

# THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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*On the Doctrine of Humanity*

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. 2  
Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had  
formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting  
you are God. 3 You return man to dust and say, "Return, O  
children of man!" 4 For a thousand years in your sight are but  
as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. . . . 12  
So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of  
wisdom. 13 Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your  
servants! 14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,  
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

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Psalm 90:1-4, 12-14

What is  
anthropology?



What is  
*theological*  
anthropology?





**PRINCETON  
UNIVERSITY**

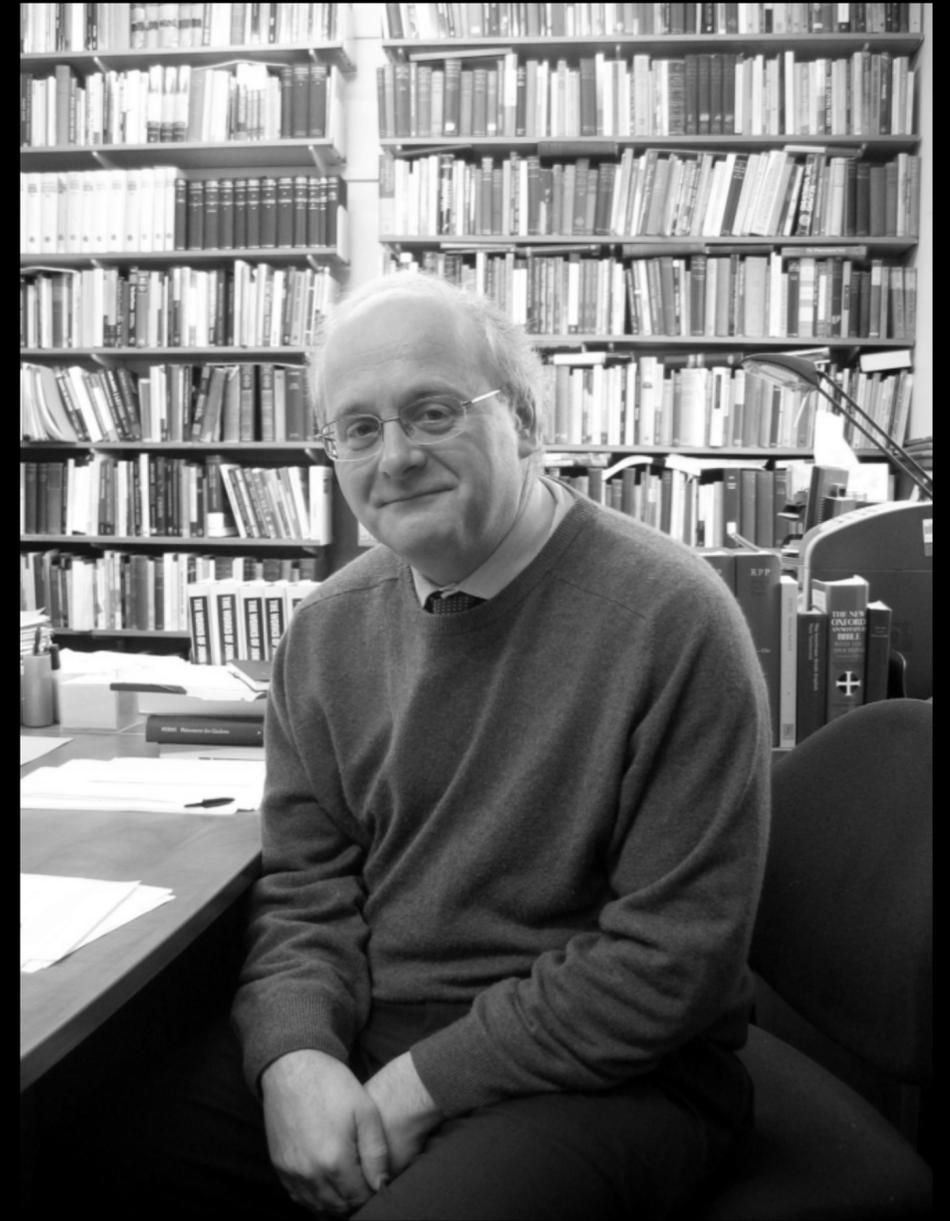
## **Why Study Anthropology?**

Anthropology is the comprehensive study of human development, culture, and change throughout the world, past and present.

The comprehensiveness of anthropology stems from its emphasis on context, reflected in the perspectives offered by the discipline's four fields: sociocultural, biological, linguistic anthropology, and archaeology. (<https://anthropology.princeton.edu/undergraduate>)

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“Christian theological anthropology is the dogmatic depiction of human identity as it is shaped by the creative, regenerative and glorifying work of the triune God” (263).



