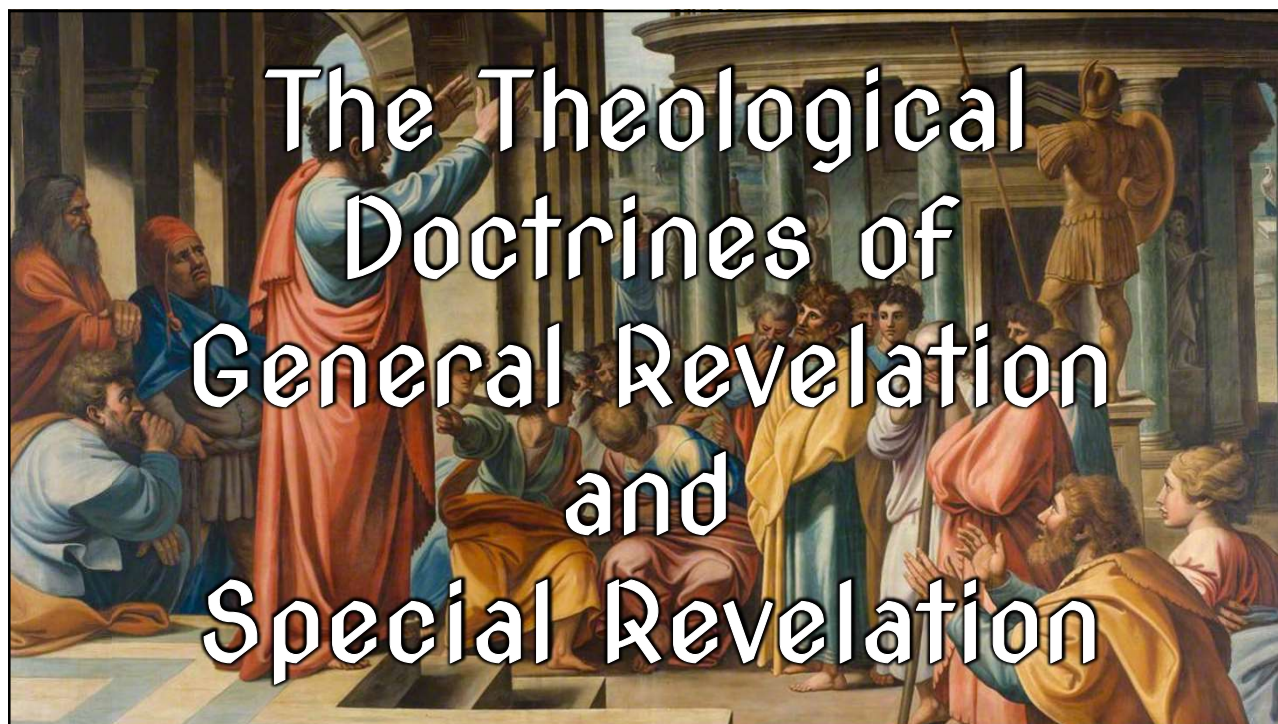


# Natural Theology

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.  
Southern Evangelical Seminary

*The doctrine of Natural  
Theology is defined in the  
context of the doctrines of  
**General Revelation** and  
**Special Revelation.***



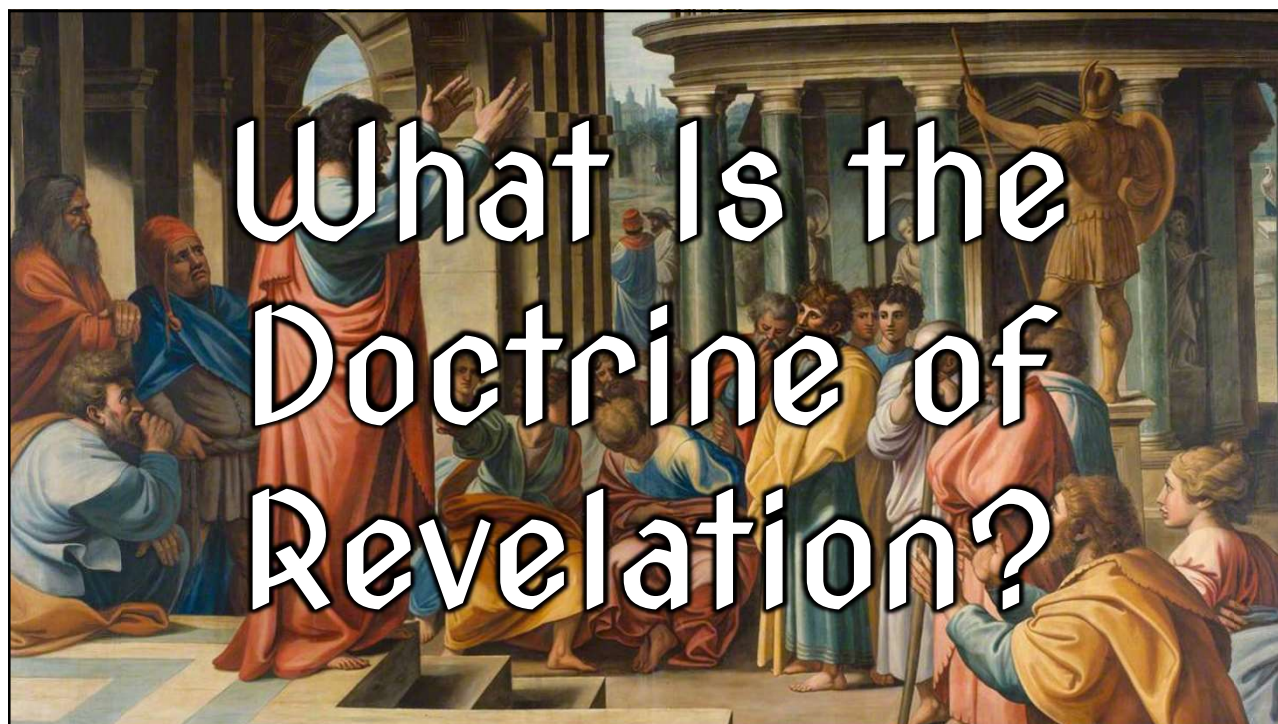
## Intro to God's Revelation 6-Week Curriculum by Dr. Richard Howe

What does it mean for God to speak to mankind? In this six-week video study, respected philosopher and apologist Richard G. Howe teaches Christians the fundamentals of how to approach and understand their Bible in an age of skepticism. Each session contains a lecture from Dr. Howe and a short wrap-up with interview contributions from other Christian thinkers.

Perfect for Sunday school classes, small groups or individual study!

- Session 1: General Revelation
- Session 2: Special Revelation
- Session 3: Inspiration
- Session 4: Inerrancy & Canonicity
- Session 5: Transmission & Translation
- Session 6: Interpretation & Application





# What Is the Doctrine of Revelation?

*Revelation is God making known to mankind His divine person and divine truths that would otherwise be unknown. It means "to unveil."*



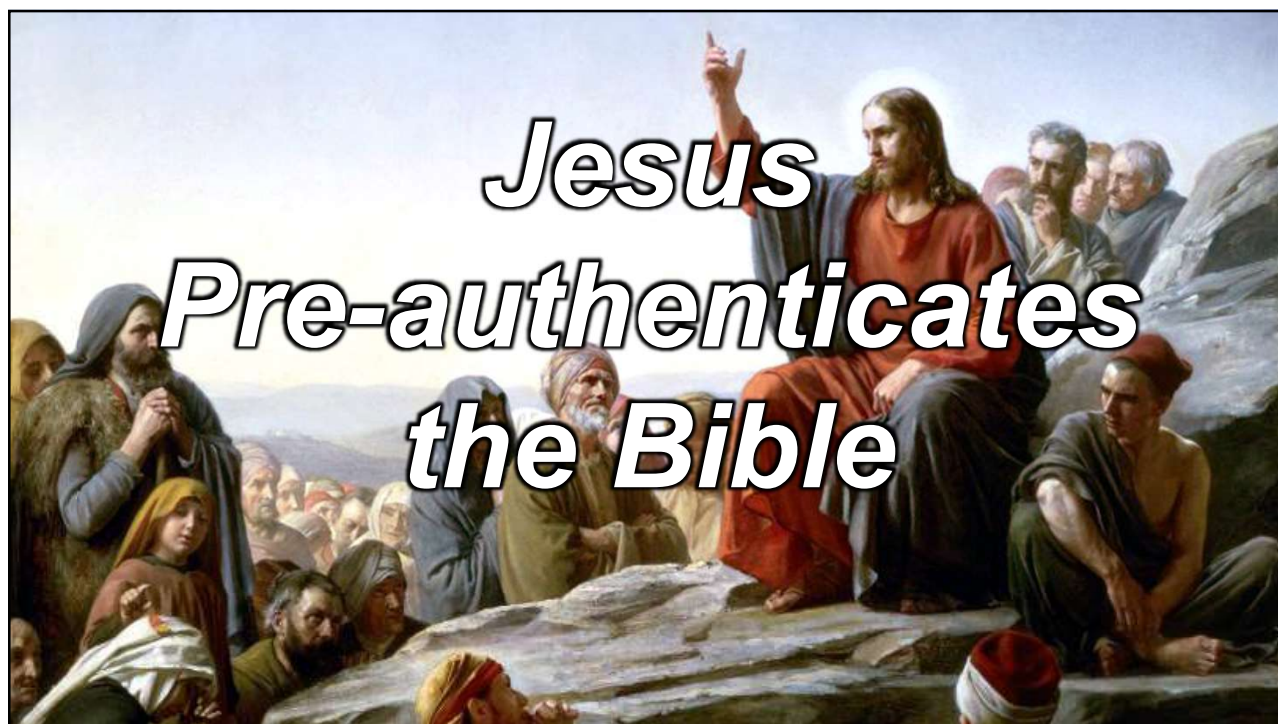
Revelation	Inspiration
<p><i>God making known to mankind His divine Person and divine truths that would otherwise be unknown</i></p>	<p><i>God transferring to mankind His divine Person and divine truths through human agency into written language form for mankind to understand</i></p>
<p><i>Giving of the truth</i></p>	<p><i>Recording of the truth</i></p>





***Special Revelation is God making known to mankind through His prophets, apostles, and His Son (the Lord Jesus) His nature and will that could not necessarily be known through General Revelation.***

***Special Revelation is what we now know as the Bible.***



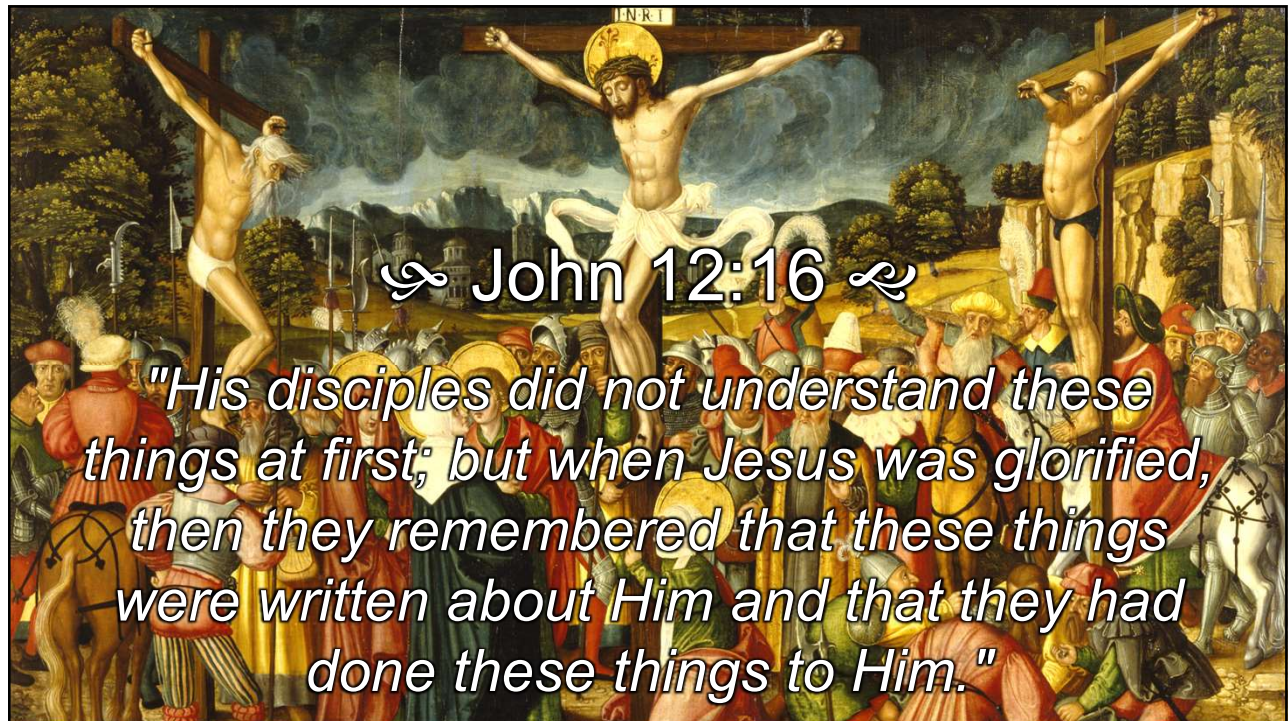
John 14:25-26: *"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. {26} "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

John 16:12-13: *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. {13} "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*



John 14:25-26: "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. {26} "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and **bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**

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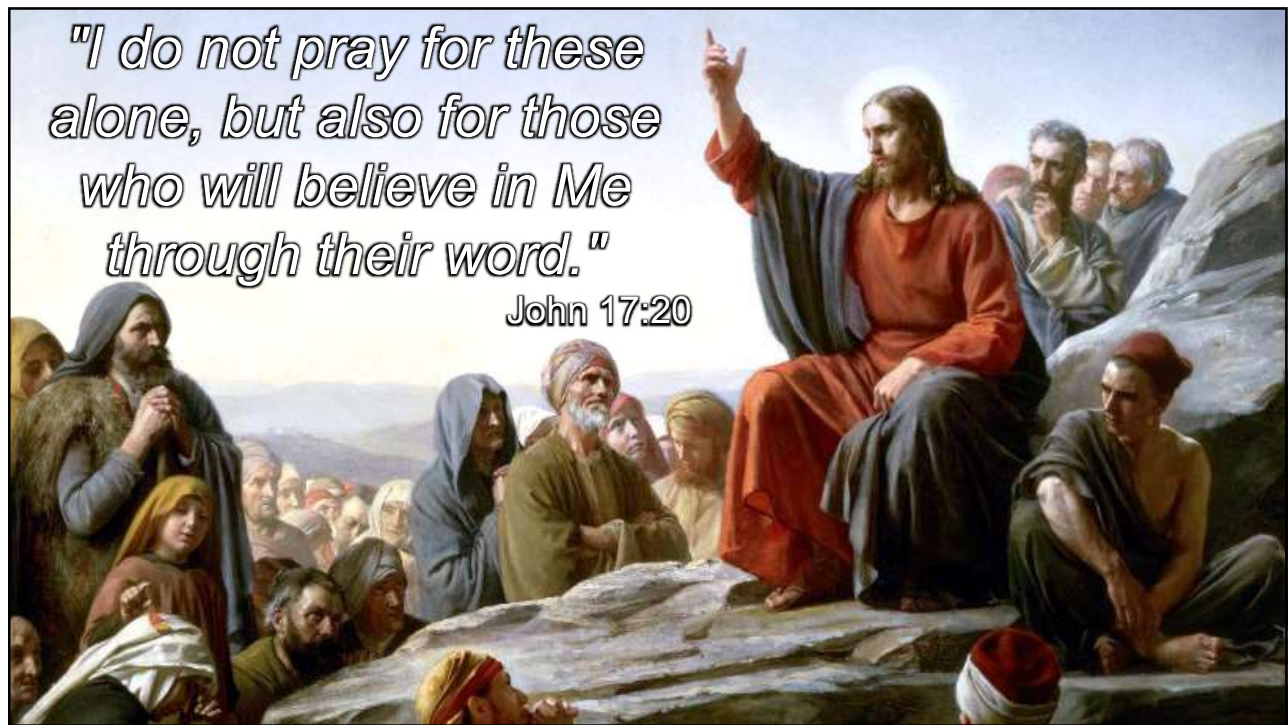


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John 16:12-13: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. {13} "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will **tell you things to come**.

*"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word."*

John 17:20







Historical

"... bring to your remembrance ..." John 14:26

**Matthew - Acts**

Teaching

"... teach you all things ..." John 14:26

**Romans - Jude**

Prophecy

"... tell you things to come ..." John 16:13

**Revelation**

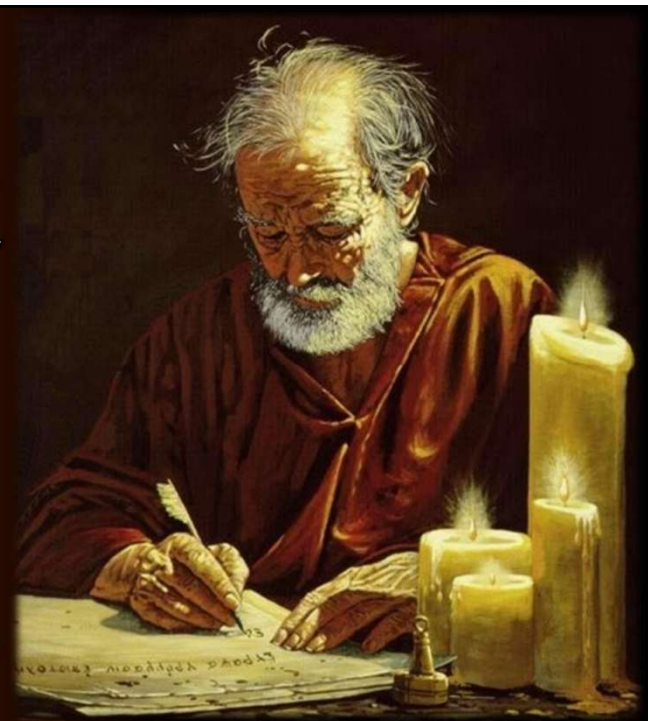


***"... knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."***

**2 Peter 1:20-21**

***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

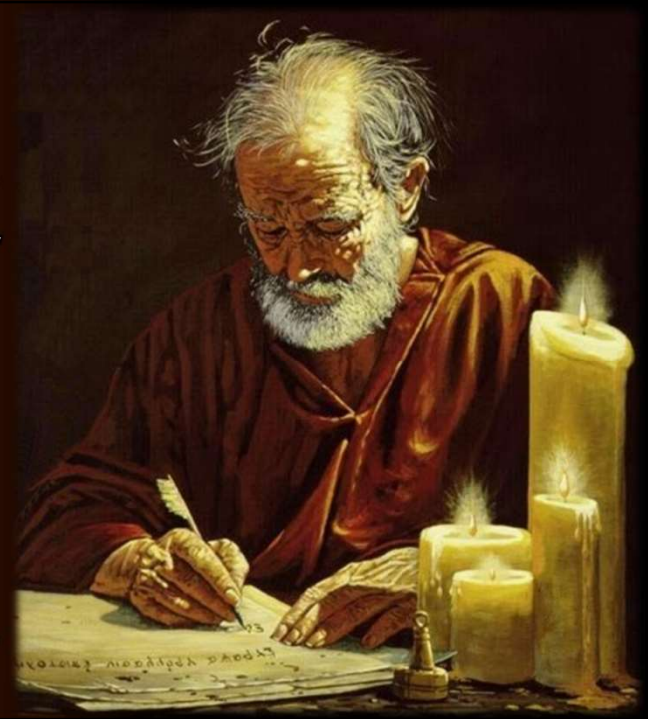
**2 Timothy 3:16-17**





*All Scripture is **given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17



*All Scripture is **given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17

### **theopneustos**

(θεόπνευστος) = God breathed

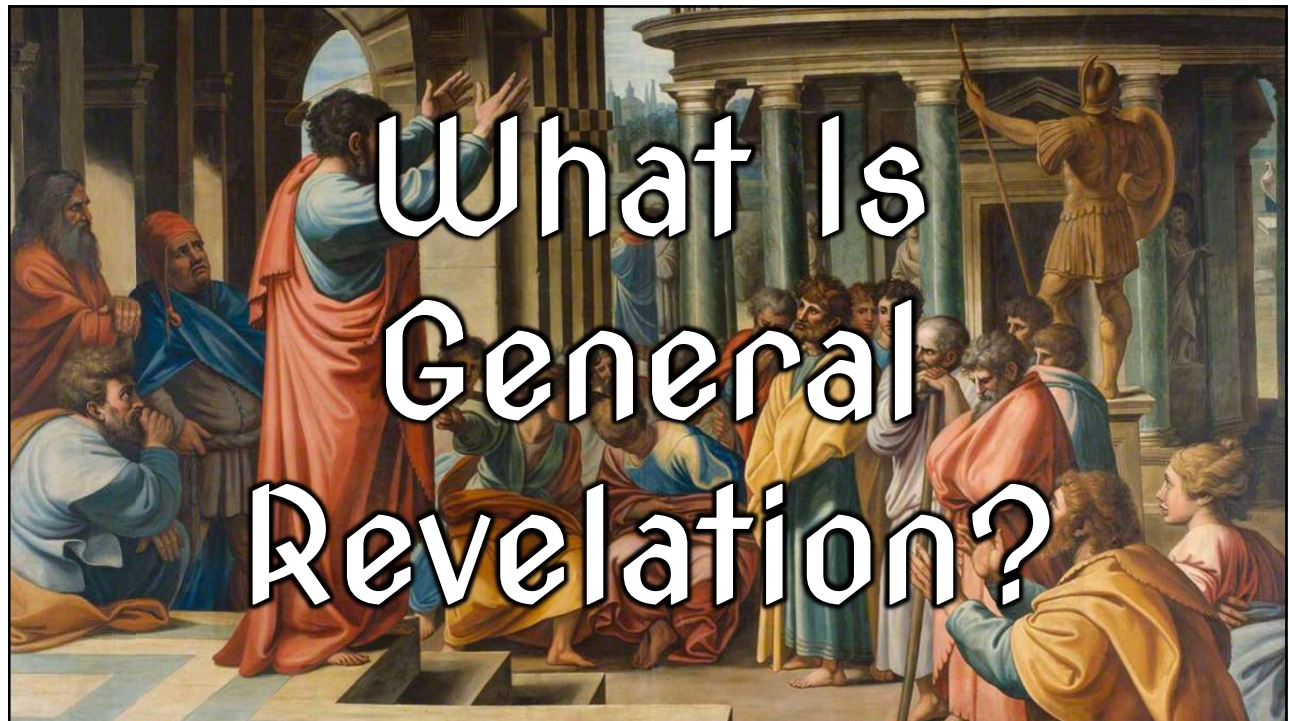
**theos** (θεός) = God

**pneō, pneuma** (πνέω, πνεῦμα) = I breathe, breath, spirit, Spirit

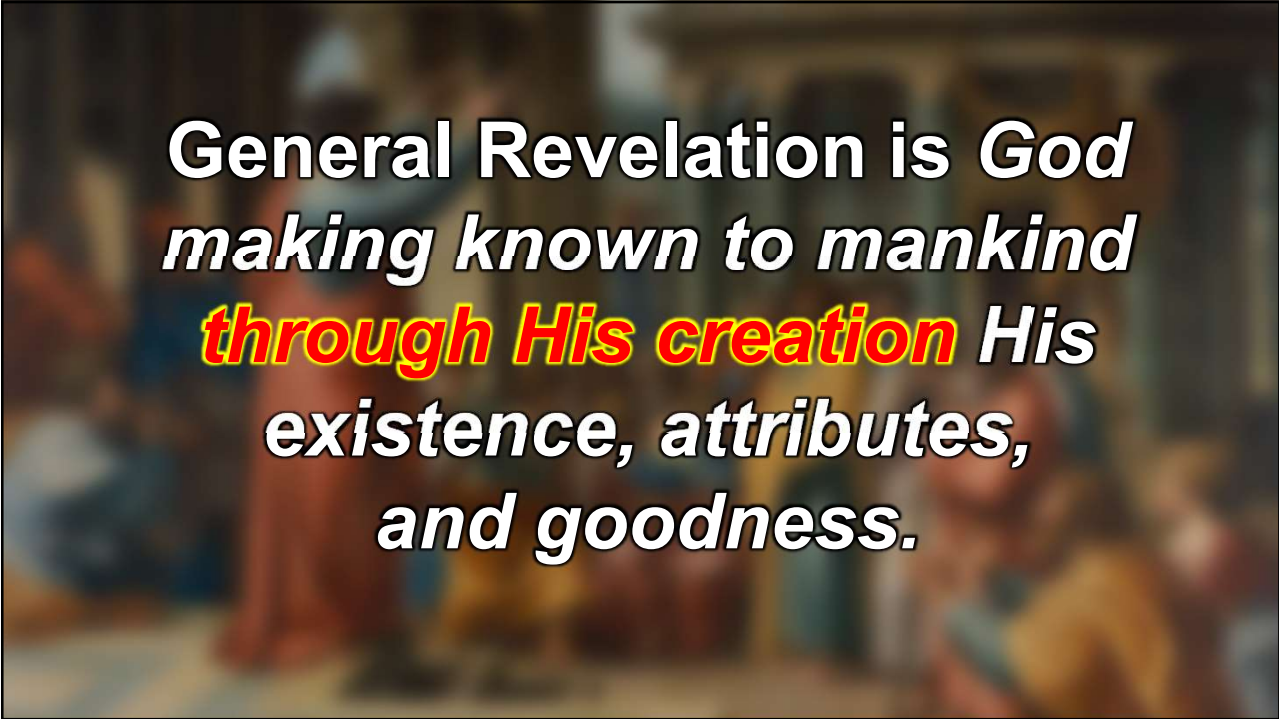
*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **instruction in righteousness**, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17

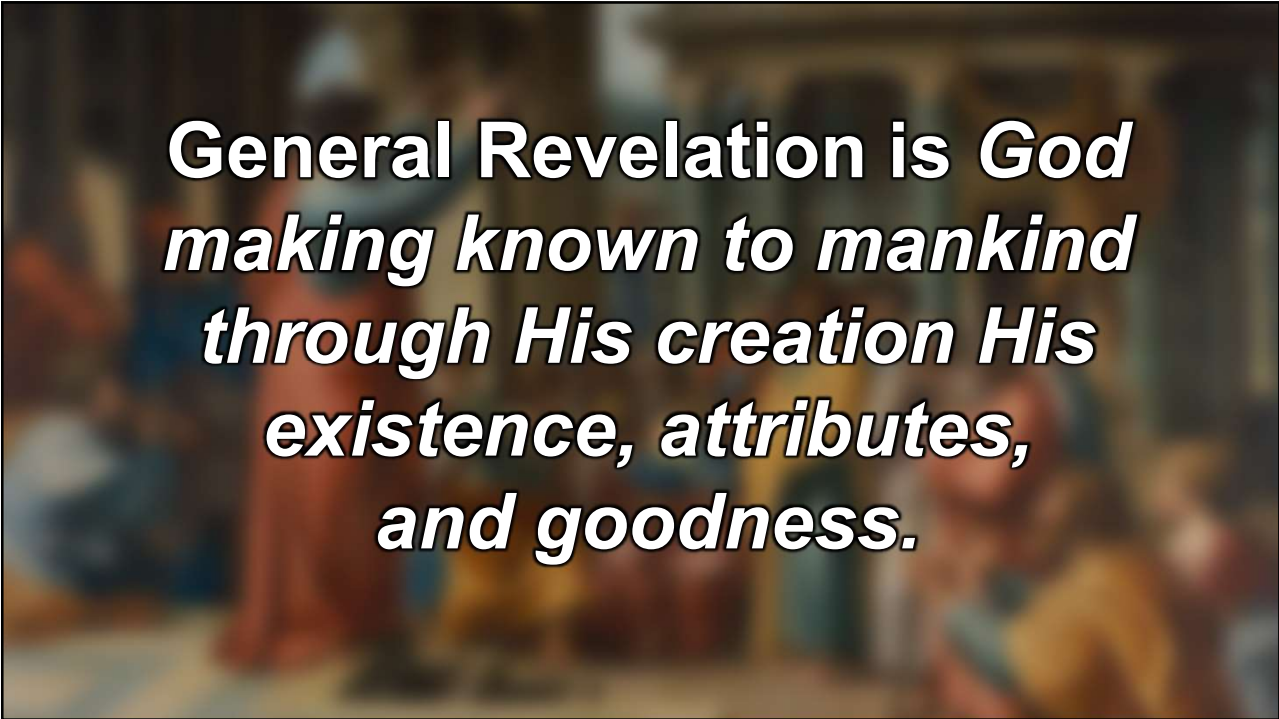
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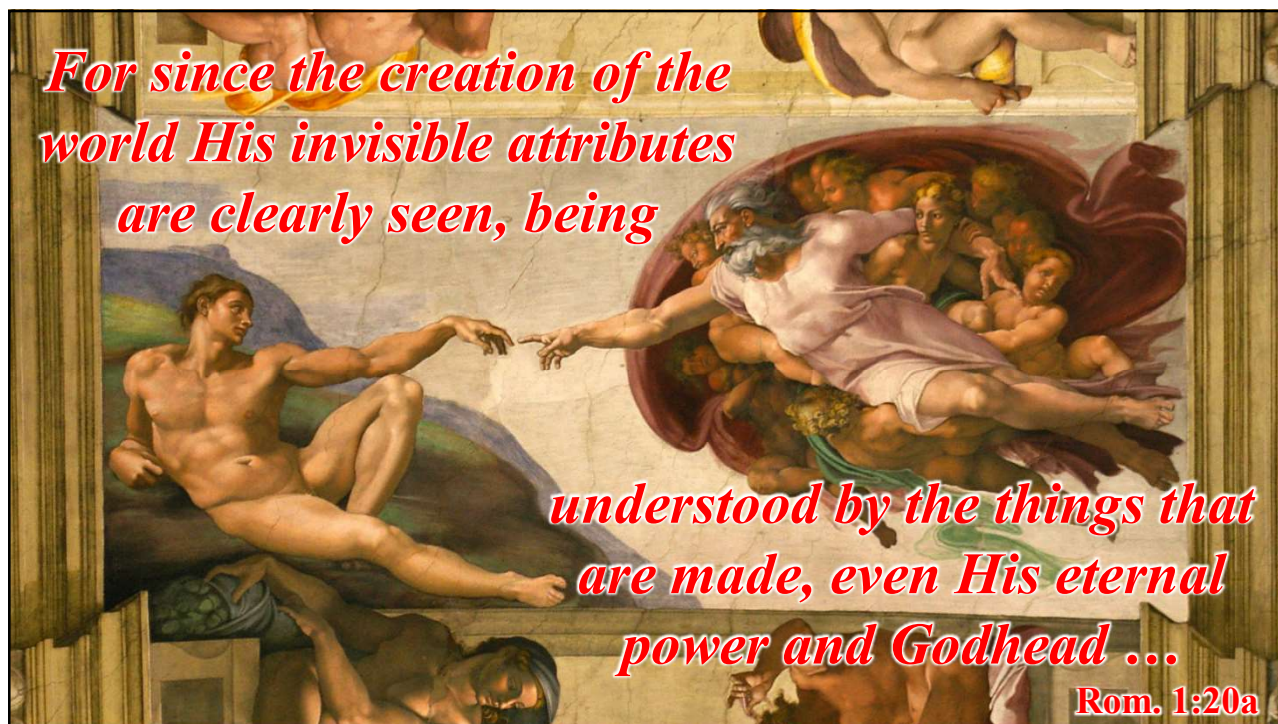




**General Revelation is God  
*making known to mankind  
through His creation His  
existence, attributes,  
and goodness.***



**General Revelation is God  
*making known to mankind  
through His creation His  
existence, attributes,  
and goodness.***



*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being*

*understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead ...*

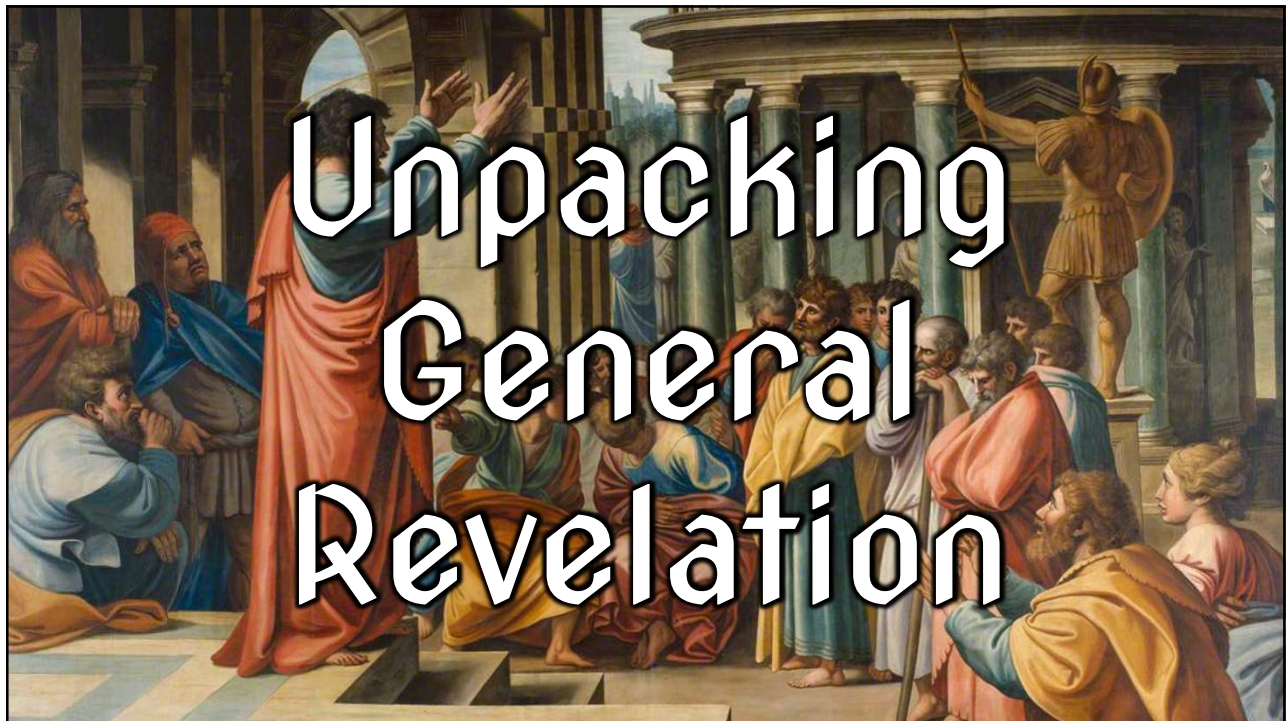
**Rom. 1:20a**



**Contrasting  
General Revelation  
with Special  
Revelation**



- *Whereas General Revelation rests on creation, Special Revelation rests on re-creation.*
- *Whereas General Revelation is sourced in the created universe, Special Revelation is sourced in the Lord Jesus Christ (the living Word) and the Bible (the written Word).*





