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A REVIEW ESSAY OF

A THEOLOGY FOR THE CHURCH

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Review Essays

A Review Essay of *A Theology for the Church*. Edited by Daniel L. Akin, with David P. Nelson and Peter R. Schemm, Jr. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007). 979 pages. Hardcover, \$49.99.

The contributors to *A Theology for the Church* share a common background, hold a common purpose, and follow a similar structure in their essays. Yet, in spite of the unity of source, purpose, and structure, there is an incredible diversity evident in the text. First, as to background, each of the authors are committed Southern Baptists and highly educated. Amongst them are research doctoral degrees from Cambridge University, Harvard University, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Oxford University, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the University of Texas at Arlington. Moreover, many of the authors have not only spent considerable time in the academy, but also in leading local churches. Second, as to purpose, the editors set the goal before each writer to construct a theology intended for the church. The writers were enlisted because of their demonstrated passion for contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. They each set out to defend theological truth against error, indicating how “doctrine and life” or “faith and practice” are unified within the church (vii). Third, as to structure, the authors were assigned responsibility to consider four major questions. These questions follow a highly significant order, beginning explicitly with Scripture and proceeding through history and system to practice:

1. What does the Bible say?
2. What has the church believed?
3. How does it all fit together?
4. What is the significance of the doctrine for the church today?

In the following review essay, an equally capable and committed group of Southern Baptist theologians, each of whom teaches theology in one of the schools of the Southern Baptist Convention, provide a critique of *A Theology for the Church*, considering each chapter in turn. Our hope in publishing such an extended review essay is to demonstrate the communal nature of theology that exists within the believers’ church tradition of the

Southern Baptist Convention. The reviewers do not always agree with the authors on every particular conclusion, and probably would have written similar chapters with varying degrees of diversity. However, there is still a sense of ecclesial and theological community in what the authors originally brought together by Daniel L. Akin and David Dockery have produced, a sense of community in which the reviewers share and which the reviewers wish to supplement. The following reviews are organized according to the original eight sections and 14 chapters.

Section 1, The Doctrine of Revelation

Chapter 1, “Prolegomena: Introduction to the Task of Theology,” by Gregory Alan Thornbury (Reviewed by Malcolm B. Yarnell III)

Gregory Alan Thornbury is Dean of the School of Christian Studies at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, and a prolific author in the fields of philosophical theology and cultural engagement. The introductory chapter demonstrates the attractive mind and compelling style of this college professor. What strikes the reader immediately, however, is that Thornbury departed from the order submitted to the writers by adding a section. This intrusion, an investigation of the concept of truth, comes first and is developed in such a way as to give the prolegomena a fundamentally Reformed character. Where the other chapters begin with a short introduction followed by an in-depth treatment of relevant Scripture passages, Thornbury begins with a philosophical foundation that treats Scripture secondarily and minimally, although affirmatively. Working through the ancient, modern, and post-modern debates, he defines truth as “that which corresponds to reality; it is the opposite of falsehood,” and “truth comes from God” (5).

In the biblical section, Thornbury discusses various passages under the categories of the existence of God and the human mind, the Bible’s radical claim that God is the source of all truth and knowledge, the nature of the created order making knowledge possible, and the Christian’s intellectual challenge to love God with the whole mind. In the historical section, the author opines, “philosophical systems and ground rules have always been deeply embedded” in theology (21). However, he then relates that in the early church there was a struggle over philosophical theology, with Tertullian arguing against and Origen for incorporation. A separate section is devoted to Augustine and the medieval synthesis of theology and philosophy, but Thomas Aquinas, William of Occam, and the Reformers are tellingly treated together. The Enlightenment and the growth of liberalism are granted separate sections. The section on the Baptists is conflated

with Reformed Evangelicalism, beginning with Herman Bavinck rather than a Baptist, and those Baptists that are treated have been primarily devoted to the Reformed project of philosophical theology. Thornbury laments the “phenomenon of philosophical followership” among Southern Baptists (50), yet could be accused of having followed the same pattern.

In the systematic section, Thornbury describes divine revelation as “*the fundamental epistemological axiom of Christianity*” (his italics, 53). Theology itself is described as “the study of God organized in an orderly manner that seeks to portray accurately the divine reality in the light of revelation” (54). Demonstrating a typical Reformed rationalism, he then excludes the Holy Spirit from the list of doctrines in spite of pneumatology’s own separate section in this book. He describes his structure as the “traditional Protestant ordering” (54–55), but the ordering is actually rooted in the Middle Ages. After treating the concept of worldview, he concludes the systematic section by citing Erickson’s paradigm for theological construction, a paradigm that should be used to evaluate both Erickson and Thornbury (63–64). The application section mentions the need to keep the church in mind while writing theology, but Thornbury demonstrates greater interest in post-modern philosophy and cultural exegesis (64–70).

Chapter 2, “Natural Revelation,” by Russell D. Moore (Reviewed by Malcolm B. Yarnell III)

Russell Dwayne Moore is Senior Vice President for Academic Administration and Dean of the School of Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Moore’s chapter, though not the primary focus of his doctoral research, is an exemplar of careful theological construction. Moore consistently exegetes and applies Scripture from an ecclesial perspective even as he fully engages the world’s culture and its various philosophies and movements. Shaping his theological approach is a tension that Moore discovered in Scripture: “nature is the revelation of God, and this revelation is always subverted by fallen humanity” (71). He defines general revelation as “the self-disclosure of God to all rational beings, a revelation that comes through the natural creation and through the makeup of the human creature.” He defines natural theology as “the attempt to build a theological structure on the basis of general revelation apart from God’s witness in the Scriptures and in Jesus Christ” (71).

In the biblical section, Moore treats both the requisite Old Testament and New Testament passages at length. For instance, he notes that the creation narrative of Genesis 1–3 not only reveals the universe’s origin, “but explains something of the creative purpose behind such natural

phenomena" (73). Again, the Psalmist and the Prophets reveal that the "stability and predictability of the natural order is illustrative of the covenant faithfulness and unchangeable purposes of God" (76). Discussing the *Logos* concept, Moore contends that John breaks with the Hellenistic construction of the *Logos* by stressing "the creative 'Word' and 'Wisdom' motifs of the Old Testament" (80). As for the much [mis]used text of Acts 17:16–34, Moore demonstrates how Paul's citing of a pagan poet was "not a note of optimism but an indictment of Athenian paganism" (83). Finally, turning to Romans 1–3, he argues that general revelation has "a specific content, namely that God exists, He is Creator, He is powerful, He is righteous, and He is to be worshipped as God" (85). "Even in the face of universal revelation, all human beings 'suppress the truth in unrighteousness'" (87).

In the historical section, Moore says that the best Greek fathers received only certain aspects of Greek speculation regarding general revelation. Luther is noted for condemning "speculative theology," because it fails "to understand that the same texts that teach such a general revelation also teach the failure of depraved humanity to acknowledge God" (95). Moore treats Baptists and modern non-Baptist theologians separately, drawing out some of the unique concerns of Baptists, especially with regard to the mission of the church. In his systematic section, Moore affirms the reality of general revelation within nature and humanity, periodically issuing relevant reminders regarding the relationship between general revelation and theology: First, "[g]eneral revelation is not to be abstracted from Christology" (109). Second, "humanity's perception of general revelation is clouded by human depravity" (110). Third, the limits of general revelation necessitate "the special revelation of Christ and the prophetic-apostolic Scripture" (111).

Moore completes this first of his two theological essays in *A Theology for the Church* by addressing various attempts to use general revelation in the church today. He decries the attempt to use the Qur'an to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ: "It is, at best, the forgery of a false prophet, and, at worst, the dictation of a demon" (112). Scripture is a necessary instrument in the evangelization of the lost, including those in other religions: "This likewise means that our apologetic appeals must value above any other authority the claims of Scripture, the 'spectacles' through which we view general revelation" (113). His analysis of integrationist Christian psychology is not complimentary: "The theology of general revelation at the heart of the integrationist experiment, however, claims far more for general revelation and does so often at a strikingly simplistic level" (115). Yet his criticisms of the misapplications of general revelation are not intended to be taken as universal. Rather, he concludes by arguing "churches should

equip those gifted in all areas to pursue excellence, order, symmetry, and beauty—even when these disciples are not explicitly ecclesial or ‘Christian’” (116). Moore’s theology of general revelation works from a deep scriptural exegesis toward a fully engaged but chaste encounter with fallen human culture. He should receive applause for the method and the result.

Chapter 3, “Special Revelation,” by David S. Dockery and David P. Nelson (Reviewed by Jason K. Lee)

Chapter three in *A Theology for the Church* focuses on special revelation. The chapter is a collaborative effort by David S. Dockery (Union University) and David P. Nelson (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary). Admittedly, this response is written from a position of clear sympathy for the project of producing an assessable theology that might prove useful for local churches. Additionally, I have a professional respect for and personal affinity for both the editorial team and the authors of this chapter. With those notable admissions, I will attempt a critique of the chapter that is cognizant of the book’s purpose and audience.

Strengths. Like the other chapters in the work, this chapter utilizes four questions to provide the framework for discussion. In so doing, the chapter provides a useful summary of the biblical witness concerning special revelation as well as past and current discussions of the topic. Though systematic issues drive the discussion, the attention to historical and biblical material is appreciated.

