Outline to the Introduction of
Geerhardus Vos: Biblical Theology, Old and New Testaments

Rev. Charles R. Biggs

“Theology is the science concerning God.”

I. Theology based on Revelation - God must come to us before we can go to him - God takes the divine initiative in revealing himself. Revelation is absolutely necessary for man to have a true knowledge of God. Man is the receiver and God is He who graciously communicates to man. Because of the inherent sin in man, God must take the sovereign initiative to reveal Himself to man.

II. Division of Theology into Four Great Departments - Exegetical theology is the foundation for the other departments of theology because as Vos teaches: “God speaks and man listens.” It is through His Word that God has communicated to man clearly. It matters not what man thinks or imagines about God; what matters is what God thinks about himself. Anyone who would study to show himself approved must understand this foundational point before proceeding to study Historical, Systematic and Practical Theology.
The study of Exegetical Theology consists of: (1) the study of the actual content of Scripture; (2) the inquiry into the origin of the several Biblical writings (referred to as Exegesis proper); (3) the putting of the question of how these several writings came to be collected into the unity of a Bible or book (canonics); (4) the study of the actual self-disclosures of God in time and space (Biblical Theology).

III. What is Biblical Theology? Even though known popularly by the nomenclature of “Biblical Theology” it is ultimately The History of Special Revelation. G. Vos: “[Biblical Theology is] that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible.” The teaches us initially that God has truly revealed himself through the Scriptures and with the aid of the Holy Spirit of God, man can truly come to know Him as He has chosen to reveal Himself.

A) The Historic Progressiveness of the Revelation Process- God in Scripture has not revealed Himself all at once in time as it were, but has communicated His revelation to man progressively in history. God’s revelation has “unfolded itself in a long series of successive acts.” This is to be understood in light of God himself and his communication to man his creation through historical intervals. The
following exists alongside each other from the beginning of God’s revelation to man.

1. **Objective-Central Acts of God**: The incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection of Christ.


**B) The Actual Embodiment of Revelation in History** - Vos teaches that this revelation of God becomes “incarnate in history.” The order of God’s revelation is: Word → then the fact → then the interpretive Word of God. For instance, the Old Testament brings the “predictive preparatory word,” the Gospels record the revelatory fact, the Epistles supply the subsequent, final interpretation.¹

**C) The Organic Nature of the Historic Process Observable in Revelation** - It is observable in revelation how God’s message to man becomes clearer and sometimes more audible in particular, epochal stages of His revealing. In the Old Testament there were times when God would speak with Moses, speak through the prophets, culminating in the revelation of God in the flesh in the New Testament. This does

not mean that God was not active at other times, but that he chose to reveal himself in epochs - historically to his people.

D) **The Fourth Aspect of Revelation Determinative of the Study of Biblical Theology consists in its Practical Adaptability** - God’s revelation is not a mere school whereby he teaches his people the truth about Himself. Rather, in His graciousness he has revealed Himself in Covenant to His people, intertwining his revelation and truth of himself with the everyday lives, history and generation of his Covenant people. Vos writes, “All that God disclosed of Himself has come in response to the practical religious needs of His people as these emerged in the course of history.”

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2 ibid., pg. 17.