

Systematic Theology: Introduction
FBC Summer ALC
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June 2, 2018

I. Definitions

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Theo: God
Logos: word or rational expression
Theology: rational expression of truths regarding God

definition: The discovery, systematizing, and presentation of truths about God (and truths about Creation in the context of the truths about God)

II. Organizing Principles

You can organize theology by

- A. Eras (patristic, medieval, reformation, modern)
- B. Viewpoint (Arminian, Reformed, Calvinistic, etc.)
- C. Focus
 1. Historical theology: the historical development and context, with a focus on church councils
 2. Biblical theology: focus on discovering truths in the context of their biblical books, with an emphasis on the progressive revelation through Scripture; it sees theology as developing in the Bible, whereas systematic theology approaches theology as completed
 3. Systematic theology:
systematize, summarize, categorize, synthesize
tries to systematize and summarize the complete revelation; categorizes and then synthesizes biblical truths from throughout Scripture.

2 Cautions:

- The Bible only occasionally and only in the epistles gives us theology straight. While it's important to systematize, it's also important to appreciate the value of the stories, poetry, wisdom literature and so on for what they are. The idea is not just to extract the propositional truth, the idea is to be shaped by the literature.
- God is a God of order and reason, and so we can also be ordered and reasoned; but remember that there are limits to our human comprehension. I think we can get in trouble sometimes because we insist on deriving answers to questions biblical passages do not intend or attempt to answer in the way we would like.

III. Scope

“Systematic theology seeks to coordinate the teaching of various biblical authors across various redemptive-historical epochs and literary genres, and across the Bible’s two testaments, in a way

that does not mute or flatten the diversity of biblical teaching but allows it to shine forth in its multisplendored richness.

“Furthermore, systematic theology seeks to coordinate the teaching of holy Scripture with that which may be learned outside of holy Scripture through general revelation, recognizing that, because the Bible is the supreme source of wisdom about God, it plays the role of adjudicator and judge in relation to all lesser sources of wisdom about God.”

“Systematic theology seeks not only to understand what the Bible says about “salvation” or “good works.” It also seeks to understand the relationship between “salvation” and “good works” (Eph. 2:8–10). Confusion about the relationships between various doctrines inevitably leads to confusion about the doctrines themselves. The supreme relationship that systematic theology considers is the relationship between God and everything else.”

Scott Swain crossway.org

Example of how systematic theology clarifies relationships between doctrines and passages:
What do you need to do to be “saved”?

[Mat 24:13 ESV] 13 But the one who **endures to the end** will be saved.

[Mar 16:16 ESV] 16 Whoever **believes and is baptized** will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

[Jhn 10:9 ESV] 9 I am the door. If anyone **enters by me**, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

[Act 2:21 ESV] 21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who **calls upon the name of the Lord** shall be saved.'

[Rom 10:9 ESV] 9 because, if you **confess with your mouth** that Jesus is Lord and **believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

[1Co 15:2 ESV] 2 and by which you are being saved, **if you hold fast** to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.

[Eph 2:8 ESV] 8 For by grace you have been saved **through faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

[1Ti 2:15 ESV] 15 Yet she will be saved **through childbearing--if they continue** in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

A note on special (the Bible) vs. general (Creation, reason, history, etc.) revelation:

All forms of theology may take general revelation into account, but systematic tends to rely more on reason and philosophy

God is a God of order and reason, and so we can also be ordered and reasoned; but remember that there are limits to our human comprehension. I think we can get in trouble sometimes because we insist on deriving answers to questions biblical passages do not intend or attempt to answer in the way we would like.

e.g. sovereignty of God vs. free will of Man

[Psa 103:19 NASB] 19 The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.

[Gen 3:6 ESV] 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

How do we reconcile these two truths?

[Rom 9:13-24 ESV] 13 As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." 14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. 19 You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" 20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory-- 24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

IV. Doing Theology: an Illustration

God is good. How do you know?

Gen. 1

God makes good things

Psalms

[Psa 25:8 ESV] 8 Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

[Psa 34:8 ESV] 8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

[Psa 69:16 ESV] 16 Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.

[Psa 73:1 ESV] 1 A Psalm of Asaph. Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

[Psa 100:5 ESV] 5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

[Psa 118:1 ESV] 1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

[Psa 119:68 ESV] 68 You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.

[Psa 135:3 ESV] 3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing to his name, for it is pleasant!

John

[John 10:11 ESV] 11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 3:16

What else from John tells us that God is good?

Philippians

[Phl 1:6 ESV] 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

[Phl 2:5-11 ESV] 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Book of Job

Where is God's goodness in the book of Job?

We've been doing "biblical theology"

To do "systematic theology" is to ask, how do all these teachings from scripture fit together logically and philosophically?

How is God good?

(list the ways)

But then reason and philosophy raise some questions: How is God good despite the presence of evil in the world?

God is omnipotent. How do you know?

Gen. 1:1

[Gen 50:20 ESV] 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.