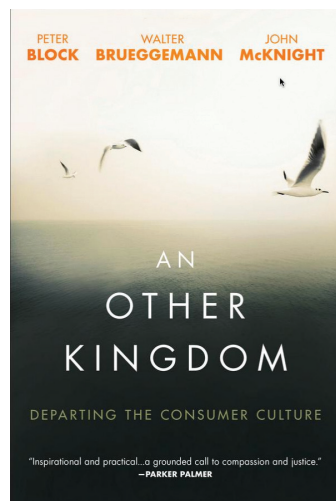




Book Reviews

July 2017

Section Editors: Craig Nesson, Ralph Klein, Troy Troftgruben



An Other Kingdom: Departing the Consumer Culture. By Peter Block, Walter Brueggemann, and John McKnight. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-1191-9472-9. xxiii & 117 pages. Paper. \$17.00.

This collaborative effort by three established and creative authors summons readers to resist and deconstruct the pervasive stranglehold of consumerist culture that clutches us in its grasp and take measured steps toward “an other kingdom,” the realm of life-giving relationships Jesus invoked as the kingdom of God. As we are being consumed every day, the ideology and practices of the free market economy are leading us to death not life. Not only does the economic disparity between the 1 percent and the rest of creation demonstrate our captivity, but the increasing paroxysms of violence and the silent, deadly plague of ecocide function as signals of the depths of our disorder.

At the heart of the book is imagination for and practical proposals about an alternative path named “neighborliness.” Neighborliness begins with paying attention to and valuing what is local. One key involves eating practices that favor local markets, luxuriates in table company, and extends hospitality. Neighborliness, however, is not just a matter of personal preference but the foundation for an alternative social order. The authors advocate the cutting of a “neighborly covenant” (46-47), the flourishing of “neighborly beliefs” (9-20), and the cultivating of “neighborly disciplines” (61-80).

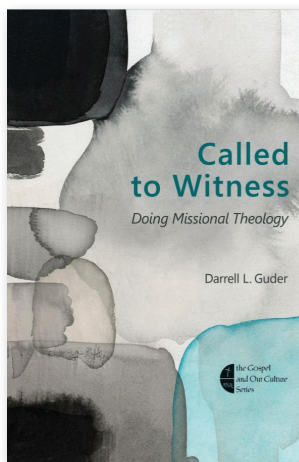
Neighborly values include affirmation of abundance (not scarcity), mystery (not certainty), and fallibility (not perfection) on the way to the rediscovery of the common good. Shifting our focus to building neighborhoods means breaking dependence on oppressive global structures and directing energy to associational life on the local level. Harkening back to the Hebrew Bible, such neighborhoods measure their worth according to how the widow, orphan, and immigrant are faring.

What the authors propose begins when neighbors commit to new investment in valuing and using time, food, and silence.

Revising our relationship to time means resistance to the temptations of speed, individualism, and like-mindedness that characterize mass society. Instead we make space for relationships and hospitality. Revising our relationship to food means growing food locally, avoiding food contaminated by chemicals, and setting a sacred table when gathering to eat. Revising our relationship to silence means disciplining ourselves in practices of fasting from the noise of our electronic, entertainment culture. Instead we honor the mystery of one another through deep listening and time for reflection through the practices of Sabbath.

The metaphors of “neighborliness” and “neighborhood” deserve re-appropriation as the church seeks to find its way out of exile from captivity to consumer culture into the promised land of shalom, “an other kingdom.”

Craig L. Nesson
Wartburg Theological Seminary



Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology. By Darrell L. Guder. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7222-7. xvi & 203 pages. Paper. \$25.00.

If you believe that God’s mission belongs within the church, you will find a friend in *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*. Therein Darrell

Guder reminds readers that Jesus commissioned the apostles—the church—as missionaries. This disposition challenges the maintenance structures of many present-day Christian communities as Guder calls for significant change in the communal and academic expressions of Christ’s church.

Each chapter considers a development central to Guder’s missional theology, beginning with a historical review of the ways theologians have or have not considered mission as a practice worthy of attention. He then considers missional theology alongside the *missio Dei*, Christology, ecclesiology, the role of scripture within church communities, and ecumenism.

