

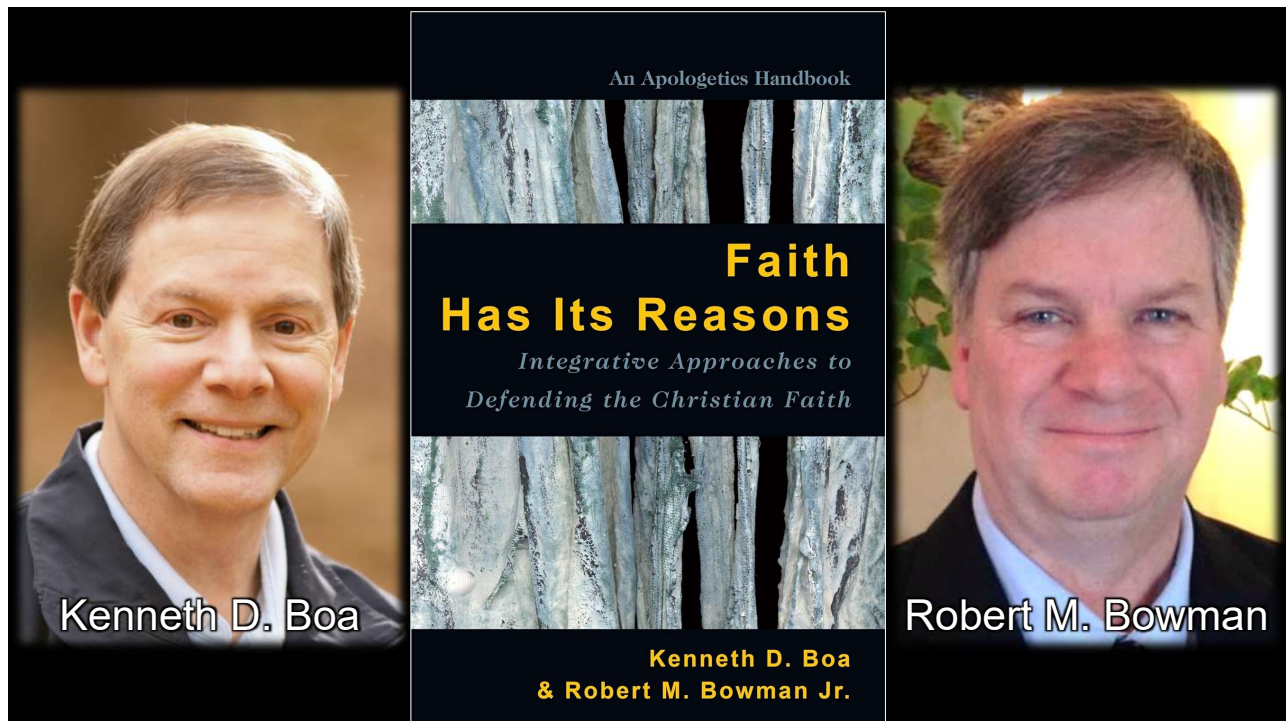
# Christian Apologetic Systems

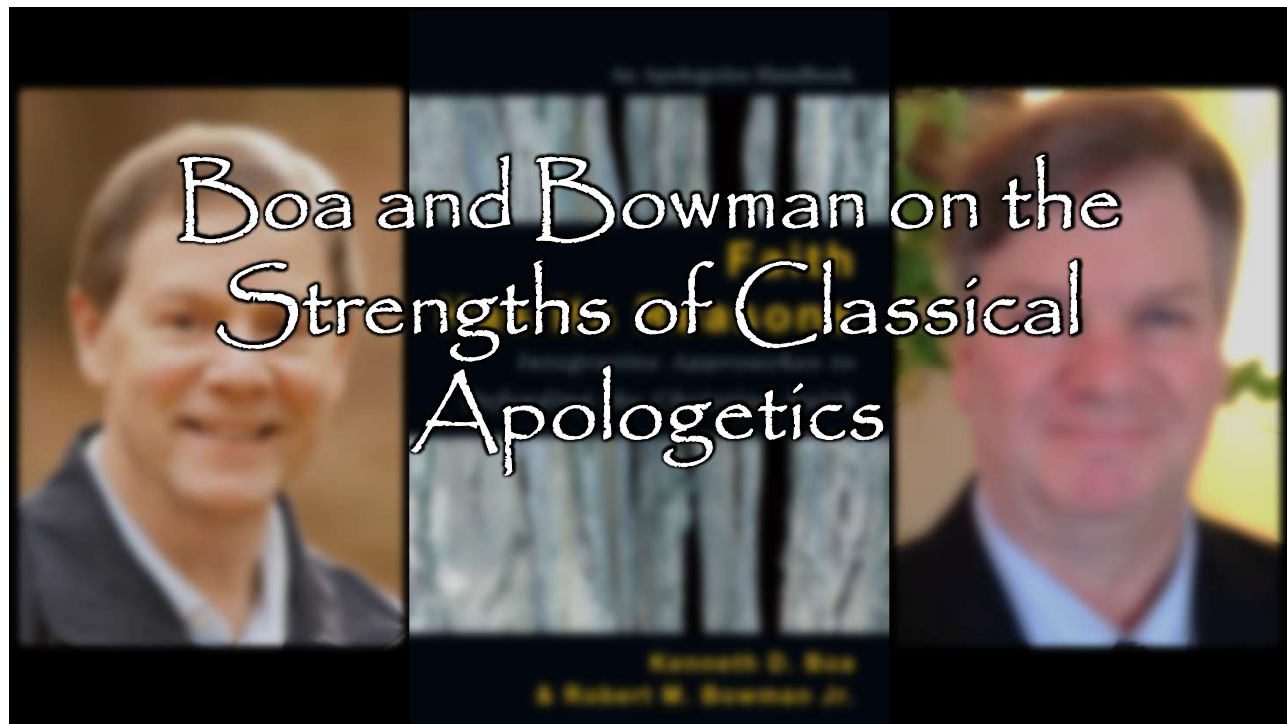
❧ 04: Classical Apologetics, Pt. 2 ❧

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

Provost

Norman L. Geisler Chair of Christian Apologetics  
Southern Evangelical Seminary  
Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA





***Classical Apologetics  
affirms the universal  
applicability of reason.***

**Boa and Bowman (in quoting Geisler, p. 127/221)  
rightfully acknowledge the "inescapable  
character of logic and reason." (Later I will  
address the range of usages of these two terms.)**

**Given that the fundamental laws of logic are  
characteristics of reality itself, then they apply to  
everyone and everything, including human  
beings, even in their lost estate.**



## ☞ *The Law of Non-Contradiction* ☞

- essence* ➤ A thing cannot be both 'A' and 'non-A' at the same time and in the same sense.
- existence* ➤ A thing cannot both exist and not exist at the same time and in the same sense.
- truth value* ➤ A statement cannot be both true and not true at the same time and in the same sense.

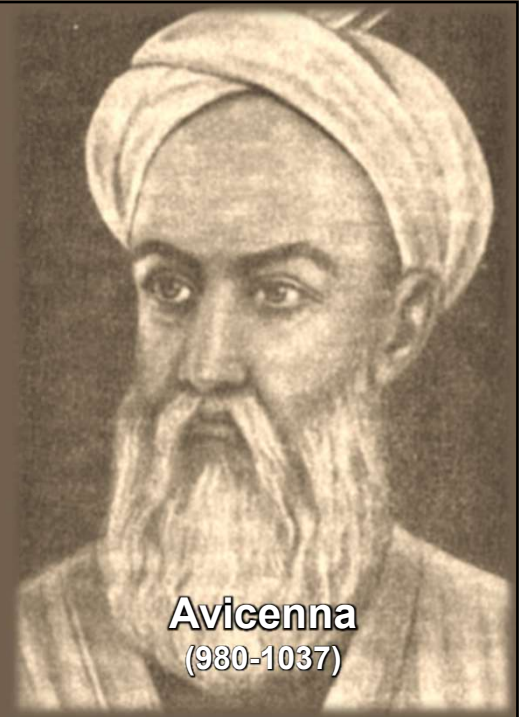
*Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, **lest you die.**'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "**You will not surely die.** For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Genesis 3:1-5



***"Those who deny a first principle should be beaten and burned until they admit that to be beaten is not the same as to not be beaten and to be burned is not the same as not to be burned."***

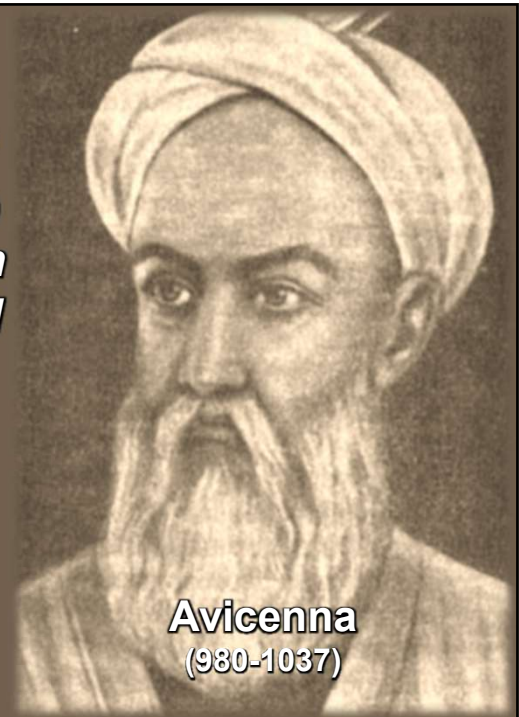
*Metaphysics of Healing I, 8, §12*



**Avicenna**  
(980-1037)

***As for the obdurate, he must be subjected to the conflagration of fire, since "fire" and "not fire" are one. Pain must be inflicted on him through beating, since "pain" and "no pain" are one. And he must be denied food and drink, since eating and drinking and the abstention from both are one [and the same].***

*[Metaphysics of Healing I, 8, §12. Trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 43]*



**Avicenna**  
(980-1037)

## ☞ *The Law of Excluded Middle* ☞

*essence* ➤ A thing is either 'A' or 'non-A.'

*existence* ➤ A thing either exists or does not exist.

*truth value* ➤ A statement cannot be both true and not true at the same time and in the same sense.

***"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit."***

**Matthew 12:33**



## ☞ *The Law of Identity* ☞

*essence* ➤ If a thing is 'A' then it is 'A.'

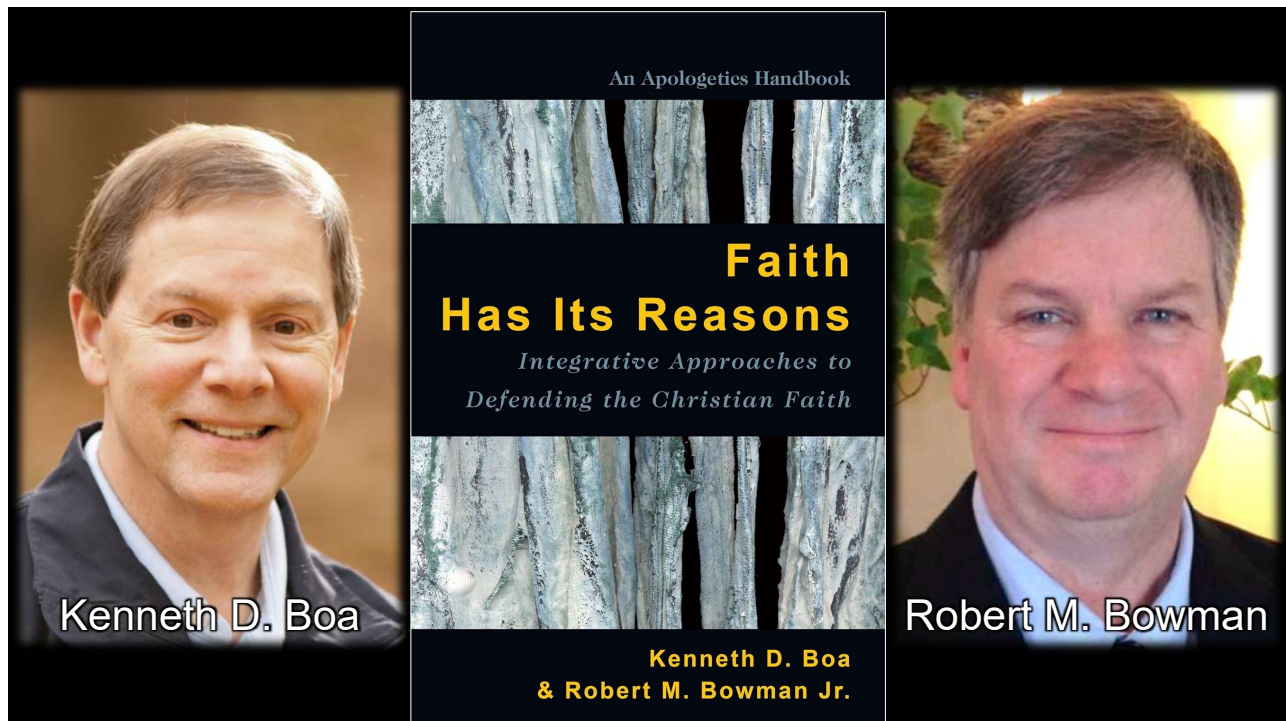
*existence* ➤ If a thing exists, then it exists.

*truth value* ➤ If a statement is true then it is true.

*Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

Exodus 3:13-14





***Classical Apologetics  
raises awareness of the  
unavoidable role of  
worldviews.***






 <p>Kenneth D. Boa</p>	<p>"Classical apologists emphasize that it is <b>impossible to think about</b> the world at large or about facts or experiences <b>apart from some worldview.</b>"</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, <i>Faith Has Its Reasons</i>, 129/223]</small></p>	 <p>Robert M. Bowman</p>
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 <p>Kenneth D. Boa</p>	<p>"Classical apologists recognize that facts are perceived in accordance with <b>an interpretive framework.</b>"</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, <i>Faith Has Its Reasons</i>, 129/223]</small></p>	 <p>Robert M. Bowman</p>
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 <p>Kenneth D. Boa</p>	<p>"Classical apologists emphasize that it is <b>impossible to think about</b> the world at large or about facts or experiences <b>apart from some worldview.</b>"</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 129/223]</small></p>	 <p>Robert M. Bowman</p>	<p>Is this statement impossible to think about apart from some worldview?</p>
 <p>Kenneth D. Boa</p>	<p>"Classical apologists recognize that facts are perceived in accordance with <b>an interpretive framework.</b>"</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 129/223]</small></p>	 <p>Robert M. Bowman</p>	<p>Is this statement perceived in accordance with an interpretive framework?</p>

 <p>Kenneth D. Boa</p>	<p>"Non-Christians are often unaware that they look at life through <b>a specific set of worldview 'glasses.'</b> Making them aware of this can <i>help non-Christians rethink some of their beliefs.</i>"</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 129/223, emphasis in original]</small></p>	 <p>Robert M. Bowman</p>
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"Non-Christians are often unaware that they look at life through **a specific set of worldview 'glasses.'**

Making them aware of this can *help non-Christians rethink some of their beliefs.*"

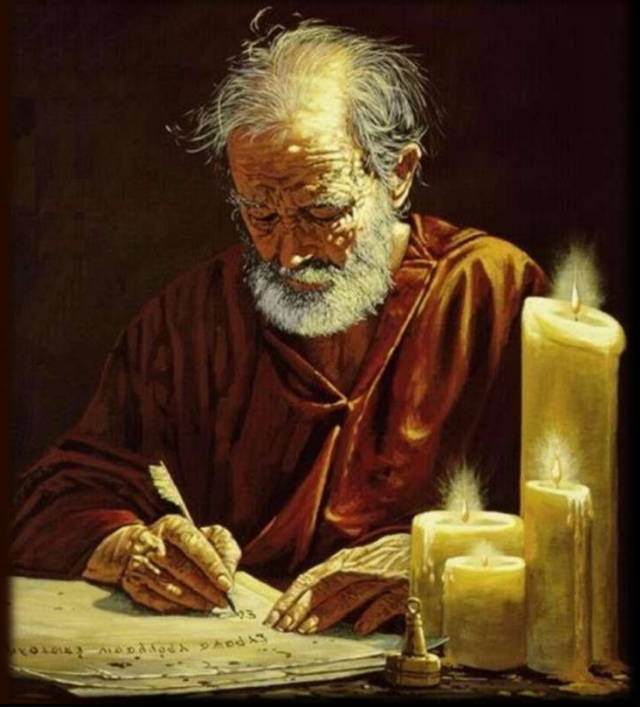
[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 129/223, emphasis in original]

**In due course, I will visit the topic of "worldviews" and the use of the glasses metaphor.**

***Classical Apologetics recognizes common ground with non-Christians.***

For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the **natural** use for what is against **nature**. Likewise, also the men, leaving the **natural** use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Romans 1:26-27



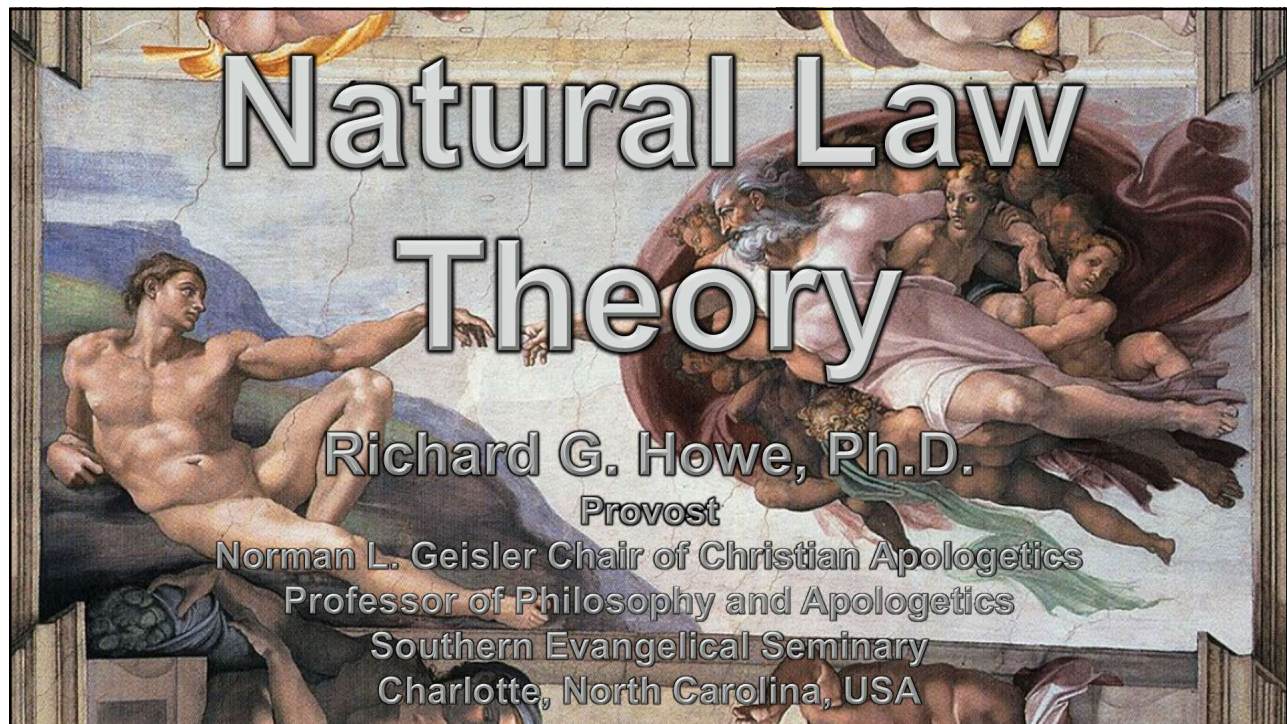
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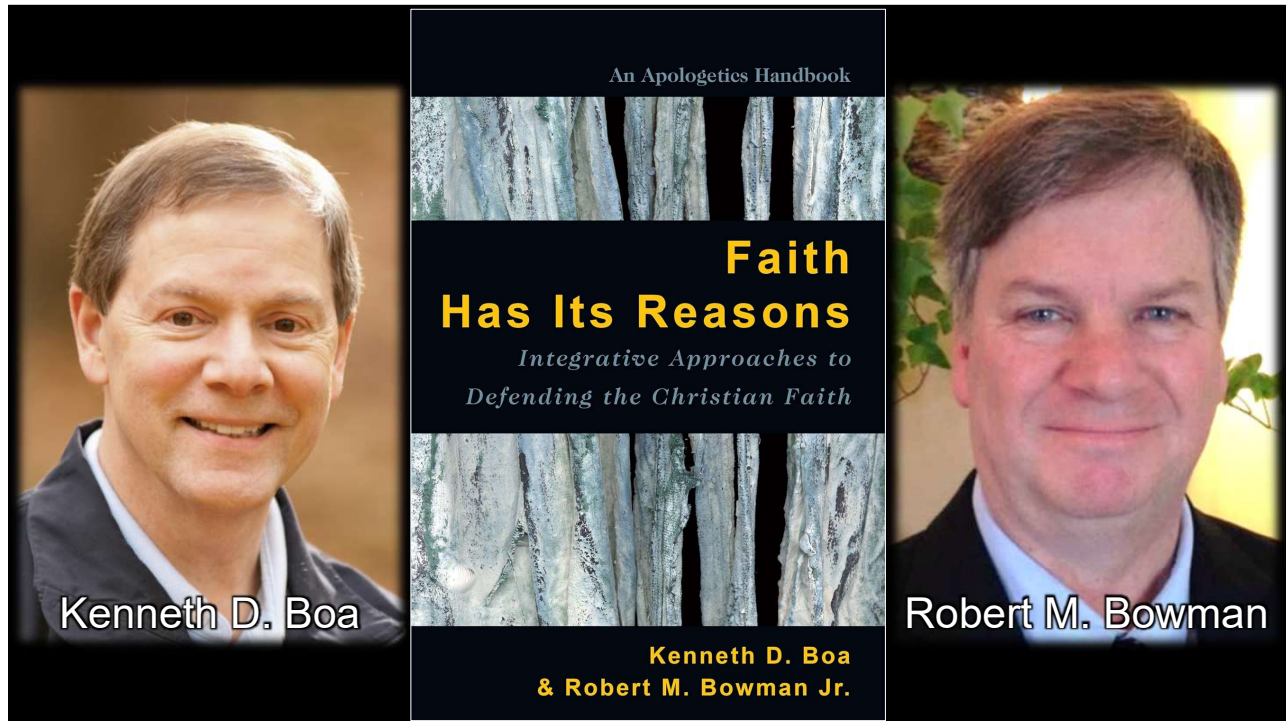
Romans 1:26-27

**Notice that Paul, when condemning homosexuality to the Romans, does not appeal to Leviticus 20 but, instead, appeals to nature.**

