The Foolishness of God

Instructor's Guide

The purpose of this course is to gain an understanding of five concepts: 1) the natural theology in Luther's works, 2) reason as an instrument, 3) the use of reason to judge Biblical truth, 4) Luther's approach to apologetics, and 5) the anti-rationalism in Lutheran theology. Having been written based on a PhD thesis, the book is naturally challenging reading. The instructor needs to invest sufficient time to comprehend the materials and present it in a way that people who do not have formal theological training can comprehend the importance of Luther's teaching on the use of reason.

In teaching advanced topics, it is important for the instructor to realize the goal of his teaching. The saving truths are presented in the Scriptures, but they do not benefit a person's soul unless they are transcribed from the Scriptures onto the wall of faith in the mind and heart of the believer. Ideally, a Christian's faith will be beautiful mural of all the teachings of the Bible appropriately linked with each other to give the Christian a perfect knowledge of God's will. This mural will never be completed in this world, but it is important that the Christian and those that teach him or her work to make it more complete. While pastors have a well-developed mural based on long and systematic training, laypeople often have scattered facts from the Bible placed here and there on their wall of faith. Sometimes they are misconnected with each other, and sometimes wrong information learned from non-Scriptural sources will be intertwined with Scriptural truth. In his presentation of the Scriptural material, the teacher will always try to guide his hearers so that they will put it into the correct place and make the correct attachments to the other materials that are there. This is what makes teaching the word of God challenging and rewarding.

For this course, which will study reason as applied to the Scriptures, it is desirable to discuss the ways in which scholars attempt to find and define truth. There are four fundamental ways that this is done: 1) theology, which is based on divine revelation, 2) philosophy, which is based on self-evident truth, 3) mathematics and formal logic, which are forms of deductive reasoning based on definition, and 4) science, which is a form of inductive reasoning based on observation. As an aid in making a solid presentation of these ideas, reading chapter one of *Clearing a Path for the Gospel* can be quite useful.

This course is set up to be taught in seventeen sessions, but the material in the lessons can be regrouped for any number of class periods that are available. From educational research we know that reading the material before the class, answering the study questions, and considering the issues that are being raised by the readings are essential to maximize learning. Students should be strongly encouraged to do so.

Note that the study questions and answers are inserted in the teaching text where they might be used, but they can be moved in the actual presentation or ignored.

1 - Introduction

I. Luther and the meaning of reason

Q1. What were Luther's "two minds" about reason? A: Luther saw reason as the "devil's bride" when it was used to augment or change the Scriptures but as "the greatest gift of God" when it was used to understand the Scriptures.

A. Luther's "irreconcilable" statements

Q2. How is this shown in his explanation to the Apostles Creed? A: In the explanation of the First Article, he thanks God for the blessing of reason, but in the Third Article he claims it to be useless for faith.

1. Reason is a big red murderess, the devil's bride, a damned whore, a blind guide, the enemy of faith, the greatest and most invincible enemy of God. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him." (Luther's Explanation of the Third Article) {*"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."* 1 Corinthians 12:3b}

2. Reason is God's greatest and most important gift to man, of inestimable beauty and excellence, a glorious light, a most useful servant in theology, something divine. "I believe that God has created me together with all creatures. He has given me and still preserves my body and soul, my eyes, ears and all my bodily parts, my reason and all my senses." (Luther's Explanation of the First Article) {*"For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."* Proverbs 2:6}

3. Theology and philosophy are incompatible. Theology comes from the holy mind of God, but philosophy comes from the sinful mind of man. {"*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.*" Colossians 2:8}

B. Scholastic view of reason

Q3. What was scholasticism? A: An effort to develop a rational basis for Christianity using the philosophy of the Greeks, such as Aristotle.

1. A common axiom of Scholasticism was "reason intercedes for the best." This is the magisterial use of reason where reason acts as a judge of the meaning of the Scriptures.

2. Scholasticism and the mind. a) Upper mind – the part of the mind that has been undamaged by the fall in which enlightened reason exists. b) Lower mind – the base and animalistic part of the human mind, prone to sin. c) "Reason allows man to reach the very threshold of the Christian faith." (Thomas Aquinas) d) Without understanding Aristotle one could not become a Christian theologian because Scripture could only be interpreted through Aristotle.

C. Theology of Luther's time

Q4. What is the importance of Thomas Aquinas in Roman Catholic philosophy? A: Aquinas is central to Catholic thinking because he established the justification of altering doctrine to fit reason.

1. Thomists. a) Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274, Dominican) believed that truth is to be accepted no matter where it is found. He believed there is a unity of all truth which allows pagans to find God. This one-truth thesis was an anchor of Greek philosophers, who believed that no matter where one started, one could eventually learn all truth in the universe. b) "The capital theses in the philosophy of St. Thomas are not to be placed in the category of opinions capable of being debated one way or another, but are to be considered as the foundations upon which the whole science of natural and divine things is based." (Pope Pius X, 1914)

   Q5. What was Luther's beef with Aristotle? A: Aristotle believed everything could be resolved using reason. The Roman Catholic Church agreed. Luther believed in the ministerial use of reason, in which reason is used to organize the material in the Scriptures rather than to judge it.

2. Scotists. a) John Duns Scotus (1266-1308, Franciscan) made very free use of Aristotle, but also criticized his use sharply in some areas, adhering to the Old Franciscan teachings about souls, angels and the rule of poverty. He was also influenced by Plato. Plato believed that everything in the real world was imperfect, but that there were perfect forms of all things, and each imperfect real thing had that form dwelling within it. For example, every real dog was imperfect, but it was the ideal form of a dog residing in it that made it a dog. b) Our word "dunce" is derived from his name.

3. Albertists. a) Albertus Magnus (1193-1280, Dominican) was regarded by his adherents as the most reliable interpreter of Aristotle. Albertism was very critical of Plato's Nominalism (there exist underlying perfect forms of all things material) and challenged Thomism and Scotism on a number of issues in the field of logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. b) Albertus was an instructor of Aquinas.

4. Occamists. a) William of Ockham (Occam) (1285-1347, Franciscan) believed that the ways of God were not open to reason, but that God had freely chosen to create a world and establish a way of salvation within it apart from any necessary laws that human logic or rationality could uncover. He had a strongly developed interest in the logical method, and his approach was critical rather than system-building. b) Occam's razor is a rule of thumb which states that the explanation which makes the fewest assumptions is generally the correct one. Occam's razor is not a scientific law, and it only holds under some conditions. People often start with it before developing a more complete model.

5. *Via moderna*. A school of thought that the Christian faith was derived from the Bible but still held that the Catholic Church was the ultimate arbiter of all things spiritual. It was developed to some extent from Ockham and Augustine. Many people feel that this was the starting point for Luther in developing his theology.

II. Neo-orthodoxy

Q6. What is neo-orthodoxy? A: It is an attempt to retain Christian terminology while making its meaning compatible with reason and modern thinking.

A. What is it?

1. Developed as a backlash to previous philosophies in the church. The Enlightenment was the era that occurred after the Renaissance as the search for knowledge became more and more systematized. Rationalism and liberal theology developed in this time period. a). Rationalism had emptied the churches of attendees because it had "rationalized" away people's hope in a supernatural God and eternal salvation. {"*We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.*" 1 Corinthians 2:6} b) Liberal theology had demythologized the Holy Scriptures by applying the same techniques of "higher criticism" to it as were being used on other ancient writings. It had no unified set of propositional beliefs, leaving people with nothing about God that they could be confident was true. {"*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*" Psalm 119:105}

   Q7. What is the central tenet of neo-orthodoxy? A: Faith must be the judge of the Scriptures. There must be no "book faith."

2. A system of using Christian terminology but with non-historical meanings. a) Neo-orthodox sermons can sound very "Christian" and can fool the hearers that the minister shares their beliefs although the actual meanings of his words are far different. {Jesus said, "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'* " Matthew 7:21–23} b) Neo-orthodoxy rejects that any human words can actually represent the immensity of the eternal truths of God, and therefore divine truth can only be grasped through a personal experience with God's Word (i.e., Christ). This idea that the Almighty God could not use human words to communicate with people is ludicrous if one thinks about it, but people who want to sell new philosophies often do not think them through thoroughly. {"*Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*" Deuteronomy 11:18–20}

   Q8. How does Calvinism differ from the Formula of Concord on God's grace? A: Calvin taught that God's grace was limited to the elect ("limited atonement") and the FOC proclaimed universal atonement.

B. Why is neo-orthodoxy something most un-Lutheran?

1. Rejection of the Scriptures as the definitive revelation of God. a) Christ is the only true revelation of God's will. b) Individual Scriptural passages cannot adequately express God's will for man.

2. Rejection of the objective reality of Biblical events. a) Events in the Bible may only have happened in a spiritual sense. b) The Moral Law is important only to the extent that it reflects God's love in people's lives.

2 - Ways of Reasoning

III. Non-theological truth (Each instructor will have to determine how much of the material in this section he wants to teach. It is very useful background for understanding the nature of reason.)

A. Deduction (Mathematical)

1. Humans completely define the domains and the rules governing everything in them. A domain is like a toybox which contains toys. The toys are then the elements of the domain. The permitted ways that the toys can be used to play with each other are the rules. Integers also can be considered a domain, and the numbers are the elements of the domain. a) A rational number (also called a fraction or a ratio) is any number **n** that can be represented as the quotient of two integers **p** and **q** [i.e., **n** = **p**/**q**], where **q** ≠ 0. b) The legal operators are addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. c) Rules: addition and multiplication are both commutative (operations can be done in any order, 1+2=2+1) [$\mathbf{n_1} + \mathbf{n_2} = \mathbf{n_2} + \mathbf{n_1}$] and associative (operations can be grouped in any order, (1+2)+4=1+(2+4)) [$\mathbf{n_1} + (\mathbf{n_2} + \mathbf{n_3}) = (\mathbf{n_1} + \mathbf{n_2}) + \mathbf{n_3}$].

2. Deductive Reasoning moves from the general to the specific. a) Because $\mathbf{n_1} + \mathbf{n_2} = \mathbf{n_3}$, where $\mathbf{n_3}$ is unique, ∴ ½ + ⅓ = ⅚ uniquely. This means that the same operator working on the same data elements will always give the same result. (b If $\mathbf{n_1} > \mathbf{n_2}$ and $\mathbf{n_2} > \mathbf{n_3}$, then $\mathbf{n_1} > \mathbf{n_3}$, (e.g., 7 > 5 and 5 > 3, ∴ 7 > 3).

3. One cannot play with toys that are not in the toybox. Results outside the domain of interest are impossible to prove (i.e., cannot be reached). Deductive reasoning is about proofs. a) No series of legal operations in the set of rational numbers can produce an irrational number such as **π**. Irrational numbers cannot be expressed as ratios. b) If one lived on a two-dimensional surface (like football before the invention of the "forward pass"), one could not prove the existence of a third dimension because one would have no device that could measure anything in a third dimension.

B. Induction (Scientific)

1. Domains are subsets of the natural world (i.e., everything that exists in the realm of spacetime) which contain objects, operators and rules that are not initially known. God defines the following, not man. a) Domains: living things, sub-atomic particles, planets. b) Objects: cells, electrons, rocks, light, dark matter. c) Operators: gravitational fields, electromagnetic fields, strong force. d) Rules: quantum mechanics, conservation of energy, Pauli exclusion principle.

2. Reasoning moves from the specific to the general, i.e., models to explain what is observed. For example, what happens when objects are dropped. All inductive reasoning suffers from the

following three fallacies. Science is useful, but unlike mathematics, nothing in science can be proven. Scientific truth is fragile. a) The fundamental assumption of science is that all physical observations can be explained in terms of the inherent properties of matter, energy, space and time. (This assumption could be a false premise [logical fallacy].) b) A model is created after "enough" evidence is gathered. ("Enough" may not really be enough, making this a hasty generalization [logical fallacy].) Example: the inadequacy of Newton's Laws to explain all motion. [Provisional acceptance] c) While model **A** may completely explain evidence **B**, it may still be the wrong explanation. (**A** can never be shown to be the actual explanation of **B**, therefore this assertion may be a case of inappropriately affirming the consequent [logical fallacy].) Example: the geocentric model of the solar system. [Biostatistics professor George Box: "Basically, all models are wrong, but some of them are useful."] We must beware of the impact of inductive reasoning on the wall of faith.

3. Results outside the domain are always impossible to prove. a) Available measuring devices cannot measure anything that is not part of the spacetime domain (e.g., more than three spatial dimensions), such as the characteristics of a supernatural being. b) To claim that something cannot be known because it is currently not known, and therefore it must have a supernatural cause, is to commit the logical fallacy of appealing to ignorance (e.g., "Scientists will never be able to…."). New discoveries are constantly being made.

C. Syllogistic (Philosophical) [Predicate calculus is a later invention.] The logic of Aristotle.

1. Components are major premises, minor premises and conclusions. a) Major premises are general statements with a middle term and a predicate. Example: All men are mortal. b) Minor premises are specific statements with a subject and a middle term. Example: Socrates was a man. c) Conclusions assert a truth relating the subject and the predicate. Example: Socrates was mortal. d) Middle terms state a characteristic that is hoped to be shared in common by the predicate and the subject. Example: men. e) Predicates state a truism about the characteristic of the middle term. Example: mortal. f) Subjects are specific examples of the middle term. Example: Socrates. g) Qualifiers: Indicate whether "a", "all", "some" or "no(ne)" of what is indicated in the term is involved. h) Domains are the environments under which the premises are true. (There may be no domain.)

2. Reasoning links the major and minor premises through the middle term to form a conclusion. a) Using all permutations of qualifiers on all of the terms, there are potentially 256 combinations (formats), of which only 11 formats are true. False example: Some people have no hair. Some mammals are not people. Therefore no mammals have hair. b) Conclusions are true only if both premises are true, the middle term has the same meaning in both premises and the syllogistic format is true. If the former is false, it is a false premise fallacy. If the middle term has a different meaning, there is a four-term fallacy. (For example: All men die and decay. Jesus was a man. Therefore, Jesus died and decayed. The term "man" does not have the same meaning in both premises, so the statement is false.) If the syllogistic format is false, the logic is not sound.

3. Results outside the domain are impossible to prove. Hidden assumptions are sometimes used in the premises to attempt to reach outside the domain of definition. Example of hidden assumption fallacy: Assuming that something being true in the natural domain also means that it is true in a supernatural domain, such as "everything that moves has a mover." The premise of this example is not even actually true in the natural domain because of the discovery of Newton's third law of motion.

IV. Theology versus Philosophy on Natural Knowledge

A. Theology (Theology is God's view of what is significant for man to know)

Q1. What is the "image of God"? A: It is the will of and knowledge about God that was written into man's heart at his creation.

