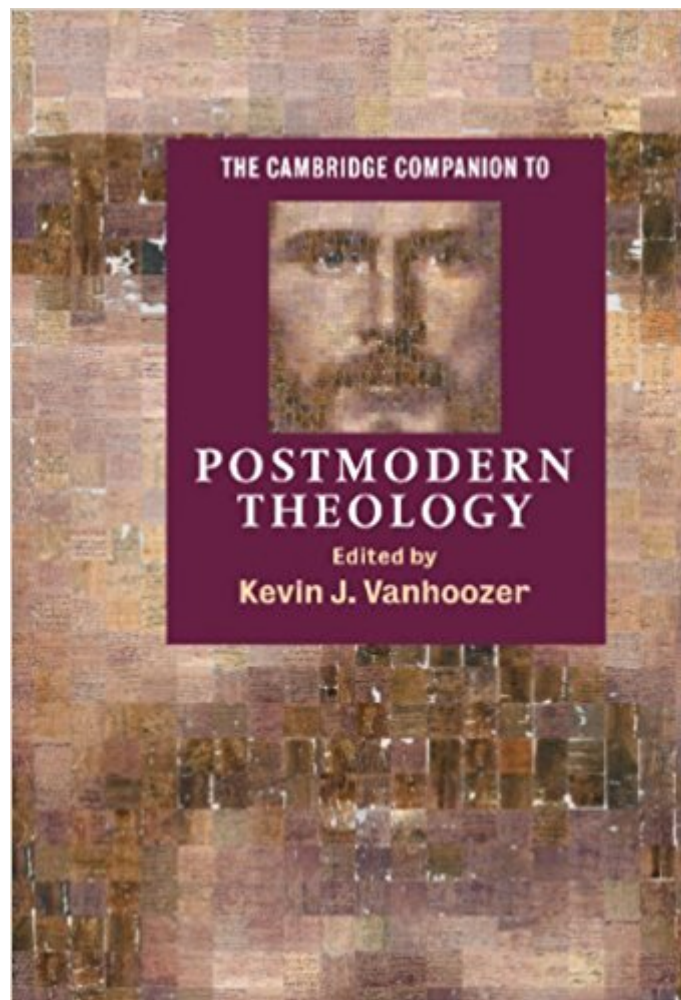




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# The Cambridge Companion To Postmodern Theology (Cambridge Companions To Religion)



## Synopsis

Postmodernity allows for no absolutes and no essence. Yet theology is concerned with the absolute, the essential. How then does theology sit within postmodernity? Is postmodern theology possible, or is such a concept a contradiction in terms? Should theology bother about postmodernism or just get on with its own thing? Can it? Theologians have responded in many different ways to the challenges posed by theories of postmodernity. In this introductory 2003 guide to a complex area, editor Kevin J. Vanhoozer addresses the issue head on in a lively survey of what 'talk about God' might mean in a postmodern age, and vice versa. The book then offers examples of different types of contemporary theology in relation to postmodernity, while the second part examines the key Christian doctrines in postmodern perspective. Leading theologians contribute to this clear and informative Companion, which no student of theology should be without.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Vanhoozer has collected a great selection of essays to introduce current moves in theology. He

concisely presents the intellectual shift to postmodernism through the many disciplines in which it has emerged and focuses in on how it has effected theology. There are then another 15 essays on various issues of relevance for 21st century theology, namely: understanding the self, theological method, investigation of post-liberal method, traditional doctrines such as trinity, pneumatology, ecclesiology and Scripture, responses to late 19th century deconstructionism (via Foucault, Derrida, etc) and the theological aftermath, post-metaphysical theology, radical orthodoxy, etc. There are a many great things to learn from the essays, even if only to understand the trends and the historical development of the current state fo theology. Most are very accessible and clear, though the essays on Deconstructive Theology and on Postmetaphysical Theology get technical at times. One disappointment with the book, is that the essays dealing with 'God and World' and 'Reconstructive Theology' - the only two dealing constructively with metaphysics - are written from a process theology perspective. This may be appropriate from an editorial/historical stand-point as Process thought is a unique and original development (maybe the most unique and original) in the last century of theology, but it is not the only metaphysical theory available and it is arguable if it even qualifies as postmodern in form. it is a great collection of essays, and the two on Process thought are also good despite my critique. The contributors are high-caliber theologians, the topics covered are diverse and essential. Each essay also has a section with suggestions for further reading, making a very good resource into a great and perhaps invaluable one for the studying theologian in the 21st Century.

This 2003 volume is a broad, most useful, yet relatively brief (cf. the *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Blackwell Companions to Religion)) introduction to many of the currents of contemporary theology. Here are some quotations from the book: "For to be postmodern is to signal one's dissatisfaction with at least some aspect of modernity. It is to harbor a revolutionary impulse: the impulse to do things differently." (Pg. xiii) "The postmodern condition thus pertains to one's awareness of the deconstructability of all systems of meaning and truth." (Pg. 13) "(T)he postmodern condition is essentially, that is, structurally, messianic: constitutionally open to the coming of the other and the different. FAITH, not reason---faith in a religionless (viz., messianic) religion---is thus endemic to the postmodern condition." (Pg. 18) "At the heart of this theology is its naturalistic theism. This theism is naturalistic not in the sense of equating God with the world, or otherwise denying distinct agency to God, but simply in the sense of rejecting supernaturalism, understood as belief in a divine being that can interrupt the world's normal causal principles." (Pg. 103) "Postmodernity is not what comes after the new; it is the 'dissolution of the category of the new.'" (Pg. 127) "What is

radical orthodoxy? ... It is a Christian metaphysic that does not begin with transcendentalist assumptions that predicate knowledge of God upon a secure knowledge of ourselves. Instead it assumes that participation in the church makes possible a theological knowledge that must then mediate all other forms of knowledge. But this mediation must take place within the terms in which it has been received---as gift." (Pg. 144)"Indeed, seen in this light, sola scriptura sounds positively postmodern to the extent that it questions whether any single human point of view captures universal truth." (Pg. 167)"Yet postmodernism has rather famously tended to drift toward highly theoretical and abstract accounts of its subject matter; and these accounts are sometimes woven together into precisely the sort of 'metanarrative' that it had so heavily criticized." (Pg. 199)

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