

# Vital Books for the Serious Bible Student

I regularly get asked for my advice regarding what sort of book people need in this or that situation. To help them I have compiled two previous lists of books for general encouragement and study and have evaluated all the available systematic theologies in a third.

In this paper I want to be more specific and more restricted. I want to compile a list of my choices for vital books that a serious Bible student needs to hand. These would be the books required by an elder that teaches the flock assiduously. I am not saying that every elder needs all these books; some elders teach in a simple, pastoral manner and do a good job; but the didactic teacher, the preacher, the serious expositor, the doctrinal instructor needs a good library.

Now this list will be subjective and selective since it is just my opinion; there will be books that others think are vital that I may miss. Be that as it may, this list will be a good start for the up-and-coming serious Bible student. In this paper I will not discuss the myriad resources available on the internet with the exception of mentioning the best Bible Study free program, E-sword.

## Dealing with the Biblical text

The Bible student must be able to get to what the text really says, rather than what some translation or expositor says it says. This means some dealing with Hebrew and Greek. These are some essential resources (there are very many modern works now available).

### **Interlinear Greek/English NT**

*The NKJV Greek English Interlinear NT*

An interlinear is essential. There are many to choose from, but in my view the best version on the best text (the Majority Text) is Nelson's, *'The NKJV Greek English Interlinear NT'*. Sadly this is currently out of print and second-hand copies can be ridiculously expensive. This interlinear helpfully also shows the correct order of words in a sentence for English readers.

*Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*

This book by Baker Book House and compiled by George Ricker Berry is much more easily available but it is an old Victorian work (1897). It is a huge book also containing NT synonyms, Berry's lexicon and Strong's code numbers & Greek dictionary. It uses the Greek text of Stephen's 1550, essentially the Textus Receptus (which also added the Elzevir edition of 1624), i.e. the text underlying the AV. It is not the best text for study.

Some will find this book very helpful, but it is not as good as the previous item. The text in the column is the AV (which is not credited). I suppose that if you could only afford one Greek resource this would be a good one to have.

The text used by most modern Bible versions is the Nestle-Aland UBS editions. There are many interlinears that use these texts. For those who use the AV (KJV) and NKJV these are of little use, except for comparison.

### **Interlinear Hebrew – English OT**

This is much more difficult to get, at least cheaply. The easiest, and perhaps cheapest, set is the three volume edition published by Baker originally in 1976, *'The Interlinear Bible, Hebrew / English'*. This has the AV in the left-hand column and the Hebrew text on the right with English words under every Hebrew word. It uses the Masoretic Hebrew text.

### **Greek lexicons, commentaries and aids**

Again there are large numbers of these available today. However, some of the old books are still amongst the most useful, in my opinion, and much cheaper to find second hand.

#### *Thayer's Greek- English Lexicon of the NT*

Written by Joseph H Thayer. Available cheaply in various editions including the Baker paperback, which is also numerically coded to Strong's concordance. A standard work often used as the basis of other more modern works.

#### *Analytical Greek lexicon*

If you don't read Greek, or have a computer program that analyses the Greek text, you need one of these. Mine is the Bagster copy, which is still found second-hand. This is a dictionary/lexicon which does not discuss the meaning of the Greek words at length (as in a lexicon) but which lists every form of every Greek word and shows you the root it came from and what the declension is (e.g. substantive noun, verb, tense etc.). Such a work is vital.

#### *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*

By Walter Bauer. A large and expensive volume, published by the University of Chicago Press. The standard academic work but not necessary for the layman.

#### *Vine's Expository dictionary of NT words*

Written by WE Vine, a Brethren author and suspect of an agenda here and there, this is still a very useful work for the layman. He lists all the words in the AV NT and gives all the Greek equivalents, explaining their meaning and listing their occurrence. Some modern editions also include a similar dictionary of OT words by Unger and White.

#### *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance*

Written by the Hyper-Dispensationalist EW Bullinger. This works as a substitute for Vine but often has more helpful information. It is also more succinct.

#### *The Gnomon of the New Testament*

By John Albert Bengel. A five volume commentary of the Greek NT which formed the basis for many subsequent commentaries like Vincent and Robertson. In its time was very useful but is superseded now.

#### *Studies in the NT*

By Kenneth S Wuest. A similar approach to Bengel but more recent. Can be very useful in understanding the Greek. Several quite cheap paperbacks published by Eerdmans. Some people swear by him but he needs to be checked alongside others.

#### *Word Studies in the NT*

Written by MR Vincent. This comes in two volumes in the MacDonald edition, four volumes in others. More of a commentary than a dictionary but essentially strives to explain the Greek words and grammar to identify the meaning of the verse. Coming from an Arminian background this is occasionally weak, but generally is of much use. Available for free in E-sword on the Internet.

*Word Pictures in the Greek New Testament*

By A T Robertson (1934) published by Broadman Press, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. A standard work that is most useful. Available freely in E-sword on the Internet. It looks at the verses of the NT and comments upon the Greek words and grammar to give the original sense.

*Word meanings in the NT*

One volume edition in the Baker version. Very similar to *Robertson's Word Pictures*, more modern but not as good.

*Synonyms of the NT*

Written by RC Trench. In the Baker edition it is also numerically coded to Strong's concordance. A standard work explaining Greek words and very useful.

**Hebrew lexicons, commentaries and aids***Hebrew-Aramaic and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (BDB-Gesenius Lexicon)*

Francis Brown, with help from Charles A. Briggs & SR Driver (1906), based upon Wilhelm Gesenius' *Lexicon Manuale Hebraicum et Chaldaicum*, 1833, as translated into English from Latin and expanded by Edward Robinson, 1833-1854; also coded to Strong's numbering system. The standard work on the subject, available from Hendrickson (1979).

*Nelson's Expository Dictionary of the OT*

Edited by Merrill F Unger & William White Jnr. Similar to the approach of Vine but regarding Hebrew words. Sadly, not every Hebrew word is discussed.

*Key Hebrew - Greek Study Bible*

Summarising all these is this Study Bible by Spiros Zodhiates. This is an AV Bible in large print with certain key words coded to Strong's. There are exegetical footnotes, grammatical notations and definitions. In the back is a Hebrew and Greek lexicon by Zodhiates plus the Hebrew and Greek dictionaries of James Strong. If a person had no other Greek/Hebrew aids than this, he would still do well. There is a version in the NASB but none for the NKJV.

**Conclusion**

The average layman does not need all these books. What the serious student does need is this:

- A good interlinear Greek and Hebrew, or a computer program that does the same job.
- A good Greek lexicon or two, or a computer program that does the same job.
- Robertson's *Word Pictures* (preferably) or Vine / Vincent.
- A good Hebrew lexicon or a computer program that does the same job.

## Concordances

These are alphabetical listings of Bible words showing where and how often these occur, and what they mean in Hebrew and Greek.

*Young's Concordance* is extremely helpful in its layout but *Strong's* has all Biblical words coded which helps in the use of other reference works which use the same code. Both are based on the AV. [New editions of *Young's* have added *Strong's* numbers.] Other translations have their own concordances. Cruden's concordance is the earliest but is of little value since it has been superseded by better ones.

A topical concordance lists verses under subject matter rather than actual words. Examples would be *Holman's*, *Nave's* and *Zondervan*. These can be of use when studying a particular subject, but I rarely use them.

*The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* gives cross-references and parallel passages to every chapter in the Bible. This is an extremely helpful book, which is a much more detailed form of the centre column notes in many Bibles. Invaluable.

## Study Bibles

These are Bibles with marginal notes of variable quality. As they are uneven, they are not recommended. The most sound Reformed notes are found in the *New Geneva Bible*. Some of the study Bibles available are truly dreadful and follow vested interests - be warned. Some Bibles have additional technical references, which are very useful like *The Thompson's Chain Reference Bible*. Others like: *The Newberry Study Bible* and *The Zondervan Hebrew-Greek Study Bible* (both KJV) have lots of help to understand the original languages accessed via marginal symbols and notes.

## Bible Dictionaries

Today there are a plethora of these, of various usefulness, but again some of the older ones are the most valuable. A Bible dictionary should offer information on antiquities and archaeology, cultural background, biographies, geographical information and natural history as well as some exegetical comment where necessary.

### Dictionaries and encyclopaedias

#### *Dictionary of the Bible*

By William Smith (1863); three volumes but also in an abridged one volume edition which is common but less useful (the one volume edition appears free in E-sword). This is my favourite Bible dictionary, yet there are some glaring errors, such as in the Tabernacle entry.

#### *Dictionary of the Bible*

By James Hastings in five large volumes. Some very good scholarship in the main, (including Warfield on Predestination) but some liberal entries too. If you see it cheaply in a second-hand bookshop buy it if you have room in your house and your floors can stand the weight. There is a one-volume edition but this is completely different and less useful. If you have Smith you don't need Hastings.

#### *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*

By John D Davis, revised by HS Gehman and published by Collins. Though only a 658 page single volume, this is a great dictionary, often found very cheaply second-hand. If you can only afford one and have little room, this is the one to choose.

#### *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*

A large standard work with very detailed articles, but some entries spoiled by liberal ideas. Available freely on E-sword.

#### *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*

Written by the commentator AR Fausset. A useful work that is freely available on E-sword.

*Easton's Bible Dictionary*

Originally published in 1887. Another standard work but outclassed by others.

*Also see*

*Baker's Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible*; *Unger's Dictionary of the Bible*; *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopaedia*; the *Lion Encyclopaedia of the Bible*.

**Handbooks, introductions and surveys**

These are a sort of general introduction to Bible study comprising several subjects, such as summaries of Bible books, message, history and geography. There are a great many of them. All of them have certain benefits.

*Simple handbook*

- *Understanding the Bible*, John Stott
- *Unger's Bible Handbook*
- *The Lion Handbook of the Bible*
- *Baker's Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*
- *Christian Handbook*, Peter Jeffrey
- *Baker's handbook of Bible lists*

*More complex and older handbook*

- *The New Bible Handbook*, Manley (IVP)
- *The Bible Handbook*, Angus
- *Bible Handbook*, Halley

*Simple introductions*

- *The Message of the OT*, Ellison
- *The New Testament*, Gresham Machen
- *The Message of the NT*, FF Bruce
- *The Teaching of the NT*, Guthrie
- *Know Your Bible*, Scroggie
- *Survey of the Bible*, Hendriksen

*More complex introductions*

- *Introduction to the OT*, Young
- *A Short Intro. to the Pentateuch*, Aalders
- *NT Introduction*, Guthrie
- *NT Survey*, Tenney
- *Survey of the NT*, Gundry
- *New Intro. to the NT*, Carson et. al.

*Manners and Customs*

- *Illustrated Dictionary of Manners and Customs* (pub. Lakeland)
- *Everyday Life in NT Times*, Barquet
- *Everyday Life in OT Times*, Heaton
- *Everyday life in the Holy Land*.
- *Ancient Israel, Its Life & Institutions*, De Vaux
- *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, Edersheim
- *Manners & Customs of the Bible*, Freeman

### *Bible Geography*

- *Baker's Bible Atlas*
- *Holman's Concise Bible Atlas*
- *Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*
- *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Atlas*
- *Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*
- *Historical geography of the Bible*, Smith
- *The Land and The Book*, Thomson
- *Nelson's Book of Bible Maps and Charts*

### *Bible History*

- *Israel and the Nations*, FF Bruce (explains the 400 year interval between the OT and NT)
- *History of Israel*, Davis & Whitcomb
- *Historical Survey of the OT* (now entitled *A Kingdom of Priests*), Merrill
- *Survey of Israel's History*, Wood
- *OT Bible History*, Edersheim
- *Works of Josephus* (Jewish historian)

In my view, every young Christian ought to read Jeffrey's *Christian Handbook*; it is simple, well illustrated and helpful. Regarding a deeper handbook, well you just take your own choice; they are all of use. If you have a good handbook and decent commentaries, you don't really need additional books on cultural background, history and geography. *Nelson's Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, however, is a very helpful handbook to have at hand including all sorts of summaries, background and charts. A good handbook, or even a good Bible, will have sufficient maps to cover most things.

### **Conclusion**

You only need one good Bible dictionary on the shelf for quick reference since the Internet provides answers to many detailed Bible queries. To save space, the Westminster is most useful; supplement this with the dictionaries in E-sword. If you want a more thorough work on the shelf get Smith's as well. You also need at least one good handbook/survey of the Bible to get an overall picture.

## **Commentaries**

Now a full discussion of these could occupy many books. I will only offer my opinion on a very few that I think are the most useful. This is not an exhaustive list by any means, just a starter.

### **Whole or part Bible Commentaries**

#### *Barnes Notes*

In my view Barnes is one of the most useful commentaries, even though he was a layman writing for Sunday School teachers in America. He only wrote on the NT and a few OT books, but publishers have added in other authors to make up a whole Bible commentary. The non-Barnes sections are less useful. Barnes is always worth checking out, but not always right.

#### *Matthew Henry's Commentary*

Beloved of Spurgeon and many more. Henry is warm and devotional and always worth reading. He did not write all the NT comments, having died while writing the Gospels, but

your could never tell. Being more devotional, he is not easy for quick consultation, having long comments on passages. Available in E-sword

*Matthew Poole*

Spurgeon's second choice and for general consultation would be my second choice after JFB for a one set, concise, Bible commentary. Easier to access and more succinct than Henry, but less devotional.

*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*

Three volume full edition or one and two volume abridged edition. Get the three volumes. E-sword offers the one volume edition (sadly). My first choice for general consultation, easily the most informative of the old commentaries. Usually, good, sometimes brilliant, only occasionally disappoints.

*John Calvin*

The prince of preachers. Only occasionally disappoints. 22 volumes in the Baker edition but is available as a cheap CD Rom.

*NT Commentary*

Multi-volume set written by John Gill. Very discursive and often very helpful, though dated. Available freely from E-sword, and as a separate CD Rom, and useful for study. Hyper-Calvinistic here and there.

*Adam Clarke's Commentary*

Written by an Arminian but much good scholarship nevertheless. Useful for comparison and available on E-sword.

*Bible Student's Commentary*

Dutch series reprinted by Zondervan but they only completed a few. First rate Reformed commentary by famous theologians and teachers such as G Ch Aalders and J Ridderbos. Just the Pentateuch, Joshua/Judges and Matthew printed (as far as I am aware). Get them.

*John Darby's notes on the NT*

Darby can sometimes be very helpful and at other times his Dispensationalism renders what he says useless. Not a first choice but occasionally helpful. His system is also difficult to access being prolonged (sometimes unwieldy) prose on whole passages. Available on E-sword.

*Dr. Hawker's Poor Man's Commentary*

Multi-volume commentary. Very popular with Strict Baptists. Spurgeon liked him but did have valid criticisms. Hawker is not always accurate, has very little critical ability with the text and tends to spiritualise. I find him hard to read and not worth the effort. There are much better commentaries than this.

*Alford's Greek Testament*

Five volume commentary on the Greek text. Though reading Greek would help, you can just about access this without knowledge of Greek. In my view these volumes are superb and most useful for the Bible student, yet rarely mentioned these days and not available digitally (as far as I am aware). It is clear that Charles Hodge referred to Alford frequently. You can sometimes find these in second-hand bookstores; I got mine for £5 in Bath many years ago; that was a great day!

*Dr. Wordsworth's Holy Bible, With Notes and Introductions*

*The New Testament in the original Greek; with Notes, Introductions, and Indexes.* By C Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln. I only have the NT volumes and these have been most useful on occasion. Similar to Alford but simpler.

*Ellicott's Bible Commentary*

Once very popular but not first class; has some liberal comments. There is a useful one-volume compilation that is handy for quick reference.

*Tyndale Commentary Series*

Short volumes, vary greatly, some good.

*Hard Sayings of the Bible*

Published by IVP. Helpful notes on key texts. Not a full commentary.

*IVP commentary series*

Editions vary; some liberal comments. Not a first choice.

*NT Commentary*

Written by John Trapp. Pithy concise comments in one volume.

