

“Contemporary Theology: An Introduction”

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Transcript:

[1] Jonathan Armstrong: Today it is our huge pleasure to be speaking with Dr. Kirk MacGregor. Dr. MacGregor is Assistant Professor of Philosophy of Religion and the Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion at McPherson College in McPherson, Kansas. He is also the author of the book that we'll be discussing today, *Contemporary Theology: An Introduction: Classical, Evangelical, Philosophical, and Global Perspectives*, available from Zondervan in 2019. Dr. MacGregor, thank you so much.

[2] Kirk MacGregor: You're very welcome.

[3] Jonathan Armstrong: Dr. MacGregor, if I can ask. So this is an amazing survey of contemporary theology, very accessible also has the depth that we would want from a seminary classroom, even. 38 chapters, each of them boring down deep in a particular theological movement. And we've got quite a diversity of movements here presented all the way from Neo-Thomism to the new perspective on Paul, is you are selecting for this book and putting this book together, how did you choose these 38 theological movements?

[4] Kirk MacGregor: I started with the theological movements I learned about during my graduate education. So, I had two excellent professors in the history of Christian thought, who presented contemporary theology from two different perspectives, one from an evangelical perspective, and the other from what I would call a classical perspective. I also in my graduate training, I studied from several philosophers who informed me of the tremendous renaissance in philosophy of religion, Christian philosophy of religion, that has transpired over the past 60 years. Once I earned my PhD, I was asked to teach classes in global Christianity. And through preparation for those courses, I learned of exciting new developments in Latin America, Africa and Asia, where two thirds of the world's Christians live. So, taking that as sort of my base, I then asked a few questions.

[4] One question was, given that the audience for this book is largely going to be English speaking, theology and religion students, what ideas, figures and movements would be most profitable for them to understand, as they went out in the pastorate, or on the mission field, or as professors? What are the movements that they're most likely to encounter in their future endeavors? And then I also thought, what movements are just absolutely essential, even if they don't come into direct contact with, for them to know about especially global movements.

[5] I also asked what movements are part of contemporary theology, but are usually for some reason not discussed under the context of contemporary theology, but made a

huge contribution. So, I think about Princeton theology as a case in point, or the work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, or D. L. Moody, or Christian fundamentalists, or the history of the 20th century evangelical movement. I come personally out of the Church of the Brethren, which is an anabaptist pietist tradition, which believes that you can't split personal salvation from social justice that you need them both. And so, I'm from my religious tradition's experience.

[6] John 3:16, For God so loved the world and Matthew 25:31-46, the parable of the sheep and the goats are both equally part of gospel. And so, what I wanted to do is to call attention to those movements in the last 200 years, which whether you agree completely with movements or not, you can at least say they are trying to balance both sides. I think that too often in our current political climate, especially how polarized it is, you sometimes have Christian groups which stress individual salvation at the expense of social justice and others which stress social justice at the expense of individual salvation, and I think that's not really the way it should be. It should be integrated. So, I made sure to take a look at movements like the social gospel or current anabaptist theology or post conservative evangelicalism as cases in point. So that's basically the thought process I went through in getting 38 chapters.

[7] Jonathan Armstrong: Dr. McGregor, thank you. In this text, "Contemporary Theology: An Introduction", you begin the survey. I think it's chapter two with Friedrich Schleiermacher, so called found founder of the modern liberal theology. How is it that Schleiermacher-Schleiermacher, excuse me, signals the onset of this new theological era?

