Chapter 1 : Elements of Christian Theology

Basic Elements of Christian Theology: Scripture Replacing Tradition [Fernando Canale] on blog.quintoapp.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Ever since the Reformation, Protestant Christians have believed in the sola sciptura principle, upholding the Bible as the utmost and ultimate authority.

Philosophy and Christian Theology In the history of Christian theology, philosophy has sometimes been seen as a natural complement to theological reflection, whereas at other times practitioners of the two disciplines have regarded each other as mortal enemies. Some early Christian thinkers such as Tertullian were of the view that any intrusion of secular philosophical reason into theological reflection was out of order. Thus, even if certain theological claims seemed to fly in the face of the standards of reasoning defended by philosophers, the religious believer should not flinch. Other early Christian thinkers, such as St. Augustine of Hippo, argued that philosophical reflection complemented theology, but only when these philosophical reflections were firmly grounded in a prior intellectual commitment to the underlying truth of the Christian faith. Thus, the legitimacy of philosophy was derived from the legitimacy of the underlying faith commitments. It was during this time however that St. Thomas Aquinas offered yet another model for the relationship between philosophy and theology. According to the Thomistic model, philosophy and theology are distinct enterprises, differing primarily in their intellectual starting points. Philosophy takes as its data the deliverances of our natural mental faculties: These data can be accepted on the basis of the reliability of our natural faculties with respect to the natural world. Theology, on the other hand takes as its starting point the divine revelations contained in the Bible. These data can be accepted on the basis of divine authority, in a way analogous to the way in which we accept, for example, the claims made by a physics professor about the basic facts of physics. Since this way of thinking about philosophy and theology sharply demarcates the disciplines, it is possible in principle that the conclusions reached by one might be contradicted by the other. According to advocates of this model, however, any such conflict must be merely apparent. Since God both created the world which is accessible to philosophy and revealed the texts accessible to theologians, the claims yielded by one cannot conflict with the claims yielded by another unless the philosopher or theologian has made some prior error. Since the deliverances of the two disciplines must then coincide, philosophy can be put to the service of theology and perhaps vice-versa. How might philosophy play this complementary role? First, philosophical reasoning might persuade some who do not accept the authority of purported divine revelation of the claims contained in religious texts. Thus, an atheist who is unwilling to accept the authority of religious texts might come to believe that God exists on the basis of purely philosophical arguments. Second, distinctively philosophical techniques might be brought to bear in helping the theologian clear up imprecise or ambiguous theological claims. Thus, for example, theology might provide us with information sufficient to conclude that Jesus Christ was a single person with two natures, one human and one divine, but leave us in the dark about exactly how this relationship between divine and human natures is to be understood. The philosopher can provide some assistance here, since, among other things, he or she can help the theologian discern which models are logically inconsistent and thus not viable candidates for understanding the relationship between the divine and human natures in Christ. For most of the twentieth century, the vast majority of English language philosophyâ€"including philosophy of religionâ€"went on without much interaction with theology at all. While there are a number of complex reasons for this divorce, three are especially important. The first reason is that atheism was the predominant opinion among English language philosophers throughout much of that century. A second, quite related reason is that philosophers in the twentieth century regarded theological language as either meaningless, or, at best, subject to scrutiny only insofar as that language had a bearing on religious practice. The former belief i. Since much theological language, for example, language describing the doctrine of the Trinity, lacks empirical content, such language must be meaningless. The latter belief, inspired by Wittgenstein, holds that language itself only has meaning in specific practical contexts, and thus that religious language was not aiming to express truths about the world which could be subjected to objective philosophical scrutiny. In the last forty years, however, philosophers of religion have returned to the business

