



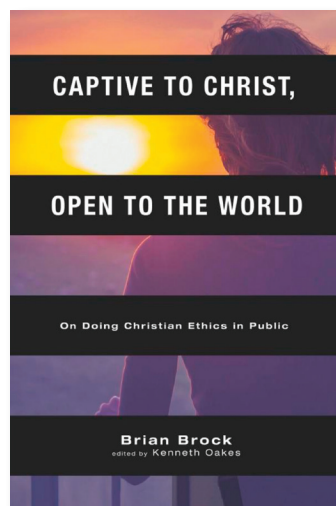
Book Reviews

July 2019

Section Editors: Craig Nesson, Ralph Klein, Troy Troftgruben

Review a book!

Currents in Theology and Mission is seeking to expand its number of regular book reviewers. If you have interest, please send name, contact information, and areas of primary interest to currents@lstc.edu.



Captive to Christ, Open to the World: On Doing Christian Ethics in Public. By Brian Brock, Kenneth Oaks, ed. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-7188-9377-4. xviii & 143 pages. Paper. \$21.00.

Brian Brock's *Captive to Christ, Open to the World* is an excellent resource for

those seeking to cultivate an ethical sense both grounded in Christian tradition and adaptive to the ongoing crises of modernity. Rather than attempting to solve every problem through apologetics or memorization, Brock encourages listeners to interface daily ethical conflicts with the core tenants of Christian faith. Particularly, and most fundamentally: the belief that God, who created all things, is present, alive, and active in creation. As editor Kenneth Oaks summarizes, "God is present and at work in the messy affairs of human interaction and life together. Jesus does not send his disciples out into a godforsaken wasteland, but out and into his own world, the world of his Father and the Spirit" (xvi). This posture of anticipating God's presence around every corner sets a tone of constructive and faithful curiosity throughout the various ethical crises of life, allowing each conflict to be transformed into an opportunity for Christian vocation and deputyship.

To model this endeavor, Brock himself navigates a variety of everyday, ethical dilemmas through the structure of interview-response dialogue. Each chapter offers a topical entry-point for readers to reflect upon how God's living presence informs everyday choices. Such issues are addressed by "secular" nomenclature (including technology, teaching, environmentalism, and medicine) as well as theological terms (e.g., exegesis, good works, accompaniment). Of course, given the foundational posture

that God is present and dwelling in all matters of creation, such human clarifications between what is secular and sacred become blurred. Perhaps, this is the best offering of Brock's text to the ongoing task of nurturing Christian ethics in public: that all things are a matter of faith, and all things can become a space of faithful contemplation and action.

It must be noted that this book, just like many other good works of critical reflection, is best suited for a group-learning setting with a competent instructor. For all the author's effort to make the text accessible through the companionable, dialogue-based tone, there is still a considerable gap between the author's voice and the everyday citizen. I believe that, without the privilege of higher education, particularly in philosophy and theology, many will struggle to make use of the author's keen references to the wisdom of minds like Luther, Bonhoeffer, and Barth. However, even in this teaching imperative, the topical organization of the text lends itself well to chapter-by-chapter study and discussion. In a small-group study, one could pick up *Captive* and read a random chapter without the necessity—only the enrichment!—of previous chapters.

For those who are trained in higher education and beyond, references to Martin Luther's *Genesis Lectures* and "Three Estates" are welcome—as are Augustine and Bonhoeffer's exegetical work with scripture (particularly the Psalms) and Karl Barth's influence (*Ethics* and *The Christian Life*). The treatment of each scholar is companionable, and Brock calls upon their wisdom not to strong-arm the audience, but to enrich an already complex, expansive world in which we live and make Christian decisions every day.

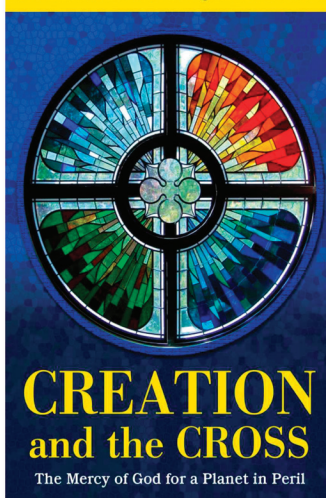
As a person who favors abstract thinking, something I appreciate about this text is Brock's attention to not merely the ethical crisis at hand, but, moreover, the assumptions that underlie the crisis. For example, how Brock postures in the opening chapters that "technology" has less to do with technical products themselves, but rather, more to do with a human "desire to command, to be in control, to manipulate," which is soothed by such products. (26). Such curiosity about systems-based thinking seeks to understand and re-construct the environment which fosters a problem, instead of merely dealing with the symptom being expressed at the moment.

I recommend Brian Brock's *Captive to Christ, Open to the World: On Doing Christian Ethics in Public* to anyone seeking to engage faith, curiosity, and ethics.

Alexandra E.H. Smith, Pastor
American Lutheran Church, Webster, S.Dak.
and Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Waubay, S.Dak.



ELIZABETH A. JOHNSON



Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril. By Elizabeth A. Johnson. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-6269-8266-6. xvii and 238 pages. Cloth. \$28.00.