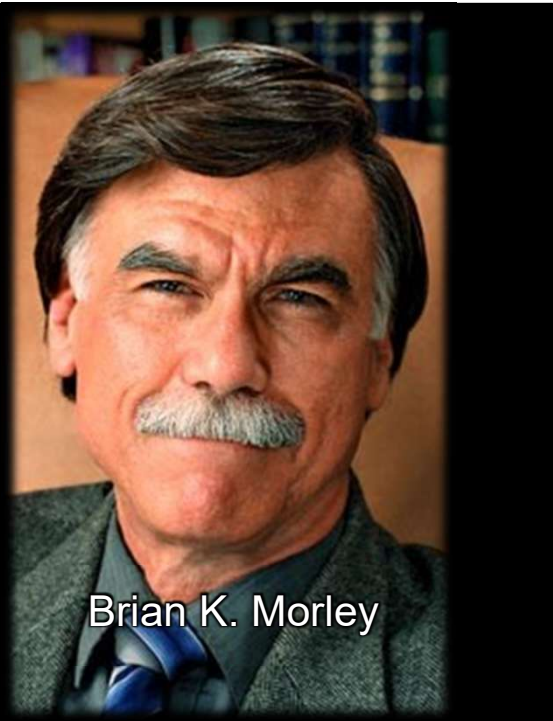
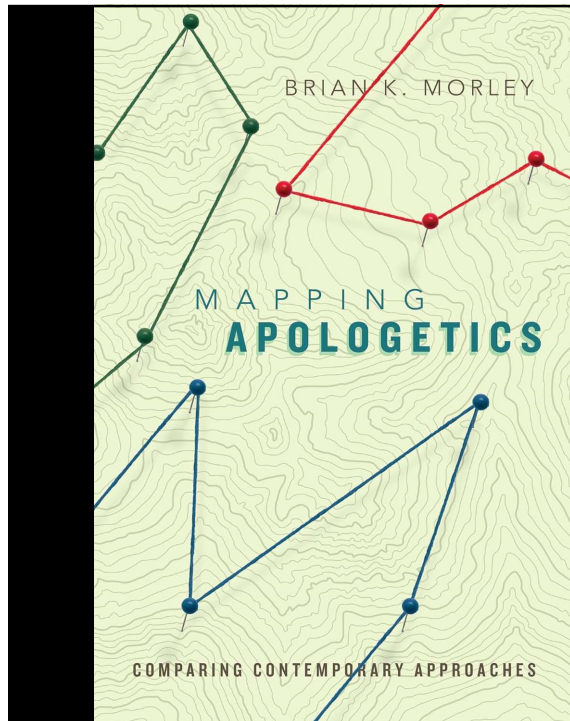
**Perhaps the reason was, while certain members of the Roman church may or may not have known what Leviticus was or might have questioned whether Leviticus had any authority over them, they could not excuse themselves from nature itself.**



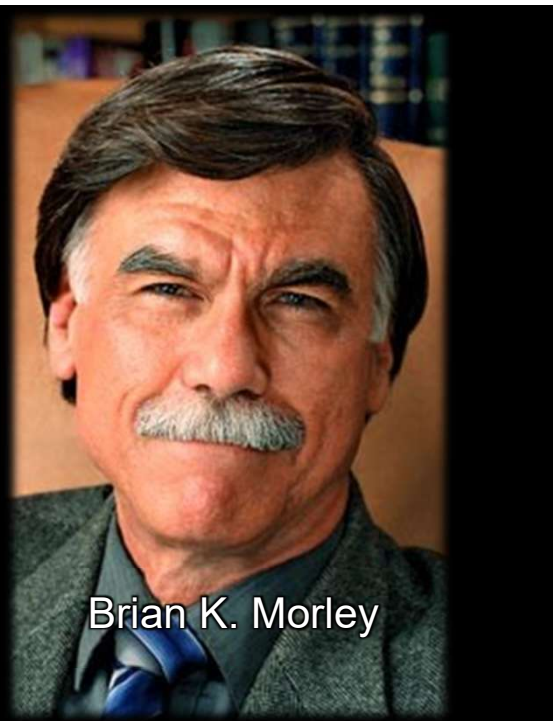
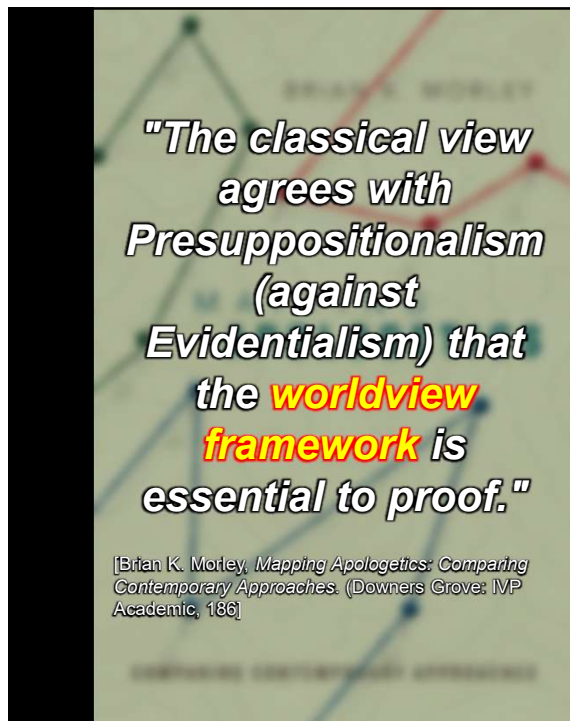




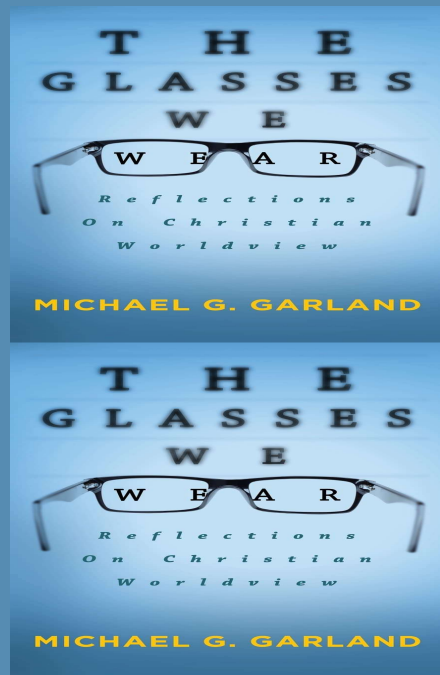
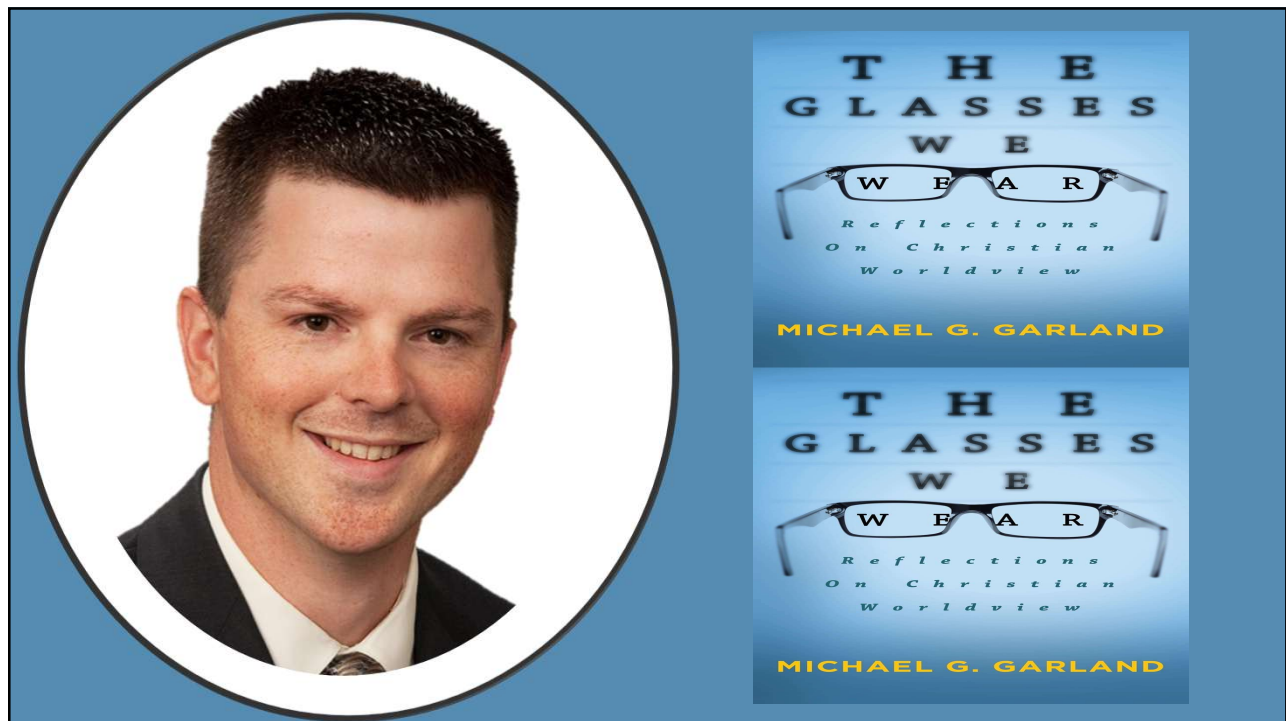
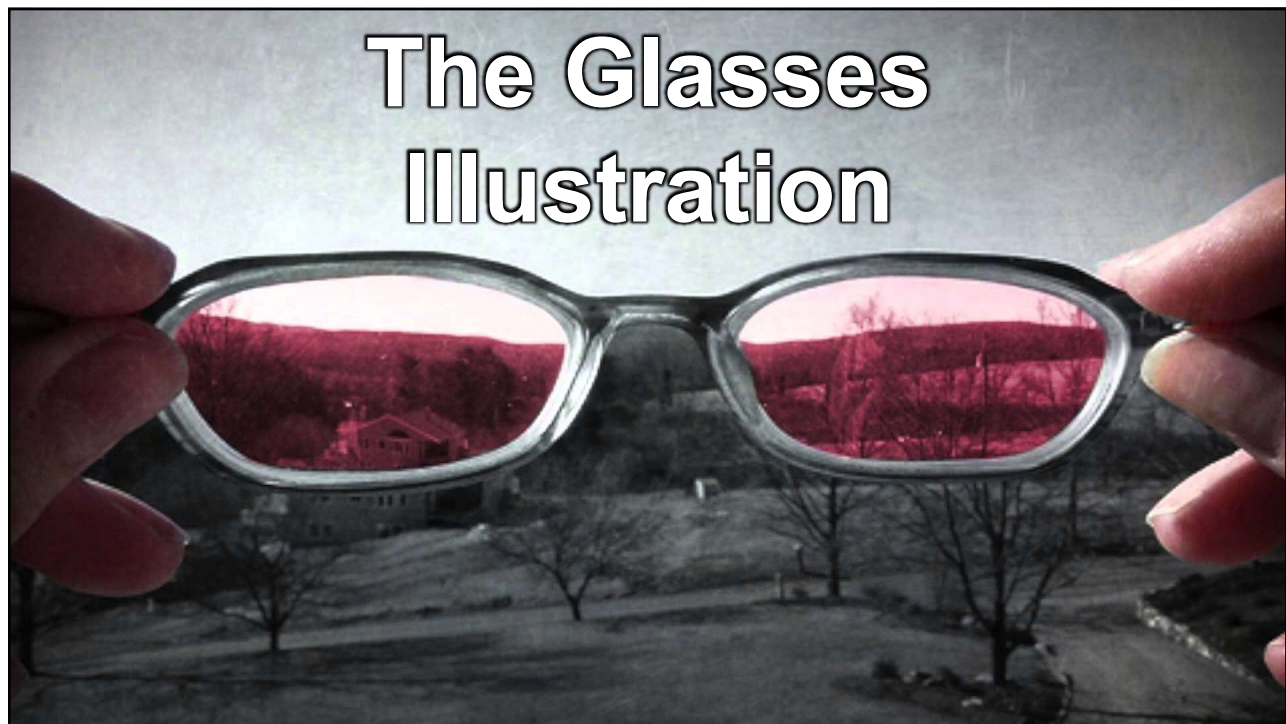





Brian K. Morley



Brian K. Morley










**The glasses we wear change everything about us...**

Did you know that each one of us wears glasses? Even if you have 20/20 vision, you wear worldview glasses, a particular set of lenses through which you view the world and interpret life. For example, how do you see God? Is He loving, relational, cruel, distant, or maybe just imaginary? And how do you see yourself? As a good person who is in control, happy, and living with purpose? Or instead as insignificant, lost, or broken? The answers to these questions have life-changing implications and deserve careful consideration.

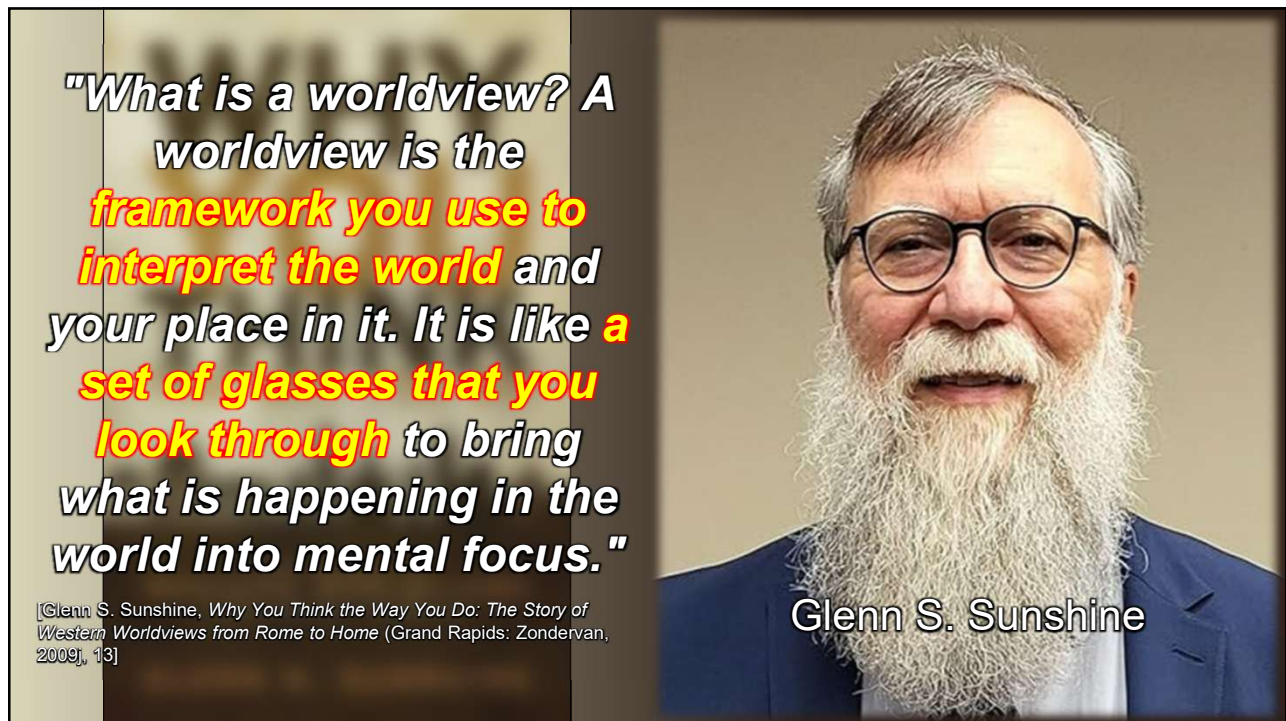
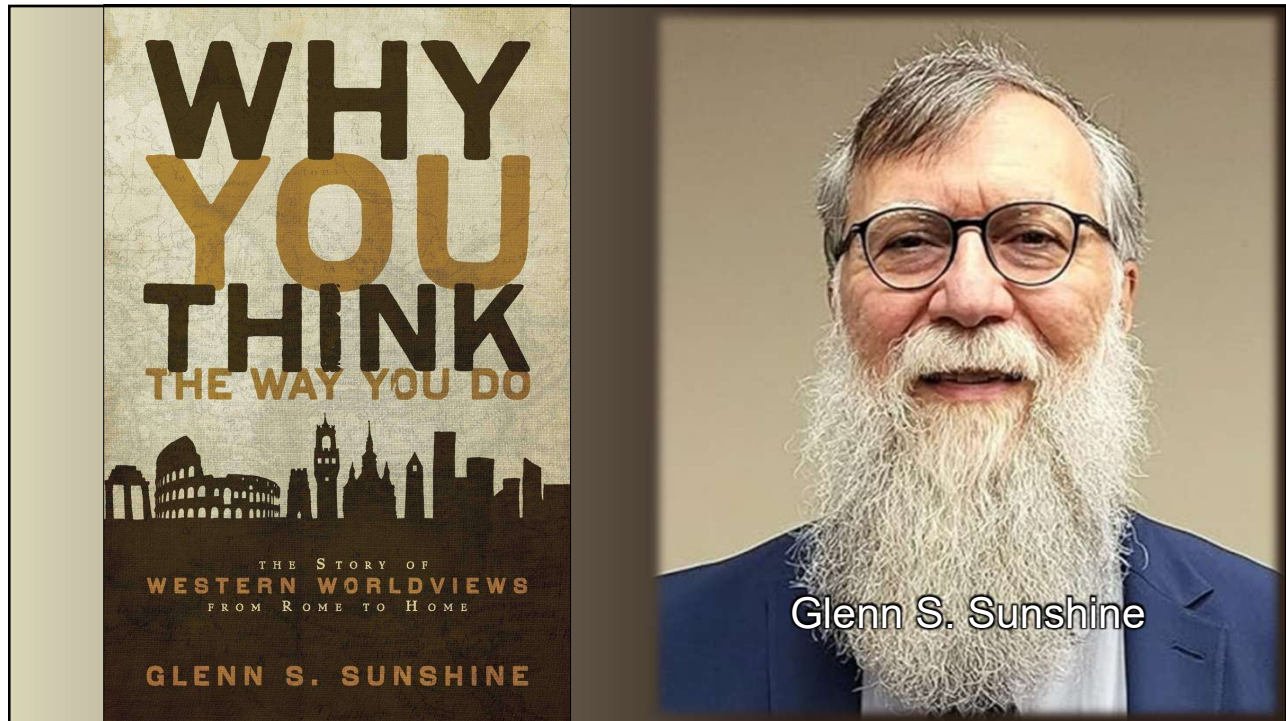
**The good news is, you can change your glasses...**

Using concise chapters, reflective poetry, and thoughtful study questions, Michael G. Garland invites you to see the world through a different set of glasses. While exploring the Christian perspective, *The Glasses We Wear* will challenge you to examine closely the lens through which you see God, the world, and yourself.

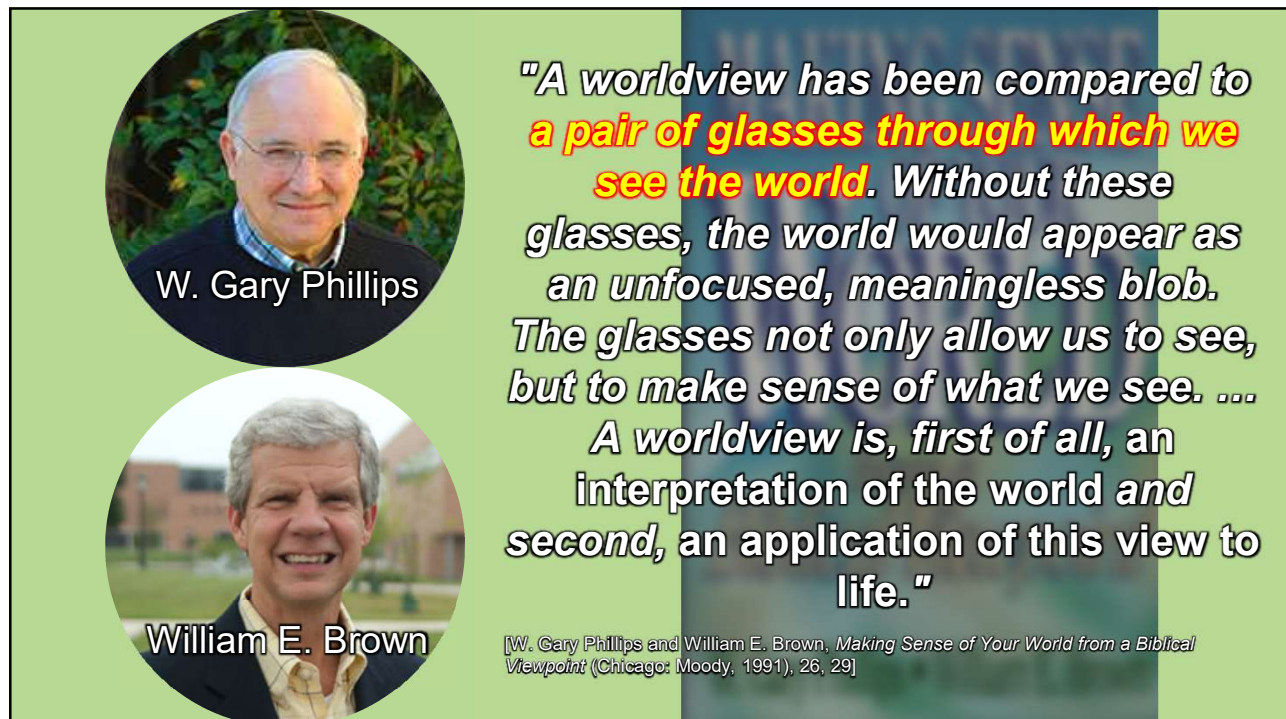
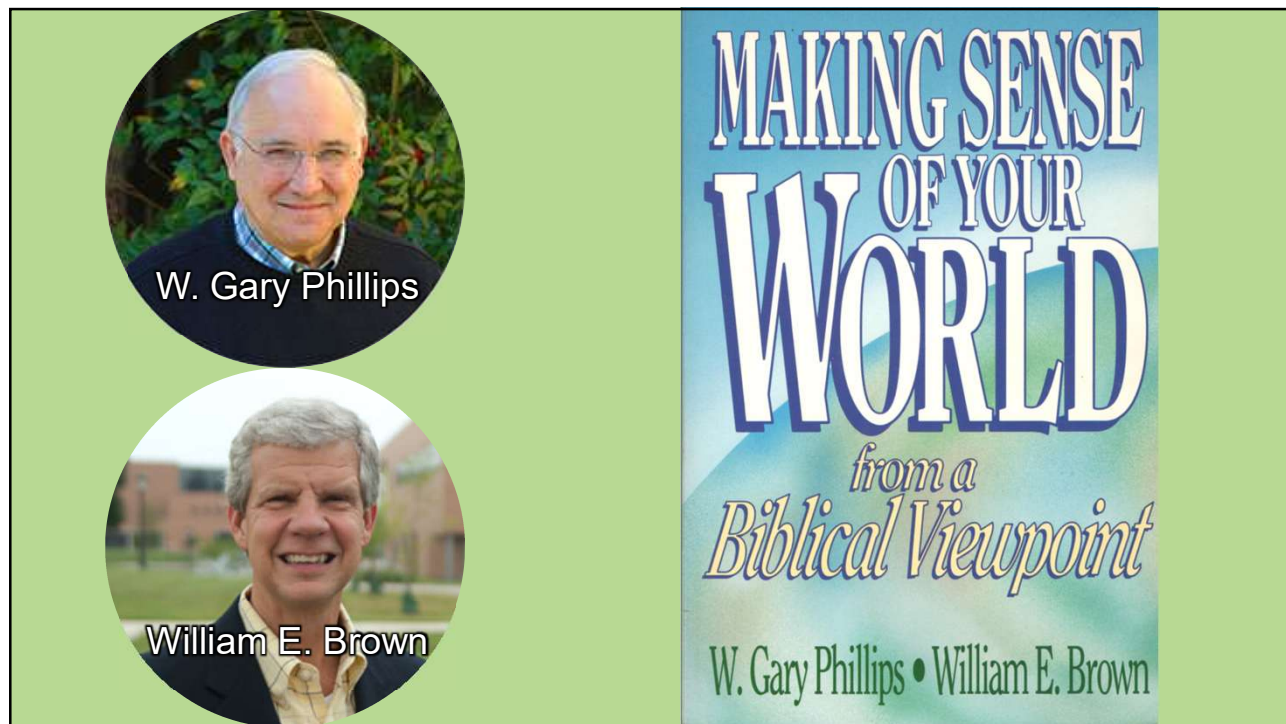
MICHAEL G. GARLAND is employed as an orthopedic physician assistant. He and his wife Joelle have four children and are awaiting the arrival of two adopted children from Haiti. They live near Portland, Oregon. Visit his blog at [www.reflect-god.com](http://www.reflect-god.com).

