**Elenctic Theology**

***“…that he should be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” (Titus 1:9)***

Introduction to Theology
(*Prolegomena*)

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Acknowledgements

A variety of sources were consulted in the preparation of this (Prolegomena, *et alii*) course syllabi. Below is a partial list of the principal sources consulted for this work.

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**Introduction to Theology (*Prolegomena*)**

***“Theology is taught by God,***

***teaches of God,***

***and leads to God.”***

***(Thelogia a Deo docetur, Deum docet, et ad Deum ducit.)***

**Thomas Aquinas**

## The Need for Theology

### Dogmatic Theology is Essential to Christianity[[1]](#footnote-1)

#### *Scripture Represents Doctrinal Truth as Essential to Christianity.*

##### Some claim that “Christianity is not a ‘doctrine,’ it is a lifestyle.” This appears quite pious, but it is misleading and harmful. It is truth (i.e., “doctrine”) that leads to personal transformation and action (i.e., “lifestyle.”).

##### The Gospel of the self-revelation of God in Christ comes to us through revealed doctrinal truth. To be anti-doctrine is to be anti-truth. Christians should reject false doctrine, not all doctrine.

##### It is only through a proper understanding and believing acceptance of the Truth of the Gospel that people are brought to the necessary self-surrender to Christ in faith, and are made partakers of new life in the Holy Spirit.

##### Existential encounter or ethical conduct apart from saving knowledge is insufficient for salvation; salvation is grounded in and conditioned by true knowledge of God.

##### Sample Verses emphasizing the primacy of Truth in the life of the believer:

###### John 17:3

###### John 17:17, 20

###### II Cor. 10:3-5

###### Eph. 4:12-13

###### Phil. 4:8

###### I Tim. 2:4

###### II Pet. 1:3

#### *True unity in the church rests first on doctrinal agreement.*

##### I Tim. 3:15, 4:13

##### Phil. 1:27 cf. Jude 3

##### I Cor. 1:10

##### I Tim. 6: 3-5

### The Bible & Systematic Theology

#### God did not produce a Systematic Theology when He inspired the Scriptures. Therefore, it is imperative for Christians to gather the facts from the Scriptures and organize them into a comprehensive, coherent, and defensible system.

#### This is true for any science, including theology. All sciences gather data and arrange the data into a comprehensive, coherent system. The discipline of theology, the Queen of the Sciences, is no different.

#### **Example of the Need for Systematics: The Person of Jesus Christ**

##### Biblical Fact: Jesus is the true God. “The Word was God” (Jn. 1:1).

##### Biblical Fact: Jesus is a true man. “One mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5).

##### **Conclusion of Systematic Theology: Jesus is *Theanthropos*, a God-man, fully divine and fully human, one Person with two distinct, complete natures.**

### Theology Facilitates Discipleship & Sanctification

#### ***Organized Discourse v. Disorganized Discourse***

##### Most Christians make systematic theological statements. Examples are:

###### Jesus isa God-man (*Theanthropos*).

###### There is one God who simultaneously exists as three Persons.

##### Observation: Organized, coherent, statements about God, Christ, and Salvation are preferable to disorganized, incoherent assertions.

**Responsibilities of Theological Students: Be ready and willing to change your mind and believe the Truth if you are convinced the view you hold is incorrect!**

##### If you are convinced you hold a false belief, you must change your mind.

##### However, do not change your mind without adequate justification and count the cost of changing your mind on any particular doctrine.

**Teaching Theology Fulfills the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20)**

##### The church is commanded to evangelize and then teach the Faith, that is, give doctrine to the disciples.

##### A new disciple has many questions. Repeating the suggestion to “keep reading the Bible” without systematic teaching will stunt her spiritual growth as this is an inefficient way to have legitimate questions answered.

##### Newer and older disciples need to focus on doctrine. In Acts 2:42 the believers “continually devot[ed] themselves to the apostles’ teaching….” See also 2 Tim. 4:1-8.

#### ***Limited Time and Resources Mandate Efficiency in Our Teaching***

##### Teachers need to summarize biblical teachings and apply them for disciples.

##### Since there are “weightier matters of the Law” (Matt. 23:23), that is, some teachings are more important that others, teachers need to prioritize the material in the Bible to address the most important issues first.

### The Nature of Truth in Opposition to False Doctrine

**The General Concerns**

##### *One* of the reasons for the systematic study of doctrine is the necessity to defend the church against false teaching (See the section on Heresy and Orthodoxy, *infra*).

##### In order to confront false doctrine (Titus 1:9-11; 2 Tim. 4:1-8) we must first collect all the facts of Special Revelation on a given subject and organize them into a coherent, harmonious system.

#####

##### **Truth is easier to comprehend when it is compared with error.**

###### It is easier to understand Trinitarianism when it is contrasted with modalism, tritheism, and Unitarianism, the three basic Trinitarian heresies.

###### Failing to have an comprehensive, systematic approach to doctrine places the Christian apologist and polemicist at a disadvantage.

##### **To be Forewarned Against False Doctrine is to be Forearmed.**

###### It is easier to respond to an opponent’s argument for a false doctrine when you have already studied it and formulated counterarguments and refutations.

###### On a practical level, you will likely be more persuasive and confident if you are able to respond quickly because you have thought through the issue in advance.

#### ***The Biblical Mandate to Oppose & Refute False Doctrine***One of the most important duties of Christian leaders, besides teaching doctrine to the disciples, is to also protect the people under their care from false prophets and wolves who seek to devour the sheep.

##### ***A Mandate for Christian Teachers & Preachers***

###### **II Timothy 4:1-8:** I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,  and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.  I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing

###### **Titus 1:9-11:** The overseer must be “able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

##### ***The Warnings of Jesus***

###### **Matt. 7:15-23:** Jesus warns against false prophets who come as wolves in sheep’s clothing. The “fruit” of a false prophet is a false disciple of Christ.

###### **Matt. 24:23-24:** False Christs and false Prophets will arise and deceive many.

##### ***The Warnings of the Apostle Paul***

###### **Acts 20:28-31**: “savage wolves among the flock”

###### **II Cor. 11:3-5, 13-15**: “another Jesus, a different Spirit, and a different gospel”

###### **Gal. 1:6-9:** “a different gospel”

###### **Gal 2:4:** “false brethren”

###### **I Tim. 1:3-7:** men teaching “strange doctrines”

###### **I Tim 4:1-3:** “deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons”

###### **Titus 1:9-11:** **9** “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.**10**For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, **11**who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain.”

##### ***The Warnings of the Apostle Peter***

###### **II Peter 2:1-3:** “false teachers will secretly introduce destructive heresies”

###### **II Pet. 3:16-17:** The “Untaught and unstable” twist Scripture to their own destruction.

##### ***The Warnings of the Apostle John***

###### **I John 4:1: “many false prophets have gone out into the world.”**

#### **Related Scriptures on the Polemical Task of Christian Teachers**

##### **Matthew 12:25:** “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.”

##### **II Corinthians 4:3-4:**  “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

##### **II Corinthians 10:3-5: “**For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ…”

##### **Colossians 2:8:** See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

##### **II Thessalonians 2:9-12:**  **“**that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

##### **II Timothy 2:24-26:** The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

##### **II Timothy 3:1-5**: But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful,arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

##### **II Timothy 3:12-13**:  Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

##### **I Peter 3:15:**  but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

##### **II Peter 3:14-17:**  … our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.  You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

##### **Jude 3:**  Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

## Worldview & THEOLOGICAL METHOD

### The Definition and Relevance of Worldview Thinking for Theology

#### A worldview is “an overall perspective on life that sums up what we know about the world”[[2]](#footnote-2) Thus, simply speaking, a worldview is a set of beliefs about the most important issues of life.

