The Impact of Reason on Faith, Ethics, and Belief

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Vernon Series in Philosophy

VERNON PRESS

To My Granddaughters

You make life fun and worth living

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CHAPTER 6
Logic and Theology

Although philosophy and theology approach the questions of existence, knowledge, and verifiable proof from two distinctly different vantage points, the question is whether they can find common ground in interpreting the biblical covenants. From an etymological standpoint theology is grounded in "words about God," or "speaking about God," while philosophy is understood as the "love of wisdom." The disciplines converge on the same subject but with a different orientation.

Theology seeks to understand how spiritual experiences and divine revelation function in the relationship of God and humanity. It relies on the Bible for facts, meaning, purpose, and morality. Philosophy is the attempt to formulate questions that face humanity in order to discover truth within the context of strict rules of inquiry and logic. Theology never doubts the existence of God whereas philosophy asks whether God exists. Theology has, however, appropriated the philosophical method of logic in its quest to find answers about God's nature, will, and existence. The question requires an investigation into the manner in which theology makes application of logic.

One area of concern is the theological presupposition that evidence based proof is not necessary in reasoning about God. Perhaps the most difficult question to answer is this: Is it possible to examine the existence of God from an objective philosophical perspective or does acceptance of faith and belief confound attempts to investigate objectively? Is it possible for the theologian to remove these presuppositions in examining faith and belief?

Theology assumes the existence of God but does not seek proof apart from that which exists in Scripture. It postulates that God created the world, placed humanity in it, made humanity subject to the creator, and created the covenants with Israel based on terms of obedience. Jesus spoke to Israel's condition by preaching a message of Kingdom nearness and repentance, performing miracles, gathering followers into the Kingdom and courageously accepting death on the cross.

In the early church the Apostle Paul was the preacher of the risen Christ and the first theologian of the Christian movement. He reasoned under the assumption that God, through divine revelation, made known to Israel the divine will and purpose. Faith and belief are evidenced in the lives of people as recorded in scripture. Paul explained in a systematic manner that knowledge of God was given in and through revelation and that divine truth was known through revelation and not by human reasoning.

Philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of all things relative to knowledge, existence, reality, and truth. It does not make assumptions but asks questions such as "Why is there something rather than nothing? Does humanity have free will? Is it possible to be totally objective in a study of theology? Is there life after death? What does it mean to be ethical? What is right and wrong and what are right and wrong acts? Is there a God? If there is a God, why don't all religions worship the same God?"

In the area of metaphysics, philosophy seeks to understand the fundamental nature of reality as it formulates definitions of existence that explain that which ultimately exists. It seeks to know whether there are uniform principles that apply to that which is ultimately known. In epistemology philosophy considers the source and basis of knowledge and justified belief. It investigates the source of all knowledge and the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge for something to exist. In all these quests it utilizes logic as its fundamental tool.

I.   The Nature of Logic

At the outset it must be pointed out that an exhaustive examination of logic in theology is outside the parameters of this work. The methodology accepted is to present a summary of the important relevant aspects of logic and philosophy. In essence it is a brief analysis of deductive and inductive logic as found in various parts of scripture.

Philosophy attempts to arrive at valid conclusions by stating propositions and then following rules of logic to reach conclusions. It employs methodologies in the form of arguments which are unique in substance and composition. A distinction must be made between the composition of philosophical arguments and forms of expression which contain proposi-

tions. Explanations and expository writings are not forms of philosophical arguments but are distinguished as statements that explain why or how something happened or to explain the nature of a thing. Whereas theology frequently recounts events and the nature of humanity in the form of an explanatory perspective, philosophy seeks conclusions based on evidence based proof.(1)

Formal logic employs syllogistic arguments in the form of deductive and inductive logic in which deductive arguments make the claim that if the premises are true, the conclusion must follow. True premises means the conclusion follows with absolute necessity, but with invalid arguments the conclusion could be false even if the premises are true. A deductive argument is valid when, if its premises are true, the conclusion must be true. Validity refers to the relationship between the premises and does not apply to a single proposition. Truth and falsity refer to the assertion of what really is the case and applies to single propositions and their attributes. Propositions within arguments are called categorical if they affirm or deny the inclusion of categories or classes. The deductive categorical syllogism familiar was made popular by the Greek philosopher Aristotle which begins with a premise, infers a second premise, and then reaches a conclusion. Most people are familiar with this syllogism:

