

b. The theologian first builds individual doctrines on the teachings of a number of individual portions of Scripture (this assumes exegetical theology) being careful to compare Scripture with Scripture. He then takes individual doctrines and attempts to discover their interrelationships. In doing so, he may find that he has overstated a doctrine so as to make it appear to conflict with another doctrine. In such a case it may be necessary to modify the understanding of individual doctrines lest, by pressing one doctrine beyond the limits of truth set by another, he represents the Scriptures as teaching error.

For instance, the doctrines of faith, hope, and love may be represented erroneously by a failure to systematize them with one another and with such other doctrines as (for example) the will of God.

(1) The doctrine of faith unrelated to the will of God becomes presumption. The promise in Matthew 21:22 -- "And everything you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" -- must be brought into systematic relationship with the truth of I John 5:14-15 -- "And this is the confidence that we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." The "everything you ask" of Matthew 21 must be qualified by the "ask anything according to His will" of I John 5.

(2) The doctrine of hope unrelated to the will of God becomes empty speculation. Specific predictions of the date of Christ's Second Coming, whether based on interpretations of Daniel or Ezekiel, on a theory of sacred numbers, on the mathematics of the Great Pyramid of Cheops, or on a vision newly received, must be brought into systematic relationship with such statements as that found in Matthew 24:36 -- "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." If it was not the will of the Father to reveal to the Son in His humanity the time of His return, it is virtually a moral certainty that God has not and will not reveal the time to modern-day interpreters or self-proclaimed prophets!

(3) The doctrine of love unrelated to the will of God becomes sentimentalism or self-willed indulgence. The common idea, based on an implication drawn from God's characteristic of love, that God is too kind to send anyone to hell, must be brought into systematic relationship with such revelations of God's will as that expressed by Christ in Matthew 10:28 -- "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

The common practice, based on God's command to love all human beings, of some believers yoking themselves with unbelievers to attempt to do the work of God, must be brought into systematic relationship with such commands as that found in II Corinthians 6:14,17 -- "Do not be bound together with unbelievers;" "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord."