



*The Journey of Modern Theology:
From Reconstruction to
Deconstruction*

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Roger E. Olson (PhD, Rice University) is professor of theology at George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He is the author of *The Story of Christian Theology* and *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, as well as coauthor of *20th-Century Theology* and *Who Needs Theology?*, both with Stanley J. Grenz. He also coauthored *The Trinity* with Christopher A. Hall.

Constructing Modern Theology

Roger Olson didn't set out to do a major overhaul of the award-winning *20th-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* which he coauthored with Stanley J. Grenz, but that's what happened.

"It was intended to be a twentieth anniversary edition of that book with some added chapters. Plans changed and it became what you see—an almost entirely different book incorporating some material from the earlier one," Olson explains in the preface.

In addition to the new title, *The Journey of Modern Theology* differs from its predecessor in several key areas. Notably, after the original book's publication, Grenz passed away tragically in 2005 at the age of fifty-five. "His sudden death was a shock; it felt like the loss of a brother," Olson said.

In terms of content, Olson has added a significant amount of material on nineteenth-century theology. "I believe it is impossible to understand twentieth- and twenty-first-century theology without understanding nineteenth-century theology. That and the added chapters on postmodern theology make this a much bigger book," notes Olson.

As far as the overall organization of the material, the unifying motif is also different. "The motif of *20th-Century Theology* was the transcendence and immanence of God. That was Stan's idea, and I liked it then," Olson remarks. "The new motif is modernity and theological responses to it. . . . This book is about how the most influential Western theologians . . . integrated the gospel with modernity or did not."

Lastly, Olson has focused on making the book as accessible as possible to students, pastors and interested laypeople. Extensive details of scholarly debates are generally excluded, with the emphasis rather on the major ideas and contributions of each theologian, movement or philosopher. "Think of it, then, as a satellite view of a city in which the major landmarks are visible (because the view has been enlarged) but not every detail is visible," explains Olson.

And given their longstanding friendship, would Grenz be happy with the results?

Olson responds, "I view this revision as an honor to Stan; I know he would be pleased with it and smile on it. His fingers are all over it—both in terms of its use of some of his material in *20th-Century Theology* and in terms of his influence on me."

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