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Review: Life's Ultimate Questions: A Contemporary Philosophy of Religion

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again needed for advancement as in past centuries (p. 308). Looking at current trends in science, many would conclude that this crisis is fast approaching.

DON B. DEYOUNG
GRACE COLLEGE

Life's Ultimate Questions: A Contemporary Philosophy of Religion, by John P. Newport. Word Publishing, 1989. Pp. 644. \$16.95.

Dr John Newport, Provost and professor of philosophy of religion at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has long sought to deal with life's ultimate questions. The "Preface" to this lengthy work gives much insight not only into John Newport's thirst for knowledge and life's ultimate questions but into his desire to communicate biblical answers to such questions to others (as he does regularly around the country and beyond). Because of this he has written numerous previous works that have touched variously on issues that he has brought together in this his *magnum opus*.

This is not a run-of-the-mill book on philosophy of religion. The purpose is much more openly stated and clearly perceived on almost every page (especially near the beginning and end of each major chapter). Further, Newport deals with questions not often dealt with so directly, if at all, in other books considered to be philosophies of religion. This book is meant to have, and indeed, ought to have a wide readership. It has been written in a semi-popular way for the purpose of accessibility and effective ministry. After a very significant chapter on "the Biblical World view" and the application of such to life's ultimate questions, Newport gives ample discussion, debate and analysis to the meaning of history, religious and biblical language (God-talk), science and the biblical world view. The following topics are discussed: science and the issues of prayer and miracles; evil and suffering along with the issue of demonic powers; death and the life beyond; world religions; the relationship of faith and reason in the knowledge of God; human morality; and finally the arts, culture and worship. This overview should be indicative of this book's uniqueness and its intention to minister and teach.

In coming to each critical issue/question Newport begins by carefully laying the foundations and expanding the reader's vision for the angles, facets and aspects that this problem surfaces. While having to be succinct at this juncture, Newport is usually fair, seeking to avoid the heavy handed measures that would defeat the very purpose of the book itself. After the exposition and analysis of the various perspectives, Newport begins gathering together some of the reflections that had arisen in the process (for example, that which is good and right in a particular viewpoint). He develops the biblical perspective while showing how it answers the questions more effectively than all other options. This method is hardly new but Newport's own style and concerns along with his ability to communicate God's truth make this very effective in most cases.

This book is usually quite satisfactory, even excellent at points (given its expressed purpose and range). Any person relatively educated could read this book easily and with much stimulation and profit. One will not agree with Newport at all times but his perspectives at each point and under each question are

truly Christian, stimulative, and viable. As mentioned above, Newport has included the discussion of questions not usually included in other, often more scholarly, texts on philosophy of religion. The discussions on the development of the earth and mankind, Christianity and the World Religions, evil and demonic activity and the Christian view of the various arts were the most stimulating and controversial. Newport is clearly antidisestablishment (he has not read anything more recent than Ryrie and clearly knows little of development in this school of thought nor does he have any real aspect for creation science as a science). He seems to hold (its hard to tell) to a form of theistic evolution, but *micro*-evolution and not *macro*-evolution is considered as the appropriate or operative description. At times, Newport's chapters seem to be merely a stringing together of the thoughts of other authors, but his discussion is helpful.

All in all, with these points in mind, *Life's Ultimate Questions* by John Newport would serve as a basic undergraduate text (with supplements) in philosophy of religion.

JOHN D. MORRISON
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

The Supremacy of God in Preaching, by John Piper. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990. Pp. 119. n.p. Paper.

This is a book of extraordinary value, one which every pastor and every aspirant to the gospel ministry should read as soon as possible. As the title indicates, John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, holds that preaching should be first and foremost about God. In today's ecclesiastical atmosphere churchgoers have come to expect that the main purpose of preaching is to provide solutions for their problems. The author of this highly readable and powerful book contends, on the contrary, that preaching should extol God. "Our people need to hear God-entranced preaching. They need someone . . . to life up his voice and magnify the supremacy of God. They need to behold the whole panorama of his excellencies" (p. 11). This may not be what people want, but it is what they need, for their salvation and sanctification depend upon it. "Holiness is nothing other than a God-centered life—the living out of a God-entranced worldview" (p. 11).

In a time when much preaching is autobiographical in character and pulpits often seek to be clever and amusing with anecdotes, Piper's thesis may seem radical, but it is actually a plea for a return to the apostolic methods through which God has times been pleased to send revival to his people.

As a young theology student John Piper began a thorough study of Jonathan Edwards as a theologian and preacher. That study has become a lifelong undertaking that has convinced Piper that he must preach with the same "gravity and gladness" that Edwards displayed. "His preaching was totally serious . . . You will look in vain for one joke in the 1200 sermons that remain" (p. 47). Edwards refrained from almost every pulpit device that modern preachers employ, yet God blessed his ministry abundantly, even to the point that historians often cite it as the beginning of the Great Awakening in America. Perhaps Piper is right in contending that many preachers want revival "and