*The Evangelical Press Series*

Cheap, evangelical, useful, reverent. More devotional than for study. Not a first choice for serious students. Also called *The Welwyn Commentaries*.

*The Bible Speaks Today*

(IVP). Items vary, some very good.

*Geoffrey Wilson's NT Series (Banner of Truth)*

Evangelical, concise, helpful and short.

*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels - Ryle*

Justly popular still. Devotional / instructive.

*Studies in the OT & NT,*

Commentaries on various single books by FL Godet. Very detailed and very useful.

*Commentary on various NT books and the words of Paul*

By John Eadie. Absolutely invaluable but not easy to get these days. I still haven't found a reasonably priced copy of Galatians.

*Commentary on the OT*

By Keil & Delitzsch. A standard OT work. Very useful but very discursive and sometimes dense and technical. Available freely in E-sword.

*Interpretation of the NT*

RCH Lenski's commentary on all the NT books. Though written by a Lutheran this is one of my favourite sets; always helpful, always thorough.

*NT Commentary*

Published by Banner of Truth in the UK. The NT commentary was begun by William Hendriksen and continued after his death by Simon Kistemaker. Considered as a standard work by many Reformed folk. Extremely useful, especially in background issues but sometimes disappointing on difficult verses.



*New International Commentary on the Old [NICOT] and New Testament [NICNT]*

Published by Eerdmans. Scholarly and detailed modern commentaries. Some of the best commentaries are in this series. Includes authors such as FF Bruce, John Murray, PE Hughes and Leon Morris. Some volumes appeared earlier as the 'New London Commentary' and are found cheaply second-hand.

*Commentary on the NT Greek Text*

Published by Paternoster. Modern scholarly works. Not necessary for the layman but useful for the serious student.

*The Expositor's Bible*

Victorian series that are often found second-hand in usual blue or, less often, red bindings. Occasional volumes are superb (such as Kellogg on *Leviticus*, Blaikie on *1 & 2 Samuel & Joshua* or Findlay on *Galatians & Ephesians*) but most are liberal and compromised. However, useful for background and books are covered that are infrequently commented on (such as *1 & 2 Kings*).

*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*

Published by Zondervan. Uneven modern series, mostly by American authors, but some odd volumes are superb such as *Matthew* by DA Carson.

*The New Century Bible Commentary*

Modern paperback series of uneven quality based on the RSV. Occasional good volume (e.g. by FF Bruce or IH Marshall) but many are liberal.

*Commentaries*

By HA Ironside. Once popular American Brethren author whose many books were published by Pickering & Inglis or the Loiseaux Brothers. More devotional than exegetical. Useful as back up, easy to read commentaries found cheap second-hand.

*Commentaries and Lectures*

By William Kelly the famous Brethren author. The problem with Kelly is that he says some great things and then some terrible things, being marred by early Dispensationalism.

*Notes On The Pentateuch*

By CH Mackintosh. A Brethren author once very popular. Though marred by some Dispensational ideas, these are very encouraging and helpful.

*The Gospel in the Pentateuch*

By Henry Law, a conservative, Victorian Anglican. Excellent and encouraging material with much light shed on the typology of the books. Everyone ought to read his 'Gospel in Genesis', reprinted by Banner of Truth. Spurgeon said of him, 'Deservedly popular. Simple, instructive, full of Christ. Law abounds in gospel.'

*Geneva Commentaries*

Reprints of Puritan and other commentaries by Banner of Truth. All excellent; often found cheaply second-hand.

*Klock & Klock Commentaries*

Reprints by an American publishing house; usually Puritan works. Very good.

### *Commentaries*

By Campbell Morgan, Congregational predecessor of Martyn-Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel. Once very popular but now somewhat dated. Some of his books are very useful but more devotional and sermonic in style.

### *Commentaries*

By Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Chiefly on Romans and Ephesians but a few other NT books. Lloyd-Jones was a great preacher and some of his works are truly inspiring. However, he was sometimes just plain wrong, such as in his sections on Romans 6-7 and his wrong approach to the Baptism in the Spirit in Ephesians. What he was good at was getting people to love the word by his zest for preaching.

### **Conclusion**

There are many more series available, all of which are mixed. Best choices: JFB, Calvin, Henry, Poole, Lenski, Eadie, Ryle, Barnes, Law, Geneva, plus get all the one's available on E-sword. Get a few NICOT/NICNT or BSC or Hendriksen when you see them cheap. For information on old commentaries check out Spurgeon's 'A chat about commentaries' either in the book '*Commenting and Commentaries*' by Banner of Truth, or found on the Internet.

### **Individual commentaries OT**

- God Spake by Moses, Allis
- The Five Books of Moses, Allis
- Genesis, Calvin (Geneva series)
- History of Joseph, Lawson
- Types in Genesis, Jukes
- Genesis, Aalders (BSC)
- Gospel in Genesis, Law
- The Genesis Record, H Morris
- Genesis Studies, Candlish
- Genesis, Leupold [Lutheran]
- Gleanings in Genesis, Pink
- Gleanings in Exodus, Pink
- Exodus, Gispem (BSC)
- Exodus, Murphy (Klock & Klock)
- Typical teachings of Exodus, Dennett [Brethren]
- Leviticus, Bonar (Geneva)
- Leviticus, Noordtzu (BSC)
- Sacrificial Worship, Kurtz
- Law of the Offerings, Jukes
- Numbers, Noordtzu (BSC)
- Numbers, Wenham (Tyndale)
- Deuteronomy, Ridderbos (BSC)
- Deuteronomy, Craigie (NICOT)
- Deuteronomy, Merrill (New American Comm.)
- Joshua, Woudstra (NICOT)
- Gleanings in Joshua, Pink
- Judges, Fausset (Geneva)
- Distressing days of the Judges, Wood
- Ruth & Esther, Lawson & Carson

