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DENNIS ALLAN BRATCHER

28 May 1979

Dear Colleagues:

Here is yet another response paper on justification. I'm writing without having fully crystalized what I am writing. You will have to bear with me. But I thought it advisable to write now. I will not be able to enter into substantial discussions with you during my stay in South Africa July-December, 1979. At the same time, I judge that continuing and sometimes apparently increasing divisions in the faculty, in the Philadelphia Presbytery, OPC, and in the Board of Trustees of WTS are damaging our ability to move forward. I want to contribute in any way that I can to move the discussions off of "dead center" immobility. Hence, I ask you to overlook any signs of haste and oversimplification that you may find in this paper.

Cordially,

Vern S. Poythress

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Systematic Theologizing in the Justification Controversy

Vern S. Poythress 28 May 1979

This paper is intended as a continuation of the observations made in my paper "The Role of Justification in Understanding the Bible's Message," distributed to the faculty 31 March 1978. I hope that you will refer back to that paper. I ended that paper with the suggestion that we were confronted by an apparent conflict between the sola fide and sola scriptura principles. If, for the purpose of schematic summary, we construe the conflict in terms of these two principles, Shepherd and his supporters are found championing sola scriptura, while Kuschke and his supporters are found championing sola fide.

There are, of course, minor differences in emphasis, manner of formulation, and strategy of trouble-shooting both among the Shepherd group and among the Kuschke group. I shall more or less ignore these differences in the following discussion, and concentrate on what seem to me to be the main lines dividing the two groups. Shepherd and Kuschke may stand as representatives of the two groups, not because the difficulties are confined to them or wholly due to them, but for lack of more visible proponents of the two groups. You understand, then, that I am not dealing with individuals.

Some aspects of Shepherd's approach are indeed nearly unique to himself. Hence what I say about the Shepherd side may from time to time take a somewhat narrower and more individual character. But, despite the fact that Shepherd the individual was the historical point of origin of the present conflict, the divided votes of faculty, Board of Trustees, and Presbytery show that the Shepherd side, as well as the Kuschke side, has at many points a broader base of support.

In the 31 March paper I maintained that the differences between the Shepherd side and the Kuschke side are differences partly, or perhaps even mainly, in the "grid" they use in reading the Bible. For the Kuschke side, the "grid" is the systematic theological doctrine of justification as that is expressed in the Reformed creeds. For the Shepherd side, the "grid" is the biblical theological approach, particularly as that is crystalized in Shepherd's call for covenantal thinking. Covenantal thinking means thinking that respects the dynamic character of divine initiative and human response in salvation. Of course, it is not quite that simple. Shepherd claims that the Westminster Standards in fact support his position in contrast to the Kuschke side. In deference to this claim (about which I will have more to say), Kuschke's grid could be designated more narrowly as the grid approaching the Bible by way of the doctrine of justification as it is propounded in Charles Hodge and Louis Berkhof. Moreover, the Shepherd approach to reading the Bible might make the claim that it avoids all "grids," by just speaking the way the Bible speaks. This must be borne in mind. But such a claim cannot invalidate the observation that biblical theology and the covenant decisively influence the Shepherd approach. One may claim in favor of Shepherd's side that this is all right, since biblical theology and the covenant are themselves biblical teachings. But then one may claim in favor of the Kuschke side that the doctrine of justification is biblical. One wins nothing this way.

My aim in what follows is to delineate the differences between the Kuschke side and the Shepherd side in another way. I want to sketch out

the differences between the two in their underlying views or presuppositions about the nature, function, structure, and purpose of the activity of systematic-theologizing, and in particular the function of systematic theological discourses. The differences in presuppositions about theologizing interact in a complex way with the differences in grid. Hence I come back here and there along the way to older issues.

I am embarking on this procedure because I have come to think that perhaps the foremost necessity for disputants engaged on both sides is to penetrate in a really thorough way the inner workings of the mind of the opposite side. I urge you to do this to such a degree that you can anticipate the response of the other side to your arguments. (Neither side, in my judgment, has gotten close to this ideal. Both sides are consistent enough internally so that this ideal is attainable.) Then carry on the two-sided argument in your own head. You will find that the conflict is not resolvable by an appeal to texts. That is why it has not been resolved by an appeal to texts. Every text in the whole Bible can be adequately explained in principle by either the Shepherd side or the Kuschke side, granted their patterns of theologizing.

One of the best starting points for understanding the difference between the two patterns of theologizing is the material by Gaffin on the relation between biblical theology and systematic theology. Cf. Gaffin, "Geerhardus Vos and the Interpretation of Paul," Jerusalem and Athens, ed. E. R. Geehan, pp. 228-37; "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," WTJ 38 no. 3 (1975-76), 231-99 (also in The New Testament Student and Theology (III), ed. John H. Skilton, pp. 32-50). Similar remarks occur in Gaffin, "Contemporary Hermeneutics and the Study of the New Testament," Studying the New Testament Today (I), ed. John H. Skilton, pp. 16-18; and "Paul as Theologian," WTJ 30 (1968), 204-232.

