

# Classical Theism (Part 2 – ‘Ehyeh, the Trinity and the Incarnation)

GOD SAID TO MOSES,

“I AM WHO I AM.”

AND HE SAID, “SAY THIS TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL,

‘I AM

HAS SENT ME TO YOU’.”

EXODUS 3:14

## Special: Classical Theism (2) – ‘Ehyeh, the Simplicity of God, The Trinity, and the Incarnation

### Bible Doctrines (The True-Good-Beautiful )

#### T/G/B

Eschatology  
Thanatology  
Ecclesiology  
Israelology  
Dispensationalism  
Doxology  
Hodology  
Soteriology  
Hamartiology  
Natural Law  
Anthropology  
Angelology  
Pneumatology  
Christology  
Paterology  
Trinitarianism  
Cosmology  
Theology Proper  
Bibliology  
Natural Theology

#### The transcendent life, Psalm 73:21-26; James 1:17.

**Prayer:** 1 Jn 1:7. How did the doctrinal movement get off track (cf., 1 Jn. 1 :9, Gal 5:16; Acts 17:11; Ex. 3:14; Job)?

#### **3 Parts to Bible Class: PR helps us make sense of the Bible in a way that nothing else can.**

Part I: Spiritual basics: God-talk and God’s love.

Part II: Philosophical foundations. POL: Ancient Realism vs. modern Kantianism.

Part III: Doctrinal development: Special – Classical theism 2: Developing metaphysical categories for Trinity and HU.

#### **Part I: Basics: Spiritual foundations: God-talk and love (1 Cor. 13; Gal 5:13-15; 22-23).**

1. We are examining love, joy, and peace from human and divine perspective.
2. We have noted the three options regarding God-talk.
  - a. Univocal – love, joy, and peace of God is the same for man.
  - b. Equivocal—love, joy, and peace of God is totally different than man’s.
  - c. Analogical—love, joy, and peace is similar in some points and different in others.
3. God’s love according to classical theism is far different than God’s love in modern neo-theism.
4. God’s love in neo-theism is very anthropopathic because in neo-theism univocal love of God is used for God-talk. In this view, God’s love is the same as our love but only greater in degree and purity. In other words, God likes and loves things that we like and love; He just does it better. Moreover, He is a Big Man with same human goals and love.
5. However, according to classical theism, God is radically different from human beings, and while there are points of similarity, like divine and human sacrificial love (Jn 15:13), His love is not to be modeled on human nature. Human love is not the exemplar. To make human love and thinking the exemplar is to create God in our image.
6. Only by starting with God’s transcendent being can we have a proper perspective on what should be said and left unsaid regarding divine love and action.
7. Our verbal and conceptual abilities are geared to our creaturely world. We know first through our senses and then through our intellect. We know what participates in BE, but we do not know BE as first cause. He is beyond us and all language that is used finds analogates in the creature realm. All of our language with reference to God is deficient.
8. If we say that “God is good,” for instance, we never escape our creaturely mode of signification. We always have some kind of creaturely kind of goodness in mind, since that is the only kind of goodness we know. The goal is to get beyond our creaturely limitations to a divine goodness.
9. Classical theism affirms that God loves all things, both animate and inanimate. Creation is suffused with the love of God. The universe is not a mass of inert bodies passively moved by a force that passes through them, but a collection of active beings each enjoying the efficacy delegated to it by God along with actual being. The infinite goodness of God is communicated to all that exists. God’s love is the unfathomable source of all causality.
10. At the heart of creation is the gift of *agape* as God works for the good of all His creatures. Moreover, God is the exemplar cause making creatures like Himself. This makes no sense in neo-theism (personalism).

5: Hermeneutics

4: Language-82

3: Epistemology 32

- Existence 50
- History 50

2:Metaphysics 32

- Trans. 50

1: Reality

- Logic 32,
- Truth 32

## Part 2: Philosophy of Language (82)

1. The first horizontal column represents ancient philosophy and theory of knowledge.
2. The second column represents modern philosophy and theory of knowledge.
3. Descartes dichotomized man and made the direct object of knowledge the mind.
4. Kant completed the modern project by making the mind cookie cutter of reality.
5. Saussure completed the modern project with respect to language and reality by collapsing the signifier and signifier into one, moving from language to linguistics.
6. The difference is between the ancient and modern is all about metaphysics (forms) vs. naturalism (bodies extended in space).
7. The reason that theology is no longer considered a science (a knowledge), let alone the queen of sciences, is due to naturalism and rejection of metaphysics.