    Major Premise: All humans are mortal.
    Minor Premise: Socrates is a human.
    Conclusion: Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

Inductive arguments are different in that the issue of probability is present in the conclusion. The relationship that exists between premises and conclusions are not of logical necessity and inference is based on insight rather than evidence based proof. Inductive arguments claim that the conclusion follows only with a high degree of probability and its starting point is with an observation of a thing.

Whereas deductive conclusions are true or false, inductive conclusions lack validity, are more or less true from a probabilistic standpoint, and are never valid or invalid. Inductive logic employs analogies that help understand the relationship of one thing to another. In making analogies thoughts are grounded in actual situations and events. Analogies frequently break down and the task is to be certain analogies are relevant with respect to the argument at hand. At the same time analogies can be used to refute the probable conclusions in an inductive argument.

Another form is the hypothetical with the word "If" before the first statement and a "then" leading to the next. The statement following the "if" is the antecedent and the one following the "then" is the consequent. There can be pure hypothetical syllogisms that contain conditional propositions and mixed hypothetical syllogisms that contain a conditional premise and a categorical premise. The implication is that the consequent follows logically from the antecedent. One must be careful in affirming either the antecedent or consequent and should observe rules that apply to this relationship.

The terms that apply to a valid form are known from their Latin terms of *modus ponens* (affirmative mood) and *modus tollens* (to deny). For example, let's suppose the forecast is for rain and I have been planning a picnic. My reasoning would be, "If it rains, I will not go on a picnic." One of two events will occur - either it will rain or it will not rain. If it rains, then I do not go on my picnic. The condition that must exist in the antecedent is rain in order for the consequent to be in effect.

Disjunctive syllogisms, also known as conditional, begin with the word "either" and the word "or" separates the two statements that affirm or deny relationship. The propositions are simple in that they affirm or deny some class but do not always include the words "either" or "or," and the wording of the statements make clear the disjunct. A valid inference occurs when one of the statements is true and the other is not. Neither proposition is affirmed, but the disjunct "or" indicates that at least one of them is true. If one disjunct is the denial of the other, then the probability is that one of the disjuncts is true.

Although two alternatives are given with the impression that one is true, the fact is that both might be true. Dilemmas are formed using various logic techniques and a combination of both hypothetical and disjunctive is common. For example, I am shopping for a necktie to wear to my son's graduation. In examining the tie I select two that I like and say to myself that it will be "Either the paisley or the solid tie." If I rule out the solid tie, then the paisley will be my choice. Likewise if I rule out the paisley, then the solid will be my selection.

Another form of inductive logic encompasses the concept of causation that investigates cause and effect relationships. There are causes that produce something new and causes that produce a change in something already existing. For example, I am planning on mowing my lawn this afternoon but my lawn mower will not start. Every time I pull the cord it simply sputters and shuts down. I remove the gas cap and see that it is full of gas.

Then I remove the spark plug and see that the points are dirty. I then re-place it with a new spark plug and the mower starts when I pull the cord. The effect of the mower not starting was caused by the bad spark plug. The cause and effect relationships in the covenants explained Israel's sin as the cause of its rejection and suffering.

II.   The Use of Logic in Scripture

A. Conditional Logic

Theology employs these various logic tools in arguments as seen in the command that Joshua gives the Israelites: " . . .choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether [either] the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Joshua was to lead Israel into the Promised Land, Canaan, and his real priority was the safety of his family. "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

In Matt 6:24 Jesus encouraged his listeners that a decision must be made whether to serve only one master: "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Only one master can be served; if not, then they will love one and hate the other.

Matthew also recounted these words of Jesus: "[Either] Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." (Matt 12:33-34). The Pharisees heard the teachings of Jesus and being hostile to him, questioned him about proper living. Jesus taught that the tree and fruit which represent God and Jesus share the same good power.

