

Critical review of "theology: the basics"



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As Christians we often believe certain things simply because it's what our parents and the people around us believe. We often go about our Christian walk without ever giving thought or reason to why we believe what we do. The world of Christian Theology is a place where Christians can find answer to the ' what and why' of Christianity.

If we are able to begin comprehending Christian Theology and the rudimental knowledge of it, then we can take it with us into more in depth books and discussions about theology, know the importance of it and how vital it is for Christians to actually know what and why they believe specific things

The goal of the book *Theology: The Basics* is to introduce basic foundational terms of Christian Theology to those who have never studied theology before. It explains how we get doctrine and theology from the Apostle's Creed and the technicalities found in it. The book attempts to have an unbiased approach at the ideas and theology brought up in the contents.

The book can be easily summarized by looking at the flow of the chapters in the table of contents. Starting off with the basics, " What is faith?" (pg. 1) then moving into discussion on God, Creation, Jesus, Salvation, Spirit, Trinity, Church, Sacraments and finishing off with Heaven.

This book thoughtfully moves and flows through some of the most thought about of topics. With each chapter the reader can dive into the meaning of these terms and if there are big intimidating words in front of their eyes they are able to refer to the glossary conveniently added in the back of the book.

The tactics that McGrath uses in his book are very practical. McGrath takes a specific topic and meticulously teaches on it using both a historical and educational stand point. McGrath uses the history of the time period that the Apostle's Creed was written in and gives historical background to add clarity on the topics he is teaching on.

In doing this McGrath lets our minds have enough backstory to more easily understand the information given. After giving historical background McGrath breaks down the topic in a very clear format. When talking about Jesus (pg. 58-76) He talks about why Jesus is important " Christology", but then he educates us by breaking down the considerably large topic of Jesus into more manageable categories such as the names of Jesus; Messiah, Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, God.

After going through the names of Jesus he then educates us on other important theological discussions of Jesus like: Functional statements about Jesus, Early Christological Models, The Council of Chalcedon, The incarnation and icons, and Christ as mediator. Then after discussing the ' meat' of the topic he then gives us an opportunity to " Engage with a text" at the end of every topic. These texts give different examples and opinions for each topic and then McGrath gives the reader a short series of questions for individual or small group discussion about the text/topic he had given.

Though McGrath did do a very good job at giving us insight on the historical background of the topics and also educated us in a very easy, elementary level on the theology, he lacked personal touch. In this I'm talking about some personal stories or experiences from his life that has helped him engage these theological terms and ideas.

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It was very "theological" in its approach, however the simple addition of some personal experiences might help him engage a broader and more diverse target audience. Even with that being so, the book was very well written and I enjoyed learning about the different topics about Christian Theology. This book did help me develop my own ideas of some of the terms, as it remained unbiased throughout majority of the book.

One area where I think McGrath could have connected more with the reader is in the chapter discussing the Spirit. When he is discussing the term "Charism" (pg. 100) as he is discussing how it means the filling of an individual with the spirit of God.

I believe that could have been a prime situation for him to give a personal testimony in attempt to connect with the reader and give additional examples. I do though understand that if McGrath were to start giving personal stories he would have to add them throughout the entirety of the text as well as change the voice of his writing all together.

So even though McGrath may not be able to connect with every type of learning (as many authors cannot) he did create a great resource to be used by those of us who are just simply 'newbies' at theology. The books purpose as stated was to create a text in which people who did not have any knowledge of theology could come and learn about it in an easy, clear manner.

In *Theology: The Basics*, McGrath did an excellent job at teaching us these somewhat daunting terms and topics. He admirably took a broad tip paint

brush and went over all of the basic terms that are lined out in the Apostle's Creed.

In doing so he whetted our appetite in the world of Christian Theology and he was able to give us great rudimental knowledge that we can take with us into more in depth books and discussions about theology, the importance of it and how vital it is for Christians to actually know what and why they believe specific things. Overall the book did a good job at creating a medium to pass on knowledge as well as staying unbiased to keep us unoffended if his view didn't entirely line up with the readers.