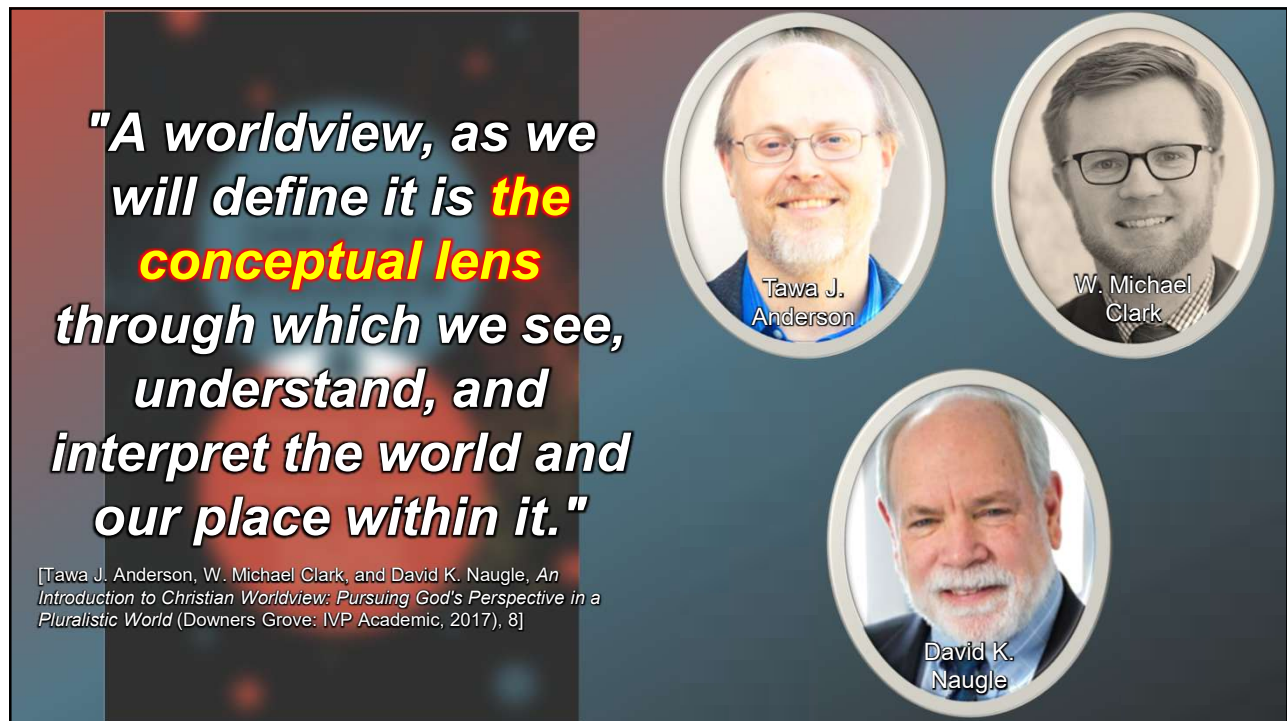
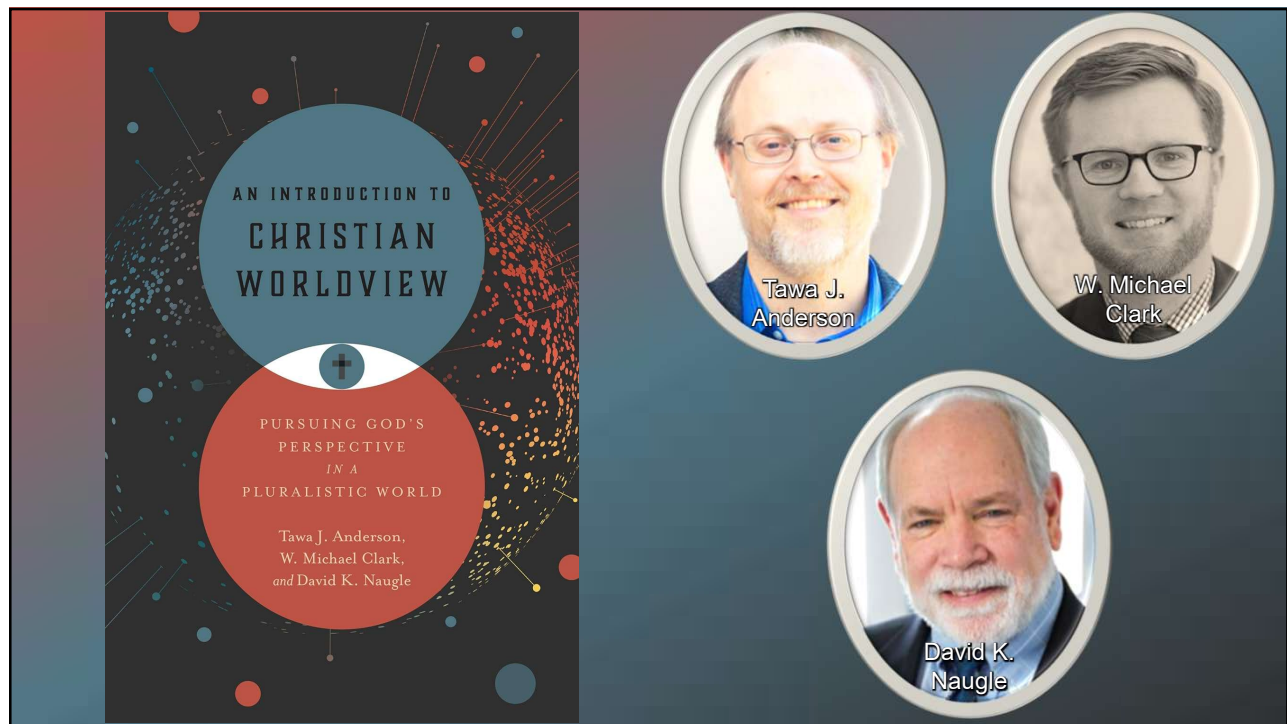




*"Did you know that each one of us wears glasses? Even if you have 20/20 vision, you wear **worldview glasses**, a particular set of lenses through which you view the world and interpret life. ... The good news is, you can change your glasses ... While exploring the Christian perspective, *The Glasses We Wear* will challenge you to examine closely the lens through which you see God, the world, and yourself."*

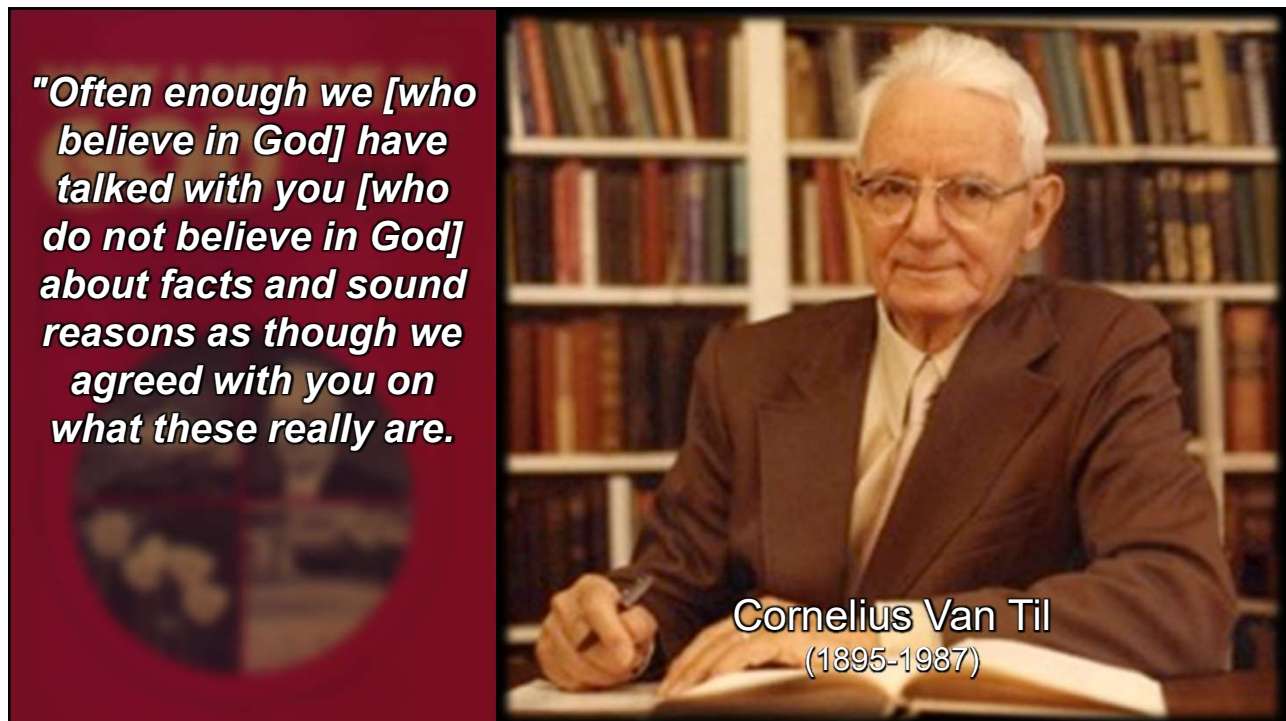
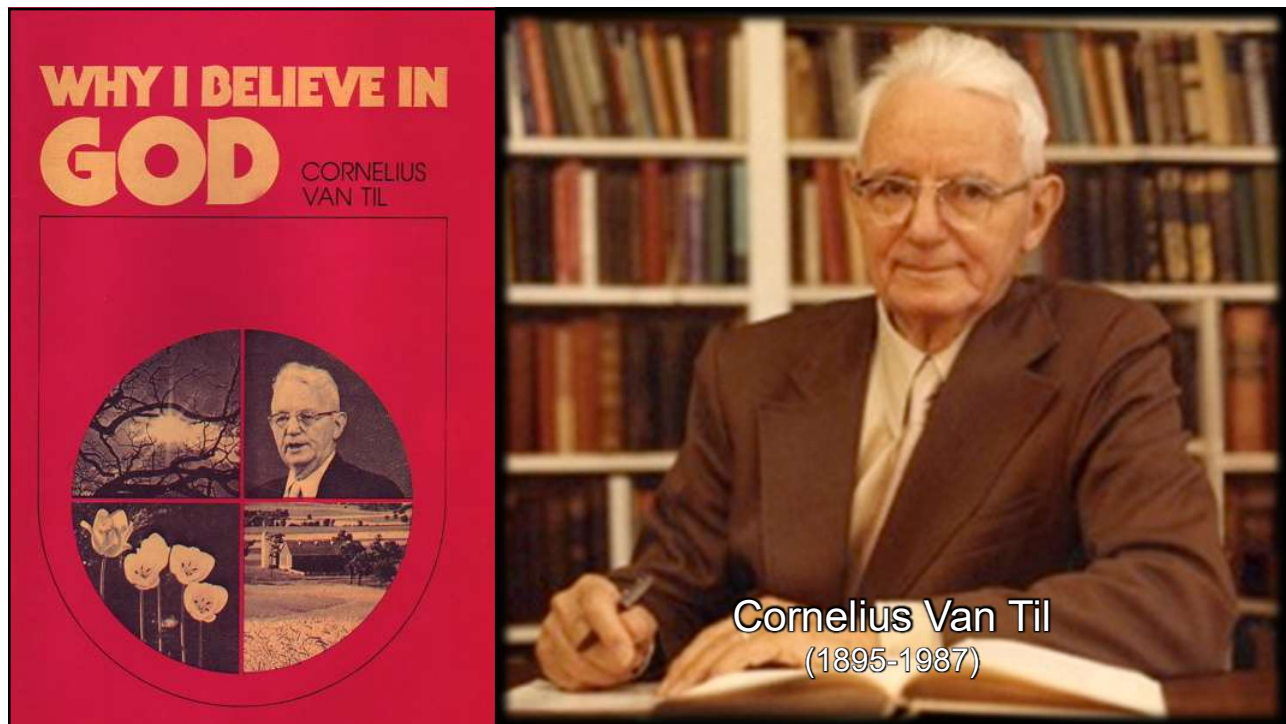






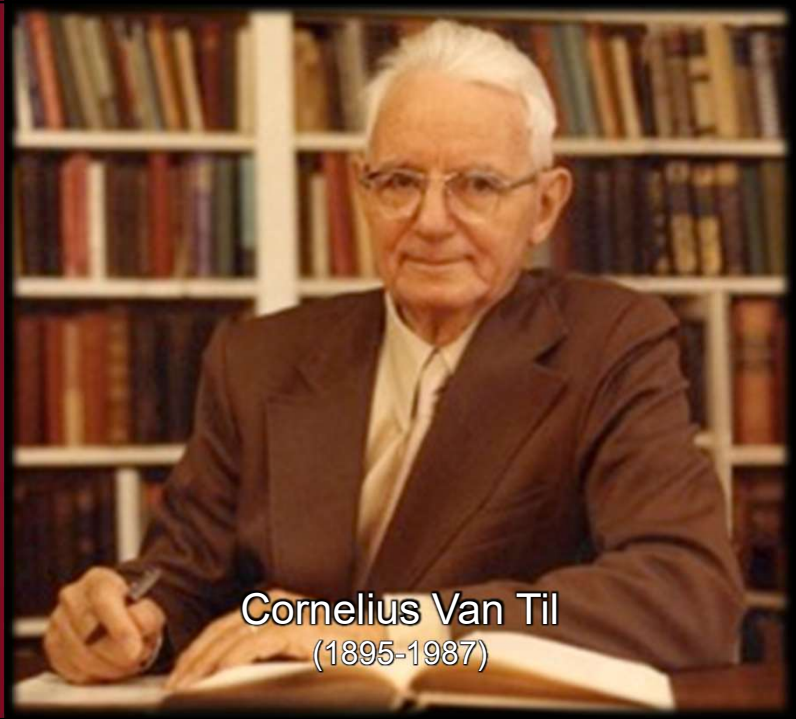






***"In our arguments for the existence of God, we have frequently assumed that you and we together have an area of knowledge on which we agree."***

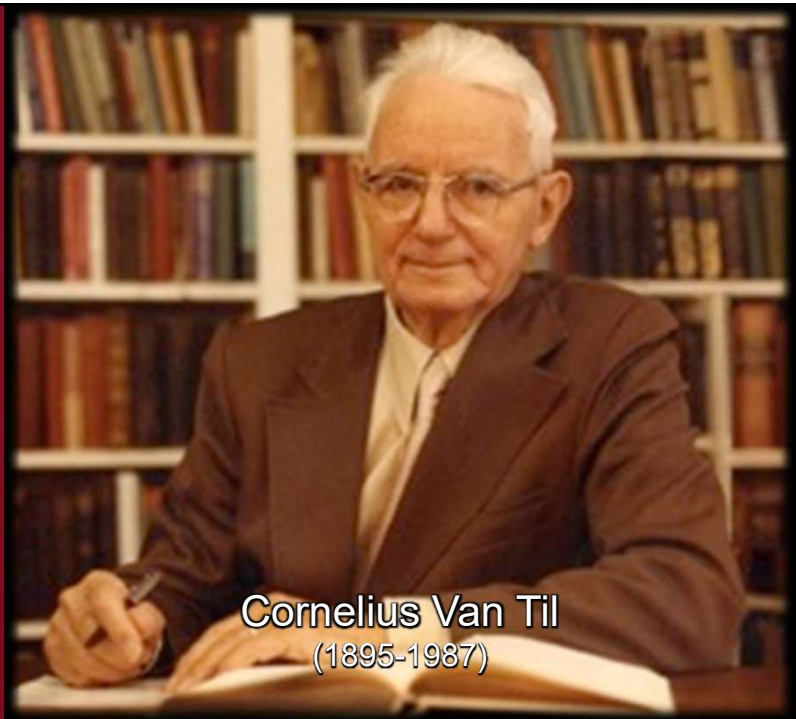
[Why I Believe in God (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, n.d.), 9]



**Cornelius Van Til**  
(1895-1987)

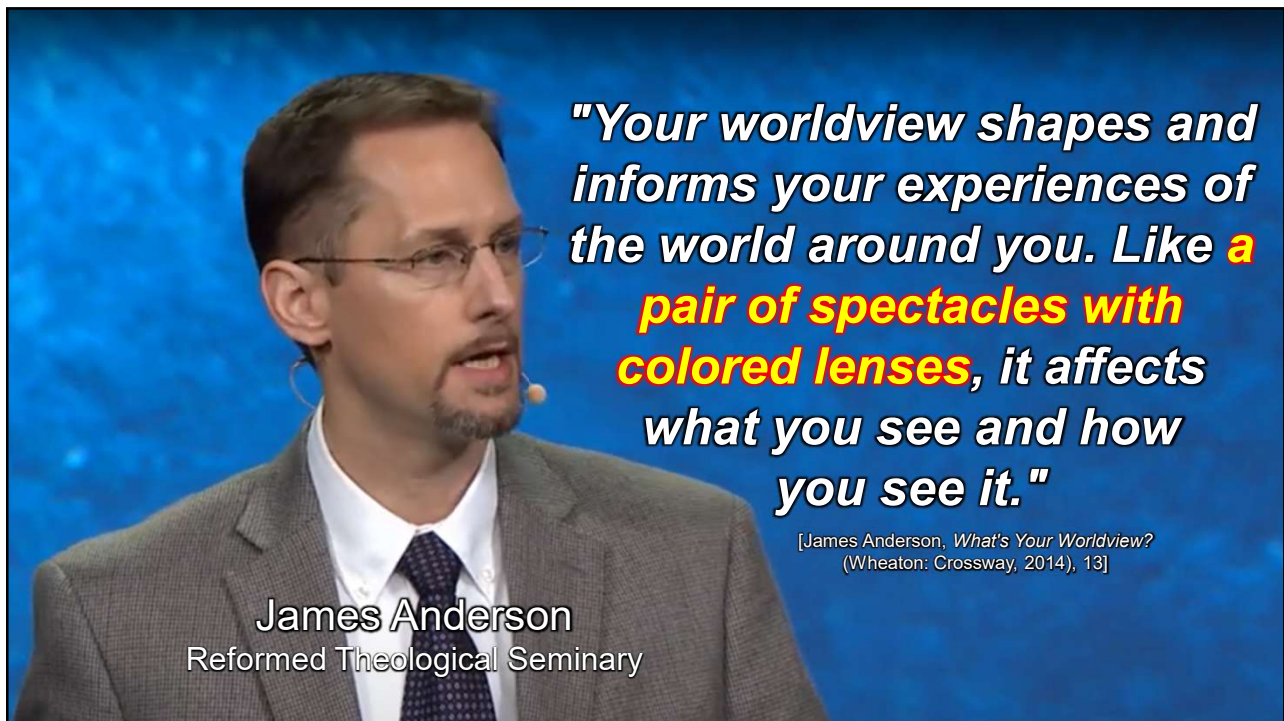
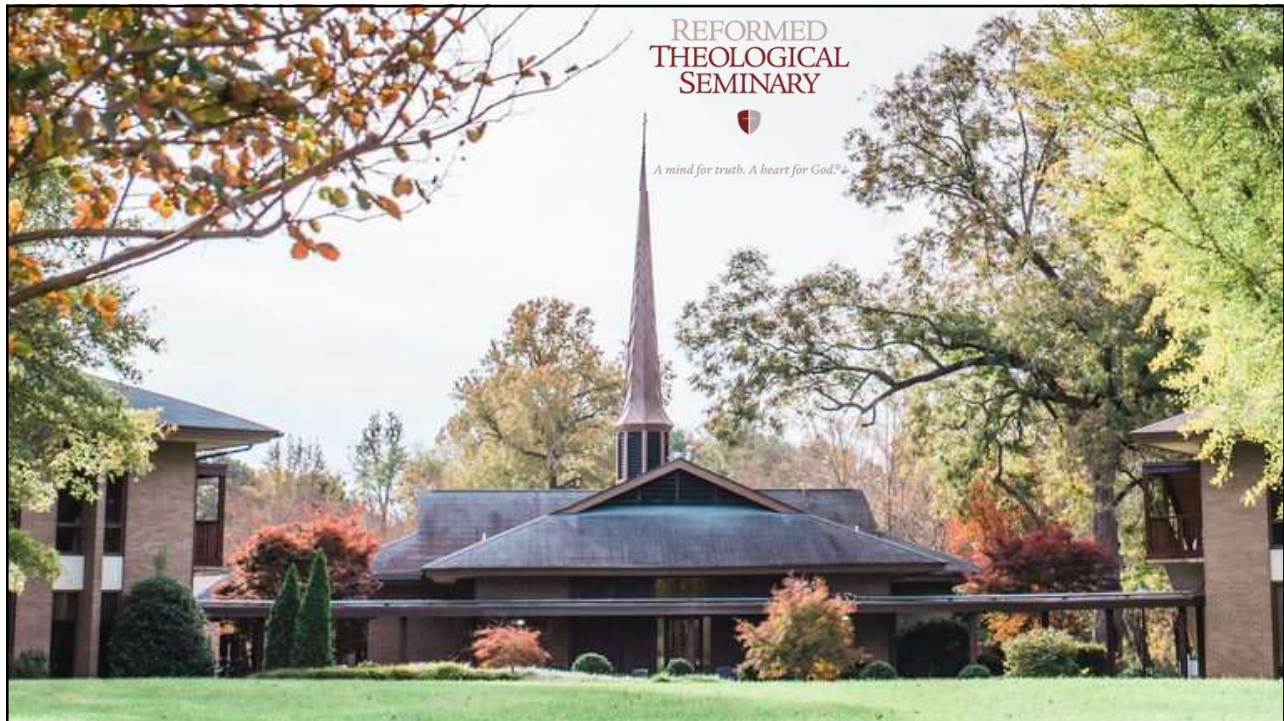
***"But we really do not grant that you see any fact in any dimension of life truly. We really think you have colored glasses on your nose when you talk about chickens and cows, as well as when you talk about the life hereafter."***

[Why I Believe in God (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, n.d.), 9]



**Cornelius Van Til**  
(1895-1987)








Voddie Baucham

*"Our worldviews function in many ways. They function like eyeglasses. You ever heard the term 'Looking at the world through rose colored glasses.' If you have a colored pair of lenses and put them on your eyes, everything looks that way. Your worldview functions like that. It is **the lens through which you see the world**—through which you view the world—and how you interpret reality."*

[Voddie Baucham, DVD "Family Driven Faith," Stand for Truth California Christian Apologetics Conference 2008]



# Probe


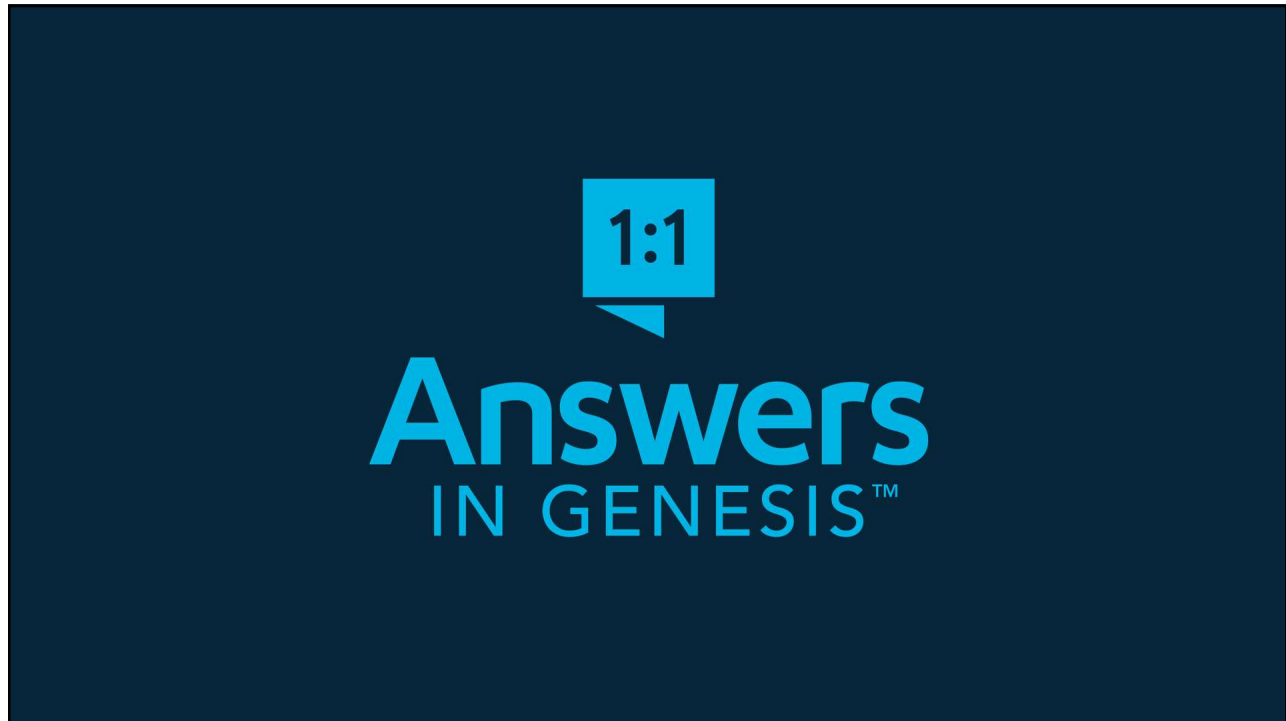
## Ministries



**Sue Bohlin**  
Probe Ministries

*"Our worldview is like **an invisible pair of glasses through which we see reality and life**. If we have the wrong prescription, the wrong beliefs and assumptions, what we see will be fuzzy and undependable. If we have the right prescription, we will see things as they are. The prescription of these glasses consists of our beliefs and the things we assume to be true. These beliefs and assumptions comprise the filter through which we experience and interpret life. And we all have a filter."*

[Sue Bohlin, "What a Biblical Worldview Looks Like," Probe Ministries, <https://probe.org/what-a-biblical-worldview-looks-like/>, accessed 09/02/25]


A portrait of Brandon Clay, a man with dark hair and a beard, smiling, wearing a blue t-shirt, standing in front of green foliage.

