



# Southwestern

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Theology Applied



## BOOK NOTES

We continue with the overview of notable works that have been published in recent months, a feature initiated in the previous issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*. Doing so allows us to bring to the attention of our readers additional significant titles from various fields. “Theology Applied” has served as the theme for this issue and we will give greater attention to books that fall into this broad category, beginning with Christian worldview and cultural engagement.

### CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

A number of key works in this area are truly noteworthy. In *The Gathering Storm* (Nashville: Nelson, 2020), R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary, brilliantly addresses the primary worldview, cultural, and moral challenges of our day, showing us why these issues are so critical for us to comprehend. Recognizing that all too often Christians have struggled to grasp the far-reaching implications of these matters, this timely and theologically informed volume enables us to see with greater clarity the advances of secularization in all spheres of life. Moreover, Mohler, one of the twenty-first century’s most incisive Christian thinkers, offers wise counsel and cultural commentary connected with an urgent warning about what is really at stake for individuals, families, churches, and the culture at-large. This excellent book will benefit pastors, Christian educators, and laypersons across the land.

*Cultural Intelligence: Living for God in a Diverse, Pluralistic World* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), by Darrell Bock, longtime professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, presents us with a timely perspective on the numerous challenges of our day. Bock, who is widely recognized as one of the finest evangelical biblical scholars of our generation, offers keen insights into the meaning of the relevant biblical texts, allowing us the opportunity to hear his heart as he provides important application to guide believers toward faithful discipleship in this fallen

world in which we live. After providing helpful framing of our current context and culture, Bock calls for individual Christians, churches, and the Christian community at-large to engage and renew the culture in a grace-filled manner. Believing that cultural intelligence can only be developed with biblical conviction and Spirit-enabled kindness, Bock encourages believers to prioritize God's reconciling work in the world through Jesus Christ, along with the themes of hope, love, and the transformational power of the gospel. I pray that believers will reflect the fruit of the Spirit called for in Bock's fine work as we all seek to put into practice the author's wise counsel.

Wherever one finds oneself in the debate related to Christians and social justice, *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask about Social Justice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020) by Thaddeus Williams, will offer wise guidance to these exceedingly challenging issues. Framed by a series of thoughtful questions, this important work seeks to address the pressing social issues of the day with the assistance of a dozen conversation partners. The helpful addendums at the conclusion of the book provide additional insight and clarity. This certainly could not have been an easy book to compile but Williams, a seasoned faculty member at Biola University, is to be commended for his courage in offering this roadmap for his readers. Anyone who wishes to engage in the debate regarding social justice in the days ahead will find *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth* to be an essential prerequisite to that discussion. *The Age of AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), by Jason Thacker, who serves as associate research fellow and creative director for the Ethics and Religions Liberty Commission, is a superb book written to provide guidance for Christians as we develop, utilize, and interact with artificial intelligence in our families, work, and society. Thacker contends that we do not have the luxury of waiting to see how this technology will affect us. He calls for us to engage these technologies instead of waiting to see how they will impact our communities. Another engaging volume addressing similar themes is David Zahl's *Seculosity: How Career, Parenting, Technology, Food, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What to Do about It* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2019). Those interested in these pressing issues will not want to miss Jonathan Cole's *Christian Political*

*Theology in an Age of Discontent: Mediating Scripture, Doctrine, and Political Reality* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019).

## **THEOLOGY, ETHICS, AND APOLOGETICS**

One need not agree with all aspects of Adam Neder's theological framework to appreciate much that is found in *Theology as a Way of Life: On Teaching and Learning the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019). The same can be said for the volume edited by Tim Perry, who has gathered a group of outstanding Protestant theologians to explore *The Theology of Benedict XVI* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019). Members of the Southwestern Seminary family will not want to miss the third volume in *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr., 1950-2015* (Eugene, OR: Resource, 2019), which focuses on themes related to ecclesiology. We salute Wyman Richardson for his efforts to bring together this important material for the Baptist and evangelical communities. A marvelous resource by Donald Fairbairn and Ryan Reeves has been carefully and cohesively put together to tell *The Story of Creeds and Confessions: Tracing the Development of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019).

Ken Magnuson, the newly elected executive director of the Evangelical Theological Society, has offered a splendid service to the evangelical community with his biblically grounded and thoughtfully reasoned *Invitation to Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020). Readers will be especially grateful for the clarity this capably researched and accessible volume brings to such a host of wide-ranging issues. All who wish to understand and engage the numerous ethical challenges in our current context will find Magnuson's work to be an excellent guide. Though some may find a place to differ here or there with such a wide array of topics, all will benefit from this even-handed, thorough, informative, and careful presentation. Those who take time to work through this helpful volume will find it to be worthy of serious reflection and consideration. Mary Eberstadt expands her years of work in the area of ethics and cultural engagement with *Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton, 2019). *God, Morality, and Beauty: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Ethics, Aesthetics, and the Problem of Evil* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019) by Randall B. Bush, professor of philosophy at Union University, is an ambitious project

that seeks to bring the conversation related to the good, the true, and the beautiful into coherence by providing a vision of reality, and trajectory for future discussion, under the authority of a transcendent and Trinitarian God.

Many of us have been looking forward to the arrival of *The History of Apologetics: A Biographical and Methodological Introduction*, edited by Benjamin K. Forrest, Joshua D. Chatraw, and Alister E. McGrath (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020). This wonderful resource is a gold mine of information, a rich resource that will serve students as well as seasoned scholars for years to come. Chatraw has also given us *Telling a Better Story: How to Talk about God in a Skeptical Age* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020). Chatraw has clearly become one of the most significant thinkers and strategists regarding issues of apologetics in the twenty-first century. Winsome and persuasive, this volume should be a high priority on one's reading list.

