

INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY

A. What is THEOLOGY"?

1. Literal-"THE STUDY OF GOD" /Theos=God, logos=word; study of
2. Working Definition of this course:

"Theology is the application of God's Word by persons to all areas of life"

Word of God

Persons

All of Life

- a. "application" is "teaching" or "doctrine" ; using the Word of God to meet the needs of people, to promote godliness and spiritual health

(1 Tim 1.10,4.6,6.3 2 Tim. 1.13,4.3; Tit. 1.9)

"sound" doctrine means healthy or life-giving teaching

- 1) Done by all Christians (even in song! Coloss 3.16)
- 2) Every disciple is a theologian (1 John 2.20,27)
- 3) There is no sharp distinction between exegesis, interpretation, and application; all should use Scripture to meet human needs; not merely discuss theories

B. Different Categories of Theology

1. EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY

-focus on PARTICULAR PASSAGES of the Scripture, application of a SPECIFIC text of Scripture

- a. "exegesis" Lit. Def.- remove meaning OUT/FROM, e.g. exposition or interpretation of the text

- 1) the exegete is an expositor of the message of text

2) danger of EISEGESIS: forcing a meaning INTO a text

- b. Sees the WHOLE of the Scripture from particular perspective, exegesis is imperative for doing theology
- c. Literary analysis is predominant; sees Scripture as canon, according to literary characteristics, structure, author's intention, reception of text by original audience of words, concepts, chapters, etc.
- d. Contexts and "PROOF-TEXTS" -good use & misuse

Def. -"A Bible reference cited to show the basis for a particular theological assertion"

DANGER -These MAY distort their contextual meaning and thus not in fact support the teaching.

VALUE- Theological short-hand to defend doctrines which are indeed based on proper exegesis

e. ALL theology SHOULD BE exegetical, e.g. Biblical, applying the message of Scripture to all of life

f. GOOD EXAMPLES of Exegetical Theology:

New International Commentaries; Editors:
O.T.- R.K. Harrison, N.T.- F.F. Bruce

The Bible Speaks Today, Series Editors;
J.A. Motyer (OT), John R.W. Stott (NT)

Word Biblical Commentaries

2. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

"a thematic interpretation of the Bible, viewed in its own biblical and historical setting revealing its continuity and multifariousness", also known as "history of redemption" or "history of the covenant"

- a. BT is built upon the findings of careful exegesis
- b. Studies the HISTORY of God's dealings with creation and makes APPLICATION of that history to human needs
- c. Excitement- very fascinating, sweeping-overview of God's eternal purpose in Christ, new terms, new topics, new approaches, focus on Christ Himself.

- d. Limitations -can be more theoretical than practical, keeping in mind the purpose of theology is to meet human needs; does not elaborate other functions of Scripture other than the historical
- e. Valuable tool to understand/apply Scripture
- f. GOOD EXAMPLES: Geerhardus Vos, "Biblical Theology", "The Pauline Eschatology"; Herman N. Ridderbos, "The Coming of the Kingdom", "Paul: An Outline of His Theology"; S.G. Degraff "Promise and Deliverance, 4 volumes" ; Meredith G. Kline, "The Structure of Biblical Authority"; Benjamin B. Warfield "Biblical and Theological Studies," George Ladd, "The Gospel of the Kingdom"

3. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

focus on the Scripture as a whole; uses both exegetical and biblical theology, trying to bring all of Scripture together, to organize as answers to human needs, also called DOGMATICS

- a. An attempt to answer whole-Bible questions, applies the sum total of Biblical truth to life
- b. Is not inherently more "systematic" i.e. orderly, than other theological perspectives
- c. Need for CONTEXTUALIZATION, believers of various cultures studying the Scriptures to find ways of meeting needs of their society
- d. Systematics is NOT just a repetition of what every other theologian has said about a certain topic
- e. GOOD EXAMPLES: "Foundations of the Christian Faith" by James Montgomery Boice; "Christian Theology" by Millard Erickson, Robert Reymond, the works of J.I. Packer, John Murray, John M. Frame; "New Dictionary of Theology" Ferguson, Wright, Packer

4. HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

-bridges the gap between the giving of Scripture and the present day, enables the Church of today to benefit from victories and failures of the past; tells the Church where we are and how we got there

- a. It is theology not just history, studies the Word of God, benefiting from the insights of others, to meet human needs, not just intellectual issues

b. Tradition should give direction and example, but Scripture alone reveals God's binding authority.

c. GOOD EXAMPLES: "Historical Theology " by Geoffrey W. Bromiley; "The Story of Theology" by R.A. Finlayson
"Institutes of the Christian Religion" by John Calvin
"Creeds, Councils, & Christ " by Gerald Bray

5. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

-how to COMMUNICATE the Word of God

a. Brings the fruits of exegesis, biblical, systematic, and historical theologies to human needs

b. Must not be divorced from the Biblical text

c. What is most effective? relevant? affordable? MEANS

d. Enlightened by the SOCIAL SCIENCES only when those scientific findings are critiqued by Scripture

e. All good theology must be practical, meet needs

6. HAWAIIAN THEOLOGY

-application of the Scripture by persons (not only Hawaiians) to meet particular needs of Hawaii

a. Based upon the normative, absolutes of the Scripture

b. This should be done by the world-wide church to provide UNIVERSAL NATURE and HISTORICAL BALANCE

C. Advantages of this Perspectival Definition of Theology

1. Theology is NOT a CORRECTIVE for a fallible Bible

a) this is assumption of many modern theologians

b) Instead theology addresses DEFECTS IN OURSELVES

2. Theology is NOT a SUPPLEMENT to an INCOMPLETE Bible

a) Some see Bible as OUT-DATED with MISSING PARTS

b) They see theology as "necessary" to help God speak a relevant message to the modern world

c) Rather the Bible's eternal message COMPLETES US

3. It has Scriptural warrant: "teaching them to do everything I have commanded you" Matt 28.19 ff.

a) Baptism is the beginning of life-long discipleship

b) Reformation principles:

1) SOLA SCRIPTURA, God alone is our authority, and He reveals His authority in the Bible alone

2) TOTA SCRIPTURA -scripture speaks to all of life

c) Scripture provides the example of life-application; Matt 16.3, 22.29; Luke 24.25; John 5.39; Rom 15.4
2 Pet 1.1.9-21

d) Scripture states that its own purpose is application; Ex 24.7; Josh 24.24; John 20.30,31;
2 Tim 3.15-17

II. Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Hermeneutics)

A. The Bible has ONE DIVINE AUTHOR

1. Bible is rightly called the "Word of God"

a. NT descriptions of the OT:

1) "oracles of God" Rom 3.2

2) "prophetic" Rom 1.2, 3. 21, 16. 26

3) "what the Holy Spirit says" Heb 3.7, 10.15

4) "word of God" Mark 7.6-13; 12.36; Acts 4.25, 28.25

5) words of men quoted as the "word of God " Gen 2.24 = Matt 19.4; Ps 95.7 = Heb 3.7

6) OT writers: "men moved by Holy Spirit" 2 Pet 1.20 "Spirit of Christ in them" 1 Pet 1.10-12

7) when God speaks, Scripture speaks: Rom 9.17 = Ex 9.16;
Gal 3.8 = Gen 12.3

8) God's inspired word 2 Tim 3.16 VERBAL & PLENARY

b. NT descriptions of itself:

1) Promise of apostolic inspiration John 14.26, 15.26, 16.13-15, 17.20, 20.21-23

2) Claim of apostolic authority 2 Thess 3.6,14; 1 Thess 2.13, 5.27; Col 4.16; 2 Pet 3.15,16

3) Permanence of apostolic message 1 Cor 15.2ff; Eph 2.20; 1 Tim 6.20; 2 Tim 1.12ff, 2.2; 2 Pet 1.15 (cf.vs. 12-21), 2.21; Jude 3

c. Belief in the INSPIRATION and INFALLIBILITY of the Scriptures is a FAITH COMMITMENT (presupposition)

