

# Theology

by Charles Hodge

---

*Theology is the exhibition of the facts of Scripture in their proper order and relation, with the principles or general truths involved, and it is concerned with the nature of God and our relation to him as his creatures, sinners, and subjects of redemption.*

**Scripture:** John 3:3, John 3:36, Acts 4:12, Romans 1:19, Romans 5:18, Romans 10:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9, Ephesians 2:12, Hebrews 12:14

**Topics:** "Systematic Theology", "Divine Revelation"

---

## Description

Charles Hodge preaches about the nature of Theology, emphasizing that it is concerned with the facts and principles of the Bible, arranging them in their proper order and relation. The sermon delves into the definitions of Theology, highlighting its distinction as natural and revealed, and the importance of understanding theology as the science of the facts of divine revelation concerning God and our relationship with Him. Hodge discusses the insufficiency of natural theology in providing salvation, pointing out the necessity of a supernatural revelation through Christ for the redemption of sinners.

---

## Transcript

### § 1. Its Nature.

IF the views presented in the preceding chapter be correct, the question, What is Theology? is already answered. If natural science be concerned with the facts and laws of nature, theology is concerned with the facts and the principles of the Bible. If the object of the one be to arrange and systematize the facts of the external world, and to ascertain the laws by which they are determined; the object of the other is to systematize the facts of the Bible, and ascertain the principles or general truths which those facts involve. And as the order in which the facts of nature are arranged cannot be determined arbitrarily, but by the nature of the facts themselves, so it is with the facts of the Bible. The parts of any organic whole have a natural relation which cannot with impunity be ignored or changed. The parts of a watch, or of any other piece of mechanism, must be normally arranged, or it will be in confusion and worthless. All the parts of a plant or animal are disposed to answer a given end, and are mutually dependent. We cannot put the roots of a tree in the place of the branches, or the teeth of an animal in the place of its feet. So the facts of science arrange themselves. They are not arranged by the naturalist. His business is simply to ascertain what the arrangement given in the nature of the facts is. If he mistake, his system is false, and to a greater or less degree valueless. The same is obviously true with regard to the facts or truths of the Bible. They cannot be held in isolation, nor will they admit of any and every arrangement the theologian may choose to

assign them. They bear a natural relation to each other, which cannot be overlooked or perverted without the facts themselves being perverted. If the facts of Scripture are what Augustinians believe them to be, then the Augustinian system is the only possible system of theology. If those facts be what Romanists or Remonstrants take them to be, then their system is the only true one. It is important that the theologian should know his place. He is not master of the situation. He can no more construct a system of theology to suit his fancy than the astronomer can adjust the mechanism of the heavens according to his own good pleasure. As the facts of astronomy arrange themselves in a certain order, and will admit of no other, so it is with the facts of theology. Theology, therefore, is the exhibition of the facts of Scripture in their proper order and relation, with the principles or general truths involved in the facts themselves, and which pervade and harmonize the whole.

It follows, also, from this view of the subject, that as the Bible contains one class of facts or truths which are not elsewhere revealed, and another class which, although more clearly made known in the Scriptures than anywhere else, are, nevertheless, so far revealed in nature as to be deducible therefrom, 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. This distinction, which, in one view is important, in another, is of little consequence, inasmuch as all that nature teaches concerning God and our duties, is more fully and more authoritatively revealed in his Word.

#### Definitions of Theology.

Other definitions of Theology are often given

1. Sometimes the word is restricted to its etymological meaning, "a discourse concerning God." Orpheus and Homer were called theologians among the Greeks, because their poems treated of the nature of the gods. Aristotle classed the sciences under the heads of physics, mathematics, and theology, i. e., those which concern nature, number and quantity, and that which concerns God. The Fathers spoke of the Apostle John as the theologian, because in his gospel and epistles the divinity of Christ is rendered so prominent. The word is still used in this restricted sense when opposed to anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology, as departments of theology in its wider sense.

2. Theology is sometimes said to be the science of the supernatural. But what is the supernatural? The answer to that question depends on the meaning assigned to the word nature. If by nature is meant the external world as governed by fixed laws, then the souls of men and other spiritual beings are not included under the term. In this use of the word nature, the supernatural is synonymous with the spiritual, and theology, as the science of the supernatural, is synonymous with pneumatology. If this view be adopted, psychology becomes a branch of theology, and the theologian must, as such, teach mental philosophy.