For Guder, this movement relies upon the church’s apostolic identity. Considering the Nicene Creed, Guder suggests the “holy, catholic, and apostolic” nature of the church begins with our walk as apostles who share the Gospel in our particular contexts. Through that proclamation of Christ’s story, though our expressions remain different, we find unity. Our God-given holiness arises in our missional living, where our varied church experiences are unified in the spreading of the Gospel. While the rise of Christendom produced churches concerned with maintenance of the members’ salvation, Guder suggests we find our



proper identity and vocation in being sent by Christ, to share Christ.

Guder writes with a concise clarity that provides readers with gratifying theological education. Yet, sometimes content within the same chapter demands rereads to grasp the intended meaning. The time spent in study is worth it, for Guder argues for the very soul of the church. This is especially apropos since Jesus commissioned the church to bring the transformative reality of his death and resurrection into a necessarily pre-Christian culture, and many of our post-Christian contexts now similarly lack an awareness of God's work in Christ. If you hope to see the church move away from maintenance and toward God's mission, you will find in *Called to Witness* an impassioned attempt to reconnect Christian communities with the apostolic, missional identity to which Christ calls us all.

Andrew Tucker
Christ Lutheran Church
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Deaconesses in Nursing Care: International Transfer of a Female Model of Life and Work in the 19th and 20th Century. Edited by Susanne Kreutzer and Karen Nolte. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2016. ISBN: 978-3-5151-1355-7. 230 pages. Paper. \$69.00.

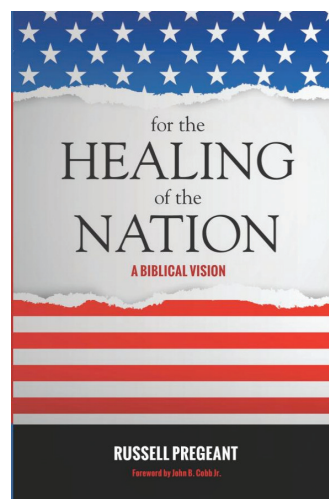
At a time of renewal for the diaconate in the United States, this historical study provides documentation and interpretation of how the ministry of deaconesses as nurses was transposed from motherhouses in Germany to diverse international contexts, including Palestine, Scandinavia, England, and the United States. The editors offer an overview of this transnational history in their introduction to the book. Chapter One (Karen Nolte) focuses on how attention was devoted to the basic understanding and practice of nursing at the first deaconess motherhouse founded by Theodor Fliedner at Kaiserswerth in 1836. Deaconesses were trained both to care for the body and the soul: “Care for the soul—as the deaconesses learned during their training—was the Lutheran nurses’ area of competency that was independent from the doctors” (23). Chapter Three (Matthias Honold) provides a comparable treatment of nursing education and practice as implemented by Wilhelm Loehe at Neuendettelsau starting in 1854: “For Loehe, it was essential that the healing process be accompanied by spiritual care. In addition to faith, he repeatedly emphasized cheerfulness of spirit, focusing on ‘spiritual nursing’” (69). Chapter Two (Annett Büttner) provides a case study of the service of denominational brothers and sisters as pioneers in battlefield nursing with particular reference to the commitments of the Kaiserswerth Deaconess Institute. This chapter is enhanced by reproductions of illustrations from the period.

Chapter Four (Uwe Kaminsky) and Chapter Five (Ruth Wexler) discuss, respectively, the transfer of nursing care by dea-

conesses to parishes and a leper home in Palestine. Chapter Six (Susanne Malchau Dietz) and Chapter Seven (Pirjo Markkola) address the extension of the German model of deaconess nursing across Germany, Europe, and to the United States, with detailed attention to a Danish motherhouse in the U.S. and the contribution of deaconesses to the history of nursing in Finland. Chapter Seven (Carmen M. Mangion) and Chapter Eight (Doris Riemann) examine both the possibilities and the limitations of the translation of the deaconess nursing model to other cultural and societal contexts, specifically England and the U.S. (the Lutheran motherhouse in Baltimore). Chapter Nine (Susanne Kreutzer) concludes by surveying how nursing by deaconesses in Germany, Sweden, and the U.S. developed in the twentieth century, including focus on increasing professionalization in those contexts.

