FRANCIS
TURRETIN
Institutes of
Elenctic Theology
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VOLUME ONE: FIRST THROUGH TENTH TOPICS
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FIRST TOPIC

THEOLOGY

FIRST QUESTION
Should the word "theology" be used in the Christian schools, and in how many ways can it be understood?

The word "theology" is rightly used.

I. Since, according to the laws of accurate method, the use and true sense of terms (πρῶτον ἐκταθὲν τὰ ὄνοματα) are first to be explained (as the Philosopher [Aristotle] has it), for words are the types (τύποι) of things, some things must be premised concerning the word "theology" before we come to the thing itself. But although the proposed question may seem hardly necessary (in the common sense and in that received by almost all who think it should be retained as a technical [technikon] word properly and emphatically declaring its subject), yet we must meet the opinion of those who dislike it because it does not occur in Scripture and is used to denote the false system of the heathen and who judge that it would be more suitable to use other words drawn from Scripture.

II. Although the word "theology" is not in so many words in-written (ἐγκρατοὺς ἀυτολεξεῖ), yet it is not altogether un-written (ἐγκρατοῦς). The simple words of which it is composed often occur there: as λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ("word of God") and λογία τοῦ Θεοῦ ("words of God"; cf. Rom. 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:11*; Heb. 5:12). Therefore it is one thing to be in Scripture as to sound and syllables (or formally and in the abstract); another to be in it as to sense and the thing signified (or materially in the concrete). Theology does not occur in Scripture in the former manner, but in the latter.

III. Although it is not lawful to form any doctrines not in Scripture, yet it is lawful sometimes to use words which are not found there if they are such as will enable us either to explain divine things or to avoid errors. For this purpose, the words "triad," ἰμοουσίων, "original sin" and the like have been used by theologians.

IV. Although the heathen often abused this word to designate their false system, yet this does not prevent applying to our true and saving science what was wrongly given by them (falsely and falsely so-called [pseudonymoi]) the name of theology. Just as the word "God" (which among the Gentiles denoted a false and fictitious god), and the word "church" (which was applied to a secular assembly) are used in the Scriptures in a sounder sense for the true God and the assembly of the saints. The word "theology" (of Greek origin) was transferred from the schools of the Gentiles to sacred uses, just as the vessels of the Egyptians were appropriated to sacred purposes by the Israelites.
V. We do not deny that there are various synonyms in the Scriptures by which the heavenly science might be designated; as when it is called "wisdom in a mystery" (1 Cor. 2:7), the "form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13), the "acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness" (Tit. 1:1), "doctrine" (Tit. 1:9) and is expressed by other like words. But nevertheless this name can and ought to be retained because it has been used so long and is the most appropriate for expressing this saving science.

VI. It is evident that the word "theology" was used by the Gentiles. For they who discoursed sublimely of God, or settled the worship of the gods, or set forth their birthdays, marriages, offspring, dominion and achievements were called "theologians" and their science "theology" (see Lactantius, The Wrath of God 2 [FC 54:85-88]; Clement of Alexandria, Stromata 3.3 [ANF 2:384]; PG 8.1119-20; Isidore, Etymologiarum 8*.6.18 [PL 82.307]; Aristotle, Metaphysics 3.4.9 [Loeb, 1:126-27]).

VII. Among Christians, the word "theology" is used either inadequately (with reference to the efficient to mean a discourse of God [Theou Logon], and with reference to the object, a discourse about God [logon peri tou Theou] or adequately inasmuch as it denotes both a discourse of God and a discourse about God. These two must be joined together because we cannot speak concerning God without God; so that it may be termed the science which is originally from God, objectively treats concerning and terminatively flows into and leads to him, which Thomas Aquinas aptly expresses, Theologia a Deo docetur, Deum docet, et ad Deum ducit ("Theology is taught by God, teaches God and leads to him," ST, 1, Q. 1, Art. 7+—not in Thomas, but a medieval scholastic adage). So this nomenclature embraces the twofold principle of theology: one of being, which is God; the other of knowing, which is his word.

