This entry into the well-known, respected, and prolific T&T Clark Handbooks series attempts – and largely succeeds – to tackle the adolescent and diverse field of public theology. Rather than wait to produce a handbook like this until public theology is more solidified, this volume presents what the editors call the ‘unifying core’ of the discipline while providing space and framework for an ever-evolving myriad of voices and perspectives.

The book is organized into five sections of six chapters each, covering the broad topics of the background and positioning of public theology, its ecumenical scope, the theological underpinnings of the discipline, the challenges it faces, and finally public theology’s international geographic scope. Thirty-one contributors provide material which produces a final result that pays homage to public theology’s unity and heterogeneity.

The first section offers a rather uniquely in-depth backdrop and framework, including some remarkably detailed looks at political theory, history, and philosophy. It is slow to make the connection specifically to public theology at the outset, but eventually places public theology into a rich background that was created to provide a better understanding of the field. The result is a broader picture (including the history of the notion of “public” as well as western liberal democracy itself) for anyone seeking that deeper level of understanding. The remainder of the first section deals more directly with defining public theology as a discipline, noting its newness and diversity, of course, and advancing what they see as common threads of that unifying core: public theology’s dialogical (rather than declarative) nature; its commitment to justice, human flourishing, and the common good; and its wide relevance. A major thread running throughout is that of secularity: both the secularization and then the post-secularity of the public sphere and western culture, as well as the impact that has on public theology. This focus perhaps creates some overreaches or overstatements in some of the earlier chapters, but eventually presents a wonderfully nuanced and attractive understanding of, and approach to, the field and builds a strong argument for how public theology thrives in a post-secular world. The proposition of understanding public theology as a method of apologetics in a post-secular context (which returns a few times in later sections as well) is one intriguing example, and builds the case of public theology almost being apologetics by definition. Here, the dialogical nature of public theology is helpful as the adversarial and rationalist approaches to apologetics are rejected in favor of a conversational and irenic strategy.
Section two springboards off of the foundation of political theory to steer the discussion toward ecumenism. A deconstruction of Tillichian theology's influence on public theology placed in light of Donald Trump's (accidental) public theology in order to exhort Christian theologians to make room for other faiths in the public sphere is a spectacally unique ride that works surprisingly well. Subsequent looks at public theology in Catholic and Orthodox contexts set the stage for powerful calls to ecumenical collaboration within and without Christianity in a post-liberal and post-secular culture. Section three presents groundwork to help further define the field of public theology, including differentiating it from the field of ethics, helping to ground it in a theology of God, engaging with Cone and Black theology to create a framework of soteriology and force a wider, global perspective, and fleshing out ideas in the areas of ecclesiology and liturgy to address perceived shortcomings in public theology up to this point. There is a general theme through this section of going beyond relevance – that public theology must do more, and must be grounded in more, than simply making theology relevant to the public. This is a timely and necessary theme to take up as public theology itself begins to grow up as a field of study.

Section four is perhaps the most grounded section, in that it presents not only pragmatic essays on topics such as sports, economics, racism, and ecology, but also in that it weaves in a common thread of embodiment and the physical nature of theology. This is an appreciated and necessary aspect which is often overlooked not just in public theology, but many other areas of theology as well, and is beneficial in current contexts. Finally, section five looks at public theology in the context of various geographic regions around the world, engaging particularly with liberation theologies in places like Africa, Asia, and Latin America to discuss public theology's strengths and weaknesses on a global stage. Here, although each of the chapters is careful to note to varied and diverse nature of its particular continent or region, one simply cannot do justice to that diversity in a single chapter and descriptions often suffer from reductionist or oversimplified descriptions; however, the engagement with local communities and theological movements is helpful to locating public theology's space in each emerging area.

After a beginning full of political theory, philosophy, and history which provides a unique (if not dense) backdrop against which to more fully understand public theology, this Handbook makes a number of valuable contributions to the evolving field, creating some groundwork and framework for understanding both our current culture and how public theology not only fits into it, but can remain a force for transformational change within it. The contextualization of public theology's work on behalf of the poor and marginalized and for
the sake of justice should especially resonate with a post-secular society and provide much common ground moving forward. Because of its uniqueness in subject matter and perspective, this Handbook is a valuable complement to earlier foundational works like Kim & Day's *A Companion to Public Theology* and T&T Clark’s own *Public Theology for the 21st Century* and deserves a place on the shelf and syllabus.

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