The *either/or* statement is not always worded with the condition being stated with the words "either/or" For example, there is no question that Israel was led by Moses into the wilderness where God would deliver the

Law to it. In the process God spoke to Israel through Moses (Deut 11:16-17):

> "[**Either]** Be careful, **or** you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. [Cause and effect] Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you."

B. Cause and Effect

Philosophy maintains that in the law of causation nothing just happens but that something caused something to happen. Biblical affirmations are clear regarding the nature of cause and effect: disobedience to the laws of God would cause hardship and calamity would befall Israel. God set the rules and Israel can either obey or not obey. Deuteronomy records the story of the twelve spies that Moses sent out to explore the Valley of Eshkol and surrounding territory. They reported that the land was good, but Israel was afraid to inhabit the land and rebelled against God. As a result God prohibited all but a few to be inhabitants because they trusted God. "**Because** of you the Lord became angry with me (Moses) also and said, "You shall not enter it, either." *(*Deut 1:37) The cause for God's punishment was the decision not to trust God, and the effect was their banishment from the land.

C. Hypothetical Syllogisms

One of the popular logic forms appearing frequently in scripture is the hypothetical syllogism. For example, God placed the responsibility and accountability on Israel regarding promises that if it will do something, God will act in accordance with its actions. Moses spoke these words three months after Israel left Egypt (Ex 19:3-6):

> "Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now **if** you obey me fully

and keep my covenant, **then** out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. ' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.'"

In the book of Deuteronomy is a list of the promises that God rewards for faithful obedience (30:16-18):

"For I command you today to love the Lord your God to [**if you**] walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; **then** you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But **if** your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that [**then]** you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess."

The law gave a promise of God's blessings for faithful service in Deut 11:13-15:

"So **if** you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul—**then** I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and olive oil. [Then] I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied."

Moses instructed the people of Israel, "…If you listen carefully to the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, [then] I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you." (Exs 15:26).

On one occasion Jesus was speaking with his disciples and said,

 "I am the vine; you are the branches. **If** you remain in me and I in you, [**then]** you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. **If** you do not remain in me, [**then]** you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. **If** you remain in me and my words

remain in you, **[then]** ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (John 15:5-7).

In I John 1:9 the statement is made, "If we confess our sins, [then] he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness".

The hypothetical form indicates that a choice must be made and the consequences of not accepting the "if" are usually disastrous. Authority exerts itself by the listing of consequences that follow the preferred act.

D. Inductive Logic

This form of reasoning is based on insights and spiritual experiences as the source of evidence. Such methodology employs finite terms to refer to infiniteness but fails in proof because finiteness cannot describe infiniteness. It expresses only the possibility and necessity of truth that is based on insight and spiritual experiences that are formulated in propositions believed to be true. Theology builds its foundation on an interpretation of God, the world, the condition of humanity, and accepts without question the celestial rules by which everything operates. New knowledge and facts are sought but the problem is dealing with past predictions of the workings of prior knowledge and facts. Empirical observations are undertaken to establish new conclusions, and the strengths and weaknesses of those conclusions are determined by the probability of the veracity of the propositions.

As a logician, Jesus made extensive use of inductive logic in his teaching. One of the many examples is the Parable regarding What Defiles A Person (Mark 7:1-23). On one occasion the Pharisees and scribes noticed that Jesus' disciples did not observe the tradition of the elders by washing their hands before they ate. Jesus responded by referencing the prophet Isaiah who chastised Israel for teaching as doctrine the precepts of the priests. Then Jesus accused the Pharisees and scribes of rejecting the commandments of God to keep the traditions of the Pharisees. Jesus concluded that it was not what goes into the mouths of people that defile them, but what came out of their mouths.

Jesus' logic unfolds this way: The disciples did not observe the traditions of the elders who were the religious leaders of Israel. Jesus notes that Isaiah charged Israel with observing the precepts of humanity over the

laws of God. The Pharisees rejected the commandments of God to keep their tradition; therefore the Pharisees, not the disciples, are defiled. Even though the commandments of God went into them, what came out was rejection of the commandments and acceptance of Pharisaic traditions. Other examples can be found in Matt 6:25-34, anxiety; Matt 7:1-5, judging; Matt 5:17-20, the Law; Matt 6:5-8, prayer; Luke 7:36-50, hospitality; Mark 4:13-20, the sower; Mark 5:21-43, Jairus' daughter; and Mark 8:34-9:1, the conditions of discipleship.

