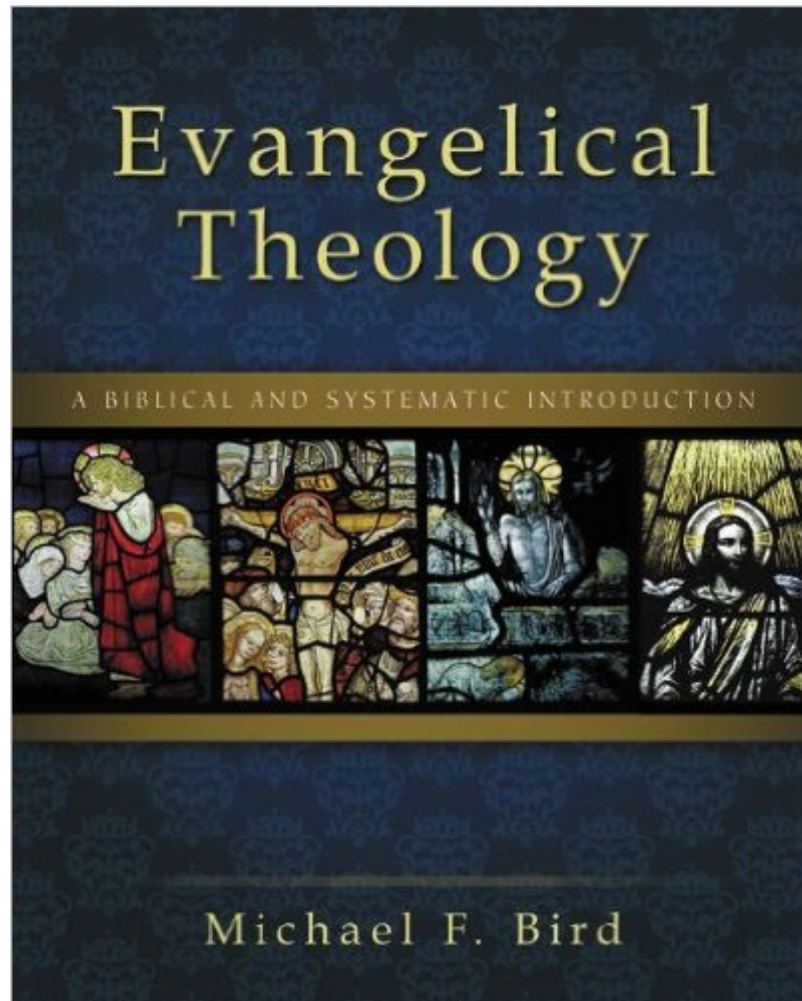


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Evangelical Theology: A Biblical And Systematic Introduction



Synopsis

Evangelical Theology is a systematic theology written from the perspective of a biblical scholar. Michael F. Bird contends that the center, unity, and boundary of the evangelical faith is the evangel (= gospel), as opposed to things like justification by faith or inerrancy. The evangel is the unifying thread in evangelical theology and the theological hermeneutic through which the various loci of theology need to be understood. • Using the gospel as a theological leitmotif • an approach to Christian doctrine that begins with the gospel and sees each loci through the lens of the gospel • this text presents an authentically evangelical theology, as opposed to an ordinary systematic theology written by an evangelical theologian. • According to the author, theology is the drama of gospelizing • performing and living out the gospel in the theatre of Christian life. The text features tables, sidebars, and questions for discussion. The end of every part includes a • What to Take Home • section that gives students a run-down on what they need to know. And since reading theology can often be dry and cerebral, the author applies his unique sense of humor in occasional • Comic Belief • sections so that students may enjoy their learning experience through some theological humor added for good measure.

