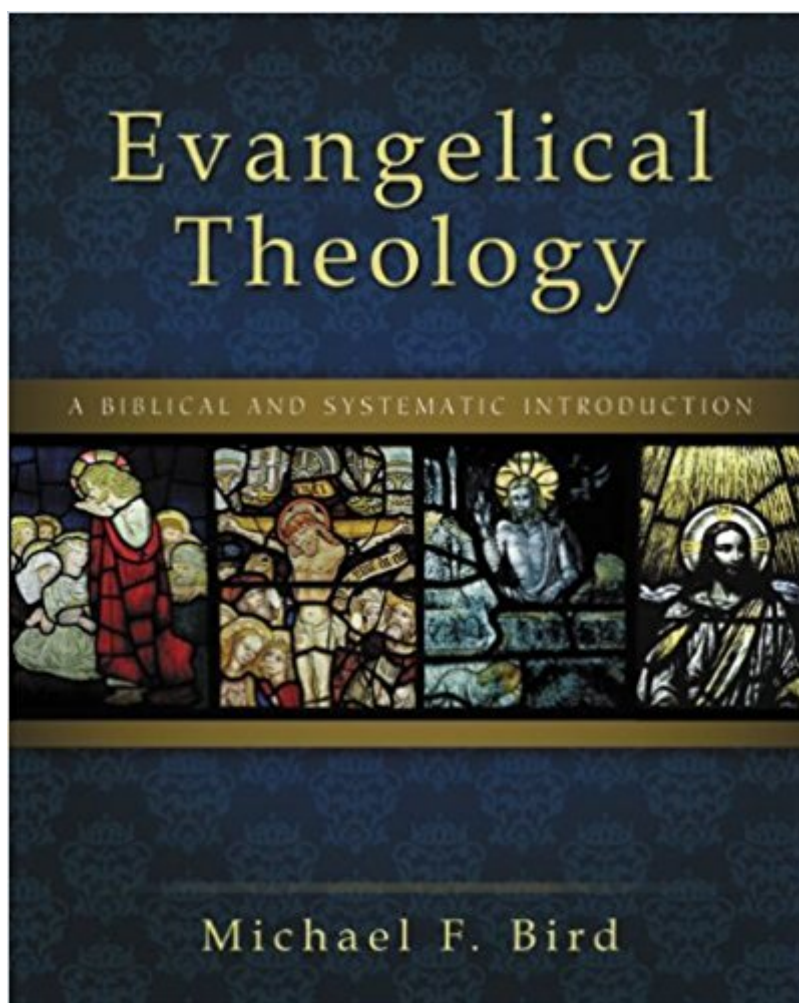


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Evangelical Theology: A Biblical And Systematic Introduction



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

It is rare for a biblical scholar to produce a systematic theology of the breadth and depth of this book. Warm-hearted yet with a critical and engaging style throughout, Michael F. Bird presents a theology that is robustly biblical, doxological, and woven through the breadth of the evangelical ecclesial traditions. Providing fresh interaction with concepts from the wider theological world while

persistently mining the biblical text, this theology takes no short cuts in offering an evangelical theology that has everything to do with the gospel. -- Jason S. Sexton, Research Associate, USC's Center for Religion and Civic Culture, Los Angeles

Taking its bearings in the gospel story of Jesus, Michael Bird's *Evangelical Theology* is unique among the current crop of one-volume systematic theologies. Bringing the sensibilities of an exegete and biblical theologian to the task of systematics, Bird pursues a drama of redemption approach: doing theology through telling the story. While championing the expositional realities of the biblical text, Bird also keeps a keen eye toward the creedal inheritance of the church and the contributions of the theological tradition. Broadly Reformed and self-consciously evangelical, Bird's accessible and conversational style will be sure to win him a wide reading among students, pastors and teachers. -- Michael D. Williams, Professor of Systematic Theology, Covenant Theological Seminary

Michael F. Bird (PhD, University of Queensland) is lecturer in theology at Ridley Melbourne College of Mission and Ministry in Melbourne, Australia. He is the author of *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission*; *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective*; *Evangelical Theology*; *Bourgeois Babes, Bossy Wives, and Bobby Haircuts: A moderate Case for Gender Equality in Ministry* and editor of *The Apostle Paul: Four Views*. He is also a co-blogger of the New Testament blog "Euangelion."

