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# DEFINING THEOLOGY

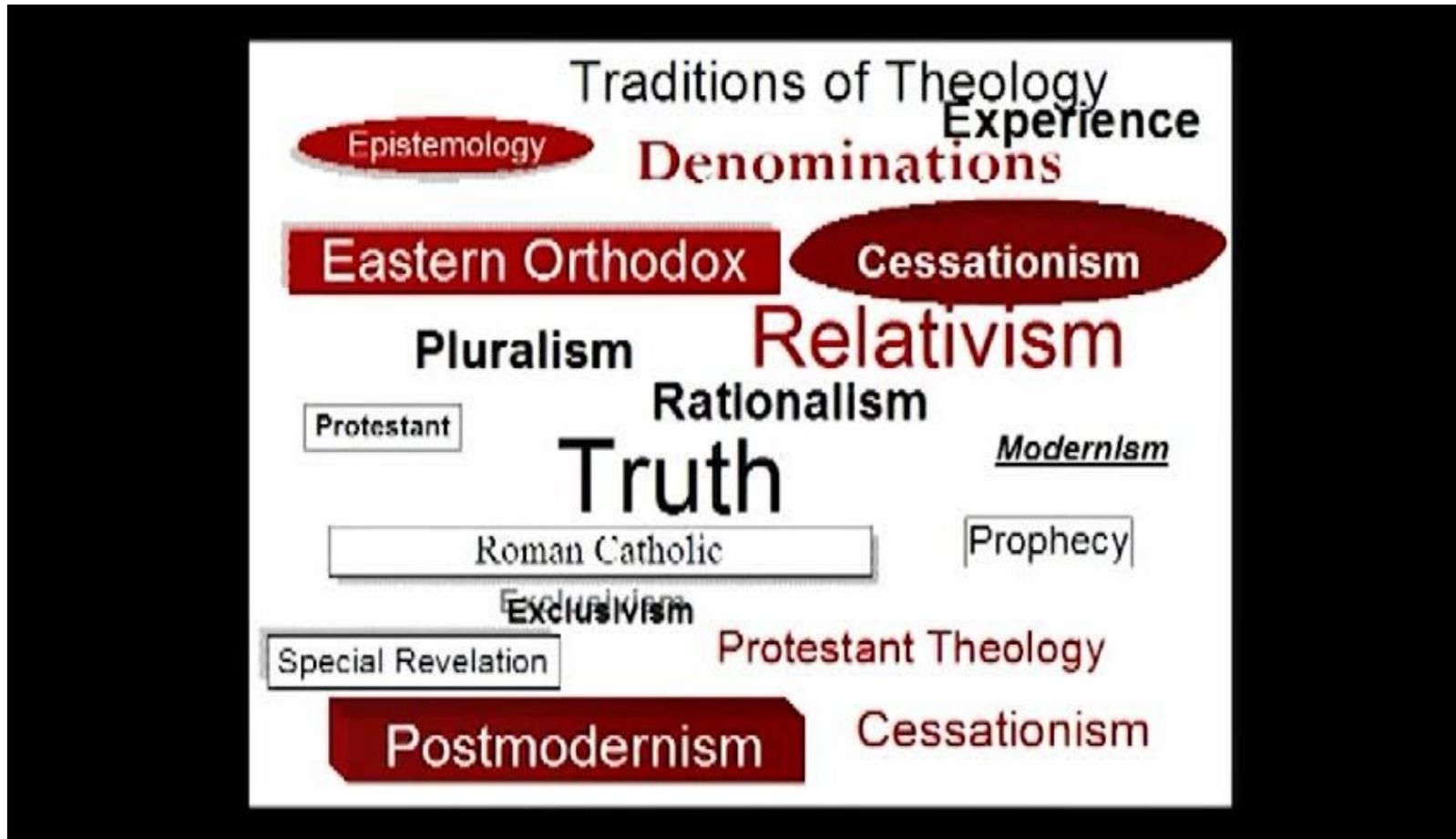
THE THEOLOGY PROGRAM

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Defining Theology

**WHAT IS THE  
DEFINITION OF  
THEOLOGY?**

# Defining Theology



# Defining Theology

## What is Theology?

Write a one or two sentences to define your definition of theology?