# ***The Nature of General Revelation***

- 1. It is based on the creation of both the material (sensible) and immaterial universe.**

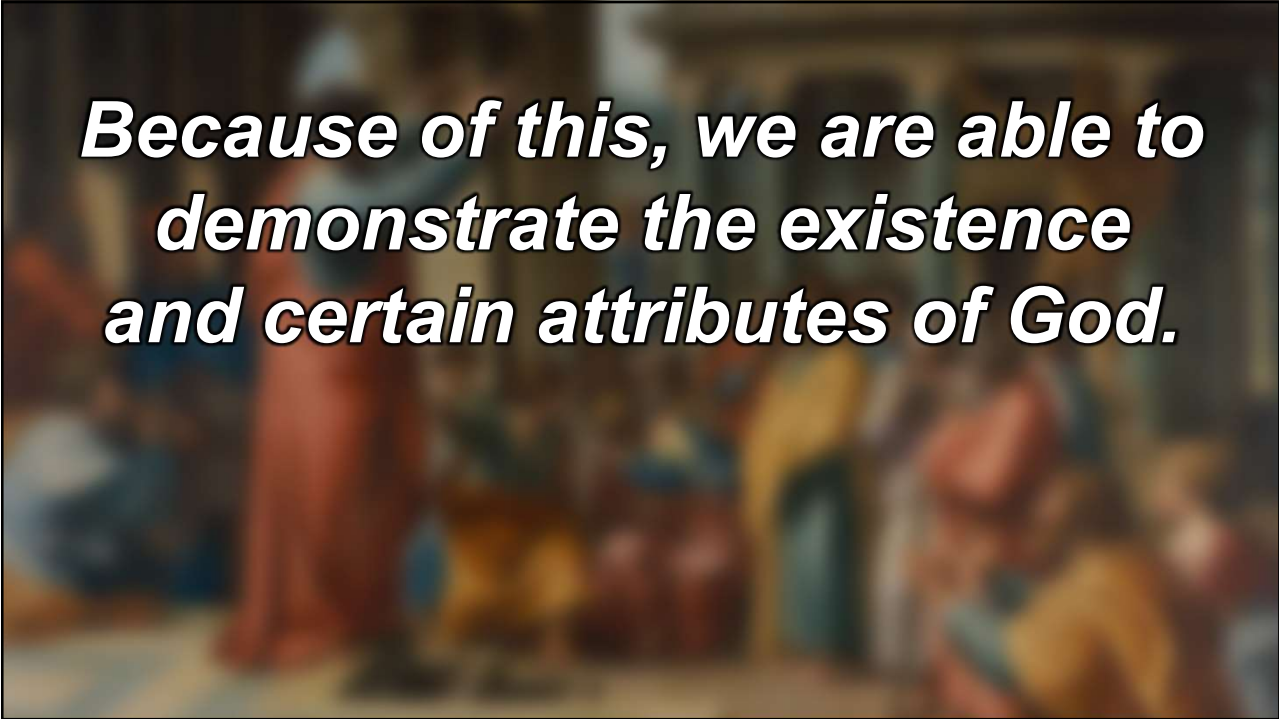


**2. It is addressed to human beings as intelligent creatures.**

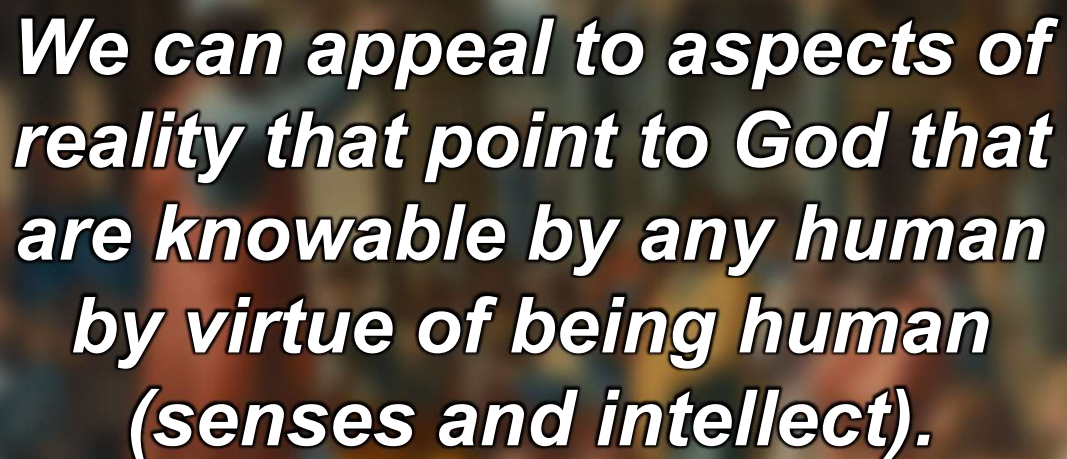
- ❖ *not necessarily addressed to human beings as regenerate*
- ❖ *in light of the ability of humans to have knowledge (which begins in senses and is completed in the intellect) of the creation*

**3. It is accessible to all men.**

- ❖ *No person has a more privileged access to the creation because of his geography (where he is).*
- ❖ *No person has a more privileged access to the creation because of his chronology (when he is).*



***Because of this, we are able to demonstrate the existence and certain attributes of God.***



***We can appeal to aspects of reality that point to God that are knowable by any human by virtue of being human (senses and intellect).***

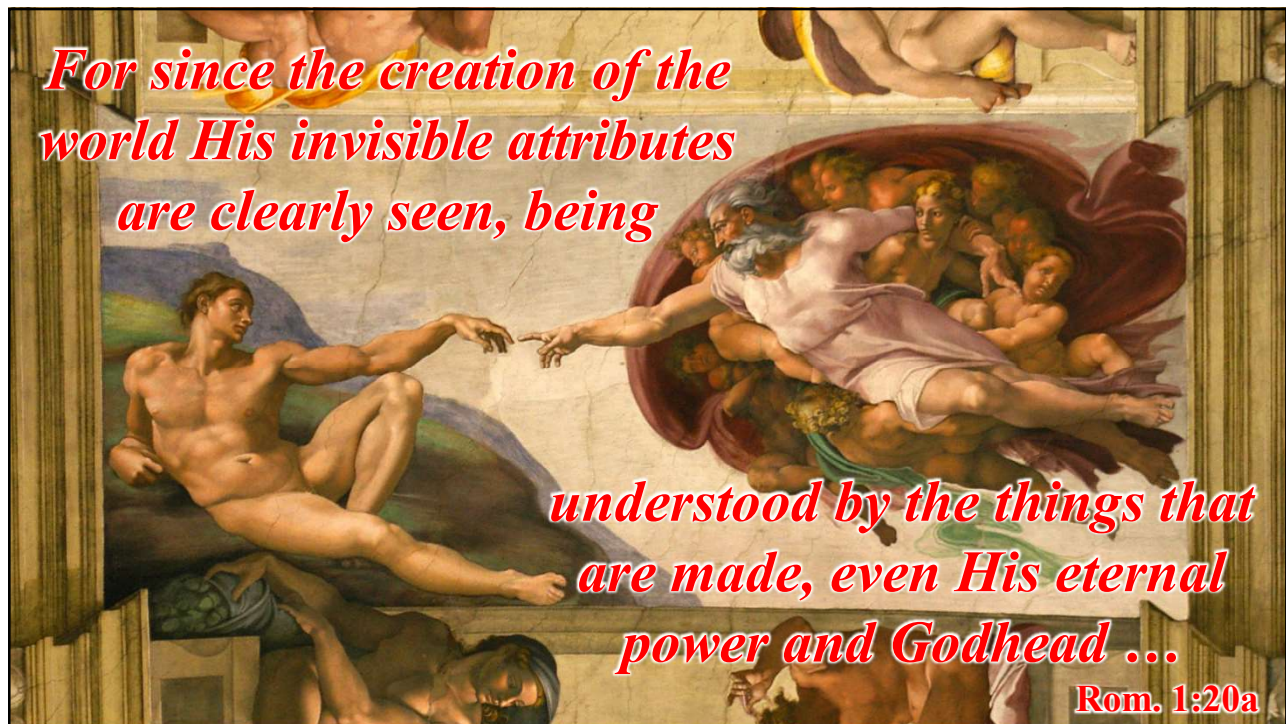




# ***The Content of General Revelation***

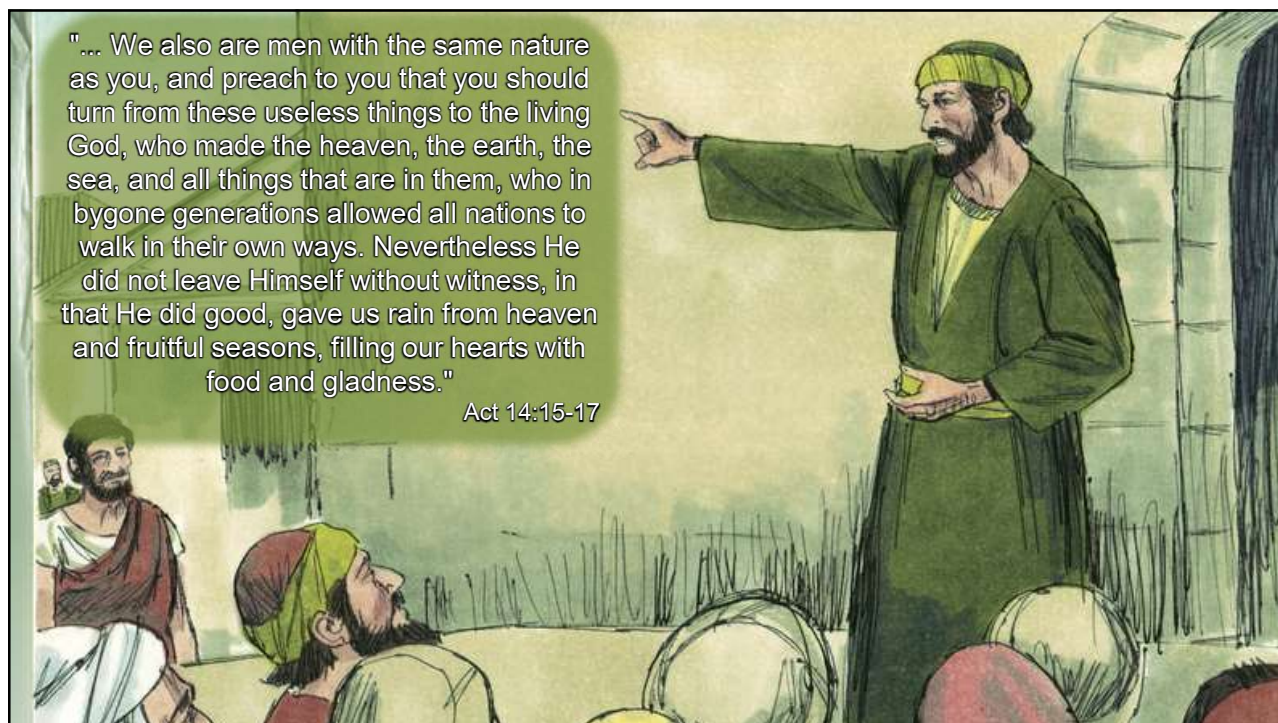
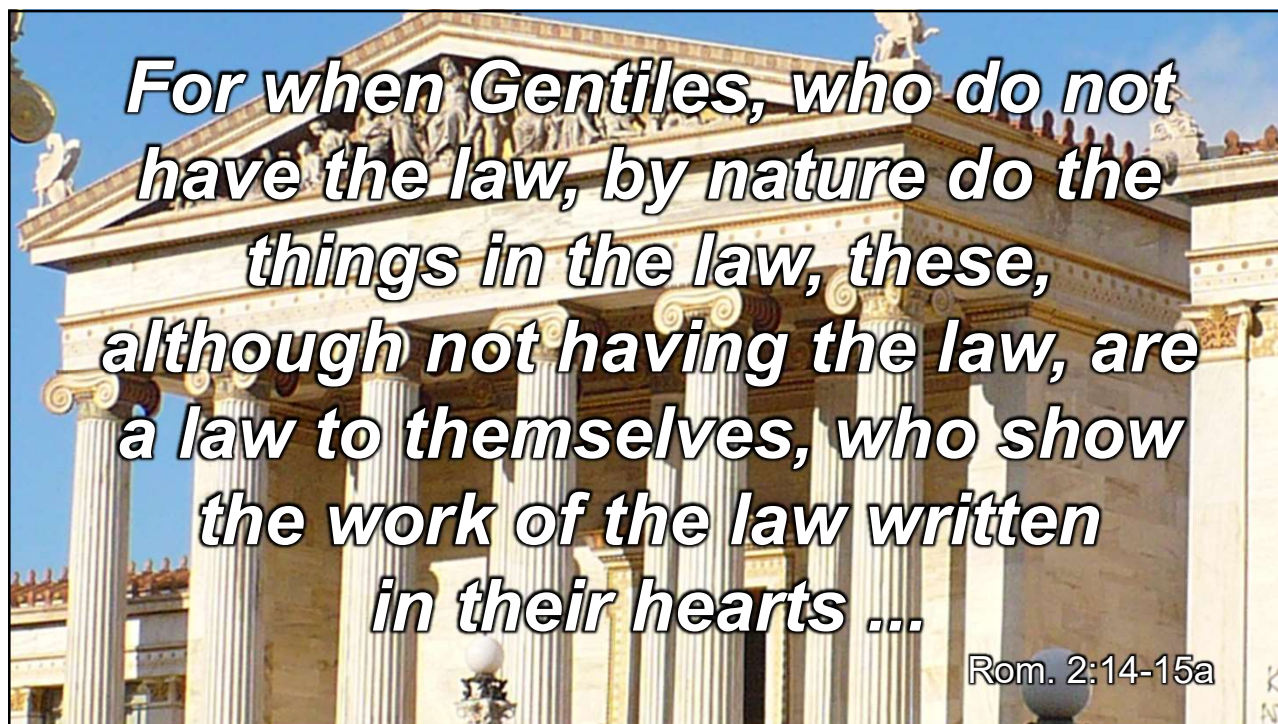


***1. God's existence, deity, and power***



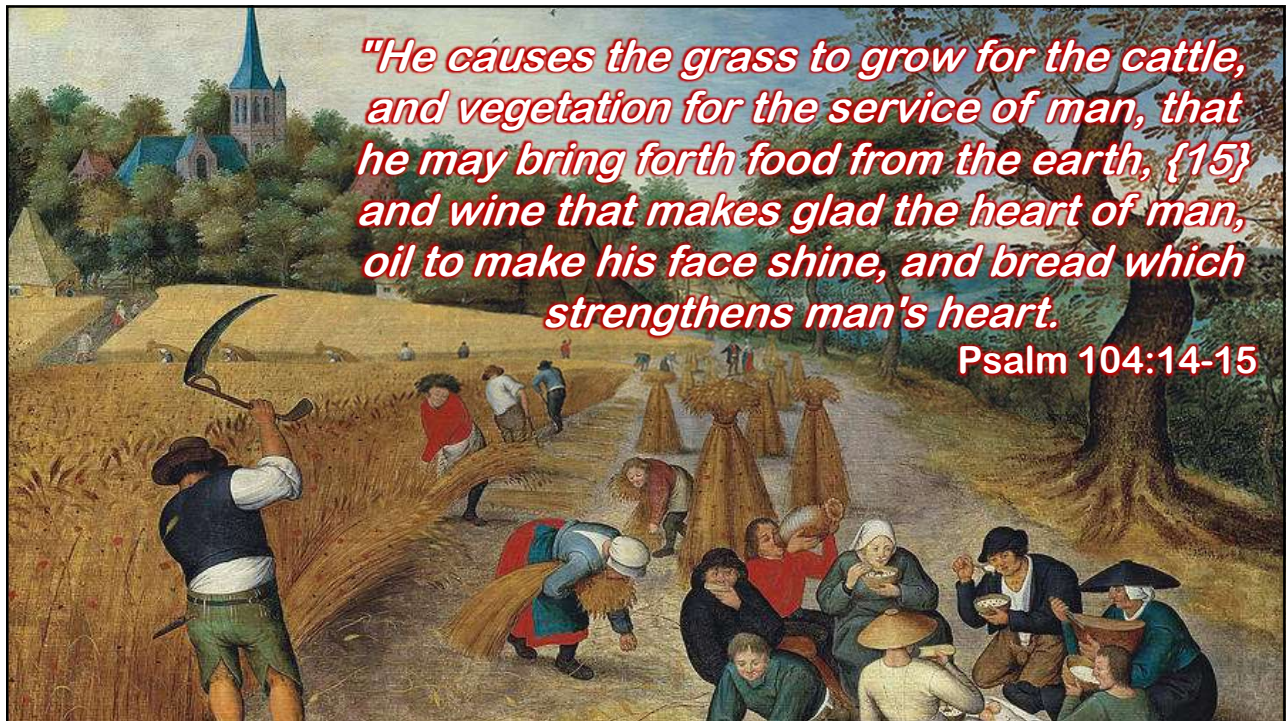
- 1. God's existence, deity, and power**
- 2. God's goodness**



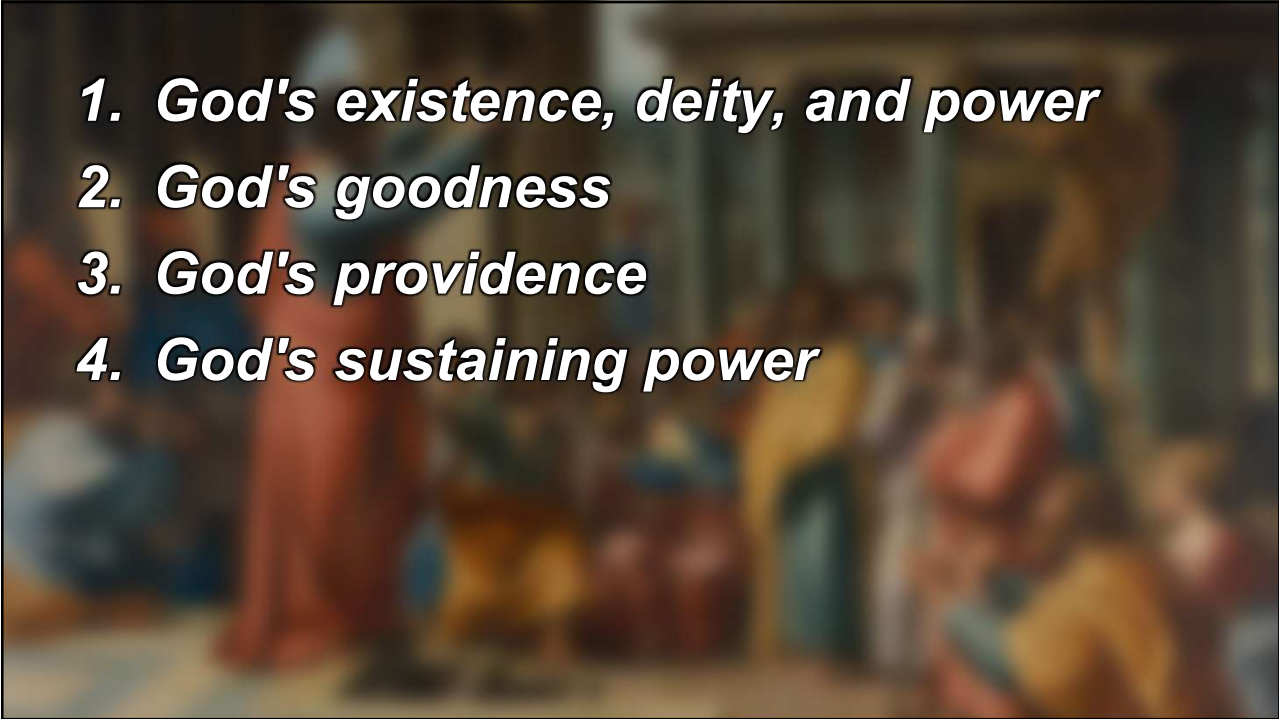




- 1. God's existence, deity, and power**
- 2. God's goodness**
- 3. God's providence**



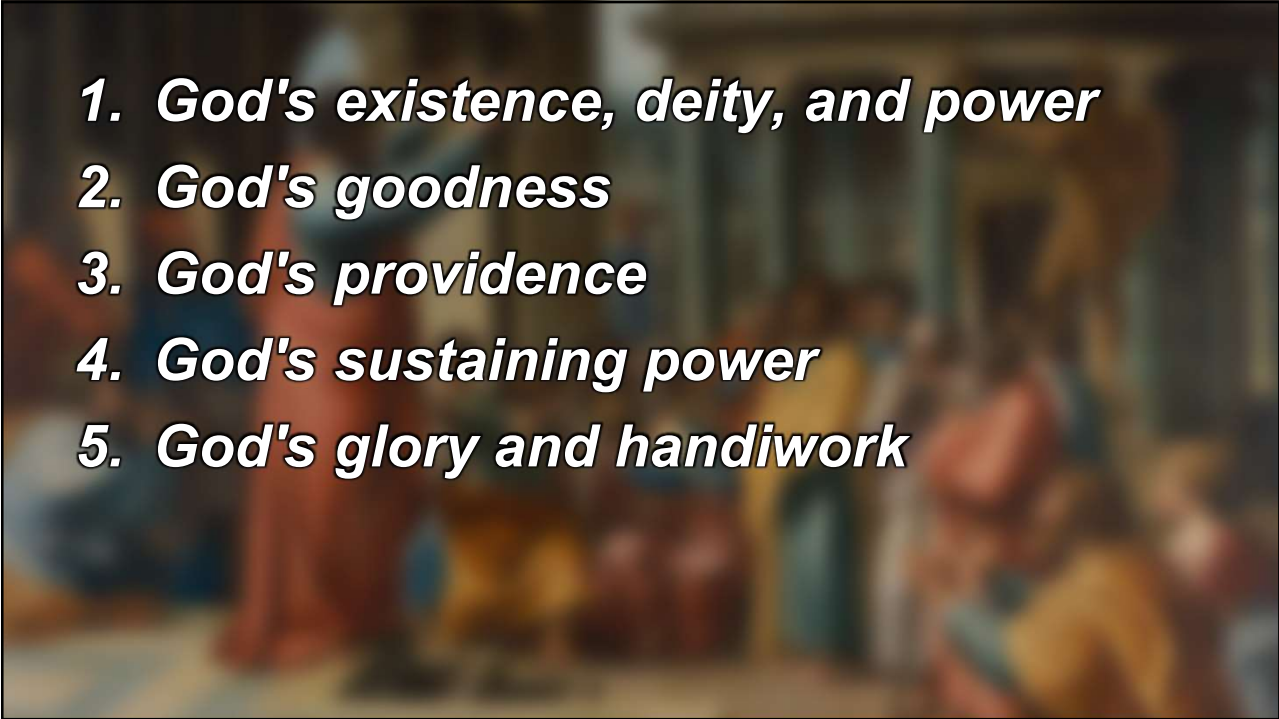


- 
- 1. God's existence, deity, and power**
  - 2. God's goodness**
  - 3. God's providence**
  - 4. God's sustaining power**



☞ Colossians 1:16-17 ☞

*"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."*

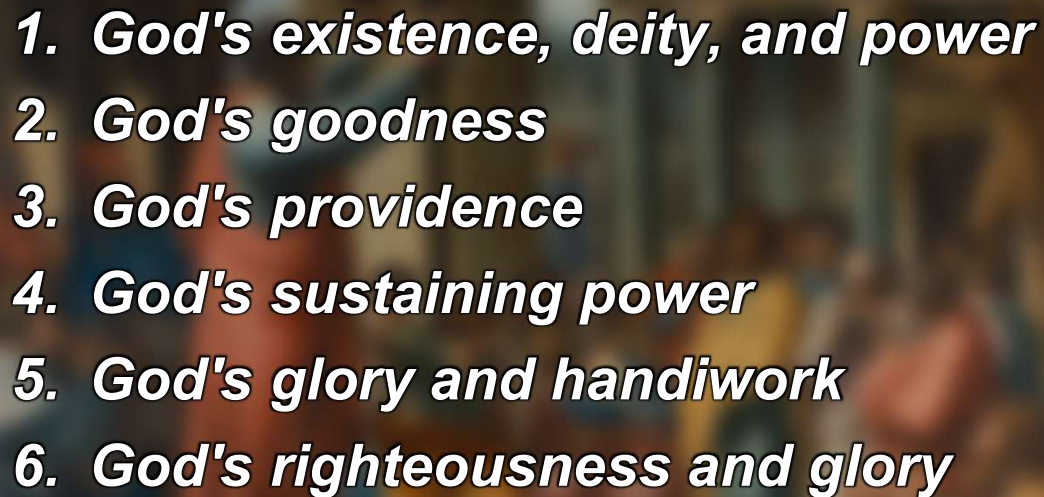
- 
- 1. God's existence, deity, and power***
  - 2. God's goodness***
  - 3. God's providence***
  - 4. God's sustaining power***
  - 5. God's glory and handiwork***



***The heavens declare  
the glory of God; and  
the firmament shows  
His handiwork.***

Psalm 19:1

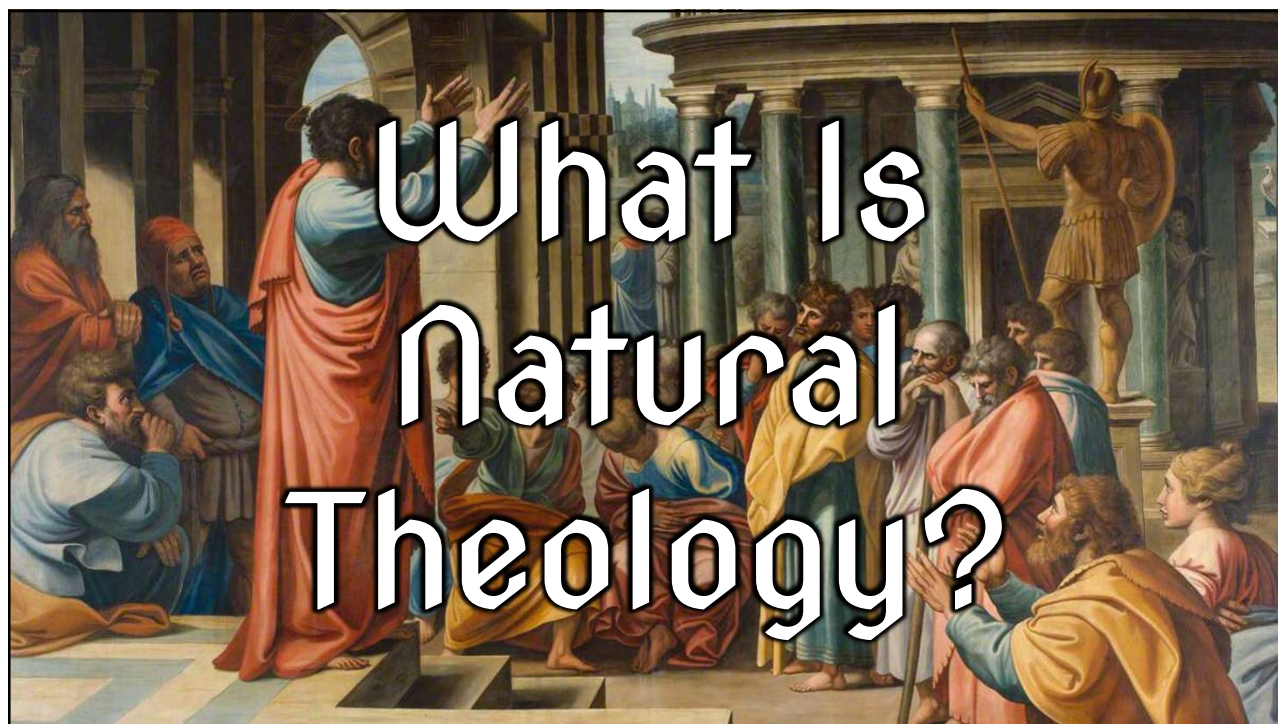


- 
- 1. God's existence, deity, and power***
  - 2. God's goodness***
  - 3. God's providence***
  - 4. God's sustaining power***
  - 5. God's glory and handiwork***
  - 6. God's righteousness and glory***



***The heavens declare  
His righteousness,  
and all the peoples  
see His glory.***

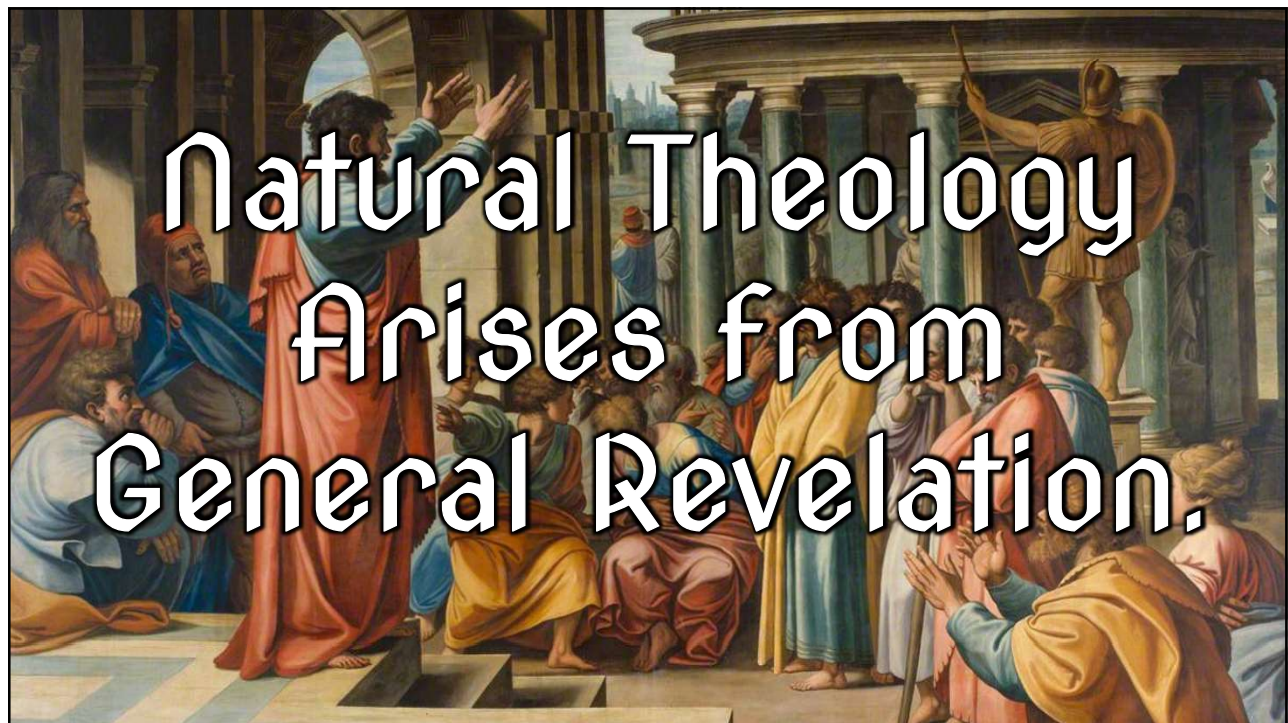
Psalm 97:6



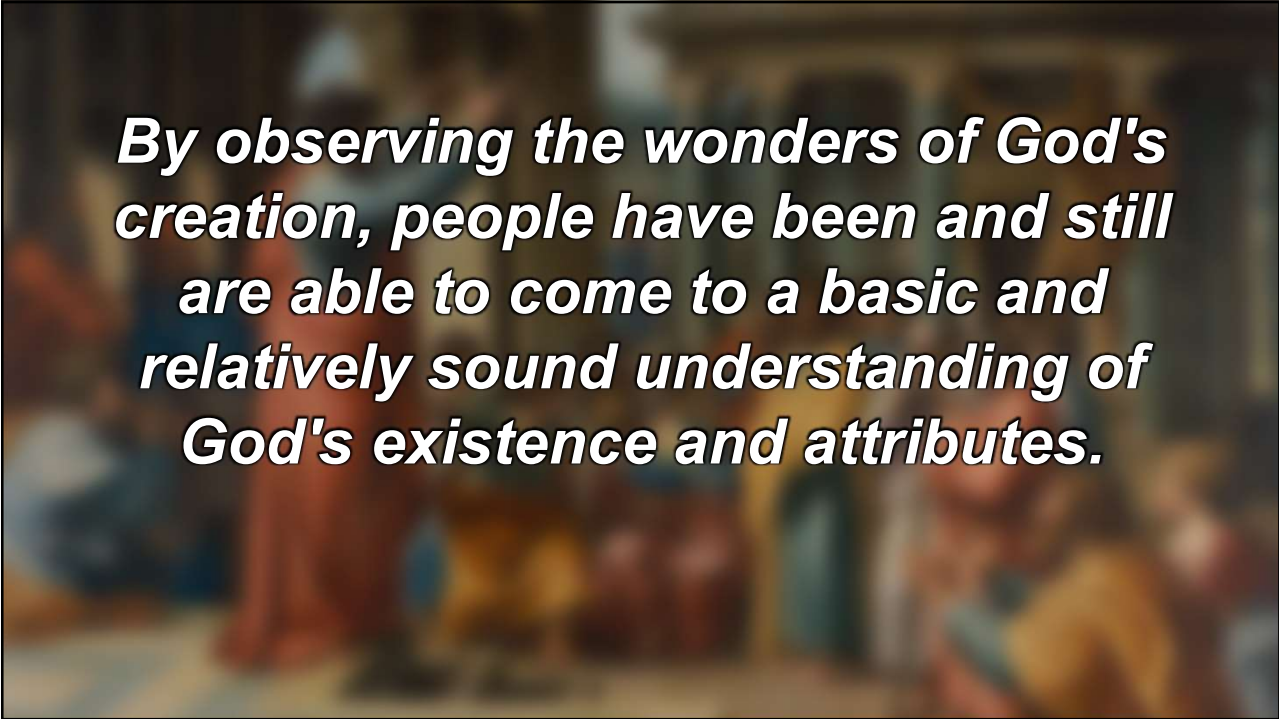
*The truths knowable by reason through General Revelation constitutes Natural Theology.*



