

theology, *n.*

Pronunciation: /θi:'ɒlədʒi/

Forms: Also ME **teologie**, ME–16 **theologie** (ME **theologi**, 15 **theologie**).

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: < French *théologie* (14th cent. in Hatzfeld & Darmesteter), < Latin *theologia*, < Greek *θεολογία*, abstract noun < *θεολόγος*: see THEOLOGUE *n.* and -LOGY *comb. form*.

Greek *θεολογία* meant 'an account of the gods, or of God (whether legendary or philosophical)'. Varro, following the Stoics, distinguished three kinds of *theologia*, mythical, natural (rational), and civil, the last being the knowledge of the due rites and ceremonies of religion. This threefold division is referred to also by Tertullian and St. Augustine. In Christian Greek, the verb *θεολογεῖν* was used = 'to speak of as God, to attribute deity to', whence *θεολογία* had the specific sense of 'the ascription of a divine nature to Christ', in contrast to *οἰκονομία*, the doctrine of his incarnation and human nature. Another patristic Greek use, arising out of the primary sense, was 'the account of God, or record of God's ways, as given in the Bible', whence the late Greek and medieval Latin use of *theologia* for the Scriptures themselves. In the 12th cent. (1121–40) Abelard applied the term to a philosophical treatment of the doctrines of the Christian religion, which, though at first strongly condemned, became current, and, in this sense, 'theologia' came to designate a department of academic study, the text-books of which were the Bible and the Sentences (from the Fathers) of Peter Lombard. Hence the earliest English use. (The passage from Gower in sense 3 is derived ultimately from Aristotle's division of the theoretic forms of philosophy into *μαθηματική*, *φυσική*, *θεολογική*, the last being what we should call metaphysics, which included his doctrine of the divine nature.)

1.

a. The study or science which treats of God, His nature and attributes, and His relations with man and the universe; 'the science of things divine' (Hooker); divinity.

Biblical theology: orig. theology as a non-dogmatic description of the religious doctrines contained in the Bible, following J. P. Gabler's distinction, in 1787, between biblical and dogmatic theology; now usu. the exposition of biblical texts (both O.T. and N.T.), based on the presupposition that there is a common biblical way of thinking which informs the Bible as a whole.

dogmatic theology, theology as authoritatively held and taught by the church; a scientific statement of Christian dogma. **natural theology,** theology based upon reasoning from natural facts apart from revelation.

1362 LANGLAND *Piers Plowman* A. XI. 136 Bote Teologie [B. x. 180, C. XII. 129 theologie] haþ teoned me ten score tymes; For þe more I muse þeron þe mistiloker hit semeþ.

c1386 CHAUCER *Parson's Tale* ¶969 The exposicion of this hooly preyere..I bitake to thise maistres of Theologie.

1552 ABP. J. HAMILTON *Catech.* (title-page), Doctours of Theologie and Canon law.

1593 R. HOOKER *Of Lawes Eccl. Politie* III. viii. 146 The whole drift of the scripture of God what is it but only to teach Theologie? Theologie what is it but the science of thinges diuine?