This book offers historical and contemporary perspectives on the development of diaconal ministry with a specialization in nursing as provided by deaconesses from the nineteenth century to the present.

Craig L. Nesson
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For the Healing of the Nation: A Biblical Vision. By Russell Pregeant. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016. ISBN 978-1-4982-3539-6. 352 pages. Paper. \$41.00.

In this book, Russell Pregeant, who has published a number of excellent New Testament textbooks, addresses “political, economic, and social issues that face American society today” (xiii). His objective is to evaluate ideologies and public policies from a *biblical* perspective, with a view toward how the Bible can help forge ways to “heal the nation”—that is, “my country, the place in the world where I have the greatest opportunity, and thus responsibility, to make my voice heard” (3). He addresses “the attitudes and policies toward ‘otherness’ in our society” in Part 1; “economic policies and political philosophies” in Part 2; and “war, foreign policy, capital punishment, and our criminal justice system” in Part 3 (3). Anticipating that some readers will want to label his views, Pregeant explains up front his belief that “the biblical vision of a just society” calls into question “all points on the current spectrum—even that middle, which many Americans hold so sacred” (2)!

He is also well aware of the “hermeneutical circle”: reading the Bible shapes your values, and your values shape how you read the Bible. For example, at the end of a good survey of the relevant

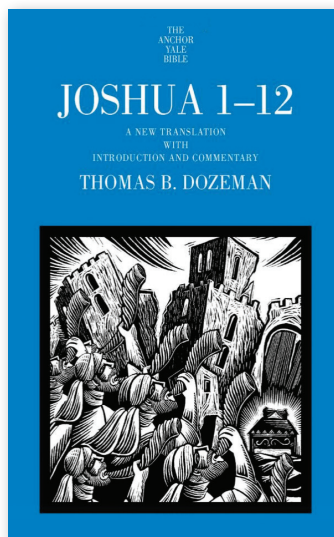


passages showing the emphasis on economic justice for the poor in both Testaments (chapter 7), Pregeant takes on the statement attributed to Jesus that might seem to say that the existence of the poor is an ineradicable fact, so why bother to try to eradicate poverty. He makes two points. First, the statement in Mark 14:7 is situation-specific: Jesus is about to be put to death, so the time to pay tribute to him is immediate and short (also see Matt 26:11 and John 12:8). Second, it says “they can minister to the poor *whenever the opportunity arises*” (113, italics added).

As an alternative reading, I would argue that, in Mark 14:7a, *pantote* intensifies the present tense “you have the poor,” so that it means “you *continually* have the poor.” And v. 7b is not a corrective explanation of v. 7a. Rather, it expresses the result of v. 7a: “you *continually* have the poor, *so that*, whenever you want, you can do good to them.” Although this reading is not entirely at odds with Pregeant’s reading, it sharpens the ambiguity of this saying, which opens a more complex dialog with it.

Pregeant engages “the biblical vision of a just society” in critical conversation with an impressive range of leading economic and political theories. At the end of his Foreword, John Cobb challenges Protestant churches, claiming that, if they “would become biblical in Pregeant’s authentic way, they could lead the world in responding to its terrifying future” (xii).

David J. Lull
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Wartburg Theological Seminary



Joshua 1–12. By Thomas B. Dozeman. Anchor Yale Bible 6B. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-3001-4975-3. xxiii & 627 pages. Cloth. £60 or about \$89.00.

Joshua 1–12 narrates the destruction of kings, royal cities, and the indigenous population in the Holy Land. The previous volume on the entire book of Joshua in the

Anchor Bible, written by Robert G. Boling, with a lengthy introduction by the late G. Ernest Wright, was published in 1982. It concluded that many of the battles described in chapters 1–12 were supported by archaeological evidence and the book itself was part of the Deuteronomistic History written in the seventh/sixth century.

All that is gone in Dozeman’s commentary. He discards the Deuteronomistic History hypothesis and thinks that Joshua was written in postexilic times from a northern point of view (note

the role of Shechem in Joshua 8 and 24). The events described in chapters 1–12 have nothing to do with the Israelite conquest of the land in the thirteenth century B.C.E. Rather, the author of these chapters is polemical against kings and royal cities of foreign rulers, requiring holy war to rid the land of its urban culture and idealizing a more primitive and rural life in the promised land. The book of Joshua, therefore, is directly opposed to Ezra and Nehemiah where the rebuilding of Jerusalem represents assimilation to the rule of the Persians.

