



If this first instalment is any indication, Douglas Kelly's three-volume Systematic Theology is sure to set a new standard. Harvesting decades of steady scholarship and equally steady engagement in all facets of the church's life and ministry, Kelly displays the richness of the Christian faith, particularly in its Reformed expression. Christians of all traditions will benefit greatly from the catholic breadth, appropriate but not bewildering depth, and exegetical insight of this remarkable work.

Michael Horton

J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics  
Westminster Seminary in California, Escondido, California

Douglas F. Kelly is one of the English-speaking world's leading Reformed theologians. A brilliant Patristics scholar and a gifted linguist, with a grace-wrought passion for the Triune God, a love for truth, and a commitment to godliness, Dr. Kelly is a hearty advocate for supernaturalism in its fullest Christian sense (and you will not read far before you see his polemic against rationalism in every form). I know of no one who is better at making the unseen world of spirituality reality vivid and tangible. Here we begin to enjoy the fruits of his labors of more than three decades as a doctor of the church and servant of the Word in the teaching of systematic theology. What a feast it is. Few Protestant theologians in our day know the terrain of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Person of Christ, as well as Professor Kelly. Consequently, he is at his best when opening up to us the unrealized importance and glory of these foundational truths about our Savior God. For those who yearn for an orthodox Reformed catholicity, Kelly shows the way forward.

Ligon Duncan,

Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi  
President, Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals  
Adjunct Professor, Reformed Theological Seminary

Professor Douglas Kelly's eagerly awaited Systematic Theology exceeds all expectation. With the same exacting diligence and attention to detail that have always characterised his work, Doug Kelly presents a theology that is at once grounded in Scripture and appreciated within the church. His contention is that these are the hallmarks of all true theological reflection, and this volume fulfils its intention to distil the teaching of the Bible for the benefit of the believing community. Professor Kelly weaves together a rich tapestry of biblical exegesis, historical reflection, critical engagement and contemporary application; while standing in mainstream Reformed theology, he is not afraid to engage other traditions.

This first volume is a comprehensive introduction to discussion of God's self-disclosure, Triune being, transcendent majesty, and covenant relationships. It is a magnificent gift both to the Church and the Academy.

Iain D. Campbell,

Back Free Church of Scotland, Isle of Lewis







# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

V O L U M E O N E

Grounded in Holy Scripture and  
understood in the light of the Church

DOUGLAS F. KELLY

THE GOD WHO IS: THE HOLY TRINITY

**MENTOR**

Copyright © Douglas Kelly 2008

ISBN 978-1-84550-386-4

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Published in 2008

in the

Mentor Imprint

by

Christian Focus Publications Ltd.,  
Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire,  
IV20 1TW, Scotland, Great Britain

[www.christianfocus.com](http://www.christianfocus.com)

Cover design by Daniel van Straaten

Printed by Bercker, Germany

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying. In the U.K. such licences are issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London, EC1 8TS. [www.cla.co.uk](http://www.cla.co.uk)

