

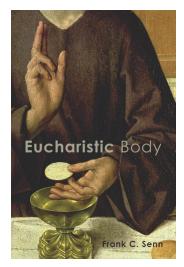
Book Reviews

October 2018

Section Editors: Craig Nessan, 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.



Eucharistic Body.
By Frank C. Senn.
Minneapolis: Fortress,
2017. ISBN:
978-1-5064-1676-2.
xiii & 200 pages. Paper.
\$39.00.

In his recent work, *Eucharistic Body*, prolific historian and retired pastor Frank C. Senn provides a compelling sketch of the various dimensions of the eucharistic life by

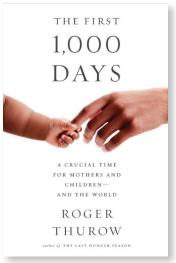
combining his personal faith journey and a lifetime of liturgical scholarship. The primary aim of the book is to bring to the fore "the sacramental body of Christ; the social body of Christ, which is the church that assembles to celebrate the Eucharist; and the body of the communicant who receives the sacramental body into his or her own body as a participant in the social body of the eucharistic assembly" (x). For Senn the eucharist is an embodied ecclesial act that has profound meaning, consequences, and practical pastoral theological implications.

The practical theological questions raised in the work include the significance of the altar or table in sacramental celebrations both historically and in contemporary practice, the place of the anaphora or thanksgiving at the table as the heart of eucharistic life, the question of absence and real presence and how it impacts our self-understanding of what we receive in the elements of bread and wine, the meaning "fencing the table" (145) for our own time in light of the historic patterns of Christian initiation, and the invitation to think carefully about our language whenever we encounter and express prayer and praise to the triune God in the liturgical assembly. These questions in this book are important because they raise again the continued need in our churches for the ongoing reform and renewal of worship. At the center of this renewal is Senn's call for the continued recovery of full and robust trinitarian eucharistic prayers in our assemblies

as a sign that the body of Christ is doxologically preparing to receive the body of Christ.

While the author is right to take seriously the preparation for sacramental reception, I wonder if his strong emphasis on discipline at the table is a bit overstated, particularly for Lutherans who have historically emphasized the gift character of the sacrament. Luther himself emphasized that the right preparation for the meal is trust in the words "given for you," "shed for you." Sin is a corporate, and not merely individual, reality that calls us to reconciliation with one another. However, if we could be "properly disposed for sacrament" by the strict exercise of penitential practices, would we really have need for the forgiveness proclaimed to us in the sacrament? Yes, we have need of confession and absolution, yet an overemphasis on right preparation sounds more like the Reformed third use of the law. Overall, the book is a profound historical and deeply moving personal testament by a pastoral and liturgical scholar, whose life was transformed by the encounter with the crucified and risen Christ in the sacrament. All those who have themselves been transformed in this encounter should read this work. They will not be disappointed.

Shane R Brinegar Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago



The First 1,000 Days: A Crucial Time for Mothers and Children —and the World.

By Roger Thurow. New York: PublicAffairs, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-6103-9585-4. viii & 279 pages. Cloth. \$26.99.

This is another stellar contribution by Roger Thurow (also author of *Enough: Why the World's Poorest Starve*

in an Age of Plenty and The Last Hunger Season: A Year in an African Farm Community on the Brink of Change) toward the reduction and elimination of extreme hunger in our world. As the title proposes, the first 1000 days—from pregnancy to the age of two years—are the critical period of intervention for preventing the developmental stunting of infants and small children that would continue to affect them negatively for the rest of their lives.

Chronic nutrient depletion, resulting from inadequate nutrient intake, infection, or both, leads to retardation of skeletal growth in children and loss of, or failure to accumulate, muscle mass and fat; this linear growth is never fully regained. Chronic undernutrition (also) has neurological consequences [75, quoted from the International Food Policy Research Institute].



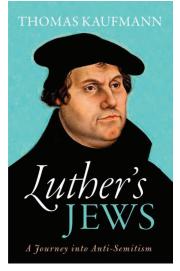
Thurow brings vivid case material about women and their children, who have participated in organized nutrition programs from Uganda, India, Guatemala, and Chicago, to describe the achievements, limitations, and ongoing problems facing impoverished people in specific contexts to attain sufficiency in nutrition and other survival necessities.