- Discuss with your neighbor(s) to develop your statement.
- Choose a representative from your group to communicate your response.
- Your group will have 5 minutes to prepare a statement for the class.

# Defining Theology

- Theology is the study of God.
- Doctrine is a body of beliefs that are taught.
- Christian doctrine is what we believe as Christians.
- Christian theology and Christian doctrine are closely related.
- Systematic theology organizes the Christian Biblical beliefs into a coherent system.

# Defining Theology

- Why Study Theology?
  - “Doctrine leads to doxology as well as to duty.”
    - Doxology passed into English from Medieval Latin “doxologia”, which in turn comes from the Greek term doxa, meaning “opinion”, or “glory,” and the suffix -logia, which refers to oral or written expression.
    - In short, it is an oral expression of praise and glorification since it first appeared in English around 1645.
  - It’s not just about knowledge. It’s about practical application.
    - Knowledge without love is pride.
    - Knowledge without grace is arrogance.
    - Knowledge without practice is useless.

# Defining Theology

- Where do people look as the source of authority regarding spiritual truth?
  - Reason
  - Feelings
  - Conscience
  - Experience
  - Church
  - Tradition
  - Scripture

# Defining Theology

- Foundational Principles For This Class:

1. Sola Scriptura (“by Scripture alone”)

From Wikipedia:

Sola scriptura (Latin ablative, "by Scripture alone") is the doctrine that the Bible contains all knowledge necessary for salvation and holiness. Consequently, it demands that only those doctrines be admitted or confessed that are found directly within Scripture or are drawn indirectly from it by valid logical deduction or valid deductive reasoning. Sola Scriptura does not deny that other authorities govern Christian life and devotion, but sees them all as subordinate to and corrected by the written word of God.

2. Sola Fide (“by Faith alone”)

3. Sola Gratia (“by Grace alone”)

4. Solus Christus or Solo Christo (“Christ alone” or “through Christ alone”)

5. Soli Deo Gloria (“glory to God alone”)

“The study or science of  
God.”



-FROM: MILLARD ERICKSON (BAPTIST THEOLOGIAN)  
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY (GRAND RAPIDS, MI: BAKER, 2001). 22.

“Rational discussion  
respecting the deity.”



FROM: AUGUSTINE – 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

“Thinking about God  
and expressing those  
thoughts in some way.”



FROM: CHARLES RYRIE, BASIC THEOLOGY (WHEATON, IL.: 1986). 9.

“The science of God and of  
the relations between God  
and the universe.”



A. H. STRONG

“The science of God or of religion; the science which treats of the existence, character, and attributes of God, his laws and government, the doctrines we are to believe, and the duties we are to practice; divinity; (as more commonly understood), the knowledge derivable from the Scriptures, the systematic exhibition of revealed truth, the science of Christian faith and life.”



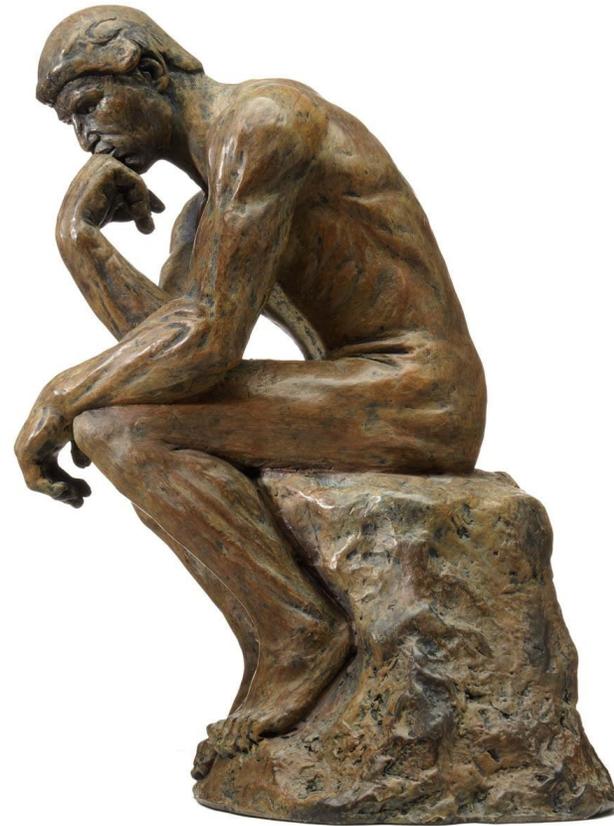
WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY

# Defining Theology

Who is a theologian? Anyone who has asked the ultimate questions of life:

- Why am I here?
- What is life?
- What happens after death?
- What is the difference between right and wrong?
- Why is there something instead of nothing?

We are all theologians because we have all expressed thoughts about God.



The question is not, “Who is a theologian?” but “What kind of theologian am I going to be?”

Are you going to be a good theologian or a bad theologian? This is a more accurate question because, as one writer put it, “not all theologies are equal.”



SOURCE UNKNOWN

“We live in what may be the most anti-intellectual period in the history of Western civilization... We must have passion – indeed hearts on fire for the things of God. But that passion must resist with intensity the anti-intellectual spirit of the world.”



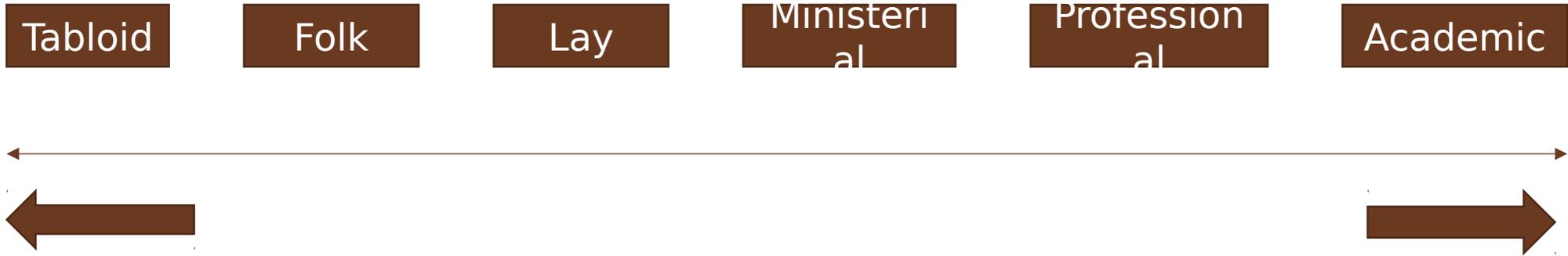
R. C. SPROUL, “BURNING HEARTS ARE NOT NOURISHED BY EMPTY HEADS.” CHRISTIANITY TODAY: SEPTEMBER 3, 1982. 100

# Defining Theology

## Six Arenas In Which We Do Theology

- Tabloid Theology
- Folk Theology
- Lay Theology
- Ministerial Theology
- Professional Theology
- Academic Theology