What an original and needful book! Elizabeth Johnson has been on the frontier of Christian theology to reinterpret creation at the interface with evolutionary

thinking. Her recent title, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (2015), is a major contribution toward expanded understanding of God's creative and redeeming work to incorporate all creatures. In this volume, Johnson continues this argument first by addressing the problems involved in reducing the Christian interpretation of the cross to the satisfaction theory, which view has attained prominent, if not exclusive, place among many Christians. Because Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* ("Why God Became Human") took the form of a dialogue with a younger colleague, Johnson structures this book as a conversation with her own imaginary interlocutor, Clara by name.

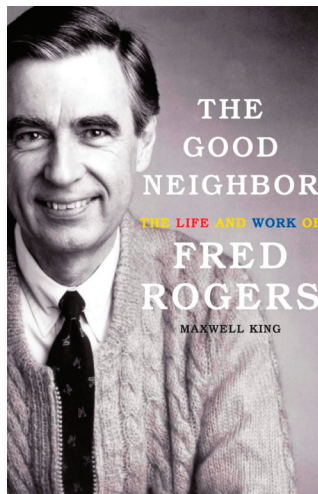
While a compelling interpretation in Anselm's own medieval context, the logical and ethical conundrums evoked by his viewing Christ's death as a satisfaction payment for sin make it illogical and even offensive in our times. After a sympathetic description of Anselm's original atonement metaphor, Johnson analyzes the several problems now posed: the disastrous image of God, the compromising of divine freedom, overlooking the ministry and resurrection of Jesus, sacralizing violence, morbid spirituality, submission in the face of injustice, and ecological silence. The first chapter is a trenchant critique of relegating the interpretation of the cross to satisfaction for sin.

Subsequent chapters develop biblical and theological paths for extending the significance of the cross to encompass all creation. Both the Hebrew Bible (Second Isaiah) and the New Testament are foundational for this rethinking. Beginning with a Christology from below, Johnson demonstrates the continuity between the life and ministry of Jesus which led to his crucifixion as consequence for the provocative way he embodied the kingdom of God. The resurrection is God's divine affirmation of all Jesus said and did as God's son. Johnson explores a wide range of metaphors to expand our capacity as interpreters of the cross: saving (medical), victory (military), reconciliation (diplomacy), redeeming (financial), justifying (legal), liberating (penal), sacrifice (cultic), birth/adoption (family), and new creation (cosmic). These metaphors stir the imagination of contemporary interpreters.

Johnson explores the meaning of the cross for all creation. "Deep incarnation" (Gregersen) means God's incarnation in the flesh of Jesus has theological significance not only for humans but for all creatures. Drawing upon Scripture's wisdom traditions, Johnson connects the work of Christ to "the whole evolving biological world of living creatures and the cosmic dust of which they are composed" (186). Her original claim for a commensurate "deep resurrection" makes explicit the implications of resurrection for all creatures: "the living God, gracious and merciful, always was, is, and will be accompanying the world with saving grace, including humans in their sinfulness, and humans and all creatures in their unique beauty, evolutionary struggle, and inevitable dying" (225).

This book deserves attention not only for its critique of the satisfaction theory of atonement—urgent in its own right—but especially for constructing a cosmic vision of the mercy of God revealed in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ for all creatures and a new creation.

Craig L. Nesson
Wartburg Theological Seminary



The Good Neighbor: The Life and Work of Fred Rogers. By Maxwell King. New York: Abrams Press, 2018. ISBN 978-1-4197-2772-6. 405 pages. Cloth. \$30.00.

Although Fred Rogers had a profound influence on children's television, and positively influenced millions of boys and girls, it is often forgotten that his respect of children and his passion for bettering their lives was rooted in his Christian faith. And, although Maxwell King's biography of Fred Rogers is not a theological work, Rogers's devotion to his Presbyterian faith permeates his life and work and thus repeatedly comes to the forefront of the book. Rogers's life gives multiple examples of how Christians should think about and respond to the needs of children.

First, Mister Rogers marveled at the fact that Jesus experienced childhood in its fullest. "The Son of the living God," Rogers noted, "was not only born a baby, he grew through all the stages of becoming an adult human being that each one of us grows through." This means that the incarnate God experienced and understands the sorrows, joys, fears, and hopes of children. In turn, the followers of Jesus should be mindful of the challenges of children and respectfully help them navigate life's stormy seas. Through the television set, Fred Rogers helped children process even painful subjects such as divorce, death, and racism.



Second, Rogers made it clear that ministry to children's needs not involve a pulpit or even a church. Halfway through his seminary studies, Rogers was asked the type of ministry he wanted to engage in. Rogers's response that he believed his work in children's television to be a ministry was shocking to the church of his time. According to Maxwell, "(n)othing like that had ever been fashioned from Presbyterian fabric..."

Third, Rogers's life illustrates his conviction that Christianity should be lived as much as preached. Rogers read the Bible each morning for an hour and then prayed not for his success "but rather the goodness of heart to be the best person he could be in each of the encounters he would have that day." Mister Rogers rarely preached—but consistently lived his faith.

