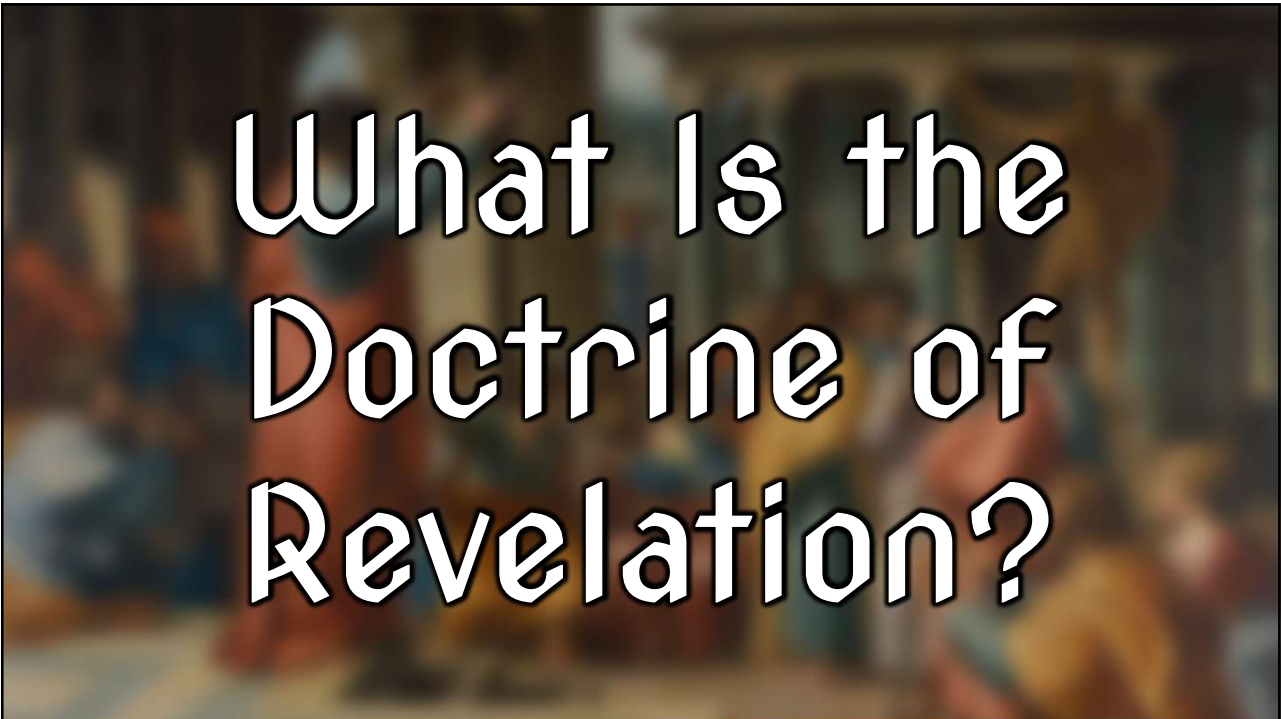
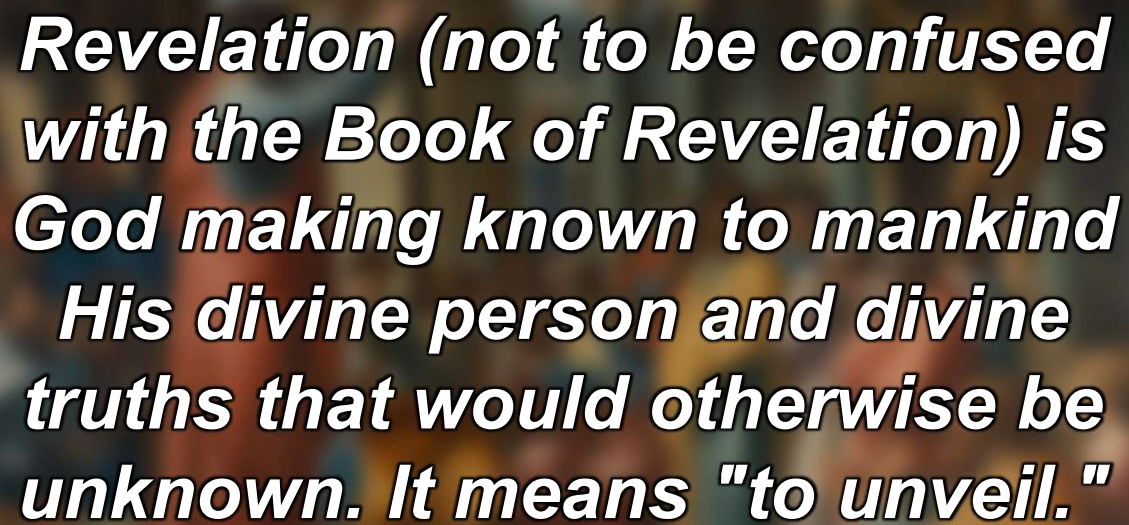


*Natural Theology is the name
given to those truths
knowable by reason through
General Revelation.*



What Is the
Doctrine of
Revelation?



Revelation (not to be confused with the Book of Revelation) is God making known to mankind His divine person and divine truths that would otherwise be unknown. It means "to unveil."



There are two kinds of revelation: General Revelation and Special Revelation.

General Revelation

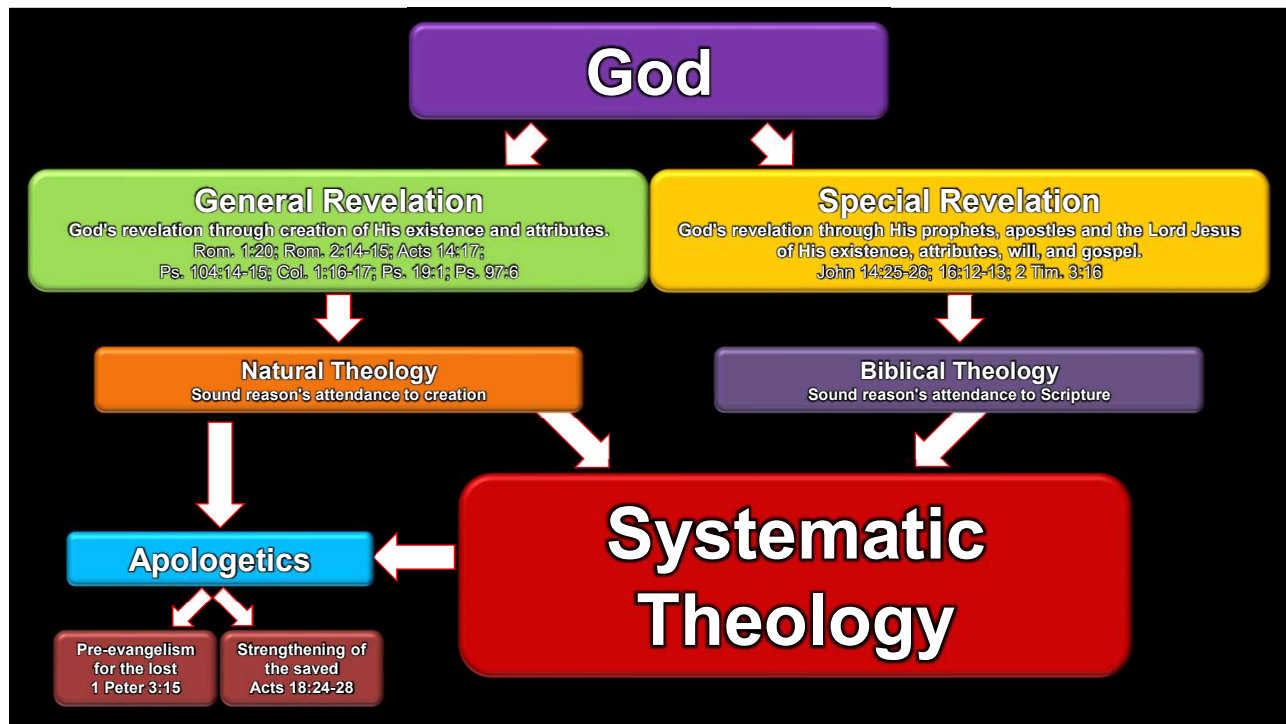
*God making known
through His creation
His existence,
His nature, His
attributes, and His
goodness*

Special Revelation

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



Relationships of Theological Categories

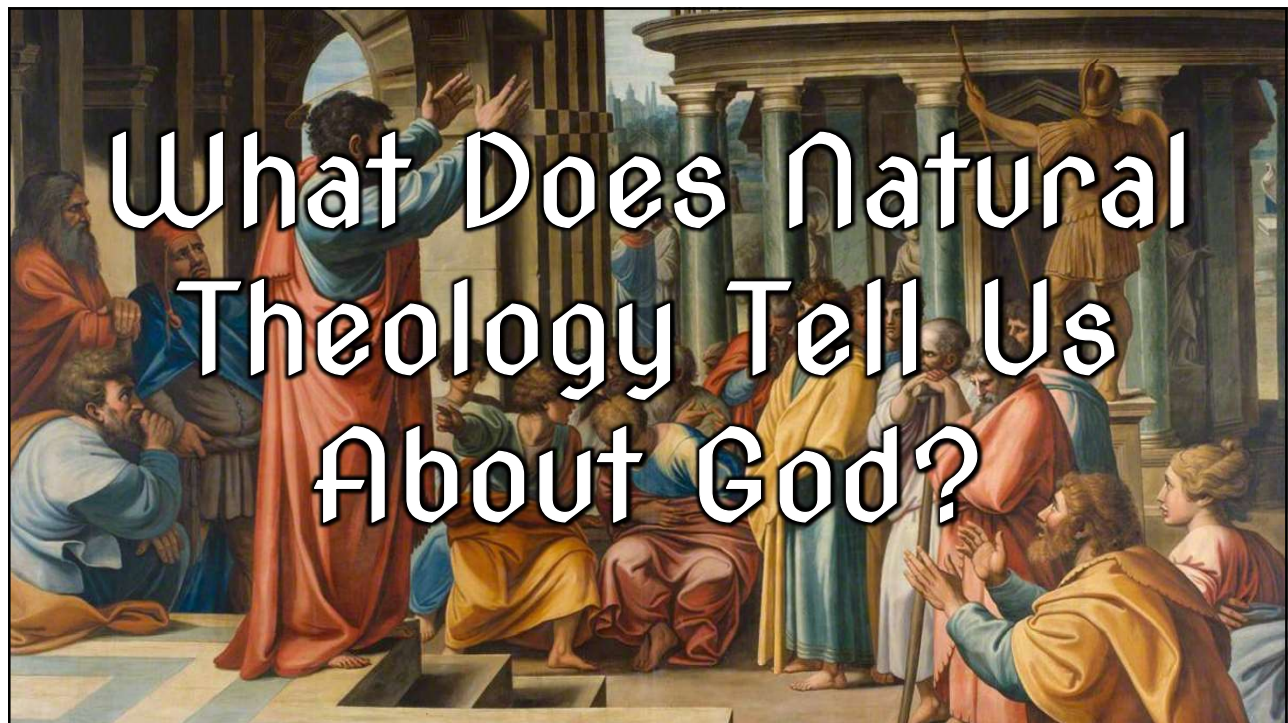


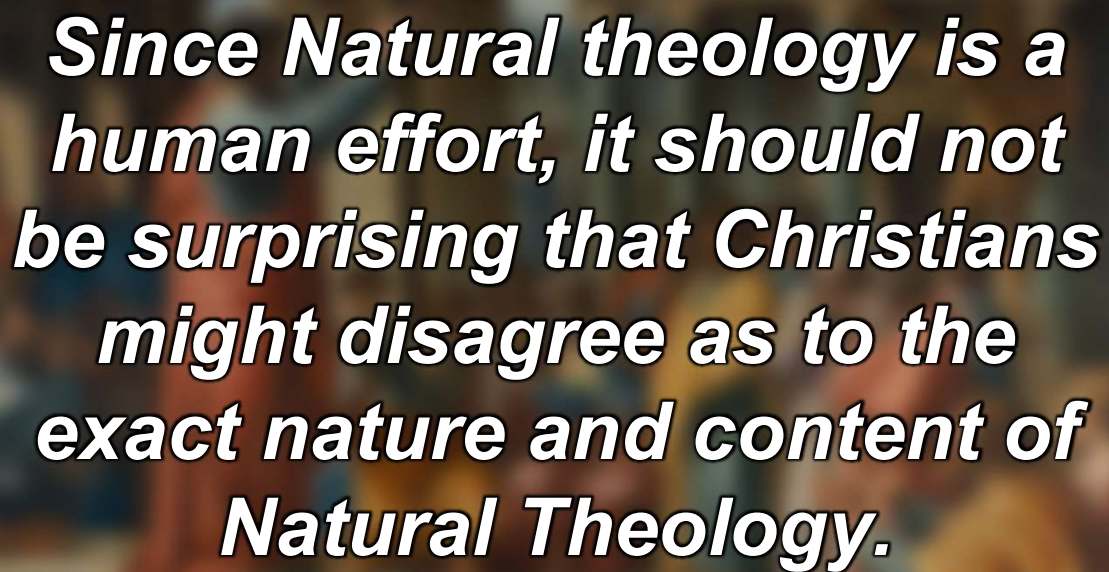
Natural theology is that body of knowledge about God that can be acquired by natural human reason as it attends itself to the sensible world (i.e., things encountered by the senses) around us.