Brandon Clay  
(Answers in Genesis)

*"Picture two people in a living room. A man puts on green-colored glasses, and a woman puts on red-colored glasses. Everything the man sees has a green tint while everything the woman sees has a red shade. The couch may be brown, but to the man it will be a greenish-brown. The chair may be white, but to the woman it will have a pinkish-hue. **Everything is colored by the glasses the man and the woman wear. That's what happens with a worldview.**"*

[Brandon Clay, "Only Two Worldviews," *Answers in Genesis*, <https://answersingenesis.org/worldview/only-two-worldviews/>, accessed 09/02/25]






**Patricia Engler**  
(Answers in Genesis)

***"Like a pair of glasses that colors everything we see, a worldview is the set of beliefs we use to interpret the world around us. We all observe the same world—the same humans, the same rock formations, the same scientific data. But how we understand and explain our observations depends upon our worldview."***

[Patricia Engler, "A Biblical Perspective: A Worldview Checkup," Answers in Genesis, <https://answersingenesis.org/worldview/biblical-prescription-worldview-checkup/>, accessed 09/02/25]



**REASONS**  
**to BELIEVE**

A portrait of Kenneth Samples, a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. His arms are crossed, and a watch is visible on his left wrist.

Kenneth Samples

*"In the simplest terms, a worldview may be defined as how one sees life and the world at large. In this manner it can be compared to **a pair of glasses**. How a person makes sense of the world depends upon that person's 'vision,' so to speak. The interpretive 'lens' helps people make sense of life and comprehend the world around them. Sometimes the lens brings clarity, and other times it can distort reality."*

[Ken Samples, Reasons to Believe (RTB):  
<http://www.reasons.org/articles/what-in-the-world-is-a-worldview>,  
accessed 06/24/21]





Impact 360 Institute

# WORLDVIEW



Impact 360 Institute

# WORLDVIEW

***"A worldview is **the set of lenses through which you see the world around you.** ... Through your worldview, you interpret life in a particular way. It affects how you think, how you feel, and you live day to day."***

[Impact 360 Institute, "What's Your Worldview (Quiz)," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXnSE0uvwzM>, accessed 09/02/25]





*"A person's worldview consists of the values, ideas or the fundamental belief system that determines his attitudes, beliefs and ultimately, actions. ... Jeff Baldwin, a fellow at the Texas-based Worldview Academy, says worldview 'is like **an invisible pair of eyeglasses**—glasses you put on to help you see reality clearly. If you choose the right pair of glasses, you can see everything vividly and can behave in sync with the real world. ... But if you choose the wrong pair of glasses, you may find yourself in a worse plight than the blind man - thinking you see clearly when in reality your vision is severely distorted.' To choose the 'right' glasses, you have to first understand and embrace the true worldview."*

[Tracy F. Munsil, Focus on the Family: <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/christian-worldview/whats-a-christian-worldview/whats-your-worldview>, accessed 09/04/25]



Tracy F. Munsil

*"A worldview is like **that set of glasses, the lenses of which are made up of our ideas, beliefs and feelings and experiences**. This concept is often described today using the word narrative, which also gets at the fact that our perspective on life is, in many ways, story-like."*

[Adam R. Holz, "Entertainment, Worldview, and Your Family, Focus on the Family, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/entertainment-worldview-and-your-family/>, accessed 09/03/25]



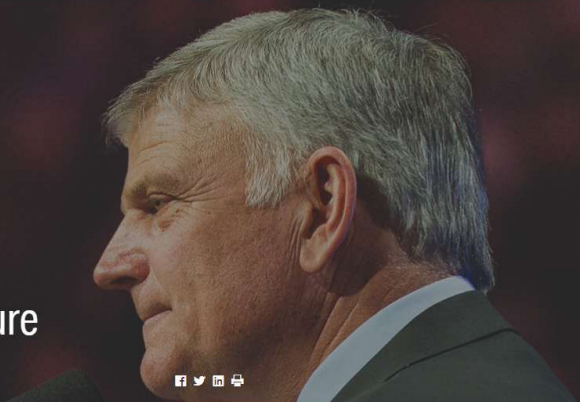
Adam R. Holz



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## The Lens of Scripture

BY FRANKLIN GRAHAM | © MARCH 1, 2018 | FRANKLIN GRAHAM

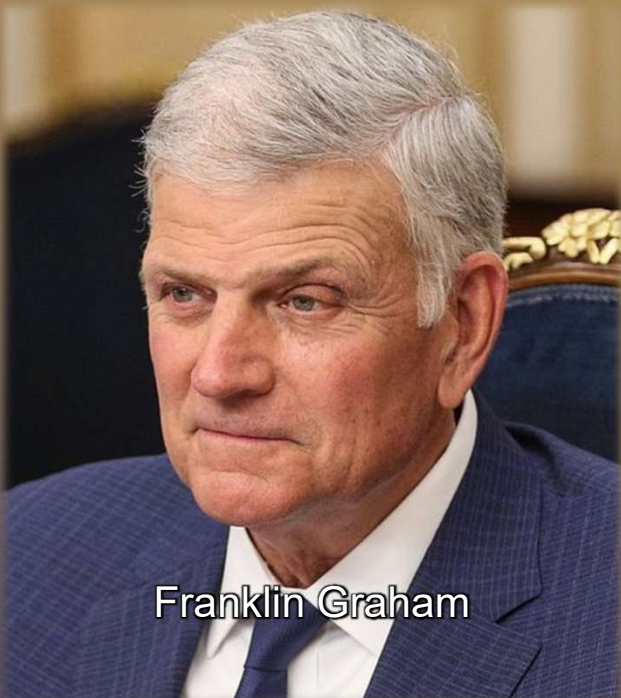
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*Editor's Note: This article was originally published in March 2018, but Franklin Graham's words still ring true in a world that has only strayed farther from God's standards.*

In late January, the United States Senate failed by nine votes to pass legislation that would have banned abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy. Since *Roe v. Wade* made abortion legal in 1973, more than 60 million children have been murdered in their mothers' wombs.

***"A worldview is the way a person views the world and himself. It is the lens through which an individual sees issues and relationships, and it becomes the foundation and framework for all decision making."***

[Franklin Graham, "The Lens of Scripture," <https://decisionmagazine.com/lens-of-scripture/>, accessed 02/04/25]



Franklin Graham



**"A worldview is the way a person views the world and himself. It is the lens through which an individual sees issues and relationships, and it becomes the foundation and framework for all decision making."**

[Franklin Graham, "The Lens of Scripture,"  
<https://decisionmagazine.com/lens-of-scripture/>, accessed 02/04/25]

**Is it the lens through which an individual sees worldviews themselves?**

**If so, then how can one have an objective knowledge of different worldviews?**


**If a worldview "becomes the foundation and framework for all decision making" then does it become the framework for one's decision about worldviews?**

MINISTRY 127

Encouraging, Equipping, and Engaging Ideas from Local Church Leaders

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## What Is a Biblical Worldview?

Looking at the World from God's Viewpoint


By [Dr. Mike Norris](#) Thursday, January 6, 2011

Everybody has a worldview! From the pigmy tribes in the Congo to the cufflink staffer in the White House, everybody has a philosophy of how they view the world.


Simply put, a worldview is simply the way that a human being looks at life—the way we perceive things.

Everyone has a lens that they look at the world through. And the way we look at the world makes all the difference in the world. It determines how we define reality, as well as how we relate to each other.

Everybody has a lens through which they interpret where life came from, and why bad things happen, and what their



Article by  
**Dr. Mike Norris**  
 Senior Pastor of Franklin Road Baptist Church



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***"Everyone has a lens that they look at the world through. And the way we look at the world makes all the difference in the world. It determines how we define reality, as well as how we relate to each other."***

[Mike Norris, "What Is a Biblical Worldview?"  
[<http://ministry127.com/christian-living/what-is-a-biblical-worldview>,  
assessed 09/04/25]



Mike Norris

***"Everyone has a lens that they look at the world through. And the way we look at the world makes all the difference in the world. It **determines how we define reality**, as well as how we relate to each other."***

[Mike Norris, "What Is a Biblical Worldview?"  
[<http://ministry127.com/christian-living/what-is-a-biblical-worldview>,  
assessed 09/04/25]

*If the lens "determines how we define reality," then it will determine how we define the reality of the lenses themselves.*

*In other words, one's worldview will determine how one defines the reality of worldviews.*

*But if our worldview determines how we define the reality of worldviews, then we cannot know whether our definition of the reality of a given worldview is objectively true.*




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### What is a Biblical Worldview?



What is a Biblical worldview? Everyone has a worldview. Whether or not we realize it, we all have certain presuppositions and biases that affect the way we view all of life and reality. A worldview is like a set of lenses which taint our vision or alter the way we perceive the world around us. Our worldview is formed by our education, our upbringing, the culture we live in, the books we read, the media and movies we absorb, etc. For many people their worldview is simply something they have absorbed by osmosis from their surrounding cultural influences. They have never thought strategically about what they believe and wouldn't be able to give a rational defense of their beliefs to others."

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***"What is a Christian Worldview? Everyone has a worldview. Whether or not we realize it, we all have certain presuppositions and biases that affect the way we view all of life and reality. A worldview is like a set of lenses which taint our vision or alter the way we perceive the world around us. Our worldview is formed by our education, our upbringing, the culture we live in, the books we read, the media and movies we absorb, etc. For many people their worldview is simply something they have absorbed by osmosis from their surrounding cultural influences. They have never thought strategically about what they believe and wouldn't be able to give a rational defense of their beliefs to others."***

[Israel Wayne "What Is a Biblical Worldview?"  
http://www.christianworldview.net/, assessed 09/04/25]



Israel Wayne

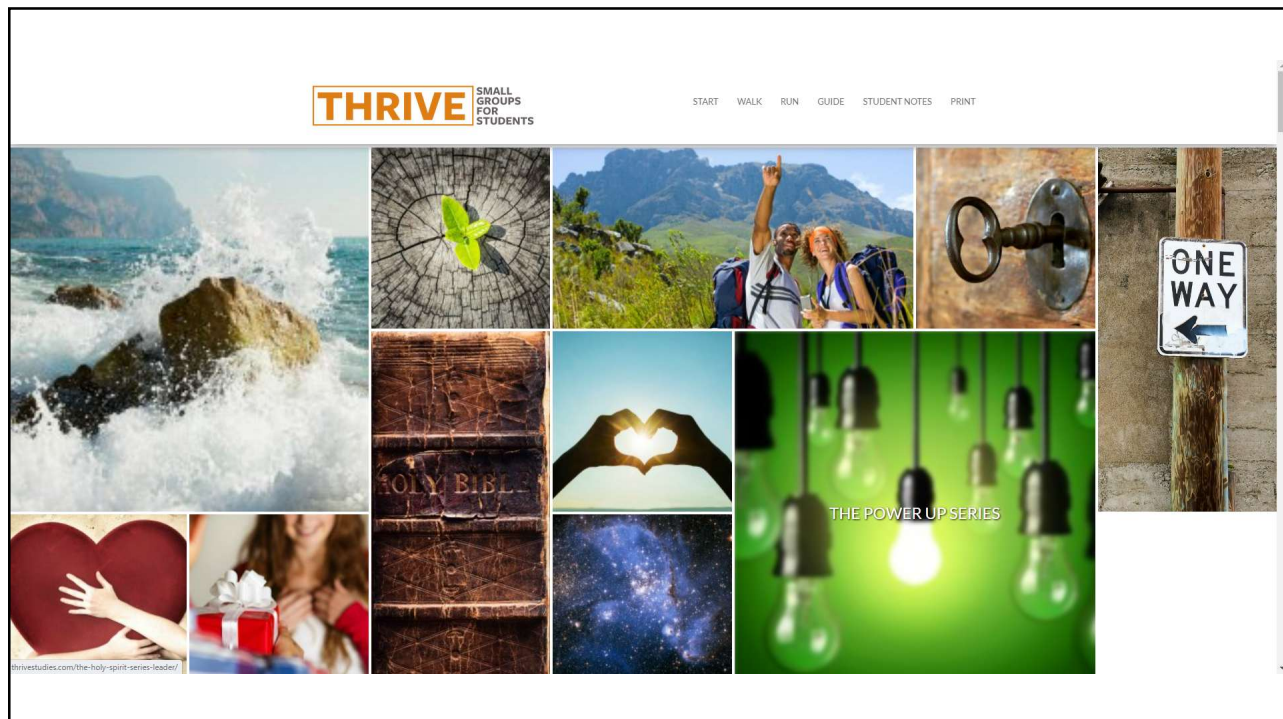
*"What is a Christian Worldview? Everyone has a worldview. Whether or not we realize it, we all have **certain presuppositions and biases** that **affect the way we view all of life and reality**. A worldview is like a set of lenses which **taint our vision or alter the way we perceive the world around us**. Our worldview is formed by our education, our upbringing, the culture we live in, the books we read, the media and movies we absorb, etc. For many people their worldview is simply something they have absorbed by osmosis from their surrounding cultural influences. They have never thought strategically about what they believe and wouldn't be able to give a rational defense of their beliefs to others."*

[Israel Wayne "What Is a Biblical Worldview?"  
<http://www.christianworldview.net/>, assessed 02/04/25]

*If "certain presuppositions and biases ... affect the way we view all of life and reality," which "alter the way we perceive the world around us," then such presuppositions and bias will alter the way we see worldviews.*

*Thus, we would not be able to have objective knowledge about worldviews themselves.*

*But, if we cannot have objective knowledge about worldviews themselves, then we cannot whether a given worldview is true.*










***"A worldview is like the glasses through which we see the world. ... everything looks a little different depending on which one we're looking through."***

["Worldview: It's How You See the World"  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Xs--PCv3OJS\\_fm5QJkLgVbXRa8ziNnc3/View](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Xs--PCv3OJS_fm5QJkLgVbXRa8ziNnc3/View), CRU, assessed 09/04/25]

***If "everything looks a little different" depending upon which worldview one is looking through, then how can we know when we are objectively seeing what a given worldview is?***




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### Why Should I Learn About Other Worldviews?

by Amy Barnard | Oct 16, 2020 | Culture and Worldview | 2 comments



Ask any Wilberforce Academy mentee about their top takeaways from their time with Wilberforce and you will likely here one word over and over: Worldview. Understanding the concept of worldviews is foundational to much of what we do at the Academy, and today we look at six reasons for studying

***"We define worldview as a big story, shaped by deep assumptions, that generates great allegiance and defines a way of living. It's the idea that people have a comprehensive view of the story of reality that influences the way they interpret the world. By understanding these worldviews we can avoid many of the pitfalls that derail communication in our relationships or attempts to share the Gospel, as well as impact our ability to effect redemptive change in a community."***

[Amy Barnard, "Why Should I Learn about Other Worldviews?"  
<https://www.wilberforceii.org/2020/10/16/2020-10-16-why-should-i-learn-about-other-worldviews/>, 09/04/25]

Archived  
 October 2020  
 February 2022  
 July 2021



***If "everything looks a little different" depending upon which worldview one is looking through, then how can we know when we are objectively seeing what a given worldview is?***

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Ruth McDonald

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WHAT IN THE  
WORLDVIEW?

What in the Worldview?

By Ruth McDonald

I'll never forget the day I rode home from the doctor wearing new cat-eye, tortoise-shell glasses. Not only did I feel very cute and stylish, I was in absolute awe of the details of the world outside my daddy's car. Until that day, I had seen only a small fraction of the leaves, birds, flowers, and road signs. And I hadn't even realized it.

We all see the world through an individual set of glasses, figuratively speaking. With the correct prescription, we can see the world as it really is. If our prescription is incorrect, however, the view is distorted, though we may or may not realize it. Simply put, the way we view and interpret the world around us is our worldview.

Throughout history, people have attempted to answer common questions about the world. Where did all of this come from? What happens to us after we die? Is there absolute right and wrong? If there is, how do we know? What is the standard for making moral, legal, and ethical decisions?

The very fact that we desire to answer such questions is a gift from God. According to Genesis, God created man in His own image, setting humans apart from all other created beings. As smart as our pets may be, they are not prone to ponder philosophical questions. Solomon wrote of



Ruth McDonald

*"We all see the world through an individual set of glasses, figuratively speaking. With the correct prescription, we can see the world as it really is. If our prescription is incorrect, however, the view is distorted, though we may or may not realize it. Simply put, the way we view and interpret the world around us is our worldview."*

[Ruth McDonald "What is a Worldview?"  
[https://www.nafwb.org/onemag/what\\_worldview.htm](https://www.nafwb.org/onemag/what_worldview.htm), accessed 09/04/25]

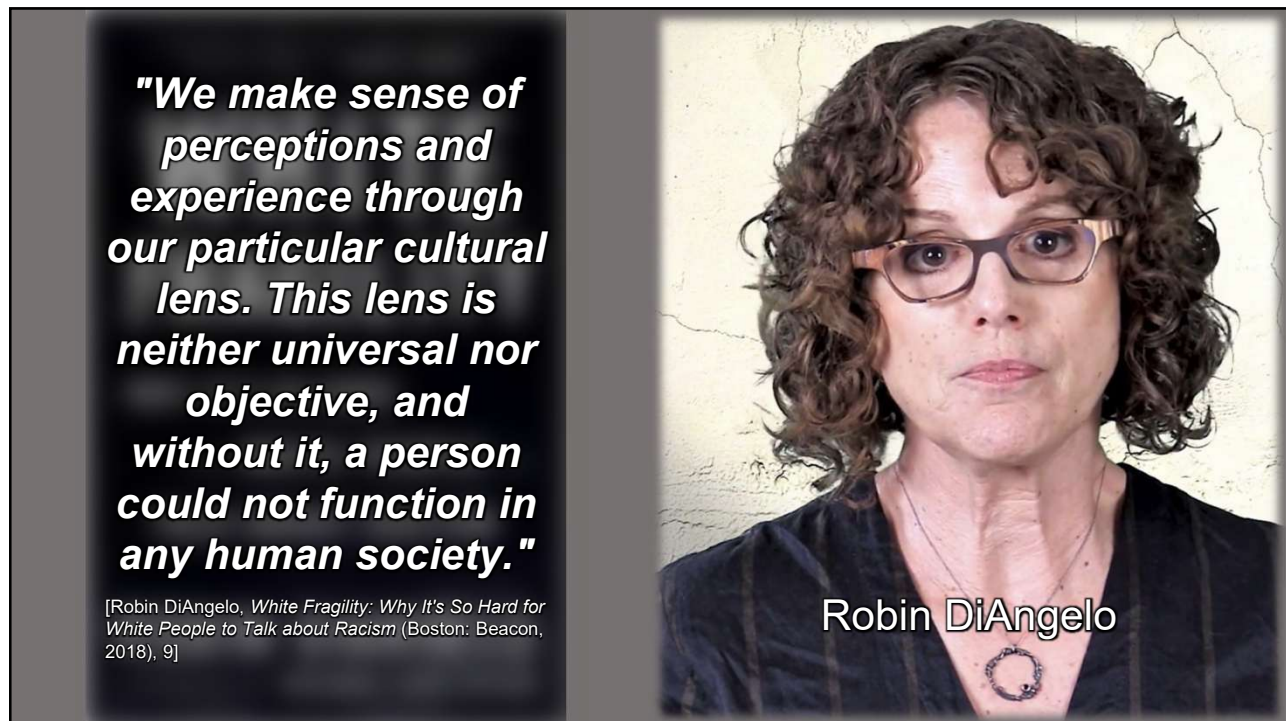
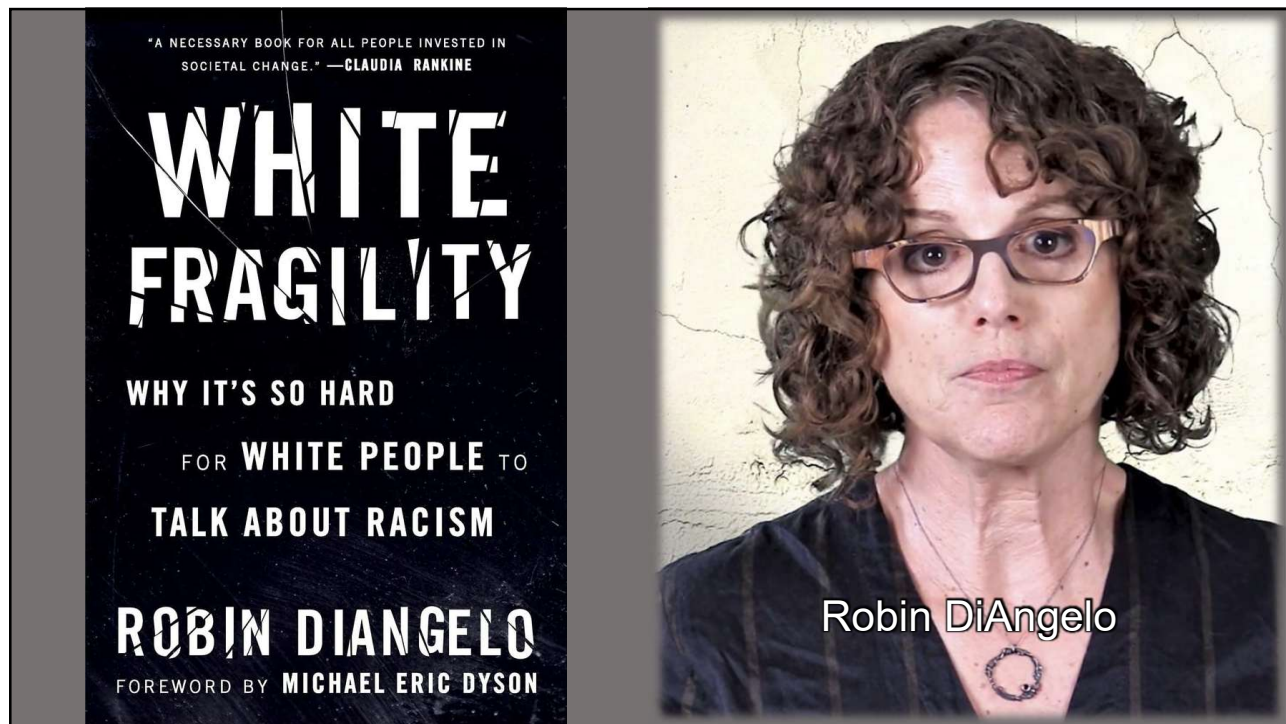


