

Smith's Christocentric hermeneutic allows Christians to acknowledge and deal with the Bible's plurality, incompleteness, and problematic texts. We can abandon biblical practices not consistent with the logic of the gospel. We can develop a biblical affirmation such as our oneness in Christ into a full-blown anti-slavery stance that New Testament writers did not yet understand as the logic of the gospel.

I applaud Smith's suggestions for how to read the Bible as good news. However, the interpretive pluralism which he sees as discrediting biblicism also afflicts Christocentric hermeneutics, which is no more likely than biblicism to find agreement on infant versus believer's baptism, atonement theories, church structure, worship, or pacifism versus just war.

*The Bible Made Impossible* will be most appealing to readers recovering from a biblicist (as defined by Smith) way of interpreting scripture. Such readers will have their misgivings about biblicism validated and will be guided towards a more life-giving, intellectually honest, and truly evangelical way of reading the Bible.

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Jens Zimmerman. *Incarnational Humanism: A Philosophy of Culture for the Church in the World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012.

*Incarnational Humanism* is a spirited defense of classical Christian theology as the best ground for a humanist philosophy of culture by Jens Zimmerman, Canada Research Chair of Interpretation, Religion, and Culture at Trinity Western University. Zimmerman sees the doctrine of the incarnation as the key to elevating the status of humanity in the ancient world and anchoring human dignity, solidarity, and social responsibility today.

In the first half of the book, the author acknowledges that early Christian thinkers were influenced by Platonic philosophy but argues

they departed from its contempt for the body and the material world. For examples, he highlights how Athanasius celebrated God's sanctifying the human body in the incarnation (61) and how Irenaeus was willing to include the human body as part of the image of God (76). Furthermore, Zimmerman contends the heart of classical Christian humanism is the idea of *deification*, of becoming like God. For both Eastern and Western theologians, deification was rooted in the incarnation: "God's descent into human nature allows the human ascent to the divine" (85). This does not mean the abandonment of the body to become a pure spirit equal to God but rather the restoration of humanity to its full potential as revealed in Christ. This elevation of humanity also has social implications, binding Christians together in communion and calling them to care for the image of Christ present in all human beings.

In the second half, Zimmerman traces the gradual separation of humanism from its Christian roots through the medieval, Renaissance, and modern periods. He connects the "anti-humanism" of postmodern philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault to their dismissal of Christianity as Platonism, and challenges them with Gregory of Nyssa's emphasis on the divine elevation of human nature through the bodily resurrection (184). He then contrasts Nietzsche and Foucault's disavowal of ethics to the explicitly ethical impulses of later philosophers Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, whom he classifies as humanists (222). Still, Zimmerman is concerned that Derrida's resistance to definition encourages his theological disciples like John Caputo to fall into a kind of irrational fideism, advocating anarchist action in the name of an unknown God (243). The author concludes with a brief outline of the attitude towards culture entailed by incarnational humanism.

*Incarnational Humanism* is largely free of over-generalizations and polemics. As befits a professor of English, Zimmerman relies on close readings of texts to advance his argument and overturn the stereotype—recently revived by popular Christian author Brian McLaren—that Greek philosophy corrupted the early Christians, who in turn corrupted the message of Jesus. Mennonites and Anabaptists in particular will find some of their impressions of classical and medieval theology challenged.

At the same time, Mennonites may ask why, if the incarnation is so central to Christian humanism, no details of Jesus' life appear in the

discussion. Of the four gospels, only the gospel of John is referenced, primarily to emphasize the divinity of Jesus and the importance of the incarnation. I most noticed this lack of attention in the final chapter, where the author draws on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* to promote a posture of "realistic responsibility" that navigates between the radical's naïve question of "what would Jesus do?" and the compromiser's tendency to "collapse the distinctions between Christ and the world" (272). However, while in his *Ethics* Bonhoeffer himself ranges freely across the gospels and insists there that "it is quite wrong to establish a separate theology of the incarnation," Zimmerman's own presentation appears to lack any interest in what Jesus *did*, confirming the suspicion that classical theology tends to abstract Jesus from his life and message.

Still, these concerns should not overshadow Zimmerman's achievement in painting a sympathetic portrait of early Christian theologians like Athanasius, Irenaeus, and Gregory of Nyssa, and in carefully arguing that retrieving classical theology can help us recover a coherent Christian humanism. Despite wading through deep waters of theology and philosophy, the author's nimble prose makes this book readable and suitable for both advanced undergraduates and graduate students in theology. I would suggest it for inclusion in an introductory course on historical theology, and classes on Christianity and culture or philosophy and theology.

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David J. Neville. *A Peaceable Hope: Contesting Violent Eschatology in New Testament Narratives*. Studies in Peace and Scripture Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013.

David J. Neville is associate professor of theology and lecturer in New Testament studies at Charles Sturt University in Canberra, Australia. He is known for his writings on the Synoptic Problem, and on the relationship between eschatology and ethics in the NT. What do the NT eschatological visions reveal about the character of God and the ethics that cohere with that