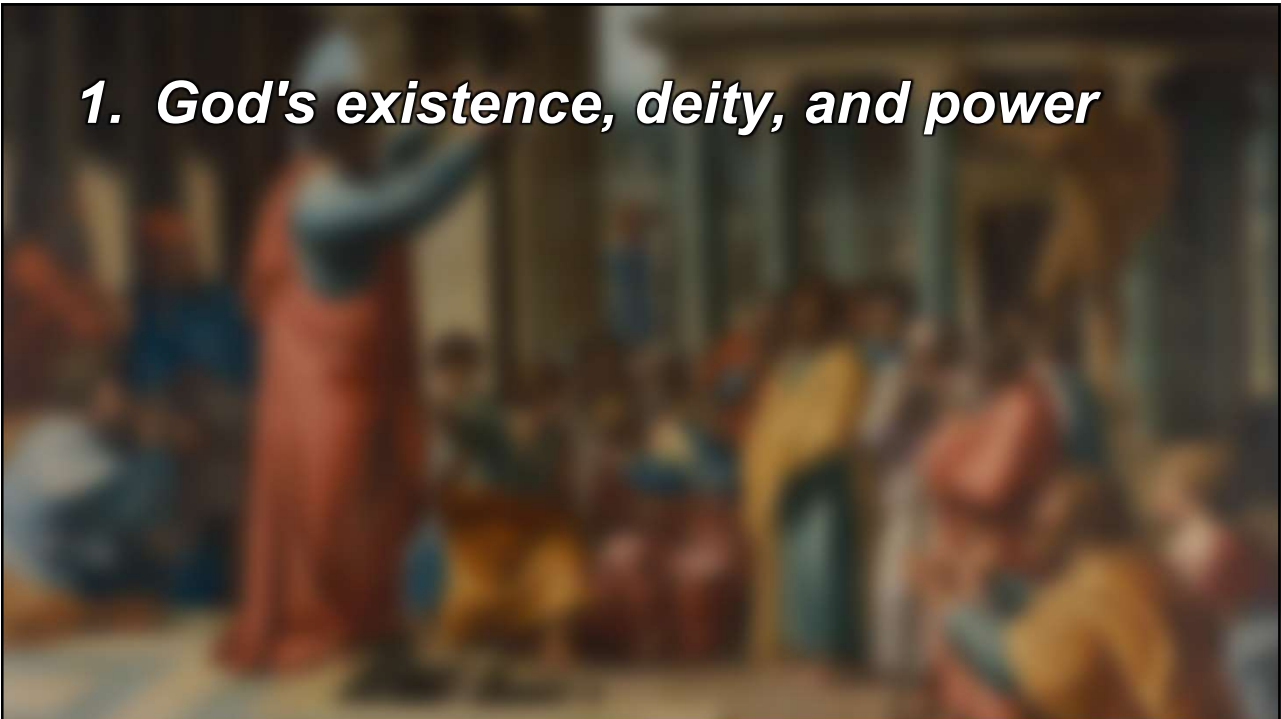
*The application of sound reason
in understanding God's revelation
of Himself through creation gives
rise to sound Natural Theology.*

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

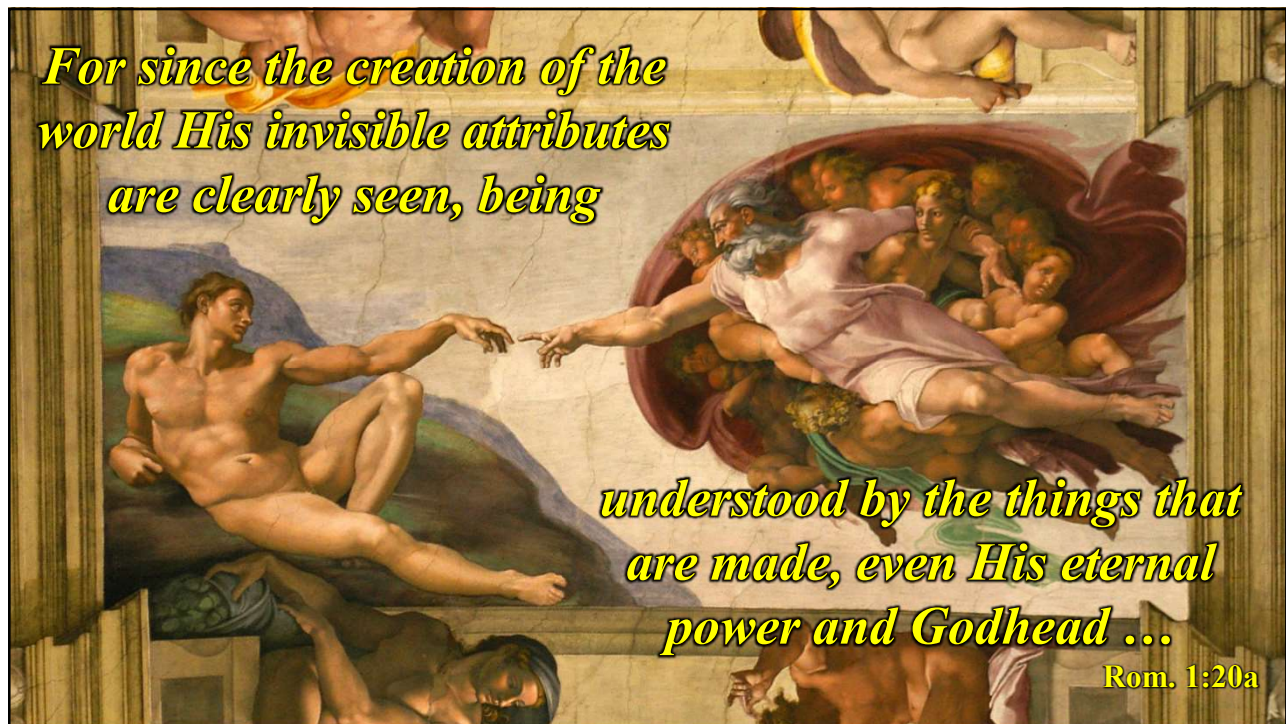




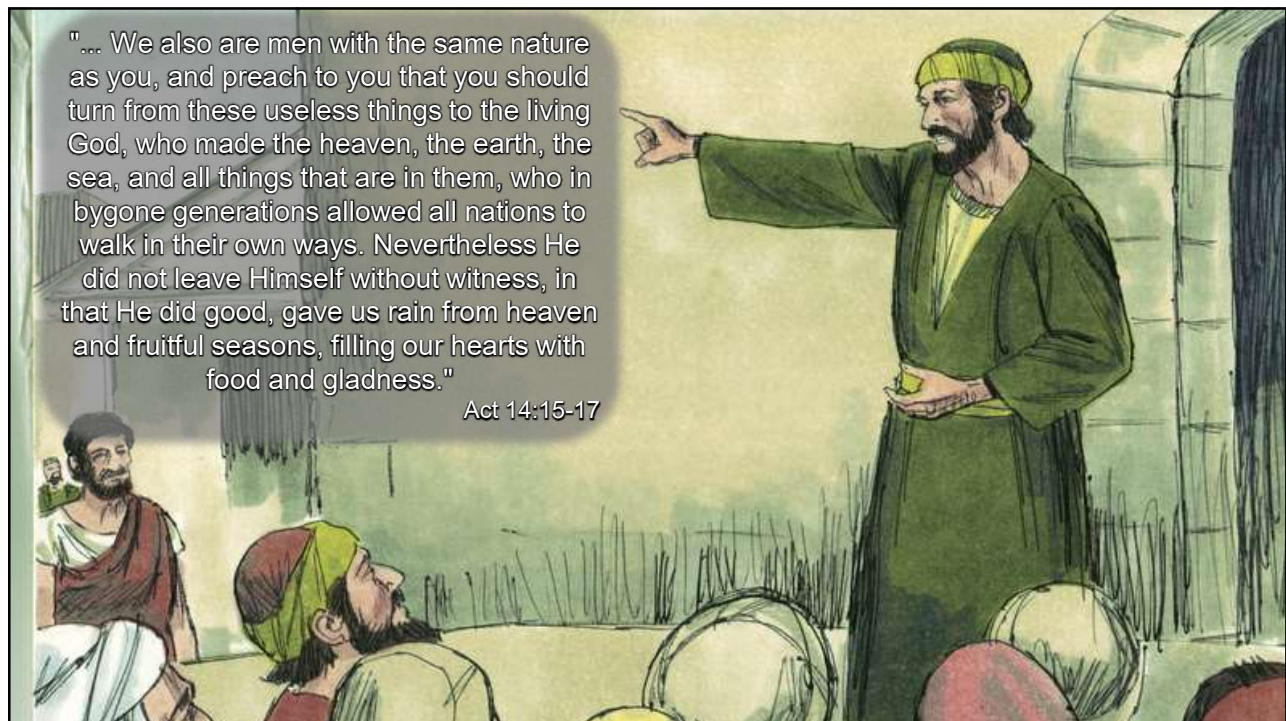
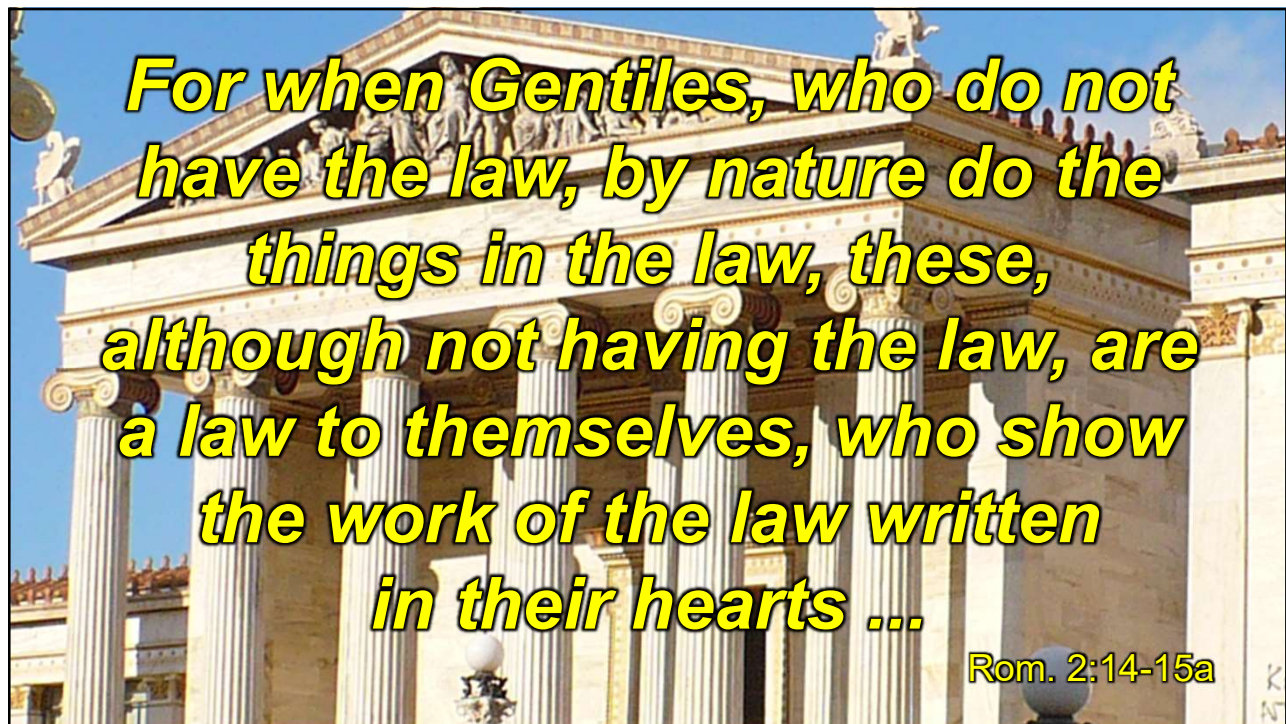
Since Natural theology is a human effort, it should not be surprising that Christians might disagree as to the exact nature and content of Natural Theology.



