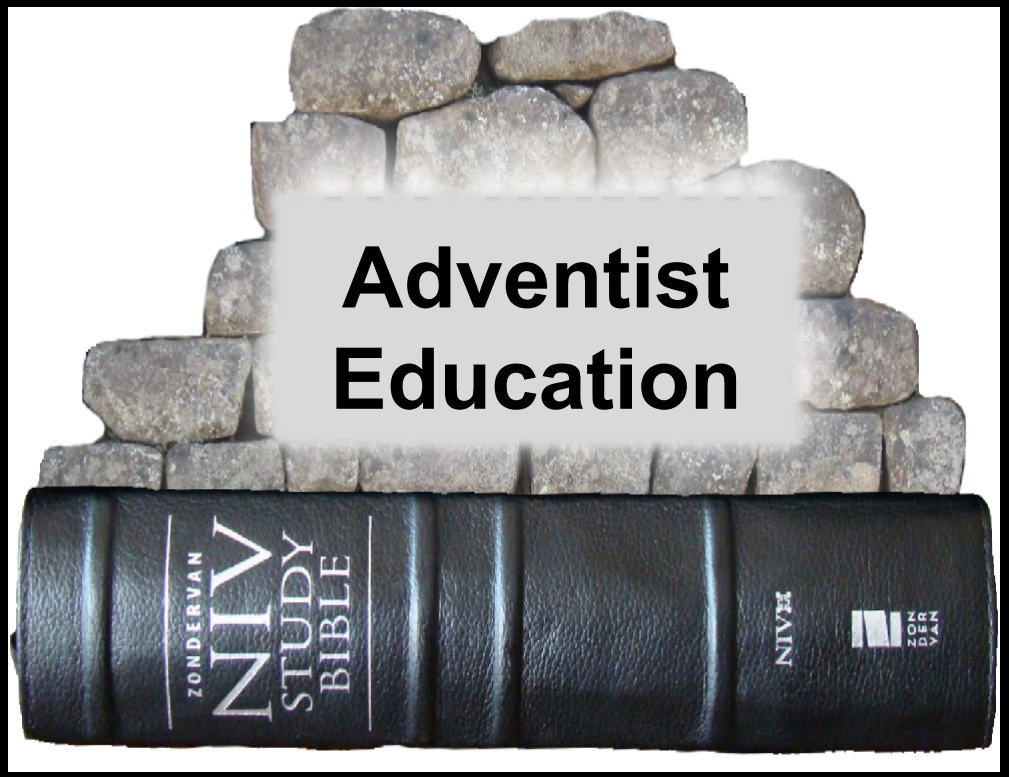
The Biblical Foundation for Adventist Education

By E. Edward Zinke
Illustrations by David Zinke
and Carol Raney
Motivation by Doug Zinke
and by Seven Grandchildren



The Authority of the Bible in the History of Theology

To the Reformation

Epistemology

Epistemology

Epistemology

God

Universe

World

Existence

Self

Epistemology

Self

Existence

World

Universe

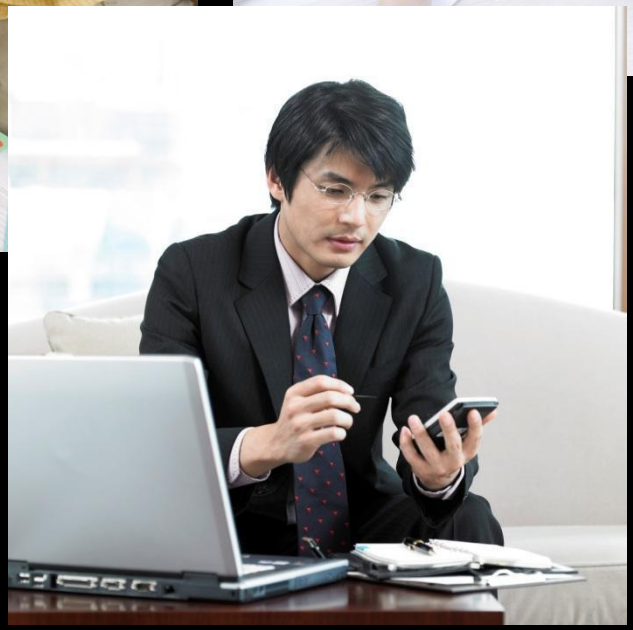
God

Epistemology

a little thing that makes a BIG difference

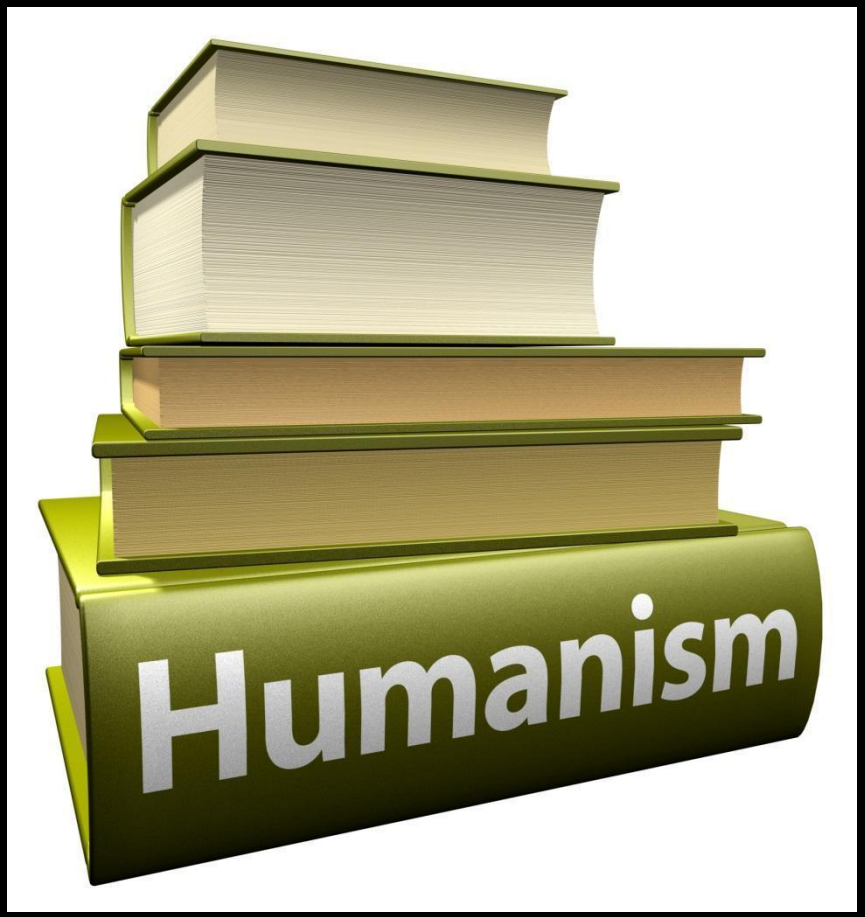
Business News

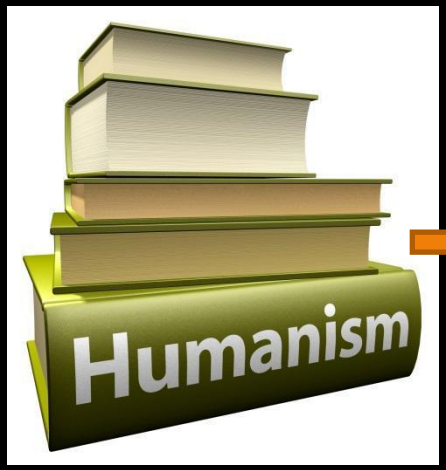
FULLHD

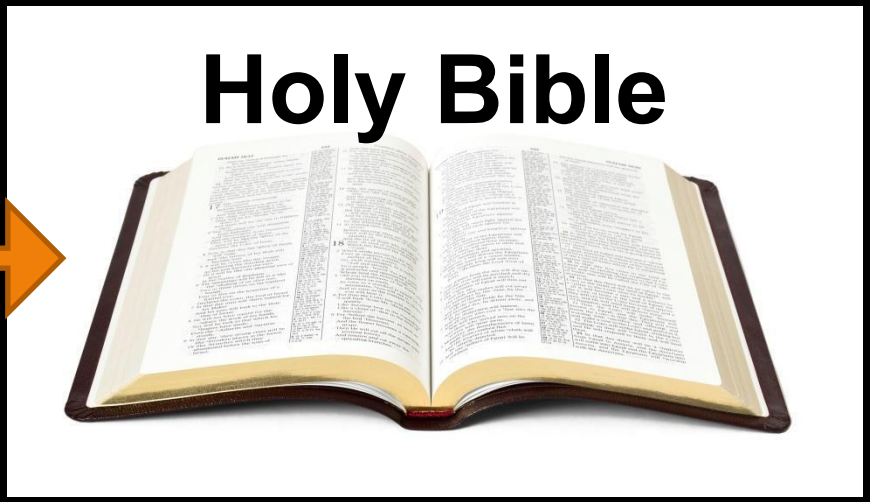


Rock-solid
foundation

Religion
Math
EXPERIENCE
Science
AND MYSTICISM


Humanism


Humanism


Holy Bible

How Will We Get There?

- Overview of the history of philosophy, theology and Biblical studies highlighting lessons learned
- The Biblical world view as foundational for our understanding of the world – that rock solid foundation we were seeking above

Presuppositions

The Bible, God's Word, came by the will of God rather than by the will of man

The Bible is its own interpreter

Terminology

- Rationalism
- Empiricism
- Existentialism
- Pragmatism
- Materialism
- Ectceteraism

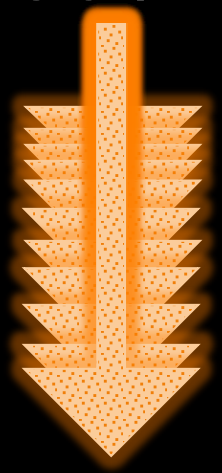
Early Church
2nd-12th centuries

- The early church was dominated by the philosophy or the world view of Neo-Platonism. This philosophy was inherited from Greek philosophy, primarily from Plato.

