



CALIFORNIA BIBLICAL UNIVERSITY and SEMINARY
Presents

BATTLE OF THE AGES

Theological Systems in Conflict
with Dr. Robert A. Morey



SYLLABUS

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Introduction

We must begin by defining our terms because there are different kinds of Theological Systems (TSs). The first thing you must do when you pick up a theology book is to determine what kind of TS it is because all TSs are not created equal.

- They do not come from the same Source or Origin.
- They have different methodologies.
- They have different goals in mind.
- They appeal to different standards of truth and morals.
- Some are hostile to God and Christ.
- Some try to be Biblical in varying degrees.
- Some ignore the Bible entirely.
- Some are openly humanistic.
- Some hide their humanism.
- Some reject the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible.
- Some pay lip service to the Bible but in reality reject it.
- Some are a Philosophical System (PS) masquerading as theology.

You have to understand where an author is coming from in order to judge his TS. For the Christian, how a TS treats the Bible is crucial. Does this TS look to Scripture as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice, or does it look to some aspect of fallen man as the Origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty? Is the Bible viewed as the infallible, inerrant, inspired Written Word of God, or is it viewed as a collection of ancient Jewish myths and legends?

One important thing to look for is whether the TS supports its teachings by a careful exegesis of the original text of Scripture. If the author does not parse the verbs and

Note:

analyze the grammar and syntax of the verses he cites, alarm bells should go off in your head.

Beware of proof-texting Scripture, which is a lazy and cheap way to appear to be Biblical without proving that your ideas are in line with Scripture.

Beware of misquoting Scripture. The Pagan Catholic dogma of Natural Law (NL) is based in part on a constant misquotation of Rom. 2:15. The text actually states,

“in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts,
their conscience bearing witness,
 and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.”

οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν,
 συμμαρτυρούσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως
 καὶ μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων,

NL is the theory that we can derive morality from some aspect of man and we are not dependent upon Revelation. They hypocritically quote the Bible in order to prove (sic.) that you don't need to quote the Bible! I remember once debating a pompous Natural Theologian.

NTS: “Paul says in Romans that God has written his Law upon the hearts of all men. Thus we are not limited to Scripture. We can look to our own hearts to tell us moral laws.”

TTS: “Paul did not say that.”

NTS: “Yes he did!”

TTS: “I will give you a hundred dollars if you can show me where Paul said that God has written His Law on the hearts of all men.”

NTS: “Get ready to part with your money! Turn to Romans 2 and there is a

verse somewhere in that chapter that proves what I said.”

TTS: “Did you ever bother to look it up yourself?”

NTS: “Well...”

TTS: “It is obvious that you never read the passage yourself! Verse 15 says the “work of the Law” (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου), not the Law *per se*, is “written in the heart.” Instead of the objective infallible Law of God being written on the hearts of all men, Paul says that the subjective fallible human conscience functions in the place of God’s Law. Our evil conscience either accuses or excuses our actions. The heathen do not have the Law of God written on their hearts. All they have is their fallen conscience that is seared by sin.”

NTS: “Are you saying that Natural Theologians twist this verse to say the exact opposite of what it actually says?”

TTS: “Yes! The bottom line is that instead of God’s Law functioning in the hearts of all men to decide if an action is good or evil, the human conscience takes over that function in the place of the Law and it either accuses or excuses our actions. By the way, Natural Theology not only misquotes and misinterprets the verse, but they unwittingly deny the doctrine of regeneration. God “writes His Law on the hearts of men” when regeneration takes place.

In the Old Testament we are told,

“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares YHWH, ‘I will put My law within them, and on their heart I

will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares YHWH, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'" (Jer. 31:33-34)

We are told the same thing in the New Testament,

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Hebrews 8:10)

Both Jeremiah and the author of Hebrews describe regeneration as the work of God when He writes His Law into the minds and hearts of His people. Having the Law in your mind and heart is a work of God's grace and not a state of nature. Only those who "know YHWH," and "whose sins are forgiven" have the Law written into their minds and hearts.

In terms of Hebrew parallelism, "writing the Law into the heart and mind" is the same thing as "putting the fear of God into the heart and mind." The end result is that all those in whom God has written His Law, and put His fear into, will never fall away from the Living God, but most surely persevere unto eternal life.

“And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.” (Jeremiah 32:40)

Natural Theologians teach the heresy that all men have the Law written in their hearts and minds by virtue of their *first* birth in the flesh. But the Bible clearly teaches that it is by virtue of the *second* birth in the Spirit (John 3:1-5). When one is regenerated, that is when the Law is written in the mind and heart. It did not exist there *before* regeneration.

The debate above illustrates how you must look up the verses that Natural Theologians try to palm off on you. Look to see if the Bible is misquoted or taken out of context.

With these brief words of introduction, we now turn to our main focus.

Notes

Chapter One

The Need for Theological Systems

Today there are those who argue that we do not need to be systematic in our theology. Modern irrationality questions the *need* for TS to exist *per se*. Why?

Since postmodernists have no theological system of their own to define, document, or defend, they pretend that they are not interested in the entire enterprise. They claim that they don't care about systems. TSs are a waste of time and energy.

This means that our first task is to justify or defend the need for TS. Once this has been established, then we can determine which system, if any, is true.

The justification or vindication of TS is rooted first of all in the very nature of God. God is said in Scripture to have a "mind". Thus He is not mindless or irrational in any sense.

