

Book Reviews

Theology, Church, and Ministry: A Handbook for Theological Education. By David Dockery, ed. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017.

Review by C. Joseph Brasher

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Dr. David Dockery, president of Trinity International University, edits a compilation of writings from contemporary theological scholars to survey the relationship of the local body of believers and theological education institutions. Dockery views his audience as theological students, interested donors and friends, and board members who guide and direct institutions (xvi). Dockery seeks to establish a bridge of understanding from the current view of theological education that promotes a broader appeal in the church.

In the broader scope of literature, Dockery's compilation provides a contemporary perspective concerning works that define and justify the necessity of theological education. The uniqueness of Dockery's work comes in the combination of subjects provided in one volume. (xv) Furthermore, the work expands views about theological education from being merely American to a more global approach. The work has immediate application and provides the platform for critical conversations regarding the future of theological education beyond the boardrooms to the lay member in the pew.

The first section, "Theological Education; An Introduction," defines theological education and the role it plays in forming men and women for areas of service in the local church body. Dockery introduces the discussion regarding theological education by providing a common understanding of the relationship between the church and theological education from historical and theological positions. His introduction veers strongly towards a historical understanding of the roots of theological education. It ends with his view of the church and the future of the relationship.

Dockery summarizes the relationship: "When the church carries out [understanding what it believes and why], and when theological education is church-centered and church-focused, the true content of faith... can be preserved and proclaimed in churches in the United States and around the globe." (20) Dockery believes the discussions that occur from his work are critical to the formation of

theological education in the future and lead the church to a more biblical foundation. (ibid)

The work introduces a proper view of Scripture that influences decisions in dealing with the challenges that theological education faces, including debt relief, global Christianity, technology, and economic needs. The section deals with ways in which seminaries influence the motivation of learning for intellectual pursuit, as opposed to practical ministry needs.

Next, the discussion turns to the individuals' pursuit of ministry from the perspective of fulfilling their call and the role of theological education in spiritual formation. Harris concludes that spiritual formation is essential to theological education. (88) An institution is to be intentional in its approach to the subject in regard to students. Therefore, theological education promotes intentionality in the amount of influence it has for people to embrace their roles within the kingdom of God and to help support spiritual growth.

The next section, which contains the most material, deals with the shape of ministry preparation. The chapters provide a summary of the courses offered at an institution and how each fits into the broader structure of holistic theological education. Topics in the discussion range from a basic introduction to the essence of the Old and New Testament and the need for courses regarding biblical ethics. Each author argues for how his specific topic contributes to explaining the heart of theological educational curricular offerings.

The material walks students through the main functions of the church (such as preaching, missions, and worship) with the intent to, as Lawless states, "offer up a sumptuous banquet of doctrine and worldview training in order to equip students for Christian witness in a dying, decaying world." (386)

A final perspective expands the relationship of theological education from being contained in American institutions alone to one that contains a global perspective. New believers introduce "new questions and issues to the text of Scripture that is helping reenergize the whole task of theology" as theological education expands its influence around the world. (421) Dockery's overarching point is that while the West has been the leading place for theological education, the West should prepare to broaden its influence in contextualization.

The structure of the content has an excellent flow and supports Dockery's goal of explaining theological education. However, the appeal to the audience seems to lose its original intent. Dockery's original audience is broad as it reaches out to students and board members. Each group has different motivations towards success in theological education. At times, the discussions appeal to one segment of audience versus another rather than remaining consistent throughout the content.

One applauds Dockery for seeking to address the critical subject of theological education from an American and global perspective. The writers provide elaborate and well-written arguments in their respective disciplines that connect to the broader nature of theological education. Bringing this number of experts together in one

volume was challenging, especially with the goal of sharing a unified voice towards theological education. Dockery's volume is one in which people who question and those who support theological education can find a proper understanding of its necessity in a contemporary setting.

Pastoral Theology: Theological Foundations for Who a Pastor Is and What He Does. By Daniel L. Akin and R. Scott Pace. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017.

Review by Gregory Paul Cook

Gregory Paul Cook serves as Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Horn Lake, Mississippi and is a PhD student at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary.

