

Doctrine of the Mystery: Background of the Mystery Cults: Theology: Science or Philosophy? Scripture Establishes Absolute Truth thus It Is Both

12. The controversy over whether theology is a philosophy or a science is dependent upon how questions regarding metaphysics, a study of what is outside objective experience, is approached.
13. If one is an empiricist who demands experimental evidence for a proposition to be regarded as true, real, or confirmed, then his means for validating truth is scientific.
14. If one is a rationalist who demands logical proof for a proposition, then his means of validating truth is philosophical.
15. Unbelievers approach theology from one of these two perspectives. The empiricist regards the Bible as philosophy and will cherry-pick concepts that agree with his worldview.
16. The rationalist views the Bible through the prism of “natural theology” and will consider concepts in agreement with his worldview but reject involvement in organized religion.
17. A believer must subscribe to the concept of “sacred theology” which requires him to submit to divine revelation contained in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.
18. “Sacred theology” requires reverent attention to the biblical text through analysis of its construction, its presentation, and its setting – what we define as the literal-grammatical-historical system of hermeneutics.
19. When a person believes that the Bible is (1) God’s immutable, inerrant message to man (2) whose content is presented literally and (3) understood by exegetical analysis while (4) observing the historical setting at the time of its writings, then he may conclude that the Bible contains an authentic record of divine thought and its message may be trusted as the source of absolute truth.
20. Note, however, that the issue of faith is paramount in this conclusion. Beyond its own claims, there is no empirical, extrabiblical proof that the Bible is the Word of God. Rationally, much of its content is implausible since, for example, its commentary on certain acts of God go beyond human reasoning and comprehension.
21. Theology becomes a science when the person who undertakes analysis of Scripture subscribes to the principle that the Bible is the Word of God.
22. A believer cannot arrive at this conclusion from either empirical or rational worldviews. He must accept this proposal by means of faith.

23. What makes it possible for him to arrive at this conclusion is found in a foregoing faith conclusion: that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).
24. There is no precise testimony to this fact outside the Bible. The biblical record must serve as the valid object for the unbeliever’s faith.
25. The Lord’s response to Peter in Matthew 16:17 must be believed as true, “Blessed are you, Simon Johnson, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you [neither empiricism nor rationalism], but My Father who is in heaven.”
26. Theology – “sacred theology” – begins with faith in two categories: (1) salvation through faith alone in Christ alone, and (2) faith alone that the Bible alone is the singular divine record containing absolute proof regarding all things seen and unseen.
27. When these two faith conclusions are in place then the theologian becomes a scientist based on empirical evidence as well as a philosopher based on the rationales of divine wisdom.
28. Empiricism demands experiential proof which the Bible accurately supplies. The literal-grammatical-historical system of hermeneutics enables the theologian to scientifically extract its truths for exhortation. Example: Question: Is Jesus Christ undiminished deity? Answer: Yes. Source: Matthew 16:16, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
29. Rationalism demands that logical arguments must be utilized to conclude truth and that conclusion based on a valid premise.
Example:

Premise:	Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. Proof: Matthew 28:6, “He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said.”
Logical connection:	Those who believe in Him will also be resurrected from the dead. Proof: 1 John 3:2b, “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.”
Conclusion:	Believers will be resurrected at the Rapture of the Church. Proof: 1 Thessalonians 4:16, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout ... and the dead in Christ will rise first.” v. 17, “Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”
30. Therefore, theology’s foundation is faith which enables a person to consider the Bible as an authentic record of divine revelation from the one true God.

31. Therefore, under this premise the theologian is a scientist who considers the Bible as empirical evidence of absolute truth by which he is able to dogmatically assert principles regarding those things seen and unseen.

NOTE: Mortimer Adler rarely consulted Scripture in the introductions to his 102 “great ideas.” In his initial introduction to the idea of “Angel,” Dr. Adler consults the works of authors found in *Great Books of the Western World*:

The first idea “Angel” is broken down into “Inferior deities or demi-gods in polytheistic religion,” “the philosophical consideration of pure intelligences, spiritual substances, supra-human persons” and seven other subtopics.^[13] After this is the references section (for instance, “inferior deities or demi-gods in polytheistic religion” can be found in Homer, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, Locke, Hegel, Goethe and more).¹

32. Under that same premise the theologian is a philosopher who considers the Bible as the source of pure reason by which he is able to dogmatically assert principles regarding wisdom, virtue, and values that draw clear distinctions between right and wrong.
33. Those involved in religion have “theologies” that are based on extrabiblical concepts that are rightly called myths. The most famous are ones that were popular in Greece and Rome although each borrowed from those arising in the Middle East.

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syntopicon>