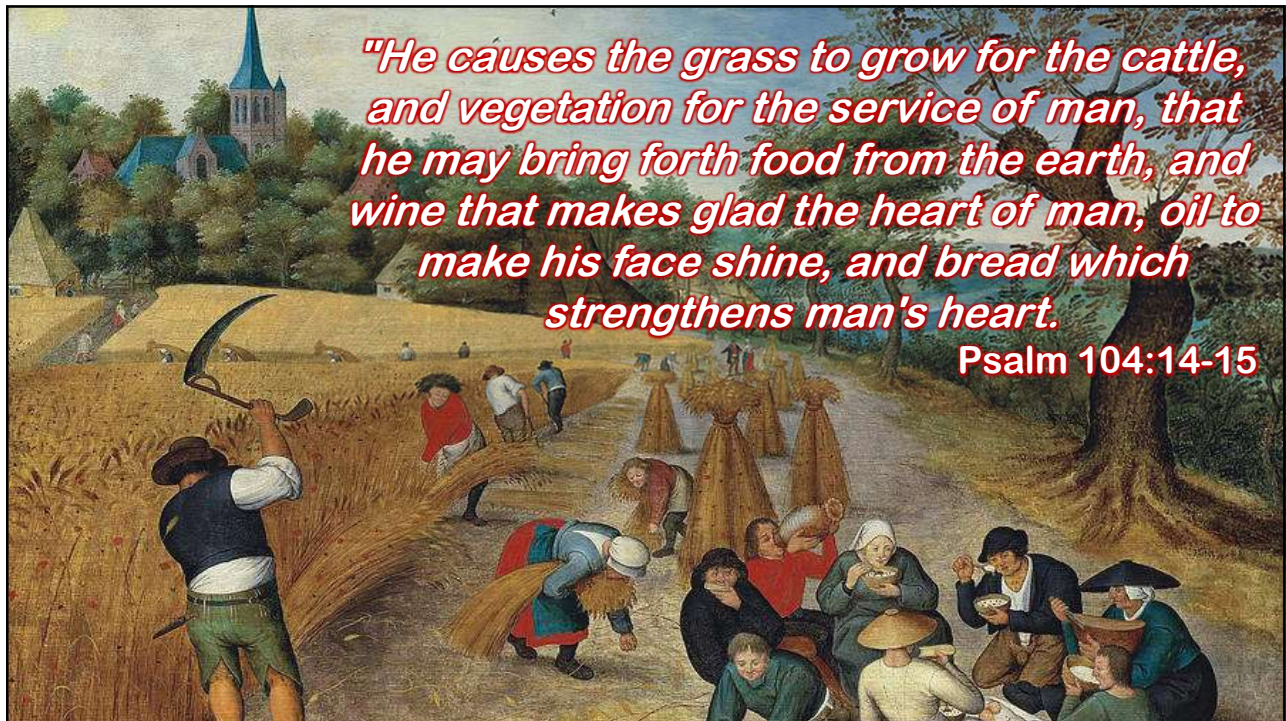
1. God's existence, deity, and power

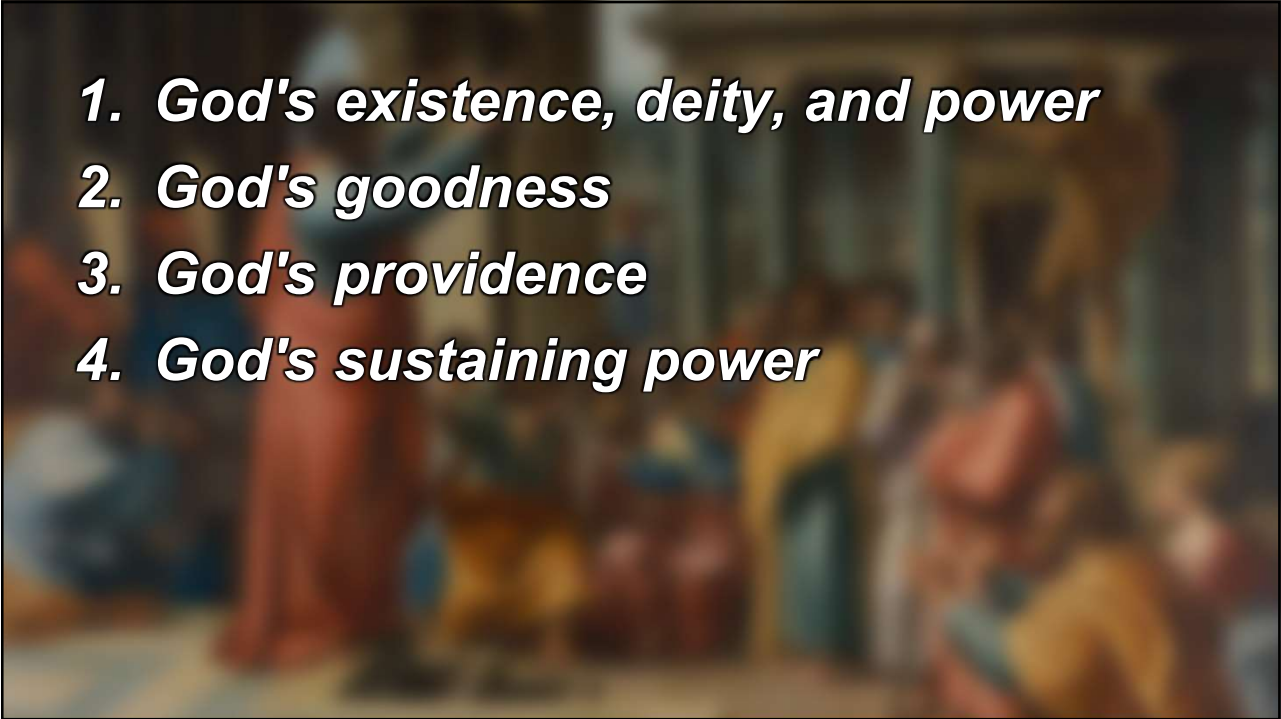


1. God's existence, deity, and power
2. God's goodness



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

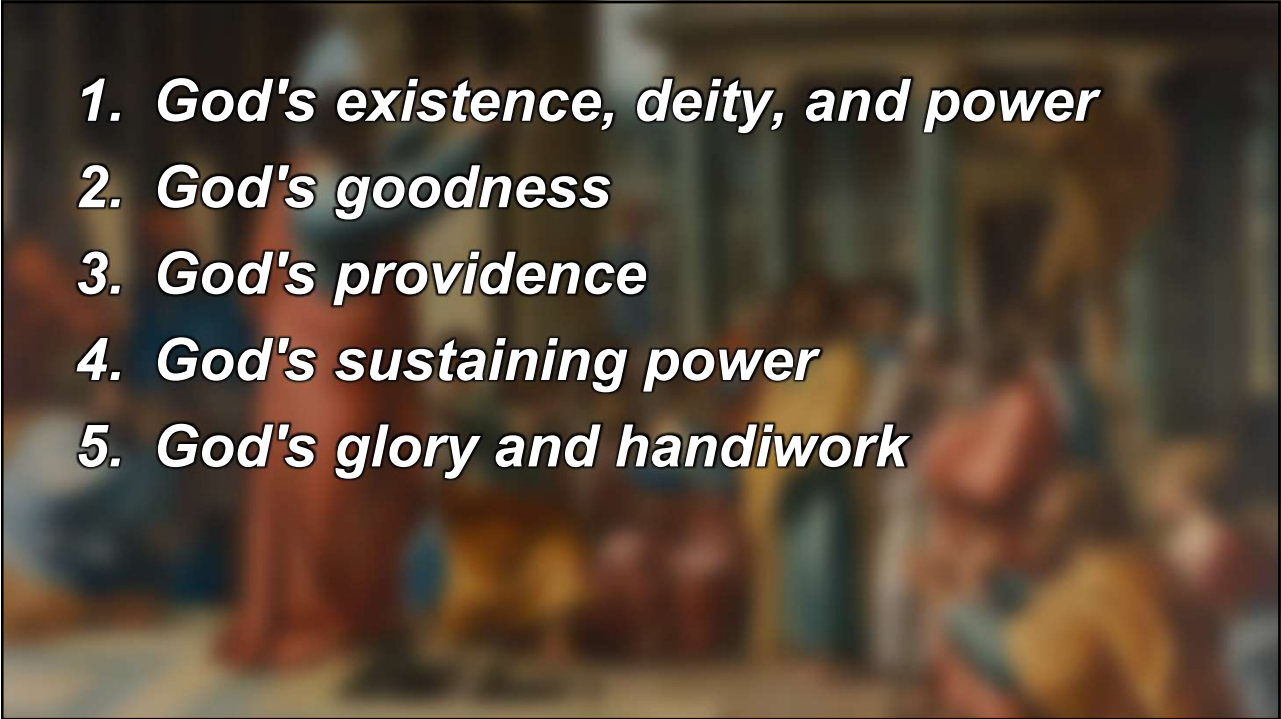


- 
1. ***God's existence, deity, and power***
 2. ***God's goodness***
 3. ***God's providence***
 4. ***God's sustaining power***



✧ Colossians 1:16-17 ✧

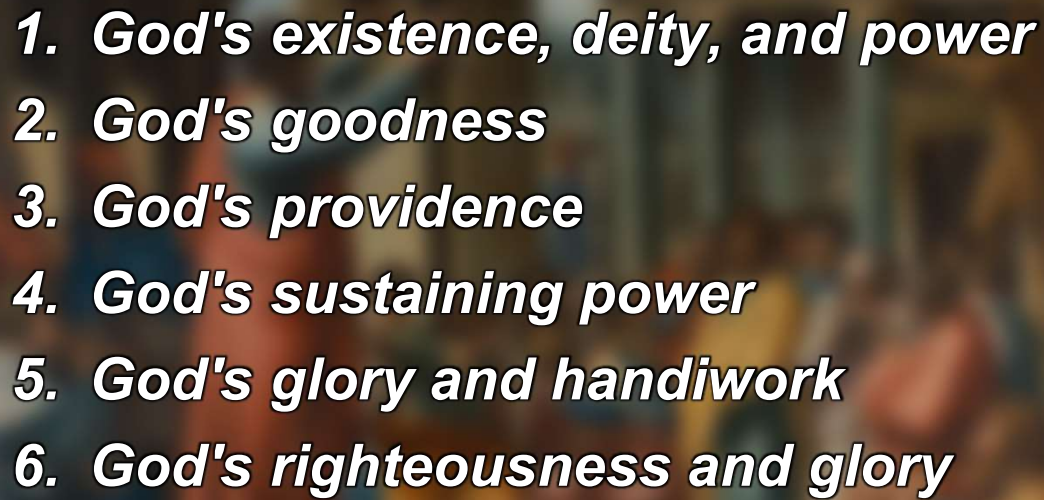
"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

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



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

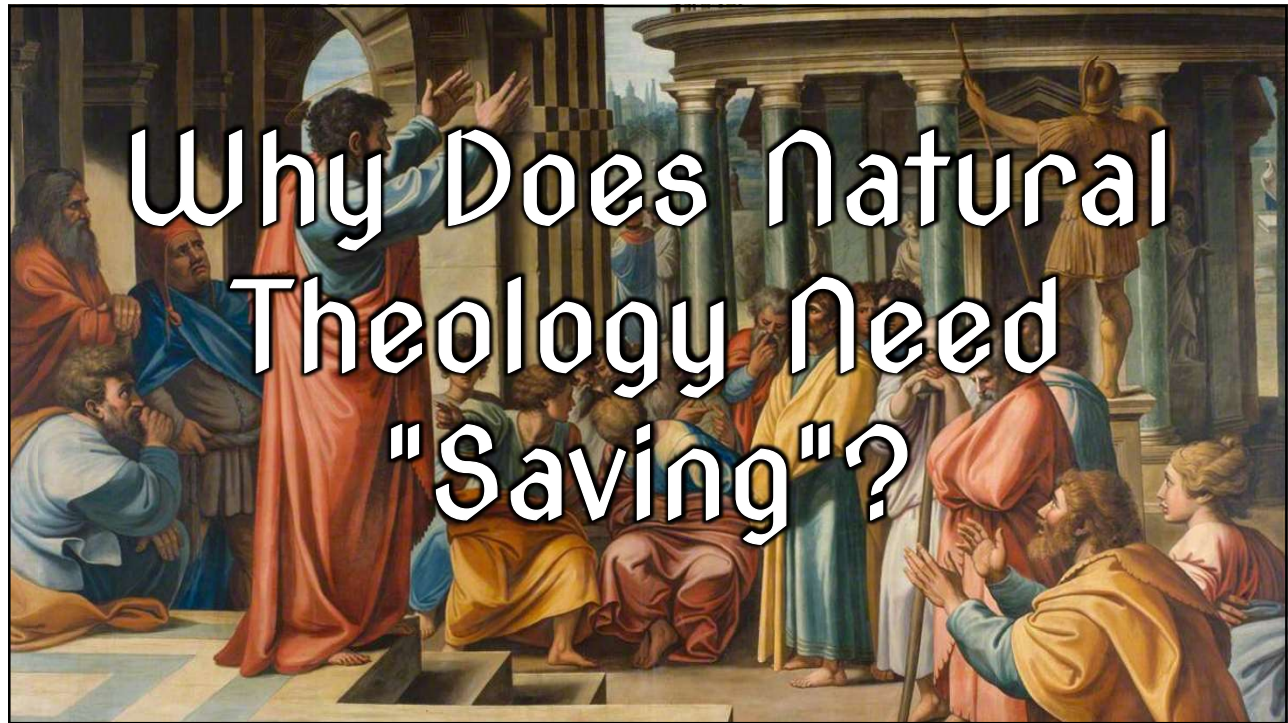
Psalm 19:1

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

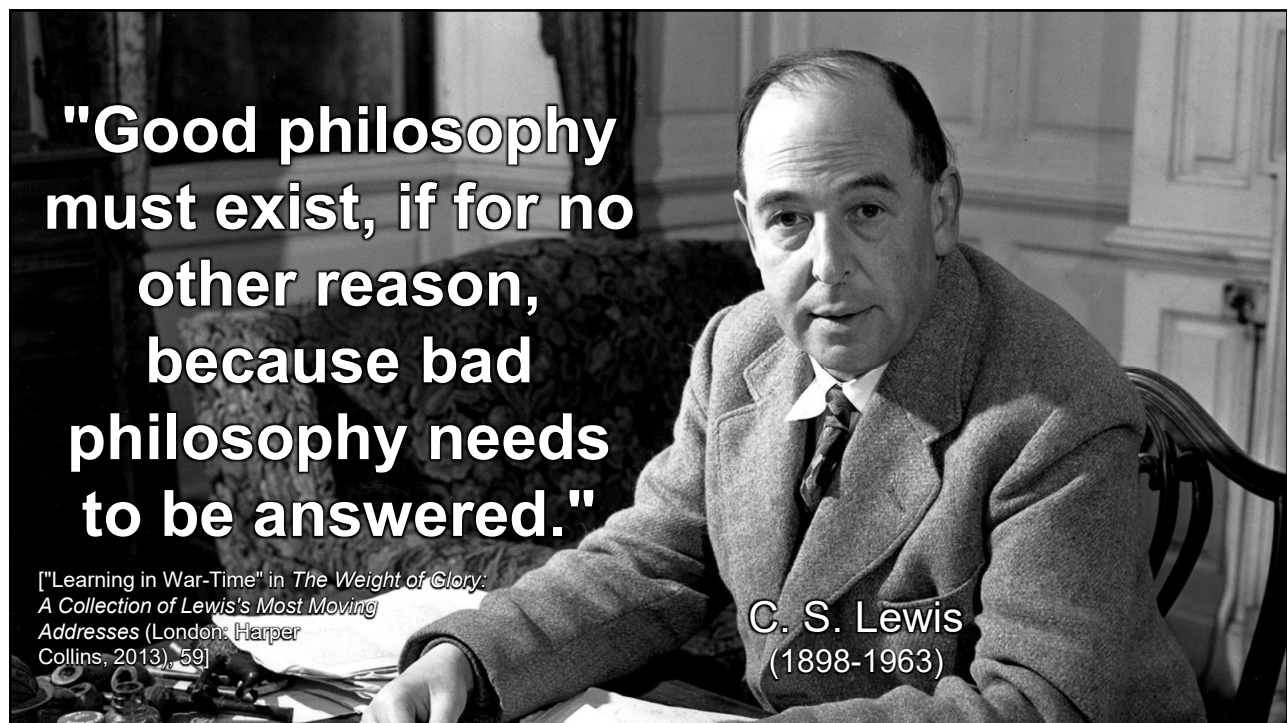


***The heavens declare
His righteousness,
and all the peoples
see His glory.***

Psalm 97:6



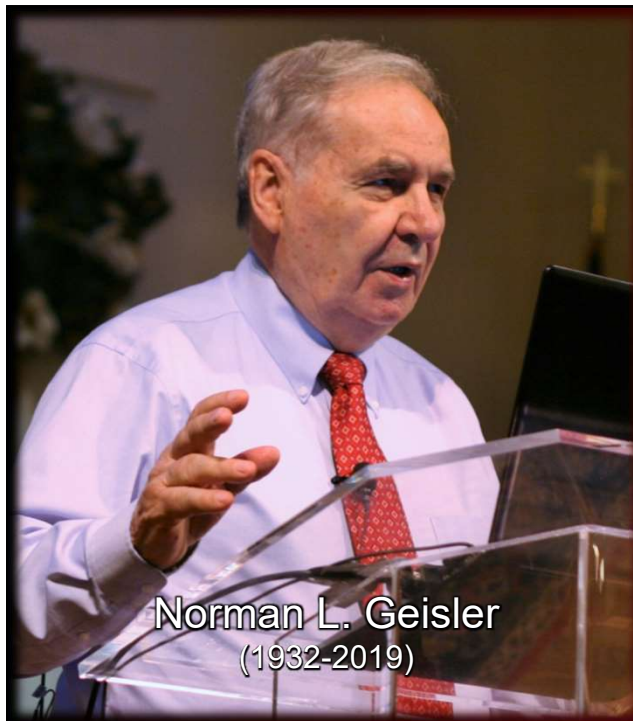
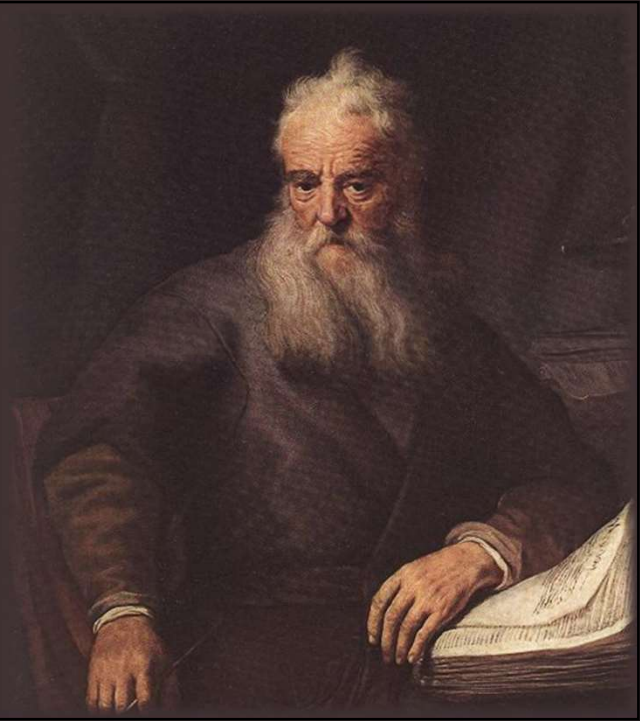
As more toxic philosophical voices have fogged the conversation throughout history, the need has arisen to appeal to deeper issues in philosophy and apologetics to demonstrate God's existence and attributes "through the things that are made" (Rom. 1:20).



