

BOOK REVIEWS

Luther@500 and Beyond: Martin Luther's Theology Past, Present & Future. Edited by Stephen Hultgren, Stephen Pietsch, and Jeffrey Silcock. Adelaide, Australia: ATF Press Publishing, 2019. x + 311 pp.

A collection of fourteen essays by international and ecumenical scholars, this volume is the result of a summer 2016 conference on Luther's theology, sponsored by Australian Lutheran College in Adelaide, Australia. The essays are of high scholarly caliber. It is, unfortunately, not possible to elaborate on each one. Many essays also display a commitment to good pastoral practices.

Theodor Dieter reexamines the *Ninety-Five Theses* in light of his recent ecumenical discussions with Roman Catholic scholars. After reading Dieter, it is clear that the theses should not be seen through the lens of later Protestant polemics but instead as a debate over the nature of "penalties" in connection with indulgences. The scholastics assumed two approaches to penalties, a *punitive* one which imposes works of prayer, fasting, and alms on the penitent, completing what sinners owe God, and a *medicinal* one which seeks to prevent the offender from committing the same sin again. Dieter notes that "Luther reduces punishment to the medicinal function alone . . . This is the consequence of denying that there is a divine righteousness that requires a punishment for every sin" (18). In Dieter's estimation, Luther "is so focused on the medicinal aspect of penalties that the notion of a punitive function simply has no place and makes no sense." Following his mentor Staupitz, Luther held that God's commandments must be read in light of the "Savior's wounds," thereby making the "formerly bitter word 'penitence' a sweet word, calling for a 'change in our affects and love'" (22).

Mark Thompson presents the significance of the Leipzig Disputation (1519) and notes that the conflict over the primacy of the pope had "never before in the history of Christianity" occurred "in this magnitude" (47). Roman Catholic scholar Franz Posset argues that Luther was dependent upon the thinking of Bernard of Clairvaux.

The tradition stemming from Bernard was focused on the crucified Jesus Christ as embracing sinners as evidenced in the Augustinian Friary in Nuremberg's painting of Bernard himself as embraced by the Crucified (55).

Jeff Silcock evenhandedly explores the controversial question of the degree to which Luther's early "theology of the cross," grounded in monastic Augustinian "humility piety," continued to influence the mature Luther. He contrasts the Heidelberg Disputation with Luther's April 16, 1530, sermon at Coburg Castle in which Luther no longer advocates an "exemplarist Christology" in which the "way of salvation entails conforming ourselves to Christ in his suffering by carrying our cross in faithful discipleship"; instead, Christ's suffering on our behalf is clearly distinguished from the suffering of faithful discipleship (89). For the later Luther, the cross refers to the trials that disciples undergo in their faithful witness, but such trials do not contribute to justification but only sanctification (90).

Risto Saarinen presents Luther's theology of "giving and the gift." Developing the thinking of Bo Kristian Holm, Saarinen notes that

When Luther realizes that he can only renounce himself up to a certain point and not beyond he can leave exaggerated humility behind and begin to trust in God alone. Due to this new trust, he can affirm the world and maybe even himself in some sense. The mature Luther thus replaces exaggerated humility with a confidence in God and a more positive view of human reception. (157)

Stephen Pietsch writes on a pastoral approach to those who are suicidal, appealing to Luther's consolatory letter to Jonas von Stockhausen (1532). Wisely, Pietsch notes that "Pastoral care, as Luther sees it, is only honest and effective if it can strengthen and uphold people to endure suffering, drawing on the strengthening power of the external word, the Spirit's comfort, spoken and enacted incarnationally by and through others" (120-21). Andrew Pfeiffer sees the *Small Catechism* as a resource for cross-cultural mission. He examines not only the impact of the Catechism in New Guinea, but also how the Australian Lutheran Church has packaged it as an alternative to "cultural achievement," that is, cultural demands prevalent in

Australian society (215–16). Finally, Thomas Kothmann’s essay on Luther’s approach to pedagogy notes that like us Luther honored developmental psychology, conceding “that the child has a different status than the adult” (243).

All in all, despite a saturation of Luther resources surrounding the year 2017, this collection is most welcome.

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The End of Empathy: Why White Protestants Stopped Loving Their Neighbors. By John W. Compton. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. 399 pp.

Lutherans make nary an appearance in this book which covers social justice advocacy amongst United States Protestants in the twentieth century. But this is a must-read book for anyone interested in how church, culture, and politics intersect, how denominations numerically grow or shrink, the status of the clergy in the wider public, and Christian engagement with economic inequity, racial injustice, or environmental matters. Compton, a political scientist at Chapman University, masterfully documents his research. In a word, he shows how American Protestantism, as it came to be dominated by Evangelicalism, ceased supporting social reform and instead began to resist it.

Compton contends that throughout much of the twentieth century, mainline Protestantism led its members to “engage in apparently emphatic or otherwise costly forms of political behavior” precisely because it held a high standing amongst its members (5). Mainliners enjoyed high social status due to the fact that mainline Protestantism assisted people in economic upward mobility by publicly validating its members as upright citizens. Along with other progressives, mainline Protestants worked for and succeeded in the eradication of child labor in factories, the quest for reasonable workplace regulations, the construction of a social safety net, and support for civil rights laws (3). Even the forebears of contemporary Evangelicals often supported progressive causes. For instance, early