



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE**

**COURSE CODE: CTH 122**

**COURSE TITLE: Types of Theology**

CTH 122: Types of Theology is a one-semester 2- credit unit course. It consists of 15 units which include; the definition of theology, preliminary issues about theology, relationship between Bible and theology, relationship between hermeneutics and theology, ecumenism and theology, different types of theology (including Roman Catholic theology, Protestant theology, Evangelical theology) and modern and emerging theologies, such as, liberation theology, feminist theology, black theology and African Christian theology among others.



**COURSE GUIDE**

**CTH 122**  
**TYPES OF THEOLOGY**

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## **Introduction**

CTH 122: Types of Theology is a one-semester 2- credit unit course. It will be available to all students as a course in Certificate, Diploma and Degree in theology. The course is also suitable for anybody who is interested in the theological study of Christian faith. The course (will consists) of 15 units which include; the definition of theology, preliminary issues about theology, relationship between Bible and theology, relationship between hermeneutics and theology, ecumenism and theology, different types of theology (including Roman Catholic theology, Protestant theology, Evangelical theology) and modern and emerging theologies, such as, liberation theology, feminist theology, black theology and African Christian theology among others.

There are no compulsory pre-requisites for this course. The course guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through these materials. It also emphasizes the need for tutor- marked assignments. Detailed information on tutor-marked assignments is found in the separate file, which will be sent to you later. There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to the course.

## **What you Will Learn in this Course**

The overall aim of CTH 108: Types of Theology is to introduce you to the basic issues in theology, the function of theology in the society and the principal elements that serves as sources for the development of theology. Your understanding in this course will prepare you as a student to understand the fundamentals of theology, the relationship between hermeneutics and theology and the resulting different theological views in the church. You will also be able to appreciate the emerging theologies such as liberation and feminist theologies.

## **Course Aims**

The aim of the course can be summarized as follow: This course aims at helping the students of Christian Theology to understand the fundamentals of developing theology, the various types of theology and the emerging modern theologies.

## **Course Objectives**

To achieve the aims set above there are set overall objectives. In addition each module and unit also has specific objectives. The module and unit objectives are always included at the beginning of every module and the



unit; you should read them before you start working through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the module and unit to check on your progress.

You should always look at the module and unit objectives after completing each section. In this way definitely, you can be sure that you have done what was required of you by the module and unit. Stated below are the wider objectives of this course as a whole. Definitely by meeting these objectives you should therefore know that you have achieved the aims of the course as a whole. On your successful completion of the course, you should be able to: know the definition of theology; types of theology and the emerging theologies that can be termed modern.

On successful completion of the course, you should be able to: Define theology

Evaluate Roman Catholic theology

Evaluate Protestant theology

Compare Roman Catholic and Protestant Theologies

Evaluate the formation of the theology of African Independent Church

Examine the relationship between hermeneutics and theology

Assess the theological methods of liberation theology Explain the origin and development of black theology Compare Black theology in North America and South Africa Discuss the origin and development of feminist theology Examine the reason for the emerging theologies

### **Working through this course**

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units, read recommended books and read other materials. Each unit contains self- assessment exercises, and at points in the course you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of this course is a final examination. Below you will find listed all the components of the course and what you have to do.

### **Course Materials**

Major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks



4. Assignments File
5. Presentation Schedule

In addition, you must obtain the materials. Obtain your copy. You may contact your tutor if you have problems in obtaining the text materials.

## **Study Units**

There are fifteen study units in this course broken into 3 modules of 5 units each. They are as follows:

### **Module 1**

- Unit 1 Preliminaries
- Unit 2 Bible and Theology
- Unit 3 Christology and Theology
- Unit 4 Hermeneutics and Theology
- Unit 5 Ecumenism and Theology

### **Module 2**

- Unit 1 Roman Catholic Theology
- Unit 2 Protestant Theology
- Unit 3 Evangelical Theology
- Unit 4 Pentecostal Theology
- Unit 5 Theology of African Independent Church

### **Module 3**

- Unit 1 Contextual Theology
- Unit 2 Liberation Theology
- Unit 3 Black Theology
- Unit 4 Feminist Theology
- Unit 5 African Christian Theology

Each unit contains a number of self-tests, in general terms, these self-test questions on the materials you have just covered or require to cover are to be of help to you in your relationship to the traditionalists and it is also meant to help you to evaluate your progress and to reinforce your understanding of the materials. Alongside with your tutor-marked assignments, these exercises will assist you in achieving stated learning objectives of the individual units and of the course.

## Set Textbooks

Alexander, Desmond T. & et al. eds. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998).

Blomberg, Craig L. “The Unity and Diversity of Scripture.” *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Alexander T. Desmond et al ed. (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000).

Fabella, Virginia & R.S. Surgirtharajah. ed. *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*. (New York: Orbis Book, 2000).

Ferguson, Sinclair B. et al. eds. *New Dictionary of Theology*. (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988).

Millard, Erickson. *The Christian Theology* (Michigan: Baker Books, 1988).

Osborne, Grant R. *Hermeneutical Spiral* (Illinois; Inter-Varsity Press, 1991).

## Assignment File

In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the Assignment File itself and later in this Course Guide in the section on assessment.

## Presentation Schedule

The Presentation Schedule included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against falling behind in your work.

## **Assessment**

There are two aspects to the assessment of the course. First are the tutor- marked assignments; second, there is a written examination. In tackling the assignments, you are expected to apply information and knowledge acquired during this course.

The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the Assignment File. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course mark. At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final three-hour examination. This will also count for 70% of your total course mark.

## **Tutor Marked Assignments**

There are fifteen tutor-marked assignments in this course. You need to submit all the assignments. The best four (i.e. the highest four of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best four (4) assignments will be 30% of your total course mark.

Assignment questions for the units in this course are contained in the Assignment File. You should be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your set textbooks, reading and study units. However, you are advised to use other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it, together with TMA (tutor-marked assignment) form to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given to the Assignment File. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is done to discuss the possibility of an extension.

## **Final Examination and Grading**

The final examination of CTH 108 will be of three hours' duration and have a value of 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed.

You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

### Course Marking Scheme

This table shows how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignment 1-4	Four assignments, best three marks of the four count at 30% of course marks
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Table 1: Course Marking Scheme

## Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignments that follow them.

<b>Module 1</b>	<b>Title of work</b>	<b>Week's Activity</b>	<b>Assessment (end of unit)</b>
Unit	Course Guide	1	
1.	Preliminaries	1	Assignmen1
2.	Bible and Theology	2	Assignment2
3.	Christology and Theology	3	Assignmen3
4.	Hermeneutics and Theology	4	Assignmen4
5.	Ecumenism and Theology	5	Assignmen5
<b>Module 2</b>		6	Assignmen6
Unit			
1			
2	Protestant Theology	7	Assignmen7
3.	Evangelical Theology	8	Assignmen8
4.	Pentecostal Theology	9	Assignmen9
5	Religious Leaders	10	Assignment10
<b>Module 3</b>		11	Assignment 11
Unit			
1	Theology of African		
2	Liberation Theology	12	Assignment12
3	Black Theology	13	Assignment13
4.	Feminist Theology	14	Assignment14
5	African Christian Theology	15	Assignment15
16	Revision	16	
17	Examination	17	

Table 2: Course Overview

## How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other material. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the units you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a

## **Reading Section**

Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly.
2. Organize a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course overview' for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates for working on each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.

9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also on what is written on the assignment. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.

10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this Course Guide).

### **Tutors and Tutorials**

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary.

Contact your tutor if:

you do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings.

you have difficulty with the self-tests or exercises.

you have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and to ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.





## Summary

CTH 108 intends to introduce you to the basics issues in the formulation of Theology. Upon completing this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

What are the sources of theology? Identify the elements of theology

What is the role of hermeneutics in the formation of theology? What is the role of ecumenism in the formation of theology? What are the important landmarks in Roman Catholic Theology? What are the weaknesses of evangelical theology?

What are the weaknesses of African Independent Church theology? What does the proliferation of theologies tell us about traditional theology?

What are the unique features of Pentecostal theology?

Of course, the questions you will be able to answer are not limited to the above list. Types of Theology are an exciting study. We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.



Course Code CTH 108

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## **MODULE 1**

- Unit 1 Preliminaries
- Unit 2 Bible and Theology
- Unit 3 Christology and Theology
- Unit 4 Hermeneutics and Theology
- Unit 5 Ecumenism and Theology

### **UNIT 1      PRELIMINARIES**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Definition of Theology
  - 3.2 History of Theology
  - 3.3 Disciplines of Theology
  - 3.4 Task of Theology
  - 3.5 Presuppositions of Theology
  - 3.6 The Limitation of Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Mark Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The course, *Types of Theology* introduces the students into the dominant theological development of the last century, particularly as they related to the non-western settings in Africa, Latin America and Asia. In this unit, we will explore the general definition of theology, analyze in-passing the general historical background that occasioned the rise of these brands of Christian theologies, account for the theological and existential bases for their origin, appeals and continuous support in the developing nations, but most importantly, the guiding theology presuppositions justifying these multiple theological expressions.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Define the different brands of Christian theologies.

Critically evaluate the major theological beliefs, tenets and presuppositions undergirding these groups of Christian theologies.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Definition of Theology**

Theology is ordinarily defined as “the human study of God.” However, this definition though simple is yet profound and indeed introduces serious theological complications. The complication inherent in this definition is the presence of two participants in the definition, namely human and God respectively. In this definition, human is the subject, which by implication is the active participant and God is the object hence, a passive category in theological discussion. This understanding of theology raises serious problem because it envisaged a hypothetical situation whereby humankind with all their obvious limitation in time and space becomes the interpreters or investigators into a profound being that is infinite in nature. The dominate human role in theological investigation is both intriguing and also problematic in this last sense, since the whole enterprise began on a hypothesis that the finite human being could indeed reflect on the infinite divine. However, even beyond this stated problem of epistemology, is also the concern whether humans could actually capture or interpret the divine infinite being in the category of creeds, beliefs and religious system as easily seen in contemporary religious professions.

Interestingly, the classical answer to such a theological question or consideration in the Christian religious tradition is in the affirmative. The Christian religious tradition believes that the divine has become revealed in the New Testament revelation and thus, a tacit justification for human reflection on the divine. In this sense, human particularly Christian could reflects on the divine despite the recognition that none religious confession could in the long run capture the entire divine essence as often depicted in stereotyped traditional theological reflections.

Nonetheless, with all its many problems, the human dimension reminiscent in theology is both liberating and not always problematic as already shown, since it provides a crude justification for differing ways of understanding the transcendent in view of the diverse theological understanding of such a being within, even the Christian theological traditions. If we recognize the human dimension inherent in theologizing, it goes along to show that theological differences is actually a healthy necessity in light of diverse human understanding and in this sense, Christian theological understanding of God and His activities in time and space. The thrust of this last assertion revealed also the limitation of every theology since every theology (Christian theology in particular) seeks in the long run to capture the eternal claims of the divine in the light of the present spiritual, economic, political context, and also in the background of class, gender and other human determinants. In this understanding, every theology always develop not in isolation or

vacuum but rather reflect the cultural, spiritual and political trends of its contemporary context. This goes to suggest that every theology must be ready to accept its temporary and human dimension even when it claims to speak for the infinite divine being and at such every theology is limited and thus must be subjected to critical evaluation and review in order to engender a healthy theological discussion. It is assumed that such a fresh and critical reflection into theologies will engender newer and more biblically honest theological understanding in the long run.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT TEXERCISE 1**

What are the problems inherent in the recognition of the human dimension of theology?

### **3.2 History of Christian Theology**

A survey of the history of theology could be divided in a restricted sense into four major periods. This division is informed basically by the distinctive nature of theology in the following times. However, one has to realize that history of theology in its broad perspective began in the Bible especially in the theological reflection of the biblical writers. The biblical writers captured the transcendent in a unique form, which according to conservative understanding could never be reduplicated; nonetheless there is an aspect of theology that could be traced throughout the history of the Christian church. The following periods are the four dominant stages in the development of Christian theology.

#### **Patristic Period**

In its narrow usage, Christian theology has its genesis in the writings of the Church fathers, particularly in the works of the Christian apologists of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries respectively. The Church apologists sought to reassert the claims of Jesus Christ hitherto in the Jewish context to their own contemporary Greek context. Foremost among these apologists were Justin Martyr, Origen and Tertullian. The patristic period also had great theologians like Athanasius and Augustine who developed solid theological works on the Trinity and Christology. It was on the basis of their theological works that conclusions were drawn by the church councils such as Chalcedon, Constantinople and Ephesus. However, even before this time, theological reflection on the need to reassert the unique claims of Jesus Christ in the Greek context goes back to the New Testament, specifically, in the Pauline writings where the preoccupation to reassert the claims of Christ in the Greco-Roman world was dominant. This similar preoccupation is also chiefly seen in the writings of the apostolic fathers, who admonish the church using the Bible, but drawing largely on their Greek linguistic and philosophical backgrounds to understand and interpret the biblical revelation. In this same sense, the 4<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of Christological thinking as particularly expressed in the Nicean and Chalcedonian Councils and the theological reflection of Athanasius and later Augustine.



## Medieval Period

The understanding of theology in the medieval period could be sum up in the term, “scholasticism.” This descriptive term, though often derogatory, described the preoccupation of Medieval Theology with Aristotelian logic, traditionally inclined and straightjacket understanding of theology. For the scholastics, they sought to harmonize Christian revelation and reason. The overriding hypothesis of scholastic theological works was the general commitment of these individuals to the Christian faith and the rationality of the biblical revelation. Foremost theologians of this period are Anselm, Duns John Scotus, Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard and Peter Abelard. One of the dominant theological themes in Medieval scholasticism was on the attributes of God. Eventually theological divisions on the understanding of deity emerged between two particular schools of Scotus’ nominalist and Thomas Aquinas’ intellectualist traditions. These scholastic theological divisions grew in influence and eventually had impact on the Reformation theology of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The nominalist tradition was traced back to the Augustinian and neo-platonic trajectories while the intellectualist tradition of Aquinas was traced the Aristotelian philosophical categories.

## Reformation Period

The monolithic theology of the medieval church was called into question by the Protestant movement of the sixteen century. The medieval theology dominated by scholastic tendencies and the Roman Catholic dogmatism led to the break of the Church at the advent of the Reformation. Before the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Renaissance swept the whole European landscape. But the 16th century went beyond the influence of the Renaissance. The century also witnessed the growth of royal power, the appearance of centralized monarchies and the discovery of new lands. During the great age of exploration, massive quantities of gold and silver flood Europe, an event which drove many people crazy about money and materialism, especially the British, Dutch, Italians and Germans. The year 1543 can be said to have marked the origin of the Scientific Revolution; this was the year Copernicus published his *De Revolutionibus* and set in motion a wave of scientific advances that would culminate with Newton at the end of the 17th century. In the meantime, urbanization continued unabated as did the growth of universities. And lastly, the printing press, perfected by the moveable type of Gutenberg in 1451, had created the ability to produce books cheaply and in more quantities. And this was indeed important since the Renaissance created a literate public eager for whatever came off the presses.

Despite all of these things, and there are more things to be considered, especially in the area of literature and the arts, the greatest event of the 16th century, indeed, the most revolutionary event was the Protestant Reformation. It was the Reformation that forced people to make a choice either to be Catholic or Protestant. This was an important choice, and a choice had to be made. There was no real alternative.

We have to ask why the Reformation took place after all. In general, there was dissatisfaction with the Church at all levels of European society. First, it can be said that

many devout Christians were finding the Church's growing emphasis on rituals unhelpful in their quest for personal salvation. There was a shift from salvation of whole groups of people, to something more personal and individual. The sacraments had become forms of ritualized behavior that no longer "spoke" to the people of Europe. They had become devoid of meaning. And since more people were congregating in towns and cities, they could observe for themselves and more important, discuss their concerns with others. Second, the papacy had lost much of its spiritual influence over its people because of the increasing tendency toward secularization. In other words, popes and bishops were acting more like kings and princes than they were the spiritual guides of European men and women. And again, because so many people were now crowding into cities, the lavish homes and palaces of the Church were noticed by more and more people from all walks of life. The poor resented the wealth of the papacy and the very rich were jealous of that wealth. At the same time, the popes bought and sold high offices, and also sold indulgences. All of this led to the increasing wealth of the Church, and this created new paths for abuses of every sort. Finally, at the local level of the town and village, the abuses continued. Some Church officials held several offices at once and lived off their income. The clergy had become lax, corrupt and immoral and the people began to take notice that the sacraments were shrouded in complacency and indifference. Something was dreadfully wrong.

These abuses called for two major responses. On the one hand, there was a general tendency toward anti-clericalism, that is, a general but distinct distrust and dislike of the clergy. Some people began to argue that the layperson was just as good as the priest, an argument already advanced by the Waldensians of the 12th century. On the other hand, there were calls for reform. These two responses created fertile ground for conflict of all kinds, and that conflict would be both personal and social.

The deepest source of conflict was personal and spiritual. The Church had grown more formal in its organization, which is hardly unsurprising since it was now sixteen centuries old. The Church had its own elaborate canon law as well as a dogmatic theology. All of this had been created at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. That Council also established the importance of the sacraments as well as the role of the priest in administering the sacraments. The year 1215 also marks the year that the Church further elaborated its position on Purgatory. Above all, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 established the important doctrine that salvation could only be won through good works such as fasting, chastity, abstinence and asceticism.

The biggest event in church history came on October 31, the eve of All Saints Day. On that day Luther nailed a copy of the 95 *Theses* or statements to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg. The choice of where to place these theses was to open it to public consumption and reaction. The *Theses* all related to the prevalence of indulgences and Luther offered to dispute them all. The day chosen by Luther, All Saints Day, was important. All of Wittenberg was crowded with peasants and pilgrims who had come to the city to honor the consecration of the Church. Word of Luther's *Theses* spread throughout the crowd and spurred on by Luther's friends at the university, many people called for the translation of the *Theses* into German. A student copied Luther's Latin text and then translated the document and sent it to the university press and from there it spread throughout Germany. It was the printing press itself that allowed Luther's message to spread so rapidly.

The particular indulgence which attracted Luther's attention was being sold throughout Germany by Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar. Tetzel was trying to raise money to pay for the new Church at St. Peters in Rome. In general, an indulgence released the sinner from punishment in Purgatory before going to Heaven. The system was permitted by the Church since 1215 but had been abused by the clergy and their agents such as Tetzel.

Luther also attacked indulgences in general, and he voiced his objections to the sale of indulgences in his letter to the Archbishop of Mainz in 1517. According to the Church, indulgences took their existence from the surplus grace that had accumulated through the lives of Christ, the saints and martyrs. The purchase of an indulgence put the buyer in touch with this grace and freed him from the earthly penance of a particular sin, but not the sin itself. But Tetzel's sales pitch implied that the buyer was freed from the sin as well as the penance attached to it. Tetzel also sold the idea that an indulgence could be purchased for a relative in Purgatory. This meant the relative's soul would now fly to Heaven. For Tetzel: "As soon as pennies in the money chest ring, the souls out of their Purgatory do spring."

Luther claimed that it was not only Tetzel but the papacy itself which spread the false doctrine of the indulgence. By attacking the issue of the indulgences, Luther was really attacking the entire theology and structure of the Church. By making salvation dependent on the individual's faith, Luther abolished the need for sacraments as well as a clergy to administer them. For Luther, faith alone, without the necessity of good works, would bring salvation. This was obviously heretical thinking. Of course, Luther couched his notion of "justification by faith alone" within a scheme of predestination. That is, only God knows who will be saved and will be damned. Good works did not guarantee salvation. Faith did not guarantee salvation. God alone grants salvation or damnation.

Beginning in Germany, the Reformation proceeded unto Switzerland, Scotland, France, and England. The Reformers' theology both in the radical and non-radical expressions of the Reformation bordered on the doctrine of "sola fide" and "sola scriptura" meaning "salvation by faith alone" and "the finality of Scripture in the Church's faith and practice." On the other hand, the Roman Catholic theology as later expressed fully by the Council of Trent advocated equal place to the Bible and tradition in the Church ministry and sacraments. Foremost of the protestant theologians of the period are Luther, Zwingli, Melanchthon and Calvin but also include radical reformers such as Karlstadt, Thomas Muntzer and the Anabaptists. It is very important to note that even though united under the single course of Reformation, the reforms were similarly divided and different in their theology of God and of Christ.

### **Enlightenment Period**

Following the double impact of the Renaissance and the reformation on the western academia and the western Church, a scenario developed whereby the Bible and the Church came under close scrutiny with the result whereby the church and the Bible came under serious suspicion and the preference for reason. Reason became the standard test for everything that has to do with religion. Consequently, various forms of criticism and critical apparatus were applied to the Bible and the Christian religion. On the whole, theology in the enlightenment period was dominated by pure reason hence theology

became more abstract, rather than be in engagement with societal or existential situation of the human society. In its radical expression Enlightenment degenerated towards anti-supernaturalism, whereby academic or science assumed hatred and disbelief in divine Scriptural activities in the world. In its moderate form, acceptance of supernaturalism was deemed possible, however, it was assumed particularly the deist that the divine had left the world to work on its own (like a watch), hence the notion of *divine absconditus*. Foremost among the theologians of this period include W. F. Hegel, Emmanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher.

## Modern Period

The academic and theological challenges of the Enlightenment were sustained in the modern context, but perhaps with little modification. Many theologians became vocal challenging the dominance of western theology as seen in the stereotyped classical Christian theological reflection and postulated the need to express the divergence of the modern context particularly in context of colonization, race, gender, class and other social and political definitions of the modern society. These modern incentives with the one-sided nature of western theology and its patriarchal and capitalist disposition brought about great innovation in theological reflection of the modern period. Thus, these theological developments resulted in the birth of modern theologies such as Black, Feminism, Liberation, Asian and African theologies to fill the theological and contextual void seen in classical western theology.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the major preoccupation of theology in the historical epoch sampled.

### 3.3 Theology and Basic Foundations

#### i. Theology and Revelation

##### a. The necessity of revelation: revelation as the *principium* (or ultimate norm) of theology

“Theology”- is an overworked word. To define theology bristles with difficulty. What are the basic dimensions, or simple elements of theology? Theology comes from the Latin word *theologia*, and this word from the Greek. This means: “God-speaks” or “speaking about God.” The study of theology has God as its subject matter and speaks about God. This brings to issue a meta-issue: How is it possible to speak about God? Under what conditions is even such speak conceivable? How is this speak, if conceivable, legitimate? The answer given by the Church from its inception has been a resolute answer, even if not always clear or consistent answer. What is the answer based upon the Bible? Here is the circularity which we must confront: Why do we go to the Bible? Two factors are at play in this answer: (1) Maintaining the Creator-Creature relation. Man is finite and God is infinite; how can there be any communication between the two? We are speaking of creaturely dependence. Our sinful rebellion has distorted the Creator-creature relationship. It has disturbed the relationship in all its

dimensions. Because of this, God must speak to man and take initiative first toward man. There must be revelation from God. There can only be speaking about God only if there is speaking of God through revelation. God is the object of theology but not an object at man's disposal. No entity in the horizon of man's experience. Man can know him, theologize, only if God sovereignly speaks, reveals, and discloses himself to man. God is the unique object of theology because he is the original theologian. God speaks first about God. He is unique because he is the subject matter only as he is the speaking and revealing subject. The object of theology is the revelation of God. The object of God is the self-revealing God active in his revelation.

The possibility of true theology is grounded in God and not man. It is not grounded in rational speculation, empirical investigation, etc. It is not grounded in our experience of God. This is a stand in the face of the large scale developments that have come in the past few centuries. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century: **Schleiermacher**- Referred to as the father of LIBERALISM. In response to the Protestant Orthodoxy, he defined theology as our feeling, our sense of absolute dependence. For him, theology was a matter of reasoned reflection. **Wesleyan Quadrilateral**: Sources of theological truth- 1 Scripture; 2 Reason; 3 Faith; and 4 Tradition. In response, we cannot find our way to God through our own ways. We erect false theologies. Left to ourselves, our theology is idolatry. The first commandment is the first principle of theology: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." *Theology is the way of God to man; not the way of man to God.*

The main points of the comments can be summarized in the language of classical philosophy: *principium theologia*- *principium* is speaking of the origin or source, the beginning, the foundation, or the norm. This is the source, the principle of theology. *The revelation of God must control our study from the beginning to the end. This revelation is the source and the norm of our speaking about God.* Only because God has revealed himself to man truly in revelation makes man able to study God at all. All human knowledge, in a matter of speaking, is theology.

## ii. Theology and Scripture

The concept of revelation is an exceedingly broad concept. It is as broad and wide as the creation. The entire creation, including ourselves is a revelation of God. Ps. 19: "The heavens declare the glory of God." All true human knowledge, since it derives from the created order, all knowledge may be called theology. These are all focused on ourselves and our environment as image-bearing creatures. **Special Revelation**- the revelation since the Fall that God provides in addition to general revelation that is "saving knowledge" of God. What is special redemptive revelation? The history of God's redemptive, revelatory activity: (1) This is a history that has reached its consummation in Christ. (2) This history has received its own revelatory explanation from the Scriptures.

We must recognize the function scripture has in revelation. There are two facets that are the leading function of Biblical revelation: (1) More pointedly, redemptive character: it is a redemptive revelation and of crucial significance in a world order corrupted by sin. Biblical revelation has a unique, crucial significance. (2) The Bible Alone is Uniquely Linguistic and verbal in character. This is revealed in genuine human language. In the concrete situation we find ourselves in God's revelation, Scripture performs its leading function and stands out as the purist exemplification of theology, the purist instance of the speaking of God: the divine speaking of God. The Bible *is* theology. The Bible is the

speaking of God; it is the speaking of God in the most direct and proper sense. The Bible is God contemporaneously speaking to us today. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, “The Bible today is the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.” These individual disciplines are all derived from the Bible as the source for all theology. The key to understanding Church History, is to understand that Church History is the history of the exegesis of Scripture. The question of Church History as a theological curriculum is to provide an understanding of how the Church has historically interpreted Scripture. Theology has a vital interest in language; both language of the Bible and how it functions and our own language. Hermeneutics is foundational to every theological endeavor. The work of Systematic theology is central to understanding hermeneutics. Hermeneutical inquiry, how to interpret, constitutes the prolegomena of theology. Understanding theology as the understanding of Scripture fundamentally, leads us to the non-speculative nature of theology. 1 Cor. 4:6- “Do not go beyond what is written.” This is not an atomistic, or biblical positivistic use of Scripture. This statement is not to be taken outside of the good and necessary consequence of Scripture or the understanding of a text outside of the context. Theology does not seek to be creative. Beware, be on your guard against the notion of creative theology or that “X is a creative theologian.” It is not creative or constructive in any sense. In our theology, our concern is to be receptively reconstructive. Receptively reconstructive is to be involved in thinking God’s thoughts after him. Given the character of the Bible, as God’s own interpretation, is received as God’s own interpretation as Creator and Redeemer. Our understanding of Scripture is interpretation of interpretation: our interpretation of the God-given pre-interpretation of the God given reality in Scripture. We are about interpretation of the pre-interpretation of the totality of Scripture. We are drawn to recognize the dependent or derivative quality of our theology. Theology must understand itself to be ministerial, not magisterial. Theology ministers “under the word” it has no authority “over the word.”

To limit theology brings into view the perennial question of the relationship between the Scripture and the rest of God’s revelation; or, the relationship between Special and General Revelation. The correlative question is the relationship between theology and the other special disciplines or sciences. The question is not of the relationship between the Bible and science but the relationship between theology (our understanding of the Bible) and other sciences. It could be said that it is the difference between God’s Word and God’s Works.