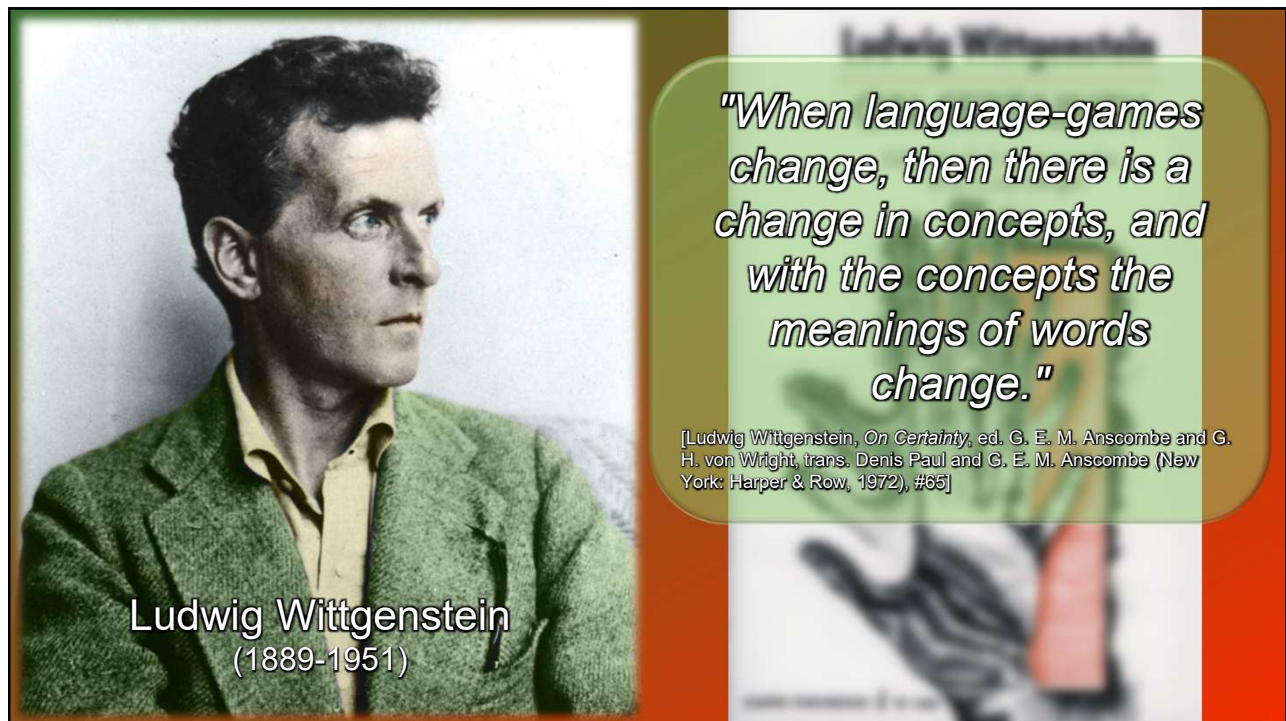
*If "the way we view and interpret the world around us is our worldview" which is like seeing "the world through" a "set of glasses," then how could we know when our "prescription" is correct or incorrect?*

*"We all see **the world through** an individual **set of glasses**, figuratively speaking. With the correct prescription, we can see the world as it really is. If our prescription is incorrect, however, the view is distorted, though we may or may not realize it. Simply put, **the way we view and interpret the world around us is our worldview.**"*

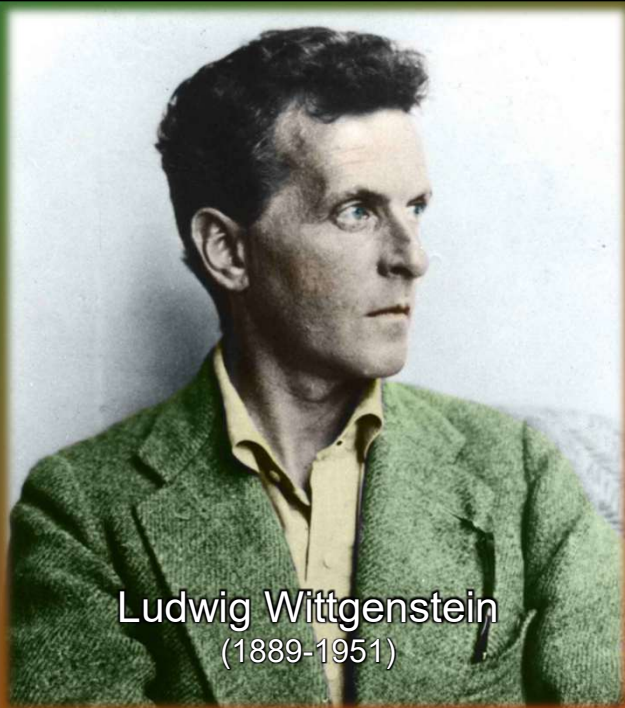
[Ruth McDonald "What is a Worldview?"  
[https://www.nafwb.org/onemag/what\\_worldview.htm](https://www.nafwb.org/onemag/what_worldview.htm), accessed 09/04/25]







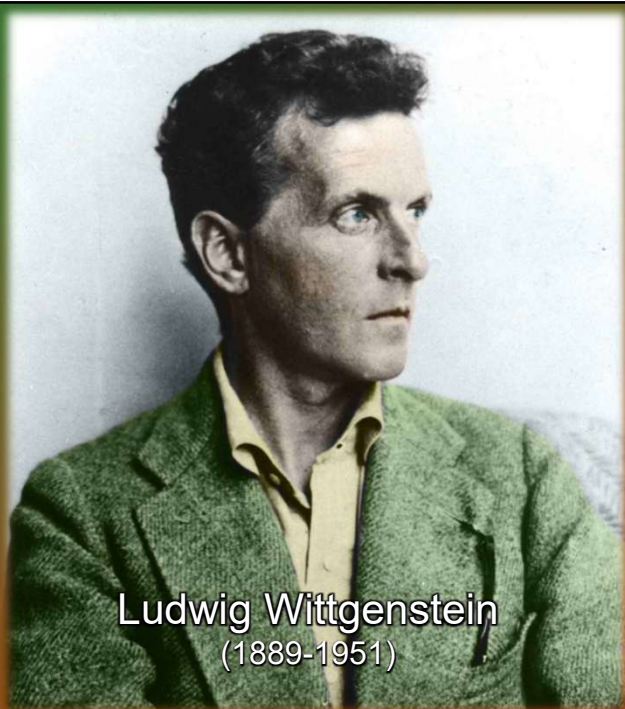




Ludwig Wittgenstein  
(1889-1951)

*"But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor did I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false."*

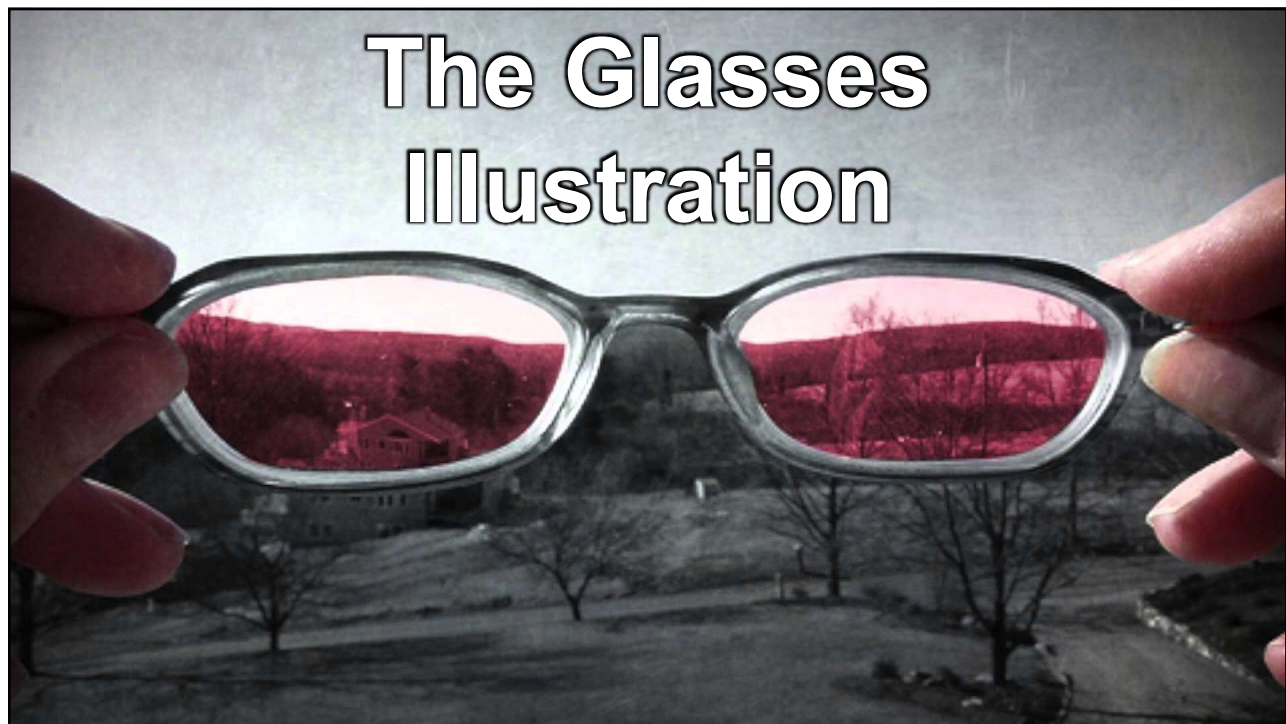
[Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, #94]



Ludwig Wittgenstein  
(1889-1951)

*"It would be nonsense to say that we regard something as sure evidence because it is certainly true. Rather, we must first determine the role of deciding for or against a proposition."*

[Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, #197-198]



## PERSPECTIVISM

*The notion that everyone has their own perspective about the world and that nobody's perspective is any more or less legitimate than anyone else's.*



# PERSPECTIVISM

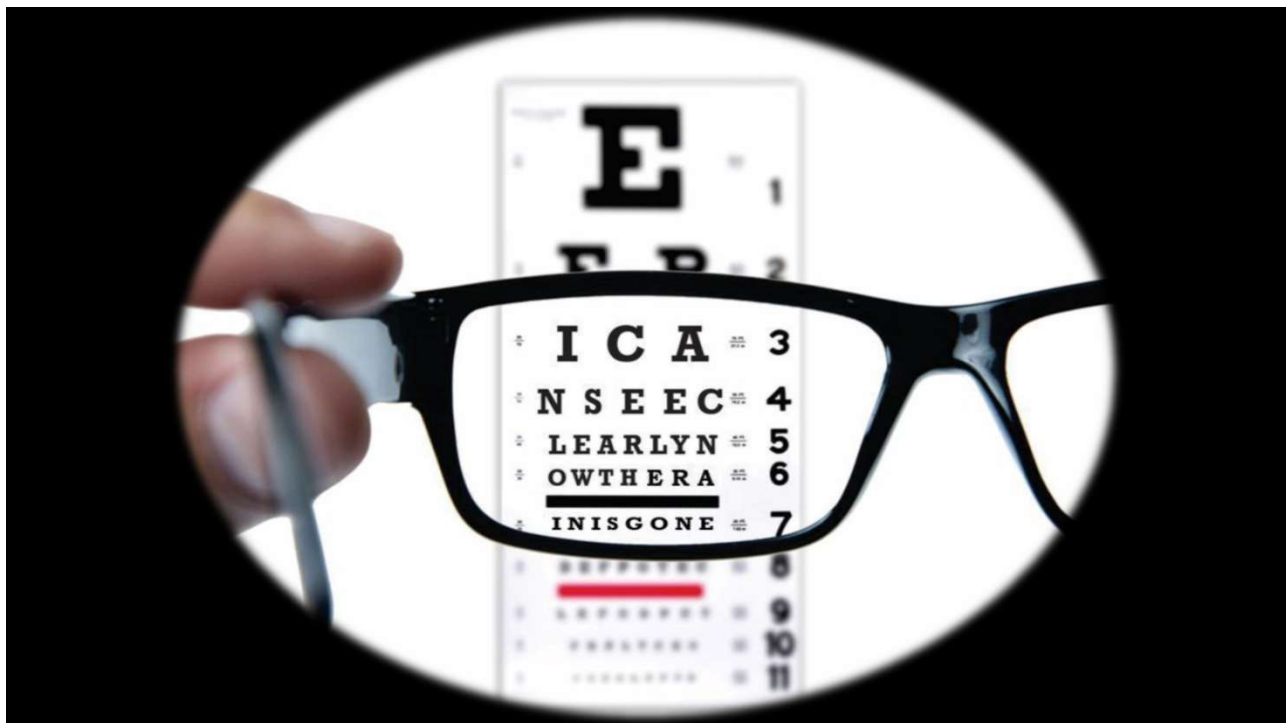
## ∞Problems∞

*How can one choose a world view without being affected by his own world view while making the choice?*

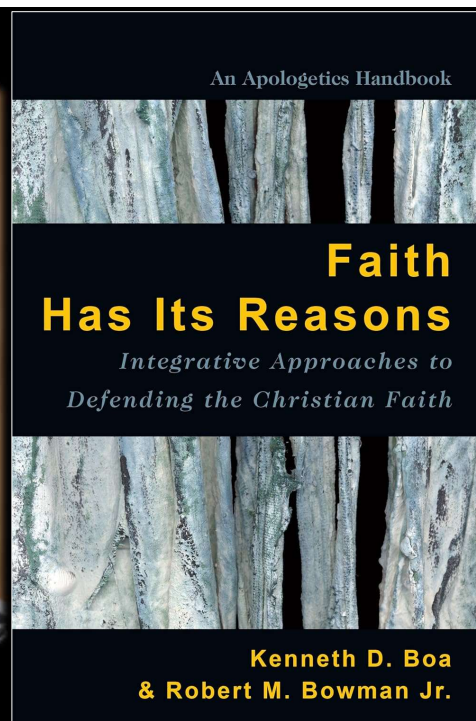
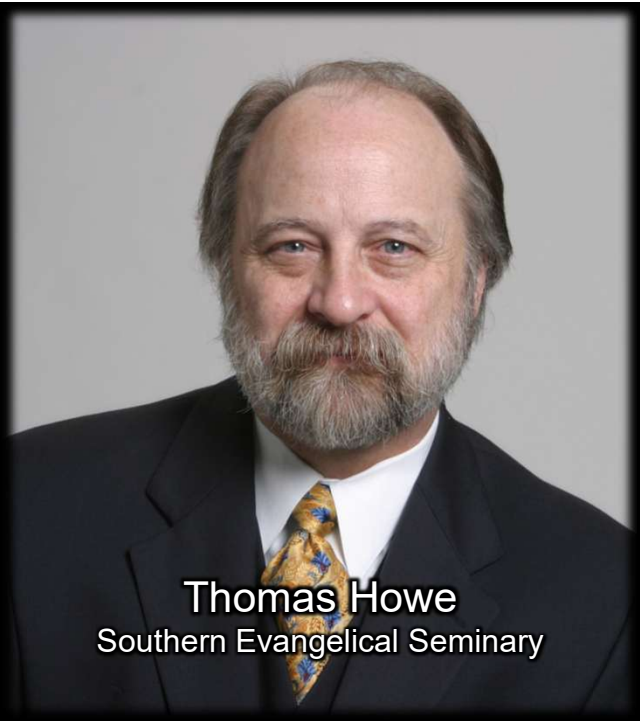
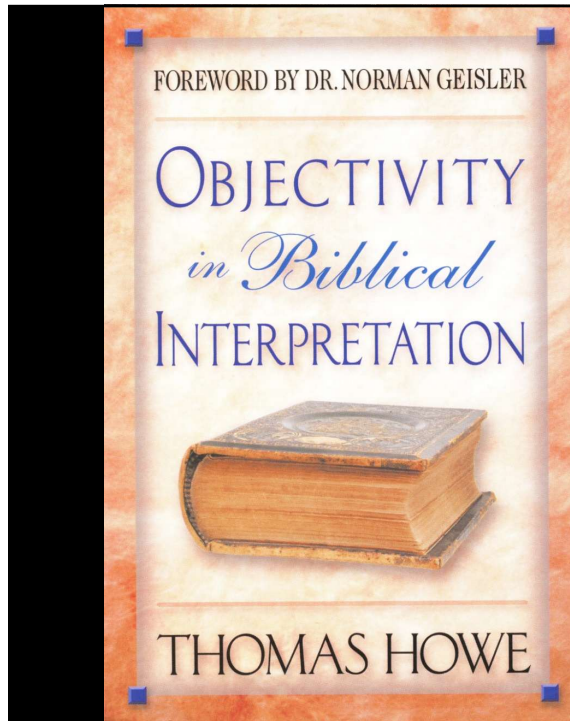
# PERSPECTIVISM

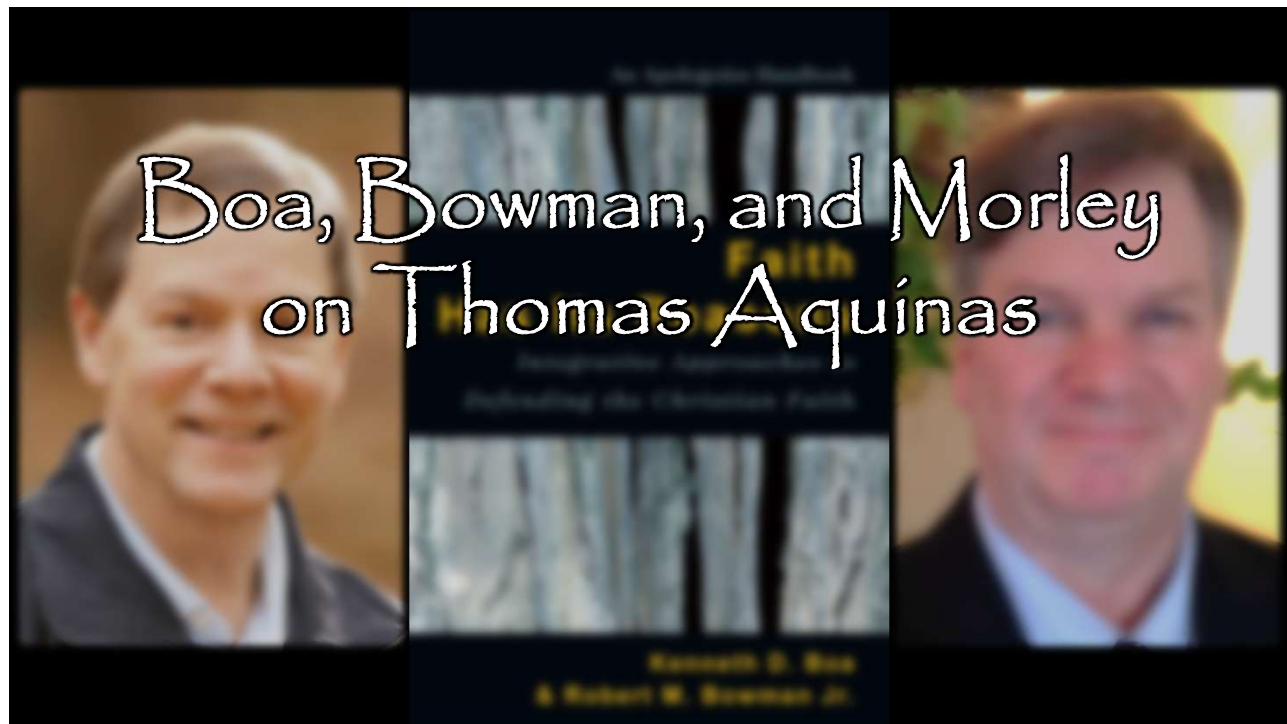
## ∞Problems∞

*Don't we actually want something more from our world view than merely choosing our preferences?*









### Four Approaches to Apologetics

Classical	Evidentialist	Reformed	Fideist
proof	defense	refutation	persuasion
rational	empirical	authoritarian	intuitive
Thomas Aquinas	Joseph Butler	John Calvin	Martin Luther
Norman Geisler	John W. Montgomery	Cornelius Van Til	Søren Kierkegaard



### Four Approaches to Apologetics

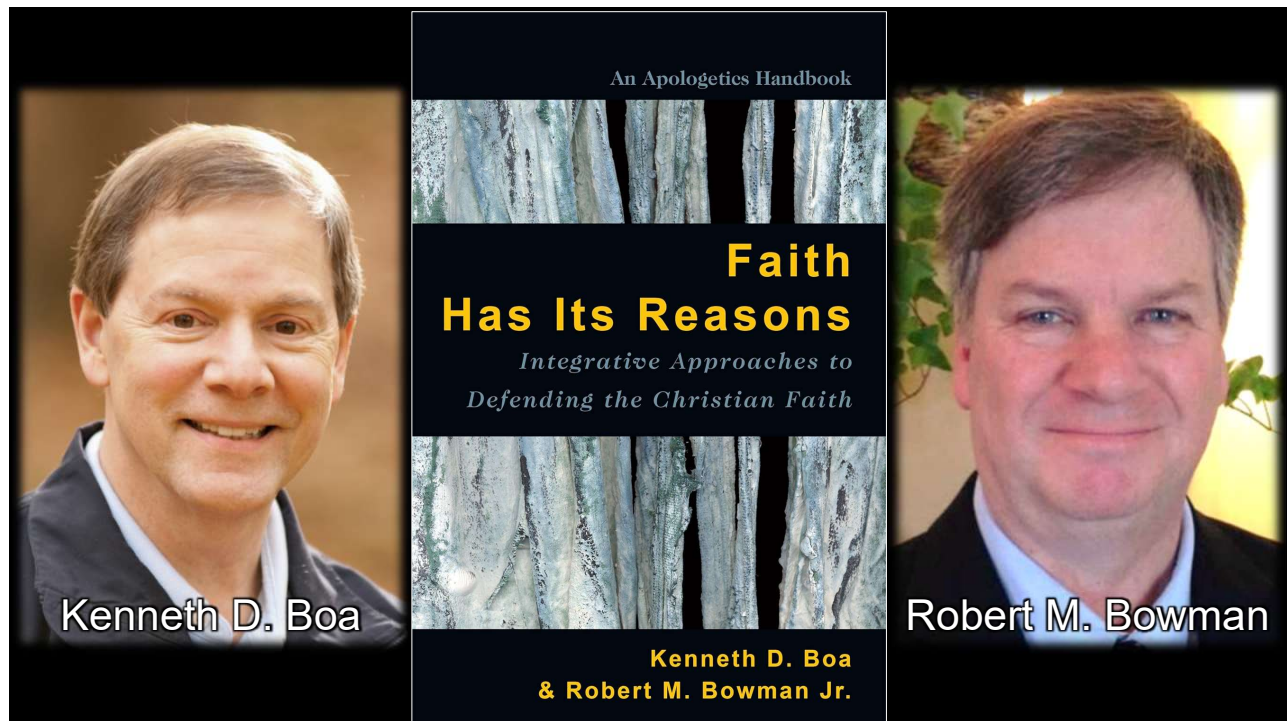
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**"These proofs  
(according to Aquinas  
himself) show that **a  
God exists**, but do not  
prove God **per se**; for  
Thomas, faith in God  
ought to be based on  
his revelation in  
Scripture, not on  
the proofs."**

[Ken Boa and Robert Bowman, *Faith Has Its  
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Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. , 20/44]




Kenneth D. Boa

Robert M. Bowman



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[Ken Boa and Robert Bowman, *Faith Has Its  
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While I am not quite sure exactly what Boa and Bowman mean in saying that Aquinas did not prove God "per se," I am quite sure that Aquinas did not see his arguments as proving that "a God exists."