Among the dilemmas facing poor people are not only the availability and cost of nutritious food but a myriad of other complicating factors: access to adequate pre-natal and newborn health care, perilous birthing conditions, basic hygiene, conditions to support breast feeding, medical treatment to prevent child mortality, gender bias against girls, sanitation, cognitive stimulation, biofortification, vitamin supplements, and parenting education, especially for mothers. The number of issues that can undermine intentional efforts to provide for children during the first 1000 days seems overwhelming, even with the best preparation and intention by families.

The book demonstrates how endemic poverty engulfs every aspect of life for those living on the margins of the global economy. While there are success stories in the case material, the overall conclusion is a summons for more equitable distribution of the world's wealth. While statistics from the most recent decades indicate overall progress in addressing chronic malnutrition worldwide, current trends in the U.S. are ominous for the willingness of political and corporate leaders to fund the kinds of programs Thurow promotes. The failure of political leaders to support either a domestic safety net or foreign aid for the purposes of economic development will only increase the magnitude of hunger, accelerating the migration caused by violent conflicts, climate change, and maldistribution of wealth.

It is vital for church leaders to educate about the causes of hunger and to advocate for the large number of individuals who are living on the economic edge. Much of the rage we are witnessing domestically and across the globe is fueled by the economic disparity that is the underlying presupposition of this book. Only by amplifying the voices of poor people and their advocates, like Thurow, can we keep hope alive for sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all.

Craig L. Nessan Wartburg Theological Seminary



Luther's Jews: A Journey into Anti-Semitism. By Thomas Kaufmann. Translated by Lesley Sharpe and Jeremy Noakes. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-1987-3854-1. vii & 193 pages. Cloth. \$30.00.

Thomas Kaufmann is one of the most globally recognized historians working on themes related to the Ref-

ormation. One of the most understated of these themes at the observance of the 500th Reformation anniversary has been Luther's engagement with and writings against the Jews, especially based on the image of the Jews he construed; thus the book title. Kaufmann's book, translated from the 2014 German edition, is an extensive historical treatment of Luther's complex and finally disastrous engagement with the Jews.

What we learn from the details is that Luther only had minimal contacts with actual Jewish people, mostly with Jewish converts to Christianity. Luther's writings from beginning to end are embedded in the fixed paradigm that since the post-New Testament rabbinic period, the Jews have been rejected by God and fated to wander the earth as an apostate people. This view persists from Luther's earliest biblical commentaries to the end of his life, most wretchedly in his late treatise, "On the Jews and Their Lies" (1543) and evidenced as well in the sermons preached at the very end of his life.

Scholars dealing with Luther's writings on and against the Jews have overinterpreted the significance of "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew" (1523). This has led to the fallacy of contrasting an early Luther who was favorable to the Jewish people and a late Luther vindictive against the Jewish people. This view has prevailed even though this text is predicated on the anticipated conversion of Jews to Christianity now that the gospel was finally being proclaimed by the Reformers. Kaufmann's reading does not succumb to this overgeneralization; he is too rigorous a historian for that. However, he does not adequately account for that treatise in relationship to Luther's overall paradigm that regarded the Jews as a people under deserved judgment by God.

There is much excellent detail in Kaufmann's treatment and it is to be commended for right historical remembering in Jewish-Christian relations. The horrific proposals of Luther at the end of his life are presented with force in their historical context. In "On the Jews and their Lies" Luther advocated severe measures. To the civil authorities Luther recommended the following: burn down synagogues, destroy Jewish homes, confiscate prayer books and Talmudic writings, forbid rabbis to teach, abol-

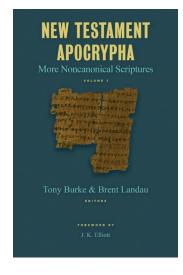


ish safe conduct for Jews, prohibit usury by Jews, and enforce the Jews in manual labor. To the pastors he commended: burn down synagogues; confiscate prayer books, Talmudic writings, and the Bible; prohibit Jewish prayer and teaching; and forbid Jews to utter the name of God publicly.

