

# 1 Prologomene

## Knowledge of God

1. We come to know God through the narrative of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation.
2. Christian theology is possible today because God still speaks and the church still hears and obeys the Word of God.
3. The particular story of salvation in Jesus Christ does have universal significance.

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## Methods of Theology

**Biblical Theology:** the systematic study of the key themes of Scripture

**Dogmatic Theology:** includes in its concern the history of church interpretation of Scripture and its dogmas, confessions. To make theology contemporary.

## General and Special Revelation

**Romans 1 and 2** The creation itself reveals God's power and nature clearly and universally. Human beings naturally suppress this revelation and exchange it for idols. The fault for this suppression is in humanity itself. There is a conduct of unbelievers that conforms to God's law.

**General Revelation** is some (non-verbal, non-saving) manifestation of God that is universally present to all people. It points us to God.

**Common grace** is the work of God, in 1) the restraint of evil, 2) the bestowal of gifts to all. (Bolt sees common grace to be more alike to providence than general revelation.)

**Special Revelation** (more Bavinck. p.61)

Necessitated by the inadequacy of general revelation. God was not obligated to this revelation. Necessity of sp. rev. is connected with the purpose which God himself has appointed for his creation, which is to restore a sin-devastated creation.

## Scripture

Experience is our experience of the world, of the structure of order and law.

Scripture is that by which we see in this world of experiences.

### Sufficiency and Perspecuity.

We believe that this Holy Scripture contains the will of God completely and that everything one must believe to be saved is sufficiently and clearly taught in it." (Belg. Conf., 2,7)

**Organic Inspiration:** the Holy Spirit used men as living, active

RES 1958 Report. "The Reformed doctrine of inspiration gives due recognition to the human aspect of Holy Scripture, and maintains that the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets and the apostles."

**Infallibility:** Ascribed to Scripture only in accord with the extent, nature and purpose of inspiration. The extent of inspiration, we affirm is both plenary (full) and verbal. (61 Report) (Bolt sees little difference b/w infallibility and inerrancy.)

**Inerrancy:** <sup>Evangelical</sup> Chicago Statement Art XIII: "We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture. We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture acc. to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose"

**Authority:** "Synod calls the churches to a wholehearted recognition that Scripture addresses us with full divine authority as the saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ and that this authority applies to Scripture in its total extent and in all its parts." (1972 Report, Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority.)

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## 411 Prolegomena

What is theology? → *a system of knowing + understanding*  
A science, but with no objective norm because knowing God is empirically impossible.

What is its proper subject? → ?!

Berkhof – “God”

Barth – “God in the history of his deeds”

⇒ God’s being is the event of his disclosure (revelation)

Kuiper – “God’s revelation”

Liberal theology – the study of religious experience or feelings of dependence that imply God

How should theology be arranged?

Barth – According to two *conversations*

1. The primary with Scripture
2. The secondary with the history of the church

Its proper divisions are:

- Biblical Exegesis
- History of the Church
- Dogmatics
- Practical Theology

These are the divisions that Calvin Seminary uses.

Calvin uses Trinitarian method

Berkhof organizes according to the Creed (T3 implicit in structure but not dealt with directly). Very strict categories for T3 function. Creator/Father....Redeemer/Son....Sanctifier/Spirit

### Nature of Revelation

Barth offers a three-fold witness

- Proclamation – hearer impacted by sermon (quickened by HS) Derivative of JC
- Scripture – reader impacted by Jesus Christ (ditto) Derivative of JC
- Jesus Christ – primary revelation of God

The purpose of revelation is to reveal God’s work in redemption.

Barth held that the Scriptures in and of themselves are not the Word of God (WOG) Only when the Holy Spirit is active in the expounding or reading of the Scripture does it become the WOG. God can speak through a dead dog as easily as through Scripture.

Calvin’s view of revelation is that Scripture is special revelation that clarifies general revelation. In other words to be able to witness the testimony of creation concerning its Maker, one must first be informed by Scripture. Spoke of *sensus divinitates*. The seed of religion leaves us without excuse.

Berkhof spoke about three forms of SpecRev:

- theophanies
- communications (verbal – dreams or visions)
- miracles

### Bible, Nature and Authority

Self-authenticating

Historical-Redemptive understanding

Organic inspiration

Plenary (as a whole) verbal inspiration

Plenary verbal authority

God: primary author using deputized men