



NATURAL THEOLOGY

STUDY OUTLINE
BY DR. ROBERT MOREY

The Bellflower Lectures On Natural Theology and Apologetics

By Dr. Robert A. Morey

Part I

Lean Not on Your Own Understanding

Introduction

Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path.

-Proverbs 3:5-6

The wisest man who ever lived warned us not to “lean on our own understanding” of God, the world, man, morals, meaning, etc. The Septuagint uses the Greek word σοφία, which means “human philosophy,” as the translation of the Hebrew word for “understanding” (בִּינָה). Thus the prohibition is against basing your life on a philosophic understanding of the world.

The prohibition against trusting in human philosophy is based on two biblical truths:

1. The futility of human reason and understanding (Psa. 14:3; Rom. 3:11; 1 Cor. 1:21).
2. The foolishness of trusting in your own heart. (Pro. 28:26).

Since thinking takes place in the “heart” according to Scripture, the depravity of the heart of man means that we cannot trust our heart to tell us truth from error, right from wrong, good from evil.

The heart is more deceitful than anything else and is desperately wicked; Who can understand it?

-Jeremiah 17:9

Instead of looking within ourselves (i.e. to our sinful reason, experience, faith, or feelings) as the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty, we should look away from ourselves to Divine revelation.

From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. (Psalm 119:104)

The unfolding of Thy words gives light; It gives understanding to the humble. (Psalm 119:130)

The sum of Thy word is truth. (Psalm 119:160)

Your word is truth. (John 17:17)

Psalm 119 celebrates the Holy Scriptures as the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning and beauty. The Bible gives us the true understanding of God, man, the world, and all things. It is “a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Instead of trusting in our sinful hearts (i.e. human reason, experience, faith, or feelings), we are told to “acknowledge Yahweh in all our ways.” Thus God’s revelation must be applied to everything in life.

This means that philosophy, science, psychology, theology, apologetics, etc. are to be brought under the authority of Scripture. Christ must be given the preeminence (i.e. “first place”) in all things (Colossians 1:18).

Natural religion, natural philosophy, natural law, natural theology, and natural apologetics all deny that Christ should be given “first place” in their belief system. Instead, *man* is given “first place” while Christ is assigned “last place” as the end product of a long, convoluted chain of so-called “rational” arguments. They foolishly try to “end” with God by “beginning” with man. They have forgotten another maxim of the smartest man who ever lived:

The fear of Yahweh is the beginning (lit. first step) of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

-Proverbs 1:7

What is the Definition of “Natural Theology”?

The answer is not as easy as some assume. It all depends in which *region* of the planet you ask the question, which *religion* responds, and in which *time period* the question is asked. There is no clear absolute definition because all definitions of Natural Theology are *relative* to time, place, race, religion, and culture.

That’s right! Natural theology, natural religion, natural philosophy, natural law, and natural apologetics are all examples of cultural relativism! Not one of these disciplines has ever produced a single universal truth. Any Christian who depends upon Naturalism as the basis of his faith is building his life on the shifting sands of relativism.

This will come as quite a shock to the pride and conceit of Western, European, British, White, Judeo-Christian naturalists. They assume that their Western, European, British, White, Judeo-Christian ideas are universal, i.e. absolute. But the bitter truth is that their so-called “absolutes” are subjective and relative.

From William Paley to William Lane Craig, Western, European, British, White, Judeo-Christian apologists claim that they base Christianity on universal and absolute truths.

What is a “universal” truth? According to some Western, European, British, White, Judeo-Christian scholars, some of the time, in some places, in order for an idea to be a universal truth it must be:

- a. known,
- b. understood,
- c. believed,
- d. accepted as true,
- e. by all of mankind regardless of
 1. time,
 2. place,
 3. race,
 4. culture,
 5. or religion.

Have they ever found even one idea that is truly “universal” in this sense? No. They have arrogantly pretended and proclaimed that their ideas are universal and hoped that no one would call them on it. But as soon as you ask for proof that those ideas are universal, they move on to another topic in order to escape accountability.

What is an “absolute” idea? According to some Western, European, British, White, Judeo-Christian scholars some of the time, in some places, in order for an idea to be absolute, it must be “self-evident” and “intuitive.”

- a. In order for an idea to be “self-evident,” it must be “universal” in the sense that:
 1. All of mankind,
 2. in all cultures,
 3. in all regions of earth,
 4. throughout all of human history,
 5. have known of it,
 6. and accepted it as true.

How can an idea be truly “self-evident” if it has not been known or believed by all people throughout all of human history in all places and in all times? If one man’s “self-evident” truth is another man’s “self-evident” lie, evidently we did not have a “self-evident” truth to begin with!

Some Western, European, British, White, Judeo-Christian Natural theologians and philosophers admit that their “self-evident” truths have not been self-evident to the majority of mankind throughout human history. But this is where racism is so strong in them that they have the nerve to argue that their “self-evident” truths are self-evident only to “educated” and “civilized” people. The “natives” of the non-white European world are not capable of rational thought! Thus the fact that Western, European, British, White, Judeo-Christian “self-evident” truths are not self-evident to the rest of the world doesn’t count because non-Europeans are only ignorant “savages.”

b. Natural theologians also claim that their ideas are “intuitive” in that they do not need any “proof” or “demonstration.” They claim that all people already believe it or, as soon as someone reads or hears the idea, he or she automatically believes it without any argumentation necessary. But has anyone ever produced a self-evident truth that is “intuitive” to all of humanity all of the time in all places? No! In fact, the very idea that there are absolute, universal, self-evident, and intuitive truths is a Western, European, British, White, Judeo-Christian idea!

When Natural apologists speak to Christian audiences, they count on their hearers to agree with them that this or that idea is “self-evident” and “intuitive” because to *Christians*, who *already* believe in these ideas, they appear to be self-evident and intuitive! But the moment these same apologists attempt to claim so-called “self-evident” and “intuitive” truths to a non-Christian, non-European crowd, they hit a brick wall.

While it appears “self-evident” to *Christians* that the universe exists, it had a beginning, it needs an explanation, etc., to Eastern natural religions, the universe does *not* exist and hence did not have a beginning and needs no explanation.

Western, European, British, White, Judeo-Christian reference works state that “Natural” religion, theology, philosophy, law, and apologetics are all based upon the humanistic assumption that man starting solely from himself, by himself, through himself, and of himself, apart from and independent of any special revelation from God (i.e. the Bible), can understand himself, the world around him, the existence and attributes of God, morality, and the relationship that we can have with God. Natural theologians assume that man is sufficient in and of himself, particularly through his “reason,” to develop a “rational” religion, theology, philosophy, law, and apologetics.

I. Natural Religion, Theology, Philosophy, Law, and Apologetics are...

1. Man-made:

First, some aspect of man's finite being is transformed into an infinite, idealized, abstract, romantic principle. For example, man's relative and limited ability to reason is transformed into a universal idealized abstract concept of "Reason" that supposedly knows all and sees all.

Second, this abstract principle is absolutized. Thus man is now defined solely in terms of this abstraction. For example, rationalists defined man as a "rational" animal.

Third, every other aspect of man is reduced to and explained by this idealized abstraction. Reductionism is the hidden problem behind all forms of humanism.

Fourth, reductionism has produced four basic reductionisms:

- a. *Rationalism* is based on an idealized abstract concept of human "Reason."
- b. *Empiricism* is based on an idealized abstract concept of human "Experience."
- c. *Mysticism* is based on an idealized abstract concept of human "Feelings."
- d. *Fideism* is based on an idealized abstract concept of human "Faith."

Fifth, while all humanists are united in their rejection of Divine revelation as the origin of truth, they disagree among themselves, sometimes quite violently, as to which aspect of man should be abstracted, idealized, romanticized, and then transformed into the universal origin of truth.

2. Man-centered:

a. Man is the **Origin** of all things:

- (1. Truth
- (2. Justice
- (3. Morals
- (4. Meaning
- (5. Beauty
- (6. God

b. Man is the **Measure** of all things:

- (1. Truth
- (2. Justice
- (3. Morals
- (4. Meaning
- (5. Beauty
- (6. God

c. Man is the **Judge** of all things:

- (1. Truth
- (2. Justice
- (3. Morals
- (4. Meaning
- (5. Beauty
- (6. God

3. **Autonomous:**

They are independent of God and any information from Him.

4. **Foundational:**

The basis of Natural Theology, which is Natural Religion, is expressed in Christian terminology.

II. Revealed Religion, Theology, Philosophy, Law, and Apologetics are...

1. **God-made:**

They arise out of some aspect of His Being and will:

- a. Divine reason: Rom. 11:34; 1 Cor. 2:16
- b. Divine experience: Gen. 6:5
- c. Divine faith: Rom. 3:4
- d. Divine feelings: Rom. 9:13

2. **God-centered:**

a. God is the **Origin** of all things:

- (1. Truth
- (2. Justice
- (3. Morals
- (4. Meaning
- (5. Beauty
- (6. God

b. God is the **Measure** of all things:

- (1. Truth
- (2. Justice
- (3. Morals
- (4. Meaning
- (5. Beauty
- (6. God

c. God is the **Judge** of all things:

- (1. Truth
- (2. Justice
- (3. Morals
- (4. Meaning
- (5. Beauty
- (6. God

3. **Autonomous:**

They are independent of man and any information from him (Rom. 11:34-35).

4. **Foundational:**

Revealed Theology is the exposition of God's special revelation found solely in Holy Scripture (Sola Scriptura).

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Part II

To Dream the Impossible Dream

The Claim of Natural Theology

The vaunted claim of Western, European, Christian Natural Theology is that man, apart from and independent of the Bible, can discover the truth about all things human and divine by starting solely from himself, by himself, and within himself, using only his own reason, experience or feelings.

This claim is breath-taking in that it means that sinners can succeed in life, religion, and politics without any assistance from God's revelation in Scripture. In other words, sinful man is exalted as the origin of truth, justice, morality, meaning and beauty and the Bible is put away as unnecessary.