#### The tacit implication is that the beliefs forming the worldview must logically cohere in some way to form a system or conceptual scheme. If this is accomplished, the worldview is a “conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and *by which we interpret and judge reality*.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

#### And although the answers differ in the diverse worldviews, the philosophical questions about ultimate reality are essentially the same, and include questions about what exists (metaphysics and ontology), how human being should live and treat others (ethics), and how human beings know things (epistemology and logic).[[4]](#footnote-4) The answers to these questions form the presuppositions from which one evaluates the world—and more specifically, the importance and nature of human persons.

### The Major Elements of a Worldview

#### **Introduction**

##### A minimally complete worldview should include beliefs in at least five major spheres of thought: God, ultimate reality, knowledge, morality, and humanness.[[5]](#footnote-5)

##### Moreover, there are important sub-issues that flow from the five essential elements. Issues such as the meaning of human history and what happens to a person at death contribute important factors to the discussion of the definition and value of personhood. In sum, a worldview is a set of presuppositions that one holds, consciously or unconsciously, concerning the essential composition of the world.

#### **The Elements of a Worldview**

##### **God in a Worldview**

###### The *Encyclopedia of Gods* lists over 2,500 names for the various gods worshipped by human beings.[[6]](#footnote-6) Nonetheless, these 2,500 appellations for deity represent a mere handful of substantive concepts about God—such as monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, panentheism, dualism, and atheism—with their respective subcategories.[[7]](#footnote-7)

###### The question of God is the most important in any worldview and the various worldview differ greatly on the issue. Here, the inquiry concerns such issues as whether God exists, the number of Gods, what are God’s characteristics or attributes, whether God is personal or impersonal, and whether God can know, love, forgive, or act in any sense in our realm of existence.[[8]](#footnote-8)

###### Classic atheism does not escape this worldview concern since the term “God” is employed to mean “one’s ultimate concern.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam are simultaneously different religions and different worldviews because of their divergent conceptions of deity. However, conservative Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—the classic western monotheistic religions—have much in common because of their similar ideas of God.[[10]](#footnote-10)

##### **Ultimate Reality in a Worldview**

###### When the issue of ultimate reality is raised, it is ultimately a discussion of metaphysics.[[11]](#footnote-11) Here, the most frequent question is whether there are only material entities (materialism), whether there are only immaterial mental entities (idealism), or whether both exist simultaneously (metaphysical dualism).[[12]](#footnote-12) Other issues raised here are: the nature and individuation of substances, space and time, and identity.[[13]](#footnote-13) Also, related to the previous category, the issues of the relationship of God to the universe, whether God created the universe and, as a result, our dependency on God, and such questions as the possibility of miracles.[[14]](#footnote-14)

###### This is significant for answering the anthropological question of the metaphysics of humanness. For example, if naturalism is the true view of the world, then there is no God and no such thing as an immaterial soul, in which personality is grounded, that survives the death of the body. But if theism is correct, with its corresponding view of substance dualism, then souls are possible. And should be given great weight in a discussion of what a complete person is.

##### **Knowledge in a Worldview**

###### The third main element of a worldview is one’s view of knowledge—or more specifically, the justification of knowledge. The questions are simple to pose, but the answers are lengthy and seemingly enigmatic in nature. Is knowledge about the world possible? If it is, how can we know it and to what degree of certainty?[[15]](#footnote-15) Here, the epistemological scope of responses range from the topics of axiomatic certainty[[16]](#footnote-16) and absolute skepticism[[17]](#footnote-17) to foundationalism,[[18]](#footnote-18) methodism and particularism.[[19]](#footnote-19)

###### These are certainly essential prerequisites for approaching the question of when and how we will know the nature of human persons in the context of a legal issue. For example, if skepticism is the true approach, then judges and legislators should suspend judgment on the issue because they cannot know the truth about it.[[20]](#footnote-20)

##### **Morality in a Worldview**

###### Here, in worldview analysis, the focus is not on casuistry,[[21]](#footnote-21) but on systemic concerns such as whether morality is action based or virtue based,[[22]](#footnote-22) deontological or[[23]](#footnote-23) teleological,[[24]](#footnote-24) or whether morality is absolute[[25]](#footnote-25) or relative.[[26]](#footnote-26) These ethical factors are necessary for answering a question such as whether it is ever morally right to kill a human person.

##### **Humanness in a Worldview**

###### Here lies the core of the essay. What are human beings and why are they important in the worldview? Are humans merely physical beings or, as previously stated, do we have an immaterial soul as well? Are human persons essentially sleeping gods—as in Idealism, persons in the image of God—as in Theism, merely physical machines or highly evolved apes—Naturalism? Are our wills free or determined? This would be essential to answer for the sake of moral culpability. What is the nature of human death? Do we survive death or is death all that there is? If we do survive death, is there reward and punishment based on what we do in this life? This would certainly be a determining factor regarding whether to “pull the plug” or wait as long as one can and hope for a miracle.

### Worldview Analysis

#### ***Pantheism***

##### All that exists is divine. There is only one substance that exists.

##### This leads to an ontological and axiological egalitarianism, that is, all things are of the same essence and are, thus, equally valuable.

##### In this view, humans and trees share the same essence.

##### What is Theology in this view?

#### ***Atheistic Physicalism (i.e., Atheistic Materialism or Atheistic Naturalism)***

##### All that exists is a-teleological matter-in-motion, that is, non-purposeful, non-designed, accidentally assembled physical particles.

##### There is no design or purpose inherent in any existing thing.

##### Arguably, the concept of a hierarchy of intrinsic value in this worldview is impossible.

##### In this view, humans and trees are different accidental arrangements of physical particles.

##### What is Theology in this view?

#### ***Monotheism***

##### God is an eternal, immutable perfect Being. And since He is the most valuable Being, He is the measure for all lesser beings and things.

##### God creates, out of nothing, a world distinct from Himself. In the created, contingent world there are persons and things that are similar God.

