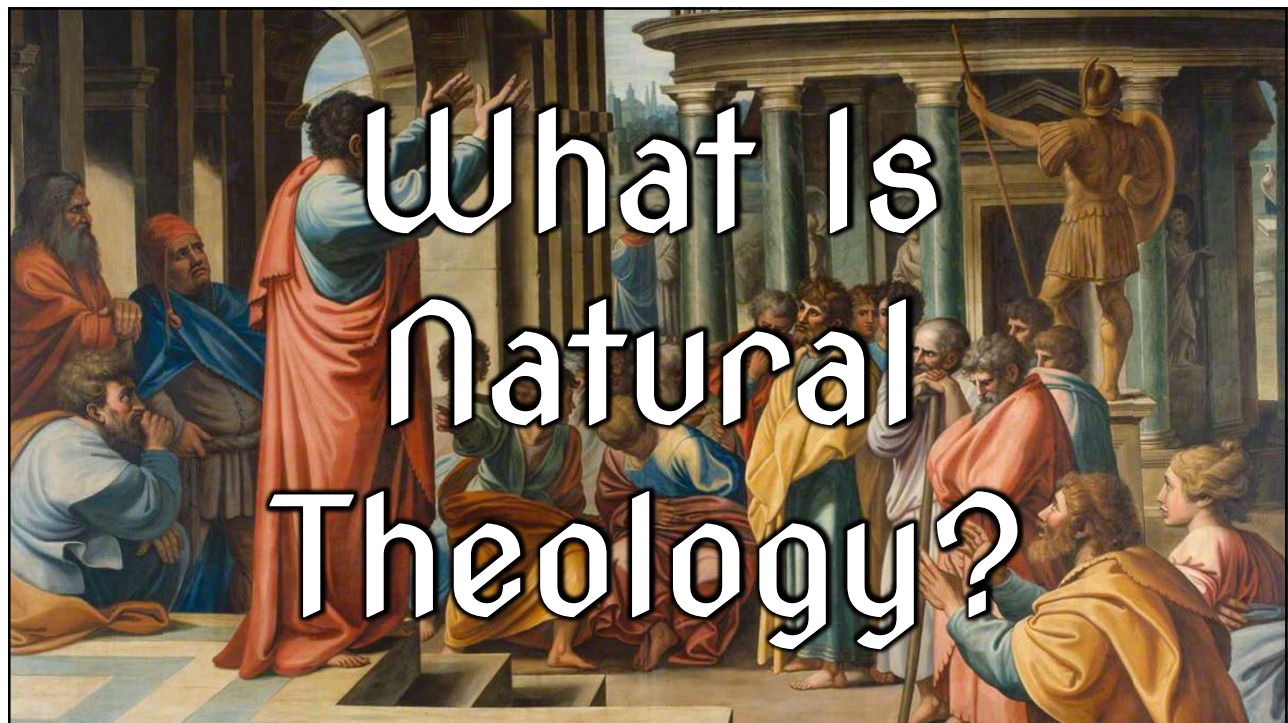


# Natural Theology

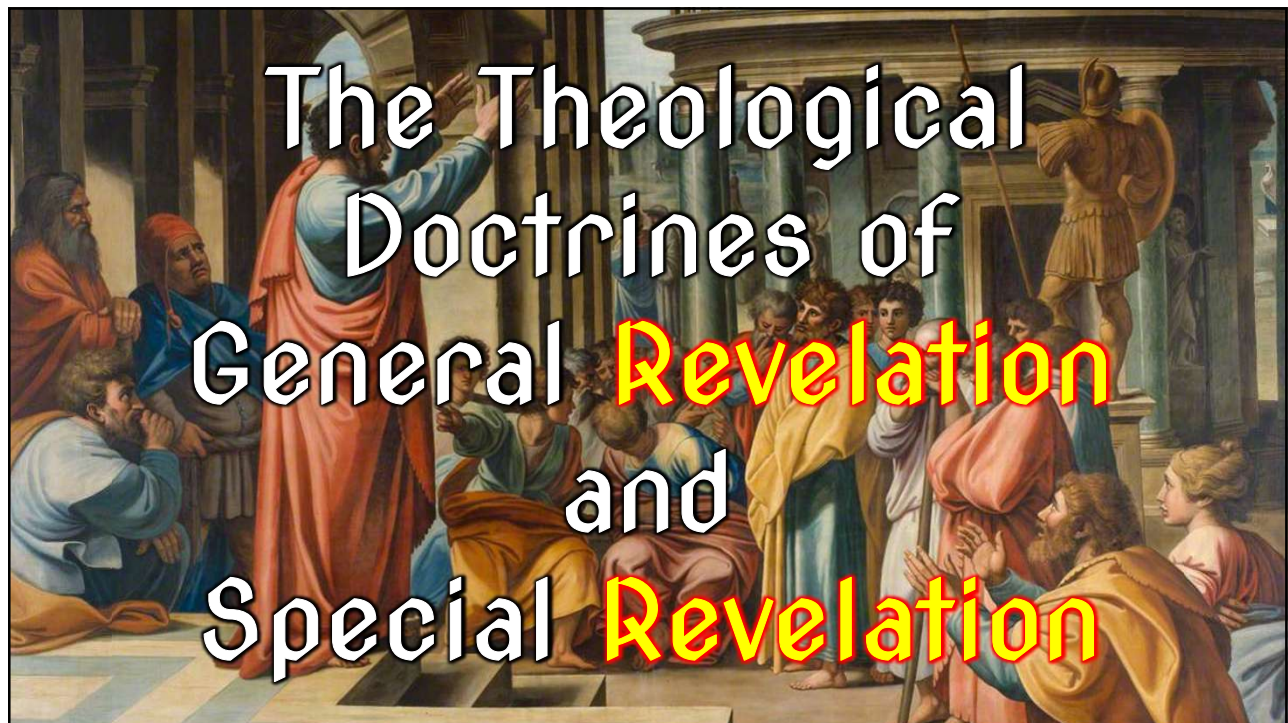
Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.  
Southern Evangelical Seminary

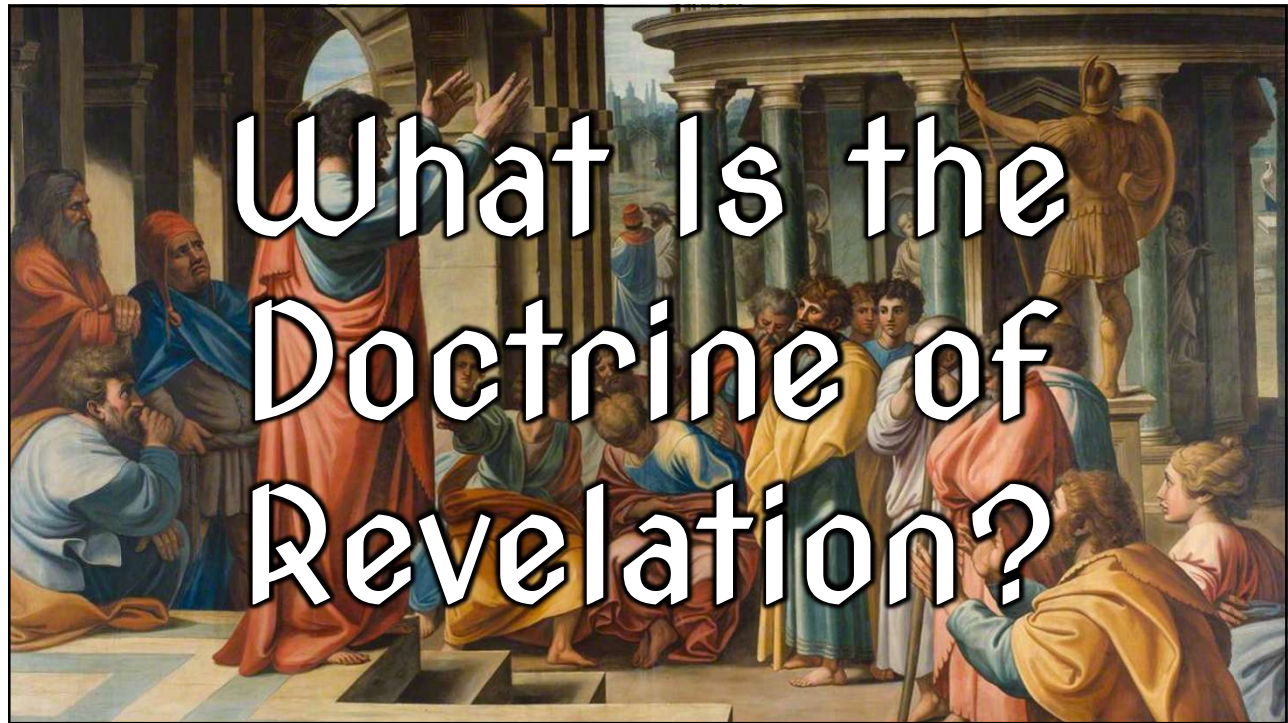


# What Is Natural Theology?



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





***The doctrine of Revelation is not to be confused with the Book of Revelation.***



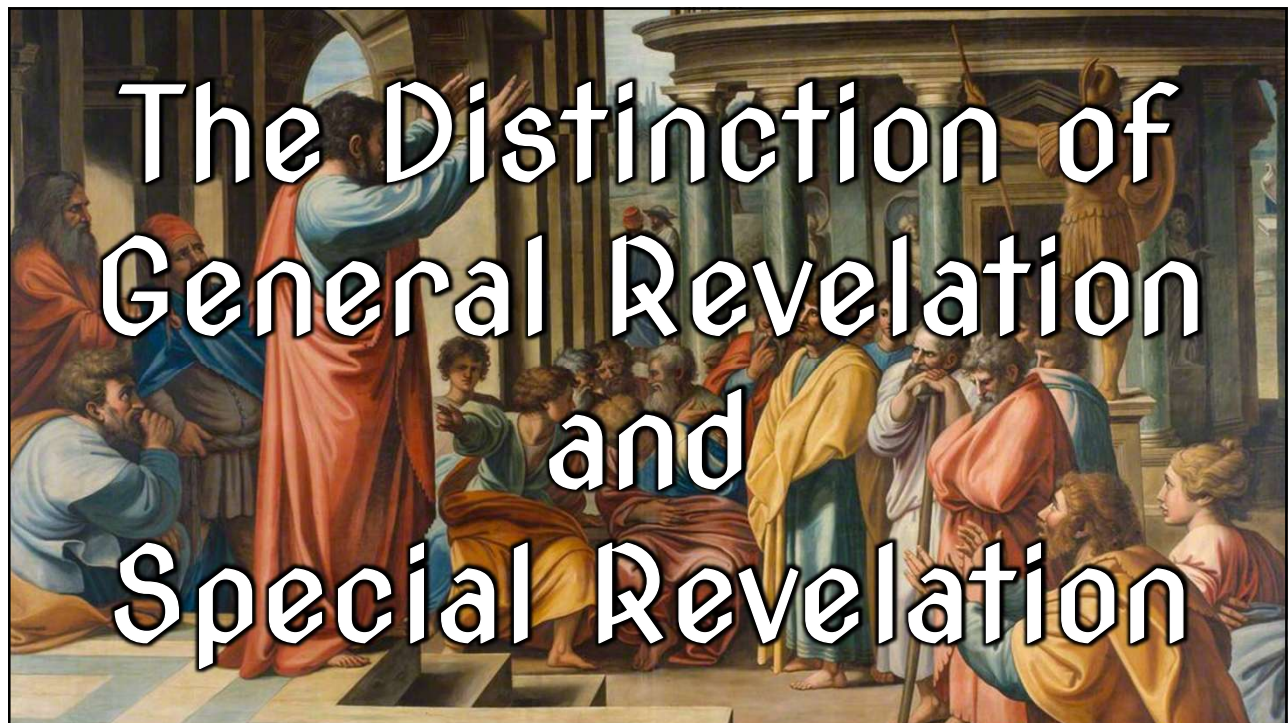
***Revelation is God making known to mankind His divine person and divine truths that would otherwise be unknown. It means "to unveil."***





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

(from Earl D. Radmacher "Bibliology and the Doctrine of Man" series)





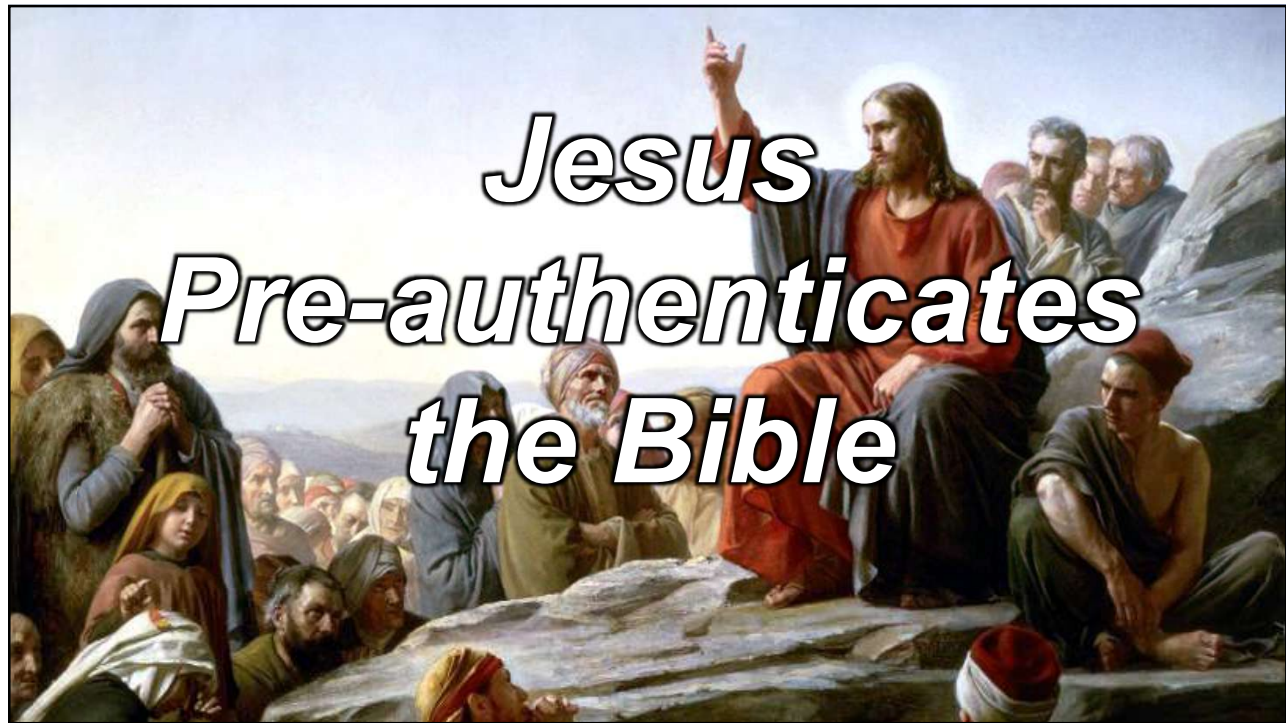
## General Revelation

*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*





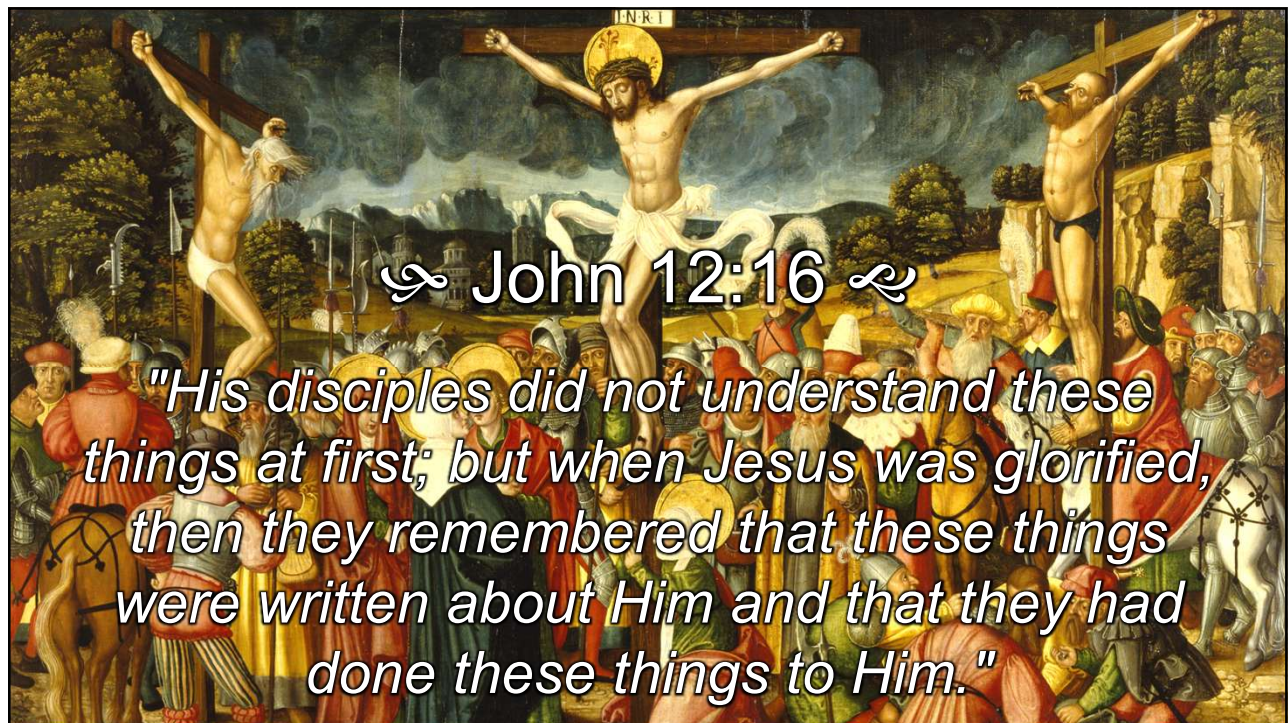
John 14:25-26: *"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. {26} "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

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



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

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



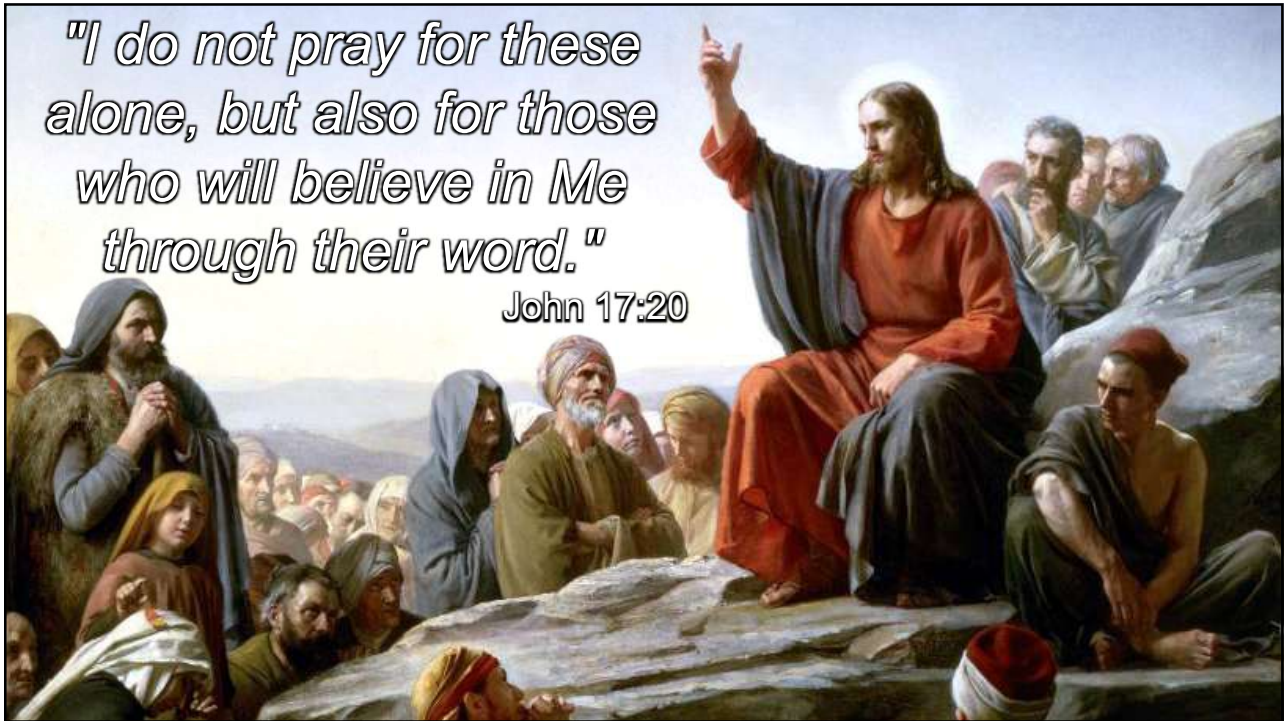


John 14:25-26: "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. {26} "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will **teach you all things**, and **bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you**.

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

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

John 17:20





Historical

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

**Matthew - Acts**

Teaching

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

**Romans - Jude**

Prophecy

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

**Revelation**



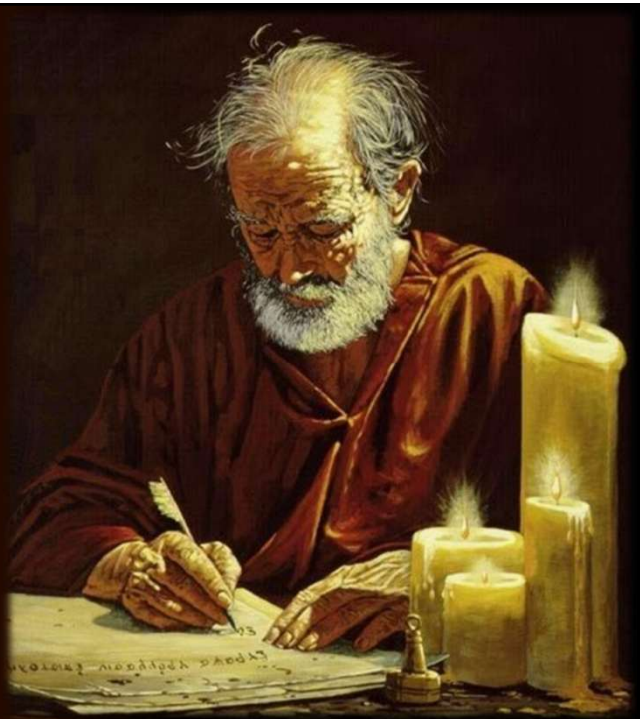


*"... knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."*

2 Peter 1:20-21

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

2 Timothy 3:16-17



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

2 Timothy 3:16-17

### **theopneustos**

(θεόπνευστος) = God breathed

**theos** (θεός) = God

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

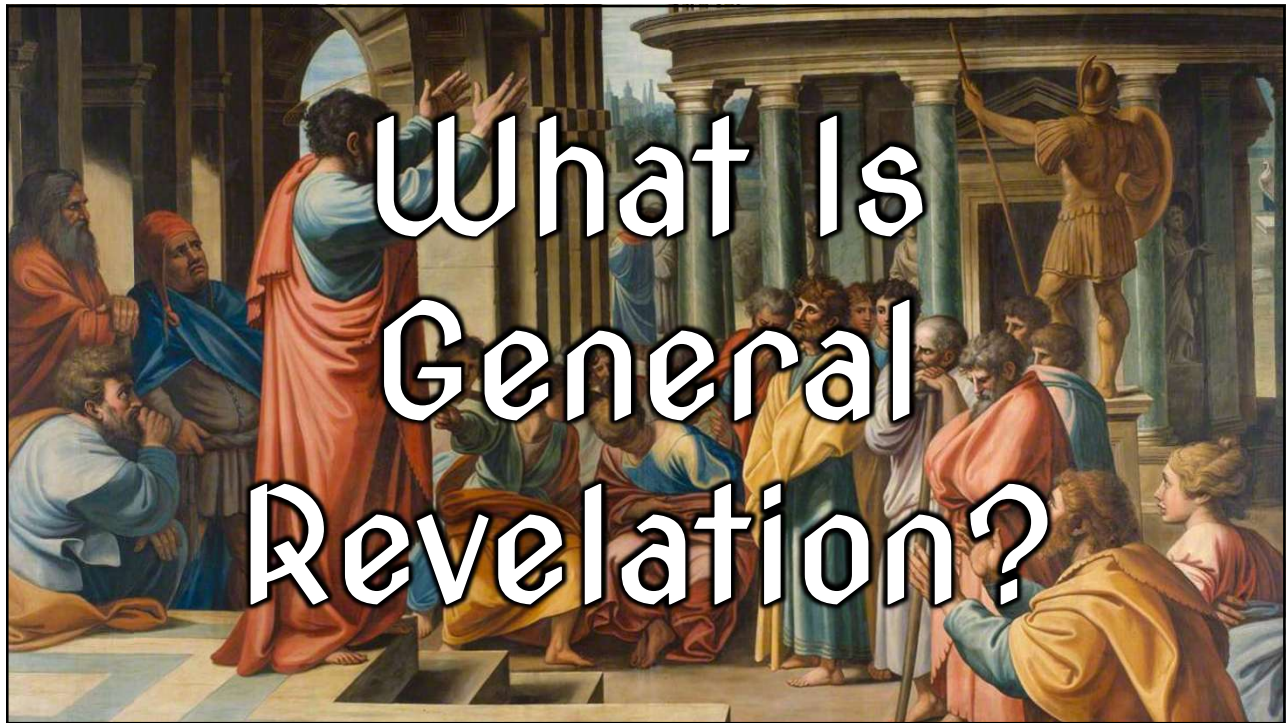
*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **instruction in righteousness**, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17

RIGHT  
TEOUS  
NES



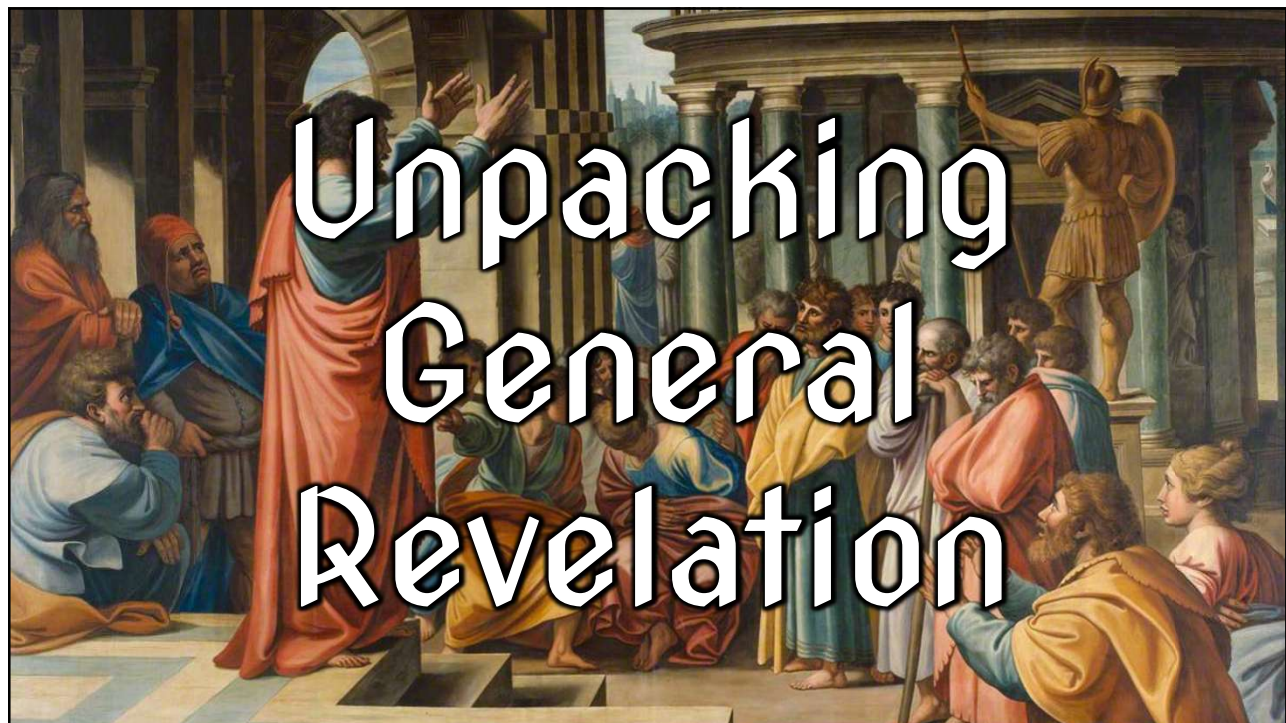
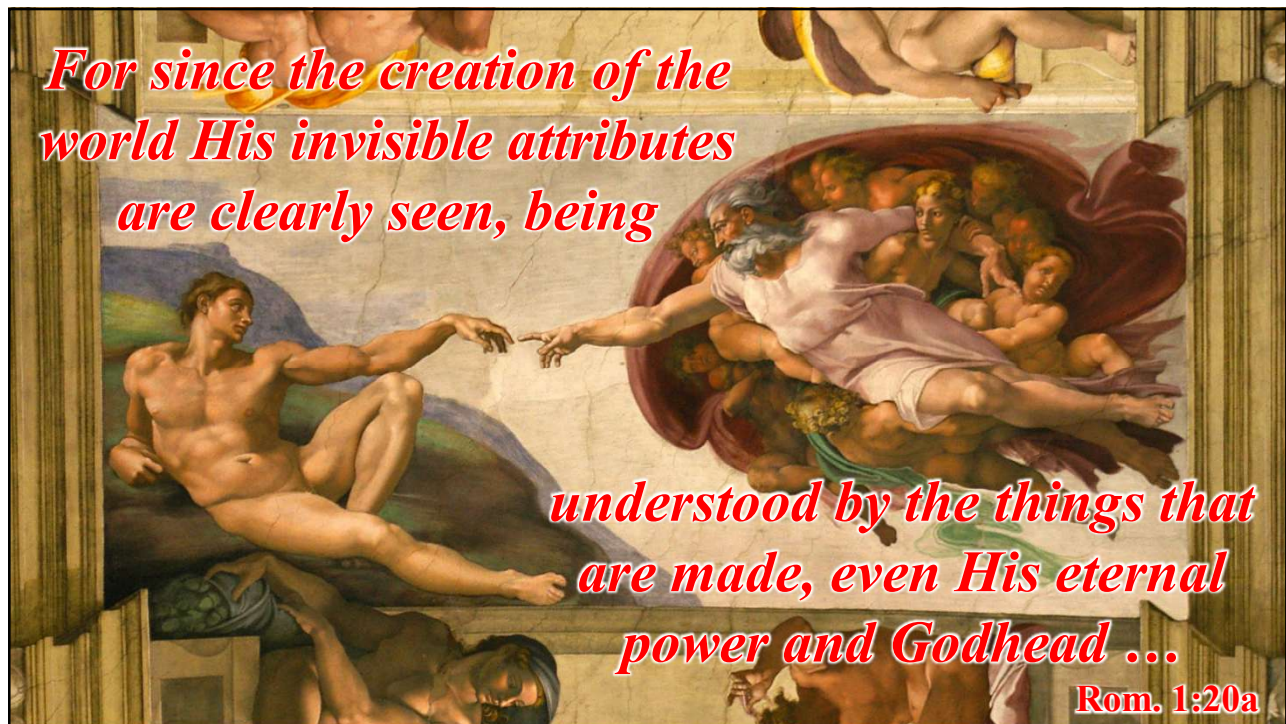




## General Revelation

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









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

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

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

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

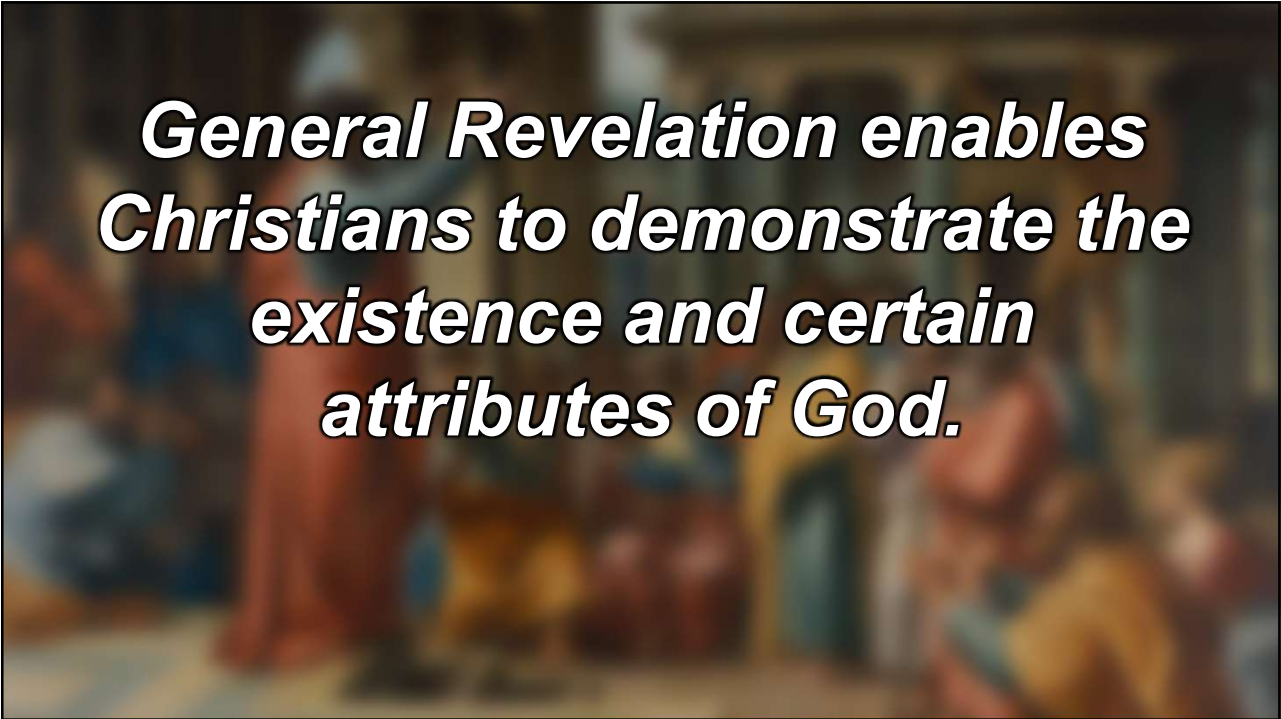
## 3. It is accessible to all men.