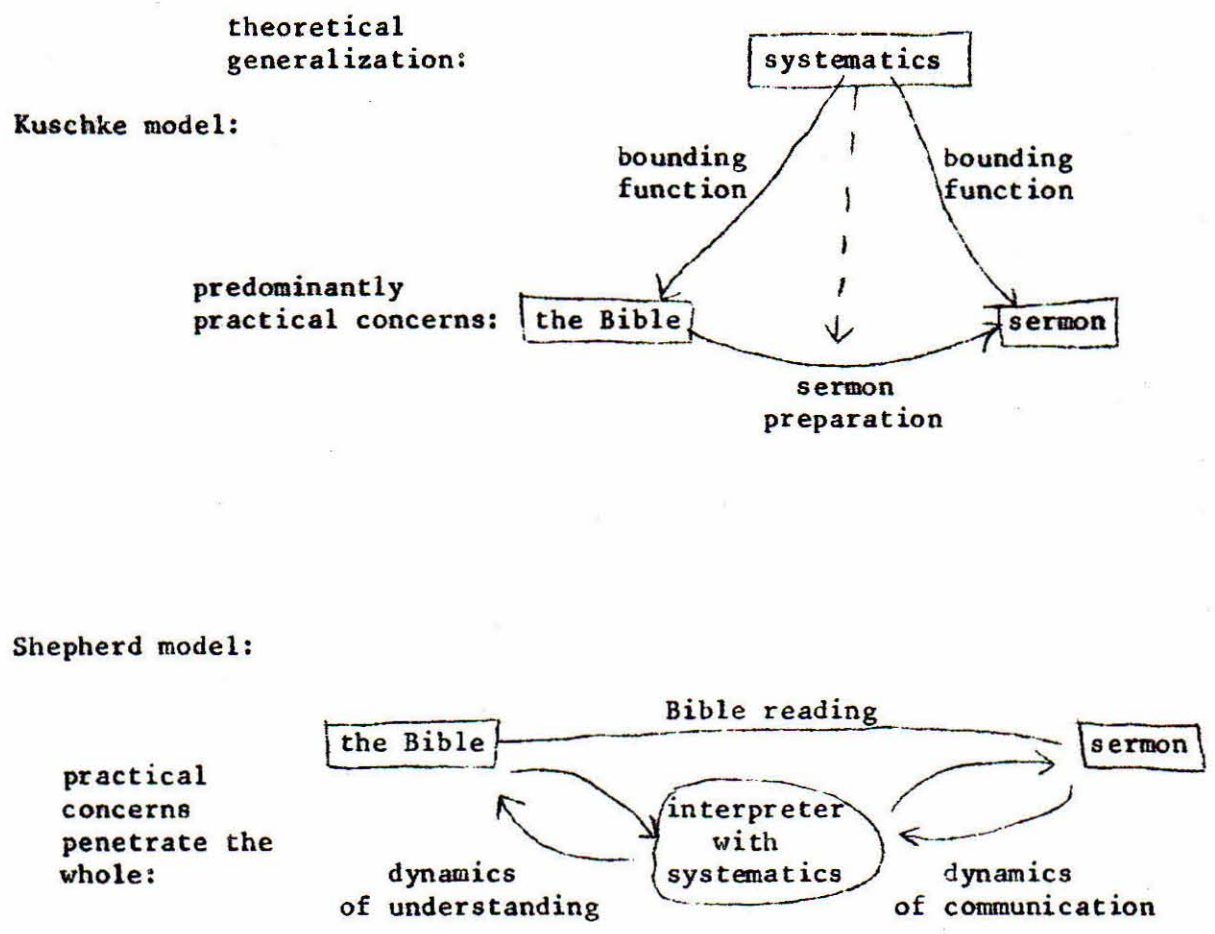
The Kuschke side has a pattern of theologizing whose structure is relatively uninfluenced by biblical theological method, while the Shepherd side has a pattern of theologizing heavily influenced by it. In a general way, this is well known. But in what particular ways do the patterns differ? In addition to the characterizations in the Gaffin articles, I would offer the following points of global difference.

(1) Both sides conceive of systematic theology as a discipline and an activity whose product, ideally, should be an objective setting forth of the total teaching of the Bible on given topics. But for Kuschke's side, systematics is a theoretical discipline the structure of whose discourse may differ widely from that of the Bible and of preaching, as long as "the content" is the same. The language of systematics may sit, even must sit at a certain distance from the language of the Bible and the language of preaching. The language of theoretical discourse may differ from the practical language of the Bible and preaching. As with Kuyper and Hodge, so with Kuschke's side the Bible forms primarily the raw material for systematics, not its paradigmatic embodiment. Diagram 1 shows, doubtless in an oversimplified, almost caricatured fashion, the role of systematics.

On the other hand, the Shepherd side sees systematics as a discipline whose structure and language should somehow match the Bible as closely as possible. A change of form is likely to entail also a change of content. The more the language of systematics differs in structure from the Bible, the more unusable it becomes in guiding the student in the interpretation of the Bible. And the more unusable it becomes as an aid to preaching,

Diagram 1

The Nature and Function of Systematics for the Kuschke and Shepherd Sides



because, communicated directly to the hearers, it causes indigestion. Therefore, systematic theology should represent in a deepened and fuller form, the kind of structure of mind that should characterize every child of God. Hence it cannot be separated from the language of practice.

The above characterizations of the Kuschke side and the Shepherd side are limiting generalizations. I believe that these and other generalizations have fewer exceptions with Kuschke's side than with Shepherd's, because, as I see it, Shepherd's side is still in the process of moving away from the older (Kuschke) model, and shows many tendencies to lapse back into it.

(2) What is the function of systematics? For Kuschke's side its function vis-a-vis the Bible is not to guide exegesis in detail. Because of its theoretical distance from the language of the Bible, it could not do so. Its primary function, I believe, is a "bounding function," the function of eliminating interpretations and exegesis not in agreement with the overall teaching of the Bible. It excludes heretical interpretations. Of course, there is a positive side to it too. But systematics in the Kuschke vein does not make nearly the positive contribution to exegesis that systematics in the Shepherd vein could potentially make, since its organizational structure is not related so closely to the surface structure of the biblical text.

Systematics functions in a similar way in relation to sermon preparation. It bounds sermons by eliminating from them heretical thoughts, and eliminating statements that could too easily be construed as heretical. There is, of course, no reason why the loci of systematics could not provide the organizing structure for some topical sermons. The immature student may easily think that loci of systematics are designed to form the immediate organizing structure for textual sermons as well, but this in fact need not be the case. The distance between the theoretical discipline of systematics and the practical discipline of preaching encourages the student to exploit other possibilities for sermons. Organizing a sermon in terms of topics naturally arising from the passage, or from biblical theological categories, is quite acceptable provided the outcome is "bounded" by the systematics represented in the Reformed confessions. The sermon need not have the same internal structural organization or the same vocabulary as the confessions. Hence, the student can preach in "uninhibited" fashion on all the texts that are cited by Shepherd, despite Shepherd's objection to the contrary. (I will return to this objection in taking up particular examples.)

For the Shepherd side, on the other hand, systematics has much less theoretic "distance" from the Bible and from the sermon. Therefore, it is a more immediate positive aid to interpreting the Bible and constructing the sermon. The balance of the systematic formulation should be reproduced in the way one balances the aspects of meaning of a given text and balances the emphases of a given sermon. The bounding off of heresy is only a secondary function of systematics. For heresy and error are best combatted by simply letting the Bible speak for itself. The Bible itself sets itself against every important error in as clear a way as we could desire.

(3) In agreement with the differences in perception of the nature and function of systematics as a whole, there are differences in the vocabulary of systematics. For Kuschke's side, the vocabulary of systematics should include a technical vocabulary with great theoretical precision. Indeed, this precision of definition and consistency of usage is to be desired as

one of the main ways of producing a clear-cut, stable delineation of the exact bounds of truth and error, and in particular of producing an exact delineation of heresy. For such a function, technical vocabulary may be developed that is not in the Bible at all ("Trinity") or matches only partly the use of a given biblical word ("sanctification"). As an example, Kuschke desires to restrict the term 'justification' to God's act of acquittal at the beginning of the Christian life. Others on Kuschke's side are not so strict, but would still see in James 2 a more casual use of dikaioo not fully matching the technical term. The technical vocabulary makes crystal clear distinctions which are taught somewhere in the Bible (justification in Paul), but are not everywhere made with the same precision ("justification," or better "vindication," in James).