Neo-Platonism

Neo-Platonic Philosophy

Celestial/Perfect/Eternal Forms

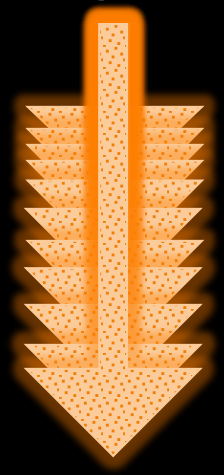


Imperfect/Earthly

Materialization of these forms

Neo-Platonism

Perfect/Eternal Form or Idea (Real)



Imperfect/Earthly/Material

(Merely a Reflection of the Real)

Neo-Platonic Philosophy

Perfect/Eternal Form

Imperfect/Earthly

The Goal of Neo-Platonism

Return to the Eternal Form

Neo-Platonism

Perfect/Eternal

(Real)

Imperfect/Earthly/Material

(Not Real)

Return to the really real

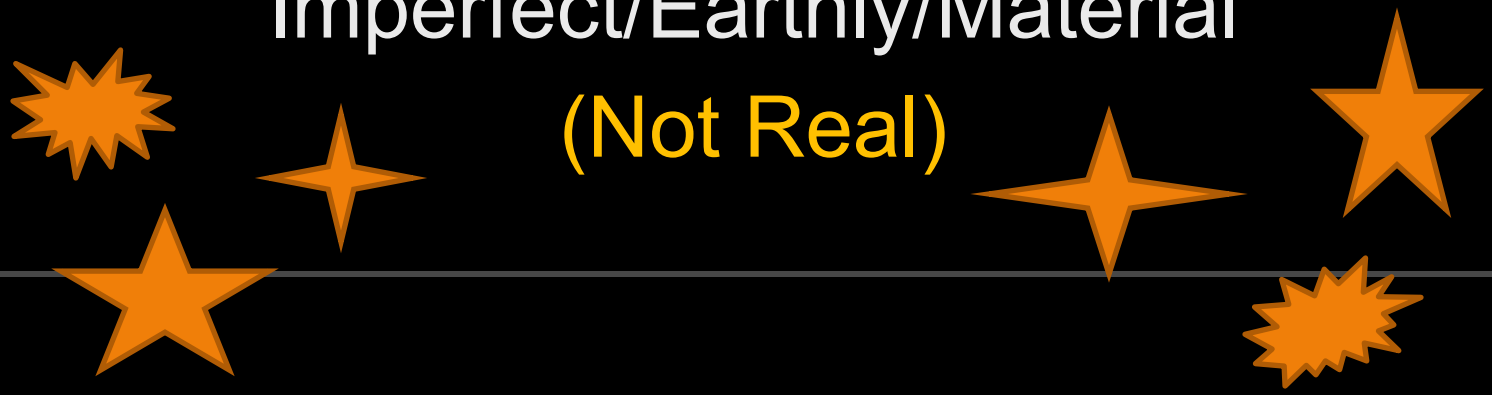
Neo-Platonism

Perfect/Eternal

(Real)

Imperfect/Earthly/Material

(Not Real)



Influence on Theology

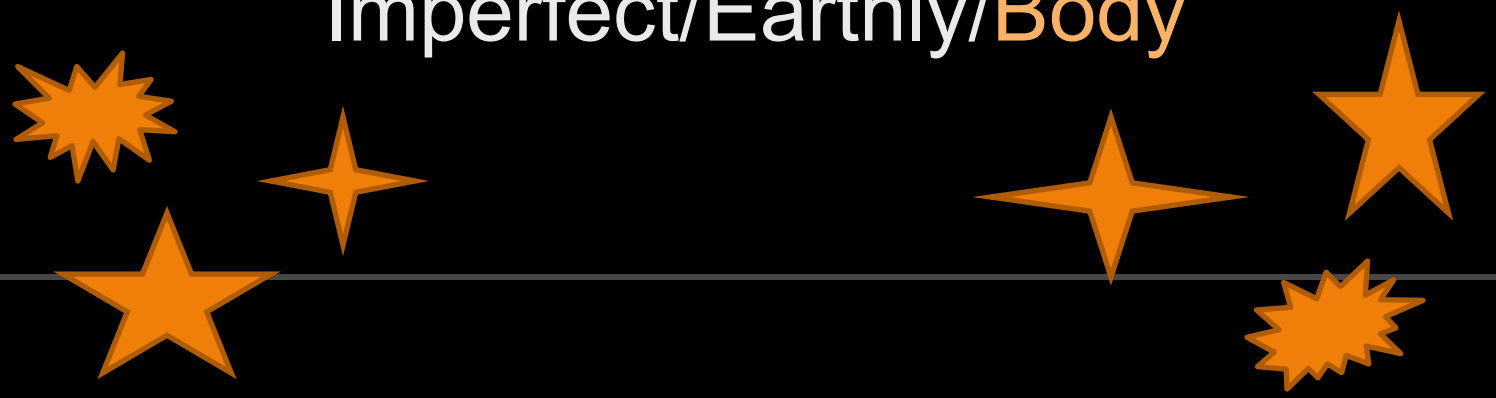
- Neo-Platonism had a major impact on the theology of the Christian Church.

Natural Immortality of the Soul

Perfect/Eternal/Soul

(Real)

Imperfect/Earthly/Body



Knowledge of God

Since reality was only accessible through intermediaries, God also was only known and approachable through intermediaries.

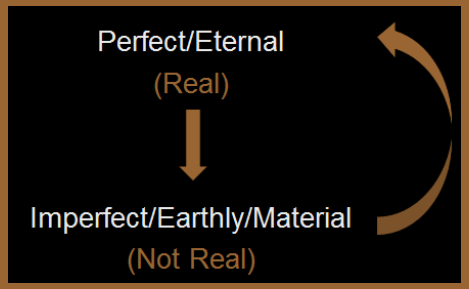
Origen

Early Church	Middle Ages Dark Ages 500s-1500s	Renaissance 1300s-1600s Reformation 1500s	Enlightenment Age of Reason 1600s-1700s	Modernism Post-Modernism

3rd century

Allegorical Method of Interpretation came from Neo-Platonism through the Jew, Philo

Neo Platonism



Origen

Hermeneutics

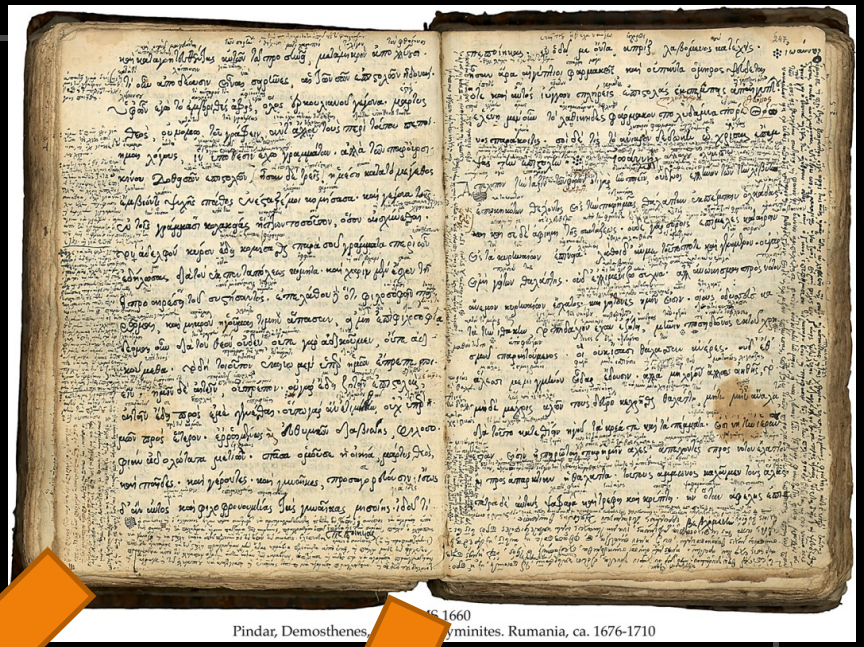
- As we have seen, Neo-Platonism held to the dual concept of eternal realities and their reflection in earthly forms. This influenced their understanding and interpretation of literature. Literature had a literal meaning, but more importantly and often distinctly, an allegorical interpretation, the really real.