✧ Colossians 2:8 ✧

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

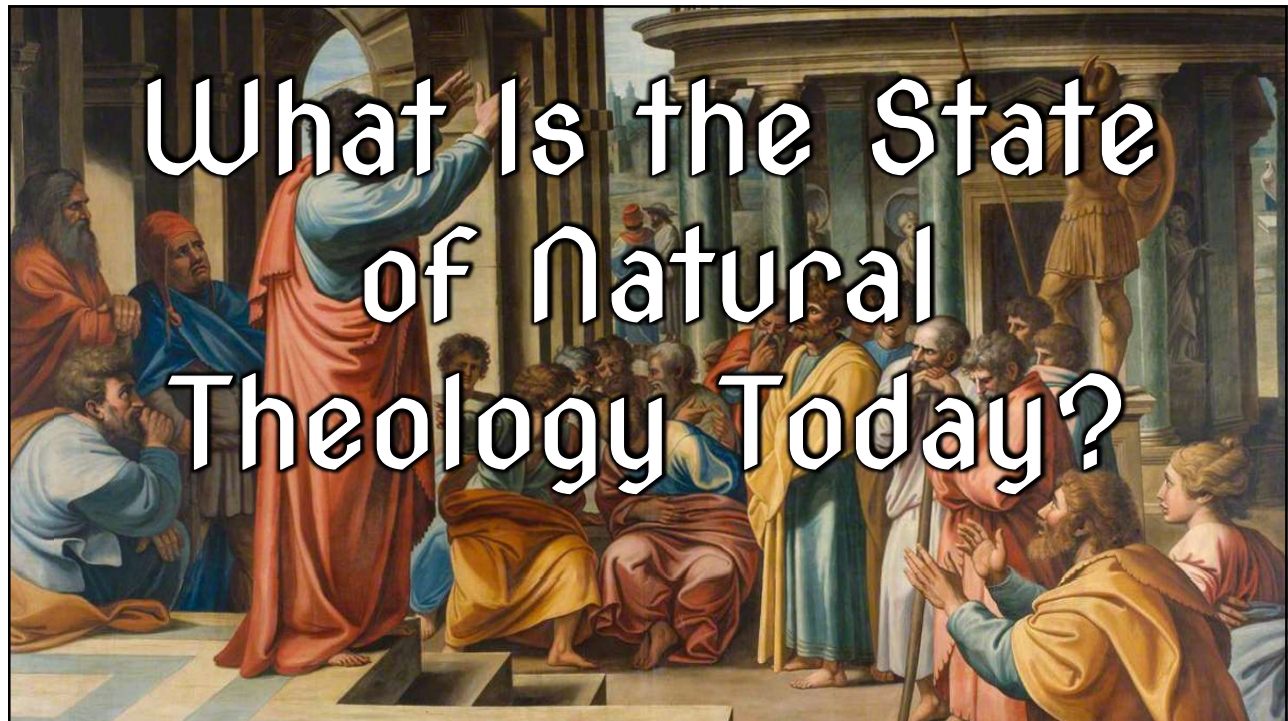
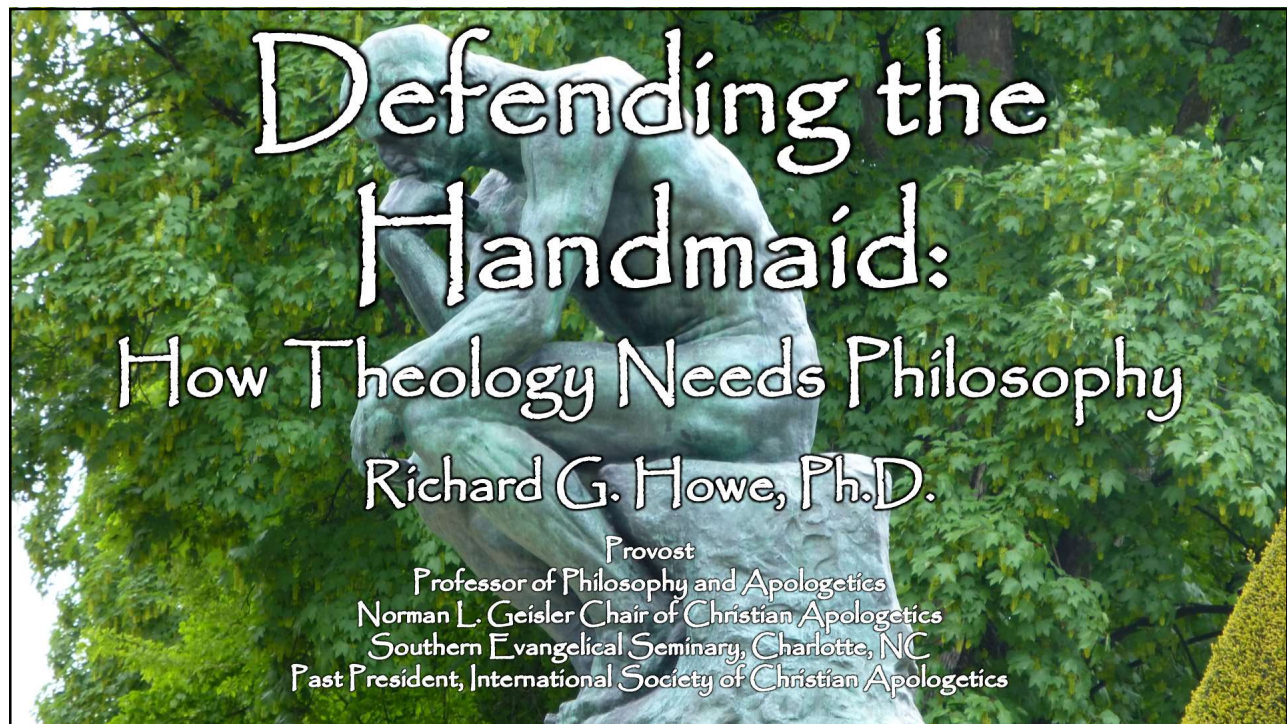
The Apostle Paul



Norman L. Geisler
(1932-2019)

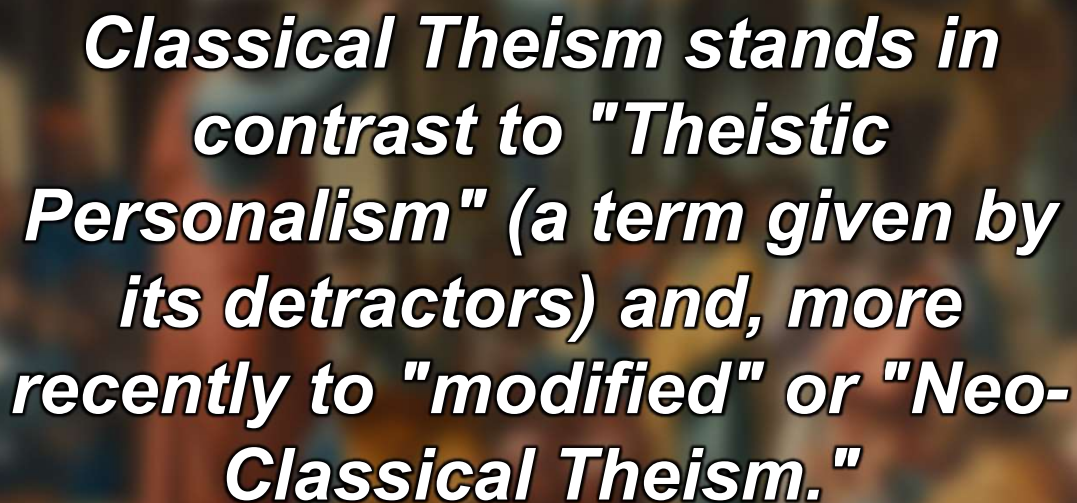
"We cannot properly *beware* of philosophy unless we *be aware* of philosophy."

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





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



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

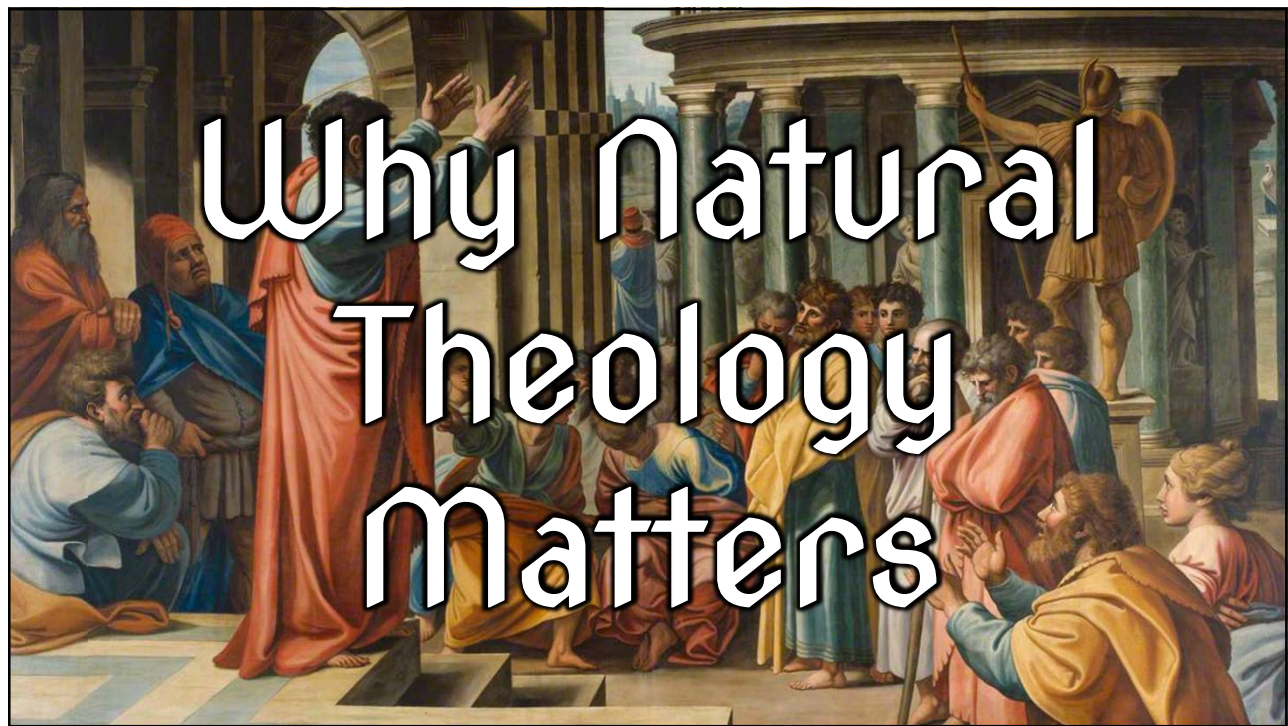
Natural Theology and Classical Theism have been widely embraced and celebrated in Christianity since the Church Fathers through the Middle Ages.



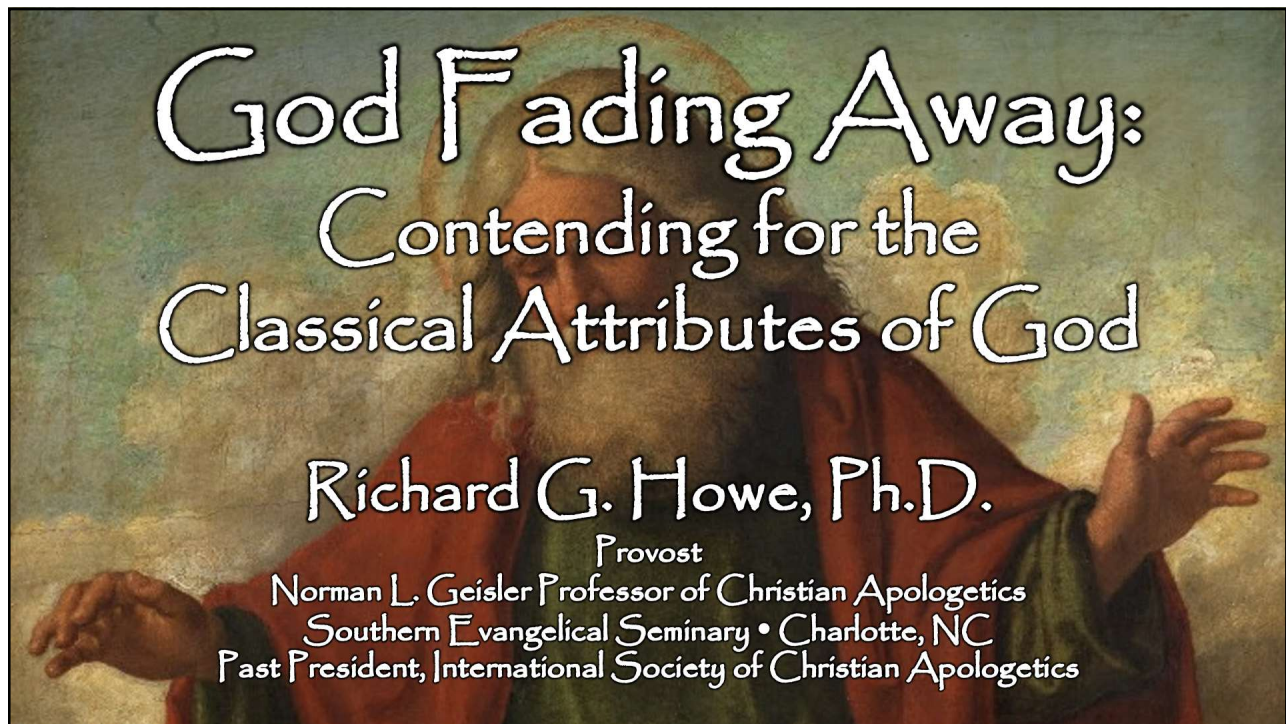
***This celebration has
continued in both Catholicism
and Protestantism until today.***



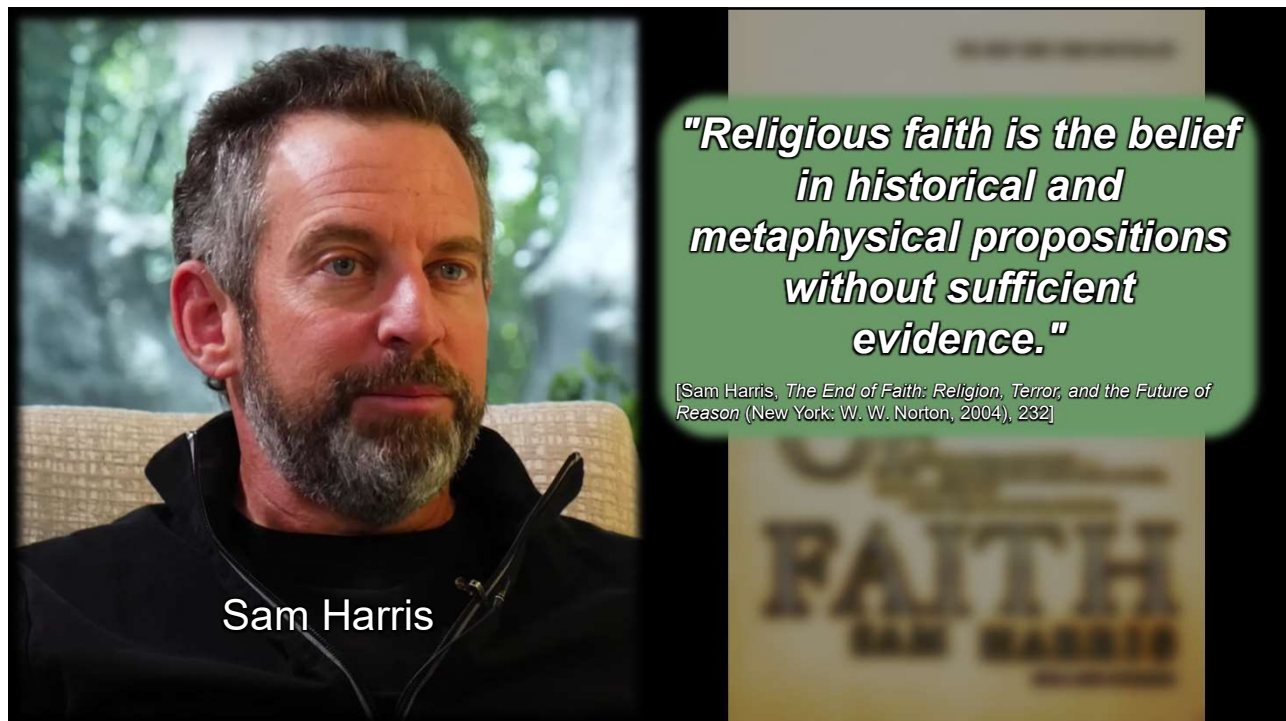
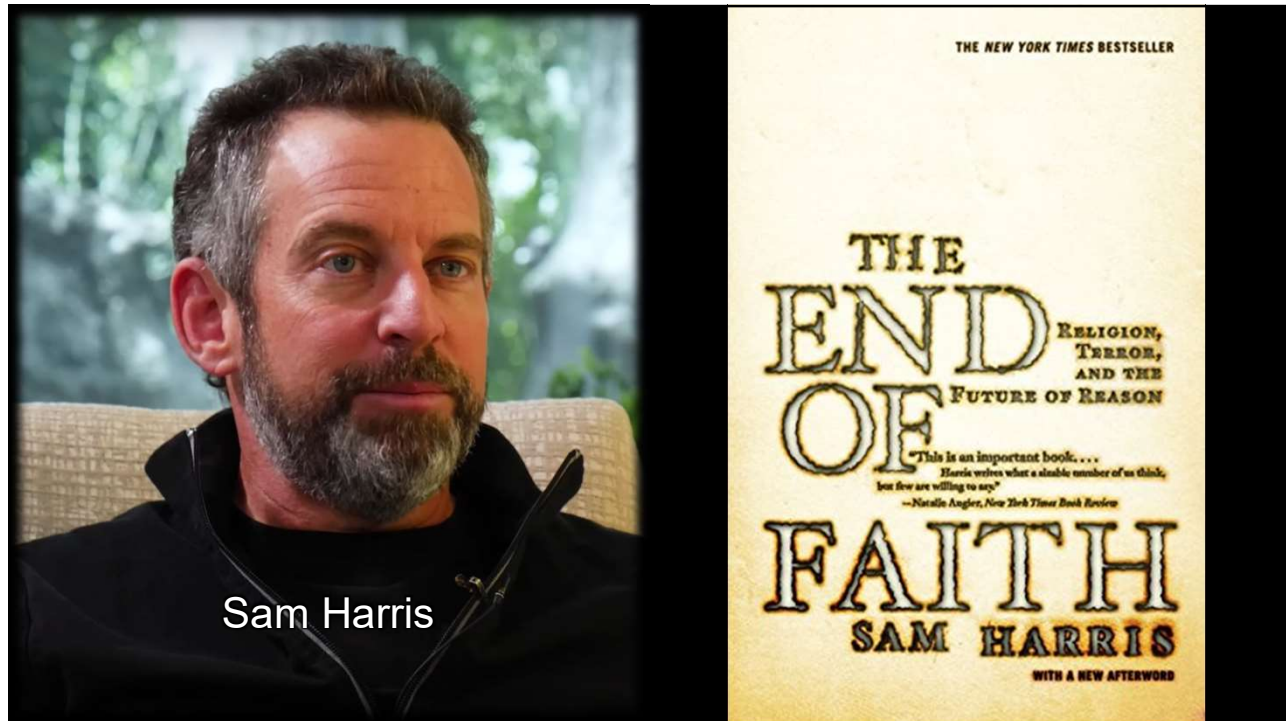
Norman L.
Geisler
(1932-2019)

