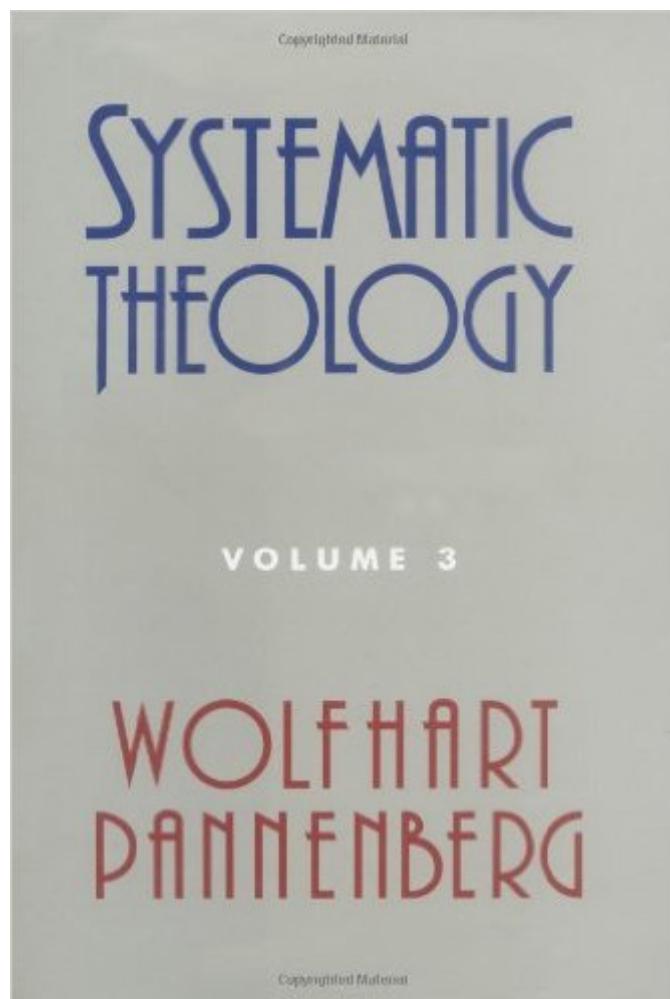


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Systematic Theology (Volume 3)



Synopsis

The publication of Volume 3 of German theologian Wolfhart Pannenbergs Systematic Theology completes the English edition of a work that will surely come to stand as one of the lasting theological statements of the twentieth century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I cannot even begin to hope to interact in detail with this magisterial work. One of the blurbs on the book jacket acclaims this work as significant as the 20th century works by Tillich, Barth and Rahner. It's true. If one wants more detail than I can provide in this review, I recommend the review by Christoph Schwobel in *Modern Theologians* or the respective secondary works by LeRon Shults or Stanley Grenz. Volume I (ISBN 0802836569) covers prolegomena, God and Trinity. Volume II (ISBN 0802837077) covers creation, christology, anthropology and some soteriology. Volume III (ISBN 0802837085) covers the rest of soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology and eschatology. First, very briefly, this work is not light reading. It is a theologian's theology, unmatched in its scientific approach. Although one may beg to differ on the details of his treatment, he has a breathtaking command of scripture, historical theology and the Continental philosophical tradition. The figures that populate these pages are Calvin, Barth, Ebeling, Wilckens, von Rad, Althaus, Krestschmar, Moltmann, Schlink, Origen, Aquinas, Scotus, Rahner, Augustine, Schleiermacher, Kant, Hegel, Dilthey, Melancthon, and of course Luther. Second, more than any other contemporary

