

# NATURE AND CONCEPT OF THEOLOGY.

(De Natura et Constitutione Theologiae.)

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## Introduction to Sacred Theology.

(Prolegomena.)

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### 1. THE SCRIPTURAL VIEWPOINT OF THE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIAN.

Owing to the diverse views and tendencies prevailing among theologians to-day, it is necessary for the Christian theologian, before presenting to his readers his dogmatic treatise, to declare in clear and unmistakable terms from which viewpoint it has been written.

The viewpoint of the present-day *modernistic theologian* is that truth must be determined by human reason in the light of scientific research. The theological Liberalist therefore does not recognize Holy Scripture as the source and norm of faith, but holds that this ancient standard of Christian doctrine has been superseded by the standards of reason and philosophy which he himself has established. From this viewpoint his dogmatic treatise is written, and since this viewpoint is anti-Scriptural and unchristian, it follows that his whole theology is rationalistic, naturalistic, and diametrically opposed to the Word of God.

The viewpoint of the *Roman Catholic theologian* is that truth must be determined by both Holy Scripture and the "infallible" traditions of the Church as these are formally set forth in the papal decretals and decisions. Thus he accepts as a source and norm of faith, in addition to Holy Scripture (to which he falsely adds the Apocrypha), something that is foreign and even opposed to Holy Scripture and ascribes to it the same authority as to the Word of God. This erroneous viewpoint proves the antichristian character of papistical theology; for it, too, is in direct opposition to Holy Scripture.

The viewpoint of the modern rationalizing Protestant theologian is that, while Holy Scripture is indeed a "divine-human record of revealed truths," which contains the doctrines that Christians must believe for their salvation, these saving truths must be determined, not by any authoritative statement of the Scriptures,

but rather by the Christian "faith-consciousness" or the "regenerate and sanctified mind" or the "Christian experience" of the theologian (*das christliche Glaubensbewusstsein, das wiedergeborene Ich, das christliche Erlebnis*). In his opinion not the objective statement of Holy Scripture, but rather the "sanctified self-consciousness of the dogmatizing subject" (*das fromme Selbstbewusstsein des dogmatisierenden Subjekts*) is in the last analysis the norm which decides what is divine truth and what is not. Modern rationalistic theology is therefore a movement away from Holy Scripture (*eine Los-von-der-Schrift-Bewegung*) to a source and norm of faith established by man himself. This movement may differ in degree, but is always the same in kind. It is basically anti-Scriptural and has its source in the unbelief of the corrupt flesh. The viewpoint of the modern rationalistic theologian must therefore likewise be rejected as unchristian and opposed to Holy Scripture.

The viewpoint from which the present dogmatic treatise is written is that *Holy Scripture is the only source and norm of Christian faith and life*, for the simple reason that the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God, which is absolutely infallible and inerrant, both as a whole and in each individual passage. Hence, whenever it speaks on any point of doctrine or life, the matter is fully decided. *Scriptura locuta, res decisa est*. This viewpoint identifies Holy Scripture with the Word of God; its claim is, not merely that the Bible contains the Word of God, but that it *is*, fully and absolutely, in all its parts, the Word of God.

The fact that *this viewpoint is the only correct one* is proved by the statements and the attitude of both Christ and His inspired apostles. Our divine Savior accepted no other norm than Holy Scripture, and He invariably rejected the traditions of the Pharisees and the "reasonings" of the Sadducees. When He declared His divine doctrines and refuted errors, He constantly based His teachings on the immovable foundation of the written Word of God. Thus at the beginning of His ministry He met the temptations of Satan with the emphatic assertion "It is written," Matt. 4, 4, and He adhered to this principle throughout His ministry. Cp. John 5, 39; Matt. 5, 17—19; John 8, 31. 32; etc.

Also the apostles regarded Holy Scripture, including their own inspired teachings, both oral and written, as the sole source and norm of faith. Cf. Gal. 1, 8; 2 Tim. 3, 15—17; Titus 1, 9; 1 Cor. 14, 37; 2 Pet. 1, 19—21; etc. When in the age of the