



Volume 60 | Issue 1

Article 57

4-2017

MacGregor's "Luis de Molina: The life and theology of the founder of middle knowledge" (Book Review)

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Recommended Citation

Emerson, Steve (2017) "MacGregor's "Luis de Molina: The life and theology of the founder of middle knowledge" (Book Review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 60 : Iss. 1 , Article 57.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol60/iss1/57>

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the exploration from various theological topics does inform particular models of atonement. For example, Ben Myers' essay, "The Patristic Atonement Model" does sketch a unified atonement mechanism among the Fathers in a sustained and effective critique of Gustav Aulén's still influential book *Christus Victor*. Other essays, as well, relate overtly to specific models (e.g., "Atonement and the Concept of Punishment" and "Atonement and the Wrath of God" relate directly to penal or satisfaction theories). Trinitarian and Christological efforts approach atonement via God's inseparable operations and Christ's will(s), respectively. Creation and covenant merit two essays, respectively couching the atonement within these broad theological and biblical concepts. Other essays consider atonement in relation to wisdom, human suffering, the Eucharist, the Ascension, and (a psychological outlier) shame. Given the purpose of the book, it does not introduce atonement theology. Some understanding of the debates in atonement theology and of the ancillary theological topics are presupposed. Nonetheless, the essays are well written and accessible even to novice theologians. I highly recommend the book for all libraries.

Reviewer

Greg Rosauer, University of Northwestern

MacGregor, K. R. (2015). *Luis de Molina: The life and theology of the founder of middle knowledge*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 288 pp. \$27.99. ISBN 9780310516972

Kirk R. MacGregor, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religion at McPherson College, provides a thoroughly researched and timely introduction to the life and thought of the 16th century Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina in his helpful work *Luis de Molina: The Life and Theology of the Founder of Middle Knowledge*. The past 25 years have seen a steady increase in scholarship surrounding the theological ideas of Molina as they relate to the concepts of divine omniscience, providence, and predestination, leading many theologians to place Molinism alongside Calvinism, simple foreknowledge, and open theism as significant options when treating these areas of Christian doctrine. Despite the growing influence of Molina's theology, until this work by MacGregor no modern critical biography of Molina existed, so MacGregor's monograph fills a substantial gap in the scholarly literature related to this important late Reformation-era theologian.

MacGregor skillfully draws on numerous primary sources from 16th and 17th century Spain to construct his portrait of Molina's life. The result is an engaging presentation of the key events in the life of a Roman Catholic theologian whose rejection of

certain aspects of Thomas Aquinas' theology placed him in danger from the forces of the Spanish Inquisition. MacGregor organizes his biography chronologically, interspersing chapters focused on life-events with others that address key advances in Molina's theology as they were developed at various points in his life. He argues that Molina's understanding of middle knowledge – God's knowledge even before his decision to create the world of what free creatures *would* choose if they found themselves in particular circumstances – allows for the reconciliation of ideas related to divine sovereignty, providence, and predestination with the concept of human free will. Later chapters address Molina's practical theology and his theology of social justice. MacGregor closes his work with a helpful consideration of possible applications of Molinism to current Evangelical theological work in the areas of Biblical inerrancy, the relationship between Christianity and other world religions, the problem of evil, and the conversation between creationism and evolution.

MacGregor writes for an academic audience in a voice accessible to undergraduate students but with relevance for those in graduate schools and seminaries as well. He writes from a perspective that is sympathetic to Molinism but also from one that is broadly Evangelical, and his approach will resonate well with open-minded readers across denominational boundaries and theological perspectives. MacGregor's detailed yet readable introduction to the life and thought of this significant late Reformation-era theologian will make his work useful for students at institutions with a curriculum that includes theological education. It is a recommended addition to the collections of all libraries that support such areas of study.

Reviewer

Steve Emerson, California Baptist University

Bowman, C. & McKinley, T. (2015). *M is for manger*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 28 pp. \$6.99. ISBN 9781496420046

Crystal Bowman and Teri McKinley have authored a children's board book that not only tells the story of Jesus' birth in chronological order, but uses the alphabet to do so. The story that unfolds shows the greatest miracle of the Bible. Each letter follows the same script. A title, a description and a verse as evidence. The formula is short enough to accommodate a child's attention span for each page.

Claire Keay's illustrations are simple, but display the event that is described. Bowman & McKinley use many Bible translations to clarify each scene. The translations include the *New Living Translation*, the *New International Reader's Version*, the *International Children's Bible*, and *God's Word to the Nations*.