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The Question of Authority

Elder Dick Roesch

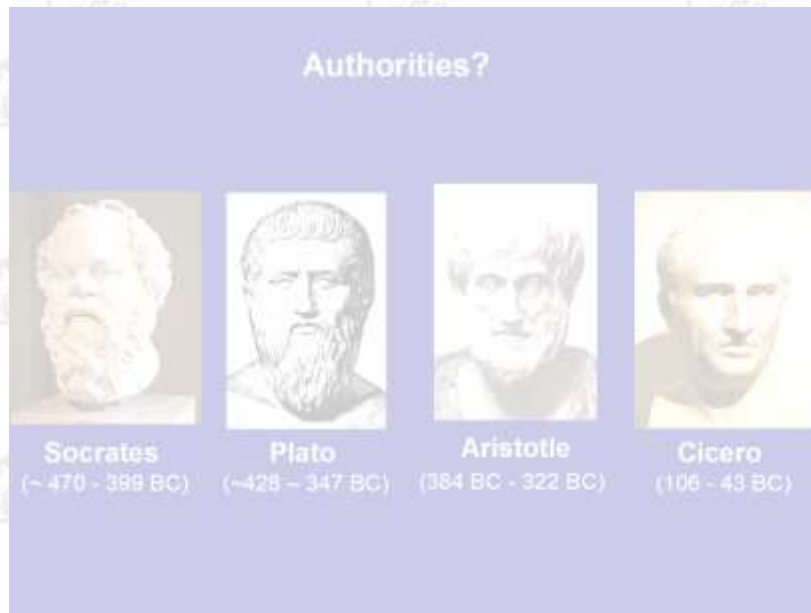
This morning I'd like for us to examine the question of authority.

Let me begin with an observation.

Not since the Tower of Babel has the world so desired oneness. Man is building a structure that will reach into the heavens, spread across the globe, enter each living room, and influence the masses. Man is making a name for himself – globally. We have global trade, global technology, global marketing, global banking, global communication, global language translators, global money, and on and on. We even have global goals of saving the environment, stamping out hunger, poverty, sickness and, above all, inequity, and the Internet has provided us with global information.

What has all this to do with the question of authority? The same question that was implied in the building of the Tower of Babel – will we obey God and do as He commands, or will we band together and work to do our own bidding? To whose authority will we submit? If we do not obey God, then we set ourselves up as our own authority just as they did at Babel.

We are all, in some way, under authority, and as we begin to acquire knowledge, we become more curious, and hopefully more critical of whose authority we are being “taught” and asked to believe. Why do we accept one person’s point of view as authority and not another’s?

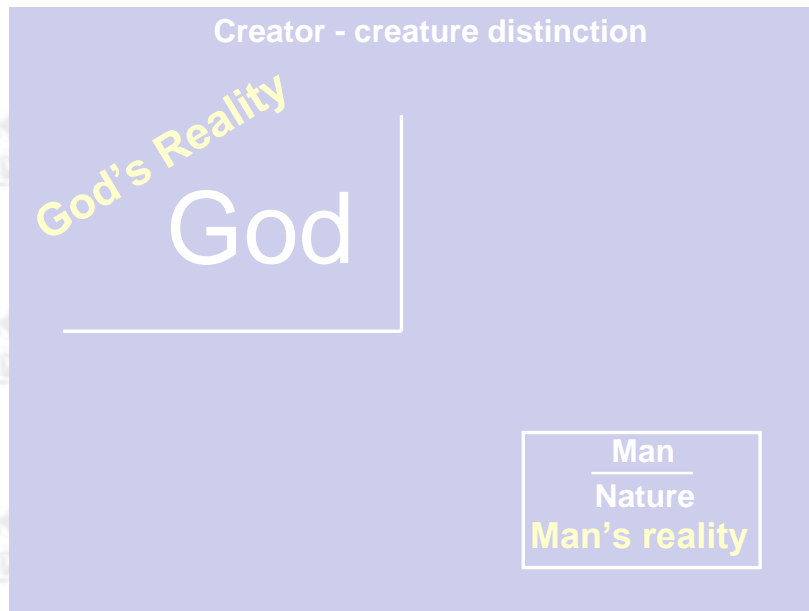


Why do people place such weight of authority on the writings of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, or Cicero? They are called great men of learning, great teachers, great influences on societies, the shapers of how people will think in the future about the whys of man and nature. These were men of insatiable learning, always in conversation with their students, pondering the seen and unseen, desirous of making sense of man and his environment, and eager to engage visitors so that they might acquire new knowledge. These men and their teachings are considered the foundation upon which future thinkers will build.



And what about later men like Descartes, Kant, Darwin, Freud, or Carl Jung as authorities? All of these men influence the way we think about life, ourselves, and the world around us. Colleges and universities teach courses in philosophy, sociology, and psychology that reflect their thoughts and writings. These are men who have made their mark on society, and considered men of influence, men of renown.

