

Activity I: Historical Causation and Religion

Martin Luther – *An Open Letter to the German Nobility* (1520)

Analyze the content of the source below and address the following question: What is Luther's position of the relationship between reason and revelation? Why would Luther be upset with the infusion of Aristotelian thought into Christianity?

In this regard my advice would be that Aristotle's *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul*, *Ethics*, which have hitherto been thought his best books, should be altogether discarded, together with all the rest of his books which boast of treating the things of nature, although nothing can be learned from the either of the things of nature or the things of the Spirit. Moreover no one has so far understood his meaning, and many souls have been burdened with profitless labor and study, at the cost of much precious time. I venture to say that any potter has more knowledge of nature than is written in these books. It grieves me to the heart that this damned, conceited, rascally heathen has with his false words deluded and made fools of so many of the best Christians. God has sent him as a plague upon us for our sins.

Thomas Aquinas – *Summa Contra Gentiles* (1264)

Analyze the content of the source below and address the following question: What argument is Thomas Aquinas espousing in the selection below? What is the relationship between this selection and the one above?

We will put first the reasons by which Aristotle proceeds to prove the existence of God from the consideration of motion as follows. Everything that is in motion is put and kept in motion by some other thing. It is evident to sense that there are beings in motion. A thing is in motion because something else puts and keeps it in motion. That mover therefore either is itself in motion or not. If it is not in motion, our point is gained which we proposed to prove, namely, that we must posit something which moves other things without being itself in motion, and this we call God. But if the mover is itself in motion, then it is moved by some other mover.

Aristotle, *Physics*, Chapter 8, Part 6 (c. 4th century B.C.E.)

Analyze the content of the source below and address the following question: What statement is Aristotle making about motion? What is the relationship between this selection and the two above?

Since there must always be motion without intermission, there must necessarily be something, one thing or it may be a plurality, that first imparts motion, and this first movement must be unmoved.

Activity 2: What Impacts the Exegetical Process?¹

At a minimum, interpreting written texts presupposes that the writer and the reader share a common world, a common frame of reference, and a common understanding of language. – John Hayes and Carl Holladay

Exegesis: *Critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture.*

The Impact of Language: *When we interpret texts that have been translated from another language, we inevitably confront a communication gap, however small, between what the translation says and what the writer originally expressed.*

The Impact of Culture: *Writings produced in one cultural context and interpreted in another setting present special problems. There are two reasons for this. First, a document may mention, describe, or allude to special ideas, practices, and customs that would be clearly understood by a person reading the document in the original culture but that baffle a reader in a different culture. Second, communication within a culture frequently assumes a shared body of cultural understanding.*

The Impact of History: *When we read documents from the more distant past we often encounter persons, places, practices, and perspectives that are a “world apart” from our present situation. In order to understand a communication between two other parties, however, a third-party reader must imagine, even empathize with, both the sender and the receiver.*

Questions: Examine the sources below. Based on these sources would you argue that God is male or is God male and female? Why factors do you believe have led to the development of this question?

Tanakh ²	NIV Bible ³
1:26 And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.”	1:26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”
1:27 A God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.	1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

¹ All quotes for this section taken from Hayes, John H.; Holladay, Carl R. *Biblical Exegesis*, 3rd ed. Westminster John Knox Press.

² Dated to c. 7th century B.C.E. although scholars still debate the origin of composition.

³ First published in 1978 and updated in 2011.