Given the context of Aquinas's own metaphysics, his arguments prove that God possess all the superlative attributes and show that God is the only God who could exist.

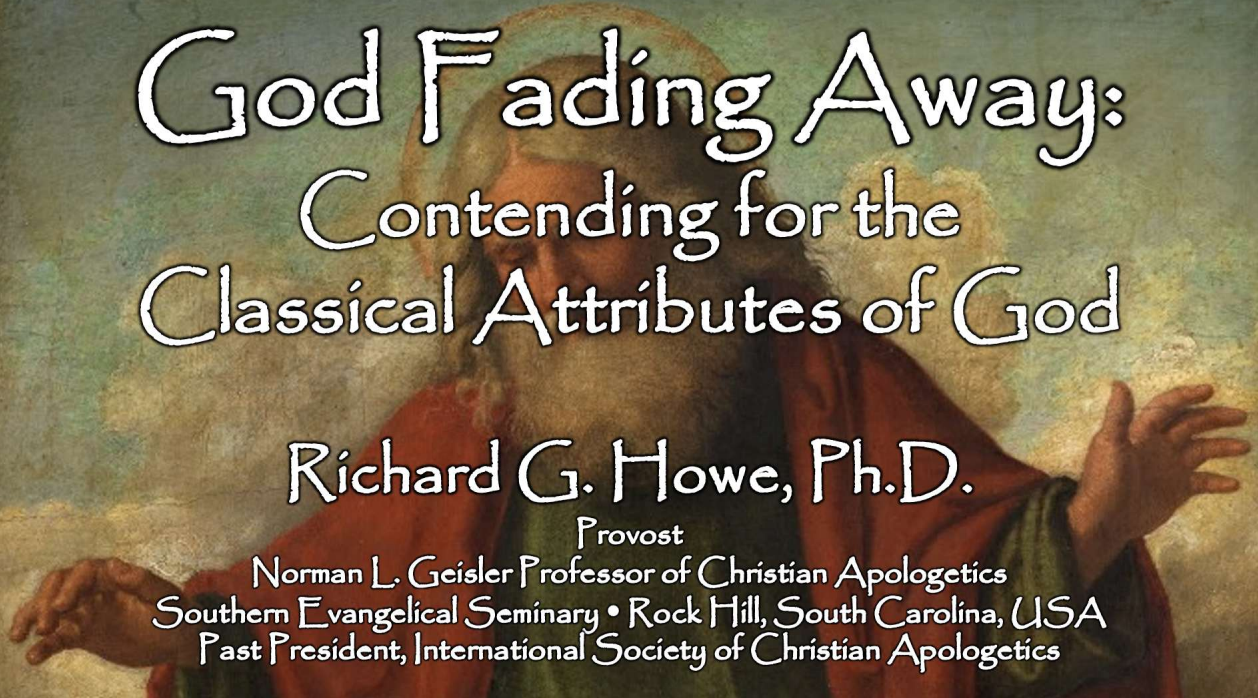
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Robert M. Bowman



Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)


✓ Simple	✓ True
✓ Perfect	✓ Living
✓ Good	✓ Personal
✓ Infinite	✓ Loving
✓ Omnipresent	✓ Just
✓ Immutable	✓ Merciful
✓ Eternal	✓ Providential
✓ One	✓ Omnipotent
✓ Omniscient	



# 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 • Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA  
Past President, International Society of Christian Apologetics






Kenneth D. Boa

*"These proofs (according to Aquinas himself) show that **a God exists**, but do not prove God **per se**; for Thomas, **faith in God** ought to be based on his revelation in Scripture, not on the proofs."*

[Ken Boa and Robert Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith, 2nd ed., 2014]




Robert M. Bowman

Further, it seems to me that Boa and Bowman are illicitly switching categories in making a single point about Aquinas's arguments for God's existence.

There is a difference between knowing that God exists and that God possess the attributes He does; it is another thing to have faith in God.

The former has to do with the philosophy of the arguments attainable by natural reason (General Revelation) while the latter has to do with truths about God knowable only from Special Revelation.


Boa and Bowman make it sound like that the manner in which one has faith in God has implications for the nature of the arguments for God's existence.



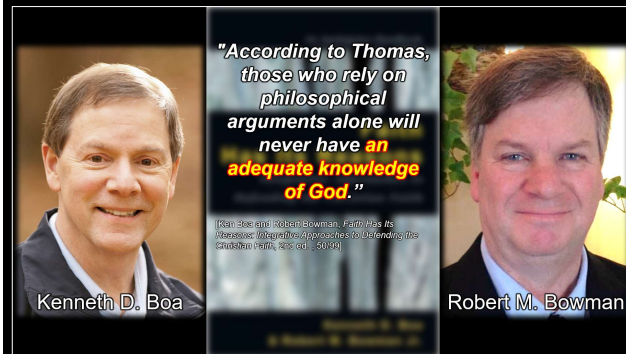
Kenneth D. Boa

*"According to Thomas, those who rely on philosophical arguments alone will never have **an adequate knowledge of God.**"*

[Ken Boa and Robert Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith, 2nd ed., 50/99]

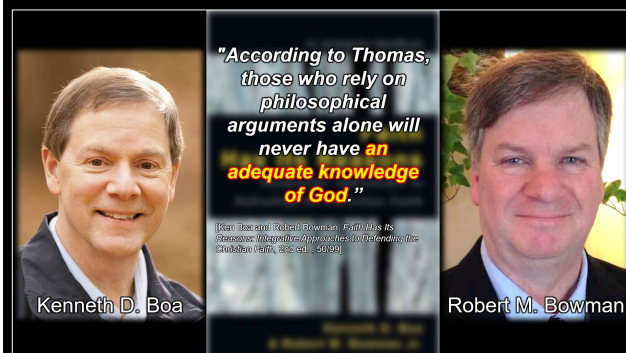


Robert M. Bowman



If by "adequate knowledge of God" they mean that the arguments cannot give enough information to demonstrate the existence of the one and only true God, then I have to disagree (though time and purpose will not allow my defense of this claim right now).

If by "adequate knowledge of God" they mean that the arguments do not give enough information to demonstrate the gospel that alone leads to eternal life, then I wholeheartedly agree.



But anyone conversant in apologetics should know while believing in the existence of God is necessary, it is not sufficient for salvation.

Thus, the arguments were never intended to be evangelism itself, but rather to be apologetics.

Aquinas explicitly makes this point at the beginning of his *Summa Theologiae* before he embarks on his discussion about God's existence and attributes.

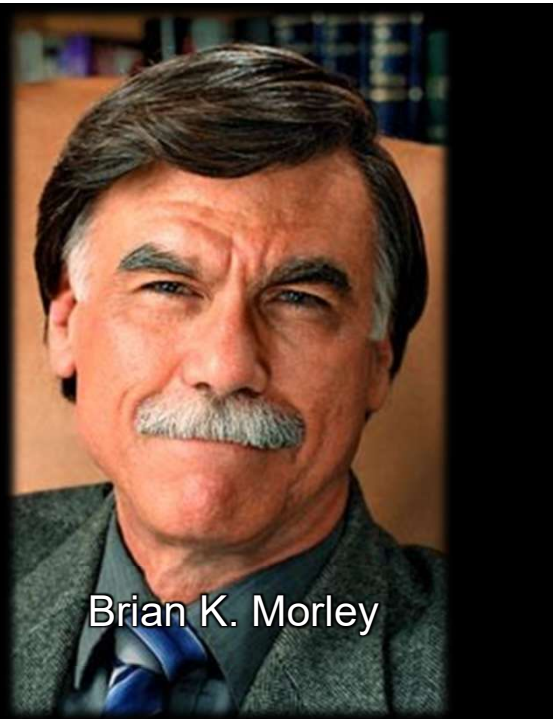
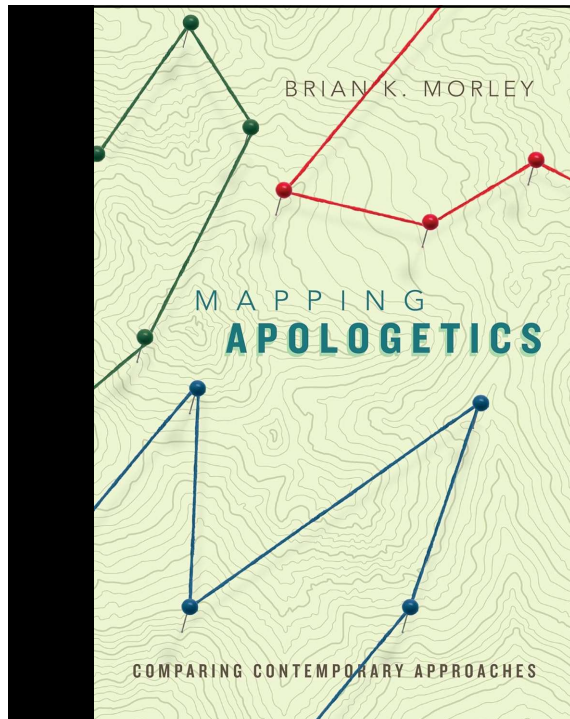


***"Now Scripture, inspired of God,  
is no part of philosophical  
science, which has been built up  
by human reason. Therefore, it is  
useful that besides philosophical  
science there should be other  
knowledge—i.e., inspired of God.  
... It was necessary for the  
salvation of man that certain  
truths, which exceed human  
reason should be made known to  
him by divine revelation."***

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q1, art. 1, trans. Father of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics), 1]



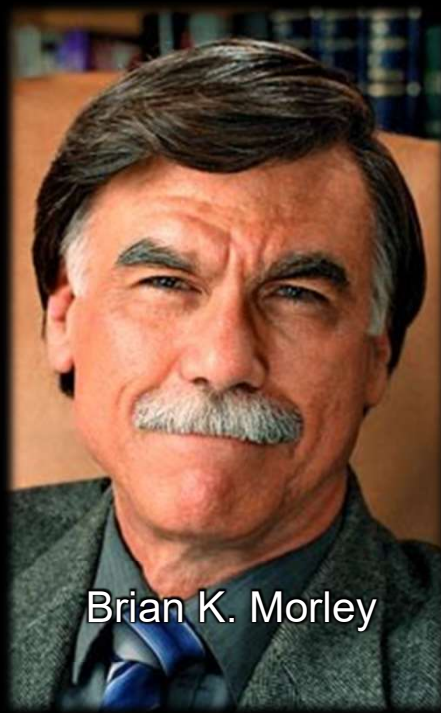
**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)



**Brian K. Morley**

*"Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) sought to harmonize Aristotle with Christianity where possible, rejecting the elements of his thought that contradicted doctrine. We can know something if a cause from its effects, Aquinas said, so we can know something of God's existence from the world, a line of reasoning he developed in five arguments. **But this knowledge is vague** and must be filled out with revelation."*

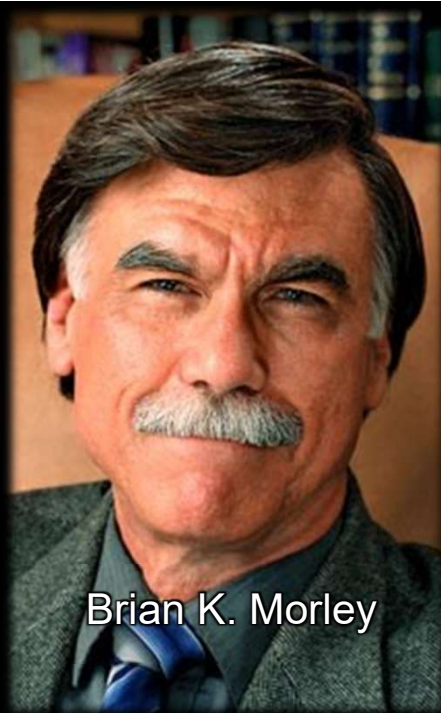
[Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 23)]



Brian K. Morley

*"Besides what he said about analogy, Aquinas said that we can know things by their effects, so we can know something of God by his effects—what he causes. **(He did not believe we can know much about God that way;** for detailed knowledge of God we need the Bible."*

[Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 73)]

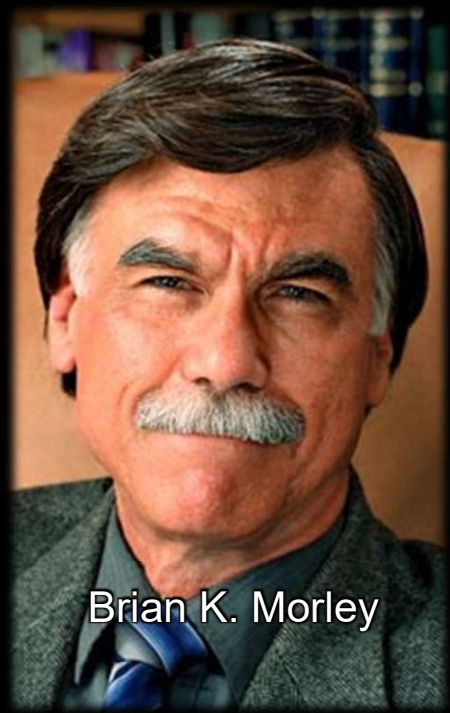


Brian K. Morley



"Thomas Aquinas ... said that we could know something of causes by examining their effects, and thus we can know some basic things about God through creation. **He added that reasoning backwards from causes does not yield much knowledge**, so we need revelation to give us important details, such as the nature of the Trinity, and the gospel."

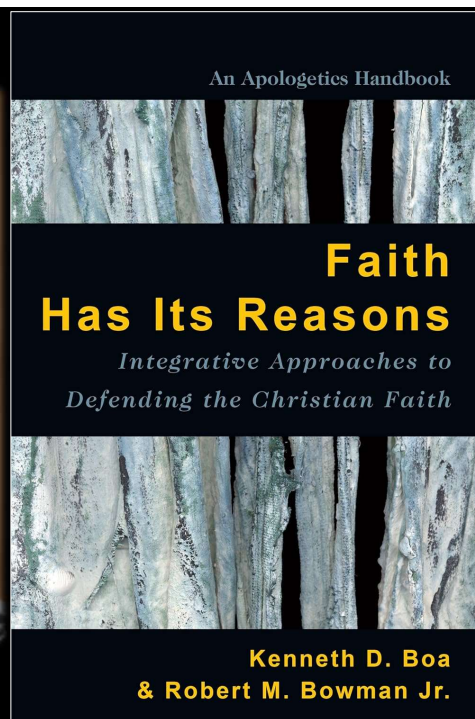
[Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 185)]



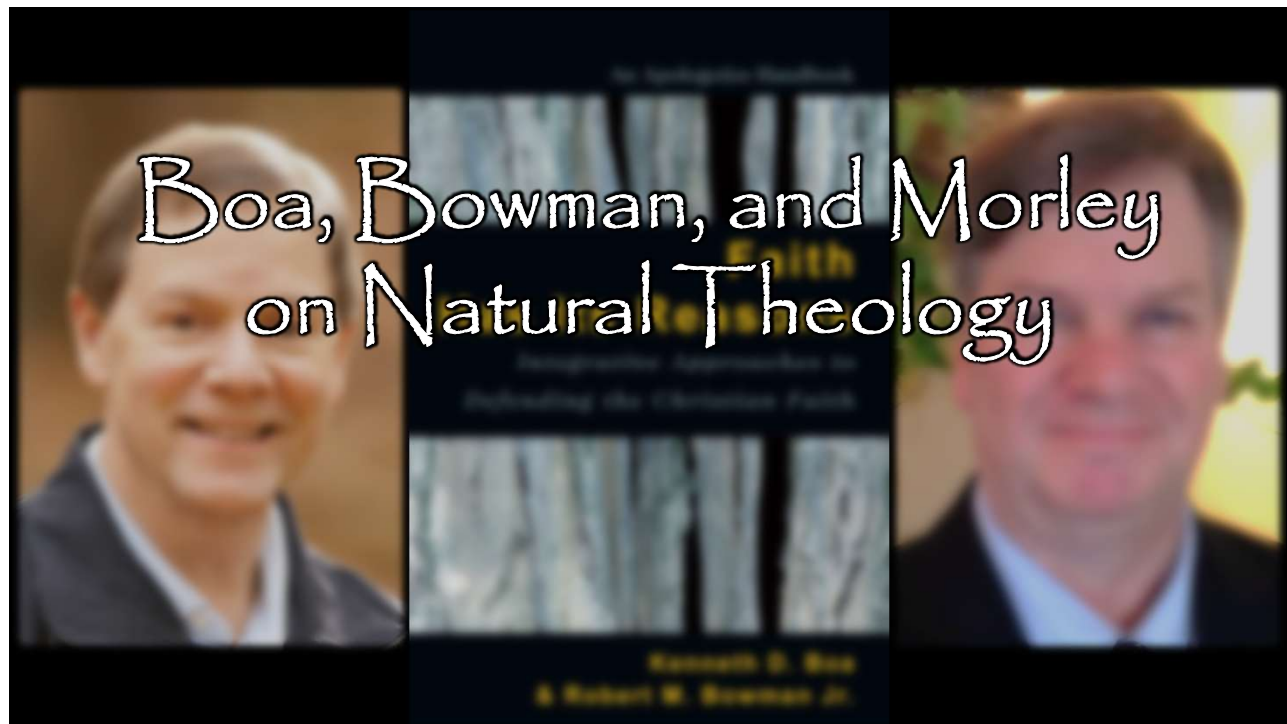
Brian K. Morley



Kenneth D. Boa



Robert M. Bowman





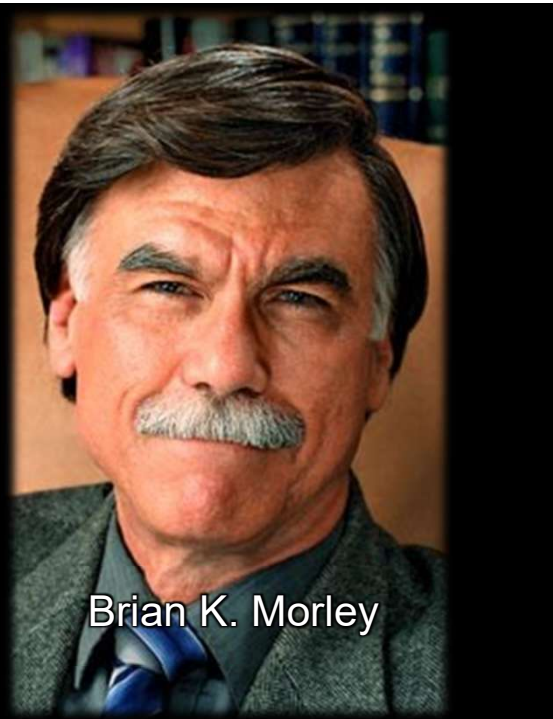
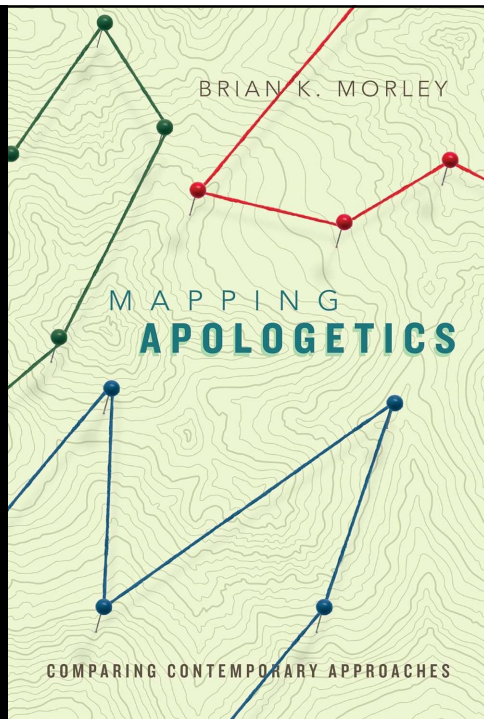
**"Natural theology, the construction of arguments defending or providing a theistic worldview on the basis of rational considerations apart from divine revelation, became a regular part of Christian apologetics."**

[Ken Boa and Robert Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. , 51/99]

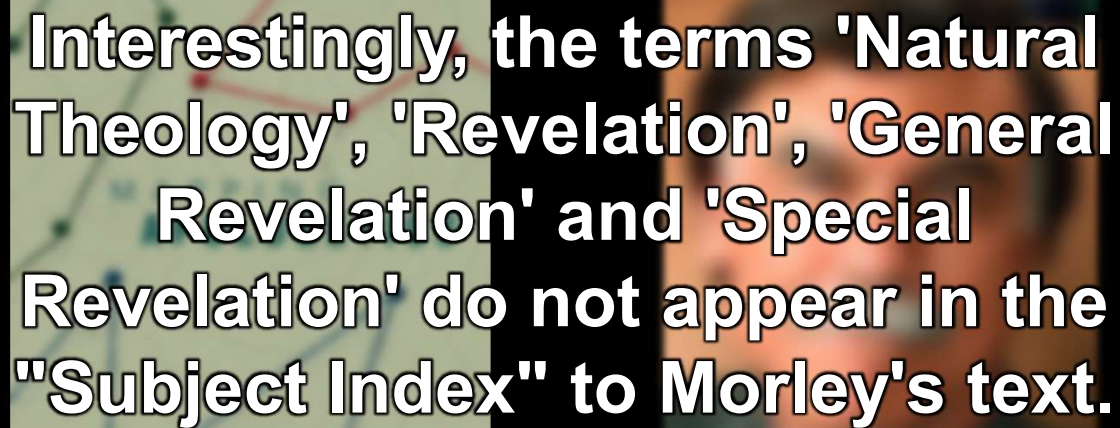
**Strictly speaking, Natural Theology arises from sound reason's attendance to General Revelation.**

**Given that General Revelation is God's revelation of Himself through creation, it is wrong to characterize Natural Theology as "apart from divine revelation."**

