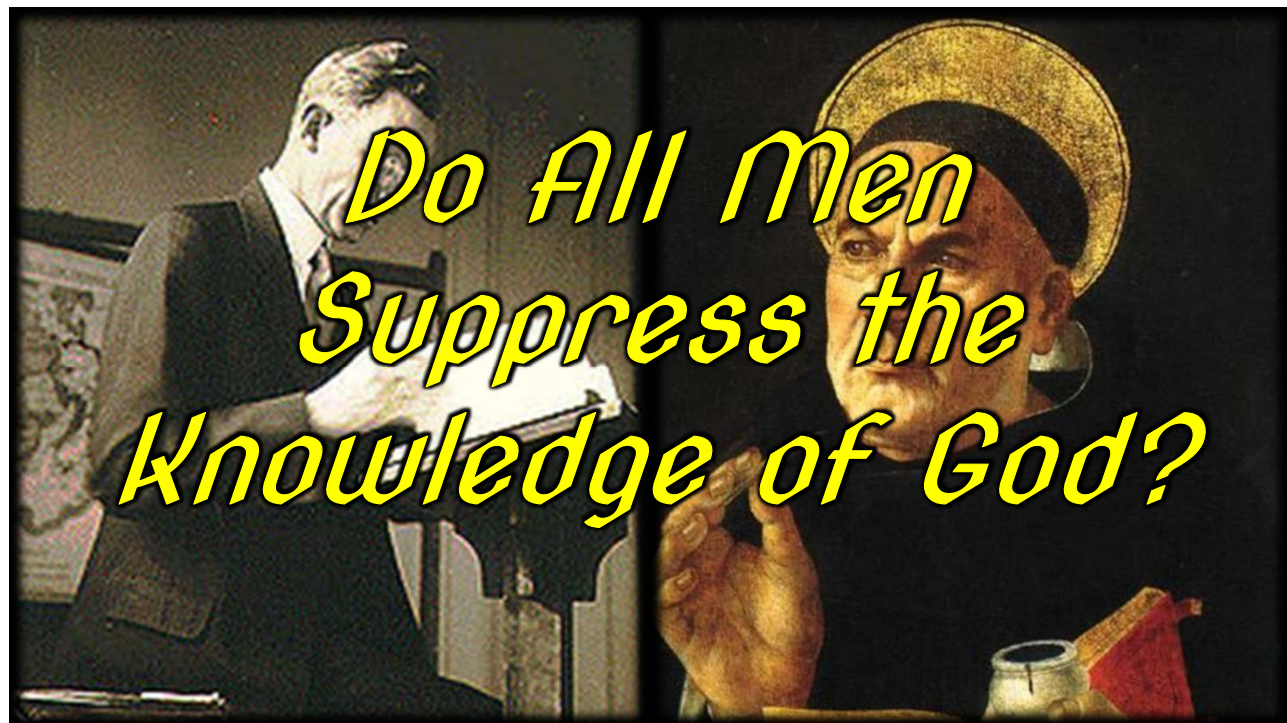
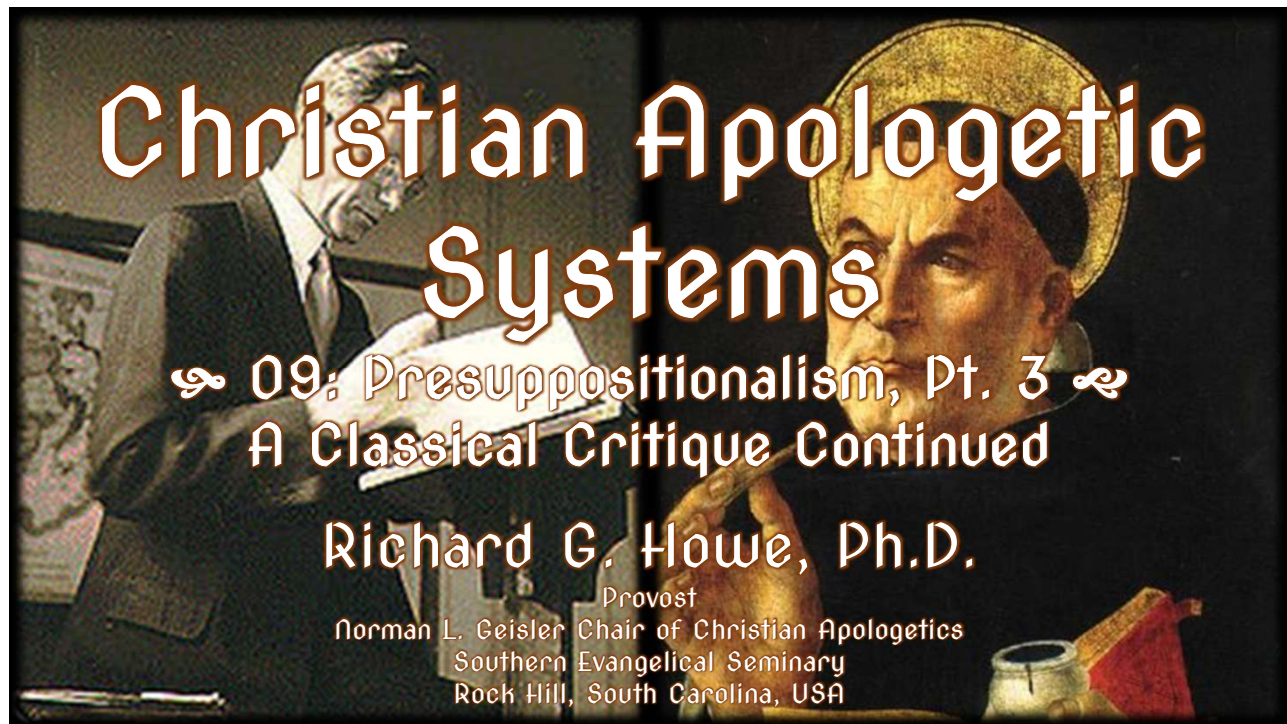




*"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of **men**, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."*

Rom. 1:18

Restrictive Apposition or Non-Restrictive Apposition?



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

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

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



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

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

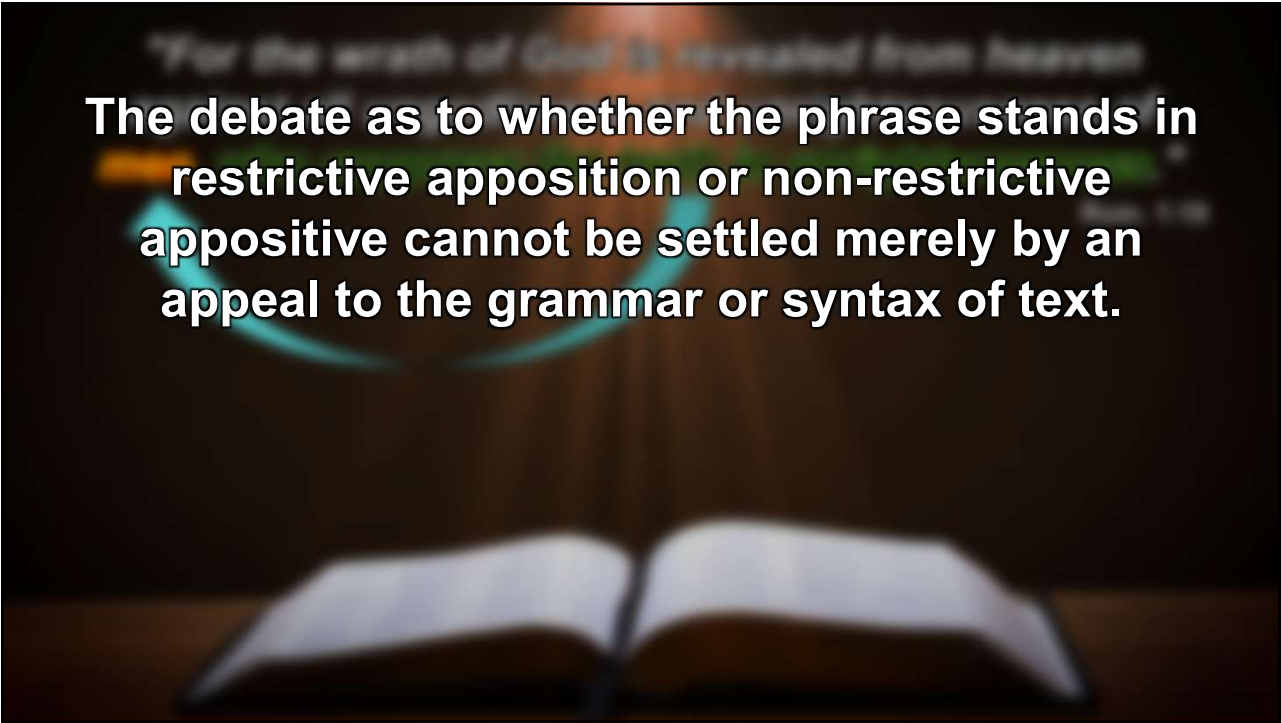
"People in America
who live below the
poverty line are
richer than many
people in the
world."



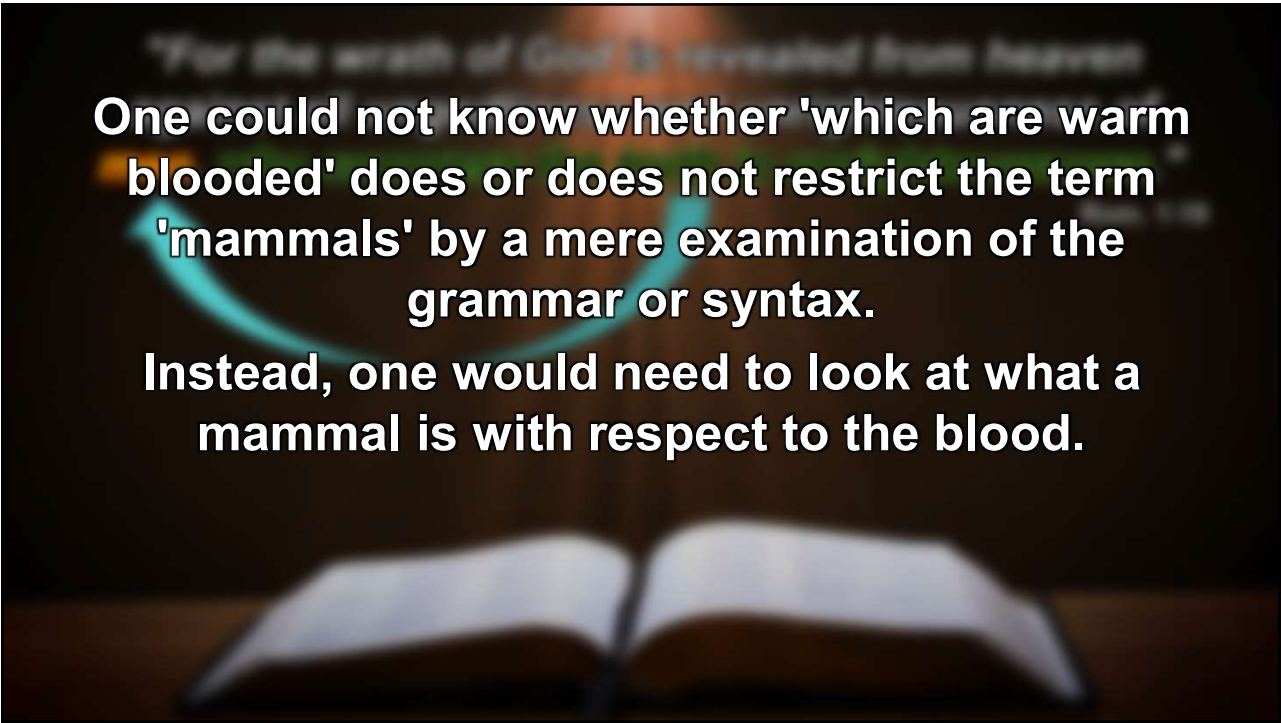
The phrase 'who live below the poverty line' is not another way of saying 'people who live in America'.

Instead, the phrase 'who live below the poverty line' restricts the phrase 'people in America' and it, thus, stands in restrictive apposition to 'people who live in America'.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven
**The debate as to whether the phrase stands in
restrictive apposition or non-restrictive
appositive cannot be settled merely by an
appeal to the grammar or syntax of text.**

An open book is shown in the foreground, slightly out of focus. Above the book, a glowing blue arc is visible, suggesting a digital or magical effect. The background is dark and textured.

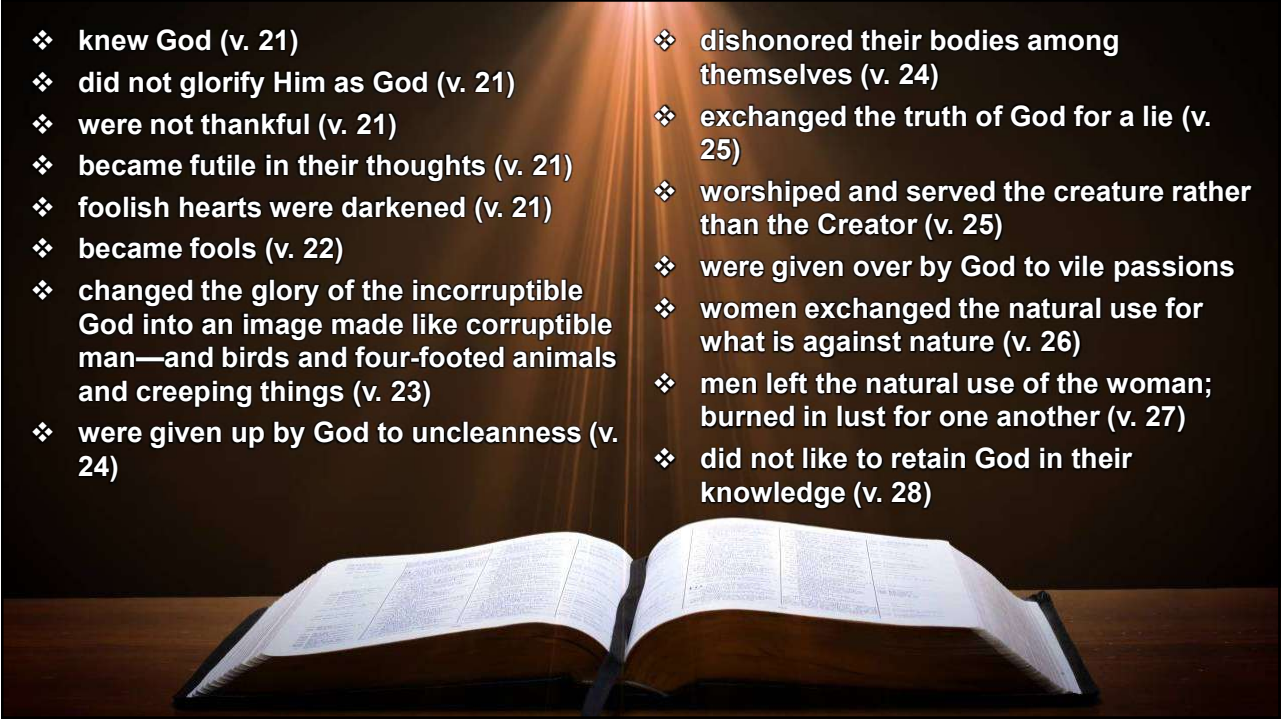
"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven
**One could not know whether 'which are warm
blooded' does or does not restrict the term
'mammals' by a mere examination of the
grammar or syntax.**
**Instead, one would need to look at what a
mammal is with respect to the blood.**

An open book is shown in the foreground, slightly out of focus. Above the book, a glowing blue arc is visible, suggesting a digital or magical effect. The background is dark and textured.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven"

In like manner, one would need to make his argument as to whether 'who suppress the truth in unrighteousness' does or does not restrict the term 'men'.

Such an argument should be based on theological / philosophical matters by appeal to sound reason and to other biblical texts.

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

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

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Some Thoughts on Natural Theology and Romans 1

by quodlibetalblog

God

General Revelation
God's revelation through natural means and human reason.

Special Revelation
God's revelation through supernatural means and divine inspiration.

Natural Theology
Based on reason and observation of nature.

Biblical Theology
Based on the Bible and divine revelation.

Apologetics
Defense of the Christian faith.

Systematic Theology

John 1:1-18

1 Peter 1:1-12

Pages

- About

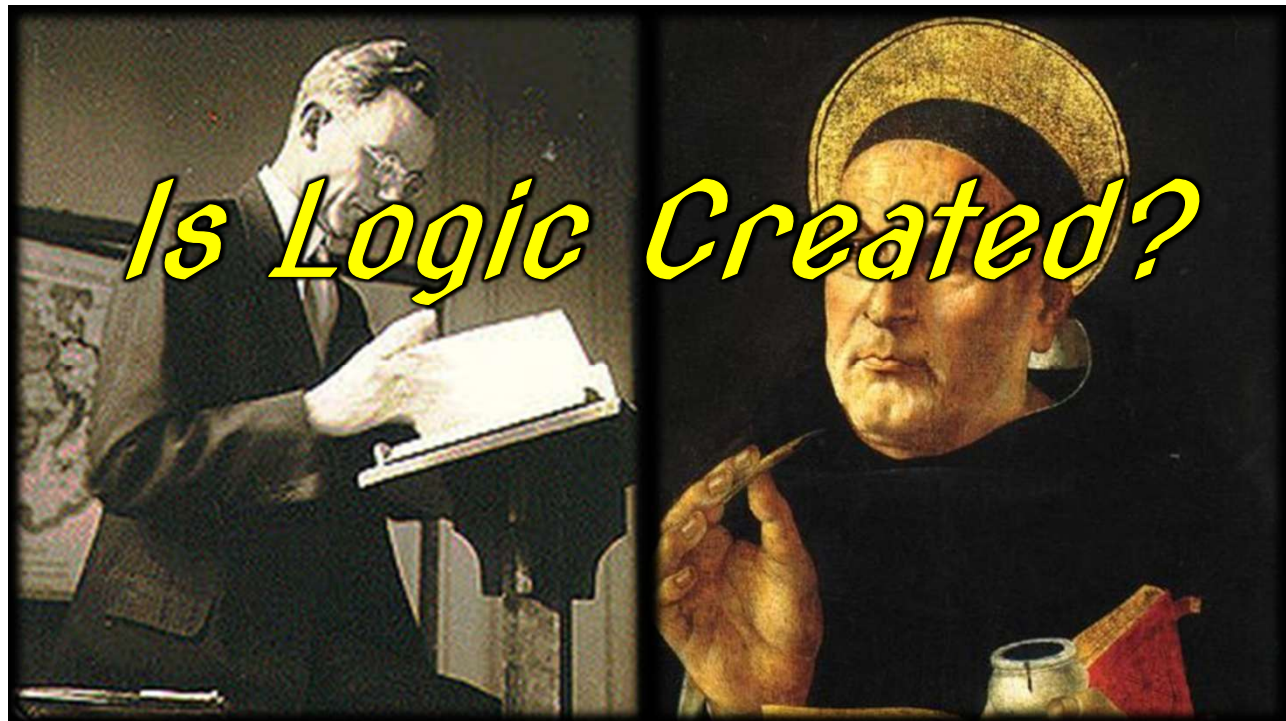
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- Archived
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- Areopagus Christian Study Center
- Cold Case Christianity
- Cross Examined
- Defending Inerrancy
- Evangelical Philosophical Society
- Evangelical Theological Society
- Free Grace Alliance
- Grace Evangelical Society

Recently I've been thinking about how to explain the basis of the way in which God



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

🌀 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.

∞ 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.

∞ 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.

Usages of the Term 'Logic'

Formal Logic

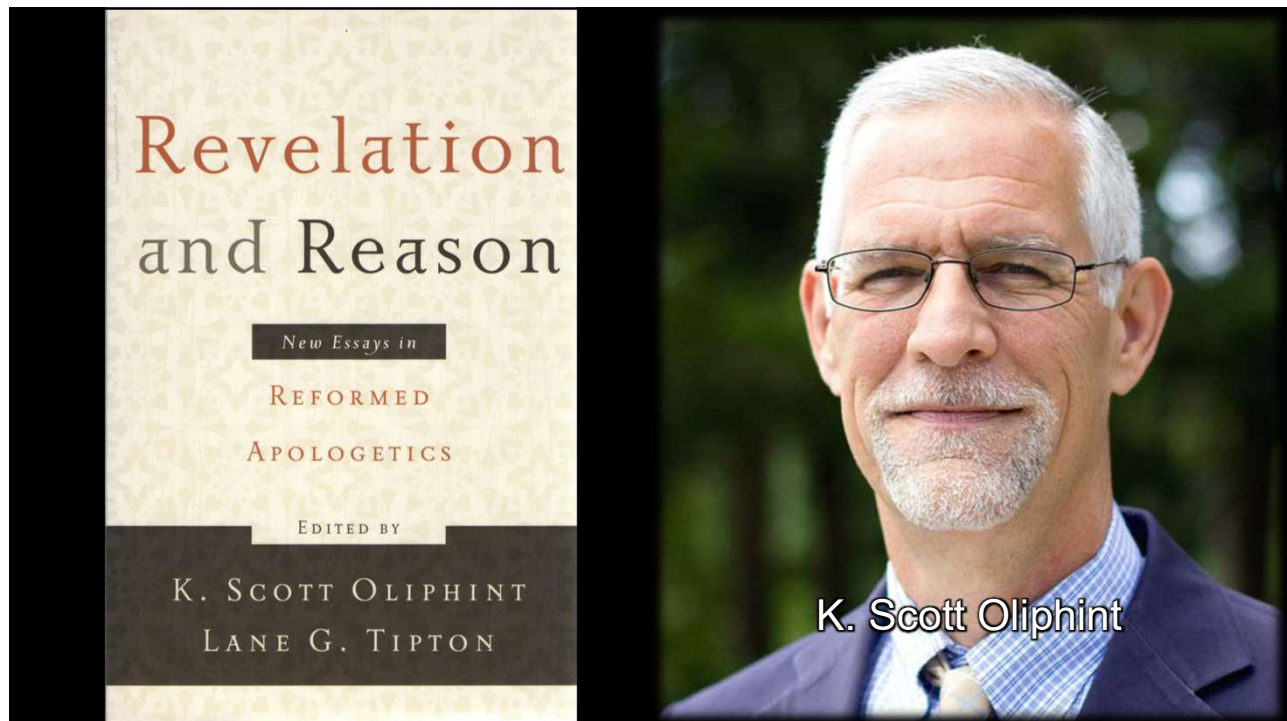
sometimes regarded as "deductive logic;" systems that focus on the "form" (as opposed to the content) of arguments and rules of inference according to which some philosophical thinking can be arranged like, for example, Categorical Logic, Truth-Functional Logic, Quantificational (Predicate) Logic, Modal 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.

Usages of the Term '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

Presuppositionalists are not unanimous in their opinions about the nature of logic itself and, by implication, whether logic is a fitting tool for our thinking about God.



K. Scott Oliphint

"When it is said, for example, that God cannot resolve a bona fide contradiction, the natural question is, why not? **If the answer given is that logic carries with it such force, such compelling consent in and of itself that God is subject to it, we must disagree with such a claim. Logic, like all else save God himself, is created."**

[K. Scott Olinphint, "Cornelius Van Til and the Reformation of Christian Apologetics," in *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*, eds. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2007): 284-285]



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This is a fallacy of false dilemma which then leads to Oliphint's non-sequitur that logic is created.

The choices are not confined to either

logic carries with it such force, such compelling consent in and of itself that God is subject to it

or

logic is created.

"When it is said, for example, that God cannot resolve a bona fide contradiction, the natural question is, why not? If the answer given is that **logic carries with it such force, such compelling consent in and of itself that God is subject to it**, we must disagree with such a claim. Logic, like all else save God himself, is created."

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No Christian theist with whom I am familiar has ever offered this and an accounting for logic.

Since obviously it would be distasteful for the Christian theist to consider that God would have to be subject to anything else, Oliphint then seeks to force his reader to opt for the conclusion that logic is created.

"When it is said, for example, that God cannot resolve a bona fide contradiction, the natural question is, why not? If the answer given is that **logic carries with it such force, such compelling consent in and of itself that God is subject to it**, we must disagree with such a claim. Logic, like all else save God himself, is created."

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What we recognize as the three fundamental "laws" of logic

- ❖ **the law of non-contradiction**
- ❖ **the law of excluded middle**
- ❖ **the law of identity**

are grounded in the nature of being (existence) itself.

"When it is said, for example, that God cannot resolve a bona fide contradiction, the natural question is, why not? If the answer given is that logic carries with it such force, such compelling consent in and of itself that God is subject to it, we must disagree with such a claim. Logic, like all else save God himself, is created."

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In classical theism, God is substantial existence itself (ipsum esse subsistens).

Thus, these fundamental "laws" of logic are the nature of God Himself and, thus, cannot be created.



Richard L. Pratt, Jr.



Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

"Because logic is a part of creation, it has limitations. ... Christianity is at points reasonable and logical but logic meets the end of its ability when it comes to matters like the incarnation of Christ, and the doctrine of the Trinity."

[Richard L. Pratt, Jr. *Every Thought Captive* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 25]



Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

"We must remember that logic is at best merely a reflection of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Although in Scripture God does stoop low and reveal Himself in terms of creaturely reason, logic, as we know it, is not above or equal to God, nor is it a part of God's being."

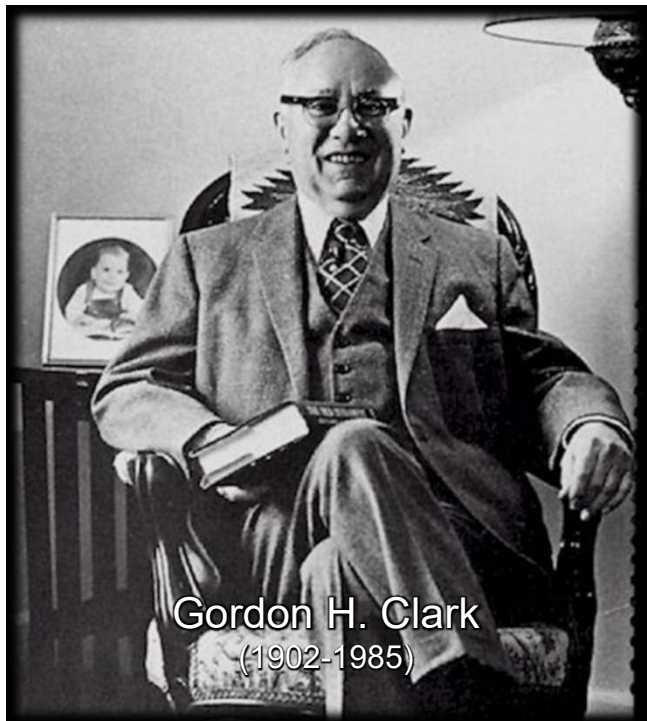
[Richard L. Pratt, Jr. *Every Thought Captive* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 24-25, emphasis in original]



Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

"Men wish either to reject reason in favor of blind faith or to give logic some amount of independence from God."

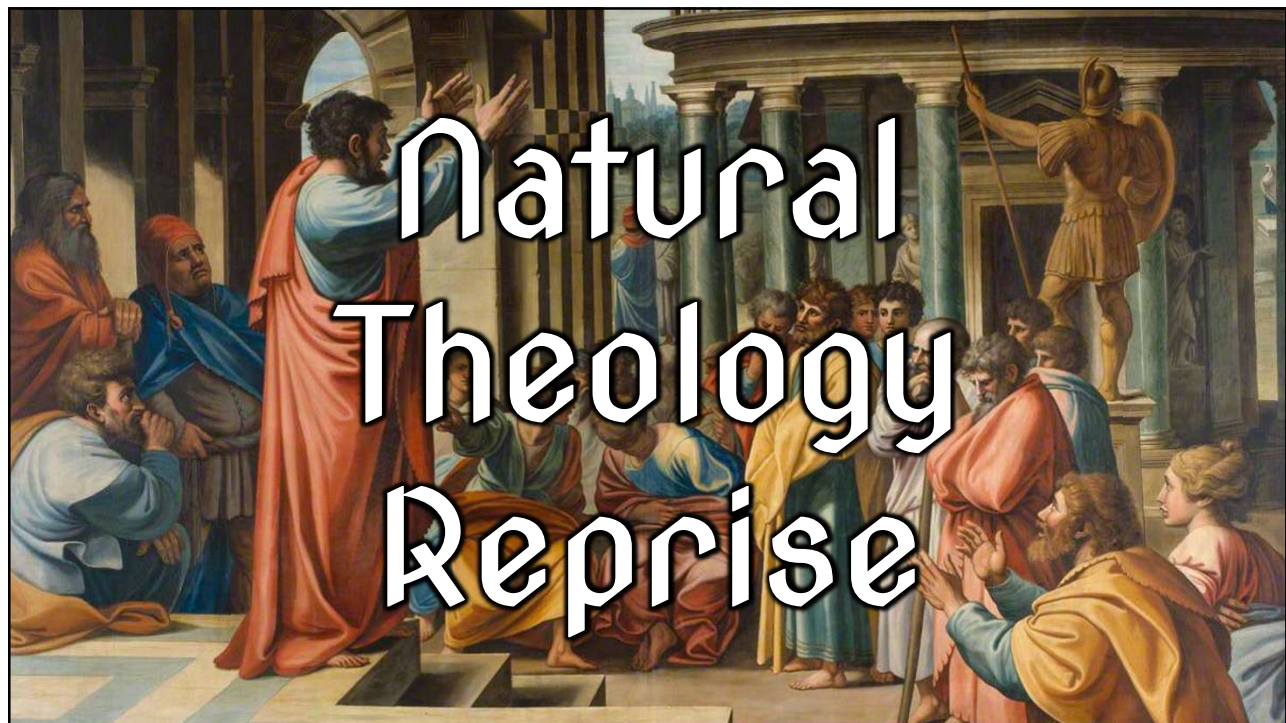
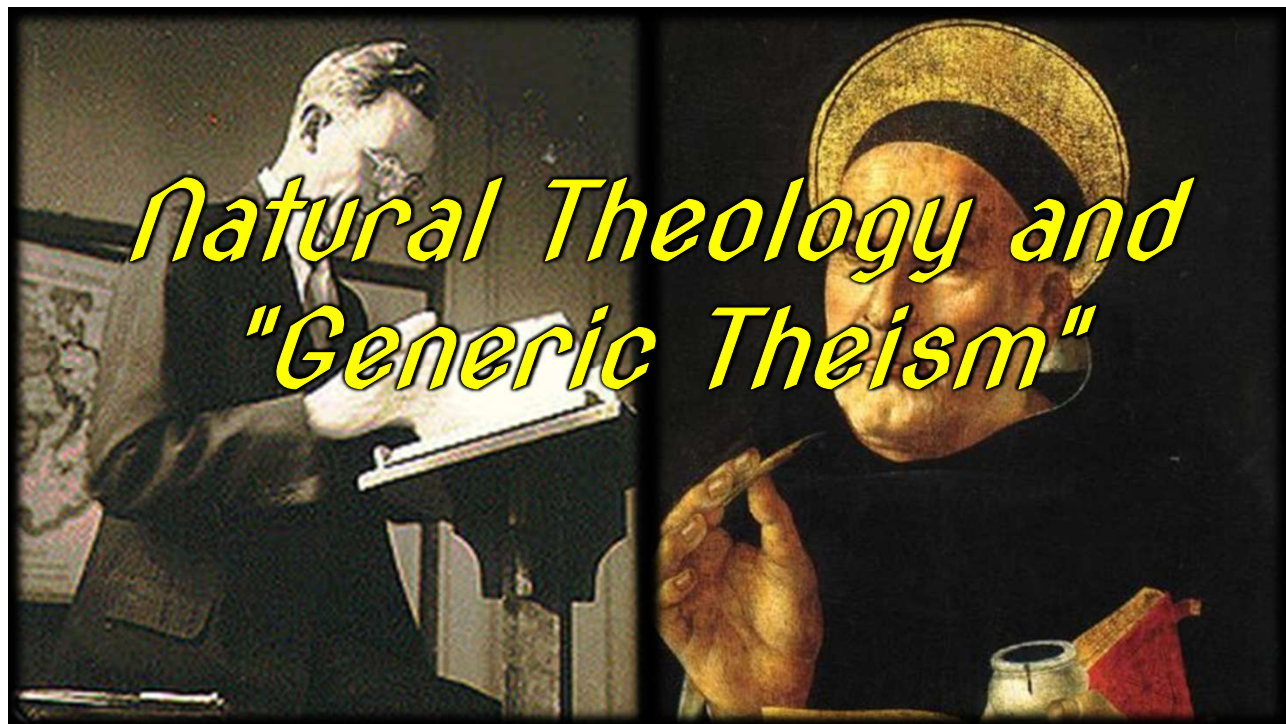
[Richard L. Pratt, Jr. *Every Thought Captive* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 26]



Gordon H. Clark
(1902-1985)

"The law of contradiction is not subsequent to God. If one should say that logic is dependent on God's thinking, it is dependent only in the sense that it is the characteristic of God's thinking."

[Gordon H. Clark, *Logic*, 2nd ed. (Jefferson: The Trinity Foundation, 1988), 122]



Background to Natural Theology:

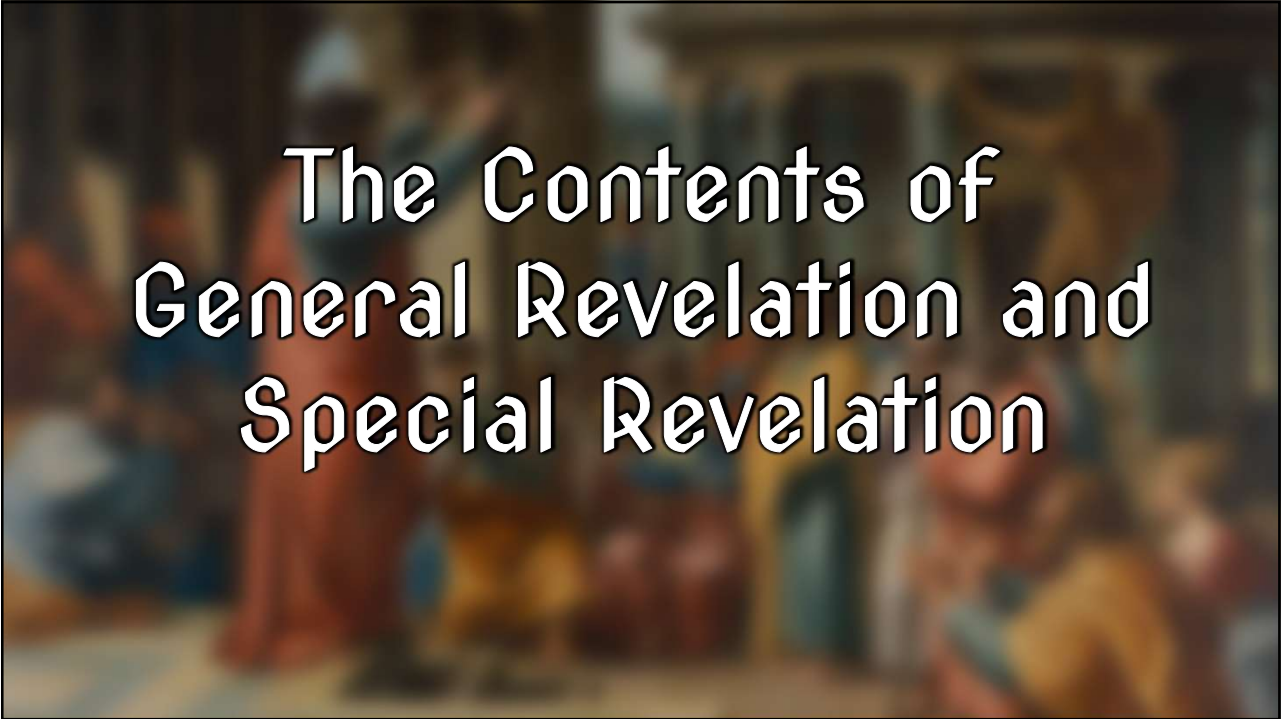
General Revelation and Special Revelation

General Revelation

*God making known
through His creation
His existence,
His nature, His
attributes, and His
goodness*

Special Revelation

*God making known
through the Scriptures
His nature and His will
not necessarily
knowable through
General Revelation*



The Contents of General Revelation and Special Revelation

General Revelation

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

Special Revelation

1. *The Trinity*
2. *The Hypostatic Union*
3. *The Gospel*
4. *The Mystery of the Church*
5. *The Second Coming*
6. *The Resurrection*
7. *Heaven*
8. *Hell*

General Revelation

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

The application of sound reason in understanding God's revelation of Himself through creation (General Revelation) gives rise to Natural Theology.