Perfect/Eternal

(Real)

Imperfect/Earthly/Material

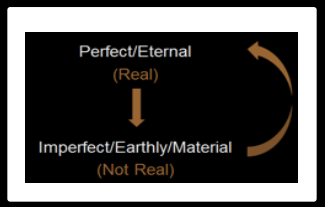
(Not Real)

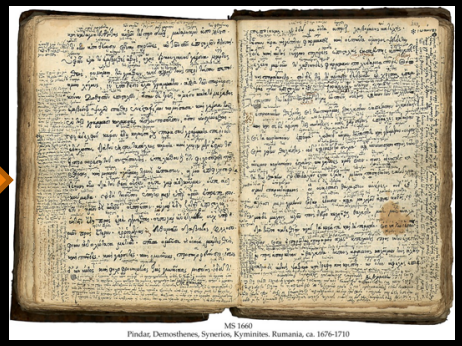


Pindar, Demosthenes, [illegible] Hymnites. Rumania, ca. 1676-1710

Literal

Allegorical




MS 1660
Pindar, Demosthenes, Synerios, Kyminites. Rumania, ca. 1676-1710

Spiritual

Figurative

Allegorical

Literal

Levels of Meaning

Literal

and/
or

Spiritual

Figurative

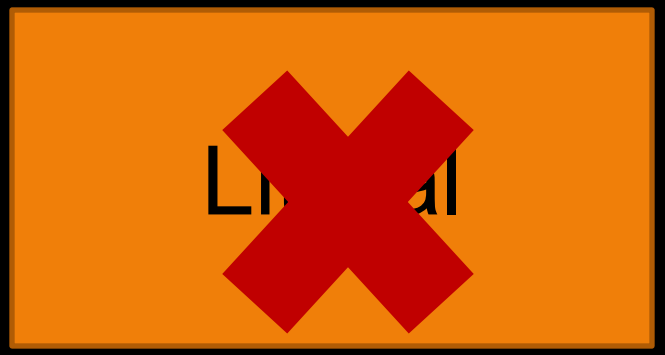
Allegorical

When a literal interpretation was…

- Unworthy of God
- Impossible (based upon the contemporary thinking of the age)
- Not in harmony with other passages of Scripture

Literal

An allegorical interpretation was demanded

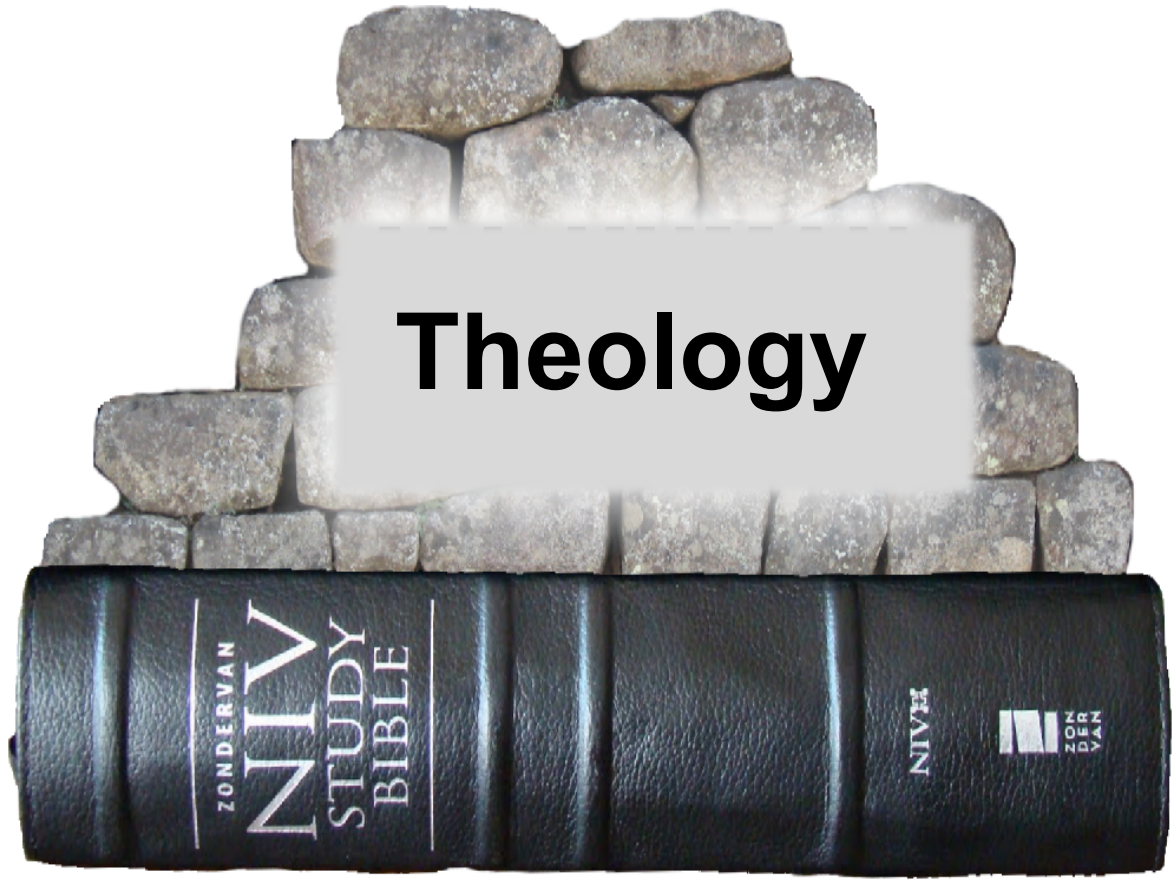


and/
or

Spiritual

Figurative

Allegorical


Theology
ZONDERVAN
NIV
STUDY
BIBLE
NIV
ZONDERVAN

Origen--Lessons Learned

- Came from Alexandria, a city of Greek culture in Egypt
- Accepted Neo-Platonic worldview/philosophy of Alexandria
- The allegorical method of interpretation was a product of Neo-Platonic thinking
- He used this external method and thereby imposed Neo-Platonism on the Bible

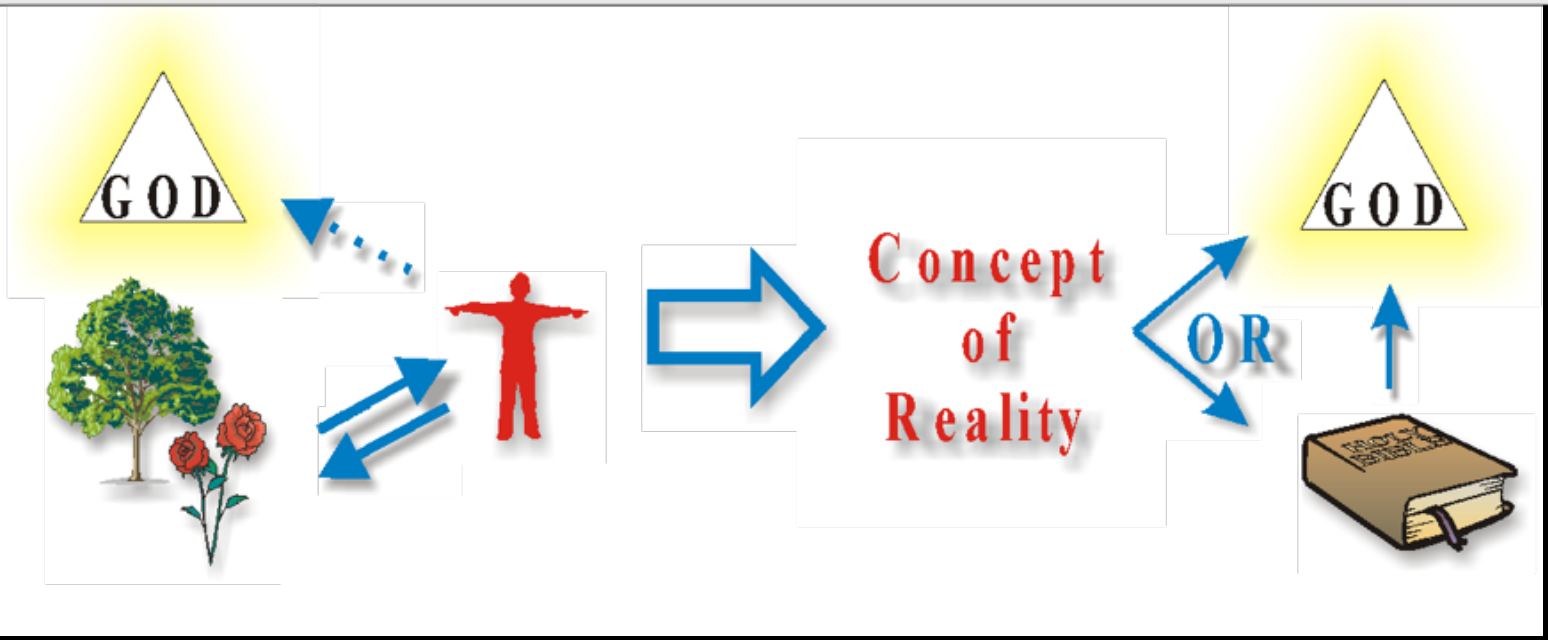
Origen--Lessons Learned

- By applying the allegorical methods to the study of scripture, he imposed the Neo-Platonic worldview upon scripture. Scripture became a good Neo-Platonic book.
- His intention was mission—to reach people where they are, but the result was compromise, the baptism of Christianity by a pagan culture, and the obscuration of the Bible.

Paths to Knowledge of God

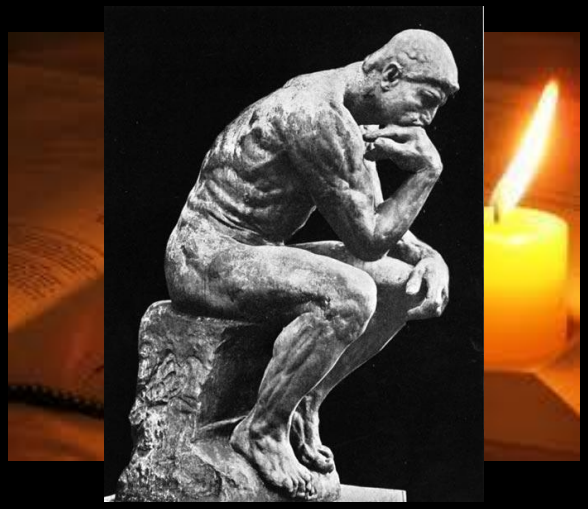
Medieval World

"If you want to know God, look at reality"



Middle Ages

Early Church	Middle Ages Dark Ages 500s-1500s	Renaissance 1300s-1600s Reformation 1500s	Enlightenment Age of Reason 1600s-1700s	Modernism Post-Modernism



Philosophical Arguments for the Existence of God

The Bible simply assumes the existence of God.

Some theologies of the middle ages attempted to prove His existence.

- These arguments encased God within the philosophy of the age.

