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Bowman and McKinley's "M is for manger" (Book Review)

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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*.

This board book would be a good asset for home or nursery purchases. Its sturdy design will allow it to be used for a long time with little concern for the wear.

Reviewer

Jennifer A. Rich, Hope International University

Kirk, J. R. D. (2016). *A man attested by God: The human Jesus of the synoptic gospels*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 638 pp. \$43.10. ISBN 0802867952

J. R. Daniel Kirk holds a doctorate in New Testament from Duke University. Kirk argues in *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels* that one must read the synoptic gospels through the paradigm of an idealized human being, which is described as humans playing “roles that properly belong to God alone, without redefining ‘Jewish monotheism’” (p. 2). If one were to focus primarily on the synoptic gospels in order to determine the divinity of Jesus they unfortunately miss the distinct human nature of Jesus which is on full display. For Kirk, a human Jesus is necessary as he “shares in the identity of God in ways analogous to what idealized human figures are supposed to do throughout the stories of early Judaism” (p. 582). Thus, Jesus should be interpreted in the synoptic gospels hermeneutically as an idealized human being.

Kirk emphasizes that it was his former teacher Dan McCartney that placed the seed for this present volume. For McCartney, he interprets the entire New Testament through the lens of an idealized human being. Kirk takes that concepts and gives special attention to the Synoptic Gospels (p. 1). Kirk describes his book as primarily being “concerned with issues of literary and historical-critical exegesis,” however he does note that further theological explorations are necessary (p. 578).

Overall, this is a study concerning the Christology of the Synoptic Gospels. This project is not a study of the historical Jesus (p. 9). It is not a theory of Christian origins (p. 13); nor is it a “full-orbed Christian Christology” (p. 15). Instead, Kirk argues that the preferred reading of the Synoptic Gospels is one that “demonstrates Jesus to be the messiah and lord,” rather than merely concluding that Jesus is “preexistent or otherwise divine” (p. 39). Kirk’s volume is scholarly in nature and accomplishes his goal to present the reader with a unique method of interpreting the Synoptic Gospels.

Reviewer

Kyle D. DiRoberts, Phoenix Seminary