theologian, P. has taken seriously the categories of history, anticipation, promise and hope without sacrificing a high standard for the pursuit of truth in the academic conversation. His basic reason for this is that the truth of the gospel claims the church so that she can witness to the world. However, truth is only grasped provisionally on this side of the eschaton, because only at the eschatological consummation is the full totality summed up and revealed (Dilthey). This entails an openness to public debate, not a retreat to argument by assertion or authority. In some ways, I would say that P. has recovered the original sense of *auctoritas*, which is the power to *_persuade_*. (Of course, it would take me too far afield to discuss why conservative Christians have emphasized authority in response to modernity). The critiques of P. have been the obverse of what his acclaim. First, the difficulty of the work has drawn the criticism that he is pastor-unfriendly, and that he has scholasticized the original excitement of 20th century theology. I can certainly sympathize with this; hence, I would recommend P's former student, Stanley Grenz (*_Theology for the Community of God_*). Be that as it may, the reception-history of many scholastic theologies have often been unfriendly at first, until people realize they need a rigorous treatment to solve theological problems they can't solve by themselves (e.g. Aquinas). Second, American reception of P. has been guarded, because of his unfriendliness toward liberation theology. Yet, as has been pointed out, this is because of his own experiences with Marxism from his roots in East Germany. However, to find out how he cashes out his theology into ethics, one has to look other parts of the P. corpus. Third, does his theology of history make God subject to his creation and evacuate divine simplicity? More specifically, is his own view of "divine infinity" as the sum of the transcendent attributes adequate to maintain the Creator-creature distinction? Fourth, how successful is his ecumenical ecclesiology in attempting to synthesize various positions normally seen as incompatible? E.g. his view of Eucharist as anticipation, anamnesis, epiclesis & trans-signification tries to sublate Anabaptist, Reformed and Catholic positions into a broadly Lutheran position. Fifth, his epistemology emphasizes the "not yet" of truth in tension with the "now." Hence, the noetic path to the ontic reality of Christ is the work of Christ in his death and resurrection (note the mating of historicist concerns with Melancthon's "we know Christ through his benefits"). Hence, his Christology proceeds "from below" by starting with the Christ-event to his person. This is the obverse of Karl Barth's Christology! It would take me too far afield to discuss his Christology, but this "apologetic" move raises the question of whether his dialogue with the world is prior or posterior to his own dogmatic decisions. All in all, I cannot recommend this ST highly enough. It is certainly stimulating reading, and will help theologians give an account for the reason for their hope.

In an age filled with "theologians" who have little interest in or knowledge of God, His attributes and His acts, Hodge is a must read. Though he does have his share of quirks (for example, his odd view of the salvation of infants who die), yet his Biblical insights, along with his piercing logic, will make any Christian reader a better theologian. There are so many gems of theological exposition in this work that it would be impossible to list all of them, but I would urge every reader not to miss these--the inspiration of Scripture, the attributes of God, the Person of Christ, the nature of justification by faith alone, the nature of sanctification, the meaning of the Ten Commandments, and of course, though they are often scoffed at in our age, the proofs for the existence of God (Chapter II, Theism). Though there remain a few quite minor formatting flaws in this edition, the editor completed a daunting task to make this complex work conveniently available for Kindle, and at a wonderful price. Many, many thanks!

Charles Hodge's Systematic Theology is a MUST have book, so my review is only evaluating the kindle version of this book. There are 4 Kindle versions of this book. #3/4 has no linked Table of Contents. This is the \$6.99 version with the black cover with a red box that reads "Systematic Theology" in white letters and the name Charles Hodge at the bottom of the cover. (This is the book being evaluated in this review) The other Kindle versions: #1/4 is the best version with a complete linked Table of Contents is the one with a COLOR picture of Charles Hodge with a black bar across the bottom of the book with the words "SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY" in CAPS and below it in a larger font "CHARLES HODGE" in CAPS. This best version is \$1.99. #2/4 has a linkable Table of Contents BUT it comes in 2 different kindle volumes at \$1.00 each so you must buy 2 Kindle books for the same content as #1/4. This is the version titled "Systematic Theology Vol 1 (Theology) (with fully functional TOC) (Illustrated) [Kindle Edition]" with a black and white picture of Charles Hodge with "Systematic Theology Vol 1 (Theology) Charles Hodge" written across his picture in big white letters. #4/4 This version \$0.99 has no linked Table of Contents PLUS has weird symbols and many typos because it is a scanned copy - the same as the free public domain version. It has a black and white picture of Charles Hodge on the cover but no title and no name. No writing at all on the cover.

Hodge's work is comprehensive and academic. His theology is Calvinist of the Old Princeton School. He delves into original language of secondary sources frequently, but the English-only reader can still follow his principle points.

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