New information that is introduced in inductive propositions may have the effect of weakening instead of strengthening the premises. In the attempt to strengthen the faith of believers, contemporary Christianity has offered new interpretations regarding the relationship of humanity to Jesus in which Jesus becomes a personal friend. Christians are thus encouraged to establish a personal relationship with Jesus and converse regularly with him as they would with their closest friend. A high probability exists that such friendship with Jesus will lead to sharing a cup of coffee with him in the morning, reciting a prayer or two, chatting about God's expectations for the day, and receiving a personalized blessing before heading out to work. Faith, rather than being strengthened, is weakened by detachment from reality and is infused with a theological message that is foreign to the synoptic gospel writers. Jesus directed his listeners toward producing actions befitting those who were Kingdom-livers, not on friendship with him.

One prominent use of inductive reasoning in present day Christianity relates to biblical accounts dealing with divine revelation. Following are some of the conclusions of contemporary Christianity that are the result of inductive reasoning.

God spoke to Abraham numerous times in cutting the covenant, to Samuel about mourning Saul, to Satan in the story of Job, to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, to Mary the mother of Jesus, to Saul on the road to Damascus, to John the writer of the fourth gospel, and to hundreds of other biblical characters. God revealed himself through the spoken word as well as in dreams (Daniel, Solomon, Joseph and others).

As a result of these divine communications one may conclude that since God communicated with people through words and dreams and spoke to biblical characters as well as St. Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther, Rev. Billy Graham, and others, communication with God could occur anytime. People hear reports that God spoke to individuals during prayer, in a worship service, or during a leisurely stroll down the street. The logical

conclusion is that God speaks to people today as he did in biblical times. Thus, because I am a believer, God speaks to me.

Another illustration concerns the story of creation in Genesis 1 in which Adam and the moon, stars, oceans, insects, elephants, fish, birds, grass, and everything that exists were created. These creations emanated from a power greater than man has ever known. Since humanity does not have this power to create, it must be from the power of something greater than anything humanity knows. God is that power and created everything that exists. Thus, God must have created me too.

The term "friend of God" in the covenant story was the designation for Abraham because only a faithful believer who cut a covenant with God could be called friend of God. God promised to bless the friend in ways too numerous to mention if Abraham would just be true to the terms of the covenant. I have entered into a covenant with God and I am obeying the terms of the covenant. Because of my obedience God will bless me as his friend. Therefore, I am a friend of God.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus explained his views toward rich people and observed that a rich man could not enter the kingdom of God. Thus one reasons he is middle class because he has a higher than average salary, two of his children are in college, one is at home, another is on the way, and he has a mortgage and two car payments. He is struggling with financial obligations, is not rich, and therefore will enter the kingdom of God.

One day as Jesus was teaching about forgiveness, Peter inquired re-garding the requirements for forgiving people and asked how many times he should forgive someone. Jesus responded that he was to forgive seventy times seven, a symbol for infinite forgiveness. Thus one reasons that they are a sinner and have sinned against a lot of people. Therefore, they simp-ly ask others to forgive them and it it doesn't matter how many times they sin, they will always be forgiven.

In many respects the tenets of faith and belief of contemporary Chris-tianity are the results of inductive reasoning based on faulty propositions. Fallacious arguments occur when the propositions are not relevant or adequate as good reasons for conclusions to be drawn. This means that in the process of forming an argument, propositions that are not proven false does not mean they are true.

Logic is fallacious if it identifies something as the cause of a thing but it is not really the cause, or if knowledge about one or a few things leads to a

generalization for everything. Even when reasoning is sound, inductive arguments make the claim that conclusions follow propositions only with a high degree of probability. Truth is not absolutely proven.