1. God set the stage for knowledge. At creation, God wrote the image (knowledge) of Himself into man's heart as a gift: a) The LORD is the creator of the universe and of man. {The LORD said, "*It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.*" Isaiah 45:12} b) The Moral Law is the eternal will of God. {"*They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts.*" Romans 1:15a} c) Man was given the ability to keep God's Law perfectly. {"*Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.*" Romans 5:12}

2. Through the fall man's knowledge of God was effaced. Man became totally corrupt. Through the Fall, man's ability to perfectly respond to God's will was destroyed. a) Man became guilty of original sin. {David wrote, "*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*" Psalm 51:5} b) Man's knowledge of the creator God and his Law became effaced. {David wrote, "*The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*" Psalm 14:2-3}

3. God gave man witnesses to remind him of the natural knowledge he once received. This might be considered God's effort to jog man's heart and mind. a) The physical world should remind man that God is the creator. {David wrote, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.*" Psalm 19:1-4a} b) Man's conscience should remind man that God is just and demanding of perfection. {"*Their consciences also bearing witness*." Romans 2:15b}

4. God holds man responsible for acting on this knowledge even though man can't do so. In Romans 1&2 God declares that He has a right to hold man culpable, whether man realizes it or not. a) Man is without excuse for not seeing God as creator. {"*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being*

understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse." Romans 1:20} b) Man should obey God's law perfectly. {Jesus said, "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" Matthew 5:48} c) God's condemnation is independent of the reason man fails to act properly. {"*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*" James 2:10 / "*The one who sins is the one who will die.*" Ezekiel 18:20}

3 – The Nature of God

B. Philosophy

1. Argument from evolution – Man is a species that evolved to have intellectual capacities far superior to other species because at some point he developed both a longing to understand his environment and a psychological need to control it. He created mythical creatures to help him deal with these two drives. Note that the appeal to science is in itself **not necessarily** good science. Points a through e are rationale some "scholars" give for the reason that people have gods. a) Some of these props were imaginary physical creatures such as fire-breathing dragons, harpies, elves, ogres and centaurs. b) Some were the spirits that supposedly animated physical entities like the sun, land formations or sacred animals. c) Some were human-like beings who were far more powerful and knowledgeable than humans and could influence or control the forces of nature, at least to a limited extent, for human benefit or woe. d) As man learned more about how the universe operated, the stable of imaginary creatures and divine beings has been reduced to the likes of yetis and supernatural beings that are needed to deal with the gaps which still exist in human knowledge. e) Scripts are coded behaviors to permit the subconscious mind to reduce complexity in its evaluation of sensory inputs. (See chapter 9 of *Clearing a Path for the Gospel* for a fuller explanation.) The conscience evolved as a self-defense mechanism. Members of the human species saw that they were safer in groups. Those who were more willing to adopt a group morality survived at a higher rate. After multiple generations, the genes which supported this scripting became dominant, and the conscience became genetically coded for, as for any other human characteristics. f) "*Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*" Deuteronomy 8:11–14.

2. Argument from fairness – It would be unfair for God to judge anyone based the act of their unbelief in not recognizing God's witnesses without regarding the cause of such unbelief. Not all unbelief is necessarily the result of maliciousness, but it might rather be the result of ignorance or incompetence. The following are human excuses. a) People might be ignorant of the wonders of nature if they are blind, live in an urban slum or are very young. In these cases the people have not seen the wonders of nature as Abraham did or as a cowboy in Wyoming does. They really do not know the great things that God has created. Similarly, people might be ignorant if they were raised in an atheistic or materialistic environment where they were taught a radically different morality and were brainwashed into believing that no god exists. For example, in a Communist

state. b) People are often simply incompetent in observing their environment. We have all had the experience of being unable to find something that was lying right in front of us. Cognitive psychologists have discovered that the mental scripts which control how we process the sensory inputs that we receive do not always work properly. Numerous replicable experiments have shown that people regularly fail to consciously observe many of the events that occur in their presence even if the evidence of these events is picked up by their senses. People have numerous thinking handicaps. The extensive use of cell phones may be making this situation worse. c) Luther's rebuttal: "If the Natural Law had not been inscribed and placed by God into the heart, one would have to preach a long time before the consciences are touched; to a donkey, horse, ox, cow, one would have to preach 100,000 years before they would accept the Law in spite of the fact that they have ears, eyes, and heart, as man has; they can also hear it, but it does not touch their heart" (St. L. III:1053).

Excuses do not justify human actions before God.

V. Luther and Finding God

A. The Hidden God

Q1. What is meant by the phrase "the hidden God"? A: God does not behave in a manner whereby we can read His thoughts or discern His intentions.

1. We cannot find God as He exists. There is no way to find God in His divine majesty. {"*He* [the LORD] *said, 'you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.'* " Exodus 33:20}

2. God does not play hide-and-seek with us. God assumes two different postures. a) God hides Himself from us. {Jesus said, "*No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*" Matthew 11:27} b) God reveals Himself to us. {"*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.*" Deuteronomy 29:29} c) "One should beware of speculation and only hold to Christ in all simplicity." Martin Luther, 1532.

B. The Masks of God

Q2. What are the "masks of God"? A: These are the ways in which God shows His existence and purpose in the physical universe while still concealing Himself from our sight and understanding.

How does God "hide"?

1. Natural objects. a) Breeze – Genesis 3:8 b) Burning bush – Exodus 3:2-6 c) Pillar of cloud and fire – Exodus 13:21

2. Objects with spiritual significance. a) Mercy seat – Exodus 25:22 b) Water of Holy Baptism – Matthew 28:19 c) Bread and wine of the Lord's Supper – 1 Corinthians 10:16

C. The Competence of Man

Q3. In what way is man incompetent after the fall? A: Man is incompetent in spiritual matters and in clearly recognizing God in His works.

1. God did not completely remove man's ability to reason about natural things, but research in cognitive psychology shows it is a lot weaker than most people realize. Man's ability to reason about earthly things is still strong. {Jesus replied, "*When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.*" Matthew 16:2–3}

2. Spiritual things do not make sense to the human mind because they are counterintuitive. Man's ability to reason about spiritual things is totally corrupted. {"*The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.*" 1 Corinthians 2:14}

D. The Proofs of God's Existence

Q4. Why did Luther not place much emphasis on the "proofs" of God's existence? A: He said, "What philosophy can prove, it can also disprove." Philosophy does not work saving faith. It shifts the emphasis from the Scriptures to the thoughts of man.

We need to contemplate the question, "What is man really competent to judge?"

1. Luther rejected the philosophical weight of proofs for God's existence based on the arguments of Thomas Aquinas, which he considered to be only Aristotelianism under a Christian veneer.

2. Luther accepted the theological weight of proofs for God's existence based on the image of God written in man's heart, even though it has become tarnished.

3. Luther recognized that these proofs depended on the person hearing them and might therefore not be always seen objectively.

E. Luther's Platonism

Q5. What is Platonism? A: It is the belief that everything in the physical world exists as an imperfect form, but it contains as its kernel the perfect form, which gives it its identity.

More comments on Platonism might be in order.

1. Platonism is based on the concept that there are underlying forms which are the perfect image of items and which give meaning to the actual items in the physical world.

2. Luther believed that the image of God written into man at the creation, although somewhat marred and defaced, still causes man to respond to the image when activated by appropriate stimuli. Man can see God in nature. Man can feel God's wrath through his conscience. Yet because man is corrupt, he might not.

4 - Proof for the Existence of God

VI. Philosophical "Proofs" of God's Existence

A. The Ontological "Proof" – St. Anselm – God exists because He has to exist!

Q1. Why was the existence of the universe regarded as a proof for the existence of God? A: It is argued that because the universe exists, it must have come into existence through a creator. If one sees a house, one knows that there was a builder.

1. Anselm tried to define something into existence. This is standard practice in mathematics but it is not possible in philosophy or theology. Statement. a) It is possible to imagine a perfect being which has all the highest levels of the best characteristics of every good thing and none of the evil characteristics which exist in the world. b) Such a being could not be perfect unless its essence included actually existing. c) ∴ a perfect being must exist, and that being is God.

2. Rebuttal. a) This argument illegitimately moves from the existence of an idea to the existence of a thing that corresponds to the idea. b) Anselm tries to define something into existence, but that is a fallacy called *mind projection*. c) We cannot create a thing simply by defining it, no matter how reasonable the thing is or how much we want it to exist. d) If we could, we would all be rich.

B. The Cosmological "Proof" - Aristotle/Aquinas

1. Statement. a) Everything that moves must have something to move it (i.e., a mover). b) One can therefore follow the chain of movers backwards until the first (i.e., prime) mover is found. c) Because the prime mover is not set into motion by any other mover, it must be God.

2. Philosophical Rebuttal. a) All observable items that are moved are entities in the *physical world*, and the movers are also *physical* entities. b) The first mover must therefore also be an entity in the physical world, and thus it cannot be supernatural; consequently, it cannot be a god. c) To claim that this first physical mover can only be moved by a supernatural mover requires we further assume 1) that such a supernatural mover exists and 2) that it can influence something in the physical world. d) The first premise has, in effect, a hidden assumption which is the same thing as the conclusion to be proved. (These are called "hidden assumptions" because the proponent makes them without stating them.) This argument is an example of the fallacy called begging the

question (i.e., appearing to prove something by assuming it in one of the premises). This problem occurs any time one tries to "jump domains" in one's proof.

3. Scientific Rebuttal. a) Isaac Newton's discovery of the laws of physical motion showed that the first premise is false, meaning the argument contains the fallacy called false premise. b) Newton's third law of motion states if object **A** applies a force to object **B**, then object **B** applies an equal force to object **A**. c) ∴ objects move each other, and a first mover is not necessary to begin the process.

Luther did not trust philosophical arguments because they were subject to fallacies.

C. Teleological "Proof" – William Paley - Based on the idea that the universe is well-ordered.

1. Statement. a) The cosmos is well ordered, well-balanced and extremely complex. b) In fact, if certain natural constants differed significantly from their observed values, the universe as we know it could not exist. Life would be impossible. c) Just as one can recognize the existence of a skilled watchmaker from the existence of a precise timepiece, one can recognize the existence of God from the precisely organized universe.

2. Rebuttal. a) While the odds may be a billion-to-one against any specific ticket winning a national lottery, eventually someone will get a winning ticket. Even if it appears that the odds for any particular universe existing out of all possible universes are astronomically low, yet at least one of these many universes clearly does exist now. If we were not in that universe, then we would not exist to be considering the issue! b) It may be that the critical universal constants so necessary for life are, in fact, forced to have their specific values by the very nature of matter, energy, space and time, but this has not yet been determined. There are about 20 natural constants for which scientists are currently trying to find why they have their specific values. c) If statement b is true, the existence of the universe as we know it would not be improbable at all, but would be forced by these constants. d) Simply because we do not know something now does not mean it is unknowable. The fallacy at the root of this argument is called the argument from ignorance.

D. The Moral "Proof" – The argument is based on the need for morality in society.

Q2. Why was the moral sense of man regarded as a proof for the existence of God? A: If God is good, then He would want man to be good. Man senses that he must be good, or he will be judged. ∴ There must be a judge, who is God. (∴ means "therefore.")

1. Statement. a) Human society requires an ethical basis to survive. b) Ethics are more effectively enforced if people fear a God and eternal punishment and have a hope for eternal life. c) Therefore God must exist because humans need to have such an ethical framework.

2. Rebuttal. a) The expediency of a belief does not prove its truthfulness. Key point! b) Even the promise of heaven and the threat of hell do not prevent crime or build just societies. c) The fear of immediate consequences and the promise of immediate reward are much stronger motivators, and

these can exist even in a totalitarian society. d) Because of the existence of contrary evidence, this is an example of the false premise fallacy.

VII. Luther and How God is Known

A. Luther and Probability

1. An explanation of the nature of disputation might be useful. The statements for several disputations exist in Luther's Works. George Major's Theses. a) Disputations were used in the medieval universities as tests to show a candidate's ability to defend his ideas, much as a PhD examination is now. It was also used to clarify differences in ideas between disputants. b) Major tried to prove the existence of God by leaning a bunch of dominoes together without a central support. Explaining the concept of *sedes doctrinae* might be helpful here.

   Q3. What is the weakness of philosophical proofs? A: At best, they have only an uncertain degree of probability of being true.

2. Weakness of philosophical proofs. a) Philosophical proofs of supernatural ideas can never be shown to be absolute, but can only be shown with a high degree of probability. Even still, this is a gross overstatement in light of what has subsequently been learned. b) Luther rejected that "probability is the guide of life" in religious matters. c) Luther realized that the "existence of evil" argument was a strong argument against an almighty and good God. d) The value of the natural knowledge of God is weak with Christians and easily attacked by Satan in unbelievers. Cicero was an example of someone who accepted the philosophical proofs for a god but still had doubts about its existence. e) Luther held that reason could never attain the certainty that a faith in the true God demands. The weakness of philosophical proofs cannot be overemphasized because they are so tempting.

   Q4. Why did the Scholastic theologians come to mix philosophy with theology? A: Scholastics believed in the one-truth thesis.

3. The "one-Truth" theory of knowledge. a) Philosophers from ancient times believed that all truth was interconnected. If something was true in mathematics then some corresponding thing was true in philosophy and theology. b) The one-Truth concept was responsible for the Scholastic theologians relying on Aristotle to help them understand the Scriptures. c) Today it is accepted that there can be different truths based on different standards of truth just as there can be different card games based on different sets of rules. What is true (legal) in one game is false in another. For example, bridge and hearts. Today we have post-modernism, which might be call the "all-truth" theory of knowledge.

5 - Luther and the Natural Knowledge of God

B. A Two-fold Knowledge of God

Q1. What did Luther consider the two-fold knowledge of God? A: The Law as seen in nature and given in the Scriptures, and the Gospel as given in the Scriptures.

1. Natural law knowledge. a) Everyone has an inherent theological knowledge of God from the image of God which was written into man's heart at creation. This theological argument is likely to be rejected by philosophers and social scientists. {"*When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law*." Romans 2:14} b) This image has been weakened by sin and is unreliable at pointing the sinner to God. {"*The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time*." Genesis 6:5} c) Despite its corruption, it can and sometimes does respond to God's witnesses of nature and conscience to a limited extent but never with saving results. {"*All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god*." Jonah 1:5}

2. Scriptural law knowledge. a) The Law given through Moses reinforced the law written into man's heart at creation. This law told of a just God who had a high standard of righteousness and who would punish all sins severely. Access could only be gained to Him through the shedding of blood. {"*Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God.*" Galatians 3:11} b) The law left man ignorant of the saving God even though he might recognize a divine lawgiver whom he had to placate. Yet, many people have not been able to grasp that by their deeds they cannot become justified before God. This was a chronic problem for the Israelites. {"*How then can we be saved? All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away*." Isaiah 64:5b–6}

3. Gospel knowledge. a) Only faith of the heart in the Gospel of Jesus Christ can save. {Peter said, "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved*." Acts 4:12} b) Knowledge of the Gospel must precede faith in the Gospel. {"*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*" Romans 10:14} c) Mere knowledge without faith in what is known also will not save. {Jesus said, "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'* " Matthew 7:21–23} There needs to be a dynamic progression from head to heart to hands in saving faith.