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

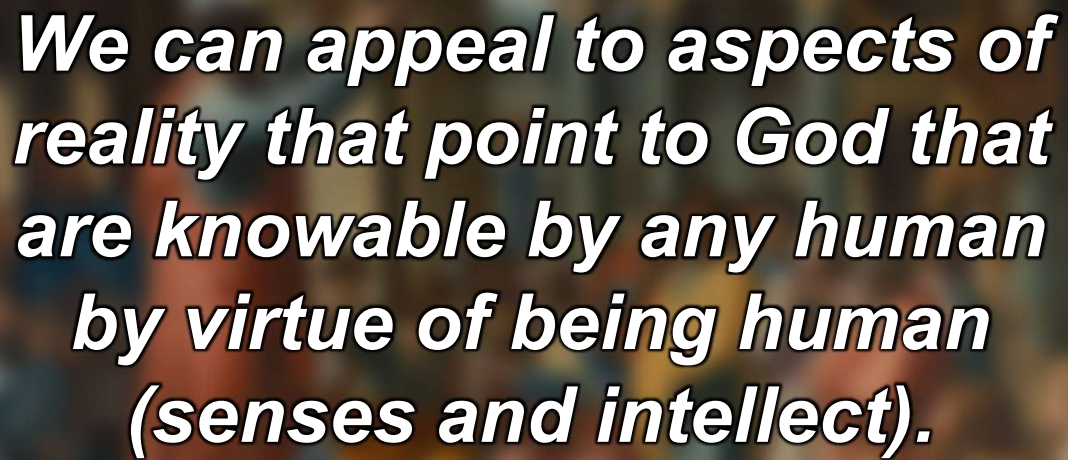




# ***The Apologetic Value of General Revelation***



***General Revelation enables  
Christians to demonstrate the  
existence and certain  
attributes of God.***



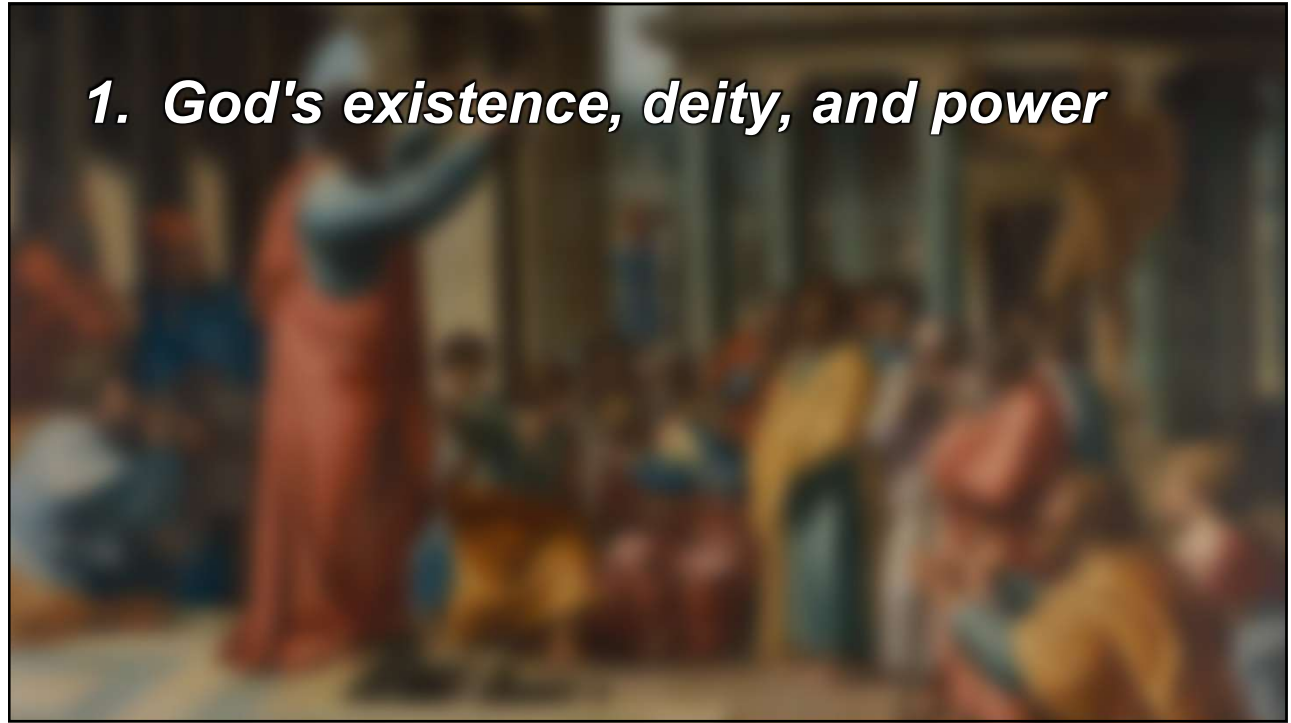
***We can appeal to aspects of reality that point to God that are knowable by any human by virtue of being human (senses and intellect).***



***The Content of General Revelation***



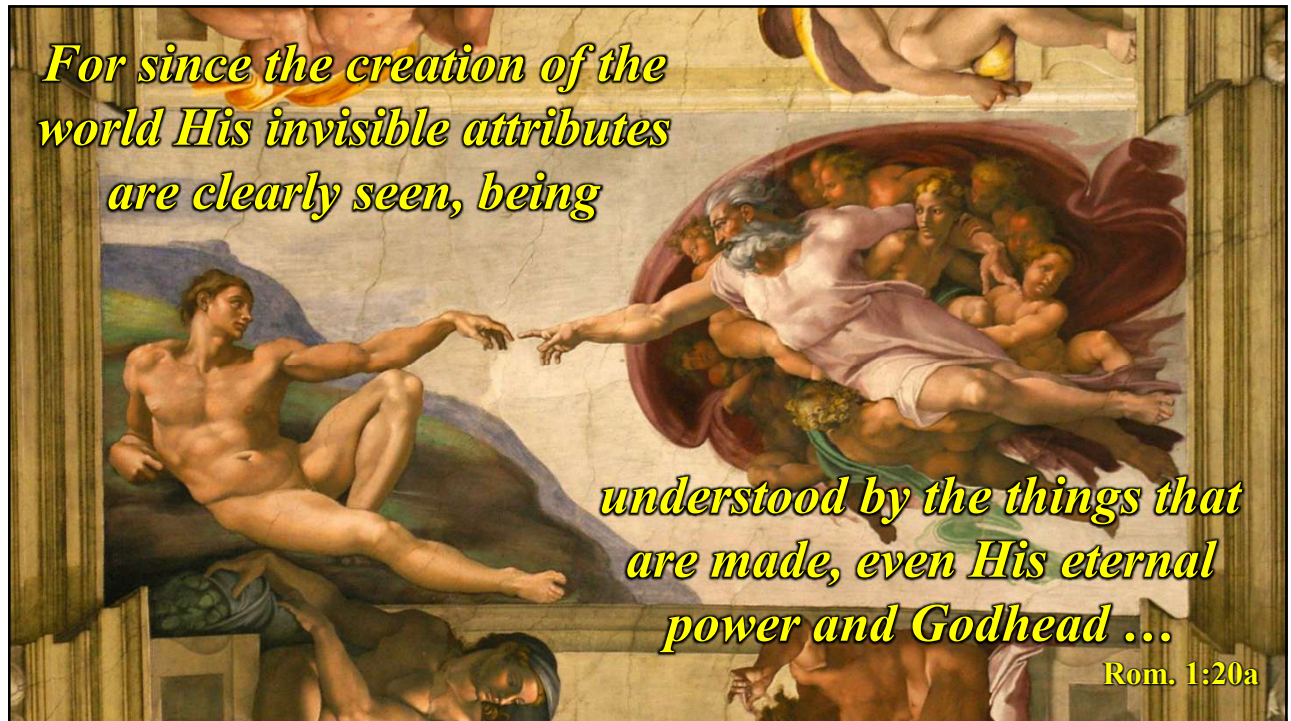
# ***1. God's existence, deity, and power***

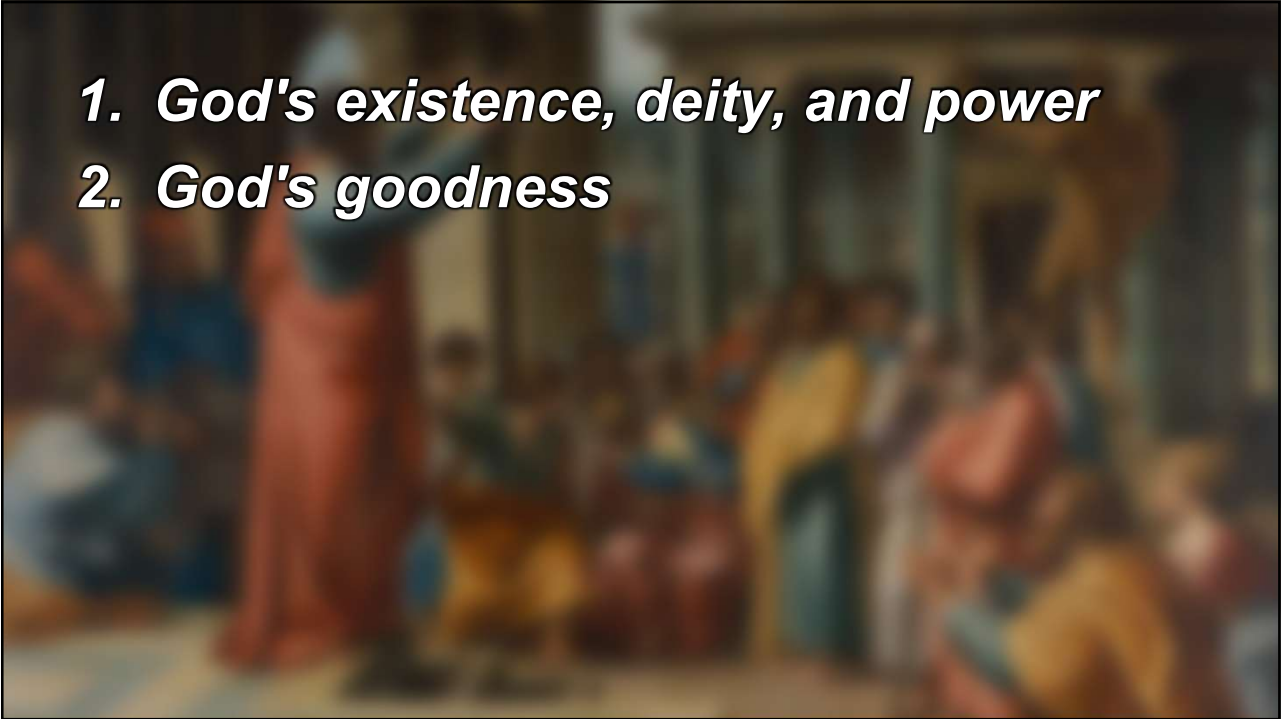


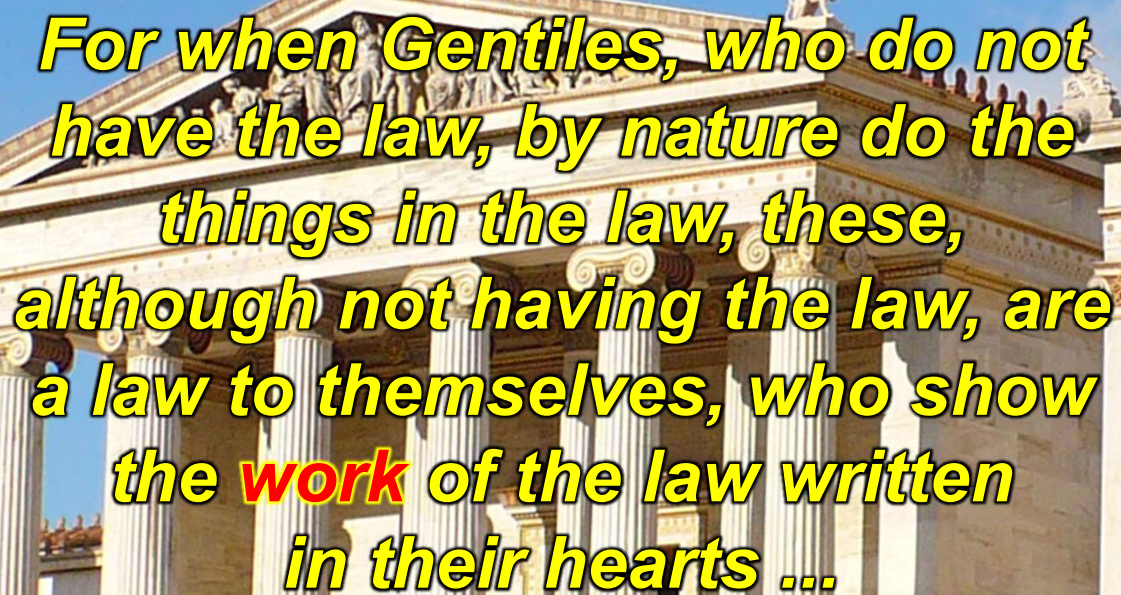
*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being*

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

*Rom. 1:20a*



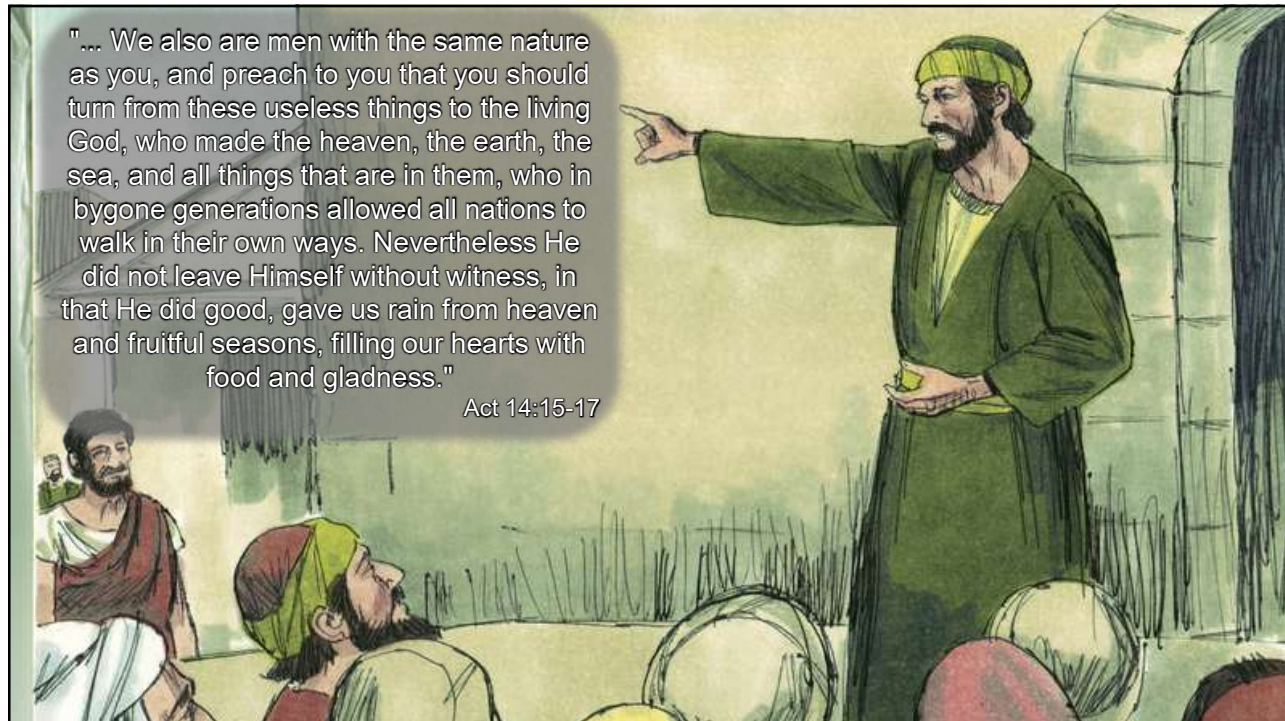
- 
1. *God's existence, deity, and power*
  2. *God's goodness*



*For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the **work** of the law written in their hearts ...*

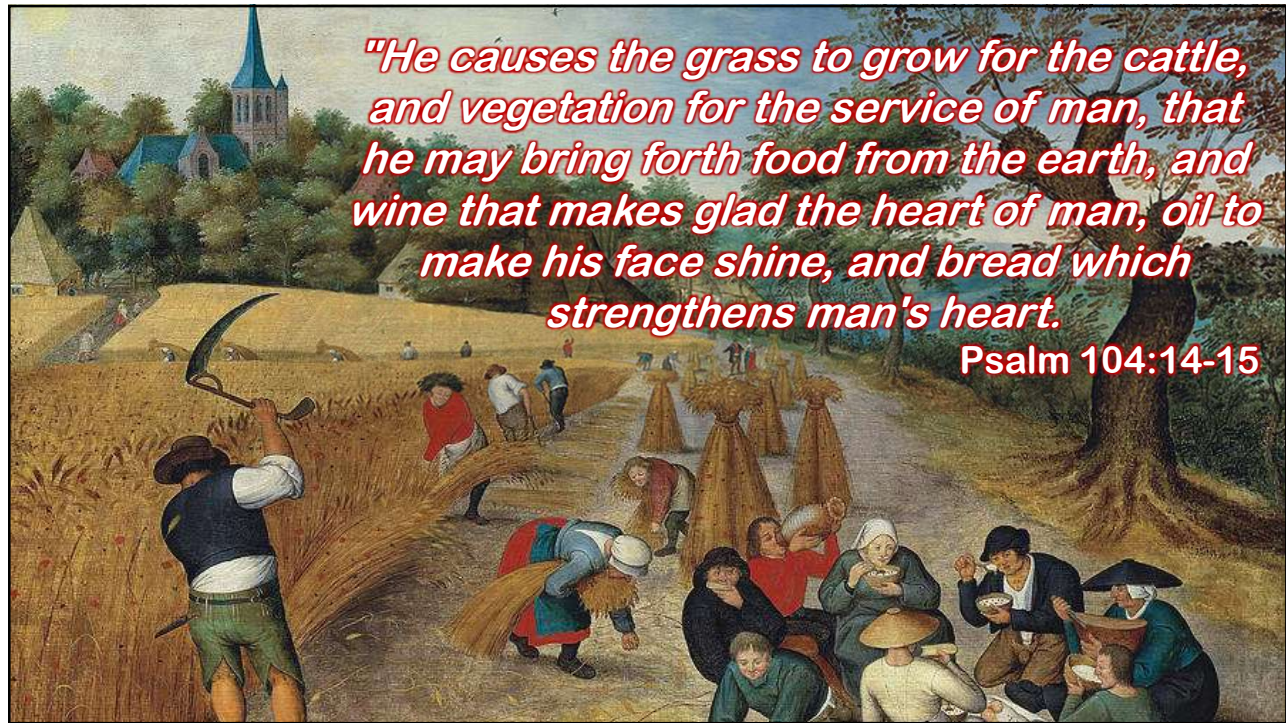
Rom. 2:14-15a





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



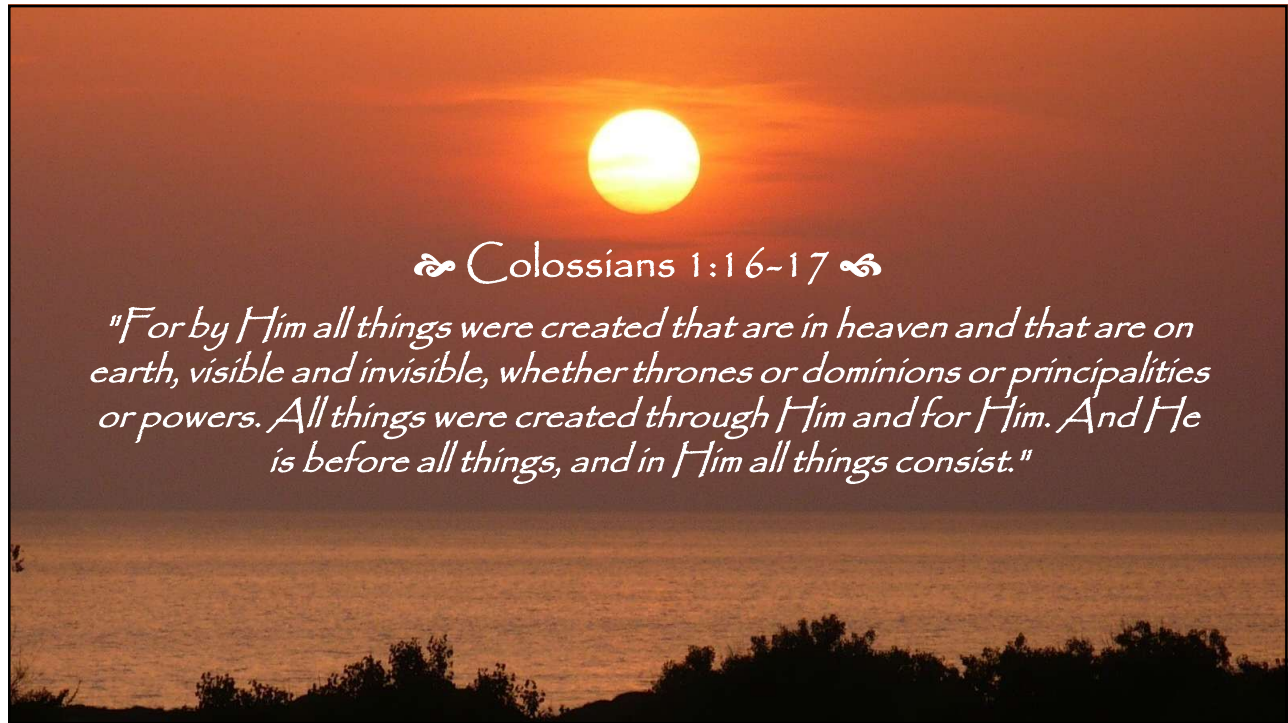


*"He causes the grass to grow for the cattle,  
and vegetation for the service of man, that  
he may bring forth food from the earth, and  
wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to  
make his face shine, and bread which  
strengthens man's heart."*

**Psalm 104:14-15**

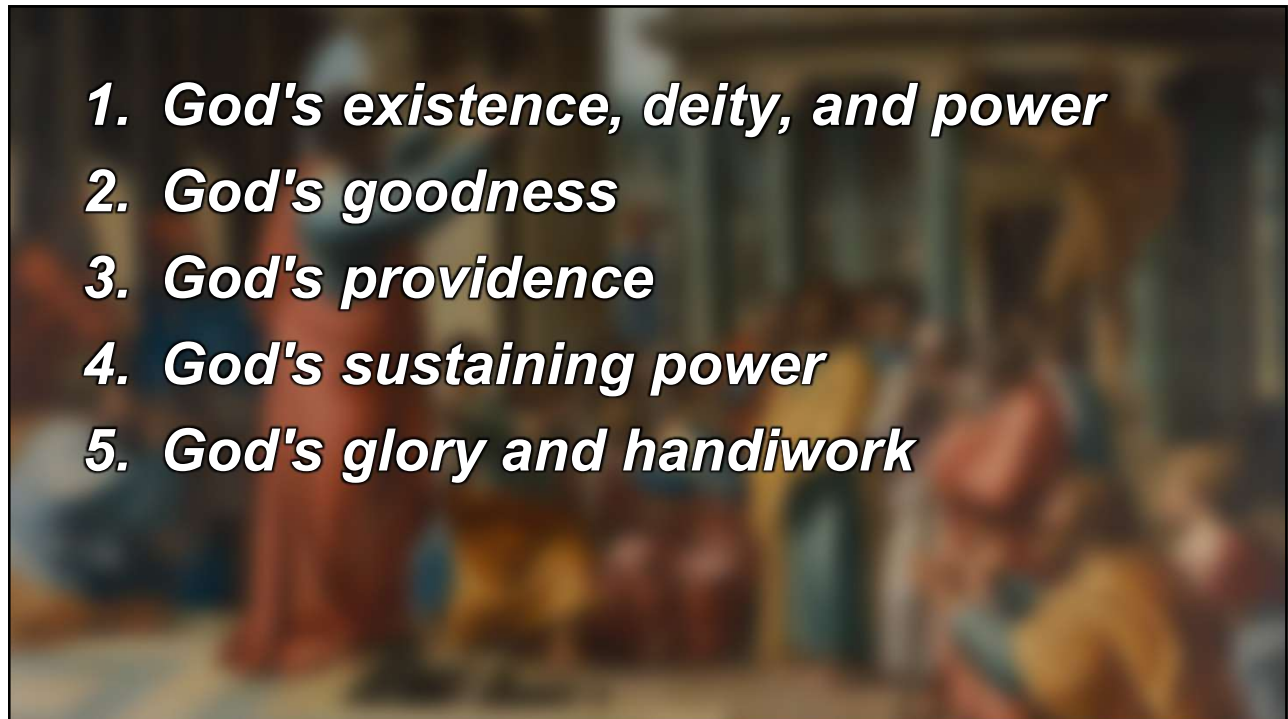
- 1. God's existence, deity, and power**
- 2. God's goodness**
- 3. God's providence**
- 4. God's sustaining power**





✧ Colossians 1:16-17 ✧

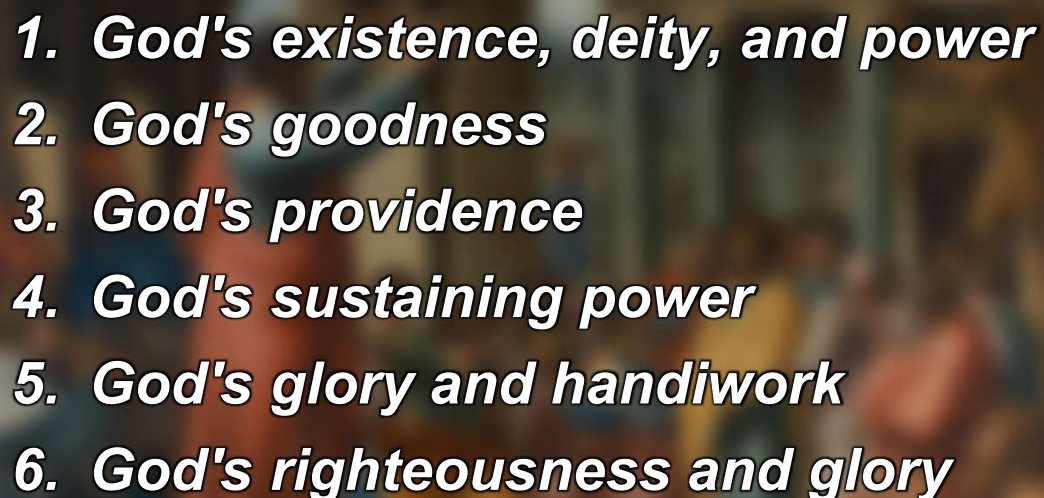
*"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."*

- 
- 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

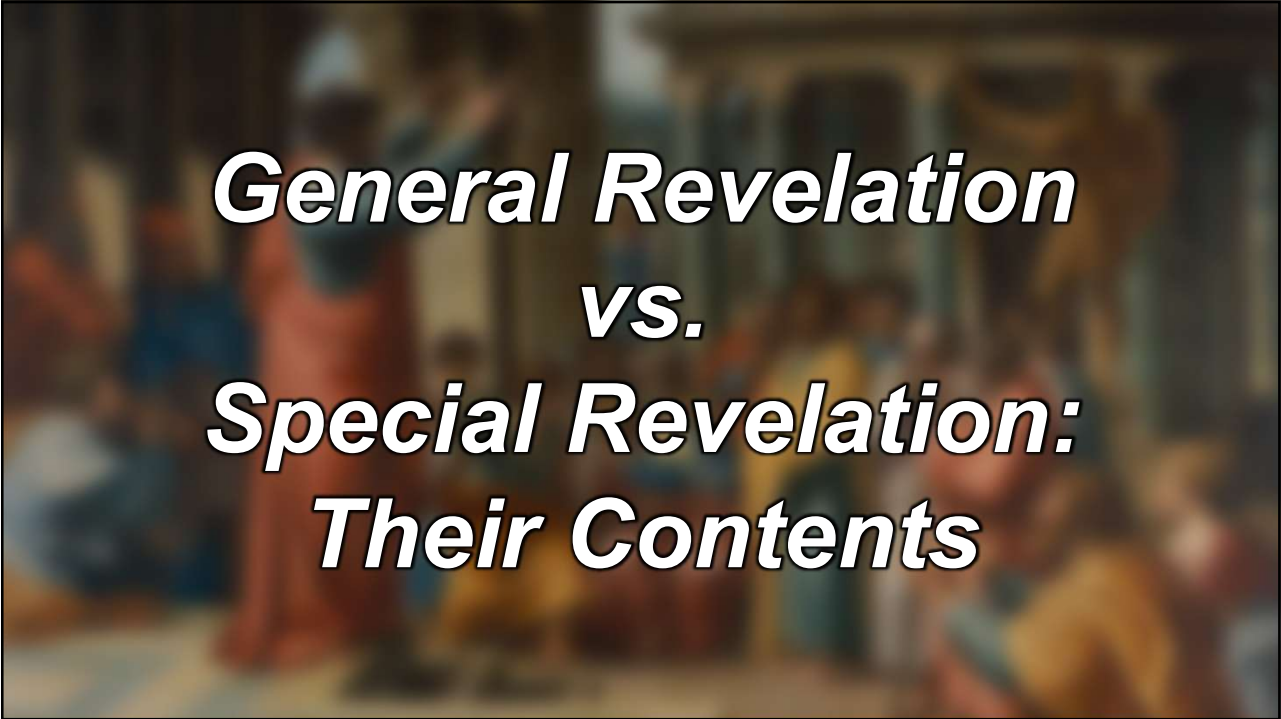




# ***General Revelation vs. Special Revelation: Their Natures***

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





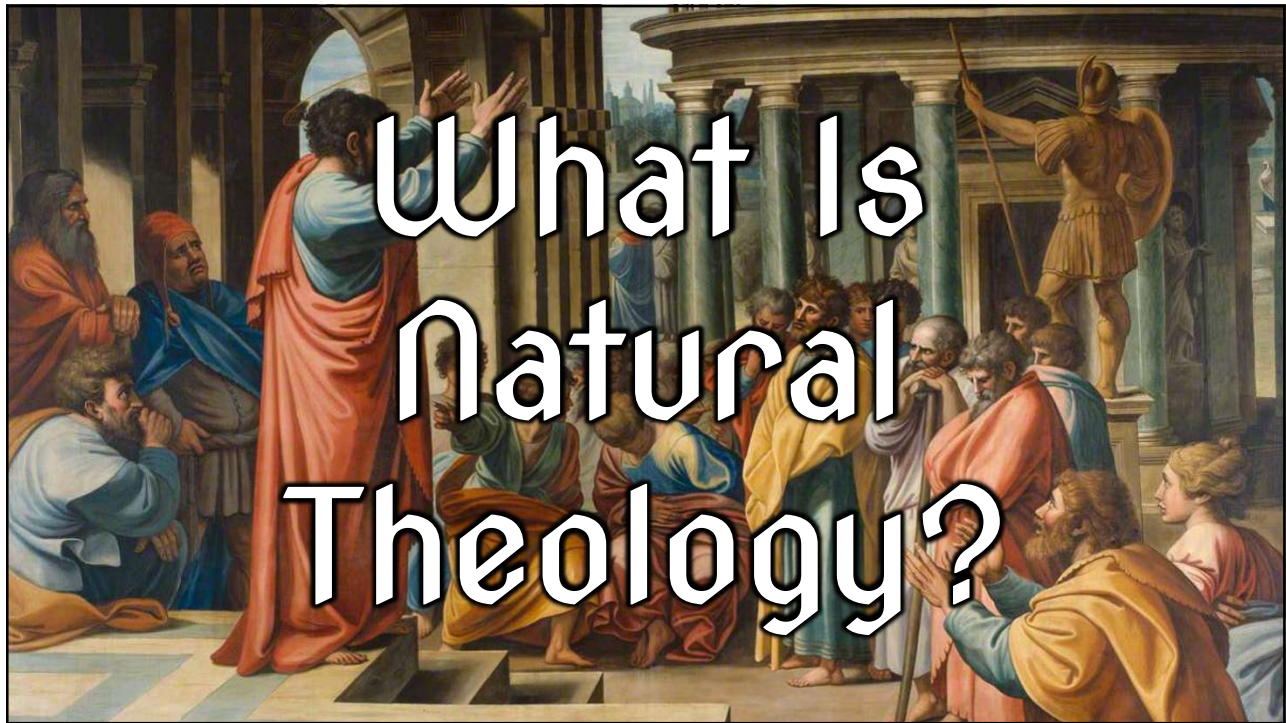
# ***General Revelation vs. Special Revelation: Their Contents***

## **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*

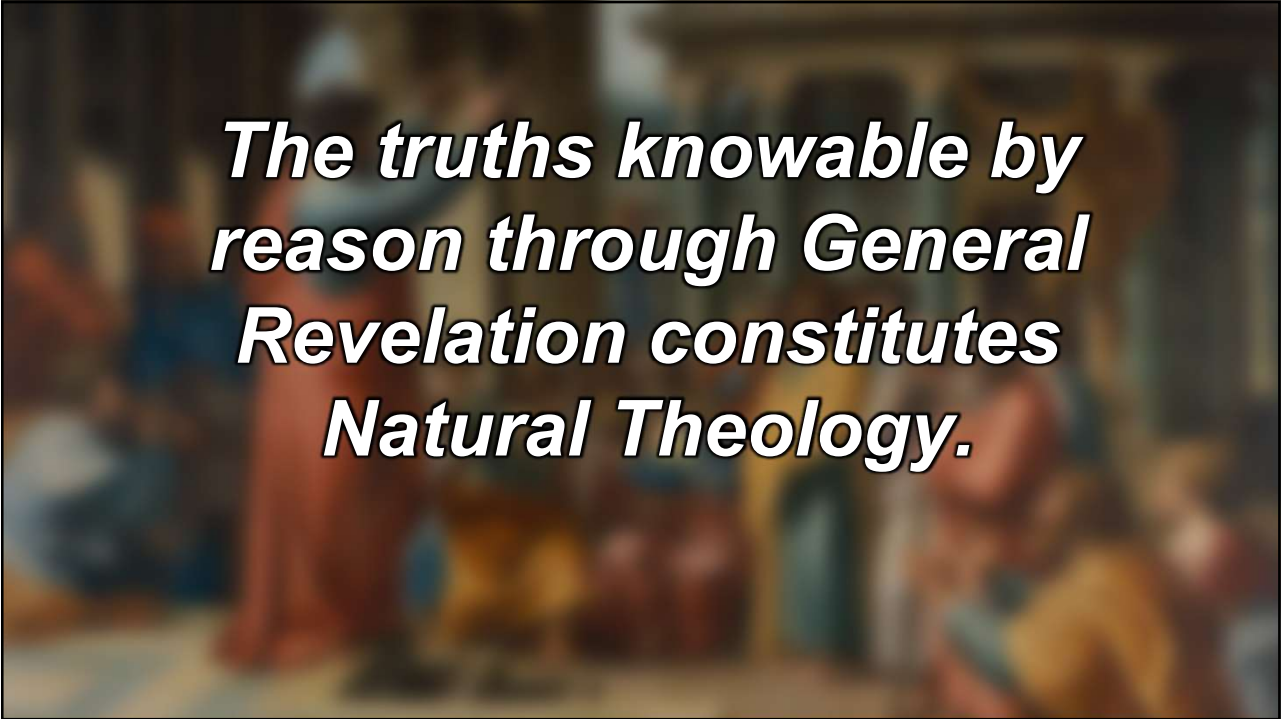
## **Special Revelation**

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*

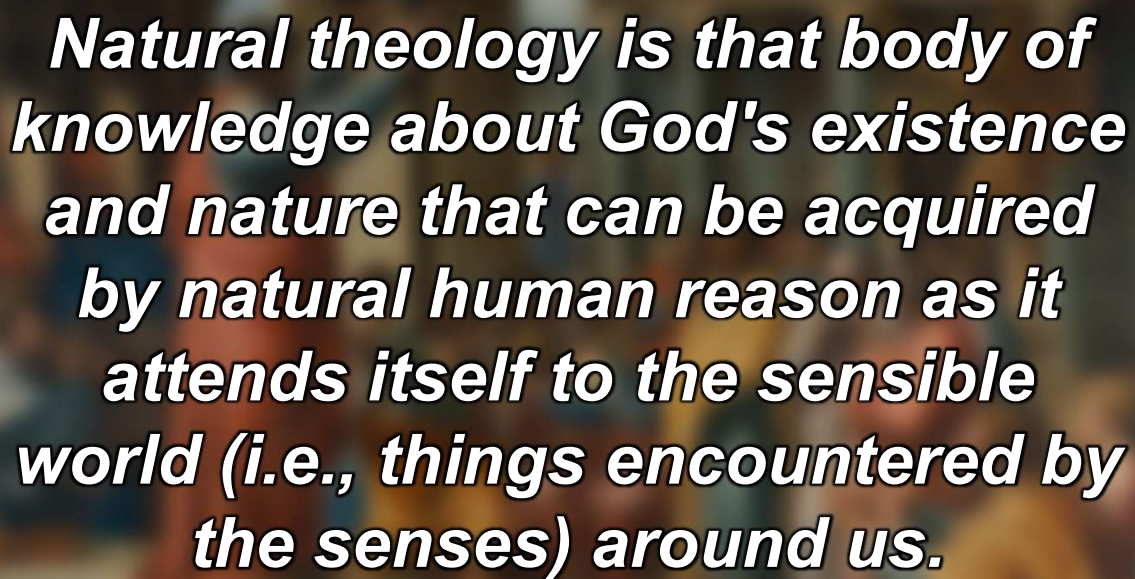


***The application of sound reason in understanding God's revelation of Himself through creation gives rise to Natural Theology.***





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

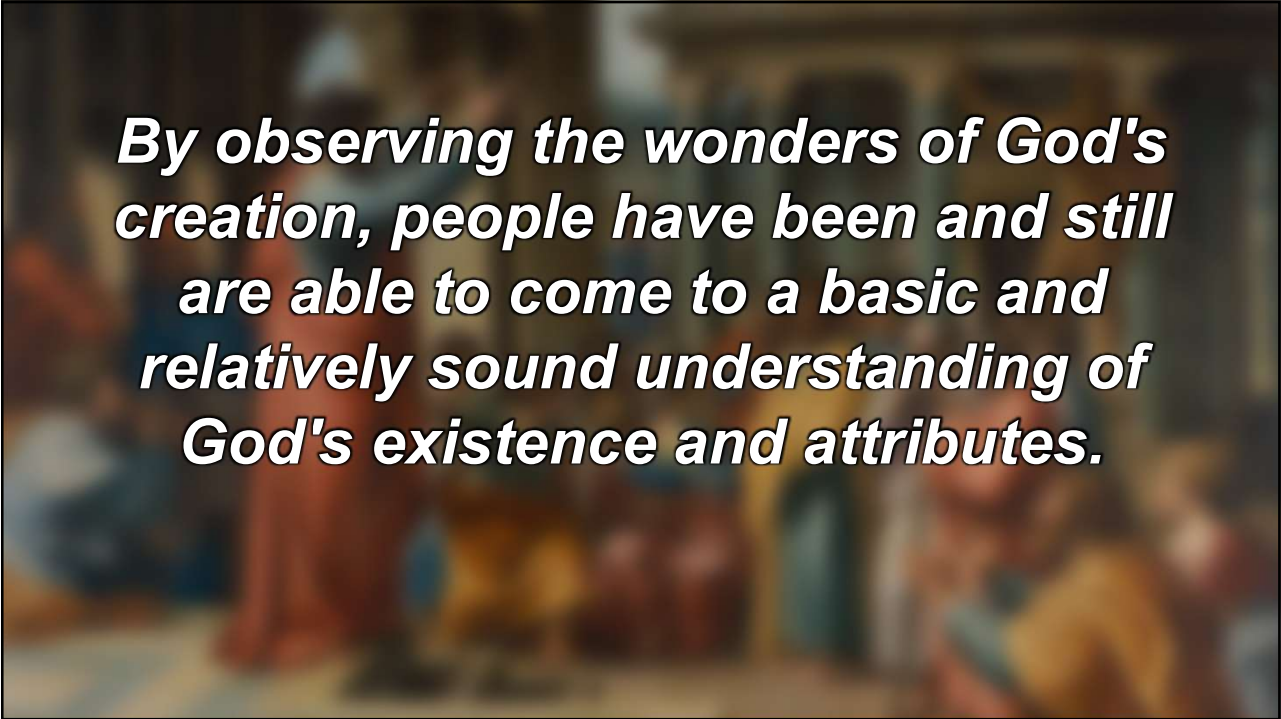


***Natural theology is that body of knowledge about God's existence and nature that can be acquired by natural human reason as it attends itself to the sensible world (i.e., things encountered by the senses) around us.***

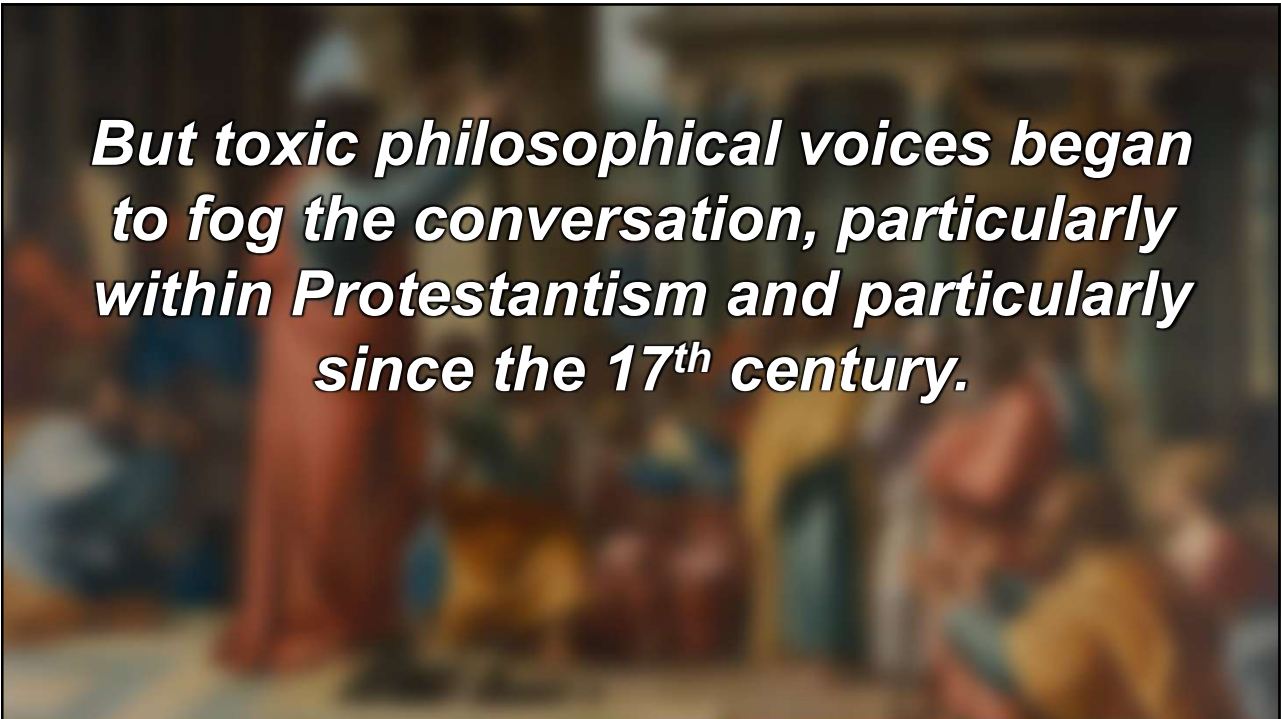
***Since Natural theology is a human effort, it should not be surprising that Christians might disagree as to the exact nature and content of Natural Theology.***







