

PREFACE FOR THE WEBSITE FOR THE TWO VOLUMES OF MODERN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Teachers and students of modern Christian thought long have recognized the need for a comprehensive text for students studying this important field. The two volumes of *Modern Christian Thought*—the one on *The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century* and the other on *The Twentieth Century*—are meant to meet the growing interest in and need for such a text. There are books that survey the history of modern Christianity but do little justice to the extremely important and influential theologians, philosophers, and eminent writers who not only have written about the development of Christian thought since the eighteenth century but also have profoundly influenced the directions and movements of Christian thought in modernity to the present day.

There are books that focus exclusively on selected Catholic theologians and scholars and books on their Protestant counterparts during the past two or three hundred years. The two volumes of *Modern Christian Thought* examine thoroughly, yet succinctly, the major movements and thinkers in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions during this critical era. Furthermore, the elucidation and interpretation of each thinker's ideas are rooted in the primary sources and extensive illustrative quotations from these sources so that the reader can be engaged by the thinker's own ideas and meaning.

Modern Christian Thought also includes analysis of thinkers who have played important roles in the development of modern interpretations of modern Christian thought but who are often overlooked or given insufficient attention. This explains why these two volumes include thinkers such as Voltaire and the philosophers David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, William James, and Karl Marx. While not confessional Christians, their philosophical work and ideas cannot be understood fully without reference to Christianity. More importantly, Christian thought reveals the influence of their ideas and acute criticisms.

The author hopes that the website for both volumes will be of genuine service in introducing readers in some detail to the general plan of the books and to specific movements, themes, and thinkers discussed in each chapter. As you will see, the text gives special attention to developments in biblical, constructive, historical, philosophical, and socio-political theology in the modern era, that is, with the encounters between Christian thought and modern historical criticism, philosophy, the natural sciences, as well as with social, political, and cultural currents. The above are crucial to our understanding of both modern Western civilization and developments in Christian thought itself.

—James C. Livingston