of theorizing about many of the traditional doctrines of Christianity and have begun to apply the tools of contemporary philosophy in ways that are somewhat more eclectic than what was envisioned under the Augustinian or Thomistic models. In keeping with the recent academic trend, contemporary philosophers of religion have been unwilling to maintain hard and fast distinctions between the two disciplines. As a result, it is often difficult in reading recent work to distinguish what the philosophers are doing from what the theologians and philosophers of past centuries regarded as strictly within the theological domain. In what follows, we provide a brief survey of work on the three topics in contemporary philosophical theology thatâ€"aside from general issues concerning the nature, attributes, and providence of Godâ€"have received the most attention from philosophers of religion over the past quarter century. We thus leave aside such staple topics in philosophy of religion as traditional arguments for the existence of God, the problem of evil, the epistemology of religious belief, the nature and function of religious language. We also leave aside a variety of important but less-discussed topics in philosophical theology, such as the nature of divine revelation and scripture, original sin, the authority of tradition, and the like. Trinity From the beginning, Christians have affirmed the claim that there is one God, and three personsâ€"Father, Son, and Holy Spiritâ€"each of whom is God. Although we profess three persons we do not profess three substances but one substance and three persons â€¦ If we are asked about the individual Person, we must answer that he is God. No doubt this is an understatement. Indeed, it looks like we can derive a contradiction from the doctrine, as follows: Either way, however, we have a problem. If the Father is identical to God and the Son is identical to God, then by the transitivity of identity the Father is identical to the Son, contrary to the doctrine. On the other hand, if the Father is divine and the Son is divine and the Father is distinct from the Son, then there are at least two divine personsâ€"i. Either way, then, the doctrine seems incoherent. At first blush, it might seem rather easy to solve. The answer, in short, is that the Christian tradition has set boundaries on how the doctrine is to be explicated, and these sorts of models fall afoul of those boundaries. Modalism confounds the persons. It is the view that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mere manifestations, modes, or roles played by the one and only God. Ruling out modalism thus rules out analogies like the Superman analogy just given. Tritheism divides the substance. It is a bit tricky because controversial to say exactly what tritheism, or polytheism more generally, is. For discussion, see Rea But whatever else it might be, it is certainly implied by the view that there are three distinct divine substances. Assuming the items in your shopping cart count as multiple distinct substances, then, the problem with the shopping cart analogy is that it suggests polytheism. In what follows, we will consider several more sophisticated models of the trinity: These do not exhaust the field of possible solutions, but they are the ones to which the most attention has been paid in the recent literature. For more detailed surveys, see Rea and, at book length, McCall This suggests the analogy of a family, or, more generally, a society. Thus, the persons of the trinity might be thought of as one in just the way that the members of a family are one: Since there is no contradiction in thinking of a family as three and one in this way, this analogy appears to solve the problem. Those who attempt to understand the trinity primarily in terms of this analogy are typically called social trinitarians. This approach has been controversially associated with the Eastern Church, tracing its roots to the Cappadocian Fathersâ€"Basil of Caesarea, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend Gregory Nazianzen. Against this practice, see especially Ayres and Barnes b. Consider, for example, the children of Chronos in Greek mythology, of whom Zeus was the liberator. These children included Zeus, Hera, Ares, and a variety of other Olympian deitiesâ€"all members of a divine family. Nobody, however, thinks that the fact that Zeus and his siblings nor even, say, Zeus and his begotten daughter Athena count in any meaningful sense as one god. For this reason, social trinitarians are often quick to note that there are other relations that hold between members of the trinity that contribute, along with their being members of a single divine family, to their counting as one God. Richard Swinburne, for example, has defended a version of this view according to which the unity among the divine persons is secured by several facts in conjunction with one another. First, the divine persons share all of the essential characteristics of divinity: Second, unlike the deities of familiar polytheistic systems, their wills are necessarily harmonious, so that they can never come into conflict with one another. Third, they stand in a relationship of perfect love and necessary mutual interdependence. On this sort of view, there is one God because the community of divine persons is so closely

interconnected that, although they are three distinct persons, they nonetheless function as if they were a single entity. One might think that if we were to consider a group of three human persons who exhibited these characteristics of necessary unity, volitional harmony, and love, it would likewise be hard to regard them as entirely distinct. And that is, of course, just the intuition that the view aims to elicit. Still, many regard the sort of unity just described as not strong enough to secure a respectable monotheism. Thus, some social trinitarians have attempted to give other accounts of what unifies the divine persons. Perhaps the most popular such account is the part–whole model. Moreland and William Lane Craig have argued that the relation between the persons of the Trinity can be thought of as analogous to the relation we might suppose to obtain between the three dog-like beings that compose Cerberus, the mythical guardian of the underworld. One might say that each of the three heads–or each of the three souls associated with the heads–is a fully canine individual, and yet there is only one being, Cerberus, with the full canine nature. At this point, therefore, it is natural to wonder what exactly it is that makes both proposals count as versions of social trinitarianism. Unfortunately, this is a question to which self-proclaimed social trinitarians have not given a very clear answer. However, this answer is less than fully illuminating. What is needed is some characterization of the common core underlying the diverse views that are generally regarded as versions of social trinitarianism. The following two theses seem to capture that core: One of the more serious problems is that it is inconsistent with the Nicene Creed. Likewise, the Creed says that Father and Son are consubstantial. This claim is absolutely central to the doctrine of the trinity, and the notion of consubstantiality lay at the very heart of the debates in the 4th Century C. But the three souls, or centers of consciousness, of the heads of Cerberus are not in any sense consubstantial. Other versions of the part–whole model raise further worries. A cube, for example, is a seventh thing in addition to its six sides; but we do not want to say that God is a fourth thing in addition to its three parts. The reason is that saying this forces a dilemma: Either God is a person, or God is not. If the former, then we have a quaternity rather than a trinity. If the latter, then we seem to commit ourselves to claims that are decidedly anti-theistic: Bad news either way, then. Thus, many are motivated to seek other models. Historically, the use of psychological analogies is especially associated with thinkers in the Latin-speaking West, particularly from Augustine onward. Augustine himself suggested several important analogies, as did others in the medieval Latin tradition. However, since our focus in this article is on more contemporary models, we will pass over these here and focus instead on two more recently developed psychological analogies.

Chapter 2 : Faith: Three essential elements | CBCP News

Elements of Christian Theology by George Pretyman Christian Denominations Or a Brief Exposition of the History and Teachings of Christian Denominations Found in English-Speaking Countries by Vigilius H. Krull.

