

To Know and Love God: Method for Theology

By David K. Clark

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It is the job of all believers, not just theologians, to serve God by discerning what is true about the crucial issues of life. Our task is to learn more about God. Our privilege is to love God passionately with our minds. Clearly then, spiritual life must have theology as one of its ingredients, but this, by itself, will not guarantee a vibrant spiritual life. Rather, evangelicals must link a theological experience and an experiential theology. Knowing and loving God are both necessary.

David Clark explains how evangelical systematic theology is structured and how this discipline assists believers in understanding God more fully and worshipping him more completely. To do so, he uses strategies of analytical philosophy to reveal the nature, purposes, methods, and limits of evangelical systematic theology. He attempts to speak both to and for evangelicals, with the goal of showing how a reasonable, articulate, and credible evangelical theology can proceed.

Other questions are raised while trying to define evangelical systematic theology: Is systematic theology a legitimate intellectual enterprise? How does theology build upon the teachings of the Bible? How can evangelical theologians in different cultures assist each other? How does theology contribute to transforming society? What does the existence of other religions mean for evangelical theology? How does systematic theology relate to other intellectual disciplines? How does it connect with the life of the church? What are the purposes and the final goal of systematic theology? The answers to these questions are not ends in themselves, but assist believers in attaining the goal of knowing and loving God.

Asserting that evangelical systematic theology is the science by which evangelical believers learn of God, Clark claims that the insights of apparently contradictory viewpoints can and should be drawn together. He works past the false dilemmas, imprecision, overstatement, inferences, and generalizations that often cloud theological discussion and arrives at clear definitions, precise distinctions, careful analysis, and modest conclusions.

Clark argues that evangelical systematic theology is rooted in the Bible and focused on Christ. Good theology provides vision, fosters wisdom, and nurtures covenantal relationship with God. Good theology leads to knowing and loving

God.

Part of the Foundations of Evangelical Theology series.

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Editorial Review

Review

“The best antidote yet to the poison of anti-intellectualism that has sapped contemporary evangelicalism of much of its theological mettle. Clark deftly works his way through the traditional issues pertaining to theological method, yet he does so with an eye to our postmodern, multicultural, and spiritually starved situation. He makes a compelling case that cultivating and embodying the wisdom of God for daily living really is the most compelling case that pursuing excellence in theology is the best way to embark on the project.”

—**Kevin J. Vanhoozer**, Research Professor of Systematic Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; author, *Biblical Authority after Babel* and *Faith Speaking Understanding*

“Clark sets forth a wide-ranging, constantly centrist, moderately technical, analytically alert demonstration of the what, why, and how of the evangelical theological task, interacting at each stage with rival positions. No comparable across-the-board vindication of evangelical mental method exists; this is a landmark book.”

—**J. I. Packer**, Board of Governors' Professor of Theology, Regent College

About the Author

David K. Clark (PhD, Northwestern University) is vice president and dean at Bethel Seminary. He has served as a pastor and taught theology and philosophy for many years. David has written numerous journal articles, essays, and books.

John S. Feinberg (PhD, University of Chicago) is department chair and professor of biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is the author of *Ethics for a Brave New World* (with Paul D. Feinberg) and is general editor of Crossway's Foundations of Evangelical Theology series.

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