On the other hand, for Shepherd's side, technical terms of systematics must be brought into the closest possible relation with words in the Bible. They should match the range of words in the Bible, where this is practicable. This is because the interpreter uses systematics as an "immediate" tool for exegesis. His exegesis will be distorted if he expects a word to mean one thing (what he has been taught that 'justification' means) and meets a passage where the Greek or Hebrew means something else, (Matt. 12:37 doesn't speak about the beginning of the Christian life.) Also, when a person teaches others about justification in a sermon, their own ability to interpret the Bible will be likewise impaired. Systematics must "match" the Bible in a much more direct fashion because the language of systematics in Shepherd's model stands in much more direct continuity with the language of the Bible and the language of preaching.

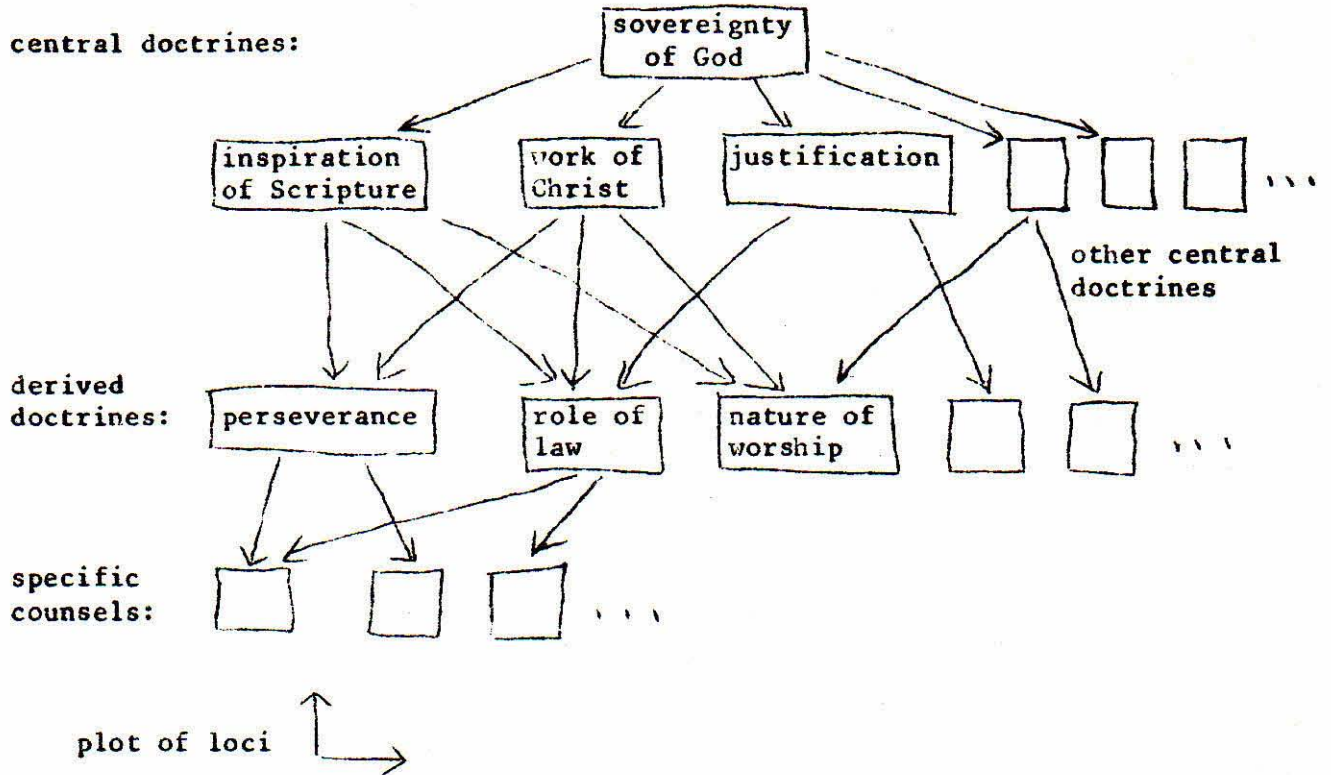
(4) There are differences in the structural organization of the topics of systematics. The Kuyperian method of theology in Kuschke leads naturally to an analytical, distinction-making theological structure by loci. The biblical-theologically oriented method of Shepherd's side favors a synthetic, holistic, picture-building theology of connections. (See Diagram 2.) This is consistent with the differences in conception of the nature and function of systematics. The systematics of Kuschke's side can take on the analytical organization characteristic of a science or theoretical discipline. Moreover, since one of its primary functions is to bound heresy, it favors distinction-making and increasing refinement of each locus. The systematics of Shepherd's side, on the other hand, must strive to capture the synthetic character of biblical teaching by interlocking topics with one another in a fashion like that in the Bible. And it must do this for the sake of preaching as well, since a vital aspect of a good diet of sermons is presentation of doctrines in connection and in relation to a whole, so that response can be properly motivated.

A second difference in the structure of systematics for Kuschke's and Shepherd's sides is that for Kuschke systematics is more thoroughly organized in terms of a levels of "depth," the higher levels articulating a more ultimate set of metaphysical categories than the lower levels. Let me illustrate how this works. Let us take the passage in James 2. James can easily be read as an instance of practical dealing with a practical (and quite vital and important!) problem concerning carnal assurance and sluggishness in good works. On Diagram 2, it is an instance of "specific counsels." James, unlike Paul, does not approach a theory of justification and does not offer precise enough statements about it to enable us to build such a theory. In the light of a refined theoretical statement on justification, which

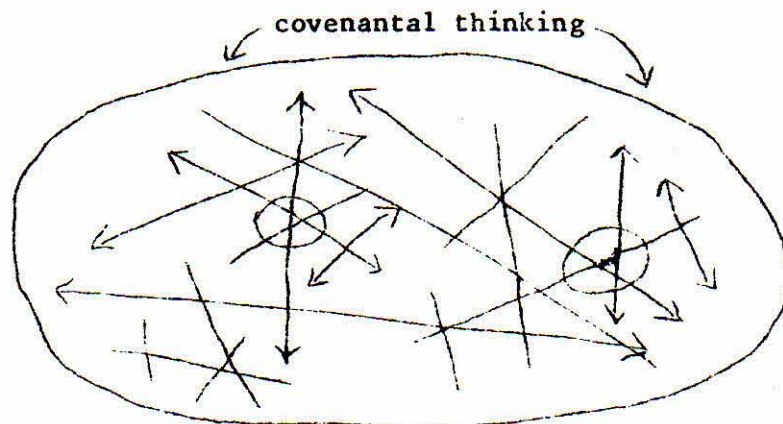
Diagram 2

Internal Structure of Systematics for Kuschke's and Shepherd's Sides

Kuschke model:



Shepherd model:



interconnections in an organic whole

(center points are indicated by small circles)

is one of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, we judge that James is just not addressing the theoretical issue directly. In the light of the theoretical formulation, we can bound off exegesis of James. (Remember the theoretical bounding function of systematics.) James must not be saying that works contribute to justification or are a means or way of justification ("justification" is here used in a systematic-theological sense). He must not even be saying that works are necessary for justification. (For, in the theoretical articulation of systematic theology, as it has developed in church history, talk of "necessity" in connection with the systematic theological term 'justification' will mean instrument or ground.) In terms of a theoretical articulation, we must say either that (a) dikaioo is being used demonstratively, or (b) works are mentioned as necessary evidence of genuine faith. By means of distinction (a) or (b) we bound ourselves off from heresy. Shepherd's side objects that (a) is not the best exegetical solution, and (b) minimizes the connection that the text established between works and justification. We will not be able to preach that connection with full vigor.

The reply from Kuschke's side is that the text can still be preached, indeed must be preached, with vigor, because specific counsels like James 2 need to be preached to meet specific problems. The deeper theoretical articulation in terms of the distinction between evidence and instrument, between works as a sign and faith as the crucial thing, need not always be brought down and inserted bodily into the practical exhortation of the sermon. It can remain at the theoretical level, acting simply in its bounding function of making sure that we do not in the sermon so press our inferences from James 2 in a wrong direction that we run into out-and-out error. Only when the audience is in danger of works-righteousness do we bring in the deeper theoretical articulation directly. And then, according to Kuschke's point of view, we can present a much sharper boundary to the misinterpretation of James than can the vague language of Shepherd's side.

Now look at the text of James from Shepherd's point of view. If the total structure of systematics is to match closely the structure of biblical language, systematics must have place within it for the formulations of James 2. Moreover, Shepherd's systematics, though it possesses some key motifs like union with Christ, the organic unity of the life of the believer, and the covenant, is much less hierarchically structured than is Kuschke's systematics. Hence formulations like that of James must in principle go right along side formulations like Paul's and Calvin's. Formulations like that of James do not need "patching up" with qualifications before incorporation into the body of systematics. If they were good enough for James without explicit qualification, they are good enough for us--because our statements in systematics stand on a level near to that of Scripture, not on some distant theoretical level. An attack on all statements without qualifications appears to Shepherd's side to be tantamount to an attack on Scripture, which allows itself statements without explicit qualifications. Moreover, if the structure of systematics is to direct us in a positive, active, vigorous, direct way in our exegesis of James, it must contain statements that prepare the student for the kind of language that he will find in James. If systematics is to actively direct sermon structure, it must contain statements like that which the student must be prepared to say in expounding James.

I must introduce one qualification into the picture that I have been building of Shepherd's view of the role of systematics. I think that there

is some oscillation in Shepherd's writings on justification between the "pure" Shepherd that I presented in Diagrams 1 and 2 and the Kuschke version of systematics. The oscillation is more one of format than of substance, and more an oscillation at the sentence level than at the level of extended acts of communication.

I can illustrate this by pointing to the difference in structure between Shepherd's 34 theses on the one hand and the paper "The Grace of Justification" that Shepherd presented to the faculty and Board February 8, 1979. The 34 theses, in trying to condense Shepherd's views into close-knit formulations, come closest in form to what people have come to expect from systematics as a "theoretical" discipline. In such contexts people tend to be most intolerant of loopholes, missing qualifications and clarifications, and the like. They expect the qualifications to appear within the bounds of a single sentence or paragraph. Any one paragraph, people expect, ought to obtain the Kuschke ideal of theoretical precision on the particular locus that it addresses. In fact, the breaking up of a position into theses is characteristic more of the analytical ideal, the ideal of loci refined with more and more precision, than it is of the synthetic ideal coming out of biblical theology and imitating structures of biblical language. Hence, Shepherd is, in a sense, "at his worst" in presenting his position by means of theses. And, I believe, he is in some sense at his worst in criticizing competing theological positions, because those theological positions exist by and large in the sphere of abstracted precise discourse and tend to draw Shepherd into that sphere.

By contrast, Shepherd is at his best when he takes his time to expound his position by a connected argument, developed directly from Scripture rather than developed by contrasting himself with criticism of other positions. The more he is simply explaining what the Bible says, the more comfortable people are. On the other hand, the closer his argument gets to showing how the Bible backs up some one of his 34 theses or some other sentence-length formulation, the more uncomfortable people become (because they are approaching the theoretical sphere). Moreover, Shepherd is capable of comforting people when he talks about sermons as well as when he talks about the Bible. Most people want to accept his plea for robust preaching of the warnings of Hebrews, and the presentation of the demands of discipleship in connection with evangelistic preaching.

I maintain, therefore, that the close-knit formulations, of sentence or paragraph length, give the trouble. And they give trouble the most when they use the technical "code words" for the systematic theological locus of justification by faith. Why do they give trouble? On the one hand they arise from and are defended within Shepherd's overall presupposition about systematics: systematics directly tied in with the Bible and preaching. On the other hand, their close-knit character and their adoption of the technical terminology promise a theoretical precision and qualification corresponding to the traditional concerns of the Kuschke model of systematics. Readers read them automatically in the Kuschke framework.

I am now ready for a further example of how the two types of model for systematics would approach a biblical text. Take Heb. 10:36-39. First, what does Shepherd's approach do with this text? It models its formulation in systematics fairly closely after the formulation in 10:36. But since an exact modeling of systematics after 10:36 would just end up repeating 10:36 verbatim, it makes some concessions to the interests of the Kuschke

model in certain technical terms. Thus, instead of "need" (echete chreian) Shepherd's systematics will speak of "necessity." Instead of "endurance" (hypomones) and "doing God's will" Shepherd's systematics will speak of "perseverance in good works" or, more briefly, "good works." Instead of "the promise" (ten epangelian) or (vs. 39) "the obtaining of your soul/life" (peripoesin psyches), it will put "justification." This last substitution is justified by a series of steps. It will first be pointed out that, in the context of the discussion of "better and more lasting possessions," "great reward," and "obtaining your life," "the promise" of vs. 36 surely includes or implies the promise of eternal life. This is the opposite of the Lord finding no pleasure in someone in vs. 38. "The righteous" (vs. 38) will receive, in receiving life, vindication or open acquittal. These are included in the comprehensive promise. Hence "acquittal" or "justification" may be substituted for "the promise." With these replacements, vs. 36 says that good works are necessary for obtaining justification. The formulation, "Good works are necessary for obtaining justification" is what we obtain in systematics.