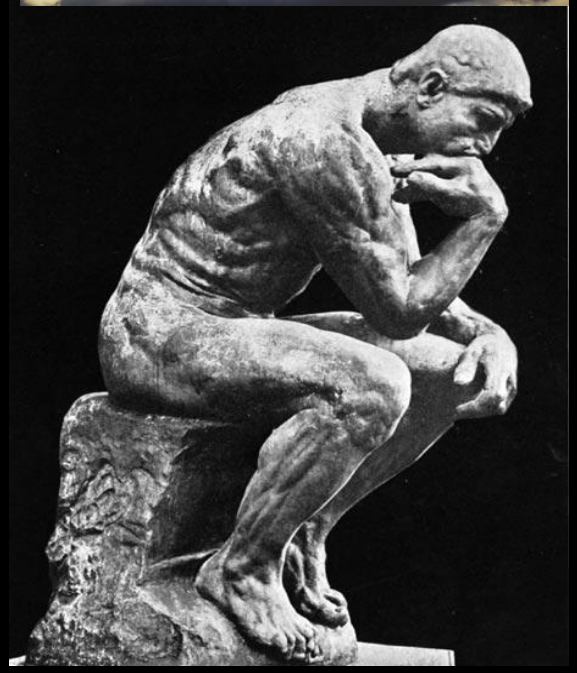
Anselm

Reason puts man in touch with the whole order of being and has its own principles of operation. Therefore reason gives a foundation for accepting the existence of God.

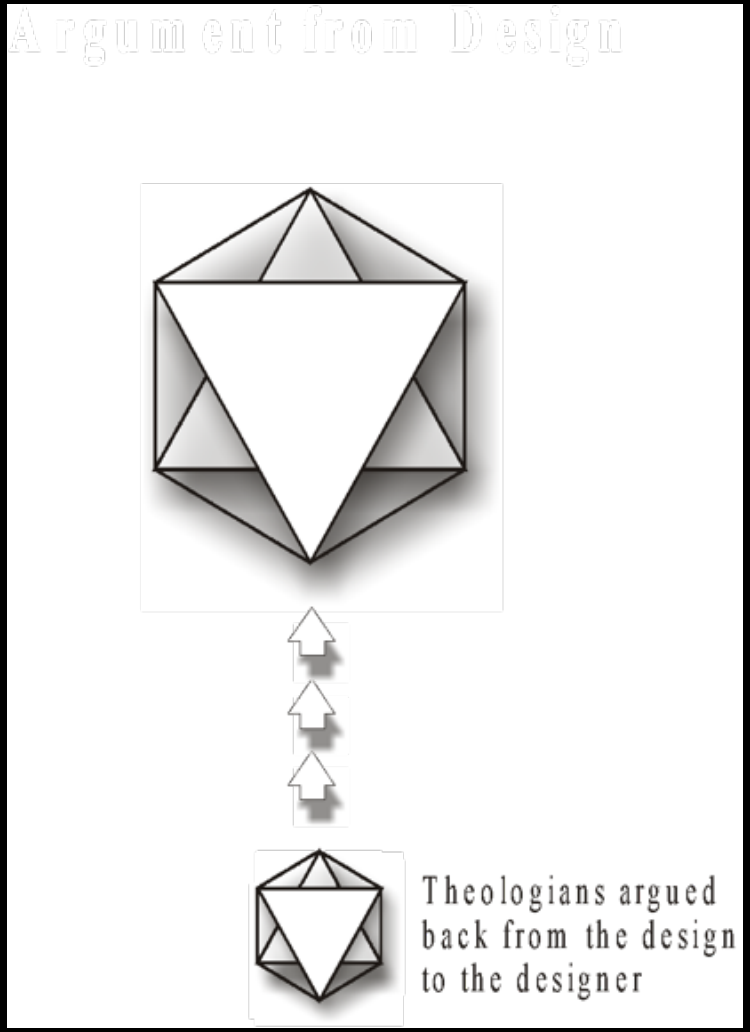
- How do we know such a being as God exists?
- By an argument that arises from a definition of God?

Ontological Argument for Existence of God

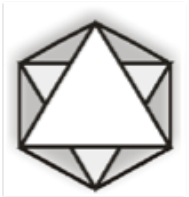
God: a being greater than which nothing can be conceived.



Argument from Design

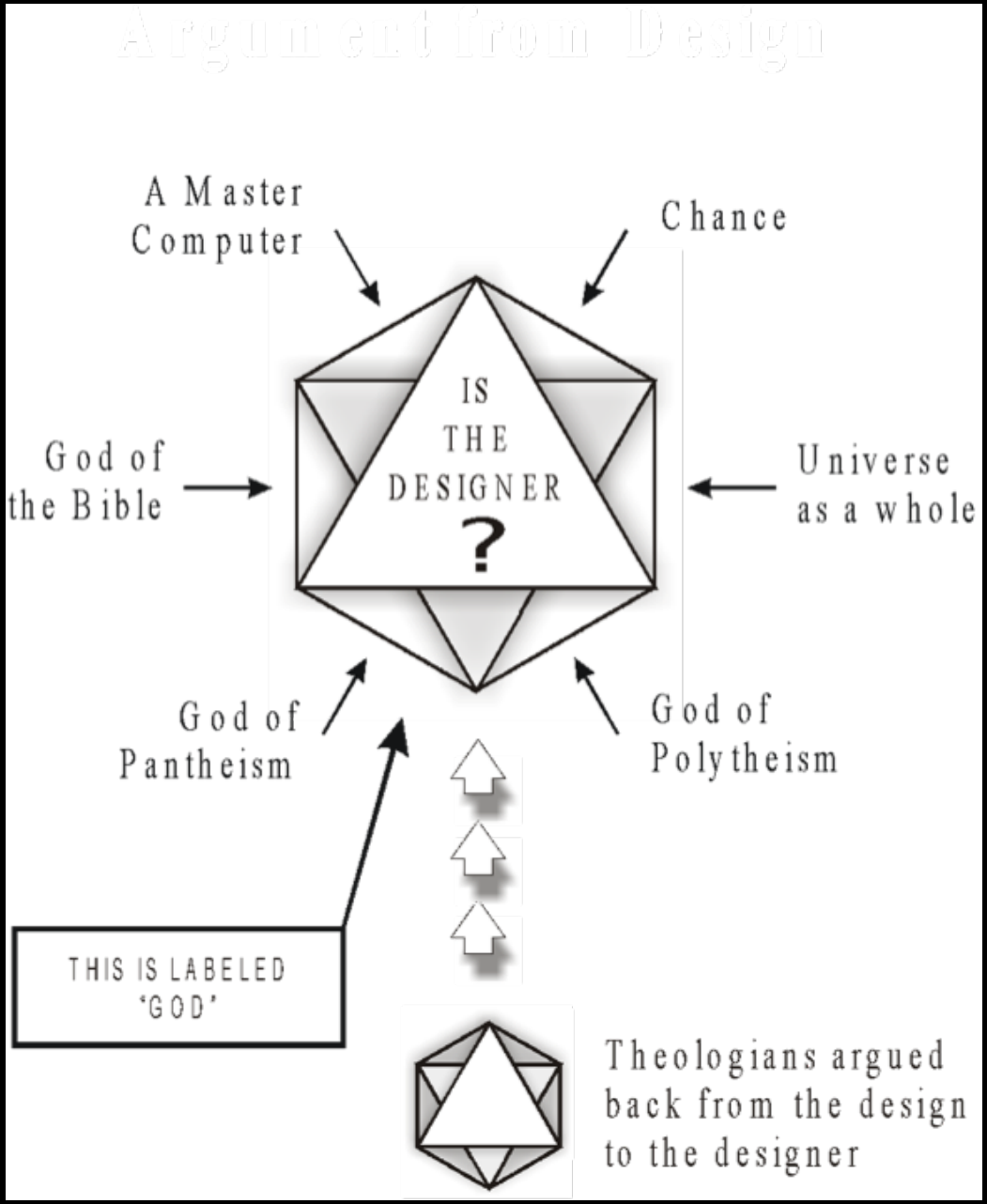


Argument from Design



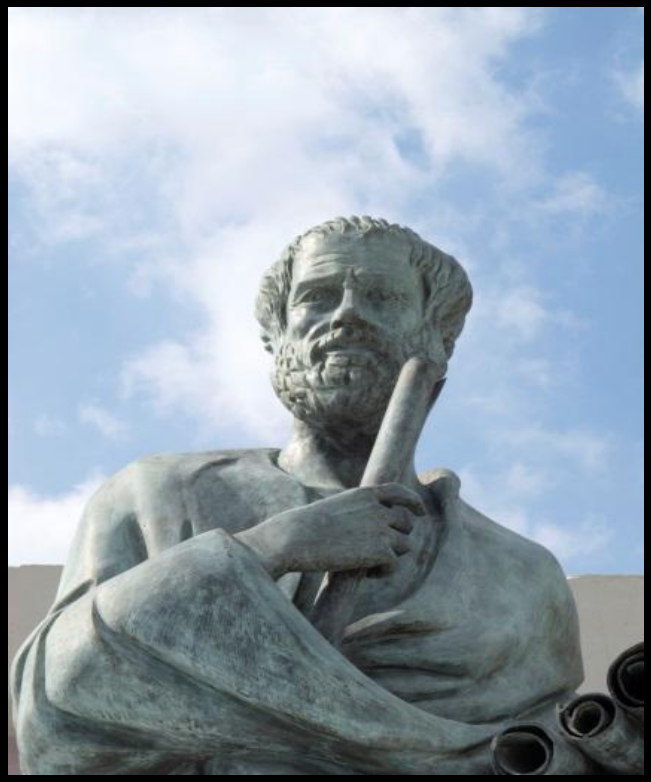
Theologians argued back from the design to the designer

