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A table of contents for *Reformation & Revival* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ref-rev-01.php



Reformation
& REVIVAL
JOURNAL

THEOLOGY:
WHY BOTHER?

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Theology is necessary because truth and experience are related. While some would deny, or at least question this connection, in the long run the truth will affect our experience. A person who falls from the tenth story of a building may shout while passing each window on the way down, "I'm still doing fine," and may mean it, but eventually the facts of the matters will catch up with the person's experience. We may continue to live on happily for hours and even days after a close loved one has, unknown to us, passed away, but again the truth will come with crushing effect on our experience. Since the meaning and truth of the Christian faith will eventually have ultimate bearing on our experience, we must come to grips with them.

MILLARD J. ERICKSON
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, SECOND EDITION (1998)

I say that my gospel is the true one. Marcion says that his is. I assert that Marcion's gospel is adulterated. Marcion says that mine is. Now what can settle this for us—unless it is the principle of time. This principle maintains that the authority lies with that doctrine that is found to be more ancient. It assumes as a fundamental truth that corruption belongs to the side that is convicted of comparative lateness in its origin. For, inasmuch as error is falsification of truth, it must necessarily be that truth precedes error.

TERTULLIAN (A.D. 207)

A SELECT ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

John H. Armstrong

- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, five volumes. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, translators. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975. The most important series of theological volumes written in the twentieth century. Preachers ought to read these volumes even though some conservative evangelicals differ with Barth's conclusions on Scripture, church and eschatology.
- Bloesch, Donald G. *A Theology of Word & Spirit*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1992. The first volume in a projected seven-volume series called "Christian Foundations," this book is a major assessment of the task of Christian theology. Here is serious reflection that will guide thoughtful readers toward a confessional, biblical and mature theology for the twenty-first century.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, two volumes. John T. McNeill, editor. Ford Lewis Battles, translator. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960. Surely a "must read" for any serious work in biblical evangelical theology. Again and again the reader is stunned by the vital link forged between devotion and theology in these volumes.
- Elwell, Walter A., editor. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001. The very best reference tool of its kind. All church leaders should own and use this book. Very strong in the area of entries on particular theologians, especially on those who lived in the last century.
- Ferguson, Sinclair B., David F. Wright, and James I. Packer, editors. *New Dictionary of Theology*. Downers Grove, Illi-

nois: InterVarsity Press, 1988. This is, quite simply, the best concise and authoritative work on the subject of theology. It is international in scope and contemporary in outlook, without surrendering serious evangelical thought at any point.

Gonzales, Justo L. *A History of Christian Thought*, three volumes. Nashville: Abingdon, 1970, 1971, and 1975. The most readable of all such works in print. Gonzales knows the sources, writes well, and never leaves the reader wondering what the issues were really about.

Hannah, John D. *Our Legacy: The History of Christian Doctrine*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 2001. Perhaps the finest non-professional survey of the struggles and debates that have led the church to confess faith as it has over the course of twenty centuries. This book is ideally suited for pastors, lay leaders and class study in churches. Highly recommended.

Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Doctrines*. 1960 reprint. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978. The classic on the history and development of doctrine in the early church. Profitable for all serious readers.

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Oxford and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1994. McGrath has the unique ability of sorting through mountains of material and getting to the important issues clearly.

Olson, Roger E. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999. Perhaps the best overview of the theological development by a modern Arminian theologian.

Packer, James I. *Collected Shorter Writings of J. I. Packer*, four volumes. Carlisle, Cumbria: England: Paternoster Press, 1998, 1999. For those who have wished for a complete systematic theology from the esteemed Packer this may have to be the closest we will get to such a work. The chapters in these four volumes appeared in journals, mag-

azines and periodicals over forty years. There is gold to be found throughout.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, five volumes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. Pelikan is without peer in this field, and this is clearly the most important such work in print. Though aimed at scholars serious students should eventually get to these volumes if they want to gain an overview of the big picture.

Schaff, Philip. *The Creeds of Christendom with a History of Critical Notes*, three volumes. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977. The most complete edition of the historic creeds in print. Every pastor and serious reader ought to have and use these volumes.