# C O N T E N T S

Dedication .....	7
Author's Preface.....	9
1 Knowledge of God: God Reveals Himself.....	13
Appendix I – <i>Some Traditional Theistic Proofs</i> .....	65
Appendix II – <i>Thomas Reid Answers David Hume on Causation</i> .....	119
2 Knowledge of the Triune God through Creation and Conscience .....	129
Appendix I – <i>Other religions as Viewed by the Old Testament</i> .....	181
Appendix II – <i>Theologoumenon: Are the Pagans, who Lived Before the Gospel of Christ Came to their Culture, Condemned to Destruction, Since their Religions were Not True Bearers of the Salvation of God in Christ?</i> .....	211
3 Western Rejection of God's Testimony to Himself in Creation and Conscience (The Continuing Heritage of the Enlightenment).....	223
Appendix I – <i>Testimony of Dostoevsky</i> .....	263
4 The God Who Is: the Holy Trinity as One Lord .....	273
Appendix I – <i>The Distinction in Eastern Orthodox Theology between God's Essence and His Energies</i> .....	295
5 What Kind of Lord He Is: His Transcendence, Beauty and Majesty Mean that His Sovereign Control is 'Good News' .....	315
Appendix I – <i>Contemporary challenges to God's Lordship</i> .....	353
Appendix II – <i>Attempts to Know the Lord Outside the Community of Faith: (1) How the Jesus Seminar and (2) Ancient and Modern Gnosticism both Remove God's Lordship</i> .....	363
Appendix III – <i>Feminist Theology and the Fatherhood of God</i> .....	375
6 The Triune God Makes Himself Known in the Covenant of Grace .....	387
Appendix I – <i>Where Was the Covenant Before the Sixteenth Century?</i> .....	445
7 The One Lord exists as three persons .....	447
Appendix I – <i>St. Augustine's Psychological Analogies of the Trinity</i> .....	473
Appendix II – <i>The Traditional Christian Interpretation of Old Testament Theophanies as Pre-incarnate Appearances of Christ (as summarized by Louis Gaussen)</i> .....	479
8 The Christian Church Thinks Through how God is One Being and Three Persons.....	485
Appendix I – <i>The Differing Approaches of the Cappadocians and Augustine to the Trinity</i> .....	519
9 The Full Co-equality of the Trinitarian Persons: No Subordinationism	529
Appendix I – <i>On the Filioque</i> .....	563
Bibliography .....	579
Scripture Index .....	601
Index of Names .....	609
Subject Index.....	615
Acknowledgements .....	621





Hoc volumen filio quarto meo  
Patrick Blue McMillan Campbell Kelly  
diligatione aestimationeque dedicatum est



Haec est autem vita aeterna,  
ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum,  
et quem misisti, Iesum Christum.

Ioannes XVII:iii



## A U T H O R ' S P R E F A C E

---

I was born and brought up in the Presbyterian Church in the United States (the old 'Southern Presbyterian Church'). At the age of twenty-four, I was ordained into the ministry of this church, and have always believed its basic teachings as I learned them at the feet of my believing family and local church. Particularly, I grew up trusting in Christ as my personal Lord and Savior, God as my heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit as my sanctifier. From family and church, I learned, and still believe in the Holy Scriptures as the written Word of God, 'the only infallible rule for faith and practice.' I cannot claim to have lived up to all I believe, but such has been my sincere and lifelong desire.

While every Christian denomination has its own limitations, the Reformed churches do have the considerable advantage of seeing themselves as true branches of a much larger, ancient and worldwide body: the body of Christ; the bride of Christ, as part of the Holy Catholic Church (and not the whole of it). The Church of Scotland, which is the mother church of American Presbyterians, saw itself, not as a new denomination, but simply as the Catholic Church *Reformed* in Scotland.

A Manual of Church Doctrine according to the Church of Scotland explains how the Reforming Catholics in sixteenth-century Scotland (and much of Europe) understood themselves:

While retaining in common the Divine Ordinances and the Catholic Creeds, they [the sixteenth century European Reformers] adopted, each for itself as it was reformed, 'Confessions' or statements of doctrine, for the guidance of teaching and for testimony: and they regulated their internal policy on different models. They have not thereby changed their identity or broken their continuity. They are the same national churches now reformed, and members of the one visible and Catholic Church which our Standards [i.e. the Westminster Standards of the 1640s] define.

The Reformers believed that it was the Roman Church that had departed from the Apostolic faith. It was by the Church itself that the Reformation had been effected. The Reformers sought not to destroy the Church as a united and visible body, but to strengthen it and cleanse it by restoring its Apostolic and primitive form. In the eyes of the Reformers there was no real disruption at the Reformation – baptism and ordination were held as valid and the Reformed presbyter emerged from the Roman priesthood;

the Catholic Church Reformed was no national sect, but The Universal Kirk [according to the *Scots Confession* of 1560, art. xvi] ...

