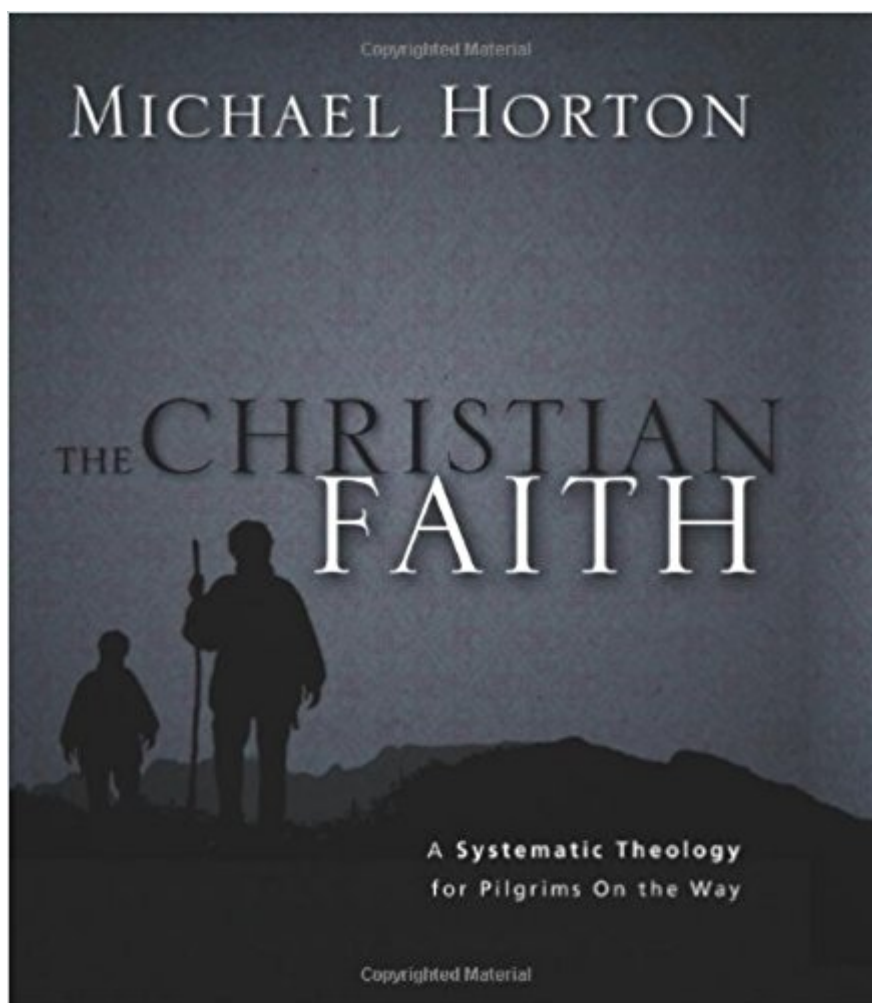


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The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology For Pilgrims On The Way



Synopsis

Michael Horton's highly anticipated *The Christian Faith* represents his magnum opus and will be viewed as one of the most important systematic theologies since Louis Berkhof wrote his in 1932. A prolific, award-winning author and theologian, Professor Horton views this volume as "doctrine that can be preached, experienced, and lived, as well as understood, clarified, and articulated." It is written for a growing cast of pilgrims making their way together and will be especially welcomed by professors, pastors, students, and armchair theologians. Features of this volume include: (1) a brief synopsis of biblical passages that inform a particular doctrine; (2) surveys of past and current theologies with contemporary emphasis on exegetical, philosophical, practical, and theological questions; (3) substantial interaction with various Christian movements within the Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodoxy traditions, as well as the hermeneutical issues raised by postmodernity; and (4) charts, sidebars, questions for discussion, and an extensive bibliography, divided into different entry levels and topics.

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Customer Reviews

"The Christian Faith is impressively deep, immensely practical, and infinitely hopeful for us pilgrims on the Way. Michael Horton will sculpt your appreciation for theology and enhance your love for Christ crucified. Anyone wanting to impact this world effectively---pastors, missionaries, evangelists, church planters, lay leaders, and all other wayfarers---must read this book."

