

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY BY VINCENT CHEUNG - TELLS THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTIANITY BEING A DARK RELIGION THOUGH HE PRETENDS THE BAD IS GOOD!

This book is an highly recommended Christian introduction to real Christian theology. The value of the book is magnified by how it debunks love the sinner and hate the sin which is virtually the rock modern Christianity is built on. Even if Christianity is the true faith, what virtually passes for Christianity is certainly not. Vincent Cheung is an excellent writer and his ability to think and interpret the Bible is exceptional.

CHALLENGING THE IDEA THAT YOU CAN LOVE GOD WITHOUT KNOWING MUCH ABOUT HIM

Theological knowledge is the prerequisite of walking in love. This destroys the anti-intellectual notion that a person can love God without studying theology, or that loving God is superior to knowing about him. To love God is to obey his teaching, but to obey his teaching, one must first grasp it with the intellect, and this is to study theology. Theology makes love possible.

A closer look at the "first and greatest commandment" will further emphasis this. Here are some relevant biblical passages:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes...

CHRISTIAN LIFE

Moral separation from the world implies that our lifestyles should be very different from the non-Christians. It is inconceivable that Christians who live in accordance with God's precepts and who are able to perceive that moral implications pervade all that we do would have much common with non-Christians in their beliefs, preferences, communities, reading materials, and so on. Christians hate "even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh" (Jude 23).

CHRISTIAN "TRUTH"

We are commanded to resist the non-Christians and to destroy their beliefs. Jesus and the apostles never had an exchange of ideas with non-Christians, because they believed in the final and exclusive truth of the Christian faith, and that it was to completely dominate. All their dealings with non-Christians were one-sided – they preached to the non-Christians, refuted their beliefs and traditions, and taught them the only truth.

We may have friendly conversations with non-Christians, but an exchange of ideas implies that we respect their beliefs, that some their beliefs might be true, that we might learn from them, and that we might even consider adopting their beliefs. However, for a Christian to suggest any of these things is treason against the kingdom of God. One who respects non-Christian beliefs and who thinks that some of them might be true is probably not a Christian in the first place. Just as Jesus has nothing to learn from the devil, Christians have nothing to learn from non-Christians (2 Corinthians 6:15).

He commanded us to teach the nations (Matthew 28:18-20), not to learn from them. Rather, we learn from God himself, who teaches us through the Scripture.

Other relevant passages include:

I do not sit with deceitful men, nor do I consort with hypocrites; I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked. (Psalm 26:4-5)

Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil. Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure. (Psalm 101:4-5)

Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God! (Psalm 119:115)

Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies....Yet my prayer is ever against the deeds of evildoers; their rulers will be thrown down from the cliffs, and the wicked will learn that my words were well spoken. (Psalm 141:4-6)

Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. (Proverbs 4:14-15)

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. (Proverbs 13:20)

Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared. (Proverbs 22:24-25)

Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? (1 Corinthians 5:6)

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. (Ephesians 5:3-4)

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you. (1 Timothy 6:20-21)

Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. (2 Timothy 2:16)

Most people become involved with the world because they like the world, and not because they are determined to change it toward a more godly direction. But the Bible says, "Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Therefore, although it is unbiblical to retreat from the world and its social, economic, and political structures, we must evaluate our motive for associating with sinners, and make sure that we always remember our spiritual mission. The Bible also instructs us concerning relationships among Christians. Although we are no longer dealing with non-Christians, so that there are not as many restrictions, and that even intimate and permanent bonds are possible, it remains that the main purpose and content in these relationships among Christians ought to be spiritual, dominated by prayer, worship, and theological discussions. Some relevant biblical passages include: These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts. (Psalm 119:63)

May those who fear you turn to me, those who understand your statutes. (Psalm 119:79)

Let a righteous man strike me – it is a kindness; let him rebuke me – it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it. Yet my prayer is ever against the deeds of evildoers. (Psalm 141:5)

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. (Proverbs 13:20)

Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honor

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It is popular to teach that "God hates the sin but loves the sinner," and that Christians should hold such an attitude. But the above verses explicitly contradict the notion that we are to love the sinners but hate their sins; rather, they indicate that we are to hate both the evil people and their evil deeds.

MYSTERY

A "mystery" in the Bible does not refer to something that man cannot understand. Rather, it is something that has not been fully told to man before, but that is now more fully told and explained (see Romans 16:25-26, 1 Corinthians 15:51-54, Ephesians 3:4-6, Colossians 1:25-27, 2:2-3). Thus the word has to do with the chronology of God's revelation instead of man's intellectual limitation. In fact, when the Bible calls something a "mystery," it is a sure sign that we have been informed about it and that we can understand it.

HOW JESUS MADE KNOWING GOD A CORE COMMANDMENT

Love your neighbor as yourself" comes from Leviticus 19:18.