The author of Joshua uses the procession of the ark to advance an aniconic form of monotheistic Yahwism. The political aim of the author is to reconstruct a new rural society under the charismatic leadership of someone like Joshua. The author hopes for an invasion that will destroy the urban centers. The Promised Land in Joshua will have peace only when it is emptied of all royal cities and their citizens and replaced by a new tribal society.

Dozeman criticizes William F. Albright, who in 1957 had his own way around the ethical dilemmas of the conquest that he considered to be historically accurate: “It was fortunate for the future of monotheism that the Israelites of the conquest were a wild folk, endowed with primitive energy and ruthless will to exist, since the resulting decimation of the Canaanites prevented the complete fusion of the two kindred folk which would almost inevitably have depressed Yahwistic standards to a point where recovery was impossible.” Today that opinion would be considered racist and totally without interfaith understanding.

Dozeman holds that the historicity of Joshua no longer plays a role in evaluating the violence of the book. Rather: “[The violence of the book of Joshua] is a reactionary fantasy about the extermination of a superior people, whose technologically advanced city-states threaten the tribes who reject the dominant culture while living in a camp.” He compares this ideology to modern fundamentalists who are focused on making a new future society that functions as an antidote to the present evil age. He concludes: “I hope that [this commentary] will provide a resource for understanding the radical political-religious theology of the book of Joshua and perhaps aid in evaluating the violence of religious fundamentalism that now dominates contemporary culture.” I have my doubts about the purpose he assigns to the book of Joshua, but if he is right, the book of Joshua has nothing positive to contribute to our understanding of God and faith.

The commentary itself consists of sixty-seven pages of bibliography, a fresh translation of chapters 1–12, and very learned notes and comments averaging about twenty-six pages per chapter.

Ralph W. Klein
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Justification in a Post-Christian Society.

Edited by Carl-Henric Grenholm and Goran Gunner. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-2271-7523-1. xii & 258 pages. Paper. \$32.00.

This assembly of articles completes a two-volume set developed from the Church of Sweden's 2013

conference exploring "Lutheran Identity in Transition." Herein readers will find beautifully challenging reflections on this central reformation principle, especially for those considering the theological implications in the 500th year of the Reformation.

This volume utilizes three sections to explore the topic of justification broadly. The first focuses more narrowly on justification *in se*, as well as its relationship to atonement. The second looks to the ethical dimensions of justification, including attention to spirituality, pluralistic dialogue, and the embodied nature of justice. The third utilizes Reformation principles as a critical interpretive lens for later historical movements such as Latin American liberation theology, the Enlightenment, and Modernity's emphasis on rationality.

While each chapter deserves your attention, a few call for special attention. Christine Helmer's "The Experience of Justification" addresses the twentieth century's reduction of justification to a verbal act of God that humanity receives, and encourages readers to consider theological resources from Howard Thurman to Luther himself to return justification as an embodied experience of God's grace and an opportunity for spiritual development. In "Law and Gospel in Lutheran Ethics," Carl-Henric Grenholm proposes a Lutheran ethic based on Christology and Eschatology, which allows both for a more critical engagement with the powers that be and reminds us that God's grace necessarily entails an ethical response. We even find an ecumenical conversation based in Mariology through "Luther's Interpretation of the *Magnificat* and Latin American Liberation Theology" by Elina Vuola. These innovative articles reveal the heart of this text: a fresh, faithful consideration of Lutheran theology.

Most refreshingly, while the volume rightfully critiques the Lutheran tradition, the authors remain deeply grounded in the theology of Luther and his descendants. Through the prism of these essays, the authors highlight that justification remains foundational for the church's continued reformation even 500 years after Luther inspired this movement of Reform.

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Live Like You Give a Damn: Join the Changemaking Celebration. By Tom Sine. Eugene: Cascade, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-4982-0625-9. xxi & 206 pages. Paper. \$24.00.

