

Introduction to Systematic Theology

Vern S. Poythress, Ph.D, Th.D.

A. What Is Systematic Theology?

What Is Theology?

Theology = theo- + -logy

theos = God

logos = word, discourse

- Discourse about God
- More broadly,
 - explaining what the Bible teaches.

What Is *Systematic* Theology?

Explaining what the Bible teaches, organized by topic ("system")

B. Why is Systematic Theology Important?



And if the bugle gives an <u>indistinct sound</u>, who will get ready for battle? (1 Cor. 14:8)

Sound Doctrine (2)

Follow the pattern of the <u>sound</u> words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. (2 Tim. 1:13-14)

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph. 4:15-16)

Sound Doctrine (3)

Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. (1 Tim. 6:2-5)

C. What Is Salvation?

Core Principle: God Saves

Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! (Ps. 3:8)



Core Principle: From God

- God the Father
- God the Son
- God the Holy Spirit

- Plans and sends
- Accomplishes
- Applies (Pentecost and the church)

Core Principle: From God

- God the Father
- God the Son
- God the Holy Spirit

- Adopts us as children
- Reflects his Sonship in us
- Cries with us, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15)

Core Principle: No Boasting

(Boasting in God)

What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? (1 Cor. 4:7)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may <u>boast</u>. (Eph. 2:8-9)

Core Principle: God Chooses

And he [God] said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. (Ex. 33:19)

Versus: I will be gracious to those who are gracious.

Classic Phrases from the Reformation

- by Scripture alone (sola scriptura)
- to the glory of God alone (*soli deo gloria*)
- by grace alone (*sola gratia*)
- in Christ alone (*solus Christus*)
- by faith alone (sola fide)

**Unpacking Salvation: WTS Curriculum

- by Scripture alone
- to the glory of God alone
- by grace alone
- in Christ alone
- by faith alone

- ◆ ST 101 Intro
- ◆ ST 113 God
- ◆ ST 211 Man
- ST 223 Christ
- ST 313 Salvation
- ST 231 Living (Ethics)
- ST 343 Church

D. How Did We Get Here?

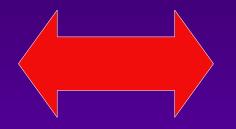
Growth in History

- Ancient Church
- Medieval Church
- Reformation: Protestantism "Reformed Theology"

- God, Christ
- Atonement
- Purification
 - ◆ Scripture
 - ◆ Grace

Disagreements Who is God?

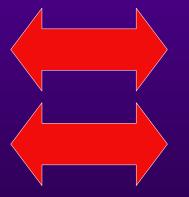
Trinitarian
Doctrine



Antitrinitarians

Whose authority?

Bible



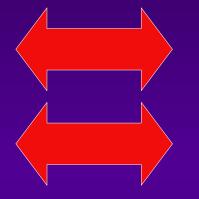
Bible + tradition

Bible +
new voice
of the Spirit

Disagreements

Link to the past?

Sift tradition by the Bible

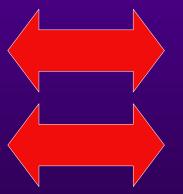


Bible + tradition

Bible + fresh start

Who saves?

God (monoergism)



you (Pelagian)

God + you (synergism)

Reformation Positions

- Eastern Orthodoxy
- Roman Catholic
- Enthusiasts
- Anabaptists
- Lutheran & Reformed
- English baptists
- Arminianism

- tradition; synergism
- tradition; synergism
- fresh revelations
- pacifism; reject infant baptism
- sola scriptura;sola gratia
- subpart of Reformed
- synergism

Growth in History (2)

- Ancient Church
- Medieval Church
- Reformation

- Post-Reformation
- Old PrincetonSeminary
- WTS

- God, Christ
- Atonement
- Purification

- Consolidation
- Hold orthodoxy (vs. liberalism)
- Growth

WTS Distinctives

- Westminster Standards
- Van Til's apologetics
 - ◆"presuppositional apologetics"
- Geerhardus Vos's redemptive history
 - ◆ "biblical theology"
- Jay Adams's pastoral care
 - ◆"biblical counseling"
- John Murray's exegetical theology

E. Resources

- Romans 9:6-25; Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Cor. 4:7
- Westminster Standards
 - ◆ Westminster Confession of Faith
 - ◆ Westminster Shorter Catechism
 - ◆ Westminster Larger Catechism
 - https://pcanet.org/beliefs/
- Steele and Thomas, The Five Points of Calvinism
- Ned Stonehouse, J. Gresham Machen