### Outline

- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ What is philosophy of language?
- ✓ Theories of meaning
- ✓ Plato's *Cratylus*
  - Hermogenes
  - Cratylus
  - Socrates
- ✓ Aristotle (384-322 BC)
- ✓ Transition to modern philosophy of language

Ferdinand de Saussure  
(1857-1913)

Gottlob Frege (1848-1925)

Bertrand Russell  
(1872-1970)

Ludwig Wittgenstein  
(1889-1951).

Martin Heidegger  
(1889-1976).

W. V. O. Quine (1908-2000).

Noam Chomsky (1928-)

Realist view of meaning.

Foundation of meaning.

Communication of meaning.

Elements of language.

Function of language

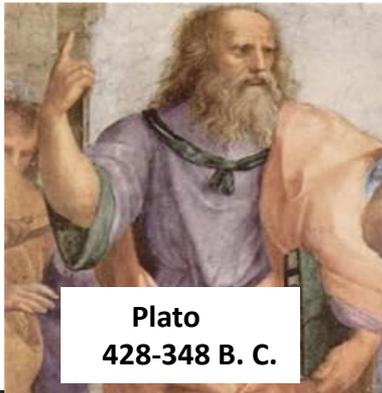
Meaningful God-talk.

Analytic Philosophy

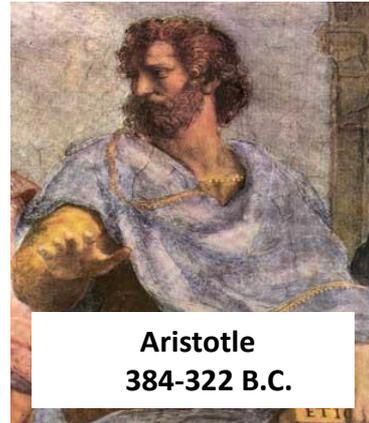
Conclusion.

Analogy.

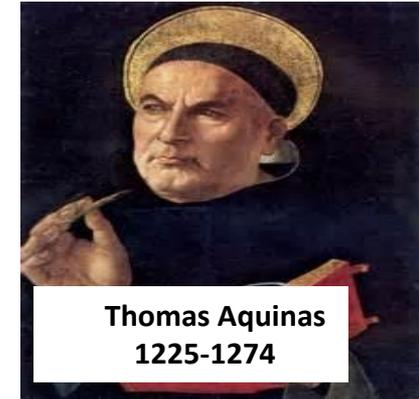
Metaphysical analogy.



Plato  
428-348 B. C.



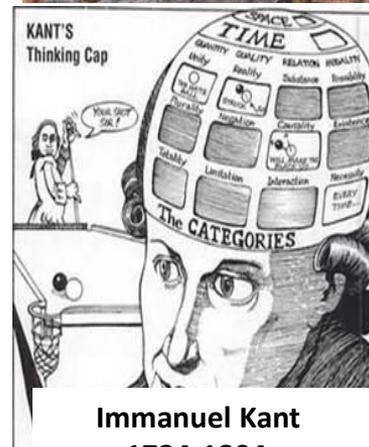
Aristotle  
384-322 B.C.



