

Systematic Theology

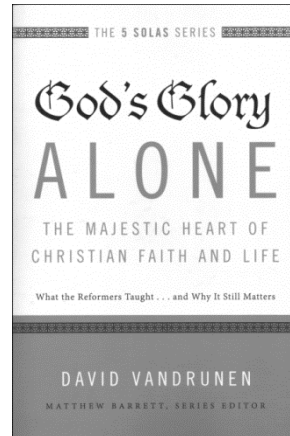
***God's Glory Alone: The Majestic Heart of Christian Faith and Life.* David VanDrunen. The Five Solas Series, ed. Matthew Barrett. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015, 186 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-310-51580-7**

The subtitle of David VanDrunen's book *God's Glory Alone* motivates the Christian heart and mind. Christians desire to know and practice the "majestic heart of the Christian faith and life," and VanDrunen's work both teaches and stirs Christians on the subject of God's glory. His aim in the book is simple: "We have set out to contemplate the glory of the Lord and the Reformation theme that all glory belongs to God" (p. 24). VanDrunen accomplishes his aim with a heartwarming effect.

God's Glory Alone: The Majestic Heart of Christian Faith and Life is the second volume of The Five Solas Series published by Zondervan and edited by Matthew Barrett. The purpose of the series is to remind today's church that the five *Solas* of the Reformation are biblical doctrines fundamental to the Christian faith and to inspire today's church to live out these truths.

VanDrunen's work meets these goals by first showing that the truth of *solī Deo gloria* runs throughout all Reformed theology. As he writes, "*Solī Deo Gloria* can be understood as the glue that holds the other *solas* in place or the center that draws the other *solas* into a grand, unified whole" (p. 15). To prove his case, VanDrunen alerts the reader to the glory of God in the writings of Edward Leigh (1602-71), Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), and the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. VanDrunen's entire thesis in his first section is that the Reformation (and all biblical Christianity) is about God and His glory from first to last because, in all His works, His chief end is to glorify Himself. Humans' labors for God are ultimately saved and comforted by Him for His glory.

Second, VanDrunen meets the goal of this series through his exegesis of Scripture. The source of *solī Deo gloria* is Scripture. VanDrunen writes,



“The other Reformation *sola, sola scriptura*, drives us behind Reformation theology to explore its source” (p. 44). Consequently, VanDrunen’s second section highlights the glory of God as revealed in key events of the redemptive history recorded in Scripture. He describes God’s special appearances in the cloud, the tabernacle, the temple, and the Incarnation. His chapter on “The Glory of God Incarnate” is especially edifying. Jesus is the revelation of the glory of God both in His humiliation and exaltation. Jesus is the fulfillment of all God’s promises; thus, the glory of God seen in the cloud, the tabernacle, and the temple is fulfilled and surpassed in Jesus the God-man. Through the cross and resurrection, He is the “brightness of the Father’s glory” (p. 83).

The third section of VanDrunen’s volume is the practical pastoral section. This section also meets the goal of the Five Solas Series by inspiring the Christian to live for God’s glory. His reminders that worship and prayer are for God’s glory and his challenge to Christians to glorify God in this present age as they make their pilgrimage to heaven give clear directives to live a faithful Christian life for God’s glory alone. His chapter on the glory of God and narcissism was of particular help to me. VanDrunen, knowing the seduction and saturation of narcissism in Western culture, confronts it with the fear of the Lord. Biblically, the fear of the Lord is what VanDrunen defines as “‘reverential awe,’ or a ‘filial fear’” (p. 134). Christians will grow in this godly fear as they increasingly admire the glory of God. Narcissism deceives people, but people who love the truth about God and His glory are brought to reality – namely that only God is glorious. This truth brings Christians to humility and peace.

This book reminds today’s church that our lives are to be lived for God’s glory alone because He alone has perfect glory. I encourage you to take it up and read it.

Reviewed by Henry Bartsch, minister of Trinity AR Presbyterian Church in Chatham, Ontario. Henry is married to Tammy; they have six children and two grandchildren.



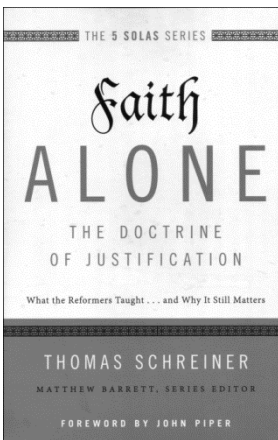
***Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification.* Thomas Schreiner. The Five Solas Series, ed. Matthew Barrett. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015, 288 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-310-51578-4**

In commemoration of the 16th century Reformation and in service to the modern church, Matthew Barrett, as series editor, and Zondervan are publishing a detailed explanation on each of the Reformation’s *Solas*. The aim of this five-volume series is not to merely be historical or exegetical but also practical. The editor and authors hope this series will help the church “renew theological bearings and find spiritual refreshment” (p. 9). Tom Schreiner’s

work *Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification* is the first volume in this series.

