

Theology 1.10 - Trinity

Theo 1 Notes Continued – different approaches to NT Theology:

1. Rauschenbusch

- a. Was a proponent of “Faith Focused Theology” that would lead to a utopian society of social justice expressed through faith.
 - i. Moltmann – theology focused on Hope.
 - ii. Zahl – theology focused on Grace. Zahl’s understanding of Grace is so broad and foundational that he doesn’t accept God’s judgment or damnation... he sees these as contrary to Grace. Known as a “free-gracer” in that grace is free and triumphs completely.
- b. Rauschenbusch argued that faith was exhibited in social justice. If you don’t care you don’t love and your faith is worthless.
- c. Personal faith is 1st repentance and acceptance of the gospel.
- d. Social faith is also based on repentance and the gospel – but was aimed at attaining a new social order on earth.
- e. Sins are defined similarly as personal and social – repentance of sin involved both orders for the individual and the church.
- f. He sees Jesus more as the typical “new moralist” rather than God-Messiah.
- g. He was an early supporter of German Socialism and the establishment of a “State” order/program.

2. James Choong – he is a post-modern thinker whose theology came out of his primary focus as an evangelist.

- a. He argued that there is a real problem with American Christianity – they claim transformation, but fail to live like it. Their faith results in no action... they don’t do anything... its all talk and no conviction and no action.
- b. He views traditional preaching of ‘personal sin & need for salvation leading to eternal life by faith’ is not a system that transforms people – rather it breeds complacency. ‘I have mine; so you worry about your own.’
- c. Worked on a way to bring ‘dedication and commitment’ into a faith based system that would cause personal life transformation demonstrated by action.
- d. He argued that unbelievers [especially post-modern] recognize societal sin – that is... the world is inherently problematic and filled with serious problems.
- e. He worked toward merging the awareness of the present reality with a believer’s Kingdom mindset that demands action.
- f. Faith requires a commitment to the ‘New World Order of Jesus.’
- g. Since the typical individualistic evangelistic approach leads to self-centered complacency, Choong advocates a system that deals on the corporate integration of the gospel.
 - i. His goal is to get people off their butts and to engage the world.
 - ii. Focus is less on the individual concept of sin, but rather the corporate implications.
- h. 1st Point of his Evangelistic approach – humanity was designed as good and purposed for good. In the beginning:
 - i. Creation is good.
 - ii. Human relationship with God is good.
 - iii. Relationship between man and wife & humanity as a whole was good.

Theology 1.10 - Trinity

- iv. The Fallen condition was not God's intention – it was man's choice.
- i. 2nd Point is that humanity was damaged by evil. The result is:
 - i. We are separated from God.
 - ii. We are separated from each other.
 - iii. We are separated from the world.
 - iv. Approach is not about the conventional aspects of the Fall-Sin or Satan-God conflict.
 - v. Witness to post-moderns is more effective when focused on our corporate identity and our choice to do something about it.
 - vi. Individual conviction is that we are not as God intended and designed, but you can do something about it.
- j. 3rd Point is God's Plan to restore for better.
 - i. God's plan of restoration is accepted by faith.
 - ii. Commitment to Jesus as Lord and following Him means implementing His Kingdom design.
 - iii. Faith and discipleship are drawn together in restorative action in the world.
- k. 4th Point is that we are sent together to Heal.
 - i. Salvation = deliverance and healing.
 - ii. We are called to live in the Kingdom now. We are a restorative influence on society – we can end hunger, genocide, global warming, etc.
 - iii. Emphasis is growing with God in the world now.
 - iv. Eternity is in play – God's Great Hope is expressed in our present hope.
- l. Problem with this system – is the weakness on personal atonement.
 - i. The whole plan is focused on identifying with Jesus' World View – rather than on Jesus' Spiritual reality.
 - ii. System is a form of "Ransom Theory" – that God accepted a "Non-violent" notion of the Gospel. Post moderns have a problem with Jesus' substitutionary death to secure atonement. They see Jesus' required death as "Divine Child Abuse." They want a non-violent solution, which this caters to.
 - iii. This system acknowledges that Jesus' death "Freed us," but it is less about Jesus paying our penalty of "Substitutionary Death."
 - iv. Problem is the lack of emphasis on personal 'conviction' of sin by the Holy Spirit where personal conviction leads to freedom and to Spiritual transformation... resulting in a different way to think, live, and engage others with a Kingdom of God mindset.
 - v. They mistakenly focus on the work of social justice as the sole expression of the love of God – it becomes a personal event that then takes expression in a group event of the church.
 - vi. Atonement is not about being united with and then imitating Jesus, it is more about having Jesus' Character and Nature formed in me so that I naturally do the things He cared about... focused on helping the poor and oppressed and removing pain and suffering.
 - vii. It is more about 'noble Jesus' who I want to be like, rather than 'Lord God Jesus' who has absolute claim on my life and the entire world who I desire to serve out of love and obedience.