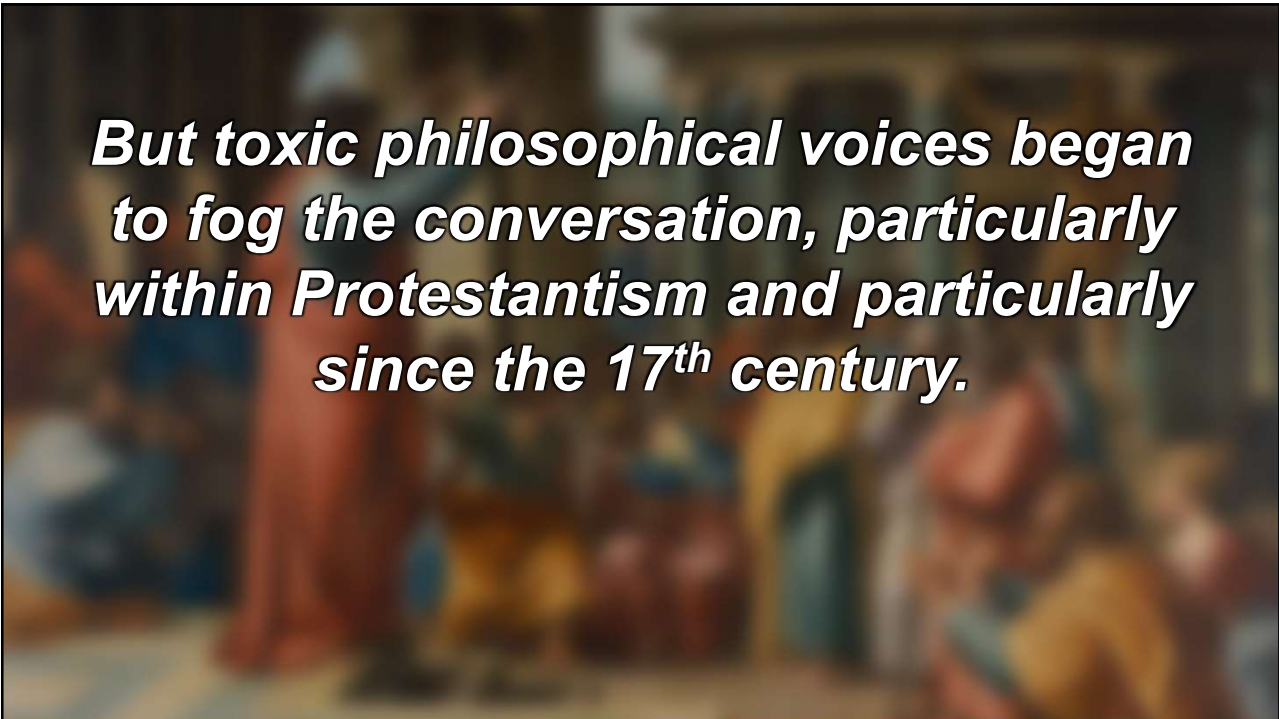
***Natural theology is that body of knowledge about God's existence and nature that can be acquired by natural human reason as it attends itself to the sensible world (i.e., things encountered by the senses) around us.***



**Natural Theology  
Arises from  
General Revelation.**



***By observing the wonders of God's creation, people have been and still are able to come to a basic and relatively sound understanding of God's existence and attributes.***



***But toxic philosophical voices began to fog the conversation, particularly within Protestantism and particularly since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.***



*Because of this, there is the need at times to reason from deeper issues in **sound philosophy** to demonstrate God's existence and certain attributes given that they are understood "by the things that are made" (Rom. 1:20).*

*Because of this, there is the need at times to reason from deeper issues in sound philosophy to demonstrate God's existence and certain attributes given that they are understood "by the things that are made" (Rom. 1:20).*

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

["Learning in War-Time" in *The Weight of Glory: A Collection of Lewis's Most Moving Addresses* (London: Harper Collins, 2013), 59]

**C. S. Lewis**  
(1898-1963)

**"But seeing that a teacher of sacred Scripture must at times oppose the philosophers, it is necessary for him to make use of philosophy."**

[Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*, Q. 2, art. 3.6, published as *Faith, Reason and Theology: Questions I-IV of His Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1987), p. 48]

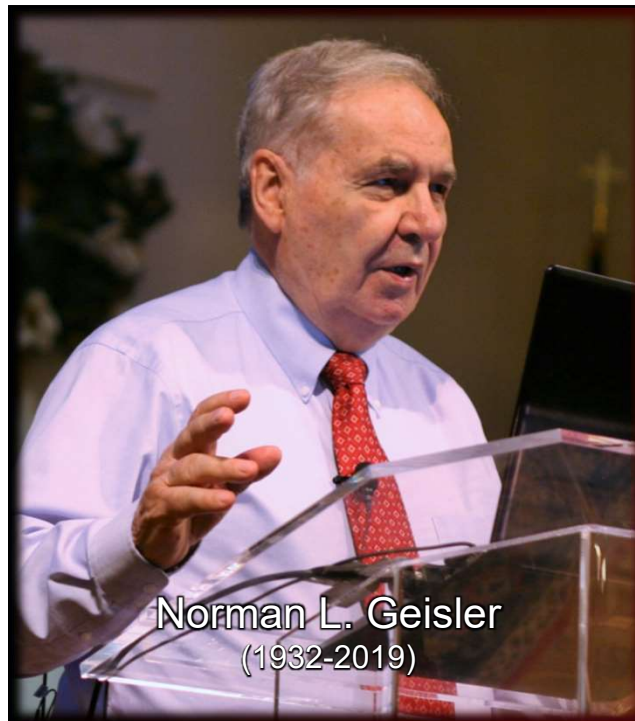
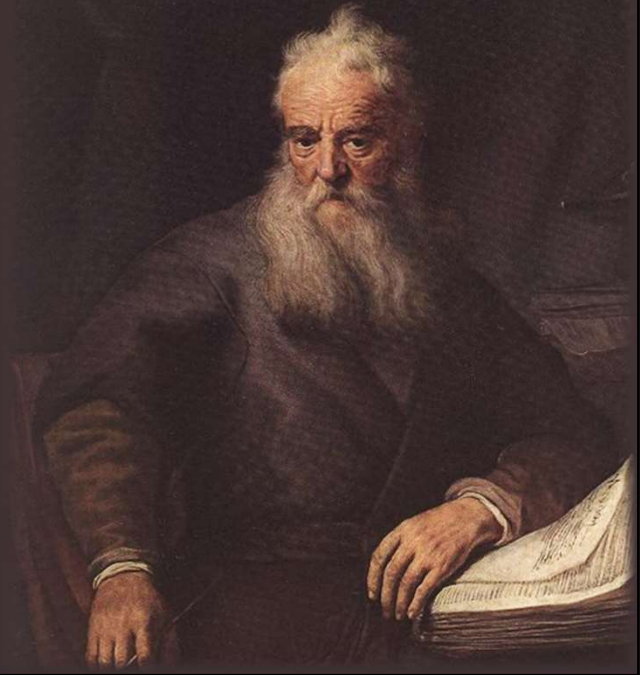
**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)



☞ Colossians 2:8 ☞

**"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ."**

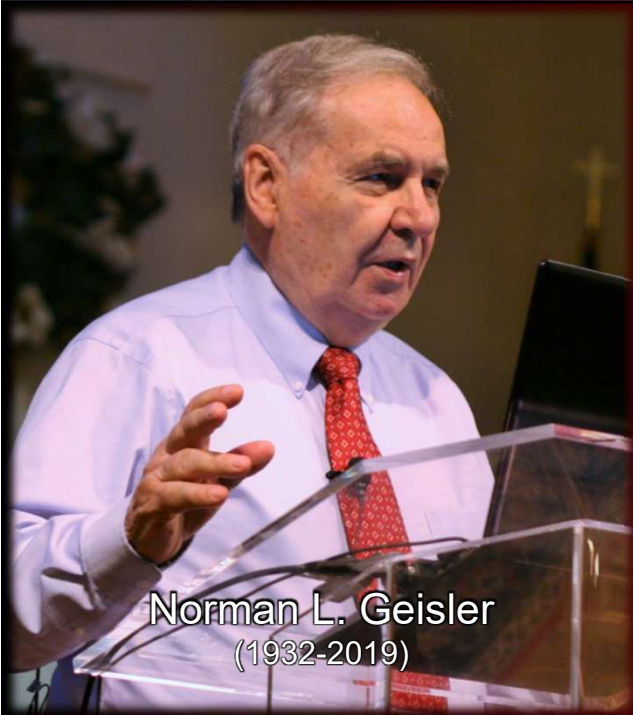
The Apostle Paul



**Norman L. Geisler**  
(1932-2019)

***"We cannot properly beware of philosophy unless we be aware of philosophy."***

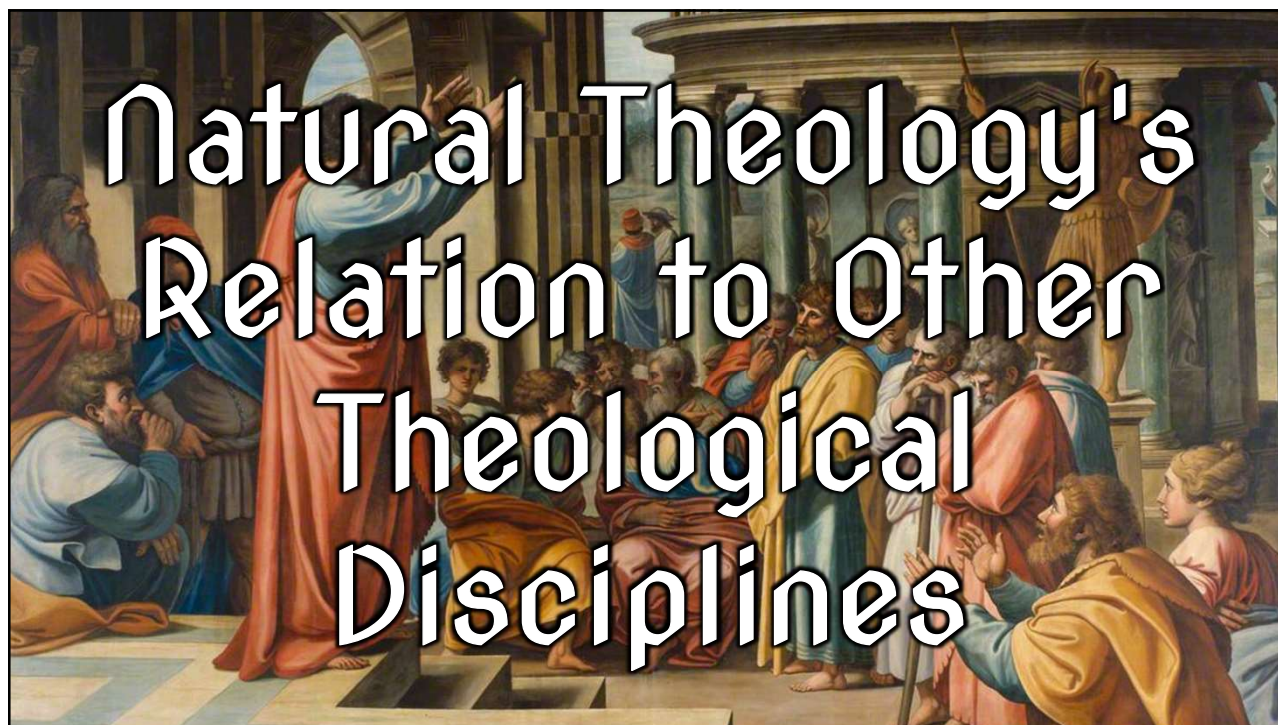
[Norman L. Geisler, "Beware of Philosophy: A Warning to Biblical Scholars," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42/1 (March 1999): 3-19 (18)]



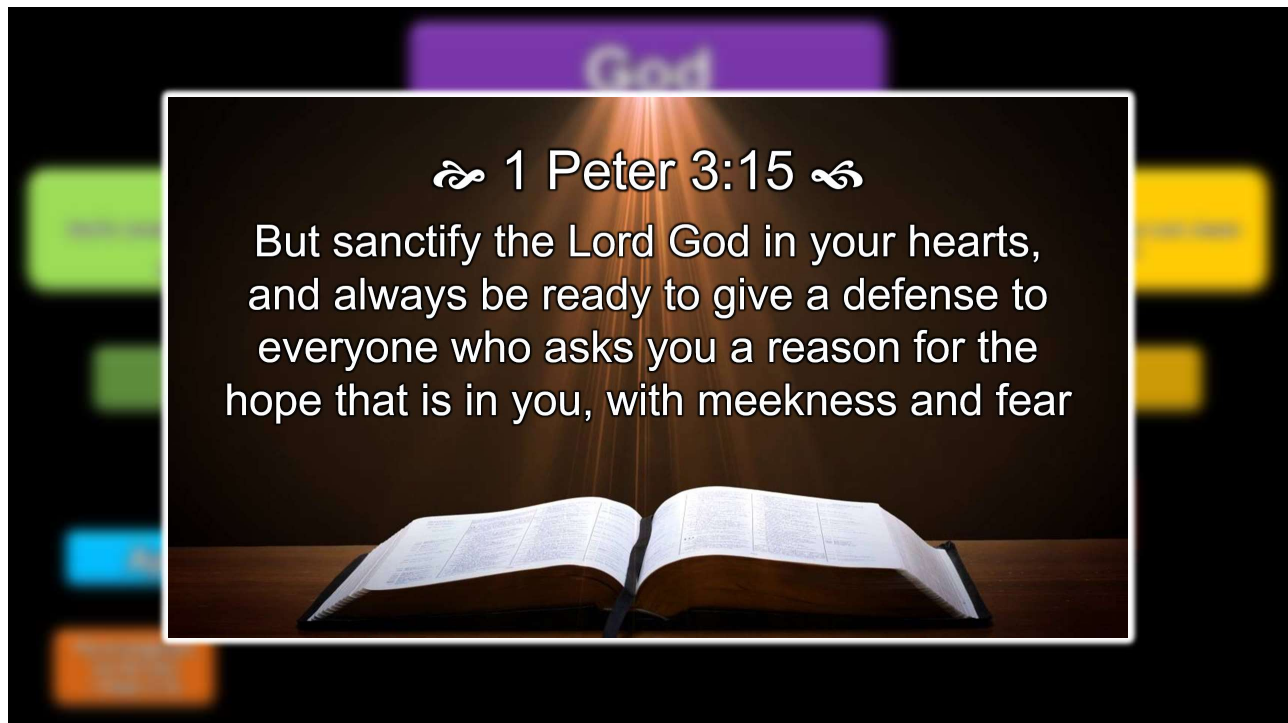
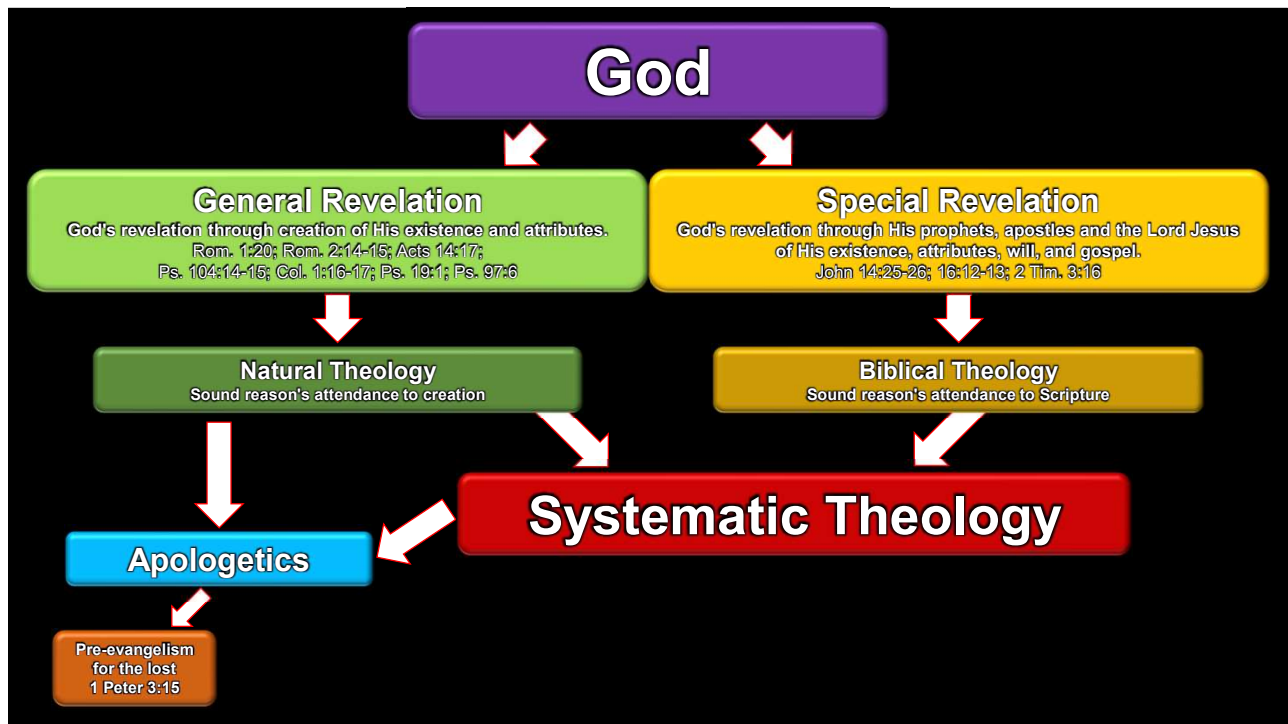
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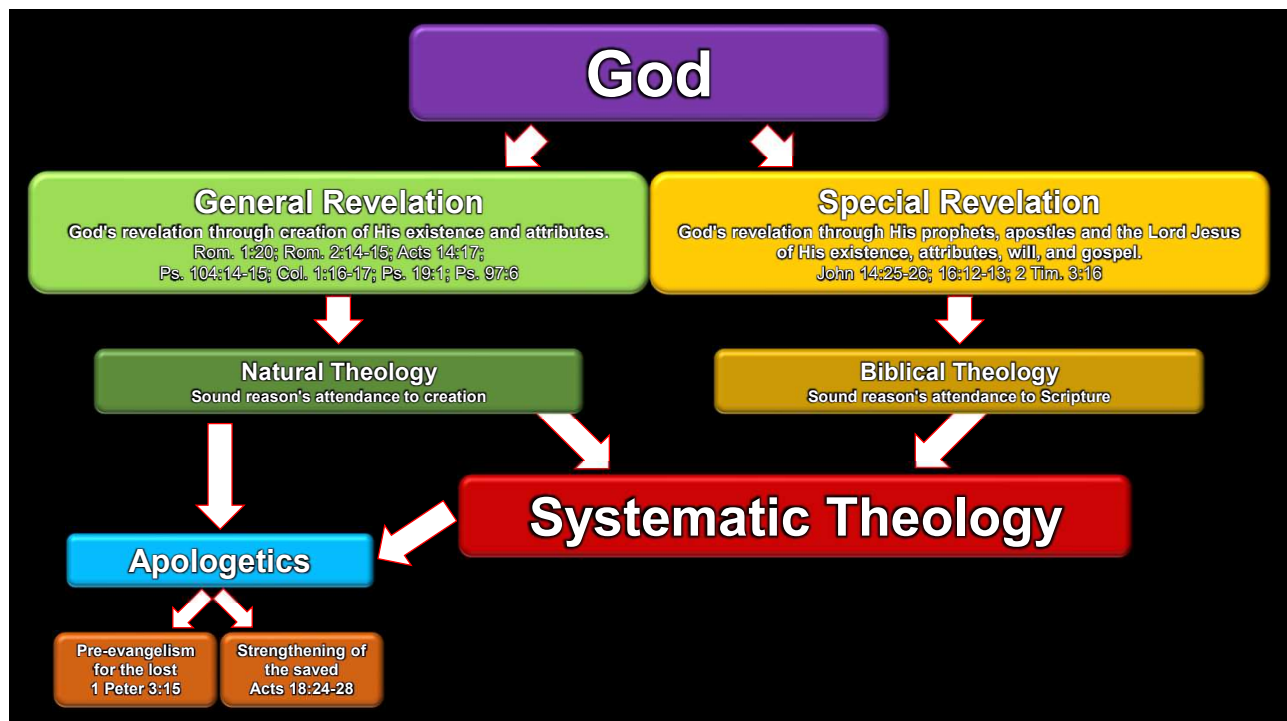
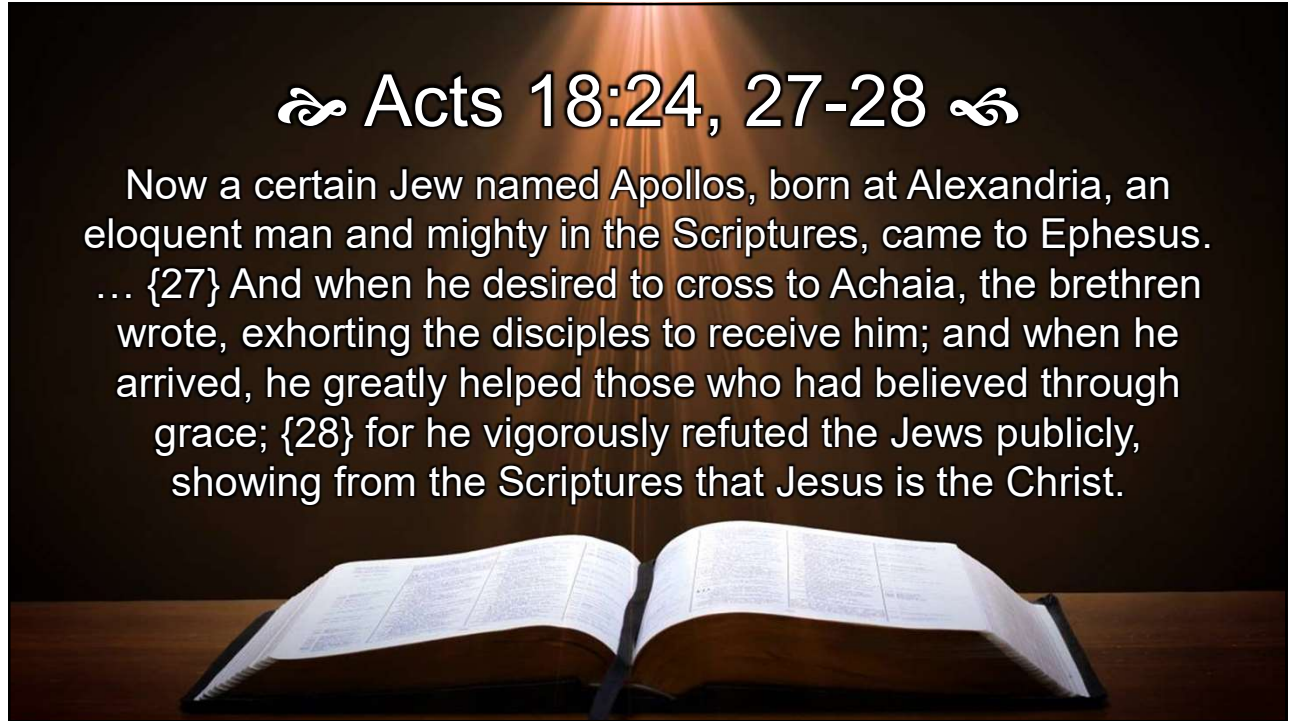






## Acts 18:24, 27-28

Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. ... {27} And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; {28} for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.



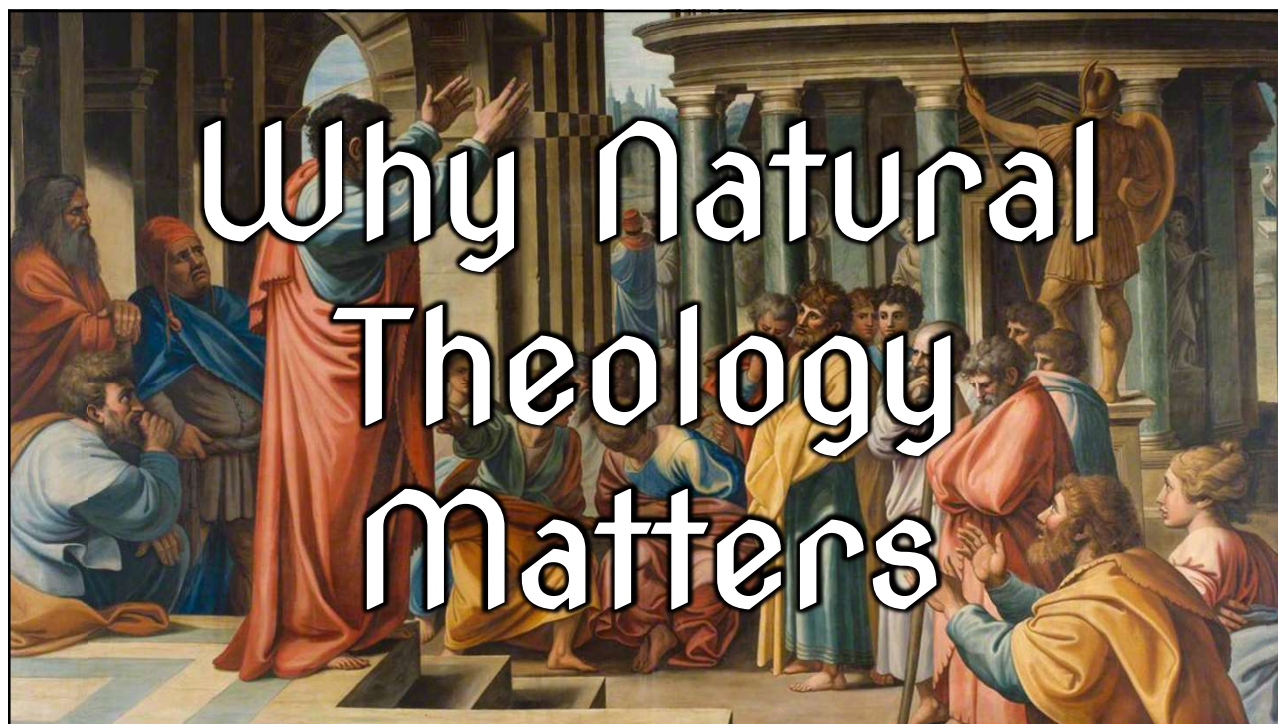


## Acts 18:24, 27-28

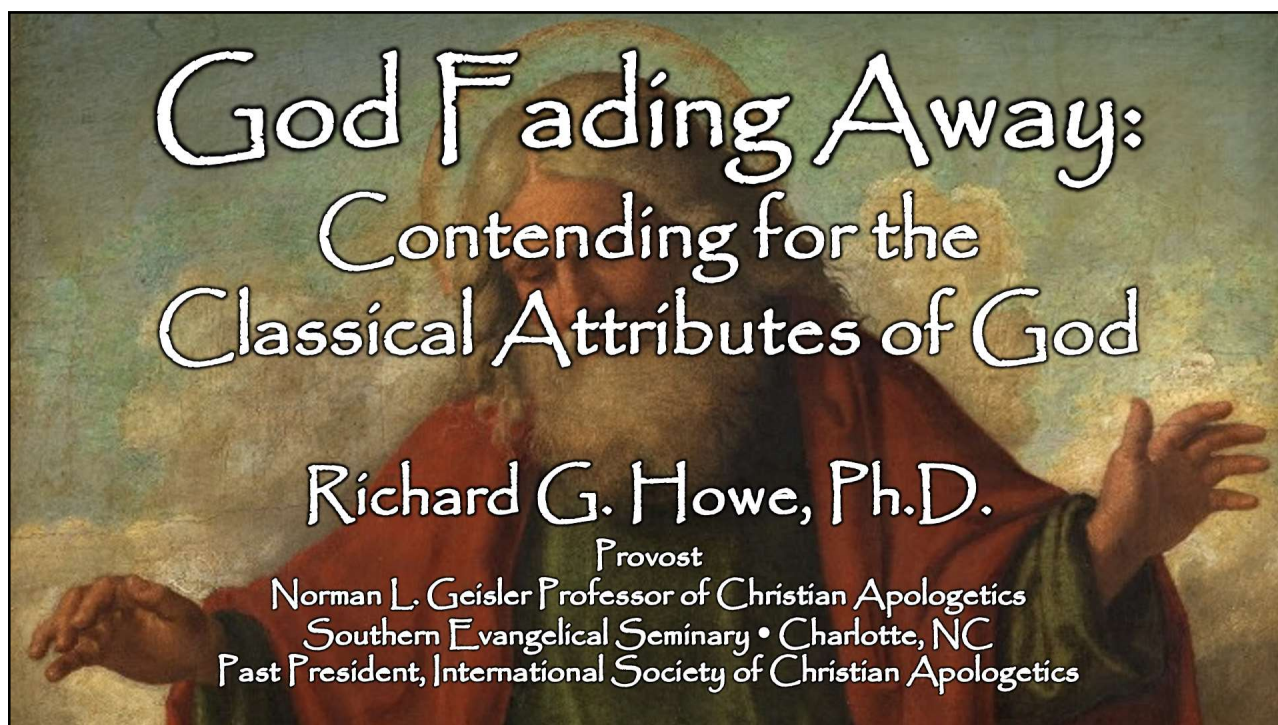
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General Revelation	Special Revelation
<i>Given through creation (known through simple apprehension of the sensible world)</i>	<i>Given through Prophets and Apostles (read by their writings, a.k.a., the Scriptures)</i>
<i>Reveals God's existence and attributes</i>	<i>Reveals God's gospel and will</i>
<i>Given TO all people</i>	<i>Given FOR all people</i>
<i>All people have it</i>	<i>Not all people have it</i>
<i>Some accept, some reject</i>	<i>Some accept, some reject</i>
<i>Sufficient to condemn if rejected</i>	<i>Sufficient to save if accepted</i>
<i>Acceptance is necessary but not sufficient for eternal life</i>	<i>Acceptance is necessary and sufficient for eternal life</i>



# Why Natural Theology Matters



## God Fading Away: Contending for the Classical Attributes of God

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

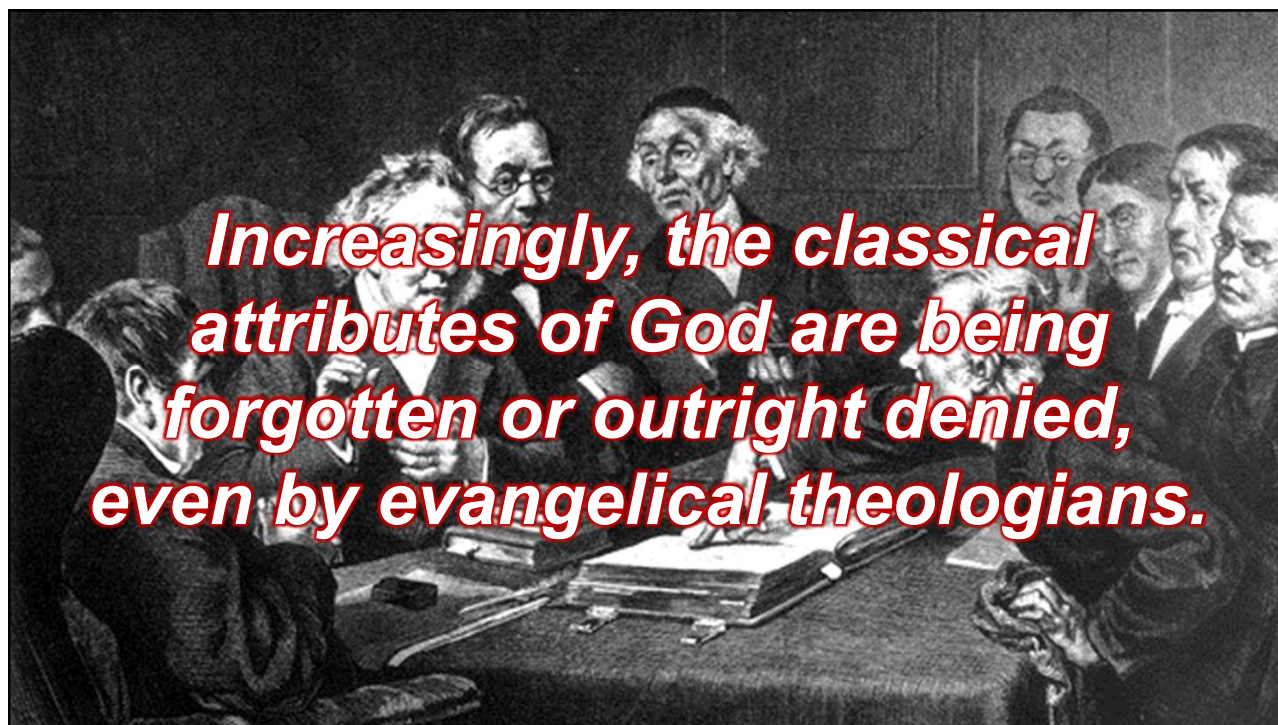
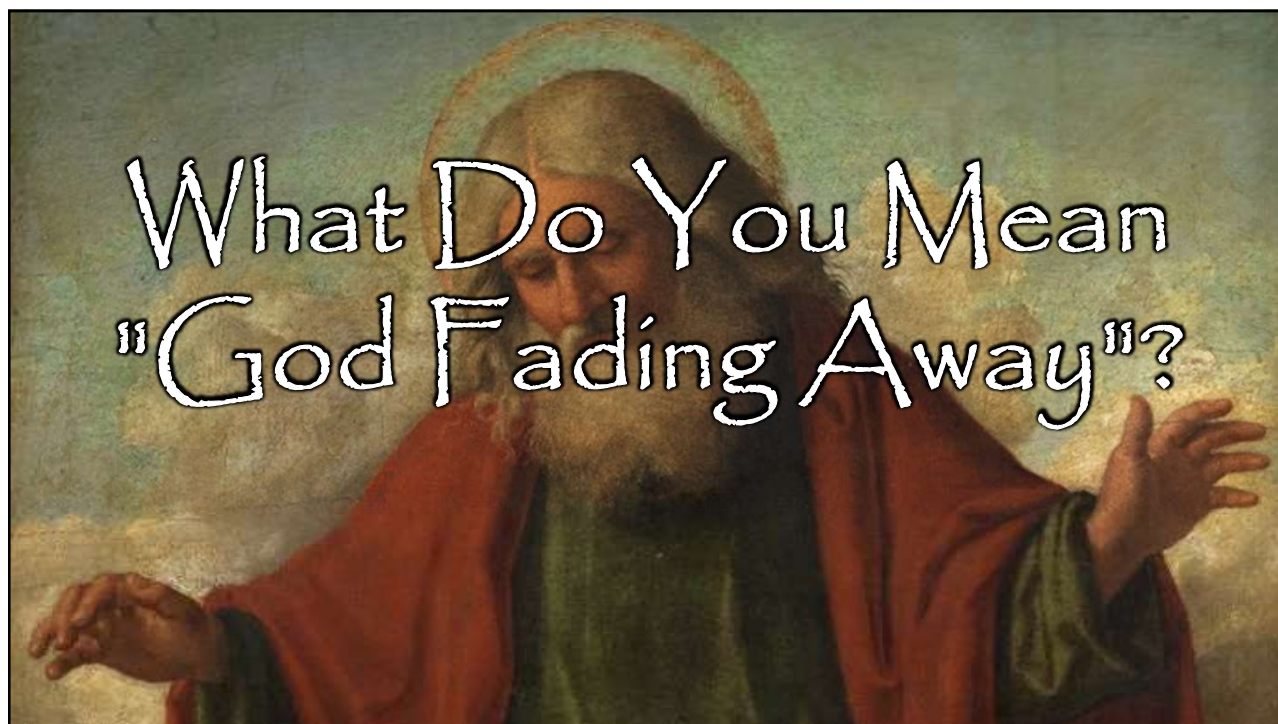
Provost