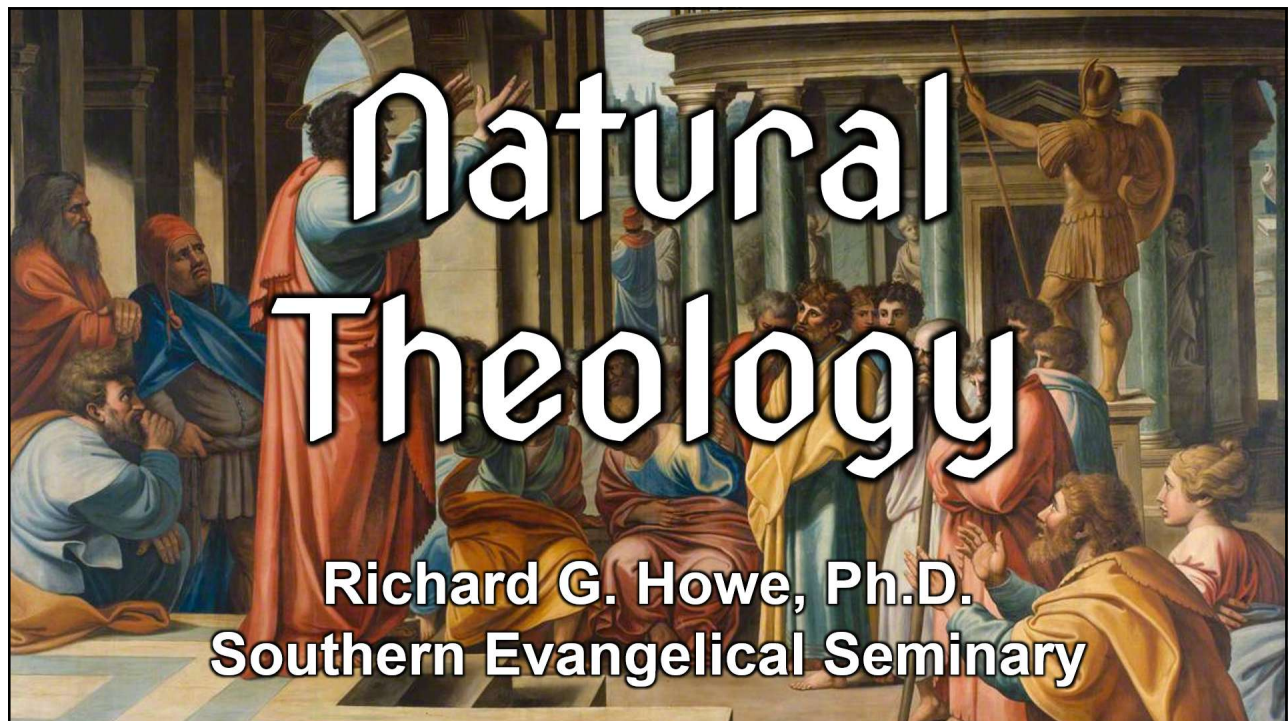
**Rather, Natural Theology is apart from divine "Special Revelation."**



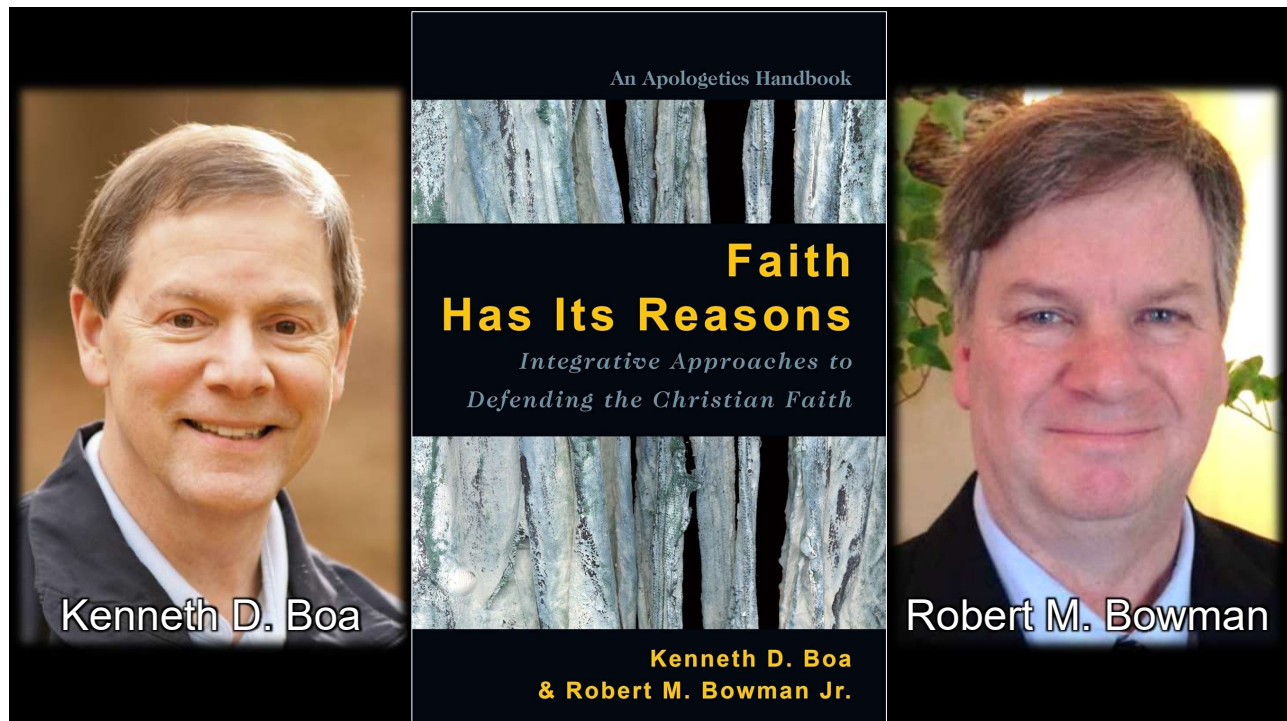
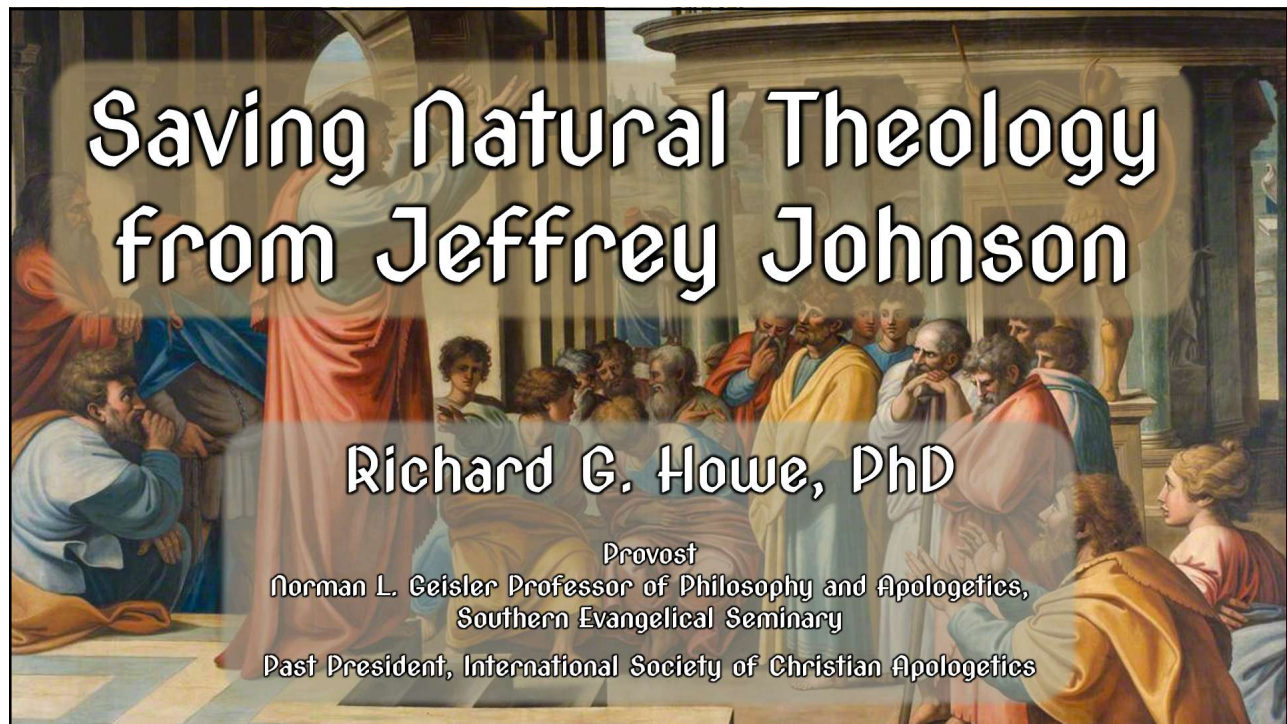
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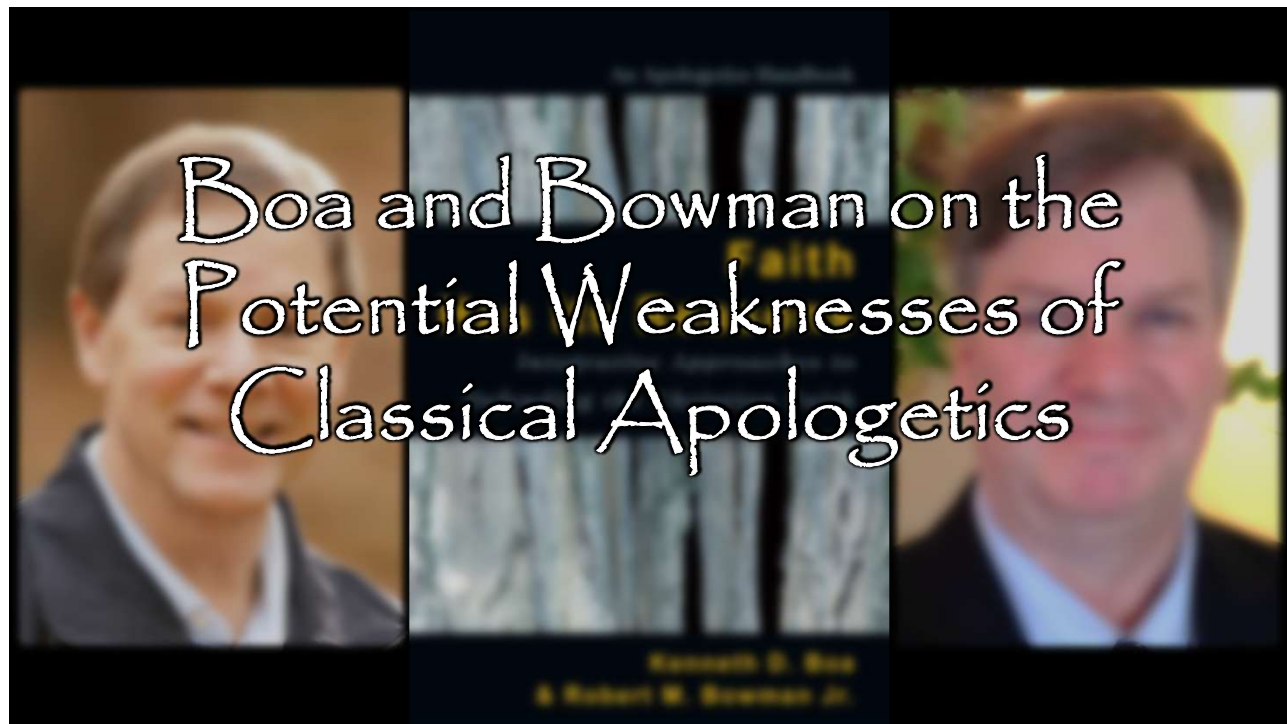


Interestingly, the terms 'Natural Theology', 'Revelation', 'General Revelation' and 'Special Revelation' do not appear in the "Subject Index" to Morley's text.







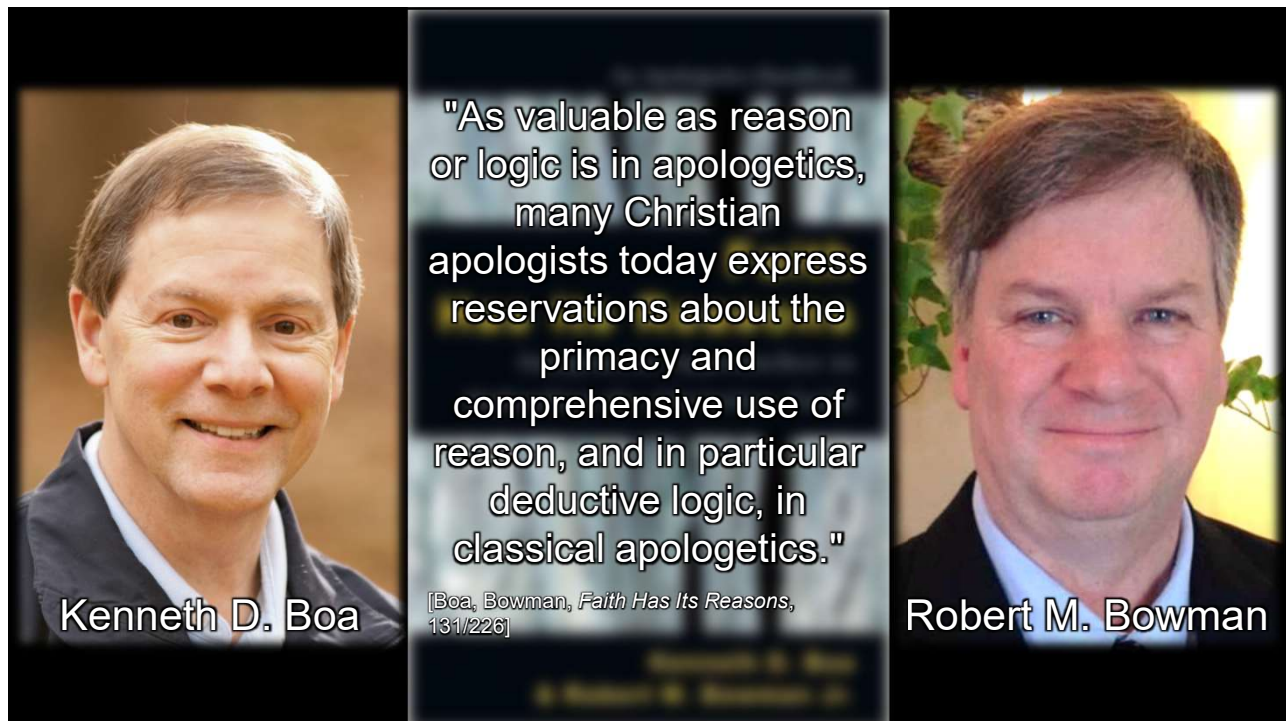




***Critics express concerns that Classical Apologetics overestimates the adequacy of reason as a criterion of truth.***





***Critics express concerns that Classical Apologetics overestimates the adequacy of reason as a criterion of truth.***

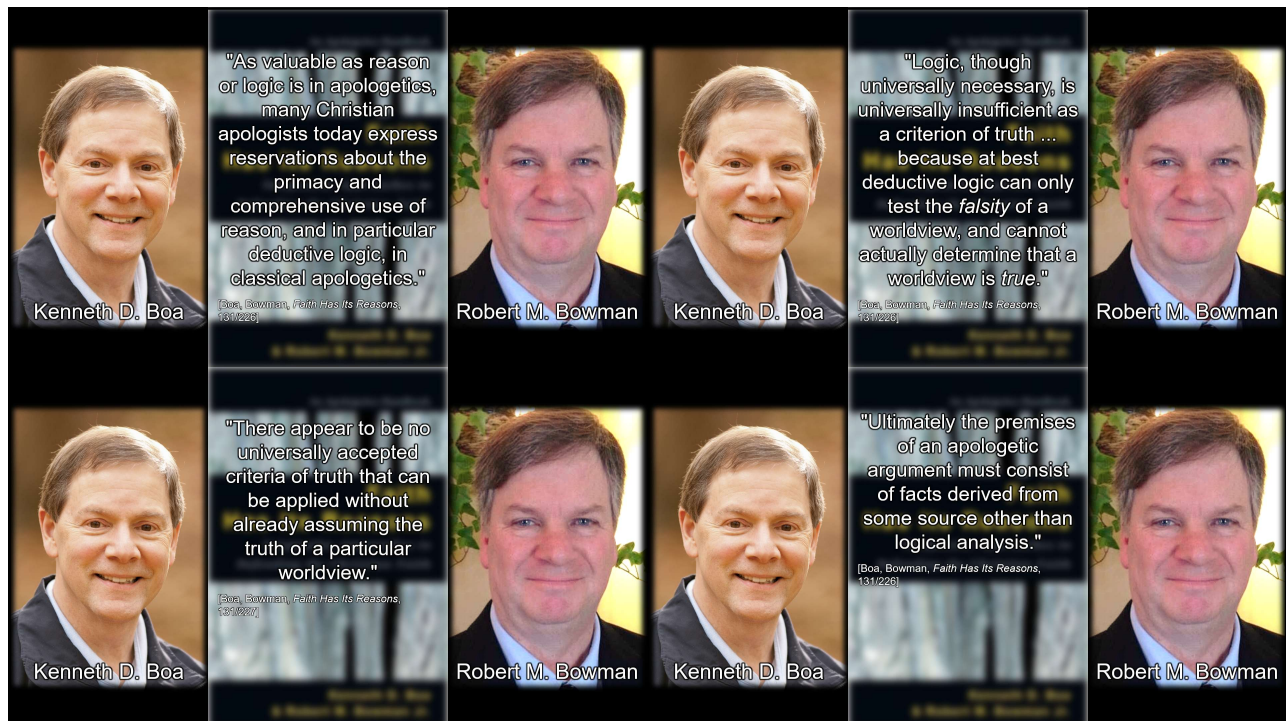
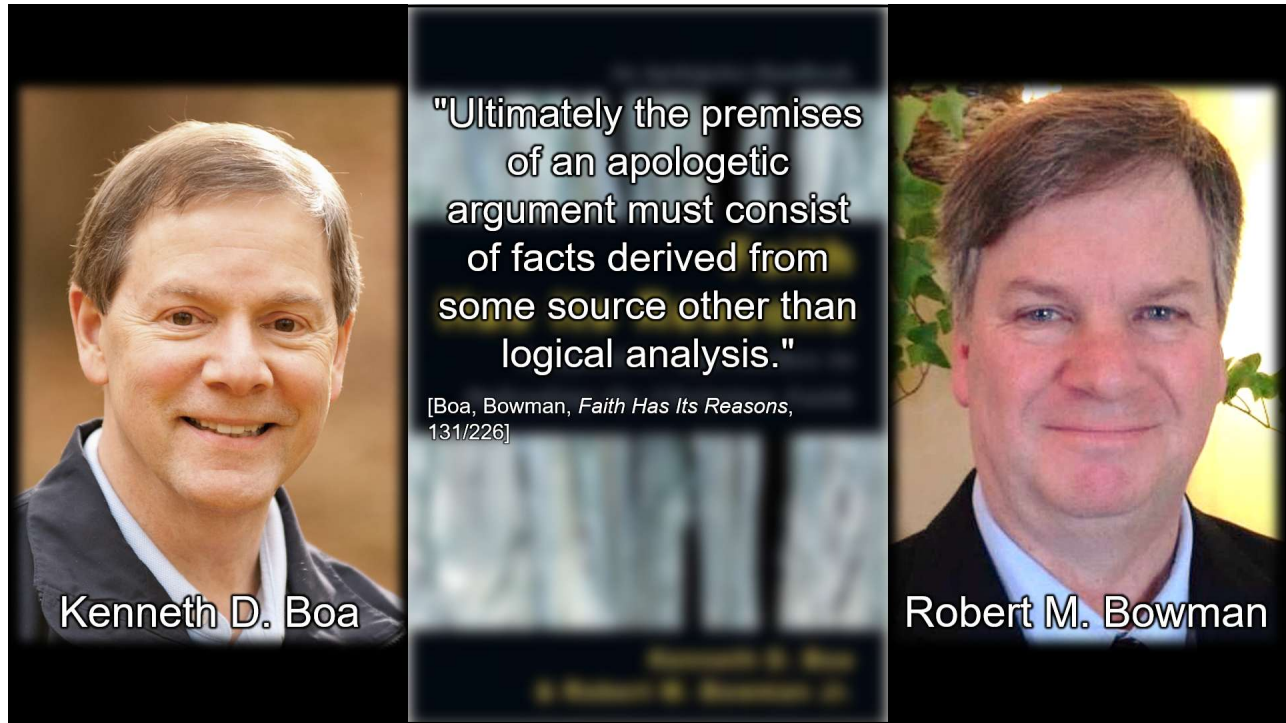
- 1. Logic, though universally necessary, is universally insufficient as a criterion of truth.***



 <p>Kenneth D. Boa</p>	<p>"Logic, though universally necessary, is universally insufficient as a criterion of truth ... because at best deductive logic can only test the <i>falsity</i> of a worldview, and cannot actually determine that a worldview is <i>true</i>."</p> <p>[Boa, Bowman, <i>Faith Has Its Reasons</i>, 131/226]</p>	 <p>Robert M. Bowman</p>
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 <p>Kenneth D. Boa</p>	<p>"There appear to be no universally accepted criteria of truth that can be applied without already assuming the truth of a particular worldview."</p> <p>[Boa, Bowman, <i>Faith Has Its Reasons</i>, 131/227]</p>	 <p>Robert M. Bowman</p>
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<p>"As valuable as reason or logic is in apologetics, many Christian apologists today express reservations about the primacy and comprehensive use of reason, and in particular deductive logic, in classical apologetics."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, <i>Faith Has Its Reasons</i>, 131/226]</small></p>	<p>"Logic, though universally necessary, is universally insufficient as a criterion of truth ... because at best deductive logic can only test the <i>falsity</i> of a worldview, and cannot actually determine that a worldview is <i>true</i>."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, <i>Faith Has Its Reasons</i>, 131/226]</small></p>	<p>"There appear to be no universally accepted criteria of truth that can be applied without already assuming the truth of a particular worldview."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, <i>Faith Has Its Reasons</i>, 131/227]</small></p>	<p>"Ultimately the premises of an apologetic argument must consist of facts derived from some source other than logical analysis."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, <i>Faith Has Its Reasons</i>, 131/226]</small></p>
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# Usages of the Term 'Reason'

## Common

attending oneself to careful thinking with the commitment to avoid undue emotion or ulterior motives that might adversely impact one's conclusions; often the term 'logic' is use for the same meaning

## Historical Philosophical

a particular role of reason in human knowing cataloged as "Rationalism" in contrast to the role of sensory data cataloged as "Empiricism;" Both would seek to be "reasonable" in the Common Usage sense of the term 'reason'.

## Classical

Within the Thomistic tradition that informs certain versions of Classical Apologetics, the terms 'reason' and 'logic' are not synonymous. For Aquinas, 'reason' has to do with that aspect of human knowing regarding the role of the intellect in contradistinction to that aspect of human knowing regarding the role of the senses.



***"Our knowledge, taking its start from things, proceeds in this order. First, it begins in sense; second, it is completed in the intellect."***

[Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, I, 11, trans. Mulligan, 48, in *Truth* (3 vols), vol. 1 trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952); vol. 2 trans. James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953); vol. 3. trans. Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1954). The three volumes were reprinted as *Truth* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994)]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

## Usages of the Term 'Logic'

### Fundamental Aspects of Reality

codified as (1) the law of non-contradiction; (2) the law of excluded middle and; (3) the law of identity

### Formal Logic

sometimes regarded as "deductive logic;" systems that focus on the "form" (as opposed to the content) of arguments and rules of inference according to which some philosophical thinking can be arranged like, for example, Categorical Logic, Truth-Functional Logic, Quantificational (Predicate) Logic, Modal Logic, and others; In some instances, certain aspects of some logical systems understate or fall slightly oblique to reality, as for example, the rules governing material implication in truth-functional logic.

