I. Introduction

W. Tozer: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

Augustine: no place where error is more potentially dangerous or where truth is more potentially rewarding

A. Systematic theology is a way of studying the Bible that gives attention to the unity, full scope, proportions, and relations of biblical teaching.

B. WLC Q/As 6-7 provide a standard summary of what the church confesses about God on the basis of Holy Scripture.

1. WLC 6

   Q. What do the scriptures make known of God?
   
   The scriptures make known
   [1] what God is,
   [2] the persons of the Godhead,
   [3] his decrees,
   [4] and the execution of his decrees
   [in God’s works of nature, grace, and glory]

2. WLC 7

   Q. What is God?
   
   A. God is a Spirit,
   
   in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection;
   [Incommunicable]
   all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, every where present,
   almighty,
   [Communicable]
knowing all things, most wise,  
most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and  
abundant in goodness and truth.

3. **Overview**  
a. The nature of idolatry  
b. Thinking about God in a divine way: God is infinite and independent  
in his being, attributes, and actions and, as such, he is “the happy God”  
(1 Tim 1.11; 6.17).  
c. Practical implications

II. **The nature of idolatry**  
A. **The First and Second Commandments prohibit two forms of idolatry.**  
B. **Idolatry consists not only in worshipping a creature as God (Rom 1.23) but**  
also in thinking about/treating God in a creaturely way (Num 23.19; 1 Sam  
15.29; Isa 40.18; Acts 17.24).  
C. **Digging deeper**  
   1. In terms of **design**, creatures resemble God (Gen 1.26), but God does not  
   resemble creatures (Isa 40.18). Creatures are “**theomorphic.**”  
   2. In terms of **language**, God does not speak to us in a divine language  
   (John 1.1); God in his grace stoops down to speak to us in human  
language. Biblical language of God is “**anthropomorphic.**”  
   i. **Examples**  
   3. Much idolatry consists in confusing the **direction of design** with the  
   **direction of language.**

III. **Thinking about God in a divine way: God is infinite and independent in his being,**  
attributes, and actions and, as such, he is “the happy God” (1 Tim 1.11; 6.17).  
A. **Introduction**  
   1. A nearly infinite multitude of creaturely characteristics are  
   attributed to God. How can we think about these attributions in a  
   **divine** rather than in an **idolatrous** manner?
2. **God is infinite and independent in his being, attributes, and actions** and, as such, he is “the happy God” (1 Tim 1.11; 6.17).

B. **God is infinite in his being, attributes, and actions.**
   1. Infinity negatively stated; and *positively* stated (fullness)
   2. God is infinite in his being (Job 11.7-9; 36.26; Ps 145.3; Rev 4.8).
   3. He is infinite in his intellect (Isa 40.28).
   4. God is infinite in his will and counsel (Ps 36.6; Rom 11.33; Eph 3.8-9).
   5. God is infinite in his goodness, grace, and love (Exod 34.6; Ps 136; Eph 2.7; 3.18-19).
   6. God is infinite in his power (Eph 3.20).

C. **God is independent in his being, attributes, and actions.**
   1. Independence negatively stated; and positively stated (*self*-existence, etc.)
   2. God is “independent, not only in his existence [Acts 17.25; John 5.26] but consequently also in all his attributes and perfections, in all his decrees and deeds.
   3. He is independent in his intellect (Rom. 11:34-35).
   4. God is independent in his will (Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:19; Eph. 1:5; Rev. 4:11).
   5. God is independent in his counsel (Ps. 33:11; Isa. 46:10).
   6. God is independent in his love (Hos. 14:4).
   7. God is independent in his power (Ps. 115:3), and so forth” (Bavinck, 2:150).

D. **As the one (and the only one!) who is infinite and independent in his being, attributes, and action, God is “the happy God” (1 Tim 1.11; 6.15).**

IV. **Applications**

A. **The error of “works salvation” rests not only upon a misunderstanding of fallen human nature. It also rests upon a misunderstanding of God** (Job 22.2-3; 35.6-7; 41.11; Rom 11.35).
1. This puts good works and bad works in a whole new (God-centered!) light: Our good works please God but they do not benefit God; rather, they benefit us and our neighbors. Conversely our sin displeases God but it does not harm God; rather, it harms us and our neighbors.

2. This is transformative for recovering legalists!

B. The independence and infinity of the happy God are good news for God’s covenant people.

1. Psalm 33:12: “Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.”

2. Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”