Norman L. Geisler Professor of Christian Apologetics

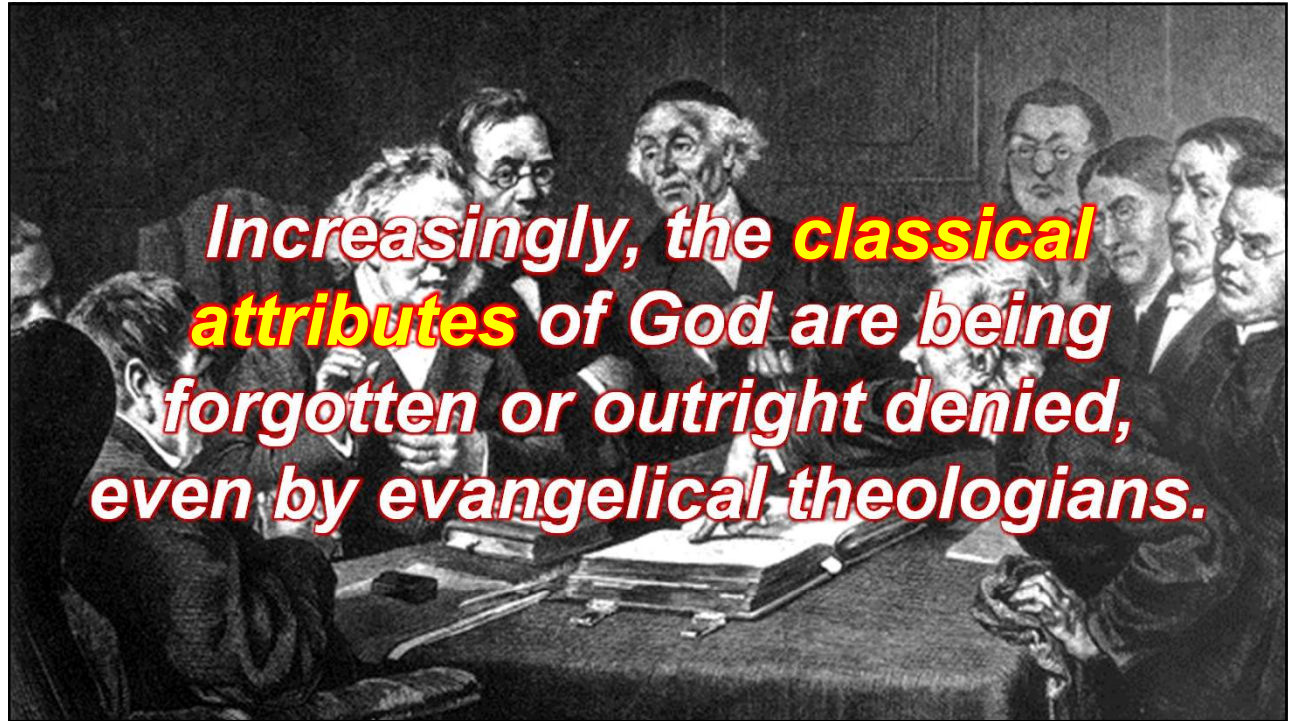
Southern Evangelical Seminary • Charlotte, NC

Past President, International Society of Christian Apologetics

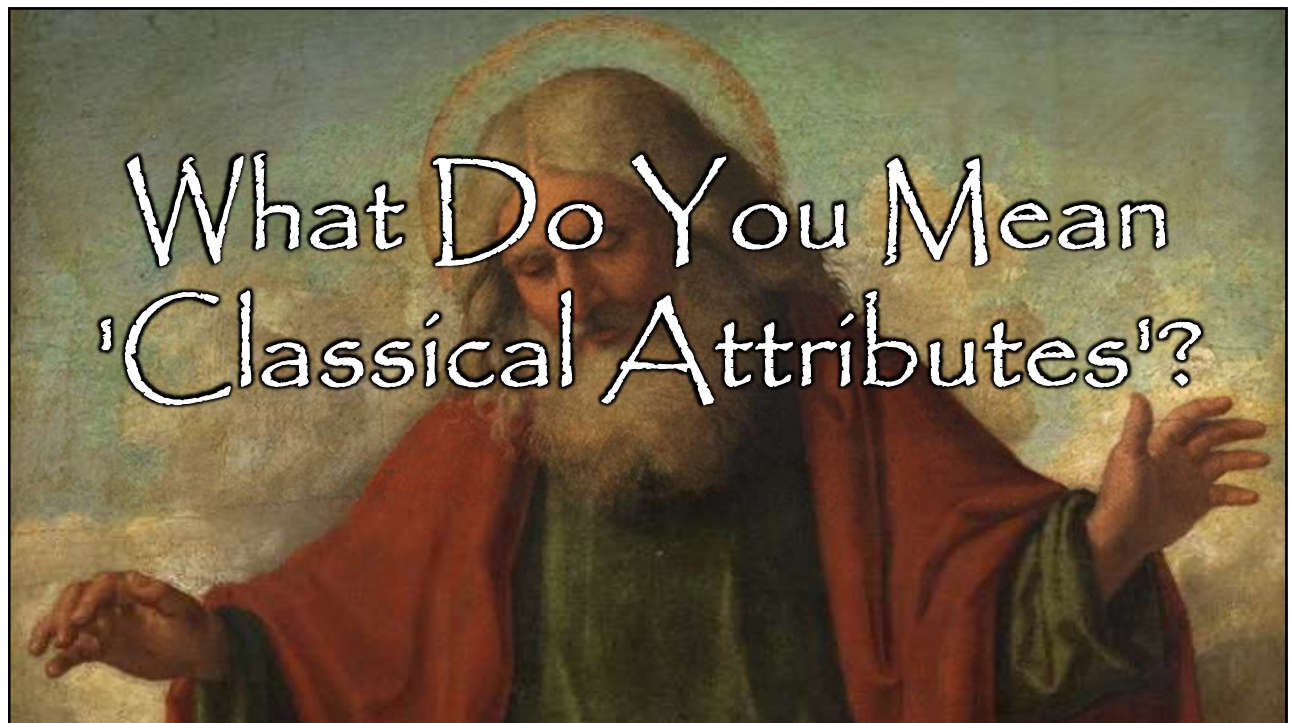








*Increasingly, the **classical attributes** of God are being forgotten or outright denied, even by evangelical theologians.*



What Do You Mean  
'Classical Attributes'?



# attributes

*characteristics of God's nature and actions known from creation and God's Word*

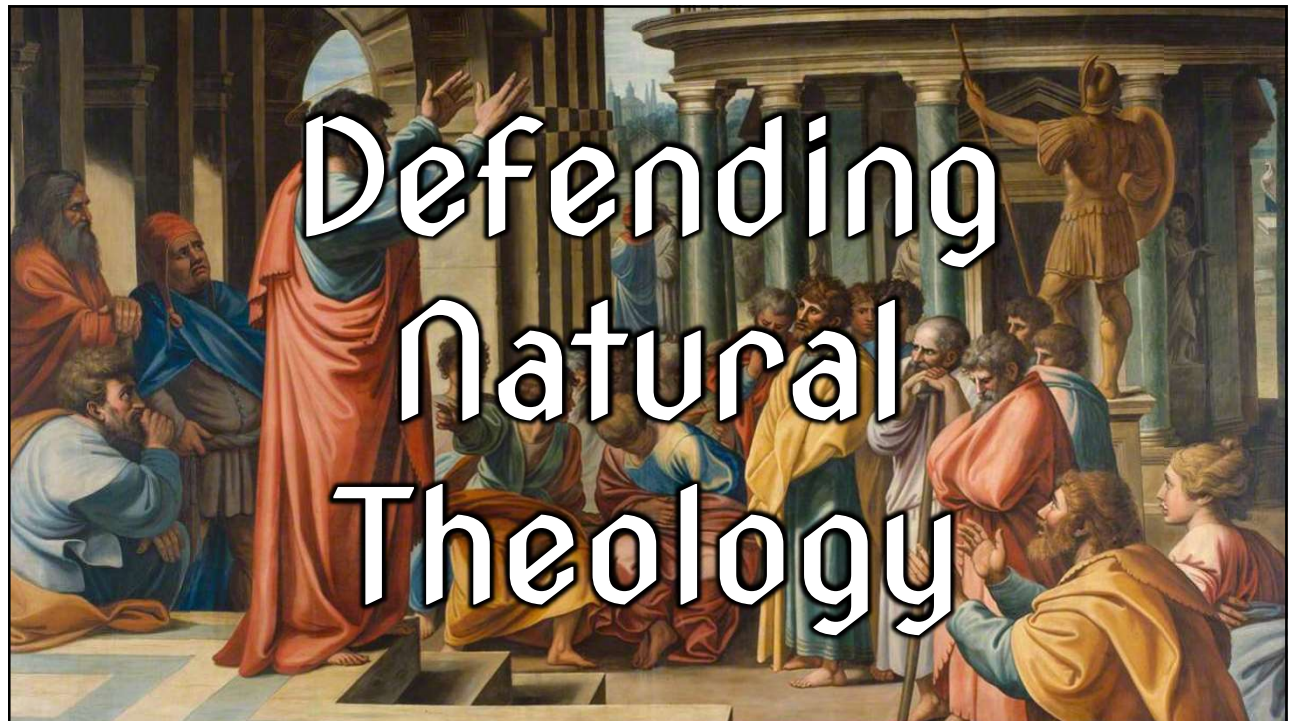
# classical

*understood along the contours of the categories of Western thinking arising from the ancient Greeks, the Christian Church Fathers, and the Medieval Scholastics*

# classical attributes

*characteristics of God's nature and actions known from creation and God's Word understood along the contours of the categories of Western thinking arising from the ancient Greeks, the Christian Church Fathers, and the Medieval Scholastics*

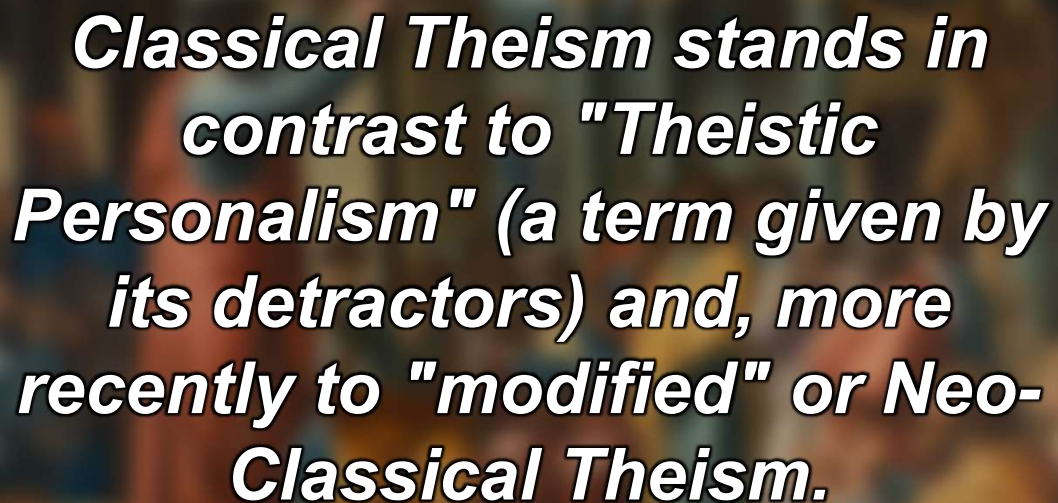
***This traditional view of the attributes of God has come to be known as "Classical Theism."***



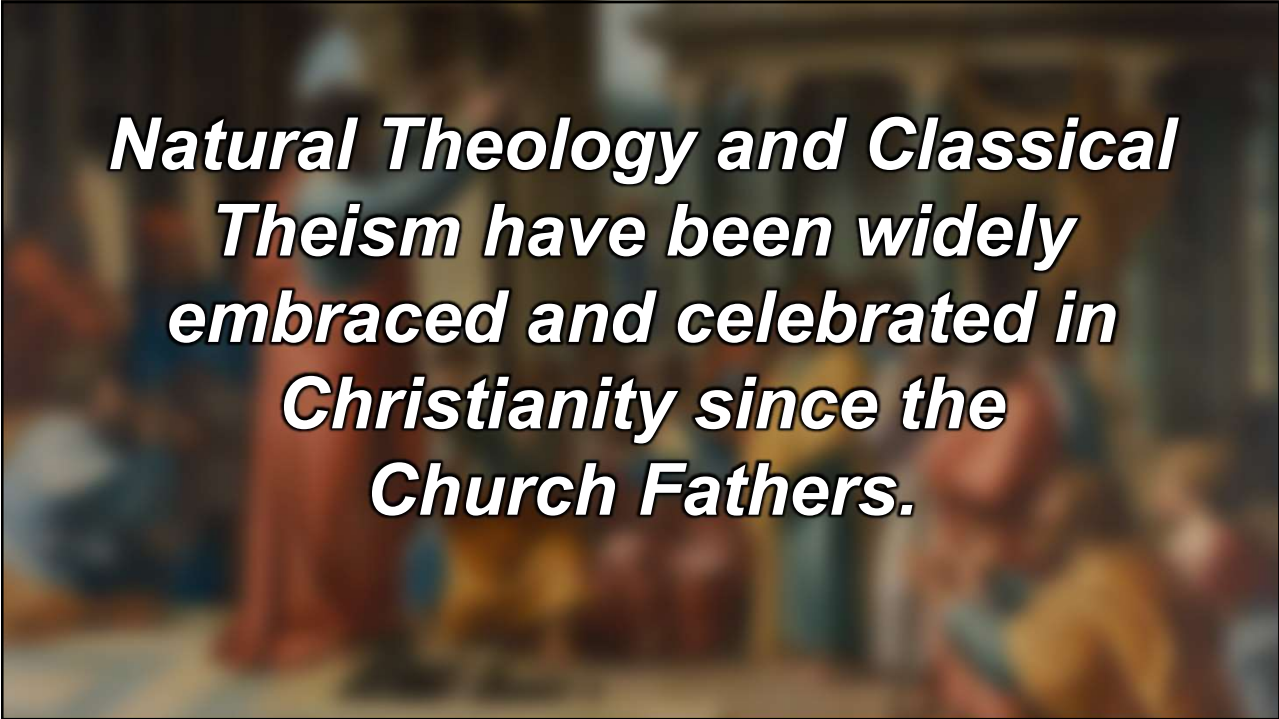




***The traditional view of the attributes of God has come to be known as "Classical Theism."***



***Classical Theism stands in contrast to "Theistic Personalism" (a term given by its detractors) and, more recently to "modified" or Neo-Classical Theism.***



***Natural Theology and Classical  
Theism have been widely  
embraced and celebrated in  
Christianity since the  
Church Fathers.***



***This celebration has continued  
in both Catholicism and  
Protestantism until today.***







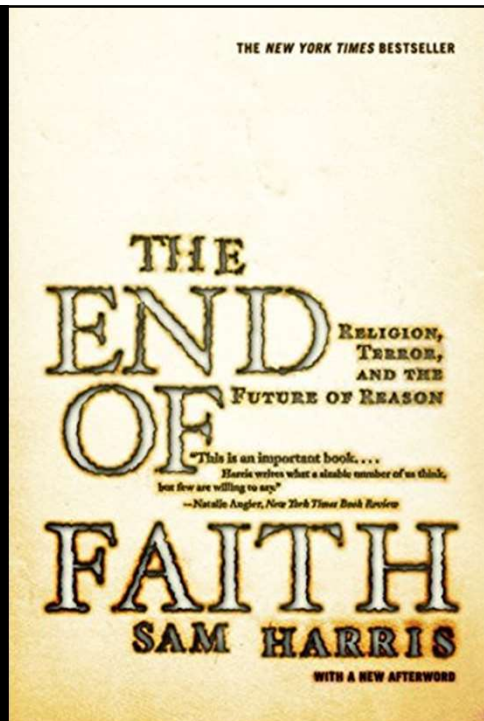
***However, the Classical Theism arising from Natural Theology (as I am describing it here) is starkly criticized in a number of circles.***

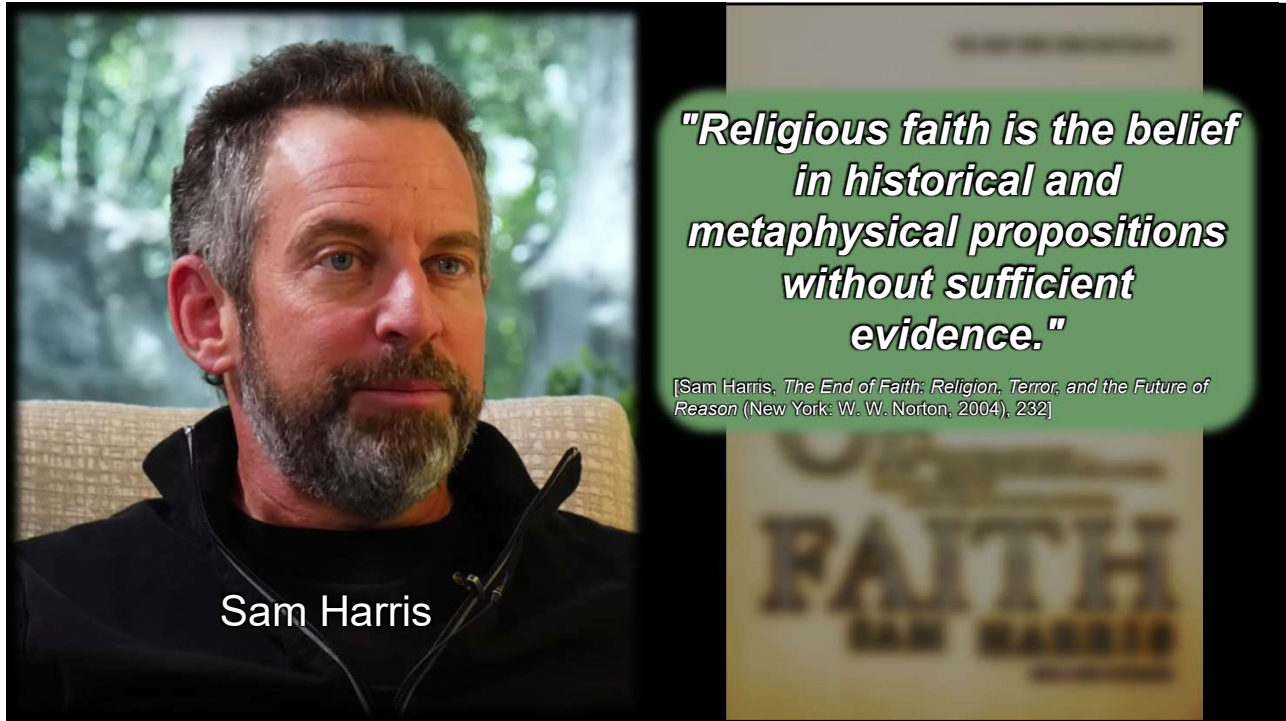


***Not surprisingly, Natural  
Theology and Classical  
Theism (indeed theism as a  
whole) is rejected  
by atheists.***



Sam Harris

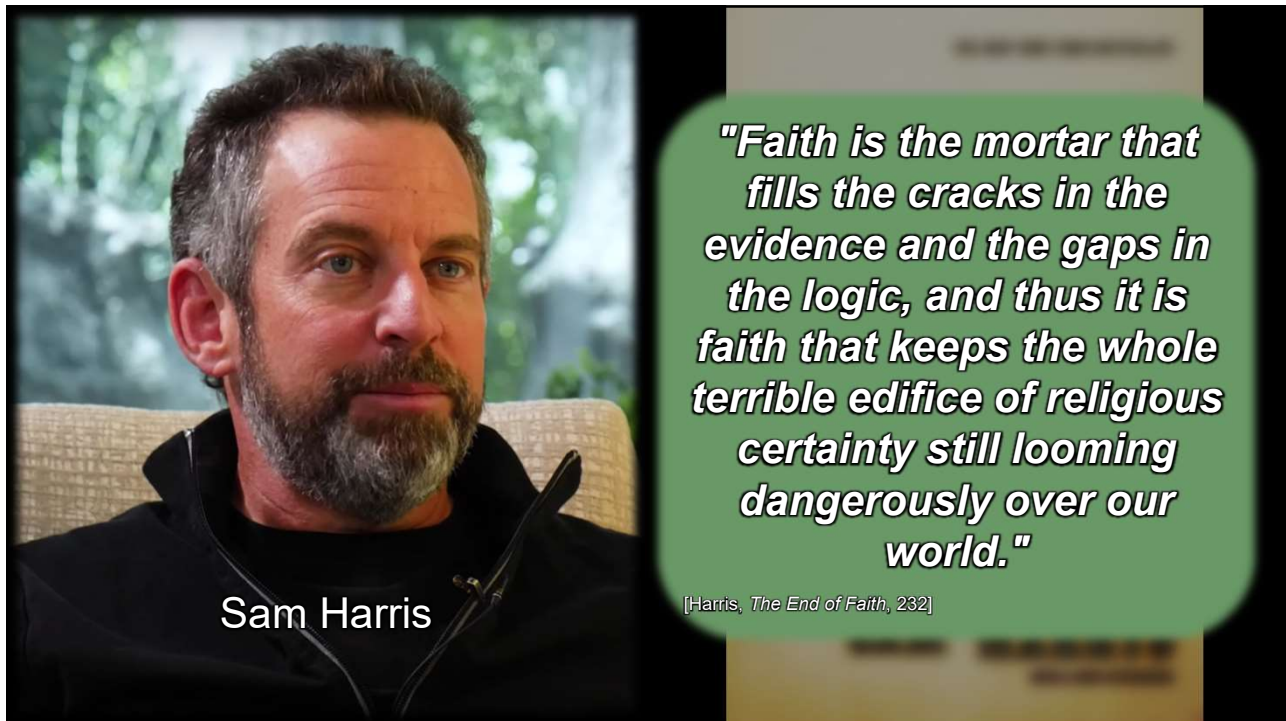




Sam Harris

***"Religious faith is the belief in historical and metaphysical propositions without sufficient evidence."***

[Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 232]



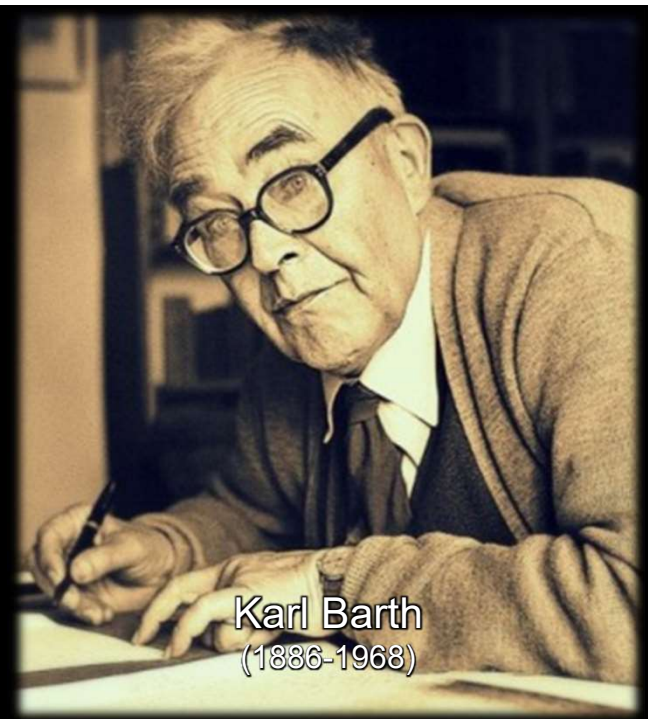
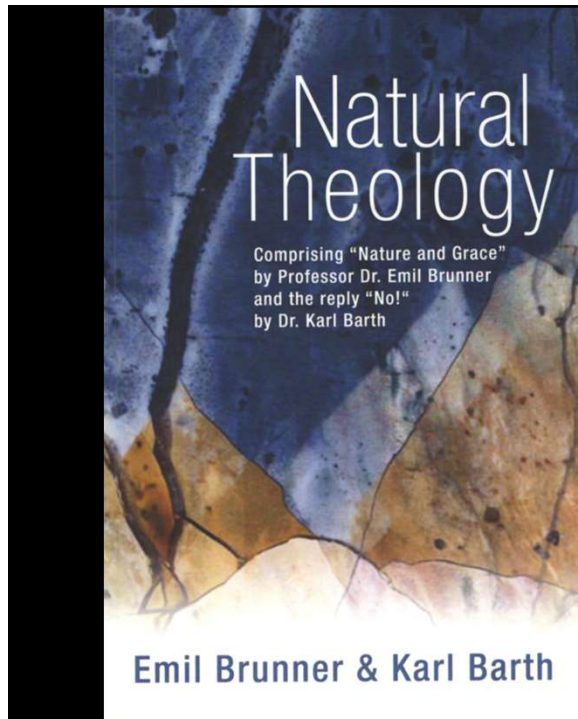
Sam Harris

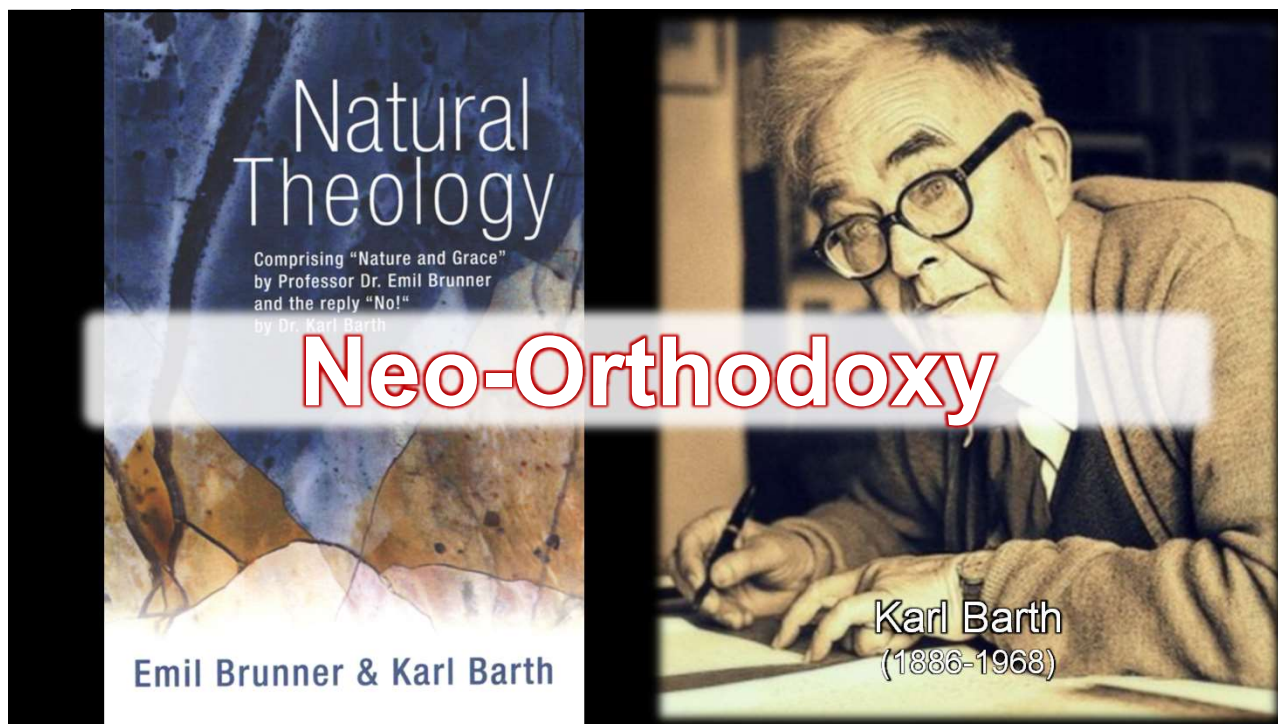
***"Faith is the mortar that fills the cracks in the evidence and the gaps in the logic, and thus it is faith that keeps the whole terrible edifice of religious certainty still looming dangerously over our world."***

[Harris, *The End of Faith*, 232]



***Nevertheless, Natural  
Theology and Classical  
Theism have had their  
detractors even within  
Christianity.***





## Neo-Orthodoxy

**"Natural Theology does not exist as an entity capable of becoming a separate subject within what I consider to be real theology—not even for the sake of being rejected.**

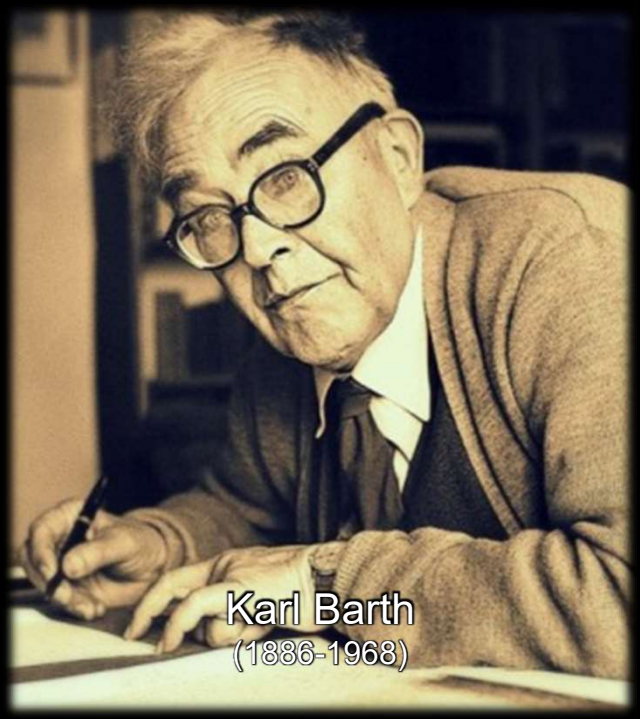
Emil Brunner & Karl Barth

Karl Barth  
(1886-1968)



**"If one occupies oneself with real theology one can pass by so-called natural theology only as one would pass by an abyss into which it is inadvisable to step if one does not want to fall.**

Emil Brunner & Karl Barth

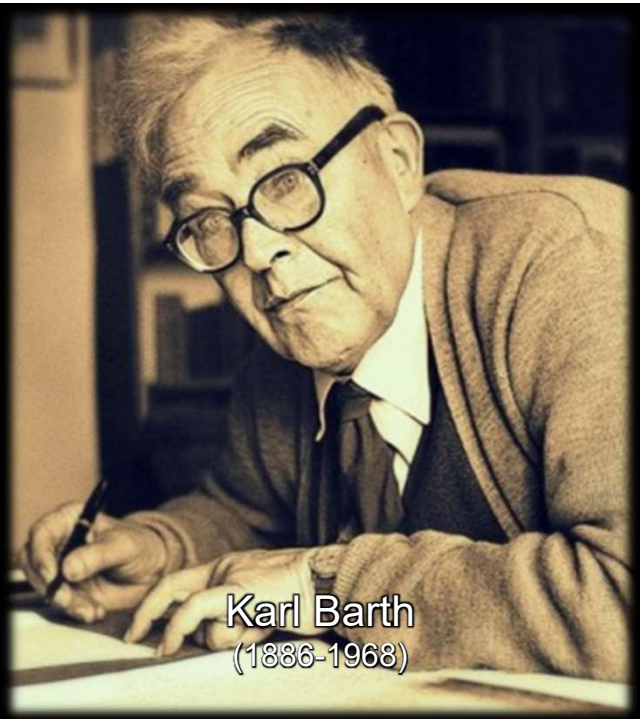


**Karl Barth**  
(1886-1968)

**"All one can do is to turn one's back upon it as upon the great temptation and source or error, by having nothing to do with it ... "**

[Karl Barth, "No!" trans. Peter Fraenkel, in *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock: 2002), 75]

Emil Brunner & Karl Barth



**Karl Barth**  
(1886-1968)

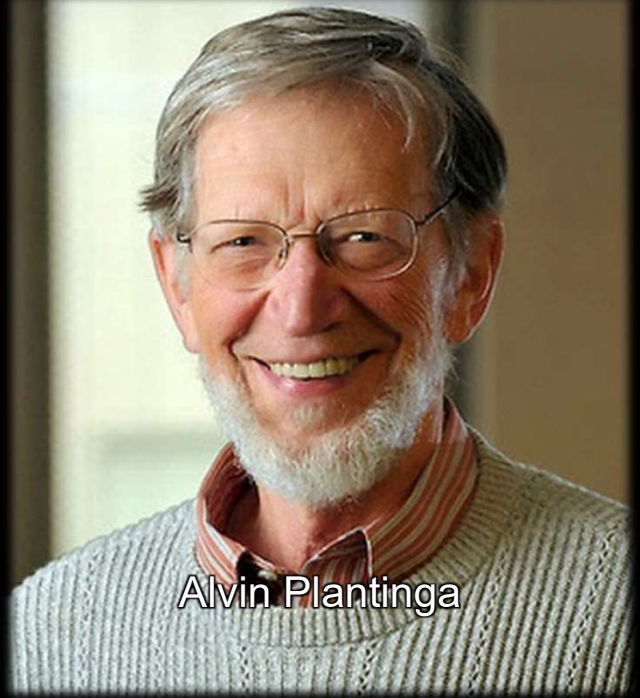
***Many Christian philosophers  
who are committed to Analytic  
Philosophy are relatively  
unsympathetic towards the  
Natural Theology of the  
Classical Philosophy approach.***