Argument from Design



Scholasticism

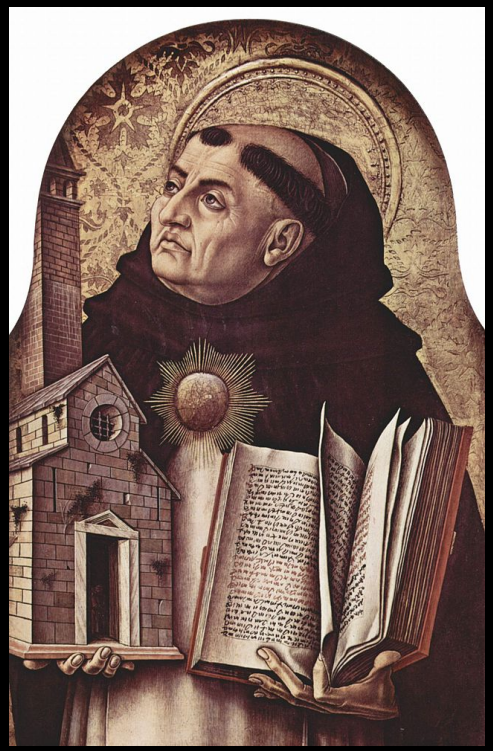
Early Church	Middle Ages Dark Ages 500s-1500s	Renaissance 1300s-1600s Reformation 1500s	Enlightenment Age of Reason 1600s-1700s	Modernism Post-Modernism



Aristotle's understanding of the world

Thomas Aquinas

Early Church	Middle Ages Dark Ages 500s-1500s	Renaissance 1300s-1600s Reformation 1500s	Enlightenment Age of Reason 1600s-1700s	Modernism Post-Modernism



13th century

Thomas Aquinas

&

Truths of Nature

(Aristotle's understanding of the world)

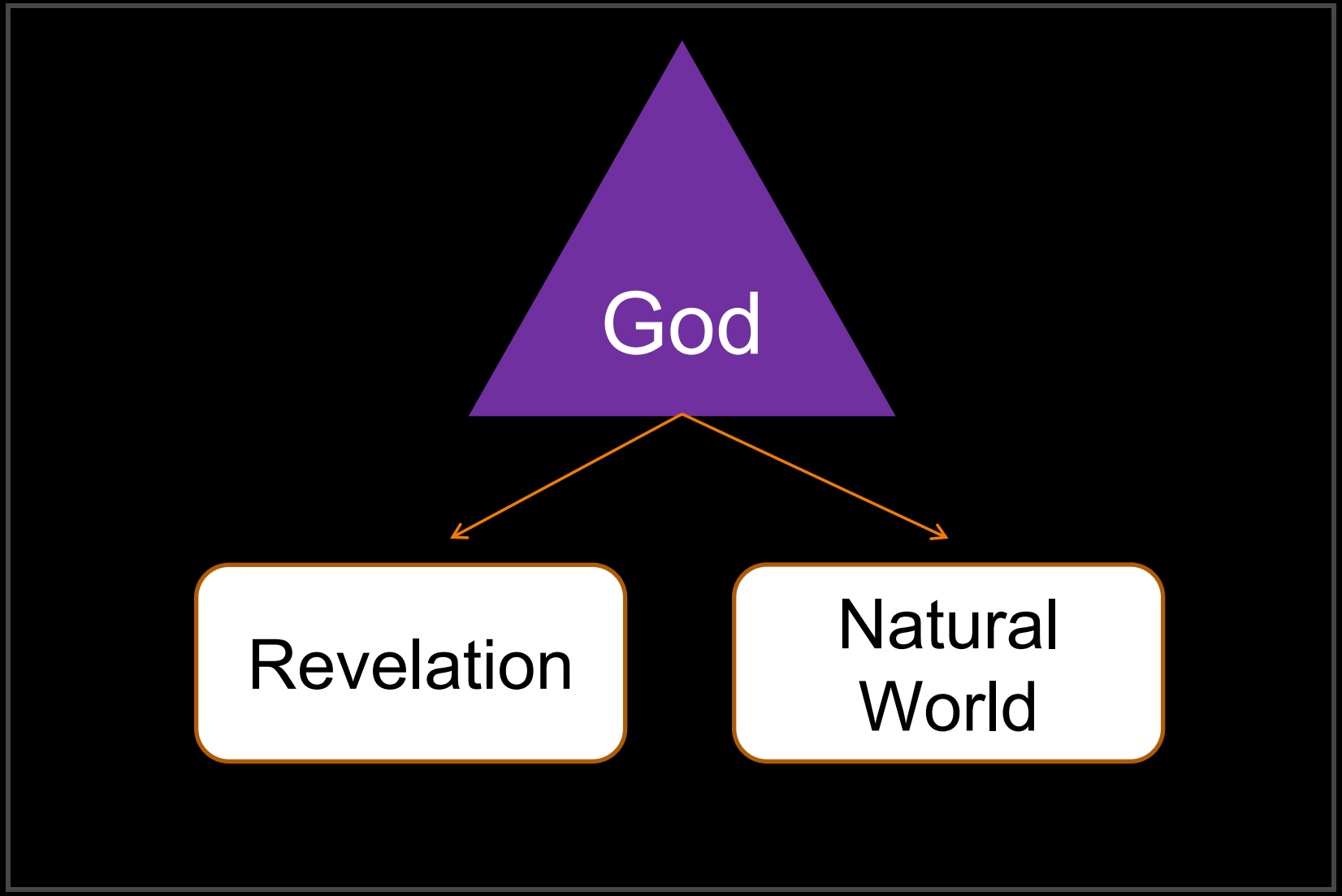
Roman Catholic Church Tradition

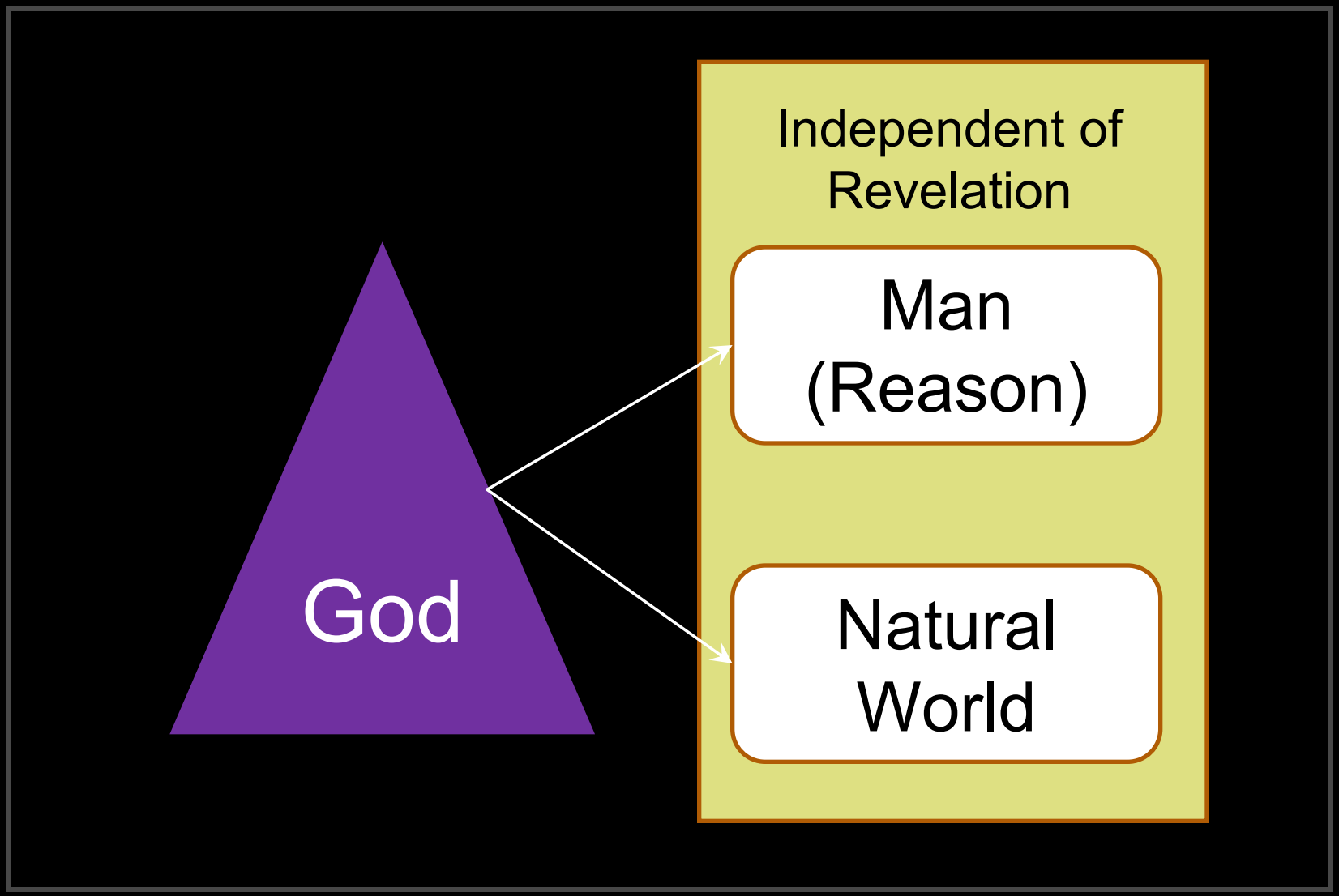
&

- Nature
- Tradition
- The pope
- Church councils
- Philosophy
- Etcetera

Scripture = the intended starting point

The fundamental propositions of Scripture are the starting point or presuppositions of theological thinking.