##### In theism, the things that are the most like God would be the most valuable. The things that are least like God are the least valuable. (cf. Matt. 10:31)

##### Thus, monotheism provides a clear basis for a hierarchy of the value of beings.

##### What is Theology in this view?

#### **Other Worldviews**

##### Polytheism

##### Dualism

#####

## The Definition of Theology

### Etymological Definition

#### The term “theology” conjoins the Greek words *theos*, “God” and *logos*, “speech or rational expression.”

#### Thus, the etymological meaning of “theology” is “an organized discourse concerning God.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

### The Four General Categories of Theology[[28]](#footnote-28)

#### Theology is the *Divine Revelation* itself given in Scripture, which is the sum of all knowledge necessary for salvation. (Objective)

#### Theology is *knowledge held by faith* that is acquired by reading the Scriptures or by drawing conclusions from the text of Scripture. (Subjective)

#### Theology is the *science or wisdom constructed from revelation by means of reason* for the purpose of explaining and defending the faith. (Systematic Theology)

#### Theology is *Divine Self-knowledge*, which is the archetype of all true knowledge of God. (Divine Omniscience)

### Special Categories of Theology[[29]](#footnote-29)

#### **Archetypal Theology** *(theologia archetypa)*

##### This is the infinite knowledge of God, which is known only to God Himself.

##### It is the Archetype or ultimate pattern or model for all theology.

#### **Ectypal Theology** *(theologia ectypa)*

##### Ectypal theology is *any true reflection* of the divine archetypal theology.

##### True Natural Theology is in this category since it is a true reflection of the divine archetype.

##### This kind of theology is distinguished *according to the knower*.

#### **Higher Theology** *(theologia acroamatica)*

##### This is the theology of the learned, that is, scholars and Christian leaders.

##### It is for theologians and pastors for the purpose of detailed exposition and defense of the faith.

##### This type is usually contrasted with Catechetical Theology.

#### **Catechetical Theology** *(theologia catechetica)*

##### This is basic and essential theology that is required of all Christians.

##### They are the necessary truths of the faith.

##### This type is contrasted with Higher Theology.

#### **Theology of Pilgrims** *(theologia viatorum)*

##### This is the *incomplete* theology of believers in the world.

##### This category is contrasted with the theology of the blessed.

#### **Theology of the Blessed** *(theologia beatorum)*

##### This is the perfected form of human theology.

##### It is equivalent to the final vision of God (*visio Dei*) of the church triumphant in heaven.

#### **Theology of the Cross** *(theologia crucis)*

##### This is Martin Luther’s term for the essence of revelation and theology as a whole.

##### Luther explained that God chose to reveal Himself, ultimately, in the weakness and scandal of the cross.

##### This category should be contrasted with the Theology of Glory.

#### **Theology of Glory** *(theologia gloriae)*

##### This was Martin Luther’s term for the rationalistic theology of the medieval scholastics that discussed and emphasized God in terms of His glorious attributes.

##### Luther held that God should be primarily conceived in terms of His self-revelation in suffering and the cross.

#### **Theology of Angels** *(theologia angelorum)*

##### This is the knowledge of the elect angels.

##### Because of the nature of angels, they are deemed as having a higher form of the knowledge of God than human beings.

#### **False Theology** *(theologia falsa)*

##### This is false teaching concerning God as opposed to all forms of true Christian theology, both natural and revealed.

##### This kind of theology does not reflect the divine archetype in any way.

#### **Theology of the Unregenerate** *(theologia irregenitorum)*

##### This is correct doctrinal knowledge held by an unregenerate person, that is, a non-Christian.

##### This type of theology may be grounded in a *Historical Faith* or *Legal Faith* (See ECD Soteriology Syllabus on “Faith”).

#### **Supernatural or Revealed Theology** *(theologia supernaturalis sive revelata)*

##### This is theology resting on divine propositional revelation alone.

##### It presents the truths necessary for salvation that are inaccessible to human reason through general revelation and natural theology.

#### **Natural Theology** *(theologia naturalis)*

##### Natural theology is the knowledge of God available to reason through the light of nature or creation.

##### People can know God as the Creator and highest good as the Source of natural moral law through natural theology.

##### Additionally, through natural theology, man can know that God requires perfect obedience to His natural law.[[30]](#footnote-30)

#### **Natural Theology of the Regenerate** *(theologia naturalis regenitorum)*

##### Since natural theology cannot produce saving knowledge, and the Scriptures are sufficient for knowledge of salvation and the Christian life, Protestant Orthodoxy generally eschewed the connection between natural and revealed theology.

##### Thus, in the *Sola Scriptura* models of the majority of Protestant Reformers, natural theology is useful only when employed in the context of a prior saving knowledge.

#### **Positive Theology** *(theologia positiva)*

##### This is theology positively stated according to the logical order of its doctrines.

##### This is contrasted with negative or polemical theology, which is stated according to the order of debate with adversaries.

#### **Polemical & Elenctic Theology** *(theologia polemica sive elenchtica)*

##### Polemical Theology is an attack on another theological doctrine or system with the purpose to demonstrate that the doctrine is incorrect.

##### Elenctic Theology is a confutation or logical refutation of another theological doctrine or system coupled with a detailed, positive statement and argument for true doctrine.

## The theological encyclopedia[[31]](#footnote-31)

### Definition of Encyclopedia

#### Encyclopedia means “Instruction in the circle [of knowledge].”

#### Applied to the discipline of theology, it means instruction in all the disciplines of theology—from Biblical Theology to Practical Theology.

### Theological Disciplines: The Biblical and Historical Foundations

#### **Exegetical & Biblical Theology**

##### Exegetical theology is the beginning point for theology and examines the theology of individual texts of Scripture through sound exegesis and exposition.

##### Biblical Theology is the study of biblical teachings as they developed within the *historical periods* and by various *biblical* writers.

##### Biblical Theology is restricted by literature groupings. For example:

###### Old Testament Theology

###### New Testament Theology

###### Pauline Theology

###### Petrine Theology

#### **Historical Theology**

##### Historical Theology (or History of Doctrine) is an examination of the theological teachings of the church in their historical setting and development.

##### Historical Theology is usually divided into four distinct periods. Students should note the development of key theological *loci[[32]](#footnote-32)* during these periods:

###### *The Patristic Period (To A.D. 476)*

Bibliology-Gnosticism (2nd-4th)

Theology Proper- Trinitarian Controversies (4th)

Christology & Pneumatology (5th)

Anthropology (Augustine & Pelagius) (5th)

###### *The Medieval Period (A.D. 476- A.D. 1517)*

Atonement Theory-Anselm (11th Century)

###### *The Reformation Period (A.D. 1517- A.D. 1648)*

Soteriology

Reformation-Protestant & Catholic (16th)

Reformed & Arminian (17th)

Ecclesiology

Sola Scriptura v. Authority of the Church

###### *The Modern Period (A.D. 1648-Present)*

Eschatology & Ecclesiology

Dispensationalism (19th - 20th)

### Theological Disciplines: Contemporary Statement and Practice

#### **Dogmatic & Systematic Theology**

##### **Definition of “Dogmatic Theology”**

###### The terms “doctrine” and “dogma” are not synonyms.

###### A “dogma” is a statement or formulation of doctrine regarded as an established truth by the body of Christians who formulated. It is, therefore, authoritative and necessary to believe.[[33]](#footnote-33)

###### Thus, dogmatic theology is the authoritative, necessary and defining doctrine of a group or system. *It must be believed in order to remain associated with a particular group or system.* Thus, dogmas function as a rule of faith for the believing community.

###### Note that there are levels of dogmatic theology, such as with essential and secondary issues. See the section in this syllabus on levels of doctrine.

###### In contrast, the word “doctrine” refers to a teaching, which may or may not be necessary to believe.

##### **Definition of Systematic Theology**

######  “Systematic Theology is the science of God and His works by which doctrines are inductively derived from biblical evidence and organized into a comprehensive, coherent and defensible system.” (Dr. Henry Holloman, Talbot School of Theology).

