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Estep, Anthony, and Allison's "A Theology for Christian Education" (Book Review)

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The Testing of God's Sons: The Refining of Faith as a Biblical Theme,

by Gregory S. Smith. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014. 222 pp.

\$24.99. ISBN 9780805464184

Reviewed by Linda Poston, Dean of Library Services, Nyack College, Nyack, NY

Gregory Smith, a professor of Bible at Southwestern Theological Seminary, explores the concept of testing as a theological theme found in both the Old and New Testaments. In contrast to temptation, the author defines testing as “the divine means by which God cultivates and establishes the faith and fidelity of his own people” (p. 3). In order to explain the nuances of testing, three different Hebrew words are examined. Testing can be used to reveal, authenticate, or refine and demonstrates the quality of faith or the improved faith of an individual or group. Specific examples of Adam, Joseph, Abraham, the midwives, Moses, Israel, Job, Jesus and the Church shed further light on the purpose of testing an individual or group. Smith includes a theory related to the ancient Near Eastern use of the touchstone for one of the Hebrew terms for testing. The touchstone was used to test the quality of metal, such as gold. This metaphor can be seen in such passages as Proverbs 17:3 and Zechariah 13:9a. The author notes that Jeremiah provides an excellent example of being a “touchstone” for Judah, and the Babylonians provided the “refining fire” aspect of the testing. “Judah’s fidelity will first be authenticated for its quality (6:27b), and then subsequently refined and improved (6:29b)” (p.137). Extensive footnotes and bibliography are included to support the thesis and contribute to a significant scholarly work that would be useful for upper-level undergraduate or graduate courses as well as pastoral ministry.

A Theology for Christian Education,

by James R. Estep, Jr., Michael J. Anthony, & Gregg R. Allison. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008. 316 pp. \$34.99. ISBN 9780805444575

*Reviewed by Charles Huckaby, Assistant, Technical Services Department,
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A Theology for Christian Education is the fruit of three men equally qualified to write the book alone but together they have produced an even finer piece of systematic theology examining Christian education. James R. Estep, Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison each present individual articles, with a few collaborations in the mix, walking through the typical pillars of systematic theology. However, each article filters the attention through systematic theology onto Christian education.

The book is well written and clearly laid out. At the outset, Estep sets forth the main idea and gives a clear outline of all that is to come. Then, he and his coauthors follow through and deliver what they promised. It sounds simple enough, but the result is profound. The authors' entire premise is that if we believe what we say we believe, it should affect not just what we teach, but how we teach it. They maintain that we should not teach Christian theology in a purely secular way, but that the content of our theology should cause us to teach in a distinctively Christian way. That may not jump off the page at you as being extraordinarily revolutionary until you consider the possible applications involved. For example, the authors contend that your eschatology, rightly understood, should effect how you teach as opposed to being mere fodder for an academic conversation. Your understanding of the depravity of humanity should rightly affect your views of the end goal of your teaching and the potential of your students. Each section concludes with questions designed to help you understand the ramifications of the chapter at this level.

The authors are to be commended not only for pure text, but also for the additional aids and resources included. They document themselves well and direct the reader to other supporting and contrasting resources. Unsurprising for a book by educators about education, the multitude of charts, diagrams, and figures elucidate the text magnificently and make it even more accessible. For any institution – primary, secondary, or graduate level – serious about applying scripture not only to the content of their teaching but also to their method of teaching, *A Theology for Christian Education* is worthy of consideration and application.

A Theology for the Church,

edited by Daniel L. Akin, Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014. 770 pp. \$54.99.

ISBN 9781433682131

*Reviewed by Charles Huckaby, Assistant, Technical Services Department,
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX*

Danny Akin's *A Theology for the Church* was a welcome addition to the study of systematic theology when first released in 2007, and the revised edition is just as welcome. Akin, along with associate editors Bruce Riley Ashford and Kenneth Keathley, took on the formidable task of assembling fifteen scholars in the Baptist tradition and creating a unique examination of systematic theology. In order to preserve structure among the various writing styles and personalities of the contributors, each topic answers four questions: What does the Bible say? What has the church believed? How does it all fit together? How does this doctrine impact the church today? The result is an academic systematic theology that will challenge