Since Natural theology is a human effort, it should not be surprising that Christians might disagree as to the exact nature and content of Natural Theology.

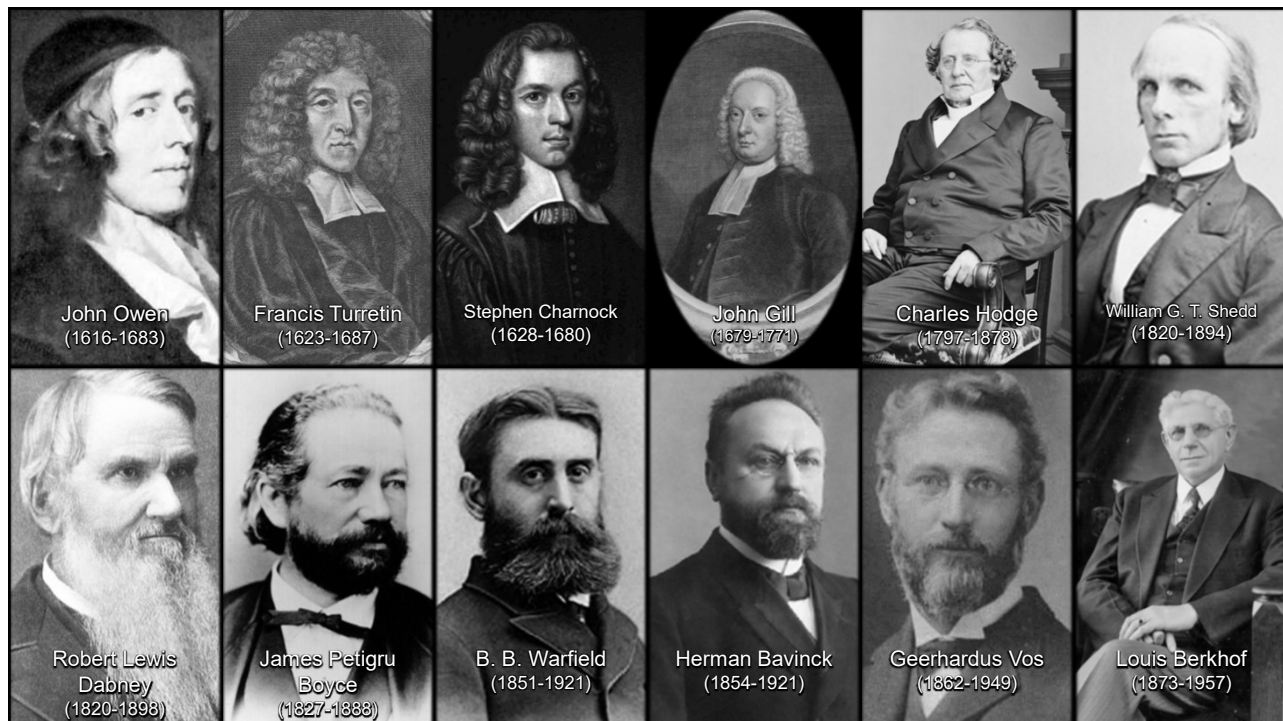
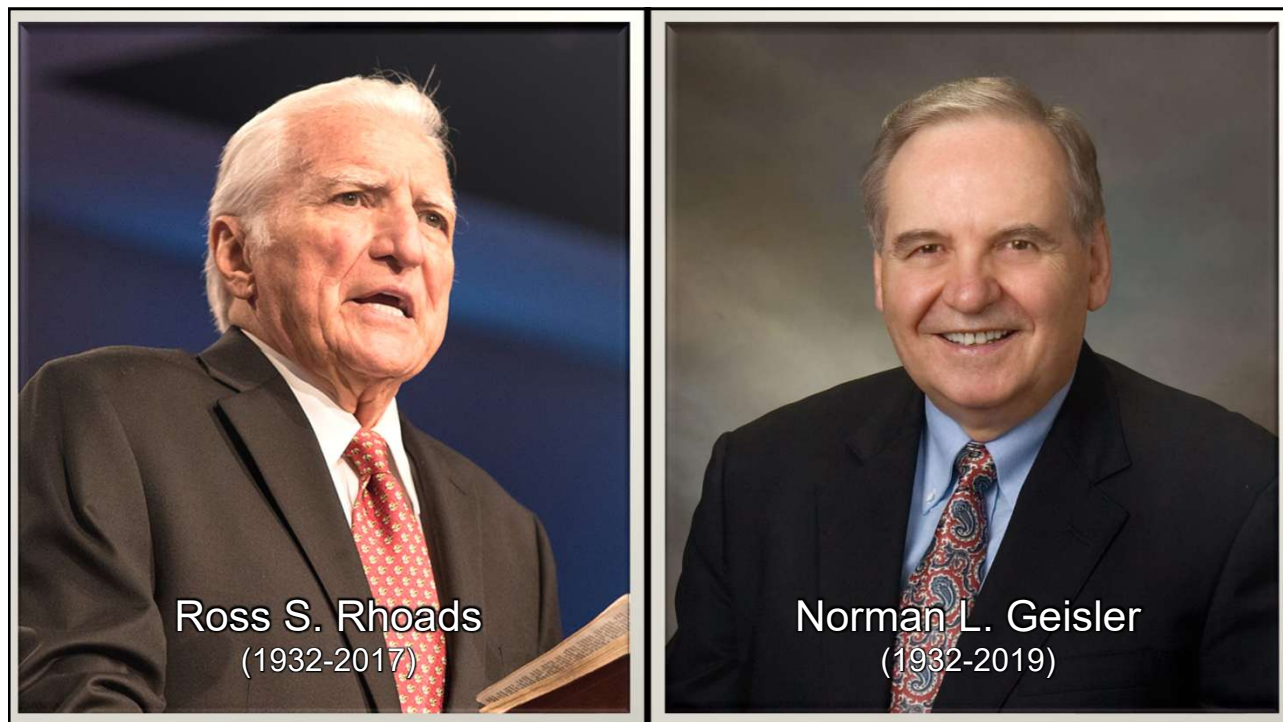
Natural Theology has been widely embraced and celebrated in Christianity since the Church Fathers through the Middle Ages.



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

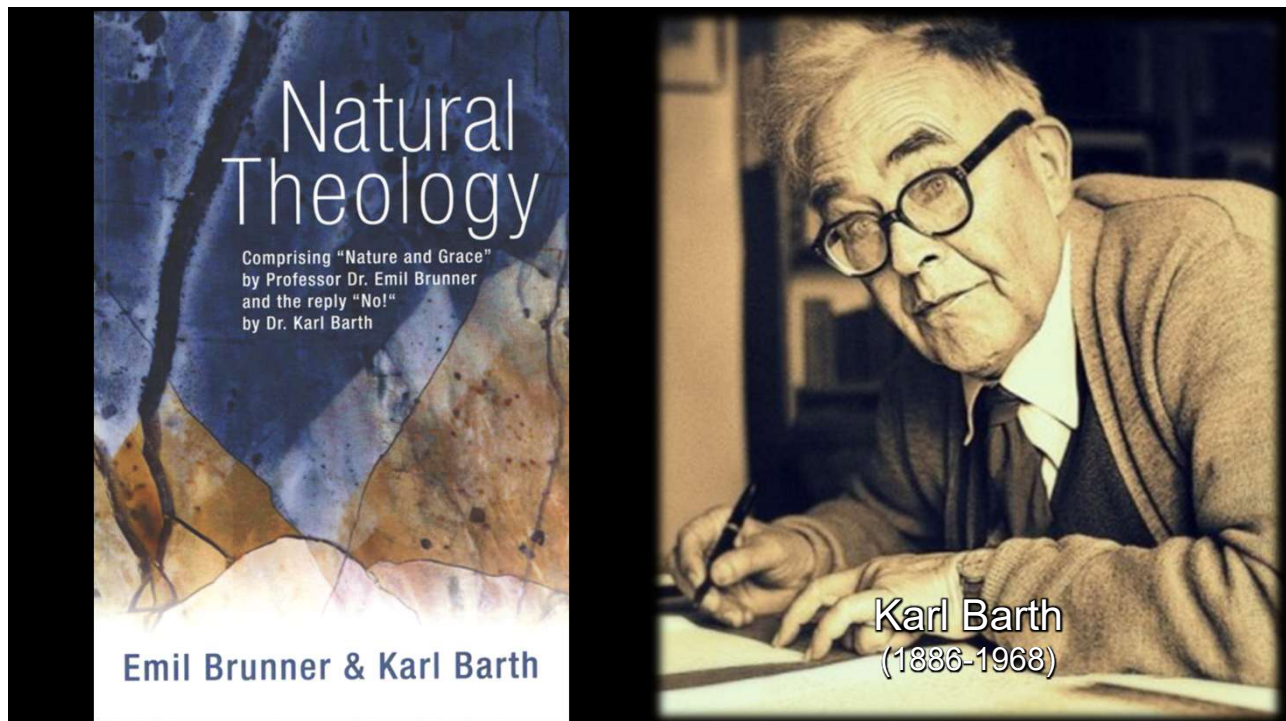


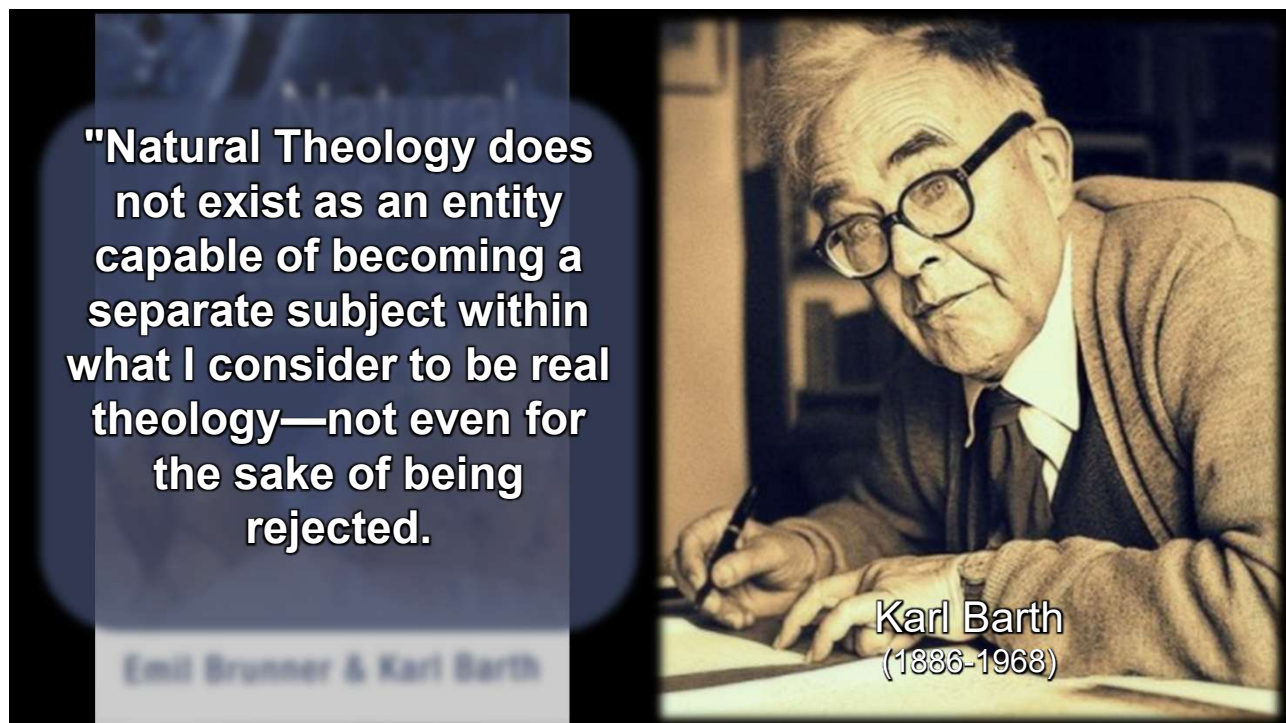
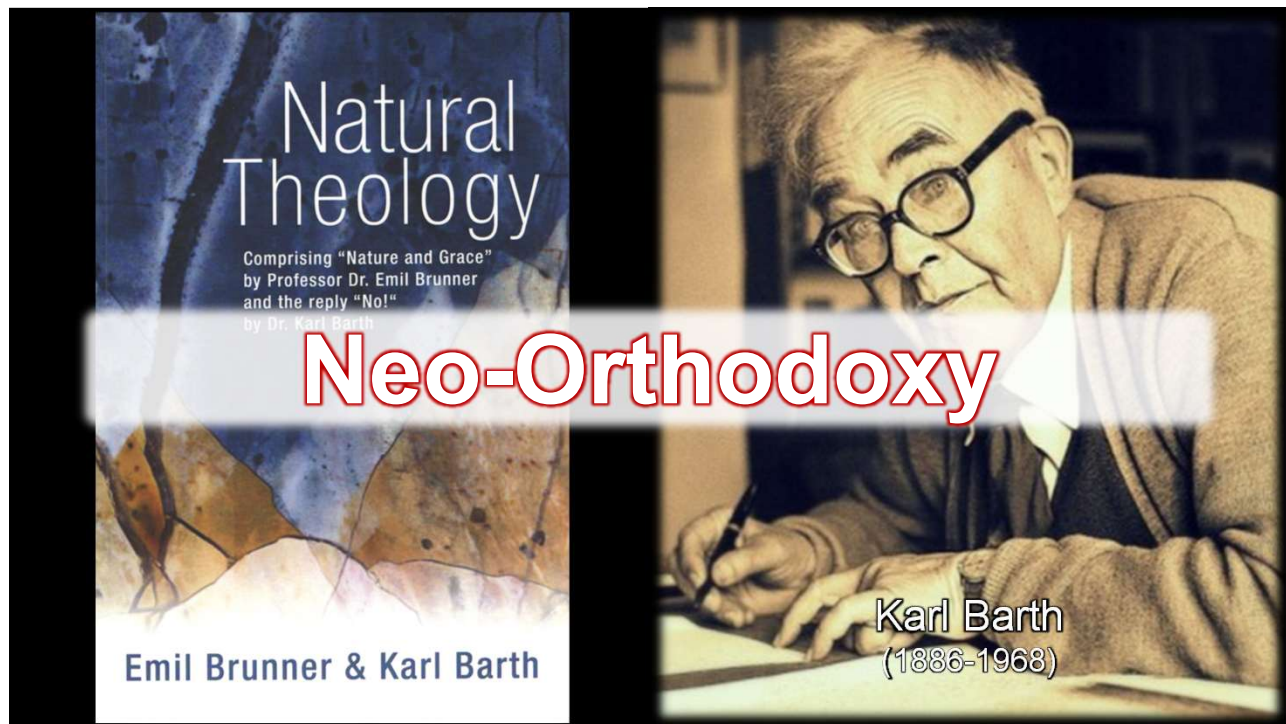
Norman L.
Geisler
(1932-2019)



*Though our focus for now is
Presuppositionalism, it is
interesting to note that
Presuppositionalists are not alone
in repudiating Natural Theology
(though Presuppositionalists do so
for different reasons than
these others).*

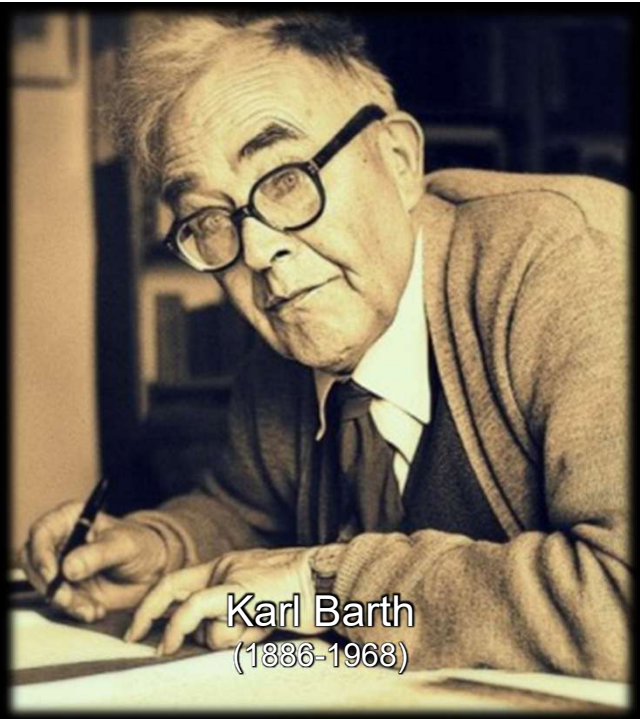
Neo-Orthodoxy on
Natural Theology





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

Emil Brunner & Karl Barth



Karl Barth
(1886-1968)

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

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

Emil Brunner & Karl Barth



Karl Barth
(1886-1968)

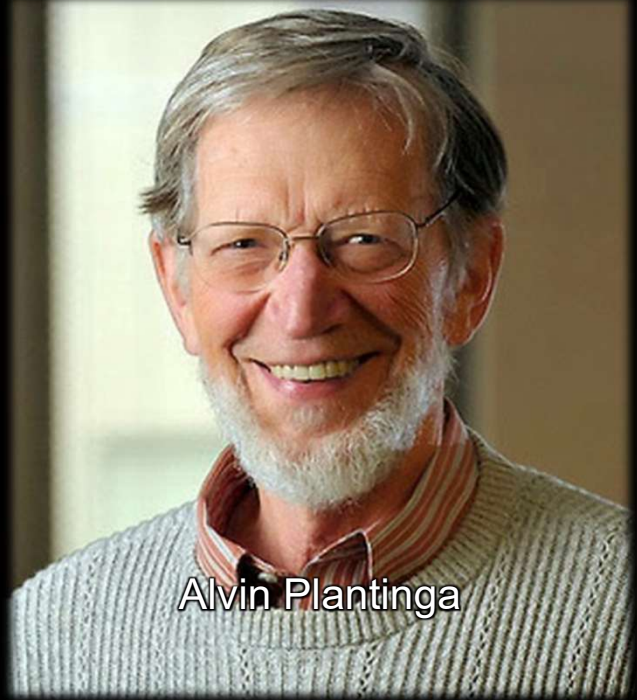
Reformed Epistemology on Natural Theology

GOD AND OTHER MINDS

A Study of the
Rational Justification
of Belief in God

With a new Preface by the author

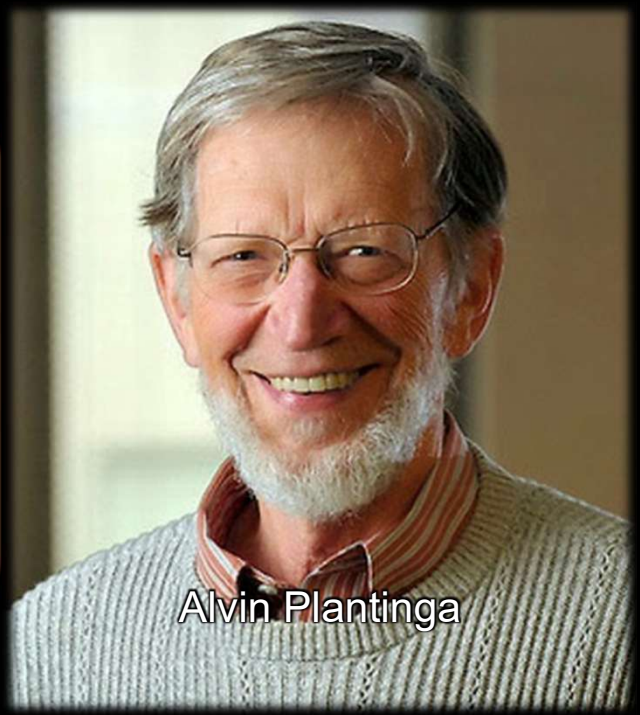
ALVIN PLANTINGA



Alvin Plantinga

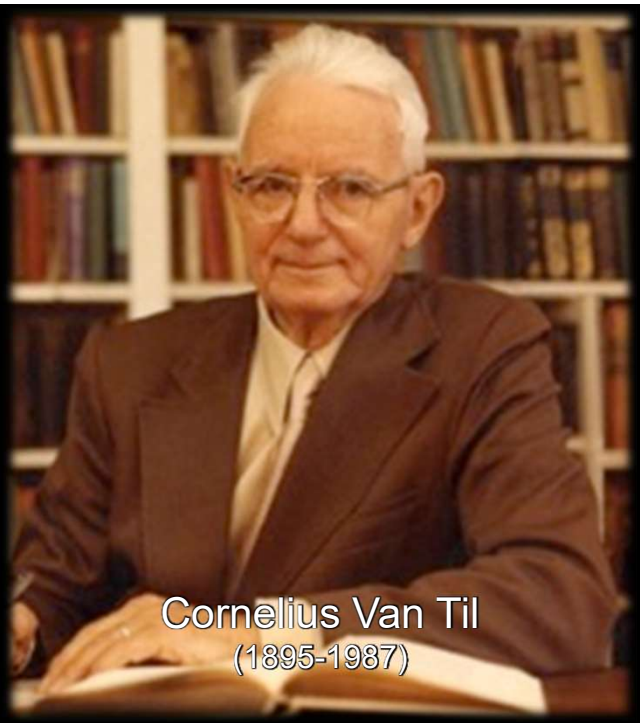
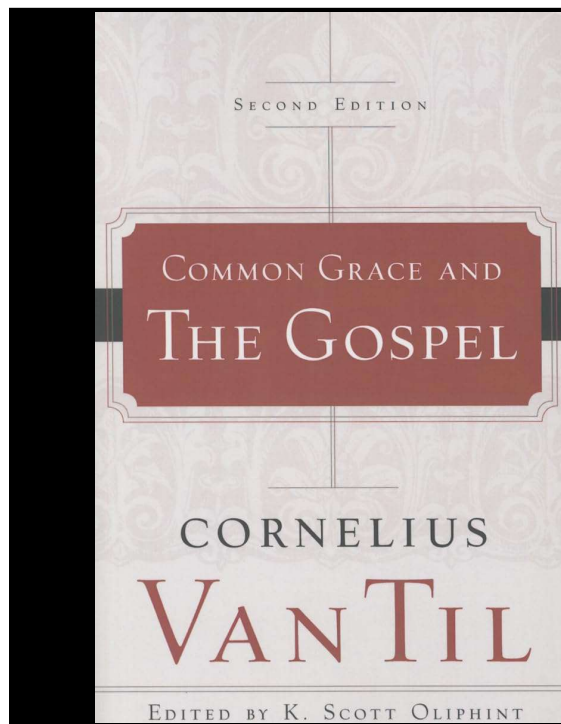
"It is hard to avoid the conclusion that natural theology does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question with which we began: Is it rational to believe in God?"

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



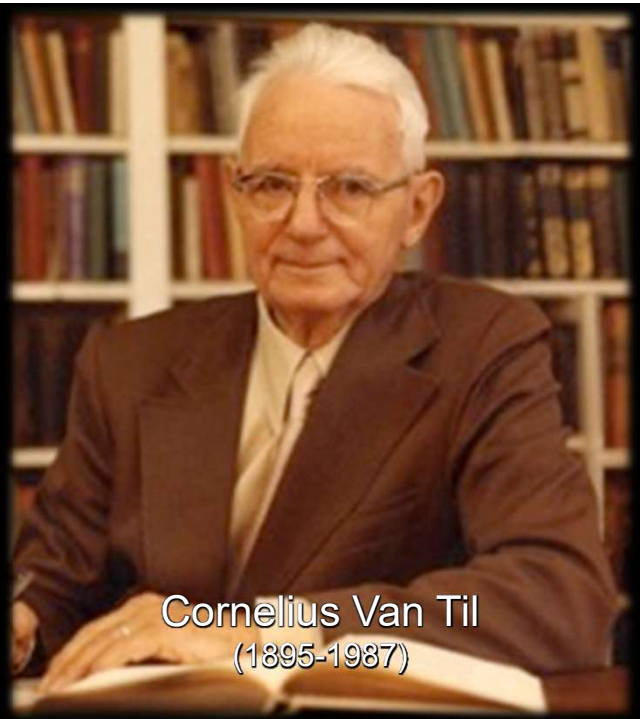
Alvin Plantinga

As we have said, though they do so for different reasons, Presuppositionalists likewise reject the possibility and viability of Natural Theology.



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

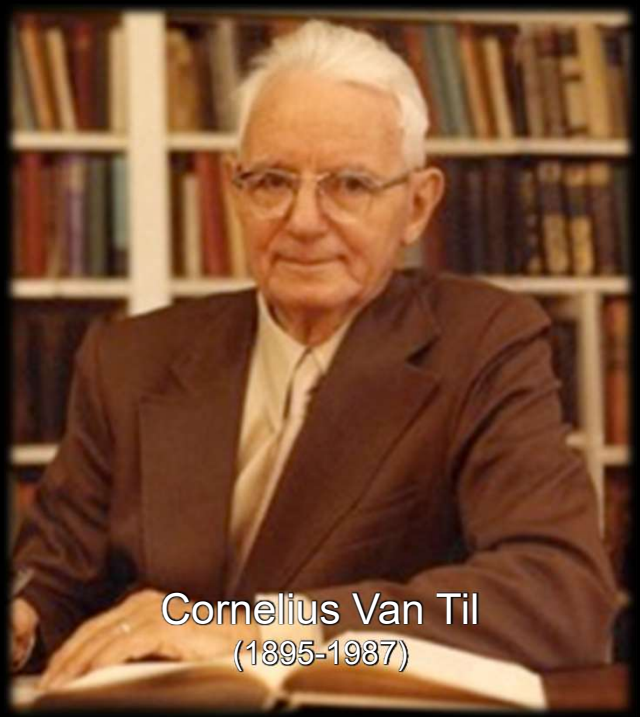
"That the gods produced by the 'theistic proof' are frequently nothing but idols is plain to any one familiar with the history of philosophy. Aristotle proved the existence of a god; there must, he reasoned, be an unmoved Mover back of all movement. Thomas Aquinas used essentially the same method that Aristotle did in proving the existence of God."



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

"Yet the god of Aristotle did not create the world, does not control it, is not even a person. Aquinas wanted to prove to those whose standard of judgment is reason rather than revelation that it is proper to believe in God. But the only god he can rightfully hold to on this basis is such a god as no Christian should call God."

[Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, 2nd ed., edited by K. Scott Oliphint (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2015), 219]

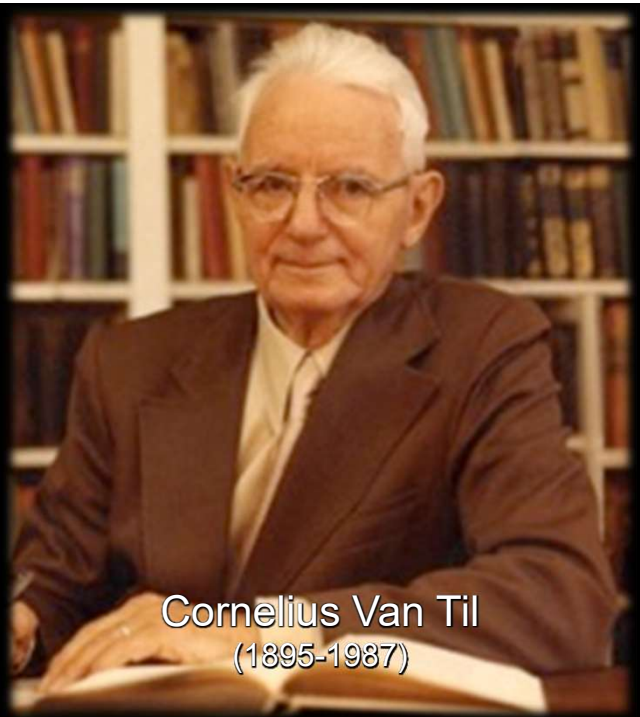


Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

JERUSALEM and ATHENS

CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS ON
THE PHILOSOPHY AND
APOLOGETICS OF
CORNELIUS VAN TIL

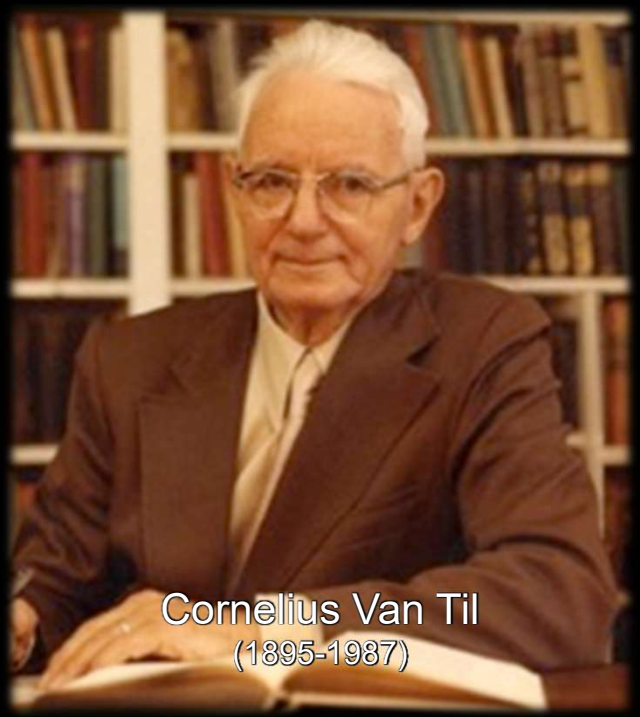
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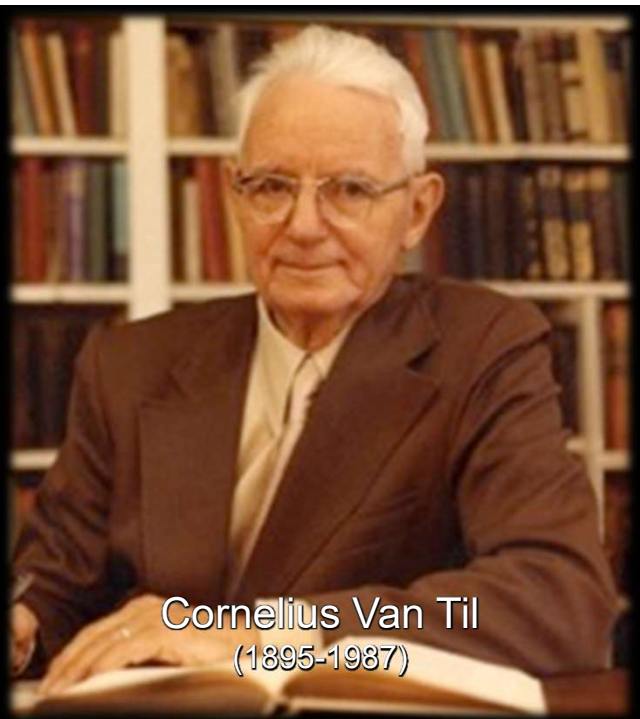
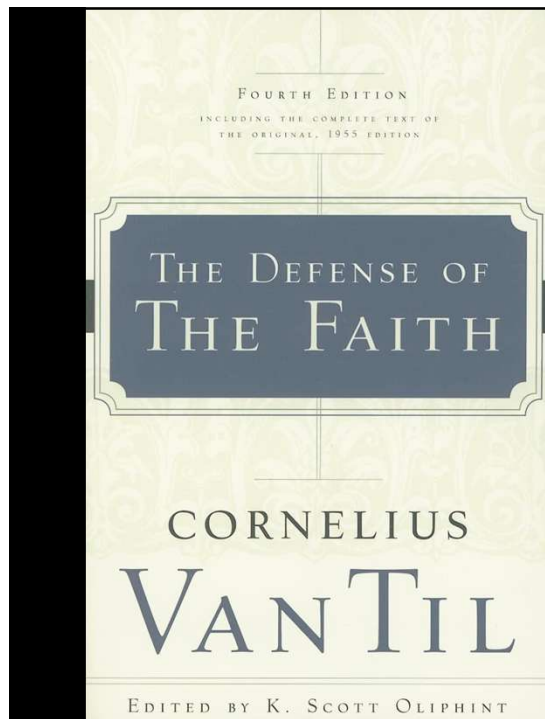
Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

"I believe that Christian apologetics, and in particular Reformed apologetics, is not really transcendental in its method unless it says at the outset of its dialogue with non-believers that the Christian position must be accepted on the authority of the self-identifying Christ of Scripture as the presupposition of human predication in any field."

