

A Technical Analysis of Robert L. Reymond's Systematic Theology: Methodological Rigor and Reformed Orthodoxy

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In the landscape of modern evangelical scholarship, the publication and subsequent revision of Robert L. Reymond's **A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith** represents a significant milestone for Reformed dogmatics. Unlike many contemporary works that prioritize brevity or ecumenical accessibility, Reymond's treatise is an unashamedly rigorous defense of classic Calvinist positions. As a Senior Technical Writer and SEO strategist analyzing this work, we must recognize that its primary value lies in its **Scripture-saturated** methodology, its commitment to exhaustive exegesis, and its distinctive take on the ontological aspects of the Trinity and the order of divine decrees.

The Methodological Framework: Exegesis as the Foundation of Dogmatics

One of the most striking technical features of Reymond's work is the ratio of direct biblical exegesis to speculative theological reasoning. While historical systematic theologies often rely on the **loci communes** (common places) method established during the Reformation and Post-Reformation periods, Reymond pivots toward a more **exegetical-heavy model**. This approach posits that systematic theology is not merely the arrangement of inherited doctrines but the logical synthesis of intensive biblical study.

The Prolegomena and Epistemological Foundations

Reymond's prolegomena is heavily influenced by the **presuppositional apologetics** of Cornelius Van Til. He establishes that human knowledge is only possible because God has revealed Himself. Technically, this is referred to as **epistemological self-consciousness**. For Reymond, the starting point is the self-attesting Word of God. This removes the need for "natural theology" (the attempt to prove God's existence via reason alone) and places the technical burden of proof on the internal consistency and external application of the biblical text.

- The Authority of Scripture: Reymond argues for a high view of verbal, plenary inspiration.
- The Necessity of Revelation: Finite human reason cannot bridge the gap to the infinite Divine without a specific, propositional revelation.
- The Role of Logic: Reymond famously defends the use of the law of non-contradiction within theology, asserting that while God is incomprehensible, He is not irrational.

Structural Breakdown of the Theological Loci

To understand the depth of this work, one must examine how Reymond categorizes the standard divisions of systematic theology. Each section (or **Locus**) is treated with a combination of historical survey and granular word studies from the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

1. Theology Proper: The Doctrine of God

In the realm of Theology Proper, Reymond provides what many consider his most unique contribution: a defense of the **Autotheos** of the Son. Drawing from John Calvin's **Institutes**, Reymond argues that the Son of God is "God of Himself" in terms of His deity, rather than being eternally generated in a way that implies a derivative essence. This technical distinction is crucial for maintaining a robust **Nicene Orthodoxy** while avoiding any hint of subordinationism.

2. Anthropology and Hamartiology

The technical analysis of the fall of man in Reymond’s work focuses on the **Federal Headship** of Adam. He utilizes a legal/covenantal framework to explain the imputation of sin. This is not merely a moral failure but a judicial status change for the human race. The work explores the **Total Depravity**of the human will, using the technical language of the Synod of Dort to clarify that the "will" is free in a mechanical sense (it chooses what it desires) but bound in a moral sense (it cannot desire God).

Technical Comparison: Reymond vs. Contemporary Systematicians

To provide a clear evaluation of where Reymond stands in the academic market, the following table compares his work with other standard 1-volume systematic theologies used in seminaries today.

Feature/Theologian	Robert L. Reymond	Wayne Grudem	Louis Berkhof	Herman Bavinck (Abridged)
Theological Tradition	High Reformed / Presbyterian	Baptistic / Charismatic-leaning	Traditional Dutch Reformed	Neo-Calvinist / Dutch Reformed
View on Baptism	Paedobaptism (Infant)	Credobaptism (Believer)	Paedobaptism (Infant)	Paedobaptism (Infant)
Eschatology	Amillennial / Postmillennial leanings	Classic Premillennial	Amillennial	Amillennial
Soteriology	Supralapsarian leanings	Infralapsarian	Infralapsarian	Infralapsarian

The Supralapsarian Distinction

A technical point of divergence for Reymond is his openness to **Supralapsarianism**. In the order of God's eternal decrees, most Reformed theologians (Infralapsarians) argue that God viewed man as fallen before decreeing election. Reymond, following a more logical-priority model, explores the Supralapsarian view where the decree of election logically precedes the decree to permit the fall. While a dense technical debate, it highlights Reymond's commitment to the absolute sovereignty of God in all aspects of teleology.

Soteriological Mechanics: The Ordo Salutis

The **Ordo Salutis** (Order of Salvation) is the technical sequence of the application of redemption to the believer. Reymond's treatment is characterized by a strong emphasis on **Monergism**—the belief that the Holy Spirit is the sole agent in regeneration. The workflow of his soteriological model follows a strict logical progression:

1. Effectual Calling: The internal work of the Spirit that enables a response to the Gospel.
2. Regeneration: The immediate, supernatural impartation of new life (precedes faith).
3. Faith and Repentance: The human response, which is a gift of God.
4. Justification: The forensic act of God declaring a sinner righteous based on the imputed righteousness of Christ.
5. Adoption: The legal transfer into the family of God.
6. Sanctification: The progressive work of the Spirit and the believer in conforming to the image of Christ.
7. Glorification: The final state of the believer.