The issues covered in the essay are typical ones for the subject: a working definition of special revelation, the connection between revelation and scripture, Jesus’ relationship to the Bible and then issues related to the doctrine of scripture. In regards to Scripture, attention is given to divine-human authorship and inspiration. The most extensive discussion of the chapter pertains to inspiration. As a result of inspiration, the Bible is also inerrant, truthful, authoritative, sufficient and clear. The authors discuss various theories for inspiration and then advocate the verbal, plenary position. The chapter ends with a laudable appeal for the authority of Scripture to be applied to the everyday life of Christians and the church.

Three main points seem to pervade the chapter. First, Scripture serves as the primary means of special revelation. Second, the concursive aspect of the inspired biblical text is the best descriptor of the divine and human qualities of Scripture. Third, an affirmation of the inspired quality of the biblical text instigates other successive commitments.

Weaknesses. The confessional quality of the chapter serves the admirable purpose of providing the church with a clear expression of sound doctrine. However, this confessional aspect may explain the tendency at

times for the authors to make assertions as matters of fact or to conclude a discussion, instead of a means of introducing a sustained argument. A typical line of argument goes as follows. One position is described that has weaknesses, primarily through being too extreme in a certain detail. The opposing position extends too far in the opposite direction. The position held by the authors is then put forward as the synthesis that takes into account the issues raised by the first two positions, but without the tendencies toward the extremes. However, in the concluding position, requisite details of how it exactly answers all the concerns or a sustained defense of the concluding position against its detractors are too often missing or far too brief. The authors may be right in this approach in their catechetical aim, but it sacrifices some of the scholarly dialogue that some readers might anticipate. It must be noted that this style of argument may not be a weakness of the authors as much as a limitation due to the intention of the book.

The section on the authority of Scripture has its own shortcomings as well. Though authority is described by the authors as “the ultimate concern,” it receives only two paragraphs of explanation. The second of these paragraphs seems only tangentially connected to the argument for authority (or at least is a non-sequitur) and perhaps at best serves as an application of the concept of authority rather than an argument pertaining to it. Seemingly, the style, purpose and content of the second paragraph contrast with the previous paragraph. (See pp.162–163 to note the seemingly different subject matters of the two paragraphs.)

Questions Raised. The comments on special revelation create some avenues for further discussion. Several questions aid in pressing the issues for continued exploration. First, if the canonical Scripture is so significant for the doctrine of special revelation, what view on the relationship between the testaments should be taken? Several quotations from this chapter touch on this issue, but are unable to provide the clarity needed. At one point the authors say that moving from the Old Testament to the New Testament is moving “from a lesser to a fuller revelation” (119). In what regard is the Old Testament’s revelation lesser? The Hebrews 1 reference used by the authors seems to be comparing the status of the messenger (the prophets versus Christ) not the quality of the message. Consider that the writer of Hebrews uses those texts delivered by the “prophets” to explicate the status of the Son. Perhaps “less detailed” would be a better term. (In a later section [p.124] the authors explain that the New Testament “interprets and amplifies the Old Testament.” This language is preferable to “lesser.”)

Also concerning the relationship of the testaments, in discussing the scope of inspiration, the authors assert:

This means that the Sermon on the Mount or the epistle to the Romans may be more readily recognized as inspired Scripture than the books of Esther or Chronicles. They are of equal inspiration but not of equal importance. Yet this is due in part to the subject matter. The inspiration in such historical passages assures the general characteristics of reliability that is brought to these records (143).

This quotation spurs a few questions. Is the contrast intentionally one of New Testament books with Old Testament books? What does it mean that these Old Testament books are “not of equal importance?”

Do the authors mean importance for church doctrine? For Christian living? For the canonical witness to Christ? Additionally, as the “subject matter” is mentioned, what is the subject matter of these Old Testament books? Are they simply “historical passages” that provide the quality of reliable records to the historical occurrences affecting Old Testament Israel? Or does their importance exceed their historical referents by contributing in their canonical context to the messianic expectation so vital to the Old Testament?

There may be an underlying contrast with the sections of “Jesus Christ as the Promised Messiah,” “Jesus Christ and the Old Testament,” and “Jesus Christ and the New Testament” and the other statements noted in the chapter. In these sections, there is a strong consideration of the textual Christ instead of the historical acts of Jesus. The unity of the Old Testament and the New Testament is accentuated in phrases like “The New Testament, which is rooted in the Old Testament, interprets and amplifies the Old Testament” (124). Even the life and work of Jesus is described as being “grounded in the Old Testament” as the Word of God. Also, it is noted that the “New Testament writers . . . interpreted the Old Testament as a whole and in its parts as a witness to Christ” (124–25). Those “parts” are surely not simply “historical passages” and clearly Christ is the “subject matter” to those Old Testament texts.

The second major question produced by various statements in the chapter is the relationship between special revelation and Scripture. Several statements throughout the chapter demonstrate the close connection between Scripture and special revelation. For example, the authors state about special revelation, “This revelation is available now only by consultation of sacred Scripture” (119). In a slightly different emphasis, the Bible is referred to as the “written source of God’s revelation” along with redemptive history and the work of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the authors claim, “For believers today the Bible is the source of God’s revelation” (119). While these statements point to a close connection between Scripture and special

revelation, they do not define the relationship. (See 134–37 for a historical survey in this regard. The first three sections of the historical survey center mostly on establishing a connection of inspiration and the Scripture, but do not provide much discussion on the connection of Scripture and revelation or more narrowly on historical perspectives on special revelation specifically.)

In the second example mentioned above, the discussion affirms special revelation in “three stages.” The three stages include “God’s redemptive work in history,” the Bible as “the written source,” and the “work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals and in the corporate life of the church” (120). The next statement says that the Spirit “applies God’s revelation to the minds and hearts.” Applying the revelation is distinct from a genuine contribution to new special revelation as implied in the “three stages” language. The “three stages” wording can create questions as to whether the three stages all produce the same quality of special revelation. One might also ask if stages must build on each other logically or is there simply a chronological development. If the development is chronological, is the contemporary church still in the third stage? Can any person arrive at any definitive revelation from any “stage” other than the Bible? If not, how are the other two revelatory in a specific (“special”) sense?

Other statements in the chapter create similar questions. For instance, the authors state, “Special revelation includes not only those acts in history but also the prophetic-apostolic interpretation of those events, meaning that revelation occurs in deeds and words” (120). In the progression implied in this statement, special revelation begins fundamentally in the acts and then only subsequently in the interpretation of those events. The affirmation of “special” revelation in the events of history raises the question of how these events are revelatory in a specific sense. Are these specific, revelatory events accessible through general tools such as science, history, archeology or sociological studies? Would further information about these “revelatory” events gleaned through these “general” (i.e. non-religious) tools provide more “special” revelation? If not, how are these events themselves genuinely revelatory? If so, what differentiates the special revelation discerned through general tools from that revelation exclusive to the Scripture? Also, if “special” revelation is available outside the biblical texts, can there be any requisite connection between revelation and inspiration? Furthermore, the authors assert, “The Bible is our primary source of information about Jesus.” (123. In several statements throughout the chapter the authors use “primary” or “primarily” to either soften or hedge their remarks. Cf. 120, 121, 123 [twice], 156, 159, 160 [twice] and 172.) Is the extra-canonical information about Jesus simply “information” or is it revelatory in a special sense?

The following paragraph is perhaps the most pertinent in regards to the questions raised regarding the relationship of Scripture to special revelation. The authors surmise:

While we can identify Scripture as a mode of special revelation, along with God's words and acts, it must be acknowledged that Scripture and revelation are not identical. There was special revelation that was not preserved for us in the Bible (John 21:25). On the other hand, not all of what is in the Bible is necessarily special revelation in a direct sense. Some portions of the material found in the Bible were simple matters of public knowledge, such as the list of genealogies. These most likely were matters of public domain, which could have been recorded by the biblical writers without God's having to reveal them specially. (122. The John 21:25 reference points to the authorial purpose of the book of John and his process of selectivity in composition but does not affirm extra-canonical special revelation.)

At least two major questions come from this quotation. First, what constitutes acts of God not "preserved" in Scripture as special revelation? Through His providence, God is constantly "acting" (or interacting) in regard to His creation. Are all of these acts of God ("saving" or otherwise) revelatory in a specific sense? Specifically, in regards to Jesus, do John's comments mean that all of Jesus' other activities are specially revelatory but just not recorded or an affirmation that John's writing was not intended to be a comprehensive biography. Also, would there be any access to these revelatory but non-recorded events?

Second, does the inclusion of "matters of public domain" with the canonical text give them a new dimension of special revelation not inherent in their pre-canonical source. If inspiration is a feature of the final compositional form of the canonical text, is it necessary to distinguish the qualities of the source material? Also, in the specific case of genealogical material, it could be argued that in their canonical context these genealogical "lists" have a significant revelatory effect. Matthew 1 reveals much about the promissory aspect of Jesus' work and sets the context for the idea of fulfillment so important in Matthew's gospel. The genealogies of Genesis serve an important revelatory function of showing the preservation of the seed of Eve through Noah to Abram. The Chronicler uses his genealogical lists as a means of reviewing biblical history up to the time of David, at which point the story slows to depict further detail. This genealogical

device then serves as means of showing a culmination of God's promises in the line of David.