**GOD  
AND  
OTHER  
MINDS**

A Study of the  
Rational Justification  
of Belief in God

*With a new Preface by the author*

**ALVIN PLANTINGA**

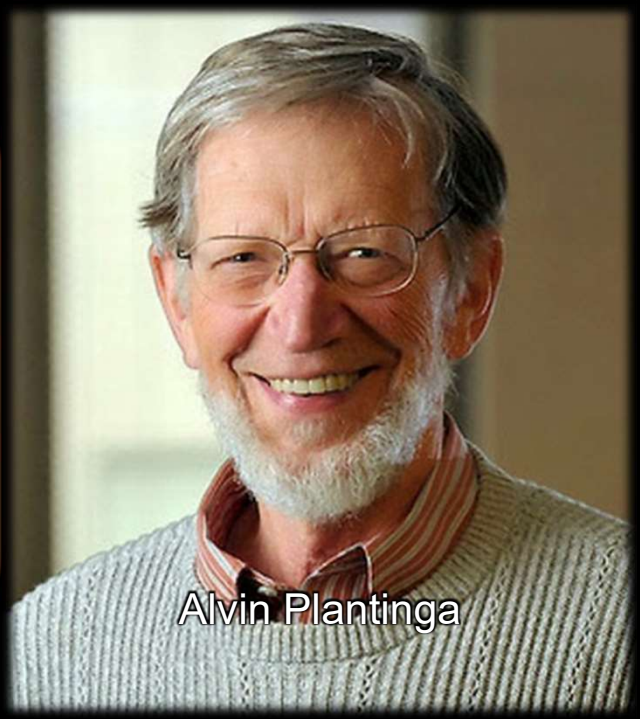


Alvin Plantinga

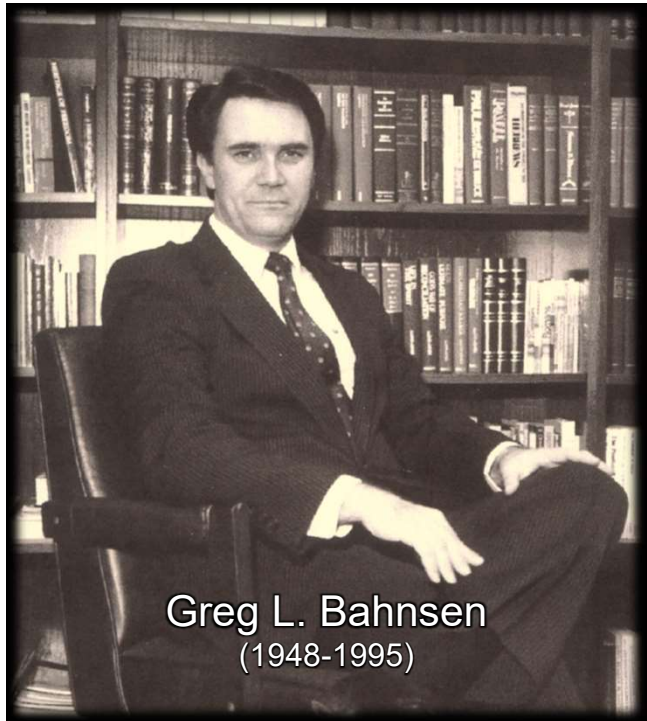
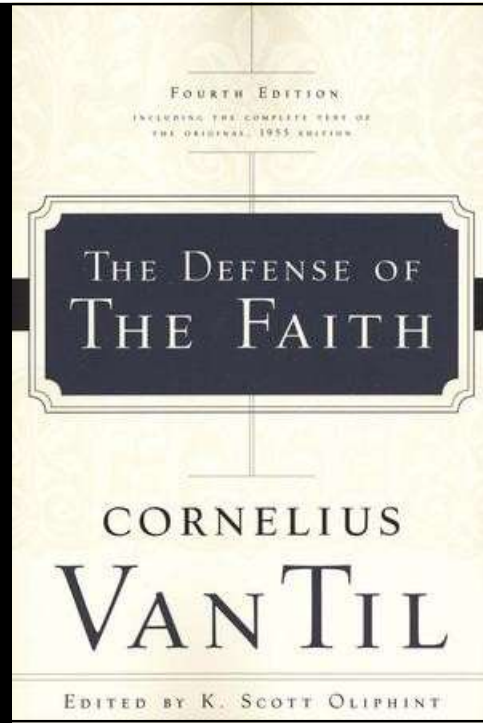


**"It is hard to avoid the conclusion that natural theology does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question with which we began: Is it rational to believe in God?"**

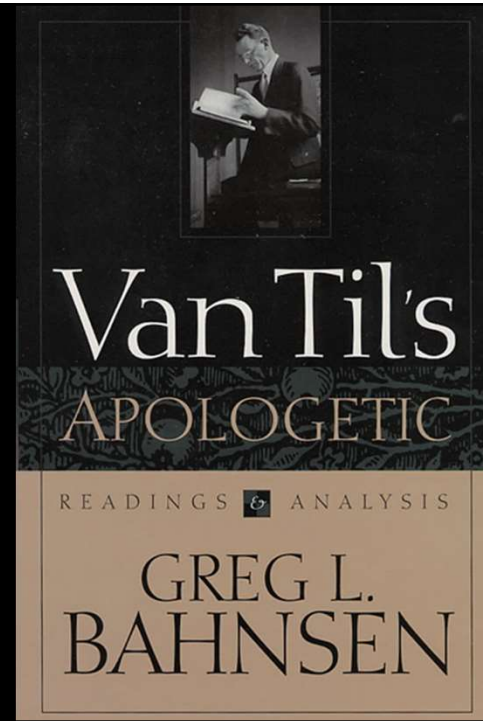
[Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967, 111)]



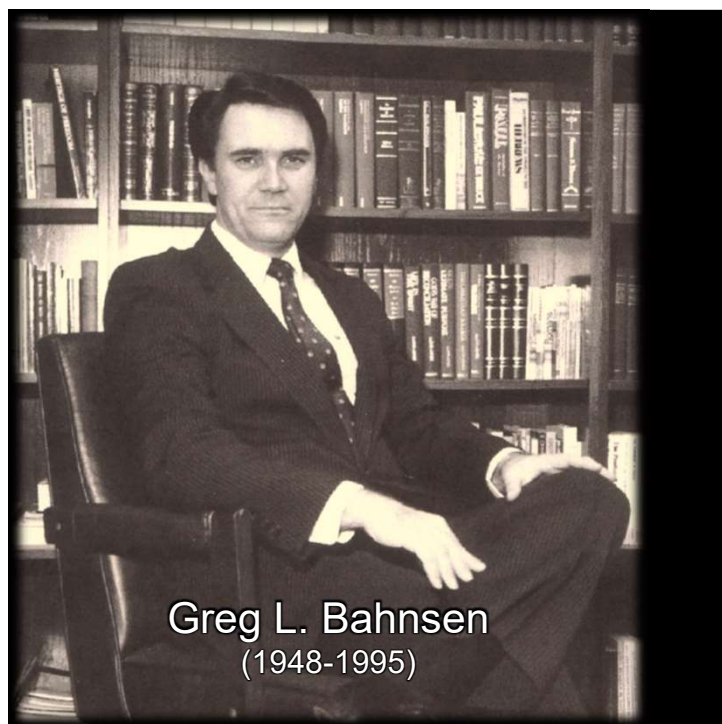
**What is more, the Natural Theology of Classical Philosophy is coming under increasingly stark criticism in certain contemporary evangelical circles.**



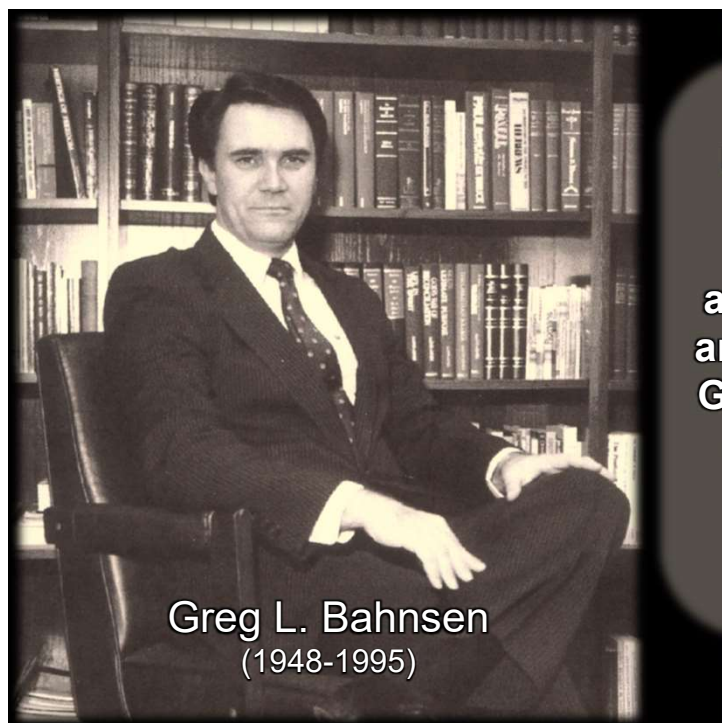
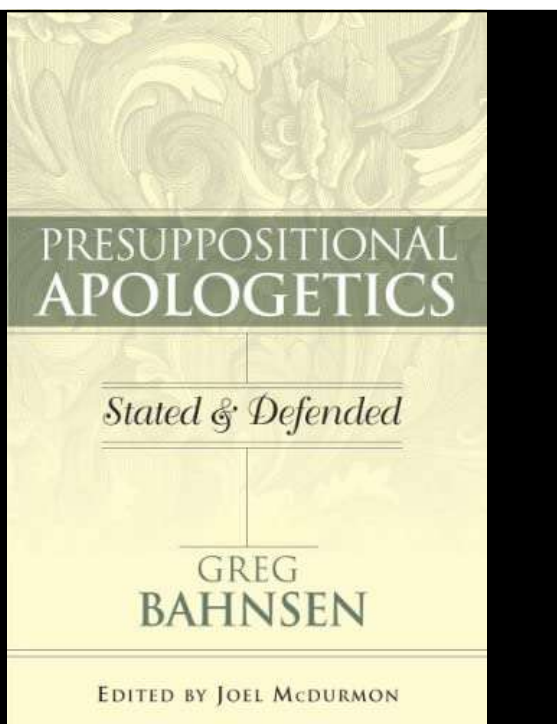
Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)





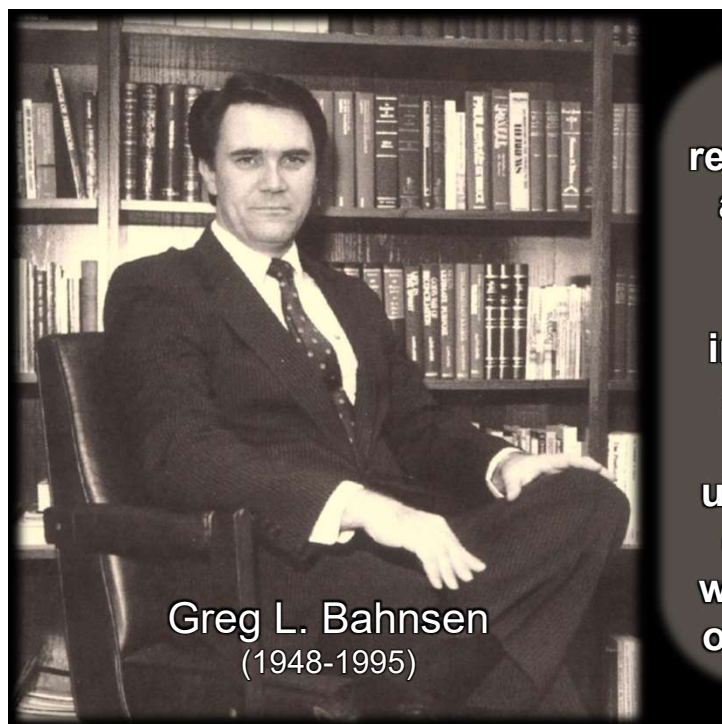


Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)



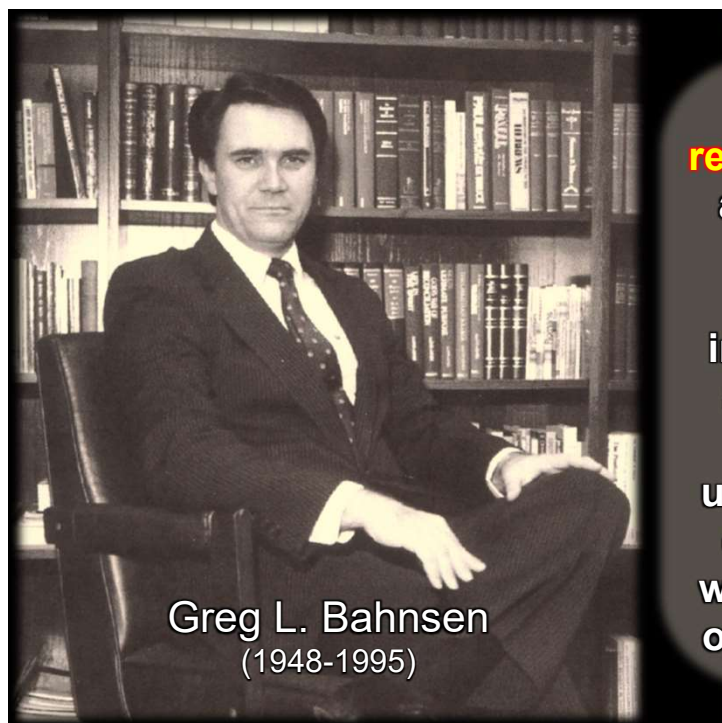
Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)

"Thinking to maintain neutrality with respect to Scripture, any natural theology that reasons autonomously *from* logical and/or empirical grounds *to* God results in an exclusion of *revelational necessity and authority* endorsing some other imperious philosophy. ...



Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)

"Because the clear revelation of God in nature's and man's constitution is suppressed in unrighteousness, it is impossible for theology or apologetics to base their efforts in a rebellious understanding of the world or history, independently working up to a verification of God's written revelation.



Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)

"Because **the clear revelation of God** in nature's and man's constitution **is suppressed in unrighteousness**, it is impossible for theology or apologetics to base their efforts in a rebellious understanding of the world or history, independently working up to a verification of God's written revelation.



Quodlibetal Blog  
Musings from Anywhere by Dr. Richard G. Howe

Sep 14

## Some Thoughts on Natural Theology and Romans 1

Recently I was brainstorming about how to explain the basics of the ways in which God has revealed Himself to mankind. My thinking arose in the context of trying to clarify for some friends how the notion of *Sola Scriptura* relates to God's revelation of Himself

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- About

Categories

- Archived
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- Areopagus Christian Study Center
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- Cross Examined
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- Grace Evangelical Society
- International Society of Christian Apologetics
- Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

***"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."***

Rom. 1:18

Apposition or not?

**"Mammals,**  
**which are warm**  
**blooded, almost**  
**always give birth**  
**to live young."**

The phrase 'which are warm blooded' is another way of saying 'mammals'.


The phrase 'which are warm blooded' stands in apposition to the term 'mammals'.

**"People in Atlanta**  
**who are not Atlanta**  
**Falcons fans often**  
**find themselves**  
**engaging in fun**  
**rivalries at Sunday**  
**evening church."**

The phrase 'who are not Atlanta Falcons fans' is not another way of saying 'people in Atlanta'.

Instead, the phrase 'who are not Atlanta Falcons fans' is a subset of 'people in Atlanta'.



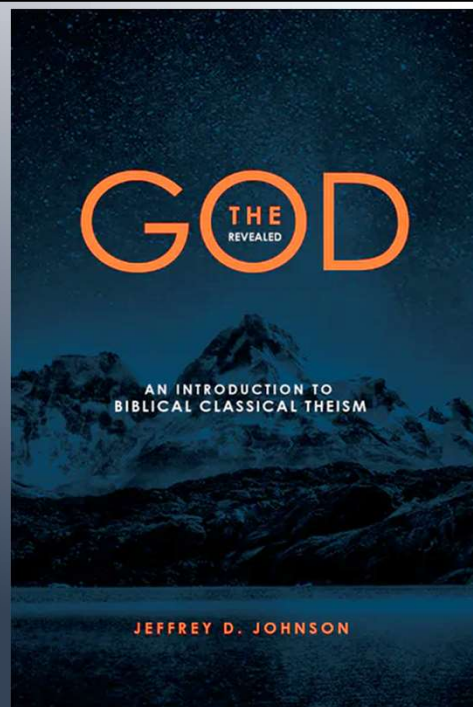
- 
- ❖ knew God (v. 21)
  - ❖ did not glorify Him as God (v. 21)
  - ❖ were not thankful (v. 21)
  - ❖ became futile in their thoughts (v. 21)
  - ❖ foolish hearts were darkened (v. 21)
  - ❖ became fools (v. 22)
  - ❖ changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things (v. 23)
  - ❖ were given up by God to uncleanness (v. 24)
  - ❖ dishonored their bodies among themselves (v. 24)
  - ❖ exchanged the truth of God for a lie (v. 25)
  - ❖ worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator (v. 25)
  - ❖ were given over by God to vile passions
  - ❖ women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature (v. 26)
  - ❖ men left the natural use of the woman; burned in lust for one another (v. 27)
  - ❖ did not like to retain God in their knowledge (v. 28)

***Much of this criticism arises from a growing animus toward any role that philosophy is said to play in developing and defending the contents of Natural Theology.***

***This animus is almost always directed toward the philosophy grounded in the classical tradition of Aristotle through Aquinas.***



Jeffrey D. Johnson







Jeffrey D. Johnson

**"Within the Christian tradition, there arose two versions of Classical Theism .... One version looks to both pagan philosophy and Scripture for its model of God, while the other version rejects pagan philosophy and relies on God's revelation alone. ... Greek philosophy is a faulty foundation for knowledge because it is built on the autonomous and contradictory notions of man's wisdom."**

[Jeffrey D. Johnson, *The Revealed God: An Introduction to Biblical Classical Theism* (Greenbrier: Free Grace Press, 2023), 17, 18]

Pythagoras was an ancient Greek "pagan" mathematician. Does this give us reason to doubt the truth of the Pythagorean Theorem?

Tacitus was an ancient Roman "pagan" historian. Should this call into question the reliability of his *Annals of Imperial Rome*?

The truth is, Johnson's use of the term 'pagan', while technically accurate, is nevertheless tendentious and constitutes an *ad hominem* fallacy.

**"Within the Christian tradition, there arose two versions of Classical Theism .... One version looks to both pagan philosophy and Scripture for its model of God, while the other version rejects pagan philosophy and relies on God's revelation alone. ... Greek philosophy is a faulty foundation for knowledge because it is built on the autonomous and contradictory notions of man's wisdom."**

[Jeffrey D. Johnson, *The Revealed God: An Introduction to Biblical Classical Theism* (Greenbrier: Free Grace Press, 2023), 17, 18]

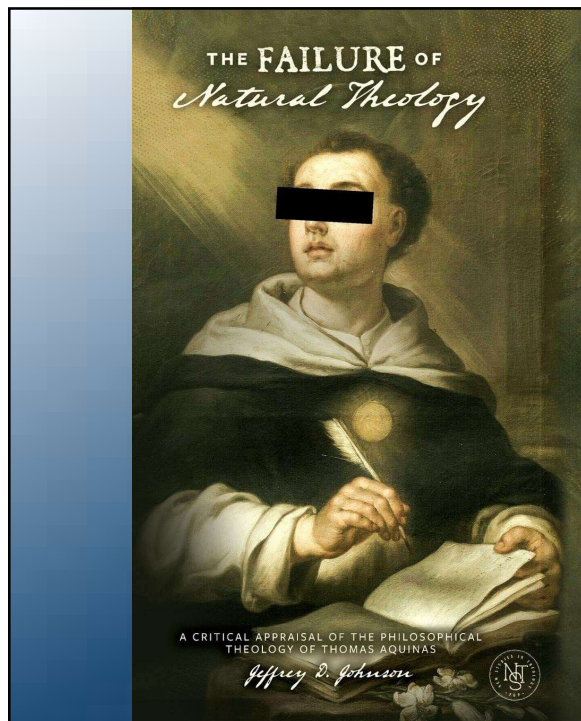
The buzzword 'autonomous' is another tendentious term.

It masquerades as an careful conclusion regarding the epistemological issues at hand.

Instead, it is a Presuppositionalist talking point that has little to nothing to do with a conscientious philosophical examination of the dispute over the Classical theory of knowledge .

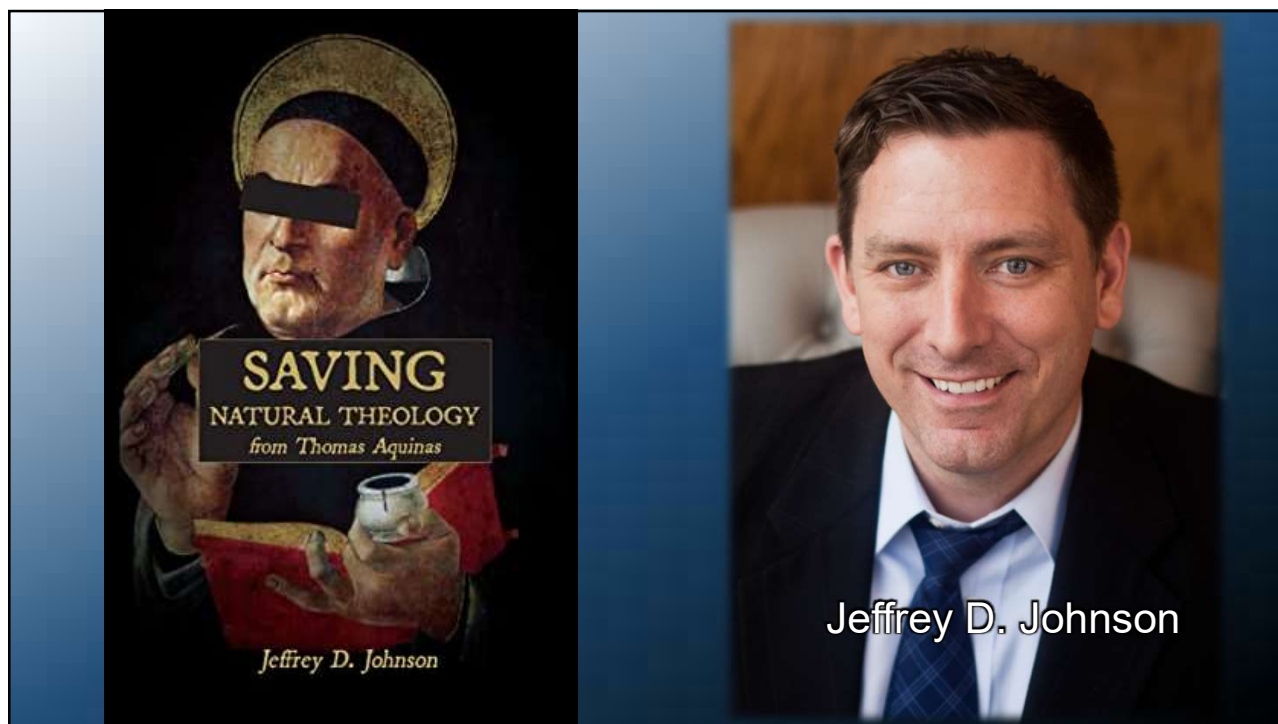
**"Within the Christian tradition, there arose two versions of Classical Theism .... One version looks to both pagan philosophy and Scripture for it model of God, while the other version rejects pagan philosophy and relies on God's revelation alone. ... Greek philosophy is a faulty foundation for knowledge because it is built on the **autonomous** and contradictory notions of man's wisdom."**

[Jeffrey D. Johnson, *The Revealed God: An Introduction to Biblical Classical Theism* (Greenbrier: Free Grace Press, 2023), 17, 18]



Jeffrey D. Johnson



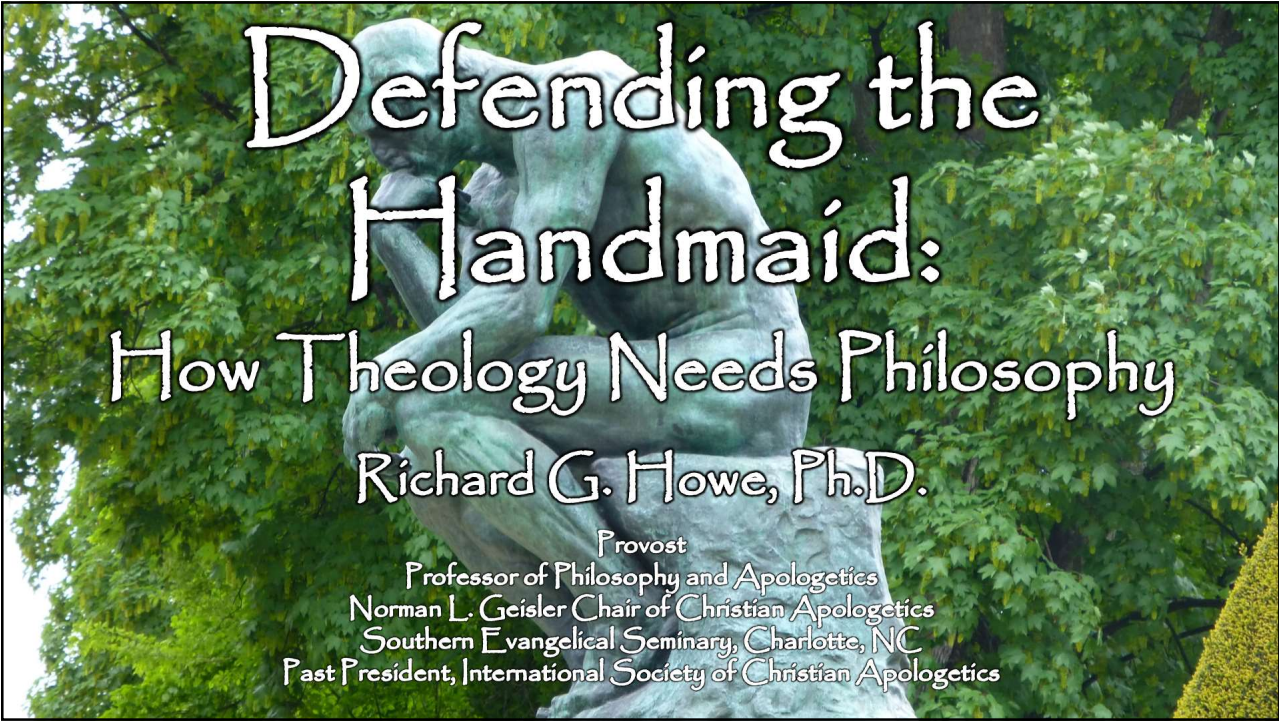
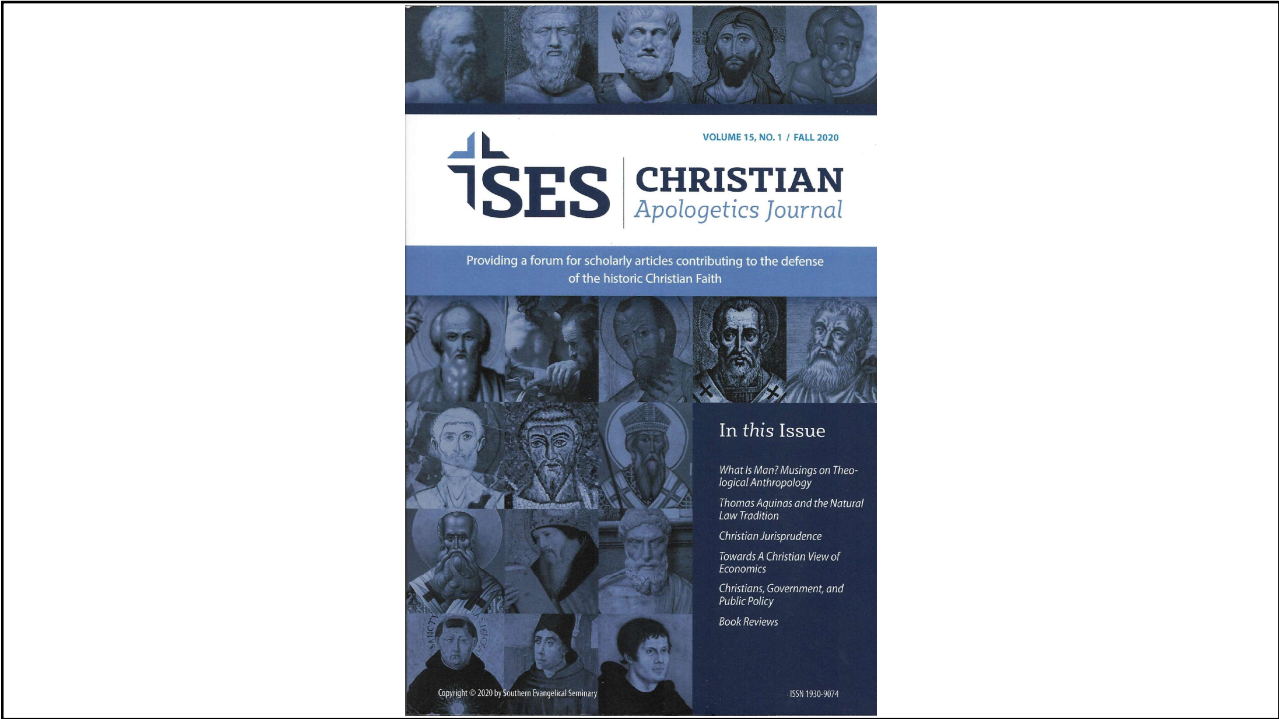


**Evangelical Philosophical Society**  
**Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel**  
**Nov. 15-17, 2022**

**"Saving Natural Theology  
from Jeffrey Johnson"**

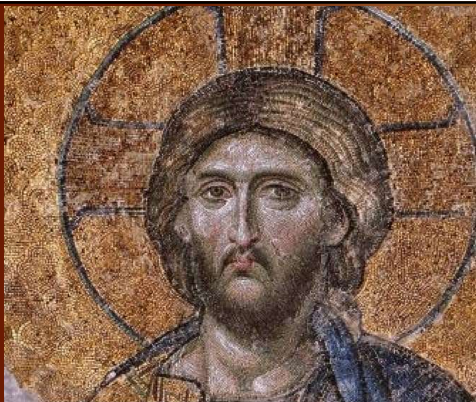
**Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.**

**Tues. Nov. 15, 2022 @ 4:30 PM**  
**Evangelical Philosophical Society B2**  
**Tower Building - Mezzanine Level Gold**



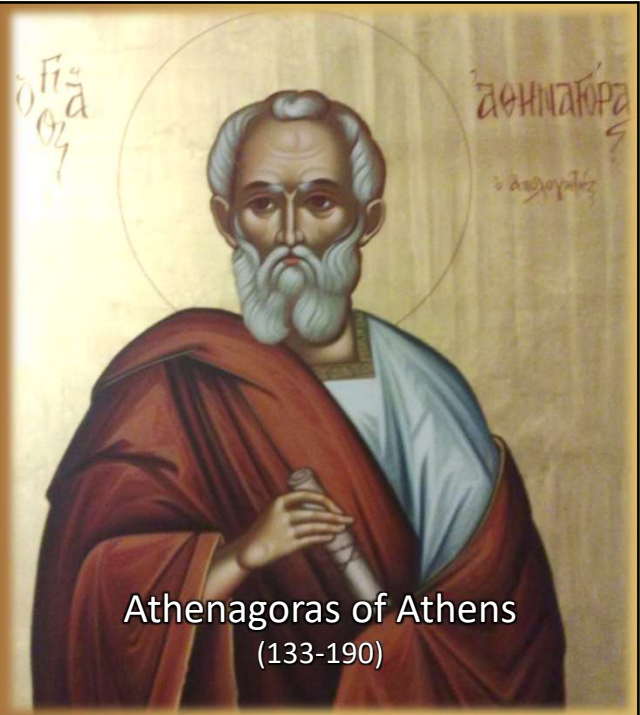


# *Some Voices from Christian History on Philosophy*



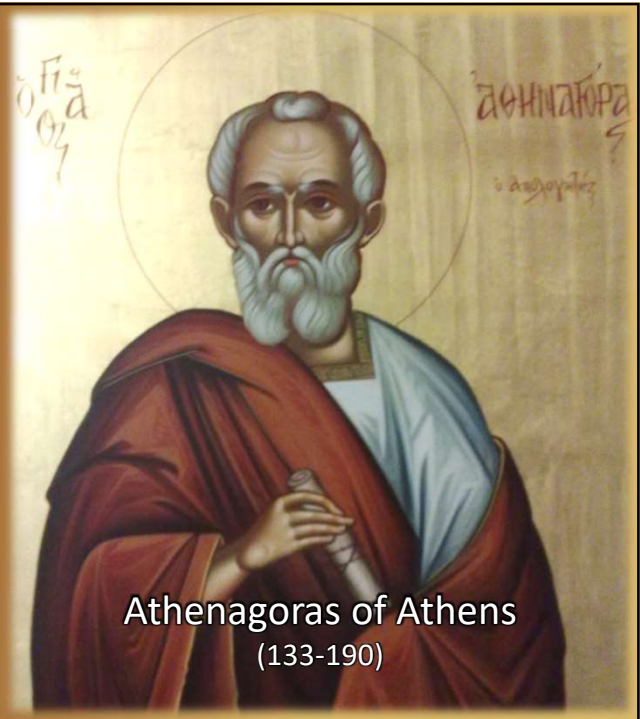
**A PLEA FOR THE  
CHRISTIANS**

ATHENAGORAS OF ATHENS



Athenagoras of Athens  
(133-190)

