

OTHER BOOKS OF INTEREST

Wholly Citizens: God's Two Realms and Christian Engagement with the World

Joel Biermann

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017 (228 pages)

Theologian Joel Biermann has penned an accessible introduction to Christian social thought in the Lutheran tradition that follows on his previous work on virtue ethics, *A Case for Character* (Fortress, 2014). In *Wholly Citizens* Biermann first seeks to overthrow misreadings of Luther's two-kingdoms idea, arguing that Luther's two kingdoms (or realms) cannot be identified with American notions of church and state. Rather, Luther's duality of temporal and spiritual realms is comprehensive, excluding "simply nothing" (xxiii). In this Biermann is mediating a growing scholarly consensus to a lay readership. No book by a conservative Lutheran theologian would be complete without a few swipes at Calvinists, and in this Biermann does not disappoint. He clearly signals that he is "not among those cheering" (xx) about recent Calvinist appropriations of Luther's two kingdoms, and he briefly engages one such view, that of David VanDrunen (43–45). After clearing the ground, Biermann builds a two-realms approach to Christian cultural engagement that is framed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's four mandates of work, marriage, government, and church (Biermann argues for Bonhoeffer's consistency with Luther). He then applies the two-realms paradigm to the work of the church and its ministers and to the lives of individual Christians. One of the most eye-opening features of the book is Biermann's repeated argument, developed from Luther's own statements and the inseparability of the two realms, that faithful pastors *must* address political matters from the pulpit (though this claim is not without qualification). Biermann's position on the church's relation to politics—a counterintuitive one to many American Christians—is worthy of wide consideration. Throughout the book Biermann insists that Luther's understanding of God's two realms is not merely Lutheran doctrine, but church doctrine, founded on

the rule of faith and Scripture. This is not so much argued as asserted, though a thorough defense of that claim would require another, quite different book.

Calling All Years Good: Christian Vocation throughout Life's Seasons

Kathleen A. Cahalan and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Editors)

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2017 (244 pages)

Calling All Years Good is a collection of essays by members of The Collegeville Institute Seminar on Vocation across the Lifespan. Taking an approach that may be unique in its field, this volume addresses Christian vocation from a “lifespan perspective” that considers how “calling is experienced, formed, and lived out across the whole of human life from infancy to old age” (12). After two introductory essays, the contributors trace and develop the vocational aspects of all the stages of human life in six chapters: childhood, adolescence, younger adulthood, middle adulthood, late adulthood, and older adulthood. Along the way, New Testament scholar Jane Patterson provides nine short “biblical interludes” that highlight vocational motifs in Scripture for each life stage. The volume is intentionally interdisciplinary, drawing sociology and psychology into conversation with theology. Classical theology does not appear to be welcome in this conversation, however. Rather, the theology represented here is suspicious of “traditional ontologies” and “static” concepts of God and prefers “open, dynamic, and evolving understandings of God’s relationship to the world” (15). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that the concept of vocation itself seems ever evolving and open, or simply unclear. Indeed, the concept is so open and all-encompassing that one comes away from the volume wondering what vocation is *not*. These criticisms aside, the editors and contributors should be commended for taking such a comprehensive approach and for raising wide-ranging questions about vocation at every stage of life, from birth to death.

Great Christian Jurists in English History

Mark Hill and R. H. Helmholz (Editors)

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017 (375 pages)

This is the first volume in the Great Christian Jurists series, a subseries within Cambridge’s Law and Christianity series. Each of the book’s fourteen chapters is by a different author and examines the way Christian faith impacted a particular English jurist’s life and contribution to the field of law. The scope is wide, reaching from the thirteenth century (Henry of Bratton) to the twentieth (Lord Denning), and the chapters are of consistently high quality. Thus the volume is no mere biographical collection, but a unique contribution for the way it explores the complicated interactions between faith and practice, ecclesiastical law and common law, and recurring questions about the boundaries between civil and ecclesial jurisdictions. Readers may be disappointed that the volume does not contain a bibliography, but the editors and publisher may be forgiven for this omission, since to compile a comprehensive bibliography for such an erudite collection of articles would be a monumental task. The footnotes are a treasure trove of primary—including archival—and secondary sources. In sum, this is an excellent start for the Great Christian Jurists series, and it has set a high bar for subsequent volumes.

Christianity and Natural Law: An Introduction

Norman Doe (Editor)

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017 (281 pages)

Christians often present natural law as common ground for moral discourse with non-Christians in the public square. Norman Doe's collection (appearing in Cambridge's *Law and Christianity* series) focuses instead on natural law as common ground for moral and ecumenical discourse among Christians. Richard Helmholz's opening piece, "Natural Law and Christianity: A Brief History," is both an accessible orientation for students and a helpful reorientation for experienced scholars. Then follow chapters on natural law in each of seven Christian traditions: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed, and Baptist. Each is written by a scholar with expertise—and in many cases, affiliation—in the tradition discussed. Hence one of the notable, perhaps unique, features of the volume: its focus on the way natural law functions in ecclesiastical law and church order. The tradition-specific chapters sketch the state of the controversy over natural law and present the views of significant natural law thinkers in the history of their respective traditions. The collection is filled out by essays on natural law in the ecumenical movement, natural law in the Abrahamic religions, and philosophical matters related to natural law. In the concluding essay, "Towards a Jurisprudence of Christian Law," Russell Sandberg describes (and seeks to mollify) the ongoing conflict between natural-law and positivist jurisprudence, and he suggests some ways forward for interaction between the two camps. At certain points it seems that the authors were given too tall a task when they were asked to present an entire ecclesial tradition's natural law thought in the space of one chapter. Nevertheless, the volume's topic and goal are laudable, and the result is a useful entry point into the multiconfessional nature of Christian natural law thought.

