

ABSTRACTS AND CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

the inductive approach to using BHS, as introduced by Brotzman and Tully, is of great value the reader, it may as well be intimidating due to the redundant materials that appears in its borders.

The textual criticism and analyses of the issues are apt for many Biblical scholars. If one wants to introduce students to the textual criticism of the OT and its logical exegetical conclusions, Brotzman and Tully's work is probably the best. Seminary students and scholars alike will immensely benefit from this volume. Of special importance is the authors' provision in the appendix of an English key to BHS which is a modification of Hans Peter Ruger's "An English Key to the Latin Words and Abbreviations and the Symbols of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 1985)." Above all, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* offers a good and useful introductory resource to textual criticism for students of the OT with the basic knowledge of OT languages.

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The End of the Timeless God, by Ryan. T. Mullins. First edition. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016. 248 pp. ISBN-978-0-19-875518-0. Hardcover US\$110.00.

Ryan T, Mullins has distinguished himself, at a tender age of 39, as a scholar in systematic theology and philosophy of religion. He earned his doctoral degree from the University of St Andrews in Philosophy of Religion. A prolific writer and a Fellow of Analytic Theology at the University of Notre Dame Center for Philosophy of Religion. Besides, he visits many campuses to teach or make presentations.

The book, *The End of a Timeless God*, is a must read for anyone who wants a cutting age scholarly discussion on the controverted subject of divine timelessness. The book is an academic product that has been produced alongside a series of scholarly books that utilize an analytical theological approach in their discussion. In *The End of a Timeless God*, Mullins is non-apologetic in his ferocious attack on divine timelessness. He argues for divine temporality by use of several perspectives in his book.

Mullins puts his focus on the concept of time as a thematic thread to argue for the option why timelessness should not be preferred against the temporality of God. Presentism and Creation are discussed in connection to the timeless God. Timelessness and its interplay with four dimensions of

eternity are at the center of the discussion, while incarnation takes the terminative part of the corpus of Mullins' book.

To drive his argument home, Mullins explains the distinctives of what constitutes time through existing theories of time (p. 14), inclusive of physical and metaphysical dimensions. Sensing the need to be clear with terms in any scholarly discussion to eliminate an escalation of academic disputes on a subject matter, he observes this rule most appropriately in the discussion of timelessness. In so doing Mullins is so careful to attempt to reduce, at most, objections to his premise of argument, while at the same time he sets delimitations to hold his dialogue on timelessness.

Challenging a view that is widely held is no easy task for any scholar. Mullins defies all these odds in his treatise of time conceptualization in relation to the ontology, temporality or timelessness. Metaphysical (p. 35) or physical (p. 32) view of time are carefully considered against the background of timelessness. He concludes his discussion on time by observing that time's sequence is a result of divine creation.

Related to the element of time and timelessness, Mullins proceeds to make an analysis of the interplay between timelessness and eternity. He does so after a discussion on what constitutes eternity. In the third chapter he looks at divine immutability, simplicity, impassibility and the duration of time. He argues, repeatedly, against scholars who have used time and eternity to advocate for timeless (p. 44). The flaws of such scholars and a historical overview of classical philosophy (p. 52) are reviewed with an intuition that goes beyond the obvious analysis. Mullins' book is made unique on this element by his boldness to challenge the traditional view, (p. 72) even though he does proffer another preferred option in this section.

A traditional approach is to conceive of divine timelessness in the context of Presentism and omniscience. Mullins tackles this view, first by observing how "anachronistic," (p. 75) it is for scholars to view eternalism in relation to omniscience. He addresses the element of how classical Christianity was rooted on presentism. For anyone who has an appreciation of the influence of classical philosophy on classical theology, would appreciate the genius of Mullins' strength of analysis from this perspective as a methodology to comprehend the nuances of divine omniscience and Presentism. He mentions and discusses Augustine (p. 77) foremost, as a church father not to be missed once classical theological discussion is undertaken.

Interestingly, Mullins discusses the doctrine of creation ex nihilo, whether it should be based on timelessness (p. 101), before he addresses the shortfalls of timelessness's position that God sustains an already existing universe. What is of paramount import is that such an argument is self contradictory in Mullins' view because he observes that a timeless God

would lack temporality and location (p. 109). Accordingly, he concludes this discussion by noting the limitations of denying the Creatorship of God before he posits the dangers of blending timelessness to divine simplicity and immutability.

In chapter six Mullins handles the incompatibility of a four-pronged dimension of eternalism and timelessness. In this section Mullins, by considering the scholarship of selected scholars, such as Katherin Rogers (p. 128), shows how the four-pronged dimension is not tenable with timelessness. The deficiencies of *ex nihilo* based on timelessness are reinforced in the same chapter with the works of Proclus used as an example (p. 134). Mullins' argument makes for a self convincing conclusive discussion that vindicates divine temporality as a reality that is connected to divine ontology.

In his last chapter, Mullins serves his analytical theological handling of the subject by a look at incarnation and its connection to the world of timelessness. Incarnation is a subject of intense interest to the doctrine of God and salvation, and for an analytical theologian in the realm of philosophy to use this aspect seems a herculean task. However, for Mullins it is a preferred avenue to dispute timelessness in favor of temporality.