This volume is helpful to both church leaders and laymen because its writing and layout are direct and clear. Schreiner expounds on the doctrine of faith alone and its corollary doctrine justification in three parts. First, he gives a historical overview of faith alone and justification. Second, he gives an exegetical defense of these Reformation doctrines. Third, Schreiner cites and rebuts the contemporary challenges to faith alone and justification.

Like most books, *Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification* contains strengths and weaknesses. Fortunately, Schreiner's book contains far more strengths than weaknesses. This review will highlight three key strengths and then describe one weakness.



The first strength. In the historical overview, Schreiner's account of Luther's doctrine of justification by faith is first-rate. He highlights Luther's rejection of Gabriel Biel's semi-Pelagian view of justification, which asserted that God's covenant is a gift of God's grace but man still has the capacity to meet the terms of that covenant – namely the works of the law. In response to Biel and Erasmus, Luther correctly linked justification to predestination. Humans cannot will to come to God for justification unless God gives them faith to receive Christ and the obedience to keep the terms of the covenant. Salvation is of grace from beginning to end, so predestination is connected to faith alone.

Luther knew that God gives the grace needed as well as the atonement, faith, and repentance to those whom He predestined (p. 39). Schreiner also stresses that “Luther's vision of God was the foundation for what he thought about everything else, and because of his view of God Luther believed justification was the doctrine by which the church stands or falls” (p. 40). God's holiness and justice and God as Creator of all are woven throughout Luther's theology. In connection with justification, Luther maintained that a sinful person is justly condemned before a holy God, and only when God satisfies His justice by His grace in Christ and then received by faith alone can a sinner be made right with God. Furthermore, Schreiner identifies the modern Finnish view on Luther's justification doctrine, and he shows it to be contrary to Luther. The Finnish view collapses sanctification and justification into one. Contrary to Luther, the Finnish theology rejects *simul justus et peccator*; also contrary to Luther; it asserts a deification of Christians due to union with Christ.

The second strength. Schreiner's exegetical defense of faith alone and justification is the longest and finest section of his book. He is detailed in his Scripture exegesis and thoroughly orthodox in his doctrine. Many sections were especially helpful to me. First, he clearly explains the New Testament phrase “works of the law” and why works don't justify; they don't justify

because “people fail to perform what the law requires” (p. 111). Second, preachers would do well to study Schreiner’s section on Paul’s teaching on faith. Paul clearly emphasized faith alone in his writings, and one of Paul’s main teachings is that righteousness is granted to those who believe. Schreiner has no shortage of Scripture citations to show this. For Paul, as our author explains, true faith always has the Person of Jesus Christ as its object; Paul teaches that “what makes salvific is the object of faith” (p. 122).

Another helpful chapter was chapter 10, “The Importance of Justification in Paul”. The reader should know that Schreiner’s work has an apologetic thread throughout. He defends the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone against attacks from modern theological movements. In chapter 10, Schreiner confronts the positions Albert Schweitzer, James Dunn, Michael Gorman, N.T. Wright, and Doug Campbell, who all reject the Reformation doctrine. These theologians assert that justification by faith alone as defined by the Reformers was not central to Paul’s theology. Schreiner shows their assertion to be misguided, and he posits that, though justification might not be central to Paul’s theology, “it is sufficient to say that it plays a crucial role in his theology” (p. 135). Schreiner then goes on to give a masterful, biblical eight-point defense for this view.

Chapter 13, entitled “Righteousness Is Forensic”, is a tour de force apology for the forensic view of justification by faith. Some modern protestant scholars understand Paul to teach transformative righteousness, which means believing sinners are not legally declared righteous before God but are actually made righteous. Being transformed by God to live righteously is a biblical doctrine; however, as Schreiner shows from the New Testament, that forensic justification is the basis for the transformative. This forensic view of justification is taught in the Old Testament, and “this prepares us for Paul’s use of the term” (p. 163). Paul clearly teaches that faith is counted to the believer as righteousness, not that faith is his righteous work; by faith, the believer trusts in Christ, and Christ’s righteousness is then imputed to his or her account. That believing sinner is then legally righteous before God.

The third strength. Schreiner gives a warning against uniting with the present Roman Catholic Church; she still denies justification by faith. Schreiner’s last section, which deals with contemporary challenges, takes on three movements that downplay justification by faith alone. They are the modern movements which seek to bring the Roman Catholic and Protestant church to closer unity: N.T. Wright and the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), and the NPP in relation to imputation. Schreiner’s interaction with the NPP is competent and fair. He gives credit to N.T. Wright’s groundbreaking work in New Testament studies and says, “there are many things we can learn from N.T. Wright” (p. 256). Nevertheless, Schreiner shows the NPP to be off the mark in teaching ecclesiastical justification, the idea that justification is about how someone becomes part of the family of God rather than being declared righteous and having the imputed righteousness of Christ by faith in Christ

alone.

