

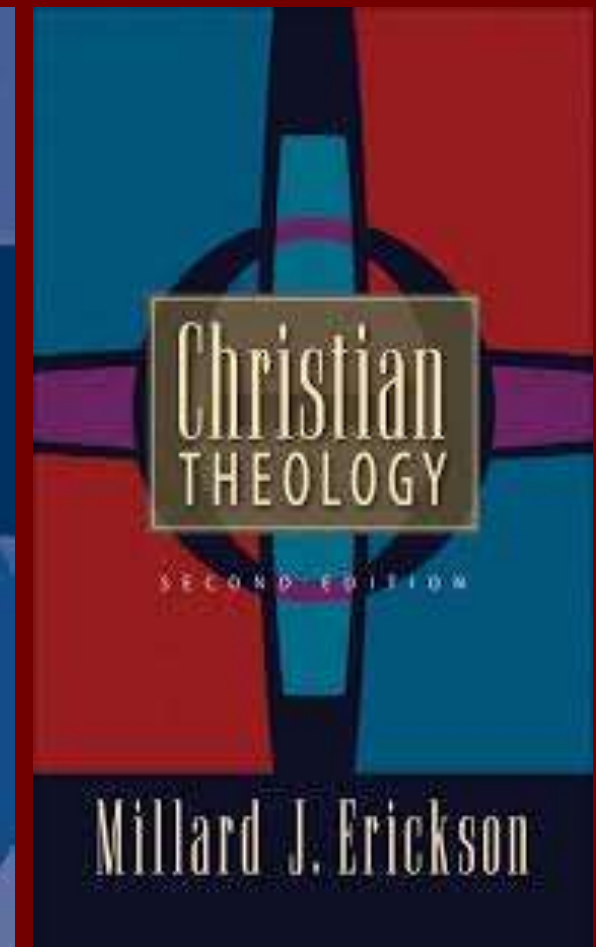
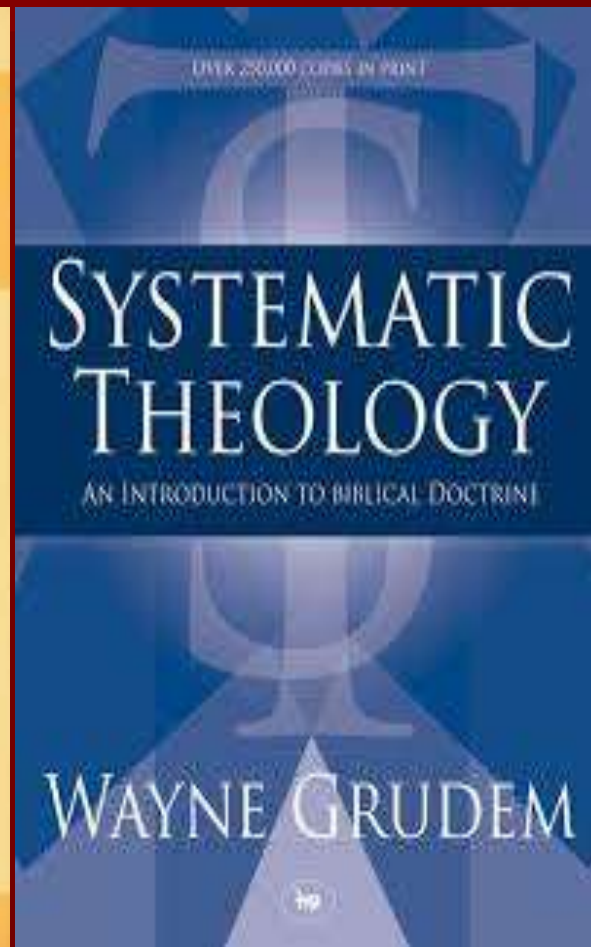
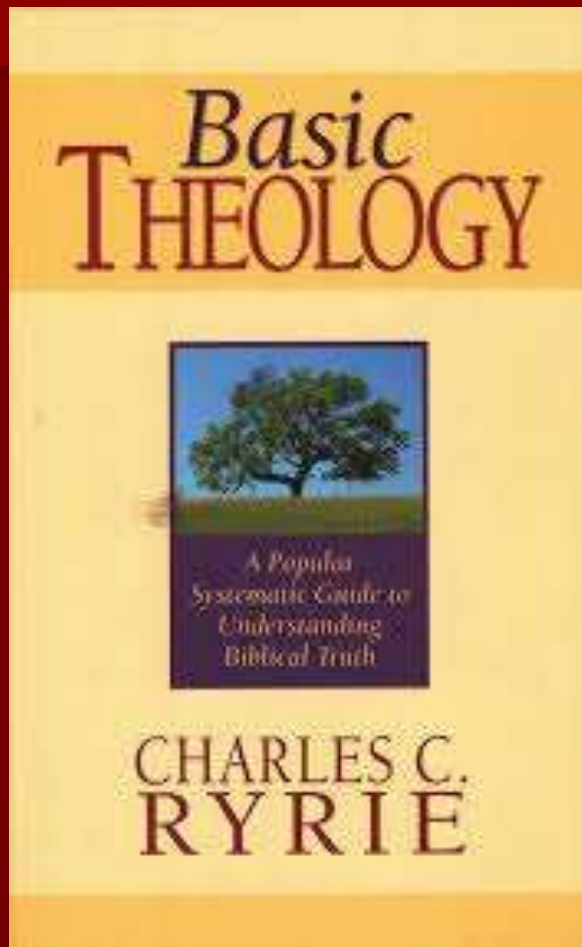
The image features two unrolled scrolls of parchment, likely containing Hebrew text, set against a dark, textured background. The scrolls are positioned diagonally, with their wooden handles and decorative bands visible. The text on the scrolls is written in a cursive script, characteristic of ancient Hebrew or Aramaic. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the parchment and the wood of the handles.

