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Theology from A to Z

A Glossary of Key Theological Terms

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Cover Image: *Miniature from a Latin Bible: St. Luke*, c. 1100. France, Burgundy, Abbey of Cluny. Ink, tempera, and gold on vellum. The Cleveland Museum of Art.

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Introduction

Though by no means exhaustive, this collection of theological terms and their accompanying definitions are meant to bring clarity and understanding to those seeking a greater understanding of theology proper.

Theology is a broad discipline encompassing a wide variety of subjects, each with its own forms of nuance. Furthermore, and perhaps regrettably, theology often suffers from an overwrought vocabulary and language, much as any discipline, academic, scientific, or otherwise. Nevertheless, even the most seemingly complex subjects can be understood, and theology is no different. In fact, theology does not have to be complicated, and guides like this can help make it much more comprehensible.

Through this glossary of nearly 250 key theological terms we hope that seekers and students will walk away not only with a greater handle on theological terminology, but that they will be inspired and seek further instruction in different areas of theology. Why? Because there is no greater place to park your mind or greater subject to glean from. All of the answers to man's "big questions" can be sufficiently found through the study of Jesus Christ our Lord, his Word and doctrines.

May these terms and definitions guide you into greater fellowship with our Creator and may they help you along as one of the many instruments that God uses to help sanctify you to be who he would have you to be.

-Paul and J.R.

-A-

Actus forensis – (the actualization of a legal state) This is the Protestant concept of justification. We are declared righteous, which in turn, makes us righteous.

Actus physicus – This is the concept of justification according to the Roman Catholic Church. It refers to an infusion of grace that makes one righteous.

Ad hominem fallacy – This is an informal fallacy where the opponent attacks the person rather than the argument.

Adiaphora – These are matters of belief or practices about which the Reformers were indifferent in that they were neither stipulated nor rejected by Scripture.

Adonai – This Hebrew word is translated in the New Testament as Lord (kyrios). This was the highest title attributed to God. (Matt. 22:44; Luke 1:43, 2:11; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:10-12; Rev. 19:16.)

Agents of Revelation – God uses humans as agents of revelation, (e. g. prophets in the Old Testament and Apostles in the New Testament.)

Analogy of faith – This is the foundation for biblical interpretation according to the Reformers. It states that difficult passages of Scripture must be interpreted in light of other clear passages. From this Bible-believing Christians often use the phrase “let scripture interpret scripture.”

Analogia entis – (the analogy of being between God and man, not the identity) This term introduced by Thomas Aquinas means there is a point of contact between the infinite and the finite or some similarity between God and man. God is “holy other,” not “wholly other.”

Analytical justification – Under scrutiny God finds a person to be just. This is the Roman Catholic view that God will declare a person righteous only if they are actually, or by analysis, righteous. Therefore one must cooperate with the infused grace to produce a real personal righteousness.

Animism – This is the belief that an individual spirit resides in anything, either animate or inanimate. This view can often be seen in Eastern, pagan and superstitious man-made religions.

Antinomy – This is the mutual contradiction of two principles resting on premises of equal validity. This is against the law of non-contradiction.

Arianism – This view denied that Christ was co-essential, co-eternal, or consubstantial with the Father. According to this theory Christ was a created being. This denial of the Trinity was condemned at Nicea in 325.

A priori knowledge – This is innate knowledge. It is built in before sense experience.

A posteriori – (from the latter) This term is applied to those proofs of the existence of God that begin with the finite order and ascend toward the first cause.

Apologetics – A systematic argumentative discourse that is used in the defense of Christianity. It comes from the Greek word “apologia” which means “to make a defense.” Apologetics is a rich branch of theology through which believers seek to give an answer to every man that asks a reason for the hope they have. (1 Peter 3:15)

Aquinas, Thomas – Aquinas was a Roman Catholic theologian and philosopher of the 13th century. Noted for his work on natural revelation and natural reasoning (especially the law of causality), he distinguished between nature and grace to argue for their harmony.

Anno Domini – (“In the year of our Lord” or A.D.) A way to measure time, specifically years, starting with the birth of Jesus Christ.

Articulus Mixtus – (mixed articles) Pure articles are derived from either theology or philosophy, but mixed articles may be derived from both. The existence of God can be discovered in nature or Scripture.

Articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae – (The article by which the church stands or falls.) The article is justification by faith alone.

Aseity – This refers to God's self-existence. God has the power of being. He is not dependent, contingent, or derived. He is not self-created as He is eternally an independent power of being within himself.

Assensus – This is a simple assent to a truth by the intellect or intellectual assent to data.