- Thoughts on Ruth, Dennett [Brethren]
- Ruth & her kindred, Hughes
- 1 & 2 Samuel, Henry, Gill, Pink (MacDonald)
- 1 & 2 Kings, Provan (NIBC)
- Israel's united monarchy, Wood (Baker)
- 1 Chronicles, Selman (Tyndale)
- Prophets of Israel, Wood (Baker)
- Elijah, Krummacher
- Elisha, Krummacher
- Elijah, Pink
- Life of David, Pink
- Ezra, Dennett [Brethren]
- Nehemiah, Dennett [Brethren]
- The ordeal of faith (Job), Horne
- Job, Hailey
- Psalms, Horne
- Psalms, Perowne
- The Treasury of David, Spurgeon
- Psalms, Plumer (Geneva)
- The Shepherd Psalm, FB Meyer
- Song of Solomon, Burrowes (Geneva)
- Song of Solomon, Durham (Geneva)
- Proverbs, Arnot
- Proverbs, Bridges (Geneva)
- Ecclesiastes, Bridges (Geneva)
- Ecclesiastes, MacDonald (Klock & Klock)
- A life worth living (Eccles. & Song of Solomon), Olyott (Welwyn, EP)
- Isaiah, A Alexander
- Isaiah, Leupold [Lutheran]
- Isaiah, Young
- Isaiah, Motyer (IVP)
- Isaiah, Hailey
- Ezekiel, Fairbairn (Klock & Klock)
- Ezekiel, Guthrie
- Ezekiel, Greenhill (Geneva)
- Daniel, Young (Geneva)
- Daniel, Leupold [Lutheran]
- Jeremiah, Laetsch (Concordia [Lutheran])
- Jonah, Martin (Geneva)
- Minor Prophets, Hailey
- Book of the prophets, Findlay
- Men spake from God, Ellison
- Minor Prophets, Laetsch (Concordia [Lutheran])
- 12 Minor Prophets, Henderson (Baker)
- The day of the lion (Amos), Motyer (IVP)
- Obadiah & Habbakuk, Marbury (Klock & Klock)
- Nahum, Habbakuk & Zephaniah, Robertson (NICOT)
- Haggai-Malachi, Moore (Geneva)
- Zechariah, Leupold [Lutheran]

- Zechariah, Moore (Geneva)

### **Individual commentaries NT**

- Four Gospels, David Brown
- Discourses on the sayings of our Lord, John Brown
- Harmony of the Gospels, Boettner
- Life & Times of Jesus the Messiah, Edersheim
- Matthew, Ridderbos
- Matthew, Carson (Expositors Series)
- Matthew, Dickson (Geneva)
- Mark, Alexander (Geneva)
- Luke, Geldenhuys (NICNT)
- Luke, Godet
- John, Godet
- John, Leon Morris (MMS)
- John, Pink
- John, Carson (IVP)
- John, Beasley-Murray (Word)
- John, Meyer
- Beatitudes, Pink
- Sermon on the Mount, Pink
- Sermon on the Mount, Lloyd-Jones
- Lord's Prayer, Watson
- The Beatitudes, Thomas Watson
- The Parables, Guthrie
- The Parables, Trench
- The Parables, Arnot
- The Miracles, Trench
- Pictures and Parables, GH Lang
- When I Survey, Hoeksema
- Acts, Alexander (Geneva)
- Acts, Stott (BST / IVP)
- Acts, Bruce (NICNT)
- Life & Epistles of Paul, Conybeare & Howson
- Harmony of the Life of Paul, Goodwin
- Paul, Apostle of the Free Spirit, Bruce
- The words of the apostle Paul, Eadie
- Romans, Haldane
- Romans, Lloyd-Jones (series)
- Romans, Hodge (Geneva)
- Romans, Leon Morris (IVP)
- Romans, Godet
- Romans, John Brown
- Romans, Murray (NICNT)
- Righteous by Faith Alone (Romans), Hoeksema (RFPA)
- 1 Corinthians, Leon Morris (Tyndale)
- 2 Corinthians, Hughes (NICNT)
- 1 & 2 Corinthians, Hodge (Geneva)
- 1 & 2 Corinthian, Godet

- 1 Corinthians, Fee (NICNT)
- Galatians, Ridderbos
- Galatians, Luther
- Galatians, Findlay (Expositor's)
- Galatians, John Brown
- Galatians, Lightfoot
- Ephesians, Hodge (Geneva)
- Ephesians, Eadie
- Ephesians, Findlay (Expositor's)
- Ephesians, Lloyd-Jones (series)
- Ephesians-Colossians, Bruce
- Philippians, FB Meyer
- Philippians, Eadie
- Philippians, Lightfoot
- Colossians, Eadie
- Colossians, Davenant (Geneva)
- Colossians, Philippians & Ephesians, Bruce (NICNT)
- Colossians, Philippians, Lightfoot
- Thessalonians, Eadie
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians, GG Findlay (Baker)
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Morris (NICNT)
- Pastoral Epistles, Fairbairn
- Pastoral Epistles, Guthrie (Tyndale)
- 1 & 2 Timothy, Fee (New Int. Biblical Comm., Hendrikson)
- Hebrews, Pink
- Hebrews, John Owen
- Hebrews, Hughes
- Hebrews, John Brown (Geneva)
- James, Johnstone (Geneva)
- James, Manton (Geneva)
- James, Stier (Klock & Klock)
- James, Motyer (BST, IVP)
- Peter & Jude, Luther
- 1 Peter, Leighton
- 1 Peter, Brown (Geneva)
- 2 Peter, Thomas Adams
- Jude, Manton (Geneva)
- 1 John, Candlish (Geneva)
- John's Letters, GG Findlay
- Behold, He Cometh (Revelation), Hoeksema
- Revelation Spiritually Understood, CH Alexander
- More Than Conquerors (Revelation), W Hendriksen
- Revelation, PE Hughes.

