



Timothy Ministries

Mini-Seminary

THEOLOGY 1

THE NUPTIAL TOE (THEORY OF EVERYTHING)

Why Pursue A Grand Unified Theology?

1 Understanding the “Big Picture” helps us make sense of the details.

Cf. Paul’s statement of the “big picture” in Colossians 1.16: “all things have been created through [Christ] and for Him.”

2 A comprehensive theology affects the spirit in which we fulfill our prime directives.

Our comprehensive theology will influence whether we advance God’s kingdom in a spirit of love, legalism, or lackadaisicalness.

3 A comprehensive theology provides an interpretive key for ambiguous passages of Scripture.

For example, even with the precision of Greek, Acts 2.38 can grammatically be interpreted two ways: “Repent for the forgiveness of sins,” *or* “Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.” A theology emphasizing reconciliation will point us to the correct interpretation.

4 A comprehensive theology will help us prioritize our tasks in the work of the kingdom.

A comprehensive theology should point us to what is ultimately important. Our lives and ministries will never be properly aligned until we have settled on what *one thing* is more important than anything else, because it is God’s ultimate intention.

Questions For Assessing A Comprehensive Theology

1 Is it biblical?

Is our comprehensive theology consistent with the clear statements in Scripture regarding God's acts and purposes? Are all of its main ideas complimentary to the central teachings of the historic Christian faith? If Scripture does not declare the core idea of our comprehensive theology explicitly, **is the core idea the inference to the best explanation** in light of the biblical data? See Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 2nd Edition, p. 55.

2 Is it anchored in God's eternal character?

Does our comprehensive theology describe God as acting according to His eternal intentions rather than simply responding to developments in human history? Will it still have force throughout the coming ages, after the Great Commission is fulfilled?

3 Does it have strong explanatory power?

Does our comprehensive theology provide answers for historically challenging questions; will it help us answer any of mankind's **ultimate questions** (see next page)? Does it answer more questions than it raises? Does it integrate a high percentage of the established truths of historic Christianity?

4 Is it a practical improvement over other theologies?

Is it more apt to promote holiness among God's people, and does it provide lasting impetus for fulfilling the Great Commission?

5 Does it exalt Christ and His interests above human concerns?

Does it provide a greater purpose for the Church beyond the righteous but short-term priority of "getting people saved"?

The Ultimate Questions We've Heard People Ask

1. **Teleology:** What is the purpose and meaning of life?
2. **Happiness:** What is the most direct path to true fulfillment?
3. **Ethics:** What is right and what is wrong?
4. **Theology:** What is God's nature and character?
5. **History**
 - A. Why has history unfolded as it has? Why is evil in the world?
 - B. What is the best explanation for the existence of competing religions?
6. **Epistemology**
 - A. What forms of knowledge are reliable?
 - B. Can the observable world and universe be rationally understood?
7. **Ontology**
 - A. What is the nature of existence?
 - B. Is there a supernatural realm?
 - C. What was the origin of life?
 - D. What does it mean to be human?

The ultimate questions are those whose answers provide a working framework for life. As such, they are integral to what we call our worldview. A worldview is simply the mental framework by which we understand the world and our place in it. The more directly we study the ultimate questions, the more consciously, consistently and effectively we will live out our worldview. Few people do the hard work to answer all the ultimate questions, but every person either answers them or makes assumptions about them in order to function as a human being. For a much fuller explanation of the ultimate questions, please download the PDF document, in which I introduce them: http://www.tmin.org/pdfs/THE_THEO_A.pdf

If you would like to explore these questions further, I highly recommend starting with a copy of Tom Morris's book, misleadingly titled, *Philosophy For Dummies*. A better title for this book would be *Philosophy Well Taught*.