John Webster, “Eschatology and Anthropology,” in *Word and Church*

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"The task of Christian theology is to clarify what is **distinctively theological** in its account of personhood and to formulate criteria for what is **authentically Christian** in its accounts of human being."

~ Kevin Vanhoozer, "Human Being, individual and social," 158

# Biblical Theological Foundations for Christian Anthropology

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CREATURE

Human beings as creatures dependent upon and in relation to God, the Creator; *imago Dei*

WHOLE

Humans are created as whole beings. Not physical against spiritual; Soul-Body; Gender/Sexuality; Ethnicity

SOCIAL

Humans are created within the context of creation and in relationship to the "other." Culture/Society; Church

NEW CREATION

Humans are in need of redemption and reconciliation because of bondage to sin and estrangement from God.

# On Creatureliness

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*Creator-creature Distinction*

26 Then God said, "Let us **make** man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God **created** man in his own image, in the image of God he **created** him; male and female he **created** them.

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Genesis 1:26-27

# What is a “creature”?

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1. To be a “creature” is to be a “thing made.”
2. The creature’s existence is completely “gratuitous.”
  - Must be explained by an external principle. Understanding a creature’s reality lies beyond itself to its source.
  - Christian anthropology should be theocentric, i.e., “theological” anthropology.
  - John Webster, “*Non ex aequo: God’s Relation to Creatures,*” 121-22.

“I believe in God, the Father almighty, **CREATOR** of heaven and earth.”

**What is this? Answer:**

**I believe that God has created me together with all that exists.** God has **given** me and still **preserves my body and soul**: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property—along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. **God protects** me against all danger and shields and **preserves** me from all evil. **And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy**, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! **For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.**

~ Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism*, 354-55

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# A Created-Person

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- ❖ Human beings, like all created things, are totally dependent upon God.
- ❖ Humans are not only “creatures,” but also are persons who have “a kind of independence—not absolute but relative [to God]” (Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 5).
- ❖ “In sum, the human being is both a creature and a person; he or she is a *created person*. This, now, is the central mystery of man; how can man be both a creature and a person at the same time?” (Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 6).

# Dignity and Destiny

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- ❖ “To be caused and not the cause of one’s being, is not to be nothing; it is to be something *out of nothing*” (Webster, “The Dignity of Creatures,” 35).
- ❖ **Human dignity** is bestowed by God upon his creatures out of his divine goodness. Humans have dignity because God dignifies them (Ps 8:4; 144:3-4).
- ❖ **Human destiny** is given by God to have a particular nature and existence *for* and *with* the creator (Gen 1:26-27; Isa 43:7).

# On the Image of God

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*Fit for Life with God*

26 Then God said, "Let us make man **in our image, after our likeness**. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man **in his own image, in the image of God** he created him; male and female he created them.

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Genesis 1:26-27

# *Imago Dei ~ Manna?*

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- ❖ “The major exegetical problem is that there is virtually no explanation of the term within the Old Testament” (Brevard Childs, *OT Theology in Canonical Context*, 97).
- ❖ “Theologians have difficulty identifying a single trait that constitutes the *imago Dei*” (Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 83).

# *Imago Dei* ~ Guiding Concerns

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1. The problem of irreducibility.
2. All-encompassing and loss of definition: If everything is "image," then nothing is "image."
3. Must not mistake the results of the image for the image itself (e.g., dominion, rule).
4. A biblical-theological approach must test ultimate truth about humans as the image of God against the total scriptural witness to Jesus Christ, God the Son Incarnate, as the true image of God (Jn 1:1-14; Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; 3:10; Heb 1:1-4).

# *Imago Dei* ~ Major Views

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## STRUCTURAL

A set of capacities constitutive of being human that reflect the Divine in some way (e.g., reason/rational thought; creativity).

## FUNCTIONAL

The image is something humans *do*. Typically, it is identified as humanity's "representative rule" on earth for God.

## RELATIONAL

Tends to be modeled after inner-Trinitarian relations. Relations are to God, to humans, and to creation.