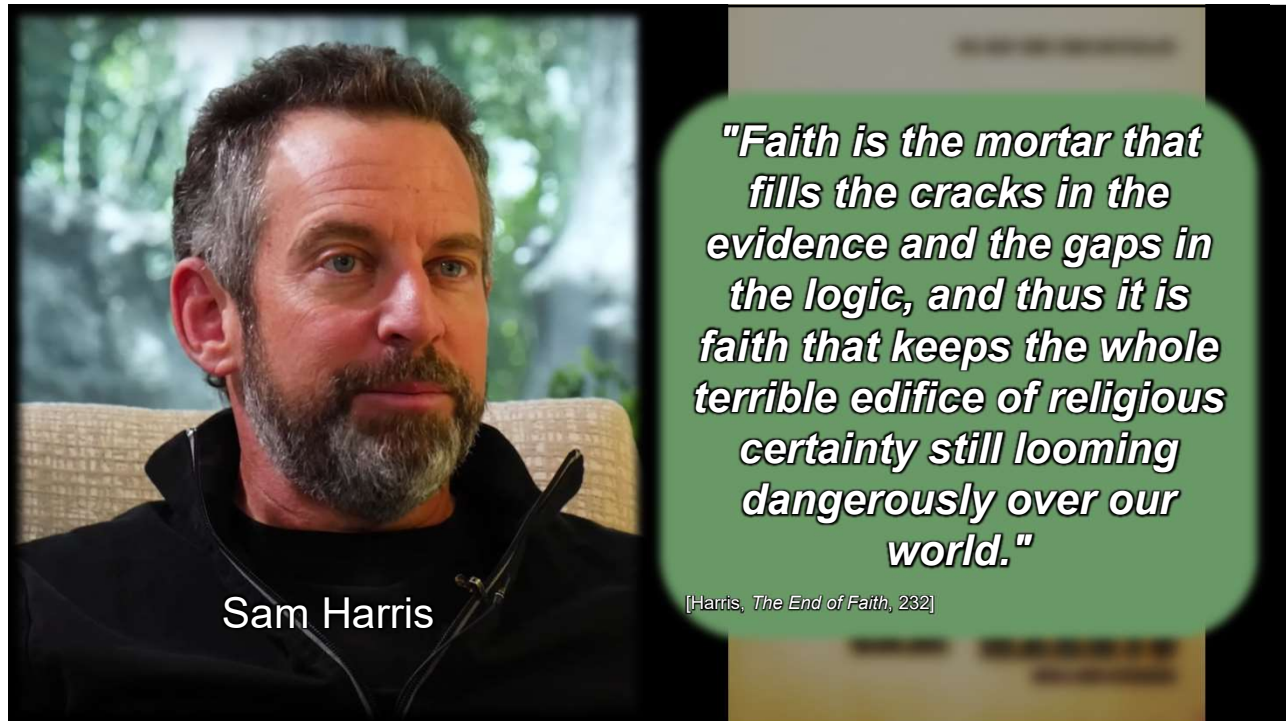


The Classical Theism arising from Natural Theology (as I am describing it here) is starkly criticized in a number of circles.

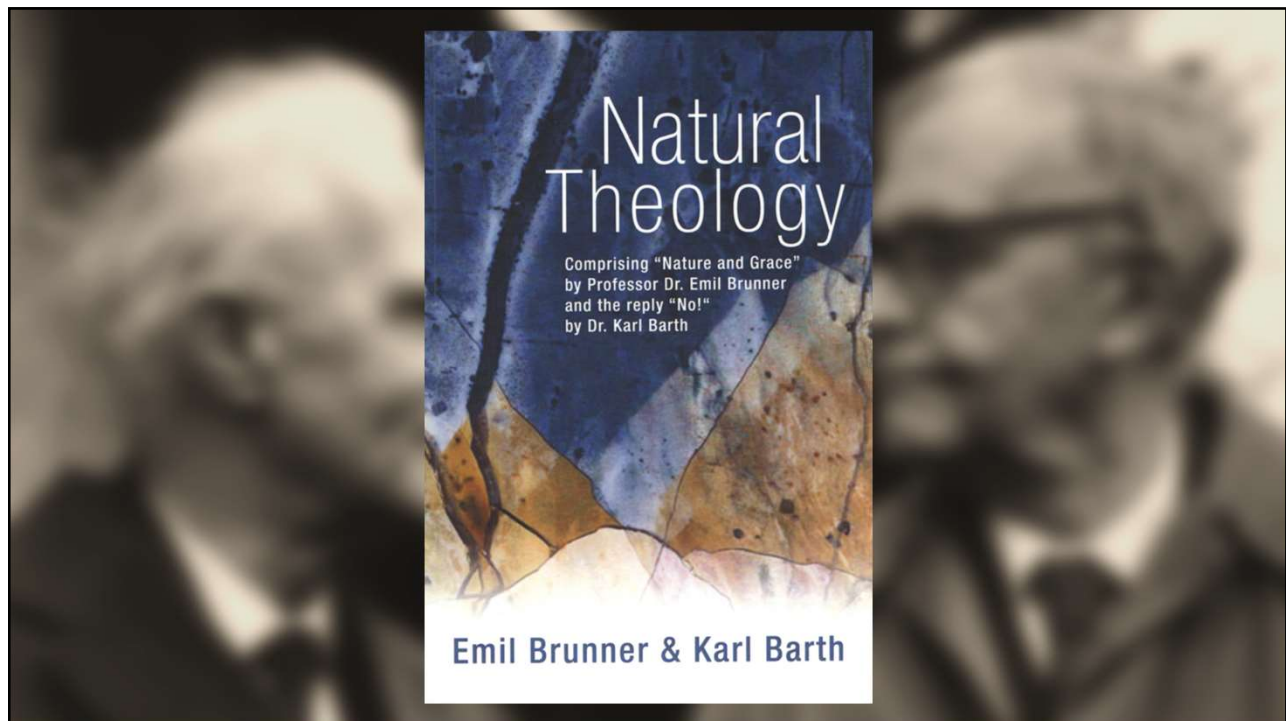


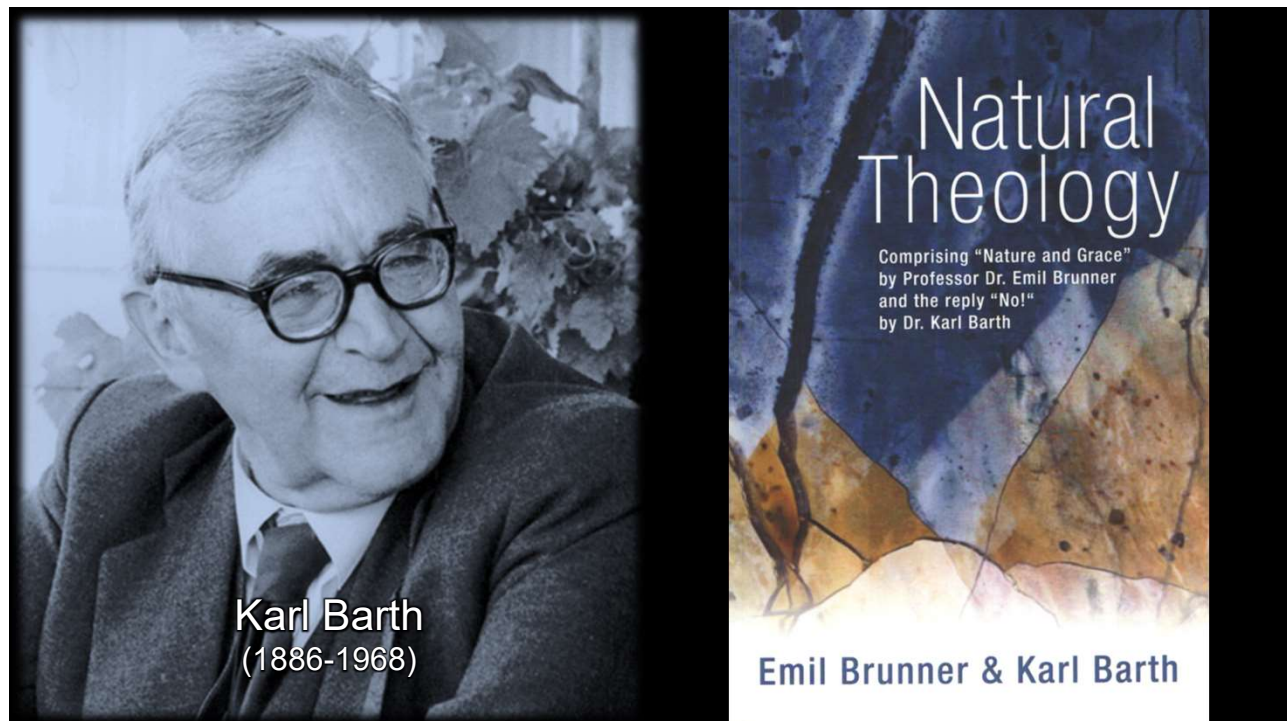
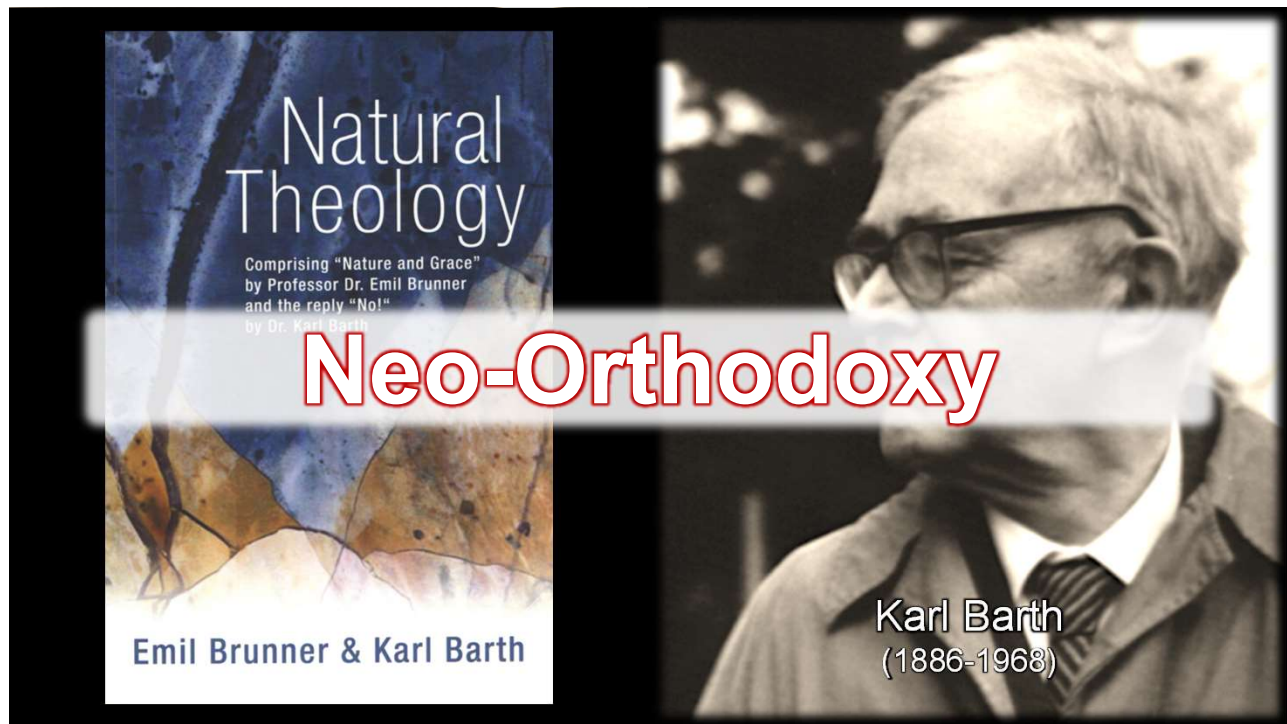
Not surprisingly, Natural Theology and Classical Theism (indeed theism in any form) is rejected by atheists.