Daniel L. "Danny" Akin serves as president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and College. Akin is also known for his commitment to expository preaching and missions. Scott Pace is Associate Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Ministry and serves as Associate Director for the Center of Preaching and Pastoral Leadership at Southeastern. Combining their passion and expertise, Akin and Pace authored *Pastoral Theology* with the persuasion that a theological framework is necessary for the pastorate. The content of *Pastoral Theology* reflects their predisposition of the Sovereignty of God, the infallibility, authority, and sufficiency of Scripture, and the necessity of pastoral ministry.

Pastoral Theology proposes that the theological truth of the Bible is the foundational guide that shapes the pastor's role within the church. While *Pastoral Theology* stands in contrast with other works that promote models for pastoral ministry, it does not conflict with such works. Akin and Pace intend to help pastors predicate their pastoral development upon theology rather than traditions within pastoral ministry. To support their thesis, Akin and Pace use the most significant portion of their content focusing on Systematic and Biblical Theology to show how each theological precept shapes the understanding of the pastor's life.

The authors divide their book into three sections: Trinitarian Foundation, Doctrinal Formation, and Practical Facilitation. Within each section, three chapters support the section's theme. Each chapter includes a Theological Premise, Biblical Precepts, Pastoral Principles, and Conclusion.

In section one, Akin and Pace develop the trinitarian doctrine and relate how the doctrine of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit form the identity of the pastor. The second chapter presents a theological exposition of God the Father. Chapter 3 gives a theological exposition of God the Son. Chapter 4 presents

a theological exposition of God the Holy Spirit. Akin and Pace highlight critical aspects of the triune God and organize them in a manner that promotes theological clarity and support their theological positions by using a systematic approach to Scripture. They relate the theological truths to the role of the pastor so the pastor can understand his identity through a Trinitarian perspective of God.

In the second part of their book, Akin and Pace present the doctrines of man, the church, and the mission of the church to show how God shapes the pastor through these agencies. While section one is foundational for the identity of the pastor, section two is formational for the role of the pastor. Chapter 5 develops the doctrine of man and captures the relational aspect of the *imago dei*. It describes how sin corrupted man's relationship with God.

The theme of chapter 5 captures the compassion of God as He relates to man through the act of redemption. Akin and Pace illustrate the formation of the pastor's compassion through understanding the grace of God as it relates to fallen humanity. In chapters 6 and 7, the writers develop the doctrine of the church and the church's mission to demonstrate the venue and purpose of the church. These chapters provide the pastor with an ecclesiological framework through which he can lead God's church to fulfill its mission of sharing God's compassion to the world.

The third section of *Pastoral Theology* is the most practical section, focusing on the pastor's role in shepherding the Church, homiletics, ethics, and morality. The pastor's character should reflect theological integrity. Therefore, if a pastor loves his people, he should do so because of who God is and how God loves His Church. Additionally, the authors use the basic theological premise of God's view of marriage and His relationship to the church as motivation to the pastor's role in his marriage and home. The authors do not present practical suggestions about the character of the pastor, but argue that the pastor's character should reflect biblical theology.

This reviewer believes that Akin and Pace are successful for three reasons: 1) The book's thesis is supported by biblical theology—emphasizing biblical integrity. 2) The book's content complements the book's title. 3) The organization of the book is logical. The weakness of *Pastoral Theology* involves the minimal use of extra source material. The book uses few endnotes and no bibliography. However, what the book lacks in additional source material, it makes up with its use of Scripture. It offers a Scripture and subject index, which is useful for theological and pastoral research.

In this reviewer's opinion, *Pastoral Theology* would best benefit a first-year seminary student, or a young pastor beginning in ministry. The theological content will be redundant to most seminary graduates. Akin and Pace have given a gift to the pastoral field by bringing attention to the importance of how the pastor understands his identity through the theological truths of Scripture.

Anyone Can Be Saved: A Defense of “Traditional” Southern Baptist Soteriology. By David L. Allen, Eric Hankins, and Adam Harwood, eds. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016.

Review by Michael L. Crouch

Dr. Michael Crouch serves at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

David L. Allen and Adam Harwood teach at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and have authored other titles. Eric Hankins is pastor of First Baptist Church, Fairhope, Alabama.