E. Deductive Logic

In the forms noted above, structure and process are rather straightforward and deal with dilemmas, cause and effect, hypothetical wording of possible outcomes, and degrees of probability of results. However, in its use of deductive categorical syllogistic "truths," theology finds difficulty in reaching conclusions that are valid and true. A deductive argument is valid when, if its premises are true, the conclusion must be true. Validity refers to the relationship between the premises and does not apply to a single proposition. Truth and falsity refer to the assertion of what really is the case and applies to single propositions and their attributes. Propositions within arguments are called categorical if they affirm or deny the inclusion of categories or classes. Configuring propositions and categorical syllogisms about God are tricky and statements about the existence of God are based on spiritual insight and experience.(2)   Statements of fact can be proven true or false but a statement of spiritual insight is what someone believes. Propositions in categorical deductive syllogisms are concerned with evidence based knowledge and they reject propositions based on supernatural insights and beliefs.(3)

At the same time there are categorical deductive syllogisms in the Bible that exhibit validity and truth with propositions that are positioned squarely in the camp of evidence based proof. For example, in the Old Testament God singled out the sons of Levi to be priests with Aaron from the house of Levi and descended from the tribe of Levi as recorded in Exodus 6:16-20.

"These were the names of the sons of Levi according to their records: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. Levi lived 137 years. The sons of Gershon, by clans, were Libni and Shimei. The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. Kohath lived 133 years. The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. These were the clans of Levi according to their records. Amram married his father's *sister Jochebed, who bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years.*"

Based on the scriptural history above, theology can safely construct the following categorical deductive syllogism:

All Levites are among God's chosen people.
Gershon is a Levite.
Therefore, Gershon is among God's chosen people.

The major premise reflects the fact that the Levites were set aside as priests and as Israelites they are among God's chosen people. The proposition refers to all Levites and all God's chosen people categorically. One priest from the house of Levi was Gershon, the son of Aaron, a fact that is verifiable. All facts in the syllogism are true and the relationship and inferences flow according to rules of logic.

To assure his readers that the God of Jesus was supreme, omnipotent, and the one true God, John connected the creation and Jesus to the philosophical use of the *logos* (word) and began his gospel with the words,

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

The wording is a bit different in Gen 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Since the conclusion tells us that God is the subject and created the heavens and the earth is the predicate, our task is to find the middle term. Theology asserts that bringing the world into existence was an act of God and the story tells us more about what was created: light, darkness, water, land, vegetation, stars, sun, moon, birds, and on and on until he concluded with the creation of mankind. The category of heavens and earth is expanded so that all classes of existing things are included categorically. In this explanation most theologians understand the creation *ex nihilo*, a doctrine that the Prophets and many of the Psalms accepted without reservation. It is the doctrine of creation from nothing by the will of a transcendent personal God (Is 42:5 and Ps 33:6-9):

"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jar, he puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the

LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."

God's existence was presupposed in the Bible and questions of that existence or non-existence were not open to debate. God existed, period, and creation attested to it. The wording of the proposed categorical deductive syllogism would be the following:

Major premise: All that exists is the result of a creator.
Minor Premise: God is a creator.
Conclusion: God is the creator of all that exists.

There are major problems in using categorical deductive syllogisms to prove the creating power of God or even that a creator exists. The syllogism above is based on insights and spiritual experiences instead of facts and evidence-based proof. There is no verifiable proof of the existence of a creator but only the assumption that God is in reality a creator. There is repetition of the same words in both premises and conclusions. The word "creator" appears in all three parts of the syllogism with the major premise assuming the existence of a God. The conclusion is transformed into a premise in the form of a proposition.

The fallacy committed is petitio principii, also called circular argument, circular reasoning, or begging the question. It is the mistake of assuming the truth of that which one seeks to prove. To beg the question means that an assumption is made of something that logically there is no right to assume. Reasoning in a circle is reasoning from the conclusion back to the beginning of the argument and back to the conclusion.

The syllogism above states that everything that exists is the result of a creator and the creator is God; however, no inference is drawn and no relationship proven. The supposed proof is inferred in the propositions but is not proven in the conclusion because the object proven is assumed already proven in the propositions. It is a fallacy that is deceptive for the simple reason that a statement cannot prove itself. A premise must have evidential proof different from that in the conclusion.