Another strength of this section is Schreiner's interaction with those movements seeking to bring Romans Catholics and Protestants together. Schreiner's concern is maintaining the forensic doctrine of justification by faith alone. He documents that the Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification, a document signed between the Lutheran World Federation and Catholic Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, compromised and then surrendered the Reformation doctrine of faith alone. Schreiner also documents that the Evangelical and Catholics Together (ECT) movement of America and parts of Europe also compromised justification by faith alone. Their documents asserted justification by faith, but their meaning of justification differed from the Reformed doctrine, and they omitted the word "alone". By "alone", the Reformers meant justification without the works of the law but by the Person and word of Jesus Christ alone, received by faith alone. "The omission of the word 'alone' from ECT constitutes a fatal flaw"(p. 224). Schreiner shows the truth that in both these movements and their documents, the Roman Catholic view of justification did not change.

We now turn to a weakness of this book. In his historical section, Schreiner discusses the controversial question, "Was the doctrine of faith alone taught and preached in the early church?" T.F. Torrance's book *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* seeks to show that the early church was not in agreement about justification by faith alone. Schreiner asserts that Torrance's thesis is not fully correct, but he should have been stronger on this point. In a cumulative way, he does try to show that the key Early Church Fathers did teach about justification, but, in the end, this seems to support Torrance's thesis. It seems to me that more work needs to be done in this area of patristics.

Schreiner's *Faith Alone* is a satisfying, comprehensive book. Those who read it will be reminded of the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone and hopefully will rejoice that they are sons of God through Christ alone because they have received Him by faith alone.

Reviewed by Henry Bartsch

***A History of Western Philosophy and Theology.* John M. Frame. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015, 875 pp., ePub. ISBN 978-1-62995-085-3**

In *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, author John M Frame seeks to demonstrate what it means to "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5) as he evaluates the history of western thought in light of biblical theology.

Frame is professor of systematic theology and philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, USA and previously taught at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia and California). He has authored numerous books including *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief* (P&R Publishers 2015) and his *Theology of Lordship* series (P&R Publishers). He hosts www.frame-poythress.org, which provides resources for apologetics, theology, and philosophy, including access to many of his own writings.

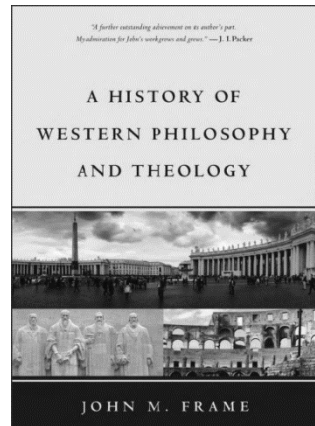
In the first chapter, Frame constructs a biblical approach to worldview, that is a Christian epistemology. The remainder of the book is simply an application of that paradigm to philosophy and theology in the west from ancient Greece to modern times. The book is essentially one long case study contrasting Christian and non-Christian thought in light of biblical teaching.

Frame first outlines his paradigm of a truly Christian epistemology and worldview.

Christian philosophy begins in Scripture itself, with the two-level worldview of Genesis 1. God is the Creator, the world the creature. God is absolute tripersonality, and he is Lord of all that he has made. His Lordship entails control, authority, and presence. Sin leads people to think they can replace God's lordship with their own autonomy, and their rebellion extends to their philosophical thinking. The natural consequence is that their thinking becomes what Scripture calls foolish. We can see the foolishness of unbelief in many areas of metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory. Unbelieving thought is caught up in a dialectic of rationalism and irrationalism – principles that conflict with each other but nevertheless require each other. (p. 86)

This is the lens through which Frame will read and evaluate the history of thought in the west through the rest of the book.

Essential to Frame's paradigm is the claim of irreconcilable antithesis between Christian and non-Christian philosophy. Frame traces this antithesis as it is expressed in the three traditional areas of philosophy – metaphysics (biblically, God is both the transcendent creator and the immanent covenantal presence in His world), epistemology (God's transcendence implies that He is the ultimate criteria of truth and establishes the conditions of knowing; His immanence permits our competent knowledge of God and His world), and ethics (only a personal sovereign can impose moral norms). To summarise the antithesis: "non-Christian philosophers are seeking alternatives to God,



making the discipline of philosophy an exercise in idolatry” (p. 30). There is little wonder then why Frame so often refers to the apologetic task as spiritual warfare.

Throughout the book, Frame demonstrates the antithesis between Christian and non-Christian thought by depicting the autonomy of reason, by demonstrating how rationalism inevitably leads to irrationalism (following Cornelius Van Til), and by showing how non-Christian thinking often blurs the Creator-creature distinction. Frame is not afraid to criticise Christian theologians from Justin Martyr to Bultmann for supporting an unbiblical approach to theology.

