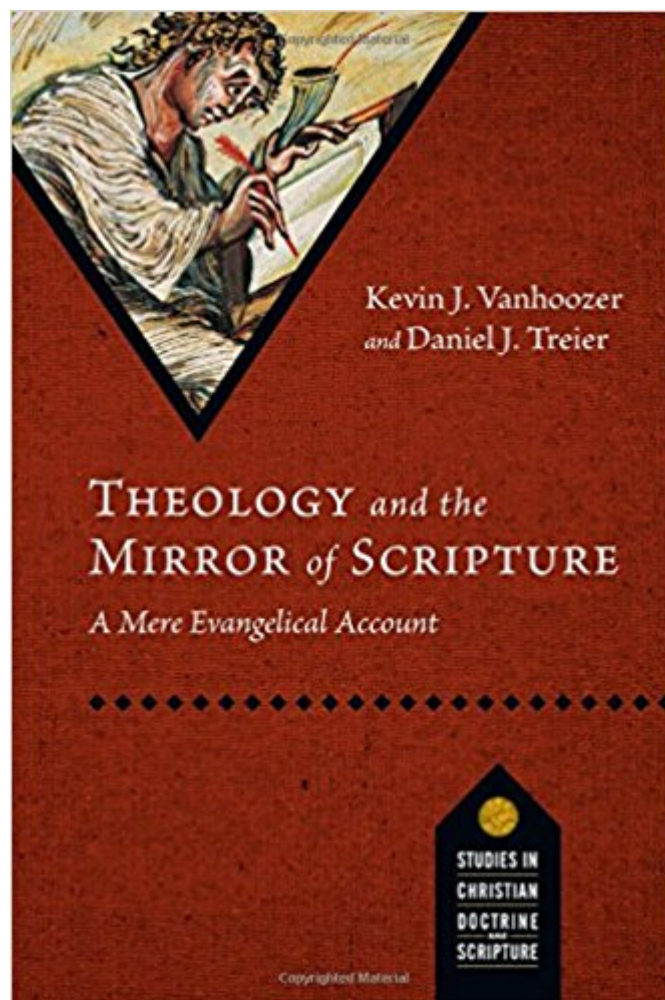




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Theology And The Mirror Of Scripture: A Mere Evangelical Account (Studies In Christian Doctrine And Scripture)



Synopsis

Evangelicalism has long been a hotly disputed label, and what counts as evangelical theology is often anyone's guess. Is evangelicalism a static bounded set defined by clear doctrinal limits, or is it a dynamic centered set without a discernible circumference? In this inaugural volume in the Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture, Kevin Vanhoozer and Daniel Treier present evangelical theology as an "anchored" set, rooted in the Trinity. In response to increasing evangelical fragmentation, *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* offers a clarion call to reconceive evangelical theology theologically by reflecting on the God of the gospel as mirrored in Scripture. Such "mere" evangelical theology will be an exercise in Christian wisdom for the purpose of building up the fellowship of saints.

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Customer Reviews

"This is not just another book about evangelicalism—it points out its fissures, successes, designs and contusions. Rather, it is a proposal for doing mere evangelical theology—mere as genuine, not minimal—one that draws on the wisdom of the entire Christian tradition. Well-written and clearly argued, this book offers a compelling way forward for the evangelical church today."

(Timothy George, founding dean, Beeson Divinity School of Samford University, general editor, *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*) "Vanhoozer and Treier are calling for the development of a catholic evangelical theology by drawing from the resources of the Christian tradition. If their call is