VIII. Again it is used by authors in three ways: (1) broadly; (2) strictly; (3) according to the true extent of its signification. In the first way, it is accommodated to metaphysics, and in this sense Aristotle calls the first philosophy "theology" (Metaphysics 6.1.10-11 [Loeb, 1:296-97] and 11*.7.8-9 [Loeb, 2:86-89]). He divides theoretical philosophy into three parts: physical (physikēn), mathematical (mathēmatikēn) and theological (theologikēn). In the second way, the fathers designate particularly that part of the Christian science which treats of the divinity of Christ by the word "theology." In this sense, John is with emphasis styled "Theologian" because he boldly asserted the deity of the Word (tēn tou logou theōtēta, cf. Rev. 1:2). The other fathers applied to Gregory Nazianzus the name of "Theologian" because he demonstrated the divinity of Christ in various orations. Hence a distinction was made by them between theology (theologias) and economy (oikonomias). By the former, they meant the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; by the latter, the doctrine of his incarnation. Theologos îēsous is with them to discourse of the divinity of Christ (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5.28 [FC 19:343]; PG 20.512); Basil the Great, Adversus Eunomium 2 [PG 29.601]; Gregory Nazianzus, Oration 31*.26, "On the Holy Spirit" [NPNF2, 7:326; PG 36.161] and Oration 38*.8, "On the Theophany" [NPNF2, 7:347; PG 36.320]).

In the third and most proper sense, it denotes "a system or body of doctrine concerning God and divine things revealed by him for his own glory and the salvation of men." In this sense, we use it here.
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 unspeakable 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.

Theology is proved to be.

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 to gnōston or knowable object, and the to gnōstikon or knowing subject) are found here (viz., God, the most capable of being known of knowable things [tōn epistēton epistētoton], 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.
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THE LAW OF GOD

FIRST QUESTION
Whether there is a natural law, and how it differs from the moral law. The former we affirm; the latter we distinguish.

NECESSITY OF DISPUTING.
I. As the doctrine concerning the law of God (the discussion of which we now enter upon with the favor of God) properly belongs to the theologian, so it has a multiple use in theology. (1) For the direction of life—as a perfect rule of God's right over man and of man's duty towards God. (2) For a knowledge of sin—because as sin is illegality (anomia), from no other source than the law can its truth and heinousness be ascertained (Rom. 3:20). (3) For preparation for grace—that from the declaration of man's sin and misery, the necessity of saving grace may be unfolded and a desire for it excited in us (in which sense it is called "a schoolmaster unto Christ," Gal. 3:24).

ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD "LAW."
II. Now law is called by the Hebrews טב (from the verb תב) signifying in the Hiphel "to teach" because by it all are put in mind of their duty. The Greeks call it νόμος (from νομεῖν) which denotes both "to rule" and "to distribute" because according to its prescription men ought to be governed and each one's own is given to him. The Latins either derive it from legendo (according to Isidore, Etymologiarum 2.10 [PL 82.130]) because, as Cicero observeth, it is usually read when enacted that it may become known to all or is exposed on public tablets to be read (Laws 2.5.11 [Loeb, 16:384-85]); or inasmuch as legeere is put for deligere because in it is contained a choice of things to be done and avoided; or finally from ligando (as Thomas Aquinas, ST, 1-II*, Q. 90, Art. 1, p. 993 and most of the Scholastics after him hold), because it binds and fastens men as it were by a chain. It may be in reference to this that in Scripture "laws" are frequently called "bonds" (Ps. 2:3; Jer. 5:5).