### iii. Theology and Faith

#### **The role of faith: faith and the *principium* of theology-**

The historic conviction of the Church, clarified at the Reformation, is that the self-revelation of God is the only norm for understand who God is. We may not veil from ourselves that in terms of the commitment to the *principium*, there are only two alternatives: (1) Affirm our *principium*, embracing it in faith; faith that can only come by the hearing of Christ (Rom. 10:17), or (2) Reject our *principium* in unbelief. We cannot from a neutral standpoint prove that the Bible is God’s word. We cannot prove Scripture in an *a priori* or *a posteriori*, inductive or deductive way. How do we prove that God spoke through prophets and through his Son. We can speak convincingly only as we speak from faith to faith. To seek to demonstrate your *principium*, or your ultimate norm is to show you do not understand your *principium*. This veils from

ourselves that we have a different or more ultimate *principium*. This does not mean that it is a waste of time to reflect on our *principium*, nor to give reasons why we hold to our foundational norm. We can give reasons for holding our *principium*, but such efforts are meaningful only in the circle of faith; only among those who believe. If we use anything but our *principium* to try to prove our *principium*, we reveal that we have another *principium* altogether. We are shut up as it were in the Holy Spirit's revelation. We must suspend our theological enterprise on faith. The reaction to this might be to ask the question: "Doesn't this correlation of faith and *principium*, our stress on the exclusiveness, grant too much to faith?" "Isn't this the case that we are being involved in *fideism*?" "Isn't this teaching "absolutizing" faith? Involving us in a blatant subjectivism?" A lot of harm has been done in the church in the name of faith. Fideism is a true threat to the church. The fideistic stance and question comes because it misunderstands what faith is. This brings us to discuss the nature of faith.

### **The nature of faith**

From a Biblical outlook, faith can be used in two senses. (1) More broadly it can refer to the religious root which is in every image-bearing creature; every human. This is the *semen religionis* or seed of religion. We can understand faith in this broad sense of religious rootedness that disposes us to ultimate commitments and to worship something, whether true or false. This faith is corrupted and distorted in human beings as sinners. (2) More narrowly, and what we have in view of faith in a specific sense: this is true faith or faith understood as saving faith. This is what the Bible has in view when it speaks of "faith." True faith is not a human capacity, it is a gift of God. It is not a potential slumbering in the sinner waiting to be actualized by appeal from the Word of God. Faith to be sure intensely personal, is not an act of self-assertion. Faith is not a principle of subjectivity; it is not my own subject-centeredness. What we need to break out of is the mindset that my reason gives me my objectivity and my faith is my subjectivity. Faith is a gift from God; more specifically, faith is the result of the Sovereign working of the Spirit of God. Considering faith as a gift of God, is in one important sense, has nothing of its own: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 4). Faith is what it is only in relation to its object - Jesus Christ. Faith's object and focus is in Jesus Christ. Faith depends upon this object; focused and bound to this object; faith is radically "extra-spective" or looking away from itself. Faith is focused on the Word of God and the saving relationship in Christ. Without Christ faith has nothing. According to Rom. 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing from the Word of Christ." Eph. 3:19: "As believers we may be filled up with all the fullness of God." Christ dwells in our hearts through faith. Because faith in itself is nothing; yet it possesses everything but "All things are yours" (1Cor.3:22). By faith, we are better than our faith. "We are shut up to the circle of the Spirit's working." It is not that faith is subjective, but we cannot set up reason as objective and faith is subjective.

Faith as extra-spective is looking away from oneself to Christ and His word. These principle acts are "recepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone." What is being drawn to our attention is that the essence of faith is the abandonment of self. Faith is whole-soul acceptance. This is acceptance without reservations even though the reservations may come back from time to time. It is a deeply rooted receptivity. We should not understand this receptivity as passivity, or being passive. We receive and rest upon Christ but this is not to be passive toward inaction; or, this does not mean a tendency toward quietism or other forms of mysticism. This is not a certain kind of "let go and let God." It is not a tendency toward such passivity because inevitably, faith

alone will not be enough but will have to be supplemented by some extra action. As this mindset comes in, we polarize works and faith in the Christian life. Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. 14 says: "Faith is the source of multiple activities: yielding obedience to commandments of Scripture, trembling at the commands, relying on the grace of God alone." Faith is an abandonment of self to Christ which is active for Christ. Faith is an abandonment that is active with all our being. Faith is a resting, repose in our God and his righteousness, which is restless for God and his righteousness. Faith is a restless resting in our Savior and his word. Calvin says, "We stand firm only as we rest on God by faith" True faith is restlessness for God, and resting on God.

From these observations, it is plain that to insist on the unbreakable correlation between faith and revelation, or that theology is the truth of faith, to insist on this is not a sacrificing of the Church to subjectivism. Error has come into the Church through misdirected appeals to feelings and faulty uses of reason, and religious sentiment and tradition. It is because of this that the Church has not stayed faithful to the Word of God. Faith, no matter how partial or imperfect, it holds fast and unerringly to Christ and His Word. This is the true, distinguishing essence of faith. John 10:27- "My sheep hear my voice." Faith is drawn to the Word of God. Belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is not a necessary component; it is an intricate and normal component of saving faith.

### **Faith and Reason**

Almost from the beginning of the Church, the church has strayed from its *principium*. There have been efforts to synthesize revelation and reason which would attempt to provide a place for reason to be a supplementary to revelation. This reason would be used as a *principium* in theology. These synthesis efforts are efforts which operate or proceed that the basic problem of unbelief is not a matter of intellect but of the will. Over against such efforts, in the interest of our work in theology as Christian thinkers, we need to rid ourselves of the misconception that reason, or the intellect is an unbiased tool to use at our disposal. The thought is that reason is neutral toward God and the world. Rather, we have to recognize from a Biblical point of view is that man's reason is embedded (intrinsically) in the unified whole of his personality structure. The integrity (or wholeness) of man is involved. It is I in my distorted wholeness and integrity in the exercise of reason. Reason inevitably gives expression to what is my motivating center. Reason is guided by who I am at the center of my personality. A particular exercise of reason is who the person is at the very core of their being. Exercises of reason are exercises of an existential bent. Reasoning is always an expression of what the Bible calls the "heart" out of which are the issues of life, or the well-spring of life (Prov. 4:24) and this includes the intellectual as well as other aspects. Pascal says, "The heart too has its reasons." The heart only has reasons. All reasoning is from the heart. We need to always be aware that every rational discussion is in fact a heart to heart talk. We need to keep this in mind not only in marriage, but in our speaking with unbelievers. What is the motivating center of our personalities? 1 Cor. 2:13-15; Rom. 8:6- Within the human community there are only two "hearts" motivating centers, dispositions (no neutral ground or third position). Every human is characterized by one of these two positions. These two positions are in irresolvable, actual conflict. On the one hand, there is what Paul calls the "natural man" which thinks God's truth is foolishness. It is demonstrably foolish. Believers are "spiritual."



What is demonstrably foolish to the wisdom of the world is wisdom for the believers, or those who are spiritual.

We do not need to place reason and revelation in a tension, but we need to speak as our Fathers of as reasoning by faith (*ratio Christiana*). Rom. 10:17; Gal. 3:2,5- Apostle Paul speaks of the hearing of faith. This faith does not function in a vacuum but it is a bound faith, it is the “Word bound” character of faith. It holds by faith to that word simply which in the moment of believing it understands and it is driven to further understand. Augustine spoke of “faith seeking understanding.” Anselm said “Credo ut intelligam.” Epistemology and soteriology are not separate concerns of our existence. How we know and how we are saved are not detached in our existence. True knowledge and saving knowledge are inseparable. For the Just we shall always live by faith, an all-embracing life principle. If we are justified by faith, we must think and reason by faith. Reason is in no more opposition to faith as the good works of the believers in opposition to faith. In fact, reasoning is just as much a function or proof of our faith as our good works. Reasoning that is rooted in faith is one of the good works for which we have been created in Christ Jesus. To make reason function apart from faith, an aid for faith, is to reverse the order set down in 1 Corinthians by the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 2:3-5).

Paul further says in 1 Cor. 2: 3-5: “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”- Paul is showing how that his preaching was not received because it was reasoned correctly with a line of argumentation. His presentation had cogent argumentation, but the positive reception ultimately was because of the powerful demonstration of the Spirit. This preaching showed the power of persuasion of the Spirit working with the Word of God preached. Because of that powerful demonstration of the Spirit, the recipients of faith were based not on rhetorical sophistication, but by the sovereignly convincing power of God.

### **3.4 Disciplines of Theology**

Theology, as a human endeavor, is the interpretation of Scripture. This includes everything that facilitates or subserves understanding of Scripture. All theology is based on exegesis. The theological disciplines are interrelated and focused in concentration on Scripture: i.e. Old Testament, New Testament, Church History and Historical Theology, Systematic Theology. These individual disciplines are all derived from the Bible as the source of all theology. The key to understanding Church History is to understand that Church History is the history of the exegesis of Scripture. The question of Church History as a theological curriculum is to provide an understanding of how the Church has historically interpreted Scripture. Theology has a vital interest in language; both language of the Bible and how it functions and our own language. Hermeneutics is foundational to every theological endeavor. The work of Systematic theology is central to understanding hermeneutics. Hermeneutical inquiry, how to interpret, constitutes the

prolegomena of theology. Theology, in its classical expression has been broadly divided into many disciplines and subcategories. The following are some of the basic disciplines of Theology.

### **Biblical Theology**

Johann Philip Gabler (1753-1826), one of the fathers of Biblical Theology defined Biblical Theology as “the historical study of the OT and the NT, their authors and the contexts within which they were written.” The basic presupposition of Biblical Theology is that it is an objective process of recovering of the theology of biblical authors without the necessary interference of one’s religious tradition. Thus, Biblical Theology is assumed to be a central theology, which opens to different religions or theological traditions.

### **The Vosian Tradition in Biblical Theology**

Even though known popularly by the nomenclature of “Biblical Theology” it is ultimately *The History of Special Revelation*. G. Vos: “[Biblical Theology is] that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the *process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible.*” The teaches us initially that God has truly revealed himself through the Scriptures and with the aid of the Holy Spirit of God, man can truly come to know Him as He has chosen to reveal Himself.

### **The Historic Progressiveness of the Revelation Process-**

God in Scripture has not revealed Himself all at once in time as it were, but has communicated His revelation to man progressively in history. God’s revelation has “unfolded itself in a long series of successive acts.” This is to be understood in light of God himself and his communication to man his creation through historical intervals. The following exists alongside each other from the beginning of God’s revelation to man.

**Objective-Central Acts of God:** The incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection of Christ.

**Subjective-Individual Acts of God:** Regeneration, justification, conversion, sanctification and glorification.

**The Actual Embodiment of Revelation in History-** Vos teaches that this revelation of God becomes “incarnate in history.” The order of God’s revelation is: Word → then the fact → then the interpretive Word of God. For instance, the Old Testament brings the “predictive preparatory word,” the Gospels record the revelatory fact, the Epistles supply the subsequent, final interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

**The Organic Nature of the Historic Process Observable in Revelation-** It is observable in revelation how God’s message to man becomes clearer and sometimes more audible in particular, epochal stages of His revealing. In the Old Testament there were times when God would speak with Moses, speak through the prophets,

<sup>1</sup> Vos, Geerhardus. *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948, pg. 15.

culminating in the revelation of God in the flesh in the New Testament. This does not mean that God was not active at other times, but that he chose to reveal himself in epochs - -historically to his people.

**The Fourth Aspect of Revelation Determinative of the Study of Biblical Theology consists in its Practical Adaptability-** God's revelation is not a mere school whereby he teaches his people the truth about Himself. Rather, in His graciousness he has revealed Himself in Covenant to His people, intertwining his revelation and truth of himself with the everyday lives, history and generation of his Covenant people. Vos writes, "All that God disclosed of Himself has come in response to the practical religious needs of His people as these emerged in the course of history."<sup>2</sup>

Biblical theology is first of all *theology*. And theology presupposes an active self-disclosure of God. This active divine principle sets genuine theology apart from all forms of anthropocentric liberalism which reduce theology to religion. Religion is a subjective, not an objective science. It represents man's grasp of the noumenal; it delineates man's psychical nature. In sum, religion is human religious experience arising from within man. It is anthropology, not theology. Vos was boldly distinguishing his method from that prevalent in his day. Biblical theology arises from an objective self-disclosure of God, not a species of the human religious consciousness.

### **Biblical Theology as Linear and Transcendent**

The finality of this Christological revelation is both linear and transcendent. It progresses linearly or horizontally through redemptive history from first Adam to second Adam. Yet in addition it continually discloses a transcendent (or vertical) point of contact. We may designate this the eschatological dimension which intrudes from above into the history of redemption. The full disclosure of the incarnation marks the end of the organic development. No further redemptive acts occur; nothing greater than the Christ-event can take place. The record of this accomplishment closes the canon. Beyond the inscripturation of the New Testament, the people of God may expect no further revelation (save perhaps at the parousia).

The nature of this revelatory process is multiform or "much variegated." Not all vehicles of revelation are the same nor are all the forms of revelation identical. There are four gospels (or a four-fold gospel), epistles and apocalyptic in the New Testament. The Old Testament is replete with poetry, lament, narrative history, court chronicle, prophecy, apocalyptic and much more. Vos is suggesting the unity in diversity of biblical revelation. The continuity of redemption is not annulled by its diverse forms—covenant, theocracy, kingdom, church.

### **Philosophical Theology**

Philosophical theology is a term used to describe the process of doing theology with the aid and support of philosophical reflection, language, and methods. It emphasizes the use of philosophical language in theological development. This method moves beyond the simple statements of faith to nuanced and highly articulated language. There are typically two different categories in philosophical theology: "The first category includes

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pg. 17.

attempts to demonstrate the truth of religious claims by appeal to evidence available apart from purported divine revelations and is based on natural revelation to understand the Christian claims. The second category includes attempts to demonstrate the consistency and plausibility of theological claims using philosophical techniques and is based on special revelations."

One of the most critical questions in philosophical theology is how we can know and posit realities of a divine nature. Among the great topics in theology that have high philosophical articulation are the existence and nature (attributes) of God, Trinity, Incarnation and Faith and Reason. We shall employ two theologians Thomas Aquinas and William Parley who have used philosophical theology in developing natural theology for our study.

### **Thomas Aquinas**

One of the most astute philosophical theologians of the church, Thomas Aquinas, posits a "twofold mode of truth concerning what we profess about God." First, we can know things about God by rational argumentation. We can use human reasoning in order to arrive at certain conclusions that are necessary and certain for those who know the truth of the demonstration's premises. The rational demonstration can enable us to know about the existence of God. Reasoning can also demonstrate many of God's essential attributes, such as his oneness, immateriality, eternity, and so forth. This does not mean that our demonstrative efforts will give us complete knowledge of God's nature. Aquinas believes, however, that human reasoning can illuminate some of what the Christian faith professes. It is those aspects of God which can be demonstrated and the process that is called natural theology and natural theology is built by philosophical arguments.

Obviously, some truths about God surpass what reason can demonstrate. Our knowledge of them will therefore require a different source of divine truth, namely, sacred teaching. According to Aquinas, sacred teaching contains the most complete and reliable account of what we profess about God. Of course, whether sacred teaching is authoritative *vis-à-vis* divine realities depends on whether what it says about God is true. The nature of the sacred teaching needs to be qualified, whether this refers to Scripture alone as the revelation of God or some other church traditions.

Though Aquinas has done extensive work on natural or philosophical theology, he nevertheless stands on the shoulders of Augustine. Augustine wrote extensively on Roman 1:19-20 of which the most salient aspect of his use of the Romans text is that the invisible realities of God can be seen with the mind in creation. The eyes of the body and of the mind are windows through which the soul or the mind intuitively grasps the truth and perceives the invisible realities of God beyond creation. His work unfolds one of the most philosophical Christian minds of the first millennium AD by seeking to understand the basic premise of both theology and philosophy that the nature of the Creator is invisibility and incorporeality.

Natural theology is obviously built on philosophical categories. By accepting the fact of natural theology and revealed theology, philosophical theology holds its space in Christian theology. Charles Hodge argues thus, "Theology is properly distinguished as

natural and revealed. The former is concerned with the facts of nature so far as they reveal God and our relation to him, and the latter with the facts of Scripture.”

### Can We Demonstrate God’s Existence?

Aquinas thinks there are a variety of ways to demonstrate God’s existence. But before he turns to them, he addresses several objections to making God an object of demonstration. This essay will consider two of those objections. According to the first objection, God’s existence is self-evident. Therefore, any effort to demonstrate God’s existence is, at best, unnecessary. For Aquinas, this objection rests on confusion about what it means for a statement to be self-evident. He explains: a statement is self-evident if its predicate is contained in the essence of the subject. For example, the statement *a triangle is a 3-sided planar figure* is self-evident because the predicate-term (3-sided planar figure) is a part of the subject-term’s (triangle) nature. Anyone who knows what a triangle is will see that this statement is axiomatic; it needs no demonstration. On the other hand, this statement will not appear self-evident to those who do not know what a triangle is. To employ Aquinas’ parlance, the statement is self-evident in itself but not self-evident to us. For a statement is self-evident in itself so long as it accurately predicates of the subject-term the essential characteristics it has. Whether a statement is self-evident *to us*, however, will depend on whether we understand the subject-term to have those characteristics.

The aforementioned distinction is helpful when responding to the claim that God’s existence is self-evident. For Aquinas, the statement *God exists* is self-evident *in itself* since *existence* is a part of God’s essence or nature (that is, *God is his existence*—a claim to which we’ll turn below). Yet the statement is not self-evident *to us* because God’s essence is not something we can comprehend fully. Indeed, it is unlikely that even those acquainted with the idea of God will, upon reflecting on the idea, understand that existence is something that God has necessarily. Although Aquinas does not deny that knowledge of God is naturally implanted in us, such knowledge is, at best, inchoate and imprecise; it does not convey *absolutely* that God exists. We acquire definitive knowledge of God’s existence in the same way we come to understand other natural causes, namely by identifying certain facts about the world—observable effects whose obviousness makes them better known to us—and then attempting to demonstrate their pre-existing cause. In other words, knowledge of God’s existence must be acquired through *a posteriori* demonstrations. We will consider one of these demonstrations below. At this point, we simply are trying to show that since God’s existence is not (to us) self-evident, the use of theistic demonstrations will not be a pointless exercise.

The second objection to the demonstrability of God’s existence is straightforward: that which is of faith cannot be demonstrated. Since God’s existence is an article of faith, it is not something we can demonstrate. Aquinas’ response to this argument denies that God’s existence is an article of faith. That is, he denies that God’s existence is a supernaturally revealed truth. Instead, God’s existence is a demonstrable fact which supernaturally revealed truths *presuppose*. The assent of faith involves embracing doctrinal teachings *about* God, whose existence is *already* assumed. For this reason, Aquinas describes God’s existence not as an article of faith but as a *preamble* to the articles. As such, God’s existence can be the subject of demonstration.

Aquinas concedes that, for some people, God's existence will be a matter of faith. After all, not everyone will be able to grasp the proofs for God's existence. Thus for some people it is perfectly appropriate to accept on the basis of sacred teaching that which others attempt to demonstrate by means of reason (*ST Ia 2.2 ad 1*).

### **William Parley on Natural Theology<sup>3</sup>**

IN crossing a Neath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer, that, for any thing I knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever: nor would it perhaps be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given, that, for any thing I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch, as well as for the stone? Why is it not as admissible in the second case, as in the first? For this reason, and for no other, viz. that, when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive (what we could not discover in [2] the stone) that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, e. g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; that, if the several parts had been differently shaped from what they are, of a different size from what they are, or placed after any other manner, or in any other order, than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use, that is now served by it; To reckon up a few of the plainest of these parts, and of their offices, all tending to one result:--We see a cylindrical box containing a coiled elastic spring, which, by its endeavour to relax itself, turns round the box. We next observe a flexible chain (artificially wrought for the sake of flexure) communicating the action of the spring from the box to the fusee. We then find a series of wheels, the teeth of which, catch in, and apply to, each other, conducting the motion from the fusee to the balance, and from the balance to the pointer; and at the same time, by the size and shape of those wheels, so regulating that motion, as to terminate in causing an index, by an equable and measured progression, to pass over a given space in a given time. We take notice that the wheels are made of brass, in order to keep them from rust; the springs of steel, no other metal being so elastic; that over the face of the watch there is placed a glass, a material employed in no other part of the work, but, in the room of which, if there had been any other than a transparent substance, the hour could not be seen without opening the case. This mechanism being observed (it requires indeed an examination of the instrument, and perhaps some previous knowledge of the subject, to perceive and understand it;- but being once, [3] as we have said, observed and understood), the inference, we think, is inevitable; that the watch must have had a maker; that there must have existed, at some time and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers, who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.

I. Nor would it, I apprehend, weaken the conclusion, that we had never seen a watch made; that we had never known an artist capable of making one; that we were altogether incapable of executing such a piece of workmanship ourselves, or of understanding in what manner it was performed; all this being no more than what is true of some exquisite remains of ancient art, of some lost arts, and to the generality of mankind, of

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<sup>3</sup> This is culled from the Internet Encyclopedia.

the more curious productions of modern manufacture. Does one man in a- million know how oval frames are turned? Ignorance of this kind exalts our opinion of the unseen and unknown artist's skill, if he be unseen and unknown, but raises no doubt in our minds of the existence and agency of such an artist, at some former time, and in some place or other. Nor can I perceive that it varies at all the inference, whether the question arise concerning a human agent, or concerning an agent of a different species, or an agent possessing, in some respects, a different nature.

II. Neither, secondly, would it invalidate our conclusion, that the watch sometimes went wrong, or that it seldom went exactly right. The purpose of the machinery, the design, and the designer, might be evident, and in the case supposed would be evident, in whatever way we accounted for the irregularity of the movement, or whether we could account for it or not. It is not necessary that a machine be perfect, in order to shew with what design it was made: still less necessary, where the only [4] question is, whether it were made with any design at all.

III. Nor, thirdly, would it bring any uncertainty into the argument, if there were a few parts of the watch, concerning which we could not discover, or had not yet discovered, in what manner they conduced to the general effect; or even some parts, concerning which we could not ascertain, whether they conduced to that effect in any manner whatever. For, as to the first branch of the case; if, by the loss, or disorder, or decay of the parts in question, the movement of the watch were found in fact to be stopped, or disturbed, or retarded, no doubt would remain in our minds as to the utility or intention of these parts, although we should be unable to investigate the manner according to which, or-the connection by which, the ultimate effect depended upon their action or assistance; and the more complex is the machine, the more likely is this obscurity to arise. Then, as to the second thing supposed, namely, that there were parts, which might be spared without prejudice to the movement of the watch, and that we had proved this by experiment, --these superfluous parts, even if we were completely assured that they were such, would not vacate the reasoning which we had instituted concerning other parts. The indication of contrivance remained, with respect to them, nearly as it was before.

IV. Nor, fourthly, would any man in his senses think the existence of the watch, with its various machinery, accounted for, by being told that it was one out of possible combinations of material forms; that whatever he had found in the place where he found the watch, must have contained some internal configuration or other; and that this configuration might be the structure now exhibited, viz. of the works of a watch, as well as a different structure.[5]

V. Nor, fifthly, would it yield his inquiry more satisfaction to be answered, that there existed in things a principle of order, which had disposed the parts of the watch into their present form and situation. He never knew a watch made by the principle of order; nor can he even form to himself an idea of what is meant by a principle of order, distinct from the intelligence of the watch-maker.

VI. Sixthly, he would be surprised to hear, that the mechanism of the watch was no proof of contrivance, only a motive to induce the mind to think so:

VII. And not less surprised to be informed, that the watch in his hand was nothing more than the result of the laws of metallic nature. It is a perversion of language to assign any law, as the efficient, operative, cause of anything. A law presupposes an agent; for it is only the mode, according to which an agent proceeds: it implies a power; for it is the order, according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the law does nothing; is nothing. The expression, " the law of metallic nature," may sound strange and harsh to a philosophic ear, but it seems quite as justifiable as some others which are more familiar to him, such as " the law of vegetable nature"--" the law of animal nature," or indeed as " the law of nature" in general, when assigned as the cause of phenomena, in exclusion of agency and power; or when it is substituted into the place of these.

VIII. Neither, lastly, would our observer be driven out of his conclusion, or from his confidence in its truth, by being told that he knew nothing at all about the matter. He knows enough for his argument. He knows the utility of the end: he knows the subserviency and adaptation of the means to the end. These points being known, his ignorance of [6] other points, his doubts concerning other points, affect not the certainty of his reasoning. The consciousness of knowing little, need not beget a distrust of that which he does know.

*Chapter II: State of The Argument Continued*

[7] SUPPOSE, in the next place, that the person, who found the watch, should, after some time, discover, that, in addition to all the properties which he had hitherto observed in it, it possessed the unexpected property of producing, in the course of its movement, another watch like itself; (the thing is conceivable;) that it contained within it a mechanism, a system of parts, a mould for instance, or a complex adjustment of laths, files, and other tools, evidently and separately calculated for this purpose; let us inquire, what effect ought such a discovery to have upon his former conclusion?

I. The first effect would be to increase his admiration of the contrivance, and his conviction of the consummate skill of the contriver. Whether he regarded the object of the contrivance, the distinct apparatus, the intricate, yet in many parts intelligible, mechanism by which it was carried on, he would perceive, in this new observation, nothing but an additional reason for doing what he had already done; for referring the construction of the watch to design, and to supreme art. If that construction without this property, or, which is the same thing, before this property had been noticed, proved intention and art to have been employed about it; still more strong would the proof appear, when he came to the knowledge of this further property, the crown and perfection of all the rest. [8]

II. He would reflect, that though the watch before him were, in some sense, the maker of the watch, which was fabricated in the course of its movements, yet it was in a very different sense from that, in which a carpenter, for instance, is the maker of a chair; the author of its contrivance, the cause of the relation of its parts to their use. With respect to these, the first watch was no cause at all to the second: in no such sense as this, was it the author of the constitution and order, either of the parts which the new watch contained, or of the parts by the aid and instrumentality of which it was produced. We might possibly say, but with great latitude of expression, that a stream of water ground corn: but no latitude of expression would allow us to say, no stretch of conjecture could



lead us to think, that the stream of water built the mill, though it were too ancient for us to know who the builder was. What the stream of water does in the affair is neither more nor less than this; by the application of an unintelligent impulse to a mechanism previously arranged, arranged independently of it, and arranged by intelligence, an effect is produced, viz. the corn is ground. But the effect results from the arrangement. The force of the stream cannot be said to be the cause or author of the effect, still less of the arrangement. Understanding and plan in the formation of the mill were not the less necessary, for any share which the water has in grinding the corn: yet is this share the same, as that which the watch would have contributed to the production of the new watch, upon the supposition assumed in the last section. Therefore,

III. Though it be now no longer probable, that the individual watch which our observer had found, was made immediately by the hand of an artificer, yet sloth not this alteration in any wise affect the inference, that an artificer had been originally employed [9] and concerned in the production. The argument from design remains as it was. Marks of design and contrivance are no more accounted for now, than they were before. In the same thing, we may ask for the cause of different properties. We may ask for the cause of the colour of a body, of its hardness, of its heat; and these causes may be all different. We are now asking for the cause of that subserviency to an use, that relation to an end, which we have remarked in the watch before us. No answer is given to this question by telling us that a preceding watch produced it. There cannot be design without a designer; contrivance without a contriver; order without choice; arrangement, without any thing capable of arranging; subserviency and relation to a purpose, without that which could intend a purpose; means suitable to an end, and executing their office in accomplishing that end, without the end ever having been contemplated, or the means accommodated to it. Arrangement, disposition of parts, subserviency of means to an end, relation of instruments to an use, imply the presence of intelligence and mind. No one, therefore, can rationally believe, that the insensible, inanimate watch, from which the watch before us issued, was the proper cause of the mechanism we so much admire in it; could be truly said to have constructed the instrument, disposed its parts, assigned their office, determined their order, action, and mutual dependency, combined their several motions into one result, and that also a result connected with the utilities of other beings. All these properties, therefore, are as much unaccounted for, as they were before.

