

## Scriptures and Doctrine :: Systematic Theology and the Talmud

### Systematic Theology and the Talmud - posted by rookie (), on: 2003/12/6 13:34

What do the Talmud and the hundreds of books on systematic theology have in common? Both are written by men who attempt to define God's ways and desires for us. Both will lead man away from God. Only the word of God can lead a man by the Holy Spirit to Jesus. All other attempts are vanity.

Paris Reidhead in Ten Shekels and a Shirt identifies the evangelical churches regression into vanity. Paraphrasing Reid head, "The men of three generations ago knew God. And from the their relationship with God, mighty works were done i n their generation. The writings and thoughts generated in their day have been passed down to this generation. And no w this generation professes belief in those men's thoughts."

Without a relationship, without being saved by "The Life," we who believe in the thoughts of men will never enter into the New Covenant life. We will wither in the wilderness. The church of this generation will be impotent.

Andrew Murray in the Holiest of All, page 366 writes, "He is able to save completely. Salvation is a subjective, experime ntal thing--manifest in the peace and holiness of heart He gives. We, our life, our inner man, our heart, our will and affec tions, are to be delivered from the power of sin, and to taste and enjoy the putting away of sin as a blessed experience. In our very heart we are to find and feel the power of His redemption. As deep and strong as sin proved itself in its actu al power and its mastery within us, is Jesus to prove the triumph of redeeming grace.

His one work as Priest over the house of God is to bring us into it, and enable us to live there. He does this by bringing God and the soul into actual harmony, sympathy, and fellowship with each other."

As Paris Reidhead condemned the humanistic poison of the gospel we share today, so has Andrew Murray identified th e poison of his day. It is okay to sin, God love you.

As iron sharpen iron

### Re: Systematic Theology and the Talmud - posted by Chosen7Stone (), on: 2003/12/6 14:27

Sharing half a gospel might make way for half a relationship -- how in the world would I respond to God's questioning of doing such a foolish and selfish thing?

### Re: Systematic Theology and the Talmud - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/12/6 14:45

Jeff wrote: What do the Talmud and the hundreds of books on systematic theology have in common? Both are written by men who attempt to define God's ways and desires for us. Both will lead man away from God. Only the word of God can lead a man by the Holy Spirit to Jesus. All other attempts are vanity.

I wonder if you have ever thought that you would never have heard of either Paris Reidhead or Andrew Murray if they ha d not diligently studied lots of those books of systematic theology?

### Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2003/12/6 16:59

Hi philologos,

Again you are correct, and I want to say this in a loving way. We hear these men today because they have been influen ced by systematic theology. You see, if we listened to Jesus speak to us through the Holy Spirit, all these books on self help and methods to find God would be rendered useless. The printing presses and commercial activity would cease. T hen we would have the only book we ever needed, His Word.

I doubt that many authors would see their thoughts printed who do not fit into the parameters of what is deemed safe the ology.

abiding in Christ

**Re: - posted by jeremyhulsey (), on: 2003/12/6 18:34**

Hi Jeff,

I want to say that I appreciate your desire to want to know the Living Word and not just a bunch of printed pages. But everyone has a systematic theology. This is the system by which someone looks at what the whole Bible teaches on particular doctrines. Everyone who is a Bible believing Christian falls back on some sort of systematic theology to define their beliefs.

Like you, I wish many theologians would come out of their ivory towers and get a little heart knowledge, but I am glad to say that there have always been many who have done just that. A. W. Tozer is considered one of the great theologians of the 20th century. He preached for people to know not just the word of God, but the God of the word. The Church's greatest theologian of course was Paul. He was trained from his youth in the scriptures in one of the greatest rabbinical (I think that's how you spell it) schools of his day.

I would say the lack of proper theology has opened the church up today to some of the greatest doctrinal heresies of all time. Lack of the knowledge of the word of God has unleashed upon unsuspecting Christians a plethora of ear-ticklers who prophecy lies and deceit to adoring crowds of biblically illiterate Christians.

My signature was inspired by studying men who loved God and His truth. Truth without fire is dead: men can know the Bible from one end to the other, but unless it's brought to life by the Holy Ghost, it's mere academics. Fire without truth is deadly: men who mishandle the word of God, who build people up to some psychotic frenzy, then take their money, leave people still trapped in the bondage of sin thinking they are free. We need the truth on fire: The Holy word of God preached by holy redeemed men, reaching the lost and making them holy.