ITS EQUIVOCAL SENSE.
III. However, it is used in different ways in Scripture: either broadly, for the whole word of God (Ps. 1:2; 19:7, 8)—now for all the books of the Old Testament (Jn. 10:34; 1 Cor. 14:21), then for the Mosaical books alone—or the Pentateuch as distinct from the Psalms and the Prophets (Lk. 24:44; Rom. 3:21); or strictly, for the Mosaic dispensation in opposition to the New Testament dispensation (Heb. 7:12; Jn. 1:17); or for the covenant of works exclusively in contradistinction to the covenant of grace (Rom. 6:14); or for "the rule of things to be done and avoided, which God has prescribed to rational creatures under the sanction of rewards and punishments." It is to be particularly examined in this sense.
IV. Now this law of God is divided in general into natural and positive. As the right of God is twofold (one natural, founded in the perfectly just and holy nature of God; the other positive, depending on the will of God alone in which he also shows his own liberty), so there is a positive law of God built on the free and positive right of God (with respect to which things are then good because God commands them). Hence God was free either not to give such a law or to institute otherwise (such as the law relating to food and the symbolical law given to Adam [Gen. 2:16, 17] and the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, in which there was no moral goodness or evil per se, but only from the command of God). There is another (natural) founded on the natural right of God, with regard to which things are not called just because they are commanded, but are commanded because they were just and good antecedently to the command of God (being founded on the very holiness and wisdom of God). And such is its nature that (the creation of man being supposed) it must have been given to him, since it prescribes to him indispensable duties to be performed by all, always and everywhere.

V. However, natural law is again taken in two ways: either broadly and improperly (inasmuch as it is extended to inanimes also and brutes and denotes nothing else than the most wise government of the providence of God over creatures and the most efficacious direction to their ends). In this sense, Ps. 119:91 (where it treats of the motion of the heavens and the stability of the earth) says, “All things continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants”; “He hath also established all things for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass” (Ps. 148:6). In the latter, he is speaking of the works of creation: by this law plants grow, beasts generate and every animal has his own desires (hormas) and spontaneous instincts. Or natural law is taken strictly and properly for the practical rule of moral duties to which men are bound by nature. Concerning this law, it is here inquired whether there is such a natural law of God obtaining among all (as the rule of justice and injustice) antecedently to the positive laws of men; or whether justice and virtue depend upon man’s will alone and spring from the consent of human society and are to be measured by each one’s own utility. The orthodox affirm the former; libertinism the latter.

VI. For just as of old Carneades and the Cyrenaics (following Aristippus) denied all natural justice, pretending that “nothing is just and base by nature, but by law and custom” (mêden einai physei dikaios en kai ethe, [Diogenes] Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers: Aristippus 2.93 [Loeb, 1:220-21]). This was also the opinion of Epicurus, in reference to whom Gassendi says many things ("Philosophiae Epicuri Syntagma," in Opuscula Philosophica [1658], 3:3-94). So there are not wanting many in our day who, treading in their footsteps, think that no rule of right and wrong is given by nature, but that it depends only upon the free determination of man and is to be measured by each one’s own advantage (as man is by nature free from every law and has no other rule of right and good than the preservation of himself and the defense of his life and limbs). Calvin testifies that this impious error (with many others) is held by the libertinists (Contre le secte des Libertins, CR 35:144-248). Hobbes approaches them on this subject in his Elementa philosophica de civi (1647).
VII. But the orthodox speak far differently. They affirm that there is a natural law, not arising from a voluntary contract or law of society, but from a divine obligation being impressed by God upon the conscience of man in his very creation, on which the difference between right and wrong is founded and which contains the practical principles of immovable truth (such as: "God should be worshipped," "parents honored," "we should live virtuously," "injure no one," "do to others what we would wish them to do to us" and the like). Also that so many remains and evidences of this law are still left in our nature (although it has been in different ways corrupted and obscured by sin) that there is no mortal who cannot feel its force either more or less. Now they wish this law to be called natural, not because it has its origin from bare nature (since it depends upon God the supreme lawgiver), but because it becomes known from the aspect of creatures and the relation of man to God, and the knowledge of it is impressed upon the mind by nature, not acquired by tradition or instruction.

VIII. Thus the origin and foundation of this law ought not to be sought (as the Jews falsely seek it) from "the seven precepts" which they maintain were given to Adam and Noah, by which all posterity should be bound: (1) not worshipping idols; (2) not blaspheming the name of God; (3) not committing theft; (4) avoiding incest and foul lusts; (5) appointing judges and magistrates; (6) not shedding blood; (7) not eating the members of a living animal, or flesh with the blood (which is its life). Besides their being founded upon tradition alone (which cannot be said of the natural right), they are not all simply moral and of perpetual observance, but some are ceremonial and positive (such as that about not eating blood); nor do they draw out whatever belongs to natural right, although from it they can be deduced as conclusions from their own principles.

