

Theological Topics:

1. Theology of man – anthropological theology
2. Theology of Sin
3. Soteriology
4. Sanctification

Theological Anthropology – the Theology of Humanity

How humanity conceives itself necessarily must take one of two directions – it turns inward and defines itself by itself, or it turns outward and defines itself by the external standard of God. The philosophical and theological outworking of faith follows accordingly.

1. Documents to review:
 - a. Original “Humanist Manifesto 1” – Secular Humanism
[<http://theroadtoemmaus.org/RdLb/21PbAr/Apl/HumMan1.htm>]
 - b. Westminster ‘Shorter’ Catechism – Reformed Theology – 100 questions and answers.
[http://www.puritanseminary.org/media/Shorter_Catechism.pdf]
 - c. Westminster Confession – Reformed Theology
[http://www.gracefallbrook.org/westminster_standards/The_Westminster_Confession_of_Faith.pdf]
2. Gospel Centrality – Teachings and theology should always be evaluated in light of the Gospel. There are many approaches to faith to capture the hearts and minds of humanity, and many Christian pastors and evangelists take perspectives that are not necessarily true to Jesus’ teachings. [<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>]
 - a. Those who preach the “Prosperity Gospel” fail in that this thinking often obscures the Gospel under ‘teachings of abundance & blessing’ with a ‘name it and claim it’ faith strategy. This is not what God promised. God doesn’t promise we won’t suffer pain or affliction, but that He will walk with us through it. In the world we will have trouble and affliction, but Jesus promised that He has overcome the world.
 - b. Others preach from a perspective of a “Gospel of Works” while faith in action is expected. They will argue that if you are not doing good works, that your faith is suspect. This errors in that doing more for Jesus is not necessarily what He is asking from us. Jesus taught that He was more concerned about what was in a person’s heart – their motivation and intent counted as well as the result.
 - c. What is God after in my life? What is Grace – God’s unmerited gift of love to humanity? How does grace flow through our ministry?
 - d. It begins in what Jesus did for me – it is both personal and experiential before it becomes public.
 - i. It doesn’t necessarily require an astonishing testimony... though we always seem

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- to love hearing them; it is more about how God has shaped my view of myself and of life.
- ii. Recount in your mind and heart where you are as a child of God. It is all about the journey of discovery... how God shows up in your life day in and day out.
- e. It expands into every sphere of my life – my family, my work, my friends, my church, play, etc.
- i. How God plays out of every facet of my life speaks to the reality of my faith... if it's not real to me it won't be real to others.
 - ii. People should see evidence of your faith journey as you demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in your life... Paul describes the result of life in the Spirit in Galatians 5:16-26.
 - iii. The Spirit working in us and out of us is more than being kind or nice; it is where we exhibit the nature of our Lord manifested in us.
- f. We are saved by Grace, and we grow by Grace – the Gospel is centered by Grace.
- i. How does Grace flow out of your own life? Is your theology Grace centered?
 - ii. Jesus was 'full of Grace and Truth' [John 1:14-18] – He was merciful and compassionate, yet He held the Jewish leaders who should have known better and act more appropriately.
 - iii. The New Testament model is judgment without condemnation – He correctly judged what was in a person's heart, but He also affirmed that the Law is what condemned the faithless.
- g. If you are discipling someone – what do you start with?
- i. Spiritual disciplines are good to know and practice. We need to foster a contemplative heart and an attentive mind, which the disciplines enable. However, alone they are not enough.
 - ii. Teaching to 'deny yourself and work for the Kingdom' ignores that we are saved by Grace. Works alone will not avail... but love must surely be demonstrated [1 Corinthians 13:1-13].
 - iii. Discipleship is more than learning Scripture... it is allowing God to transform me through His Word... to make me open for His use in furthering His Kingdom. Too much of what we call "ministry" is self-promotion, not Christocentric service in love.
 - iv. Those we would serve are served best if they can observe Jesus fleshing out in my life.
 - v. A balanced comprehensive approach to discipleship includes... 1) Biblical Literacy – knowing what the Bible teaches and having my mind renewed through it; 2) Spiritual Formation – deepening my love and dependence on God where my life

reflects Jesus' heart for humanity; and 3) Leadership Development – where I am purposefully engaging in ministry to further the Kingdom of God.