Frame fully admits his bias (pp. xxvi, 560). Though he assures his readers that he is fair in presenting the ideas of each thinker, Frame does not evaluate each thinker or movement neutrally. He applies his paradigm rigorously in this perspectival reading of the history of thought. If his readers accuse him of circular reasoning (beginning with his conclusions about philosophers and then finding those conclusions), Frame counters, “that’s the way it is in philosophy and in all of life: we can’t step out of our skins” (p. 2) and all philosophers argue from within their worldview, which he seeks to demonstrate through the pages of this book.

With this paradigm before the reader, beginning in Chapter 2 Frame launches into a chronological presentation of western thought through the Greek, Early Christian, Medieval, Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and Modern eras.

As Frame presents 19th and 20th century philosophers, he discusses theologians who might not be found in traditional histories of philosophy but who would be of special interest to readers of this book, most of whom are likely more interested in theology than exclusively in non-Christian philosophy – including von Harnack, Barth, Brunner, Bultmann, Tillich, Bonhoeffer, Moltmann, and Panenberg. The book closes with a presentation of the contributions of modern Reformed thinkers – Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, Clark, Van Til, Plantinga, Poythress, and others.

The section on Cornelius Van Til (pp. 529-537) is especially useful as well as Appendices D (“Transcendental Arguments”) and T (“Van Til Reconsidered”) as the entire book seeks to apply Van Til’s transcendental apologetic approach to the history of philosophy.

Frame concludes that his excursion through the history of western philosophy has been bleak. The history is dark as it has demonstrated over and over again that humans are fleeing from their Creator, their foolish hearts are darkened, and their worldviews are incoherent or ultimately undercut themselves. But he closes the book with hope and a challenge.

But God has not abandoned the world of thought. Through all this time, faithful pastors, church teachers, evangelists, theologians, and fathers and mothers have maintained the authentic biblical gospel.

Hearts have been transformed, and Christian people have spread abroad the love of Christ. (p. 512).

The final three hundred pages of the book comprise twenty appendices, which contain ten of Frame's previously published discourses on philosophy, seven book reviews, and assessments on Thomas Oden, Gordon Clark, and Cornelius Van Til. Each chapter concludes with a helpful list of key terms, study questions (useful in the classroom context), print and online bibliography, recommendations on primary source reading, and famous quotes of thinkers highlighted in each chapter. Chapter content closely follows Frame's lectures at Reformed Theological Seminary and is freely available through iTunes (p. xix).

Frequent diagrams assist the reader to visualise abstract concepts. The running outline and brief summaries in the margins help the reader follow the flow of argument. Frame's constant citing of primary sources demonstrates his grasp of the perspectives he is evaluating. The brief conclusions at the end of each major era of philosophy allow the reader to see the big picture of Frame's philosophical paradigm in application. Some degree of previous knowledge of theology, apologetics, and the history of philosophy would help students before they read this book.

Frame writes in conversational style as if he were lecturing in class, including numerous personal reflections and asides (mainly in the plentiful footnotes). This style will bother readers who are looking for a more technical or detached analysis, but it does give the book "personality" and allows the reader the chance to "watch the author think" as he writes.

Whether a reader agrees with Frame's Reformed theology or his presuppositional apologetic approach, one will benefit greatly from the vast scope of the work and the helpful summaries of each thinker presented. The volume of information presented allows the book to be used as a quick reference guide to theology teachers and students.

Having lectured in philosophy in a tertiary theological institution in Africa, I am naturally interested in the usefulness of Frame's book for teaching philosophy and theology on this continent. How relevant is *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* for theological education in Africa? On the surface, a reader might judge that the book is irrelevant to engage the philosophies, worldviews, or social concerns on the continent. The book does not reference a single modern African thinker, nor does it engage traditional African ontology or social concerns. And isn't "Western" in the title an immediate turn-off in light of recent pan-African renaissance?

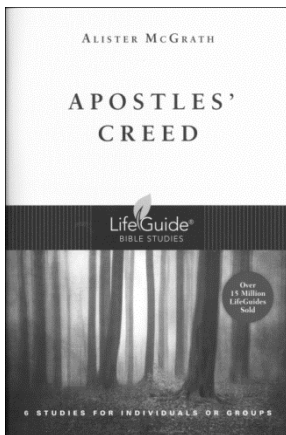
I believe a case can be made for the usefulness of this text in Africa for a number of reasons. First, African life and thought have engaged western philosophy for generations, for better or for worse. There is likely no university on the continent which does not interact heavily with western thought. Providing students with a Christian perspective on western thinking will be a

helpful evaluative tool. Secondly, Frame's book provides African students of theology, philosophy, and apologetics with an example of how to approach any philosophy from Africa, such as the spirit-world/phenomenal-world, the ontological concepts of identity-in-community and identity-in-ethnicity. Frame's approach to the creator-creature distinction, autonomy of reason, and idolatrous fleeing from God are an integral part of the specific concerns in the African philosophical agenda. The first chapter itself could be used as a stand-alone text in a course on theological or philosophical prolegomena. Given the issues the continent faces today, which have deep philosophical and worldview roots, we could easily welcome a follow-up to Frame's work, applying a biblical paradigm to the philosophical concerns in Africa with a view to take every thought captive.



