

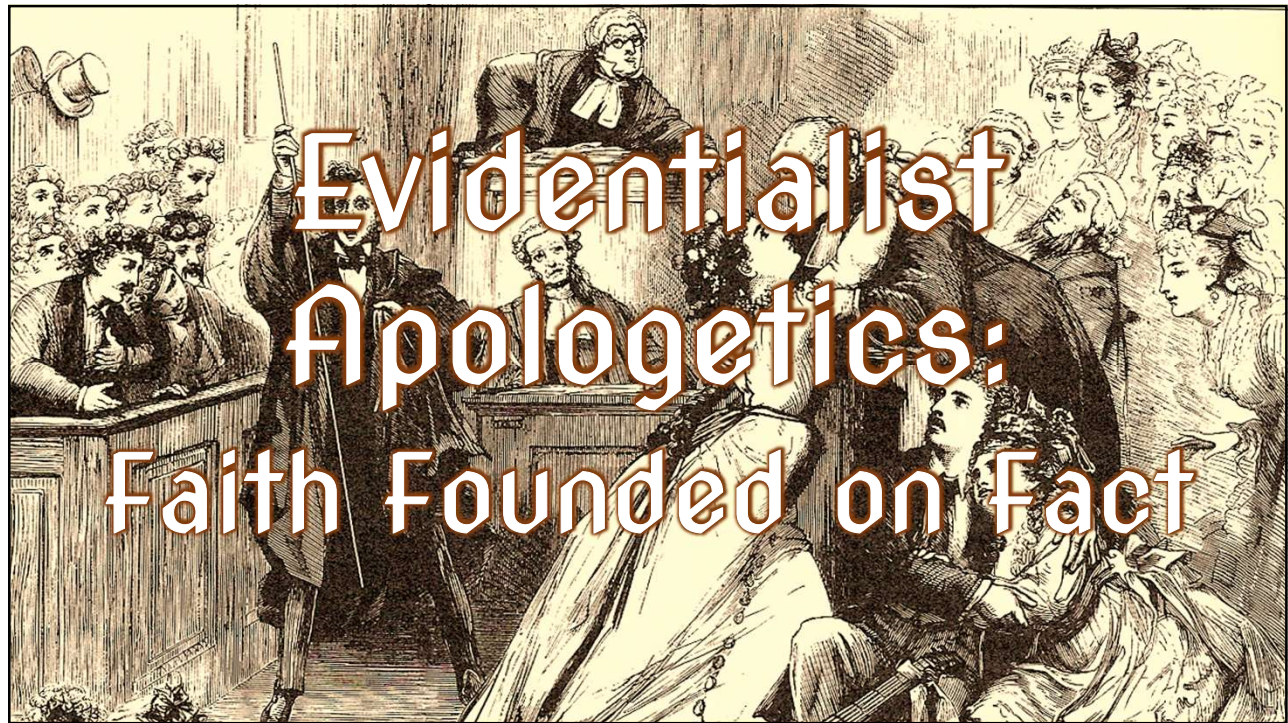
Christian Apologetic Systems

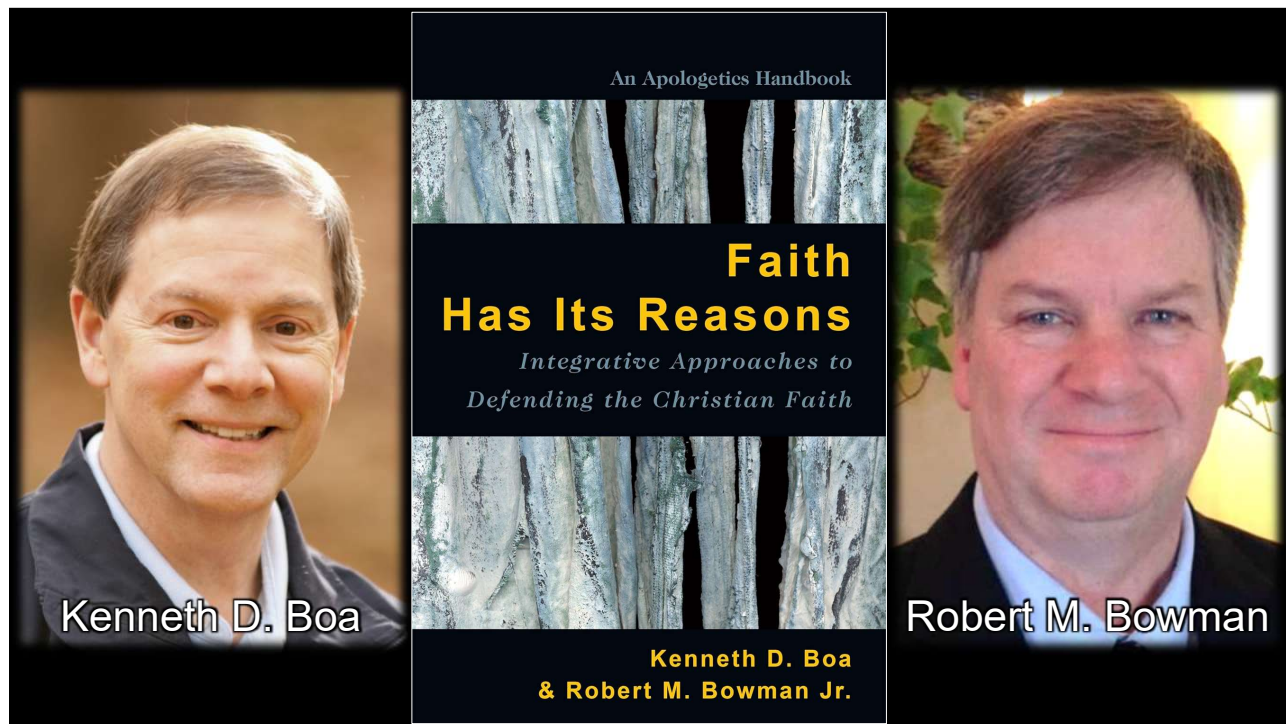
❧ 06: Evidentialism, Pt. 2 ❧

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"Where as classical apologetics characteristically regards **logic or reason as the primary criterion of truth**,

Evidentialism characteristically assigns this priority to fact. (This difference can be understood largely as matter of emphasis; of course, both classical apologists and evidentialists consider reason and fact to be both essential to apologetic argumentation.)"

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 155/264]

Again, there is a problem with terminology. Besides what we have already said about the terms 'logic' and 'reason', here Boa and Bowman's use of the phrase "criterion of truth" seems to mean that classical apologetics regard logic and reason as the means by which we ascertain whether something is true. In other words, that logic and reason are a TEST for truth.

"Where as classical apologetics characteristically regards **logic or reason as the primary criterion of truth**,

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[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 155/264]

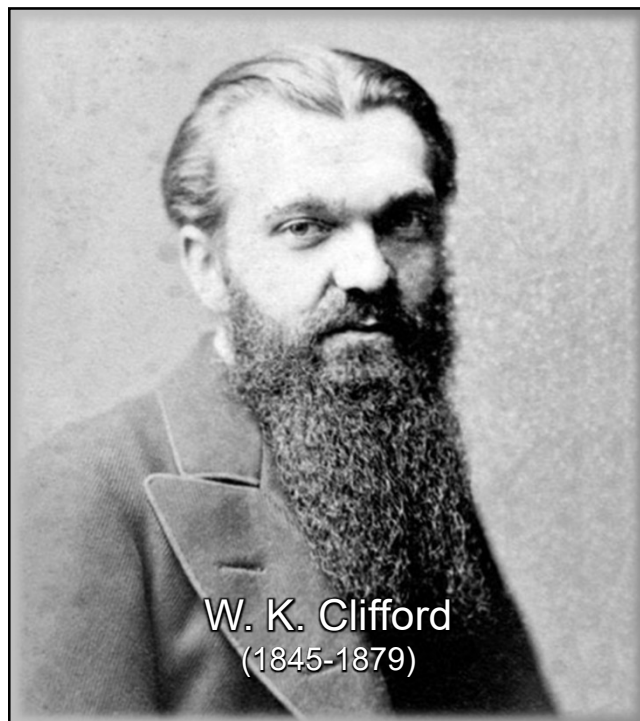
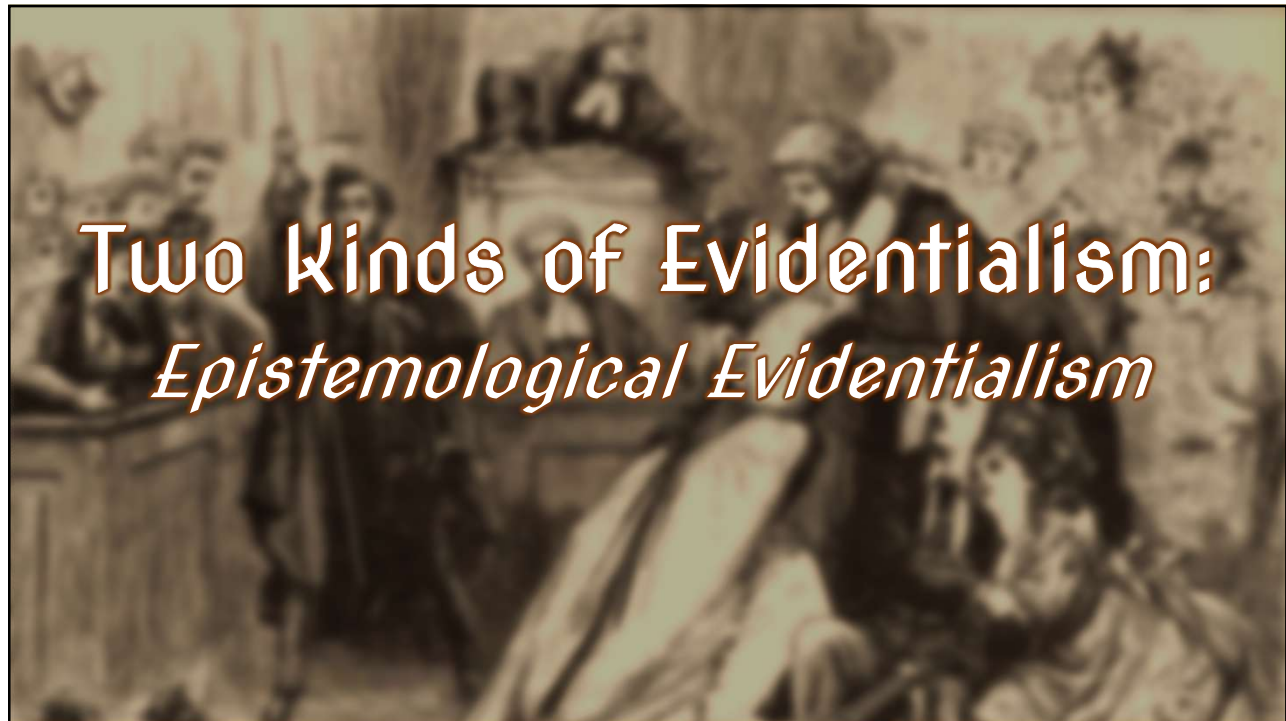
But, in characterizing Evidentialism, they contrast this with the priority of "fact." However, when calling something a "fact," one means that it is something that is true of reality. In other words, that a "fact" is true because it corresponds to reality, which is a **THEORY** of truth.

"Where as classical apologetics characteristically regards **logic or reason as the primary criterion of truth**,

Evidentialism characteristically assigns this priority to **fact**. (This difference can be understood largely as matter of emphasis; of course, both classical apologists and evidentialists consider reason and fact to be both essential to apologetic argumentation.)"

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 155/264]

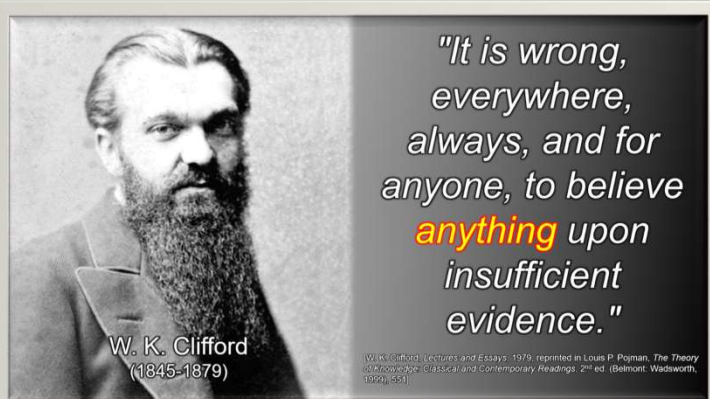
But a theory of truth is not the same as a test for truth. Thus, it does not make sense to contrast the test for truth in Classical Apologetics with the theory of truth of Evidentialism.



W. K. Clifford
(1845-1879)

*"It is wrong,
everywhere,
always, and for
anyone, to believe
anything upon
insufficient
evidence."*

[W. K. Clifford, *Lectures and Essays*, 1979, reprinted in Louis P. Pojman, *The Theory of Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, 2nd ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1999), 551]

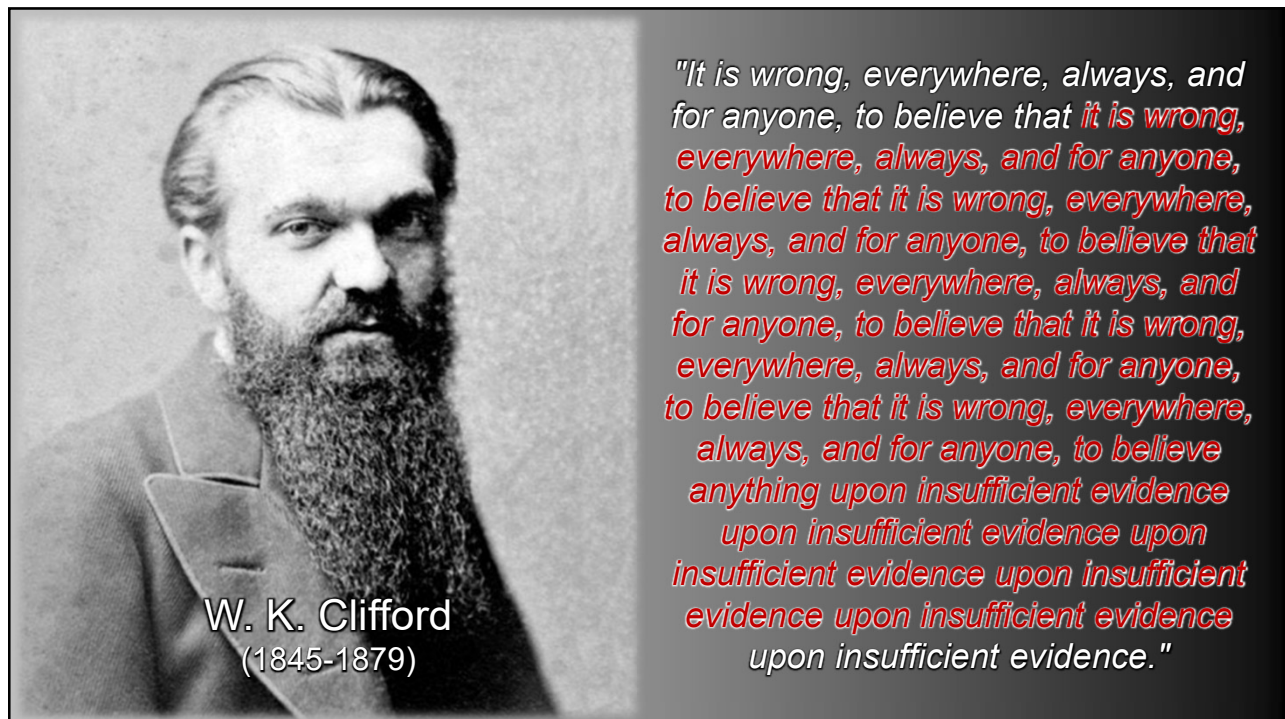


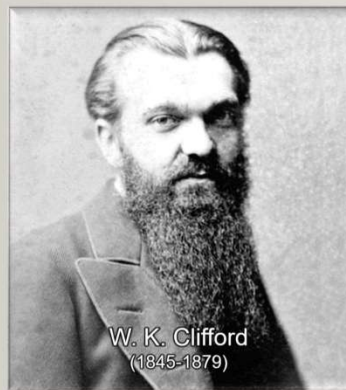
What about this statement?

What is the "sufficient evidence" for it?

For that matter, what could possibly count as evidence for such a philosophical statement?

It would seem that this is clear example of a self-refuting statement.





W. K. Clifford
(1845-1879)

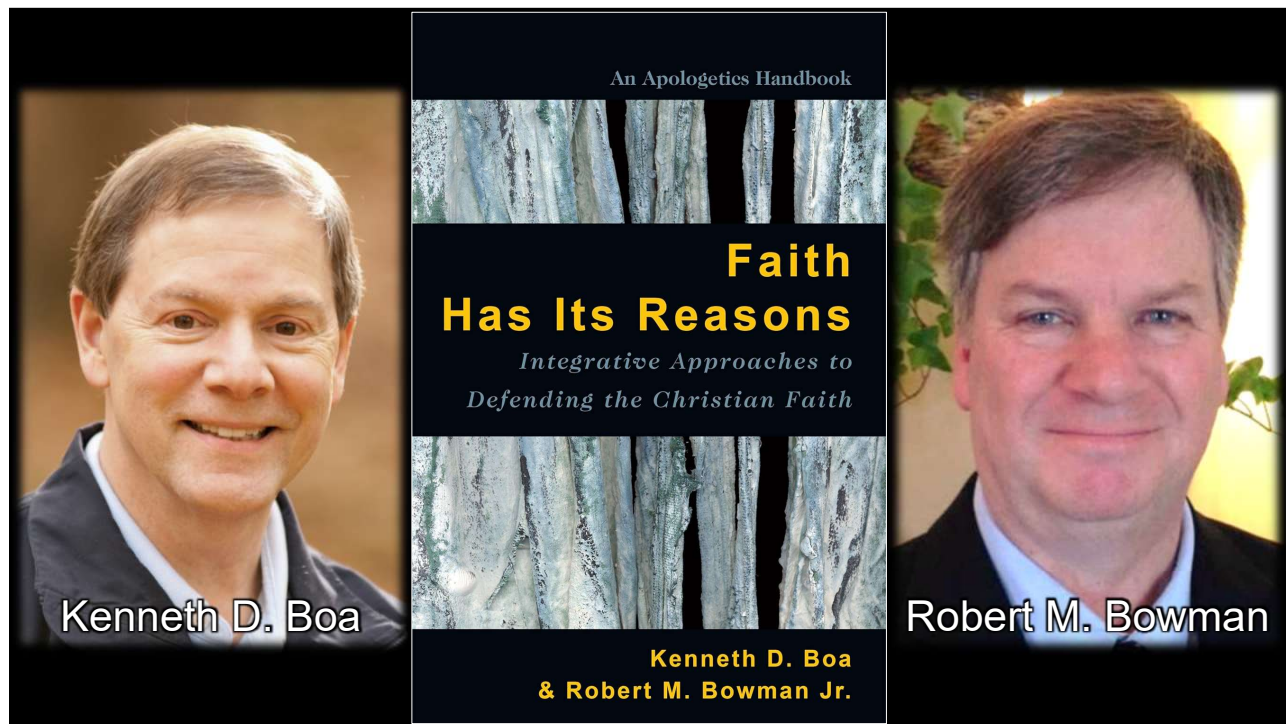
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W. K. Clifford, Lectures and Essays, 1978; reprinted in Louis P. Pojman, The Theory of Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Readings, 2nd ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1999), 551.

To be sure, the questions of beliefs and their relationships to evidence are important philosophical issues.

Epistemological Evidentialism, while related at some deeper level, generally has nothing to do with the evidentialism we are interested in our study here.

Two Kinds of Evidentialism: *Apologetical Evidentialism*

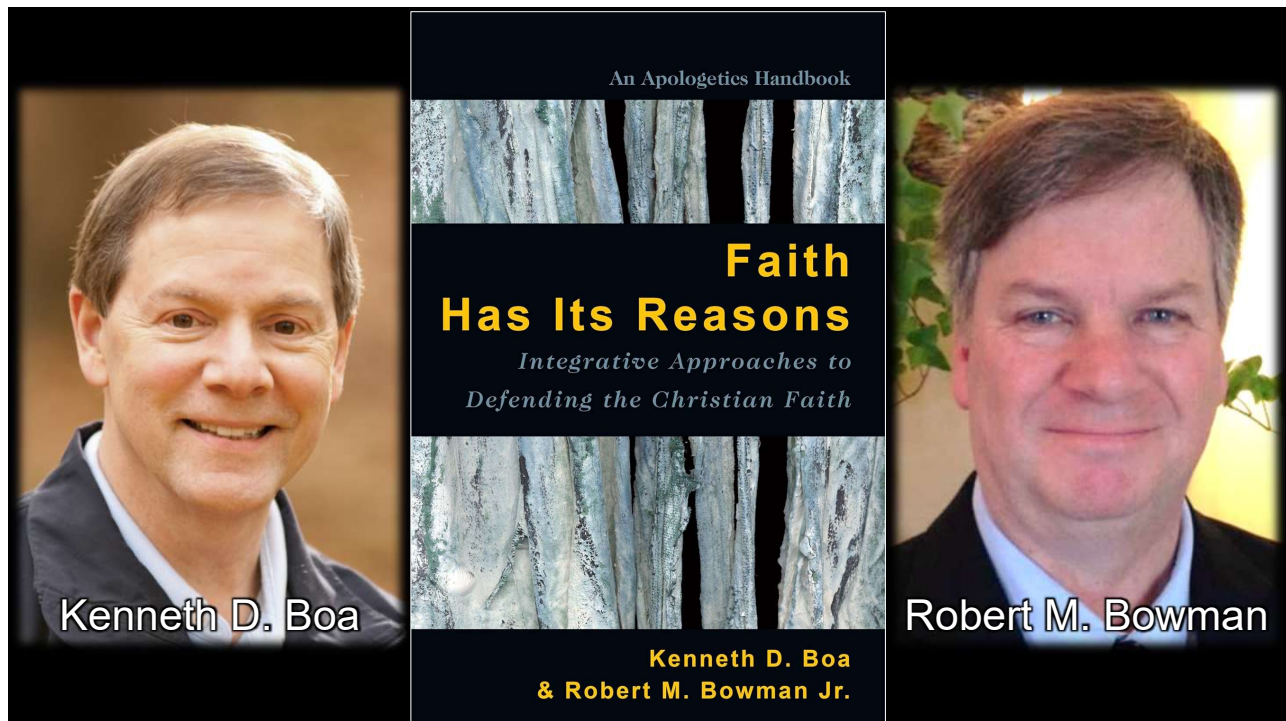
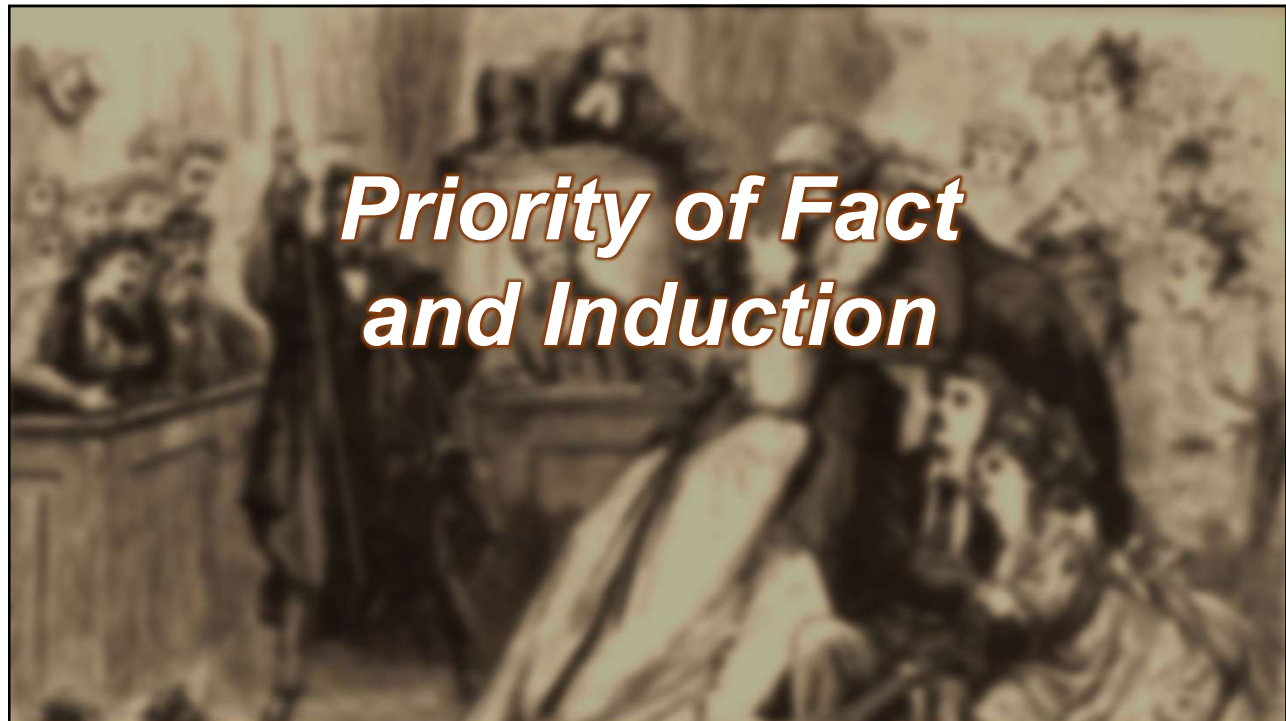


"If we were to formulate a maxim for evidentialist apologetics, it would be something like this: it is wrong, everywhere, always, and for anyone *to tell someone else* to believe something other than on the basis of evidence."

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 156/265]

Does it not seem that this maxim is tacitly telling someone what to believe?

Given that, could we not level the same criticism against this formulation that we did against Clifford's original wording?