Going from vs. 36 to this latter formulation of systematics presupposes several assumptions included in Shepherd's view of systematics. (1) The sentence-length formulations of systematics can or ought to closely match formulations in the Bible. (2) Technical terms of systematics like 'good works,' 'justification,' and 'necessary' ought to be so used and understood that they are closely related to or equivalent to expressions of the Bible. (3) The organization of systematics is a synthetic one. This allows us to substitute freely closely related expressions. The synthetic variegated character of biblical language invites us to relate different expressions to one another. This should be done in systematics as well. Hence "justification" as an aspect of "the promise (of eternal life)" can be fitted into the sentence given in Heb. 10:36.

All three of these presuppositions tie in with Shepherd's understanding of the language of systematics as closely related to the language of the Bible in texture. An attack on the formulation "good works are necessary for justification" therefore comes close to being an attack on Heb. 10:36.

Now let us approach the same text from the Kuschke point of view. The Kuschke side begins by vigorously affirming the teaching and practical bearing of not only Heb. 10:36 but this whole section of Hebrews. This passage can be preached effectively in many ways, provided that those ways, in their practical exhortations and affirmations, do not fall into positive error. People need to be told that they must continue in faith and good works. The man without good works is the man without faith, and that man does not receive the promise of eternal life.

But the Kuschke side will not accede to Shepherd's formulation for several reasons. First, Heb. 10:36, like many other passages of the Bible, addresses a practical concern. In this case, it is related to the temptations of the hearers to apostasize back to Judaism. The Kuschke side thereby creates a certain distance between the practical level of Heb. 10:36 and the theoretical levels, especially the higher levels of central doctrine, in systematics. Reflection is therefore needed to see which doctrines of systematics it bears on, and how it bears on them. A little reflection shows that it bears on the locus about perseverance of the saints. About this perseverance it says what Reformed theology has always said. Perseverance is a necessary element in sanctification, and sanctification is

a necessary aspect of the total process of application of redemption that God has ordained. But the type of necessity is qualified at the deep level of systematics as a necessity of evidence. It is evidence to God, perhaps, as well as to men (though God can see the heart), evidence of faith and union with Christ. This qualification is made because the sovereignty of God is a deeper principle in the accomplishment of salvation than is the free agency of man and his bringing forth good works. Systematics freely teaches at one level that the good works are man's works; but at a deeper level it acknowledges that God works both the will and the deed (Phil. 2:12-13). Hebrews need not explicitly invoke this principle of God's sovereign guarantee in the immediate context of 10:36. For 10:36 is practically oriented. Hebrews elsewhere teaches about the divine guarantee in terms of Christ's unailing intercession.

Second, the technical terms of systematics cannot be blithely substituted for the vaguer language of 10:36. This is because the technical terms are invested with a much greater precision for certain specific purposes. The language of justification has been honed to precision primarily to guard against errors in our understanding of the all sufficiency of Christ's person and work in providing us already now with perfect legal standing before God. It has also been honed to guard against errors with regard to the entirely extra-spective way in which we laid hold on this promise (faith is the alone instrument). The vaguer and more fluid term 'promise' in Heb. 10:36 is not designed by either the author of Hebrews nor by systematians in general to bear the freight that is borne by 'justification.' Nor, for that matter, is the 'have need' (echete chreian) of 10:36 quite equivalent to the word 'necessity' used in a technical formulation from which people expect to be able to deduce long trains of conclusions. In the technical formulation we may be called upon to specify the type of "necessity" we have in view. Finally, though the Kuschke side may admit that good works are necessary for obtaining the promise, that is, for salvation, they will not admit that they are necessary for justification. Why? Because, in the theoretical discussions of systematics, under the locus of justification, the discussion is constantly oriented around merit--either the merit of Christ ^{or} the merit of works. Mixing up the loci of systematics in this way by bringing works in to justification confuses the whole system.

In all this, one should note the analytical, distinction-making stamp of Kuschke's approach. Texts speak to given loci (perseverance) in distinction from others (justification), and words speak sometimes in a vague, practical way ("the promise," "salvation") in distinction from other words of great precision ("justification").

The same analytical stamp marks Kuschke's approach to the Westminster Standards. Justification is linked to faith in the locus of justification; faith is linked to repentance, and repentance to good works, in other loci. The technique of Kuschke's side, in their own eyes, is exactly that of WCF XI.2. Both justification and good works may be linked to faith, and thereby, indirectly, related to one another. But good works may never be brought into a direct positive relation to justification, without a mention of faith as a kind of separating barrier. Why? Because the locus of justification, in the course of church history, was largely developed in its particular texture precisely to deal with the errors arising with the attempt to see good works as somehow a contribution to God's approval.

A similar response can come from Kuschke's side concerning WCF XV.3. "Expect pardon" is not quite "receive pardon," since the former puts us

J→f-
cf. Calvin's
"navigatory"

more in the sphere of assurance, the latter (like the earlier part of the sentence of XV.3) in the sphere of God's actions. Nor is "pardon" quite the equivalent of "justification." "Pardon," as a negative act of blotting out with respect to liability for past transgressions, is not so easily conceived of as resting on or caused by a present repentance. Present repentance does not atone for the past. But repentance might more easily be conceived of as the basis for a positive righteousness before God. Hence linking the word 'justification' with repentance would be more open to misunderstanding than linking the word 'pardon' to it. Finally, the "necessity" here is not "necessity for pardon." The word 'for' suggests an order, repentance first, then pardon, which is more open to misconstrual in a causal sense. By separating "necessity" and "pardon" into two clauses, and by eliminating the "for," the Confession says that the sinners who repent are the only sinners who may expect pardon. That is unexceptionable.

The attempts by Shepherd to synthesize statements from here and there in the Standards into an overall picture which includes the language about the necessity of good works for justification fail to affect Kuschke's side because of their more analytical approach to the organization of the Confession into loci, and because of their ability to make distinctions between similar expressions.

