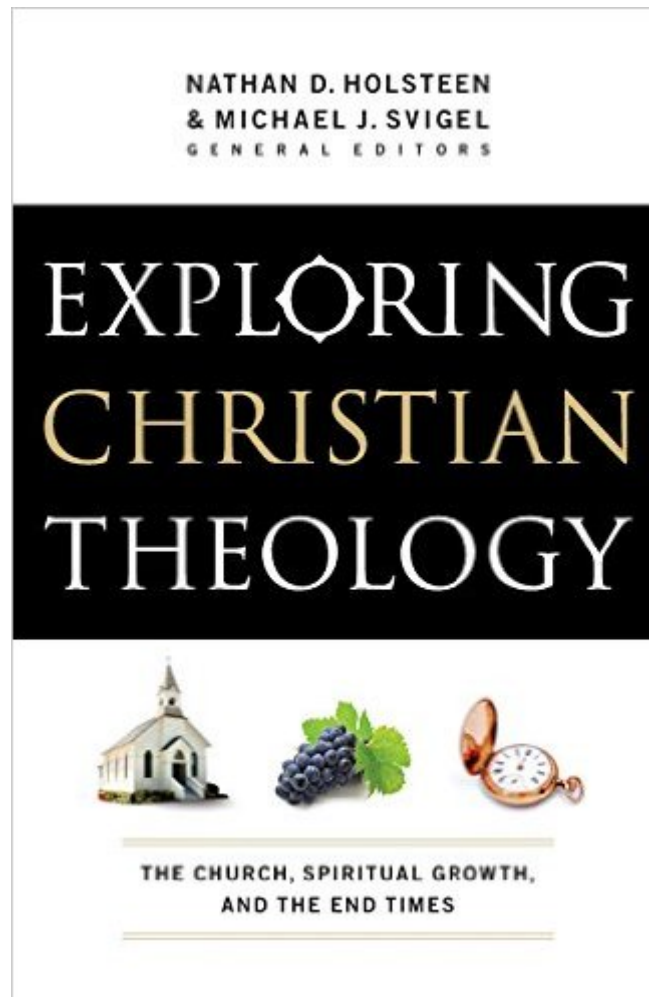


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# Exploring Christian Theology: The Church, Spiritual Growth, And The End Times



## Synopsis

Popular Dallas Theological Seminary professors make basic theology accessible for everyone, including key doctrines on the church, spiritual growth, and the end times.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"For some people, the word doctrine summons yawns of tedium, shudders of trepidation, or frowns of suspicion. Dogmatic preachers exasperate them, feuding denominations weary them, and droning scholars bore them. When people hear theology, the condition sometimes worsens. They picture massive tomes packed with technical discussions, less-than-crucial data, and incomprehensible footnotes - unusable information to distract them from God rather than drawing them nearer. Most people seeking to grow in their faith want practical principles, not theoretical concepts. They want to know God, not just know about Him. Yet the fact is that we can't experience real spiritual growth without solid spiritual truth. We can't know the true God without knowing God truly." (9) Studying theology can be a real source of joy and spiritual growth. Yet for many, particularly in America today, studying theology is mundane and not worth an investment. "Just give me that good old time religion." As the above quote suggests, the general editors of the series and the author of the book *Exploring Christian Theology: The Church, Spiritual Growth, and the End Times* (Bethany, 2014) seek to pen a book that provides a thorough survey of theological doctrines complete with biblical exegesis, historical developments, and practical application. The *Exploring Christian Theology* is a series published by Bethany House that seeks to introduce not just the nuts

and bolts of theology, but also its importance. As a pastor I could not be more thrilled to have the opportunity to review one of its volumes. In this volume, Drs. Nathan Holsteen and Michael Svigel tackle the doctrines of ecclesiology and sanctification (Dr. Holsteen) and Eschatology (Dr. Svigel).

This is not a typical theology book: it is written for a popular audience in a fun and accessible style while also presenting major theological issues within their historical contexts. It has two sections: the first addressing ecclesiology (the study of the church), and the second featuring eschatology (the study of the end times). The title "Christian Theology" may connote a larger range of theologies, so I want to emphasize that ecclesiology and eschatology are the primary focuses; other doctrinal theologies (say, the discussion of the Trinity, or of the work of the Holy Spirit, and so forth) are not discussed in depth as they are beyond the intended scope. Also, the application of the theologies at hand are highlighted more so than the theologies themselves, which is what makes this text unique and special. The first section I particularly enjoyed. It is concise, engaging, and draws examples from pop culture in order to bring application and relevance to each subject. The examples are appropriate for the intended audience (lay-persons who want to know a bit of theology), and I think the authors have done a great job of sharing an unbiased perspective and encouraging involvement and appreciation within and for the church body. The section on the end times could have provided a more thorough overview of the major positions, and also could have discussed the implications of each eschatological position. I did not enjoy this section as much, although the writing is still very accessible, and the overall message is positive (though a bit biased toward Dispensational Premillennialism). I appreciate the authors' focus on the big picture rather than on the details. The historical chapter within this section is also very good.

I was sent a copy of Exploring Christian Theology: The Church, Spiritual Growth and the End Times to review. Having read other theology books I was prepared for slanted views, undefined terms, and assumptions. I was unprepared for how eminently readable these books are. Yes, they are two books in one. The first is "Created in Christ Jesus: Church, Churches, and the Christian Life". The second is "When He Returns: Resurrection, Judgment, and the Restoration. While they are organized similarly, they are very different in tone and subject matter so I will examine them separately. "Created in Christ Jesus" by Nathan D. Holsteen is like sitting at my friend's dinner table. The dessert is digesting and we are sipping our glasses of wine or cups of coffee. Now that we are warm and comfortably well fed, I might ask "what do different churches believe about the church in history and what the Bible tells us?" My friend, an expert in

theology and church history, would reply by conversing on a level I could understand, using analogies from film (The Bourne Identity) and books (The Cat in the Hat) to illustrate and firmly plant in my mind the current scholarship about the church and major differences. As he spoke, it would become clear to me what I believed and why, and why others might be persuaded to believe differently about these matters. My friend and now spiritual mentor would suggest some short Bible passages to learn and would make sure that I understood the both the dangers that threaten a church's vitality and simple principals to remember so I could help my own church grow.

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