The source of the canonical material does not determine its revelatory qualities. Luke 1 notes that this presentation of the gospel story is different than previous attempts of gospel accounts though the others may have had similar (or the same) sources, written or oral. Therefore, the quality and process of inspiration deal directly with the compositional strategy and form of the canonical text.

Finally, the latter half of the chapter focuses on the concept of inspiration and its implications. One result of the inspiration of Scripture is its truthfulness. In this discussion, the authors comment on several notions of truthfulness. The authors noted that Scripture is normative partly due to the universal condition of humanity. However, in the four reasons that follow, the third reason states that the Scriptures are "historically proximate to the saving acts of God." This reason may be helpful in defending scriptural accuracy but seems to do little in the way of establishing its normative quality.

Conclusion. Overall, this chapter provides some helpful talking points for Christian theology. The authors accomplish their purpose of providing helpful answers to the questions of members of a local congregation of believers. The emphasis on the central place that Scripture should take in the church's thinking about God and His purposes is timely and hopefully will be productive.

Section 2, The Doctrine of God

Chapter 4, "The Nature of God: Being, Attributes, and Acts," by Timothy George (Reviewed by Benjamin B. Phillips)

Timothy George, Dean of Beeson Divinity School, has provided a useful chapter on theology (proper) for *A Theology for the Church*. The essay follows the structure established throughout the book by beginning with a discussion of the Scriptural basis for the topic, describing the development of the doctrine's expression in the tradition, addressing systematic issues, and concluding with reflection on practical application derived from the doctrine.

The great strength of the chapter is that it weaves practical reflection throughout its discussion of biblical, historical, and systematic issues. For George, the doctrine of God clearly has significant impact on Christian life and ministry—it is not a matter of mere academic speculation. The essay also handles Scripture well by identifying a theme of biblical theology for each major section of the canon (though the general epistles are

skipped altogether). This strategy prevents the biblical basis section from degenerating into a mere list of texts which bear on the doctrine. In a welcome return to the pattern of some older theologies, George includes a discussion of the names of God, and uses them as a point of entry into the nature of God.

With respect to Trinity, the author affirms that the doctrine is foreshadowed in the Old Testament. His doctrine of the Trinity is western, emphasizing the Spirit as the bond of love between Father and Son (no mention is made of *filioque*, however). Furthermore, the chapter elevates the doctrine of Trinity to the front of the essay with the intent of emphasizing that everything said about the nature of God is predicated of the Triune God, not a generic theistic deity. Although there is no separate chapter on Trinity, George clearly intends that the doctrine of God's being, attributes, and acts be understood in a thoroughly Trinitarian way.

Unfortunately, the chapter fails to deliver a consistent and thoroughgoing Trinitarian doctrine of God. George does not carry the Trinitarian theme through his discussion of each major division of Scripture (giving a relatively weak defense of Trinity in the Old Testament). Though the chapter explicitly unpacks the attributes of holiness and love in terms of the Trinity, there is no mention of Trinity in the sections on eternity, omniscience, and omnipresence. Only the Father and Son are discussed with respect to omnipotence.

The historical theology section would benefit from a revision of the description of Calvin's Trinitarianism to include his major contribution to the doctrine—the idea that each of the divine Persons is *autotheos* (God of Himself). There also needs to be some mention of Baptist contribution to the doctrine. Though Baptists have historically made little unique contribution to the doctrine of Trinity, Baptists like Ware, Schemm, and Grudem are in the forefront of current developments in evangelical Trinitarian thought. These and others are doing important work exploring the functional submission of the Son to the Father in eternity, and the implications of the doctrine of Trinity for gender relations in the family and church.

The most troubling aspect of the systematic section is the essay's discussion of the divine attribute of love. George correctly notes that God's nature as love is fully satisfied in the inner Trinitarian relations of Father, Son and Spirit. He then discusses God's love for the church. The subject of God's love for unbelieving humanity, both those who have not yet believed and especially those who die in unbelief, goes completely unaddressed. This silence can leave the (wrong!) impression that God simply does not love those who die in unbelief. In what sense God can be said to love those who die in unbelief is an important and problematic question for any orthodox Christian, and deserves discussion here.

Chapter 5, “The Work of God: Creation and Providence,” by David P. Nelson (Reviewed by Benjamin B. Phillips)

In the fifth chapter of Akin’s *A Theology for the Church*, David P. Nelson (Senior Vice President for Academic Administration and Dean of the Faculty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) presents a very mixed offering on the work of God in creation and providence. The chapter repeats the book’s standard structure (Scripture, historical development, systematic issues, and practical reflection) for the doctrine of creation first, then the doctrine of providence. This review will consider the second section (providence) and then the first section (creation).

The second section, on providence, is the strong suit of this chapter. Nelson’s discussion of the way Scripture presents providence focuses on key texts and themes in a way that is easy to follow. One valuable aspect of this presentation is the clear juxtaposition of texts which affirm active divine intentionality (even predestination) and free human willing in precisely the same events. The essay then traces the historical development of the doctrine, culminating in the modern perspectives of process and open theism. Given the author’s emphasis on the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom in the systematic issues portion of the chapter, it is surprising that there is no mention here of Luther’s work *On the Bondage of the Will*, the Jesuit–Dominican controversies over Molinism, or of Edwards’ *Freedom of the Will*.

The discussion of systematic issues emphasizes the issue of divine sovereignty and human freedom, but does so in an even-handed fashion. Nelson carefully affirms both meticulous divine sovereignty and meaningful human freedom. He also reminds the reader that one’s conclusions about divine sovereignty and human freedom generally are somewhat distinct from one’s conclusions about soteriological issues, such as effectual calling. The section concludes with practical reflection, including a brief but encouraging note on the relationship between providence and prayer.

The first section of the chapter is on the doctrine of creation, and does not compare favorably to the writing of the section on providence. The ordering of the discussion of Scripture is idiosyncratic and does not follow any readily discernable pattern. The discussion of John 1, the New Testament’s counterpart to Genesis 1 and 2, receives only two sentences. The core of the Christian doctrine of creation is *creatio ex nihilo*, yet the section does nothing to ground the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* in the Biblical text. The author passes up the opportunity to relate Romans 4:17 and Hebrews 11:3 to *creatio ex nihilo* until he brings up the Creator-creation distinction in the systematic issues segment.

The presentation of the historical development of the doctrine of creation would benefit greatly by consideration of the contribution of the significant works on the doctrine in the last thirty years, including Moltmann's *God in Creation* (1985) and Copan and Craig's *Creation out of Nothing* (2004). This segment also needs to eliminate or revise the historically interesting (but irrelevant to the topic) observations on Schleiermacher's view of the Trinity and Southern Baptist controversies over higher-critical methods and conclusions about the Mosaic authorship of Genesis.

The consideration of systematic issues and the practical reflection are the strongest segments of this section. In particular, the practical reflection offers a well-structured discussion of the impact of the doctrine in culture and in the church. One issue which would be a helpful addition here is the significance of Sabbath as the creation-memorial observance for Israel and its relation to the Lord's Day for the church.

Chapter 6, "The Agents of God: Angels," by Peter R. Schemm Jr. (Reviewed by Rustin Umstatt)

Peter R. Schemm, Jr, is an associate professor of Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Dean of the College at Southeastern. Schemm was tasked with writing the chapter on the agents of God, or in more general terms, "angels." Schemm begins his presentation by highlighting the biblical material regarding both good and evil angels. Within this section he highlights both the Hebrew word *malak* and the Greek word *angelos*, which are translated as angel. While briefly stating that both words literally mean "messenger," he proceeds to treat many passages in which it is unclear if a human or heavenly being is under consideration, as if it were a heavenly being. The English word "angel" is fraught with baggage and it might not be the most helpful term to use in many places. When most people read the word angel, whether consciously or subconsciously, images of winged and robed creatures come to mind. Most of these images are not biblical, but they are so ingrained in culture that it is extremely difficult to undo them. One example is Schemm's use of 1 Timothy 5:21 to assert that there are "chosen angels," and hence they cannot fall away from God. There is nothing in the context of the passage that calls for *angelos* to be translated as angel instead of messenger, but all the major English translations opt for angel. The complaint is not so much against Schemm, for he is merely following the lead of the translators, but it would be helpful to have a discussion at the beginning of the section on biblical terminology about the ambiguity within both the Hebrew and the Greek.

Schemm does a commendable job of highlighting the origin, nature, number, organization, ministry, and destiny of both the good and evil angels. He clearly shows that angels are created beings, and that while they are glorious, they are not omnipotent, omniscience, or omnipresent. While the good angels minister to both God and man by giving the Law, caring for believers, announcing, and assisting Christ, the evil angels' ministry is a self-serving one that seeks the harm of both God and His creation, especially humans. The destiny of both groups of angels are fixed so that those who have fallen are not offered redemption and those who did not fall are no longer able to rebel against God.

Schemm presents a solid biblical foundation for his angelology, with two minor exceptions. The first is that he too hastily lumps the various heavenly beings that the Bible presents under the catch-all term of angel. "Cherub," "holy ones," "heavenly host," "watchers," "sons of God," and "seraphim" are all titles for angelic beings according to Schemm. It would be more helpful to let each description stand on its own, since there is no biblical support for collapsing the diversity into a unified group called angels. It might be more clarifying to create a group called "heavenly beings" and then list each of the groups under that heading. Secondly, Schemm equates both Isaiah 14:12 and Ezekiel 28:14 with Satan. While it must be acknowledged that these verses have been debated in the history of exegesis, there does not seem to be a compelling exegetical reason to equate these passages with Satan, beyond the declaration that they seem to be too lofty to be about a mere man. The passages, however, declare that they are about a man, and it would be helpful if Schemm would have given more of a basis for his conclusion beyond referring the reader to James Leo Garrett's contrary conclusion in his systematic work and stating that "the language of both texts transcends the earthly rulers being described and points to an evil spiritual power working in and through these rulers" (303).

