

The Problem of Human Standardization

A Generalization from Romans 11

Text from Romans 11:

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?

35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again?

36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! (NAS)

Synopsis: The problem of human standardization exists because, quite in contrast to what is said in Romans 11:33-36, man sets himself up as the standard and context against which all other things are judged. In Romans we see the existence of an uncontexted spiritual reality, in which we see four aspects of the limitations of human standardization. The power of a deep presence/deep reality stands also in contrast and opposition to the ideology of contextualization of which man believes himself not only capable but also empowered by.

Natural man thus is faced with three insurmountable problems, according to this passage: the dispositive horizon, the proximity limit, and the absence of leverage.

The Lesson:

1. We know historically that even though God has spoken, and there is a revelation with its commands and requirements, that all of that has been consistently opposed by something we can characterize as “purely human.”
2. Man wishes to be his own standard. It is more than his wish to set standards – man regards himself as a standard. Therefore, we speak here of human standardization. So man doesn't merely establish standards for thought speech and behavior; it is rather that these things in themselves have no significance. What man posits has relevance or meaning because man is the standard: They are

important because he says they are important. The power of language is to speak importance into existence. Thus it is implied that nothing has inherent importance, it is only important when man says it is.

3. This sets the very recognizable pattern: Man himself has determined that he is the standard. He is important, he is the source of meaning, and therefore whatever he says or thinks or does is important. Thus importance is a derivative of his mere presence, of his being. It's important because he says it.

None of his nominal ideas are inherently important. An example of this would be existentialism. Such things are only important because he says so; all things of true importance derive from man.

At this point we see a contrast between these ideas and Romans 11:36. Paul says there that all things are from the Lord: from him, through him and to him. That puts God at the center of importance, quite in contrast to the way that man sees himself.

4. In Romans 11:33-36, this problem of human standardization is opposed by something of an entirely different nature. We can call that an “an uncontexted spiritual reality.” We know that because –

5. God is described in four terms in verse 33 : the depth of his wisdom, the richness of his wisdom and knowledge, his unsearchable judgments, his untraceable paths. We have four statements that speak of a reality that is unseen, but is not contexted by man. The wisdom and the ways of God are beyond the human rational scope. The scale of difference between God and man cannot be calculated. Consequently, earth, space, time, history, and human intelligence can in no way pose as a context for the wisdom and ways of God. In relation to God, intellectually and kinetically, we are in over our heads, so the Text says.

6. In the light of all this, human standardization has no basis in fact nor in strict materiality. Therefore the only basis for it is a combination of ignorance and will.

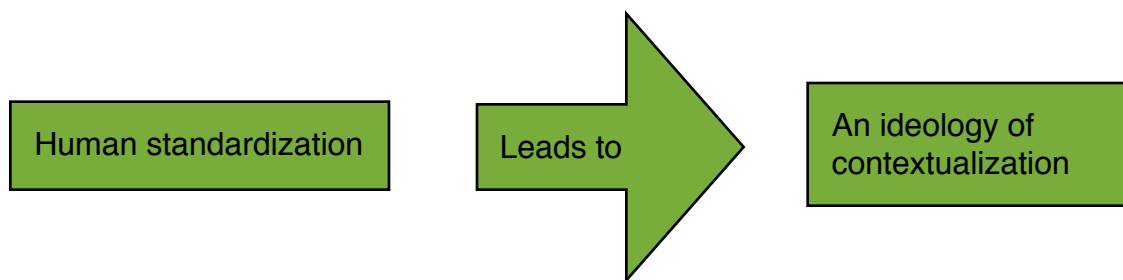
7. There is a deep presence/deep reality in proximity to man. And that is Paul's thesis in these verses. Thus the propositions of verses 33 to 36 are themselves uncontextable. We can find all these propositions all throughout Scripture, and wherever we find them their meaning and truth has universal application.

8. This deep presence/deep reality is not contexted by anything human or temporal. To the contrary, God is the context for human existence.