What is the practical hope for Christians who live in an age of dwindling emphasis upon church by both individuals and soci-

ety? *Live Like You Give A Damn!* This intentionally provocative title also sums up Tom Sine's argument. Namely, there are resources outside of the church that counter obstacles like pollution, food deserts, and political corruption with more creative, transformative responses. If the church learns from outsiders and puts those good works to God's purposes—if we live like we give a damn not just about the survival of the church but the thriving of the world—then we may rediscover abundant life.

Sine invites readers into what he calls the "changemaking celebration," because the work of millennial social, economic, and environmental entrepreneurs deserves our attention. Each chapter presents examples of how to reorient Christian thinking from simply alleviating suffering to create thriving. Sine first argues that readers ought to see the value added by incorporating voices not generally invited into places of authority: younger leaders and leaders outside of the church's typical membership. In their imaginations and willingness to see obstacles as growth opportunities, Sine sees the potential for vibrant renewal. The remaining pages describe a process to foster the life-giving change that vitalizes the church's future.

Sine celebrates ecumenical partners as he describes impactful change that churches accomplish when open to the leadership and wisdom of those outside ecclesial power structures. He also provides questions for each chapter to facilitate group discussion. Sine does not simply argue points; he includes stories from his life and community that illustrate the value of creatively engaging the problems we face as occasions for new life. Though some may find this style distracting, it reflects the value placed on creative engagement of obstacles by millennial generations. The book's structure stands as one example of how Christians may follow the lead of community organizers, entrepreneurs, and young leaders as we seek to positively shape our spiritual and civil communities: or in other words, to follow some unlikely others and learn together to live like we give a damn.

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ON TYRANNY

TWENTY LESSONS
FROM THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY

TIMOTHY SNYDER

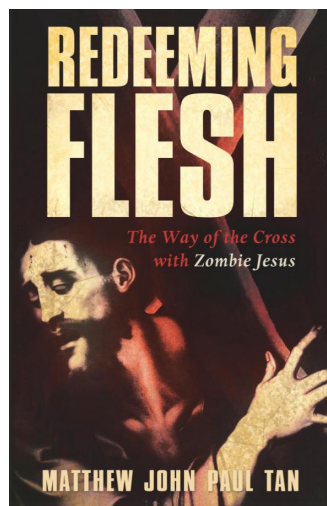
On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century. By Timothy Snyder. New York: Tim Duggan, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-8041-9011-4. 126 pages. Paper. \$7.99.

This is a penetrating, pointed book, written for this moment in history by the Levin Professor of History at Yale University. It is possible for democracies to become dizzy and distracted, and to degenerate complacently from within. Civilizations have come and gone before us, democracies as well. The author knows the sweep of history from ancient Greece and Rome to the Soviet Union and Germany in the twentieth century. Snyder points out that “fascism and communism were responses to globalization: to the real and perceived inequalities it created, and the apparent helplessness of the democracies addressing them” (12). This is a cautionary tale that such things can happen here, if we lack political vigilance and activism.

The twenty lessons may appear simple, but the practice of these is challenging. “Defend institutions.” Cynicism about politicians is corrosive of the constitution and the government constructed upon it. It is a matter of holding politicians accountable to our institutions and what they represent. “Believe in truth.” A populace cannot surrender to the “endless repetition” of untruths that undermine public discourse (67). Likewise a populace cannot succumb to “magical thinking” that tyrants employ to promise simple and self-contradictory solutions to complex problems. It is a matter of resisting the slogans and deceit that undermine public discourse and thereby public institutions: “Post-truth is pre-fascism” (71). “Be a patriot.” Patriotism does not mean thoughtless obedience to the dictates of those in power. Patriotism means holding one’s country to its core ideals and being as courageous as one can in doing so. Patriotism entails active participation, more and more to my mind at the grassroots, to revivify what ails our democracy.

This book provides a needed civics lesson of a reasonable length, in direct language, and at an affordable price. It is informed by haunting historical lessons from the recent past. The appeal to activism among the young generations is especially poignant: “If young people do not begin to make history, politicians of eternity and inevitability will destroy it” (126). We are living in a vulnerable historical moment. I pray we can rally the forces of democracy to resist the destruction of the common good by advocating for the most vulnerable people among us.