From the 17th to the 21st century, several thousand different and conflicting systems of Natural Theology developed in the European English religious world as an apologetic for Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity. Thus the idea that there is a single monolithic belief system called "Natural Theology" is actually a myth. There are as many different Natural Theologies as there are Natural Theologians! They disagreed with each other in many fundamental ways such as where to start, how to argue, and what kind of God they hoped to find at the end of their arguments.

Natural Theology and Western Science

Natural Theologians follow whatever philosophic and scientific belief systems are popular in their culture at that time. Like chameleons, they always blend in with the philosophic background of their culture.

As Western science changed its fundamental view of reality and moved to a new world view, Natural Theology changed with it. When Western science followed Aristotle, Natural Theologians used Aristotle's principles of science as the basis of its arguments for the existence of God.

When Western science dropped Aristotle and switched over to the mechanical world of Newtonian science, Natural Theology likewise switched over to Newtonian scientific laws for

their arguments. When Newton's world view was supplanted by Einstein's universe and the theory of relativity, Natural Theology changed over to Einstein's world view. As Western science moved from Einstein to Quantum Mechanics, and then moved on to the Tao of Physics, Natural Theology followed its lead.

The implications of the fundamental shifts in Western science's perceptions of reality are stunning. All the arguments for the existence and attributes of God based on Aristotle's science died when Western science switched over to Newton's science. This is why the arguments developed by Thomas Aquinas no longer work. They were all based on Aristotle!

A Historical Illustration

One historical illustration may be helpful at this point. Aristotle taught that the "form" of something need not correspond to its real "essence." On the basis of Aristotle's distinction between form and essence, Roman Catholicism developed the doctrine of transubstantiation in which the communion bread has the external form of bread but its real essence was the living flesh of Christ. The communion wine has the form of wine but its real essence is the living blood of Christ.

The Protestant Reformers rejected Aristotle's philosophy. This is why they did not adopt the theistic proofs of Aquinas who based his worldview on Aristotle. The Reformers were realists who preferred Occum of Orange. They insisted that the form and the essence of something must correspond to each other. If something looked like bread and tasted like bread, it was bread. If it looked like wine and you could get drunk on it, then it was wine. Thus when I am asked why I do not accept Roman Catholicism, one reason is that I do not accept Aristotle's worldview. This is why I cannot accept the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation.

An Interesting Question

If the "rational" arguments for the existence of God developed by Natural Theologians from the 17th to the 19th century are still valid today, why don't modern Natural Theologians just reprint these old books and used them as textbooks in Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries? Why are they of interest only to antiquarian book dealers?

The traditional 17th century arguments for the existence of God were based on Aristotle and became passé once Isaac Newton replaced Aristotle. The 18th century arguments were based on Newton and once Einstein supplanted him, they became obsolete as well. This is why no one seriously studies William Paley today. All the older Natural Theologians are defunct and worthless. Their arguments presuppose a scientific view of reality that is no longer viewed as valid.

Natural Theology has always been a knee-jerk reaction to whatever scientific worldview is in vogue at the time. It is doomed to relativism and is incapable of producing any sound arguments because it is based on the ever-changing world of science. By the time the Christian philosophers catch up to a new scientific worldview and mold it into a Natural

Theology, the scientific community has already abandoned it and moved on to some new scientific worldview!

Natural Theology and Western Philosophy

When Rationalism became the dominant philosophy in Western Europe from the 15th to the 18th century, Natural Theologians used Rationalism as their epistemological base to develop “rational” religion. Thus “rational” arguments for the existence of God were in vogue as long as Rationalism was the dominant philosophic view in Europe. Secular and Christian rationalists exalt human reason as the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning and beauty.

Beginning in the 19th century, Empiricism became the dominant world view in Western European philosophy. Natural Theologians abandoned their old “rational” arguments and developed new “empirical” arguments for the existence of God. Secular and Christian Empiricists exalt human experience as the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning and beauty.

Beginning in the later part of the 19th century, Western European philosophy abandoned both Rationalism and Empiricism. They turned away from human reason and human experience as the Origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning and beauty. All the rational and empirical arguments for God’s existence were discarded.

The 20th century witnessed the rise of Existentialism, Mysticism, Fideism, and Process Philosophy. Each of these popular belief systems chose a different aspect of man’s being as the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning and beauty.

The Mystics chose humans feelings as the origin and followed the Eastern path by looking to their feelings for ultimate truth. The New Age Movement is mystical Natural Theology. Channeling, crystals, fortune telling, reincarnation, karma, pantheism, and the occult arts are part of this mystical Natural Theology.

Existentialism rejected all discussions of the “essence” of being as a waste of time. Instead, existence became their starting point. Kierkegaard and those who followed him have developed several different forms of existential Natural Theology.

Toward the end of the 20th century, Whitehead’s Process Theology became the fad in liberal and neo-evangelical seminaries and universities. Thus it is no surprise to find Processian Natural Theology rising in popularity.

The so-called “Open View of God” peddled in Evangelical circles by Pinnock, Boyd, Sanders, etc. is a cheap imitation of Process Theology. They followed Whitehead’s Processianism in limiting the knowledge and power of God to solve (sic) the problem of evil. I argued this point in *Battle of the Gods* and *The Nature and Extent of the Knowledge of God*.

In reaction to the collapse of Rationalism, some Natural Theologians gave up the search for a “rational” religion and chose man’s faith as the Origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning and beauty. Instead, they believe that man has only two live options: “Faith or Reason.”

Another Live Option

Of course, as humanists, they are still looking within themselves for the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning and beauty. They assume that we must choose between *man's* faith or *man's* reason. It has never crossed their mind that there is another option that lies outside of man's reason, experience, feelings or faith. The real choice confronting us is:

Man as the Origin	God as the Origin
Man's Reason	Special Revelation in Scripture
Man's Experience	Special Revelation in Scripture
Man's Feelings	Special Revelation in Scripture
Man's Faith	Special Revelation in Scripture

The Liberal Response

In order to avoid accepting Scripture as the Origin of truth, justice, morals, and meaning, and thus the Measure of man's reason, experience, faith and feelings, many Natural Theologians deny that the Bible is a Divine Special Revelation! They claim that man's faith is the Origin of Revelation. The word "revelation" is often slipped into the word "faith."

Reason and Faith (Revelation)

Since Natural Theologians believe that man is the origin and measure of all things, including God, then man is likewise the origin and measure of Revelation. How can we deal with this attempt to avoid *Sola Scriptura*?

First, this is a clear example of reductionism in which one aspect of man—in this case his faith—is absolutized and God's word is reduced to it. But Special Revelation exists apart from and independent of man's existence. It is outside of man and does not depend upon man's faith to exist.

Second, Natural Theologians have it backwards. Instead of faith being the origin of Revelation, Revelation is the origin of faith!

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing of the word of Christ.

-Romans 10:17

ἄρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἡ δὲ ἀκοή διὰ ῥήματος Χριστοῦ.

“Faith” (πίστις) comes “out of” (ἐξ) hearing. Since ἐξ is a preposition with the ablative of source, it means that when we trace faith back to its origin, it come in response to the message preached. Then Paul traces what is preached back to the revelation (ῥήματος) about the Messiah. Robert Haldane, in his classic commentary stated:

Faith, then, comes but by hearing, that is, by the word of God. . . All this showed the necessity of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, on which Paul had been insisting, according to which there is no such thing as saving faith among heathens who have not heard of Christ. . . faith must come, not from the revelation of the works of God, but from that of His Word. (1.)

Since the clear teaching of Scripture is that *faith comes from Revelation*, any attempt to say that Revelation comes from faith is a clear violation of the Word of God and must come under the rubric of heresy.

Third, one way to force Natural Theologians to rethink reducing Revelation to faith is to do to “Nature” what they do to Revelation. Reduce “Nature” to man’s faith!

Reason and Faith (Nature)

They will loudly protest that “Nature” exists apart from and independent of man and his faith. It is outside of man and should not be reduced to faith. Then point out that if they can reduce God’s Word to faith, then you can do the same to their beloved “Nature.” The reason they are so touchy about “Nature,” is that “Nature” has taken the place of Scripture. They view “Nature” as an infallible and a reliable guide to truth. Oh the tangled web they weave as they go astray from the word of God.

R.C. Sproul and William Lane Craig

Dr. Sproul in Reformed circles and Dr. Craig in Arminian circles, have both tried to resurrect the old 18th and 19th century *rational* arguments for Natural Theology. Their so-called “rational” arguments for the existence of God were so successfully refuted by David Hume and Emanuel Kant that Western philosophy ignores them all together. Why? Rational arguments are valid only to the extent you buy into Rationalism. If your philosophic base is Empiricism, Mysticism or Fideism, then “rational” arguments are meaningless to you.

It must also be pointed out that Sproul and Craig disagree on many essential points. As an Arminian, Craig believes in “free will” and uses this doctrine to solve the problem of evil. His “free will defense” was originally developed by pre-Socratic Greek philosophers. Their concept of “free will” developed out of a pagan worldview in which the universe is eternal, infinite, and chance-driven. There was no Sovereign Creator or Sustainer of the universe. The gods and goddesses were all finite and subject to chance. There was no Special Revelation in the Biblical sense. Man was autonomous and could become a god if he chose to do so.

On one occasion, when asked to defend his doctrine of free will. Dr. Craig simply stated that free will is an “intuitive” truth that requires no demonstration! Indeed, since the Greek philosophic concept of man’s autonomous, absolute free will is not found anywhere in the Bible, his subjective intuition is all he has!

As a Calvinist, R.C. Sproul knows that the Arminian concept of “free will” is an old pagan philosophic concept that is not Biblical in any sense. Instead of a chance-driven universe that is not under the sovereign control of God, Sproul believes in the existence of a Sovereign Creator who rules the world in righteousness.

In this light, Craig and Sproul are trying to prove the existence of fundamentally different and contradictory concepts of God! How can Sproul use the same “rational” arguments used by Craig to prove the existence of a God that Craig does not believe in? The same holds true for Craig. How can Craig use these same “rational” arguments to prove the existence of a God that Sproul rejects?