Evangelical Theology by Michael F Bird is a fantastic book for those looking to better understand God. It includes everything from who God is and His nature, to what our task here on Earth is while we wait for the second coming. It did an excellent job explaining key concepts clearly in a way that was easy to grasp and understand. Bird also used tons of outside sources to back up the facts he used to support his claim. Perhaps my favorite part about this book was Bird's ability to give viewpoints from several worldviews rather than just giving his alone. By doing this, he did a superb job keeping the bias to a minimal while explaining concepts. When reading this book, it was easy for me to make my own judgements rather than being slammed with his own opinions presented as facts. Not only was the author's information well-supported and clear, the author did an amazing job hooking the reader. He would occasionally throw in a humorous hyperbole while explaining a topic. This helped me follow along with everything he said throughout the book. So why only four stars? Throughout the book I found one flaw that tended to be a bit irritating. In many chapters, it was not uncommon for the author to repeat himself several times. Occasionally, I would find myself reading up to three pages of material that was already explained clearly in the first

paragraph of the first page. Despite the author's outstanding efforts to keep his readers attached to the material so that they could understand it, I did find myself becoming slightly frustrated and confused on certain concepts simply because the concept was overstated. Overall, *Evangelical Theology* by Michael F Bird is excellent for understanding many key concepts about God, His divine nature, our mission here on Earth, the role of each of the three persons that make up God, and more. Despite the occasional overstating of concepts, the book was easy to read with tons of unbiased information that was backed by other sources.

Style and Overview According to Mike Bird, the purpose of his work on Christian theology is to produce a textbook for Christians that represents a biblically sound expression of the Christian faith from the vantage point of the evangelical tradition, a tradition which he goes on to define. Over the years I've read my share of Systematic Theologies, whether in college, seminary, pastorate, or personal enrichment. While I've enjoyed their contents for the most part, they did not always flow well. Some were simply dry and dull. Not Mike Bird's *Evangelical Theology*. It flows. It's a lively. Throughout are charts, diagrams, and other visuals. Embedded in the text are further discussions pertinent to the subject matter. At the end of each section is a summary in the form of What to take Home? and Study questions for individuals and groups. The work is divided into eight parts around the evangel, the gospel. It does not follow the usual order of other systematic theologies. Mike provides a reason. Of special note is the fact that Mike describes himself as an ex-Baptist post-Presbyterian Anglican. He writes from a Reformed/Calvinist perspective. However, according to Mike, I am more than willing to part company with Calvin and the Reformers when I feel compelled to in the light of biblical evidence and Christian tradition. **Critique** For the most part, Mike's work is a breath of fresh air, displaying a willingness to challenge and reframe traditionally held beliefs, even within his own Reformed tradition. I find this especially true in Part 5, "The Gospel of Salvation," where Mike convinced me of Christus Victor and so on. Some readers would not be pleased with Mike's generous and irenic spirit when it comes to such controversial subjects as biblical inerrancy and the historical Adam. Parts 2, 4, 7, Trinity, Christology, and Pneumatology, respectively, are quite solid. This is not to discount the other sections, but these I found to be more refreshing. In Part 2, section 2.6, "God's Purpose and Plan." While it appears promising, i.e., Mike's willingness to depart from Reformed covenant theology's "covenant of works" and covenant of grace, it fell short. It proved to be more about semantics, as one works through the larger work. Neither was I convinced about his arguments for the historic

premillennial position “simply a rehearsing of the same old unconvincing arguments. I expected to be challenged here. While there are bright spots in Part 8, “The Community of the Gospelized,” for the most part it was *deja vu* “I’ve been here before, especially when it came to church government and baptism. However, his discussion on the Lord’s Supper stands out. Conclusion All in all, Evangelical Theology is a well-researched work. Mike’s knowledge and interaction with the Church Fathers, the Reformers, and modern theologians throughout the work are quite impressive. As a footnote, Mike Bird is not even 40 as yet. So in the next 10 to 15 years, I would really like to see where he would be theologically in light of this work. At any rate, I commend Evangelical Theology, a systematic theology from a New Testament scholar.

Bird does an excellent job in analyzing the different topics of theology. He writes this book in a way that it centers around the gospel, which is an interesting approach to a systematic theology however he is able to execute his ideas almost flawlessly. This book can be very helpful if you want to examine what you truly believe in and possibly make you question an assumption or idea you might have already had. Some chapters seem to be more focused and thought out than others, but this is understandable since certain theological topics can be more dense and can leave more room for argument. Almost all claims that Bird says are able to be backed up by some sort of evidence, whether they be a footnote or a passage from the Bible. Overall it is was a very interesting and intriguing read by offering certain instances of humor that can be found within the endless amount of evidence and content he provides.

Michael Bird does a great job of putting this systematic theology into the powerful perspective of the gospel story. He offers up new ways of thinking things through, all entirely in light of the gospel. I found it very intriguing to observe his careful consideration of the way that he ordered the different topics discussed throughout the book His strategy was unpredictable. For example, he emphasizes putting eschatology towards the beginning chapters in order to make a point of God’s kingdom being a lens to look at everything concerning redemptive history. This was a unique and new way to go about a systematic theology. Throughout the entire book, Bird talked about each topic in light of the gospel. Overall, I would definitely recommend this book to those who are looking for a systematic theology that keeps things focused, yet relational and light at the same time.

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