

- (3) Analyze the meanings of biblical teachings, particularly by getting clear on what we mean by technical terminology or theological concepts.
- (4) Examine various historical treatments of the particular doctrine under consideration.
- (5) Identify the essence of the doctrine, by distinguishing the permanent, unvarying content of the doctrine from the cultural vehicle in which it is expressed.
- (6) Seek illumination from extra-biblical sources, particularly general revelation. General revelation may be found in nature and in man. This suggests that it may be helpful to study the behavioral sciences, the natural sciences, psychology (particularly psychology of religion), and history.
- (7) Give the doctrine contemporary expression by clothing the timeless truth in an appropriate form. This may be done by means of a dialogical approach, in which the culture of a given society provides the questions, and the Bible provides the authoritative answers. The content of theology is provided by the Bible, the form is determined by correlating the answers offered by the Bible with the questions being asked by the culture. Another way in which doctrine may be given contemporary expression is by finding a model that makes the doctrine intelligible in a contemporary context. The aim here is not to make the message acceptable, but understandable. In order to achieve this step, the message must be contextualized. This requires that it first be decontextualized, then recontextualized in length (from a first-century to a twentieth-century setting), breadth (bridging various cultures), and height (various levels of complexity and sophistication, depending on our target audience).
- (8) Choose a central interpretive motif, a particular theme which is the most significant and helpful in approaching theology as a whole. Such a motif lends unity to a system, provides power in its communication, and gives a basic emphasis or thrust to one's ministry.
- (9) Range the theological topics on the basis of their relative importance; and from this develop an outline of major topics and subtopics, noting especially those that are more basic than others and those that need special attention during a given historical period.

Among the various helpful things that he proposes, Erickson leaves some things undeveloped or underdeveloped. For example, in step 2 he does not suggest how one goes about coalescing the various emphases of Biblical Theology into a coherent whole. In step 5 he does not tell us how to distinguish the essence of a doctrine from the cultural vehicle in which it is expressed. And in step 8 he tells us why he thinks it desirable to choose a central interpretive motif, but he does not tell us how one goes about choosing such a motif, or why such a thing is needed.