Reviewed by Karl Peterson. Karl Peterson lectures at the Bible Institute of South Africa in Cape Town. He received his D.Min. from Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, PA.

***Apostles' Creed: 6 Studies for Individuals or Groups.* Alister McGrath. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016, 47 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-1095-6**



Apostles' Creed is a short work that is part of the larger Life Guides series published by InterVarsity Press. It's a series which includes many books of the Bible, topical studies, and character studies.

This particular volume is by Dr. Alister McGrath, who along with being a theologian is a biochemist. He holds the chair in theology, ministry, and education at the University of London. He is the author of *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, *In the Beginning*, and *The Twilight of Atheism* amongst a long list of books.

This short work (forty-nine pages) explores each phrase of the Apostles' Creed. Each section begins with a summary passage from the Bible which undergirds the phrase, a one-page commentary of the particular phrase in the Creed, followed by two pages of questions for study and reflection. Included as well are suitably large spaces to write one's answers.

The copy given for review happens to be a leader's guide. This contains helpful approaches to leading the study as well (for those lacking leadership abilities) and appropriate answers to the questions at the back.

McGrath states the purpose for these studies: "Leading a Bible discussion can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience, but it can also be scary – es-

pecially if you have not done it before.” He continues, “These studies are designed to be led easily. As a matter of fact, the flow of questions through the passage from observation to interpretation to application is so natural that you may feel that the studies lead themselves.” (p. 35) McGrath says the studies can be used with people from professionals, students or church groups, with each chapter designed to take about forty-five minutes in duration.

If this volume is any reflection of the wider series, they will serve as a wonderful way to bridge the gap between a beginner’s level and a more involved study of God’s Word.

As in any series, the quality of each one has to be determined on its own merits depending on the author, and so if being led by a novice, a good suggestion might be to consult with someone with more experience as to the suitability of the content. But strictly judging by this study, they can and should be widely used across the life of the church.

Reviewed by Kent I. Compton

A Review of Three Books on Aspects of Global Theology

***Theology without Borders: An Introduction to Global Conversations.* William A. Dyrness and Oscar Garcia-Johnson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015, 208 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8010-49323**

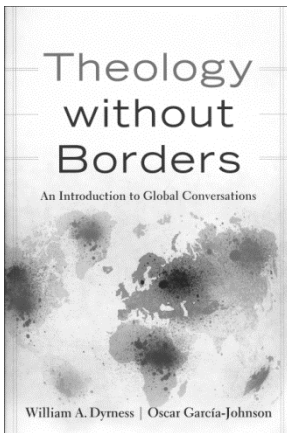
***Jesus without Borders: Christology in the Majority World.* Eds. Gene L. Green, Stephen L. Pardue, and K.K. Yeo. Majority World Theology Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014, 208 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8028-70827**

***The Trinity among the Nations: The Doctrine of God in the Majority World.* Eds. Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo. Majority World Theology Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015, 182 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8028-72685**

In the 21st century most Christians are found in the Majority World. While there are some signs of renewal and church growth in the “First World,” the projected growth in the West is very slight in comparison to the dramatic – and even, explosive – growth of the church in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, the vast majority of theological writing and publishing still is found in the West, largely due to the accumulated wealth and resources for such production there. Thus, the vast majority of publications still embody a

Western perspective on theology. In addition, theology and biblical studies as taught in the Majority World has largely not taken account of this new global situation. This needs to change.

Something that will change this unfortunate situation is the availability of non-Western theological voices in Western publications. The insights of theologians from diverse contexts and socio-cultural situations expressing the meaning and applications of the gospel in their situations are needed to expand the Western understanding of the Christian faith for a global church. This has slowly begun to happen. The three books which we examine in this review essay are significant contributions to this expansion of the Western theological perspective and to the global theological conversation.



Theology without Borders: An Introduction to Global Conversations is written by William A. Dyrness and Oscar Garcia-Johnson. Dyrness has taught at theological schools in Manila and Nairobi, as well as a number of Western seminaries, and is currently a professor of theology and cultures at Fuller theological Seminary. Garcia-Johnson was born and raised Honduras and moved to the U.S. as a young man. He is associate professor of theology and Latino/a studies at Fuller, and recently became associate dean of the Center for the Study of the Hispanic Church and Community. They wrote this book as a catalyst to promote greater dialogue between theologians in the West and the

Majority World.