VIII. Natural Knowledge and Reason

A. Luther's Rejection of Thomism

1. Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism and synergism. a) Pelagianism is the belief that original sin did not taint human nature and that the human will is still capable of choosing good or evil without special divine assistance. People can therefore learn to please God and be saved through their

own efforts, particularly if they use Jesus as a guide. St. Augustine opposed this teaching. b) Semi-Pelagianism is the belief that original sin did to some degree corrupt human nature but that the human will is still capable of seeking God. This was a redo of Pelagianism, and some of the popes at the time somewhat supported it. God will respond by giving the grace necessary for salvation to those who honestly seek him (Thomas Aquinas' argument) even if they do not initially have the divine revelation of Jesus the Messiah. c) Synergism is the belief that while God must give the initial grace through Jesus Christ to get people on the path to salvation (current Roman Catholic teaching), they must then cooperate with God to accomplish their salvation either through their good works or their choosing to accept the offered grace (Arminian teaching).

Q2. What was Thomism? Try to be specific about the ideas. A: Acceptance of the one-truth thesis. ∴ Man can find God through natural knowledge. Reason leads to the realization that revelation is needed.

2. Thomism is the heart of Scholastic Theology. a) Guided by the one-truth thesis, Aquinas argued that the heathen can through their own efforts, at least in theory, do what is necessary to gain God's gift of the grace necessary for salvation. Because all truth is interconnected, there must be a pathway to divine truth. b) The natural knowledge of God by itself gives a light to people which allows them to find their way to the greater light of the gospel. c) Anyone following the dictates of reason in religion will come to the recognition that there is a need for divine revelation to reach the goal of salvation.

Q3. What was Luther's refutation of Thomism? A: Luther claimed that the "light of reason" was itself darkness. The natural knowledge of God leads to work righteousness, not faith.

3. Luther's refutation. These points need to be emphasized because people are always tempted to grasp for natural proofs. a) Luther believed that the "light of reason" was itself a deep darkness that caused people to hallucinate so they thought they were seeing things in a clear light. {"*Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.*" Isaiah 8:20} b) Honorable heathen scholars like Cicero did not find God's revelation, but came to despair of the existence of any god. c) Natural knowledge, when it works at all, leads people to try to find ways to finesse God into accepting what they have to offer rather than seeking His mercy. People rely on themselves when they can and seek a "friend in high places," either human or divine, when facing problems that they cannot themselves solve. This is a repudiation of the First Commandment and therefore the whole will of God. {The LORD said, "*Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble!*" Jeremiah 2:28a}

B. Natural Knowledge Always Legalistic

Q4. Why is natural knowledge always legalistic? A: Nature works through fixed laws of action and reaction. Natural knowledge implies the same should be true for our relationship to God. He needs to be pleases by our works for us to be saved, which means *quid pro quo*.

1. The heathen. a) Like the Romans, many among the heathen thought that by having a fair and detailed set of laws, they could become people worthy of acceptance by the gods. b) Like the Stoic philosophers, some among the heathen thought they could reach a state of human perfection by a rigorous lifestyle that would make them even more worthy before men and the gods. c) Luther argued that this was "natural religion," a *quid pro quo* approach to dealing with the prompting of conscience. Offering a *quid pro quo* form of Christianity can fill churches but leave heaven empty. The devil loves "pew potatoes," i.e., people who believe they will be saved merely by coming to church, because he knows that no one will feel the need to try to evangelize them.

2. The monks. a) The monks went beyond the heathen in that they believed that their additional rules of conduct were so pleasing to God that not only would they be able to save themselves but that they would have extra merit before God that they could share with others. b) Luther regarded this as Pharisaic because the monks had the divine revelation to know the function of the law and the need for the gospel, but they ignored it in favor of their own efforts at virtue. {Jesus said, "*The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'* " Luke 18:11–12} We need to avoid trying to be "too good to be saved" by Jesus' blood.

C. The Value of Natural Knowledge

Q5. What did Luther see as the value of natural knowledge? A: The natural knowledge was a curb to social ills.

1. Outward order in society – the conscience, even when the law it preaches is a distorted copy of God's law or even a law concocted by human wisdom, causes people to behave in a restrained fashion toward each other. This makes society possible. [Law as a curb.]

2. Preparation of the heart – the preaching of the conscience, even when it is erring, serves to break up the sod of the heart. It gives people a feeling that there is a right and wrong, which does not exist in oxen and sheep. This, Luther claimed, made the preaching of God's law and gospel more effective because it could connect to what the LORD had already implanted in man.

Civil righteousness is a tool of God even if it does not save.

6 - The Use of Reason - I

When Immanuel Kant wrote *A Critique of Pure Reason*, he recognized that things eternal were beyond reason. Despite this, people continue to try to reason God into a corner or find some way of leveraging Him by means of reason. Reading Chapter 9 of *Clearing a Path for the Gospel* may be helpful.

IX. The Limitation of Reason

A. The Nature of Reason

1. Reason is the capacity of consciously making sense of things, establishing and verifying statements, applying logic, and changing or justifying practices, institutions and beliefs based on new or existing evidence. a) Reasoning must take place within a specific domain using specific ground rules. For example, to reason about a "bat" one must know whether one is in the domain of baseball or a cave. Failure to understand the context of what is being reasoned about leads to significant errors [e.g., Fresno Flipper (The Fresno Flipper is a short story about news reaching the student body of a small college in the 1950's that the Fresno Flipper was coming to the campus. Some thought he was an acrobat, some a seal act, and some a singer who made all the girls "flip." The hilarious conflict among the various groups as they tried to set up the auditorium as a proper venue for the Flipper's arrival is the meat of the story. When the Flipper arrives, he is flipping a coin, followed by his secretary recording each of the flips on a long piece of paper.)]. b) Reasoning is a prisoner of the quality of the data with which it has to work. For example, given a ruler whose calibration is wrong will give one the wrong length of anything measured. (A spacecraft once crashed onto Mars because someone confused English and metric measurements.)

2. While reasoning should always be objective to obtain the most favorable outcome, the reasoning process is often corrupted by man's sinful nature and hidden assumptions. a) Because the conscious mind has a short-term memory with a very limited capacity to hold information, it must rely on pulling information from long-term memory. Unfortunately, each time such memories are accessed, they are changed. This is automatic and often causes faulty reasoning from memorized information. (Three days after the event, researchers asked numerous people where they were and what they were doing at the time they learned of the 9/11 events. When they asked the same people the same questions 5 years later, half of them gave dramatically different answers.) b) Evidence suggests that we are born with certain inherent assumptions which affect our later decisions, and more hidden biases accumulate during life. We are often unaware of the role that these play in our subsequent reasoning. (This is pretty similar to the concept of original sin.)

3. As well as induction and deduction, sometimes forms of "soft reasoning" creep into our argumentation. While looser forms of analysis have a place in our lives, they must be recognized and avoided in theological reasoning. a) Intuition is the feeling of what makes sense based on one's experience in similar situations without hard evidence of what will happen this time. For example, if there is a runner on second base with nobody out and with the team desperately needing a run, the manager needs to determine the strategy to employ given his available batting order. b) Abduction is making an educated guess based on inadequate evidence to make a solid inference. This is often used in game-playing where a game is too complex to rigorously test all the possible move combinations. c) Fuzzy logic is a way of combining information which is not strictly true or false (a matter of probability) to get an estimate of the validity of the combination.

B. Reason's Incompetence at Science

Q1. How did science at Luther's time differ from science today? A: Luther's time—science referred to all forms of analytical scholarship. Today—science refers to the non-Humanities where there are observable effects of nature (evidence).

Q2. What was the danger that Luther saw in science? A: Trying to establish a truth above Scriptural truth, including the one-truth thesis.

1. Science at Luther's time was far different from science now. a) From before the time of Plato until time of Galileo, science was regarded as a branch of philosophy, sometimes called natural philosophy. b) This "philosophical science" was derived wholly out of the minds of the philosophers with only the most basic observations of nature, the kind that everyone makes on a daily basis. There was no experimentation to validate the ideas that were hypothesized to explain natural phenomena. c) Luther rejected that such an approach to understanding nature could ever gain any traction at understanding how the universe, as God's creation, worked. (One cannot probe the mind of God.) d) Because of the one-truth thesis, if science could gain traction at understanding nature, then it could also finally be able to understand God, which Luther saw as a clearly unscriptural attempt to make an idol of God. {"*Be careful not to forget the covenant of the* LORD *your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol (e.g., a golden calf) in the form of anything the* LORD *your God has forbidden. For the* LORD *your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God*." Deuteronomy 4:23–24}

2. Modern science differs radically from the science at Luther's time. a) Modern science rejects the one-truth thesis and regards truth as something measured according to a standard. It therefore decouples objective truth (that is truth measured according to a standard) from the subjective truth of philosophy, and it further divides objective truth into experimental truth and observational truth. The former is more reliable than the latter. b) By separating the realm of the physical and biological sciences from the realm of theological truth, scientists can use reason as Luther thought proper on the things of this world rather than on the things of God and of faith. c) There is no way to reconcile scientific truth, which is always provisional, with revealed Biblical truth, which is always absolute. They are based on different assumptions.

B. Reason's Incompetence for the Study of Causes

Q3. What is the nature of the "causes" to which Luther refers? A: Causes = why things happened. Immediate = visible reasons. Ultimate = unseen reasons.

1. The nature of causes a) Causes are generally divided into two categories. The causes that are called "material," "formal" or "instrumental" or intermediate are those causes of events which can be measured by scientific instrumentation or extrapolated from the data gained from such observations. For example, the instrumental cause of a train moving forward is the locomotive on one end. There may be a number of causes of this type for an event to occur. b) Those causes called "final" or "effective" are the underlying reason why the event occurred so that the event would not have happened without them. For example, a written train order caused an engineer to use the locomotive to move the train.

2. Science, philosophy, theology, and causes a) Science is by its own fundamental assumption limited to explaining things in terms of material or instrumental causes in the physical spacetime

universe. Final causes are therefore outside of its realm of study, that is, in a realm where humans are not involved. b) Philosophy is not limited by natural/supernatural boundaries in its assumptions and its reasoning, but all its conclusions are only as valid as its assumptions. Since we cannot see into the supernatural realm, the conclusions are always speculative. c) In theology, The final cause of everything is the will of God who ordains it or at least permits it to happen within the latitude that he gives to human and demonic agents. While events in the physical world may have material or instrumental causes, only the power of the Almighty God enables them to happen because He has all the power that exists. He reveals to us some of His final causes in the Scriptures, but most of His final causes are among the things that He hides from us. (See the "The Presence of the LORD," a paper available on the In Terra Pax website.) {"*Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor? Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding?*" Isaiah 40:13–14 / "*Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat— for he grants sleep to those he loves.*" Psalm 127:1–2}

X. The Place of Reason

A. Reason, A Great Gift of God

Q4. Why did John Wesley disagree with Luther's commentary on Galatians? A: Luther used reason to condemn the use of "Reason."

1. John Wesley and those like him.

a) Like many in all ages, Wesley combined what we should properly call "pure reasoning" (which might not actually be true) with a feeling of emotional satisfaction which a reasoner gets when he proves that something is true to his satisfaction (i.e., internal threshold).

b) Wesley desired that Christian doctrines could be expressed in clear logic so that people could see the hand of God leading them to eternal life.

Q5. Why is Luther's differentiation between reason and the image of God at first shocking? A: The image of God was lost in the fall. Reason was weakened in the fall but is still usable for earthly things. God's wisdom is not like our reason.

2. Luther and reason. a) Luther's efforts to articulate a clear and consistent position of the role of reason was hampered by the baggage accumulated by the scholastic theologians. Not only did Luther have to overcome this personally, but all his hearers and readers also had such baggage. They naturally interpreted everything in terms of the scholastic framework, so sometimes it was necessary for Luther to overstate an aspect of his position to break through the scholastic mindset of his audience. Therefore, one has to carefully consider the context of Luther's statements. b) Luther maintained that reason was not part of the image of God which was written into man's heart at creation. If it had been, then man would be similar to the beasts that cannot reason very well about even earthly things. Therefore, reason, when used for earthly things, remains a great,

untarnished gift of God. c) Luther's position has been widely opposed by those who want a connection between man's ability to reason and his ability to understand the truths of God based on some sort of natural knowledge. Luther clearly understood that spiritual things could not be grasped by reason; therefore, reason could not be part of the divine image though man before the Fall could grasp the things of God. d) This is a critical distinction because it allowed the shattering of the one-truth model of knowledge. Reason could grasp truths measured against standards of the physical world, but it could not grasp the lost image of God which required a separate spiritual understanding.

7 - The Use of Reason - II

X. The Place of Reason (Cont.)

B. The Sphere of Reason

Q1. What did Luther regard the sphere of reason? A: The present universe–as in now, not in where from or in where to from here.

1. Reason and boundary conditions a) A "boundary condition" limits the domain in which something is true. For example, a boundary condition for rational numbers is that the divisor cannot be equal to zero. Similarly, desktops abruptly end at the edge. b) To use reason to evaluate something, one must know what standard of truth applies. For example, if an outfielder is running backward to catch a fly ball, he is not permitted to vault the outfield fence to catch it. It must be caught on the field of play. Likewise, it is silly to use reason to deduce the properties of the offspring of an alley cat and a block of marble because they cannot mate.

Q2. What is metaphysics? A: Philosophy that investigates first (ultimate) causes in the abstract.

2. The domains of reasoning. a) The physical world, "spacetime" in the vocabulary of physical scientists, is a world where reasoning works very well. One can see what one is working with and measure phenomena by scales which one establishes. Granted, as one advances in the study of physics, the reasoning becomes more than a little convoluted because the laws of nature are not straightforward. Nevertheless, by mathematics if not by words one can reason about such matters. If we are willing to put in the work, we can solve problems, either exactly or within a restricted set of possibilities. The soundness of the reasoning is, of course, limited by the evidence available. Because no physical measurement can be informative about the supernatural world, reasoning in this domain cannot help us understand or validate actions by God. b) Philosophy, at least in the general sense, is rooted in the mind of man, even when it refers to things physical or things supernatural. As the German protest song goes concerning our thoughts – *Kein Mensch kann sie wissen, kein Jäger erschießen mit Pulver und Blei: Die Gedanken sind frei!* While reasoning in this domain, it is very hard to keep prejudices and emotions out of the reasoning process. The result of this reasoning is driven as much by current popular sentiment as by reliable evidence. This is why reasoning based on philosophy is of no value in discerning the things of God. c) Metaphysics, in particular, which is the branch of philosophy that deals with the first

principles of things (i.e., ultimate causes), including abstract concepts such as being, knowing, substance, cause, identity, time, and space, often leads to abstract theory with no basis in reality. d) Reasoning about revelation can help us to understand the things of God, but only to a limited extent. After all, revelation is not of human origin, so it does not have to make sense to the human faculty of reason. When reason works on what God revealed, it must be restricted by the boundary conditions imposed by the Bible.