Athanasius – He was the primary defender of the orthodox view of the person and nature of Jesus Christ (homoousios) during the fourth century.

Attributes of God – This refers to the character of God or quality of God that constitutes who He is. They are inseparable from His being and they must be viewed in their totality. There are many wonderful examples in Scripture of who God is, and in fact theology itself is “the study of God.” We are blessed as believers to worship a God who can be known and who has revealed Himself to us in his Word and through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Augustinianism – The theology of Augustine of Hippo (354-430) teaches that man is morally unable to embrace the gospel because of the Fall and that the Fall is absolute and total. The Holy Spirit monergistically changes the heart of fallen man and enables man to understand and believe the gospel. According to Augustin, regeneration precedes faith in the *ordo salutis*. Thus, regeneration produces faith.

Auto-piste – (trustworthy in and of itself / autopistic) This term was used by Protestant scholastics denoting the self-authenticating character of scriptural authority. Scripture is self-evidencing. The scriptures themselves determine to us what they are. We obtain meaning *from* them instead of reading meaning *into* them.

Autographs – The original inspired biblical manuscripts.

Apographs – Copies of the original inspired biblical manuscripts.

-B-

Baptism – This is a sacrament in both the Roman Catholic and Protestant Church. It represents cleansing from sin as a symbol of death and resurrection of Christ, regeneration, and faith. (Matt. 28:19) It is not necessary to be baptized in order to be saved, but God does ask Christians to obey Him by being baptized if they are able to do so since it is a way for believers to testify to others that they have accepted Jesus’ salvation, and because it honors God.

Barth, Karl – He was a significant theologian of the 20th century. He said contradiction was an indication of Christian growth. He said the three fundamental sins of man are pride, dishonesty and slothfulness.

Beautiful vision – This question was asked of the 13th century Scholastics: Will we see God as He is in His very essence or just a theophany?

Bede, The Venerable – An English monk whose importance as an historian and chronicler of Anglo-Saxon England is unquestioned. We owe the majority of our knowledge of early English history to Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* - “Ecclesiastical History of the English People.” Bede’s efforts in computistics, or measuring times, dates and seasons, helped popularize usage of *anno Domini* (“in the year of our Lord”) as a way to measure years and time starting with the birth of Jesus Christ.

Being – This means the quality or state of having existence and refers to, and encompasses all of reality.

Biblical docetism – This term was coined by Emil Brunner describing the orthodox view of inerrancy. The Docetists were a sect of Gnostics who denied Jesus had a real body. Brunner is saying that the Orthodox view of Scripture denies that it was written by men for men err.

Brunner, Emil – He was a noted 20th century theologian; a student of Karl Barth, who said contradiction was the hallmark of Christianity.

-C-

Caesarea Philippi Confession – (Matt. 16:13) This is the location of Peter's confession as Christ as the Messiah. This was the turning point for the disciples understanding of Christ. This is the first creed of the Christian church.

Calvin, John – This theologian of the 16th century Reformation wrote the first systematic theology from a Reformed perspective. He articulated the majesty and sovereignty of God. He is one of the most influential and important theologians.

Canon – The Greek word means "rule." It is a term used to describe the books of Scripture. Roman Catholicism views Scripture as an infallible collection of infallible books. Classical Protestantism views Scripture as a fallible collection of infallible books. Liberal theologians view Scripture a fallible collection of fallible books. Among criteria for canonicity are that it was written or endorsed by an Apostle and that the church accepted it.

Causality – Causality is the relationship between cause and its effect. It is a practical application of the law of non-contradiction.

Catholic – Not to be confused with Catholic as it pertains to Roman Catholicism, rather "catholic" means "universal" and denotes all Christians in the church invisible.

Chalcedon – This council was held in 451 to define orthodox Christology. The council described Christ as truly man and truly God without confusion, division, mixture, or separation. The Council of Chalcedon was convened to deal with heresies relating to the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ. It affirmed the unity of the two natures of Christ (vere homo– truly man and vere deus– truly God). The unity of the two natures of Christ was defined as being without mixture and confusion (both of these definitions being directed at the Monophysite heresy), and without division and separation (both of these definitions being directed at the Nestorian heresy). The Council stated that each nature, the human and divine, retains its own attributes.

Christology – This is the doctrine and study of Christ encompassing the person and work of Christ.

Communicable attributes – These are attributes of God for which corresponding characteristics can be found in human nature.

Communicato idiomata – This term is used in Christology to describe the way in which the properties of each nature are communicated in the unity of the person of Christ.

Compound being – This term refers to a being made up of distinct parts. The attributes of God are not the pieces of a compound being.