[8] Kirk MacGregor: Well, Schleiermacher is the first theologian to start with the autonomous cell, and works from the human condition, to what we can sort of naturalistically prove about God. And that was quite different from earlier theological discussion, which started with God understood as a personal being outside of the universe and created the universe as your presuppositional lens, the glasses that you put on before you even started to examine the human condition. Even more than that Schleiermacher made it his mission to develop a completely different lexicon for Christian theology. He felt that in his culture, which was deeply post-religious, it was influenced by 200 years of religious war, including such things as the 30 Years War, many people thought that religion inevitably leads to violence. That's a common theme today amongst the new atheists, that with the French Revolution, with the Enlightenment, that basically Christian beliefs were passe, and that we needed to live in a naturalistic and rationalistic world. And so, Schleiermacher still felt that Christianity was important, but he wanted to reach his culture, friends in the Berlin salon culture to convince them that they needed religion in general and Christianity in particular. So, he wants to create a complete renovation of the Christian tradition, keeping the same words, as the Christian tradition has always used, but assigning them radically new meanings.

[9] And at the same time, Schleiermacher is also working on this project of trying to bring unity between the Lutheran and the reformed traditions in Germany. So, for the 300th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in 1817, the Lutheran Church in Germany and the Reformed Church in Germany commissioned Schleiermacher to write a new systematic theology that would bridge the gap between these two movements. And it needs to be said that most, most Lutheran and reformed were quite informed by the site Geist at that time. So, what Schleiermacher does in this systematic theology called the Christian faith, is he goes through in great detail all of the traditional doctrinal categories that you would expect from a systematic theology, whether it be God, humanity, sin, Christ, salvation, and so on. But the definitions he gives these terms is quite different than anyone has seen before. So, with respect to God, Schleiermacher does not define God as a personal being outside of the universe created the universe Schleiermacher defines God as entirely imminent, imminent spelled with an A, in other words, completely within all things.

[10] Schleiermacher understands God is Geist, or sort of the world spirit that pervades everything. And to get a handle on this might say, God is the underlying mind your religiosity or spirituality or self-consciousness that is shared by and therefore unites all humanity. It's a panentheistic conception of God, where God is kind of like the soul of the universe, just like we're body soul composite, so is the universe and that, therefore God is entirely within the domains of space and time. And Schleiermacher makes precisely the same moves with regard to say the doctrine of Christ, where the doctrine of Christ is no longer understood as an ontological two natures conception, but it's rather understood as a functional Christology. What makes Jesus the Christ is that he has an absolute potency of God consciousness.

[11] Now God consciousness, or the *Gefühl* (German: "feeling") is a really big concept for Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher believes that every single human being no matter what their culture, no matter where they're born, has this *gefühl*, this sense that there is some greater transcendent reality, that everyone is dependent upon absolute dependence upon the old all are on the whole. And so, for the Christ, what the Christ task is sort of Christhood is the absolute potency of God consciousness, whereas the rest of humanity does have God consciousness, they don't have it to anywhere near the same intensity as the Christ. And it is the Christ role to mediate this God consciousness with the exact same intensity that he has it to all other persons. So, Jesus is the Christ in respect to this fact that he is imbued with God consciousness, that every single thing that Jesus does, is completely in line with God consciousness, he never violates the God consciousness. And so, the idea of sin is redefined, not in terms of like breaking some rule, but in terms of doing something that is contrary to this universal God consciousness.

[12] The notion of the atonement is redefined, not in terms of Jesus needing to die on the cross for our sins, nothing like a penal substitutionary model, but along the lines of a more subjective model of the atonement where it's Jesus life. It's Jesus preaching and

especially his kingdom of God proclamation that redeems us from sin, it wouldn't matter how Jesus died, or even if Jesus died. So, doctrines that had previously been thought as sacrosanct like the doctrine of the Trinity, they were deemed as irrelevant, because what could the doctrine of the Trinity tell you without God consciousness, and so Schleiermacher irrelevant, relegated his discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity to independence.

[13] So, you can see how Schleiermacher is trying to remake the entire theological process to understand what Christianity would mean, if you begin with the assumptions of enlightenment, naturalistic rationalism. And if you have those assumptions, then Christianity is going to look significantly different. Schleiermacher isn't going to believe in such things as miracles. So, he is to try to offer naturalistic explanations of everything that is purported to be miraculous, there were various life of Jesus figures who tried to do the same thing, during Schleiermacher. Era, basically, at Schleiermacher is leading and Schleiermacher toyed, for example, concerning Jesus resurrection, with the idea that Jesus didn't really die on the cross, but was taken down barely alive and somehow managed to get out of the to the apparent death theory. So Schleiermacher is working very hard to try to say is he understands it, and is enlightened people understand it, that his version of Christianity and that understanding of science do not conflict.

