

## MY BOOKS: THEIR GENESIS AND MAIN IDEAS

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JOHN M. FRAME

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I'VE PUBLISHED thirteen books. Four are very long and appear in a series called *A Theology of Lordship*. The others, shorter and in more popular style, overlap the *Lordship* books somewhat but also address other issues.

Full bibliographical information about each of my books may be found in the Bibliography in this festschrift.

### **A THEOLOGY OF LORDSHIP SERIES**

The *Theology of Lordship* series is essentially an expansion of lecture material I have given in the four main areas in which I have specialized over forty-one years of seminary teaching. A major goal of mine in this series is to produce adequate textbooks for my courses. Both the lectures and the books seek to articulate a common theme: God's lordship is the central message of Scripture. "God is Lord" is the fundamental message of the Old Testament (Deut. 6:4–5), and "Jesus is Lord" is the fundamental message of the New Testament (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11). Salvation is the work of God as Lord, hence my book *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*.

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As I understand God's lordship, it includes God's control, authority, and presence. Reformed theology has been somewhat imbalanced in favor of the first two, liberal and broad evangelical theologies in favor of the latter. In *Theology of Lordship*, I try to bring these emphases together and provide a balance. Balance is essential because control, authority, and presence are *perspectives* on one another. An adequate understanding of each requires an adequate understanding of the others. That should bring a respite to unprofitable theological battles, which may turn out to be differences over emphasis and perspective rather than principle.

In the books of this series and all my other books, I seek to narrow the differences between factions and traditions within Christianity by suggesting that our differences are at least partly based on differences of emphasis and perspective. This study of God's lordship should also warn modern Christians and non-Christians to forsake their autonomous thinking and to see human thought as one area of service to God, since thought, like all the rest of human life, is subject to God's lordship. (The books try to bring together the concerns of theology with those of presuppositional apologetics.) It should also help us to see that Scripture, God's Word, is sufficient not only for "sacred" matters, but for all areas of human life, since God is Lord over all of life.

### ***The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God (1987)***

This work is my attempt to develop an epistemology, or theory of knowledge, based on the Bible. The main idea is that because of the nature of God's lordship, human thought cannot be autonomous. Thinking is one thing we do, and like all other human actions, it must be subject to God's authority. But because God's lordship also involves his presence with us, knowledge also has a subjective dimension.

I am especially concerned in this book with the concept of theology and its method. I develop the view that theology is the application of God's Word, by persons, to all areas of life—note the three perspectives. In theology we are not trying to find truth as such; that is already given to us in Scripture. Rather, theology is for us, to meet human needs from the Word. This excludes at the same time many imbalances commonly found in theology: absolutization of confessions and historical theology, the academic pride of many theological writings, speculative approaches, and subjectivist approaches.

Epistemology and theology can be approached from many perspectives because of the multiperspectival nature of God and of his creation.

***The Doctrine of God (2002)***

This book contains my most elaborate analysis of the concept of God's lordship in Scripture and my most extensive argument for the primacy of God's lordship therein. It also shows how the concept of lordship can illumine many other things that Scripture says about God. It provides antidotes to speculative, scholastic, and liberal approaches such as process theology and open theism. The structure of the book is intended to make the doctrine of God less philosophical and abstract and more focused on God's personal qualities in relationship with his people. And my multiperspectival approach tries to show how God can be understood from a variety of angles.

***The Doctrine of the Christian Life (2008)***

This book focuses on ethics and elaborates the case that all of human life (including our thought) is ethical, that is, subject to God's lordship. Half the book is metaethical, discussing what ethics is and how to do it, from the three lordship perspectives. Here I try to reconcile the concerns of Christian command ethics, narrative ethics, and virtue ethics, distinguishing these as equally ultimate perspectives. The other half is properly ethical, showing what Scripture says directly about ethical questions (using the Ten Commandments as a focal point). My ethic is based on *sola Scriptura* and contains frequent critique of natural-law approaches and the related notion that some ethical problems should be resolved by autonomous reasoning, rather than by Scripture.

***The Doctrine of the Word of God (forthcoming)***

This book urges that the Word of God is, first, God himself, and second, God's personal speech to us, creating obligations in its hearers: to believe, obey, and respond in many other ways. This Word comes to us today indirectly through a complicated process—copies, translations, editions, etc.—but God himself comes with it in the Spirit to illumine the Word and demonstrate its truth. God's Word is God himself speaking as Lord, and this Word manifests his lordship attributes of control, authority, and presence. So today the Word comes to us as the power of God, as his personal

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spoken word, and as the dwelling place of God himself with us. Since God always speaks truth to us, his Word is inerrant, but inerrancy is only one of the many qualities of God's personal speech.