Concurrence – It literally means to run together. Used in connection with the doctrine of God's providence, it is used when describing the primary and secondary causes and that they operate concurrently. God's purpose is brought to pass by His sovereignty even though He uses human means. (The brothers of Joseph in Gen. 37-50 did evil, but God meant it for good.)

Confession of faith – Any written set of statements that seeks to centralize and codify the major beliefs (doctrines) of Christianity and that is held in acceptance by a large religious body. Confessions describe what a church or denomination "affirms" or believes to be true about God and his Word and set in word form its distinctives. The *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, *Augsburg Confession (Lutheran)*, *Belgic Confession*, *Heidelberg Catechism*, and *Westminster Confession* are some of the more prominent ones. See also *creed*.

Confirmation – This is a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church so that new grace is given when one moves from childhood to adulthood.

Contra Naturam – (works against the laws of nature) A term used to show that miracles attest the authority of Scripture.

Contra Peccatum – (against sin) This is the argument that only God can act against sin. It describes the limitation on Satan.

Contradiction – The belief that two ideas at the same time in the same relationship cannot be both be true. Something cannot be and not be at the same time and in the same relationship.

Consubstantiation – In Lutheran theology this term means the actual substantial presence and combination (in, with and under) of the body of Christ, with the eucharistic elements.

Cooperare and assentire – These are Latin words meaning "cooperate and assent." Semi-pelagians use these terms to explain that man must cooperate with and assent to prevenient grace to bring about regeneration. This view teaches that faith precedes regeneration.

Cor ecclesiae (the heart of the church) – Martin Luther said Sola Fide, Sola Scriptura, and Sola Deo gloria was cor ecclesiae.

Council of Trent – This was a council of the Counter Reformation in 1550. They repudiated justification by faith and accepted the two-source theory of revelation.

Covenant of Works – This was the first covenant God made with man. This covenant involved God's promised blessing and rules for man to obey to secure God's promised blessing.

Creation ex nihilo – (created out of nothing) This expresses the idea that God created without the use of previously existing materials. God has the power of being and thus the power to create (see Aseity).

Creed – A set of statements that briefly affirm the core beliefs of a religious body. The *Nicene Creed*, and *Apostles' Creed* are two famous ones. Some churches recite them during services and/or worship and creeds often describe what is believed by a religious body to be true regarding Jesus Christ and the Trinity. See also *confession*.

Cult – Also known as a religious sect, these groups do not adhere to the core doctrines of traditional Christianity that have been maintained by the majority of mainline Christian groups over millennia. They deny one or more of the major doctrines of Christianity and often espouse their own extra-biblical non-canon texts or secondary revelations as equal with God's Word.

-D-

da mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed noli modo - ("grant me chastity and continence, but not yet") A prayer by St. Augustine, as mentioned in his *Confessions* (book 8) which he used to illustrate his bondage to sin.

De servo arbitrium – This term translates as Luther's bondage of the will.

Decretive will of God - Francis Turretin defines the decretive will of God as that "which God wills to do or permit Himself." It refers to the eternal decrees of God.

Descartes – He was a French philosopher of the 17th century who sought to explain the relation and interaction between matter and thought. He sought to understand the relation between extension and non-extension. Descartes described matter as extension and thought as non-extension.

Determinism – Human choices are determined by outside forces or causes that are blind impersonal forces. We have no choice. John L. Girardeau charged Jonathan Edwards' work on the Freedom of the Will with determinism.

Deus revelatus – This phrase was used by Luther to describe the knowledge of God that is revealed.

Deus Absconditus – (that which God has not revealed to us). This phrase was used by Luther to describe the knowledge of God that remains a mystery to man because God has chosen not to reveal certain information about Himself.

Dialectic – This comes from the word dialogue that means back and forth. Hegel developed Dialectical Idealism and the dialectic is a tension, struggle, and conflict.

Dialectical idealism – This describes Hegel's philosophy in a three-stage operation: thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

Dialectical Materialism – Marx's philosophy stated that the conflict in history is not over ideas but over material goods.

Diderot – He was a French philosopher of the Enlightenment who said the God hypothesis was no longer necessary to explain the origin of the universe and of life. He argued for spontaneous generation.

Dignitas – (dignity) This word is closely connected to the Latin word gloria. Thus the glory of God is the dignity of God that is giving Him what he is due.

Dispensation – This refers to the ordering of God's economy. It is the sequence of events in the history of redemption.

Docetism (biblical) – This term was coined by Emil Brunner describing the orthodox view of inerrancy. The Docetists were a sect of Gnostics who denied Jesus had a real body. Brunner said the Orthodox view of Scripture denies that it was written by men because men err.