Thoughtful engagement with the challenging issues of faith and science is readily available in *Darwin Devolving* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2019), by Michael Behe, as well as *A Worldview Approach to Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2019), by Carol Hill. Todd Charles Wood, Darrel R. Falk, and Rob Barrett have given us a model to follow for how to discuss our differences on these matters in an irenic manner in *The Fool and the Heretic: How Two Scientists Moved beyond Labels to a Christian Dialogue about Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020). Even as we seek to find more charitable ways to talk about these difficult issues, we must not forget that there are also truth issues at stake in these conversations.

## **BIBLICAL STUDIES**

The new *Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020) has been edited by J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, two esteemed faculty members at Ouachita Baptist University and alumni of Southwestern Seminary. The editors have assembled a first-class team of biblical scholars to explore the important background material related to both the Old Testament and the New. More than merely a survey of dates, times, places, people, and events, as significant as these things may be, the *Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* provides illumination to challenging and perplexing interpretive issues, guiding readers to fresh understandings

of the biblical text. Drawing on recent archaeological findings and insights from ancient sources, the informative articles, combined with the well-researched textual commentary, provide a rich resource for students, teachers, and pastors. As an added bonus, the book is helpfully and beautifully illustrated. Hays has also provided the church with a terrific resource titled *A Christian's Guide to Evidence for the Bible: 101 Proofs from History and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020). We salute and applaud Professor Hays for putting together this beautifully illustrated volume, which, with great thoughtfulness, clarity, and organizational skill, illuminates key literary, historical, and geographical aspects of challenging biblical texts related to 101 people, places, and events. Drawing on his years of teaching, research, and travel, Hays has provided a marvelous gift for students, teachers, and scholars of both the Old and New Testaments.

*Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), by Andreas Köstenberger with Richard D. Patterson, which was originally released in 2011, has been updated and expanded in this second edition. This volume offers insightful guidance for interpreters of Holy Scripture with its focus on the “hermeneutical triad.” This encyclopedic and monumental publication has been improved with new material on the biblical canon and a renewed recognition of the importance of theology for serious interpretation. Additional thoughts have been added to the chapters on application and proclamation as well. The masterful organizational design and skillful pedagogical emphasis, combined with the helpful and informative bibliographies, make this book a rich and rewarding resource for students, scholars, and pastors. We also want to mention Mark Gignilliat’s fine work on *Reading Scripture Canonically* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019) and the significant introduction to the history, literature, and theology of the early church, which can be found in *The New Testament and Its World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), by N.T. Wright and Michael Bird.

## **CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND MISSIONS**

With the publication of *Excellence in Online Education* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), Kristen Ferguson has solidified her role as a shaping leader and strategic voice among Christian educators in the design, delivery, and management of online education. Providing helpful

guidance for both faculty and administrators in the various aspects of online education, Ferguson simultaneously offers a persuasive case to those who continue to doubt the validity of this educational approach. Ferguson brings together a distinctive vision for mission faithfulness and theological fidelity while offering a thoughtful proposal for developing Christian community and spiritual formation in an online format. While Christian educators will need to continue to wrestle with and engage the ongoing questions and challenging issues associated with online education, particularly in a post-COVID-19 context, Ferguson has given us a framework around which we can have these important conversations. *We Evangelicals and Our Mission* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020) is a posthumous publication from the pen of David Hesselgrave, the longtime faculty member and missiologist at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. This important book, which echoes themes found elsewhere in Hesselgrave's writings, offers a stirring call to theological and confessional fidelity as an essential foundation for faithfulness in global mission efforts. While not everyone will agree with the examples cited by Hesselgrave, this important work, which began as a conversation with his granddaughter, is a much needed and timely work.

## **PASTORAL MINISTRY AND APPLIED THEOLOGY**

Combining rich insights from years of pastoral experience with a theologically shaped and biblically informed approach to ministry, Phil Newton, who has served as pastor of the South Woods Baptist Church in Germantown, Tennessee for more than three decades, has provided readers with a welcomed addition to Kregel's *40 Questions* series. Ministers need not agree with Newton's distinctive theological and ecclesiological convictions to profit from reading this thoughtful and applicable handbook on pastoral ministry. *40 Questions about Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020) will serve as a valuable resource and helpful guide for pastors at various stages of their ministries. Another wise and beneficial work on Christian ministry. *The Politics of Ministry: Navigating Power Dynamics and Negotiating Interests* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2019), has been co-authored by Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie. Eric Redmond has edited an important volume with a Foreword by Charlie Dates called *Say It!: Celebrating Expository Preaching in the African American*

*Tradition* (Chicago: Moody, 2020).

Other volumes worthy of at least a brief mention under the wide and varied category of applied theology include *On the Road with Saint Augustine: A Real World Spirituality for Restless Hearts* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019), by James K. A. Smith; *Biblical Spirituality* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), edited by Christopher Morgan; *Work* (Philipsburg: P&R, 2019), by Daniel Doriani; *Becoming Whole: Why the Opposite of Poverty Isn't the American Dream* (Chicago: Moody, 2019), by Brian Fikkert and Kelly M. Kopic; *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook & Multnomah, 2019), by Latasha Morrison; and *He Calls Me Friend: The Healing Power of Friendship in a Broken World* (Chicago: Moody, 2019), by John Perkins with Karen Waddles.

We look forward to the opportunity to continue this conversation in the next issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*.

David S. Dockery  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Fort Worth, TX