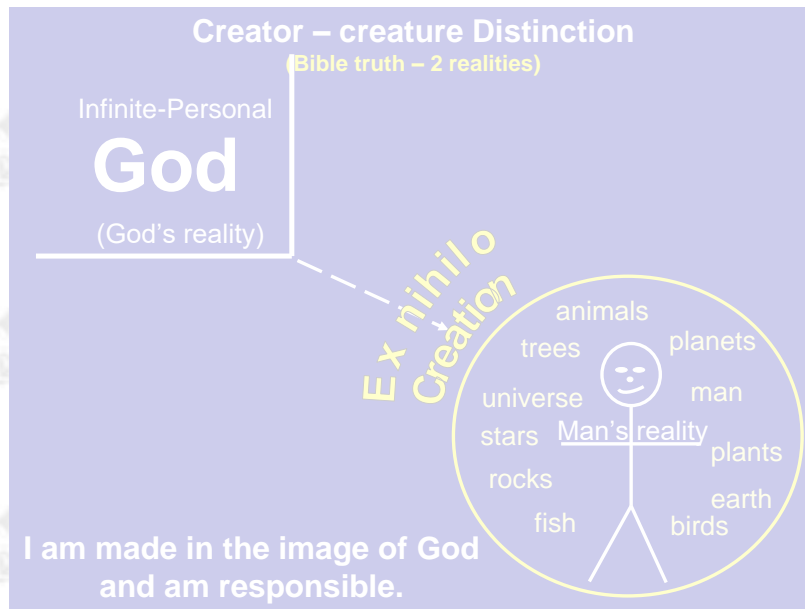
The problem for the true Bible believer is that these philosophies are coming from created, finite minds, great and profound as they may be. And this brings us to the discussion of authority as it pertains to “origins”. Who are we and how did we get here? Think back with me to Part 1 of the Biblical Framework Series we studied, regarding the **Creator – creature distinction**.



That is the most crucial point of understanding true authority. That God is God not because we grant Him that honor. He calls Himself the “**I AM who I AM**” – independent of creation, always existing, from eternity to eternity. It is that which humbles man and instructs him about ultimate authority. It tells man who he is and tells man who God is and why we should obey Him. This is the true and realistic recognition of absolute authority. Yet because of our sinful natures and distracted minds, a recognition that we will keep coming back to until the day we die.

Most people just go along, trying to make their way through life without a clue as to what life is all about. But the Bible confronts you right on page one – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” There it is. First, we are confronted with the concept and pre-existence of a “God”, and this pre-existing God “creates” (from nothing) the heavens and the earth. He is immediately portrayed as almighty, eternal, sovereign, free, purposeful, and having ultimate authority. He is the Creator. We are the created. This is a lot to take in all at once, but as we read further in Genesis chapter one, we see His planning when we read that the plants, trees, animals, birds, are created “with seed in them”, produce fruit “after their kind”, and we see later that mankind likewise produces offspring after his kind.

So, as we gaze upon the landscape of the earth and sea, we see such a great variety of flowers, trees, animals, fish, birds, butterflies, and so much more, that it takes volumes of books to identify them. But what you have to be impressed with is the “order” surrounding creation. Everything is identifiable and stable – each after its own “kind”. We have plant-kind, tree-kind, animal-kind, bird-kind, fish-kind, and above all of them, we have man-kind. We have the authority and responsibility over this created earth.



The entire Bible tells us that God has a plan, is Sovereign and faithful. As we watch progressive revelation unfold, we see Creation, Fall, Flood, New World Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant with the nation of Israel, the first coming of Jesus, Israel's Messiah, the offer of the kingdom and their rejection of Him, His death, resurrection, and ascension, the sending of the Holy Spirit and the "church" beginnings. The message now, for Jew and Gentile alike, is that the sins of the world are forgiven through the cross-work of Christ – the God-Man.

It is not Christ's *life* that saves, it is His *death* that pays the penalty for all of man-kind's sins, and satisfies God's wrath. That is what we place our faith in – the revealed word of God telling us what He has done for us so that we can have "faith alone in Christ alone", and be reconciled to our Creator once again. Then, Christ will be accepted by a remnant of the nation of Israel and she will enjoy the land promised her in the Abrahamic Covenant – for a thousand years with Christ reigning on the throne of David in Jerusalem. Finally, the permanent separation of good and evil will take place at the Great White Throne judgment, where those who have not acknowledged God or His Son's work on the Cross, will be cast into the Lake of Fire forever.

In what other writings will we find these profound and wonderful truths where we are told of our past, present, and future? It is only communicated through the inerrant, inspired, and authoritative content of Scripture.

Here's how the chapters of Genesis break out authority of God and delegated authority of man.

Genesis 1 – God declares that He has rightful and absolute authority by the act of creating. All creation is subject to Him.

Genesis 2 – We find three institutes are established by God.

- #1. Responsible dominion – male headship and responsibility.
- #2. Marriage – male headship and responsibility with one man, one woman.
- #3. Family – male headship and the responsibility of handing down truth.

Genesis 3 – Describes the Fall:

We find authority is disobeyed. Sin has begun.

Consequences: spiritual death, the ground is cursed, “sweat” begins, pain in child birth, conflict between husband and wife, and physical death.

Between Genesis 3 and Genesis 7, mankind gets so corrupt morally and is into idolatry to the point that Genesis 6:6-7 records, “And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. And the LORD said, ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.’” Fortunately, Noah found favor with God.

Genesis 7 – The Flood:

The picture of absolute Authority displayed over creation – Judgment of everything on the face of the earth by a global flood, except salvation for eight people and the cargo on board the Ark.

Genesis 9 – The New World Covenant and the same three Institutes are re-established with a fourth added.

#1. Responsible dominion– male headship and responsibility.

#2. Marriage– male headship and responsibility with one man, one woman.