1) Based upon the Spirit's witness through the Word

2) CIRCULAR REASONING, the basis of all arguments "To prove an ultimate authority by appealing to a higher authority would be a contradiction in terms"

2. Unified authorship results in UNITY OF THE MESSAGE

a. Unity revealed through DIVERSITY

1) Written over 1600 years, in 66 different books, by more than 40 authors who used 3 languages

2) Describes people of all ages, backgrounds, and social levels in many different situations

b. Unity in THEME and PURPOSE

1) People in relation with one living and true God who reveals Himself through words and actions

2) In all these settings similar themes emerge: grace and wrath; law and love; faith and works; God's Word, man's response; blessing for obedience; cursing upon disobedience; eschatological hope

c. Unity results in CONSISTENCY, not contradictions

1) Importance of studying a text in its CONTEXT

2) Principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture

3) Different EMPHASIS, or aspects, of truth seen in the different human authors, MULTI-FACETED TRUTHS

4) It is wrong to interpret James contradicting Paul or rival Christologies, denies principle of harmony

B. God's Message is GIVEN THROUGH DIFFERENT HUMAN AUTHORS

1. HUMANITY does NOT imply FALLIBILITY

- a. Analogy of Jesus (must not be pressed too far)
 - 1) Scripture teaches that Jesus is BOTH fully God and fully man in one person
 - 2) Being human did not make Jesus SINFUL or FALLIBLE
 - 3) Jesus'sinless flesh//Bible's infallible word
- b. Humanity of God's Word is a PERFECTION
 - 1) GOAL of God in revelation is to MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN
 - 2) Limitation of knowledge is not sin or fallibility, it is essence of humanity, e.g. Matt 24.36
 - 3) God's Spirit works through human intellect and personality; Luke 1.1-4; John 21.25; 2 Pet 1.21
- 2. Humanity Necessitates Defining WORDS in their CONTEXT
 - a. Human speech cannot convey all related and relevant ideas in a word or phrase; other words further explain
 - b. Bible words are in a COMPLEX OF CONTEXTS; word, phrase, paragraph, chapter, book, writings by same human author covenants, testament, entire Bible
 - c. Interpretation must recognize the context, "a text without a context is a PRETEXT"
 - 1) Immediate context; EX: Josh 24.15 "choose"
 - 2) Larger context; EX: Ex 31.18 "finger of God", (cf. Ex 8.19, Ps 8.3, Dan 5.5,24-28, Luke 11.20)
 - d. Same word may mean diferent things in different context EX: "faith" (Greek- "pistis") means:
 - 1) system of beliefs Gal1.23
 - 2) specific attribute of God Rom 3.3
 - 3) basis of action 2 Cor 5.7
 - 4) opportunity Acts 14.27
- 3. Human Authors of Scripture used VARIOUS LITERARY STYLES
 - a. Historical Narrative
 - 1) Facts to build faith, EX.. "great" Omri 1 Kgs 16.21,8 2) Emphasis on redemptive events, e.g. FOUR gospels

b. Prophecy

- 1) Mostly FORTHTELL to their generation, Amos 1.1-9
- 2) Sometimes FORETELL future events, Amos 9.11-15

c. Commands

- 1) Consider the historical situation of recipients
- 2) Look for any NT application -Deut 24.1-411
Matt 19.1-12 or any NT fulfillment -Matt 5.17,18

d. Poetry

- 1) Use of FIGURATIVE language, not all LITERAL Ps 33.18
- 2) Use of RYTHM and METRE, Ps 119 {alphabet headings} I
- 3) Hebrew Parallelism
 - a) Synonymous statements -Ps 85.2,3; 103.7
 - b) Rising action to a climax -Ps 93.3, Isa 40.31

e. Apocalyptic (unveiling of hidden things)