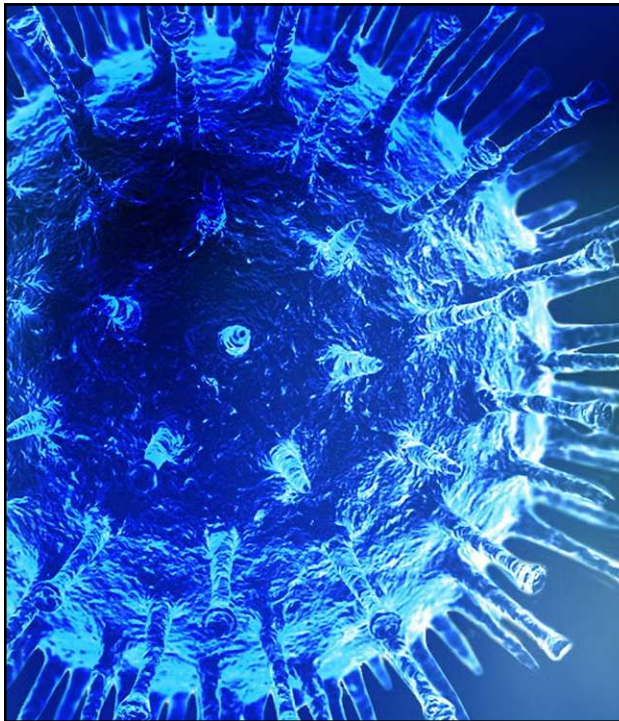


**"Evidentialism
is primarily
inductive,
rather than
deductive, in
its logical
form."**

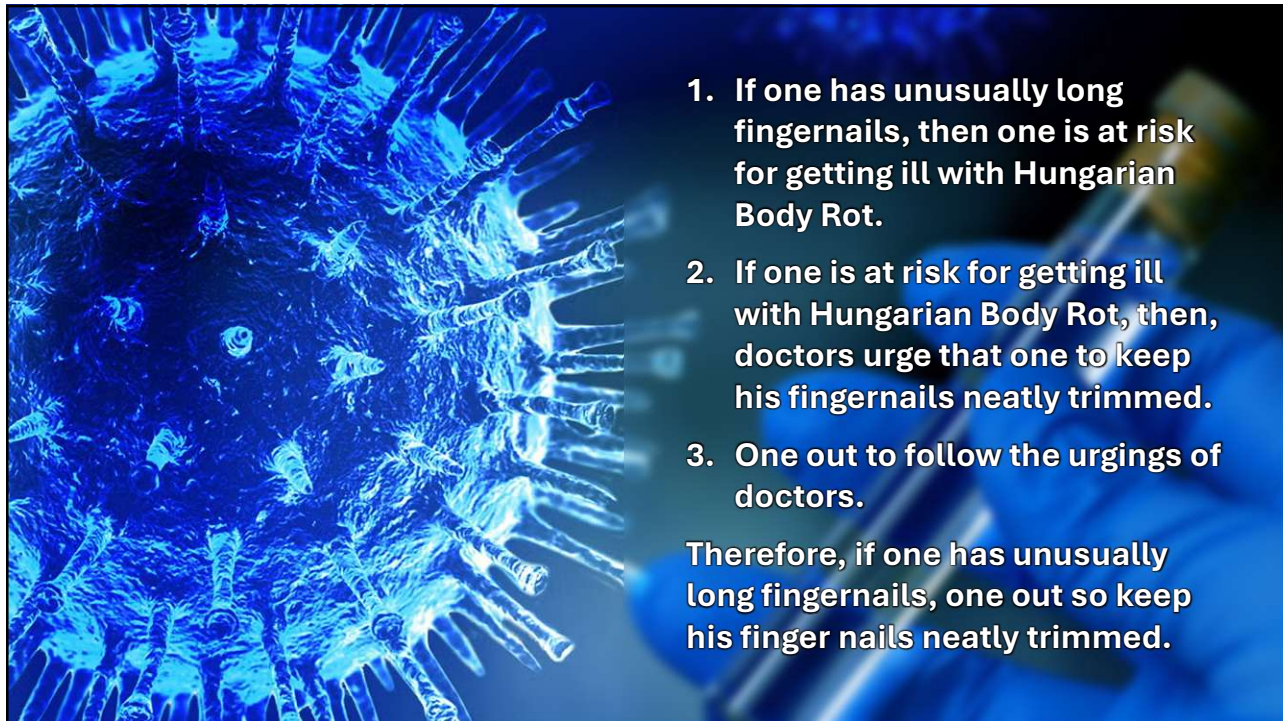
[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*,
157/266]

**I do not mean to harp too
much on this point about logic,
but the logical "form" of an
argument is almost always
irrelevant to the content of the
premises of the argument.**

**Any argument can be cast as a
deductive argument, even
scientific ones.**

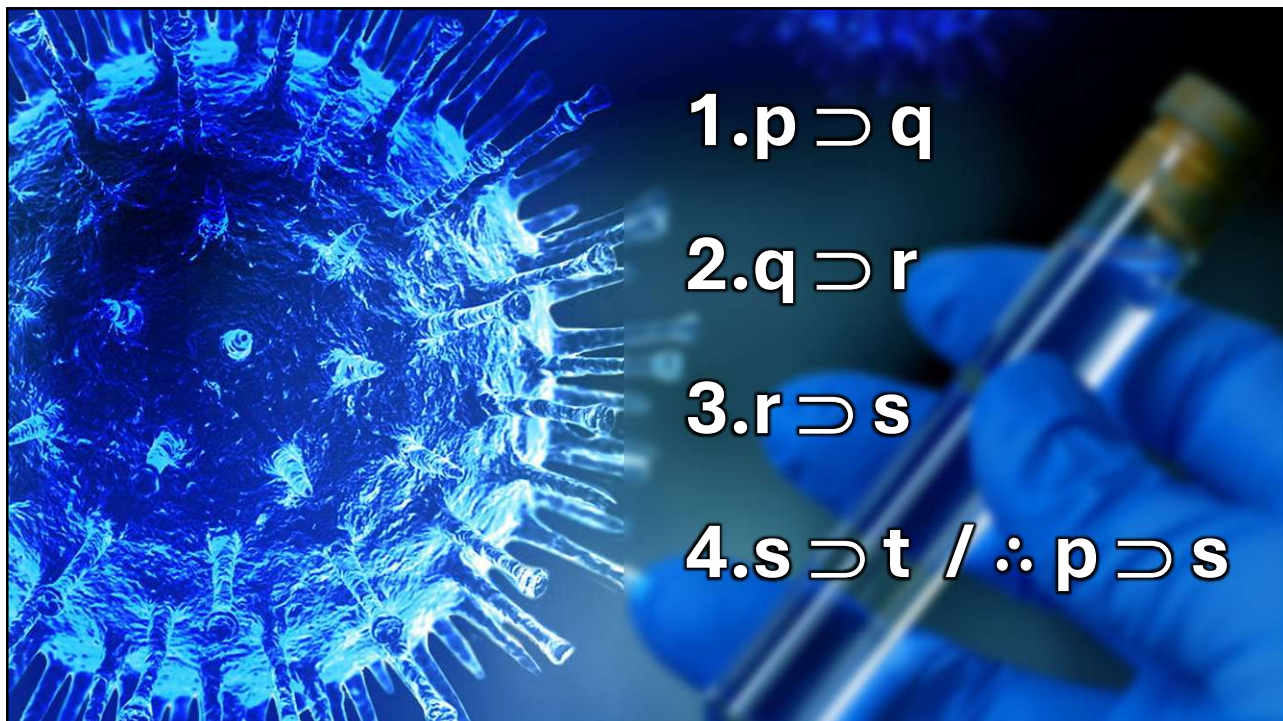


**"Research shows that
the main factor common
among patients taken ill
with the Hungarian Body
Rot Virus (HBRV) is
unusually long finger
nails which put them at
risk. Doctors are urging
everyone to keep their
finger nails neatly
trimmed."**



1. If one has unusually long fingernails, then one is at risk for getting ill with Hungarian Body Rot.
2. If one is at risk for getting ill with Hungarian Body Rot, then, doctors urge that one to keep his fingernails neatly trimmed.
3. One out to follow the urgings of doctors.

Therefore, if one has unusually long fingernails, one out so keep his finger nails neatly trimmed.



1. $p \supset q$
2. $q \supset r$
3. $r \supset s$
4. $s \supset t / \therefore p \supset s$

"Inductive arguments reason from as many facts, or data, as can be mustered to a conclusion that is shown to be supported in some way by the facts. By contrast, deductive arguments, such as those favored in classical apologetics, reason from as few facts, or premises, as are needed to conclusion that is shown to follow from the facts."

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 157/266]

Even given Boa and Bowman's point about logic here for the sake of argument, it is misleading to contrast Evidentialism as a whole with Classical Apologetics as a whole.

Classical Apologetics historically has two and currently, three, distinguished "steps" in its system.

"Inductive arguments reason from as many facts, or data, as can be mustered to a conclusion that is shown to be supported in some way by the facts. By contrast, deductive arguments, such as those favored in classical apologetics, reason from as few facts, or premises, as are needed to conclusion that is shown to follow from the facts."

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 157/266]

The last step in Classical Apologetics in demonstrating Christianity as the only true theism is largely indistinguishable from Evidentialism.

So, to the degree that they are the same, Boa and Bowman's point about deductive vs. inductive would be false (again, granting the point for the sake of argument).

"Inductive arguments reason from as many facts, or data, as can be mustered to a conclusion that is shown to be supported in some way by the facts. By contrast, deductive arguments, such as those favored in classical apologetics, reason from as few facts, or premises, as are needed to conclusion that is shown to follow from the facts."

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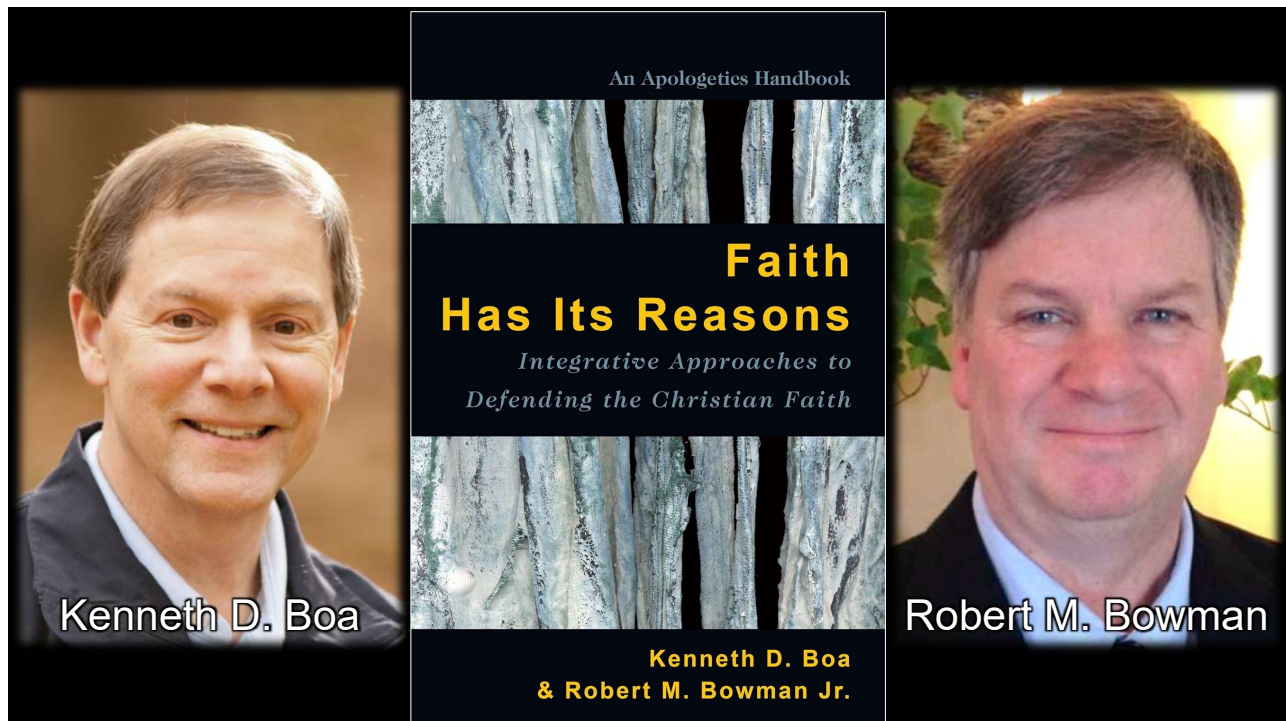
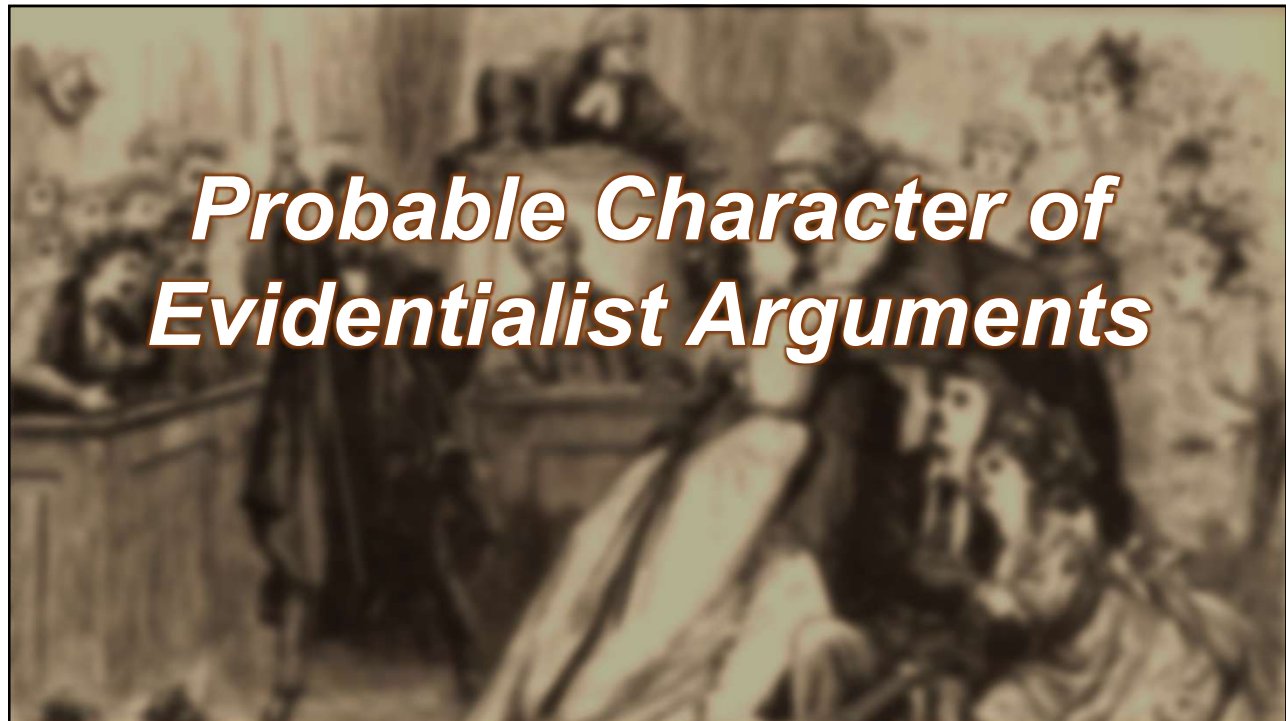
Now, given all this, taking into account the Classical Apologetics system's distinction between demonstrating theism and demonstrating Christianity (a distinction Evidentialism all but ignores), what might we say about Boa and Bowman's point about inductive logic and deductive logic?

"Inductive arguments reason from as many facts, or data, as can be mustered to a conclusion that is shown to be supported in some way by the facts. By contrast, deductive arguments, such as those favored in classical apologetics, reason from as few facts, or premises, as are needed to conclusion that is shown to follow from the facts."

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 157/266]

Even among Classical apologists, most with whom I am familiar use what Boa and Bowman characterize as "inductive logic" in their arguments for theism.

Consider, for example, the vast amount of scientific evidence (big bang, fine tuning, information content of the DNA) in making an "argument to the best explanation," a.k.a. abductive argument for God's existence.



"Evidential apologists of all stripes hold in common a second crucial aspect: *the conclusions of the apologetics arguments they employ are shown to be probable rather than certain.* This follows from the inductive nature of the arguments typically employed.

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 159/269-270, emphasis in original]

Boa and Bowman are making an important point here that I think is correct, with some qualifications.

They are correct in that inductive arguments lead to probability since, by definition, an inductive argument lead to the probability of the conclusion while a deductive argument leads to the certainty of the conclusion.

"Evidential apologists of all stripes hold in common a second crucial aspect: *the conclusions of the apologetics arguments they employ are shown to be probable rather than certain.* This follows from the inductive nature of the arguments typically employed.

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 159/269-270, emphasis in original]

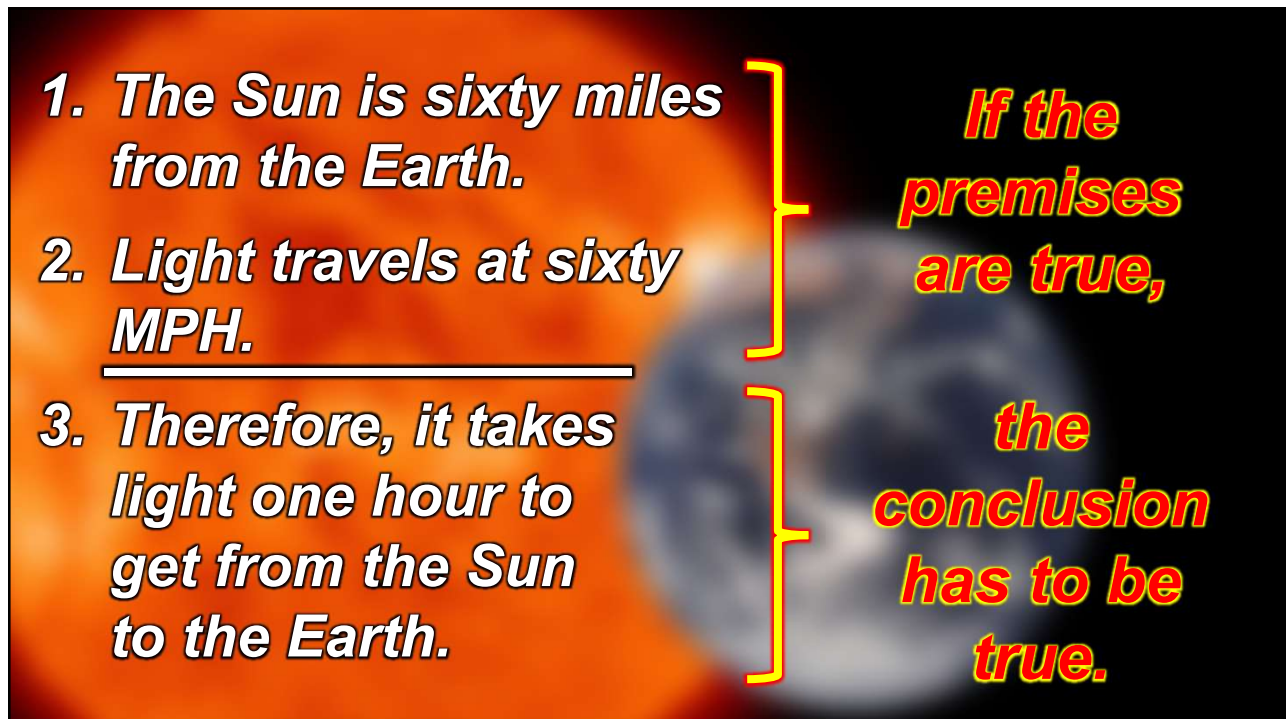
But one must remember that both the probability and the certainty are *logical* probability and *logical* certainty, not necessarily actual probability and actual certainty.

A valid deductive argument will entail a necessary conclusion, even if the conclusion is false.

Remember the illustration about the distance the Sun is from the earth and the speed of light.



1. *The Sun is sixty miles from the Earth.*
2. *Light travels at sixty MPH.*
3. *Therefore, it takes light one hour to get from the Sun to the Earth.*



1. *The Sun is sixty miles from the Earth.*
2. *Light travels at sixty MPH.*
3. *Therefore, it takes light one hour to get from the Sun to the Earth.*

If the premises are true,

the conclusion has to be true.

1. *The Sun is sixty miles from the Earth.*
2. *Light travels at sixty MPH.*
3. *Therefore, it takes light one hour to get from the Sun to the Earth.*

Since the premises "necessitate" the truth of the conclusion, it is called a deductive argument.

1. *The Sun is sixty miles from the Earth.*
2. *Light travels at sixty MPH.*
3. *Therefore, it takes light one hour to get from the Sun to the Earth.*

What areas of study govern the truth or falsity of these statements?

1. *The Sun is sixty miles from the Earth.*

2. *Light travels at sixty MPH.*

3. *Therefore, it takes light one hour to get from the Sun to the Earth.*

What areas of
**ASTRONOMY
AND PHYSICS**
do these statements?

"Evidential apologists of all stripes hold in common a second crucial aspect: *the conclusions of the apologetics arguments they employ are shown to be probable rather than certain.* This follows from the inductive nature of the arguments typically employed.

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 159/269-270, emphasis in original]

Boa and Bowman are correct in emphasizing that the conclusions of Evidentialism are probabilistic.

But there only partially correct in implying (by way of contrast in the overall context) that this distinguishes Evidentialism from Classical Apologetics

"Evidential apologists of all stripes hold in common a second crucial aspect: *the conclusions of the apologetics arguments they employ are shown to be probable rather than certain.* This follows from the inductive nature of the arguments typically employed.

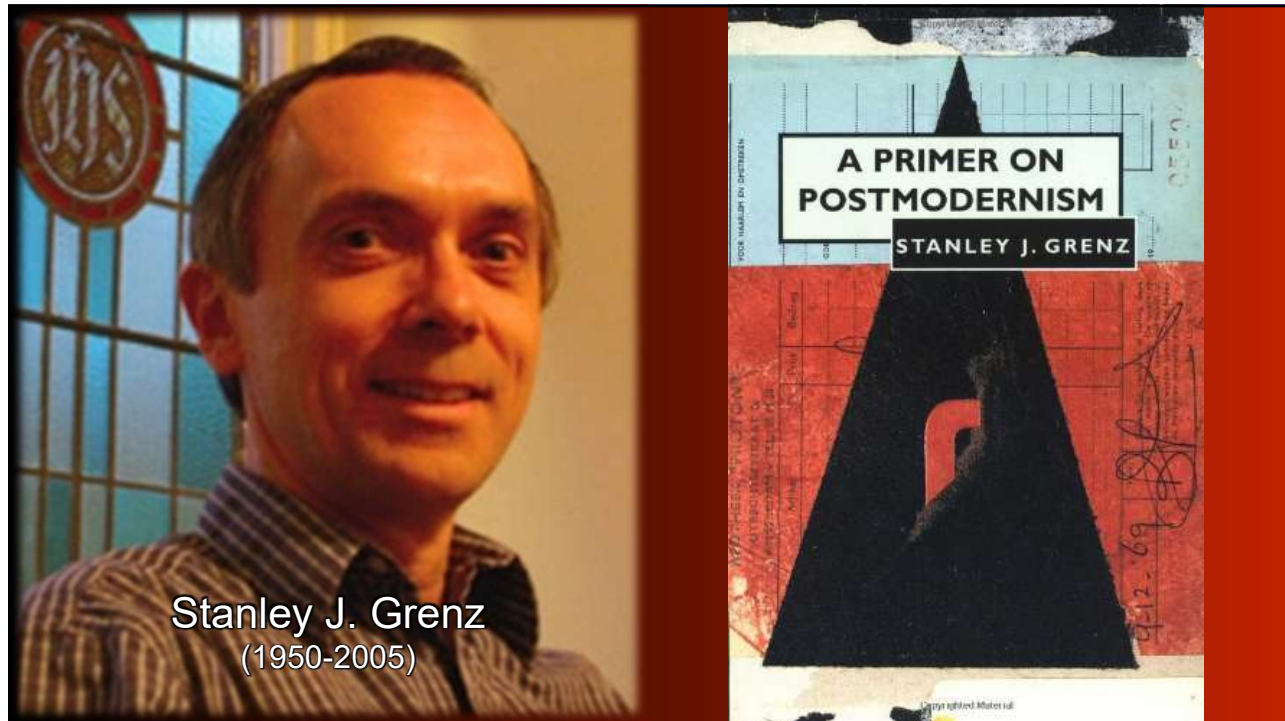
[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 159/269-270, emphasis in original]

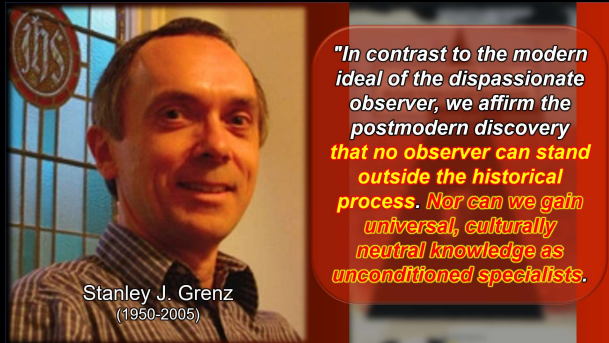
Most Classical apologists with whom I am familiar argue abductively for both theism and Christianity.

But Thomists will maintain that their arguments for theism which employ the metaphysics are demonstrative, not versions of the "argument to the best explanation."



The Postmodern Challenge to Evidentialism





If what Grenz says is true, then his own statement itself does not come from an observer who stands "outside the historical process" and, thus, the statement is not itself "neutral knowledge" coming from an "unconditioned specialist."

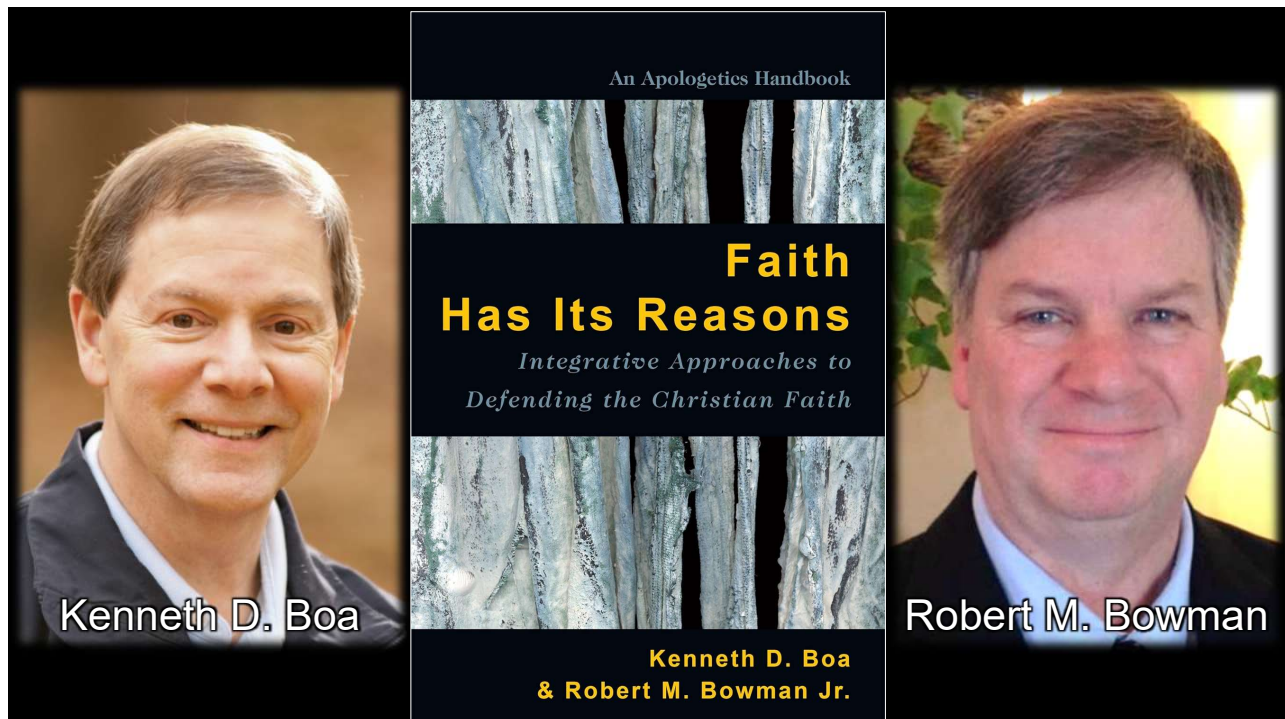
Since this is the case, why should we believe that it is objectively true?

