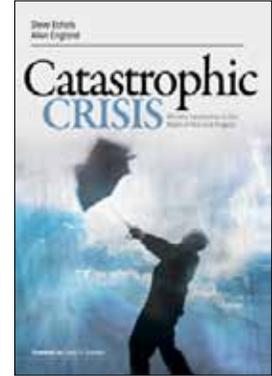


Catastrophic Crises: Ministry Leadership in the Midst of Trial and Tragedy. By Steve F. Echols and Allen England. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2011. 192 pages. \$19.99, paper.



The preacher in Ecclesiastes claimed there is no end to the writing of books (Ec. 12:12). Writing a book that glues the reader to the narrative, however, is an appropriate end that justifies the means of diligent research, keen analysis, and thoughtful prose. Steve Echols and Allen England have given us a rich resource of transformational leadership for times of catastrophic crises. They define catastrophic to mean an event of overwhelming destruction and ruin. While all leaders face crises in their tenure of ministry, a catastrophic crisis usually occurs once in a lifetime. Consequently, the authors selected, examined, and evaluated eight catastrophic situations: seven that struck churches and one that almost devastated New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. By combining case studies with strategic leadership lessons the reader feels the weight of the trial or tragedy and learns the cruciality of effective leadership.

Several practical examples stand out. For those of us who endured the destructive fury of Hurricane Katrina the authors stir provocative memories of the long and laborious assessment and recovery. Dr. Chuck Kelley along with the trustees and the administrative team of the seminary tackled the New Orleans catastrophe swiftly and decisively in order to minimize the loss of students and faculty to the seminary. Hard times require hard decisions from leaders. As a result Dr. Kelley asked the faculty to make a personal sacrifice by meeting on the campus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary 10 days after the hurricane in order to reestablish communication, foster support, and allow for an opportunity to collectively grieve. Maintaining a clear perspective during emotionally volatile circumstances creates a potential for serious conflict. Nevertheless visionary leaders like Chuck Kelley provide hope in the midst of heartache and direction in the midst of chaos that enables everyone to adapt to a new normal.

Leading during a disaster is also what Echols and England emphasize when an F2 tornado leveled Bethel Baptist Church in Moody, Alabama. Pastor Chris Burns discovered the importance of creativity when his congregation had no place to worship. Furthermore he learned the art of navigating through conflicting congregational opinions while leading Bethel to reach out to the community. Transitioning an established rural church into a growing suburban church takes a toll upon both pastor and people, but servant-leaders help a congregation move from survival to revival during a malevolent crisis.

But what about the nightmares that come true? What kind of leadership is necessary when a deranged gunman interrupts a worship service and fatally wounds the pastor? And how do you manage the shock factor when a church bus accident injures and kills several students?

The authors skillfully explore the relational dynamics and communication techniques necessary at such catastrophic moments. Furthermore, the authors show the necessity of staff cooperation and cohesion from the position of second chair leadership: "Often people forget

about the service they could provide from the second chair because they are so focused on getting to the first chair” (55). When a catastrophic event occurs church staff leaders must not reproduce the infamous mistake of Alexander Haig. Within minutes after President Ronald Reagan was shot Secretary of State Haig erroneously stated, “I’m in charge”.

During the tragic bus accident involving the students of First Baptist Church Shreveport, Gene Hendrix minister of administration and education made it clear that the pastor was the primary leader. Gene handled behind the scene details so the pastor could give attention to grieving families and conduct media interviews. From a secondary position he emphasized that the senior pastor was clearly in charge.

One of the many strong points in this thoughtful book is the way Echols and England apply stylistic competencies to the biblical foundation of godly leadership. They affirm the two biblical stances of (1) transformational leadership and (2) servant leadership as essential models regardless of which stylistic competency a leader may exhibit.

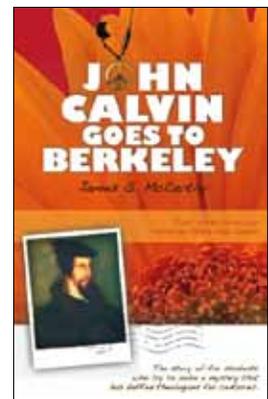
Afterall, leadership is always under the scorching light of criticism but never more so than during a catastrophic event. Such experiences allow leaders to distinguish themselves as Christ-like servants who rise to the occasion with empathetic ministry and courageous integrity.

My copy of *Catastrophic Crisis* is marked, underlined and dog-eared for ready reference. I will give copies to young pastors that I mentor and encourage them to read it eagerly and allow its wisdom to seep deeply. Indeed God leaves His fingerprints upon the catastrophic crises of our lives so that by prayer and humility we may demonstrate that His grace is sufficient for the unexpected moment that can happen to any leader anywhere.

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John Calvin Goes to Berkeley. By James G. McCarthy. San Jose, CA: City Christian Press, 2010. 304 pages. \$14.95, paper.

When I was a young college and seminary student, the two main issues we debated in dormitory rooms and Bible studies were millennial views and Bill Gothard’s teachings about the family. Among the most discussed topics today in those same settings is a few key tenets of Calvinism. It is important for everyone (particularly Christian students in high school, college, and seminary) to be well-informed on these issues. *John Calvin Goes to Berkeley* is an excellent introduction to this subject.



John Calvin Goes to Berkeley is a novel, not a theological treatise, and thus affords a creative approach to the Reformed-Arminian debate, which has evoked many one-sided theological treatises but little meaningful dialogue. We often learn more from dialogue than from a monologue, more from a story than a lecture, more from a novel than from a theological treatise. The format of a novel allows us to overhear the debate over Reformed theology as a bystander without feeling pressed by a one-sided author to affirm that position. Overhearing the debate provides the readers with a balanced presentation of multiple sides of the issue, and allows the readers to think through their own positions without feeling defensive.

The author, James McCarthy, is a converted Catholic who serves as an elder at Grace Bible Chapel in San Jose, California. He also teaches in the Discipleship Intern Training Program hosted by Grace Bible Chapel and Hillview Bible Chapel, which ministers in part to students at the University of California at Berkeley. After authoring four other books and co-authoring another on ministering to Catholics, *John Calvin Goes to Berkeley* is McCarthy's first novel, and the first in an intended University Christian Fellowship series.

The storyline in *John Calvin Goes to Berkeley* concerns the University Christian Fellowship (UCF) at the University of California at Berkeley, in which the issue of Calvinism and predestination became divisive. Five members of UCF covenanted to meet together and study the issue in depth until they could resolve the issue. However, the storyline is enriched by a number of subplots, including an irresponsible investigative reporter who accused UCF of being a part of the Dou Yat Ji Lou doomsday cult, an accusation of UCF President Alex Kim for an alleged cheating scandal, a tie to Patricia Hearst and the Symbionese Liberation Army, the salvation of a student from Singapore, a drug-crazed vagrant man who kept assaulting UCF displays, a trip to Geneva to learn more about Calvin, and a number of personal struggles experienced by the UCF members. This is an interesting novel even if someone were less interested in the theological issues about which it rotates.

When dissension arose among the UCF leadership, their President Alex Kim (a Korean American engineering student) called a series of meetings at the Graduate Theological Union library in Berkeley. The Calvinist protagonist in the discussions was UCF Vice-President Rod Sutherland, who hoped to attend Westminster Theological Seminary. The other participants were not as committed to a particular doctrinal tradition though had their own presuppositions: Angela (a Hispanic student with a Catholic background), Elliot (a doctoral student in mathematics), and Jamie (a popular "Joe College" surfer boy). The group researched theology, history, and the Bible, and yet still struggled to come to a consensus answer. However, the discussions present all the major arguments from Scripture and theology for and against the Reformed view of predestination. These discussions are helpful to anyone who wants to hear both sides of these issues and a survey of the relevant biblical texts in order to think through these issues. In fact, the various views are presented with such balance that the reader will not be sure which way the majority of the group is going to go until the very end of the book.