IV. Nor is any thing gained by running the difficulty further back, i. e. by supposing the watch before us to have been produced from another watch, that from a former, and so on indefinitely. Our going [10] back ever so far brings us no nearer to the least degree of satisfaction upon the subject. Contrivance is still unaccounted for. We still want a contriver. A designing mind is neither supplied by this supposition, nor dispensed with. If the difficulty were diminished the further we went back, by going back indefinitely we might exhaust it. And this is the only case to which this sort of reasoning applies. Where there is a tendency, or, as we increase the number of terms, a continual approach towards a limit, there, by supposing the number of terms to be what is called infinite, we may conceive the limit to be attained: but where there is no such tendency or approach, nothing is effected by lengthening the series. There is no difference as to the point in question, (whatever there may be as to many points) between one series and another; between a series which is finite, and a series which is infinite. A chain, composed of an infinite number of links, can no more support itself, than a chain composed of a finite number of links. And of this we are assured, (though we never can have tried the

experiment) because, by increasing the number of links, from ten for instance to a hundred, from a hundred to a thousand, &c. we make not the smallest approach, we observe not the smallest tendency, towards self support. There is no difference in this respect (yet there may be a great difference in several respects) between a chain of a greater or less length, between one chain and another, between one that is finite and one that is indefinite. This very much resembles the case before us. The machine, which we are inspecting, demonstrates, by its construction, contrivance and design. Contrivance must have had a contriver; design, a designer; whether the machine immediately proceeded from another machine, or not. That circumstance alters not the case. That other machine [11] may, in like manner have proceeded from a former machine: nor does that alter the case: contrivance must have a contriver. No tendency is perceived, no approach towards a diminution of this necessity. It is the same with any and every succession of these machines; a succession of ten, of a hundred, of a thousand; with one series as with another; a series which is finite, as with a series which is infinite. In whatever other respects they may differ, in this they do not. In all equally, contrivance and design are unaccounted for.

The question is not simply, How came the first watch into existence? Which question, it may be pretended, is done away by supposing the series of watches thus produced from one another to have been infinite, and consequently to have had no such first, for which it was necessary to provide a cause. This, perhaps, would have been nearly the state of the question, if nothing had been before us but an unorganised, unmechanised, substance, without mark or indication of contrivance. It might be difficult to show that such substance could not have existed from eternity, either in succession (if it were possible, which I think it is not, far unorganised bodies to spring from one another), or by individual perpetuity. But that is not the question now. To suppose it to be so, is to suppose that it made no difference whether we had found a watch or a stone. As it is, the metaphysics of that question have no place; for, in the watch which we are examining, are seen contrivance, design; an end, a purpose; means for the end, adaptation to the purpose. And the question, which irresistibly presses upon our thoughts, is, whence this contrivance and design. The thing required is the intending mind, the adapting hand, the [12] intelligence by which that hand was directed. This question, this demand, is not shaken off, by increasing a number or succession of substances, destitute of these properties; nor the more, by increasing that number to infinity. If it be said, that, upon the supposition of one watch being produced from another in the course of that other's movements, and by means of the mechanism within it, we have a cause for the watch in my hand, viz. the watch from which it proceeded, I deny, that for the design, the contrivance, the suitableness of means to an end, the adaptation of instruments to an use (all which we discover in the watch), we have any cause whatever. It is in vain, therefore, to assign a series of such causes, or to allege that a series may be carried back to infinity; for I do not admit that we have yet any cause at all of the phenomena, still less any series of causes either finite or infinite. Here is contrivance, but no contriver: proofs of design, but no designer.

V. Our observer would further also reflect, that the maker of the watch before him, was, in truth and reality, the maker of every watch produced from it; there being no difference (except that the latter manifests a more exquisite skill) between the making of another watch with his own hands by the mediation of files, laths, chisels, &c. and the disposing, fixing, and inserting, of these instruments, or of others equivalent to them, in the body of the watch already made, in such a manner, as to form a new watch in the

course of the movements which he had given to the old one. It is only working by one set of tools, instead of another.

The conclusion which the first examination of the watch, of its works, construction, and movement suggested, was, that it must have had, for the cause and author of that construction, an artificer, who understood its mechanism, and designed its use. This [13] conclusion is invincible. A second examination presents us with a new discovery. If the watch is found, in the course of its movement, to produce another watch, similar to itself: and not only so, but we perceive in it a system of organization, separately calculated for that purpose. What effect would this discovery have, or ought it to have, upon our former inference? What, as hath already been said, but to increase, beyond measure, our admiration of the skill, which had been employed in the formation of such a machine?

### **Historical Theology**

Historical Theology concerns itself with historical development of Christian doctrines. It seeks to reveal the political, economical, religious and ecclesiastical factors that aided in the evolution of Christian doctrines. Historical Theology in this dimension revealed the humanness and contextual nature of every theological creation. Thus, this theological discipline often challenged the tendencies in most theological traditions to make a theological reflection of the past sacrosanct for the present. Even though, one have to recognize that timeless theological truths existed in theology such as God which will always occupy the minds of theologians of each generation or time, yet overshadowing the present with the creeds of the past has tendencies of merely paying a lip service to the present while actually living in the past. In this sense, historical theology challenges the uncritical imposition of theological tradition of the past on the present.

### **Systematic Theology**

Although systematic theology has its potential weaknesses and pitfalls, to which biblical theology may serve as a helpful corrective, it also has its strengths, and may prove to be the remedy to certain possible shortcomings of biblical theology. For instance, systematic theology ensures that all the doctrines of the bible find a place in the Christian's understanding; every doctrine is treated exhaustively, from the entire testimony of the scriptures, so that nothing "falls through the cracks," or is overlooked. Also, systematic theology ensures that one's understanding of a given doctrine is the most developed and up-to-date that it can possibly be. Systematic theology demands the fullest and most final expression of a doctrine that revelatory history has made possible, so that there is no overlooking or forgetting any later clarification in the scriptures.

Along the same lines, systematic theology, by comparing scriptures with scriptures, according to the principle of "analogy of faith," precludes any potential inconsistencies in one's doctrinal understanding. The scriptures are all brought together and compared side-by-side, in relation to any particular theme; and any scriptures that seem to be contradictory are ironed out and brought into harmony. Finally, systematic theology is valuable as a comprehensive explanation of the Christian worldview. Because it brings

all the truths of the Bible into a well-organized system, it is invaluable for explaining to the world just what Christianity is, defending it logically and scripturally, and edifying and equipping Christians to interact knowledgeably and reasonably with others.

When talking efficiently or meaningfully about Systematic theology, we must say what theology is, addressing the notion of theology in general. There is a necessity for a certain circularity involved in theology. At a number of points we are going to have to anticipate certain conclusions that we will arrive at subsequently. Prolegomena began around the Reformation period in the conflict with Rome. This reemerged with the so-called Enlightenment period of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There has been systematic theology from the beginning of the Church such as Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, but it is later in history when prolegomena was started when the foundations began to come under attack (such issues as the relationship of reason and revelation; the doctrine of Scripture and the Church; etc.). None of us come to the study of theology in a vacuum; without a bias; or uncommitted in our theological convictions. Each comes into this study with an explicit theology that needs to be advanced and clarified. The work of theology could be a challenge to the growth of our theology.

Systematic Theology seeks a rational presentation and documentation of doctrinal beliefs of the Church. Even though the Bible itself never revealed such a coherent rational pattern to present its beliefs, yet theologians in light of academic and modern challenges has sought to represent Christian beliefs in systematic forms. This practice could be traced back to the writings of the Church fathers particularly Tertullian and Origen and such quest for systematization of dogmatic doctrines as inherently seen in the preoccupation of medieval scholastics. Despite its service to the course of Christian faith however, the flaw of systematic theology is its tendencies of proof-texting. Many verses on the topics and themes in the Bible are just collected without a forthright exegesis of the texts.

### **Pastoral Theology**

Pastoral Theology is mainly concerned with the relationship that exists between theology and the pastoral ministry. It sought to capture for the pastoral ministry helpful developments in theology and the Bible. Under this understanding, Pastoral theology explores ingredients of pastoral ministry such as worship, liturgy, homiletics, administration, hermeneutics and ethics.

### **Exegetical Theology**

Exegetical Theology is preoccupied with the text of Scriptures. It seeks to explicate the meaning of the text as understood by the contemporary and original or intended audience of the text. Hence, exegesis and systematic analysis of the text becomes the first very important level and also the primary level or theology where all other development or disciplines of theology built on.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Explain the various disciplines of Theology

### **3.4 Task of Theology**

The tasks of theology are many because of the many disciplines of Theology as already highlighted in study unit 3:3. Some had reduced the task of theology to explication of divine will for humanity; others had stressed the commitment of theology to social and political concerns. Still, others had sought to defend the task of theology to missiological particulars. On the other hand, others have underscored the apologetic nature of the task of theology noting the commitment of theology towards correcting the misrepresentation and other miscellaneous erroneous understanding of the Christian faith. In the same vein, others have understood the task of theology in terms of the edification and ministry of the Church in the human society.

It seemed that these many tasks of theology could be reduced into two categories, which has been and ought to be the task of every theology. These two categories that explicate the task of theology are namely the theological commitment to transcendence and secondly its commitment to immanent or contextual realities.

#### **Transcendence Commitment of Theology**

Theology must seek a conscious commitment to the transcendent. By its name, it is rightly assumed that theology should have the divine being at its core or focus, however unfortunately this defining task of theology has often elude many Christian theologies. These types of Christian theologies have sound humanitarian or contextual concerns but faulty transcendent concern and thus, inevitably such Christian theologies become shallow and inadequate to address the humanitarian or contextual concerns of the human community. Similarly, the flaw of many Christian theologies with a strong transcendent commitment is their inability to articulate a coherent commitment to the context of human experience.

#### **Immanence Commitment of Theology**

Most theologies have been warped in philosophical categories around transcendence that no room is left to address the human situation in which theological reflection is taken place. Traditional Theology as revealed in western Theology often is abstract, impersonal, reflective and unable to address the human socio-political, racial, gender and other cogent and volatile components of the human society. With such disposition in academic shibboleths and devoid of the existential factors in the human context, thus the theological preoccupation becomes a reflection of mirage and not really the felt needs of the human society. Unfortunately, it is such lack of praxis - sensitivity of classical theology that course the rise of multiple theologies to address the many human concerns that have generally been ignored as theological agenda in classical theology reflection. Theology must have a transcendent focus and an immanent locus, without these two horizons kept in check, theology become irrelevant and obsolete. It is true that neither of these Christian theologies, which have no transcendent or immanent context, is adequate enough to deal with the human existential crisis of the modern times and also, the post-modern crises of future times.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain the two basic tasks of Theology?

### 3.5 Presupposition of Theology

Every theology, whether explicitly stated or not, have some basic assumptions or hypothesis that guide its theological methodology. We do come to theology with our presupposition, which is otherwise called faith in the most basic sense of it. In other words, it is what we believe that we theologize about God. From a Biblical outlook, faith can be used in two senses. (1) More broadly it can refer to the religious root which is in every image-bearing creature; every human. This is the *semen religionis*. We can understand faith in this broad sense of religious rootedness that disposes us to ultimate commitments and to worship something, whether true or false. This faith is corrupted and distorted in human beings as sinners. (2) More narrowly, and what we have in view of faith in a specific sense: this is true faith or faith understood as saving faith. This is what the Bible has in view when it speaks of “faith.” True faith is not a human capacity, it is a gift of God. It is not a potential slumbering in the sinner waiting to be actualized by appeal from the Word of God. Faith to be sure intensely personal, is not an act of self-assertion. Faith is not a principle of subjectivity; it is not my own subject-centeredness. What we need to break out of is the mindset that my reason gives me my objectivity and my faith is my subjectivity. Faith is a gift from God; more specifically, faith is the result of the Sovereign working of the Spirit of God. Considering faith as a gift of God, is in one important sense, has nothing of its own: “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 4). Faith is what it is only in relation to its object, which is Jesus Christ. Faith’s object and focus is in Jesus Christ. Faith depends upon this object; focused and bound to this object; faith is radically “extra-spective” or looking away from itself. Faith is focused on the Word of God and the saving relationship in Christ. Without Christ faith has nothing. Rom. 10:17- “Faith comes by hearing and hearing from the Word of Christ.” Eph. 3:19- “As believers we may be filled up with all the fullness of God.” Christ dwells in our hearts through faith. Because faith in itself is nothing, it possesses everything. 1 Cor. 3:22- “All things are yours.” By faith, we are better than our faith. “We are shut up to the circle of the Spirit’s working.” It is not that faith is subjective, but we cannot set up reason as objective and faith is subjective. Faith is Extra-Spective in nature which is looking away from oneself to Christ and His word. This speaks of the “principle acts of saving faith.” These principle acts are “receiving, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone.” What is being drawn to our attention is that the essence of faith is the abandonment of self. Faith is whole-soul acceptance. It is acceptance without reservation even though the reservations may come back from time to time. It is a deeply rooted receptivity in the human personality. We should not understand this receptivity as passivity, or being passive. We receive and rest upon Christ but this is not to be passive toward inaction; or, this does not mean a tendency toward quietism or other forms of mysticism. This is not a certain kind of “let go and let God.” It is not a tendency toward such passivity because inevitably, faith alone will not be enough but will have to be supplemented by some extra action.

As this mindset comes in, we polarize works and faith in the Christian life. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. 14- “Faith is the source of multiple activities: Yielding obedience to commandments of Scripture, trembling at the

commands, relying on the grace of God alone.” Faith is an abandonment of self to Christ which is active for Christ. Faith is an abandonment that is active with all our being. Faith is a resting, repose in our God and his righteousness, which is restless for God and his righteousness. Faith is a restless resting in our Savior and his word. Calvin- “We stand firm only as we rest on God by faith” {commenting on Romans 1:17- “the just shall live by faith}. True faith is both restless for God and resting on God.

From these observations, it is plain that to insist on the unbreakable correlation between faith and revelation, or that theology is the truth of faith, to insist on this is not a sacrificing of the Church to subjectivism. Error has come into the Church through misdirected appeals to feelings and faulty uses of reason, and religious sentiment and tradition. It is because of this that the Church has not stayed faithful to the Word of God. Faith, no matter how partial or imperfect, it holds fast and unerringly to Christ and His Word. This is the true, distinguishing essence of faith. John 10:27- “My sheep hear my voice.” Faith is drawn to the Word of God. Belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is not a necessary component, it is an intricate and normal component of saving faith.

There are different presuppositions in theology that are a catalogue of each of them here becomes entirely a Herculean task, however as we are going to see in the presentation of some of the theologies that these presuppositions could be narrowed down into two primary presuppositions, namely the rejection of the normative character of western theology as universal theology and the acceptance of multiple theological expressions.

### **Rejection of Western Universal Theology**

Most theologies particularly of the liberation stock “and those of racial, gender and regional brands such as African Theology, Asian theology, Feminist theology, Liberation theology and Black Theology have certain basic assumptions that western theology though often positioned to assume universal status is understood to be inadequate in the human context of African, Latin America, and Asia. This is because such theology was fundamentally shaped by western questions, which often are poles apart from those of the African continent or Developing Nations contexts.

### **Validity of Contextual - Local Theology**

Rejecting western assumed universal Theology, theologians in non-western context understood a just basis for other theological expression of the Christian faith because of the realization that western theology has blind spot towards issues of race, colonization, nationalism and gender related upheavals. Thus, the local, religious and contextual differences of all human contexts warranted the necessity of multiple theologies.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5**

Discuss the two basic presuppositions of Theology?

### 3.6 The Limitations of Theology

Theology as a human endeavour to understand or interpret the divine is inherently saddled with diverse forms of limitations. These limitations had been expressed in many ways and many forms, however three salient limitation of theology is forever certain and thus the necessity to tolerate, appreciate and also be sympathetic to the weaknesses revealed by many theologies in their quest to capture the infinite transcendent being for their time, generation and human context.

The limits of theology can be expressed at two fundamental levels which are what God chooses to reveal those to whom he reveals and the areas that theology may not so explicitly cover to address some issues of human concern.

#### **Theology and Epistemology: some exegetical foundations**

##### **Matthew 11:25-27/ Luke 10:21-22**

**Matt 11:25-27-** “At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Luke 10:21-22- “At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

**The Necessity of Revelation/ The *Sola* Revelation of God in Christ-** Some remarks on this section: It varies in each gospel, Matthew and Luke. We can know for instance that the temporal indicator is more indefinite (“at that time”). This is true of Matthew’s gospel as a whole, he has more of a topical, rather than chronological flow to his gospel. Luke’s gospel in contrast, literally says: “In that very time...” Matthew begins in 11:25 with “Jesus answered and said...” as in Luke we have: “Jesus was full of joy in the Spirit and said...” Jesus was jubilant in the Holy Spirit which accents the intensity of Jesus’ involvement of what he is about to say. We are looking into what is a high point into Jesus’ earthly ministry. The focus of the following comments will be Luke 10:

In the last few hundred years, these verses in Luke have been used to try and prove that the Son of God is not truly deity. The verses have been discussed as to the unique identity of Jesus as the Son of God; his ontological equality with the Father and his Messianic self-consciousness. Our interest is not on the bearing the verses have on the Person of Christ, how they establish his deity, but the activity of the Father and Son in revelation. It is the revealing activity that is spoken of which is of interest to us.

In verse 21, it reads “you have hidden” stands in contrast to “you have revealed,” “those whom the Son chooses to reveal.” The primary word for revelation in the New Testament, *apokaluptw*- Revelation is an “open secret” or making known what has not



formerly been known to man. What has been hidden is from the “wise and intelligent.” The point is to make emphatic that what is revealed is beyond all human capacity and competence: human reason, intuitive factor, spiritual sensitivity, etc. What has been revealed is inaccessible in human capacity in its highest realization. The necessity of revelation is the absolute necessity of revelation. In contrast to the Enlightenment and the commitment of the autonomous human reason. To them, revelation was what God gave to man in their immaturity and now supposedly the maturity of man was beyond the need of revelation. Revelation in the Enlightenment view is an alternate track which is disposable. In the Enlightenment understanding, what is meant by revelation is what reason can find out naturally. Jesus in contrast, is saying that revelation is hidden from the “wise and understanding.”

This exclusive necessity is accented further by reference to the infants, or little children are in view as the recipients of revelation. How are we to understand this verse? In light of other statements Jesus makes: Matt. 18: 3-4: “Truly, unless you repent and become like children (paideon), you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this little child will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.” Repentance and humility mark these children. Mark 10:15- “Truly, those who do not receive the Kingdom of God like little children, we will have none of it.” Jesus is speaking of the need of faith. How does this fit into the force of the statement in these verses which Jesus is making? In view of these verses, the necessary correlate, or recipient of revelation is faith; faith, particularly seen in its openness, receptivity to revelation. The necessity of revelation involves the unbreakable bond between faith and revelation.

This also shows the sovereignty of revelation. The recipients of revelation are absolutely dependent upon revelation. The revealer of revelation is under no outside compulsion to reveal. No claim arising from the recipients that demands that God must reveal. No potential on the side of the recipient, rather what is in view, is that the act of revealing is a free act; a matter of divine initiative and involves no compulsion except what we recognize as what constrains God as to who he is in himself. The matter is to the Father’s eudokia- “good pleasure,” “purpose,” “choice or kind intention.” The factor of sovereignty not only attaches to the Father, but to also the Son to “whom he chooses to reveal,” “wills” to reveal. The accent at the close of the statement in verse 22, is not to whom it reveals, but that THE SON chooses to reveal. We are bound to appreciate the sovereignty of both Father and Son.

### **Limitation of Scope**

No single theology has ever captured all dimensions of the human existential experiences; instead every theology is in every sense narrow, limited and preoccupied with a particular time, context and agenda. It is thus unhealthy and absurd to develop a theology that will truly cut across all race, gender, class and other different categories of the human society. Even though, many theology claims this impossibility, yet a closer look at these theology revealed that often those claims are bogus generalization and not founded on reality. It is true that most theology seeks to be universal in their relevant to the entire globe, but it is also true that such desire is just a wishful thinking since theology itself from its simple definition encompasses ultimately the reflection of human in their various context about the divine being who no single person or time could ever capture for every people and time.

### **Limitation of Methodology**

The revolt of the existential theology and philosophy against traditional theology and philosophy is in this sense justifiable since no human methodology or system could in every sense captured the full and stalk dimension of the human existential experiences. Thus, in this particular sense every theological methodology whether expressed or unexpressed have a salient limitation and hence revealed that no one single method of theology could in every sense translates the divine or interpret the full scale of human socio-economic experiences.

### **Limitation of Agenda**

It is now known that no single theological agenda whether of traditional theology, or feminism or Black theology or any other theology in that sense could be sufficient and transcend all cultural boundaries, age group, gender distinction, racial categories and economical and social status. Thus, every theology is limited in its choice and identification with a theological agenda whether this agenda is expressed or unexpressed.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6**

State the three basic limitations of every theology?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In order to understand the major concerns of the different types of theologies, there is as a necessity the need to understand the general introductory aspect to theology as a field. This is done with the intention that such understanding will aid the student in a critical and systematic appreciation of the many different Christian theologies of contemporary times.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major lesson you have learnt in this unit:

Theology can be defined as the human study of God.

There are five periods in the history of Theology, namely patristic, medieval, reformation, enlightenment and modern periods.

There are six disciplines of theology, namely: biblical,

philosophical, historical, systematic, pastoral and exegetical. Theology must be committed to the transcendence and immanent aspects of its task. Theology is limited in scope methodology and agenda.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

- 1 What is your own understanding of theology particularly, in relationship to the human dimension of every theology?
- 2 State the two basic task of every theology?
- 3 Narrate briefly the history of Theology?
- 4 State the basic presupposition and limitation of Theology?

## 7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READINGS

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**UNIT 2 THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY****CONTENTS**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

“The Bible” as observed by John S. Mbiti “is a strange and unique book.” It is strange according to Mbiti, because it is “written by one people, the Jews,” and now has “become a universal book.” Consequently, the Bible as a universal book has to be understood and interpreted by people of other places who were not primary the recipient of its message. At such, the Bible is one of the fundamental and central sources of Christian theology. For many theologies, the Bible solely occupied a lofty place in the theological reflection that often, it seen as the only source of a Christian theology. Thus, this unit seeks to reflect on the central role that the Bible occupied in theological discourse, but it also sought to relate the unity and diversity of the Bible and its relevance in contemporary multiplicity of Christian theological reflections.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:  
 Define the nature of the authority of the Bible  
 Discuss the unity and diversity of the Bible  
 Explain the role of the Bible’s diversity and unity to the present multiplicity of Christian theologies.

**3.0 MAIN CONTENT****3.1 The Inspiration of Scripture**

The supernatural action of the Holy Spirit on the mind of the sacred writers whereby the Scriptures were not merely their own but the word of God. Scripture not merely

contains but is the word of God. As the whole Godhead was joined to the whole manhood, and became the Incarnate Word, so the written word is at once perfectly divine and perfectly human; infallibly authoritative because it is the word of God, intelligible because in the language of men. If it were not human we should not understand it; if it were not divine it would not be an unerring guide. The term "scriptures" is attached to them exclusively in the word of God itself, as having an authority no other writings have (Jn. 5:39; 10:34-36). They are called "the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2), i.e. divine utterances. If Scripture were not plenary and verbally sanctioned by God, its practical utility as a sure guide in all questions directly or indirectly affecting doctrine and practice would be materially impaired, for what means would there be of distinguishing the false in it from the true?

Inspiration does not divest the writers of their several individualities of style, just as the inspired teachers in the early church were not passive machines in prophesying (1Cor.14:32). "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). Their will became one with God's will; His Spirit acted on their spirit, so that their individuality had free play in the sphere of His inspiration. As to religious truths the collective Scriptures have unity of authorship; as to other matters their authorship is palpably as manifold as the writers. The variety is human, the unity divine. If the four evangelists were mere machines narrating the same events in the same order and words, they would cease to be independent witnesses. Their very discrepancies (only seeming ones) disprove collusion. The solutions proposed in Harmonies, being necessarily conjectural, may or may not be the true ones; but they at least prove that the differences are not irreconcilable and would be cleared up if we knew all the facts. They test our faith, whether on reasonable evidence we will unreservedly believe His word in spite of some difficulties, designedly permitted for our probation.

The slight variations in the Decalogue between Exodus 20 and its repetition Deuteronomy 5, and in Psalm 18 compared with 2Samuel 22, in Psalm 14 compared with Psalm 53, and in New Testament quotations of Old Testament, (sometimes from Septuagint which varies from Hebrew, sometimes from neither in every word), all prove the Spirit-produced independence of the sacred writers who under divine guidance and sanction presented on different occasions the same substantial truths under different aspects, the one complementing the other. One or two instances occur where the errors of transcribers cause a real discrepancy (2Kgs. 8:26, compared with 2Chr. 22:2). A perpetual miracle alone could have prevented such very exceptional and palpable copyists' mistakes. But in seeming discrepancies, as between the accounts of the same event in different Gospels, each account presents some fresh aspect of divine truth; none containing the whole, but all together presenting the complete exhibition of the truth. Origen profoundly says: "in revelation as in nature we see a self concealing, self revealing God, who makes Himself known only to those who earnestly seek Him; in both we find stimulants to faith and occasions for unbelief."

The assaults of adversaries on seemingly weak points have resulted in the eliciting of beautiful and delicate harmonies unperceived before; the gospel defenses have been proved the more impregnable, and the things meant to injure "have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." When once it is admitted that the New Testament writers were neither fanatics nor enthusiasts, (and infidelity has never yet produced a satisfactory theory to show them to have been either,) their miracles and their divine commission must also be admitted, for they expressly claim these. Thus, Paul (1Cor.

14:37), "if any man think himself a prophet, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." And not only the things but the words; (2:13) "we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth." The "discerning of spirits" was one of the miraculous gifts in the apostolic churches. His appeal on the ground of miracles (2:4) which are taken for granted as notorious rather than asserted, (the incidental mention being a clear mark of truth because it excludes suspicion of design,) and to persons whose miraculous discernment of spirits enabled them to test such claims, is the strongest proof of the divine authority of his writings. Peter (2Pet. 3:16) classes Paul's epistles with "the other Scriptures"; therefore whatever inspiration is in the latter is in the former also.

That inspiration excludes error from Scripture words, so far as these affect doctrine and morals, appears from Psalm 12:6, "the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." As our Lord promised the disciples His Holy Spirit, to teach them how and what they should say before magistrates (Mt. 10:19, 20), much more did the Spirit "abiding" with the church "forever" (Jn. 14:16) secure for the written word, the only surviving infallible oracle, the inspiration of the manner as well as the matter. So (16:13) "the Spirit of truth will guide you into all (the) truth," namely, not truth in general but Christian truth. Also (14:26) "the Holy Spirit shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." "He shall testify of Me" (15:26). "He will show you things to come ... He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you" (16:13,14).

Paul (2Tim. 3:16) declares that no part of the written word is uninspired, but "ALL" (literally, "every scripture," i.e. every portion) is "profitable" for the ends of a revelation, "doctrine, reproof (conjuring error: the two comprehending speculative divinity; then follows practical), correction (setting one right, 1Cor. 10:1-10), instruction (disciplinary training: Deut. 13:5; 1Cor. 5:13) in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"; as it makes him "perfect" it must be perfect itself.