The word 'Catholic' has also a canonical and juristic sense which is decided by the Edict of Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius (A.D. 380): that those are to be called Catholics who believe in 'the one Godhead and equal majesty and holy tri-unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost'. The Scottish Reformers in 1558 had this definition in view when they required that 'the Church be reformed in accordance with the precepts of the New Testament, the writings of the Ancient Fathers, and the Godly and approved laws of the Emperor Justinian' (in whose code the Theodosian Edict had been incorporated) ... As a branch of the Reformed Church the Church of Scotland has consistently followed the example of Calvin who sought to restore the face of the Apostolic and Catholic Church by reforming it in accordance with its apostolic foundation and in agreement with the Catholic doctrine of the Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Church ...<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, I have written this first volume of *Systematic Theology*, thinking of my heritage as both Reformed and Catholic; gladly appropriating crucial insights, as best I could understand them, of the whole people of God over the last two thousand years – Eastern Orthodox, Western Catholic, and Reformation Protestant – as they sought to explicate and live out the foundational truths of the inspired Word of God.

I like what Dr. (often called 'Rabbi') John Duncan (Free Church of Scotland minister, former missionary to the Jews, and erudite professor of Old Testament in nineteenth-century New College in Edinburgh) once said: 'I'm first a Christian, next a Catholic, then a Calvinist, fourth a Paedobaptist and fifth a Presbyterian. I cannot reverse this order.'<sup>2</sup>

For all of these reasons, I entitle this work: *Systematic Theology: Grounded in Holy Scripture and Understood in Light of the Church*. Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would be with the Church to the end of time, so as to guide her into all truth (John 16:13-15). The Apostle Paul makes it clear that all parts of the universal Church need one another in order to see the fullness of this truth (Eph. 1). It takes the whole Church to understand the whole truth. God reveals His life and truth within the covenant community (of Israel and of the Church). Dissociated individuals, cut off from the covenant community of faith and the covenant Word in the Scriptures, are in no position accurately to grasp and articulate God's saving truth. They need the Church in order to see and experience the Word of God in God's own light (cf. Ps. 36:9), and this volume seeks to call them into this believing fellowship of grace. This believing fellowship of grace has been divinely called out from all ages, cultures, tribes and tongues. That is why I have not hesitated to draw from its rich resources from a wide array of denominational traditions, who have often vehemently disagreed among themselves on important issues, but nonetheless, have ultimately agreed on

<sup>1</sup> H. J. Wotherspoon and J. M. Kirkpatrick, *A Manual of Church Doctrine according to the Church of Scotland* (Second Edition), Revised and enlarged by T. F. Torrance and Ronald Selby Wright (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> William Knight, *Colloquia Peripatetica: Conversations with John Duncan* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1907), p. 8.

far more than divided them, since it is a God-ordained characteristic that 'the sheep hear Christ's voice and follow Him' (John 10:27). It is my humble prayer that the bread of heaven and the living waters may be multiplied to many of God's people (and to some outside the fold who may thereby find their true spiritual home), as they read this volume.

### Thanks and Acknowledgements

It remains my happy task to thank many who have helped me in so many different ways while this first volume has been in preparation. I started on it during a sabbatical leave from Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, to the University of Edinburgh (1998–99), and largely finished it during a second sabbatical leave (from and to the same places) in 2005–06. Of necessity, I have done plenty of other things during these years, so that I had to lay aside this book for long stretches of time, but it has remained my major project. Since it has stretched over seven or eight years, I fear that I shall forget some who have been of significant assistance. If I did not keep a personal daily diary, this task of acknowledgments would indeed be hopeless. And even with the diary, I am likely to neglect important servants of God, who have done much for me. If so, I apologize to them ahead of time. But no doubt they did it primarily for Christ, 'who is not unfaithful to forget their labour of love.'

