

Introduction

Many Christians would prefer to skip the study of theology and get on with sharing their personal beliefs about God. Some of them think that the study of theology is unnecessary for the proclamation of the Christian message. Others believe that theology leads to doubts, which can destroy a person's faith or belief. Studying theology, however, has several benefits. It has an effect on every aspect of a Christian's life. For example, theology can help Christians to deepen their knowledge of Christian doctrines, which are necessary for personal edification (e.g., dealing with doubts) and the proclamation of the Christian message.

The vibrant expansion of Christianity in places outside of Europe and North America, namely in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, raises a question about the "theological face" of Christianity. Should Christianity's theological face remain largely European and North American in the twenty-first century? Like all important questions, the question about the "theological face" of Christianity cannot be ignored. For too long, African, Asian, and Latin American theologians have been left out of mainstream theological discussions. Few standard textbooks on Christian theology acknowledge the unique contributions theologians from these continents have made to global Christianity.

Introducing Christian Theologies: Voices from Global Christian Communities is a two-volume textbook that alters the predominantly European and North American "theological face" of Christianity by interacting with the voices of Christian communities from around the globe. *Introducing Christian Theologies* explores the works of key theologians from these communities, highlighting their unique contributions to global Christianity. This first volume covers the following topics: preliminary issues in Christian theology, God's revelation, Christian Scripture, Trinity, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, and divine providence. The second volume will cover the topics of

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theological anthropology, Christian hope, salvation, church, the Christian life and social problems, and theology of religions.

Intended Audience

Introducing Christian Theologies is primarily designed for undergraduates taking an introductory course in Christian theology. However, the depth of the content also makes it a useful text for seminary students and graduate theology students.

Features of the Book

Accessibility: I taught Christian theology at the undergraduate level in Nigeria and in the United Kingdom. I currently teach theology at the same level in the United States. In my experience, very few introductory textbooks on Christian theology are written in a manner that is accessible to undergraduate students who have no previous knowledge of how to interpret and integrate Christian doctrines. This is a serious problem that *Introducing Christian Theologies* addresses.

Contextualization: This is one of the unique features of this book. Every theology is contextual and ought to be so. Although many theologians, especially in the West, have ignored the contextual nature of theology in their theological discussions, theologians should *intentionally* construct their theologies to befit the contexts of the intended recipients. Theologies must reflect a rigorous and constructive engagement with the social location, religious aspiration, culture, experience, and sociopolitical condition of the communities for which they are intended. The contexts of the theologians whose works are explored here will be highlighted. This will help students to appreciate the contributions of these theologians and also to rethink how to appropriate such theologies in their own contexts.

Diversity of Viewpoints: The textbook presents and discusses several positions on the major Christian doctrines. These positions are described in a manner that highlights their differences, similarities, and unique contributions.

Global and Multidenominational: Unlike the majority of the existing introductory textbooks on Christian theology, *Introducing Christian Theologies* covers a vast range of theological positions written by theologians from Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America, and Europe. The theologians

whose works are discussed in this book are Protestant, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Coptic, or Pentecostal.

Key Terms: The textbook has definitions of theological terms at the end of each chapter.

Charts and Tables: Charts and tables are used to buttress key points or to compare similarities and differences of theological positions.

Primary Sources: Excerpts from primary sources that are keyed to the discussion of the major topics are included at the end of each chapter with the exception of chapter 1.

Exercises: A few assignable exercises have been included in some chapters to help students evaluate their knowledge of the topics discussed.

Review Questions: Several questions have been included at the end of each chapter to help students review the major themes and position discussed.

Texts for Further Reading: A list of important texts on the topics covered is provided at the end of each chapter.