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

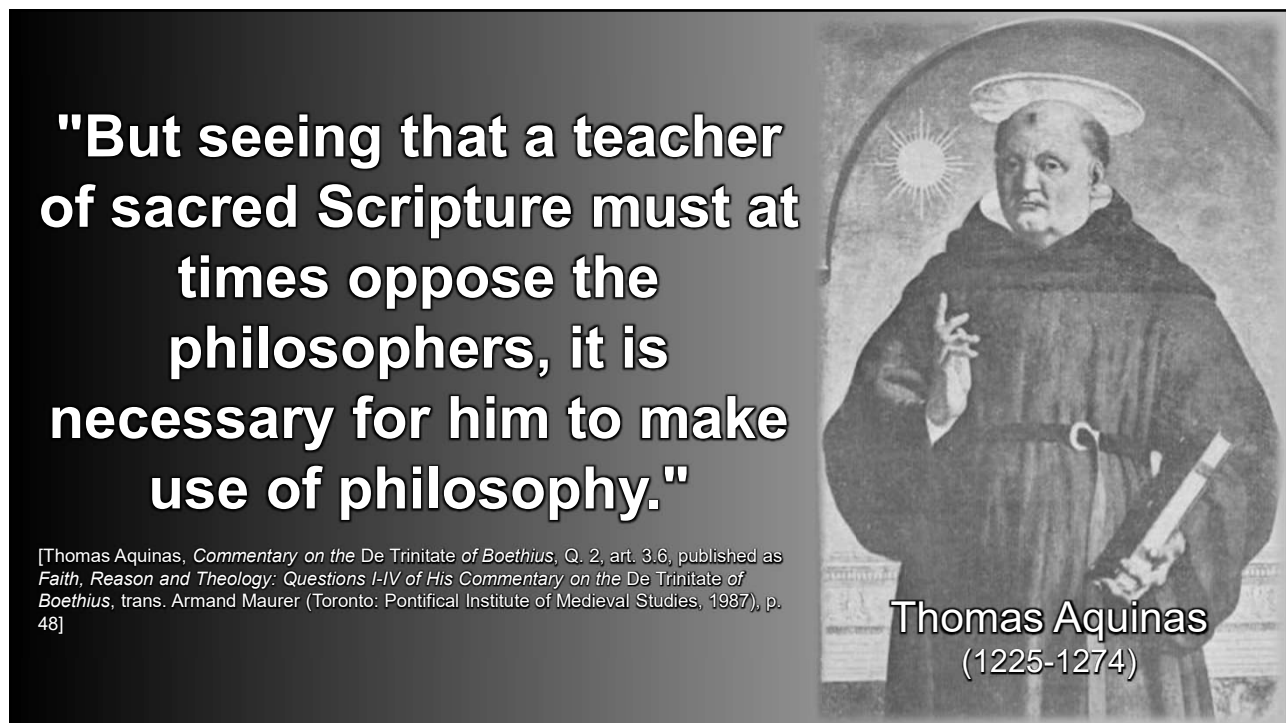
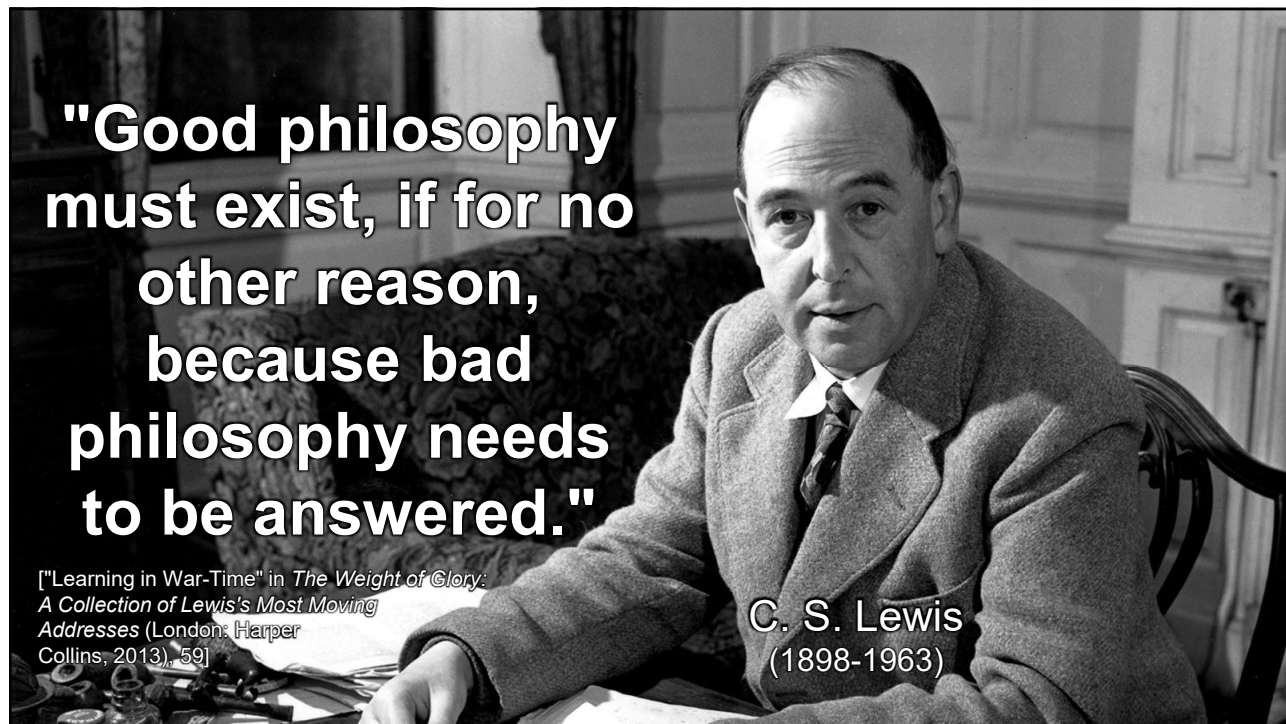


***But toxic philosophical voices began to fog the conversation, particularly within Protestantism and particularly since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.***

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



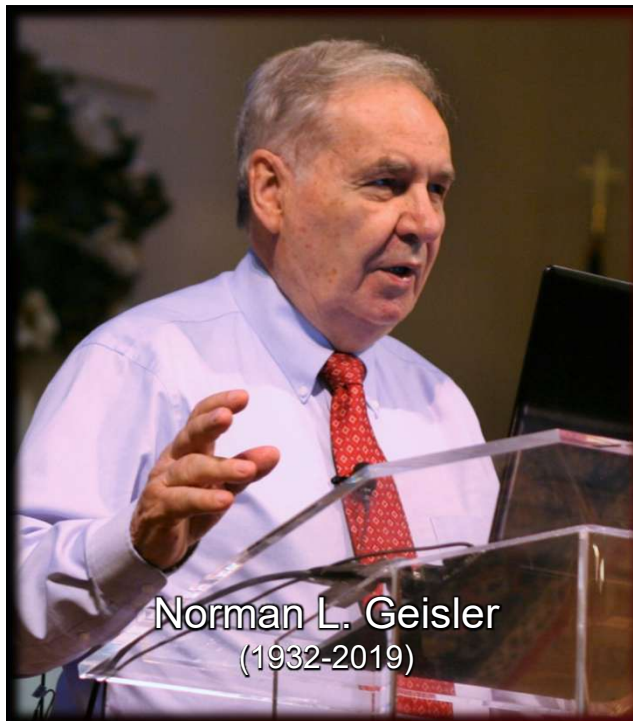
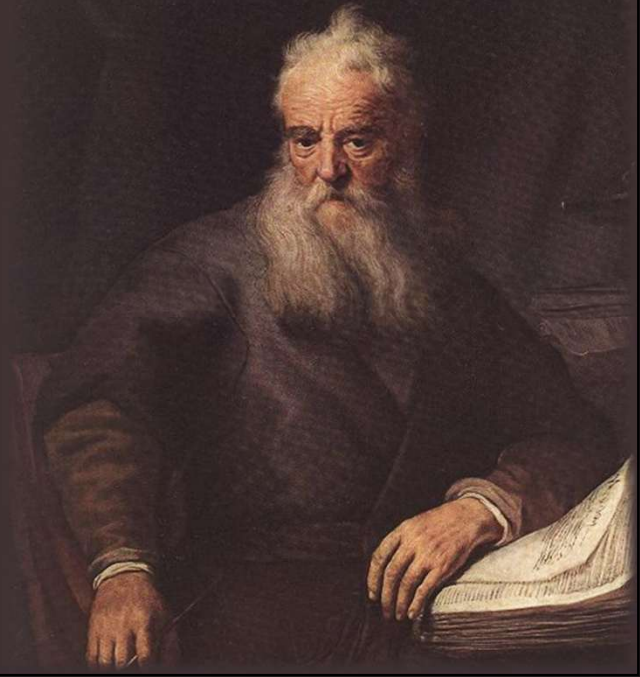




## ✧ Colossians 2:8 ✧

**"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

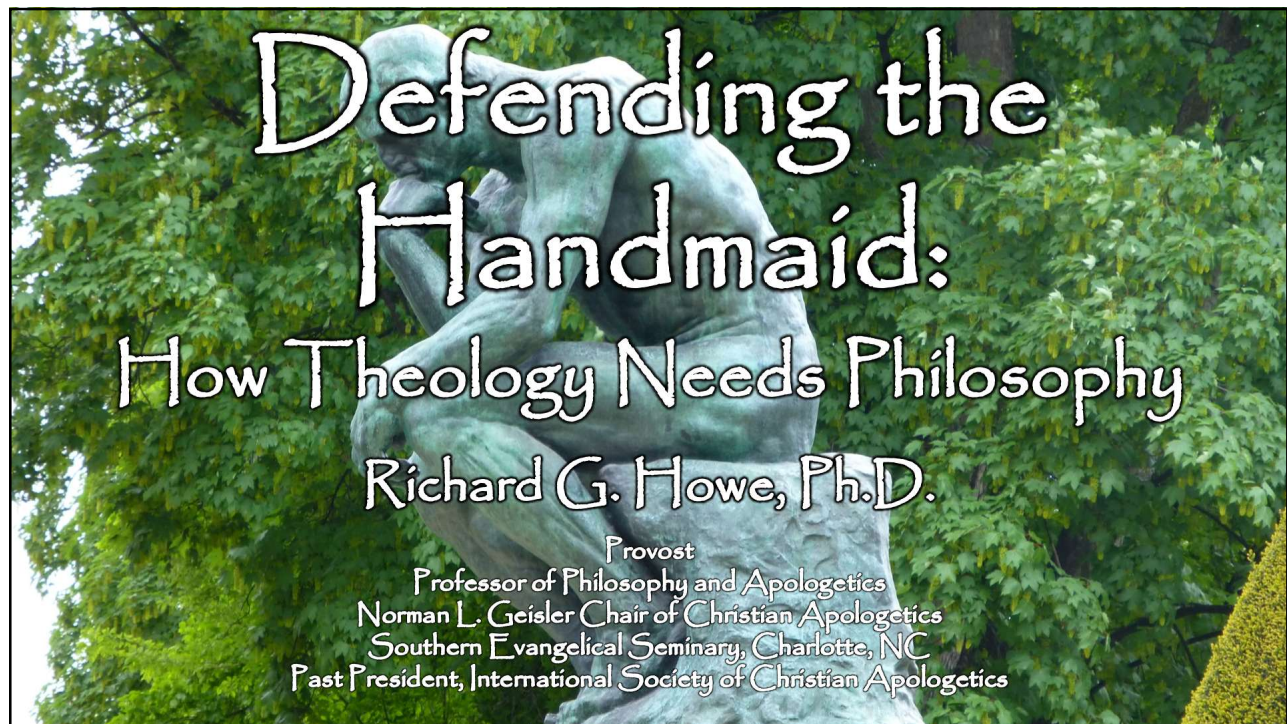


Norman L. Geisler  
(1932-2019)

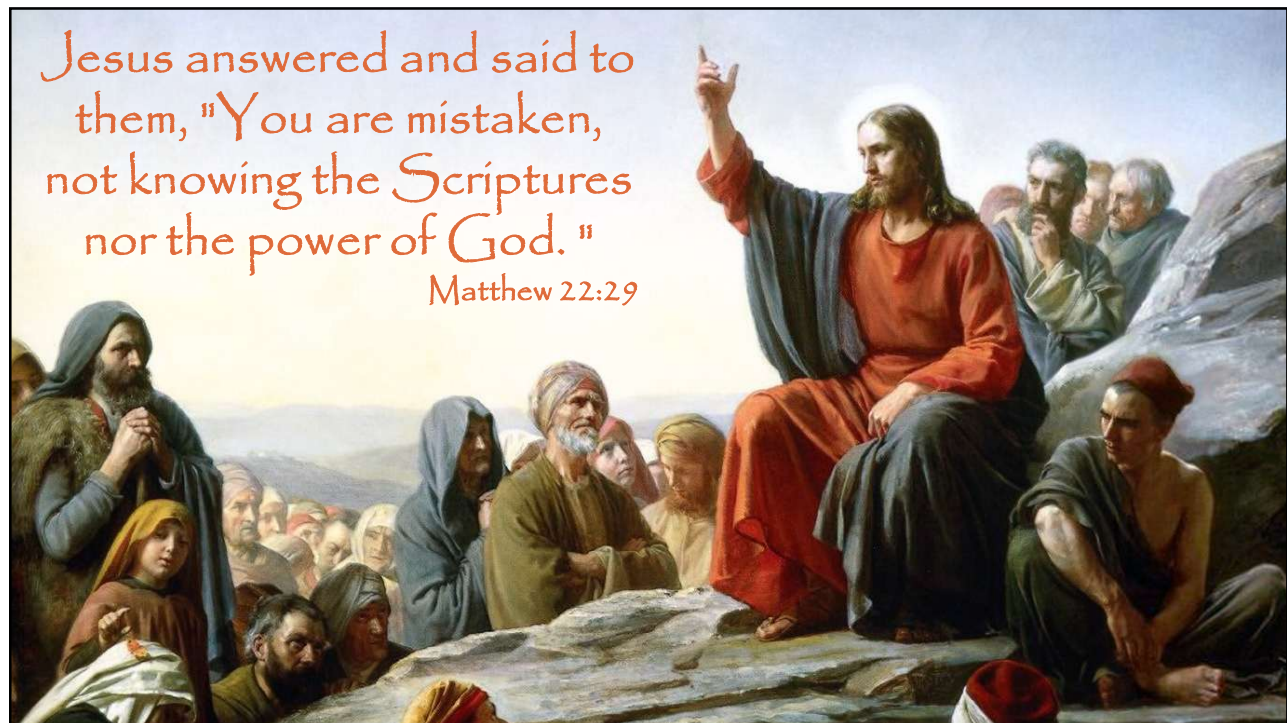
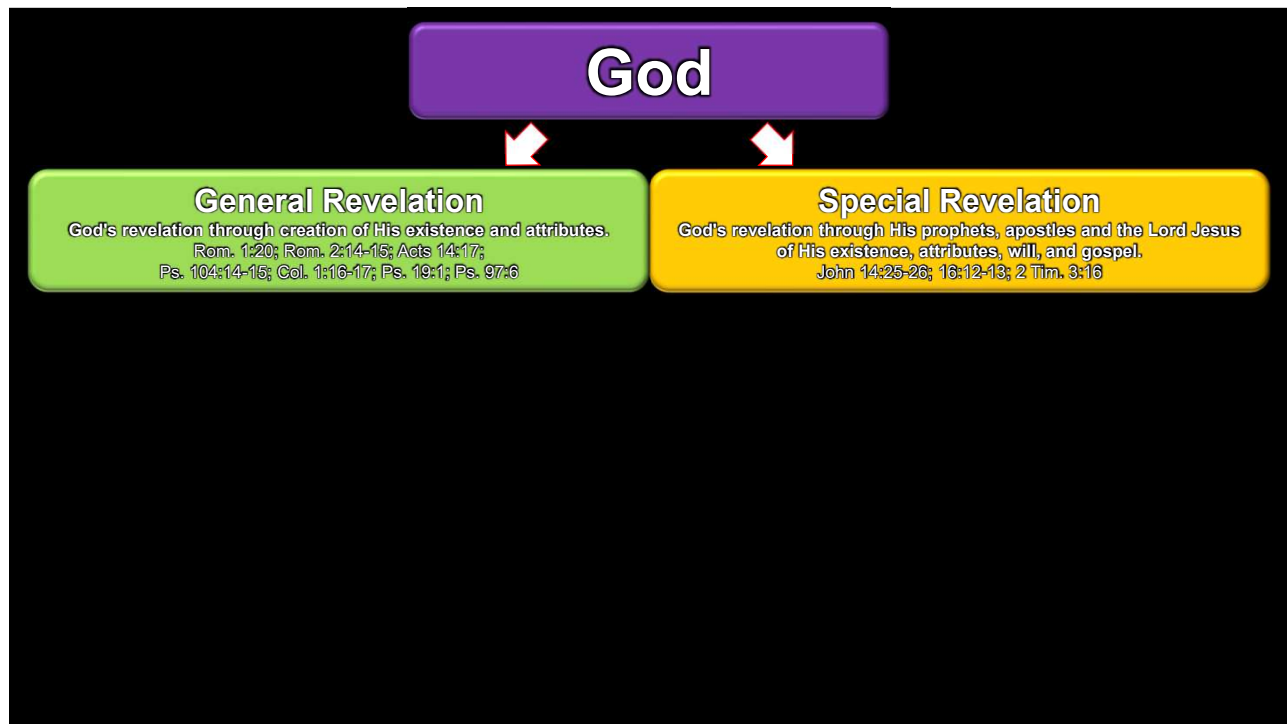
**"We cannot properly *beware* of philosophy unless we *be aware* of philosophy."**

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

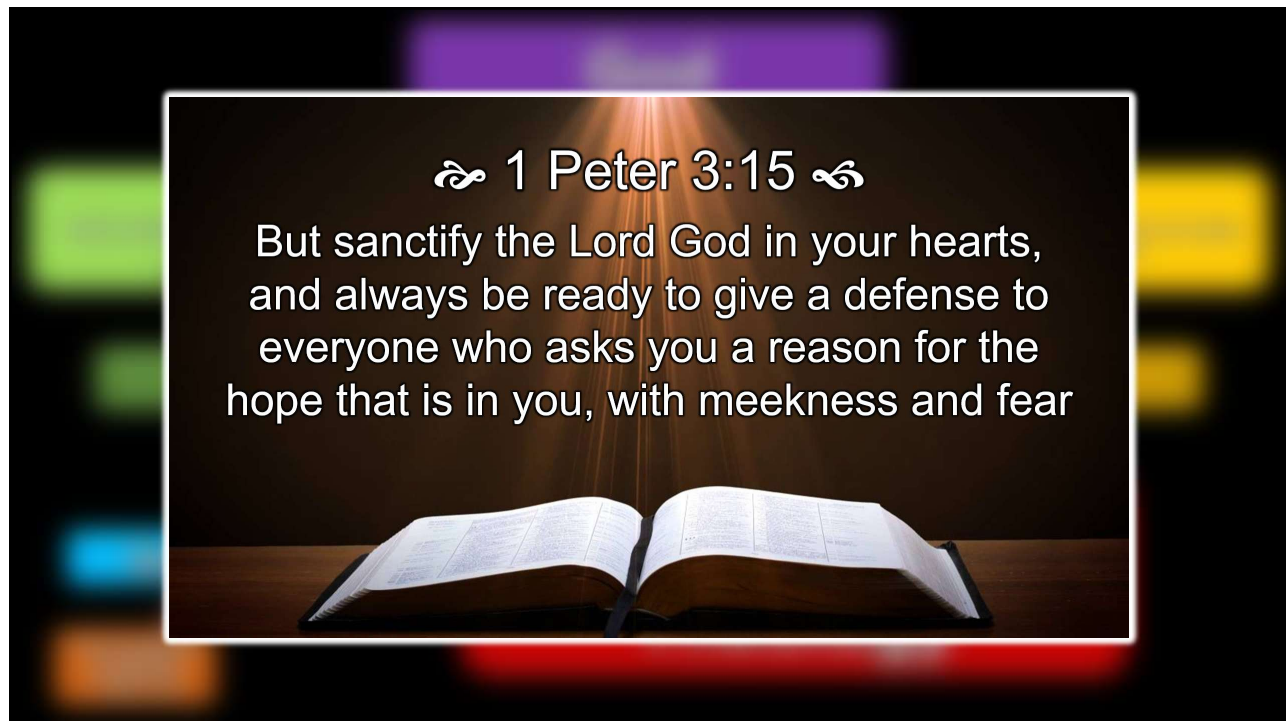
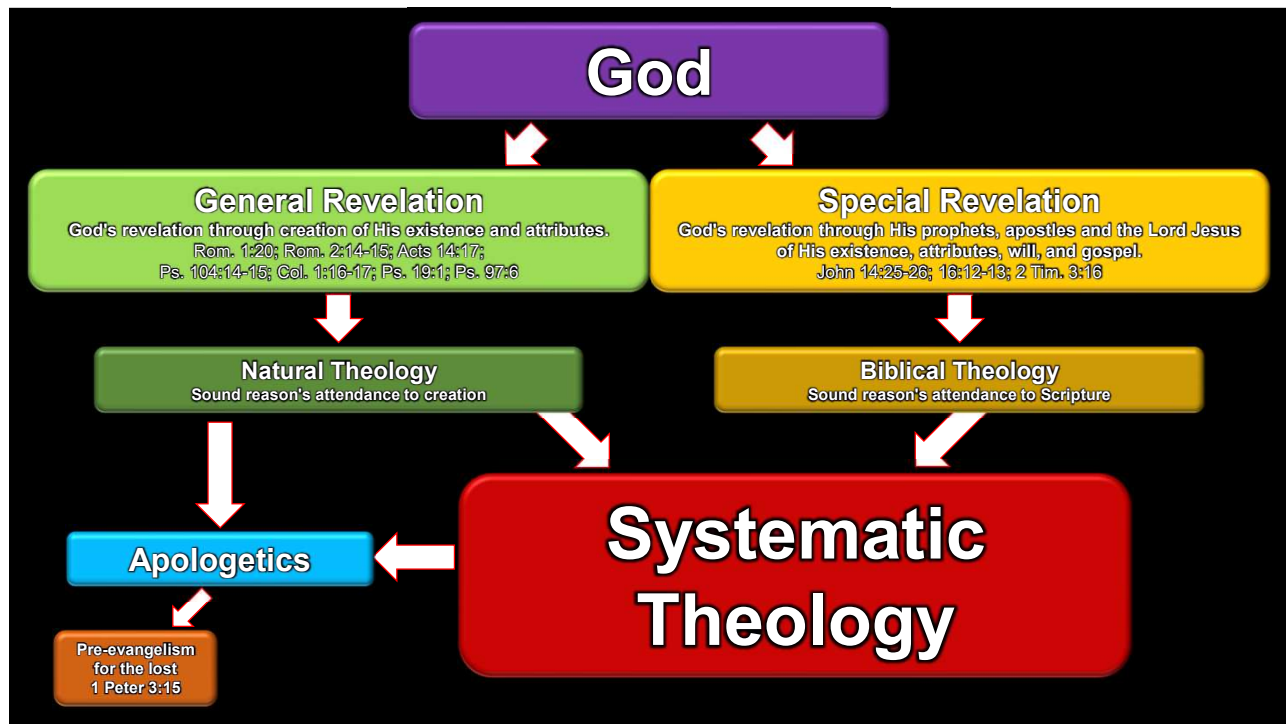


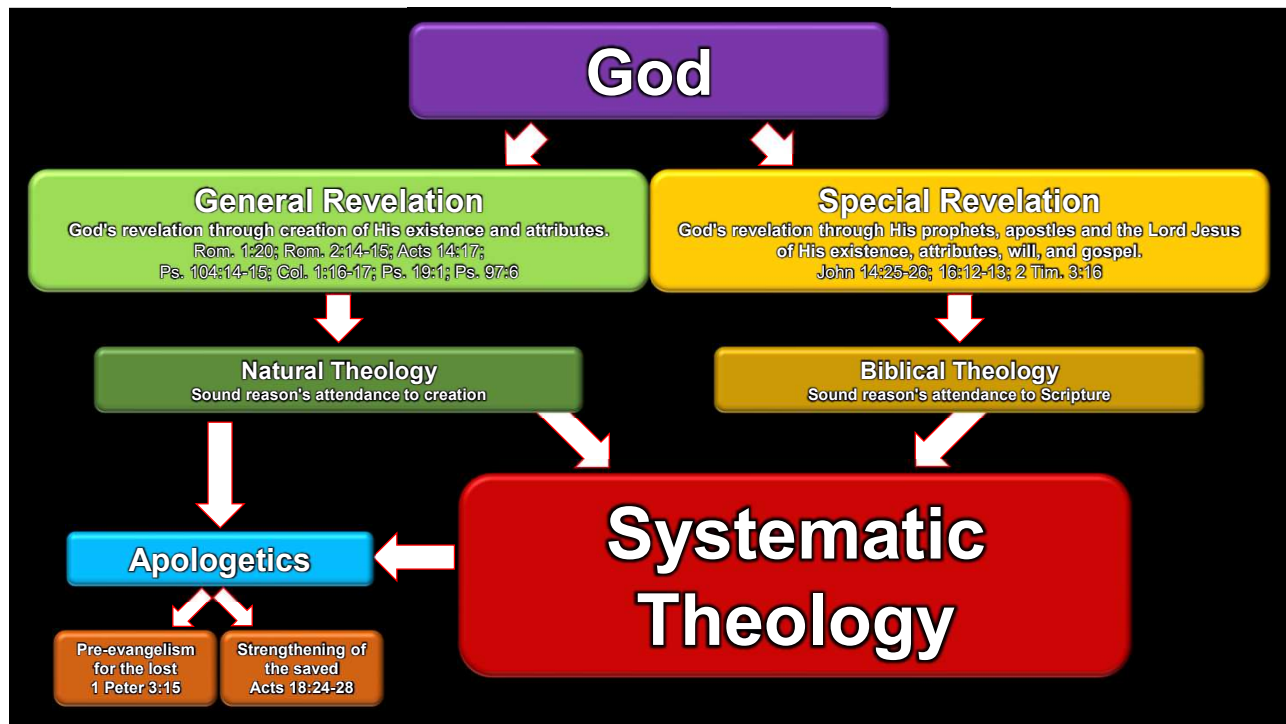










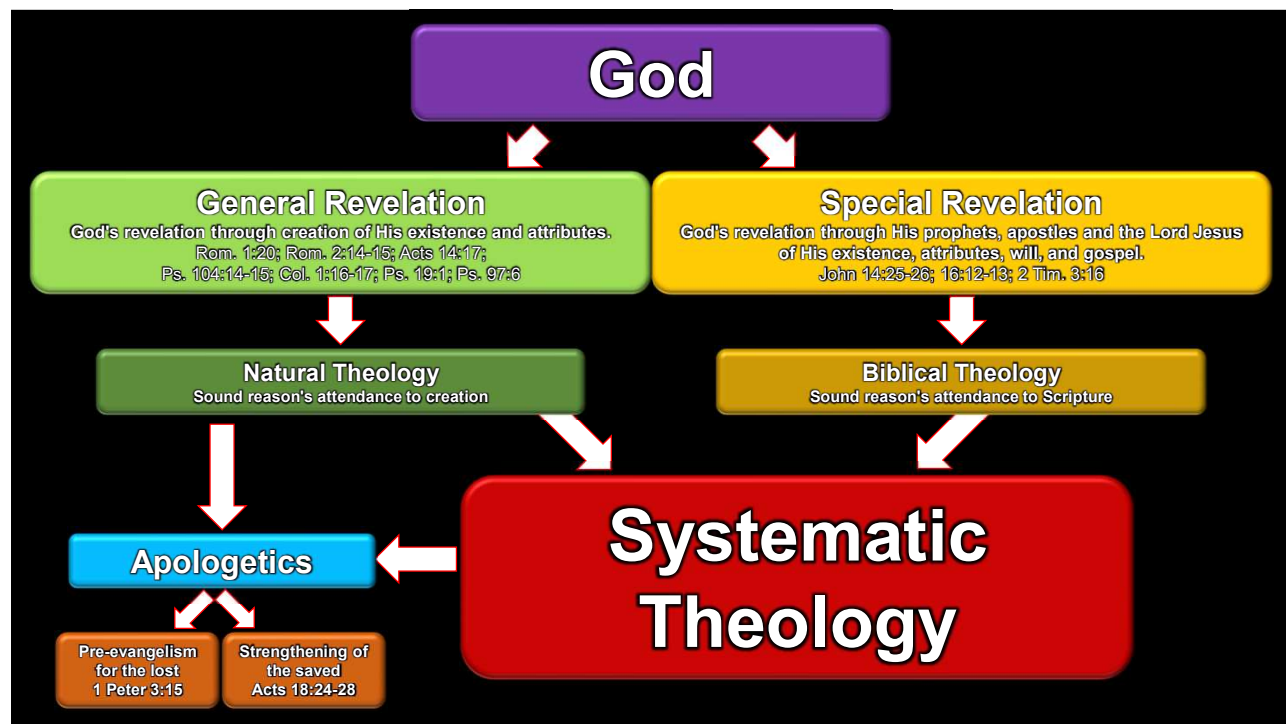


## ✠ Acts 18:24, 27-28 ✠

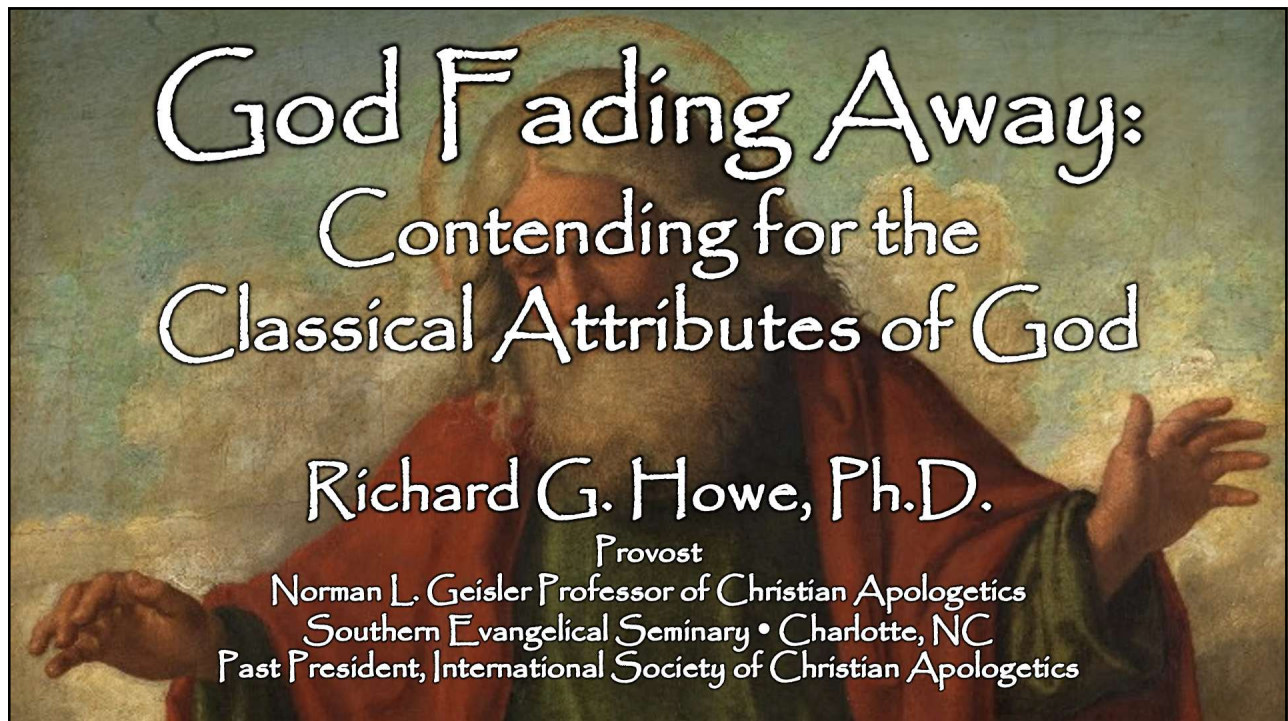
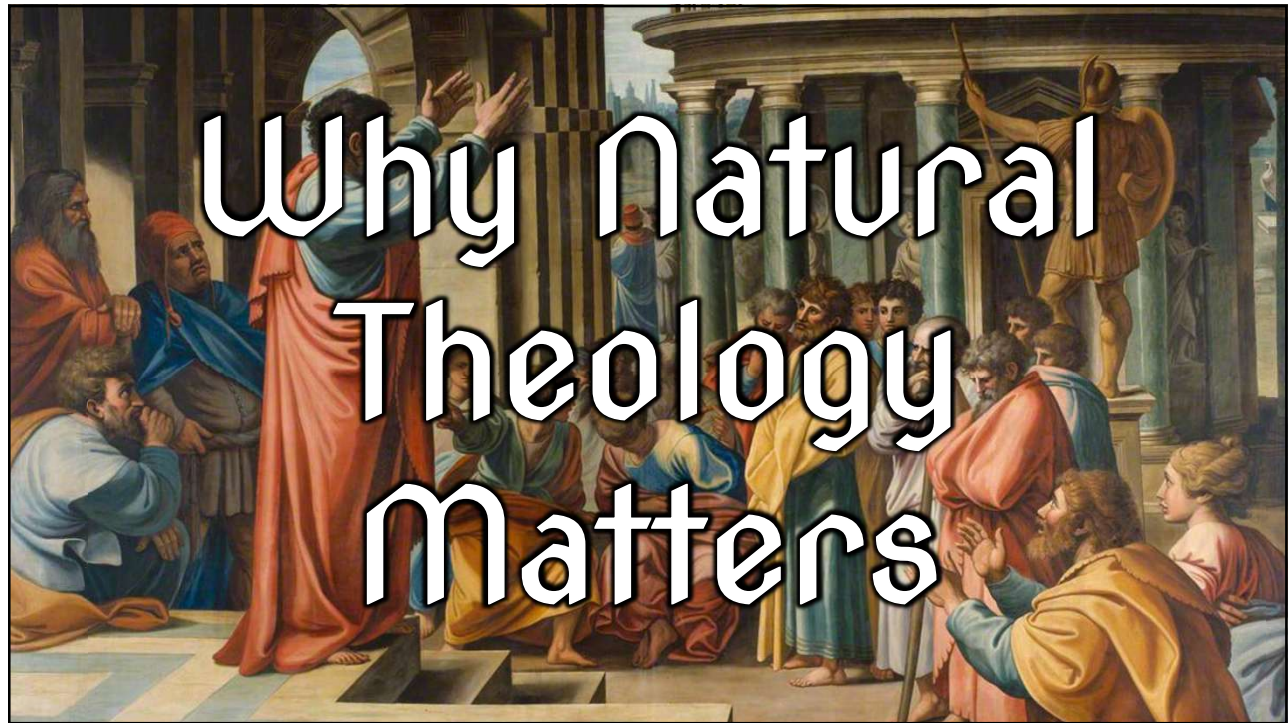
Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. ... {27} And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace;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