## Interpretation

Exegesis is the method of discovering what the text actually says by using principles of grammar, translation, comparison and so on. Principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) are the Biblical rules for determining what this actually means.

- *Principles of Interpretation*, Berkhof
- *Interpretation of the Scriptures*, Pink
- *Exegetical Fallacies*, Carson
- *Bible Hermeneutics*, Terry

Mention should also be made of Bullinger's *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*, which identifies all the variations of this important aspect of grammar which can revolutionise one's approach to a passage.

## Biblical typology

The figurative, symbolical and metaphorical in scripture.

- *Christ in All the Scriptures*, Hodgkin. Old favourite, often found cheaply second-hand.
- *The Tabernacle, Priesthood and Offerings*, Soltau. The best work; a thorough treatment which can also serve as a useful primer on doctrine.
- *The Vessels and the Furniture*, Soltau. Follow up to the previous work.
- *The Tabernacle*, W Brown. Very useful book, more succinct than Soltau but very good.
- *The Temple*, Edersheim. A standard work.
- *The feasts of Jehovah*, J Ritchie
- *The law of the offerings*, A Jukes
- *Christology of OT*, Hengstenberg. Two volumes, very heavy standard work. Worth struggling with.
- *Preaching From the Types*, Keach. Large single volume in Kregel edition. Very useful as a reference tool.
- *The Shadow of Christ*, Poythress. Modern large paperback; very useful as a summary.

## Theological dictionaries

Alphabetical articles of Biblical teaching.

- *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (pub. Baker).
- *The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (pub. Baker).
- *The New IVP Dictionary of Theology*.
- *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Alan Cairns, pub. Ambassador-Emerald.
- *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, RA Muller, pub. Baker.

Some advanced theological dictionaries are based upon the Greek or Hebrew words and are listed in those languages: *Kittel's Theological Dict. of the NT* (10 vols. or 1 vol. summary), *Brown's Dict. of NT Theology* (pub. Paternoster), Van Gemeren's *New International Dict. of OT Theology & Exegesis* (pub. Paternoster).

## Theology

### Sound Creeds and confessions of faith

These expressions of the church sought to explain their basis of faith ('Confession'), give a short summary of Christian belief ('Creed') or disciple the young via a series of questions and answers ('Catechism'). There are very many of them; the best include:

- *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Anglican Puritan)
- *The Larger and Shorter Westminster Catechisms* (Anglican Puritan)
- *The London Baptist Confession of Faith (1644)*
- *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith* (UK Baptist)
- *The Heidelberg Catechism* (European Calvinism)
- *The Savoy Declaration* (Congregationalism)
- *The Canons of the Synod of Dordt* (European Calvinism)
- *The Belgic Confession* (European Calvinism)
- *The Nicene Creed* (Ancient Christian)
- *The Apostles' Creed* (Ancient Christian)
- *The Athanasian Creed* (Ancient Christian)

All of these can be found freely on the web.

### Simple systematic theology

- *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, Berkhof (US Presbyterian).
- *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Williamson.
- *The Shorter Westminster Catechism*, Williamson.
- *Truth for All Time*, Calvin.
- *Biblical Christianity*, Calvin
- *Elemental Theology*, Bancroft (US Baptist).
- *Essentials of the Christian Faith*, Sproul (US Presbyterian).
- *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, Boice (US Presbyterian).
- *Know the Truth*, Milne (UK Baptist).
- *What the Scriptures Teach*, Kevan (UK Baptist).
- *Doctrine According to Godliness*, Ron Hanko (US Presbyterian).
- *Studies in theology*, Boettner (US Presbyterian)
- *Foundations of the faith*, Boice (US Presbyterian)
- *Great Themes of the Bible*, M. Henry (English Puritan)

### More complex systematic theology

*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*

RL Reymond (Modern American Presbyterian). Probably the best modern systematic.

*Systematic Theology*

L Berkhof (Dutch American Presbyterian). The standard work for the last 100 years. Still very useful and better laid out and easier to access than Reymond.

*Systematic Theology*

RL Dabney (Southern States American Presbyterian). Dabney is very original and helpful but can be very dense to read.

*Discussions*

RL Dabney. Three volumes, Thoughts on certain theological and ecclesiastical subjects collected from various reviews and studies. Contains some very useful comments.

*The systematic theology of John Brown*

(Church of Scotland) A bit difficult to access as it is so dense, but very useful and full of Scripture refs. Heart-warming.

*Body of Divinity,*

Thomas Watson (Anglican Puritan). Considered a standard Puritan work which is still edifying.

*Outlines of Theology*

AA Hodge (American Presbyterian). Son of Charles Hodge and a good communicator. This work is in question and answer format, but can be a bit dense and over-detailed, but lots of information.