Man is a dichotomy, and consists of soul (mind, intellect, heart, or spirit) and body. He is not a trichotomy of spirit (heart), soul (mind, intellect), and body. The heart or the spirit is the soul (mind or intellect) of man. In the passages under discussion, heart, soul, and strength are synonymous terms, used for emphasis, and refer to a person's inner being, which Jesus interprets as the mind of man. Some commentators impose fanciful distinctions between these terms in this verse, but

this is illegitimate and unnecessary. Even if Jesus had not added the word "mind," the commandment would mean the same thing as what is claimed here, since the heart and soul are synonymous with the mind. See Vincent Cheung, *Godliness with Contentment*, chapter 2.

Mark 12:30 - Jesus says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

He mentions four items here with which we must love God, namely, the heart, soul, mind, and strength.

If 1 Thessalonians 5:23 demands the understanding that man consists of three parts, then Mark 12:30 demands the understanding that man consists of four parts. Thus the trichotomist argument from 1 Thessalonians 5:23 fails. Scripture uses repetition for emphasis. The fact that the above verses use different words to refer to man does not necessarily mean that each word designates a different part of man; rather, the intention is to refer to the whole person.

Popular Christian preaching often assumes a sharp distinction between the spirit and the soul, identifying the "heart" with the spirit, and the mind with the soul. However, the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* defines "heart" (Greek: *kardia*) as, "the inner person, the seat of understanding, knowledge, and will...."

Kittel contains a lengthy article on the word, and says, "The heart is the seat of understanding, the source of thought and reflection."

And as with other lexicons, it confirms that "The NT use of the word agrees with the OT use...."

The word "heart" includes a range of meanings in Scripture, but except when it is speaking of the physical organ, it refers to the mind, while the context stresses its particular functions. Gordon Clark estimates that, "the term heart denotes emotion about ten or at the very most fifteen percent of the time. It denotes the will maybe thirty percent of the time; and it very clearly means the intellect sixty or seventy percent [of the time]."

Since both the emotion and the will are functions of the intellect, or the mind, except when it refers to the physical organ, the word "heart" means the mind in the Bible.

EVOLUTION

Similarities between the human body and that of the animals imply common design, not common descent.

A "right" is something to which one is entitled. Since God is the creator and owner of all things, only he has the authority to assign rights to his creatures. Humans and animals do not have intrinsic rights; only God has intrinsic rights. Humans and animals have rights only in the sense that Scripture commands that they should be treated in the manner it prescribes. Such rights only exist in relation to other creatures, because God is free to treat his creatures in any way he desires.

DID JESUS NEED TO DIE TO SAVE SINNERS

One question regarding the atonement is whether the substitutionary death of Christ was necessary to redeem sinners. Two significant answers to this question are the **HYPOTHETICAL NECESSITY** and the **CONSEQUENT ABSOLUTE NECESSITY** views of the atonement.

John Murray explains these two views as follows: The view known as that of hypothetical necessity maintains that God could have forgiven sin and saved his elect without atonement or satisfaction – other means were open to God to whom all things are possible. But the way of the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God was the way which God in his grace and sovereign wisdom chose because this is the way in which the greatest number of advantages concur and the way in which grace is more marvellously exhibited.... The other view we call consequent absolute necessity. The word "consequent" in this designation points to the fact that God's will or decree to save any is of free and sovereign grace. To save lost men was not of absolute necessity but of the sovereign good pleasure of God. The terms "absolute necessity," however, indicate that God, having elected some to everlasting life out of his mere good pleasure, was under the necessity of accomplishing this purpose through the sacrifice of his own Son, a necessity arising from the perfections of his own nature.

If only these two options were available, the preferable one would be consequent absolute necessity. The atonement was not necessary in the sense that God

HELL – NON-CHRISTIANS ARE IN IT!

Indeed, all the non-Christians that have died are already there. If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and

throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. (Matthew 18:8-9)

You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? (Matthew 23:33)

Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels....Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:41, 46)

In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, "Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire....Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment." (Luke 16:23-24, 27-28)

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)

In any case, it appears that most of the people who oppose the biblical doctrine of definite atonement do not affirm actual universalism; rather, they assert a position that may be called HYPOTHETICAL UNIVERSALISM. They maintain that Christ has made salvation possible for all men, and all of them could be saved if they would only believe in the gospel. However, the problem remains: if Christ had indeed paid the price for the sins of every person, then why would anyone go to hell? What is left for God to punish? The usual answer is that a person must accept what Christ has done, else God would still condemn him even though Christ has fully paid for his sins. But this means that God would punish the same sins twice – once on Christ as he suffered on the cross, and a second time on the person who has committed those sins.

One preacher tried to escape this problem by suggesting that the only sin for which God sends people to hell is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ. But this contradicts the biblical passages that say God will in fact take account of the personal sins of the reprobates:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. (Romans 1:18-19)

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. (Ephesians 5:5-6)

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. (Colossians 3:5-6).