

Theological Fallacies – Outline

I. Approach-Based Fallacies

- A. *Emotionalistic Approaches* – Forming one's belief by what is emotionally appealing, rather than consistent with Scripture and logic.
 - 1. Example: The Charismatic Movement and its doctrines such as being “drunk in the Spirit,” the contemporary “worship” style and entertainment mentality of churches today, and even the doing away with the “hard doctrines” such as eternal punishment.
 - 2. Applicable Scripture: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, wanting their ears tickled...” (2 Timothy 4:3)
- B. *Unbalanced Extremism* – Holding one doctrine tenaciously without regard for its balancing counterpart.
 - 1. Example: Holding truth without love or love without truth, and holding Christian liberty without restraining ourselves from license.
 - 2. Applicable Scriptures:
 - a. “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13)
 - b. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” (Matthew 23:23)
- C. *The Merely Academic Approach* – Studying theology for intellectual reasons only, rather than pursuing the knowledge of God. It is the question between textbook theology and Biblical theology.
 - 1. Example: Liberal observations on the inconceivability of the inerrancy of Scripture. It is not the living breath of God to such, even though they may call themselves “theologians.”
 - 2. Applicable Scripture: “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God... But we speak the wisdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:4-7)
- D. *Incompetence* – No academic discipline at all in studying Scripture – only using it for inspiration and devotion, not deep doctrines.
 - 1. Example: Seen in the Christian book industry; what sells is what is “inspirational.” It is also seen in Bible study that is about a verse to draw artistically or only about a verse to underline, rather than a passage to understand.
 - 2. Applicable Scriptures:
 - a. 2 Timothy 2:15 – “Be diligent to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”
 - b. Hebrews 5:12-14 – “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat

belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

- E. *Unreasonable Approaches* – Lacking logical consistency in forming one's beliefs.
 - 1. Example: Trying to determine the date of the Second Coming when Scripture clearly says “No man knows the day nor the hour.”
 - 2. Applicable Scripture: “My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion.” (Proverbs 3:21)
- F. *Experiential Approaches* – “The Bible says this, but this is my experience. I will believe my experience.”
 - 1. Example: That people are generally good, in spite of what Romans 1-3 says.
 - 2. Applicable Scripture: “And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” (2 Peter 1:18-19)

II. Text-Based Fallacies

- A. *Mysticism* – Claiming truth/revelation through an extra-biblical source, particularly, the inner workings of the mind or the ethereal claims of a system/teacher.
 - 1. Example: The Charismatic movement is full of this in claims to have “talked with Jesus” or have a long experience in Heaven and describing it by erroneous details.
 - 2. Applicable Scripture: “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust [a sure, finite revelation entrusted to him], avoiding profane and vain babblings [that which has no substance], and oppositions of what is falsely called 'knowledge' [that which has no validity]: which some professing have erred concerning the faith.” (1 Tim. 6:20-21).
- B. *The “Proof-text Only” Approach* – Citing one verse, without regard for context or overall Scriptural themes, to support one's theological claim. Or, on the flip side, demanding that every theological statement be backed up by a proof-text, when it in fact is arrived at by means of multiple passages.
 - 1. Example: Using Ecclesiastes 1:4 to say that the earth will not be destroyed and replaced by a new earth.
 - 2. Applicable Scripture: “[Satan] saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (Matthew 4:6-7)
- C. *Allegorization / Spiritualization* – Giving a text an allegorical meaning to develop one's theology rather than consistent historically and grammatically consistent interpretation.
 - 1. Example: How Reformed Theology treats clear millennial passages in the major and minor prophets.
 - 2. Applicable Scripture: Note how in Hebrews 8:7-13, the author takes the text of Jeremiah 31 literally and in its plain sense.
- D. *The Application-First Approach* – Jumping to the personal application of a verse before one discerns its context and interpretation.
 - 1. Example: Using the Imprecatory Psalms as an excuse to curse one's enemies in this day and age. Everything in Scripture is written *for* us, but not necessarily *to* us. We need to understand a passage's *meaning* before we understand its *bearing* on our lives.
 - 2. Applicable Scripture: Notice how Hebrews 9 sets up a correct understanding of the

Tabernacle and sacrificial system before applying it to Christ. There was proper development before applying the doctrine. This must be true for both types and personal application.

- E. *The Typology-First Approach* – Using a passage as a type, deriving a doctrine from the supposed type, though the doctrine is nowhere explicitly taught elsewhere – only by implication from a subjective viewpoint.
1. Example: Isaac is a type of Christ (Obviously). The ram's substitution for Isaac's death therefore proves that Christ did not really die on the cross, but someone took His place. (Obviously, this is a damnable heresy)
 2. Applicable Scripture: With Hebrews 9:8-14, there was not arbitrary correspondence made between the sacrifice/priesthood of Christ and the Old Testament counterparts. They were real counterparts. The heavenly sanctuary is a reality; thus the sanctuary of old had reality to correspond to. The reality was not made from the type, but the type from the reality. Types look forward, yes, but we look backward to them (through New Testament lenses) in order to interpret them.

III. System-Related Fallacies

- A. *Detached-from-History (Too little system)* – No regard for historical orthodoxy or considerations. “It's just me and my Bible under a tree.”
1. Example: Re-Inventing the “wheel” of Bible doctrines every generation, without building on the orthodoxy that has already been established.
 2. Applicable Scripture: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)
- B. *Detached-from-Teaching (Too little system)* – No regard for the teaching of others, whether oral or written. “It's just me and my Bible under a tree.”
1. Example: Little respect for Bible teachers, and satisfaction with surface Bible reading without help from faithful expositors of Scripture.
 2. Applicable Scripture: Notice the centrality of teaching. If they were learned, they were to be teachers. If they were unlearned, they were to be taught. “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” (Hebrews 5:12)
- C. *Theological Intimidation* – Seeing an error popularized and being drawn to it on account of its popularity and/or the consequences of rejecting the error inflicted by the system.
1. Example: Jehovah's Witnesses most often have this problem, since if they should question the obvious heresies and seductions, they will be ostracized.
 2. Applicable Scripture: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” (2 Peter 2:2)
- D. *Positional Theology (Too much system)* – Holding to a name of some theological camp, without being convicted of or living the truth that it claims.
1. Example: Saying “I'm part of [some denomination],” while only holding to it nominally. There is no concern for Scripture, only surface participation in a system.
 2. Applicable Scripture: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from

such turn away.” (2 Timothy 3:5)

- E. *Traditionalist Approaches (Too much system)* – Holding one's religious traditions higher than or on par with Scripture. “It's the clergyman and his Bible under a tree, and I just listen to what he says about the Bible.”
1. Example: Every time a Catholic says “My priest says [such and such]” we find an example of this. Or “Our confession says that...” The concern in these cases is more what keeps them consistent with their theological camp, rather than with Scripture. This can also mildly be seen in Reformed Theology with the high emphasis on “historical Reformed doctrine” and a complete TULIP acronym being absolutely essential to its tenets, even though Scripture may not emphasize certain things which Reformed Theology does.
 2. Applicable Scripture: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17:11)