Without “spoiling” the end of the story for future reader, the research group surveys all the major views on the subject, and some of them come up with their own distinct proposal. Rod leads part of the UCF to leave and start a Reformed Christian Fellowship, while the others agree on a compromise proposal in which God enlightens those who are willing to repent and believe.

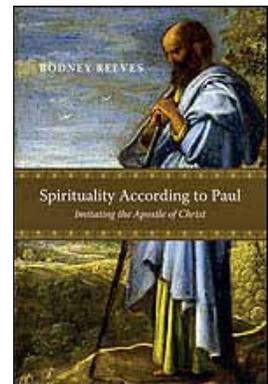
Many of the theological texts on Reformed theology are either written for laypersons and are too simplistic for theological precision, or are written for scholars and are too technical for the typical layperson. *John Calvin Goes to Berkeley* strikes a good balance – although it is obviously not a technical theological treatise, it does discuss the key biblical texts and theological issues impinging on predestination, and even word studies of key biblical words relating to predestination. It is an excellent book to recommend to a college student, seminarian, or informed layperson who is interested in this important doctrinal issue.

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Spirituality according to Paul: Imitating the Apostle of Christ. By Rodney Reeves. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011. Pp. 253. \$16.00 paperback.

Dr. Rodney Reeves is professor of biblical studies and dean of the Courts Redford College of Theology and Ministry at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri. In his latest book, *Spirituality according to Paul: Imitating the Apostle of Christ*, Reeves fleshes out what Paul’s understanding of spirituality entails, which essentially is, “Take up the cross and follow me!” Reeves updates Paul’s clarion call to be like him so as to be like Jesus for a culture of convenient Christianity, a church fudging on biblical truth, and a mindset that has capitulated to postmodern pluralism. According to our author, Paul’s spirituality is cruciform in shape, guided by three brand images: crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Thus toward the conclusion of his introduction, Reeves writes, “[Paul] believed he imitated Christ. That’s because he was convinced that the gospel is the story of Christ—death, burial and resurrection—that will be the narrative of spirituality for all time. And he believed that he was the one to show us how to live that story because he walked in the power of Christ’s Spirit” (17). This three-fold concept provides the framework for Reeves’ entire book, which I now summarize.

Part I is devoted to the notion of the Christian being crucified with Christ, which is developed in four chapters. The first chapter makes the point that Paul’s true spirituality was not rooted in his accomplishments as a Pharisee but rather in his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, when Paul discovered that the suffering Jesus was none other than the glorified



Messiah. Such an insight turned Paul's theology around, causing him to embrace Jesus the suffering Messiah. Consequently, the newly called apostle embraced the cross of Christ as the means to experiencing divine glory: "This pattern of humiliation leading to exaltation is the essence of the gospel according to Paul. Messianic suffering must precede messianic glory. Death gives life. Loss becomes gain. Shame morphs into honor. The cross explains resurrection" (35). God's power displayed in Paul's weakness would become the theme of Paul's apostleship and for all who wished to follow him as he followed Jesus, the theme of Reeves' chapter two. Here the author draws much on 1 and 2 Corinthians and the Pauline opposition documented there. It boils down to the fact that the church at Corinth held Paul in disdain for his ineloquent speech. He had not been influenced by Greek rhetoric like his missionary counterparts had been. But, for the apostle to the Gentiles, it was precisely through his weaknesses that the power of the gospel was being demonstrated. Here Reeves offers an interesting diagnosis of Paul's deficient speaking skills, namely, Paul suffered the continuing effects of head trauma perpetrated upon him in Galatia (48-49). In chapter three, our author sticks with Paul's message to the Corinthian Christians, especially in his challenge for them to deny themselves and be the holy temple of sacrifice God had called them to be. Such a message flew in the face of the idolatry that glorified sex had become in that day, a message that has continuing relevance for the twenty-first century. The last chapter in unit one explains why the Law of Moses failed to produce obedience and holiness and why only walking in the Spirit provides the solution.

Part II of Reeves' book is devoted to the Pauline metaphor of baptism with Christ which, according to the author, must be seen as a communal act. Thus chapter 5 asserts that when the Christ follower (Reeves' preferred term for a Christian) is baptized, she is baptized into Christ's body, the church: "Indeed, most books on Paul's spirituality skip over the significance of being buried with Christ. That's because we tend to emphasize our personal experience as the locus of spiritual formation" (98). Rather, the believer is baptized into the community of faith when he is baptized into Christ. Indeed, the churches at Corinth serve as a foil in this regard because their very gloating over being baptized into the names of their respective heroes belied the true significance of baptism. Chapter 6 continues Reeves' critique of the Corinthian Christians, this time with reference to their celebration of the Lord's Supper. Reeves demonstrates, among other things, that the Corinthian churches' participation in the agape meal right before the Lord's Supper undermined the communal aspect of Christianity. When the wealthy patrons of the house churches ate better food and drank more wine in their secluded posh part of the house than the poorer believers did who were confined to the more common areas, this divided the church into the haves and have-nots thereby invoking the judgment of God. Chapter 7 addresses the issue of immorality in the church at Corinth and the church today. Reeves emphasizes the corporate dimension of sexual sin for the Christian; it drags the body of Christ into the illicit relationship organically as well as provokes the world's criticism. Chapter 8 reminds the reader that to be Christian is to give to others, especially one's fellow believers. Paul's collection of money from his Gentile churches for the Jerusalem church demonstrated the importance of such grace-giving. These three actions, then—unity at the Lord's Supper, sexual purity, giving to others—flow from the believer's baptism into Christ and His body.

Part III explores the role of the resurrection in Paul's spirituality under the rubric of "raised with Christ." In chapter 9, Reeves expounds how it is that Jesus' resurrection power is at work in the mortal lives of Christians. He writes of this paradox, "So what does resurrection power look like on earth? On the outside it looks like death. It looks like weakness and groaning. It looks like loss, foolishness and failure. It looks like a hopeless cause, a problem that never goes away, a wasted effort. Indeed, it looks like a man who labors in vain. But even as "our outer nature is wasting away," Paul believed "our inner nature is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). "Because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen," believers operate with an abiding hope that God is at work in our lives in mysterious ways (172). Chapter 10 continues the theme of the paradox of the resurrection by observing that God shows up in Christ followers in the midst of loss. God turns losing into gain, death into life, sorrow into joy, weakness into strength, futility into glory. Indeed, if God can turn a cross into resurrection, then He can work all things for good (182). Chapter 11 asserts that being raised with Christ also means being fit for spiritual battle with Satan and his malevolent forces. This was something that the Ephesian believers needed to understand and something the modern church can ill afford to neglect. Chapter 11 concludes Reeves' book by discussing glimpses of the resurrection in signs, miracles, and visions; happenings that God granted to Paul and occasionally to us as well. But most important of all is the foretaste of divine glory that believers encounter when they pore over sacred Scripture, God's primary vehicle of communicating His truth.

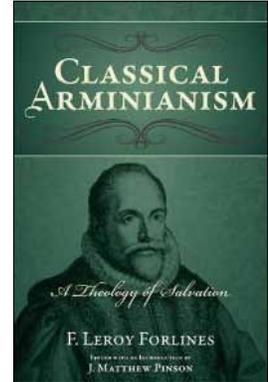
Reeves concludes his book by asking the question: What would following Paul look like today? Rather than concentrate on specific issues that plague modern Christianity, our author challenges his readers to count on the Spirit like Paul did, which means to live the crucified life by promoting the welfare of all people by edifying the church and by caring for all creation because the glory of Christ's resurrection invades every corner of the earth. Paul believed we could participate in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ so that all might see the good news of God's reclamation of all things (236).

Reeves provides us with a convicting yet liberating profile of Pauline spirituality. In doing so, he points the way out from the moral morass and spiritual lethargy that have long had an impact on the modern church. So what does it mean for the Christian to take up the cross and follow Jesus? It means to imitate His servant the apostle Paul!