["Response by Cornelius Van Til to Herman Dooyeweerd, 'Cornelius Van Til and the Transcendental Critique of Theoretical Thought'" in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 98, emphasis in original]



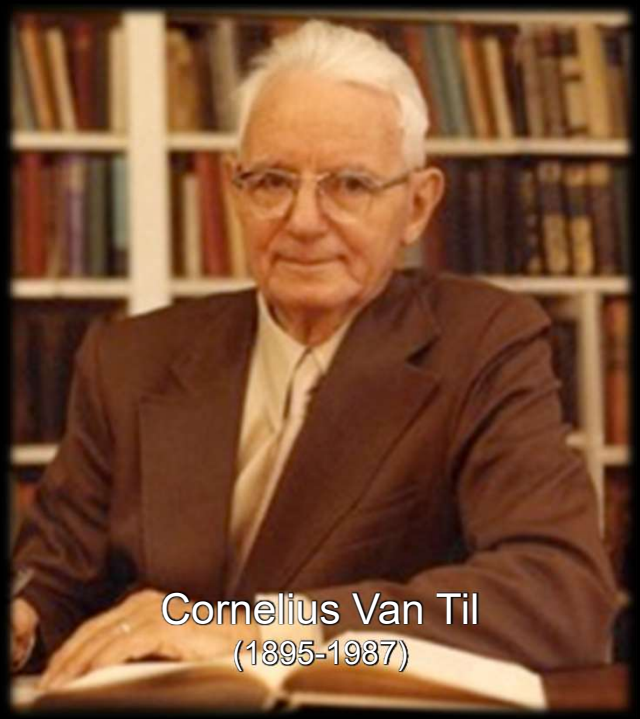
Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

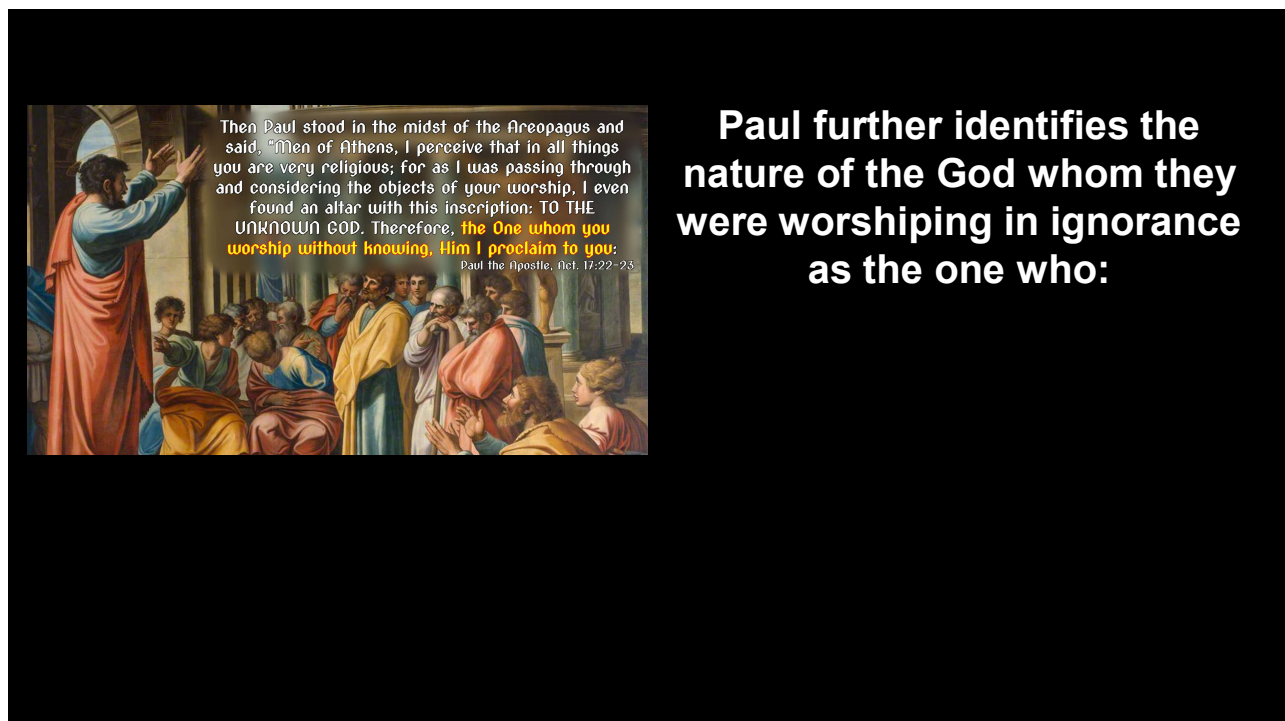
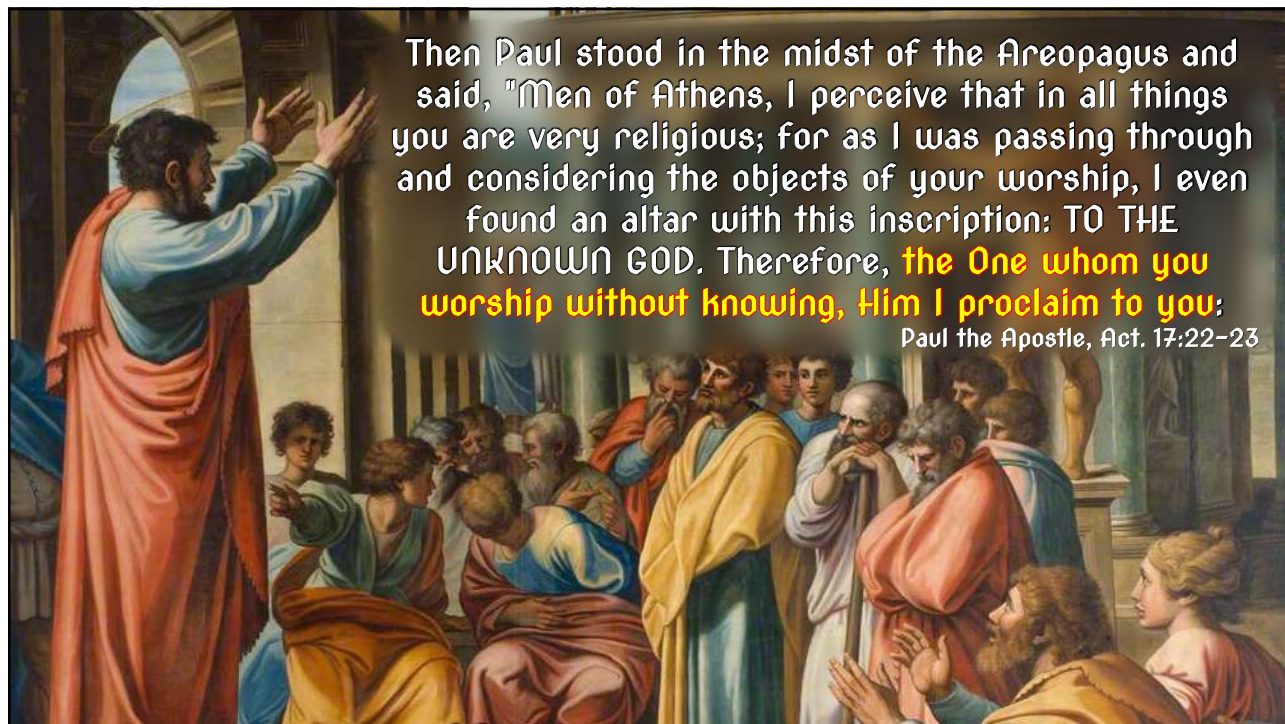
*"In not challenging this basic presupposition with respect to himself as the final reference point in predication, the natural man may accept the 'theistic proofs' as fully valid. He may construct such proofs. He has constructed such proofs. **But the god whose existence he proves to himself in this way is always a god who is something other than the self-contained ontological Trinity of Scripture.**"*

[Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 4th ed. (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2008), 101]



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)





- ✓ who made the world and everything in it
- ✓ is Lord of heaven and earth
- ✓ does not dwell in temples made with hands
- ✓ is not worshiped with men's hands
- ✓ does not need anything
- ✓ gives to all life, breath, and all things
- ✓ has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth
- ✓ has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings
- ✓ should be sought by all, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him
- ✓ is not far from each one of us
- ✓ in whom we live and move and have our being
- ✓ of whom we are His offspring of God
- ✓ ought not to be thought of like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising
- ✓ has overlooked these times of ignorance
- ✓ now commands all men everywhere to repent
- ✓ has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained
- ✓ has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead

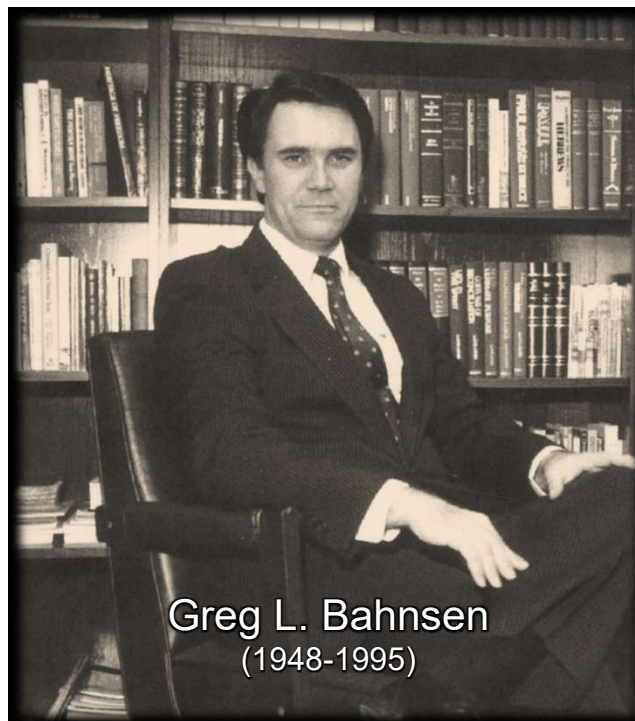
"In not challenging this basic presupposition with respect to himself as the final reference point in predication, the natural man may accept the 'theistic proofs' as fully valid. He may construct such proofs. He has constructed such proofs. But the god whose existence he proves to himself in this way is always a god who is something other than the self-contained ontological Trinity of Scripture."

[Cornelius Van Til, The Defense of the Faith, 4th ed. (Philosophy: PAR, 2000), 107]

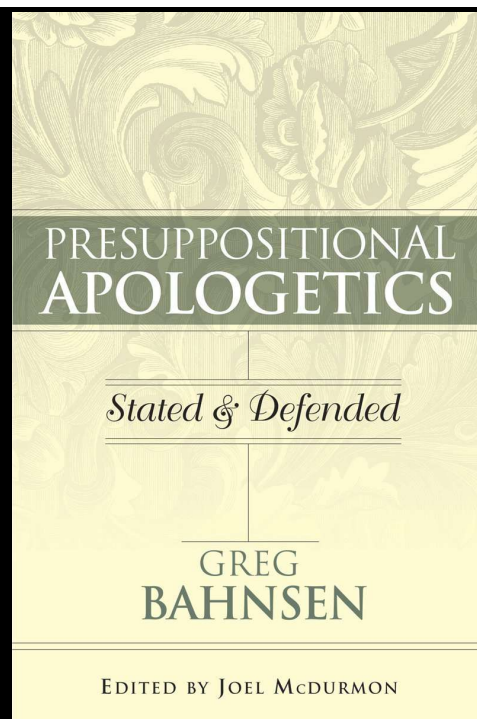


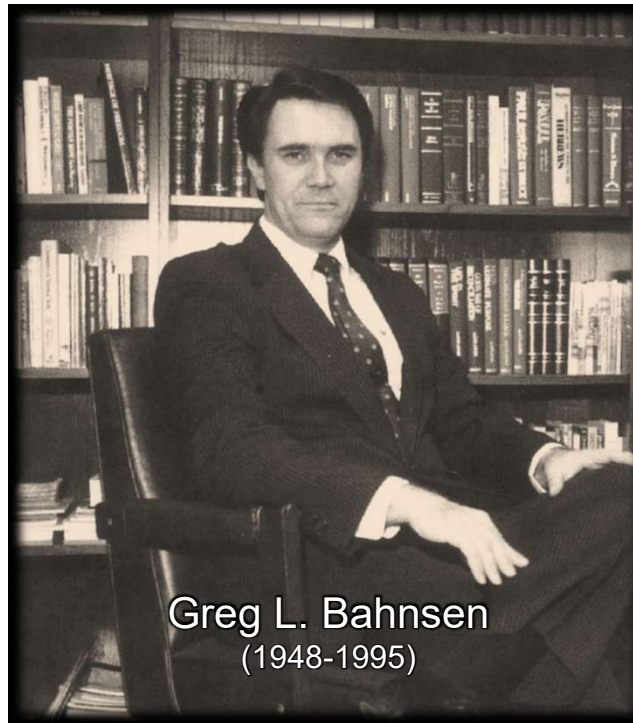
Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

Since Paul here does not mention the "self-contained ontological Trinity of Scripture" do you think that VanTil would conclude that the God Paul was proclaiming to them was not the true God?



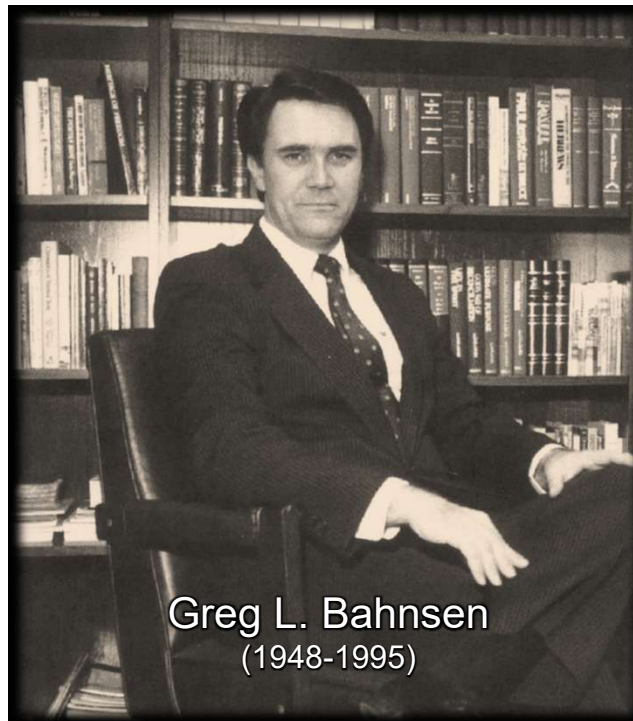
Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)





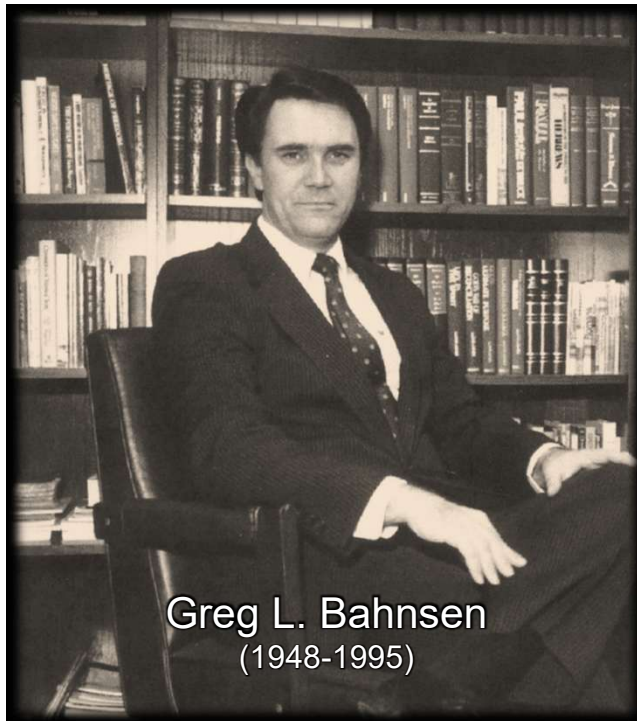
Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

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



Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

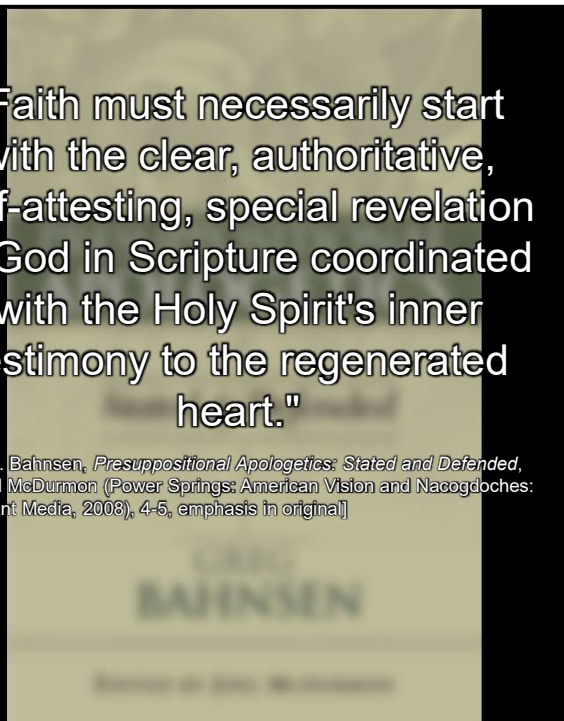
"Because the clear revelation of God in nature's and man's constitution is suppressed in unrighteousness, it is impossible for theology or apologetics to base their efforts in a rebellious understanding of the world or history, independently working up to a verification of God's written revelation.



Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

"Faith must necessarily start with the clear, authoritative, self-attesting, special revelation of God in Scripture coordinated with the Holy Spirit's inner testimony to the regenerated heart."

[Greg L. Bahnsen, *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended*, ed. Joel McDurmon (Power Springs: American Vision and Nacogdoches: Covenant Media, 2008), 4-5, emphasis in original]

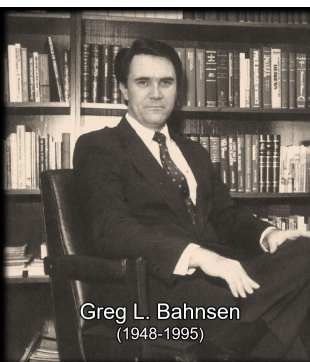


"Thinking to maintain neutrality with respect to Scripture, any natural theology that reasons autonomously *from* logical and/or empirical grounds *to* God results in an exclusion of *revelational necessity and authority* endorsing some other imperious philosophy. ...

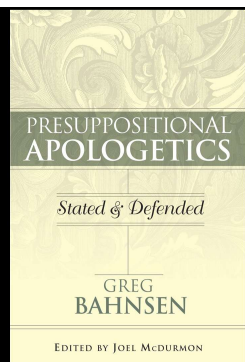
"Because the clear revelation of God in nature's and man's constitution is suppressed in unrighteousness, it is impossible for theology or apologetics to base their efforts in a rebellious understanding of the world or history, independently working up to a verification of God's written revelation.

"Faith must necessarily start with the clear, authoritative, self-attesting, special revelation of God in Scripture coordinated with the Holy Spirit's inner testimony to the regenerated heart."

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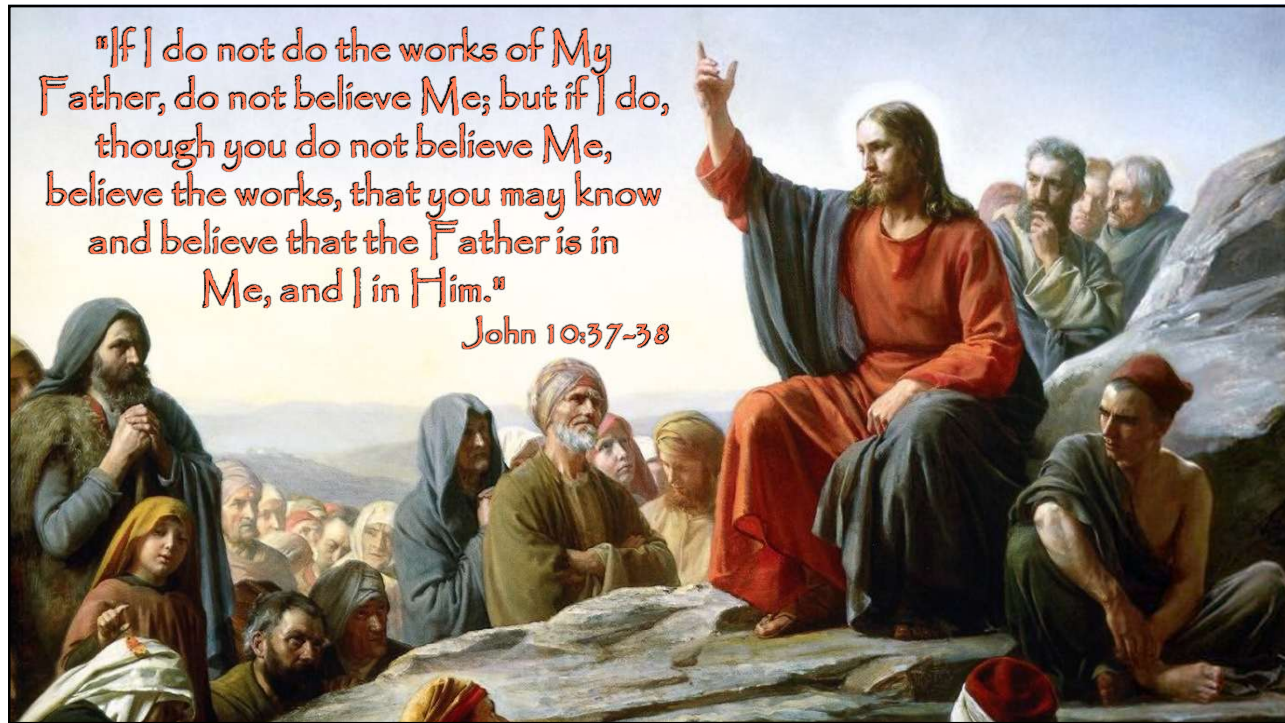


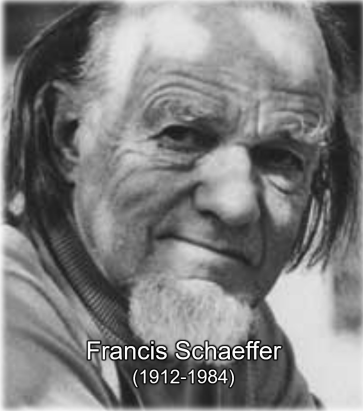
Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)



PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS
Stated & Defended
GREG BAHNSEN
EDITED BY JOEL MCDURMON

Since Paul here clearly did not "start with the clear, authoritative, self-attesting, special revelation of God in Scripture," do you think Bahnsen would conclude that what Paul was proclaiming to them was not the true God?





Francis Schaeffer
(1912-1984)

Vol. 6, No. 4

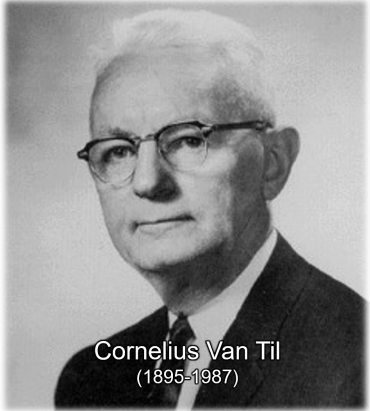
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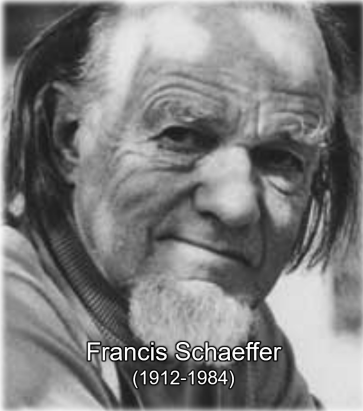
The 1993 ICRC in Zwolle, Holland

Published by
The Christian Education Committee
of
THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

October, 1997



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

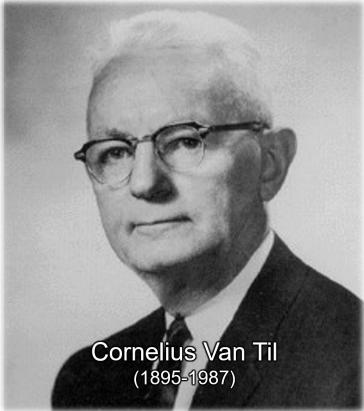


Francis Schaeffer
(1912-1984)

*"I think you will agree, then,
that no form of natural
theology has ever spoken
properly of the God who is
there."*



THE GOD WHO IS THERE
by Francis Schaeffer
THE CHRISTIAN BOOK CONCERN



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)

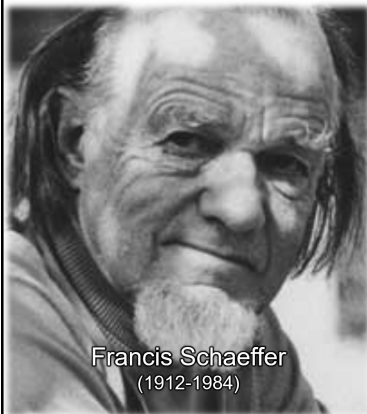


by Francis A. Schaeffer

the God who is there



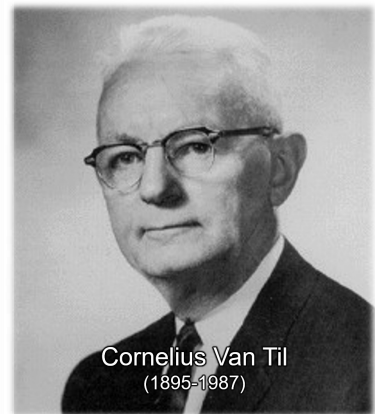




Francis Schaeffer
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*"I think you will agree, then, that **no form of natural theology has ever spoken properly of the God who is there.** None of the great Greek philosophers, like Plato and Aristotle, and none the great modern philosophers, like Descartes, Kant, Hegel or Kierkegaard and others, have ever spoken of the God who is there. The systems of thought of these men represent a repression of the revelation of the God who is there."*

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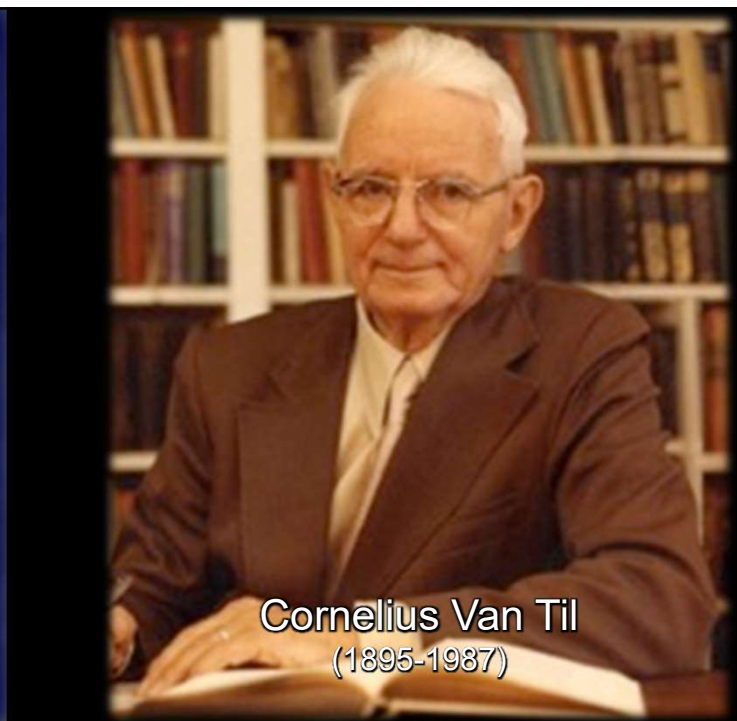
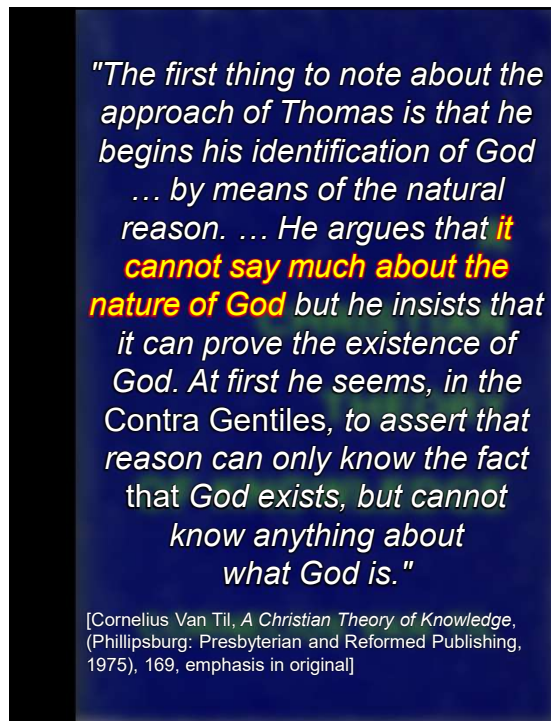
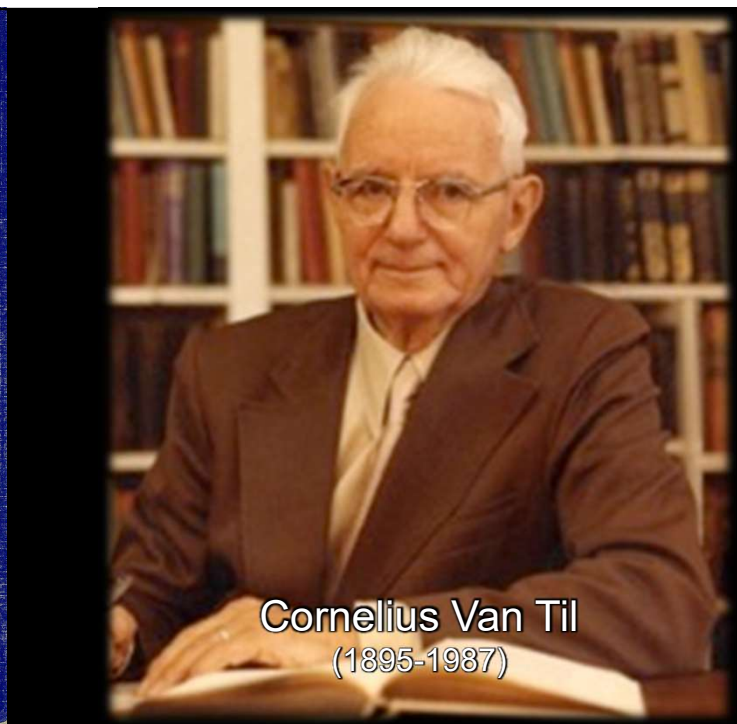
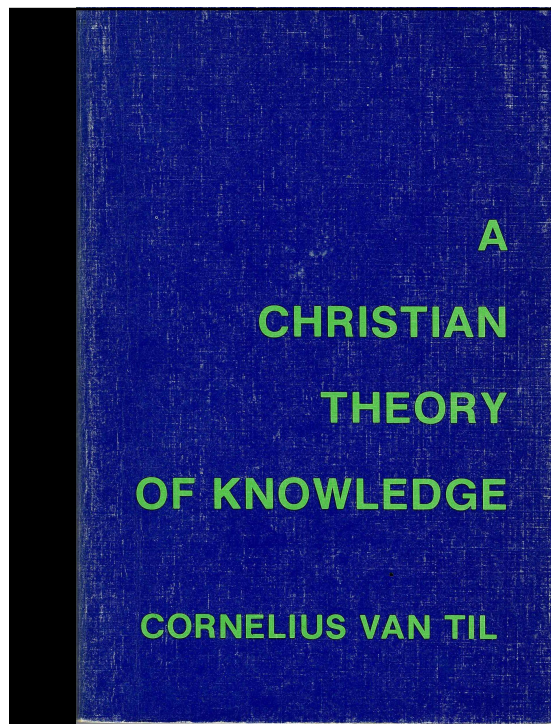


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I suppose you can guess by now who I think is conspicuously missing from the list of philosophers.

What is more, notice that Van Til conveniently skips from ancient philosophy to modern philosophy without any regard as to what contributions to the subject of Natural Theology was made in the Middle Ages.



*"The first thing to note about the approach of Thomas is that he begins his identification of God ... by means of the natural reason. ... He argues that **it cannot say much about the nature of God** but he insists that it can prove the existence of God. At first he seems, in the Contra Gentiles, to assert that reason can only know the fact that God exists, but cannot know anything about what God is."*

[Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1975), 169, emphasis in original]

It is amazing to me that Van Til could think that Aquinas held that reason was unable to "say much about the nature of God" since, having demonstrated God's existence in Question 2 of Part 1 of his *Summa Theologiae*, he spends the next 24 questions comprised of 146 articles covering nearly 140 pages in English translation unpacking the characteristics of God's nature.

*"The first thing to note about the approach of Thomas is that he begins his identification of God ... by means of the natural reason. ... He argues that **it cannot say much about the nature of God** but he insists that it can prove the existence of God. At first he seems, in the Contra Gentiles, to assert that reason can only know the fact that God exists, but cannot know anything about what God is."*

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Even if one disagrees with any or all of Aquinas's thinking here, it is manifestly false that Aquinas "argues that [reason] cannot say much about the nature of God."

"The first thing to note about the approach of Thomas is that he begins his identification of God ... by means of the natural reason. ... He argues that it cannot say much about the nature of God but he insists that it can prove the existence of God. At first he seems, in the *Contra Gentiles*, to assert that **reason can only know the fact that God exists, but cannot know anything about what God is.**"

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The challenge here is that undoubtedly Van Til is unaware of exactly what Aquinas means by the word 'know.'

For Aquinas, as Aristotle before him, knowledge is primarily of sensible objects such that to know is to be formally one with the known in the actuality of cognition.

"The first thing to note about the approach of Thomas is that he begins his identification of God ... by means of the natural reason. ... He argues that it cannot say much about the nature of God but he insists that it can prove the existence of God. At first he seems, in the *Contra Gentiles*, to assert that **reason can only know the fact that God exists, but cannot know anything about what God is.**"

[Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1975), 169, emphasis in original]

This happens when the human intellect by means of the senses, abstracts the Form (the "whatness") of the sensible object—the sensible object being composed of Matter and Form.

Since God is not an "object" that has a Form to be abstracted given that God is subsisting existence itself (*ipsum esse subsistens*), Aquinas would argue that we cannot know "what" God is.

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[Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1975), 169, emphasis in original]

But as we just saw, this does not mean that we cannot know quite a bit about what God is like by means of causality, negation (removal), and transcendence (supereminence).

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[Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1975), 169, emphasis in original]

Regarding the things we know in creation, we can know that God is their Creator and Sustainer (causality), that the limitations that created things have cannot be true of God as the Creator (negation), and that perfections of creation finitely reflect the perfections of God as their supereminent cause (transcendence).

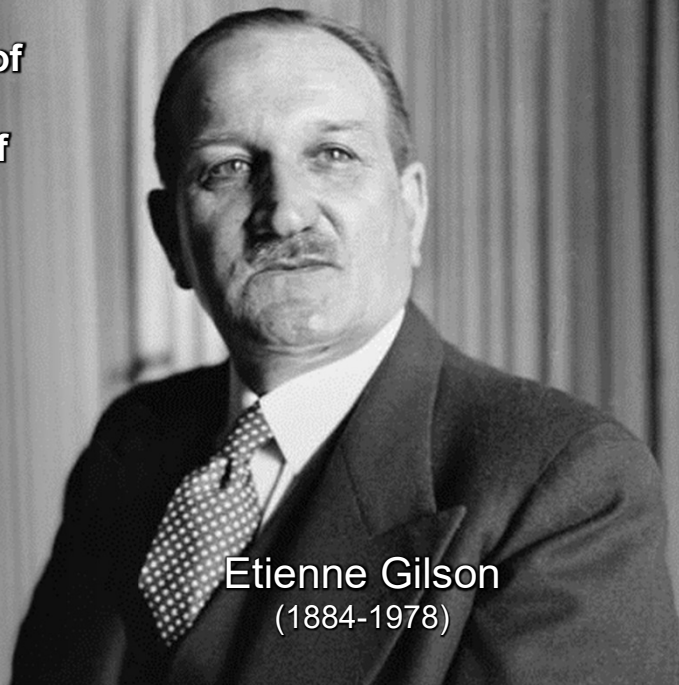
*"The first thing to note about the approach of Thomas is that he begins his identification of God ... by means of the natural reason. ... He argues that it cannot say much about the nature of God but he insists that it can prove the existence of God. At first he seems, in the Contra Gentiles, to assert that **reason can only know the fact that God exists, but cannot know anything about what God is.**"*

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To be sure, Aquinas's thinking is thick with classical metaphysics which can be disputed.

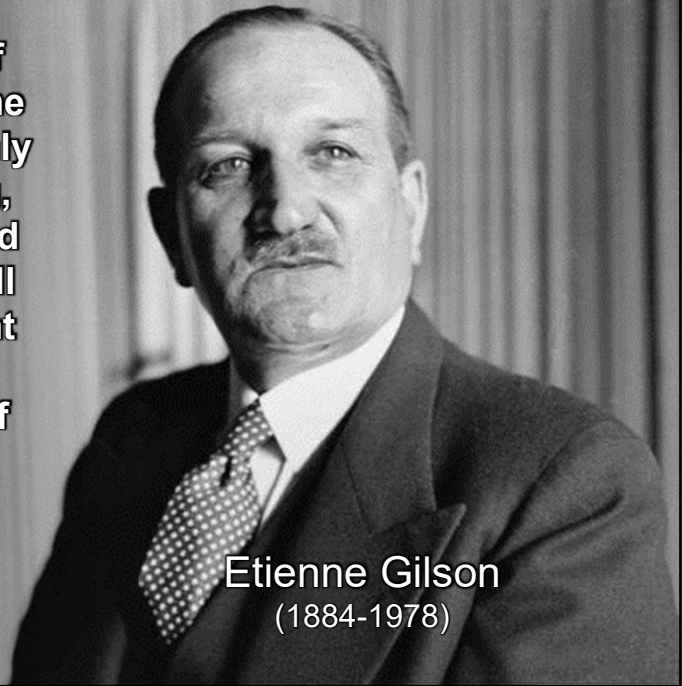
It is regrettable, however, that in their critique of Aquinas, neither Van Til nor any other Presuppositionalist with whom I am familiar seem aware of the metaphysics and, thus, do not come close to engaging Aquinas's thinking.

"Thomism was not the upshot of a better understanding of Aristotle. It did not come out of Aristotelianism by way of evolution, but of revolution.



Etienne Gilson
(1884-1978)

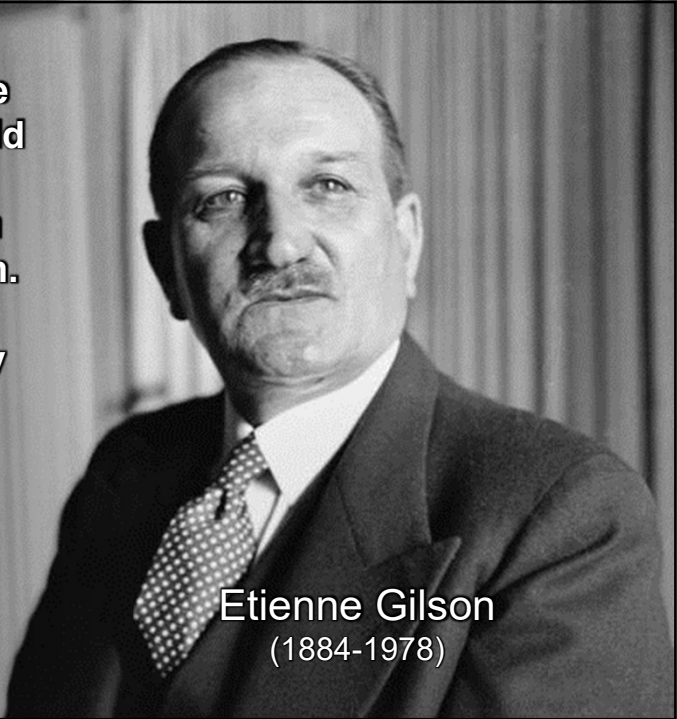
"Thomas uses the language of Aristotle everywhere to make the Philosopher say that there is only one God, the pure Act of Being, Creator of the world, infinite and omnipotent, a providence for all that which is, intimately present to every one of his creatures, especially to men, every one of whom is endowed with a personally immortal soul naturally able to survive the death of its body.