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



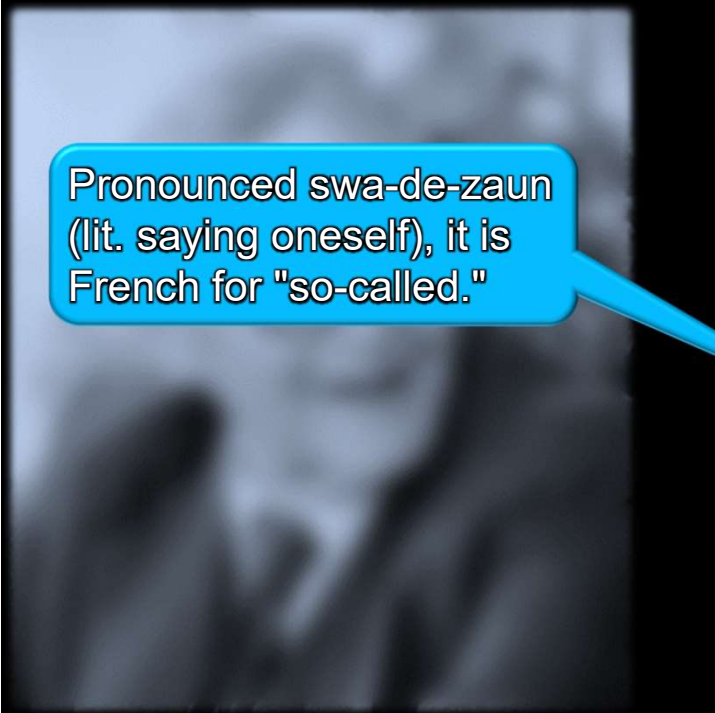




Karl Barth
(1886-1968)

"For of what use would be the purest theology based on grace and revelation to me if I dealt with the subjects of grace and revelation in the way in which natural theology usually deals with its soi-disant data derived from reason, nature and history ...? "

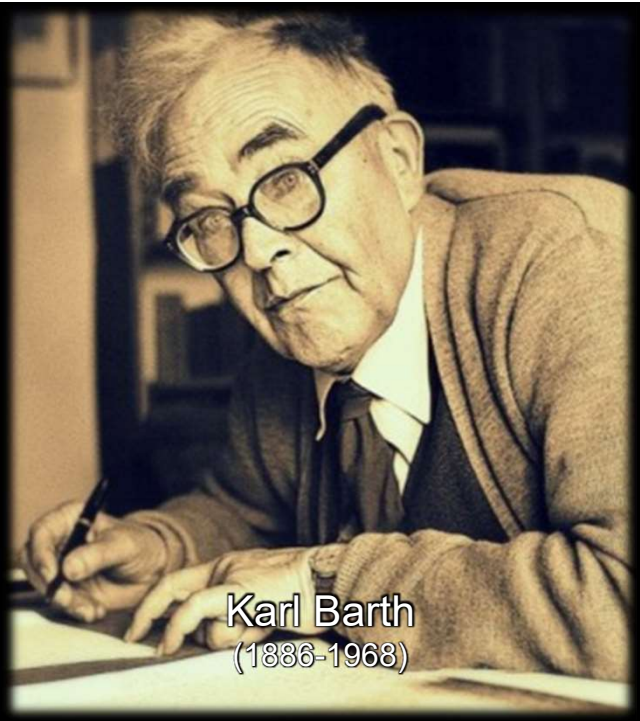
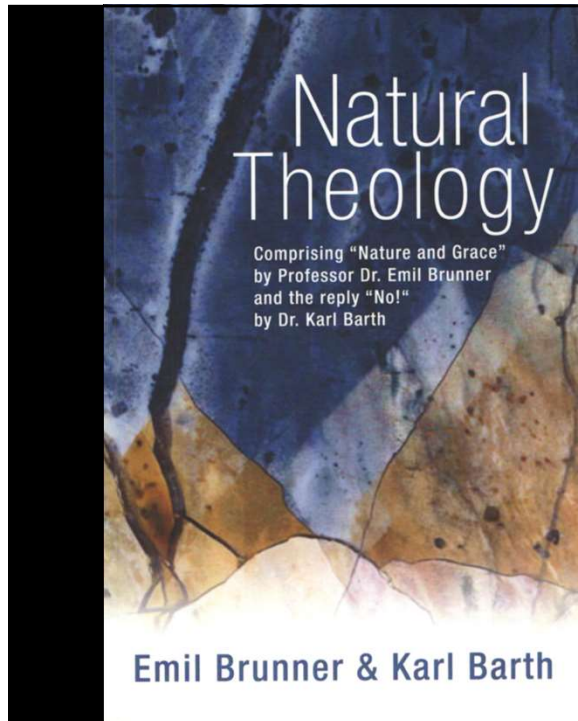
[Karl Barth, "No!" trans. Peter Fraenkel, in *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock: 2002), 77]



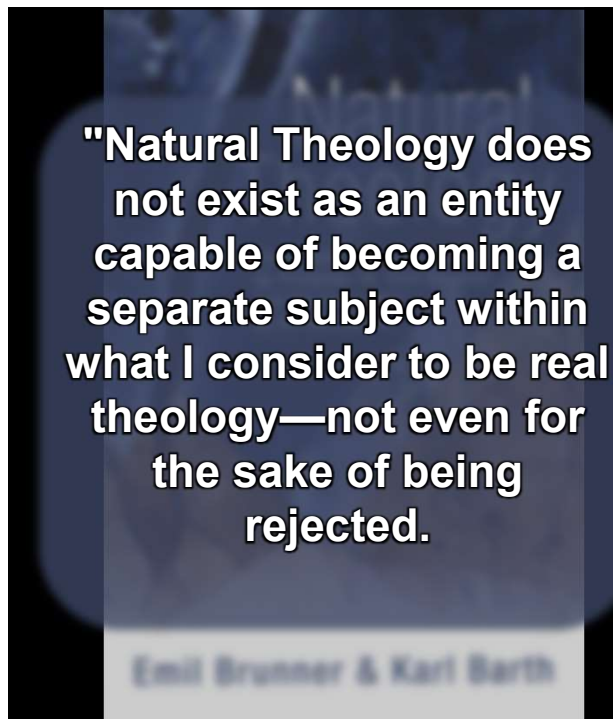
Pronounced swa-de-zaun (lit. saying oneself), it is French for "so-called."

*"For of what use would be the purest theology based on grace and revelation to me if I dealt with the subjects of grace and revelation in the way in which natural theology usually deals with its **soi-disant** data derived from reason, nature and history ...? "*

[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), 81]



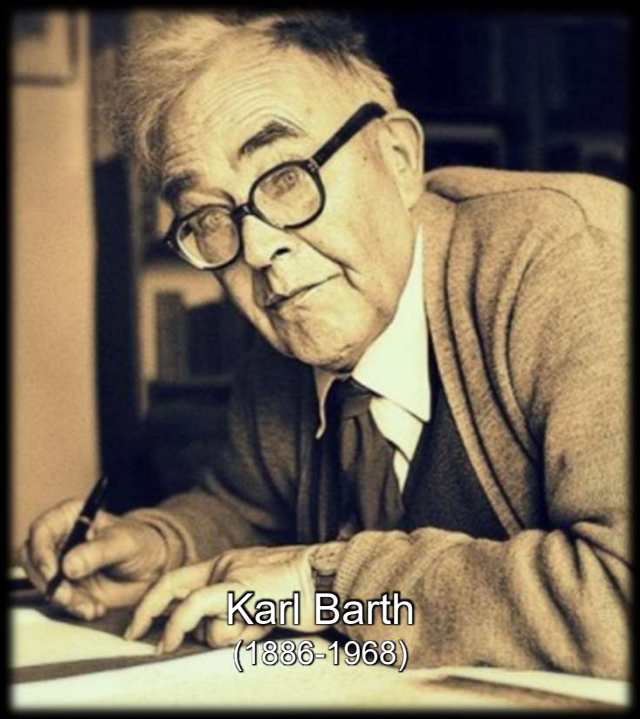
Karl Barth
(1886-1968)



Karl Barth
(1886-1968)

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

Emil Brunner & Karl Barth



Karl Barth
(1886-1968)

"All one can do is to turn one's back upon it as upon the great temptation and source 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)

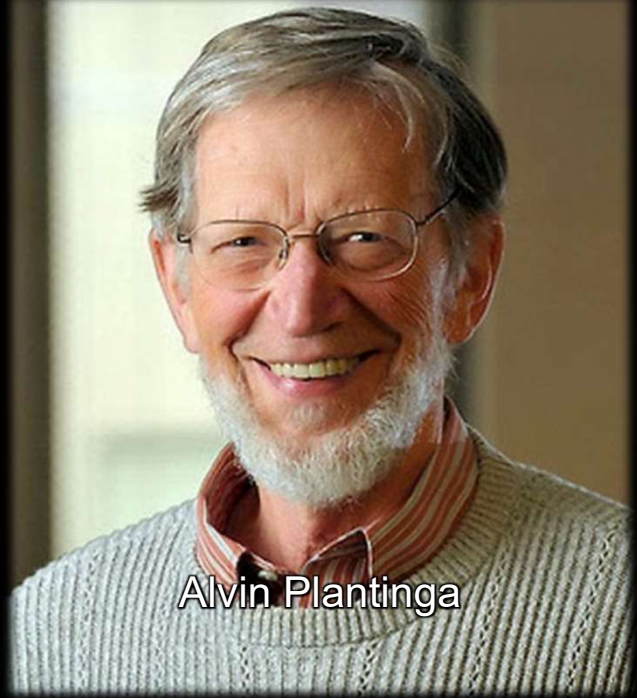
Some Christian philosophers who are committed to *Analytic Philosophy* are relatively unsympathetic towards the Natural Theology of the *Classical Philosophy* approach.

**GOD
AND
OTHER
MINDS**

A Study of the
Rational Justification
of Belief in God

With a new Preface by the author

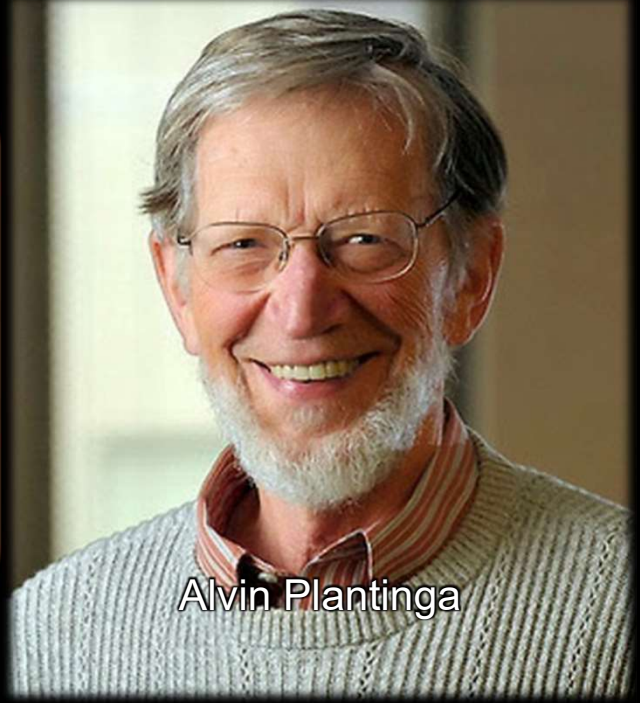
ALVIN PLANTINGA



Alvin Plantinga

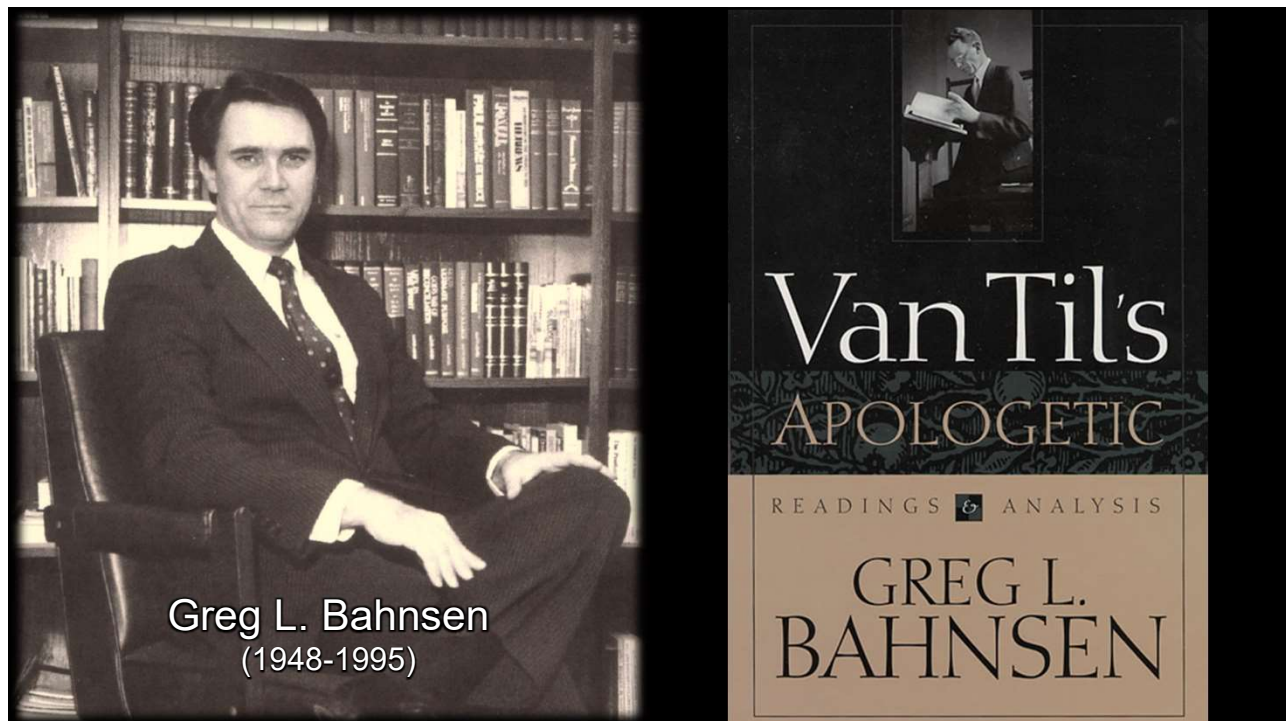
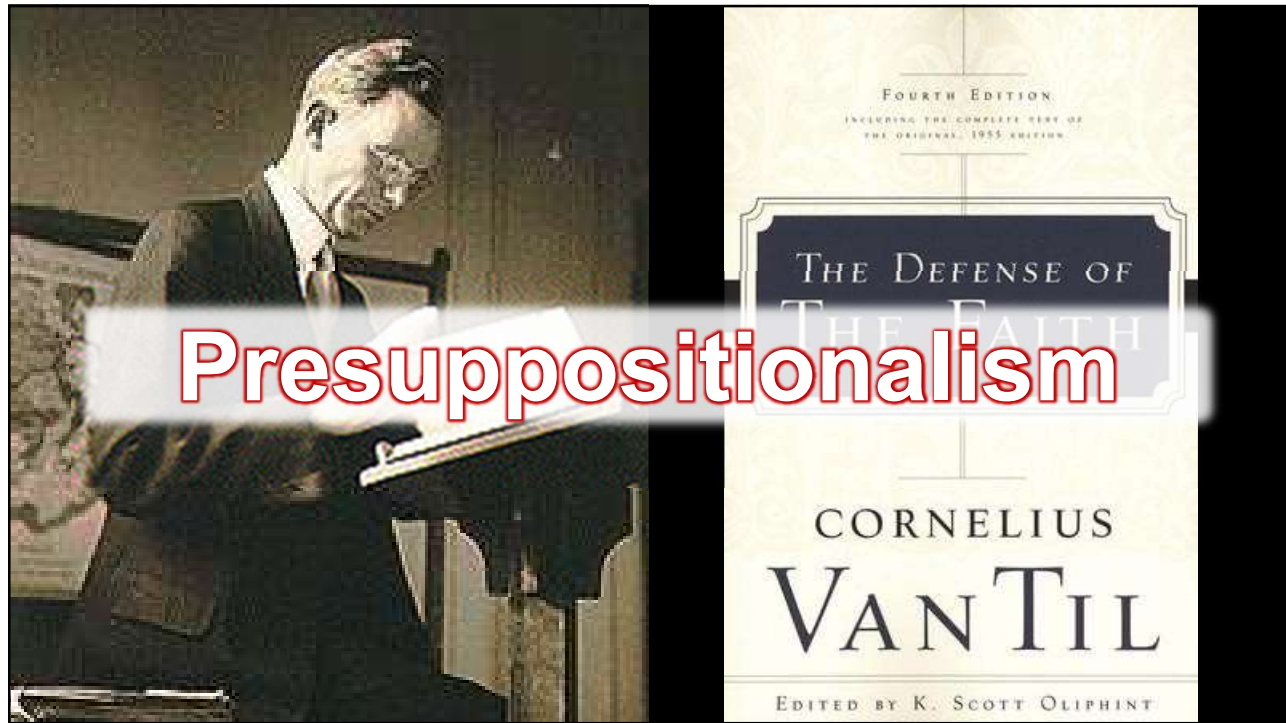
"It is hard to avoid the conclusion that natural theology does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question with which we began: Is it rational to believe in God?"