Important theological debates also surrounded the various Ecumenical Councils â€"Nicaea in , Constantinople in , Ephesus in and Chalcedon in Papacy and primacy[edit] Main article: Historical development of the doctrine of Papal Primacy The theology of the Bishop of Rome having a monarchal papacy developed over time. As a bishopric, its origin is consistent with the development of an episcopal structure in the 1st century. As long as the Papal See also happened to be the capital of the Western Empire, prestige of the Bishop of Rome could be taken for granted without the need of sophisticated theological argumentation beyond these points; after its shift to Milan and then Ravenna, however, more detailed arguments were developed based on Matthew Just what exactly was entailed in this primacy, and its being exercised, would become a matter of controversy at certain later times. Christian heresy Urgent concerns with the uniformity of belief and practice have characterized Christianity from the outset. The New Testament itself speaks of the importance of maintaining orthodox doctrine and refuting heresies, showing the antiquity of the concern. Some scholars, drawing upon distinctions between Jewish Christians , Gentile Christians, and other groups such as Gnostics , see Early Christianity as fragmented and with contemporaneous competing orthodoxies. The process of establishing orthodox Christianity was set in motion by a succession of different interpretations of the teachings of Christ being taught after the crucifixion. Though Christ himself is noted to have spoken out against false prophets and false christs within the gospels themselves Mark The epistles of John and Jude also warn of false teachers and prophets , as does the writer of the Book of Revelation and 1 Jn. One of the roles of bishops, and the purpose of many Christian writings, was to refute heresies. Orthodox Christianity, on the other hand, held that both the material and spiritual worlds were created by God and were therefore both good, and that this was represented in the unified divine and human natures of Christ. This was therefore an early argument supported by apostolic succession. Irenaeus first established the doctrine of four gospels and no more, with the synoptic gospels interpreted in the light of John. Gnosticism is predicated on the existence of such hidden knowledge, but brief references to private teachings of Jesus have also survived in the canonic Scripture as did warning by the Christ that there would be false prophets or false teachers. In the middle of the 2nd century, three groups of Christians adhered to a range of doctrines that divided the Christian communities of Rome: The letters of Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna to various churches warned against false teachers, and the Epistle of Barnabas , accepted by many Christians as part of Scripture in the 2nd century, warned about mixing Judaism with Christianity , as did other writers, leading to decisions reached in the first ecumenical council , which was convoked by the Emperor Constantine at Nicaea in , in response to further disruptive polemical controversy within the Christian community, in that case Arian disputes over the nature of the Trinity. During those first three centuries, Christianity was effectively outlawed by requirements to venerate the Roman emperor and Roman gods. Consequently, when the Church labelled its enemies as heretics and cast them out of its congregations or severed ties with dissident churches, it remained without the power to persecute them. However, those called "heretics" were also called a number of other things e. Before AD, the "heretical" nature of some beliefs was a matter of much debate within the churches. After AD, some opinion was formulated as dogma through the canons promulgated by the councils. Medieval Christian theology[edit] Byzantine theology[edit] While the Western Roman Empire declined and fell, the Eastern Roman Empire, centred on Constantinople, remained standing until , and was the home of a wide range of theological activity that was seen as standing in strong continuity with the theology of the Patristic period; indeed the division between Patristic and Byzantine theology would not be recognised by many Orthodox theologians and historians.

Chapter 3 : Elements of St. Benedict's Monastic Theology and Practice

What makes for good theology? Or, to put it another way, what makes for creative wisdom? Recently, I was reading The Future of Christian Theology () by David Ford, the highly respected professor of theology at the University of Cambridge.

Roman Catholic and Eastern Christians recognize 73 books as canonical, with 46 books for the Old Testament 7 more than Protestants. The Old Testament canon entered into Christian use in the Septuagint , a Greek translation with a few books in Greek originally. In addition to the Septuagint, Christianity subsequently added various writings that would become the New Testament. Somewhat different lists of accepted works continued to develop in antiquity. In the 4th century a series of synods , most notably at the Synod of Hippo in AD , produced a list of texts equal to the 46 book canon of the Old Testament that Catholics use today and the book canon of the New Testament that all use. A definitive list did not come from any early Ecumenical Council. With the benefit of hindsight it can be said that this process effectively set the New Testament canon, although there are examples of other canonical lists in use after this time. During the Protestant Reformation , certain reformers proposed different canonical lists of the Old Testament. The texts that are present in the Septuagint, but not included in the Jewish canon, fell out of favor and, in time, they would come to be removed from Protestant canons. These texts are referred to as Deuterocanonical books in Catholic Bibles, whereas in a Protestant context they are referred to as the Apocrypha. The "New Testament apocrypha" has a very different meaning. It is a poorly defined group of early writings in which, generally, none ever achieved acceptance by any widespread group. God[edit] Main article: God in Christianity In Christianity , God is the creator and preserver of the universe. God is the sole ultimate power in the universe but is distinct from it. The Bible never speaks of God as impersonal. Instead, it refers to him in personal terms â€" who speaks, sees, hears, acts, and loves. God is understood to have a will and personality and is an all powerful , divine and benevolent being. He is represented in Scripture as being primarily concerned with people and their salvation. For example, saying he is immutable is saying that he does not change. Enumeration[edit] Some attributes ascribed to God in Christian theology [17] are: Aseity â€"That "God is so independent that he does not need us. Eternity â€"That God exists beyond the temporal realm. Graciousness â€"That God extends His favor and gifts to human beings unconditionally as well as conditionally. Holiness â€"That God is separate from sin and incorruptible. Noting the refrain of " Holy, holy, holy " in Isaiah 6: Sproul points out that "only once in sacred Scripture is an attribute of God elevated to the third degree The Bible never says that God is love, love, love. Impassibility â€"That God does not experience emotion or suffering a more controversial doctrine, disputed especially by open theism. Impeccability â€"That God is incapable of error sin. Incorporeality â€"That God is without physical composition. While the Mission of God is not traditionally included in this list, David Bosch has argued that " mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. Omnibenevolence of God refers to him being "all good". Omnipotence â€"That God is supremely or all-powerful. Omnipresence â€"That God is the supreme being, existing everywhere and at all times; the all-perceiving or all-conceiving foundation of reality. Omniscience â€"That God is supremely or all-knowing. Onenessâ€"That God is without peer, also that every divine attribute is instantiated in its entirety the qualitative infinity of God. See also Monotheism and Divine simplicity. Providence â€"That God watches over His creation with interest and dedication. While the Providence of God usually refers to his activity in the world, it also implies his care for the universe, and is thus an attribute. Righteousness â€"That God is the greatest or only measure of human conduct. The righteousness of God may refer to his holiness, to his justice , or to his saving activity through Christ. Transcendence â€"That God exists beyond the natural realm of physical laws and thus is not bound by them; [22] He is also wholly Other and incomprehensible apart from general or special self-revelation. Triune â€"The Christian God is understood by trinitarian Christians to be a "threeness" of Father , Son , and Holy Spirit that is fully consistent with His "oneness"; a single infinite being who is both within and beyond nature. Because the persons of the Trinity represent a personal relation even on the level of God to Himself, He is personal both in His relation toward us and in His relation toward Himself. Veracity â€"That God is the Truth all human beings strive for; He is also impeccably honest. Christ in Gethsemane, Heinrich Hofmann , Some

