

claim to know something implicitly expresses an underlying confidence in God. We cannot avoid assuming that God is trustworthy to begin with.

Some readers will also find Tonstad's objections to Augustine's reflections on evil puzzling. He admits that the great theologian did not dispense with the notion of a cosmic conflict, but in his view the story, as Augustine tells it, has been "bleached" of its earlier power (50), and Augustine's concept of evil as a privation of the good is seriously deficient (356). For many, however, Augustine's reflections on evil are enormously helpful, and in some ways they actually support Tonstad's central concern. There is no question, as Tonstad argues, that evil confronts us as a powerful, virtually palpable force, as the very figure of the devil suggests. But Augustine's insight is not that evil is less than horrible, but that, strictly speaking, it has no positive ontological status. By itself, evil is literally nothing, no-thing. The point is that evil is never "by itself." It "exists" only as the corruption of something essentially good. But if evil is parasitic on the good, then the greater the original good, the greater the potential for evil. This fits nicely with the concept that the supreme personification of evil is nothing other than the highest created being, Lucifer, the archangel, whose magnificent original qualities are bent to serve perfidious ends. If anything, such a view of evil, and of God's archenemy, would seem to bolster, rather than detract from, Tonstad's theodicy.

Whatever the questions that *God of Sense* raises, I doubt that they detract from Tonstad's accomplishment. Indeed, when viewed alongside the dramatic scope of his undertaking, and the beauty of its presentation, such questions may amount to nothing more than quibbles. After all, a grand narrative does not stoop to answer questions; it transcends them. And that, in essence, is what *God of Sense* provides: not a sustained argument, not an exercise in discursive reasoning—however admirable the author's forensic skills may be—but a powerful narrative, a multifaceted story of the greatest Love in the universe relentlessly pursuing the objects of its affection until they—we—can no longer wonder, or can only wonder, that we are cared for in ways that can only be imagined, but never adequately conceived. It is no wonder that Tonstad finds the climax of the cosmic story he so eloquently portrays in the stunned silence of the heavenly court.

Loma Linda University  
Loma Linda, California

RICHARD RICE

Vanhoozer, Kevin J., and Daniel J. Treier. *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture: A Mere Evangelical Account*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 301 pp. Softcover, US\$26.00.

*Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* is the first volume in the *Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture* promoting constructive, creative evangelical engagement between Scripture, doctrine, and traditions. The authors and also editors for these *Studies*—Kevin J. Vanhoozer, research professor of systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical School; and Daniel J. Treier, Blanchard Professor of Theology at Wheaton College—provide a

normative proposal for doing evangelical theology by offering “a theological prolegomenon and ecclesiological perspective for orthodox, pietist, Protestant ecumenism” (23–24).

The book is full of echoes, analogies, and imageries of the past. The title *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* echoes Richard Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. The book’s subtitle *A Mere Evangelical Account* parodies C. S. Lewis’s *Mere Christianity*, indicating the intended ecclesiology. The book starts with an *Unscientific Preface*, although not mentioning explicitly Kierkegaard, and goes on with a confession using the tone of Augustine. The intended goal of the book to achieve an evangelical catholicity matches the linguistic style that renews the spirit of landmark contributions in intellectual and theological history.

This prolegomenon is divided into two parts: Part 1, “The Agenda: The Material and Formal Principles of Evangelical Theology” (chs. 1–2), describes theological ontology and epistemology. Part 2, “The Analysis” (chs. 3–6), corresponds to the actual practice of doing evangelical theology, including reflection on wisdom (ch. 3), theological interpretation of Scripture (hereafter TIS) (ch. 4), ecclesiology (ch. 5), and issues related to the wider scholarly community (ch. 6), followed by the conclusion. The number of pages is evenly distributed between parts one and two, despite the difference in the number of chapters.

Chapter one, “The Gospel of God and the God of the Gospel: The Reality *Behind* the Mirror,” focuses on theological ontology. At the outset, the question of theological unity among evangelicals is problematized by the absence of a defined theological core with no magisterium to emit judgments when facing theological disagreement (46). This complicates the landscape for evangelical identity and programmatic future. The proposal imagines the theological substance using a nautical analogy of an “anchor” instead of static proposals (i.e., boundary or centered analogies). The anchor analogy allows some doctrinal fixation and delimited flexibility. The substance of such “anchor” corresponds to a Trinitarian, crucicentric emphasis (78–79). This proposal is not intended to be “an exact science” (51), nor a method (126). The *telos* of such theology does not aim to produce foundationalist knowledge, but the formation of wise judgments. These procedures access the knowledge of God through the divine economy (57) targeting what God is in himself. Although the authors use the language of “being” (66), they are not interested in metaphysical speculation, but in the divine identity that self-communicates in speech and acts in the soteriological narrative.

Chapter two, “From Canonical Cradle to Doctrinal Development: The Authority of the Mirror,” presents a theological epistemology. It proposes a *critical biblicism* that gives theological currency to the variegated literary forms and contents within Scriptures looking for patterns of biblical reasoning. Its epistemic strategy is to validate testimony as reliable. The chapter reacts to naïve biblicism by broadening the concept of authority pertaining intrinsically to the canon toward a larger domain that includes its interpretative reception. By emphasizing “apostolicity” before “catholicity,” the authors posit tradition

with ministerial, derivative authority while maintaining *sola scriptura* with magisterial authority (117). The goal is to provide a blueprint that holds the tension between theological unity in essentials and diversity in nonessentials for the sake of right understanding, wise embodiment, and mission.

