

## Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

# Historical Theology

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This section of *A Puritan's Mind* serves as an *introductory* overview to Historical Theology. The word “theology” is divided into two Greek words: *theos* (God) and *logos* (Word). Basically, theology is a “word about God.” The term “theology” was first used around the second century where Clement of Alexandria used the term to describe the corpus of the Christian Faith (the *regula fide*). Under the influence of writers such as Peter Abelard and Gilbert de la Porree, the Latin word *theologia* came to mean “the discipline of sacred learning.” Biblical material became systematized and the term was then used to describe the systematized discussion of Christian beliefs in general. The first major theological textbook of western theology was Peter Abelard’s *Four Books of the Sentences*, which was compiled at the university of Paris during the 12th century. However, the most widely used and influential theological textbook of systematized doctrine is John Calvin’s [Institutes of the Christian Religion](#). Later, the Puritans then placed systematized doctrine alongside of pastoral theology. It was not that there was no pastoral theology before this, but rather, that the Puritans *best* systematized theology alongside of Christian doctrine to enact the most capable pastoral mindset on any given issue. The student of theology, though, should not stop at simply finding a balance between pastoral theology and systematic theology, or choose the best textbooks for those purposes. Rather, they should wrap those concepts up in a comprehensive historical context, known formally as *church history*. The study of church history allows insights into history in general, as well as how theology came about in particular.

Church history is of vital importance to historical theology since it gives theology a *context* in which it was produced and defined. Systematic Theology attempts to create statement of faith with the leading doctrines of the Christian Bible. Historical Theology then embodies both of these concepts as a way of informing theologians as to what has been believed, and what corrections, improvements or adherence need to be made in the present based on that information. Historical Theology was first prominent during the

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Reformation and the need to go back to the original sources of the Bible (*ad fontes* means *back to the sources*). The systematician should remember, critically, that it is nearly impossible to “do theology” as if it has never been done before. Historical Theology, then, is used both as a pedagogic tool (for systematic theology) and as a critical tool (highlighting various important topics through history as key elements of the Christian faith).

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