Rom. 8:27: the mind of the Spirit (τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος)

Rom. 11:34: the mind of the Lord (νοῦν κυρίου)

1 Cor. 2:16: the mind of the Lord (νοῦν κυρίου)

The word φρόνημα is unusual. It refers to the "way of thinking" about something and means "looking at things" from "organized thoughts." The word νοῦν refers to the faculty of self-consciousness that enables God and man to communicate their ideas to each other.

The Bible tells us that the mind of God is not confused, disorganized or scatterbrained. The Mind of God is in perfect harmony with His attributes and works: systematic and orderly.

1 Cor. 14:33: for God is not confused but harmonious
(οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς ἀλλὰ εἰρήνης.)

Note the order of the Greek words: “NOT for is CONFUSED God” Instead of God being confused and mindless, His mind is organized and in complete harmony.

This is in opposition to the gods of the heathen who did not know the future and thus their will was constantly frustrated by unforeseen events kicked up by a chance-driven universe. This is why the so-called “Open View” of God (Clark Pinnock, Gregory Boyd, John Sanders, etc.) is only a rerun of old pagan ideas of a limited confused god, who is not in control of the present or the future. What a sad and pathetic god! Any god not quite omniscient or quite omnipotent is no god at all.

The Scriptures reveal the mind of God and it thus should not surprise us that the Bible is organized in an orderly fashion. It begins at the Beginning of all things and concludes with the End of all things. The canon is organized thematically. Nowhere does the Bible manifest randomness or disorganization.

The Bible is the revelation of the “Mind” of the Triune God. This is what Paul meant when he said,

1 Cor. 2:16: “we have the mind of Messiah.”

(ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν)

Notice that he moved the verb (ἔχομεν) to the end of the sentence, and the word “mind” (νοῦν) is moved to the front. This means that Paul is emphasizing that the Bible is the inspired revelation of the “mind of Messiah.”

Man was created to be the image bearer of God (Gen. 1:26-27). This is why man automatically organizes and systemizes objects. If you give a child a box of wooden blocks, he will arrange them in a certain order to make something or spell something. He will put his ducks in a line because he is the image bearer of God. He is taking dominion over his toys!

The “image of God” in man should not be reduced to some part of his physical body (his feet), some aspect of his mind (reason), or some aspect of his being (soul). It is neither physical nor metaphysical, but functional. Gen. 1:26-27 describes the “image of God” in the functional sense of man taking dominion over the earth. Adam’s naming the animals and tending the Garden are examples of how man “images” God.

In the same way, the desire to put ideas and concepts into some kind of philosophical or theological system is rooted in the image of God within man. In other words, we cannot help trying to organize our ideas into some kind of coherent system where one idea relates to another. Some people are better at it than others. When we make systems, we are taking dominion over our ideas.

The following Biblical evidence demonstrates the need to construct theological systems.

1. God reveals ideas/concepts in Scripture (1 Cor. 2:12-13). These ideas are what we call *doctrines*. For example, Gen. 1-3 reveals the three ideas of Creation ex nihilo, the radical Fall of man into sin and guilt, and divine Redemption, as the three foundational doctrines of the Biblical world and life view.

2. Not only does God reveal such ideas in Scripture, but He also arranges these ideas (i.e. doctrines) in a *specific* order that conveys information to us. Gen. 1-3 has Creation, Fall, and then Redemption. Rom. 8:30 is another good example.

Whom He **predestined**,
 these He also **called**;
 and whom He **called**,
 these He also **justified**;
 and whom He **justified**,
 these He also **glorified**.

3. According to the divine order revealed in Romans 8, predestination comes *before* effectual calling, which comes *before* justification, which comes *before* glorification, which is the final **goal** of the entire process. Thus the order itself conveys meaning. The golden chain begins in eternity past and ends in eternity future. For example, glorification will not take place in this life, but awaits the resurrection at the end of the world.
4. Thus, arranging revealed truths into a system is not evil, but good. It means to follow the example of God given in Scripture and is thus an aspect of being in the image of God.
 - The Wesleyan heresy of sinless perfectionism is rooted in the attempt to disrupt the divine order and to experience glorification in this life. The people of God will not be glorified until the return of Christ (1 Thess. 5:23). Those who claim it now are in error.
 - The Dutch heresy of eternal justification places justification before calling. It pushes it back into eternity with predestination! We are justified before we are effectually called.
 - Those who claim that God predestines those whom He foresees will believe in Him have denied the divine order set forth by God in Romans 8. They put calling before predestination.
 - They reverse the order found in Acts 13:48: "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." By the time they are finished, they teach, "as many as believed were appointed to eternal life." Instead of predestination being the Origin of faith, faith becomes the Origin of predestination.

- They do the same thing with Acts 16:14,
 “And a certain woman named Lydia,
 from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics,
 a worshiper of God, was listening;
 and the Lord opened her heart
 to respond to the things spoken by Paul.”

Lydia responded in repentance and faith to the message of Paul because God first opened her heart, then she believed as a result. Regeneration precedes faith.

- John 3:3-5 is yet another example of the divine order being denied. Jesus clearly said that we must first be “born from above” in order to “see” and to “enter” the kingdom of God. The word “see” is a figure of speech in Scripture for faith (Rom. 15:20-21; 2 Cor. 4:4). Thus regeneration takes place before faith. To teach that faith comes before regeneration is to deny the divine order set forth by Jesus.

What about those who say they don't believe in “organizing” theology?

First, they want and demand organization in every other aspect of life. Would they want *disorganized* medicine, government, finances, roads, etc.? No! Why then do they assume that a “disorganized” theology is better than an organized one?

Second, they are self-refuting. When someone organizes reasons as to why he should not organize his ideas, he has cut his own throat. You have to be very organized to argue that you don't believe in organization.

