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# INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

DS212—Anthropology  
Camden M. Bucey

## COURSE INTRODUCTION

I have organized this course under two major headings: (1) man created in the image of God and (2) man's relationship to God. While properly we are studying theological anthropology, the first section will touch upon themes belonging to soteriology and the second will verge into the territory of ethics. Since the eternal Son of God assumed our human nature and we are being conformed into his resurrected image, we must touch upon Christology to some degree as well. And of course, all things were created by the Triune God, which means we must know something about the doctrine of God. This is to be expected, since the theological *loci* are not hermetically sealed compartments, but facets of an overall systematic theology based upon the whole of God's revelation.

## PEDAGOGY

- I have designed this course with a certain pedagogy in mind.
  - As I teach, I'll do my best to demonstrate why I believe this is important throughout the class.
  - But allow me to take some time to explain the method behind what you at some point may be tempted to label as madness.
- We will have an emphasis on exegesis and extended argumentation for developing doctrines.
- For this pedagogy to be effective, you *must* do the required reading.
  - I plan to cover much of the subject matter that appears in your reading, but there will likely be finer points about arguments and views from other theologians that I will not cover in class.
  - I encourage you to read a good portion of the recommended reading, but it will not directly affect your grade. I was given a hard limit of 350 pages per credit hour.

## THE STUDY OF THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

- Before we dive into the actual material of the doctrine of man, or theological anthropology, as it is also known, we should situate this study within the larger scope of the theological disciplines.
- Coming from the Greek *ἄνθρωπος* and *λόγος*, "anthropology" is quite basically the study of man.

- You will find courses on anthropology at nearly every accredited university and liberal arts institution of higher learning. It is a common course of study.
- The approach taken in the university is much different than that upon which we will embark in this class. Louis Berkhof writes, “We should not confuse the present subject of study with general Anthropology or the science of mankind, which includes all those sciences which have men as the object of study. These sciences concern themselves with the origin and history of mankind, with the physiological structure and the psychical characteristics of man in general and of the various races of mankind in particular, with their ethnological, linguistic, cultural and religious development, and so on. Theological Anthropology is concerned only with what the Bible says respecting man and the relation in which he stands and should stand to God. It recognizes Scripture only as its source, and reads the teachings of human experience in the light of God’s Word.” (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 181)
- In order to situate our study of the doctrine of man, I would like for us to go even deeper for a moment.
  - We must look to our foundations, which includes studying prolegomena and the very nature of God’s revelation.
  - And we must consider how our different theological pursuits relate to one another.
  - The Doctrine of Man is one of the traditional theological *loci*.
    - It rightly falls under the heading of systematic theology. Yet, we can never understand God’s teaching about man if we *limit* our consideration to systematic theology.
    - More basically, we must understand how to be faithful systematic theologians in the first place. That means understanding how the other disciplines inform systematic theology and *vice versa*.

## REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL HERMENEUTICS

- Systematic theology must be distinguished—but never separated—from biblical theology and exegetical theology.
  - Each of these have Scripture as their subject matter.
  - Before detailing these disciplines, we must rehearse several basic points about Scripture and its entailments for exegesis.
- Scripture and exegesis: basic points
  - Proper exegesis requires a focus on Scripture as a divine product. This is the *theological* component of our approach.
    - Scripture is God’s Word. He is the *primary author*.
    - He has inspired human agents to record his Word as *secondary authors*.
    - Scripture is fundamentally unlike any other document. It is θεόπνευστος.
  - Proper exegesis also requires a *canonical* approach.

- When engaging in systematic theology, we are concerned with the texts of the Old and New Testaments in their finished form, *as a whole*.
  - The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are organically related and concerned with the bestowal of a covenant kingdom upon a covenant people through a covenant mediator.
- In his book *Divine Meaning*, Vern Poythress describes three distinct, yet related, perspectives upon Scripture. These serve as interpretive concentric circles.
  - First, we can interpret any text in light of its particular book.
  - Second, we can interpret a passage in light of the context of the canon available *at the time of the text's writing*.
  - Third, we can interpret any passage in light of the total canon—the entire Bible as the Word of God.
- These concentric circles of interpretation inform a proper *hermeneutic*.
  - If we cannot interpret revelation according to proper principles, we have no reasonable expectation of ever arriving at a true and proper theology.
  - Scripture as a whole must be our most basic reference point. This is the only legitimate point of departure for any theological study.
    - When we realize this nature of Scripture, we recognize more of its majesty.
    - Scripture is no longer seen as a collection of narratives, poems, and letters. It's a vast network of divine texts that mutually interpret one another.
- When considering covenant history, we must understand the big picture.
  - When considered as a whole, covenant history unfolds in three distinct epochs. These are *foundational* or *architectonic*.
    - *Protology*: Creation to the Fall into sin
    - *Typology*: Promised redemption until the coming of Christ
    - *Eschatology*: the epoch between the first and second coming of Christ
  - This basic structure is the historic bedrock for understanding God's relationship to man throughout all of covenant history.
- Scripture teaches us several interpretive principles we must employ when considering these different epochs.
  - First, this is a *related set* of epochs.
    - We cannot treat them independently from one another, for each covenant epoch illumines the others.
    - While in one manner of speaking, these are discreet periods of covenant history, they cannot be isolated from one another in interpretation.
  - Second, there is a *specific order* of these epochs.
    - We cannot reverse them or otherwise mix them up. Eschatology is the *goal* of covenant history.
    - Another way to say this is there is a divinely ordained *teleology*. This τέλος (purpose, end, or goal) is realized in Christ and the other two epochs (protology and typology) point to it.

## SYSTEMATIC AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

- Systematic theology is concerned with asking the following: What does the Bible *as a whole* teach about X?
  - In other words, systematic theology seeks to organize the content of revelation topically.
  - In his book *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, Geerhardus Vos describes this topical arrangement as drawing a circle.
  - What could happen if this type of study went unchecked? If systematic theology were to operate independently, what tendencies might it exhibit?
    - One danger is that of abstraction. If we seek to organize the content of Scripture topically with no regard to the particular setting of Scripture, we may end up with a bare abstract conclusion that has little or nothing to do with actual covenant history.
    - We can prevent the error of bare abstraction by appealing to biblical theology.
- Whereas systematic theology seeks to organize the Bible topically and logically by drawing a circle, biblical theology seeks to represent the progressive unfolding of revelation in history by drawing a line.
  - In brief, the difference between biblical and systematic theology is the difference between historical and logical construction.
    - But it's not as if these disciplines developed independently from each other in Scripture.
    - Vos—"It should be remembered that on the line of historical progress there is at several points already a *beginning of correlation* among elements of truth in which *the beginnings of the systematizing process can be discerned.*" (*Biblical Theology*, 16)
  - We've already addressed the danger of abstracting the content of Scripture without reference to the concrete particulars of redemptive history.
    - This is one way that biblical theology can regulate systematic theology.
    - Another danger would be to concentrate on the individual concrete events of covenant history without respect to the whole.
- In some ways this illustrates an interpretive instance of the problem of the one and the many.
  - So how do we avoid these problems?
    - We must remember is that both biblical and systematic theology rely upon exegetical theology.
    - This is why our pedagogy for this course will take its particular form.
  - Systematic and biblical theology are not antagonistic.
    - They mutually contextualize, regulate, and inform each other.
    - Systematic theology should never be done apart from biblical theology, and both disciplines rely upon exegetical theology.