Categorical deductive syllogisms follow four standard forms: universal affirmative, universal negative, particular affirmative, and particular negative. Forms used for proof of the existence of God are of the universal nature, for particular forms would posit that "some" of a thing exists but not all. To prove that "some" of God or that "some" God exists would be futile

and suggests the antithetical proposition that other gods exist on a level with God.

Continuing with suggested proof, there are other universal categorical deductive syllogisms that are based on scriptural affirmations that attempt to determine if a valid and true syllogism exists. Here are two universal affirmative syllogisms that attempt to prove God's existence:

All godly beings are living beings.
God is a godly being.
God is a living being.

The Bible record is about a living deity.
God is in the Bible record.
God is a living deity.

The following is a syllogism in the universal negative form:

No godly being is dead.
God is a godly being.
God is not dead.

The same problem exists with the arguments in the creation stories in that the arguments are circular and attempt to prove something that is assumed to exist. At the same time, however, the propositions admit the existence of other gods because assuming God is a godly being leads to the assumption that other deities exist. Although theology might cry "foul" at this point, the foul belongs to theology because of the claim to prove the existence of something for which there is no evidence. How can infiniteness be proven if infiniteness cannot be verified? How can one prove omnipotence and omniscience if no empirical evidence exists? Theology conveniently maintains that the believer must "take as faith" that God does in fact exist and that all the claims of the Bible are true.

Theology must accept the inescapable conclusion that the foundation of the existence of God is based on inductive logic, not on categorical deductive logic, and conclusions that God exists are reached with degrees of probability depending on the insights and spiritual experiences affirmed in the propositions.

III.   Theological Arguments

The concept of arguing for the existence of God based on inductive logic is a common one. Theology usually applies the claims in scripture as the basis for its propositions. There are many formal arguments for the existence of God and we will approach the question from several different vantage points. Of the myriad arguments the most significant are the argument from natural theology, eminent reasoning, classical arguments, way of negation, and the nature of religious experience.

The basis of the natural theology argument asserts there is evidence apart from divine revelation for the existence of God. For example, one belief is that statements about the existence of God are based on the empirical evidence of the creating power. The Stoics believed there were universal religious experiences that were based on individual religious experiences. Thomas Aquinas took the position that everything humanity knows about the existence of God has been divinely revealed and that innate knowledge about God has been formed into explicit concepts about God.

Natural theology takes three distinct approaches to reason. One argument is based on causality in which the world came into existence because of God. One has only to see the effects of first cause to acknowledge the existence of God. The world could not come into existence unless God caused it to exist.

Another argument is from the perspective of eminent reasoning and posits that everything we believe to be perfect is attributed to the creation of God. God is perfect and implants thoughts into our being that are the consequence of perfection.

There is also the way of negation which begins with the proposition that humanity is finite and leads to a subtraction of everything else that is finite. Once finiteness is subtracted, all that left is infiniteness, or God.

Of the classical arguments for the existence of God, Anselm's ontological argument lays out an ontological argument in detail. To him, God is that being to which a greater entity cannot be conceived and humanity cannot limit God to its own understanding of existence.

St. Thomas Aquinas argued from the idea of motion to the existence of first mover or first cause. There are cosmological arguments that posit that

if everything is contingent, there would be nothing at all; however, all things derive their existence from God.

Classical moral arguments usually take one of two forms: the first argues that moral laws exist and were given by an absolute and moral law giver and that moral law giver is God. The other holds that the demands of a moral life based on moral laws, moves us to postulate freedom, immortality, and the existence of God.

Arguments from the nature of religious experience are claimed to be different from the nature of other knowledge. Knowing the existence of God is not based on inference but on the unique power of personal faith. Religious experiences are implanted in the heart of humanity and are determined by divine revelation and not by logic. Logic can deny the existence of God but divine revelation trumps logic and is implanted in humanity's heart. It is confirmed by the existence of moral and ethical standards of humanity.