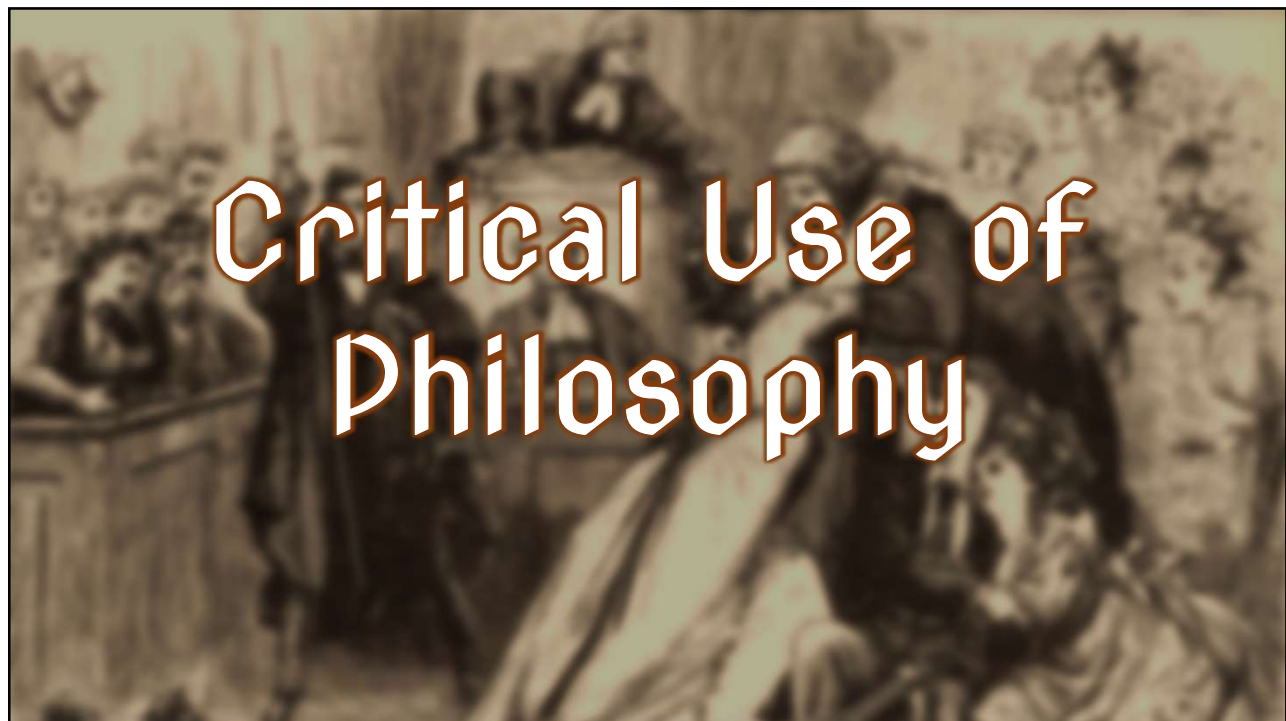
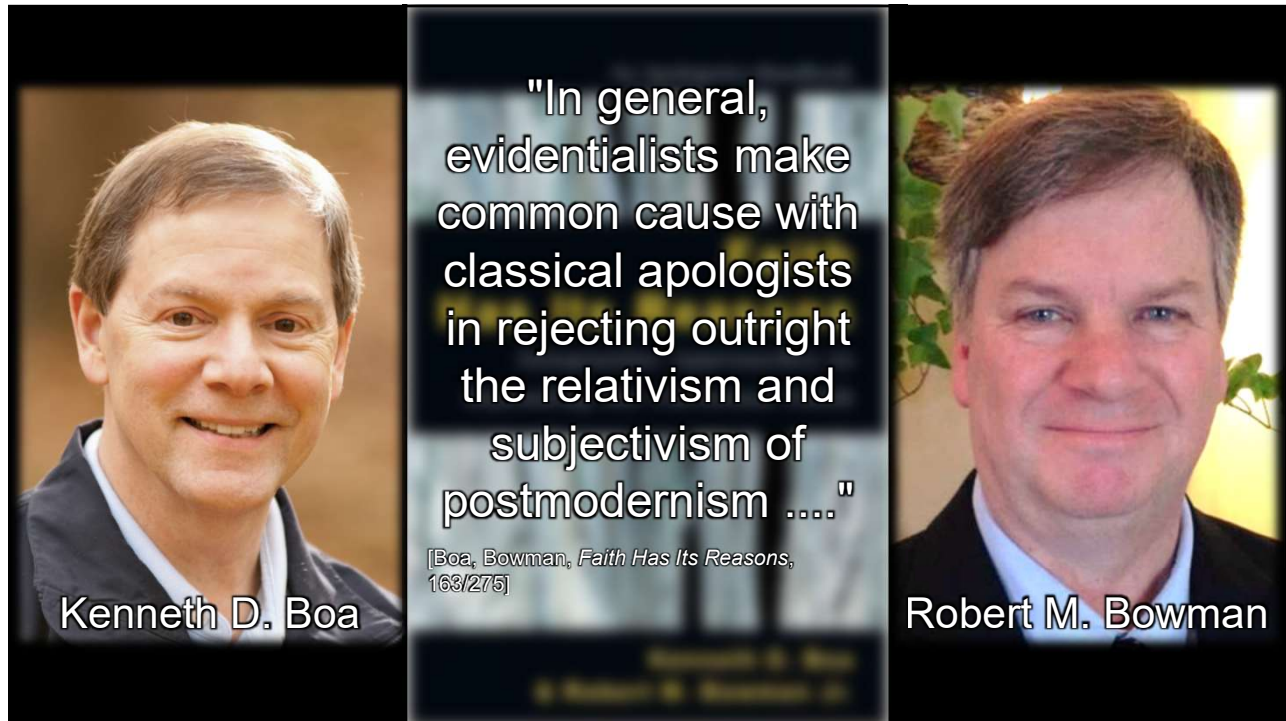


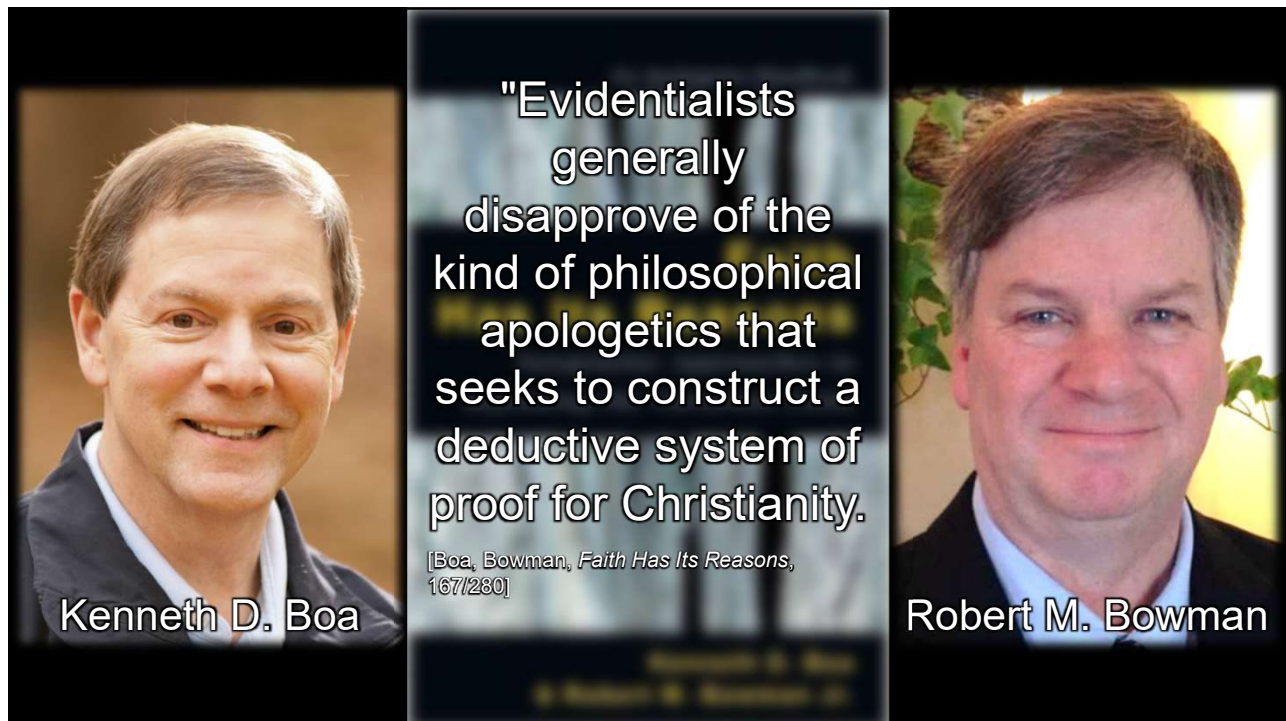
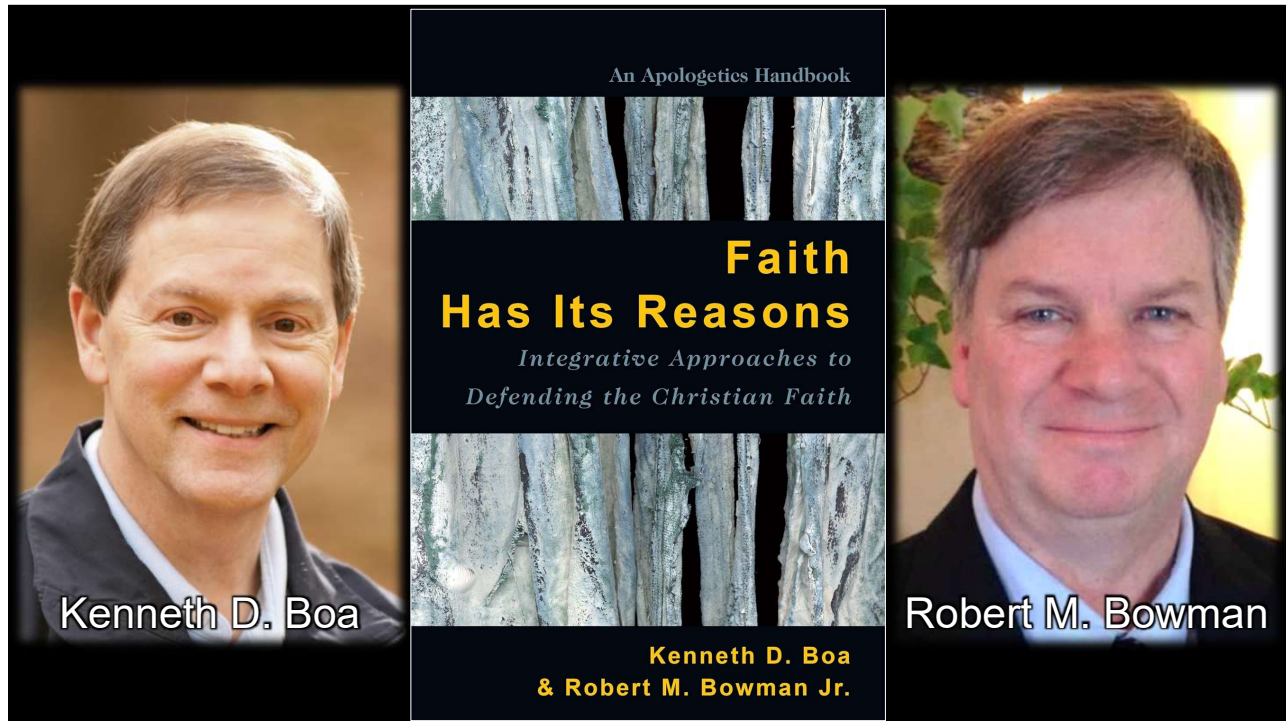


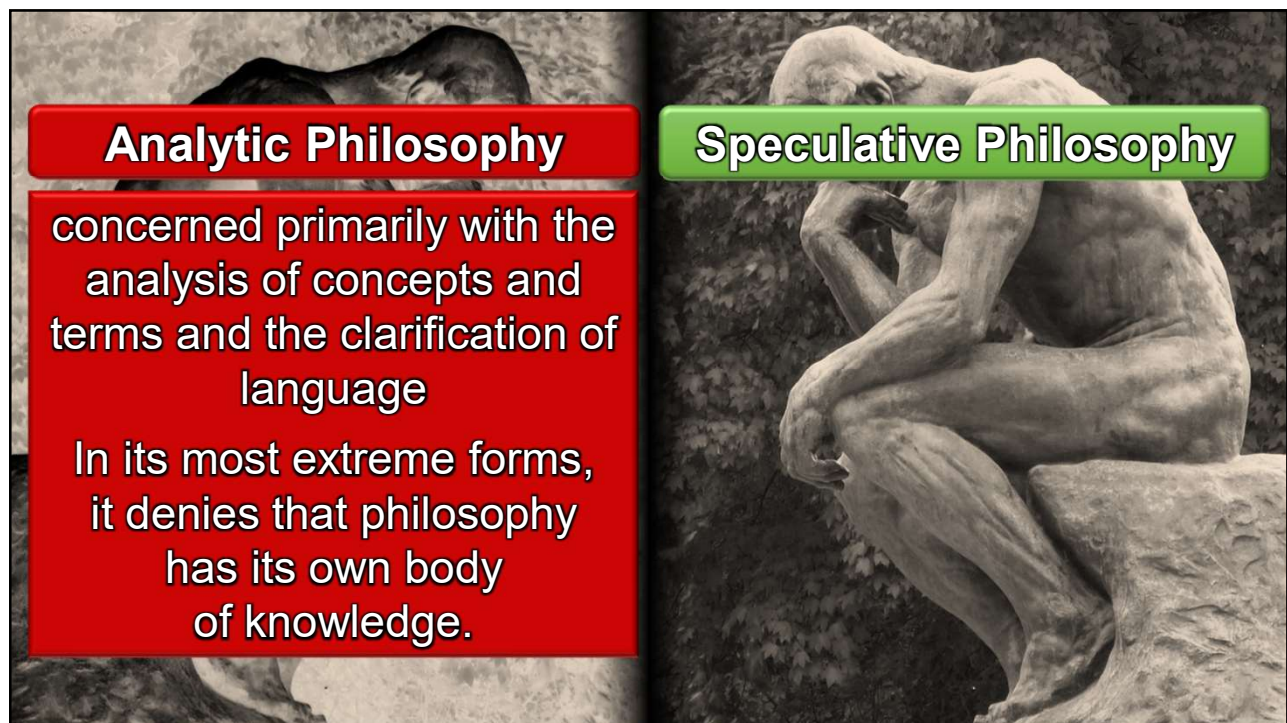
If "all our intellectual endeavors" are "unavoidably conditioned" then Grenz's own statement is itself "unavoidably conditioned."

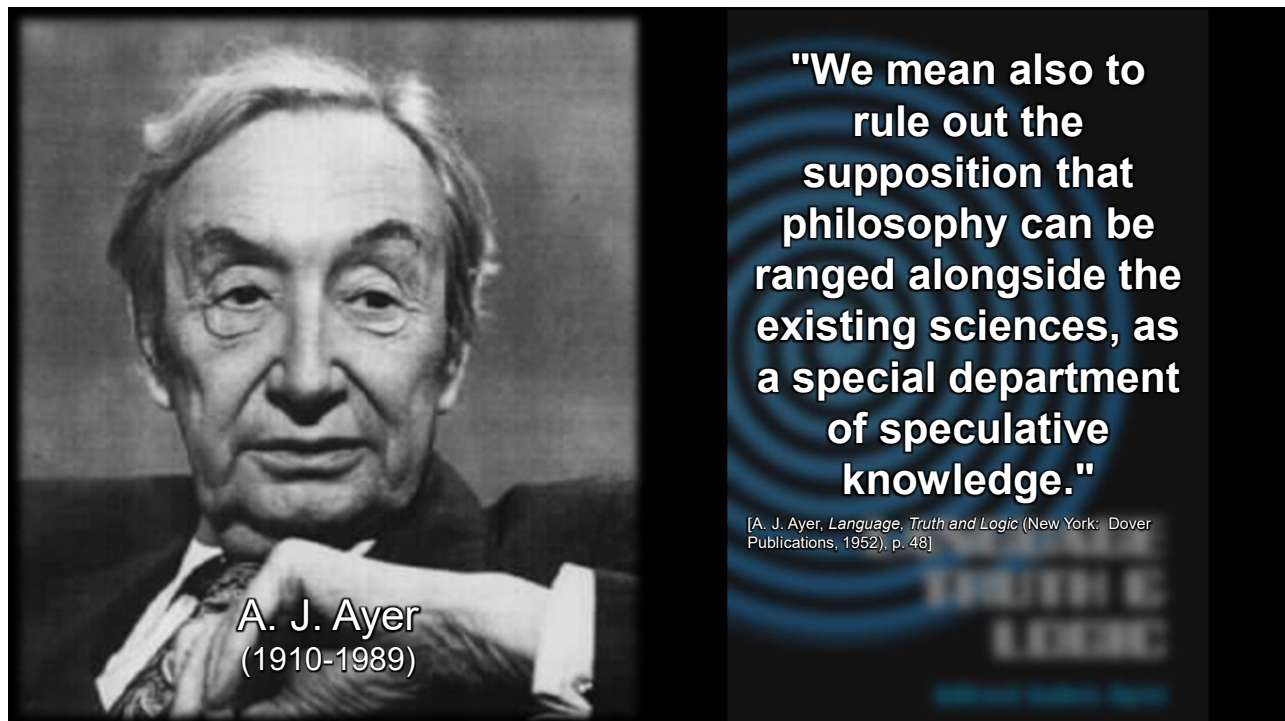
But if his statement is "unavoidably conditioned," then why should we take it as objectively true?

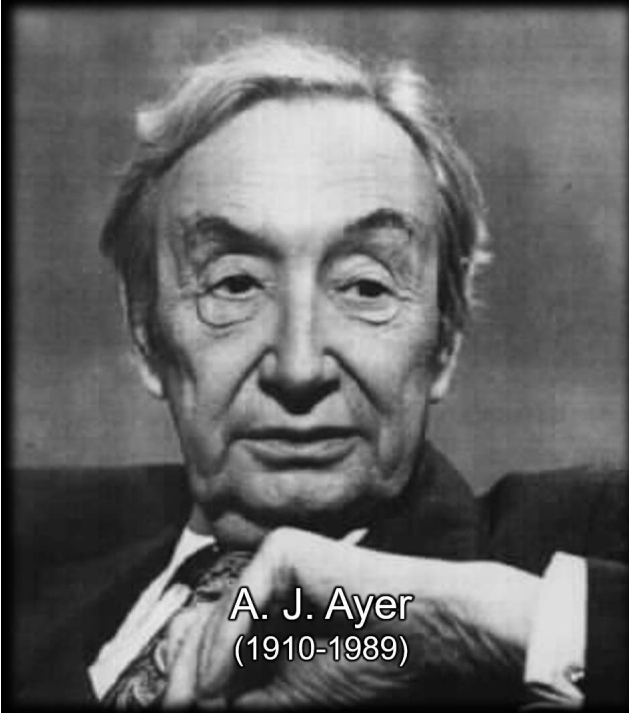








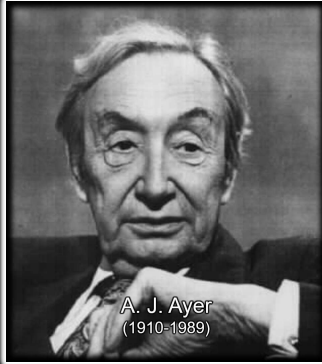




A. J. Ayer
(1910-1989)

"There is no field of experience which cannot, in principle, be brought under some form of scientific law, and no type of speculative knowledge about the world which it is, in principle, beyond the power of science to give."

[Ayer, *Language*, p. 48]

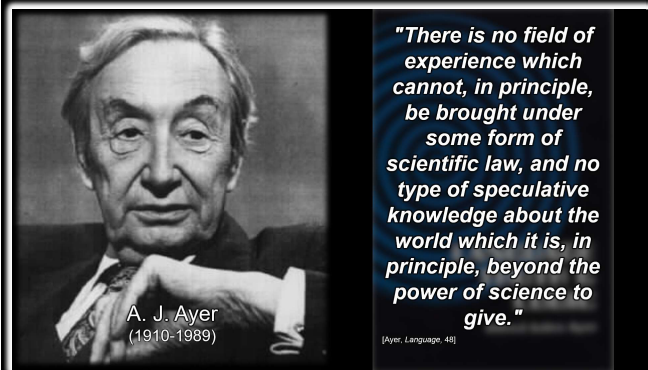


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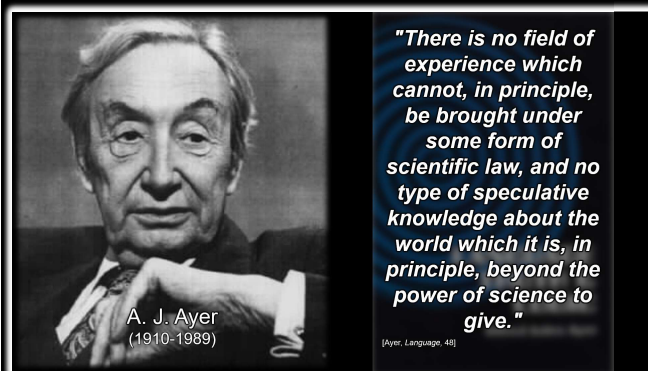
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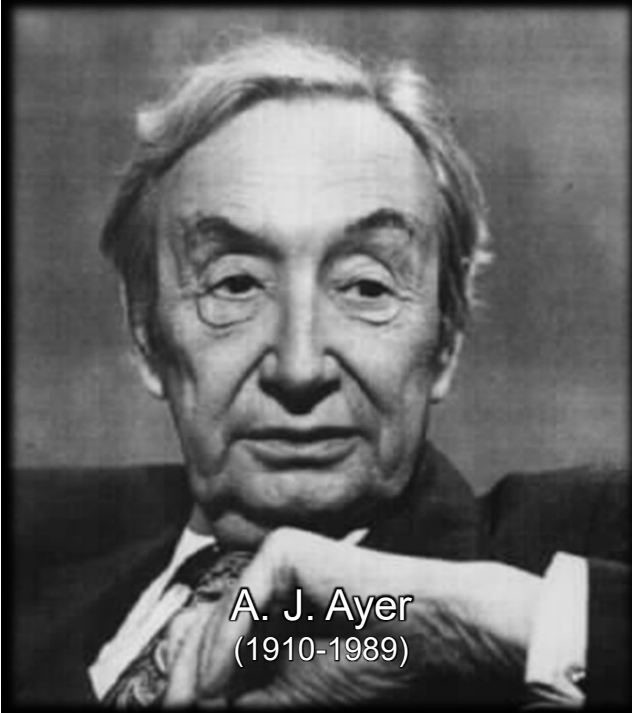
Can this statement be "brought under some form of scientific law"?



If the answer is no, then this statement is not a scientific statement.



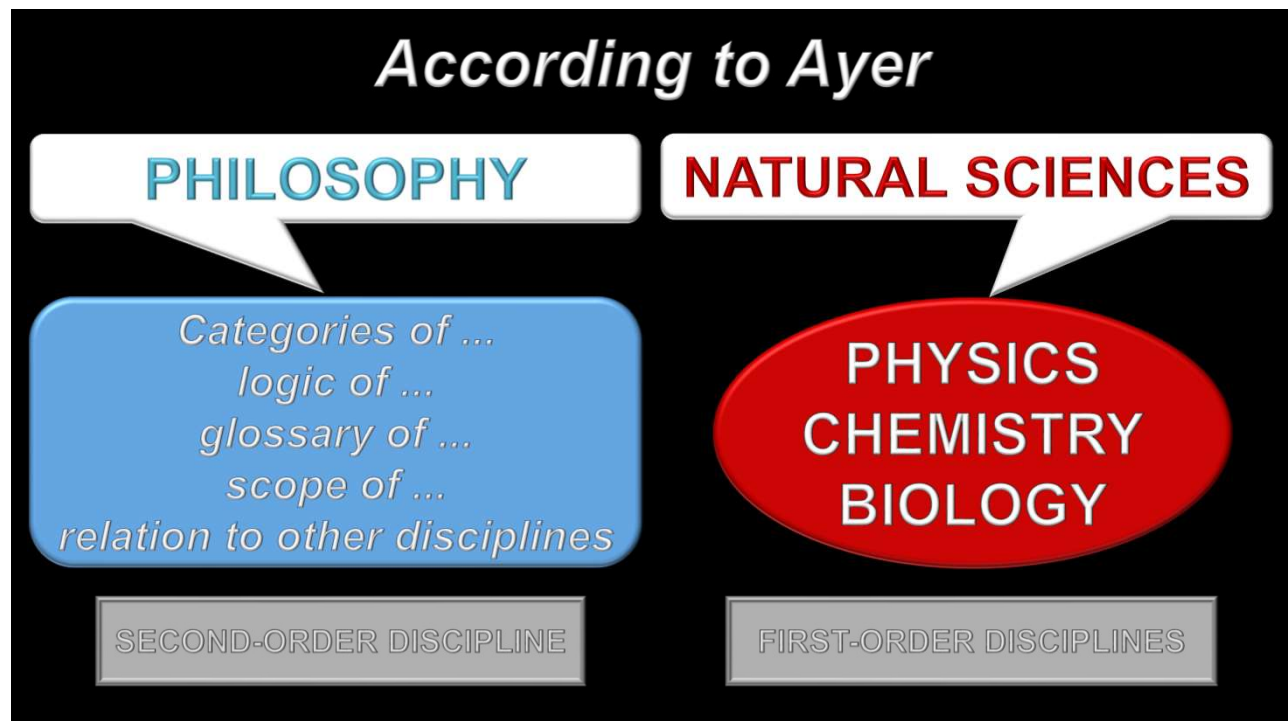
If this statement is a philosophical statement, is it a scientific statement?

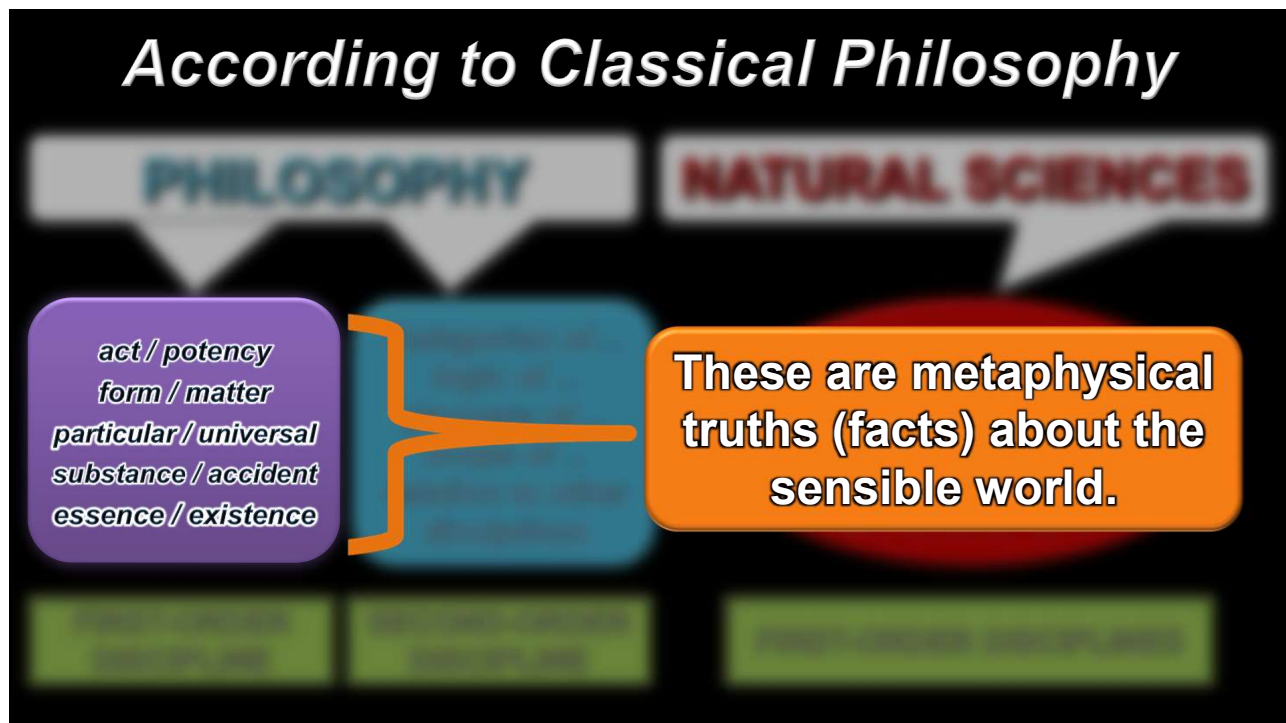
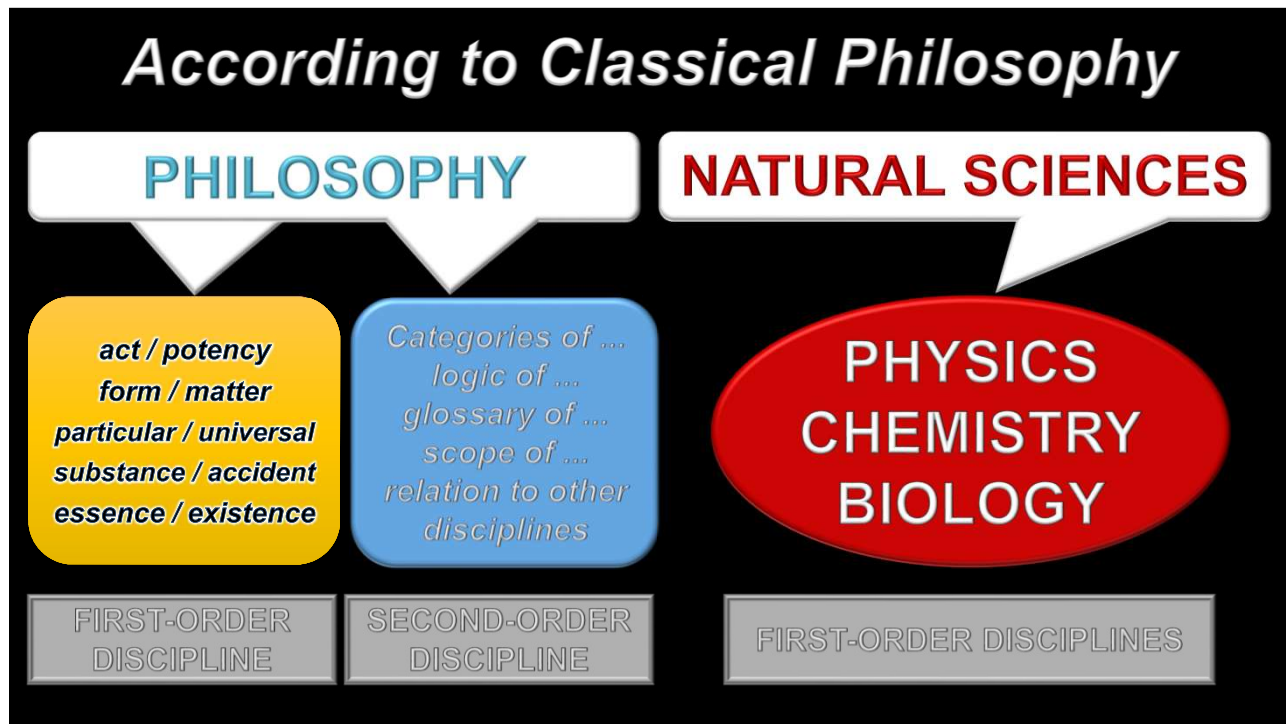


