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## Review: Tensions in Contemporary Theology

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A better approach for encouraging the indifferent Christian to study theology would be to turn to Scripture texts which clearly demonstrate the need for understanding Bible doctrine. The pastoral epistles are full of such teaching. Jesus' ministry was one of teaching and challenging people with the message he brought from the Father. All Christian living must rest upon the foundation of biblical truth.

The negativism expressed thus far is not meant to imply that this book has no value. The assessments of atheism and neo-orthodoxy are helpful. Some of Clark's declarations are challenging and insightful. However, the ones who will use this book the most and derive the greatest benefit from it are those who do not need to have the pursuit of theology defended.

RONALD T. CLUTTER  
GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*Tensions in Contemporary Theology*, edited by Stanley N. Gundry and Alan F. Johnson. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983. Pp. 478. \$12.95. Paper.

This scholarly, well-edited volume presents a no nonsense introduction to the world of contemporary theology. The book opens in the Foreword by Roger Nicole with a brief defense of the Christian's need to be familiar with modern theological trends. This is followed by a Preface by editors Gundry and Johnson which provides general comments and an overview of the work.

Chaps. 1 and 2, by Bernard Ramm and Vernon Grounds, respectively, are viewed as introductory essays by the editors (p. 10). Ramm's survey of the major development in critical thought from the Enlightenment to Bultmann reminds the reader how well-read the author is on this subject. While these trends are masterfully presented, one gets the impression that Ramm's treatment is too brief and sweeping.

Grounds discusses the work of four major twentieth century theologians—Bultmann, Teilhard, Bonhoeffer and Tillich. His emphasis is on their thought and influence in recent decades. However, approximately half of this essay is made up of quotations which, while useful, display too few of the author's own comments. Both Ramm and Grounds offer only weak critiques of their subject matters.

Chaps. 3–9 are termed the "specific focus of the book" (p. 10). Stanley Obitts authored the initial chapter in this group on the subject of religious language in the current philosophical debate. This essay is technical (as warned by the editors on p. 11) and comprehensive, presenting a good apologetic for meaningful religious language which should satisfy even the contemporary empiricist.

Harold Kuhn wrote chap. 4 on the subject of secular theology. He surveys the major practitioners of both "God is dead" theology and the less radical theists who, nevertheless, express some similar sentiments. Kuhn provides meaningful insights into and good critiques of the movement.

Chap. 5 investigates the popular theology of hope. David Scaer has written a detailed account of the major theologians in this school of thought,

although he virtually ignores some of Pannenburg's apologetics (an aspect which characterizes much of Pannenburg's system). While one can appreciate the detailed analysis in this chapter, the critiques are fairly weak.

Process thought is the subject of chap. 6, which was written by Norman Geisler. Like the essay by Obitts, this selection is also technical and detailed, considering a wide range of panentheistic options. Geisler's chapter also contains one of the best critiques, including both positive and negative elements.

David Wells' work on contemporary Roman Catholic trends (chap. 7) is a welcome subject for this book, primarily because it includes material which is unknown to most evangelical Protestants and otherwise largely ignored. Although this chapter somewhat ignores major Catholic theologians such as Rahner and Küng, it is very informative and includes a noteworthy critique.

Harvie Conn's two chapters on liberation theology (chaps. 8, 9) were originally added to the 1979 edition and total over 100 pages. Conn offers numerous insights and a very stimulating interaction with and critique of liberation theology. However, the selections are too long, given the size of the volume. Perhaps summaries could have been utilized to consolidate the material.

This book ends with a hard-hitting conservative corrective to contemporary critical theology (chap. 10) written by Harold O. J. Brown. This essay contains numerous thought-provoking reflections concerning the need for a biblical corrective which contains some backbone and evangelical "bite." In spite of the heavy reliance on Reformed thinkers in this selection, this is unquestionably a challenging conclusion to an excellent volume.

Several general comments are now in order. There are additional strengths besides those mentioned above. All of the contributors to this volume are major evangelical thinkers who are well-known through their publications and their attendance at society meetings and other scholarly events. Each of these persons wrote in an area of his expertise (p. 9). Additionally, a variety of ecclesiastical traditions was included in this volume (at least five different denominational graduate schools were represented). Also noteworthy is the fact that this volume is one of comparatively few scholarly volumes produced by evangelicals on the subject of contemporary theology in spite of its importance. Lastly, most of the essays contain strong critiques and the volume ends with a powerful plea for conservative thinking. This plea is as important as any other single element in this work.

A couple of weaknesses need to be addressed, however. The volume left out such important topics as the New Quest for the Historical Jesus and *Heilsgeschichte* thought. In fact, only the chapter on hope theology represents any of the important post-Bultmannian groups which are so influential in contemporary western European theology. Even one chapter on such trends would have been very helpful. And some will surely object to the editor's statement that Barth "did not produce theologies in the sixties and seventies" (p. 11). Admittedly, all subjects cannot be treated in a volume of this nature, but the omission of these when two chapters have been given to liberation theology is questionable.

Additionally, while the editors state several times that the inclusion of a critique in each chapter is important (pp. 9–11), a few chapters ignored any

kind of a major critical response. This deficiency is significant, especially when the book is addressed largely to students (p. 10). If the conservative option is correct (see chap. 10, p. 438, for instance), then critiques are indispensable.

This volume was produced chiefly to be an introductory textbook for upper levels of college or for graduate school, keeping other interested persons (such as pastors) in mind as well (p. 10). It is this reviewer's opinion that this is perhaps the best evangelical book on the market for that purpose. It is a most noteworthy contribution to contemporary theology and is highly recommended as a textbook in this area. In fact, reviewing the book caused this writer to decide to use it for his graduate level courses in contemporary theology.

GARY R. HABERMAS

LIBERTY BAPTIST COLLEGE AND GRADUATE SCHOOL

*Metaphysics: Constructing a World View*, by William Hasker. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983. Pp. 132. \$4.95. Paper.

This volume by William Hasker, Professor of Philosophy at Huntington College, is another in the "Contours of Christian Philosophy" series edited by C. Stephen Davis. It joins other books on the subjects of Epistemology and Ethics, as well as a projected volume on Philosophy of Religion. After an Introduction, *Metaphysics* is divided into four additional chapters which treat major issues in this area of philosophy, followed by a brief Epilog. There is no doubt that the questions raised in each of the chapters address areas of critical concern not only for the philosopher but also for the theologian.

In the Introduction, Hasker notes major questions in metaphysics, sets forth some guidelines for answers, and ends by listing three criteria for evaluating theories. In these last two sections there are both strong and weak points. The criteria of factual adequacy (correspondence), logical consistency (coherence) and explanatory power are excellent indicators of truth (pp. 25-28). However, I found the statement that "philosophical assertions can't be based on religious authority" (pp. 22-23)—including Scripture (p. 116)—to be quite objectionable. If Scripture is established as a reliable source by any of several possible approaches, what precludes using it as such? Just as problematical is the apparent separation between theological beliefs and philosophical reasons for those beliefs (p. 24).

Chap. 2 is concerned with "Freedom and Necessity" and moves from several key definitions to treatments of compatibilism, determinism, free will, and a section on the relevance of this issue to the theological subject of predestination and foreknowledge. Although treading through explosive issues, this chapter is quite readable and provides a good overview, including critiques, of each position. Although not everyone will agree (even with each other!) with the conclusions concerning these volatile subjects, Hasker places the chief options before his readers and defends well, as an example of a practical application of philosophical truth, the theological position favoring foreknowledge.