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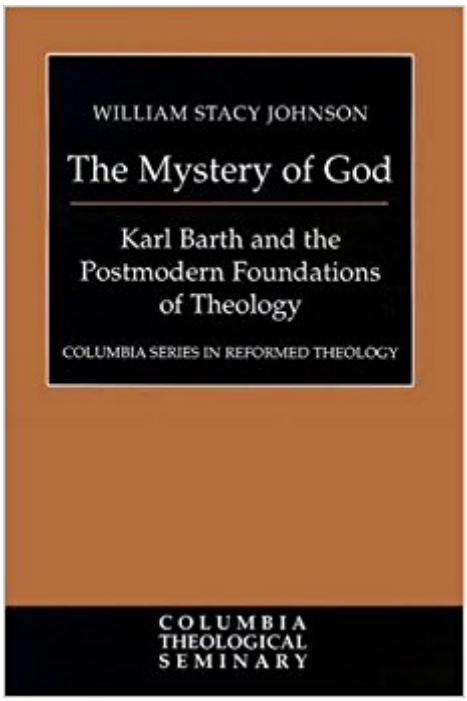
The Mystery Of God: Karl Barth And The Postmodern Foundations Of Theology (Columbia Series In Reformed Theology)



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Synopsis

Moving beyond traditional ways of reading Karl Barth, William Stacy Johnson proposes an approach that makes Barth relevant for the postmodern period. Recognizing Barth's insight that God is mystery, he suggests that theology is best seen not as a restating of old orthodoxies but as an ongoing response to that divine mystery. Johnson's reassessment of Barth opens exciting possibilities for a new appropriation of Barth's insights for contemporary theology and the church.The Columbia Series in Reformed Theology represents a joint commitment by Columbia Theological Seminary and Westminster John Knox Press to provide theological resources from the Reformed tradition for the church today. This series examines theological and ethical issues that confront church and society in our own particular time and place.

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Customer Reviews

William Stacy Johnson is Arthur M. Adams Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey.

"The Mystery of God" succeeds. I found myself returning to reread it.The flood of our ages' books on Barth can be roughly separated. There are two types, to make express a distinction largely latent within the theology of the late Prof. HANS FREI of Yale and founding father of the new Yale Theology.The first type are books that can be characterized as lively, or textuallY alive, that succeed

in sustaining an edifying conversation between Barth, on the one hand, and the reader, on the other hand.Frei's second type of KB book are those that turn to lifeless ash in the hands of the reader.My find with this book is that it is of the engaging type. Since so many books on KB fail on all these spiritually energetic points--perhaps the headline for "The Mystery of God" is that this book succeeds as a Barth study by being Spirit-ally engaging.This headline is relevant as more and more Bargains build their theological libraries by adding each new Barth book to their Barth libraries, though much of this burgeoning lit can too often disappoint.This review, subjective and superficial though it is, recommends a "BUY" of Johnson's book. I believe it deserves a wide reading, b/c it succeeds.

Johnson challenges the static 'neo-orthodox' image of Karl Barth, bringing him into conversation with postmodern thought, especially that of Jacques Derrida. He picks up on the Barth's idea of God as mystery and of Barth's image of the empty space of the wheel at which the spokes of theology's questions converge and finds in these a point of contact for dialogue with poststructural thought. Weighed against Barth's Christocentrism (the center of the wheel) is Barth's theocentrism (God as mystery); as Barth had said, God is veiled in His revelation and vice versa. Johnson takes a refreshing and promising approach which is a fine contribution to a larger discussion taking place between Barth's theology and postmodern thought.

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