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Classical Arminianism. By Leroy Forlines. Edited by J. Matthew Pinson. Nashville: Randall House, 2011. Pp. 379, \$27.99 paperback.

Arminian theologian Leroy Forlines' doctrine of salvation has been expanded and compressed from its previous incarnations in this new volume, edited by J. Matthew Pinson (cf. *Biblical Systematics* [Nashville: Randall House, 1975] and *The Quest for Truth* [Nashville: Randall House, 2001]). This substantial book sets forth a comprehensive systematic theology of the doctrine of salvation in ten chapters. The book includes an index of references to authors and subjects (but not of Bible verses), and is documented and supplemented by endnotes – instead of footnotes.



Many readers are likely to be struck by four aspects of this Arminian theology. First, this is an Arminian theology that is well denominated as “Reformation Arminianism” due to its advocacy of key Reformed theological elements. Secondly, it is an Arminianism more closely reflecting the theology of Arminius, than the Wesleyan Arminianism of a later era. Thirdly, it is an Arminianism with a pedigreed Baptist lineage, traceable to 17th-century English Baptists. Fourthly, it is an Arminianism that is freshly argued by a mind that looks at the pertinent theological elements in an ingenious way and in a way that makes theology personal and relevant.

The book is introduced by J. Matthew Pinson, whose differentiation of Forlines' theology in the Arminian spectrum is worth the cost of the book and the time investiture of reading it. Both Pinson and Forlines are Free Will Baptists, but Pinson's introduction shows how Forlines' Arminianism can appeal to a wider audience of those seeking an alternative to both Calvinism and Wesleyan Arminianism.

Forlines begins his initial chapter by discussing what it means to be created in the image of God. For Forlines, this may be summed up as individuals being created as *persons*, beings who think, feel, and act, and are endowed with reason and morality. Forlines' discussion is characteristically simple, but carries profound implications for his entire theological system. In particular, man is designed for an interpersonal relationship with God, one that is characterized by influence and response, rather than cause and effect. Forlines argues that “in some sense, an individual's actions are both his or her own and under his or her control. If this were not the case, he or she would be less than a person” (12). Forlines notes that it is hard to find a theology book that deals extensively with human personality, suggesting that Calvinists avoid the issue for fear that it will “take something away from God[’s sovereignty]” (59).

The lengthy chapter goes on to argue for a nuanced view of total depravity, one that recognizes that the Fall seriously impacted personhood but did not nullify it: fallen man is still a thinking, feeling, and acting being endowed with reason and morality, even if these characteristics have become deeply flawed. Thus, even as a sinner, “the image of God within cries out for Truth, a right use of reason, moral uprightness, forgiveness for guilt” (19), although “fallen humanity

has no ability or power to reach out to the grace of God on its own” (citing Pinson, 23). Forlines concludes the chapter by incorporating Reformed doctrinal commitments regarding the imputation of Adam’s sin to the race, the means whereby it was imputed (natural headship), and the means whereby depravity is transmitted (Augustinian).

The second chapter introduces issues pertaining to election. Forlines’ treatment of the various orders of the decrees in Calvinism, and how one theological commitment logically flows from another, is so clear that individual Calvinists may find it helpful in clarifying their own particular positions. The discussion includes various Calvinistic views on God’s sovereignty, in counterpoint with various aspects of human freedom. Forlines raises the simple question, “Is the *cause* and *effect* model the only way that a sovereign God can carry out His purposes? Or, can God work effectively in carrying out His purposes through the *influence* and *response model*?” (80). He answers emphatically by showing how an influence and response model is compatible with God’s sovereignty. Forlines affirms a view of God’s absolute foreknowledge that does not result in divine causality. He denies Molinism and Open Theism through substantial argumentation. The chapter concludes with an outline of an Arminian order of decrees, and with a discussion of the types of decrees consistent with Arminian theology (conditional and unconditional efficacious decrees, decrees to influence, and decrees to permit).

Any reading of the third chapter will dispel the popular but unschooled notion that Arminians do not believe in election. In fact, Forlines not only affirms election, but thinks that the thorny ninth chapter of Romans is his best prooftext to support his view that God elects individuals on the condition of faith, and he provides an extensive theological analysis of it, section by section. Essential to Forlines’ analysis is the Jewish presumption of their *unconditional* election, by virtue of Abrahamic descent, a theme revisited throughout the work. Thus, Paul answers the objection that large numbers of Jews were not saved by arguing that salvation is conditioned upon the individual believing, as reflected in the chapter’s summation which indicates that the decisive factor in election is faith (Rom. 9:30-33).

The third chapter highlights both Forlines’ genius as well as some deficiencies. His genius is seen in that his perspective on election and Romans 9 moves away from older models and reflects some of the thinking of the New Pauline Perspective found in the writings of Sanders, Dunn, and Wright, although he had independently arrived at his conclusion long before the New Pauline Perspective became well known (cf. Forlines’ *Romans* [Nashville: Randall House, 1988]). On the other hand, Forlines’ treatment of Romans 9 could be strengthened significantly by greater interaction with more recent exegetical treatments; although there is some interaction with modern scholars, such as Grudem, Moo, Piper, Schreiner, and Yarbrough, the majority of Forlines’ interaction on this topic is with older scholars such as David Brown, John Brown, Clarke, Ellicott, Godet, Haldane, Hodge, Lenski, Liddon, Meyer, Murray, Plumer, Sanday and Headlam, and Shedd. Elsewhere, Forlines’ exegesis seems more dependent upon older and less reliable works, such as word studies by Vincent, Earle, Trench, and Thayer. In one case, Forlines cites *The Amplified Bible* (331).

Having worked extensively through Rom 9 and arguing for its support of an Arminian election that is individual, eternal, and conditional, Forlines turns to dispelling other prooftexts

for Calvinistic unconditional election in chapter 4, and then to garnering scriptural support for Arminian conditional election in chapter 5.

The discussion in chapter 5 covers terminology, such as predestination, foreknowledge, election, and whether the biblical data require that these terms imply unconditional election. Forlines shows that election is centered “in Christ” (Eph 1:4), explaining, “We are chosen in Christ. [Paul] does not say that we were chosen *to be in Christ*” (183). To explain the difficulty of a Calvinistic election that precedes the decree to provide atonement, Forlines quotes Arminius: “God can previously love and affectionately regard as His own no sinner unless He has foreknown him in Christ, and looked upon him as a believer in Christ. . . . For, if God could will to any one eternal life, without respect to the Mediator, He could also give eternal life, without the satisfaction made by the Mediator” (184). Forlines concludes by discussing logical arguments for the various views of election. The discussion would have been strengthened by a discussion of Jesus’ being God’s elect Son, or simply, the Elect One, since whatever it means for Christians to be elect must correspond in some sense to the Son’s status as elect.

Forlines argues in chapter 6 for an atonement that grasps “the seriousness of sin and the understanding of God’s holiness” (199). In doing so, he affirms the Reformed doctrinal commitment to the nature of the atonement as being penal satisfactory, and that salvation could only be accomplished by the punishment of sin through Jesus’ substitutionary sacrifice. Forlines gives a clear contrast of the basic assumptions of this view of atonement with those of the Governmental View, a view which many well known Arminians have advocated. The Governmental View rejects the notion that God’s holiness requires that sin be punished but that punishment is an option to be exercised at God’s discretion. The chapter concludes by addressing objections to the Penal Satisfaction View, and an argument for infant salvation (accomplished through the atonement by the removal of racial guilt). Forlines’ exposition of Penal Satisfaction is clear and logically coherent, and is one of the strengths of the book. However, one gets the impression that the system is occasionally imposed upon certain texts. Moreover, the meaning of a number of passages, especially in regard to God’s wrath being poured out upon Christ, need to be strengthened in light of recent exegetical treatments which question traditional interpretations.

