

Introduction to Theology

- Theology: what, who, why?
- Contextual nature of theology

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Theology: What, Who, Why?

- **Theology** = *theos* + *logos* = study of God.
 - Used for the study of the doctrine of God.
 - Used for the study of all Christian doctrine.
- Theology is a **second-order** activity.
 - Faith is primary (relationship with God).
 - Theology is our reflection on the content of our faith and our articulation of it.
- **Systematic theology** - comprehensive, logical, topical.

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Theology: What, Who, Why?

- Who does theology?

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Theology: What, Who, Why?

- Do you have to be a Christian to do Christian theology?

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Theology: What, Who, Why?

- Why do we need Christian theology?

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Theology: What, Who, Why?

- Theology and philosophy = love/hate
 - Tertullian: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"
 - Augustine: All truth belongs to Christians.
 - Philosophy has always influenced theology.
 - It can help us develop and communicate theology, but the primary subject matter of theology is from revelation, not philosophy.

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Theology: What, Who, Why?



Theology: What, Who, Why?

- It's a human construct based on revelation.
 - We have true knowledge.
 - We have partial knowledge.
 - There is no inspired theology.

Theology: What, Who, Why?

- Theology is always under development.
- Test theologies by Scripture, not vice versa.
- Acknowledge paradox and mystery.
- Be content not to go further than Scripture can support.
- Humility is a requirement for theologians!

Contextual Nature of Theology

- Read developing statements of faith.
 - What form do they take?
 - What seems to be their function?
 - What are their main concerns?
 - What changes do you see over time?

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Contextual Nature of Theology

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- See the “[biblical-classical synthesis](#)” here.

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Contextual Nature of Theology

- Theology grows out of issues/needs in culture (and particular theological traditions) and addresses those issues/needs.
- It also reflects the theologian who writes it.
- This is why there are so many systematic theologies and why they’re dated so quickly.
- So ask WHOSE systematic theology?

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Contextual Nature of Theology

- Dialogue between kerygma and context.



- Must be faithful to the kerygma.
- Must be relevant to the context.
- Make gospel understandable, not acceptable.

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Contextual Nature of Theology

- Presuppositions of this course:
 - Evangelical perspective for the most part.
 - Our texts...
 - Me: Anabaptist, Arminian, Evangelical.

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Contextual Nature of Theology

- Sources and norms
 - Source: where do we get our material?
 - Norm: by what do we validate our theology?
- Sources: Bible, tradition, contemporary issues, insights from other disciplines, etc.
- Possible norms: Scripture, tradition, reason, experience.

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Contextual Nature of Theology

- Tom Finger:
 - Scripture is the norm of the **truth** of theology.
 - Contemporary culture is the norm of its **intelligibility**.
- Choice of **theological method** reflects how the theologian balances kerygma and context.

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Contextual Nature of Theology

- Three methods:
 - **Concordance model** (“propositionalist”): view Scripture as system of propositional truths; ignore context.
 - **Synthesis model**: adapt kerygma to fit context.
 - **Contextualizing model**: translate kerygma into new context. Paradigm of the incarnation.
- Theologians use **models** or **analogies**.

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