



Goahead Theological Seminary & College

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Christian Theology

Christian theology is the study of the Christian faith and the church, and is the academic study of Christianity.

Christianity distinguishes itself from general religious studies because it presupposes faith in Jesus Christ.

Because Christian theology has evolved in response to the times and cultures in which it arose, there is no uniform theology that encompasses all time and culture.

Theologians who study Christian theology comment on the Bible, analyze the content of the Old and New Testaments, theological orthodoxy, and historical literature to enhance understanding, and conduct expositions to defend and supplement Christian doctrine. (Theological Hermeneutics) Christian theology deepens the theologian's understanding of the truths proclaimed by Christianity, enables comparisons between Christianity and other traditions, defends Christianity from criticism, and conducts missionary work to meet the needs of the times.

Classification by characteristics

Christian theology began with the monotheistic belief in Jehovah God, originating from Judaism (Hebraism), and systematized by those who believed in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, and later by the Apostle Paul, who confessed Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, and Christ. Therefore, some scholars consider Paul to be the first Christian theologian.

Until the emergence of liberal theology, which emphasized human religious emotions and experiences over Scripture and tradition, Christian theology referred to dogmatics—what we now call systematic theology—establishing doctrines, verifying and defending them through biblical theology.

Today, it can be broadly divided into "theoretical theology" and "practical theology."

There are three main areas: biblical theology, which studies the biblical text; historical theology (church history), which studies the theological topics and debates discussed throughout church history; and "theoretical theology," which systematically studies biblical themes such as God, humanity, and the church, and systematic theology rooted in past doctrines.



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Furthermore, there is "practical theology," which discusses how to apply Christian beliefs to today's reality through integration with other disciplines and reflection on the current challenges of the church. "Practical theology" includes Christian education, which combines Christian faith/theology and education; pastoral counseling, which combines psychology; Christian ethics, which is a branch of systematic theology; and homiletics, missionary studies, and liturgy, which address the practical challenges of the church.

Definition of theology as a discipline

Theology, a compound word of "theo-" meaning God and "-logy" meaning study, is literally the study of the Trinity. In a narrower sense, it is the study and reverence for God's redemptive history, which encompasses creation, salvation, and the completion of salvation through Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate. Ultimately, all humans possess the perspective of a theologian. The world and the universe, nature and order, and everything we see, feel, and observe in our entire lives are ultimately connected to theological practice.

This is because humans, as beings created in the image of God, possess the seed of religion within their hearts. There is no human act that is not connected to religion. All humans learn about God directly (through the Bible) and indirectly (through general revelation). Indeed, Anglican theologian Father John Stott argues that God reveals himself through the Bible, His Word, and nature, His creation.

The essence of theology

Christian theology is not philosophy, nor is it religious studies, nor is it ethics or psychology.

The true essence of theology finds its true meaning in exploring the true existence of God and His creative history through the Bible.

The purpose of theology

Christian theology is neither a desk-bound, contemplative exercise nor a philosophical discussion of abstract concepts. The purpose of theological



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study is to correctly understand and introduce God the Creator and God the Redeemer.

Theology also derives from the experiences of Christian life. The theology of St. Paul, a theologian and apostle of the ancient Church, was a Christian interpretation and resistance to the real-world problems faced by the churches with which he shared the fellowship of saints (see the Apostles' Creed), and the problems of the Roman Empire, which oppressed and exploited the people to maintain its power while concealing the peace of Rome and the deification of its emperors through imperial theology. In other words, the purpose of theology is to interpret and overcome the phenomena and dominant order of our society through Christian thought.

The significance of theology

Theology truly surpasses all other academic disciplines in its academic value and is the study of true hope for humanity.

Theology holds invaluable meaning for learning about and bearing witness to the God of creation and redemption. Above all, it is a discipline that allows us to experience the profound joy of resolving the fundamental problem of human sin and attaining eternal life through Jesus Christ, the center of theology. This profound joy gives us the value of living as disciples, bearing witness to the Good News to the whole world. Matthew 28:19-20 "It gives meaning to the forgiveness of sins, the grace of salvation, and the life of eternal life. The purpose of theology is to transform sinners, enable them to meet the Creator, and, in accordance with His will, enable humanity to fulfill God's pleasing purpose in the created world."

Parables in the Bible (Analogia Scripturae)

Theology is not a discipline of scientific study, nor does it describe a mystical world. Its validity stems from the Bible, the Christian scripture believed to be God's revelation, and it must achieve its essence and purpose according to biblical methods.

The Bible is said to be the sole source (*fons* or *principium unicum*) of theology. However, choosing only what suits one's taste (*cafeteria style*) is not a good approach.



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The Reformers' assertion that the source of Christian faith is the Bible, not the church, is sola scriptura (Scripture alone), which is the premise for theological study and the beginning of interpretation, Ebeling argues. Biblical analogy is the principle of interpreting Scripture with Scripture (scriptura sui ipsius interpres). It is a method of interpreting and understanding biblical texts by considering their entire context.

Analogy of Faith (analogia fidei)

Theology is the study of faith. While Christianity is a religion that embraces rationality, logic, and science, we cannot fully understand God, who is omnipotent and transcendent, through our rational logic. Therefore, Christians encounter God through faith in Christ, the incarnate God and the Epiphany of God, and gradually gain knowledge of Him.

The Bible says that faith does not come from human hands but is a gift from God. (So faith comes from hearing the message, and hearing the message comes through the word about Christ. /Romans 10:17, New International Version)

The inner illumination of the Holy Spirit (testimonium spiritus sancti internum- John Calvin)

The illumination of the Holy Spirit is essential for theology to communicate with God's revelation. It requires the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who inspired the biblical authors, overcoming the limitations of human reason and scholarship.

