



Introduction to Thinking Theologically

In 1 Peter 3.14-15, Peter says this to the Church:

‘But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don’t worry or be afraid of their threats. ¹⁵ Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.’

What is theology?

The word 'theology' is combination of the Greek words

Theos – God

Logos – Words

'Faith Seeking Understanding'

Theology is not just about the Head

The Apostle Paul sums it up this way:

When I think of all this, I **fall to my knees and pray to the Father**, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your **hearts** as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to **understand**, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you **experience** the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. - Ephesians 3.14-19

Fall to my knees and pray to the Father:

Hearts:

Understand:

Experience:

Areas of Theology and Questions of Theology

Branches of Theology

Biblical Theology – studies in detail the canonical writings of the OT and NT that are acknowledged by the church as the primary witnesses to the work and word of god.

Historical Theology – traces the many ways in which Christian faith and life have come to expression in different times and places.

Philosophical Theology – employs the resources of philosophical inquiry to examine the meaning and truth of Christian faith in the light of reason and experience.

Practical Theology – explores the meaning and integrity of the basic practices of the church and the specific tasks of ministry such as preaching, educating, pastoral counseling, caring for the poor, and visiting the sick, the dying and the bereaved.

Systematic Theology (also called Doctrinal or Constructive theology) - ventures a faithful, coherent, timely, and responsible articulation of Christian faith

Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Scripture –

Tradition –

Reason –

Experience –

Theological question raised:

1. What do the scriptures say?
2. What has the Church said?*(see excerpt on Pages 3-4)
3. Is it reasonable to think these things about God?

4. Have we experienced this love and seen the evidence of this love worked out in the world?

A Word about Words

Homoousious – of the same substance/being

Homoiousious – of a similar substance/being

Summary

'What is theology? It is faith asking questions, seeking understanding. It is disciplined yet bold reflection on Christian faith in the God of the gospel. It is the activity of taking rational trouble over the mystery of God revealed in Jesus Christ as attested by Scripture. It is inquiry yoked to prayer [and worship]. When theology is neglected or becomes distracted, the community of faith may drift aimlessly, or be captured by spirits alien to its own. However difficult the theological task today, there is no escaping the questions about the truth, the wholeness, the intelligibility, and the concrete practice of the gospel. And there is no escaping the issue of whether all these questions of theology will be asked not only from the locations of church, academy, and society familiar to most North Americans but also from below, from the incomparable experience of solidarity with a wounded humanity and a groaning creation.' Migliore, 19

***Excerpt from Athanasius' *On the Incarnation* (4th century)**

'When I first opened his *De Incarnatione* I soon discovered by a very simple text that I was reading a masterpiece. I knew very little Christian Greek except that of the New Testament and I had expected difficulties. To my astonishment I found it almost as easy as Xenophon (Greek philosopher); and only a master mind could, in the fourth century, have written so deeply on such a subject with such classical simplicity. Every page I read confirmed this impression.' – Introduction to *On the Incarnation*, by C.S. Lewis.

43. *He came in human rather than in any nobler form, because (1) He came to save, not to impress; (2) man alone of creatures had sinned. As men would not recognise His works in the Universe, He came and worked among them as Man; in the sphere to which they had limited themselves.*

Now, if they ask, Why then did He not appear by means of other and nobler parts of creation, and use some nobler instrument, as the sun, or moon, or stars, or fire, or air, instead of man merely? Let them know that the Lord came not to make a display, but to heal and teach those who were suffering.

2. For the way for one aiming at display would be, just to appear, and to dazzle the beholders; but for one seeking to heal and teach the way is, not simply to sojourn here, but to give himself to the aid of those in want, and to appear as they who need him can bear it; that he may not, by exceeding the requirements of the sufferers, trouble the very persons that need him, rendering God's appearance useless to them.

3. Now, nothing in creation had gone astray with regard to their notions of God, save man only. Why, neither sun, nor moon, nor heaven, nor the stars, nor water, nor air had swerved from their order; but knowing their Artificer and Sovereign, the Word, they remain as they were made. But men alone, having rejected what was good, then devised things of nought instead of the truth, and have ascribed the honour due to God, and their knowledge of Him, to demons and men in the shape of stones.

4. With reason, then, since it were unworthy of the Divine Goodness to overlook so grave a matter, while yet men were not able to recognise Him as ordering and guiding the whole, He takes to Himself as an instrument a part of the whole, His human body, and unites Himself with that, in order that since men could not recognise Him in the whole, they should not fail to know Him in the part; and since they could not look up to His invisible power, might be able, at any rate, from what resembled themselves to reason to Him and to contemplate Him.

5. For, men as they are, they will be able to know His Father more quickly and directly by a body of like nature and by the divine works wrought through it, judging by comparison that they are not human, but the works of God, which are done by Him.

6. And if it were absurd, as they say, for the Word to be known through the works of the body, it would likewise be absurd for Him to be known through the works of the universe. For just as He is in creation, and yet does not partake of its nature in the least degree, but rather all things partake of His power; so while He used the body as His instrument He partook of no corporeal property, but, on the contrary, Himself sanctified even the body.

7. For if even Plato, who is in such repute among the Greeks, says that its author, beholding the universe tempest-tossed, and in peril of going down to the place of chaos, takes his seat at the helm of the soul and comes to the rescue and corrects all its calamities; what is there incredible in what we say, that, mankind being in error, the Word lighted down upon it and appeared as man, that He might save it in its tempest by His guidance and goodness?