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Wartburg Theological Seminary



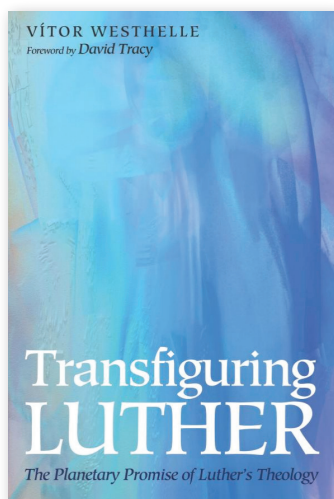
Redeeming Flesh: The Way of the Cross with Zombie Jesus. By Matthew John Paul Tan. Eugene: Cascade, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-4982-9117-0. Paper. ix & 100 pages. \$15.00.

Bizarre as the concept first appears, this is a serious contribution to constructive theology as culture critique. Zombies appeared in nineteenth century literature with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Edgar Allan Poe’s stories (“The Fall of the House of Usher”), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. In recent decades, zombies consume a new film genre, especially as directed by George Romero (*Night of the Living Dead*, etc.) and authored by Stephanie Meyer (*Twilight* series). Characteristic of zombie horror is their insatiable desire to consume human flesh, transforming those they eat into zombies themselves. That zombies are attracted to shopping malls indicates a main feature of Tan’s analysis: zombies represent the relentless drive of human bodies to consume things that do not satisfy or nourish. Consumption becomes an end in itself, a dead end.

The author juxtaposes the zombie phenomenon with Eucharistic theology and the passion narrative of Jesus. The reflections are compelling. Whereas zombies consume human flesh, leading to the death of the victims, eating the flesh of Christ leads out of death (zombie-like existence in consumer society) into life abundant. “In this mapping out of the animated flesh of Christ onto the flesh of the believer, we see also the absorption of dead flesh by the living, where ‘death is swallowed up in victory’ by all bodies being incorporated into the body of Christ” (66–67). Whereas the zombie-stricken join the annihilating hoard, those participating in eating and drinking the body of Christ become the body of Christ for the life of the world.

Employing the stations of the cross to narrate Christ’s passion, Tan depicts how Christ allows himself to become the Zombie Jesus to enter fully into humanity’s sinful condition, in order to set us free from the powers of death: “...Christ’s body was being Eucharistically fractioned and distributed to be consumed by the zombified masses, and like a giant net Christ’s body enveloped all of that very creation that sought to consume him” (91). This book offers angular perception and fresh interpretation of central theological metaphors. Take and eat!

Craig L. Nesson
Wartburg Theological Seminary



Transfiguring Luther: The Planetary Promise of Luther's Theology. By Vitor Westhelle. Foreword by David Tracy. Eugene: Cascade, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-6256-4216-4. xv & 338 pages. Paper. \$41.00.

The Reformation anniversary has provided the occasion for publishing many books honoring Luther's lega-

cy. None of these, however, does more to locate and imagine Luther's significance in the twenty-first century than *Transfiguring Luther*. While Westhelle's scholarship is deeply grounded in the established literature, his vision for Luther's thought, especially as it is being transfigured by the contexts of the Southern hemisphere, alters how we must interpret Luther as we take seriously the horizon of the future.

Westhelle insists on full recognition of the process of hybridization, *mestizaje*, through which traditions, such as the Lutheran tradition, are not compromised but instead made more than what they ever previously could have been. While this has always been the case (Chalcedon is offered as one instance), the author demonstrates how a surplus of meanings adds value through cross-cultural engagement with Luther. "Hybridity is a helpful construction that might serve theology in its elusive search for a language to convey that which, ultimately, cannot be reduced to words" (109). He draws on a wide range of authors and disciplines to explore this method of engagement, especially post-colonial theory (187-191).

