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BOOK REVIEW

Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen, eds. *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 222 pp. Pbk. ISBN 13: 978-0310293163.

This book is a welcome and valuable addition to Zondervan's Counterpoints Series (Bible and Theology category), a series that presents a variety of views on pressing subjects. The format of this book has each author present his position followed by the other three providing a critical response. The editors, Naselli and Hansen, provide an introduction and conclusion to set the context and summarize conclusions. The level and language of discourse is often popular and conversational, but yet scholarly enough to satisfy students and educators.

Kevin T. Bauder, past president and current research professor of systematic and historical theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, is the representative of Fundamentalism. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president and Joseph Emerson Brown Professor of Christian Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, presents the position of Confessional Evangelicalism. John G. Stackhouse, Jr., Sangwoo Youtong Chee Professor of Theology and Culture at Regent College, Vancouver, presents the position of Generic Evangelicalism. And Roger E. Olsen, professor of theology at George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University, is the representative of Postconservative Evangelicalism. The theological spectrum, from left to right, is Olsen, Stackhouse, Mohler, Bauder.

The focus of this volume is on the defining characteristics of evangelicalism, especially as they relate to three contemporary issues that have recently been flashpoints for evangelical conflict. The first, related to Christian cooperation, is Evangelicals and Catholics, an ecumenical movement begun in the 1990s by

Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus. The second, related to doctrinal boundaries, is that of open theism. The third issue, related to key doctrinal concerns and the gospel, is penal substitutionary atonement. It should be noted that using these three issues as a way of illustrating the four main positions is an innovative and helpful approach, for the way in which each author addresses them illustrates his particular brand of evangelicalism and helps to place it on the spectrum of evangelical belief and practice.

Evangelicalism has both an image problem in popular culture and an identity crisis among its adherents. And while this book does not attempt to solve the former problem it does seek to solve the latter. The term “evangelical” has become (or always was?) so nebulous that scholars such as David Wells argue that the name is relatively meaningless. Not willing to abandon the term, the editors provide four essays from the spectrum of evangelicalism in order to “shore up evangelicalism by highlighting common beliefs.”

In many ways the book accomplishes what it sets out to do. Chapters are tight, the issues clear, the responses thoughtful, and similarities between positions are identified. All in all, it is a very helpful discussion of similarities and differences. However, the diversity of beliefs and ethos in these chapters does reinforce the point of view that there are disparate groups within evangelicalism that are irreconcilable in some respects. (It is nice to see the authors addressing one another so amicably, for holders of such disparate positions do not always do so in real life.) As for a criticism, Sam Reimer has shown us how regional—rather than just theological—identities explain some of the differences between evangelicals. For instance, the lone Canadian author in the book would no doubt notice significant variance between evangelicalism in Canada and evangelicalism in the Southern United States. That being said, this is a helpful book with thoughtful interaction between scholars who have a wealth of experience in the academic and evangelical world.

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