

Preface



This book is a primary-source reader with excerpts covering from the late medieval period up through the early twenty-first century. It is intended to acquaint students (and anyone interested in intellectual history) with the most influential figures and documents of the past seven hundred years in the Western church. The core curriculum at a number of seminaries and universities surveys the two millennia of “Church History” or “Historical Theology” in the course of two semesters. The division of the two halves tends to settle in the late medieval period leading to the European Reformation. This book is thus meant to be used as a textbook in university, and especially seminary, courses on the Reformation to the modern church—or, practically speaking, the “second half” of church history.

Although there are several primary-source compilations related to church history, I am not aware of any collections that specialize in this time period (from about 1300 to the present). Many anthologies seek to cover the whole of church history. In their attempts to include the whole Christian era, however, their coverage remains too broad and spotty in the second half. Other collections are more narrowly focused on specialized topics, such as the Reformation or American Christianity. In either case, whether the book is too broad or too narrow, instructors of “Church History 2” courses have been forced to supplement such books with extensive readings from the Internet or library reserve. In light of this often frustrating and time-consuming pedagogical challenge, this book seeks to make the correct sources available in one place.

The reading selections have been distributed into nine chapters, each of which begins with an introduction to the period and some of its controversies and closes with suggestions for further secondary-source reading. Each reading selection is also preceded by a brief introduction to set the immediate context. Such compartmentalization, which is helpful for structuring chapters and divisions within a book, should not obscure the complexity of history and especially the tremendous eclecticism and plurality that characterize this whole era. It is a form of evil to pigeonhole thinkers and documents into categories, but it is a necessary evil.

This volume is intended to work in conjunction with a fuller set of lectures and a survey text. Although many surveys of the entire history of the church abound and can be used profitably with the current book, the following recent texts cover roughly the same time period and, without intending to endorse everything about them, are worth noting:

González, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 2, *The Reformation to the Present Day*. 2nd ed. New York: HarperOne, 2010.

Janz, Denis R., ed. *A People's History of Christianity—Student Edition*, vol. 2, *From the Reformation to the 21st Century*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.

Woodbridge, John D., and Frank A. James III. *Church History: The Rise and Growth of the Church in Its Cultural, Intellectual, and Political Context*, vol. 2, *From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.

At the same time, even though this book works well accompanying a secondary survey text, it may also stand alone as a primer for readers who are unfamiliar with the primary sources and the most important figures and movements in this period of Christian theology. Taken as a whole, the chapter introductions, selection introductions, biographical notices, and primary sources come together to tell some of the most significant aspects of this history.

Reading Primary Sources

Direct interaction with primary sources is indispensable in the study of history. There is no better way to understand the major figures under discussion in a course than to read large chunks of their own writings. The selections that are included are intended not only to inform but also to spark the reader's interest in the whole document from which a selection is taken, or to find other writings of the author and contemporaries. The study of history is incomplete without such reading.

Here are some general methodological guidelines that apply to reading any primary sources, including those collected in this volume.

1. The reader should primarily be attentive to the thesis or central idea of each reading selection. What main point is the author trying to get across?
2. The reader should discern how the author proceeds to ground the thesis. How does the author support the case? What are the arguments? If it is readily available in the editorial note or introduction, the reader should keep in mind the occasion for writing and the intended audience, which help to illuminate the main idea and method of argumentation.
3. The reader should always be on the lookout for any relevant presuppositions, beliefs, values, and themes that illustrate the author's *Sitz im Leben* and that connect with his or her larger corpus and that of his or her contemporaries.
4. Finally, look for the threads of influence that precede the author and for the seeds of theological trajectories that follow. Whom does the author quote or seem to follow, and who later appeals to the author and seems to follow him?

In other words, as in biblical studies—a discipline with which most seminarians have some familiarity—the best way to understand an author is to put one's exegetical skills to work. At the very least, this kind of reading will require annotating one's textbook and perhaps taking separate notes on the readings.

The goals for reading are threefold. As already stated, the primary proximate goal of the reading is to begin to **understand** the authors on their own terms before making any judgments about their orthodoxy or heterodoxy. As Herbert Butterfield wrote, "Real historical understanding is not achieved by the subordination of the past to the present, but rather by our making the past our present and attempting to see life with the eyes of another century than our own."¹ Similarly, Étienne Gilson said, "As a rule it takes much more cleverness to understand a philosophy than to refute it."² A good historian is like being a tourist; when one visits another country, one should not deride the people and their customs simply because they are different or *prima facie* unintelligible.

1. Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: Norton, 1965), 16.

2. Étienne Gilson, *Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (New York: Random House, 1963), vii.

Instead, one should attempt to understand by means of translation and engagement. Moreover, an understanding of the reading selections should increase the student's grasp of the class lectures, and vice versa. Accurate, descriptive understanding is requisite for and leads to fair **evaluation**, which is the remote goal of the reading.

After understanding and basic evaluation, the question of how the material can **inform one's own faith and practice** in a positive way may be addressed as the ultimate goal—that is, one should ask questions such as these: What can be gained from this historical perspective? What have we learned about ourselves in the process? How does this material inform and influence the theology and controversies of the present day and help the church move forward? Based on our understanding and evaluation, how can we be more faithful disciples, both individually and corporately, leading to the eternal enjoyment of God?