# Christological Anthropology

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- ❖ For humans beings to be made “in the image of God” is to be made “in the image” of the Son, the true Image of the Father (Col 1:15; Heb 1:3; Jn 1:18).
  - **Focuses upon eternal Trinitarian relations:** The way to the Father is always through the Son, the Word of God (Jn 1:18; 14:6).
  - God’s intent from the beginning was to create human nature with certain properties/capacities based upon the human nature required for union with a “divine person,” that is, the person of God the Son (Jn 1:14).
  - All humans bear the “image of God” by virtue of their human nature being created with all that is necessary and sufficient for union with “a divine person,” i.e., union with Christ, God the Son Incarnate, who brings us into communion with the Triune God for a life of worship, service, and faith-filled obedience. In this view, *imago Dei* is about humans being uniquely *fit for life with God*.

NSBT NEW STUDIES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

# Identity and Idolatry

The image of God and its inversion



Richard Lints

Series Editor: D. A. Carson

- ❖ *Imago Dei* as "identity" is more about "meaning" than "metaphysics" (23,39).
- ❖ An initial observation is that the canonical counterpart to the *imago Dei* is graven images, i.e., idols (35).
- ❖ A mirror reflects; a distorted or broken mirror still reflects, but in a distorted or broken manner (22). Thus, Christians and non-Christians still are "in the image of God," the former renewed, the latter corrupted.

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# Identity and Idolatry

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- ❖ Humanity as the *imago Dei* finds its ultimate purpose in the worship and honoring of God, the Creator (29-30, 42).
- ❖ The image is not lost after the Fall, but instead is expressed in breach of covenantal relationship with God (its Original). The image-bearer still reflects its draw to God, but it does so as an idol-maker.
- ❖ The image's proper worship of God in covenantal relationship results in spiritual and ethical reflection of its Creator (2 Cor 3:18).

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"It is a relational dynamic that connects image (person) to original (God) but it is also a relationship of worship or honour that depicts this connection. From the beginning to the end of redemptive history the image is constituted by its (dis)honouring of God. The image (humankind) finds its *telos* (purpose) in the honouring relationship to the original (God the Creator). This is true at both the beginning and the end of the canon" (30).

# On the *Imago Dei*: Concluding Thoughts

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- ❖ Christ is the true image of God, the Incarnate Word of the Father (Jn 1:1-18; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:1-3).
- ❖ Male and female are equally created “in the image of God” (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-2).
- ❖ The righteous and the unrighteous are image-bearers (Gen 9:6-7; Jas 3:9).
- ❖ Sin corrupts humanity as the *imago Dei*, but it does not lose it (see texts above; 1 Cor 15:42-49).
- ❖ The corrupted *imago* requires renewal “in Christ,” who is the image of God (Col 3:9-10; 2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29).
- ❖ The “image” is a canonical concept that is teleological and/or eschatological at its core. Anthropology demands Christology and Soteriology.



# HAMARTIOLOGY

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*On the Doctrine of Sin*



"The plain truth is that a right knowledge of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity."