The word nature is, however, often taken in a wider sense, so as to include man. Then we have a natural and a spiritual world. And the supernatural is that which transcends nature in this sense, so that what is supernatural is of necessity also superhuman. But it is not necessarily super-angelic. Again, nature may mean everything out of God; then the supernatural is the divine, and God is the only legitimate subject of theology. In no sense of the word, therefore, is theology the science of the supernatural. Hooker<sup>1</sup> says, "Theology is the science of divine things." If by divine things, or "the things of God," he meant the things which concern God, then theology is restricted to a "discourse concerning God;" if he meant the things revealed by God, according to the analogy of the expression "things of the Spirit," as used by the Apostle in I Cor. ii. 14, then the definition amounts to the more definite one given above.

3. A much more common definition of Theology, especially in our day, is that it is the science of religion. The word religion, however, is ambiguous. Its etymology is doubtful. Cicero<sup>2</sup> refers it to *relegere*, to go over again, to consider. "Religio" is then consideration, devout observance, especially of what pertains to the worship and service of God. "Religens" is devout, conscientious. "Religiosus," in a good sense, is the same as our word religious; in a bad sense, it means scrupulous, superstitious. "Religentem esse oportet, religiosum nefas."<sup>3</sup> Augustin and Lactantius derive the word from *religare*, to bind back. Augustin<sup>4</sup> says: "Ipse Deus enim fons nostrae beatitudinis, ipse omnis appetitionis est finis. Hunc eligentes vel potius religentes amiseramus enim negligentes: hunc ergo religentes, unde et religio dicta perhibetur, ad eum dilectione tendimus ut perveniendo quiescamus." And Lactantius, "Vinculo pietatis obstricti, Deo religati sumus, unde ipsa religio nomen accepit, non, ut Cicero interpretatus est, a religendo."<sup>5</sup> According to this religio is the ground of obligation. It is that which binds us to God. Subjectively, it is the inward necessity of union with God. Commonly the word religion, in its objective sense, means "Modus Deum colendi," as when we speak of the Pagan, the Mohammedan, or the Christian religion. Subjectively, it expresses a state of mind. What that state characteristically is, is very variously stated. Most simply it is said to be the state of mind induced by faith in God, and a due sense of our relation to him. Or as Wegscheider expresses it, "AEqualis et cōstanis animi affectio, qua homo, necessitudinem suam eandemque aeternam, quae ei cum summo omnium rerum auctore ac moderatore sanctissimo intercedit, intimo sensu complexus, cogitationes, voluntates et actiones suas ad eum referre studet." Or, as more concisely expressed by Bretschneider, "Faith in the reality of God, with a state of mind and mode of life in accordance with that faith." Or, more vaguely, "Recognition of the mutual relation between God and the world" (Fischer), or, "The recognition of a superhuman causality in the human soul and life" (Theile). "Faith founded on feeling in the reality of the ideal" (Jacobi). "The feeling of absolute dependence" (Schleiermacher). "The observance of the moral law as a divine institution" (Kant). "Faith in the moral order of the universe" (Fichte). "The union of the finite with the infinite or God's coming to self-consciousness in the world" (Schelling).<sup>6</sup>

This diversity of views as to what religion is, is enough to prove how utterly vague and unsatisfactory must be the definition of theology as "the science of religion." Besides, this definition makes theology entirely independent of the Bible. For, as moral philosophy is the analysis of our moral nature, and the conclusions to which that analysis leads, so theology becomes the analysis of our religious consciousness, together with the truths which that analysis evolves. And even Christian theology is only the analysis of the religious consciousness of the Christian; and the Christian consciousness is not the natural religious consciousness of men as modified and determined by the truths of the Christian Scriptures, but it is something different. Some say it is to be referred to a new life transmitted from Christ. Others refer everything distinctive in the religious state of Christians to the Church, and really merge theology into ecclesiology.

We have, therefore, to restrict theology to its true sphere, as the science of the facts of divine revelation so far as those facts concern the nature of God and our relation to him, as his creatures, as sinners, and as the subjects of redemption. All these facts, as just remarked, are in the Bible. But as some of them are revealed by the works of God, and by the nature of man, there is so far a distinction between natural theology, and theology considered distinctively as a Christian science.

With regard to natural theology, there are two extreme opinions. The one is that the works of nature make no trustworthy revelation of the being and perfections of God; the other, that much revelation is so clear and comprehensive as to preclude the necessity of any supernatural revelation.