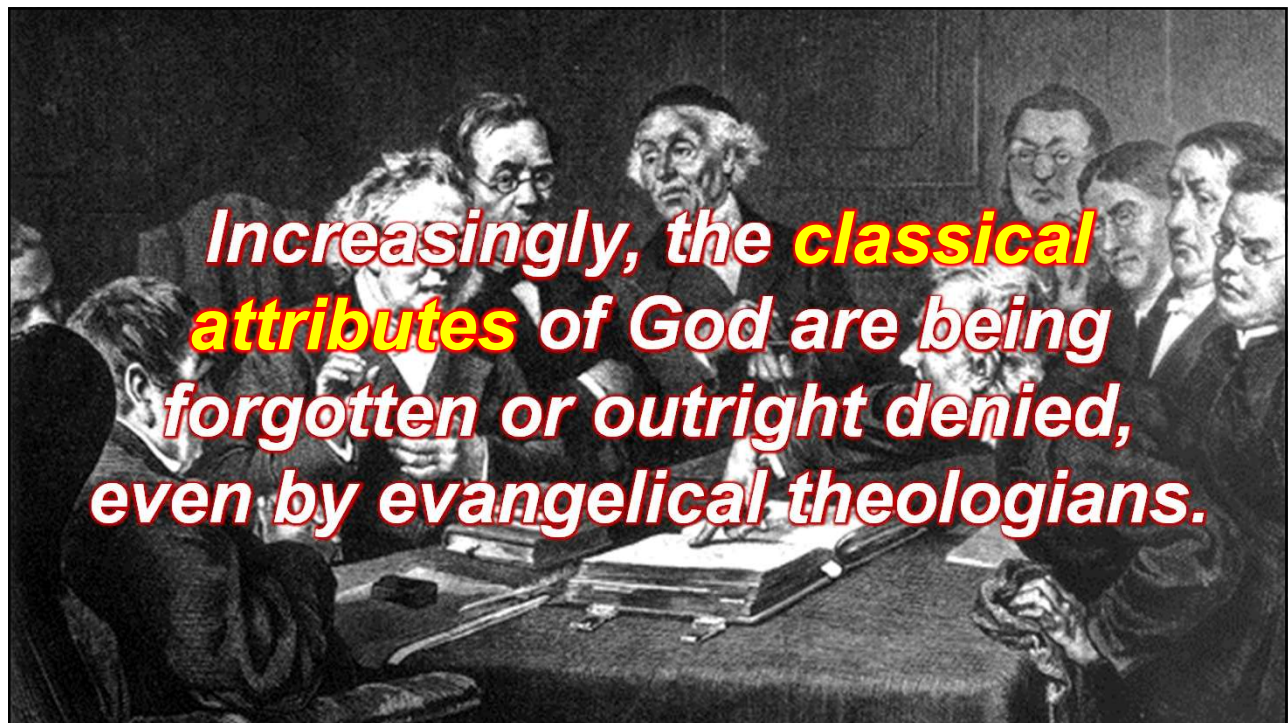
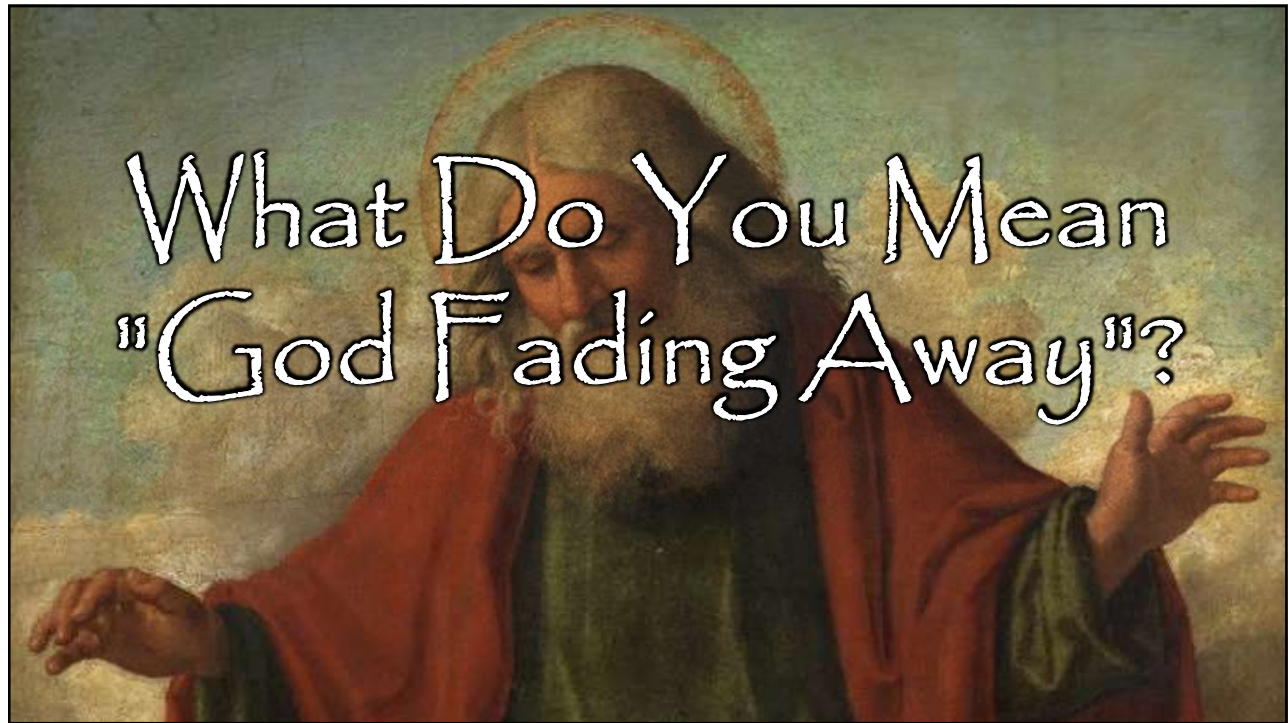


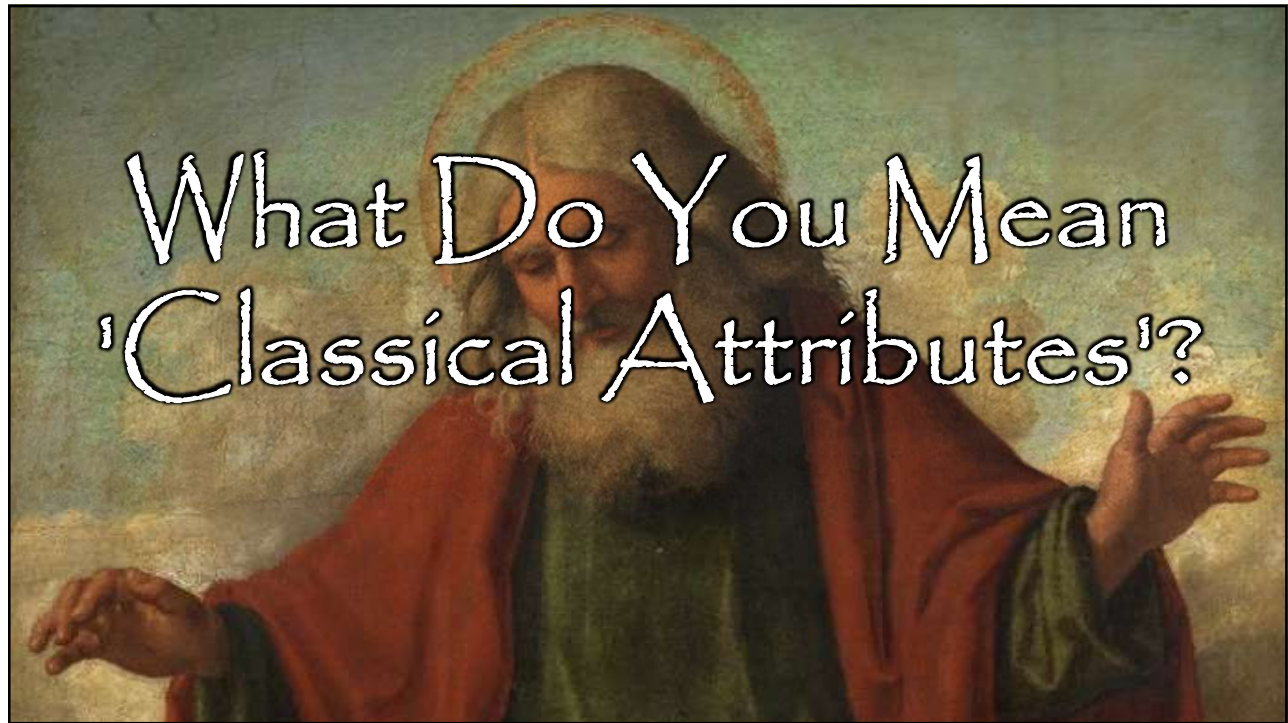


General Revelation	Special Revelation
<i>Given through creation (known through simple apprehension of the sensible world)</i>	<i>Given through Prophets and Apostles (read by their writings, a.k.a., the Scriptures)</i>
<i>Reveals God's existence and attributes</i>	<i>Reveals God's gospel and will</i>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









## attributes

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

## classical

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





# classical attributes

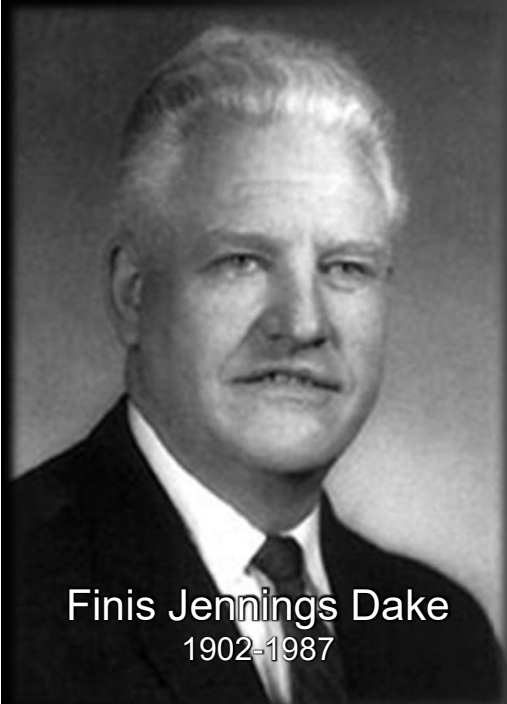
*characteristics of God's nature and actions known from creation and God's Word understood along the contours of the categories of Western thinking arising from the ancient Greeks, the Christian Church Fathers, and the Medieval Scholastics*



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

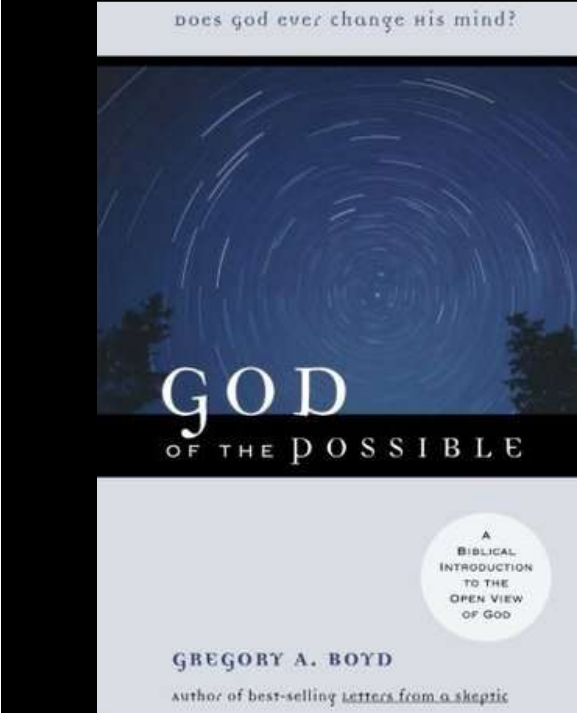






Finis Jennings Dake  
1902-1987

(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)




does god ever change his mind?

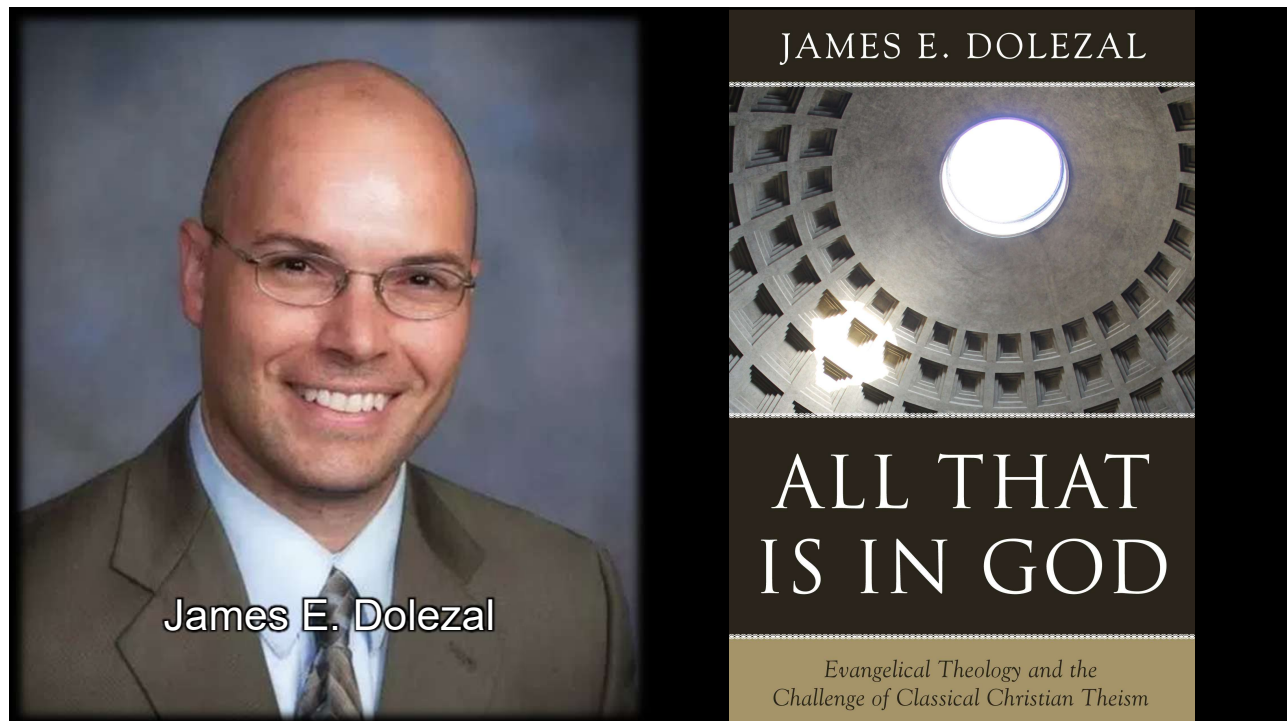
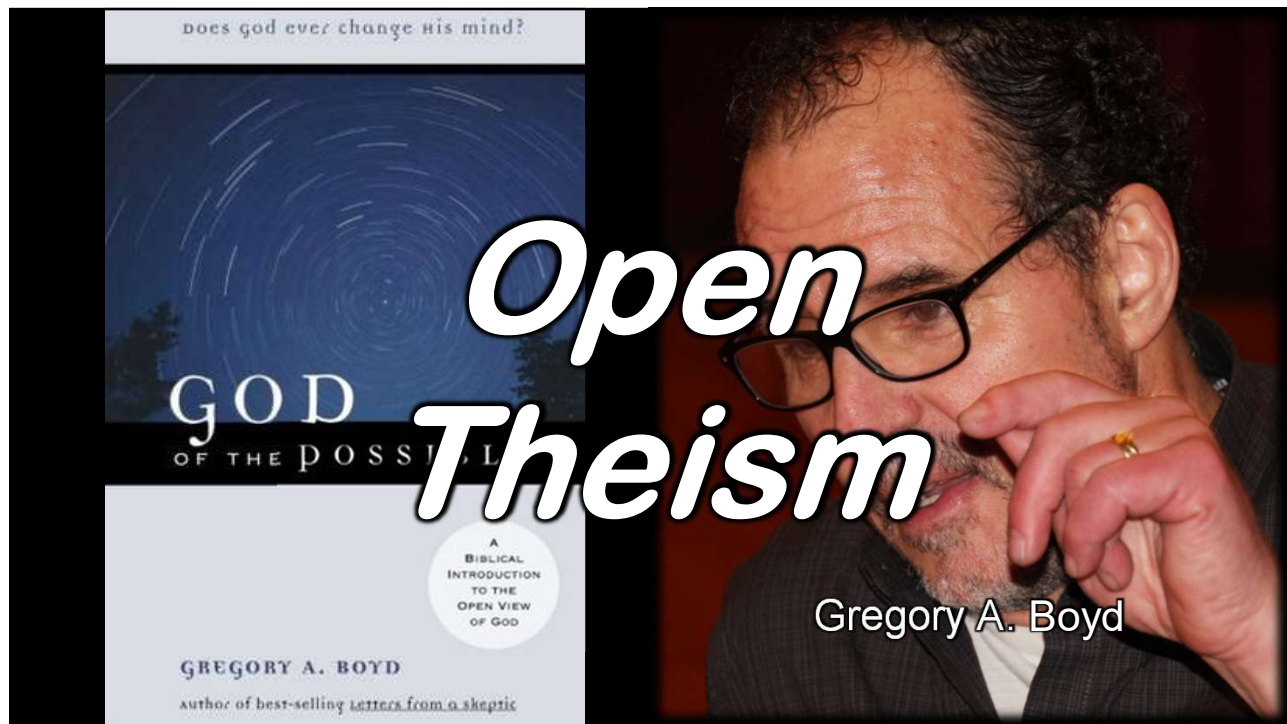
GOD  
OF THE POSSIBLE

A  
BIBLICAL  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
OPEN VIEW  
OF GOD

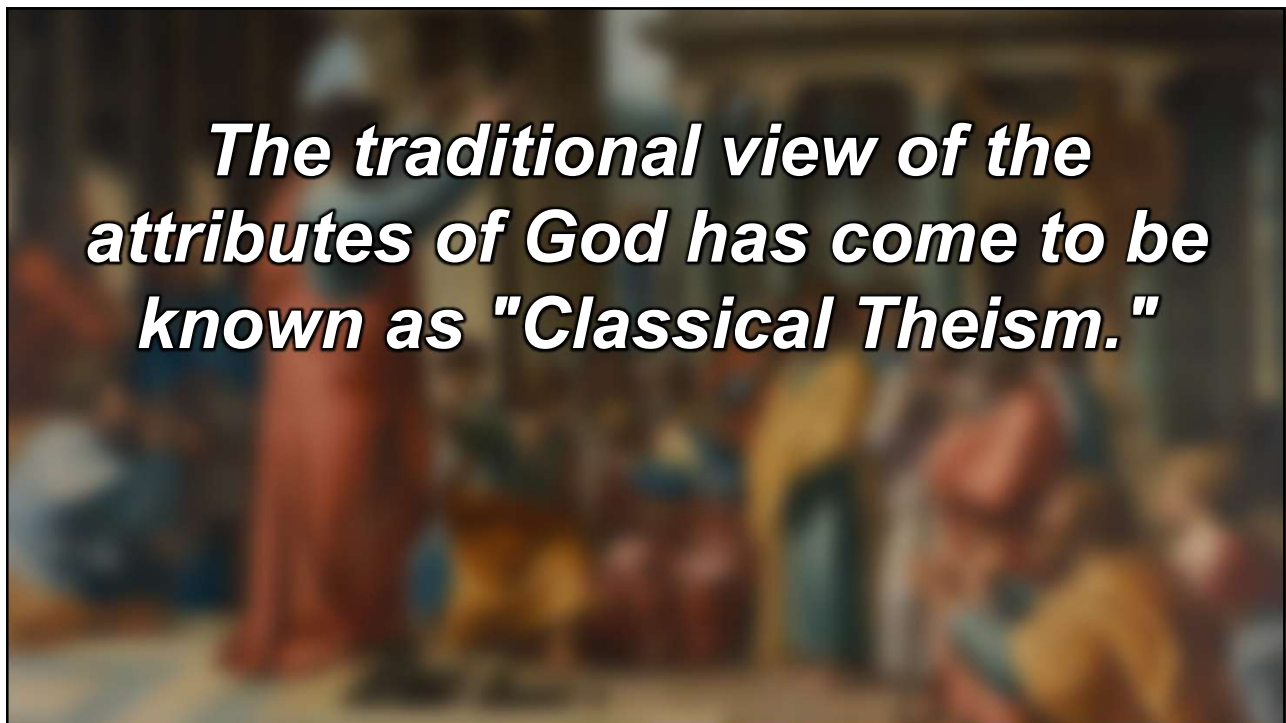
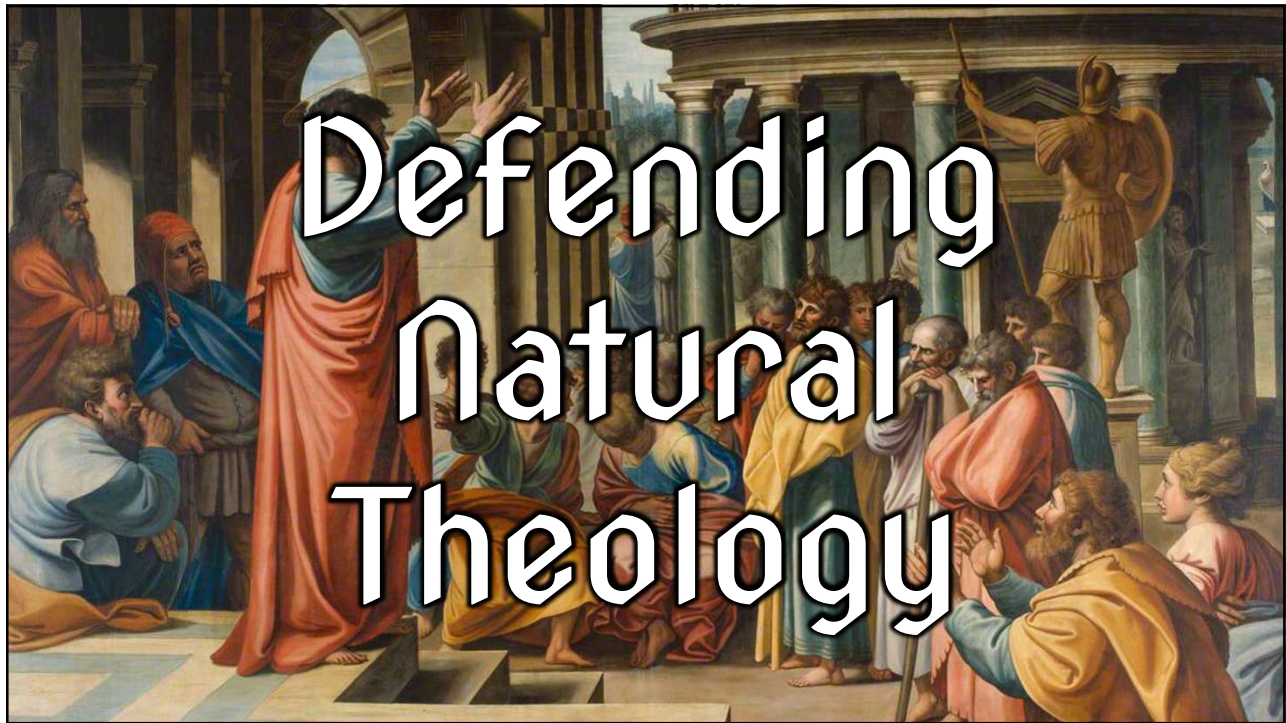
GREGORY A. BOYD  
author of best-selling *letters from a skeptic*

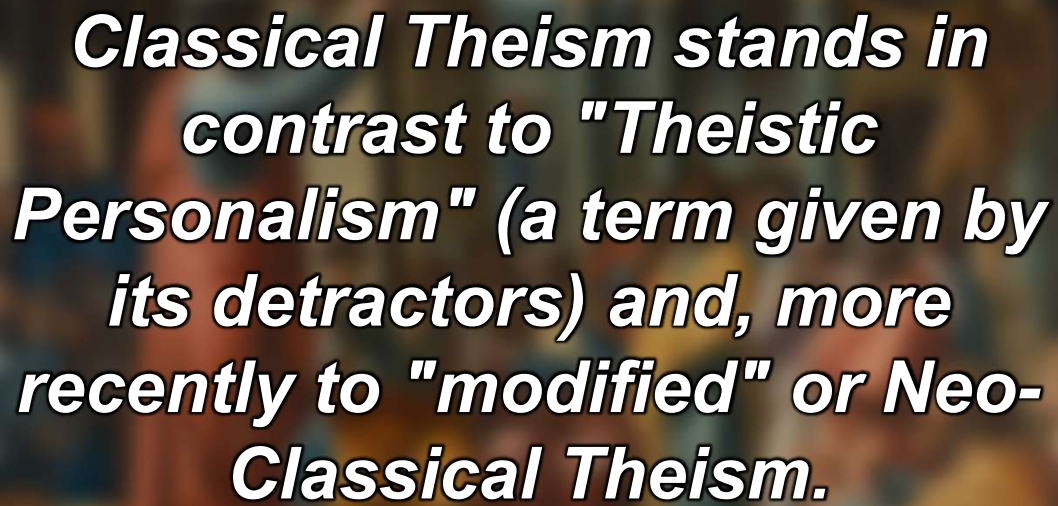


Gregory A. Boyd

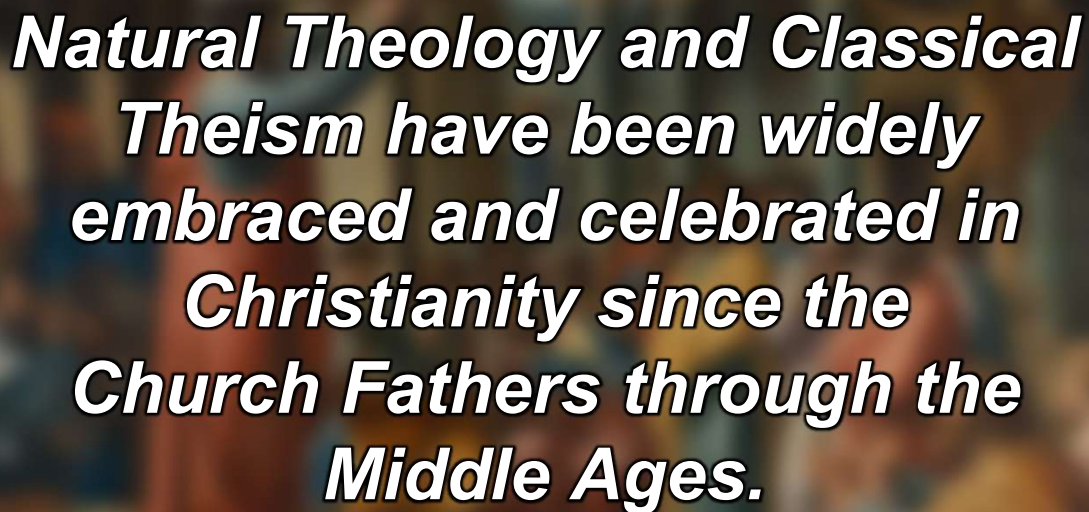








***Classical Theism stands in contrast to "Theistic Personalism" (a term given by its detractors) and, more recently to "modified" or Neo-Classical Theism.***

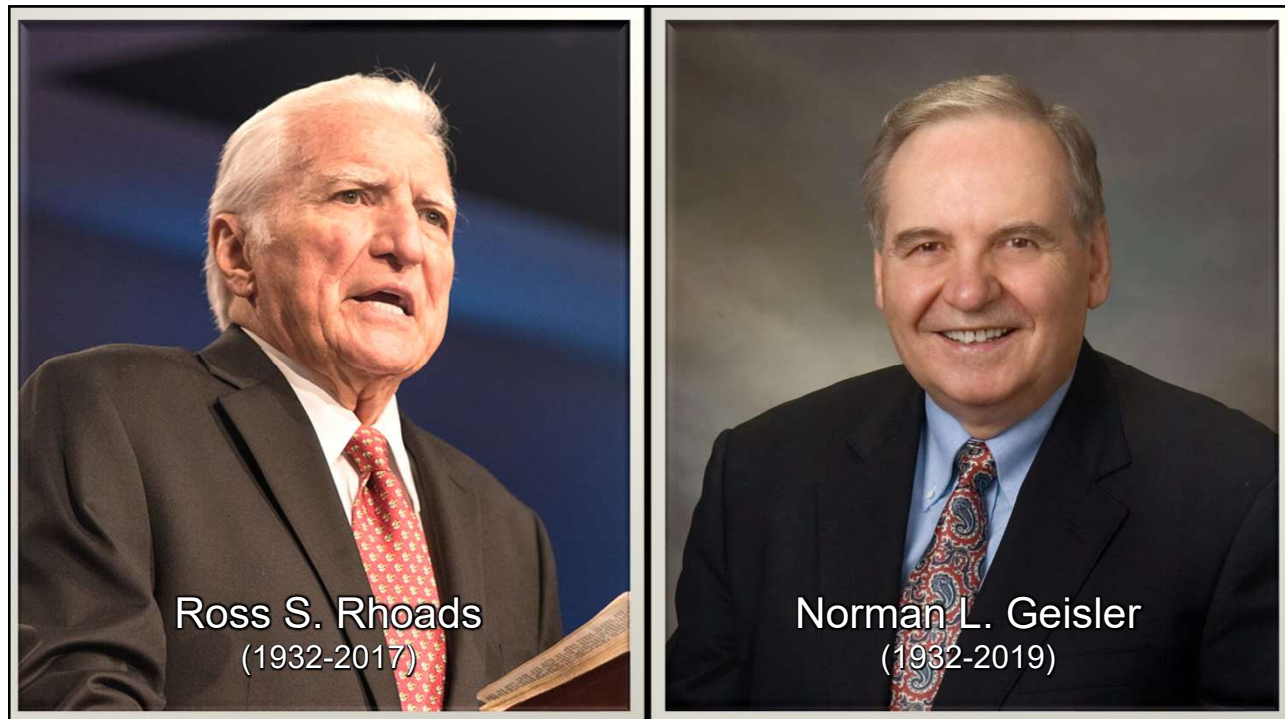


***Natural Theology and Classical Theism have been widely embraced and celebrated in Christianity since the Church Fathers through the Middle Ages.***





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

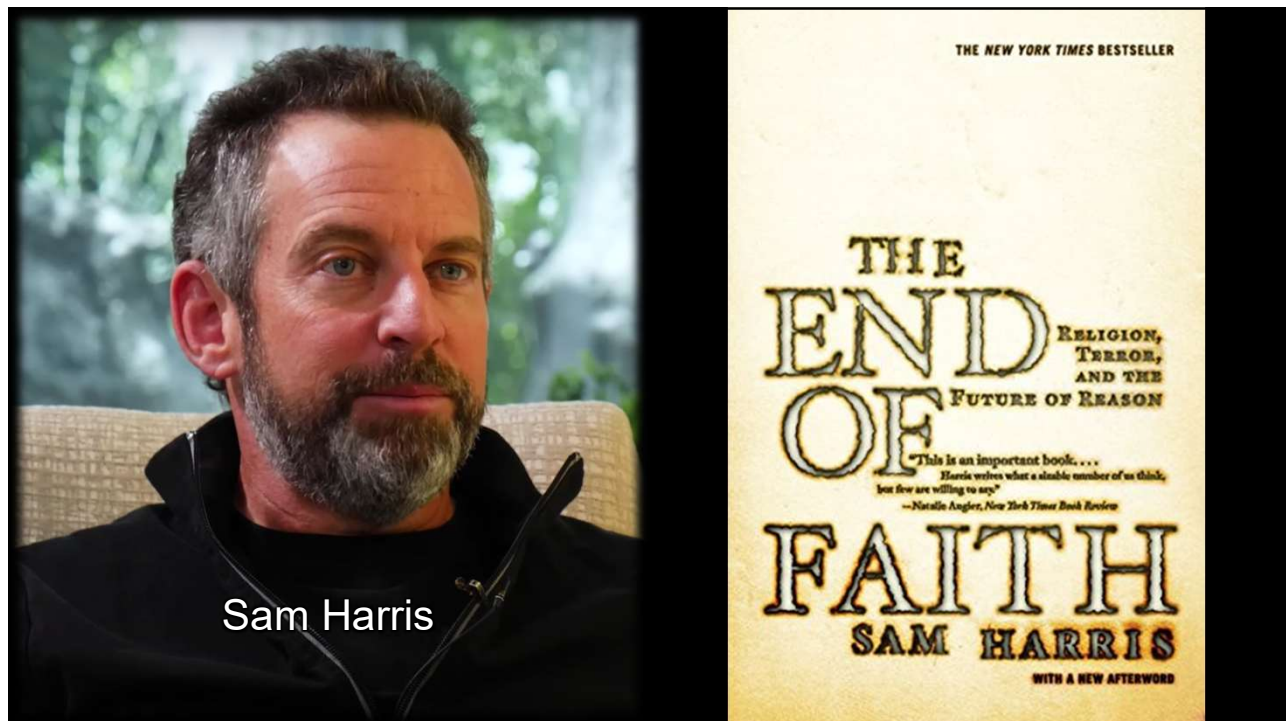




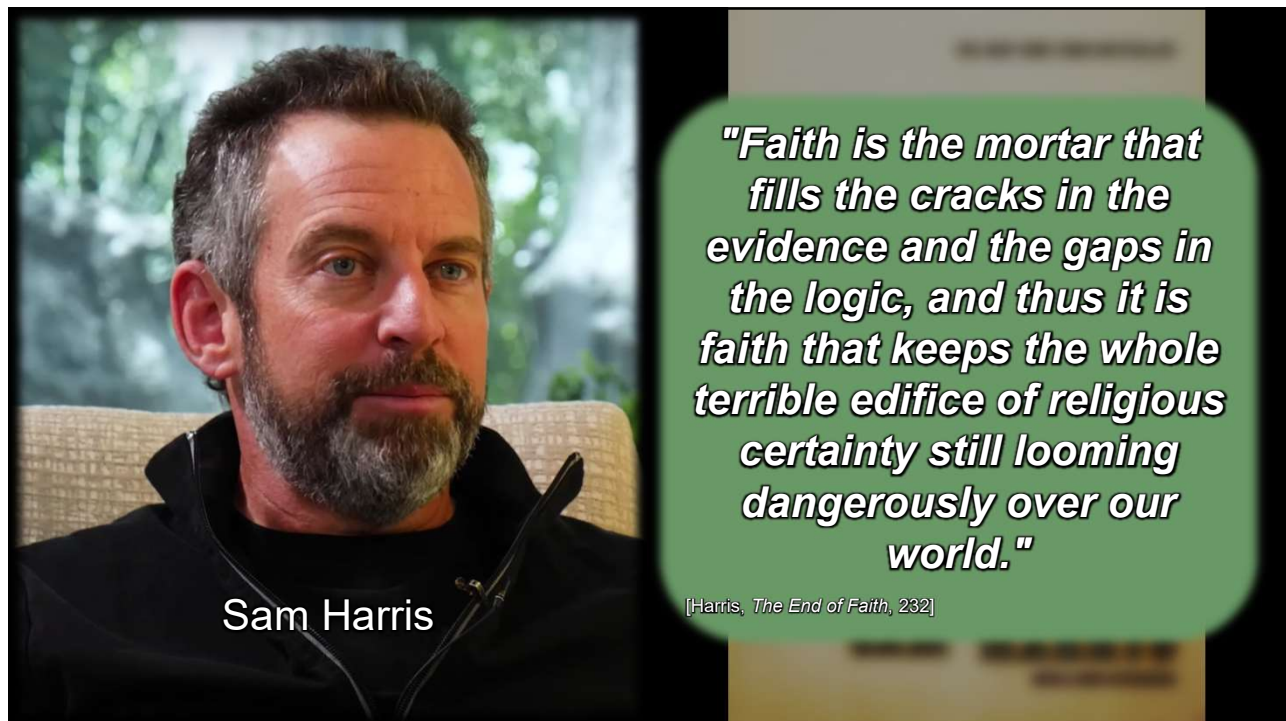
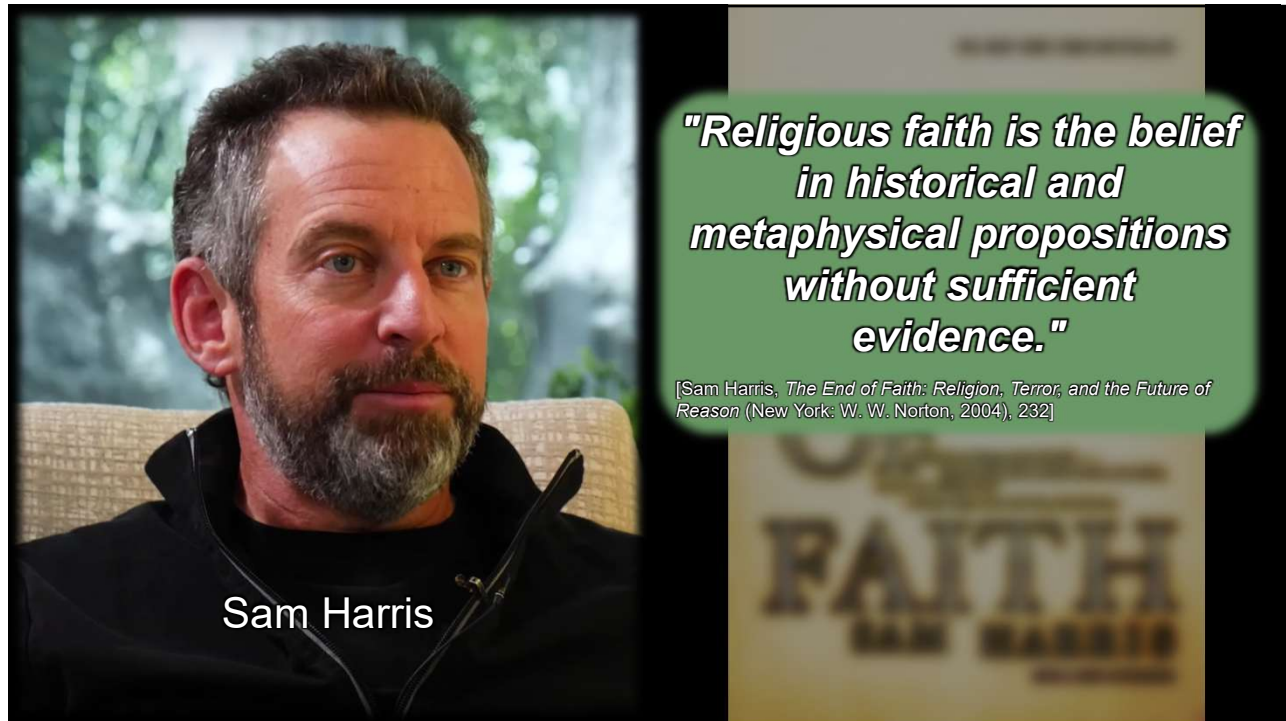


***However, the Classical Theism  
arising from Natural Theology  
(as I am describing it here)  
is starkly criticized in a  
number of circles.***