Fourth, Fred Rogers's life reminds Christians to be fierce advocates for children. In what Maxwell calls "one of the most powerful pieces of video persuasion ever filmed," Rogers convinced a gruff congressional chair to support continued funding for quality children's television, telling the committee that helping children manage their anger or other feelings will yield greater dividends than showing them gunfire or other unseemly images. It was the gentle passion of the Presbyterian minister that carried the day.

Lastly, at a time when many Christians continue to resist child development and social science research on issues such as child discipline, Rogers reminds us that advances in knowledge can benefit the children entrusted to us. Rogers worked closely with Dr. Margaret McFarland to make sure his programming was developmentally sensitive because children deserved nothing less than our finest.

With so many Christian communities rocked by scandals involving the abuse of children, it is cleansing to the palate to read of a man whose faith led him to dedicate his life to the welfare of boys and girls.

Victor Vieth

*President of the Academy on Violence & Abuse
Director of Education and Research of the Zero Abuse Project*



The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable.

By Amitav Ghosh.

Chicago: University of Chicago, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-2263-2303-9.

176 pages. Cloth.

\$22.00.

If you have doubts about climate change and the devastation it has caused and will continue to drive, both through the natural disasters affecting human life on earth and the mass migrations that weather-related events will catalyze, please consider this book. If you already are convinced by the epic character of climate change, pray that the author's conclusion about the agency of actors motivated by religious convictions will be fulfilled.

Ghosh is a novelist and this book makes a powerful case that literary works have not begun to depict the enormity of the changes we are facing. The modern novel has established the expectation that good fiction deals above all with heroic and tragic individual actors. Therefore, with only a few exceptions (for example, Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* or Richard Powers' *The Overstory*) novelists rarely have the wherewithal to assign agency to the natural world. This lack contributes to the overall breakdown of imagination about "the uncanny" being unleashed through climate change.

Ghosh provides detailed descriptions of what awaits millions of human beings whose lives will be lost, ruined, or displaced both through severe weather events and by dramatic changes to environments that will make them uninhabitable. Already we are witnessing the beginning of the disruptions that will increase with greater frequency and consequences. The examples the author provides from the context of India, especially the precarious location of Mumbai, are chilling.

While the national security apparatus and intelligence communities of nation-states are already setting in motion plans for maintaining order in scenes of chaos, our political discourse remains paralyzed by manufactured polarization, if not about the very reality of climate change then about how it will be solved. In his most apocalyptic image, the author describes the possibility of a future in which wealthy elites prepare to secure their own future through "armed lifeboats," which will include militarized borders to protect their interests.

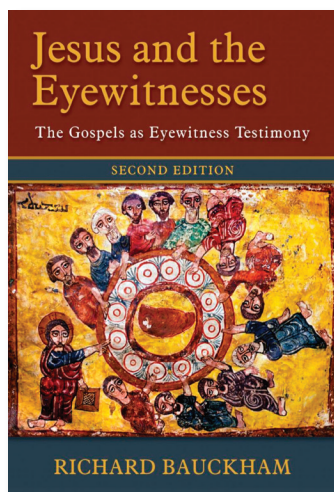
Ghosh contrasts the tentativeness of analysis by international agreements about climate change, such as The Paris Agreement, to the clarity of religious and ethical analysis in the encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*. Agreements hammered out through political compromise by those with economic interests in the



existing global system cannot bring themselves to name forthrightly the lack of sustainability for the modern economic trajectory based on the extraction and massive consumption of fossil fuels. Even though signs of collapse are becoming more apparent with every passing year, we are so overtaken by “psychic numbing” (Lifton) that we cannot advocate for the requisite reductions in our lifestyle.

In spite of an argument that is ominous in every way, Ghosh manages to offer a word of hope, which he finds not in the prospect of topdown political change, but in the fragile promise of climate activism by religiously motivated groups and leaders. It is from religious teachings, as articulated by Pope Francis, that we might learn to live within the limitations of a finite world and discover new and more equitable patterns of distribution. However, the great limit we are up against is running out of time to act.

Craig L. Nesson
Wartburg Theological Seminary



Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony.

Second edition. By Richard Bauckham. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7431-3. 680 pages. Cloth. \$50.00.

In *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, Richard Bauckham argues

that the words and deeds of Jesus recorded in the four gospels originated from eyewitness testimony of individuals who were with Jesus from the beginning to the end of his ministry. To deem the gospels reliable accounts of the Jesus of first-century Palestine is to appreciate them as historiography written within “living memory” of eyewitnesses.