## § 2. The Facts of Nature Reveal God.

Those who deny that natural theology teaches anything reliable concerning God, commonly understand by nature the external, material universe. They pronounce the ontological and teleological arguments derived from the existence of the world, and from the evidences of design which it contains, to be unsatisfactory. The fact that the world is, is a proof that it always has been, in the absence of all evidence to the contrary. And the argument from design, it is said, overlooks the difference between dead mechanism and a living organism, between manufacture and growth. That a locomotive cannot make itself, is no proof that a tree cannot grow. The one is formed ab extra by putting its dead parts together; the other is developed by a living principle within. The one necessitates the assumption of a maker external and anterior to itself, the other excludes, as is said, such assumption. Besides, it is urged that religious truths do not admit of proof. They belong to the same category with aesthetic and moral truths. They are the objects of intuition. To be perceived at all, they must be perceived in their own light. You cannot prove a thing to be beautiful or good to the man who does not perceive its beauty or excellence. Hence, it is further urged, that proof of religious truth is unnecessary. The good do not need proof; the evil cannot appreciate it. All that can be done is to affirm the truth, and let it awaken, if possible, the dormant power of perception.

#### A. Answer to the above Arguments.

All this is sophistical. For the arguments in support of the truths of natural religion are not drawn exclusively from the external works of God. Those which are the most obvious and the most effective are derived from the constitution of our own nature. Man was made in the image of God, and he reveals his parentage as unmistakably as any class of inferior animals reveal the source from which they sprung. If a horse is born of a horse, the immortal spirit of man, instinct with its moral and religious convictions and aspirations, must be the offspring of the Father of Spirits. This is the argument which Paul on Mars' Hill addressed to the cavilling philosophers of Athens. That the sphere of natural theology is not merely the facts of the material universe is plain from the meaning of the word nature, which, as we have seen, has many legitimate senses. It is not only used to designate the external world, but also for the Forces active in the material universe, as when we speak of the operations and laws of nature, sometimes for all that falls into the chain of cause and effect as distinguished from the acts of free agents; and, as natura is derived from nascor, nature means whatever is produced, and therefore includes everything out of God, so that God and nature include all that is.

2. The second objection to natural theology is that its arguments are inconclusive. This is a point which no man can decide for other men. Every one must judge for himself. An argument which is conclusive for one mind may be powerless for other minds. That the material universe began to be; that it has not the cause of its existence within itself, and therefore must have had an extramundane cause; and that the infinitely numerous manifestations of design which it exhibits show that that cause must be intelligent, are arguments for the being of God, which have satisfied the minds of the great body of intelligent men in all ages of the world. They should not, therefore, be dismissed as unsatisfactory, because all men do not feel their force. Besides, as just remarked, these arguments are only confirmatory of others more direct and powerful derived from our moral and religious nature.

3. As to the objection that religious truths are the objects of intuition, and that intuitive truths neither need nor admit of proof, it may be answered that in one sense it is true. But self-evident truths may be illustrated; and it may be shown that their denial involves contradictions and absurdities. All geometry is an illustration of the axioms of Euclid; and if any man denies any of those axioms, it may be shown that he must believe impossibilities. In like manner, it may be admitted that the existence of a being on whom we

are dependent, and to whom we are responsible, is a matter of intuition; and it may be acknowledged that it is self-evident that we can be responsible only to a person, and yet the existence of a personal God may be shown to be a necessary hypothesis to account for the facts of observation and consciousness, and that the denial of his existence leaves the problem of the universe unsolved and unsolvable. In other words, it may be shown that atheism, polytheism, and pantheism involve absolute impossibilities. This is a valid mode of proving that God is, although if be admitted that his existence after all is a self-evident truth. Theism is not the only self-evident truth that men are wont to deny.

## B. Scriptural Argument for Natural Theology.

The Scriptures clearly recognize the fact that the works of God reveal his being and attributes. This they do not only by frequent reference to the works of nature as manifestations of the perfections of God, but by direct assertions. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." (Ps. xix. 1-4.) "The idea of perpetual testimony," says Dr. Addison Alexander<sup>7</sup>, "is conveyed by the figure of one day and night following another as witnesses in unbroken succession. The absence of articulate language, far from weakening the testimony, makes it stronger. Even without speech or words, the heavens testify of God to all men."

The sacred writers in contending with the heathen appeal to the evidence which the works of God bear to his perfections: "Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" (Ps. xciv. 8-10.) Paul said to the men of Lystra, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." (Acts xiv. 15--17.) To the men of Athens he said:

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.'" (Acts xvii. 24-29.)

Not only the fact of this revelation, but its clearness is distinctly asserted by the Apostle: "That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." (Rom. i. 19-21.)