What are we to make of this catastrophic legacy, especially as it contributed to anti-Semitism in subsequent centuries, particularly in Nazi Germany and in hate groups to this day? Versions of "On the Jews and their Lies" published as anti-Semitic propaganda continue to proliferate on the Internet and through online booksellers. In 1994 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) repudiated Luther's writings against the Jews: http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/ Declaration_Of_The_ELCA_To_The_Jewish_Community.pdf It remains an unfinished task, however, for Lutheran seminaries, universities, and congregations to make teaching about the destructive utterances of Luther against the Jews a part of the regular curriculum.

As fine a historical work as Kaufmann provides, the question arises about the responsibility of historians to render ethical judgment about Luther's writings against the Jews. Kaufmann offers this: "The only way forward is to accept the truth, no doubt painful to some but theologically inescapable, that we can no more put our faith blindly in Luther's theology than responsible twenty-first century adults would voluntarily place themselves in the hands of a sixteenth-century surgeon" (11). This is a weak analogy. It is time for historians to join theologians in moving beyond the business of "historicizing" (159), to insisting that church bodies repudiate Luther's writings against the Jews through acts of solemn contrition and repentance, exactly as the Lutheran World Federation did before the Mennonite World Conference in 2010 for crimes against Anabaptists.

Craig L. Nessan Wartburg Theological Seminary



New Testament
Apocrypha: More
Noncanonical
Scriptures. Vol 1.
Edited by Tony Burke
and Brent Landau.
Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 2016. ISBN:
978-0-8028-7289-0.
xlx & 585 pages. Cloth.
\$75.00.

This collection of thirty noncanonical texts is in-

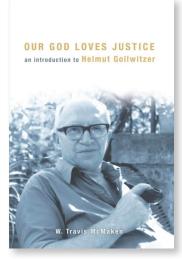
tended to supplement J. K. Elliot's 2005 collection *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) by including recently discovered apocryphal texts not available to Elliot, as well as texts not only from early Christianity but also through the rise of Islam in the seventh century. Many of the texts have never before been translated into a modern scholarly language. The volume has a foreword by J. K. Eliott, a detailed introduction, and thirty apocryphal texts categorized as "Gospels and Related Traditions of New Testament Figures," "Apocryphal Acts and Related Traditions," "Epistles," and "Apocalypses." Unfortunately, perhaps for considerations of space, there is no identifying list of contributors.

In this collection, readers will encounter the Star of Bethlehem as a luminous Jesus; the horrifying flying, severed head of John the Baptist; a theologically heretical Jesus who, incognito, harasses a paralytic to test the man's faith; and a Jesus who, along with his disciples, dances around the cross. Beyond their entertainment value, the texts in this collection enlighten us about ancient Christian theology, ritual practices, and history. Also, these apocryphal texts "are creative literary products in their own right" (xlii) and thus worthy of study for their own sake.

This book is an important contribution to New Testament studies and church history. Sadly, the book's high price will keep it out of the hands of all but interested scholars and libraries. If at all possible, it should be assigned in the appropriate graduate seminar. Pastors could consult a library copy of this book for teaching purposes. Especially relevant to this last point is the translation and analysis of Papyrus Oxyrhyncus 210, which due to its fragmentary nature, is difficult to translate and interpret. A copy of a page or two of the reconstructed text and the editor's accompanying notes would help parishioners understand the difficulties faced in analyzing and interpreting ancient texts, including biblical ones.

Lynn Allan Kauppi Codex Editorial Services Phoenix





Our God Loves Justice: An Introduction to Helmut Gollwitzer. By W. Travis McMaken. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-4514-8274-4. Paper. xiii & 221 pages. \$19.90.