In this second edition (orig. pub. 2006), Bauckham retains the substance of his original eighteen chapters, but adds three more at the end to expound key arguments and answer critics. Throughout the book, he challenges inherited biases and skepticism—especially from form criticism, redaction criticism, and literary criticism—that treat the gospels as collections of reshaped traditions passed down orally and anonymously over significant time. In an innovative move, Bauckham analyzes the gospel traditions from within. He takes five things into special consideration: first, the remarks of Papias on eyewitness sources,

his preference for John’s orderly account (vs. Mark and Matthew), and John the Elder as the Fourth Gospel’s author (chaps 2, 9, 16, 20); second, the importance of preserved names among characters in certain gospel pericopes and their correlations with the most popular Palestinian Jewish names at the time (chaps 3–4, 8), and the lists of Jesus’ twelve disciples (chap 5); third, literary techniques employed by the gospel writers (e.g., *inclusio*, the plural-to-singular narrative device, internal focalization), especially Mark and John, as shaping of preserved traditions from eyewitnesses (chaps 6–7; 14–15); fourth, differentiating between prominent individual eyewitnesses and individual communities as recipients, and between individual memory and collective memory (chaps 12–13, 18); fifth, Paul as an apostolic preserver of the Jesus tradition, which he keeps separate from parenetic instruction (chaps 11, 20–21). For Bauckham, these pieces of internal evidence support a view of the gospels as trustworthy accounts of Jesus, preserved by individuals and shared and shaped into “collective memory”—not later creations that reflect more so the life of early church communities.

Whereas the majority of the chapters concentrates on eyewitnesses close to Jesus and writers who depend on them, Bauckham does distinguish these eyewitnesses and their bearing witness to Jesus from the act of testimony itself (chap 18). He categorizes different types of testimony (e.g., in a court of law, accounts of past events, and events of unique significance). For comparison, he uses the modern-day example of eyewitness survivors of the Holocaust, focusing on four aspects common to the Holocaust and the traditions of Jesus. Despite their differences, for Bauckham they demonstrate the indispensable significance of credible eyewitness testimony, since without it, the inconceivable remains unbelievable.

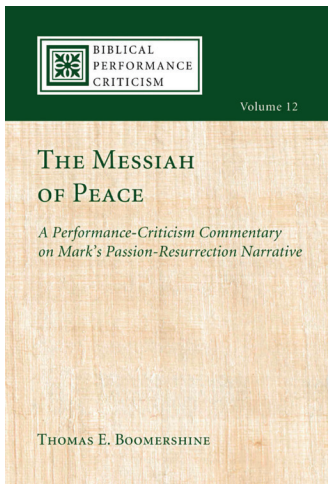
In the three chapters added to this second addition (chaps 19–21), Bauckham elaborates on key points he argued originally, answering critics directly in the process. He revisits the Petrine perspective he finds visible in Mark, continues discussion of “the disciple Jesus loved” in John’s Gospel, and declares an end to form criticism as it has traditionally been practiced. In place of form criticism, Bauckham advocates for an interdisciplinary approach that is less inherently skeptical and more appreciative of the historical validity of Jesus traditions in the gospels. He hints at it by citing Kevin Vanhoozer’s definition of testimony as a speech act and C. A. J. Coady’s philosophical inquiry of testimony (chaps 18, 21).

Bauckham’s work brilliantly interweaves five broad subjects in order to present Jesus in the gospels as a historically valid and trustworthy figure: the gospels, the person of Jesus, people in his inner circle, testimony about Jesus and bearing witness to him, and the time span between his life and each gospel’s composition. Despite this insightful and ambitious work, Bauckham’s book is still often misunderstood and challenged. While his research continues to gain attention and traction, hurdles remain for his arguments to be accepted on a wider scale. The obstacles are two-fold. First, the enterprise of New Testament studies is tradition-



ally driven by historical-critical methods that call into question the historicity of Jesus' words and deeds as recorded in the gospels (e.g., parables, miracles). These methods often foster doubt and skepticism, which are not conducive to open-mindedness to alternative approaches perceived as "conservative" or uncritical. As a result, scholars who build their careers on a platform that treats the gospels as myths or folklore have more to lose than gain from accepting Bauckham's premises. At stake is the relationship between faith and intellectual inquiry. The second obstacle pertains to pastors and the extent to which they find Bauckham's detailed work accessible. The book is not a light read. However, pastors who invest the time and energy that Jesus and the Eyewitnesses requires may find it a very valuable resource for discerning the significance of the New Testament gospels and their traditions. In turn, pastors may find the book more relevant to the work of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ than a mere first glance suggests.

Lace Marie Williams-Tinajero
Spokane Valley, Washington



The Messiah of Peace: A Performance-Criticism Commentary on Mark's Passion-Resurrection Narrative. By Thomas E. Boomershine. Biblical Performance Criticism. Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-6256-4545-6. xvi & 448 pages. Paper. \$55.00.

Boomershine's volume in the ongoing *Biblical Performance Criticism* series (edited by David Rhoads, Holly E. Hearon, and Kelly R. Iverson) is much more than just another commentary on Mark. Nor is it simply a book about the "how-tos" of biblical storytelling (though you may pick up a few tips along the way). This scholarly volume is a deep dive into both the story and historical worlds of Mark's passion narrative from a performance criticism perspective.

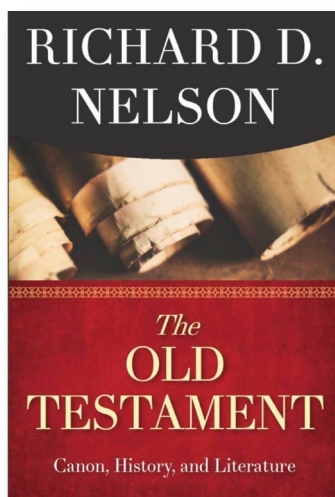
This commentary is best read in conjunction with the accompanying web resources at www.messiahofpeace.com, including Boomershine's performance of a complete telling of Mark's passion narrative by heart in both English and the original Greek. These performances, together with the sound mapping and contextual background that the commentary provides, help the reader to listen closely and with new ears to Mark's familiar story.