- 1) Characteristic HOPE -Dan 10.19; Rev 14.12,13
- 2) Word pictures, NOT LITERAL -Dan 10.4-6; Rev 12.1-17
- 3) TRUE and TRUSTWORTHY -Rev 22.6,7; Dan 12.1-3
- 4) Read with CAREFUL BALANCE
 - a) Not OVER emphasis -Acts 1.7
 - b) Not UNDER emphasis -Rev 1.3

f. Wisdom - careful observation, reflective thinking on life

- 1) Parts understood by whole, Job 19.7-11, 25-27; 42.1-6
- 2) More observations about life than commands to obey, e.g. "adultery" Prov 5.1-23; cf. Matt 5.27-30, 1 Cor 6.9
- 3) Sometimes personal example and not general principle Ecc 5.18; cf. 1 Cor 15.32
- 4) Sometimes written when writer is not walking with God Ecc 2.10,11, then 12.13,14

4. Human Authors wrote with DEFINITE PURPOSE

a. A passage must be interpreted as original writer intended it to be understood by original hearers

1) Gen 1.26 "us" did NOT MEAN Trinity, EISEGESIS

2) Matt 12.32 does NOT DENY deity of Jesus

b. Understand the emphasis of the passage; Mal 1.2,3 Hebrews saw life as black or white, no grey areas

c. SAVING PURPOSE of all Scripture -2 Tim 3.15,16

5 .Human Authors used PARTICULAR WORDS

a. WORD STUDIES are very useful when they:

1) Understand CONTEXT in which the word is found

2) Understand CHANGING DEFINITIONS of words over time

b. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

1) Simile -clear comparisons using "like" or "'as'"
Ps 103.13; Prov 26.14; Isa 53.7; Hos 13.7

2) Metaphor -analogy, description of one thing applied to another thing Gen 7.11; Ps 23.1,2; 51.7

3) Personification- giving a personality to an abstract idea, Prov 8 "wisdom"

4) Anthropomorphism -giving a human form to something which is non-human Ex 24.10; 2 Chron 16.9; Ps 34.15; 119.73

5) Allegory -description to convey a different meaning than that which is expressed

a) Biblical Examples 2 Sam 12.1-12; Ezek 16; 17.2; 23 Matt 13.24-30,36-43; Gal 4.24ff In each case the context provides the true meaning

b) Improper Allegory EX: Lev 11.3 separation/meditation Josh 2.17-21 "scarlet cord" = blood of Christ

"Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions which lead us away from the natural meaning." John Calvin wrote as reaction against the allegorical interpretation of Middle Ages

C. God's Message is a HISTORICAL RECORD

1. Problems with using the Historical-Critical Method

a. Describes the past according to present beliefs

1) Current views form "world view", or "paradigm", for looking at reality

2) EX: Before Copernicus people saw earth as flat, or Evolutionary paradigm of development of life

3) Most modern critical interpretation of the Bible has SKEPTICAL opinion of Biblical historicity

b. Looks for clear chain of evidence from past to present

1) Biblical history has many "gaps" , esp. in OT

2) Genealogies are not always complete records

3) Biblical history is not a continuous sequence, but a SERIES OF EVENTS in CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

2. Development of HEILSGESCHICHTE (German: Holy History)

a. Form critics of late 1800's and early 1900's divided the Biblical text into unrelated fragments

1) They sought to discover the "real" authors of texts

2) Assumed that scholarly development (evolutionary) gave them new insights and analytical abilities

3) Many of their "discoveries" were challenged by the growing number of archeological finds in the ANE

4) Two world wars challenged their supposed brilliance

5) The shredded Bible of form critics left man hopeless

b. Response of Neo-orthodoxy (Barth, von Rad, Wright)

1) Challenging the liberal critics, they insisted that "God has spoken in Scripture, " old words/new meaning

2) This was NOT a return to conservative interpretation e.g. grammatico-historical method of Reformation

3) DIALECTICAL look at reality; higher, spiritual world is above our world of known experience

4) EVENTS OF SALVATION OCCURED in HIGHER REALM, not the time/space history which we experience now