These arguments claim to prove the existence of God, but it is of note that such claims are based on inductive logic; however, the conclusions only prove the existence of God with degrees of probability. It is troubling that the use of inductive logic to prove the existence of God is viewed by theology as absolute truth rather than probabilistic truth. Rather than admitting that absolute truth cannot be proven, it continues to befuddle rational thinking by magically transforming the probabilistic into the absolute and by circumventing metaphysical questions with linguistic wizardry.

IV.   The Nature of Theological Language

The nature of theological language changed after the death of Jesus. With the exception of the synoptic gospels, the New Testament authors speak of a Christianized Jesus in terms different than those Jesus used to refer to himself. Jesus spoke of the rule of God, the Kingdom near and future, the requirements for living in the Kingdom, and the necessity of repentance and forgiveness. The New Testament task was to provide a theological account of faith that was based on the Christ.

The early church believers gathered on a regular basis to worship in the Temple as devout Jews and were not certain what rituals to observe. In the beginning the believers worshipped as a loose knit community, sang hymns, provided teaching, gave witness, and prayed. A new theology resulting from a different understanding of Jesus evolved in the early years of the church and new questions arose regarding an understanding of the Kingdom of God. Is the future Kingdom now a present reality as Jesus promised? How is eternal life to be understood? What about the new meaning of "salvation," "justification," and "sanctification?"

The Apostle Paul introduced new language that interpreted Christian existence as the acceptance of the lordship of the Christ and which expressed that relationship. To Paul, the Christ was the Son of God and understood as Spirit. The words of Jesus in the oral tradition become the language and symbols of the faith of the believer in Christ. Paul interpreted the language in eschatological terms to express the belief that the rule of God was present but that eternal rule would be realized in the future.

Paul believed that Jesus viewed himself in the same manner as the early church, namely, that he was the Messiah. In this context the early church developed and appropriated language for its understanding of the Messiah. This message was articulated in the New Testament and expressed the belief that the Christ was central to the community of faith and was the speech that facilitated spiritual transformation.

Language plays an important role in the dialogue of philosophy and theology. Without an understanding of the nature of language, human speech about God leads to confusion. In language the definiendum is the symbol being defined, and definiens refers to the symbol or group of symbols that have the same meaning as the definiendum. Copi provides an excellent discussion of the five different definitions and the one most relevant to biblical language is the précising definition.(4)

With précising definitions the goal is to provide clarity and eliminate ambiguity and vagueness. For example, the word "Christ" is a symbol that is peculiar to the New Testament, has its roots in the Old Testament and is a reference to the Hebrew word for Messiah. In common usage it became synonymous with Jesus in the early church's understanding of the Christ. Established usage was generally understood but the New Testament writers make its meaning more precise.

Paul Christianized Jesus as the Messiah. Until encountering Jesus in his conversion experience, the Christ was a concept in which he did not

believe. Saul was educated in the Old Testament tradition of messianic expectations and firmly rejected the idea that the anticipated Messiah had arrived despite his awareness of the expectation as mentioned in places such as Dan 9:26: "After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed." Psalm 2:2-3 contains this reference, "The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying,' "Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.'" Jesus was the "anointed one."

The Book of Acts recounts the story of the Apostle Peter standing outside the home of Cornelius and preaching to a large crowd. In that speech he says, "You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him." (Acts 10:37-38).

Mark began his gospel with these words, "The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" -- "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

Theology defines the Christ and its properties, place, and function within Christianity. The role of philosophy is to function within these definitions and boundaries of those unique definitions. The application of ordinary language pertaining to theology is an issue that separates philosophy and theology. Ordinary words of description are not sufficient in defining a God who by definition possesses the qualities of infiniteness. Theology employs analogies and similes to describe God but analogies often break down because they attribute human concepts to God.

The results are descriptive statements about God which are extensions of belief that create a God who conforms to preconceived ideas. It has "humanized" God or "Yahweh-ed" God in the same linguistic manner that Paul "Christianized" Jesus. Unfortunately these descriptive statements confine God to categories of human understanding, human insights, and human spiritual experiences. Language symbols are reduced to the sum total of the experiences of belief and faith that create and propagate different meanings from generation to generation.(5)

Philosophy is suspicious of such theological claims because they thrust one upon the horns of a dilemma. From the perspective of categorical deductive syllogisms, philosophy participates in a dialogue with theology regarding the existence of something that is unproven and unverifiable. On the other hand, if philosophy operates within the confines of inductive logic, then it must accept that conclusions reached by theology can be acceptable from a probabilistic perspective.