Some parts were immediately communicated by God, and are called "apocalypse" or "revelation," as that to John, and to Paul (2 Cor. 12:1; Rom. 16:25). Others, as the historical parts, are matter of human testimony. But inspiration was as much needed to write known facts authoritatively as to communicate new truths; else why should certain facts be selected and others be passed by? Inspired prohibition is as miraculous as inspired utterance. Had the evangelists been left to themselves, they doubtless would have given many details of Jesus' early life which our curiosity would have desired, but which divine wisdom withheld, in order to concentrate all our attention on Christ's ministry and death. The historical parts are quoted by Paul as God's "law," because they have His sanction and contain covert lessons of God's truth and His principles of governing the world and the church (Gal. 4:21). Considering the vast amount of Mariolatry and idolatry which subsequently sprang up, the hand of God is marked in the absence from the Gospel histories of aught to countenance these errors. Sacred history is like "a dial in which the shadow, as well as the light, informs us" (Trench). The Spirit was needed to qualify the writers for giving what they have given, a condensed yet full and clear portraiture of Messiah, calculated to affect all hearts in every nation, and to sow in them seeds of faith, hope, and love. The minor details, such as Paul's direction to Timothy to "bring his cloth and parchments," and to "drink a little wine for his stomach's sake and his infirmities," are vivid touches which give life and nature to the

picture, making us realize the circumstances and personality of the apostle and his disciple, and have their place in the inspired record, as each leaf has in the tree. The genealogies, as in Genesis 10 and Matthew 1, form most important links between the progressive stages in the sacred history, and are anything but dry and profitless to the diligent student. There is a progress in the manifestation of the eternal and unchangeable principles of morality, in the New Testament as compared with the Old Testament God never sanctioned evil, but dealt with the nonage of the world as to REVENGE, DIVORCE, etc. (which see) as its case required, less strictly marking sin than under the clear light, of New Testament.

The mode of God's inspiring the writers it is not essential for us to know; the result is what momentarily concerns us, namely, that their writings are our sure guide; for (2Pet. 1:21) "the prophecy of Scripture (the written word of men inspired, as 'prophet' means 1Cor.14:29, not merely a foreteller) came not by the will of man, but holy men spoke as they were moved (literally, borne along, Acts 2:2; rapt out of themselves, yet not losing self control 1Cor. 14:32) by the Holy Spirit." Every word of inspiration is equally the word of God; but there is a progress in the mode of revelation and there are degrees in the importance of the words uttered. With the prophets God spoke in vision, but with Moses "face to face" and "mouth to mouth" (Exo. 33:11; Num. 12:6-8). The highest revelation of all is that of God manifest in the flesh. But, however varied the mode, the result is that all Scripture alike is sanctioned as the word of God.

Caiaphas is an instance showing that the words were sanctioned as divinely inspired; while the speaker himself did not know the deep significance of his own words (Jn. 11:50), "he spoke not of himself." So (1Pet.1:11) the Old Testament prophets "searched what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory, ... unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister," etc. They too knew not the full meaning of their own words. For "no prophecy of Scripture proves to be of private solution" (Greek text of 2Pet.1:20), i.e. it is not the utterance of the mere individual, and so to be solved or interpreted by him, but of "the Holy Spirit" by whom the writer was "moved"; Scripture is not restricted to the immediate sense in the mind of the individual writer, but has in view "the testimony of Jesus," which is "the spirit of prophecy" in the "holy men moved by the Holy Spirit." The words of one compared with those of another from whom the former may be separated in age and in country often bring forth some truth evidently not contemplated by the writer, but designed by the ONE MIND who inspired, overruled, and sanctioned both. There is throughout the whole a consistently developed scheme, too grand for the mind of anyone writer.

Our Lord and His apostles make vital truths hinge on single words. The force of Jesus' three answers, "It is written," to Satan's three temptations lies in single words (Mt. 4). So in chap. 19:4. Also He confutes the Sadducees and proves the resurrection of the body from words which otherwise we should scarcely have regarded as proving it (Mt. 22:32), "I am (not I was) the God of Abraham" (namely, the man in his integrity, body, soul, and spirit). The one word "My" is Christ's proof of His Godhead (Mt. 22:43), "the Lord said unto MY Lord (Ps. 90:1): if David call Him Lord, how is He His Son?" David could not have understood the full force of his own words (Ps. 22) as to the "gall," the "vinegar," the "parting of His garments," and "casting lots for the vesture," and other minute details fulfilled in Messiah. He who, working through means, creates the minute leaf as well as the mighty forest, saith of all His word, "till heaven and earth pass, one

not one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled" (Mt. 5:18; "law" means the whole Old Testament, as John (10:35) uses "law" of the psalms). Christ's argument, "if He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?" rests on the one word "gods" being applied to rulers, as types of the Son of God, therefore still more applicable to the Antitype Himself. Our Lord makes it a fundamental principle "the Scripture cannot be broken," even as to one word (Jn. 10:35). So also Paul shows unhesitating confidence in the divine authority of special words, as "seed" not "seeds" (Gal. 3:16), "all" (Heb. 2:8), "brethren" (11), "today," and "My rest" (4:1-11). To crown all, Revelation (22:19) at its close declares, "if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life."

### **3.2 The Authority of the Bible**

The authority of the Bible has variously being defined in many ways. As defined by Wayne Grudem, "The authority of Scripture" means "that all the words, in scripture are God's words in such a way that to obey or disobey any word of God is to disbelieve or disobey God." (1994: 73). This suggests that the authority of the Bible is fundamentally based on certain claims of the Bible itself. The authority of Scripture is based on the nature of its inspiration. In other words, by virtue of its origin in God, which is explained as its inspiration, the Bible holds absolute authority.

It may also be stated that the authority of the Bible stemmed from its canonical and ecclesiastical status particularly in the popular acceptance of the Bible as God's word. This does not destroy the objective status of the authority of the word of God as if it is based on the authority of men who worked on the canonicity of Scripture. The canonization was only a process of isolating the pure inspired text from other writings. Thus, the authority of the Bible in relationship to theology could be discussed in three basic subheadings.

#### **The Testimony of the Bible**

The Bible becomes truly the basic source of witness to its own authority since almost all the pages of its sacred words revealed the divine as its ultimate source of revelation. These divine claims of the Bible have been subjected to various academic criticisms, however the understanding still reign in theological discussion even if often not out rightly expressed that the Bible is fundamentally a sacred document. This understanding of the Bible's authority has serious implication for theology because it assumed rightly that reflection on Bible should be seen as a sacred task particularly in the quest of understanding the mind of divine for the contemporary society, which ultimately becomes the preoccupation of theology. Significantly, however, the authority of the Bible made it the ultimate standard of truth, whereby all theologies must be tried and tested. There seemed to be a paradox here because while theology or the academic expression of it evaluate or test the divine claims of the Bible, on the other hand, the Bible also becomes the judge and litmus paper by which all theologies are tested.



## **The Canonical Status of the Bible**

Apart from the testimony of the Bible as to its authority, various councils and theological discussions in Church history have largely accepted the authority of the Bible even though with few dissidents. The culminative testimony of the canonical and ecclesiastical status of the Bible made it an authoritative for every theology. This is not to suppose that the academic attacks challenging its authority have not taken place in history, but to underscore the importance of such document despite the few occurrences of these academic attacks. Thus, any theology that must be taken serious must reckon or recognized the canonical authority of that Bible in order to remain Christian.

## **The Popular Status of the Bible**

Even though not often emphasized the popularity of the Bible as a divine document is largely assumed. Interview, discussions and studies of the Bible in the African context is primarily based on the accepted understanding of its authority in the matter of faith and practices. The reason for the popular appeals of the Bible, particularly in the African context is beyond the scope of this study; however it must be due to the affinity between the biblical world and the worldview of the African people.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

What are the three basic sources of the Bible's authority in relationship to doing theology?

### **3.3 The Unity of the Bible**

The unity of the Bible has basically shaped classical theology whether in exegesis, homiletics or Biblical Theology. This monolithic unity of the Bible is chiefly based on the implication of the foregone discussion, particularly in the general acceptance of the divine authority of the Bible by both the ecclesiastical and popular understanding of the Bible. Thus, tensions between the Old Testament and New Testament were often allegorized and harmonized in wholistic understanding of singular divine authorship. This understanding of the application of the "regula fidei" (or rule of faith) to perceived tension or contradiction between the Testaments went beyond the broad theologies of the testament to individual texts, whereby texts were harmonized and made to carry the general tone of biblical literature. However, despite the perceived diversity, a common and central unifying framework exists and this made discussion in the unity of the Bible possible, particularly in the broad spectrum of the Old Testament and New Testament.

### **Old Testament**

The central unifying theme of the Old Testament has been hotly debated. As such, various centres have been proposed for considerations. These centres range from promise, covenant motif, dominion, justice, God's people, community motif to such complex multiple centres such as Deliverance-freedom motif, covenant-promise motif, and creation- new community motifs. In the presence of diverse centres, it is needful to reassert the centre of salvation as the major defining centre of the Old Testament as already underscored in traditional Christian Theology. This is not to suggest that such theme of salvation is not problematic, but rather that even with its many problems such centre encompasses the thesis of the other centres and also translates such concerns to the end product of the salvation of the human race.

### **New Testament**

The New Testament centres too have also been debated with many theological proposals as the centre of New Testament such as the gospel, justification, reconciliation, faith, new creation, kingdom and Salvation history. Other multiple centres such as Christology-ecclesiology and community-mission motif have also been forwarded. With all its many problems, it seemed on the face value that Christology is the major centre of the New Testament Scripture, even though such Christology could not be deprived of inter-relationship with New Testament theme of salvation history.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Explain the unity of the Bible?

### **3.4 The Diversity of the Bible**

The Bible written by different people from different backgrounds, at different times on different subjects, naturally has an obvious heterogeneous nature. This diversity of the Bible should be stressed since it gives legitimacy to the different brand of theologies that now characterized contemporary Christendom. Hence, it is legitimate to underscore the diversity of the Bible writers in relationship to doing theology in the contemporary context. This diversity of the Bible is revealed in both the Old Testament and New Testament respectively.

### **Old Testament**

The Old Testament reveals diversity in the subject matter as well as style and context of Biblical writers. Thus, different biblical writers at different times made different religious or ethical demands on the human society based on their background, context of

their audience and other existential situations of the cultural and religious milieu in which they lived. Thus, Genesis was committed to the narration of creation story and the founding of the Israeli nation; Exodus with the theme of redemption and deliverance; Leviticus with the cultic issues of sacrifice and holiness; Numbers on the national tragedy in the wilderness and Deuteronomy on the giving again of the commandments. The two books of Samuel, Kings, Judges and Chronicles are preoccupied with history and the Prophets with issues of social justice, judgment, salvation and messianic expectations. This diverse nature of theology which was harmonized and sealed by canonical authority gives a clue to the necessity of plurality in theological reflection. However, this understanding does suggest that the harmony of these diverse theologies was envisaged by the Biblical authors and thus, imply that contemporary theologies with pluralistic agenda must also find harmony in the context of Scripture.

### **New Testament**

The New Testament reveals also that diversity as clearly seen in the different understanding of the New Testament writers. Matthew was preoccupied with the Jewish context and issues that arose from the encounter of Christianity with the Jewish religious and cultural context. The gospel of Matthew sought to reflect the claims of Jesus as messiah within the Jewish milieu. On the other hand, the gospel of Luke wrestled with the issues of the Gentile context and this theological concern is also found in Pauline epistles. The gospel of John incorporated the contextual issues of the post-apostolic context into his interpretation of the apostolic and the Christological tradition.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

State the nature of the pluralistic tendencies in the theologies of the Bible?

### **3.5 Relevance of the Bible**

The relevance of the Bible could easily be seen by the growing popularity of the Bible in the continent of Africa. However, theology has often been used as the vehicle of philosophy instead of the content of biblical revelation. It is this understanding that often weakens the credibility of such theology. Thus, it should be emphasized that with all the already highlighted diversity and unity, the relevance of the Bible in today's world is not only necessary, but also imperative particularly in discussion of theology and the ministry of the Church in both popular and academic context.

### **Relevance of the Bible in Theology**

The concept of revelation is an exceedingly broad concept. It is as broad and wide as the creation. The entire creation, including ourselves is a revelation of God. Ps. 19:

“The heavens declare the glory of God.” All true human knowledge, since it derives from the created order, all knowledge may be called theology. These are all focused on ourselves and our environment as image-bearing creatures. **Special Revelation-** the revelation since the Fall that God provides in addition to general revelation that is “saving knowledge” of God. What is special redemptive revelation? The history of God's redemptive, revelatory activity. (1) This is a history that has reached its consummation in Christ. (2) This history has received its own revelatory explanation from the Scriptures.

We must recognize the function scripture has in revelation. There are two facets that are the leading function of Biblical revelation: (1) Pointedly redemptive character- it is a redemptive revelation and of crucial significance in a world order corrupted by sin. Biblical revelation has a unique, crucial significance. (2) The Bible Alone is Uniquely Linguistic and verbal in character. This is revealed in genuine human language. In the concrete situation we find ourselves in God's revelation, Scripture performs its leading function and stands out as the purist exemplification of theology, the purist instance of the speaking of God: the divine speaking of God. The Bible *is* theology. The Bible is the speaking of God. The speaking of God in the most direct and proper sense. It is entirely appropriate that there be theology in a human endeavor based on the Bible as theology itself. This human theology seeks the Bible which is the central concern of the theologian. Answering to the special revelation of God, there is a specific, specialized, even scientific, human response.

Theology, as a human endeavor, is the interpretation of Scripture. This includes everything that facilitates, subserves understanding Scripture. All theology is based on exegesis. The theological disciplines are interrelated and focused in concentration on Scripture: i.e. Old Testament, New Testament, Historical Theology, Systematic Theology. These individual disciplines are all derived from the Bible as the source for all theology. The key to understanding Church History, is to understand that Church History is the history of the exegesis of Scripture. The question of Church History as a theological curriculum is to provide an understanding of how the Church has historically interpreted Scripture. Theology has a vital interest in language; both language of the Bible and how it functions and our own language. Hermeneutics is foundational to every theological endeavor. The work of Systematic theology is central to understanding hermeneutics. Hermeneutical inquiry, how to interpret, constitutes the prolegomena of theology.

Understanding theology as the understanding of Scripture fundamentally, leads us to the non-speculative nature of theology. 1 Cor. 4:6- “Do not go beyond what is written.” This is not an atomistic, or biblical positivistic use of Scripture. This statement is not to be taken outside of the good and necessary consequence of Scripture or the understanding of a text outside of the context. Theology does not seek to be creative. Beware, be on your guard against the notion of creative theology or that “X is a creative theologian.” It is not creative or constructive in any sense. In our theology, our concern

is to be receptively reconstructive (Van Til). Receptively reconstructive is to be involved in thinking God's thoughts after him. Given the character of the Bible, as God's own interpretation, is received as God's own interpretation as Creator and Redeemer. Our understanding of Scripture is interpretation of interpretation: our interpretation of the God-given pre-interpretation of the God given reality in Scripture. We are about interpretation of the pre-interpretation of the totality of Scripture. We are drawn to recognize the dependent, or derivative quality of our theology. Theology must understand itself to be ministerial, not magisterial. Theology ministers "under the word" it has no authority "over the word."

To limit theology brings into view the perennial question of the relationship between the Scripture and the rest of God's revelation; or, the relationship between Special and General Revelation. The correlative question is the relationship between theology and the other special disciplines or sciences. The question is not of the relationship between the Bible and science but the relationship between theology (our understanding of the Bible) and other sciences. It could be said that it is the difference between God's Word and God's Works.

The Bible becomes a normative tool for theology, and also formed the yardstick by which theologies are judged, understood, interpreted and evaluated. However, even within the Bible (as already shown) the diversity of theology is well entrenched and thus should provide a legitimate basis for the acceptance of various theologies whose theological agenda might in many ways seem foreign when compared to the familiar traditional theology. The relevance in emphasizing the diversity and unity of the Bible is that it has the tendencies of initiating and invigorating a healthy theological discussion across the various spectrums of Christian theologies and thus in the final analysis contribute to a tolerant atmosphere in the universal theological discussions.

### **Relevance of the Bible in the Context of Church's Ministry**

The Church's context of the ministry has always relied on the Bible for instruction and guidance for ministry. Though the Roman Catholic has complemented such emphasis with Church traditions, yet it is obvious that the Bible forms a very important tool in both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic confessions. This value accorded to the Bible in context of church's daily ministry in the human society made it necessary for every theology to affirm a commitment to the Bible.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

What relevant role did the Bible occupy in theology and church's ministry?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The relationship between the Bible and Theology is a very interesting one. This relationship becomes also significant and a paradox because as already seen, theology seeks to understand and evaluate the claims in the Bible, but also the Bible on the other hand, should be use to test every theology in order to see whether such theology has any

serious commitment to the Bible. It is this dialectic relationship that should characterize theological discussion. However, as also seen, theologies in the Bible were in every sense diverse as well as unified. Thus, this understanding could help in developing a tolerant atmosphere that could aid in a healthy global theological discussion. It is in this latter sense, that Craig L. Blomberg advice that “the diversity of Scripture demonstrates how no one sect or ecclesiastical tradition has a monopoly of the truth. One can become heretical by either being too broad-minded or too narrow minded.” (2000:72).

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major lessons that you have learnt in this unit:

The authority of the Bible is based on the biblical claim for divine authorship and also from its canonical and ecclesiastical status.

The monolithic unity of the Bible is based also on its claim to divine authorship.

The diversity of the Bible is based on the nature of the Bible, especially because of its multi-authorship nature.

The diversity of the Bible should make us become tolerant of other theological views.

## 6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What are the basic sources of the authority of the Bible in relationship to theology?
2. Explain the unity and diversity of the Bible’s authors?
3. What is the relevance of the Bible in the African Church and theology?

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**UNIT 3 CHRISTOLOGY AND THEOLOGY****CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Definition of Christology
  - 3.2 Various Types of Christology
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- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The teachings about Jesus, his nature, being, and functions in the Trinity are what we call “Christology.” In some aspects, some scholars treat Christology separately from Soteriology. The importance of Christology for the Christian Church cannot be underestimated, since apart from him the religion call “Christianity” could not have come into being. Thus, Christianity is synonymous with Christ.

The way the New Testament painted the picture of Jesus has been vigorously debated by scholars (see Albert Schweitzer, *The Search for the Historical Jesus* (1906)). Some call him a prophet, Messiah and a teacher among others. In whatever status he was seen, he attracted large followers mainly from the peasants and the lower classes of people from the cities, towns, villages, and country side of Palestine (now Israel). He was rejected and crucified by the Jews, but later he rose up from the dead. Now, his resurrection is the significant of the “Easter-event” in Christianity. His resurrection, according to Paul in 1 Cor. 15:1-19 is a historical fact and the cornerstone of the Christian faith. However, attempts to reduce this incident to a spiritual dimension only have always raised some theological problems.

Some of the difficulties these have created are: How much of the New Testament witness of Jesus came directly from him and how much belongs to later ecclesiastical reflection (see Mt. 16:16). Another difficulty with the New Testament Christology concerns its content. These include: The Gospels different titles assigned to Jesus such as Saviour, Messiah and Son of Man among others. The New Testament claims that Jesus is the heir to the throne of David and that he also became the High Priest, as well as the victim of the atoning sacrifice on the cross in order to save mankind from their sin proved that Jesus was God in the human flesh. The post-apostolic Christology by the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD developed in response to the heresies of various kinds. At that time, there were some who held that Jesus was a kind of an angel, who seemed to be partly human and partly God (cf. 1 John 4:2-3). Such heretical teaching is called “docetism”

from the Greek word “*dokein*” meaning “to seem.” Perhaps some orthodox Christians as well as the heretics held to this view.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of study of this unit, you should be able to: Define Christology  
Differentiate Christology from other Christian Theologies  
Explain different types of Christologies  
State the sources of Christology.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Definition of Christology

Strictly speaking, one will agree that “Christology” can be defined as “the doctrine (teaching) about Christ, his person and nature, being and works.” The linguistic root of the terms comes from the combination of two Greek words “*Christos*” (Christ) and “*Logos*” (Word). Now, when put together it gives us “Christology” which, in simple terms means the study or discussion of Christ’s words.”

It will be a rewarding experience or exercise to study types of Christologies taught or held by various groups in Christian circles. So far, our definition of Christology has been to provide you with a peg on which to hang your study of Christ. It seems the following elements are very important in our definition of Christology and should be re-stated or elaborated upon as follows:

Christology, when it comes to interpretation, should be logically, clearly, and coherently stated in line with the teaching of the Scriptures.

Christology cannot be studied independent of God and the function of Christ in the Trinity.

Every theology in the Christian Church cannot be complete without relating to Christology. Similarly, Christology must be studied in the light of its historical development and tradition in the Christian Church through the centuries. A true biblical Christology must understand and accept that Christology involves Christian, individual, and societal experiences in the areas of: economy, political and religious liberation. For this was the purpose of Christ’s coming (Isa. 61:1-3).

Christology must be emphasized to relate to each context, culture, worldview, philosophy and situation of people to whom it is presented before it can be meaningful.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1



What is the definition of Christology? “State and discuss its etymology and what a true Biblical Christology must include in order to warrant a Biblical acceptable and meaning.

### 3.2 The Various Types of Christologies

#### Classical Christology

No doubt, the classical Christology period started in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. as a response to the teaching of Arius. He held and defended the view that Jesus Christ was a heavenly being, intermediate between God and man, yet a creature. He argued that if Christ were not a creature, he would not have been able to suffer and die for us. By the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D; Arius was condemned as a heretic. Nevertheless, his views continued in various forms till at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In the aftermath of the Council of Nicea, two main schools of thought came into being centred at Alexandria and at Antioch respectively. In terms of doctrine, Alexandria claims priority and Antioch was regarded as a reaction against Alexandria excesses.

The Alexandrian school emphasized the unity of Christ. It emphasized the divine nature of Christ. That is, that he was the Son of God in human flesh. But the difficulty encountered was, how they could define the nature of this relationship. There was a constant temptation to say that the term refers only to the flesh of Jesus excluding his soul. The Council of Constantinople condemned this understanding of the nature of Jesus in 381 A.D in favour of the Alexandrian School. By the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D, it has become the article of faith in the Alexandrian tradition, that the incarnate Christ has only one nature and it has to be divine. This, however, brought the genuineness of his humanity into question. This teaching, which came to be later known as monophysitism, was also condemned in the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451 A.D.

By 428 A.D. Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius were holding to the Adoptionism, that is, the union of the two nature of Christ (Son of God) the divine nature and (human embryo) the human nature. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ecumenical Council in 431 A.D. at Ephesus, Nestorius was condemned. By 449 A.D., Pope Leo held on Orthodox view that Christ was a single person, but that his human nature was added to the divine incarnation. Although, some rejected Leo’s formula, it remained the chief foundation classical Christology to this day. It was the main foundation of Chalcedon’s own definition.

The problem constantly faced by theologians of this period was the witness of the Gospels to the miracles and other extraordinary acts of Jesus. Were these things done by the power of the human or the divine nature? Some resolved this problem by adopting the theory of borrowing. That is, the humanity of Christ borrowed divine attributes as and when required. Today, orthodox Christology holds to the divine Christ who manifested himself in the capacity of two natures.

## **Modern Christology**

### **Modern Western Christology**

After the close of the patristic period and up to the Reformation, there was little or no formed development of Christology distinct from the former ones. Even the reformers were contented with their ancient heritage. For example, John Calvin strongly defended the classical creedal formulae as the faithful representation of Scriptural teaching (see Calvin Institute 1:13) [I. Xiii]. This teaching was repeated by his followers and remained typical of the mainly Western Protestant Orthodox teaching in Churches and Seminaries to present day.

However, due to the impact of the enlightenment in the West, by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, debate about Christ's nature was revisited, but not as vigorous as before. Scholars like Reimarus (1694-1768) up to the First World War, attempted to reconstruct the life of the "historical Jesus" (*see also Schweitzer, The Search for the Historical Jesus*). Surprisingly, the enlightenment Christology argues that Jesus was essentially a prophetic moralist, a religious reformer, a philanthropist, crucified because his thinking was ahead of his time. However, Albert Schweitzer strongly criticized this image of Jesus without returning to the earlier orthodox position. He argued that Jesus was an apocalyptic figure. Thus, this helps divide western modern Christology into two camps using very different principles of the theological method. For example, some exponents hold to a "Christology from Above" which is directly based on the Chalcedonian tradition. The Enlightenment thinkers hold to a "Christology from below."

So the former is seen as a modern form of ancient docetism or monophysitism, while the latter is often seen as the modern version of the ancient Nestorians or even adoptionism.

Extreme exponents of the latter view have wide spread following in recent times by using the word "myth" to describe the New Testament Christology. No wonder, Rudolf Bultmann endeavours to demythologize the New Testament gospel stories about Jesus in order to reach to the real hidden historical Jesus. To him, the N.T narratives are myths, and should not be treated as historical facts. On the hand, some see the evidence presented in the gospel as historical and as such credible proof of Jesus' divinity. In this understanding are the work of Martin Hengel and W. Pannenberg, who have variously asserted the historicity of the gospels, using it as their basis for Christ's divinity.

### **Modern Non-Western Christology**

The modern non-western Christology can hardly be the same with the Western modern Christology. This is because the frame and lenses in which the former sees and

interpret Christ are not the same with those of the latter. For example, the former spiritualizes everything about Christ including the purpose of his coming and his acts. But the latter sees Christ as a divine being in human form whose coming (incarnation) brings liberation from physical as well as spiritual, economic, political and religious oppression. Without these ingredients, the Modern non-western theologian does not see Christology as indeed Biblical and complete. Thus, for most non-western theologians in Africa and South America, a proper biblical Christology must touch the culture, spiritual, political and physical needs of the people to whom it is presented. Primarily, the Modern non-western Christology is fundamentally colored by the Latin American Liberation Theology in terms of praxis and objectives.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Name and discuss the various types of Christologies, noting the arguments in favour and against each. In your own opinion, why do you think the Modern non-western Christology is indeed relevant in the African context?

### **3.3 Sources of Christologies**

#### **The Bible**

Whether in the Western or in the non-western context, the Bible has often been taken as the major source of Christology. But as always the case, the different understanding of the biblical teaching on Christology has often led to various Christological presentations. This diversity of Christology is not because of the ambiguity of the Bible, but rather the influences from the context of the interpreter since a lot of the presentation of Christology is actually a reflection of the milieu or the context of the interpreter. The Western Christologists interpret the historical facts and narratives about Christ using their frame, lenses, context, culture, philosophy, worldview, economic, and political systems of the west, even though, their presentation explored strongly a biblical or Christian motif or framework. Similarly, the non-western settings interpret the text of the Bible in their frame and context. Since the two are in different worlds naturally their Christology cannot totally be the same at critical points.

#### **Context**

Christ lived and worked in a context, a historical milieu, a political era and a cultural environment. The question is, how did he relate to and meet each one's needs accordingly? In the Developing Nations, the context in which Christology is being interpreted and practiced is very important. As the saying goes, "empty stomachs have no ears." So in the Developing Nations, spiritualization of Christological teaching is secondary. The primary aspect is the physical. This does not mean that there are not spiritual oriented works in the Developing Nations' context; however the preoccupation of these works had a large

obsession with the contextual realities rather than purely spiritual works of western conservative traditions.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Discuss the two basic sources of Christology?

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Christological study or discussion is very important. No true biblical Theology will be complete without touching on Christology. It is important due to its relationship with the central personality of Christianity and the Christian faith. It is also important because the history of the Christian church have revealed a consistent fascination for the study. Certainly, the future or post-modern context would continue to wrestle with the person and works of Jesus Christ.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

Christology is the study of discussion about Christ.

The issue of Christology has been in serious contention in the church from the very beginning. The Bible and the context of the theologian have been the sources for the study of Christology.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. What do we mean by Christology?
2. What are the various types of Christology and how do they differ from each other in terms of objectives and sources?
3. Summarize the history of Christology from 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. to present.
4. Why is it that Modern Third World Christology cannot be exactly like its counterpart in the Modern Western World?