Forlines raises multiple issues regarding the condition of salvation in the seventh chapter. First, he asserts that repentance and faith reflect different aspects of the same single condition. Secondly, he defines saving faith in a way similar to many Reformed theologians (“the abandonment of all trust in self or anything else, and a complete confident trust in Christ for salvation,” 254); in doing so, he circumvents the Calvinist claim that in Arminianism, faith is a work (citing Rom. 4:3-5). Thirdly, Forlines safeguards against the notion that people can be forgiven without experiencing a change in their lives by emphasizing that faith involves the whole personality (mind, heart, and will). Fourthly, Forlines affirms that faith is a gift in that it “cannot be exercised without the work of the Holy Spirit,” while insisting that nonetheless “it is a response of the person in such a way that it is a response of his or her personality” and “is in a real sense his own action” (258). Since this issue is so important in the Calvinist-Arminian controversy, Forlines goes on to clarify that faith is merely the condition for justification, not its ground. He denies the Calvinistic claim that regeneration must precede faith, in which regeneration is the *cause*, and faith is the guaranteed

effect. Instead, he points out an inconsistency in Calvinism whereby Reformed theologians such as Berkhof and Strong affirm that regeneration is a part of sanctification, even though God “cannot enter with His sanctifying grace until the guilt problem is solved by justification” (citing Calvinist theologian Robert Haldane, 263). Interestingly, Forlines quotes Reformed theologian R. C. Sproul to argue that faith is synergistic in both Calvinism and Arminianism, while asserting that regeneration is monergistic in both systems (260-61). Forlines is remiss in discussing the theological groundswell in New Testament scholarship of whether the phrase for “the faith of Christ” in passages such as Gal. 2:20 is to be taken as a subjective or objective genitive, and reduces the subjective genitive to the nearly non-sensical meaning “Jesus’ faith,” rather than “Jesus’ faithfulness” (258).

Through Wesley’s emphasis on Christian perfection, Arminians have been well known for their emphasis on personal sanctification. In the eighth chapter, Forlines likewise emphasizes holiness: “The redemptive process is designed to restore us to favor with God and to restore the holiness that was lost in the fall. Justification is a step in that process by a personal God who is intensely interested in holiness” (280). However, Forlines addresses the issue of personal holiness through a traditional Reformed approach rather than through a Wesleyan approach. He points out the errors regarding sanctification that may arise through a governmental view of the atonement. He distinguishes his view from a popular view of sanctification advocated by Charles Finney by asserting, “Sanctification is always an *accompaniment* of justification, but it is *not a condition* or *ground* of justification.” Likewise, he denounces the notion that sanctification is optional (“pseudo-Calvinism” and “cheap easy-believism”). Thus, he grounds sanctification in the atonement: “Our guilt stood as a barrier between us and the sanctifying power of God. . . . When the guilt was removed by the justifying grace of God, the way was open for the entrance of God’s sanctifying grace” (279). While Forlines recognizes that there is some latitude within “the framework of possibilities” for the influence of God’s sanctifying grace and the response of the believer, he nonetheless argues for “the guaranteed results of sanctification (295-97): “it is not within the framework of possibilities for the Christian to practice sin. It is within the framework of possibilities for him to please God and to live right” (297). This chapter is refreshing in that it offers a systematic framework for sanctification, while having the tone of a work on spirituality. Amazingly, however, in a chapter that should be replete with references to the Spirit, Forlines manages to refer to the Spirit but five times.

The final two chapters are devoted to the issue of continuance in salvation and the possibility of apostasy, which Forlines adroitly refers to as “making shipwreck” of one’s faith (320). Since Forlines grounds both salvation and continuance in salvation in the atonement, the only way that a saved person could be lost again is if he makes shipwreck of his faith. Thus, so long as a person is united with Christ by faith, his sins are forgiven (341). Accordingly, “we do not have room for a halfway state between being saved and being lost. If we are in union with Christ . . . , we are justified. If we are not in union with Christ, we are not justified. We can be in danger of losing our salvation. However, we have lost it only when the union is broken.” Forlines’ insistence that continuance in salvation is conditioned upon faith, dispels the claim that it is a works-salvation: “The Bible plainly conditions salvation on faith. To insist that salvation is *kept on the condition of faith* no more contradicts the notion of free salvation than saying that it is *received*

on the condition" (345). Hence, Forlines would affirm the present continuous tense formula that those who *are* truly *believing* endure to the end, but would question the present perfect tense formula that those who *have* truly *believed* do so (italics mine; compare with the Baptist Faith and Message which reads "All true believers endure to the end," section V). Forlines argues for the position that a person who has made shipwreck of his faith cannot be saved again (319-25). Chapter nine addresses the prooftexts for and against the various Calvinist and Arminian positions of continuance in salvation, while chapter 10 addresses the theological arguments. Much of the discussion is original.

Forlines' *Classical Arminianism* is a worthy endeavour, essential for any serious theologian interested in traditional theological systems. However, it delivers weighty matters in a style that appeals to non-specialists, pastors and church leaders, and to theology students. Not only does it provide an alternative to Calvinism, but it does so in a way that undermines much of the logical force behind Calvinism. One easily concludes that Forlines' system (really, Arminius's system) is the strongest alternative to Calvinism.

To be sure, there are some weaknesses. There is room for a good biblical exegete to strengthen some of Forlines' exegesis and to ground his systematic theology in biblical theology. Interaction with recent exegesis is relatively low.

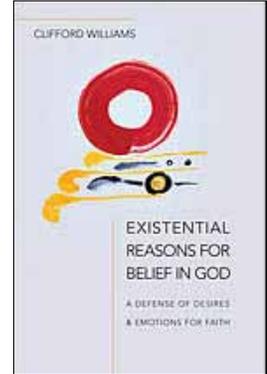
The book is strikingly free of mechanical errors. While some of Forlines' denominational audience may find the Scripture quotations from the KJV appealing, other readers will find it curious, to say the least; Forlines' need to explain KJV readings or alternate it with modern versions is occasionally intrusive. Also, the layout of headers with sectional numbering would help the reader distinguish sections from subsections, and facilitate cross-referencing.

These criticisms hardly detract from the book's real urgencies. In particular, Forlines impresses upon the reader God's real concern for holiness, as it is manifest in his plan to engage mankind as individual persons in an influence-response model to bring about their salvation. As such, the book is nearly as much a theology of spiritual growth as it is a systematic theology of salvation.

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Existential Reasons for Belief in God: A Defense of Desires & Emotions for Faith. By Clifford Williams. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011. 188 pages. \$22.00.

Clifford E. Williams serves as Professor of Philosophy at Trinity International University's Trinity College and as Chair of the Philosophy department. He has written more than ten books with topics ranging from free will, virtues, and Kierkegaard to Modern American Hoboes. His journal articles include various discussions of time and ethics. In *Existential Reasons for Belief in God* Williams attempts to legitimize need as a basis for faith. He argues that both reason and emotional need fulfillment are part of coming to faith.



According to Williams, most people who come to faith do so because their faith meets an existential need and because they think their faith is true. His book introduces several needs people have and he argues that need satisfaction is a legitimate reason to come to faith in God. The bulk of the work is dedicated to defending his argument from four objections.

Williams identifies two categories of needs: “self-directed needs” and “other-directed needs” (20). Fulfilling self-directed needs benefit the individual and consist of having cosmic security— heaven, life after death, goodness, feeling loved, a richer life, meaning, and forgiveness (21-24). Fulfilling other-directed needs benefits others or are intrinsically good and consist of loving, experiencing awe, delighting in goodness, being present to others, and justice/fairness. He does not intend to provide an exhaustive list nor does he claim that everyone feels these needs.