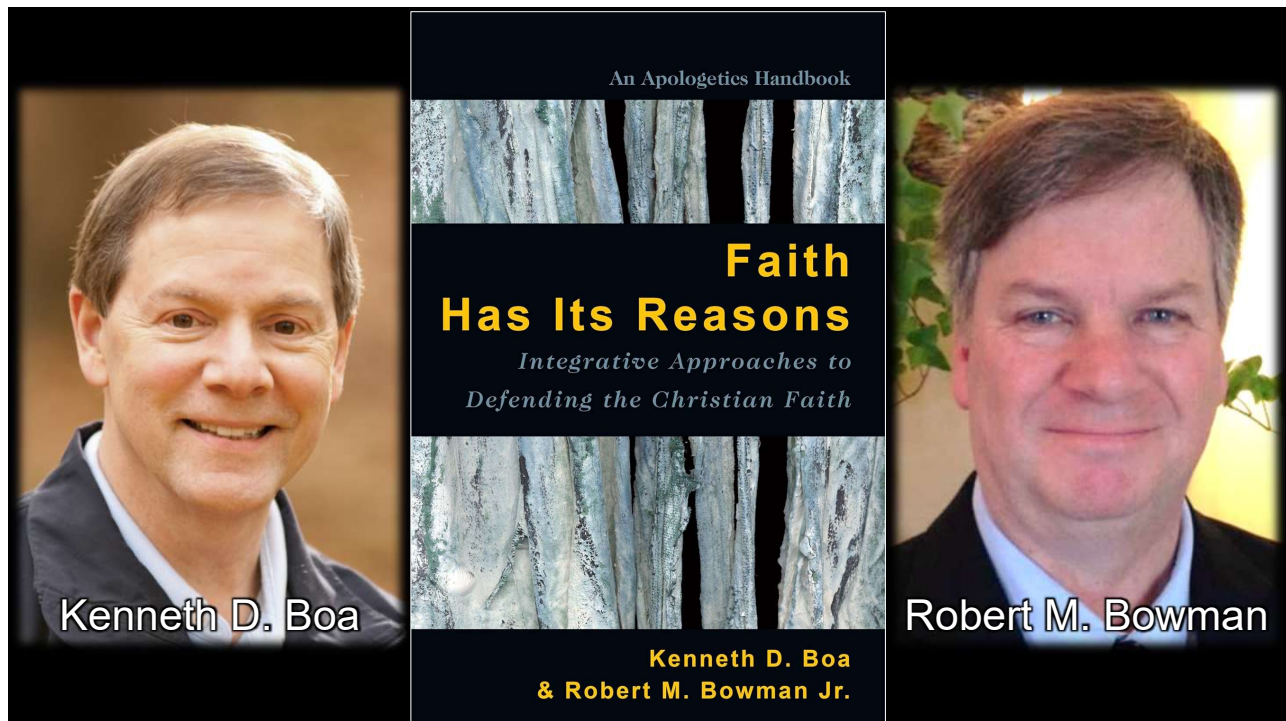
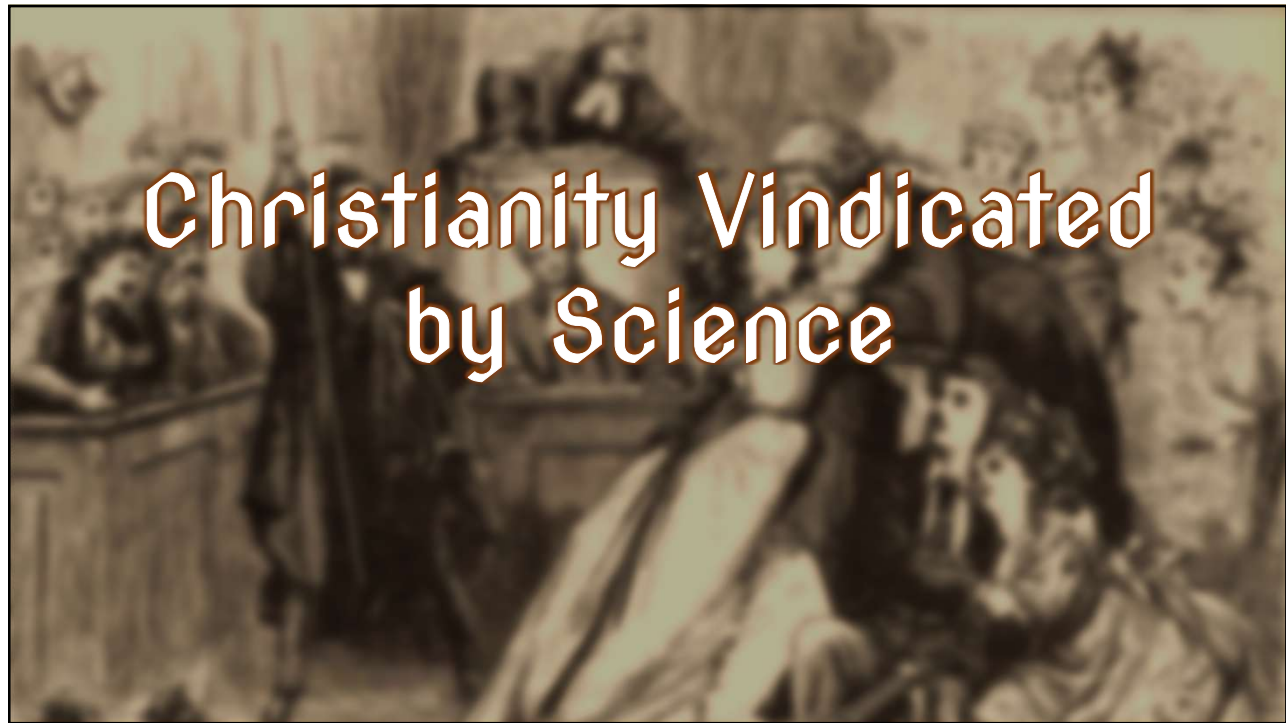
A. J. Ayer
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"But, actually, the validity of the analytic method is not dependent on any empirical, much less any metaphysical, presupposition about the nature of things. For the philosopher, as an analyst, is not directly concerned with the physical properties of things. **He is concerned only with the way in which we speak about them.** In other words, the propositions of philosophy are not factual, but linguistic in character."

[Ayer, *Language*, p. 57]







"Up until the eighteenth century, apologetics was modeled on philosophy, which was generally **deductive in form**. 'Philosophy' until that time was a much broader term than it is now, and included the study of the natural world (what was called 'natural philosophy'). In turn, the word 'science' was understood in its common Latin sense as *scientia*, knowledge. As disciplines of study became more specialized, the sciences emerged as distinct branches of knowledge increasingly differentiated from philosophy by their **inductive, empirical method**.

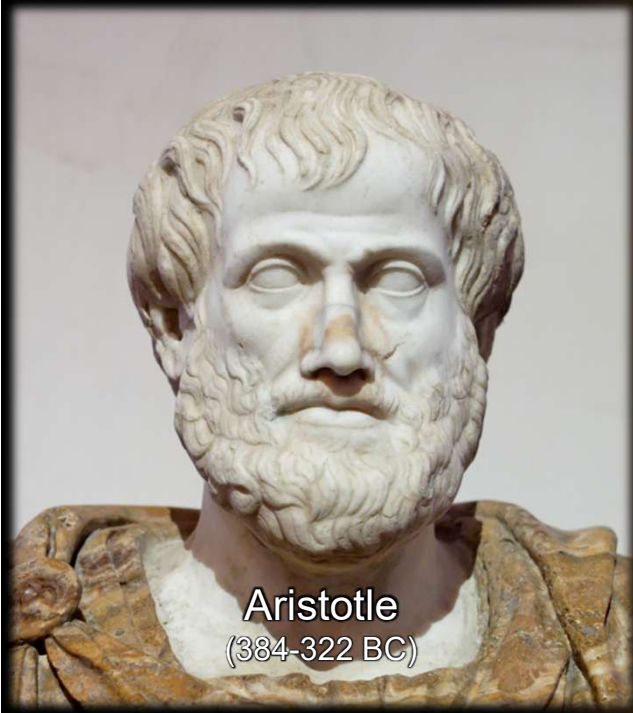
[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 171/286]

Boa and Bowman are right in pointing out how the different areas of knowledge (*scientia*) became more specialized.

"Up until the eighteenth century, apologetics was modeled on philosophy, which was generally **deductive in form**. 'Philosophy' until that time was a much broader term than it is now, and included the study of the natural world (what was called 'natural philosophy'). In turn, the word 'science' was understood in its common Latin sense as *scientia*, knowledge. As disciplines of study became more specialized, the sciences emerged as distinct branches of knowledge increasingly differentiated from philosophy by their **inductive, empirical method**.

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 171/286]


It should be noted that the ancient Greeks, Aristotle for example, recognized that there were different specialized areas of knowledge even if the specialization was not to the extent that it becomes in the modern era.



Aristotle
(384-322 BC)

"We only ascribe universal education to one who, in his own individual person, is thus critical in all or nearly all branches of knowledge, and not to one who has a like ability merely in some special subject. For it is possible for a man to have this competence in some one branch of knowledge without having it in all."

[Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*, Bk. I, trans. William Ogle (<https://penelope.uchicago.edu/aristotle/parts1.html>), accessed 09/19/25]



Edward Feser

Aristotle's Revenge
The Metaphysical Foundations of Physical and Biological Science

editiones scholasticae

"Up until the eighteenth century, apologetics was modeled on philosophy, which was generally **deductive in form**. 'Philosophy' until that time was a much broader term than it is now, and included the study of the natural world (what was called 'natural philosophy'). In turn, the word 'science' was understood in its common Latin sense as *scientia*, knowledge. As disciplines of study became more specialized, the sciences emerged as distinct branches of knowledge increasingly differentiated from philosophy by their **inductive, empirical method**.

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 171/286]

I would suggest, however, that the trend began in the seventeenth century with the mathematization of philosophy in the thinking of René Descartes (1596-1650).

"Up until the eighteenth century, apologetics was modeled on philosophy, which was generally **deductive in form**. 'Philosophy' until that time was a much broader term than it is now, and included the study of the natural world (what was called 'natural philosophy'). In turn, the word 'science' was understood in its common Latin sense as *scientia*, knowledge. As disciplines of study became more specialized, the sciences emerged as distinct branches of knowledge increasingly differentiated from philosophy by their **inductive, empirical method**.

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 171/286]

This is to say that the specialization and at times separation of the sciences had much to do with the increase in the precision of the instruments together with the increasing dominance of mathematics and less with logical methods of deduction and induction.

"Up until the eighteenth century, apologetics was modeled on philosophy, which was generally **deductive in form**. 'Philosophy' until that time was a much broader term than it is now, and included the study of the natural world (what was called 'natural philosophy'). In turn, the word 'science' was understood in its common Latin sense as *scientia*, knowledge. As disciplines of study became more specialized, the sciences emerged as distinct branches of knowledge increasingly differentiated from philosophy by their **inductive, empirical method**.

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 171/286]

What is more, Aristotle was quite the inductive empiricist, though the Classical Empiricism of Aristotle and Aquinas is quite different from Modern and Contemporary Empiricism in its metaphysical grounding.

"A widespread disdain for and distrust of abstract reasoning in general and deductive philosophical argument in particular have brought the classical theistic arguments into disrepute.

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 172/287]

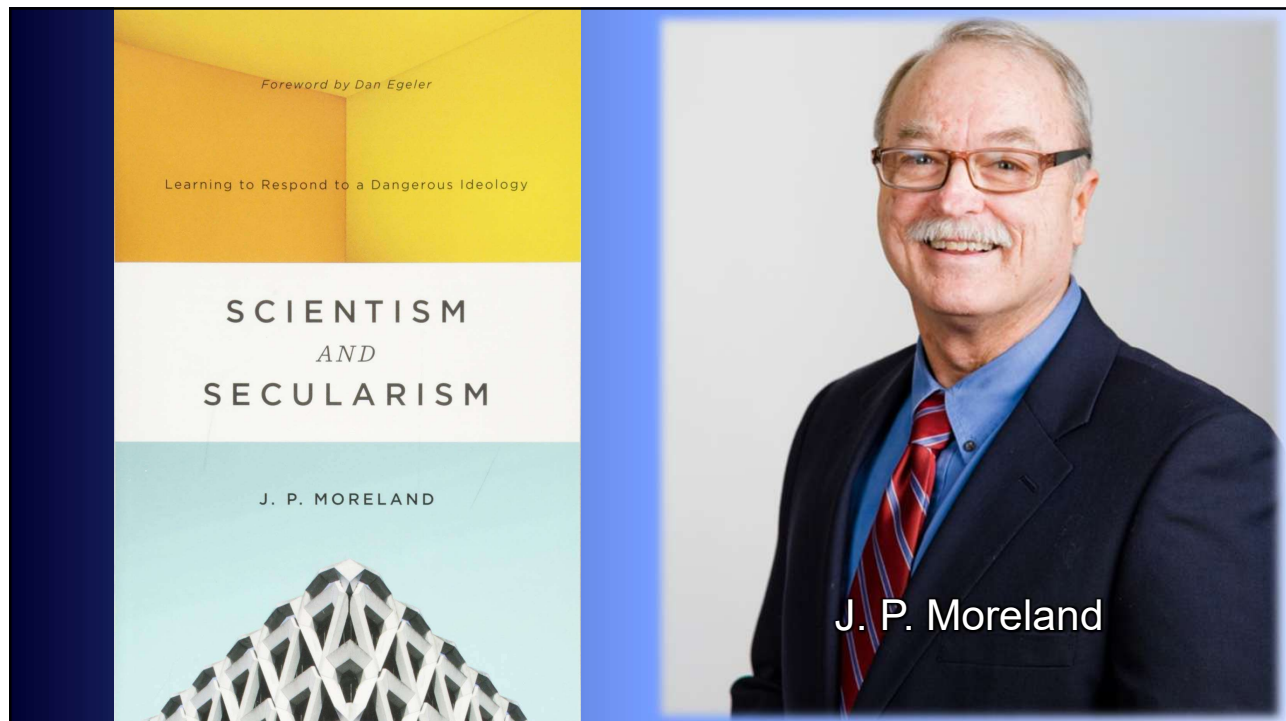
Regrettably Boa and Bowman are right that the classical theistic arguments have fallen into disrepute, though I would submit that it had to do, not so much with any deductive aspect of philosophical arguments, but with philosophy in general.

"A widespread disdain for and distrust of abstract reasoning in general and deductive philosophical argument in particular have brought the classical theistic arguments into disrepute.

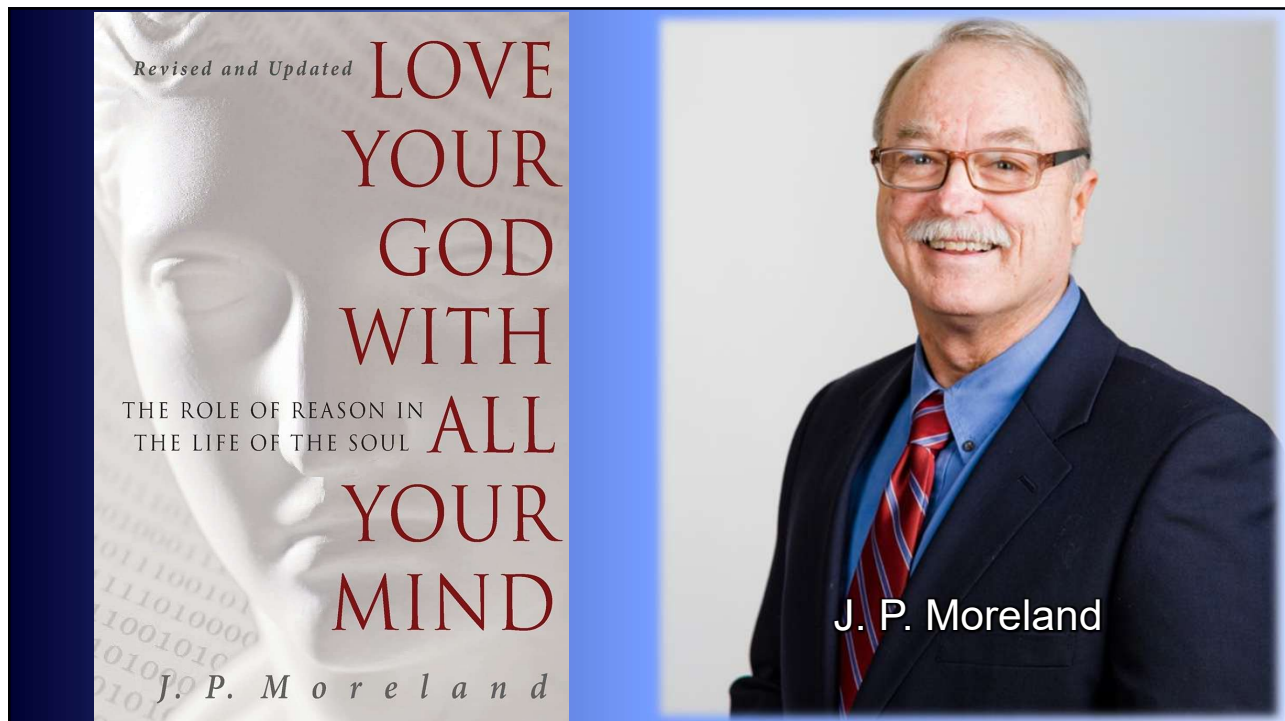
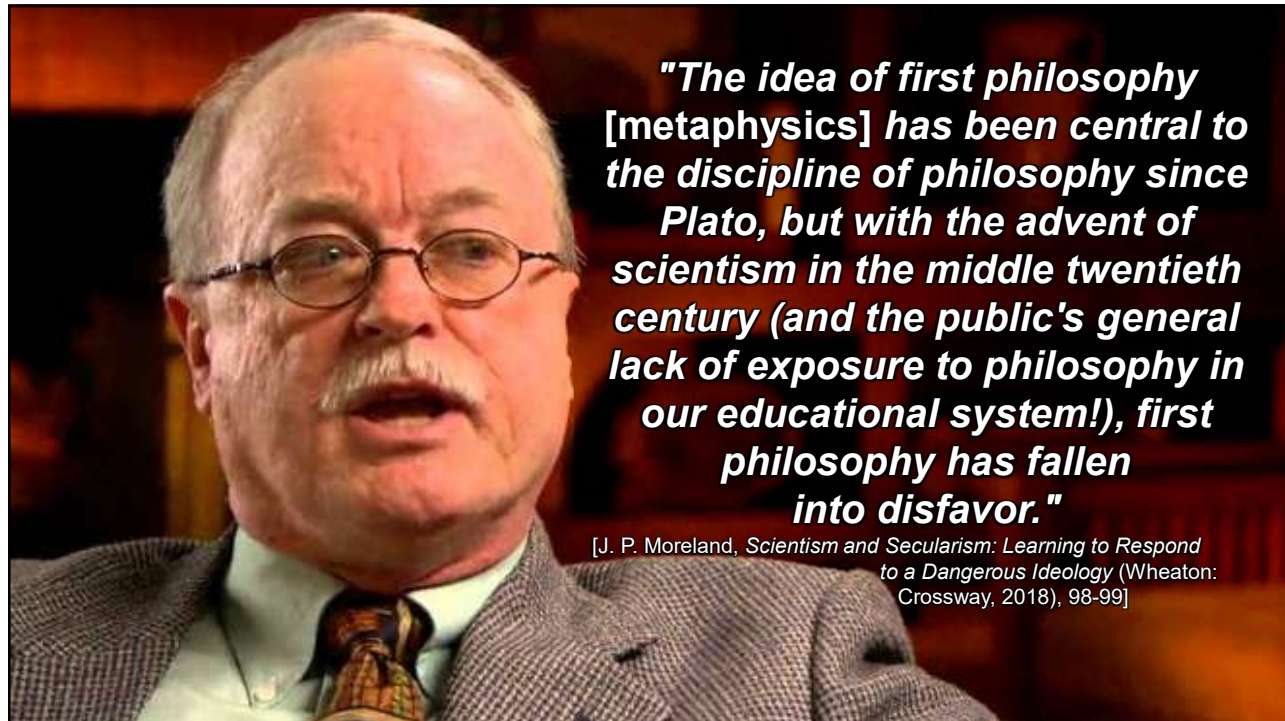
[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 172/237]

This increasing disdain for philosophy is especially evident in evangelicalism.

It is but one aspect of the increasing disdain for higher learning in general that has plagued American Christianity in the 20th century.



J. P. Moreland

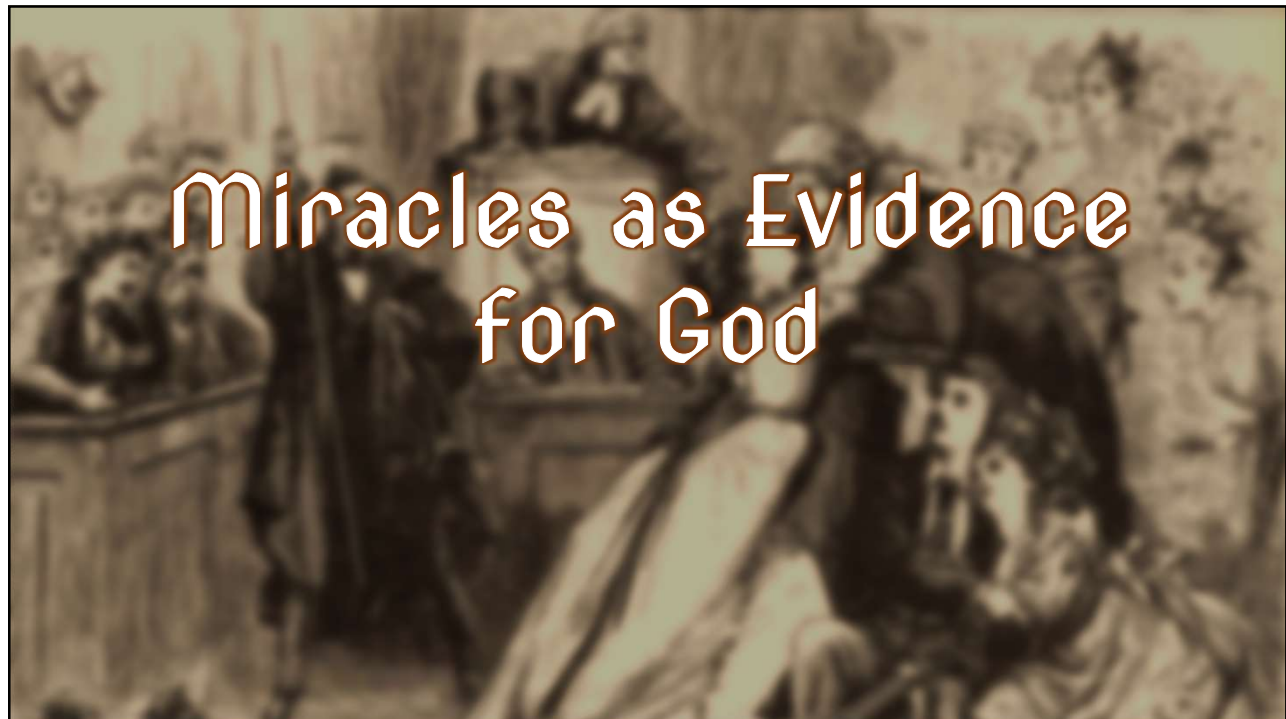


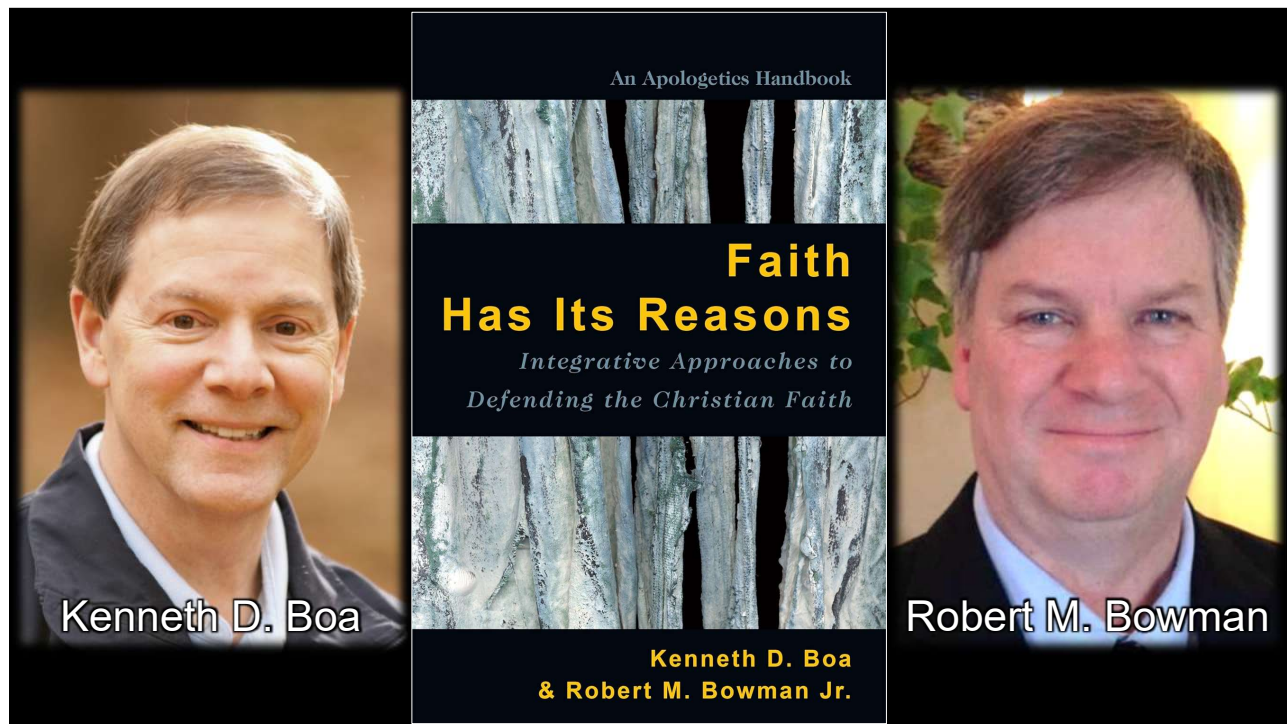
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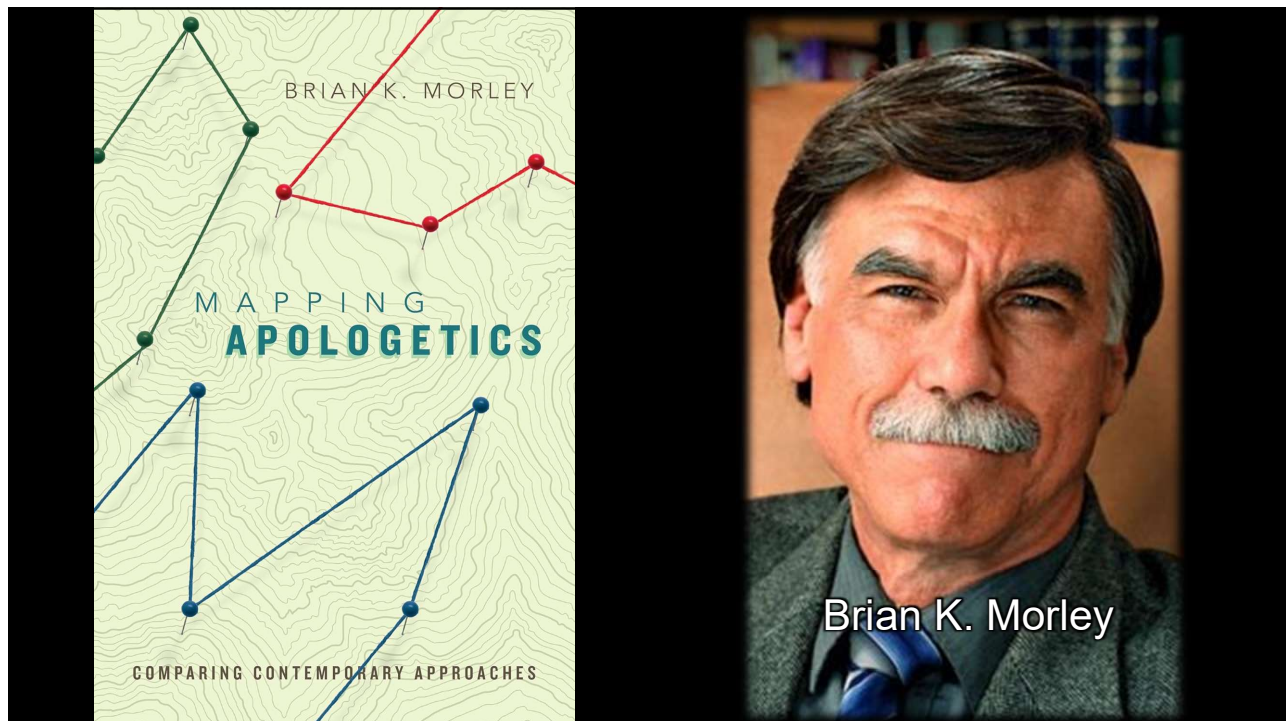
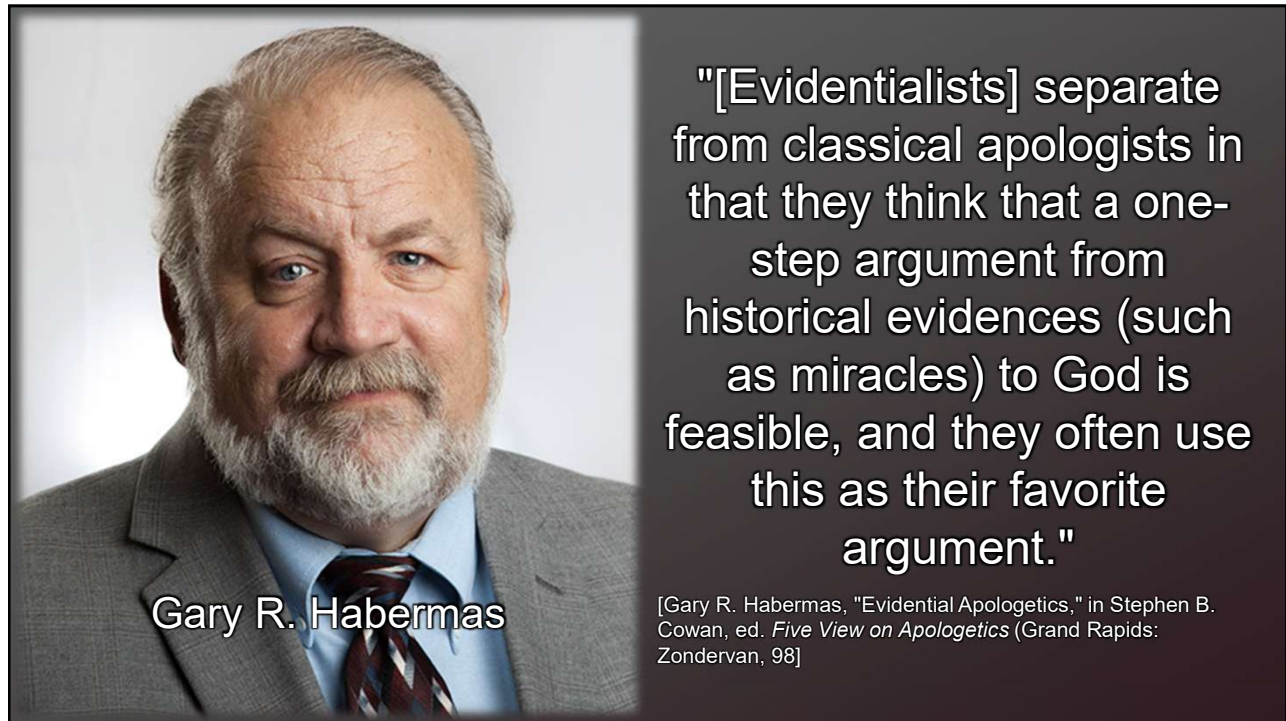
[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 172/287]

The question to ask is what, if anything, can be identified as the cause or causes of the decline.

However, there is hope in that philosophy has seen somewhat of a comeback in American evangelicalism in recent decades.

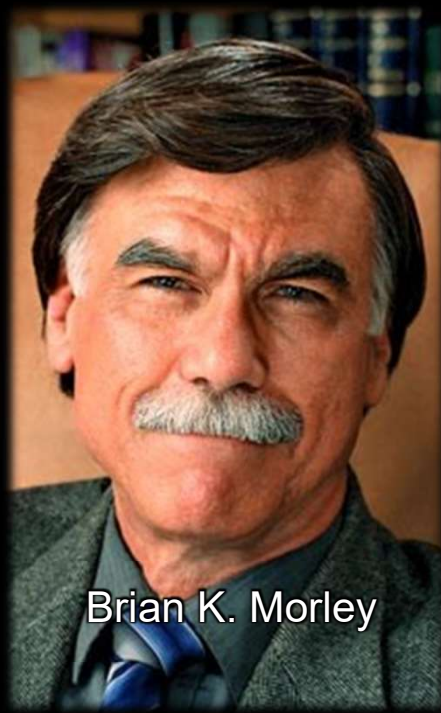






"Classical apologists are less confident than evidentialists that miracles can point to proper conclusions about religion without first setting up the worldview. It is the overall case for the theistic God, established through theistic arguments, that can show the possibility of miracles, says Geisler. ... Then, only history can show the actuality of a miracle."

[Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 325)]



Brian K. Morley

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[Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 325)]

Morley does a good job in summarizing the Classical Apologetics system of Norman Geisler.

However, I would demur regarding the use of the term 'worldview', especially in light of the common employment of the misleading glasses illustration.

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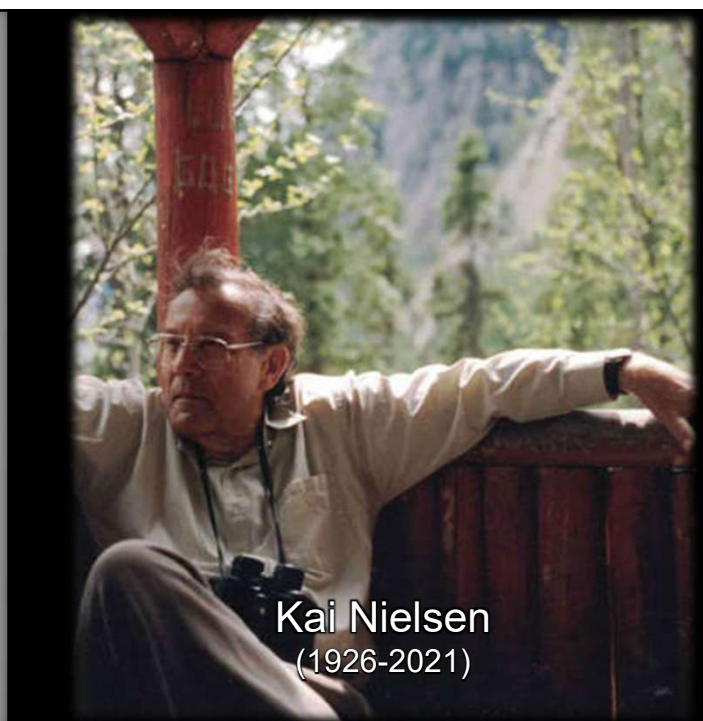
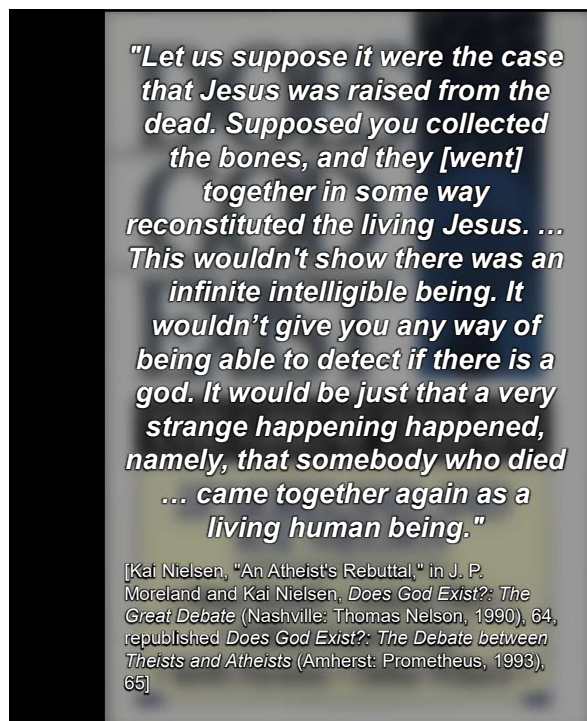
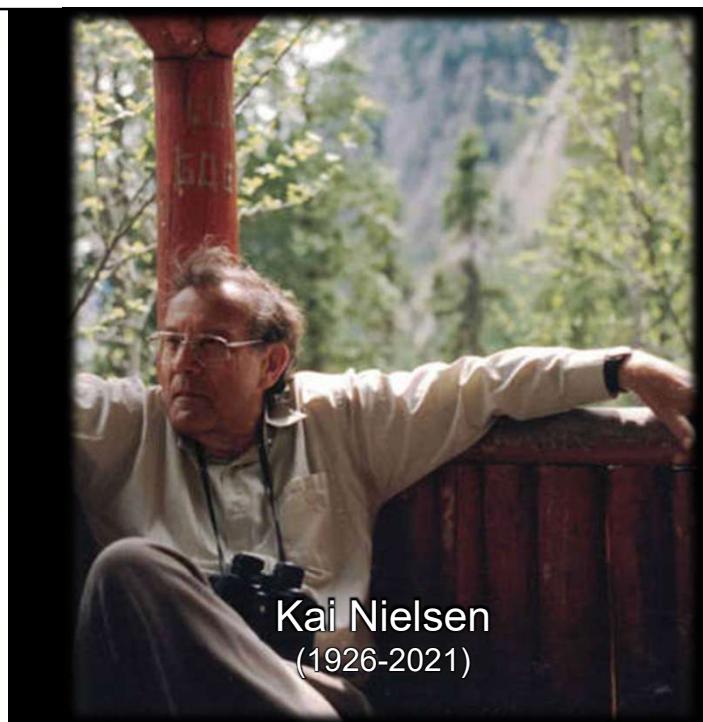
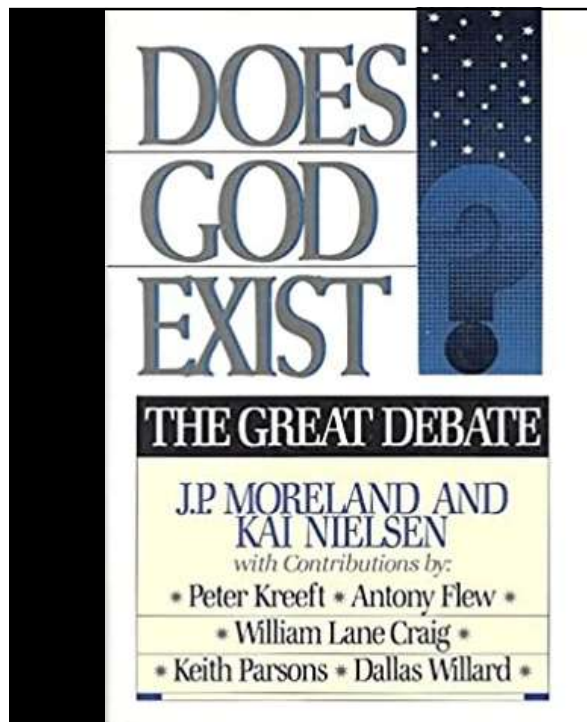
[Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 325)]

In Geisler's defense, he uses the term 'worldview' as a label for the various positions taken on the question of God's existence and the implications a given position has for a number of important issues, not the least of which is the possibility of miracles.

"Classical apologists are less confident than evidentialists that miracles can point to proper conclusions about religion without first setting up the worldview. It is the overall case for the theistic God, established through theistic arguments, that can show the possibility of miracles, says Geisler. ... Then, only history can show the actuality of a miracle."

[Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 325)]

The Classical Apologetics point about God and miracles is vividly illustrated by atheism Kai Nielsen in responding to the evidence for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as evidence for God's existence.



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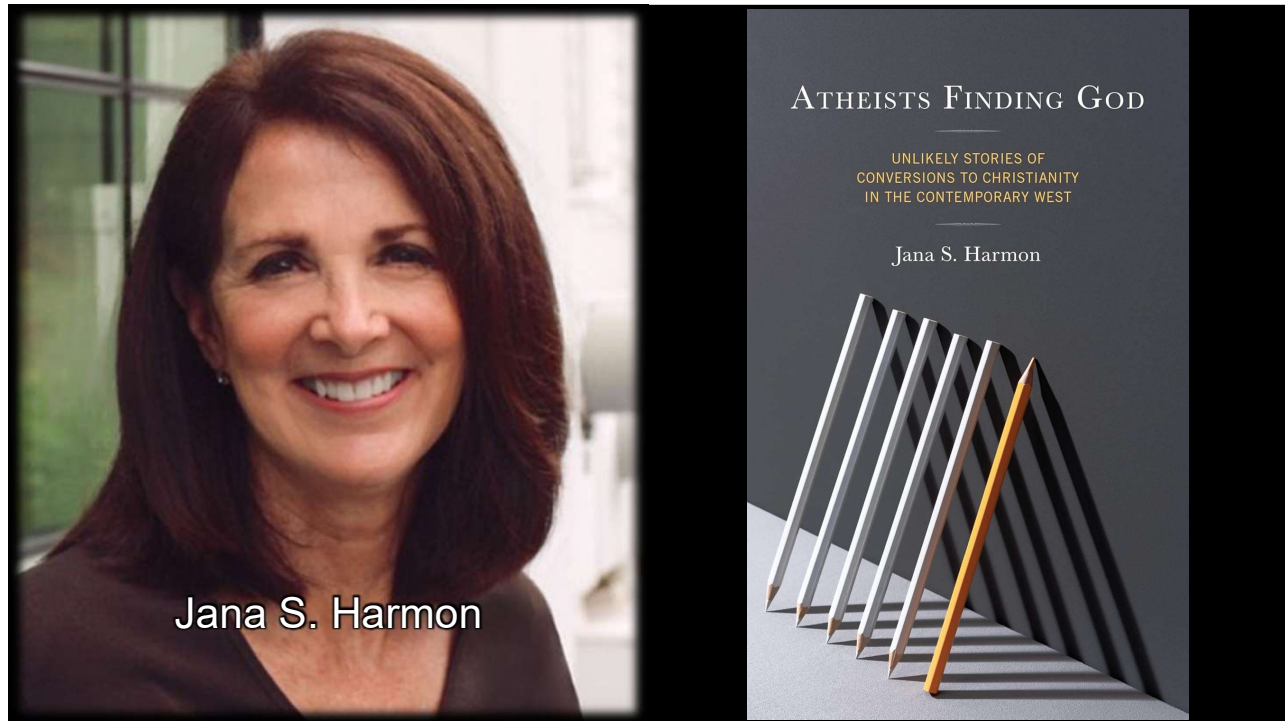
[Brian K. Motley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 325)]

My appeal to Nielsen here is not to deny that no atheist could ever move directly from atheism to Christian theism when confronted with the evidence of the resurrection.

"Classical apologists are less confident than evidentialists that miracles can point to proper conclusions about religion without first setting up the worldview. It is the overall case for the theistic God, established through theistic arguments, that can show the possibility of miracles, says Geisler. ... Then, only history can show the actuality of a miracle."

[Brian K. Motley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 325)]

Rather, in defense of my principled/practical position on God, miracles, and apologetic systems (which I take up in the following comments on Boa and Bowman), Nielsen is an example of the principled point.



"Evidentialists believe that miracles, like fulfilled prophecy, can be used in the verification of the supernatural. ... **Classical apologists tend to argue that one must first establish the existence of God in order to render miracles credible.**"

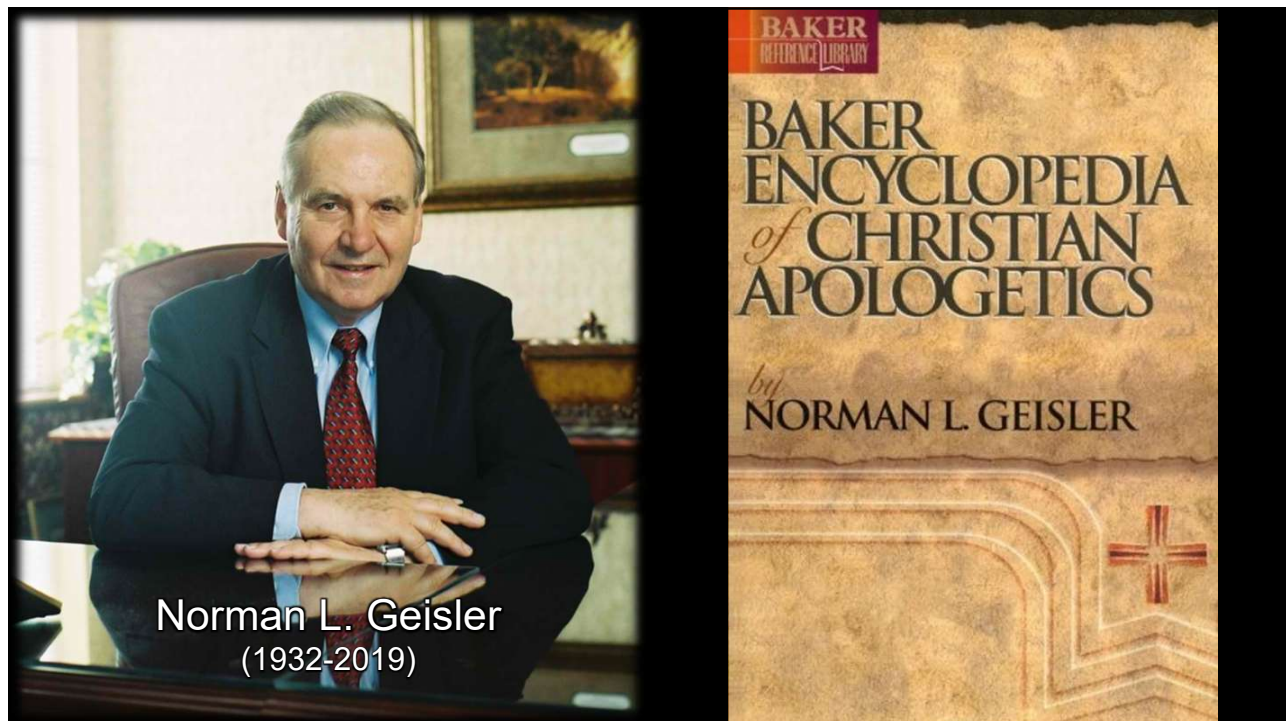
[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 191/319]

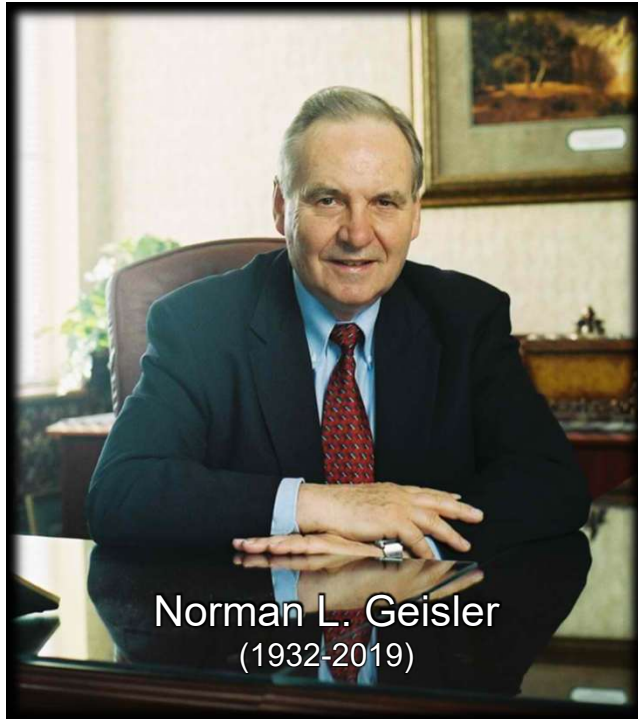
First, Boa and Bowman are right in saying that Classical apologists "tend to argue" this about miracles, although one will find a difference of opinion among self-identified Classical apologists.

"Evidentialists believe that miracles, like fulfilled prophecy, can be used in the verification of the supernatural. ... **Classical apologists tend to argue that one must first establish the existence of God in order to render miracles credible.**"

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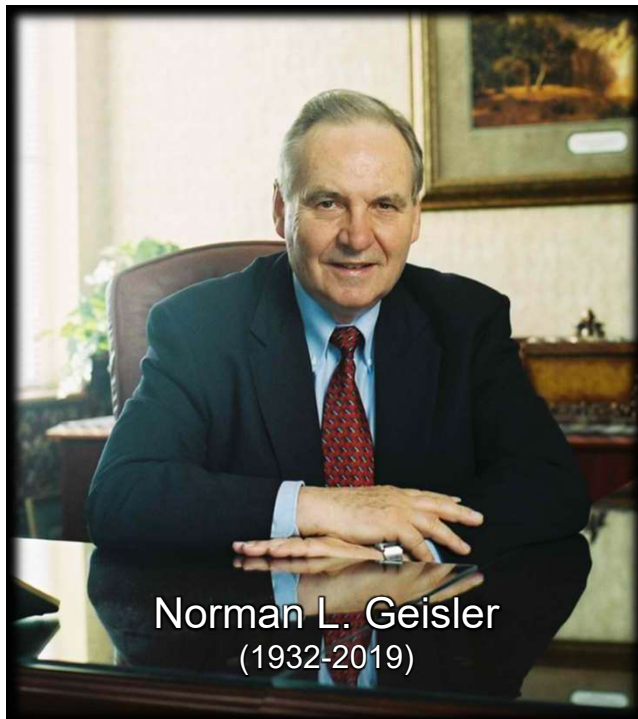
Norman L. Geisler, R. C. Sproul, and other Classical apologists hold that miracles presuppose theism, meaning that the existence of God needs to be demonstrated before the evidence of miracles can be employed in making the case for Christianity.





Norman L. Geisler
(1932-2019)

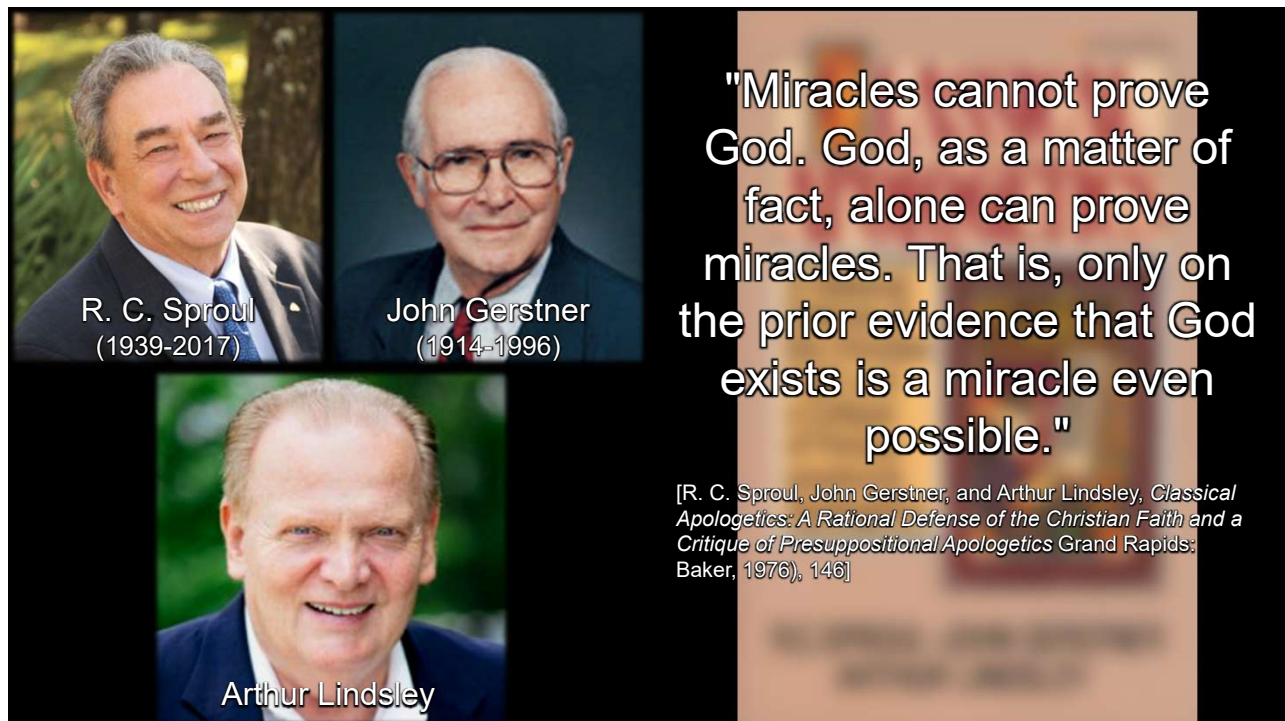
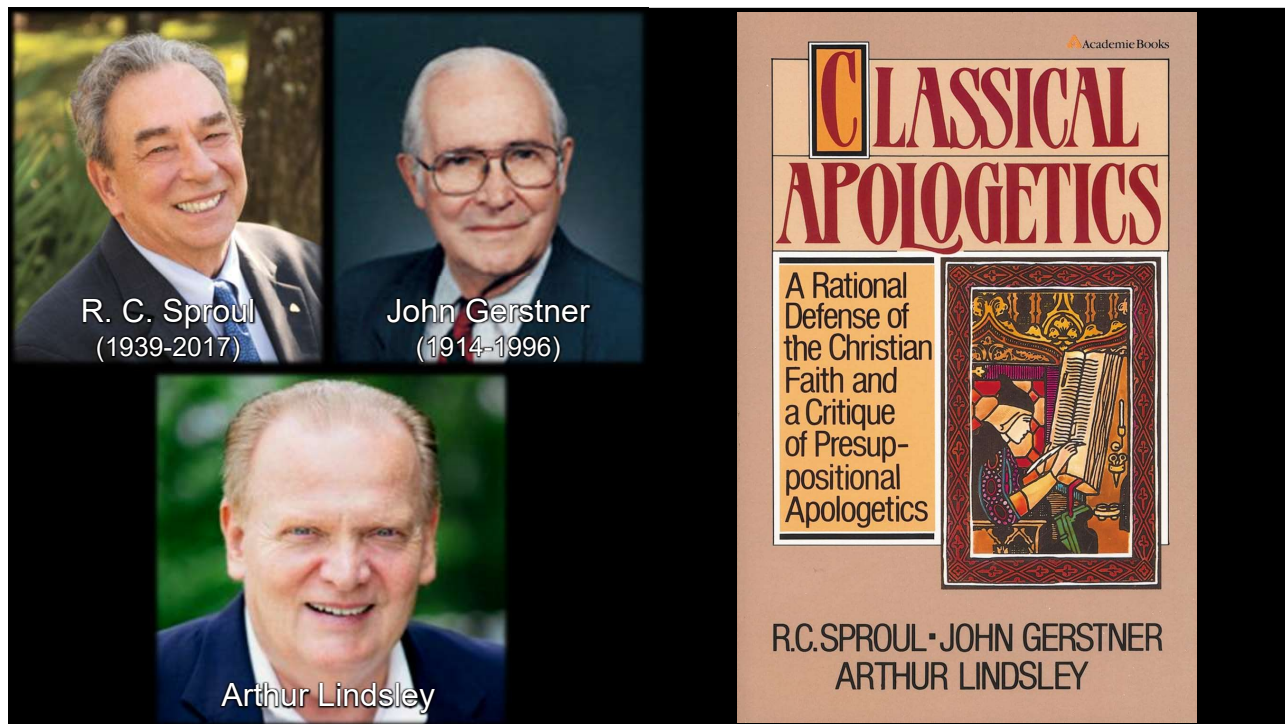
"The difference between the classical apologists and the evidentialist on the use of historical evidences is that the classical see the need to first establish the possibility of and identity of miracles. Evidentialists do not see theism as a logically necessary precondition of historical apologetics."



Norman L. Geisler
(1932-2019)

"The basic argument of the classical apologists is that it makes no sense to speak about the resurrection as an act of God unless, as a logical prerequisite, it is first established that there is a God who can act."

[Norman L. Geisler, "Apologetics, Types of" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 42]



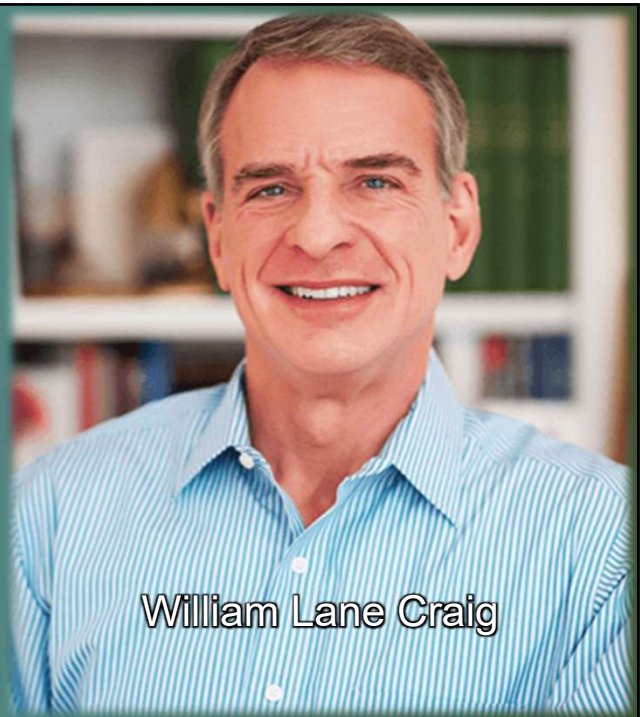
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[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 191/319]

William Lane Craig, who also self-identifies as a Classical apologist, holds that miracles can indeed be part the case for theism itself.

"It seems to me that Evidentialism so defined does not qualify as a distinct apologetic methodology or school of thought, but is merely a personally preferred style of argumentation. And I certainly agree that an argument from miracles can be part of a cumulative case for theism."

[William Lane Craig, "A Classical Apologist's Response [to Evidential Apologetics]," in Stephen B. Cowan, ed. *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 122)]



William Lane Craig

"Evidentialists believe that miracles, like fulfilled prophecy, can be used in the verification of the supernatural. ... **Classical apologists tend to argue that one must first establish the existence of God in order to render miracles credible.**"

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 191/319]

Regarding this issue of whether the existence of God must be established before the apologist can employ miracles, I make a distinction between a principled matter vs. a practical matter.