Having framed a collegial approach to an often divisive discussion in Chapters 1-3, successive chapters present the case for the “Traditional Statement” that all people are savable, none being excluded from God’s redemptive plan. Chapter 4 explains that any view of the Gospel that denies this truth is not truly good news, and is, in fact, bad news for many. In “The Sinfulness of Man,” the traditional view of original, or inherited, sin is described, affirming that all people are born with a sinful nature, but not an inherited guilt. Individuals are held guilty for their sinful choices. In “The Atonement of Christ,” Dr. Allen states the biblical, philosophical and historical reasons Southern Baptists deny Calvinism’s doctrine of limited atonement.

In Chapter 7, “The Grace of God,” the traditional view that receiving the grace of God in salvation is not a meritorious work is illustrated. The next chapter denies the Calvinistic view that regeneration precedes faith, affirming that individuals freely respond by faith in Christ to experience regeneration. Chapter 9 addresses the biblical teaching of election as “the lavish generosity of God, who will save not just a few but an innumerable multitude.” Furthermore, “rather than determining these choices Himself, God has gloriously and sovereignly decided to accord to each sinner the responsibility of surrendering to the Holy Spirit’s leading in the preaching of the gospel.”

In “The Sovereignty of God,” the writer notes that Southern Baptists traditionally affirm the truth “that only God can save us, and that we cannot save ourselves.” However, he also strongly denies that God, through means of “irresistible grace,” imposes salvation on anyone. The following chapter, “The Free Will of Man,” explains “although God is responsible for the salvific work and offer, man is responsible for receiving or rejecting the gift.” It continues by illustrating key concerns regarding compatibilism and the alternative afforded by a soft libertarianism regarding free will in salvation.

Both Reformed and traditional Southern Baptists have long affirmed the security of the believer, yet each group defines assurance differently. For the traditionalists, “[a]ssurance is not rooted in the doctrine of election or the doctrine of sanctification. It must be rooted in the doctrine of justification, or perseverance

becomes a cause of doubt not a source of assurance.” In response to concern over false conversions, “the biblical solution: preach the whole gospel, passionately call people to repentance and faith, strengthen believers in the body of Christ, and trust the Lord to keep his promises.”

Chapter 13, “The Great Commission,” illustrates the consequences of a traditional Southern Baptist understanding of salvation. Highlighting the motivation, mandate, means, method, message and magnitude of the Great Commission, the writer shows how God desires to operate through believers to accomplish his eternal plans.

“Is The Traditional Statement Semi-Pelagian?” seeks to dispute the false claim on several grounds. The theological and historical definitions of semi-Pelagianism are contrary to the Traditional Statement. The Traditional Statement affirms salvation is initiated by God, not by the free will of man. While some people have attempted to so charge the Traditional Statement based on the Canons of Orange, such accusations are unhelpful as that historical statement did not address the issues at hand nor has it ever been binding upon Baptist doctrine. Finally, the early response to the Traditional Statement by Roger Olson is critiqued as erroneous in three areas.

The final chapter, “Five Theological Models Relating Determinism, Divine Sovereignty, and Human Free Will,” articulates the ways in which evangelicals view the interaction of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Anyone Can Be Saved is a significant contribution to the ongoing discussion among Southern Baptists regarding the teachings of Calvinism. As a thorough commentary on *A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation*, the majority of the book sequentially addresses each article of the statement. The tenor of the volume details the doctrinal positions without rancor or caricature of opposing viewpoints. The writers also annotate the biblical, theological and historical background for beliefs long shared by Baptists, particularly Southern Baptists.

Each contributor brings fresh insight to the facets of the Traditional Statement he criticized, yet the cohesive nature of the whole comes in its balance of scholarship and accessibility. While some readers may not be intimately familiar with some of the theological terms, the writers endeavor to explain their references. This effort alone underlines the editors’ stated intent to contribute more light than heat to the discussion occurring among Southern Baptists. Additionally, it provides readers with ability to review subsequently the source materials referenced.