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Customer Reviews

Evangelical Theology by Michael Bird is a book that will grab readers early on and will not let them go for 800+, rich pages of theology, humor and worship. Bird hooked me early. From the outset, he cannot help but show his love for the church catholic and historic, freely citing authors from all walks of the Christian faith, from throughout two millennia of Christian history. His implicit focus on the

fellowship of the saints in studying theology made it feel like, and really become, a worshipful and communal event. Hearing a bit of who Michael Bird is encouraged me even more to dive into this text. He lays his "ecclesial and theological cards on the table" and shares a bit about himself early on. "On the church side of things, I did not grow up in a Christian home, but I came to Christ through a Baptist church in Sydney, Australia. I also attended a Baptist seminary (Malyon College) and have been a pastoral intern and itinerant preacher in Baptist churches. I taught for five years in an interdenominational theological college committed to the Reformed tradition in Scotland (Highland Theological College); more recently I spent three years teaching at an interdenominational college in Brisbane while being on the preaching team of a Presbyterian church (Crossway College). I am now a lecturer in theology at an Anglican College (Ridley Melbourne). Strange as it sounds, I would describe myself as an ex-Baptist postPresbyterian Anglican." Bird considers himself a "mere evangelical" and attempts to write his systematic from that perspective. One of the things you will note in Evangelical Theology is the tone. Bird writes deeply and lightly, using humor freely to make points and disarm the reader. Is his use of humor good or bad?

From the get-go, I must say that Michael F. Bird is a scholar who knows what he is talking about. Although I don't agree with some of the things he says, he is a very knowledgeable NT scholar who has done his homework. If one looks at his CV on his website, one will immediately notice that he has done a lot of research and written many materials on related to biblical studies and theology. One of the interesting aspects of this work is that it is a SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY written by a New Testament scholar. This is quite out of the ordinary. Most authors of evangelical systematic theologies (Millard Erickson, Wayne Grudem, Robert Reymond, Robert Culver, Louis Berkhof, Norm Geisler, Mike Horton, Charles Ryrie, Norman Gulley, Herman Bavinck, Morton Smith, John Frame, Thomas Oden, Lewis and Demarest, etc.) are ALL theologians or dogmaticians. Michael F. Bird is not. This makes you wonder if the approach taken in this work will be strictly a standard systematic theology OR a biblical theology written using systematic categories. Fortunately, it is a systematic theology written by a biblical scholar. First, the positive parts. The work is nicely organized and laid out. Bird also writes in a style that tries to be easy on lay people or seminary students. He doesn't write in a way that makes you think he is trying to be arrogant or typing away only for PhD-holding scholars. In fact, the language used in the work is quite "lay-friendly." Also, there are many helpful ways that Bird describes a particular doctrine so that the average Christian can understand. For example, his way of explaining the Trinity is well-done (pp. 92-124). Also, his darker shade commentaries on a particular doctrine are very helpful and

interesting to read. Finally, his rigorous use of Scripture is refreshing.

Michael Bird is lecturer in theology at Ridley Melbourne College of Mission and Ministry in Melbourne, Australia. He is the author of numerous books on topics ranging from the person of Christ to a commentary on Colossians---of which I gave high praise a few years ago. He also blogs at Euangellion. Technically, Bird is a New Testament scholar. And yet, like another biblical scholar-turned-systematic theologian (Wayne Grudem), Bird is presenting the church with gospel-driven theology that stands on his careful exegesis. Yet, his book is not so much a desire to give an exegetical theology as much as he has written his book to provide an evangelical theology. You can see him speak to the need for a truly "evangelical" theology in his youtube introduction: [youtube=...]As a part of Zondervan's blog tour, I've been commissioned to review the introductory section of ET, what is known as the prolegomena ("first words"). Fulfilling that commission, let me outline my review under three headings: (1) a summary of the section, (2) the strength of Bird's gospel-centrality, (3) the stumbling block of his sources. A Summary After making an apologia for the evangelical nature of this theology textbook (see pp. 16-26 and the video above), Michael Bird gives the reader about sixty pages of prolegomena, introductory thoughts about how one should do theology and "talk about God." He answers the usual questions: "What is theology?" "What must you say before you say anything?" "Is theology possible?" And "What are the sources for theology?" To these questions, Bird engages with a number of historical figures whom he uses as foils for his proposed methodology. Bird also asks the important and often overlooked question of "What is the Gospel?"

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