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Challies' "Visual theology: Seeing and understanding the truth about God" (Book Review)

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Thompson, D. A. (2016). *The virtual body of Christ in a suffering world*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 144 pp. \$19.99. ISBN 9781501815188

The world we live in is fast becoming a wireless one where 24/7 digital connectivity through email, Facebook and instant messaging is increasingly the norm. This book accepts digital connectivity as our reality, but presents a vision of how faith communities can use technology to strengthen the body of Christ for those who are hurting while also helping followers of Christ think critically about the limits of technology. Thompson begins with a testimony of a professor of religious studies who did not use technology and was critical of its ability. Upon receiving a stage 4 Cancer diagnosis, this professor experienced how technology could be used as a 24/7 support line to encourage and support their journey. The book concludes by acknowledging that the body of Christ can and does exist virtually and does make a difference in the lives of those who use it.

Reviewer

Deborah McConkey, Horizon College & Seminary

Challies, T., & Byers, J. (2016). *Visual theology: Seeing and understanding the truth about God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 155 pp. \$17.99. ISBN 9780310520436

Tim Challies, a pastor, speaker, and well-known blogger, and Josh Byers, a communications pastor, have written a book on living the Christian life that articulates basic aspects of theology. The book is divided into four sections: Grow Close to Christ, Understand the Work of Christ, Become Like Christ, and Live for Christ. The chapters includes a variety of visuals such as representative icons, relationship charts, or a decision tree asking specific questions to understand how to put sin to death (pp. 96-97).

Section two describes the world as a stage with God unfolding His drama in the four acts of creation, the fall, redemption, and the new creation. It is refreshing to see doctrine presented as something essential and alive, leading to love, humility, obedience, growth, worship and unity, rather than something that is seen as either divisive or boring dogma.

Chapters six provides an excellent description of what is involved in stopping old habits and patterns using John Owen's model of sanctification, and chapter seven describes four marks of repentance that will result in true change.

In their conclusion the authors discuss vocation, various types of relationships and stewardship. With regard to vocation they conclude that a person has not just one vocation but many (citizen, neighbor, husband, father, and pastor) and that all have the “same great purpose: to do good to others and bring glory to God” (p. 122).

This book is more practical than scholarly in nature and would be most helpful for new believers in understanding their relationship with Christ and how to practically live a fruitful and godly life. The visuals are fairly simplistic but can provide an additional perspective on the content.

Reviewer

Linda Poston, Nyack College

Bird, M. F. (2016). *What Christians ought to believe: An introduction to Christian doctrine through the Apostle's Creed*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. \$24.99. ISBN 9780310520924.

Anyone who has read anything written by Michael Bird (lecturer in theology at Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia) knows that he writes in a distinct voice: clever and relevant, accessible and direct, occasionally verging on corniness. But anyone who has read anything by Michael Bird also knows that he can be trusted to teach the historic evangelical faith with warmth, candor, and fidelity. This book is no exception.

Proceeding through the lines of the Apostle's Creed one by one, Bird explains their import for orthodox Christian belief, using a variety of illustrations and demonstrating why orthodox truth is *this* and not *that*. He also makes the crucial case for the legitimate circularity in the relationship between canon and creed. The apostolic teachings of and about Christ, fleetly enscripturated within the lifetimes of the apostles, framed the contours of the creed, while “the guidelines for determining which books were canonical were those that accorded with the apostolic gospel found in both the rule of faith and the church's creeds” (p. 36).

On a supremely practical note, Bird provides recommended reading at the end of each chapter. Most chapters correlate to sections in Bird's *Evangelical Theology* textbook, so *What Christians Ought to Believe* could be used as an introductory text for the larger work.

Reviewer

Mark Tubbs, Pacific Life Bible College