

## BOOK REVIEWS

Daniel J. Treier, *Lord Jesus Christ*. Edited by Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain. Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2023. 384 pp. Paperback \$41.99

Daniel J. Treier is Gunther H. Knoedler Professor of Theology and Director of Ph.D. Program at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. His current scholarship focuses on evangelical theology and theological interpretation of Scripture, particularly Christology. He has authored and co-authored several books such as *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, *Introducing Evangelical Theology*, and *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice*.

*Lord Jesus Christ* forms part of the New Studies in Dogmatics series. This series seeks to “offer . . . focused treatments on major topics in dogmatic theology that fill the gap between introductory theology textbooks and advanced theological monographs” (19). The series aims to offer works in constructive theology via renewal through retrieval (19). According to the editors, modern theology has not provided a more profound understanding but has drifted sideways. However, by resourcing the Scriptures in connection with the ancient, medieval, and contemporary voices, this series seeks to “contribute to a flourishing theological culture in the church today” (20).

Treier suggests that “dogmatic theology focuses on exposition of the church’s authoritative teaching” (27). Given the focus of New Studies in Dogmatics in general and of dogmatic theology in particular, this book approaches the person and work of Jesus Christ as faith seeking understanding and affirms with the earliest Christian confession, “Jesus is Lord” (Ro 10:9; 1Co 12:3; Ph 2:11). Treier draws from “ecumenical dogma and Protestant confessions” to accomplish his objective (27). He will outline his “faith seeking Christological understanding” with four aims: evangelical and ecumenical faith, biblical and historical seeking, ontological and analogical understanding, and conceptual and contextual Christology (35–45).

His first aim is to be evangelical and ecumenical. By ecumenical, Treier seeks to uphold the “rule of faith” by speaking about the seven ecumenical councils. Additionally, the Reformed confessions also form part of our understanding of Christology. His second aim will be to employ a theological interpretation of Scripture and theological realism of historical Jesus research. In doing so, one can examine Christ from his earthly and heavenly dimensions. As Treier notes, Jesus was a man, but he was not a mere man, he was more, he was the God-man. Treier’s third aim is to examine Jesus’ identity, namely his eternal sonship and earthly existence as the God-man. Fourth, conceptually, Treier attempts to speak of “Scripture’s theodramatic ontology,” promoting Christology and engaging with various historical contexts to gain more understanding of Christ’s incarnational presence and to further catechesis (42–43).

Treier, having laid out his four objectives, begins every chapter with a particular text of Scripture, which functions as his springboard for theological exegesis and interpretation. Treier then outlines his chapters in a progressive Christological manner or, as he says, “Christ’s theodramatic ontology” (46). Simply stated, the book starts with the Eternal Son of God, his condescension or incarnation, his life as the Messiah, His life, death, resurrection and exaltation, ascension, and finally, consummation of redemption and creation.

The text used in chapter one is Ephesians 1:3–14. This text points to the three persons of the Trinity. Treier focuses on the Son’s life, *ad intra*, that is, as the eternal Son in relation and communion with the Father and Holy Spirit; the eternal generation of the Son and his ontological identity are in full view in this chapter. Next, he employs Colossians 1:15–29 to speak about the incarnation of the Son as the express *imago Dei*. Here, the eternal Son entered His creation and took upon flesh, thus taking part in the creation as the preeminent one who is the prototype for humanity in general and the *imago Dei* in particular. In chapter three, Treier highlights Luke 24:13–35 and focuses on Jesus’ Messianic office as Priest, Prophet, and King who alone fulfills God’s covenant. In chapter four, Isaiah 7:14 points to the more-than-human aspect of Jesus. Jesus, as Immanuel, is God with us, thus pointing to the glorious mystery of God incarnate. In chapter five, Treier points to John 1:1–18 and demonstrates how the Logos, the Word who was with the Father, took upon flesh in the incarnation, is God’s supreme and final self-revelation.

Then, in chapter six, Philippians 2:5–11 is used to demonstrate that not only was the incarnation an act of God’s love, but Jesus’ Servant-like attitude and obedience is evidence of God’s superlative love toward sinners. Chapter seven begins with Luke 4:14–30 and situates Jesus as the Savior whose coming was synonymous with the coming of God’s kingdom. Following, chapter eight treats Mark 10:32–45 and focuses on Jesus as the Son of Man who was the once and for all substitutionary atoning sacrifice who purchased our redemption. Chapter nine properly treats Hebrews 7:22–8:6 to demonstrate that Jesus is the theandric Mediator, the God-man, who stands as the only Mediator between God and humanity. His exaltation and mediatory office were accomplished by his resurrection and ascension. Finally, chapter ten culminates in Jesus being the Bridegroom whose return ushers in the consummation of creation and redemption. It is here where He and his redeemed covenant people will dwell together on the earth in utter bliss forever.