It cannot, therefore, be reasonably doubted that not only the being of God, but also his eternal power and Godhead, are so revealed in his works, as to lay a stable foundation for natural theology. To the illustration of this subject many important works have been devoted, a few of which are the following: "Wolf de Theologia Naturali," "The Bridgewater Treatises," Butler's "Analogy," Paley's "Natural Theology."

### § 3. Insufficiency of Natural Theology.

The second extreme opinion respecting Natural Theology is, that it precludes the necessity of a supernatural revelation. The question whether the knowledge of God derived from his works, be sufficient to lead fallen men to salvation, is answered affirmatively by Rationalists, but negatively by every historical branch of the Christian Church. On this point the Greek, the Latin, the Lutheran, and the Reformed Churches are unanimous. The two former are more exclusive than the two latter. The Greeks and Latins, in making the sacraments the only channels of saving grace, deny the possibility of the salvation of the unbaptized, whether in heathen or Christian lands. This principle is so essential to the Romish system as to be included in the very definition of the Church, as given by the authoritative writers of the Papal Church. That definition is so framed as to exclude from the hope of salvation not only all unbaptized infants and adults, but all, no matter however enlightened in the knowledge of the Scriptures, and however holy in heart and life, who do not acknowledge the supremacy of the bishop of Rome.

The question as to the sufficiency of natural theology, or of the truths of reason, is to be answered on the authority of the Scriptures. No man can tell a priori what is necessary to salvation. Indeed, it is only by supernatural revelation that we know that any sinner can be saved. It is from the same source alone, we can know what are the conditions of salvation, or who are to be its subjects.

#### A. What the Scriptures teach as to the Salvation of Men. Salvation of Infants.

What the Scriptures teach on this subject, according to the common doctrine of evangelical Protestants is first : --

1. All who die in infancy are saved. This is inferred from what the Bible teaches of the analogy between Adam and Christ. "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many (oi. polloi, = pa,ntej) were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many (oi. polloi, = pa,ntej) be made righteous." (Rom. v 18, 19.) We have no right to put any limit on these general terms, except what the Bible itself places upon them. The Scriptures nowhere exclude any class of infants, baptized or unbaptized, born in Christian or in heathen lands, of believing or unbelieving parents, from the benefits of the redemption of Christ. All the descendants of Adam, except Christ, are under condemnation; all the descendants of Adam, except those of whom it is expressly revealed that they cannot inherit the kingdom of God, are saved. This appears to be the clear meaning of the Apostle, and therefore he does not hesitate to say that where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded, that the benefits of redemption far exceed the evils of the fall; that the number of the saved far exceeds the number of the lost.

This is not inconsistent with the declaration of our Lord, in Matthew vii. 14, that only a few enter the gate which leadeth unto life. This is to be understood of adults. What the Bible says is intended for those in all ages, to whom it is addressed. But it is addressed to those who can either read or hear. It tells them what they are to believe and do. It would be an entire perversion of its meaning to make it apply to those to whom and of whom it does not speak. When it is said, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but

the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36), no one understands this to preclude the possibility of the salvation of infants.

Not only, however, does the comparison, which the Apostle makes between Adam and Christ, lead to the conclusion that as all are condemned for the sin of the one, so all are saved by the righteousness of the other, those only excepted whom the Scriptures except; but the principle assumed throughout the whole discussion teaches the same doctrine. That principle is that it is more congenial with the nature of God to bless than to curse, to save than to destroy. If the race fell in Adam, much more shall it be restored in Christ. If death reigned by one, much more shall grace reign by one. This "much more" is repeated over and over. The Bible everywhere teaches that God delighteth not in the death of the wicked; that judgment is his strange work. It is, therefore, contrary not only to the argument of the Apostle, but to the whole spirit of the passage (Romans v. 12-21), to exclude infants from "the all" who are made alive in Christ.

The conduct and language of our Lord in reference to children are not to be regarded as matters of sentiment, or simply expressive of kindly feeling. He evidently looked upon them as the lambs of the flock for which, as the good Shepherd, He laid down his life, and of whom He said they shall never perish, and no man could pluck them out of his hands. Of such He tells us is the kingdom of heaven, as though heaven was, in great measure, composed of the souls of redeemed infants. It is, therefore, the general belief of Protestants, contrary to the doctrine of Romanists and Romanizers, that all who die in infancy are saved.