- h. What is the chief end purposed by God and how do we convey it?
 - i. Westminster Shorter Catechism says our purpose is to 'glorify God and enjoy Him forever.' The problem with this statement is that it is centered on man's 'doing,' rather than on his 'being.' Our deficiency is inward... which is why Paul spoke so consistently about the 'inner-man.' We need the Spirit to transform us into a new creation, not just clean up or improve the old version.
 - ii. Though the Westminster Shorter Catechism is a great document – we can do better. In fact, to be relevant today in our world and society, we have to do better.
 - iii. Westminster Catechism starts with man – rather than God and Christ.
 - iv. We should think in theological terms centered on Grace, and avoid "Christianese" – the inside language of faith practice that has no real meaning outside of the church. Start by practicing speaking about your faith in standard language... don't presume that Christian buzz words have merit... they don't and are often an impediment.
 - 1. What does 'glorify' mean? This is not an active word – rather it has become a Christian by-word and has no real meaning. To glorify really means to reflect God's Glory back upon Him. When people observe you do they 'see' God's Glory? Or do they see you trying to 'do' better? The latter is not a bad thing, but it isn't the main thing.
 - 2. When the Apostle John said 'believe in Jesus' – his hearers knew exactly what he meant. But what does it mean now? Almost everyone 'believes' in Jesus in some sense, so that it is not a meaningful phrase. Plus the Gospels always link believing and transformation... it always plays out in active change in priorities, fruit of the Spirit, etc.
 - 3. The words we use should be chosen carefully and wisely to clearly describe what we mean to say – don't settle for colloquialisms that are subject to individual meanings.
- i. Where is the relational nature of faith? How do we present Jesus in personally relevant terms?
 - i. In each of the spheres we live in [home, work, social, church, etc] people are watching us.
 - ii. Do our words and our lives match up? Obviously we are all 'sinners saved by Grace', but we should be 'Saints who sometimes sin.'

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- iii. Do you profess kindness, respect and love... but display meanness, disrespect and disinterest? Always stand back and observe yourself... are you portraying the image you think you are? Ask your friends... and be ready for a shock.
- j. When developing your own theology – Do you begin with an ‘active tone’ – relating what we ‘do?’ Or do we employ a ‘passive tone’ – to relate what God has ‘done.’ The Gospel of Grace always begins and ends in God... we are His ambassadors... His witness and spokesmen, and we’re His vehicles... His feet and hands in the world.
 - i. Why should we ‘love our fellow man?’ – An active tone would assert that God commanded us to do so. A passive tone would state that God first loved us.
 - 1. The passive tone answers the question ‘why’ – it is a relationally descriptive approach.
 - 2. The active tone answers the question ‘what’ – it is an action imperative approach.
 - ii. Pay attention to the ‘Great’ statements of Jesus:
 - 1. The Great Commandment – Mat 22:37 – the Shema - love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
 - 2. The Great Commission – Mat 28:19-20 – evangelism and discipleship.
 - 3. The 10 commandments of the OT are replaced by the ‘Great’ 2.
- k. What is the tone of your theology?
 - i. Classic Reformed view – says the 10 commandments of the OT and the 2 commandments of the NT are both in play. We are thus under Law and under Grace.
 - ii. Generic ‘Good theology’ view – is like an ice-cream cone... the cone itself is the 10 commandments, while the ice-cream is the ‘enlarged but better’ 2 statements. This emphasizes that God’s redemptive plan keeps getting better... not only does the ice-cream taste better than the cone alone, but it is dipped in chocolate and covered in sprinkles. No one would reasonably settle for eating only the cone, because the ice-cream is so much better.
 - iii. Lutheran view – says that the Mosaic Law has been shattered and destroyed like the tablets on the mountain, and we now have a new covenant. This is the theology behind the Westminster catechism and confession. It is Zahl-esque thinking. The Westminster ‘shorter’ catechism replaces the 10 commandments with 100!
- 3. Let’s re-think the questions and answers posed by the Westminster Shorter Catechism:
 - a. In reviewing Q-1 – what is the chief end of man – a Pharisee could have given that answer, or even taken the classic reformed view... that is obviously not what Jesus had in mind. If we stay focused on the Law instead of Grace for salvation, we essentially become modern day Pharisees.