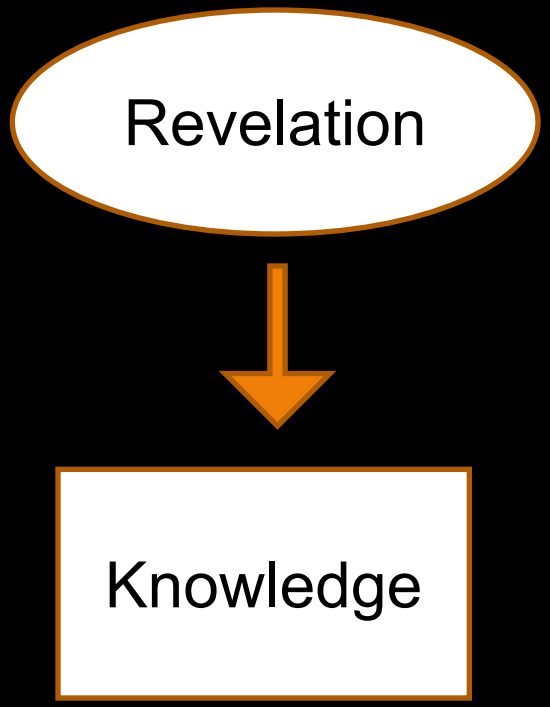

God
Revelation
Natural World


Independent of Revelation
Man (Reason)
Natural World
God

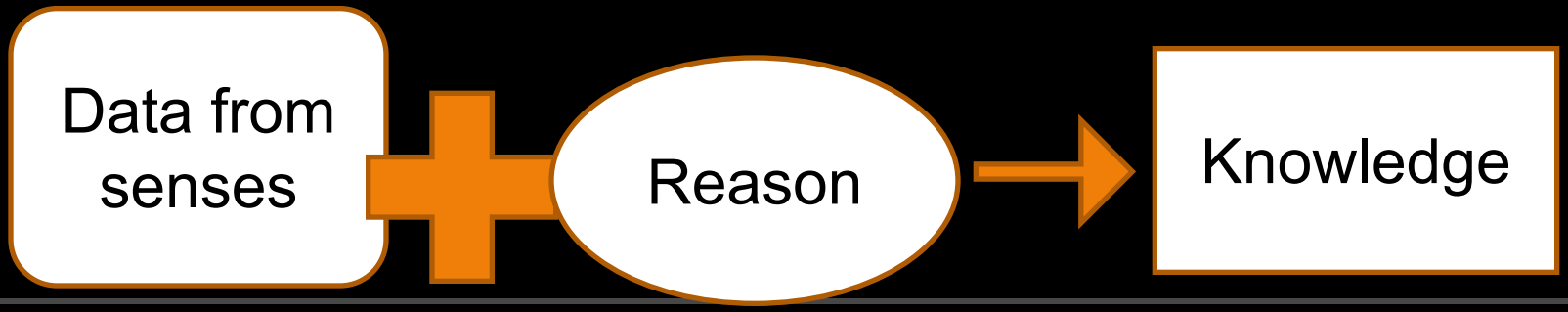
What is the relation between knowledge of the natural world and revelation from God?

Both revelation and reason bring knowledge to mankind.

Revelation is given.

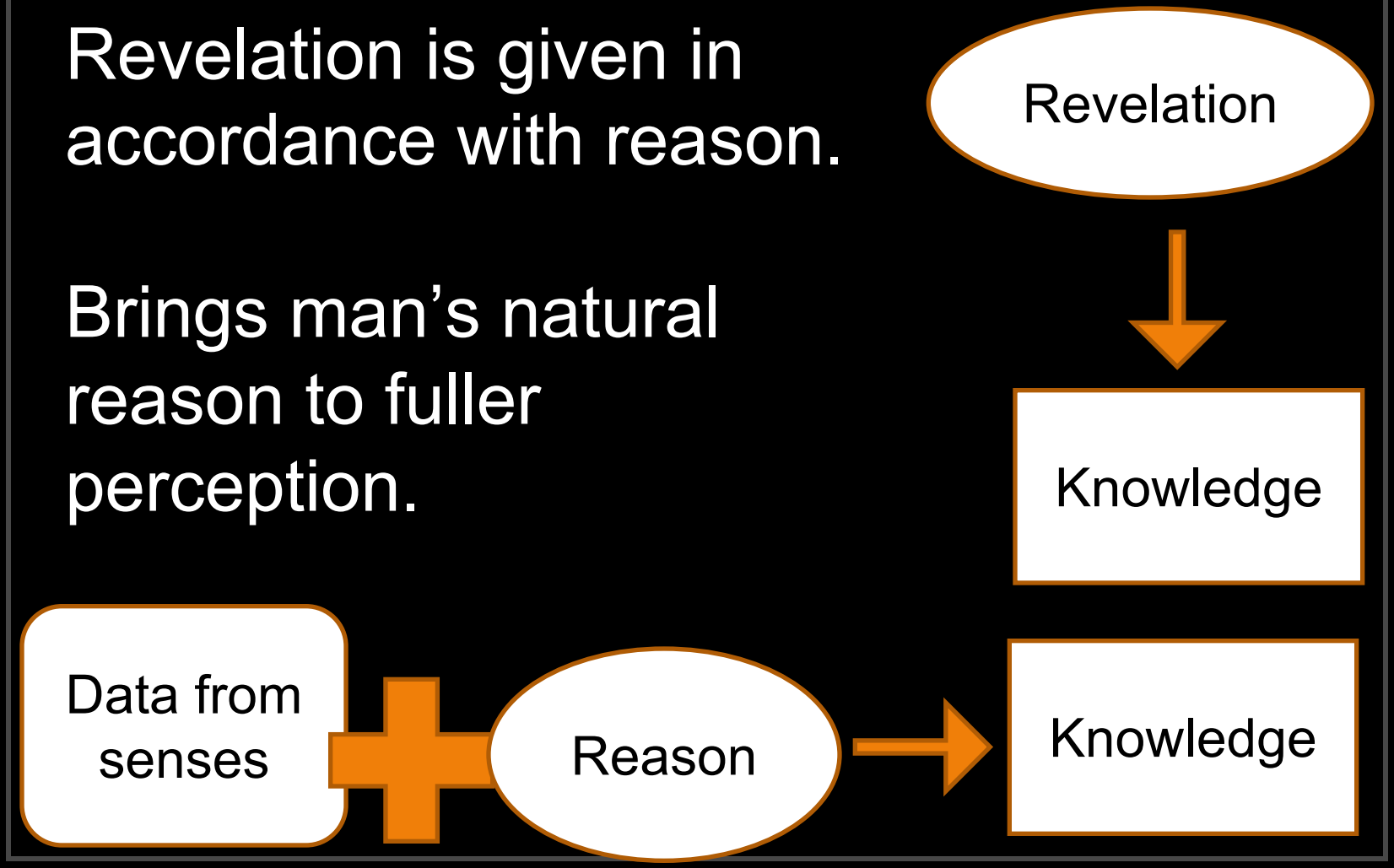


Reason interprets the data of the senses.



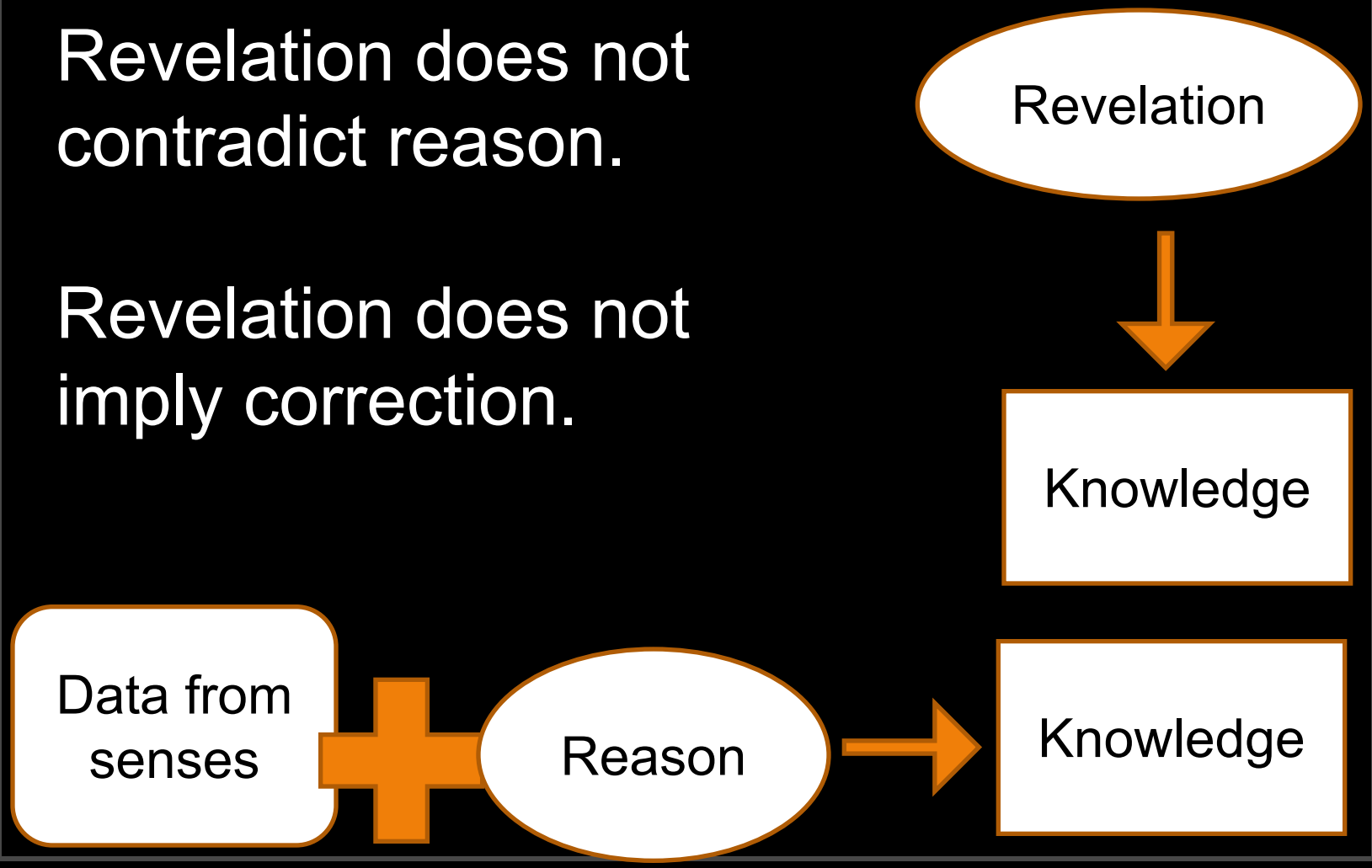
Revelation is given in accordance with reason.