[14] Jonathan Armstrong: Thank you very much, Dr. McGregor. So, I'm going to have to ask you a follow up question there. Yeah. You've-you've given us a great overview of understanding some of the innovations that Schleiermacher drives theology toward, but you've not convinced me that he's the father of any modern theology that I want to identify with. things here is quite long. You've said he's panentheistic? Yes, the Trinity is irrelevant. The two natures distinction of Christ is disregarded. I'm not sure how the Church Fathers would feel about that, actually, I'm very sure how the Church Fathers would feel about that. So why is it that we begin the survey with this guy again?

[15] Kirk MacGregor: Well, I think that Schleiermacher is the main figure that everyone is either accepting and building off of or reacting to, that, certainly figures that are within the tradition of Schleiermacher would be Hegel, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Bart to some degree, definitely Paul Tillich, definitely the death of God theologians, Rudolph Boltzmann. And certainly, those who are disagreeing with him would be people like John Nelson Darby, the Princeton theologians, and early Christian fundamentalists, 20th century American evangelicals, Spurgeon, Moody, African Christology, Chinese eschatology, and so on.

[16] So really everyone in the book is either saying, alright, Schleiermacher have the basic correct idea, and we're going to build off of it, or Schleiermacher was dead wrong, dangerously wrong, and that we need to make sure to oppose them, and sometimes even oppose him, perhaps more strongly than he should have been opposed, maybe as a reactionary movement. So that's one thing but when I teach on this book, I use this as a textbook in my Christian traditions class, that I keep finding myself coming back to

Schleiermacher and saying what, here's how this is a reaction against Schleiermacher work. Here's how this is an affirmation of Schleiermacher.

[17] Jonathan Armstrong: Dr. McGregor, the subtitle of your text here, contemporary theology and introduction, classical, evangelical philosophical and global perspectives on a lot of different movements that you brought together under one volume. And under the philosophical form of theologies, we have folks like you've mentioned them and helped us understand through the-the foundation there of setting the stage with Schleiermacher. We have chapters on Hegel, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, in the global category of theology, you have liberation theology in Latin America, you have African Christology Chinese eschatology, in your view, are these global forms of Christianity? Are they in dialogue legitimately with this older enlightenment tradition? Or are they simply bypass that conversation entirely? What's your view?

[18] Kirk MacGregor: My view is that both are mutually interacting on each other. So, I would say concerning philosophical perspectives, influencing global perspectives, the classic example of that is Soren Kierkegaard's understanding of things. So, Kierkegaard understands faith as a blind leap in the dark, which makes no reference at all to reason, it might well be irrational, it definitely drives reason to its very edge. Basically, reason only goes to show you how far it is that you have to leap, in order to have faith and therefore you're going to hope against hope that you land on the other side.

[19] Now, what I found is not only in the United States, but also in places like Latin America, and Africa, and China. There's just this common understanding that Kierkegaard was right on this. When people are asked what is faith, they'll normally say: faith is believing something in your heart without physical evidence, or that faith is sort of a leap of faith that you have to make, or even popular Christian songs about that being the nature of faith. And what bothers me there is that I don't think that's the biblical conception of faith at all, or the conception of faith that has been historically held by the church.

[20] So, when Jesus talks about having faith in Him or believing in Him, what it seems to me he means is making a personal commitment to him to pledge your life, your love your allegiance to him, to profess to follow Him as your disciple, it would be the idea of entering into a spiritual marriage with Jesus. And this spiritual marriage concept is massive in the history of Christian thought. So, figures as diverse as Thomas Aquinas, various Christian mythic mystics, like you know, Catherine of Sienna, Teresa Abdullah, figures like St. Bonaventure, Martin Luther, especially in the freedom of a Christian talk specifically about this motif of spiritual marriage. And it also comes through sort of in the Old Testament legacy as well. And so, when two people get married, they're not like making a blind leap in the dark, they have good reason to believe that the two are right for each other. Maybe not everybody, but that's at least what they should have been want to have their marriage work.

