Baby boomers still run much of the world, and sadly, their greatest theologian has already died. John Webster, who passed away in May 2016, played an important role in the English-speaking Christian world. His singular achievement was to become an expositor rather than a conceptual innovator, a dogmatic theologian rather than that very modern theological figure, the creative and revisionary systematician. I count myself fortunate to have spent my formative years learning from him.

Born in 1955, Webster was a laconic Yorkshireman and low-church Anglican who had little regard for the pomp and pretension of upper-class English life. Educated at Cambridge University, he held teaching posts in Durham University and Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto, after which he was appointed Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford. His time in Oxford was not happy, and when the opportunity arose, he went north to the austere precincts of Aberdeen, Scotland, to take up a teaching post at the university there. In the final years before his untimely death, he taught at the University of St. Andrews.

His professional pilgrimage was matched by his intellectual one. Webster was trained in the dialectical fireworks of Barthian theology. His early scholarship grappled with the theology of Eberhard Jiingel, a German figure of stature in the generation that succeeded Barth. But over the course of his career, he educated himself back into the classical tradition of Protestant scholasticism as an extension of patristic and medieval Christianity. At the time of his death, he was the most eminent proponent of an unapologetically Protestant project of ressourcement, the "return to the sources" that had done so much to renew Roman Catholic theology in the twentieth century.

Webster's theology is best understood in terms of three themes. First, Webster insisted that theology begins with God. In this respect, he always remained in agreement with Karl Barth. But the second theme marked a departure from Barth (at least as the great Swiss theologian is typically understood). Webster came to insist that Christian theology, which begins with God, must discipline its reflection with metaphysics. His third theme is the central role of exposition. The theologian is not critical or creative. The Word of God is both of those things, and to a far greater degree than any human can be. If the theologian, therefore, wishes to participate in God's critical and creative power, he must "hear, read, mark, and inwardly digest" God's Word. Theology is, first and foremost, commentary. In each of these respects, Webster cut against cultural trends, not just in the wider Western world but in mainstream Christian theology.

Karl Barth's reputation was made by his explosive commentary on Romans, which one review called a "bomb on the playground of theologians." In that work, Barth spoke vividly of God and God's action in transforming our world over against the liberal platitudes of human progress. Decades later, John Webster likewise took up the theme of the priority of God's action and challenged the often human-centered methods that...
John Webster as Theological Essayist (with a note on Sapientia). Sapientia emerged as an idea just over a year ago. It was conceived as a hybrid digital periodical, intended to harness the best of news rags, academic journals, and the emerging digital communication within the venue of an academic center (the Henry Center). The below group of theologians have benefited from Webster’s life and theology, and represent past students, colleagues, theological peers, and friends. They have each been asked to select an article of John’s that was either influential in their own thinking or perceived as significant in the wider theological landscape. Each review article is thus focused less on a comprehensive summary and critique than on the context and impact of the argument. John Bainbridge Webster FRSE (1955–2016) was an English Anglican priest and theologian writing in the area of systematic, historical, and moral theology. Born in Mansfield, England, on 20 June 1955, he was educated at the independent Bradford Grammar School and at the University of Cambridge. After a distinguished career, he died at his home in Scotland on 25 May 2016 at the age of 60. At the time of his death, he was the Chair of Divinity at St. Mary’s College, University of St Andrews, Scotland. Dr. R. Michael Allen. John Dyer Trimble Professor of Systematic Theology • Academic Dean. Resident Faculty | Orlando. Resources by Dr. R. Michael Allen. Dr. Allen’s research interests range widely over the topics of Christian doctrine. His long-term writing project will be a four-volume systematic theology to be published with Baker Academic. He is currently writing the first volume, entitled The Living and True God. He is working on two volumes regarding the theology of the late John Webster: preparing an annotated reader of primary sources and then co-editing a companion of interpretive essays. With Dr. Scott Swain, he serves as general editor of the T & T Clark International Theological Commentary series and the New Studies in Dogmatics series for Zondervan Academic. John Webster (theologian). From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. John Webster. FRSE. Born. (1955-06-20)20 June 1955. Mansfield, England. Died. Oliver O'Donovan - The Trinity and the Moral Life (In Memory of John Webster). Paul Davies - Why are Science and Theology so Fascinating? Transcription. Contents. 1 Career. 2 Theological commorancy. 3 Selected works.