

The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600–1800. Eds. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber. Oxford: Oxford University, 2016. Pp. xv + 669. \$150.

What happened in Christian theology in Western Europe in 1600–1800, more precisely between the end of the French Wars of Religion (1598) and the Congress of Vienna (1815)? The editors acknowledge the problematic nature of periodizing history by century—there is nothing inherently significant in the years that end with two zeros—or by epochal events—there are no historical occurrences with radical and large-scale discontinuities that can serve as a demarcation line between one period and the next. Nevertheless, there are in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the editors argue, socio-political and ecclesiastical developments and theological movements that were distinctive and significant enough to differentiate them from what had gone on in the sixteenth century—namely, the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Reform at the Council of Trent—and what would be going on in the nineteenth century and beyond. As far as theology is concerned, this period has been called “post-Reformation” and “post-Tridentine Catholicism,” with reference to Protestantism and Catholicism, respectively. The editors prefer the “Early Modern” moniker because it “offers a broader and more generalized meaning, as well as providing a salutary chronological vagueness and a less value-charged identification of the era or period” (4).

Nomenclature aside, how should this period’s theology—better, *theologies*—be approached, a methodology that would ensure the thematic unity of the volume? Four considerations are made to govern the “patterns of analysis” operating in this book: (i) discerning continuities, albeit not repetition, of issues, ideas and debates between these two centuries and the immediate previous and succeeding ones, highlighting in the case of Catholicism the “second scholasticism,” and in the case of Protestantism the “first scholasticism;” (ii) enlarging the traditional “confessional historiography” by describing the means by which theologians of various confessions employ to teach and formulate the “right doctrine” (“orthodoxy”), often by crossing confessional boundaries; (iii) honoring the role of dissident and “radical” movements and the significance of their theologies such as the Arminians or Remonstrants, Anabaptists, Socinian-Unitarians, Pietists, Jansenists, and Moravians; and (iv) analyzing the linkages made by these Western European Christian theologies with other Christian churches such as the Churches of the East and the Orthodox Churches, and other religions, in particular Judaism and Islam, and with secular philosophies.

Accordingly, the volume is divided in three parts, the second and the third with several subdivisions. The first part presents the context and form of early modern theology in three chapters dealing with theological developments in the non-European world; the sources, methods, and forms of early modern theology; and the development and theology of the confessional state. These three chapters, by Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, Ulrich G. Leinsle, and Paul Shore, respectively, are comprehensive and illuminating.

The second part, the largest of the three, discusses the “theological topics” that constitute systematic theology and is divided into four sections corresponding to the

four “denominations”: Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, and Dissident/Radical. The first chapter of the first three sections introduces the general character and developments of these early modern theologies, whereas the fourth section analyzes the theologies of Socinian/Unitarian, Anabaptist, Arminian/Remonstrant, Pietist, Jansenist, and Moravian movements.

The third part, divided in two sections, discusses how early modern Western European theologies deal with Eastern and Orthodox Churches, non-Christian religions, and philosophies. It is the most innovating and interesting part, rarely found in run-of-the-mill texts on early modern Western European theologies. It shows how some early modern Western theologians were occupied with ecumenical and interreligious issues and deeply involved with the connections between theology and contemporary philosophies, in particular Descartes, Leibnitz, Wolff, empiricism, Spinoza, Rousseau, Kant, science, natural law theory, and neology.

As one who has contributed to the Oxford Handbook series, I deeply admire the exceptional skills with which the forty-three authors distill their lifetime research into relatively brief yet comprehensive and highly readable essays. One of the most helpful features of the volume is the huge bibliography that follows each essay. It must, however, be said that much of Western European theologies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in their scholastic form, have lost their appeal to contemporary readers and remain mostly of historical interest. Also, these theologies do not boast giants such Augustine, Aquinas, Schleiermacher, Barth, and Rahner, who have exerted huge and lasting influence on subsequent theological developments. Nevertheless, we owe these scholars an enormous debt of gratitude for recovering a much-neglected theological tradition and retrieving the perennial issues, ideas, and conversations that are the lifeblood of God-talk.

Peter C. Phan
Georgetown University

The Practice of Catholic Theology: A Modest Proposal. By Paul J. Griffiths. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2016. Pp. xii + 142. \$29.95

This book grew out of Paul Griffiths’ plenary address on theological disagreement at the 2014 meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America. He characterizes this slim volume as a “how-to book: If you want to learn how to do Catholic theology ... this book tells you what to do” (xi–xii). G. defines *theology* broadly as reasoned discourse about “god” or the gods and Christian theology as discourse about the LORD. To do Catholic theology, which aims at “cognitive intimacy” with the LORD, one needs only expertise in the “Catholic archive” and skills related to it, not grounding in faith or ecclesial commitment. For G., this archive consists of Scripture, conciliar texts, magisterial texts, Denzinger’s *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, catechisms, creeds, canon law, liturgical books, as well as non-textual content such as “buildings, paintings, statuary, musical scores, body parts used as relics, graveyards, and liturgical