Theology must recognize that the logical justification for the existence of God is based on degrees of probability. It makes absolute statements about ethics, morality, belief, and faith, but it cannot exclude the probability that gods exist as other religions claim. The empirical approach of the philosopher is one of organizing and synthesizing that which is known, combined with conclusions that are tested by empirical experiences. On the other hand, theology posits that revelation of God is evident in creation and that insight and spiritual experiences are confirmed in and through this divine revelation.

How is philosophy to evaluate the biblical texts from the perspective of logic? Perhaps the biggest problem concerns a theological versus a philosophical interpretation of scripture. Attempts to deal with this question are examined by G. R. Evans in *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to Reformation* (6) in which he observes that, according to the Council of Basle in 1433 CE, the whole of scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Nothing that Scripture contains can deceive or mislead one, it is infallible, and the literal sense is the meaning the author intended. The literal sense of interpretation made more sense when twelfth century developments in grammar and logic brought deeper insights into the nature and functioning of biblical language. Apparent contradictions were reconciled and authorship and content were closely examined.

A more recent understanding of logic and scripture is presented in a PhD thesis by Daniel R. Driver, *The Logic of Scripture's Textual Authority. St. Andrews, University of St. Andrews.* 2009. Driver argues for the inner logic of scripture as the foundation for textual authority in and through which the church experiences the Godhead. The Old and New Testaments are rules of faith that are the basis for the church's authority.(7)

Michael Barnes discovers the logic of scripture through the reading and interpretation of texts from other religious traditions. An important dialogical practice called Comparative Theology explores the "logic of scripture" and attempts to make manifest the reasoning that is implicit in scripture and the reason that the interpreter brings to the text itself. In this

sense it considers the philosophical pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce and explains how one can draw imaginatively from scripture toward pragmatics that can make application of the ancient wisdom of the texts to the present day situations.(8)

V.   Final Thoughts

What is the impact of reason on faith and belief? Paul would have us understand that faith positions itself squarely in the corner of the truth of biblical evidence and asserts that humanity can know God aside from reason or logic. Thus the resurrection was an attestable fact because a number of people reportedly saw the risen Christ (I Cor 15:3-8). Faith is indisputable proof that God's word is truth (John 17:17), is from God and not from the will of humanity, (II Pet 1:21), and does not require an understanding of everything (Is 55:8). The Old Testament prophets point to the folly of worshipping idols because Israel worshipped the false gods of other nations. The creation story recounts that God created the universe. As a result faith was the reasonable consequence because the Bible attests to the creation.

However, all the above conclusions are based on the underpinnings of inductive logic and do not contain evidence based proof that can be reconstructed. On the one hand reason is the ability to organize and understand biblical facts into an understandable system, but on the other it demands that the propositions leading to such conclusions are backed by evidence. Although theology encourages questions of faith, such questions are of the nature of seeking a deeper understanding of faith within the biblical framework.

An alternative approach is to accept theology's use of reasoning but to recognize the limitations of its application. It is necessary to distinguish between the several forms of logic (deductive, inductive, conditional, disjunctive, and causation) and recognize that categorical deductive syllogisms cannot provide answer to questions, such as whether the resurrection was an actual event or that miracles occurred or whether God exists actually. To reach valid conclusions regarding these questions based on deductive logic is not within the power of theological reasoning.

Philosophy poses questions without bias and seeks to break free of the inability to ask fundamental questions. In its quest for truth theology is shackled with assumptions. Theology makes appropriate use of the methods of logic and forges ahead based on the assumption that no external proof is needed for the existence of God. Philosophy acknowledges the dilemma in which theology finds itself but continues in conversation with the knowledge that theology's claim of the existence of God is proven only with varying degrees of probability.

Even so, what is the identity of God that can be ascertained with degrees of probability?

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