But from the right of nature.

IX. But it must be drawn from the right of nature itself, founded both on the nature of God, the Creator (who by his holiness must prescribe to his creatures the duties founded upon that right), and on the condition of rational creatures themselves (who, on account of their necessary dependence upon God in the genus of morals, no less than in the genus of being, are bound to perform or avoid those things which sound reason and the dictates of conscience enjoyn upon them to do or avoid).

In how many ways the right of nature may be used.

X. The right of nature, however, is here used by us, not broadly and improperly (as by lawyers for "that which nature teaches all animals" [Corpus Iuris Civilis, I: Institutiones 1.2, p. 1]) as distinguished from the law of nations which all nations use; and from the civil law which each state or community has determined for itself (because as reason does not belong to brutes, so neither are they properly capacious of right or wrong), but strictly and properly for that which has reference only to rational creatures. The lawyers include this under the law of nations. It is rightly described by common practical notions, or the light and dictation of conscience (which God has engraven by nature upon every individual, to distinguish between virtue and vice, and to know the things to be avoided and the things to be done).
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EIGHTEENTH TOPIC

THE CHURCH

First Question
The necessity of the discussion concerning the church, and whether the knowledge of the church ought to precede the knowledge of doctrine.

The necessity of the treatise on the church is proved.

I. Since the treatise concerning all the articles of faith is the most useful and of the highest importance, yet scarcely any other among the controversies waged between us and our opponents in this miserable age (most fruitful in disputations) seems to be of greater moment and more necessary than the disputation concerning the church. This we now take up under the divine blessing.

II. For although the controversies concerning the church are not among the first (which occasioned our secession from the Roman church), but only among the secondary (which sprung from the others); inasmuch as the Romanists (distrusting the goodness of their cause in other heads of doctrine) have betaken themselves to the authority of the church that they might be the more safely concealed under her shield, still in the progress of time they have become the principal matter in which our opponents seem to place the strength of their cause. Hence a manifold necessity of this discussion arises, whether it is considered absolutely and in itself or in relation to our opponents.

III. First, the church is the primary work of the holy Trinity, the object of Christ’s mediation and the subject of the application of his benefits. For he came into the world and performed the mediatorial office for no other reason than to acquire a church for himself and call it (when acquired) into a participation of grace and glory. Hence the offices and benefits of Christ having been explained, the order demands that we discuss the church, to which alone they are destined and come to be applied. Second, since there is no salvation out of the church (no more than out of the ark; nor does anyone have God as his Father in heaven whose church is not his mother on earth), nothing ought to be dearer to our hearts than that this mother may be known (in whose bosom God has willed us to be educated and to be nourished). It behooves us to be directed by her care until we grow up and arrive at the goal of faith. Also it behooves us to know what assembly is that true church with which (according to the command of God) we are bound to connect ourselves that we may obtain salvation (Acts 2:47). Third, this doctrine is put among the primary articles of faith in the Creed (to the knowledge and belief of which we are bound).

IV. Fourth, the sacred name of church (which we profess in the Creed) all arrogate to themselves with great zeal, but not with equal truth. For the Jews,
formerly boasting that they were the true church of God and the children of Abraham, still imitated nothing less than his faith (whom on this account John calls a generation of vipers and Christ the children of the Devil), as also heretics claimed the name of church for themselves. Hence Tertullian says, "The wasps also make honeycombs, the Marcionites also make churches" (Against Marcion 4.5 [ANF 3:350; PL 2.367]). Cyprian says, "The Devil has invented a new fraud, that under a false title of the Christian name he may deceive the unwary" (On the Unity of the Church 3 [ANF 5:422; PL 4.512]). And Leo says, "They are armed with the name of the church and they fight against the church" (Letter 124, "To the Monks of Palestine," B [NPNF1, 12:95; PL 54.1068]). Thus this day the Romanists (although they are anything but the true church of Christ) still boast of their having alone the name of church and do not blush to display the standard of that which they oppose. In this manner, hiding themselves under the specious title of the antiquity and infallibility of the Catholic church, they think they can, as with one blow, beat down and settle the controversy waged against them concerning the various most destructive errors introduced into the heavenly doctrine.

