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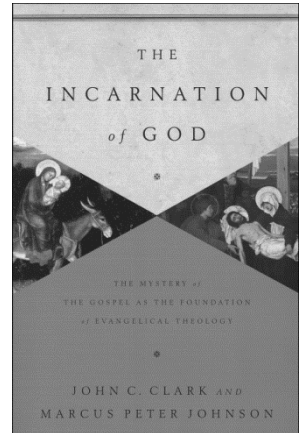
CONTRIBUTORS

Peter K. Aiken, Nick Alons, Henry Bartsch, Loyde Bruce, Kent I. Compton, Brian A. DeVries, John C. Ellis, D. Douglas Gebbie, Wayne A. Grätz, Manfred W. Kohl, Milton Lipa, A. Donald MacLeod, Steve Mollins, Greg Phillips, John S. Ross, Todd Statham, Kenneth J. Stewart, Andrew M. Whytock, Jack C. and Nancy J. Whytock

Systematic Theology

***The Incarnation of God: The Mystery of the Gospel as the Foundation of Evangelical Theology.* John C. Clark and Marcus Peter Johnson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015, 238 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-4187-2**

The incarnation of Christ is one of the doctrines that most Christians confess, but it is also one of the least understood and appreciated today. That is the premise of the book, *The Incarnation of God*. The authors seek to be careful to guard the mystery while providing a full-throated treatise on what the Bible teaches and the church has confessed on this doctrine. Clark and Johnson, professors at Moody Bible Institute, are not seeking to be novel but to explore the historical, orthodox understanding of the incarnation. Although the incarnation may be fundamental to our faith, this does not diminish all mystery and majesty surrounding this truth. As Clark and Johnson say on p. 12, “The incarnation of God lies at the heart of all reality.”



This book opens by acknowledging that it cannot be comprehensive. Still, consisting of 238 pages, it is no lightweight pamphlet. The pages are divided into eight chapters but the main structure is as follows “1. The nature and function of doctrine; 2. Trinitarian and Christological developments regarding the incarnation in the early centuries of the church; and 3. Several core convictions that characterize the authors’ approach to the supreme mystery of the gospel (p. 20)”. The scope of this book is vast, as the authors connect the incarnation to man in his sin, how the incarnation enables us to know God, how the incarnation speaks to the church’s relationship to God, and how the incarnation is the framework for our marriages. This scope was very helpful in my view.

When reading this book, I was struck by the need for a book like this. The doctrine of the incarnation has, in my opinion, been ignored by many in the church and scoffed at in the world. Clark and Johnson bring the reader back to a place of wonder and joy in this sacred event. Of particular help, chapter

I defends the centrality of the incarnation as it directly affects the Christian's life, practice, and faith. Also, chapter 8 on marriage is worth the price of this book. One critique I have is the frequent use of packed words. At certain points, Clark and Johnson come off sounding unnecessarily academic. For example, the authors state on p. 74, "Yet whenever discussions of God's attributes are beholden to incipient naturalism, to rationalistic tendencies that suggest epistemic Pelagianism, God is invariably domesticated and distorted, reduced, in effect, to little more than a representation of some self-styled ideal." This and other sentences are loaded and cumbersome in my view. Since these authors tend to use catch phrases and academic labels, I believe that this treatise is not as approachable as it could be. It is definitely not a weekend read nor should it be seen as an introduction to the subject matter.

In conclusion, although Clark and Johnson could have been more approachable in their word choice, with a little effort this book will pay dividends. I appreciate how Christo-centric each chapter is, and this book did cause me to marvel at Christ's humiliation and His glorious presence with us. It was helpful but also profound. I recommend this book to anyone who is serious about studying the incarnation and its implications.

Reviewed by Nick Alons, originally from Iowa and a graduate of Dort College and Mid-America Seminary, presently pastor of a United Reformed Church in Illinois.

