

**BE LIKE SANTA**

Faith Seminary

Be Like Santa:

Introduction to Biblical and Theological Study

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**BE LIKE SANTA****Abstract**

These are comments and deeper insights into the DVD lectures by Dr. Wayne House. Definitions start out this task. Definitions of theology, prolegomena, as well as definitions and concepts behind liberal and conservative theologies are discussed. Where revelation comes from is next up, is it from God or man. Did we invent it or receive it. What are the limiting factors of revelation if indeed it comes from man and not God? Hermeneutics and exegesis are briefly discussed considering the eight historic rules guiding these concepts. Liberation theology is also touched upon and made relevant by connecting it to the 2008 election cycle. Papyri are discussed, most notably the Magdalene College portions of Matthew. (Dr. house is the first person to go in-depth on this discovery, at least that I have heard.) Ossuaries wrap up my class notes, with a finish on how to counter the dreaded “Mormon Testimony” in case you run into them on a plane.

**BE LIKE SANTA****Theology Defined**

A good definition of theology comes from Geisler, and it is: “...*a rational discourse about God... [and] is defined here as a discourse about God that maintains that there are certain essential Christian beliefs*” (Geisler 2002, p. 15). Geisler then goes on to list a few areas where an orthodox understanding is key to true theology. Most of these topics he lists are covered in systematic theology studies. Theology is also referred to quite simply as “*the science of God*” (Cross 1997, p. 1604). The beginning of what entails the study of – the “first principles” of... so to speak – theology also has a name, it is Prolegomena.

Prolegomena is defined as “*Topics and issues addressed before the main discussion in a work. Often, the method of theology as opposed to its contents*” (Kurian 2001, p. 631). Theology can be viewed in five questions/statements:

- 1) What is the basic datum to theology? God.
- 2) Primary source for God. Revelation.
  - a) Written revelation (Bible)
  - b) Living revelation (Jesus)

“Sanctify them by your word.” The “words” of God make up the “word” of God.
- 3) The basic motif of theology is “The Glory of God.” Theology at its heart is Doxological... it means glory.
  - a) Much of the focus of theology today is focused on anthropology. Anthropos means man... the focus of the *church* is “man-centered.” You should ask how God feels after church not how church made you feel. God centered.

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- 4) The theologian should realize the limitations of studying theology. We are finite. It is impossible to have a memory that can present all we learned in panoplies of history or knowledge. We can and do miss something. Bottom line is we are sinners, we are hindered from the get go. You do not have to know everything to know something.
- 5) Theology is redemptively practical. Just knowing it is not enough... thinking great thoughts isn't enough... living out great thoughts and ideas (application) is the main step. We start in the mind, we end in our living it out – “Live it out!”

(Dr. House, DVD Lecture)

Theology, then, isn't just a study of God; it is a form of worship, a systematic road of understanding redemption.

**Subjective Theology versus Objective Theology*****Subjective Theology***

Friedrich Schleiermacher is the “father” of theological subjectivism. Schleiermacher bordered on pantheism. God, to Schleiermacher, was the “*creative Eros immanent in all things*” (Lewis 1996, p. 52). Another “subjective” theologian of fame is Paul Tillich, who said that “*the true God is unknowable*” (Dr. House, DVD Lecture). Dr. Tillich's statement is self-refuting. I will explain.

“To say that we cannot know anything about God is to say something about God; it is to say that if there is a God, he is unknowable. But in that case, he is not entirely unknowable, for the agnostic certainly thinks that we can know one thing about him: That nothing else can be known about him. Unfortunately, the position that we can know exactly one thing about God – his

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unknowability in all respects except this – is equally unsupportable, for why should this one thing be an exception? How could we know that any possible God would be of such a nature that nothing else could be known about him? On what basis could we rule out his knowability in all other respects but this one? The very attempt to justify the claim confutes it, for the agnostic would have to know a great many things about God in order to know he that couldn't know anything else about him" (Geisler 2001, p. 54).

Agnostics basically claim that nothing can be known about reality (or, Reality: e.g., God). Again, Norman Geisler points out – with a bit of adaptation by me – that for Tillich to claim that *"knowledge about... [God]... is impossible. But this itself is offered as a truth about [God]"* (McDowell 1999, p. 637).