The Theology Of The Bride

A Synopsis

THE THEOLOGY STATED

The reason for all creation is the overflow of the Father's love for the Son. The expression of the Father's love for the Son will be multiplied through the building¹ of a suitable, corporate bride for His Son, a bride who loves much for having been forgiven much (cf. Luk 7.47). The preparation of the bride (Rev 19.7) involves the Father's love being perfected in her (1Jo 4.12) as she learns deep obedience to the greatest commandment (Mat 22.37-38), and does all things for God's glory (1Co 10.31), in order to attract others to the heavenly Bridegroom (Rev 22.17). In this theology, Eve is the archetypal bride, Israel is the prototype of the corporate bride, and the Church is the Bride in her fullness who absorbs the other two.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BRIDE IS BASED UPON THESE TRUTHS:

1. God has no inherent lack or deficiency.
2. God is inherently relational, i.e., a Trinity.
3. Sacrificial love is inherent to God's eternal character (1John 4.16).
4. The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world (John 17.24).
5. The eternal Son of God became man without ceasing to be God (John 1.1-3,14).
6. The greatest commandment is not to glorify God, but to love God (Matthew 22.37-38). Scripture commands us to do all things for God's glory (1Corinthians 10.31), but this mandate is ancillary to the greater commandment.
7. Of His countless creatures, God created only one species in His relational image (Genesis 1.26-28).

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BRIDE DEPENDS UPON:

1. Monotheism (contra pagan polytheism).
2. An inherently relational God (taught by biblical Trinitarianism, but downplayed by Economic Trinitarianism,² and contra Hinduism and Islam).
3. A God whose essential character qualities include the readiness to love sacrificially (1John 4.16).
4. A God-Man who is unique among all other human beings (cf. John 3.29-30; contra Gnosticism and New Age philosophy).
5. The rightness of a Christocentric worldview (Colossians 1.16 contra Secular Humanism).
6. Creatures made in God's relational image (contra Darwinism).
7. A high view of marriage (contra Gnosticism; contra post-modern sexual ethics).

¹ Cf. Septuagint of Gen 2.2 with Greek New Testament of Matthew 16.18.

² See Kelly, J. N. D., *Early Christian Doctrines*, Fifth, Revised (London; New Delhi; New York; Sydney: Bloomsbury, 1977), ch. 4, sections 5 and 6. In Economic Trinitarianism, more than *as persons*, Christ is seen as the Father's mind, and the Spirit is seen as the Father's wisdom.

Questions We Can Address With The Theology Of The Bride

1. What is central to God's nature and character?
2. What is God's ultimate intention?
3. Why is loving God the greatest commandment (instead of glorifying God)?
4. Why did Lucifer rebel? If from envy, of what was he envious?
5. Why did God create; what is the purpose of everything (all creation)?
6. **Why did God make creatures in His own image?**
7. Why, in contrast to his forming of the other creatures, did God give special attention to building a suitable counterpart for Adam?
8. Why did God institute marriage and family for mankind?
9. Why is homosexual practice abominable?
10. What is the true basis for determining right and wrong?
11. Why did God allow evil to enter the universe and planet earth?
12. Why did God allow man to fall into sin?
13. Why are there so many religions in the world, and what makes us think Christianity is the right one?
14. What was the "joy set before Him" (Hebrews 12.2; cf. Isaiah 61.10; 62.5; Zephaniah 3.17)?
15. What is "His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1.18)?
16. Why has God purposed to produce sons of God and siblings of Christ (Romans 8.19,29)?
17. Why is the Song of Solomon in the Bible, and how should we interpret it?
18. Why is the essence of eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ (John 17.3)?
19. Why is true fulfillment found in loving God and loving people?
20. What does it mean to be human?
21. Is the question, *who am I* rational? If so ... who am I?
22. **Why do all human beings crave intimacy?**

Intimacy

To be completely loved while fully known (1Cor 13.12).