**Etienne Gilson
(1884-1978)**

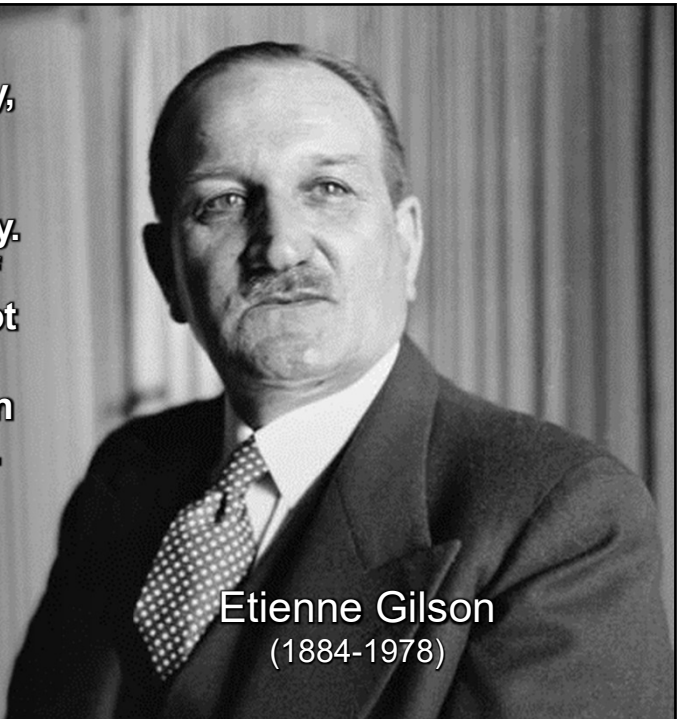
**there is only one God
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intimately present to every one of his creatures,
especially to men
every one of whom is endowed with a personally
immortal soul
naturally able to survive the death of its body**

"The best way to make Aristotle say so many things he never said was not to show that, had he understood himself better than he did, he would have said them. For indeed Aristotle seems to have understood himself pretty well.

A black and white portrait of Etienne Gilson, a middle-aged man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a serious expression.

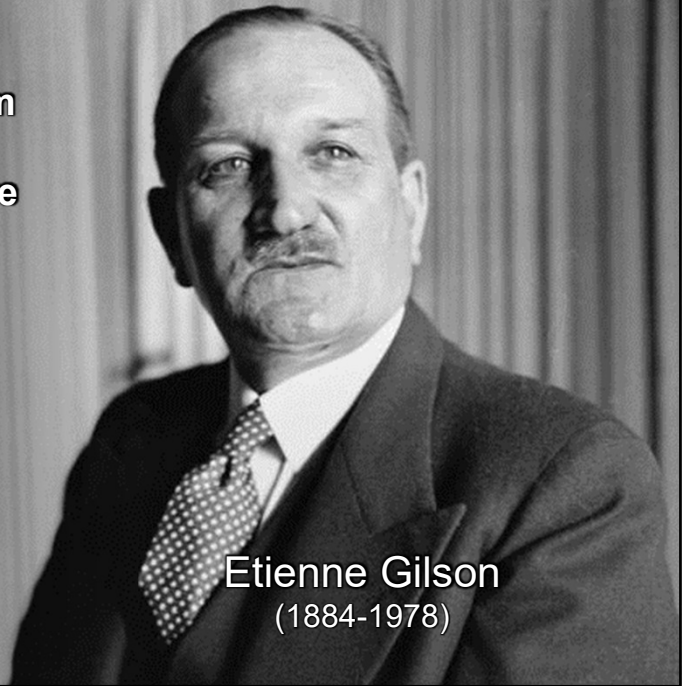
Etienne Gilson
(1884-1978)

"He has said what he had to say, given the meaning which he himself attributed to the principles of his own philosophy. Even the dialectical acumen of Saint Thomas Aquinas could not have extracted from the principles of Aristotle more than what they could possibly yield.

A black and white portrait of Etienne Gilson, a middle-aged man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a serious expression.

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(1884-1978)

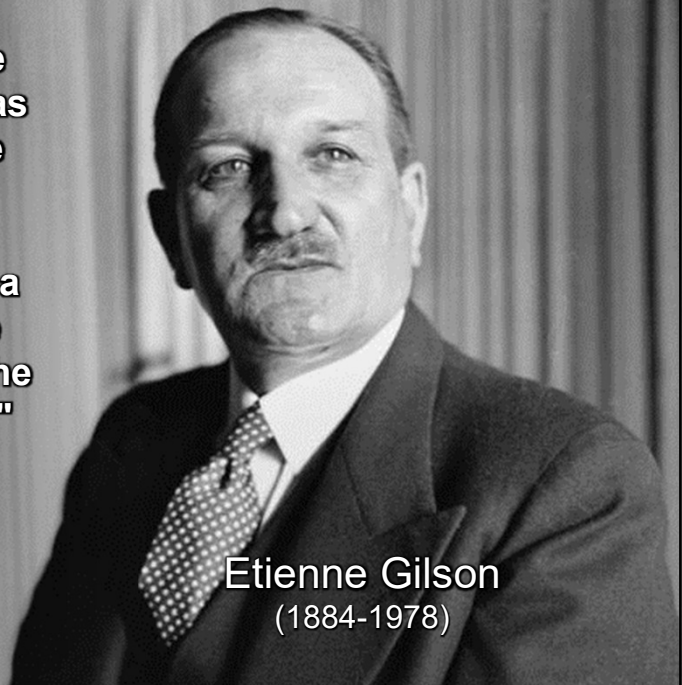
"The true reason why his conclusions were different from those of Aristotle was that his own principles themselves were different. ..."



Etienne Gilson
(1884-1978)

"In order to metamorphose the doctrine of Aristotle, Thomas has ascribed a new meaning to the principles of Aristotle. As a philosophy, Thomism is essentially a metaphysics. It is a revolution in the history of the metaphysical interpretation of the first principle, which is "being."

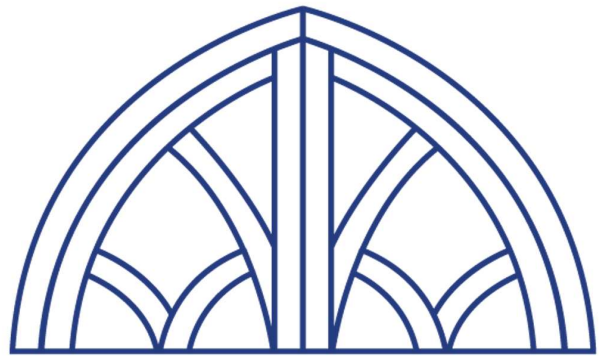
[Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward 1972), 365]



Etienne Gilson
(1884-1978)



Jeffrey D. Johnson

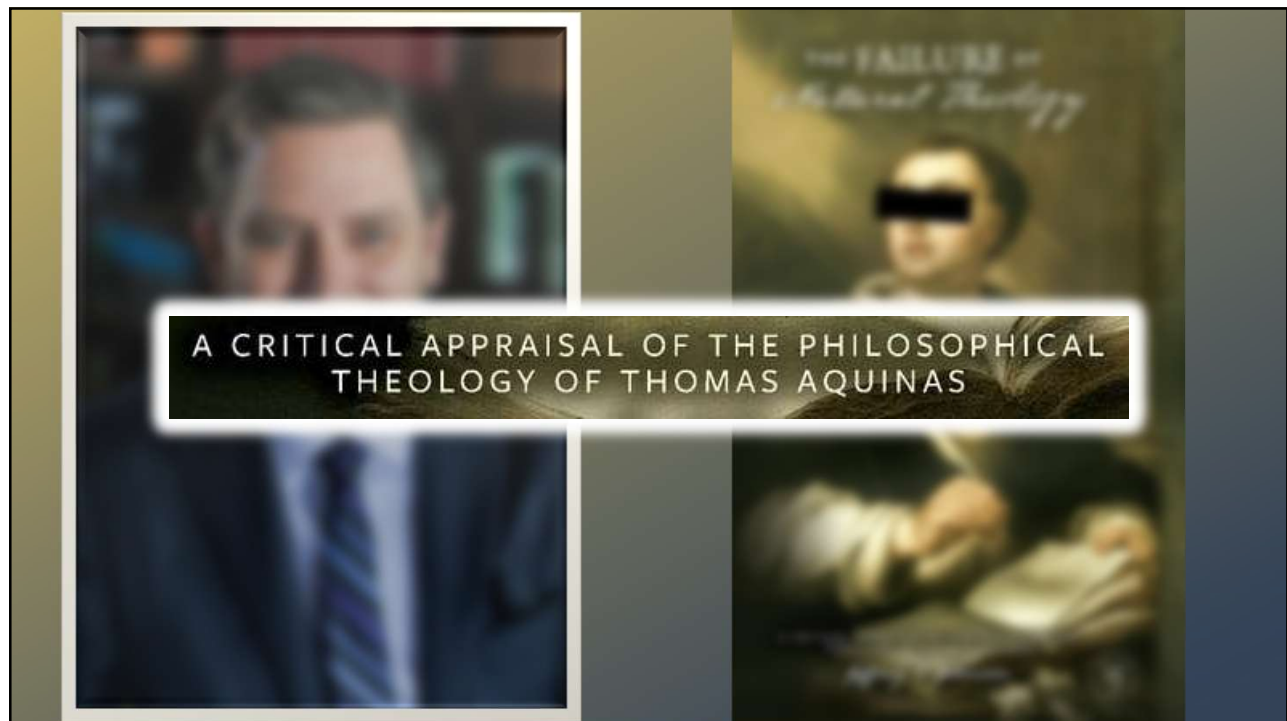


GRACE
BIBLE CHURCH



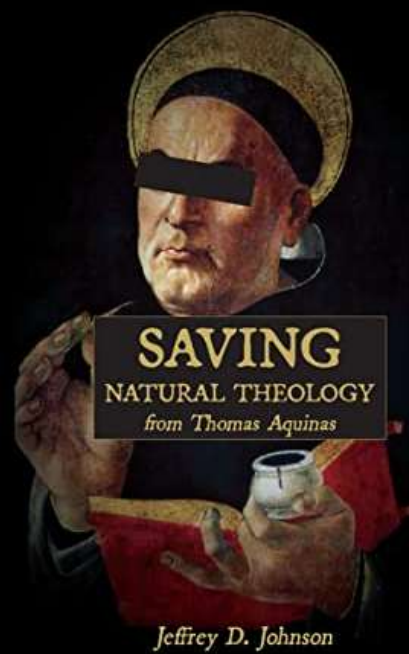
Jeffrey D. Johnson



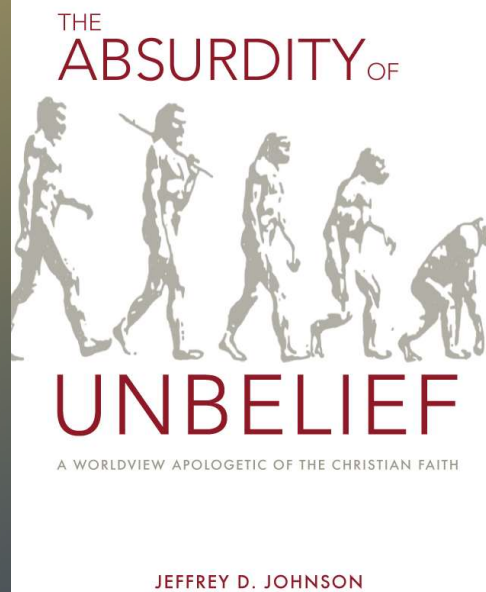




Jeffrey D. Johnson



Jeffrey D. Johnson



Evangelical Philosophical Society

Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel

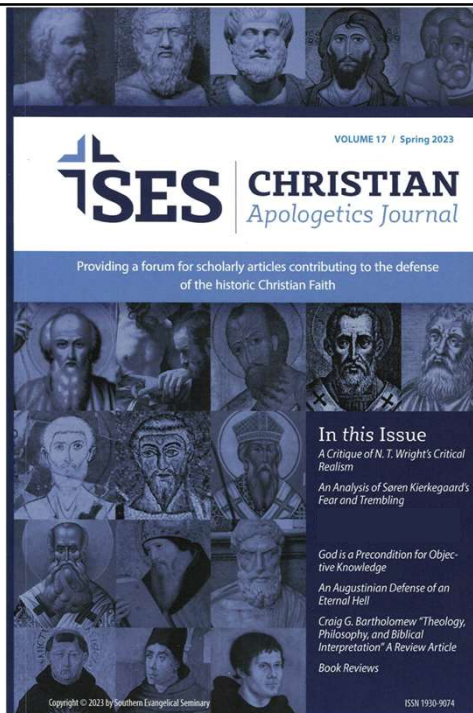
Nov. 15-17, 2022

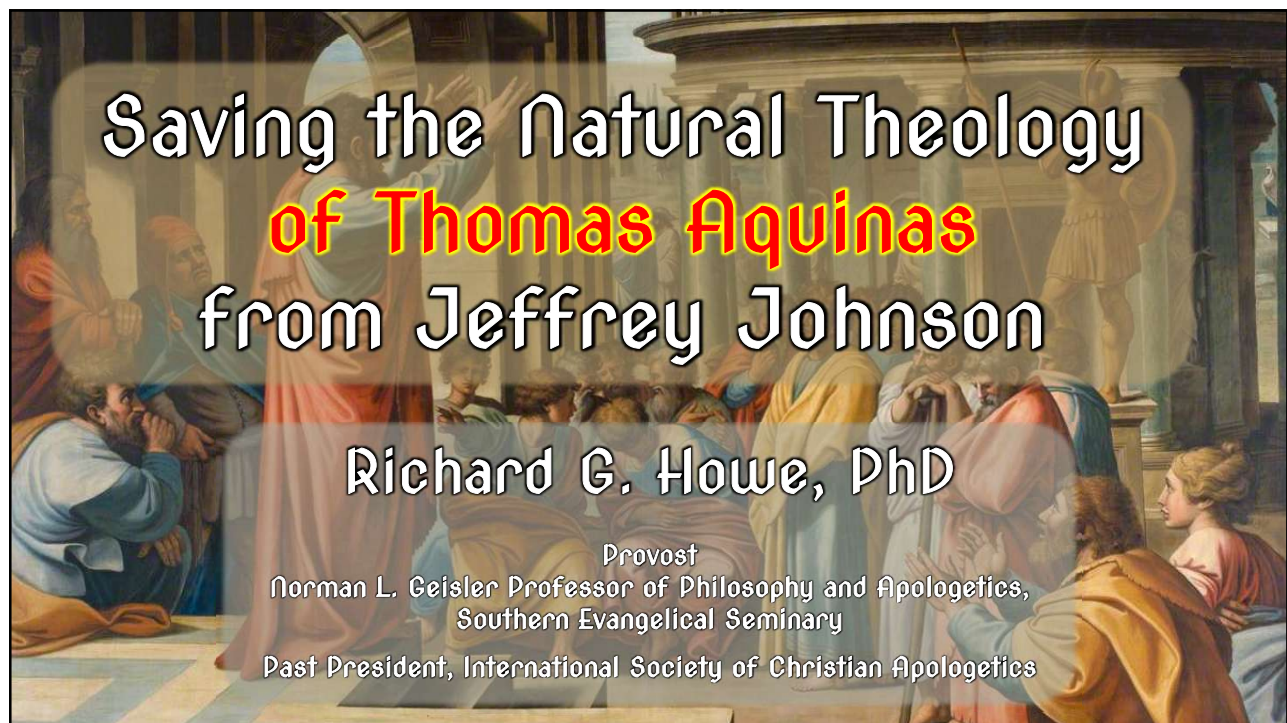
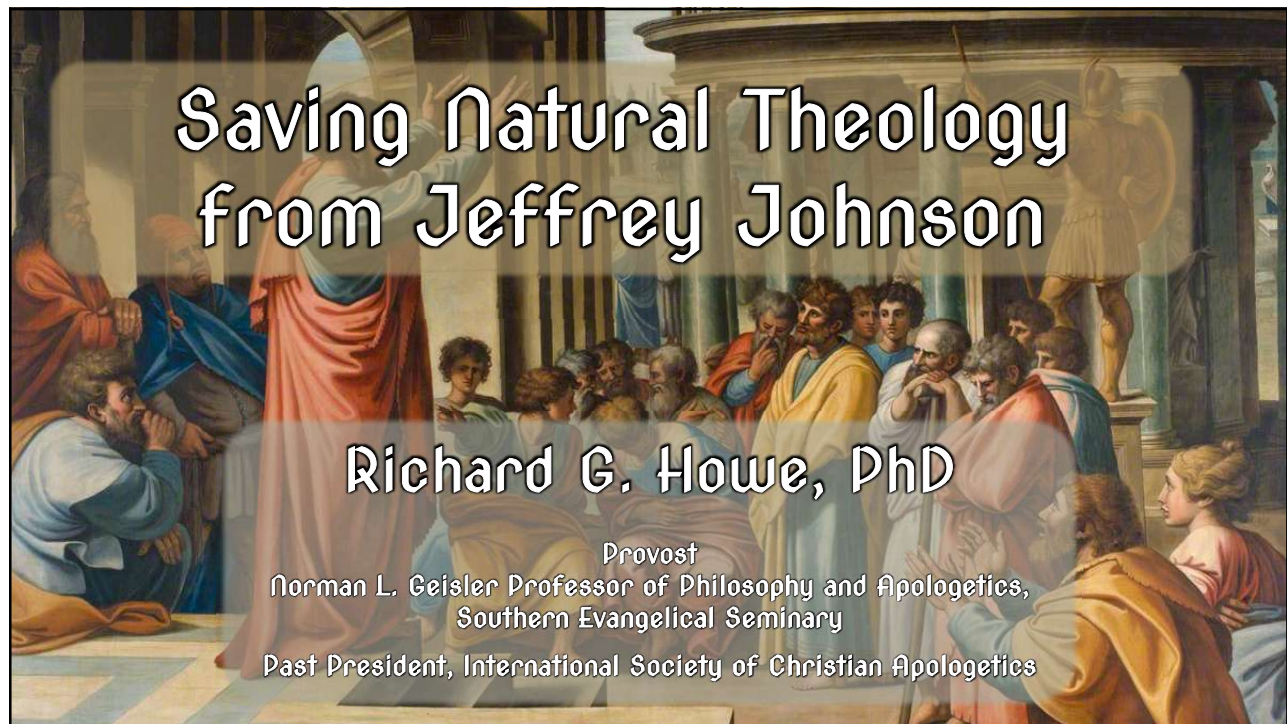
"Saving Natural Theology from Jeffrey Johnson"

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

Tues. Nov. 15, 2022 @ 4:30 PM

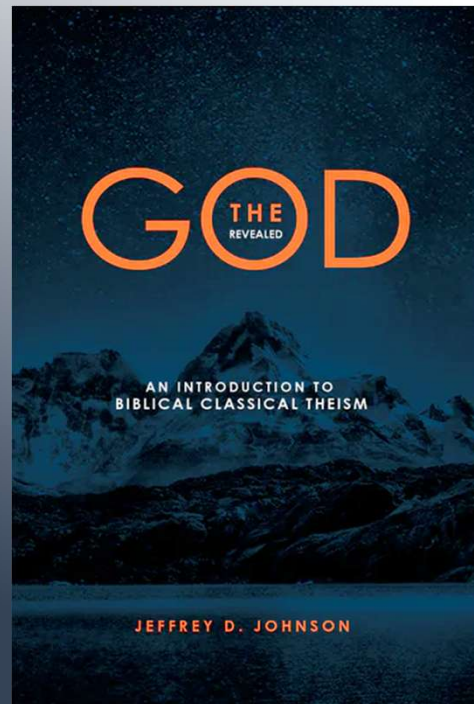
Evangelical Philosophical Society B2
Tower Building - Mezzanine Level Gold







Jeffrey D. Johnson



Jeffrey D. Johnson

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

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

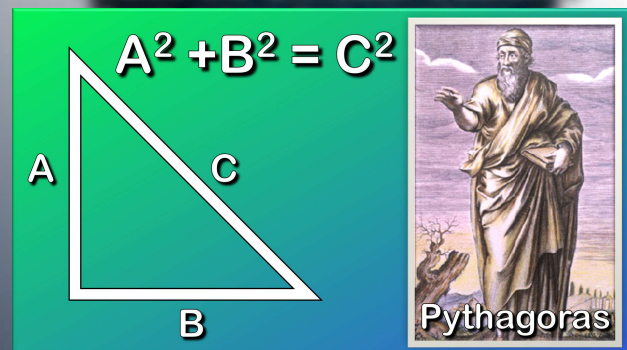


Jeffrey D. Johnson

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

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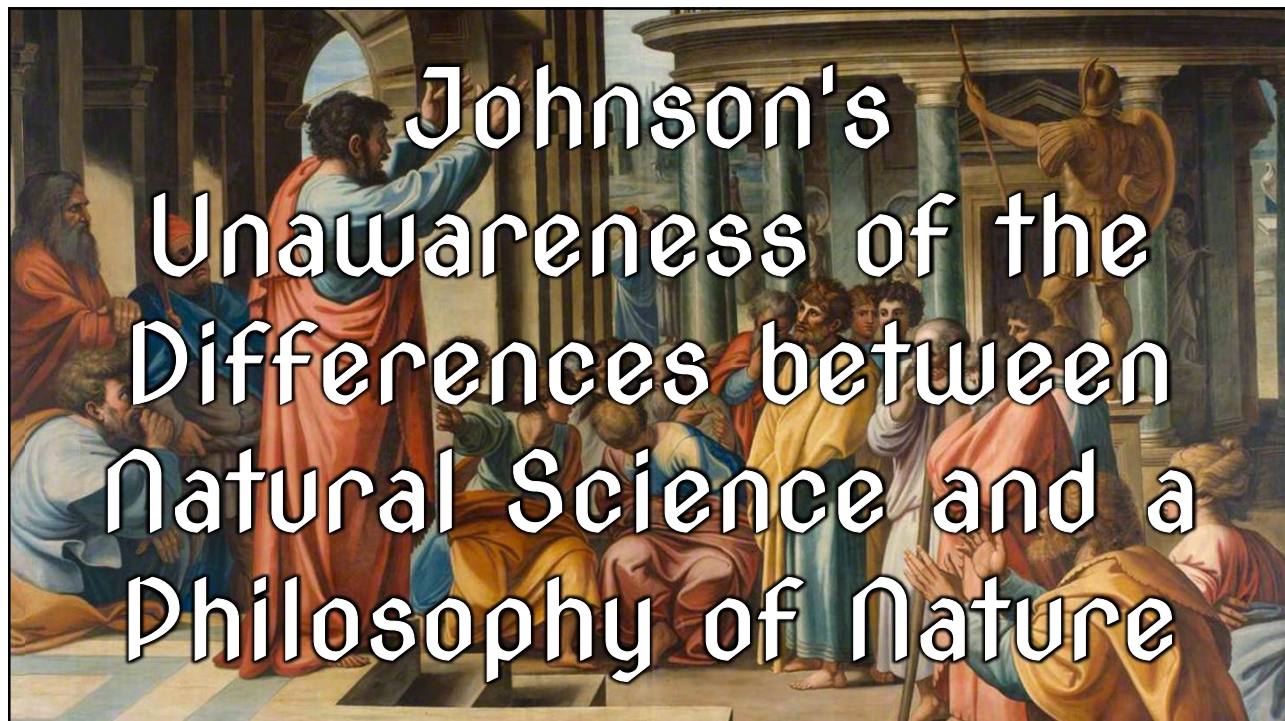
The buzzword 'autonomous' is another tendentious term.

It tries to appear as a careful conclusion regarding the epistemological issues at hand.

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

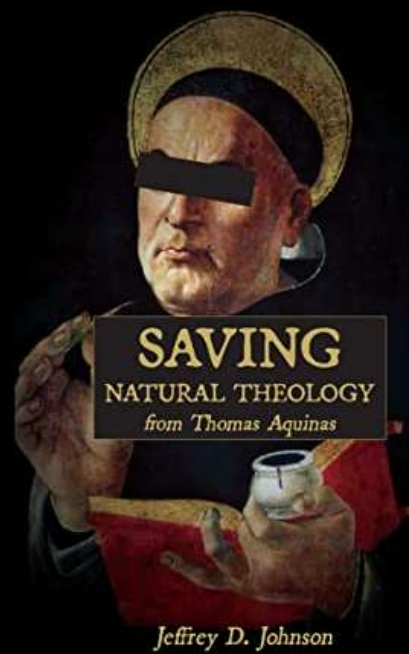
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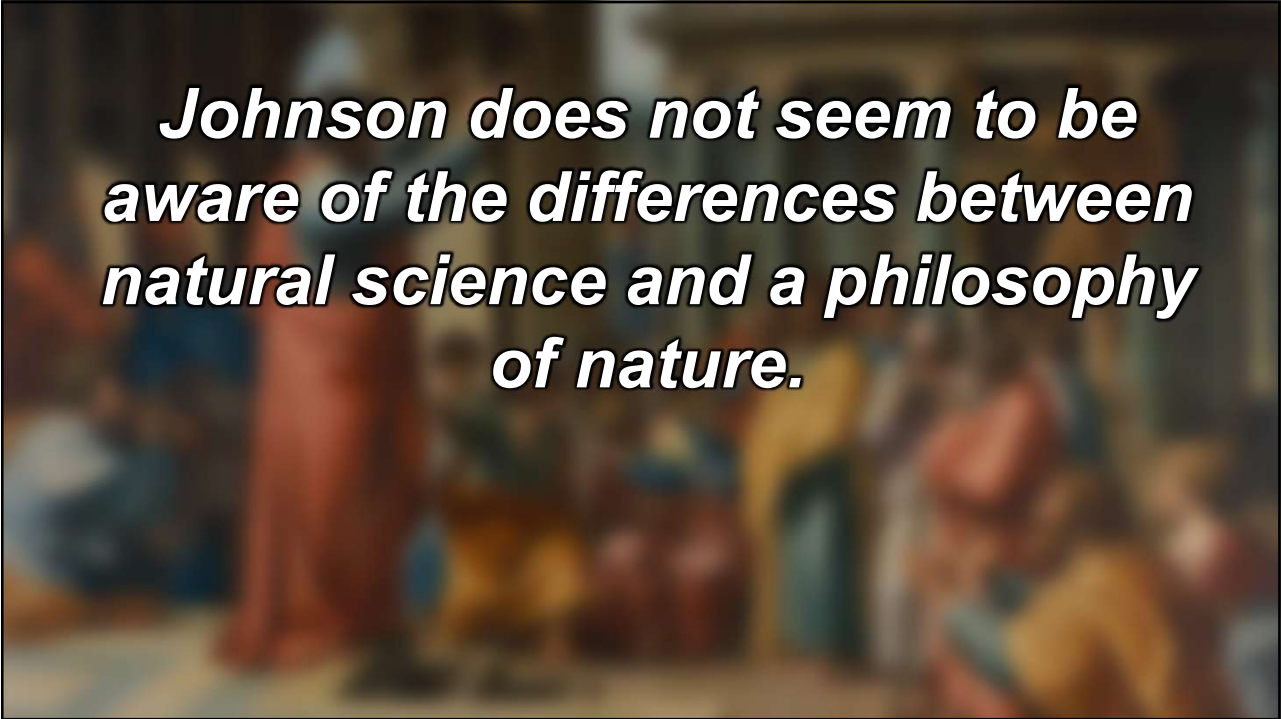


"Instead of building on natural revelation, Aquinas *builds his natural theology on natural science.*"

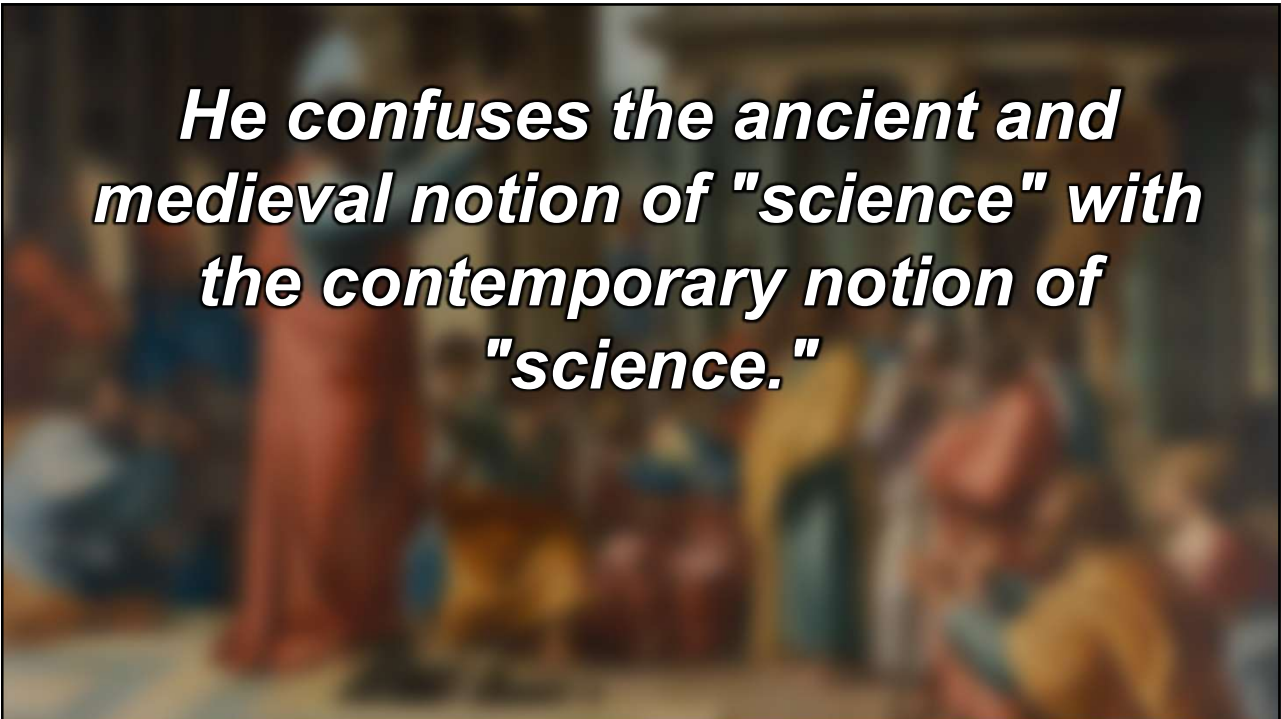
[Jeffrey D. Johnson, *Saving Natural Theology from Thomas Aquinas* (Conway: Free Grace Press, 2021), 1-2, emphasis added]



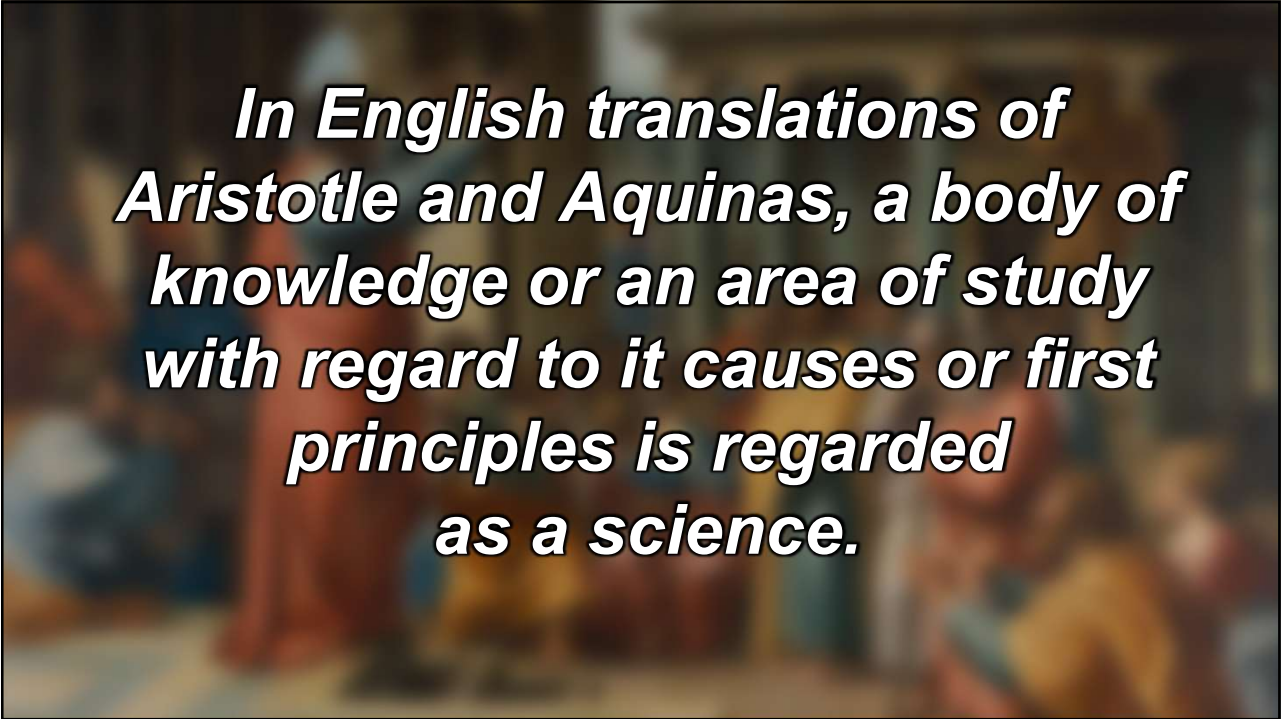
Jeffrey D. Johnson



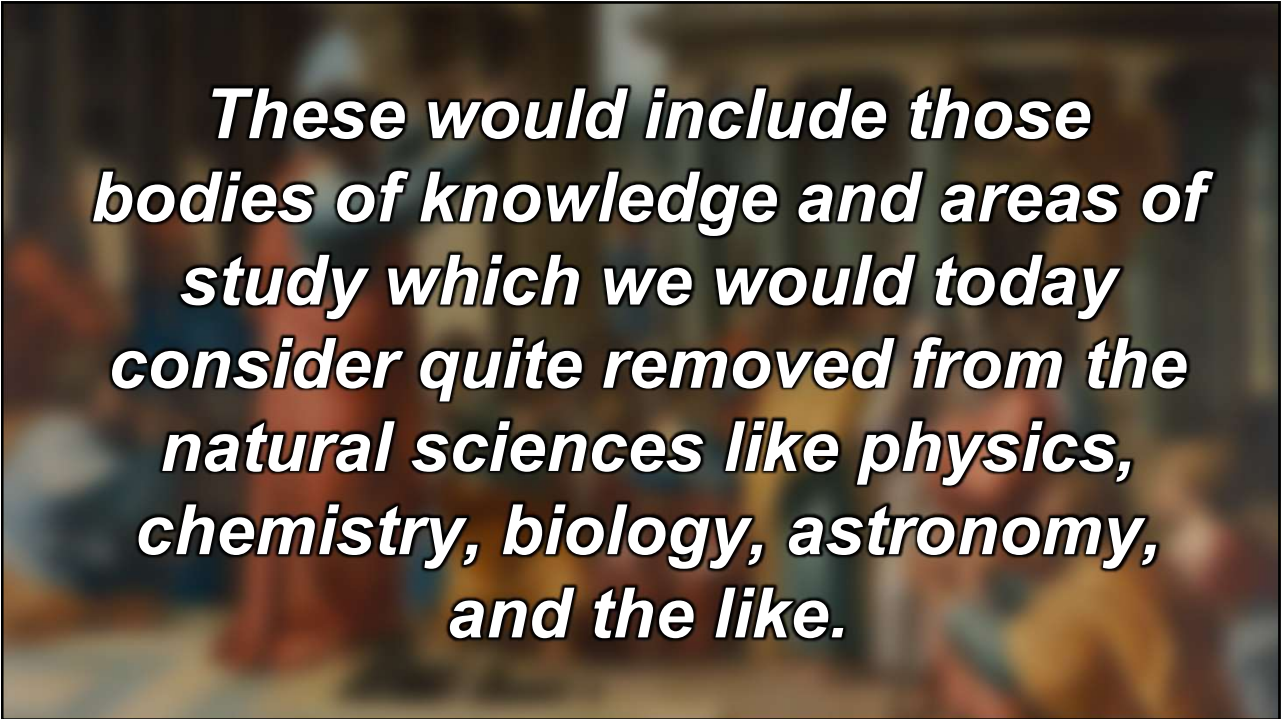
Johnson does not seem to be aware of the differences between natural science and a philosophy of nature.