The volume successfully brings clarity to the Traditional Statement, allowing the discussion to advance. In the opening chapter, David L. Allen writes, “[i]f we are to come together in unity, we must do so *as Baptists*, not as Calvinists and Traditionalists.” Therein lies this reviewer’s best recommendation. Southern Baptists

have always counted Calvinists and Traditionalists among our number. With biblical faithfulness, evangelistic and missions fervor, mutual respect and open conversation, our greatest value to God's kingdom purposes is still ahead.

Reformation Commentary on Scripture. New Testament XIII. Hebrews, James. By Ronald K. Rittgers, ed. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017.

Review by Kevin Jackson

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In the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* series (RCS), the editors follow the same format as the editors of the *Ancient Commentary on Scripture* series. Within each volume, the editors have compiled commentary from writers, pastors, and theologians relative to the specific period of Church History. The editor's compilation of material in the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* provide a wide range of valuable interpretative light on the text of Scripture.

Ronald Rittgers serves as the editor for the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture New Testament XIII*. He holds the Erich Markel Chair of German Reformation Studies at Valparaiso University in Indiana. He teaches history and theology with a specific interest in Medieval and Early Modern/Reformation Europe. His scholarly publications include *The Reformation of the Keys: Confession, Conscience, and Authority in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Harvard University Press, 2004) and *The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

In the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture New Testament XIII*, Rittgers points out "The Patristic and Reformation eras are separated by nearly a millennium, and the challenges of reading Scripture with the reformers requires special attention to the context, resources, and assumptions of that period" (xix). With this fundamental belief, the editor presents an overview of the context and process of biblical interpretation for the Reformation era (xix-xlii). He details key interpretative principles during the Reformation era, including grammatical-historical exegesis and the Christological centeredness of the entire Bible (xxxiii). He also divides the Reformation approaches into different schools of exegesis (xxxiii-xl). This helpful feature enables modern readers of the RCS series to grasp the particular rationale for comments on various passages within the volume.

The Reformers used the epistle of Hebrews to bring Reformation theology onto the world scene. As Rittgers states, “Some scholars have argued that Luther’s lectures on Hebrews (1517/1518) contributed directly to a mature Reformation theology” (xliii). The writer of Hebrews explained a developed Christology which the Reformers used to combat faulty theology of their day. The Reformers affirmed Nicene and Chalcedonian orthodoxy; however, they disagreed vigorously concerning the “nature of Christ’s presence in the holy bread and wine” (xliv-xlv).

The Reformers vastly disagreed on the epistle of James. Luther and his followers dismissingly remarked, “James is an epistle of straw” (xliii). Erasmus Sacerius held a more optimistic view than Luther, while the epistle seems to have suffered little reproach in the Reformed and Anabaptist circles” (xlviii). Rittgers aptly illustrates how the Lutheran and Reformed exegetes sought “to avoid criticism from Catholics and Anabaptists” in his selection of comments on the epistle of James. Lutheran and Reformed exegetes insisted on monergism and human bondage to sin. This belief opened them up to the charge that God is responsible for sin and evil.

As the modern reader can surmise, the Protestant Reformers leveled many criticisms against the Catholic Church. Throughout the *RCS New Testament XIII Hebrews, James*, the editor arranges the comments of the Reformers to illustrate the divide between the Catholic church and the Protestant church. The comments on James 5:7-12 serve as an example. Regarding James 5:7-12, Rittgers highlights the criticism of the sacrament of unction and the sacrament of penance (255-56).

Rittgers has provided a resource for modern pastors, theologians, and students of Scripture. By explaining the nature of the Protestant Reformation, the sources in the Protestant Reformation, and Rittgers’ selection process, Rittgers enables the modern reader to use the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture New Testament XIII Hebrews, James* as a resource instead of an authority.

Rittgers arranged the exegetical and theological treasures from the Reformation era. By utilizing a variety of German, Swiss, French, Dutch, English, and Scottish reformers, Rittgers provides a well-rounded understanding of how the figures of the Reformation period used Hebrews and James. When modern readers consider the Reformation period, Luther and Calvin stand out as exegetical giants. However, Rittgers offers a wider perspective on the Reformation era. He includes well-known and obscure exegetes. This inclusion strengthens the volume.