3. Bottom line of these variant Theological Systems:

- a. There are many ways to present the gospel – there is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach. As much as we want to simplify it and make it consistent, there are a myriad of contexts and outworking.
- b. Paul wanted to be ‘all things to all people’ in order to win them for Christ. One could argue that you can’t be all things to all people, and that it really isn’t our job to ‘win them’ – our job is to preach the truth as we know it, to witness to the things we understand, and allow the Spirit to convict and transform people. Then we disciple them to know and obey Jesus.
- c. Romans 1 says ‘I will not be ashamed of the gospel... which is the power of God.’ The post-moderns act as though they are ashamed of the gospel and try to remove the offense it presents to people’s sensibilities. The cross is offensive... no way to sugar coat it. But it was absolutely necessary to accomplish God’s intended purpose of redeeming humanity.
- d. The key is to be true to scripture, be real in our walk, be sensitive to the Spirit, and to be concerned for others – we need to integrate these factors holistically, not dissect them and explain them and apply them independently.
- e. We cannot pull the ‘bite’ out of sin just to make the gospel more palatable to others.
- f. God’s redemption is going to be offensive to some, and joyful to others.

4. Reformation Theology

- a. Luther –
 - i. A Catholic monk who was consumed by the fear that he might die with unconfessed sin and be damned as a result.
 - ii. His spiritual struggles and contemplations led him to try to work out his salvation through strict observance to monastic rule, constant confession, and self-mortification.
 - iii. He had seen God as a strict and wrathful judge that required penitent sinners to earn their salvation.
 - iv. The outworking of his struggle led to his two-fold conviction:
 1. Salvation by grace alone based on the substitutionary death of Christ... this was imputed righteousness.
 2. Faith based on Scripture alone and not the traditions or rulings of the church.
 - v. The reformation gave birth to Protestant Christianity, and sparked the counter-reformation within the Catholic church where many of the egregious and questionable practices that had plagued the church through the years were reformed.
- b. Calvin –
 - i. Built upon Luther’s thoughts... becoming the father of the ‘Reformed and Presbyterian doctrine and theology.’
 - ii. Wrote extensive treatises in his Institutes of the Christian Religion in 1536. He became known as the ‘systematizer of the Reformation.’
 - iii. His writings were based on the mantra of ‘Sola Scriptura’ – Scripture only was the proper standard for faith and religious practice.
 - iv. While Calvin had a decided intellectual bent to faith, he also had elements of mysticism – accepting as unknown many aspects about God and faith.
- c. Arminius –

Theology 1.10 - Trinity

- i. Proposed a number of thoughts about faith practice that ultimately were challenged and countered by Calvin.
- ii. Was a Dutch reformed theologian who did not write a full 'systematic theology' as Calvin had done, but none the less wrote and taught as a pastor and professor in Holland.
- iii. His thought was carried on and promoted by John Wesley and his 'Methodist' approach to faith.
- iv. One of the basics of his thought development was against the Calvinist concept of "supralapsarianism" – the view that each person's destiny was determined by God prior to Adam's Fall... essentially reducing humanity to automatons playing out a script God had written for us before time. Arminius argued for the 'free will' of humanity as the only means a just and righteous God could hold humanity accountable for their actions.