We are now in a position to see how Shepherd's and Kuschke's sides both see themselves as defenders of both sola scriptura and sola fide. Shepherd's side obviously defends sola scriptura by its return again and again to biblical texts, and its attempt to bring the language of systematics into the closest possible relation to the Bible. The language of systematics ought to represent or do justice to the full range of the language of the Bible. This protects sola fide in the same way that the Bible does. The Bible cannot be improved upon; hence the Bible's own formulations, for all their looseness in isolation, in their synthesis provide the best possible antidote for deviation from the truth.

Kuschke's side, on the other hand, is obviously a representative of sola fide. But it also defends sola scriptura, precisely by its separation between the technical language of systematics and the language of Scripture. Scripture is not required to address directly the narrowly defined issues formulated in each locus. Rather, the loci represent crystallizations from large numbers of passages. This allows that each passage separately may or may not address the concerns of the locus directly. As long as the formulations of the loci can be shown to be derived from Scripture, it does not matter whether their technical vocabulary matches every occurrence of similar words in Scripture.

The differences in theological method between the sides also help to explain their differences in the interpretation of Paul. The crucial question is whether the good works of the Christian are to be included among the "works of the law" which Paul excludes in various passages as a way of justification. Shepherd's side asks that our systematics approach Paul closely in form. As one aspect of this, the mind of the systematician should conform to the mind of Paul. Gaffin's concern that biblical theology guide the structure and method of systematics governs the approach. Hence one asks what Paul had in mind in writing about "the works of the law." The answer is that he had in mind the Pharisaic system of man's contribution forming a basis for salvation (merit). He had in mind people, whether Jew or Gentile (remember Rom. 1-3), searching for salvation by any other means than the

finished work of Christ. They must be searching under their own power, ultimately relying on themselves, since God's way of salvation is in Christ. Paul did not "have in mind," that is, he was not consciously thinking about, the good works and fruits of the Spirit of the Christian, when he wrote Rom. 3:28. For such works proceed from the salvation in Christ rather than being antagonistic to it.

Now let us approach the matter in Kuschke's way. The task of systematics is not to reproduce what was "in Paul's mind" when he wrote Romans. Doubtless, exegesis is the first step to systematics, and the ultimate basis for it. But the model for systematics is that of Kuyper. The systematician theoretically refines, organizes, and restructures the results of exegesis. Systematics is concerned not only with what was on Paul's mind, but with the general principles that Paul's discourse brings to light. Paul was responding to Pharisaic and Gentile opposition to the gospel. But he would respond similarly to opposition to the gospel by Christians who see their good works as making a contribution to salvation and to justification in particular. Such good works are excluded in terms of the general principle of the argument that Paul develops. The systematician, therefore, quite properly generalizes from Paul's particular opponents to a theoretical formulation such as WCF XI.1-2. The general formula disallows other Christian graces and good works from coming into causal relation to justification. Faith must be held in contrast to these as well as Pharisaic works. Moreover, the theoretical formulation of the Standards has been refined not only by meditation on Paul but by the fires of conflict in church history. These have shown that the danger of introducing the good works of the Christian in connection with justification is not an idle one, even if it was not Paul's immediate intention to counter this danger.

I hope that in the above pages I have provided sufficient examples of the differences in approach between Kuschke's and Shepherd's sides. I would reiterate my request that you try picking some text or other point of controversy between the two and argue for both sides. I hope that you find it to be a way of understanding why resolution does not come to us.

It remains to ask whether the methods of theologizing of Kuschke and Shepherd are valid and profitable. I wish I could discuss this last question at greater length, but this paper already grows to unreasonable length. I shall therefore confine myself to some miscellaneous observations and questions.

First, I believe that both Shepherd's and Kuschke's sides have a tendency to conceive of systematics as a discipline with an ideal of objectivity. The goal is to set forth in a balanced, universal objective form the contents of Scripture. I question whether this model of "objective" systematics is wise, for reasons given at length by John Frame in his discussions in ST 111 and ST 323 of the definition of systematic theology. In brief, systematics aiming at an "objective" product, rather than at overcoming people's subjective difficulties in understanding, has difficulty avoiding the charge that it is attempting to "improve" the form of Scripture. The best "objective" reproduction of the truth is obviously a reprint of the Bible. On the other hand, when systematics is conceived of as applying the word of God to us, overcoming our ignorance, misunderstandings, and errors, people can more clearly see why we have warrant for constructing systematics in a form different from that of the Bible.

I have another reason for introducing Frame's considerations at this point. It seems to me that, as long as systematics aims at an "objective"

ideal, it will be hard to argue about whether Kuschke or Shepherd has the better ideal. People's ideas differ about what an absolutely objective form for systematics would look like. When, however, systematics is conceived in Frame's way as application of Scripture, when it is through and through a practical discipline, it is possible to ask fruitful questions about its strengths and deficiencies in achieving the practical goal. What, then, are the strengths and weaknesses of the Kuschke model and the Shepherd model in helping the church to understand and obey the Bible?

First, I list some salient strengths of the two patterns of theologizing. What are the strengths of the Kuschke model?

1. The Kuschke model is closer to the way most sophisticated, exact systematic theological arguments in church history have usually been conducted, since the third or fourth century. The person using this model is less likely to misconstrue globally his reading of past systematics. (I think, therefore, that the Kuschke side has the more plausible claim to represent the teaching of the Westminster Standards.)

2. The Kuschke model encourages the development of a technical vocabulary (Trinity, simplicity of God, aseity, intermediate state, etc.) for the convenience of our understanding and communication. In academic circles it would be hard to do without a certain amount of such vocabulary.

3. The Kuschke model encourages the development of discussion within loci corresponding to controversies and problems that have arisen in church history. Hence it is able potentially to address much more directly our problems and questions than is a systematics which is constrained to follow closely the contours of Scripture in its form.

4. By developing a technical terminology that does not match one-to-one the meaning of words as they appear in the Bible, the Kuschke model can encourage us to read each word of the Bible in its own immediate context, not necessarily "pouring into it" all that we know from a systematics summary. This takes place, for example, when pistis and dikaioo occurring in James 2 are distinguished from the technical terms 'faith' and 'justification' in systematics.

5. By refusing to alter radically the terminology already developed in systematics in the course of history, the Kuschke model enables us to put both ourselves and laypeople in closer contact with the writings of past generations, and the Reformed catechisms in particular.

The Shepherd model has a complementary set of advantages.

1. By bringing the terminology and structure of systematics into much closer relation of the Bible, the Shepherd model hopes to cut off the speculative tendencies and uncriticized presuppositions often found behind the formation of technical vocabulary, the technical formulations themselves, and the patterns of reasonings by which these formulations are obtained.

2. The Shepherd model appropriates and incorporates much more easily the fruits of biblical theology, which itself attempts to structure itself directly in terms of biblical categories.

