

Understanding and Defending the Reasons of our Faith in a World Gone Mad

Session #5

1. Branches of philosophy and overlapping Christian doctrine:

a. Metaphysics (Study of the fundamental nature of reality) vs. Theology Proper/Creation.

b. Epistemology (Study of the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge) vs. Revelation, illumination, and perspicuity (clarity).

Westminster Confession on Perspicuity: "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all. Yet, those things that are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or another, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them" (1.7).

Question: Can we come to a knowledge of God apart from His revelation to us?

c. Axiology/value theory (Study of the nature of value and valuation) vs. holiness/goodness

i. Ethics (Study of what is right and wrong in human behavior) vs. morality

ii. Aesthetics (Study of beauty and taste) vs. worship/delight/goodness

2. Some overlapping questions of concern:

The World	Christianity
Origins: where did we come from?	Creation: God created all things.
Purpose/meaning: why are we here? what to do?	Imago Deo: We serve and represent God.
Problems/evil: what is evil? what causes it?	Fall: all creation is corrupt including human nature
Solutions: how do we improve people/the world?	Salvation/Redemption: God saves and sanctifies us.
History: how do we understand the past? where are we going?	His-story/Eschatology: God has been at work and has an end in mind.

3. Christian Epistemology: Knowledge and wisdom are founded on God alone and begin with revelation.

a. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10).

Fear is a disposition of the heart.

b. All treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ (Colossians 2:1-8).

c. The fool says in his heart "there is no God" (Psalm 14:1; Romans 1:21).

Though people can know many things well, nothing can be *properly* learned apart from the "fear of the Lord", and we should not seek to know anything apart from God or without reference to Him. This is **not** to say that subjects must be studied with the Bible open or by developing the specific subject matter from theological propositions, but that God must be acknowledged and conclusions must comport with what we know to be true from His Word.

Clarifying Terms:

- *Popular Materialism* is an inordinate focus on or desire for material things and is associated with greed.
- *Philosophic Materialism* as a worldview holds matter to be the fundamental substance in nature. All things, including mental states and consciousness, are results of material interactions. Mind and consciousness are by-products of material processes (such as the biochemistry of the human brain and nervous system), without which they cannot exist.
- *Naturalism* is the belief that reality is exhausted by nature, containing nothing “supernatural”, and that the scientific method should be used to investigate all areas of reality, including the “human spirit”. [Naturalism and materialism are generally held together as they both deny any immaterial (spiritual) reality.]