9. This means that God alone holds the **power of contextualization**. Man himself and all human activity of whatever variety is contexted by the deep presence/deep reality; and it is itself uncontexted. So God is beyond and outside of man in every possible category of consideration.

10. A prime characteristic of the impulse to human standardization is to arrogate to itself this power of contextualization. But man cannot possess in actuality this power. So it shows up as **an ideology of contextualization**. Man does not possess the right to do this – we cannot contextualize anything. No, man takes this right as his own. Why? Because man has determined that the only context for thought, speech, and behavior is man himself. The reality of man and the range of his will, intellect, and self-regard project a context for all things including God and his revelation.

11.



Human standardization: It's the case where trust in God, a commitment to revelation, the spiritual life are all seen as overstatements --because such things are outside of the context projected by human standardization.

Ideology of contextualization: This is the idea or the philosophy of assertion. Man will assert that his intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, capabilities form a sufficient explanatory and justifying context for his earthly existence. This is the persistent, repetitive mistake: That is, to put God and his Word within the human context and not be contexted by him.

Result: the humanization of God.

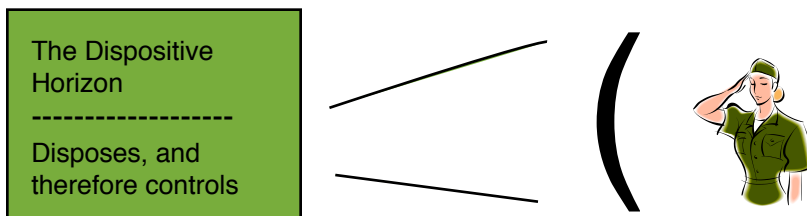
12. After the humanization process, then God is just one more element within the context projected by man. In other words, God is turned into a pure abstraction with no particular relevance to the material world.



The humanization of God makes him “like me.” Therefore he is subject to our collective appraisal, to the standard of human wisdom and will. We can infer and confer meaning upon him instead of the other way around, he to us. This means that God at this point is just an abstract idea and not a real external presence and reality. The power, if we choose to call it power, is to treat God as just one more abstraction in the human mind and not acknowledge him as the deep presence/deep reality.

13. Verses 34-35. To human standardization the apostle supplies three insurmountable problems.

A. Problem #1: The knowledge limit, or the dispositive horizon. Dispositive means controlled: “Who has known the mind of the Lord?” This is a rhetorical question, no doubt. There is an horizon put on what men can know by their own efforts. We cannot know that which is not knowable. There are some things that are inherently unknowable. This horizon is clearly an experienced reality. Man cannot see it but we all know that it’s there. Christians and nonbelievers can agree on this phenomenon. This horizon is always functioning to enforce limitations on man. A kind of boundary state confronts human capacity. There is no potential real or conceivable to know the deep presence/deep reality. At this horizon all human potential breaks down, or reaches its zenith. This means that both human wisdom and human potential are absolutely contained. This impenetrable horizon is part of the created world. ***This is the dispositive horizon.*** The word dispositive comes from the same root as dispose, which therefore involves control.



A. Today the pride and arrogance of man has determined that since we cannot pierce the dispositive horizon, that there is nothing out there beyond it.

Consequently, contemporary hubris simply dismisses this dispositive horizon, and claims that all that is seen is all that there is. This is the beginning of a logic or a knowledge system. Such a system of knowing that man has created for himself is predicated upon an assumption functioning as an axiom. The axiom states that there is no dispositive horizon. Therefore, man's intellect and potential can, should, must, and will provide the only rational context for life. In other words, man is the only being that thinks, which has thoughts. The knowledge limit or dispositive horizon is indicative. It indicates that what man really needs is a knowledge of the absolute uncontexted wisdom of God. He needs this for his daily life, in order to face all the difficulties of human existence. Man needs *fundamental knowledge* – as defined by all the deep reality beyond the horizon.