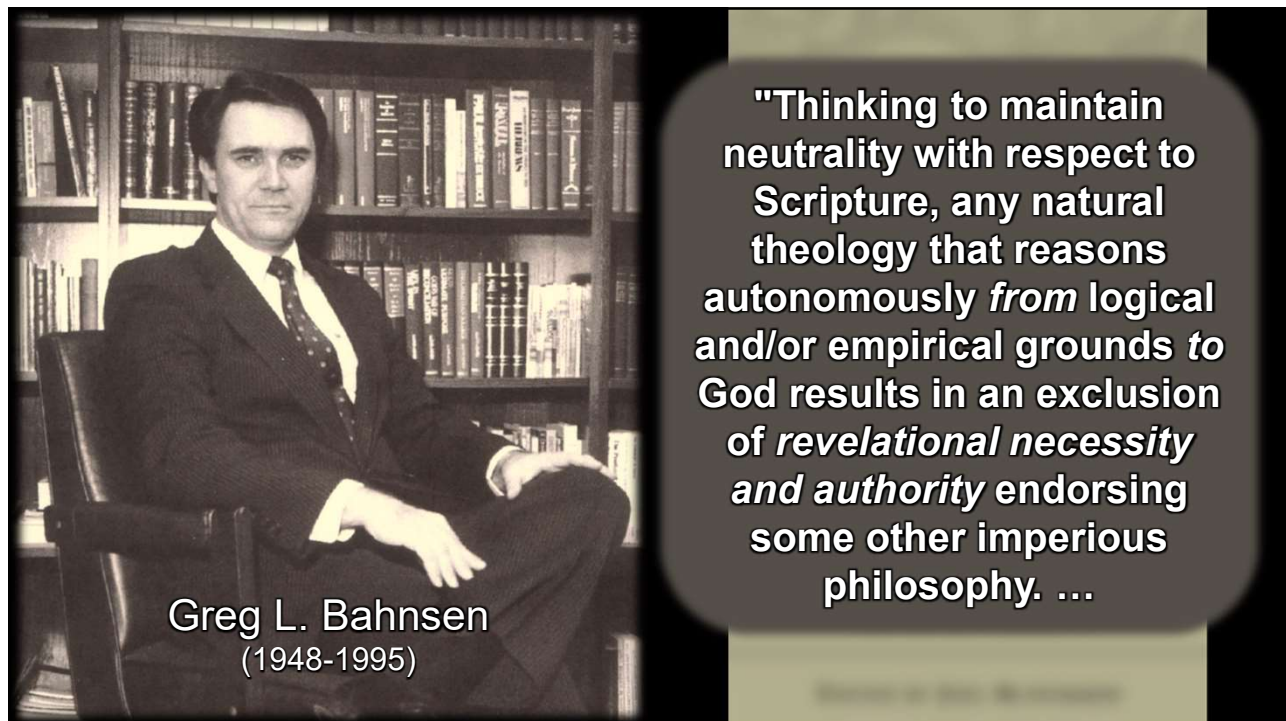
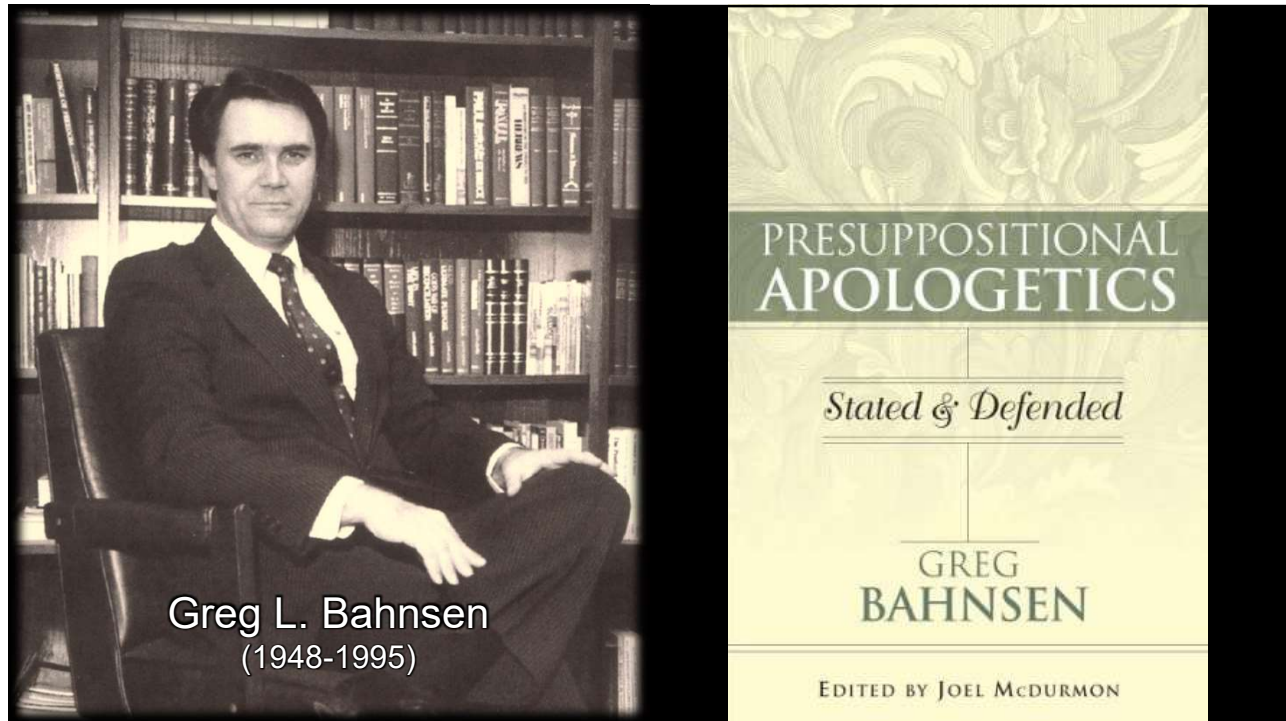
[Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967, 111)]

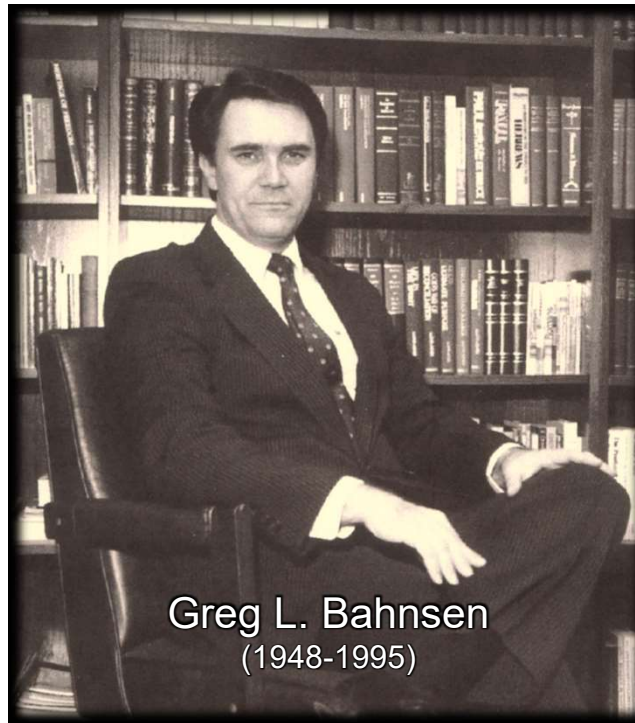


Alvin Plantinga

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

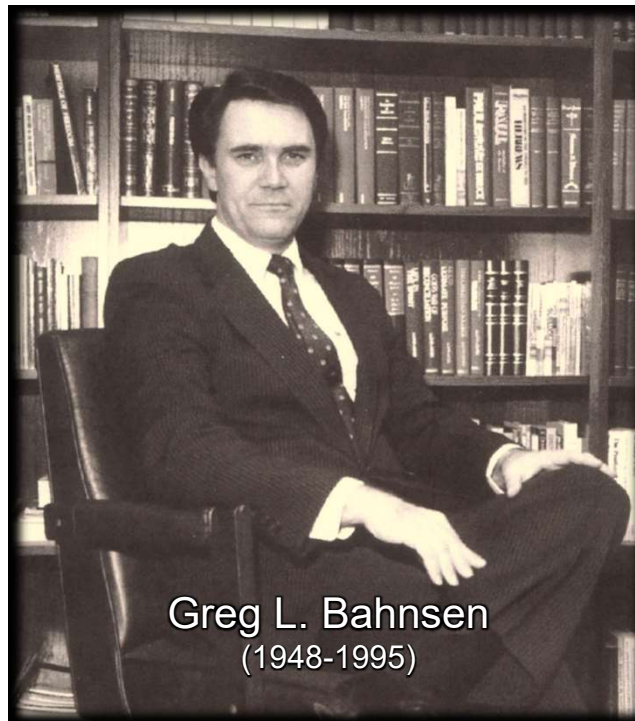






Greg L. Bahnsen
(1948-1995)

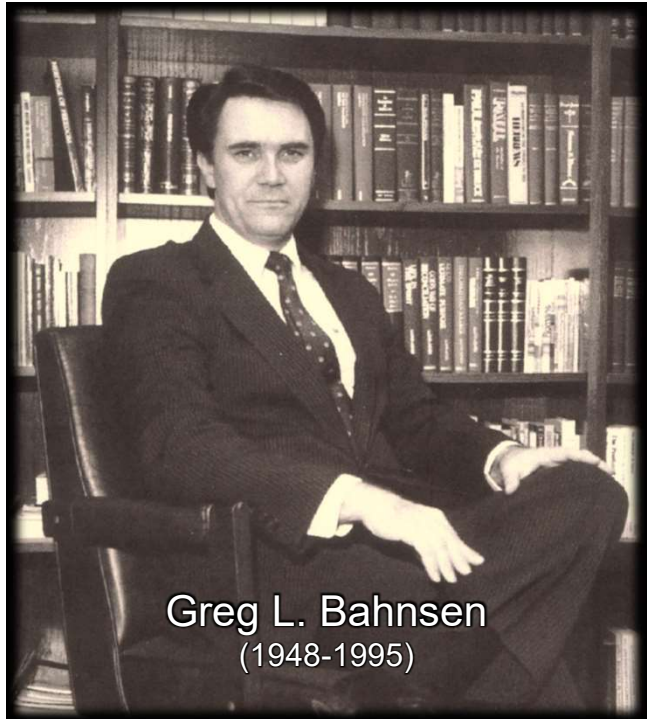
"Because the clear revelation of God in nature's and man's constitution is suppressed in unrighteousness, it is impossible for theology or apologetics to base their efforts in a rebellious understanding of the world or history, independently working up to a verification of God's written revelation."



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]



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

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

Home About Older posts

Sep 14

Some Thoughts on Natural Theology and Romans 1



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graph TD
    God[God] --> GR[General Revelation  
God's revelation through creation of His existence and attributes.  
Ps. 19; Ps. 97; Rom. 1:20; Rom. 2:14-15; Acts 17:14]
    God --> SR[Special Revelation  
God's revelation through His prophets, apostles and the Lord Jesus of His existence, attributes, will, and gospel.  
John 14:25-26; 16:12-13; 2 Tim. 3:16]
    GR --> NT[Natural Theology  
Sound reason's attendance to creation]
    SR --> BT[Biblical Theology  
Sound reason's attendance to Scripture]
    NT --> ST[Systematic Theology]
    BT --> ST
  
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Recently I was brainstorming about how to explain the basics of the ways in which God has revealed Himself to mankind. My thinking arose in the context of trying to clarify for some friends how the notion of *Sola Scriptura* relates to God's revelation of Himself

Pages

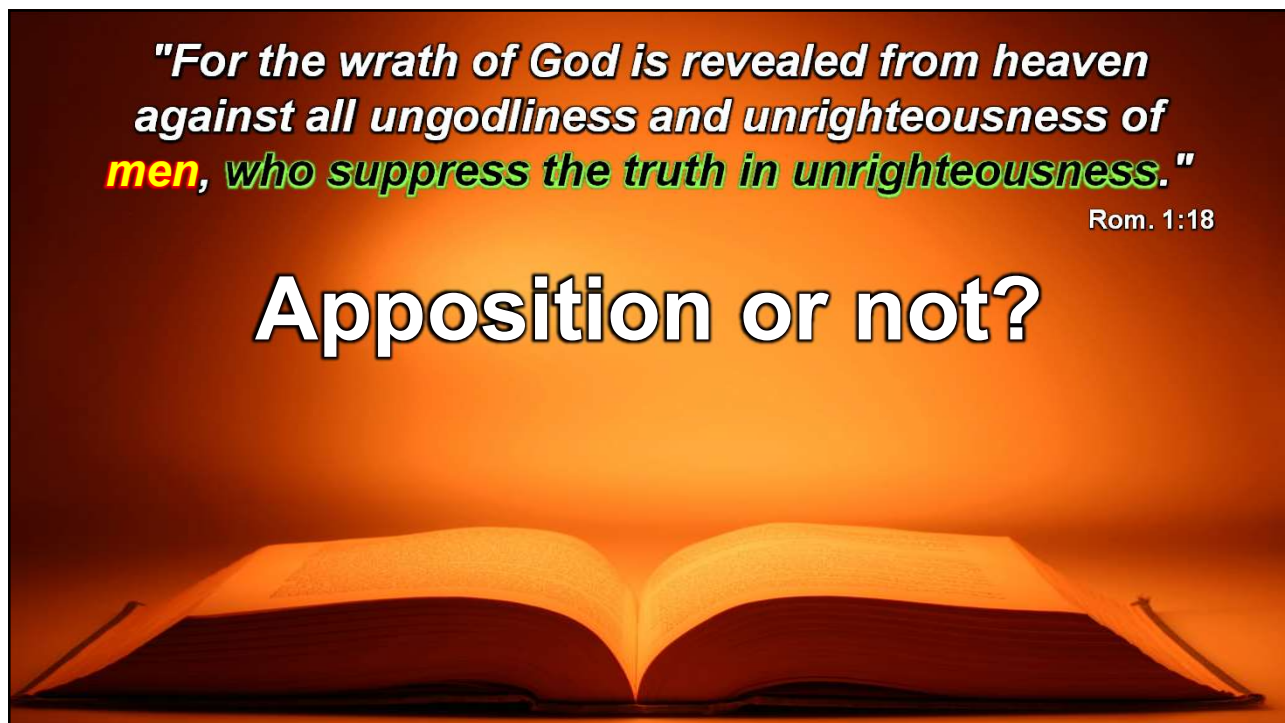
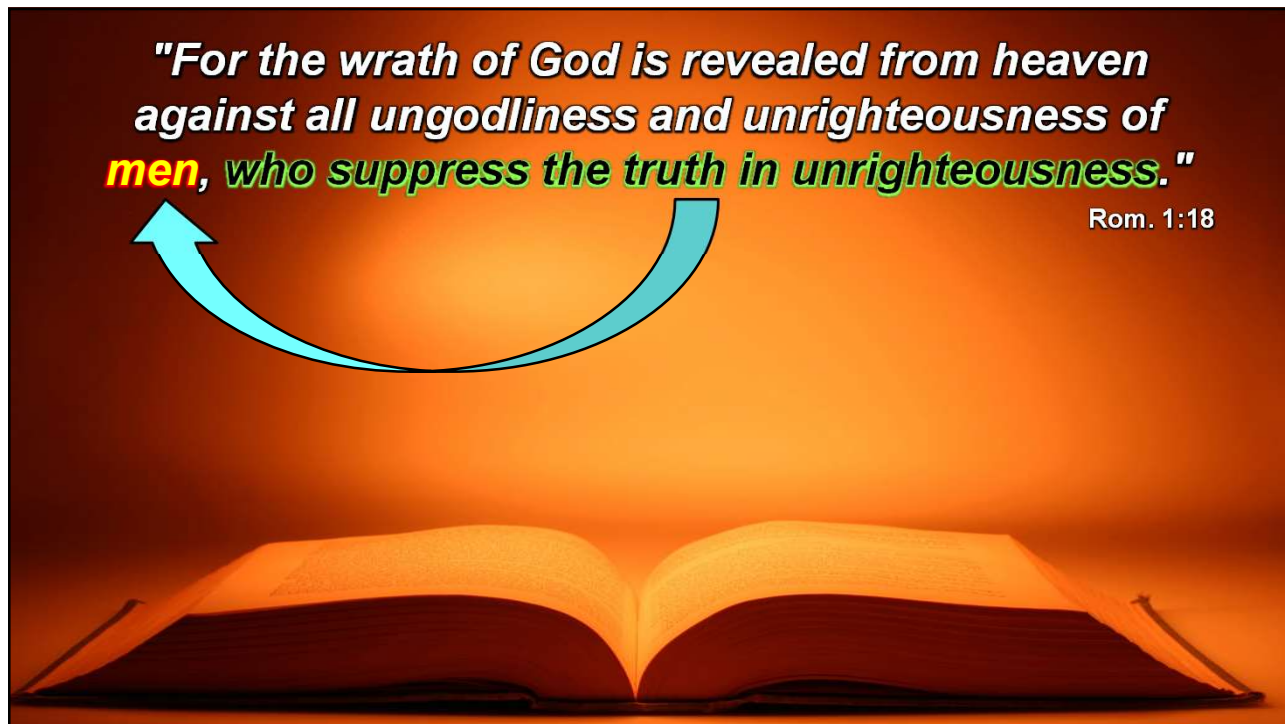
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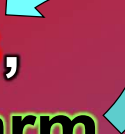
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- Cold Case Christianity
- Cross Examined
- Defending Inerrancy
- Evangelical Philosophical Society
- Evangelical Theological Society
- Free Grace Alliance
- Grace Evangelical Society
- International Society of Christian Apologetics
- Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.




