

Introduction to Christian Theology:



What is religion?

- The word "*religion*" comes from the Latin word "*religare*," which means "*to relate, to yoke together, or to bind back.*"
- What does this say about "religion?" It's essential purpose is to relate us, or yoke us, or bind us to something greater than ourselves, something like God.

What is religion?

- Religion, at its most basic level, is the sum total of man's attempts to know God and/or maintain correspondence with Him; it involves a body of beliefs, experiences, and institutions which correspond to, or grow out of those relations.

What is theology?

Theology, in its most general sense, is the science of religion (*Theos* = God; *ology* means “study of”).

Christian theology involves the following tenets:

1. The accurate & reasonable determination, interpretation, & defense of the Scriptures,
2. The history of the manner in which the doctrinal truths it reveals have been understood, &
3. & the practices, duties, privileges, & responsibilities the Scriptures impose that have been performed by all Christians in every age.

4 Major Attitudes toward Christian Theology?

- **Believing Attitude:** Biblical systematic theology is the most important source of truth and goodness, truth for your mind, answers to life's most important questions, and goodness for your life, moral decision-making, and the cultivation of your identity and personality.

Illusionary and bad for you.

- **Unbelievers:** Biblical and systematic theology is the world's greatest illusion; it is one of the greatest sources of oppression and superstition.

Illusionary, but good for you

- **Biblical and systematic theology is illusionary, a superstition, a myth.** Though it is not truth, it is still a good thing for life and culture because it makes you become a better and happier person and a healthier community.

Indifference:

- Indifference: It's simply not interesting; I don't really care.

Why is theology so controversial?

- **People are so passionate about it.**
 - Why people are so passionate about theology is because, in part, theology is so interesting.

Why is theology so controversial?

- **Why are people so interested in it?**
 - Because the questions it claims to answer are so interesting:
 - What is true?
 - What is ultimately real?
 - What is good and evil?
 - What is right from wrong?
 - What happens following death?
 - Where is joy found?

The Central Divisions of Theology

- Apologetics: Is the rational defense of Christianity: It explains *why* we believe *what* we believe.
- Exegetical Theology: Is the critical study of the biblical words of Scripture, syntax, and the explanation of their meaning.

The Central Divisions of Theology

- Systematic Theology: Embracing the development into an all-embracing and self-consistent system of the contents of the Relation, its explanation, and defense of theological doctrines of God's Word.
 1. It is the constitution of all the contents of both special and natural theology into propositional statements.
 2. It involves the coherence of those propositional statements into a complete system of faith and duties.
- Practical Theology: The principles and laws revealed in Scripture for living the Christian life.

The Central Divisions of Theology

- **Practical Theology:** The principles and laws revealed in Scripture for living the Christian life.

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- **Historical Theology:** Is the study of the history of the actual development of theology during all past ages, their representatives, and the practical elements of those truths and teachings both personally and collectively, within and outside of the Church.

The Central Divisions of Theology

- **Natural Theology:** Is the study of theology as revealed in creation, nature, human beings both personally and collectively.

Theological Doctrinal Terms:

- Prolegomena: Preliminary or prefatory remarks.
- Bibliology: The Study of the Bible.
- Theology Proper: Existence, perfections, Triune Personality of God, together with His eternal purposes and activities of creation and providence.

Theological Doctrinal Terms:

- Hamartiology: The study of Sin
- Christology: The study of Christ
- Pneumatology: The study of the Holy Spirit
- Angelology: The study of Angels
- Satanology: The study of Satan

Theological Doctrinal Terms:

- Demonology: The study of demons
- Anthropology: The study of humanity
- Soteriology: The study of salvation
- Sanctification: The study of Holiness

Theological Doctrinal Terms:

- Israelology: The study of Israel;
- Ecclesiology: The study of the Church;
- Eschatology: The study of End-Times;
- Hermeneutics: The science and art of interpretation.

Introduction to Theological Systems:

- Traditional Roman Catholic Theology
- Natural Theology
- Lutheran Theology
- Anabaptist Theology
- Reformed Theology
- Arminian Theology
- Wesleyan Theology
- Liberal Theology
- Existential Theology
- Neo-orthodox Theology
- Liberation Theology
- Black Theology
- Feminist Theology

Why so many different systems? Consider the following...

- Presuppositions: Fixed biases that do not change unless extreme duress is applied;
- Preunderstandings: Moldable fluid-like influences that come and go;
- Cultural influences (e.g., what subcultures honor);
- Authorities (e.g., church, Bible)
- Personalities (e.g., Martin Luther).
- Tradition (e.g., rituals)
- Experiences (e.g., encounters with God)
- Hermeneutics: The science & art of interpretation;
- Noetic effects of sin: The effects of “sin” upon the human mind;