Fundamental knowledge is not of the sciences, mathematics, the humanities, nor technical skills. Rather, it is knowledge of what lies beyond the dispositive horizon and how that deep presence/deep reality affects life on the human side. However, men of the world do not consider any of this as fundamental; but only as myth, story, metaphysics, religion. For them fundamental knowledge is only that which relates to man's physical experience in the world as obtained by direct action. Yet we generalize that fundamental knowledge is knowledge revealed to us by God. It is this knowledge which serves to context our place here in the earth. But we will not be contexted by him.

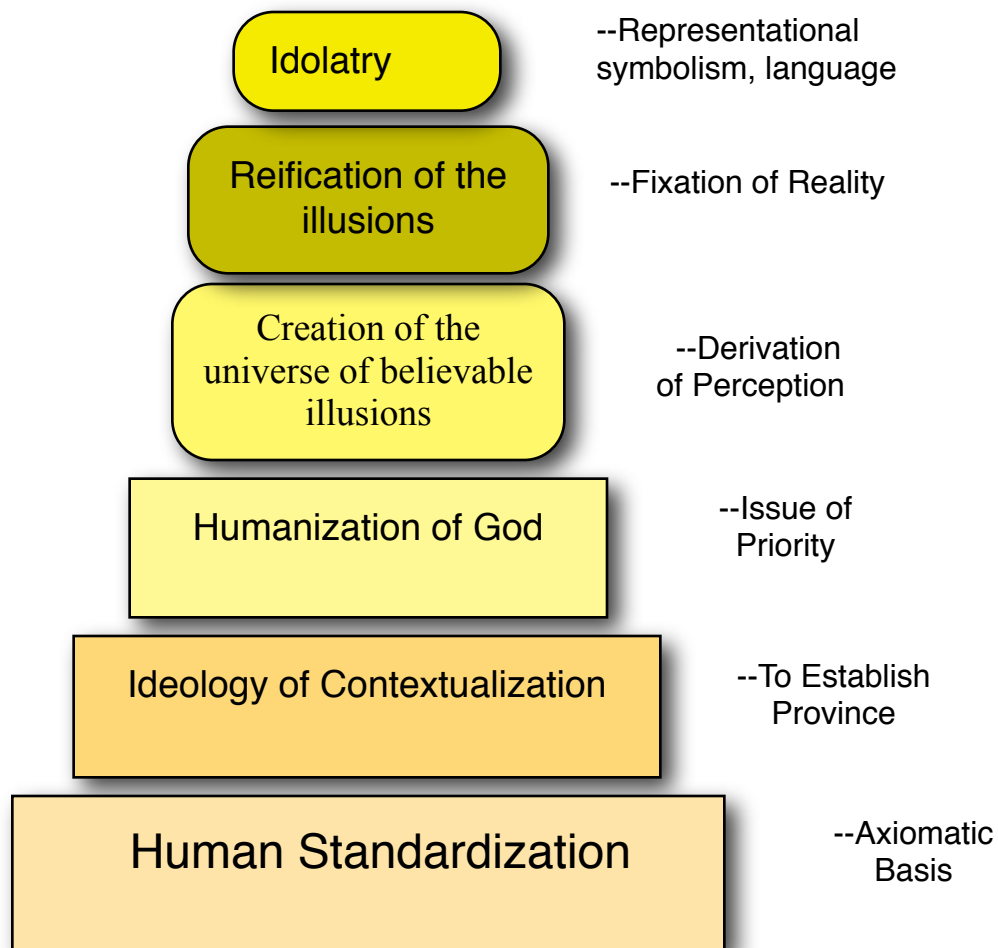
B. Problem # 2—Verse 34. **The Proximity Limit.** This is the phrase – “for who has been his counselor?” Man is not proximate to God. God is not like us. There is no basis for comparison between man and God except within very narrow lines. Therefore God cannot be compared equally with men. His ways are “beyond tracing out” (v. 33). Man is not in a position to serve as counselor to the Almighty. This means that man is not the comparitor for God. To have the effrontery to counsel God, in other words to function as comparitor or peer to Him, is the epitome of arrogance. The agenda here is of course for the counselor to compare God and his wisdom to the universal of human standardization. Regularly, men using their wisdom attempt to sit in judgment upon the Word of God. The most effective, famous public atheists do this all the time. Television celebrities included make fun of God, the Bible, Christianity, and faith. But believers who read the Scripture yet conclude that the Word is not immediately relevant to daily life do the same thing. In this way we can all attempt to counsel God. We place ourselves as comparitors to God.

