

# 3. Philosophical Methodology

## I. Introduction: Why Philosophical Methodology?

- 1) Relationship between Theology and Philosophy
- 2) Theology is the study of God and addresses divine revelation.
- 3) Philosophy is the rational inquiry into being, knowledge, truth, and values.
- 4) Theology is grounded in revelation; however, philosophical reasoning is employed to understand, organize, and articulate revelation.

## 2. Necessity of Philosophical Methodology

- 1) Doctrine is not a mere collection of biblical quotations but logically structured truth.
  - 2) It is necessary to provide rational apologetics against heresies, atheism, and secular ideologies.
  - 3) Certain theological concepts (e.g., the Trinity, Incarnation, free will, problem of evil) require philosophical language for proper explanation.
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## II. Definition of Philosophical Methodology

### 1) Definition

- (1) Philosophical methodology is the use of reason and logic to analyze, systematize, and defend theological truth.
- (2) It serves revelation; it does not replace it.

### 2) Core Principles

- (1) Philosophy is the servant, not the master, of theology.
  - (2) Philosophy must operate under Scripture, not above it.
  - (3) When reason and revelation seem to conflict, Scripture retains final authority.
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## III. Major Areas of Philosophical Methodology

### 1) Metaphysics

- (1) Focus: The study of being and existence
- (2) Theological Applications:
  - (3) God's mode of existence (aseity, immutability, eternity)
  - (4) Existence of creation and created beings
  - (5) Unity and diversity in the Trinity

### 2) Epistemology

- (1) Focus: How humans know truth
- (2) Theological Applications:
  - ① Knowledge of revelation (general vs. special)

- ② Relationship between faith and reason
- ③ Role of the Holy Spirit's illumination

### 3) Logic

- (1) Focus: Rules of correct thinking and reasoning
- (2) Theological Applications:
  - ① Systematization of doctrine
  - ② Discernment of error, contradiction, and heresy
  - ③ Construction of apologetic arguments

### 4) Ethics

- (1) Focus: Standards of right and wrong, moral judgment
  - (2) Theological Applications:
    - ① God's absolute moral standard
    - ② Ethics of Law and Gospel
    - ③ Distinction between Christian ethics and secular ethics
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## IV. Theology and Philosophy in Historical Context

### 1) Early Church

- (1) Utilized Greek philosophical concepts (Logos, essence, hypostasis)
- (2) Nicene Creed and doctrine of the Trinity formalized through philosophical terminology

### 2) Medieval Theology

- (1) Augustine: influenced by Platonic philosophy
- (2) Thomas Aquinas: harmonized Aristotelian philosophy with divine revelation

### 3) Reformation

- (1) Restored the priority of Scripture over philosophy
- (2) Logic and conceptual tools continued to be used

### 4) Modern and Contemporary Theology

- (1) Enlightenment: absolutized human reason
  - (2) Liberal theology: weakened revelation
  - (3) Evangelical theology: restored instrumental use of philosophy
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## V. Strengths and Limitations of Philosophical Methodology

### 1) Strengths

- (1) Organizes theology logically and systematically
- (2) Strengthens the intellectual dimension of faith
- (3) Useful in dialogue and apologetics with unbelievers

## 2) Limitations & Dangers

- (1) Reason may dominate over revelation
  - (2) Temptation to fit Scripture into philosophical systems
  - (3) Risk of losing simple, childlike faith
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## VI. Principles for Proper Philosophical Methodology

- 1) Primacy of Scripture
  - 2) Use of reason centered on revelation
  - 3) Harmony with Church tradition
  - 4) Dependence on the Holy Spirit's illumination
  - 5) Maintain a humble academic attitude
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## VII. Conclusion: Proper Role of Philosophical Methodology

- 1) Philosophical methodology is a tool, not the foundation, of theology.
  
- 2) It complements biblical methodology, interprets historical methodology, and enables systematic theology and apologetics.
  
- 3) Healthy theology harmoniously integrates revelation, history, and reason.