3. Students who learn systematics in the future will not find it interfering with and biasing their exegesis if the categories of systematics are so constructed that they do not constantly cut across the more salient categories of the Bible.

4. Systematics conceived as a highly theoretical discipline is unpreachable as well as unusable in the direct work of exegesis. The student must make a double translation in the Kuschke model, first from the Bible to systematics, then from systematics to preaching. But if preaching, systematics, and the Bible are all structured alike, won't the task be easier?

5. If systematics is to represent adequately biblical teaching, it must set out the connections between teachings (the synthetic approach), not merely treat loci in isolation (the analytic approach).

The weaknesses of the two patterns of theologizing are, as it were, the mirror images of these strengths. I wish I could say more on this matter, because I think the weaknesses of the two approaches are less perceived than the strengths.

Concerning the Kuschke approach, the following are weaknesses.

1. In fact average students, and sometimes even quite sophisticated students, are unaware of the vast gap between the theoretical discipline of systematics on the one hand and the Bible and preaching on the other. Or, if they are vaguely aware, they cannot make "translations" between the spheres efficiently enough. They tend to lapse back into an equation of the three spheres, and take statements directly from one sphere to another without asking whether the terms mean quite the same thing in the different spheres. Thus Charles Hodge makes the claim that "Reformed Theology . . . retains, as far as possible, Scriptural terms for Scriptural doctrines" (Systematic Theology, vol. II, part III, Ch. 14, p. 639). Louis Berkhof begins quite a few of his discussions of loci of systematics with word studies. But both Hodge and Berkhof at this point have a confused and unsatisfactory methodology. As far as their final results go, Hodge and Berkhof indeed give us (by and large) things that the Bible teaches. But the technical terminology that they introduce in the process does not "match" the range of meaning of a Greek or Hebrew word in a single case.

Of course, to be fair to Hodge and Berkhof, I should say that they can reply by agreeing that their technical terms do not "match" every occurrence of corresponding words of Greek and Hebrew in the Bible. Rather, the technical terms match only some few "key" occurrences. I would say it as follows. Their teaching, say, on sanctification, is built on the teaching of a few passages in which the word hagiasmos or hagiazō happens to occur. It ignores other passages where these same words occur. And their teaching is based on many other passages where these words do not happen to occur, but which speak to the issue, that is, which speak about "sanctification" (e.g., all the passages about dying and rising with Christ, Christian growth, etc.). But their selection of a few passages as the "key" passages, their selection from these passages of that aspect of teaching that concerns them, and their combination of that aspect of teaching with the teaching of many other passages not using the hagios group of words, are all procedures guided not directly by the structure of the Bible but by their concerns to answer certain modern questions. The same holds, mutatis mutandis, for any technical term of systematics purporting to be "biblical."

2. The teaching of terminology such as 'justification,' 'sanctification,' 'adoption,' 'faith,' 'union with Christ,' to laypeople has disadvantages as well as advantages. On the one hand it does encourage them to relate teachings of the Bible that they might not otherwise think of

relating, because they group these teachings under the same technical term as a heading. On the other hand, it can confuse them when they find similar language in the Bible and try to make the Bible's language "match" systematics in one-to-one fashion.

3. Systematics with theoretical distance from the Bible can become speculative. It can introduce fine distinctions in its technical terminology on insufficient grounds, and then use these to deny the force of biblical teaching. Such has happened with the trichotomous theory of the nature of man, and with the Roman Catholic distinction between doxologia and latreia. Reformed theology is not immune to this problem.

4. The organization of systematics into loci tends to discourage students' sensitivity to connections between loci established by the Bible itself.

5. The organization of systematics in terms of categories that "cut across" more salient categories of the Bible tends to discourage students' appreciation for biblical theological connections.

6. A central doctrine like the doctrine of justification can be abused when it causes students to be inhibited in their ability to preach like the book of Hebrews. The doctrine of limited atonement likewise can inhibit the preaching of the free offer of the gospel. Students are often too afraid to exploit the full range of exhortations and declarations that human authors of the Bible feel free to use. Why? The students are always immediately qualifying things in their minds by referring to the "central" doctrines at a higher level of the hierarchy. They then feel it necessary to be over-cautious in their preaching.

Concerning the Shepherd approach, the following are weaknesses.

1. The Shepherd program of conforming our language in systematics to the Bible's language is only half-hearted. A full conformity demands reproducing the Bible word by word from Genesis to Revelation. And even this is not really faithful to the Bible, since reproducing the same sequence of words in a context different from the original historical contexts of biblical writings alters the communicative force of the words.

2. The program cannot succeed in developing technical expressions matching the Bible's expressions, because the Bible has few if any fully technical expressions. The same word is used different ways in different contexts in the Bible. Moreover, different human authors of the Bible have different habits of writing, not only with respect to the words they use, but with respect to the structural organization of their thought. A systematics whose structure would directly represent the structure of the Bible as a whole destroys both the diversity of human authors, the situational differences between their utterances, and finally the epochal differences between the stages of redemptive history. This is particularly obvious when we attempt to form a technical term or compose a definition of a term in systematics. Suppose that term is somehow to encompass within itself all the occurrences of a comparable term in the texts of the Bible. Then it must fuse the occurrences of these comparable terms in all the writings of all the human authors of the Bible at all stages of redemptive history. The final result will eliminate the sense of diversity between human authors and between different situations. CWD

3. If systematics must alter its technical terminology to "conform to the Bible" in some one-to-one way, it will lose contact with the systematics that has developed in the course of church history.

4. The attempt to conform the structure of the language of systematics in detail to the language of the Bible tends to create the illusion that achieving a "match" means solving our hermeneutical problems. It encourages students to evade the difficulties of "translating" parts of the Bible so that they speak not only in a different language (in this case, English), but to a different cultural situation and frequently to a different redemptive-historical situation.

5. In the same vein, the attempt to conform the structure of the language of systematics to the language of the Bible inhibits us from addressing and developing answers to questions raised by modern people, questions to which the Bible may provide answers only in a very indirect way.

I do not have a short-range solution to the dilemma raised by the weaknesses of the Kuschke and the Shepherd approach. We cannot necessarily expect that God will continually provide us with a multitude of individuals each of whom is so intensely gifted that he is capable of operating with both models and overcoming the weaknesses and pitfalls of them both. Nor can we expect a multitude of individuals so intensely gifted that they will each be able to transcend the structure of the two models altogether. I think that we must expect to see in the immediate future some people operating primarily or almost exclusively with one model, other people with the other. Nor can we expect the quick disappearance of the Kuschke model, because it has such a long history and is deeply embedded in Reformed tradition both living and dead.