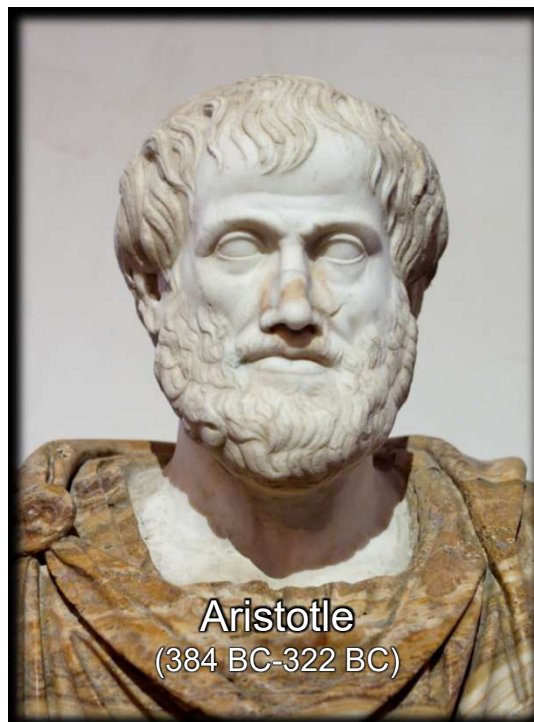
He confuses the ancient and medieval notion of "science" with the contemporary notion of "science."



In English translations of Aristotle and Aquinas, a body of knowledge or an area of study with regard to its causes or first principles is regarded as a science.



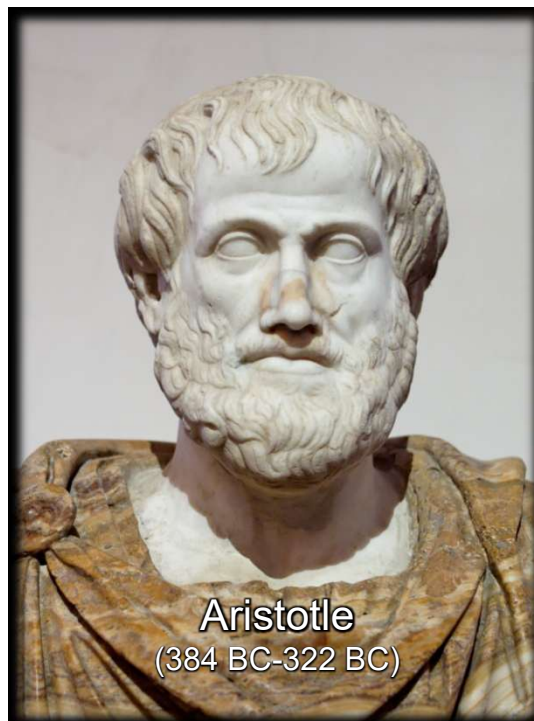
These would include those bodies of knowledge and areas of study which we would today consider quite removed from the natural sciences like physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, and the like.



Aristotle
(384 BC-322 BC)

In Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,
the English word 'science'
translates the Greek
ἐπιστημῇ (epistemē).

One should note that
Aristotle's subject matter
could not be about
"science" as the word is
commonly used in
contemporary English.



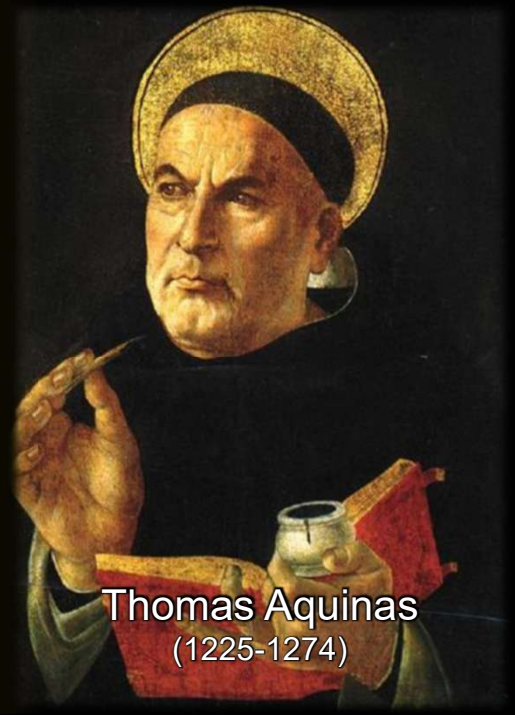
Aristotle
(384 BC-322 BC)

"And the most exact of
the sciences
[ἐπιστημῶν] are those
which deal most with
first principles."

[Metaphysics Bk. I, chap. 2 (982a25), trans. W. D. Ross in Richard McKeon, ed.
The Basic Works of Aristotle, (New York: Random House, 1941), 691]

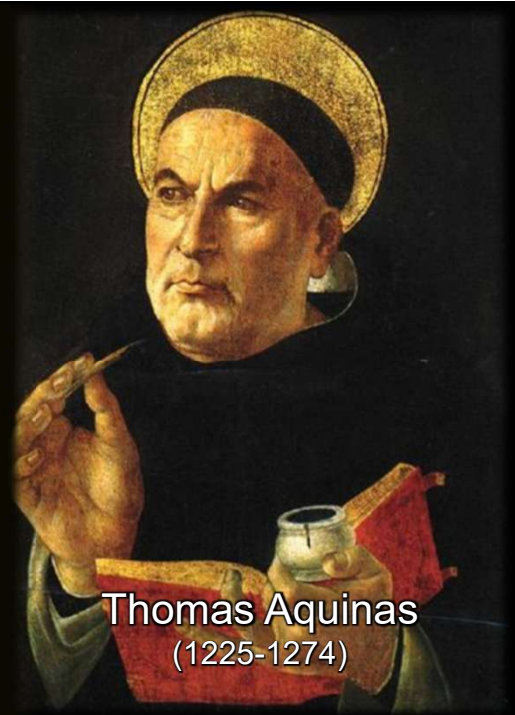
"Sacred doctrine [i.e., theology] is one science [scientia]. ... Because Sacred Scripture considers things precisely under the formality of being divinely revealed ..."

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [hereafter ST] I, Q1, art. 3, trans. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981), vol. 1, p. 2]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"In order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine revelation."



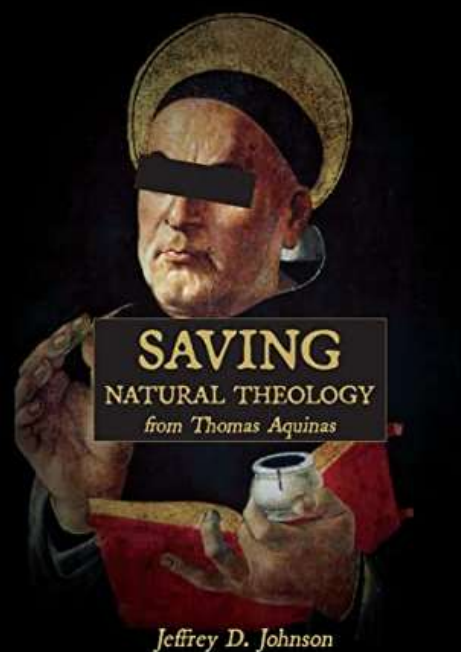
Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"It was therefore necessary that, besides philosophical science built up by reason there should be a sacred science learned through revelation."

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [hereafter ST] I, Q1, art. 1, vol. 1, p. 2]



Jeffrey D. Johnson





Jeffrey D. Johnson

"If God is transcendent and ontologically distinct from the universe, then it's a huge leap to jump from earth to heaven.

I'm convinced it's an impossible leap. Yet, Aristotle transitioned from physics to metaphysics by making a philosophical assumption. ...



Jeffrey D. Johnson

"Aristotle assumed that the cause-and-effect relationship between sensible things flowed back to the first cause. That is, he assumed that the laws of physics apply to God as much as they apply to sensible things."

[Johnson, *Saving*, 31]



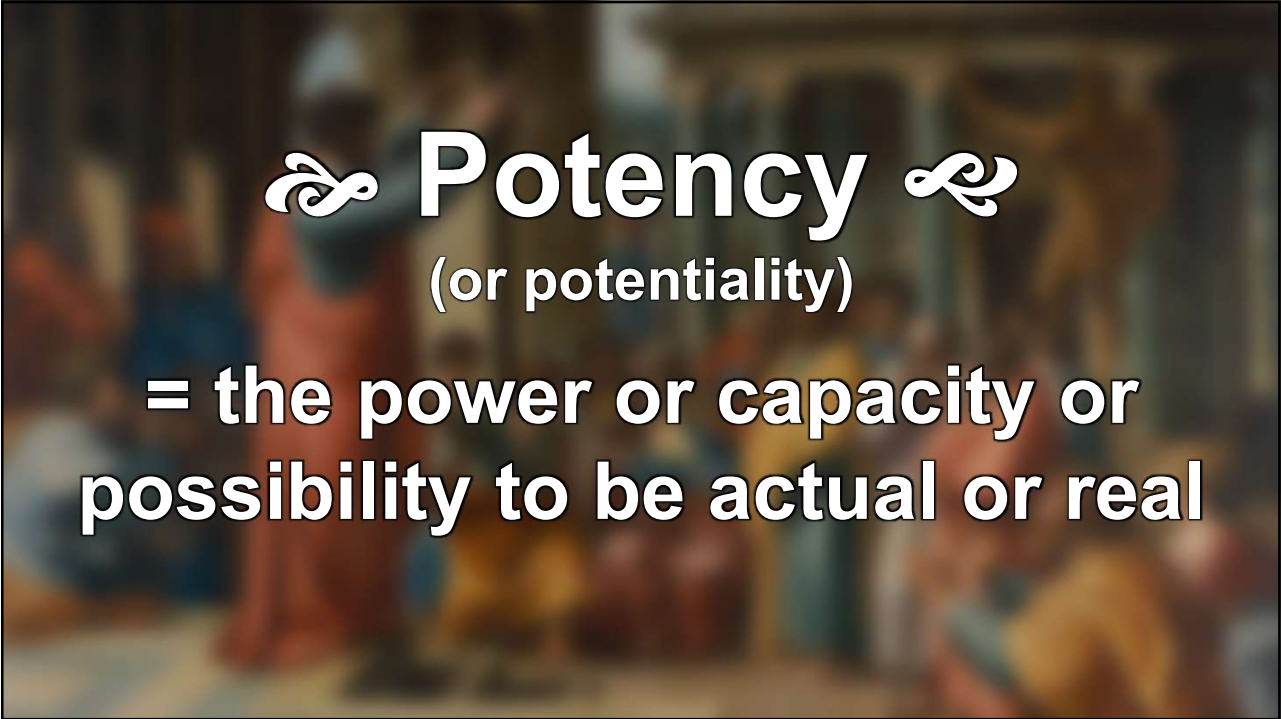
Jeffrey D. Johnson

"Aquinas asserted that the rules that apply to finite things in motion do not apply to the unmoved mover...which is true. But Aquinas was not consistent in applying the principle. If God transcends the laws of motion that govern the physical world, **why did he base his understanding of God on these laws in the first place?**"

[Johnson, *Saving*, 39]

*Being scandalized that the subject under consideration is "natural science," Johnson completely misses that what both Aristotle and Aquinas are discussing is **metaphysics** not merely physics.*

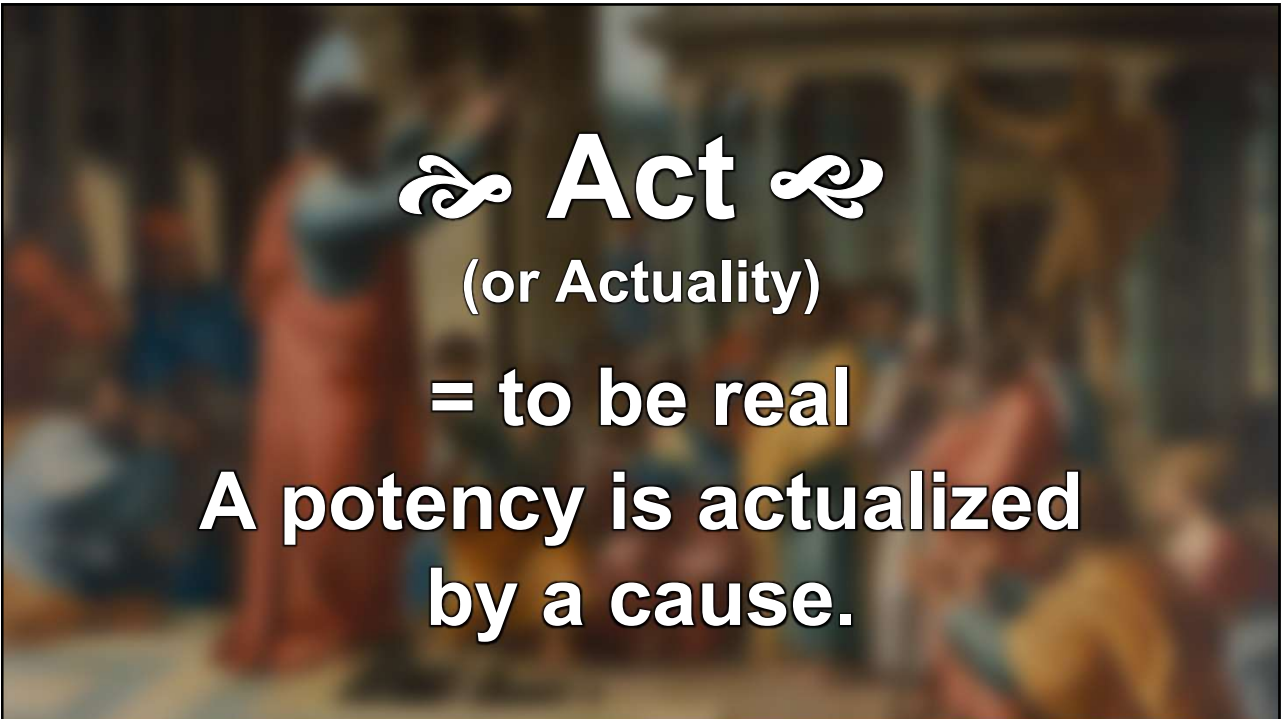
*They are not at all focusing on "the laws of physics" but specifically the metaphysical principles of **act and potency**.*



∞ Potency ∞

(or potentiality)

= the power or capacity or possibility to be actual or real



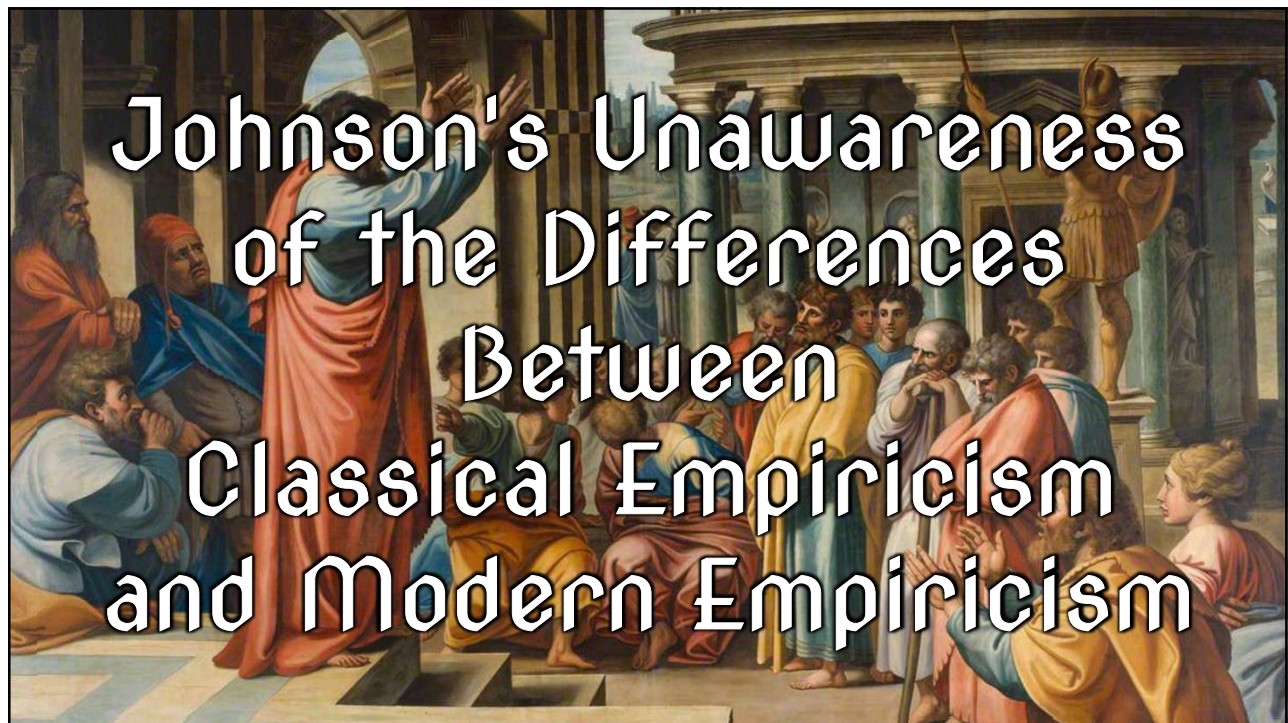
∞ Act ∞

(or Actuality)

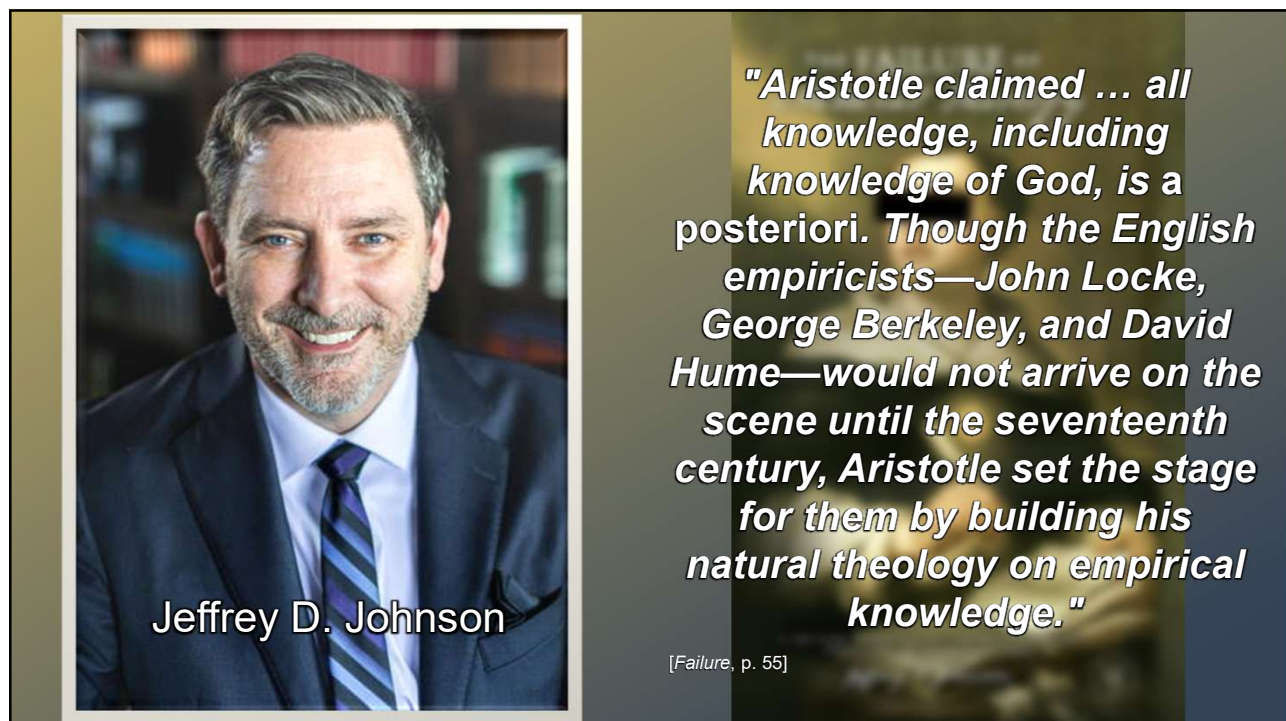
= to be real

**A potency is actualized
by a cause.**

It is of the nature of the philosophical reasoning of Aristotle and Aquinas that metaphysical truths are expressly knowable from our sensory encounter with the world around us.



Johnson's Unawareness
of the Differences
Between
Classical Empiricism
and Modern Empiricism



The fact that Johnson would move seamlessly from the empiricism of Aristotle (and by implication, Aquinas) to the empiricism of John Locke et al. without any regard for the differences in the nature of the respective empiricisms completely evacuates his criticisms of Aristotle and by extension, Aquinas.

"Aristotle claimed ... all knowledge, including knowledge of God, is a posteriori. Though the English empiricists—John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume—would not arrive on the scene until the seventeenth century, Aristotle set the stage for them by building his natural theology on empirical knowledge."

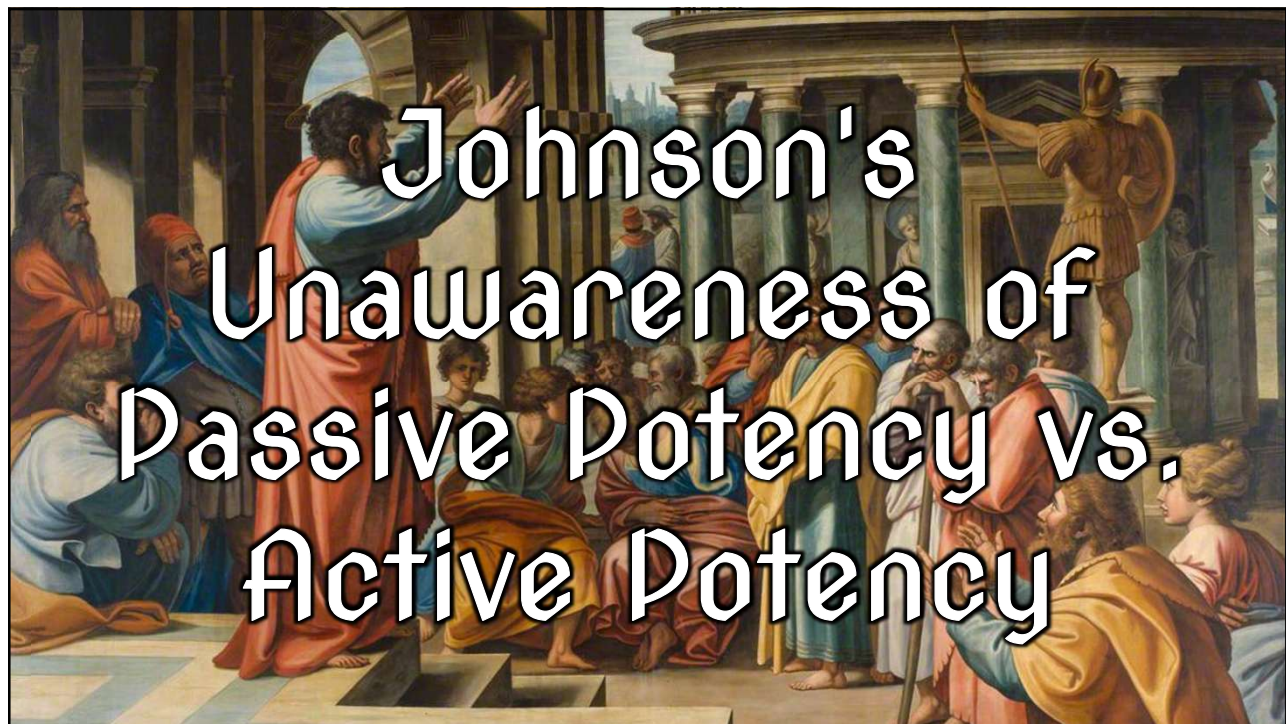
[Failure, p. 55]

It is little wonder, then, that he is completely unable to notice the metaphysical reasoning going in Aristotle's and Aquinas's thinking.

What is more, it is little wonder why Presuppositionalists like Johnson insist that only the presupposition of God can deliver one from the impasse of certain philosophical "problems."

"Aristotle claimed ... all knowledge, including knowledge of God, is a posteriori. Though the English empiricists—John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume—would not arrive on the scene until the seventeenth century, Aristotle set the stage for them by building his natural theology on empirical knowledge."

[Failure, p. 55]





Jeffrey D. Johnson

"The fatal flaw of the philosophical theology of Thomas Aquinas is the foundation of his natural theology—divine immobility, the idea that God cannot move himself. ..."



Jeffrey D. Johnson

"This is the basic problem even the confident Angelic Doctor could not overcome. Divine immobility cannot be reconciled with the God of the Bible because it is inherently incongruent with the God of the Bible."

[Jeffrey D. Johnson, *Failure*, 114]



Jeffrey D. Johnson

"The Bible does not teach divine immovability. Of course, the Bible affirms that God didn't create himself. He didn't come into existence or need any external power to actualize any passive potency within him. ... He is self-existent and needs nothing outside himself to be who he is and to do what he wills to do."



Jeffrey D. Johnson

"Yet God's aseity, independence, and absoluteness do not mean that God can't choose to exercise power or refrain from exercising power. The biblical doctrine of divine simplicity and immutability does not mean, as Aquinas believed, divine immobility."

[Jeffrey D. Johnson, *Failure*, 137]

Johnson seems completely unaware of the distinction between passive potency and active potency.

Passive potency is the ability of something to undergo change in as much as it possess metaphysical potency.

Active potency is the ability of something to cause change in something else.

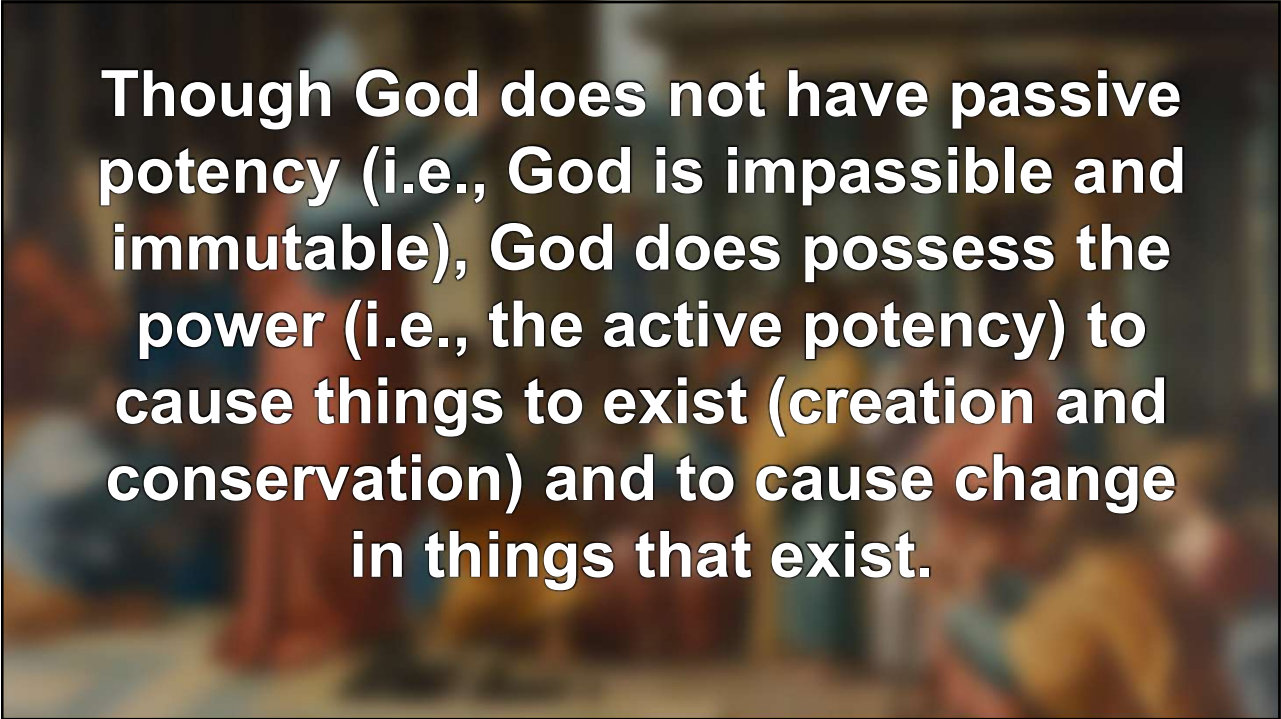
Though God does not have passive potency (i.e., God is **impassible and **immutable**),**

∞ Immutable ∞

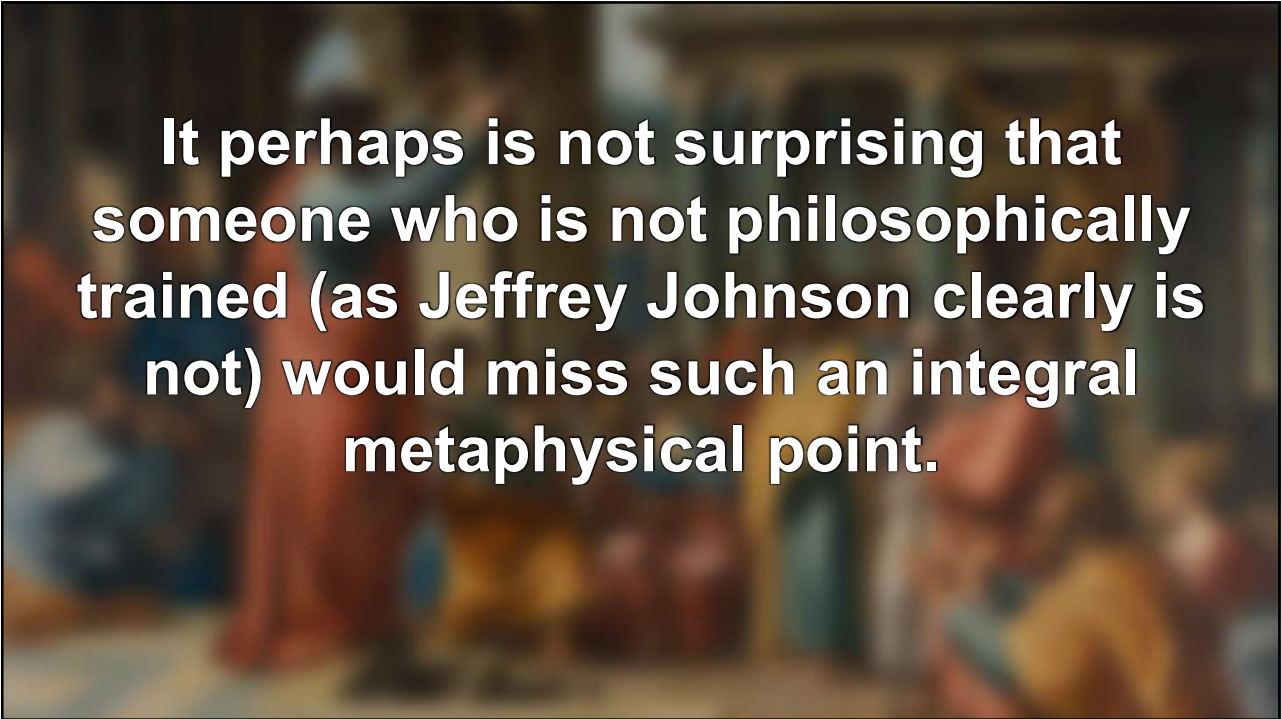
God's immutability means that God cannot undergo change.

∞ Impassible ∞

God's impassibility means that nothing in creation can causally affect God.

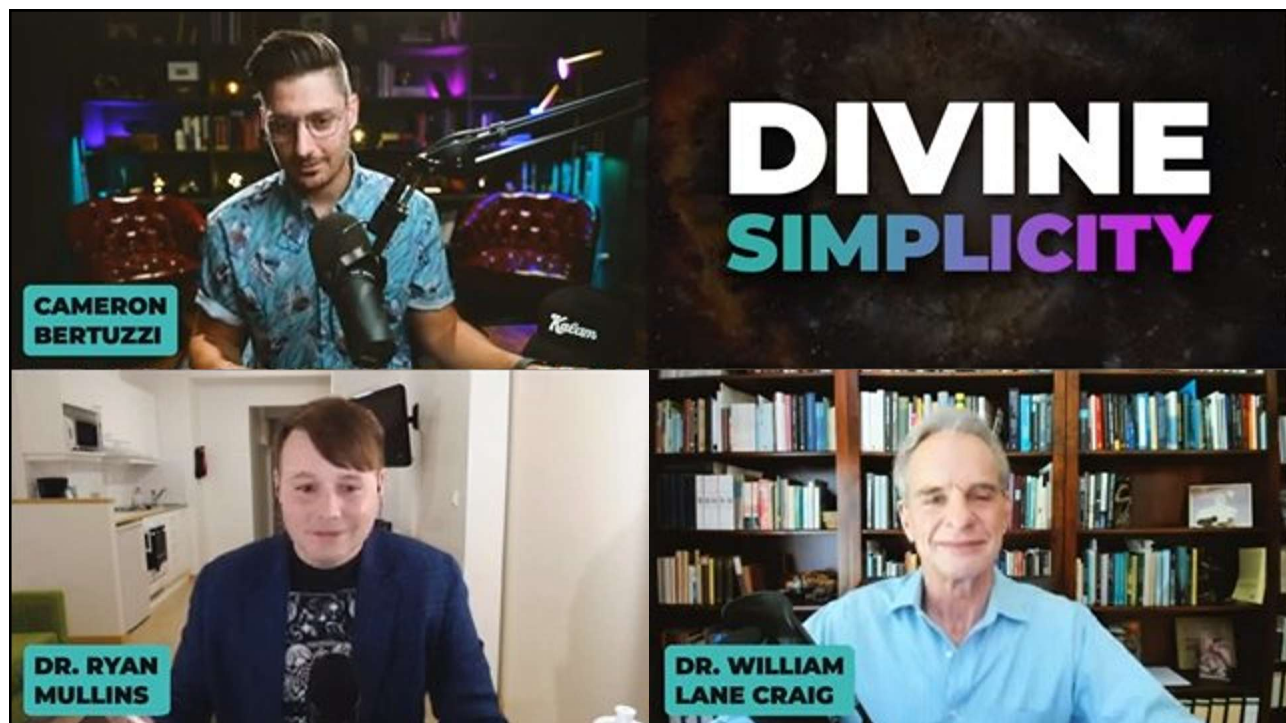


Though God does not have passive potency (i.e., God is impassible and immutable), God does possess the power (i.e., the active potency) to cause things to exist (creation and conservation) and to cause change in things that exist.



It perhaps is not surprising that someone who is not philosophically trained (as Jeffrey Johnson clearly is not) would miss such an integral metaphysical point.

What is surprising, however, is that even prominent philosophers can miss the same point in criticizing Aquinas regarding active and passive potency.