Christians believe that the God worshiped by the Hebrew people of the pre-Christian era had always revealed himself as he did through Jesus ; but that this was never obvious until Jesus was born see John 1. Also, though the Angel of the Lord spoke to the Patriarchs, revealing God to them, some believe it has always been only through the Spirit of God granting them understanding, that men have been able to perceive later that God himself had visited them. This mysterious "Trinity" has been described as hypostases in the Greek language subsistences in Latin , and "persons" in English. Nonetheless, Christians stress that they only believe in one God. Most Christian churches teach the Trinity, as opposed to Unitarian monotheistic beliefs. Historically, most Christian churches have taught that the nature of God is a mystery , something that must be revealed by special revelation rather than deduced through general revelation. Christian orthodox traditions Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant follow this idea, which was codified in and reached its full development through the work of the Cappadocian Fathers. Some critics contend that because of the adoption of a tripartite conception of deity, Christianity is a form of tritheism or polytheism. This concept dates from Arian teachings which claimed that Jesus, having appeared later in the Bible than his Father, had to be a secondary, lesser, and therefore distinct god. For Jews and Muslims , the idea of God as a trinity is heretical â€" it is considered akin to polytheism. Christians overwhelmingly assert that monotheism is central to the Christian faith, as the very Nicene Creed among others which gives the orthodox Christian definition of the Trinity does begin with: In the 3rd century, Tertullian claimed that God exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spiritâ€"the three personae of one and the same substance. In Christianity , the doctrine of the Trinity states that God is one being who exists, simultaneously and eternally , as a mutual indwelling of three Persons: At that time, the Emperor Constantine convoked the First Council of Nicaea , to which all bishops of the empire were invited to attend. Pope Sylvester I did not attend but sent his legate. The council, among other things, decreed the original Nicene Creed. For most Christians, beliefs about God are enshrined in the doctrine of Trinitarianism , which holds that the three persons of God together form a single God. The Trinitarian view emphasizes that God has a will and that God the Son has two wills, divine and human, though these are never in conflict see Hypostatic union. However, this point is disputed by Oriental Orthodox Christians, who hold that God the Son has only one will of unified divinity and humanity see Miaphysitism. To the ancients, personhood "was in some sense individual, but always in community as well. Since the beginning of the 3rd century [28] the doctrine of the Trinity has been stated as "the one God exists in three Persons and one substance , Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A small minority of Christians hold non-trinitarian views, largely coming under the heading of Unitarianism. Most, if not all, Christians believe that God is spirit, [John 4: With this background, belief in the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit is expressed as the doctrine of the Trinity , [30] which describes the single divine ousia substance existing as three distinct and inseparable hypostases persons: The holy three are separate, yet the Son and the Holy Spirit are still seen as originating from God the Father. The New Testament does not have the term "Trinity" and nowhere discusses the Trinity as such. Some emphasize, however, that the New Testament does repeatedly speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to "compel a trinitarian understanding of God. God the Father[edit] Further information: God the Father In many monotheist religions, God is addressed as the father, in part because of his active interest in human affairs, in the way that a father would take an interest in his children who are dependent on him and as a father, he will respond to humanity, his children, acting in their best interests. Thus, humans, in general, are sometimes called children of God. The New Testament says, in this sense, that the very idea of family, wherever it appears, derives its name from God the Father, [Eph 3: However, there is a deeper "legal" sense in which Christians believe that they are made participants in the special relationship of Father and Son, through Jesus Christ as his spiritual bride. Christians call themselves adopted children of God. According to the Nicene Creed , the Son Jesus Christ is "eternally begotten of the Father", indicating that their divine Father-Son relationship is not tied to an event within time or human history. Christology and Christ[edit] Main articles: Christology and Jesus in Christianity Christology is the field of study within Christian theology which is primarily concerned with the nature, person, and works of Jesus Christ , held by Christians to be the Son of God. There have been and are various perspectives by those who claim to be his followers since the church began after his ascension. The controversies ultimately focused on whether and how a human nature and a