C. Reason in Communicating Religious Truth

1. Metaphysics versus logic. a) While metaphysics is focused on the abstract (an oxymoron), logic does not have to be so focused. Logic is domain-independent and can work equally well in the hardest science and in the most speculative philosophy. However, the validity of the results will depend on how well-grounded the premises are. b) The difficulty in using logic in any field is that by inserting hidden assumptions into one or more of the premises, one can reduce anything into pure speculation. Keeping metaphysics from creeping into theology is a daunting task.

   Q3. Why did Luther place so high a regard on a knowledge of the original Biblical languages? A: He feared the twisting of the text in translation, i.e., different usages in different languages.

2. The use of language. a) How things are expressed in a language is critical. "Let's eat grandma" has a far different meaning than "Let's eat, Grandma." The immediate context and sentence structure are important. b) The meaning of things in the languages in which they are written must often be studied carefully before they are translated into another language. As well as the phrasing, every language has its own "gestalt" of presentation. Things translated the same from two different languages can have radically different meanings (e.g., the use of the "double negative" to give a positive or to intensify the negation).

3. Knowledge versus faith. a) Learning a subject, including the Bible, requires building a matrix (mural) of the information about the subject which contains a series of data nodes and directed connections (i.e., neural nets). One's ability to understand something is dependent both on the number and quality of the nodes and the connections. One can develop an extensive knowledge and understanding of the contents of the Bible and their meaning without believing them. Reason is necessary to gain such an understanding. b) Reason, however, cannot create faith, but it can cause one to add to or delete nodes from one's matrix of Biblical knowledge in an effort to make it more acceptable for human sensibilities. Here human reason can run amok. Faith requires knowledge, but it also requires the work of the Holy Spirit to cause the knowledge to become a living entity. Letting reason become the interpreter of the Scriptures will quickly kill faith because it poisons (adds to) or depletes (subtracts from) the critical nourishment upon which faith relies. {"*If anyone adds anything to them [the words of the prophecy of this scroll], God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. If anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City.*" Revelation 22:18–19}

8 - The Use of Reason - III

It is a good idea to review what has been said about reason up to this point.

XI. Harnessing of the Power of Reason

A. Rules and Reason

Q1. What is allegory? A: A literary device where each element of the story symbolizes something in another realm.

1. Development of allegorical interpretation in the church. a) Plato introduced allegory to philosophy in his work entitled *The Republic*. In one story, known as the Allegory of the Cave, Plato describes a group of people who have lived chained to the wall of a cave all their lives facing a blank wall. The people watch shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of a fire and begin to ascribe forms to the shadows. The people tried to explain the world in terms of the shadows that they saw. b) Origen, in his *Treatise on First Principles*, recommends that the Old and New Testaments be interpreted allegorically at three levels, the "flesh," the "soul," and the "spirit." c) In the Middle Ages people shaped their ideas and institutions by drawing on the cultural legacies of the ancient world. They did not see any disconnections between themselves and their ancestors. They visualized a continuum between themselves and the ancient world by using allegory to close the historical gaps. d) Medieval scholars believed the Old Testament needed to serve as an allegory of New Testament events, such as the story of Jonah and the whale, which represents Jesus' death and resurrection.

2. The four classical meanings of a Biblical text. This approach shows the danger of human reasoning applied to the Scriptures. a) *Literal* interpretation: the meaning of Scriptural passages in terms of their vocabulary and grammar, using literary and historical context as a guide. b) *Anagogical* interpretation: the use of the passage to explain the future events of Christian history (eschatology) as well as heaven, purgatory, hell, the last judgement and the second coming of Christ. c) *Typological* interpretation: the connection of the events in the Old Testament with those in the New Testament, particularly drawing allegorical connections between the events of Christ's life and the accounts of the Old Testament. d) *Tropological* interpretation: the moral meaning of the accounts and proverbs in the Bible as they can be used as a guide for Christian living.

Q2. Why did Luther come to reject allegory? A: Different interpreters of the Scriptures gave different allegorical interpretations to the Scriptures.

3. Luther and allegory. a) Luther was trained in the scholastic tradition which allegorized every passage in the Scriptures. In his early teaching he began to realize that the allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures varied dramatically with the person making the interpretation. Clearly, these were being created by the interpreter and were not an inherent meaning residing within the Scriptures themselves. b) Luther gradually abandoned allegory as it had been practiced

during medieval times and developed limitations for the use of allegory in explaining the Scriptures.

Q3. What were Luther's rules for interpreting the Scriptures? A: 1) Take as plain speech unless context indicates otherwise, 2) Study the grammar, 3) Consider the context at all levels, & 4) Reason is the maidservant, not the queen.

4. Luther's rules for interpreting the Scriptures. (*Simply Lutheran* contains a section on Lutheran hermeneutics in chapter 3.) a) The words of the text were to be understood in their historical literary manner unless there was a compelling reason not to understand them in this way. Words meant what the ordinary reader would naturally take them to mean unless Scripture itself indicated that they should not be so understood. {*These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children.*" Deuteronomy 6:6–7a / "*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*" Psalm 119:105} b) The proper interpretation of the Bible must be attentive to the grammar of the passage. In particular, the meanings of the verbs are influenced by their tense, person, number and voice. The meanings of nouns and adjectives are influenced by their number and case. c) The proper interpretation of the Bible must consider the context of the passage in terms of the speaker, the hearer and the historical situation, as well as what immediately comes before or after the passage. {"*We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*" 2 Peter 1:19–21} d) In interpreting the Scriptures, reason must always be the maidservant and never the mistress in decision-making. Reason can never be placed over the Scriptures to overturn, exclude or add to what is written in them. {"*See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it*." Deuteronomy 12:32}

B. Syllogisms as applied to Scripture

Q5. What are the dangers in syllogisms? A: 1) False premises, 2) hidden assumptions, 3) false syllogistic forms, & 4) the 4-term fallacy (middle terms are not identical).

1. Premises in syllogistic logic. Note that syllogistic logic is deductive reasoning. a) They must clearly state something which will be accepted as true by all the hearers. For example, "some yellow things are birds." The qualifier "some" here is critical to the truth of the premise because "yellow things are birds" is a false premise, as is "no yellow things are birds." Qualifiers, on the other hand, make it harder to match the middle terms successfully. b) Premises must not have hidden assumptions. For example, "Every person has or had parents." This statement has the hidden assumption that at some point in the past a person was not brought into existence by some other means. It is an example of inductive reasoning being encapsulated into a premise, and inductive reasoning is burdened by the Halting Problem, which has no solution.

2. The dangers of syllogistic logic in theology. a) Because syllogistic logic is a type of deductive reasoning, if it is done correctly, it must yield a valid result. Mathematics, another form of deductive reasoning, always generates the same answer if the mathematical operations are performed correctly. Therefore, people trust mathematics and seldom argue about the solution of a mathematical application. b) A small error in a deductive process will always lead to the wrong answer. Once a wrong premise is accessed or an illegal operation is accepted, deductive reasoning has no way to correct the error, and it may actually amplify it. Reasoning, like a railroad locomotive, has no steering wheel, but will go wherever the switches direct it. It is the switchman, not the engineer, who determines where the train goes.

Q4. How did Luther use syllogisms in his expounding of the Scriptures? A: Only when all the premises were well-grounded in the Scriptures.

3. Restrictions on premises in theology. a) All premises must come from the Bible. The great mistake that many would-be theologians make is to start with a premise from the Scriptures and then add a premise of their own that make sense in the philosophical world but which has no Scriptural basis or which is a distortion of a Scriptural idea. Even with sound logic, the conclusion is no longer a valid expression of the Word of God. b) The premises must be true in the gestalt (analogy) of Scriptures. This means that sometimes the premises may be inconsistent with each other. For example, God would have all men to be saved {"*This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*" 1 Timothy 2:3–4} and God has elected only a few {"*To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:*" 1 Peter 1:1–2a}. In such cases logic is limited in its ability to reduce the incompatibility of the statements, at least according to human philosophy. c) The Triune God is a contrarian. {"*Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor? Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding?*" Isaiah 40:13–14} The very idea of having three independent persons in one divine essence is philosophical nonsense. This problem spreads through many of the teachings of Scripture. Logic can be employed only to the extent that it does not produce a chain of reasoning that contradicts one revealed doctrine on the basis of another revealed doctrine. d) Reasoning concerning the Scriptures must use some form of quadrature which attempts to narrow the meaning of what God is communicating to us by using all the relevant Scriptural statements to establish bounds of the truth. Some doctrines are stated in a manner that is harmonious with human reasoning, but for others one needs to seek the narrow middle position which is consistent with all the statements of the Bible. (see Deutchlander's *The Narrow Lutheran Middle*) e) Theological reasoning is always threatened with the trap of the four-term fallacy. As Luther noted, "Every man is a creature. Christ was a man. Therefore, Christ is a creature." is a false syllogism because man does not have the same meaning in both premises, and as a result, there are four terms, and the syllogism is not resolvable.

XII. Faith as a Rational Process

A. Faith is not the product of reason

1. Man does not come to faith by reason [conversion]. a) Man's heart and mind by nature may be alive temporally, but they are spiritually dead. They cannot comprehend spiritual truths through reason any more than a dead person can respond to things in his environment by reason. Therefore, faith can only come through a transformation of the heart and mind. {"*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient*." Ephesians 2:1–2} b) The necessary transformation can only come from the outside, that is, by the work of the LORD God. {Jesus said, "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.'* " John 6:44–45a}

2. Man does not remain in faith by reason [preservation]. a) Jesus assured His disciples not only that saving faith was a gift from Him but also that He and the Father would preserve them in that faith until the end. In effect, they were relying on the hand of God, not themselves, for their salvation. {Jesus said, "*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand*." John 10:28–29} b) Because of Jesus' promise, the individual can trust that he or she will be saved through the work of God who will sustain faith until the end of life. {"*The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen*." 2 Timothy 4:18} c) Nevertheless, people are warned that the devil is still active and, like Eve, they can be led astray. In effect, man's reason can still be influenced by the devil and decide to abandon the salvation that God has given. {"*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith*." 1 Peter 5:8–9a}

B. Faith as "right reason"

Q6. How did Luther use the term "right reason"? A: As correct thinking about the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

1. Faith creates a new reason. a) Reason is neutral. It operates upon whatever premises are given to it. If it is given evil premises, it will act on them to commit sin and justify sinning. (For example, if one puts bad food into a food grinder, one gets bad food out.) b) Despite the neutrality of reason, it must be connected to the premises it is to use in such a way that it actually uses them in more than an academic manner. If the knowledge needed for faith is supplied, reason can deduce what the appropriate responses to the new information are, but that is inadequate for a saving faith. Instead, reason must be motivated to apply its conclusions to the heart and make them its very life. This is "right reason." One can reason "from faith," but not into faith.) c) The reprogramming of reason will not occur without resistance from the Old Adam that continues to exist within us. The Old Adam will continue to supply our reasoning powers with evil premises

and make them look mighty attractive. It will try to derail right reason and cause our reasoning mechanism to again rationalize sinning.

Q7. What does "Where reason leads, the will follows" mean? A: We do what we can rationalize doing.

2. Reason and the human will. a) Scholastic theologians divided the mind and body into numerous virtual parts and made a distinction between what activities happened where. The divisions of the mind included intellect and will. The intellect was where intelligence lay. Therefore, it is natural that reason would be assigned to the intellect. Because the intellect was supposedly in the upper mind, it is natural that it should dictate to the will, which was considered a lower mind function. b) The Old Adam disrupts the directed bond between reason and will. It tries to make the will chafe under the "moral straitjacket" of reason and fall under its evil spell. {"*For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.*" Romans 7:19}

   Q8. How does conversion change a person's temperament and gifts? A: It doesn't. They merely get used differently.

3. Faith and the human temperament and gifts. a) Faith in Jesus does change the heart. Faith makes it want to reject sin and to seek to serve God. The person who believes in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior will reflect the love of God. {"*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" Matthew 5:16} b) Faith does not change a person's temperament and gifts to serve. Most of these personality characteristics were given us before we came to faith, and the LORD lets us retain them afterward to use in His service. We must access them and use them. {"*We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully*." Romans 12:6–8}

9 - Empirical Theology

After battling reason, it is necessary to consider feelings and experiences which can be added to reason to lead the Christian astray.

XIII. Luther's Rejection of Empirical Theology

Q1. What is "empirical theology"? A: Religious ideas gained from experience.

A. Knowledge and Faith

Q2. What does "the better a person understands the Word of God the harder it is for him to believe it" mean? A: The more we know, the more and more we are tempted to judge God and His revelation.

1. When Luther complained about the use of "reason" in the understanding of the Scriptures, he was often really complaining about the use of "common sense" to attempt to understand the mysteries of God. When Biblical words, phrases and sentences are taken out of their literal and historical context, the human mind is easily led astray in determining their meaning. {"*However, as it is written: 'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived'— the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.*" 1 Corinthians 2:9–10}

2. Luther's claim that "the better a person understands the Word of God the harder it is for him to believe it" is based the arrogance of human reason. As soon as the human mind has a little information on a subject, it assumes that it knows everything it needs to understand the subject, regardless of how complex the subject is. It no longer sees any mystery in the things of God. {"*We know that 'We all possess knowledge.' But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know.*" 1 Corinthians 8:1b–2}

B. The Bible with and without the Holy Spirit

1. The Jews and the Roman Catholics both had the Holy Scriptures, or at least a part of them. They read them regularly and could quote them at length. Yet they were unable to comprehend the meaning of those Scriptures. a) Judaism had become a ritualistic religion. Ritualism is always a misguided hope. Because they did not understand the significance of God's Law as they read the Hebrew Bible, they thought that they could keep it and thereby convince God that it was time to send the Savior who would establish a Jewish state and the rule of the House of David forever. In the process they first came to abandon the theology of blood sacrifice and finally the sacrifices themselves. {"*But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read.*" 2 Corinthians 3:14a} b) The Roman Catholics had come to despise the Gospel because they saw it as a way that was too easy for men to be saved. They wanted Jesus to demand more in exchange for His salvation so they suggested what they thought He would reasonably demand as being necessary for obtaining His gift. {"*If by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*" Romans 11:6}

   Q3. How does the work of the Holy Spirit change how we view the Holy Scriptures? A: We come to view it as God's necessary revelation to man instead of rules which we must obey to be saved.