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



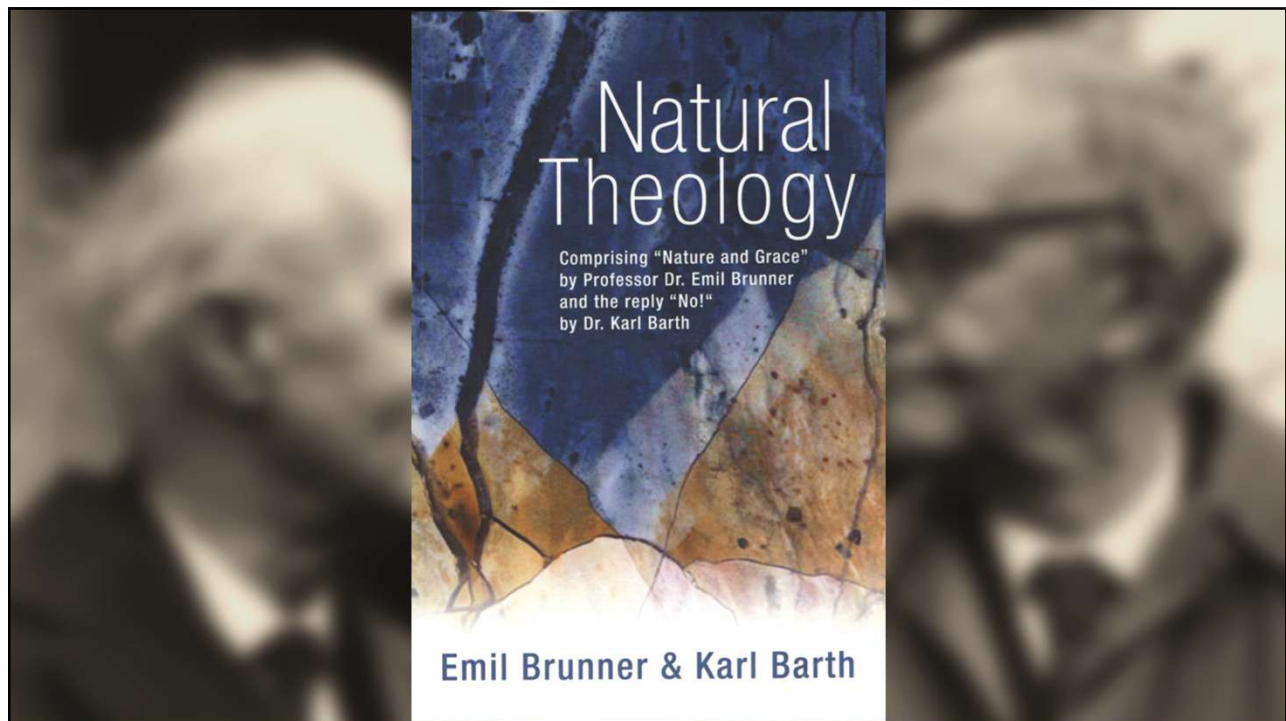


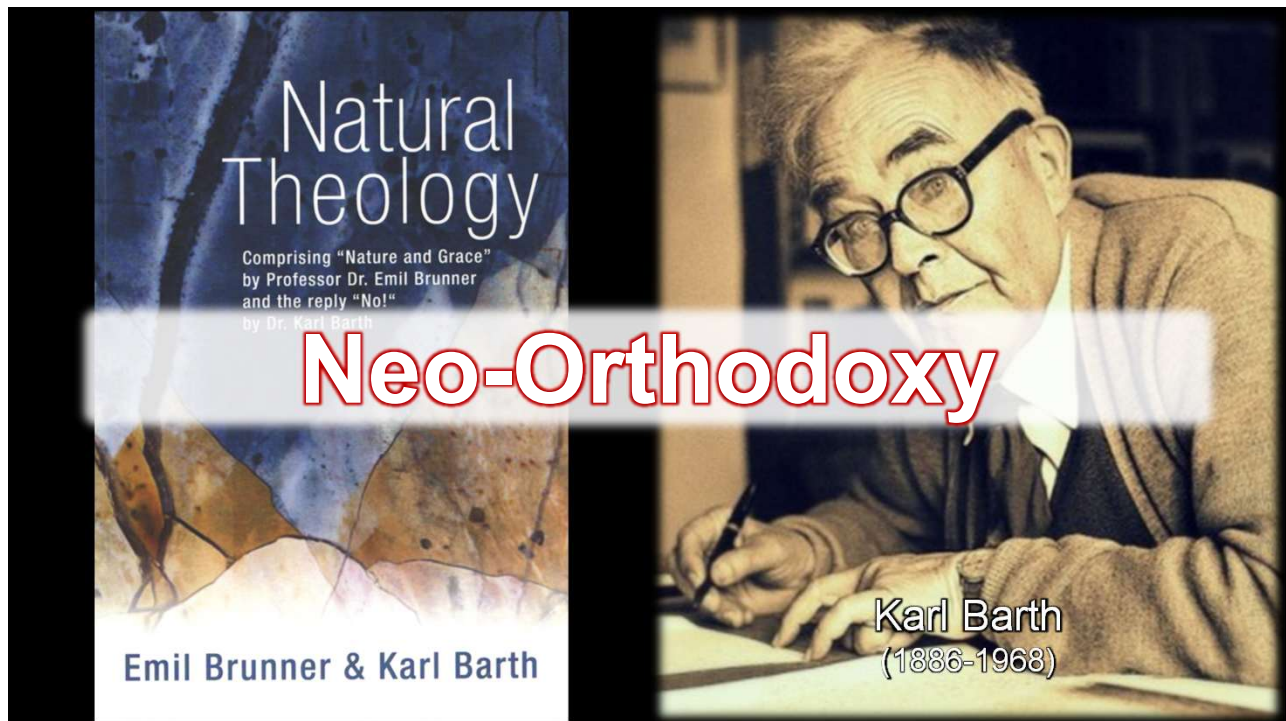
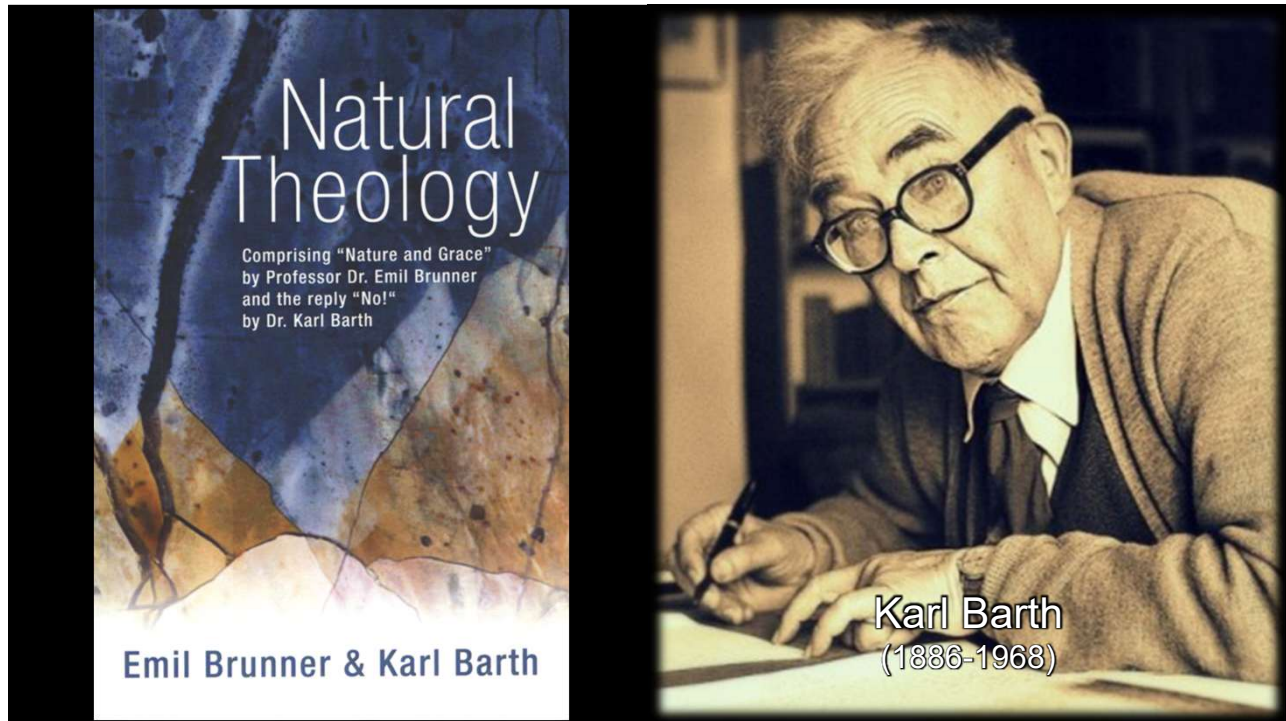




***Nevertheless, Natural  
Theology and Classical  
Theism have had their  
detractors even within  
Christianity.***



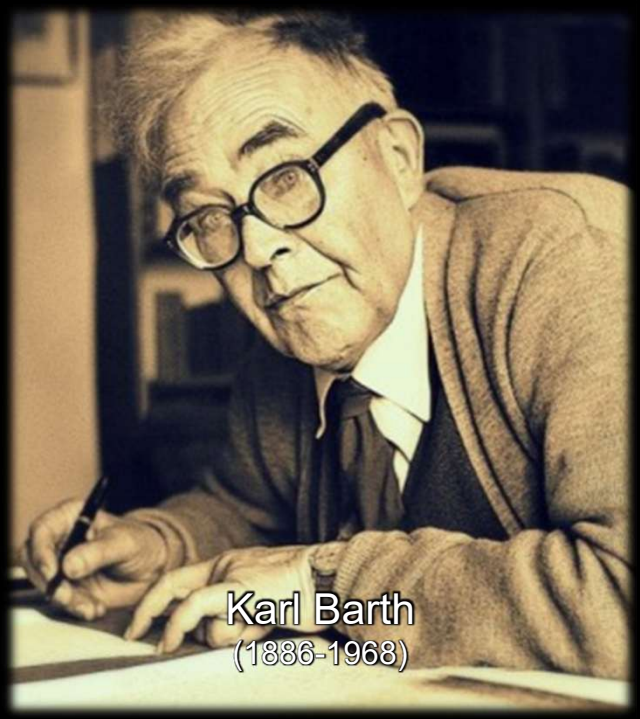






**"Natural Theology does not exist as an entity capable of becoming a separate subject within what I consider to be real theology—not even for the sake of being rejected."**

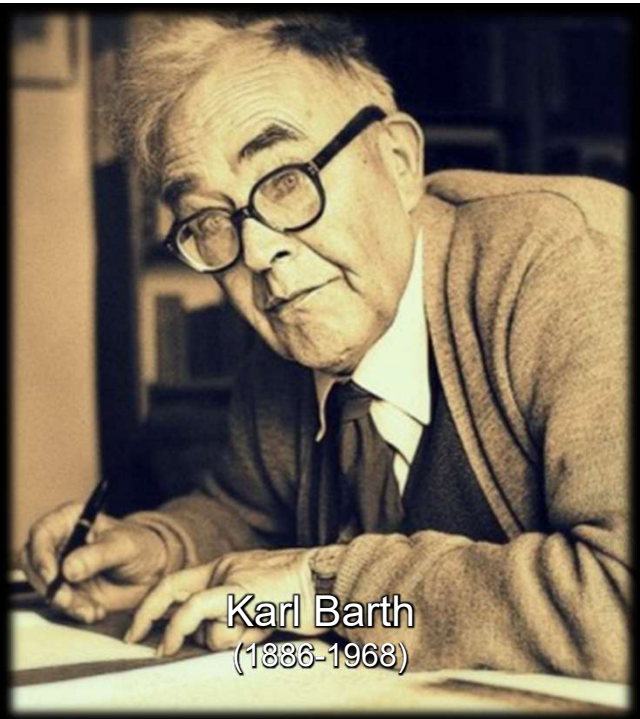
Emil Brunner & Karl Barth



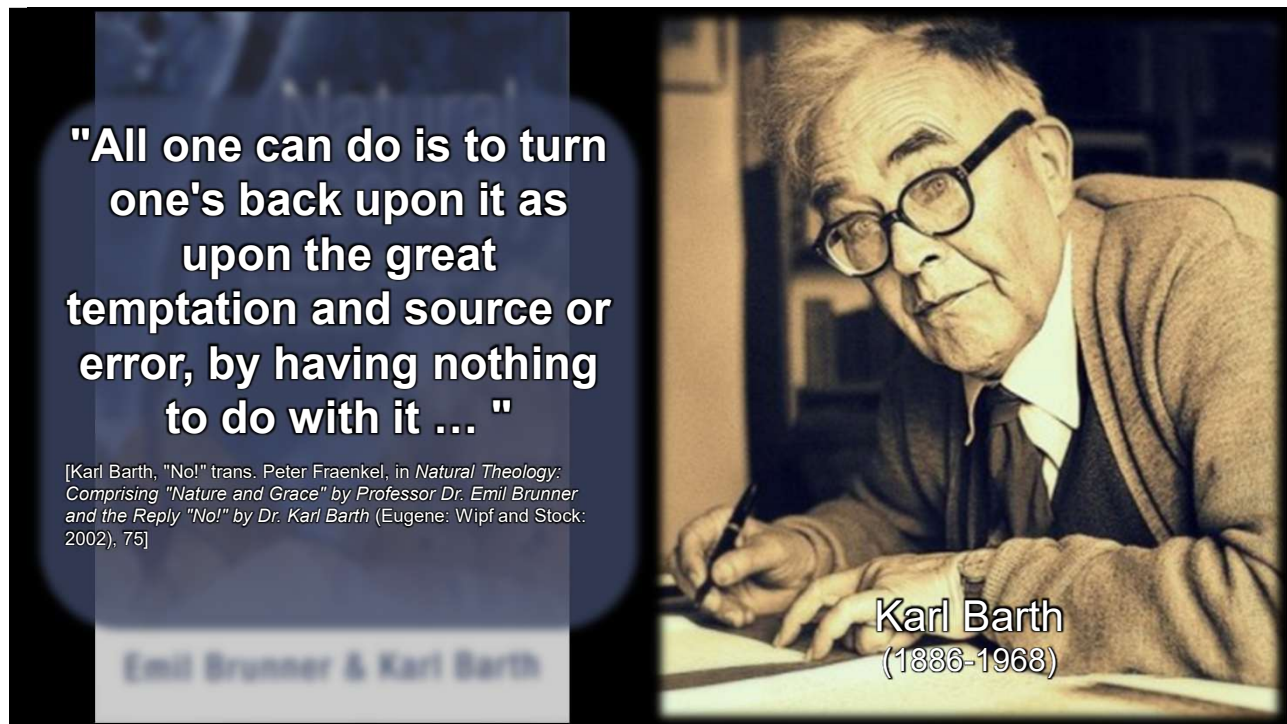
Karl Barth  
(1886-1968)

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

Emil Brunner & Karl Barth

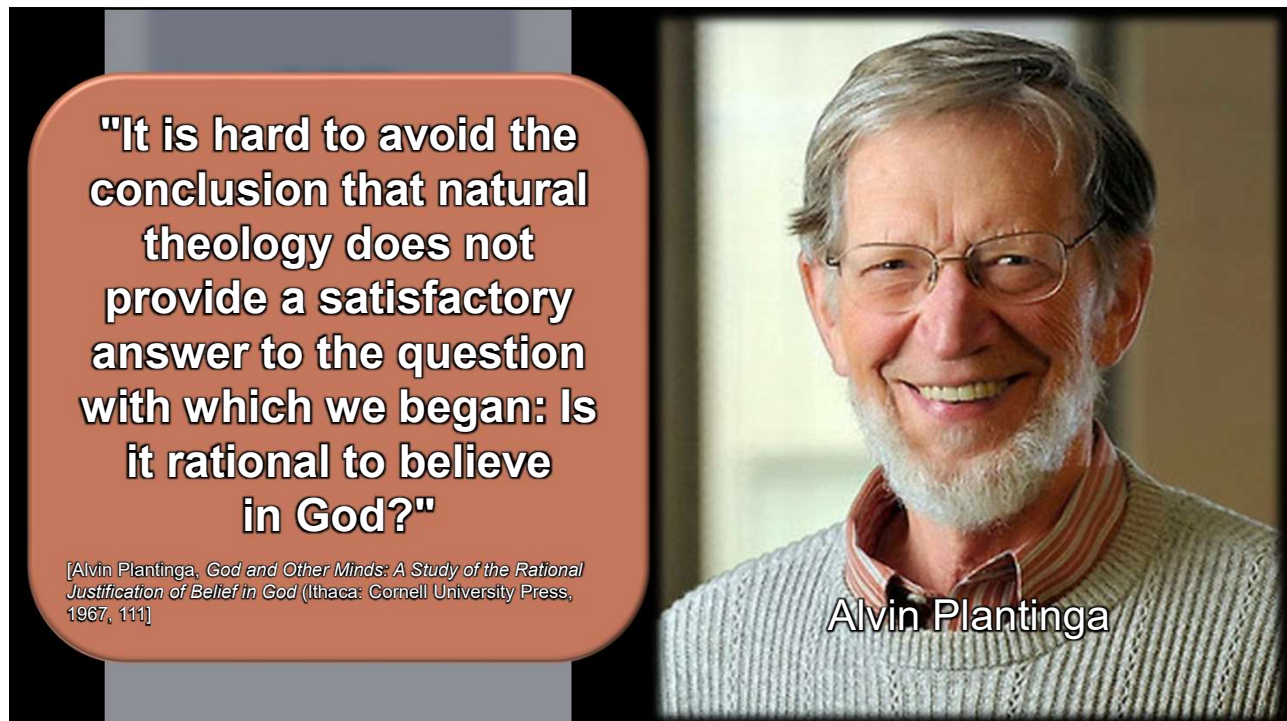
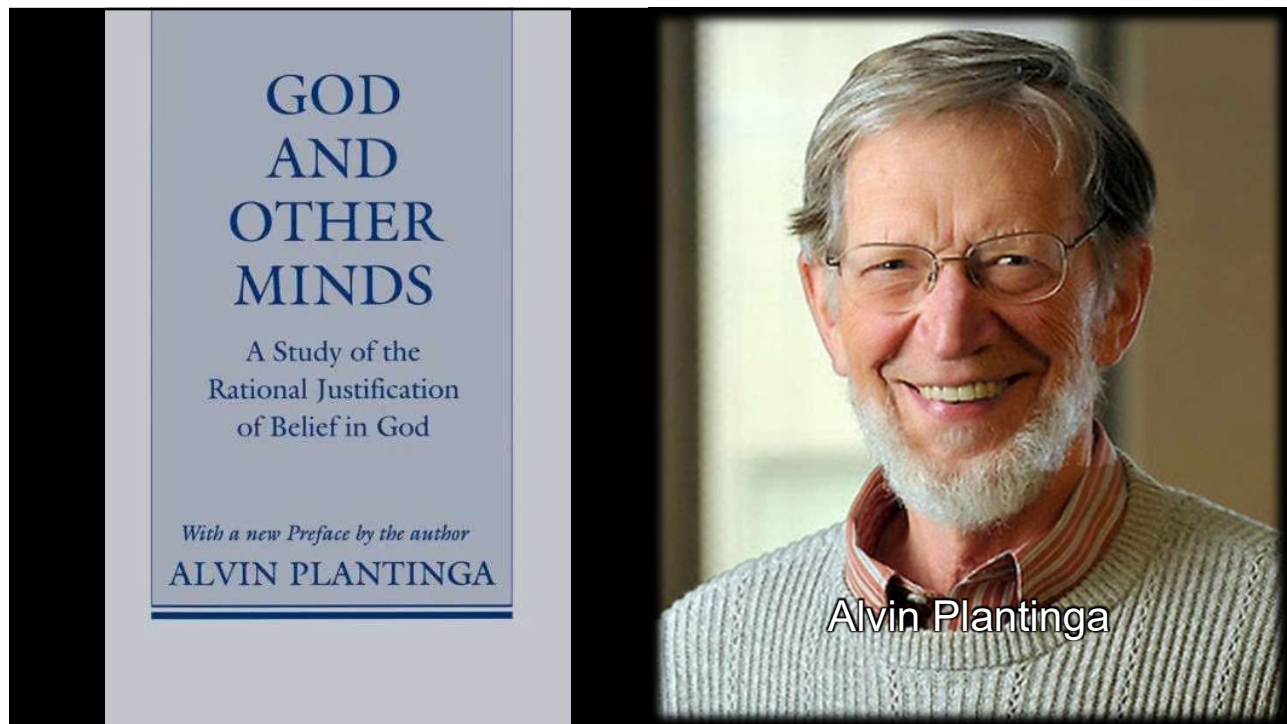


Karl Barth  
(1886-1968)

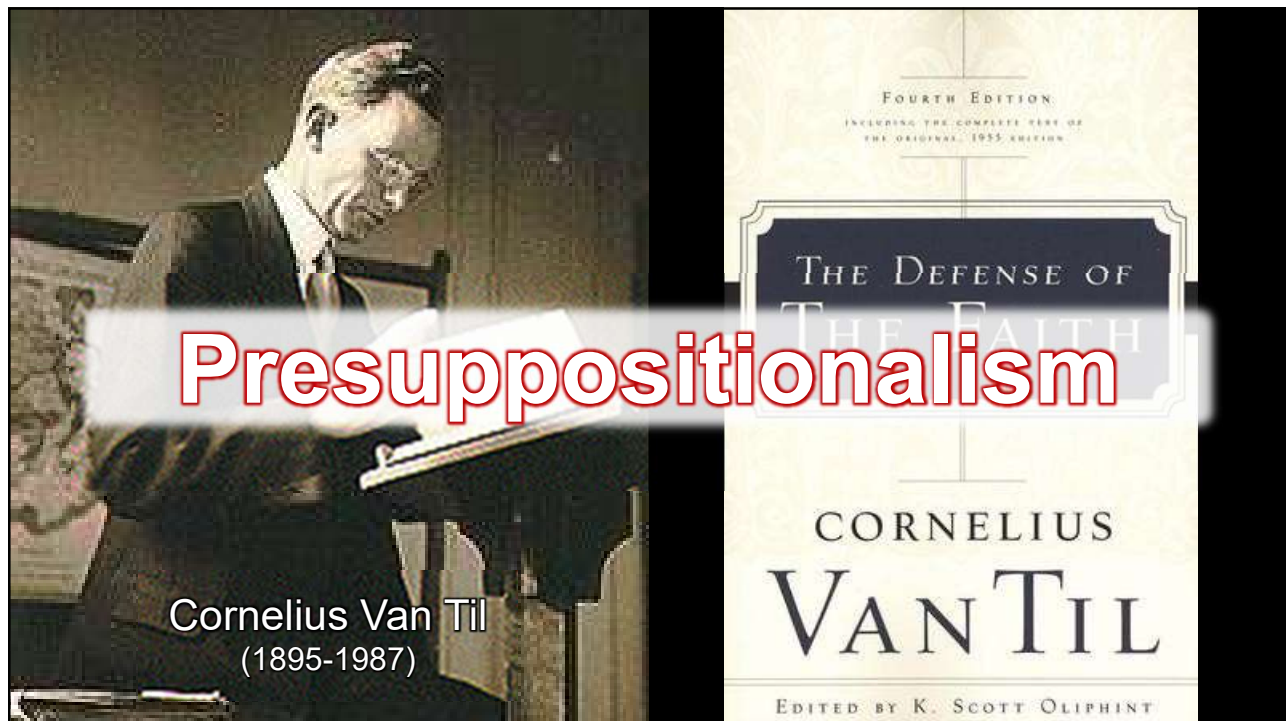


**Some Christian philosophers who are committed to *Analytic Philosophy* are relatively unsympathetic towards the Natural Theology of the *Classical Philosophy* approach.**





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







Francis Schaeffer  
(1912-1984)

Cornelius Van Til  
(1895-1987)

## A Letter from Cornelius Van Til to Francis Schaeffer

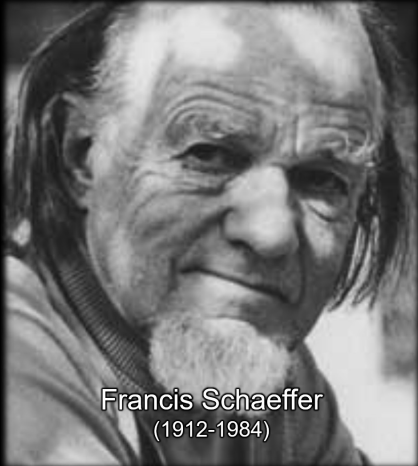
Extracted from *Ordained Servant* vol. 6, no. 4 (October 1997)

March 11, 1969  
Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer  
Chalet les Melezes  
Huemoz sur Ollon  
1861 Switzerland

Dear Francis:

You remember that some time ago I sent you a copy of a memorandum that I wrote on your Wheaton Lectures. Now that your book *The God Who Is There* appeared I should like to make some further remarks.

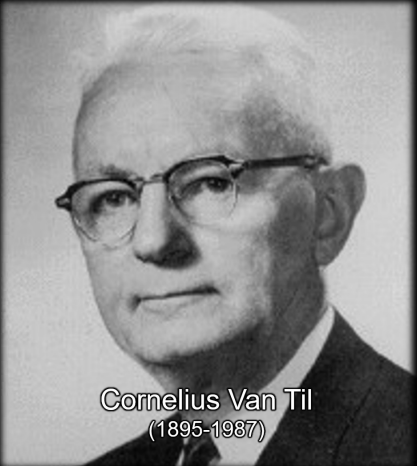
Let me preface what I say, by repeating what I said in the memorandum, that I have the greatest admiration for you personally and for your work at L'Abri. Those who have been with you there



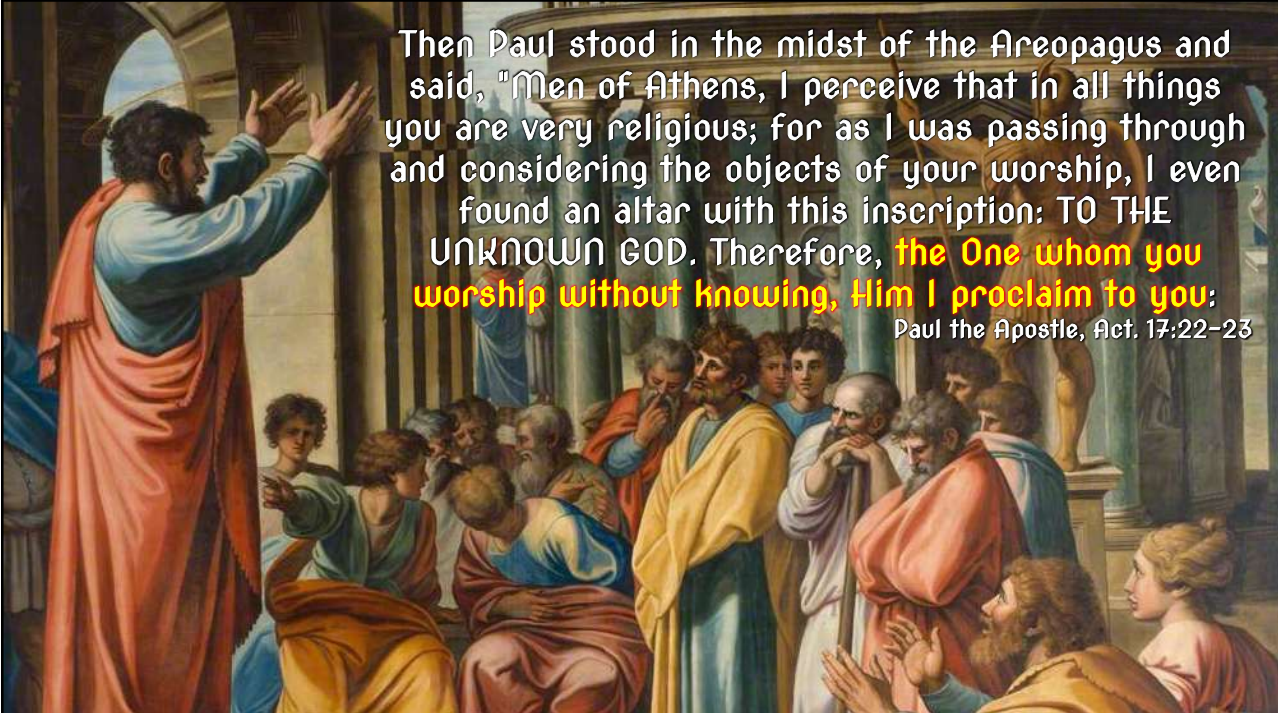
Francis Schaeffer  
(1912-1984)

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

*Cornelius Van Til to Francis Schaeffer*



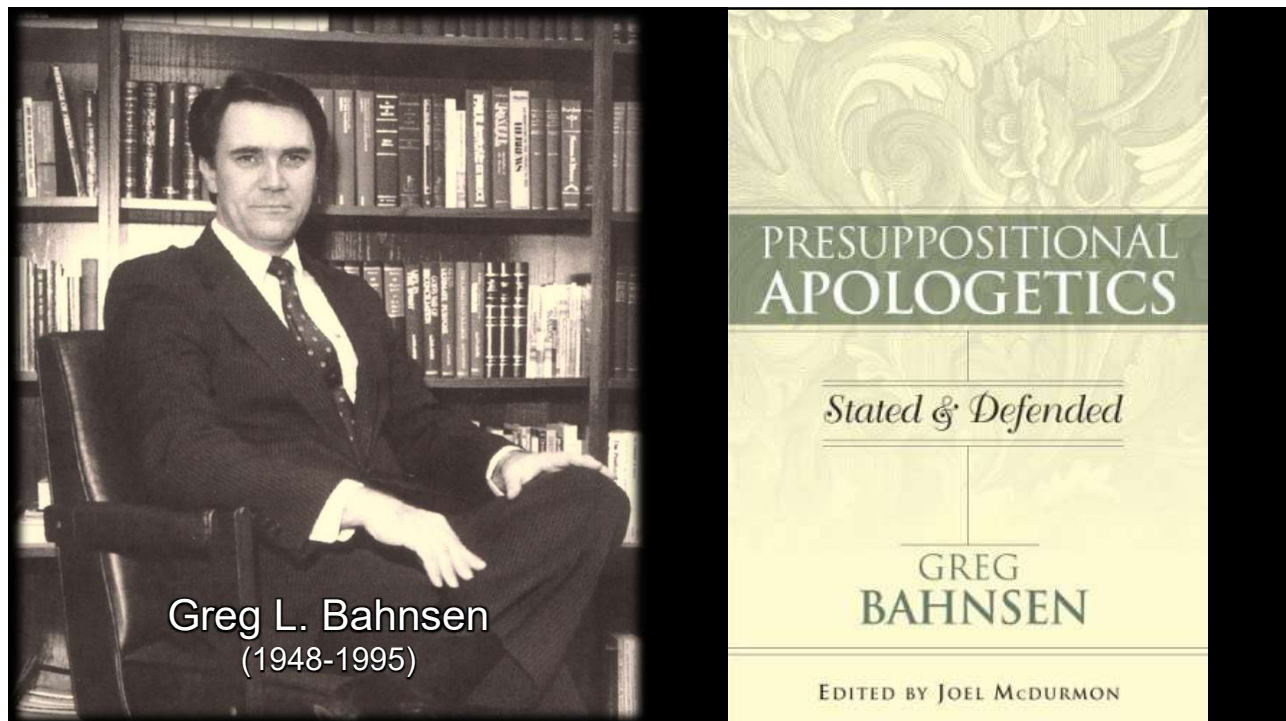
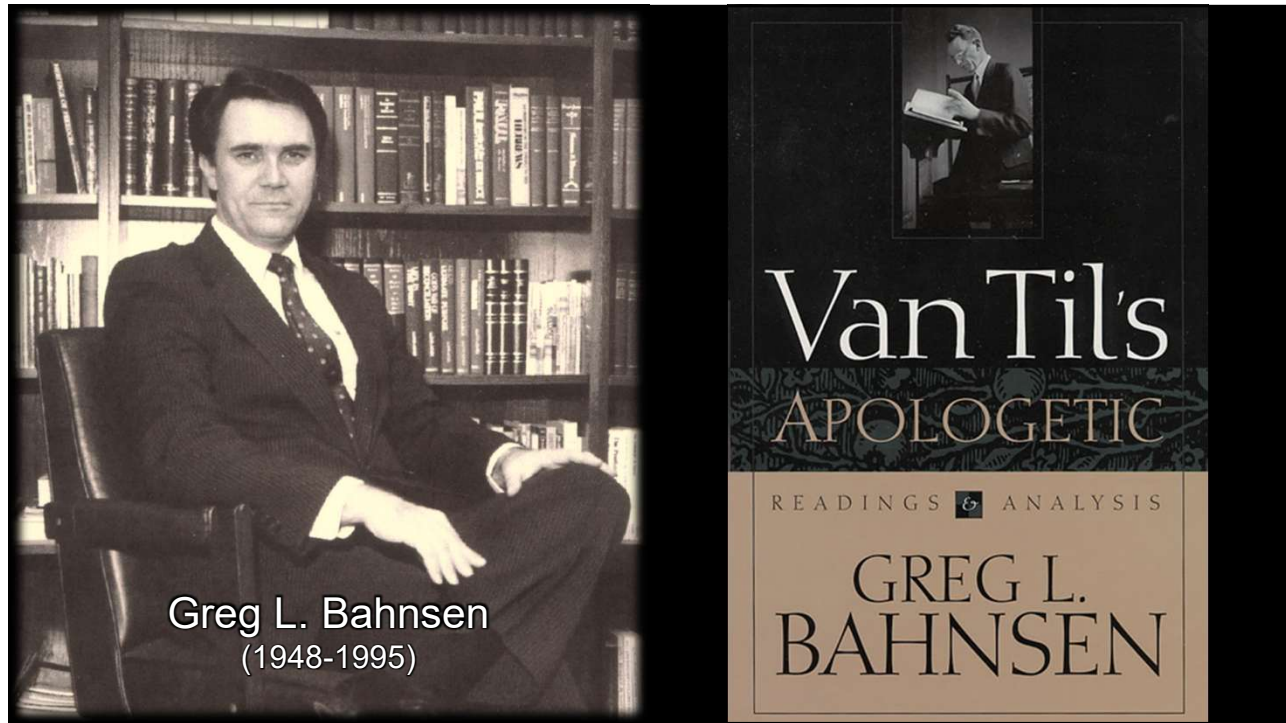
Cornelius Van Til  
(1895-1987)

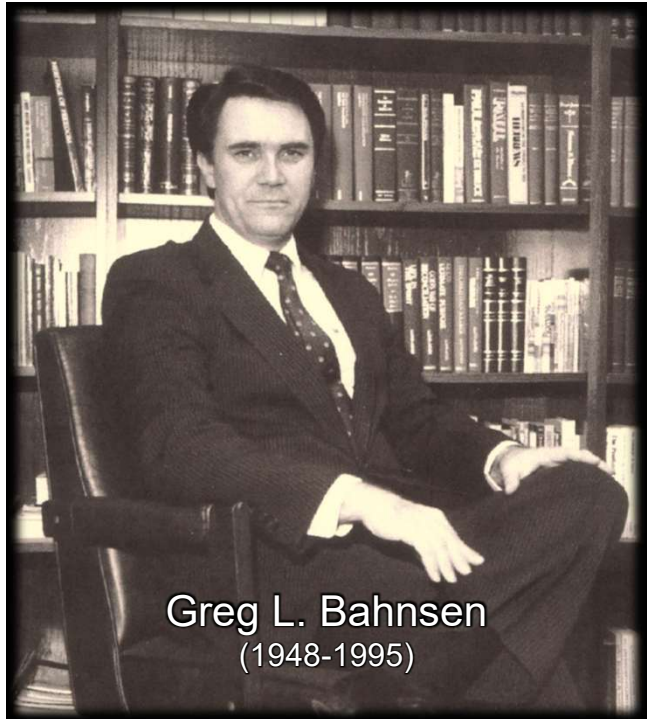


Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, **the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:**

Paul the Apostle, Act. 17:22-23

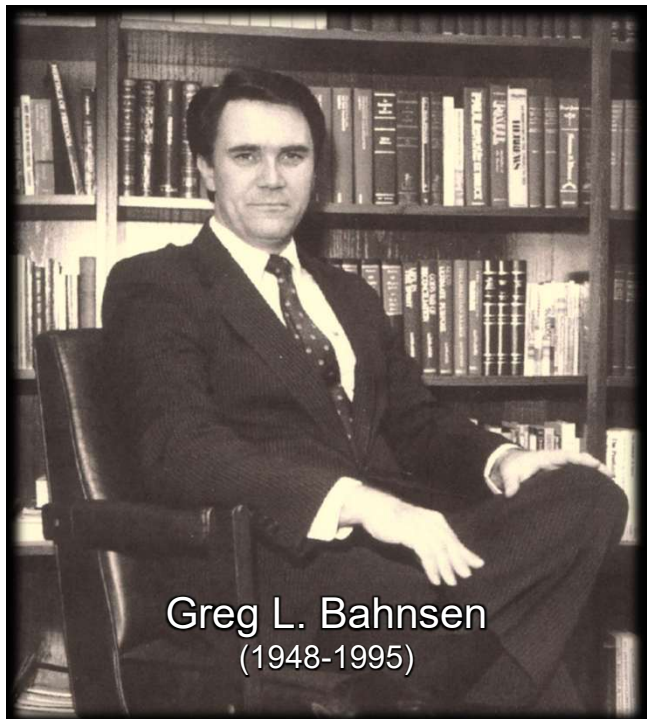




A black and white portrait of Greg L. Bahnsen, a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is seated in a dark leather armchair, positioned in front of a large bookshelf filled with numerous books. The lighting is soft, highlighting his face and the texture of his clothing.

Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)

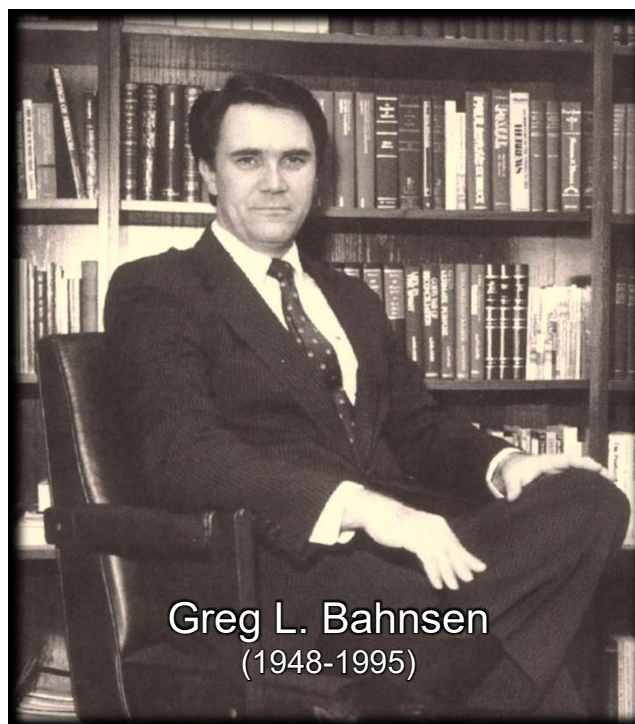
"Thinking to maintain neutrality with respect to Scripture, any natural theology that reasons autonomously *from* logical and/or empirical grounds *to* God results in an exclusion of *revelational necessity* and *authority* endorsing some other imperious philosophy. ...

A black and white portrait of Greg L. Bahnsen, a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is seated in a dark leather armchair, positioned in front of a large bookshelf filled with numerous books. The lighting is soft, highlighting his face and the texture of his clothing.

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.