Having established a biblical foundation for his discussion of God's agents, Schemm moves into the area of church history. He treats the thought of the church under the typical headings of Apologists, Patristics, Medieval, Reformation, and Modern. His historical treatment touches briefly on Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Origen, Augustine, Dionysius the Areopagite, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Rudolf Bultmann, and Karl Barth. He takes a detached approach to each person, presenting each individual's ideas regarding angels with limited interaction with the thoughts presented. It would have been helpful in this section to have taken a more critical approach to each person, especially given the fact that many of them have understood angels in a way that is not in line with the biblical account. At the end of the historical section a chart of Baptist theologians is presented that lists each

theologian's view regarding angels, as well as the works in which those views can be found. The list is presented in alphabetical order, but it might have been more helpful in chronological order. Additionally, it would have been nice to have seen some of these major Baptist theologians discussed in the main body of the historical section, and not relegated to a chart.

Having completed the historical section, Schemm proceeds to demonstrate how all the information on angels fits together. He does this under four headings: 1) Paradise, 2) Paradise Lost, 3) Paradise Regained, and 4) Paradise Forever. The presence and involvement of angels at each major turn in the biblical narrative is solidly attested. This connection of the doctrine of angels with the unfolding story of God's interaction with His creation is most helpful in that it allows the reader access back into the whole sweep of the Bible as narrative, and not merely as disconnected information regarding angels. Angels are an integral part of God's plan of redemption and this is shown from creation to consummation.

The final section of the chapter addresses how the doctrine of angels impacts the church today. Schemm does a magnificent job of highlighting the current fascination with angels and spiritual warfare. He also stands firmly anchored in the biblical text, refusing to be taken in by the flights of speculation that abound in the world today. He rejects much that is passed off as spiritual warfare, such as territorial spirits and guardian angels, as so much speculation that is not grounded in the Bible. He also rejects the modern practice of prayer-walking in its more strident form that states that being on site is a requirement for more effective prayer. He closes the section by listing the criteria that the Bible presents for waging spiritual warfare. The believer is to be vigilant in his walk. He is also to give no place to the devil, while at the same time resisting him. Finally, the believer is to stand firm having put on the armor of God. The believer's spiritual battle is not one in which he is to go chasing after a spiritual fight with the forces of evil, but one in which he is to draw close to God, be aware of the enemies tactics, and to focus his attention on the author and perfecter of his faith.

Section 3, The Doctrine of Humanity

Chapter 7, "Human Nature," by John S. Hammett (Reviewed by Dongsun Cho)

John S. Hammett, professor of systematic theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, has written a Christian anthropology with excellent biblical analysis and thoughtful pastoral implications. Although Hammett presents his arguments in a biblical, historical, and theological

format, key issues are repeatedly mentioned in each section, and his presentation is thematically organized.

Based on the interchangeability of the terms “spirit” and “soul” in the Bible, Hammett supports dichotomy as a biblical view of the constituents of human nature. Interestingly, however, he stands with trichotomists in arguing that a certain distinction between spirit and soul needs to be preserved. Spirit and soul would indicate the different human functions, if not necessarily different parts, of human nature that relate to God and creation respectively. Hammett rejects a monistic anthropology incompatible with the biblical descriptions of the conscious existence of the soul apart from the body. Since the Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and evangelical annihilationists refute the concept of the immortal soul as hellenistic and, therefore, unbiblical, Hammett as a biblical dichotomist could have helped the church and her ministers by providing sound biblical, historical, and theological responses to these anthropological monists’ objections to the immortality of soul.

Hammett’s point that God can relate Himself to anyone with any kind of disabilities in a mysterious way could be a strong Christian critique of secular medical ethics, which tends to jeopardize human dignity and the God-given right to exist. Some local church pastors and lay people might also want to know how Hammett would answer Mormons’ presentation of human physicality as part of the image of God.

As a complementarian, Hammett advocates male headship in the family and male eldership in the church in light of the order of creation, the analogy of the church as family, and the functional subordination of the Son and the Spirit within the Trinitarian nature of God who created human beings in His image. A critical exegesis of mutual submission in Ephesians 5:21, a favorite text for egalitarians, could have strengthened the complementarian argument for ontological equality and functional subordination. Some conservative Baptists might be disappointed by Hammett’s indication of possible support for female deaconship on the grounds that there is no sufficient evidence against it and that it has nothing to do with the exercise of authority over the male congregation. In contrast, however, John Piper and Mark Dever would appreciate Hammett’s openness to female deaconship. Hammett’s introspective critiques of his fellow complementarians are worthy of special attention. A husband should try to obey the Lord’s commandment to love his wife, instead of claiming his wife’s submission as a right to be enjoyed. On the other hand, pastors should “honor” the ministries of women rather than ignoring or minimizing the value of women in the church (404).

One can hardly find as extensive a discussion of the role of work and rest in the context of human nature as Hammett provides in this chapter.

Although God originally gave Adam work as a divine blessing, after the fall, human beings began to be in bondage to work. Rest, however, liberates a person from the bondage of work and helps one to worship God. Regarding “the Lord’s Day” as a form of Christian rest, Hammett’s Reformed theology leads him to prefer the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message, which defines Sunday for Christians as a sort of Sabbath to be observed, over the 2000 revision, which permits more freedom to do things on Sunday. Those who take the new perspective of the Christian Sabbath in the 2000 version as a compromise of Christian faith would join Hammett’s appeal for a more disciplined observance of the Lord’s Day.

Hammett’s emphasis on the communal aspect of human nature created in the image of God, whose life is also communal in the Trinity, could also serve as an effective antidote to the ideas of soul competency and individualism that some Southern Baptists have used to refuse any arguments for the legitimacy of creedal faith and doctrinal accountability.

Despite a few suggestions by this reviewer, Hammett’s work will greatly benefit master’s level students who need to see both sides of a debate. Hammett not only fairly defends his own view by critically evaluating other views but also provides some constructive critiques of the conservative evangelical camp to which he himself belongs.

Chapter 8, “Human Sinfulness,” by R. Stanton Norman (Reviewed by Dongsun Cho)

R. Stanton Norman is Vice President for University Development at Southwest Baptist University. In his introductory section on human sinfulness, Norman strongly opposes a naïve romantic approach to human nature as basically “good and pure” (409). Human nature is completely depraved in that sin permeates every aspect of human nature, and no one can meet the absolute moral and spiritual standard of God. Without a proper appreciation of the gravity of sin, one cannot appreciate the grace of God.

Unlike Hammett, who argues no theological significance for talk of the origin of a human soul, Norman presents traducianism as the best model to explain the transmission of original sin and guilt from Adam to all of his descendents. Another reason Norman opts for traducianism rather than creationism is that there is no substantial evidence for the “covenant of works” between God and Adam.

Interestingly, Norman’s agreement with Augustine about traducianism does not mean that the Baptist theologian supports the ancient bishop’s argument for the simultaneous imputation of original sin and guilt to infants. Following Erickson’s observation of a parallelism between Christ and Adam, Norman contends that all humans are born with original sin

but not with the guilt of original sin. If there is no “unconscious faith,” there must be no “unconscious sin” either (464). Here, Norman uncritically assumes that Erickson follows the natural headship theory in developing the conditional imputation of guilt. As James Leo Garrett, Jr. demonstrates, however, Erickson actually develops the Placean imputation theory of guilt, not the Augustinian idea of natural headship. Both the natural headship view and the federal headship view necessitate the immediate imputation of original sin and guilt as well. In opposition to the immediate imputation theory, the Placean theory teaches that guilt will be inevitably imputed to all humans but only through the mediation of the depraved nature inherited from Adam. Like Erickson, Norman concludes that all dead infants, who cannot exercise their will to do either good or evil, are not vulnerable to punishment but enjoying the presence of God. It might be their Baptist ecclesiastical emphasis on the necessity of personal confession and voluntary commitment in the matter of salvation that leads Erickson and Norman to modify the Augustinian or Calvinistic view of the unconditional imputation of original sin and guilt.

Overall, Norman’s understandings of idolatry as the essential nature of sin, the conditional imputation of guilt from Adam to the individual, and the salvation of infants bear considerable resemblance to Erickson’s views. Norman’s contribution would be his section on the historical development of hamartiology from the church fathers to major Baptist theologians. However, there is one thing to be revisited in Norman’s historical presentation of Augustine’s understanding of original sin. As many theologians do, Norman also ascribes Augustine’s reading of original sin in Romans 5:12 to the bishop’s mistranslated Old Latin version of the Greek New Testament and his own ignorance of Greek. To read the Greek phrase “*eph hō*” as the Latin phrase “*in quo*” (in whom) was traditional among the Latin church fathers such as Ambrose and Ambrosiaster. They read the “*eph hō*” of Romans 5:12 as “in whom” not because of their ignorance of the basic Greek words but because of theological conclusion in the immediate context of the verse.