"Evidentialists believe that miracles, like fulfilled prophecy, can be used in the verification of the supernatural. ... **Classical apologists tend to argue that one must first establish the existence of God in order to render miracles credible.**"

[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 191/319]

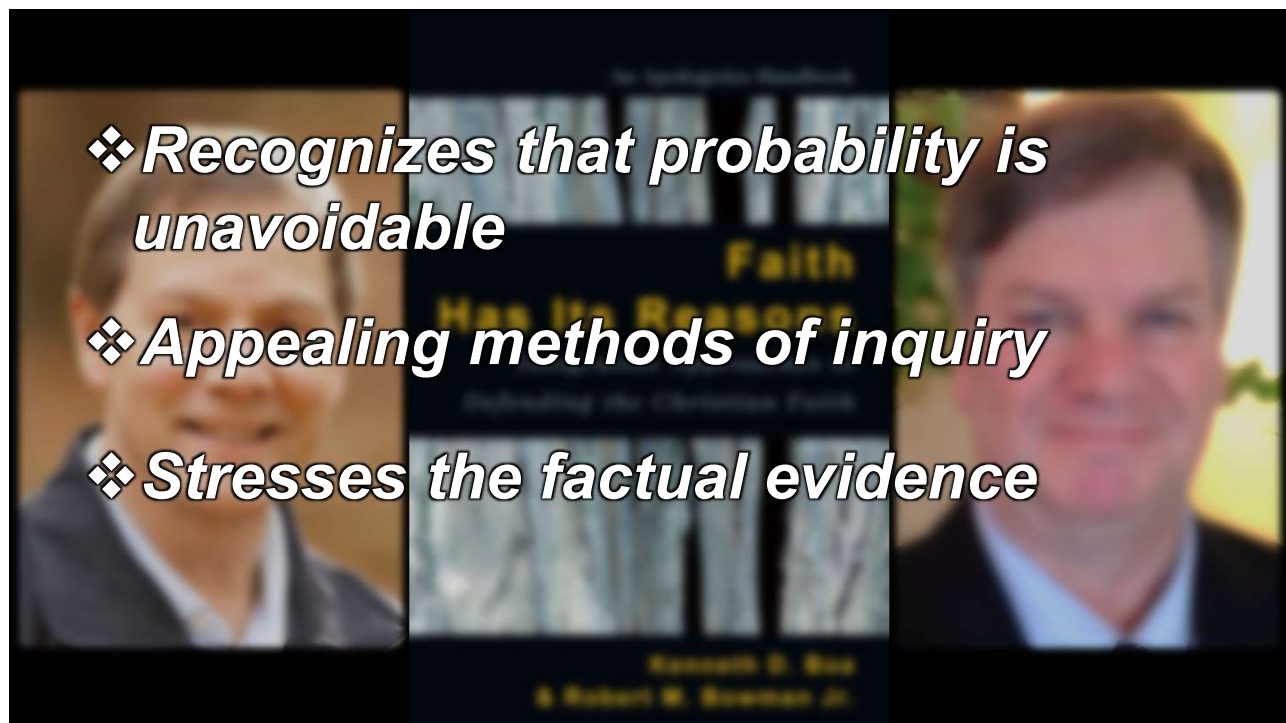
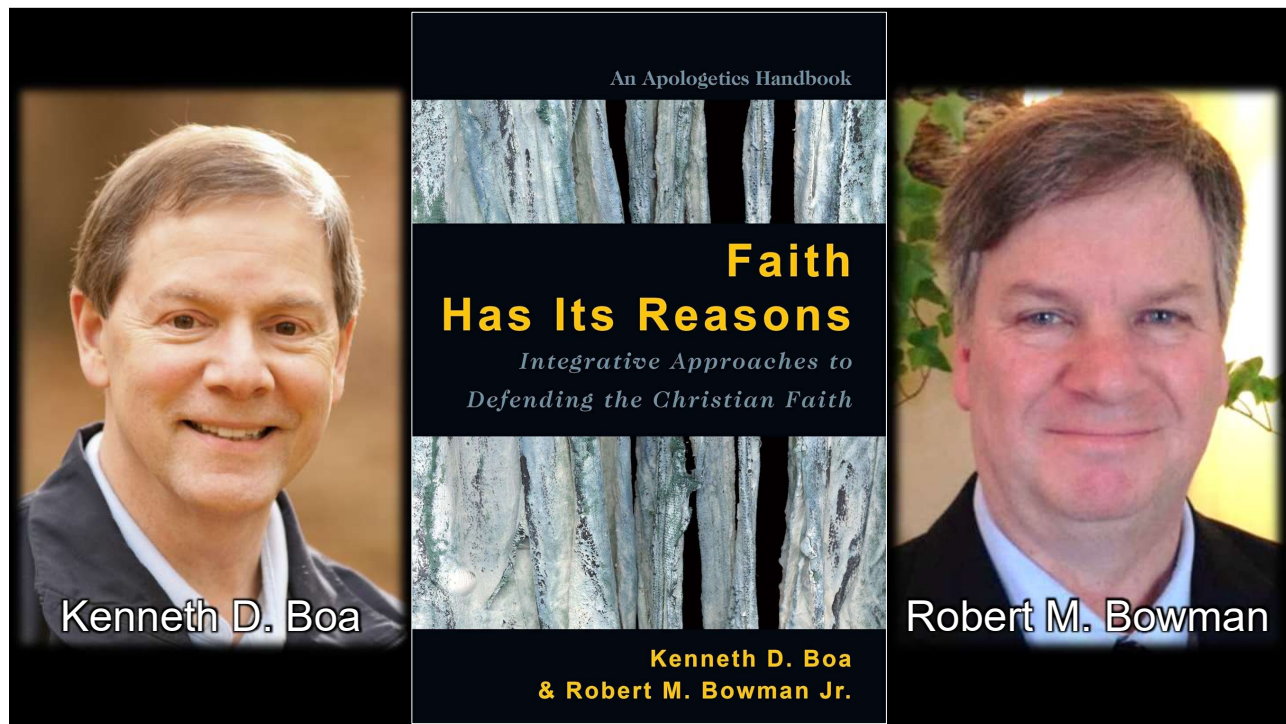
As a matter of principle, I agree with Geisler, et al. that God's existence must be established first since there cannot be an act of God unless there exists a God who can act.

"Evidentialists believe that miracles, like fulfilled prophecy, can be used in the verification of the supernatural. ... **Classical apologists tend to argue that one must first establish the existence of God in order to render miracles credible.**"

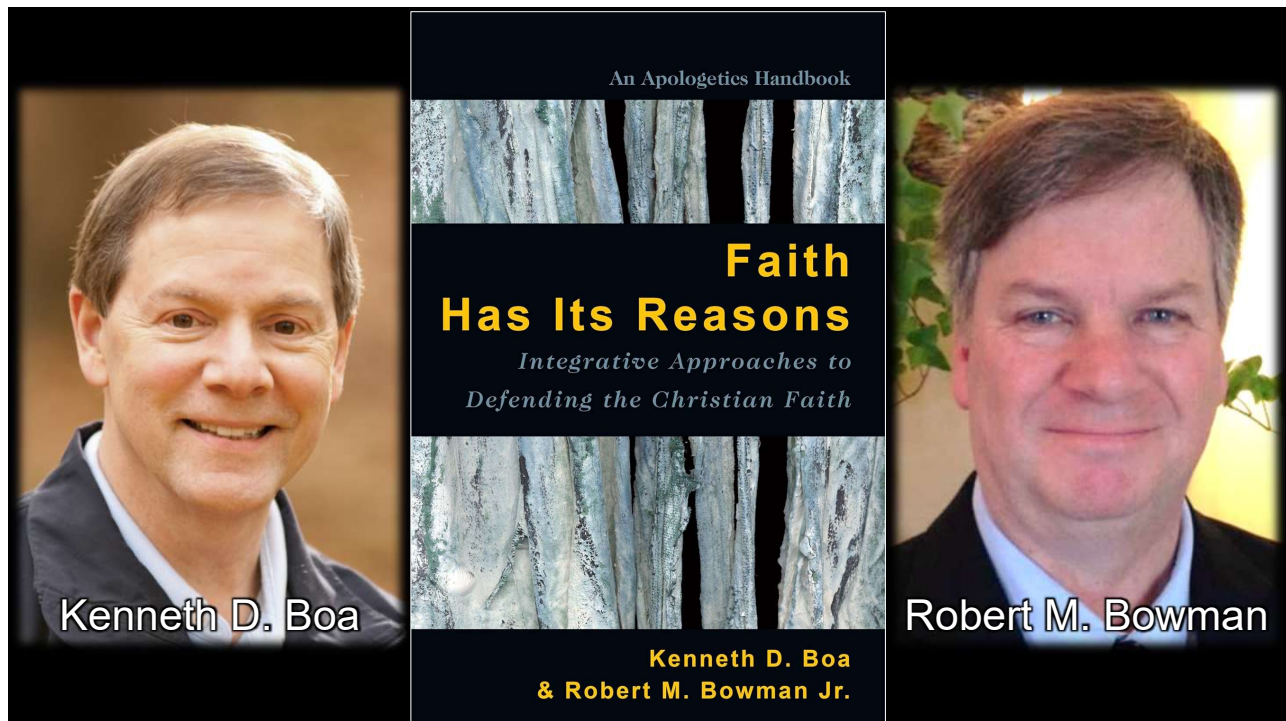
[Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 191/319]

However, as a practical matter, atheists are not always necessarily consistent and may be persuaded to move in one step from their atheism to Christianity by a cogent argument from, for example, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Boa and Bowman
on the Notable Strengths of
Evidentialist Apologetics



***Recognizes that
probability is
unavoidable***



"Evidentialists readily admit that the conclusions available through the inductive process of historical inquiry are probable, not certain. But they are quick to add that no decision in life is based on deductive certainty. Deduction can reveal whether a conclusion follows from certain premises, but **it cannot tell us whether premises correspond to truth about the real world.**"

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 211/352)

Boa and Bowman are certainly right here that deduction cannot tell us whether the premises of a given argument are true.

Remember, again, the illustration about the distance the Sun is from the earth and the speed of light.

"Evidentialists readily admit that the conclusions available through the inductive process of historical inquiry are probable, not certain. But they are quick to add that no decision in life is based on deductive certainty. Deduction can reveal whether a conclusion follows from certain premises, but **it cannot tell us whether premises correspond to truth about the real world.**"

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 211/352)

But the evidentialist seems to be pressing this point as if it had anything to do with the differences between the Classical Apologetics system and the Evidentialist Apologetic system.

"Evidentialists readily admit that the conclusions available through the inductive process of historical inquiry are probable, not certain. But they are quick to add that no decision in life is based on deductive certainty. Deduction can reveal whether a conclusion follows from certain premises, but **it cannot tell us whether premises correspond to truth about the real world.**"

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 211/352)

Again, this is confusing a logical analysis of an argument with a philosophical analysis or scientific analysis or historical analysis or mathematical analysis or whatever-aspect-of-reality-the-premises-are-about analysis.

"Evidentialists readily admit that the conclusions available through the inductive process of historical inquiry are probable, not certain. But they are quick to add that no decision in life is based on deductive certainty. Deduction can reveal whether a conclusion follows from certain premises, but **it cannot tell us whether premises correspond to truth about the real world.**"

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 211/352)

The term 'deduction' refers to a particular form of logical reasoning. Deduction is exclusively a logical / epistemological category.

For the Classical Realist (but not necessarily for every Classical apologist), the "real world" is not known by a logical procedure.

"Evidentialists readily admit that the conclusions available through the inductive process of historical inquiry are probable, not certain. But they are quick to add that no decision in life is based on deductive certainty. Deduction can reveal whether a conclusion follows from certain premises, but **it cannot tell us whether premises correspond to truth about the real world.**"

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 211/352)

Rather, the Classical Realist (i.e., the Thomist) regards knowledge as a formal identity of knower and known on the occasion of the knower's encounter with sensible reality.

"Evidentialists readily admit that the conclusions available through the inductive process of historical inquiry are probable, not certain. But they are quick to add that no decision in life is based on deductive certainty. Deduction can reveal whether a conclusion follows from certain premises, but **it cannot tell us whether premises correspond to truth about the real world.**"

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 211/352)

Having already come to know sensible reality, the intellect can further reflect upon and analyze that which is known.

Such reflection and analysis will then take on the categories of logic "as a human instrument."

Francis H. Parker
and
Henry B. Veatch

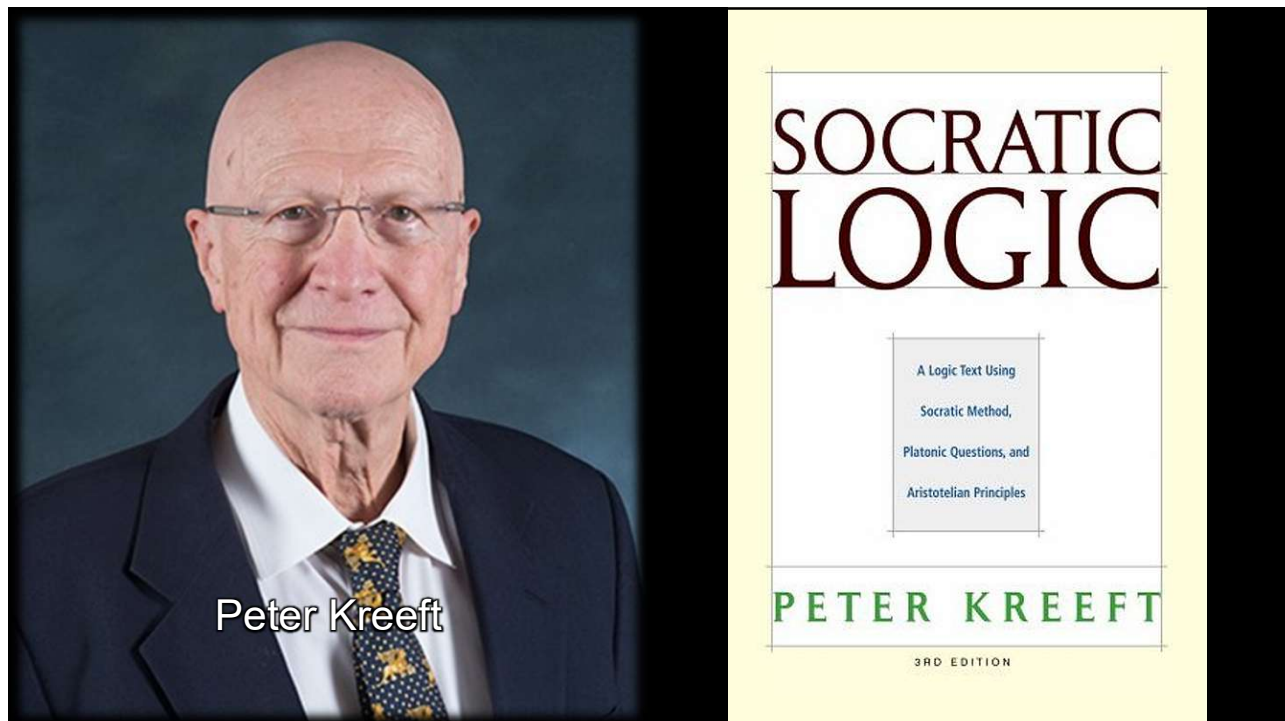
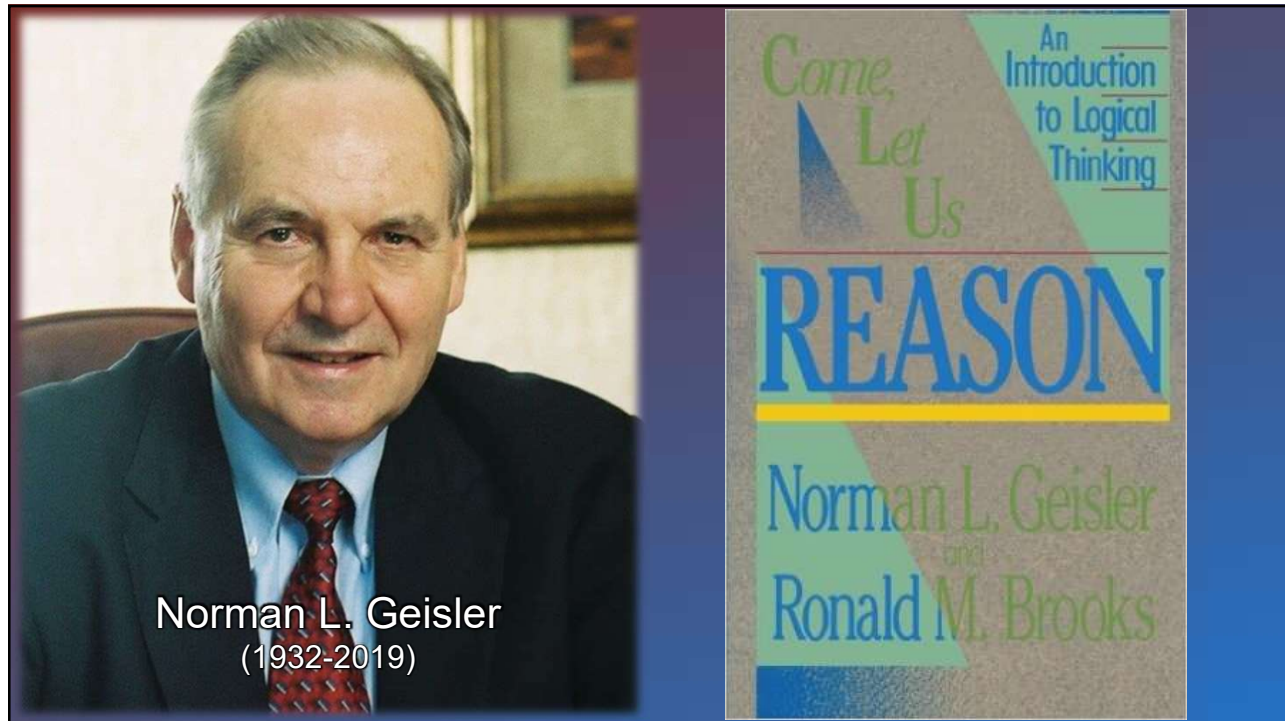
LOGIC

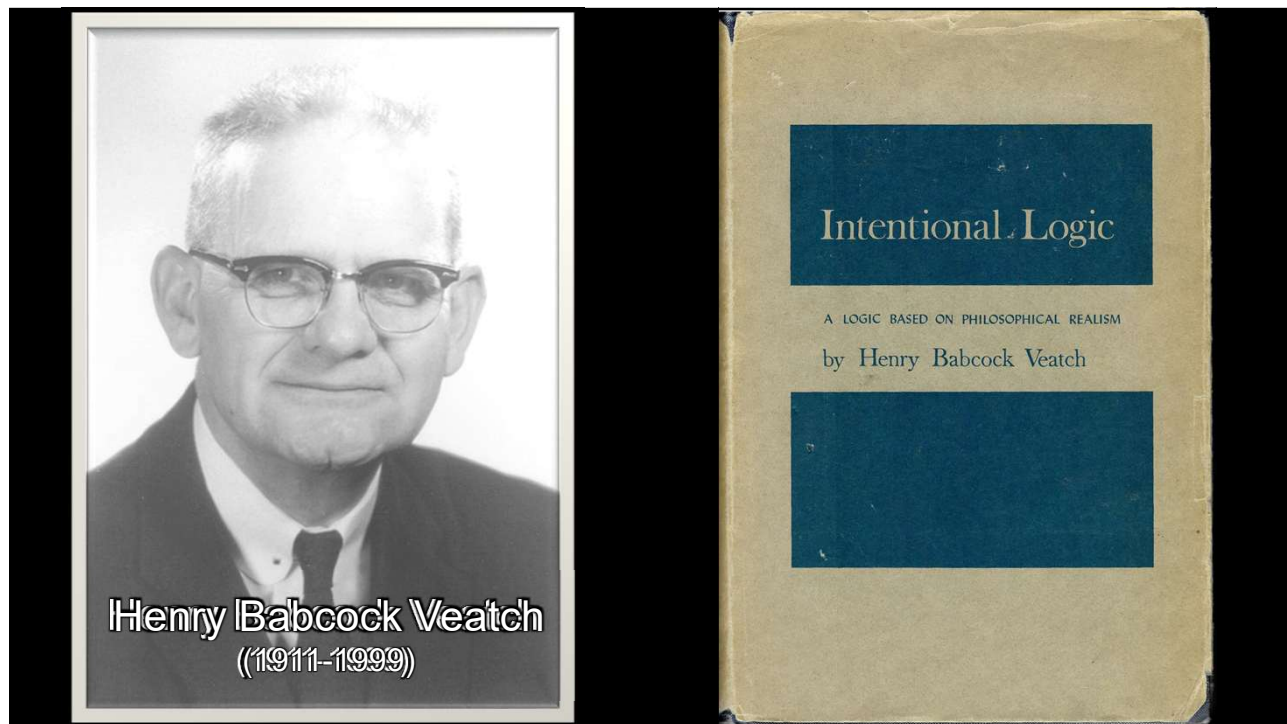
AS A HUMAN INSTRUMENT



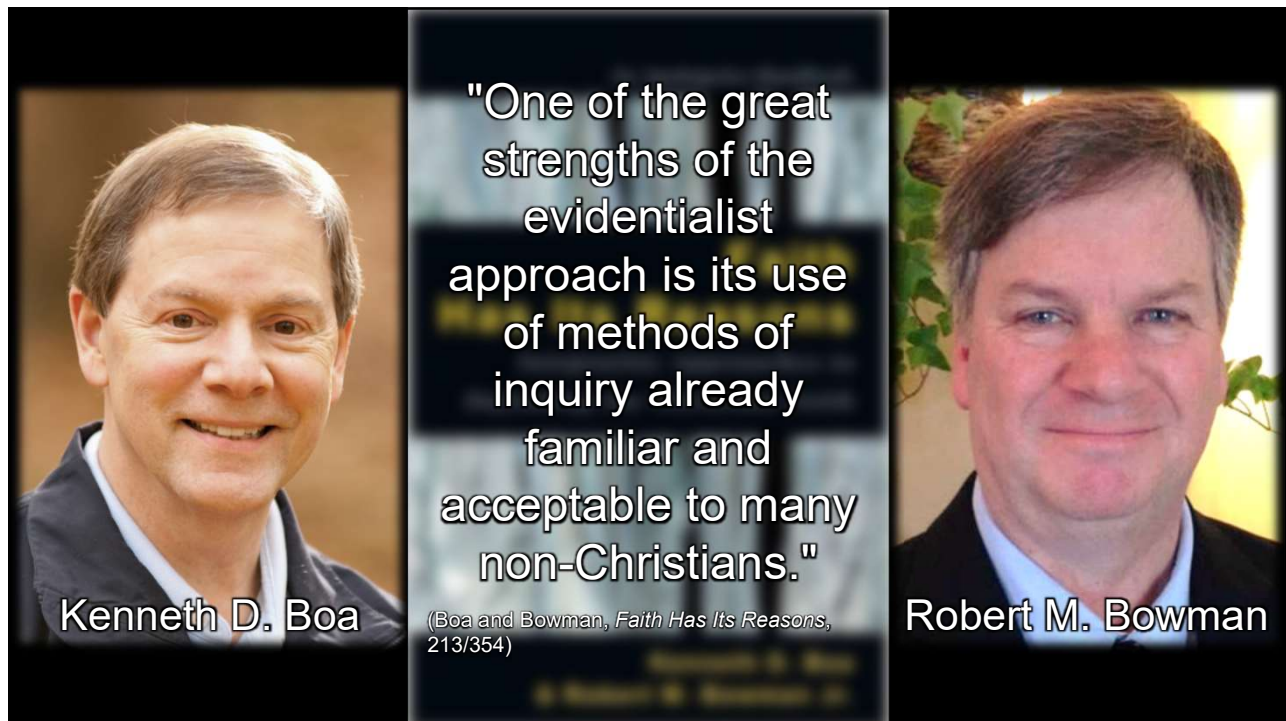
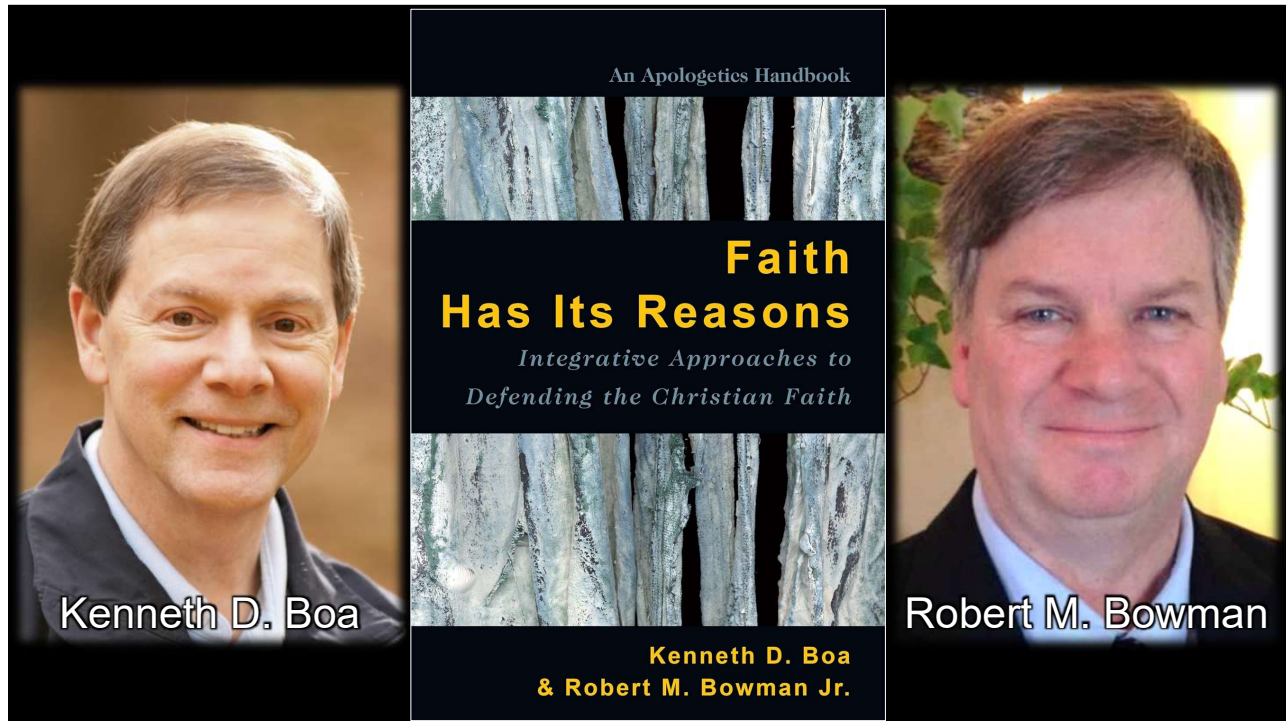
Henry Babcock Veatch
(1911-1999)





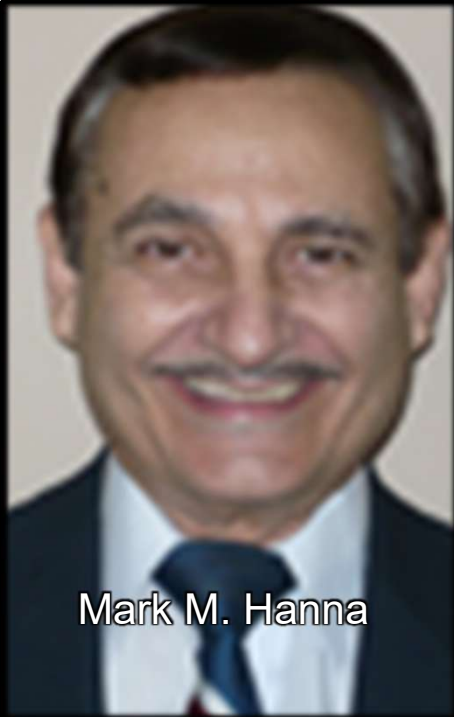


***Appealing methods
of inquiry***



Crucial Questions in Apologetics

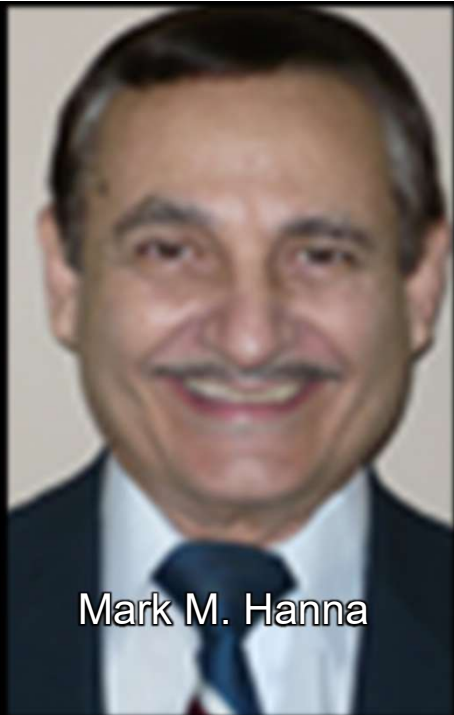
**Mark M.
Hanna**



Mark M. Hanna

Evidentialism
"recognizes the
unavoidability of
making use of ordinary
ways of knowing in
order to become aware
of God's self-revelation
in Scripture."