#3. Family – male headship and the responsibility of handing down truth.

#4. Civil government (man governing man) with power of capital punishment.

Tragically, as we see in our day, all these authority structures have been challenged, berated, vilified, belittled as nonsense by an onslaught of confusing “rights”- “equal rights”, gay rights, individual rights, women’s rights, children’s rights, along with divorce-made-easy legislation, and the multitude of fathers who run away from their responsibilities. Needless to say, these are difficult days to have and maintain a Biblical marriage and family!

Open your Bibles to Romans 1:18.

I want introduce the “battle” of origins.

We need to look at Romans 1:18ff to understand man’s resistance to God and to what degree men will go to hide from Him.

Romans 1:18-20 (NASB95)

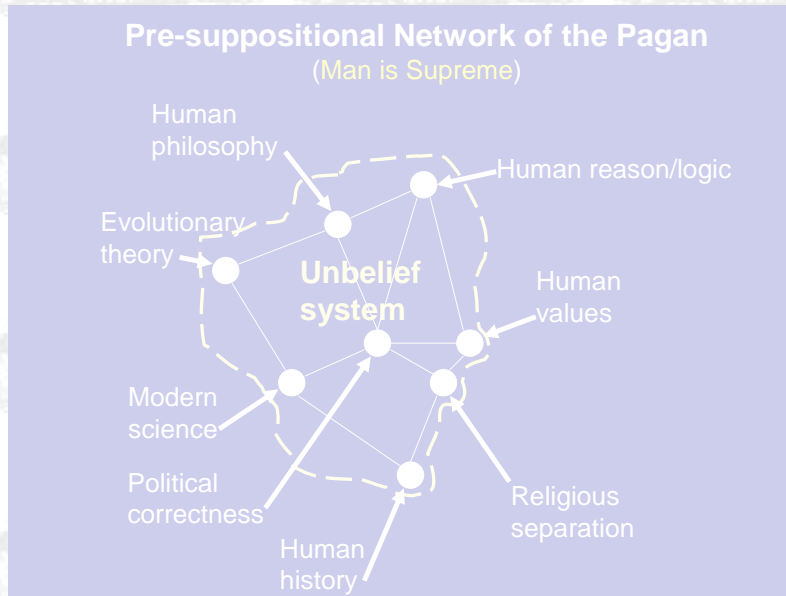
- 18 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,
19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.
20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

Verses 19 and 20 are what theologians call General Revelation.

Creation says there is a Supreme Being, and God has placed the truth of His existence within man. No one will have an excuse at the Great White Throne Judgment for not having acknowledged that God exists!

Let's continue with verse 21.

- 21 “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.
22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,
(and catch this)
23 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.”
A perfect description of the Continuity of Being!



Let's look at what makes up this unrighteous pagan mind, because we all come from the same mindset. This mind has only ONE reality, and that reality is the supremacy of man. He wants to be autonomous, self ruled, and self contained. He keeps suppressing the knowledge of the existence of God. God cannot be part of this picture. Only MAN using his logic and reason, can be the supreme and final authority.

Here's something that feeds into the discussion that I found on a world history website (history-world.org). Here's what it said:

“To understand the natural world and humankind's place in it solely on the basis of reason and without turning to religious belief was the goal of the wide-ranging intellectual movement called the Enlightenment. The movement claimed the allegiance of a majority of thinkers during the 17th and 18th centuries, a period that Thomas Paine called the Age of Reason. At its heart it became a conflict between religion and the inquiring mind that wanted to know and understand through reason based on evidence and proof”. Reason based on evidence and proof is called empiricism, so let's take a moment to review how mankind acquires “knowledge”.

The Basis of Knowledge			
	SYSTEM	STARTING POINT	METHOD
Autonomous Systems Of Perception	RATIONALISM	Innate ideas Faith in human ability.	Independent use of logic & reason
	EMPIRICISM	Sense perceptions External experience; Scientific method Faith in human ability	Independent use of logic & reason
	MYSTICISM	Inner, private experience; intuition Faith in human ability	Independent, Nonlogical, nonrational, nonverifiable.
Divine View point	REVELATION	Objective revelation	Dependent use of logic and reason

Adapted slide from Dr. Robert Dean

We acquire knowledge through Rationalism, Empiricism, and/or Mysticism.

Through the system of Rationalism, we find the starting points of innate ideas and faith in human ability. We find the method is the independent use of logic and reason.

Through the system of Empiricism, we find the starting points of sense perceptions; external experience; scientific method and faith in human ability. We find the method is the independent use of logic and reason.

Through the system of Mysticism, we find the starting points of inner, private experience; intuition, and again, faith in human ability. We find the method is independent, but non-logical, non-rational, and non-verifiable.

So from these three systems we get all human information for Human Knowledge or Human Viewpoint.

We now begin to understand the mind of the Pagan. He wants nothing to do with God. He is only interested in man's ability, with the acquired knowledge of other humans through science and philosophy to shape his world and make sense of the life he has. He will rely on his human logic and reason, and/or his inner, private experience, and intuition. This, he says, is all he needs.

But there is **one more way** that humans can attain knowledge, a fourth system.

Through the system of Divine Revelation, we find the starting point is the objective revelation of God, where we find the method is the dependent use of logic and reason.

From this system we get God's knowledge or Divine Viewpoint.