divine nature can co-exist in one person. The study of the inter-relationship of these two natures is one of the preoccupations of the majority tradition. Teachings about Jesus and testimonies about what he accomplished during his three-year public ministry are found throughout the New Testament. Core biblical teachings about the person of Jesus Christ may be summarized that Jesus Christ was and forever is fully God divine and fully human in one sinless person at the same time, [34] and that through the death and resurrection of Jesus , sinful humans can be reconciled to God and thereby are offered salvation and the promise of eternal life via his New Covenant. While there have been theological disputes over the nature of Jesus, Christians believe that Jesus is God incarnate and " true God and true man " or both fully divine and fully human. Jesus, having become fully human in all respects, suffered the pains and temptations of a mortal man, yet he did not sin. As fully God, he defeated death and rose to life again. Scripture asserts that Jesus was conceived, by the Holy Spirit, and born of his virgin mother Mary without a human father. The apostle Peter, in what has become a famous proclamation of faith among Christians since the 1st century, said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. The word is often misunderstood to be the surname of Jesus due to the numerous mentions of Jesus Christ in the Christian Bible. The word is in fact used as a title , hence its common reciprocal use Christ Jesus, meaning Jesus the Anointed One or Jesus the Messiah. Followers of Jesus became known as Christians because they believed that Jesus was the Christ, or Messiah, prophesied about in the Old Testament , or Tanakh. Trinitarian Ecumenical Councils[edit] See also: Ecumenical council Major christological schisms and related early councils. The Christological controversies came to a head over the persons of the Godhead and their relationship with one another. Christology was a fundamental concern from the First Council of Nicaea until the Third Council of Constantinople

Essential Christianity When we talk about the essentials of Christianity we're referring to the basic elements that make up and characterize our faith, and which, of course, separate it from other beliefs.

This list is not exhaustive. But it is a good cross-section of biblically-derived principles that should help as you seek to understand a biblical worldview. As you study them, notice how they would affect your beliefs and actions about various topics: God, church, evangelism, creation, worship, family, sin, salvation, homosexuality, abortion, etc. Principles are like a fountain from which other beliefs and actions flow. The closer you are to biblical beliefs, the better able you will be to carry out the commission of our Lord and Savior to make disciples of all nations, to glorify Him, and to understand His creation. There is a God Isaiah The Christian Trinity is the only God Gen. God has revealed Himself in three ways: In creation, in the Bible, and in Jesus Rom. God created the universe and all that is in it with order and design -- the universe is not an accident Gen. All life on earth was created by God with a design and a purpose -- life did not evolve Gen. The unseen supernatural world is just as real as the physical world Eph. The first humans were Adam and Eve Gen. Adam and Eve were the first family male and female according to the purpose of God for procreation and glorifying Him -- homosexuality, therefore, is unnatural Gen. Man is morally responsible and answerable to God Ex. God gave dominion of the earth to Adam and Eve and, thus, to their descendants Gen. Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve Gen. Only God can save. Man cannot save himself Matt. Jesus is the only way to escape the judgment of God Acts. The Christian Gospel is the key to the conversion of all people 1 Cor. The Bible reflects the true and moral character of God; therefore, truth and morals are knowable and absolute, not relative Exodus Christians are to follow the laws of the land except where they contradict the Bible Acts 5: Christians are to evangelize the world Matt. All areas of life are subject to God and should have Christian principles guiding them: All areas of life are Christian mission fields:

Chapter 5 : Augustine: Elements of Christianity

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July 18, What makes for good theology? Or, to put it another way, what makes for creative wisdom? The paragon of wise and creative retrieval is Henri de Lubac, who is â€" in my opinion â€" the perfect example for this element. For something to be Christian theology, it must give an account of itself in terms of the historical tradition within which it is situated and from which it arises. Exclusive focus on the epochal or classic results in the exercise of history alone which, in itself, is not a bad thing â€" but it is not, according to Ford â€" wise and creative theology and simple exploration of theory and experience results in sociology or some other academic consideration that is not rooted in the tradition. Both are necessary for good theology. Wise and Creative Thinking This might seem like an obvious point, but it is one upon which to reflect more deeply. Some of it is what might be termed basic intellectual good practice: Just as knowing the tradition and being aware of the contemporary concerns, experiences, and sources are important, so too is the method or mode of thinking that informs the theological reflection. Recently, I heard an interview with a man who identifies himself as a scholar of religion who has written a popular book on the historical Jesus. During an NPR interview, it became clear that his understanding of some basic tenets of ancient philosophy lacked what Ford is here advocating. As a result, I â€" someone who is likely more attuned to these concerns and issues than the average NPR listener â€" found his conclusions to not necessarily follow in the way he was suggesting. Wise and Creative Expression This is perhaps the element that I find to be the most important! Ford begins this section with this direct observation: For this, appropriate genres, structures, and forms are needed, together with attractive language. Many academic theologians are not gifted in this respect, and very few are good at more than one or two of the wide range of arts ideally required to communicate theology as widely and effectively as possibleâ€¦The ideas and images are already enmeshed in language, and writing is itself a creative task, in which fresh theological insights can occur. So good theology can become better theology through being expressed better. This perception is reinforced by the reams of journal and book pages filled with such writing. However, this is simply an untruth. Good writing is good writing.

Chapter 6 : What is Theology?

Elements of Christian theology: containing, proofs of the authenticity and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures ; a summary of the history of the Jews ; a brief statement of the contents of the several books of the Old and New Testaments ; a short account of the English translations of the Bible and of the liturgy of the Church of England ; and a scriptural exposition of the thirty-nine.