Modern Liberalism does not produce any systematic theologies today because it does not believe that it is *possible* to do so. They assume:

- The Bible is not inspired, and thus it does not reveal the mind of God.

- The Bible is only a random and confused collection of contradictory ancient literature. Thus, it cannot be organized. There are different and conflicting views of God, salvation, etc.
- We can talk about the view of a single author such as Luke, but we must not assume that anyone else in the Bible believed what he did. Rather, we can assume that other authors had ideas that were not only different but contradictory to his ideas. They love to pit James against Paul on justification.
- Theology is nothing more than the study of human psychology or sociology. It is not a study of any objective revealed truths. It is relative to the prevailing cultural norms. Any attempt to organize the ideas or doctrines in the Bible is futile and a waste of time.

Arminians and Fundamentalists

Anti-intellectualism has characterized their circles for many years and there is an emotional resistance to even trying to systematize theology. “Just preach the Gospel” is their theme. One prominent Fundamentalist leader told me that evangelism was more important than “counting the number of angels that can dance on the head of a pin.” It is a shame that he reduced all theology to a waste of time!

I have a sneaking suspicion that the real reason that they don't encourage systematic theology is that they have seen that this often leads to their intelligent students becoming Calvinists. When I was new believer, I was warned on several occasions that if I kept asking questions, I would end up a Calvinist!

Pentecostals and Charismatics

The preachers who are confused, and the “name it – claim it” preachers, glory in being “mystics,” i.e. irrational. They are allergic to rational thought, and glory in being a

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“fool” for Christ. The crazier the idea, the better they like it! This is why they can claim that Adam flew to the moon or that Jesus was rich. Their ideas are so confused and convoluted that they are incapable of being organized.

Reformed Theology Today

The only ones today who are writing new TSs are “Reformed” theologians. But they are a motley crew of the good, the bad, and the ugly. Most “Reformed” theology today is nothing more than regurgitation of old fashioned liberalism, Barth’s neo-orthodoxy or Whitehead’s Process theology. In such cases the word “Reformed” is only a denominational label and does not indicate the nature of the doctrines taught.

The well-known TV pastor Dr. Robert Schuller is a good example of someone who claims to be “Reformed,” but whose theology is a direct contradiction of everything that Reformed theology ever stood for. His humanistic-based “possibility thinking” is nothing more than a modern version of the old occult heresy of old “positive thinking.” This doctrine is found in New Thought, Christian Science, Unity, the mind sciences, and the New Age Movement. Yet, he would be insulted if you denied his claim to be “Reformed.”

Just because someone claims to be “Reformed” does not mean that his TS is historically in line with Reformed theology. Each TS must be judged by Scripture alone.

Chapter Two

The Great Divide

There are really only two different kinds of TSs. This may come as a surprise to many but this is the reality that confronts us. All TSs are either Theistic or Humanistic in origin, nature, methodology, and goal. There is no middle ground. No compromise. No halfway house. It is either one way or the other.

Theological Systems		
	<i>Theistic</i>	<i>Humanistic</i>
Origin:	God	Man
Nature:	Revealed	Man-made
Methodology:	Exegesis of Scripture	Rationalism, Empiricism, Mysticism, Fideism
Goal:	Glory of God	Happiness of Man

fig. 1

While the origin, nature, methodology, and goal of TS determines if it is Theistic or Humanistic, there is a sliding scale within each group that goes from inconsistent to consistent. For example, a TS may be classed as a Theistic Theological System (TTS) but be inconsistent because it contains humanistic elements such as libertarian “free will.”

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It is the same with Humanistic TSs. Some of them are inconsistent because they contain elements borrowed from Biblical theism. Many humanistic systems appear to be “Christian” at first because they have borrowed capital, drawn inconsistently, from Biblical truth. For example, there are humanistic systems that believe in human rights, civil rights, and women’s rights. But since they also believe in the heresy of evolution, if they were consistent, they would teach that man is only a primate with no more rights than other primates – such as monkeys and chimpanzees. The unity and dignity of the human race is based upon the Biblical model of Adam and Eve created in the image of God.

Humanistic Theological Systems

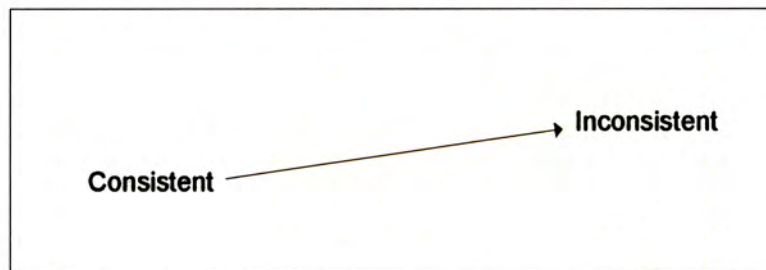


fig. 2.1

Theistic Theological Systems

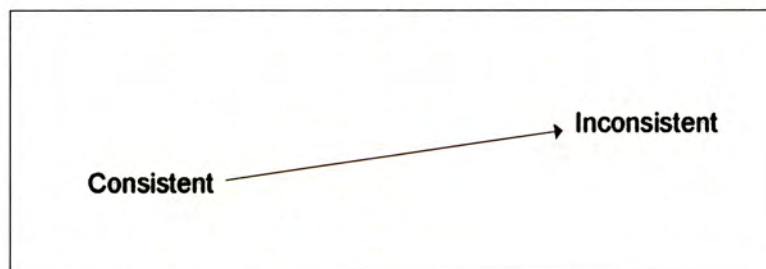


fig. 2.2

Note

The charts reveal how it is possible for you to be a professing Christian and yet be humanistic in your theological system. Your “heart” is Christian, but your “head” is still filled with pagan ideas! When you entered the kingdom of Christ through the new birth, you brought with you all that you are and all that you have. If you were humanistic in your worldview before your conversion, then you are starting out in the Christian life as a humanist with many false and harmful false ideas.

