

EDITORIAL:

THEOLOGY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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Theology literally means 'thinking about God' or Science of God. It is the Study of the nature of God and the relationship of the human and divine. Theology is *theandric*. The term 'theology' was first used in the works of Plato and other Greek philosophers to refer to the study and teaching of myths. Theology and Mythology coincided in ancient Greek understanding. Later, Theology as a discipline expanded within Christianity and later found application in all theistic religions. The four basic tasks of theology correspond with responses to these basic questions: (i) What is going on? (descriptive-empirical task), (ii) Why is this going on? (interpretative task), (iii) What ought to be going on? (normative task), and (iv) How might we respond? (pragmatic task). The ultimate goal of theology is not knowledge, but worship. If one's learning and knowledge of God do not lead to the joyful praise of God, one has failed. We learn only that we might laud.

In the early Church, the development of Christian theology was shaped by four important functions it served in the life of the church: the catechetical, the apologetical, the polemical and the homiletical. All four of these functions of theology are still vital for the mission of the Church today. In its *catechetical* purpose, theological instruction prepared converts for Church membership and participation in the Eucharist, instructing them in basic

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Christian doctrine. The *apologetic* role of theology was to defend and explain the faith to outsiders (see I Pet. 3:15: “Be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that is in you”). In its *polemical* task, theology was utilized to defend and expound the biblical faith against heretical threats from within the Church. The fourth use of theology was the *homiletical*: assisting preachers and teachers in the exposition and teaching of Scripture (see I Tim. 4:13: “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and teaching”). The Church leader is to “hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Tit. 1:9).

All the above roles of theology are united in their impact in driving the realization of the Church’s mission on earth. Basically, the mission of the Church is tied with the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20): to go out into the world with the authority of the risen Christ and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to follow Jesus until he returns, all to the glory of God. This Church’s mission which has its origin in the eternal purposes of God is the task of the whole Church involving all God’s people through participation in the fulfillment or completion of God’s purposes (Eph 3:9-10). Thus, the most important duty of missionaries is to teach people about Jesus Christ, and His great commandment to love God and to love others. This means ensuring that their actions not only fulfill a need but also are sustained after they have left the community.

Theology as an exercise calls upon the doer to ensure in his life the meeting of the following five-fold demands. First, the theologian should deepen his knowledge of God. The central pursuit of theology is to better understand God’s nature and how he works in the world. One cannot truly love someone without

knowing that one. Second, the theologian should defend his/her faith. Theology seeks to understand the central beliefs of Christianity from all angles, using real-world examples and preparing one to intelligently defend one's beliefs when the need arises. Third, the theologian should gain knowledge of other disciplines. For instance, to contend with difficult questions of God's existence and nature, the theologian must call upon other disciplines such as history and philosophy, to say the least. Fourth, the theologian has to strengthen community bonds. As one cannot study theology in a vacuum, one important aim of the theologian is to link relationships across individuals and communities. Finally, the theologian should learn to live his/her faith. Because theology will deepen one's knowledge of the Christian faith and apply it to real-world situations, the theologian should be disposed and get prepared to follow a more Christ-centered path that will help him/her grow trust in God and his plan.