G. Approaches to Theology

Note: the following six approaches all assume revelation as the source.

1. The Philosophical Approach

This approach selects from the Scriptures what appear to be necessary or self-evident first principles (presuppositions) of theology, and employs these first principles more or less consistently in its formulation of theological doctrine. However, it fails to check its results with the specific teachings or general emphases of Scripture for modification or correction. As a result this approach tends to omit or distort those teachings of Scripture that conflict with its formulation.

Example: The drawing of the implication that all human beings will be saved, from the scriptural truth that God is love.

Example: The drawing of the implication that in His human nature Jesus was omniscient, from the scriptural truth that He was God in the flesh.

Example: The drawing of the implication that fallen human beings can do nothing good, even in a relative sense, from the scriptural truth that all mankind is holistically depraved.

Critical Axiom: All presuppositions drawn from Scripture, and all formulations and implications drawn from those presuppositions, must be checked against other biblical teachings and against the teaching of Scripture as a whole.

2. The Experiential Approach

This approach elevates experience (primarily "religious" experience) to the level of norms of truth, and then presses biblical teaching into a grid derived from those norms. In doing so, this approach tends to distort, omit, or even contradict biblical teaching.

Example: Using the modern experience of tongue-speaking to interpret the phenomenon of tongues recorded in Acts and I Corinthians, instead of the other way around.

Example: Using modern claims of miraculous healings, resuscitations from the dead, and continuing special revelation to decide the question of the continuance of the supernatural sign-gifts.

Critical Axiom: Although experience should confirm biblical doctrine, it should not be the interpreter of that doctrine; rather, experience should conform to and be evaluated by biblical doctrine.