[21] And so, it seems to me that the biblical concept of faith and the historic Christian one is not in any way. Contrary to reason, it is a wholly different movement. It's a parallel movement of having good reason to make the commitment that you're going to make. And it only is sensible if you would have such good reasons. So, when I look at Latin America, Africa and China, and I see that there's a poverty of apologetics in those places. Now, one might say, oh, Kirk, you know, the reason why there's a poverty of apologetics is because God is just taken for granted in those cultures. And so therefore, you don't need apologetics. And I would have two responses to that. I would say not all of them. I'm really in Communist China, God has taken for granted. Give me a break. Okay. It's pretty clear that in that context, I think you'd better have some good arguments for the existence of God. Secondly, that even though it is true in many parts of Latin America and Africa, that the supernatural and perhaps belief in God is taken for granted.

[22] In the Middle Ages, belief in God was taken for granted to and that didn't stop people like Anselm and Aquinas, from developing proofs for the existence of God. And so it seems the only reason I can come up with for this phenomenon is this sort of global buying in to Kierkegaard's redefinition of faith. Now, on the other side, with global perspectives influencing philosophical perspectives, I think of Latin American liberation theology, I think of Gustavo Gutierrez, and the theology of liberation, and how that has basically had a major impact on all sorts of philosophical movements. So, if you're going to understand like African American philosophy, like philosophy of Cornel West, you better than understand what's going on in liberation theology, or if you're going to understand African philosophy, you'd better understand liberation theology, or feminist philosophy. Um, if you're to understand folks like Mary Daly, then again, an understanding of liberation theology is essential. So, I think that the shared future that both of them all is that they can't really exist without the other. They're in this symbiotic relationship where you need both operating in order for either really get off the ground.

[23] Jonathan Armstrong: Dr. McGregor, you've helped to see how influential Schleiermacher is and how the movements following Schleiermacher are in large part either agreeing with or disagreeing with Schleiermacher. If you look to the last two centuries, could you identify other really significant moments where there's a fork in the road and theology goes? A couple of different ways?

[24] Kirk MacGregor: Yeah, well, there would be three, I think that I kind of want to make sure I talk about movements that I haven't talked about already. So, one would be Vatican one. Vatican was in 1870. So basically, the Catholic Church was confronted with a fork in the road, and how to respond to the modern world, should we basically be in friendship with a modern world, embracing concepts like the separation of church and state and democracy? Or should we kind of dig in our heels and say, No, we have sort of a papal monarchy, we have a hierarchical way of doing things that church and state ought to be united. So, what happened was the pope at that time Pius the IX, was quite hostile to the modern world, and really forced Catholics of his time into a difficult choice

to either be good Catholics or to you know, basically embrace what the modern world has to offer.

[25] So, in things like his syllabus of errors, where he denounced several concepts that were sort of taken for granted his basic modern ideas, and he said, all of these are basically lies from the pit of hell. Then in Vatican one where he pronounces the doctrine of papal infallibility. Whenever the pope speaks ex cathedra or from the chair on matters of faith and morals, then the Holy Spirit supernaturally prevents the pope from making a mistake. And this was far beyond what Catholics previously had believed. But it was really creating a fork in the road that you either believe what the pope is saying on these matters, or what your secular political authorities or your local governments have to say on these matters.

