

## **Doctrine of Natural Theology**

### **Natural Theology and General Revelation**

1. There are principles of knowledge which are critical for proper Biblical interpretation, and defense of the faith.
  - The Law of Non-contradiction
    - ❖ Contradiction
    - ❖ Paradox
    - ❖ Mystery
  - The Law of Causality
  - The Value of Sense Perception
  - The Analogical Use of Language
2. An important defense in Christian apologetics is that of Natural Theology.
3. Many modern theologians and philosophers reject the idea of Natural Theology.
4. A champion of Natural Theology was Thomas Aquinas (1225 – March 7, 1274), who stood on the shoulders of Augustine, who in turn appealed to the apostle Paul.
5. The term “Natural Theology” can be defined as “knowledge of God that is gained from nature.”
6. In addition to, but distinct from, what is revealed about God in Scripture, is another source of revelation, and that which can be found in nature.
7. Historically, Natural Theology, within the Christian tradition, is based upon general revelation.
8. The two concepts are distinct. General Revelation refers to something that God does. Natural Theology refers to something that man does. Natural Theology is the result of General Revelation.
9. General Revelation is distinct from Special Revelation.
10. General Revelation is called this for two reasons.
  - General Revelation is given to all human beings. It is universal. Not everyone is given Special Revelation, such as those who are privileged to hear about Jesus, or know the Bible.
  - General Revelation is because of its content. What General Revelation reveals is knowledge of God in general. We do not see in General Revelation the doctrine of the Trinity, or God’s plan of salvation. What is revealed is basic, substantive information.

11. There are two kinds of General Revelation.

- Mediate Revelation. This is the revelation that God gives to all people through some medium. It is not direct, but it is indirect. God gives revelation through the heavens, just as a great painter leaves something of himself in the art he paints.

*Psalms 19:1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*

- Immediate Revelation. This is the revelation that God gives directly to a person through the conscience. This is not something deducted from nature. Rather, it is a sense of the Divine (Latin, *sensus divinitatis*, John Calvin).

*Romans 2:15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)*

12. The classical location in Scripture for General Revelation, and for Natural Theology, is found in Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

- *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

**Special Note.**

There is a single sin in view when Paul speaks about "*all ungodliness and unrighteousness*" and that is a suppression of the truth in unrighteousness.

13. The revelation of God's wrath shows readers the necessity of the gospel, and the necessity of a Saviour.

- *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*
- *Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

14. The one primary universal sin of humanity is the suppression of truth, in general, and in particular. Potential knowledge about God is being suppressed.

- *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

15. On the Day of Judgment, people will not be able to say that they just did not know about God. That excuse will not be accepted, because God has shown Himself plainly to all.
- *Romans 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*
16. Individuals do not have God in their thoughts, because they hate God.
17. Because men hate God, they take the knowledge they do have of God in natural revelation, which produces natural theology, and they distort it, they reject it, and they twist the truth to their own eternal destruction.
18. The natural man will engage in religious arguments, but only to advance his hatred of God and his agenda to be free of God.
19. The question arises about those in Africa, or South America, or Australia, who have never heard the gospel. "Will they go to heaven?"
20. If they are innocent, they will go to heaven, and to assure their going to heaven not one cent should be given to evangelize them. Let them die in their state of ignorance, and innocence, and be saved.
21. Of course that is outrageous, and for this reason. The people in Africa, the people in every nation, are guilty in the sight of God. They have sinned, and they know it. They know about God through general revelation, and through natural theology, and they know they need forgiveness.
22. It is because every person is guilty before God that the gospel of redemption must go forth.
23. The gospel must go forth because though man has general revelation about God, and can know something about God through natural theology, something more is needed for salvation, and that is the preaching of the gospel.
- *Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*
24. Natural theology is not inconsistent with Biblical theology. Some theologians, such as Francis Schaeffer, thought that Catholic dogma, reflected in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, separated nature and grace.
25. But the natural and the supernatural are not opposed to one another. Aquinas tried to show the ultimate union between nature and grace.
26. What Aquinas was opposed to was Muslim theology and Aristotle, technically called, Integral Aristolelianism.

27. Arab philosophy was advocating the Double Truth Theory.

***Special Note.***

This theory postulated that something could be true in philosophy, but false in religion. Conversely, something could be true in religion, but false in philosophy. Again, it was said that something could be true in science, but false in theology. Or, something could be true in theology, but false in science.

For example. there are people who believe in evolution. However, the Bible declares that God created man from the dust of the earth. The origin of humanity is meaningless, and the destiny of humanity is nothing, according to the evolutionist. Christian theism teaches that man was created by God and is destined for glory. The two concepts cannot both be true.

28. If the Double Truth Theory is valid then people are mentally schizophrenic. On Sunday they can believe in a divinely created universe, and man is made in the image of God. But, on Monday they can believe in the evolutionary model where man is a grown up germ with no significance whatsoever.
29. Thomas Aquinas knew that pure relativism was threatening Christianity, and he moved to oppose it by presenting his philosophy of natural theology.
30. Aquinas distinguished between nature and grace, or between reason and faith, but he did not divorce, or separate, the two. He simply noticed the diffidence between religion and science.
31. A distinction can be made between body and soul without any harm being done.
32. A separation between body and soul means the end of life.
33. Aquinas argued that there are certain things we can learn from nature that we cannot learn from grace. There are certain truths we learn from a study of this world.

***Special Note.***

The Bible does not teach us about the circulatory system of the blood. The Bible does not teach us about molecular biology. At the same time, there are things we learn from grace, or from the Scriptures, that cannot be learned from science. Salvation cannot be learned from science, but only from the Bible.

34. In addition to a study of nature and the Bible, Aquinas said there is the “articulus mixture”, or, “mixed articles.”
35. The “mixed articles” refer to those truths that can be learned either from the Bible, or from nature. Chief among these truths is the existence of God.

36. While it is true the Bible assumes the God of the Bible, the reason for this is that God has already, conclusively, proven His existence through nature. Therefore, apologetics is a valid field of inquiry, and so is nature.
37. The General Revelation of God comes to us in nature. The Special Revelation of God comes to us in Scripture. They are in agreement so that all truth is God's truth and meet in theology, the Queen of the Sciences.
38. The conclusion is that if something is true in science, it must also be true in theology. If something is true in theology, it must also be true in science.
39. When there is conflict between science and the Bible, the believer must stay with the teaching of Scripture for the Word of God lives and abides forever. Science changes.

***Special Note.***

Some science is sheer nonsense, especially when it speaks of everything coming into existence from nothing, or one species evolving into another species. That is philosophy, not science.

40. There are times when the church has been wrong in their understanding of Scripture, and therefore was wrong in its science.
- The geocentric theory of the universe was embraced until Copernicus (1473 – 1543) and Galileo (February 15, 1564 – January 8, 1642) proved the earth moved and the sun was the center of our solar system.
41. Some scientist will try to destroy Christianity.
- Scopes Monkey Trail 1925
  - Refusal to teach Creationism in public schools
  - Indoctrination in college courses
42. Sinful unbelief is the cause of the conflict between reason and faith, nature and revelation, and between science and religion.