2. The same event through different eyes. a) Jesus dramatizes this point in His discussion of the person of John the Baptizer. {Jesus said, "*What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.*' " Matthew 11:7b–10} The Pharisees saw John in a completely different light. {Jesus asked, "*John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?"...The Pharisees answered, "We don't know.*" Matthew 21:25,27} b) Jesus' parables particularly demonstrated the difference in how things

were seen by various people. He told people that the parables had spiritual meaning, but most could still not decipher them, including often His own disciples. He therefore hid the truth in plain sight. {Jesus said, "*This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.'* " Matthew 13:13}

C. Why Reason fails in judging Scripture.

1. Reason is inclined to judge by what it sees, but also by what it feels. It has built up a lifetime of patterns that it uses to create a model of the universe from what it has seen. It relates so strongly with patterns that they become the reality that reason has come to expect. In this way reason harkens back to Platonism and its perfect forms. Our expectations become our reality. For example, our expectation that the power company will always provide electricity becomes so strongly ingrained within us that we cannot deal with it failing to provide it.

2. Reason wants validation. It is good scientific practice to always conduct experiments to show that one's theories are consistent with what can be measured. But this is not the proper approach to what is taught in the Scriptures. They are the revelation of the absolute source of truth. There is nothing that can therefore validate them even if some experiences are consistent with their veracity. Correlation does not imply causation. There will also be things that appear to our senses to be inconsistent with them, so experiences are phony evidence.

3. Scripture is the sole source of faith. No amount of reasoning, hypothesizing or philosophizing can add anything to it or subtract anything from it. God is almighty and can do what he pleases no matter what our reason says. We can rely on its message even when all the evidence of this world says otherwise. {"*I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.*" Colossians 2:4}

XIV. Reason as a Judge

Q4. What is the "problem of limited revelation"? A: We cannot see God's whole game board, so we must always doubt the necessity and sufficiency of what we are seeing and doing.

A. The problem of limited revelation.

1. God only tells us what He wants us to know. An old rhyme goes "God in His wisdom made the fly and then forgot to tell us why." The purpose of the Bible is to reveal to us what we need to know about God and His plan of salvation so that we might believe in Him and it and be saved. He didn't think we needed further explanation. God is under no obligation to reveal things to us. a) "*You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other.*" Deuteronomy 4:35. b) Jesus said, "*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*" John 17:3.

2. Man's mind is easily deceived by the three great fallacies of inductive reasoning. Note these well! a) Man assumes that what he sees is reality rather than the world stage that God has created

for him to see. (False premise fallacy) {The LORD said, "*The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*" 1 Samuel 16:7b} b) When man has gathered a little spiritual information, he assumes that he has sufficient information to understand and even judge the actions of God. This, however, is a delusion because man cannot come close to knowing enough about God to understand His ways. (Hasty generalization fallacy) {"*Who can fathom the Spirit of the Lord, or instruct the Lord as his counselor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding"* Isaiah 40:13–14} c) Simply because a human explanation explains how and why God accomplished something does not mean that is the way it actually happened. God is not required to do things in a way that makes sense to us. (Affirming the consequent fallacy.) The sun and moon both rise and set along the same course through the sky, but that does not mean that they both orbit the earth. {"*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?'* " Romans 11:33–34}

Q5. Why do God's words and promises seem impossible? A: They are contrary to our experiences.

B. Why God's words and promises seem impossible.

1. They are out of harmony with our fragmentary experience. When one asks a five year old child to explain some complex thing in his or her world, one receives an answer based on the child's limited knowledge of the world. These are often entertaining, but seldom correct. It is the same way with our efforts to explain the words and promises of God based on our limited experience with the world that He gave us. (Hasty generalization)

2. God's ways are frequently out of harmony with what we expect and want them to be. Reason struggles to explain the seeming contradictions between what it expects from a just and loving God and what it actually experiences. This can result in such irrational statements as "I refuse to believe in a God who permits X." This is akin to saying, "I refuse to believe in the Grand Canyon because it is too big." Such a statement will not make the Grand Canyon disappear. (Wishful thinking)

3. Many aspects of the LORD and His plan of salvation contradict human logic. a) How can God be three separate persons in one divine essence? b) How can someone be both God who is infinite and man who is finite? c) How can the blood of one person cleanse another person from sin?

10 - Paradox in Luther's Theology- I

C. The issue of the Lord's Supper.

1. The clarity of Scripture. a) The words of institution which establish the sacrament come from Jesus Himself. Unlike many things related to the LORD's plan of salvation, this statement was

not delegated to a human messenger who might be accused of muddling the message. b) The words are clear and unambiguous. The word "is" in Greek is optional when equating two things, but all eight recorded phrases that declare the bread to be Christ's body and the wine to be Christ blood contain the word "is." {"*While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'* " Matthew 26:26–28} c) There is a clear promise of the blessing of the forgiveness of sins attached to elements of the sacrament which make them special. Certainly such an incredible promise has never been attached to the vile elements of the creation which surround us, lest we easily feast on them and be saved. Such a "tree of life" was denied to fallen mankind. {God said to Himself, " *'He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.' So the* LORD *God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.*" Genesis 3:22b–23} Note that God took away eternal life in the Garden of Eden, but He gave it back through Jesus Christ.

Q1. Why does reason reject the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament? A: 1) A body can only be in one place at one time. 2) There is too little body and too little blood so all Christians can receive some. 3) Eating human flesh is cannibalism.

2. The absurdity of reason. a) Reason has been trained by observation that a living human body can only be present in one place (Although we can take parts of the body in which cells are still alive for pathology analysis). For Jesus' body to be present everywhere His Holy Supper is celebrated therefore is clearly irrational. Reason therefore denies that in the person of Jesus the human nature can receive attributes of the divine nature. {Jesus said, "*Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*." Matthew 28:20b} b) Reason calculates the amount of body and blood that would be necessary to satisfy all communicants and senses that this amount is huge compared to the size of a human body. Reason thereby denies that Jesus can multiply physical elements. {"*The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.*" Matthew 14:21} c) Reason recoils at the unsavory idea of chewing human flesh and drinking human blood. This is a case of reason assuming that physical elements united with God's word have the same properties as natural physical elements.

Q2. What is the implication of the rejection of the real presence? A: 1) No forgiveness of sins. 2) Denial of the unity of the two natures of Christ's body. 3) Reason reigns.

3. The implications of rejection. a) The forgiveness of sins is not received in the sacrament by anyone who does not expect to find it there. It is only a meaningless work to obtain merit for such a person. b) The unity of the person of Christ is denied. If Christ cannot be present everywhere in both His natures, then the natures do not form one person. They are merely attached to each other by "a little toe." Even when Christ was physically present on the earth, his body was present everywhere. c) Reason has replaced the LORD as the arbiter of truth. The Word of the Lord cannot be accepted until it has passed the test of reason. The first commandment has been rejected.

XV. The Legalism of Reason

A. Natural religion

1. The child a) At birth children cannot differentiate between themselves and the external world. They think the whole environment is part of themselves. b) As they learn the world is a separate entity, they still believe that it exists for their benefit and should fulfill their desires. They see themselves as the ruler.

2. Philosophical righteousness a) People retain a belief in their natural superiority throughout life. This causes them to believe that they can earn their salvation because their actions are usually meritorious and seldom bad. Their good deeds deserve to be rewarded. b) The mind has scripts that automatically alter long-term memories every time they are recalled to amplify the image of self in them. We naturally try to perfect ourselves in our view of history. Winston Churchill said, "History will treat us well," even though he would have been hung as war criminal if the standards of Nuremberg had been applied to him.

B. The Law and reason

Q3. Why are the Law and Reason an "unholy alliance"? A: When the Law accuses, Reason tries to rush in and become man's savior through offering God a different plan of salvation.

1. The unholy alliance a) The Law accuses the self of sin, but reason attempts to tame the Law by rationalizing away its sharpest barbs and using its chastening as penance. b) Reason uses the instances when the self resists the breaking of the Law as positive evidence of being meritorious and therefore deserving salvation. c) Reason cannot comprehend that the self cannot keep the Law in a God-pleasing way and is totally depraved.

2. Going beyond the Law a) Reason argues that if obeying the Law is good, then obeying a more stringent law is better. This is the religion of the Pharisees and the monks. b) Reason believes that it can actually create the terms under which God should grant salvation, thereby eliminating the chance that its self-devised behavior would be inadequate. c) Reason sees wanting to rely on Christ for all or even part of the merit necessary for salvation as the repudiation of self's very being, a sellout of the human dignity to an arrogant God who wishes humans to be helpless pawns.

XVI. Paradox in Thought

A. What is a paradox?

Q4. What is a paradox? A: A statement of two contradictory thoughts, both asserted as being true at the same time.

1. A paradox is a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition. Examples are "a tall dwarf" or "I can resist anything but temptation." a) The purpose of using paradoxes is to state in a few words what would otherwise take more words to express, because when the paradox is investigated and explained, it shows deeper wisdom. For example, George Bernard Shaw's "What a pity that youth must be wasted on the young" means that the strength and health of youth are unfortunately the attributes of those who do not yet know how best to take advantage of them. Worldly paradoxes need resolution so we can preserve our sanity. b) Theological paradoxes often do not have such a resolution because the one who poses them is the LORD, and He does not feel obligated to always tell us what we desire to know.

2. Faith versus sight a) It is natural for people to believe what they can detect with their own senses. All of science is based on this. Nevertheless, senses are not always reliable, as attending a magic show will quickly demonstrate. This is why we find magic shows fastinating! Sight is a poor basis of belief. {Jesus said, "*Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*." John 20:29} b) The epistles, in fact, teach that sight is not needed at all to have faith and may even be a hindrance to faith. {"*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see*." Hebrews 11:1 / *"For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*" God wants us to accept Him by faith. Romans 8:24–25 / "*For we live by faith, not by sight*." 2 Corinthians 5:7}

B. The paradoxes of faith

Q5. Why do faith and reason come to different conclusions about many things? A: Faith relies on the Word of God. Reason relies on what makes sense to man.

1. Faith and reason must have different bases of judgment. Truth exists only in regard to a standard. If reason and faith had the same standard, then faith would have no reason to exist (i.e., purposeless). If the standards are different, then the nature of faith and reason will be different.

2. God's whole plan of salvation involves paradoxes that appear foolish to reason. Who would save the outwardly bad and condemn the outwardly good?

3. Zwingli's efforts to treat these paradoxes as only figures of speech (*alloeosis*) showed a complete dominance of reason over faith in the words of the LORD.

C. The paradoxes of the nature of God

Q6. What is Arianism? A: The belief that God the Son was created by God the Father and therefore is a lesser God.

1. The Trinity a) There is only one God. {"*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one*." Deuteronomy 6:4} There are many specific verses in the Bible that state this truth, but in addition the whole gestalt of God in the Bible is that of oneness. That is, the mural of the biblical teaching

on our wall of faith. b) There are three distinct persons within the essence of God, each of whom is completely God. {Jesus said, "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" Matthew 28:19} There are numerous verses and accounts in the Bible which contain more than one of the persons of God. c) Numerous heresies in the church, such as Arianism (the Son is a created lesser deity), Modalism (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are merely masks God wears) and Tritheism (The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirt are distinct beings), demonstrate how reason stumbles at understanding this fundamental Bible truth.

Q7. What does "the finite cannot contain the infinite" mean? A: God cannot dwell within the confines of a physical human body.

2. The Incarnation a) Jesus Christ is the son of God and is truly God from eternity. {"*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.*" Isaiah 9:6-7a} Many verses in the Bible attest to Jesus' deity. b) Jesus Christ is the son of the human mother Mary and is truly human. {An angel said, "*Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins*." Matthew 1:20–21} No one who encountered Jesus during his life on earth doubted that he was human. c) Zwingli's statement that "the finite cannot contain the infinite" shows how human reason responds to this paradox, i.e., cannot fit in the box. Numerous heresies, such as Docetism (Jesus only seemed to have a human body, i.e., he only had a flesh wrapper around His godliness.), Psilanthropism (Jesus was only human and did not exist prior to his incarnation, but had access to divine powers) and Adoptionism (Jesus was a mere man adopted into God because of his goodness, i.e., he was a special son), developed to explain this paradox.

11 - Paradox in Luther's Theology - II

XVII. Paradox in Conversion

A. Depravity versus universal justification

1. Man, by nature, is totally depraved. a) People are sinful from conception. {David wrote, "*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me*." Psalm 51:5} All people have committed sins in their lifetime. {"*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*." Romans 3:23} b) Since the fall People have no free will to choose to do anything but sin. They are, by nature, like a donkey ridden by Satan, who have no control of their path. {"*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags*." Isaiah 64:6a} All human efforts to do good only generate works contaminated by sin, even in believers. Sin clings to everything like a film of crud. {"*For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.*" Romans 7:19-20}

Q1. What is "universal justification"? A: The teaching that the death of Jesus Christ paid for the guilt of the sins of all the people; therefore, all have been justified before God.

2. God interacts with man by both his justice and his mercy. a) By God's justice all people are only eligible for condemnation to hell. {"*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*" James 2:10 / "*For if you live according to the flesh, you will die.*" Romans 8:13a} b) By God's mercy through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all are declared righteous and eligible for eternal salvation. {"*All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*" Romans 3:24}

B. Universal call versus election

1. God desires all to be saved. The Father created man perfect. The Son redeemed man from the guilt of his sin so he could be righteous before God. The Holy Spirit issues a universal call to repentance. a) God's clearly expressed intent is that He desires all people to be saved. {"*This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*" 1 Timothy 2:3–4} In fact, the LORD swore by Himself, the highest oath there is, that He does not want people to perish. {" *'As surely as I live,' declares the Sovereign* LORD, *'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.'* " Ezekiel 33:11} b) God supported His words with action when He sent His Son to enter the world to save the world. {Jesus said, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*" John 3:16-17} The death of Jesus Christ purified everyone from sin so that they could become God's children. {"*He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*" 2 Corinthians 5:15}

Q2. What is "election"? A: The choosing by God in eternity of some people in Christ to be saved.