- c1698 J. LOCKE *Thoughts on Conduct of Understanding* xxii, Theology, which, containing the knowledge of God and His creatures, our duty to him and our fellow-creatures, and a view of our present and future state, is the comprehension of all other knowledge, directed to its true end.
- 1743 E. YOUNG *Complaint: Night the Fourth* 7 Was I as plump, as stall'd Theology, Wishing would waste me to this Shade again.
- [1787 J. P. GABLER *Kleinere Theol. Schriften* (1831) II. 179 (title) De iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus.]
- 1837 H. HALLAM *Introd. Lit. Europe* I. i. 96 Peter Lombard, the founder of systematic theology in the twelfth century.
- 1845 CORRIE *Theol.* in *Encycl. Metrop.* 857/1 Under the..term Theology we comprehend all the knowledge which man can obtain respecting God, whether concerning His nature and attributes, or concerning the relation in which man stands to Him.
- 1846 C. W. BUCH tr. Hagenbach *Compend. Hist. Doctr.* I. 5 In our opinion biblical theology is only to be regarded as the *foundation-stone* of the edifice..and dogmatic theology as the builder.
- 1874 J. DUNCAN *Pulpit & Commun. Table* 73 Polemical theology is the defence, Practical theology the application, of Dogmatic theology, which again rests upon Exegetical.
- 1888 *Encycl. Brit.* XXIII. 264/2 Biblical theology is the delineation of a section of religious ideas, —that section of which the traces and records remain in the Bible.
- 1904 A. B. DAVIDSON *Theol. O.T.* i. 1 In Biblical Theology the Bible is the source of the knowledge, and also supplies the form in which the knowledge is presented.
- 1951 H. H. ROWLEY *Old Testament & Mod. Study* xi. 312 Since the publication of Gabler's famous address in 1787, the correctness of the distinction which he drew between biblical and dogmatic theology has been accepted as axiomatic by the majority of scholars.
- 1958 *Listener* 14 Aug. 241/1 A new subject has appeared called Biblical Theology. This means that the Bible, or rather the New Testament, is now subjected to analysis in order to see what is the total message or picture that it contains.
- 1969 A. RICHARDSON *Dict. Christian Theol.* 36/2 The question..remains whether there can be a completely presuppositionless interpretation of any historical documents (as tended to be assumed by those who regarded biblical theology as a purely descriptive science).

b. A particular theological system or theory. Also *fig. liberation theology*: see as main entry.

- 1669 T. GALE *Court of Gentiles: Pt. I* III. iv. 53 Aristotle wonderfully agrees with the Mosaic Theologie herein.
- 1796 H. HUNTER tr. J. H. B. de Saint-Pierre *Stud. Nature* (1799) III. 734 Among those questions, two hundred referred to the theology of the Hebrews.
- 1830 J. MACKINTOSH *Diss. Progress Ethical Philos.* 55 Clarke..considered such a scheme as the only security against Hobbism, and probably also against the Calvinistic theology.
- 1837 H. HALLAM *Introd. Lit. Europe* I. i. 17 The scholastic theology..was in its general principle, an alliance between faith and reason.

- 1874 J. B. BROWN *Higher Life* xx. 408 There lies a meaning in these glorious words..for which there is no room that I can see in any of our theologies.
- 1899 C. K. PAUL *Memories* iv. 130 There [*i.e.* at Eton] in 1841 [some] of us..became conscious of the great stir which was going on at Oxford; a few of our masters were falling under the influence of the new theology.
- 1907 *Standard* 19 Jan. 9/4 Latest development of 'New Theology'.
- 1956 P. LARKIN *Less Deceived* (ed. 3) 36 Our garden, first: where I did not invent Blinding theologies of flowers and fruit, And wasn't spoken to by an old hat.

c. Applied to pagan or non-Christian systems.

- 1662 E. STILLINGFLEET *Origines Sacrae* I. ii. §8 Had we no other demonstration of the greatness of mans Apostacy and degeneracy, the Ægyptian Theology would be an irrefragable evidence of it.
- 1677 R. GILPIN *Dæmonol. Sacra* II. iv. 258 The Gentile Theology of Dæmons is the thing which Paul prophesies should be introduced into Christianity.
- 1712 J. ADDISON *Spectator* No. 471. ¶8 Our Forefather, according to the Pagan Theology, had a great Vessel presented him by Pandora.
- 1841 M. ELPHINSTONE *Hist. India* I. II. iv. 211 Their theology, mythology, philosophy,..are almost entirely of the Hindú family.

d. In trivial or disparaging use: a system of theoretical principles; an (impractical or rigid) ideology. Cf. THEOLOGICAL *adj.* 3.