[26] So, I would say that clearly, in terms of driving a wedge between church and culture that didn't necessarily have to be there and dangerous consequences value in one was pivotal in really keeping the church isolated from culture for the next 90 some odd years. And so, I think about the travesties pillar, where the Catholic Church basically was quite passive in allowing Hitler to carry out certain military tactics, as well as the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, in a time when the church was in an excellent position to save countless Jewish lives, and really was on the sidelines doing nothing, because they said, we really want nothing to do with modern culture. But on the other hand, Vatican two was instrumental in a different way. And that is the idea that St. Thomas Aquinas would be the de facto official theologian of the Roman Catholic Church. And the reason why that's important is because for a couple of hundred years, and this is true, both in Catholic theology and Protestant theology, that people had this idea that you could do philosophy, free theology, didn't really need philosophy or theology.

[27] Now, the medievals didn't think like that. They thought that, you know, theology is the queen of the sciences. And therefore, you needed a good philosophical Foundation, as a prerequisite in order to studying the highest field from all the study of God. And so, by adopting Aquinas as sort of the official religion of the Roman Catholic Church, then you have this tradition coming back to life to say, as an indispensable preliminary to the study of theology, we need a good grounding in philosophy. And I think that would give birth to later philosophical developments, down the road, another key event would be Vatican two, from 1962 to 1965, which tries through what's called as your momentum or bringing up to date to reverse several of the effects that Vatican one. So, Vatican two tried to make the church much more friendly toward culture in general, tried not to force Catholics between church and culture, it tried to bring the priests and the laity together, even though it retains their separate roles. So instead of the mass being in Latin, the mass would be in vernacular, instead of the priests facing away from the lady at one end of the church, when the Eucharist was being given, he would rather be facing the congregants very close to them out of communion table, that girls were allowed to be altar girls, it wasn't just altar boys, that lay people were now on committees where they can help inform the church on how doctrine should go. And we're even responsible

for say, bringing the Eucharist to people who were sick and need. And then with the idea of bringing new people into the Catholic Church, our CIA, or the rite of Christian rite of adult Christian initiation, that, that the laity played a huge role in that and serving as people sponsors, and other ideas that sort of come out from that one of them is Christian inclusivism.

[28] This idea that, yes, Jesus is the only way to the Father. But the notion that John 14:6 is making a sort of ontological statement about Jesus, that yes, Jesus in the mechanism of salvation, is the own way. But that doesn't say that people have to know the name of Jesus or know about Jesus. And so, you have this idea of like anonymous Christians, that someone could commit their life to God as they know God by nature and conscience. And then they would have implicit faith in Christ, not realizing that the god they've committed themselves to was a trinity, and that Jesus was the second person of the Trinity.

[29] And so, all of those types of movements coming out of Vatican two began to bring a sense of unity between Catholics and other Christians. So, the old excommunication between Catholics and Protestants that's revoked that Protestants are now seen as separated brethren. The excommunication of the Eastern Orthodox Church was revoked. Um, there was a joint declaration on justification, which is the most important doctrine of the entire reformation era, which comes about through the confraternity of Catholic doctrine and the Lutheran church were in 1999, they say, yeah, we can see eye to eye on-on justification. And the Methodist Church signs on later you have movements like evangelicals and Catholics together. So, I think would say the sense of ecumenism would never be what it is without Vatican two.

[30] And then finally, I would be Chinese eschatology, this idea that after, after the rise of Mao, after the communist revolution in China, you needed something to indigenize Chinese Christianity. And one thing that worked very well was the notion that the Chinese could play a pivotal role in bringing to completion, the Great Commission, that basically the gospel had been circumnavigating the globe, and it now come back around to China. And the Chinese missionaries could go the rest of the way, by evangelizing Muslim countries and Buddhist countries and Hindu countries, ultimately bringing the Gospel back around the globe to Jerusalem. And they thought that when that happened, that all nations of the world would have heard the gospel in the Second Coming would occur. So, the idea that I'm sort of Christianity as a foreign transplant in China did not work all that well. But once Christianity became indigenized, it has taken off and there are over 90 million Christians in China.