Section 4, The Doctrine of Christ

Chapter 9, “The Person of Christ,” by Daniel L. Akin (Reviewed by Gerardo A. Alfaro)

Daniel Akin, President of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, begins his article on the person of Christ, by identifying two major methodological procedures. Christology from above and from below should not be played out one against the other. We should not have to opt

for either one. Our Christology should nourish from both methodologies. He proposes a “Christology from behind,” which begins with its messianic story line in the Old Testament.

Fourteen Old Testament passages are examined in canonical order. Major attention is paid to the book of Psalms and Isaiah. According to Akin, there is no question that the Old Testament picture of the Messiah is mysterious and complex (491). At least for some key Old Testament passages, the cross and resurrection of Jesus functioned as an interpretative key that opened the eyes of the early church to the identity of the Messiah (489).

The New Testament Christological discussion is developed in two sections. The first one focuses on five major Christological passages covering the Incarnation (John 1), the Humiliation (Phil 2), Creation (Col 1), and Revelation (Heb 1). The second section is an examination of major theological events in the Gospels, what Akin calls “a Christology from below.” The virgin birth is important for various reasons and especially because it was the way God chose to preserve His Son from sinfulness. On the temptation of Jesus, what needs to be remembered is that Jesus did not sin, even if genuinely tempted. Scriptures do not answer the “could He have sinned” question. Jesus miracles are signs or witnesses of His deity (518). Other events shortly evaluated are Jesus’ transfiguration and ascension.

In the second section, Akin outlines the history of the Christological Councils (Nicea 325, Constantinople 381, Ephesus 431, Chalcedon 451) and a short history of the “modern attacks on the Christ of the Bible”. The latter section focused exclusively on the history of the so-called three quests of the historical Jesus. At the end, Akin offers ten responses to the perceived shortcomings of these quests.

Let me express my gratitude to Dr. Akin for this solid article on the person of Jesus. Trying to include everything about the One who is “everything for us”—to use an expression of the apostle Paul in Colossians—is a gigantic task. For this very reason, I am going to concentrate my evaluation on just three particular issues. Moreover, I am going to present my evaluation in terms of questions, as I find myself also wrestling with the right answers.

The first question is methodological. What is the real starting point of Christology? After all the terminological discussions during the 20th century, Can we still talk about a Christology “from below” or “from above”, or as in Akin “from behind”? Are these options complementary? Or, do they exclude one another? Akin seems to choose the former option. Personally, I have abandoned this way of talking, for at the end all Christologies are done from some kind of philosophical, theological, or practical “above”

or “behind.” Our task is to make sure that our “Christological above or behind” is determined and controlled by a solid interpretation of the New Testament revelation on Jesus’ story, person, and work.

My second question is related to the Christological content of the Old Testament. Is it enough for Christological reasons to trace the messianic story line in the Old Testament? I have the impression that based on what we have in the New Testament, there is much more to say about the Christological person of the Creator, Savior, Sustainer, Revealer that is present in the Old Testament and that should be brought to light when doing systematic theology. What about the Angel of the Lord, Wisdom, Word, etc.?

The third question is on the relation of the virgin birth and Jesus’ sinless nature. Is it true that connecting Jesus’ virgin birth with His sinlessness helps us to understand how Christ can stand outside the guilt of Adam? (538) Does it? Is there any other better theological explanation for the virgin birth? I agree with Akin in the fact that we need to make a distinction between Scripture affirmations and theological deductions (538). The Gospels never affirm that Jesus’ holy nature depends on His virgin birth. What they do affirm is that Jesus’ holy nature is due to Him being conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20) and being the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32). Would it be better to deduce from this data that the theological importance of Jesus’ virgin birth is that it testifies to the fact that the Only Son of God has only One Father too?

Chapter 10, “The Work of Christ,” by Paige Patterson (Reviewed by Gerardo A. Alfaro)

After a short discussion on the classical three offices of Jesus, Paige Patterson’s article concentrates on the doctrine of the atonement. In the Old Testament there is no overt claim to the atonement but “generations of believers” have found in it didactic insights into God’s redemptive plan (551). Six major passages are exegeted in connection with the New Testament (Gen 3:21; 22; Ruth; Exod 25–30; Ps 22; Isa 52). Long before the rise of modern criticism that denies the centrality of forensic images in the doctrine of the atonement, Old Testament passages deploy them openly, helping us understand a concept that will be fully developed in the New Testament.

Patterson provides evidence of how the New Testament is saturated with affirmations concerning the vicarious and substitutionary nature of the atonement. Romans and Hebrews, the book of the atonement, have a special place in his argument, as both writings emphasize the absolute need of Christ’s atonement. They show how a correct understanding of

Christ's propitiation is completely in accordance with God's indignation with human sin. God cannot just announce forgiveness to sinful humans. That would leave the issue of justice unaddressed—God's identity as holy and merciful would also be destroyed, we would add. The rest of New Testament also resonates with the same sound. At the end of this section, eight points summarize the scriptural teaching.

In the second section of the article, the author gives us a summary of the different theories of the atonement (8 objective and 3 subjective). Irenaeus, Cyprian, Augustine, Anselm, Abelard, Socinus, Calvin, and Luther, among others, are briefly studied. In the following section, the author puts together some systematic thoughts on the atonement, on the theological importance of Jesus' intercessory work and His resurrection. Jesus' resurrection is presented mainly in an apologetic style. Ancient and modern theories are numbered and confronted with a defense of Jesus' bodily resurrection. Finally, a short exposition of 1 Corinthians 15 is offered.

As with the previous article, I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Patterson for writing this substantial text. I specially appreciate its clarity and cohesiveness. I have always believed that Christology is the center of Christian faith and that the work of Christ is the center of Christology. This is not to say that other theological themes are unimportant, but that every other aspect of our faith is immensely, and sometimes irreparably, affected by the way theologians deal with this one in particular.

Let me articulate only three questions that the article leaves for me. Since the chapter concentrates almost exclusively on the atonement, would it better to change its title to "the atonement of Christ"? Apart from a few pages at the beginning and some others at the end devoted to the ascension and resurrection, everything else is circumscribed to the atonement of Christ. I think this is positive if the importance of the doctrine is underlined. On the other hand, as a systematic theologian I cannot help but think of the many other areas the New Testament talks about the work of Christ. For example, Akin mentioned in his article basic New Testament passages that describe Jesus as Creator, Sustainer, Guide, and Judge. I would include the work of Christ as the *Logos*. Those passages should be closely examined as to their meaning concerning the work of Christ.

Another question is not just related to Patterson's article but also to Akin's, as both articles should be organically connected in this regard. What is the historical connection between Jesus' earthly life and his death? What role does Jesus' earthly life, as narrated by the Gospels, play for understanding His person, or His death? I believe that the famous Trinitarian axiom: "the ontological Trinity is the economical Trinity" applies specifically to Christology. The earthly concatenated picture that the Gospels give us about Jesus should help us to produce an ontology of Christ, which

is even more intimately related to His revelation in Scripture. A closer attention to these connections would cast more light onto our understanding of our Savior's person and on the oft-hidden nature of our sinfulness.

Last question. Do our Anabaptist ancestors have anything important to add to any of these two areas of systematic theology? I wonder if at least something specific about them should be mentioned in so critical chapters on Christology. How did they see the person of our Lord? For example, did the Son of Man as martyr play a significant role in their Christologies? Did they interpret Jesus' suffering and death as a crucial part of Christian discipleship and theological epistemology?

Section 5, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Chapter 11, "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit," by Malcolm B. Yarnell III (Reviewed by Robert W. Caldwell III)

It may be said that while the Holy Spirit is the most "popular" member of the Trinity in today's highly mystical evangelical climate, pneumatology by contrast, or the careful biblical theological analysis of the Spirit, is virtually non-existent. Some may say that this is the way it is supposed to be: We cannot place the Spirit in our own theological boxes, but must allow Him free reign over our lives and ministries. We need not look far, however, to see the spiritual devastation such an approach engenders: Theological confusion reigns in many Christian circles leading many into spiritual bondage. If only we remembered that the Lord who calls us to love Him with all our hearts has also called us to love him with all our minds, then we might know the joy Jesus mentions of a heart set free by truth (John 8:31). The pursuit of a biblically faithful pneumatology can only have a positive outcome in the lives of Christians, and Malcolm Yarnell's chapter on "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit" is an excellent place to begin that pursuit.

Like all the chapters in *A Theology for the Church*, Yarnell's is sectioned into four parts which to this reviewer represents the best way to "do theology:" starting first with an extensive review of the biblical data, moving on to the ways the church has understood those texts over the centuries, followed by a systematic statement on that topic, and then relating that theology to the life of the church. It is no coincidence that the past-theologians who popularized this method, the seventeenth century Dutch Reformed, saw revival flourish under their ministries.

Yarnell's canvassing of the biblical data helpfully summarizes the prominent pneumatological themes in the Old and New Testaments. Along the way he introduces the reader to important exegetical and theological

questions raised by the text: To what degree did the Old Testament saints discern the Holy Spirit in personal terms (606)? Is the Wisdom personified in Proverbs 8 a reference to God the Son, God the Spirit or neither (611)? What is the meaning of New Testament phrases like the “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,” the “baptism with the Holy Spirit,” and “the Spirit of Christ?” (613–15, 622) While each of these questions merits an entire article, Yarnell resists the temptation to be exhaustive by giving succinct answers and pointing more inquisitive readers to helpful footnotes where more extended discussions may be found. The result is not an intensive examination of any one topic, but an excellent overview of the whole.