[Mark M. Hanna, *Crucial Questions in Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 97, as cited in Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 213/354]



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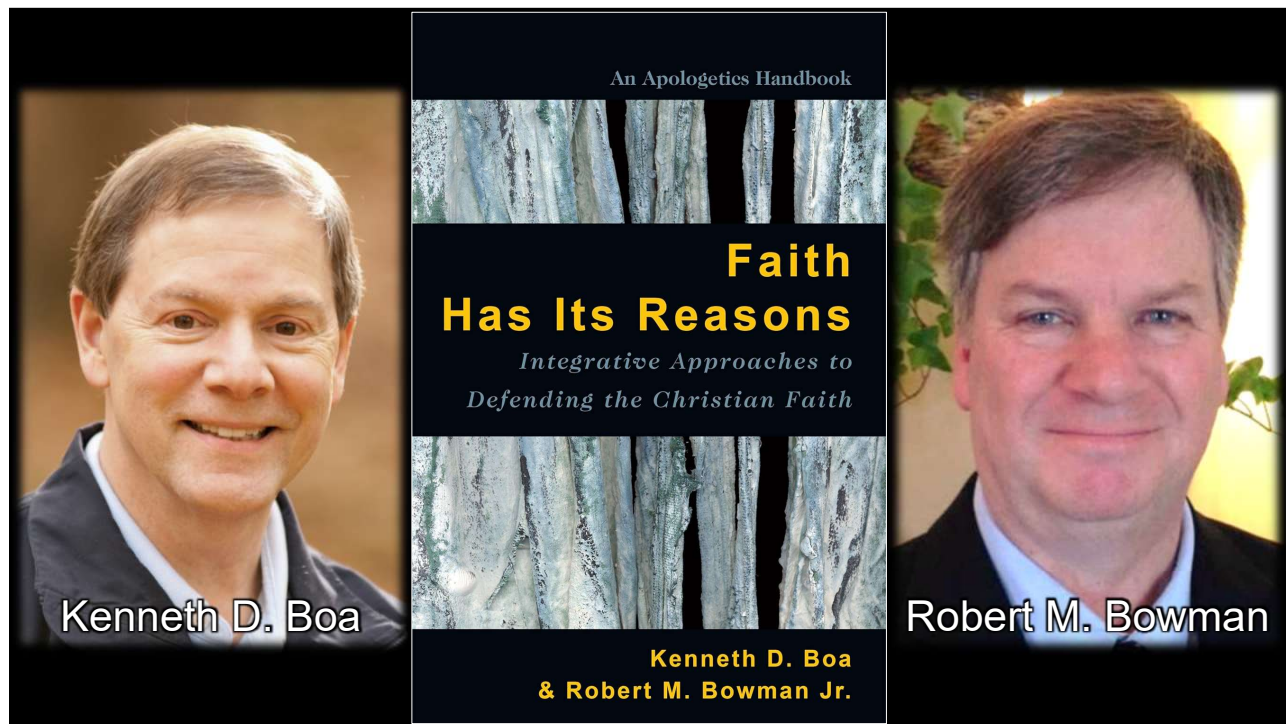
Undoubtedly this is indeed a strength of Evidentialism. And while it is relevant to certain differences between Evidentialism and Presuppositionalism, it has nothing to do with any differences between Evidentialism and Classical Apologetics.

Evidentialism
"recognizes the
unavoidability of
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[Mark M. Hanna, *Crucial Questions in Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 97, as cited in Boa, Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 213/354]

This is so not only because Evidentialism is very nearly identical to the third step of Classical Apologetics, but an employment of "ordinary ways of knowing" is exactly what the Classical philosophical tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas does.

One has only to consult my presentation "Aristotle Camping with His Dog" to see how.



"Evidentialists emphasize that daily communication between believers and unbelievers requires a commonly held logic and world experience. Without this commonality, communication and dialogue would be impossible."

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 213/354)

Here is an important commonality Evidentialism has with Classical Apologetics.

Human beings possess faculties of sense and intellect that enable us to know the world around us.

These faculties, while undoubtedly impacted by the Fall and by our own sin, nevertheless are not eradicated and can still enable us to know many truths about reality.

"Evidentialists emphasize that daily communication between believers and unbelievers requires a commonly held logic and world experience. Without this commonality, communication and dialogue would be impossible."

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 213/354)

It is from these knowable truths that both the Classical apologists and the Evidentialist apologists maintain (though for different reasons) that God's existence can be demonstrated or shown to be the best explanation.

"Evidentialists emphasize that daily communication between believers and unbelievers requires a commonly held logic and world experience. Without this commonality, communication and dialogue would be impossible."

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 213/354)

Some might suggest that this opinion is exactly the point of departure for the Presuppositionalist given the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity—the "T" in the famous TULIP.

Total Depravity
Unconditional Election
Limited Atonement
Irresistible Grace
Perseverance of the Saints

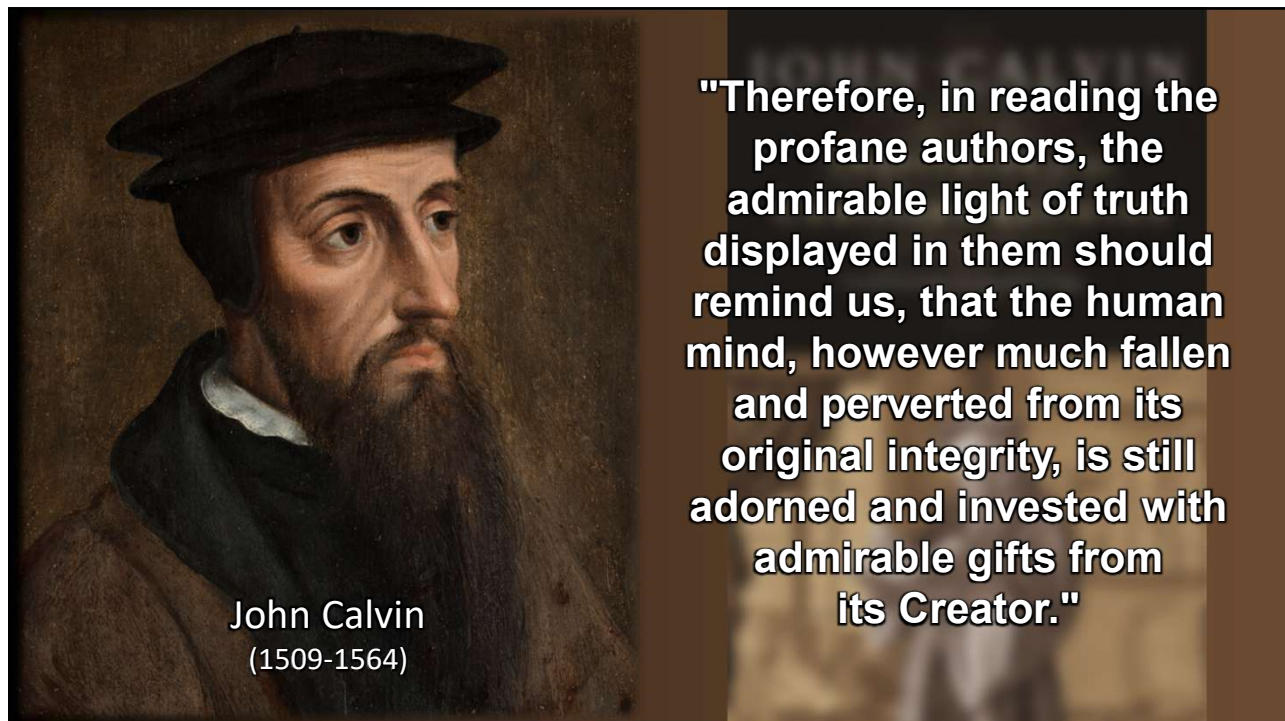
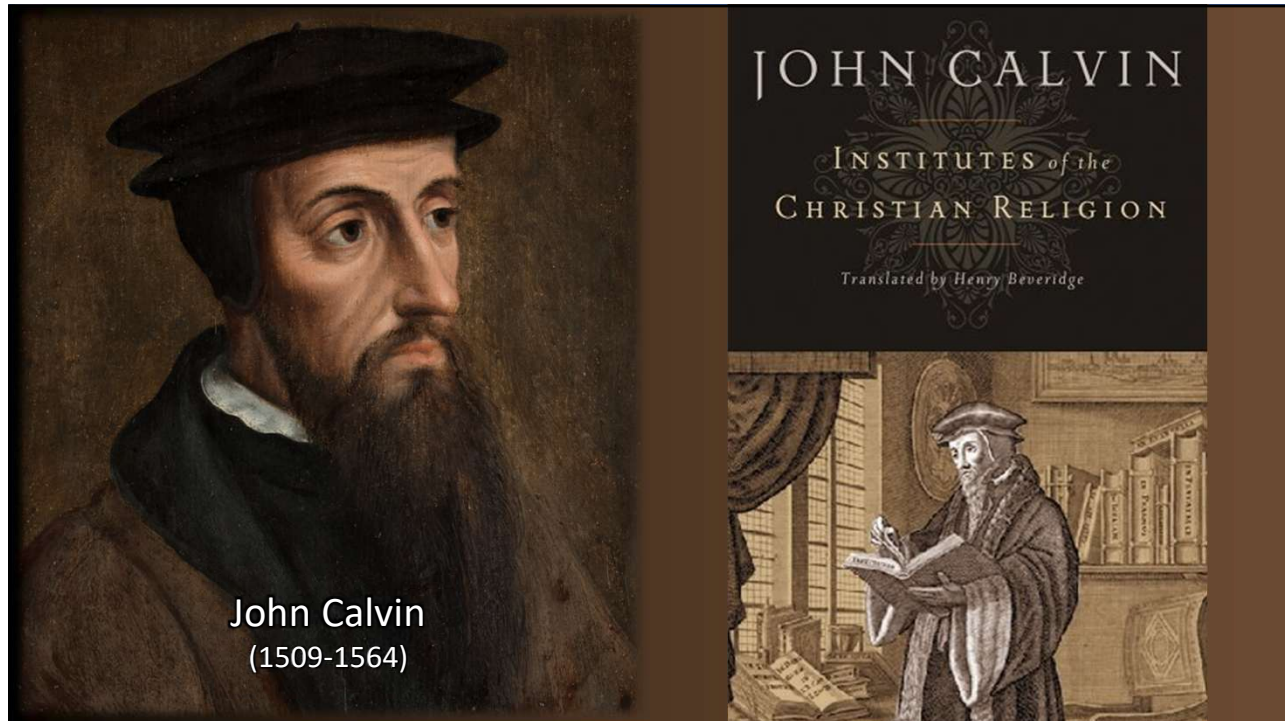
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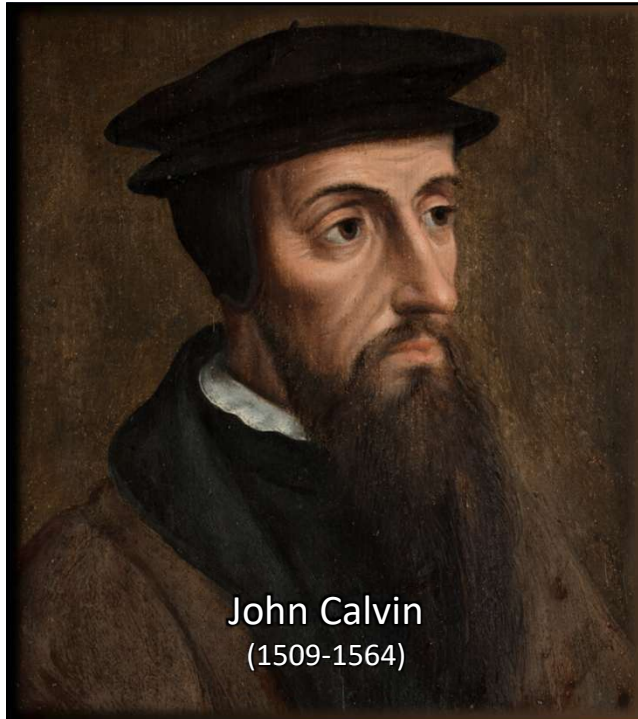
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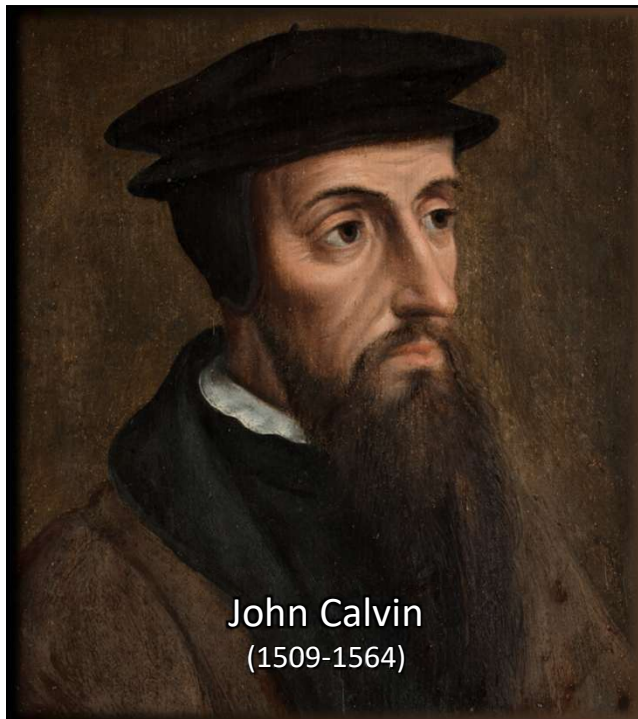
Without jumping ahead to interact with the Presuppositionalist, one should take heed to the wise words of John Calvin himself.





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."

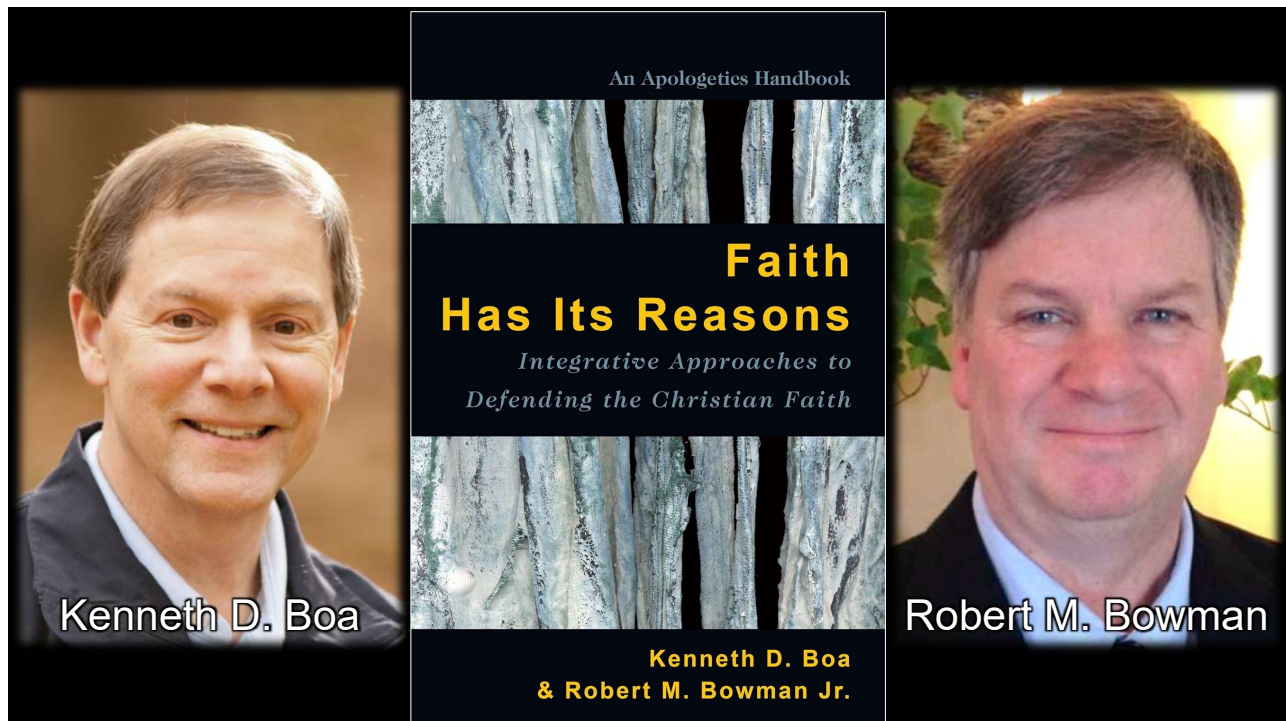


John Calvin
(1509-1564)

"The sum of the whole is this: From a general survey of the human race, it appears that one of the essential properties of our nature is reason, which distinguishes us from the lower animals, just as these by means of sense are distinguished from inanimate objects."

[John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.2.15, trans. Henry Beveridge, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans), vol. 1, pp. 236, 237]

Stresses the factual evidence



Kenneth D. Boa

Robert M. Bowman

**Kenneth D. Boa
& Robert M. Bowman Jr.**

"If the goal of Christian apologetics is to defend the **truth** of Christianity, and if truth is understood as **correspondence with reality**, then an apologetic that emphasizes the factual reality of Christianity is mandatory."

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 213/354)

Remember our discussion about different theories of truth in defense of the correspondence theory that says "truth is correspondence with reality."

This emphasizes the fact that claiming that Christianity is true is claiming that it is **OBJECTIVELY** true and not merely a way of "seeing" the world through some lens.

"If the goal of Christian apologetics is to defend the **truth** of Christianity, and if truth is understood as **correspondence with reality**, then an apologetic that emphasizes the factual reality of Christianity is mandatory."

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 213/354)

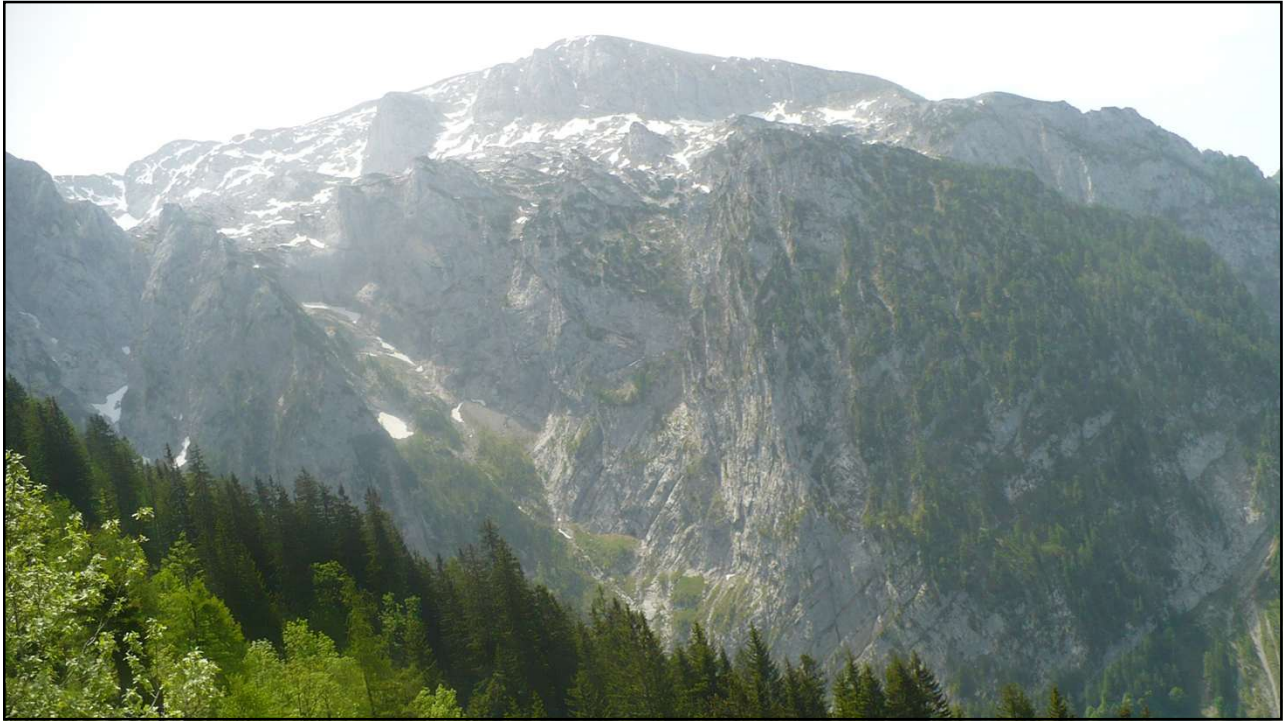
Remember also that we acknowledged different ways that a statement can correspond to reality, e.g., literally, metaphorically, and others.



Literally

"And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen."

Mark 1:16



Metaphorically

"For you shall go out with joy, and
be led out with peace ... and **all the
trees of the field shall
clap *their* hands."**

Isa 55:12

"If the goal of Christian apologetics is to defend the **truth** of Christianity, and if truth is understood as **correspondence with reality**, then an apologetic that emphasizes the factual reality of Christianity is mandatory."

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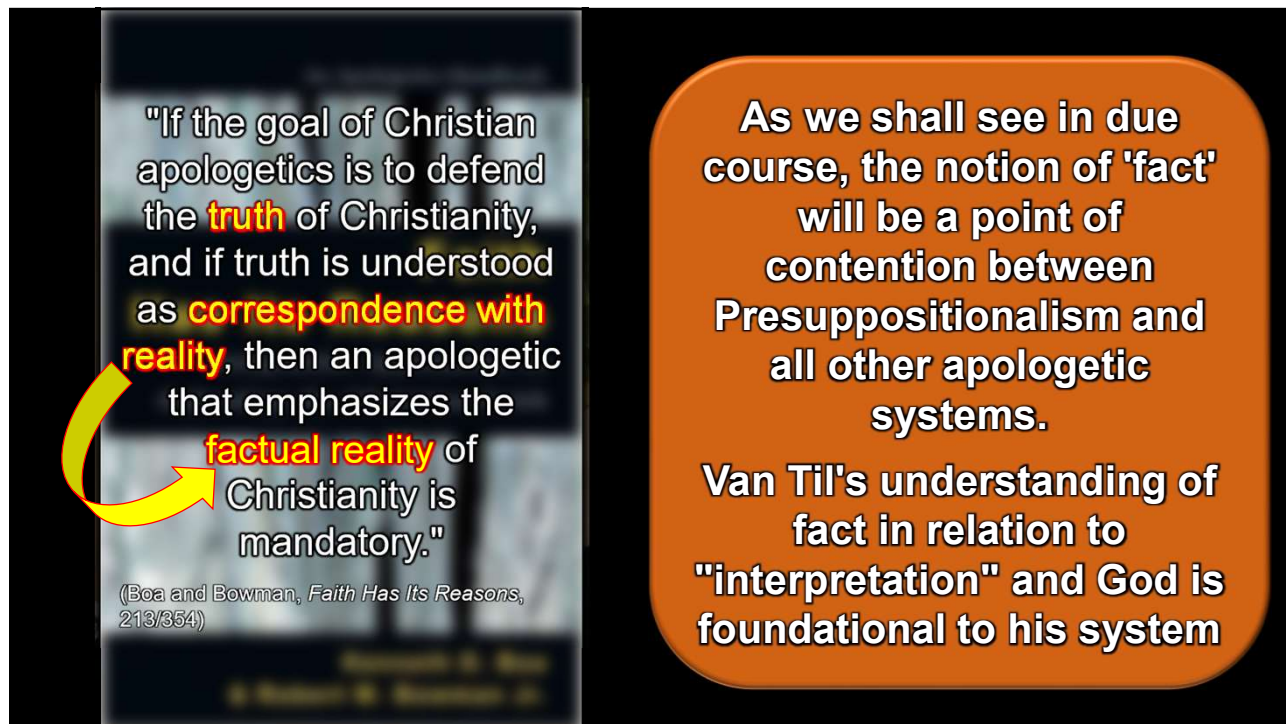
Remember also that we acknowledged different ways that a statement can correspond to reality, e.g., literally, metaphorically, and others.

Regarding Boa and Bowman's comment here, my questions are:

"If the goal of Christian apologetics is to defend the **truth** of Christianity, and if truth is understood as **correspondence with reality**, then an apologetic that emphasizes the **factual reality** of Christianity is mandatory."

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 213/354)

- 1) Why does their wording go from correspondence with "reality" to "factual reality"?
- 2) Does the term 'factual' qualify the nature of the reality that truth corresponds to?
- 3) In other words, is there a difference between 'reality' and 'factual reality'?
- 4) If they are implying some kind of difference, what kind of discipline governs the exploration of what that difference might be?

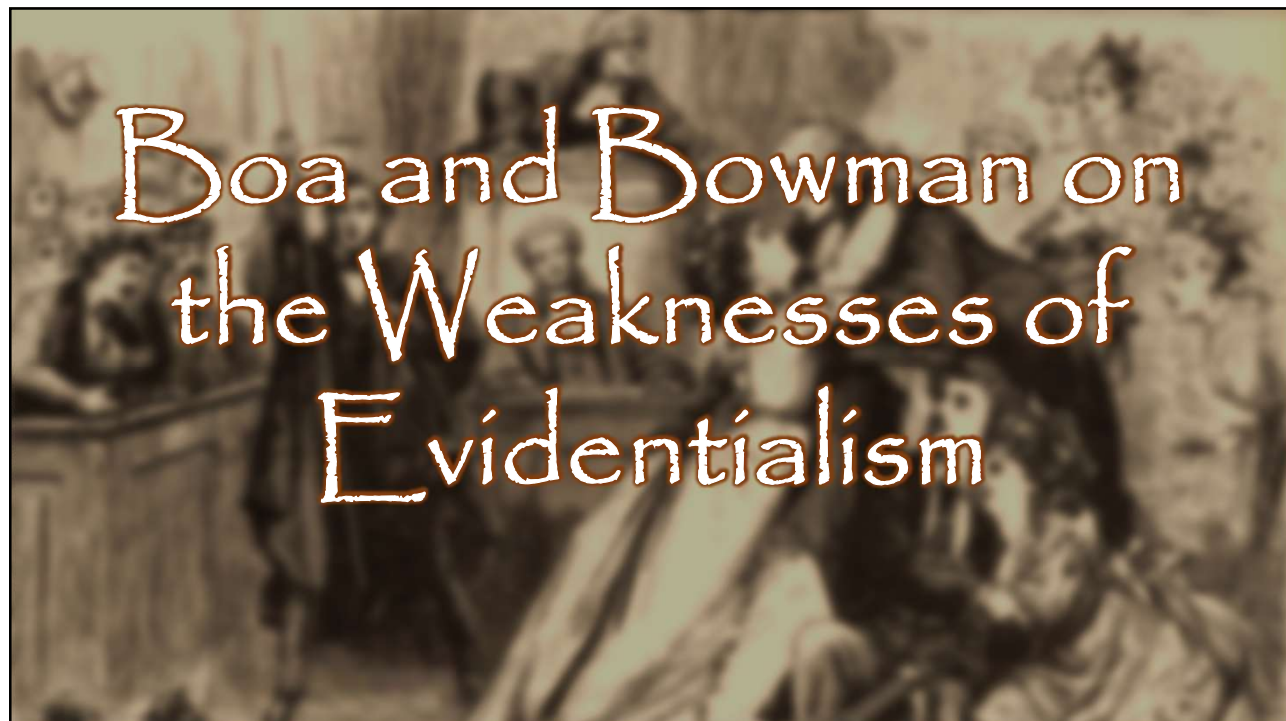


"If the goal of Christian apologetics is to defend the **truth** of Christianity, and if truth is understood as **correspondence with reality**, then an apologetic that emphasizes the **factual reality** of Christianity is mandatory."

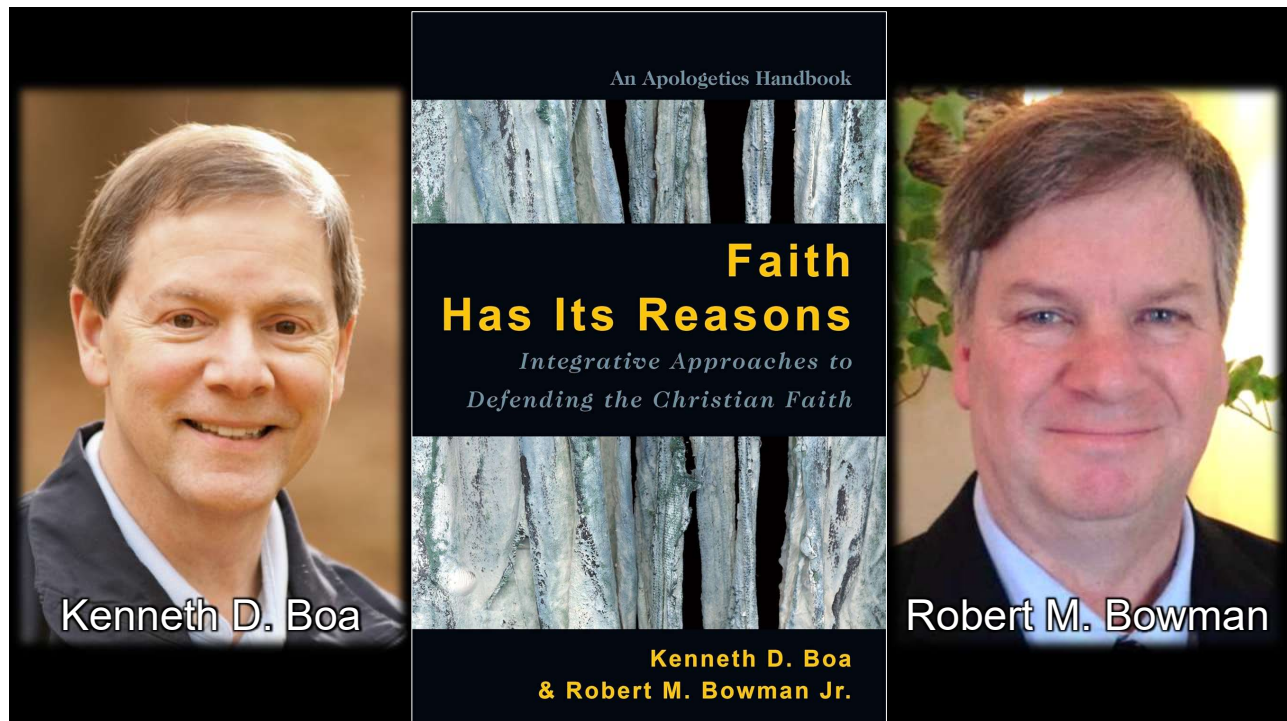
(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 213/354)

As we shall see in due course, the notion of 'fact' will be a point of contention between Presuppositionalism and all other apologetic systems.