[31] Jonathan Armstrong: Dr. McGregor, thank you so much for isolating those three events or points as these decisive forks in the road for the past two centuries of Christian theology, that it can one that it can to and Chinese eschatology, Dr. McGregor, I wanted to follow up with one question you listed on the theory of anonymous Christians as part of the heritage of Vatican two. And I just wanted to clarify, as far as

I'm aware, Catholic authorities were discussing this theory of anonymous Christians. But Vatican two did not promote or endorse the theory of Vatican Christianity, anonymous Christianity, is that correct? Do I understand that correctly?

[32] Kirk MacGregor: No. Vatican two actually did. They didn't use the term anonymous Christians, but they did promote the idea. Um, so I have in my library here, like the-the official documents that come out of Vatican two, and what they say is that people who are, you know, not part of the Christian tradition are related in various ways to the people of God. They say that people who strive to know the Creator, by nature and conscience can be saved. They also say that the Jews are very dear to God, and that we should now pray for the Jews not for the conversion of the Jews. They also say that salvation is accessible to others who are trying to seek to know the creator such as Muslims. So, the statement that they have on the various world religions that comes out of Vatican two, you're right, they would not use Karl Rahner's term anonymous Christians and Karl Rahner was a major theologian at Vatican two. But it's the same idea.

[33] Jonathan Armstrong: Thank you for that clarification. Dr. McGregor, where is contemporary theology going today? As you look out on the landscape, what are just a couple of the movements that you see is most promising for the future of Christian theology?

[34] Kirk MacGregor: Well, the one that I see is most promising and I have to admit that I'm biased because this is my work is philosophy of religion and analytic theology. So, I have been literally amazed at how the face of philosophy has changed. And atheist and agnostic philosophers have noticed this and lamented this. So, Quinten Smith, who is an atheist philosopher, wrote in the atheist philosophy journal Philo. Now it's, you know, to his absolute horror, that about, you know, a third of practicing philosophers at major, you know, Anglophone colleges and universities were outspoken Christians, and that they seem to have better arguments than their atheist colleagues. And he said, God is not dead in academia, you know, God is still alive and well and philosophy departments. And I think about from the time of like Alvin Plantinga, in the 1970s.

[35] Until today, how there really has been this renaissance in Christian philosophy, that basically analytic philosophy is providing the tools by which Christians could now look at various arguments for the existence of God and make them with a great deal of logic and force. So, the idea of the...cosmological argument, the idea that the universe whether or not it's beginningless, or has a beginning is still contingent, it doesn't have to exist. And so why is it the case that a contingent universe exists even if it is eternal, a contingent eternal universe can't explain itself, you need something to explain it, and then trying to argue that there must be something beyond the time-space universe to account for it and also the Kalam cosmological argument, an argument first made by all Ghazali, the Islamic theologian back in the 1100s, but didn't really gain traction until William Lane Craig revived it back in the late 1970s.

[36] And the argument there is that the universe began to exist, anything that begins to exist has a cause, therefore, the universe began to exist. And then you say, Well, if the universe is all time, space matter energy, saying the universe began to exist means that time began to exist, well, the beginner must be time less, or if space and matter begin to exist, the beginner must be immaterial rather than physical or energy began to exist, the beginner must be unimaginably powerful, and trying to argue that the beginner must be personal as well. Because otherwise you couldn't have the beginning of something in time. If you just had an impersonal, timeless cause, then the effect would always exist with the cause. So that argument has been quite powerful. And the teleological arguments looking at various factors in the universe, whether it be the initial constants and quantities of the universe, or the laws of nature and saying, these have to be exactly the way they are, like balanced on a knife's edge, in order for life in any form to exist, not just intelligent life like us, but like life in the biological sense of stuff that can like take in food and reproduce these bare bones to get life in any form. You need these constants and quantities and laws to be, you know, extraordinarily fine-tuned. And it seems like the best explanation for that is-is designed.