Yarnell’s skill as a historical theologian shines bright in the section “What Has the Church Believed?” the largest section in the chapter. Here the reader is taken on a historical *tour de force* of pneumatology where key controversies and theologians are introduced: Montanism, the Cappadocian Fathers, Augustine, the *Filioque* controversy, the relationship of the Spirit and the Word in the Reformers, the Spirit and Wesley’s doctrine of perfection, and the Pentecostal separation of regeneration from the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Along the way one might quibble with Yarnell’s mild critique of the West’s doctrine of the double procession of the Holy Spirit, especially in the light of the fact that he affirms Rahner’s *Grundaxiom* (“the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity,” 659), which appears to counter Eastern Orthodoxy’s strong distinction drawn between the economic sending of the Spirit and His essential procession (639). One might also question the placement of Scholastic Orthodoxy under “The Modern Era” section, especially when we consider that the Protestant scholastics adopted the biblical theological methodology which was forged not in the rationality of early modern period but in the “pre-modern” climate of the High Middle Ages (649). Yet in spite of these minor issues this section fulfills its purpose admirably by encouraging North American Christians, who have a penchant for historical amnesia, to see that we are part of a conversation that has stretched across the centuries.

Systematic formulation is the subject of the third section, and Yarnell canvasses the major issues apropos to a complete treatment of pneumatology: the Spirit’s deity and personhood, His work as Creator, Revealer, and Companion to Christ and the church. Notable discussions here include Yarnell’s call for more theological reflection on the person of the Holy Spirit (rather than merely His work, 659), the differences between the Spirit’s work in old and new covenant saints (669), and a basically cessationist approach to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit today (674). Noteworthy in Yarnell’s treatment is his extensive interaction with

Baptist theologians both old (Gill, Dagg, Boyce, Carroll) and new (Connor, Hobbs, Criswell, Ellis, Vaughn, Garrett, Hemphill, and Patterson).

Rounding out the chapter is a short section suggesting ways that pneumatology “impacts” the church today (681–84). Mention of prayer in the Spirit, proclamation in the Spirit, and worship of the third person of the Trinity is made. Other pneumatological topics which many Christians today wrestle with daily—such as discerning the Spirit’s hand in one’s religious experiences, the nature of assurance, divine guidance, and the call to ministry—would have strengthened an already strong chapter.

Overall, Yarnell’s chapter is a competent example of a faithful, biblically grounded, historically sensitive review of a theological topic from a Baptist perspective. I definitely plan to return to its pages in the years to come.

Section 6, The Doctrine of Salvation

Chapter 12, “The Work of God: Salvation,” by Kenneth Keathley (Reviewed by John D. Laing)

The chapter on soteriology by Ken Keathley follows the prescribed divisions of the book, lending it strengths and weaknesses. The immediate emphasis on biblical teaching has much to commend it, while the historical section is frustratingly brief such that confusion can result and major items are omitted (e.g., fundamentalism and neo-orthodoxy are not mentioned). However, Keathley does an admirable job, given the constraints of the text.

One of the strengths of this chapter is its biblical and Christocentric focus. At the outset, Keathley emphasizes the primacy of Christ in salvation by referencing the concept of union with Christ and noting its flexibility as both a central truth and an all-encompassing image for salvation. He examines the Eastern and Roman views of union as *theosis* and sacrament respectively, but finds both wanting, arguing that union encompasses both experiential and positional components. Even though the notion is admittedly vague, Keathley does not shy away from it, explaining scriptural analogies as well as specific scriptural references. This allows both the objective and subjective components of salvation to remain in the fore, with particular emphasis upon Christ as Savior.

Keathley’s discussion of repentance and faith is particularly strong. He rightly notes that the two coincide and are inseparable in conversion. Repentance includes both mental and active components with neither taking precedence—it is neither mere belief nor an act whereby the believer obtains the right to receive grace through penance. Instead, it is a “rejection

of the sins themselves” (730). Keathley skillfully avoids the question of whether faith is a gift or a work, and instead emphasizes the dual components of divine activity and human response. The human response requires a measure of knowledge of who Jesus was and why he came, as well as of his death, burial, and resurrection. Thus, Keathley carefully avoids a controversial theological question while maintaining the theological connection between soteriology, Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology (736–37).

This purposeful avoidance evinces a third strength of the work: Keathley’s desire to break with traditional categories and controversies within soteriology. In fact, Keathley consistently strives to offer a third alternative to the extremes of Calvinism and Arminianism. For example, in his discussion of election, Keathley offers “congruism” as an alternative to the Calvinist notion of unconditional election (which detracts from human responsibility for rejection of Christ) and the Arminian idea of conditional election (seen as dangerous because it is human-centered and makes God passive in salvation). Likewise, in his discussion of the call to salvation and the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, Keathley proffers *overcoming grace* as an alternative to irresistible grace of Calvinism and prevenient grace of Arminianism. It is superior to irresistible grace because it preserves human responsibility for rejecting the gospel call while maintaining God’s integrity and universal love; and to prevenient grace because it preserves the concept of total depravity which prevenient grace makes superfluous. Keathley’s desire for even-handedness is also clear when he notes that Arminianism and Thomism are just as dependent as Calvinism is upon speculative philosophical thought (713n68).

Sometimes, though, what stands as a strength in one respect can also serve as a weakness in another respect. While much of Keathley’s work seems to reflect his own desire to break with traditional categories and discussions of soteriology, he seems ultimately unable to make such a break seemingly due to two factors: the difficulty in escaping cultural conditioning and the lack of a true middle ground. First, Keathley seems unable to avoid the issues that have dominated theological thought in the West. For example, he criticizes overly individualistic views of Christianity and correctly notes that there has not been enough focus on either corporate election or individual election to service. He even claims that the Bible’s primary focus is upon these aspects of election and notes that they should be “our primary emphases too” (709), yet he then spends the majority of his effort on individual election to salvation and the attendant debates over efficacious grace. This inability is also seen in some of the criticisms he levels against the Calvinist view of election. First, he presents the problem of God as cause of unbelief, even in an “ultimate sense” as though it is unique to the Calvinist approach (709); second, he claims that God’s decree of

damnation for the non-elect, whether understood as active or passive, undermines the love of God for all persons and His desire that all be saved (709); third, he argues that Calvinist belief in the inability of persons to respond to the gospel undermines human responsibility (presumably for rejecting Christ). In each case, Arminian theology struggles with the same problems, albeit they are less severe. Thus, while Keathley is surely correct that the primary issue of concern is “whether the Calvinist teaching does justice to God’s character,” his oversimplification of the problems detracts from his normally fair evaluation of the positions (709).

Second, his inability may be due to the fact that a true middle way does not exist (with respect to particular positions in the debated areas). That is, there simply is no third alternative to libertarian and compatibilist freedom, to unconditional and conditional election, to irresistible and prevenient grace, because in each case, the options presented in the classical debates are opposites. While there is variance in defining the terms, there are only two alternatives. The only middle option between Arminianism and Calvinism is an acceptance of points from each of the two systems, but such a position is a hybrid, not a separate option.

Thus, what Keathley offers as a third alternative is really just a variation on one of the traditional views, most often the Arminian view. The presentation of congruism as a separate alternative to Calvinism and Arminianism is one such example, for Amyraudism seems to be a Calvinist form of congruism while traditional Arminianism (Arminius, Wesley, etc.) has always affirmed human decision and divine election. Keathley also presents Molinism as a separate option, but it is widely recognized as the traditional Arminian view of divine knowledge; Arminius himself held to belief in middle knowledge, and it is really middle knowledge to which Arminians refer when they claim that predestination is based on foreknowledge. Similarly, the overcoming grace position, as Keathley presents it, postulates a gracious work of the Holy Spirit which enables hearers of the gospel to respond, while preserving their ability to resist, but this is simply the traditional Arminian views of prevenient grace. Most Arminians claim that prevenient grace is given by God only to those who hear the gospel, and even those few who believe that it is given to all persons deny that it is given in equal measure to all persons.

Despite its few and minor shortcomings, Keathley’s effort is a noble one. The emphasis on biblical exposition, biblical theology, and then a systematization of the doctrines alone make it worth reading. This, coupled with its application to the body of Christ, which can be found throughout the chapter (not just the practical applications section), makes the work commendable to the saints.

Section 7, The Doctrine of the Church

Chapter 13, “The Church,” by Mark E. Dever (Reviewed by Thomas White)

Arguably the most vocal Southern Baptist for meaningful church membership and the marks of a healthy church, Mark Dever, wrote the thirteenth chapter on the doctrine of the church. Dever currently serves as the senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC and president of 9Marks ministries. Dever’s role as a pastor adds a valuable practical slant to this theological dialogue. His church has also bought into his passion by offering “weekenders” where pastors and students from all over the nation catch a glimpse of a healthy church in action. From the informal discussions in his more public than private home office to his written contributions and public sermons, Dever has established himself as a leading voice in the Southern Baptist recovery of biblical ecclesiology. The editors of this volume did well in acquiring Dever as the author of a chapter that is a must read for every churchman and theologian.