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274



Rene Descartes  
1596-1650



Immanuel Kant  
1724-1804

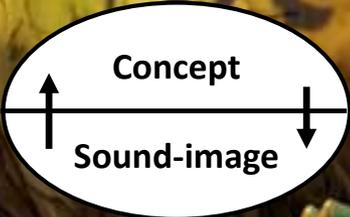


Ferdinand de Saussure  
1857-1913

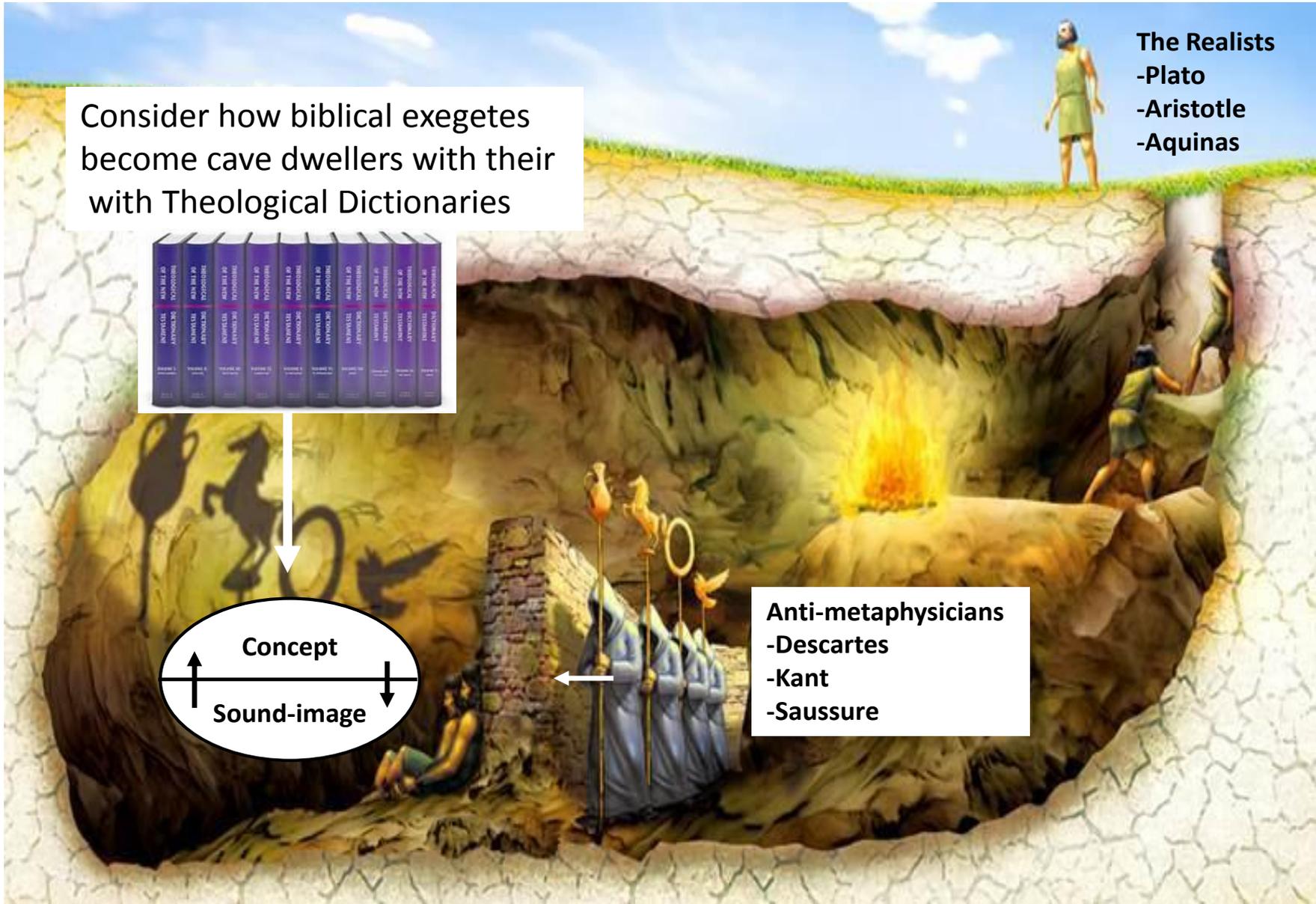
Consider how biblical exegetes become cave dwellers with their with Theological Dictionaries