Docetism – This is the view that the body of Christ was not real, but only seemed or appeared to be real.

Double predestination – This is a misnomer in reformed theology. Arminians and anti-Calvinists use this term to imply that Calvinists teach that God chooses some to be saved and chooses some to be lost. Predestination is an act of God whereby He ordains whatsoever happens.

Double imputation – Sin is transferred to Jesus on the Cross and the merit of Christ's righteousness is transferred to us.

Dulia – In Roman Catholic theology this means the veneration given to saints (see *hyperdulia* and *latria*).

Dualism – This means two substances or powers, neither of which is reducible to the other.

Dynamic equivalency – This term is used for a Bible translation that conveys thought for thought instead of word for word. The New International Version (NIV) uses this translation concept.

Dynamic monarchism – This is the declaration that the human Jesus was deified (made to be God) by the divine Logos from Baptism to crucifixion.

-E-

Effectual calling – This is the term used to describe that part of the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) which is accomplished by God before the foundation of the world.

Efficacy – This means that it actually works.

Ekklesia – This is a Greek term referring to the "called assembly." Orthodox Christianity uses it to describe the church. Calvin wrote that the chief task of the visible church is to make the invisible church visible.

Empiricism – This philosophical view teaches the source of all knowledge is sense experience. It is based on the common perception that our senses provide us with knowledge. Experience therefore is the sole source of knowledge. A reaction to Rationalism.

Enlightenment – This was the philosophy of European rationalists during the 18th century. It rejected supernatural revelation and man's sinfulness and reason was its god.

Ens necessarium – (necessary being) According to Aquinas, God is the necessary being, or cause for all else to be. God is eternal and exists in and of Himself. He cannot, not be.

Epistemology – This is the science of knowledge. It answers the question: How do we know we know?

Equal ultimacy – This is a view of God's decrees where God is creating good, but is also actively creating evil.

Eschatology – Historically speaking, this is the doctrine and study of the last or final or concluding events that end time and commence eternity.

Esse – (the act of existing, essence) This means something is essential to the faith.

Essence – This is the being or power of a thing that comes from the Greek word *ousia* (being). God is therefore pure being.

Eutyches – He fused two natures in one person (half man, half God) so emphasizing Christ's deity that his humanity was neglected. This was condemned at Chalcedon in 451.

Evidentialist – This is one who presents valid evidence that man is morally obligated to God, (also called a probabilist).

Evil – This is the negation of good. It is wicked, real, and experienced, and that which is morally bad or harmful.

Ex lex controversy – In the Middle Ages it was the tension between the internal righteousness of God and the external righteousness of God. What is the relationship of God and the law? *Ex lex* means that law is king as opposed to *sub lego*. *Sub lego* means under the law. Thus, if God is *ex lex* He is arbitrary; if God is *sub lego*, then God is under the law and the law is god. Orthodoxy rejects both as God is law unto Himself as He is consistent and obedient to Himself.

Ex nihilo – (out of nothing) – This is the divine creation of the world out of nothing.

Ex opere operato – (by the work performed) When the sacraments are administered they are effective to act positively upon the believer or unbeliever.

Exegesis - The interpretation and study of biblical Greek and Hebrew. Exegesis seeks to draw correct meaning out of the biblical text.

Existence - This comes from a Latin term meaning to "stand out." The ancient Greeks would say this is becoming. It refers to the realm of creaturely being, not in the realm of isness. Thus God does not exist, He is!

Existentialism - This philosophy says that the source of knowledge is sensations, as they "exist" in our consciousness. It denies the metaphysical.

Expiation - This is a work of Christ directed to man for removal of guilt. Christ removes the penalty of sin from us.

Extreme unction - In Roman Catholic Theology, this sacrament relieves mortal sin before death.

-F-

Fabricum idolarum - (an idol factory) John Calvin taught that "every one of us is, even from his mother's womb, expert in inventing idols" (Calvin's Commentary on the Book of Acts, Vol. 19, page 413).

Fideism - This means to believe something by faith without any rational evidence. The ultimate ground for accepting the claims of the Bible is the testimony of the Holy Spirit received by faith.

Fides viva - (a living faith) This is associated with the Reformers view of justification by faith alone.

Fiducia - This means trust. It fits in the reformers view of faith to include notitia (knowledge) and assensus (to affirm or to agree).

Finitum non capax infinitum - (the finite is incapable of the infinite). Man (finite) cannot totally comprehend God who is infinite.

Feurbach - He stated that man created God in man's image. Gods are mirror images of the people that worship them.

-G-

General Revelation - This is God's Revelation of Himself and His divine attributes in His creation.