Introducing Protestant Social Ethics:

Foundations in Scripture, History, and Practice

Brian Matz

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2017 (271 pages)

Brian Matz is associate professor of the history of Christianity and holds an endowed chair in Catholic thought at Fontbonne University. He is a well-established scholar in patristic history and Catholic social thought, and here he sets out to write a primer on Protestant social ethics. Matz intentionally does not survey the field of Protestant social ethics or its many internal debates. Rather, his stated goal is to present the essential principles of social ethics in order to help students *do* social ethics for themselves (xvi). There are fifteen chapters in three parts. Part 1 outlines the social teaching of Scripture, but unfortunately this outline is rather one dimensional. Matz focuses almost exclusively on biblical themes of social justice and God's concern for outsiders, the poor, and the oppressed. Important biblical (and Protestant) themes on social-ethical topics such as marriage, family, vocation, and work are scarcely mentioned. In part 2, after a survey of the patristic and medieval eras, Matz highlights Protestant contributions to the doctrine of the two kingdoms, but here he inaccurately identifies the two kingdoms as the church and the state (xv, 101–3), rather than, more accurately, the spiritual and temporal realms. There is also one chapter on Protestant contributions to social ethics in the modern era.

Part 3 is a very good overview of five essential principles in Christian social ethics (human dignity, common good, justice, solidarity, and subsidiarity), and it would serve well in an introductory ethics class. On the whole, however, the book is not really focused on distinctively Protestant social ethics. Matz even indicates that he has actually introduced Christian social ethics “more broadly” (220, 154). The title of the book is therefore a bit misleading. Part 1 is more of an introduction to biblical social justice than an introduction to biblical social ethics, and the rest of the book is more of an introduction to Christian social ethics than an introduction to Protestant social ethics. In the best light, one might see this as an introduction to Christian social ethics *for* Protestants.

Church, Market, and Media: A Discursive Approach to Institutional Religious Change

Marcus Moberg

London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017 (210 pages)

The author, a senior researcher in comparative religion at Abo Akademi University in Finland, brings a discourse analysis theory and methodology—heavily influenced by the work of Norman Fairclough—to the study of how churches have been impacted and changed by “processes of marketization and mediatization” (9). Specifically, Moberg examines recent documents from several mainline and majority Protestant churches in the United States (the Presbyterian Church USA, United Methodist Church, and Evangelical Lutheran Church), Britain (the Church of England), and Nordic countries (the Church of Denmark, Church of Sweden, and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland). He seeks to show not only how the rise of media and markets has affected these Protestant churches, but especially how this change is both evident in and effected by the texts these churches have produced. To that end, Moberg works in several disciplines: critical discourse analysis with its attention to ideology, hegemony, and power; economics; and media studies—all in the service of the sociology of religion. The mixture of these disparate disciplines necessitates extensive introduction and methodological groundwork in part 1 (nearly half of the book). Then Moberg turns to the study proper in part 2, in which excerpts from church statements are presented, labeled as particular kinds of discourse, and examined for evidence of marketization and mediatization, particularly for their use of new public management (NPM) techniques, which are “a direct product of neoliberalism” (49). This part seems rather selective in its data and, at best, preliminary in its conclusions. The discursive method itself, and the justification of it, seems to be the deeper goal of the book. Part 1, along with the bibliography, could be of interest to scholars in any of the several disciplines used here, and part 2 may spark discussion about market and media influences within the churches whose statements are analyzed.

Religion and the Morality of the Market
Daromir Rudnyckyj and Filippo Osella (Editors)

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017 (308 pages)

The overlap and interplay of religion and markets is a diverse global phenomenon extending beyond Christianity and Western contexts. *Religion and the Morality of the Market* consists of ethnographic and sociological studies of this phenomenon. As the editors state, the goal of the volume is to “demonstrate the diversity of forms of religious practice” that emerge from a new economic landscape that “emphasizes neoliberal principles of market freedom and individual entrepreneurship” (10). Furthermore, the studies highlight the “common contingent historical milieu” in which specific religious and market practices develop (13). The balance of the material is weighted heavily toward non-Western subjects, which is welcome and refreshing. Most of the essays address highly specific contexts and subjects. Representative of this specificity is Julie Y. Chu’s fascinating essay on fortune telling practices among customs inspectors in southern China. The collection includes five studies of contemporary market practices in Islamic contexts, as well as an essay on the market realities of the prosperity gospel movement (Simon Coleman), a case study of a successful Ugandan Catholic charity as an outlier to Catholic Social Teaching and neoliberalism (China Scherz), and an advocative final essay on Pope Francis’s critique of capitalism’s insensitivity to the global challenge of migration (Valentina Napolitano). One might take issue with the descriptive-cum-prescriptive method of some of the essays, but the cumulative effect of the book serves to support the editors’ claim that the “two domains” of religion and markets cannot be “neatly cleaved” (14).