**The Realists**  
-Plato  
-Aristotle  
-Aquinas

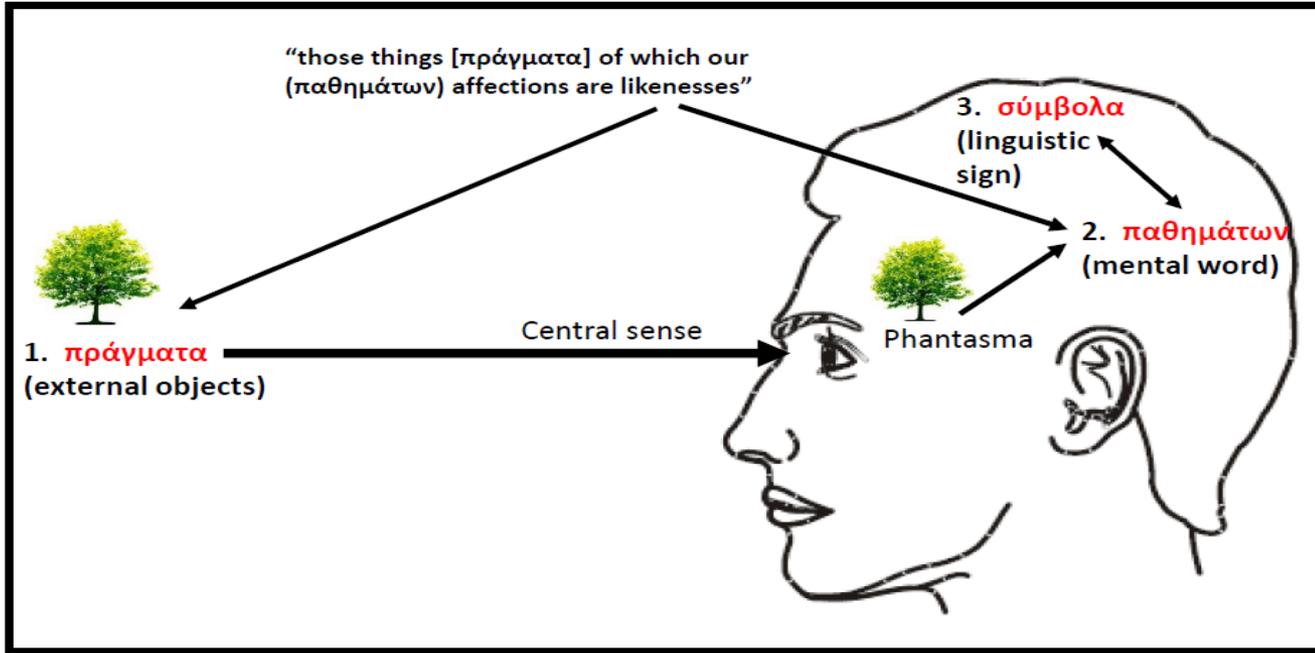


**Anti-metaphysicians**  
-Descartes  
-Kant  
-Saussure

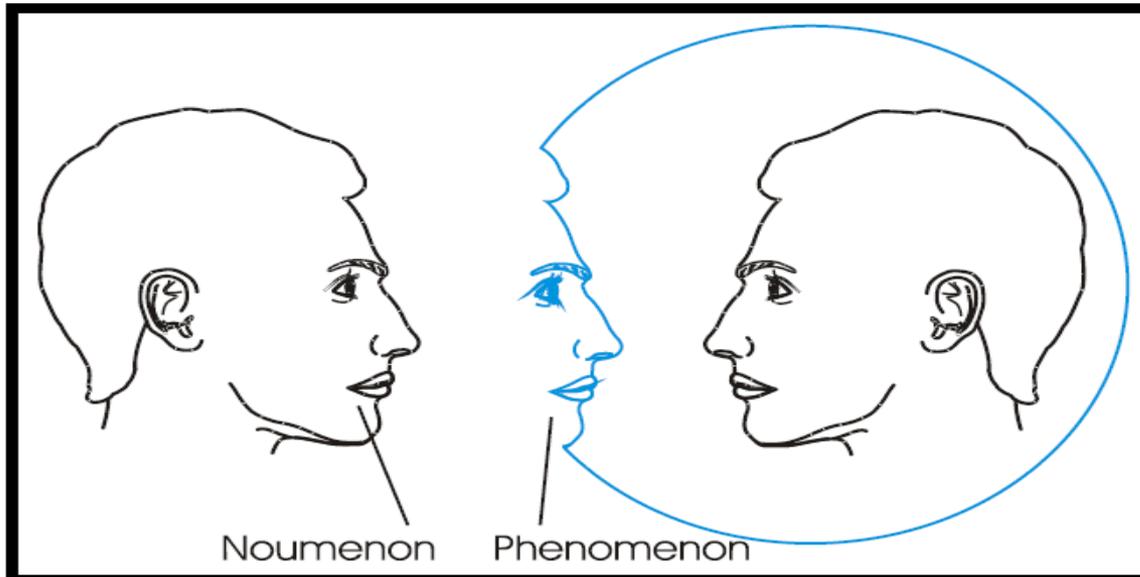


# Ancient vs Modern Models of Linguistics

Aristotelean Realism: metaphysical forms of the world are abstracted by the mind



Modern naturalism: mind only has contact with sense impressions.



