

Real World Theology: How to Think Theologically About Any Field of Study

This lecture will answer the question of why Christian scholars need to think theologically by considering the following: Biblical Christianity is based on the Truth, that is, God's self-revelation of Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the inerrant Scriptures. This theological concept of 'the Truth' involves also the attributes of unity and consistency. All thinkers have, and all kinds of thinking necessarily involve, some ultimate presuppositions which affect all our thoughts, interpretations, and actions. As Christian scholars of any discipline, we are obliged to 'bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ' and to reject epistemic idolatry. That is why we have to understand clearly our specifically Christian theological presuppositions and their consistent implications for various fields of thought.

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I. By understanding the Christian epistemic duties

A. God is Truth in His self-revelation: general and special revelation

1. Creation

2. The Lord Jesus Christ

3. The Scriptures: verbally inspired inerrant Bible

B. The epistemic concept of truth

1. Unity, consistency; personal and eventual dimensions

2. Propositional nature; correspondence; reliability

C. The epistemic duty of a Christian scholar: 2 Corinthians 10:4–5

1. Reject epistemic idolatry, Col. 2:2–4

2. Jesus Christ is Lord, Phil. 2:11

II. By understanding the Christian metaphysical/ontological presuppositions

A. Doctrine of God: Theology proper

1. Classic Christian trinitarian theism
2. Doctrine of creation: the distinction between Creator and the creature
3. Substance metaphysics: Christian Aristotelianism

B. Doctrine of man: Anthropology

1. Specially created in the image of God
2. The Fall and original sin
3. Unity of material body and spiritual soul: hylomorphism

C. Doctrine of Christ: Christology

1. Divine and human natures constitute one Person
2. Substitutionary penal atonement
3. Resurrection, ascension, and second coming

III. By understanding the Christian ethical presuppositions

A. Truth, beauty, justice, and values are objective norms

B. Natural law/Ten Commandments

C. Virtue ethics

IV. How to think theologically?

A. Always keep in mind these presuppositions

B. Draw consistent implications from these presuppositions

C. Apply these consistent implications

Suggested Readings:

Barrett, Matthew, Ed., *Reformation Theology: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

Feser, Edward, *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2008).

Frame, John M., *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2015).

Horton, Michael, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

Muller, Richard A., *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*. 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).

Svensson, Manfred, VanDrunen, David, eds., *Aquinas among the Protestants* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018).

Van Asselt, Willem J., *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).