

Prolegomena

A. Definitions:

1. **Etymological definition:**

THEOLOGY comes from the Greek word *theos* Θεός which means God and *logos* λόγος which means word or discourse. Literally, it means, “The Word about God.”

2. **Technical definitions:**

- a. **Theology** — *is the science of God and the relations between God and the universe (Strong)*
- b. **Systematic Theology** — *is the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His work. (Chafer)*
- c. **Religion** — The set of beliefs, attitudes, and practices, which indicate and express the feeling or conviction of a group of persons who are bound fast to any object or ideal regarded as of supreme worth. (From the Latin, meaning, “to bind fast.”)
- d. **Doctrine** — The term “doctrine” simply means, “teaching.” The formal use of the term “doctrines” means, “That which is taught and held as true, such as the principles or creed of religion.”

3. **The major divisions of theology:**

- a. **Prolegomena** — The introduction or the study of first words or preliminary matters
- b. **Bibliology** — The study of the doctrine of Scripture
- c. **Theology Proper** — The study of the Godhead
 - (1) **Theism** — The study of the Person of God as Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the Universe

- (2) **Trinitarianism** — The threefold personality of God
- (3) **Paterology** — The study of the Father
- (4) **Christology** — The study of the Son of God
- (5) **Pneumatology** — The study of the Holy Spirit
- d. **Angelology** — The study of Angels
- e. **Anthropology** — The study of Man
- f. **Hamartiology** — The study of Sin
- g. **Soteriology** — The study of Salvation
- h. **Ecclesiology** — The study of the Church
- i. **Eschatology** — The study of Future Things

B. Six Reasons for Theology:

1. To define Christianity:

Theology organizes our thoughts. Our human intellect is not content with mere facts; rather we desire to organize them.

2. To express the meaning of Christianity:

To be able to express our faith to others. Therefore, theology affects evangelism and missions .

3. To defend Christianity:

Because of the unbelief of our day we need to be always ready to defend our faith. Theology, therefore will help in apologetics.

4. To build Christian character:

What we hear, see, think, and believe affects us. Therefore, to build a strong Christian character we need to be precise in our thinking.

5. To understand the Scriptures:

The Bible is the unfolding story of God's revelation to mankind. It is life, history, and God's revelation unfolding. God left us to study and to build these facts into a logical order.

6. To be effective Christian servants:

Proper theology will aid us in our teaching, counseling, preaching and in discerning truth from error.

The Types of Theology

(Definitions Continued)

1. **Natural Theology** — This is a theology constructed without respect of special revelation. No superhuman wisdom is involved.
It has scriptural support. (See Psalm 19:1-6; Acts 14:15; 17:23; Rom. 1:18-19; 2:14).
Though it is proper to use natural theology since it has Scriptural support. Natural theology is limited to what is seen. It cannot tell us who God is; the necessity of salvation and so much more. Hence, it is confined to those things that are generally revealed to all men.

2. **Biblical Theology** — It is the branch of theological science, which deals systematically with the historically conditioned progress of God's self-revelation in the Bible. It "studies the Bible from the perspective of understanding the *progressive history* of God revealing Himself to humanity following the Fall and throughout the Old Testament and New Testament. It particularly focuses on the epochs of the Old Testament in order to understand how each part of it ultimately points forward to fulfillment in the life mission of Jesus Christ. Because scholars have tended to use the term in different ways, biblical theology has been notoriously difficult to define.¹
Biblical theology seeks to understand a certain passage in the Bible in light of all of the biblical history leading up to it and later biblical references to that passage. It asks questions of the text such as:
 - How much does this person or group know about the attributes of God?
 - To what extent are God's plans revealed, such as future plans of sending Jesus as the messiah?
 - How has Israel responded to God's interactions with them up to this point?
 - How is a given theme or subject progressively developed throughout redemption history?
 Biblical theology seeks to put individual texts in their historical context since what came before them is the foundation on which they are laid and what comes after is what they

¹ Carson, D. A. "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology." In *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Edited by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000, 89.

anticipate. Biblical theology is sometimes called the "history of special revelation" since it deals with the unfolding and expanding nature of revelation as history progresses through the Bible."²

3. **Historical Theology** — This is the study of the historical development of doctrine as men have interacted with Scripture within their own historical context.
4. **Liberal Theology** — This is also called “Modernism” and “Neo-Protestantism.” It developed from German theology out of the intense rationalism of the Enlightenment age and as a protest to the confessional orthodoxy, which developed after the reformation. (See Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*, pp. 409-13, 444-48.

a. **Key leaders within liberalism:**

- (1) **Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher** (1768-1834). He is known as the “Father of modern religious liberalism” He defined religion as feeling Or as the immediate consciousness of absolute dependence upon God Under his teaching the Christian consciousness became the lone interpreter of religion and the standard for testing the truth and knowing God. Ultimately, his God was not a personal Being, but rather an impersonal, pantheistic force, to him this force is the universal, the absolute, the eternal principle which is immanent in the world. The life of this universe is mirrored in the individual and Jesus of Nazareth was his ideal. To him, Jesus was merely a superior, sinless man unique in His God-consciousness. (See *Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church*, p. 361.)
- (2) **Albrecht Benjamin Ritschl** (1822-1889). He was strongly influenced by Kant and Schleiermacher. He stressed a community consciousness rather than the individual consciousness of God. Those who followed him adopted the critical study of the Bible (JEPD theory — Jehovah; Elohim; Priestly and Deuteronomists)

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_theology

4. **Neo-orthodox Theology** — Theists who rebel against liberalism and insist on the transcendence of God as evidenced primarily by Jesus breaking into history. But, they felt that Jesus cannot be understood simply by the gospels or the Bible. To them, the Bible is the witness to Jesus (who is the Word of God), but the Bible is not considered to be the Word of God itself. The neo-orthodox believes that the Bible is a human record and thus capable of error.

