

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: ITS VALIDITY AND ITS LIMITATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Etymologically, theology means the study of God. As used by the scholastics it included all that God has made and therefore could involve everything in the universe. In the course of time most of those areas that deal with observable phenomena have been classified under specific scientific heads while those dealing with theoretical interpretation have largely been placed under the term philosophy. As understood today systematic theology means a systematic arrangement of facts regarding the being of God and regarding the supernatural world.

There is no basis on which a non-Christian can properly undertake to build a valid systematic theology. He has no access to the appropriate data. Any conclusions he reaches are based on an insufficient factual foundation and therefore are entirely speculative.

If the non-Christian's eyes are open he must see signs of God's existence on every hand. There is no reasonable way to explain the material universe apart from the activity of an omnipotent divine Creator. The material world is filled with evidences of the existence of God, but tells nothing about His character. The same is true about man's mental makeup. Every man has within him, even if only deep within his consciousness, a belief in the existence of God, but this does not tell him anything about the nature or character of God. There is no way that information in this realm can be gained except through a revelation from God Himself.

The situation is similar with regard to the moral law. Every human being recognizes that there is a difference between right and wrong, even though he may have crowded recognition of this difference into a comparatively small area of