5) Heilsgeschichte is SUPER HISTORY, above history

- 6) Greater emphasis on the MEANING and RESPONSE TO the "events of salvation" instead of their historicity
- 7) Confusion arises over the definition of words, e.g. What does it mean that "Jesus rose from death?"
- 8) Many neo-orthodox scholars were SINCERE, wanting to protect Biblical truths from liberal critics; in the "upper realm" it became "out of reach"

3. Evangelical Response

a. Affirm that the Bible does focus on "Salvation history"

- 1) The Bible from beginning to end is historical
- 2) Focus: God's saving activity 2 Tim 3.15
- 3) Salvation history is REAL, time/space history; from the beginning of time/creation to end of time/ consummation of history at Christ's return
- 4) Numerous references to historical setting shows the writers intended to present historical truths; Gen 39.1, Ex 5.1, 1 Kings 5.1, Dan 1.1, Luke 3.1,2, Luke 23.12, 1 Cor 15.1-7, Rev 1.1,2,9

b. Admit that belief in Biblical history is FAITH DECISION

- 1) Critical historians do not have enough information to "prove" or "disprove" Biblical records
- 2) Yet Biblical faith is based on SOME EVIDENCES
 - a) Existence of OT Prophets who based their message on Mosaic law, EX: Amos 4.10,11, 5.8, 9.7
 - b) Witness of Jesus to truth of OT
 - c) Apostolic witness to OT and Jesus
 - d) Records of early church to NT as Scripture
 - e) United testimony of world-wide church today
 - f) Personal experience of Spirit's witness
- 3) Only the God who spoke the Word can ultimately prove the truth of His Word, Luke 16.31, 1 Cor 2.11
- 4) Every intellectual position requires FAITH
- 5) The God of the Bible is MOST WORTHY of our faith

6) MORE FAITH needed to believe in CRITICAL THEORIES

4. Biblical History is GOD-CENTERED

a. God is the Central Figure Rom 11.33-36

b. People/events are described as they relate to Him and His purposes

1) OT is not a "History of Israel, " rather a historical record of God's involvement with Israel Ex 6.2-8; Israel was aware of this, Deut 4.32-40, 26.5-10

2) Many details of Jesus are not recorded John 21.25; Gospels are not a "History of Jesus" focus is on His saving work Mark 1.1, John 20.30,31

5. Biblical History is GOD-INTERPRETED

a. "Facts without words are blind, and words without facts are empty."

b. Scripture provides BOTH God's MIGHTY ACTS AND WORDS

c. Acts alone are not self-explanatory, EX: Mark 3.20-22

d. God is His own interpreter, 1 Cor 2.11

e. Biblical model: Word/Deed/Word or Announcement/Event/Application

f. Finished work of salvation means closing of canon, Jude 3

4. The BENEFITS of Biblical Theology

- a. Great gains in LEXICAL {word} STUDIES, concern to see words in their CONTEXTS, e.g. TDNT -Kit tel
- b. Bible is interpreted in HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK, setting of human author and original recipients taken seriously c. Appreciation for the UNITY of the Bible, sweeping over-view of God's saving activity Matt 13.52
- d. Rediscovered RELEVANCE & POWER of the Bible, seen in historical examples of great BT preachers, e.g. John Calvin, Charles Simeon, Charles Spurgeon, Bishop Festo

5. The RELATION of Biblical Theology to Other Theological Perspectives -"BRIDGE BETWEEN"

- a. Purpose of BT -Set forth the theology of the Bible
- b. EXEGESIS attempts to determine the meaning of a specific text, gives EXPOSITION of the text
- c. BT sets the texts in HISTORICAL framework, EPOCHS
- d. HISTORICAL THEOLOGY considers the HISTORICAL USAGE of the text in the history of the Church
- e. SYSTEMATIC {Dogmatic} THEOLOGY formulates Biblical truths in outline form, whole Bible perspective
- f. Disciplines WORK TOGETHER, complementary perspectives 1) Without Exegesis BT is superficial, no solid basis 2) Without BT verses are "proof-texts," OUT OF CONTEXT 3) Without HT we do not hear "what the Spirit says to the churches" 4) Without ST Bible is ancient history, IRRELEVANT

