

Theological Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts

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By Dr. Kyle Rapinchuk
Head of School, Sager Classical Academy
kyle.rapinchuk@sageracademy.com

Owner, The Classical Thistle
www.theclassicalthistle.com
kyle@theclassicalthistle.com



Goal: To set forward some ideas about theological thinking and how keeping the higher order “theological thinking” in mind when teaching can help us teach students to be readers and doers of the biblical text, not simply fact-collectors. My proposal is to help students think theologically by reading Scripture (and theological texts) Christianly by means of ten considerations: carefully, contextually, canonically, conversationally, Christologically, confessionally, critically, creatively, communally, and charitably.

1. **Carefully:** *Theological thinking is developed first by being careful readers of the text.*
2. **Contextually:** *Theological thinking is developed next by being aware of the context of each text.*
 - a. **Literary (micro):**
 - b. **Literary (macro):** In addition to the micro context, we should be aware of the larger literary context. This happens on two levels:
 - i. **Book**
 - ii. **Scripture as a whole**
 - c. **Historical:**
3. **Canonically:** *Theological thinking is developed next by reading under the authority of the text.*
 - a. **Authority**
 - b. **Final Form**

4. **Con conversationally:** *Theological thinking is developed next by being in conversation with the text.*
5. **Christologically:** *Theological thinking is developed next by being attuned to what the text says about Christ.*
6. **Confessionally:** *Theological thinking is rooted in and developed by an ever-increasing reliance upon the interpretive work done in and through the Holy Spirit.*
 - a. **Dual Authorship implies Dual Interpretation**
 - b. **Text vs. Event**
7. **Critically:** *Theological thinking is developed by an ability to engage in critical analysis without abandoning interpretive fidelity on other points.*
8. **Creatively:** *Theological thinking is developed next by developing a Christian imagination that sees all things through the lens of Christ and helps us bridge the gap between historical context and present practice.*
9. **Communally:** *Theological thinking is developed next by reading within community.*
10. **Charitably:** *Theological thinking is developed finally by being a charitable and hospitable reader, assuming the best about the text and considering first that any apparent contradictions are a result of our misguided interpretation.*

Some Conclusions

1. **Model it:** Teach, preach, and discuss the Scriptures in ways that evidence and model good theological thinking.
2. **Practice it & Coach it:** Ask students to engage in interpretive exercises and coach them on areas for improvement and growth.