Persons And Events In The Historic Wedding Rehearsal

BRIDEGROOM	→	Yahweh. After the engagement in Egypt and wedding at Sinai, infractions by Israel considered adulterous (Hosea)
BRIDE	→	Israel demonstrates in history what the Bride must be and not be (Ezekiel 16).
FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM	→	Moses, in this role, leads the bride to the Bridegroom's current "home," the mountain of God (Exodus 15.22; 19.2).
EYRUSIN & PAYMENT OF MOHAR	→	Observing the Passover was a nuptial commitment on Israel's part; God then gave her the Egyptians' wealth.
NUPTIAL WASHING	→	The "baptism" in the Red Sea (1Corinthians 10.1-2).
READING OF THE KETUBAH	→	The nuptial obligations are set before the people (Exodus 19.3-7; 24.7).
THE WEDDING VOWS	→	The people commit to keep the nuptial obligations (Exodus 19.8; 24.3,7).
THE WEDDING FEAST	→	Representatives of Israel dined with God under the <i>chuppah</i> (wedding canopy) of cloud (Exodus 24.9-10,15).
PREPARING A HOME	→	God directs construction of a new tabernacle in which He can dwell with His bride (Exodus 25.8; 29.45).

Persons And Events In The Ultimate Nuptial Drama

BRIDEGROOM	→	Jesus Christ , God the Son, the Son of God (Mat 9.15; 25.1-13; Rom 7.4; Col 1.16).
BRIDE	→	The Church made up of Jews and Gentiles, growing into a unified community (Rev 21.10 ff.).
FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM	→	John the Baptist (John 3.27-30), rightly imitated by apostles and pastors.
ATTENDANTS OF THE BRIDEGROOM	→	Christian men and women who invest in preparing the Bride for her wedding. Paul, for example (2Corinthians 11.2).
NUPTIAL WASHING	→	With the Word of God (Ephesians 5.25-26), and with the outward ceremony of baptism.
READING OF THE <i>KETUBAH</i>	→	The Bridegroom proclaims the relational obligations in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).
THE ENGAGEMENT SUPPER	→	The <i>eyrusin</i> is fulfilled by a covenant meal <i>based upon</i> the payment of the ultimate <i>mohar</i> (bride price).
PREPARING A HOME	→	The Bridegroom departs to prepare a home (John 14.1-2).
Marriage Supper	→	The Bridegroom returns to receive His Bride who has made herself ready (Revelation 19.7-9).

A Fresh Way To See The Sections Of The Bible

Section Of The Bible	Importance In The Theology Of The Bride
Pentateuch	God creates the environment in which a great romance can unfold, and places within it creatures made in His relational image, capable of love. The rest of Genesis and the Pentateuch record the beginnings of a lengthy “wedding rehearsal”: God <i>builds</i> ¹ the archetype bride, Eve, and then leads some of her descendants, the corporate prototype bride, Israel, on a walk-through of the wedding and marriage elements. However, because of an incursion by the archenemy of the Bridegroom, the archetype bride and her family are taken captive, and subsequently the prototype bride is enslaved by one of the archenemy’s deputies. Because of these setbacks, the Bridegroom must act as Redeemer in order for the wedding plans to proceed (Ex 6.6; 15.13; Deu 7.8).
History	The Bride is destined to rule (Gen 1.26; Rev 22.5), but lost her dominion early on to the Serpent. Therefore, both the Bride and her dominion must be redeemed. As a snapshot of this reality, the book of Ruth brings together the themes of a widow’s redemption and the redemption of her land. With the redemption of the greater land grant begun under the leadership of the Old Testament <i>Jesus</i> ² (Jos 1.1-9; cf. Gen 17.8), and continuing under judges and kings, the history section of the Bible describes the training of the prototype bride in the principles of government and the lessons she learns about the snares of power and prosperity. God raises up a man after His own heart to serve as a model king (1Sa 13.14), who foreshadows the coming Bridegroom with whom the bride will rule (cf. Psa 45). God also raises up a warrior judge, Deborah, and a savior queen (Esther), who illustrate character qualities of the suitable bride for God’s Son.