Part two, “The Practice of Evangelical Theology,” analyses how the implementation ought to be done, capitalizing on the idea of “practice” and “art” instead of scientific methodology. Each chapter in this section starts with a theological reading of 1 Corinthians, addressing the issues under discussion. Chapter three, “In Search of Wisdom,” conceptualizes theology as a sapiential enterprise, making wisdom the end or outcome of mirroring Scripture (i.e., teleological principle). The discussion is extended to prolegomena, theological education, and the fragmentation of theological disciplines.

Chapter four, “In Need of Theological Exegesis,” provides the accounts for ecclesiastical apostolicity through a theological practice that exegetes the canon, creed, culture, and their mutual relations. It offers a series of clarifications and defenses of TIS, concluding that wisdom bridges the gap between historical exegesis and the formation of theological concepts and judgments. With the aid of insights from pragmatist and ordinary language theory, the proposal rejects the mesmerizing appeal to rationalist epistemology. Instead, it nuances the rational apparatus within habits and practices of social activity. Such is the link of doctrinal concepts to ecclesiology (the locus where such practice happens) and pneumatology (the agent who guides the conceptual development of such practices).

Chapter five considers the ecclesiology of the proposal, with special focus on catholicity and ecumenism. It describes the level of ecumenical relations based on correspondence as a three-leveled dogmatic rank that informs the engagement among churches and within congregations. The proposal is missiological and seeks to reestablish the currency of “tradition” within evangelicalism.

Chapter six, “In Pursuit of Scholarly Excellence,” discusses how this proposal could be actualized by means of appropriation of wise judgments in constructing the literary materials of the Bible with synthetic creativity. It also looks for the systematicity that attests to the coherence of the interconnections of the parts to the whole. Then, it moves toward dogmatic focus by bridging and uniting the fragmented disciplines of biblical, theological, and practical studies. Also, the authors provide eight typologies of current theology that model and open avenues for future evangelical scholarship.

As I move to the assessment of Vanhoozer’s and Treier’s normative theological proposal for evangelicals, I note that the book is well researched, following logically from a programmatic agenda to the analysis. The footnotes converse mainly with contemporary authors, despite the intention to honor the creedal marks of the church. Although the intention of the proposal is ambitious—nothing less than the attempt to rekindle a revival movement—the description of the theological state of affairs is just sufficiently argued in order to transition to the constructive and prescriptive portions. As any book of creative power, it provides food for thought, and

so I offer assessment related to two areas of the proposed ecclesiology: First, the communitarian emphasis adopted in the prolegomenon, and second, the use of the creedal marks of the church, particularly, on the limitation of reflection on holiness, and the theological substance in the conceptualization of catholicity.

1. The authors acknowledge the inclusion of the doctrine of the church to the realm of their *first theology* (12–13). Previously, Vanhoozer argued that first theology focuses on the relation between God and Scripture (see his earlier account of prolegomenon in *First Theology: Essays on God, Scripture, and Hermeneutics* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002], 30). Later, Vanhoozer asked: “Should ecclesiology be ‘first theology?’” by characterizing how the cultural-linguistic turn of George Lindbeck makes the church the first principle of Christian theology (*The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005], 155). However, *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* offers an increased communitarian emphasis encompassing theological interpretation in the church. While this move should be commended for avoiding isolationism and the necessity to do theology not in the abstract but in the ecclesiastical concrete forms of embodiment, also it should be acknowledged that this communitarianism may, in practice, become a way of giving extracanonical normative interpretative authority.

2. Although the book’s ecclesiology emphasizes the marks of the church (oneness, apostolicity, catholicity), as expressed in the Nicene Creed, it under-develops “holiness.” If the mark “holiness” would be further elaborated, it could build bridges between dogmatics and moral theory. The authors could have connected “holiness” to the well-developed aspects of phronetic wisdom and the eschatological-ethical dimension of mirroring Scriptures. In particular, the authors could have developed an application of the eschatological paradigm in Christian ethics. Although they state their attempt to interpret theology in an eschatological way (10), they do not fully explore how this re-eschatologization of Christianity may affect their theological construction as it relates to ethics and the holiness of the church.

In regard to catholicity, the authors fill its theological content as the consensus of the whole church expressed as orthodoxy (116). Yet, they argue that what is authoritative is not the individual concepts of the past, but the judgments which were emerged (115). This rehabilitates the creeds even if their metaphysical framework is denied. The value of catholicity is in the theological development by the reception of the gospel throughout space, time, and culture. This makes catholicity intrinsically related to tradition and cross-cultural mission. The book elaborates mainly the quantitative aspect of catholicity, focusing—using the language of Avery Dulles—on the breadth (mission and communion) and length (tradition and development) of catholicity, but lacking the qualitative dimension, namely, the heights (the fullness of God) and depths (anthropology) of catholicity (cf. Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1985]). If indeed the book attempts to bring ecclesiology into the realm of first theology, it

should articulate the qualitative aspect of the catholicity of the church with divine catholicity. Also, I would have liked to have seen the book interacting with catholicity within a comprehensive eschatological framework that differentiates an eschatological maximum from a historical minimum catholicity (cf. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 266). In this way, catholicity would theologially predicate not only ecclesiology but also other theological loci.

Overall, *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* is an important contribution that will be helpful to church members, pastors, and theologians interested in the evangelical ethos, constructive systematic theology, Protestant ecumenism, TIS, and the often forgotten evangelical ecclesiology.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

ELMER A. GUZMAN