The place of comparitor is to “make sense of it all.” By putting everything within the human context. All the while the Word of God insists that the deep presence/deep reality is not subject to human standardization. The wisdom of man cannot

serve as counselor to God. God is absolutely uncontexted and we are severely contexted. This alerts us to ***The Master Anthropology***: Man is contexted by a deep presence/deep reality, not itself subject to anything human. This is the beginning point for the study of man. Instead, it is said that “man is the subject of his environment”: cultural, biological, genetic, geophysical. The proximity limit is not acknowledged nor recognized nor respected by a great many. Therefore the wisdom of God is called into judgment by human standardization. In Acts 4:19, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God.” Acts 5:29: “We must obey God rather than men.” The apostles recognized the proximity limit. We are not proximate to God, we do not serve as his counselors. The apostles refused to make human standardization the comparator for God. The deep presence/deep reality, the Scripture says, is the driving force in the universe and therefore within situations. Nor is there proximity between the eternal and temporal dimensions. Nor between the deep presence/deep reality and human nature. A vast and deep inequality governs the distance between God and man. This is not something to ignore but something with which to contend.

C. Problem # 3 – The absence of leverage. (Verse 35: “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?”) God is not indebted to man. Leverage is always exercised over those indebted by those to whom they owe. Man can exercise exactly zero leverage upon God. He is not our debtor. To think of God as in our debt so that he “should” or “ought” or “must” act in a certain way is an echo of human standardization. God relates to man by grace and not in response to some imagined leverage (see the previous verses in Romans 11.) Quite to the reverse, it is man who is indebted to God. Perhaps it is often the case that our emotional states, we treat as *de facto* leverage on God. “Because I feel bad, that has some leverage on God.” Some often have anger toward God, as though he be somehow indebted to them. But no one has ever given to God that which God did not already possess. Accordingly then, human standardization become the mother philosophy from which all others surge: human standardization produces or projects a universe of believable illusions. For example, the idea that the universe was not created but is rather the result of naturalistic evolution. Another example is that ethology –the study of animal behavior – is regarded as the doorway to anthropology, the study of human behavior. (Thus Fossett’s apes could supposedly inform us about ourselves.)

Human standardization ignites a process. With every stage in the process, man increasingly shuts God and his Word out of influence, and even out of consideration. Paul says this process is a false basis upon which men make assessments and pose solutions.