1 The verb in Gen 2.22 and Mat 16.18.

2 Heb יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, Joshua, later shortened to יֵשׁוּעַ, Jesus (in Grk).

Section Of The Bible	Importance In The Theology Of The Bride
Poetry	<p>The five books of poetry teach relational principles, the understanding of which will be vital in the coming marriage. They also rehearse the glories of the Bridegroom (e.g., Job 38.1-42.6; Song of Songs 5.9-16) and call the Bride to fruitfulness (Job 42.7-17; Song of Songs 4.16). Furthermore, they teach the wisdom that will characterize the coming Bridegroom who will fulfill the offices of prophet, priest, king <i>and sage</i> (Isa 11.1-4; Mat 12.42).</p>
Prophecy	<p>The books of prophecy underscore the faithfulness of the Bridegroom and call the Bride to like faithfulness and holiness (Hos 1-3). They also affirm the eschatological redemption and marriage in which Jerusalem and Israel (the prototype bride) will be happy participants.³</p>
Gospels & Acts	<p>The first five books of the New Testament introduce “the friend of the Bridegroom” and the long-awaited Bridegroom Himself. These books tell of the prenuptial immersion of the corporate Bride, the stipulations of the <i>ketubah</i> (marriage contract), the ceremonial cup of the <i>eyrusin</i> (betrothal), and the payment of the ultimate <i>mohar</i> (bride price). They also record the departure of the Bridegroom to prepare a home. Two surprises emerge from these books: the Bridegroom is <i>a servant</i> (Phil 2.5-7), and He seeks a <i>forgiven</i> Bride (cf. Luke 7.47).</p>
Epistles	<p>The epistles encourage further wedding preparations, i.e., continuing growth in godly character, in preparation for the Bridegroom’s coming.⁴ The epistle’s authors, acting as additional “friends of the Bridegroom,” tell of the graciousness of the Bridegroom, and exhort the Bride to become like Him in servanthood.</p>

³ Isa 49.18; 54; 61.10-11; 62; Jer 33.10-11.

⁴ Cf. Rom 7.1-4; 2Co 11.1-2; 1Th 3.11-13; 5.23; 1Ti 4.7-8; Heb 10.32-37; 1Jo 2.28.

Section Of The Bible	Importance In The Theology Of The Bride
Revelation	The book of Revelation describes the physical redemption of the Bride and the restoration of her dominion, following a new exodus from under the oppressive rule of the dragon and his figureheads. As these enemies and usurpers are vanquished, the marriage supper of the Lamb is announced. At last, the victorious Bridegroom and the prepared Bride are fully revealed in their glory.

In 2010, The International House of Prayer launched a ten-part study entitled, "Studies on the Bride of Christ." The first installment states:

God's ultimate purpose for His creation is to provide a family for Himself and a Bride for His Son as His eternal companion to reign with Him forever (Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 19:7-9). The guiding principle of the Father's activity throughout history has been to raise up a prepared Bride for His worthy Son. He has been training the Bride to rule the earth with Jesus (Rev. 3:21; 5:10).

The Redemption Connection

Dispossessed And Widowed Humanity

Leviticus 25 (NIV)

- 23 “The land must not be sold permanently, because **the land is mine** and you are but aliens and my tenants.
24 Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.
25 “If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. 26 If, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, 27 he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property.
28 But if he does not acquire the means to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and he can then go back to his property.

Eschatological parallels to the kinsman-redeemer scenario from Lev 25.23-28 and Jer 32.1-15:

- | | |
|---|---|
| A. A man receives a property as a perpetual inheritance. | • Adam and Eve receive dominion of the earth, Genesis 1.26. |
| B. The man sells his inheritance and does not have the means to redeem it. | • Adam & Eve “sell out” their domain to Satan, Genesis 3.6. |
| C. A near relative buys back (redeems) the property to keep it in the family. | • Christ pays man’s debt at the cross, 1 Corinthians 1.30. |
| D. Two copies of a deed made; one is witnessed and sealed. | • Redemption sealed by the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1.13,14. |
| E. When redemption contested the sealed deed is brought forth. | • The sealed scroll held forth in heaven, Revelation 5.1. |
| F. The redeemer takes possession of the property. | • Christ takes possession of the earth, Revelation 11.15. |
| G. If original owner leaves a widow without heir, she is married to the redeemer. | • Humanity, widowed from law, married to the Lamb, Rom. 7.4; Rev. 19.7-9. |
| H. The original family line once again exercises authority over the property. | • Holy humanity again rules the earth, Revelation 5.10. |

He is the Bridegroom and the Apostles are the ‘Betrothers,’ and we are the Bride; let us prepare our dowry. — Aphrahat, c. AD 340.