I often ask Arminians who defend “free will” the following questions:

Calvinist: “Did you believe in ‘free will’ in your heathen days *before* you accepted Christ?”

Arminian: “Yes.”

Calvinist: And you still believe in ‘free will’ even *after* you accepted Christ?

Arminian: “Yes.”

Calvinist: “Then accepting Christ has *not* changed your heathen belief in “free will” one iota. Don’t you think that becoming a Christian should cause you to get rid of heathen doctrines? Why do you assume that you can continue to believe in pagan ideas once you become a Christian?”

If you are not subsequently educated in the Biblical worldview by attending a Reformation-based church, you may, through ignorance, continue to believe in many humanistic concepts. If you later go to a humanistic university or seminary and are further indoctrinated in heretical ideas, you may personally still trust Christ as your Savior, but your philosophical and theological systems are humanistic.

One example that comes to mind concerns a Roman Catholic teenager who trusted Christ for salvation. He left the Church of Rome and joined an Evangelical church. But his entire theological education up to that point had been based on Natural Theology and Natural Law created by Thomas Aquinas. He had been brainwashed by Catholic schools into looking at everything through the lens of Aquinas' worldview.

When he decided to get a Ph.D, he went to Notre Dame and was further indoctrinated by the Jesuits in Aquinas' theology. By the time he got his degree, he was thoroughly brainwashed with Aquinas' humanism. That was the only thing he knew.

Once he had his Ph.D. from the Jesuits at Notre Dame, he was hired by an Evangelical school. This may surprise you but there are plenty of Evangelical schools today that lust after the world's approval by seeking out professors with degrees from prestigious schools such as Notre Dame. They don't care if these professors teach damnable heresies. As long as the degrees will enhance the school's reputation, that is all that matters.

Now that he was a professor at an Evangelical university, what would he teach his students? Like any other graduate, he will teach his students what the Jesuits taught him: Roman Catholic doctrine such as Natural Theology, Natural Law and Molinism (which he renamed "Middle Knowledge" in order to hide its Jesuit origin and nature).

He eventually realized that Aquinas was historically condemned by the past generation of Evangelical scholars such as Carl Henry, Francis Schaeffer, Gordon Clark, John Murray, Van Til, etc. So he hid his commitment to Aquinas until that generation died off. Then he "came out of the closet" and announced that now that the previous Evangelical theologians have died, it is time to reveal that he was a disciple of Aquinas. But he defended Aquinas by pretending that he was actually a "Protestant before his time."

Of course, he counted upon the fact that most Evangelicals have never even seen the works of Thomas Aquinas, much less read them. Aquinas is the official philosopher and theologian of the Church of Rome. He hid the fact that Aquinas denied that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to the authority of Scripture alone. He also steadfastly hid the fact that before Aquinas died, he renounced his theological system as “mere straw.”

We end up with a theologian/philosopher in Evangelical circles teaching Jesuit theology. When challenged about his Jesuit theology, he will change the focus from what he is teaching to whether he is “saved.”

“I accepted Christ at a church camp when I was
16 years old. Are you denying my salvation?
How dare you judge me!”

He flipped the issue from what he is teaching to whether you are mean and nasty for asking. But the issue of whether he accepted Christ as his Savior is *irrelevant* to the issue of whether or not he is teaching Jesuit doctrines. We cannot judge his heart. But we can judge what he is teaching. I would respond,

“It is great that you accepted Christ when you were
16 years old. But that is not the issue. What you are
teaching today is the issue. Does it contradict
Scripture; is it a denial of the *sola scriptura* of the
Reformation; is it Roman Catholic doctrine? This is
the issues before us.”

Notes:

I emphasize this important point because when you expose Jesuit agents in Evangelical circles, expect them to attack your motives and character. They will try to shift the issue from their doctrines to your character. You will be accused of judging their heart. But we are not interested in judging whether someone is saved. But we do have authority from Scripture to judge what someone is teaching (1 Thess. 5:21). If it contradicts the Word of God, it is our responsibility to say so.

Notes

Chapter Three

Humanistic Theological Systems

What is humanism? According to the Humanist Manifesto I and II, humanism is a religion, i.e. a theological system! It is the religious belief that man is the measure of all things, including God. It is the grand conceit that man starting only with himself, by himself, and from himself can understand himself and the world around him, without any information from God, i.e. the Bible. Man, not God, is the Origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty.

In terms of its origin, humanism was first introduced to mankind in the Garden of Eden by Satan. He told man that God is not the Origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty. He used the tree of knowledge as the case at hand. God is not the Origin of the meaning and morality of the tree. Instead, man was to elevate himself to become the Origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty of the tree and everything else.

In terms of truth, God warned them that if they ate of the tree, they would die. But was He telling them the truth or was He lying? Satan told man to sit in judgment of God and to decide for himself if God was telling them the truth. Man decided that God was lying and Satan was telling them the truth!

In terms of justice, God told them it would not be just for them to take what did not belong to them. He made the tree and it was up to him who could or could not eat of it. But man listened to the devil and felt that it was just for him to take the fruit.

In terms of morals, God said it was sinful to disobey Him by eating of the tree. But man decided that God was morally suspect. He was only trying to keep man from growing and developing into gods. It was thus morally OK to steal the fruit and eat it.