Systematic Theology

Introduction to Theology

Prolegomena

Theology Books of Choice



What is Theology?

- It is the study of God
- **Theos (God) + Logos (rational expression) = rational interpretation of religious faith.**
- Christian theology thus means the rational interpretation of the Christian faith.

Theology is neither...

- Man's religious experiences with God nor
- Man's opinion of what God ought to be.
- **It simply is the study of God and His revelation of Himself to mankind.**
- **Thus, theology is a systematic study of the entire Bible.**

Theology ...

- ...is rational and so can be understood by rational creatures;
- ...requires explanation, so it involves exegesis and systematization.
- ...is developed through a study of the Bible, through discovering truth, systematizing it, and presenting it to all who wish to understand it.

*"Can you discover the depths of God?
Can you discover the limits of the
Almighty? They are high as the
heavens, what can you do? Deeper
than Sheol, what can you know?"*
(Job 11:7–8)

Problems in Theology

- God is infinite; man is finite
- God is holy; man is unholy
- God is reality; our study of Him is based on human description of that reality.

A Challenge for Us

- You can know the Bible and not know theology, but it is unlikely that you can know theology and not know the Bible.
- At HBC, we know the Bible. Now let's put what we know together and endeavor to understand theology.
- Every Christian is called to be a theologian
- This study will be as good for me as it will be for you, maybe more so!

Why Study Theology?

- Because theological-mindedness, assuming that it is centered on sound teaching and true spirituality, is the best remedy against being 'blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming' (Eph 4:14).

- *Every Christian is called to be a theologian*
 - You don't have to have a degree in theology
 - You don't have to be a minister
 - You don't have to be in full-time Christian service to be a theologian.
- *To be prepared for service 'so that the body of Christ may be built up...in the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph 4:12-13)*
 - 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth' (2 Tim 2:15). 'For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine' (4:3).