Williams’s existential argument is simple. Humans have certain needs that are satisfied by faith in God, therefore faith in God is justified (32). His argument is directed at rational ways to satisfy a need— by believing in God—but his argument is not designed to prove God exists (41). The justification for belief in God is that having such a belief satisfies certain needs. Williams’s project shows that people are rational for believing in God because certain needs are satisfied by having that belief (or faith).

The bulk of the book defends Williams’s project from four objections. The first is that the existential argument *does not guarantee truth*. Belief in God may satisfy certain needs but it cannot guarantee God’s existence (62). Williams admits to the veracity of this criticism but that it does not defeat the existential argument. When the existential argument is supplemented with reasons to believe that God exists, it can aid a person in coming to faith (81).

The second objection is that the existential argument *justifies belief in any God*. Williams explains that his argument does not guarantee anything about any God (88). His criteria for legitimate needs are designed to exclude deviant needs as a way to avoid using his argument to justify belief in a malevolent God. Williams also admits the second criticism is true but it does not defeat the existential argument.

The third objection is that *not everyone feels existential needs*. Williams discusses different aspects associated with introspection and self-identifying needs. He claims that some people may be unaware of their own needs since we sometimes have obstacles that hinder need recognition. He concedes that while the argument will not work for those who claim they do not feel the existential needs, the argument will work for those who do feel the existential needs (109).

The final objection is that *existential needs can be satisfied without faith*. If the objection is true, then whatever satisfies the needs would be as justified as belief in God including non-belief. Williams develops methods to test how to best satisfy the existential needs and he argues that Christian faith best satisfies them.

The last two chapters of the book examine the relationship between faith and reason and presents reasons to pursue faith. Williams argues that faith is emotion with commitment illustrates the emotive and reasonable aspects of faith. His final chapter presents positive benefits having faith in God.

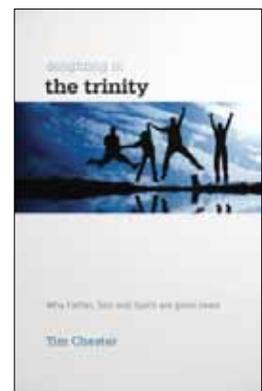
Williams work is valuable. Emotions are part of the human condition and have a role in all aspects of life, including faith. He made the case that satisfying needs is a reasonable justification for belief in God. Although useful to Christians, his argument also can be used to justify belief in a non-Christian god or gods.

Existential Reasons for Belief in God is not an overly technical book, but the topic is deep and Williams's writing requires persistence and attention. He sprinkles case studies in the chapters to demonstrate his position and provide a way for the reader to relate. Those familiar with philosophy will be very comfortable with his presentation, but any thoughtful person would be able to understand his argument. Although William's book cites some biblical examples, it is philosophy. I recommend this book for those who are interested in an in-depth discussion of justifying belief/behavior with need fulfillment.

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Delighting in the Trinity: Why Father, Son and Spirit are Good News. By Tim Chester. 2d ed. United Kingdom: The Good Book, 2010. 192 pages. \$12.99, paper.

With a Ph.D. in eschatology and missions, Tim Chester sees his ministry as not to take people to church but to take church to people. In his most recent book, *Everyday Church* (June 2011), he describes how, in our post-Christian western culture, people no longer come to church so we must bring the church to them. To this end, he serves at *The Crowded House*, a church plant in Sheffield, UK, he is the director of The



Porterbrook Institute, a distance learning center that specializes in practical, missional, ministry training, and he is a prolific author (timchester.wordpress.com).

With Chester's background in mind, we should expect his book on the Trinity to be accessible and well written yet informative and practical. *Delighting in the Trinity* is just that. Chester lays out an easy to follow lesson plan that is very conversational in tone but brings the necessary research to bear. He begins by building a case for the importance of the study despite the inherent difficulty of the subject. Taking a cue from Karl Barth, Chester places the Trinity at the center of the gospel so it is something with which we need to grapple in order to understand ourselves and our faith: "By telling the story of the triune God, we invite people to know the God who both rules the world and has come close to us, welcoming us into His family" (18).

After the introductory chapter, Chester begins part one by interacting with the biblical evidence for the triunity of God. As he plumbs the depths of Scripture, astute readers will notice a slight "reformed" perspective in his research and writing. For example, while most Baptists hold that Jesus was abandoned on the cross by the Father and the Spirit, Chester agrees with Calvin that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was made possible by the Spirit: "On the cross Jesus is abandoned by His Father, but the Spirit is present with Him enabling Him to offer Himself to the Father" (74). One way Chester's writing is accessible is in the way he dispels mistaken views of the Trinity. For example, he points out that the Son is not placating a stern Father but is fulfilling an act of love that "started with the Father" (68). He adds that the Son is not the victim of the Father but is a willing participant. The focus of the entire first part is on the unity of the godhead and the relationality of the Trinity.

In the second part, Chester probes the historical development of the Trinity. He lights softly upon some of the important people and events in Christian history: Origen, Arius, the Cappadocians, Augustine, Aquinas, the *filioque* controversy and the subsequent east-west schism, the reformers (esp. Calvin), the Enlightenment, Barth, and liberation theology. This survey helps ground the doctrine in all its practical significance.

Chester, in part three, explores the practical implications of a trinitarian doctrine of God, which, not surprisingly, is the largest section of the book. For him, the proper way to apply the Trinity is relationally. Thus, God can only be known through relationship, that atonement is only possible with a triune God (130), and that we were created to be in relationship with God and with others (172).

Chester's concluding chapter is missions-focused. He compares the uniqueness of Christ to Islam. While Christians hold that we are created in the image of God, Muslims are offended by any depiction of God so believe the Christian claim to the *imago Dei* to be blasphemous. And while Christians accept the concept of Trinity so depict Yahweh as both transcendent and personal, Muslims portrait of Allah is that of a deistic, distant being, who cannot be personal yet remain holy. For Chester, the study of the Trinity is all about how we are made as relational beings for community living. To miss this point is to miss the point of Christ and the Trinity.

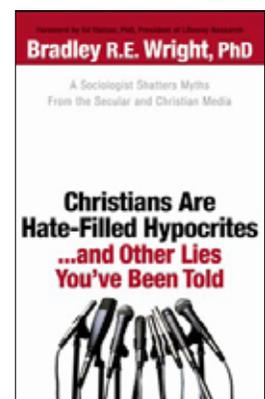
Delighting in the Trinity deserves high praise. The writing is accessible. Chester introduces key terminology but always provides a concise definition. For example, on page 92 he presents and defines two sets of terms: “*homoousios* (‘same substance’)” and “*homoiousios* (‘similar substance’)” and “the ‘economic Trinity’ (the Trinity in relation to creation) and the ‘immanent Trinity’ (the Trinity as it is in itself)” (92). His presentation of the historical development was detailed but not so meticulous that we get lost in the details. As discussed at the beginning of the review, Chester’s focus is on getting the Gospel to the people. The tone of this book meets that need and makes the complexity of the Trinity accessible to those interested in understanding this important pillar of the Christian faith.

The weaknesses are few and minor. One soft spot is how Chester compares our inability to know about God to our inability to know about a distant city or person we have never met (124). But, as he argued earlier (18ff), God is not distant but personal. Thus, the analogy is weak; though Chester’s overarching point is not adversely affected. Another soft spot is in the comparison of Yahweh to Allah (176-80). Following a clear presentation of the Muslim’s belief in a distant Allah, he adds that “there is little sense of God’s love and no place for the fatherhood of God” (177). The writing is unclear. While earlier Chester differentiated between Yahweh and Allah (28-29), here he could be read as claiming Allah is another name for Yahweh. A little editing would help remove the seeming contradiction. This, again, is a minor issue and has little affect on the overall impact of the book. I would be happy to recommend it to anyone interested in reading an uncomplicated but serious presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

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Christians Are Hate-Filled Hypocrites . . . and Other Lies You’ve Been Told: A Sociologist Shatters Myths From the Secular and Christian Media. By Bradley R. E. Wright. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2010. 333 pages. \$14.99, paper.

