



# Southwestern

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY



Christian Higher Education  
in the Baptist Tradition





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## BOOK NOTES

It would be our wish that we had opportunity and space in each issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* to provide full-length book reviews for each book worthy of such engagement. Since, however, that it is not possible, we want to bring to the attention of *SWJT* readers a brief overview of several key 2019 publications.

### THEOLOGY AND APOLOGETICS

Among the numerous significant volumes published in recent months in the field of theology are two fine additions to the highly regarded Foundations of Evangelical Theology series, edited by John Feinberg and published by Crossway. In *Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons*, Graham A. Cole demonstrates once again why he is considered a trusted theological voice for our time. Bringing his careful research and wide-ranging interaction with major theological voices throughout the centuries alongside his own fresh theological engagement, Cole applies his superb theological skills to the oft-neglected themes of angels, Satan, and demons. Moreover, this thoughtfully designed and accessible volume offers several treatments of controversial subjects and challenging biblical texts, providing readers an opportunity to learn from Cole's insightful wisdom.

In *Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin*, Thomas McCall invites us to join him as he thoughtfully guides us through a thorough and careful exploration of the doctrine of sin from biblical, historical, philosophical, theological, pastoral, and practical perspectives. Serious interaction with the biblical text and with other key thinkers through the centuries by this first-rate theologian provides the context for the author's own wrestling with the personal, societal, private, and public aspects of this challenging area of theology. Offering careful exegesis of the central biblical texts on this subject, McCall serves as a judicious and astute guide through the issues of original sin, guilt, corruption, and the multiple dimensions of

sin. In doing so, he avoids the trap of popular psychobabble while, with pastoral sensitivities, leading readers to a deeper and more thoroughly biblical understanding of the misery of sin, idolatry, transgression, and depravity. McCall helps us all to gain a more theologically informed grasp of the important issues of humanity and our desperate need for rescue, redemption, forgiveness, and salvation.

Three systematic theology textbooks, worthy of our attention, have been published within the past year. Ben C. Blackwell and Randy L. Hatchett, both of Houston Baptist University, have written a commendable introductory volume titled *Engaging Theology: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan). Daniel Treier's *Introducing Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker) has attracted the attention of the broader evangelical community. *Systematic Theology*, by Robert Letham (Wheaton: Crossway), has received a glowing reception from Reformed thinkers. An important contribution to the field of biblical theology comes from two productive Southwestern Seminary alums and Ouachita Baptist University faculty members, Daniel Hayes and Scott Duvall. It is a delight to recommend their perspicacious work, *God's Relational Presence: The Cohesive Center of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker).

Albert Mohler, one of the outstanding theological thinkers of this generation as well as one of the influential leaders in Southern Baptist life, has provided a thoughtful, insightful, and biblically informed commentary on *The Apostles' Creed: Discovering Authentic Christianity in an Age of Counterfeits* (Nashville: Nelson). Offering a clearly written and incisive introduction to this historic confessional statement, this volume clarifies for readers the meaning of the essential truths of the Christian faith. Readers will be informed, instructed, and illumined by this helpful book, and students will be grateful for its conviction and wisdom. Two other works connect with this important tradition. Matt Jensen offers a nice overview of the development of theology through the centuries with his *Theology in the Democracy of the Dead: A Dialogue with the Living Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker). Gavin Ortlund convincingly makes the case for why such dialogue matters with his *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals* (Wheaton: Crossway).

Kirk Macgregor extends that conversation with a focus on more recent theological voices: *Contemporary Theology: An Introduction: Classical, Evangelical, Philosophical, and Global Perspectives* (Grand Rapids:

Zondervan). Lexham Press has reintroduced Carl F. H. Henry to this generation with two volumes: *Architect of Evangelicalism: Essential Essays of Carl F. H. Henry* along with an edited volume on the *Basics of the Faith: An Evangelical Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, which was initially published more than five decades ago. The new edition includes a fresh and sagacious introduction from Kevin J. Vanhoozer.

Glenn R. Kreider and Michael J. Svelg, with much wisdom, have written *A Practical Primer on Theological Method: Table Manners for Discussing God, His Works and His Ways* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan). Keith Whitfield has edited a fine book of essays on *Trinitarian Theology: Theological Models and Doctrinal Applications* (Nashville: B&H), which includes an exceptional essay by Malcolm Yarnell on the influence of Trinitarian theology on theological anthropology.

Michael Horton's two-volume work on *Justification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018) is a vitally important contribution to the subject. Craig Ott has written an excellent work called *Church on Mission: A Biblical Vision for the Transformation of All People* (Grand Rapids: Baker). At least three other works from Southern Baptist theologians are worthy of our attention: *Reenchanting Humanity* (Mentor/Christian Focus), by Owen Strachan; *Shalom Yesterday, Today, and Forever* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock); and an edited volume by Matthew Barrett, *The Doctrine on Which the Church Stands or Falls* (Wheaton: Crossway), which includes a persuasive introduction from D. A. Carson.

*Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion* (Wheaton: Crossway), by Rebecca McLaughlin, is an outstanding book that should receive a wide readership. James Emery White has written a winsome volume called *Christianity for People Who Aren't Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker). Alister McGrath has offered an intriguing approach with his *Narrative Apologetics: Sharing the Relevance, Joy, and Wonder of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker)

## **BIBLICAL STUDIES**

Moving from the category of theology and apologetics to biblical studies, readers will want to examine *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: IVP), by Kevin Chen. Chen adapts and expands the methodology of John Sailhimer to illuminate the meaning of the Mosaic writings. This widely engaging book contends that the network of Messianic prophecies can be understood as a complex array of interrelated

lenses designed and intended to project a coherent, sweeping vision of the Messiah at the center of their theological message. While wrestling with a variety of complex hermeneutical issues associated with his approach, Chen thoughtfully contends that these intertextual relationships point to the presence of an authorially intended unified Messianic theology in the Pentateuch. Offering perspectives on prophecy, typology, progressive revelation, and repetition, this volume offers readers much to consider with the hope of enabling biblical interpreters to read, understand, teach, and proclaim the Word of God in a more coherent and faithful manner.