The Forensic Nature of Justification

Reymond is particularly technical regarding the **Imputation of Christ's Active Obedience**. He argues that for a sinner to be saved, it is not enough for their sins to be forgiven (passive obedience); they must also have a record of perfect law-keeping (active obedience). This is achieved through the technical mechanism of imputation, where Christ's 33 years of perfect obedience are credited to the believer's account.

The Covenantal Framework: A Presbyterian Implementation

As an ordained minister in the **Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)** and a professor at **Knox Theological Seminary**, Reymond's ecclesiology and sacramentology are deeply rooted in Covenant Theology. He utilizes the **Covenant of Works** and the **Covenant of Grace** as the primary hermeneutical lenses for understanding

redemptive history.

The Unity of the Covenant of Grace

Reymond rejects Dispensationalism in favor of the unity of the Covenant of Grace. This has practical technical implications for how the Old and New Testaments are integrated. For example, he views the **Sign of the Covenant** as moving from Circumcision to Baptism. This continuity provides the technical basis for **Paedobaptism**(the baptism of children of believing parents), treating the children of the New Covenant with the same status as those under the Abrahamic administration.

Ecclesiological Structures

The work outlines a **Presbyterian (Elder-led)** form of government. Reymond argues from the Greek term *presbyteros* that the New Testament church was governed by a plurality of elders at the local, regional (Presbytery), and national (General Assembly) levels. This technical hierarchy is defended as the most biblical model for maintaining doctrinal purity and ministerial accountability.

Advanced Theological Nuances: Christology and the Extra Calvinisticum

In his Christological analysis, Reymond delves into the **Hypostatic Union**—the union of two distinct natures (divine and human) in one person. He defends the **Extra Calvinisticum**, a technical term referring to the Reformed belief that the Son's divine nature remained omnipresent and was not limited by the physical body of Jesus during the incarnation. This is a critical point of technical disagreement with Lutheran Christology, which argues for the "communication of attributes" (*communicatio idiomatum*) in a way that suggests the humanity of Jesus could take on divine properties like omnipresence.

The Polemic Against Open Theism

The 2nd Edition of Reymond's work includes updated sections countering **Open Theism**. Reymond uses rigorous logic and extensive Scripture quotations to argue against the idea that God does not know the future exhaustive contingencies. He maintains the technical position of **Omniscience** as being essential to the divine nature, arguing that a God who learns or reacts is not the God of the Bible.

Operational Use: A Field Guide for Students and Pastors

For those utilizing this 1,300+ page volume in a professional or academic setting, it serves multiple functions. It is not merely a textbook but a reference manual for theological defense.

How to Use This Text for Sermon Preparation:

- **Word Studies:** Use the index to find Reymond's analysis of specific Greek terms like *hilasterion* (propitiation) or *dikaioo* (justify).
- **Historical Context:** Consult the sections on the Early Church Creeds (Athanasian, Nicene) to ensure historical continuity in teaching.
- **Cross-Referencing:** Utilize the "Scripture-saturated" nature of the book to find related passages that support a specific doctrinal point.

Troubleshooting Common Misunderstandings

When studying Reymond, students often encounter difficulty with his dense logical proofs. A common error is to view his emphasis on logic as a move toward **Rationalism**. However, the solution lies in his prolegomena: logic is a tool granted by God to understand His revelation, not a master over revelation. If a biblical doctrine appears paradoxical (like the Sovereignty of God and the Responsibility of Man), Reymond maintains both based on the

text, while seeking the highest possible logical synthesis.

The Enduring Legacy of Reymond's Scholarship

Robert L. Reymond's contribution to the field of systematic theology is characterized by an uncompromising adherence to the **Westminster Confession of Faith**. His work remains a primary resource for those seeking a contemporary statement of classic Reformed theology that does not shy away from technical precision or polemical engagement. By blending high-level academic exegesis with a deep commitment to the church's confessional heritage, Reymond ensures that the "New" in his title refers not to new doctrines, but to a fresh, vigorous presentation of the "faith once for all delivered to the saints."

The technical density of the work makes it an essential tool for the seminary library. Whether one is analyzing the **metaphysics of the Trinity** or the **judicial mechanics of justification**, Reymond provides a coherent, contextual, and conversational guide that remains unsurpassed in its one-volume scope. For the SEO strategist or content creator, this book serves as the "Gold Standard" for authoritative, E-A-T (Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness) compliant theological content in the Reformed tradition.

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