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## **UNIT 4     HERMENEUTICS AND THEOLOGY**

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Definition of Hermeneutics
  - 3.2 Traditional Hermeneutics
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  - 3.4 Hermeneutics and Plurality
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Mark Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The study investigates the development in hermeneutics in relationship to Theology. It is important to note the close relationship between theology and hermeneutics because as one may guess different theologies are product of differing hermeneutical methodology or agenda. Thus, it is pertinent to observe the relationship between theology and hermeneutics in order to account for the multiplicity of contemporary brand of Christian theologies.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to: Define hermeneutics  
Explain the relationship between hermeneutics and theology  
Analyze the nature of modern and traditional hermeneutics  
Discuss fundamental developments in hermeneutics as it affects theology.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Definition of Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics is often defined as the art, science or theories of interpretation. However, in its restrictive Christian usage, it encompasses the study of rules or principles for the interpretation of the Biblical text. On the other hand, in the non-Christian usage, it is applied to the art of

communication whether verbal or written. Another understanding of hermeneutics is also extended to the interpretation of the human society and the investigation into the social, economic and political networks or links present in the human society. Hermeneutics in this latter sense becomes a sociological tool towards the interpretation of class distinction, gender designation and other fundamental aspects of the human society. The current discussion of hermeneutics is in the former sense and not in the latter sense, thus we will be preoccupied with relationship of hermeneutics of the Biblical text and its corresponding relationship to theology in general.

There are different approaches to hermeneutics in Church history. These approaches include the allegorical, midrashic, typological and other forms of hermeneutical methods.

However in recent times there is a move towards historical-grammatical hermeneutical methodology. The benefits of this hermeneutical methodology are many, but nonetheless it has also come under serious attack because of the obvious obsession of the methodology with historical forms, particularly its tendencies towards active preoccupation with the Biblical text and passivity towards the existential context of the interpreter.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Define Hermeneutics?

### **3.2 Traditional Hermeneutic**

Traditional theology as a result of the influence of Western scientific quest for objectivity has generally discussed hermeneutics in a manner that assume the enterprise is entirely neutral without the presupposition of the interpreter. This posture of traditional hermeneutic had been challenged by the emergence of different hermeneutical methodologies, which acknowledges the need of presuppositions and hypothesis in the process of hermeneutical investigation.

#### **General Principles**

Tradition Hermeneutics has three basic guiding principles. The first guiding principle is the assumption that a contemporary reader could actually observe the intended meaning within the Biblical text. This understanding is problematic since the human authors of the Bible are not always present to explain the meaning of the text to the

modern reader. It also presupposes that separated by time, culture and linguistic barriers the meaning of the text becomes unrecoverable because of the significant changes in the way of life in the biblical times and the contemporary modern society. However against such understanding, the traditional hermeneutics has sought to discover the intended meaning of the text through historical and grammatical parameters. Secondly, this first point is also extended to mean that there is only one single meaning in any given text and not multiple meanings. This single meaning is believed to be the original intention of the biblical authors and thus, the necessity of removing the grammatical layers of the text to discover such meaning. Lastly, the understanding from this foregone is drawn on the assumption that the Biblical text itself is static and not dynamic; hence the text is immune from the historical and contemporary influences that preserved the text. The static understanding of the text makes hermeneutic a mere human endeavour insulated from the myriads human antecedents that aided in the shaping, transmission and translation of the text.

## **Problems**

The assumptions of traditional hermeneutics, despite its appeals could not be substantiated by reason or the Biblical documents, since the Bible revealed little or no guide in the form of historical and grammatical preoccupation with the revealed text, instead the apostle used hermeneutical methodology that seemed different from the ones used by contemporary traditionalist interpreters. Similarly, traditional interpreters are often embarrassed by their presuppositions and thus these presuppositions are usually disguised as no existence in their hermeneutic endeavours. However, a look at its methodology and content revealed the existence of such presupposition. In this understanding, the disclosure of such presupposition so that it could engender dialogue with the Biblical text, is healthier for Biblical theology rather than suppressing them and assuming their non-existence.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

State the basic guiding principles and problem of traditional Hermeneutics?

### **3.3 Modern Hermeneutics**

Modern hermeneutics developed as a revolt against traditional hermeneutics and theology with its narrow theological agenda and its refusal to place class, gender and race at the centre of theology and hermeneutical investigation. This new modern hermeneutics emphasized the context of the interpreter rather than the text of the Bible in isolation. Its commitment to the context of the interpreter made modern hermeneutic revolutionary. This radical way of doing theology and hermeneutics rejected a presuppositionless hermeneutical enquiry and grounded hermeneutics and



hence theology in contextual presupposition of the interpreter. This section analyses the guiding principles and problems of these new modern hermeneutics.

### **Guiding Principles**

The guiding principles of modern hermeneutics are basically three. First, it argued that hermeneutics must proceed from the contemporary context and not the text of the Scripture. In this methodology, hermeneutics as well as the subsequent theology from such reflection is context-initiated and thus context in this procedure becomes the centre of theological reflection and not the mere afterthought of hermeneutical or theological investigations. Secondly, it de-neutralized hermeneutical inquiry and redefined Biblical interpretation around some well defined presupposition of theological agenda. Lastly, it expressed freely the hitherto mute voices, of individual at the fringe of the human society such as women, outcast, and the Blacks. It did not only reject the dominance of traditional Theology and hermeneutics, but transformed theology and hermeneutic by asserting neglected human category as central issues in theology and hermeneutics, thus forever redefining theology and hermeneutics.

### **Problems**

The problems of new modern ways of doing hermeneutic is that often they become engrossed in the details of the interpreter's context at the expense of a thorough exegetical and syntactical commitment to the Biblical text. Thus, they revealed an impeccable interpretation of the human society by the use of basic theories of social analysis, but however show little or no devotion to Biblical studies or exegetical theology. This one-sided nature of modern hermeneutics raises serious problems for theology since it undermined the historical source of theology, namely the Bible. Consequently, loyalty to the context of the interpreter at the expense of a serious engagement with the text of the Bible rendered it less credible a methodology of Hermeneutics.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

State the basic guiding principles and problem of modern Hermeneutics?

### **3.4 Hermeneutics and Plurality of Theologies**

The root of diverse Christian theologies could be easily traced to the diversity of hermeneutical traditions, methods or presuppositions of theology, thus as long as hermeneutical methodologies or presuppositions are different, interpretation and conclusions to the Bible and doctrine of the Scripture will always be different.

Consequently, this accounts for multiplicity of theologies. This relationship between theology and hermeneutic revealed the fundamental role hermeneutics played in the determination of the content and nature of Theology. Since the understanding of the text necessitates diversity of reading and rereading, the plausibility of diverse theological traditions will indeed remain with us. However, even with such diverse tendencies that plurality of theologies engender, ultimately the course is a healthy one for the theological discourse in the long run, since it often revealed the richness and beauty of the Christian faith. Accordingly, this section presents justification for the plurality of theologies and the hermeneutical methodology.

### **Hermeneutical Justification for the Plurality of Theologies**

The hermeneutical justification for the plurality of theologies lies in the human dimension of hermeneutics as well as theology. It is not that the text is ambiguous or problematic as such, but that our ability to comprehend, understand, interpret and reconstruct the Biblical text is limited and by all indication human that we cannot fully grasp the full import of a particular text even when such text is clear. Most importantly, we unconsciously bring to the text unknowingly, our backgrounds, presuppositions and all other human categories into the text and thus, the diversity of our experiences shapes and colour our questions, and most often even the answer, we expected from the text of Scriptures.

### **Theological Justification for the Plurality of Hermeneutical Methodologies**

There is also a way that preconceived theologies shape the methodology of hermeneutical investigation and the outcome of such hermeneutical enquiry so that even when the meaning of meaning comes to us naturally yet the process of understanding such conceived natural flow of meaning might be due to preconceived theologies and choice of methodology that remote control the expected meaning from the text. The interface between the interpreter and the text normally argued against the tendencies to assume our interpretation as the best or the only meaning that could be found in the text.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

State the hermeneutical and theological justifications for the plurality of theologies and hermeneutical methodologies?

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Hermeneutics as already seen in this lecture holds a very important place in the contemporary diversity of theology. This study unit accounts for the nature as well as the content of theology, thus ultimately determining the distinctive characteristics of each theology. The contention of this investigation is that by studying the forces that shaped hermeneutics, we are invariably a foot away from the forces shaping theology itself because ultimately theology is a child of hermeneutics.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

Hermeneutics is the art, science or theories of interpretation

Hermeneutics have taken various shapes in church history such as: allegory, midrashic and typological. The emergence of new hermeneutical methodologies have challenged the position of traditional hermeneutics. The plurality of hermeneutics justifies the plurality of theology.

#### **6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Define hermeneutics?
2. Give the general guiding principles and problems of traditional and modern hermeneutics?
3. Discuss the theological and hermeneutical justifications for plurality of theologies and hermeneutical methodologies?

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## UNIT 5 ECUMENISM AND THEOLOGY

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- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, theological discussion concerning the quest for the unity of the Church featured frequently. The Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 has often been associated with the ecumenical movement. After a preliminary meeting in Geneva in 1920, the first World Conference on matters of faith and order was held at Lausanne in 1927. While Edinburgh was a missionary gathering, Lausanne was formally an inter-Church assembly with some 90 Churches represented. The Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox Church and most of the Evangelical Churches were excluded. The next milestone was the second faith and order conference held at Edinburgh 1937 with 123 Churches represented. That conference gave birth and endorsed the proposal for a World Council of Churches, and was realized in 1948. Since then, the faith and order commission, the main agency of the WCC has reported to it at Evanston, Illinois USA (1954), New Delhi (1961), Uppsala (1968), Nairobi (1975), and Vancouver (1983). Membership of representative Churches has clocked 301. Some of the matters concerning *baptism*, *Holy Communion*, and *ministry* gained consensus in Lima and Geneva (1982). Other matters, which the movement is concerned about includes: salvation, Church, God's reign, unity.

The WCC original statement declared that it is “a fellowship of Churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.” Because of the much criticism and vulnerability of this declaration, it was amended in New Delhi to read:

A fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (D.F.

Wright, pp.219-220).

The main purpose and goals of ecumenical movement were:

- (a) To heal the historical division of the Churches, thus stimulating renewal in Faith and worship.
- (b) Struggling by social and political means to secure freedom, justice, and peace;
- (c) To extend the mission of the gospel to all spheres of society.

From this overview of the ecumenical movement, this unit presents some developments and perspectives in relationship to ecumenism and diversity of Christian theologies.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to: Define ecumenism  
Identify and discuss the trends in Ecumenical Theology  
Explain ecumenism and its relationship to New Testament theology  
Discuss various scholastic positions on ecumenism and theology.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Definition of Ecumenism**

The word “Ecumenism” can be said to come from the Greek word *oikoumene* which literally means “the whole inhabited world.” So by extension, ecumenical movement is “a movement started to express the wholeness of the Christian faith as held by diverse Churches in pursuit of a common worldwide mission” (J.R. Nelson Keith Gim, ed. *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions*, 1981, 234).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Define and Give the etymology of the term *ecumenism*?

### **3.2 Trends in Ecumenical Theology**

One of the problem in the ecumenical movement is that in Lausanne and Edinburgh, the conclusions reached there failed to take into consideration biblical or theological criteria, nor its feasibility when the declaration were made. Evangelicals have,

therefore, criticized repeatedly the ecumenical theology on several grounds. For example, the imprecise language used; abuse of biblical terms and concepts; quest for consensus rather than truth; taking Churches stand point of view rather than the Bible as its basis and pervasiveness of universalistic assumption.

Today, because of the continued evangelical participation in large numbers, the WCC is now paying attention to conservative biblical and theological beliefs. Consultations in ecumenical theological debate have increased, especially on issues such as the nature of Salvation and the mission of the Church. A major question that arises in ecumenical theology is whether salvation could be found in other religions apart from Christianity.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Discuss the basic trends in contemporary ecumenism?

### **3.3. Ecumenism and New Testament Theology**

Despite the strides recorded by the ecumenical movement, however, the theological issues are still the major obstacles that prevent ecumenical movement from achieving its goal of global Christian unity. For example, whenever one considers the various types of reservations expressed regarding the movement, theology seemed to occupy a major share of the ecumenical discussions or consultative forums. Conservative and liberal tension often characterized these forums because of the understanding particularly of the former that there is less emphasis on certain aspects of belief, biblical teaching and doctrine. For example, the supreme authority of the Bible as the basis and source of Christian faith and practice is often assumed to be watered down by ecumenical emphasis on unity. This became a problem particularly because not all the participants of those forums believed in the Biblical miracles, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus. Similarly, not all Churches or participants agreed that salvation is by faith and grace as taught in the New Testament, nor do all Churches or participants believe in bodily second coming of Christ as taught in the New Testament? Thus, from these diverse theological traditions naturally the confessional statement or creeds became less than Biblical in the New Testament sense.

It seems that on matter of theology, the ecumenists spend more time on issues of Church unity at the expense of other New Testament teachings. Catchy phrase such as: “there shall be one flock, one Shepherd” (John 10:16), “that they may all be one” (John 17:21), “that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me” (John 17:23), “called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor.1:2), “being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2:2), “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph. 4:12-13), “those members are all one body” (I Cor.10:17; 12:12-26) are often flaunted by ecumenists.

While the validity of these references revealed the divine desire for unity, these references however, are often emphasized by the ecumenist at the expense of Biblical teaching on the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believers' life. Also, the purity of the Church and its separation from the world are given less attention. However, in the midst of the many diversities that characterized the contemporary modern Christian theologies a truly ecumenical movement could be found in the spiritual unity of the church rather than a physical unity based on creeds and confessions that the representatives or participants of ecumenical forums shared but which has little or no support from the Bible or Christian traditions.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Discuss the understanding of *ecumenism* in New Testament Theology?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The main purpose of the Church's merger with heavy emphasis on oneness is weak. However, the good aspect of ecumenical movement is that although all Churches have suffered the blow of divisions for a long time due to difference in doctrinal and other theological matters, it is good that these Churches have now been propelled into dialogue. Perhaps one day some proper understanding will be reached whereby each side can reshape its theology in line with Scriptures and also tolerate each others; diverse theological traditions.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major lessons you have learnt in this unit: Ecumenical movement is a movement started to express the oneness of the Christian faith

It started with the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910

The first World Conference on matters of order and faith was held in Lausanne in 1927

Ecumenism puts too much emphasis on "oneness" as taught in the N T over other matters in the Scripture.

## **6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

- 1 Define ecumenism
- 2 What are some of the theological trends in modern ecumenism?
- 3 What do Churches/denominations stand to gain in establishing interfaith?

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## **MODULE 2 TYPES OF THEOLOGY I**

Unit 1 Roman Catholic Theology

Unit 2 Protestant Theology Unit 3 Evangelical Theology Unit 4 Pentecostal  
Theology

Unit 5 Theology of African Independent Church

### **UNIT 1 ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 History
  - 3.2 Theology
  - 3.3 Evaluation
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Mark Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Roman Catholic Church is one of the largest denominations in the world, with the members cutting across all race, gender and different social status that characterized the human society. It also cut across the different continent of the world with members found in both the urban and rural settings, among the educated and the illiterate and among various groups of tribe or ethnic affiliations in the world. Many factors account for the exponential spread of the Roman Catholic Church; however two factors are basically responsible for this particularly in non-western context. The first reason is the vibrant missionary outfit of the Roman Catholic mission Church as classically expressed in the Jesuit Roman Catholic missionary outlet of the sixteenth century and other Roman Catholic religious orders and societies. The second factor is the metaphysical outlook of the Roman Catholic Church, with strong emphasis in the mediating roles of the Saints, Mary and angelic personality. In Africa and other non-western context, this Roman Catholic theological emphasis sounded a familiar chord with the already established mediating role of the ancestors, gods and goddesses of the African pantheon. At such, most Africans saw in the Roman Catholic Church a continuity of these pre-Christian religious forms in the new definition and borders of Christianity.

This unit investigates the origin and theology of the Roman Catholic and subsequently, evaluates the theology, noting the problems and prospects of Roman Catholic theology.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By end of this unit you should be able to:

To understand the origin and theology of Roman Catholic Church To evaluate the Theology of Roman Catholic, noting the problem and prospects inherent in Roman Catholic theology.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Origin of Roman Catholic Theology**

The origin of Roman Catholic Theology goes deep in Church history, beginning in the history of the patristic fathers to the erudition of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. However, the origin of Roman Catholic Theology is so complex and complicated that capturing the origin of the official Roman Catholic teachings and the other myriads of Roman Catholic theologies as expressed by her many school of theology is a daunting task that could not be sustained in the present investigation. However, some salient defining historical points in Roman Catholic Theology would be reviewed.

### **Roman Catholic Reformation**

The Roman Catholic Reformation also known as counter-reformation is a very important historic point in the development of Roman Catholic Theology. The Roman Catholic reformation sought to reassert and developed the distinctive masks of Roman Catholicism in the light of the Protestant onslaught at the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. The Reformation of the Roman Catholic was on a large scale that goes throughout Europe.

Closely related to our present discussion of Roman Catholic Theology is the significant council in the history of Roman Catholic Theology, the Council of Trent that was held between 1545 and 1563. The Council has been described as “Impressive ideals” of the Roman Catholic Theology. The Council stood in opposition to the major doctrinal emphasis of the Protestant movement and clearly defined the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. The Council resolved to uphold the systematic training of Roman Catholic priesthood to guard against the repetition of Protestant rift. Similarly, the Council rejected the heart of Protestant Reformation by its rejection of the doctrine of justification by faith and asserted that good works is a necessity and prerequisite for salvation. This council also affirmed the validity of the seven sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Holy order, Penance, Eucharist, Holy matrimony, Extreme Unction) and made them a necessity for true sanctification. The Council made the Vulgate (Latin Bible), the standard Bible for the Roman Catholic Church and Thomas Aquinas the

model theologian for the Roman Catholic Theology. Lastly, the Council of Trent declared those outside of the Roman Catholic Church anathema, that is, accursed. The influence of the council of Trent is wide reaching and imposing that most of its resolution had remained intact for centuries in Roman Catholic Theology.

### **The Second Vatican**

The Second Vatican Council was also a very important movement for the redefinition of Roman Catholic Theology in light of the challenges of the modern context. The Second Vatican took place between 1962 and 1965 at the peak of salient political and theological revolution that took place in most part of the world, particularly the Developing Nations context. The Second Vatican repositioned Roman Catholic Theology to address modern contemporary challenges such as inter-faith religious dialogue and to soften the tune of most of the theological emphases of the Council of Trent. This resolution at the Second Vatican Council has opened door to ecumenical dialogue and had significantly aided in the founding of Liberation Theology in South America.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

What are the two important historic points in Roman Catholic Theology?

### **3.2 Theology**

Roman Catholic Theologies are many and thus, the problem of relating all of them in the limited scope of this study; however some of her salient theologies are hereby briefly highlighted.

#### **Theology of Scripture**

The Roman Catholic as many Protestants believed in the inspiration and authority of the scripture. However, Roman Catholic also believed that the authority of the Scripture should be complimented by Church traditions in the form of ecclesiastical rulings and past heritage of the Church. They also uphold the apocryphal books as equally authoritative in matters of faith and practices. The important place that tradition holds for the Roman Catholic stemmed from the understanding that most of doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic faith come from these different arrays of Church traditions. These church's tradition are responsible for priesthood, the mass, transubstantiation, penance, veneration of Mary, the use of images in worship, holy water, rosary beads, papacy, and other Roman Catholic characteristics.

#### **Theology of Salvation**

In classical Roman Catholic theology, salvation is complemented by good works. This understanding of salvation has necessitated Roman Catholic doctrines such as penance and indulgence. The nature of salvation in Roman Catholic definition makes the entire work of redemption dependent on the works of individual and thus poses a serious problem to the doctrine of grace. It is this doctrine of salvation and Scripture that caused the rift between the Roman Catholic Theology and the Protestant faith.

### **Theology of Mary**

Roman Catholic Theology have given an unequal honour, reverence and worship to Mary that it seemed in some cases that Mary has been admitted into the Godhead. Though, many Roman Catholic repulse the idea that they are worshipping Mary and asserted that they are merely giving “reverence” and not worship, yet the appellation in Hail Mary such as “Mother of God” often lead to this conclusion. The mediatory role of Mary in Roman Catholic Theology had also been termed Mariolatry. Despite these definitions, many had seen this development in Roman Catholic theology as a development towards gender-inclusive worship and faith.

### **Theology of the Pope’s infallibility**

The theology of the Pope’s infallibility that came as a result of the Vatican Council of 1870 is one of the controversial Roman Catholic theologies. It asserted that the Pope is infallible in his pronouncement and decision pertaining to ecclesiastical matters. This Council claims infallibility for the Pope when the Pope is speaking “ex cathedra” and that the pronouncement of the Pope is binding on the whole Church. This understanding of the Pope does not mean that the pope is infallible as a man. This theology of the Pope’s infallibility does not also apply to the Pope’s personal habits. It does not assume that the Pope is a sinless or perfect man, nor does it presume that the Pope is inspired as the apostles so that his writing were canonical as those of the apostle. Contrary to this, however it means “that in his official capacity as teacher of the Church he has the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that he can interpret and state clearly and positively doctrines which allegedly have been part of the heritage of the Church from the beginning.”

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

What are some of the salient Theologies of the Roman Catholic Church?

### **3.3 Evaluation**

Roman Catholic Theology is definitely undergoing certain major changes particularly with the emergence of Charismatic movement within its walls and the great contribution of Liberation Theology in Latin America to the cause of global Christianity. However, most of its doctrinal and theological emphasis had remained basically unchanged. Despite the Second Vatican Council ‘s move to spark changes in Roman Catholic Theology, the

majority of Roman Catholic theology is still orthodox and conservative in posture. Two areas are however seems to be vying for reforms in Roman catholicity.

### **Commitment to the Bible**

Many astonishing and wonderful Biblical materials have been produced by Roman Catholic Theologians; however there is still the growing need to align these biblical works with biblical based presuppositions rather than merely to critically defined philosophies.

### **Commitment to the Context**

Roman Catholicism had been known for involvement in social work and the politics around the globe, however in Africa, the liberation presupposition that accounts for the mass revolt against the social and political status quo have not been fully grasped. Often, injustices and corruption goes without a criticism from the ecclesiastical bureaucrats. It is the moves to address the political and social settings of particularly the West African region that should dominate Roman Catholic theological discussion in Africa.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

What are the two commitments that the Roman Catholic theology in Africa should make?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Roman Catholic Theology has all the necessary components to start as well as sustain global theological discussion. The study has shown that Roman Catholic theology has undergone certain significant changes, but still retaining its pre-modern theological emphases. Thus the task of Roman Catholic theology particularly in West Africa, is to show more commitment to the Scripture and the context of West Africa in terms of critical engagement with the social and political context.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) sealed the Roman Catholic Theology

The Council of Trent rejected the heart of Protestant Reformation The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) is an attempt to review Roman Catholic Theology The Second Vatican Council opened the door to ecumenical dialogue

Roman Catholic Theology has to show more commitment to scripture and context of West Africa in terms of critical engagement with the socio-political context

## 6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Highlight the historic points in the development of Roman Catholic theology?
2. Discuss four basic theologies of the Roman Catholic Church?
3. Evaluate Roman Catholic commitment to Scripture and socio-political context of West Africa?

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## **UNIT 2     PROTESTANT/REFORMED THEOLOGY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Origin of Reformed Theology
  - 3.2 The Content of Reformed Theology
  - 3.3 An Evaluation of Reformed Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Mark Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In recent times, the two terms “Protestant” and “Reformed” are used interchangeably in reference to the branch of the Church that came out of the Roman Catholic Church during the sixteenth century Reformation. Hence, in this unit we will also use both terms interchangeably. Today all churches/denominations that are not in the Roman Catholic orbit of Church authority are called “Protestants” or “Reformed.” They are called “Protestants” because when Martin Luther left the Roman Catholic Church it was interpreted as a “Protest.” Consequently, all who went with him were called “Protestants.” “Reformed” on the other hand, it was because the purpose of Luther’s protest was to reform the Church from the alleged deviation from apostolic teaching and some of the Roman Catholic handling of the scriptures. Thus, the interchangeable use of the terms is justified.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:  
 The origin of Protestant or Reformed Theology  
 The nature and an evaluation of Protestant or Reformed Theology

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Origin of Reformed Theology**

Protestantism is that form of Western Christianity, which does not accept the authority of the Pope of Roman Catholicism. Although some hold that the name “Protestant” comes from a statement made by a party of Christians at the Diet of Speyer in Germany (1529), it is well documented that its roots went beyond that date. For example, in Bohemia John Huss became restless and was concern about



papal authority, the neglect of the Scriptures, and the doctrine of grace. The actual root of the Reformed Theology however, can be traced to Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli and many other reformers in the Netherlands, Scotland and England.

From its sixteenth century roots the movement had successfully went through the enlightenment period and the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution added fuel to the movement. For example, the printing press invention aided the revolution because the printed page with its power and dissemination of information sent information all over the continent of Europe. By the time the puritans, the pilgrims arrived in America, they brought along with them the spirit of Protestantism, which spread from this place to other parts of the American colonies and other part of the world.

The development of Reformed theology was not restricted to one country but it expanded in various countries in Europe. Such countries like Switzerland, France, Netherlands, England, Scotland, Germany and many others embraced Reformed theology. For this vast expansion, its doctrinal expression is also not limited to one particular document but there are several creeds of the Reformed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Reformed Christians in various nations tried to formulate their doctrinal confessions within their contexts but all Reformed confessions are one in substance without contradiction. Reformed theology actually started with John Ulrich Zwingli whose basic educational template was humanism. The basic contours of his theology are “the absolute dependence of humanity, predestination, the human nature of Christ, the spiritual conception of the church and sacraments, the ethical and political import of the Reformation” (Herman Bavinck, 2003:177). His system, however, lacked coherence but he laid a good foundation for further improvement. It is on these contours that Calvin’s masterly systematic and organizational skills outlined Reformed theology in its most basic and stable articulation. All of Calvin’s theological enterprise is set in his great *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in two volumes. Calvin differed significantly with Zwingli by “banishing all philosophical and humanistic ideas and adheres as rigorously as possible to Scripture” (Ibid, 178). More emphatic in Calvin’s works are the objectivity of the Christian religion, covenant theology, the person and work of Christ, the Scripture, church and sacrament and his resistance to the antithesis between the spiritual and secular, and spirit and flesh. Though Reformed theology is always given the tag of Calvinism, Calvin was not alone in the development of Reformed theology. He had his contemporaries who equally developed theology along with him. This was more especially in Germany where Reformed theologians like Pareus, Ursinus, Olevianus, Hyperius, Boquinus and á Lasco developed Reformed theology within the German context.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Reformed theology took a more scholastic dimension with great theologians like Francis Turretin, Voetius, B. Pictet, John Owen and several others taking giant strides in the overall development. The 17<sup>th</sup> century was a great period that served as a bridge to the subsequent centuries that faced serious theological challenges due to the rise of the Enlightenment. Towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, people lost interest in simple dogma but asked hard intellectual and philosophical questions that demanded sophisticated answers. The confrontation was always between the Reformed scholastics and Arminians, Catholics, and the Socinians who

attacked certain doctrines especially on the Trinity, soteriology and Christology from a rationalistic point of view.

The humanists who were rationalists approached all theological issues from the angle of rationalism. They sought to revive the Greek and Roman culture. The Socinians were more rationalistic and mystic having influence in Switzerland, the Netherlands, England and America. In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Reformed theology met great challenges with the influence of the philosophies of Kant and Schleiermacher. Reformed theology came to America through various groups and churches from different countries of Europe. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Methodist church which is also an offshoot of the Reformed came through the work of John Wesley and George Whitfield and the Reformed Puritans having its most prominent theologian in the person of Jonathan Edwards also took root in America. These revivalist movements within the Reformed tradition answered strongly to the influence of Kantian philosophy.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Briefly describe the historical origin of the Reformed Theology?

