

Bestselling author of *The Dawkins Delusion?*

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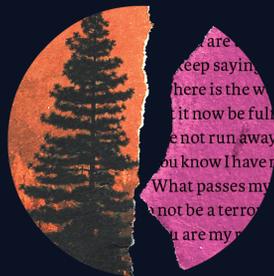
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ALISTER McGRATH

WHAT'S
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POINT

OF THEOLOGY



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Wisdom,
Wellbeing
and Wonder

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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Taking things further

This book is not a theology textbook, but it may stimulate you to want to know more about this discipline and to follow through on some of the writers that I engage with in the text. Happily, you can find an enormous amount of helpful material on theological issues and individual theologians online. However, I will mention some printed resources that may also be useful.

If you've found this book interesting, you might like two others I wrote, which are used to teach Christian theology throughout the world in colleges, seminaries and universities. Both are based on lectures that I gave at Oxford University in the 1980s and 1990s, and have been updated and expanded over the past 30 years:

Alistair E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* 6th edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016).

Alistair E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basics* 4th edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016).

The first is long and comprehensive; the second is shorter and easier to read. However, both are accessible.

It really helps to engage with original texts so that you can read other theologians with a sense of the approach they take and the ideas they develop. I've written two such collections of texts (or 'readings'). Each introduces the text in question and guides you through it, telling you what to look for:

Alister E. McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader* 5th edn
(Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017).

Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basic Readings* 3rd edn (Oxford:
Wiley-Blackwell, 2018).

Again, both these textbooks are designed to be accessible. The first is very comprehensive; the second is shorter and easier to read.

If you want to know more about my own journey as a theologian and some of the ideas that I find especially interesting, you might like to take a look at these:

Alister E. McGrath, *My Theology: Return from a Distant Country*
(London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2021).

Alister E. McGrath, *Through a Glass Darkly: Journeys through
Science, Faith and Doubt* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2020).

I also maintain a website on which I post videos of my theological lectures and reflections: <alistermcgrath.net>. All content is free and may be copied, shared or downloaded.

Although you may find my own introductions to theology helpful, there are many other wonderful guides to the field. I recommend the following, all of which are widely used in theological education at a variety of levels:

Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral
Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University
Press, 1997).

David Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* 2nd edn (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2013).

- David Ford and Rachel Muers eds, *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918* 3rd edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005).
- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994).
- Mark A. McIntosh, *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).
- Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).
- Roger E. Olson, *The Journey of Modern Theology: From Reconstruction to Deconstruction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).
- Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology that Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2019).

Questions for reflection

Many people find it helpful to use study questions to make sure that they've got the most out of their reading. The questions below will help you both to reflect on the approach set out in this book and develop your own.

1 Discovering theology: seeing things in a new way

- 1 How can we see the same thing in new ways? What difference does it make?
- 2 What is the distinction between seeing the world around us as 'nature' and as 'creation'?
- 3 How helpful do you find C. S. Lewis's idea of a 'supposal'?

2 Theology as a 'big picture'

- 1 What difference does thinking about Christianity as a 'big picture' make?
- 2 How might you summarize Dorothy L. Sayers's argument about the identity of Christ in your own words? Why is this argument important?
- 3 How helpful do you find the idea of exploring a landscape of faith?

3 Theology: five criticisms

- 1 How might you summarize the five objections to theology that I note in this chapter in your own words? Which seem closest to your own concerns?
- 2 What might someone from outside the Christian faith find valuable in theology?

- 3 Why do you think so many Christians are hesitant about studying theology? What reassurances could be offered to them?

4 Wisdom: discovering the depths of faith

- 1 Set out in your own words Karl Popper's idea of 'the three worlds'. Does this help us to think about how we can use theology?
- 2 What can we learn by thinking about some of the New Testament's ways of speaking about salvation?
- 3 How does theology help us to cope with uncertainty and doubt?

5 Wellbeing: discerning value and meaning

- 1 Why does meaning matter to people?
- 2 In what ways does theology help us to think about questions of meaning in life? You might like to focus on the doctrine of the Incarnation.
- 3 Why is the idea of 'the heart's desire' so important to many people? And how does theology help to identify the goal of that desire and how it might be achieved?

6 Wonder: expanding our vision of life

- 1 Most people think that a 'mystery' is some kind of puzzle. In what way does the theological use of the term 'mystery' differ from this?
- 2 What is the link between Christian worship and wonder?
- 3 How does the doctrine of the Trinity try to grasp the mystery of God?

7 Conclusion: making theology matter

- 1 Why is it important to distinguish between learning about and learning from a theologian?

- 2 How does John Mackay's distinction between the 'balcony' and the 'road' help us to think about how we can learn from past theologians?
- 3 How can we practise the art of seeing the world in a Christian way?