Brings man's natural reason to fuller perception.



Revelation does not contradict reason.

Revelation does not imply correction.



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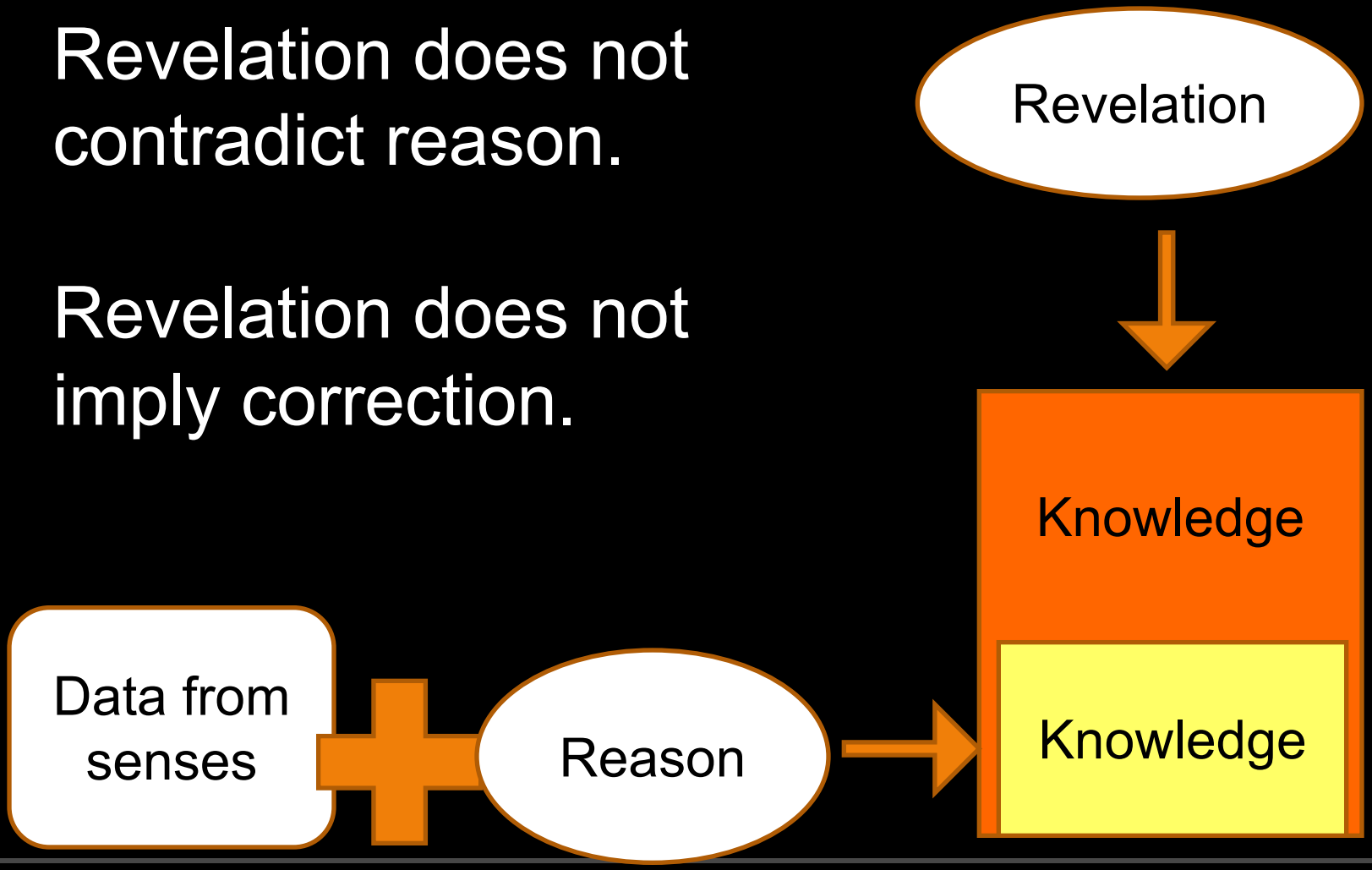
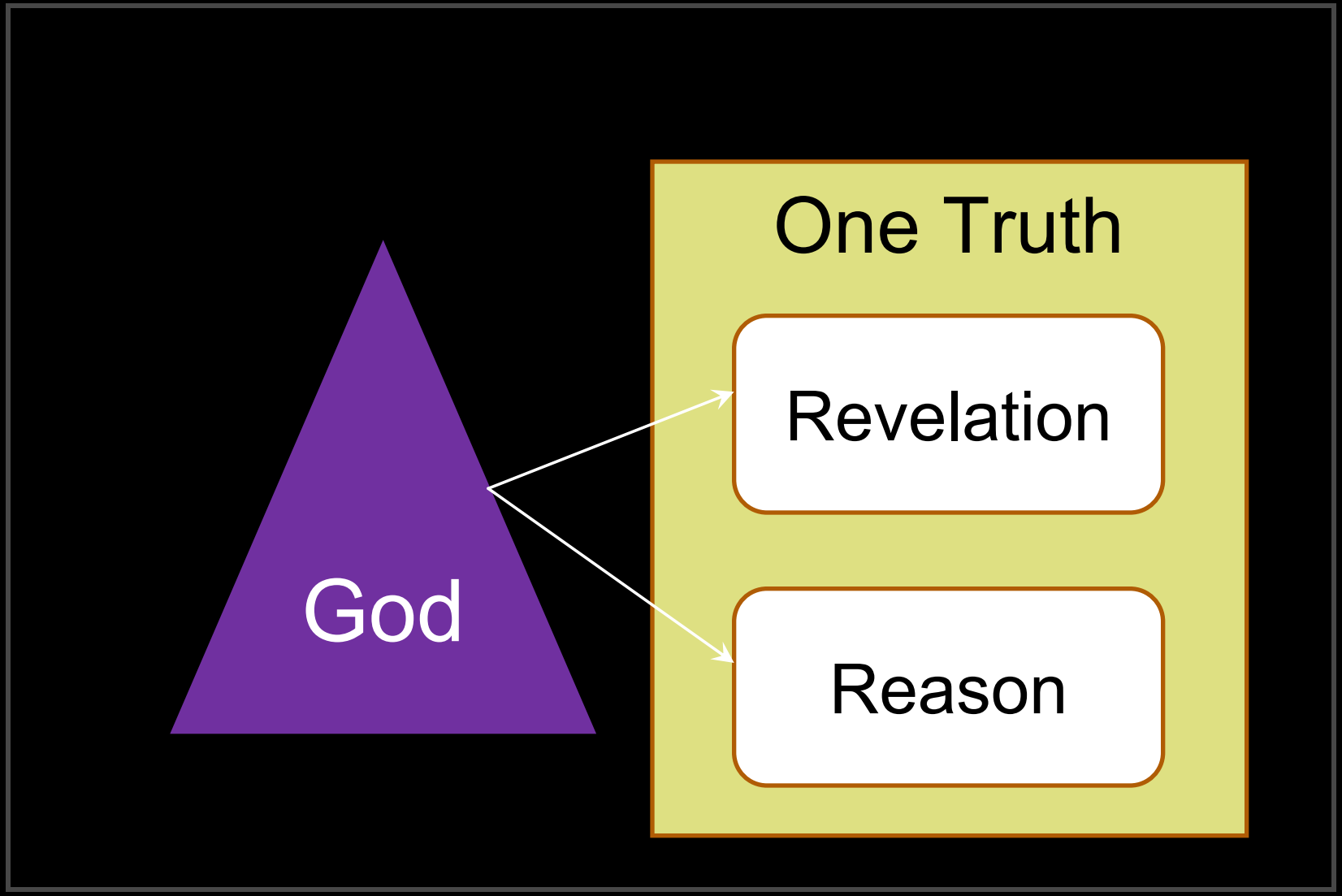
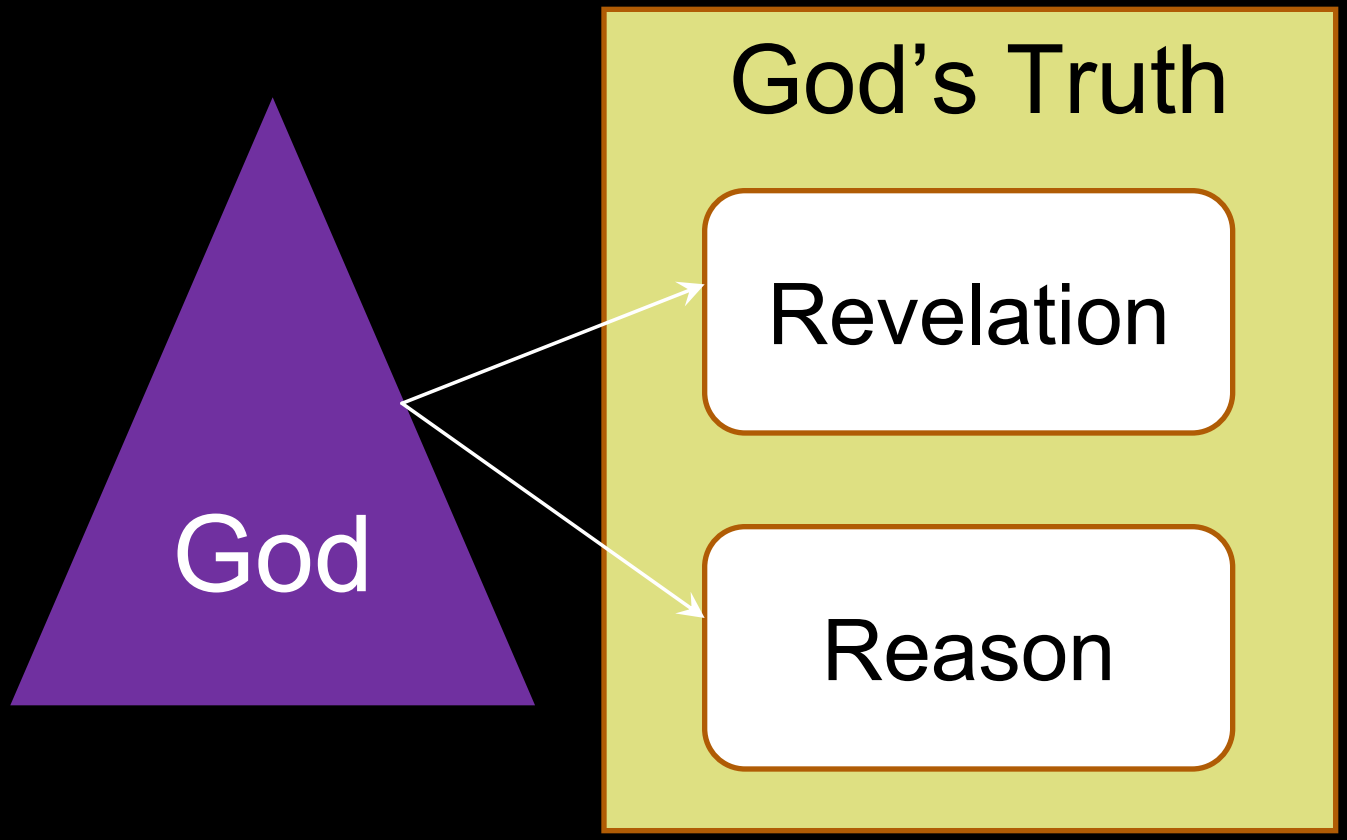