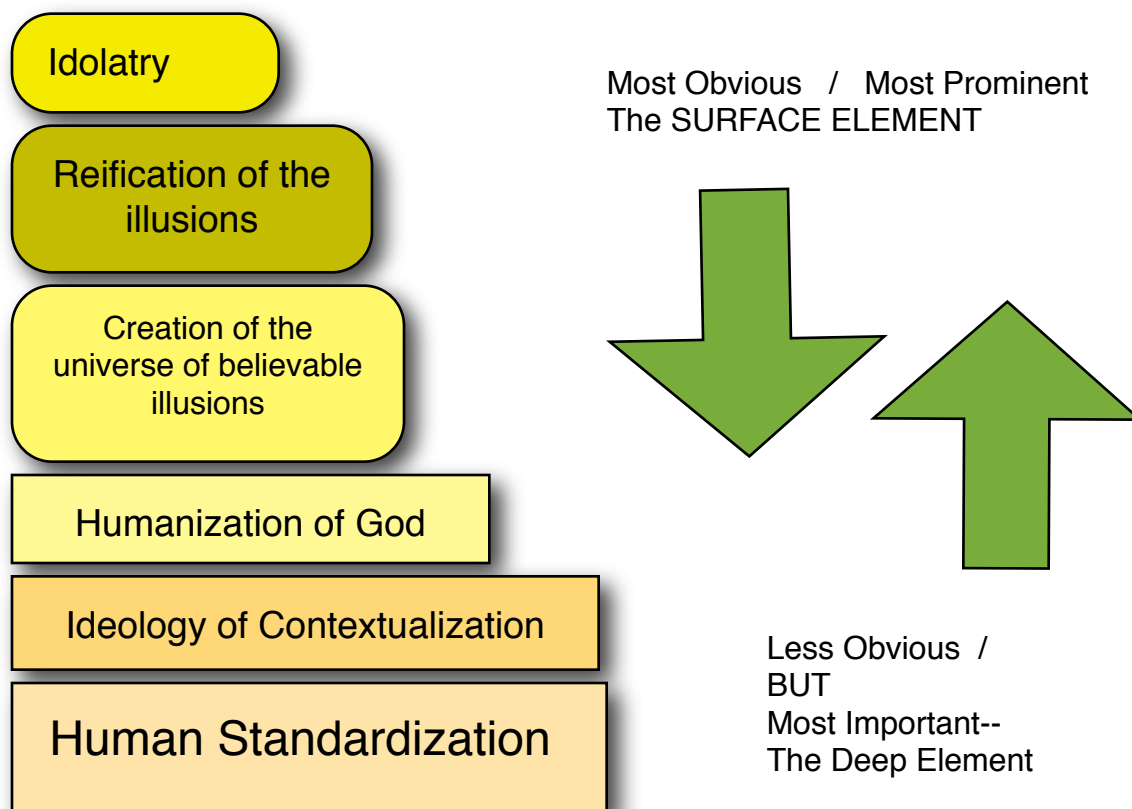
14. The graphic illustrates: A schematic of human standardization as process. This is a system of knowing. On this schematic, an epistemology is conducted. There is a calculation to this: To erode confidence in anything than itself.

14. There are implications for leadership. The object of spiritual leadership, according to the Bible, is to lead people away from human standardization, where people are the standard, so God can lead them.

15. According to the schematic of human standardization, all facts are going to be related in some way to this system of knowing. So here is one of the key elements and its power to influence. Any fact that comes into contact with this pyramid is appropriated by this system. It produces plausibility due to the starting point. We say this because the starting point is not the fact itself rather the system. So the collusion between the system and the facts gives the impression of knowledge.

16. Much like an iceberg, the element at the top of the pyramid in the schematic -- the idol -- is the most obvious, the most prominent. However, human

standardization, though less obvious than something like idolatry, is of much greater significance. What is most noticeable is not at all what carries the most eternal weight. So we draw a distinction between the surface elements (such as the idol) and the deep elements (such as human standardization.) We should not be unduly impressed by the most obvious and prominent elements of the system. We should look at deeper, less obvious, less prominent yet more important parts. In other words, we should ask the question: what is behind all of this?