Craig Keener's creative and brilliant work on the Gospels, *Christobiography: Memory, History, and the Reliability of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) deserves high praise. As is true for almost all of the Asbury scholar's prolific work, there is much to commend in Keener's commentary on *Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Baker). *Jesus, Skepticism, and the Problem of History: Criteria and Context in the Study of Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), edited by Darrell L. Bock and J. Ed Komoszewski, contains a number of excellent and persuasive essays. *Can We Trust the Gospels?* (Wheaton: Crossway), by Peter J. Williams, provides thoughtful and well-reasoned responses to the pressing questions associated with the first four New Testament books.

Readers will not want to miss James M. Houston and Bruce K. Waltke's *The Psalms as Christian Praise* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans). Profound insights may be found in Christopher J. H. Wright's *Knowing God through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP). Kenneth A. Mathews has penned a careful exegetical study on *Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People* (Wheaton: Crossway). Also, worthy of note is the *Handbook on Acts and Paul's Letters*, by Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Baker). The discerning study on *Hebrews* (Nashville: B&H), by Dana Harris, and the astute work on *Ephesians* (Downers Grove: IVP), by Darrell Bock, are both impressive.

Crossway has released two fine volumes in their *ESV Expository Commentary: John-Acts* (Brian Vickers) and *1 Samuel-2 Chronicles* (John Mackay, Gary Miller, and John Olley). Brad Green and Lee Gatiss have collaborated on the volume on *1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* in the multi-volume Reformation Commentary Series, edited by Timothy George (Downers Grove: IVP).

## ETHICS, CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW, CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT, AND PHILOSOPHY

Turning to the areas of ethics, Christian worldview, cultural engagement, and philosophy, we find that Jacob Shatzer has provided genuine help to inform our thinking about issues related to *Transhumanism and the Image of God* (Downers Grove: IVP). In this volume, Shatzer grapples with the potential for technology to transform the way we think about what it means to be human in light of the doctrine of the incarnation. Guidance is provided for topics such as artificial intelligence, robotics, medical technology, and other matters. Jemar Tisby has given us a challenging book with a revealing title: *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan).

*The Gospel of Our King: Bible, Worldview, and the Mission of Every Christian* (Grand Rapids: Baker), by Bruce Ashford and Heath Thomas, is a superb introduction to worldview thinking for students and church leaders. C. Stephen Evans has added *Kierkegaard and Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) to his ongoing contributions regarding the intriguing Danish thinker. The topic of religious liberty remains at the forefront of conversations related to matters of the public square. Two valuable works published in recent months are Luke Goodrich's *Free to Believe* (Portland: Multnomah) and *Liberty in the Things of God: The Christian Origins of Religious Freedom*, by Robert Louis Wilken (New Haven: Yale University Press).

## CHURCH HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

A number of fine works in the field of church history have recently made their way beyond the publishers' workrooms. Scott Manetsch, the brilliant Reformation scholar, has edited a significant collection of essays on the Reformers and their engagement with Scripture with the title, *The Reformation and the Irrepressible Word of God* (Downers Grove: IVP). Mark David Hall's work on early American history, *Did America Have a Christian Founding?* (Nashville: Nelson), is balanced, nuanced, and insightful. Thomas Kidd seems to write books faster than most of us can read them. Two quality works can be added to the list: *Who is an Evangelical? The History of a Movement in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press) and *America's Religious History: Faith, Politics, and the Shaping of a Nation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan).

Hal Poe has written *Becoming C. S. Lewis: A Biography of Young Jack*



*Lewis, 1898-1918* (Wheaton: Crossway). This brilliant story is the first of a projected three-volume series on the life of Lewis. Grant Wacker has added *One Soul at a Time: The Story of Billy Graham* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) to his previous work on Mr. Graham. Two moving accounts can be found in the courageous autobiographical stories of Rachael Denhollander, *What is a Girl Worth?* (Wheaton: Tyndale), and Andrew Brunson (with Craig Borlase), *God's Hostage: A True Story of Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Baker).

### **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND DISCIPLESHIP**

Since this issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* concentrates on themes of Christian higher education and discipleship, we will conclude our survey by noting contributions to this field. Edward P. Meadors is to be congratulated on bringing together an array of gifted thinkers to produce *Where Wisdom May Be Found: The Eternal Purpose of Christian Higher Education* (Eugene: Pickwick). Maintaining that the purpose of education is to cultivate eternal wisdom through the integration and interrelatedness of the various disciplines across the curriculum, the contributors skillfully amplify this theme for biblical and theological studies, the humanities, the arts, the sciences, and the various professional programs. This treasured resource is impressive in its scope, thematic in its focus, and compelling in its presentation. Freddy Cardoza and a strong group of contributors have put together a useful guide on *Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker). Two other beneficial volumes, among others that could be included in our survey, are Kevin Vanhoozer's *Hearers and Doers: A Pastor's Guide to Making Disciples through Scripture and Doctrine* (Bellingham: Lexham) as well as *Discipling in a Multicultural World* (Wheaton: Crossway), by Ajith Fernando. We will look forward to extending this conversation and expanding the topics for consideration in the fall 2020 issue of *SWJT*.

David S. Dockery