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## RESEARCH IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: FINDING CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

### STEP ONE: GETTING STARTED

For the doctrine, locus, or movement under investigation, read an overview article in a theological **dictionary or encyclopedia**, noting references in the article or bibliography to key authors and texts in the formulation of this doctrine.

(See also “Finding English Translations of the Writings of the Early Church Fathers” elsewhere in this guide)

A few theological dictionaries/encyclopedias well suited to this task:

#### **The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church**

**BR95.O912 1997 Ref.**

Best for persons and movements, but also contains articles on theological topics from an historical perspective. Bibliographic references.

#### **The Encyclopedia of Christianity**

**BR95.E91213 Ref. 5 vols.**

When complete this English version of the *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon* will be a major source of information on the entire sweep of Christian history and doctrine.

#### **New Dictionary of Theology**

**BR95.N492 Ref.**

Solid articles containing references to doctrinal formulations in classic and contemporary works.

#### **The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought**

**BR95.B56 Ref.**

Summaries of contemporary (post-Enlightenment) thinking with references to authors and texts.

#### **The Encyclopedia of Early Christianity**

**BR162.2.E63 1997 Ref. 2 vols.**

Excellent articles and bibliographies on all aspects of the early Christian world. Ample references to the writings of Church Fathers on doctrinal issues.

#### **The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation**

**BR302.8.O93 Ref. 4 vols.**

Helpful discussions of major topics of theological concern during the Reformation. Bibliographies.

For more options, the basic classification number for theological dictionaries is **BR95**. In the catalog, the main subject heading to use is **THEOLOGY—DICTIONARIES**.

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## STEP TWO: CATALOG SEARCH

A **subject heading** search in the catalog is a good way to locate secondary sources which in turn will lead to discovering primary authors and texts.

### EXAMPLE:

Suppose you are working with the doctrine of original sin. In the **Basic Search** mode type "original sin" in the **Subject** field. Note that this leads to a 'See' reference to the authorized form of the heading "**SIN, ORIGINAL**". Redirect the search by clicking on the link to this heading

Pay close attention to the variety of subdivisions associated with this heading, in particular those which relate to the history of the doctrine:

#### **SIN, ORIGINAL**

- Biblical teaching
- Early works to 1800
- **History of doctrines**
- **History of doctrines – 16<sup>th</sup> century**
- **History of doctrines – 17<sup>th</sup> century**
- **History of doctrines – Early church, ca. 30-600**

(For an authorized list of Library of Congress Subject Headings, see the 5 volume set of red books at the Reference Desk)

## STEP THREE: INTO THE BOOK STACKS

With call numbers in hand, find the books on the shelf identified by the subject search above.

- a) Check the **indexes** of the books for references to authors and primary works which helped to define the doctrine.
- b) Return to the catalog to find these works in our library.
- c) Also consider browsing the books shelved to either side of those you found to determine if there are others which would do an equally good job in referencing original sources.

## [Possible] STEP FOUR: DATABASE SEARCHING FOR ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

The best source for finding journal articles or essays in books on religious/theological topics is the **ATLA Religion Database**. A guide to searching this database is available on the library web site.

A good technique for searching this database combines a subject heading with a keyword(s) or keyword phrase.

EXAMPLE: **SIN ORIGINAL** (Subject phrase) combined with **enlightenment** (keyword) or “**jonathan edwards**” (keyword phrase)

Find the article or essay and consult the notes or bibliography to determine the original sources for the development of the doctrine or topic. Use MARTIN to locate these sources.

Other journal article databases to try are (see list of databases under “Digital Resources”):

### Religious and Theological Abstracts

Keyword search the FULL TEXT of citations and abstracts

EXAMPLE: **fathers AND sin AND original**

### Academic Search Premier

Try searching by subject using Subject Terms tab.

EXAMPLE: Type **sin**, browse list of headings and check those that fit best. Click “Add” and then “Search.” If the resulting list is too long, click the “Refine Search” tab and add qualifying terms

**Web Sites . . . consider these web sources for online texts:**

### Christian Classics Ethereal Library

<http://www.ccel.org>

A source for many public domain texts including works of the Church Fathers in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ANF) and *Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers* (NPNF) sets

### Early Christian Writings

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/>

Contains additional Patristic texts not included in the ANF and NPNF sets.

### New Advent Catholic Web Site

<http://www.newadvent.org>

A point of access to the text of the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, writings of the Church Fathers, and the 1917 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*

## **Finding English Translations of the Writings of the Early Church Fathers**

References to the works of the patristic writers are often made to their location in standard critical editions in their original Greek and Latin (e.g. the Corpus Christianorum series, Sources Chretiennes, etc.) Locating an English translation of works by the Church Fathers can be difficult without a guide. Fortunately there are several excellent guides to the writings of the Fathers, providing a listing of locations both in the original languages and in translation. Some of the standard guides contained in our reference collection are listed below.

### **“Augustine’s Works (Abbreviations, Titles, Editions, and Translations)” in *Augustine Through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*. p. xxxv-xlii.**

**BR65.A74 A93 Ref.**

A clear, easy-to-use table indicating locations of Augustine’s writings in English translation as well as standard critical editions.

### **Keller, Adalbert. *Translationes Patristicae Graecae et Latinae*. 2 vols.**

**BR60.K44 Ref.**

A recently published guide to the location of standard editions and translations of Patristic works.

### **Quasten, Johannes. *Patrology*. 4 vols.**

**BR67.Q3**

Not only a guide to texts and translations, but also an excellent commentary on them.