#### B. Rule of Judgment for Adults.

2. Another general fact clearly revealed in Scripture is, that men are to be judged according to their works, and according to the light which they have severally enjoyed. God "will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." (Rom ii. 6-12.) Our Lord teaches that those who sinned with knowledge of God's will, shall be beaten with many stripes; and that those who sinned without such knowledge shall be beaten with few stripes; and that it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the heathen, even for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those who perish under the light of the gospel. (Matt. x. 15; xi. 20-24.) The Judge of all the earth will do right. No human being will suffer more than he deserves, or more than his own conscience shall recognize as just.

#### C. All Men under Condemnation.

3. But the Bible tells us, that judged according to their works and according to the light which they have severally enjoyed, all men will be condemned. There is none righteous; no, not one. The whole world is guilty before God. This verdict is confirmed by every man's conscience. The consciousness of guilt and of moral pollution is absolutely universal.

Here it is that natural theology utterly fails. It cannot answer the question, How can man be just with God? or, How can God be just and yet justify the ungodly? Mankind have anxiously pondered this question for ages, and have gained no satisfaction. The ear has been placed on the bosom of humanity, to catch the still, small voice of conscience, and got no answer. It has been directed heavenward, and received no

response. Reason, conscience, tradition, history, unite in saying that sin is death; and, therefore, that so far as human wisdom and resources are concerned, the salvation of sinners is as impossible as raising the dead. Every conceivable method of expiation and purification has been tried without success.

4. The Scriptures, therefore, teach that the heathen are "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God." (Eph. ii. 12.) They are declared to be without excuse, "Because, that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." (Rom. i. 21-25.) The Apostle says of the Gentiles that they "walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of thicir heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." (Eph. iv. 17-19.)

5. All men being sinners, justly chargeable with inexcusable impiety and immorality, they cannot be saved by any effort or resource of their own. For we are told that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi. 9.) "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Eph. v. 5.) More than this, the Bible teaches us that a man may be outwardly righteous in the sight of men, and yet be a whitened sepulchre, his heart being the seat of pride, envy, or malice. In other words, he may be moral in his conduct, and by reason of inward evil passions, be in the sight of God the chief of sinners, as was the case with Paul himself. And more even than this, although a man were free from outward sins, and, were it possible, from the sins of the heart, this negative goodness would not suffice. Without holiness "no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. xii. 14.) "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John iii. 3.) "He that loveth not, knoweth not God." (1 John iv. 8.) "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John ii. 15.) "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." (1 John iv. 8.) Who then can be saved? If the Bible excludes from the kingdom of heaven all the immoral; all whose hearts are corrupted by pride, envy, malice, or covetousness; all who love the world; all who are not holy; all in whom the love of God is not the supreme and controlling principle of action, it is evident that, so far as adults are concerned, salvation must be confined to very narrow limits. It is also evident that mere natural religion, the mere objective power of general religious truth, must bc as inefficacious in preparing men for the presence of God, as the waters of Syria to heal the leprosy.

#### D. The necessary Conditions of Salvation.

6. Seeing then that the world by wisdom knows not God; seeing that men when left to themselves inevitably die in their sins; it has "pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. i. 21.) God has sent his Son into the world to save sinners. Had any other method of salvation been possible, Christ is dead in vain. (Gal. ii. 21; iii. 21.) There is, therefore, no other name whereby men can be saved. (Acts iv. 12.) The knowledge of Christ and faith in Him are declared to be essential to

salvation. This is proved: (1.) Because men are declared to be guilty before God. (2.) Because no man can expiate his own guilt and restore himself to the image of God. (3.) Because it is expressly declared that Christ is the only Saviour of men. (4.) Because Christ gave his Church the commission to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven, as the appointed means of salvation. (5.) Because the Apostles in the execution of this commission went everywhere preaching the Word, testifying to all men, Jews and Gentiles, to the wise and the unwise, that they must believe in Christ as the Son of God in order to be saved. Our Lord himself teaching through his forerunner said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.) (6.) Because faith without knowledge is declared to be impossible. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. x. 13-15.)

It is, therefore, as before stated, the common faith of the Christian world, that, so far as adults are concerned, there is no salvation without the knowledge of Christ and faith in Him. This has ever been regarded as the ground of the obligation which rests upon the Church to preach the gospel to every creature.