V. Nothing can be more unfair than this method of acting because the very thing in question is imposed upon us as the principle of faith to be believed. For since the church of Rome is asked concerning itself whether it is a church of Christ (the head and mistress of the rest), they think they settle the whole matter if they obtrude in place of an indisputable principle (anaphisbêteno) what is in the highest degree disputable (amphísbioîmenon). And that they may not be convicted of error, they impudently vociferate with those scriptures in Jeremiah (8:8) that the church is infallible, and is with them, and that they alone are wise. Thus in the definition of the church (from which fountain they draw their positions with the insane fraud of the false apostles) "they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (autoi en heautous heautous merounites kai synkrinontes heautous heautois, ou sêniouiei, 2 Cor. 10:12). And as if the matter was settled, they condemn as schismatics and heretics all those who withdraw themselves from obedience to that church, which they cover with treacherous fraud. Nor without reason are they obstinate on this point, who wish to appear sometimes more liberal in others. Believe as you please, they say, provided that you subject yourself to the church and give yourself captive to her faith. For sagacious men knew that they would immediately receive those things which before they seemed to have yielded up, if once for all they subjected their minds to the dictation and authority of their church.

VI. The arts of our opponents impose upon us the necessity of this disputation that we may distinguish the real face of the church from its counterfeit; nor suffer ourselves to be deceived by those specious and splendid names (destitute of truth) which they are accustomed to repeat with perpetual crowing and great clamor, that they may be considered the sole heirs—others being driven from that possession. Like the Jews, boasting that they were the people of God and reiterating the temple of the Lord, persecuted the prophets, the pious servants of God, and with rage cast out and cruelly treated the Lord of the vineyard himself.
The Church

Ought the knowledge of the church to precede the knowledge of faith?

VII. Now although the knowledge of the church is especially necessary to us, still it must not be supposed that it ought to precede the examination and knowledge of doctrine, so that faith or doctrine ought to be known from the church rather than the church from the doctrine and faith. Cardinal Perron too confidently maintained this, arguing that faith ought to be known from the church, rather than the church from faith; and that we can be secure concerning faith provided we are in the church (Reply of the... Cardinal of Perron to the Answere of the... King of Great Britaine 1.4, 5 [1630/1975], pp. 23-32). Nor did the author of the book de praejudici. mean anything else, who in his preface laboriously strives to prove that in order to distinguish between the sects of Christians (i.e., which is the true, to which we ought to join ourselves) we must follow the way of the authority of the church and not the way of discussion and examination of doctrine. For the latter is long, uncertain and dangerous, but the former short and indubitable. From this prejudice, we who are unwilling to follow the first way by submitting ourselves in blind obedience to the Roman church can be justly condemned—even unheard; as if what is not known can be condemned or what is not examined can be known.

The negative is proved: (1) from the Scriptures.

VIII. But the falsehood of this comment is readily exposed by various considerations. (1) By Scripture itself, which is wont to premise the examination of faith and doctrine to the knowledge and communion of the church. Christ, sending the apostles to gather the church, supposes the necessity of a preceding instruction and knowledge of doctrine: "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them" (Mt. 28:19); they were added to the church who had been taught before by the apostles (Acts 2:41); the Samaritans who believed were baptized (Acts 8:12). Therefore as in adults faith ought to precede baptism (which is the entrance into the church), so examination of faith and knowledge ought to precede knowledge of the church.

2. From the nature of the thing itself.

IX. (2) From the nature of the thing. Now a unified society (group) supposes some necessary principle in which the members themselves are united. The unity of the church supposes a preceding unity of faith in which believers are joined. As in the state, which is the gathering of citizens, it is necessary to have the right of citizenship before communion of the citizens in the republic; and in the family, which is a society of brethren begotten from the same father, it is necessary to suppose birth from the father before the communion of brothers; so the church is a city and family of God, into which no one is admitted without faith; the necessity of faith precedes communion, constituted by it. We have to desire to apply ourselves to other things in the church before we have faith and knowledge of the truth; to desire to be in the family of God before we are begotten from it; before we have the right of citizenship to be admitted into the republic and to know its nature—such is the doctrine respecting the church (Eph. 2:20).
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