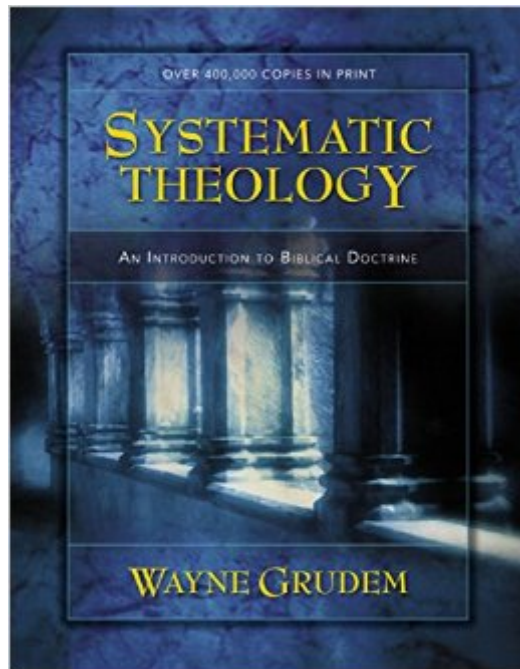


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Systematic Theology: An Introduction To Biblical Doctrine



Synopsis

The Christian church has a long tradition of systematic theology, that is, studying theology and doctrine organized around fairly standard categories such as the Word of God, redemption, and Jesus Christ. This introduction to systematic theology has several distinctive features: - A strong emphasis on the scriptural basis for each doctrine and teaching - Clear writing, with technical terms kept to a minimum - A contemporary approach, treating subjects of special interest to the church today - A friendly tone, appealing to the emotions and the spirit as well as the intellect - Frequent application to life - Resources for worship with each chapter - Bibliographies with each chapter that cross-reference subjects to a wide range of other systematic theologies.

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Customer Reviews

Though I have found immense help in Dr. Grudem's book over the past months, I have post-poned a review in order to get a complete reading of it first. Now that I have read it all, I can say that this may be the best systematic theology written in the 20th century. Dr. Grudem combines theological insight, practical application, and faithful exegesis of Scripture with simple, uncomplicated language and clear thinking. The result? The most readable and informative Systematic Theology one could desire. Every chapter starts with a question and ends with application questions and a hymn! Education is turned into exaltation over and over again as Grudem moves you from deep thinking to appropriate feeling about the greatest truths in the universe. The arrangement of topics is typical. Grudem covers the doctrine of God, man, Christ, salvation, church, and last things. Like any book of

this magnitude, it has strengths and weaknesses. But the strengths are more than the weaknesses. The section on theology proper (the doctrine of God) is outstanding. Grudem's explanation of the Trinity is very helpful avoiding both modalism and arianism. His treatment of God's character and attributes is especially good, arguing strongly against the "open" view of God and process theology. The chapters on Creation and Providence are also very well-done containing lengthy Scriptural arguments for his position. His soteriology is Reformed and not much different than you would get from Berkhof or Murray. Still good, though. Grudem spends much time discussing the Holy Spirit (though the chapters are scattered around the book and not in one section) and especially the church. His understanding of the nature of the church is excellent avoiding denominationalism, yet affirming a very Biblically-grounded argument for plural elders governing a congregational church. He is baptistic in polity, though not dogmatic on the issue. He believes that charismatic gifts are still current in the church today, but is wary of extremes. Whether one agrees with Grudem or not on this issue, he should be read, because he approaches the subject from a scholarly standpoint with supreme concern for the text of Scripture. One can't afford to neglect his arguments in forming their opinions (I still somewhat unsettled on many questions relating to this and so do not write from a bias.) On last things, Grudem defends historic premillennialism and presents some thoughtful arguments to both amillennialism and dispensational pre-tribulation premillennialists. He should be read here. But again, he proceeds with caution. The weakest chapter of the book is the one on the Atonement. Although Grudem provides some excellent scholarship on the question of Christ's "descent into hell" here, there is a lack of depth in his treatment of this most glorious doctrine. Berkhof and Gill are better. Overall this is an excellent book. It's greatest strength is its textual basis. Grudem's chief concern is to be Scriptural and for the most part he succeeds well. You don't have to be a theologian to read this book. But you will become a theologian if you do.

Although I personally disagree with a number of the positions held in this book, and might agree more with other Systematic Theologies, this one is by far the best. It truly is head and shoulders above any of the other Systematic Theologies I have surveyed--including Hodge, Erickson, Wiley, Miley, Geisler, Williams and others--although each has its value. First, is the design and scope of the book. It is intentionally designed to help clarify positions held by those who believe the Bible is authoritative. This is different from Erickson, for example, who spends a lot of energy interacting with neo-Orthodox and other liberal perspectives. Grudem's approach is ideal for pastors and laymen. Handle challenging issues without getting off into extraneous detail. You go right to the crux of the issue. In addition, Grudem's tone feels kind. You really feel that he is instructing you in love.

As many have pointed out, it really has a devotional quality to it in many places, including appropriate hymns at the end of each chapter. Look for that in another theology! Second, it has excellent helps. For example, he indexes many of the major Systematic Theologies at the end of each chapter. This allows you to very easily compare his perspective with others, and do deeper research. Third, it's broad yet concise. I really feel that with this book on my shelf, I have access to the crux of a lot of major doctrinal issues. I don't need a pile of "four views" books. Grudem covers many many issues from the atonement to miracles and the baptism of the holy spirit. Fourth, it is truly a Biblical approach. It's not just a doctrinaire polemic about pet positions. Just reading one chapter really challenged me and re-inspired me to examine the Bible more closely--that is because that is exactly what Grudem himself is attempting. He's building up doctrine from Scripture, not the reverse. I believe this book is destined to become a classic, and perhaps redefine the genre. Start here.

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