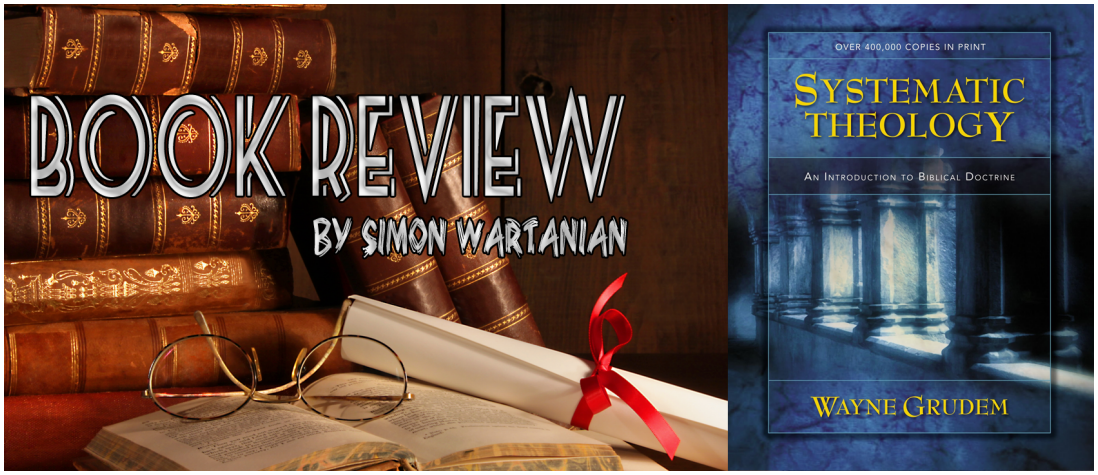
Review of Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology

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Introduction



I purchased this book because I wanted to have a good biblical case for each doctrine that I was interested in looking at. At that time I was interested in learning more about God's sovereignty.

I never thought that I'd read such a large book with 57 chapters of biblical doctrine, but I am thankful that God sustained me through the journey that I had with Wayne Grudem in biblical doctrine.

Why it's awesome

A lot of reasons can be given why this Systematic Theology is great. It is the first Systematic Theology that I've picked up and I know for certain that I will go back to it many times.

In a certain sense Dr. Grudem's job is simple, find the passages which speak of a particular doctrine and explain what they say. But it is the manner in which he cites and explains the passages that is encouraging. He always explains the contexts and I cannot think of a citation that is out of context. He lays out the context, explains what the passages means in context and it's relevance to the present topic.

I love those fruitful **footnotes.** I would often skip footnotes thinking that they only refer to works cited, but that's not the only thing that Dr. Grudem does in his footnotes. He often explains things more technical, makes a particular case for something, refers to a relevant topic in his Systematic Theology or engages with the other side.

His handling of the Holy Scriptures is truly aspiring. I pray that God would given me the same love for the Scriptures, that Dr. Grudem has. He does not simply assume things, he proves them biblically. That should be every Christian's desire.

The two biggest reasons why it's a great text is because, first it is **thoroughly** biblical. What I most loved is the fact that he produced the passages and not merely referenced them. He backs up every major statement he makes upon a doctrine.

Second, it is accessible and not only for "theologians."[1] It is easy to understand, he tries his best to explain things plainly, though there are obviously difficult doctrines which are not that easy to explain.

If you don't have this great Systematic Theology, get it now.

Major Doctrines

Here I want to say a couple of things about Grudem's major influence on my doctrine.

The Holy Scriptures

Dr Grudem is unashamed about his belief in God's absolute and holy Word.

The Bible is God's sole authoritative Word, His very speech (2Tim 3:16). God used holy men as His instruments and spoke through them, not ignoring or overriding their vocabularies and use of language (2Pet 1:20-21).



It is incapable of being wrong, because it comes from the God who is the Truth (Jn 14:6) and who cannot lie (Heb 6:18). The Word of God reflects the character and its integrity is based upon the character of God.

The Bible, which is the collection of 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books is the very and certain Word of God.

See my commentary on the first chapter (Of The Holy Scriptures) of the 1689 Baptist London Confession.

Trinity

Dr Grudem excellently shows the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity from the Scripture and not from creeds as is often alleged by unbelievers. I have often gone back to chapter 14 (God in Three Persons: The Trinity) to get more insight into this great doctrine and the biblical support.

Dr Grudem goes on to prove the doctrine of the Trinity by using three statements that summarize the doctrine:

1. God is three persons.
2. Each person is fully God.
3. There is one God.

From there on he goes into the Scriptures to prove just that!

See my case for the doctrine of the Trinity in my commentary on the 1689 Baptist London Confession.

God's Providence

This is the first chapter that I read from Grudem. Chapter 16: God's Providence. And man...I was in for something. It was excellent and it was fully biblical. I loved it.

He defines God's Providence as follows:

> God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes.[2]

God is absolutely sovereign over His creation. Nothing can happen without His will. Moreover He has ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Although God is absolutely sovereign, even over chance events (Prov 16:33), man is still held responsible (Isaiah 11, Gen 50:20; Acts 4:27-28).

This is above our understanding, but it is what the Scriptures teach and thus we are to obey it.

This is not fatalism, this is the carrying out of a divine plan of a God who is just, holy, wise and merciful.