Pastor Fikret Bocek "This is a remarkable volume. Lucid, insightful, learned, and faithful, *The Christian Faith* is that rare book that substantially contributes to and helpfully introduces Christian

theology. I highly recommend it. — Kevin W. Hector — “The most authoritative systematic theologies must possess a range of qualities: a firm grasp of the overall shape and proportions of Christian teaching; an eye for its fine details; deep biblical and historical learning; conceptual prowess matched by descriptive power; a sense of cultural occasion—all animated by humble delight in the inexhaustibility of God and the gospel. Michael Horton’s presentation exhibits all these excellences. This is a work of outstanding theological and spiritual cogency and will command wide attention. — John Webster — “The Christian Faith offers a fine, comprehensive companion to a number of recent systematic theologies. Crisply written, scripturally informed throughout, distinctively evangelical and Reformed, conversant with classic as well as contemporary Christian authors—Horton’s study is an outstanding contribution that will richly nourish Christian pilgrims on their way toward the consummation of Christ’s kingdom. — Cornelis P. Venema, President — “Michael Horton has done the Protestant church a profound service by bringing the theology of the Reformation forward to the twenty-first century. For decades, there has been a need for Reformed dogmatists to tackle new questions in theology, philosophy, and culture. Horton’s well-researched volume brings a rich, theological heritage into conversation with ideas and thinkers that are shaping the future of our world. This volume demonstrates that Protestant orthodoxy is alive and active. Horton’s precision is sure to initiate a new series of theological refinement in light of new global realities. — Anthony B. Bradley, Associate Professor — “The Christian Faith is a remarkable accomplishment—the most significant single-volume systematic theology to be written in decades! This book is written for the sake of the church, yet it also reflects a fresh engagement with a broad range of biblical and theological scholarship. The Christian Faith is an excellent resource for all who wish to engage classical Christian theology in a Reformed key. — J. Todd Billings, Associate Professor — “Horton’s Christian Faith has the great merit of never letting the reader forget that doctrine is for disciples who want to walk the way of Jesus Christ. Horton knows that the best systematic theology is a practical theology—one that helps us understand the ways of God, make sense of life, and give direction for God-glorifying living. He also knows that the best systematic theologies draw on biblical and historical theology. May many readers, therefore, take up this book, read, and walk! — Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Professor of Theology — “There has been a renaissance of theological writing in our day, but no one writes as carefully, cogently, and thoughtfully in the grand tradition of Protestant systematic theology as does Michael Horton. This work is a powerful reminder that theology ought to grow first from the soil of the biblical text; then, in conversation with the church across the ages, it ought to clarify

conceptually the great truths of the gospel. Theology, as Horton has written it here in *The Christian Faith*, must always be cognizant of the challenges of the contemporary world, but it must finally belong to the church, which gives it voice in the first place. There is no one better at this task in our day than Michael Horton.

— Richard Lints, Professor of Theology

“A crisp, clear, and forceful new theology that is at once biblical and reverent, historical and contemporary, learned but accessible. What a great gift this is to the church!

— David F. Wells, Distinguished Research Professor

“Michael Horton has hit a home run: a narrative-shaped, comprehensive, one-volume systematic theology that is biblically-grounded, warmly evangelical, confessionally Reformed in its angularity while catholic in its tone, and freshly contemporary. In the spirit of the Westminster Catechism, Horton directs readers to the glory of God and the joy of doing theology.

— John Bolt, Professor of Systematic Theology

“In this impressive volume, Michael Horton takes the movement of confessing evangelicals to a new level. He remits and rethinks the greatness of seventeenth-century Reformed theology and makes it accessible for readers today. Even those who cannot go along with some of his central positions will find them to be challenging and formidable. It is well worth grappling with Horton’s up-to-date work.

— George Hunsinger, Professor of Systematic Theology

“Dr. Horton has produced a remarkable work. His approach to systematic theology is fresh and critically needed in our time. Every pilgrim will profit from this work.

— R.C. Sproul, Chairman and President

“This is a pilgrim’s systematic theology, thoroughly impressive for its architectonic design and sweeping scope and the wide reading it reflects, provides a major restatement of Christian truth for today. Its overall plan is to explore the interaction between four key factors: the historically reliable narrative drama of Scripture that gives rise to doctrine, culminates in doxology, and results in discipleship. The author carries this plan through in a fresh and stimulating fashion out of a deep commitment to Reformation and post-Reformation orthodoxy. He enriches his discussion by using the subsequent redemptive-historical insights of Geerhardus Vos and others and interacts substantially with other traditions, both sympathetic and critical. One may have reservations about the author’s forensic ontology and aspects of his use of speech act theory yet benefit greatly from his able and biblically sound treatment of numerous theological topics.

— Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology

“Michael Horton’s new systematic theology has been long-awaited and does not disappoint. Here is classic, deep, orthodox Reformed theology, written in a way that is thoughtful and engaged. The author draws deeply on his tradition, but also interacts fruitfully with insights from contemporary scholarship in a way that communicates clearly but does not sacrifice

depth for the sake of simplicity. Each of the classic loci is addressed with exegetical and systematic insight, and old doctrines are once again brought to life on the page. Great truths are defended, but not in a defensive manner; and the glory of the gospel shines through in sharp relief. For those who think one must make a choice between guarding the faith and being thoughtfully relevant, think again: this book both teaches theology and is an example of how theology should be done. The reader who is undaunted by the number of pages will be richly rewarded; and the pastor, elder, discussion leader, and church member who wants to know more will not be disappointed. — Carl R. Trueman, Professor of Historical Theology and Church Hist

Michael Horton's highly anticipated *The Christian Faith* represents his magnum opus and will be viewed as one of—if not the—most important systematic theologies since Louis Berkhof wrote his in 1932. A prolific, award-winning author and theologian, Professor Horton views this volume as 'doctrine that can be preached, experienced, and lived, as well as understood, clarified, and articulated.' It is written for a growing cast of pilgrims making their way together and will be especially welcomed by professors, pastors, students, and armchair theologians. Features of this volume include: (1) a brief synopsis of biblical passages that inform a particular doctrine; (2) surveys of past and current theologies with contemporary emphasis on exegetical, philosophical, practical, and theological questions; (3) substantial interaction with various Christian movements within the Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodoxy traditions, as well as the hermeneutical issues raised by postmodernity; and (4) charts, sidebars, questions for discussion, and an extensive bibliography, divided into different entry levels and topics.

For those serious Christians who desire to learn more about their faith, this in-depth, systematic survey of the Doctrines of Faith will serve you well. This book is not casual reading but rather a serious theological study requiring perseverance. Michael Horton richly rewards the reader with Scriptural explanations establishing the Biblical foundations of why we believe what we believe, by incorporating the contextual historical development of many Church doctrines. Although written from the perspective of the Reformed tradition and organized as a textbook, it's Biblical structure will be of great spiritual profit for the Christian pastor, elder, seminary student and the serious laymen desirous of expanding their understanding of their faith. Horton will reward you on every page. This work will become a classic in Systematic Theology Studies. I highly recommend this work.

Michael Horton's "The Christian Faith" is a welcome gift to the 21st century. It's a massive (1000

page) one-volume systematic theology that's written with life, passion and the needs of the 21st century in mind. While as an Anglican, I don't necessarily agree with all that Horton writes, I highly recommend his book to a wide variety of readers: seminarians and seminaries, pastors, teachers, and educated laymen. Horton's work is an incredible achievement in that he has taken the worn out discipline of systematic theology and injected it with new life. How has he done this? First, Horton clearly writes from a position as one who understands the 21st century and the monumental changes we are seeing that are often categorized as the transition from modernity to postmodernity. Horton also draws from a wide range of sources: he not only delves into the historical background to various theological issues but also makes reference to a variety of church traditions, and not just his own Reformed tradition. He also manages to integrate his systematic theology into a living whole by the way he ties everything together through key concepts such as the covenant, Drama, Dogma, Doxology, and Discipleship. This means that Horton's work is useful not just as one more systematic theology but also as a primer in narrative theology, an inspiration to worship, and a resource for all who seek to be more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Horton's work has been said by some to be one of the most important systematic theologies since Berkhof's. In fact, Horton's is better than Berkhof's, which is a work that betrays a much more modern mindset that categorizes things without necessarily showing how they all relate. Horton's work is a book that should be in the hands of a great many Christians! The book begins with a wonderful Introduction that pictures systematic theology as a "theology for pilgrims on the way." He also relates the 4 "D" words he will use in the rest of the work to hold things together: Drama, Doctrine, Doxology, and Discipleship. It all begins with the greatest story ever told, which means that Horton is aware of the importance of narrative theology, and not just an old-school propositional theology. The Drama of the gospel inevitably leads to Doctrine, and Doctrine leads to Doxology or praise. Ultimately, theology must lead to Discipleship as well. Horton wants his work to reflect and embody the goal of doctrine, which must not only be understood and articulated but also "preached, experienced, and lived as a 'community of theater' in the world today." Horton writes from a specifically Reformed perspective, but he is careful not to begin and end his thought with only Reformed categories of thought. Instead, he interacts with exegetical, philosophical, practical, and theological questions from a historically informed position. I'm also glad to see that he has not only acknowledged Eastern Orthodox theology but has clearly benefited from its wisdom and perspective. Part 1, which consists of the first 5 chapters of "The Christian Faith," deals with "Knowing God: The Presuppositions of Theology." Although these chapters don't begin Horton's systematic theology, they lay a crucial foundation for it. This section may be difficult and not as relevant for all readers, but in these chapters Horton