In terms of meaning, God claimed to be the measure of all things, including defining the meaning of trees. But man now claimed to be the Origin of meaning and he redefined the tree as the path to deification, not death.

In terms of beauty, man decided that the tree was beautiful and that he had the right to eat of it.

In every way, the Fall of man into sin and guilt took place in the Garden of Eden when man replaced theism with humanism. This is the origin of Natural Theology, Natural law, and Natural Philosophy. They are forms of rebellion against God and His Law/Word. They lead to disobedience and unbelief. No Bible-based Christian should have anything to do with them.

All humanistic theological systems are not created equal. The only consistent thing about fallen man is his capacity for being inconsistent! Thank God that not all humanists are consistent as this would have led to absolute chaos in society!

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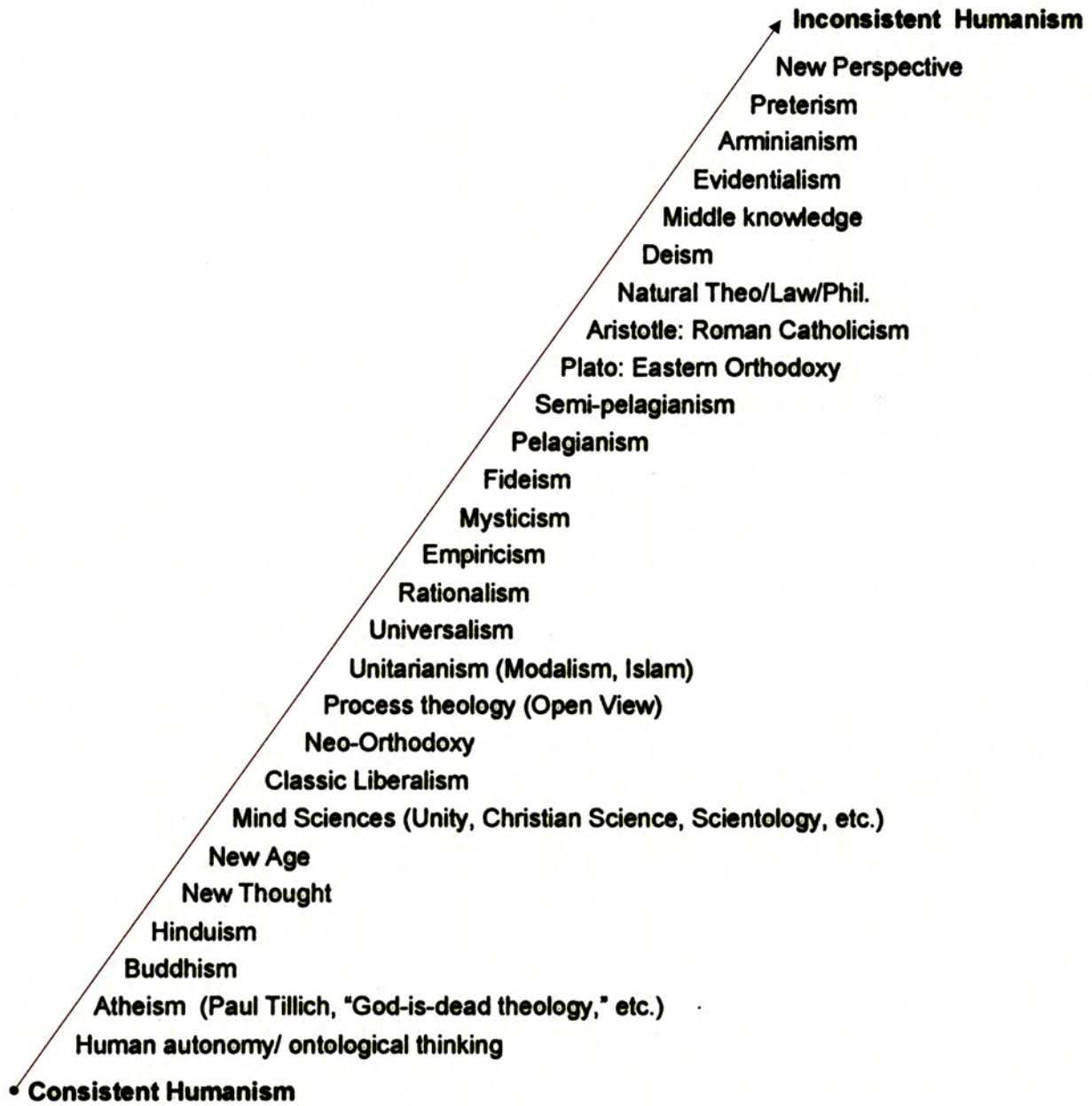


fig. 3

Notes

Special Note: Natural Theology (NT)

NT is the attempt to start from yourself, by yourself, rejecting any information from God, to build a world and life view based on your own reason (rationalism), feelings (mysticism), experience (empiricism), or faith (fideism).

The Bible is clear that we are not to go beyond what is contained within its inspired pages.

“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn “Do not go beyond what is Written,” in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.” (1 Cor. 4:6)

Ταῦτα δέ, ἀδελφοί, μετεσχημάτισα εἰς ἑμαυτὸν καὶ Ἀπολλῶν δι’ ὑμᾶς, ἵνα ἐν ἡμῖν μάθητε τὸ Μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐνὸς φυσιούσθε κατὰ τοῦ ἐτέρου.

As Paul stated, once you “go beyond Scripture,” you descend into arrogance and conflict because why should your opinion be any better than mine? With no absolute standard by which to judge TSs, every one builds a TS to suit his own personal and subjective prejudices and tastes.

Most Arminian theologians openly admit that they believe in “free will” because it is an essential part of their philosophy. They know that they do not have a single Scripture to support it. But it is a “necessary” part of their philosophical system. Thus they believe in it without any Biblical warrant whatsoever.

Now and then we run across a hillbilly who uses the KJV phrase “free will offerings” as the Biblical proof (sic.) for the doctrine of “free will!” (ex. Amos 4:5) But the

poor guy is totally ignorant that the KJV phrase “free will offerings” referred to donations that exceeded the required tithe. They need to stop picking up snakes, drinking poison, and believing in free will!

The Hebrew text does not have two words, one for “free” and the other for “will.” The Hebrew text has only one word and that one word (נְדָבָה) simply meant a “voluntary offering above and beyond the tithe.” If you want more detail on whether man has a “free will,” order the seminar on Biblical Anthropology.

God has revealed what we are to believe and how we are to live in the Scripture *alone*. This revelation is objective and absolute. We must make the distinction between the dots revealed in Scripture and the history of man’s attempt to connect those dots.

Before continuing to believe in pagan doctrines such as free will, if you are now a Christian, be open to God’s Word changing what you believe. Have an open heart, mind, and hand to God.

Chapter Four

Theistic Theological System (TTS)

A TTS is man's attempt to organize the ideas revealed in Holy Scripture into a cohesive and coherent system. A TTS attempts to connect the dots found in the Bible until a meaningful pattern appears. It puts together the pieces of the divine puzzle given in Scripture until we have the whole picture laid out in front of us.

While all TTSs are the work of man, the object of study for TTSs is the Word of God. Thus the study of Special Revelation is the only proper study of a TTS. The Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* forbids the mingling of our ideas with God's.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways My ways,
declares YHWH.

‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.’” (Isaiah 55:8-9)

אָרִי לֹא כְּמַחְשְׁבֹתַי מִחְשְׁבֹתְכֶם וְלֹא
אוֹרְחֹתְכֶם תִּקְנֶן כְּאוֹרְחֹת כְּאוֹרְחִי
טוֹבֵי אָמַר יְיָ:
אָרִי כְּמֵא דְרָמִין שְׁמַיָא מִן אַרְעָא
כִּין תִּקְנֶן אוֹרְחֹת טוֹבֵי מֵאוֹרְחֹתְכֶם
וּמַחְשְׁבֹתַי יִתְקַנֶּן מִמְּחְשְׁבֹתְכֶם:

Notes:

The original text is interesting. The word translated “thoughts” refer to what is in the mind of God when He decides to do something. It is used of God in several important passages. His thoughts are “very deep.” God’s thoughts are so deep that no human being is capable of plumbing their depths (Rom. 11:33-36).

“How great are Thy works, O LORD!
Thy thoughts are very deep.” (Psalm 92:5)

כמה הינון רברבין עובדך יהוה לחדא
עמיקין מחשבתך:

God’s thoughts are also infinite and thus too many for man to count.

“Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which
Thou hast done, And Thy thoughts toward us;
There is none to compare with Thee; If I would
declare and speak of them, They would be too
numerous to count.” (Psalm 40:5)

סניעי ניסיא דעבדתא את אנת יהוה אלהי
פרישותך ורעותך ורעיוניך לותנא לית
איפשר לסדרא לותך תושבחתך אתני ואמליל
תקיפו מן לחואה:

Notes:

God's "ways" refers to what He does. It refers to His mighty deeds and acts in Creation and Providence. What God does and what He has in mind when He does it are far above and beyond the finite capacity of man to understand on the basis of his own reason, experience, feelings, and faith. Only if God reveals these things to us, can we know them. This Biblical truth refutes the very basis of Natural Theology.

Since our thoughts and ways are not God's thoughts or ways, analyzing our thoughts and ways will not reveal the thoughts and ways of God. To find God we must look away from ourselves to the Revelation of God found in Scripture.

Humanistic theologians assume that if they analyze man's ideas and meditate on man's ways, they will discover the thoughts and ways of God. Isa. 55:8 refutes this foundational error of Natural Theology.

Humanistic Theological Systems (HTSs) are based upon the pagan dogma of human autonomy, which teaches that man has within himself all he needs to discover truth, justices, moral, meaning, and beauty. Man's thoughts and ways are the Origin and Measure of all things. The contrast between these two paths could not clearer.

Evangelical Theological System (ETS)

ETSs are a subheading under TTSs. The word "Evangelical" has historically meant that a theological system looks to the Bible *alone* as the Origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty. God is the measure of all things, including theology. This is why Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, liberal, neo-orthodox, Process, Open View, Natural Theology, Natural Law, New Age, etc. are not "Evangelical."

All Evangelicals believe that we saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone. Because they are unified on such essential doctrines, they view each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. They may differ on non-essential doctrines, but they are unified on the essential truths of the Gospel.

What about the liberals and heretics running around in Evangelical circles today? (N. T. Wright, Clark Pinnock, Gregory Boyd, John Sanders, etc.) They should be excommunicated, publicly delivered over to Satan, and tossed out of the church they pastor or the university or seminary where they teach.

The sad truth is that they hang around the Evangelical world because they like Evangelical money! If you deny them money, they will rush out and join a liberal denomination such as the Episcopalians. I have seen it a hundred times. They pretend to be Evangelicals on long as they are on the take. They want to keep their churches and teaching posts. If they were honest, they would have left our circles and joined the Unitarians by now. The fact that they are still running around in Evangelical circles is a witness to their hypocrisy and to the cowardice of those around them.

Evangelical theology is divided into different disciplines.

