

# Introduction to Theology

## The Definition of Theology

### Three popular Views of the Term

#### Christian (Bible Theology):

The science of God (His existence, nature, attributes, laws, government, works, whatever may be known of Him), of the relations that exist between God and the universe, and of our relations, duties, responsibilities to Him and the universe. It is the science of things divine. This view, in its broadest sense, includes all knowledge/truth.

#### Scientific:

The critical, historical, philosophical and psychological study of religion and religious ideas.

#### Common:

The study of man's universal concepts of a Higher Power or Person.

### Etymology of the Term

Two Greek words supply the basic meaning. a. Theos: God b. Logos: word, speech, reason. The etymology suggests a reasoned treatise or discourse about God.

### Use of the Term

#### Broad, general, inclusive:

The sum of all Christian doctrines, or religious truth; rational inquiry into religious questions.

#### Narrow, particular, exclusive:

The doctrine of God, His Being and His works.

### Synonymous treatment of doctrine and theology

Both are sciences that treat of religious beliefs, creeds and principles.

Both are divine revelations of truth. Doctrine is the specific revelation of truth. Dogma is the human statement of the truth incorporated in a creed.

# **The Ground of Theology**

**The unmistakable evidences of the existence of a God who is related to our universe.**

**The capacity of the human mind to know God and certain of those relations.**

**The provision of a revelation that brings God and the human being into contact and communion.**

**The absolute dependence of the human being on a Higher Power to live at peace with himself and his fellow creatures.**

**The ever recurrent questions concerning human origin, human destiny and the riddle of life demand intelligible answers.**

## **The Sources of Theology**

**There are two authentic sources.**

### **Nature (Natural Theology)**

The universe and the world in which we live. (Psalm 19:1-4)

The intuitive response to nature's light. (Romans 1:8-20; 2:14,15)

Natural knowledge is elemental and limited (Acts 17:23)

### **The Holy Scriptures (Revealed Theology)**

They are absolute, final and complete.

They give saving knowledge.

**There are three undependable sources.**

### **Traditionalism**

This theory asserts the claim that the ecclesiastical interpretations of the Scriptures are equal to, and often superior to, the Holy Scriptures themselves. This is a Roman fallacy.

## **Rationalism**

This theory places reason above revelation. The rationalists reject all Scriptures that do not pass the test of human understanding and reason. The miracles of the Bible are subjected to these tests. The rationalists give three interpretations to the miracles: Natural, Mystical, and Mythical.

## **Mysticism**

This theory supports the practice of getting new light about God through personal revelation. Subjective experience is claimed to be equal to written revelation. Personal notions and prejudices may lead to error.

# **The Relationships of Theology**

### **Theology is a science.**

It treats of certified facts and data that are logically arranged and classified.

### **Religion is a life/lifestyle.**

The Latin meaning is to bind or tie fast, to restrain. Religion is a life in communion with and controlled by God.

### **Morality is a law.**

i.e., a code of behavior by which people govern themselves; a system of ideas of right and wrong conduct.

### **Worship is an art.**

It is the outward expression of religion.

### **Salvation is an experience.**

It involves a personal awareness of God and divine forgiveness.

### **A theologian may be only a scientist.**

### **A Christian student of theology fits all the relationships.**

# **The Classifications of Theology**

## **Exegetical Theology**

The study of the original languages of the Bible to explain the true meaning of the Scriptures --€” Hebrew, Aramaic of the Old Testament and Greek of the New Testament.

### **Historical Theology**

The study of the history of the church and the development of doctrinal interpretation.

### **Dogmatic**

Theology The study of church creeds and the fundamentals of truth found in them.

### **Systematic**

Theology The study of a composite picture of theology taken from the Bible, history, philosophy and man's general knowledge of God. The subject matter arranged in a systematic form gives a comprehensive view of man's idea of God. Biblical Theology This is the simple, direct study of God and Christian doctrine taken exclusively from the Bible.

## **The Scope of Theology**

**Bibliology: Doctrine of the Bible**

**Theology: Doctrine of God**

**Angelology: Doctrine of Angels (Satan included)**

**Anthropology: Doctrine of Man**

**Harmartiology: Doctrine of Sin**

**Soteriology: Doctrine of Salvation**

**Christology: Doctrine of Christ**

**Pneumatology: Doctrine of the Holy Spirit**

**Ecclesiology: Doctrine of the Church**

**Eschatology: Doctrine of the Future**

# **Limitations of Theology**

**The human mind is finite.**

Infinitude seems out of reach.

Sin has weakened intellectual powers.

**The apparent disharmony between science and the Bible.**

Inadequate scientific data.

Modern scientists gradually bowing to revelation.

**The inadequacy of human language to describe deity.**

St. Paul mentioned the ineffable glories of God.

Christ was the mysterious Word of God.

**The silence of written revelation.**

Basic principles are clearly expressed.

The Bible is silent on many subjects.

Principles are applied according to the law of analogy.

**The barrier between the flesh and the spirit**

God can assume many forms. He is essentially Spirit.

Human beings are corporeal. They possess spirit.

# **The Value of Theology**

## **It is the foundation of solid Christian experience.**

Right believing is the first requisite of saving grace.

## **It builds a pattern for living the Christian way.**

### **It builds a moral pattern.**

Moral - Relating to the practice, manners or conduct of men as social beings in relation to each other, and with reference to right and wrong. - Webster's 1828 edition.

### **It guards against a pattern of immorality.**

Immoral - Inconsistent with moral rectitude; contrary to the moral or divine law; wicked; unjust; dishonest; vicious. - Webster's 1828 edition.

### **It helps the believer to build an understanding of the Amoral attributes of God.**

Amoral- Being neither moral nor immoral specifically : lying outside the sphere to which moral judgments apply. - Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary.(Eleventh ed.) This as an old English word that can also be rendered non-moral and refers to attributes of the Divine essence that do not involve moral qualities. An example would be the Omnipotence of God, which is an attribute of the very nature of God and cannot be changed.

### **It protects the mind against error.**

Truth garrisons the heart and mind.

### **It is a necessary qualification for the ministry.**

To preach about God, one must know Him and know about Him. With open minds, humble hearts and absolute dependence upon the Holy Spirit, we begin our quest of God and divine things.

ASSIGNMENT: Read this entire Introduction to Theology; bring to class at least three written questions or remarks generated from reading this entire introduction. Also, be prepared to answer questions regarding this information.