

Introduction to Christian Thought - Choose Your Own Textbook

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A good theological textbook will serve you throughout your studies at Trinity and beyond. As theologians approach their work differently according to their doctrinal and ecclesial context, there is no single perfect text for a broad theological grounding. As such, I prefer to give students the option where possible to select their own reference text for systematic theology, which will be supplemented with provided readings in class (these are especially important in giving a voice to often marginalised perspectives). You may choose any of the following (or alternatively may contact me to discuss another option if you have one in mind).

[Note that the first three sources are comprehensive enough that you will find them useful in more advanced theological study, whereas the final two are more basic and less likely to assist you beyond this introductory unit.]

Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016) (5th edition also acceptable)

This text is the broadest and most ecumenical of the recommended resources. McGrath provides a thorough treatment of systematic theology, first through historical development and then again as theological themes. The companion *Christian Theology Reader* text and dedicated website with additional resources makes this text especially suitable for independent study. Apart from the clarity of writing and breadth of scope, a strength of this work is its use of extended excerpts from primary sources.

Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Eerdmans, 1994).

Grenz' systematic theology is oriented around the notion of the church as an eschatological community. It is readable and balanced, offering a thoughtful approach to theology that draws on scripture, tradition and culture in a sophisticated way. It is very much a work *for* the church, connecting theology to the life of faith. Sadly, the untimely death of the author means this text will not be updated, though it holds up generally well for its age.

Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Eerdmans, 2004).

This text is clear, concise, and well-organised. I recommend it especially to those who are new to studying theology, though Migliore does treat some fairly sophisticated concepts as well in this volume. In the list provided, this text (along with McGrath) does the best job of including more marginalised theological perspectives, although the shorter length means that individual themes are not treated in as much detail.

Beth Felker Jones, *Practising Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically* (Baker Academic, 2014).

This is a very basic introduction from a Reformed evangelical perspective. Students with no prior higher education, or coming from a culturally and linguistically diverse background may benefit especially from using this text.