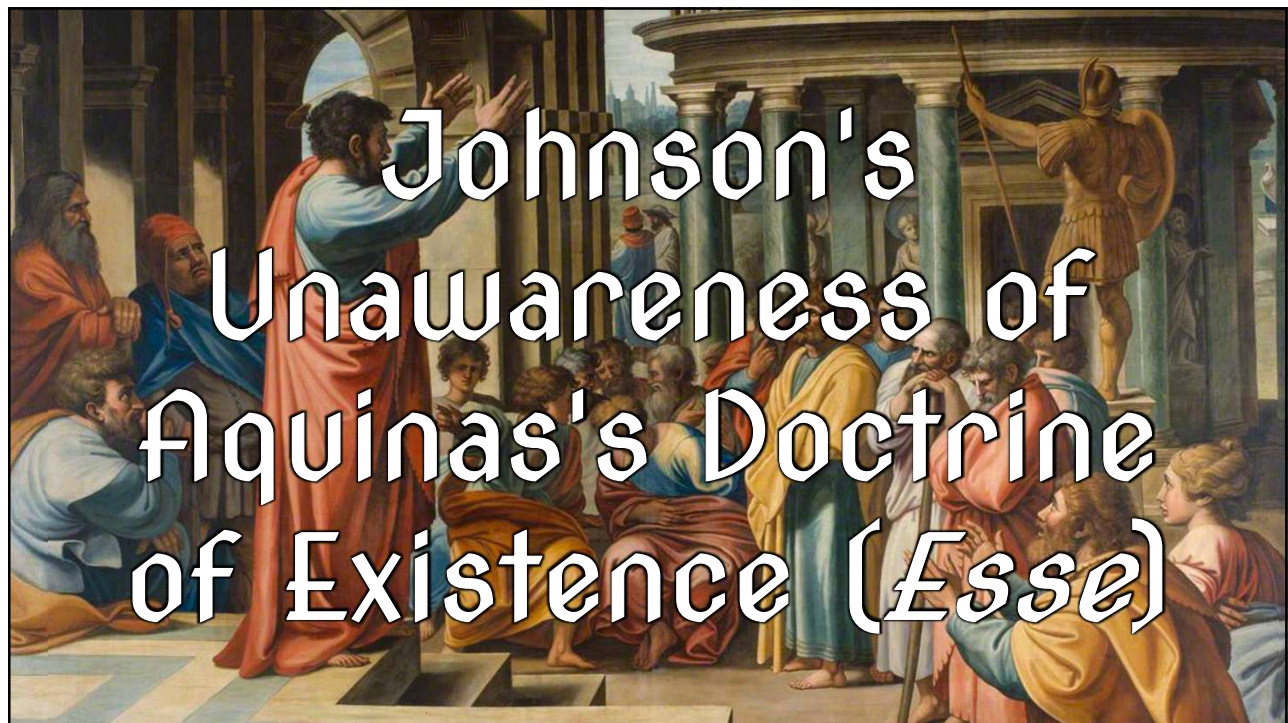


	<i>"In Divine Simplicity, God is said to be purely actual. And that means that God has no unactualized potential. ... I think it's really hard to make sense of Divine freedom if you want to say that that God has no potential."</i>	<i>"The idea that God has no potentiality seems to me to be obviously false scripturally speaking ... God has ... the potential to do all sorts of things that He isn't actually doing. So, clearly God has ... unlimited potential."</i>	
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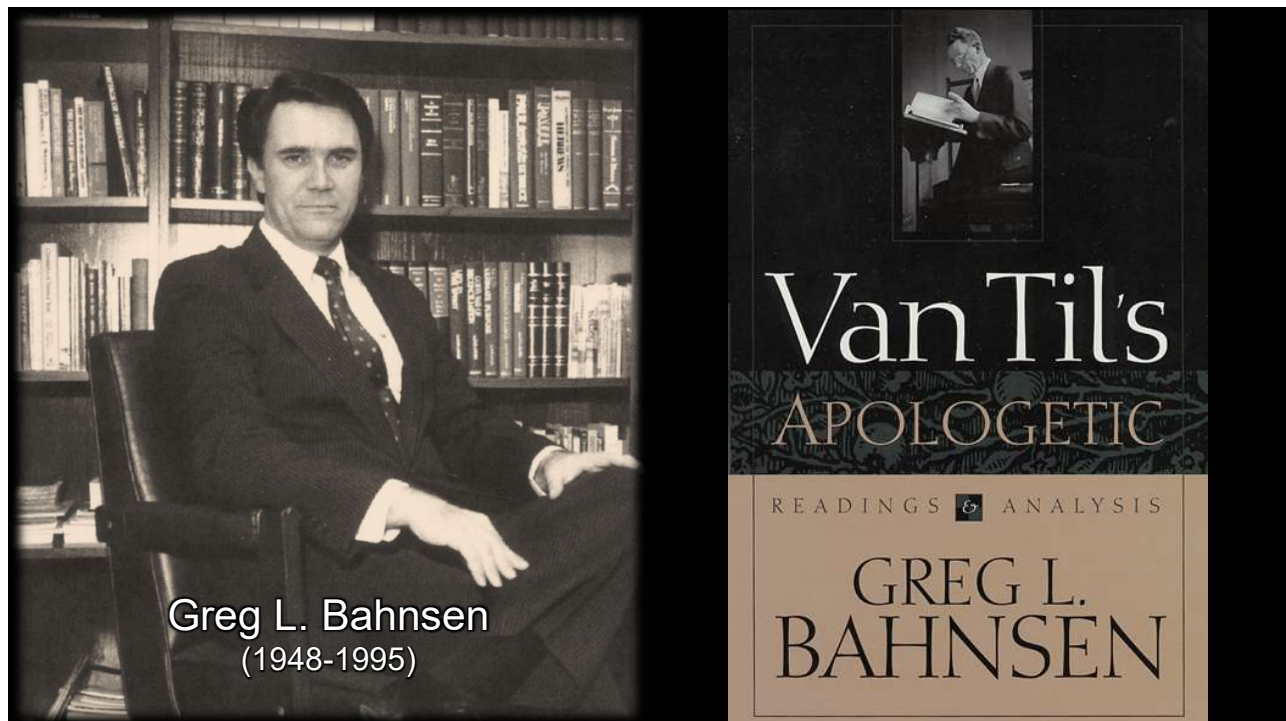
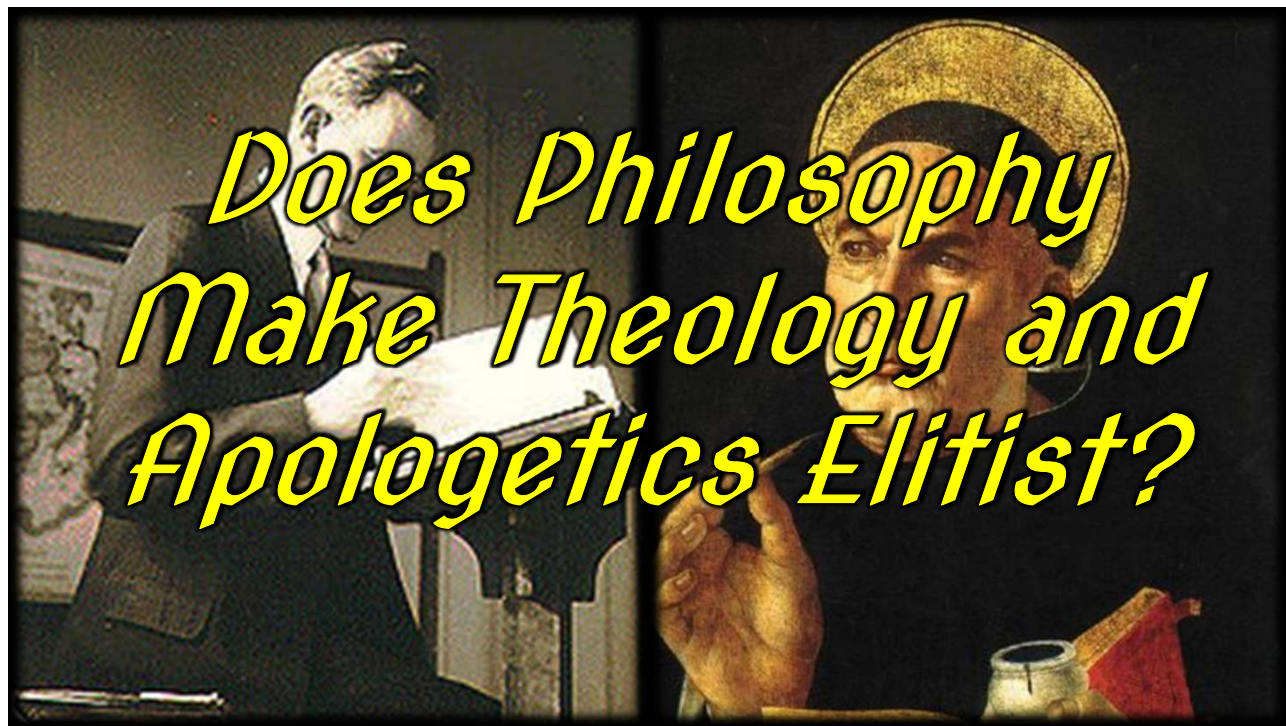
Mullins and Craig are taking issue with Aquinas's doctrine of Divine Simplicity which says that God is pure actuality with no potential.

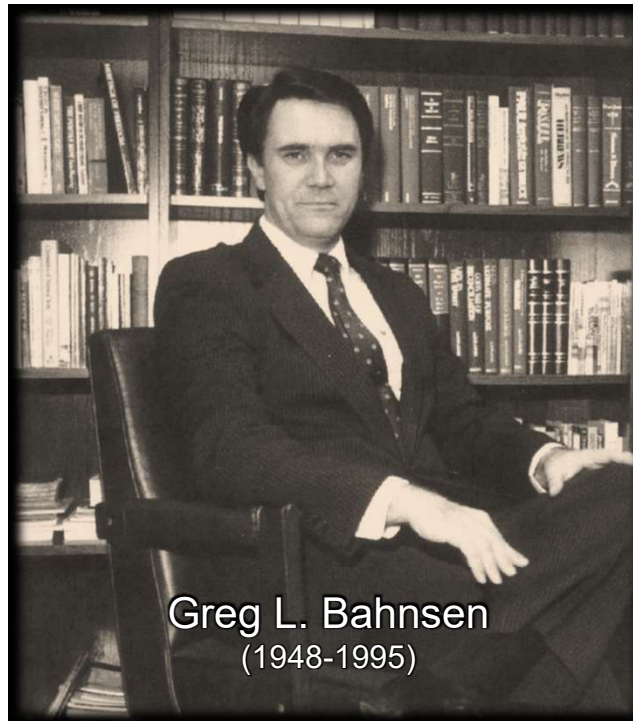
To be sure, Aquinas often says that God is pure actuality and has no potential.

But a careful reading of Aquinas will clearly show that when Aquinas says that God has not potential, he means that God has no *passive* potential.



Johnson's
Unawareness of
Aquinas's Doctrine
of Existence (*Esse*)

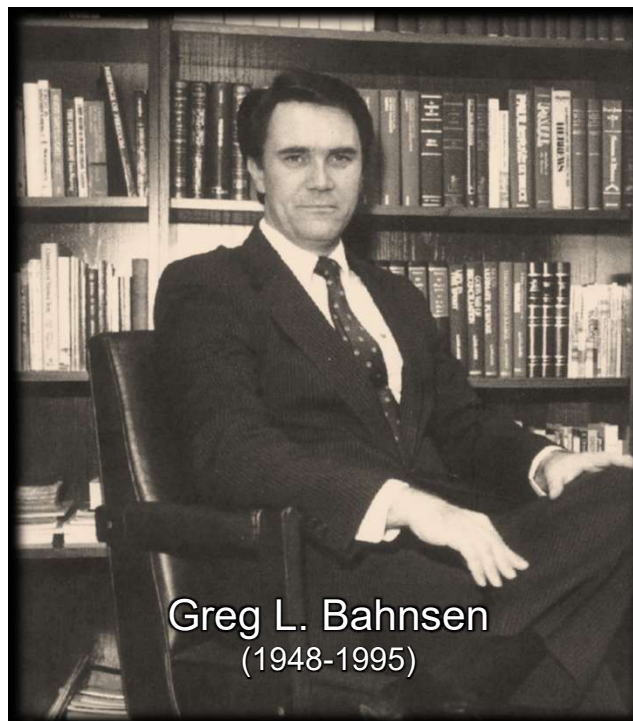




Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

This is a troublesome conception of Christian philosophy. ... The philosopher is placed in the privileged position of laying down for the exegete how the Bible may and may not be used, how its teaching must be broadly conceived, and what the Bible can and cannot say. ... Philosophy is thereby rendered rationally autonomous"

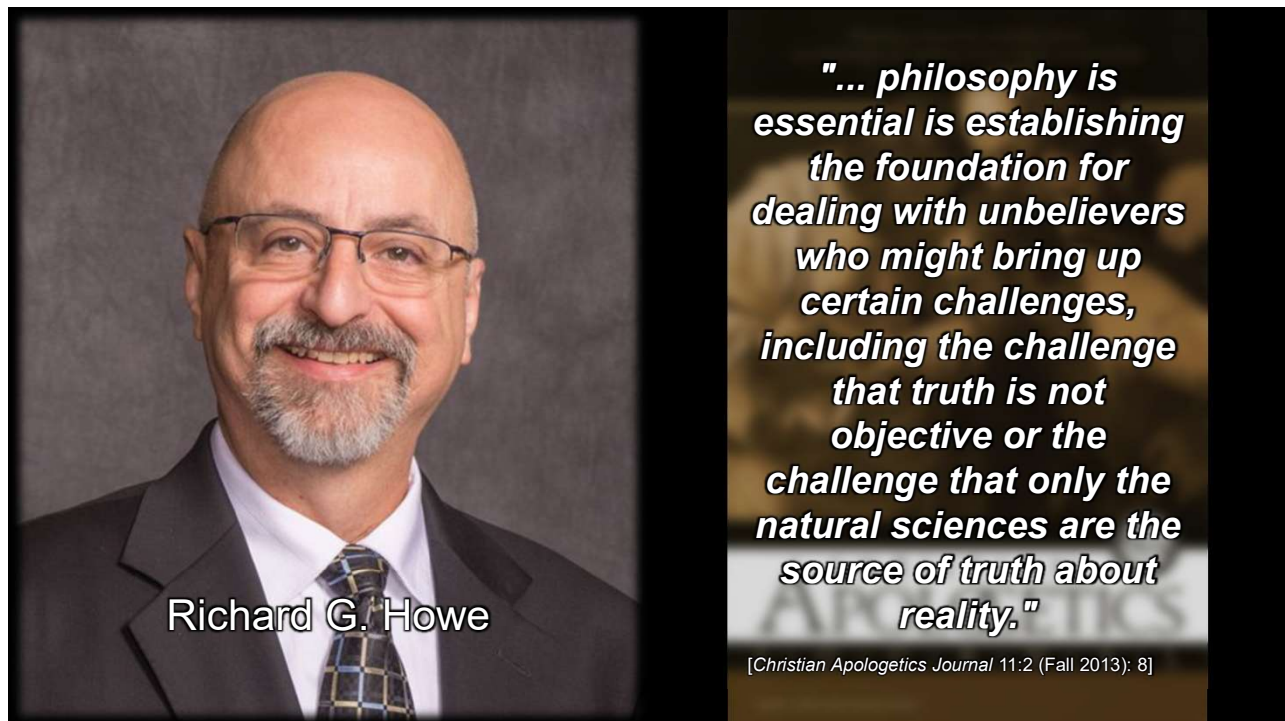
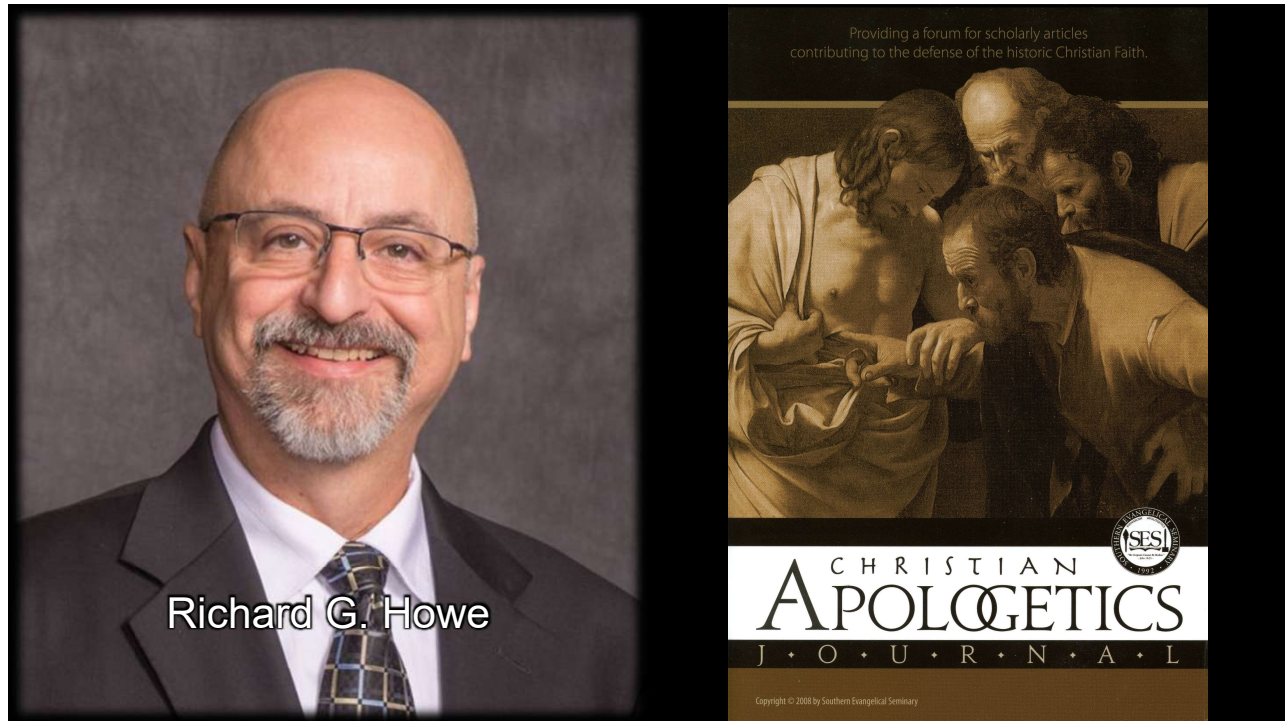
[Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis
(Phillipsburg: P&R, 1998), 50]

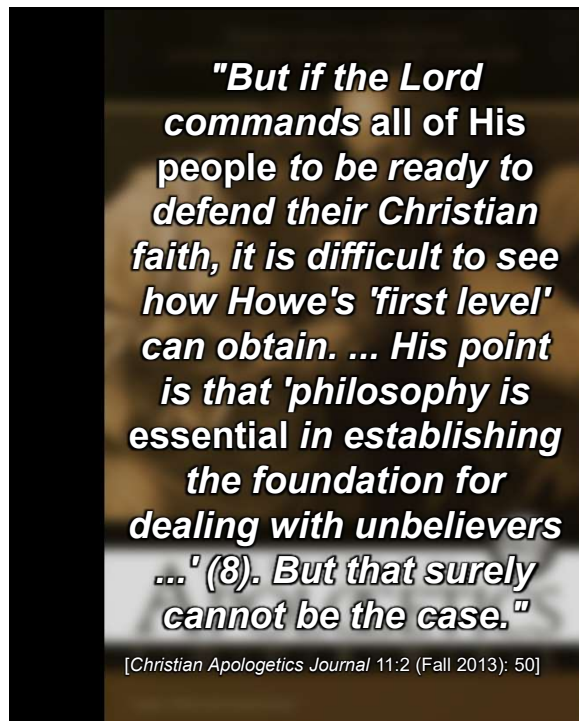
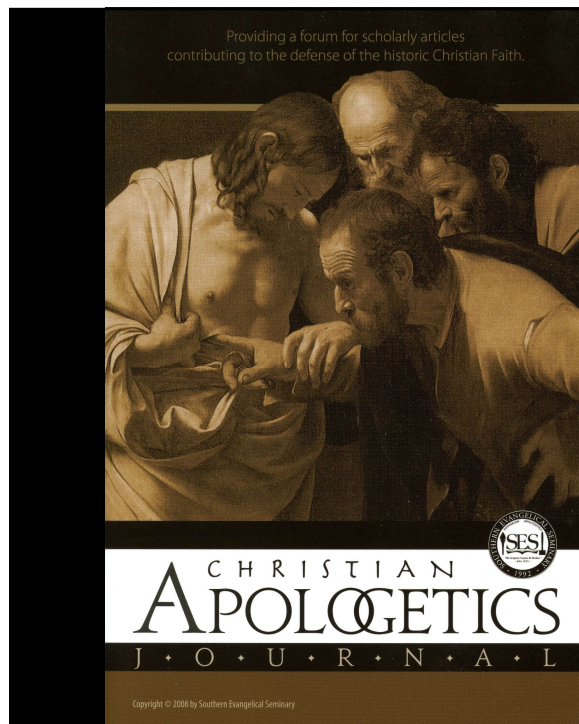


Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

The deadly assumption here is that some philosophical reasoning is possible or intelligible for the unbeliever without presupposing the Christian worldview. That makes philosophical reasoning autonomous after all, and the apologetical case is lost from the very start."

[Van Til's Apologetic, 50]





"... philosophy is essential in establishing the foundation for dealing with unbelievers who might bring up certain challenges, including the challenge that truth is not objective or the challenge that only the natural sciences are the source of truth about reality."

[Christian Apologetics Journal 11:2 (Fall 2013): 8]

"But if the Lord commands all of His people to be ready to defend their Christian faith, it is difficult to see how Howe's 'first level' can obtain. ... His point is that 'philosophy is essential in establishing the foundation for dealing with unbelievers ...' (8). But that surely cannot be the case."

[Christian Apologetics Journal 11:2 (Fall 2013): 8]

"What Howe's 'first level' of apologetic methodology does, therefore, is establish an elite group of academics and intellectuals who alone can protect the rest of us from the challenges and objections that are brought against our faith."

[Christian Apologetics Journal 11:2 (Fall 2013): 8]



K. Scott Oliphint



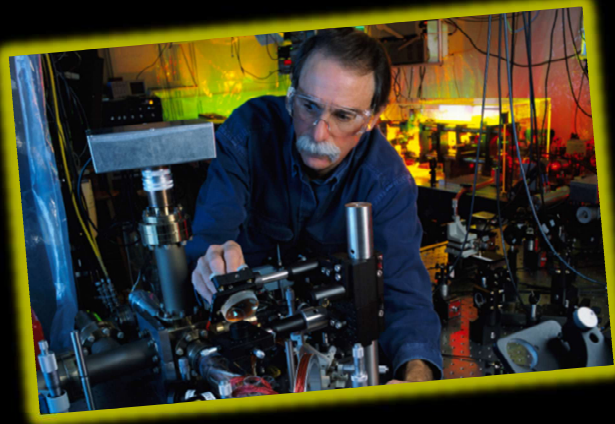
*A child can know what a flower is.
She knows that a flower is not a human.*



*However, to delve deeper into the
physical nature of a flower, one would
need to understand botany.*

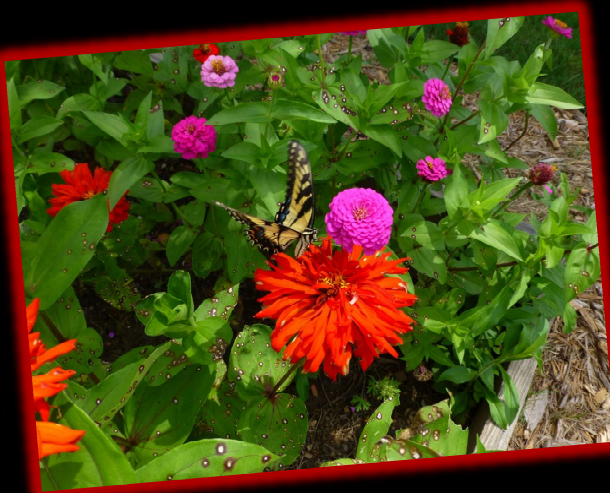


To delve deeper still, one would need to understand chemistry (to understand, e.g., photosynthesis).



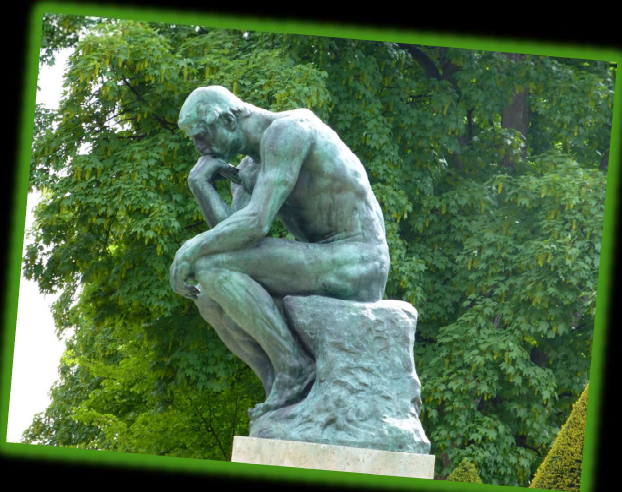
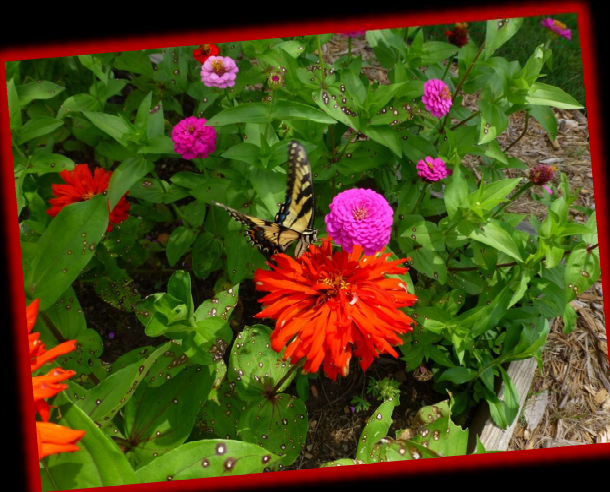
And to delve deeper still, one would need to understand physics.

Suppose we wanted to account for a number of other aspects of the flower and the human.



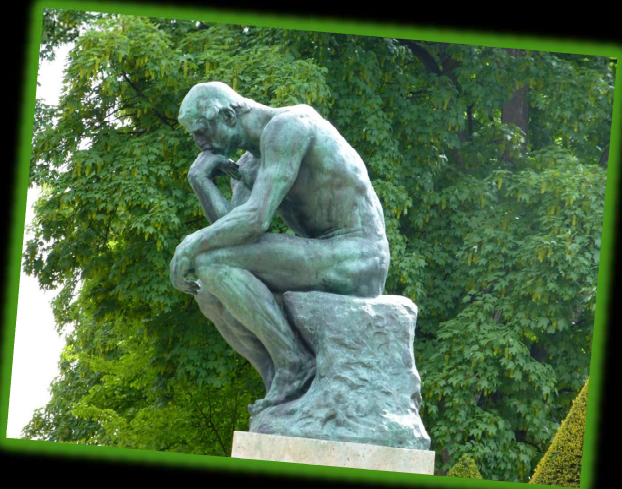
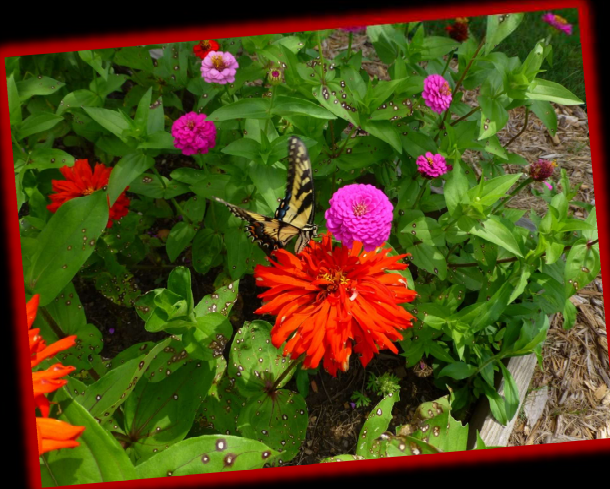
What makes a flower a flower and what makes a human a human are their respective natures.

Metaphysics



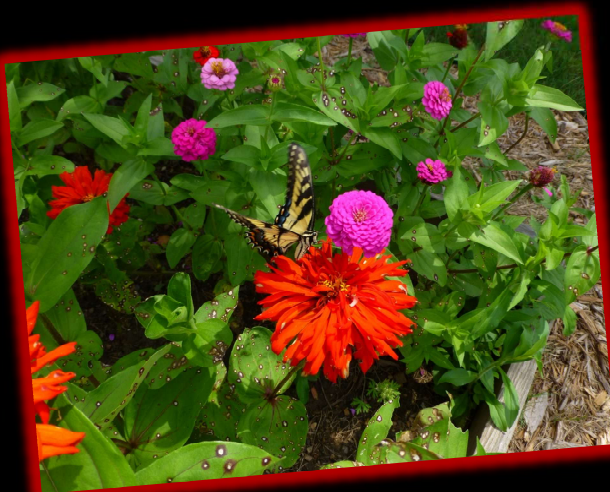
We can know that one is a flower and the other is a human by our senses.

Epistemology



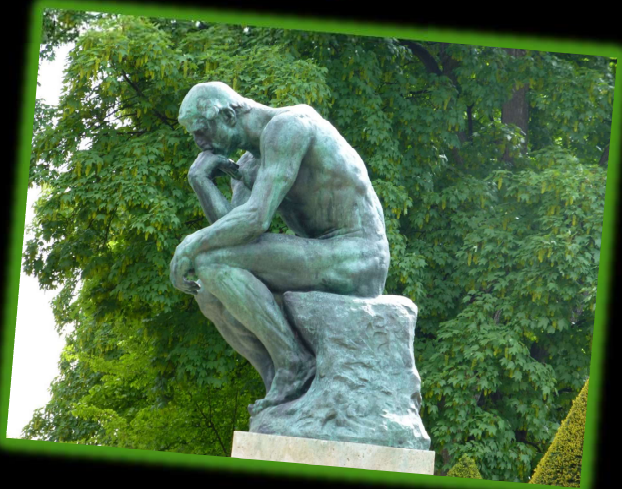
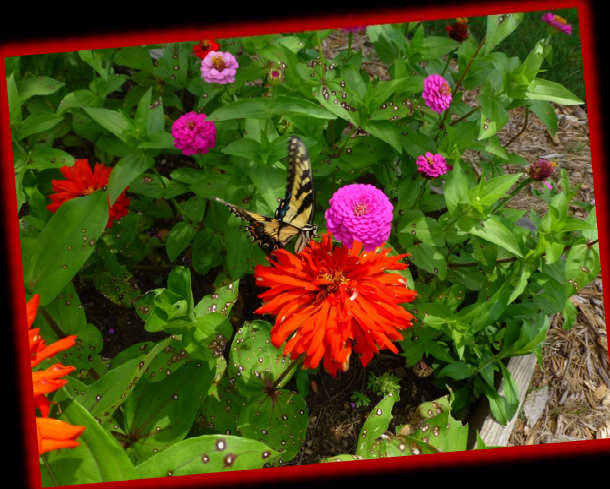
We value the human over the flower because of the different kinds of things they are.

Ethics



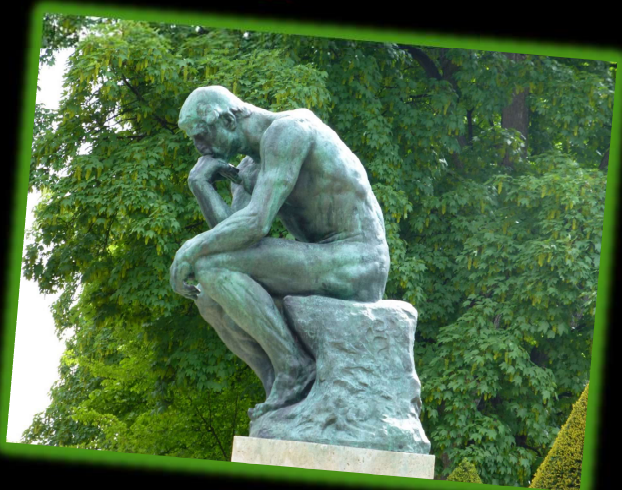
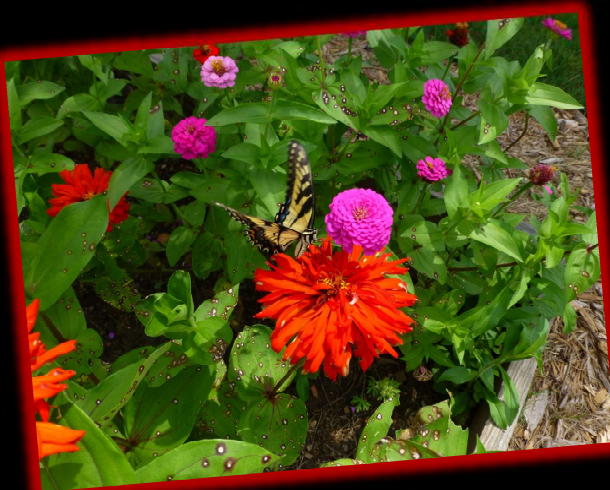
*We insist that others value the human over the flower
and hold them accountable when they do not.*

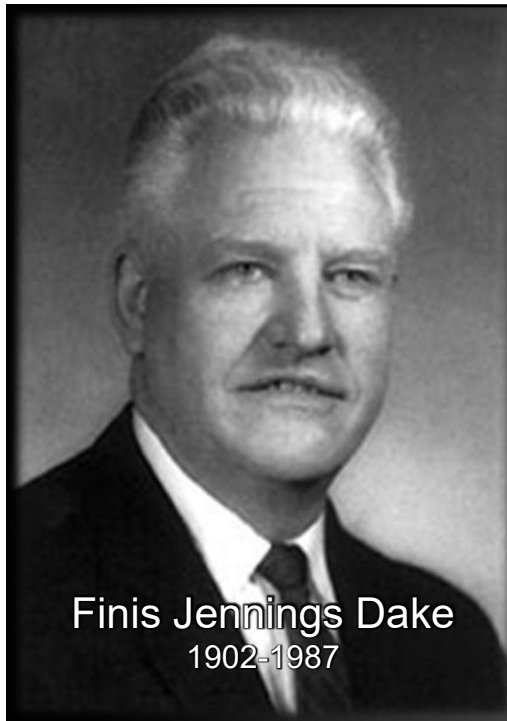
Political Philosophy



*We know that neither the flower nor the human can
account for their own existence but are created by God.*

Philosophy of Religion

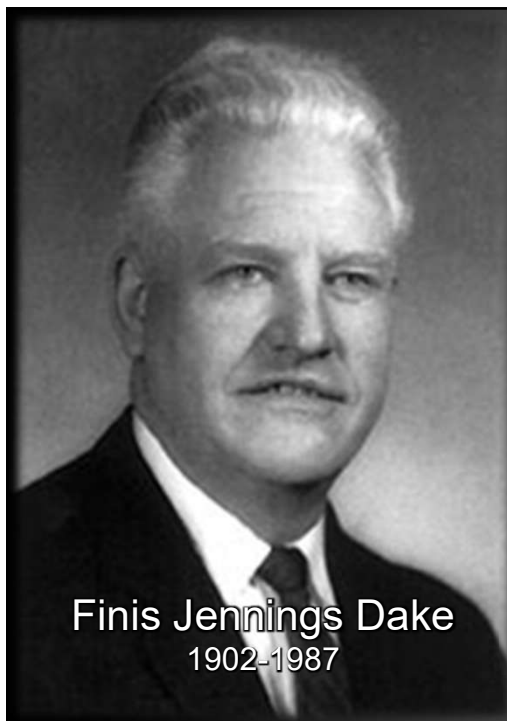




Finis Jennings Dake
1902-1987

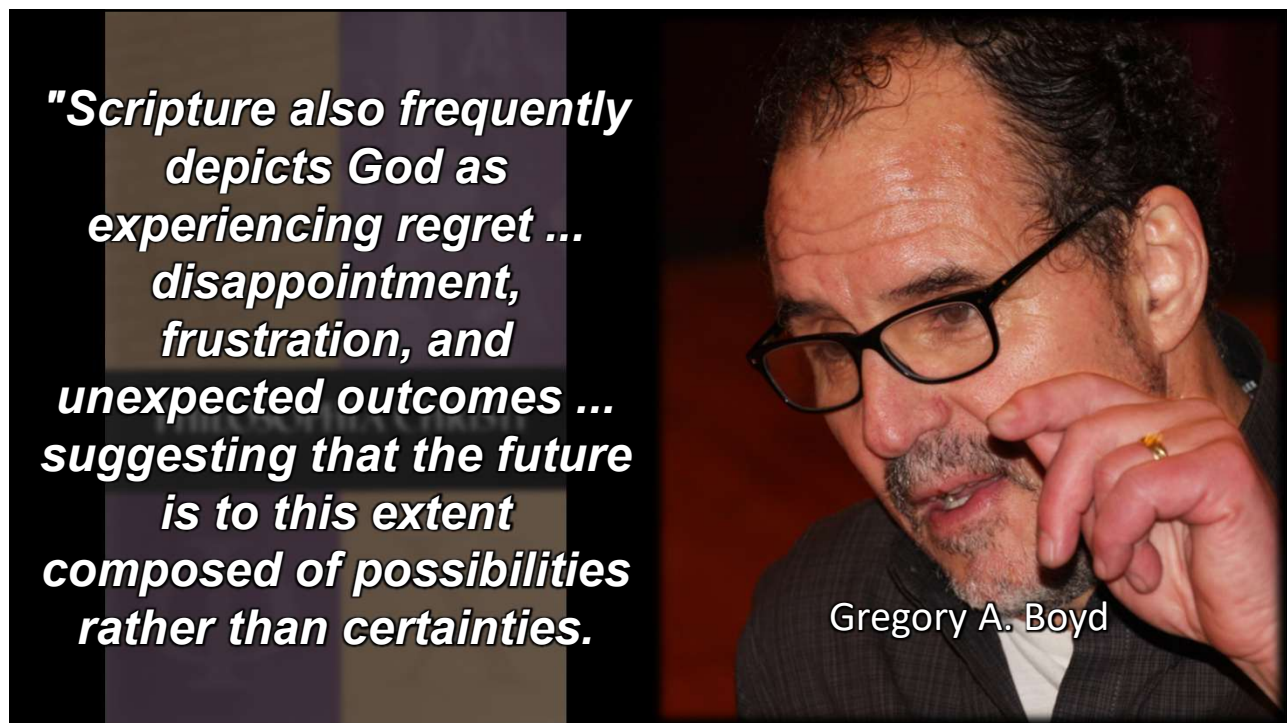
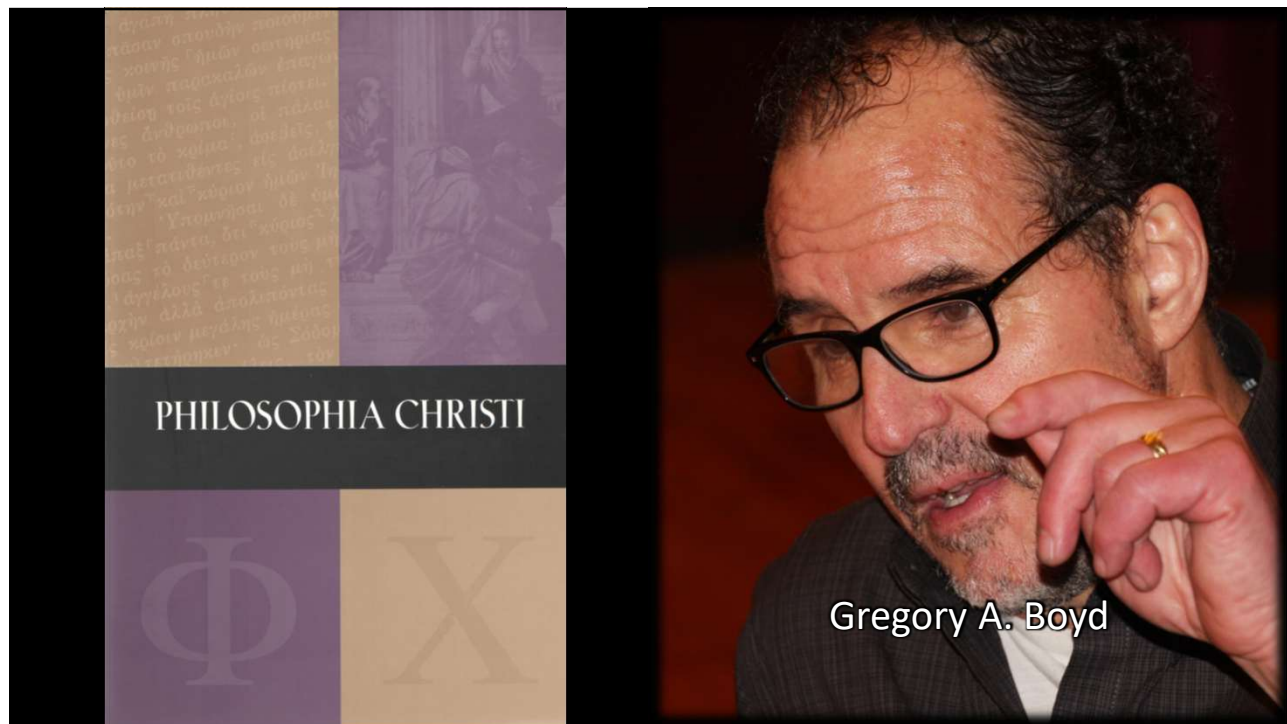
"God has a personal **spirit body** (Dan. 7:9-14; 10:5-19); shape (Jn. 5:37); form (Phil. 2:5-7); image and likeness of a man (Gen. 1:26; 9:6; Ezek. 1:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9). He has bodily parts such as, back parts (Ex. 33:23), heart (Gen. 6:6; 8:21), hands and fingers (Ps. 8:3-6; Heb. 1:10; Rev. 5:1-7), mouth (Num. 12:8), lips and tongue (Isa. 30:27), feet (Ezek. 1:27; Ex. 24:10), eyes (Ps. 11:4; 18:24; 33:18), ears (Ps. 18:6), hair, head, face, arms (Dan. 7:9-14; 10:5-19; Rev. 5:1-7; 22:4-6), and other bodily parts."