Ironically both the church’s harshest critics and her strongest proponents love sensationalist quotes and statistics about the dire state of the church in America today. Critics rejoice in the downfall of the church, while pastors often believe that negative claims about the state of the church will compel Christians to do the work of the church. Wright proposed that many of these statistics, used by both critics and proponents of the church alike, are grossly misleading, exaggerated, or just plain wrong—stats like “only prostitutes rank lower than Christians in terms of respect in the mind of the public.” Wright paints a much brighter picture of the state of Christianity than is often found in the newspaper or in the pulpit.



Wright covered six areas of church life: church growth, doctrine, involvement in church activities, family and sexual issues, how Christians treat others, and how the world perceives

Christians. His goal was to examine popular claims about Christianity to determine whether these claims are true, and to see what the actual evidence says about the state of the church.

To use one example, many bemoan the involvement of youth and young adults in the church today. Wright cited Josh McDowell, the Southern Baptist Convention Council on Family Life, and John Lennon, who suggest that the flight of young people from the church when they become adults could lead to dire problems for the church in the years to come. Some would go so far as to say that the last Christian generation has already been born. But adults have been lamenting the degenerate ways of children for thousands of years, and critics have been predicting the demise of the church for at least hundreds of years. Thomas Jefferson speculated in 1822 that Christianity would soon fall to Unitarianism, saying, "There is not a young man now living in the United States who will not die a Unitarian" (73).

Wright's more hopeful conclusion is that young people tend to leave the church when they leave home, but they return to church when they start families of their own. This pattern has held true for several generations, so one could assume that many members of this generation of young adults will return to the church as well. The issue of young people leaving the church is a real problem, and the church would be wise to address the issue, but reports of the collapse of the church are exaggerated at best. Such exaggerated claims might raise eyebrows and sell tickets to conferences, but they are misleading and unhelpful in addressing the real issues that the church faces.

While Wright offered a very positive assessment of the church today, he did highlight a few areas where the church needs significant growth, including racism, loving attitudes toward homosexuals, and a negative self image to name a few. Certainly the church is not perfect, but neither does Wright believe that the church is destined to fall apart within a few generations.

Wright's sober look at church statistics has much to offer those studying the state of the church today. But as a statistical book, it necessarily falls short in offering a complete picture of the Christian landscape. First, surveys cannot measure genuine Christian devotion. Anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that most churches have an average worship attendance somewhere between one-quarter to one-half of their resident membership. The Southern Baptist Convention has some 16 million members, but most of these members will not be worshipping with a church on a given Sunday morning. At the heart of the issue, most Americans would claim to be Christian, but large numbers of these self-professed believers have little to no involvement in the church. While church numbers may be strong, other evidence would seem to indicate that genuine Christian devotion and commitment to Christ's church are far from where they need to be.

Second, Wright's analysis did not distinguish between individual churches since he was operating at a denominational or large-group level. While he could claim that church attendance numbers were not plummeting as some might claim, he does not address whether certain kinds of churches are suffering major losses in attendance. For example, with the rise of mega-churches, have smaller, more traditional churches suffered in favor of larger, more contemporary churches?

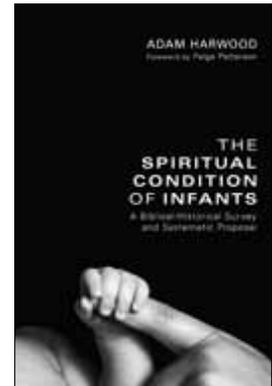
These questions are outside of Wright's scope, but answers to these questions would certainly help Christians as they seek to apply his findings to specific settings. For example, that somewhere between 70-80 percent of American churches are plateaued or declining has become a truism for many, but how could Wright's conclusion that the state of the church is relatively healthy be true if 70-80% of Southern Baptist Churches are struggling?

Though Wright's book left a few questions unanswered, overall he offered a powerful reminder of the need to love and support Christ's church instead of lambasting her. Many feel the need to motivate people by painting a grim picture of the church in desperate need of devout believers. Such motivation does not lead to permanent change. Believers should be motivated by love for Christ's church, not fear over her impending doom. Christians already know that she is victorious, and they should be motivated because they have the chance to be a part of God's master plan, not because of fear that His church will not survive unless Christians are scared into action.

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The Spiritual Condition of Infants: A Biblical-Historical Survey and Systematic Proposal. By Adam Harwood. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011. Pp. 118, \$23.00.

Adam Harwood's new book, *The Spiritual Condition of Infants: A Biblical-Historical Survey and Systematic Proposal* was released this year. Harwood, Assistant Professor of Christian Studies at Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Georgia, answers a profound question which has baffled the greatest minds of the Christian church—the eternal destiny of children. Paige Patterson wrote the foreword while endorsers include heady theologians Charles White, James Leo Garrett Jr., Malcolm Yarnell III, and Rustin J. Umstattd.



After the foreword by Patterson, Harwood divides his subject nicely into three uneven sections—Introductory, Biblical, and Historical—followed by a conclusion, bibliography, and indexes. The introductory material includes a brief but helpful survey of the literature on the subject and shows how his book is different by focusing more on the “spiritual condition of living infants” than strictly with infant salvation (5). Chapter two reveals Harwood's assumptions which serve as “boundaries” in studying the proposal. The author reveals four of his working assumptions: 1) a person is a person no matter how small; 2) Infants have a sinful nature because of their descent from the first Adam; 3) God can welcome infants with a sinful nature into heaven; 4) if number 3 occurs, then it is through the person and work of Christ. The remainder of the chapter teases out Harwood's assumptions.

Much of Harwood's book is spent on engaging Baptist theologian, Wayne Grudem. In fact, Harwood confesses "I cut my teeth as a young believer" on Grudem's highly popular *Systematic Theology* (13). And, while Harwood remains undeniably respectful throughout his work, he shows no hesitation in offering Grudem's idea on the spiritual condition of infants a persuasive alternative. Such remains why, for example, chapter three may draw blood from die-hard Grudem fans since Harwood pounds so heavily on the charismatic Calvinist's view of infant salvation.

From Harwood's standpoint, Grudem is "in a minority of scholars who either imply or state some people who die in infancy will or might end up in hell" (23). Harwood makes one wonder since Grudem's *Systematic Theology* is perhaps the most popular systematic theology among seminarians today, how Grudem gets so many free passes from Southern Baptist scholars for his less than flattering views on the eternal destiny of infants. Even so, Harwood delivers some powerful critique in this section—including valuable commentary on Romans 5:12—making much of the distinction between inherited *sinful nature* and inherited *sinful guilt*, a distinction which becomes a major plank in Harwood's argument.

Harwood acknowledges one of the key texts reformed theologians like Wayne Grudem and John Murray employ in understanding the spiritual condition of infants is Romans 5:12: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—" (NASB). Harwood objects to Grudem's view—the mainstream view among most Augustinian-Calvinists—which asserts "[since the aorist verb form of the word translated "sinned" in v.12 means "completed past action"] Paul must be meaning that when Adam sinned, God considered it true that all men sinned in Adam" (15). For Harwood, the classic Augustinian-Calvinist interpretation of the aorist verb tense is hardly conclusive.

Drawing from a broad range of diverse scholarship including Buist Fanning, Frank Stagg, and Elaine Pagels, Harwood persuasively contests: "The grammatical presupposition that forms the basis of both Murray and Grudem's theological conclusions is based on a narrow understanding of the aorist verb tense . . . the case for an Augustinian-Calvinist reading of Romans 5:12 cannot be based on the verb tense alone" (16). Apparently, Southern Baptist and New Testament scholar, Frank Stagg, offered overwhelming evidence from his analysis of the Greek text that the aorist verb can be used to "cover any kind of action" making it either a "completed or open ended" action. In short, Stagg showed the aorist tense "simply points to an action without describing it." Similar conclusions on the aorist tense were found by Buist Fanning, Department Chair and Professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary. Consequently, Harwood argues it's more consistent to understand Romans 5:12 as stating that sin entered the world through one man, Adam, but that men die not because of the sin of Adam but "because of *their own* acts of sin" (17, italics original).