- *The present trend toward man-centeredness and 'what's in it for me?' type of thinking has created a vacuum that has left the church in a powerless, superficial state.*
 - Too many Christians cannot tell you for sure what they believe or why they believe it.
 - Too many Christians know nothing of the history of the Christian church, and Church history is the laboratory of theology.
 - Knowledge of the past will help us to understand the present and face the future.

- *All of us need motivation to be disciplined.*
 - This study may help motivate us to get on with learning that is long overdue.
 - It may help us discipline our minds that they will be filled with godly knowledge.

KINDS OF THEOLOGY

Varieties of Theology

- By era: i.e., patristic theology, medieval theology, reformation theology, and modern theology.
- By viewpoint: i.e., Arminian, Calvinistic, Catholic, Barthian, liberation theology, etc.
- By focus: i.e., historical theology, biblical theology, systematic theology, apologetic theology, exegetical theology, etc.

Natural
Theology

Exegetical
Theology

Practical
Theology

Biblical
Theology

Systematic
Theology

Historical
Theology



- **Natural theology** (i.e., apologetic theology) is the study of God based upon what we can perceive in nature. It is based upon rational arguments for God's existence apart from His special revelation:
 - Cosmological argument (cause/effect)
 - Teleological argument (design)
 - Ontological argument (being)
 - Moral argument (morals & ethics)

- **Exegetical theology** is the result of both exposing the meaning of a text and the application that follows its meaning.
 - I.e., if God is truly sovereign, how then shall we live?
- **Practical theology** is concerned with preaching, counseling, liturgy, evangelism, worship, administration, etc.

- **Biblical theology** studies God, man, and God's relationship to man in relation to God's unfolding revelation in individual books of the Bible.
 - What does Mark's Gospel reveal about God the Father? God the Son? About man? About man's relationship to Christ?
 - Biblical theology is finalized at end of Revelation
- **Historical theology** focuses on what those who studied the Bible thought about its teachings either individually or collectively (e.g., various church councils).

- **Systematic theology** correlates the data of biblical revelation as a whole and systematizes the total picture of God's self-revelation. Some of those systems are:
 - Theology proper
 - The Trinity (Trinitarianism—Christology, Pneumatology)
 - The Bible (Bibliology)
 - Man, sin, salvation, angels (anthropology, hamatology, soteriology, angelology)
 - The Church (Ecclesiology)
 - The end times (Eschatology)

- **Summary:** Theology is the discovery, systematizing, and presentation of the truths about God. From what others have said about these truths through time to surveying the progressive revelation of God's truth to systematizing everything the total structure, God's revelation is exposed to man.

Some Presuppositions

- All have them—from atheists to theists.
- Christians use the Bible to prove beliefs:
 - Must lean on sound exegesis from normal, historical-grammatical hermeneutic
 - The priority of the New Testament
 - Using proof texts in their context
- Exegesis arrives at a conclusion from a text; theology uses it as a piece of the puzzle in lieu of the entire picture.

True theologians must...

- Believe, having the mind of Christ
- Think, correlating exegesis with theology
- Depend, relying on God's Spirit
 - Inductive Bible study is a beneficial way to study, but to do it *only* is to ignore the results of the work of others, and to do it *always* can be an inefficient repetition of what others have already done (Ryrie, p. 19)
- Worship, adoring Who he is studying

Acts 17:10-12

The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so. ¹² Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

Critics of theology say...

- Systematic theology is man-made, and it illegitimately squeezes God into a logical box. God is beyond human logic.
- Systematic theology reflects western thinking; it is not helpful for the global church.
- Systematic theology is only for academics, not for lay Christians.

Some pitfalls of studying theology

- Creates division within the Body
- Those who know more tend to become proud, argumentative
- Dependence upon knowledge gives some a false sense of security
- Accepting man's false teachings

BTCP Question

- How might you define natural theology from Romans 1:18-20? Give at least four examples of how we can use natural theology to encourage Christians in their faith.
- Interact with three commentaries, sharing your opinions of what they say.