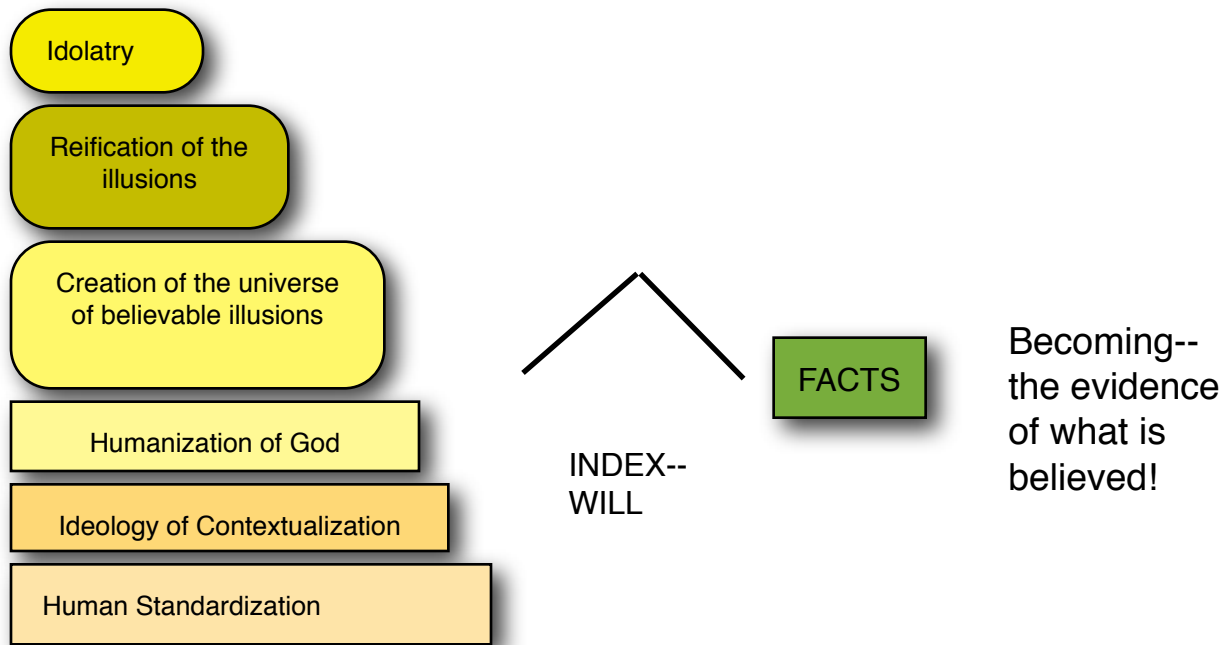
17. Thus there is a threshold issue. Human wisdom and human experience are facts of human nature. They are created by God. But there is a threshold and if we cross this threshold, we enter into human standardization with all of its bias and prejudice. This was most certainly present in the event in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:18. In the book of Romans, the apostle accused the Jews of the sin of human standardization. That is what Judaism was. Even Paul's previous life was an instantiation of human standardization. Among the Jews this was a persistent historical process, elevated to a virtue. But it is a spiritual pathology. It is also an immediate moral issue because of the ingredient of human pride.

19. The educational system in the USA and in the world, one imagines, is constituted of this naturalistic system of knowing. All of the *isms* of the world are manifestations of this arch system of knowing. This is the example of communism, Nazism, scientific materialism, Hegelianism, and evolutionism.

20. Any person coming to the gospel must practice de-standardization. That is to say, anyone coming to the gospel must take action to remove the human as the standard, hence, destandardization. We must destandardize obedience. This is a prerequisite to obedience. Obedience to God must not be defined by human judgment upon God's requirements. We must destandardize situations. One cannot come to a plenary appreciation of a situation while human standardization is given full authority to establish what the situation is. We must destandardize the word of God. We are not therefore allowed to rationalize the Scripture. We must destandardize cognition: As long as the human standard is employed to determine what is valid reasoning, then we cannot transcend the dispositive horizon.

