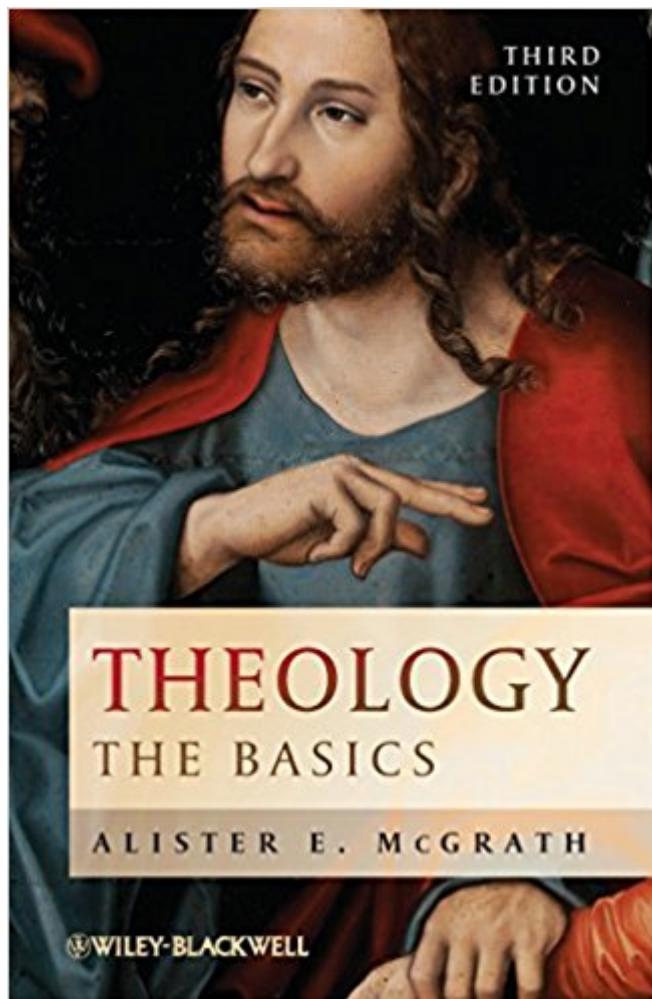


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# Theology: The Basics



## Synopsis

Completely updated and expanded, this third edition from one of the world's leading theologians introduces students to key theological issues, contextualizing them within the bible and the works of seminal theologians. Introduces readers to key theological issues such as God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, faith, creation, salvation, atonement, religious history, and heaven Thoroughly updated, with the addition of a new chapter on the Holy Spirit Now includes images and more pedagogical features to engage the reader Each chapter offers an overview of an important theme, presents relevant biblical passages, and summarizes the contribution of a major theologian Expands the range of theological positions discussed within the book, especially those of contemporary and feminist theologians Maintains the user-friendly structure of the previous edition, with the Apostle's Creed as a framework Concludes with suggestions on how readers can take their study further Can be used alongside the new edition of *Theology: The Basic Readings* for a complete overview of the field

## Book Information

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Description An authoritative exploration of the history of Christian theology from the Patristic period to present-day developments. An ideal introduction to the history, sources & methods, and key figures of Christian thought. An engaging introduction to core topics of Christianity discussing them in relation to the Bible and key theologians. This classic text introduces the central ideas and developments of the European Reformation to readers of history and theology.    Ä    Ä  
Why Study Theology? Insights from author Alister E. McGrath    Author Alister E. McGrath There are a number of reasons why it's both important and enriching to study theology and here I have listed what I think are three of the most important. Firstly, studying theology is about making sense of some of the great debates and themes of history. It is impossible to study the religious art of the Middle Ages, the great literature of the Renaissance, the history of the sixteenth century, or the novels of J. R. R. Tolkien without knowing something about theology. To study theology is to pass through a gateway which offers an enhanced vision of human thought and history. It's like a lens that helps bring things into focus. Secondly, theology enables us to see things through the eyes of others, so that we can gain fresh perspectives on some of the great questions of faith. One of the leading themes of C. S. Lewis's late work *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961) is that reading literature enables us to see with the eyes of others, deepening and sometimes challenging our own ideas. To read Augustine, Athanasius, Thomas Aquinas or Karl Barth is to have our eyes opened to other ways of seeing things. We may not agree with them, but their insights help us forge and enrich our own approaches. Thirdly, studying theology brings new depth and vitality to faith. When the novelist Evelyn Waugh discovered Christianity in 1930, he spoke of beginning the "delicious process of exploring it endlessly." Theology is about mapping the landscape of faith, discovering its landmarks, appreciating its inner logic, and experiencing its beauty and richness.    The Triumph of Saint Thomas Aquinas, painting by Benozzo de Gozzoli, ca. 1420-97, tempera. Musee de Louvre, Paris. The Art Archive / Musee de Louvre, Paris/Gianni Dagli Otti    William Blake's *Ancient of Days*, 1794, relief etching with watercolor, 23.3 x 16.8 cm. British Museum, London. AKG Images/Erich Lessing    C.S. Lewis. Getty Images

"This is an excellent and extremely helpful introduction to Christian theology. Believers of all familiarity with theology will find McGrath's explanations helpful and clarifying. This would be an

excellent text for a sunday school or church bible study. I would even include this as a text for an introductory course in theology." (Jacob Sweeney's Blog, 16 December 2011) "McGrath's approach is creedal and biblical. The chapters are lucid, engaging, and thought-provoking in so far as they serve as gateways into a complex (if not at times convoluted) field of study. (Religious Studies Review) "The publisher's blurb reports that the first edition was 'an international best seller' It deserves this success. Students need such a clearly presented, sure-footed account of the theological basics." (Theological Book Review)

The book is exactly what the title implies, the basics. A very good summary of Christian theology without too much depth. I am sure, from his comments that his other book goes into more detail with explanations.