***Objective Theology***

The adherents to the objective view of theology are often called "fundamentalists." There was an association called the World's Christian Fundamentals Association that in the early 1900s published a work called "Fundamentals," which is where the term "fundamentalist" comes from (Hastings 2000, p. 255). Some of the stalwarts in the objective camp are Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield. *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* says of these two,

"During these years [WWI, urbanization, industrialization, immigration from non-Protestant countries, social and cultural transformations, Wilson's attempt to get America into the League of Nations, the maturing of the Darwinian paradigm, and the like] the mainline denominations of the northern states were gradually adapting to the changing context, accommodating

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evolutionary thinking, absorbing biblical criticism, even advocating a social gospel. By contrast, many conservative Protestants denounced these accommodations as modernism or liberalism. They opposed modern biblical criticism's supposed denial of prophecy and of the miraculous and supernatural generally. Such opposition, in its most theologically rational form, drew on the Princeton theology of Charles and A. A. Hodge and Benjamin Warfield. It was during these years of struggle, about the time of the First World War, that fundamentalism emerged with its own distinct identity" (ibid.)

Dr. House quotes Thomas F. Torrance as saying of "fundamentalism" that "*theology and every scientific inquiry operate with the correlation of the intelligible and the intelligent*" (House 2006, p. 19).

**Revelation and God**

Tillich, Schleiermacher, and others are off base mainly because God **HAS** revealed Himself to us through *written revelation*, the Bible, as well as *living revelation*, Jesus Christ. Revelation, then, can be described as "*the divine disclosure to all persons at all times and in all places by which humans come to know that God is and what he is like*" (Elwell 2001, p. 1019). Objective theology rightly emphasizes the transcendent nature of the truth of the revelation *of God about God*. The Church discovers God in His revelation; the Church does not invent God by subjective insights. This is the key difference between the liberal theologian and the conservative one.

**BE LIKE SANTA****Sources**

Theology's source then is *"God himself, in the last analysis, must be the only source of knowledge with regard to his own being and relations. Theology is therefore a summary and explanation of the content of God's self-revelations. These are, first, the revelation of God in nature; secondly and supremely, the revelation of God in the Scriptures"* (Strong 2004, p. 25)

**Implications of Liberal Theology**

The correlation/anthropological method have inherent in its premise a restricting aspect in its application to the Christians life. If the theologian starts with man and works his way to God, the Bible and its saving message is viewed through cultural mores and biases. Man can impose then on God, but God cannot impose upon man because one's culture cannot critique one's culture. If however the theologian starts with God and works his way towards man, then the saving message of the Bible can confront man and his culture, rather than man's culture determining God's message: *"...by allowing the culture to specify the questions, one has already determined the kind of answers that the revelation is permitted to give, and that one has also to consider the critical questions that the revelation raises for the culture"* (Gentz 1986, p. 228).

**Hermeneutics and Exegesis**

Typically hermeneutics follows an eightfold path (no, not the Buddhist path). These eight rules have been used since before New Testament times; they are (The Light BBS, internet article):

1. *Rule of Definition*: define the term or words being considered and then adhere to the defined meanings.

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2. *Rule of Usage*: don't add meaning to established words and terms. What was the common usage in the cultural and time period when the passage was written?
3. *Rule of Context*: avoid using words out of context. Context must define terms and how words are used.
4. *Rule of Historical Background*: don't separate interpretation and historical investigation.
5. *Rule of Logic*: be certain that words as interpreted agree with the overall premise.
6. *Rule of Precedent*: use the known and commonly accepted meanings of words, not obscure meanings for which there is no precedent.
7. *Rule of Unity*: even though many documents may be used there must be a general unity among them.
8. *Rule of Inference*: base conclusions on what is already known and proven or can be reasonably implied from all known facts.

These rules have been used by scholars and legal institutions, as well as by the theologian for about 2,500 years.

**Liberation Theology**

Liberation theology has been thrust into the limelight again – at least for the armchair theologian – by Barack Obama, a possible Democratic nominee for President. Mr. Obama's pastor is an ardent follower of Liberation Theology. Originally it was more Catholic based and in Latin America but has since infected many seminaries in the U.S. and Europe. It teaches that "*Christ's message pertained not only to salvation of the soul, but also to political salvation here on earth through the establishment of Christian socialism*" (Frohn 2006, p. 502). An excerpt from Obama's church's website will elucidate somewhat the theological prose involved in "political salvation:"

**BE LIKE SANTA****BLACK VALUE SYSTEM****Statement of Purpose**

We honor Dr. Manford Byrd, our brother in Christ, because of the exemplary manner in which he has thrice withstood the ravage of being denied his earned ascension to the number one position in the Chicago School System...

**The Black Value System**

These Black Ethics must be taught and exemplified in homes, churches, nurseries and schools, wherever Blacks are gathered. They must reflect the following concepts:

**Commitment of God**

“The God of our weary years” will give us the strength to give up prayerful passivism and become Black Christian Activist, soldiers for Black freedom and the dignity of all humankind...

**Commitment to Self-Discipline and Self-Respect**

To accomplish anything worthwhile requires self-discipline. We must be a community of self-disciplined persons, if we are to actualize and utilize our own human resources instead of perpetually submitting to exploitation by others. Self discipline coupled with a respect for self, will enable each of us to be an instrument of Black Progress, and a model for Black Youth.