This system of attaining knowledge is one that is entirely outside of us. It is the revealing of truths that we would never have received from the three human systems. We have to pick up scripture and read it. It is not infused into us. Nor can we read it haphazardly. It also requires that

our human logic and reason be subject to this revelation, along with the subjecting of our inner, private experience, and intuition. It claims complete authority because it is God's revelation, in God's words, graciously given to created mankind who is made in God's image, and who possess characteristics such as choice, conscience, love, and knowledge that are finite replicas of their Creator's divine attributes.

Remember: The Bible possesses its authority over us - independently of us.

We know that the pagan mind will not acknowledge a Creator God, even though the variety, order, and stability of creation around him cries out that there is a Supreme Being, a Creator God. In his heart of hearts, he knows that there is a Creator (Rom 1:19-20), but he will still not acknowledge Him because in doing so he must become responsible and submissive to Him. This person wants freedom to sin. This person wants to be a victim so that whatever happens, it's not his fault. It is this suppressing of the truth that God exists and we are responsible to Him that drives men to harden their hearts toward God and deny Him even more. So, that is why the investigation of "origins" is so important, because if we can promote an alternative to the Biblical Creation record, we can keep ourselves from having to recognize a Creator God. "Evolution" is that alternative, and it is heavily promoted throughout the world in literature, TV, Internet, the education system, etc. with government backing, to the point that it is generally accepted as "fact".

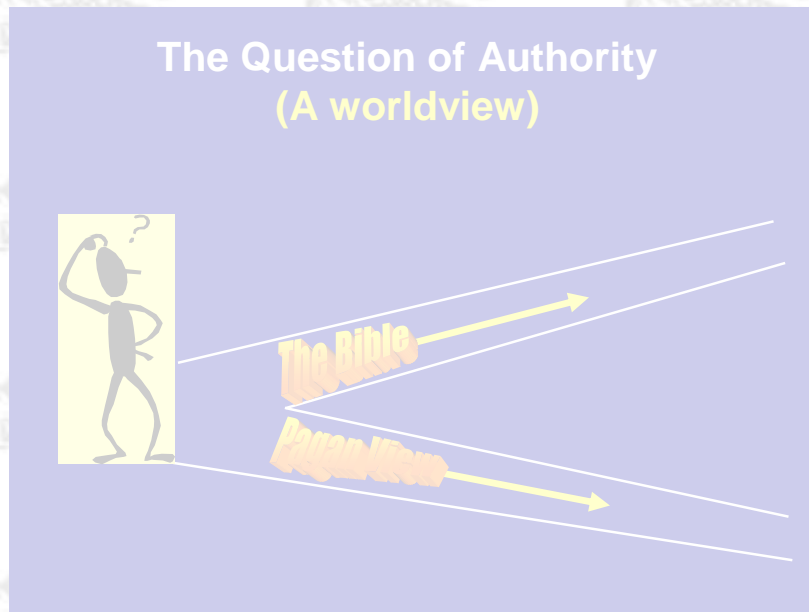
So, in your science class, on the History Channel, on the Discovery Channel, in books, magazines, movies, college and university lectures, you will be taught that everything you see evolved over billions and billions of years. It is called the Continuity of Being, the Chain of Being, Cosmic Evolution, or something similar. This is not a new concept introduced by Charles Darwin. The ancient Greeks believed in a Chain of Being.



So, whether it was a Big Bang or some kind of primeval slime, that's where it all started, and from there – over time – ever so gradual, with transmutation, and a bit of chance, they will tell you that you are what you are because that's how you have evolved "so far" – we're still in the evolutionary process. Satisfied with that, they will tell you that "there is no need for a 'God'".

That's an old notion. People used to believe that because they needed a psychological crutch, but in this 'enlightened' age, with science making such progress, and new technology coming on line, we know that's not true." (Oh, did I mention that these are unproven "theories" and presuppositions?)

So there you have it. Two views, two choices, but they can't both be true. One says that a "God" "created" everything we see around us, the other boasts, "Scientifically, we can prove that evolution is true!" Two authorities.



Which view will you choose? Choose carefully, because it will affect the rest of your life. If you choose the Biblical view, your life will be a difficult one. People will look upon you as a dreamer, a believer in myth, and one that is out of touch with reality. "Come on, in 6 - 24 hour days the heavens and the earth were created? Don't be stupid." These are the same people that will tell you that science is fact and the Bible is fiction, that science is knowledge and the Bible is belief in the unseen, that it is irrational and unreal.

These are the same people that will tell you that "faith" and "reason" are opposites.

Well, let's clarify something right now - Faith and Reason are not opposites! Faith and reason work together. Romans 10:17 tells us, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (NKJV). What is heard is not gibberish, it the recorded the Word of God.

Faith and Reason

“ The two cannot be separated without serious injury; this is God’s own arrangement, and, to insure success, it must be followed. They are inseparable, for there can be no faith without reason first perceiving the truth and its adaptability to man, so that faith may then appropriate it. Reason may refuse faith, can exist without it, but faith cannot live without reason..... Faith *must* have knowledge, for we must first *know* the things that we are to believe, and hence it is also represented as “*seeing*” (John 6:40, Hebrews 11:27)”.