## Developing the Metaphysical Categories for 'Ehyeh, the Trinity and the Hypostatic Union

1. John 1:1-18, an overview. We are now in the deepest end of the pool. It is interesting that all heresies are a result of sloppy thinking.
  - a. Binitarianism, tritheism, or trinitarianism?
  - b. These passages scream for a developed metaphysical mindset. God's has chosen to communicate His intertrinitarian life.
  - c. There exists no higher truths for the human mind than trinity and hypostatic union.
  - d. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ. There truly is no one like Him.
  - e. Absolute certainty about sacred doctrines only comes by the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit, Gal 4:6; 2:20; Rom. 8:9, 15-16; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13. Apologetics is only about showing something to be true.

2. Our view of God will determine how we put together the biblical data on God. We will either begin with *'Ehyeh* of Exodus 3:14 (or philosophical abstraction from creation) or we will end up projecting ourselves and our attributes on God (by starting with our minds). Moreover, how we view His attributes will determine how we relate to Him. Everyone uses some philosophical method. For example, where in the Bible do you find words like omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, or timelessness? We have the words, but no longer have the metaphysical categories for these concepts. The result is that contemporary Christianity is losing the attributes of God, one by one, heading to full scale heresy. We think radically different about God than our Christian forefathers, classical theists.

3. Our view of God will determine our overall spiritual life from the authority of the Bible to our faith and trust in Him. Erroneous views of God leads to false religions and cults. False views of God are always detrimental to spiritual growth. We must all strive for a true view of God. Only a true view of God can satisfy the longings of a believer's heart.
  
4. The classical view of God (simplicity, immutability, timelessness, wholly otherness) was accepted by the Church Fathers, Medieval church, Augustine, Aquinas, the Reformers, the Puritans, the Pilgrims, the American Founding Fathers (who were Christian), the Princeton theologians, Sproul, Gerstner, Geisler. Aquinas continues to be by far the best defender of the classical view of God.

5. Yet modern evangelicals today reject the classical view of God and one by one His attributes are being removed (cf., Craig on the simplicity and timelessness of God). This is due to lack of personalism, metaphysics and adoption of modern analytical philosophy. More and more evangelicals, moreover, are moving closer and closer to the cults not only in view of God but in their devotions and approach to the spiritual life, for example “Lean not on your own understanding” is becoming “make up your own view of God.” What does it mean not to lean on your own understanding?

6. On what basis do you handle the conflicting testimony of Scripture on God's immutability, corporeality, limited knowledge, and depictions of Him moving from place to place? What philosophy do you use? Only by understanding – 'Ehyeh, the classical God, can one properly understand the conflicting data.

7. According to philosophical realism, theology really is the highest science and philosophy is her handmaid.
8. Philosophical realism rejects the reductionism of modern hard science as being more accurate than God's authoritative revelation. PR also rejects anti-science musings of many fundamentalists.
9. Philosophical realism demonstrates the falsity of the modern reductionistic shift of the meaning of "science," which claims that the only true science is observable physical phenomena (positivism). Modern notions of science is that it is only about what is testable and repeatable. The idea that only the physical is all that there is self-defeating and a result of our naturalistic culture. It is untenable.

10. The term “science” simply means a demonstrated body of knowledge about a subject and is thus much broader than modern physicalism. Science should include all knowledge, and when it comes to the physical I recommend the nomenclature “hard science.”
11. Modern science rejects anything that is not observable and testable. It does not include theology as a sacred science because it deals with the supernatural. For a Christian to bite this apple is to reduce God, ethics, and the spiritual life to a lower level than physical causes, which is about a lower science in the order of sciences.
12. In all sciences, there is a formal and material aspect to the knowledge. Formal is the way in which one studies the object. The material is the subject. For example, man can be studied biologically or ethically. Astronomy can be studied in one way by the physicists and astronomer. So, two sciences can have the same object but different demonstrations. The key to science is that it is always a demonstrable view of knowledge.

13. Philosophical realism and reflection on ultimate reality confirms that theology really is the Queen of the Sciences. Illustration:
- a. Theological knowledge comes from God who is infallible.
  - b. All sciences have first principles that they do not attempt to prove.
  - c. Since all sciences have first principles that they do not attempt to prove, they cannot be the ultimate explanation, and cannot qualify as queen.
  - d. Consider geometry.
    - 1) Geometry has first principles that it does not seek to prove. For example, you do not prove that parallel lines never meet at infinity (Euclidean geometry).
    - 2) You just take them as axioms. You just assume them.
    - 3) So, to prove this one would have to go up to a higher science. This applies to all sciences, for example, consider an optician.
    - 4) What would be a higher science for geometry? Philosophy of nature where the very nature of space and lines are examined.
    - 5) But where does one go to beyond space and lines? Esse, the Creator and sustainer of all space and all lines!
    - 6) Aristotle's illustration of a ship, whose design and purpose are the higher science and the workers installing the sails were in lower area.