The author interprets Helmut Gollwitzer, one of the best Barth scholars in Germany, for an American

context. As one of the most influential Protestant theologians of the twentieth century, there has been little attention to his theological contribution. Grounded in the Lutheran tradition, especially in the grace of justification and economic justice, he regards Karl Barth as his most important teacher. Barth wanted Gollwitzer as his successor at the University of Basel, but to no avail. Involved actively in the Confessing Church against National Socialism and the collaborating German Christians, Gollwitzer became an important exponent of Jewish-Christian renewal, fighting against antisemitism, together with his student and friend F.W. Marquardt.

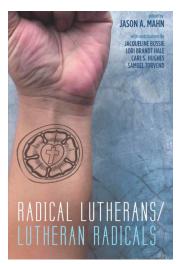
Travis McMaken is an able scholar not only in dealing with Gollwitzer's life and prophetic activity, but also is engaged academically to explore his own solidarity theology through the agenda of Gollwitzer. Gollwitzer's theology is, first of all, rooted in the biblical witness of God YHWH as totaliter aliter, who is revealed in Jesus Christ in the presence of the Holy Spirit. This God can be neither objectified nor ontologized in a philosophical sense. Given this, along with Barth's doctrine of God, Gollwitzer stands under the influence of Martin Buber and Kornelis Miskotte. God comes to us as "Thou Objectivity" in the event of grace and confession of faith, such that it contradicts Jüngel's well-known attempt at interpreting Barth's Trinity according to an ontology of God in a Hegelian-Heideggerian fashion (70). For Gollwitzer "God IS" in coming for renewing and transforming the society and world in a completely different manner, rather than ontologically "becoming." His position finds an echo in Barth's sharp critique of Heidegger in the teaching of das Nichtige in Church Dogmatics III/3. The contextual character of Gollwitzer's solidarity theology comes from God totaliter aliter, who becomes the ground for his political theology in a direction and orientation toward democratic socialism and the kingdom of God (87).

His famous argument reads: "the wholly other God wants a wholly other society" (93), which corresponds to more democracy and more social justice in a permanent manner. This direction and line takes the form of reflection on God's identity, who is revealed in Jesus Christ as "the partisan of the poor" (Barth).

Thus, the doctrine of God is the axis of Gollwitzer's solidarity theology, and also underlies his prophetic involvement in public issues in terms of *status confessionis* against the false teaching of the church. Karl Barth once characterized his theological line and orientation in response to Eberhard Bethge's Bonhoeffer book: "ethics—co-humanity—servant church—discipleship—[democratic] socialism—peace movement and, hand in hand with all that, politics" (Barth, *Briefe 1916-1968*, 404).

Gollwitzer gave lifelong commitment to this prophetic orientation in his political theology, Christian-Marxist dialogue, Jewish-Christian renewal, and recognition of people of other faiths and cultures. McMaken makes a great contribution by introducing Gollwitzer's theology and life, while encouraging the church to draw attention to his theological insight and political social responsibility. McMaken's book should become one of the important sources for further research in this field between theology, political economic issues, and interreligious solidarity. This book is well-written and structured with conceptual clarity, making Gollwitzer's solidarity theology for emancipation more accessible to those involved in renewing public spheres for a better society in accordance with the prophetically inspired socialism coming from the kingdom of God (166–167).

Paul Chung, Th.D. Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church Orinda, California



Radical Lutherans/ Lutheran Radicals. Edited by Jason A. Mahn. Eugene: Cascade, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-4982-3491-7. xii & 156 pages. Paper. \$22.00.

The argument of this book is simple: that Lutherans who pursue radical societal reforms, and radicals whose commitments arise from their grounding in the Lutheran

tradition, comprise an essential portion of the historical and contemporary Lutheran movement. Do not mistake the simplicity for acceptability. This is a necessary argument for present-day American Lutherans, for many definitions now exist of what constitutes "true" Lutheranism. Mahn, along with Jaqueline Bussie, Lori Brandt Hale, Carl S. Hughes, and Samuel Torvend make a powerful case that the words "radical" and "Lutheran" aren't mutually exclusive.