*Systematic Theology*

Charles Hodge (American Presbyterian). Considered to be a foremost American theologian. This work is in three big volumes but there is a one-volume abridged version. Hodge is often useful but there are weak spots, such as on evolution. Not a first choice.

*Manual of Theology*

JL Dagg (American Baptist). I have a soft spot for this. Dagg's work was the first proper American Baptist systematic theology and it is very helpful.

*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*

F Turretin (European Calvinism). Three big volumes of intense theology in question and answer format. Elenctic refers to establishing the faith and contending against errors. An encyclopaedia of Reformed scholastic thought; vital for the very serious student. This was the foundation of many modern systematics, such as Hodge's or Dabney's. Only published in English in the last ten years; previously a single translation from the Latin was held in manuscript form in Princeton Seminary, commissioned by Charles Hodge.

*Body of Divinity*

John Gill (English Reformed Baptist). Very thorough studies in two volumes. Not safe on certain subjects, such as eternal justification, but often his detailed style, though not easy to read, is more useful than modern works.

*Institutes of the Christian Religion*

Calvin (European Calvinism). Still very valuable despite being 500 years old.

*Reformed Dogmatics*

H Hoeksema (Dutch American Presbyterian). Very helpful. Takes the correct stand on the free offer, unlike all the other theologians (except Turretin).

*Dogmatic Theology*

WGT Shedd (US Presbyterian). Three volumes, though the third comprises extra notes on the first two. Shedd was an original thinker and his work is very useful.

*Reformed Dogmatics*

Herman Bavinck (Dutch Reformed). Four large volumes only recently translated from the Dutch into English. Absolutely brilliant and vital, though some flaws here and there. A standard work of Reformed theology.



*Systematic Theology*

Wayne Grudem (IVP, US Charismatic). Not my favourite. However, it is well laid out and easy to access. Takes a Charismatic view of the spiritual gifts but is insufficient on some important subjects, like hell; also poorer on historical developments of dogma than others.

*Abstract of systematic theology*

James P Boyce. American Baptist systematic theology. Not easy to access but worth the trouble.

*The Marrow of Theology*

William Ames (UK Puritan). Once the most popular Puritan work. Very useful.

**Specific doctrines***The Bible*

- The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, Warfield
- Thy Word is Truth, Young
- The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, Pache
- Accuracy of Translation, Martin

*God*

- The Doctrine of God, Bavinck
- The Attributes of God, Pink
- Gleanings in the Godhead, Pink
- The Trinity, Bickersteth
- The Sovereignty of God, Pink (unabridged edition - Baker, USA)
- Knowing God, JI Packer
- Great God of Wonders, Peter Jeffrey
- The knowledge of the Holy, Tozer

*Christology*

- The Person & Work of Christ, Warfield
- The Virgin Birth, Machen
- Christ Before the Manger, Rhodes
- The suffering Saviour, Krummacher
- Christ Our Penal Substitute, Dabney
- Christ Ascended, Donne
- The Grace of Christ, Plumer
- Rock of our salvation, Plumer
- The Glory of Christ, Peter Lewis
- The glory of the Redeemer, Winslow
- Life by his death, John Owen
- Jesus Christ, Sir Norman Anderson
- The shadow of Calvary, Martin

*The Holy Spirit*

- The Office & Work of the Holy Spirit, Buchanan
- The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Smeaton
- The work of the Holy Spirit, Kuyper
- The fruit of the Spirit, Sanderson
- The work of the Holy Spirit, Winslow

*The decrees*

- Predestination, Boettner
- Chosen by God, Sproul
- The Sovereignty of Grace, Custance
- God's Everlasting Covenant of Grace, Hanks
- The Unfolding Mystery, Clowney
- Calvin's Calvinism, John Calvin
- Sermons on Election & Predestination, John Calvin

*The doctrines of grace*

- The Deeper Faith, Girod
- Man's Total Depravity, Pink
- Imputation of Adam's Sin, J Murray
- Redemption Accomplished & Applied, J Murray
- Justification, Buchanan
- Atonement, Martin
- The cross of Jesus, Leon Morris
- The Five Points of Calvinism, Dabney & Dickinson
- The Five Points of Calvinism, Steele & Thomas
- Hyper-Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel, Engelsma
- The Bondage of the Will, Luther
- Saved by Grace, Cammenga & Hanks
- The Reign of Grace, A Booth
- Particular Grace, Kuyper
- The Five Points of Calvinism, W Parks
- The Five Points of Calvinism, Hanks & Engelsma
- The Five Points of Calvinism, Seaton
- Salvation, EF Kevan
- What the Scriptures teach, EF Kevan

*Conversion*

- Repentance, Watson
- Regeneration, Charnock
- Repentance, Colquhoun
- Right with God, Blanchard
- The Grace of God in the Gospel, Various
- Faith, Spurgeon

*Sanctification*

- Five Views of Sanctification, (Various)
- Sanctification, Pink
- Spiritual Growth, Pink
- Comfort for the Christian, Pink
- Precious remedies against Satan's devices, T Brooks
- Holiness, Ryle
- Keeping the heart, Flavel
- The normal Christian life, Watchman Nee
- How to overcome evil, Adams
- Holiness, Spurgeon

- The pursuit of Holiness, Bridges
- God's way of peace, Bonar
- Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, Marshall
- The Practical Philosophy, Dabney