Possibly the greatest treasure of the Catholic Church is its two millennia of reflection and study of Revelation and the Mystery of God, namely theology, the "sacred science." Theology is little known to lay Catholics in typical parish life, as it may be confused with elementary instruction or religious education. Catechetics and most faith formation programs pose definitive and conversation-ending answers to those who have yet to ask the piercing questions. Theology, by contrast, begins with philosophy and seeks the mind and wisdom of God, in disciplined and systematic ways, in order to address the hungers of the human heart. Theology and its laborers know that this science can never balance its books, for its object (and passion, really) is the mind and soul of God. From Apostolic times the Church has thrived on the organized thinking and writings of its gifted theologians, beginning with Paul and the Evangelists, and continuing down to our time in the works of Augustine, Aquinas and Rahner. Inevitably the question arises as to the provenance of the sacred science. Is it a project of seminarians and clerics, or is the privilege of exploring the sacred Tradition of the very essence of Baptismal right and responsibility? I would argue the latter, in that we cannot love a God we do not know nor can we celebrate that love without the passion or thrill that mystery arouses. A clarity achieved with no effort is a loveless marriage. Alister McGrath's work is both an invitation and a roadmap. He introduces the layman and the cleric to the questions posed by a divinely created universe and the time tested formulas of belief around which Catholic thought has organized itself since the Nicene Creed was promulgated in the fourth century. His 32-page preface is an excellent and informative overview of the project of theology, highlighting the various methods of approaching this discipline while introducing its past and present masters. He discusses briefly but clearly the role of philosophy in both the development and intelligibility of theology. Citing the

acclamations of the Nicene Creed, McGrath unpacks the universal mysteries they address. "I believe in one God" becomes an essay on faith, the recognition of things unseen, most notably a Supreme Being. He examines St. Thomas Aquinas's "proofs" of the existence of God, derived at least in part from the philosopher Aristotle's recognition of a first cause and later called into question in the generation of Charles Darwin. Each postulate of the Faith, however, opens new doors of questioning. One may believe in God, but as chapter two reflects, just whose God are we to believe? Further, what are the possibilities of apprehending this God? The Roman Emperor Hadrian's request of a Jewish rabbi to behold his God (p. 23) is a pithy summary of a complex question and would inspire theologians to our own day to explore the possibilities and capacities of humans to engage the divine. Karl Rahner's twentieth century speculation on the "supernatural existential" is a child of Hadrian's question. Trinitarian formulation (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) has always implied multiple interventions of the Divine. McGrath examines these in detail, beginning with creation in Chapter 3. The author explores a variety of metaphors including the Genesis accounts, Plato's concept of the divine as extrinsic fashioner, and the early Christian heresy of Gnosticism. In this chapter the work of an early Christian theologian comes into focus, namely the anti-Gnostic Justin Martyr (c. 150), and the reader gets a good look into the workshop of Revelation, Faith and lived experience, in this case frontal assault, where all theologians live, move, and have their being, so to speak. As one might expect, the subject of Jesus is comprehensively addressed. McGrath approaches Christology from several flanks--the titles applied to Jesus, who applied them, and what they meant; the function of Jesus, specifically soteriology or the meaning of salvation; and finally, the Church's efforts to linguistically and logically talk of the meaning of Jesus Christ, in the "Christological Councils" of 325-451 AD. Discussion of the Holy Spirit is complex. Understanding and misunderstanding of the role of the Spirit has essentially divided Christianity East and West, and even in relatively mundane matters as the age of Christian Confirmation of minors, clarity regarding the work of the Spirit remains a major focal point of theological investigation. McGrath does not shy away from these historical difficulties, which through time have led to debate and controversy over the nature of a threefold God or Trinity. It is probably evident at this point that McGrath has, in his 200+ pages, set the table of the full banquet of theology. The study of the Trinity has led to investigation of those who believe in it, the Church, [ecclesiology] and its canon or collection of revealed works [Jewish and Christian scripture study], its communal life and behaviors [morality], its worship [liturgy], traditions [history], etc. While it is true that theologians--dating back to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John--have been indispensable in maintaining the backbone of faith and continuity in the global Church of all times, it is equally true that the object of theological study radically

impresses itself upon the character and identity of those who embrace its labors. McGrath and other theologians use the phrase "obedience to the text" as a way of describing the irrepressible wave of change, perhaps best called grace, experienced by those in proximity to the wisdom of God. The study of theology demands guidance, organization, humility, and grit. That said, the study of theology by all believers is the democratization of grace, the freedom of all people of good will to be dazzled by divine wisdom and passionately in love with Lady Wisdom, who delighted the Lord "from the beginning."

Good read and really easy to understand!

Having started formation for Holy Orders, I chose this book to begin to have a better knowledge of theological teachings. I was not disappointed and seek to read more from this author. His style and approach, in this book, allow the novice to slowly grasp concepts that will be expanded on in further works.

I don't think this text was as good as it could have been. It really doesn't actually give a definitive view of theology, but rather a topical overview of historical theology that uses the Apostle's creed as an outline.

This introductory theology book is well balanced and readable. My students give a consistently positive response to the book. It contains key beginner level core Christian teaching.

Very lucid and easy to read for a theology rookie like me. Reading it helped me understand more complex texts better.

Good overview coverage of the theological thinking behind some of some of the key concepts in Christianity

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