

theology is that, other things being equal, you see further into the meaning and implications of Bible passages than you would do otherwise. The ultimate context of each scriptural sentence is the whole Bible, by which I mean not only 66 books but also biblical teaching; and the better one knows one's Bible in this double sense, the deeper one will see into what particular texts involve. That good theology grows by induction out of Bible study, and must always be taught with reference to its biblical base, is familiar truth. Less familiar, but not less true, is the converse, that Bible study is informed by theology.

This is the case also with Christian witness, which in Scripture means not just relating experience, excellent as that practice is, but primarily proclaiming the Creator as Redeemer, and Jesus Christ as risen Saviour. What has to be said about God and the Son comes from Scripture, but theological study will enable us to see it, and therefore say it, more clearly than would otherwise be possible.

Historical theology too is important here, for learning with and from saints of past days is one dimension of fellowship in the body of Christ, and the great Bible students of yesterday (Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Owen, Edwards and the rest) often have richer insight into key themes than do their current counterparts. And since, as has been truly said, it is beyond the wit of man to invent a new heresy, it is a great help to know the old ones, so that one can spot them when they reappear in modern make-up.

I. Divisions of Systematic Theology

Although various classifications have been suggested, we will employ the following seven-division outline:

- (1) Prolegomena (Introduction to the Study of Theology)
- (2) Theology Proper (The Doctrine of God)
- (3) Anthropology (The Doctrine of Man and Sin)
- (4) Objective Soteriology (The Plan and Provision of Salvation through Christ)
- (5) Subjective Soteriology (The Application of Salvation)
- (6) Ecclesiology (The Doctrine of the Church and Its Ordinances)
- (7) Eschatology (The Doctrine of Last Things)