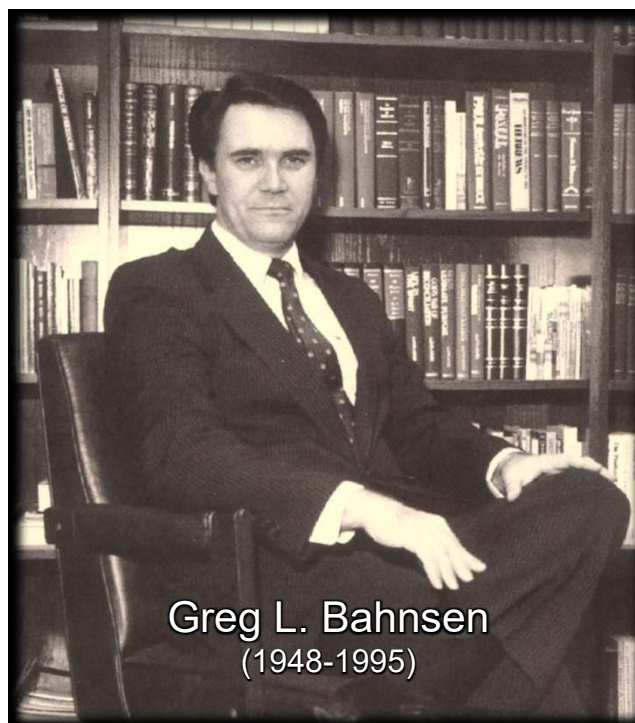




Greg L. Bahnsen  
(1948-1995)

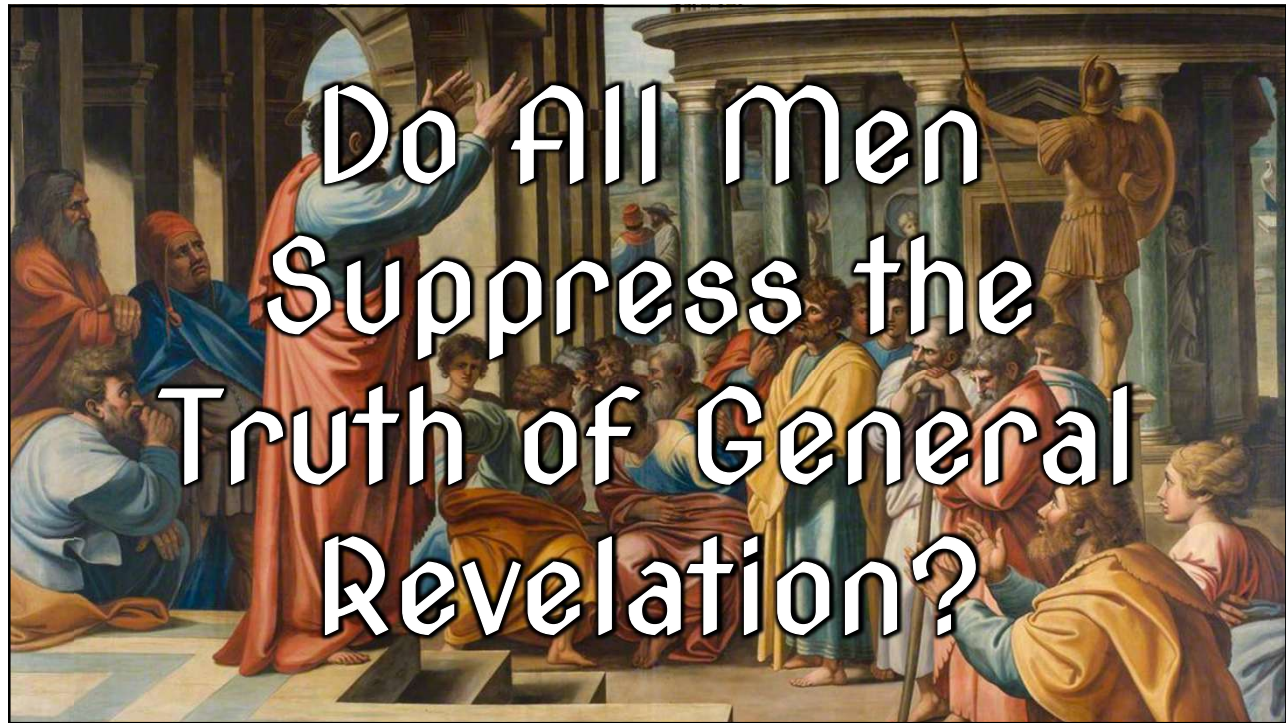
**"Faith must necessarily start with the clear, authoritative, self-attesting, special revelation of God in Scripture coordinated with the Holy Spirit's inner testimony to the regenerated heart."**

[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  
(1948-1995)

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



## Quodlibetal Blog

Musings from Anywhere by Dr. Richard G. Howe

Home About
Older posts

**Sep 14**

### Some Thoughts on Natural Theology and Romans 1

```

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 14:29-26; 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
        
```

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

- About

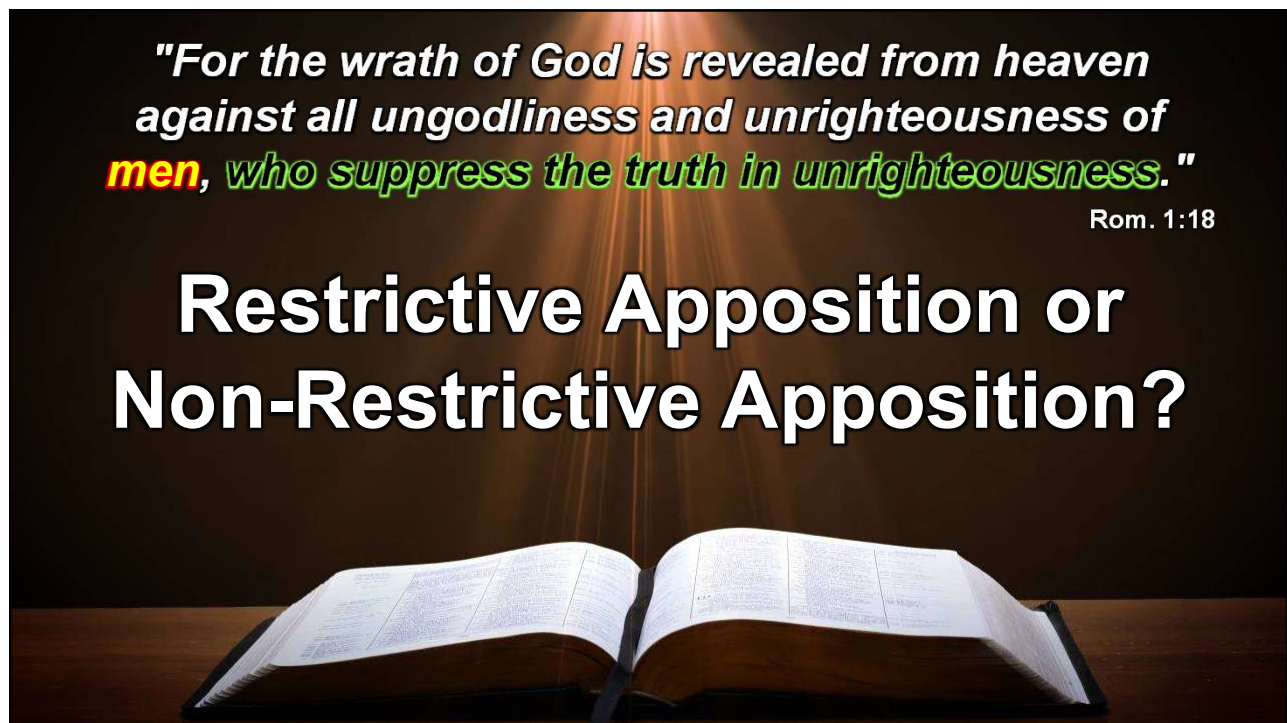
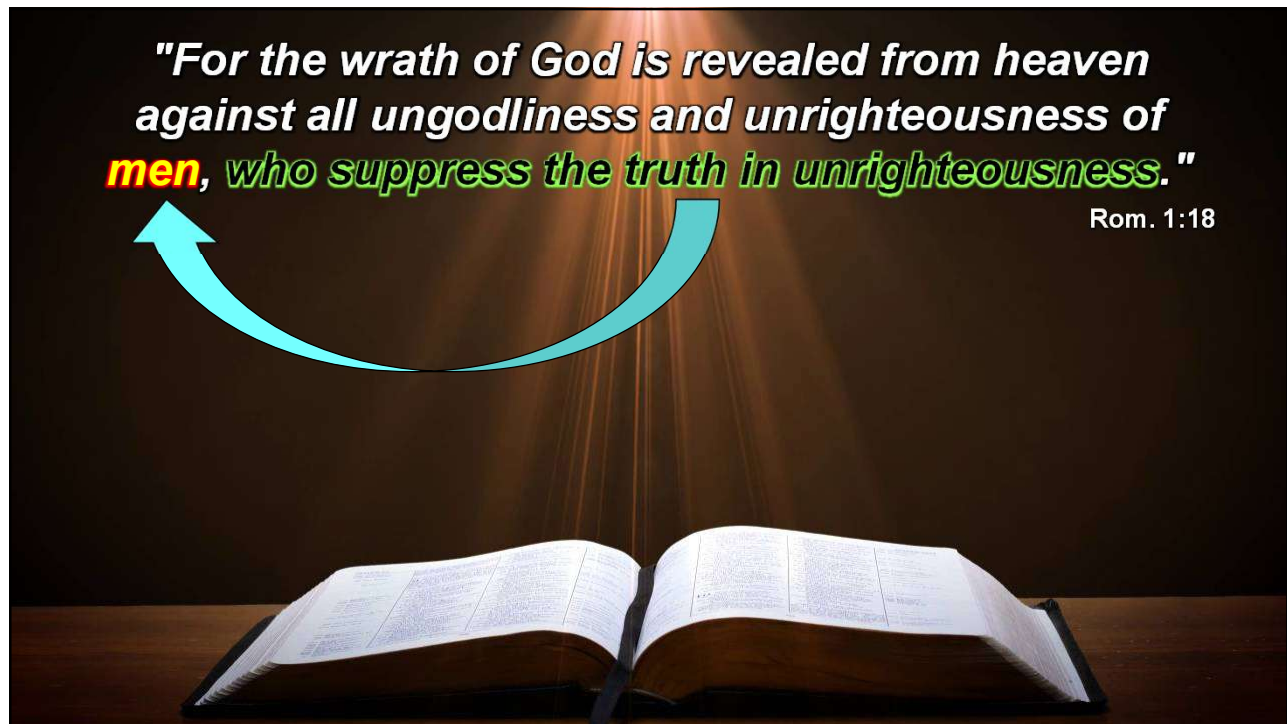
Categories

- Archived
- Uncategorized

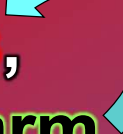
Blogroll

- Antwoord (in Afrikaans)
- Areopagus Christian Study Center
- 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'.

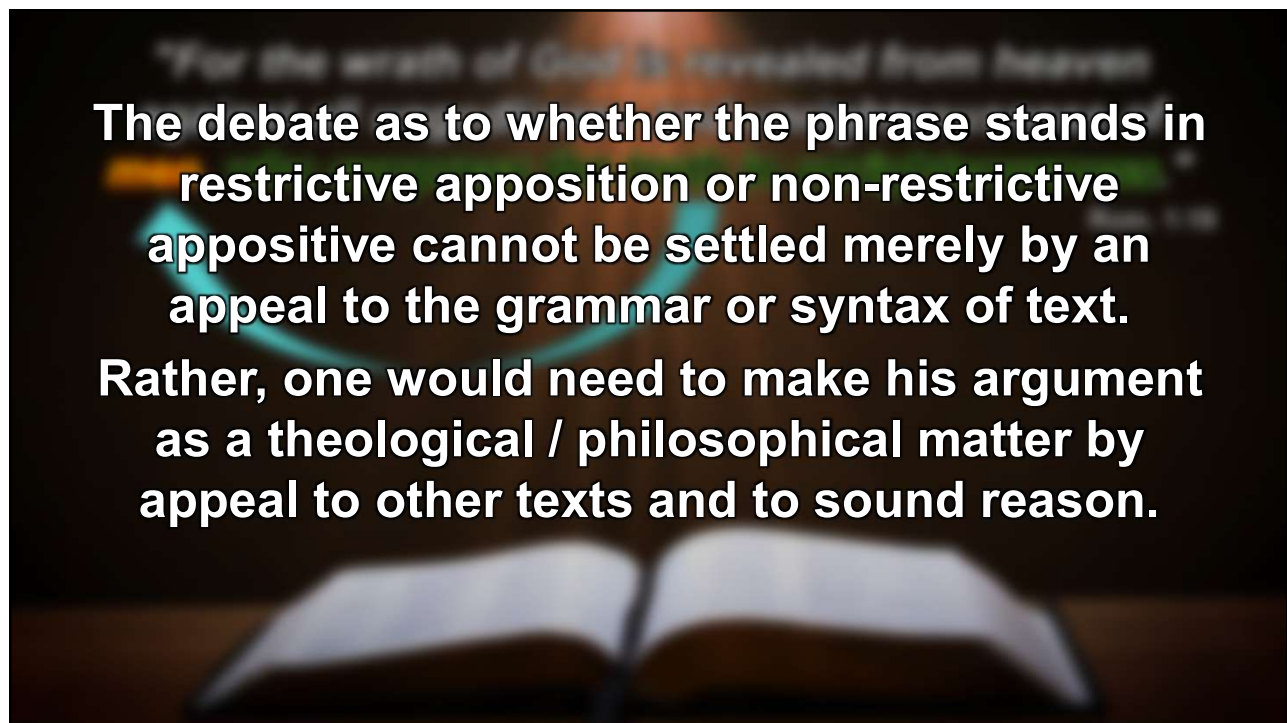
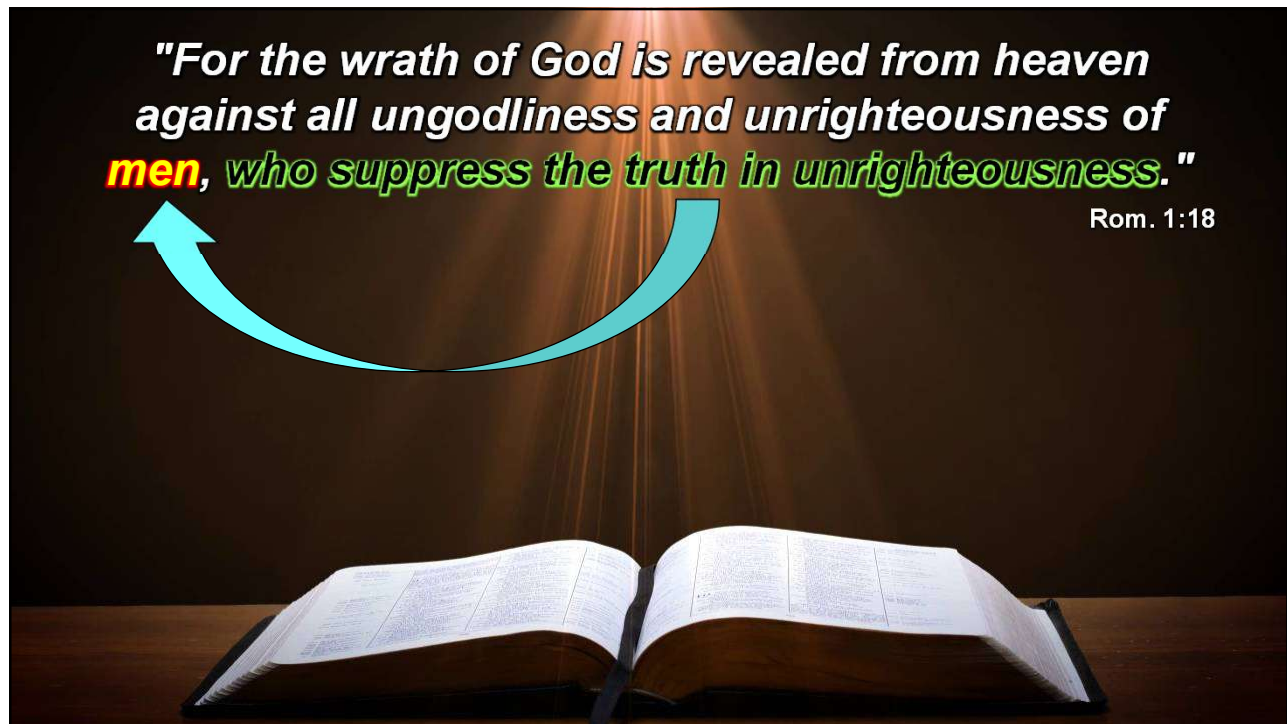
The phrase 'which are warm blooded' stands in non-restrictive **apposition** to the term 'mammals'.

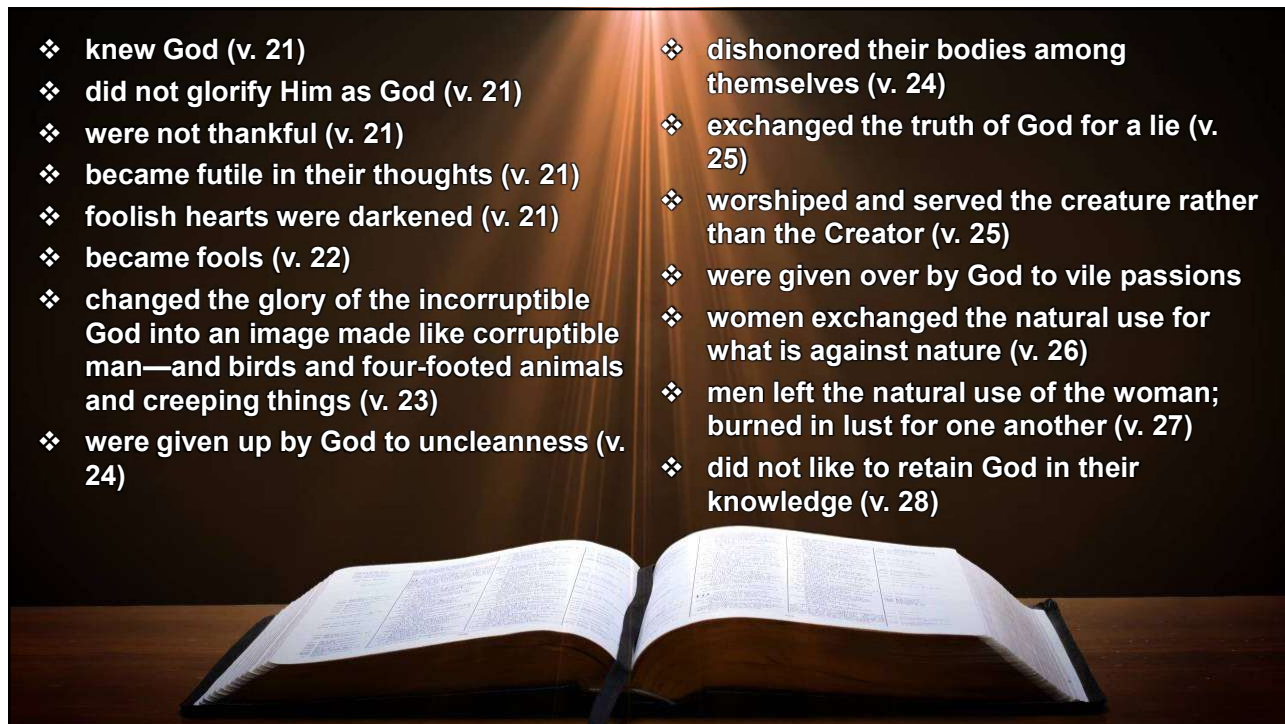
**"People in South**  
**Africa who live in**  
**the Cape**  
**experience wetter**  
**winters than those**  
**in Pretoria."**



The phrase 'who live in the Cape' is not another way of saying 'people who live in South Africa'. Instead, the phrase 'who live in the Cape' restricts the phrase 'people in South Africa' and, thus, stands in restrictive **apposition** to 'people who live in South Africa'.







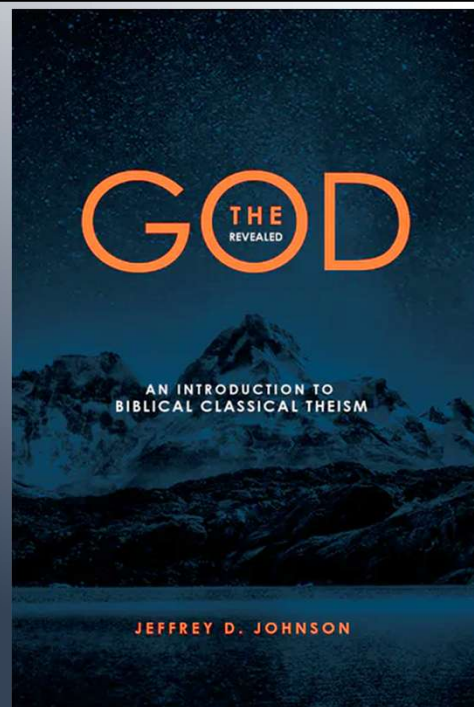
***Much of this criticism arises from a growing animus toward any role that philosophy is said to play in developing and defending the contents of Natural Theology.***



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



Jeffrey D. Johnson



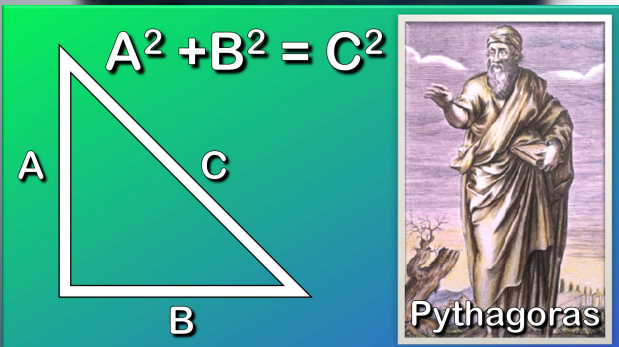


Jeffrey D. Johnson

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

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


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





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

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



Tacitus

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

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

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

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

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

The buzzword 'autonomous' is another tendentious term.

It 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.

***"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]











# Evangelical Philosophical Society

Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel

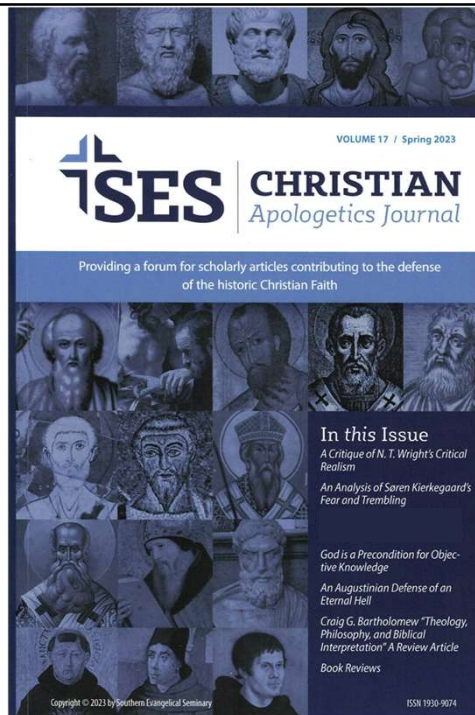
Nov. 15-17, 2022

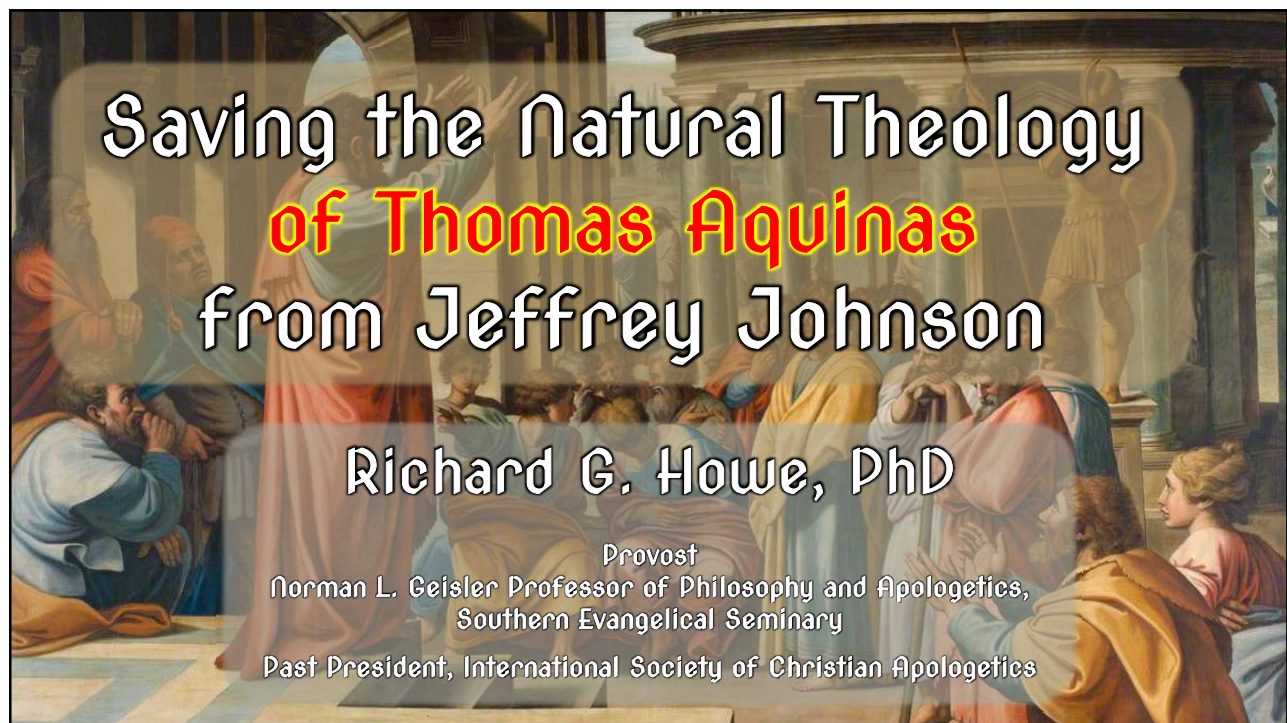
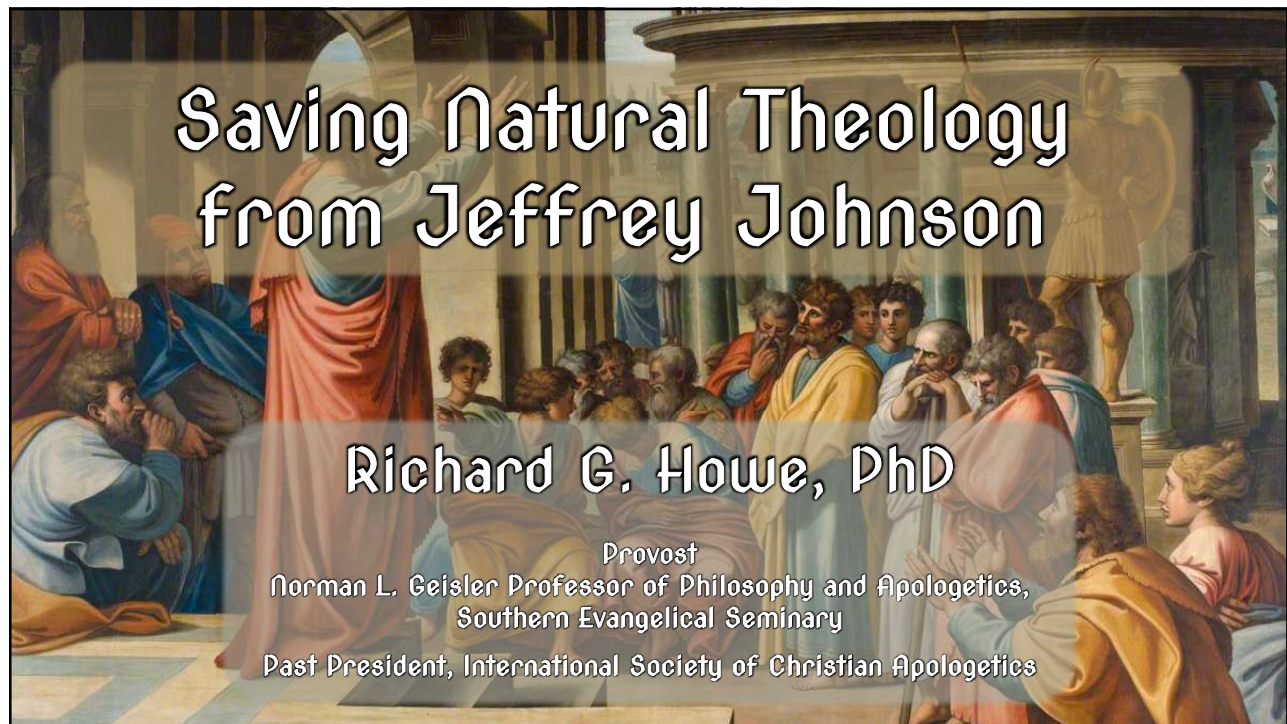
## "Saving Natural Theology from Jeffrey Johnson"

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

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

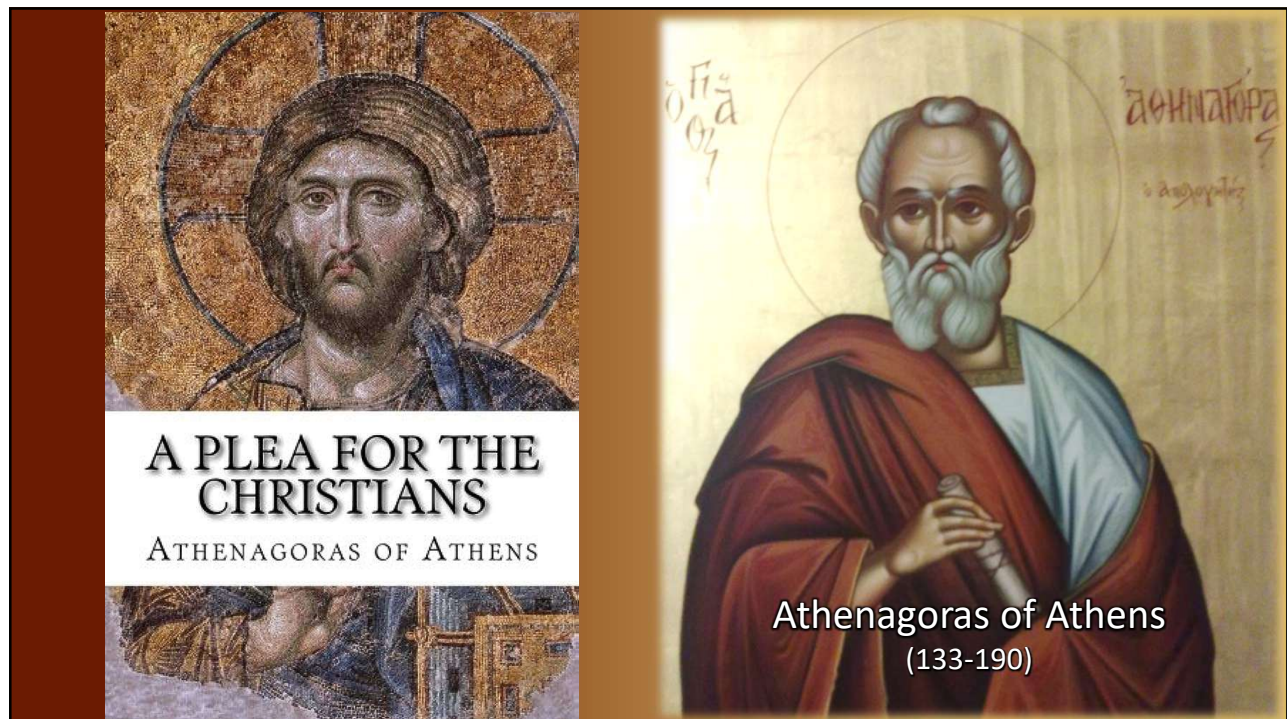
Evangelical Philosophical Society B2  
Tower Building - Mezzanine Level Gold



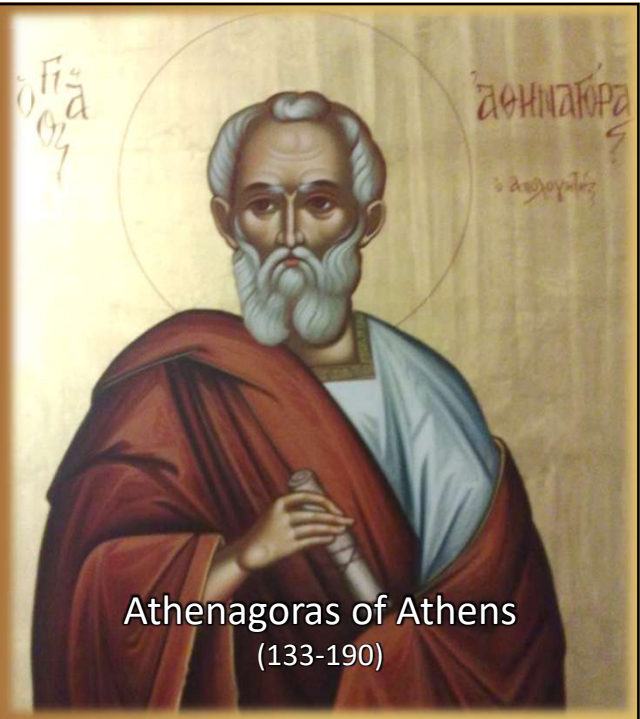




# *Some Voices from Christian History on Philosophy*



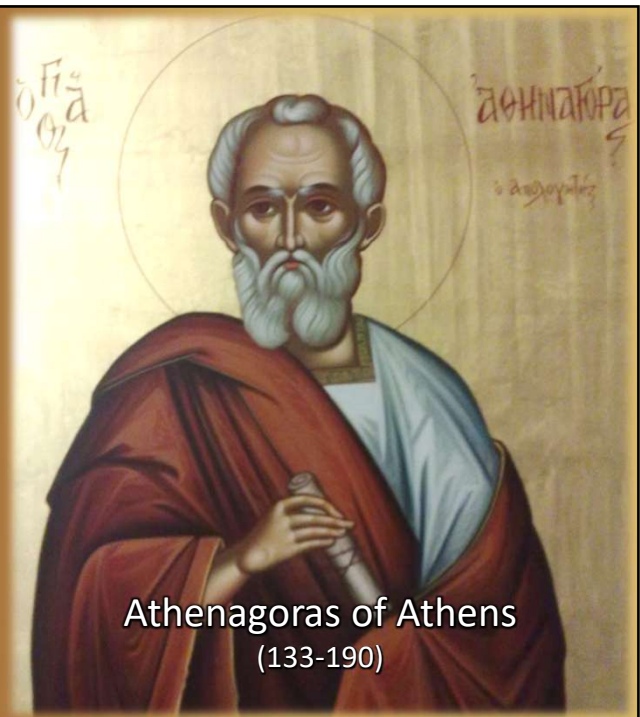
***"Since, therefore, the unity of the Deity is confessed by almost all [of these philosophers], even against their will, when they come to treat of the first principles of the universe, and we in our turn likewise assert that He who arranged this universe is God —***



Athenagoras of Athens  
(133-190)

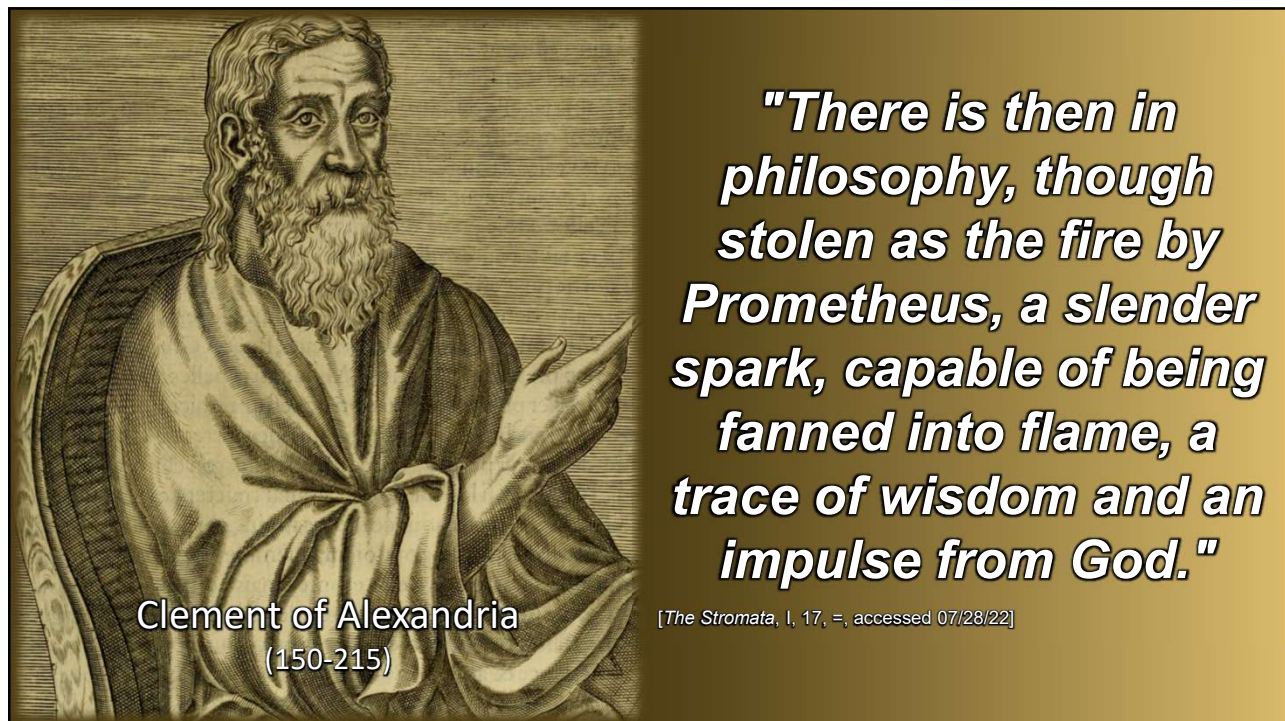
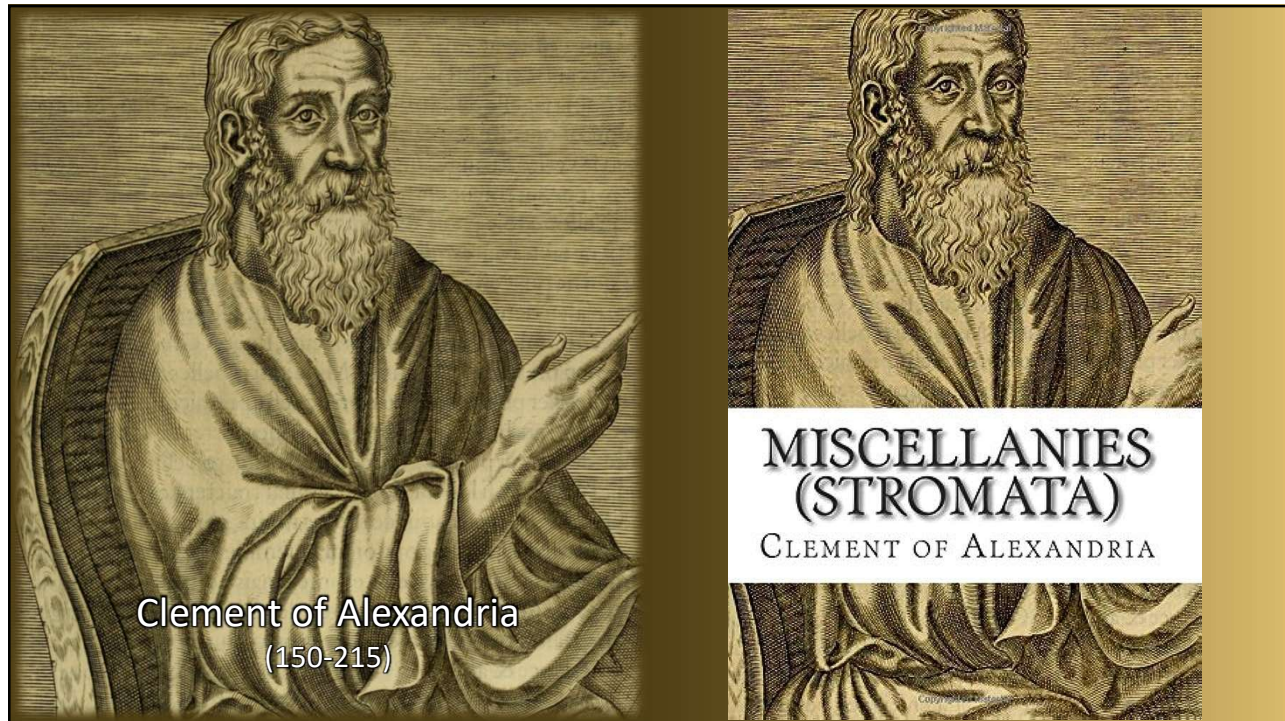
***why is it that they can say and write with impunity what they please concerning the Deity, but that against us a law lies in force, though we are able to demonstrate what we apprehend and justly believe, namely that there is one God, with proofs and reason accordant with truth?"***

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

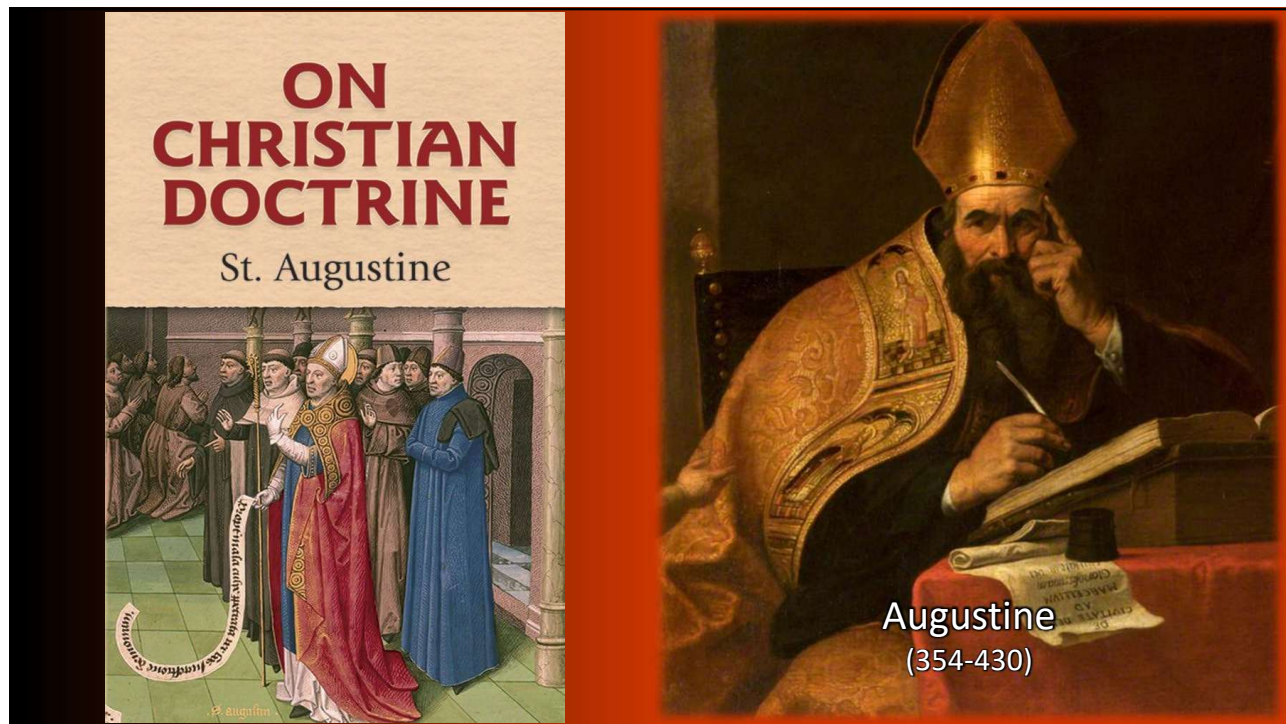


Athenagoras of Athens  
(133-190)



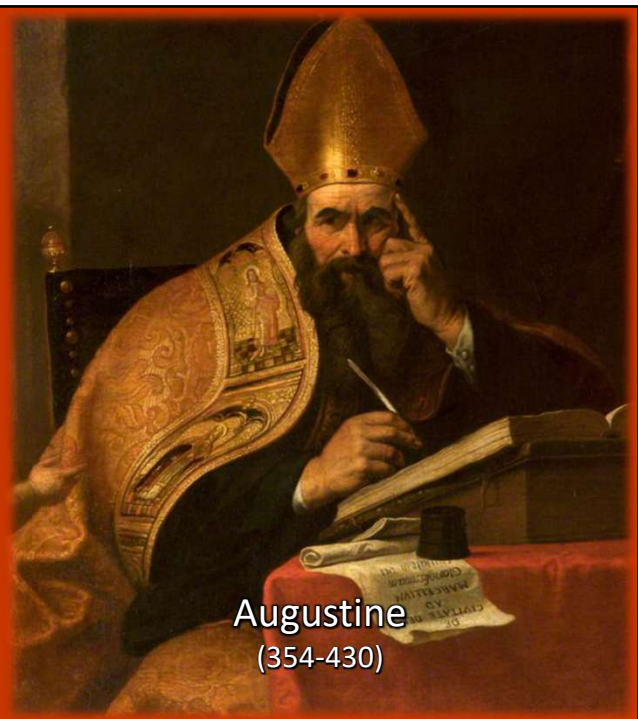




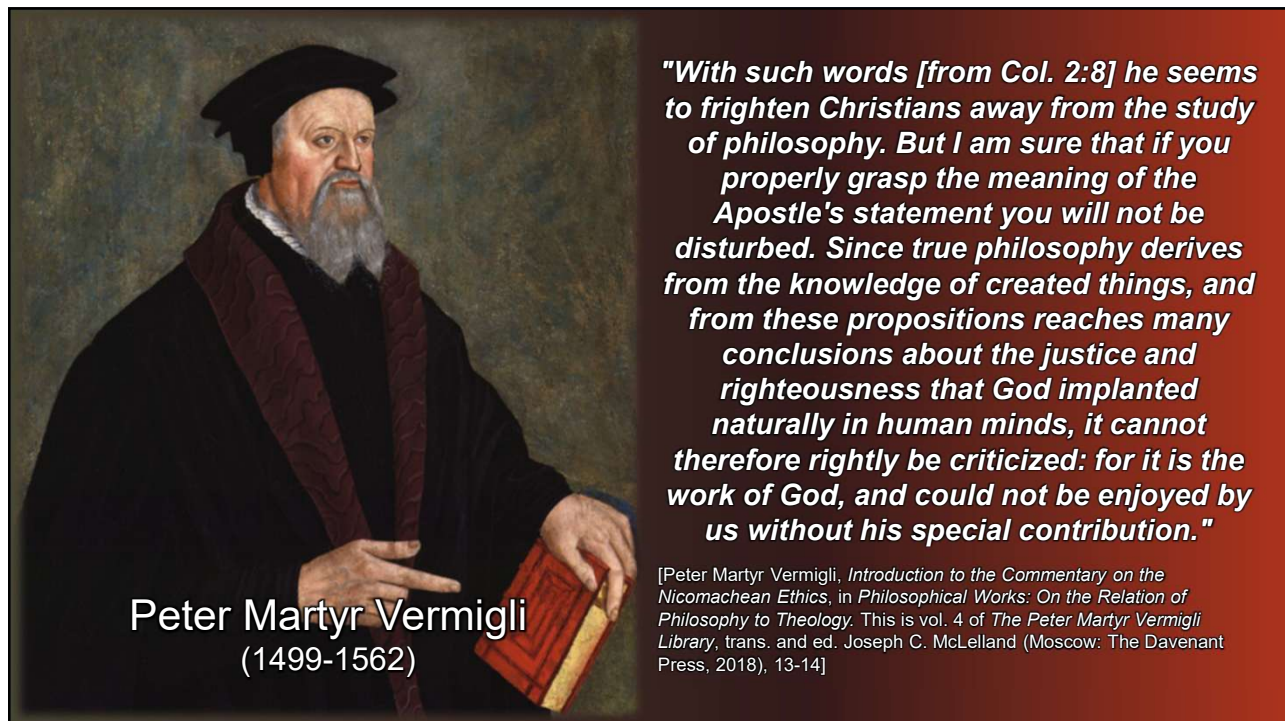
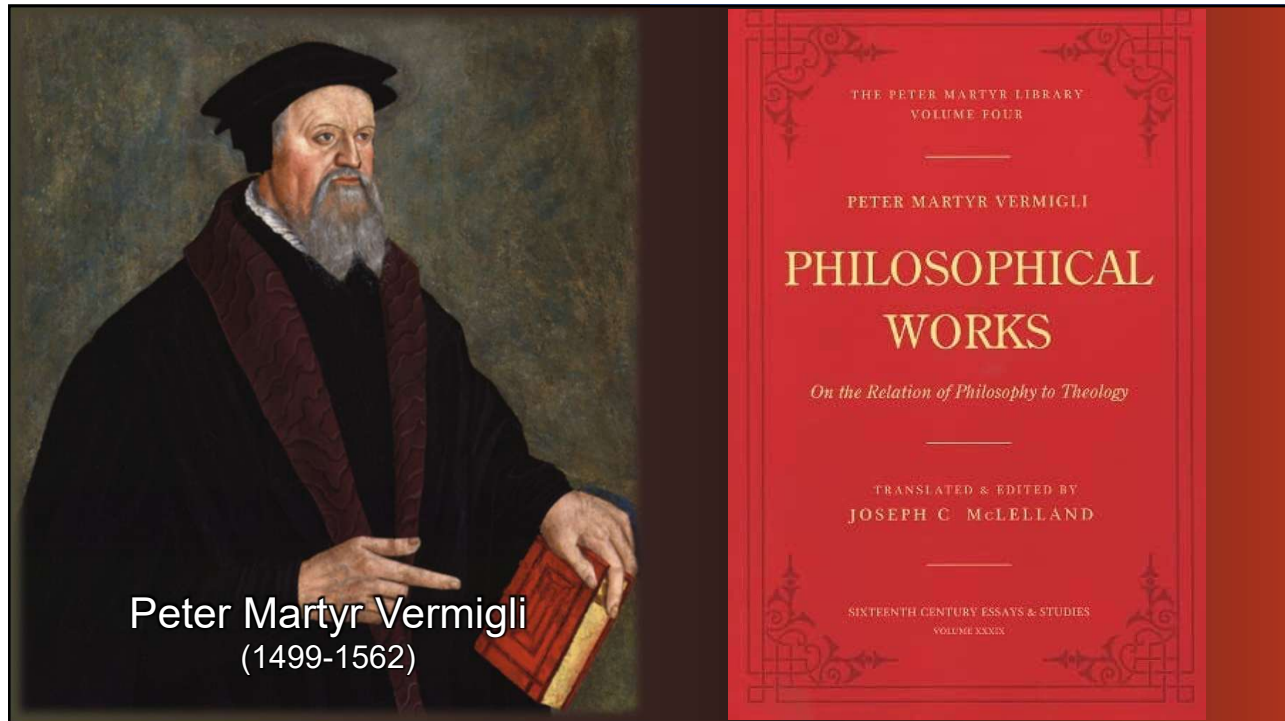


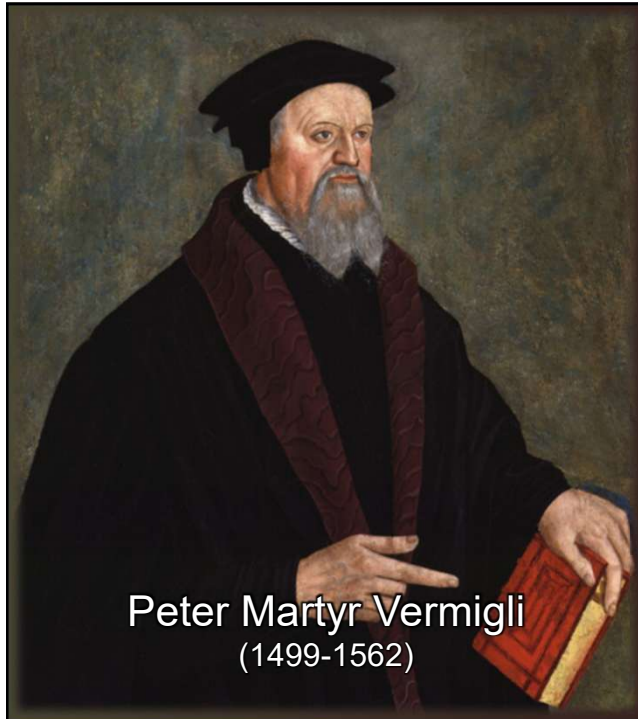
**"Moreover, if those who are called philosophers, and especially the Platonists, have said aught that is true and in harmony with our faith, we are not only not to shrink from it, but to claim it for our own use from those who have unlawful possession of it."**

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





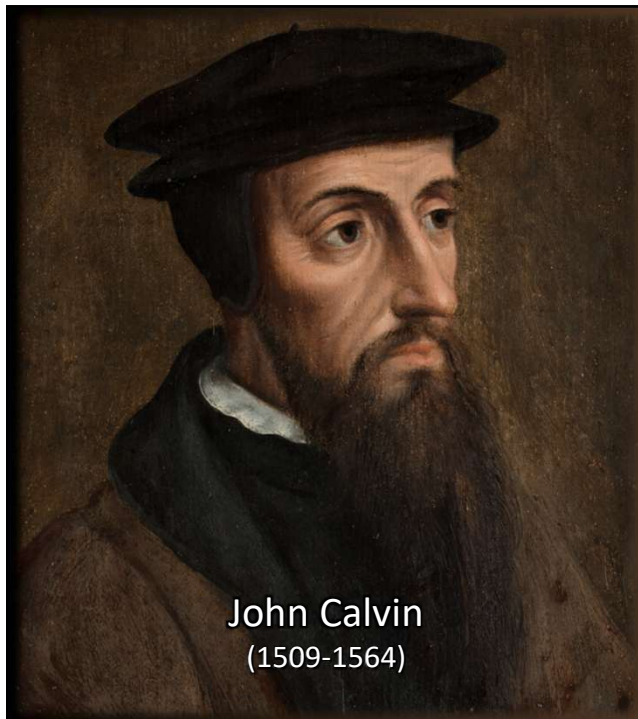




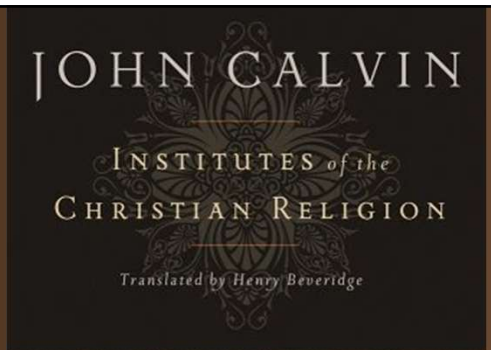
**Peter Martyr Vermigli**  
(1499-1562)

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


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



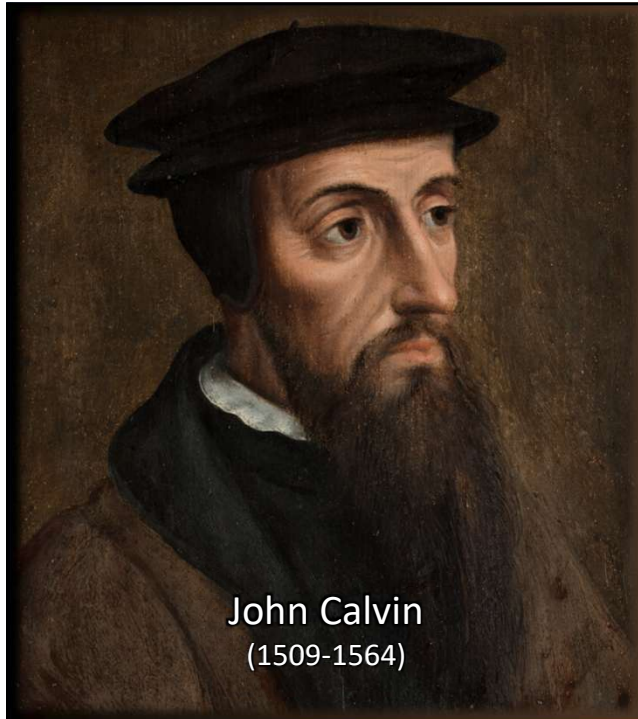
**John Calvin**  
(1509-1564)



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



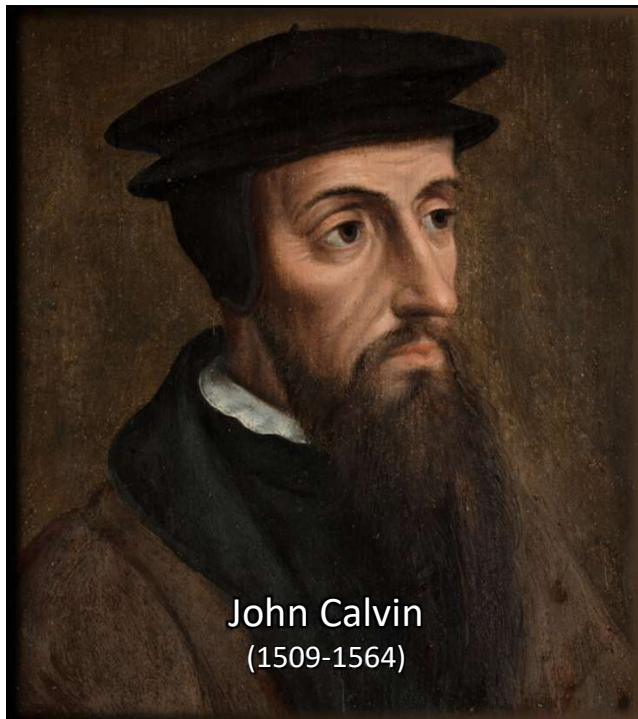




**John Calvin**  
(1509-1564)

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

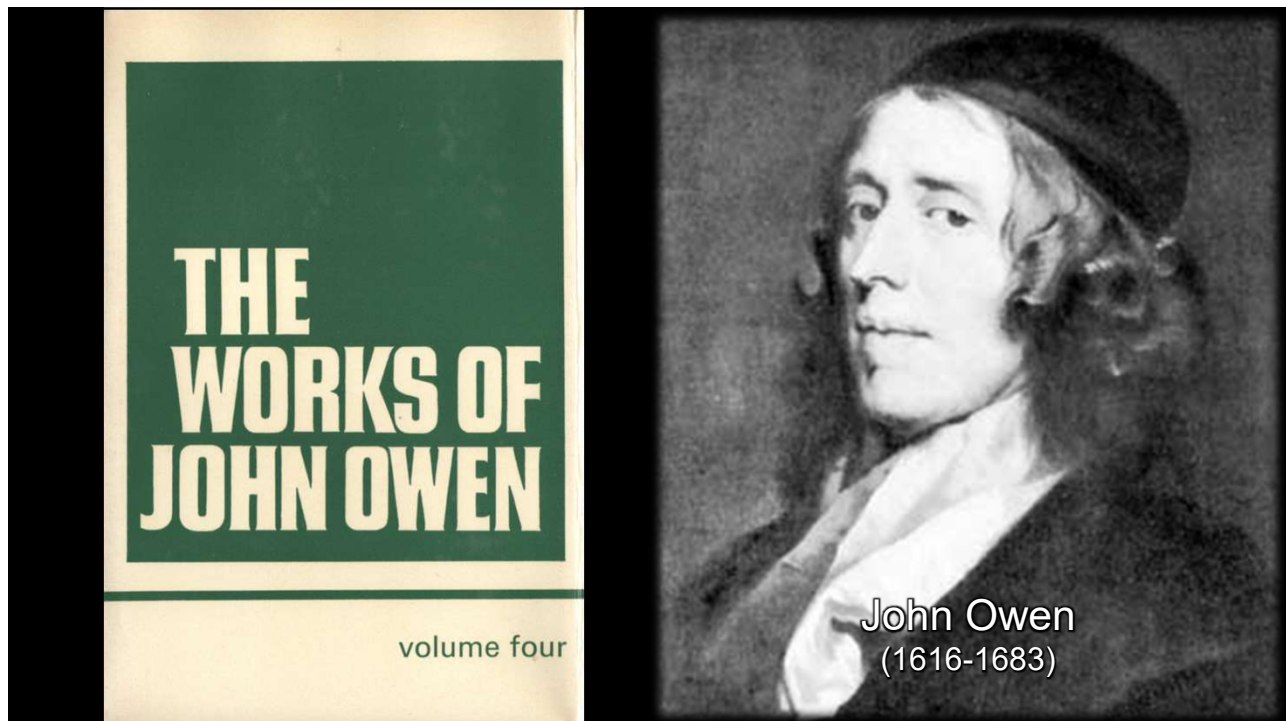
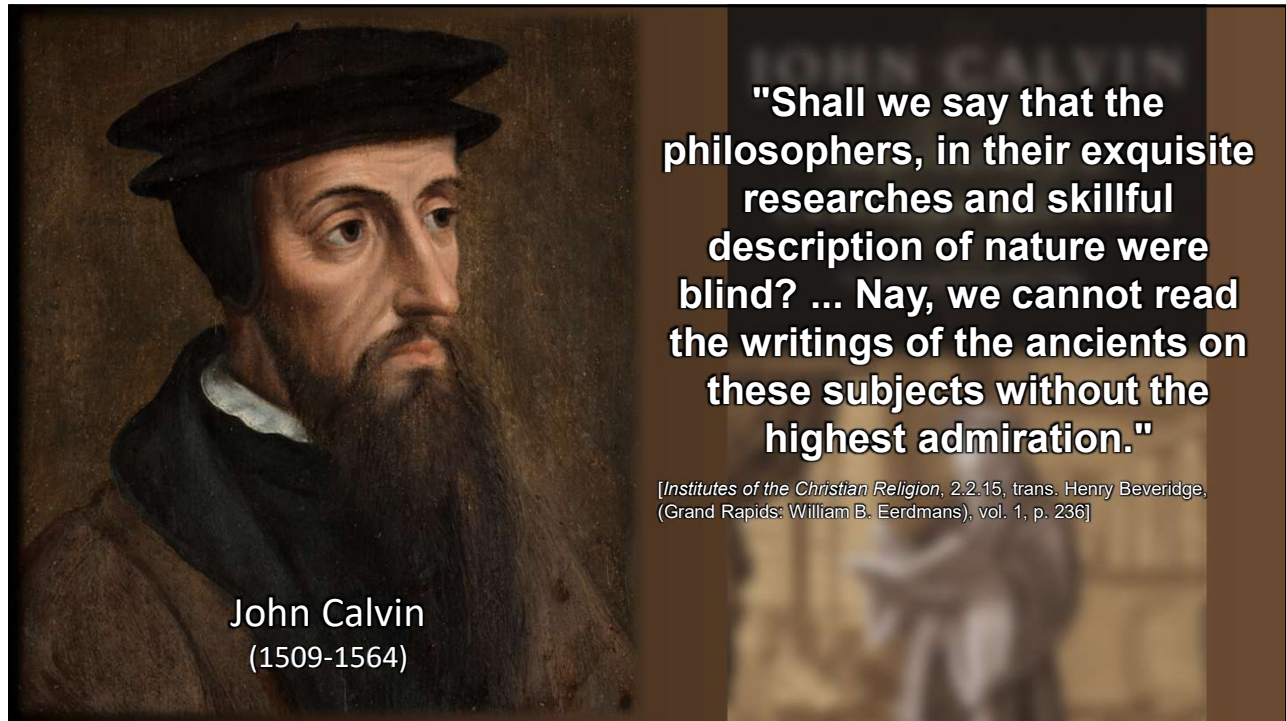
[John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.2.16, 2 vols., trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 236-237]



**John Calvin**  
(1509-1564)

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

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





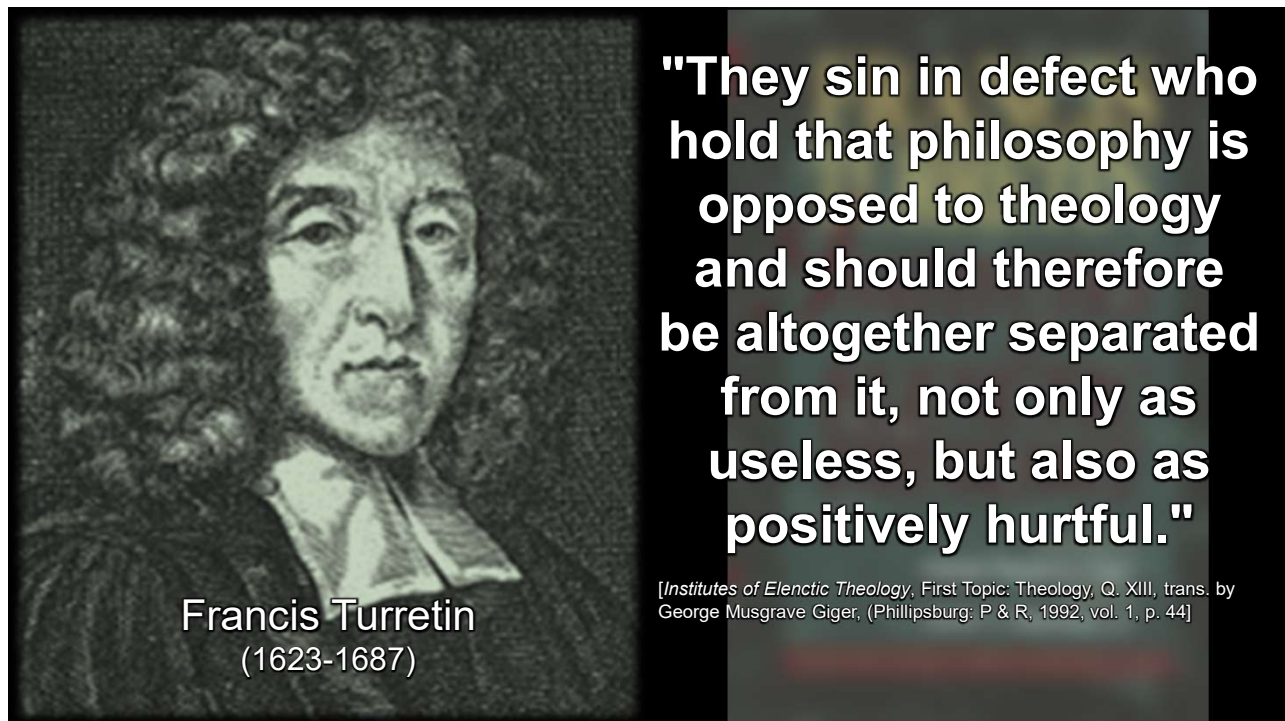
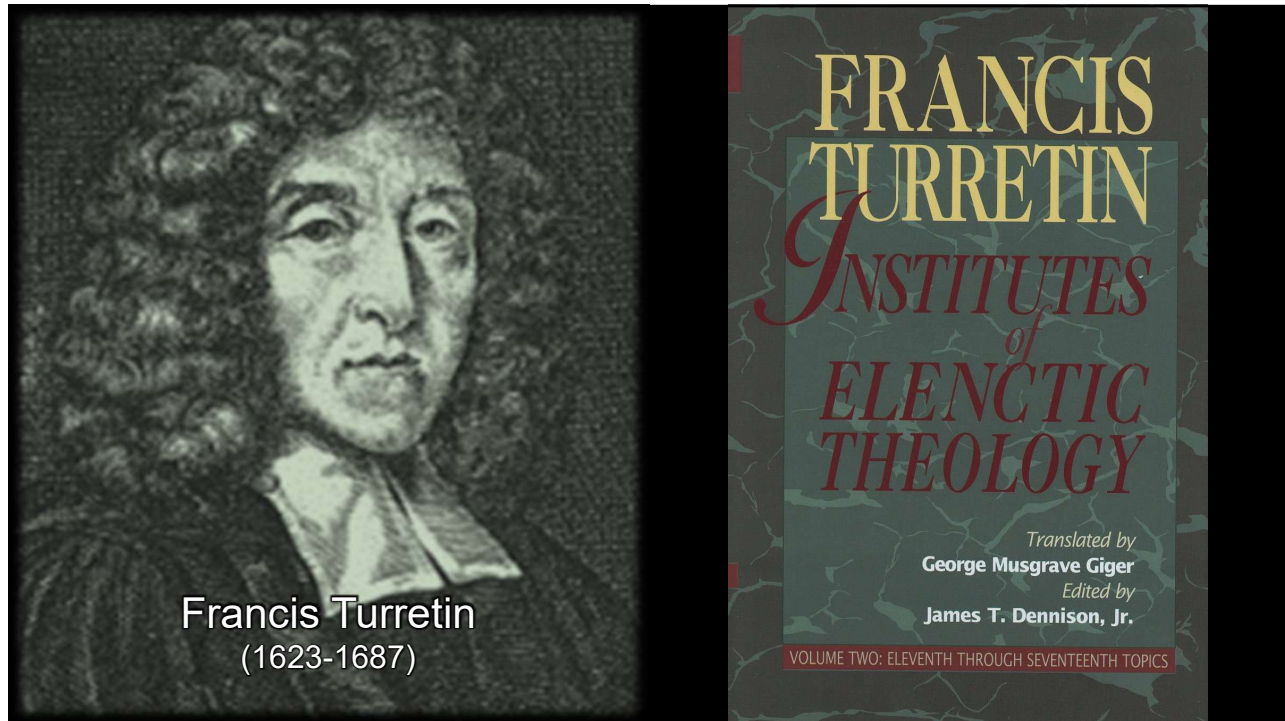
**"There are sundry cogent arguments, which are taken from external considerations of the Scripture, that evince it on rational grounds to be from God. ... and ... are... necessary unto the confirmation of our faith herein against temptations, oppositions, and objections."**

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

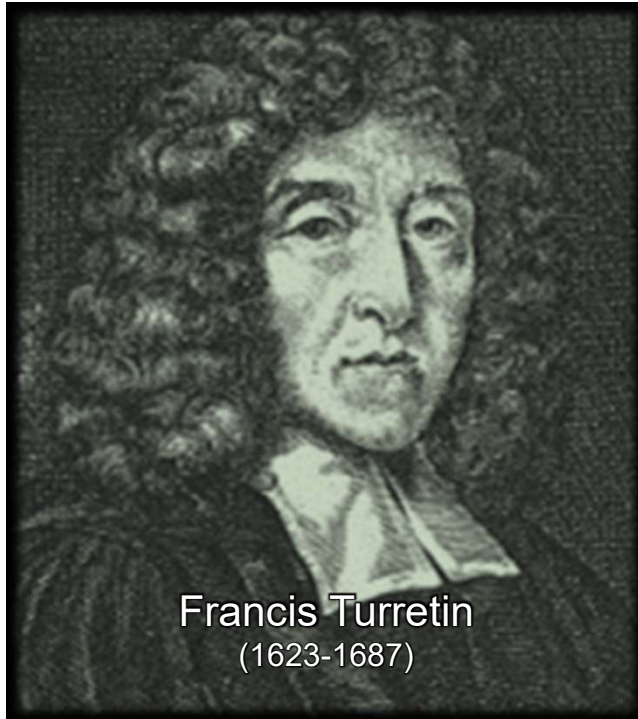


**John Owen**  
(1616-1683)





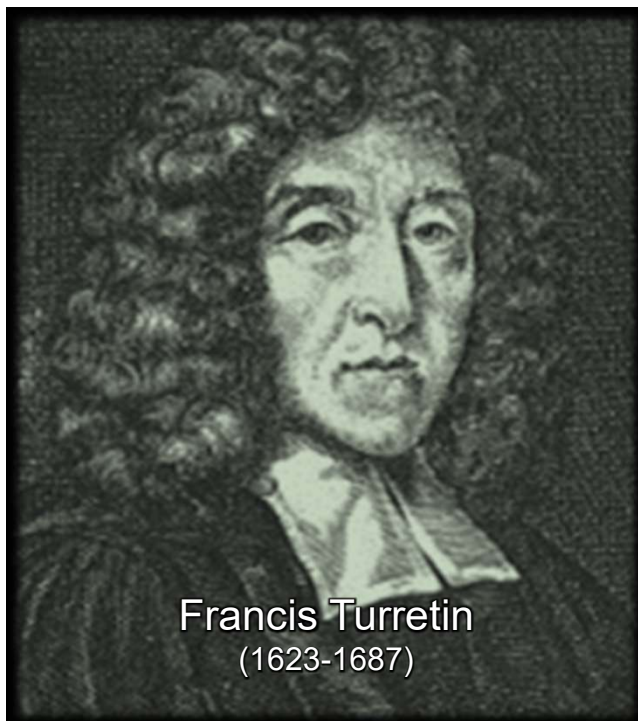




**"Philosophy ... has many and various uses in theology which must be accurately distinguished from its many abuses."**

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

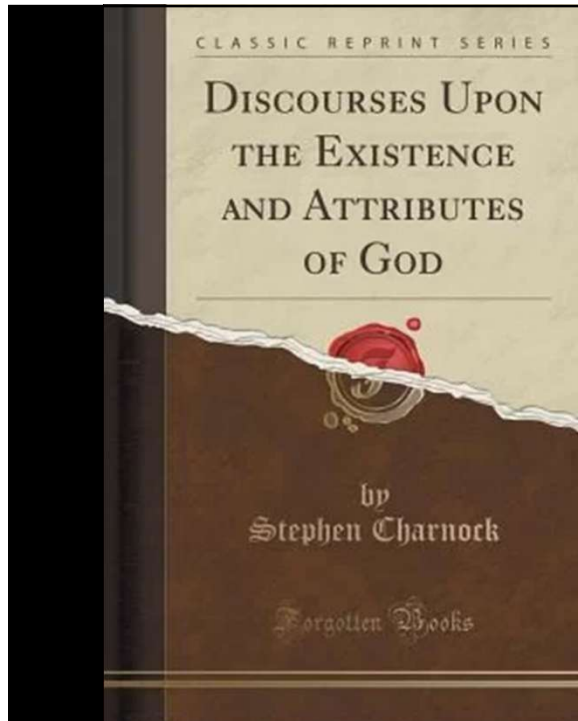
Francis Turretin  
(1623-1687)



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

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

Francis Turretin  
(1623-1687)



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

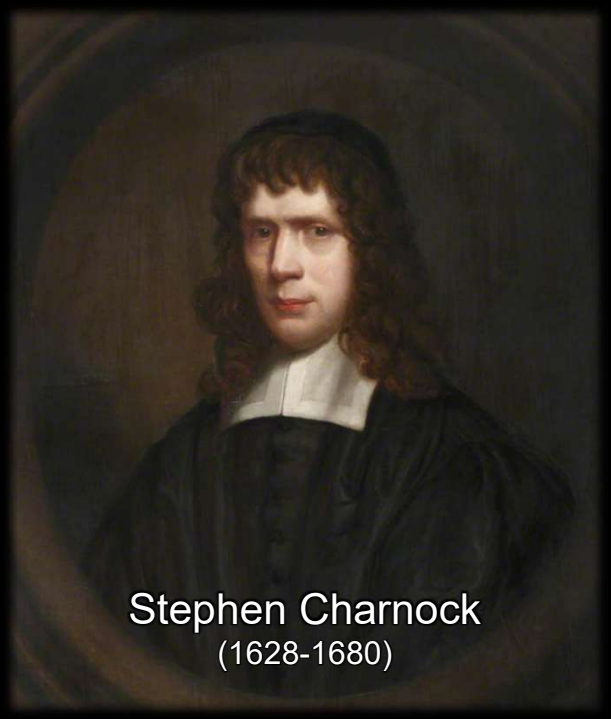
[Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God*  
(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 27]



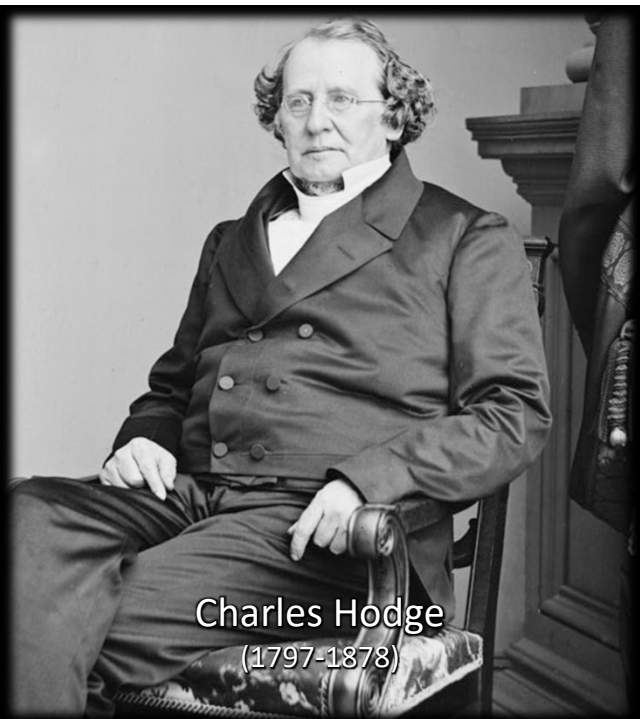
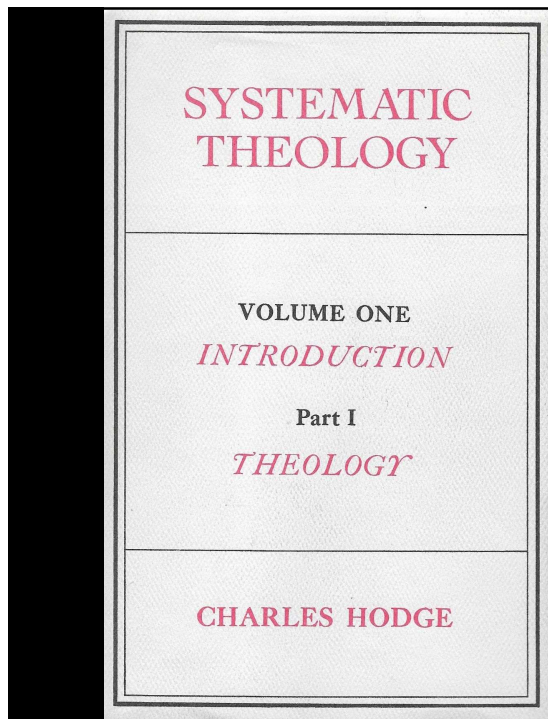