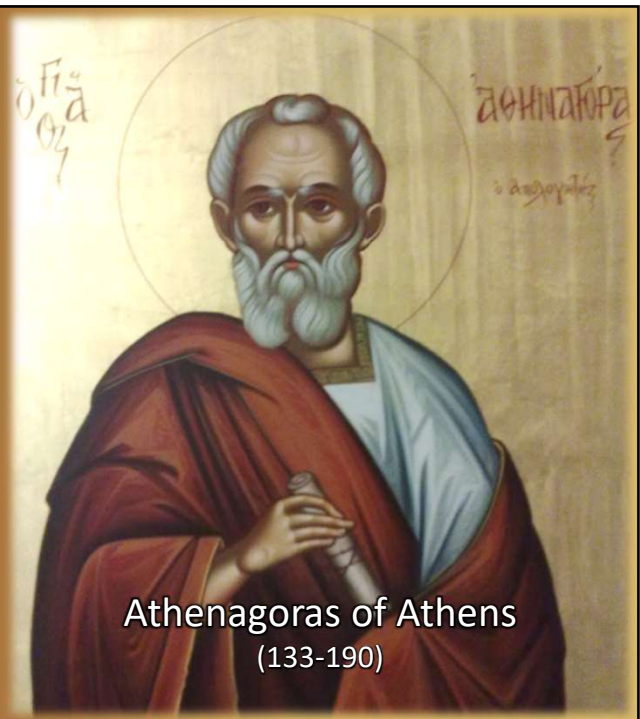
***"Since, therefore, the unity of the Deity is confessed by almost all [of these philosophers], even against their will, when they come to treat of the first principles of the universe, and we in our turn likewise assert that He who arranged this universe is God —***



Athenagoras of Athens  
(133-190)

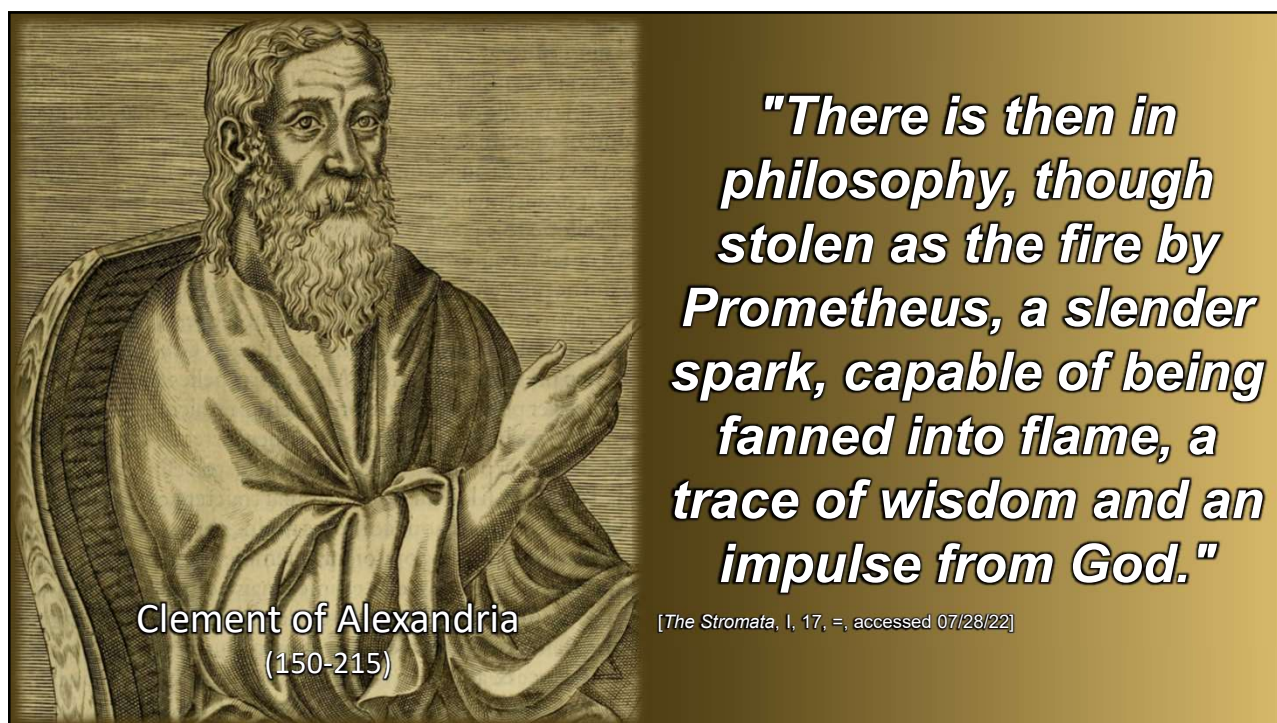
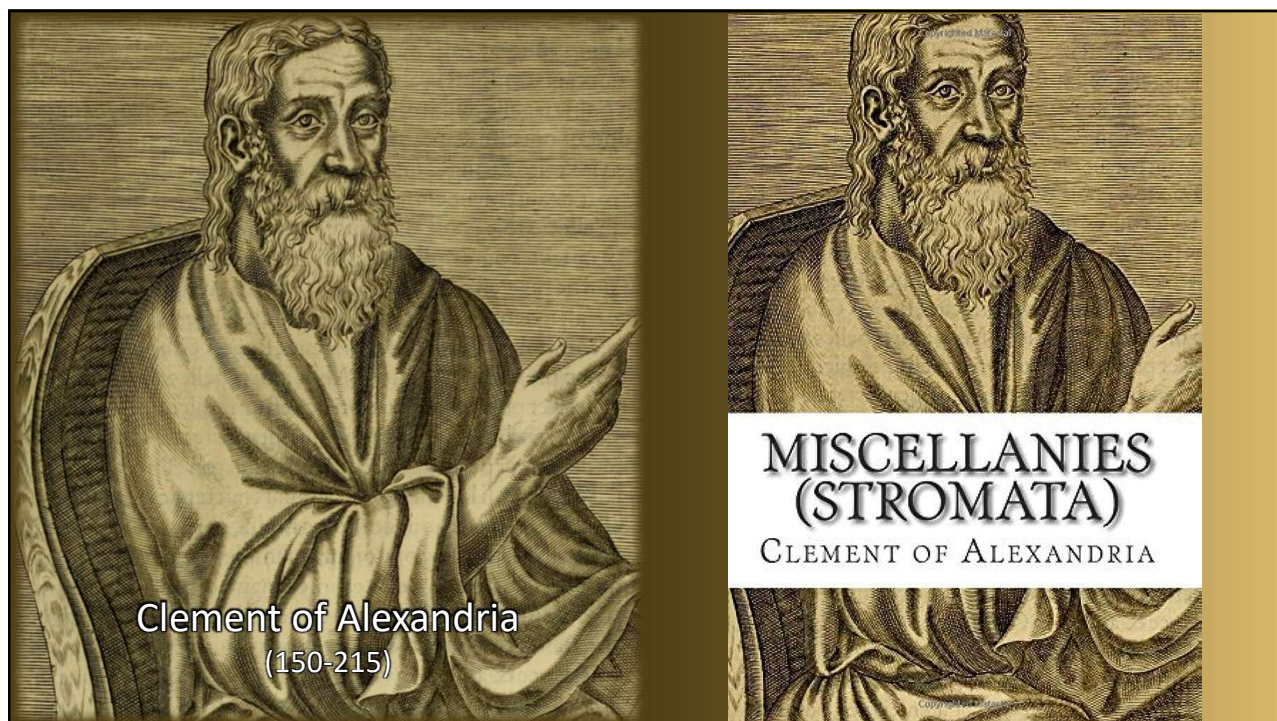
***why is it that they can say and write with impunity what they please concerning the Deity, but that against us a law lies in force, though we are able to demonstrate what we apprehend and justly believe, namely that there is one God, with proofs and reason accordant with truth?"***

[ A Plea for the Christians, 7, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0205.htm>, accessed 07/24/23]

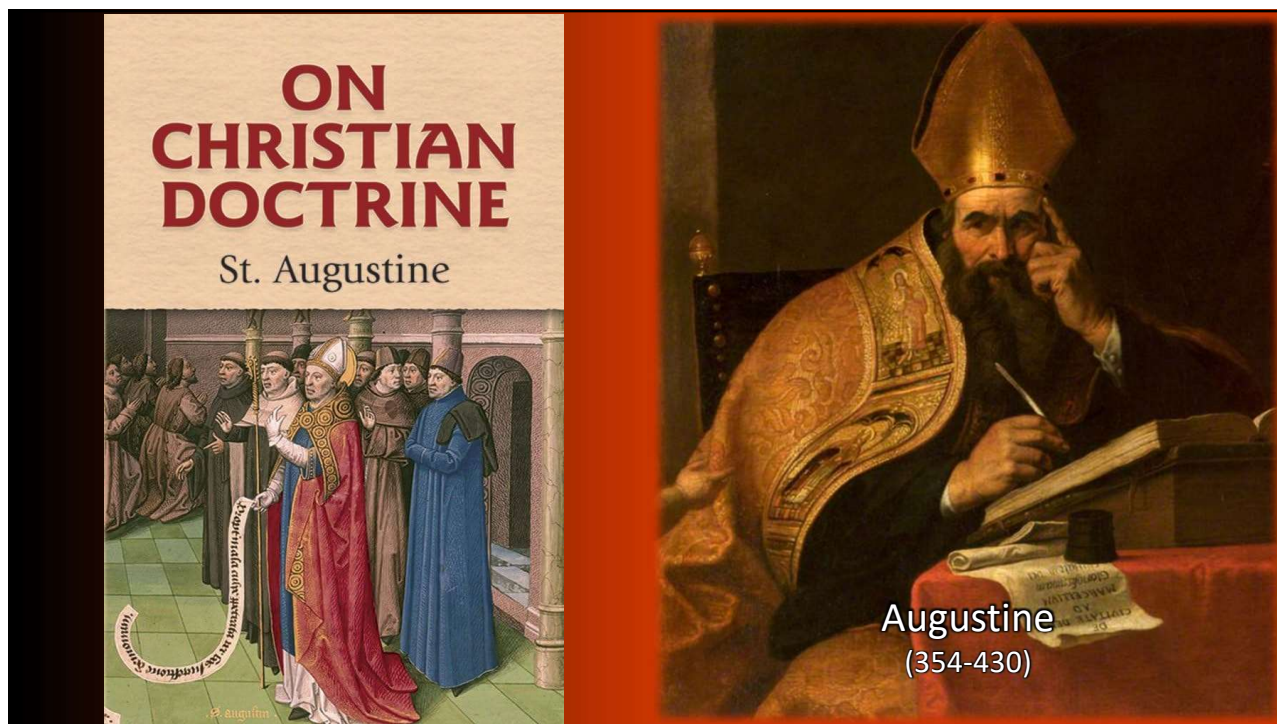


Athenagoras of Athens  
(133-190)





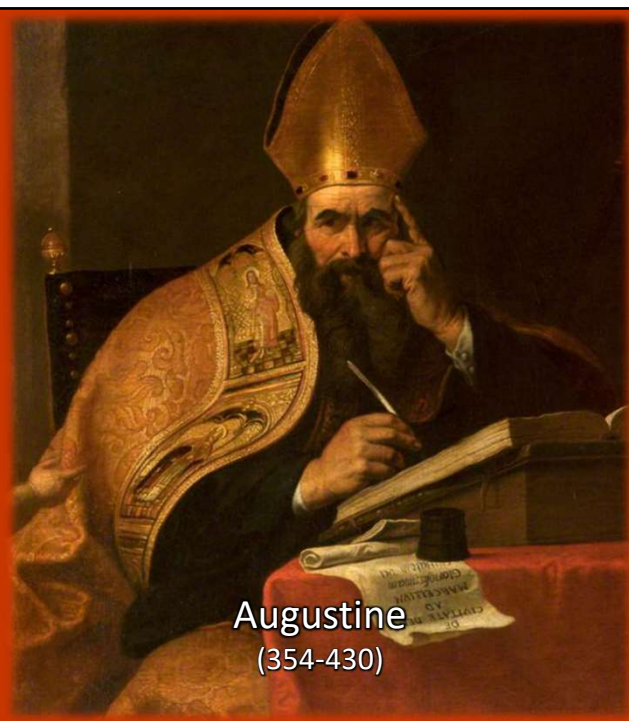




Augustine  
(354-430)

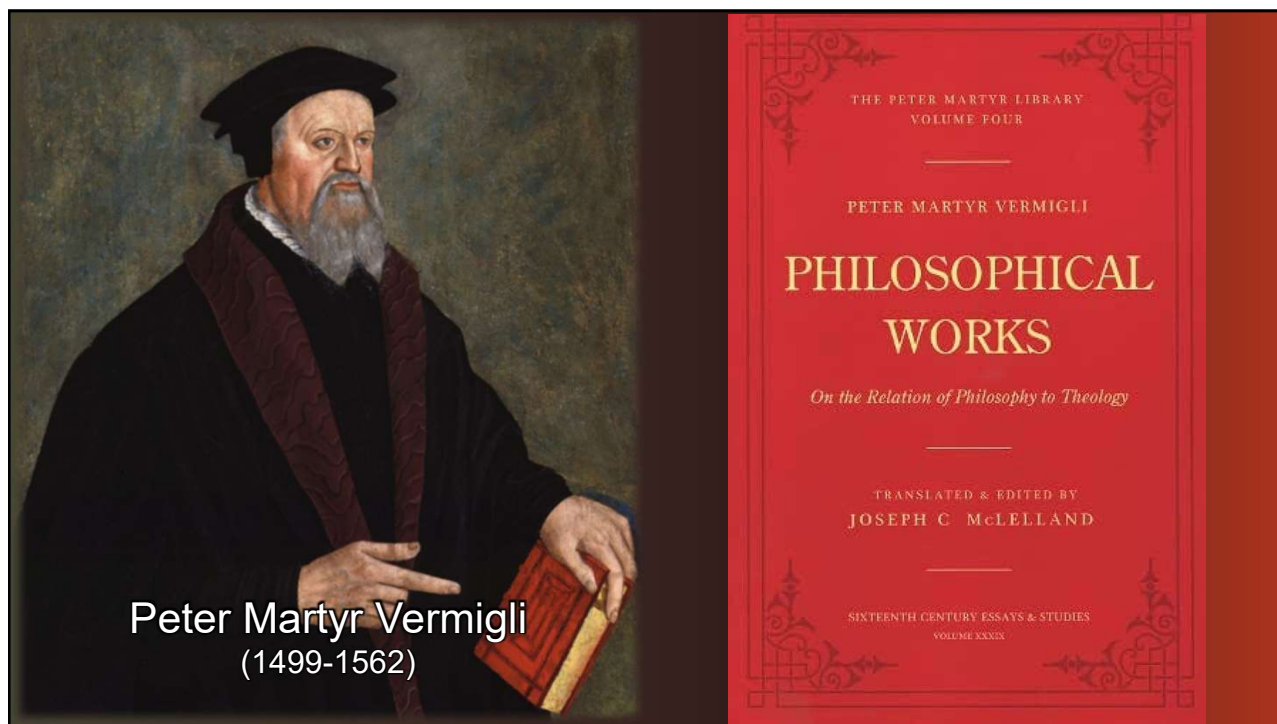
**"Moreover, if those who are called philosophers, and especially the Platonists, have said aught that is true and in harmony with our faith, we are not only not to shrink from it, but to claim it for our own use from those who have unlawful possession of it."**

[Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. from *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Book 2, Chap. 40, §60.  
From <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/ddc2.html>, accessed 07/28/22]

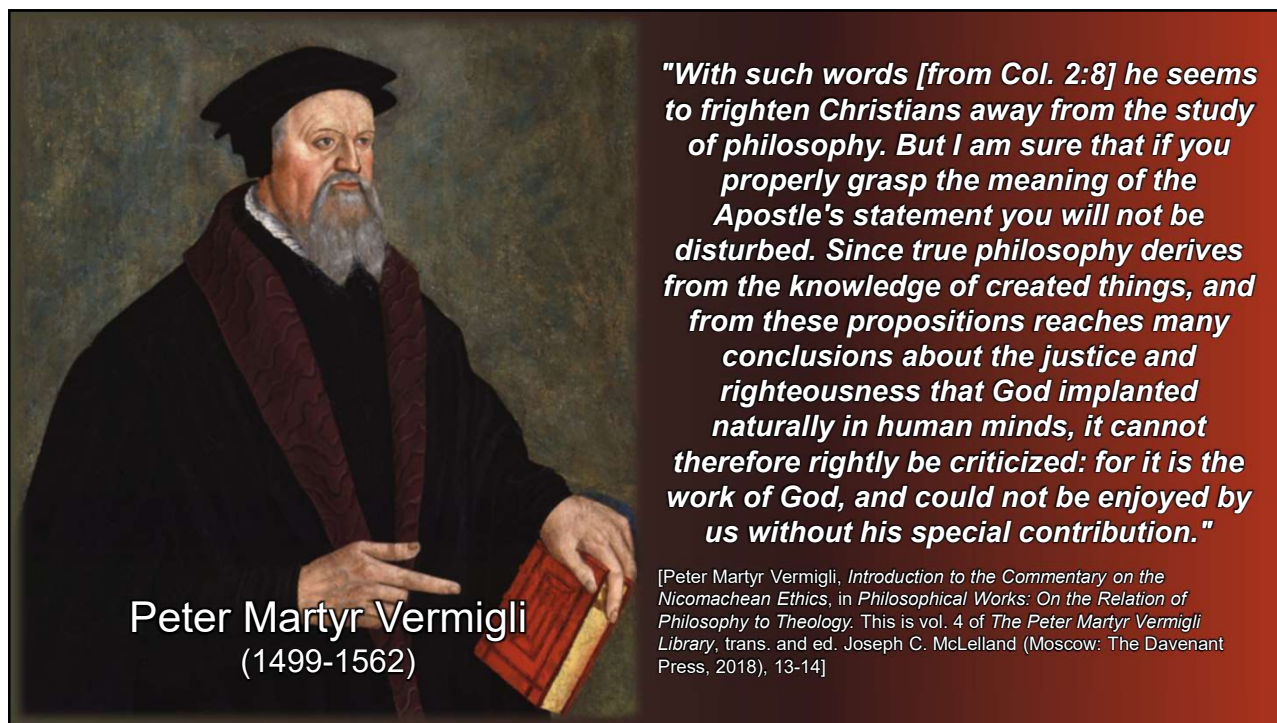


Augustine  
(354-430)





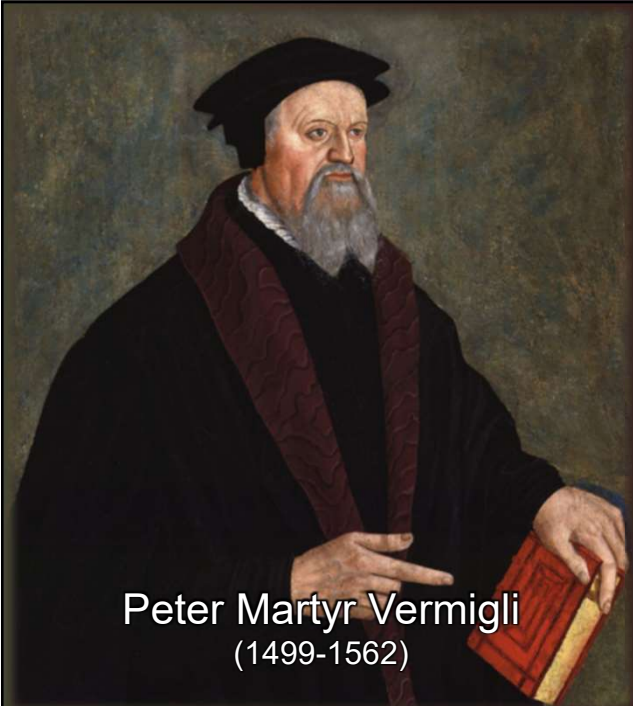
Peter Martyr Vermigli  
(1499-1562)



Peter Martyr Vermigli  
(1499-1562)

***"With such words [from Col. 2:8] he seems to frighten Christians away from the study of philosophy. But I am sure that if you properly grasp the meaning of the Apostle's statement you will not be disturbed. Since true philosophy derives from the knowledge of created things, and from these propositions reaches many conclusions about the justice and righteousness that God implanted naturally in human minds, it cannot therefore rightly be criticized: for it is the work of God, and could not be enjoyed by us without his special contribution."***

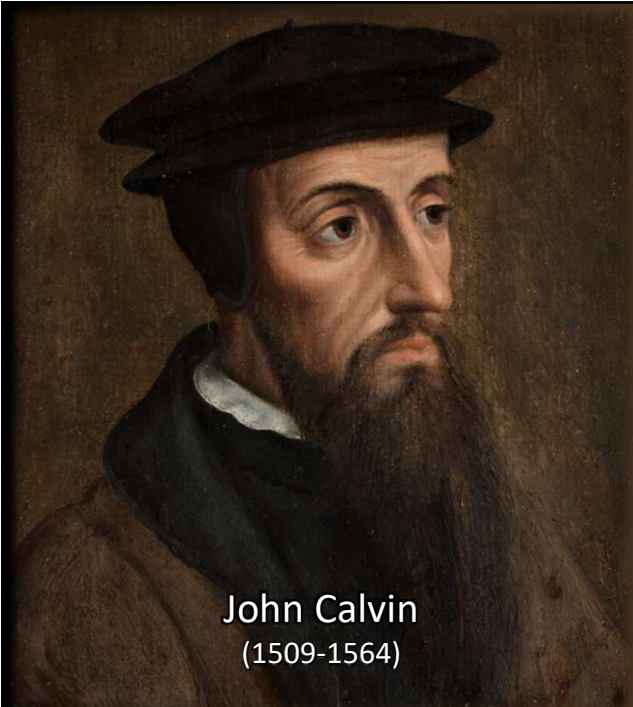
[Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Introduction to the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, in *Philosophical Works: On the Relation of Philosophy to Theology*. This is vol. 4 of *The Peter Martyr Vermigli Library*, trans. and ed. Joseph C. McLelland (Moscow: The Davenant Press, 2018), 13-14]



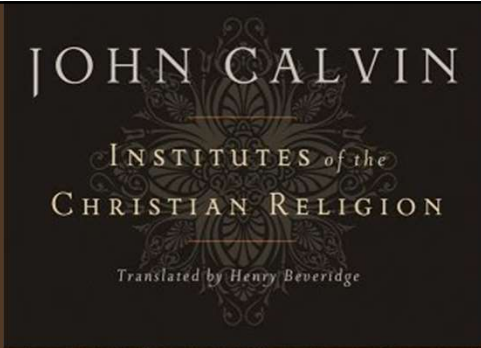
**Peter Martyr Vermigli**  
(1499-1562)

***"The goal of philosophy is that we reach that beatitude or happiness which can be acquired in this life by human powers, while the goal of Christian devotion is that the image in which we are created in righteousness and holiness of truth be renewed in us, so that we grow daily in the knowledge of God until we are led to see him as he is, with face uncovered."***


[Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Introduction to the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, 15]



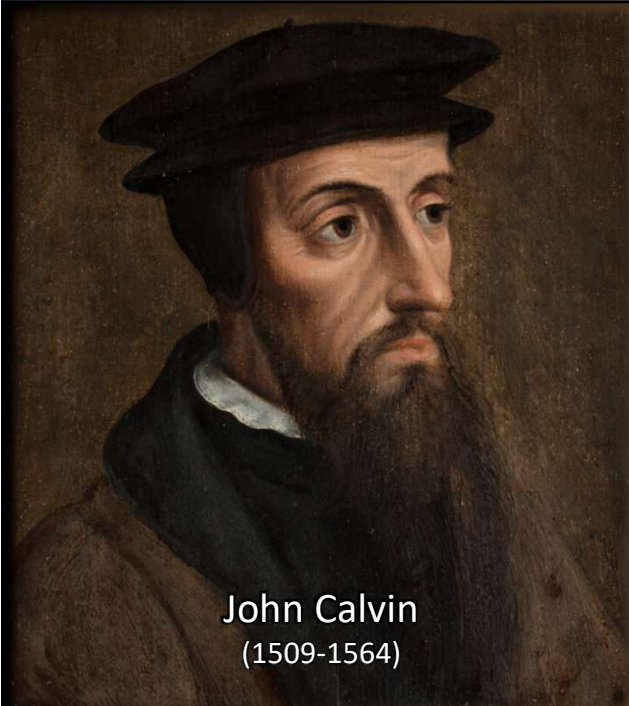
**John Calvin**  
(1509-1564)



**JOHN CALVIN**  
INSTITUTES of the  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION  
*Translated by Henry Beveridge*



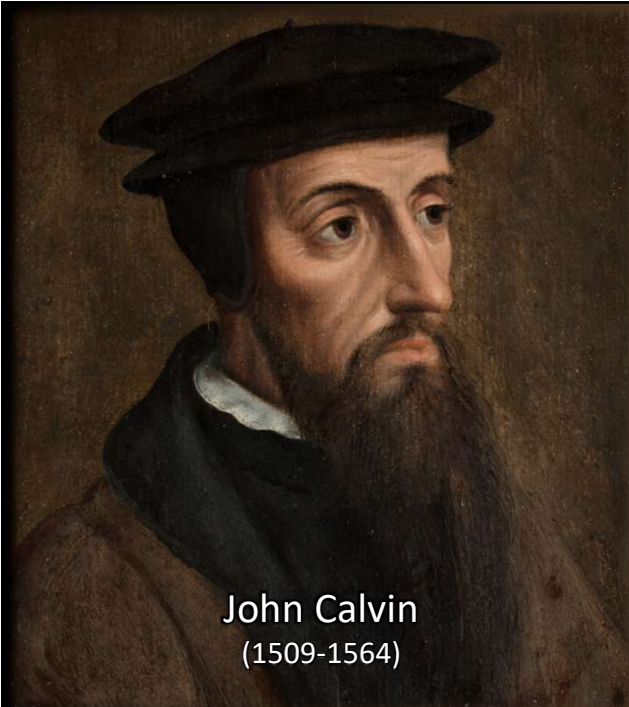


A portrait of John Calvin, a bearded man wearing a black cap and a dark robe with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right.

**John Calvin**  
(1509-1564)

**"But if the Lord has been pleased to assist us by the works and ministry of the ungodly in physics, dialectics, mathematics, and other similar sciences, let us avail ourselves of it, lest, by neglecting the gifts of God spontaneously offered to us, we be justly punished for our sloth."**

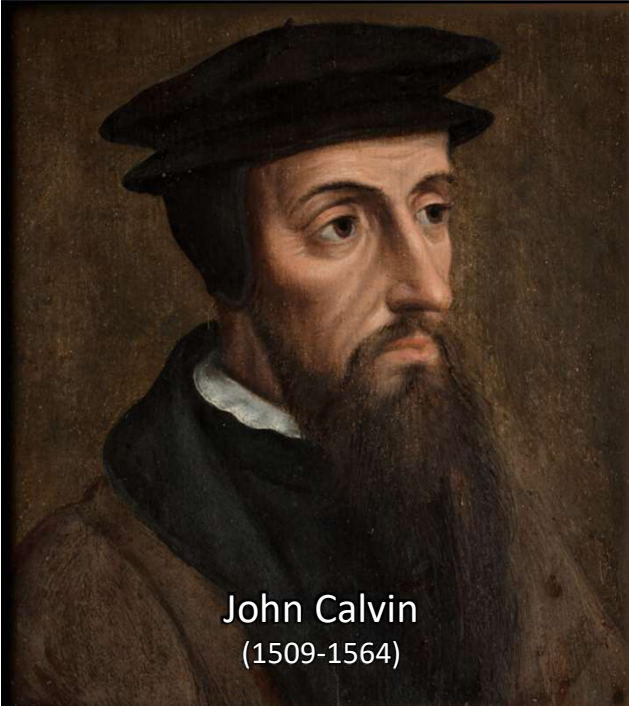
[John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.2.16, 2 vols., trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 236-237]

A portrait of John Calvin, a bearded man wearing a black cap and a dark robe with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right.

**John Calvin**  
(1509-1564)

**"Therefore in reading the profane authors, the admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator."**

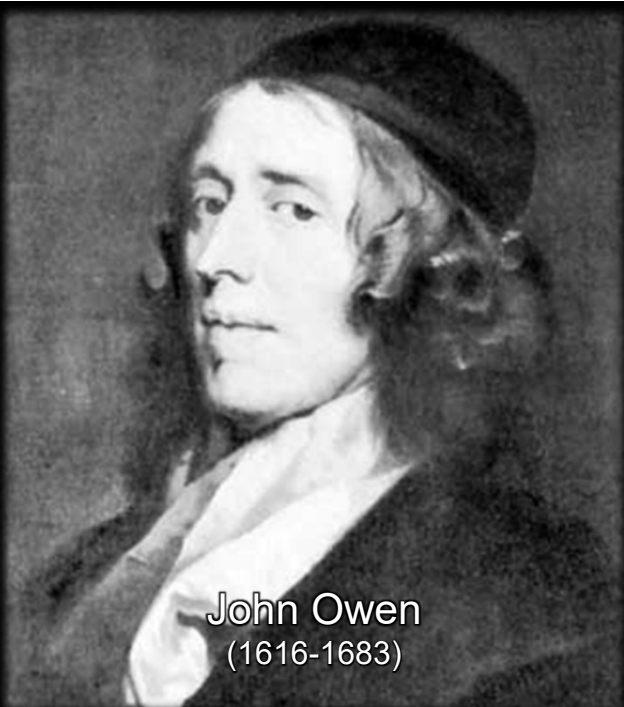
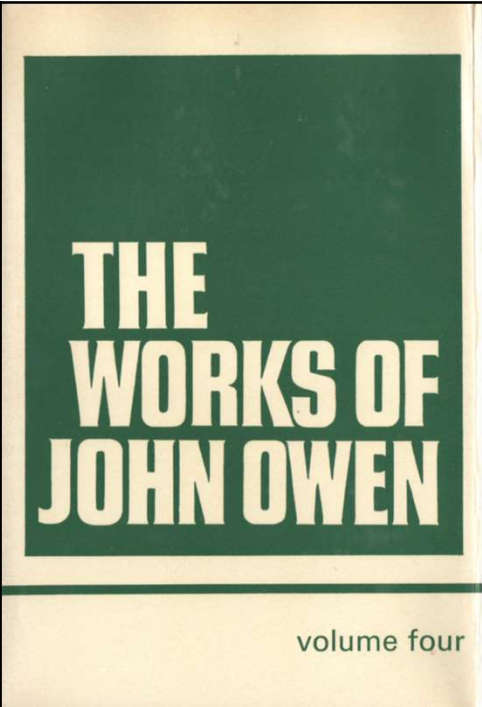
[*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.2.15, trans. Henry Beveridge, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans), vol. 1, p. 236]



**John Calvin**  
(1509-1564)

**"Shall we say that the philosophers, in their exquisite researches and skillful description of nature were blind? ... Nay, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without the highest admiration."**

[*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.2.15, trans. Henry Beveridge, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans), vol. 1, p. 236]



**THE WORKS OF JOHN OWEN**

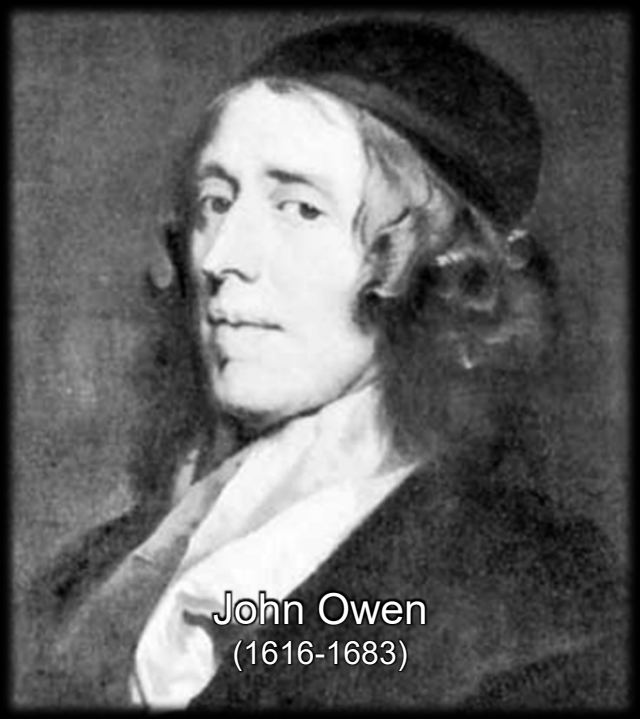
volume four

**John Owen**  
(1616-1683)

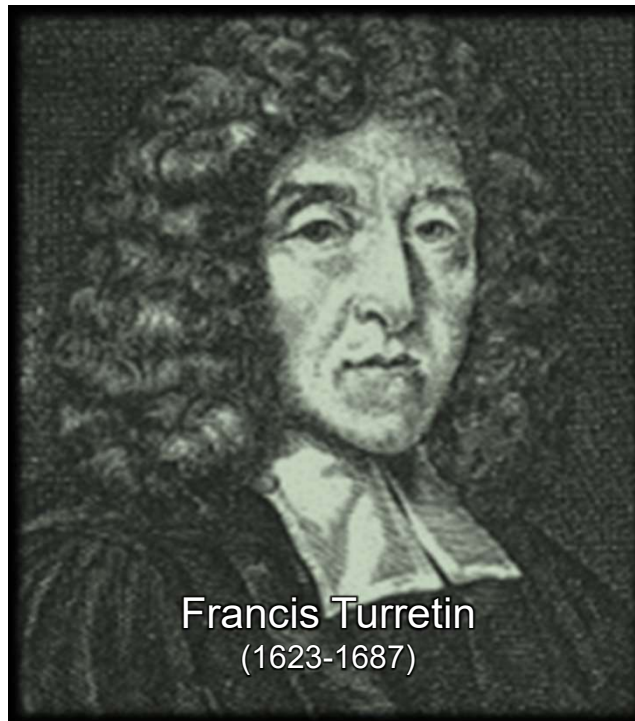


"There are sundry cogent arguments, which are taken from external considerations of the Scripture, that evince it on rational grounds to be from God. ... and ... are... necessary unto the confirmation of our faith herein against temptations, oppositions, and objections."