Van Til's understanding of fact in relation to "interpretation" and God is foundational to his system



Assumes the theistic worldview



Kenneth D. Boa

Robert M. Bowman

**Kenneth D. Boa
& Robert M. Bowman Jr.**

"The principal objection to evidentialism from a classical apologetics perspective is that it attempts to make a case for the theistic worldview on the basis of facts. According to both classical apologists and most Reformed apologists, this will not work; **one must first have a worldview before one can interpret the facts in the world.**"

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 214/356-357)

I have no objection if the point Boa and Bowman are making is that the "worldview" of theism needs to be established before certain other "facts" can be rightly understood.

"The principal objection to evidentialism from a classical apologetics perspective is that it attempts to make a case for the theistic worldview on the basis of facts. According to both classical apologists and most Reformed apologists, this will not work; **one must first have a worldview before one can interpret the facts in the world.**"

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 214/356-357)

However, as a Classical Realist (i.e., a Thomist), I would not word it this way since, as Rom. 1:20 says, the establishment of theism itself is based precisely upon our encounter with the sensible world which itself is the starting point of all "facts" that enters the human intellect.

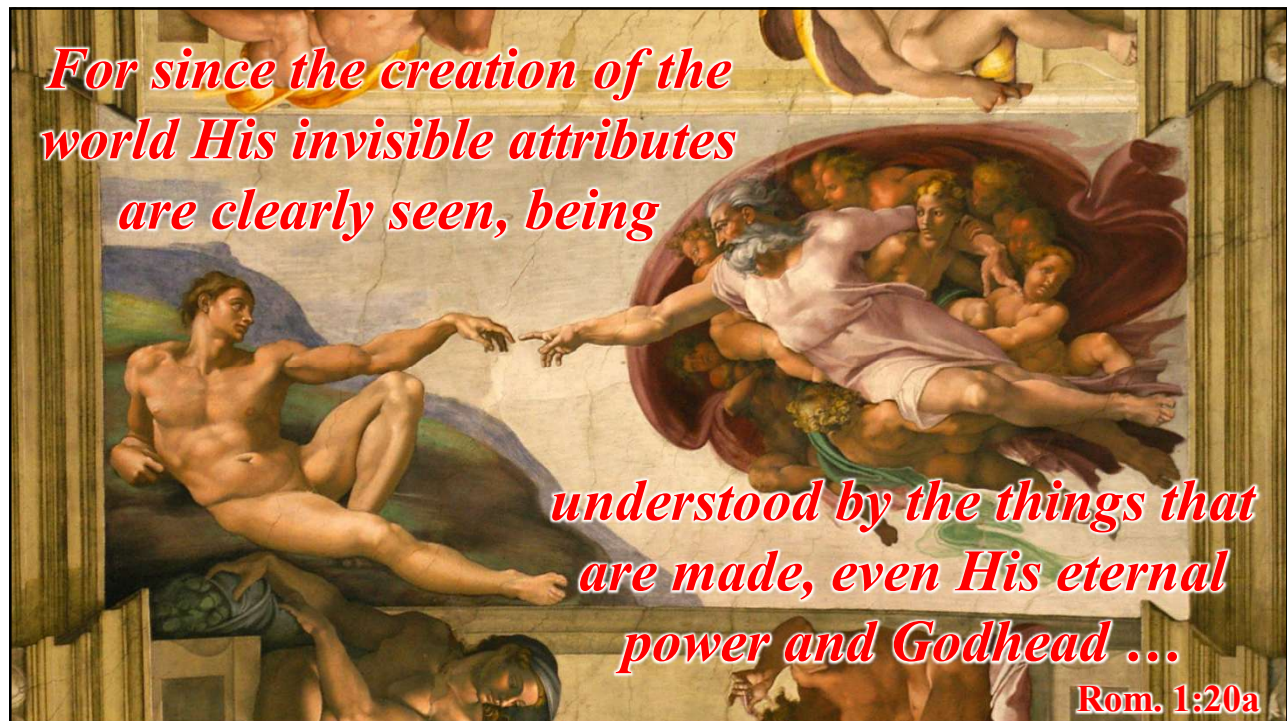
"The principal objection to

Be sure not to forget the various ways in which the term 'classical' can be used in this context. See the presentation "Apologetic Systems 03 – Classical Apologetics Pt 1."

Interpret the facts in the world

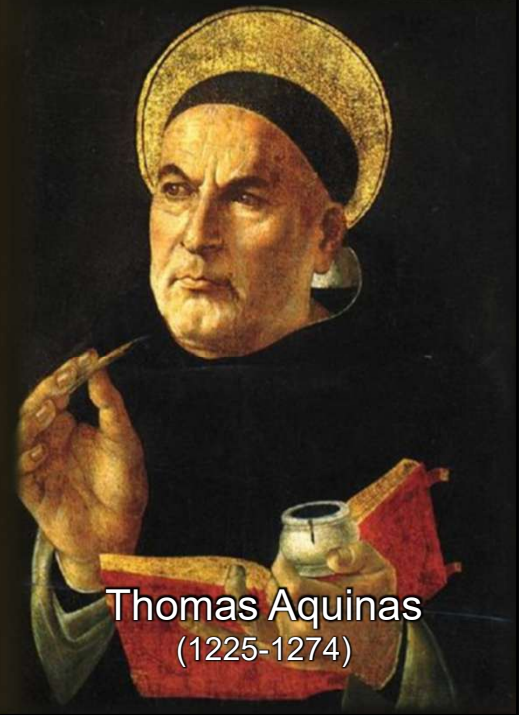
Howe and Bowman, Faith Has Its Reasons, 214/256-357

However, as a **Classical Realist** (i.e., a Thomist), I would not word it this way since, as Rom. 1:20 says, the establishment of theism itself is based precisely upon our encounter with the sensible world which itself is the starting point of all "facts" that enters the human intellect.



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

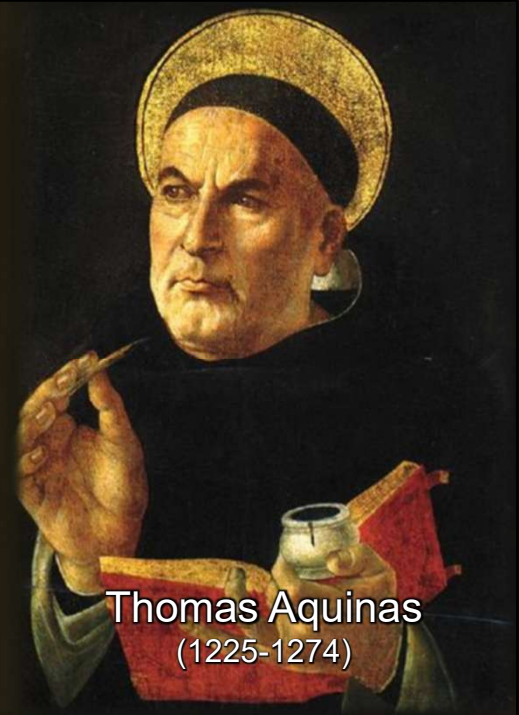
[Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, I, 11, trans. Mulligan, 48, in *Truth* (3 vols), vol. 1 trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952); vol. 2 trans. James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953); vol. 3. trans. Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1954). The three volumes were reprinted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



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

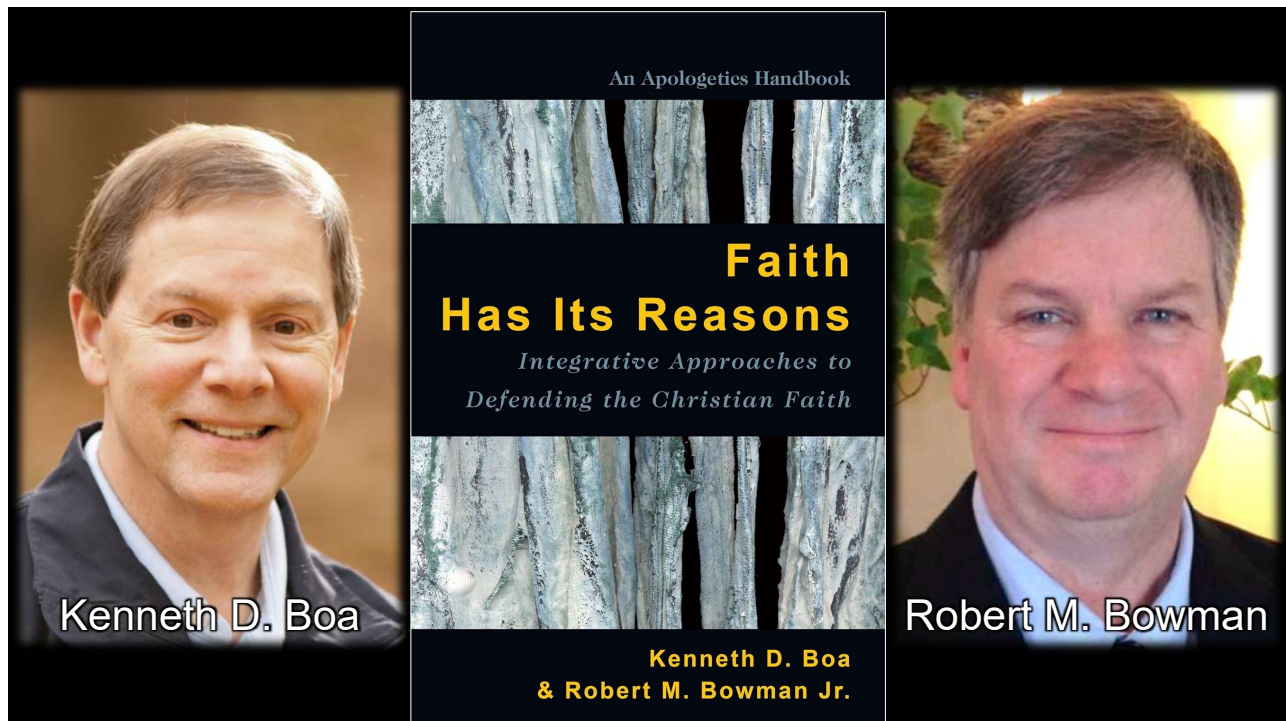
"Sensible things [are that] from which human reason takes the origin of its knowledge."

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 9, §2. Trans. Anton C. Pegis. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975): I, 77]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

Uses hidden presuppositions



"It is the contention of evidentialists that metaphysical presuppositions can be minimized in apologetics.... For example, in their scientific and historical arguments, **evidentialists presuppose that there is a rational structure to the whole of reality.** The heuristic, methodological **assumptions that knowledge is possible**, that **the universe is structured**, and that **the senses can be trusted cannot themselves be empirically substantiated.**"

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 214/357, 358)

I do not wish to quarrel with Boa and Bowman's characterization that evidentialists actually do presuppose this.

But it does not follow that the Thomist who holds that the whole of reality has a rational structure is because he presupposes it.

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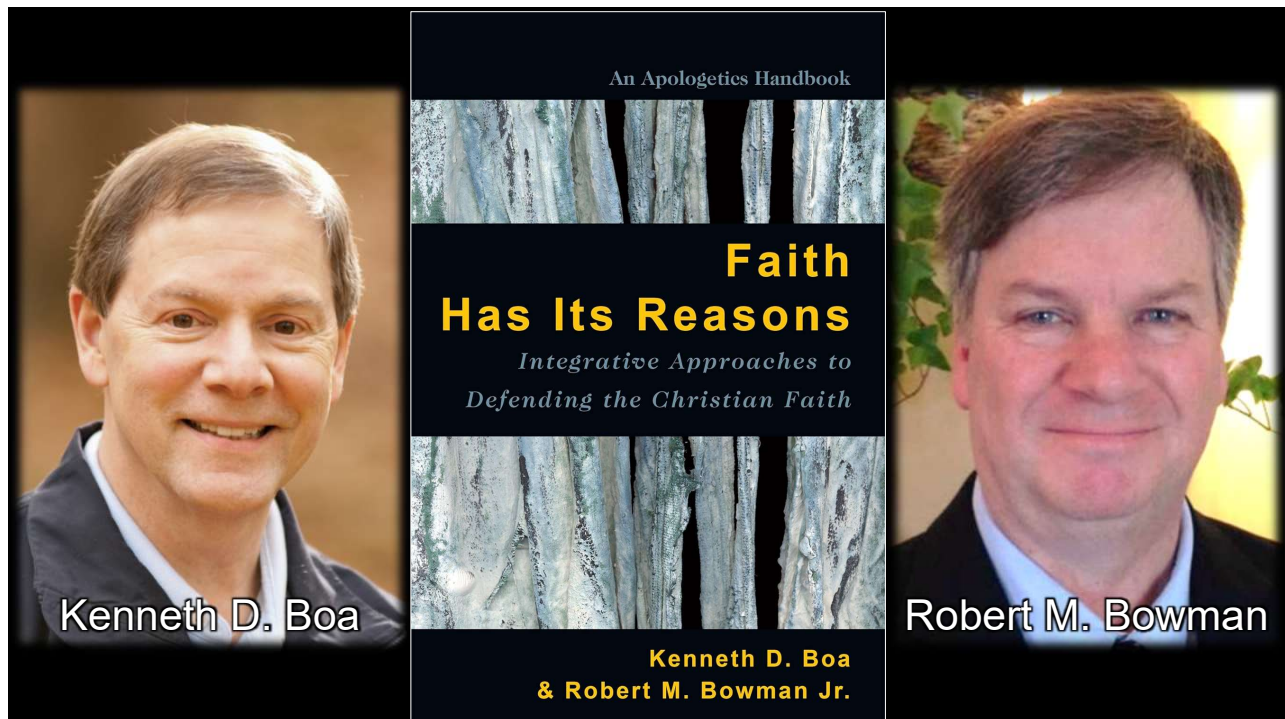
(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 214/357, 358)

Once again, a faulty assumption here found on all sides (common in contemporary philosophical thinking) is that knowledge must be ultimately cashed out in terms of epistemology ("empirically substantiated") in such a way that is indifferent to any metaphysic.

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Both sides of this dispute have already bought into the bankruptcy of Critical Realism in terms of which the reality of the external world either is a position that requires substantiation or it is an ultimate presupposition.



""Montgomery admits that 'a prioris must lie at the basis of every procedure,' but says that 'they should be kept to a minimum, and be as self-evident and beyond dispute as much as possible.' Because of this, [Carl] Henry has commented that 'Montgomery differs from the presuppositionalists he disowns only in the number and scope of the presuppositions he prefers for deciphering the meaning of history.' "

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 216/358)

That fact that Montgomery's admits that knowledge is ultimately grounded in an **a priori** sets him against the Philosophical Realism of Aquinas.

The expression "a priori" means "before or apart from empirical experience.

It is contrasted with "a posteriori" which means "by, on the basis of, or beginning with empirical experience.

That fact that Montgomery's admits that knowledge is ultimately grounded in an **a priori** sets him against the Philosophical Realism of Aquinas.

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That fact that Montgomery's admits that knowledge is ultimately grounded in an a priori sets him against the Philosophical Realism of Aquinas.

Given that, Henry is right in his criticism that the difference between his own Presuppositionalism and Montgomery's Evidentialism is merely a matter of degree.

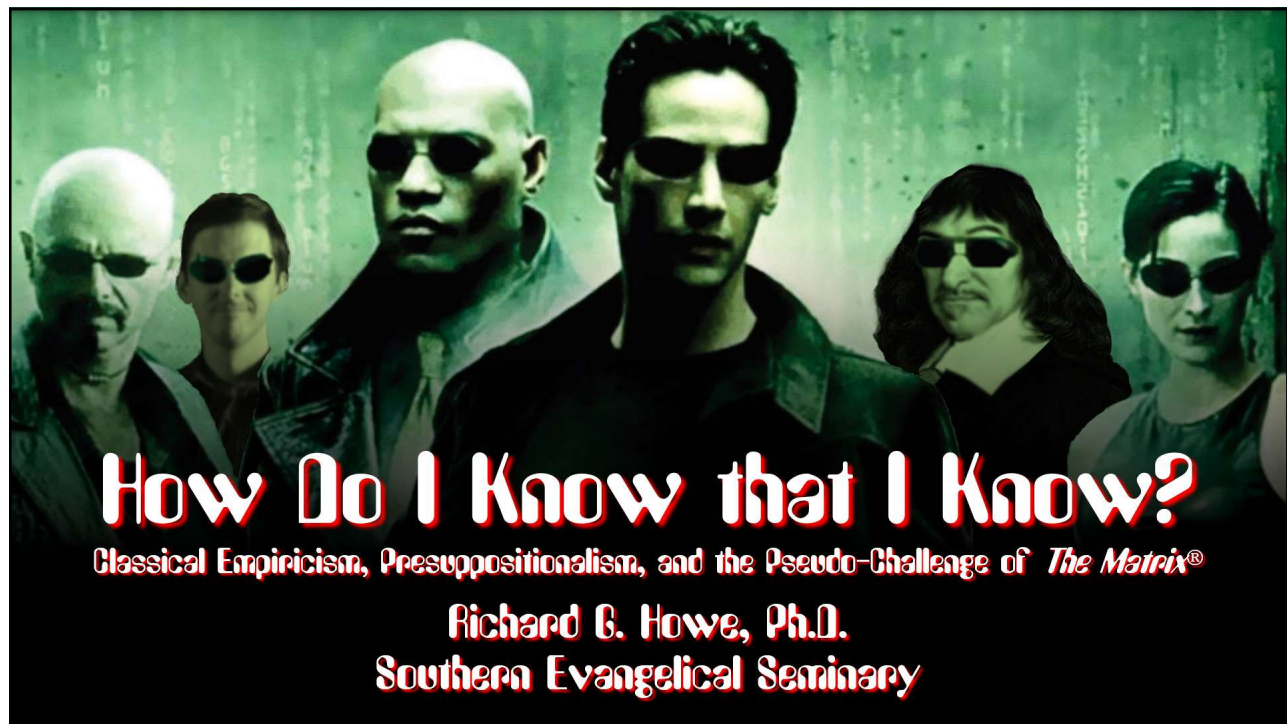
Since both of them imbibe a level of Critical Realism, their faulty positions on the nature of knowledge leads them both down the same dead end.

""Montgomery admits that 'a prioris must lie at the basis of every procedure,' but says that 'they should be kept to a minimum, and be as self-evident and beyond dispute as much as possible.' Because of this, [Carl] Henry has commented that 'Montgomery differs from the presuppositionalists he disowns only in the number and scope of the presuppositions he prefers for deciphering the meaning of history.' "

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 216/358)

The Thomist rejects Critical Realism's demand that one's belief in the existence of the sensible world (i.e., external reality) must itself be justified.

The Thomist also rejects Presuppositionalism's insistence that such a belief can only be justified by the presupposition of the Trinitarian God of Protestant Calvinist theism.



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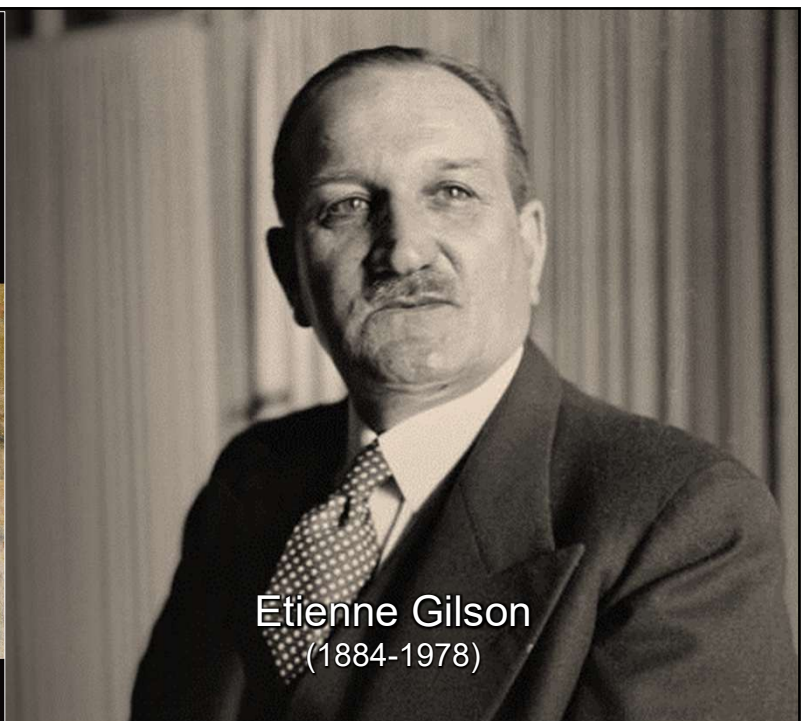
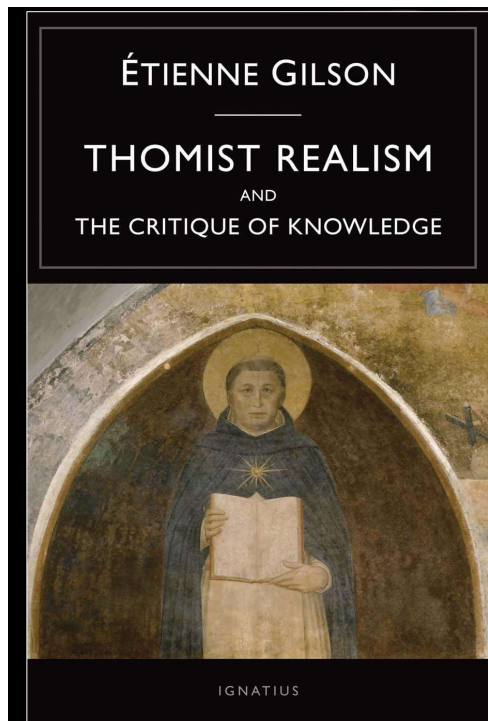
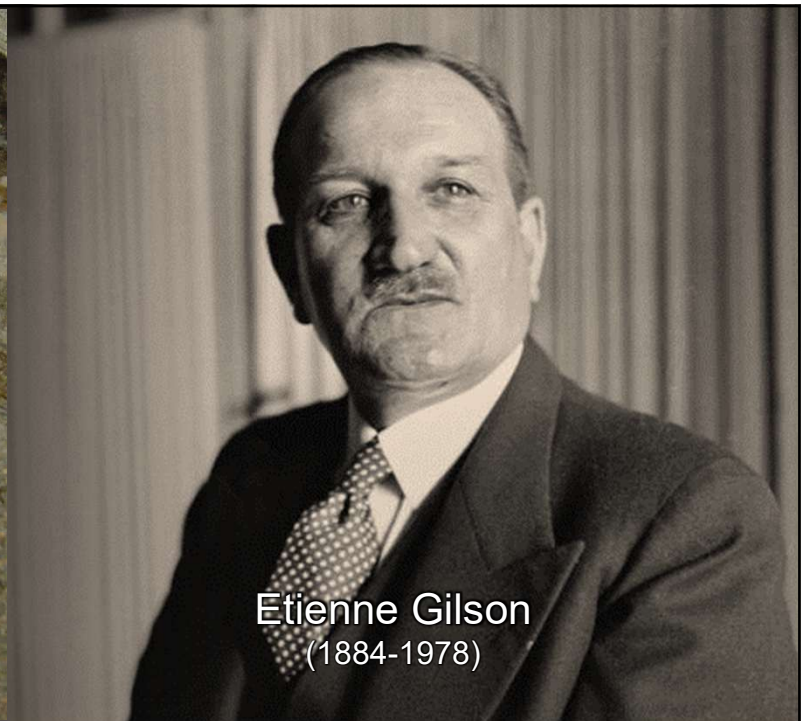
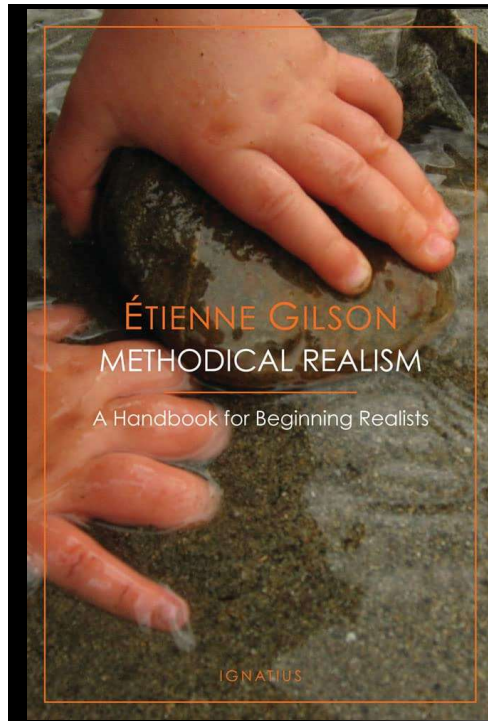
(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 216/358)

The Thomist realizes that existence of external reality is directly known through simple apprehension.

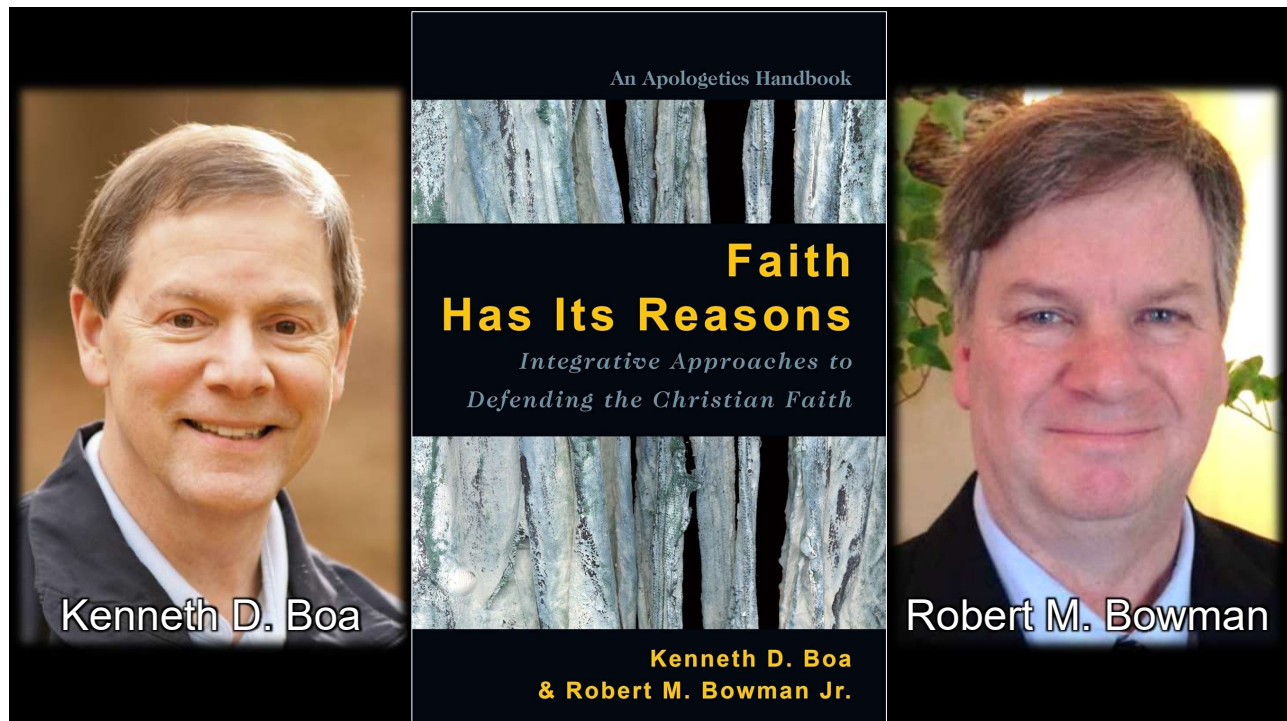
Such a view is neither an a priori starting point nor is it an instance of accepting something as a "brute fact."

Rather, it is a view of knowledge that is understood in terms of the metaphysics of what it is to be a knower and what it is to be a known.

The knower becomes the known at the lever of cognition; the Formal identity of knower and known.



Underestimates the human factor



"Both classical and evidentialist apologists are often criticized for an excessive optimism in assuming that unbelievers are willing and able to examine the evidence for Christianity in an open, honest, and unprejudiced way. ... Some evidentialists, however, acknowledge the effects of sin on human reasoning; they appeal to the common and special grace of God in overcoming these cognitive and volitional barriers."

(Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 216, 217/359, 360)

I know of no apologetic system, as far as the principles of the systems go, that overlook or deny the need for the grace of God in overcoming cognitive and volitional barriers.

There will be in Presuppositionalism, however, a nuanced understanding of the notion of "common" grace and whether and to what extent there is any "common ground" or "neutral ground" between the believer and unbeliever.