Strong described it as "The science of God and of the relations between God and the universe. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Paul points out that there is an element of work involved in handling the word of truth. Theology is the word that describes that work of handling the word of truth. For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of Yahweh, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel. Freshman college students usually define it with one word: How is getting a job or mowing the lawn aided by knowing about supralapsarianism? All we need to know is how to be saved, and how to give the gospel to others, right? Why should we know anything more? The Nature of Theology One could say that our modern concept of theology began with the Greeks, even though it gained its content and method with Christianity. The themes of the discipline are God, humanity, salvation, and the study of last things, among other topics. According to Helmut Thielicke: The Greek philosopher Plato c. For Plato theology described the mythical, which he allowed may have a temporary pedagogical significance that is beneficial to the state but is to be cleansed from all offensive and abstruse elements with the help of political legislation. This identification of theology and mythology also remained customary in the later Greek thought. In distinction to philosophers, "theologians" as, for example, the poets of myth - e. Theology thus became significant as the means of proclaiming the gods, of confessing to them, and of teaching and "preaching" this confession. In this practice of "theology" by the Greeks lies the prefiguration of what later would be known as theology in the history of Christianity. In spite of all the contradictions and nuances that were to emerge in the understanding of this concept in various Christian confessions and schools of thought, a formal criterion remains constant: The Objective of Theology There may be as many objectives to theology as there are theologians. Some have as their goal, perhaps, simply the accumulation of facts about God, without any concrete goal beyond that. Others may study God for the purpose of making a point. The ax-grinders union is a significant force in theology: Too often, theology falls to the lowest ebb, of people seeking to prove something, rather than people seeking to discover or understand something. Theology should function as a science, and like any other science, it should have as its sole goal the attainment of truth. Stating such a goal is far easier than achieving it. As a human being, the author of this book has his own agenda, his own ideas, his own axes. No one who approaches theology is any different. In fact, objectivity, though a laudable goal, is unattainable. Anyone who claims complete objectivity is lying - either to the people around him or to himself. More reasonable and better is for the author - any author - to discuss very early on what his or her prejudices and points of view might be. In that way, at least the reader has a fighting chance of determining what the truth of a given issue might really be. Scientists strive to harmonize and make sense of the universe around them. They want to arrive at a consistent point of view, and to postulate theories that make good sense of the relevant evidence. Ideally, theologians should also seek harmony. They should attempt to formulate theories that makes sense of the various parts of Scripture and, at those points where it intersects, with the world as well. Theologians should desire a consistent point of view regarding God - that is, they should hunger for a reasoned and reasonable, non-contradictory picture of who God is and what he expects of the human race - a picture that makes sense both in the context of Scripture, and in the wider context of the Universe as a whole. Theology frightens the daylights out of most people. When they hear the word mentioned, their eyes glaze over: They imagine lists and categories and dry barren wastes without a drop of water. Not surprisingly, therefore, many will doubt the need for theology at all, asking the pertinent question: Everyone who reads the Bible or even thinks about God has contrived a theology of some sort. So there is a question that everyone must face: This is not a subjective question; there are objective criteria to think about. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that those

who worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth John 4: The prophet Hosea wrote: My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Besides keeping a lot of theologians off welfare and out of trouble, it brings clarification. Unlike the way teachers so often present it, theology is not a settled issue of firmly established facts. Theology is theory, and like theory in science, forever alive and developing. In the early Church questions arose now and then and theology - theory - to answer them had to be developed. For instance, in Acts, the church was faced with the problem of what to do with all the Gentiles who were coming to Christ. Did they have to become Jews first, before they could be saved? Or was entrance into Christianity by grace alone? Later on, people began wondering who, precisely, was Jesus? Was he really God, or simply an emanation, or maybe a created being? How are such questions answered? This action, of looking to the Bible and the world for answers, raises a question of its own: The Five Kinds of Theology 1. Natural Theology Natural theology is restricted to the facts concerning God which are revealed in the universe around us. Thomas Aquinas, in a systematic fashion, outlined his belief that the existence of God may be proven from reason alone. Modern theologians such as Karl Barth, reflecting Immanuel Kant and David Hume, argued that there was essentially no validity to a natural theology, while Process theologians such as John B. Within evangelical circles, there is a division on this question. Biblical Theology Biblical theology is restricted to the biblical revelation of God. Its sole source is the Bible, independent of any philosophical system ideally. In reality, any approach to theology must inevitably carry certain philosophical presuppositions and perspectives. Dogmatic Theology Dogmatic theology refers to those elements of theological truth which are absolutely certain. It will avoid controversial fields of study and will concentrate on those points about which the church throughout history has held to unswervingly, such the virgin birth, the resurrection, the Trinity, and the like. Practical Theology Practical theology has to do with the actual function of the truth in the lives of people. Given beliefs and doctrines are considered true if they work in the lives of real people. In other words, if it works, then it is true. Otherwise, it is of no consequence. Theology Proper Theology proper concerns itself with the study of the person of God, apart from his works. It deals with the existence of God, the ability of people to know him, his various attributes, and the nature of the Trinity. In other words, Theology Proper is concerned with understanding and knowing God. Our Approach The five kinds of theology are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and in fact, this essay will make use of all five sorts. Our approach is not designed to give the student a complete, ready made theology: The learning process is stimulated, both by outlining a proper methodology, and by discussing in detail some of the most serious riddles facing theologians people who think about God , pointing out what are sometimes provocative and controversial possibilities in the hope of encouraging - or even forcing - the student to learn how to think for himself or herself. In the end, it is hoped that the student will be able to explain, not just what he or she believes, but also why. Supernatural Help is Required A basic presupposition in the approach taken here, is that God is real; more than that, it is assumed that he cares about human beings as individuals, and that he is interested in them learning and understanding and getting to know him better. Therefore, it is to be expected that God will help the reader as he or she develops his or her own theology. A theology does not grow up in a vacuum apart from a genuine relationship with the object of study. In contrast to most other objects of study, God is a person, and he desires a relationship. Simple knowledge apart from the relationship is not only boring, but mostly useless. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. We will begin with inductive reasoning, since all thinking begins with particulars from which general principles are derived. That is, we learn what dogs are like from having been around a lot of dogs; we learn that we tend to sunburn easily if we get frequent sunburns. Thus, we will look at the individual particulars in the Bible and Nature, and from those particulars we will infer general principles. For instance, we learn that God is loving from the numerous

examples and statements in the Bible that tell us this. Theology, not unreasonably, is called a science, because it makes use of the same principles and methods as science. The scientific method, which also becomes, then the theological method, may be defined as "that method for describing and explaining the revelations of God that incorporates the principles of verification, operational definition, statistical generalization and confirmation. We become aware of the problem or question.