Great men of God from the past:

John Chrysostom; trained by one of the greatest teachers of rhetoric in the East. Chrysostom is probably one of the best preachers in all of church history.

John Hus; trained in the college of Prague, and was the administrator of the college. Was martyred by the Catholic Church for being the first to break from it.

William Tyndale: Began Translating the Bible into the common language of his countrymen.

John Wesley: Graduated from Oxford University. Required his ministers to study five hours a day.

Jonathan Edwards: If I remember correctly, he was over Princeton University.

"Any mediocre preacher can hope to have a couple of good sermons in his lifetime, but every great preacher from the past has been a man of great study." ~Professor Crabtree, Central Bible College~

In Christ,  
Jeremy Hulsey

**Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2003/12/6 22:15**

I many times sign off with the words, as iron sharpen iron. For this precept is a blessing to all who partake. Fellowship through Jesus is a wonderful gift of God.

Many today repeat what they read. Tozer called this phenomena textualism. They believe in the words of the Bible, never coming to the understanding of the power of God. Yet because they recite the words, they believe the words make up the understanding. Only by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire do we receive His provisions.

I stumbled across this site because of Tozer. Not because of his intellect but because he knows God. We have fellowship through His Spirit. Our hearts sing a new song. I pray that all would learn this song.

That is why I chose to compare the Talmud to systematic theology. One may sow another water but it is God who gives the increase. We are like the Israelites who trembled before God's voice. We stumble as they did. They asked Moses to intercede for them. And again we look to creation and not the Creator.

sing a new song

**Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2003/12/8 11:33**

Husley wrote: But everyone has a systematic theology.

I thought about your response this weekend. Thankyou for the reading list. We read to know that we are not alone.

I can only base my response to what I know. In my walk I have found that the word "systematic," when applied to my knowing Him, has always been the opposite of my preconceived notions. Thus the word of God is living, and our High Priest, "has an unchangeable priesthood." Hebrews 7:24 God is the same always and He continues to change me. He works always fresh and alive.

As you have said about the ivory tower theologians, I agree. Yet many follow them to their destruction. Jesus warned us of these.

"Those by the wayside are the ones who hear: then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts; lest they should believe and be saved." Luke 8:12

The word was heard initially and it was implanted by God into their hearts, but Satan came as a thief!

As I reach out, I fail miserably, I appreciate your willingness to teach and exhort. Fellowship is a precept of God. It is living.

Thankyou Jeremy

**Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2004/1/13 12:34**

I listened to two sermons of Paris Reidhead. I will paraphrase his thoughts. He said, "The Bible does not teach systematic theology. It teaches responsibility. The believer is responsible to God through prayer, worship, and obedience to His commands in our lives. Men create systematic theology. Paris said he has no problem with man's attempt to understand God's ways, but his theology must not deny his responsibility to God.

In Christ  
Jeff

**Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/1/19 5:57**

I totally agree with Hulseley on this issue. Whether educated or not, all Christians are, in practice, theologians -- we all consciously or unconsciously form ideas and perspectives about God. The question is whether these theologies are good or bad.

There is nothing *intrinsicly* wrong about systematic theology. The problem comes only when preoccupation with the right doctrine dominates our agenda to an extent that we lose sight of the living God.

I guess systematic theology had gained a bad name especially when liberal theology was rampant in Christian institutions. However, I think we should not therefore place systematic theology in opposition to vital and genuine faith.

After all, zeal without knowledge is simply the other extreme -- religious zeal and experiences without knowledge is just as (or more) dangerous (Romans 10:1-2).

I once heard Gordon Fee, professor of New Testament at Regent College, said that what evangelical theologians need today is **scholars on fire**. That is so true. He himself already set up a good example.

I was thinking of John Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion*, which is an unsurpassed masterpiece in Christian theology.

y -- even to those who disagree with him. What's often neglected though, is how his passion for God and devotion to God permeate through the pages. One does not have to be a Calvinist to appreciate this work.

**Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2004/1/22 10:37**

In the promise of the New Covenant it states, "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know Me, **from the least of them to the greatest of them...**" Jeremiah 31:34

I stated in another thread the only correct system I see in Scriptures. Yes, Lord, O how good you are to me. No Lord, o uth! Man am I stupid, thankyou Lord. What's next Lord?

In Christ  
Jeff

**Re: Systematic Theology and the Talmud - posted by eagleswings (), on: 2004/1/22 19:57**

Hi Jeff,

Just noticed your thread today. T.Austin-Sparks would have been delighted with your title.