#### E. Objections.

To the objection that this doctrine is inconsistent with the goodness and justice of God, it may be answered: (1.) That the doctrine only assumes what the objector, if a Theist, must admit, namely, that God will deal with men according to their character and conduct, and that He will judge them according to the light which they have severally enjoyed. It is because the judge of all the earth must do right that all sinners receive the wages of sin by an inexorable law, unless saved by the miracle of redemption. In teaching, therefore, that there is no salvation for those ignorant of the gospel the Bible only teaches that a just God will punish sin. (2.) The doctrine of the Church on this subject does not go beyond the facts of the case. It only teaches that God will do what we see He actually does. He leaves mankind, in a large measure, to themselves. He allows them to make themselves sinful and miserable. It is no more difficult to reconcile the doctrine than the undeniable fact with the goodness of our God. (3.) In the gift of his Son, the revelation of his Word, the mission of the Spirit, and the institution of the Church, God has made abundant provision for the salvation of the world. That the Church has been so remiss in making known the gospel is her guilt. We must not charge the ignorance and consequent perdition of the heathen upon God. The guilt rests on us. We have kept to ourselves the bread of life, and allowed the nations to perish.

Some of the older Lutheran divines were disposed to meet the objection in question by saying that the plan of salvation was revealed to all mankind at three distinct epochs. First, immediately after the fall, to Adam; second, in the days of Noah; and third, during the age of the Apostles. If that knowledge has been lost it has been by the culpable ignorance of the heathen themselves. This is carrying the doctrine of imputation to its utmost length. It is making the present generation responsible for the apostasy of their ancestors. It leaves the difficulty just where it was.

The Wesleyan Arminians and the Friends, admitting the insufficiency of the light of nature, hold that God gives sufficient grace, or an inward supernatural light, which, if properly cherished and followed, will lead men to salvation. But this is merely an amiable hypothesis. For such universal and sufficient grace there is no promise in the Scripture, and no evidence in experience. Besides, if admitted it does not help the matter. If this sufficient grace does not actually save, if it does not deliver the heathen from those sins

upon which the judgment of God is denounced, it only aggravates their condemnation. All we can do is to adhere closely to the teachings of the Bible, assured that the Judge of all the earth will do right; that although clouds and darkness are round about Him, and his ways past finding out, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

#### § 4. Christian Theology.

As science, concerned with the facts of nature, has its several departments, as Mathematics, Chemistry, Astronomy, etc., so Theology having the facts of Scripture for its subject, has its distinct and natural departments. First --

##### Theology Proper,

Which includes all the Bible teaches of the being and attributes of God; of the threefold personaiity of the Godhead, or, that the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct persons, the same in substance and equal in power and glory; the relation of God to the world, or, his decrees and his works of Creation and Providence. Second, --

##### Anthropology,

Which includes the origin and nature of man; his original state and probation; his fall; the nature of sin; the effect of Adam's first sin upon himself and upon his posterity. Third, --

##### Soteriology,

Including the purpose or plan of God in reference to the salvation of man; the person and work of the Redeemer; the application of the redemption of Christ to the people of God, in their regeneration, justification, and sanctification; and the means of grace. Fourth, --

##### Eschatology,

That is, the doctrines which concern the state of the soul after death; the resurrection; the second advent of Christ; the general judgment and end of the world; heaven and hell. And fifth, --

##### Ecclesiology,

The idea, or nature of the Church; its attributes; its prerogatives; its organization.

It is the suggestive remark of Kliefoth in his "Dogmengeschichte," that to the Greek mind and to the Greek Church, was assigned the task of elaborating the doctrine of the Bible concerning God, i. e., the doctrines of the Trinity and Person of Christ; to the Latin Church the doctrines concerning man; that is, of sin and grace; to the German Church, Soteriology, or the doctrine of justification. Ecclesiology, he says, is reserved for the future, as the doctrine concerning the Church has not been settled by oecumenical authority as have been the doctrines of Theology and Anthropology, and that of justification at least for the Protestant world.

The above classification. although convenient and generally received, is far from being exhaustive. It leaves out of view the law (or at least subordinates it unduly), or rule of moral duty. This is a department in itself; and under the title of Moral Theology, is sometimes, as in the Latin Church, regarded as the most important. Among Protestants it is often regarded as a mere department of Philosophy.

It has been assumed that Theology has to do with the facts or truths of the Bible; in other words, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. This, however, is not a conceded point. Some claim for Reason a paramount, or, at least a coordinate authority in matters of religion. Others assume an internal supernatural light to which they attribute paramount, or coordinate authority. Others rely on the authority of an infallible church. With Protestants, the Bible is the only infallible source of knowledge of divine things. It is necessary, therefore, before entering on our work, briefly to examine these several systems, namely, Rationalism, Mysticism, and Romanism.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-hodge/theology/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**