The Biblical section comprises chapters 4 through 10 and includes exegesis on several important passages of Scripture including Romans 5:12-21, Psalm 51:5, Ephesians 2:3, Luke 1:15, Mark

10:13-16, and 1 Corinthians 7:14. Throughout the chapters, Harwood engages various scholarly commentators—both Calvinist and non-Calvinist—and offers sober conclusions of his own based on his own examination of the biblical materials. Harwood focuses on mainstream representatives of the positions with which he contends. Hence he avoids needless criticisms that his work is irrelevant because he engages peripheral advocates of certain positions.

The final section offers an historical survey of the various positions on infant salvation held within the Christian church. Beginning with the Church Fathers (both East and West, chapters 11 and 12 respectively) Harwood traces what Christians broadly held on the question under consideration. Moving on to Augustine and the Magisterial Reformers (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli), Harwood also deals with the views of Radical Reformers (Harwood calls them “Anabaptist Reformers”), Hubmaier and Marpeck (chapter 15).

Perhaps more appealing to Southern Baptists, Harwood looks at nineteenth-century Baptist views including James P. Boyce, A. H. Strong, and E. Y. Mullins (chapter 16). Just as Grudem fans will surely not like their hero so effectively criticized as Harwood manages to do in the Introductory section, Calvinists who make James Boyce the theological standard among historic Southern Baptists will undoubtedly chill toward Harwood for his critique of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary founder. Harwood clearly exposes Boyce’s glaring internal inconsistency in his view of inherited sinful guilt as applied to infants (136-144). In fact, another surprise may be Harwood’s essential agreement with E. Y. Mullins since, unlike Boyce and A. H. Strong, Mullins “better maintained” the twin truths of Scripture: infants inherit a sinful nature (but not sinful guilt) and God judges sinful actions (but not sinful nature, 144). In the final chapter, Harwood examines twentieth-century Baptist views represented by two eminent theologians, William Hendricks and Millard Erickson.

Spiritual Condition is a must-have to better understand this vexing question. Harwood makes a convincing case that not only is the Bible *not* silent about the spiritual condition of infants, the Bible has much to say. And, what the Bible affirms is, at least in some important ways, inconsistent with a robust Reformed anthropology. Or, at minimum, the biblical view seems to negate the Reformed understanding of original sin. Whereas Reformed believers normally affirm that all infants inherit both Adam’s sinful *nature* and sinful *guilt*, Harwood’s book persuasively argues *while all infants inherit Adamic nature, no infant inherits Adamic guilt*. It is only when a person knowingly commits sinful action (including thoughts and attitudes), that the person becomes sinfully guilty and liable to God’s divine, eternal judgment.

Moreover, Harwood’s view is clearly more consistent with language in *The Baptist Faith and Message* (BFM) concerning the sinful human condition than classic Augustinian-Calvinists. Under Article III “Man” in the BFM (2000), it reads, “Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity *inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin*. Therefore, *as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation*” (emphasis

added). The BFM seems to affirm that while all infants “inherit a nature” that is inclined toward sin, it is only when they become “capable of moral action” that they are “under condemnation.” This seems to be the heart of Harwood’s thesis throughout his volume. In his conclusion, he argues: “I have tried to argue throughout this book that infants do not inherit guilt from Adam. Instead infants inherit a sinful nature. In the Scriptures, God does not judge people for their inherited sinful nature. Instead God judges people who are morally responsible” (160).

From my perspective, the only glaring weakness is the thin survey in the post-Reformation historical section of the book. Roughly 40 pages long, Harwood traces the idea from the Reformation to modern times. Of course, 40 pages could have been written on each of the Magisterial Reformers alone. And, so far as the section on Baptists goes, Harwood again is well under weight (even though half the post-Reformation section was allotted to Baptists!). Obviously, editorial restrictions prohibited longer sections. Yet an introductory statement on pre-Reformation Christianity would have sufficed, consequently, freeing much more space to deal with the Protestant understanding of infant salvation. The result would have been a stronger book for Harwood’s probable readership.

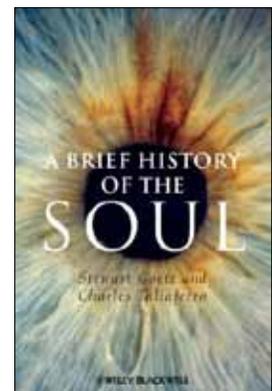
Even so, this is only a minor quibble of the reviewer. I highly recommend *Spiritual Condition* and judge it to be a formidable treatise on a vexing subject. Get the book!

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A Brief History of the Soul. By Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 240 pages. \$24.95, paper.

Christian dualists have been feeling attacked by those in the philosophical world who argue against the existence of the soul. Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro offer a brief history of philosophy of mind and challenge the philosophical claims against dualism. The purpose of the book is for the authors to mount a defense against naturalism, which has been working to strip all spirituality from humanity (203-5). They begin by tracing the history of philosophy of mind from Socrates and Plato to Hume and Kant. From the survey, they make the case that belief “in the existence of the soul . . . as a hypothetical entity whose existence is postulated in a god-of-the-gaps fashion [and is used] to account for human experiences that cannot yet be exercised in physical terms [is] thoroughly groundless” (155). They have good reasons for their belief in the existence of the soul.

Throughout *A Brief History of the Soul*, Goetz and Taliaferro defend dualism, from a substance dualism perspective; but the strength of the book is their arguments for the existence of the soul.



Although the soul cannot be observed outright, its effects are observable through introspection, causal interaction, and free will.

In their presentation of the soul in Greek thought, the authors build upon Aristotle's explanation that we perceive that we sense ourselves sensing. This position is dismissed by many as falling into infinite regression. That which perceives my perception is itself being perceived, which in turn is being perceived, etc. But Goetz and Taliaferro suggest that another possible way is that the soul as "the self" need not require "any further distinct act of awareness" (25). Thus, through introspection, the act of knowing that we see something proves that we possess first-person perspective, which is "the self" or "the soul" (24-25).

During their discussion of causal interaction, the authors set out the parameters for causal relations: "A causal relation obtains when a substance that possesses causal power exercises that power to produce the actualization of a capacity" (135), and "In general, a causal relation obtains when a causal power is exercised and actualizes a capacity" (137). They use these definitions to challenge Ernest Sosa's and Jaegwon Kim's claims that spatial relations are necessary condition for causal relationships to obtain. Such a conclusion makes sense when discussing spatial agents, but the soul may not be spatial. If it is not spatial, according to Goetz and Taliaferro, "then it is not obvious in strict a priori or conceptual terms that it cannot interact causally with an object located in space" (138). But if it is spatial, then non-Cartesians are "justified in holding that there is a noncausal pairing relation that makes possible causal interaction between one soul and a body—but not another soul" (143).

Their argumentation comes to a head with their discussion of free-will. Goetz and Taliaferro accept the scientific claims of neuroscientists who have mapped the neural impulses that, for example, raise an arm. But from where did these impulses originate? Such causation could not be neural because of free will. Therefore, Goetz and Taliaferro conclude "that there can be gaps (causal openness) in the course of events in the physical world such that there is room for the explanation of some physical event in terms of a soul's causal activity, which, in turn, is ultimately explained teleologically, by recourse to a purpose" (170). In other words, neural activity alone does not allow for free decision making? The authors also conclude that if all mental causation is reducible to brain activity, then "there is no explanatory room for God and God's purposes" (175).