Each author writes an introductory chapter indicating his concerns in doing theology in general and in writing this book. Garcia-Johnson challenges Western theology to end its dominance in the theological field and to engage in fair and respectful interaction with theologies of the Majority World. His use of the language of postcolonial and critical studies – terms such as the subaltern, transoccidentality, transnationality, and glocality – makes the thrust of his arguments somewhat opaque and dense. But his essential points are important – that any framework that produces clear and fruitful cross-cultural theological dialogue must accept that all theology is shaped by its historical and socio-cultural context. Thus, every theology must humbly and respectfully listen to the insights of the theologies arising out of other contexts to have a richer – global – understanding of the gospel.

Dyrness repeats the concerns and goals of Garcia-Johnson. He wants Western theologians to appreciate how deeply committed Majority World theologians are to applying theology not merely to personal evils but also to the social evils in their own settings. While there are perennial questions that theologians answer in all ages and cultures, the methods of doing theology in

the non-Western world arise out of the conditions of persecution, injustice, and corruption in which these Christians find themselves.

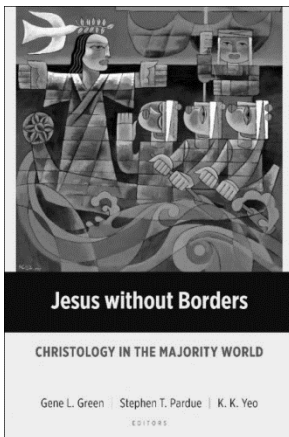
There are two themes that the authors explore in the remaining four chapters: applications of theology to the specific socio-cultural conditions in the Majority World and ways that the beliefs and values of pre-Christian indigenous traditions have shaped theology around the world. These themes are set against the background of criticism of Western Christianity. Some of these criticisms are accurate: that church traditions and practices were imposed on indigenous peoples; that the gospel was presented in individualistic terms; and that Christianity was used to justify coercive imperial conquest. But others are highly questionable. Among the latter are: that the cultural and social assumptions of church leaders shaped what the 4th and 5th century councils found in the Bible concerning the doctrines of Christ and of the Trinity; that American Christianity was shaped by the Enlightenment and its ahistorical perspectives; and that Christian missionaries were indifferent to the injustices that colonial powers practiced in the Majority World. Concerning this last claim, while it is certainly true that this was true of many missionaries, there were also many missionaries who worked to protect the indigenous peoples from the unjust and abusive treatment of colonial interests. The recent work of sociologist Robert Woodberry has brought this important aspect of proselytizing missionaries to light. This book could have been more balanced in noting the positive impact of Western Christians and their theology to the Majority World.

The second theme of the book – the role of the beliefs and values of pre-Christian indigenous traditions in shaping the theology of Majority World Christians – is both enlightening and a source of caution. The authors acknowledge that, even in the Majority World, theologians differ on the role that these pre-Christian beliefs and values should play. For example, the African theologian Emmanuel Katongole views the gospel as an alternative to idolatrous indigenous African beliefs, while Kwame Bediako considers Christianity as fulfilling Africa's deepest indigenous aspirations. It is one thing to contend that, due to general revelation and common grace, many beliefs and values of indigenous peoples have a strong resemblance to Christian beliefs. Examples of these are: the Mezoamerican belief in a supreme Creator Being who guides all humans; the African belief in the importance of the spiritual world, of community, and of being connected with the natural environment; and the Asian belief in a divinely-given code for harmonious human relationships. But it is another thing to argue that these beliefs should shape the character of non-Western theology. For example, the authors appeal to the African notion of ancestors as spirit guides to be incorporated into theology to understand the communion of saints. This is obviously a significant problem for Protestant theology.

Even with the caveats noted, this book contains many helpful insights to open Western theologians to humble dialogue with theologians from the Ma-

majority World. Theology is always contextual; it should be applied to social and cultural issues to effect positive change; and it must draw upon the insights of indigenous beliefs in transformative ways so as to shape beliefs in a culturally winsome manner. Insofar as this book unfolds these themes in biblically faithful ways, it is a helpful tool in promoting truly global theological conversations.

The next two books reviewed here are the first in The Majority World Theology Series published by Eerdmans. Each book opens with a chapter on the specific doctrine by a leading Western theologian. This is followed by chapters from theologians in the Majority World in which they indicate how their socio-cultural context shapes the significance of the doctrine for their setting. Both books have the same goals as *Theology without Borders*: to provide a forum in a Western publication for the expression of Majority World theology and to foster dialogue and mutual enrichment for Christian scholars from around the world.



Jesus without Borders is divided into two parts. Part I contains chapters by theologians reflecting on Christology with Scripture, philosophy, history and culture. Part II contains chapters by biblical scholars reflecting on Christology by interacting with biblical texts that have Christological significance.

Kevin Vanhoozer begins Part I with a presentation of historical Christological developments in the West, with a concern for the continuity that is important to maintain for Christian worship and proclamation. He argues that the Chalcedonian formulation – two natures in one person – is essential for the global church's confession of Christ

today. Yet, he notes that this confession is not the whole truth about Christ in that it leaves room for specific applications and emphases that relate to diverse social contexts. Vanhoozer rightly notes that these applications and emphases must always uphold the biblical ontology embodied in Chalcedon, which confesses the divinely revealed identity of the person of Jesus Christ.