profitably deals with important foundations for theology, which has become more necessary in an age of postmodernism. It's always interesting to see how a writer handles some of the more difficult aspects of his material, so I was keen to see how Horton dealt with predestination, the Trinity, and the Church, as just three examples of important material. In Chapter 8, Horton tackles the doctrine of the Trinity, which has undergone a resurgence of interest in recent decades. In this chapter, he gives the important and necessary historical background that enables the reader to understand the various views of the Trinity that have been held. This historical background also enables Horton to offer a theology of the Trinity that integrates the best insights of Augustinian, Orthodox, and other views while avoiding some of the potential errors that come from an overemphasis these historical positions are often open to. While Horton's discussion of predestination in Chapter 9 is useful, he fails to adequately explain how God's predestination relates to the need for human agency in doxology and discipleship (he does deal with this, but inadequately). Likewise, I found his presentation on the Church to be one of the places where Horton's own Reformed perspective triumphs over an attempt at incorporating other views. The book would have been stronger if, in this section, he had dealt more with the views of the early church, as well as the views of other traditions, as he does elsewhere. In spite of some weaknesses, Horton's work is a superior and delightful achievement. Through his use of the covenant, he's able to integrate the various components of systematic theology into a pleasing whole that should become a standard work for decades to come. Horton breaks down his book in the following way, which manages to reflect the traditional categories of systematic theology while at the same time revitalizing this field.

Part 1 - Knowing God: The Presupposition of Theology

1. Dissonant Dramas: Paradigms for Knowing God and the World
2. The Character of Theology
3. The Source of Theology: Scripture
4. Scripture as Covenant Canon
5. The Bible and the Church: From Scripture to System

Part 2 - God Who Lives

6. God: The Incommunicable Attributes
7. God: The Communicable Attributes
8. The Holy Trinity

Part 3 - God Who Creates

9. The Decree: Trinity and Predestination
10. Creation: God's Time for us
11. Providence
12. Being Human
13. The Fall of Humanity

Part 4 - God Who Rescues

14. The Person of Christ
15. The State of Humiliation
16. The State of Exaltation

Part 5 - God Who Reigns in Grace

17. Called to be Saints: Christ's Presence in the Spirit
18. Union with Christ
19. Forensic Aspects of Union with Christ: Justification and Adoption
20. The Way Forward to Grace: Sanctification and Perseverance
21. The Hope of Glory
22. The Kingdom of Grace and the New Covenant Church
23. Word and Sacrament: The Means of Grace
24. Baptism and the Lord's Supper
25. The Attributes of the Church: Unity, Catholicity, and Holiness
26. Apostolicity

Part 6 - God Who Reigns in Glory

27. A Dwelling Place
28. The Return of Christ and the Last Judgment
29. The Last Battle and Life

Everlasting

Excellent update on Louis Berkhof's Systematic Theology. Loved the themes of overcoming estrangement, the stranger we never meet and meeting a stranger. Also the univocal- analogical contrast between man and God. The essence-energies method of explaining how God works is helpful. The best part is speech act theory - God acts toward creation and creatures through communication - the Word and words. One overused expression (ontic; ontology; ontological; ontologically) detracts from an otherwise very well written volume. I especially liked the parenthetical explanations and simplifications of the more difficult concepts - this really made for better comprehension by arm chair theologians - true pilgrims on the way.

Just a great systematic theology for those in the reformed camp and really accessible for those who aren't or aren't sure.

Having been a 5 point Calvinist (Is there any other kind?) for several years I started investigating Reformed Theology. I started going to seminars (The Academy) at Christ Reformed Church in Anaheim on and off for the last couple of years. This church is headed by Dr. Kim Riddlebarger (a colleague of Michael Horton's and co-host of "The White Horse Inn"). As I started going to a Wednesday night function and Sunday mornings I started learning more about Reformed Theology. This Systematic Theology is a great resource for Christians to understand their faith from a Reformed perspective. Another book of Dr. Horton's I have found helpful would be "God of Promise" which is subtitled "An Introduction to Reformed Theology". Be warned though: Coming from a normal evangelical background, reading these books will be a paradigm shift for you. You will look at the Triune God and how he deals with his people throughout history in a new and profound way. For Christians who are already Reformed this could be considered a worthy heir to Berkof's Systematic Theology written for today's believer. I'm not a professional theologian (nor do I play one on TV!), rather a "pilgrim in the pew" learning about my Lord, as I strive to be faithful (by the Holy Spirit) as I continue my journey to that city whose architect and builder is God.

Dense with information, but not difficult to read. Horton writes well to make it easier to understand for those who aren't theologians or seminary students. It's a fine skill to be able to effectively communicate complex ideas and make it simpler and easier to understand.

Very good overview of prevalent theologies. A little difficult when the reader cannot find the point due to inconsistencies in writing/logic formula. However, if you get over the broad and somewhat erratic(I used this word because I could not find a better one, not negative in any way) conclusion building process, there is a lot to be found. Definitely take your time with this book.

This is really a textbook or series of lectures turned into a text book. I ordered this book because I read Michael's 'Christless Christianity' and tried to get an idea of his background theology. This would be a textbook for a Bible College, well written.

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