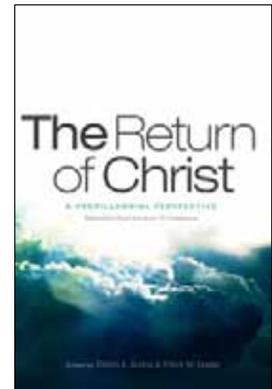
These philosophical arguments are well documented, well thought through, and refuse to shy away from the hard issues. Furthermore, Goetz and Taliaferro's writing is accessible and understandable for readers who are not trained philosophers—though some background in the field is essential. The problem with the book, however, is not really with the book but with society. The book may seem convincing to the converted but ultimately will not be accepted by its opponents. Both sides of the debate will continue to draw opposite

conclusions from the same data. Dualists claim that the data is evidence for the existence of the soul, while monists dismiss the data as epiphenomenological, emergent, supervenient properties of a highly complex brain. In other words, no evidence will suffice to convince otherwise. Such is the state of debate today—in all facets of society.

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Return of Christ: A Premillennial Perspective. Edited by David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke. Nashville: B&H, 2011. Pp. 285, \$24.99 paperback.

Who cares about eschatology? In many circles this query would receive a sharply negative response: no one. We live in a society where increasing numbers of people are becoming less concerned than ever about being “left behind.” However, the churches have the privilege and responsibility of demonstrating the urgent need for clear thinking about what will happen at the “end of days.” Because extravagant caricatures of biblically based eschatological reflection are not hard to find, there is a consistent need for balanced discourse about the end times and the return of Christ. In this volume, David Allen and Steve Lemke seek to provide a cogent and reflective presentation of these issues from a “premillennial perspective.”



Allen and Lemke divide the volume into two main parts that serve two different purposes. In part one, they gather the messages given at the Acts 1:11 Conference that took place in 2009 at North Metro First Baptist Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia. The presenters are all prominent figures within the Southern Baptist Convention and each deal with an important eschatological topic. Jerry Vines begins the volume with a sermon on the central text that served as the launchpad for the conference. From the words of the heavenly messengers spoken to the disciples after Jesus’ ascension, Vines exhorts believers to be “soul winners” rather than “stargazers.” He also highlights the theme of the volume and the motivation for believers to think carefully about eschatology by pointing to the promise that “this same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come” (Acts 1:11).

In the following presentations, the basic outline of the eschatological timetable is explicated. Ergun Caner surveys a number of millennial options and argues that a premillennial and eminent return of Christ is consistent with Scripture. Danny Akin treats the expectation of believers when Christ returns, including a secret rapture of the church, an appearance at the “judgment seat” of Christ, and the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven. Paige Patterson discusses the nature of the great tribulation and also outlines the active role of Israel during this period. David Allen surveys the biblical support for a millennial reign of Christ upon the earth prior to the eternal

state. Richard Land summarizes what will take place at the final judgment as well as the arrival and nature of the eternal state that will include both a real heaven and a real hell. Evangelist Junior Hill rounds out part one with an exhortation about “what to do until Jesus returns.” He urges the believer not to be a “gazing Christian looking to the past,” but to be a “going Christian, looking to the present and the future” (107).

In part two, five contributors provide additional reflection on issues of eschatology. R. Stanton Norman provides a brief systematic treatment of the doctrine of eschatology, covering both individual (e.g., “What happens when we die?”) and corporate dimensions (e.g., “What happens at the end of the world?”). He also connects the study of the end times to what believers are called to do in the meantime (i.e., a call to evangelism, holiness, and faithfulness). Following this general overview, Craig Blaising explains the way that the millennial kingdom fits into the overall picture of history and the harmony of Scripture. Lamar Cooper surveys the “Second Coming” in the Old Testament, Steven Cox surveys the main eschatological discourses of Jesus in the Gospels, and Michael Vlach concludes the volume with a thematic survey of eschatological topics in the Pauline corpus. Vlach seeks to demonstrate that eschatology is not “merely an appendix to Christian theology” for Paul, but rather a “crucial aspect of the Christian faith” (264).

A clear strength of this collection of essays is its overall focus on the return of Christ. Though sometimes derided by critics, ignored in preaching, or relativized in favor of other areas of theological emphasis, eschatology should matter to any believer that holds out hope in God’s promises about the future. In their own way, each of the essays contributes to this overarching emphasis. Additionally, throughout the volume, key texts that have significant bearing on the millennium and the return of Christ are highlighted and explicated (e.g., Ezek 40-48, Isa 2, Matt 24-25, 1 Cor 15, and Rev 12, 19-22). These features will help orient readers to the main areas of discussion and encourage them to reflect further on these areas of Scripture and their eschatological import. Because the messages of part one and the essays of part two are written in an engaging style, the book as a whole can serve as a resource for both pastors and laymen. In fact, many preachers will find the range, contents, and sequence of topics covered to be a possible outline for a sermon/teaching series on eschatology.

One area where clarification could be helpful is the nature of premillennialism and what it necessarily entails. A more accurate subtitle for this volume might be “A Dispensational Perspective,” or at least, “A Pretribulation-Premillennial Perspective,” as each of the contributors affirm a pre-tribulation secret rapture of the church prior to a millennial reign of Christ on earth (6). Allen and Lemke note in the introduction that “the contributors to this volume all support a premillennial position with a pre-tribulational rapture” and that they seek to present a “scholarly version of that perspective” (6). Indeed, for much of the book, the basic tenets of dispensationalism are assumed when the term “premillennial” is used (e.g., see Akin’s presentation of the “big picture” of the “pretribulation/premillennial understanding,” 50). To give one example, the clear distinction between Israel and the Church, perhaps the hallmark feature of dispensationalism, is consistently maintained (62ff, 198-205, 246-48).

Clarification might also be in order regarding the use of history to support a pre-tribulational, pre-millennial position. The “imminence of Jesus’ return” throughout the volume typically refers to the rapture of the church before the tribulation. Caner argues that the “premillennial view of the return of Christ carries with it *a measure of urgency*” and that “to be ‘snatched up’ (from the Gr. *harpazo*) at any moment is tremendously motivating for the believer” (38). As evidence of this position, he quotes Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Phillip Schaff, and a number of Anabaptists. However, in the quoted texts these figures refer not to a pre-tribulational rapture but more generally to the millennial reign of Christ on earth before the eternal state. This type of treatment resonates with the common assumption throughout the book that a natural feature of premillennialism is not only that “Christ will return before the millennium” but also that “in this system, the church will be snatched out before the tribulation” (32). Because a pre-tribulational rapture of the church is integral to the overall perspective of the book, it would have been helpful to include in the “additional reflections” a sustained exegetical argument for a dispensational understanding of the rapture. Moreover, in addition to Akin’s interaction (49-57), further explanation of 1 Thess. 4:16-17 in particular (the locus *classicus* of a discussion of the “rapture”) and how it relates to other views could be a worthwhile development.

Because some readers will possibly hold to a form of non-dispensational premillennialism (sometimes called “historic premillennialism”), a little more discussion about how the concerns of the book apply equally to this camp would enhance the conversation. This perspective is mentioned twice in the book (34-35, 49), but the more frequent dialogue partner in the discussion is the amillennial position that interprets the 1,000 year reign as an example of apocalyptic symbolism. This decision makes sense because amillennialism and premillennialism are at opposite ends of the eschatological spectrum and provide the strongest interpretive contrast. However, readers aware of an alternative option regarding the thousand-year reign of Christ might wonder where the key differences lie between dispensational and non-dispensational premillennialism.

As Blaising notes in his essay, “the firm belief that Jesus is coming again” is “central to the Christian faith” (141). If read sympathetically, this volume has the potential to encourage believers to continue clinging to Christ and resting in the staggering promise of his return. A number of times while reading this book, I put it down and picked up my Bible (and even my Greek lexicon a few times) to examine a passage or the textual context of a point being made by an author. This biblical examination of eschatological themes seems to be the effect intended by the contributors and editors.

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