*Lord Jesus Christ* reminds one of Robert A. Peterson’s 2012 book, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ*. Part one of Peterson’s book has similar life events to those of Jesus in Treier’s *Lord Jesus Christ*. However, a distinction aligns well with the stated purpose of the New Studies in Dogmatics and Treier that is not found in Peterson’s work, which is the notion of renewal via retrieval. The former book reads well and is suited for beginner to intermediate students of the Word. Treier’s book likewise uses readable but more academic prose and theological grammar that theologically trained students would understand.

Treier stated in his introduction that his aim was fourfold: Did he accomplish his task? Treier accomplished his objective. Each chapter evidenced theological exegesis and interpretation of the chosen Scriptural reference. Treier engages with the various aspects of dogmatic Christology by resourcing ancient, medieval, and contemporary voices. He deals with conceptual and contextual issues as they relate to dogmatic Christology.

There are two observations that this writer would like to highlight. In chapter one, “Communion as the Son of God,” Treier situates the Son in the life of the Trinity, and rightly so. One aspect that often goes unaddressed, with some exceptions, such as with Fred Sanders in his book *The Deep Things of God*, is the connection between Jesus’ ontological sonship and the elect’s sonship by grace via adoption. Treier devotes some pages to addressing the doctrine of adoption, which makes sense given that he is engaged in the task of theological interpretation of Scripture. Ephesians 1:3–18 is a classic text that deals with the Triune God’s life and the redemption and adoption that takes place as a result of the inseparable operations within the Godhead, namely, the Father’s election, the Son’s substitutionary atoning work, and the union with Christ produced by the Holy Spirit. It is refreshing to see that the doctrine of adoption necessarily flows out of the ontological identity of the Son. Since the Son is eternally Son, then it follows that those who the Father elects will become sons of God by grace. As John Calvin once said, God became man, that man may become sons of God.

The second observation is identified in chapter seven. This chapter deals with the notion of reconciliation as liberation. Treier observes that Jesus came to liberate from sin, not just conceptually or spiritually but also against “social structures and systemic evil” (237). So far, so good. Then Treier makes a suggestion that needs some clarification. Treier said, “How different might have been the story of the last two thousand years on this planet grown old from suffering if the link between Jesus and Israel had never been severed!” (238). He goes on to say, “Severing this link left the church with a sociopolitical legacy that includes imperial collaborations, colonialism, patriarchy, racism, and slavery” (238). What does he mean that Jesus and Israel were severed? Does he mean that Jesus is not treated as a Jew? Is he referring to the de-Judaization of Christianity? Moreover, this last statement seems to imply that because Jesus was severed from Israel, slavery, racism, patriarchy, and colonialism are its result. It would seem that sin lies at the root of those issues noted above.

Additionally, there is nothing inherently wrong with patriarchy, Father-rule, so long as it is biblical patriarchy. The Bible teaches biblical patriarchy. The Father is eternally Father, and the Father is over all, from whom the Son and the Holy Spirit proceed. For a treatment on biblical patriarchy see Zachary Garris’s book *Masculine Christianity*. It would also seem that slavery would eventually be undone, given Paul’s preaching of the Gospel, union with Christ, and his letter to Philemon, in which Christians are to treat one another as brothers.

Nevertheless, besides this above-noted section, *Lord Jesus Christ* comes with many endorsements from respected theologians. Pastors, seminary students, and anyone thirsty for dogmatic theology and Christology would benefit from this work. As the series editors noted, it seeks to be an intermediary work attempting to fill the gap between an introductory survey textbook and an advanced monograph. Thus, it will be a smooth read if pastors and theological seminary students are well acquainted with theological grammar. Should they need to improve their theological grammar, it will be essential to have a theological dictionary to help them in their reading endeavors.

*Lord Jesus Christ* is a well-done work. It is a great resource and exercise in resourcement of the tradition in its pursuit of renewal via retrieval. Treier effectively demonstrates how to engage in theological interpretation of the text while engaging with ancient and Reformed confessional material to help readers engage with their modern contexts. Readers will benefit from and be challenged by *Lord Jesus Christ*.

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