First, I am grateful to Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) for these two academic leaves of absence, and to my alma mater, New College (University of Edinburgh), which allowed me to be a visiting scholar during these periods of study. I thank Professor (and Dean) David Fergusson for his help. Also I thank the Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh, who (under Principal Donald Macleod) kindly provided me with an office during these sabbaticals. Holyrood Abbey Church of Scotland in Edinburgh helped me with housing during the first sabbatical, and the Banner of Truth Trust in Edinburgh provided housing during the second period (with the assistance of former director, Iain Murray, and the current director, Jonathan Watson). Rutherford House of Edinburgh was of great help, as was Dr. Frank Gibson of Edinburgh. Elder Jim Shipway, Elder and Mrs. Tom Maxwell, and Elder and Mrs. Ken Colville rendered us much help during our time in Edinburgh.

The first trip was made possible by generous assistance of several of the Lord's people: the Rev. William Fulton of Austin, Texas; Elder Tommy Peaster of Yazoo City, Mississippi; Mrs. Betty Edwards of Jackson, Mississippi; the session of Second Presbyterian Church in Yazoo City, Mississippi; Dr. Michael Brown of Dillon, South Carolina; Elders Jim Atkins and Coble Adams of Dillon, South Carolina; the session of Reedy Creek Presbyterian Church of Minturn, South Carolina; and the session of Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, North Carolina; and also the late Mr. Jerre Pearson of Auburn, Alabama and Mrs. Jane Moore of Charlotte, North Carolina.

My long-time secretary, Mrs. Tari Williamson, the RTS-Charlotte librarian, the Rev. Ken McMullen, and a number of able student assistants have strengthened my hands. Among them are Scott Lingle, Matthew Miller,

Chris Finnigan, Paul Mulner, Mark Miller and Blake Schwartz. I am grateful to the former President of RTS, Dr. Luder Whitlock, and to his successor, Dr. Ric Cannada, Chancellor of RTS, for all of their help. Mr. Alex Mark, minister to the youth of First Presbyterian Church of Dillon, South Carolina (with generous contributions from Mr. and Mrs. Jack McInnis, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Rich Alford, Mr. and Mrs. Neill Alford, Mr. John Manton Alford, and Dr. and Mrs. Michael Brown, all of Dillon) provided for me a laptop computer on which I have composed most of this volume. Thanks go to Mr. F. E. Hobeika of Dillon, South Carolina who makes it possible for us to be away for long periods by looking after our house.

Monsieur Jean-Marc Berthoud, a lay scholar (in the Reformed tradition) of Lausanne, has been of inestimable service as he has constantly interacted with me on the preparation of this volume. He has offered insightful critique and suggestions throughout all its chapters, and has provided books, articles and papers, which always seemed to come at just the right time. For whatever the book may be worth, much of its value will go back to his highly knowledgeable and perceptive theological mind. He has made my pathway much less lonely. And I am grateful for discussions on aspects of feminist theology with the Rev. David Jones, of Reformed University Fellowship at Stanford University in California.

Also I wish to thank cordially two distinguished scholars from other major Christian traditions (Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic) for generously taking the time to look over the manuscript: Protobishop George Dion Dragas (a former New College, Edinburgh, classmate of mine), now Professor of Theology of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Massachusetts, and Father Joseph Koterski, S.J., Associate Professor and Chair of the Philosophy Department of Fordham University in New York.

Above all others, I thank my noble wife, Caroline, for all she is and does, and I thank the hundreds of Christians who have reminded me of how much they have prayed for this long project. The head of Christian Focus Publications in Scotland, Elder William Mackenzie, and my chief editor, the Rev. Malcolm Maclean of the Free Church of Scotland on the Isle of Scalpay, have made it possible for this work finally to appear. I am particularly grateful to my youngest son, Patrick, who has spent a great deal of time, care, and love, proofreading this work and suggesting changes to improve it.

My prayer for all of these good people, and for all who will ever read this volume, is that of the Psalmist:

Lord, bless and pity us,  
 Shine on us with thy face:  
 That th' earth thy way, and nations all  
 May know thy saving grace.  
 Let people praise thee, Lord;  
 Let people all thee praise.  
 O let the nations be glad,  
 In songs their voices raise.

(Ps. 67:1-4; Scottish metrical version).