

Paul in Athens



What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?

--Tertullian, 2nd Century Theologian

The Problem with Intellectualizing God

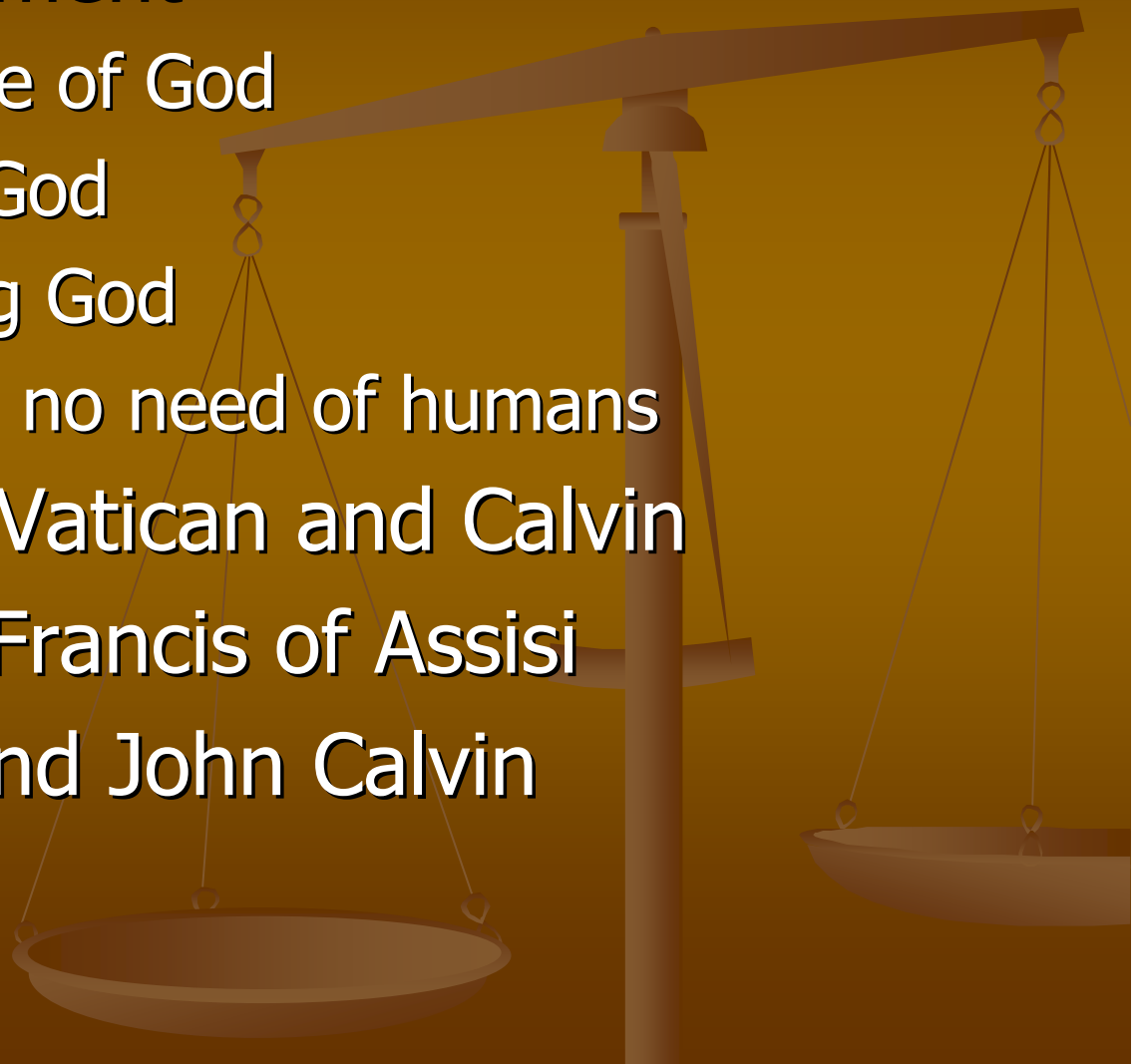


Eastern Orthodox Church

- Stoic Philosophers: Pantheistic Views
- God is in all matter (like an all powerful force)
- "God is in you, with you, around you" –Seneca
- "For we too are his offspring" (17:28) –
Taken from the poet Aratus
- Divine Judgment (17:31)
- "The Eastern Orthodox Church had to reject the notion of the Trinity because of its relationship to Stoic Ideology." --Reece

Western Tradition

- Epicurean Sentiment
 - Animated nature of God
 - Immortality of God
 - Bliss of Knowing God
 - A True God has no need of humans
- Predestination: Vatican and Calvin
- Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi
- Protestantism and John Calvin



Prayer of Saint Francis

- Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.
- O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. **Amen**
- May not have been written by him...

Lutheranism

- Rejects “Theology of Glory” --M. Luther
- “Christology, not Theology” –R. Bultmann
- “Christ in, with, and against Culture” –R. Neibuhr
- Accepts *Pauline* Theology
- **The phrase ‘times of ignorance’ probably expresses Paul’s conviction that the religious pluralism of Athenians made them guilty before God: one can not ignore truth for too long without being responsible for one’s behavior.** --Schnabel, Eckhard J. (2005). *Contextualizing Paul in Athens: The Proclamation of the Gospel Before Pagan Audiences in the Graeco-Roman World*. Religion & Theology

Final Thoughts...

- Is it possible the split between the Eastern Orthodox and the Western Catholic Church is simply a cultural misunderstanding?
- If our reaction to the Gospel message is truly:
 - 1. Rejection (mockery)
 - 2. Reluctance (consider and come back tomorrow)
 - 3. Reception (accept it and begin in ministry)
- Which type of participant does the Evangelical Lutheran Church seem to best serve?
- How should congregants and hospitality provide the essential feedback each Sunday to God's Word from its congregants for church growth?
- How about exit polls? Did you accept, reject, or consider God's word after hearing the pastor's message today?
- Why or Why not?



God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.
Amen.

--Reinhold Niebuhr