### **3.2 The Content of Reformed Theology**

Reformed theology has its unique characteristics. Those features include the sovereignty of God, covenant, election, the person of Christ, justification, regeneration, the sacraments, etc. Emphasis on these theological concepts makes Reformed theology to be distinguished from other protestant theologies such as Lutheran and Arminians. The sovereignty of God is the most basic strand upon which the other concepts are understood. By the sovereignty of God, Reformed theology understands that nothing in the universe is outside the control of God. God works all things according to his own good pleasure. Since theology begins with God, the question of salvation is also one that begins with God. Reformed theology underscores the severity of sin and how all humanity has been rendered incapable of personal effort to earn salvation. The question of “who saves the sinner” is placed at the altar of God; it is God who saves. If it is God who saves the plan of salvation and its execution is all by God and mankind is only a passive recipient of God’s undeserved mercy and grace. The Theology of the Reformed churches is based on the Scriptures. Every theology is judged by the method of its hermeneutics. Thus in the Reformed formulation of theology, there are a number of aspects that are considered as guidelines or procedures. For example:

- 1 There is emphasis on literal interpretation of the Bible.
- 2 There is emphasis on the teaching of the NT. This is because although the OT is prior in time, the NT is prior in method. It is the capstone of God’s revelation (Heb. 1:2).

3 Exegesis is taken very serious because it is prior to making any theological statement. Even the historic Protestant position emphasizes the anchoring of theology in biblical exegesis. Philosophy has a place in theological formulation, but it is not itself the source of or the data. Rather, its function is ancillary.

4 Whatever is not a matter of revelation cannot be made a matter of creed or faith.

5 Protestants hold dearly the literal historical and grammatical interpretation of the Scriptures.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Describe some basic contents of Reformed Theology?

### **3.3 An Evaluation of Reformed Theology**

The Reformed Church theology at the very beginning was packed with reaction. This is because when Luther broke away, he hated anything Catholic. He abolished images, pictures of saints and prophets in the Reformed churches. While Protestants' theological formulation procedures are great, some segments in Protestantism are massacring the theology, especially the Pentecostal arms. This is because sometimes they take the scriptures too literal and without proper exegesis. Their lack of proper theological training is contributing to such weak exegesis and theology. However, this problem is not only peculiar to the Pentecost but also could be seen in the narrow exegesis and spiritually obsessed hermeneutics and theology of reformed theology with its backward looking tendencies to deal with contemporary questions.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Critically evaluate the Reformed Theology and Theology?

### **3.4 Comparison of the Protestant and the Roman Catholics**

#### **Scripture and Teaching**

The early Protestants complained that Catholics had elevated Church tradition at the expense of the Bible. Thus the printing and distribution of Scriptures became a passion for the Protestants during the reformation. They abolished the papal authority and idolize the Scriptures. During the reformation, Protestants fashioned elaborate doctrines to support their claims of Scripture inerrancy and infallibility.

#### **Social Institutions**

Protestants or Reformers took over many of the social forms of Western Catholicism and unanimously rejected only the papacy. However, many churches in the Protestant orbit such as Anglican, and some Lutherans, including many of the independent churches even in recent times, kept the office of the Bishop and Episcopal patterns. The Protestants hold to the priesthood of all believers and, therefore, they teach that the laity is on the same status with the clergy. In spite of this, the Protestant clergies are the only one empowered to preside over the preaching and administering of the Holy Communion.

### **Rituals and Worship Activities**

The Roman Catholics venerate the services of the Mass. But the Protestants lay more emphasis on the preached Word. There have been many changes in some ways in Catholicism and Reformed churches in recent times. With more and more biblical scholars from all continents coming to the scene of theology and condition of the world - systems changing very fast, it remains to be seen how Catholics and Protestants will relate. That is, whether they will be closer or they will further part ways.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Since the reformation, due to proliferation of Protestant or Reformed denominations, the unity of their theology tends to be a matter of concern now. On another front, contemporary issues of modern and post-modern context had consistently challenged her hermeneutical and theological presuppositions and had often forced her to more biblically honest and realistic prescriptions to the ills of the human society.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit: The invention of the printing press aided the Reformation

Protestant Theology upheld the central authority of the Scriptures

Protestant Theology upheld literal interpretation of the Scriptures  
 Protestant Theology upheld literal, historical and grammatical interpretation  
 Some Protestant churches still retain the form of Roman Catholic Church government.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

- 1 Explain the terms “Protestantism” and “Reformed” and noting the relationships of each of the term?
- 2 What are some of the major areas that parted the Roman Catholics and the Protestants?
- 3 Discuss briefly the major emphases of Reformed theology?

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## **UNIT 3      EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY**

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- 2.0 Objectives
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  - 3.1 Definition of Evangelical
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The term, “evangelical” should not be understood in a confessional, that is, in a denominational and exclusive sense. “Evangelical” refers primarily and decisively to the Bible, which in some way is respected by all confessions. It has to be stated that not all so-called “Protestant” theology is evangelical. On the other hand, Evangelical theology is found across the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Pentecostal traditions.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

Trace the history or origin of Evangelicalism  
 Discuss how the term has been used over the years.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Definition of “Evangelical”**

The term “evangelical” derives from the Greek word “*Euangelion*” meaning “gospel.” In the reformation era, the term “evangelical” was used to refer to the adherents of the Augsburg Confession in contrast to Roman Catholic or Reformed Churches. Historically,

a second meaning of the term has evolved. Due to the characteristic unity of the doctrine exposed and defended by the early Protestants, the word “evangelical” has tended in a narrower sense to denote all who remain fully committed to Protestant Orthodoxy.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Define and Give the etymology of the word *Evangelical*?

### **3.2 The Origin of Evangelical Theology**

The origin of “evangelical” can hardly be separated from its meaning. As mentioned above already, it started in the Reformation era as a reaction against some of the Roman Catholics formulation of theology and beliefs. But as a movement its roots is traced to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the term came to be applied to those who favoured a Protestant Church of England. In 1846 opponents of the Anglo-Catholic movement in England formed a cooperative venture, the Evangelical Alliance. This alliance affirmed a nine-point statement of faith that included the inspiration of the Bible, atonement, the Trinity, the fall and depravity of man. By 1867 an American Evangelical Alliance was formed. By the 1940s a new evangelical movement, which is of interest to this segment, began to form as American Fundamentalism. Carl F. Henry, a Baptist minister and Educator, signalled the beginning of this neo-evangelicalism in his publication the *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* in 1947.

E.J. Carnell (1919-1967) was the early theologian of this new type of conservative faith. At this time the conservative Churches grew very fast. As a result of the strength of this evangelical movement, extra- congregational institutions came into being, thus, the founding of notable of evangelical institution such as Gordon-Cornwall, Fuller and Trinity. Subsequently, these institutions had caused the influence of evangelicalism to spread globally.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Describe briefly the historical origin of *Evangelical Theology*?

### **3.3 Evangelical Theology**

A denomination, a religion and an institution are always measured by what they teach and hold dearly. Similarly, the evangelicals have what distinguishes them from others in terms of theology and belief. Generally speaking, evangelical theology’s basic substance is drawn from the heritage of Orthodox Christian formation. Thus it stands in the great Christian theological tradition. For example, evangelical theology goes back to the

creeds of the first centuries of the Christian era in which the early Church sought to correlate the teaching of Scripture and to defend it.

Evangelical theology also has strong links with the early medieval Church, the distinctive of Protestant Reformation, and it is deeply indebted to the series of evangelical awakenings starting from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Since then it has broke away from its preoccupation with the theology of Christian life to serious exegetical work. Unfortunately, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as the pressure from liberal theology mounted, evangelicalism kind of weakened. That brought about the defensive fundamentalism. From the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been revitalization in the part of Evangelical theology. Now, we have to open our eyes and ears to see and hear what the 21<sup>st</sup> century will say. When we talk of evangelicals, first we need to see them as fundamentalists. However, the first and foremost emphasis of evangelical when it comes to theology is their belief the in Bible, the 66 Books only, is the only inspired word of God. Within this Bible there are cardinal teachings that, according to Evangelicals, if temper with, will devaluate the validity of the Scriptures. These cardinal teachings are:

**1 The Bible** – The Bible is the only book that is the Word of God. It is the revelation of God to mankind.

**2 Revelation** - God revealed Himself to man through special revelation, which include the Word, the Son, etc. Then the general revelation, which is all the visible and invisible things, God created in the world.

**3 Inerrancy of the Scripture** – This teaches that the Bible is without error. This excludes typographical errors, dating errors and omissions among others.

**4 Inspiration** - The Scriptures are inspired by God. That is, God breathed into the writers and they wrote under the control of the Holy Spirit. Thus evangelicals hold that the terms: “infallibility”, “trustworthiness”, “plenary Inspiration”, “inerrancy as to teaching”, or “inerrant in all it affirms”, are all adequate.

5 The Virgin birth is held dearly by evangelicals.

6 Jesus the son of God and His bodily return cannot be theologically compromised.

7 Faith and practice - faith is the event and history without which no one can become a Christian. Faith helps the believer in his formulation of theology. Faith gives hope. Hope in the now and in the future.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Briefly outline the content of *Evangelical Theology*?

#### 3.4 An Evaluation of Evangelical Theology

It is a little difficult to evaluate evangelical theology fully in a work like this one. However, we need to realize that evangelicals are still trying, as a movement, to fashion a theology that will still proclaim their distinctiveness. For within the evangelical realm or movement, there are Pentecostals who place premium on some doctrines or biblical teachings than others. For example, healings, miracles and prosperity among others are very much at the forefront. Tongue speaking from the 60s to the 1990s was emphasized in Pentecostal circles but it is dying out now. Most evangelicals did not subscribe to



tongue speaking and second baptism of the Holy Spirit. All these trends revealed the diversity inherent in the evangelical movement.

At the moment the evangelical theological can be termed biblical (since its source of the Old Testament/New Testament) and spiritual theology. It takes into consideration God purpose for mankind. This brings us to the issue of contextualization, which is the task of systematic theology. However, evangelical theology has not been able to articulate its theology in the arena of political and cultural entities of the human society.

#### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

Critically evaluate *Evangelical Theology*?

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Thus far this unit has introduced evangelical theology, and its objective. It defined what “evangelical” means and discussed its theology. It concluded by evaluating its theology. Evangelical theology is still the product of the Reformation, Great awakenings, and its source is the Holy Scriptures. We are still keeping our finger cross to see what evangelical movement will offer the Christian Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

The term evangelical tend to refer to all who remain committed to Protestant Orthodoxy

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the term is applied to those who favoured Protestant Church of England

There are various shades of evangelicals but there are seven points of belief that is generally held.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

- 1 Explain the origins of evangelical and its theology?
- 2 Who were the precursors of Evangelical movement?
- 3 In what ways have this movement and its theology relate to or affect the African Christians?
- 4 Suggest a way forward for evangelical movement and its theology?

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## **UNIT 4     PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0    Introduction
- 2.0    Objectives
- 3.0    Main Content
- 3.1    The Origin of Pentecostal Theology
- 3.2    The Pentecostal Theologies
- 3.3    An Evaluation of Pentecostal Theology
- 4.0    Conclusion
- 5.0    Summary
- 6.0    Tutor-Mark Assignments
- 7.0    References/Further Readings

### **1.0    INTRODUCTION**

Pentecostalism is the fastest growing movement in present day Christendom. The Pentecostal Theology has also far reaching influence than often acknowledged. The influence of Pentecostalism is clearly seen in the semi-modified liturgy, sermon and theological emphases of even the mainline conservative missionary churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The phenomenon of Pentecostalism has now sparked theological discussion though it has over the years being ignored in academic theological reflection until recent time. This study investigates briefly the origin, theology and presence of Pentecostal movement in the non-western context. It also evaluates the contribution and weakness of contemporary Pentecostal movement.

### **2.0    OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to: Narrate origin of Pentecostal Theology  
Explain the nature of Pentecostal Theology  
Discuss the basic content of Pentecostal theology  
Evaluate the contribution of contemporary Pentecostal movement

### **3.0    MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1    The Origin of Pentecostal Theology**

The origin of Pentecostal Theology has often been dated to Pentecostal events of the last century; however, the Pentecostal phenomenon in a loose

sense goes back to the Old Testament world especially in the active role played by the Spirit of God in the lives and ministry of the Old Testament saints. This section highlights the ancient and modern roots of Pentecostal phenomenon and its consequent theology.

### **Ancient Roots**

Pentecostalism is not merely a twenty-first century revival or phenomenon but has its root down deep in Church history. Apart of the charismatic leaders of the Israelite society who were imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit, there were indications in Israel prophetic genre that people of the exilic and post exilic period anticipated an increase in the activity of the Spirit of God in their day, hence the prophecy of Joel that in the last days the Spirit of God will cut across age, gender and class distinction of the human society (2:28-32).

This scriptural passage was interpreted by the early Church as a reality in the coming of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts (2:16-21). The Pentecostal phenomenon was clearly celebrated in the life, message and ministry of the Early Church as attested by many scriptural passages devoted to explaining the gifts, fruits or works of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Church and the individual members respectively. This emphasis on the Pentecostal phenomenon is clearly seen in Pauline epistles and the gospel narratives.

The history of the Church is creamed with references to this Pentecostal phenomenon. In the writings of the Church fathers particularly Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Origen, there are references to this event. Even the reformers attested to the reality of this phenomenon in their day, though some of them because of the medieval superstition practices condemned such Pentecostal dispositions. Similarly, such Pentecostal phenomena such as healing, prophecy, speaking in tongue have also been celebrated by dissident movement or sects in Church history particularly the Montanist, Waldensians, Lollards and the Moravians.

### **Modern Roots**

The modern origin of Pentecostalism is dated to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1901 at the beginning of twenty century, when Miss Agnes Ozman, a student at the Bethel Bible College, Topeka, Kansas was believed to have spoken in tongue at the laying of hands of the Principal of the school Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929). The singular event coupled with the Azusa Street revival spearheaded by the Apostolic Faith Mission in Los Angeles launched Pentecostalism to global attention. Ever since then, Pentecostalism has spread by leaps and bounds across the globe. This staggering growth, while also taking place in the West, has primarily taken place in the Developing Nations Context. The appeal of Pentecostalism is largely due to the affinity that Pentecostal theological emphases has with the Third world context, particularly Africa. Thus, the message of divine security, financial prosperity,

success and deliverance from witches and wizards always rings a familiar chord with the expectation from the worldviews of most Africans.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

What are the ancient and modern roots of *Pentecostalism*?

### **3.2 The Pentecostal Theologies**

Pentecostal Theology has many different distinctive features and emphases; however, three basic theologies have often shown the unique contribution of Pentecostalism to theology. These theologies are as follows:

#### **Theology of Salvation**

The Pentecostals believed in holistic salvation of well being both for the Spirit and the body. They extend the theological domain of salvation to encompass wealth and financial prosperity. This understanding of salvation is also stretched to include divine protection against the forces of evil whether they are demons or witches. They also believed salvation should include the “now” in concrete physical terms and not postponement of divine promises to the future. They believed that a life of abundance, faith and positive thinking should characterize the life of a believer.

#### **Christology**

The Pentecostal Christology is a “realistic Christology” that deals pragmatically with problems of the now. The Christology of Pentecostalism is quite different from the Christology of those found in conservative theology. Most conservative Christology often depicted Christ in philosophical and abstract clothing, but the Christology of most Pentecostals is clearly constructed to deal with crucial issues in the lives of their members.

#### **Pneumatology**

The recovery of the Third person of the Godhead in the Theological discussion is generally a bye-product of the rediscovery of the Holy Spirit by the Pentecostals. They single-handedly reawakened an interest in the Holy Spirit, His work and charismatic gifts, which many conservatives believed had ceased. They reverted the “Binitarian” disposition of classical Theology in its emphases on God the Father and the Son and the often neglect of the Holy Spirit. It is in this latter sense, that Pentecostalism had made a great contribution to global Christianity, even with the recognition of its many flaws.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

What are the three basic theologies of Pentecostalism?

### **3.3 An Evaluation of Pentecostal Theology**

Despite the contribution of Pentecostalism in Pneumatology and even Christology, yet some salient problems of Pentecostalism and its theology is footed on two fronts.

#### **Pentecostal Hermeneutics**

Interestingly, most of the excesses of Pentecostal theology could be traced to faculty hermeneutics particularly as expressed in shallow exegesis and the habit of proof-texting. This practice often degenerates to heretical and syncretistic tendencies, whereby context of scriptures are ignored, progressive revelation confused and thus, Pentecostals reached out with all zest to claim millennium texts, whether in prophetic books or within Psalms.

#### **Pentecostal Pastoral Ministry**

Pentecostal pastoral ministry is filled with apparent contradictions because most often, it is the pastor that is frequently blessed and the members are usually left feeling unrealistic longings for financial prosperity or the expected healing. Their Theology of salvation influenced their pastoral ministry to the extent that the leaders are prefigured as super human and thus the members creamed around them like demigods. This usually crippled the spiritual maturity of the members.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The Theology of Pentecostalism cannot longer be ignored as has often been done in classical Christian reflection. This is because the Pentecostal movement has influenced the language, attitudes and lifestyle of most Christians in Africa, Asia, and South America at the grassroots. It is in this understanding we must overlook its fanaticism, challenge its presupposition and correct its many flaws.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit: Pentecostalism has its root in the Old Testament.

Modern revival of Pentecostalism can be dated to January 1, 1901 and the Asuza Street revival.

Pentecostal hermeneutics often involved proof-texting and shallow exegesis.

### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Explain the contribution of Pentecostalism in the area of Pneumatology?
2. What are the ancient and modern roots of Pentecostalism?

3. Give a fair evaluation of Pentecostalism in your neighbourhood?

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## UNIT 5 THEOLOGY OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Origin of African Independent Churches
  - 3.2 The Theology of African Independent Churches
  - 3.3 An Evaluation of African Independent Churches
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Mark Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The African Independent Church also known as the *African Initiative Church* or the *African Prophetic Church* is one of the significant theological developments in the African religious terrain of the last two centuries. The emergence of the phenomenon of the African independent Church arose out of the complication arising from the missionary encounter between the western missionary and African worldview and spiritual longings. This unit investigates the origin and theology of the movement and also reveals their basic theologies, noting their contribution to universal Christianity.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

Explain the origin of African Independent Church  
 Evaluate the basic theologies of the African Independent Church  
 Appreciate the contribution of African Independent Church to African and global Christianity.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 The Origin of African Independent Churches

The origin of African Independent Church could be attributed to the stark reality of modernization on the African society, particularly in the collapse of pre-Christian religious structure and thus the necessity of recreating new religious structures on Christian religious lines at the beginning of



modernization in Africa. However, such sociological explanation of the cause of African Independent Church does not do justice to the ancient roots or occurrence of the phenomenon of African Independent Church in the religious consciousness of the African society. This section surveys the ancient origin and modern roots of African Independent Church.

### **Ancient Roots**

The historic root of African Independent Church has generally been traced to the Congo region in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In a Roman Catholic missionary context of the Congo area, a Congolese of royal family by name Kimpa Vita advocated some theological and prophetic disposition that is now closely associated with African Independent Church. After her Baptism, Kimpa Vita began to manifest some prophetic gifts and she was anti-white missionary in her messages. She related in her vision that Jesus and the apostles were black, which was contrary to representation of Christ by the white missionaries. She also saw Jesus as a liberator from poverty and oppression, and she looked to the future, when a black millennium will dawn on earth with its capital in Africa. The implication of Kimpa Vita study for theology is that it revealed an early dissatisfaction and rejection of the hermeneutics and theology of western missionaries and a conscious preoccupation to define hermeneutics and theology using an African contextual agenda. It is in this sense, that Kimpa Vita became the first page and genesis in the study of African Independent Church.

### **Modern Roots**

The dawn of African Independent Church has been traced to the message and missionary activities of William Wade Harris in the early twenty century in the region of West Africa, particularly in the Liberia and Ivory Coast. Harris was a revolutionary figure, who had been credited as responsible for the religious changes in the spiritual landscape in Ivory Coast. He retained in his theology and messages a preoccupation to define the Christian reality using the African worldview. In his evangelism, Harris preached salvation, divine protection against witchcraft, healing and miracles, destructions of charms and idols and substituted the Christian God for the African gods in traditional African religious songs. He was reported as having baptized 120 thousand converts, per year and subsequently turned over these converts to established denominations for discipleship. He helped to spark the phenomenon of African Independent Church in West Africa. However, similar trends were also taking place in other parts of Africa, namely: South Africa and East Africa. The modern and ancient expressions of the phenomenon of African Independent churches stemmed from the radical rejection of the hermeneutics and theology of the western missionaries and their siblings, the mainline denominations as incompatible with the African worldview and contextual realities.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

What are the two *basic historical roots* in the history of African independent churches?

**3.2 The Theology of African Independent Churches**

The theology of African Independent Church had many and diverse theological emphases. However, three salient theologies dominate the hermeneutics, homiletics and Pastoral ministry of African Independent Church. These theologies could be easily seen in the Cherubim and Seraphim Churches, Christ Apostolic Churches and other expressions of African Independent Church scattered over Nigeria and Africa in general. The major three theologies of these denominations are:

**Christology**

Instead of creedal Christology that had dominated the missionary founded churches particularly in its abstract spiritualized and philosophical interpretation of the person of Christ and the Christ event, the Christology of the African Independent Church is by all purpose functional rather than creedal. In this understanding, Christ is depicted as the cosmic victor and Lord of the African cosmology and thus, all forces of evil and good are duly under his sovereign control and rule. Consequently, every person under his care is assured divine protection against these feared forces of cultic and metaphysical personalities, as well as, their human agent such as witches, wizards and the native herbalist. This deduction makes emphasis on Christ's supernatural victory over the forces of evil dominant in the song, liturgy, preaching and ministerial outlook of African Independent Church. In a very subtle way, the African Independent Church have emphasized the irrelevant of western Christology and sought to redefine Christology in terms of the African worldview and context. Consequently, Christ in this depiction is made to deal with the spiritual and cultural fears of the African people. The distinction between the non-miraculous and non-active and non-sensitive western Christology is drawn. Though maintaining some close continuity with the western Christology yet in the African Independent church, Christology maintained a closer relationship with African worldview in the interpretation of the Bible and the interpretation of human cultural assumptions.

**Soteriology (Theology of Salvation)**

The understanding of salvation within the context of the African Independent Church is in holistic terms. The African Independent Church conceives salvation as encompassing spiritual, bodily and other dimensions of the human personality. Thus, the redemption of the entire human personality is assumed in the understanding of salvation by the African Independent Church. These emphases are a direct reaction against the narrowly defined understanding of salvation in the mainline churches and western theology. Similarly, the emphasis in holistic salvation came along with it a strong African conception, since for most Africans; salvation is basically interrelated with the concept of blessedness, whereby the understanding salvation seemed synonymous with

blessing in terms of wealth, children, possession and health. Thus, the preoccupation in traditional African society to seek the gods in order to initiate, promote or protect such desirable state of being is Christianized. The African gods are relevant only as they help to actualize the blessedness of the African community without such role within the African society; the African gods lost their place. There is no such thing as worshipping of the gods for the divinity sake in the African pre-Christian context as the general tune of western traditional Christianity often suggests. African gods are worshiped for utilitarian reasons and thus, the African Independent Church understood salvation in these terms, hence, seeking to actualize those African collective salvation definitions in Christian terms.

### **Angelology**

An elaborate theology of angels dominates the worldview of the African Independent Church. These emphases on angelic mediation or ministry have certain Biblical justification, but however it is completely the by-product of the African pre-Christian worldview of people in African Independent Church. In pre-Christian Africa, belief in the mediatory role of angelic or spiritual entities are clearly envisaged, where through these intermediaries the Africans are expected to relate with the highest God. This role is also closely performed by the ancestors who mediate between the physical world and the spiritual world. In a new context devoid of these traditional religious expressions, the African Independent Church places emphases on the angelic personalities with closer relationship to the African mediating role of the spirits. These angelic personalities are often invoked through repetition and incantation in words and rhymes similar to those found in the pre-Christian traditional religious environment. The protection and provisions from angels such as Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael are often invoked. It is this angelic emphasis that made the phenomenon of African independent Church an interesting African phenomenon.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

State and explain the three basic theologies of the African Independent churches?

### **3.2 An Evaluation of the African Independent Churches**

The appreciation of the theologies of African Independent Church must be done particularly in their hermeneutical, liturgical, homiletical and pastoral quest to consciously break away with the unrealistic spiritual or theological emphases of the mainline churches. Interestingly, they produce unilaterally a theological emphasis that is a rich blend of their deep commitment to the African primeval worldview and Biblical affirmation. However, caution in two areas in reference to the theology of African Independent Church must be exercised.

### **Syncretistic Tendencies**

It is obvious that African Independent Church maintained a commitment to the African worldview. However, their romance with the African worldview and the African pre-Christian religious heritage has often generated some serious concerns particularly in the adulteration of the Christian forms and the introduction into the Christian forms of

questionable religious unrealistic forms such prescription of candles, sacrifice and unhealthy emphases on the mediatory role of the angels. These syncretistic tendencies have generally made the African Independent Church a sect instead of playing a defining role in mainstream African Christianity.

### **Subjective Spiritual Experiences**

Often, in the services, liturgy, ministrations, prophecies and interpretation of the Bible subjective experience of the leaders of founders of the African Independent Church are emphasized and defined as normative for the course or nature of the worship or ministrations. The text of the Bible is thus at the mercy of the imagination of the shepherd, who often employed it to defend his presumptuous and interest. “Bible abuse”, if there is anything like that, frequently characterizes the sermons, interpretation and pastoral works of the leaders. They punctuate every phrase in a sermon with chain of references to visions or angelic visitation, which are assumed as normative to guiding the church’s course of action.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

What are your personal evaluations of an African Independent Church in you neighbourhood?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The study underscores the importance of African Independent churches in Africa. It reveals the quest of African Independent Church to harmonize the Christian biblical revelation with African pre-Christian traditional forms. The distinctive shape taken by the theologies of African Independent Church is quite interesting, but also revealed some concerns, particularly in the quest to align the content of such theology to the Bible.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

The ancient root of African Independent Church can be traced back to Kimpa Vita of Congo in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The modern root of African Independent Church can be traced back to the activities of William Wade Harris in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire.

The theology of African Independent Church has three distinctive emphases: Christology, Soteriology and Angelology

African Independent Church theology is however subject to syncretistic tendencies.

### **6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Who are the African Independent churches?

2. What are the ancient and modern roots of eh movement?
3. Discuss the theologies of African Independent churches?
4. Evaluate any African Independent Church in your neighbourhood?

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## **MODULE 3      TYPES OF THEOLOGY II**

### **UNIT 1      CONTEXTUAL AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY**

Unit 1	Contextual Theology
Unit 2	Liberation Theology
Unit 3	Black Theology
Unit 4	Feminist Theology
Unit 5	African Christian Theology

#### **Unit 1 Contextual Theology**

##### CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Defining Contextual Theology
3.2	Contextual Theology and Missiology
3.3	The Importance of Contextual Theology
3.4	A Praxis Model of Contextual Theology
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
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#### **1.0 Introduction**

Theology has grown over the years since the beginning of the church. Theologians have tried to understand the biblical message within their own various contexts. Western theology had dominated the theological landscape until the 21<sup>st</sup> century when theologians from majority third world also began to ask critical questions as to the relevance of some of the theological concepts within their contexts. This led to agitations for contextualizing of the biblical message to fit with the people's contexts. Today, the concept of contextual theology is no longer new, though theologians are still wrestling with how to make the best of contextual theology without diluting the original biblical message. This course is to introduce the students to context theology in order to be equipped in doing it effectively.

#### **2.0 Objectives:**

The objectives of this unit are to:

Help the student understand what contextual theology is

Equip the student to be able to critically analyze issues in contextualization of theology

Enable the student to engage in doing contextual theology effectively

### 3.0 Main Content:

#### 3.1 Defining Contextual Theology

One common definition of theology is simply “faith seeking understanding” put another way it is “Christian faith trying to understand the things of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.” Yet one thing that strikes us if we start to read theological literature is that it can sound very different depending on when and where it was written. Today’s African Christians (e.g. Lamin Sanneh or Kwame Bediako) are writing things about Jesus that do not sound very much like what Frenchman Jon Calvin wrote in Switzerland in the mid-1500s. And Calvin does not sound very much like the Great Cappadocians—great Eastern theologians of the 4th century who lived in what we might think of as modern-day Turkey. It’s not that Scripture has changed, or God himself. The difference is the place and cultures—the setting of the faith that “seeks to understand.”

