Institutes of elenctic theology

Turretin, F.

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IX. The use of the word "theology" is either equivocal and abusive (when it is applied to the false theology of the heathen and heretics); or, less properly, when it is referred to the original and infinite wisdom which we conceive to be in God knowing himself in an unspokenable and most perfect manner (for the word cannot reach the dignity of the thing itself), or to the theology of Christ and to angelic theology; or, more properly, when it is applied to the theology of men on earth which (as we shall see hereafter) is divided into natural and supernatural.

SECOND QUESTION
Whether there is a theology and its divisions.

I. Many things prove that there is a theology. (1) The nature and goodness of God who, since he is the best, is most communicative of himself. He cannot communicate himself more suitably to a rational creature and in a manner more fitting to human nature than by the knowledge and love of himself. (2) The consent of people and the universal, innate desire to know God which must be for some purpose. For although they have shamefully wandered from true theology, yet the very fact of their seeking it proves the existence of such a theology. Hence no nation has ever been found so barbarous as not to have its hierophants engaged in gaining the knowledge of and in teaching divine things. (3) The design of creation; for God made rational creatures with this intention—that he might be recognized and worshipped by them, which cannot be done without theology. (4) The nature of the thing because the two things requisite for the making up of a system (the 

gnōston or knowable object, and the 

gnōstikon or knowing subject) are found here (viz., God, the most capable of being known of knowable things [sὸν ἐπίστημον ἐπιστήτωταν], and rational creatures endowed with intellects capable of gaining the knowledge of him). (5) The necessity of salvation; for as man is appointed for a supernatural end, he must necessarily have presented to him supernatural means for reaching that end. Now this is no other than faith which absolutely requires the knowledge of God.

II. All entities discussed in philosophical systems are not discussed with reference to all that can possibly be known of them, but only with reference to that which can naturally be perceived of them. Hence from the extent of the object of philosophy no prejudice can justly be occasioned to supernatural theology which treats certain entities not as they are known by nature, but by revelation. (2) Although all natural entities form the subjects of the inferior sciences, this does not take away the necessity of theology, where different supernatural mysteries are taught and to which no human science has ever extended.

III. The senses do not stand in need of any supernatural knowledge in order to their perfection. It would be wrong to infer from this that the intellect does not need it because the intellect is ordained to a supernatural end, surpassing the comprehension of the reason. This is not by any means the case with the senses. But although this need of the intellect is a mark of imperfection with regard to an end not as yet attained and as denoting the absence of the end, yet it indicates perfection with regard to its capacity for reaching that end.
IV. Metaphysics is the highest of all sciences in the natural order, but acknowledges the superiority of theology in the supernatural order. The expression of philosophers—that sciences are distinguished by their greater or lesser abstraction and therefore the science which has least to do with matter as metaphysics is superior to all—must be understood of sciences merely theoretical, occupied with universal things only and belonging to the natural order. For these form their own objects by an abstraction of the mind, and their superiority is regulated by the degree of abstraction. However, this cannot apply to theology, being partly theoretical and partly practical and therefore superior to all in the natural order and not forming its own object by any abstraction, but receiving it from revelation already formed and distinct.

V. Theology is wont to be distinguished in diverse ways into true and false. The false and equivocally so-called (applied to an erroneous system concerning God and his worship) is of various kinds. First, that of the Gentiles which evidently has been manifold. Thus Plato (The Republic 2+) makes it two-fold: symbolical (symbolikēn) or mythical (mythikēn) (consisting of things wrapped up in a covering of signs under which the Gentiles and especially the Egyptians were accustomed to teach divine mysteries); and philosophical (philosophikēn) or demonstrative (apodeiktikēn) (occupying itself in the contemplation of divine things). Marcus Varro makes it threefold: mythical (mythikēn) or fabulous (of the poets, which was intended for the stage and theaters); political (politikēn) or civil (of the priests and people, which was publicly used in the temples according to the rites of each city and nation); and physical (physikēn) or natural (of the philosophers, which was taught in the schools; cf. Augustine, CG 6.5 and 8.1 [FC 8:314-17 and 14:21-22]). Thus both the poets (on account of their fabulous discussions on the nature of god and divine things [theologomenous mythous]) and the philosophers and priests are called "theologians" by Justin Martyr (Hortatory to the Greeks 3 [ANF 1:274; PG 6.247-48]) and Clement of Alexandria (Stromata 5.8 [ANF 2:454-57]). However the principal part of their theology was a setting forth of the generation of the gods (theogonias) because they believed that the gods were generated. Second, that of infidels and heretics who either openly rejected Christ (as the Jews, Mohammedans, etc.), or who, while they retain the name of Christ, are in fundamentals at variance with the word of God (as the theology of papists, Socinians and other like heretics). For although their theology may contain some truth, yet because the greater part is false and the errors fundamental, it is properly called "false" (the denomination being taken from the larger part).

VI. True theology is divided into: (1) infinite and uncreated, which is God's essential knowledge of himself (Mt. II:27) in which he alone is at the same time the object known (epistēton), the knowledge (epistēmēn), and the knower (epistēmētē), and that which he decreed to reveal to us concerning himself which is commonly called archetypal; and (2) finite and created, which is the image and ectype (ektypion) of the infinite and archetypal (prōtotypou) (viz., the ideas which creatures possess concerning God and divine things, taking form from that supreme knowledge and communicated to intelligent creatures, either by hypothetical union with the soul of Christ [whence arises "the theology of union"] or by beatific vision to the angels and saints who walk by sight, not by faith, which is called "the theology of vision"; or by revelation, which is made to travellers
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[viz., to those who have not yet reached the goal and is called "the theology of revelation"] or the stadium.