The unique insight of performance criticism is that Mark's gospel was originally performed in oral form before it was written down in the texts preserved today. On account of this, Boomershine's analysis takes seriously not just the words as signifiers, but the way in which they may have been originally heard. Although it is impossible to recreate with certainty an original performance of Mark's gospel (and it is unlikely there ever was only *one*), Boomershine presents a compelling case for *one hearing* of Mark's passion narrative within a plausible performance context. Through attention to historical context, sound mapping (involving determining where to place pauses in a text that comes to us unpunctuated), Greek pronunciation, rhetoric, and Mark's unique terminology, Boomershine presents "Jesus as the nonviolent Messiah of peace and reconciliation" (1).

After the introduction's discussion of the rhetoric of biblical storytelling and a historical-critical examination of Mark's probable audience, the book takes shape in traditional commentary form, treating Mark 14:1–16:8 in sequential fashion. In addition to typical notes on details and translation, features unique to this commentary include Greek sound maps of each pericope and comments on the story's performance that draw out meaning potentially elicited through the storyteller's use of tone and gesture. A series of appendixes at the end of the commentary offer more detail on these unique features that will likely be of greatest interest to scholarly audiences.

While there is significant scholarly detail in this hefty volume, Boomershine is intentional about explaining his methods and terminology throughout. This, combined with placing the most technical aspects of his thesis into appendixes, makes the text approachable for most religious leaders or advanced lay readers. This book represents a significant contribution to the interpretation of Mark generally and can be read as such. Due to its attention to the aspects of performance, it is also an essential read for those interested in deepening the interpretive aspects of their practice of biblical storytelling.

Amy Lindeman Allen
Christian Theological Seminary



The Old Testament: Canon, History, and Literature. Richard D. Nelson. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-4267-5923-9. xxi and 326 pages. Paper. \$42.99.

Nelson, a widely published scholar, emeritus from Perkins School of Theology and a long-time professor at the Lutheran Theological

Seminary at Gettysburg, provides students and pastors with a clearly written and mainstream introduction to the Old Testament.

The book begins with a sixteen-page Table of Contents that provides ready access to whatever pericope the reader is looking for in the canonical text or in the Apocrypha. Nelson hopes that this arrangement will lead students to read the biblical text in addition to this introduction. His discussion follows the order in the Hebrew Bible, with two exceptions: the Minor Prophets are treated in their probable chronological order, and Daniel appears at the end of the Writings section. Nelson often provides comparison of translations between the NRSV and the Common English Bible (CEB), and he is the translator of 1 and 2 Kings in CEB. Excursuses are set off by marginal vertical lines. There are no footnotes—the advantage here is that whatever the reader wants to explore is incorporated into the text, and not parked in endnotes. Eight pages of “Vocabulary” might fit well under the caption “Glossary.” Nelson offers very brief suggestions at the end of sections for further reading. Sometimes this refers to commentaries, but not always, and these suggestions are not as mainstream as I would like (e.g., Auld on 1 and 2 Samuel; Faley at the end of the discussion of Abraham and his descendants).

On the Pentateuch he follows the Documentary Hypothesis, but pays little attention to more recent hypotheses from Europe. I felt he hit his stride with his introduction to Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings (Nelson has published full-length scholarly commentaries on Deuteronomy, Joshua, and 1 and 2 Kings although those excellent publications are not listed in the sections for further reading). Nelson barely mentions the Deuteronomistic History even though from his dissertation on, he has published many essays arguing, in support of Frank Moore Cross, that this history had both pre-exilic and exilic editions. Contemporary scholarship tends to downplay the historicity of the conquest of Canaan and its genocidal violence, and Nelson follows this trend.

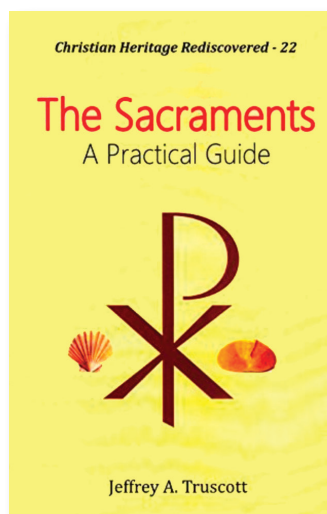
He discusses Isaianic passages like Isa 9:1–7 and 11:1–9, that describe an ideal Davidic king, but does not label them messianic. Jer 23:5–6 and 33:14–26, which also talk about ideal or

messianic Davidic descendants go unmentioned, as does the new covenant passage in Jer 31:31–34. He notes that Dan 12:2–3 stands out in Old Testament texts as promising resurrection, a notion that is widespread in the New Testament, with the exception of the Sadducees.

I wish long life to this introduction which is a joy to read!