Pray (prex)

Prayer is not about getting your wishes answered by the absolute God.

It is a discipline of faith that continually and humbly relies on God, the Father of all. It allows us to cultivate a theological attitude through reverence for God, humility, and prayer. Theology, in pious terms, is prayer. It is gratitude, praise, and confession to Him, our Creator and Redeemer, for all we have.

Christ-centeredness



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The Bible claims to reveal Christ's own theological approach.

The Bible is a book that tells the story of who Christ is in narrative form.

Robert L. Raymond argues, based on Luke 4:16-21, 24:27, and John 5:46, that all theological activity ultimately leads to Him.

Doctrine (Creed, Confession of Faith)

Christianity has always emphasized the importance of doctrine, teaching both Scripture and doctrine simultaneously. The ecumenical councils, which shaped Christian categories and traditions, were also meetings designed to establish doctrinal standards. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and the doctrinal decisions of each ecumenical council serve as standards and guidelines for understanding Christian theology.

However, the tendency in neo-evangelicalism and fundamentalism to emphasize faith over doctrine is dangerous. Wary of this danger and emphasizing the importance of doctrine, neo-evangelical theologians like Rev. Michael Horton of the Reformed Church and Rev. John Stott of the Anglican Church, for example, believe that traditional doctrines such as the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Augsburg Confession of Faith, the Nicene Creed, and the Apostles' Creed, along with the Bible, serve as standards and guides for Christians in their faith.

Regardless of whether a Christian is Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant, they must systematically study Christian doctrines, and they must understand that doctrines are a safety device for Christian faith that follows the Bible and tradition.

Limitations of methods for classifying doctrinal materials

The theological method first recognizes that God is the principle of being (*principium essendi*) and the source and origin of all our knowledge.

In developing the theological method, God's special revelation is crucial as the external principle of knowledge (*principium cognoscendi externum*). Furthermore, for the theological method, it recognizes that the internal principle of knowledge (*principium cognoscendi internum*) is faith. Louis Berkhof argues that it is unwise to develop theology by advocating only one of the five frameworks he presents in his book *Systematic Theology*. He



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argues for a comprehensive method that logically unifies God's revelation from theology to eschatology.

Trinitarian method

Derived from the Apostles' Creed, it is weak in its anthropology and soteriology.

Analytical Method

Calixtus begins with what he considers the ultimate goal of theology: blessing, but blessing becomes the goal of theology more than the glory of God.

Covenantal Method

Coccejus's central emphasis is on the covenantal relationship between God and humanity. His theology is limited to theology and anthropology.

Christological method

This method is central to revelation, but it should not be the starting point of theology.

A method based on the concept of the kingdom

It is said that the use of the concept of the kingdom due to the influence of Ritschl causes problems in establishing the doctrine of humanity, sin, and Christ as the divine man.

Theological fields and classifications

Christianity maintained the same theology and confession of faith after being recognized by the Roman Empire in 313, but during the Great Schism of the 11th century, the Roman provinces of Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch were separated for political reasons. Afterwards, the church was divided into the Western Church and the Eastern Church, and in Western



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Europe and Northern Europe, which are the Western Church regions, starting with the 16th century Reformation, the Western Church was divided into denominations such as the Catholic Church (Roman Catholic), the Old Catholic Church, the Independent Catholic Church, and the Anti-Papal Catholic Church with a 'anti-reformation' tradition, and denominations such as the Lutheran Church, the Reformed Church (Presbyterian Church), the Anglican Church, the Baptist Church, and the Methodist Church with a 'pro-reformation' tradition. Although based on the same Bible and creed, each denomination asserted different doctrinal interpretations, developing its own theological thought. Entering the modern era, theological thought evolved through encounters with modern and contemporary ideas, including scientific advancements. Furthermore, each region developed its own version of Christian faith and theology tailored to its own context.

Theoretical Theology

- **Systematic Theology:** Study of systematic theology, including fundamental doctrines, theology, Christology, ecclesiology, and soteriology, as well as patristic theology and medieval theology.
- **Christian Ethics:** Study of the standards of Christian ethics based on Christian doctrine in social and personal settings.
- **Biblical Theology:** Critical study of the New and Old Testaments, utilizing exegesis, texts, and history.
- **Historical Theology:** Study of important theological backgrounds and church activities, focusing on church events.

Practical Theology

- **Liturgy:** The study and practice of the forms, sacraments, and core elements of worship.
- **Homiletics:** The study of techniques for conveying the gospel appropriate to the times, based on biblical exegesis.
- **Christian Education:** The study of the operation, learning plans, and guidance of Sunday schools.
- **Missiology:** The study of methods and theories for conveying the church's gospel to society.
- **Christian Counseling:** The study of Christian counseling that helps people recognize and overcome problems through counseling based on the gospel.



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Theology by Denomination

- Reformed theology
- Roman Catholic theology
- Protestant theology
- Eastern Catholic theology

Theological Movement

- Biblical Criticism
- Hermeneutic Theology
- Neo-Orthodoxy
- Classical Orthodoxy

Regional (Third World) Theology

- Liberation theology
- People's theology
- References in Christian theology
- Theology
- Theologians
- Systematic Theology
- Hermeneutic Theology
- Death of God Theology
- Theological Methodology
- Theology of John Calvin
- Apostles' Creed
- Nicene Creed
- Chalcedonian Creed
- Great Schism
- Trinity
- Reformation
- Historical Jesus



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a theologian to refer to:

- **Apostle Paul**
- **Origen**
- **Augustine of Hippo**
- **Thomas Aquinas**
- **Martin Luther**
- **John Calvin**
- **John Wesley**
- **Friedrich Schleiermacher**
- **Karl Barth**
- **Paul Tillich**
- **Karl Rahner**
- **Jürgen Moltmann**