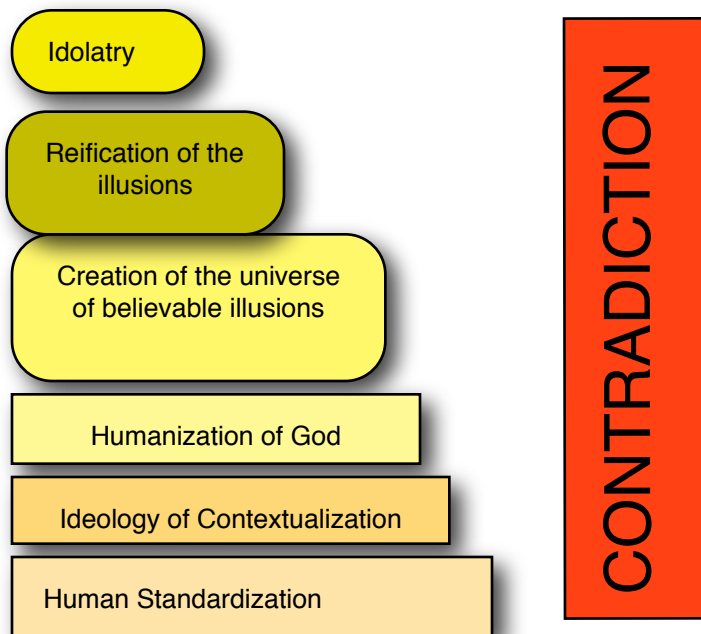
21. Moses' leadership in the desert is an example of this destandardization. Exodus 19:9. It all begins with God, and that is the basis of confidence in the leadership of Moses. See Exodus 19:16-17. Especially – Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God. Aaron, on the other hand, “led them into such great sin” (ex 33.21). This was a travesty.

22. There is a triadic structure of evidence. Schematic of the pyramid. (Graphic). This structure becomes the evidence or the rationalization of what is believed. In other words, this is THE MATRIX OF BELIEVABILITY. In this matrix the words and facts are connected and appear to create an all-inclusive system that is “sufficiently explanatory.”



THE MATRIX OF BELIEVABILITY

23. So here we place these two things side by side to try and achieve a graphic quality to their contradictory natures. These problems force the case for a need, that is for a revelation. This matrix of materialistic naturalistic epistemology is constructed behind the dispositive horizon. This knowledge matrix is a generalization from Romans 11: 33-36. And it places us in front of the depositive horizon.



1. THE KNOWLEDGE LIMIT: The Dispositive Horizon (v. 33)
2. THE PROXIMITY LIMIT (v. 34)
3. THE ABSENCE OF LEVERAGE (v. 35) ->

These three problems force the case for need for revelation.

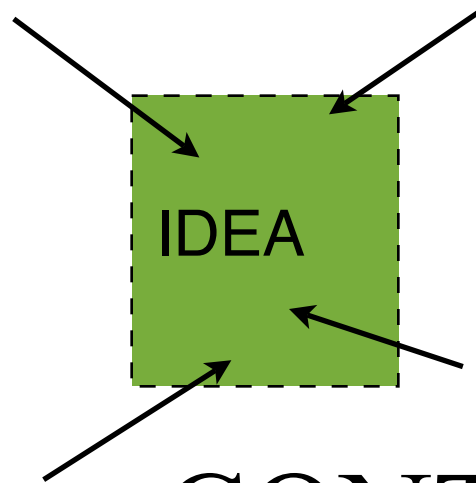
24. Man is deliberately restrained from the direct knowledge of God. Which means that he can rely only upon a revelation from God in order to know him. This is the most narrow of all epistemologies. But what if the revelation a) makes demands? B) requires obedience? C) overrules the human appetites? D) stifles man's will to power? E) challenges man's claim to priority?

25. In fact, the word of God sets limits and boundaries on the human condition.

26. The human condition as expressed in Romans 11:33-36 implies a very different idea: which is that the human condition is no basis for making assessments and judgments about eternal realities. To the contrary, man is himself purposefully permanently and irretrievably contexted by a superior mind, which the naturalistic matrix renders mute, obscure, meaningless, and anachronistic. By that system of knowing some men willingly replace God as real, knowable, and meaningful.