Traditionally, academic courses give more emphasis to the first goal and less attention to the second and third goals. In any case, each of the three goals, though distinct, should never be pursued in isolation from the others.

Selection of Materials

In addition to its unique coverage, it is appropriate here to identify some other characteristics of this book that also shed light on the reason for its reading selections. First, I believe the book should contain just more than enough material for most students to read in a semester of a typical survey course, without being too large and unwieldy. In other words, given that most courses will have at least five hundred pages of secondary source material to work through, the primary source text should equal the length of secondary readings and provide plenty of selections from which instructors may choose. Indeed, since it is impossible to be exhaustive, instructors will surely find occasional readings suited to their purposes to add to those included here.

Second, the reading selections focus on the intellectual and theological development that has taken place in the West from the late medieval to the late modern period. The focus on theology is not intended to deny the importance of social factors; indeed, the brief introductions at the beginning of each section sketch some of the sociopolitical concerns relevant to each period. Because the aim is to shape the book not primarily for modern or social history courses but, rather, for church history courses, the most important *theological* contributions and developments are of chief interest to the intended audience. In sum, I have taken the figures whom I discuss most in my own classroom lectures and have sought salient excerpts from their writings to illustrate what I have to say. Neither do my choices intend to deny the importance of developments in the Eastern churches. The fact remains, however, that theologians in the East since the fourteenth century have not exercised their influence in the West to the degree that most of the writers represented in this book have.

Third, given the constraints of space and the focus on theology, I have attempted to showcase a variety of theological genres and topics. The genres range from polemical to constructive, from academic to devotional, and the readings include excerpts from disputations, letters, sermons, prayers, liturgies, treatises, journal essays, confessions of faith, catechisms, and systematic theologies.

The topics covered are also wide-ranging, though I have highlighted some prominent or controversial topics of each respective period—for example, sacraments and free will in the Reformation

and post-Reformation period, epistemology in the Enlightenment, and ethics in the twentieth century. In the broad scope of the period of history covered in this volume, many themes rise to prominence in the theological debates and concerns. Predestination and grace, biblical interpretation, epistemology, the role of women, and sacraments are perennial topics. But none of these debates can ultimately escape the question of religious authority. The rifts that took shape in the late medieval church were motivated by this conundrum, and the fragmentation only increased from there. What are the sources for theology, and what are the criteria for evaluating doctrine? This question of religious authority is of utmost importance. When it is not in the foreground of a theological debate, it lurks in the background. For this reason, many of the selections and chapter introductions will broach the topic of foundations for religious knowledge. If a unifying thread runs through this epoch and through this volume, it is this one.

Finally, emphasis (that is, the greater number of pages) is devoted to figures and documents whose influence and legacy are decisive, or, in the case of the more obscure selections, the documents exemplify the significance of the period and the topic being illustrated. Although some attention is given to late-twentieth-century theology, there is no need to attempt to cover the present-day spectrum of systematic theology or for a historical survey to get into the business of predicting who will be more important in the church's history. Indeed, the closer one gets to the present day, the greater the number of authors are represented, and with generally shorter selections. The premise (to oversimplify a bit) is that, just as the history of philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato, the second half of church history is in many ways a series of footnotes to Luther. Thus, in order to understand this period, one needs a fairly heavy dose of Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, Trent, and Vatican II. If a reader's interest in Christian theology happens to be limited to a particular modern issue, critical and careful theology still cannot be done without reference to—or at least basic knowledge of—the theology and movements represented by these selections. In the present academic environment, marked as it is by immense diversity and countless trajectories, there is great value in studying the core traditions out of which these movements grow.

The foremost challenge of historiography is selection. It is impossible to tell every story, to examine every important figure, and to read every influential document—especially in one course or one textbook. The omission of worthy candidates is inevitable. Given the criteria for selection I have mentioned and in light of the story I seek to tell, I believe that my selections (and omissions) are justifiable. At the same time, this compilation is nothing if it is not useful to those who employ it in the classroom. Do you have suggestions for how we can make *The Reformation to the Modern Church* even better? Visit www.fortresspress.com/StanglinBook and click on the feedback tab. We look forward to hearing from you!

Notes and Apparatus

Although in a few places I have made tacit corrections to the texts and have seldom modified the translations based on the original language, in most cases I have left the texts as they are found in the editions cited. This means that, in the case of older translations and original compositions in English (especially before the twentieth century), the reader will find punctuation and spelling that are no longer standard. The reader should resist the sometimes unconscious prejudice that the older

style per se somehow reflects less erudition. It does not. For texts composed in a foreign language, I have sought to use what are, to my mind, the best translations.

Except for a very few cases marked with the author's name, the footnotes are all mine. I have not attempted to make a note of every biblical or literary allusion. Rather, I have added a footnote when a word or allusion is not clear, or when an important concept begs to be connected to the larger historical-theological context or to another selection, or, frankly, when I have felt like making a comment or clarifying. In such comments, as in the introductions to each selection and the larger introductions to each chapter, I have tried to keep my preferences to myself and thus allow the reader to evaluate.