5. Arminianism contrasted with Calvinism:

- a. The points of Arminianism gave rise to the response of Calvinism. In many ways, there are points of similarity and interaction... just different takes on how we see and interact with the reality of redemption.

Arminius: God acts... man must respond

I. Conditional election:

1. God foresaw you believe.
2. Election is not individual, by rather Corporate in the church

II. Unlimited atonement: Christ died for all.

III. Total depravity: Humanity is broken and our righteousness is insufficient to please a Holy and perfect God.

IIII. Resistible grace: We can refuse God's offer.

IIIII. Unlimited atonement: 1. All are called. 2. Only Christ is the elect w/those Sealed in Him. 3. We don't know who will be saved.

IIIIII. Perseverance: means we must Continue, It is possible to lose faith.

Calvin: God acts, man is compelled to accept

I. Unconditional election:

1. God made you believe.
2. Unconditional means no human response is necessary or possible.

II. Limited atonement: Christ died for the elect only.

III. Total depravity: Humanity is broken and our righteousness is insufficient to please a Holy and perfect God.

IIII. Un-resistible grace: We cannot refuse God's offer.

IIIII. Limited atonement 1. God's call is sovereign 2. Election is closed for saints only 3. Those saved specifically chosen by God.

IIIIII. Perseverance: means you can't fail. Impossible to lose faith.

- b. Salvation is by faith – not by works. Those who fall away either break faith or were never genuine in their faith.
 - c. Preventive Grace – Wesleyan concept that the Spirit prompts an individual to hear and respond to the offer of Grace.
 - i. Arminian-Wesleyan approach to Grace requires an individual to respond to God’s offer, and that they can ignore it or refuse it, and that all are called.
 - ii. Calvinist approach to Grace is that you have no choice but to accept it, and its offer is only for those specifically called/elected by God.
 - iii. The proclamation of the Word in the presence of preventive grace allows the response by faith leading to salvation.
 - d. Free will – Wesleyan thought holds that we have a choice to accept, follow, and obey or not... otherwise we cannot be held accountable for our sin. Calvin thought holds that there is no choice... it’s all God.
6. Spiritual Formation Reformers – at about the same time the great intellectual reformation debates were raging in Geneva, Germany and Holland, two Catholic Mystics wrote about the experiential side of faith.
- a. St Teresa of Avila –
 - i. Wrote about the Mansions of the Heart – the Spiritual Mansions Jesus spoke of that comprise the progress of spiritual development of a saint from conversion to unity with God.
 - ii. The ‘Desert Fathers’ from the 3rd century sought an ascetic life where they could focus on God and their spiritual life. Some 1200 years later Teresa sought out a life that would allow her to turn inward. She wrote about the spiritual process of maturity as distinct from the more cerebral approach of the great reformers Luther, Calvin and Arminius.
 - iii. Her writings have been translated and ably described in Tom Ashbrook’s book The Mansions of the Heart. These thoughts are summarized in the “Spiritual Formation” section of the ‘authenticdiscipleship.org’ website.
 - b. St John of the Cross –
 - i. Described the “Dark nights of the Soul” where spiritual formation maturity hits the wall of human endurance and resistance.
 - ii. Ashbrook includes these thoughts as part of his developmental Spiritual Formation progress in his book Mansions of the Heart, and are included in the summary listed above. See Ashbrook’s website ‘ImagoChristi.org’ for more information about this approach to spiritual formation.
 - c. With the development of rationalism in the ‘modern church era’ much of the ancient mystical approach to faith was ignored or discounted. With the rise of the ‘post-modern church era’ a renewed interest in Christian mysticism has resurfaced – which is a very good thing as these practices of the mind and heart need to be balanced with the experiential reality of God who tells us to ‘taste Me and know that I Am good.’
7. God’s self disclosure and His Grace play out on two fronts:
- a. General Revelation – is the notion that creation is evidence of the existence of God.
 - i. General revelation alerts the attentive to God’s existence, but not necessarily to His Person.