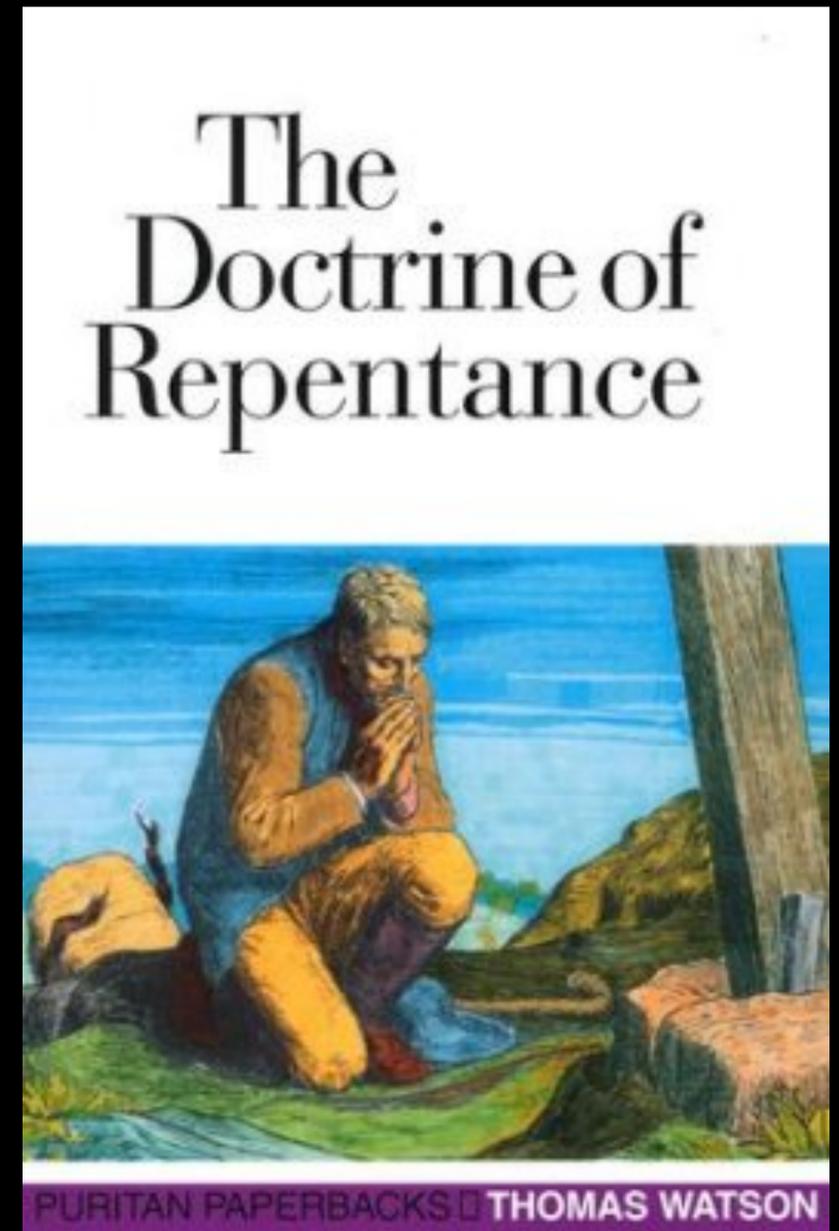
- **J.C. Ryle, *Holiness***

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# Bitter Sin, a Sweet Christ

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- ❖ “A broken heart and a broken Christ do well agree. The more bitterness we taste in sin, the more sweetness we shall taste in Christ” (27).
- ❖ “Confession of sin endears Christ to the soul. If I say I am a sinner, how precious will Christ’s blood be to me!” (35).
- ❖ “Heaven is never longed for till sin be loathed” (45).
- ❖ “Repentance is required as a qualification. It is not so much to endear us to Christ as to endear Christ to us. Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet” (63).
- ❖ **Definition of Repentance:** “Repentance is a grace of God’s Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed” (18).



# Original Sin

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## ❖ **Original Sin**

1. The sinful state and condition in which all humans are born.
2. Its origin occurs at the time of the beginning of the human race (Gen 3:1-7).
3. It is the source of actual sins (Hoekema, 143).

## ❖ **Actual Sin**

- Human sinning in thought, word, or deed by commission or omission (Hoekema, 143).

# Sin's Nature and Its Effects

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- ❖ Sin is against God.
  - Against him personally (Ps 51:4; Isa 48:11; Ezek 36:20-23).
  - Against his nature (Rom 3:23; Ps 5:4).
  - Against his law (Dan 9:11; Ps 32:1; 1 Jn 3:4).
- ❖ Sin is against one's self (1 Cor 6:18).
- ❖ Sin is against others (Matt 18:21; 1 Thess 4:6).
  - Personal/Individual sin.
  - Social, Systemic sin.
    - See McCall, *Against God and Nature*, 237-70.

# Sin's Nature and Its Effects

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- ❖ Sin has caused bondage to sin (Rom 6:17) and enmity with God (Rom 5:10).
- ❖ Sin has brought death both physical and spiritual (Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1).
- ❖ Sin has caused moral and natural evil.
  - Moral Evil: Done by rational creatures (angels and humans).
  - Natural Evil: The corruption/perversion of God's "good" creation (Rom 8:18-25; \*20-21). The scriptural viewpoint upholds moral/spiritual evil as the cause of the curse of natural evil (Rom 5:12).

