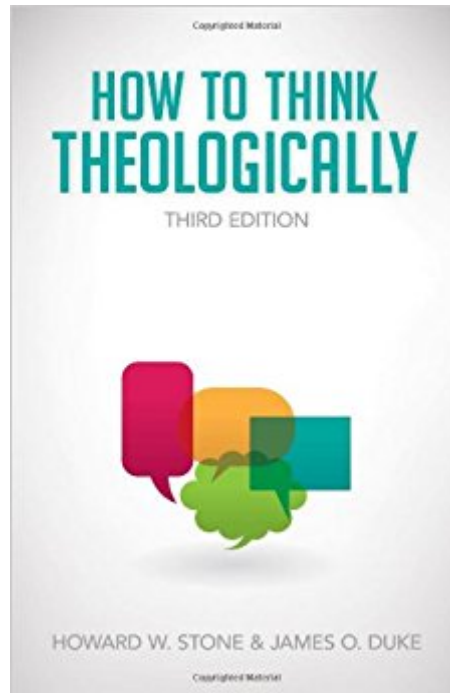




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How To Think Theologically



Synopsis

For over fifteen years, *How to Think Theologically* has served as the ideal primer on the work of theology for students at all levels of study. Stone and Duke contend that theology is not an optional, esoteric discipline, but one that every Christian person is called to do, and thus they welcome everyone to the essential, vibrant work of making religious sense of concrete life situations. The third edition of this popular book retains all of the lucid and lively text that marked the previous editions. On this already strong foundation, case studies and bibliographies are updated, and several helpful pedagogical elements are added.

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Customer Reviews

Howard W. Stone is professor emeritus of psychology and pastoral counseling at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University. He is the author of many influential books including *Depression and Hope* (1998) and (edited) *Strategies for Brief Pastoral Counseling*. James O. Duke is professor of history of Christianity and history of Christian thought at Brite Divinity School. His analytical and translation work has ranged over European and American religion.

Before reviewing the content I should note that I read this on the Kindle version. As other reviewers have mentioned, the Kindle version has a few errors. There were several pages that ended mid-sentence and repeated paragraphs from several pages earlier--I'm not referring to "big ideas" that are emphasized in larger text boxes. There were a few instances when the cut-off material never surfaced. Thankfully, though, none of these instances were communicating anything

significant. Content review is below. Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke offer readers an introductory method for thinking theologically. As they introduce the method they clarify that this is not a systematic theology; rather, it is a process by which Christians can reflect upon their understanding of what it means to be Christian in thought and practice. "Faith seeking understanding" is the primary theme of *How to Think Theologically*, meaning, "that as theologians we seek to understand what we believe about the Christian message of God" (pp. 1, 9). This understanding applies to individuals and communities of faith. Stone and Duke propose two foundational reference points for thinking theologically. The first reference, "embedded theology," involves concepts about God and the world that individuals subliminally accept based on their experiences in and around the Church (p. 15). The second reference point is "deliberative theology," and as its name implies, is the realm in which analytical thinking occurs (p. 17). The authors note a co-dependent relationship between these two concepts, but do not satisfactorily account for varying depths within a believer's theology. They argue that both types of theology are on a spectrum, but in doing so they leave readers wondering why "embedded theology" is discussed as distinct from "deliberative theology." All "embedded theology" has "by necessity" undergone some level of deliberation. For, as the authors note, when a person identifies himself as a Christian, he has already begun the process of "faith seeking understanding." Therefore, all "embedded theology" is "deliberative theology." Instead of confusing readers with an extended discussion of embedded and deliberative terminology, the authors should have noted the importance of "faith seeking understanding" and moved more quickly into teaching their process of analysis and construction. This process contains three steps. First, the individual gathers the information available within a given situation, noting the presented arguments, as well as the underlying predispositions of all parties involved. Next, he evaluates how faithfully each position embodies the Christian gospel. Finally, the theologian finds a creative way to communicate the most accurate and adequate exposition of Christianity for the scenario. The final chapters of the book help readers practice this process by moving them through generic case studies and providing them with diagnostic questions for self-evaluation. After thinking through these exercises readers should have a grasp of this method of theological reflection. For Christians who either have never considered themselves worthy or never intentionally thought about the theological thinking process, *How to Think Theologically* provides a brief primer for theological reflection. This book offers questions for reflection at the end of each chapter, increasingly drawing readers to become more conscientious about how and why they understand their beliefs. After analyzing

various scenarios, one cannot walk away without contemplating how faithfully he or she represents the Christian message of God.

The content of the book is well worth reading. However, there are several problems with the way it is formatted for the Kindle. First, some words get dropped at the end of a page where there is also a sidebar. Second, at least two sections display out of sequence. You are reading along when a paragraph stops in the middle of a sentence. Several pages later, the paragraph continues. Third, the book is formatted to only show location, not page number. Finally, the book is formatted to only allow the capture of a relatively small fraction of highlights in the My Clippings file. I highly recommend reading the book and I generally prefer reading on the Kindle but I would suggest buying this book in a physical rather than an electronic version.

The book is a helpful resource, but do not buy on the Kindle. There is something wrong with the formatting. Some sentences stop in the middle and I can't figure out how much is missing at that point. I found one section repeated in the book. As I got this for a class, I am especially disappointed at this flaw.

This book on theology is more practical than several other books I have read. It steps you through embedded, deliberate, and critical theology. It gives me more that I can use in my Christian walk. Even though there were definitions. There was much more in the understanding that theologically thinking comes from not individual thinking but the Christian community questioning life decisions based on our faith.

I'm not sure if the Kindle version is erred or if the book actually is, but there were missing paragraphs, randomly repeated paragraphs and references to seemingly insignificant (and incomplete) stories. I seriously hope it's a Kindle issue.

The book is lucidly written and astutely articulated in precision and brevity. As a Pastor and Theologian, the contents are exhaustive of religion fundamental principles and doctrines. I would recommend it any day to Pastors and those in religious leadership positions as a means of readjusting to modern religious development and complexities. Pastor Dr. Kingsley N. Ugbo. Senior Pastor: Rekindle Chapel of Evangelistic Ministries, and President Emmaus Theological Seminary, Lagos Nigeria. Email:kugbo2001@yahoo.co.uk

A surprisingly readable approach to a complex subject. The text builds layer upon layer as it lays out a craftsman like approach to theology that is nonjudgmental in its direction but still requires testing and challenging innovation in community before advancing the next layer. Each practitioner will develop a unique, made by heart, vision of their place relative to God but nested securely in the greater Church.

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