#### *Comfort and practical*

- Book of comfort, Power
- No Condemnation in Christ Jesus, Octavius Winslow
- Prayer, John Bunyan
- When God's Children Suffer, H. Bonar
- The Christian's Great Interest, Thomas Guthrie
- Out of the Depths, John Newton
- The Sympathy of Christ, O. Winslow
- Spiritual depression, Lloyd-Jones
- Profiting from the Word, AW Pink
- The Lord Our Shepherd, J. Douglas MacMillan
- Lifting up for the downcast, Bridge
- All things for Good, Thomas Watson
- Trusting God, Bridges
- Communion With God, John Owen

#### *The church*

- The Church, Clowney
- Paul's Idea of Community, Banks
- The Healing Promise, Mayhue
- The church of Christ, Bannerman
- The church of Christ, GH Lang
- The church in God's programme, Saucy
- The Home Church, Robert and Julia Banks
- The Glorious Body of Christ, RB Kuiper

#### *Angels*

- Satan Cast Out, Leahy

#### *Eschatology*

- The Doctrine of Endless Punishment, Shedd
- The Momentous Event, Grier
- Meaning of the Millennium, Clouse
- The end times made simple, Waldron
- After death, Motyer
- Prophecy & the Church, Allis
- The Bible on the Life Hereafter, Hendriksen
- Death and the Afterlife, Morey
- Probing Heaven, Gilmore
- Biblical studies in final things, Cox

#### *History of doctrines*

- Early Christian Doctrines, Kelly
- Historical theology, Cunningham

- Documents of the Christian Church, Bettenson
- History of Christian Doctrines, Berkhof
- Heresies, Brown
- Heresies, Hanks

### **Dictionaries and reference works**

- Historical handbook of major Biblical interpreters, Mckim
- Dictionary of Historical Theology, Hart
- Handbook of contemporary theology, Smith
- Handbook of evangelical theology, Elwell
- Handbook of evangelical theology, Lightner (Arminian and Dispensational)
- Dictionary of theological terms, Cairns

This is just a short summary. There are many good books not mentioned here, but this is a reasonable guide to start you off. For more detailed information on various books on theology see my paper, '*Systematic Theologies*' which contains many more examples of useful works not mentioned here.

## **Apologetics**

- *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Vol 1), Josh McDowell
- *Who Moved the Stone*, Frank Morison
- *Many Infallible Proofs*, Henry Morris
- *The Complete Book of Bible Answers*, Ron Rhodes
- *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*, Haley
- *The Answers Book*, Ken Ham
- *The Collapse of Evolution*, Scott Huse

There are myriads more that we could list but this is just a starter.

## **Church history**

### **Simple overviews**

- The Lion Handbook of Church History
- Backgrounds of early Christianity, Ferguson
- The Pilgrim Church, Broadbent
- Five Pioneer Missionaries (pub. Banner of Truth)
- Five English Reformers, Ryle
- Five Christian Leaders, Ryle
- The Great Reformation, Jones
- The Spreading Flame, FF Bruce
- A Short History of the Early Church, Boer
- A History of Protestantism, Wylie
- A Short History of the Church, Hurler
- Dictionary of the Christian Church, Douglas
- Twentieth century dictionary of Christian biography, Douglas
- Dictionary of Presbyterian & Reformed Tradition in America, Hart & Noll
- History of Dogma, Hoeksema & Hanks

### **More complex overviews**

- History of the Christian Church, Walker
- Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity, Ferguson
- Ecclesiastical History, Von Mosheim
- Historical Theology, Cunningham
- History of the Christian Church, P Schaff (available on E-sword)
- 2,000 years of Christ's power, Needham (three volumes so far)

### **Specific aspects**

#### *Apostles*

- Paul, Reymond
- John, Reymond
- Paul, apostle of the free spirit, Packer
- Paul, Conybeare & Howson
- Life and work of Paul, Farrar

#### *Early church history*

- The Dawn of Christianity, FF Bruce
- Light in the West, FF Bruce
- The Growing Day, FF Bruce
- Short history of the early church, Boer

#### *Reformation*

- The Reformers & Their Stepchildren, Verduin
- The Anabaptist Story, Estep
- Life of Calvin, Beza
- The English Reformation, Dickens
- Five English Reformers, Ryle
- Christian leaders of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Ryle
- The Reformation, D'Aubigne
- The Reformation in England, D'Aubigne

#### *Puritans*

- Puritan profiles, Barker
- Samuel Rutherford and his friends, Cook
- A quest for Godliness, Packer
- The Puritans, Lloyd-Jones

#### *Martyrology*

- Foxe's Book of Martyrs
- Men of the Covenant, Smellie
- Scots Worthies, Howie
- A cloud of witnesses, Thomson
- Martyr's Mirror, Van Braught
- Fair sunshine, Purves

#### *Revivals*

- The Welsh Revival, Evans
- Revivals, Lloyd-Jones

- Jonathan Edwards on Revival
- Evangelical Revival in the 18th century, Haykin
- Revival & Revivalism, Murray
- The Great Awakening, Tracy

#### *Denominational*

- A Short History of the Baptists, Vedder
- A Popular History of the Free Churches, Horne
- The Puritans, Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Again there are many more that we could list.

## Conclusion

This, of necessity, has to be a fairly arbitrary list; indeed it is based upon merely looking at my bookshelves and not researching publishers catalogues. I am certain that there are many important works that I may have missed. But that is not the point, the world is filled with good books (and bad ones). The point here is to identify a selection of vital research books to help the serious Bible student. You don't need them all but when you need an item on a certain subject, this list may help you find it.

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