The Theocratic Kingdom Vol1: by George Peters

In his *The Theocratic Kingdom, Vol. 1*, George Peters makes this observation about faith and reason:

“ The two cannot be separated without serious injury; this is God’s own arrangement, and, to insure success, it must be followed. They are inseparable, for there can be no faith without reason first perceiving the truth and its adaptability to man, so that faith may then appropriate it. Reason may refuse faith, can exist without it, but faith cannot live without reason..... Faith *must* have knowledge, for we must first *know* the things that we are to believe, and hence it is also represented as “*seeing*” (John 6:40, Hebrews 11:27)”.

So it is that we read in the Book of Acts about Peter and Paul spending time in various synagogues “reasoning with” and “persuading” the Jews, with Scripture, that Jesus was the Messiah!

The Question of Authority (A worldview)



The Bible

Pagan View

If you choose the Pagan view, you're path will be much smoother. You will have many friends and be able to move up the educational, business, and government ladders of promotion without much problem. You will be seen as a normal, rational thinking person.

Here we have the choice of two views of life, two views of the world, two lifestyles, two different paths that will become your belief systems and will dictate how you live your life, how you handle problems, how you deal with other people in family, business, and social settings; what you think of life, death, and what happens after death. One view seems to give you everything you want in this life and nothing after this life is over. The other seems to give you persecution and struggle in this life, yet with hope for something good to come-after this life. One of these two views will govern, rule, and channel your thoughts, words, and actions. In fact, one of these two views will have "authority" over you, and, if you don't make a decision, the default choice is Pagan authority.

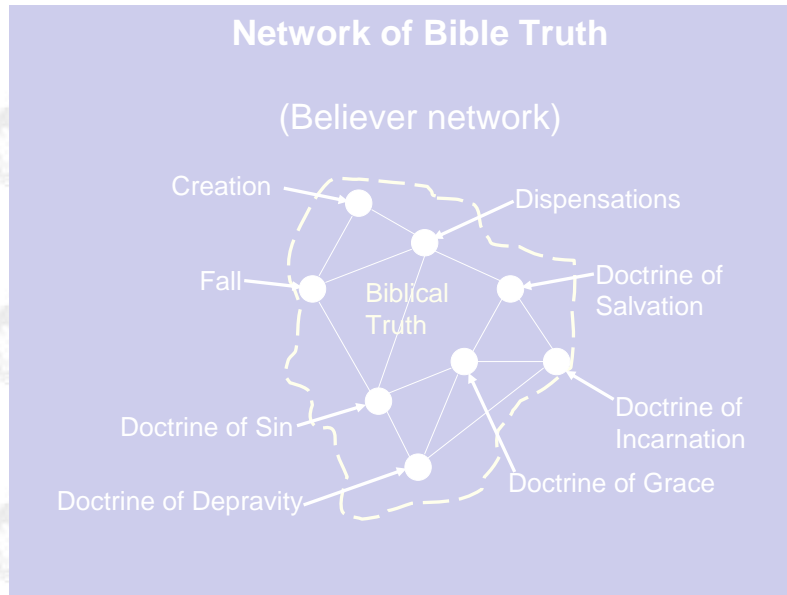
In his book, *The handbook to Bible Study*, Paul Karleen sums it up pretty well when he writes, "...we are involved with systems of belief—Why do I believe one thing as opposed to another? And why, on the basis of what I believe, do I do one thing and not something else? This is a question of authority, i.e., what belief-action system do I place myself under, using as the reference-point or basis for what I think, and how I act? This is significant for every human being, because it obviously determines much of what we think and do."

And what does the Word of God say about trying to accommodate both of these authorities? It says it cannot be done. Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13 tell us: "No one (or no servant) can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other...". The truth is: We have to determine and develop our allegiance, because there is no neutral position.

In the Pagan, Godless view of the Continuity of Being, the elements of "chance" and "mystery" are part of their beliefs. Therefore, historical events are just so many marbles in a bag – spill them out and try to make sense of history. The problem is that they have no context. Also, there is no stability, for tomorrow things may change (the N+1 principle: that all data up to this point may change because of the next piece of information discovered). So, in reality, this system has no basis for knowing or learning things and no basis for language or even rational thought. So you begin to see the hopeless system they are in.

This whole system has to be torn down and rebuilt upon the truths of Scripture. There is no other way. There are no patches to apply, because the presupposition upon which this system is built is wrong.

Yet, these people will appear to be very logical and will persistently try to make you uncomfortable because of your Bible beliefs.

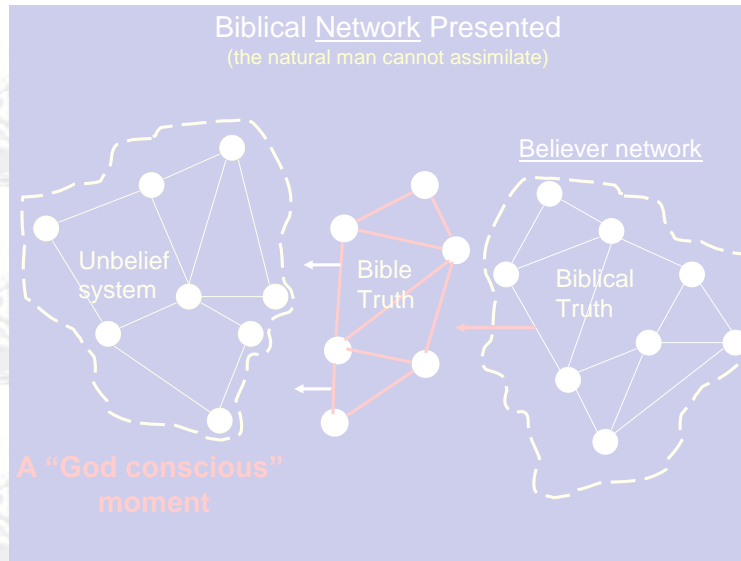


But just like the calling out of Israel, we, too, are called out to be a counter-culture. **Rom 12:2** says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

