

I. Know the Plan - 2 Peter 3:16-18: Systematic Theology

Principles

1. Spiritual birth demands a post-salvation spiritual life.
2. Following salvation there is always a lag time between our spiritual birth and the development of a spiritual life.
3. But just as an unbeliever you had equal privilege and equal opportunity to believe in Christ for eternal life, so after salvation you have this same equality to learn, understand, and execute the Plan of God.
4. It is never too late to start; it is never too late to begin taking advantage of your assets. If you are alive, God has a purpose for your life.
5. The human soul will not believe the lie until it first of all reject's truth.
6. The Apostle Peter discusses the two academies in 2 Peter 3:16, 2 Peter 3:17, and 2 Peter 3:18 and indicates that each has its own curriculum and subject matter.

B. Peter's Evaluation of the Two Academies

1. Peter concludes his second epistle with a critique of Paul's epistles in which he recommends them to the serious student of the Plan.

2 Peter 3:16 - As also in all of Paul's epistles, speaking in them concerning these things [advanced doctrines] some of which are hard to understand. These doctrines the ignorant and unstable distort as they do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Chafer, Lewis Sperry. "Preface." Vol. 1 of Systematic Theology, 8 Vols. Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947, pp. v-vii; 6-7,15-16:

Systematic Theology, the greatest of the sciences, has fallen upon evil days. Between the rejection and ridicule of it by the so-called progressives and the neglect and abridgment of it by the orthodox, it, as a potent influence, is approaching the point of extinction. The unchanging emphasis in the Scriptures upon doctrine, which subject is referred to in the New Testament more than forty times and is that to which a Christian is to "take heed," stands as a silent rebuke, whether heeded or not, to all modern notions which belittle the importance of Dogmatic Theology, and also stands as a corrective to those who neglect any portion of it.

It is no secret that the average minister is not now reading Systematic Theology, nor will such writings be found to occupy a prominent place in his library. Shocking indeed this condition would have been to ministers of two generations ago-men whose position was respected in their day because of their deep knowledge of the doctrinal portions of the Bible and whose spoken ministries and writings have gone far toward the up building of the Church.

The present situation is not one of passing moment. As well might a medical doctor discard his books on anatomy and therapeutics as for the preacher to discard his books on Systematic Theology; and since doctrine is the bone structure of the body of revealed truth, the neglect of it must result in a message characterized by uncertainties, inaccuracies, and immaturity. What is the specific field of learning that distinguishes the ministerial profession if it is not the knowledge of the Bible and its doctrines? Men of other professions are tireless in their attempts to discover the truths and to perfect themselves in the use of the forces belonging to their various callings. The preacher is called upon to deal with the things of God,

the supernatural and eternal. Few clergymen's libraries will include even one work on theology, but a medical doctor will assuredly possess a worthy work on anatomy. A form of modern thinking tends to treat all matters of doctrine with contempt.

No substitute will ever be found for the knowledge of the Word of God. That Word alone deals with things eternal and infinite, and it alone has power to convert the soul and to develop a God-honoring spiritual life. There is a limitless yet hidden spiritual content within the Bible which contributes much to its supernatural character.

This spiritual content is never discerned by the natural (psuchikos), or unregenerate man, even though he has attained to the highest degree of learning or ecclesiastical authority. The natural capacities of the human mind do not function in the realm of spiritual things. The divine message is presented "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." When on the ground of scholarship, unregenerate men have been permitted to dictate to the church what she shall believe, she has descended from her supernatural character to the level of a human institution, and it is safe to conclude that men are unregenerate who deny the only ground upon which a soul may be saved.

Acquiring the knowledge of the spiritual content of the Bible is a life task. The great preachers who have moved the hearts of men with divine power have been saturated with Bible truths secured through a first-hand study of its text.

General facts of human learning may be acquired by the usual means, but spiritual truths are apprehended only as taught to the individual heart by the Spirit.

While it is true that the Bible is the source of the material which enters into Systematic Theology, it is equally true that the function of Systematic Theology is to unfold the Bible. In its natural state, gold is often passed over by those with undiscerning eyes. Likewise, the treasures of divine truth are observed only by those who are trained to recognize them. In his years of classroom discipline, the theological student should be taken over the entire field of doctrine that he may be prepared to continue his research in every portion of the Bible throughout his ministry, being prepared to proceed intelligently in every phase of the divine revelation. Apart from such a complete introduction to doctrine, no preacher will be able to hold truth in its right proportions, nor can it be assured that he or his auditors will not drift into the errors of unscriptural cults, or into modernistic unbelief. After covering in a general way the entire field of his profession, the physician or lawyer may serve the public as a specialist in some particular aspect of that profession; but the theologian should not specialize in any department of the truth.

Doctrinal faddists have been the cause of untold harm in the church, and the only way of avoiding this danger, or that of securing preachers who will not be "tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine," is to provide a required discipline in Systematic Theology which incorporates a complete consideration under a competent teacher of the essentials of each doctrine with due recognition of the relation of each doctrine to every other doctrine.

The following definition is submitted by the author: Systematic Theology may be defined as the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works.

The theologian is a Biblicist, namely, one who not only regards the Bible as the sole rule of faith and practice, but as the only dependable source of information in realms wherein divine revelation speaks. . to the theologian is committed the task of systematizing and declaring that divine revelation as it is given.

THE MAJOR DIVISIONS OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

1. **Bibliology.** A consideration of the facts concerning the Bible.
 2. **Theology Proper.** A consideration of the facts concerning God-Father, Son, and Spirit, apart from their works.
 3. **Angelology.** A consideration of the facts concerning the angels, unfallen and fallen.
 4. **Anthropology.** A consideration of the facts concerning man.
 5. **Soteriology.** A consideration of the facts concerning salvation.
 6. **Ecclesiology.** A consideration of the facts concerning the Church.
 7. **Eschatology.** A consideration of all in the Scripture which was predictive at the time it was written.
 8. **Christology.** A consideration of all the Scripture concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.
 9. **Pneumatology.** A consideration of all the Scriptures concerning the Holy Spirit.
 10. **Hamartiology.** A consideration of the facts concerning sin.
 11. **Satanology.** Some schools of theology separate the study of Satan and demons from the study of Angelology and create the category of Satanology - a consideration of the facts concerning Satan and the fallen angels.
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2. Peter here refers to believers who refuse to adjust to the Plan of God.
 3. There may be many reasons but the end result is that in order to force the Bible to comply with their own desires, they must distort it.

LaBarbera, Peter. "Navy's Pro-Gay 'Diversity' Workshop Features Anti-Biblical Videotape." **Human Events.** 7 Oct., 1994, p. 6.