Rittgers provides new insights from old sources for the modern reader. Modern readers can easily access Reformation thought on Hebrews and James due to Rittgers’ work. This worthy work will serve as a solid resource to enhance the study of Hebrews and James.

Evangelism for Non-Evangelists: Sharing the Gospel Authentically. By Mark R. Teasdale. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2016.

Review by Dana Sneed

Dr. Dana Sneed is a curriculum writer and editor for Answers in Genesis.

Mark R. Teasdale, evangelism professor at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL, is passionate about evangelism and equipping students to express their faith articulately and authentically. *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists* seeks to meet that need. In a field with abundant resources and practical advice, Teasdale offers a framework to rescue the practice of evangelism from mere methodology.

After noticing the reluctance of most students to take the required evangelism course at Garrett, Teasdale determined that the field of evangelism did not need another methodological approach, but a reframing of the idea. Throughout the book, Teasdale uses the imagery of navigation to reflect evangelism as a journey rather than a specific practice. He guides the reader in spotting difficulties in evangelism, gaining a general sense of direction and recognizing what will be useful along the way.

The book is organized into six chapters that break the journey into manageable ideas. First, Teasdale addresses the role of experiences in evangelism. By nature, evangelism is a bias, but this idea is used in a general sense. Teasdale defines words like *evangelism* and *good news* in such a way that the reader is not tied to the belief of the author or a specific denomination. Throughout the book, a recurring idea is that in order to be authentic, the person doing evangelism must reach a personal definition of the good news that needs to be shared. The first section also exposes the influence of history and culture on evangelism, especially dealing with modernity and postmodernity.

Having laid the groundwork for what to leave (stereotypes and blind methodology) and what to beware (influences of modernity, postmodernity, and fundamentalist mindsets), the author establishes a new starting point. He does not seek to teach a specific theology; in fact, he deliberately keeps his terminology generic. Instead, he guides readers to think about their biases and beliefs in a way that leads to better articulation. The reader is encouraged to answer questions such as “Why do we remain Christian?” and “What is the good God wants to accomplish?” Throughout the book, Teasdale emphasizes that if evangelism is to work, it must be authentic. Authentic evangelism comes from having an articulated starting point.

Next, Teasdale guides the reader to consider context. He refrains from offering specific strategies for evangelism because he claims that traditional approach is what led to intimidation in evangelism. Rather, he encourages the reader to consider

how the good news fits into a given context. Even an authentic and well-articulated starting point can lead to an unsuccessful evangelistic effort if it has no consideration of context. He suggests that creativity and change are two pivotal ideas that ought to be included in evangelism. He fights against the traditional approaches for the sake of tradition and encourages creativity that considers the cultural context.

Finally, Teasdale explains why he thinks this framework is the most appropriate way to approach evangelism. He claims the navigation model helps individuals in articulating their faith authentically and removing the intimidation from the practice of evangelism. He also suggests that this model can be used as a teaching framework in the classroom or in the church. While most models look at evangelism as a result of theology, Teasdale suggests that evangelism as a framework for theology provides a means for catechesis. Rather than separating the study of evangelism from that of doctrine and theology, Teasdale suggests that the two ought to be inseparable. When viewing evangelism through this framework, it provides for a natural opportunity for the believer to articulate faith and to be deliberate in practice.

Evangelism for Non-Evangelists is written to be as versatile as possible. It can be helpful for the individual who is looking to think deliberately about evangelism, or it can be used in a casual or formal teaching environment. The book includes engaging examples that illustrate the main ideas. Learning activities placed throughout the book provide opportunities for intentional consideration or small group discussions. The book also offers supplemental online materials to aid the evangelism professor or church leader in preparing to teach this framework.

While Teasdale does not try to hide his theological biases, he has written this book to be as unlimited as possible by denomination or theological perspective. Although this approach opens the book to a broader audience, it does limit its effectiveness for the average reader. The seminary professor and the experienced church leader will find a helpful framework for reforming the common conceptions of evangelism. However, the average reader may be left with little guidance in regard to the practical application of evangelism. The book accomplishes the author's intent, which is not to inform the reader's thinking or practice, but to guide the reader to consider what evangelism should be.