### **MEDICAL ETHICS: PRINCIPLES, PERSONS, AND PROBLEMS (1988)**

This book emerged from lectures I gave at a conference in the San Diego area. It briefly sets forth my triperspectival ethical methodology and then, in dialogue with secular and Roman Catholic ethical writers, takes up issues such as patient autonomy, informed consent, confidentiality, justice, clinical trials, and living wills. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* presents a much fuller methodological analysis, and it overlaps *Medical Ethics* on some questions, such as the definition of death. But it does not cover the earlier list of issues I have mentioned here.

### **PERSPECTIVES ON THE WORD OF GOD (1990)**

This book emerged from a series of lectures I gave at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. It summarizes my approach to the doctrine of the Word of God, thus anticipating *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, and ethics, thus anticipating *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*.

### **APOLOGETICS TO THE GLORY OF GOD: AN INTRODUCTION (1994)**

My apologetics text aims to resolve some matters of dispute among some presuppositional apologists and then to address actual problems of inquirers, something rarely done in the presuppositional literature. Cornelius Van Til had suggested that presuppositional apologetics can employ traditional arguments and uses of evidence. I try to show in general *how* that is possible: Evidences and psychological appeals represent the situational and existential perspectives within the broadly circular transcendental argument that represents the normative perspective.

### **CORNELIUS VAN TIL: AN ANALYSIS OF HIS THOUGHT (1995)**

Written for the hundredth anniversary of Van Til's birth, this work analyzes Van Til's ideas—theological and apologetic. I have always thought

of Van Til as more a theologian than an apologist, although his apologetic approach is very valuable. He put forth a remarkably creative approach to all theological questions, an approach that I have tried to utilize in my other books and that I explain here.

### **NO OTHER GOD: A RESPONSE TO OPEN THEISM (2001)**

In this book, I take a number of ideas from *The Doctrine of God* and add an analysis of open theism to show that the latter movement is a distortion of Scripture.

### **SALVATION BELONGS TO THE LORD: AN INTRODUCTION TO SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (2006)**

This book, taken from a taped lecture series, is as close as I will ever get to a complete systematic theology. It is a relatively brief survey of the topics of systematics, in popular style. Some of the chapters summarize parts of my longer books, particularly the Theology of Lordship series. Others treat subjects such as Christology and soteriology that I have never addressed elsewhere. One might well ask why I haven't written Lordship books on these topics. The answer is that I have never been asked to teach them on the seminary level, and therefore I haven't researched them to the degree that I have studied the subjects covered in the Lordship books. Blame the system of academic specialization! But certainly all the topics in *Salvation Belongs to the Lord* are important, and I'm happy that I have been able to address them, at least at a popular level. And you will find here, even on these subjects, some triperspectival distinctions that may be helpful.

### **WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH: A REFRESHING STUDY OF THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP (1996)**

In this book, I try to show that Reformed theology allows more freedom in worship than is usually believed. I deal with basic biblical principles of worship, along with controversial matters such as the regulative principle, traditional worship models, contemporary music, dance, and drama. I distinguish between worship's narrow sense (Sunday services) and broad sense (our bodies as living sacrifices, Rom. 12:1–2), to show that in one sense all

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of life is worship, and worship in both cases is acknowledging the greatness of our covenant Lord. By the way, the subtitle was the publisher's choice, not mine. Some readers have not found the book refreshing.

### **CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP MUSIC: A BIBLICAL DEFENSE (1997)**

I led worship at the New Life Presbyterian Church (Escondido, California) from 1980 to 1999. We used contemporary Christian worship songs, along with traditional hymns. Some complained that the use of contemporary music was non-Reformed, and that it detracted from the dignity, reverence, and awe of worship. Friends invited me to read and comment on the defenses of traditional worship penned by various authors. This book is a response to that controversy. I argue that the use of contemporary worship music, while not the only appropriate form of Christian hymnody, is one appropriate form, that at its best it does convey a sense of awe and reverence, and that it is "edifying" (1 Cor. 14:26) for many people today.

### **EVANGELICAL REUNION: DENOMINATIONS AND THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST (1991)**

This book is a cry of the heart, protesting the scandal of the brokenness of the body of Christ through denominationalism. It analyzes what denominationalism is, how it came to be, and how the Bible evaluates it. Then the book presents an utterly unrealistic vision of how these divisions might be healed.

### **THE COLLECTED WORKS OF JOHN M. FRAME, VOLUME 1: THEOLOGY (2008)**

Recently, John Hughes, the editor of this volume, suggested that I put together a "Complete Works" set of CDs and DVDs, containing all my books and articles, plus many audio recordings of my lectures. The original plan was to release these in three volumes, divided by subject matter in a way similar to this book's structure: (1) *Theology*, (2) *Apologetics*, and (3) *The Christian Life*. The first volume was released in 2008. At present we are considering the possibility of releasing the second and third collections, together with the first, in a single set, with some additional material not available elsewhere.