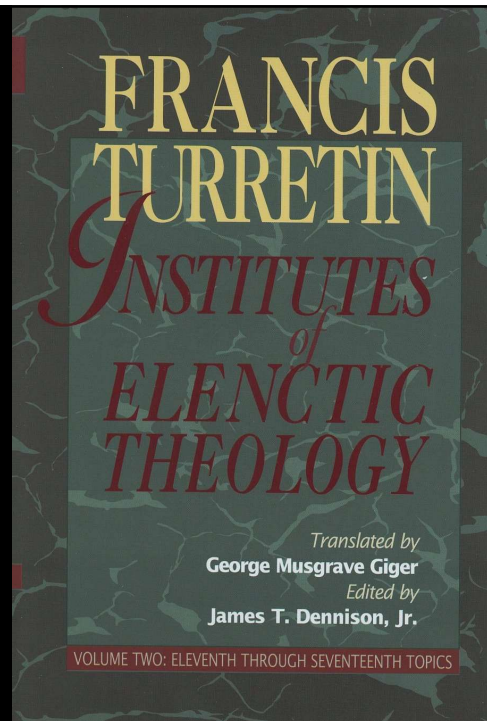
[John Owen, "The Reason of Faith," in *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 4, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 20]

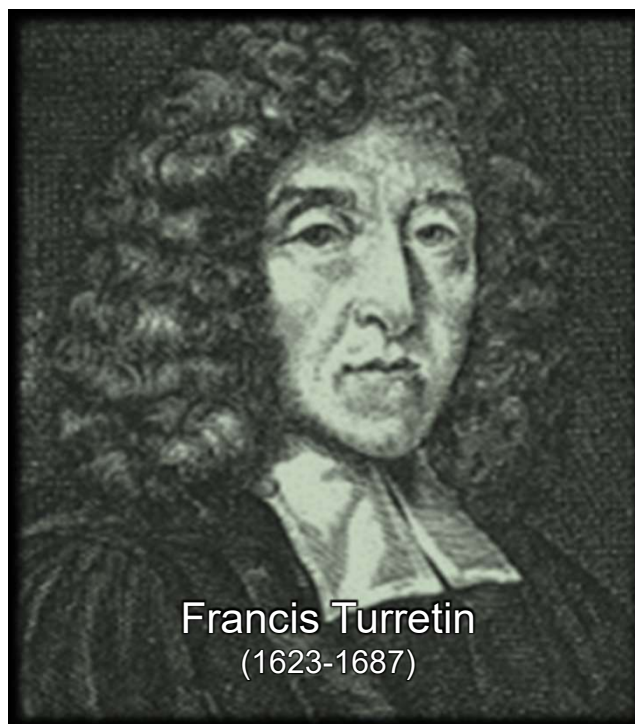


John Owen  
(1616-1683)



Francis Turretin  
(1623-1687)

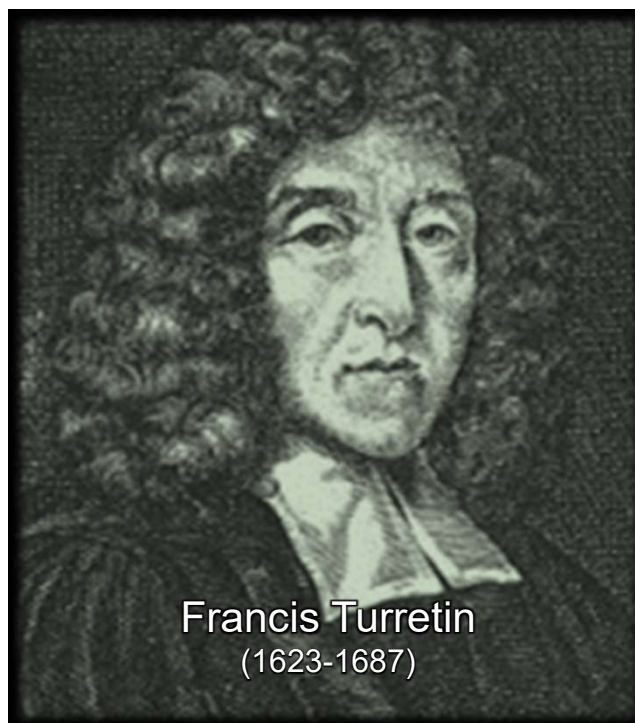




Francis Turretin  
(1623-1687)

**"They sin in defect who hold that philosophy is opposed to theology and should therefore be altogether separated from it, not only as useless, but also as positively hurtful."**

[*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, First Topic: Theology, Q. XIII, trans. by George Musgrave Giger, (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1992, vol. 1, p. 44)]

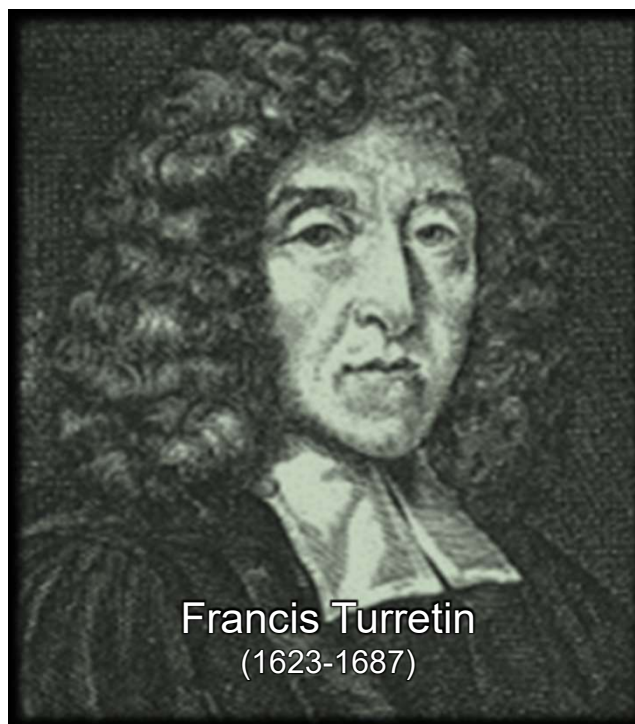


Francis Turretin  
(1623-1687)

**"Philosophy ... has many and various uses in theology which must be accurately distinguished from its many abuses."**

[*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, First Topic: Theology, Q. XIII, trans. by George Musgrave Giger, (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1992, vol. 1, p. 44)]

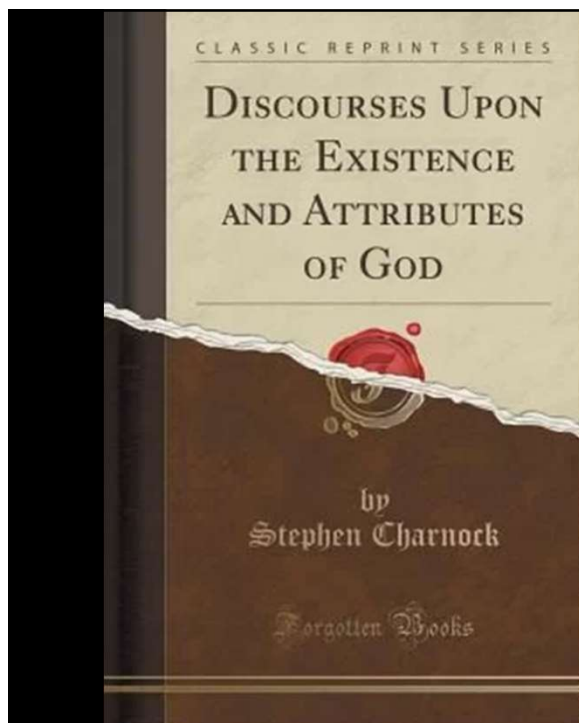




Francis Turretin  
(1623-1687)

**"Philosophy is used ... properly and in the abstract for the knowledge of things human and divine (as far as they can be known by the light of nature) ... Its uses are many."**

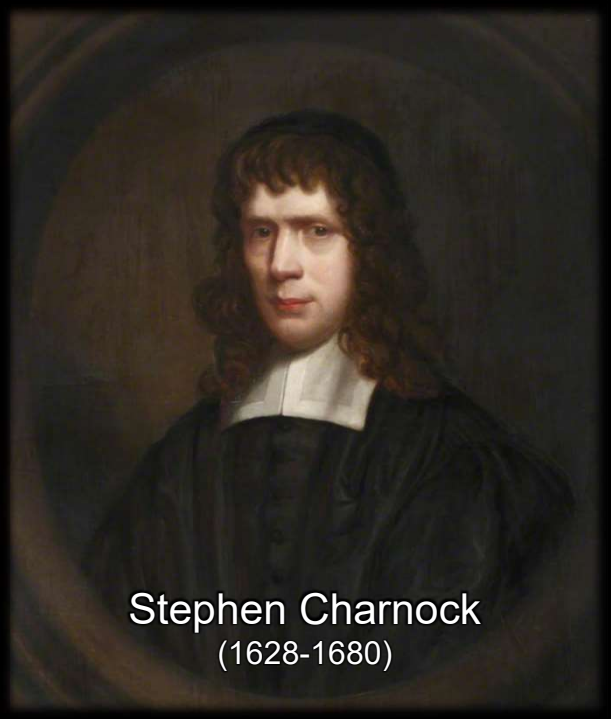
[*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, First Topic: Theology, Q. XIII, trans. by George Musgrave Giger, (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1992, vol. 1, p. 44-45)]



Stephen Charnock  
(1628-1680)

**"Men that will not listen to Scripture ... cannot easily deny natural reason .... There is a natural as well as a revealed knowledge, and the book of the creatures is legible in declaring the being of a God ...."**

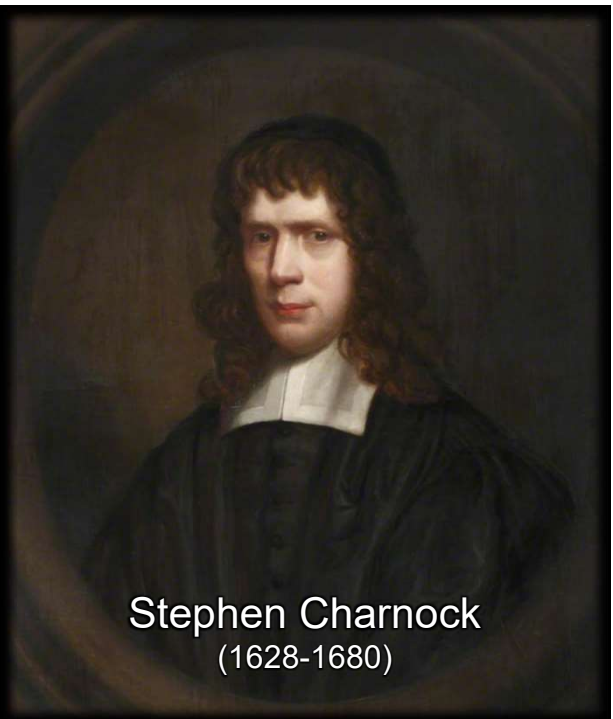
[Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 27]



**Stephen Charnock**  
(1628-1680)

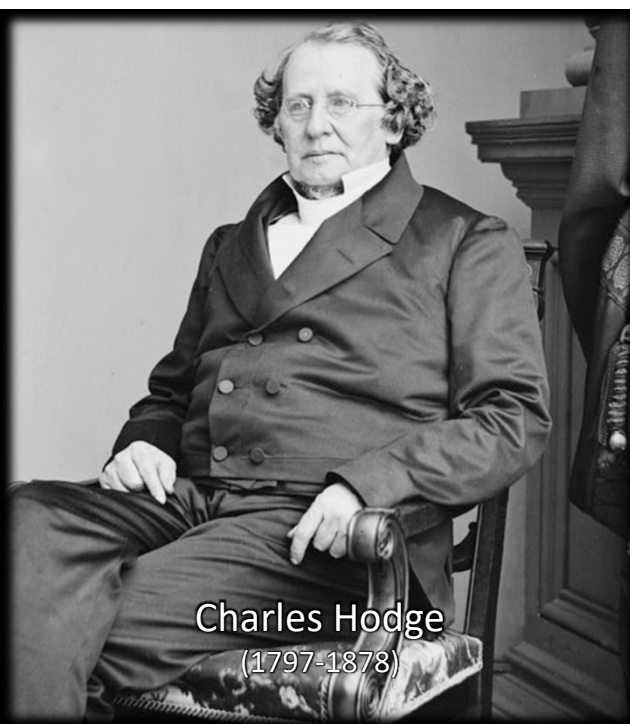
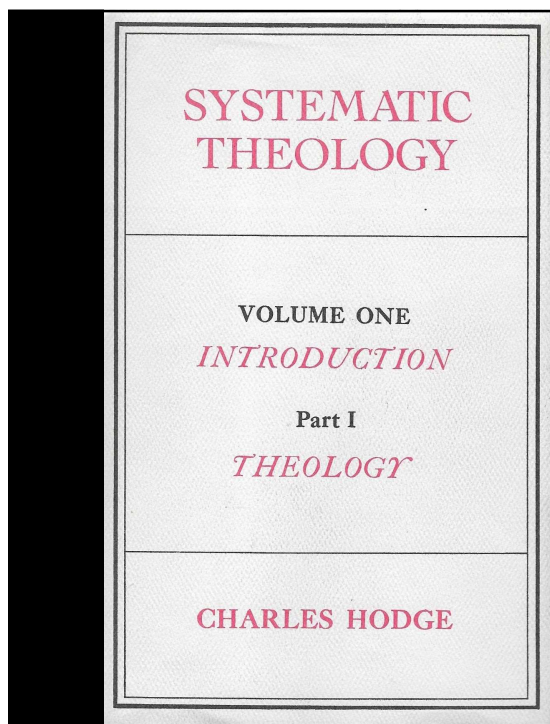
**"God in regard of his existence is not only the discovery of faith, but of reason. God hath revealed not only his being, but some sparks of his eternal power and godhead in his works, as well as in his word. ... It is a discovery of our reason ... and an object of our faith ... it is an article of our faith and an article of our reason."**

[Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 27]



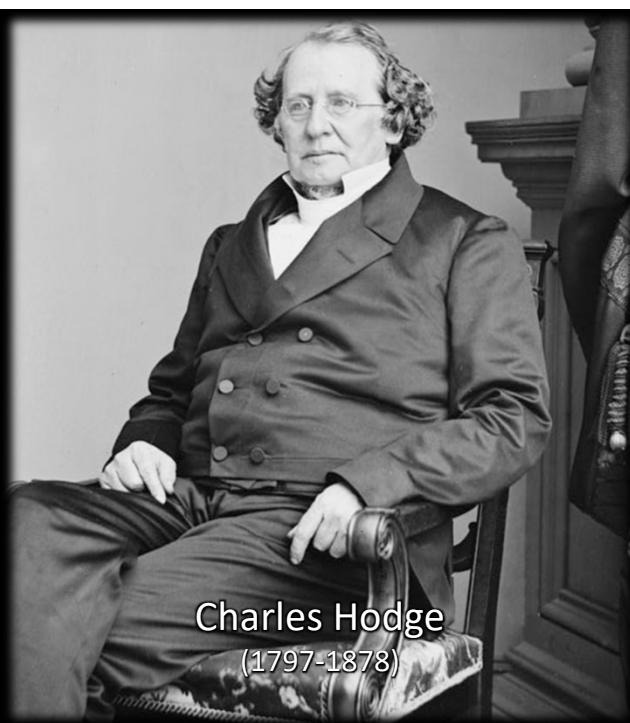
**Stephen Charnock**  
(1628-1680)





Charles Hodge  
(1797-1878)

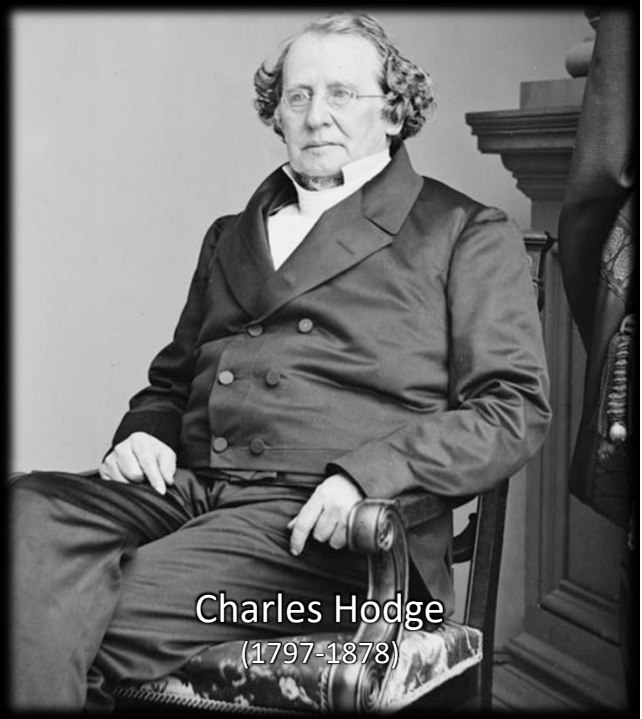
**"The Scriptures clearly recognize the fact that the works of God reveal his being and attributes. This they do not only by frequent reference to the works of nature as manifestations of the perfections of God, but by direct assertions. ... The sacred writers in contending with the heathen appeal to the evidence which the works of God bear to his perfections. ..."**



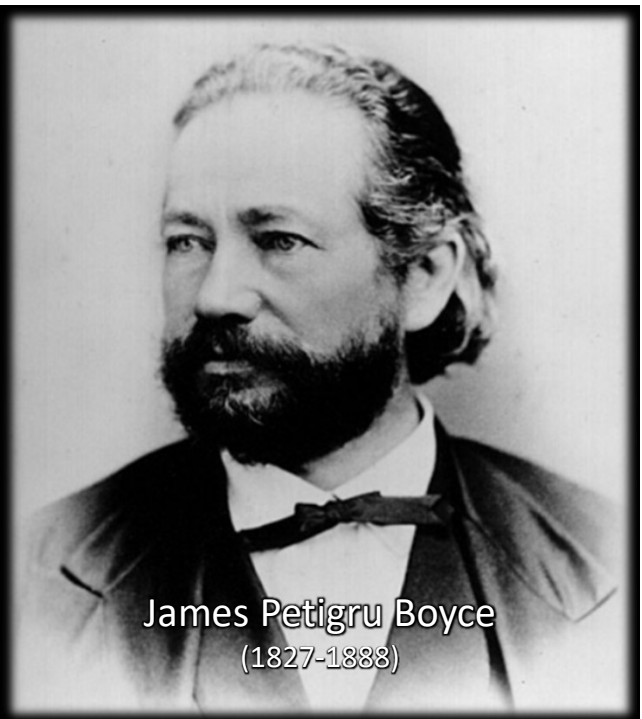
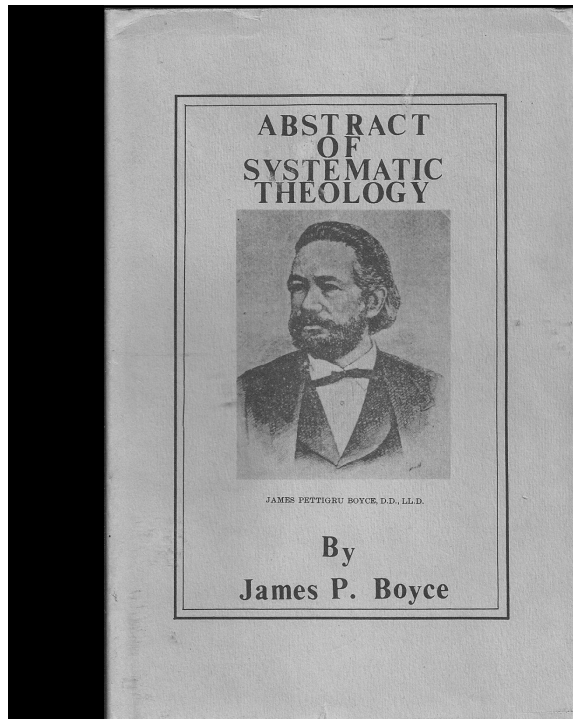
Charles Hodge  
(1797-1878)

**"It cannot, therefore, be reasonably doubted that not only the being of God, but also his eternal power and Godhead are so revealed in his works, as to lay a stable foundation for natural theology."**

[Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), I, II, §3, p. 24]



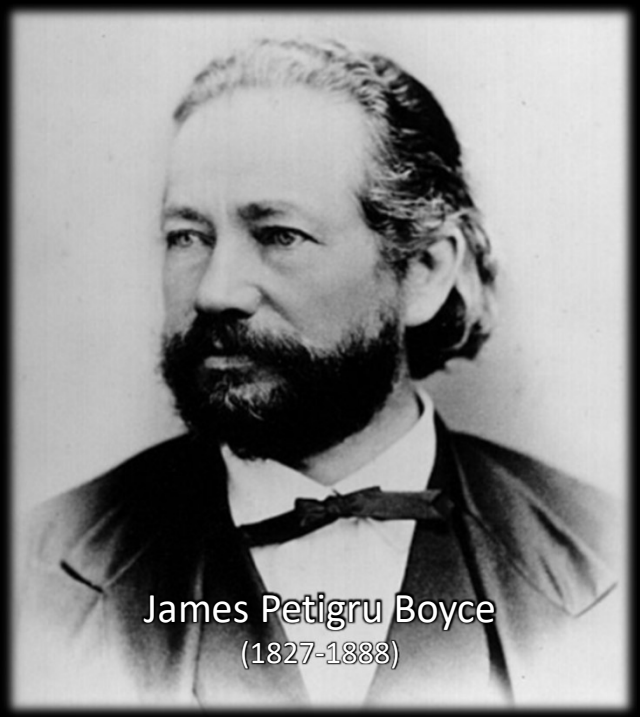
Charles Hodge  
(1797-1878)



James Petigru Boyce  
(1827-1888)

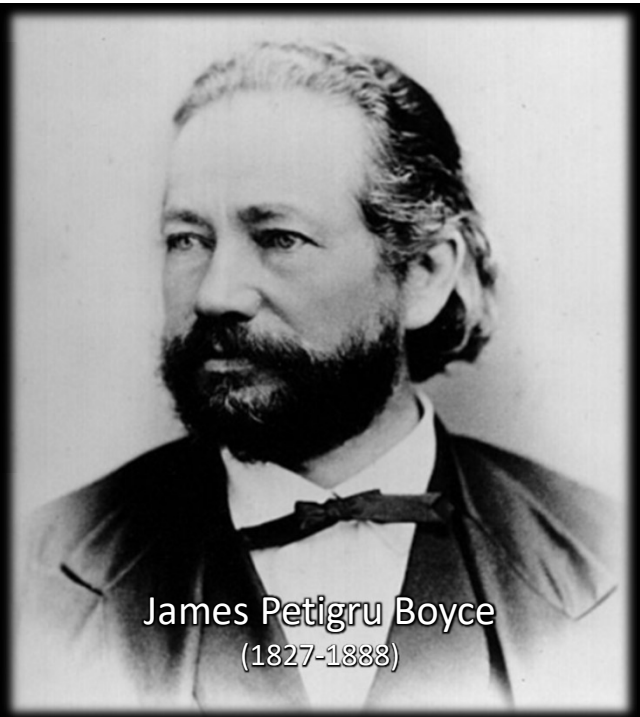


"Reason involves all the cognitive powers of man, which are the faculties through which the mind attains knowledge. These faculties are not separate, and independent, but are merely the instruments of the mind. The mind is not itself an original source of knowledge, like the Scriptures, but is merely an instrument by which the man attains knowledge through the exercise of its appropriate faculties. There is no such thing as innate ideas. ...



James Petigru Boyce  
(1827-1888)

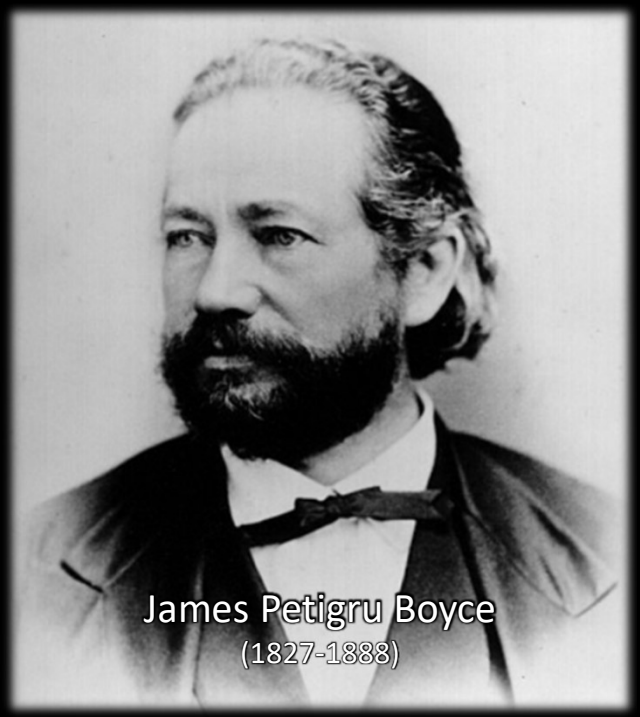
"The means by which the mind attains knowledge in the exercise of its faculties, are five. 1. Consciousness ... 2. Observation ... 3. intuitive conceptions, 4. The dispositions, instincts and tendencies of our natures ... 5. The course of events in nature, as tending to good or evil ...



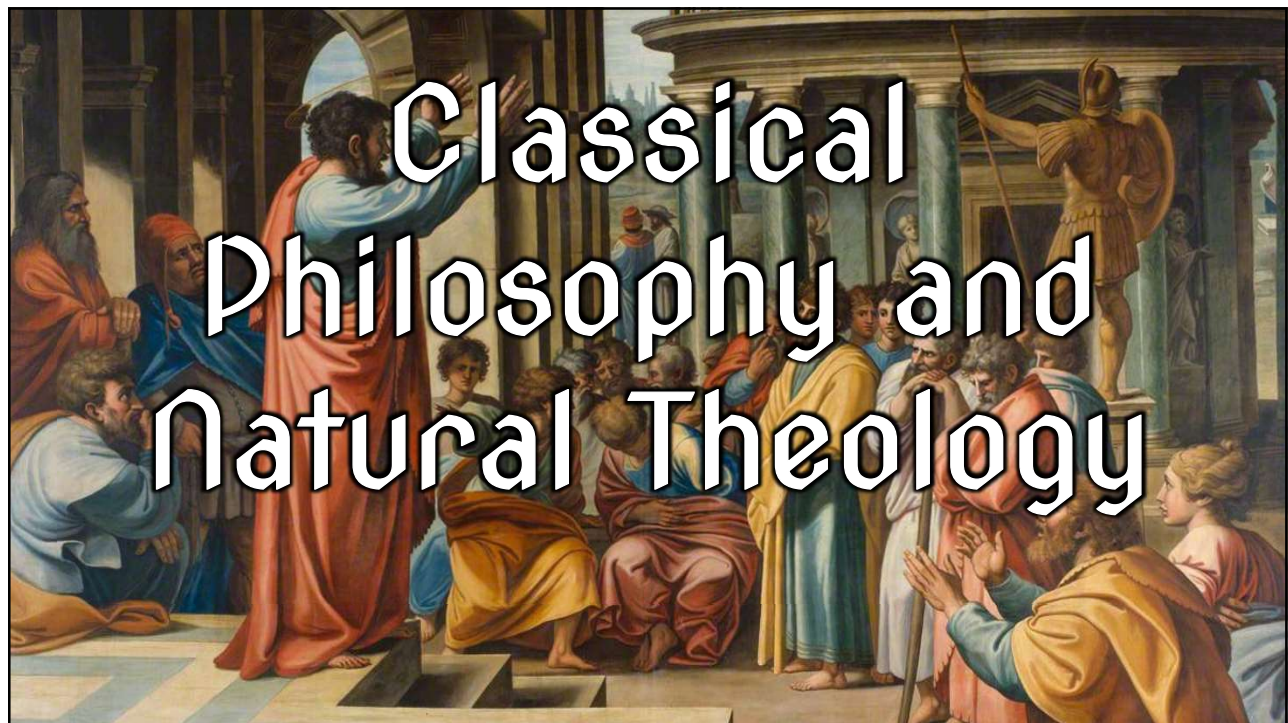
James Petigru Boyce  
(1827-1888)

**"It is manifest that the knowledge obtained from these various sources must be abundant to teach man the simple facts upon which rests his duty to God; namely, that there is a God to whom he owes existence, and consequent reverence, service and love, and whose greatness and goodness enforce this obligation; also to show him that that duty has not been discharged ..."**

[James Petigru Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), 47]



**James Petigru Boyce**  
(1827-1888)



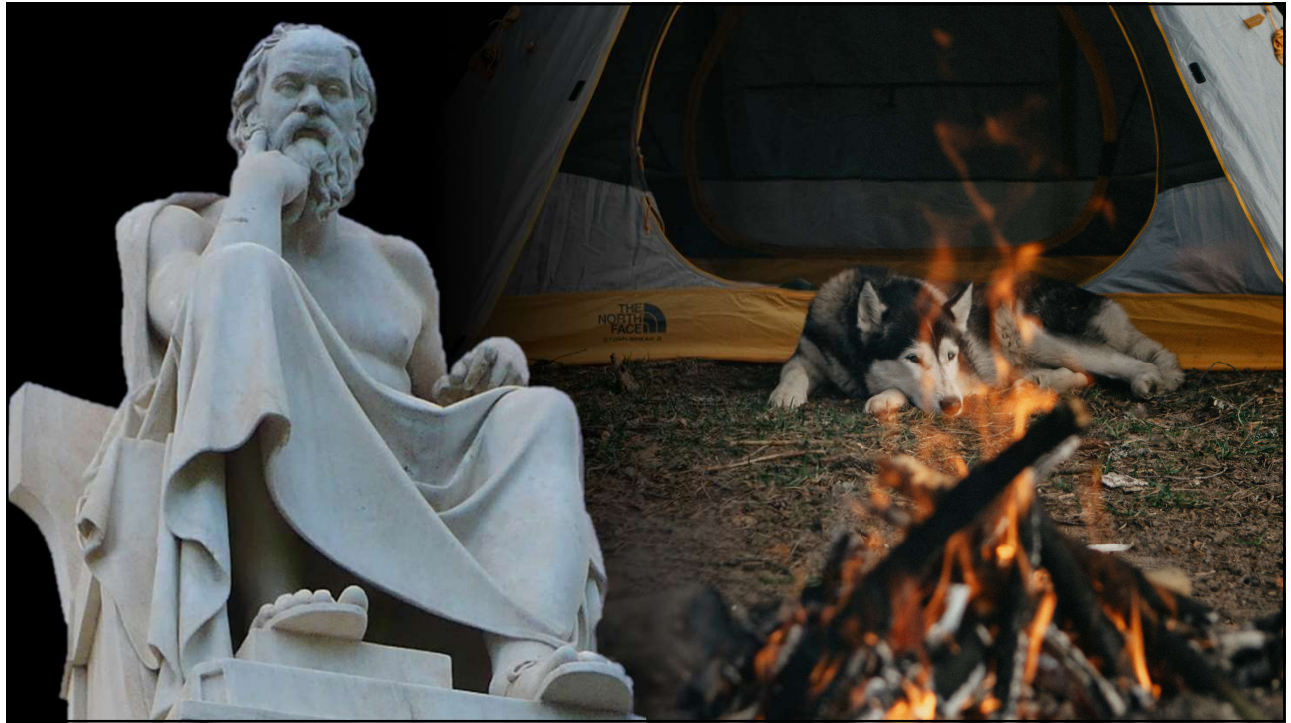
# Classical Philosophy and Natural Theology



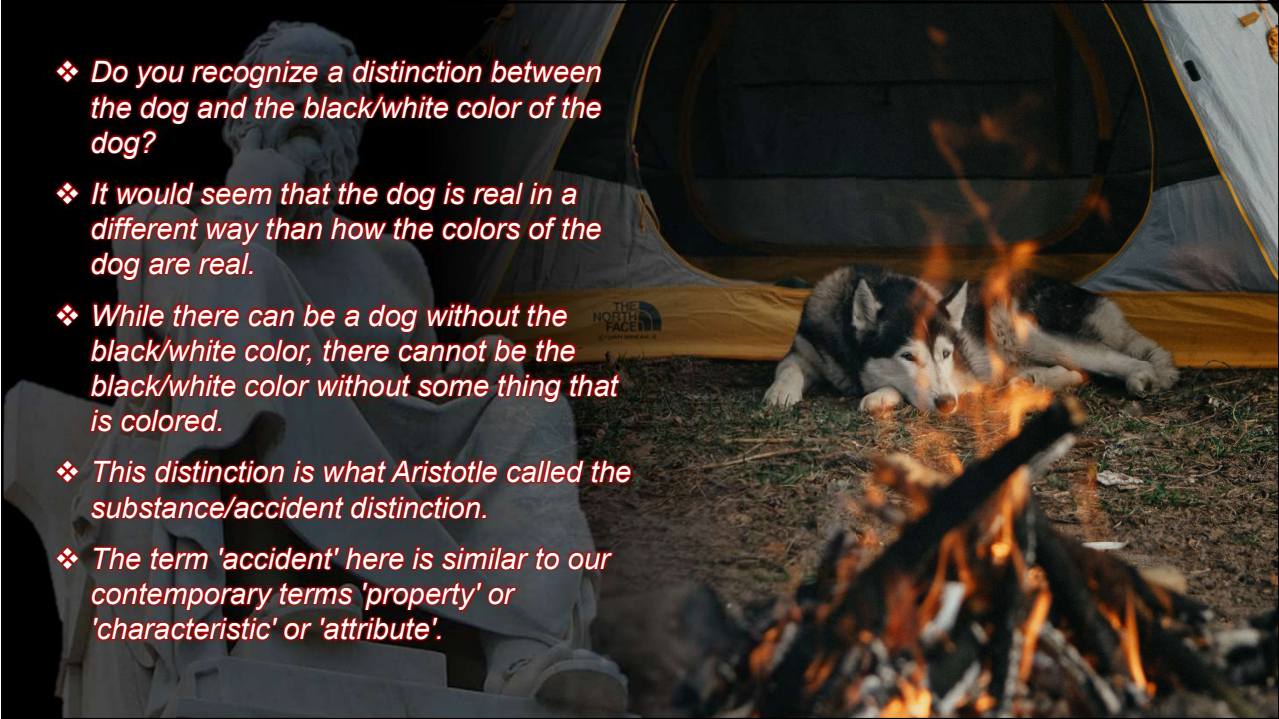
- ❖ Not every apologist who self-identifies as "classical" employs "classical" philosophy.