Other names for neo-orthodoxy:

- a. **Crisis Theology** — They believe that God may speak to you through a crisis or a trial **APART** from His Word. They hold a “dynamic theory” of inspiration. (See Ramm, *Handbook of Contemporary Theology*, p. 89).
- b. **Dialectical Theology** — Is a form of neo-orthodoxy that rejects the liberal concept that man may know God by reason. In liberalism God’s immanence³ is revealed in the human conscience. In neo-orthodoxy God is transcendent⁴ and is revealed in crisis. The result of both thoughts is that the revelation of God is made without dependence on the historical accuracy of the Bible.
- c. **Bartianism** — This name comes from Karl Barth (1886-1968) who is the father of neo-orthodoxy. He was a Swiss pastor who after the horrors of World War I and his study of Kierkegaard, Calvin, and the Bible shattered his liberal optimism. His anti-Nazi ideas were set forth in the Barmen Declaration in 1934. *Romans* and *Church Dogmatics*.

More Background (Liberalism/Neo-Orthodoxy)

- a. Liberalism reduced theology to a rationalistic philosophy and is humanistic to the core.

³ Immanence means to be “within” or “near,” that is, God is within or present to the entire universe. Liberalism understands God’s immanence to “within all men.” We must be careful here. Biblically, God is not within the universe in the sense of being part of it for He the Creator and it is His creation. God is within the universe as its sustaining Cause, but not in the sense of its being part of His nature.

⁴ Transcendent means to be “beyond” or “to be above” that is, “God is above and beyond all creation.” To the neo-orthodox God is revealed in crisis or in grips-and-grabs, yet you can never really know God. Biblically, God is both transcendent and immanent both deism and neo-orthodoxy affirms God’s transcendence but denies His immanence. Pantheism and liberalism affirms God’s immanence but denies His transcendence. Theism affirms both; understanding that God spoke in times past to the fathers through the prophets and has in these last days spoken unto us by *His* Son.

- b. Neo-orthodoxy desires the Bible to be relevant again and to give it respectability. This is done when in an encounter or a crisis one's needs are met. (See Davis, *Theology Primer*, p. 33. To the neo-orthodox, finding Christ in the Bible differs according to one's personality, temperament, and need. Only the thoughts are inspired — therefore, even the words, and thoughts of God may be found elsewhere (besides the Bible), if circumstances are right.
 - c. **Emil Brunner** (1869-1966) — a Swiss theologian and former colleague of Karl Barth. He broke with Barth in 1934 over Barth's denial that man still had the image of God after the Fall. According to Brunner, revelation is an encounter with the self-revealing God. He wrote *Dogmatics* (1946-1960), *The Divine Imperative*, *Man in Revolt*, *The Divine-Human Encounter*, and *Natural Theology*.
 - d. **Reinhold Niebuhr** (1892-1971) — He was more radical than Barth and Brunner. He served as pastor of Bethel Evangelical Church in Detroit from 1915-1928 and was professor at Union theological Seminary in New York from 1928-1960. He taught **that God in Christ would confront the individual with saving grace who would then work out proximate, not final solutions in time to social problems**. Founded and edited *Christianity and Crisis* (1941-1966). Also wrote *Moral Man and Immortal Society*, *Faith and History*, and *The Nature and Destiny of Man*.
5. **Neo-Liberal Theology** — This view holds similar neo-orthodox positions such as, no historical fall of man and man's independence. It embraces Kant's view on the absolute sense of what is right and also believing that within all man is a spark of divine life. Furthermore, places philosophy over the exegesis of Scripture. (Bultmann's Demything the Bible). (cf. Ramm. *HCT*, p. 88).
6. **Secular Theology** — This is a belief system which rejects all forms of public religion, both faith and worship. It is a social-political philosophy which finds its sole reference in "this-worldly" concerns. It totally rejects the supernatural. (Gundry & Johnson, *Tensions in Contemporary Theology*, "Secular Theology").

7. **Theology of Hope** — This is a philosophy by Jurgen Moltmann. He wrote, *The Theology of Hope* (1967), which says:
 - a. God is part of time pushing forward in the future.
 - b. All Christian theology must be shaped by eschatology
 - c. Christ's resurrection in history is not relevant, the projection of ourselves into the future is what is important
 - d. Man must participate in society to change the future
 - e. God hasn't given authoritarian forms by which the future will be realized, and
 - f. The church's purpose is social reconciliation (cf. Conn, *Contemporary World Theology*, pp. 59-65).