“(There is) a principle which is implicit in the whole purpose and argument of the letter (to the Hebrews). It is that of how life is preserved and maintained. This is one of the most difficult matters to convey unless there is a real measure of spiritual understanding, and it might well suffer in the same way as did the "many things" regarding Melchizedek in chapter 5:11. However, the spiritual situation is such today as to justify every attempt at solving it.

“The first phase of the problem is this; seeing that there is a sum of Christian doctrine and practice embodied in the New Testament, and that certain clearly defined beliefs and practices represent the substance or foundation of Christianity: that these are not to be added to or taken from: is it possible that Christianity should not become a set system, tradition, or form? There are some phrases in the New Testament which would seem to imply that it is such. It would seem impossible to avoid this when once the first newness, novelty, and wonder have passed, and age succeeds age in Christian teaching, work and practice. But to accept such a conclusion and position is really to violate the most vital and crucial facts in New Testament Christianity, and to agree to a state of things which is a caricature and denial or contradiction of Christ. If Christianity were a system of truths and practices then the above-mentioned result would be inevitable. But it is not! It is a living Person, known only in the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes, and not known all at once, but to be known by continuous and ever-growing revelation of the Holy Spirit.”

T. Austin-Sparks “GOD HATH SPOKEN”  
(from chapter 4: How Life is Maintained. The Principle of the New Covenant)

What's the "other thread"?

Roger

**Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/1/23 6:09**

I admire T. Austin-Sparks very much. I think he correctly emphasised on the life of Christ as the essence of Christianity. Without a vital and living faith, all knowledge would be in vain.

However, having been involved with Christian groups more or less in the tradition of T. Austin-Sparks and Watchman Nee (and I still am involved with it), I think there is always the danger of overemphasising the subjective to the neglect of the objective. In my own experience, I have seen church splits in these groups often, because all parties thought they have the direct "revelation" from the Spirit.

I would prefer to say that there are two aspects that must be balanced: the *timeless truth* in the *objective* Word of God forms the basis of our knowledge *about* God, and is therefore worthy of diligent and systematic study. On the other hand, for the Word to be living to us and therefore applicable to our lives, we need the illumination of the Spirit to lead us into the *subjective* experience of God by his *timely truth* -- living word spoken specifically to address our individual condition and situation.

Dismissing systematic theology as merely a human enterprise is not too helpful, because everyone (including Sparks) have a system of beliefs about God and the Christian faith (which by definition *is* systematic theology). It is not helpful to ask whether systematic theology should be done or not, because we are all doing it consciously or unconsciously; the proper question to ask is whether our own system of beliefs is biblical or not.

Systematic theology is good when it has as its foundation, a comprehensive examination of the full counsel of the Scripture. We examine the history of Christian thought in order to learn from the experiences and mistakes of Christians in the past (there is really no *new* revelation or heresies, because chances are you will find similar strands of thoughts in history!). Finally, we rely upon the illumination of the Spirit to find application of the timeless Word in a timely manner in our contemporary context.

**Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2004/1/23 7:56**

My purpose in this thread is to exhort others to travel the path that I have found. The exhortation is: believe in God's promise to us that He will teach us the truth. This is the promise of the New Covenant. The power of the New Covenant life comes through the revelation of Scripture and how it applies in each believer's life. The believer will experience circumstances in life which Scriptures teach. Many of the parables which Jesus taught become real events in the believer's life at one time or another. We learn line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little there a little. This is the substance of our relationship with our Savior.

What I have seen in the church of today is no different than the religious practices of the Jews during Christ's time of ministry. They had the talmud, and in a similar way the church places much weight on men's attempts to explain how Scripture is not in conflict. I in the past have been tormented by Romans chapter 3. I have known what it means to desire to remain blind to what Scripture is teaching us. I see that same struggle in one form or another in most of the believer's life now. I know the torment. I have also experienced the freedom of surrendering to the Holy Spirit who strives with my fleshly spirit. I have found that as I surrender to His leading the Scriptures that once seemed to be in conflict now line up as the stars in the sky. I have seen a truth which in my flesh could never comprehend.

I write this to exhort others to look to God for the peace that only He can give. Believe in the promise, God speaks!

In Christ  
Jeff

**Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/1/26 6:02**

Jeff,

I enjoyed this dialogue. I have strongly emphasised the need for balance between the study of systematic theology and a vital faith with God because of my own experience too. I hope you'd also understand where I am coming from.