### Informal Logic

sometimes regarded as "inductive logic" or "abductive logic;" focuses on methods and processes like scientific hypotheses (reasoning to the best explanation), probability, and causal connections

***Critics express concerns that Classical Apologetics overestimates the adequacy of reason as a criterion of truth.***

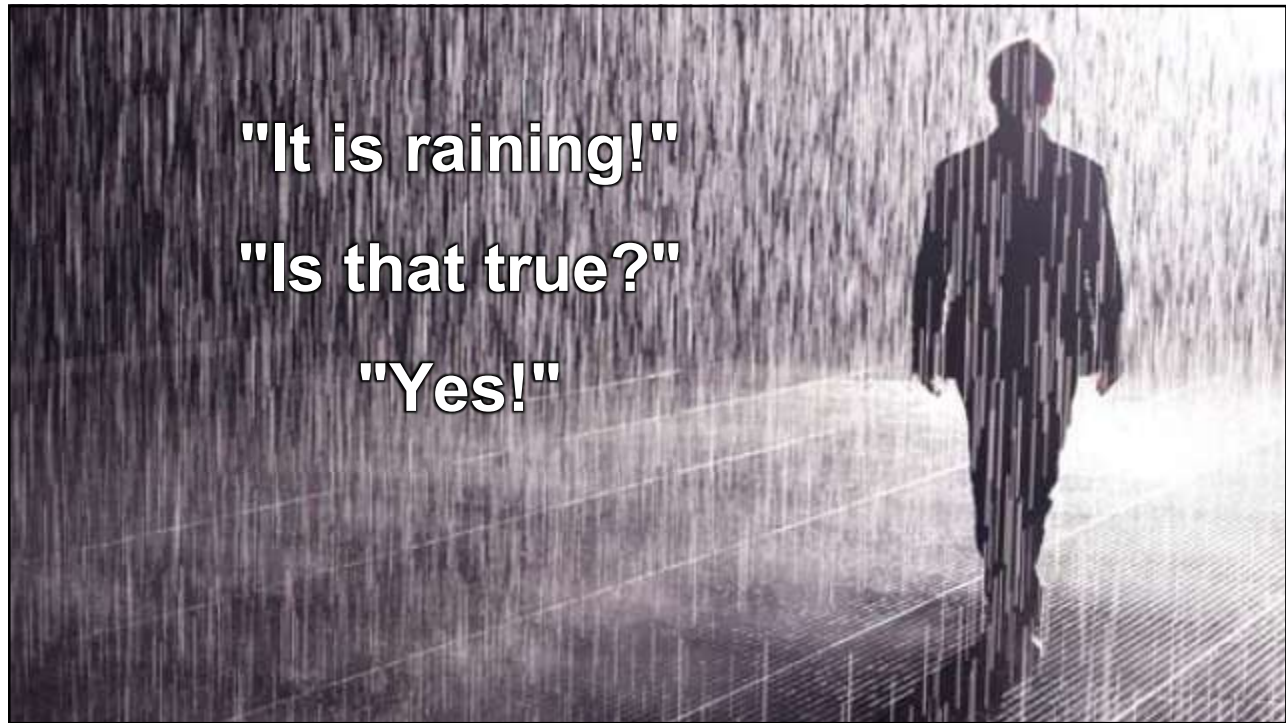
1. ***Logic, though universally necessary, is universally insufficient as a criterion of truth.***

<p>"As valuable as <b>reason</b> or <b>logic</b> is in apologetics, many Christian apologists today express reservations about the primacy and comprehensive use of <b>reason</b>, and in particular <b>deductive logic</b>, in classical apologetics."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 131/224]</small></p>	<p>"Logic, though universally necessary, is universally insufficient as a criterion of truth ... because at best deductive logic can only test the <i>falsity</i> of a worldview, and cannot actually determine that a worldview is <i>true</i>."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 131/224]</small></p>	<p><b>First, we have seen that the terms 'reason' and 'logic' are not always synonymous and can have significantly different usages in philosophy and apologetics.</b></p>
<p>"There appear to be no universally accepted criteria of truth that can be applied without already assuming the truth of a particular worldview."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 131/224]</small></p>	<p>"Ultimately the premises of an apologetic argument must consist of facts derived from some source other than logical analysis."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 131/224]</small></p>	



<p>"As valuable as reason or logic is in apologetics, many Christian apologists today express reservations about the primacy and comprehensive use of reason, and in particular deductive logic, in classical apologetics."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 131/222]</small></p>	<p>"Logic, though universally necessary, is universally insufficient as <b>a criterion of truth</b> ... because at best deductive logic can only <b>test the falsity</b> of a worldview, and cannot actually determine that a worldview is <b>true</b>."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 131/222]</small></p>	<p><b>Second, one must be careful not to confuse a <b>theory of truth</b> and a <b>test for truth</b>.</b></p>
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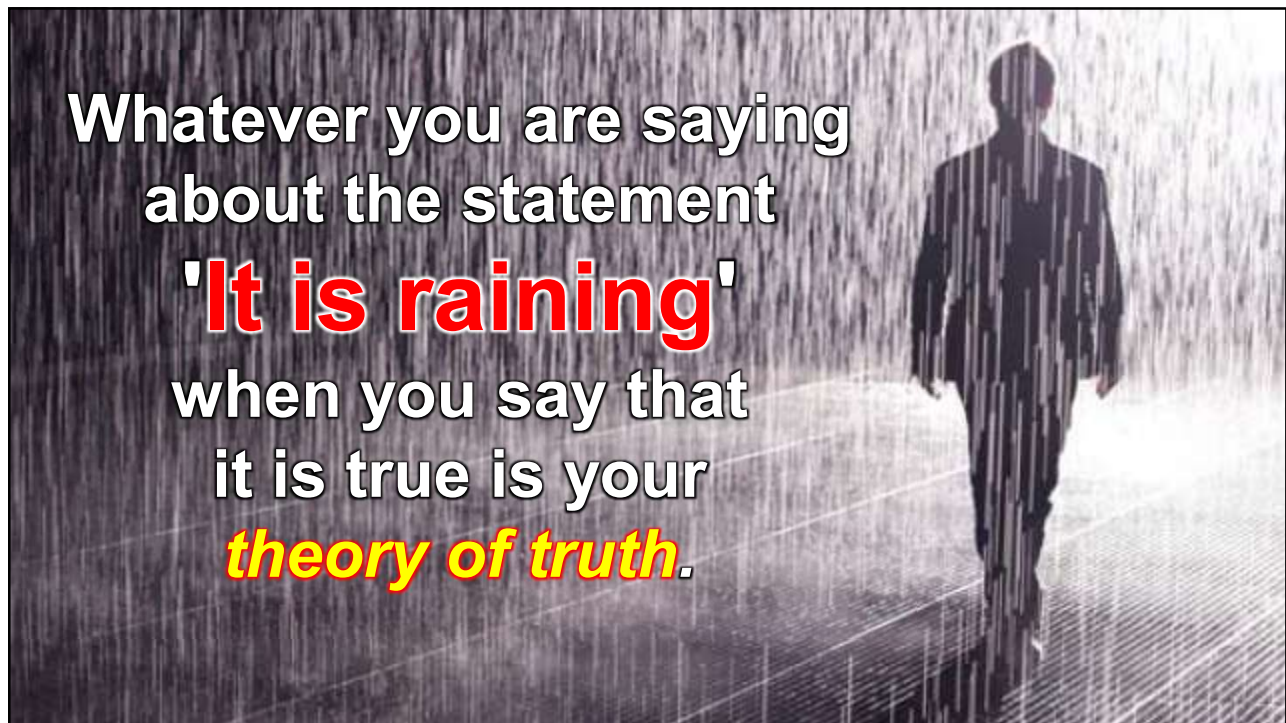
<p>"As valuable as reason or logic is in apologetics, many Christian apologists today express reservations about the primacy and comprehensive use of reason, and in particular deductive logic, in classical apologetics."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 131/222]</small></p>	<p>"Logic, though universally necessary, is universally insufficient as <b>a criterion of truth</b> ... because at best deductive logic can only <b>test the falsity</b> of a worldview, and cannot actually determine that a worldview is <b>true</b>."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 131/222]</small></p>	<p><b>Third, there is a difference between a <b>logical analysis</b> and a <b>philosophical analysis</b>.</b></p>
<p>"There appear to be no universally accepted criteria of truth that can be applied without already assuming the truth of a particular worldview."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 131/222]</small></p>	<p>"Ultimately the premises of an apologetic argument must consist of facts derived from <b>some source other than logical analysis</b>."</p> <p><small>[Boa, Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 131/222]</small></p>	



"It is raining!"

"Is that true?"

"Yes!"



Whatever you are saying  
about the statement

**'It is raining'**

when you say that  
it is true is your

***theory of truth.***



How you know whether it  
is raining is your  
**test for truth.**



### ∞ Theory of Truth ∞

*how one **defines** the  
terms 'true' and 'truth'  
when saying that a  
statement is true*

### ∞ Test for Truth ∞

*how one **discovers**  
whether a statement is  
true, regardless of  
one's theory of truth*

***Critics express concerns that Classical Apologetics overestimates the adequacy of reason as a criterion of truth.***

- 1. Logic, though universally necessary, is universally insufficient as a criterion of truth.***
- 2. There appear to be no universally accepted criteria of truth that can be applied without already assuming the truth of a particular worldview.***

***Critics express concerns that Classical Apologetics overestimates the adequacy of reason as a criterion of truth.***

- 1. Logic, though universally necessary, is universally insufficient as a criterion of truth.***
- 2. There appear to be no universally accepted criteria of truth that can be applied without already assuming the truth of a particular worldview.***
- 3. The emphasis on logical analysis has come under fire for presuming that human reasoning is capable of recognizing truth about God.***



***Critics express concerns that Classical Apologetics depends on theistic arguments of debated validity and value.***

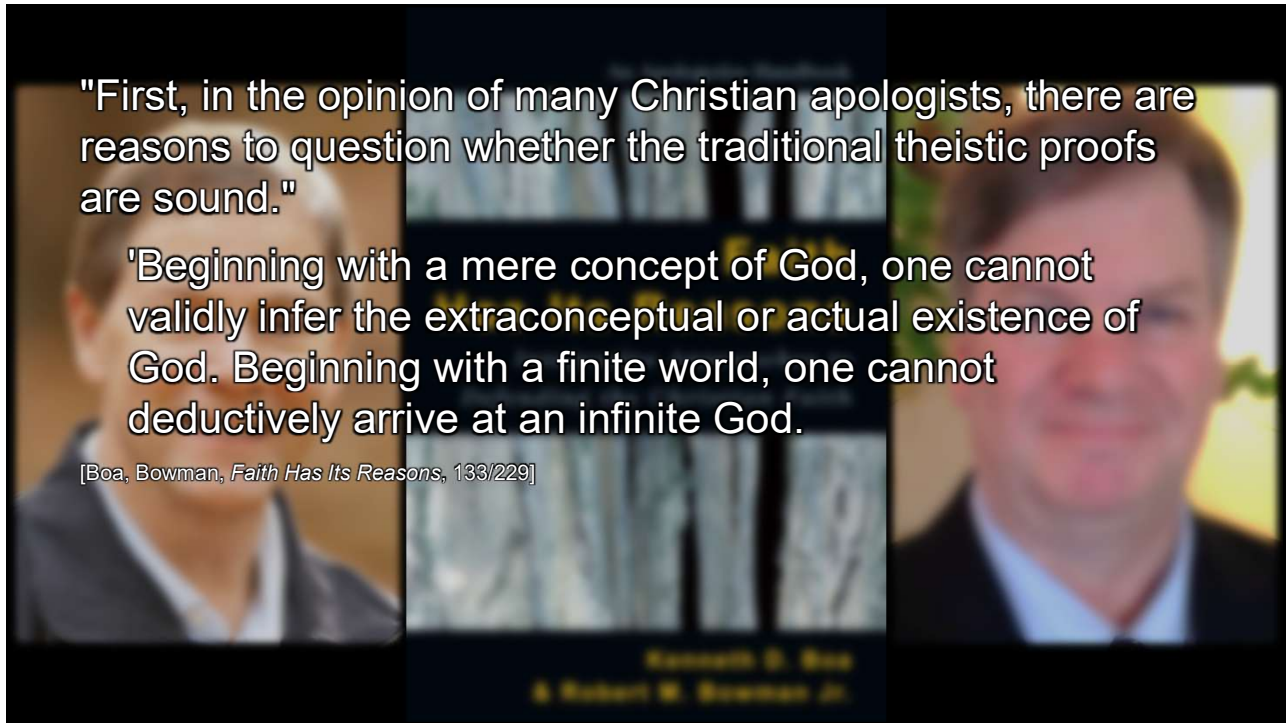
***Critics express concerns that Classical Apologetics depends on theistic arguments of debated validity and value.***

1. There are reasons to question whether the arguments are sound.

"First, in the opinion of many Christian apologists, there are reasons to question whether the traditional theistic proofs are sound."

'Beginning with a mere concept of God, one cannot validly infer the extraconceptual or actual existence of God. Beginning with a finite world, one cannot deductively arrive at an infinite God.'

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 133/229]



# Crucial Questions in Apologetics

**Mark M.  
Hanna**



Mark M. Hanna



'Beginning with a mere concept of God, one cannot validly infer the extraconceptual or actual existence of God. Beginning with a finite world, one cannot deductively arrive at an infinite God.

[Mark M. Hanna, *Crucial Questions in Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 99, as cited in Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 133/229]



Mark M. Hanna

**"Beginning with a mere concept of God, one cannot validly infer the extraconceptual or actual existence of God.** Beginning with a finite world, one cannot deductively arrive at an infinite God."

[Mark M. Hanna, *Crucial Questions in Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 99, as cited in Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 133/229]

This argument is known as the ontological argument which begins with the concept of God as the greatest conceivable being.

It was championed by Anselm who was the Archbishop of Canterbury in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

It was rejected by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* I, 2, 1, ad. 2.

"Beginning with a mere concept of God, one cannot validly infer the extraconceptual or actual existence of God. **Beginning with a finite world, one cannot deductively arrive at an infinite God.**"

[Mark M. Hanna, *Crucial Questions in Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 99, as cited in Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 133/229]

I would contend that one can start with the finite world and demonstrate the existence of "an infinite God."

Whether a given argument is deductive or not is relatively trivial inasmuch as any argument can be cast into several different logical forms.

In the Classical tradition, theistic arguments are metaphysical and not merely logical.

***Critics express concerns that Classical Apologetics depends on theistic arguments of debated validity and value.***

1. There are reasons to question whether the arguments are sound.
2. The theistic arguments are beyond the grasp of most people.



*One does not  
have to be a  
botanist to enjoy  
the beauty of a  
flower.*



*One does not  
have to be an  
astronomer  
to enjoy the  
resplendence of  
a sunset.*



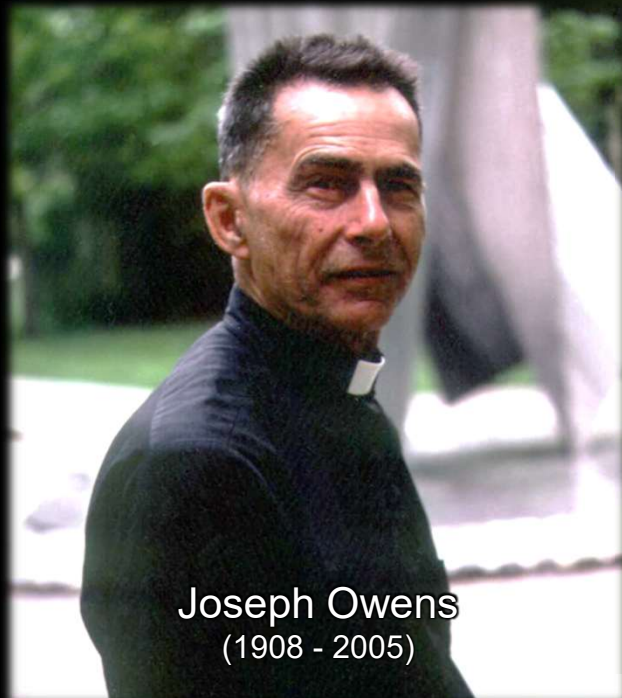


*However, a degree of in-depth analysis of the flower or sunset will require the disciples of botany and astronomy.*



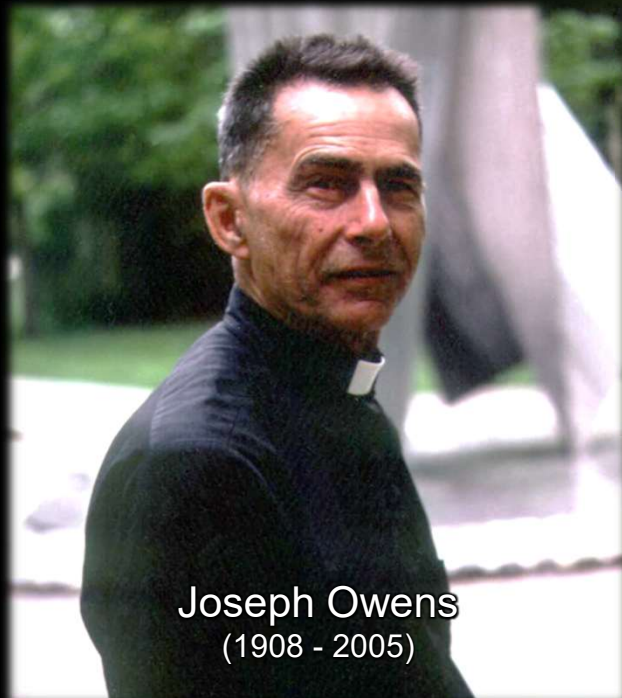
*But it is not a weakness of these sciences that such an in-depth analysis might be "beyond the grasp" of some people.*



A color photograph of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is out of focus, showing green foliage and a white structure.

Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

**"Other arguments may vividly suggest the existence of God, press it home eloquently to human consideration, and for most people provide much greater spiritual and religious aid than difficult metaphysical demonstrations."**

A color photograph of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is out of focus, showing green foliage and a white structure.

Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

**"But on the philosophical level these arguments are open to rebuttal and refutation, for they are not philosophically cogent."**

[Joseph Owens, "Aquinas and the Five Ways," *Monist* 58 (Jan. 1974): 16-35. (p. 33)]

***Critics express concerns that Classical Apologetics depends on theistic arguments of debated validity and value.***

1. There are reasons to question whether the arguments are sound.
2. The theistic arguments are beyond the grasp of most people.
3. The theistic arguments do not lead to the personal God of Christian theism.

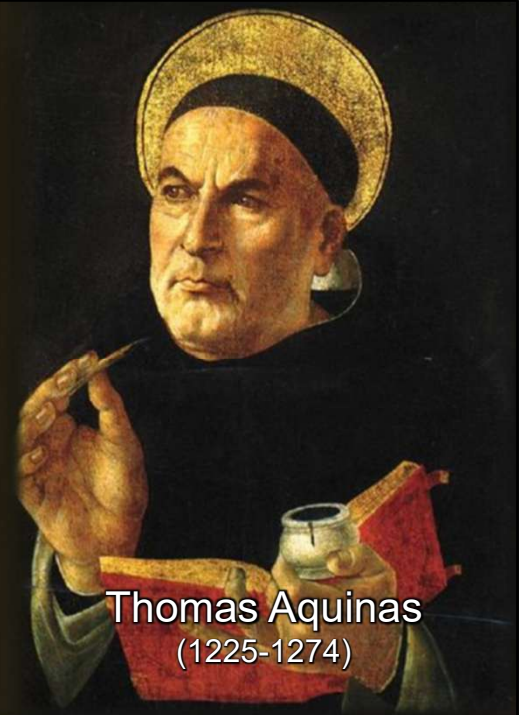
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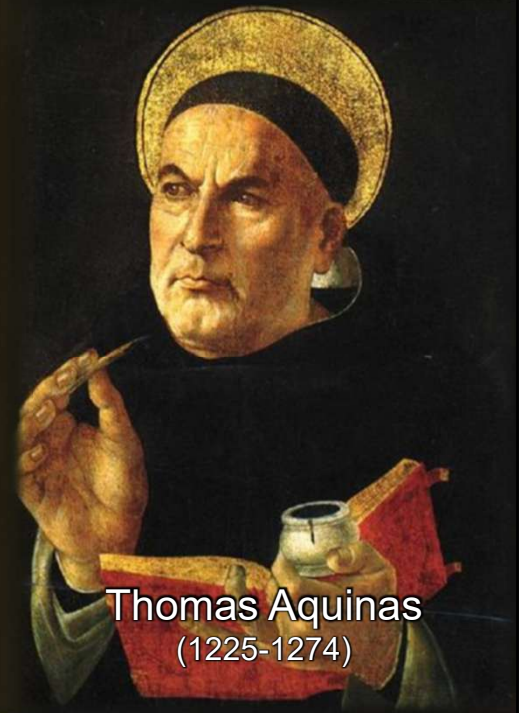
**To repeat a point I made earlier, given the context of Aquinas's own metaphysics, his arguments prove that God possess all the superlative attributes and show that God is the only God who could exist.**

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| ✓ Simple      | ✓ True         |
| ✓ Perfect     | ✓ Living       |
| ✓ Good        | ✓ Personal     |
| ✓ Infinite    | ✓ Loving       |
| ✓ Omnipresent | ✓ Just         |
| ✓ Immutable   | ✓ Merciful     |
| ✓ Eternal     | ✓ Providential |
| ✓ One         | ✓ Omnipotent   |
| ✓ Omniscient  |                |



***"Nothing of the perfection of being can be wanting to Him who is subsisting being itself."***

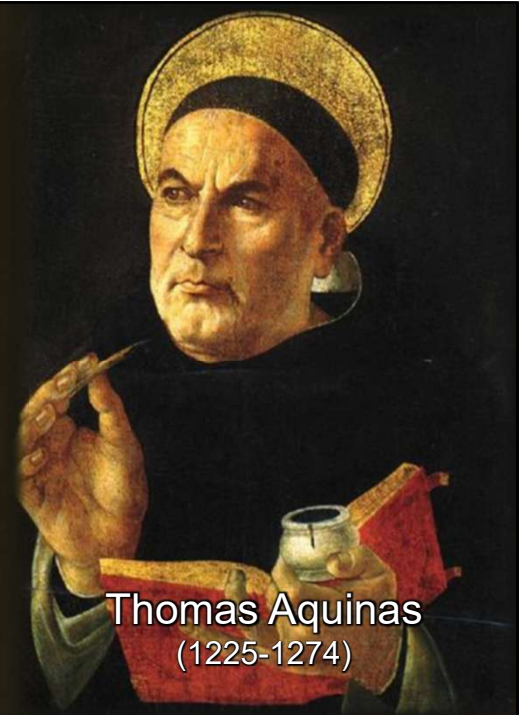
[*Summa Theologiae*, I, 4, 2, ad. 3]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"... the perfections following from God to creatures ... pre-exist in God unitedly and simply, whereas in creatures they are received, divided and multiplied."***

[*Summa Theologiae*, I, 13, 4]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



***Critics express concerns that Classical Apologetics overlooks the personal dimensions of belief and knowledge.***

## **Weakness vs. Limitation**

- ***This third criticism is not a weakness of Classical Apologetics in as much as apologetics was never designed to effect faith.***
- ***Rather, apologetics is designed to remove intellectual roadblocks to someone considering the gospel.***
- ***Thus, is unfair for the critic to characterize this as overlooking the personal dimensions of belief and knowledge.***

## Weakness vs. Limitation

- *This criticism would be like saying that the "weakness" of the automobile is that it cannot fly.*
- *But the inability of the automobile to fly is a limitation, not a weakness since the automobile was never designed to fly.*
- *This inability of Classical Apologetics is a limitation of apologetics as such, not a limitation because it is Classical verses some other apologetic system.*

## To Be Continued ...

*I will save the remainder of we might what to say in defense of the Classical Apologetics system for our responses to the other apologetic systems we will examine.*