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- b. If our goal is presenting a Christocentric Gospel approach to theology, our answers should be ones that a moderately humanly-spiritual person or a practitioner of another faith could not agree to. It should be a statement that only a true follower of Jesus could make. Mormons, Jews, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, and many Eastern Religions all hold that Jesus was an historic person, and even a Prophet or at least a very wise teacher... but not God in the flesh. Maybe a savior, but definitely not Savior and Lord. Therefore, in developing our theology:
- i. It must be Christocentric – Jesus claimed He was God, not merely a wise man.
 - ii. It must include the 'Spirit centered' life of the disciple – we live life in the Trinity... One God in Three Persons. This is a mystery... but it is not polytheism.
 - iii. It must be founded on Grace as expressed in the Gospel.
 - iv. It must include spiritual formation and personal transformation, as well as Biblical literacy, evangelism and discipleship.
- c. Some additional responses to the Q-1 question – 'what is the chief end of man:
- i. To be graciously made into the image of Jesus Christ – personal transformation.
 - ii. To respond to Jesus' love and seek His will.
 - iii. To respond to God's grace & be restored in relationship with Him.
 - iv. To glorify God in Christ and enjoy Him forever.
 - v. To become a living sacrifice in the name of Jesus Christ to the glory of God and enjoy Him forever (active tone).
 - vi. To reflect God's glory by being transformed to the image of Jesus Christ so we can enjoy Him forever (passive tone).
 - vii. Having been loved and redeemed by Jesus to glorify God & enjoy Him forever.
- d. There ought to be thematic continuation through the Biblical text on the question of what was God's chief purpose or end with regard to humanity. To this end we can ask:
- i. What was Adam & Eve's chief end?
 - ii. What was Abraham's chief end?
 - iii. What were the OT prophet's chief end?
 - iv. What was the Apostles chief end?
- e. In understanding Gospel centrality, it is useful to note the differences between the OT and the NT.
- i. OT – God 'tested' people. Law was accompanied by blessings and curses depending on one's careful obedience. The sacrificial system covered sins of error and accident, but not of evil intent. Thus there were significant limitations of the OT.
 - ii. NT – God allows testing to develop endurance. Gospel is all blessings - Beatitudes. Jesus sacrifice cleanses all sin – moral, ethical, and eternal; though temporal consequences may apply. There is no limitation in the NT.