###### “Systematic Theology is any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us today?’ about any given topic.” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, at p.21; citing John Frame)

### The Major Divisions of Systematic Theology

#### ***Introductory Comments***

##### There is a logical order to the categories of systematic theology. The truths of the former categories affect the truths of the latter ones.

##### The categories are derived from the Scriptures themselves. They are not artificial categories superimposed on to the Scriptures.

##### Doctrines are logically connected. If one doctrine changes, it will necessarily affect other doctrines. For example:

###### *Deity of Christ:* If one rejects the deity of Christ, that person will also necessarily reject the Trinity.

###### *Total Inability:* If one holds the doctrine of *radical depravity* that results in *the total inability* of fallen man to be able to turn to God apart from divine grace, then foreseen faith cannot be the ground of election since fallen man has no ability in his fallen state to be the cause of his own election. On the contrary, if fallen man by nature possesses the ability to have saving faith, faith may logically precede election in the Order of Salvation (*ordo salutis*) and be the cause or ground of election. Thus, Theological Anthropology and Hamartiology will affect one’s understanding of the Divine Decree and Soteriology.

##### Students should note that theologians order the categories with slight differences, but the order remains essentially the same.

#### ***The Common Categories (Loci) of Systematic Theology***

##### **Prolegomena (Introduction)**

###### Prolegomena includes introductory issues regarding the definitions and methodology involved “doing” theology.

###### The results of this category determine the methodological approach to the system.

##### **Bibliology (The Bible)**

###### Study includes:

Inspiration

Revelation

Illumination

Authority

Inerrancy

Canonicity

Transmission

Translation

###### The Bible is the Cognitive Foundation of the theological system (*principium cognoscendi*).

##### **Theology Proper (God)**

###### *The Being of God*

Existence of God

Knowability of God

Deficient Views of God

Names of God

Essence and Attributes of God

Triunity of God

###### *The General Works of God*

The Internal Works of God (*opera ad intra*)

Essential Internal Work: The Decree of God

Personal Internal Works: Personal Relations of the Trinity

External Works of God (*opera ad extra*)

Creation *ex nihilo*

Creation of the Spiritual World (includes Angelology, Satanology & Demonology. See below.)

Creation of the Physical World

General or Ordinary Providence

Extraordinary Providence or Miracles

Redemption (Generally Considered)

##### **Angelology (Angels: Elect & Reprobate) (**

###### Elect Angels (Person & Work)

###### Reprobate Angels (Person & Work)

Satanology

Demonology

##### **Anthropology (Man)**

###### The Creation of Man

###### The Constitution of Man

Dichotomy & Trichotomy

Origin of the Soul

Substantive Faculty Psychology

The Heart of Man

###### Man in the Image of God *(Imago Dei)*

###### The Duty of Man

##### **Hamartiology (Sin)**

##### Holiness, Law & Justice

##### The Origin of Sin

##### The Transmission of Sin

##### Sin in the Life of Man

###### Original Sin

###### Actual Sin

##### The Punishment & Consequences of Sin

##### **Christology: The Person & Life of Christ**

###### *The Person of Christ*

Deity of Christ

Humanity of Christ

Hypostatic Union of Christ

###### *The State of Humiliation*

Incarnation & Birth

Suffering

Death & Burial

Descent into Hades

###### *The State of Exaltation*

Resurrection

Ascension

Session

Apocalypse

##### **The Work of Christ: Salvation Accomplished**

###### Substitution

###### Propitiation

###### Redemption

###### Reconciliation

###### The Offices of Christ

Prophet

Priest

King

##### **Soteriology: Salvation Applied**

###### The Order of Salvation *(Ordo Salutis)*

###### Grace

###### Election

###### Regeneration

###### Conversion

###### Faith

###### Justification

###### Sanctification

###### Perseverance

###### Glorification

##### **Pneumatology (The Holy Spirit)**

###### The Person of the Holy Spirit

###### The Work of the Holy Spirit

##### **Ecclesiology (The Church)**

######  The Appellations (Names) of the Church

###### The Nature of the Church

Kingdom of God

Marks of a True Church

###### The Government of the Church

Organization & Authority

Officers

###### Sacraments or Ordinances

The Word

The Uses of the Law

Baptism

The Lord’s Supper

##### **Eschatology (Last Things)**

###### *General Eschatology*

The Second Advent (*Parousia*)

Millennial Views & Rapture Views

Amillennialism

Postmillennialism

Premillennialism

General Resurrection

Final Judgment

Final State

###### *Personal Eschatology*

Physical Death

The Intermediate State

Heaven

Hell

The Final State

First and Second Resurrection

The Lake of Fire

New Heaven and Earth

#### ***Additional Categories (Loci) of Systematic Theology***

##### While the common categories of ST listed above appear in most ST texts, there are other issues the Christian church must address in every era of the church.

##### Some important contemporary issues facing the church that should probably be addressed in a modern ST study as are follows:

###### Theology of Civil Government

###### Theology of Animals

###### Theology of Creation Stewardship and the Environment

###### Theology of Personhood (Addressing Abortion, Euthanasia, Cloning, etc.)

###### And many others

##### If the church does not form sound, biblical answers to the contemporary questions people are asking, our people will receive their information from someone else.

##### So cover the essential, common topics, and always stay current and relevant.

### Practical Theology

#### ***Introduction***

##### Practical Theology is the study of theology involving the effective means of communicating and applying biblical doctrine to human needs. It takes the truths of Biblical and systematic theology and applies them to the needs of unbelievers and believers for the purpose of salvation and sanctification.

##### The two immediate goals of practical theology are the *edification* of believers and the *evangelization* of unbelievers.

#### ***Categories of Practical Theology***

##### *Administration & Leadership Principles* The “Organized Church” is always better than the disorganized church!

##### *Homiletics (Preaching)*The best biblical, theological, and apologetics materials are of little use if you cannot communicate them well.

##### *Worship (Liturgical Theology)*We are called to worship God. The worship leader must know the best ways to lead others to worship God in meaningful ways. Music is usually employed as one of the means to facilitate worship, but there are other means the worship leader may elect to employ during a service.

##### *Counseling*How do we take the truths of Scripture and help people change their lives by: (1) knowing how to raise their children, (2) having a better marriage, (3) ceasing to practice habitual sins, *et cetera.*

##### *Evangelism*How do we use the truths of Scripture to be the best soul winners for Christ? What are the best methods and practices?

##### *Sanctification—Personal & Corporate Piety*What are the best ways to grow in holiness as a Christian? Why do true Christians fail to grow in holiness and be conformed to the image of Christ?

### Specialized Fields of Theological Study

#### **Polemical & Elenctic Theology**

##### See definition, *supra*.

#### **Heresiology**

##### Heresiology focuses on identifying and explaining false doctrine.

##### It is often included as a component of polemical or elenctic theology.

#### **Philosophical Theology**

##### Philosophical theology uses [philosophical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy) methodology and categories to develop or analyze orthodox and heretical theology.

##### Philosophical theology often includes discussions of [natural theology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_theology) in addition to its analysis of [orthodox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox) and heretical theology.

