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Practicality of Grace in Protestant Theology

Introduction

By Dr. Michael G. Maness
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What an honor it has been to work with so many fine scholars.

Kevaghn Mattis began *Testamentum Imperium—An International Theological Journal* in 2005 with a vision to gather scholarly dialogue from a multitude of disciplines on the security of the Christian believer, our “Great Testament,” which in Latin is *Testamentum Imperium*.

Our first publication in 2009 was *Perspectives on Eternal Security* with 13 articles from the 60 published in the 2007 journal.²

This volume brings together 13 carefully chosen articles from the 163 articles published in the 2011 journal, plus one by Dr. Keith

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² See www.PreciousHeart.net/ti/2007.

Evans and another me. While all 163 relate a facet of the practicality of grace, yet—goodness—so much work was done by so many, and each made a *unique* contribution. We felt these best represented the diversity and met needs in unique venues in fresh, relevant, and intriguing ways.

Furthermore, each touch many news headlines today.

While several bestsellers from scientific atheists deride all things religious—and slander Christ’s divinity in the ugliest ways (cf. Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris)—Glenn Kreider resolutely anchors the gospel in the stupendous incarnation where the Creator in Christ exemplifies humility to humanity in practical tenderness.

Timothy Demy’s masterly and historically-linked exposition on suicide corrects the depressive “unpardonable sin” in that horrendous tragedy to a more biblical view of forgiveness for all parties. His veteran military chaplaincy experience, so apropos today, touches all affected by suicide, especially veterans and law officers.

Evans reveals the skill set of the hospital chaplain and the inherent contributions of caring for the soul to the entire mission of medical and healthcare.

Alan Martin’s carefully resolute pastoral care of male sexual addiction seems to head off those afflicted—we hope—before more embarrassment ensues for the church, indeed, before more headlines expose clergy abuse in both Protestant and Catholic churches.

LaVerne Bell-Tolliver beseeches the church in a powerfully prescient treatise to *finally* deal with rape—perfect timing here—and hits our hearts hard today as the #MeToo movement has *finally* empowered more brave women to speak up. Her experience as a victim and a top clinician resonate with a determined heart to help all in Christ survive such trauma and overcome.

In a world that conspires to gut God out any meaning of life, D. J. Louw pushes us in heavy existential theologizing to view the cross of Christ and the resurrection as the quintessential necessity for every authentic sense of certain hope. Without the resurrection, there is no hope in this life, and Louw takes us to the root of our being in Christ.

Every article seems to hit a U.S. headline in a uniquely exquisite revelation, melding the academic with the deeply practical. How can we say this? In many ways, if grace cannot be made

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or in some way reach and *aid* the hurting, then grace seems to lose some of its most elemental and living treasure.

Grace—the unmerited favor from God through his son Jesus Christ allows us access to the Throne of God, all of us, everywhere, where we all stand on level ground. All need grace, and the Christian is guaranteed grace when they come to God with a humble heart.

Grace—with the above definition—many faith traditions have refined their understanding for centuries. However, when the church meets the lost person, the poor person, and the victim of crime and exploitation, it seems to us at *Testamentum Imperium* that we lose many of our differences and coalesce around “loving our neighbor.”

In such, we become the witness of God’s grace to the hurting, to those wounded, and to those scarred by the evils of the world. Each of us in our faith traditions becomes a unique vehicle for God to use. May God help us—the church—bring healing, or give comfort, or strengthen a soul in a trial of affliction.

These 15 articles touch a broad scope of affliction, some real areas of struggle, from physical suffering to moral and theological dilemmas. And part of the choice was *not* to find from the 161 those who see eye-to-eye theologically or philosophically. We desired to share the unique expertise of 15 in 15 unique oceans, as it were, who feel with a *pastoral heart* and have set sail in their rugged crafts upon 13 separate tumultuous oceans of pain. Each of the 13 chart a course through a uniquely deep sea of pain. Each weathered captain ferry in the hold of their vessels a precious cargo of healing balm from God to help bring a soul to a port of healing and peaceful victory—in Christ.

We hope they bless you in your service, too, in the

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God has given to each Christian reader, and impel each further, even to read the other scholars who have contributed to grace’s practicality within the precious Kingdom of our loving God.

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