One Truth
Revelation
Reason
God

Cannot be in Conflict



God has given

- First principles of thought in the natural world
- Articles of faith in the revealed word

Any conflict would mean that God was acting falsely by intending to deceive man.

Presuppositions

- Thus it is presupposed that God as the Creator will operate in accordance with the natural world as interpreted by reason.

Presuppositions

- Therefore, our perception of who God is and how He will act is ultimately determined by our conception of the natural world.

Presuppositions

- Faith does not negate what is brought about by reason.
- Faith presupposes the rational structure.

- Truth is truth wherever it may be found.
- God is the author of truth whether it is in revelation or in the natural world. There can be no contradiction between them.

THOMISTIC SYNTHESIS

The Relation of the Natural World to Revelation

TRUTH IS TRUTH WHEREVER IT MAY BE FOUND.

The senses present to the mind data from the natural world.

DATA OF NATURAL WORLD

THOMISTIC SYNTHESIS

The Relation of the Natural World to Revelation

TRUTH IS TRUTH WHEREVER IT MAY BE FOUND.

Reason is adequate and self-sufficient both for obtaining truth in the natural world and for acquiring limited knowledge of the spiritual world.

The senses present to the mind data from the natural world.

THOMISTIC SYNTHESIS

The Relation of the Natural World to Revelation

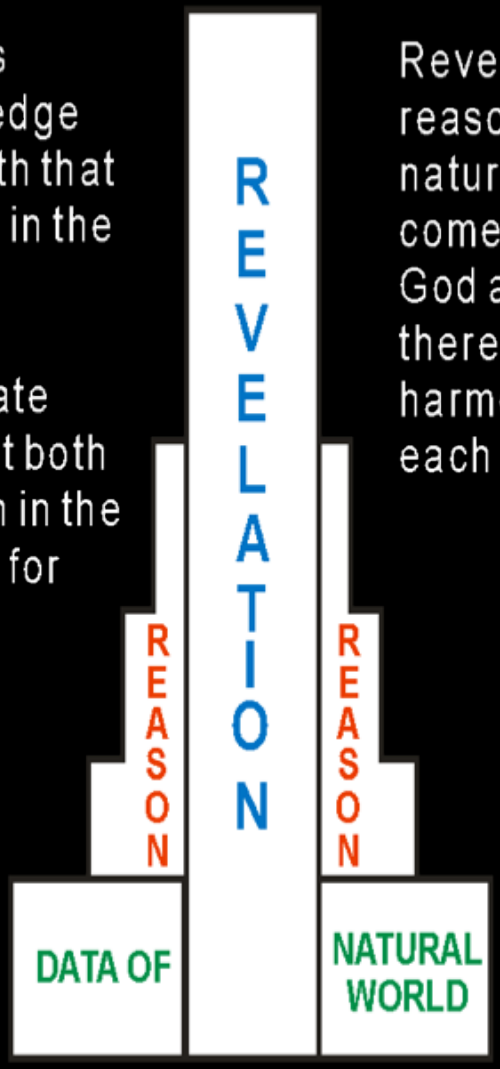
TRUTH IS TRUTH WHEREVER IT MAY BE FOUND.

MAN ULTIMATELY BECOMES THE CRITERION FOR TRUTH.

Revelation brings additional knowledge which coheres with that already available in the natural world.

Reason is adequate and self-sufficient both for obtaining truth in the natural world and for acquiring limited knowledge of the spiritual world.

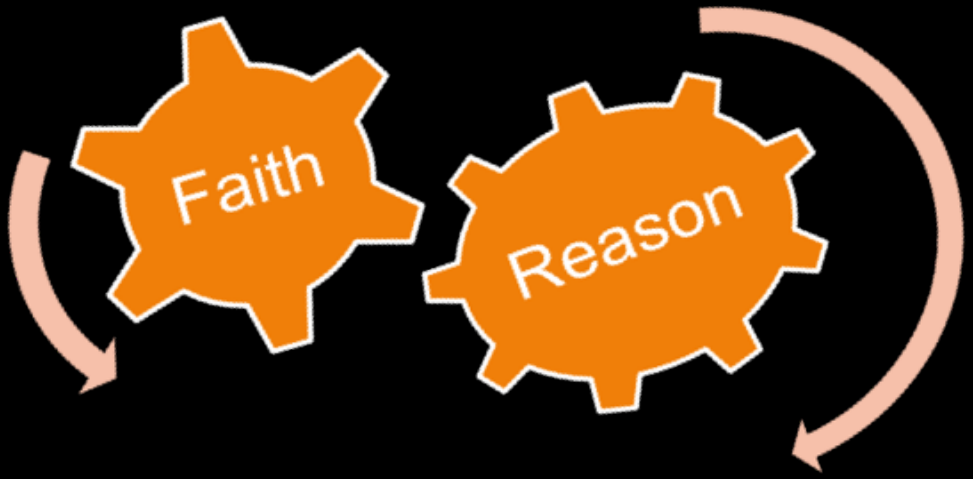
The senses present to the mind data from the natural world.



Revelation, reason and the natural world come from God and are therefore in harmony with each other.

Task of Theology

- Integration of Faith and Reason



Scripture

- Provides materials to be interpreted
- Sets the limits to the philosophical system

Reason

- Establishes the structure within which the content of revelation is expressed
- Gives unity to the system of ideas

Reason in Theology

- Finally, the role of reason in theology is both dominant and determinative.

Reason in Theology

- The new information which is given in revelation is:
  - Integrated with knowledge obtained by reason
  - Interpreted in terms of that knowledge

Reason in Theology

- Revelation does not abrogate the existing thought categories.
- Rather it brings to conclusion the existing lines of thought by allowing reason to provide the structure for theology.

Reason in Theology

- The message of Scripture is not only shaped by the philosophical system of thought but in actuality its content is also changed.

Reason in Theology

- The net effect of using reason as the context in which to structure and interpret revelation transformed the theology of Aquinas into a philosophical system rather than a biblical theology.

Aquinas's God

- Aristotle's Unmoved Mover
- Active [illegible] of the Bible

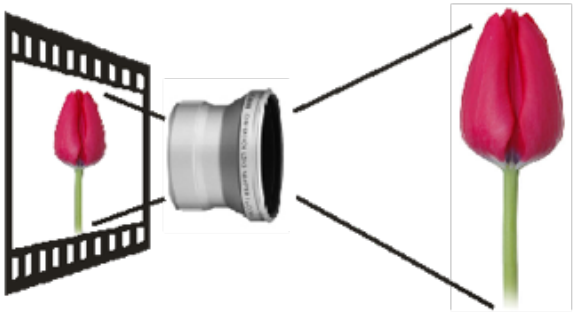
Philosophy of the age

Lessons Learned

- The epistemology of Aristotle was foundational
- It was used as the basis for method in theology
- Theology became an expression of the philosophy of Aristotle

Early Church and Middle Ages

Reality imposes meaning upon the mind of man. Theologians intended to discover the external world of reality.



The mind of man is the blank piece of film upon which reality is registered

In the middle ages the task of the theologian was to synthesize the truths of the natural world, i.e. Plato and Aristotle, with the truths of the Bible.

The formula was the Bible

AND

reason, tradition, church councils, the pope, etc.

The context and the method for studying the Bible came from the natural world.

Summary to the Time of the Reformation

- The Bible

&

- Tradition
- Pope
- Church Councils
- Reason
- Philosophy
- The Natural World

Integration of Faith AND Learning

- The theology of the middle ages exquisitely developed the method of the integration of faith and learning.
- The Bible ***AND*** reason, the natural world, the pope, church councils, tradition, etc.
- As we will see, the reformation brought the Bible back to its foundational role.

Scholasticism built upon the rock

AND