[Dake's Annotated Reference Bible, (Lawrenceville: Dake Bible Sales, 1963), NT, p. 97]



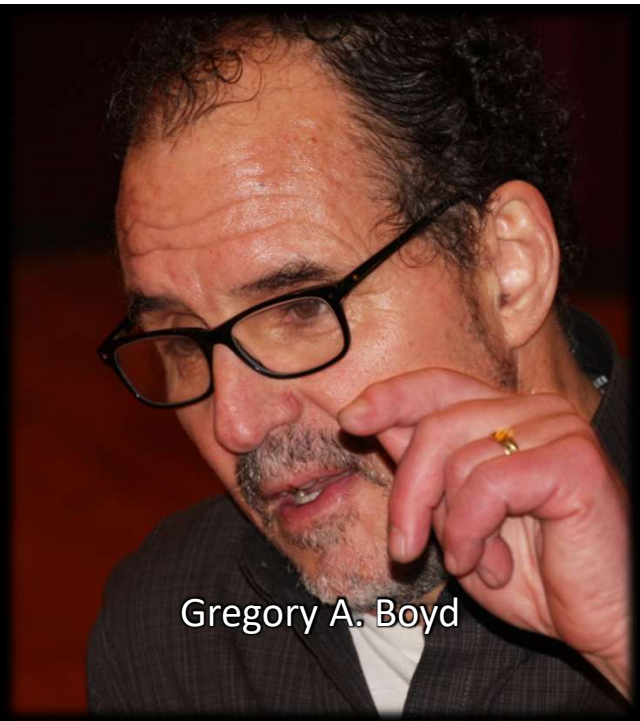
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(Dan. 7:9-14; 10:5-19) (Jn. 5:37)
(Phil. 2:5-7)
(Gen. 1:26; 9:6; Ezek. 1:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9)
(Ex. 33:23) (Gen. 6:6; 8:21) (Ps. 8:3-6; Heb. 1:10; Rev. 5:1-7) (Num. 12:8) (Isa. 30:27)
(Ezek. 1:27; Ex. 24:10) (Ps. 11:4; 18:24; 33:18) (Ps. 18:6)
(Dan. 7:9-14; 10:5-19; Rev. 5:1-7; 22:4-6)



"It is, I submit, more difficult to conceive of God experiencing such things if the future is exhaustively settled in his mind than if it is in part composed of possibilities."

[Gregory A. Boyd, "Neo-Molinism and the Infinite Intelligence of God," *Philosophia Christi* 5, No. 1, (2003):192]



Gregory A. Boyd

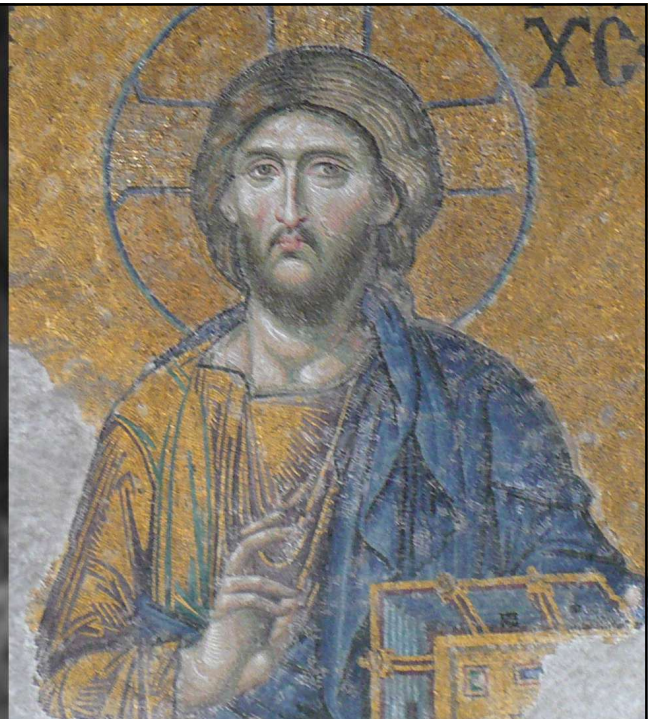


**"And they heard the sound of
the LORD God walking in the
garden in the cool of the day,**

**and Adam and his wife hid
themselves from the presence of
the LORD God among the trees
of the garden." Gen. 3:8**

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**"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
John 4:24**



🌀 2 Samuel 7:4-7 🌀

But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, {5} "Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: "Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? {6} For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle. {7} Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?' " ' "

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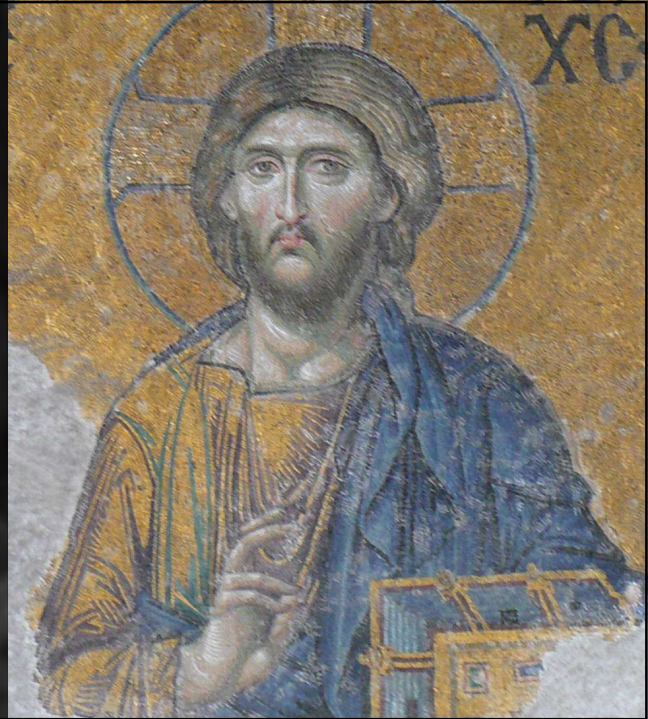
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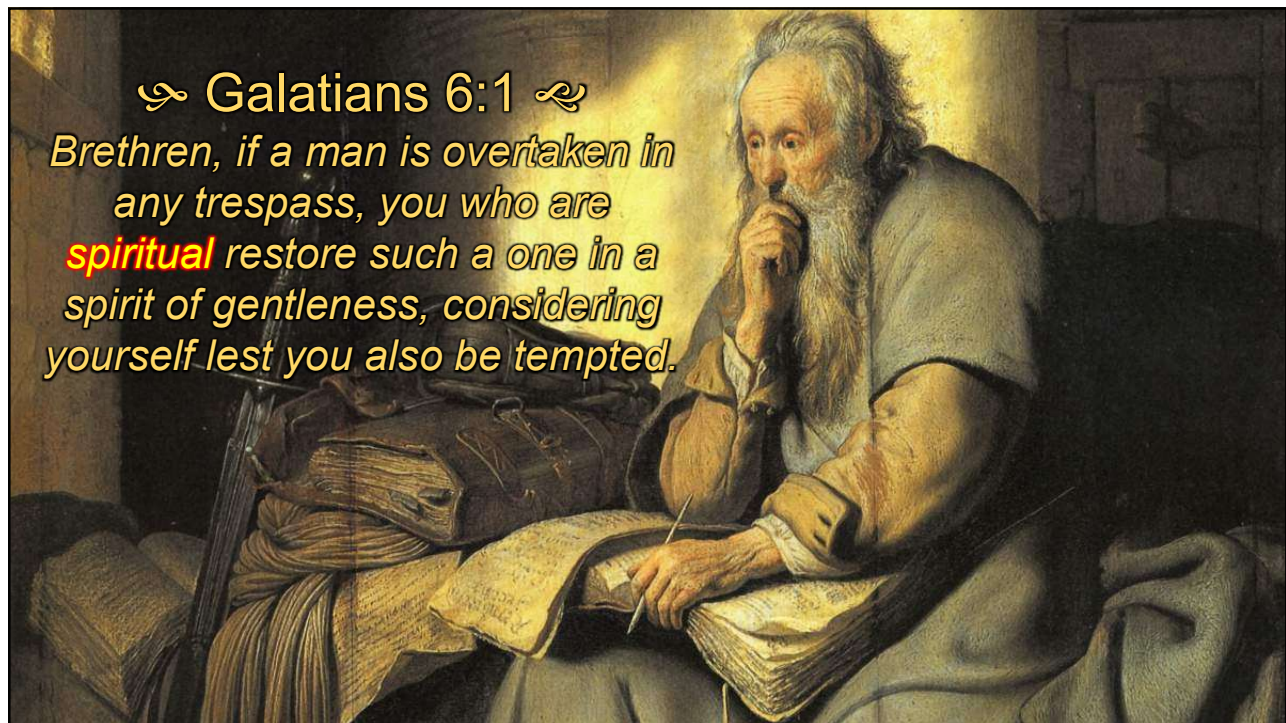
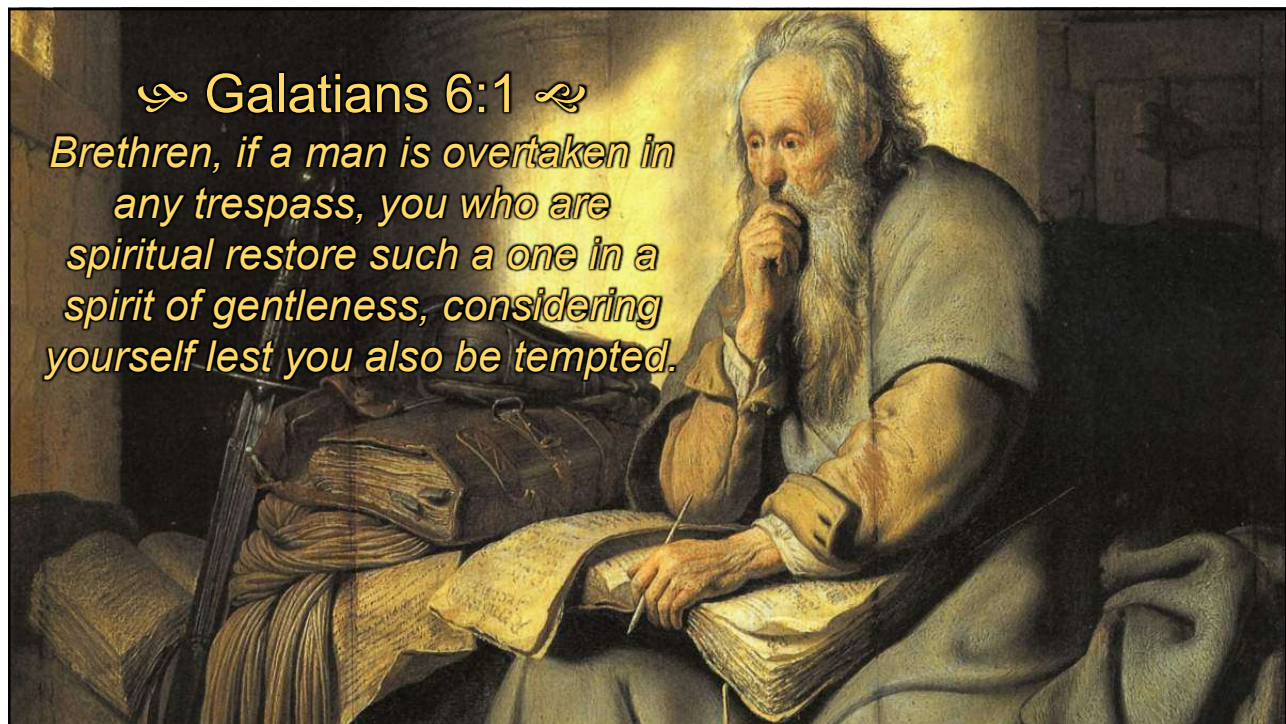
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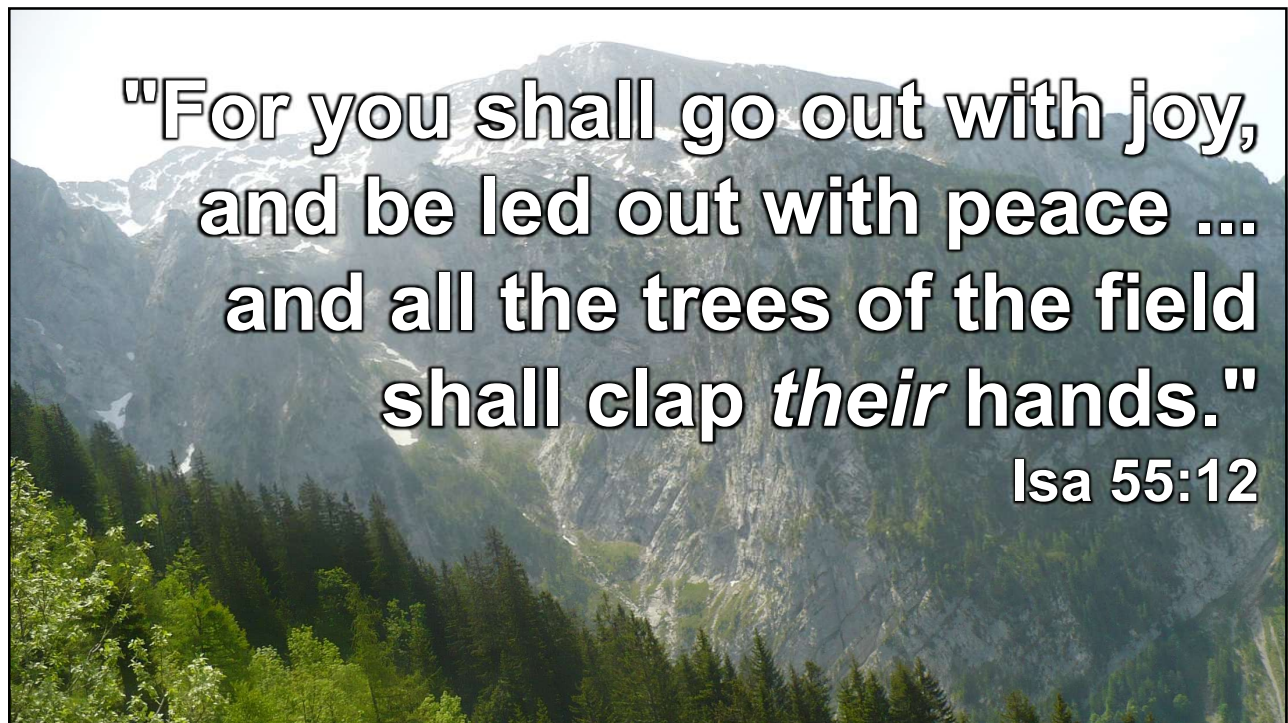
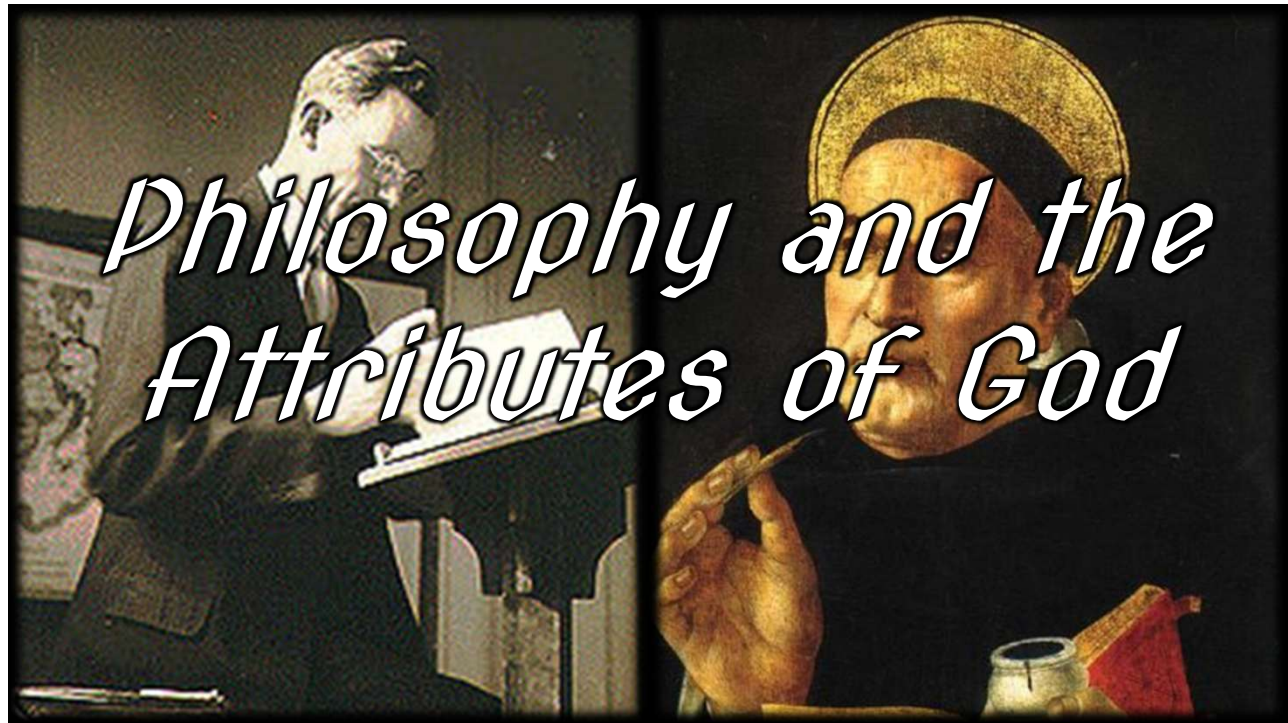


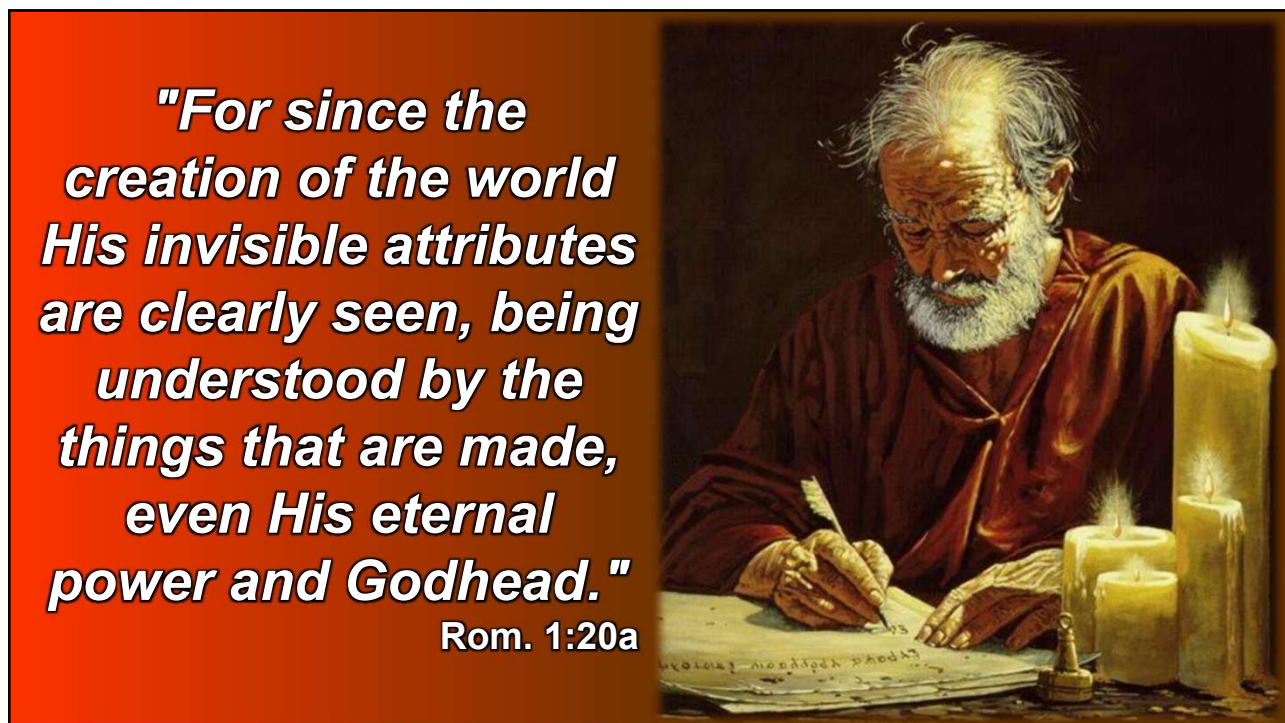
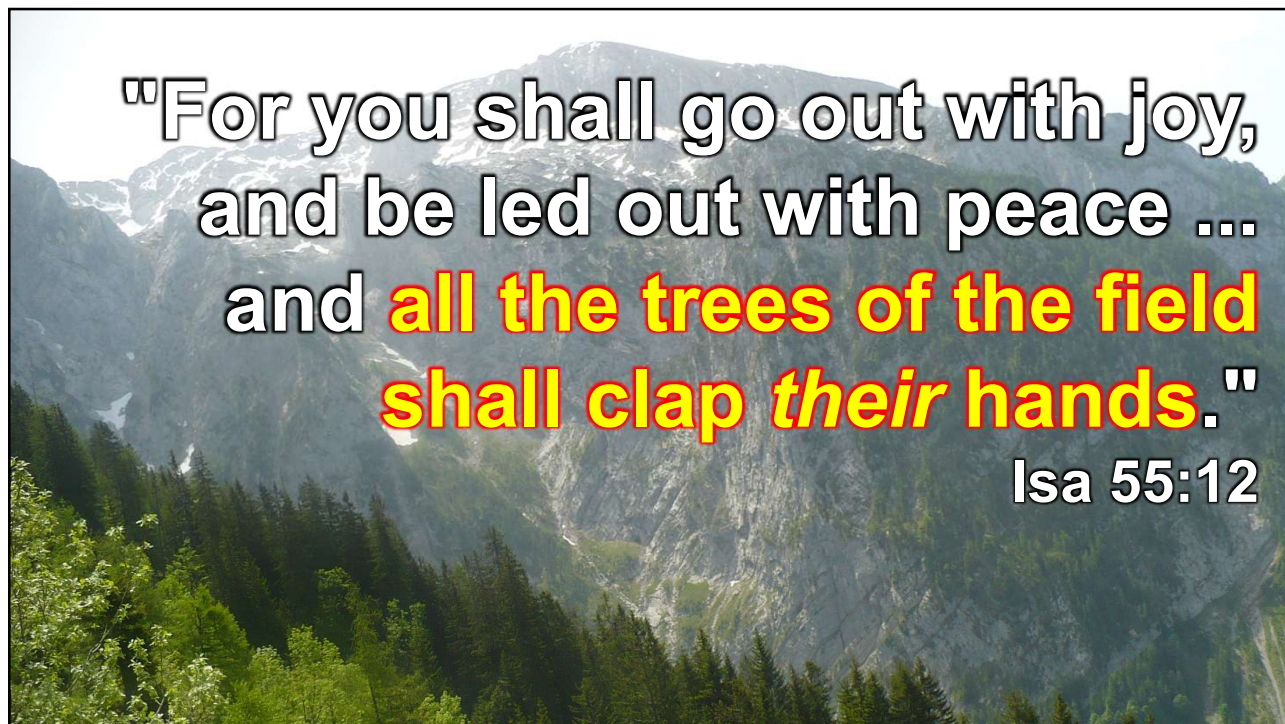
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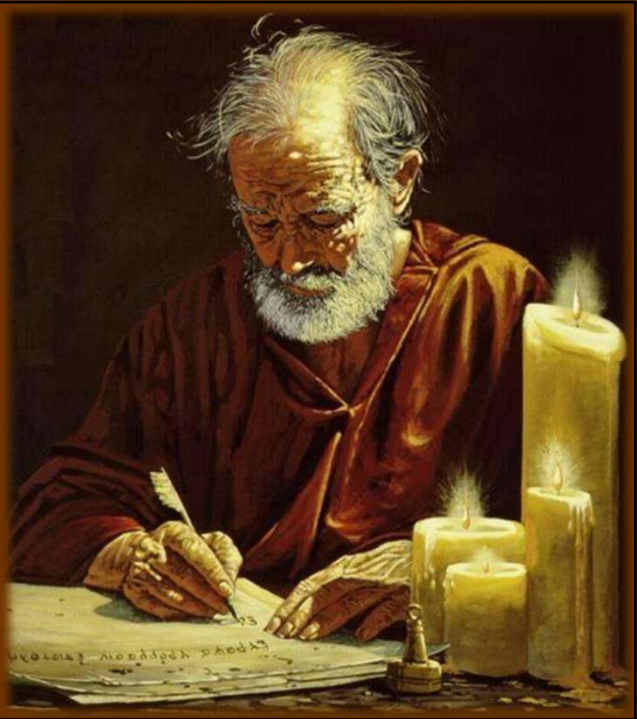






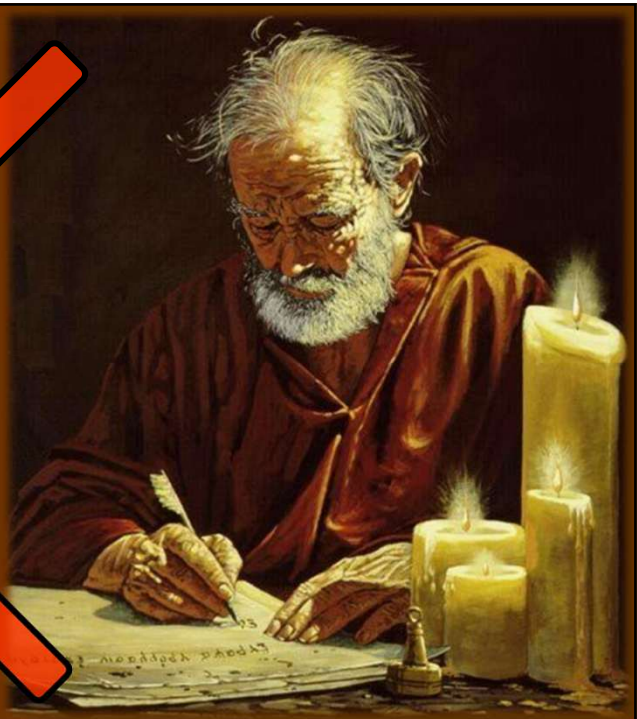
**"For since the
creation of the world
His invisible attributes
are clearly seen, **being
understood by the
things that are made,**
even His eternal
power and Godhead."**

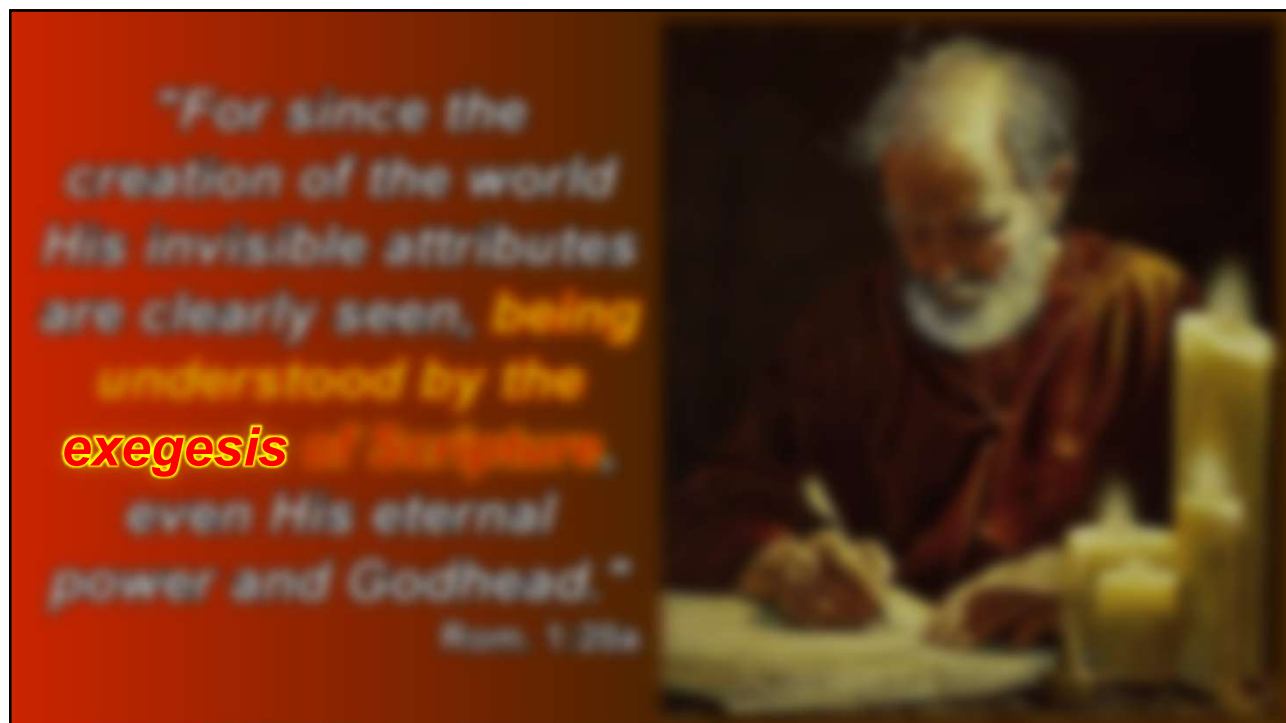
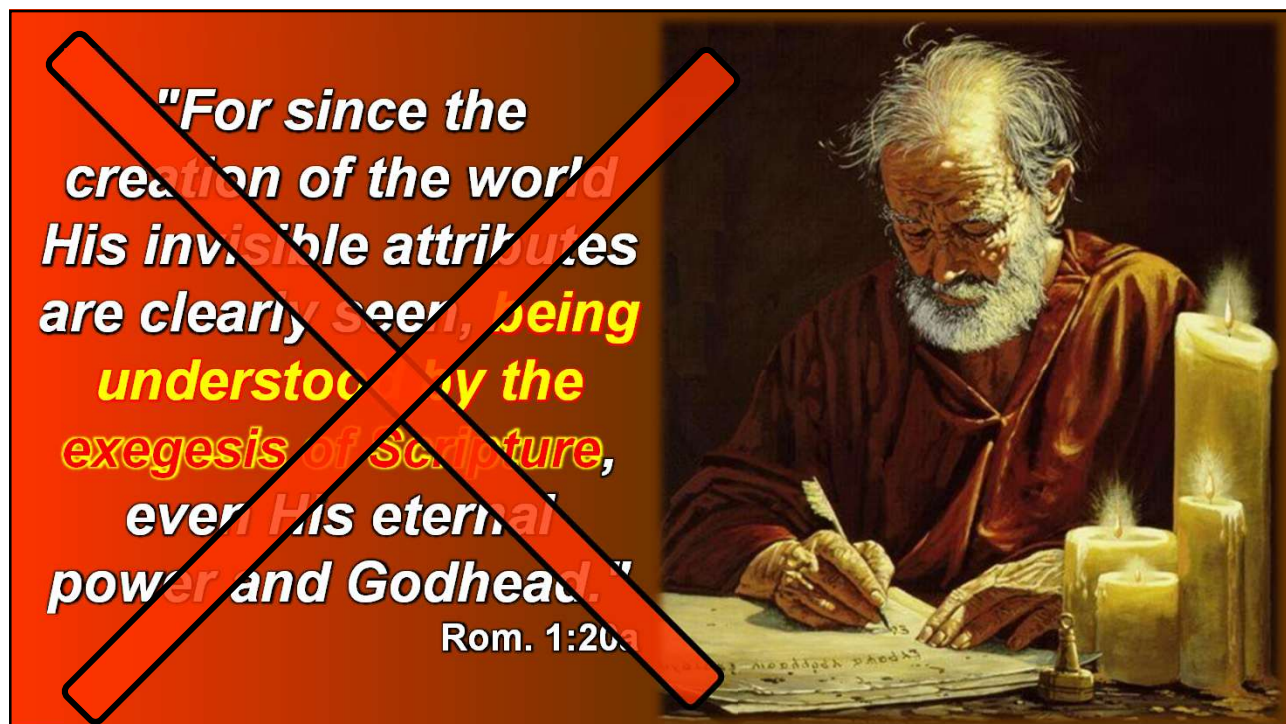
Rom. 1:20a