#### **Contemporary Theology**

##### Contemporary theology examines contemporary theological movements and systems.

##### Examples of these movements would include discussions of Neo-Orthodoxy, Emergent Theology, Liberation Theology, and Feminist Theology.

#### **Ethics**

##### Ethics is the study of the nature of morality and of specific moral choices.

##### Many theologians of the past included an explanation of Christian ethics as a category of their dogmatic systems, usually in the *locus* of the Law of God. This is, however, a relatively rare practice in the contemporary church. Ethics is most often studied apart from formal dogmatic systems.

#### **Apologetics**

##### Apologetics is assigned the task of vindicating the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith.

##### As a distinct discipline, Christian Apologetics is often difficult to place in the theological encyclopedia.

##### Some place it in exegetical theology, some in dogmatics, some in practical theology, and some place it as an adjunct to systematic theology.

##### Apologetics can be contrasted with polemical theology and elenctic theology.

## Classification of theologies & Groups

### Orthodoxy & Heresy

#### **A Primary Reason for Doctrinal Development**

##### One of the reasons Christian doctrine is developed and clarified is because heretics challenge the orthodox community’s understanding of a particular doctrine.

##### The challenge brought by heretics forces the orthodox Christian to be more precise in its doctrinal formulation in order to exclude the false doctrine from the community.

#### **Definition of Heresy**

##### The English word “heresy” is derived from the Greek word *hairesis,* which means:

###### A *choice* (Lev. 22:18, 21, LXX); or

###### A *sect, faction,* or *party* holding certain opinions (I Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20); or

###### A *teaching* or *doctrine* that causes a faction or division. In II Pet. 2:1-3 it is a destructive opinion or doctrine caused by a false teaching.**[[34]](#footnote-34)**

#### **Two Kinds of Heresy & Heretics**

##### **Material Heresy & Heretics:** Material heresy is a false doctrinal belief held in *ignorance*.

##### **Formal Heresy & Heretics:** Formal heresy is “a deliberate denial of revealed truth coupled with the acceptance of error.”**[[35]](#footnote-35)** In sum, it is a false doctrinal belief knowingly held by an individual, who also knowingly rejects the orthodox doctrine. II Pet. 2:1-3 is an example of this kind of heresy.

#### **The Limits of Using the Word “Heresy”**

##### *The Early Church*

###### In the beginnings of Christianity, the word “heresy” was employed to mean a separation or split resulting from a false faith (1 Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20).

###### Thus, heresy did not refer to simply any doctrinal disagreement, but to doctrines and parties that rejected the essence of Christianity.[[36]](#footnote-36)

##### *Contemporary Use of the Term “Heretic” & “Heresy”*

###### Theoretically, anyone who introduces a contrary doctrine in a community with an established Rule of Faith is a “heretic” and has introduced a “heresy” since he has caused a faction or division in that community.

###### However, even though the term can be accurately used in these situations, one must use caution in employing the term as it is an emotionally and theologically loaded term.

#### **Orthodoxy**

##### The English word “orthodoxy” comes from the Greek word *orthodoxia*, which combines the word *orthos*, “right,” and *doxa*, “belief” or “opinion” to mean “right belief or opinion,” as opposed to heresy.[[37]](#footnote-37)

##### The importance of orthodoxy increased simultaneously with the rise of heresies, beginning with Gnosticism and then later increasing in importance when the several Trinitarian and Christological errors arose.

##### If true Christianity were to be preserved, then a strict “Rule of Faith” (*regula fidei*) was required. The “Rule of Faith” defined the essentials of the faith, which were the necessary doctrines of the church. These are found in the ecumenical creeds, such as the Nicene Creed, the Chalcedonian Creed, and the Apostles’ Creed.

#### **The Role of Councils and Creeds**

#####  **The Development of the Creeds**

###### The word “creed” is derived from the Latin *credo,* which means “I believe.”

###### An important reason for the development of creeds was that Christians wanted to be able to express their *faith briefly and succinctly, but not imprecisely or inaccurately.* These short declarations of the faith eventually became “creeds.”

###### The creeds were often used as catechetical tools for new believers. Assent to a short creed was usually required for converts before baptism.

###### Creeds were formed for the purpose of informing prospective converts of the essential truths of Christianity.

###### Another reason for developing the creeds was to have a Rule of Faith to combat doctrinal error in the church. This was the most powerful reason for developing creeds in the early church.

##### **Church Councils**

###### A church council is a conference called by the leaders of the church to give guidance to the church.

A council can be ecumenical, representing the entire Christian church, or

 It can be regional, representing the local area.

###### The two most influential ecumenical councils are the Council of Nicea (AD 325) and the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451).

## Fundamental Articles of the Faith & Essential Christian Doctrine

### *Introduction*

#### One of the primary purposes for identifying fundamental Christian doctrines is to provide a foundation for genuine Christian unity.

#### Another purpose for the discussion is to provide a basis for discussing orthodoxy and heresy.

### *Definition of Terms Commonly Employed in the Discussion*

#### ***Essence & Essential (essentia)***

##### Essence is the “whatness” or “quiddity” of a thing.

##### Essence is those properties or qualities that make a being or thing precisely what it is, and not something else.

##### It distinguishes the *genus* of the thing.

##### As an applied definition, the essentials of Christianity are those doctrines that make Christianity “Christian” and not something else.

#### ***Fundamental Articles* (*articuli fundamentales*)**

##### Fundamental articles are those doctrines without which Christianity cannot exist and the integrity of which is necessary to the preservation of the faith.[[38]](#footnote-38)

##### These doctrines should be distinguished from secondary or logically derivative doctrines.

#### ***Nonfundamental Articles* (*articuli non-fundamentales*)**

##### Nonfundamental articles are doctrines the denial of which does not endanger salvation.

##### These doctrines are grounded in Scripture and, if correctly stated and understood, are edifying to the church.[[39]](#footnote-39)

#### ***Indifferent Issues - Adiaphora*[[40]](#footnote-40)**

##### *Adiaphora* are issues over which one may be indifferent.

##### Differences of opinion are permitted on these matters as long as they do not become an obstacle to preaching the Gospel and true doctrine.

##### Genuine *adiaphora* are neither commanded, nor forbidden by the Scriptures.

##### *Adiaphora* usually fall into the domain of practices, not of substantive doctrines.

##### *Scriptural References Related to Adiaphora*

###### I Cor. 8:1-9:23

###### Gal. 2:3-5

###### Gal. 5:13-15

###### Col. 2:16-23

### Excessive & Defective Approaches to Fundamental Articles

#### ***The Error of Excess: Too Many Essential Doctrines***

##### This error occurs when a group or system identifies doctrines as fundamental when they are not, in fact, fundamental doctrines.

##### Thus, you have too many essential doctrines.

##### Example: *Roman Catholicism*

###### *Unum Sanctum* (1302): Boniface 8th (Papal Bull, i.e., a Papal “encyclical” or “edict”)“We declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.”

#### ***The Error of Defect: Not Enough Essential Doctrines***

##### This error occurs when a group or system fails to include a genuine fundamental doctrine in its articles of faith.

##### Thus, you have too few essential doctrines.

##### Example: *Unitarian-Universalism*Universalism teaches that all people will be saved. Thus, the justification of the sinner is by “death alone.” Repentance and faith in Christ are not required for salvation.