Put more strongly, Torvend argues in the first chapter that Luther himself was a radical to his peers. He points out that Luther lambasted the wealthy for their greed, for it preyed upon

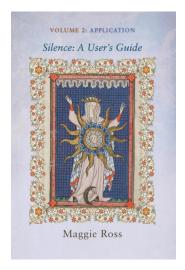


the vulnerable poor. He emphasizes Luther's egalitarian approach to baptism, which led the reformer to inspire the development of public schools for boys and girls. Torvend rehearses how Luther critiqued those in power, arguing against Johann Tetzel and Pope Leo X, and how that placed him in a decidedly radical position. The point, then, is clear: Lutheranism was born a radical movement.

The next chapters detail three historical figures—Soren Kierkegaard, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Dorothy Soelle-who are remembered for their radical ideas and action, but less so for their Lutheran origins. Hughes reveals how Kierkegaard's philosophy embodies Lutheran principles, including a Theology of the Cross and an employment of the Law/Gospel dialectic. Hale highlights the constant theological reflection, upon Luther and Lutheran tradition, that typified Bonhoeffer as he acted out again against the oppressive, violent powers of his world. Even his decision to take part in an assassination plot against Hitler was born of Lutheran sensibilities. In Hale's view, Bonhoeffer concluded the desperate times called for someone, for him, to take the sin of murder upon himself in order to save those at risk, but did so only in the trust that God's radical grace may save him. Bussie then shows that Soelle strikes another typically Lutheran tone, that of God's hiddenness. Even more unique is that as Soelle notes God's presence with, and hiddenness in, the poor, she develops a Lutheran liberation theology. Mahn pens the final chapter, with an eye toward applying the book's learnings to the reader's life. The potential for our vocations as radical Lutherans, or Lutheran radicals, takes center stage.

The ultimate goal, then, is not only to detail the historical ways in which Lutherans have been radical, or that radicals have been Lutheran. In an oxymoronic way, it is to normalize the radical nature of the gospel within the lives of Lutherans and the tradition of Lutheranism. The argument is cogent. The facts are sound. Yet, the proof truly lies in whether readers find personal connections with the book's subjects and authors, enough resonance with their own lives to take the risk of radical living in a tradition often hesitant to follow Luther's radical example. In my eyes, *Radical Lutherans/Lutheran Radicals* offers a timely consideration for twenty-first century Lutherans about the nature of our vocation in this particular world that God has called us to love and serve.

Drew Tucker University Pastor, Capital University Columbus, Ohio



Silence: A User's Guide. Volume 2: Application. By Maggie Ross. Eugene: Cascade, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-6256-4797-9. x & 140 pages. Paper. \$20.00.

In the first volume of Silence: A User's Guide—Process Maggie Ross offered extended reflection and commentary on "the work of silence." Whereas

silence at one time was an indispensable dimension of the Christian tradition, the loss of silence has impoverished our lives. Now in the second volume on *Application*, which completes the series, Ross focuses on practices that can serve to immerse us in the contemplative life. The way of silence is not only for the initiated but can also enhance the lives of ordinary folk. In fact, Ross argues that absence of—even flight from—silence in the flow of our days leads to shallowness and the impoverishment of the spiritual life.

Chapter One on "Textual Silence" builds a bridge from the first volume by providing instruction on reading ancient texts, particularly classical spiritual texts, with strategies for entering the readings at a deep level. *A Revelation of Love* by Julian of Norwich provides the basis for an extended exercise for attending to apophatic images and "surfaces" to arrive at the wonder of "beholding." To behold is the ultimate destination toward which silence leads us, encountering the very presence of God.

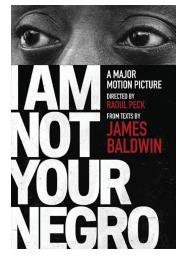
Chapters Two and Three carry forward this exploration of the significance of the term, behold, in the Old Testament and New Testament, respectively: "We might go so far as to say that the entire message of the Bible can be summarized in this one word, behold. All that God has ever asked of his creation is to behold: to behold God, to behold one another and the creation, to behold the goodness that is self-outpouring love" (49). Ross catalogues Scripture texts from both testaments to underscore that revelation in beholding of God is the crucial hermeneutical path, even as contemporary Bible translations often fail to honor this truth. In the New Testament the word, glory, is laden with the weight of beholding.