- ii. **Imago Dei** – holds that there are vestiges of God’s original revelation to Adam, Noah, Abraham & Patriarchs etc., prior to Moses that are latently existent in the world. This means we have the created ability to respond to God and to perceive spiritual reality apart from normative reality in the physical world. The problem with these senses is that they are so polluted and distorted by the Fall to be of any real value for salvific purposes.
- iii. **Scriptural examples of General Revelation:**
 - 1. Ps 19
 - 2. Ps 119
 - 3. Rom 1:18-23
 - 4. Rom 2:14-16
 - 5. Acts 14:15-17
- b. **Special Revelation** – is the notion that God reveals Himself to humanity because He wants to be known/found, and He desires relational intimacy with humanity, and He desires that humanity would be obedient and fulfill His purposes. To this end He seeks individuals who would hear His word and become His spokesman to others.
 - i. **Normative** – through Scripture and the preaching of the Word.
 - ii. **Non-normative** – through dreams and visions.
 - iii. **The purpose of Special Revelation is Eternal Life:**
 - 1. Daniel 12:2 is 1st referenced in the Book of Daniel – ‘there will be books opened.’ God is keeping tabs on all and they will be accountable.
 - 2. Those who refuse God’s Grace will be held accountable for their actions and their failures. Those who accept God’s provision of Grace will be judged righteous accordingly.
 - 3. Those who are too young or mentally handicapped fall into a different aspect of Grace – God’s Grace is sufficient for these.
 - iv. There is much more on this topic in the authenticdiscipleship.org introduction to theology. Suffice it to say here that non-normative revelation may never to be in conflict with special revelation... which is now complete in the canonized texts.

8. Canon

- a. All of Scripture is accepted as God’s self-disclosure... God revealed Himself in His desire to be known relationally by humanity.
- b. The Jewish Scribes were trained to meticulously copy and preserve their texts with exact copies of the originals. This skill was perfected over generations in preserving the Hebrew writings. This same practice was employed with the New Testament writers.
- c. The Romans allowed for a prolonged period of peace [Pax Romana] where cultural exchange and interaction was encouraged. Romans built roads and sea faring ships that enabled traveling throughout the region of the Mediterranean. This allowed for the movement of Christians and their writings through the region.
- d. 40-90 AD – is when the NT texts were written. It was copied and circulated by the faith community, and read in the congregations.
- e. 100-200 AD – church fathers in their communications were making references to scripture verses, and mention of the gospels existed.

Theology 1.10 - Trinity

- i. There were several church fathers who argued for the authenticity of certain documents over others, as some wild writings began to be circulated especially in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.
 - ii. Rise of false teachers – especially Montan who claimed to be the ‘Paraclete’ and giving ‘authorized’ teachings to his followers [Montanists] led to a perceived need to establish the true and authorized teachings.
- f. 220-367 AD – this was a period of discussion among the church fathers to agree upon an accepted canon.
- g. 367-405 AD – was the period of fixation where the canon finally took shape.
 - i. 367 – Athanasius gave the 1st reference for the full listing of 27 NT books.
 - ii. Spirit will bring remembrance – Jesus told His disciples that they would be supernaturally prepared to remember and write long portions of Jesus’ teachings for the benefit of the generations to follow.
 - iii. Apostolic ties were required to qualify writings as authentic Scripture.
 - iv. Consistency with normative theology was necessary to ground writings.
- h. Through the years many historical and other source texts have been found and translated that have increased our confidence in the Scriptural texts. The findings of the Dead Sea Scrolls with great consistency with the texts we have held to through the ages. One principal argument is whether Scripture is inerrant or infallible:
 - i. Most Bible scholars agree that the original texts written by God inspired authors were inerrant... the problem is that none of those texts exist today. We only have copies of the copies.
 - ii. Most Bible scholars agree that the degree of agreement within the texts that have survived are so consistent with one another that there are only very minimal variations:
 - 1. Some variations are words translated differently.
 - 2. Other variations are lines of text added by later editors or redactors/copiers.
 - 3. Most variations involve aspects that are so minimal that they make no difference in how the text would be otherwise translated.
 - iii. Most Bible scholars hold to an infallible position on the veracity of Scripture – since by faith we know that God will not allow His Word to fail to accomplish His purposes.