Introduction to Theology

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

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.

Theology: What, Who, Why?

• Who does theology?
Theology: What, Who, Why?

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

Theology: What, Who, Why?

• Why do we need Christian theology?

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.
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 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?

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?

See the “biblical-classical synthesis” here.
**Contextual Nature of Theology**

- Dialogue between kerygma and context.
  - biblical message
  - contemporary culture

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

---

**Contextual Nature of Theology**

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

---

**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.
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.

- 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.