**Disavowal of the Pursuit of “Middleclassness”**

Classic methodology on control of captives teaches that captors must keep the captive ignorant educationally, but trained sufficiently well to serve the system. Also, the captors must be able to identify the “talented tenth” of those subjugated, especially those who show promise of providing the kind of leadership that might threaten the captor’s control.

Those so identified as separated from the rest of the people by:

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Killing them off directly, and/or fostering a social system that encourages them to kill off one another.

Placing them in concentration camps, and/or structuring an economic environment that induces captive youth to fill the jails and prisons.

Seducing them into a socioeconomic class system which while training them to earn more dollars, hypnotizes them into believing they are better than others and teaches them to think in terms of “we” and “they” instead of “us”...

(Giordano, internet blog)

One can see by starting with this presupposed worldview, one's hermeneutic dictates the outcome of any study of the Bible.

**Biblical Manuscripts and Papyrus**

The Dead Sea Scrolls yielded portions of, and even entire books from the Old Testament, the scrolls offered up some New Testament fragments as well. Lets see just a few of the younger fragments related to biblical manuscripts (the following chart uses the numbering system established for manuscripts, for example, “7Q5” means fragment 5 from Qumran cave 7):

Mark 4:28\_\_\_7Q6?\_\_\_Dated to A.D. 50

Mark 6:48\_\_\_7Q15\_\_\_A.D. ?

Mark 6:52,53\_\_\_7Q5\_\_\_A.D. 50

Mark 12:17\_\_\_7Q7\_\_\_A.D. 50

Acts 27:38\_\_\_7Q6?\_\_\_A.D. 60

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Romans 5:11,12\_\_\_7Q9\_\_\_A.D. 70[+]

1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1-3\_\_\_7Q4\_\_\_A.D. 70[+]

James 1:23,24\_\_\_7Q8\_\_\_A.D. 70[+]

(Geisler 1999, p. 188; Jeffrey 1999, pp. 66-68)

There are also illusions to the Gospel of Luke in 4Q246, which date to A.D. 49 (Jeffrey 1996, p. 100-103). A little-known papyrus of Matthew has opened the trained eye as well. The Magdalen Papyrus, named after the university that houses it, corroborates three traditions: that St. Matthew actually wrote the Gospel bearing his name; that he wrote it within a generation of Jesus' death (dated to A.D. 60); and that the gospel stories are true (Thiede 1996, back cover). This portion of Matthew is a Coptic translation; the original Aramaic version pre-dates this, obviously, placing Matthew around A.D. 50 and before. Not to mention that almost all Bible critics place Paul's first epistle at A.D. 52-57 (Geisler 2001, p. 158), and the creed in that epistle (1 Cor. 15:3) is dated about ten years earlier than that, "*Paul had not invented it but had been the one who transferred to them what he had received*" (Carson 1994, p. 1183). 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 reads:

"I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me—that Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. After that, he was seen by more than five hundred of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died by now. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles." (NLT)

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“*Handed on to you ... what I had received*’ (NRSV) is the language of what scholars call ‘*traditioning*’” (Keener 1993, p. 484). Rabbis would have their students memorize their teachings, and in turn when these students became rabbis themselves they would likewise pass on the teachings. Memorizing was a big part of Jewish life. In the same way these first century Christians (which were mainly Jewish converts) were doing the same within a decade of Jesus death. Evidence of this comes also from early Christian tombs with reference to who Jesus was understood to be, further confirming the Gospels (Jeffrey 1999, pp. 79-92; Dr. House, DVD Lecture... *his best so far*).

I can go on and on. But I will offer a bit of witnessing advice to Dr. House (I am sure he knows at least part of this). When a Mormon tells you that they know it, i.e., Book of Mormon, to be true by the inner witness of the Holy Ghost, they are referring to their testimony. At this point the Christian should memorize a counter testimony. Remember, when this is “testified” back to the Mormon. The term Holy Ghost (not Holy Spirit) should be used, also, emphasize the “knows”:

“**I know** beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is the Christ and Savior of the world... that He dies for my sins and was resurrected. **I know** that I am saved by grace and not by works and will inherit heaven upon that principle. Also **know** that God hears and answers prayers. **I know** all these things not only by the feeling I have from the inner witness of the Holy Ghost but by the reliability of God’s word, the Bible, which **declares** it to be so. And, I also **know** that because of my relationship with Christ, Jesus has changed my life and continues to bless me!”  
(Hutchinson 1995, p. 16)

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This is taking the “good fight” right to their most treasured belief, their testimony. They use this testimony as a sort of *self-brainwashing*, but the believer has a chance to slip that rug out from under them. Catch them when they fall though!

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