2. God elected only some to be saved. a) Early in the Hebrew Bible the LORD tells us that He chose only a few of the few (i.e., a very small number) to be His people, namely, the children of Israel. In the New Testament He tells us that the people He has chosen for His kingdom now are scattered among the people of the whole earth. {"*For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.*" Ephesians 1:4–5 / "*Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.*" 1 Peter 1:2} b) Because no one would have known about His election to faith if God had not told His elect about His plan of salvation, He made sure the message got to them. {"*For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*" Romans 8:29-30 / "*He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own*

purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time." 2 Timothy 1:9}

XVIII. Paradox of Law and Gospel

Q3. How does the Gospel differ from the Law? A: The Law offers salvation to those who keep it perfectly and promises eternal punishment to those who don't. The Gospel promises eternal salvation to those who believe it.

A. Law and Gospel

1. Law. a) The moral Law is the eternal will of the LORD. It was part of the image of God that was written into man's heart at the time of the creation. {"*They* [the Gentiles] *show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts.*" Romans 2:15a} b) The Law shows that the LORD is just. He is perfectly fair and clear in His demands and judgments. {"*He* [the LORD] *is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.*" Deuteronomy 32:4} c) The image of the Law written in man's heart was marred by man's fall into sin. The conscience no longer had a reliable guide to steer people on the path of God-pleasing living. {"*The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.*" Genesis 6:5} d) The Law was re-given at Sinai as part of the covenant that the LORD made with the children of Israel. {"*You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good*." Nehemiah 9:13} e) The Law was explained by Jesus and the Apostles so people would know the LORD's will in more detail. {Jesus said, "*You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*" Matthew 5:43–44a}

2. Gospel. a) The Gospel was the LORD's response to man's fall into sin and was immediately proclaimed to him. God did not leave man in doubt without hope. {The LORD said to Satan, "*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*" Genesis 3:15} b) The Gospel shows that the LORD is merciful. {"*Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*" Ephesians 2:4–5} c) The Gospel was repeated by both the major and the minor prophets. {"*The LORD their God will save his people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown.*" Zechariah 9:16} d) Yet all the writing of the prophets would only have been dreaming if the LORD had not acted to fulfil his promise. The Gospel became reality in Christ. {"*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.*" Galatians 4:4–5} e) The Gospel was explained by Jesus and the Apostles. {Peter said, "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.*" Acts 4:12}

B. The conflict between Law and Gospel.

Q4. Why do we need both the Law and the Gospel? A: The Law shows us our helplessness before God's judgment. The Gospel shows us the way of salvation through Christ.

1. Why both are needed. a) A sinful person cannot be saved because only the righteous can stand before God. {"*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.*" Romans 3:20} b) The Law is needed to show a person his sin. It is intended to illustrate the depth of man's depravity. {"*I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting.*" Romans 7:7–8a} c) The Law cannot save because it cannot give righteousness to anyone, so the Gospel is needed to justify the sinner. The Gospel gives a "foreign righteousness," a righteousness that we had no part in earning. {"*Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*" Galatians 3:21–22}

2. Why there is a paradox? In fact, it is the ultimate paradox that can only be resolved by the cross of Christ. a) The Law shows that the LORD by His very nature hates sinners. {"*All sinners will be destroyed; there will be no future for the wicked.*" Psalm 37:38 / "*Rebels and sinners will both be broken, and those who forsake the LORD will perish.*" Isaiah 1:28} b) The Gospel shows that the LORD by His very nature loves sinners. {Jesus said, "*I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners*." Matthew 9:13 / "*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" Romans 5:6–8}

12 – The Way of Analogy

XIX. Reasoning and Explanation

Q1. Why is human curiosity dangerous in regard to the things revealed in the Scriptures? A: When curiosity cannot find what it is looking for in the Scriptures, it makes up what it cannot find and tries to read it into some irrelevant part of the Bible.

A. Whys and Wherefores

1. Adults as 3-year olds. a) Little children frequently ask questions starting with "why" because they do not understand a lot about the world. Things do not make sense to them, so they want to know why they happen. Little children also learn that by asking a "why" question they can manipulate adults by forcing them to respond and thereby disturbing what they are doing. It seems children have a toolbox of manipulative ploys. Sometimes "why" questions are therefore appropriate, but often they are not because they are asking for information that the child cannot understand. b)

When adults insist on probing why the LORD has done things or done them in a specific way, they are acting like unruly children. The LORD has His reasons, and He is not obligated to share with us what we would not understand anyway. Reason therefore seeks from God that to which it is not entitled. Man never seems to get over the curiosity of Eve; he is a slow learner. {"*For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.*" 1 Corinthians 13:9-10}

2. How'd he do that? a) If we ask a magician how he performed a trick, he will smile and not answer. When children ask about things which they cannot yet understand, we give simplistic answers which are far short of how things really work. Worse yet, we make up answers because we don't know. b) When adults want to know how God did something that He did not explain, they know that they are not going to learn any more than what is in the Bible. But human reason is never satisfied with things it wants to know, so it invents explanations for God, as if we could somehow bind God to doing things as we imagine that He should have or would have done them. Talk about folly! It is the old "I think, I tell, and you believe" approach. {Solomon wrote, "*I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*" Ecclesiastes 1:14}

B. Analogies

Q2. What is an analogy? A: An effort to gain knowledge about an unknown object based on its similarity to a known object. A metaphor describes an object by a noun or an adjective foreign to it, such as "Life is a rollercoaster." A simile adds a "like" or "as," such as "Life is like a rollercoaster."

1. What is an analogy? a) An analogy is an effort to explain a complicated or unknown object or process by a simpler representation with which people are familiar. (For example, in Luke 13:20–21 Jesus said, "*What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.*") People understood how yeast changed the nature of dough through a process that made it different than before its addition. b) An analogy is only valid at only one point, namely the point of comparison. In Jesus' parable about the yeast, this was how the yeast acted as an agent of change, making something more useful than before it was applied. In no way did it imply that the kingdom of heaven would make dough rise or produce earthly food. One needs to be very careful about extending an analogy beyond its point of comparison.

Q3. What is the difference between allegories and analogies? A: An allegory is a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to find a hidden meaning. An analogy is a comparison to aid in understanding.

2. The use of spiritual analogies. a) Analogies explain or illustrate doctrines; they do not create them. For example, the LORD cares for all people, and this can be illustrated by using the analogy of a father and his children. {"*As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him*." Psalm 103:13} b) Allegories are similar to analogies but

differ from them in that allegories infer a hidden spiritual meaning in the earthly story. Roman Catholics have long used allegories to develop theological tenets, and allegories are also used by people who believe the Bible contains codes containing secret messages from God. It became common practice that if the Bible didn't actually say something, then people would allegorize the text to put it there.

C. Faith and the Processes of Reason

Q4. What is the "essence of faith"? A: It is the willingness to accept what you cannot prove.

1. The essence of faith a) The essence of faith is accepting as true what you cannot prove to be true by any method. {"*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see*." Hebrews 11:1} The strength of the faith must be relative to the harm that is incurred if the faith is in something that is not true. This is the risk of faith. For example, if you have faith that it will not rain tomorrow and plan a picnic, then the effort in preparation expended and perhaps even the food will be lost. Much more is at risk in regard to our fate in eternity. b) Faith is required for all human activities. When a system of information, no matter how rigorous, is traced back far enough, one or more assumptions are found that are accepted because they are perceived as reasonable, not because they are provable from even more primitive "first principles." One cannot say, "It's turtles all the way down." (Many years ago an English lady attended a public lecture where a scientist told the audience that the Earth was suspended in space. She went up to him later and told him that what he had said was nonsense because the Earth rested on the back of a giant turtle. To show her the foolishness of her statement, the scientist said, "But what does the turtle stand on?" She replied, "On the back of another turtle." He tried again, "But what does that turtle stand on?" After a few more exchanges, she blurted out, "You can't trick me. It's turtles all the way down.") c) All human efforts to establish truth require the acceptance of (faith in) some standard by which all related things are judged. All human disagreements are traceable to people holding different standards of truth or unsound logic in applying them. It is important that people burn point c into their minds.

Q5. What is the "natural knowledge" of God? A: what God wrote into man's heart at his creation; namely' His eternal will (the Moral Law) and that God was the creator of all.

Q6. How can the natural knowledge of God get us into trouble? A: Reason tries to use the natural knowledge to prove the existence and properties of God, always getting them wrong.

2. Natural knowledge a) At creation God gave our first parents a knowledge both of His creating power and of His moral Law {"*the requirements of the law are written on their hearts*" Romans 2:15a}. Because these were His gifts, mankind is responsible for retaining them and sins if they are neglected or abused. This is true even though these gifts have been completely and indecipherably marred by the fall into sin. b) God also gave witnesses to this natural knowledge, namely the physical universe {"*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*" Psalm 19:1} and an internal preacher, which we call the conscience. While these witnesses can be ignored, no one can claim that the opportunity to know of God's existence

was not given to them. c) Reason therefore tries to use the existence of the natural knowledge of God to establish the existence of God philosophically. But philosophical arguments run into trouble when they try to project terms defined in the physical domain into the supernatural domain (four-term fallacy). We have no human reference points outside of the physical domain. For all we know, the supernatural domain may be a realm of convex mirrors where nothing is what it seems. This is a silly example, but it cannot be disproven by human reason.

3. Physical sciences a) Because God created the world, therefore it should be possible to find traces of God's creating work in the physical world as we see it. This is a false argument because God never said that we could. However, this requires discerning the difference between the effects of creation and the effects of change (evolution =change) since creation. The Bible, however, gives us far too little data to establish a baseline to distinguish the world at creation from the world as it now exists. Without such a starting point, all explanations of how the world has changed since creation are totally speculative. b) Moreover, the Bible does not say that the universe could not have evolved to the state in which we see it today (what is frequently called "macro-evolution"), only that it didn't. This is an extremely important point! Whether the universe under its set of constants and forces could have evolved through natural processes to its current state is an open question. Whether God could have created a universe which could so evolve is not – to deny that the Almighty LORD could create a universe that could so evolve is blasphemy. It is important to explain the difference between these two statements. {Jesus said, "*With God all things are possible*." Matthew 19:26b}

4. Cognitive psychology a) The sense of self-consciousness is often proposed to be the ultimate proof that a God exists because only man has such a sense. It could therefore not have developed from other forms of life. While animals have numerous species-specific instincts and a limited ability to learn, man's capacity to learn and manage information far exceeds anything in the animal kingdom. Sometimes called "relative thinking ability." b) Moreover, it can be demonstrated experimentally that engaging in religious practices such as prayer, meditation and study has positive effects on both mental and physical health. In fact, portions of the brain crave the favor of some of the various attributes of God such as justice, mercy, and love. c) Reading God and how He acts into some of the results of cognitive psychological research is a case of the cherry-picking fallacy. The human sense of self-consciousness sits upon an underlying automatic system which is responsible for most human decisions and actions. Those parts of the brain that react positively to the practices of religious activities also respond to disciplined non-religious activities. The human mind is self-centered even in its automatic processes. We must, however, not try to use this as a proof of original sin. {"*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure*." Jeremiah 17:9a} Its complexity makes the task of using it to support or shape theological arguments impossible.

13 - Ways of Viewing Scripture

XX. Attempts to Make the Gospel Reasonable

Q1. Give several reasons why the Gospel is "rationally nonsense." A: 1) Salvation is free. 2) God does not save the "good," but the believing. 3) Salvation requires a human sacrifice.

A. The Gospel is rationally nonsense.

1. The Gospel requires a bizarre God. a) Any reasonable God would seek the good of all His creatures. He would try to help them to become better at living in the world. He would protect them from all harm. He would be an indulgent father figure, who might occasionally scold, but would never give up on or seriously punish anyone. A God who treats people cruelly and would punish them eternally is too bizarre to be real. (Fallacy of wishful thinking) b) It is human arrogance to think that the LORD God is like us and has the same priorities that we have. We want God to serve us by paying attention to what we think is important. (In business, this is called "reverse delegation.") We want to suspend His agenda in favor of ours. God is what He is, and He will not change to placate sinful mankind. {"*The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled the LORD alone will be exalted in that day*." Isaiah 2:17}

2. The Gospel has a ludicrous approach to reward. a) Any God worth His deity knows that you reward good behavior and punish bad behavior. It is right there on page 6 of the "How to be God" manual! By doing this, people will see the wisdom of doing good and of avoiding doing bad. Through careful parenting, therefore, God could make the world a paradise. b) In fact, God started out with precisely the "reward good and punish bad" strategy. What happened? Man chose to do bad anyway. Human history is a long story of people doing evil even when it is to their disadvantage because they love the freedom to do as they please. Man is inherently evil. {"*Every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood*." Genesis 8:21b} If God only saved the good people, no one would be saved. Even the outwardly good people are good only to the very weak standard of human goodness, but they do not even come close to the divine standard.

3. The Gospel causes people to do evil. a) If people are saved even when they do evil, then there is no reason for them to do good. They might as well enjoy sinning and then repent so that they can be saved. {"*Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—'Let us do evil that good may result'? Their condemnation is just!*" Romans 3:8} b) It only seems to our reason that people can sin freely and still be saved. This is the second effect of the Gospel. The hearts of the believers (Consider Saul's heart and David's heart) are changed so that they do not want to do evil. They find that the sins that appeal to pagans are offensive to them and therefore they do not want to commit them. {"*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*" Psalm 51:10} They may occasionally fall into sin, but it is not what they want to do.

B. Trying to support the Bible by reason undoes everything.

1. The trap of reason. a) Whenever reason is brought in to support Scripture, it is because people do not trust what they read in the Scriptures. Rather than saying "This is God's Word, so I believe it," they say, "If I can only shape it so that I can grasp it with my reason, then I will believe it." The Real Presence is an obvious example. b) Once one has employed reason to buttress some teaching and shape it to be acceptable, what other teachings are entangled in the web? If, for

example, the body of Christ cannot be everywhere at once, how can it be attached to the divine nature which is? Reason immediately sees another place where it needs to intervene with an explanation.

2. Reason and renovation a) To make the doctrines of the Bible acceptable to reason and the modern sense of knowledge, man is drawn into reformulating the doctrines. This approach saves the terminology, but it changes the meaning so as to give the meaning a rational footing. The result of this is what is called "neo-orthodoxy." b) Such pointing and tucking of doctrines, however, may not be enough. Doctrines may be philosophically rational, but still be scientifically indefensible. Doctrines may have to be changed for this reason. Doctrines might not meet the prevailing standard of Humanism, requiring yet further refinement. In fact, there may be even more players who want to rationalize Biblical teachings to make them more acceptable to human standards. {"*These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.*" Isaiah 29:13}

C. Reason creates its own religion.

Q2. Why does reason always finally create its own religion? A: Reason cannot understand God, so it concludes that it needs to redesign God so it can.

