

Why Christ Matters: Toward a New Testament Christology. By Leander Keck. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015. x + 177 pages. \$39.95.
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This book collects nine previously published essays by Leander Keck, Winkley Professor Emeritus of Biblical Theology at Yale Divinity School, well known as a New Testament scholar who has made significant contributions to the theological study of the historical Jesus and the writings of Paul. Originally published between 1986 and 1999, these essays roughly coalesce around the theme of Christology in general, and the theological significance of Jesus for Paul and the Gospel of John in particular.

The opening chapter (“The Renewal of New Testament Christology,” 1986) seeks to push the study of NT Christology away from an overemphasis on Christological titles. For Keck, it is time (or at least it was time thirty years ago) to shift away from the hegemony of purely historical analysis at the expense of theological considerations toward a more genuinely theological approach that makes use of but is not mastered by historical criticism. The second chapter, “What, Then, Is New Testament Christology?” (1999), observes that NT Christology is clearly neither a mere treatment of Christological titles nor the history of ideas about Jesus. Keck’s answer continues the theme of subordinating historical questions to theological analysis, namely, of reversing the general direction of twentieth-century NT scholarship. History is important, but NT Christology should be understood as a fundamentally *theological* discipline with historical horizons. The third chapter (1994) asks about the Second Coming of “the liberal Jesus.” Here Keck provides a survey and critique of what (in 1994) were the liberal reconstructions of the historical Jesus provided by Crossan, Borg, and Vermes. He is critical of Crossan’s and Borg’s noneschatological portrayal of Jesus. He finds Vermes’ Jewish Jesus more believable.

This leads right into the fourth chapter (1998), “Jesus the Jew.” Here Keck explores ways in which early twentieth-century scholars distanced Jesus from the Judaism of his day, with devastating repercussions. Chapter 5 (1995) continues the theme of Jesus and Judaism in the New Testament, with a focus on the Gospels of Matthew and John, as the two most clearly “Jewish” Gospels, and on the apostle Paul. None of these authors are interested in presenting a historically accurate picture of Jesus in Judaism, nor should we expect them to. Keck is most sympathetic to Paul’s theologizing about Jesus in relation to Judaism.

Chapter 6 (1996) addresses anthropology and soteriology in Johannine Christology. Keck’s analysis demonstrates that for John it is crucial that Jesus comes from above and is not of this world, whereas all humans are of

this world and need redemption from it. The theme of soteriology continues in chapter 7 (1990), “Christology, Soteriology, and the Praise of God in Romans,” which focuses on Romans 15:7-13. United praise of God is the goal of Paul’s admonitions to the “weak” and the “strong.” Keck’s focus on Romans continues in chapter 8 (1989), “‘Jesus’ in Romans.” Here Keck surveys Paul’s references to “Jesus.” He concludes that although Romans is quite theocentric, for Paul everything pivots on Jesus, in whom and through whom God effects salvation. Finally, the last chapter of the book, “The New Testament and Nicea” (1986), is the only previously unpublished essay to appear in the book. Keck begins by comparing NT Christology (especially its credal formulations) with Nicea in light of historical and theological contexts.

None of the essays has been updated in any way. They hang together fairly well as independent pieces, though various themes and specific content are repeated. Most of the essays are between twenty and thirty years old, and they reflect the times in which they were written. Historical criticism was still the dominant force in the field, and Keck was seeking to place New Testament theology and Christology on more solid theological grounds that were attentive to historical criticism, but not straightjacketed by it. The conversations have moved on, with issues of interpretive diversity and postmodern theology now themselves mature discussions. But Keck’s essays are solid reminders of important, ongoing debates between historical analysis and theological interpretation of the New Testament writings.

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A New Heaven, a New Earth: The Bible and Catholicity. By Dianne Bergant. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016. 200 pages. \$25.00 (paper).

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Introducing *A New Heaven, a New Earth: The Bible and Catholicity*, author Dianne Bergant describes her work as an “experiment in hermeneutics” that approaches the Bible in an “ecosensitive” way. The second in Orbis’ new series, *Catholicity in an Evolving Universe*, this book interprets the Judeo-Christian Scriptures through a thoroughly all-encompassing lens: a new cosmology intensely aware of the interconnection and wholeness of all creation. Though an anthropocentric worldview purportedly rooted in the Bible has permeated Christian thought for centuries, Bergant places this way of thinking in dialogue with several principles of ecojustice, seeking new insight. Concluding her deceptively slim book, the author finds that “God is at the