Dever states that he will follow the assigned order in his chapter of biblical, historical, systematic, and practical sections. Those who have taught ecclesiology understand that the topic makes this very difficult as theological formulation almost weaves its way into any scriptural discussion of ecclesiology. This tension can be seen in Dever’s work as he introduces the “Attributes of the Church: One, Holy, Universal, Apostolic” after approximately 8 pages of scriptural foundation (775); however, the reader eventually learns that this seemingly historical discussion falls within and evens provides a framework for additional consideration of Scripture. The categories used in theological formulation such as polity, officers, ordinances, and membership also provide a framework for further scriptural consideration. It is not until page 816, forty-one pages after the first mention of historical marks, that Dever officially moves to historical consideration with the heading, “What Has the Church Believed?” This should not be seen as a criticism of Dever. There is a reason the best ecclesiology books of the past have not adopted this theological methodology. The doctrine of the church does not easily lend itself to the given format.

Overall, this chapter has more to praise than the current author has space to write. Dever thoroughly investigates the original languages providing a breakdown of the 114 occurrences of *ekklesia* (771) and the 75 uses of *presbeut* (800). He makes a great contribution in the discussion of plurality of elders and of special interest is his scriptural discussion of the office of senior pastor (805). His sections on meaningful membership and

church discipline are simply brilliant, and his command of Scripture is impressive and rejuvenating.

The purpose of a review, however, is not to rewrite what was written well but to evaluate and make suggestions. With that said, I believe the chapter would be better had Dever been as strong on the mode of baptism as he was on the subject of baptism. The reader first notices that *baptizo* does not receive a much discussion while other Greek words do. Dever also weakly states the Baptist position on immersion by writing, “While it is difficult to maintain that *baptizo* could only mean ‘immerse’ in the New Testament era, immersion does seem both to be the most straightforward meaning of the word itself” (785–86). In the same paragraph he quotes Erickson stating, “While [immersion] may not be the only valid form.” Additionally, only two pages discuss the mode of baptism in a 90-page chapter. Throughout the remainder of the chapter Dever consistently associates believers with baptism but not immersion. This may not normally be bothersome because the meaning of baptize is immerse, but with anemic support of immersion as the proper mode, the absence grows continually more noticeable. Then again, perhaps the current reviewer has been too immersed in traditional Baptist presentations which were not so friendly to those who sprinkle and is overly concerned with weakening positions on baptism in many “Baptist” churches.

The weakness on immersion carries over into the discussion of participants in the Lord’s Supper (789–91). Dever implies that baptism should occur before participation in the Lord’s Supper, but nowhere states that baptism by immersion is required for participation. Additionally, he does not discuss the Bunyan/Kiffin controversy in the historical section providing a theological sidestep of one of the most controversial aspects of Baptist ecclesiology.

For such a practically helpful chapter, two prominent omissions stand out. The chapter could have benefited from a discussion on divorce and its relationship to the office of pastor and deacon given the rampant number of divorces inside evangelical churches (801–02). Another needed discussion is women’s roles in the local church. While another chapter gives approximately one page to the discussion of women’s roles in the church, the climate of our culture demands deeper consideration (358–59) and particular mention of women teaching men in the local church. With that stated, these two glossed over areas likely came from space limitations and although they would have been helpful, it does not detract too heavily from a first-rate contribution.

Any weaknesses in the chapter are overcome by other areas of strength. Dever should be commended for his strong and repeated emphasis of believer’s baptism. For a man who consistently hosts those of other

denominations and works together for the gospel with those men, he has not forsaken the controversial doctrine of believer's baptism. He impressively balances the high wire of staying firm to biblical principles without becoming hostile to other denominations. Moreover, his continued emphasis on meaningful membership and church discipline speak prophetically to the current generation.

Dever demonstrates keen writing ability when discussing the issue of women deacons and the age of baptism. Baptists have long disagreed on the subject of women deacons. While Dever has them at Capitol Hill and the current reviewer argues against them, this issue never detracts the reader one way or the other. Dever wisely makes comment and passes on to more important matters (798). He also shrewdly handles his mention of the age of baptism. He is right that we have consistently lowered the age of baptism so that we practice toddler baptism, but he does not set a minimum age. Dever skillfully places a large content footnote indicating the age of many important Baptist figures (788, 848), which communicates clearly to the careful reader. Baptist should heed his intent and make sure the subjects of baptism understand it and can make a legitimate profession of personal faith.

Another unique and helpful section is titled, "A Baptist Church: Should We Have Baptist Churches Today?" (844). With many choosing to leave Baptist out of the name of the church and others questioning denominationalism altogether, Dever's discussion brings a new perspective to the issue. He hits the nail squarely on the head by stating, "If we understand that Christ commands the church to baptize only those who repent and believe, then it seems clear that a biblically faithful church is a Baptist church" (845). By focusing on obedience to Christ, Dever brings clarity to this discussion.

I not only commend the chapter, but in my classes, I plan to require it. Dever's thorough practice and support of meaningful ecclesiology has raised the topic to newfound heights in Baptist life. For that, I am thrilled to know and work together with him for the sake of the Gospel and to the glory of God.

Section 8, The Doctrine of Last Things

Chapter 14, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," by Russell D. Moore (Reviewed by Craig Blaising)

Many of today's students of theology are ambivalent about eschatology. The topic is placed at the end of the loci of theological topics in both published volumes, such as the one under consideration, and in the order

of themes in the typical survey course on systematic theology. In the latter, it is sometimes barely treated at all since there is so much to cover in such surveys. Furthermore, the tendency is to focus on controversial issues in eschatology, often for the purpose of downplaying them, leaving the student with the impression that eschatology deals with matters that are only of secondary importance, a collection of issues that can be ignored in the primary task of building up the body of Christ.

Russell Moore's essay, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," in *A Theology for the Church*, indicates why this ambivalence must cease. Aside from the very practical matter that funerals are inevitable in the ministry and that death confronts us in our familial, social, and personal experiences, making "personal eschatology" immediately relevant, the fact is the topics of "personal eschatology" are themselves part of a greater revelation of the plan of God in which all of the loci of theology are integrated. Eschatology is the study of this plan of God seen in terms of its fulfillment. Moore's essay, although understandably brief, demonstrates this fact as he masterfully highlights the interconnection of personal hope in Christ with the divine plan for the recreation of all things.

Like (most) other chapters in the volume, Moore follows a given structure, answering four questions: What does the Bible say? What has the church believed? How does it all fit together? and, How does the doctrine impact the church today? His essay is well written, demonstrating familiarity with the breadth of relevant topics and issues, presented in a clear, cogent, and engaging style. He begins with a funeral service and ends in a graveyard. In between, his answers to the four questions place the particularity of individual death with its threat of emptiness, meaninglessness, and forgetfulness into the overall plan of God in which the particular is redeemed.

The section on the Bible is divided logically between Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament sets the basic parameters of the divine plan as cosmic in scope, covenantal in form, and kingdom in terms of its actual order and structure. From the very beginning, Moore develops the Bible's "new creation" eschatology, which stands in contrast to spiritualist interpretations that are common in the history of Christian thought and that degrade the substance of Christian hope. The kingdom of God is the integrating order in which the cosmic renewal will be manifest and in which the covenant promises will be fulfilled. New Testament eschatology is presented in terms of kingdom fulfillment—both as present, or "already," in the ministry of Jesus prior to his coming in glory, and as future, or "not yet," which will be ushered in through that coming. The "already/not yet" structure is key to New Testament theology and forms a logical division for

the section. Throughout, the biblical foundation is laid for one of Moore's primary points: eschatology is inherently Christological.

The section on what the church has believed offers a historical grid in which to place a number of eschatological topics, such as millennialism, the nature of the intermediate and eternal states, the eternity of the judgment, and the Roman Catholic doctrines of purgatory and limbo. Moore also provides some historical background to the question of Israel's identity and future in the divine plan. The historical survey begins with four writers from the patristic period: Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Origen, and Augustine. Aquinas and Dante are briefly noted from the medieval era. The Reformation survey primarily focuses on Calvin's dispute with Anabaptists and moves quickly to note the rise of Covenant theology and postmillennialism in the post-Reformation period. Moore notes the rise of liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, and revisionist/liberationist theologies in the modern era and then moves to modern evangelicalism highlighting the rise of dispensationalism, the neo-evangelical emphasis on social ministry, and the erosion of eschatological orthodoxy in left-wing evangelicalism. This is followed by a helpful excursus tracing the history of eschatological thought among Baptists, primarily Southern Baptists.

A theologian faces a challenge in the systematic arrangement of theological topics. In the section on how it all fits together, Moore chooses his thematic structure from Revelation 11:15: The kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of Christ. Under the heading, "kingdom of the world," Moore arranges the topics of tribulation, Antichrist, and hell. Under "kingdom of Christ," he treats the matters of heaven, the second coming, the restoration of Israel, the millennium, and the new earth. The length of this review does not allow for a point by point examination of these doctrinal topics. Some are treated more extensively than others. While Moore's essay style does not always yield clear doctrinal definitions, the survey does serve as a helpful introduction to the topics covered. A student of theology should be motivated by the reading to pursue further study on the topics, adding to the reading a good theological dictionary and then pursuing the issues by comparative readings in other systematics and in theological monographs.