Because the settings change, the *questions* change. And because the questions change, our theology also changes. And this is why I believe that all theology is “contextual theology”—that is, it is from a context. For some evangelicals, this might sound troubling. How can we know anything for certain? Does this mean truth changes through time and cultures? The answer is no—we can trust in a God who stays the same while humbly realizing that the theological answers we come up with today might be very helpful for us, but possibly don’t answer the questions for all time.

Orthodox theology (within the main consensus of scripture and the church through time) is always equally true, but it may not always be equally *relevant*.

In our technological digitalized world, we are bound to think in a different way from those who lived before us in a non-technological world thought. It is in this light that we ask questions within our own contexts.

To speak of contextual theology today calls to mind one of two possible approaches to theology and culture, distinguishable by both their roots and their intention. Though they share the same label, they’re not often found in the same academic walls (if we can forgive some painting in rather broad strokes).

#### 3.2 Contextual Theology and Missiology

Evangelical academics are likely to locate the discussion in the missiology department, where examination of culture has an evangelistic impetus. With roots in the successes and failures in the nineteenth-century Western missionary societies, these approaches are primarily praxiological, discussing custom and ritual and global cultures. Anthropology and sociology are engaged for their descriptive powers, and missionary-theologians like Paul Hiebert and John and Anna Travis are referenced in an effort to understand the incarnation and communication of the gospel, especially in non-western environment.

Mainline academics, on the other hand, are likely visit contextual theologies as an invited critique on the Western hegemony of the academy. The approach is postmodern and plural, and builds on the foundational stones of liberation, feminist,

and black theologies, citing Gustavo Gutierrez, Mary Daly, and James Cone. In intention, these voices are studied to rectify a missing voice to marginalized people groups, a segment that is destined to continue its expansion even beyond Womanist, Minjung, and Queer theologies.

Each general approach—the missiological or the postmodern—maintains some suspicion of the other, not least because of their perceived (and not without cause) position as liberal or evangelical approaches. But both share in common a potential marginalization in the theology classroom which implicitly (and unintentionally) accepts the mainstream of Western theology as neutral, generic, or context free. That course catalogs will allow “Feminist theologies” or “African Christologies” but not “European Reformed Theologies” or “Germanic Pre-Modern Doctrine” underscores the point. The Frankfurt school’s Herbert Marcuse helpfully speaks of “repressive tolerance” to describe a hegemonic system that receives minority views with open arms, but in treating them as such uses them as evidence to reinforce the dominant view. And Dutch Catholic Frans Wijsen laments that contextual theologies are treated like “exotic fruits to supplement their traditional Western theological dishes.”

If these two approaches were to have more than just casual interaction, one might imagine they’d band together on a protest march with slogan posters held high: “All theologies are contextual theologies!” And this is the approach this study takes, attempting a theology from context because *all* theologies—as faith seeking understanding—seek from their point of view.

Catholic theologian Stephen Bevans writes, “There is no such thing as “theology”; there is only contextual theology... the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context is really a theological imperative” and cannot be “something on the fringes of the theological enterprise. It is at the very center of what it means to do theology in today’s world.”

Bevans provides six detailed sketches of contextual theology, set out as “inclusive models.” The translation model seeks adaptation; the anthropological model seeks to preserve cultural identity; the praxis model is “faith seeking intelligent action”; the counter-cultural model seeks prophetic voice; the synthetic model seeks dialog; and the transcendental model seeks paradigm shift. It’s these last two models that may partially describe the approach that will be attempted here. The transcendental model, describes Bevans, requires, “a radical shift in perspective, a change in horizon.” Jesus says that a new patch cannot be put on an old garment (Mk. 2:21-22). This model begins with the individual or community’s experience of itself, and sees God’s revelatory action as received by real human people. The synthetic model, on the other hand, assumes that context have both uniqueness and similarity to other contexts. It emphasizes dialog, and while it does not begin with “Christianity’s previous inculturations,” easily borrows resources or language from other contexts as it seeks to explain.

It’s probably important to note that the cultural context in view—digital information culture—cannot be defined geographically or generationally. Though American children and teens in middle-class settings are a staple of the online demographics, research shows us that younger adults (the latter half didn’t grow up with e-mail) are still highly digitally active—84% of 18 to 29 year olds check social networking sites at least once a week. Exceptions abound, and the Washington Post reports on



examples of both “resisters” and “adopters” in the mostly-connected age groups. And Pew Internet demonstrates effectively that the “digital divide” between poor and rich, urban and rural, and elderly and young is rapidly vanishing. So instead of defining a digital native by “generation” or social location, we say that a digital native is simply one who lives in digital technology as an environment. The description still may not encompass certain teenagers, while it could easily include a Blackberry-armed business person that exceeds the typical age assumptions, but the cultural links between digital natives remain.

### 3.3 The Importance of Contextual Theology

Lourdino A. Yuzon<sup>4</sup> argues that doing theology in context is not something optional. It is a mandate, an imperative which, as Bevans says, is based on external and internal factors. The external factors include a feeling in the Third World (and to some extent in the First World) of “general dissatisfaction with classical approaches to theology” (Ibid., p.5) which do not make sense in non-western cultural patterns and thought forms and have been perceived to be irrelevant in Third World historical realities characterized by rapid changes brought about by western technological advances and the struggles of suffering people for justice, power-sharing and freedom from anti-life forces. Another external factor is the reaction to the “oppressive nature of older approaches” (Ibid., p.6) to theology. For instance, individualistic and other-worldly theologies from the west have functioned to justify authoritarian governments and the exploitation and oppression of marginalized and powerless peoples not only in the Third World but also in the First World countries. Also, male-dominated theology and structures have served to exclude women from their rightful places in the life and work of churches the world over. In the Third World, there has been a growing awareness of the fact that a “colonial theology” has nothing to do with the real meaning of Christian faith.

Contextualization is an inherent dynamic of the Christian faith. This is to say, the imperatives of contextual theology are derived from the way God has related Godself to the world. Put simply, through the incarnation event, God comes to us and establishes us in life-affirming, life-giving and life-sustaining relationship with Godself. The world is the object of God’s unqualified and out-going love (John 3:16). God expressed God’s love through an act of self-giving and in sharing our human experience (John 1:14). If the church is to touch peoples’ lives with God’s message in a meaningful way it must communicate that message incarnationally. Contextual theology reminds us that theology is not just a view of life, but also a way of life. And based on what God did in and through Christ and is doing in the Spirit, that way of life should be incarnational through and through. Another internal factor “is the sacramental nature of reality. The doctrine of incarnation proclaims that God is revealed not primarily in ideas but in concrete reality” (Ibid., p.8).

God’s encounter with the world through Jesus Christ takes place through the ordinary things of day-to-day life which are transparent of God’s presence. For instance, bread and wine used at the Lord’s Table mediate to us the presence of the loving and living God who makes all things new. The world of things and all that “hath life” remind us of the creative power of God. If ordinary things are transparent of God’s presence, then in the same way, we can speak of culture as something that

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<sup>4</sup> The following are his arguments for contextual theology.

is revelatory of God's presence. Hence, the continuing task of theology "... is to reveal God's presence in a truly sacramental world" (Ibid., p.9). Any culture, whether "Christian" or shaped by other faiths, is not without witness to the presence of God in the midst of people. The task of theology is to discern "signs" of God's presence and make that presence explicit or manifest. A third internal factor that has contributed to the development of contextual theology is the shift in understanding of revelation. In traditional/classical theology revelation is presented "in the form of eternal truths handed down to us from Christ and the Apostles. Faith is understood to be the intellectual assent to those truths. All these are systematically arranged and presented as the... Faith." A more recent understanding of revelation speaks of God's ongoing act of self-disclosure in inter-personal terms. According to this view revelation means the offer of Godself to women and men "by means of concrete actions and symbols in history as God's self-communication to men and women" (Bevans, *op.cit.*, p.9). Consequently, this calls for faith in terms of a response of the self as a gift to the personal God. And God's offer of God-self to women and men could be made in ways that they can understand within their cultural contexts. This inter-personal view of God's self-revelation highlights the need for theology to take seriously the contexts in which women and men encounter God.

It is not farfetched to say that, in fact, all theologies including classical theologies are contextual. "Creative moments in theology have arisen out of the church's response to new challenges in a given historical context. They bear the cultural and social imprints of the time" ( K. C. Abraham, "Third World Theologies", *CTC Bulletin*, May-December 1992, p.5). It is said that the theology of St. Thomas of Aquinas was a response to the challenges of Aristotelian philosophy, and the hierarchical structure of Medieval society greatly influenced the Thomist system of theology. The crisis theology of Karl Barth was, in large measure, a response to the crises of Western civilization brought about by the First World War and the failure of liberal theology. "Theologians of every age are committed to interpreting the Gospel of Jesus in a way (that is) relevant and meaningful to the realities around them" (Ibid., p.5).

Currently, and particularly in the Third World contexts, theologies have found new conversation partners. Many respectable Third World theologians now draw knowledge and insights from other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science and economics that describe, analyze and interpret people's experience. In addition, there has been a recognition of the fact that grass-roots people, not just professionally trained theologians, have begun to articulate their world views through their stories, symbols and myths even though these have remained in the form of oral tradition. These "provide insights on their perspectives on their origin, their struggles and values that hold them together" (K.C. Abraham *op.cit.*, p.7). Contextual Asian theologies, for instance, take the articulation of the experience of grass-roots people as a basic source of theological construction. (It may be mentioned in passing that in Christian Conference of Asia circles, the term people is used not in a generic sense to refer to people in general, but to a particular class of people, namely, the poor, powerless, marginalized, suffering and struggling people in Asia such as the minjung in Korea, the Dalits in India, et al.)

There has also been a shift in the language of theology. In the past, the emphasis was on "static continuities of human life". The new language of theology emphasizes the "dynamic aspects of human relationships". This is consistent with the view (mentioned above) about the inter-personal view of God's self-disclosure to the

world. Instead of futile dichotomies which the old language of theology has engendered – nature vs. history, grace vs. law, individual vs. community, spiritual vs. material, etc.– the new language of theology affirms a holistic view of reality.

### 3.4 A Praxis Model of Contextual Theology

Asian situations have spawned a good number of contextual theologies. One of the most common has been called the praxis model. This is a departure from the assumption that theology is a systematic articulation of timeless truth and the practical application of a body of ideas to concrete historical situations.

Though theologians continue to employ adaptation, which seeks to reinterpret Western thought from an Asian perspective, or indigenization, which takes the native culture and religion as its basis, there is a newer thrust to contextualize theology... As a dynamic process, it combines words and action, it is open to change, and looks to the future. (Virginia Fabella, ed., Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity, Orbis Books, 1980, p.4).

The aim of contextual theology is not only to understand and interpret God's act, or to give reason for their faith, but to help suffering people in their struggle to change their situation in accordance with the vision of the gospel (K.C. Abraham, op. cit., p.8) of justice and freedom from bondage to fullness of life. In a very real sense, the praxis type of contextual theology is liberative. It seeks to raise the critical awareness of people about their situation and to empower them to change cultural values and social structures undergirding human relationships.

The praxis model opts for the action/reflection method of doing theology. As set forth at the Dar Es Salaam meeting of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) "reject(s) as irrelevant an academic type of theology that is divorced from action." The statement goes to say: "We are prepared for a radical break in epistemology which makes commitment the first act of theology and engages in critical reflection on the praxis of the reality of the Third World". In other words, as K.C. Abraham puts it, "liberative praxis is the methodology for contextual theologies". The praxis model is nothing new. In fact, it continues the prophetic tradition which insists not only on words but on action (Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah) and the New Testament injunction to communicate in action the truth in love. It is also in keeping with the view that theology and ethics are inseparable.

As mentioned above, the praxis model of contextual theology affirms the conviction that "truth is at the level of history, not in the realm of ideas" (Quoted in Bevans, op. cit., p.65). Action is reflected-upon and reflection is acted-upon.

To appreciate why commitment to reflected-upon action and acted-upon reflection is the preferred method of the praxis model of contextual theology, it is important for us to have a glimpse of one massive fact of the Asian context. Reference is here made to the fact that the masses of people in Asia are in bondage to dehumanizing, exploitative and oppressive con-conditions. A similar consideration may be made to the African context where there is so much of human suffering in terms of disease, food, wars, etc.

Such suffering and misery are caused much less, if at all, by people's congenital deficiencies (e.g., that, allegedly, they are unimaginative and lazy), but very much more because of structures of oppression, exploitation and domination. This situation

uses people as means to serve the self-interests of a dominant few. It runs counter to the basic (and humanist) view that persons are ends in themselves and should not be treated as means only.

### **The face of suffering varies.**

In the Philippine context suffering takes on the face of endemic poverty where about 80 percent of the people live below the poverty/bread line. This is a situation that is replicated in places like India, Bangladesh, Africa, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Burma and Cambodia.

In other Asian countries relative economic affluence has been bought at a high price. People have to forfeit their right to participate freely and responsibly in the political process because of the institution and maintenance of centralized, authoritarian and repressive regimes which are legitimized by an appeal to the idea of national security. Singapore, Taiwan, Korea and, to a certain extent, Malaysia, come close to embodying this reality.

The response of Asian churches to situations where people are forced to suffer has been far from encouraging. Most have been apathetic or indifferent. This is the inevitable (though not necessary) consequence of an individualistic, apolitical and other-worldly theology they have inherited from their “mother churches” in the West. They have been more concerned about the pastoral dimension of their calling to be engaged in God’s mission. They have carried out vigorous evangelistic programmes for the purpose of saving individual souls, but have left untouched situations in which people are being systematically “sinned against” (Raymond Fung). Some churches, however, have shown considerable sensitivity to the problems and challenges taking place in the larger human communities in which they are situated, and have intentionally attempted to respond to them in prophetic ways. In some instances, where the official position of established (mainline) churches have been characterized by “neutrality” and tentativeness, some sensitive people within their fold, both clergy and lay, have opted to live out their Christian faith by a single-minded commitment to action aimed at radically changing dehumanizing situations.

Where their own churches have stayed at the sidelines they have joined peoples’ movements that struggle for the kind of future that will ensure fullness of life to suffering and struggling peoples not only for rice but also for human dignity. They have opted to be with people, sharing their suffering and hope and determined to “...proclaim (by) word (and) by their own efforts the power that will permit them to guarantee the satisfaction of their needs and the creation of authentic conditions of liberation” (Tissa Balasuriya, “Theologizing from the Other Side of the World”, *Logos*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Sept. 1981, p.31). With people they are saying “No” to anti-life forces and “Yes” to human freedom and dignity. They have made common cause with people who affirm that as subjects of history they are committed to a radical process that will ensure their true liberation and authentic humanhood. In such a process they have demonstrated a spirituality not only of meditation but also a spirituality of involvement and engagement of active obedience, and collective commitment towards a new social order and political well-being; of sacrifice and service to the people that is embodied in a life-style of economic discipline, sharing and mutuality; of a sense of enmity and anger to those things that cause the suffer-

ings of many; of undying courage and love and of longings for justice and freedom for all. (Feliciano Carino, "What About the Theology of Struggle?" in Religion and Society, Manila: FIDES, 1988, p.xii).

Such a spirituality means no less than an act of sharing in the broken Body of Christ for the healing of the world, a commitment to the mandate to give oneself to God and to the world so that God may be honoured and that all may enjoy God's gracious gift of fullness of life. It may again be called to mind that for practitioners of the praxis type of contextual theology commitment to action for radical social change is the first act of theology, followed by reflection on that action, issuing in further action and reflection in an ongoing spiral process. In doing that, they claim that they can develop a theology that is truly relevant to a particular context in Asia. But this "theology from below" recognizes the salutary importance of grass-roots people who play a central role in acting on their situation. They are the primary theologians even though they articulate their faith mainly in an oral form.

Professionally trained theologians relate to them not as teachers having all the answers to peoples' questions, but as co-learners, theologizing with, not for, people within, not apart from, their particular contexts. The role of a professional theologian is similar to that of a midwife: to help facilitate the process of giving birth to peoples' theology. He/she can make available to people his/her conceptual tools, analytical skills and the power to put together disparate ideas in organized and coherent form. He/she has to learn to trust in peoples' capacity to reflect critically for themselves. At the same time, as a responsible partner in the birthing-of-peoples'-theology process, he/she should be prepared to challenge them if and when that is necessary. Being for, and with, people who suffer and struggle for freedom and human dignity does not mean idolizing or idealizing them. Rather, it means that solidarity with people involves a ministry of enabling them to experience ongoing renewal as they engage in a process of bringing about radical change to situations that have held them in bondage.

A practitioner of the praxis model of theology must be prepared for surprising ways by which God's will is discerned in context. Experience in the Philippine context has revealed that people of other faiths and ideologies popularly regarded as subversive of the Christian faith are capable of articulating profound theological knowledge and insights. Professional praxis theologians who have worked with peoples' movements have been amazed by the single-mind commitment to the ethical values of the Kingdom of God (God's sovereign rule in love) such as freedom, justice, righteousness and care for the welfare of people on the part of suffering and struggling people. Instead of talking about those values they live by them, even if in the process they have to face high risks. Praxis theologians have learned to be humble in the face of the surprising ways by which God's will and ways are disclosed in the world and, through the world, to the church. They have learned to accept the fact that not only does the church have a mission to the world, the world, too, has a mission to the church.

Many theologians are aware how difficult the task of contextual theology is. What we usually see in attempts of "contextual theology" is theology that has implications to a particular region... hence a "practical theology." This kind of theology seeks to address a particular issue facing a particular context. The generic nature of the "solution" is therefore not a problem because similar issues will have similar

solutions. However, we rarely see good “contextual theology” that actually uniquely emerges out of the context. This kind of theology, that is truly contextual, is mostly unique to the context within which it emerges from. In fact, it may not make sense to those outside that context, but it certainly rings a visceral bell in those within that context. This kind of theology is not simply about the issues facing the context (culture), like poverty, pluralism, lack of education etc. Rather, theology itself is made the issue. Do we understand the Bible correctly? Have we been brain-washed into thinking in a particular way? How should we (from our context) understand God, his word, that helps us to rightly understand and rightly communicate God here, today.

There have been contextual theologians in the past who have done this intentionally or unintentionally. However, good examples of “contextual theology” today are rare. It requires the theologian to be completely honest, even to the point of being willing to question age-old beliefs and traditions. Keeping in mind the controversial nature of “contextual theology” one is not sure whether it is a challenge worth fighting for. It may be argued that it is a need but not a necessity.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The Bible itself is replete with factors such as culture, ethnicity, history and its message has to be established to hold meaning in contemporary various cultures. Contextual theology tries to make the theological message human. But there is a fundamental issue that needs to be observed. Contextualizing of Scripture should not lead to twisting of its truth as if it is no longer the Word of God. The Word of God, which is an inspired work of the living Creator, is far more than any human-inspired book and has been written in such a way that every human being, rich or poor, man or woman, intelligent or challenged will understand the meaning of the Gospel message if it is presented in their native language. Contextualization is not necessary for salvation of the people into which the Gospel enters but it is very important for its facilitation and impact upon the people.

If Paul had been adjusting (contextualizing) the Word of God to fit the culture and context of the lives of those he spoke to, he would not have said “the aroma of death leading to death.” He took the spiritual state of these people very seriously, and he had full confidence that God’s Word, unaltered and unchanged, could reach into the heart and soul of any person who would receive Christ by faith. Whether a person is young, mentally challenged, or of a different culture or ethnic group, the Gospel is God’s Gospel, and He made it so that all who receive it by faith will understand His love and forgiveness and have eternal life. . . .

While reaching today’s generation for the cause of Christ is something we as Christians should all desire, we must remember Jesus Christ challenged us to follow Him and be obedient to His Word. Scripture commands us to “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). But the emergents are leading followers in the opposite direction, teaching that the Word of God needs to be conformed to people and cultures instead of allowing it to conform lives through Jesus Christ. Reimagining Christianity allows a dangerous kind of freedom; like cutting the suspension ropes on a hot air balloon, the free fall may be exhilarating but the results catastrophic.

#### **5.0 Summary**

Contextual theology is a development that has been under debate as to the nature of its explication. For some, it is conforming the Gospel to cultural patterns which would make it subservient to culture whereas others have argued that it is cultures that should be conformed to the Gospel. The basic thrust is the question of how to make the Gospel have more impact upon the people. In contextualization, the real balance is to establish connecting points between the biblical message and cultural ways of the people, not by way of compromising the essential message. Though in the past, Christian theology was dominated by Western perspectives but contemporary majority third world theologians in Africa, Asia and South America have been working to develop theology within their peculiar contexts. Such contexts as poverty, disease, hunger and wars pose significant questions for the Gospel.

## 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

What are the six models of contextual theology that Bevans has outlined?

What is the importance of contextual theology?

What are some of the factors that are considered in contextualization especially in the African, Asian and South American contexts?

## 7.0 References for Further Readings

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**UNIT 2 LIBERATION THEOLOGY****CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Sources and Development of Liberation Theology
  - 3.2 Theological Methodology of Liberation Theology
  - 3.3 Some Exegetical Direction of Liberation Theology
  - 3.4 Assessment of Liberation Theology
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- 7.0 References/Further Readings

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Liberation theology is a contemporary significant movement. It was born in Latin America in the 1960s and was largely Roman Catholic in orientation. It is different from previous systematic theology expression of faith in that it seeks to interpret the Christian faith from the perspective of the poor and oppressed.

In each era, there is a theological struggle. For example, in the post- enlightenment scepticism, there was the defending of the supernatural in a natural world. There were questions, “where is the God of truth in a world of science and technology?” For Liberation theology, the struggle is with the issues of faith and post-colonial deprivation. It is searching for hope in a world of poverty. The question Liberation Theology is asking is, “Where is the God of righteousness in a world of injustice?”

Gustavo Gutierrez is often considered the Father of Liberation Theology. In his word, he states “the starting point of Liberation Theology is commitment to the poor, the ‘non-person.’ Thus, the idea of this theology comes for the victim”. Similarly, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, the two Brazilian priests speak of Liberation Theology as a kind of chemical creation: Faith + Oppression = Liberation Theology. Since the 1970s, the Latin American Liberation Theology has exerted a lot of influence in the LATFRICASIAN regions (Latin America, Africa, and Asia). It influenced Black Theology in people like James Cone in the USA, whose concern focuses on racist oppression. It also influenced the black South Africans during the anti-apartheid years. A branch of this theology showed its head in the war-torn Northern Ireland. In fact, Liberation Theology’s influence has gone far beyond the Church into government circles. Can we deny that the quest for debts relief from the Paris club by the under privilege countries is far from Liberation Theology? Struggle for independence in most developing nations’ colony in the 1960s - 1970s was influenced by this theology.

Liberation Theology’s origins cannot be separated from the economic and political structures of the industrialized nations of the West towards Latin America, Africa and Asia. Hence, in a reaction, the Latin American theologians, particularly the Catholic



priests, began to formulate a theology by interpreting the Bible not in the American and European lenses and frames, but in response and according to the situation and context in which their theology is being done. Thus, the call for 'Contextualization' cannot be separated from Liberation Theology.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

To help the student understand Liberation Theology, its origins, sources, methods and direction.

To see how Liberation Theology differs from other theologies.

To also see what the conventional theology can learn from Liberation Theology.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Sources and Development of Liberation Theology**

According to Conn, the most basic source of Liberation Theology is the experience of poverty, distribution and repression in a region dominated by Christianity for centuries. For the Liberation Theologians, human suffering in every form; whether economic, political, religious and social is against God's will. Thus, it constitutes a moral imperative for the Christian conscience to fight against these ills. Gutierrez asserted that "we are the side of the poor, not because they are good but because they are poor."

Sources of Liberation Theology roots can still be traced to Europe political theology and to Jürgen Moltmann in his "Theology of Hope." Moltmann see the political character of eschatology, and hope on having a liberation function in history. Some scholars, especially Europeans, charge liberation theologians for lack of concreteness, that is, their reflection on theology is full of theoretical obstructions and is ideologically neutral.

Upon all these, we can say that the deepest theological roots of Liberation Theology remain in the growing interest of the Roman Catholic Church which emphasizes dialogue with the world and other religious, faith, and which sees social care of the Church towards the poor, widows, orphans, oppressed, etc., as a task that must be done. In the midst of this Roman Catholic link with Liberation Theology, there has been a word of caution from the papacy. Some series of theological skirmishes with the Vatican Curia have ensued. The Vatican sees some excesses in Liberation Theology. Thus in 1984 and in 1986 some instructions were issued by the Vatican which recognizes several forms of Liberation Theology, identified itself with the poor and oppressed, but reject some aspects of Liberation Theology. Perhaps a major cause of Vatican concern with Liberation Theology is its use of Marxist ideology and categories in its formulations. Liberation Theology adopts Marxism as an instrument of social analysis - focusing on economic system as the battleground between the rich and the poor. The precursors of Liberation Theology in Latin America were the

University lecturers and the middle classes. Later, the writers were the systematic intellectuals, who see their role as interpreters who speak with and for the poor and socially deprived. It seems Liberation Theology has shifted to a more positive stance.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Discuss the sources and development of Liberation Theology?

### **3.2 Theological Method of Liberation Theology**

The key in Liberation Theology's theological formulation is the liberation of the oppressed. It starts from below. It is committed to the poor of the society. According to Sobrino, "the poor are the authentic theological source for understanding Christian truth and practices" (1988: 389). The context of Liberation Theology is the concrete social situation. Before theology spent time on philosophical matters, now theology is to respond to social, political, economics, and all that it takes to be a real human being in the social sense. The methodology of Liberation Theology is its reflection on praxis. Theology must be practical, done and not just spending time learning and reflecting.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Explain Liberation theological methodology?

### **3.3 Some Exegetical Direction of Liberation Theology**

In its theological approach, Liberation Theology does biblical study from the perspective of the oppressed. The earlier Liberation Theology exegetical efforts were in the Old Testament, particular in the book of Exodus. It was a model for the plight of the poor. Some Liberation Theologians have now spread their nets of theological models to include the exile. The New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God has also received much attention. Likewise, materials are appearing now on the work of Christ and his identification with the poor and oppressed. What all this seems to be pointing at is that Liberation Theology has become more serious about sharpening its hermeneutical tools. Classical themes are receiving attention from Liberation Theologians today. Such themes include: Christology, ecclesiology.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Discuss some Exegetical Direction of Liberation Theology?

### 3.4 Assessments of Liberation Theology's Theology

In this section, we will like to briefly consider some aspects that help assess the theology of this movement. One can easily, as an Anglo-Saxon, criticize Liberation Theology only if he or she sees everything in his own lenses and not in addition to those of the Liberation theologians and their contexts. There are some questions that are always raised against Liberation Theology. For example:

1. How much attention does Liberation Theology pay to salvation?  
How come that it lays more emphasis on physical than spiritual salvation?
2. Liberation Theology has left us with a bare view of sin. Sin is from the Devil. Human beings are sinful by nature. Perfection here on earth is not obtainable. It is only at death when the soul separates from this sinful body that one can be holy. But Liberation Theology appears to be saying that elimination of poverty, oppression, racism, sexism, classism, and capitalism, the human sinful condition will be altered in a radical way. This, we know that it is not possible. Jesus says that the poor will always be around.

Having made these few observations, we may at the same time appreciate liberation theology because: (1) It offers other theologians an opportunity for self-evaluation. (2) It offers us new challenges to return to the factory of theology. (3) A true and thorough theology must put into consideration the culture, customs, social conditions, political conditions, economic context and society within which it is practiced. This raises the question of contextualization. (5) In what sense should our theology addresses commitment to the poor? How come that our theological formulation has brought comfort to the rich and middle class without much consideration of those at the lower echelon of society?