~~**"For since the
creation of the world
His invisible attributes
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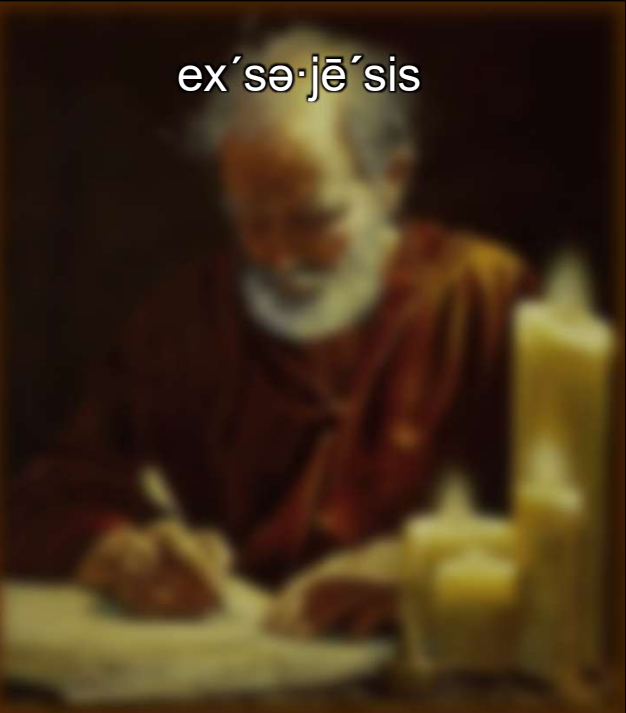
Rom. 1:20a





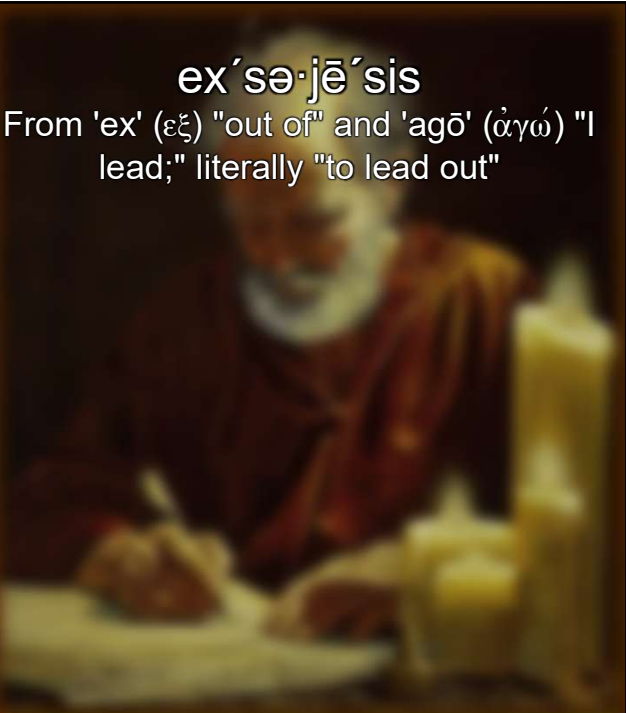
*"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, **being understood by the exegesis** of His works, even His eternal power and Godhead."*
Rom. 1:20a

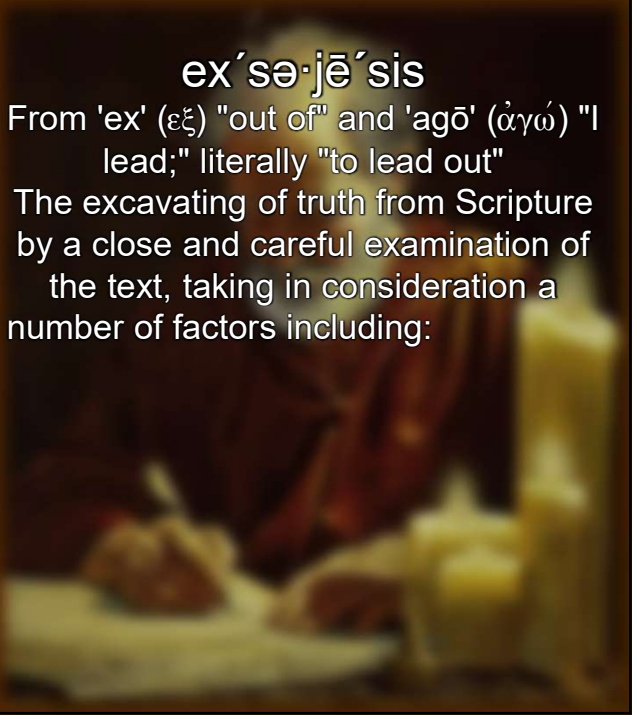
ex'sə·jē'sis



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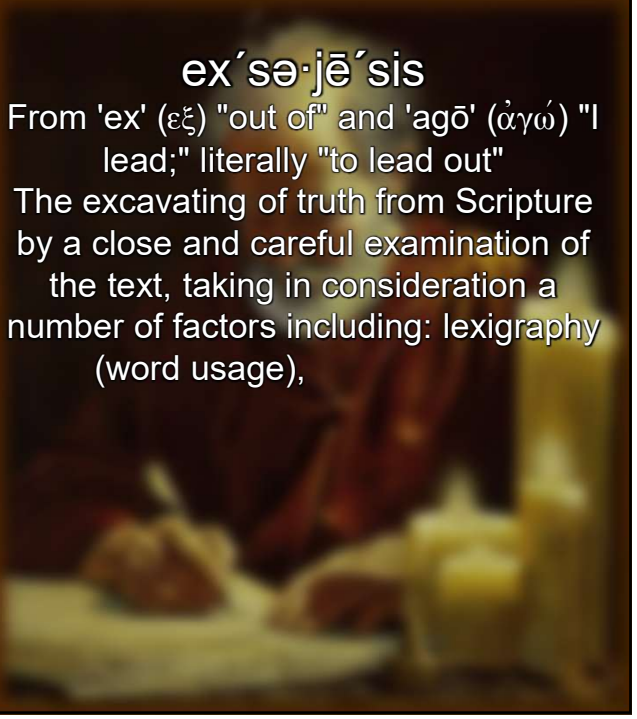
ex'sə·jē'sis
From 'ex' (ἐξ) "out of" and 'agō' (ἀγώ) "I lead;" literally "to lead out"





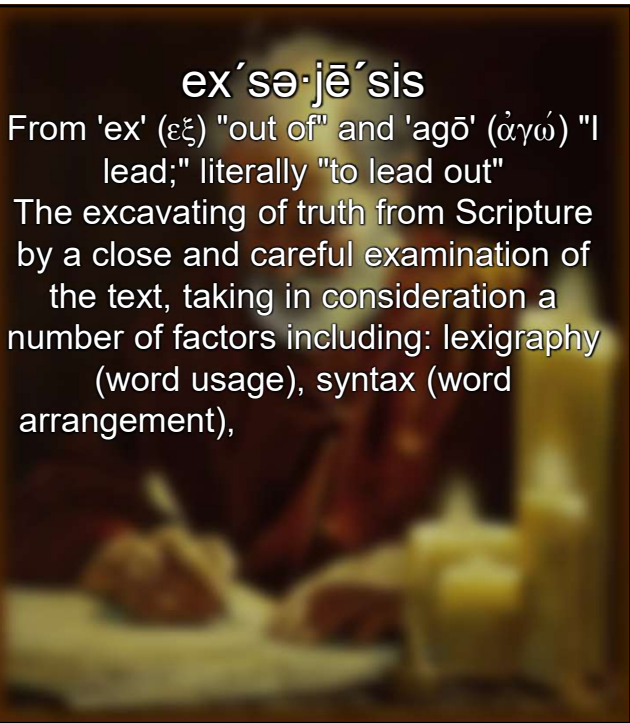
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Rom. 1:20a

ex'sə·jē'sis
From 'ex' (ἐξ) "out of" and 'agō' (ἀγώ) "I lead;" literally "to lead out"
The excavating of truth from Scripture by a close and careful examination of the text, taking in consideration a number of factors including:



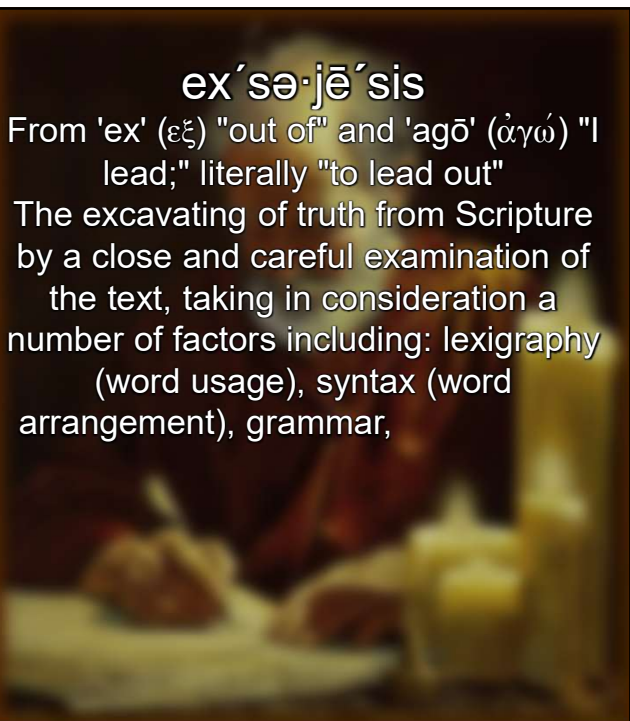
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*"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, **being understood by the exegesis** of Scripture, even His eternal power and Godhead."*
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Rom. 1:20a

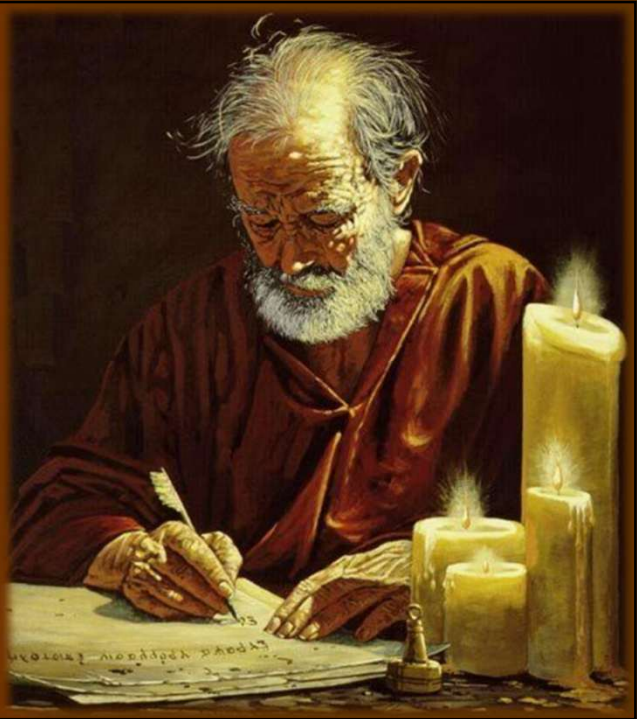
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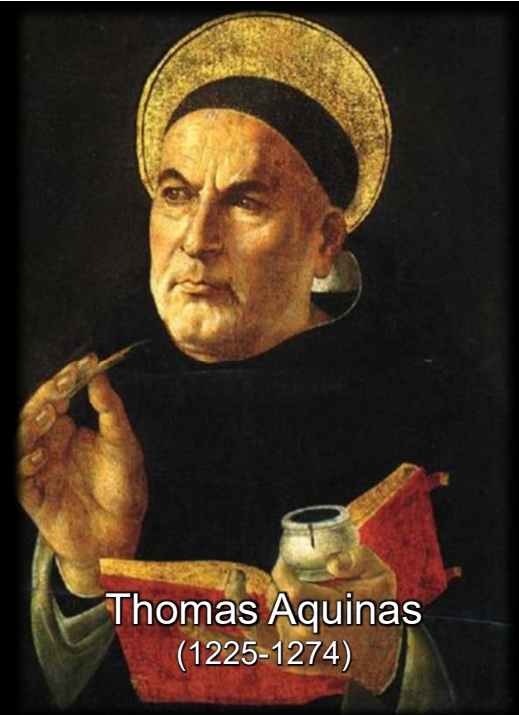
"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, **being understood by the things that are made,** even His eternal power and Godhead."

Rom. 1:20a



"Even though revelation elevates us to know something of which we should otherwise be ignorant, it does not elevate us to know in any other way than through sensible things."

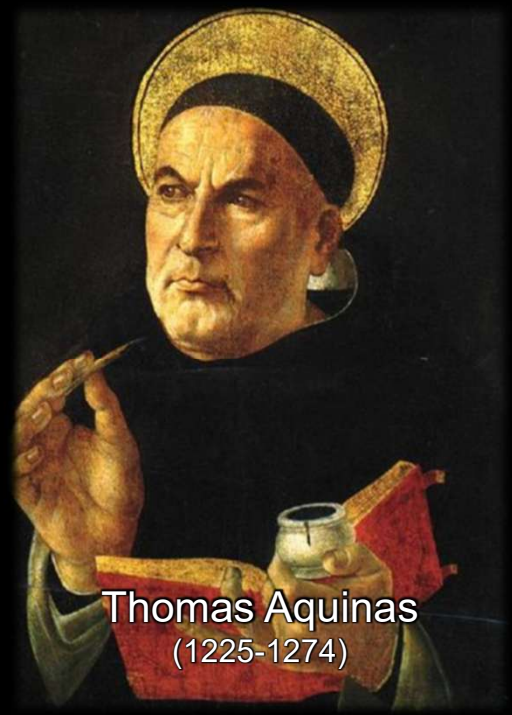
[Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius, QVI, art. 3, trans. Armand Maurer, *The Divisions and Methods of the Sciences*, 4th rev. ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986), 84]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"God, although incorporeal, is named in Scripture metaphorically by corporeal names."

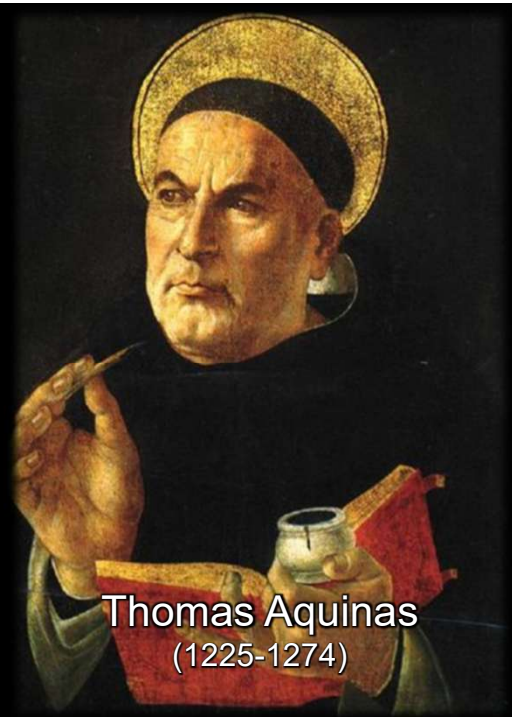
[S7, I, Q10, art. 1]



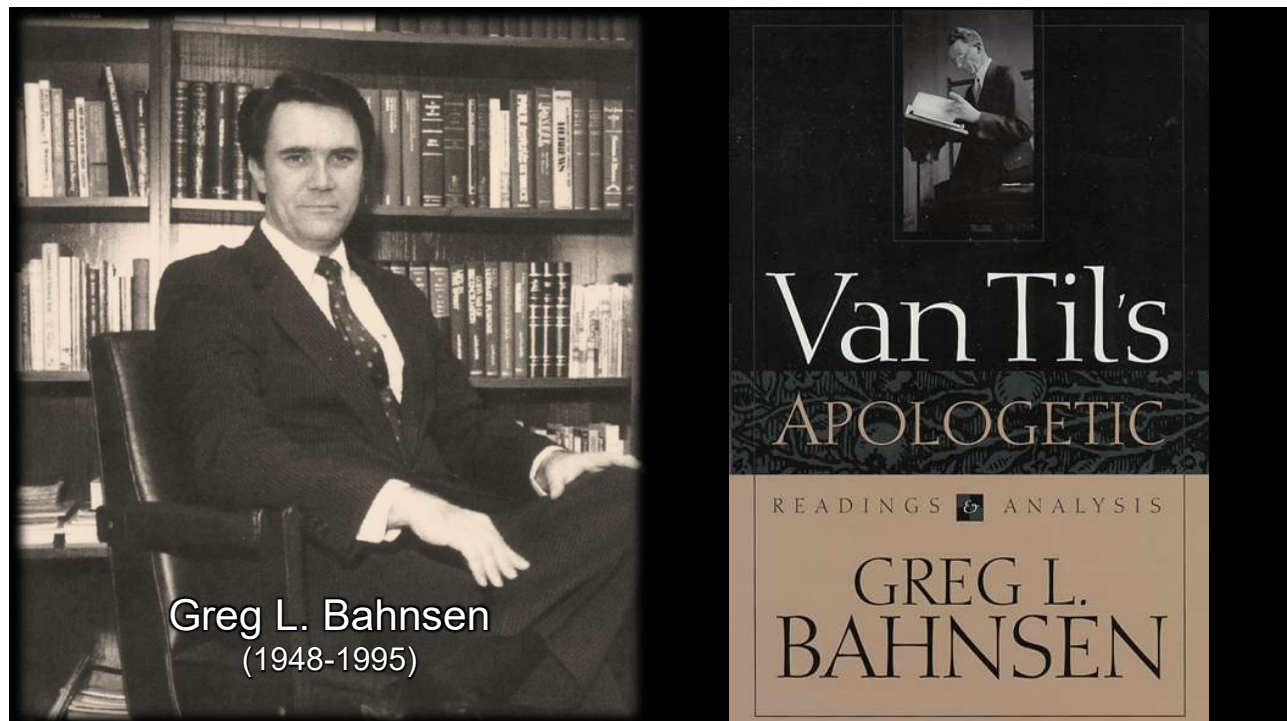
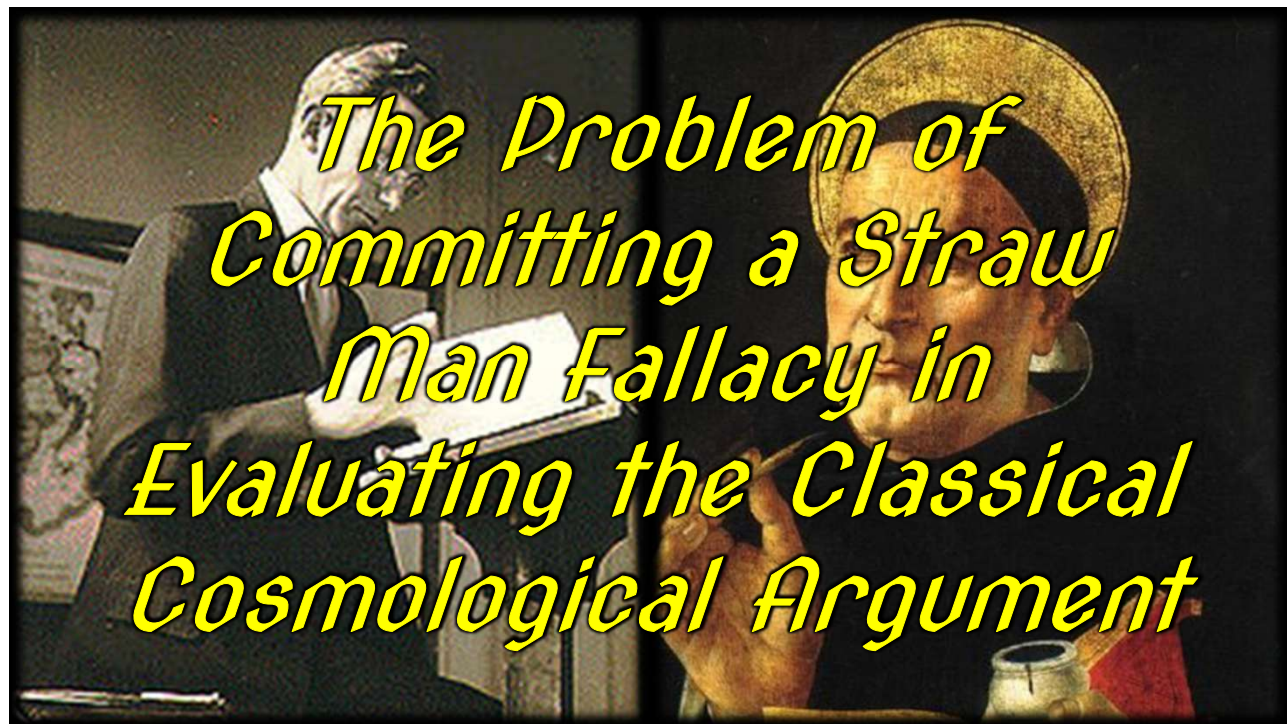
Thomas Aquinas
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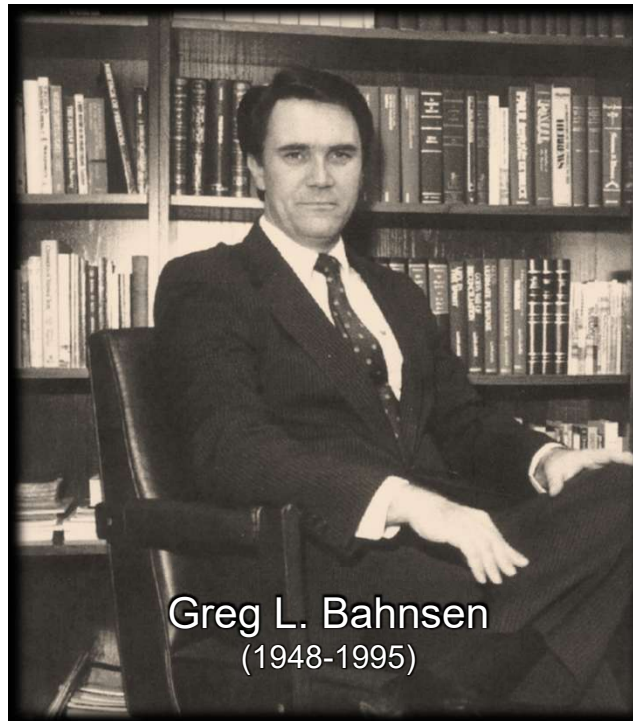
"Now, what we have said sets aside the error of certain Jews who attributed anger, sadness, repentance, and all such passions in their proper sense to God, failing to distinguish what in Sacred Scripture is said properly and what metaphorically."

[SCG, I, 91, §18]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

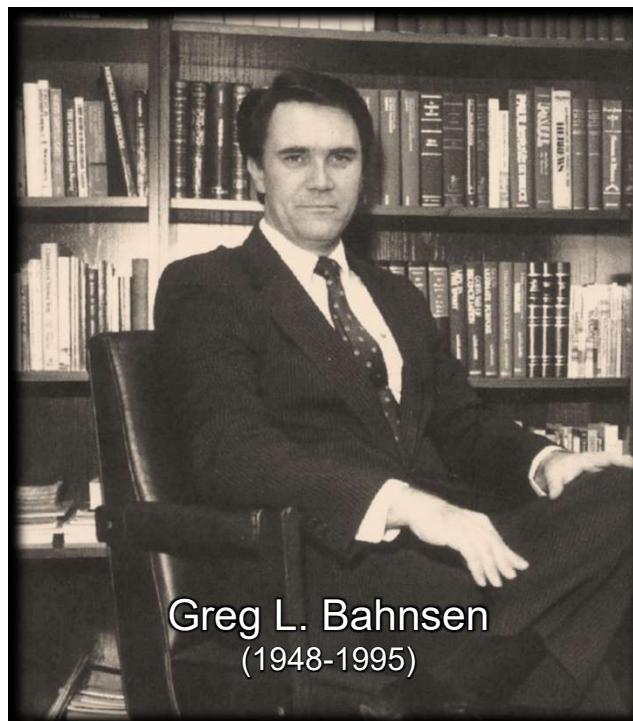




Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

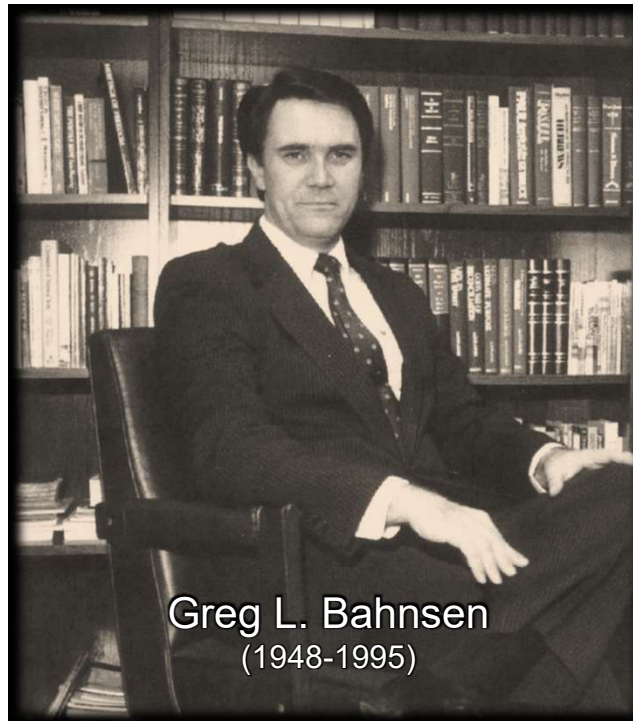
The traditional approach does not challenge the autonomy of the natural man's thinking, but naively assumes that his experience and understanding of causal relations is intelligible. If **everything has a cause**, it is argued, then he should admit that this world also has a cause—which can only be God."

[Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis
(Phillipsburg: P&R, 1998), 617, 618]



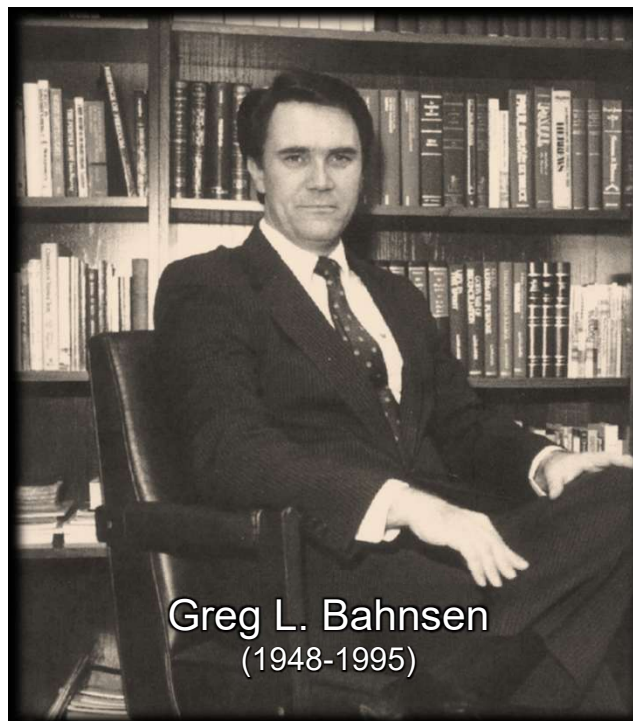
Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

Traditional formulations of the cosmological proof for God's existence have always been, as autonomously conceived and interpreted, philosophically embarrassing.



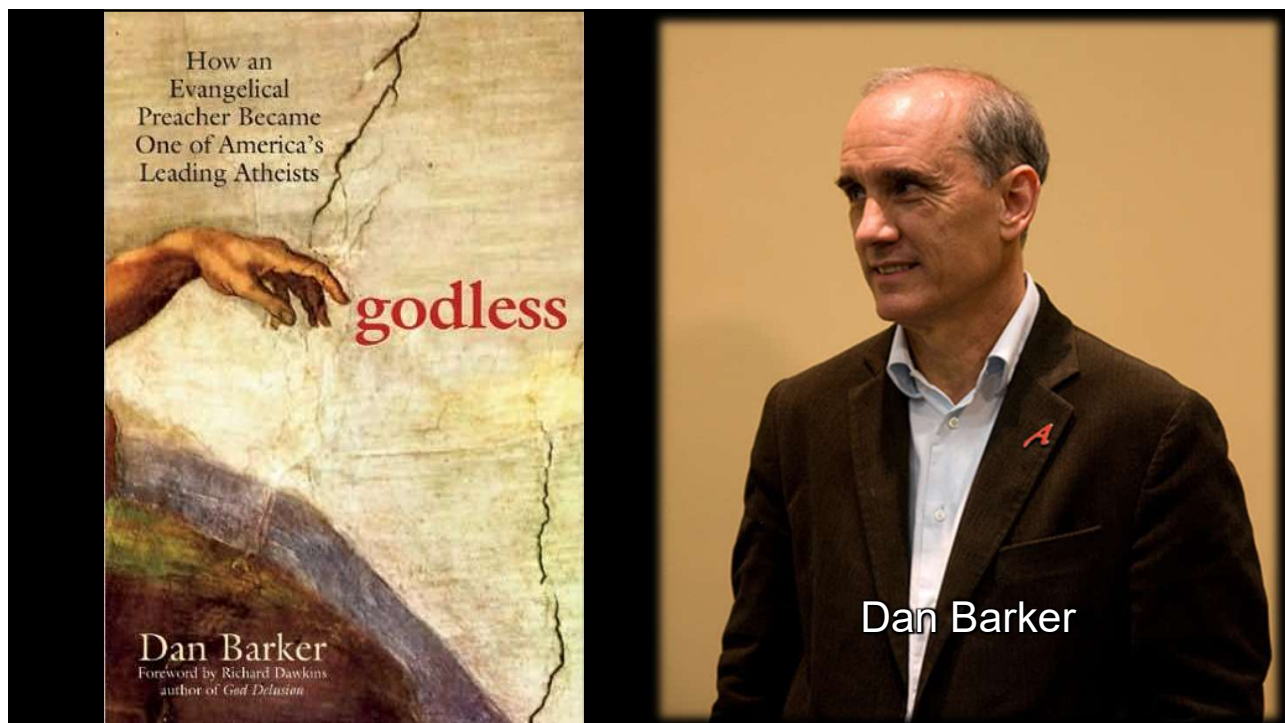
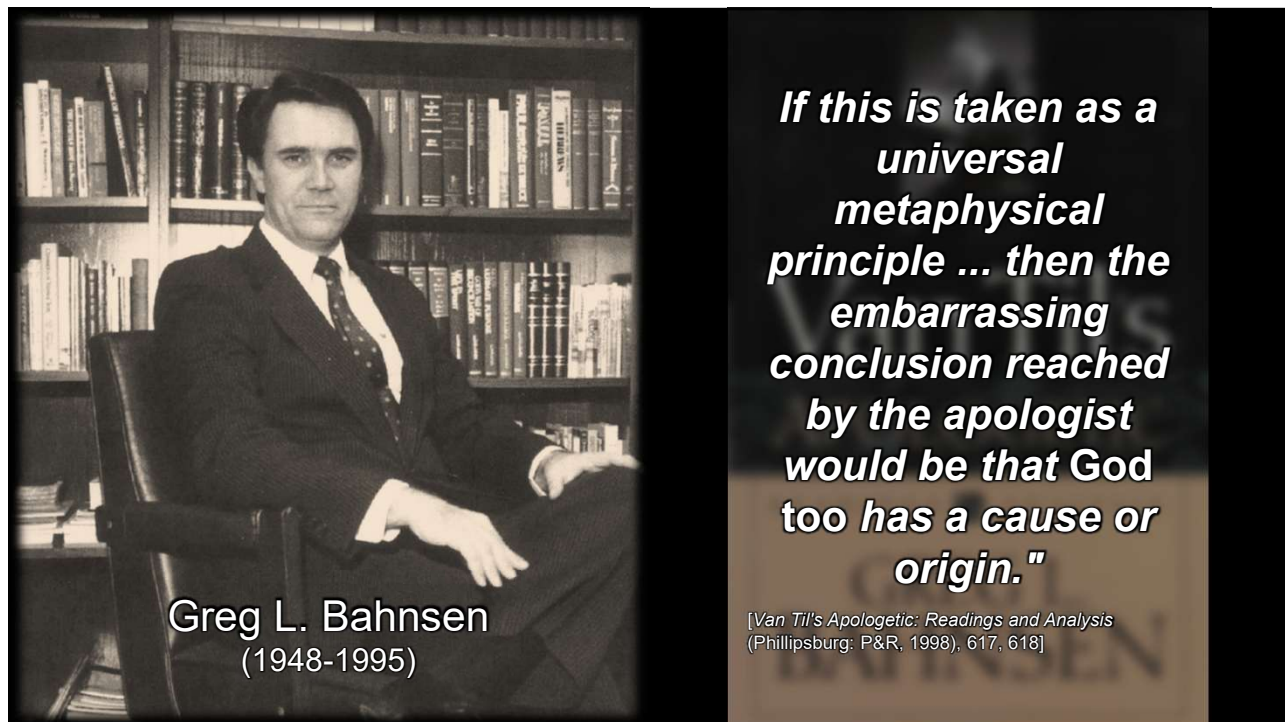
Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

How should we understand the fundamental premise in the cosmological argument, 'Everything has a cause' (or 'Every object has an origin,' or, better 'Every even has a cause')?

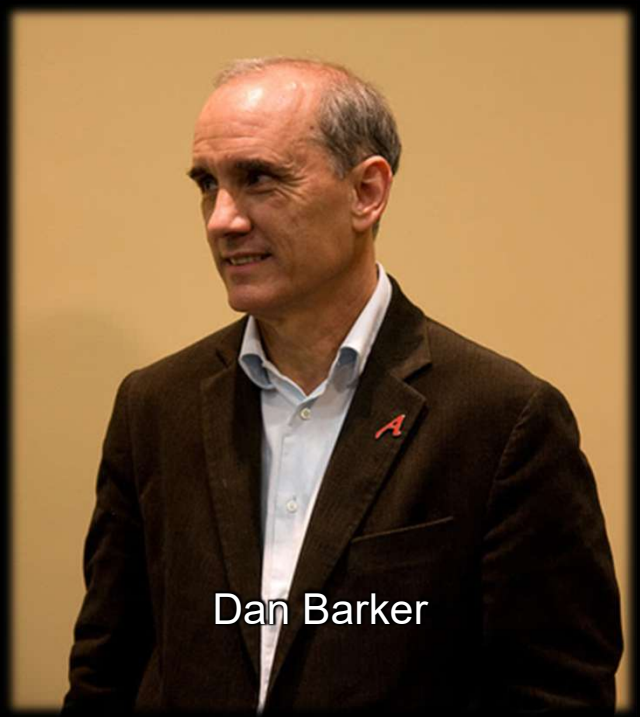


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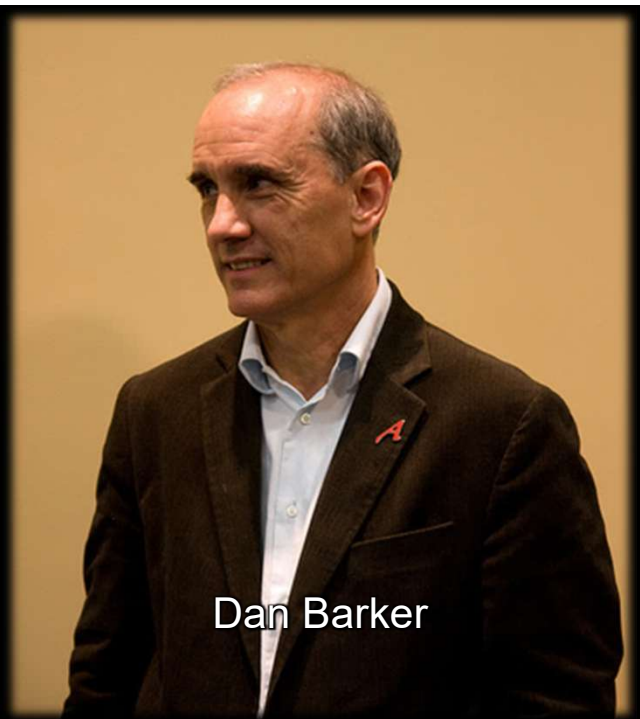
"Everything had a cause, and every cause is the effect of a previous cause. Something must have started it all. God ... is the eternal first cause ... the creator and sustainer of the universe.



Dan Barker

"The major premise of this argument 'everything had a cause,' is contradicted by the conclusion that 'God did not have a cause.' You can't have it both ways. If everything had to have a cause, then there could not be a first cause."

[Dan Barker, *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists* (Berkeley: Ulysses Press, 2008), 113-114]



Dan Barker

