

The
Management
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UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION (SOE)

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF EDUCATION ARTS

RES 224: THEOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

DATE: 29TH JULY 2026

DURATION: 2 HOURS

MAXIMUM MARKS: 70

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Write your registration number on the answer booklet.
2. **DO NOT** write on this question paper.
3. This paper contains **SIX (6)** questions.
4. Question **ONE** is compulsory.
5. Answer any other **THREE** questions.
6. Question **ONE** carries **25 MARKS** and the rest carry **15 MARKS** each.
7. **Write all your answers in the Examination answer booklet provided**

QUESTION ONE

THE CONCEPT OF THEOLOGY

Theology is one of the oldest academic disciplines and remains central to the study of religion and faith. Derived from the Greek words *theos* (God) and *logos* (study or discourse), theology refers to the systematic study of God, divine revelation, religious beliefs, and the relationship between God and humanity. Throughout history, theology has played a significant role in shaping religious thought, moral values, and social institutions. It seeks not only to understand God but also to interpret human existence in light of divine purposes. This essay examines the nature, scope, and importance of theology in both the Church and contemporary society.

Theology, derived from the Greek words *theos* (God) and *logos* (word, discourse), is the disciplined study and articulation of God's nature, actions, and relationship to creation. Historically, it has served as the intellectual backbone of Christian doctrine and practice, shaping the Church's engagement with the world across time. Alister McGrath defines theology as "the sustained attempt to speak meaningfully about God in the face of human limitations and historical context." In this light, theology is not merely a systematic catalog of doctrines but a dynamic endeavor that seeks to interpret divine revelation for the ongoing life of faith.

In recent decades, the rapid evolution of culture—marked by postmodern skepticism, secularism, globalization, and the digital revolution—has called for a renewed approach to theological reflection. Theologians such as James K. A. Smith have emphasized that theology must now consider cultural liturgies and embodied practices, recognizing that faith is not merely believed but lived. This contemporary moment demands more than a repetition of inherited doctrines; it calls for a contextualized theology that speaks to real-world crises and human experiences. As Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen notes, the pluralism and interconnectedness of the 21st century necessitate "a constructive theology that is dialogical, intercultural, and interdisciplinary."

The significance of a contemporary theological perspective lies not in its novelty but in its faithfulness to the enduring Gospel amid changing times. Contemporary theology, therefore, is not an abandonment of orthodoxy but a vital expression of it, reshaped by fresh challenges and opportunities. The work of theologians like Kathryn Tanner and Willie James Jennings exemplifies this ongoing project. Tanner insists that theology must be critically engaged with economics and social systems, while Jennings stresses theology's role in confronting racism and colonial legacy. Together, these voices underscore the need for theology to remain prophetic and pastoral, rooted in Scripture and tradition, while attentive to the cries of the present age.

Theology has always existed in dialogue with its historical context, shaped by philosophical movements, ecclesiastical traditions, and cultural challenges. While classical theology provided foundational doctrines rooted in Scripture and the early Church Fathers, the rise of modernity, emphasizing reason and individualism, compelled theologians to rearticulate faith in light of new epistemologies. Therefore, Contemporary theology is not a break from tradition but a necessary evolution. As Alister McGrath observes, theology must "engage critically and creatively with culture" to remain faithful and relevant. Similarly, James K. A. Smith argues that theology today must address the "cultural liturgies" shaping human desire, recognizing that secularism is not merely intellectual but formational.

Liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez have emphasized that theology must be done "from below," responding to the lived realities of the oppressed, thus broadening the theological task beyond abstract speculation. Likewise, theologian Kwame Bediako, writing from an African context, insists that the incarnation affirms every culture as a potential vehicle for divine self-disclosure, urging a contextual theology that honors Scripture and indigenous realities. These voices highlight the ongoing need for theological engagement that is historically conscious, culturally aware, and spiritually discerning.

The modern era, beginning with the Enlightenment, introduced a rationalist and human-centered worldview that deeply challenged traditional theological convictions. The Enlightenment emphasized reason, individual autonomy, and empirical evidence, often relegating divine revelation to personal belief rather than public truth. This shift led to a crisis of authority for theology, as Scripture and church tradition were increasingly subjected to historical-critical methods and philosophical skepticism. Alister McGrath notes that theology was forced to “redefine its intellectual credibility in a culture that had become suspicious of religious truth claims.” Theologians were compelled to respond to this intellectual environment by articulating faith in ways that could engage rational critique without sacrificing core doctrinal commitments.

In the postmodern era, the challenge shifted again—this time toward rejecting overarching metanarratives and embracing pluralism and relativism. Postmodernism questioned the idea of universal truth, destabilizing the foundations upon which much of classical theology rested. Stanley Grenz observed that postmodernity “undermines the notion of an objective theological framework” and calls for a theology that listens to the lived experiences of diverse communities. Similarly, Kevin Vanhoozer argues that theology must navigate the “crisis of meaning” brought about by the fragmentation of truth and identity. Meanwhile, James K. A. Smith calls for a retrieval of premodern practices and liturgies to counter the “immanent frame” of secular modernity. These theologians highlight that the contemporary task of theology is not simply to defend old truths but to communicate them anew in a culture marked by skepticism, diversity, and dislocation.

Required:

- a)** Analyze the historical development of New Testament Theology as an academic discipline. **(5 marks)**
- b)** Using five points assess the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church.

**(5
marks)**

- c) Evaluate **five** New Testament teachings on wealth and poverty. (5 marks)**
- d) Examine the portrayal of Jesus as the Messiah in the Gospels. (10 marks)**

QUESTION TWO

- a) Examine **five** impacts of Roman rule on the ministry of Jesus and the early church. (5 marks)**
- b) Critically analyze **five** New Testament understandings of salvation. (10 marks)**

QUESTION THREE

- a) Propose **five** solutions to problems facing religion in Africa today. (5 marks)**
- b) Examine **five** ethical demands of the Kingdom of God according to Jesus' teachings. (10 marks)**

QUESTION FOUR

- a) Examine the relevance of Jesus' teachings on forgiveness in modern society. (5 marks)**
- b) Explore the origin and growth of the early church in the New Testament (10 marks)**

QUESTION FIVE

- a) Explore **five** New Testament teachings on the second coming of Christ.

**(5
marks)**

- b) Critically analyze the Christology of Jesus Christ.
(10 marks)

QUESTION SIX

- a) Examine the concept of eternal life in Johannine writings.
(5 marks)

- b) Evaluate the titles of Jesus in the New Testament, such as Son of God, Son of Man, and Lord.
(10 marks)