Chapter 7 : The Four Elements of Good Theology â€" Dating God

In the year 1, George Joye, an English refugee, published at Strasburg a translation of Isaiah; and in the year 1 , he published at Antwerp a translation of the Prophecies of J erea miah, and of the Psalms, and of the Song of Moses.

In some versions, it also includes an analysis of the nature of Christian faith and a treatment of the nature, method, and sources of theology. Since the divine revelation in Jesus is the basis of the Church, Roman Catholic theology labels the discipline that deals with the existence and content of that revelation foundational or fundamental theology. The term "fundamental theology" is a very literal translation of the Latin theologia fundamentalis and was for a long time the title given to the discipline. The term "foundational theology," however, has been used by many especially Bernard lonergan to signify a conception of the discipline that interprets the foundations of theology in a way different from that of traditional neo-scholasticism. Whereas the neo-scholastic treatment emphasized the nontheological and the apologetical task of the discipline, Lonergan develops foundational theology as a specific functional specialty within theology. Nevertheless, the terms "foundational" and "fundamental" theology are often used today indiscriminately and often represent merely the choice of a different English term. From Apologetics to Foundational Theology. The history of Christian apologetics up to the enlightenment is one of individual apologies being argued against specific heresies. Such an apologetics should go beyond the medieval preambles of faith, namely, those philosophical truths that could be proven independently and prior to faith. It should provide a foundation for Christian faith and theology through a defense of revelation. Drey explicated the program for this discipline within his writing on the organization of theological disciplines in the modern university, with their increased specialization. Theology came to be divided into exegetical, historical, systematic, and practical studies. Catholic theology identified a division of foundational and systematic theology. The goal of foundational theology was to defend the presuppositions of theology, whereas the goal systematic theology was to give an exposition of Christian doctrine. Modern Preamble of Faith. The movement in reality recovered elements of patristic and scholastic theology that modern neo-scholasticism had neglected. It criticized the extrinsicism of neo-scholasticism and argued for a more intrinsic relation between human nature and divine grace and between the love of God and the knowledge of God. Bouillard notes that modern fundamental theology developed precisely when modernity stood under the impact of the Enlightenment and deism. Deism criticized the existence of supernatural divine revelation, but not the existence of God. The Enlightenment criticized concrete historical religions that invoked prophecies and miracles as a justification of their belief in a special supernatural revelation. Therefore, neo-scholastic fundamental theology sought to demonstrate the possibility and existence of supernatural revelation, the truth of Christian revelation, and the truth of the Catholic church. Bouillard recognized that the modern situation deals only with the denial of revelation or the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but also with the denial of the God of philosophers. Not deism, but atheism is the challenge today. The classical approach to the preambles of faith presupposed the rational and philosophical demonstration of the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the principles of morality. Its successor retrieved and also went beyond these demonstrations, taking up their task in the face of modern atheism and the loss of the divine in modern culture. Influenced by Maurice blondel, this approach sought to integrate the natural and philosophical with the religious by appealing to an experience of transcendence that avoided the sharp separation between the philosophical and the religious. The task of foundational theology is then to explicate the interrelation between the philosophical and the religious experience of transcendence in elaborating an approach to the knowledge of God. Formal and Existential Phenomenology. Rahner sees foundational theology not simply an apologetic. Rather, it should deal with the possibility of the "unbelief of the believer. It should convincingly illumine the meaning of the Christian faith not just to the non-Christian or non-Catholic, but to the believers themselves. This name calls attention to two aspects of his theology. On the one hand, it highlights the phenomenological and existential analysis of the human person as open for God. On the other hand, it emphasizes that foundational theology is more than a formal analysis of human nature and human subjectivity. It uncovers the fact that human beings are immersed in history in their openness to