We want to listen to the verse of 2 Timothy 2:15 where we are told, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” And Hebrews 4:12 tells us. “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

We live in a different world than we did 50 – 60 years ago. These souls desperately need to hear about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but the Gospel must now be presented in a framework that allows them to see the bigger picture of Creation, Fall, Flood, and New World Covenant, so they can begin to understand who and what God is and what He has done in history. Then we can introduce Jesus, His Person and His Work.

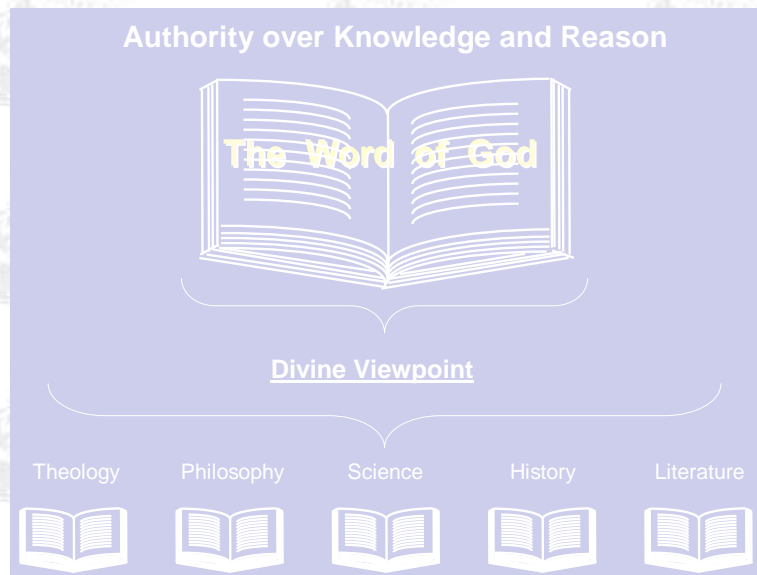
These minds have truly buried the truths of origins.



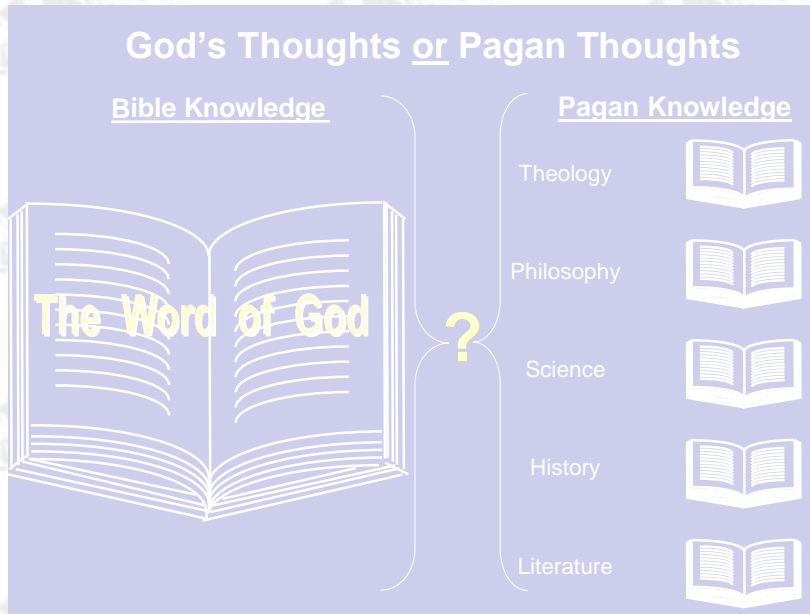
This is why we prepare ourselves with proper Bible study and learn proper doctrine so we will be, as 1 Peter 3:15 encourages us to be, "...always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;" Remember, faith and reason work together, and we are ambassadors for Christ in this age of Grace. (2 Cor. 5:20). With a framework basis, we are better prepared Biblically to communicate the Gospel because (#1) we know that there is no neutrality, (#2) we understand where the unbelieving mind is coming from and, (#3) we are able to present Biblical events and doctrines that the pagan mind cannot assimilate into their human viewpoint unbelief systems, which, we pray, will give them a "God conscious" moment.

Regarding Authority and Biblical Theology.

Ironically, at one time, Biblical Theology was considered the Queen of the Sciences.