1. The tolerance school of Christianity. a) God loves everyone; therefore, everyone must be accepted in the church. Reason finds the tension between God's justice and His mercy to be too great, so it lops off God's justice, making Him only infinitely merciful and therefore infinitely tolerant. b) Reason also finds the exclusivity of Christianity ungodlike. It therefore desires to broaden the base of the church to accept anyone who believes in a god or even those who are merely willing to admit that one might exist. This is a false definition of Christian fellowship. The church becomes a brotherly society rather than a Gospel-preaching organization.

2. The self-improvement school of Christianity. a) While God may in theory be willing to save everyone, He certainly will look with more favor on those who make an effort to live as good a life as possible (the standard of good being a human one). b) Good behavior is bound to increase one's chances of having been predestined and to therefore be given the grace to make a favorable decision for Christ.

XXI. Scripture is the Defense of Scripture

A. *Sola Scriptura*

Q3. Why was Luther's belief that God was almighty important to his attitude toward the Bible? A: Because God is able to do anything to back His Word.

1. The essence of Luther's position a) The Scriptures were spoken by God. God said it and that settled it in Luther's mind. Luther was very clear on Scripture. It does not matter whether anyone believes it or not. The truth of God's statements is not up for majority vote. {"*You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious*." Ezekiel 2:7} b) The LORD is almighty. What He says, He does. {Balaam quoted the LORD as saying, "*God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?*" Numbers 23:19 / "*I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.*" 2 Timothy 1:12b}

2. The danger of reason a) When the devil approached Eve, he did so through reason. He argued reason against the word of God. Reason is the devil's ground when it is used to question the Scriptures or to try to underpin their contents. {*A son of Korah wrote, "I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly.*" *Psalm 85:8*} b) Speculation brings in options and possibilities to consider and pleads that each option be given equal consideration. Dogmatism first defines the parameters of what may be considered before entertaining any suggestions of what to consider within those parameters. One cannot rationalize leaving the playing field and still be playing the game. {"*Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*" James 1:14–15}

B. The power of Scripture

Q4. What does the phrase "the eyes of faith" mean in conjunction with the Scriptures? A: What we see through the passages of the Scriptures as our hearts are moved by the Holy Spirit.

1. The eyes of faith. a) We cannot believe what we do not know. Key point! We therefore need to know the texts of Scripture well. {"*From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*." 2 Timothy 3:15–16} We all need to memorize the Scriptures. b) We must proclaim only the revelation which God has given us. No additions and no subtractions. {"*This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.*" 1 Corinthians 2:13} c) The conflict between Scriptural logic and human logic is important to understand. The Scriptures say that because Christ was raised, we will be raised. To the human mind, this is a conclusion based on too little evidence. However, because the Bible declares that we are united to Christ by baptism, it is an obvious conclusion. This connection is essential. We must go where He goes. {"*We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life*." Romans 6:4}

2. The ground we hold. a) "Parade generals" like to keep all their equipment in shiny condition and their troops in neat formations. "Fighting generals" know that they have their equipment and

troops for the messy business of engaging the enemy. The words of God are our tools, not what we are trying to defend. We must uncage the lion, namely, the Word to defend itself. {"*Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*" Ephesians 6:11} b) It is foolish to debate our standard of truth, namely, the Bible, which some call our "first principles." We are convinced from reading the Bible that it is the inerrant Word of God. If we are willing to debate that, we are not Christians.!!!! {Jesus said, "*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*" John 17:17} c) We are to let the world know who we are by bolding proclaiming the Scriptures. They are the banner that flies over us, and we should not try to hide our reliance on them to appear more rational to the world. People should feel free to wear biblical teachings on their clothing. {Jesus said, "*Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.*" Matthew 10:32-33}

14 - Reason in Apologetics

XXII. The Place of Reason in Apologetics

Q1. How can reason be used in apologetics? A: To attack the reasonableness of the argument of the opponents.

A. Meeting non-Scriptural reasoning with non-Scriptural reasoning

Q5. What did Luther see as the problem with "believer baptism"? A: Who knows if someone else really believes.

1. Examples of using reason to show attacks based on reason are unreasonable. a) The Docetists argued that only baptisms performed by believing priests were true baptisms and conferred God's grace. They therefore claimed that those baptized by priests who did not subscribe to all their ideas or who had once strayed had to be re-baptized by faithful priests. This can be overthrown by asking "How does one know which priests are faithful when one cannot look into the heart?" b) "Only believers should be baptized; therefore, children who have not reached the 'age of reason' should not be baptized." This can be overthrown by asking "How does one know that someone coming to be baptized is not a hypocrite?" c) Collyridianism is a heresy that teaches the Trinity is composed of the Father, the Son and the Virgin Mary. It was this version of Christianity with which Mohammed was most familiar, as is reflected in the Qur'an. But if Mary were God, then Jesus was not truly human, undermining the basis of Christianity. This teaching therefore is a big lie.

Q2. What is meant by the phrase "analogies prove nothing"? A: Analogies are illustrations (comparisons), not well-grounded premises.

2. Meeting "folly with folly" a) Even Aristotle recognized the fallacy of metabasis was dangerous. In this fallacy something true in an analogy is used to assert that the corresponding element in the reality is true. For example, in John 15:5 Jesus said, "*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you*

remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." If one argued that this shows that Jesus had a woody nature and produced sap to feed his followers, that person would be committing this fallacy. Efforts to extent analogies in this manner can be challenged with logic. This is a proper use of reason. b) People often base their claim of authority on who they are, even when that is irrelevant to the topic at hand. This is the fallacy of an appeal to false authority. For example, Linus Pauling won two Nobel Prizes, but he was not an expert at treating colds with vitamin C as he represented himself. It is acceptable to meet such claims with one's own claims, as Paul did. {"*I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool.*" 2 Corinthians 11:16–17} c) In an old fable a man kept adding pieces of straw to the load of a camel with the argument that if it could carry the current load, it could certainly carry a load which had just one more straw in it. At some point, however, the extra piece of straw exceeded the camel's strength, and it collapsed under the load. It is permissible to point out that arguments, such as "It is unreasonable that God did X," once they are permitted, can be applied to demythologize and deny any passage of Scripture. Beware of establishing such precedents! Calvin's moderate appeals to reason were the basis of some of his followers making radical attacks on Biblical teachings. d) Luther himself used logical forms to challenge opponents, such as when he attacked Mabrosius Catherinus on the papacy. Basically, this was a "red herring defense," where one creates an alternative logical case which an adversary is forced to attack, thereby abandoning his own case to protect his methodology. This something an expert would do, not an amateur.

Q3. Why was Erasmus' argument in the Diatribe so dangerous to his own position? A: By arguing that man could do what God commanded, he implied that Pelagius was right.

B. The essence of Scriptural reasoning

Q4. What is the "light of grace" versus the "light of glory"? A: The light of grace is what we can know through the Scriptures. The light of glory is what we cannot know until heaven.

1. The rules of engagement a) The defense of the Scriptures should not involve converting our opponents' positions into strawmen (Strawmen are caricatures of opponents' real positions that are much easier to knock down), which we can easily beat into the ground. Demagogues often use this approach. Proper argumentation involves arguing against one's opponents' best positions. Treating adversaries fairly shows forth our trust in the LORD rather than in our own cleverness. b) We must recognize and admit that the "light of grace" which God gave us in the Scriptures does not answer all our questions. We will need to await "the light of glory" in heaven to know everything about the LORD's plan of salvation. "I don't know" is an acceptable answer when God has not given us revelation.

   People must be taught not to debate "thin air." They must insist that their opponents fully explain their positions.

2. The grounds held by the opposition. a) At its root, denying the necessity of faith is irrational. Beneath every assertion is one or more assumptions taken on faith. It is therefore important to force the opponents to clearly state their assumptions, which often they themselves have forgotten about unless they are particularly well prepared. When forced to declare what they believe, their arguments are often significantly weakened. Whenever possible, one must challenge the opponents' assumptions. b) One's opponents' case can also be weakened if one can find an opportunity to insert phrases such as "Reason itself is forced to admit…" or "Is it not reasonable to assume (assert) that …?" These show the unreliableness of philosophy. Sometimes one can show the absurd to be equally as logical as the opponents' assumptions.

XXIII. Illustrations of Luther's Apologetics

A. God and His word

1. The LORD. a) The LORD God is almighty. This means that He has all the power that exists in the universe and nothing else has any power at all unless that power is delegated by the LORD. The almightiness of God cannot be overstated. {"*For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?*" Isaiah 14:27} b) Because the LORD is almighty, He can do anything consistent with His will. This should make us fear and tremble. Therefore one cannot deny anything that the LORD has claimed to do in the Scriptures without denying that He is almighty. But if one denies that He is almighty, then one is not talking about the God of the Bible. {"*But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk, nor can they utter a sound with their throats.*" Psalm 115:4–7}

2. The Scriptures. a) The Scriptures are the words of the Almighty God; therefore, we must look at them from God's point of view. It cannot be denied that an almighty God could have given the Scriptures because he would not be almighty if He could not have done so. To deny that He gave the Scriptures is therefore to call Him a liar, that is, to bring Him down to our level. This is blasphemy. {"*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*" 2 Timothy 3:16} b) Because the Scriptures are the word of God, they are backed by the almighty power of God. Therefore, it is ludicrous to believe that weak and mortal human beings could do anything to strengthen the witness of the Scriptures or to protect them from attacks by other weak and mortal humans. {Jesus said, "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*" Matthew 5:17–18}

B. Subjectivity

Q6. Why is relying on our experience in religious matters dangerous? A: Each of us has different experiences, and each of us draws different conclusions from our experiences.

1. Our experiences. a) Our experiences are inherently set in the framework of who we are. All of us are totally depraved human beings. Our minds do not function perfectly, neither at the conscious thought level nor at the neuron level. Our experiences are therefore shaded by higher and lower failures, and they do not represent a true picture of reality. They are in a scientific sense biased data from which no reliable conclusions can be drawn. The experience argument is absurd. b) Moreover, none of us have had all possible experiences, nor can any of us claim to have had a representative subset of all relevant experiences to permit drawing correct conclusions based on the realm of experience. We are therefore logically facing a fallacy of hasty generalization, and we can never be certain because of the halting problem that we ever can move beyond this fallacy. This an example of using reason against our opponents.

2. Our feelings. Our feelings do not give certainty. a) How many people remain at a constant emotional level? It is human nature to have ups and downs, to some days feel on top of the world and other days to have been run over by a bus. We may feel close to God one day and on another feel that He has deserted us. Moreover, we can doubt that our feelings are genuine when they are challenged by events and rejections. Feelings always cause us to be uncertain of our salvation. {"*If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.*" 1 John 3:20} b) God's Word does. The love and mercy of God are constant because God is not a creature of time; He never changes. He has promised in the Scriptures that our sins are forgiven and we have been declared righteous and therefore heirs of heaven. This means we are saved whether we feel saved or not. Our feelings change but God's promises through His word remain the same. It is not our feelings, but the LORD's promise that saves us. {"*I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.*" Malachi 3:6}

15 - Antirationalism – I

XXIV. Lutheran Antirationalism in Relation to Christ

A. Luther versus Melanchthon

1. Luther's theology a) Above all, Luther's theology was Scriptural. He believed what was presented in the Scriptures was the very and unalterable word of God. Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn. On every issue Luther would first consider whether the Bible had spoken. If so, then whatever was spoken or written about a topic had to agree with what the Scriptures said. b) Luther, however, realized that to be believed, the doctrines of the Scriptures had to be understood in the mind of the believer. This required reason, but a special type of reason that did not try to judge the rationality of what was taught in the Scriptures. This is called the "ministerial use of reason."

   Q1. Who was Melanchthon? A: He was Luther's colleague at the University of Wittenberg. He wrote the Augsburg Confession and the Apology to the Augsburg Confession.

Q2. How did Melanchthon cause problems for the Lutheran church? A: He looked for ways to compromise with the Roman Catholic and the Reformed theologians. He came to credit election to the works of man.

2. Melanchthon's philosophy a) Melanchthon had drawn away from Luther's position to what is called the "magisterial use of reason." When faced with something in the Scriptures that was inconsistent with human thinking, Melanchthon used this type of reasoning to "edit" the message of the Scriptures to attempt to gain consistency. Disloyalty to the Scriptures. This is based on the logical fallacy of appeal to ignorance, i.e., "If I cannot comprehend it, it cannot be true." Because Melanchthon still believed in the one-truth theory, he felt there had to be some way of looking at a situation which would make it resolvable to reason. b) Melanchthon tried to accomplish this by signing the Leipzig Interim, a document which he and other nominal Lutherans negotiated with Charles V after he had temporarily gained the upper hand in the Schmalkaldic Wars. It allowed the Lutherans to maintain their teachings about justification, but required them to reintroduce a large number of pagan Roman Catholic practices into their churches. False compromise amounted to surrender. c) Melanchthon also tried to find common ground with the Reformed. He regarded the Augsburg Confession as his personal document, and he revised it to gain greater acceptance (i.e., saying less to agree). In an altered form, he even got John Calvin to sign it. Melanchthon saw this as a necessary step toward finding the true Christian positions on the doctrines in dispute. Lutherans who rejected Melanchthon's compromises proclaimed their adherence to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession (UAC), which is what appears in the *Book of Concord*.

B. The Lord's Supper

Q3. What is the Roman Catholic theology on the Lord's Supper? A: Transubstantiation – The bread and the wine physically change into the body and blood of Christ.

1. Roman Catholic theology relied on the power of the church. a) The Roman Catholic position is that the Magisterium of the Roman Church has been given the right to define the nature of the sacraments, how they are to be administered and what blessings are bestowed by them. b) The bread and the wine at the beginning of the sacrament are transubstantiated into the body and the blood of Christ and no longer remain, leaving behind only the accidents of their shape, color and taste. c) The priest offers the body and the blood of Christ as an unbloody sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. It is a human work. d) People gain the merit of the sacrament *ex opere operato*, whether they are repentant or not.

Q4. Compare the Reformed and Lutheran theology on the Lord's Supper. A: The Reformed claim that the elements are symbolic; the sacrament is the work of man. B. Lutherans teach that Christ's body and blood are really present in the sacrament, which is God's work to forgive sins.

2. Reformed theology relied on the power of reason. a) The Bible describes and reason prescribes the nature of the sacrament. b) The bread and wine remain bread and wine and are only symbolically associated with the body and blood of Christ, who bodily remains in heaven. c) The

sacrament is a work of man which is done in remembrance of Christ and at His command. d) The forgiveness of sins is not obtained through the sacrament.