How can the same arguments end up with two contradictory concepts of God? Could it be that these so-called “rational” arguments are so faulty that you end up with whatever deity you began with and are only an exercise in circular reasoning? Any argument that produces whatever “God” you want cannot be a valid argument but only an example of relativism.

Self-Evident and Intuitive Truths?

In the light of the above historical survey, why would anyone try to resurrect the 18th and 19th century “rational” arguments for Natural Theology and Natural Law? They are like the man who whipped his dead horse in the hope that it would jump up and pull his wagon! He can whip his dead horse sincerely and with great enthusiasm, but it will never rise again.

Why do Natural Theologians and philosophers use 18th and 19th century philosophic terminology such as “self-evident,” and “intuitive” truths, when they know that these terms are no longer acknowledged as valid by anyone but themselves? After all, what is “self-evident” and “intuitive” to one man is nonsense to another!

Compelling and Certain Arguments?

The same is true for the 18th and 19th century terms “compelling” and “certain.” During a debate on Natural Theology, R.C. Sproul claimed that his arguments were true because they were “compelling” and “certain.” But is an argument automatically true if it is “compelling” and “certain?”

First, when someone claims that their argument is “compelling,” ask them:

- In what sense is it compelling?
- Is it compelling in a physical sense?
- Do you take out a gun and put it to someone’s head?
- How is it compelling?

An argument is deemed “compelling” if you *feel* some kind of emotional or psychological pressure to accept it. In other words, something is compelling if it *feels* compelling to you.

This holds true for all arguments deemed “certain.” Certitude is a matter of *emotional or psychological* degree of *feeling* confident about the soundness of an idea. Certitude is on an emotional scale in which you can move from not certain, to slightly certain, to mildly certain, to highly certain, to absolutely certain.

The real fly in the ointment is that an argument can be both compelling and certain and *false* at the same time! In the 15th century, people believed that the world was flat. Since this idea was “self-evident” and “intuitive” to sailors at that time, it naturally followed that if they sailed to the edge of the world, they would fall off to their death.

This argument was so “compelling” and “certain” to sailors that Columbus had difficulty finding any of them ready to sail to the end of the world. Thus an argument can be based on a “self-evident” and “intuitive” truth and be “compelling” and “certain” while being *false* at the same time!

Footnotes:

1. Robert Haldane, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1963), p. 514.

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Part III

The Roman Catholic Connection

The 16th century saw the rise of three movements in Europe whose legacies are still with us today. The Reformation with its principle of *sola scriptura* was established in northern Europe, the Counter-Reformation with its Inquisition began in Southern Europe, and the Renaissance revived Greek philosophy in academic circles.

Roman Catholic apologists recognized three things:

1. The strongest wing of the Reformation was Calvinism as opposed to Lutheranism and the Ana-Baptist movement. The Calvinists were not willing to compromise with Rome on anything and even the bloody tortures of the Inquisition were not effective in converting Calvinists into Catholics.
2. The authority of Calvinism was based on its principle of *sola scriptura*, which stated that the Bible alone was the final authority in all matters of doctrine and morals.
3. Therefore the quickest way to defeat the Reformation was to undercut its doctrine of *sola scriptura*.

The problem was how to overturn the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. As long as the Bible was viewed as the final authority, Roman Catholicism was at a clear disadvantage. This problem was solved in three ways:

1. In philosophy, Catholic apologists such as Hervet, Gontery and Vernon revived the skeptical philosophy of Pyrrhonism that sought philosophic certainty, rationality and objective knowledge in human reason alone. They substituted *sola ratiōne* in the place of *sola scriptura*. Once the Bible was set aside as the final authority, the way was paved for a return to Romanism. Instead of “according to Scripture” being the final authority, “according to reason” became the final court of appeal.
2. In theology, when Erasmus was asked to choose the most important issue between Protestants and Roman Catholics, he picked the doctrine of “free will.” The Protestants believed that the fall of man into sin and guilt rendered him a slave to sin and thus man was not free to merit salvation. Erasmus supported the Roman Church attempt to resurrect the Greek pagan concept of “free will” as the basis of a works-based salvation. Erasmus wrote the book, *Freedom of the Will*, as his answer to

Protestantism. Then Luther wrote his book, *The Bondage of the Will*, as his response to Erasmus.

Later, the Jesuit priest Luis de Molina invented the doctrine of "Middle Knowledge" in order to refute providence, predestination, and election. He also used the pagan Greek doctrine of "free will." Although Molina dedicated his book to the Inquisition, where hundreds of thousands of Protestants were tortured to death in gruesome ways, some modern Protestant philosophers have fallen into this Jesuit error and seem unaware that it was designed to undercut salvation by grace alone.

3. In education, the Jesuits were given all the money they needed to build first class pre-schools, colleges, and universities in Protestant countries where they could infect Protestant students with Pyrrhonic rationalism and Molinism.

As planned, these students would in turn become professors in Protestant schools and teach Catholic doctrines in the very institutions set up to fight Catholicism. In this way, Protestants could be seduced back into the arms of popery.

The new Pyrrhonism pointed Protestants away from Biblical Revelation as the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning and beauty. Instead, they pointed Protestants to look their own human reason as the origin and measure of all things.

Looking to man as the origin was not new to Catholic thinkers. In the 13th century, Islam invaded Europe in two jihads:

1. First, there was a military jihad. Muslim armies began a long-term attack on Christian lands. Their armies even surrounded the gates of Vienna, Austria. At times it seemed that all of Europe would fall into the hands of the Anti-Christ. See Fregosi's book, *Jihad*.
2. Second, there was a philosophic jihad. Islamic philosophers challenged the Christian West with a massive belief system built on the Greek philosophy of Aristotle. Ibn Rochd, known as Averroes in the West, had turned the philosophy of Aristotle into a powerful weapon against Christianity.

The famous Muslim scholar Averroes wrote a commentary on the works of Aristotle that soon became a powerful force in European academic circles. Muslim apologists called Mutakallemin produced an Islamic Natural Theology based on human reason alone that attacked the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the cross, etc.¹

As his rationalism progressed, Averroes faced a problem in Islamic circles. Following what he claimed were self-evident and necessary truths discovered by reason alone, Averroes ended up contradicting the clear teachings of the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an taught that the world was not eternal but had been created. But Aristotle taught an eternal world. How could this conflict be reconciled?

Averroes hit upon a novel solution that has remained one of his permanent legacies in Western philosophy. Following Aristotle, Averroes made a distinction between *knowing* something and *believing* something. The distinction between knowledge and faith has been part of European philosophy ever since.

According to Averroes, human reason is the origin of what can be *known* for certain. *Thus knowledge is limited to what can be rationally demonstrated by self-evident, necessary, and intuitive truths.* We can know only what we can prove by a chain of logical arguments following the rules of Aristotle.

Averroes was committing the fallacy of reductionism at this point. He reduced all of knowledge to Aristotle's philosophy without recognizing that philosophers before him reduced all of knowledge to Platonism. But the pattern was set for Western thinkers to latch on to some previous philosopher and reduced all knowledge to his belief system.

As a Muslim, Averroes was expected to "believe" whatever the Qur'an taught. But he also "knew" what was true on the basis of human reason. Philosophy and human reason "knew" that the world was eternal while theology "believed" that it was not eternal. Reason and revelation were in clear conflict.

While Averroes himself did not articulate the "double truth" theory, it developed after his death into a firm Western tradition. Knowing something and believing its opposite arose from the desire to escape death. For example, John of Jaudun satisfied Catholic authorities by stating that he believed in Catholic doctrines, while, at the same time, teaching the exact opposite in his philosophy class.

Following Aristotle, European philosophers soon claimed to "know" by rational means that man did not have an immortal soul. They "knew" that space and time were eternal and not created. They "knew" that "God" was "Thought Thinking Itself" and thus "God" only knew universals and did not know particulars. Thus it was not aware of man's existence.

When hauled before ecclesiastical authorities for teaching heresy in their philosophy classes, they would protest that they "believed" in all Catholic teachings. With this trick, they escaped the fire just as Averroes escaped the sword.

Averroes' dichotomy between knowledge and faith followed the standard dichotomies of Greek philosophy.

Plato: Mind
 Matter

Aristotle: Essence
 Form

Averroes: Faith
 Knowledge

Averroes' dichotomy became a firm tradition in Western philosophy and later produced other dichotomies.

Aquinas: Grace
 Nature

Rousseau: Freedom
 Nature

Kant: Noumenal
Phenomenal

Barth: Salvation history
History

Upper story
Existentialism: Lower story

I remember meeting a Southern Baptist who unwittingly believed the “double truth” doctrine. As a philosopher, he accepted the theory of evolution. But, as a Christian, he believed in the story of Creation. He thought he could have his cake and eat it too.

Another challenge to Christianity was found in the writings of the greatest Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages, Moses Maimonides. His philosophy was likewise built on Greek philosophy. His refutation of Christianity combined with Averroes’ attack, threw the Western intellectual world into chaos.

In the 13th century, Christian Europe did not have its own intellectual giant who could defeat Averroes or Maimonides. This explains the philosophic context in which Thomas Aquinas became the prince of Catholic theologians and philosophers.

Thomas Aquinas developed his philosophic system as a reaction to Averroes and Maimonides. In order to compete with them, Aquinas adopted Aristotle’s philosophic principles in order to beat these philosophers at their own game. If he could make Christianity *more* Aristotelian than Islamic or Jewish philosophy, then he would win the day.

One cannot study the works of Thomas Aquinas without reading of his great respect for the Muslim and Jewish thinkers who provoked him into producing his own Natural Theology. He borrowed freely from their works and repeated many of their arguments. Indeed, if it were not for Islam’s two Jihads against the Christian West and the intellectual strength of Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas would have remained the “dumb ox.”

The historical context of Aquinas explains WHY he became such a powerful force in Western Natural philosophy and Theology. He “saved” the Christian West from being overwhelmed by Jewish and Islamic philosophies. This is why Natural Theology with its pagan principle of *sola ratione* has been a solid Roman Catholic enterprise since the days of Thomas Aquinas.