### *Minimalist Approaches for Theology*

#### ***Introduction***

##### A minimalist methodology attempts to reduce the number of required items to the smallest number possible.

##### Practically considered, setting a minimal number of doctrines helps to determine a clear line of demarcation for inclusion or exclusion in Christianity.

#### ***Types of Theological Minimalism***

##### *Salvific Minimalism*

###### Here the question is: What are the minimal number of doctrines that must be understood and believed for one to be saved?

###### Sample Scriptures

Luke 23:39-43

Acts 2:14-42

Acts 10:34-48

###### Application

##### *Systemic Minimalism*

###### Which doctrines identify Christianity as a complete and distinct religion?

###### For example, how is Christianity, as a doctrinal system, distinguished from Judaism, Islam, Unitarianism, and Deism? The answer is that Christianity is uniquely Trinitarian, even though all the systems mentioned are monotheistic. So while Christianity must hold to monotheism as a defining characteristic, as the other systems do, a Christian system must be Trinitarian as well.

###### The doctrinal items for Systemic Minimalism should include the doctrinal list from Salvific Minimalism.

###### For example, trusting Christ’s atoning, meritorious death is both necessary for salvation and a defining element of the Christian religion.

###### Application

### *Practical Application: Primary, Secondary &Tertiary Doctrine*

#### ***Fundamental, Essential or Primary Doctrines***

##### *Definition*

###### These are the doctrines necessary for salvation or a true, complete system of Christian Truth.

###### One may use this category as a factor in determining whether person confessing Christ or a church is genuinely Christian.

##### *Examples of Essential Doctrine*

###### Inspiration & Authority of Scripture

###### The Trinity

###### The Full Deity & Humanity of Christ

###### Creation *Ex Nihilo*

###### Creation of Man in the Image of God

###### The Fall of Man into Sin

###### Vicarious Satisfaction of Christ (Atonement)

###### The Bodily Resurrection of Christ

###### Salvation by Grace through Faith

###### Miracles

##### Which doctrines are logically connected to the essential doctrines?

#### ***Secondary or Non-Fundamental Doctrines***

##### *Definition*

###### A secondary doctrine is a doctrine upon which a local church must agree and to which it must hold in order to preserve the unity and harmonious functioning of the local church.

###### Secondary doctrines are also important for living the Christian life and growing in Christ. For example, the doctrine of sanctification is very important. A Christian cannot be indifferent in seeking sanctification and holiness.

###### These are important doctrines, but not essential for salvation itself or for defining a system of Christian doctrine.

##### *Examples of Secondary Doctrines*

###### Church Government (e.g., Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Congregational)

###### Calvinism or Arminianism

###### Mode of Baptism

###### Communion

###### *Glossalalia* (i.e. Tongues) & Other Sign Gifts

###### Complementarianism & Egalitarianism

###### Means of Sanctification

###### *Others?*

#### ***Tertiary Doctrines or Adiaphora***

##### *Definition*

###### A tertiary doctrine is a doctrine upon which a local church may disagree and yet continue to preserve the unity and harmonious functioning of the local church.

###### This means a local church can continue to do ministry in a harmonious way while debating these issues and permitting a diversity of opinion about them.

##### *Examples of Tertiary Doctrines*

###### Spiritual Warfare Methodology

###### Pre-Wrath Rapture or Pre-Tribulation Rapture?

### Church, Denomination, Sect & Cult

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term** | **Sociological Definition** | **Theological Definition** |
| **Church** | An established religion which is the dominant institutional religion of a society. | The universal church is that group of orthodox believers, as opposed to heretics, which are united in a common identity of origin, essential doctrine, purpose, and lordship.[[41]](#footnote-41) |
| **Denomination** | “A structurally independent institutional and sociological organization within a larger religious tradition, usually holding an interpretation of the religion distinctive in certain particulars . . .”[[42]](#footnote-42)“In a denominational society, a number of parallel denominations comprise the great majority and represent the society’s established religion.”[[43]](#footnote-43) | “Denominations are associations of congregations. . .that have a common heritage. . . . A denominational heritage normally includes doctrinal or experiential or organizational emphases and also includes common ethnicity, langauge, social class, and geographical origin.”[[44]](#footnote-44) |
| **Sect** | “a religious body, especially one that has separated from a larger denomination.”[[45]](#footnote-45) | “Within the Christian tradition, the sect constitutes a distinctive, persisting and separately organized group of believers who reject the established religious authorities, but who claim to adhere to the authentic elements of the faith.”[[46]](#footnote-46)Thus, the term “sect” can refer to genuinely Christian groups that “have distanced themselves from churches, and to some degree the predominant culture they represent, in order to emphasize one or more beliefs or practices they feel have been lost.”[[47]](#footnote-47) |
| **Cult** | “Cults are defined as religious organizations that tend to be outside the mainstream of the dominant religious forms of any given society.”[[48]](#footnote-48)“A cult . . . is any religious group which differs significantly in some one or more respects as to belief or practice, from those religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of religion in our total culture.”[[49]](#footnote-49) | “A cult of Christianity is a group of people claiming to be Christian, who embrace a particular doctrinal system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or organization, which (system) denies (either explicitly or implicitly) one or more of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith as taught in the sixty-six books of the Bible.”[[50]](#footnote-50) |

## Inter-Denominational Theologies

### Introduction

#### Inter-denominational theologies are theological systems, movements or emphases that transcend denominational boundaries.

#### One method for tracing these theological trends is to begin with Protestant Orthodoxy of the 17th Century.

### Types of Movements and Systems

#### ***Protestant Orthodoxy***

##### By the late 16th Century and early into the 17th century, most of the Protestant creeds and catechisms, such as the Formula of Concord and the Heidleberg Catechism, had been developed and adopted by the corresponding Protestant churches as their Rule of Faith.

##### In the 17th century, scholastic systems of Protestant theology were developed.

##### In the 18th Century the Protestant orthodox battled the “Enlightenment” ideas of Deism, Unitarianism, and Skepticism.

##### During the 19th Century, some of the orthodox bodies began to incorporate the ideas of the “Enlightenment” into their theological systems, changing (i.e., “correlating”) their theologies to “fit” what the culture would now allegedly receive or believe. This resulted in Modernist Theology (aka, Liberalism).

#### ***The 20th Century: Modernism and the Reactions***

##### *Theological Modernism or Liberalism*

###### Description of Modernism

Modernism changes the substance of theology so it is acceptable to modern culture and modes of thinking

It holds that theology must first pass the test of reason or be rejected.

Scriptural Authority alone is insufficient for religious belief.

It overemphasizes divine immanence and leaves little to no room for God’s transcendence or supernatural intervention.

###### Some Sample Statements

“We must express the essence of Christianity, its abiding *experiences*, but we must not identify them with the changing categories by which they were expressed in the past.” (Harry Emerson Fosdick, 20th Cent.)

“No questions are closed or settled and religion must not protect itself from critical examination.”

###### Other Examples & Tenets of Modernism

Tubingen School

F.C. Baur for the New Testament

Graf & Wellhausen for the Old Testament

The discipline of Higher Criticism questioned the traditional authorship & dating of most of the Scriptures.

Scripture was no longer considered inspired or inerrant in the classical sense of divine revelation.