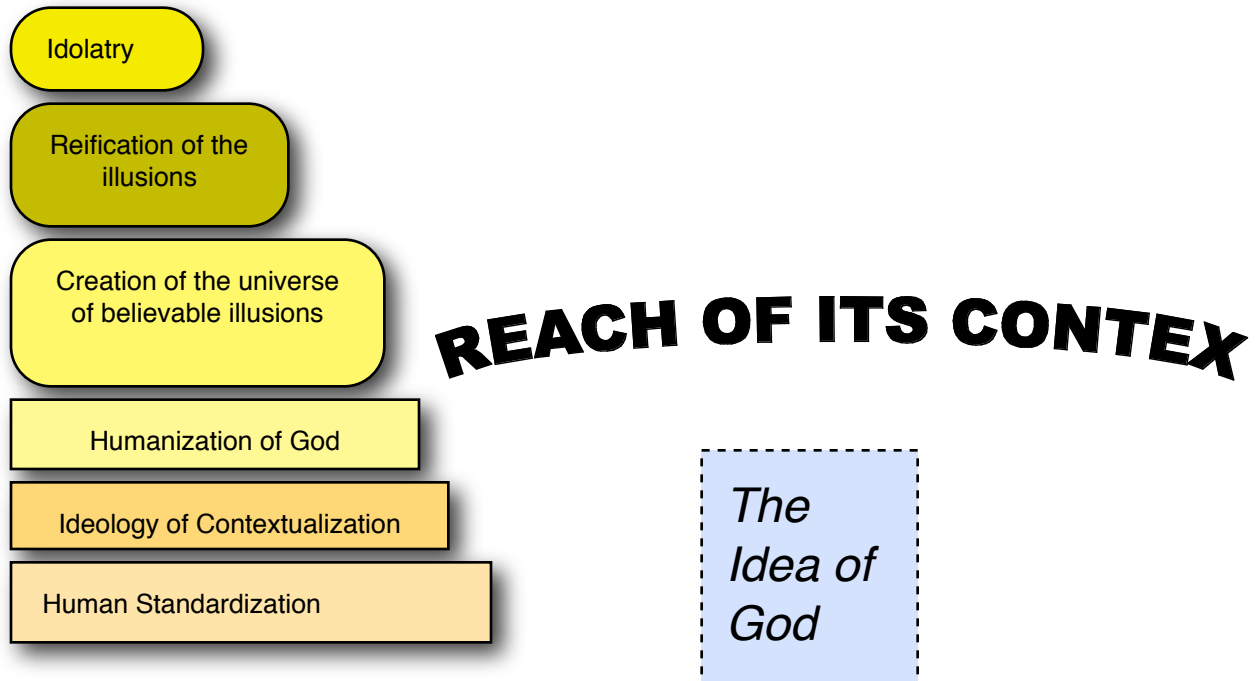
27. In the book of Romans human standardization is observed as problematic. The Scriptures are in effect placed athwart the dispositive horizon to observe the human condition and to do what man cannot do for himself. Instead of grateful acceptance of the revelation of God to man, the word of God is most frequently treated as a troublesome intrusion of the humanistic history.

HISTORICAL



CONTEXT

29. This matrix of knowledge founded upon human standardization has an immediate and profound influence upon the idea of God. Man of course cannot have any direct effect upon the Supreme Being, therefore God is treated simply as an idea -- an idea with its own historical context. However, it turns out that the real context is one that precedes history. This context is how people through the centuries in the various cultures and the various times have thought about God. Consequently, human historical rational practice serves as the actual and effective context for God. This is a non-commutative type of issue, because there is the idea of God but God is not an idea. In order to dispense with God, one must completely abstract him out of reality. This requires the will to do so and an intellectual process. Once God is reduced to an idea, then such an idea can be neatly and effectively contexted by the naturalistic manifold.



Higher reality is dismissed as untenable. It is considered to be untenable, all right, but only within the context posed by the naturalistic manifold. **This explains why the ideology of contextualization is a permanent feature of the naturalistic matrix of knowledge. You cannot deal with God unless you context Him. And He can only be contexted if He is an idea.**

The rational context is that of this matrix of knowing in at least six stages. It is a system, because it binds all the facts and ideas together. To get what is offered as a sufficient understanding of material existence with the idea of God included. By this process God is reduced to the dimensions of the human context. God is robbed of His reality, His mind, His power, and finally His place in the scheme of things.