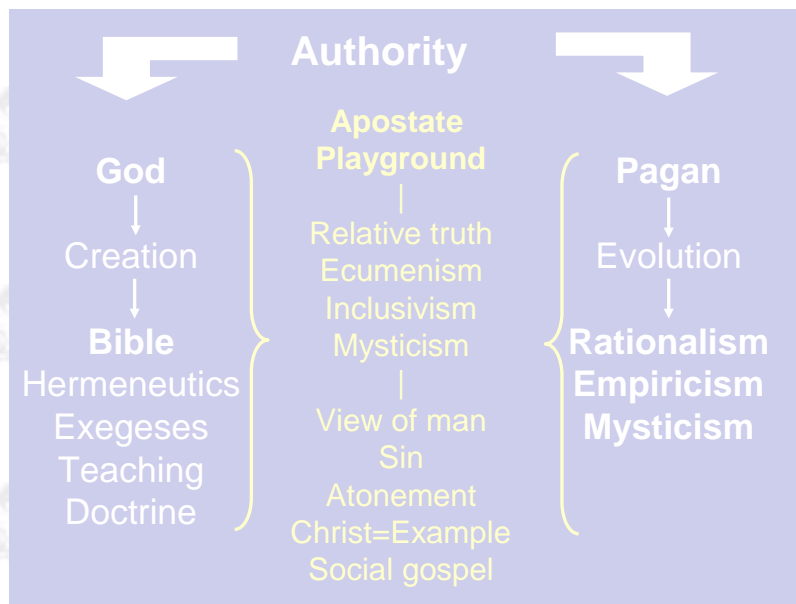


At that time, God’s Word had authority and all other subjects taught were to be aligned with Scripture. The courses derived their substance from Biblical thought.



In these days, the Bible has been demoted, misinterpreted, ignored, or replaced by human reason, empiricism, or mysticism. Biblical Truth has been laid aside, and in its place finite, autonomous man, with his evolutionary thoughts, has risen to dominate the educational scene, film industry, television industry, and media of all kinds.

The Apostate playground.



Here we have what I have called the “Apostate Playground”- or an accommodation attempt. Actually, this is the area of supposed religious “neutrality”, filled with relative truth. This is an

extremely dangerous area. This is where the mind of man with his rationalism and mysticism takes over the authority of God's Word. This is where the objective Word of God is made subjective to man's desires. This is where a person reads a passage of Scripture out of context and makes doctrine out of it. This is where a person reads into Scripture what he wants Scripture to verify for him (tell me I'm right), or tries to make Scripture something of a great mystery and is continually looking for the "key" to unlock the codes for understanding this great metaphorical writing. I see this as the area of the false teachers and false teachings that the New Testament writers warned about. Men who have stepped out from under the authority of Scripture and refuse to accept it as it is written, but continually twist, misinterpret, even deliberately misconstrue passages to entice people to their authority. This is more of a problem in this postmodern church age than most believe. People have been lulled into the confusing of the objective revelation of God with the subjective, independent use of human reason and mysticism. This is, in reality, man usurping God's authority and manipulating God's Word to accommodate his own desires.

So what if this or that group wants to emphasize "tongues" as a manifestation of a true believer?
So what if this or that group believes that they have intimate contact with the Holy Spirit and are mystically "lead" by Him?

So what if another group believes that Baptism "saves" a person?

So what if this or that group allows gay and lesbian marriages or allows openly gay and lesbian ministers?

So what if we emphasize the love of God over His Righteousness and Justice?

I'll tell you what it does. It makes man God, and God man!

This is man in self glorification. This is man controlling God. This is rebellion against the authority of the very Word of God.

Not only are the leaders of these groups Biblically blind, but the congregations they "minister" to are also blind, having partial truths and no sound doctrine.

Look, if you believe that man was only "wounded" at the Fall, and not "spiritually dead" (the doctrines of sin and man's depravity), then your doctrine will teach that man is basically good and just needs a little help to get back on his feet so he can do good works and merit salvation. And because man can earn his own salvation, there was no need for a substitutionary death of Christ (the doctrine of atonement). Oh, it was nice that He came to give us an example and show us the way to live and motivate us to do good works; like feed the hungry, visit the sick, bring justice for the oppressed, bring poverty to an end, and fight tyranny. This is the only gospel these people have. This is their "good news". These are confused souls. To them unity means more than doctrine.

Another problem with the God-suppressing system of the unrighteous mind, and the unbiblical system of thinking of the apostate mind is, that once you have been taught evolutionary thinking, or gone apostate with false doctrinal teaching and placed your faith (without reason?) in it, and become immersed in that way of thinking throughout your academic life, church life and beyond, living your life accordingly and choosing your friends accordingly, **you have clothed yourself with a blanket of intellectual comfort and you will cling to it with tooth and claw.** You cannot give up this way of thinking. Otherwise, you've got to admit that the whole system of

thinking that you've wrapped your life around is wrong, and that embarrassment is something few people are willing to endure. But thank God that His Grace still abounds!

Let's look at the seriousness of the apostate situation.

The Apostate

Believer (faith alone in Christ Alone)

Believer reads/ hears incorrect teaching

Believer follows false teaching

Believer believes false teaching

Believer marries unbeliever

Believer is confused on Gospel

Believer's children are unbelievers

Remember, the apostate is a believer that is out from under the authority of Scripture. They are saved people who, by grace, at one time had "faith alone in Christ alone", but, because they have not been properly taught in Scripture, have been enticed by false teachers and told that what they believed was not enough or was wrong and what they really need to do is to be baptized to be saved, or speak in tongues, or prophecy through the Holy Spirit as a sign of salvation; or other leaders will emphasize the love of God and preach that all men are children of God so that we must not exclude anyone from our congregation regardless of doctrine, lifestyle, or belief. Let's just be a "loving" community.

And the apostate follows this authority and believes the lie.

(The Ecumenical Movement does the same thing. It places unity over doctrine and that is simply rebellion against the authority of the Bible). Yes, these people are sincere, but they are sincerely ignorant of the context of God's Word.