This also explains why Christian rationalists become so emotionally upset when you suggest that Aquinas did more harm than good. In his attempt to save Christianity by merging it into the pagan philosophy of Aristotle, he only succeeded in paganizing it.

Following Averroes, Aquinas made the arbitrary distinction between knowledge and faith. It never crossed his mind that there is no material difference between putting your faith in Plato, Aristotle, Moses, Muhammad, Jesus or the Apostles. You follow someone because you believe in him.

The bottom line is that Averroes and Aquinas followed Aristotle because they believed in the writings of Aristotle. They chose to believe in rationalism on the authority of Aristotle just as surely as others believe something on the authority of Jesus or Muhammad.

What is the end result of setting up the false distinction between faith and knowledge?
Etienne Gilson explains.

In other words, revealed theology, or the theology Revelation, would disappear as religious knowledge; what would be left in its place would be natural theology, that is to say, metaphysics.²

Is There Knowledge In Revelation?

Averroes' idea that Divine Revelation does not give us any *knowledge*, cannot itself be found anywhere in the Bible! As a matter of fact, his idea would have come as quite a shock to the authors of Scripture. King Solomon thought that his Book of Proverbs would give *knowledge* to young people (Proverbs 1: 4; 2:6; 22:20; 23:12). The Apostle Paul said that the Word of God was "the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth" (Romans 2:20). The "knowledge of sin" comes from Scripture (Romans 3:20). It is through Scripture that "we *know* that God is working all things together for the good" (Romans 8:28).

The Reformers did not manifest any interest in Natural Theology because the Bible was their final authority. Why bother with man and his puny reason, experience, feelings or faith when you have the Word of God?

In direct contradiction of the Muslim/Catholic dichotomy between faith and knowledge, the Reformers defined faith as composed of three things:

- Knowledge
- Intellectual assent
- Personal commitment

First, faith is composed of "knowledge" in that you believe in what you know not in what you don't know. How then can you say that faith and knowledge are mutually exclusive? This is why the Reformers said that the first part of faith is "knowledge."

Second, the rationalists are conceited when they pretend that faith and intellectual assent are mutually exclusive. The second part of faith is where you give your intellectual assent to what you know is true.

Third, faith moves from knowledge to intellectual assent to personal commitment as its climax. True faith is more than mere intellectual assent.

Yet, in those Protestant countries where Calvinism was suppressed, Catholic Natural Theology with its doctrine of *sola ratione* soon crept back into popularity. This is why the Church of England, after the defeat of Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans, attempted under King Charles II to be a compromise religion between Rome and Geneva. This Anglican compromise merged with Catholic Pyrrhonism and produced the great Anglican Natural theologians such as William Paley. Of course, as we shall see, British Natural Theology naturally led to Deism and the death of God.

What is Natural Theology? Professor William P. Aston gives us an up-to-date definition:

“the enterprise of providing support for religious beliefs by starting from premises that neither are nor presuppose any religious beliefs.”³

Natural Theology attempts to go:

From the finite to the infinite,
From the visible to the invisible,
From the material to the spiritual,
From the temporal to the eternal,
From chaos to order,
From non-life to life,
From meaninglessness to meaning,
From the impersonal to the personal,
From nature to God.

In order to produce a valid Natural Theology you cannot presuppose, start with, or proceed in your arguments with any Christian beliefs or terms that would compromise your arguments. If you presuppose, start with, or proceed with the very religious beliefs you are trying to prove, your arguments are no longer “objective” and “neutral.”

Of course, the claim of objectivity and neutrality is an old rationalist canard that has been abandoned in modern times even by secular philosophers and scientists. The only place in the world today where the myth of neutrality and objectivity still exists is in the halls of Christian academia. But then, they are always at least fifty years behind the world!

What should make us hesitate to embrace the ever-changing relative world of Western, European, Christian Natural Theologies, is that Western Christians are absolutely incapable of producing a valid non-Christian Natural Theology! Why? They are so hopelessly saturated with Biblical ideas that they CANNOT think without using Biblical categories. They are in the Biblical box and cannot think outside of that box.

In order for Natural Theology to be authentically “Natural,” it must be developed *outside* the Box of Biblical ideas.

Natural Theology

Biblical Ideas

Inside the Box are *Biblical* ideas that:
must not contaminate nor pollute the mind;

cannot be presupposed;
cannot be a part of any argument;
cannot play a role at any point in any chain of arguments;
cannot show up at the beginning or the end;
cannot be the source of any key terms.
cannot influence anyone in anything at any time.

The fact that faces us is that Western, European, Christian Natural Theologians couldn't produce an authentic "Natural" Theology even if their life depended on it! The only thing a Christian can produce is a "Christian" Theology. Thus the arguments developed by Western, European, "Christian" Natural Theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, William Paley, Charles Hodge, William Lane Craig, J. P. Moreland, Norman Geisler, R.C. Sproul, etc. are *irrelevant* because they presuppose and utilize Biblical ideas from beginning to end. Thus they are neither objective nor neutral.

Western, European, "Christian" Natural Theologians grow up in the Biblical Box. They are educated in the Box. They marry in the Box. They earn their living in the Box. They worship in the Box. They defend the Box. They love the Box. *There is no way they can think outside the Box even if they wanted to so.*

A Natural Theologian (NT) and Biblical Apologist (BA) Dialogue

NT: Do you see my new book, *Building A Rational Religion*?

BA: Yes.

NT: What did you think?

BA: I didn't believe a word of it.

NT: But didn't I demonstrate the existence of God and solve the problem of evil?

BA: No. You failed on both counts.

NT: Why?

BA: Do you believe that you proved the existence of God and solved the problem of evil by human reason alone, apart from and independent of Scripture, through Nature alone?

NT: Yes.

BA: I submit that you cannot do this because you are so influenced by Biblical ideas that you cannot intellectually function without using those Biblical ideas. You were born in a Christian Box and cannot get out of that box.

NT: But I can pretend that I am not in the Box.

BA: Like a kid pretending to ride a horse by riding a broomstick?

NT: What I mean is that I can think outside the Biblical Box.

BA: I don't think so.

NT: Sure I can! If I abandon the Biblical Box and move over to a non-Christian Box like the Greek Philosophers, then I can think outside the Christian Box. I will adopt the ideas of Thales, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers. They will be my mentors. Then, beginning with those pagan ideas, I will intellectually argue my way back to the Biblical Box.

BA: Now, let me get this straight. You intend to defend the Biblical Box by first abandoning it? Then you will move over to some pagan non-Christian Box and adopt their ideas? And you really think you can make your way back to Jesus starting with some pagan philosophy?

NT: Yes.

BA: You are crazy! It is impossible for you to think outside the Biblical Box. Take for example the four stated goals of your book:

- (1.) To prove the existence and attributes of God,
- (2.) to solve the problem of evil,
- (3.) by reason alone,
- (4.) through Nature alone.

The words: prove, existence, God, solve, problem, evil, reason, and Nature, all have Christian meanings. If you are trying to think outside the Biblical Box, you have already failed. Take the word "God." Which "God" are you trying to prove? The pantheistic god of Hinduism? A finite goddess of the Greeks? What kind of "God" are you hoping to find at the end of your arguments? As a Christian, don't you mean the God of the Bible?

NT: Yes. I am trying to prove the existence of the Christian God.

BA: Then you are still thinking in the Biblical Box! Instead of trying to prove the existence of the Biblical God, you should simply say that you are trying to find out if "X" exists. You will not know what "X" means until you arrive at the end of your arguments. You may end up with a god or gods that are not like the Christian God at all.

NT: Are you saying that a Christian is incapable of producing Natural philosophy, law, theology and apologetics?

BA: Yes! The only person who is capable of producing an authentic "Natural" Theology is a "natural" man or woman who has never heard of any Biblical ideas such as:

The Jewish God
The Christian God
natural revelation;
special revelation;
inspired Scripture (the Bible);
monotheism;
one infinite/personal God;
the spiritual non-material nature of God;
infinite nature of God;
omnipotence of God;
omniscience of God;
omnipresence of God;
holiness of God;
grace of God;
the Trinity;
"Nature";
the uni-verse;
the universe is not eternal;
the finite nature of the universe;
the universe had a beginning;
Creation *ex nihilo*;
the creation of man;
the unity of mankind;
the dignity of man;
Adam and Eve;
the Fall of man into sin and guilt;
original sin;
the sinful nature of man;
the Law of God;
the Ten Commandments;
salvation;
atonement;
prophets;
apostles;
fulfillment of prophecy;
the Messiah;
Jesus;
etc.

NT: Aren't you being too picky?

BA: No. All the terms used by Western, European, Christian, Natural Theologians are Biblical or Christian terms. Thus they would have to abandon all these terms in order to think outside the Box. But can you really do this? I don't think so. For example, when you claim to prove the "existence" of "God," you have in mind the Biblical "God" and not some other deity. When you use the word "existence," you understand it in the Biblical sense of an

infinite, spiritual, non-material, non-spatial, non-temporal existence. Or, are you referring to a god made out of coconut husks with mother-of-pearl eyes and teeth? I don't think so!

NT: But the Bible gives us many examples of Natural Theology in such places as Psalm 19, Acts, 17, and Romans 1. The Bible is filled with verses that teach Natural Theology.

BA: I hate to pop your balloon, but you are guilty of making a categorical fallacy. General Revelation is not the same thing as Natural Theology. Thus when you appeal to verses that speak of God's General Revelation as if they prove man's Natural Theology, you are in error. Let me explain what I mean.

1. "General revelation" in the Bible is *God's* immediate non-verbal revelation to all men all the time in all places in all generations. It is immediate, universal, irresistible, and constant. All men are without excuse because God is personally confronting all men at all times in all places through Creation and conscience.
2. The light is shining and the music is playing to all of humanity all the time but sinful man shuts his eyes and plugs his ears so that he does not see the light or hear the music. Notice that Psalm 19:1 says that "**the heavens** are telling the glory of God." It does not say that *man* is telling the glory of God!
3. In contrast to God's immediate, universal General Revelation, Natural Theology is the human activity of a few White, Western, European, Christian philosophers trained in logic and philosophy. Since only a few people in the West have ever read their books, how can it be said the *all men everywhere* throughout all of history are without excuse because of what they write?
4. I have examined every Biblical passage put forward by Natural Theologians and did not find a single command, precept or example of Natural Theology!