# Defining Theology



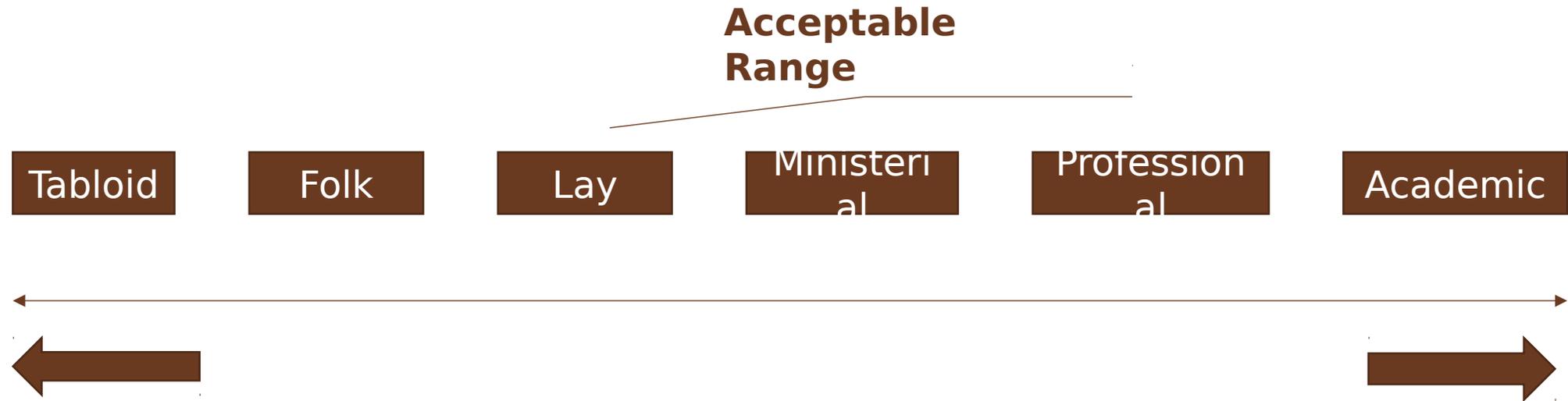
# Defining Theology

- There are basically six arenas in which we can do theology:
  - **Tabloid Theology**: One who constructs his or her theology based upon naïve hear-say information that has no basis in fact and very little, if any, evidence to be believed. May times people are Tabloid theologians because of its appearance of originality. As well, it can be “cutting edge” in many people’s minds.
  - **Folk Theology**: One who uncritically and unreflectively constructs his or her theology according to traditions and religious folk-lore. The folk theologian is often very dogmatic about his or her beliefs.
  - **Lay Theology**: A layperson who constructs his or her theology and who, unlike the folk and tabloid theologian, is (1) more reflective upon learned theological concepts, (2) likely to formulate a system of beliefs which distinguishes between essential and non essential doctrine, (3) more critical of unfounded traditions, and (4) willing to use study tools.

# Defining Theology

- There are basically six arenas in which we can do theology:
  - **Ministerial Theology**: A lay person who constructs his or her theology and who, unlike the lay theologian is (1) educated in theological methodology, (2) able to use study tools and resources at a more effective level, (3) able to openly critique personal theology against competing models, and (4) intent on devoting more time to reflection so that theological integration can take place.
  - **Professional Theology**: One who constructs his or her theology and makes a living doing so. They usually are (1) didactically purposed toward lay and pastoral theologians, (2) conduct practical original research, and (3) critically evaluate common theological trends and folk theology.
  - **Academic Theology**: A profession theologian who constructs his theology with an overly speculative and critical spirit. His dialogue can usually come only with other theologians. It is often called “Ivory Tower theology.”

# Defining Theology



“Theology is for everyone. Indeed, everyone needs to be a theologian. In reality, everyone is a theologian of one sort or another. And therein lies the problem. There is nothing wrong with being an amateur theologian or a professional theologian, but there is everything wrong with being an ignorant or sloppy theologian.”

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CHARLES RYRIE  
BASIC THEOLOGY (WHEATON, IL 1986)

# Defining Theology

- Areas in our lives that we do theology whether we realize it or not include:
  1. When we think about God
  2. When we share the Gospel
  3. When we interpret the Bible
  4. When we get sick
  5. When we defend the faith
  6. When we plan for the future
  7. When we choose schooling for our children
  8. When we vote
  9. When we attempt to deal with sin in our lives
  10. When we decide on who we marry



# QUESTIONS?

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THE THEOLOGY PROGRAM  
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