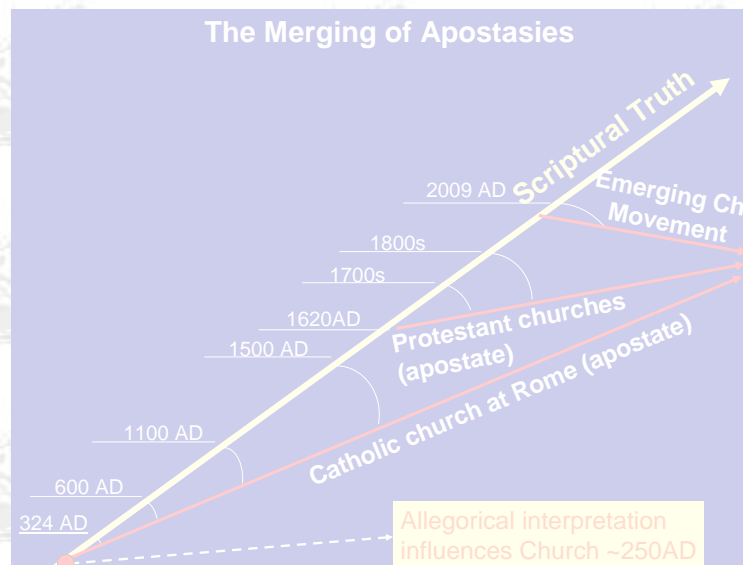
And here's what happens to the apostate. This believer marries someone he or she met in this mislead mega church, and they start to have children. Neither the father nor the mother know enough sound doctrine to explain the gospel of Jesus Christ to their children – and so their children and the following generations of children never hear the true gospel and remain unsaved – that's the tragedy of apostasy.

As an aside, this is an area that points to the importance of male leadership, especially for fathers. How are we going to protect our family against these false and apostate teachings, if we don't know sound Biblical doctrine ourselves? How are we going to help our son or daughter look for the Biblical man or Biblical woman for marriage if we aren't serious about the authority

of the Word of God? These are dangerous times, and we need to ask questions, be discerning, and take theology seriously.

We are blessed by God, in this assembly, to have the word of God taught to us in a correct hermeneutic, so that we can understand the Bible correctly. Take advantage of it. Learn proper Biblical doctrine. Don't be deceived. Remember, discernment is not knowing right from wrong, it's knowing right from almost right.

And, yes, the area of "hermeneutics" is extremely important. The Reformers knew that in the 1500s, when one of their battle cries was Sola Scriptura – Scripture alone as final authority. The early church fathers used a literal method of Biblical interpretation, and as various heresies were uncovered, they began to form the beginnings of a guideline for Biblical interpretation.



Unfortunately, somewhere around 250AD, the Greek influence of Origen at the School of Alexandria won the day with his allegorical method and it was adopted and remained the only sanctioned method of interpretation until the Reformation. During the Protestant Reformation the literal, grammatical-historical method was reintroduced, but it took less than a hundred years, and the "protests" of the reformers was waning. Rationalism (Rene Decartes) and Pietism (Philipp Spener) were on the horizon, along with the whole Enlightenment Period. Private interpretation, personal piety, and mysticism lead to movements that will spawn various Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, along with a general dislike for doctrine. And, so in the big picture, we can see one after another apostasy taking its toll as the various apostasies veer from Scriptural truth and sound doctrine derived from careful exegetical study.

With regard to the question of Church Authority, the early Church Fathers struggled to understand what "church authority" meant. In the beginning, the truth of Scripture was the authority, no matter who was in charge. But over time this thought of authority gradually shifted as various models of hierarchy were introduced, until finally the authority of truth of Scripture was laid aside and the hierarchical structure of the church clergy became the authority. So we see this go from a "succession of truth" to a "succession of men", and a shift from God's Authority to man's authority. (Satan's work was subtle, but very effective).

Well, we've looked at authority from the Biblical view and the Pagan view and we've looked at the confusing of the subjective, independent human reason and mysticism – making God man and man God, with the objective, authoritative revelation of God.

Let's remember who we are as created beings, and keep in mind that God is "God", whether we like it or not, and we owe Him our allegiance and obedience. We can do nothing better than to realize just how small, finite, and transitory we really are as creatures.

Let us not be like the people of the Northern Kingdom at the time of Elijah when he challenged the prophets of Baal to a showdown between Yahweh and Baal.

1 Kings 18:21 reports, "Elijah came near to all the people and said, 'How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the **LORD** is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.' But the people did not answer him a word." A sad and telling statement, for these people had gone apostate and were following this false god.

Choose your allegiance. Choose in whom you will place your trust. Choose which authority you will be under. If the Bible is truly the Word of God - obey His Authority. If you don't believe the Bible is inspired, inerrant, and authoritative, then your decision has already been made. But remember, there is no picking and choosing of the verses you desire to place in your theology bag.

This is a matter of the objective truth of Scripture (outside you) versus the subjective, warm, inner feelings of goodness (within you). Simply put, this is a matter of obedience over feelings.

We obey God because He's God!

The Bible is the only book in which we can find eternal truth, true comfort and final authority, because it's God's revelation to man.

Let's be in agreement with Isaiah 40, verse 8:

"The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God stands forever."

—Isaiah 40:8 (NASB)

"The grass withers, the flower fades but the word of our God stands forever." (NASB)

The Word of God, the Bible, must be our final authority.

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