- f. **Words shape our thinking – they create a vibe... a point of resonance that captures other's attention and imagination. Thus we must keep our intent focused.**
 - i. **Is our focus on testing or teaching? On condemning or encouraging?**
 - ii. **Christocentric thinking and living understands the reality of life in a Fallen world, it understand sin and moral-ethical failure, but it stops short of condemnation and always focuses on Grace.**
 - iii. **As Christians, we are in a secure relationship with God, not because of my merit or strength, or my worthiness – but because of Jesus work both in adopting me and presenting me as God's own son/daughter.**
 - iv. **In Grace there is discipline, forgiveness, hope, and spiritual transformation. The NT indwelling of the Spirit provides the transformational means the Law lacked. The Law could only convict and condemn, the Spirit convicts and transforms.**
 - v. **The NT is less about testing to be found worthy, but rather enduring in patient hope relying on the worthiness of the Lamb. It is like being in training to become stronger and able to persevere.**
- 4. **Grace Thematic Development Diachronically [throughout redemptive history] – what does Scripture demonstrate that God wanted from humanity? Is there a pattern in the 6 dispensational epochs listed below?**
 - a. **Adam & Eve before the Fall:**
 - i. **Q – What did God want? A – To know and be known in mutual enjoyment.**
 - ii. **Faith – was complete, including trust, fellowship, perfect obedience in free will, with assigned and shared responsibility.**
 - iii. **Relationship – interaction was uninhibited, as was fellowship. Humanity was innocent & perfect and could stand before a Perfect God.**
 - iv. **Passive recipient – 100% the image of God, placed in Paradise with God.**
 - v. **Active responsibility – vice-regents of earth, caretakers.**
 - vi. **Prohibition – not to eat the fruit of prohibited trees – obedience.**
 - b. **Adam & Eve after the Fall:**
 - i. **Q – What did God want? A – Faith that God was still there and still cared.**
 - ii. **Faith – had been broken through disobedience; hence doubts & rebellion had entered into humanity.**
 - iii. **Relationship – now inhibited, innocence was broken, guilt and shame enter.**
 - iv. **Passive recipient – Image diminished but not destroyed, veiled promise of redemption. Common grace and curse are 100%.**
 - v. **Active responsibility – Work is now more difficult and often severe; pain, suffering and death enter.**
 - vi. **Prohibition – driven out of the garden due to disobedience, can't go back.**
 - c. **Abraham:**

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- i. Q – What did God want? A – Trust, belief, and commitment.
 - ii. Faith – Abraham acts on God’s Word by faith without empirical evidence.
 - iii. Relationship – very good; though Abraham has some personal flaws and relational problems.
 - iv. Passive recipient – promise was offered and received.
 - v. Active responsibility – continue in righteous faith; circumcision.
 - vi. Prohibition – indirectly to remain separate and be different from the evil Canaanites.
- d. Moses & the Law:
- i. Q – What did God want? A – faith based society.
 - ii. Faith – to trust, follow, and remain obedient.
 - iii. Relationship – remedy for broken fellowship provided through blood sacrifice and repentance.
 - iv. Passive recipient – [passive & active are now tied together
 - v. Active responsibility – [through blessing and obedience
 - vi. Prohibition – sin is greatly revealed and defined.
- e. What God wants from Jesus:
- i. Q – What did God want? A – Father-Son intimacy, resulting in the fulfillment of God’s Heavenly plan.
 - ii. Faith – faith and trust in a mutually dependent reciprocal relationship
 - iii. Relationship – Jesus is the exact image and perfect reflection of the Father.
 - iv. Passive recipient – perfectly reflects God in Word and deed.
 - v. Active responsibility – sacrifice Himself as a propitiation for humanity.
 - vi. Prohibition – not to act on His own, but to commit and submit to the Will of the Father.
- f. What Jesus wants from us:
- i. Q – What does Jesus want? A – Faith and relationship.
 - ii. Faith – personal commitment, in complete trust and obedience.
 - iii. Relationship – share in the glory of relational intimacy (upper-room discourse – this is family, not merely friends).
 - iv. Passive recipient – revelation of sin problem; our inability to please God apart from Grace.
 - v. Active responsibility – trust and obey; follow Jesus example of living and walking in the light.
 - vi. Prohibition – flee evil [wrong things of the world] and resist sin [the wrong things within me].