- e. Theology is the highest of sciences because it deals with ultimate reality. The fact theological science has made outrageous claims no more discredits it as a science than does history of science which got it all wrong.
  
- f. The sacred theology that God reveals is beyond the empirical realm. God's revealed knowledge is most absolute due to His authority and due to the fact that it is based on ultimate reality. There are 2 areas of sacred theology: the preambles and the articles of faith.
  
- g. God's special revelation regarding the Trinity and the Hypostatic union can be demonstrated and so can be classified as a divine science, but is only available to those who recognize God's authority. It is a science, but only for those who believe the Word of God. Defending the trinity before others must start with their accepted authority. This is the method that Jesus used in confronting His enemies.

- h. Special revelation only given to special group is called Sacred Theology. It is demonstrable, but only to believers. If God did not reveal the fact that He is a Triune God, we would not know. There is nothing in the natural realm that points to a Triune God.
- i. In other words, there is no philosophical argument to prove the Trinity or the Hypostatic Union. Moreover, there are other truths that overlap the sacred and natural realm, like the immortality of the soul and the creation of the world out of nothing. While these can be proved, it would take many years and would not be nearly as effective as the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit.

- j. There is never any contradiction between the higher sacred science and lower hard or physical science. In fact, the more you know the higher about some things, the better you know the lower. This is true both in physics and ethics.
  
- k. For example, Thomistic physicists have far better understanding of reality than the secular physicists who continue to make irrational statements about the origin of the very science they study. The Thomist physicist is consistent whereas the secular scientist is inconsistent and by his own admission stops at some point (Carl Sagan).

## 14. Three levels of Truth.

- a) Natural revelation alone without the need for biblical revelation. These truths can be demonstrated apart from the Bible.
- b) Preambles of the faith. Metaphysical truths discoverable through natural revelation and the Bible, Rom. 1:20. The unbeliever, the philosopher as well as the Christian can get to the existence of God. This can be demonstrated apart from the Bible, but it can also be accessed in the Bible by faith, Gen. 1:1. However, apart from revelation, there is no way to prove that all men suppress knowledge of God.
- c) Sacred doctrine or special revelation. This is the highest truth and can only be accepted by faith in the authority of God Himself. This is what faith is all about. These truths cannot be proven! However, it can be shown that there are no contradictions. A word about Hume and modern evidential apologetics and knowing vs. showing.

15. More on Sacred doctrine, sacred science, the articles of faith that are inaccessible by the unsaved.
  - a. These truths include such things as the Trinity, salvation, the deity of Christ, the hypostatic union.
  - b. These truths cannot be demonstrated or proven (or disproven) in the natural realm.
  - c. There are no rationally compelling arguments that can be given for the Trinity or the hypostatic union.
  - d. While there are many things we can learn apart from direct revelation from God, the Trinity and the incarnation is not among them.
  - e. Sacred doctrine are articles of faith accepted without question by the people of God.
  - f. To reject sacred doctrines is reject the authority of God. The reason that Doubting Thomas is rebuked is due to rejection of God's authority.
  - g. The trinity and the hypostatic union are intricately related. Rejection of one leads to rejection or distortion of the other.

## 16. The nature of faith as “evidence.”

- a. Hebrews 11:1. How can faith be evidence?
- b. This hope is not based on a philosophical proof.
- c. By faith we believe God created the universe.
- d. Faith is all about accepting God’s authority.
- e. The same God who told us about creation gives us a peek at the inner life of the Trinity.
- f. While it may be demonstrated that the world had a beginning (kalam horizontal argument), one can be far more assured by supernatural faith in God’s Word. One is more probabilistic and the other is absolutely certain.
- g. It is one thing for a Muslim or unbeliever to reject the Trinity. It is quite another for a believer to doubt it. The believer should never doubt God or place rationalism or empiricism over what God has said.
- h. All you can do is to demonstrate by logic that there is no irrationality in the doctrine of the Trinity and hypostatic union. You cannot demonstrate this to be true.
- i. Without supernatural faith, you cannot believe in the Trinity. As a matter of fact without faith you have no basis to believe anything in the Bible. This is all outside of the rational and empirical realm.