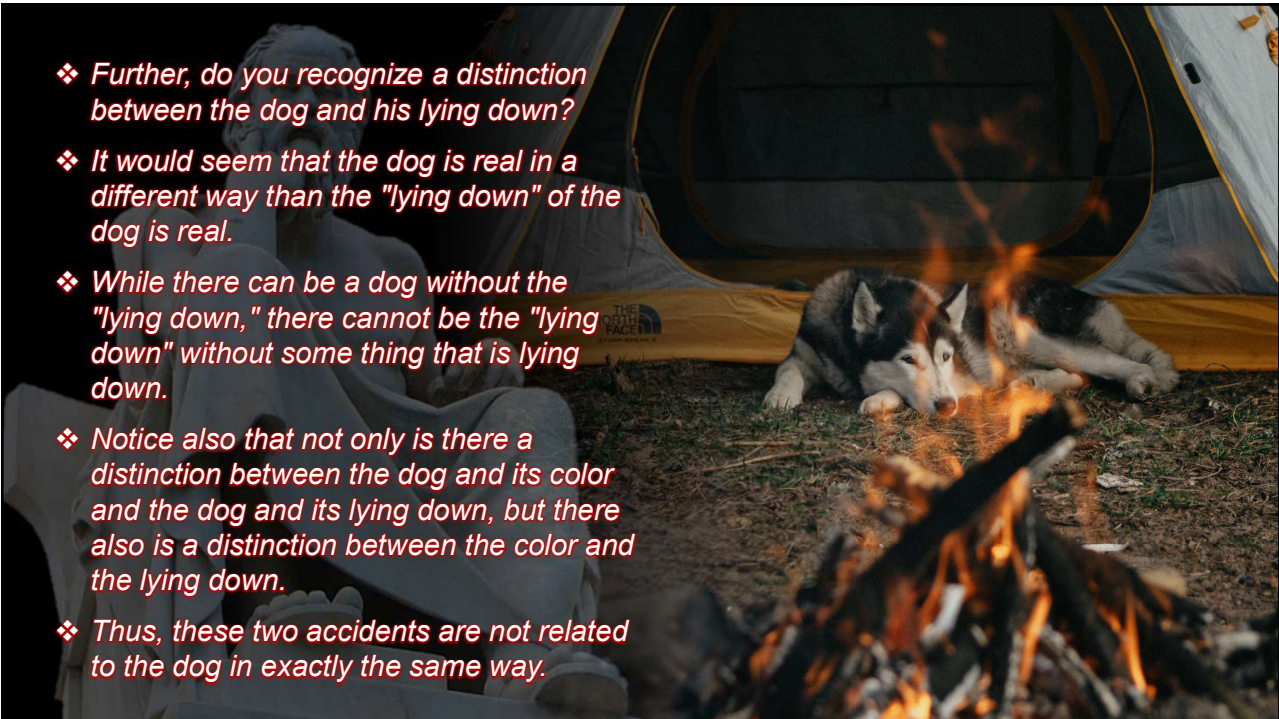
Not the same  
use of the term  
'classical'!

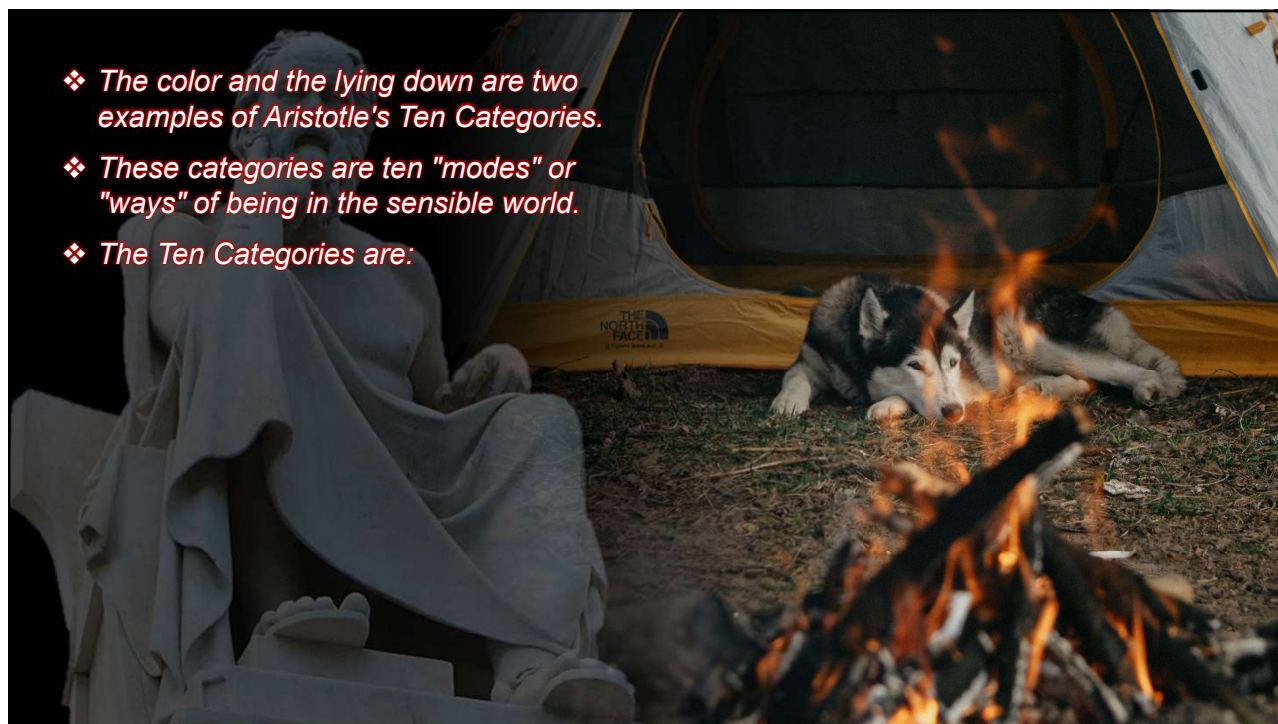
- ❖ Not every apologist who self-identifies as "classical" employs "classical" philosophy.
- ❖ In the interest of full disclosure, I am an obnoxious partisan of Thomism of a particular stripe.



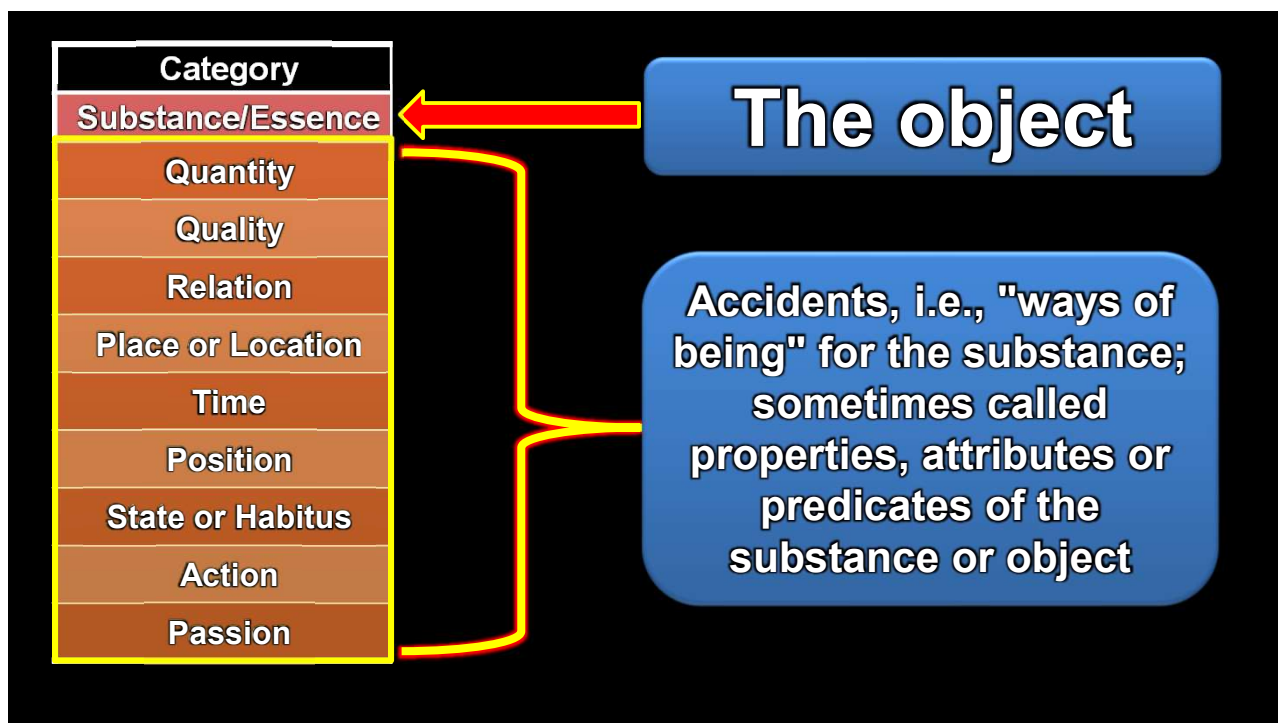


- 
- ❖ *Do you recognize a distinction between the dog and the black/white color of the dog?*
  - ❖ *It would seem that the dog is real in a different way than how the colors of the dog are real.*
  - ❖ *While there can be a dog without the black/white color, there cannot be the black/white color without some thing that is colored.*
  - ❖ *This distinction is what Aristotle called the substance/accident distinction.*
  - ❖ *The term 'accident' here is similar to our contemporary terms 'property' or 'characteristic' or 'attribute'.*

- 
- ❖ *Further, do you recognize a distinction between the dog and his lying down?*
  - ❖ *It would seem that the dog is real in a different way than the "lying down" of the dog is real.*
  - ❖ *While there can be a dog without the "lying down," there cannot be the "lying down" without some thing that is lying down.*
  - ❖ *Notice also that not only is there a distinction between the dog and its color and the dog and its lying down, but there also is a distinction between the color and the lying down.*
  - ❖ *Thus, these two accidents are not related to the dog in exactly the same way.*



- ❖ The color and the lying down are two examples of Aristotle's Ten Categories.
- ❖ These categories are ten "modes" or "ways" of being in the sensible world.
- ❖ The Ten Categories are:





Category	Meaning	Greek	Example
Substance	What	ousia	dog, tree
Quantity	How much	poson	small, tall
Quality	What sort	poion	Great Dane, oak
Relation	in relation to something	pros ti	smaller, taller
Place or Location	Where	pou	in my yard
Time	When	pote	right now, last year
Position	Being situated	keisthai	lying, standing
State or Habitus	Having, possession	echein	is leashed, is covered
Action	Doing	poiein	bites, shades
Passion	Undergoing	paschein	is fed, is pruned

A three-foot<sup>Quantity</sup> husky<sup>Quality</sup> dog<sup>Substance</sup>, much taller than<sup>Relation</sup> her puppy, was lying<sup>Position</sup> in my yard<sup>Place</sup> yesterday<sup>Time</sup> on a leash<sup>State (Habitus)</sup>, biting her paw<sup>Action</sup>, completely unaware that she was being fed<sup>Passion</sup> by me.







From individual dogs, one can derive the concept of dog.



From individual trees, one can derive the concept of tree.



From individual dogs, one can derive the concept of dog.



From individual trees, one can derive the concept of tree.



From individual dogs, one can derive the concept of dog.



From individual trees, one can derive the concept of tree.

- ❖ *The relationship of the concept of 'dog' or 'tree' to the individual dogs or trees is the relationship of universals to particulars.*
- ❖ *One debate that has endured throughout the history of philosophy has been over what exactly is the nature of a universal.*



From individual dogs, one can derive the concept of dog.



From individual trees, one can derive the concept of tree.

- ❖ *Are universals merely names we give to things (Nominalism / Hume)?*
- ❖ *Or are universals more than names but nothing more than concepts (Conceptualism / Ockham)?*
- ❖ *Or are universals "real" in some sense of the term 'real'? (Realism)*





From individual dogs, one can derive the concept of dog.



From individual trees, one can derive the concept of tree.

❖ *If universals are real in some sense of the term 'real', exactly what is the nature of their reality?*

- *Are universals the fully real whereas the individuals "participate in" or "imitate" the universals? (Extreme Realism / Platonism)*
- *Do universals "exist" as particulars in the individual and are only universal in the intellect? (Moderate Realism / Aristotelianism)*
- *Are universals "ideas" in God's mind as their Creator and are made real as particulars in creation? (Scholastic Realism / Thomism)*



From individual dogs, one can derive the concept of dog.



From individual trees, one can derive the concept of tree.

❖ *Notice also that the universal is free of any specifying characteristics of the individual.*

❖ *The concept 'dog' does not specify German Shepherd or Chihuahua; young or old; brown or black; sitting or lying; eating or being washed ...*

❖ *The concept 'tree' is free of such individuating characteristics such as tall or short; deciduous or evergreen; fruit-bearing, flower-bearing or neither; in my backyard or in my neighbor's backyard ...*









❖ Notice that, despite the changes in all the characteristics (accidents), you can know that it is the same dog throughout.



❖ Likewise with the tree. From acorn to flourishing oak, despite all the changes, you can know that it is the same tree throughout.



❖ That aspect of the thing that constitutes its "sameness" is its Form.

❖ That aspect of the thing that constitutes its "changing" is its Matter.



❖ 'Form' and 'Matter' are metaphysical aspects of any sensible thing.

❖ Neither exists apart from the sensible thing itself.





- ❖ *The Form and Matter constitution of a sensible thing is known as hylomorphic dualism.*
- ❖ *This term comes from the Greek hule (ὕλη) which means 'matter' and morphe (μορφή) which means 'form'.*
- ❖ *They are metaphysical aspects of a single thing.*



- ❖ *Hylomorphic Dualism is to be distinguished from Substance Dualism.*
- ❖ *Substance Dualism was championed by René Descartes (1596-1650).*
- ❖ *Descartes regarded the material and immaterial components of a human to be two separate substances.*





❖ *Note also that, unless something interferes (like injury, malnourishment, or disease), the Great Dane puppy will inevitably grow into an adult Great Dane and the acorn will inevitably grow into a mature oak tree .*



- ❖ *The trajectory of each of these things is its teleology.*
- ❖ *The term comes for the Greek word 'telos' (τέλος), meaning 'end' or 'goal'.*
- ❖ *A thing's teleology is determined by its Form.*
- ❖ *A thing's Form is that which constitutes "what" it is.*
- ❖ *An acorn will never become a Great Dane.*





- ❖ *These accidents of the thing that are not yet realized eventually will be realized if nothing interferes.*
- ❖ *These accidents that are yet to become real are known as potencies (or potentialities or capacities) that "exist" in the thing.*



- ❖ *Once they become real, they are actual (or actualities).*
- ❖ *Aristotle identifies this as the act and potency distinction.*



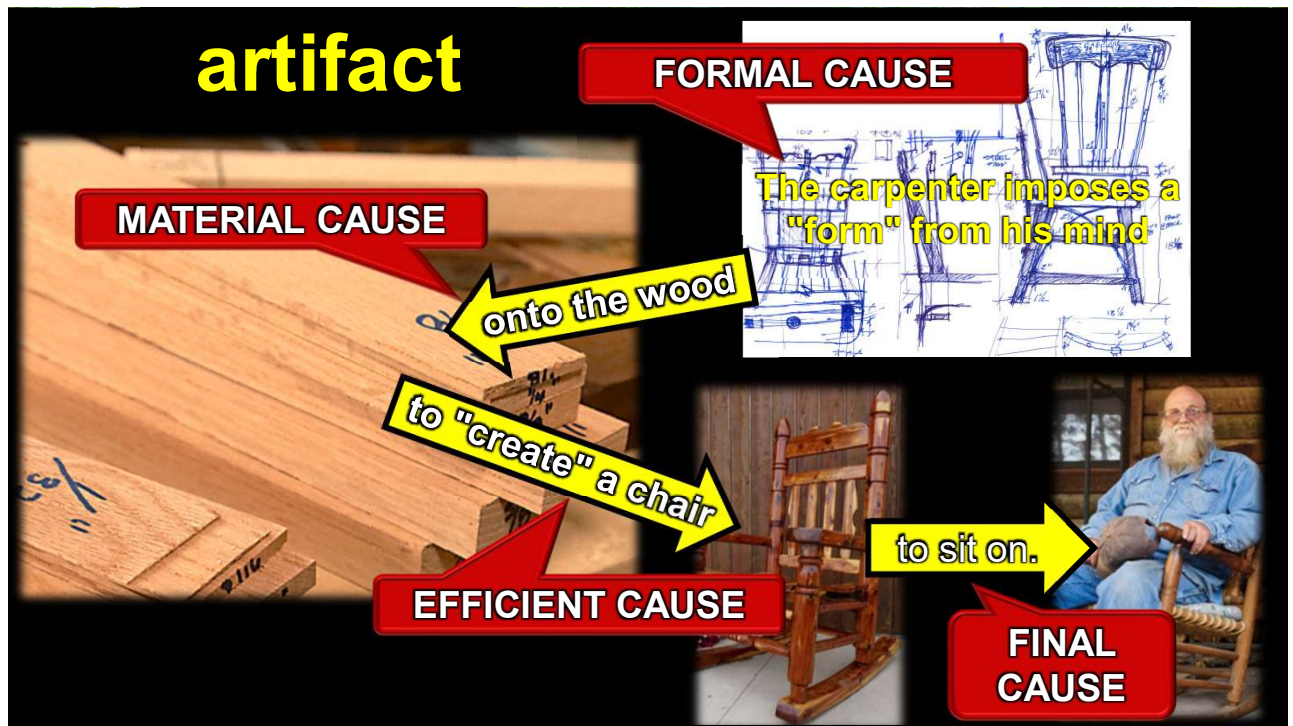


- ❖ Aristotle called that which brings a potentiality into actuality the *Efficient Cause*.
- ❖ Aristotle identified three additional causes.

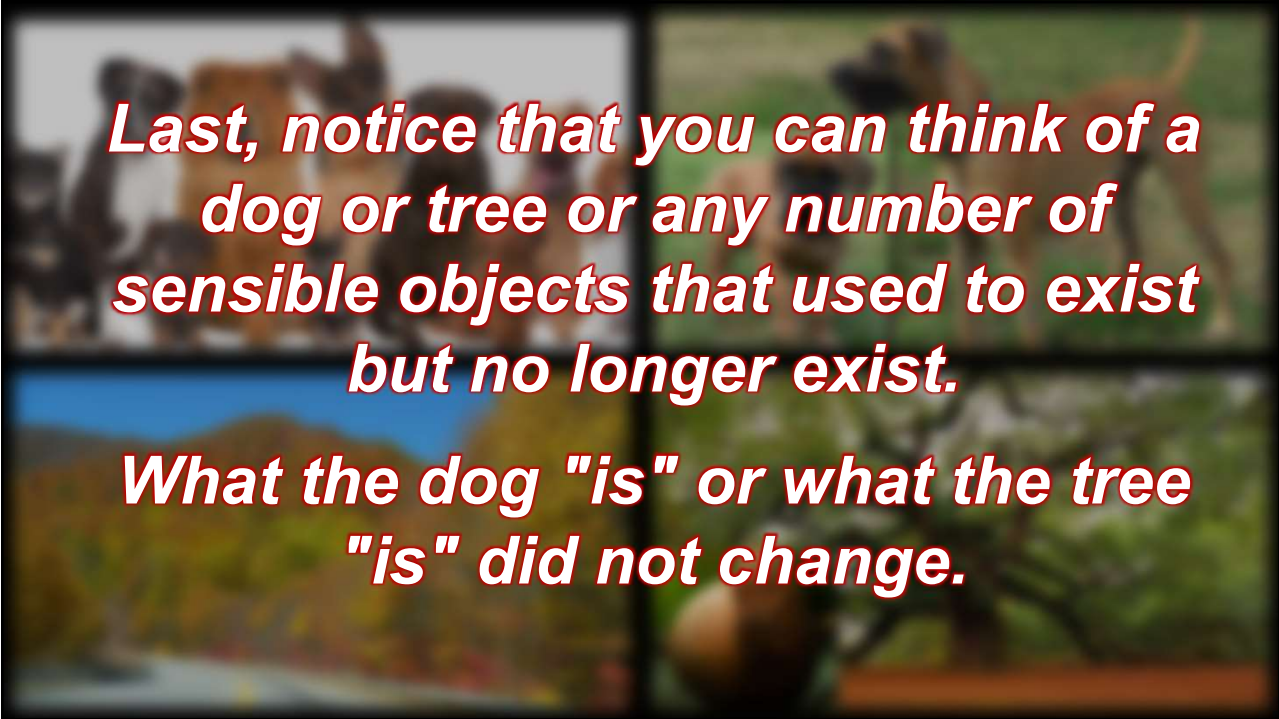


- ❖ The *Efficient Cause* is that **by which** a thing is.
- ❖ The *Material Cause* is that **out of which** a thing is.
- ❖ The *Formal Cause* is that **which** a thing is.
- ❖ The *Final Cause* is that **for which** a thing is.



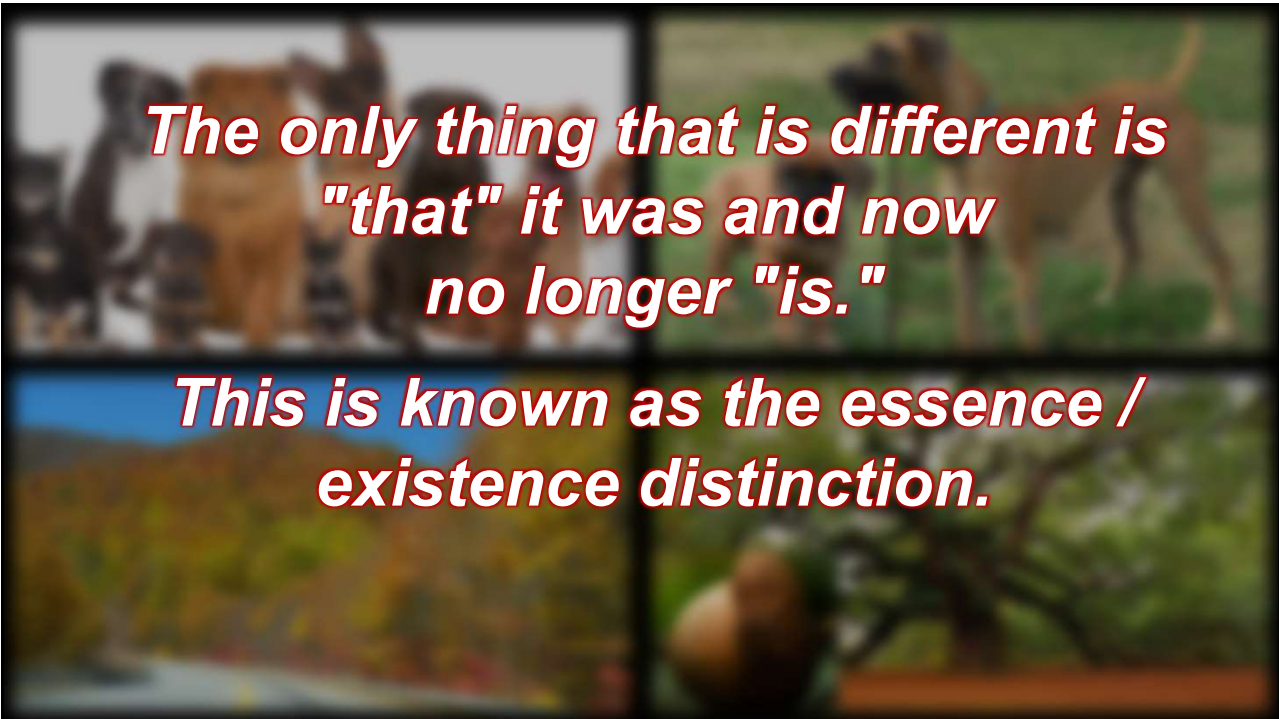






*Last, notice that you can think of a dog or tree or any number of sensible objects that used to exist but no longer exist.*

*What the dog "is" or what the tree "is" did not change.*



*The only thing that is different is "that" it was and now no longer "is."*

*This is known as the essence / existence distinction.*

**The essence is *what* something is.  
The existence is *that* something is.**

**The essence / existence  
distinction is a philosophical  
augmentation of Aristotle's  
metaphysics by Thomas Aquinas.**

 <p>Aristotle (384-322 BC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ <i>substance and accidents</i></li><li>✓ <i>ten categories</i></li><li>✓ <i>universals and particulars</i></li><li>✓ <i>form and matter</i></li><li>✓ <i>teleology</i></li><li>✓ <i>act and potency</i></li><li>✓ <i>four causes</i></li><li>✓ <i>essence/existence</i></li></ul>	 <p>Aquinas (1225-1274)</p>
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Aristotle  
(384-322 BC)

- ✓ *substance/accident*
- ✓ *Ten Categories*
- ✓ *universal/particular*
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Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



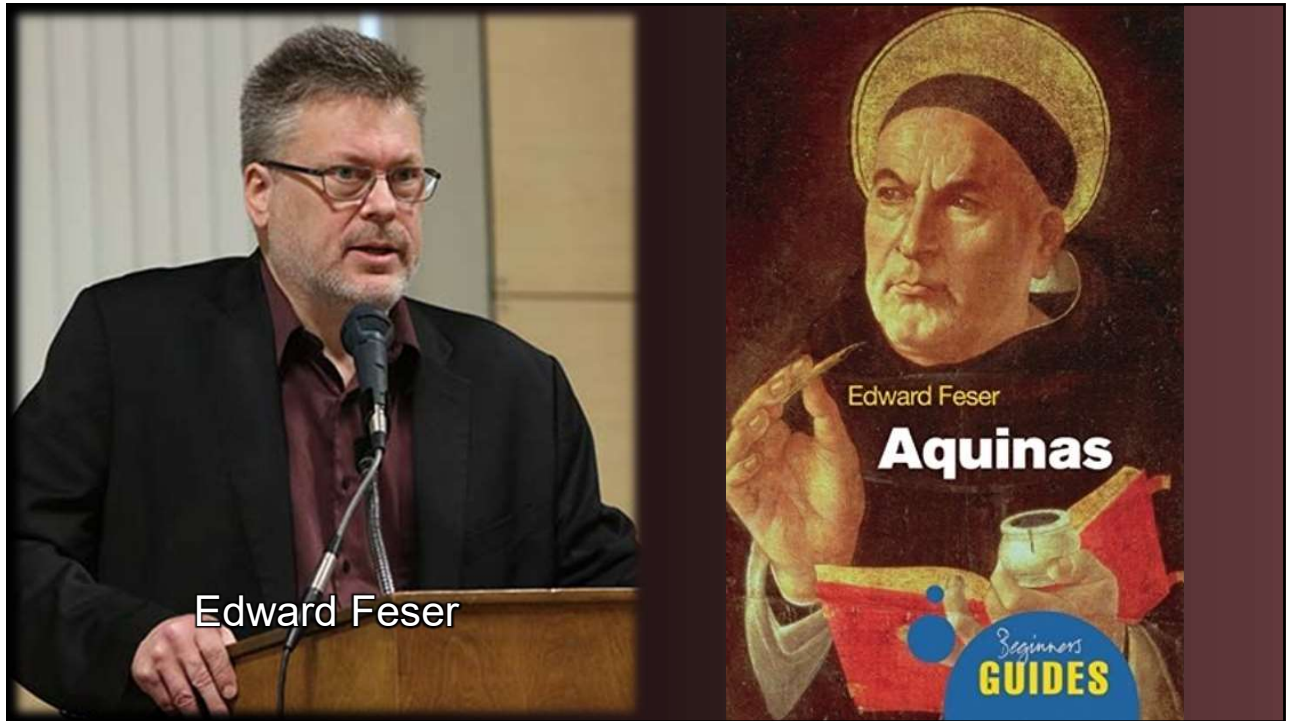
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Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***With these philosophical truths, the classical philosopher can demonstrate the existence and attributes of the God of Classical Theism.***







Edward Feser

The book cover for 'The Last Superstition' features a bright yellow background. The title is written in large, bold, black serif font. Below the title, a red horizontal band contains the subtitle 'A REFUTATION OF THE NEW ATHEISM' in white, all-caps sans-serif font. A quote from Roger Kimball is printed in a smaller black font, followed by the author's name 'EDWARD FESER' in red, all-caps serif font at the bottom.

# The Last Superstition

A REFUTATION OF THE NEW ATHEISM

"A thoughtful and theologically sophisticated sally into the ranks of the New Atheism. Feser has written a lively and well informed polemic against the latest crop of Village Atheists – Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, & Co. – who have provided the public with so much entertainment and so little enlightenment these past few years. This is a serious and passionately engaged challenge to the latest effort to impose a dehumanizing orthodoxy by religious illiterates."  
– Roger Kimball, co-editor and publisher, *The New Criterion*

EDWARD FESER



Edward Feser

The book cover for 'Five Proofs of the Existence of God' has a dark blue background. The author's name 'EDWARD FESER' is at the top in white, all-caps serif font. The title 'FIVE PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE of GOD' is in large, gold, serif font. Below the title is a grid of six portraits of philosophers: Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas, Leibniz, and Ignatius. The name 'IGNATIUS' is printed in white, all-caps serif font at the bottom.

EDWARD FESER

# FIVE PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE of GOD

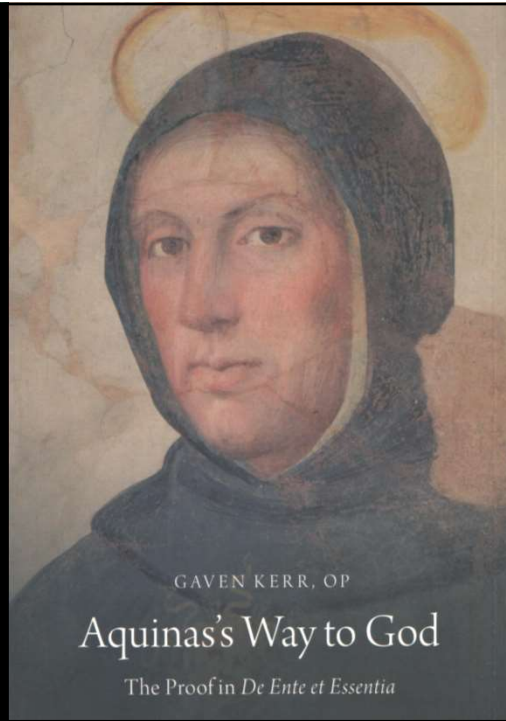


ARISTOTLE  
PLOTINUS  
AUGUSTINE  
AQUINAS  
LEIBNIZ

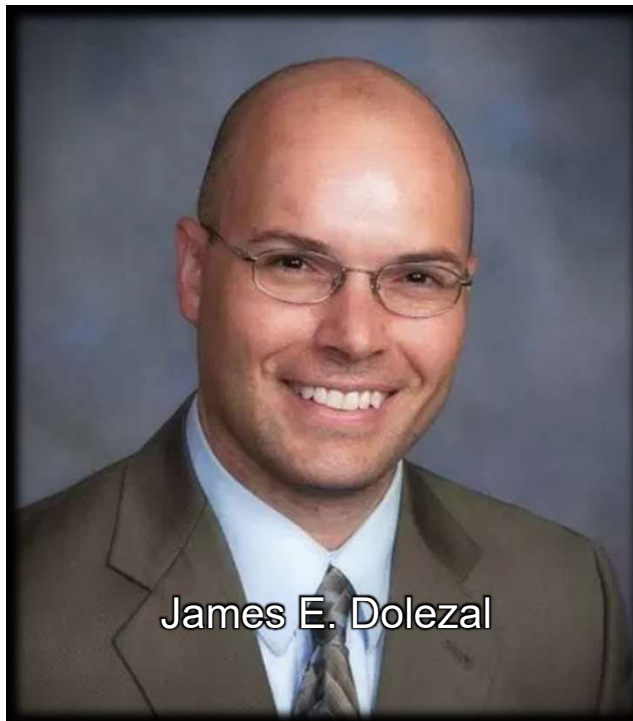
IGNATIUS



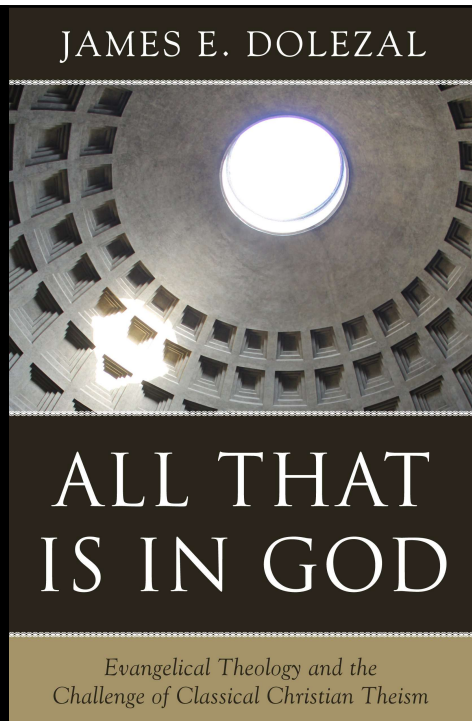
Gaven Kerr



GAVEN KERR, OP  
*Aquinas's Way to God*  
*The Proof in De Ente et Essentia*



James E. Dolezal



JAMES E. DOLEZAL  
*ALL THAT IS IN GOD*  
*Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*

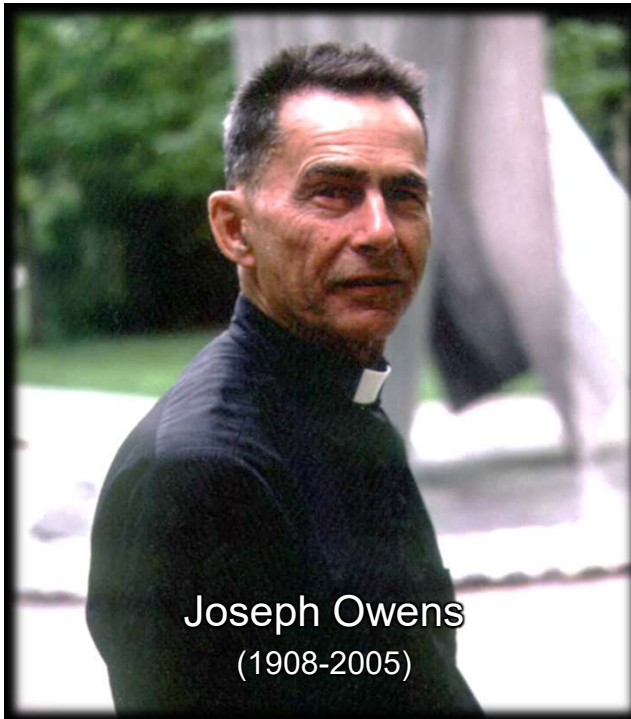


Thomistic Existentialism  
& Cosmological Reasoning

JOHN F. X. KNASAS



John F. X. Knasas



Joseph Owens  
(1908-2005)