Jewish Festivals And The Theology Of The Bride

Tim Hegg proposes that the five biblical festivals were decreed by God as illustrations of His love for His people, and hence follow the pattern of a wedding.¹ The significance of the feasts is not limited to their nuptial allusions/connotations, but this aspect of the holidays is often overlooked. The Passover (*Pesach*) begins the cycle, followed by the Feast of Pentecost (*Shavuot*), Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah*), Yom Kippur, and Booths (*Sukkot*).

The Passover commemorates the redemption of Israel, and foreshadows the redemption of all the elect, by the God who chose the nation and purchased it for a price (cf. 1Co 6.20; 7.23). This festival parallels the eastern custom of the groom and his father paying a bride price, as the first step in the betrothal process.

The first Pentecost occurred at Mt. Sinai, and commemorates the giving of the law, an event that parallels the presentation of the *ketubbah*, marriage contract, at a Jewish wedding. The biblical prophets, and Jewish rabbis to this day, consider the making of the Sinai covenant as the betrothal or marriage of God to Israel.

Jewish people understand the blowing of the trumpets (*shofars*) at *Rosh Hashanah* as a call to return and repent. In the betrothal/marriage between God and Israel, this is understood as God graciously exercising His right to call His wayward bride back to faithfulness.

Ten days after *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, is a day of cleansing. Perhaps this mirrors the ritual bath of the bride immediately prior to the wedding. Paul alludes to this nuptial washing in Eph 5.25 where he attributes the brides cleansing to the word of the gospel.

The Feast of Booths (*Sukkot*) commemorates the time in the wilderness when God made the Israelites live in tents or booths (Lev 23.42-43), even as He dwelt with them in the tabernacle. This feast also looks forward to the time when God will fully dwell with His people (Rev 21.3). When will this occur? Immediately after the marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19.7-9)!

¹ Hegg, Tim. *Introduction To Torah Living*, (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2010), pp. 134-137.

Typological Passages

Undergirding The Theology Of The Bride

The Forming Of Adam And Building Of Eve — Genesis 2; cf. Matthew 16.18.

Abraham (Exalted Father) Obtains A Bride For His Only Begotten Son — Genesis 24; cf. Hebrews 11.17.

Suffering Joseph Saves His World And Wins A Priestly Bride — Genesis 41.

The Sojourning Shepherd-Prince Marries A Priestly Bride — Exodus 2.16-22.

The Betrothal And Marriage of God and Israel Established By The Sinaitic Covenant — Exodus 12-24.

The Redeemer Responsible For The Fruitfulness Of The Widowed Bride — Deu 25.5-10; cf. Romans 7.2-4.

Rahab The Harlot, Redeemed With Her Family, Becomes A Bride In Israel — Joshua 2; 6.17-25; Matthew 1.5.

Othniel Wins The Bride — Joshua 15.15-19; Judges 1.12-15.

The Redeemer Marries The Humble Widow — Ruth

The Anointed David Marries Abigail (Delight Of The Father), Widowed From Nabal (Futility) — 1Samuel 25.

The Royal Bride Who Intercedes For Her People — Esther

Marriage Of The King — Psalm 45.

Woman Of Peace, King Of Peace And The Pursuit Of Intimacy — Song of Songs.

Parable Of The Wedding Feast — Matthew 22.2-14.

A Woman With A Non-Husband And The Man Who Fulfills — John 4.1-42.

A Tale Of Two Cities *or* Anti-Bride and Bride: The Great Prostitute Of Kings vs. The Bride Of The Lamb — Revelation 17 ff.