First, he brings to notice the major tenet of time in the context of time, to be change, an aspect he has argued for strongly in the book. Temporality, he argues, is based on "change" (p. 157). When change takes place, temporality is present. The reality of divine assumption of human nature evidences temporality of God, for Mullins. Further, he identifies and discusses the Christological elements that are models to the discussion of incarnation and temporality. The chapter considers the diverse views, however it is an attempt to establish a composite, Christological view for two different sides of the worldview; presentists and those of the "four-dimensional eternalism" (p. 163). In the process of doing so Mullins is careful to navigate through the identifiable corners to the discussion.

Second, Mullins discusses the ontological relationship between the divine and humanity of Christ. He does this by explaining the nature of the shortfalls and allays of nestorianism and the implications it causes on the Person of Christ. He highlights the relationship of the divine nature to the human, for which he uses the expression Son. A closer consideration of the contradictory nature of the human and the divine to exist in one Person is a problem Mullins attempts to resolve. Subordination of the Persons of the Godhead is a debate that has raged for the centuries among scholars and laity of all persuasions. Timelessness affirms eternal subordination at the same time assuming equality of the Godhead, a paradox that is untenable with Mullins in his analysis (p. 188). If the Son were to be eternally subordinate, timelessness' deficiency of a plausible argument in this line of

thought becomes visibly weak. An analytical theology of this element makes this angle of argument to be interesting.

On the doctrine God, Mullins' argument races to a conclusion by declaring that the timeless God cannot assume a body, through incarnation. Further, Mullins notes the connection of impassibility possibilities concerning the death of Jesus on the cross. That which is temporal cannot affect what is timeless, he posits. If God is not temporal and He was not affected in a temporal way by what happened on the cross, then this creates and suffers a huge defeat to the doctrine of salvation. Mullins explores this aspect in detail when he considers the embodiment of God in the incarnation (p. 189). As a quick analogy to drive his point, Mullins uses the "de se" (p. 192) concerning knowledge to express and explain away the arguments of the Christ of a timeless worldview. Mullins concludes this section by stating that atemporality or timelessness affects the very center of the gospel.

The book ends with the author acknowledging that there are many issues to be considered. These include science and time, biblical perspective on time, the "truth-maker theory" (p. 204) that posit future lines of discussion. His final conclusion to the book is a strong appeal not to be missed, for it evidences strong conviction or passion that temporality is the only tenable option for the Christian.

The book, *The End of the Timeless God*, deserves prioritization to anyone who places doctrines and Christian tradition discussions on a high pedestal. It has been written with a high degree of appreciation of the impact of classical philosophy on classical Christianity down to the 21st century. It is a book that manages the diverse arguments for timelessness with one who has proved himself to be conversant with philosophy of religion. Many books are on the market, whether one thinks of great philosophers or church fathers, Mullins' book is an excellent though not easy to read book. It is ideal for all those with a keen mind to go beyond the obvious in their search for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the divine temporality a preferred evangelical Christian option against the God of timelessness.

Mullins has done a highly commendable work on this book, though he fails to include what would have been essential elements to the discussion, such as timelessness and eschatology, for example. These elements needed to be part of this book, to establish the coherence of his arguments with such fundamental doctrines of the Christian church. This element and its implications on salvation, for example would have added to the solid stand for divine temporality the books takes. The book must be used with full knowledge that it is lacking of biblical references, because it has been written from a scholarly analytical philosophical perspective.

I found Mullins' book a natural attraction. I believe it should be insightful to others with an appreciation for the doctrine of God. Divine temporality is more tenable with biblical theology, than timelessness that is pillared on classical philosophy. For evangelical scholars who want to have more reasons and value for their stand on divine temporality, *The End of the Timeless God* is the right book to have on the shelf as part of cutting edge material.

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A Biblical History of Israel, by Ian Provan, Philips V. Long and Tremper Longman III. Second edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2015. 486 pp. ISBN-978-0-664-23913-8. Softcover US\$29.00.

There are many books that have been authored on the history of biblical Israel, and many of them are introductory to the origin and development of the nation of Israel in general. In *A Biblical History of Israel*, the three authors somewhat take a rather unique approach to this general tradition. My goal in this critical book review is to make a quick overview and analysis of the arguments proffered by the authors for a biblical based history of Israel.

The three authors, all of them professors; Ian Provan, Philips V. Long and Tremper Longman III, are acclaimed biblical professors of the Old Testament. Ian Provan, a PhD graduate of Cambridge University, whose main academic work focused on one of the historical books; Kings. He studied biblical archaeology and medieval history. A scholar with a track record of publishing books and articles. A minister of religion in the Church of Scotland. At a mature age of 60, his teaching career has seen him through the academic corridors of the universities of Edinburgh, Wales, and College of Kings among others. He currently lives in Canada and teaches Biblical Studies at the Regent College.

Philip V. Long, born in 1951, got his PhD from Cambridge University. His dissertation was on the reign and rejection of king Saul. Besides, he has earned degrees from Wheaton College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He also studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A published scholar and a Presbyterian minister of religion. Also, he has