Gnosticism - This religious movement stressed salvation through knowledge. They were concerned as to how to obtain knowledge, and stated that one could not come to truth through reason or sense perception.

-H-

Henotheism - This is the worship of a group of gods in which a divine attribute is ascribed to whichever god one is addressing (see monotheism and polytheism).

Heraclitus - He was a Greek philosopher who believed everything was constantly changing or in process of becoming.

Hermeneutics – This is the science of interpretation. It deals with rules of exegesis and its purpose is to understand the intended meaning of a communication.

Higher criticism – A liberal theological movement of the late 1800s that grew out of Europe and Germany in particular. It sought to undermine Christianity and in particular God's Word by making both compatible with progressive social history, evolutionary theory and extra-biblical man-centered streams of thought. Its proponents analyzed the Bible as an historical, not divinely inspired, text. The movement quickly spread throughout American Christian universities in the late Victorian era, many of which (Harvard, Princeton, Yale, etc.) never again regained their once deeply held orthodox beliefs. Ultimately, the end game for higher criticism is the belief and teaching that the Bible is not objectively true.

Homo mensura – This term was coined by the Greek Philosopher Protagoras and means man is the measure of all things. It is the core value of the secular humanist. It gained new popularity during the Italian Renaissance.

Homoousios – This Greek term means "the same substance." This was the doctrine of St. Athanasius and orthodox Christianity.

Homoiousios – This Greek term means "like substance." This is the term used to describe the Arian view of the Trinity.

Humanum errare est – (to err is human) A term used in connection with Biblical docetism, (i.e., since Jesus was human, Jesus could err– according to Karl Barth.)

Hyperdulia – In Roman Catholic theology this is the veneration offered only to the virgin Mary as the most exalted of creatures (see *dulia* and *latria*).

Hypostases – This is the Greek word for subsistence. Hypostatic union means the substantial union. There are three persons but only one essence.

-I-

Illumination – This is the process by which God's Holy Spirit enables us to understand His word and apply it to our lives.

Imago Dei – (image of God) – Man was created in the image and likeness of God. (Gen. 1:26) The Hebrew word for image is the word "tselem" (Strong's 6745), which means we are *representative* of God. Conversely, the Hebrew word for likeness is "demuwth" (Strong's 1823), which means *resemblance*. Imago Dei bestows dignity and worth on men and women and separates them from any other life-form. It is the one single attribute we all share in common and the only thing that makes us equal. Government, law, ethics, and medicine (to name only a few examples) have echoed this belief and demonstrated its tenants throughout history. Most notably, the *American Declaration of Independence* affirms this doctrine in its opening lines and throughout its text.

Immediate General Revelation – This is the revelation that comes directly from God to us. Everybody has a sense of the divine. Certain knowledge of God which man can know by an innate sense that God puts in man (Romans 2:15f).

Immensity of God – This term teaches that God is not only ubiquitous (present everywhere), but is in His fullness everywhere.

Incommunicable attribute – This is a characteristic God has that He does not give to His creatures. There is no corresponding characteristic found in human nature, such as immutability, omniscience, or omnipotence.

Incomprehensibility of God – This is a primary doctrine of Reformed Theology. We cannot understand God totally, because we are finite and He is infinite. We are not only limited, but God has limited His Special Revelation to us.

Infralapsarianism – This comes from doctrine of predestination. God created Adam righteous, but he had the ability to sin. An infralapsarian believes that God's decrees of election came "after the fall" (see supralapsarianism).

Inspiration – God in His full power used men in their full power for the writing of Scripture and superintended the work by His power and protection that the final result in the original manuscripts was without any error.

Internal Testimony of Holy Spirit – Calvin used this term to describe the testimony of God's Spirit through His Word that convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgments.

Indicia – This is the objective proof that the Bible is the Word of God. Calvin believed they were indicators for the evidence of the Bible's inspiration.

Inerrant – This term means that the Bible is without error in the original manuscripts.

Infallible rule of faith and practice – This terminology was used in neo-orthodoxy to explain that the Bible is only infallible when it speaks of matters of faith and practice.

Infallibility – This term means the Scriptures cannot err.

-J-

Justitia alienum – (an alien righteousness) This term means Christ declares one righteous.

Justitia internum – This is the internal righteousness of God. This refers to God's intrinsic character. Theologians must distinguish between the internal and the external righteousness of God.

Justitia externum – This is the external righteousness of God referring to His goodness. It describes God's behavior and activity in the created universe. Theologians must distinguish between the external and the internal righteousness of God.

-K-

Kairotic moments – This refers to a specific event in time that has great significance for the rest of time (e.g., the incarnation of Christ).