Most alluring are the brief Chapter Four on "Liturgical Silence" and Chapter Five, which provides "A Rite for Contemplative Eucharist." Ross criticizes the verbosity and trendiness of much contemporary liturgy, which fails to deliver worshippers into that for which the soul most longs, deep silence. I was fascinated by the author's description of the rubrics, structure, and texts for the Contemplative Eucharist, an approach which begs for application and to be tested in experience.



Whereas the majority of our lives are consumed in self-consciousness and while even spiritual practices fostering "mindfulness" can only take us to the brink, there yet lies an apprehension more profound, more in tune with the divine image within us, what Ross names "deep mind." This book invites the reader to cross the threshold to behold.

Craig L. Nessan Wartburg Theological Seminary



Film: *I Am Not Your Negro*. Directed by
Raoul Peck. Texts by
James Baldwin. Magnolia Home Entertainment. 94 minutes.
\$26.98. Companion
Book: *I Am Not Your Negro*. By James Baldwin. New York: Vintage
International, 2017.
ISBN: 978-0-5254-3469-6. xxiii & 118
pages. Paper. \$15.00.

James Baldwin (1924-1987) was an American novelist and social critic, in whose writings a major theme involved witnessing to the brutal history and intolerable predicament of black people in this country from its founding until now. The film, I Am Not Your Negro, and the companion book are based on the fragments of a text Baldwin never brought to completion. This book was to be titled Remember This House; it was to be his magnum opus. The central figures in the narrative were Medgar Evers, murdered on June 12, 1963; Malcolm X, murdered on February 21, 1965; and Martin Luther King Jr., murdered on April 4, 1968. Baldwin knew that by telling this story he would have to revisit the past, including his relationships with all three of these men whom he knew, and unveil before white people the reality of racism that America has never been able to face.

Raoul Peck reconstructs Baldwin's work through vintage film footage, featuring Baldwin juxtaposed not only with Evers, Malcolm X, and King but with depictions of black and white film characters in movies, TV, and popular culture. The viewer not only listens to the prophetic voices of the film's central figures but also engages period music, political events, and archival clips of Baldwin interviewed on news programs. The narration of Baldwin's words by Samuel L. Jackson adds gravitas to the stark confrontation with the unresolved divide that is race in America.

A quote from the end of the film haunts me: "What white people have to do is try and find out in their own hearts why it was necessary to have a 'nigger' in the first place, because I'm not a nigger, I'm a man. But if you think I'm a nigger, it means you need him. The question that you've got to ask yourself, the white population of this country has got to ask itself, North and South because it's one country and for a Negro there is no difference between the North and the South—it's just a difference in the way they castrate you, but the fact of the castration is the American fact ... If I'm not the nigger here and you invented him, you the white people invented him, then you've got to find out why. And the future of the country depends on that, whether or not it is able to ask that question" (108–109).

Based on subsequent history—including the daily indignities, mass incarcerations, and litany of names of murdered black sons and daughters that leads today to the Black Lives Matter movement—white Americans are challenged to address Baldwin's question now as much as ever before. Baldwin was witness to these things, which he analyzed with precision and communicated with stunning clarity. Church leaders need to view this film and are encouraged to lead conversations about the topics it raises. To this end, I offer the following discussion questions to guide conversation about the troubling issues raised by the film:

- In telling U.S. history, what prevents us from admitting how the displacement of indigenous nations and the theft of their land alongside the enslavement of African people for the exploitation or their labor benefitted the economic status of white immigrants until now?
- How does the guilty collective conscience of white people about this history lead to blaming Native Americans and African Americans still today?
- Why, as documented in the film, have we needed to depict white innocence and black inferiority in films and TV? What examples can we draw from contemporary culture of this same tendency?
- Why do white people need reassurances that racism is getting better, while black people continue to face institutional barriers in employment, housing, education, and health care?
- If Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour in American life, what can be done about it?
- Why did white Americans need to create a "nigger" and how should we address Baldwin's question today?

Craig L. Nessan Wartburg Theological Seminary





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