heeded, we will likely see the emergence of a more robust ecclesiology and a consensual orthodoxy unified around matters central to evangelical faith and practice. There is a bright future for evangelical theology and genuine ecumenism if their proposals are followed through." (Simon Chan, Trinity Theological College, Singapore)"In the last decade, Vanhoozer and Treier have been as busy as anyone else—arguably more so—on theological prolegomena and the full range of questions contested in that complex arena. *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* gathers together the various strands of their arguments but also charts a coherent forward trajectory. This account is a veritable starting point for all those who would be mere evangelical theologians amidst the present ferment." (Amos Yong, professor of theology and mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, author of *The Future of Evangelical Theology*)"Kevin Vanhoozer and Daniel Treier, two of the leading theological voices in the evangelical world, have combined their adroit skills and wise insights to produce a lucid and thoughtful proposal designed to point evangelical theology toward a hopeful and constructive future. These two brilliant authors have initiated an inviting project shaped by a commitment to the truthfulness of Scripture, informed by the best of the Christian tradition and anchored in the trinitarian gospel. *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* will delight many and challenge others, engaging not only theologians and scholars, but students, pastors and church leaders alike." (David S. Dockery, president, Trinity International University)"A deft treatment of the relationship between Scripture and evangelical theology, this book doubles as a lucid, winsome introduction to classic evangelical theology as a whole. Readers will encounter here not only a wide-ranging discussion of hermeneutical matters but also a clear-eyed, calm, faithful testimony to the 'mere' evangelical truth of God's act in Jesus Christ for the life of the world." (Wesley Hill, assistant professor of biblical studies, Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, Pennsylvania)"What you could have in your hands is a delightfully rich treatment of evangelical TIS. *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* is not a dessert after your meal, but a full course meal. And, it is good." (Joshua R. Farris, *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, Autumn 2016)"*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." (Elmer A. Guzman, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Autumn 2016)"There are many reasons to recommend this book. In their survey of evangelical diversity, the authors demonstrate the difficulty of finding an evangelical core set of doctrines; they propose a way forward through a Trinitarian understanding of the gospel. It is refreshing to read a treatment of evangelical method that has a central place for the church, that calls evangelical theologians to be ecclesologically grounded and centered. Their emphasis on

ecumenism, by which they mean evangelical unity in the midst of denominational and theological diversity, is also refreshing. . . . This would be an excellent textbook for courses in theological method and a helpful resource for students, teachers, pastors, and others who take theology seriously." (Glenn R. Kreider, *Criswell Theological Review*, Spring 2016)

Kevin J. Vanhoozer (PhD, Cambridge University) is Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He is the author of several works, including *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine*, *First Theology: God, Scripture, and Hermeneutics*, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* and *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion and Authorship*. He is the editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* and the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. Daniel J. Treier (PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is Gunther H. Knoedler Chair of Theology at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. He previously served as Blanchard Professor of Theology at Wheaton, and he is the coeditor or author of several books, including *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture*, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, and *Virtue and the Voice of God*.

What is an "evangelical"? Is there even such a thing? If one were to look at the vast spectrum of people who call themselves evangelicals, one might be tempted to say that there isn't. Yet somehow, this moniker can simply be shaken off. People keep on calling themselves (and other) evangelicals. It's a sociological-theological-historical term that I believe should not be abandoned. Even though its definition as a sociological reality is being stretched beyond recognition, there is such a thing as being a "mere evangelical". And whatever it means to be a "mere evangelical" is defined by God's word and God's act. In their most recent book, *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture: A Mere Evangelical Account*, Kevin Vanhoozer and Treier (V&T) have attempted to give an account of what such a "mere evangelical" theology might be. By the looks of their endorsers on the back of the book it would seem as though they have given a satisfactory account. According to V&T mere evangelical theology begins with theological ontology, specifically with the Trinitarian God of the gospel. It begins with the economic Trinity which mirrors the immanent Trinity. However this Trinitarian God who reveals himself in history is not known to us apart from Scripture. So V&T also argue that the biblical testimony yields knowledge of this Triune