The only person who can develop an authentic Natural Theology by reason only, through Nature alone, is a pagan who has never had any contact with any Biblical ideas whatsoever. In other words, only someone *totally* outside of the Biblical Box can develop a pure Natural Theology. Did the pre-Christian pagans find the Biblical God through reason alone by looking at Nature alone? Did any pagan natural religions discover and understand the true God?

Footnotes:

1. Etienne Gilson, Reason and Revelation In the Middle Ages, (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938) pgs. 37f.
2. Gilson, *ibid.* p. 76.
3. William P. Aston, *Perceiving God*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991) p.289.

The Bellflower Lectures On Natural Theology and Apologetics

By Dr. Robert A. Morey

Part IV

Is Natural Theology Taught in Scripture?

Verses found in Romans 1 & 2 are among the most commonly quoted passages to “prove” Natural Revelation. But those who quote Paul’s text fail to understand that the apostle is simply building a case that man, regardless of being a Jew or Gentile, has no excuse to reject God, which he does naturally.

Unlike today’s common approach in evangelism, which often begins with the “good news” that God loves us, Paul began with the bad news that God is angry with sinners. In fact, he doesn’t mention the love of God until chapter 5! Chapters 1, 2, & 3 give us the bad news that we are lost in sin and under the wrath of Almighty God. Chapter 4 is a brief lesson on Abraham and the justification of believers.

One reason why there exists such rampant mediocrity in the Church today is because Christians have filled the pews with people who never understood the bad news first.

In Romans 1:18 Paul begins with the wrath of God (the bad news) against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.

For the wrath of god is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

-Romans 1:18-23

The text could not make it any clearer that the heathen are without excuse. Then in chapter 2, Paul switches from the third person to the first person saying, “*Therefore you are without excuse...*”

Verses 14-16 of chapter 2 are an example of a commonly misinterpreted text to support Natural Theology, even by certain Christian apologists. It does not say, “*the Law of God is written in their hearts...*”, it says, “*the work of the Law written in their hearts...*” Its purpose is to show that we are guilty.

Verses 10-18 of chapter 3 contain citations of Old Testament passages that reiterate the Paul's point that there is none who seek after God.

Lectures Natural Theology, by P.A. Chadbourne

What does Natural Theology claim? Listen to an excerpt from a book written in 1867 called, *Lectures on Natural Theology*, by P.A. Chadbourne. Chadbourne was president of Williams College and noted by the Encyclopedia of Philosophy as the best and the greatest of the Natural Theologians from the 17th and 18th centuries.

We see a vast chain of being stretching above us, but no race above us. Are we then the highest order of beings in the universe? Or are there other orders to whom we sustain relations, and by whom we may be affected for good or for evil? We know that our course on earth will soon be run. Is this our only theatre of action? Or is there another yet to come independent of this or having some relation to it? This is the great question that must force itself upon the thoughts of every civilized man. Any attempt to give an answer involves the consideration of all those subjects which give us the great outlines of natural theology. Among these subjects thus presented for our study, we find the being and character of God, the origin and final destiny of man, his relations to God, and the duties growing out of those relations. All of these observations show that, before man becomes civilized, he is under the power of superstition that takes the place of rational belief in reference to all of these subjects. We must satisfy by reason what is the answer to these questions? Am I a creature of chance? Am I like the brutes except in degrees? Am I the highest intelligence in the universe or is this whole world the work of an intelligent, personal Being? And does its Creator rule and govern it, so that I am now accountable to Him and ever to remain so? In other words, am I a mortal being with power to choose my existence at any moment accountable while I live only to my fellow man or am I immortal? And is my destiny in the hands of a higher Power? These are answered by human reason alone.¹

Conclusion

Passages like Romans 1-3 not only fail to support the idea of Natural Theology, they actually refute it. It is also self-refuting to consult Scripture to prove that one doesn't have to look to Scripture to prove Natural Theology. We must avoid blurring the lines between General Revelation and Natural Theology.

Footnotes:

1. P.A. Chadbourne, *Lectures on Natural Theology* (1867), Kessinger Publishing Company; (February 2003) ISBN: 0766129225

The Bellflower Lectures On Natural Theology and Apologetics

By Dr. Robert A. Morey

Part V

Natural Theology in the Pre-Christian Era

Did Natural Theology Ever Find God?

In order to see if Natural Theology has ever worked, we must examine the pre-Christian religions of the world. Why? They developed apart from and independent of any contact with Biblical ideas. The only resources these pre-Christian pagans had were:

1. The world around them.
2. Their individual reason, experience, feelings, conscience, and faith within them.

Pre-Christian history is a perfect test of whether Natural Theology is just a lot of hot air or a reality. Let us start with the American continents.

A. North American Religions

Certain religious characteristics were prevalent among the peoples of North America—namely:

1. A mystical view of the cycles of nature as the controlling factors of the world and humanity. They were often conceived of as gods or goddesses;
2. A belief that all living beings are sentient, e.g., animals, insects, etc.;
3. The use of various magical techniques believed to control cosmic powers for personal and communal benefit;
4. Kinship with all other living beings as a metaphor for religious relations;
5. A reliance on the shaman as the link between this world and the spirits;
6. They perceived themselves as living in a world ruled over by powerful spirits and forces that controlled human life.
7. In order to survive as individuals and communities, it was necessary to worship these spirits in every aspect of their lives—by addressing them in prayer and song, offering them gifts, establishing ritual relationships with them, and passing down knowledge about them to subsequent generations, primarily through myths and legends.

The Spirit World

Native Americans lived in a world of spirits who made their presence known primarily through natural phenomena. Most Native Americans believed in a Spirit World that underlay the complexity of all existence, as well as in many other spiritual powers that influenced the whole of life. At times of crisis, Native Americans turned to the spirits to acknowledge their dependence on them and to seek help. There were evil spirits as well as good ones. Each tribal group conceived of the spirit world in its own particular way, and there were variations of belief and ritual practice within each community.

Gods and Goddesses

In no sense did the indigenous peoples of North America profess monotheism or belief in the existence of one god only. Moreover, even a great spirit being could be conceptualized in more than one way. Among the Sioux, *Wakan Tanka* (Great Mystery) was pictured both as a single entity and as an assemblage of deities—including Sun, Winds, Earth, and Rock.

In practice, many Native Americans interacted with various spirits believed to be useful in particular circumstances. For example, although the Iroquois worshiped *orenda* (the unified spiritual power innate in all things), their prayers were addressed to individual spirits with control over weather, war, health, and the growth of plants and creatures. The Ojibwa believed in *Kitche Manitou* (Great Spirit) but developed personal relations with guardian spirits who appeared to individuals in visions and dreams. The Hopi referred to Masau as their chief god, yet their ritual life focused on scores of *kachinas*, the spirits of ancestors and the forces of the environment that made fertility possible. The Navajo venerated the Sun and the Changing Woman, a figure who personified fertility, but there were also hundreds of monsters, Holy People and other forces to be evoked or exorcised in blessings and curative chants.

Guardian Spirits

Because Native Americans believed that supernatural powers were personal beings, they sought to establish relationships with benevolent guardian spirits. Such relationships existed across the North American continent, albeit they were not prominent in the Southwest.

Most of the hunting and gathering peoples of North America hoped to enter intimate relationships with spirits and to win these spirits as their protectors. They also hoped to avoid spirits thought to be dangerous, harmful, or evil. Sometimes, as in the native cultures of the Pacific Northwest, guardian spirits were handed down within families from one generation to the next. More often, as in the cultures of the Northeast, youths sought the guardians' pity and protection by means of lengthy fasts. Guardian spirits became like family members to individual Native Americans, assuring them health, long life, success in economic pursuits, and help in times of crisis.

The Native Americans, in turn, were responsible to their guardians, providing them with tobacco and other offerings, singing their praises, and upholding their honor. Thus, whereas the great spirits seemed distant to daily concerns, guardian spirits took an immediate interest in an individual's welfare.

Ghosts

In the worldview of most of the indigenous peoples of North America, there were also spiritual beings to be avoided. Native Americans of the Southwest in particular, such as the Navajo and Apache, dreaded contact with ghosts, who were believed to resent the living. These peoples disposed of the bodies of deceased relatives immediately and attempted to distance themselves from the spirits of the dead, avoiding their burial sites, never mentioning their names, and even abandoning the dwellings in which they had died. If a person was responsible for a death—for example, among the Papago of the Southwest, the death of an enemy warrior—it was necessary to adopt the dead person, keep his scalp, and appease his spirit continually with gifts and kind words.

Rituals

Native Americans engaged in a great variety of rituals. As a person passed through the stages of the life cycle—obtaining a name after birth, seeking a guardian spirit at puberty, setting off at death for the journey to the afterlife—rituals marked the passages. One of the basic elements of Native American ritual life was the sweat lodge—a purification ritual that originated in the polar regions—in which water was poured over heated stones to create a hot vapor bath. The rites, or ceremonial acts, of the sweat lodge were believed to wash away both moral and physical impurities. Sweat lodges were used for teaching, praying, and singing, often in preparation for other ceremonies.

Prayer

Native Americans used gestures and words to communicate in prayer with the spiritual sources of life. Prayers were offered for a wide range of needs, including health, agricultural bounty, and success in the hunt. Prayers could take a variety of forms: songs and dances, as well as such acts as the sprinkling of corn meal, could function as prayers. Verbal prayers included expressions of thanksgiving, requests or pleas, and coercive formulas. There were cultural variations as well. For example, whereas Iroquois prayers emphasized an attitude of thanksgiving toward all things, Navajo prayers were calculated to exorcise evil and to erect a barrier of blessings against harm.

