

## INTRODUCTION

### **REVIEW: Preface** **LESSON**

#### **I. What is Prolegomena?**

##### **A. To Say Beforehand or To Say in Advance**

1. The term prolegomena originated from the combination of two Greek words, pro, meaning “before,” and legō, meaning “to say,” which together convey the general sense of “to say beforehand or “to say in advance.”
2. A prolegomena chapter serves as a prologue or a preliminary discussion that introduces and defines the central content of the work that follows.
3. These prefatory comments include assumptions, definitions, methodology, and purposes, thereby providing a context for understanding the subsequent content.
4. Here the prolegomena discussion is organized by giving answers to a series of significant questions that will prepare the reader for the ensuing material, which

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<sup>1</sup> Material in this study is taken from MacArthur, John; Mayhue, Richard. Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (Kindle Locations 1049-1051). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

constitutes the main body of Biblical Doctrine.

B. Major Subjects Covered in Chapter 1

1. What Is Theology?
2. Why Study Theology?
3. What Are the Various Major Kinds of Theology?
4. What Is Systematic Theology?
5. What Are the Categories of Systematic Theology?
6. What Is the Relationship between Exegetical, Biblical, and Systematic Theology?
7. What Are the Benefits and Limitations of Systematic Theology?
8. What Is the Relationship of Systematic Theology to Doctrine?
9. What Is the Overarching and Unifying Theme of Scripture?
10. What Are the Major Motifs of Scripture?
11. How Does Systematic Theology Relate to One's Worldview?

12. How Does Systematic Theology Relate to One's Mind?
13. How Does Systematic Theology Relate to One's Personal Life?
14. How Does Systematic Theology Relate to One's Ministry?

## II. What Is Theology?

### A. A Study of God

1. Theology— from the Greek theos, “god,” and logia, “word”— is not a uniquely Christian word.
2. The Greek verb theologeō refers to the act of speaking about a god, while the noun theologos refers to a person who engages in theologeō, that is, a theologian.
3. The adjective theologikos describes something theological, while the noun theologia means “a word about god”— literally, theology.
4. These words were used in pagan religious contexts centuries before the New Testament.
5. None of these four words are found in the New Testament or the Septuagint.
6. The earliest known Christian use of one of these terms is a reference to the apostle John as a theologos early

in the second century AD.

7. Christian theology is the study of the divine revelation in the Bible. It has God as its perpetual centerpiece, God's Word as its source, and godliness as its aim.
  8. As Alva McClain puts it, "Out of God all things come— He is the origin. Through God all things exist— He is the sustainer of all things. Unto God— back to God— He is the goal. There is the circle of eternity: out, through, back."
  9. David Wells has crafted a notable working definition of Christian theology: Theology is the sustained effort to know the character, will, and acts of the triune God as he has disclosed and interpreted these for his people in Scripture . . . in order that we might know him, learn to think our thoughts after him, live our lives in his world on his terms, and by thought and action project his truth into our own time and culture.
- B. Succeeding Generations Began Writing About Scriptural Truth
1. The apostle John died in about AD 98. With his writing of Revelation, the canon of Scripture was completed and closed. It did not take long for succeeding generations to begin writing about scriptural truth.

2. Some of the more significant authors and their volumes include the following:
- a) Unknown author, The Didache (ca.110)
  - b) Irenaeus (ca.120– 202), Proof of the Apostolic Preaching
  - c) Clement of Alexandria (ca.150– ca. 215), Stromata
  - d) Origen (ca.184– ca. 254), On First Principles
  - e) Gregory of Nazianzus (ca.330– ca. 389), Five Theological Orations
  - f) Augustine (354– 430), Enchiridion
  - g) John of Damascus (ca.675– ca. 749), An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith
  - h) Peter Lombard (ca.1095– ca. 1169), Four Books of Sentences
  - i) Thomas Aquinas (1225– 1274), Summa Theologica
  - j) John Calvin (1509–1564), Institutes of the Christian Religion

- k) Thomas Watson (ca.1620– 1686), A Body of Divinity
- l) Francis Turretin (1623–1687), Institutes of Elenctic Theology
- m) John Gill (1697–1771), A Body of Doctrinal Divinity
- n) John Dick (1764– 1833), Lectures on Theology

### III. Why Study Theology?

Scottish pastor and theologian John Dick answered this penetrating query with seven profound responses. A better and more succinct answer would be difficult to come by:

- A. “To ascertain the character of God in its aspect towards us”
- B. “To contemplate the display of his attributes in his works and dispensations”
- C. “To discover his designs toward man in his original and his present state”
- D. “To know this mighty Being, as far as he may be known, [which] is the noblest aim of the human understanding”
- E. “To learn our duty to him, the means of enjoying his favor, the hopes which we are authorized to entertain, and the wonderful expedient by which our fallen race is restored to

purity and happiness”

F. “To love him, the most worthy exercise of our affections”

G. “To serve him, the most honourable and delightful purpose to which we can devote our time and talents”

#### IV. What Are the Various Major Kinds of Theology?

A. **Biblical theology**: The organization of Scripture thematically by biblical chronology or by biblical author with respect to the progressive revelation of the Bible (properly a component of systematic theology)

B. **Dogmatic theology**: The organization of Scripture with an emphasis on favored or selected church creeds

C. **Exegetical theology**: The methodical organization of Scripture by dealing exegetically with individual texts of the Bible (properly a component of both biblical and systematic theology)

D. **Historical theology**: The historical study of doctrinal developments after the apostolic era to the present time

E. **Natural theology**: The study of what can be known about God by human reason alone through the empirical study of the natural world

F. **Pastoral / practical theology**: The organization of Scripture with an emphasis on the personal application of doctrinal

truth in the lives of the church and individual Christians

- G. **Systematic theology**: The organization of Scripture by a synthesis of scriptural teaching, summarized using major categories that encompass the entirety of God's written revelation (developed from exegetical and biblical theology)