Christianity was now the historical fulfillment of natural religion or natural theology.

According to the Modernists, one must look behind the creeds and biblical myth to get to the historical Jesus.

*Conclusion:*
Christianity was reduced to mere ethical monotheism, with Jesus, the mere man, as the best ethicist.

##### *Neo-Orthodoxy – A Reaction to Modernism*

###### Description

Karl Barth and the philosophy of Existentialism were the identifying factors of this movement.

While Barth and his followers reaffirmed much, but not all, of Protestant orthodoxy, Barth’s doctrine of Revelation remained problematic for the orthodox.

For Barth, Revelation was personal experience or existential encounter with God; it is not something objective and propositional.

The Bible *contains* or *is a witness to* revelation, but the Bible is not revelation in the objective, propositional sense.

Barth also generally accepted the results of destructive higher criticism of the Scriptures

###### Primary Criticism of Barth: Methodologically Inconsistency

The Neo-Orthodox wanted to maintain the essentials of the faith based on special revelation (Deity of Christ, etc.), yet maintained that special revelation was flawed.

In sum, the problem was that they affirmed in fact the existence of objective, propositional revelation (doctrine), from an existentialist approach to the Scriptures.

##### *Fundamentalism – A Reaction to Modernism*

###### Description

From 1910-1915 the 12 volume set of *The Fundamentals* was published, reasserting essential Christian doctrine from the foundation of the verbal-plenary inspiration and full inerrancy of the Scriptures.

Having either been forced out of established protestant seminaries or voluntarily leaving due to the progressive decay of the institutions, several new bible colleges and seminaries were formed during this period. The Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA) was one of them.

###### A Shift in the Fundamentalist Movement

While the beginning of the movement emphasized a *doctrinal* fundamentalism, over the next few decades the fundamentalists were increasingly withdrawn from the culture, resulting in a “*cultural”* fundamentalism, as some designated it.

While the cultural fundamentalists maintained a doctrinal orthodoxy, some in the fundamentalist movement believed the time was right to re-engage the culture and influence general revelation disciplines, such as law, psychology, and philosophy.

##### *Evangelicalism: A Reaction to Cultural Fundamentalism*

###### Description

The evangelical renewal, as it was called, began in 1947.

The key persons identified with the beginning of this movement were Billy Graham, Carl Henry, Harold Ockenga & Edward Carnell

They accepted the essentials of the faith listed by the fundamentalists, but had critiques of their fundamentalist brothers and sisters. They opined:

Fundamentalism was orthodoxy gone cultic (i.e., sociologically) (E. Carnell)

Fundamentalism did not present an entire worldview, but concentrated on only part of the message of the Bible (C. Henry).

###### Evangelical Critique of Cultural Fundamentalism

Evangelicals disagreed with cultural fundamentalists, believing them to have:

*An Incorrect Attitude*: They thought cultural fundamentalists were too suspicious of people who disagreed with them on any minor point.

*An Incorrect Strategy*: They thought the cultural fundamentalist made a mistake in engaging in Cultural Separatism.

So while the Evangelicals agreed doctrinally with the fundamentalists, they believed the strategy of the fundamentalists resulted in the ineffectiveness of changing social, political, and economic institutions. The evangelicals wanted to change this and re-engage these disciplines and the culture.

###### Morphing Evangelicals: Neo-Evangelicalism & Liberal Evangelicalism

There is no creedal definition for these two terms, but the following appear to be the defining characteristics of the two movements, as distinct from the “Classic” Evangelicals (i.e. the 1947 type).

*Neo-Evangelicalism* - is a term applied to the theology of Fuller Seminary when it abandoned the position of the full inerrancy of Scripture for a partial inerrancy or “infallibility” view, while maintaining what it believed to be the substantive essentials of Christianity.

*Liberal Evangelicalism –* is a term applied to people who self identify as evangelicals, but tend to question full inerrancy, have “liberal” social views (e.g., Pro-Abortion, Pro-Homosexual Marriage), and favor socialism or communism as economic systems, rather than capitalism, which was commonly held by most classic evangelicals.

*Post-Conservative (Postmodern) Evangelicalism*

Post-conservative evangelicalism is, in its essence, the philosophy of Postmodernism applied to the evangelical church.

The phraseology employed by the Post-Conservatives is that we are now (allegedly) in a “post propositional” era and the church must adapt to this philosophy. By applying the basics of Postmodernity, this movement emphasizes:

Openness to the “Humanity” of the Bible & Higher Biblical Criticism

Increased Tolerance for Theological Pluralism (i.e. Many Ways to God)

A New Respect for the Authority of Tradition (Reject *Sola Scriptura*)

Acceptance of the “Openness” of God & Temporality of God (i.e., God does not know the future with certainty)

Openness to theistic evolutionary theory to explain origins

In Salvation: Rethinking Election & Reprobation, Penal Substitution, the Sufficiency of General Revelation, and the Annihilation of the Soul

A greater emphasis on cultural transformation, the social gospel and liberation theology

An openness to a greater Evangelical Ecumenism as the emphasis on propositional orthodoxy diminishes.

##### *Restorationist & Remnant Movements*

###### A Restorationist group is one who seeks to “restore” some important doctrine or practice it believes was present at the beginning of the church, but is now missing from the modern church and must be “restored.”

###### A Remnant group is one that believes there are few “true” believers left, and the remnant church is one of the few that hold to real Christianity.

###### Restorationist and remnant movements can be orthodox or heretical. For example:

Pentecostals are an example of an *orthodox* Restorationist movement.

The Mormon Church is an example of a *heretical* Restorationist movement.

### Denominational Theologies & Groups

#### **The Roman Catholic Church**

#### **The Protestant Churches**

##### The Lutheran Churches

##### The Reformed Churches

###### Reformed

###### Presbyterian

###### Reformed Baptist

##### The Arminian Churches

###### Wesleyan & Methodists

###### Holiness Churches

###### Salvation Army

###### Arminian Baptist

##### Baptist Churches

##### Restorationist-Unionizing Churches

###### Moravians

###### Church of Christ

###### Disciples of Christ

###### Plymouth Brethren

###### Interdenominational & Nondenominational

##### Inner Light Churches

###### Mennonites

###### Quakers

##### The Episcopalian Churches

##### The Anglican Church

#### **Anglo-Catholicism**

#### **The Eastern Orthodox Churches**

##### Antiochian

##### Coptic

##### Greek

##### Russian

## The Procedure of Theology

 ***“The sensible man considers his steps.”*
*Proverbs 14:15***

### Theology as Science

#### **Definition of a Science**

##### The English word “science” is derived from the Latin word *scientia*, which means “knowledge.” The Greek equivalent is *episteme.*

##### The applied use of the term indicates a “knowledge acquired by demonstration and resting on self-evident first principles (*principia per se nota*).”[[51]](#footnote-51)

#### **Systematic Theology as Science**

#### **Theological Method**

##### Theologians engage in the task of forming and testing theories about God.

##### Facts, Observations & Experiments lead to Concepts, Hypotheses and Theories.

##### Logic & Imagination are important to the task when attempting to formulate summaries of immutable Biblical Truths.

#### **Single & Multiple Source Approaches to Theology**

##### *Single Source* *Approach* – *Sola Scriptura*

###### *Sola Scriptura* means that Scripture is the primary and absolute norm for doctrine. It is the cognitive foundation of theology and the final authority on all matters it addresses.

