<u>functionally monistic</u> appears to "fit" all of the biblical data in their integrity; and we therefore adopt it provisionally.

Holding our model as a <u>hypothesis</u>, and gathering still other relevant biblical data, we find increasing confirmation of our construct, and are strengthened in our confidence that our model represents the teachings of Scripture.

As we further compare it with the models other theologians have proposed, and with the statements of various creeds and confessions, we find that our model holds up rather well, and in fact is actually proposed by a contemporary theologian!

It appears that the process of theological reasoning is too rich, too complex to be reduced to any one kind of reasoning. All three -- induction, deduction, and retroduction -- are involved in doing theology. All three can be used in the service of God!

As we engage in theological system building, it would seem that all three basic kinds of reasoning need to be pressed into service. As to the question of when and where one kind of reasoning is to be employed rather than another, the answer would seem to be a combination of common sense, acquaintance with the kinds of reasoning and the ways they work, and persistence in raising leading questions that are prompted by a desire to clearly understand God's system of truth, and that by their nature call for either inductive, deductive, or retroductive reasoning.

Since we are interested in the teaching of Scripture as a whole, most investigations will begin with collecting data and making doctrinal generalizations. Some investigations will proceed with deducing consequences from doctrinal generalizations, and comparing these conclusions with other doctrinal generalizations and/or conclusions. Some investigations will then adduce hypothetical doctrinal constructs which attempt to relate and make sense of generalizations and conclusions. And many investigations will use induction, deduction, and retroduction a number of times, and in various orders and sequences.

The Role of Previous Conclusions

Do previous conclusions concerning the teachings of Scripture inform ongoing theological system building? Should they? Is it necessary to address each new question *de novo*, in a vacuum, with no preconceptions or convictions based on previous study? Is it even <u>possible</u> to do this? If it <u>is</u> possible, via carefully controlled, self-conscious, critical assessment of each step, to address each question without preconceptions, is it <u>desirable</u>? Or is the process of system building one of taking into account previous work (with flexibility and the possibility of modification built into the construction process)?

It would seem that previous theological work must always be open to correction, modification, and adjustment, but only in response to new data, new insights, new constructs, or newly perceived relationships. <u>Openness does not necessitate modification</u>! And it is not necessary to think of modification only in terms of minor "tinkering"; it is possible