Kuyper, Abraham – He was a Dutch theologian who believed that man's total depravity destroyed the ability to reason. He planted the seeds for presuppositional apologetics.

-L-

Latria – In Roman Catholic theology this means the supreme worship offered to God only (see *dulia* and *hyperdulia*).

Law of non-contradiction – This law of logic states that contrary properties cannot belong to the same thing, at the same time, and in the same sense.

Legal fiction – This is the rejection by Roman Catholicism of the Protestant concept of imputed, forensic justification. Rome says for God to consider someone who is not inherently just is for God to be guilty of fictional deceit. A person is either just or sinful and cannot be both at the same time. Only the inherently just can be just at the same time (see *simul justus et peccator*).

Logical priority – Regeneration must come before faith - speaking logically not temporally.

Logos – This is a Greek term indicating discourse or reason. It is used to describe Jesus as the second person of the Trinity, and as the revelation of the Father.

-M-

Manifestum – This is a Latin word for phaneros meaning "revealing" which describes how God has revealed His divine attributes.

Mediate General Revelation – This revelation of God comes through some medium, such as the created order.

Meritum de congruo – (congruous merit) This is an act of divine grace, even though God was not required to reward it. Man cannot do anything to deserve God's grace.

Meritum de condigno – (condign merit) This merit imposes a reward from a just God.

Modalism – This is a heretical doctrine of the Trinity. The three parts of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are modes of God's activity rather than three distinct persons.

Modalistic Monarchianism – This stresses the unity of God. Christ was the manifestation of God in the Old Testament and the Holy Spirit after Pentecost.

Monotheism – This is the doctrine that there is only one God (see henotheism and polytheism).

Munus triplex – This is a Christological term referring to the threefold work of Christ as prophet, priest, and king. This concept was most clearly defined by John Calvin.

Muratorian Council – This church council in 398 AD determined what books belonged in the canon.

-N-

Natural theology – This proposition that a knowledge of God can be derived from the natural world. Natural theology is insufficient for salvation. The knowledge of God and His divine attributes that can be known from creation. Thomas Aquinas used the New Testament as an apologetic for the existence of God.

Nestorianism – Nestorius separated the divine and human natures so that two persons existed in a dual personality. It was condemned in Ephesus in 431 A. D.

Neo-orthodoxy – This is a reaction against liberal Protestantism. Karl Barth was a major proponent who supposedly rescued the Bible from the higher critics and re-established it as important for faith. The Bible is a human witness of a revelational experience.

Nicea – This church council in 325 AD condemned Arianism and formulated the doctrine of the Trinity.

Noetic effect of sin – Noetic means of or pertaining to the mind, so the question must be asked: to what extent did the fall of man affect the mind?

Notitia – (knowledge) The Reformers used this word to explain sola fide (faith alone). Faith must have content, therefore the mind must be involved.

Noumenal world – This term coined by Immanuel Kant describes that which cannot be apprehended through the senses. Kant puts God, self, and essences in the noumenal world.

-O-

Omnipotent – This comes from two Latin terms meaning *all* and *potent* thus *all powerful*. This term describes that attribute of God who has sovereign power and authority over all creation.

Ontology – This is that part of philosophy that deals with the nature of being as being. It is a rational analysis on the necessary and universal aspects of being.

Ordo salutis – (order of salvation) It refers to the order of the causes and effect that produce salvation – election, regeneration, conversion (including repentance and faith), justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification.

Otto, Rudolph – He was a German scholar who best defined the cultural sense of the “holy.” He was not interested in studying God, but studied how cultures respond to that which they consider to be sacred.

-P-

Parousia – This term is used in theology to mean the second coming of Christ (Matt. 24:44, John 14:3, Acts 1:1, I Thess. 4:16, Heb. 9:28, James 5:8, II Peter 3:10, I John 3:2, Rev. 1:7 and 22:20).

Parmenides – He was a Greek philosopher who believed in pure being, and who thought a philosopher should not talk nonsense. He became famous for he saying: "What is, is."

Passio magnum – This refers to the great suffering of Christ.

Patripassianism – (the passions or suffering of the Father) This was the name given to the Modalistic Monarchians (Christ was a temporary form of the one God) by Cyprian. This view teaches that the Father came in the person of Christ, therefore the Father suffered and died.

Pelagianism – Pelagius (383-410) argued that the Fall of the human race was nothing more than a historical event that affected Adam alone. Humans are born free of sin and they are able to sin or not to sin.

Penance – This is a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church given to those who have committed mortal sin. It involves confession, contrition, and priestly absolution.

Perceptive will of God – This is to obey what God commands through His revealed will.

