

## **INTRODUCING A “NEW” THEOLOGY: RETHINKING-THE-BIBLE THEOLOGY**

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A "new" theology is emerging—one that aligns with the current cultural landscape and is committed to examining the foundational roots of our cultural and religious beliefs. This is not a theology rooted in the Early and Medieval Ages, nor is it confined to the Reformation or the Postmodern era. It transcends geographical boundaries, encompassing not just Western thought but also African and Asian perspectives. This theology speaks to the inquisitive and critical minds that defy the limitations of time and space.

Rethinking-the-Bible Theology, although it may sprout from Africa, is not confined to African identity; though it may draw insights from Black experiences, it is not exclusively for Black individuals. The essence of this theology is rooted in the pursuit of truth, a truth that liberates from various forms of bondage—be it religious, political, cultural, educational, moral, emotional, mental, economic, or historical (see Matthew 7:7; John 8:32). It stands firmly for values that accompany truth: freedom, dialogue, openness, creativity, and innovation.

The cornerstone of Rethinking-the-Bible Theology is a relentless quest for truth—truth that is not just an academic pursuit but a transformative force. Its aim is not merely to contribute to an existing body of knowledge; it seeks an understanding of truth that may challenge conventions. The quality of research within this theology does not conform to conventional academic standards but rather values the dedication to unearthing and understanding truth. This commitment mandates openness to dialogue, learning, growth, and change, leading it to challenge established assumptions and explore unconventional or uncomfortable ideas.

Central to Rethinking-the-Bible Theology is the inquiry into whether the Bible genuinely teaches the religious truth claims and beliefs we hold. Much like the symbolic "talking Serpent" in Genesis 3—a representation of philosophical inquiry—this theology poses a crucial question: Does the Bible truly convey the beliefs we have about God, humanity, and the world?

This inquiry does not rest on whether our beliefs are biblically based; rather, it questions whether we genuinely understand them or merely assume we do because they are found in Scripture.

The talking Serpent's inquiry is not one of deceit but a philosophical challenge aimed at the mythic figures of Adam and Eve, questioning their understanding of God's command. The Serpent did not proffer falsehood; instead, it sparked a dialogue that challenged their assumptions. As such, the Serpent invites reflection on the depths of understanding rather than imposing belief.

Ultimately, the Serpent's role reveals a fundamental truth about human tendencies to build beliefs on error, often acting as zealous guardians of those misconceptions. This underscores the vital need for Rethinking-the-Bible Theology—the necessity to discern the truthfulness of what we claim God, represented in the Bible, communicates to us.

Unlike attempts to reconcile historical gaps in biblical interpretation or to reinterpret Scripture through the lens of modernity, Rethinking-the-Bible Theology, akin to the Bereans (Acts 17:11), rigorously investigates the Biblical text. It critically asks not only whether Biblical assertions are true but also whether we truly understand them or simply assume we do. Through this lens, we strive to reclaim a theology that prioritizes genuine understanding and truth-seeking.

### **Rethinking-the-Bible Theology and the Bible**

Rethinking-the-Bible Theology posits that our interpretation of the Bible is deeply influenced by our understanding of its essence. This raises an essential question: What exactly is the Bible? For too long, we have passively accepted it as a divine revelation from God—regarded as the ultimate authority in our lives and faith—without thoughtfully examining its nature. The belief that we should never question the Bible, equating inquiry with a challenge to God and His authority, has been pervasive.

1. To reinforce this uncritical attitude, passages such as Deuteronomy 29:29 are frequently cited, instilling a fear of questioning and confounding critical thinking with rebellion. Consequently, blind conformity has become the predominant virtue. Rethinking-the-Bible Theology fundamentally challenges this notion and asserts that we must engage with the text critically.

This theology does not view the Bible as a religious revelation or document designed for the colonization of any race. Although it can be misused by both religious and political figures, its significance remains relevant across time. Misinterpretations by the ignorant do not diminish its value. For proponents of Rethinking-the-Bible Theology, the Bible is an existential document meant to address human existence and societal dynamics—not a narrative about God.

It is important to emphasize that while the Bible speaks of divine matters, its primary focus is humanity's story. The human journey does not begin with the creation narrative; rather, the Bible is a by-product of mankind's quest for meaning. While humans authored its verses, they invoked God's name to lend authority and justification to their creations. However, the human story cannot be fully told without acknowledging the divine, and similarly, God's narrative is intertwined with humanity.

By positioning the Bible as an existential document, it addresses the fundamental conditions of human existence, thus retaining its relevance in every era. It does not

confine itself to the specifics of particular existential questions encountered by different generations or societies. This timelessness allows it to transcend specific ages and geographies.

Rethinking-the-Bible Theology centers on the examination of the Bible as its core theme and starting point. The Bible serves as the primary source for its studies, research, and discussions. This theological approach begins by exploring the historical foundations, formation, and evolution of the Bible, then provides an overview of its content, including detailed discussions on key themes within individual books.

The quality of research in Rethinking-the-Bible Theology is not measured solely by adherence to conventional academic standards or passive references. Instead, it prioritizes the enduring impact of its critical inquiries and engaging dialogues, fostering a vibrant exploration of the text and its implications for the human experience.