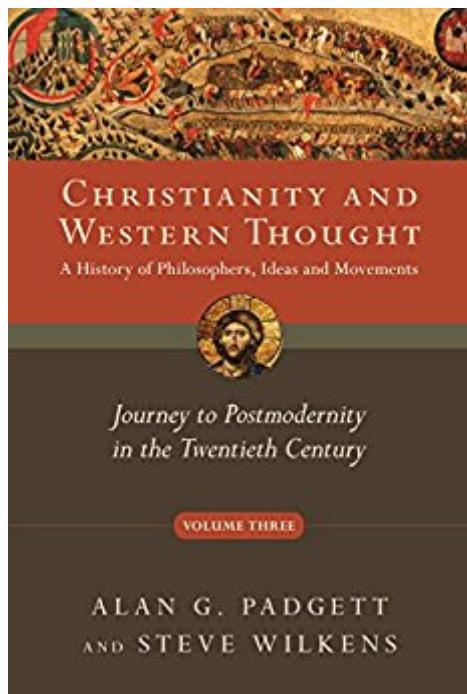


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Christianity And Western Thought: Journey To Postmodernity In The Twentieth Century: 3 (Christianity & Western Thought)



Synopsis

Colin Brown's Christianity & Western Thought, Volume 1: From the Ancient World to the Age of Enlightenment was widely embraced as a text in philosophy and theology courses around the world. His project was continued with the same spirit, energy and design by Steve Wilkens and Alan Padgett in volume 2, which explores the main intellectual streams of the nineteenth century. This, the third and final volume, also by Wilkens and Padgett, examines philosophers, ideas and movements in the twentieth century and how they have influenced Christian thought. Students, pastors and thoughtful Christians will benefit from this volume which, when combined with the previous two, completes an authoritative history of Western thought since the birth of Christianity.

Book Information

File Size: 3307 KB

Print Length: 388 pages

Publisher: IVP Academic (November 18, 2010)

Publication Date: November 18, 2010

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B004OBZQ4G

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #876,196 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #477 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Religion > Christianity > Biblical History & Culture > Historical Theology #781 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies & Reference > Philosophy #1434 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > History > Historical Theology

Customer Reviews

Tertullian, the North African church father, famously asked, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Athens was a cipher for rational philosophy; Jerusalem for revealed theology. Tertullian's answer to this question was apparently, "Nothing." In the two millennia of its existence, however, the mainstream of the Christian church has answered, "Quite a lot." Over the past twenty

years, InterVarsity Press has published a three-volume survey of the interactions between reason and faith, Christianity and Western Thought, with an evangelical readership uppermost in mind. (Like Tertullian, evangelicals have often been suspicious of the philosophical enterprise.) Colin Brown wrote the first volume, *From the Ancient World to the Age of Enlightenment*, which came out in 1990. Alan G. Padgett and Steve Wilkens wrote the second volume, *Faith and Reason in the 19th Century*, ten years later. Now they have brought the series to a conclusion with a third volume, *Journey to Postmodernity in the 20th Century* (2009). Two things differentiate this multi-volume history of philosophy from the comparable series by Frederick C. Copleston and Anthony Kenny: First, the intended readership is evangelical scholars and students. Second, the specific focus is how philosophy has informed or been critiqued by theology. Some readers in the history of philosophy might find this narrowing of readership and focus off-putting, but I think it adds to the value of the series. If you want an encyclopedic history of philosophy, read Copleston. But if you're interested in that history with a specific set of faith-questions in mind, read Christianity and Western Thought. Volume 3 examines the Journey to Postmodernity in the 20th Century.

As I read volume three of Christianity & Western Thought by Alan G. Padgett and Steve Wilkens, I was haunted by a thought similar to the one that F. W. Boreham had when he shared a train ride with a well-known actor. Reflecting on his companion's occupation, he writes, "Now if there was a world of which I knew absolutely nothing at all--a terra incognito--a realm that I had never invaded it was the stage." Here, in this volume, I invaded the world of the philosopher and felt like a stranger in a strange land. Though the authors serve as the most excellent of guides--incredibly conversant and at home in the world of philosophers and their thought--at times it was as if they were giving voice to ideas in a foreign language. It's not their own words or thoughts that can be hard to decipher--they write clearly--; it's the subject matter that can be challenging. Fortunately, in their survey of philosophers in the march to postmodernity, they tell the story of their subjects, including a summary of their major works, which I found quite engaging. Even so, this works best as a reference that can be repeatedly consulted. As the authors continually show, western thought in the 20th century is widely divergent, which makes it hard to stay on track when reading this straight through. This book, the third and final volume in the series, will be much easier for academics and those schooled in philosophical thought. Written from an unashamedly Christian perspective, but with scholarly detachment, this is not a book that will take the average Christian by the hand and make philosophy plain and simple. This is not a criticism of the authors, nor is it intended to discourage non-academics from giving this a try. It's just an acknowledgement of the complexity of the material.

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