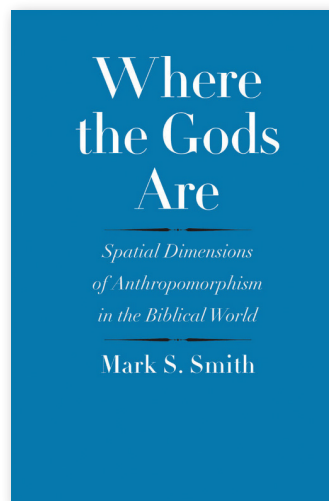
Themes central to Luther's theology are rendered freshly through Westhelle's hermeneutic (Chapter 15), whose elements include pertinence (the contextual resonance of a text) and innovation (novelty issuing in transformation). Luther's creation theology is juxtaposed to the ecological crisis, his writings against usury reverberate against the forces of economic globalization, and theology of the cross is transposed in liberation theologies. Luther's "two régimes describe asymmetric dimensions that do not concur, but where the spiritual produces incidents in the earthly order and is subjectively apprehended as something that happens and breaks through the order of things and, in that, reveals the masks under which the divine is hidden" (307).

Of particular note is the affirmation of the priesthood of all believers as "the reformatory signature." The universal priesthood recurs as a call to live out Luther's seventh mark of the church, cross and suffering: "And this is a cross we carry for being between the house and the street, risking exposure by speaking publicly and offering sanctuary as expression of holy love" (154). This articulates the prophetic vocation of the baptized also for

our times. This relates closely to Westhelle's discussion near the book's end of the relationship between economy (*oconomia*) and politics (*politia*). The proper exercise of politics is to be related to the just ordering of the economy with justice, measured by equity and fairness. This section (298-303) is full of significance for massive confusions in the contemporary economic and political (dis)order.

Most impressive is how Luther's central teaching of justification is rendered dynamically throughout the book as a compass for orienting the whole project beyond its "reification" as formalized doctrine. While not avoiding a critique of Luther's limitations (for example, the peasants' revolt or writings against the Jews), impulses for an imaginative rendering of Luther's seminal thought permeate this work. Highly recommended to spur imagination for the planetary significance of Luther's theology in a threatened world.

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Where the Gods Are: Spatial Dimensions of Anthropomorphism in the Biblical World. By Mark S. Smith. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-3002-0922-8. xix & 221 pages. Cloth. \$75.00.

Smith has published a number of outstanding books dealing with God and the gods in the ancient Near East in general and with Israel and Ugarit in particular. This book deals with anthropomorphism and theriomorphism (God/god in animal form) in the same cultures. He divides anthropomorphisms into three categories: the human-looking body (e.g., Yahweh breathing the breath of life into the first human), the super human divine body (e.g., in the call of Isaiah where the hem of God's robe fills the temple), and the cosmic divine body (e.g., the depiction of the deity in Ezekiel 1). It is the second of these anthropomorphisms that dominates temple ritual, and temples and deities share sets of concepts. The human places of deities mark deities as human, and in turn their human locations are marked as divine.

Chapter 3 introduces the idea of theriomorphism in the ancient Near East and in Israel. Yahweh, for example, has horns like a wild ox and wings. Yahweh roars from on high (Jer 25:30). Yahweh is like an eagle stirring up its nest and hovering over its young (Deut 32:11).

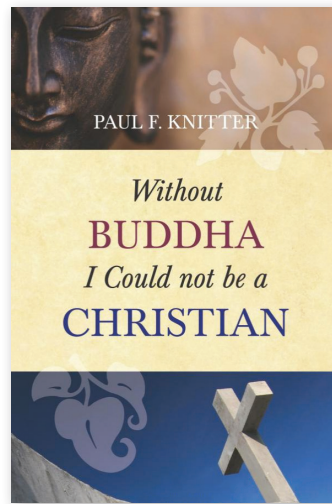


Chapter 4 deals with the calf images at Dan and Bethel, the two sanctuaries in the Northern Kingdom established by Jeroboam I. This is complicated material dealing with a bull calf, plural bovines, and feminine plural bovines. There are textual problems as shown by the Septuagint, and additional information in a difficult Aramaic document in Demotic script, Papyrus Amherst 63, dating to the third century BCE. All these are considered under the topic of theriomorphism, God in an animal form. What was surprising, even puzzling, to me is that Smith never mentions that a number of scholars, including myself, think that the calf at Dan and Bethel, as well as the golden calf in Exodus 32, was not an image of the deity at all, but rather it was an animal on which Yahweh invisibly stood, much as Yahweh was invisibly enthroned on the cherubim in the temple of Solomon at Jerusalem. While this does not undercut the central thesis of the book, it is a serious oversight in my opinion. How does his interpretation of the calf/bull fit in a religion where there exists a commandment forbidding the making of graven images (Exod 20:4–5)?