[37] Also the axiological argument saying that there are, even if you don't believe that there's an objective moral truth about everything, there are objective moral truths about something like love, equality, generosity, self-sacrifice. Yeah, they're good regardless of what anybody thinks, believes it feels, or Yeah, rape, child abuse, discrimination, the Holocaust. Yeah, those things are really evil doesn't matter how you believe, think or feel. So, if that's the case, it seems like without God, you can't have objective moral values. But if they do exist, then it would follow that God exists. Also, the notion of the ontological argument, thinking about God is the greatest conceivable being. And to say that embedded within the very concept of God is the idea that God has to exist, sort of a refurbishing of an argument that had been presented about 1000 years earlier by Anselm the idea that you could bring philosophy and history together to make a good case for the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the notion that there are multiple different arguments about seven for the existence of the soul that human beings are body soul composites, where the soul and the brain exist in what's called a dualism. interactionism there are two sides, it's like, you know that the street goes both ways, the soul can impact the brain and the brain can impact the soul. So, I see all of those as really having an effect on many laypeople.

[38] Um, there's a lot of excitement around movements like reasonable faith around Roxio Christie around stand to reason, and I happen to be a reasonable faith chapter director here at McPherson college. We actually had a had a meeting last night, and our topic was how to understand biblical inspiration. And analytic theologians are talking about exactly things that for a long time needed a bit more explication. Like, how exactly do you put philosophical refinements on the Trinity or Christology or the atonement. And so that's where I see really the most creative strides being made. And it just makes me excited to be, you know, alive and working at this time in the history of philosophical theology.

[39] Jonathan Armstrong: Dr. McGregor, we're very grateful for your time. And if I can close this conversation with a question that we've been asking all of the interviewees on this program, that is this, what would it mean for the church today to be united? How would we recognize unity and what is it that we can do as Christians to pursue the Unity for which Jesus prayed and John 17?

[40] Kirk MacGregor: I think the church needs to formulate a list of essential Christian doctrines and also to make very clear what is non-essential, and to make sure that the politicization of Christianity is rendered as non-essential that Christians can hold to a multiplicity of different political views, and that that does not undermine their sisterhood and brotherhood in Christ. And if you do that, if you show that, well, these things are not matters for Christians to separate them, um, concerning non-essential matters and differences in political opinion. Um, another thing that I think is imperative is to sort of make sure to sort of watch out that people who claim to be Christians really are Christians.

[41] What I mean by that is, I tend to be on the side of folks that call themselves lordship, salvation advocates, I tend to think that you need to have Jesus as your Lord in order to have Jesus as your Savior. I think of Jesus parable of the, of the wedding banquet is an example where the man without the wedding garment kind of wanted the benefits kind of wanted Jesus Savior, but not as Lord, he found out that didn't work out too well. So, I think that the church needs to be sure that, you know, people who come into the church and claim to be Christian, that they really know what they're doing. They have a good sort of, like kind of cases or basic understanding, and they know what they're signing up for. So that they're saying, Yeah, I really am making a decision to follow Jesus in His way of life. And then third, I would say, for Christians to have the kind of love for each other that Jesus had for them.

[42] So, when Jesus said, When Jesus gave the new commandment in John, he didn't just make the commandment that Christians love each other as they love themselves, Jesus, like Nope, that's not good enough. I want you to love your others more than you love yourself. I want you to love others, as I love you, Jesus said, and so if Christians love each other, the way Jesus loved them, as well as loving non-Christians, the way that Jesus loved them, meeting their material needs, their social needs, their economic needs, then, you know, the rest of the world would take notice. And I think that the way you recognize this is kind of what Jesus said. And I think John chapter 14, that you know, by this, all the world will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. So, I think it's our task to basically make sure that the focus on Christian essentials is there, that really a strong sense of what it means to be a Christian is put in place and that that true Christian love, the kind of love that Jesus had for us his practice.

[43] Jonathan Armstrong: It's been our delight today to be speaking with Dr. Kirk MacGregor, author of the texts that we've been discussing today, contemporary theology

and introduction classical, Evangelical, philosophical and Global Perspectives available from Zondervan. Thank you so much, Dr. McGregor.