Offerings

In order to make their prayers effective, Native Americans made offerings to the spirits. The most common offering was of native tobacco—either smoked in pipes, burned in fires, or deposited ceremonially. An Ojibwa, for example, having killed a bear, placed tobacco in the animal's nose to appease its spirit. An Ojibwa might also toss tobacco on the rapids as a prayer to ensure safe passage by canoe. When gathering herbs, indigenous peoples placed tobacco in the earth as an offering of appreciation. Such gifts were thought to seal and renew relations with the sources of life.

Ceremonies

The cycle of the year was punctuated with ceremonial observances of prayer and thanksgiving. Such observances took place at critical points in the agricultural or hunting season—for example, upon the return of the first salmon from the ocean to the rivers; at the times of planting, ripening, and harvest; upon the appearance of sap in the maple trees; or at the summer and winter solstices. In some cases, as in the cultures of the Pacific Northwest, a whole season was devoted to ritual. Spirits were welcomed into the villages with song and dance, and the people shared their food and wealth with one another in elaborate feasts.

Mythology

Rituals were meant not only to communicate with spiritual beings but also to pass down tribal traditions. One of the most common rituals among Native Americans was the recounting of myths, which contained a wealth of religious knowledge. Myths provided communities with a *cosmogony*, a story of how the world came to have its present form; a *worldview*, a picture of how the various aspects of the world are related to one another; and an *ethos*, a code of behavior for human beings.

Nature Myths

Through their oral traditions, Native Americans told how the processes of nature occurred, often through the transforming activities of deities, cultural heroes, and tricksters. A single people often recounted several different stories to explain the same phenomenon. Rather, these stories were means by which Native Americans examined the spiritual and physical conditions of their existence—the origins of humanity, the place of human beings in the cosmos, the sources of sustenance, the reasons for death, and social institutions such as marriage.

There were several recurring types of myths. In the widespread story of the earth diver, floods covered the primordial landscape, requiring animals to dive into the depths to retrieve a piece of earth from which to form the present earth. Many failed before one finally succeeded. In emergence stories, common throughout the Southwest, humans climbed up from the underworld, beset with problems of their own making, in order to find a place on the surface of the earth. There they received their languages, foods, clan identities, and ultimately migrated to their traditional homelands.

Various cultural regions had their own characteristic myths. In the Northeast, the Iroquois told of a woman who fell from the sky world. With the help of birds and other animals, the present land was formed on the back of a great turtle. The woman's grandsons—one good, one evil—created the various opposing forces, such as medicines and poisons, that affect human life. In the Northwest, the cultural heroes Star Child and Diaper Boy were said to have come into existence when two young women married stars and returned to earth. The heroes helped establish the rules of tribal life, including marriage customs. In the Arctic, the Inuit recounted how a young woman married a seabird. When her father tried to bring her back home in his kayak, the bird agitated the ocean. To save himself, the father threw his daughter overboard and cut off the joints of her fingers as she attempted to grasp the boat. From the joints came all the food sources necessary for human life, including seals, walrus, and whales.

Trickster Myths

It was common for origin myths to be intertwined with other mythic themes. For example, emergence stories often included an earth-diver sequence, and young women who married stars in myths in many cases later fell from the sky to give birth to their heroic offspring. Tricksters played a prominent role in this body of lore. These figures were often depicted as solitary coyotes, hares, or ravens, and almost invariably they were male. They represented the chaotic elements within the cosmos, the pleasure-seeking instincts within the moral order.

One famous trickster is the figure of Coyote. In the Navajo story of creation, the Holy Persons methodically placed stars in the sky and plants on the earth. Coyote came along and scattered these elements about, creating the world as it exists today. Coyote also kidnapped the Water Monster's baby and caused a great flood, which brought human beings to the surface world. He seduced a virtuous maiden and taught her witchcraft. He caused disagreements and fights, and for every act he performed, he had a partially plausible justification. Coyote is also widely credited with ensuring the finality of death.

Despite their mystical energy, Native American tricksters such as Coyote were regarded as negative examples. They were viewed as antisocial braggarts, bungling imitators, troublemakers, and buffoons. For instance, although the Ojibwa trickster Winabojo functioned partially as a cultural hero—stealing fire for human use, taming the dangerous winds, perfecting the strategies that made successful hunting possible—he also brought about the great flood by killing too many animals and thereby angering the spirits who were their protectors. Frequently, his helpful creativity was seen as an accident, such as when he dashed madly through the brambles but made nutritious berries from his blood.

1. Underwater spirits

Among many Native American tribes, these were evil gods of water. At the same time they are a source of great wisdom and healing power, particularly with herbs.

2. Zuni myths

This myth is related to Zuni fetishes which are considered to be petrified supernatural beings from mythology. The Zuni is one of the several native North American tribes. According to the legend, the first humans came from four caves in the North.

3. Skan gods

One of the sky gods of the Dakota Indians (Sioux; Midwest) formed the world according to the number four.

4. Tans gods

The local gods of the Californian Hupa Indians protected the deer in the mountains. They kept great herds safe from hunters in a huge world within the hills. Every now and then, a few of the animals are let out as a reward to hunters who killed them.

5. Wakan gods

Wakan or Wakan Tanka is the name the Lakota Indians (Eastern Sioux) used to indicate their gods in general. Each living thing and object has its own wakan, a spirit without limitation. Wakan tanka kin, the wakan of the sun, is the most important.

6. Spider Woman and Spider Man

Spider Man and Spider Woman are Navaho supernaturals or Holy People. They taught the Navaho people how to weave, and established the four warnings of death. Spider Woman is an important mythic being among both the Eastern Pueblos and the Western Pueblos.

7. Ritualized *cannibalism* was part of many Native American religions.

They believed that if they ate various parts of the body of their slain enemies, they could steal their powers. The skull was cracked open and the brain eaten to steal their intelligence. Parts of the male sex organ were eaten to steal their sexual virility.

B. Central and South American Religions

The Mayans

The nature myths of the Mayans had links to their agriculture, religion, and hierarchy. In some cases the culture of the Mayans influenced their view of nature, and in other cases their view of nature influenced their culture. After three attempts to make beings that would praise and worship them, the gods created the four First Fathers out of corn. The corn was found by four animals: a mountain cat, a coyote, a crow, and a parrot. They were sent by the spirits to look for suitable building materials from which to fashion an animal to worship them. The writers of the Mayan myth made corn the succeeding material because the Mayan agriculture centered on corn. Corn could be grown easily, and it was a major part of their diet. In this case, the culture influenced the myth. Corn was very important to the Mayans. Because they could hardly live without it, they associated it with their view of the gods. When the spirit gods decided to destroy the humans made from wood, they caused a violent death. They created a great flood which knocked the wooden people over. An eagle then tore their eyes out. A bat chopped off their heads, and a jaguar broke and mangled their bones. As animals of all sizes attacked the wooden creatures they tried to climb to the roofs of houses. The houses collapsed and the animals destroyed almost all of the wooden creatures.

Angry Gods

The Mayan religion focused on pleasing the gods so they would not be angered. The Mayans were very afraid of death and they thought that if they did not please their gods then they would be subject to the same horrible destruction that befell the humans made of wood.

In this way there is an obvious connection between the Mayan nature myths and their religion. In this case, the myth influenced the culture, and the culture influenced the myth.

The myth seemed to say that the gods would destroy those who did not praise them and the Mayans incorporated this into their religious beliefs. In this way the myth may have influenced the culture. The Mayans may have thought that such things as earthquakes and hurricanes were the anger of the gods and so the Mayans may have incorporated these temperamental gods into the myth because of various misconceptions in their culture. It was in this way that their culture may have influenced the myth.

Male Hierarchy

When the spirits finally found a suitable material for making creatures that would praise them, they made the four First Fathers. The Mayan culture surrounded a male dominant society. For example, all of the chiefs and priests were male. So a male hierarchy is evident in both the Mayan culture and myths. In this case, the culture influenced the myth. Women did not play an important role in the Mayan culture so the writers of the creation myth thought that men must have come first because they were more important.

The Mayans had an intricate culture and a very interrelated creation myth. However, it is sometimes hard to tell whether it is the culture being reflected in the myth or if it is the myth being reflected in the culture. All that we can really do is make an educated guess. The only thing that we do know for fact is that there are obvious connections between the Mayan's culture and their creation myth.

Principal Beliefs

The Mayans believed in over one hundred gods and goddesses. "Nature" and "reason," despite all the hype and ballyhoo of Western, European, Christian Natural Theologians, evidently were not sufficient to enable the Mayans to find the Creator God of the Bible.

The Maya believed in blood sacrifice to keep the cosmos in balance and a sacred ceiba or "tree of life." The cosmos according to the Maya Popol Vuh myth, and the Dresden Codex, had been through several cycles of birth and then destruction by deluge. Hunab Ku was the creator god and the Old Woman goddess, the patron god of death and destruction, held the bowl from which the deluges occurred. A serpent-like creature constituted the Milky Way. The Hero Twins, Hunapu (associated with the celestial, the sun, and life) and Xbalanque (associated with the underworld, the jaguar, Venus, and death) travel to Xibalba, the underworld, and return, outsmarting the lords of death by tricking them. They were reborn as the sun and Venus.

Sharer has described several of the principal beliefs as follows: "The myth of the Hero Twins was one of the central axioms of ancient Maya life and ritual. It demonstrated how extraordinary humans could enter Xibalba, outwit the gods of death, and return, and thus was a metaphor for the greatest life force in the cosmos, the sun which emerges from Xibalba every morning. . . . The myth also demonstrated that rebirth is possible only through sacrifice (the twins were reborn after sacrifice by both fire and decapitation), and thus was a metaphor for life after death. Sacrifice and rebirth was a theme specifically celebrated by the Maya ritual of human sacrifice . . . and in the Maya centers the ball court was seen as the threshold between this world and Xibalba, the arena for confrontation; the ritualized ballgame played therein reenacted the original contest between the Hero Twins and the gods of death. The myth of the Hero Twins highlights another axiom in Maya ideology, the strongly dualistic theme seen in the eternal struggle - between the powers of good and the powers of evil - over the destiny of many. . . . For the Maya, openings in the surface of the earth were the entrances to Xibalba, and therefore especially sacred and dangerous places. . . . The places where the Maya lived, from the smallest house to the largest city, were conceived of as symbolic representations of their universe. . . . People who committed suicide by hanging or who were sacrificed, warriors killed in battle, women who died in childbirth, priests, and rulers went directly to the Maya paradise. . . . The deification of deceased rulers, and their veneration in funerary shrines, was an elaborated expression of ancestor worship, a theme that probably permeated ancient Maya religion." (Sharer, 1994:523-6).