1. Exegetical Theology asks: What does this verse say to me about X?
2. Biblical Theology asks: What was the progress of doctrine that led up to what this verse said about X?
3. Systematic Theology asks: What does the whole Bible say to me about X?
4. Historical Theology asks: How has the Church understood X down through the ages?

Each discipline has a role to play and should be included in every TS. One additional word about Historical Theology. It focuses on the history of theology and examines the various TSs that developed throughout church history. It seeks to understand past TSs in terms of their unique cultural, linguistic, and religious context.

Historical Theology (HT) serves the grand purpose of reminding us that there is truly “nothing new under the sun” (Ecc. 1:9). Some modern theologians pride themselves in teaching what they think is a startling new doctrine. The so-called “Open View” of God heretics (Boyd, Pinnock, Sanders, etc.) were quite vocal that they were teaching a “new” view of God. They were so proud about this that I could not help but pop their balloon of hot air.

It was quite deflating to them when I demonstrated in my books, *Battle of the Gods*, and *The Nature and Extent of God's Knowledge*, that they are actually teaching an old heresy that was already considered, debated, and cast aside by the Christian Church.

Historical Theology is also helpful when thinking through all the possible positions that can be taken on various theological issues. Most theological issues have been discussed to death for centuries, and it would be pure conceit on our part to think that we are the first ones to think through those issues.

Historical Theology helps us to avoid repeating the mistakes and heresies of the past. If we stand upon the shoulders of those who went before us, we can see far and wide.

Even given these benefits, Historical Theology is of limited value in the long run. Theologians, like everyone else, are the children of the age and culture in which they lived. You have to spend a great deal of time straining out the political, religious, scientific, and philosophical junk that is found in their systems. You always end up throwing out huge sections of their TS.

If you are not very careful, you will end up defending past theologians on indefensible issues. For example, when Arminians (sic.) attack Calvinism on the basis of Jean Calvin burning Michael Servetus, too many Calvinists foolishly try to defend the honor of Calvin. This is a mistake on several levels.

First, the Arminians are in error for using fallacious *ad hominem* arguments that attack the character of Calvin instead of setting forth exegetical arguments that refute his interpretation of Scripture. Calvin could have hung, quartered, drawn, and burned a thousand Servetus and still give us theological truth. His killing of Servetus is irrelevant to the issue of whether his TS is Biblical.

Second, Arminians should not go down that road because they have more skeletons in their closet than do the Calvinists. Arminianism has been and is still the basis of the cults and occult. The Campbellites, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. are all Arminian in their view of man. Indeed, I have yet to find a single cult that is based on Calvinism!

Arminians are the one who set dates for the 2nd Coming. The "saw-dust" Pentecostals, the babbling Charismatics, the scandalous PTL, the freak show on TBN, and other nutty theologies are all Arminian.

The Star Chamber, Archbishop Laud and his thumbscrews are part of the atrocities committed by Arminian theologians. Almost without exception, if there is a religious "nut" in town, he is Arminian in theology. Given the glass house they live in, Arminians are the last ones to cast stones.

Third, those Calvinists who foolishly attempt to justify what Calvin did are attempting the impossible because the execution of Servetus was part of a cultural and political phenomena that existed before Calvin was born and existed long after he died. It had to do more with the age in which he lived than his exegesis of Scripture.

I learned a long time ago not to defend the indefensible. This is why I don't defend the Crusades, but condemn them as an example of Roman Catholic state/church "jihad" that later led to the Inquisition's butcher of hundreds of thousands of Protestants. Since the Crusades have nothing to do with the religion of Jesus revealed in the New Testament, why should I bother defending them?

What posed as “Christianity” in the East and in the West down through the centuries has been marked by heresies, atrocities, political interference, wickedness, pogroms, tortures, murder, riots, and mayhem. I refuse to take any responsibility for the crimes of Eastern Orthodoxy or Roman Catholicism. They do not represent the religion founded by Jesus and revealed in the New Testament. Why should I defend them at all?

I don't let the Protestants off the hook on this point either. The horrible excesses of Luther, Calvin, Henry VIII, the Puritans, and the Pilgrims do not have any bearing on the truthfulness of their understanding of the Gospel. Once you contextualize them, they were only doing what everyone else was doing. The people of their day did not know any other way of coping with state/church issues.

It is far too easy for us today to condemn past theologians for chopping off heads, gouging out eyes, slitting throats, and drowning people with millstones around their necks. But if we lived in the age in which they lived, would we have done any different?

Fourth, the issue is not whether some theologian committed immorality or mayhem, but whether if his interpretation of Scripture was exegetically valid. God uses crooked sticks to draw straight lines. If He can use Balaam's ass, he can use the likes of you and me!

Now, this does not mean that Historical Theology is a total waste of time. After all, why reinvent the wheel! The great theological controversies of the past were created when TSs collided over essential and non-essential doctrines. We can derive much benefit from examining how these TSs interpreted Scripture and what doctrines became the core of essential Christianity.

NOTE: This is the great danger of modern theological studies. Students spend all their time pitting man-made TSs against each other. Seminaries will choose Barth, Calvin, Scofield, Vos, Arminius, Moreland, Lane, Aquinas, Whitehead, etc., and

students will study the books written by those men. Others choose Covenant theology while others adopt Dispensationalism.

If the students were asked to judge those TSs on the basis of sound exegesis, this would be beneficial. But today the standard of truth has changed. Instead of *sola scriptura*, we now have *sola ratiōne!* Whatever feels “rational” is deemed as true. Human Reason has supplanted God’s Word!

I have seen students change their beliefs depending on what book they are reading at the time. When they read Bultmann, they believe in him. Then when they read Barth, they change over to his beliefs. They are “tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14).

