

narrative upon which the populist drive is typically built, whereby The People (dignified and pure) are oppressed by The Elites (corrupt and self-serving). Within this narrative there are also ‘dangerous others’ who live among The People. In Europe, the appeal to a historical Christian heritage ensures that those of other faiths, in particular Muslims and those from non-Christian countries are firmly within the ‘dangerous others’ camp. This divisiveness, the authors argue, is an identifying feature of anti-democratic populism, which distorts any aim towards a common good as being for one particular group to the exclusion of others.

Part two provides detailed examples of historical and current populist movements across a range of European countries, namely: Germany, Sweden, Slovakia, Spain, France and the United Kingdom. The consensus throughout is that the Christianity being adopted by populist political groups is not that of the *believing* population, but rather of *belonging*. It hinges on cultural, historical, nostalgic notions of God, rather than a living belief system upon which to build one’s life. The overall sense is that Christian language is being hijacked to unite the disgruntled masses. At the end of each of these contextual chapters, a challenge is presented to churches in each context to consider how they will respond to the use of Christian imagery by populist groups.

I find the level of theological and political analysis to be thorough and yet very accessible to those without expertise. I would recommend this book to those with an interest in politics who wish to understand better the uses of religious language and imagery within populist groups, but also to Christian organisations from whom this book is calling for a considered and urgent response.

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A FRESH SURVEY OF THE BIBLICAL JESUS

Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Jesus of the Gospels: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2020). \$34.99. pp. 462. ISBN: 978-0-8254-4536-1).

Building on the prequels, *The Final Days of Jesus* (2014), and *The First Days of Jesus* (2015), Andreas J. Köstenberger’s, *The Jesus of the Gospels* (2020) rounds out his trilogy on the biblical Jesus. While the previous two serve as bookends to Jesus’ birth and cross work, this third volume bridges the gap, providing a survey of the entire life of Jesus as presented in the canonical Gospels. Steering clear of both pedantic tomes and sensationalist fads, Köstenberger explains the idea for the volume was prompted by a search for something ‘suitable’ for his college-age children, a book ‘informed by sound scholarship but accessible and jargon-free’ (p. 11).

Mirroring the Gospels’ canonical order, the book is structured around five chapters, the first situating it in the history of Jesus research (pp. 17–30). An important entry point to what follows, the chapter briefly surveys different ‘quests’ for the historical Jesus mostly against the backdrop of Schweitzer and his immense net casted on modern Jesus studies. Contrary to dichotomous historical reconstructions or forced harmonies, Köstenberger advances the legacy of Adolf Schlatter viewing history and literature as God’s combined troupe for divine revelation (p. 23). It is this conviction that furnished the book’s title as the author refuses to divide biblical portraits of Jesus into either history *or* faith categories, choosing to focus the volume’s entirety simply on ‘the Jesus of the Gospels’ (p. 25). The remaining four chapters trace each of the Gospels’ respective storylines and theological emphases, girded by an approach consisting of five conservative theses outlined in chapter one. Customary prolegomena matter begins each chapter followed by explanations of main themes respective of that Gospel. Notably, all chapters include a unit-by-unit exposition accompanied by sidebars of content and helpful recaps along the way. Furthermore, the book’s footnotes on virtually every page provide interested readers with more than enough sources informed by sound scholarship—many with personally added content highlighting historical, exegetical, and/or theological insights (e.g., pp. 49–52; 188–190; 298–99; 368–70).

Köstenberger does not break new ground with *The Jesus of the Gospels*, something he admits in the preface (p. 12). Written through the perspective

of a seasoned conservative scholar, the book's goal is more modest, remaining focused on the Gospels' divine integrity along with their call for response to Jesus. The book's utility is, therefore, best placed as a survey-style commentary on each of the canonical Gospels, not on how they may have developed. Those interested in historical-critical matters will be better served by Köstenberger's *The Hersey of Orthodoxy* co-authored with Michael J. Kruger (2010) or *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown* co-authored with L. Scott Kellum and Charles L. Quarles (2016). Because of its lack of jargon, pastors and informed church laity will welcome the *The Jesus of the Gospels* as a valuable tool for sermon prep, Bible study lessons, or devotional reading. Moreover, its accessibility and notes for further research interspersed throughout makes the book ideal for budding college students.

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REFORMED THINKING ON EVOLUTION

Gijsbert van den Brink, *Reformed Theology and Evolutionary Theory* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2020. \$39.99. pp. xv + 328. ISBN 978-0-8028-7442-9).

It hardly needs saying that different strands within the Christian tradition have responded very differently, both historically and in the present day, when it comes to a perception of Darwinian evolutionary theory which sees it as posing challenges to faith. Such variation might in part be attributed to theological emphases, and in part to the socio-political contexts within which those traditions are located. Gijsbert van den Brink notes that 'As a result of their special doctrinal emphases, Reformed folks have their own problems with evolutionary theory', adding that there has been little work concentrating on 'the relationship between *Reformed* theology and evolutionary theory' (p. 2). It is on the areas which are potentially problematic for this theological tradition that he focusses in this book; and he is a persuasive advocate for the view that it is perfectly possible to see evolutionary theory as compatible with a Reformed Protestant perspective.

Van den Brink begins with a discussion of the distinctiveness of Reformed theology, noting its rootedness in confessional statements but also the 'remarkable diversity and plurality' (p. 18) of the Reformed tradition as it has unfolded through time in various social and geographical locations. He then devotes a sequence of chapters to topics which have been seen to present particular challenges to Reformed theological perspectives: biblical interpretation, theodicy, theological anthropology (how may we speak of human uniqueness whilst simultaneously acknowledging our origins in evolutionary processes?), covenantal theology (how can talk of a Fall make sense within an evolutionary paradigm?), divine providence, and finally the suggestions originating from the cognitive science of religion, that an evolutionary narrative might explain not only the origins of biological diversity but the origins of religions themselves.

Through all these topics van den Brink offers a level-headed appraisal of the issues at stake. He concludes that there are three areas where 'adjustments' to classical Reformed theology are necessary if evolutionary theory is to be accepted by those within this tradition: 'we can no longer uphold a concordist hermeneutics [the view 'that biblical statements pertaining to the physical world correspond to scientific facts', pp. 74-75], the theory of the cosmic fall, and the idea that human history started with a single couple' (p. 273). However, he maintains that 'Since these issues hinge on matters of biblical interpretation, in none of these cases . . . is biblical authority or any other Reformed doctrinal tenet necessarily at stake' (p. 274).

Van den Brink's stated aims are to assure Reformed Christian believers that their faith does not require them to resist evolutionary theory, and to assure non-believers that the Reformed Christian tradition does not require them to forego so well-established a theory if they are to accept that tradition. Readers falling into either of these camps who are swayed by careful, nuanced, reasoned argument will find much here to savour; and it is to be hoped that van den Brink's book may also find a readership beyond the specific constituencies which he has in mind.

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