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



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

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

"People in 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'.

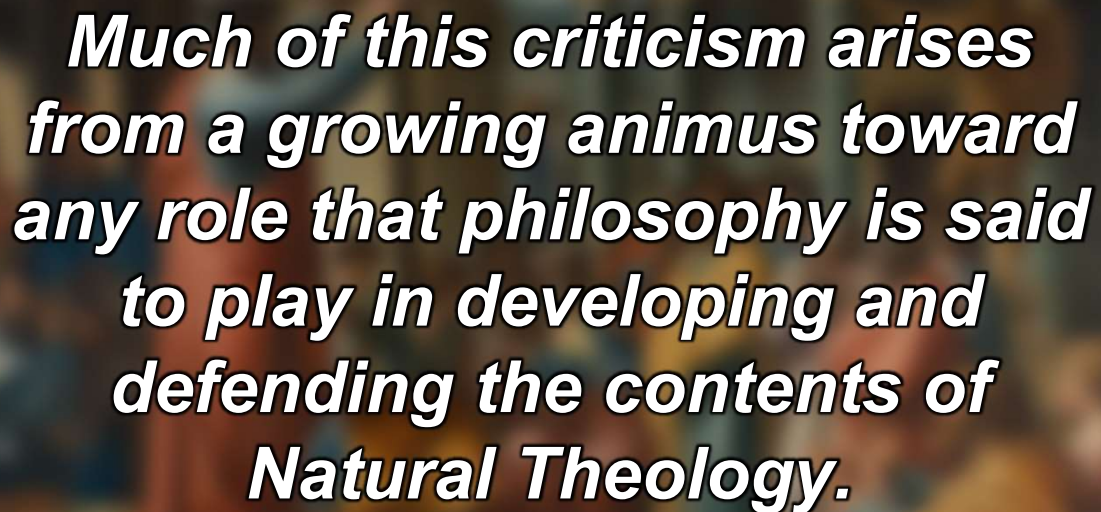
Instead, the phrase 'who live below the poverty line' is a subset of 'people who live in America'.

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

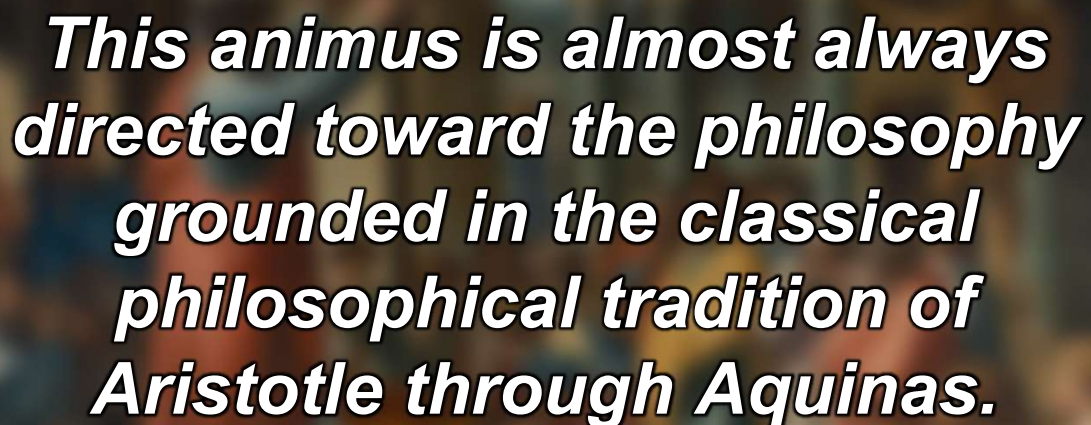
Rom. 1:18

All men or a subset of men?

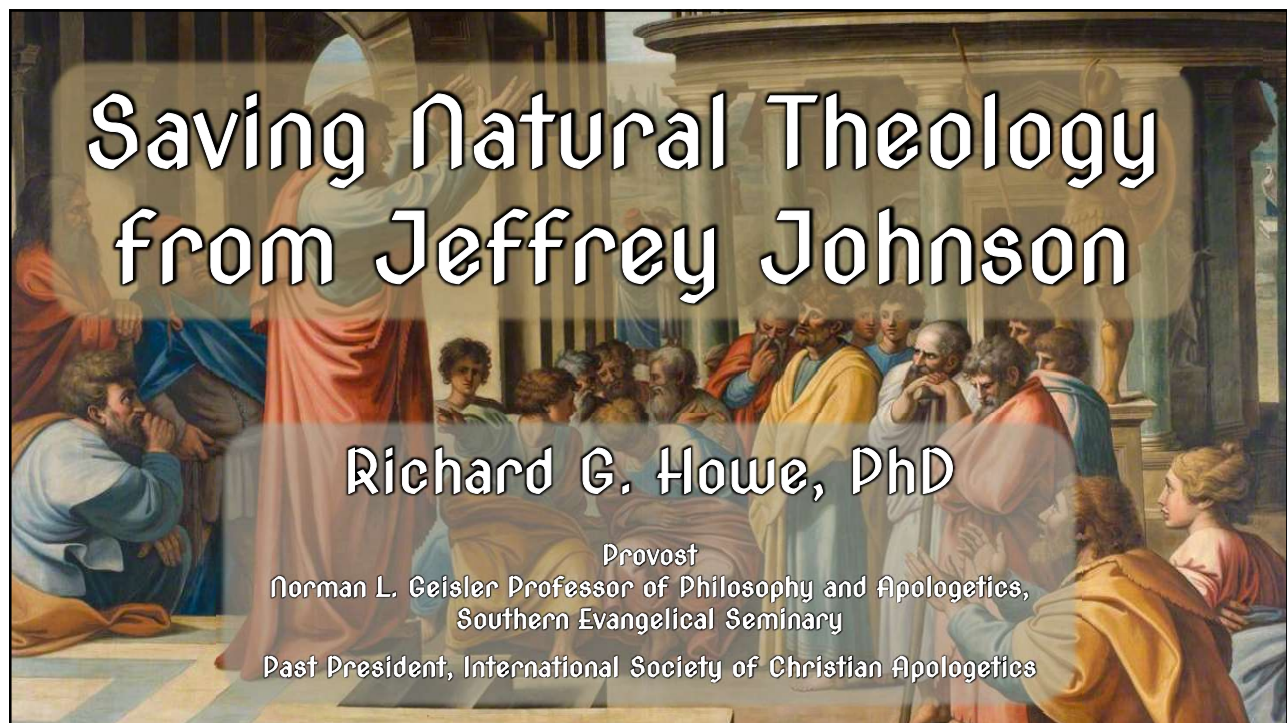
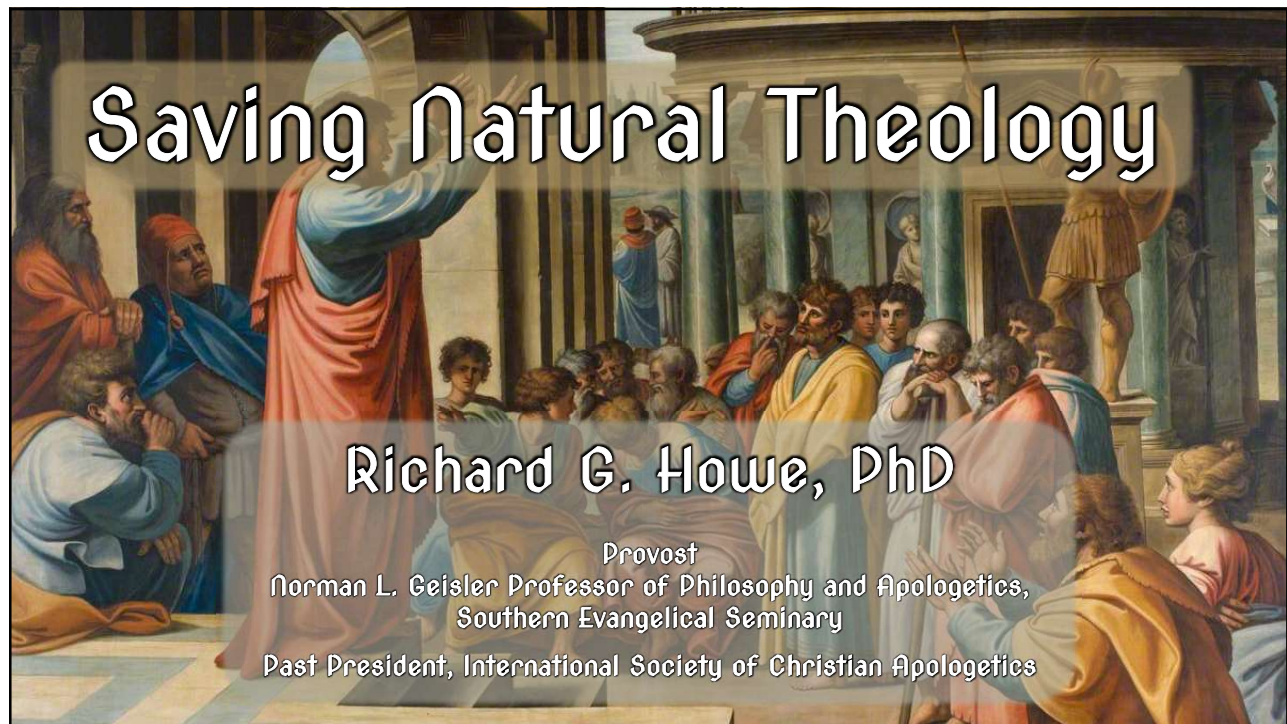
- 
- 
- ❖ knew God (v. 21)
 - ❖ did not glorify Him as God (v. 21)
 - ❖ were not thankful (v. 21)
 - ❖ became futile in their thoughts (v. 21)
 - ❖ foolish hearts were darkened (v. 21)
 - ❖ became fools (v. 22)
 - ❖ changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and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

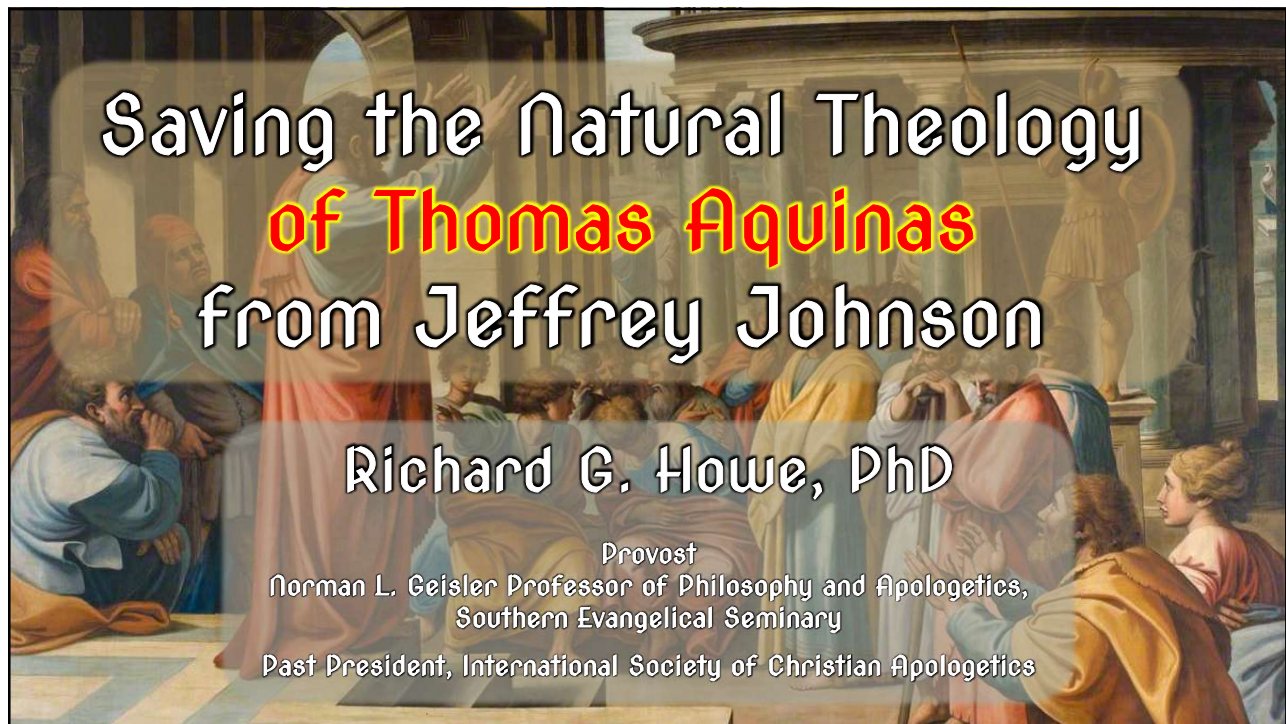


Much of this criticism arises from a growing animus toward any role that philosophy is said to play in developing and defending the contents of Natural Theology.



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





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