God because it mirrors who this God is. As V&T say, there is truth and authority in this mirror. Mere Evangelical theology is focused on the God of the Gospel and the Gospel of God. God himself is the light. Scripture is a mirror of that light. Tradition is a mirror whose light is not from itself but is derivative from the light of God reflected through scripture. The second part of this book relates V&T's theological ontology and mirror metaphors to various theological practices – specifically the interpretation of scripture, the role of tradition, and the role of scholarship in the church. What unites V&T's proposal for mere evangelical theology is the metaphor of a "mirror" which is scattered throughout the book. I believe this is a helpful metaphor which (at least for me) helped me make sense of the ontological priority of God in doing theology and the primacy of scripture. But where it made things most clear for me is in the role of tradition in doing theology. Calling tradition a mirror was a helpful move, for it emphasizes that it still reflects the true light, yet in some derivative way which is not foolproof from distortions. V&T's proposal for thinking of theology as a mirror of the God of the Gospel and the Gospel of God is a very useful metaphor, it even has implications for ecclesiology, for one might even say that the Church and local churches are also mirrors of the God of the Gospel/The Gospel of God. Overall, I highly recommend this book by two able theologians who have devoted much work to theological prolegomena. It fits right alongside Swain and Allen's *Reformed Catholicity* as a book which addresses how to be reformed and evangelical while doing theology within the context of a "mere" Christianity. (Note: I received this book from IVP in exchange for an impartial review.)

The term "evangelical" is an increasingly diverse expression that is often tossed around in Christian circles today with little meaning or understanding. What does it mean to be "evangelical" from a theological perspective? Can we actually accomplish a purely "evangelical" theology? Moreover, is "evangelical(ism)" even an appropriate label to be lobbying around today? Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Daniel J. Treier argue that it most certainly is, and their new book, *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture: A Mere Evangelical Account* seeks to present this reality in an engaging and persuasive package. *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* rightly understand the importance of the Scripture and its relation to the discipline of theology – specifically evangelical theology. Vanhoozer and Treier argue, a "mere" evangelical theology should encompass a "Protestant ecumenical range of motion while anchored to the biblical, Trinitarian and crucicentric gospel" (p. 20). This

anchor is held in place by two theological foundations: (1) ecclesiology – the church as the representative household of God, and (2) bibliology – the Scriptures as a mirror reflecting the form and content of the Bible on our teaching. For Vanhoozer and Terier, evangelical theology can be effectively distilled down to the pursuit of wisdom, via “theological interpretation of Scripture, – actively amid the drama of the church’s worship and witness (p. 40). The first part of the book, chapters one and two, seek to frame the discussion ontologically in an investigation into the gospel of God and the God of the gospel – specifically the reality that exists behind the mirror of Scripture in the triune Godhead – and epistemologically in the testimony of Scriptural knowledge, and the way that biblical truth is preserved as doctrines come into focus through time and across cultural space (p. 41). This first section provides the reader with a working framework for understanding evangelical theology, and the second part seeks to helpfully furnish the empty house that was previously built. The second part of the book, chapters three to six, defines and defends theology as the wisdom of the people of God collectively – a wisdom that is ultimately dependent on a proper theological interpretation of Scripture. Moreover, the wisdom that arises out of a theological interpretation of Scripture has a primary goal of serving the people of God as they live on mission corporately. Theology and the Mirror of Scripture concludes with a strong and appropriate call for the reader to live theologically within the context of the community of God’s people. It is here that theology, that is “mere evangelical theology, finds its ultimate purpose – to help the church glorify and enjoy God forever (p. 255). Thus, the local church is the mirror of the evangel, proclaiming the gospel of the Triune God, and embodying a visible sign of the invisible grace of our transdenominational, multiethnic fellowship in Christ (p. 262). Theology and the Mirror of Scripture puts forth a noble and admirable task. In a day where it may be easier to peg Jell-O to a wall than articulate an evangelical theology, Vanhoozer and Terier have produced a clear and compelling volume. Theology and the Mirror of Scripture has cleared much of the mud that once saturated the uncertain waters of evangelicalism. If you are looking for a careful engagement on the bedrock of evangelical theology Theology and the Mirror of Scripture is an indispensable introduction that you cannot ignore. It comes highly recommended!! received a review copy of these books in exchange for an honest review. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255: “Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.

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