# On the Practice of Doctrine

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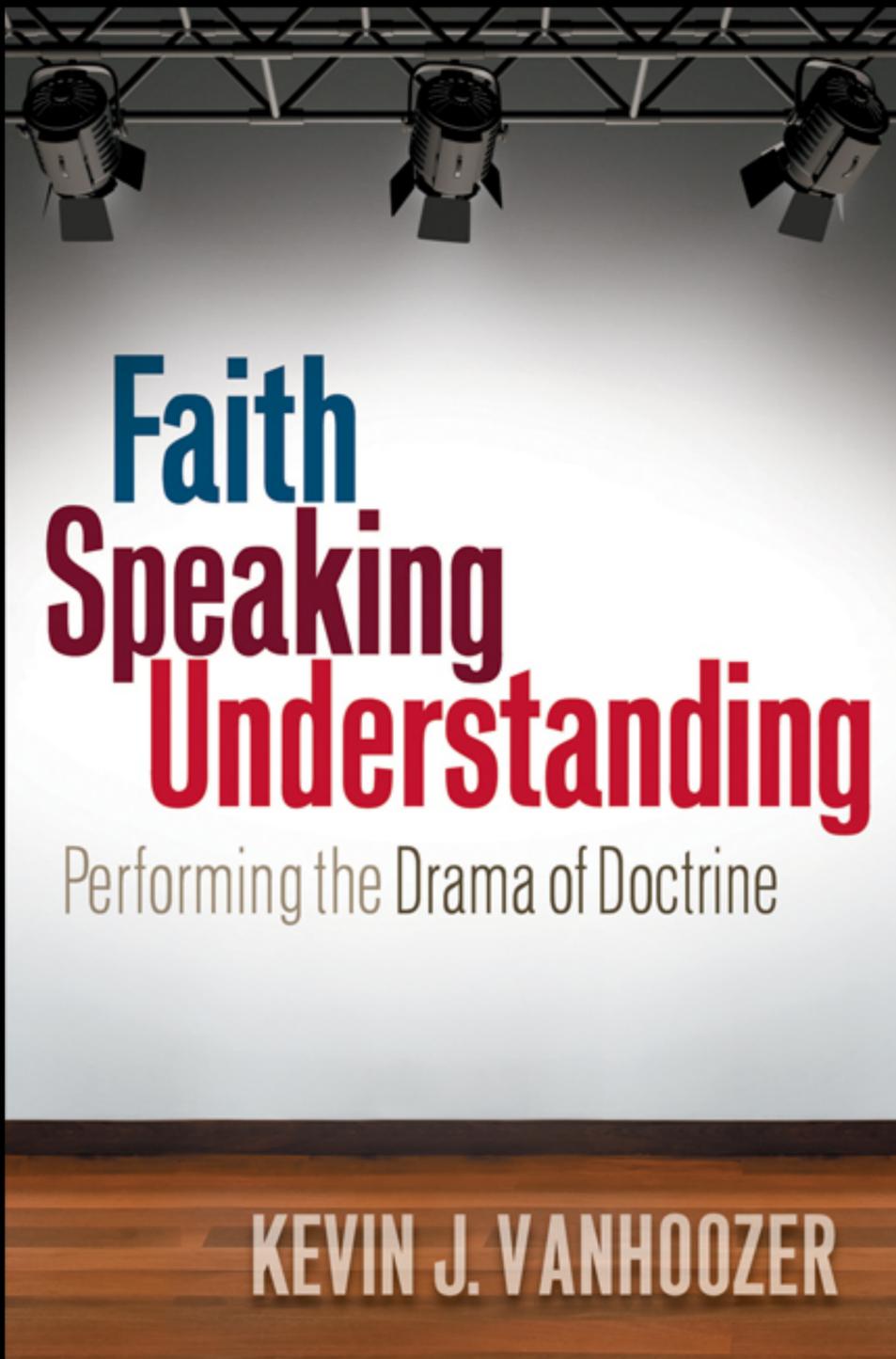
- ❖ “Theology is the doctrine or teaching of **living to God**” (William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 77).
- ❖ “Theology exists for the sake of **God’s Word, ministering understanding**, and this for the purpose of growing disciples” (Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 3).
- ❖ Theology is a tool for making disciples who live “according to the Scriptures” in each successive generation.

# On the Practice of Doctrine

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## ❖ Sample Questions to Ask:

- What are the practical *implications* of a doctrine for any given contemporary issue?
- How does a particular doctrine cast a *nuanced* or *fresh perspective* on the way an issue or situation is approached or evaluated from a Christian worldview?
- Does a certain stance or position on a contemporary issue or practice *contradict* a biblical doctrine? Can a person *consistently* hold to a particular viewpoint in faithful *coherency* with one's confession of this or that biblical doctrine?
- How could a particular contemporary issue be *enriched*, *strengthened*, or *redefined* by a given doctrine?



❖ **Sample questions to ask:**

- How can our theology *cultivate biblical wisdom* for disciplined, faithful Christian speech, thoughts, affections, and actions “in accordance with the Scriptures” in contemporary settings?
- Doctrine gives “*direction for fitting participation*” in the world and in relation to the Triune God (146-47).
- “Doctrine gives direction for bearing faithful witness, for speaking understanding. . . . Doctrine refers to the deposit of authorized teaching entrusted to the church’s care (1 Tim 6:10; 2 Tim 1:14), yet is more than a body of knowledge. It is instruction whose aim is *to form, inform, and transform disciples*” (5). . . . **“For the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ!”**

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