Clark Pinnock is a good example of someone who has changed his beliefs so many times that I told him at lunch one day that he was a charter member of “The god of the month club!” When your beliefs are based on human reason instead of the Bible, you will end up changing your beliefs depending on whose book you are reading at the time.

The careful exegetical study of the Hebrew and Greek text of Scripture to discover the concepts revealed by God has fallen to the side as the history of man’s attempt to organize his own ideas became the focus of modern theological study. Today you can graduate with a degree in Bible and Theology without any knowledge of the Bible whatsoever! All you will study is the history of man-made philosophy and theology. How sad.

Liberal Theological Systems (LTS)

Liberals were the first to abandon the exegesis of Scripture. They assume that even if God may exist (and they are not sure of that), he, she or it has never revealed anything in the Bible.

Once the inspiration of the Bible was tossed out, all that was left was the study of how different men and women understood God and the world down through the

centuries. Theology *per se* is about what man thinks and feels about God (gods). Divine Revelation does not enter the picture at all.

Humanism Versus Theism

The difference between a theistic and humanistic approach to theological systems could not be clearer. Humanists reduce all theological systems to one common denominator: *man*. He is the Origin or Measure of all things, including theology.

This means that no one can claim that his TS is any better or greater than any other TS because they are ALL nothing more than man's subjective, personal, relative, preference.

TSs are thus as relative as what flavor ice cream you prefer. They are "equal" because there is no ultimate objective Judge over them. Man is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End of all theology.

In opposition to this, TTS teach that God is there and He has not been silent. He has spoken in Scripture. Thus the ideas found in the Bible are not simply some dead Jew's personal opinion, but the Word of God.

"And so we have the Prophetic Word that is more certain, to which you would do well to pay attention to as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the Day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is someone's personal interpretation or opinion, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Pet. 2:19-21)

In the context, the Bible is said to be “more certain” than myth, legend, human opinion or even eyewitness accounts (vs. 15-18). When you read the Bible, you are not reading the personal opinion of Moses, Isaiah, Paul or Peter. What they wrote was the Word of God and not the personal opinion of man.

The contrast between God’s Word and man’s ideas could not be clearer. We must be careful not to confuse or co-mingle together man-made TSs with God’s Revelation. No man-made system is absolute. We can have certitude in our faith only to the degree it is based on a sound exegesis of God’s infallible and inerrant Word.

Ecclesiastical Theological Systems

No one, not even Calvin, ever figured everything out (1 Cor. 13:9). Everyone has blind spots, inconsistencies, and contradictions because depravity prevents us from producing anything that is perfect. This means the Bible sits in judgment over all TSs. They do not sit in judgment of Scripture.

When we view any man-made TS as the ultimate authority over faith and practice, we have erected an idol. We have pushed God off His throne and placed someone else in his place.

This is true regardless if we are erecting idols of Augustine, Aquinas, Arminius, Calvin, the Puritans, Scofield, Vos or anyone else for that matter. When someone tells you that he has no Scripture to support an idea but it must be believed because it part of his Confession or Creed, run for the exit!

This is why the present exaltation of Creeds and Confessions is dangerous. While man-made Creeds and Confessions are useful as practical guides to HT, they should never ascend the throne and become gods!

I was once offered a teaching position in a well-known seminary. All I had to do was to accept a certain doctrine. When I asked them for exegetical and hermeneutical

evidence for that doctrine, they said that my request was a waste of time. The doctrine was taught in their Confession of Faith and thus did not need any Bible verses!

I cannot accept a doctrine by a blind leap of faith. Man-made Creeds and Confessions are great to the extent they are Biblical. But we must keep in mind that they are fallible and often reflect contemporary philosophical, political, and cultural trends. I value them as a guide to the main beliefs of the Christian Church down through the centuries. But the Bible is the final judge of all theological systems.

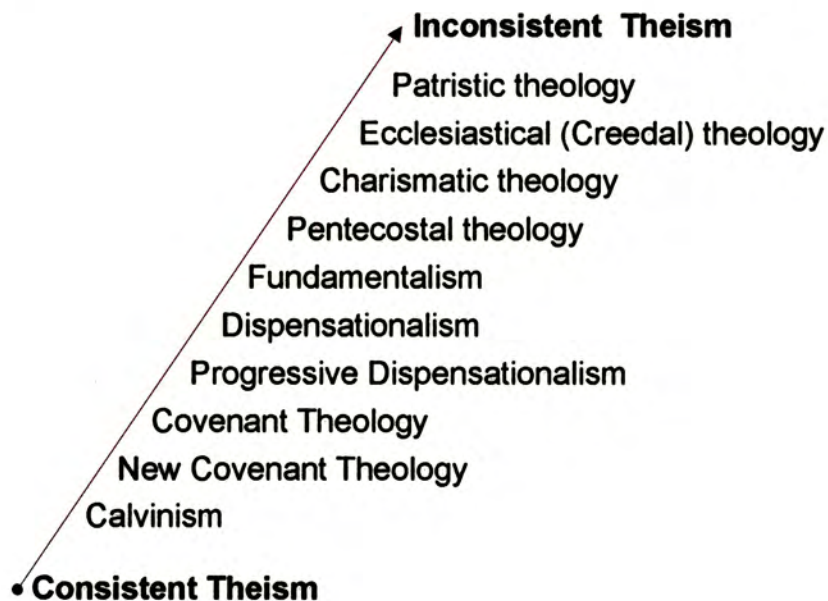


fig. 4

Conclusion

No man-made system is more authoritative than Scripture. No tradition, council or creed can supplant the Word of God. We must base what we believe and how we live on Scripture alone.