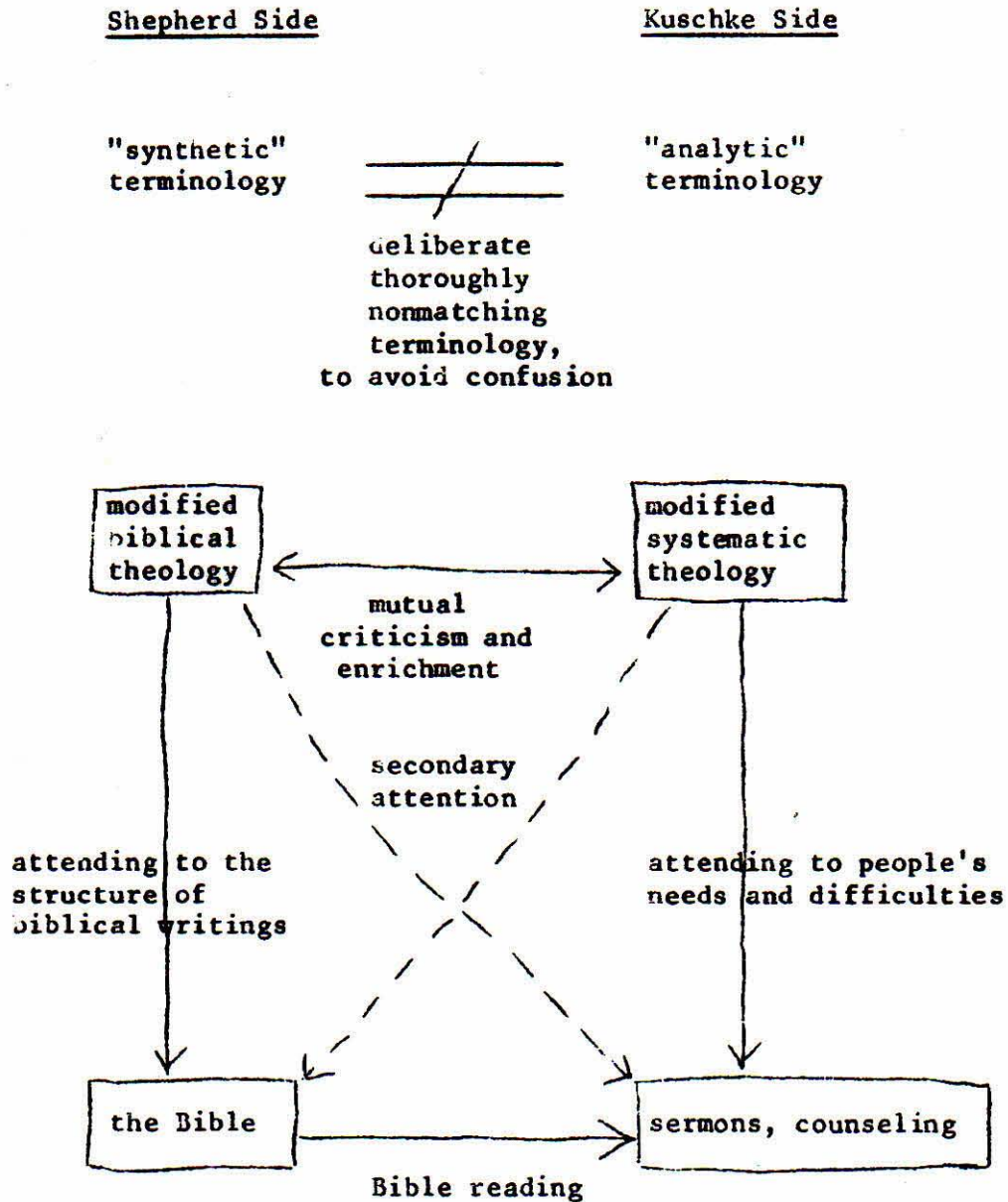
On the other hand, in a time of division like the present people in our community need to make intense efforts to appropriate and become comfortable with models in competition with their own. Only so will we be able to progress. As it is, I don't think we are getting enough effective communication. People are not, as it were, spending long enough listening to and entering into the other person's thinking before speaking. To be sure, there have been vigorous, prolonged, even agonized attempts at communication by many of us. For that I am grateful. But there is a problem. What looks clear and correct within one pattern of theologizing may appear muddled to someone with a different pattern of theologizing. The listener assumes that it is the speaker's obligation to speak in terms of the pattern of the listener ("he ought to make himself clear, oughtn't he?"). The speaker assumes that it is the listener's obligation to enter into the thinking of the speaker ("understanding me includes understanding my pattern of thinking; the listener must get used to hearing what that pattern sounds like"). I would reverse these assumptions. The listener has the obligation to try to understand the speaker's pattern in its own terms. The speaker has the obligation to communicate in the listener's pattern.

In the short run, because of the distribution of gifts in the body of Christ, I think that there must be a division of labor. (But let's not use that as an excuse now to "do our thing" and avoid the pain involved in understanding an alien pattern of thinking from inside.) I would advocate systematics using a modified Kuschke model. We must be able to organize both our technical terminology, our discourses, and the global structure of systematics to address people's modern situation (systematics as application). I would advocate that biblical theology use a modified Shepherd pattern, but admit that it, too, is most of the time at least a semi-theoretical discipline that does not simply match the structure of the Bible. It will organize its material in whatever way is most conducive to helping

theology students penetrate the structure of thought of individual human writers of the Bible. (This includes the traditional biblical theological concern for historically unfolding revelation, since this topic is a major concern of a good many writers.) Systematics is thereby oriented in its structure more to the modern situation, biblical theology to the situation of various biblical writers. (See Diagram 3.) But if this whole thing is not to break down, each of the two disciplines must have a secondary orientation in the other direction, and there must be lots of communication and learning between the two. Both disciplines, in my judgment, need some painful methodological reformation and reassessment. Systematics needs reformation of its uncritical and sometimes speculative use of technical terms; biblical theology needs reformation of its uncritical idea of deep structure in the Bible, often deep structure somehow residing in key biblical words (e.g., the Hebrew word berit).

Diagram 3

A Possible Mode of Interaction for Modified Shepherd and Kuschke Models



Biblical theology is to have semitheoretical distance from the language of the Bible, but with orientation to the practical concern of understanding the biblical writers in their own context. Systematic theology is to have semitheoretical distance from the language of sermons and counseling, but with orientation to the practical concern of removing people's difficulties in understanding and obeying the Bible as a whole.