- 1962 *Listener* 29 Mar. 551/2, I would also like to see a couple of first-class philosophers, who would..check the new brand of strategists, who have produced a complete theology, not only about the deterrent but about conventional weapons, and about morale and everything else. I think the spectacle of Whitehall trying to keep up with American theologies is too sad for words.
- 1973 *Times* 3 Oct. 14/4 There were also a few rival interpretations of Marxist theology.
- a1974 R. CROSSMAN *Diaries* (1976) II. 391 At S.E.P., this morning, we were discussing Paper 105, a brilliant demolition of the theology of PESC.
- 1980 *Times Lit. Suppl.* 8 Feb. 134/2 Like the farmers of Iowa in relation to China in a later period, they were impatient with the theology of diplomatic recognition.

†2.

a. Rarely used for Holy Scripture. So late Greek *θεολογία* (Pseudo-Dionysus *De Cæl. Hier.* 9 §3), medieval Latin *theologia*. *Obs.*

[Cf. a1149 *Hugo de S. Victore* (in Migne 1091 C), *Theologia, id est divina scriptura.*]

- a1513 R. FABYAN *New Cronycles Eng. & Fraunce* (1516) I. ccxx. f. cxli, This Lamfranke..was perfytely lerned in the scyence of Theologie or holy wrytte.

[Cf. 1659 MILTON *Consid. touching Hirelings* 98 The study of scripture (which is the only true theologie).]

†b. Hence, **virtues of theology** (also *vertues theologies*, (?) *theologycs*) = ‘theological virtues’: see THEOLOGICAL *adj.* 1. *Obs.*

a1500 (▶ 1422) J. YONGE tr. *Secreta Secret.* (Rawl.) (1898) 145 Ther byth thre Vertues pryncipalle of theologi or dyuynte, y-callid in lateyne Fides, Spes, Caritas.

a1500 (▶ 1422) J. YONGE tr. *Secreta Secret.* (Rawl.) (1898) 124 The prologe of the .iiij^e. Cardynale vertues, declarynge the .iiij^e. vertues of theologie, and foure maner of goodis.

1502 tr. *Ordynarye of Crysten Men* (de Worde) II. i. sig. i.i, The thre vertues theologies or dyuynes.

†3. Metaphysics. (See Note below.) *Obs.*

1390 J. GOWER *Confessio Amantis* III. 86–7 Theorique..stant departed upon thre, The ferste..Is cleped in Philosophie The science of Theologie, That other named is Phisique, The thridde is seid Mathematique. Theologie is that science Which unto man yifth evidence Of thing which is noght bodely.

c1425 LYDGATE *Assembly of Gods* 859 Arsmetry, Geometry with Astronomy,..Nobyll Theology, and Corporall Physyk.

PHRASES

theology of liberation *n.* = LIBERATION THEOLOGY *n.*

1968 R. ALVES in *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 32 (1970) 1314 Toward a Theology of Liberation.

1970 G. GUTIÉRREZ in *In Search Theol. of Devel.* (Sodepax) 116 The question of a theology of liberation must be placed in its proper perspective.

1970 G. GUTIÉRREZ in *Theol. Stud.* 31 243 (*heading*) Notes for a theology of liberation.

1973 *Time* 23 Apr. 42 Jesuits are at loggerheads in Latin America over a Christian-Marxist synthesis known as the ‘theology of liberation’.

DRAFT ADDITIONS 1993

theology of hope *n.* [translating German *Theologie der Hoffnung*]
a theory popularized by West German theologians in the 1960s,

emphasizing Christian hope as the basis for human action and realized eschatology; cf. LIBERATION THEOLOGY *n*.

[1959 E. BLOCH (*title*) Das Prinzip Hoffnung.]

1967 J. W. LEITCH tr. Moltmann *Theol. of Hope* 26 The most serious objection to a theology of hope springs not from presumption or despair, for these two basic attitudes of human existence presuppose hope.

1970 J. C. BENNETT in *In Search Theol. of Devel.* 8, I do believe that there is a tendency in the theologies of hope to take a short cut and too easily to deduce hope for social and political changes from Christian doctrine.

1977 A. ECCLESTONE *Staircase for Silence* v. 99 A theology of hope has become a recognised feature of our time.

1984 *Sunday Tel.* 9 Sept. 6/5 Liberation Theology was spawned in West Germany in the early 1960s (when it was called the Theology of Hope), and has since spread all over Latin America.

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