In chapter 5 Smith notes how deities are associated with specific cities (e.g., Hebron or Jerusalem) while chapter 6 pays special attention to royal cities and their gods. A city like Jerusalem plays a special role in the coronation and the death of the king. The city of God embodied ritually by its inhabitants becomes God's city as embodied female (daughter Zion).

Smith sums up his findings as follows: "Whether divine-human relations were cast in terms of model or analogy, it is evident that without human space and places, there is no mediation.... This implicit theory presupposes that divinity can be grasped in association with the human or in nature, not apart from the human or the natural; nor can it be reduced to either" (111–112).

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Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian. By Paul F. Knitter. Oxford: Oneworld, 2009. ISBN: 978-1-8516-8673-5. Paper. xvii & 240 pages. \$16.95.

The book title is quite provocative. Paul F. Knitter is arguably the best representative of religious pluralism in advocating multiple belongingness to different religions. As an ordained Roman Catholic priest (although now leaving the priesthood) the author looks beyond Christianity, especially to Buddhism. What teaching, wisdom, or spiritual practices in Buddhism makes the author want to incorporate these into Christian existence? He characterizes aptly his intrareligious theology in terms of passing over to Buddhism and coming back to a Christian identity (xiii). He wants to represent good "Buddhist theology" but he is not a scholar of Buddhism fully equipped with professional knowledge of Pali or Chinese or Tibetan (xiv). Knitter's struggle centers around God as the transcendent other. God, the *totaliter aliter* in the Roman Catholic tradition, relates to God's self-revelation in Exod 3:14. The God of Israel is also revealed as the One who loves infinitely. The author problematizes the relation between the transcendent God and the immanent God, because God's action in history is a one-way street (6). The Christian teaching of God in transcendence and immanence creates the problem of dualism, with an emphasis on the difference between God and humanity.

Against this Christian metaphysic, the author is intrigued by the Buddhist experience of Nirvana and its radical relationality. The Buddhist notion of impermanence helps the author to realize that God is the most changeable reality (10). 'Interdependent origination' (*pratityasamutpada*) teaches that "everything changes because everything is interrelated" (10). Thich Nhat Hanh translates this principle as InterBeing in which the position of the Hua-yen sutra is maintained: "Nirvana is Samsara" (13).

With this principle in mind, the author passes back to the Christian notion of God as the connecting Spirit. Finally, Buddha, according to the teaching of "Nirvana is Samsara," encourages the author to become a mystic. This conviction helps the author to retrieve the rich content of Catholic mysticism and to be persuaded by Rahner's notion of the supernatural existential (15, 17). Is God InterBeing? Is Nirvana Samsara? If Nirvana is Samsara, there is no such thing as InterBeing. The Advaita



debate has a long tradition within the Buddhist context. “Nirvana is Samsara” in the historical context of Japanese military imperialism marks a chapter of atrocity without repentance (no-self). Certainly, Knitter is greatly interested in presenting liberation theology with intrareligious mooring. A critique of religious ideas that are tainted with such power relations is clearly needed.

Knitter’s book is readable, lucid, and challenging. The author describes well his existential struggle for double belongingness in taking seriously the Buddhist path. This paves a way to the development of a “Buddhist” theology.

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Briefly Noted

Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism. By Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts (Eerdmans, \$22). The authors of this study focus on efforts to reconstruct the original text of the Greek New Testament, but they neglect the efforts to study the transmission history of the text as a means of studying the social history of early Christianity. They identify and date the major witnesses to the text and define the text-types of the Alexandrian, Western, Caesarean, and Byzantine texts. All will appreciate their introduction to the textual apparatus in Nestle-Aland and the *United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament*. Erasmus is mistakenly dated to the seventeenth instead of the sixteenth century (2). They also do not recognize that Erasmus omitted the *Comma Johanneum* from its final editions (139).

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