**"God in regard of his existence is not only the discovery of faith, but of reason. God hath revealed not only his being, but some sparks of his eternal power and godhead in his works, as well as in his word. ... It is a discovery of our reason ... and an object of our faith ... it is an article of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

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

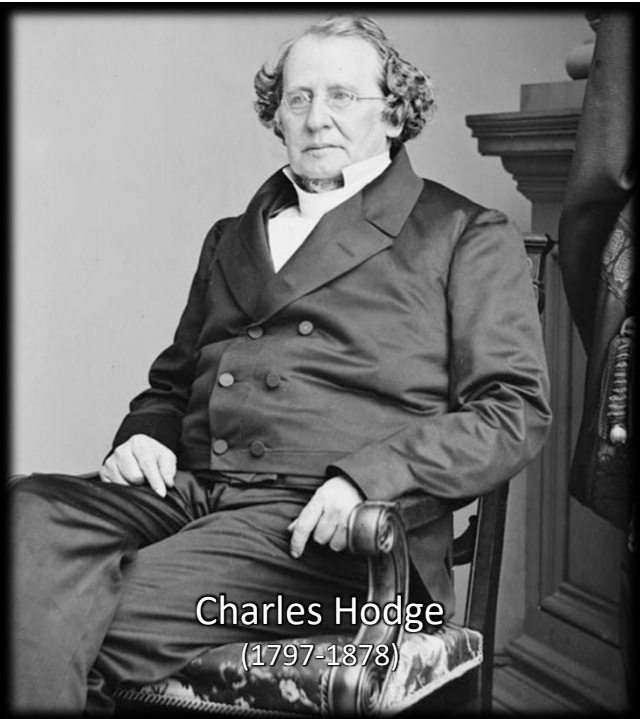


**Stephen Charnock**  
(1628-1680)



**Charles Hodge**  
(1797-1878)

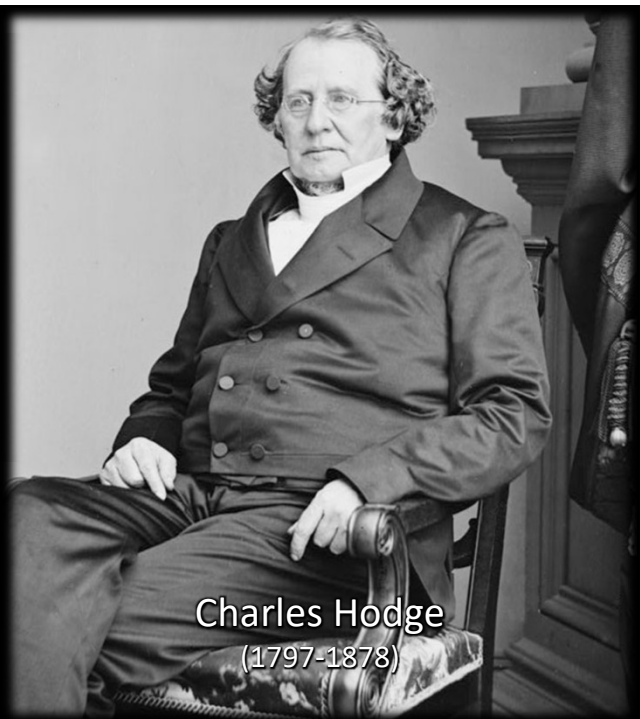
**"The Scriptures clearly recognize the fact that the works of God reveal his being and attributes. This they do not only by frequent reference to the works of nature as manifestations of the perfections of God, but by direct assertions. ... The sacred writers in contending with the heathen appeal to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



Charles Hodge  
(1797-1878)

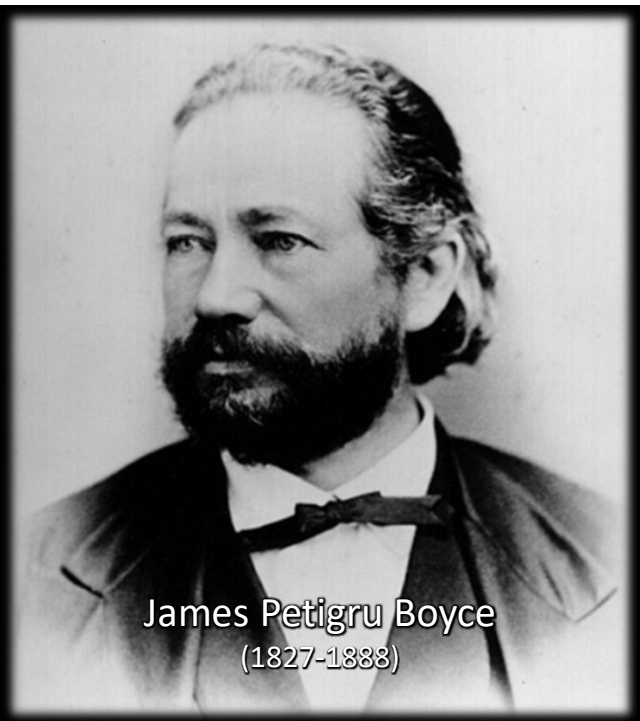
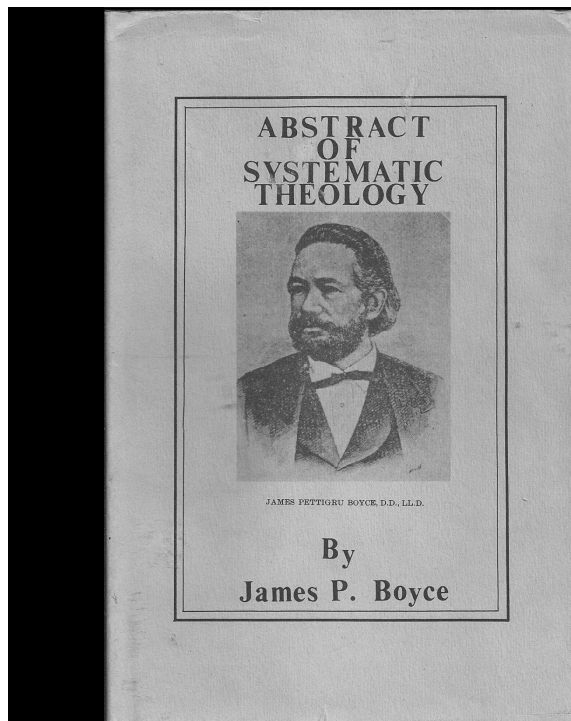
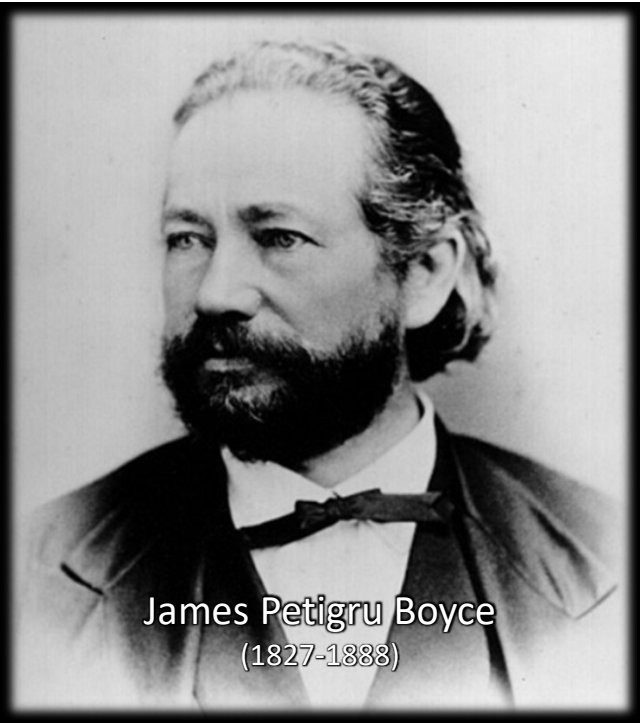
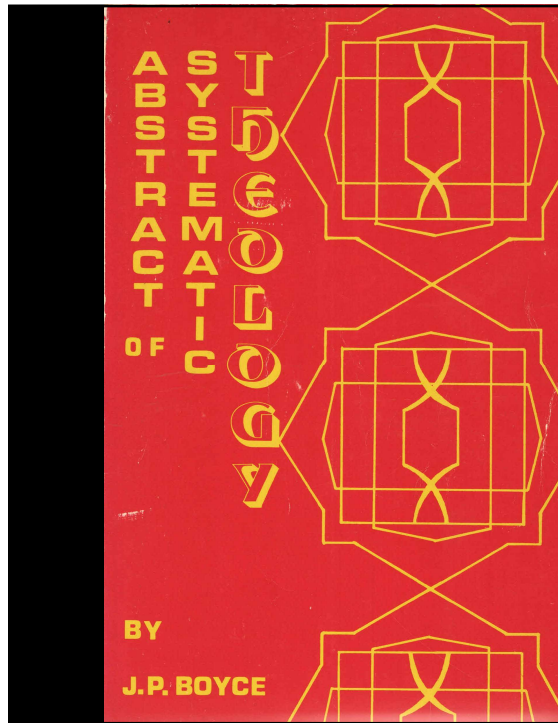
**"It cannot, therefore, be reasonably doubted that not only the being of God, but also his eternal power and Godhead are so revealed in his works, as to lay a stable foundation for natural theology."**

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

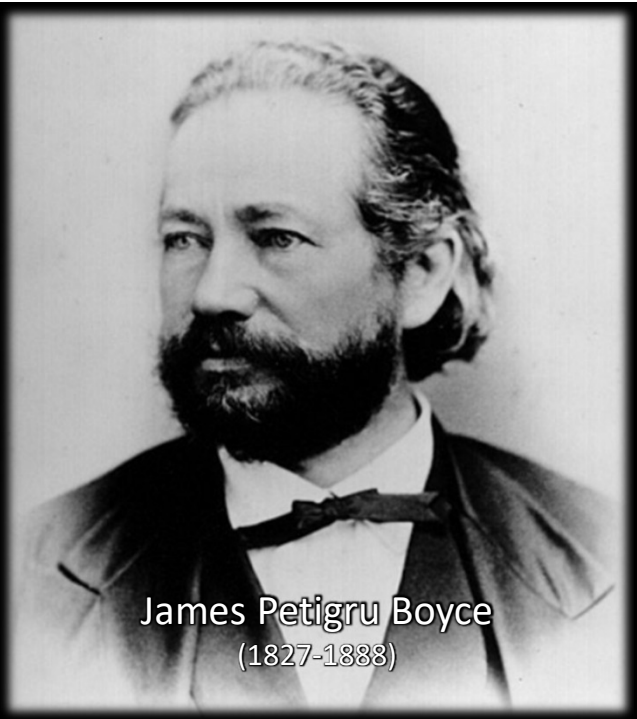


Charles Hodge  
(1797-1878)



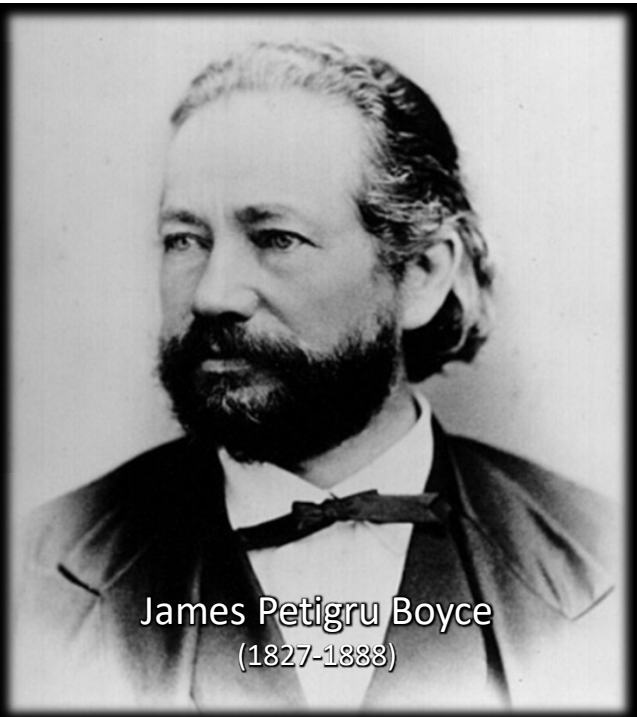


"Reason involves all the cognitive powers of man, which are the faculties through which the mind attains knowledge. These faculties are not separate, and independent, but are merely the instruments of the mind. The mind is not itself an original source of knowledge, like the Scriptures, but is merely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



James Petigru Boyce  
(1827-1888)

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

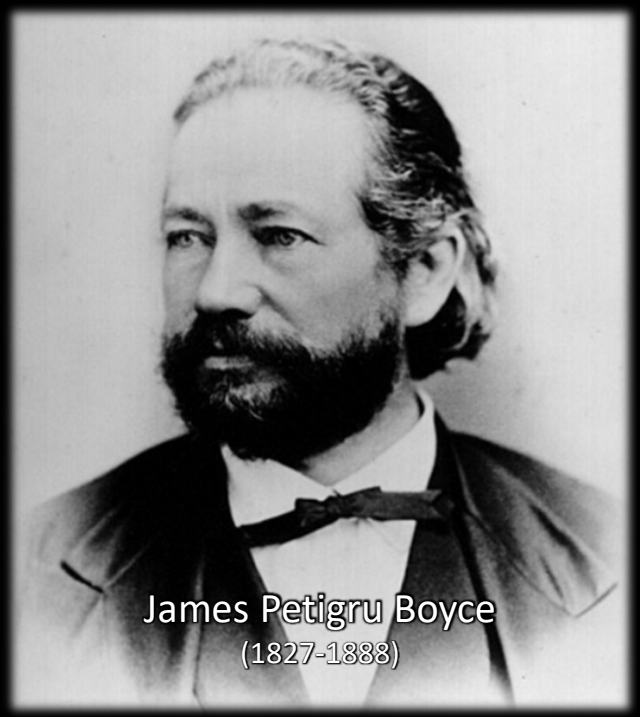


James Petigru Boyce  
(1827-1888)

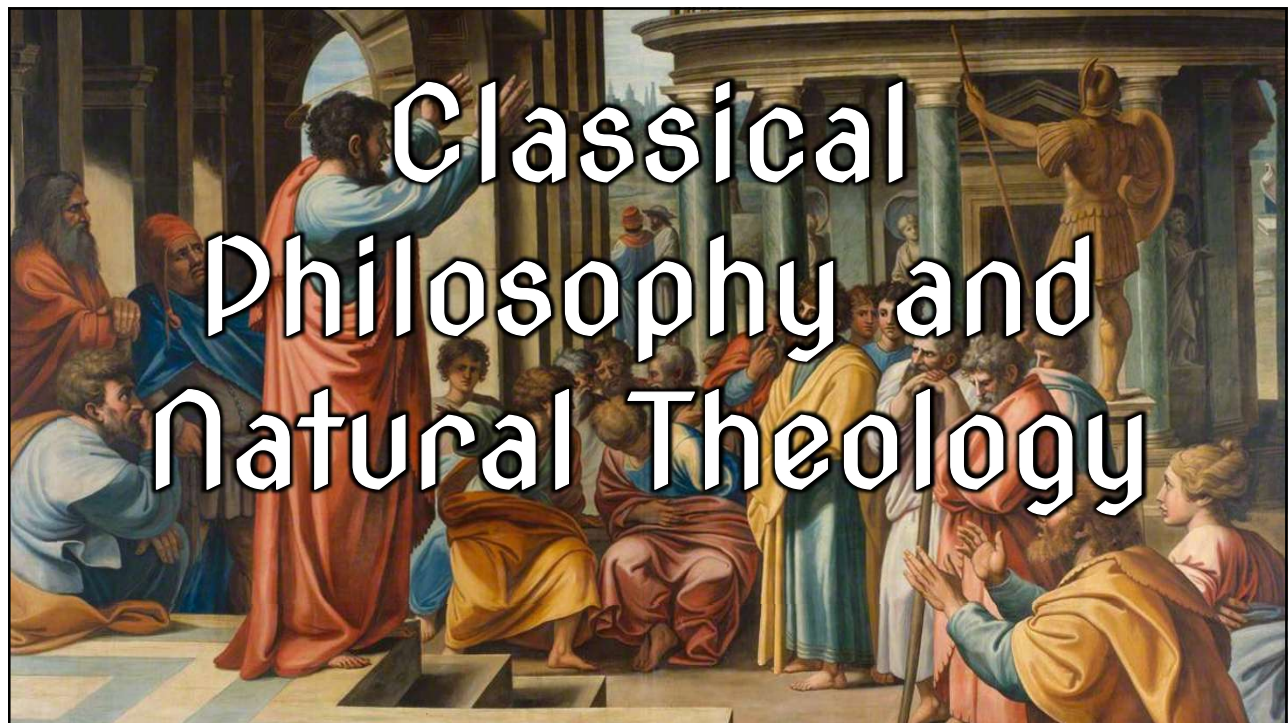


"It is manifest that the knowledge obtained from these various sources must be abundant to teach man the simple facts upon which rests his duty to God; namely, that there is a God to whom he owes existence, and consequent reverence, service and love, and whose greatness and goodness enforce this obligation;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

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

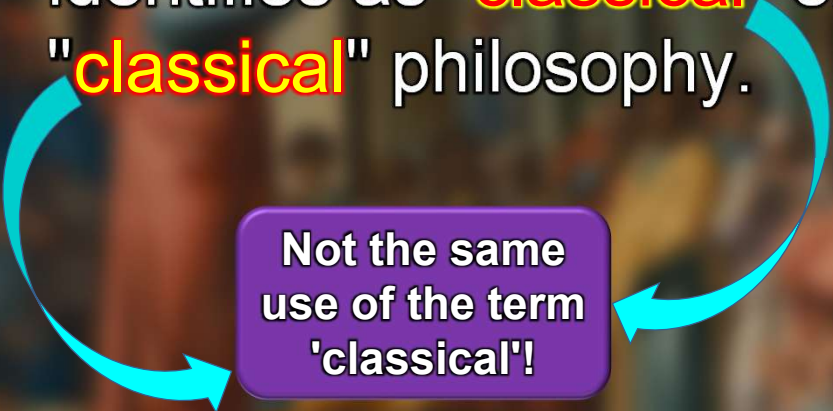


James Petigru Boyce  
(1827-1888)



# Classical Philosophy and Natural Theology

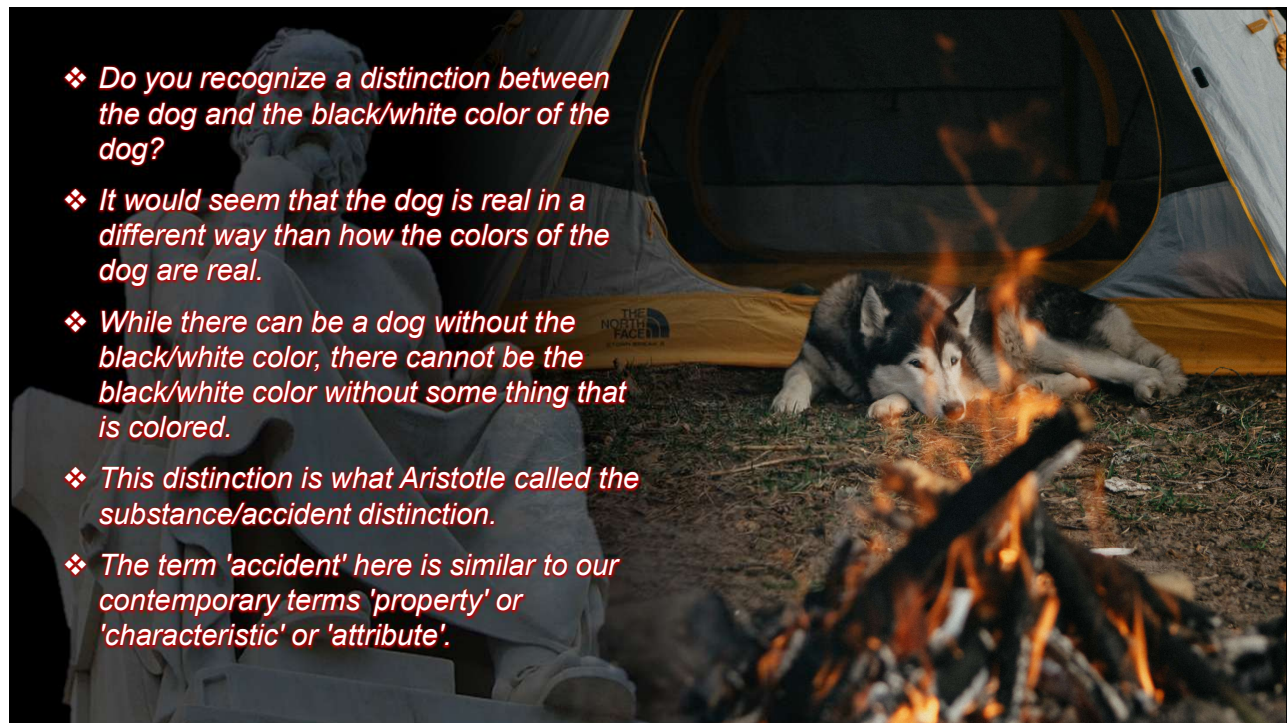
- ❖ Not every apologist who self-identifies as "**classical**" employs "**classical**" philosophy.



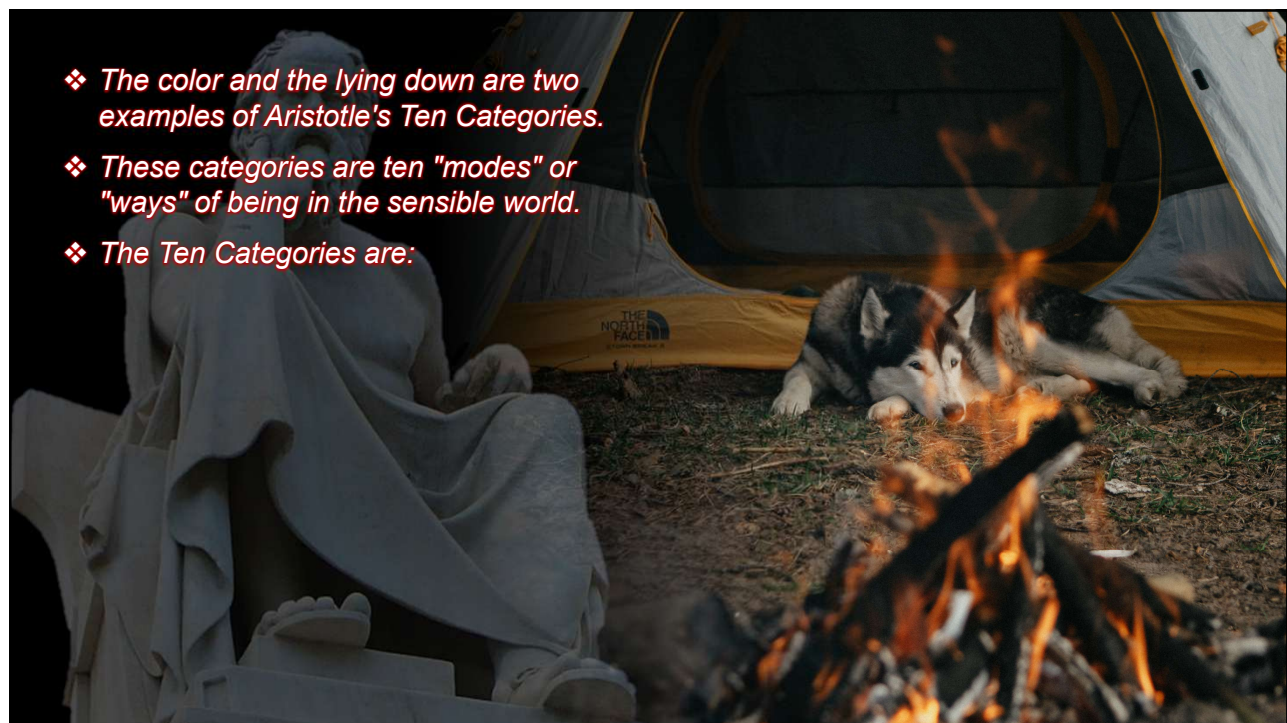
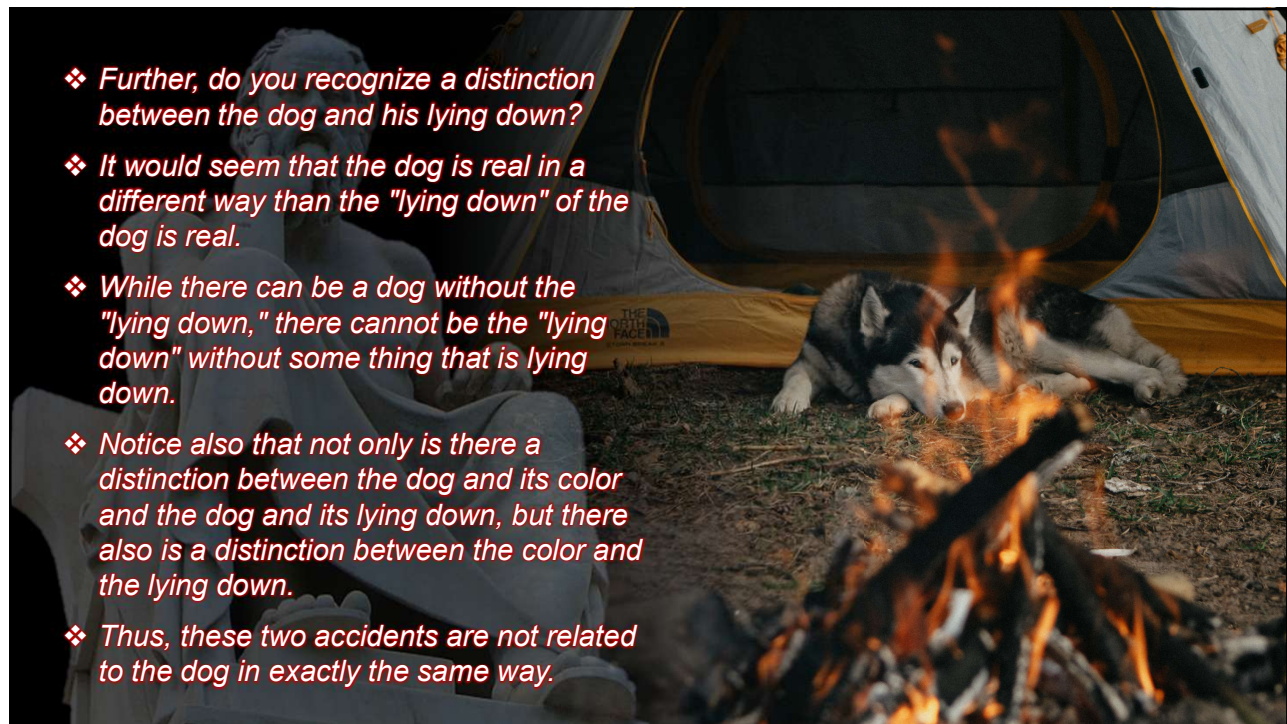
Not the same  
use of the term  
'classical'!

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











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

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







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



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



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



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

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



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

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

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



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

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

- ❖ *If universals are real in some sense of the term 'real', exactly what is the nature of their reality?*
  - *Are universals the fully real whereas the individuals "participate in" or "imitate" the universals? (Extreme Realism / Platonism)*
  - *Do universals "exist" as particulars in the individual and are only universal in the intellect? (Moderate Realism / Aristotelianism)*
  - *Are universals "ideas" in God's mind as their Creator and are made real as particulars in creation? (Scholastic Realism / Thomism)*





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

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

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

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

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







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



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



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

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

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

❖ Neither exists apart from the sensible thing itself.







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



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





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



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





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



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



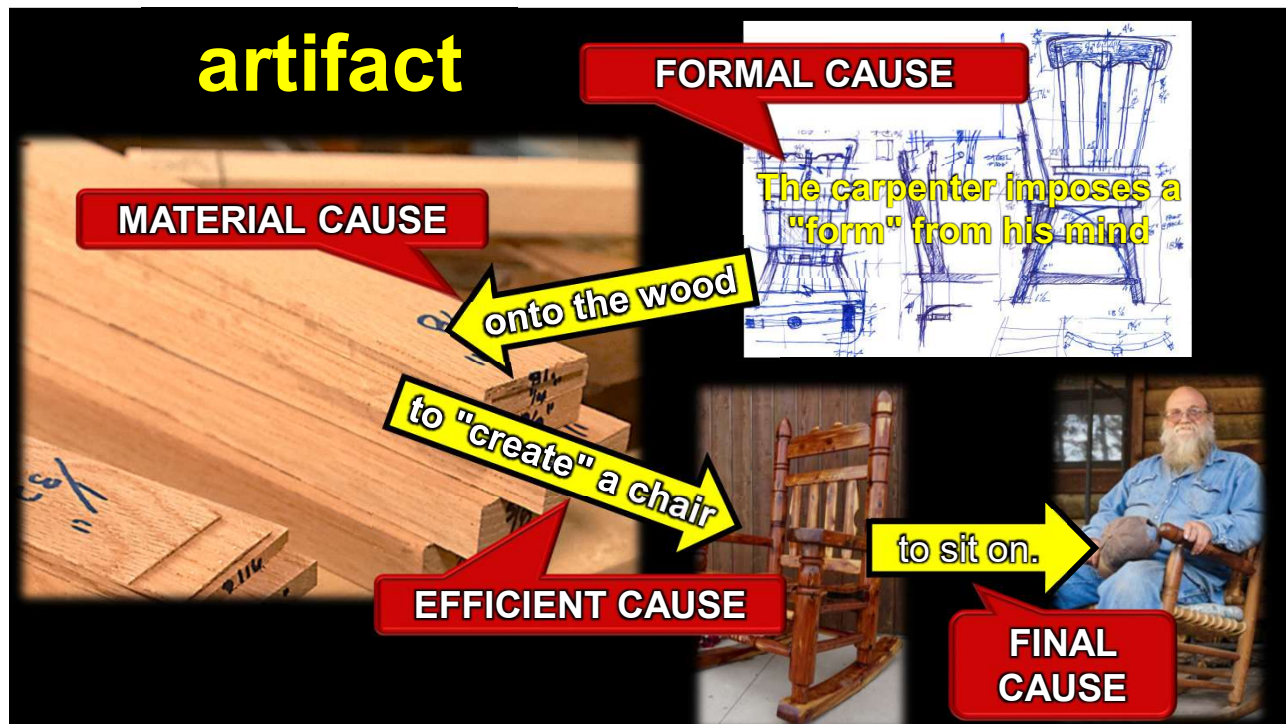


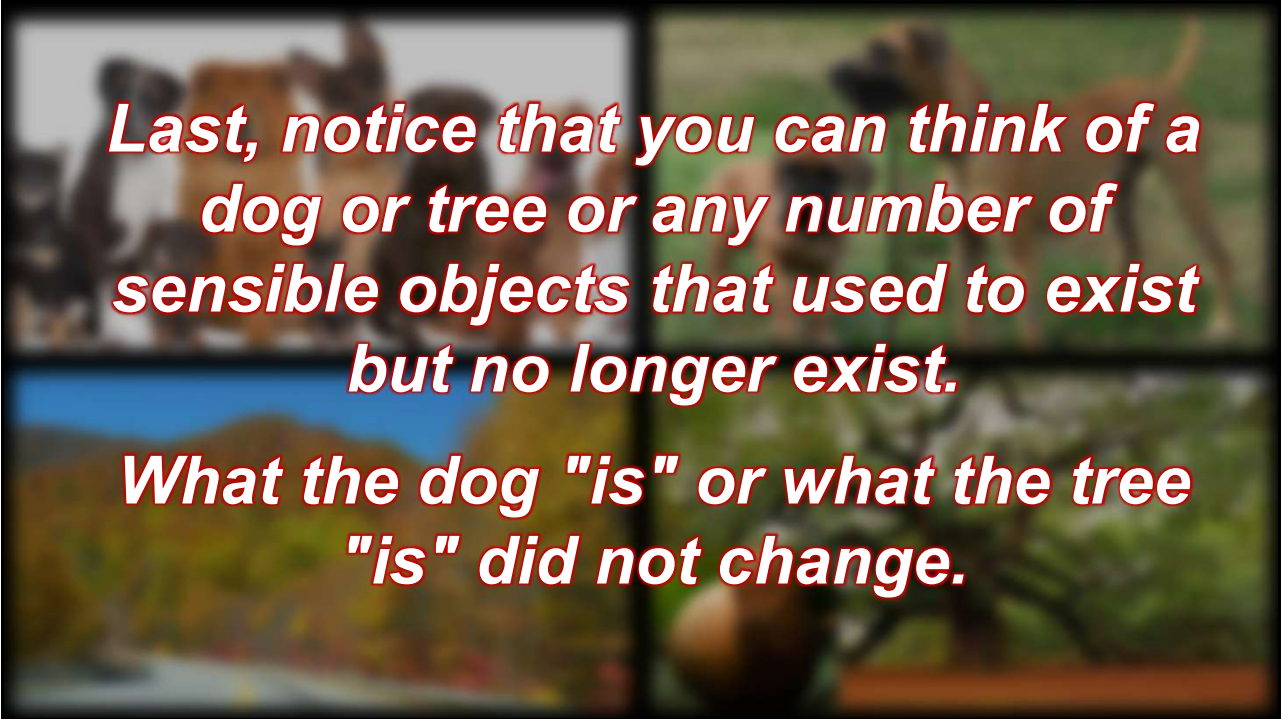
- ❖ Aristotle called that which brings a potentiality into actuality the *Efficient Cause*.
- ❖ Aristotle identified three additional causes.



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

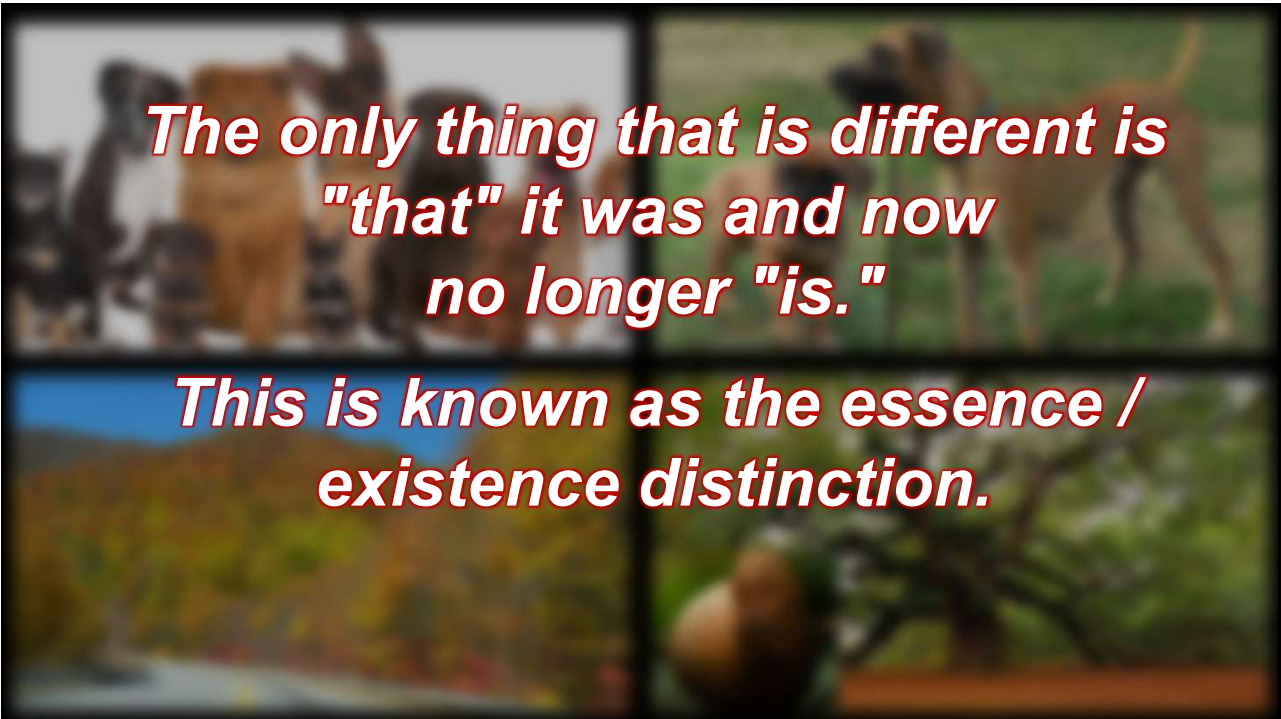






*Last, notice that you can think of a dog or tree or any number of sensible objects that used to exist but no longer exist.*

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




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

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




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

 <p><b>Aristotle</b> (384-322 BC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>substance/accident</b></li> <li>✓ <b>Ten Categories</b></li> <li>✓ <b>universal/particular</b></li> <li>✓ <b>form/matter</b></li> <li>✓ <b>teleology</b></li> <li>✓ <b>act/potency</b></li> <li>✓ <b>four causes</b></li> <li>✓ <b>essence/existence</b></li> </ul>	 <p><b>Aquinas</b> (1225-1274)</p>
--	---	---



Aristotle  
(384-322 BC)

- ✓ substance/accident
- ✓ Ten Categories
- ✓ universal/particular
- ✓ form/matter
- ✓ teleology
- ✓ act/potency
- ✓ four causes
- ✓ essence/existence



Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

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