God and oriented toward history in their search for an answer to their quest for the meaning of the mystery of God. He acknowledges the validity of the proofs, but he maintains that they presuppose a preunderstanding or experiential anticipation of the meaning of what they should demonstrate. Rahner stands within the tradition of the "new theology" but nuances it by maintaining that the desire for God is not a desire based upon an abstract human nature. It is a desire embedded in a historical human nature that has received a historical call from God. His term "supernatural existential" expresses this historical characteristic of human nature. Rahner appropriates the term "existential" from Martin heidegger, his teacher, who used it to refer to those categories specific to human nature, such as historicity and self-understanding. Bernhard Welte has developed an analogous approach. Hans Urs von balthasar has argued for the fundamental theological significance of a theological aesthetics that focuses on a dramatic action of God and Christ and the logic of that action for foundational theology. Balthasar contends that much of modern theology has insufficiently attended to the aesthetic dimension. This neglect had dominated certain strands of modern Protestant theology, but also influenced some modern Roman Catholic theological approaches that unfortunately neglect the classic Catholic emphasis on the aesthetic and sacramental. Against a fundamental theological method that focuses upon the human pre-understanding or the a priori condition of revelation within human rationality, Balthasar emphasizes the aesthetic contemplation of the Christian drama of revelation in his development of the fundamental theological implications of aesthetics. He points to an aesthetic model whereby the encounter with the aesthetic object influences, changes, and challenges the subject. Through contemplating the form of Christ manifest in the dramatic action of His suffering, death, and Resurrection, one opens oneself to this form and becomes conformed with Christ. In developing theological aesthetics that display a Christian Trinitarian logic and drama, Balthasar cautions against the appeal to an anthropological, existential, or transcendental starting point within foundational theology. The danger is that the starting point does not remain simply a starting point or beginning, but can become a standard or measure that limits what is to be grasped. Metz argues that Rahner has overemphasized personal subjectivity, has failed to take sufficiently into account social and political praxis, and has not confronted the moral and religious implications of the Holocaust. The horrors of Auschwitz speak against a fundamental theological conception that underscores on human autonomy and human transcendence over nature. Such an anthropocentricism interprets human history in terms of a continuous evolutionary progress. It views this history as culminating in the modern European West with its established freedoms. Such a view overlooks the suffering victims of this history. It expresses instead the viewpoint of the victors. It is Eurocentric rather than polycentric. In contrast, Metz proposes a foundational theology that is a political theology or, more precisely, a practical hermeneutic of Christianity. Such a foundational theology is indeed defined by the challenge of modernity and the Enlightenment. Metz, however, does not interpret this challenge as a purely theoretical or as a merely philosophical critique of Christianity. It is also, and primarily, a practical challenge and a political critique. The fundamental theological response to this challenge entails a practical hermeneutic and an emphasis on practice as its central point. Christian theology has a practical logos. The belief in God entails the affirmation of specific practice implied within Christian belief. Such a belief entails a conversion and a discipleship. The God of Jesus is a God of the living and the dead. This God promises resurrection and thereby affirms all to be subjects by affirming their identities and hopes even in the face of suffering, death, and injustice. The Christian community advocates a discipleship and a "dangerous memory" that is in solidarity with those who have unjustly suffered in the past and it proclaims a hope in resurrection that gives justice and meaning to life. The logos of Christian practice is a logos involving memory, solidarity, and hope. Such a logos differs from a more theoretical logos, for it criticizes the progressive understanding of history through its conviction that Christian apocalypticism entails an "interruption" of a human history of domination. Peukert criticizes the more empirical and positivist conceptions of rationality as insufficient because they are unable to deal adequately with suffering, especially the suffering and death of past victims of injustice. Foundational theology develops an understanding of meaning and rationality based upon a hope in the resurrection and in the ultimate vindications of those who have suffered and died. Diverse Publics and Criteria. David Tracy has proposed that the various branches of theology should be distinguished with reference to their specific social location, public or reference group ,

characteristic mode of argumentation, and distinctive religious and ethical stance. Each branch of theology seeks to provide both an interpretation of a religious tradition and an explication of the religious dimension of the contemporary situation. Fundamental theology relates primarily but not exclusively to the public represented by the academy, whereas systematic theology relates primarily, though not exhaustively, to the Church. Fundamental theology consequently employs a mode of argument that suitable to the approach and methods of an established academic discipline in interpreting the truth claims of the religious tradition. Moreover, it offers arguments that all reasonable persons should acknowledge as reasonable even if these persons are neither religious believers nor members of a Christian church. In addition, fundamental theology has a distinctive ethical and religious stance. Though the fundamental theologian might be personally a believer, in arguments his personal faith or beliefs may not serve as warrants or backings of truth. His claims of the truth for the Christian faith must be argued on public grounds. Such a conception of foundational theology relies on the link established within the sociology of knowledge between social location and types of argumentation and modes of commitment. Some critics question whether the awareness of the social conditioning of knowledge throws the notion of public rationality into question. Classical pragmatic philosophers such as Charles Pierce and Wilfrid Sellars as well as neo-pragmatists such as Richard Rorty , Richard Bernstein, and Robert Brandom have criticized various forms of foundationalism. They criticize a subjective foundationalism. In addition, they criticize the foundationalism of positivism and empiricism e. Moreover, recent theories of deconstructive as well as postmodern analysis have underscored the ambiguity of meaning. All of these tendencies have influenced contemporary formulations of foundational theology. For some contemporary Protestant theologians this critique of foundationalism has reinforced the traditional Lutheran critique of metaphysics and of natural theology. Hans Frei and George Lindbeck have strongly argued against an apologetic anthropological approach. If Tracy argued that one can defend the notion of Christian claims via "publicly acceptable criteria," Lindbeck underscores the linguistic and communitarian context of adjudication. Ronald Thiemann and William Placher explicitly take up the critique of foundationalism. Thiemann develops a narrative theology and bases Christian theology on revelation in a way that takes into account the pragmatic critique of foundationalism. Placher advocates an unapologetic theology. Roman Catholic theologians, on the other hand, have incorporated the critique of foundationalism within foundational theology itself. Fiorenza argues that the critique of foundationalism does not entail the absence of any foundations. Instead, it requires a multiplicity of foundations and the awareness that every foundation is located within a web of interpretation and within a community of discourse. This procedure involves a broad reflective equilibrium a term widely used within current political and moral philosophy influenced by John Rawls whereby foundational theology brings together diverse grounds and reasons. Just as diverse cords are interwoven to form a strong rope, so too are diverse sources brought together to form the warrants for Christian belief. Thus foundational theology brings into reflective balance diverse tasks:

Chapter 8 : History of Christian theology - Wikipedia

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Chapter 9 : [PDF/ePub Download] elements of christian theology eBook

As Christian Doctrine makes clear, divine revelation, that is to say, intervention in human affairs by a power anterior to all human reasoning, is the necessary condition of Christian theology. Perhaps when that revelation has done its work well, it might be possible to reconstruct the doctrines of Christianity as they would appear if the.