Major Gods

Major Maya gods included Itzamna, a reptilian deity, Kinich Ahau, a sun deity, Chac, a rain deity, Bolon Tza' cab, a ruling-lineage deity, Yum Kaax, a maize deity, Yum Cimil, a death deity, Ah Chicum Ek, a North Star deity, Ek Chuah, a merchant deity, Bulac Chabtan, a war and human sacrifice deity, Ix Chel, a rainbow deity, and many others (Id. at 528-36). There were thirteen deities in the Upper World and nine deities in the Lower World (Id.).

Expression of Religious Themes in Art and Writing

The worship of the images of deities and human sacrifice appear on pottery incensories, masks, monuments, polychrome pottery, and graffiti inscribed on walls (Id. at 516). At Palenque the funeral slab over the deceased, expresses religious themes of the ruler's fall into the underworld at the moment of death. Images of blood sacrifice by rulers appear on stelae, walls of buildings, paintings on walls, and in codices. The painted scenes on Classic period pottery "appear to represent aspects of Maya myth and ritual" (Id. at 528).

The "Ideological" Function of Religion in the Society

The Maya religion explained natural forces that were not well understood and organized the cosmos into an ordered place. Its ideological function was to comfort individuals, unify the society, and justify wars and the authority of the ruling elites.

The Zapotecs

The Perceived Relationship between Humans and Supernaturals

Anything that moved had “pee” and was alive. Anything animate was somewhat sacred and had to be approached with some ritual and sense of reciprocity (Marcus 1994:345). Animate things included: animals, men, the 260 day ritual calendar, the moon, light, “the effervescent foam on a cup of stirred hot chocolate,” etc. (Id.). Living supernatural forces included such things as clouds, earthquakes, and lightning (Id.).

Principal Beliefs and Major Gods

Zapotec religion was animatistic. Although not monotheists, “they did recognize a supreme being who was without beginning or end, ‘who created everything but was not himself created,’ but he was so infinite and incorporeal that no images were ever made of him” (Marcus 1994:345). “This supreme being had, in turn, created a series of powerful supernatural forces including lightning, sun, earthquake, fire, and clouds which interacted with the Zapotecs but cannot be considered the equivalent of a Greco-Roman pantheon. . . .An important aspect of Zapotec religion was ancestor worship, especially the veneration of royal ancestors” (Id.).

Expression of Religious Themes in Art and Writing

Zapotec writing and art frequently showed sacrificed conquered captives and royal genealogies. Human sacrifice and the veneration of ancestry were prominent themes in Zapotec art and writing.

The Mixtecs

The Perceived Relationship between Humans and Supernaturals

Mixtec religion worshipped the forces of nature including life, death and an afterlife (Spores 1994:342). The deities were represented with images associated with war, the sun, human sacrifice, fertility, rain, wind, air, etc. (Id.). The sun was the deity held in the highest esteem (Id.). Humans were obligated "to maintain the balance among men, nature, and the supernatural world through conscious acts of private and social ritual" (Id. at 344). Blood sacrifice from the ears and tongue, and bird feathers were sometimes offered. Dances were sometimes given. Human and animal sacrifices were sometimes made including heart sacrifices (Id.).

Principal Beliefs and Major Gods

The development and use of a calendar for astrological and divination purposes is illustrated by the lore surrounding the calendar round of 52 years and the yearly cycles (Id.). New fire ceremonies indicated a renewal of the world. People originally emerged from a natural world that was already existing (Id. at 344). There is no sequential creation, destruction, and recreation cosmology like the Maya. Principal gods besides those recounted above, included ones associated with the planets, war, health, fertility, weather, etc. Each community had its own deity associated with it and there is no hierarchy particularly apparent in the supernatural universe, unlike the Aztec religion.

Expression of Religious Themes in Art and Writing

Religious activity centered around temples, hermitages, and shrines in urban areas and caves, rivers, rocky promontories, mountaintops, and abandoned settlements elsewhere (Id.). The temple might also have what the Spaniards described as an "oracle" and "idols" (Burgoa 1674, vol.1:276). The death deity is sometimes shown cutting the heart out of the loser of a ball court game.

The "Ideological" Function of Religion in the Society

According to Spores: "The sacred caves, springs, peaks, groves, and unusual natural features associated with the supernatural realm had a great attraction for the Mixtecs and served as a vital foci of social integration" (Spores 1994:343). The building and use of urban temples, hermitages, and shrines probably also had the same ideological function of unifying the society.

The Aztecs

The Perceived Relationship between Humans and Supernaturals

Every 52 years fires were put out, cooking implements, hearthstones, and idols were thrown out of the house, individual blood sacrifices were performed and a human sacrifice was performed by priests personifying the deities in a cosmological attempt to renew the universe, avoid darkness and avoid celestial monsters coming down to eat all humans (Berdan 1982:119). The cyclical conception of time, mythological foundation of rituals, and "active, rather than passive, posture in relating to the supernatural" and preserving the universe were typically Aztec (Id.). Human fate was influenced by actively performing rituals, and omens, divination, and astrology were important (Id. at 120).

Principal Beliefs and Major Gods

Deities were plentiful, diverse, and like Aztec society were arranged hierarchically. The majority were anthropomorphic or human-like (Id. at 124). Space was also hierarchically ordered in horizontal and vertical dimensions (Id. at 122-3). There were five directions (which included the center) and 13 tiers above the earth and 9 below (Id.). Ometecutli ("Lord of Duality") and Omecihuatl ("Lady of Duality") initially created all life and produced four sons named Tezcatlipoca who represented different cardinal directions and who were associated with different colors. Two of the sons, Quetzacoatl and Huitzilopochtli created fire, the first humans, the calendar, the underworld and its gods, the heavens, water and its gods, and the earth (Id. at 120). Four ages, periods, or "suns" of 2028 years ensued and were terminated with cataclysms. Different humans in each period were destroyed or transformed. In the fifth or current "sun" Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl recreated heaven, earth, and the inhabitants (Id. at 121). Some deities required human blood for nourishment such as Tonatiuh, the sun god, and Huitzilopochtli, patron of the Mexica, and so war to obtain captives was undertaken and blood sacrifices including heart extraction were performed (Id. at 128).

Expression of Religious Themes in Art and Writing

Maya-like murals have been found that indicate blood sacrifices related to religious beliefs as well as battle murals. The Codex Mendoza is an example of a codex that survived the book burning of the Spaniards.

The "Ideological" Function of Religion in the Society

As in the other Mesoamerican societies, religion served to give authority to the rulers and elites, justify war, and provided social unity.

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Part VI

Africa and Natural Theology

S.T.U.P.I.D.

Self-evident
Truths,
Universal
Principles,
Independent of
Divine Revelation

Opening Principles

1. We must not insert biblical ideas into native African religions and Christianize them. For example, Frazier in *The Golden Bough* described the cycle of vegetation during summer, fall, winter and spring as a “dying and rising savior.” The biblical concept of Christ’s bodily resurrection was placed as a grid upon bushes and trees losing their leaves during the fall, and then growing them back in the spring.
2. Biblical concepts such as Creation, the Fall, the uni-verse, the world, mankind, the unity and dignity of man, Nature, etc., are not known or understood universally; they are scriptural ideas.
3. There is no uniform “African” religion that embraced the continent. Thus we cannot speak of “African Religion” *per se*. Each tribe had its own religion and its own gods, magic, and rituals.

A. Egyptian Religions

1. Egypt was the most advanced civilization in ancient Africa. It had great cities, palaces, pyramids, temples and tombs. We are still amazed at the beauty of their art and architecture.
2. While Western white men were still wearing animal skins and living in caves, the Egyptians produced the longest lasting civilization in the ancient world. While other empires came and went, Egypt remained.
3. The Egyptians even had the greatest library in the ancient world. The library in Alexandria was one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. It contained all the known literature of the world found on clay tablets and papyri. If the Muslims had not burned it, we would have the greatest treasure house in the world.
4. The Egyptians invented papyri paper for manuscripts. They were the first professional scribes who mass produced manuscripts for sale. They even invented books.
5. They had philosophers, theologians, scientists, mathematicians, and astronomers of great renown.
6. Egypt was the greatest world power for most of its existence. Its armies conquered much of the Middle East and its Pharaohs ruled over great empires.

Questions:

1. With all of its greatest, surely Egypt must have come up with a Natural Theology and philosophy that discovered, through human reason alone, the existence and attributes of the true God, the nature, dignity, and attributes of man and man's relationship to God.
2. Did the philosophers of Egypt discover the same self-evident truths and universal principles of Western European Natural theology and philosophy?
3. Did the philosophers and politicians of ancient Egypt discover natural law, natural morality, natural justice, and natural beauty?

If the vaunted claims of Western European white Natural theologians and philosophers have any validity at all, then Egypt is an excellent laboratory to see if it meets the test of reality.

1. The gods and goddesses of Egypt: The ancient Egyptians believed in hundreds of finite personal deities. They deified and worshipped the animals and insects around them: crocodiles, cats, baboons, lions, birds, snakes, scarab beetles, frogs, flies, fish, etc. They worshipped the sun, moon and stars. They worshipped the Nile River. Pharaoh was worshipped as a god.