Phaneros – This is a Greek word used in Romans 1:19 that means manifest or evident. It is used in connection with the wrath of God manifested in General Revelation.

Phenomenal world – (appears to our sensation) Kant says we cannot move from the visible to the invisible. This is the world we live in and understand from our senses. The other world, the noumenal world includes God, self, and essences.

Philosophy - A broad field of study that seeks to determine the best way to think about things. Theology and philosophy often intersect, and many great theologians have also been exemplary philosophers.

Plural of majesty – (referring to the Hebrew word Elohim) This plural form of the Hebrew word God (Elohim) is used to express the intensity of God's majesty. It indicates the fullness of God's majesty.

Polytheism – This is the doctrine that there is more than one god or that there are many gods. This historical critical school believed everything moved from the simple to the complex. This is the second stage where god has his or her own area of influence or particular function (see henotheism and monotheism). Interestingly enough, Jesus, in his sovereignty, conducted his earthly ministry just as the Western world was beginning to tire of polytheism.

Postestas absolutas – This term refers to God's absolute power and sovereignty. It means absolute power and because He is absolute power, He is the law. When used in conjunction with *ex lex* it means He is all powerful and outside the law.

Power of the keys – This is the Roman Catholic doctrine that the Pope is the vicar of Christ on earth, therefore he has the power of remission of temporal guilt and the power to punish evildoers.

Presuppositional apologetics – This is the basic idea that biblical revelation is the presupposition upon which any coherent system of truth must be built. There are several varieties of presuppositionalism. Gordon Clark's axiomatic presuppositionalism states that Scripture is the source of all truth. God has revealed Himself in Scripture and Scripture is the source of all truth.

Primary cause – God is the cause of everything that occurs. God ordained everything that happens.

Privatio actuosa – This refers to the reformers concept of man acting out of his lack of goodness. Sin is a real privation as is stated in the Westminster Confession.

Process theology – God is the process of change. The central idea is that reality is a process of becoming.

Progressive revelation – This is the classical orthodox view on revelation that is basically the progress of redemption. The concept of soteriology is progressively expanding through God's covenant.

Propitiation – This is a satisfaction of divine justice. Jesus Christ satisfied God's divine wrath against His elect.

Proto-Evangelium – (the first gospel) As stated in Genesis 3:15, man is naturally sinful, but God will provide a Savior and Jesus will be ultimately and finally victorious over sin and Satan.

Protagoras – This Greek philosopher is credited as the founding father of humanism. He coined the term *homo mensura* that means man is the measure of all things.

Providence – (to provide) God has ordained all events so that good will be produced.

Pure actuality – This refers to the inherent powers a thing possesses by virtue of its being the kind of thing it is, (i.e., God is pure actuality and has no potentiality)

Purgatory – The Roman Catholic Church teaches this as the place of the purging of sins.

-R-

Rationalism – This is a theory of philosophy in which the criterion of truth is not sensory but intellectual and deductive. It is the opposite of empiricism.

Recipemus – This was a key word used at the Muratorian council to explain that the church received the books of Scripture.

Reductionism – This term is used when one aspect of something is taken and all of reality is reduced to that one aspect.

Reformation – The two chief causes of the Reformation were the formal cause (*Sola Scriptura*, when Luther was asked by what authority he would debate the issue of justification by faith, he stated that Scripture alone is infallible and no authority can bind the conscience) and the material cause (*Sola Fide*, the argument of justification by faith with no mixture of human effort to accomplish justification.)

Regeneration – The creative act of God in which the elect are given new life in Jesus Christ and enabled to understand the law and the gospel for the saving of their souls. Regeneration precedes faith in reformed theology.

Revelation – This refers to the disclosure or unveiling of something. There are two ways God reveals Himself to us: General and Special Revelation. *General revelation* refers to the scope of the audience (the whole world) and to the content of God making Himself thus known. *Special revelation* refers to God as He reveals Himself as defined in the Bible and demonstrated through the person of Christ. There is also *immediate general revelation* in which there is a certain knowledge of God that man can know by an innate sense that God puts in man. It is God's self-disclosure without any medium. *Mediate general revelation* is revelation that is given to us through some medium. Specifically it is God's self-disclosure through creation. *Progressive revelation* is the classical orthodox view of the progress of redemption. The concept of soteriology is progressively expanding through God's covenant. The *sufficiency of general revelation* is that God's revelation of Himself in creation is sufficient for the human race to see their sinfulness in comparison to God's holiness (Romans 1:18-20).

-S-

Sabellianism – Sabellius (3rd Century) taught a modal Trinity where God is one being or person, but He takes the form of three different modes. This makes the Trinity one unified essence.