The next three chapters in Part I present the views on Christology by three non-Western theologians. While they reflect specific concerns arising from their contexts, it should not be assumed that their respective views are shared by all theologians in their specific global settings. V. Ezigbo presents three contextual models which represent the major assumptions of African Christology: Christ who negates African indigenous beliefs, Christ as Mediator-Ancestor, and Christ as Revealer of true divinity and humanity. Ezigbo argues for the third view.

Timoteo D. Gener notes a number of themes that resonate with Asian Christians. Some of these are: Jesus as human who makes God accessible to

humans (for Hindus), Jesus as Monk (for Buddhists), Jesus as prophet (for Muslims), the suffering Jesus (for Chinese), and Jesus as Lord of the spirits (for many Asians). J. Martinez-Olivieri notes the themes of Jesus as liberator and judge which speak to the realities of oppression, injustice, violence, and corruption in Latin America. Christology must combine both the Christ of faith with the Jesus of history, ontology and ethics, the personal and the social vision of salvation.

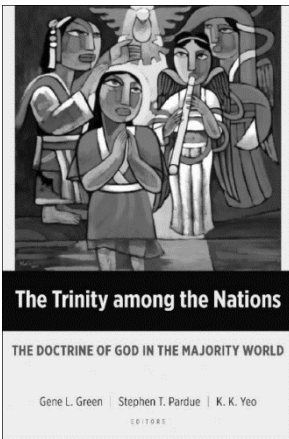
Part II contains chapters by biblical scholars that ponder the Christological significance of particular biblical texts for their contexts. The chapter on "Reading the Gospel of John through Palestinian Eyes" by Yohanna Katanacho could be more candidly entitled, "The Inclusive Christology of the Gospel of John, with Brief Application to the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict." By noting echoes of Old Testament themes in John, and parallels between Moses and Jesus, Katanacho shows how John's gospel takes the ethnic, religious, and geographical specificity of the Israelite hope of redemption in the Messiah and expands it in the person of Jesus to proclaim a Redeemer and a redemption that encompasses all people. Katanacho has a very brief conclusion with application to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. His exegetical insights are quite good, but they are not actually a reading of the gospel through Palestinian eyes.

"From Artemis to Mary: Misplaced Veneration versus True Worship of Jesus in the Latino/a Context" by Aida Besançon Spenser examines the role of Mary as intercessor in the Latina feminist evangelical perspective. Her central argument is that the growth of the view of Mary as mediator between humans and God stems from a deficient Christology, where stress is laid upon Jesus' divinity and where his humanity is greatly diminished. People sense that their prayers of petition require a human intercessor. Latino Catholics pray to Mary so that their prayers may be brought to the attention of a distant Christ and an even more distant Father. This clearly contradicts passages such as 1 Tim 2:5-6, Heb 1:2-14, and Heb 10:19-22 that affirm the human and divine Christ as the only Mediator between God and humans. Spenser also presents some insightful history on the rise of the veneration of Mary in the context of goddess worship in the ancient world and of the cult of Artemis in the city of Ephesus, where the historical evidence indicates that the veneration of Mary first arose. Spenser rightly concludes that Mary can be understood as the advocate of liberation, as reflected in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-46), and as the one whose heart is pierced in suffering with the suffering of her son (Luke 2:40). But she must never be construed as intercessor.

Andrew Mbuvi draws upon the language of blood and sacrifice (related to purity) in 1 Peter to draw parallels with African concerns for purity, Christ as the perfect sacrifice, and victory over the spirit world. There is nothing controversial in these claims. In another chapter, K. K. Yeo disagrees with Vanhoozer's claim that the ontology of Chalcedon encompasses the richness

and variety of the New Testament Christologies. Thus, Yeo argues that Chalcedon cannot provide a comprehensive Christology for the global church. But he seems to want to have it both ways. He maintains that there is a diversity and variety in the Christology of the gospels and of Paul's epistles. Yet, he also claims that there is a harmony and unity in these diverse Christologies. He is not clear in what he is getting at. If there is a unity and harmony in the diversity of facets of New Testament Christology, then this unity can be embodied in a church confession about the person of Christ such as that of Chalcedon. If not, then one wonders what meaning such a "unity and harmony" means.

This book is a helpful one for further dialogue on Christology in a global context. While some chapters are quite controversial, most are helpful in expanding the perspective of Western Christian readers on the significance of the crucified and resurrected Christ for comprehensive salvation.



The second book in the Eerdmans series, entitled *The Trinity among the Nations: The Doctrine of God in the Majority World*, also has as its goal a global conversation – now focused on the doctrine of the Trinity. The first chapter, “One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity,” by Gerald Bray presents the substance of the traditional teaching of the Council of Chalcedon on the nature of God: God is one; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit coexist within the divine being; the three persons are equal in divinity but distinct in their persons in the ontological Trinity and in their functions in the economical Trinity. Bray notes that this Chalcedonian formulation has been the

standard for the church.