VII. Second, the theology of revelation is again divided into natural and supernatural. The natural, occupied with that which may be known of God (to gnōston tou Theou), is both innate (from the common notions implanted in each one) and acquired (which creatures gain discursively). This was exquisite in Adam before his fall, but is highly disordered in corrupted man. The supernatural (which transcends our reason and is communicated to us by God by the new light of grace so that we may obtain the enjoyment of the highest good, which was revealed to the patriarchs before as well as after the flood, and through Moses delivered by God to the people of Israel, and is called the Old Testament or the New Testament, which is called by way of eminence "Christian" because it has Christ for its author and object) is from Christ (Jn. 1:18) and speaks of him (Acts 11; 1 Cor. 2:2). It is strictly called "revealed" because its first principle is divine revelation strictly taken and made through the word, not through creatures.

VIII. Supernatural theology may be considered either systematically, as denoting the system of saving doctrine concerning God and divine things drawn from the Scriptures (the doctrines with their subdivisions being arranged in a certain order which is called both abstractive and objective); or habitually and after the manner of a habit residing in the intellect, and is called "concretive" and "subjective." Again, habitual theology is either the habit of principles (by which each believer perceives things foreign to and remote from reason) or the habit of conclusions (by which from principles known by the light of faith we unfold and confirm the saving doctrine).

IX. As there is a threefold school of God (that of nature, grace and glory), and a threefold book (of the creature, of Scripture and of life), so theology has usually been divided into three parts: the first of which is natural, the second supernatural and the third beatific; the first from the light of reason, the second from the light of faith, the third from the light of glory. The first belongs to men in the world, the second to believers in the church and the last to the saints in heaven.

X. Although theology treats diverse things and those pertaining to different sciences, it does not cease to be one because it considers them under the same formal aspect, inasmuch as they are divine things revealed to us by the word of God. Now unity of doctrine depends upon the unity of the object considered not materially, but formally. Hence if other sciences discuss various things contained in theology, they do not handle them in the same manner or under the same formal aspect. For theology discusses them as they are revealed to us by the word of God. Again, it considers them in relation to remote causes (viz., the first efficient from which they flow and the ultimate end to which they are referred) and not however in relation to the proximate causes; and according to supernatural, not natural accidents.

XI. It is one thing for theology to be one as to substance and kind of doctrine; quite another to be one as to manner of treatment. In the latter sense, it can be called "multiple" according to the various modes of teaching (paideias tropon). Thus it is divided into didactic, problematic, elenctic, casuistic, etc. But in the former sense it neither is nor can be multiplex because it always contains one and the same kind of doctrine.

The unity of theology.
XII. Hence it is evident that it can differ as to more and less in relation to the different degrees of revelation (as it was more obscure under the Old Testament or clearer under the New); either more perfect or imperfect with regard to the subjects. But it does not follow that it differs as to kind because the same substance of doctrine is retained in both, Christ being the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8).

XIII. Theology does not lose its unity although it may be called partly theoretical, partly practical. Any science is called one not by a simple and absolute unity (that is, a numerical and individual as if it were one and a simple quality like whiteness in a wall), but by an aggregative unity which is termed the unity of collection (inasmuch as many special habits are brought together and arranged so as to make up one total habit of science). Thus the image of God is one although it embraces newness of mind and of the affections; and free will is one, although it resides in the intellect and will.

THIRD QUESTION
Whether natural theology may be granted.

Statement of the question.

I. The question does not concern theology in general, but natural theology in particular. Nor does it concern this as it was in Adam before the fall (for that it was in him is sufficiently evident from the image of God after which he was made); rather it concerns this as it remained after the fall.

II. The question is not whether natural theology (which is such by act as soon as a man is born, as the act of life in one living or of sense in one perceiving as soon as he breathes) may be granted. For it is certain that no actual knowledge is born with us and that, in this respect, man is like a smooth tablet (tabulae rasae). Rather the question is whether such can be granted at least with regard to principle and potency; or whether such a natural faculty implanted in man may be granted as will put forth its strength of its own accord, and spontaneously in all adults endowed with reason, which embraces not only the capability of understanding, but also the natural first principles of knowledge from which conclusions both theoretical and practical are deduced (which we maintain).

III. The question is not whether this knowledge is perfect and saving (for we confess that after the entrance of sin it was so much obscured as to be rendered altogether insufficient for salvation), but only whether any knowledge of God remains in man sufficient to lead him to believe that God exists and must be religiously worshipped.

IV. Our controversy here is with the Socinians who deny the existence of any such natural theology or knowledge of God and hold that what may appear to be such has flowed partly from tradition handed down from Adam, and partly from revelations made at different times (Faustus Socinus, Praelectiones theologicae 2 [1627], pp. 3-7; Christopher Osterodt, Unterrichtung . . . hauptpunkten der Christlichen Religion 3 [1612], pp. 23-28). The orthodox, on the contrary, uniformly teach that there is a natural theology, partly innate (derived from the book of conscience by means of common notions [koinas ennoias]) and partly acquired (drawn from the book of creatures discursively). And they prove it by the following arguments.