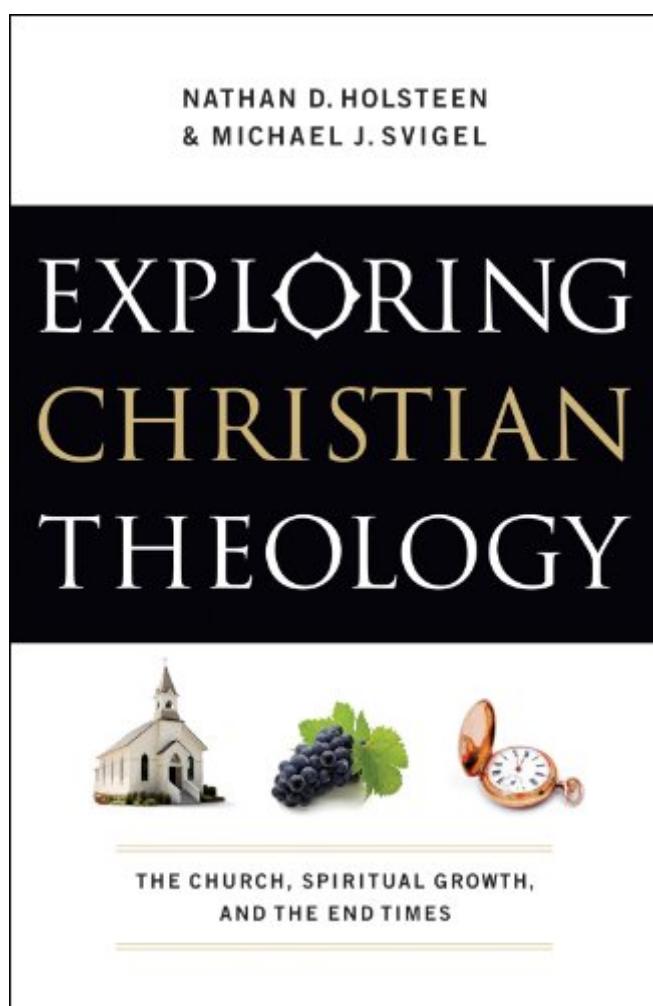


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Exploring Christian Theology : Volume 3: The Church, Spiritual Growth, And The End Times



Synopsis

Dallas Seminary Professors Make Basic Theology Accessible for AllTheology doesn't have to be complicated. In this book, trusted Dallas Seminary professors present a concise systematic theology that distills the essential spiritual truths in a way that makes sense to readers--students, lay people, and pastors. Here are introductions, overviews, and reviews of key tenets of orthodox protestant evangelical doctrines. The book also includes an annotated list of key applicable Bible texts, a quick-paced story of doctrine throughout church history, heresies or distortions to be aware of, and more.Exploring Christian Theology is useful for discipleship, catechism, membership training, preview or review of doctrine, or quick personal reference. It can also be used by ministry training programs, Bible colleges, or seminaries as an introductory primer to orient students in preparation for a more in-depth study of theology.

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Customer Reviews

"For some people, the word doctrine summons yawns of tedium, shudders of trepidation, or frowns

of suspicion. Dogmatic preachers exasperate them, feuding denominations weary them, and droning scholars bore them. When people hear theology, the condition sometimes worsens. They picture massive tomes packed with technical discussions, less-than, crucial data, and incomprehensible footnotes - unusable information to distract them from God rather than drawing them nearer. Most people seeking to grow in their faith want practical principles, not theoretical concepts. They want to know God, not just know about Him. Yet the fact is that we can't experience real spiritual growth without solid spiritual truth. We can't know the true God without knowing God truly." (9) Studying theology can be a real source of joy and spiritual growth. Yet for many, particularly in America today, studying theology is mundane and not worth an investment. "Just give me that good old time religion." As the above quote suggests, the general editors of the series and the author of the book *Exploring Christian Theology: The Church, Spiritual Growth, and the End Times* (Bethany, 2014) seek to pen a book that provides a thorough survey of theological doctrines complete with biblical exegesis, historical developments, and practical application. The *Exploring Christian Theology* is a series published by Bethany House that seeks to introduce not just the nuts and bolts of theology, but also its importance. As a pastor I could not be more thrilled to have the opportunity to review one of its volumes. In this volume, Drs. Nathan Holsteen and Michael Svilig tackle the doctrines of ecclesiology and sanctification (Dr. Holsteen) and Eschatology (Dr. Svilig). Both follow the same pattern: A survey of the doctrine, followed by biblical exegesis, a historic considerations, a summary of the doctrine, and dangers to avoid, and finally some practical applications. The authors and editors make clear this is a book and a series that is concerned with providing a general overview of Christian theology located within orthodox evangelicalism, not with defending certain tertiary convictions. For example, the authors defending the bodily return of Jesus and a physical resurrection of believers without promoting premillennialism over amillennialism or postmillennialism. The authors provide a helpful survey of these eschatologies but do not prefer one over the other. Thus those looking for an introduction to Reformed, Arminian, or dispensational theology will be disappointed. However, that does not mean the authors do not include these theologies throughout the book. Overall, this is a straight forward theological textbook. Its audience is clear and the authors/editors accomplish presenting sound theology that is relevant. One thing I found interesting thing about the book regards the first section. There Dr. Holsteen discusses both ecclesiology and sanctification. This, to me, was perhaps the most insightful part of the book. Dr. Holsteen suggests that in many ways we cannot separate those two. One danger common in American Christianity is the belief that spiritual growth is a personal matter. By grouping these two together, the authors show how biblically this is simply inaccurate. Finally, this book is a great tool for

pastors who have an obligation to preach doctrinally. Simply feeding one's flock with the saturated Christianity full with bumper sticker slogans damages the sheep. We need more sound theology and biblical exegesis. Yet such preaching need not be impractical. The authors have put together a volume discussing the weighty issues of ecclesiology, sanctification, and eschatology all while showing why they matter and how to apply it to the lives of our flock. I look forward to seeing what the other volumes have to offer. I received this book free of charge from Bethany House for the purpose of this review.

This is not a typical theology book: it is written for a popular audience in a fun and accessible style while also presenting major theological issues within their historical contexts. It has two sections: the first addressing ecclesiology (the study of the church), and the second featuring eschatology (the study of the end times). The title "Christian Theology" may connote a larger range of theologies, so I want to emphasize that ecclesiology and eschatology are the primary focuses; other doctrinal theologies (say, the discussion of the Trinity, or of the work of the Holy Spirit, and so forth) are not discussed in depth as they are beyond the intended scope. Also, the application of the theologies at hand are highlighted more so than the theologies themselves, which is what makes this text unique and special. The first section I particularly enjoyed. It is concise, engaging, and draws examples from pop culture in order to bring application and relevance to each subject. The examples are appropriate for the intended audience (lay-persons who want to know a bit of theology), and I think the authors have done a great job of sharing an unbiased perspective and encouraging involvement and appreciation within and for the church body. The section on the end times could have provided a more thorough overview of the major positions, and also could have discussed the implications of each eschatological position. I did not enjoy this section as much, although the writing is still very accessible, and the overall message is positive (though a bit biased toward Dispensational Premillennialism). I appreciate the authors' focus on the big picture rather than on the details. The historical chapter within this section is also very good. Overall, this is a great book for non-scholars who want to get a taste for theology, or could be read for encouragement or general spiritual growth. I received a complimentary copy of this book from Bethany House.

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