

## Doctrine of Theology

### General Revelation

1. Christianity is not a speculative religion. It is based upon a revealed set of truths once delivered to the saints.
  - *Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*
2. One of the fundamental assertions of the Christian faith is that the truth we believe has come to us from God Himself.
3. While God is hidden from our vision, He has removed the veil which hides Himself from us by means of revelation.
4. Revelation is the making plain, or clear, the unfolding of that which is hidden.
5. A distinction is made in theology between general revelation, and special revelation.
6. The Scriptures tell us that God is the fountainhead or source of all truth. The spring, or source of all truth is dependent upon God's work of revelation, as is all truth.
  - *2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*
7. The idea which was set forth by Augustine, and later Thomas Aquinas, is that no human being could know anything without God first making knowledge itself possible.
8. Man may have eyes, a brain, and optic nerves, and all that is necessary for seeing. However, if we are placed in a place where there are beautiful objects to behold, but the lights are turned out, then the instruments of sight and perception are meaningless. First there must be light.
9. In and of ourselves, we have the ability to see certain things, but unless everything is set in the light of God Himself, there will only be moral, intellectual, and spiritual darkness.
10. Our most acute senses are inadequate to see them with understanding. Knowledge is a gift of God. The first point of knowledge is God. He exists. He is the source of all else. He is the fountainhead of all truth and understanding. The light of divine revelation is necessary for man to know any truth at all.
11. Those in the physical sciences mock the Christian who insists that all knowledge comes from God.

12. The proper response is that the scientist could not learn anything from a test tube, if not for God giving to humanity the gift of knowledge, or the capacity to study the empirical data.
13. When the Christian talks about general revelation, the reference is to that unveiling which God gives of Himself that is general in two ways.

- Universal knowledge. General revelation refers to knowledge that is given to everyone without exception, and without distinction. Everybody in the world has available to them a measure of divine revelation. God's self-revelation goes to every human being. The whole world is His audience.

*Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*

The universe is a theater, and the glory of God is manifested through this venue. Even if a person is blind, there is knowledge which God has planted in the soul. Hellen Keller said, "I thank God for my handicaps for through them I have found myself, my work, and my God." God gives to people a conscience, a sense of right and wrong, a sense of oughtness.

- Universal content. General revelation refers to a content of sort. It does not give a detail of the atonement of Christ, or the resurrection of Christ. The heavens do not spell out God's plan of salvation. A person must go to the Bible for that for specific information. However, nature reveals much about God. Nature reveals that God exists. It reveals His eternal power and deity.
14. General revelation refers to that information God gives to everyone. Special revelation refers to that which is given in Scripture, dreams, and visions, through prophets, angels, Christ, and the apostles.
15. Sometimes general revelation is called natural revelation. In theology, natural revelation is a synonym for general revelation.
16. Here is where care must be taken, for natural revelation is to be distinguished from natural theology.
17. Sometimes there is confusion between natural revelation, and natural theology. However, they do not refer to the same thing.
18. If a picture were to be drawn, God would be in His heaven, and man would be on earth. In between God and man is the world, the world, which can be called, nature.
19. General revelation does not leave man alone in the universe to work with the clue of the universe to figure out God.

20. Sometimes clue can lead to a logical and valid conclusion. By studying the technique in a painting, for example, the proper conclusion can be drawn about the original artist. The work might be designated a Rembrandt, a van Gogh, or a Reuben, based upon style and technique.
21. God does not paint the universe only to leave man to his own knowledge. That is deism. No, God uses the universe as an active medium to reveal Himself to mankind.
22. Nature is not independent of God. Rather, God communicates Himself through the medium of the world.
23. The revelation of God that comes through nature is called natural revelation. The revelation is something that God does.
24. Natural Revelation is the revelation that God reveals about Himself through nature.
25. What happens to that revelation? Man is the object of natural revelation, but does natural revelation give man knowledge of any kind?
26. If the knowledge of natural revelation enters into the consciousness of a person, then the result is called natural theology.
27. Can a person learn anything about God from nature? Some say that nothing can be known about God from nature.
  - *1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*
28. Others insist that something about God can be known from nature. There are Scriptures that support the idea that something about God can be known from nature, but it is not enough to save. Faith in Christ alone can result in the salvation of the soul. Up to that point, the unbeliever is simply an informed sinner.
  - *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*
29. The solution to the apparent contradiction between Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2, and Paul writing to the Romans, is found in the verb, “to know.” It is used in more than one way.
30. There is cognitive knowledge, or information a person can be aware of, and then there is that personal knowledge of something, or someone that is intimate, precious, and personal.
31. In the Bible we read that Adam “knew” his wife Eve, and she bore children. The knowledge that Adam had of Eve was not merely a cognitive knowledge, something intellectual. It was intimate, precious, and personal.

- *Genesis 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.*
32. The ungodly, the unbeliever, can have a cognitive knowledge about God through natural revelation, but he can only have an intimate, and personal knowledge of God through the new birth.
  33. When writing to the church in Corinth, Paul stated that an intimate, personal knowledge of God is impossible for the natural man to possess.
  34. What the natural man can possess is a cognitive understanding of God, based on natural revelation. God reveals Himself in a way that is manifested. It is clear. There are no tiny clues. God has clearly made all to see that which is invisible.
  35. That is an important point. How can people see that which is invisible? The word invisible means, that which cannot be seen. Yet Paul is saying that what cannot be seen, can be seen, in such a way that individuals are without excuse.
  36. In Romans 1, Paul argues that the invisible can be seen clearly, but not directly seen.
  37. Man does not see God face to face. What man does see is the universe, which carries God to the mind through natural revelation, resulting in natural theology.
  38. In the universe we behold the eternal power of God, so that every person is without excuse for not seeking after God.
    - *Romans 1:20 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:*
  39. What the natural man does with natural revelation is to suppress the truth, and for doing that, they are guilty before God.
  40. The excuse that the natural man relies upon for not coming to Christ, is that he is an agnostic. He did not know God.
  41. That excuse is a lie. Man does know God. He simply suppresses the truth.
    - *Romans 1:21 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.*
  42. Only the person who is born by the Spirit of God can know, on a personal basis, the things of God. Such knowledge of God goes beyond intellectual comprehension.