There are, however, a couple of issues which this reviewer will note. Moore's own eschatological position is a variant of what he terms "historic premillennialism," which, as he notes, is a non-dispensational form of premillennialism. He sees the rapture as posttribulationist, but he believes one should not be dogmatic on that point. He does note that imminency in 1 Thessalonians 5 is a strong argument for pretribulationism. His weakness, in the opinion of this reviewer, is that he does not consider the tribulation as an extended cohesive pattern in biblical theology, seen in the themes of

the day of the Lord and Daniel's seventieth week. The tendency of many posttribulationists, including Moore, is to divide the tribulational pattern historically, assigning part to the history of the church and part, usually only the last part, to the future coming of Christ. The contention of most pretribulationists is that the tribulational pattern functions typologically in the history of the church while the pattern as a cohesive whole unfolds as the context for the future coming of Christ. The imminency of the rapture with respect to the day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 4-5 would then more clearly favor pretribulationism. G. E. Ladd understood this and consequently attempted to redefine imminency as "nearness." Although many posttribulationists like Moore identify with Ladd's "historical premillennialism," they are not futurists like Ladd—that is, they do not expect the future fulfillment of the entire tribulational pattern. Consequently, they do not appreciate the full import of the imminency argument.

Another concern for this reviewer has to do with Moore's view of Israel. Moore repeatedly draws attention to the typology of Israel applied to Christ in the Gospels. However, he interprets this typology along with Paul's statements concerning the seed of Abraham and inheritance "in Christ" in a radical way. In Moore's view, Christ himself has replaced corporate Israel in the plan of God. He alone is Israel—a remnant consisting of one Jewish man—and consequently, the promises of Israel are fulfilled to him alone. However, Christ in turn grants the status and privileges of Israel in a derivative sense to Jews and Gentiles who by faith are "in him." In this derivative sense, the entire body of the redeemed—both Jews and Gentiles—fulfill the corporate meaning of the term Israel. Since the body of the redeemed is the church, this is simply another way of saying that the church, albeit in a derivative sense only, has replaced Israel, understood in its ethnic and national sense. The crucial point is that there is, for Moore, no other sense, subsequent to the appearing of Christ, in which a corporate Israel exists.

The application of Israel typology to Christ is an important feature of New Testament theology. Moore is correct to note that the New Testament sees the fulfillment of the biblical covenants taking place in and through Christ. However, it is not necessary to conclude from this that the Christ, considered as a single individual, is the sole fulfillment of the national and political promises to ethnic Israel. The consistent pattern of kingdom prediction in Old Testament prophecy is a ruler from the house of David who rules Israel (considered corporately and nationally) and also Gentile nations. Even when the ruler is designated with the name "Israel," as in the servant song of Isaiah 49, that "Israel" will bring Israel (not himself, but the corporate Israel) back to God. He will then also gather in the Gentiles. The picture is the same: the King, then Israel (not another name

for the king, but the corporate body, the nation, over which the king rules), then Gentile nations. Within the structure of the covenants, the Davidic covenant functions as the means to the fulfillment of the other covenant promises to corporate Israel and as the means of extending covenant blessing to the Gentiles.

Moore's restrictive view of Israel creates problems in a number of New Testament texts. The corporate meaning of the term, Israel, cannot be eliminated from the Gospels without creating textual incoherence. Moore's reading of Romans 11 ignores the use of "Israel" in that chapter which is not the olive tree, but a [covenantly] "beloved" enemy whose restoration is illustrated in the regrafting of natural olive branches, bringing riches to the world. When the disciples asked Jesus in Acts 1, prior to His ascending, whether He at that time would restore the kingdom to Israel, they were not asking, after 40 days of instruction on the kingdom, whether He would restore Himself, but whether He—considered singularly as the king—would restore the kingdom to Israel—considered corporately, consistently with the pattern of biblical prophecy. Jesus's answer, that the time has been fixed by the Father, is elaborated on by Peter in Acts 3, when He speaks of "the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago." Without doubt, the restoration of Israel corporately, nationally, and politically, is a key feature among "the things about which God spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets." And, it is consistent with this that Peter in Acts 2 calls upon all the house of Israel (undoubtedly corporate) to know Jesus as Lord and Christ.

Finally, one should note the irony that Moore's view of future Israel creates for his new creation eschatology. Certainly, Moore expects and explicitly asserts that the redeemed in the millennium and in the everlasting order of the new earth will be sub-grouped and gathered as nations. This of course fulfills the corporate dimension of anthropology as it is taken up into redemption. Moore also notes that the redeemed will include both Jews and Gentiles. However, he is quite clear that there will be no national Israel among those nations receiving as an inheritance the covenantally promised land. The inescapable conclusion, and ironic in light of the whole thrust of restoration prophecy, is that the Jewish redeemed are permanently dispersed among the Gentile nations. Leaving aside the whole question of who exactly occupies the promised land in this realistic millennial or new earth scenario, do we really think that a redefinition of "Israel" to mean either Christ alone or, in a derivative sense, this whole dispersed condition satisfies the prophetic hope?

We come now to the last section of Moore's essay in which he addresses the relevance of eschatology for the life and practice of the church today. This is especially important since so many consider eschatology irrelevant

to present-day concerns. Moore's extrapolation of new creation hope to the matters of grief, burial, and aging is excellent. The topics listed under "personal ethics" include some surprises. One might not think of "parenting" as an obvious inclusion. However, Moore makes the connection clear and the application compelling. Following biblical emphases, one could add to the topics of eschatological ethics a number of other qualities, such as steadfastness and endurance in Christian faith and character. Once again, the reader is reminded of the limitations of space even in a volume of this size.

Moore has written elsewhere on the implications of eschatology for social ethics, and his choice of topics here addresses a number of major concerns—social welfare, care for creation, anti-semitism, respect for life, and a warning against modern utopianisms that drive social and political discourse. His comments here are very helpful. In the final section, "Eschatology and Corporate Witness," Moore touches briefly on the theme of the church as itself a society set within the broader society/societies of the world. This is a theme that is particularly tied to the "already" aspect of New Testament teaching on the kingdom, and one that is rarely addressed in evangelicalism today.

I am grateful to Russell Moore for this fine essay expounding new creation eschatology. Not all will agree with every aspect of his presentation, but the new creation orientation is a major advance over a number of other theologies and affords a better framework in which to pursue the differences that yet remain. The reader will appreciate the clear, inviting literary style that offers up a rich feast of biblical, theological, and cultural considerations. This is characteristic of the writings of Russell Moore, to which, it is hoped, there will be many more additions in the years to come.

Conclusion

"The Pastor as Theologian," by R. Albert Mohler Jr. (Reviewed by David Allen)

With another stroke of his ever-weighty pen, Al Mohler defines and describes for us the quintessential pastor/theologian. His essay fittingly concludes this volume and serves as a reminder that all theology is ever practical theology and should be studied not for its sake alone, but for its contribution to the church. Mohler develops his key theme: Every pastor is called to be a theologian, and demonstrates the necessity of such for healthy churches.

Under the heading “The Pastor’s Calling,” Mohler laments the transmutation of theology into a purely academic discipline and its concomitant disconnection from the church. By grounding the theological nature of pastoral ministry in Scripture and specifically in the Pastoral Epistles, Mohler proves the inherently theological nature of every pastor’s calling. The faithful pastor who is himself grounded in sound doctrine will immerse himself in the evangelistic, educational, apologetical, and polemical facets of ministry. Only such a theological understanding and commitment on the part of the pastor will liberate him and his ministry from the Scylla of the managerial revolution fostered by the Church Growth movement and the Charybdis of the therapeutic culture. Loosed from the moorings of theology, today’s pastors may become known as great communicators, counselors or managers, but they will not be known as great pastors and preachers.

“The Pastor’s Concentration” according to Mohler is the incumbent necessity on every pastor to assist the church in learning how to think theologically so that authentic discipleship may occur. Such focus develops within the pastor the ability to practice a process which Mohler describes as “theological triage.” Here the pastor learns to distinguish the differing levels of theological importance. Such a practice inoculates the church from the danger of making any and every theological difference of opinion a matter of conflict as well as the opposing danger of failure to defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints. While one can agree with Mohler’s theological triage in principle, in practice the matter proves to be a bit more elusive. One man’s first order doctrine might be another man’s second order doctrine, and vice versa. The decision as to where to draw the line may itself become a first order doctrine of some! Nevertheless, Mohler’s point is well taken.

Since one would be hard pressed to list any ministry activity as being any more inherently theological than preaching, Mohler rightly discusses expository preaching as “The Pastor’s Conviction.” Highlighting Paul’s admonition to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1–2 to “preach the word,” and noting Paul’s own grounding of this exhortation in the God-breathed nature of Scripture as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16, Mohler affirms the necessity of pastoral conviction in this area as the foundation for the transfer of Biblical knowledge into the minds and hearts of the church. Only through such expository preaching and teaching can the church know what God expects of them regarding the Christian faith and the Christian life.

Finally, Mohler makes his last point under the heading “The Pastor’s Confession,” where the pastor’s own theological convictions are lived out as well as preached in an experiential fashion. Here personal testimony is

intertwined with one's own theology to create authority and authenticity in pastoral ministry.

This short but substantive final chapter is an apt conclusion to a volume entitled *A Theology for the Church*, for here Mohler sums up exactly why, when it comes to theology and church, what God has joined together, let no man put asunder. This conclusion is well summarized in its potent and pithy opening and closing sentences: "Every pastor is called to be a theologian. . . . The pastor who is no theologian is no pastor." I could not agree more!