

Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter

By Stephen H. Webb

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In this groundbreaking study, Stephen H. Webb offers a new theological understanding of the material and spiritual: that, far from being contradictory, they unite in the very stuff of the eternal Jesus Christ.

Accepting matter as a perfection (or predicate) of the divine requires a rethinking of the immateriality of God, the doctrine of creation out of nothing, the Chalcedonian formula of the person of Christ, and the analogical nature of religious language. It also requires a careful reconsideration of Augustine's appropriation of the Neo-Platonic understanding of divine incorporeality as well as Origen's rejection of anthropomorphism. Webb locates his position in contrast to evolutionary theories of emergent materialism and the popular idea that the world is God's body. He draws on a little known theological position known as the "heavenly flesh" Christology, investigates the many misunderstandings of its origins and relation to the Monophysite movement, and supplements it with retrievals of Duns Scotus, Caspar Scwenckfeld and Eastern Orthodox reflections on the transfiguration. Also included in Webb's study are discussions of classical figures like Barth and Aquinas as well as more recent theological proposals from Bruce McCormack, David Hart, and Colin Gunton. Perhaps most provocatively, the book argues that Mormonism provides the most challenging, urgent, and potentially rewarding source for metaphysical renewal today.

Webb's concept of Christian materialism challenges traditional Christian common sense, and aims to show the way to a more metaphysically sound orthodoxy.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book provides a useful discussion of ancient Greek ideas of metaphysics and of early theological debates and heresies... *Jesus Christ, Eternal God* would be of interest to ecological theologians because by challenging traditionally accepted ideas about divine immaterialism and the finite nature of matter, it provides serious discussion of matter and space, gives the materiality of Jesus Christ a central position, and allows for the conjunction of Christology and creation. This thorough christological study, deeply rooted in the metaphysical trajectories of Christian thought, is useful, stimulating and timely."--*Colloquium*

"Drawing on Church Dogmatics II/1, Webb persuasively demonstrates the orthodoxy of the views that God, being the creator of space, possesses a distinct, preeminent space, which in Christ becomes coextensive with creaturely space. Moreover, God's essence in Christ is anthropomorphic and corporeal. From here, Webb suggests, it is but a small step to a Mormon view of matter as having its origin in Christ but as being, in its perfected form, an eternal divine attribute.... This study is refreshingly provocative and counterintuitive and undoubtedly merits attention."--*The Expository Times*

"There is no doubt in my mind that this near extraordinary monograph is worthy of serious, sustained attention. Its radical claims about Jesus mean that it should not be ignored."--*Theology*

"[A]n excellent example of first-rate work." --*Mormon Studies Review*

"Stephen Webb forces his readers to rethink the common Christian understanding of materiality. Providing fresh and bracing insight, Webb takes us on a wide-ranging tour of a forgotten dimension of the Christian tradition, utilizing sources as diverse as Karl Barth, Caspar Schwenckfeld, and Joseph Smith to recover a 'heavenly flesh Christology.' This is a ground-breaking work."
---David Paulsen, Professor of Philosophy, Brigham Young University

"Webb explores the radical ramifications for theology and philosophy of an ever more intensive concentration upon the metaphysical significance of the Incarnation. In doing so he audaciously unsettles some of the most deeply seated conventions of Christian doctrine in the service of a better orthodoxy. Can vexing problems in Trinitarian taxis, Christology, and soteriology be resolved by reconceiving matter and spirit no long as opposites, 'but as the very stuff, so to speak, of the eternal Jesus Christ?' Read on."
--Philip G. Ziegler, Senior Lecturer in Systematic Theology, University of Aberdeen

"Here is a subtle and bold argument in favor of a 'heavenly flesh' Christology, one that involves pushing the limits of many great western and eastern theologians' concerns about the pre-existence of Christ as the firstborn of all creation. Webb's criticism of the apophatic tradition's prioritization of divine immateriality and simplicity, along with his dialogue with Mormon theology, draws on dogmatics, metaphysics, and the natural sciences, confronting theological complacency."
---Carys Moseley, British Academy Research Fellow, School of Divinity, Edinburgh University

"Jesus Christ, Eternal God is an impressive combination of history, philosophy, and theology. It's been called "ground-breaking."--*Common Consent*

"There are good as well as bad motives for radical proposals, and Stephen H. Webb, professor of religion and philosophy at Wabash College, has a good one. Christian theologians need a metaphysics that makes it possible to say what Christians must say about Jesus Christ. Isn't Jesus Christ a material being just like us? And isn't he also eternal God, as the Nicene Creed teaches? Why not put two and two together and say that God is an eternally material being? That is the gist of Webb's proposal for a 'Christological metaphysics' that takes up the task of 'rethinking matter Christologically.'...If a suffering God is what you really want, Webb's proposal is a straightforward, metaphysically low-flying way to get it."--*First Things*

"In his learned and provocative tome, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God*, Stephen H. Webb plows the soil of hallowed ground. He broaches a topic that most classical theists have considered a settled question for quite some time, namely, that God is by nature the immaterial ground of being. Webb concludes, most remarkably, that matter is one of God's perfections, and for that reason, God-not just the post-incarnational second Person of the Trinity-is embodied...There is so much interesting material in Webb's book that it is impossible for any one analysis to do it justice."--*Sacred Tribes Journal*

About the Author

Stephen H. Webb has taught at his alma mater, Wabash College, for 24 years and is the author of eleven books and many articles and reviews. He has written on Bob Dylan, the doctrine of providence, theological acoustics, animal compassion, evolution, and many other topics. He is married to Diane Timmerman, Professor of Theatre at Butler University, and they have four children and two dachshunds. He was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 2007.

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This Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter are reliable for you who want to certainly be a successful person, why. The key reason why of this Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly

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