Ralph W. Klein

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago



The Sacraments: A Practical Guide.

By Jeffrey A. Truscott. New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2016. ISBN: 978-9-3514-8077-8. xx & 476 pages. Paper. \$ 45.00.

In *The Sacraments: A Practical Guide*, missionary pastor and insightful pastoral-liturgical theologian Jeffrey Truscott provides a thoughtful

historical and theological overview of sacramental practice in the various Protestant ecclesial traditions. The book's fifteen chapters each focus on a different aspect of baptism and the Lord's Supper with a beginning chapter on “the meaning of sacraments” and a concluding chapter on the “sacramentality of other rites.” Other chapter themes include: “The Lord's Supper and Time,” “Baptismal Meaning among Protestants,” and “The Lord's Supper and Justice.” This book's great gift is to provide historical analysis of sacramental praxis across the spectrum from the magisterial Protestant traditions to Pentecostalism and Revivalism.

Truscott is convinced that critical awareness of one's own sacramental tradition leads to ongoing sacramental renewal in the contemporary churches; he makes a compelling case. His commitment to pastoral liturgical reform is evidenced in his ability to bring historical sacramental theology into dialogue with contemporary ecclesial statements on sacramental practice such as *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and the *Use of the Means of Grace*. In weaving these perspectives and documents together, Truscott articulates a uniquely Protestant but ecumenically engaged practical liturgical theology for our time. Mainline seminaries in the U.S. would benefit greatly from making this text required reading in introductory worship courses.

While this book is highly commended a few questions remain. First, Truscott insists that “the contextualization” of baptism is of great importance. I wish, however, that he would provide more examples of contextual baptismal practice and perhaps even a liturgy of baptism from a global context. Read-



ers could learn a great deal from Truscott's own experiences of liturgical inculturation, given his extensive missionary work. A second concern relates to his discussion of the occasional rites. He asserts that marriage and ordination are states of life. This is not inaccurate, provided that they are understood as flowing forth from our one baptismal vocation. My question involves the need to address contemporary socio-cultural issues around these rites, especially the inclusion of LGBTQ persons in these liturgical actions. How might contemporary pastoral practice be renewed and contextualized to achieve further inclusion, affirmation, and acceptance in light of the Gospel? While Truscott is writing from a global perspective and may not be facing this pastoral issue in his context, it is nonetheless a contemporary justice issue that many encounter. In sum, this is an exceptional volume worthy of high praise and intentional use in seminaries, catechetical meetings, and rostered minister conferences on worship planning and renewal. Truscott's comprehensive book, *The Sacraments: A Practical Guide*, should be a reference book on every pastor's bookshelf.

Shane R Brinegar
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Shepherd of Souls: Faith Formation Through Trusted Relationships. By David W. Anderson. Minneapolis: Milestones Ministry, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-7320-0740-6. 244 pages. Paper. \$18.95.

At the annual "Change or Die Conference" sponsored by the Siebert Lutheran Foundation of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Rev. Dr. Lisa Bates-Froiland (speaking on the topic of "Culture, Change and Church") stated that one of the most important questions we can ask each other is: "How is it with your soul?"

Dr. David W. Anderson, in the preface of his new book, *Shepherd of Souls*, states: "*Shepherd of Souls*...is the culmination of thirty years of pastoral work." He spends the rest of the book offering biblical and theological grounding, and real-world practical application to support his claim that we are all called to be shepherds of souls. Designed to be used in small groups, this easy-to-read book comes with questions to guide conversation after each chapter.

The marketplace is filled with books that diagnose the problems facing the church today. This is not one of them. Instead, Anderson rewards the reader with chapter after chapter of practical examples about how this key reformation principle can be lived out in the pastoral office, congregational life, the home, and every arena of the lives of those who call Jesus, Lord.

In Anderson's conclusion to his book, he writes: "Returning to an emphasis on the care of souls by all Christians presents a necessary corrective to what has been called the 'churchification of Christian ministry,' what I have called 'playing church.' This

malady of the body of Christ has been diagnosed for ages, but the remedy requires more than naming the problem. It requires reclaiming the primacy of the care of souls, the role of pastor as shepherd, the resources and vision to equip the saints for this vital ministry, and a recovery of the life of faith in daily life, especially in and through the home" (232–233).

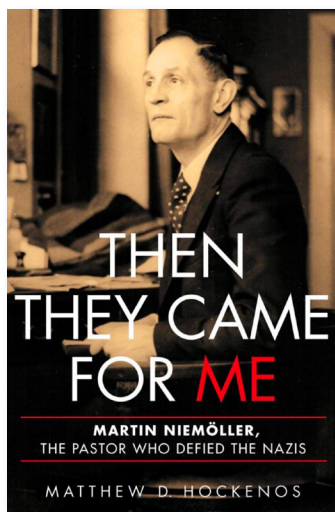
Chapter by chapter, Anderson builds the case for the centrality of every Christian being equipped and sent to be a shepherd of souls to those they love, work with, and encounter. A survey of chapter titles makes this more apparent:

1. Reclaiming the Ministry of Shepherding Souls
2. Pastor as Shepherd
3. A Basic Guide for All Shepherds
4. Shepherding in the Home
5. The Lay Leader as Shepherd of Souls
6. Milestones Ministry: A Model for Shepherding
7. Confirmation as Shepherding Souls
8. Congregational Life Equips Shepherds

For those familiar with Anderson's previous books, (*Frogs without Legs Can't Hear: Nurturing Disciples in the Home and Congregation* with Paul Hill; *Coming of Age: Exploring the Identity and Spirituality of Younger Men* with Paul Hill and Roland D. Martinson; *From the Great Omission to Vibrant Faith: The Role of the Home in Renewing the Church*; and *Vibrant Faith in the Congregation*) it is readily apparent how the Five Principles of Faith Formation, the Four Key Faith Practices, and Three Characteristics of Christians undergird the argument of this book. Do not despair if you have never read any of these previous books, much less heard of the 5/4/3 approach to ministry. He is careful to explain each of these core convictions, building on them to support each chapter.

As Rolf Jacobson states in his book endorsement: "There may be no more important book for intentional and reflective pastors to read this year than David Anderson's *Shepherd of Souls*. If you want to shape the congregation you serve into an intentional, faith-forming Christian community, this is an inviting place to start."

Greg Kaufmann
Director of Select Learning, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin



Then They Came for Me: Martin Niemöller, the Pastor who Defied the Nazis. By Matthew D. Hockenos. New York: Basic Books, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-4650-9786-9 (hardcover); 978-0-09787-6 (e-book). 336 pages. \$30.00.

Pastor Martin Niemöller is best remembered for his famous confession which is today inscribed on a wall in the Holocaust Museum:

“First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was not one left to speak for me.”

In detailing the nuanced life and legacy of Niemöller, biographer Matthew Hockenos offers the reader ample room for critical reflection on the failure of so many Christians to resist Nazi atrocities. To this end, Hockenos highlights at least three haunting questions that remain relevant for our generation.

First, what causes seemingly good people to stand on the sidelines as evil unfolds around them? In the case of Niemöller, his affection for strong government and his aversion to the Weimar Republic contributed to his initial support of the Nazis. Although Niemöller rejected racial anti-Semitism, he saw Jews primarily as a people in need of conversion and this narrow filament impaired his vision and muted his voice. Moreover, Niemöller rigidly adhered to Apostle Paul’s assertion that rebellion against the government was rebellion against God (Rom 13:1–7). His failure to read these verses in the context of the entirety of scripture sinfully slowed his entrance into the church struggle against Hitler.

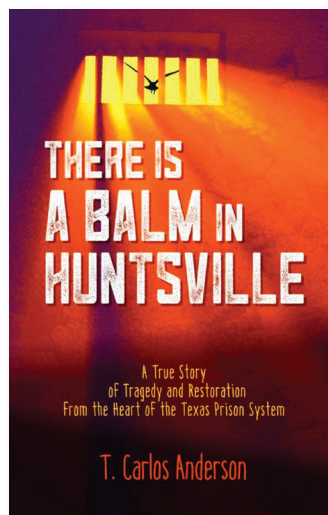
Second, what causes someone to resist evil? In the case of Niemöller, the bridge was the Christian church. When the Nazis began to pervert traditional Christian teachings, Niemöller repeatedly and unequivocally raised his voice, telling his congregants, “We are being drawn into a titanic battle between heaven and hell, between God and the devil, between angels and demons.” As a result of strong words such as these, Niemöller spent over seven years in Nazi concentration camps and narrowly escaped death.

Third, what does genuine repentance look like? After the war, Niemöller spent the remainder of his life engaged in acts of contrition, speaking on behalf of the marginalized, advocating for pacifism, and laboring “relentlessly to make a better, more equal, and more peaceful world.” This early enabler of Hitler would eventually lament: “Our guilt as Christians is much greater than the guilt of the Nazis, the German people, and the military because we knew which way was false and which was right... We are guilty of having been silent when we should have spoken.” According to Hockenos, it is the “imperfection of Niemöller’s moral compass that makes him all the more relevant today.”

Engaging in Niemöller’s life forces the reader to ask soul-searching questions about our own conduct and our own time. What can we do to make sure the church of today acts immediately and forcefully at the outset of persecution? How can we make sure our desire to spread the Gospel does not fuel hatred toward anyone? What are our own prejudices and how can we rid them from our minds? Unless and until these questions are answered, Christians may once again be tempted by seductive leaders promising power at the expense of all that we hold sacred.

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There Is a Balm in Huntsville: A True Story of Tragedy and Restoration from the Heart of the Texas Prison System. By T. Carlos Anderson. Lancaster, Pa.: Walnut Street Books, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-9475-9710-5. 320 pages. Paper. \$14.99.

This is both a cautionary tale and a story of hope. Driving drunk with his life out of control, 19-year-old Andrew recklessly collided at night with another car, killing two young people in the other auto, David and Beth. Shock waves were sent from the point of impact in all directions, changing the lives of families and friends forever. Although pleading not guilty likely would have procured a reduced sentence through plea bargaining, Andrew decided not to further distress the families and confessed his guilt. He was sentenced to two counts of intoxication manslaughter, each twenty years in length to be served consecutively.