Prophetic Foundations

The Bridegroom Like The Sun — Psalm 19.

The Shepherd Bridegroom Brings The Bride To His Home — Psalm 23.5-6; cf. John 14.2-3.

Jerusalem The Bridal Crown — Isaiah 62.1-7.

Messiah In Wedding Garments — Isaiah 61.10-11.

Remembering The Honeymoon In The Wilderness — Jeremiah 2.1-3.

God's Betrothal Of The Proto-Bride — Ezekiel 16.1-14.

God Calls For The Return Of His Wayward Bride — Hosea.

Ten Virgins And The Commission To Bring The Bride Safely Home — Matthew 25.1-13.

A Reminder From The Friend Of The Bridegroom — 2 Corinthians 11.2

The Glorious Promise — Revelation 19.7-9.

All life is courtship

Peter Kreeft, *Three Philosophies Of Life*, p. 94.

Parting Thoughts

“Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?” (Jeremiah 2.32) Yet the #BrideOfChrist rarely thinks of her approaching wedding. — Roderick Graciano, tweet on 17 April 2016

Repeat what the friend of the Bridegroom says instead of drawing attention to yourself and away from the Bridegroom. — Augustine, SERMON 292.8

“This wedding frame to the whole biblical narrative makes the history of redemption into a great romance.” — Warren Gage, *Theological Poetics*

It is the heavenly marriage that warrants and dignifies an earthly marriage. In Paul’s reasoning, therefore, human marriage is not the reality for which Christ and the church provide a sermonic illustration, but the reverse. Human marriage is the earthly type, pointing towards the spiritual reality.... — R. C. Ortland, Jr., “Marriage,” *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2000.

All people will glorify God; not all will love Him.
You can glorify God without loving Him,
but you cannot love Him without glorifying Him.

Want To Continue Studying This Topic?

Here are some resources:

A Few Books

Note: There are many ancient writings on the bride of Christ, as well as some contemporary *technical* works. Here we list only a few contemporary and accessible works. Inclusion of a book in this list does not imply Timothy Ministries' endorsement of the entirety of its contents, unless, of course, it's one of Roderick's books.

Calhoun, Rhonda. *The Bride of Christ: An Allegory Based On The Song Of Solomon*, 3rd Edition, (Grandview, MO: Heart Publishing, 2006).

— *The Bride of Christ* (Study Manual), (Grandview, MO: Heart Publishing, 2005). In this manual, along with her interpretation of the Song of Songs, Calhoun has correctly identified a good many scriptural passages with nuptial connotations that we have too often read with insufficient attention. The final section of her manual describes the parallels between Jewish betrothal customs and our covenant with Christ; this section is helpful but lacks source information for verifying the accuracy of the customs she describes.

Edwards, Gene. *The Divine Romance*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1984, 1992).

Gage, Warren Austin. *The Romance of Redemption: Biblical Types of the Bride of Christ*, (Fort Lauderdale: St. Andrews House, 2014).

Graciano, Roderick and Carlos S. Martinez. *Redemption By Jesus: An In-Depth Look At The Truths That Will Define Our Eternity*, (Lakewood, WA: Timothy Ministries, 2025). We hope to make this freely available on line this year.

Pitre, Brant. *Jesus The Bridegroom: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told*, (New York: Image, 2014). A Roman Catholic perspective, but includes some good insights.

Villeneuve, André. *Divine Marriage from Eden to the End of Days: Communion with God as Nuptial Mystery in the Story of Salvation*, (Wipf and Stock, 2021).

Viola, Frank. *From Eternity To Here: Rediscovering The Ageless Purpose Of God*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009).

E-mail The Instructor

You may e-mail your questions about this and other biblical topics to Rod Graciano at any time. Write to: roderick@tmin.org.

Ideas To Take Home

Applying The Theology Of The Bride

Personal Growth

Teaching & Preaching

Worship

Prayer

Outreach

Counseling