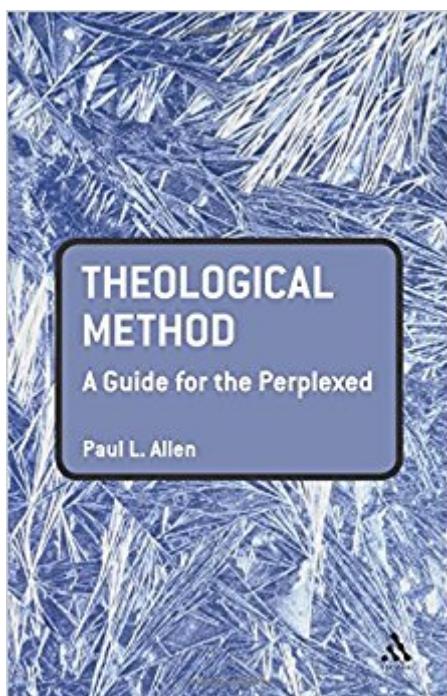


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# Theological Method: A Guide For The Perplexed (Guides For The Perplexed)



## Synopsis

Theological Method: A Guide for the Perplexed is a book that introduces the reader to the practice of doing theology. It provides a historical survey of key figures and concepts that bear on an understanding of difficult methodological issues in Christian theology. Beginning with a description of philosophical themes that affect the way theology is done today, it summarizes the various theological methods deployed by theologians and churches over two millennia of Christian thought. The book uncovers patterns in the theological task of relating biblical texts with beliefs and doctrines, according to historically conditioned theological and cultural priorities. The book's highlights include a discussion of Augustine's epoch-making *De doctrina Christiana*. Also receiving close attention is the relationship between philosophy and theology during the Middle Ages, the meaning of *sola scriptura* for the Protestant Reformers, the methods of key interpreters of doctrine in the nineteenth century and the theological priorities of the 'Radical Orthodoxy' movement.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Allen's book certainly moves towards meeting the lack of a handy primer on the history of theological method, even though, given the complexity of the enterprise, it does not claim to be more than a primer. Lonergan provides the constant background music or counterpoint, but, to the author's credit, he resists the temptation to launch into extensive presentations of his theological method. He does, however, make the tantalizing observation that both Augustine and

Lonergan have a notion of revelation that is not only outer word but also inner word, and that therefore lends support to a theological method that builds upon both text and the converted community of believers. *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education*

Dr. Paul L. Allen is an Associate Professor in the Department of Theological Studies at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

Really useful material. I loved it.

Satisfied.

Walter Kasper rightly said, "If the church worries about identity, it risks a loss of relevance; if on the other hand it struggles for relevance, it may forfeit its identity" (208). Different generation, culture, tradition, environment, personal and corporate experience, and finally hermeneutical development and how to understand the Bible qualify for a theological method. According to Paul Allen, who is an ardent proponent of Bernard Lonergan's Method in Theology, asserts "the history of methodology in Christian theology is a history of one relatively small issue slowly evolving to ensnare other methodological issues" (209). Throughout Christian history theologians, including some leading theologians, have said the Bible was all-sufficient for Christian theology and doctrine. However, this voice has never won major contribution. For Allen there are at least four major concerns [disciplines] that every theologian should consider: method itself, hermeneutics, revelation, and tradition, which all of them used in wide sense. With much consensus Allen begins with Paul as the first theologian asserting "What we have in Paul is therefore a method of one who is working in terms of the practice of scriptural interpretation and foundational categorization" (47). His testimony of the conversion, for Paul, was a catalyst to systematize his understanding of scripture, i.e. the Old Testament, which later he developed his doctrines throughout the writings of the New Testament epistles. However, it was Augustine who actually took the modern challenge of putting out a relevant theology in time that is at least four hundred years apart from the living Christ ministry on earth (chapter 2-3). Augustine, however, successfully conceptualized God, scripture and faith in particular way. However, Augustine did not dismiss other theological means such as philosophy and tradition. Even when we get to the Reformation and Martin Luther, who is known to be hostile toward philosophy and coined the term "sola Scriptura" it is imperative to read him through his own context, because he would still be considered highly philosophical in his theological method in relative to the

modern day standard (chapter 5). Thus the "methodological variety in Christian theology becomes more entrenched and self-aware by the nineteenth century....Ironically, however, while methodological differences were reinforced during the nineteenth century, the seeds for an ecumenical movement were also sown" (143f). "The basic difference over the meaning and role of history and doctrine in theology has tremendous spill-over effect in the twentieth century, which is the century of division and pluralism in theological method" (166).

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