

Growing as a Thinker, Reader, and Believer

DISCUSSION

1. Besides technical books, what are all the assigned books you've read in the past 6 months? List as many as you can in your group.
2. List all the books you read in the past 6 months that weren't for school.
3. What are the sources you go to for current news and events?

INTRODUCTION

Throughout this course, we've talked about faith, doubt, and reasons for belief in Christianity. The topics we've covered included:

- logic
- arguments for God's existence
- theology of apologetics
- tactics for dialoguing about faith
- how reliable is the Bible
- how can a loving, powerful God allow suffering and evil
- how do science and faith relate

But there's a problem, many of you probably have not read/studied other teachers on these subjects. How do you know how trustworthy is your teacher? How much confidence can you put in the views and ideas which you've been taught?

Many people don't think this is a problem until one of two things happen:

1. They encounter a person that challenges their beliefs. This person may be very intelligent, thoughtful, attractive, kind, or any other positive trait that makes it hard for you to disagree with them.
2. They have an experience that challenges their beliefs. This is usually a form of suffering or trial that shakes one's belief in God.

The only way you can deal with this problem is in one of two ways:

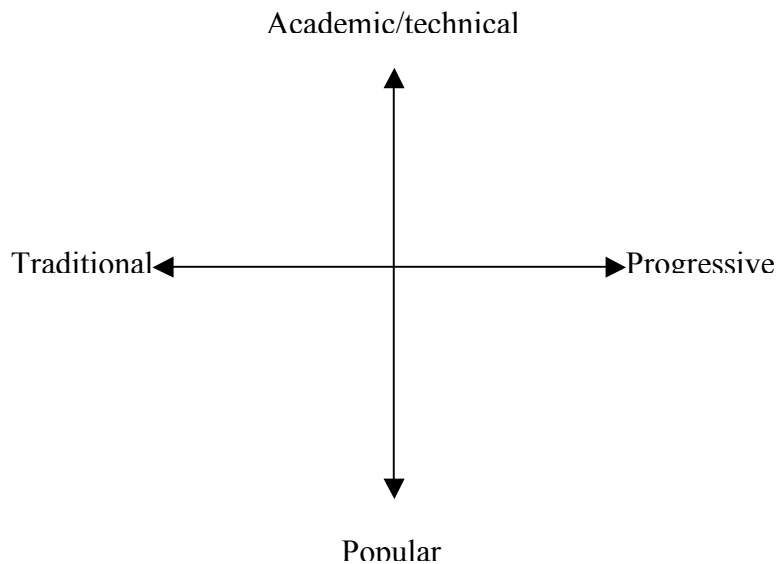
1. Trust someone else to instruct you in the right views.
2. Study and think across multiple views to arrive at your own conclusion.

Now, we may think it's foolish to simply believe something by someone else's authority or expertise. But we showed how everyone does this all the time and it's not a problem. But in general, if you make the time and priority, you can study and learn yourself. This lesson is some basic thoughts to get you started on how to tackle a topic.

THINKING BY READING, READING BY THINKING

What you think will determine what you read. And what you read will determine what you think. The influences and books you engage with have the power to change your views, solidify your views, or challenge your views.

For any book I read, I find it helpful to know where the author/stands in relation to other writers in that particular field. I suggest a basic graph that is probably overly simplified, but still helpful.



READING AND CONFIDENCE

Complete these statements.

1. If you don't read any books on a subject, but accept what one teacher (or school of thought) taught you, then....
2. If you read two or three books on a subject, then...
3. If you read 6-7 books on a subject, then...
4. If you had to read just 1 book on a subject, should you read a book that is in line with your view, or an opposing view?
5. If you had to read just 2 or 3 books on a subject, then...
6. If you had to read 6-7 books on a subject, the...

Enoch's Suggestions:

1. If you only read 1 book... read the best book that has your current view so you can at least understand one view adequately
2. If you only read 2-3 books, read the best books on variations of your view, or multiple introductions to various views. On the first method, you'll really know one view and its varying positions well. But on the other hand, you'll have a superficial understanding of multiple views.
3. If you read 5-6 books, read the best books from multiple views... from multiple levels (both popular and scholarly).
4. Talk to someone who you respect who understands at least one view, if not multiple views.