We are not "robots," as many non-Calvinists would accuse Calvinists of making man, we make responsible choices, but these choices are absolutely under the control of God.

See my commentary on chapter 3 (Of God's Decree) and chapter 5 (Of Divine Providence) on the 1689.

The Person of Christ

The treatment of of the Person of Christ is excellent. His two-fold natures in one Person, His effective and definite atonement, resurrection and ascension. All these he handles in part 4 with great care and persuasive biblical argumentation.

Before reading his treatment on the Person of Christ, I thought that Christ now was only divine and not man. God graciously used Dr. Grudem to persuaded me otherwise.

In the incarnation the Word took on flesh (Jn 1:1, 14). He did not lay aside His divinity, but added humanity to His divine Person (Phil 2:5-11). He was resurrected with a human body and went into heaven with that glorified body, nothing actually convinces us that the Lord Jesus ceased to be human at the moment of His ascension. In fact the Bible tells us that it is the man Christ Jesus who is our Mediator:

> 1Tim 2:5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus,**

The Application of Redemption

Part 5 is entitled *The Doctrine of The Application of Redemption.* Therein Dr. Grudem handles among other things:

1. Common Grace
2. Election and Reprobation
3. The Gospel Call and Effective Calling
4. Regeneration
5. Conversion (Faith and Repentance)
6. Justification (Right Legal Standing Before God)
7. Adoption (Membership in God's Family)
8. Sanctification (Growth in Likeness to Christ)
9. Death and the Intermediate State
10. Glorification (Receiving a Resurrection Body)
11. Union with Christ

These chapters are excellent like the rest and if you didn't know, Dr Wayne Grudem is a full-fetched Calvinist and in these chapters, what is called "Calvinism" is argued and shown to be the system of the Bible itself. He follows Romans 8:29-30 in laying out these doctrine sin this way:

> Rom 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

The Doctrine of the Church

Part 6 of this treatment deals with Ecclesiology. I've learned a ton in this part, because it wasn't something that I've read about before.

Being a baptist, he argues for a congregational and independent type of church and makes the case for the consistent plurality of elders in NT congregations.

What I also liked was the distinction that he made with with *more* and *less* pure churches. He admits that in the present time there will not be a church which is perfect in doctrine, but there will be churches which are more or less pure churches. There are no perfect churches.

Being a Reformed Baptist myself, I loved his treatment of Baptism (chapter 49) and his interaction with Louis Berkhof's Systematic Theology on Protestant Infant Baptism. I though that his case for Credobaptism was strong and he was gracious toward our Padeobaptist brethren.

An important doctrine which he got me more thinking about was the **Gifts of the Spirit**. He being a continuationist and I...kinda undecided, but was practically a cessationist, but couldn't make up my mind from the Scriptures because according to my judgment I didn't see any where in the NT the idea that the spritual gifts would stop.

A few things should be said, Dr. Grudem is an excellent theologian, so he is not like the prosperity preachers and the Benny Hinns. He does not believe that "NT congregational prophecy" is the speaking of the very words of God, but he defines prophecy as "telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind."[3] He does not believe that NT congregation prophecy is predicting the future. Further, he believes that in the OT the prophets spoke the very words of God and to disobey a prophet was the same as to disobey God. But this is not the case in the NT. In the NT, the prophets are replaced with the Apostles (which is an office limited to the first century he believes) which are given the authority to write the God-breathed word of God. It is the Apostles, not the prophets in the NT which write and speak the very words of God. At first I found this rather strange and I was committed that the prophets were God's mouthpiece as that is the case in the OT, but Dr Grudem argues that the Apostles replace the prophets in the NT.

As for **healing,** Dr Grudem believes that God heals through the prayers of people. He does not believe that the reason why people are not healed is caused by lack of faith, as the prosperity heretics do. But that it is the sovereign and free will of God which grants healing.

I found it strange that Dr. Grudem believes that **tongues** can in fact be a nonexistent language, but in the words of John MacArthur "gibberish." I have not studied this very deeply, but I cannot say that I agree. Dr Grudem argues that just because in Acts 2 tongues were actual languages, does not mean that that will always be the case because he believes that 1 Corinthians14 supports the idea of tongues not actually being a language sometimes.

I cannot say that now I'm fully a continuationist, but I can say that I see now more support for continuationism and weakness

for cessationism.

The Doctrine of the Future

Part 7 of this Systematic Theology deals with the study of the last things, Eschatology.

Dr Grudem shows convincingly for me the support for the coming of Christ, the Final Judgment and Hell, the New Heavens and New Earth. With all these I agreed on most points, except the Millennium.

Dr. Grudem is a Classic Premillennial. He fairly represents the four major views today:

1. Amillennialism
2. Postmillennialism
3. Classic Premillennialism
4. Dispensational Premillennialsm

While he represents these views he argues against them and for Classic Premillennalism.

I remain an Amillennial.

Conclusion

If you don't have this book in your library, get it now! You will not be disappointed. I will go back to it.

I'm thankful for God's grace upon Dr Grudem's work and life and that he has produced such an excellent treatment of Christian doctrine faithful to the Holy Scriptures.

He has become an example for me and a hero of how I should handle the Holy Scriptures.

Footnotes

1. ^ *RC rightly says that everyone's a theologian ;)*
2. ^ *Page 315.*
3. ^ *Page 1050.*