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- g. There is a significant amount of failure and change that occurs between each epoch diachronically – as this plays out in redemptive history. What Scripture records is a progressive development of grace.
 - h. This development begs the question... why would God create humanity? We know that God wasn't surprised by the Fall or the events surrounding the growth and failures of each epoch. How does God's purpose in creation play out theologically?
 - i. God didn't need relationship as He already had a complete relational life in the Trinity.
 - ii. He didn't need companionship as the Angels were already created and with Him in the Spiritual realm.
 - iii. Angels don't seem to understand forgiveness – and they don't receive grace.
 - iv. Angels don't initiate action, they carry out God's orders as God's messengers and active agents.
 - v. Man is created differently than these spiritual angelic creatures – we are physical and yet we are also 'like' God... He created humanity a little lower than the angels [Heb 2:7-8].
 - vi. Man is part of the 'seen' realm; angels are part of the 'unseen' realm.
 - vii. In the new age to come – both seen and unseen realms are united.
5. Revised Westminster Shorter Catechism – consider answering in your own words each of the questions posed as a theological exercise... example:
- a. Q1 – Why did God create man? A – To know and be known; for fellowship founded on love – with trust and obedience as a freewill result.
 - b. Q2 – What is the ultimate purpose of God's creation of man? A – To love God, and to enjoy & glorify Him forever.
 - c. Q3 – How is the ultimate purpose of God's creation of man fulfilled? A – that the Son would be formed in each person... making them uniquely themselves while being perfectly human.
 - d. Q4 – What is God's motivation in light of Q3? A – To redeem fallen humanity and restore relational intimacy.
 - e. Etc.
6. Sermon on the Mount – Mathew viewed through different lens of theology, what does this look like?
- a. Mat 5:13-20 – I come not to abolish... unless your righteousness is greater...
 - i. Door # 1 – Classic Conservative Reformed Theology [Van Gemenan] –
 - 1. The OT 10 commandments are seen as equal to the NT 2 statements [Great Commandment and Great Commission]. They play off of each other, and the new doesn't replace the old.

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2. Thus, how you live becomes inseparable with genuine faith. Not necessarily that ‘you are what you do’, but you are not what you claim to be where you continue to do wrong instead of right.
 3. Fulfillment = explanation – our lives fulfill the Law.
- ii. Door # 2 – Moderate Reformed Theology – Douglas Moo [modified Zahl] –
 1. The 10 commandments have no connection to the 2 great statements of Jesus... the Great Commandment and the Great Commission are the new order of the New Covenant.
 2. Thus, it is somewhat optional how you live your life (free grace) – it’s all about grace & faith. How you live your life has to do with your ultimate reward, not your salvation.
 3. Fulfillment = completion – the Old Covenant is completed in the New Covenant and no longer binds God’s people.
 - iii. Door # 3 – Liberal Theology
 1. The 10 commandments and the NT Great Commandment and Commission are goals for how we should live our lives, but the application of Grace is so potent that all will be ultimately saved.
 2. Lifestyle and belief are decoupled and optional... this is not what Jesus and the Apostles taught.
 3. Fulfillment = liberation – doesn’t really matter what you do... you should do good, but in the final analysis it makes no difference.
- b. Mat 5:21-26 – how you view the previous section [whether door 1 or 2] qualifies how you see this section:
- i. In this section Jesus quotes an original (traditional) saying. He then ups the meaning – not just action but thought. He then ups the penalty – not just temporal punishment but eternal damnation.
 - ii. Door # 1:
 1. Is it Jesus’ intent that you will live your life in conformance to the new dictate... or else?
 2. In Catholicism – this would be held as real – hence the provisions for expunging sin.
 3. John MacArthur has been known to encourage this thinking... to the point where many of his adherents have actually questioned their salvation because they can’t live the perfect life they are called to and are personally subscribed to do.
 4. It is easy to see how legalism and a return to Pharisaic bondage can occur if this approach is taken literally.
 - iii. Door # 2:

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1. Is Jesus applying hyperbole rather than a literal commandment? Is His intention to show an ideal with the inherent obvious conclusion that it is impossible to attain it?
2. Remember to whom Jesus was speaking – the Jews justified themselves by their outward action, not their inward intent. Jesus wants to change the heart as well as the mind, and with the resulting outward actions demonstrating transformation.
3. Jesus rips all pretenses away in this teaching... everyone falls short of the standard for God's Kingdom – it makes you rely on Grace.
4. If we are honest with ourselves we know we can't live a life consistent with this ideal.
5. Jesus asks us to strive for it, but not feel guilty when we fall short. Failure drives you back to grace, to hope and not despair.
6. On fallen earth we will continue to miss the mark. When perfection comes in the dawning of the new age, we will employ this flawlessly as perfected humanity... this is our hope.