3. Lutheran theology a) The format and the meaning of this sacrament were established by Christ and recorded in the Scriptures so that we can eat and drink it for the eternal benefit of our souls. b) Through the original words of Jesus, His body is made truly present in, with and under the bread and His blood is made truly present in with and under the wine. Called the "sacramental presence," see paper "The Presence of the LORD." This is irrational because human bodies can only be present in one place and there is no physical evidence of the body and blood in the communion elements. Christ's sacramental presence is therefore something which can only be accepted by faith, because tangible evidence is denied to us. c) The sacrament is the work of God in which man plays the minor role as an agent acting under instructions. It is God's means of grace. It is not anything which people do which gets them God's grace and forgiveness in the sacrament. Unlike the Catholic and Reformed understanding, the merit in the sacrament is wholly the result of God reaching down to the communicants and not the communicants or clergy on their behalf reaching up to God. This is offensive to human reason. d) The sacrament freely gives and seals the forgiveness of sins to all who trust its God-given promise, but it condemns to hell all who receive it without faith. This is irrational because people get no credit for the blessings, but get full blame for the curses if they eat and drink unworthily.

   Q5. Why does the person of Christ create problems for reason? A: It has both a divine (infinite) attribute and a human (finite) attribute.

C. The Person of Christ

1. The whole doctrine of Christ is antirational. As presented in the Scriptures, Jesus the Christ is both completely God and completely human. He has two natures which are totally different. Joining these together is like trying to bolt iron to water. When one looks at all the divine and human attributes which are ascribed to Jesus, it is logically impossible to assemble them into one being. Yet, the Lutheran church does accept that they can be the attributes of one person through faith, not through logic. Below the attributes of God and man are contrasted:

is spirit (John 4:24)	has flesh and blood (Luke 24:39)
is omnipotent (Matt. 28:18)	is overpowered by enemies (John 19:11)
is omniscient (John 21:17)	grows in knowledge (Luke 2:52)
larger than the heavens (2 Chron. 6:18)	fits in a manger (Luke 2:12)
dwelt in unapproachable light (Ex. 33:20)	appears to men (John 1:14)
is the Creator of all (John 1:1-3)	is a creature (Col. 1:15)
possesses the whole earth (Ps. 24:1)	has no place to lay His head (Luke 9:58)
is equal to the Father (John 5:23)	is inferior to the Father (John 14:28)
is KofK and LofL (Rev. 19:16)	is subject to His parents (Luke 2:51)
is from eternity (Is. 9:6)	is born (Is. 9:6)
never sleeps (Ps. 121:4)	slept (Luke 8:23)
cannot die (1 Tim. 6:16)	gave up His spirit (Mark 15:37)

is infinite is finite

2. Here are some of the Overt efforts to rationalize the person of Christ. a) Jesus was not human. God or an angel took on human form as was done in the Old Testament for the purpose of leading man to God. Only the artificial human nature suffered, not God or the angel. b) Jesus did not remain human. The Son of God took on a human nature for the purpose of saving mankind by living a perfect life and suffering for man's sins, but then He discarded that nature when He returned to heaven. c) Jesus was a created being but not God. He was an ideal human on whom God's Spirit dwelt. Like Moses and Elijah, God may have given him some special powers to support his ministry. d) Jesus was a human who was adopted so as to have divine properties. At his baptism, Jesus was adopted as a special "son" of God and became divine to carry out man's salvation. e) While Jesus was both divine and human, His divinity was limited because He was really only the first creature God created and therefore not eternal. (Arius)

3. Subtle efforts to rationalize the person of Christ. a) The Roman Catholics worship Jesus' divine nature as God but His human nature only similarly to Mary or the other saints. This opens the door to Mary being a co-redeemer of mankind. This is highly dangerous and denies God's plan of salvation. b) The Reformed confine the human nature of Christ to a specific place in heaven, but allow that His divine nature is omnipresent. This is a silly limitation on the almighty God.

16 - Antirationalism – II

XXV. Lutheran Antirationalism in Subjective Justification

Q1. Why does the conversion create problems for reason? A: God gets the credit if it occurs, but man gets the blame if it does not occur.

A. Conversion

1. While all people have been declared righteous before God due to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross, this objective and universal justification will do individuals no good if they do not apply it to themselves. This is called subjective justification. There are two components which the Scriptures discuss that are relevant to the accomplishment of subjective justification – conversion and election. Both of these appear to be irrational to the human mind.

2. Conversion is completely an act of God. a) The Biblical statement is clear. Every person is spiritually dead because of sin. {"*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*" Ephesians 2:1}There is no spiritual life whatsoever. People are by nature as dead as those in Ezekiel's valley of bones. {"*The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry.*" Ezekiel 37:1–2} b) Dead people do not respond to invitations or offers. No matter how good a deal you offer them on a new car or house, they will not respond. Try it. c) God's grace, and only God's grace, overcomes dead hearts. {"*Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in*

mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." Ephesians 2:4–5} Only the call of God can raise the physically or spiritually dead. d) No cooperation can occur on the part of man until after conversion. {"*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*" Philippians 2:12b–13}

3. Important! Resistible and irresistible actions of God. a) The absolute, naked power of God is irresistible. {"*For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?*" Isaiah 14:27} b) Yet people can resist God when He acts through His means of grace (agents). {Stephan said, "*You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!*" Acts 7:51}

4. The defect theories. a) Some falsely claim that not all are saved because God does not really want everyone to be saved, but only formally tries to convert them. b) Some falsely claim that only some are saved because they do not resist the Holy Spirit as strongly as those who are lost.

Q2. How is conversion related to election? A: Conversion follows election and involves only a few people chosen by God. The call to grace is extended to all because Christ died for all.

B. Election

1. Although everyone is eligible to be saved because of universal justification {"*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*" 2 Corinthians 5:14–15} and although God has expressed His desire for all to be saved {"*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*" 2 Peter 3:9}, only a relatively few will be saved {Jesus said, "*But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*" Matthew 7:14}. These are the people whom God elected to be saved through Jesus Christ before He even created the world (before we existed) {"*For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.*" Ephesians 1:4–5}. How can this be? This presents an antirational situation because it appears to human reason that God cannot desire all people to be saved if He elected only some to be saved.

Q3. How do people try to resolve the paradox of election? A: 1) By changing God, creating different levels of grace. 2) By changing man, making some more willing to accept grace and/or live good lives.

2. The nature of election. a) If God elected only some to salvation, then He must have chosen the rest for damnation since no one can be saved who was not elected. This implies a double predestination, with Jesus not having to atone for those chosen to be damned. This is the theology

of John Calvin. This seems so logical, but it is still so wrong based on the Scriptures. b) It is not God's failure to elect people to salvation which damns them, even though they cannot be saved without such election, but rather their failure to believe in Jesus Christ and to repent of their sins. This is Lutheran theology.

3. The method of election. a) Because God is just, He cannot arbitrarily allow people to go to hell and claim to want all to be saved. Therefore, God's predestination must be the result of something which He foresaw either in people's behavior or in their willingness to make a decision for Christ that set certain people apart for salvation. This is Arminian and Roman Catholic theology. The Roman Catholics and the Reformed agree! b) It was not any goodness in any individual that caused God to select him or her, but solely God's incomprehensible mercy. {The LORD said, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*." Exodus 33:19} This is Lutheran theology.

XXVI. Antirationalism in Other Doctrines

Q4. What is the paradox in the preservation of faith? A: 1) God promises He will preserve our faith. 2) God warns us of the dangers of losing our faith.

A. Antirationalism in Preservation

1. The immediate question that arises concerning the preservation of faith in the believers is whether the responsibility for such preservation is that of God or of the believers. The answer is "yes." Without God's giving the believers all the power necessary to remain in faith, they could not prevent losing faith. On the other hand, God does not believe for people, so people must make the effort to retain faith. The Scriptures state both positions.

"God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear." (1 Cor. 10:13)

"*If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*" (1 Cor. 10:12)

Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:28)

Jesus said, "*Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away*." (Luke 8:13)

Jesus said, "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:29)

"*Holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith.*" (1 Tim. 1:19)

"I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day." (2 Tim. 1:12)

"*I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize*." (1 Cor. 9:27)

"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philip. 1:6)

"*It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance*." (Heb. 6:4-6)

"It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." (Philip. 2:13)

"*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*" (Philip. 2:12)

"He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 1:8)

"*But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.*" (Rom. 11:20-22)

Q5. How did John Calvin deal with this paradox? A: He said that the warnings were irrelevant to the elect.

2. The Calvinist position. a) John Calvin emphasized the absolute majesty of God as His predominant doctrine. Therefore, once God had called one of the elect to faith, that person could not fall away from faith, no matter how scandalous his or her life might appear for a time. Faith could not be lost. Calvinists therefore accept only the first set of passages. b) Those who appeared to believe for a time and finally fell away were never believers in the first place, but they were merely hypocrites posing as Christians. Hypocrites know that they are hypocrites because their hearts are never fully committed to God.

Q6. How does the Roman Catholic Church deal with this paradox? A: It rejects God's promised preservation of faith.

3. The Roman Catholic position a) The Roman church teaches that salvation can never be certain because no one knows for sure whether they have committed an unforgiven mortal sin which would exclude them from heaven. Efforts to confess all sins are therefore necessary to allow for penance and forgiveness. b) While popes can grant indulgences, not even they can be certain how effective these are at remitting penalties for sins. For example, intentional failure to do penance for a venial sin is a mortal sin. Catholics therefore accept only the second set of passages.

4. The antirational Lutheran position. a) The Lutheran church accepts both sets of passages as the word of God. Therefore Lutherans preach the importance of the complete reliance on the LORD for preserving our faith. b) However, Lutherans also remind believers how important it is that once they are alive in faith to strive to retain that faith through the study of God's word and Holy Communion. In the same way that God provides all our physical food, but still expects us to work for it and consume it ourselves to sustain physical life, so He expects us also to behave in regard to the spiritual food that sustains faith.

17 - Antirationalism – III

B. Antirationalism in Law and Gospel

Q1. What is the Law? A: The promise of salvation to anyone who keeps the Law of God perfectly.

1. The Law clearly states that those who disobey any of God's commands are under His eternal wrath {The LORD said, "*You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.*" Genesis 2:17} and will be punished by extreme torment in hell forever {Jesus said, "*If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.*" Mark 9:43}. God's justice demands that He regard all sinners as His enemies, undeserving of any further consideration {"*For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.'* " Galatians 3:10}.

Q2. What is the Gospel? A: The promise of salvation to all who believe it.

The Gospel says that God loves all people despite their sins {"*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*." Romans 5:8}, that He created a plan to save sinful people in which He declares them all righteous in His sight and that He freely offers them heaven without any conditions attached {"*Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.*" Romans 5:18}. The Scriptures emphatically state both positions, yet, both of them being true is so antirational that people have continually tried to come up with a way to finesse one or the other.

Q3. Explain one of the common "fixes" for the Law/Gospel paradox. A: God has aged and become more mellow in dealing with man.

2. The evolution-of-God fix. a) The gods of primitive people are often thought of as being savage because the world in which these people live is dangerous and brutal. These people create gods which are like their environment. To survive, such people must follow rigorous rules, and they make their gods require obedience to such rules to make their society viable. Such societies produce "law gods." b) As people become more civilized and can better manage their environment, they begin refining their gods, making them more humane in their actions. As societies become wealthier, their gods become more loving and can be viewed as "gospel gods."

3. The pre- and post-conversion fix. a) Before people are converted, they need the "fear of God" placed in them. A God who demands rigorous adherence to a set of detailed rules is what is needed to scare people into repentance. The preaching of a law-oriented God is what is needed to effect conversion. b) Once people are converted, they do not have to worry about placating a harsh God, but will respond to the mercy of God and naturally exhibit moral behavior. Therefore the Law does not need to be preached to the converted, a heresy called antinomianism.

4. The reprobates-versus-elect fix. a) Those whom God has predestined to hell need to have the reason for their condemnation demonstrated to them through the preaching of the Law. They will therefore know how deserving of God's wrath they really are when they hear the Law preached. b) The elect do not need to worry about God's wrath and His law. After all, they have been selected from eternity to experience God's love and good pleasure. They are God's children and all their sins have been covered by Jesus' blood. They will know how much they are loved by God when they hear the Gospel preached.

5. Doing-the-best-we-can fix. a) In the Old Testament, the Law is the standard by which God judged people. b) Since Christ has come, God has weakened His standards and becomes a pothole fixer. He expects people to do the best they can, but He will take care of whatever sins they do commit via His Gospel.

6. The conditional fix. a) While the promise of salvation through the Law was always conditional, requiring perfect obedience to obtain salvation {"*Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the* LORD." Leviticus 18:5}, there are no conditions attached to the Gospel {"*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Romans 6:23}. b) Rationalists try to make salvation dependent on some action of the human recipient of the gift bestowed through the Gospel – *if* you repent, *if* you are contrite, *if* you believe, *if* you are willing to amend your sinful life. This is synergism. Subjective justification replaces all the *if*'s with *will*'s. The person converted by the Holy Spirit *will* repent, *will* be contrite, *will* believe and *will* amend his or her sinful life.

XXVII. Summary

Q4. Compare and contrast Martin Luther and Thomas Aquinas on the use of reason. A: Luther believed that reason had to be used ministerially as a maid, while Aquinas believed that reason had to be used magisterially as a queen.

A. Luther's Theology and God

1. William of Occam (antirationalism) versus Thomas Aquinas (reason).
2. God is hidden by a mask. God hides to reveal Himself.
3. A natural knowledge of God exists and natural proofs have some (very limited) value.
4. The true God can only be known by revelation and faith.
5. The natural knowledge of God is always legalistic (reward good; punish evil).

B. Luther's Theology and Reason

1. Reason is not part of the image of God which was destroyed in the Fall.
2. The ministerial use, not the magisterial use, of reason has a role to play in theology.
3. Revelation comes through human speech and requires a strict application of grammar.
4. Inductive reasoning always errs because man's experience is very limited. (Hasty generalization is one of the major limitations of science.)

5. The law of contradictions cannot be applied to the doctrines of the Scriptures. (The law of contradictions says that if two things contradict each other, at most one of them can be true.)
6. Reason is always hampered in accepting the Gospel by *opinio legis*.
7. The person of Christ, conversion and the Law and Gospel are paradoxes of faith.

C. Luther's Theology and Apologetics

1. Man must not seek out the truths of God by speculation.
2. The way of analogy and the resolutions of Biblical paradoxes are extremely dangerous.
3. It is the height of folly to try to make the Gospel reasonable to natural man.
4. The best defense of Scripture is Scripture.
5. Every argument of reason can be overthrown by reason.
6. Reason must be taken captive by the Word of God.

D. Epilogue

1. God led Israel out of Egypt by what appeared to them the most foolish way possible.
2. To follow God's Word is to become a fool in the eyes of men.
3. Following the way of reason, however, in spiritual matters is fatal.
4. "*The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom*." 1 Corinthians 1:25a.

Q5. What is the foolishness of God? A: That we must rely solely on faith created by the Holy Spirit and not on our own reason to accept the truth that God reveals.