Anderson meticulously describes the chain of events leading



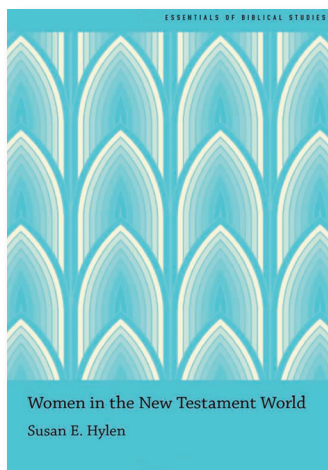
to and emanating from this tragedy. The author was invited into the lives of those involved and honors each one by his powers of empathic description. He skillfully and compassionately paints the contributions of each person brought into the orbit of this crime. One plot line involves Andrew's entry into recovery and his taking initiative to allow his story to be shared as a warning to others, especially by a high school teacher who partners to educate her students about real consequences that can follow from unintended actions. Andrew's story also appears in several other publications, each time as a way of making amends.

The thread of hope involves the process and power of restorative justice. Through unlikely and providential circumstances, the State of Texas introduced measures to begin the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Victim-Offender Dialogue. Two key characters in the book are David Doeffler and Lisa Looger, who painstakingly work with offenders and their victims through lengthy and deliberate steps, preparing them to meet together for personal healing and reconciliation. The terms of the process begin with the presupposition that the victim is always right: "Requests for face-to-face meetings would only be considered when victim-initiated, and offenders had to admit to complete fault and guilt in their crimes. Participation in the program would not lead to sentence reduction or parole board favor for the offender" (137). As these strictures make clear, this process was to serve the emotional and spiritual healing of victims without manipulation by offenders and was made available only to those who take full responsibility for their actions. Yet the healing effects for participants clearly are mutual.

This restorative justice narrative weaves together multiple threads. Readers are encouraged to immerse themselves in the book to discover the twists, turns, and outcomes in the lives of the characters that result from this innovative process. Although the lasting consequences of the tragedy are never hidden, the book provides a case study for reimagining criminal justice beyond hatred, scapegoating, and retribution. Real people do harmful things and countless real people suffer loss and grief as a result.

This book could be employed in classes with adolescents and book studies for adults, especially with parents of teenagers. Where churches observe a milestone at receiving a driver's license, this book could be provided as a gift or be made available in a church library. The tragedy is all too familiar. Anderson deserves our gratitude for a tale that can both save lives and lend hope of restoration for those affected by such tragedies.

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Women in the New Testament World.

By Susan E. Hylén.
Essentials of Biblical Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
ISBN: 978-0-1902-3758-5. xvi & 212 pages. Paper. \$99.00.

Discussion of women in the ancient world tends to go to extremes, typically in the direction of averring that they lived lives of total restriction. Susan E. Hylén brings balance to these conversations with accessible prose that gives more nuanced voice to the past. She shows that while ancient societies never considered women the social equals of men, the varied classes of women lived with more freedom than is usually imagined.

The arrangement of the book focuses on these varied nuances of women's experiences in a fresh way. Hylén lays a solid foundation in the introduction by posing a very basic question: "What is a woman?" (5). She shows that ancient peoples might not answer that question in the same way as people today; they might not even answer that question in the same ways as each other. Some thought there was only one gender—the male—and women were aberrations of that. Others saw women as completely different creatures. Hylén's point is that such differences demand that interpreters must engage all the data: "legal, social, and material conditions of women's lives alongside philosophical conceptions of sex and gender" (8).

The second chapter distinguishes her approach from those of past interpreters. Instead of positing that evidence for women leading in the ancient world is exceptional or limited, she suggests that different cultural norms invited leadership from women as expressions of appropriate feminine virtues. The following chapter describes those primary virtues—modesty, industry, and loyalty—and includes thorough historical data.

In the rest of the book, Hylén analyzes how the virtues come to expression in different arenas of life, including marriage, divorce, and widowhood (Ch. 4), class, wealth, and patronage (Ch. 5), occupations (Ch. 6), and speech and silence (Ch. 7). In each chapter she accounts for the differences between class and region and pays special attention to the ways in which each theme appears in the New Testament.

Women in the New Testament World certainly provides necessary balance to lopsided and frequently unfair conversations in which Christianity comes out as the champion for women in a dismal world of Greco-Roman and Jewish oppression. The lines are never so neat. That being said, when I put this book into the hands of students, I will also call attention to Hylén's statements



of commonality amid the variation. She shows that ancient authors agreed “that whichever qualities were viewed as inherently male were of greater value” (7) and women were “disadvantaged both in law and in social practice” (166). By noting the pervasive devaluing alongside “women’s substantial activity and contribution to their communities” (167), Hylen allows readers to “discover women in the New Testament acting in ways we did not consider possible” (164). If interpreters consider female leadership impossible in the ancient world, they might not notice when women in the New Testament are leading. Whether these activities of women were viewed “as a normal part of everyday life” (164) or as implications of the radical message proclaiming an incarnate God demands further discussion. In this succinctly powerful resource, Hylen has given interpreters the tools to engage this discussion well.

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