The remaining the chapters are expressions of various emphases and applications of this doctrine to the concerns and contexts of non-Western cultures. Some are relatively benign in their comments, but others make suggestions that are quite controversial. In the first category, I place the chapters by Kunhiyop, Gonzales, Ewell, and Panikkar. In the second category, I locate the chapters by Woodley, Asano, and Wang.

The chapters in the first category expand Western notions of the Trinity by examining and applying them in Majority World settings. “The Trinity in Africa: Trends and Trajectories” by Samule Waje Kunhiyop laments the disregard, in practice, of the classical Trinitarian in Christian Africa. The emphasis tends to be on a belief in a supreme being along with a belief in a community of gods. In light of these heresies, and in light of Muslim monotheism, he contends that Trinitarian theology should be actively taught and applied in African Christianity.

Both Antonio Gonzales in “The Trinity as Gospel” and Rosalee Ewell in “Learning to See Jesus with the Eyes of the Spirit” argue for teaching the social dimensions of the Trinity in the Latin America setting. It should especially be applied to its social and economic problems, notably the oppression of the poor. To reinforce this, the Trinity should form the basis for human community, for the promotion of social justice under the reign of the triune God, and for mercy and compassion for the poor. The authors contend that through our participation in the life of God through Christ, the Spirit makes the transformative life of Christ a reality in these contexts.

“In “Asian Reformulations of the Trinity: An Evaluation” Natee Tanchanpongs reviews the contextual Trinitarian formulations by four Asian theologians. He finds the constructions of Raimundo Panikkar (India) and Jung Young Lee (Korea) to be syncretistic, absorbing the biblical teaching into the cultural ideas. The work of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya (India), a Thomist, is more biblical as he struggles to rethink the ideas of the Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy according to orthodox biblical teaching. The author concludes that the best work is being done by Nozomu Miyahira (Japan) as he reshapes the Japanese concern for unity and community according to the pattern of the unity and differentiation of the Trinitarian persons.

Three chapters are more controversial in their proposals for contextual Trinitarian thought. In “Beyond *Homoiousios* and *Homoousios*” Randy Woodley argues that the North American indigenous concepts of the shalom community – several examples of which he presents in detail – are better than those derived from Chalcedon. He defends this by arguing that neither Jesus nor the early church promoted an enforced orthodoxy of belief. This is patently false. He also espouses the typical liberationist arguments that a single male sky god promotes male supremacy, racial hierarchy and a “single, non-complex divine ontology.” The underlying liberal assumption in his claims is that the portrayal of God in the Bible is not the revelation from God but merely the historically conditioned expression of how men in the past construed God. This assumption contradicts the views of the church throughout history, and opens the door for all manner of doctrinal reformulation. It is beyond the pale of biblical orthodoxy.

In “Motherliness of God: A Search for Maternal Aspects in Paul’s Theology” Atsuhiko Asano seeks to find “motherly” aspects of the character of God in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. While there is some validity in noting the feminine, motherly dimensions of God’s character, not only in Paul’s epistles but throughout the Bible, it is important to do this in a manner that follows biblical revelation. This means noting that God is always designated by masculine pronouns, titled with masculine terms (Father, King, Lord, Ruler, Master, Shepherd, etc), and predominantly described with masculine metaphors. The feminine designations are always metaphors – God is like a woman in childbirth (Is 42:14) or like a woman comforting her child (Is 66:13) – and God is never titled with feminine terms (Mother, Queen, Shep-

herdess, etc). Asano fails to do this in his exposition of Galatians, leading him to faulty conclusions about the equality of metaphorical male and female notions of God in this epistle.

In “How to Understand a Biblical God in Chinese Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics”, Zi Wang argues for the contextualization of the Christian God in the Chinese Confucian setting. Unfortunately, the way that Wang promotes dialogue between the two results in syncretism between the Christian Trinitarian revelation of God and the Confucian concept of God as creator and creation, with only minor critique. The transcendence of God is compromised, and God becomes merely a catalyst for the Confucian concern for social harmony and hospitality.

This book is a more diverse presentation of global Trinitarian theology than *Jesus without Borders*. While, as noted, it does have some helpful chapters for global dialogue, there are three chapters which, in this reviewer’s opinion, go beyond the boundaries of Trinitarian orthodoxy. They should be read with careful analysis and biblical criticism. And they certainly do not provide any convincing arguments from a non-Western context for revising the church’s universal acceptance of the nature of the Trinitarian God as expressed most clearly in the Chalcedonian formulation. In fact, they serve as examples of how concern for one’s context without faithful commitment to the biblical message can lead to compromise and syncretism.

Reviewed by Guenther (“Gene”) Haas, Professor of Religion and Theology, Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario.