Sacerdotalism – The real instrument of salvation is the church. The power is vested to the church by Christ and the church gives authority to the priests who administer the sacraments.

Sacramentum – (mystery) The sacraments are a means of grace the Lord gives through signs and seals for the covenant community. The impact of the sacraments affect how Christians relate to God and to each other.

Sartre, Jean Paul (on human freedom) – He stated that if man does not have total freedom then man does not have freedom. Any constraints and man is not free. He recognized that human autonomy is incompatible with God's sovereignty and said that since man is here then God is not there.

Secondary causes – God ordains and His will is brought to pass through the actions of secondary causes that have real causal power and are responsible for everything they do. (Acts 2:23)

Self-Authenticating Scripture – Calvin says the Bible has within itself overwhelming evidence of its nature, antiquity, and prophecy. The Word of God would not make a false statement about itself.

Self-determination – This says the choice is mine and therefore it has a moral dimension. Since our choices are our own there is a determinate factor that is within us.

Sensus divinitatus – (sense of the divine) This term is used by Calvin to explain that man is capable only of leaving himself without excuse in his rejection of God's truth.

Sessio – This refers to the sitting of Christ at the right hand of the Father. It is the position by which He is seated at the seat of judgment. It is used in the Apostles Creed.

Simul justus et peccator – (at once righteous and a sinner) This Reformation concept explains the relationship between regeneration, justification, and sanctification and the human sinful condition. For the reformers, one is both righteous and a sinner at the same time but not in the same sense. Christ's righteousness imputed to us is not a matter of fiction but the reality of divine grace. Also, without the imputation of our sins to Christ there is no atonement (see *legal fiction*).

Simple being – This means God is not a compound being or made up of distinct parts. This refers to God's being, not His personhood.

Sola fide – (by faith alone) This is the article of the Reformation by which the gospel stands or falls.

Sola scriptura – (by Scripture alone) This was the Reformation cry that Scripture alone is the authoritative Word of God.

Special Revelation – God reveals Himself as defined in the Bible and demonstrated through the person of Christ.

Spontaneous actions – This is a twentieth century theory that states choices proceed from neutral or equal desires. It states there is an effect without a cause.

Stoicism – This system of philosophy teaches self-salvation through knowledge. It is a pantheistic doctrine.

Sub lego – It means "under the law." Some theologians believed God was under the law. This made the law more powerful than God (see *ex lex controversy*).

Subsistence – Calvin used this term to say that something stands under something else. He said there was an essential unity in the Godhead, but only one divine Being.

Supererogation – This term is used in Roman Catholic doctrine to explain that one may receive more merit than is needed to enter into heaven. The extra merit goes into the treasury of merit.

Sui generis – This term refers to one who is in a class by himself (God).

Supralapsarianism – A supralapsarian believes that God's decrees of election came "before the fall" (see *infralapsarianism*).

Symmetrical view – In reference to predestination, God works in the same way with the reprobate and with the elect.

Systematic Theology – This is the science of systematizing Biblical truth. Theology is spiritual, devotional, and existential.

-T-

Teleology – This is the science of purpose or ends. It relates to order and apparent design of the universe. Design presupposes a designer with intelligent purpose.

Telos – This is a Greek word meaning end, goal, or purpose. Jesus uses this word (verb form) in John 19:30: "it is finished" to indicate He accomplished His purpose.

Textus receptus – (the received text) – The Greek text of the New Testament that has been used by the majority of Christians throughout history. Also known as the Byzantine type text. The King James Bible (KJV) is based upon it.

Theanthropic – This is a view of Eutyches in which he stated the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ were combined.

Totaliter aliter – This means totally other. It was the view of Karl Barth that God is wholly other than man and therefore God cannot communicate with man.

Transcendent – This means that God is higher than the created universe. He is the only Being who is self-existent. He is the only one with the power of Being within Himself.

Transubstantiation – In Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theology the eucharistic elements at the time of their consecration become the body and blood of Christ while keeping only the appearance of bread and wine.

-U-

Unconditional election – This Calvinistic doctrine teaches that man's election is not based on any condition such as having free will to choose.

Ungodliness – This is used in connection with Romans 1 to describe the condition of man.

Unrighteousness – This is a general statement about man's evil condition found in Romans 1:18.

-V-

Vaticinia ex eventu (future prediction after the event) – This was Bultman's concept of Biblical prophecy.

Verbum dei (the word of God) – Calvin referred to this as the inspired word of Holy Scripture.

Via affirmitas (the way of affirming) – Sometimes we define something by saying positively what it is (God is holy, just, eternal, etc.).



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