2. Some Christian Natural theologians and philosophers cheat at this point and pretend that monotheism developed was discovered by the ancient Egyptians. There are several problems with this notion.

a. Only pre-Joseph Egyptian religions can be considered. Once Joseph and the Jews migrated into Egypt, they introduced revealed religion into Egyptian religion. Given Joseph's strong faith and faithful testimony, he must have influenced some Egyptians toward belief in only one, true, infinite but personal God, Maker of heaven and earth, creation ex nihilo, the Fall of man into sin and guilt, etc. Thus only pre-Joseph Egyptian religions are of value to see if Natural Theology is valid.

b. The supposed monotheism of king Akhetaten is a good example. He worshipped the Sun-god Aten, who was known as the god of gods. Was Aten infinite as well as personal? No. He was a finite solar deity. It must also be pointed out that post-Exodus Egyptian religion was forever modified by Moses, the ten plagues, the death of the first born, the destruction of Pharaoh's army and the Exodus itself.

c. Different Pharaohs championed different deities as their chief god or goddess. Even if they tried to force all of Egypt to worship their favorite deity, this does not mean they believed in monotheism. They were saying to ignore the other gods and goddesses, not that they did not exist per se. There is no evidence of the biblical concept of monotheism in pre-Joseph Egypt.

d. All the gods of the Pharaohs were finite deities. No one ever came up with the idea of one infinite personal God who was Maker of heaven and earth.

B. Central and Southern African Religions

The records of such peoples of Central and Southern Africa as the Nubians and Bantus and Zulus are rare at best and non-existent at worst. There does exist, however, marvelous works of architecture, which suggest advanced civilizations. Yet even this advanced architecture includes idols, temples, and centers of worship which demonstrate that they never knew of or understood the true God.

Conclusion

In I Corinthians 1:21 Paul writes that the world, in all its philosophy, never knew God. In chapter 2, he speaks concerning God's philosophy does not come to us through empirical, sensory experience, but by the Spirit. In I Corinthians 2:14, Paul makes known that "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."

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Part VII

Is Natural Theology Biblical?

Historical Review

In order to discover if Natural Theology is biblical, it is first necessary to distinguish between Natural Theology and General Revelation. If this is not done, passages that speak of General Revelation will be mistaken as supporting Natural Theology.

The following chart makes clear the distinction between general revelation and natural theology:

General Revelation	Natural Theology
Activity of God	Activity of Man
Began at Creation	Began in the 17 th Century
Universal throughout all of Creation: all suns, moons, galaxies, planets, etc.	England, Scotland, Wales, and America
Continuous, seven days a week, 24 hours a day	Collapsed at the end of the 18 th century
Two points: a. the attributes of God b. the sinfulness of man	Two points: a. the existence of God b. the problem of evil
Origin: God's revelation	Origin: man's reason, experience, feelings or faith
Non-verbal witness	Verbal discourse
Renders all men without excuse	Does not render all men without excuse
Does not reveal way of salvation	Makes "nature" or "reason" the way of salvation

What Biblical passages are generally given by Natural Theologians and philosophers to prove that Natural Theology is justified by Scripture?

Psalm 19

Isaiah 1:18

Acts 17:2-3

Acts 17:16-34

Romans 1-2

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Part VIII

Conclusion: Its History and Repercussions

The Ripple Effect

Ideas have the potential of affecting generations after it has been expressed. This is known as the "ripple effect." When we throw a stone into undisturbed water it creates ripples on the surface. The stone immediately sinks to the bottom, but the ripples continue long after.

Sometimes the ripples can be good and sometimes bad. The life of Adolf Hitler, for instance, caused ripple effects that are still with us to this day, and will continue until the end of history. The life of Charles H. Spurgeon caused ripple effects and they too will continue until the end of history.

The ripple effects of Mother England included those thinkers of the halls of British academia. Thus you must examine why and how Natural Theology influenced the rest of British and American history.

Step #1:

British Natural Theologians, such as William Paley abandoned the Reformation doctrine of *sola scriptura*. It is Scripture and Scripture alone that decides morals and doctrine.

As a result of this, the Puritans produced the Westminster Confession. They also produced Oliver Cromwell and John Owen.

After Cromwell died, his son failed to continue his work. As a result there came about the "Great Ejection," where anyone who taught Puritan views were ejected from their positions.

Once the Puritan age was over and Anglicism took over, the Roman Catholic doctrine of Natural Theology, which was based on the doctrine of human autonomy, was introduced. There was no more *sola scriptura*.

Step #2:

Natural Theologians were so successful in convincing the British public to reject Puritanism and its Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura* that they unconsciously went half way back to Roman Catholicism by embracing the laws and teachings Thomas Aquinas, the official philosopher of the Church of Rome.

Step #3:

Their fatal flaw was to assume that having convinced everyone that man is autonomous and can therefore figure out everything without the Bible, that they had a field day with virtually no opposition from the church or the university. In one generation, they were successful in undoing everything the Puritans had managed to accomplish.

Step #4:

Once Natural Theology convinced everyone that it was possible to develop a purely natural explanation of the world, they opened a Pandora's box. Out of the box came hundreds of anti-Christian philosophies and theologies all of which claimed to be purely rational and natural explanations of the world.

Step #5:

Natural Theology then created the intellectual climate that made it possible for the rise of purely godless natural explanations of the world that either ignored or openly denied the Bible. One example is Charles Darwin.

Step #6:

Natural Theology gave rise to such anti-Christian philosophies as Deism and Darwinian Evolution, Socialism, Communism, and Nazism.

In the end, it is tragic that well-meaning Christian philosophers and theologians, whose intent was to defend Christianity, ended up destroying it. It backfired on those who adopted the pagan, humanistic principles of the European Renaissance thinkers.

The rationale for the existence of Natural Theology supposedly rests on two claims:

Claim #1:

Natural Theologians from the beginning have said that they can prove the existence of God, the nature of God, the attributes of God, the way to God, our responsibility before God, etc., based on human reason, experience, feelings, etc.

Claim #2:

Natural Theology can solve the problem of evil with a Godless methodology.

What about the existence and nature of God? Is it really possible to figure it all out with our finite minds? The five traditional proofs for the existence of God came from Thomas Aquinas, who took them from Muslim philosophers such as al-Ghazali and Averroes, who stole them from Aristotle who tried to prove the existence of a being that was thought thinking itself. And today we have many popular, well-known theologians who have revived these arguments.

These "rational" proofs of God, which attempt to prove on godless principles that God exists are very difficult. They truly wish to prove the existence of the triune God of the Bible Who is personal and infinite in His Being and attributes. But there are four problems:

1. Any argument that leads to a lesser god, goddess, or gods, is not what we're looking for. If you claim you want to find Jesus, but end up with Shiva and Kali, the argument is invalid.

Example: If you hired a shuttle to take you to the airport and it dropped you five miles from that airport, would you pay him? No. If Natural Theology leaves you short of the God of the Bible, then it is a failure.

2. Natural Theologians commonly use terms and phrases like, "universally accepted truths," "intuitive," "self-evident," "given the fact that," etc.

3. Any arguments that borrow from the Bible are immediately invalid.

4. It is impossible for anyone—Christian and non-Christian—to make their way from the finite to the Infinite just by human reason.

Therefore when Christian philosophers adopt a humanistic basis for their apologetics, they end up in the same impossible position as their secular counterparts, thus they keep changing the godless methodology they use.

If you begin only with man, you will end only with man. If you choose a godless methodology in pursuit of the truth, you will end up without God and without the truth.

Typical Arguments

1. The "Ontological Argument"

Is it possible to imagine or think of a perfect Being? To have the idea of a perfect Being necessarily means that Being must exist, therefore God exists. But the word, "perfect" poses problems. "Perfect" does not necessarily mean "perfected." It does not imply immutability as many assume. The word, "existence" poses problems as well. It is usually not defined. When you say "existence," are you talking about some kind of existence that you've never experienced, that the universe doesn't experience, or that nobody knows anything about?

2. The "Teleological Argument"

Also known as the "Cause-and-Effect Argument," it is based upon the idea that every object in the world has been a cause or an effect in many different ways and many different times. For example, the cue-stick (cause) hitting the cue ball (effect) sounds like a simple explanation. But what if the cue ball hits another ball? The cause has now become another effect!

The teleological argument says that everything around us is cause and effect. But how can you make the leap from "cause" to "Cause"? Every cause and every effect in our experience are finite. Therefore the most you can get from this is a finite cause, not an infinite cause. How can you go from finite to infinite? How can you go from material to the non-material? The most you can come up with is the possibility of multiple finite causes for the universe. Thus it is no surprise to find that the pagans have multiple gods and goddesses and that they're all finite.

3. Arguments Based Upon Design

Example: The symbiotic relationship between the tarantula and the wasp. One cannot exist apart from the other. But once again the problem is that these kinds of designs are finite, material, and non-divine. Thus the most you can get from this is a designer who is finite, material, and non-divine.

4. Arguments Based Upon Personal Experience

The argument is this: *Millions of Christians have experienced God in their lives, therefore God exists.* But there are millions of people from other religions. They cannot all be true. Christianity is not true because you experienced it; you experience it because it is true. Your personal experience can only confirm it, not prove it.

Science does not prove the Bible, but if the Bible is true, it will be scientifically accurate. You cannot “prove” Christianity by history, but if Christianity is true, it will be supported by history, archeology, etc.

5. Psychological and Sociological Arguments

If you believe in God, you will feel better. Something is not true just because it makes you feel good. Is something true because it makes you feel good, or might you feel good about something you believe because it is true? Is something true because you believe it, or should you believe something if it is true? Good feelings are a result of believing something that is true, not the basis of it.

What Then?

Then are there any theistic proofs? Yes, if you mean godless humanistic theistic proofs, based upon the idea of man being the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty. Ecclesiastes teaches us that if you begin with man, you end with all being vanity and emptiness. Proverbs teaches us that if you begin with God, then you can have dignity and worth. Thus there are theistic proofs. The Christian must realize that the above arguments are not *proofs* for the existence of God, they are *confirmations*. When you begin with God and develop theistic proofs with the Bible as your basis, you end up with 100% certainty, whereas the humanist only has probability.

Conclusion

Whereas well-meaning Christians with the greatest of motives attempted to save Christianity by adopting humanism as their basis, in the end they produced the climate in which Christianity had no intellectual credibility, because they did not have their own foundation on which to stand.