I came from a church tradition that puts theology and living experience of God in great opposition. We emphasised on learning directly from the scripture and the Spirit's leading to the truth, and condemned the study of theology as a human enterprise, as human opinion, as head knowledge with no life.

Unfortunately, some adverse effects slowly made themselves manifest. As we cut ourselves off from the rich spiritual wealth of godly saints in the past, an attitude of spiritual elitism developed. We thought we were understanding the scripture afresh free from any "human opinion" and theology, but in reality, we have simply replaced with our own assumed theology. This led to many other problems that I shall not elaborate here.

In retrospect, I think my church tradition would have been healthier if we did not throw the baby away with the bathing water. I think we were on the right track when we sought after God himself and his Word. However, we would have fared better if we did not completely reject the role of the mind. We would have learned from the mistakes of saints in the past in the history of Christian thought.

Our focus should be on Christ alone. We should rely on the Spirit to guide us into his truth. At the same time, God has endowed us with the gift of reasoning, which was blinded by sin. However, as the redeemed, we could make godly use of this gift once again. Therefore, I think it is possible for a Christ-redeemed Spirit-empowered believer to engage in the study of theology for the glory of God.

I have seen the damages done by both dry head knowledge void of life and zeal for God without knowledge. Let's beware of both.

**Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2004/1/26 7:30**

Hi Agent 001,

You wrote: "In retrospect, I think my church tradition would have been healthier if we did not throw the baby away with the bathing water..."

You talked about problems, ie "an attitude of spiritual elitism," manifesting themselves. Would you please share the nature of the problems which manifested themselves in your church?

In Christ  
Jeff

**Re: Let me try... - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/1/28 5:00**

Jeff:

I think ultimately all problems relate to the works of the flesh. It is easy for our sinful nature to fall into the condition of the church in Laodicea. We think we are rich, yet we are really poor. We think we see, yet we are really blind. We think we are spiritual, yet we are really walking according to the flesh.

One problem that I have seen: we associated theology with "head knowledge", study of theology with "being soulless" -- we said, "that is all head knowledge, there is no life in it!" or we said, "that is the Law. The letter kills." Eventually there was a condescending attitude, a holier-than-thou attitude towards ministers or Christians who equip themselves with theology.

I tell you, it is very difficult to tell people with such spiritual pride to acknowledge a problem or mistake, especially when they have wholly rejected the value of theology. Everything other people said becomes "man's opinion," and they apparently believed that what they know are all from "pure God's revelation".

They thought they were "going directly to pure Scripture", completely free from any theological bias or framework, and therefore they were always right. But the fact is, everyone who studies the Scripture does consciously or unconsciously have preconceived concepts that need to be affirmed or corrected by the Word and the Spirit. I think the study of theology is one of the tools that could be used by the Spirit.

I don't think I am explaining myself too well. I just don't think systematic theology is intrinsically evil, although it does have the potential of becoming "Talmud" if we do not put it in its proper place. On the other hand, the flesh could creep into even the "spiritual" persons in other ways.

May the Spirit reign in all of us so that His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

**Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2004/1/28 6:42**

Hi Agent 001,

Thankyou for your insights. This internet thing has ministered to me in so many ways. It has been a time for developing my thoughts and trying to communicate them with other believers. This website is a rich environment for sharing and bouncing off one another the thoughts and desires that God has put into us.

I agree with your statement: "I tell you, it is very difficult to tell people with such spiritual pride to acknowledge a problem or mistake." Paul corrects: "For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" 1 Corinthians 4:7 Pride of the flesh manifests itself in many ways. Here Paul writes to this fact, if you have truly received the understanding from God you would not boast. You would have realized that nothing in you could have brought forth what God Himself has given you. So humility should be the fruit not pride. Paul, in another place, talked about the affliction that God would not remove from him. It was to keep him from becoming prideful of his relationship with God. So this danger of spiritual pride is a real problem that can only be held in check by the Scriptures and the discerning of spirits. I am guilty, even within this thread, because I have shared my systematic theology, just like Husley wrote.

In Christ  
Jeff

**Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/1/29 3:44**

Jeff:

I have learned much from the forum too, as well as from your insights. For instance, I like an earlier quote you cited by Paris Reidhead.

Quote:  
-----Paris said he has no problem with man's attempt to understand God's ways, but his theology must not deny his responsibility to God.

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It's true, iron does sharpen iron. :)