8. **Process Theology** — (Panteism) This is a view of reality in which process, change, and evolution are just as fundamental as substance, permanence, and stability. To a process theologian, God is not personal, rather IT is a continuous creative force of involvement in the world and is ITSELF undergoing a process of change, of becoming, of self-development, and of growth.

Men of the movement:

- (1) **Alfred North Whitehead** (1861-1947)
 - (2) **Charles Hartshorne** (b. 1897, of Chicago University)
 - (3) **Pierre Teilhad de Chardin** (1881-1955), a French Jesuit philosopher, geologist, and paleontologist.
 - (4) **Shubert Ogden** of Southern Methodist University
 - (5) **Jacob Cobb, Sr.** (For more information on this subject see Davis, *Theology Primer*, p. 34.)
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9. **Revealed Theology** — This is a theology based solely on what God (or god) has revealed in experience and revelation. Revealed theology will include, Judaism, Christianity, Mormanism, Islam, etc. as a religion that was revealed to man by god.
 10. **Dogmatic Theology** — This is theological truth, which is held with certainty. Dogmatic theology may be defined as the scientific exposition of the entire theoretical doctrine concerning God Himself and his external activity, based on the dogmas of the Church. Dogmatic theology emphasizes the importance of propositional truth over experiential,

sensory perceptions. The term "dogmatic theology" became more widely used following the Protestant Reformation and was used to designate the articles of faith that the Church had officially formulated. A good example of dogmatic theology is the doctrinal statements or dogmas that were formulated by the early church councils who sought to resolve theological problems and to take a stance against a heretical teaching. These creeds or dogmas that came out of the church councils were considered to be authoritative and binding on all Christians because the church officially affirmed them. One of the purposes of dogmatic theology is so that a church body can formulate and communicate the doctrine that is considered essential to Christianity and which if denied would constitute heresy.⁵

11. **Speculative Theology** — This is a process where theology is held in abstract form apart from its practical meaning. It is founded upon, or influenced by, speculation or metaphysical philosophy.
12. **Practical Theology** — This is done when the truth of Scripture is applied to the hearts of men requiring their faith and obedience. Practical theology is the practical application of theology to everyday life. Richard Osmer explains that the four key questions and tasks in practical theology are:
 - a. What is going on? (descriptive-empirical task)
 - b. Why is this going on? (interpretative task)
 - c. What ought to be going on? (normative task)
 - d. How might we respond? (pragmatic task)⁶

Practical theology consists of several related sub-fields: applied theology (such as missions, evangelism, pastoral psychology or the psychology of religion), church growth, administration, homiletics, spiritual formation, pastoral theology, spiritual direction, spiritual theology, political theology, theology of justice and peace and similar areas.⁷ It also includes advocacy theology, such as the various theologies of liberation (of the oppressed in general, of the disenfranchised, of women, of immigrants, of children, and

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dogmatic_theology

⁶ Osmer, Richard Robert (2008). *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. William B Eerdmans. p. 4. "The Core Tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation"

⁷ Gerben Heitink, *Practical theology: history, theory, action domains: manual for practical theology* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999)

black theology). Practical theology may also include branches such as the theology of relational care, which describes Christians caring for others as Christ cared for the poor.⁸

- 13. Fundamentalism** — This is a reaction against unbelief. It developed in the early 1900's as a militant reaction to liberalism, the theory of evolution, and the higher critical methodology in biblical studies. The term “fundamentalist” is generally credited to Curtis Laws in 1920 who wrote in the Baptist *Watchman-Examiner*. The view was a compilation of ideas expressed in twelve pamphlets called *The Fundamentals*.

The Five Original Fundamentals:

- a. The inerrancy and infallibility of Scriptures in the original languages
- b. The virgin birth and deity of Jesus
- c. The substitutionary atonement of Jesus
- d. The literal, physical resurrection of Jesus
- e. The belief in a future literal, physical return of Jesus

The original intent of “the fundamentals” was to define the absolute basics required for genuine faith in Christ. By defining the basics doctrines comprising genuine Christianity, liberalism and all the other “isms” were naturally exposed and excluded as true forms of faith. However, the weakness of this formula caused many within the “believing church” to become sloppy in doctrine. Focusing only on the basic “fundamentals”⁹ many have ignored and even abandoned countless other truths such as sanctification, biblical separation, ecclesiology eschatology as well as other important biblical truths.

Relationship of Theology to Ethics:

- 1. Ethics begins with:**
 - a. Right Thinking (Biblically Based Philosophy)
 - b. Right Reading (Biblical Exegesis)
- 2. Right thinking and reading draws from:**
 - a. Biblical Theology
 - b. Systematic Theology

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Even some within the seeker friendly church and the conservative fringe within the emerging church have publicly claimed the “fundamentals of the faith” in their doctrinal statements.

- c. Dogmatic Theology
- d. Historical Theology

3. The above will result in biblical ethics which will affect our:

- a. Devotion to God (worship)
- b. Devotion to the winning the lost (evangelism)
- c. Devotion to influencing society (citizenship/being salt)