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

Liberation Theology, in spite of its weaknesses at some points, has greatly enriched contemporary Christian discussion. It fills in some gaps left out by the main line theology. It forces other theologies to rethink their theological formulation. It is a theology of both rich and poor. For example, it soothes the hearts of the poor and oppressed by giving them hope, but it pricks the conscience of the rich, middle class, and the oppressors.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major lessons you have learnt in this unit:

Liberation Theology in the Latin America in the 1960s

Liberation Theology is Roman Catholic in orientation

Gustavo Gutierrez is regarded as the father of Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology is a theological formulation committed to the poor

Liberation Theology is a challenge to address the socio-political and economic reality of the society in theology

## 6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSESSMENT

1. Write a brief introduction to Liberation Theology, noting its origins, objectives, and sources?
2. Explain some of the strengths and weaknesses of Liberation Theology?
3. Briefly describe methodological and exegetical approaches of Liberation Theology?

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## **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Nature of Black Theology
  - 3.2 Black Theology in the U.S.A.
  - 3.3 Black Theology in South Africa
  - 3.4 Evaluation of Black Theology
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Black race has often been dehumanized throughout history. However, it was the problem of slavery, racism, and others psychological and cultural stereotypes against in the Blacks North America that birth the theology that is now known as Black Theology. Hence, “Black Theology” could be said to be purely a bye-product of the response of Black North American Christians against the social and political segregations they suffered in the North American society. By an extended meaning, black theology is “the religious counterpart of the more secular term Black Power.” It calls for the need for black people to define the scope and meaning of their existence, especially in a white racist society. Although Black Theology and Black Power are allies, each has its own focus in the operational arena. For example, while black power focuses on the political, social and economic condition or situation of the black people, Black Theology puts its emphasis on the identity of blacks in theological context. In this way, its adherents have been able to show that Black Power is not only consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but that it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Although Black Theology had since gained a lot of adherents from the African continent, they are more pronounced in Southern Africa than in the rest of Africa. The reason for this is not far fetched. That is, it was influenced there by the South African Boers’ political and economic policies during the apartheid years.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Discuss the origin Black Theology
- Discuss the nature of Black Theology
- Evaluate the contribution of Black Theology
- Analyse the weaknesses of Black Theology

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Nature of Black Theology**

The intentions and concerns of black theology are rooted in the experience of oppression by the blacks in the USA. Thus the Afro-Americans and, perhaps those from Southern Africa, see their history as inseparable from black theology. So, black theology, therefore, is that attempt to articulate that significance within the black Christian community and beyond it. It emerges from a black reading of the Scripture, from a black hearing of Jesus and a black understanding of Jesus as the Liberator of black people. Thus Jesus is seen and interpreted as the Black Messiah. This brings us to the notion that there is such a thing as black spirituality, which is experienced, in black worshipping community. However a note of caution is at this junction necessary, because the designation “black theology” is not because it is produced by black people, but because it describes a particular worldview particularly in the symbol of black as a representation of dehumanization, abuse, oppression and other related existential forms. Since the black race is understood to be the par excellence representation of these negativism, thus the usage of the term.

#### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Discuss the nature of Black Theology?

#### **3.2 Black Theology in the U.S.A.**

In the U.S.A., Black Theology has gained roots and has been exported in different forms and faces to Africa, Asia, and even South America. This, of course, is done all under the canopy of “Liberation” and “Freedom.” Although the racist and segregated practices and still found in some predominantly white churches in United States, today, it is not as strong as it used to be. Yet, the practices have left their imprints on the African Americans. As a result, some of them resolved to rather embracing Islam than Christianity. They see equality of social interaction and acceptance in Islam than in Christianity in their perception. In the North American context, Black Theology has greatly thrived and had attracted criticisms. However, the advocates of black theology such as James Cone have responded to these criticisms. For Cone, the fact that majority of Blacks did not reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them by the white Western indicates the differences between the blacks and the whites perception of the Gospel. In defence of this statement, Gayraud Wilmore contemporary and foremost historian of black religion declares that: “Blacks have used Christianity not as it was delivered to them by segregating white Churches, but as its truth was authenticated to them in the experience of suffering, to reinforce an ingrained religious temperament and to produce an indigenous religion oriented to freedom and human welfare” (1988:104).

Thus to term the Gospel “black” and to call Jesus “black” is simply to express the sense of freedom of black people who discovered in the black Jesus’ Gospel the liberation which was denied them by white Christianity. So, since salvation too is

black, the white folks cannot be saved without first of all becoming or accepting the symbol represented black by the image of Black. In fact as early as 1894, Henry McNeal Turner (1834-1915), a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, in view of the white practices of racism in the churches, declared, "God is a Negro".

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Briefly explain the nature of Black Theology in United States?

### **3.3 Black Theology in South Africa**

The connections, linkages and affinities of Black Theology from the West to that of Southern Africa are obvious. For example, the political, social and the economic conditions of black people under the apartheid system in South Africa make the appeal very unavoidable. Nevertheless, South African Black Theology has tried and did develop its own insight. This really has helped to set it aside in some important respects. For instance, the South African Black Theology has rejected the violent method and has taken the Martin Luther King, Jr., path of non-violence. Allan Boesak, a leading exponent of South African Black Theology asserts that following Martin Luther King, Jr., Black Theology in South Africa takes "Christian love" as its banner. This Christian *agape* stand at the very centre of God's liberating actions for His people. Similarly, Manas Buthelezi rejects the quest for Black Theology if it is only based on black awakening of nationalism or consolidation of black power. He argued that if this is the intent, the n black theology is only an emotionally charged political concept.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Briefly explain the nature of Black Theology in South Africa?

### **3.4 Evaluation of Black Theology**

Every theology, whatever and no matter its orientation has its own merits and demerits particularly as it relates to the theological peg on which it hangs its presupposition or the presuppositions itself. For example, the African American black theology sees Jesus, salvation and God as being black. Anything short of that is white. No wonder, Allan Boesak equate "blackness" with "humanness." That is, to be black is to be human. So, white are not human. Note, however as already pointed above, that in this sort of reasoning, blackness does not designate skin colour. Rather, it is a discovery, a state of mind, a conversion and an affirmation of being. However, even within this understanding the racial conception of Black Theology is unmistakably evident and points to the narrow theological agenda of Black theology on race. Similarly, Black theology as held in South had often divorced itself from the cultural and traditional African issues that had generally been the

obsession of African theology and seemed lost in the political struggle of the Southern context. Even though, such undertaken is necessary, however such political orientation should also not lost sight of traditional African religious or cultural settings, which actually had made us African in the first place.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

Critically evaluate Black Theology?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

No theology can totally stand alone without some areas of connection with other theologies. Although Black Theology has attempted to be unique, such attempts have not been successful. For instance, to have a black Jesus, a black salvation, and a black God is equal to saying that there will be black heaven. However, even with its seemingly flaws Black Theology has sensitively engaged the racial problem of the contemporary society, placing the neglected black race at the centre of theological discussion.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major units you have learnt in this unit:

Black Theology has its origin in the experience of the afro- Americans in North America.

Black Theology is a response to the socio-political segregation the Blacks have suffered in North America.

Black Theology appealed to the Black Theology in South Africa because of similar socio-political and economic conditions.

## **6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Trace the origins of Black Theology in the U.S.A. and South Africa?
2. How do you evaluate Black Theology in the light of other theologies?
3. Explain the relation between Black Theology and African Theology?

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## **UNIT 3 FEMINIST THEOLOGY**

### **CONTENTS**

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  - 3.1 The Origin of Feminist Theology
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Traditional Theology has often been one-sided. It has been dominated by the male gender and thus most often, its investigation, interpretation and theological formulations were based on the understanding of the male gender without the apt recognition of the female gender in the defining issue of theology. The silence of the female gender and their ostracization in the domain of theology normally made classical theology a half of the total reflection of divine will for both genders. It is this under-representation of the female gender in theology and the ecclesiastical restrictions placed on her ministry in the Church that necessitated the quest to redefine theology and religion in the mutual recognition of the equality of the genders. This unit investigates the origin, theology and the evaluation of feminist Theology, noting the problems and contribution of the feminist movement to the global Church.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to: Discuss the origin of feminism  
 Discuss the basic contents of Feminist Theology  
 Evaluate the contribution of feminist Theology

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Origin of Feminist Theology**

The origin of feminism antedates the modern feminist movement and has

its source in ancient times in the untold stories of women who sought to transcend the patriarchal restriction of the human society and assert their divine calling in the face of many gender - related obstacles on their path. This unit traces the ancient and modern root of feminism and underscores the thesis that feminism has its root down in the struggle of women in the context of male-suspicion, androcentrism and the misogynistic tendencies of the human society.

### **The Ancient Roots**

The root of feminism, though often not acknowledged goes beyond the present feminist movement of the modern world to the world of the Bible and to the stories of women who break through the glass limit placed on them by the patriarchal nature of the human society. These often-nameless women redefined their gender role in a male dominated society and by so doing, actualized their God-given purpose in the context of the human community. In this perspective are Biblical women such as Deborah, Esther, Huldah, Bathsheba, Abigail, Mary, Priscilla, and Eunice, who contributed to the growths and development of the human society by their participation in divine plan in their own times. These women and other nameless Biblical character went beyond gender restriction of the context and were duly involved in the political and religious reformation of their days.

Similar women could be found in the pages of Church history, who are often ignored in the narration of mainstream Church history. Their lives and contribution to cause of God and humanity is lost in the shadow of their husbands. An interesting omission of the deeds of the wives and mothers of most figures in Church history is painfully obvious. Despite the salient contributions of the women to church history they are merely given a footnote and not a place or part in the main text of church history. For example, the contribution of Monica the mother of St. Augustine of Hippo is repressed, ignored or given few lines; yet she played a great part in the shaping of the life of Augustine. The unconscious silencing of the voice of women in the pages of Church history could be extended to the deeds of the wives of the Reformers. The deed of Katherine Von Bora, the wife of Luther is not often mentioned and yet she struggled with Luther throughout the persecution that took place at the Protestant Reformation. Similarly, is the deed of Anna Reinhart, the wife of Zwingli, who is often given two or three lines to describe her role in the life of Zwingli. On the whole, it is this omission of the deeds and place of women in history, theology and religion that necessitated the modern feminism in all its ferventness.

### **The Modern Roots**

The modern feminism had its root in the already alluded to tendencies of traditional theology or history to neglect the contribution of the female gender and the acceptance of an attitude that seemed to suggest the inferiority of the female gender. However in the modern context feminism is closely associated with women liberation of the 1960's who sought through legislation the equality of genders and assertion of the humanity and dignity of womanhood. It is this secular background that influenced the founding of the theology of feminism. Based on their attitude towards the Bible, modern feminism has been divided into three groups or models. The first model known as the *post-Christian model* rejected the Bible as a whole because of its acclaimed patriarchal and androcentric sentiments. Thus, the radical expression of

this post-Christian model advocated a return to the religion of witchcraft, nature, mysticism and other religious beliefs that underscores the femininity of God. However, others within this designation merely saw the Bible as promoting oppressive patriarchal nature of the human society and thus no longer binding on them. The second model known as the *liberation model* had the basic assumptions of the post-Christian model in their understanding of Judeo-Christian heritage, however instead of rejecting wholly the Bible or the Judeo-Christian tradition as did the first model; they use the Bible to reveal the positive role of Biblical women. They employed feminist hermeneutic principle in order to show the quest of the Biblical authors for a fair and just society that is freed of sexist oppression. The last model known as the *Evangelical Model* saw the Bible as none oppressive in its gender descriptions and roles. Thus, women are taught to submit in Church and family and also taught to assume their submissive role, which they understood, are not in any way dehumanizing to women.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Explain the ancient and modern roots of feminism?

### **3.2 Feminist Theologies**

The theology of feminism is wide and complex in its content as well as scope. It also has various racial religious and contextual colourings that made it impossible to pin down into simple easy list of theologies; however, there are three basic theological emphases that had generally characterized all brands of feminist theologies. These theological emphases are as follows:

#### **The Recognition and Rejection of Patriarchal Structures**

Feminist Theology had located the patriarchal nature of most human structures in religion, politics, and social arms of the society. It had repudiated these androcentric structures found in the society as the legacy of the past, which has no place now in the modern context. Thus, by its recognition and repudiation of the patriarchal structures in the human society, feminism had ushered in a new global gender sensibility towards the recognition of the role of women in the society and also asserting its agenda of equality in the realm of religion, politics, education and the scientific world.

#### **The Recreation of a Positive Image of Womanhood**

In a grand theological agenda, feminism in all confession seeks to redeem the battered, dehumanized and often abused image of womanhood as associated to media advertisement, pornography, prostitution and the general tendencies towards what have been described as the “commodification” of woman. Thus, to underscore a positive image for the female gender various reconstructions of the Biblical context and traditions to assert a healthy and robust image of womanhood has been carried out.

To reclaim back this feminist idealism feminist hermeneutics and other liberational methodologies have been employed to bring about lofty feminist global vision.

### **The Quest for Gender Equality**

The quest for gender equality has always been the obsession of feminism whether expressed or not. This egalitarian objective has been in the forefront of feminist theological agenda and has often characterized or coloured feminist attitudes towards the Church leadership, pastoral ministry and contemporary issues such as female ordination. While the general attitudes of the Church towards the agitation of equality in role-play have often being ignored, feminists are still determined to actualize such egalitarian dream. The continuous instances in the exemplary female leadership in the political sphere would someday be translated in the ecclesiastical sphere especially as more and more men see the exceptional leadership qualities of most women in the political realm.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Explain the three basic theological emphases that characterized feminist theologies?

#### **3.3 An Evaluation of Feminist Theology**

The feminist as a movement has greatly contribute to the global Christianity in its repudiation of patriarchal structures, its quest to recreate a positive image for womanhood and its quest to seek equality in the context of limited economic, social, political and religious opportunities that had characterized the human society. However, the following considerations are some of the problem that feminism raises for global Christianity.

#### **Feminism Tends towards Division rather than Unity**

Feminism in its quest to assert a feminist agenda had often degenerated towards division rather than the unity of the sexes. While feminist stand for womanhood is not wrong, its often emphasizes on the independence of the female sex had serious unhealthy implication for the unity of human sexes.

#### **Rejection of Authoritative Guide**

Often, feminists generally reject the Bible as a guide and replace its authoritative place with their own presupposition, arguing that the Bible is patriarchal and androcentric in its message and nature. By such rejection of a defining reference of authority, feminism often loses its Christian mooring and thus has no authoritative basis by which its teachings could be evaluated.

#### **Feminist Christology**

Most feminists Christology has no serious dialogue with the Biblical text, rather they are sentiments and even ridiculous in its basic presuppositions and inferences. It is

right for feminists to ask whether a male Christ could save a woman, but to reconfigure Christology on female gender or the reflection of God in female mode while innovative, yet has the inevitable tendencies of distorting the Biblical meaning of God and Christ. It is this basic assumption of feminism that raises serious problem for Christianity.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Beyond the highlighted problems of feminism, the feminist theological agenda must be respected particularly in their quest to assert a new global gender-sensitivity. Similarly, its quest to rid the world of all oppressive patriarchal structures as in order and to recreate a new positive image of womanhood is a theological agenda that should characterize every theological reflection particularly in the majority world where the image of womanhood has been bastardized and abused.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

Feminist Theology has its root in the ancient biblical accounts.

Modern Feminist Theology movement is rooted in the women's liberation movement of the 1960s.

There are three models of Feminist Theology, namely: post-Christian model, liberation model and the evangelical model. Feminist Theology is characterized by: rejection of patriarchal structures, recreation of a positive image of womanhood and the quest for gender equality.

#### **6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Explain the ancient and modern roots of feminism?
2. Discuss the three basic theological emphases of feminism?
3. Give a proper evaluation of feminist Theology, noting its contribution and problems?

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**UNIT 4 AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY****CONTENTS**

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  - 3.1 Definition
  - 3.2 The Origin of African Theology
  - 3.3 The Content of African Theology
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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

African Theology is the product of theological complications arising from the encounter between Africans and the western missionary activities. It is a theology that seeks to reject the western theological claims particularly the understanding that western theology is normative for each human context. The rejection of western imperialism at independence, suddenly revealed the rationality of such step since at independence, the political structure was handed over to the Africans. On a similar basis, it was assumed that the west, the Church, and the hence, theology should be relinquished to Africans. However, even before independence such quest to understand the Christian gospel using African flavour was already in process particularly as expressed in the work of Edward W. Blyden and James Holy Johnson, who vehemently argued for an African expression of the Christian gospel. This unit investigates the origin, context and evaluation of African Theology.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

Define African Theology

Narrate the origin, nature and content of African Theology.

Evaluate the quest in the development of African Theology.

**3.0 MAIN CONTENT****3.1 Definition**

African theology is confronted with the problem of definition. How could one define an African theology that is supposed to feature the theological, cultural and social political characteristics of over ten thousand million ethnic groups and sub-dialect



groups in Africa? This becomes a serious problem particularly because Africans though united in some cultural emphases and their obvious black skins are no doubt different and heterogeneous in their specific, local and contextual settings. Complicating such problem of definition also, is the ambiguity of the term theology itself, which ordinarily did not have a Christian monopolistic usage. Thus, African Theology might connote African traditional religion and not necessarily a Christian theology. It is out of these problems of definition that the usage with the added qualification, Christian is necessary.

However beyond this squabble over definition, African Theology has developed pattern on which its definition could be given. From the different reflection as attested by many themes on the dominant usage of the Christian gospel to understand the contextual realities of the African context in distinctive opposition to the western theology and its pro-western theological allies, one could define African Christian theology as the quest by African Christians to understand, interpret and reconstruct theology based upon the existential, cultural, political and spiritual categories of the African context. Even though different measures of success have been so far recorded, nonetheless the realization of the true meaning of this definition is still pending. This understanding presupposes that such actualization of this definition becomes necessary because the definition points to the two necessities that must be involved in any theological reflection. These two necessities are discussed below.

### **Commitment to the Biblical Framework**

Every theology that must be called Christian must seek consistently to align its basic agenda to the sanctions and judgment from the Christian Biblical revelation. It is this commitment that African theology in definition must seek to actualize. Though the trend in African theology so far had revealed this commitment, however, much needed to be done particularly in allowing the Biblical revelation to colour our contextual theological inquiries. It is true that contextual realities must be in active dialogue with every theology, but theology lost its bearing and moorings if allowed to move away from its source. John Mbiti, Kwesi Dickson, Byang Kato and Kweme Bediako had championed the commitment to the Biblical framework. The African theologies despite their diverse understanding of the Christ event yet had placed a high premium on the major part the Bible must play in the development of African theology.

### **Commitment to the Socio-Political Context**

The Bible with all its significance to Christian and humanity however becomes a relic of the past or merely a religious object if the thrust of its claims could not be substantiated in a given human context. Thus, even when African theology strived at reflecting the framework of the Biblical revelation in its discoursed, it must also seek to be conversant with the dynamism involved in the ever-changing context of the African society. Thus, in accordance with our definition of African Christian theology the need to reconstruct theology in the basis of the existential, political, economical and religious patterns of the African context is just meritable. The demise

of every theology is sure if it failed to make the context of its reflection the principal partner of theological dialogue. The missionary Christianity often neglects such contextual necessity for relevant hermeneutical, homiletical and pastoral ministry that is compatible in the different faces of African socio-religious life. It is these two commitments that actually defined African theology and the quest to develop it.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Give a working definition of African Theology?

Discuss the two theological commitments of these definitions?

### **3.2 The Origin of African Theology**

The origin of African Theology, as already noted, goes back in history to the turbulent relationship between the encounter of western missionaries with the peculiarities of the African context such as the uniqueness of the African cultures and custom, and most importantly, the differences in African worldview in comparison to those of the west. Primarily, the quest to develop an African Theology was also due to the misrepresentation and misunderstanding of earlier anthropological and missionaries' misinterpretation of African culture arising from this context of missions. Following this precedence, two roots of African theology are briefly examined, namely its ancient and modern roots respectively.

#### **The Ancient Roots**

The ancient roots of African theology have been traced to two figures at the beginning of African Christianity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These two individuals could be called, "The ancestors of African Theology" because of their separate, but complimentary quest to see the realization of an African Christianity. These individuals are namely Edward W. Blyden of Ghana and James Holy Johnson of Liberia. These individuals realized the necessity of Christianity to have the trademark of Africa cultural context. They sought to incorporate the African unique identity into the Christianity brought to Africa by the western missionaries. Blyden and Johnson foresight to understand that Christianity must readjust in form to the contextual elements found in African society made them inevitably a precursor in the contemporary quest for an African Theology.

However, the quest to domesticate and indigenize Christianity goes beyond the 19<sup>th</sup> century works of Blyden and Johnson to the ancient legacy of the Coptic and Ethiopic Church. Beginning with the Ethiopic Christianity, the theological redefinition of Christianity in light of Ethiopic cultural and political realities is a very important development that should begin any discussion on the contemporary quest for African theology. This is because the Ethiopic Church has one of the oldest forms of Christianity in world today, with an existence of more than 1,600 years. Among the

progress recorded in the fourth century in Africa was the formation of the Church in the Abyssinian Kingdom by the missionary activity of Frumentius. Through this zealous individual, the kingdom of Axum was also Christianized with the conversion of the monarch and the populace. The Ethiopic Church involved itself in great theological reflection such as the translation of the Scriptures into Ge'ez, the native indigenous language of the Axum people. This development in reference to the contemporary quest for an African theology is significant because the translated copies of scripture in the language of the indigenous afford the people of Abyssinian the rare opportunity of a total assimilation and inculturation of the Bible to the lives, symbols and the general context of this African people. It is also significant because it marked a decisive turn in the African church's quest to be indigenous. Interestingly, in a world dominated by Latin and Greek, the Abyssinians Church decided to tread in the rare path of making the Scriptures accessible to the people instead of following the convention of the time. Also, the Ethiopic Church became distinctively opposed to western Christianity by adhering to a monopolistic Christological understanding at the end of the fifth century Christological debate. It is this indigenous quest to contextualize Christianity that led to theological writings in the Ethiopic kingdom, which culminated with the two classical Abyssinian literatures, the "Kebra Negast" and the "Glory of the Kings."

Similarly, the Church in Egypt or the Coptic Church was significant in the history of African and global Christianity particularly in the founding of the catechetical school of Alexandria, which became the first Christian Seminary and subsequently contributed in the theological education of Clement and Origen. It seemed fair to note that all these two great African theological traditions in their own different ways seek to define Christianity within the perception of the African context and thus in a sense and in part a collective effort towards the development of the contemporary African theology.

### **The Modern Roots**

The modern root of the present quest for an African theology could be traced to the African colonization, independence and the events of the post- colonial context. The Independence at the 1960s led to change in the African Church leadership from the expatriate white to indigenous African Church leaders. At this context of the post-colonization, many indictment of the western Christianity was popular, particularly in its identification with colonization and its misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the African cultures and pre-Christian religious as fetish, barbaric, pagan and animistic. The African theology at this period began to address these negativisms by emphasizing the virtue of the African religions and cultures. This redefinition and reinterpretation of the African religious and cultures dominate the African quest for an African Christian theology. Thus, African theological works on a positive note sought to critique the western misrepresentation and also acknowledged the uniqueness of African cultures and religious beliefs in comparison to those in the western context. It is in this understanding that Placide Temple "Bantu Philosophy", Bolaji Idowu "Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief" and Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth editorial compilation of "Biblical Revelation and African Belief were

written. Similarly, in this understanding are the works of John Mbiti” “African Religion & Philosophy” and his other major theological works are written such as “the Concepts of God in Africa.”

These works had one common thesis; they seek to redefine African culture and to present African cultures and religious beliefs, particularly in the light of common misrepresentation by the early missionaries. Thus, cultural and ethno-religious concerns dominated African Theology until in recent times.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Describe the origin of African theology in its ancient and modern roots?

### **3.3 The Content of African Theology**

The content of African Theology has been of diverse nature as the many diversities of the African continent. It seemed different part of the African continent have different theological preoccupation, however, a harmony of these diverse theological definitions is observable. Since the scope of the present study is limited some salient content of African theology is hereby presented.

#### **African Culture and pre-Christian Religious Emphases**

One common factor dominant in most African Christian Theology is the African culture and religious beliefs. The religious and cultural elements in African Christian Theology came as a result of the already highlighted reasons, particularly in the misrepresentation of African pre-Christian religions and culture. Classical examples of this dominant nature of cultural and pre-Christian religious forms in an African Christian works could be easily seen in John Mbiti and Bolaji Idowu” theological works. It is significant to note that such emphasis on African culture and pre-Christian religious beliefs are not only peculiar to these cited individuals, but also characterized many works in the African theological discussion.

#### **Biblical and Systematic Theology Emphasis**

Another salient content of African theology is the quest to de-westernize the Bible and systematic theology, thus Biblical and systematic works that reflect African worldview had generally become popular. Dominant Biblical and systematic works are primarily in the areas of Salvation, Christology, Gender, ecology and Ecumenism. However, in recent time the African Christian theology has been dominated with Christological emphases, particularly in the quest to redefine Christology in the category of African ancestor, Elder brother and other respected

cultural designations of African people. Such is the Christological redefinition by Kwane Bediako and Charles Nyamiti, who reconfigured Christology using the ancestor as the basic paradigm.

### **Political Theology Emphasis**

With the exception of the dominant role of politics in South African theological discussion, there is no serious political theological engagement in African Theology as done in Latin American context. The oversight of African theology in its inability to discuss and address political issue may partly be responsible for the chaotic state of the African political leadership. However, this concern for a politically sensitive African Christian theology has been emphasized by Desmond Tutu and John S. Pobee.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

State and explain the three dominant contents of African Theology?

#### **3.4 An Evaluation of African Theology**

The quest for an African Christian Theology has immensely contributed to the richness of African Christianity. Firstly, it has helped to address the misrepresentation of African traditional religions and cultures. Also the quest for an African Christian theology has contributed in some noble initiatives, particularly in Christology and soteriology, which had greatly sparked global Theological discussion especially as it relates to the western Christology. However, three areas that pose a serious problem in the quest for an African Christian Theology are as follows:

##### **Theological Content**

Even though, steps are taking to harmonize the different local theologies in the African heterogeneous context, yet the diversity of the social, political and cultural situations made definitions of the scope, nature and content of African Christian theology impossible. This becomes a serious problem in the light of African Christian ecumenism and the quest to know understand African Theology.

##### **Theological Methodology**

Though African Christian Theology seeks to break away from the hermeneutics, homiletics and Theology of the west, but inevitable such break becomes unrealistic because of the dominant usage of western hermeneutical or theological methodologies in African theological discussion, which recommends western methodologies as the standard vehicle for theological enquiry. This understanding

sabotages the effort of producing an independent African Theology and eternally made African Theology the child of western Theological methodologies.

### **The African Context**

The political context of African Theology has generally been ignored. Even though such contexts are engrossed some issues that are closely related to theology, yet attention is narrowly given to such political issues like election, democracy, good governance, abuse of power, human rights, and other political maladies of the African context. Even though the South African context has complemented these deficiencies in Africa theologies in the west and East Africa, yet the post-apartheid government similarly raises theological issues for the South African theological discussion.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

Evaluate the African Christian theology in three basic areas?

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The direction of African Christian Theology is definitely uncertain because of the many theological works seeking to charter the course for African theology, however, the credibility of such direction will hinge on the centrality of the Bible and the African context to such defining theological work. Indeed, these relationships will become the premises on which every theology and particularly African theology drives its significance as well as its relevance.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The study unit discussed the definition, origin, theology and an evaluation of African Christian theology. It investigated the nature of the origin and the contents of African theology but also evaluated African theology in terms of content, methodology and context respectively.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Define African Christian theology and the two theological commitments inherent in this definition.
2. Describes the ancient and modern roots of African Christian theology?
3. Describe the three basic content of modern African Christian theology?
4. Evaluate African Christian theology in reference to content, methodology and context?

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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