###### However, note that the Protestant principle of *Sola Scriptura* is not “Solo” *Scriptura*. Protestant orthodoxy did not deny the usefulness of tradition, creeds or great teachers as subordinate authorities.

##### *Multiple Source* *Approach*

###### A Multiple Source approach to theology means there is more than one equally authoritative source, such as Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium.

###### One of the essential problems with these types of systems is the problem of identifying a *final* authority on matters. What happens when the sources disagree?

###### In practice, however, one of the sources of the multiple source system will function as a final authority.

#### **Conceptual Gestalts for Theology**

##### Laws = Ecumenical Creeds & Confessions

##### Theories = Theological Systems (e.g., Calvin’s *Institutes*)

##### Hypotheses = Territorial Spirits & Spiritual Warfare

#### **Artistic & Sacred Levels**

#### **Oratio, Meditatio, and Tentatio (Prayer, Study, & Testing)**

#### **Faith as Knowledge, Assent & Trust**

### The Presuppositions of Theology

#### **Definition of a Presupposition**

#### **Revelational Presuppositions**

#### **Epistemological Presuppositions & Considerations**

### Methodological Errors to Avoid when “Theologizing”

#### *Correlation v. Contextualization*

1. Louis Berkhof, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1932, Reprint 1979, pp. 28-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *See* Rudolph A. Makkreel, “Wilhelm Dilthey,” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Second Edition, Robert Audi, General Editor, pp. 235-236 (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Note that Dilthey is credited with coining the term “worldview.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *See* Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict,* p. 16 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Id.* at 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *See* *generally* James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* pp. 21-119 (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1988). These ideas correspond respectively to the disciplines of theology, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and the various forms of anthropology—theological, biological, psychological, and others. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *See* Michael Jordan, *Encyclopedia of Gods*, New York: FOF, Inc., 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *See* *generally*, H.P. Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, New York: Herder & Herder, 1971. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *See* Nash, *supra*, at 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Id.* at 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *See* *generally*, Samuel Jackson, *The Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), pp. 496-500; and *Eerdmans’ Handbook to the World Religions*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 110-113. Here, I am using the term “metaphysics” in its philosophical sense of the study of the nature, structure, and constitution of reality, not in its religious sense as it is used to designate groups such as Christian Science and other modern, Neo-Gnostic groups. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *See* Audi, *supra*, at pp. 563-566. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *See* *generally* D. W. Hamlyn, *Metaphysics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *See* Nash, *supra*, at 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *See generally*, Louis Pojam, *The Theory of Knowledge*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1993); and Robert Audi, *Belief, Justification, and Knowledge*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1988). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *See* Peter Angeles, *The Harper-Collins Dictionary of Philosophy*, (NY: Harper-Collins, 1992), pp. 307-308. This is also known as *tautological certainty*, meaning the proposition is true by definition. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *See Id*. at 280. Here, the skepticism of the Greek philosopher Sextus Empiricus, who maintained that we should be skeptical about the possibility of any kind of knowledge—that is, he knows we can know nothing. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *See* *generally* Pojman, *supra*, at 206-213. This is a type of epistemology that holds there are instances of knowledge that are non-inferential. The law of non-contradiction—A cannot be non-A at the same time and in the same sense—is an example of this kind of knowledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *See* Matthias Steup, “The Problem of the Criterion,” in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, *supra*, at p. 747. Particularism and Methodism are opposing camps in the epistemological debate regarding the need to formulate criteria for knowledge and determine the extent of it. David Hume was one of the most famous advocates of Methodism, which stated that one needs a criterion to recognize an instance of knowledge. His empirical criteria were what could be tested with the five senses. Particularists, on the other hand, argue that for one to know the criteria for knowledge, one must already be able to recognize instances of knowledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Here I am using the word “truth” in the sense of the Correspondence Theory of Truth, which holds that a proposition *p* is true if what it asserts actually corresponds to the real world. *See* Audi, *supra*. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Here, I mean the application of moral principles to specific instances of conduct for the purpose of determining its rightness or wrongness, not the alternative denotative meaning of “sophistry.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *See* Scott Rae, *Moral Choices*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), p. 16. Aretaic or virtue ethics is a category of ethics focuses more on the virtue produced in the individual than the morality of specific acts. The emphasis is that there is more to the moral life than making correct moral decisions. Character is the tendency of the person to act in predictable ways over a period of time. Thus, virtue theorists insist that any ethic that excludes the concept of virtue or character is incomplete. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *See* Angeles, *supra*, at pp. 69, 93. The terms “deontic” or “deontological” generally refers to concepts of necessity or duty. In ethics, it is the theory that the rightness or wrongness of a moral action is determined primarily by formal rules of conduct and that one is obliged to act in accordance with these rules. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *See Id.* at p. 96. This is the opposing theory to deontology, holding that the consequences or results of the moral act determine the act’s moral status. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *See* Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), Chs. 1-3.Often associated with deontological ethics—but not exclusively so—absolutism is usually manifests in one of three kinds of systems. Unqualified absolutism is the view that the moral absolute is always to be obeyed and there are not mitigating or balancing factors to consider. This view presumes there will never be a conflict of moral absolutes. Conflicting absolutism allows that there may a conflict between two opposing moral absolutes. Graded or hierarchical absolutism, as a system, holds that there are many moral absolutes, but the various mores are weighted to greater or lesser degree. Here, for example, one would be exempted from duty not to lie only to the degree necessary to obey a weightier matter of the law, such as protecting human life. These systems claim to present an objective approach to ethics. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *See* Rae, *supra*, at p. 17. Relativism refers to a subjective system of ethics that is not unchanging or objective, but is relative to one’s culture (cultural relativism) or to one’s own personal preferences (personal relativism or ethical egoism). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Richard Muller, *Dictionary of Latin & Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 298. This work will subsequently be referred to as *DLGTT*. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *DLGTT*, 298-299. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *DLGTT* [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Ibid.,* “*theologia naturalis*,” 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. *See* Richard Muller, *The Study of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. *Locus* means “place” or “topic” in Latin. The applied meaning in theology is a “doctrinal topic” [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For an extended discussion of the nature of dogmatics see Louis Berkhof, *Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 18-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. W. R. M. Farrer, “Heresy,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 508. This work will subsequently be referred to as *EDT*. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *Ibid.,* 508. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 2-3. Italics mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. J. I. Packer, “Orthodoxy,” in *EDT*, 808. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *DLGTT,* 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Ibid.,* 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Ibid.,* 25-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. R. L. Omanson, “Church” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 232. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., *Introducing Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 160, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. D. G. Tinder, “Denominationalism” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *American Heritage Dictionary*, Second College Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 1108. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Bryan Wilson, “Sect,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology,* ed. Alan Richardson and John Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 532. See also the discussion in Melton, *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America,* 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Samples, de Castro, Abanes, and Lyle, *Prophets of the Apocalypse*, 158-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ron Enroth, Youth Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Walter Martin, Kingdom of the Cults (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1978), 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Alan W. Gomes, *Unmasking the Cults* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Muller, “*scientia*,” at p. 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)