

identities and necessitated poor relief strategies and programmes that typically fell outside the auspices of governmental control. Thus, as Chung-Kim returns to a specific reformer, John Calvin (chapter 5, 'Refugee Pastor and Promoter of the French Fund'), she is able to pull together several of the preceding threads into her analysis of mid-century intersections between theology and poor relief practice. Calvin's refugee mindset affected his understanding of both poor relief and the magistracy, allowing for fertile comparisons with examples from earlier chapters.

The book's final two chapters move into the so-called Radical Reformation whose poor relief had to operate outside the realm of magisterial political jurisdiction (chapter 6, 'Swiss Brethren and Dutch Mennonites: Networks of Mutual Aid', and chapter 7, 'Hutterites in Moravia: Communal Property'). In such settings, where the government could be openly hostile to a minority religious community, social networks and congregational infrastructure became increasingly important. For instance, Chung-Kim shows how the Swiss Brethren's poor relief was shaped by particular theological values within the community, impacted by needs driven by persecution and operated completely without magisterial support.

This organisational structure fosters a close analysis of the relationship between religious perspectives and social reform. Yet, each chapter goes further than merely describing a single theologian and his poor relief ideas and policies; Chung-Kim illustrates the fact that local circumstances also shaped the specific reforms taken. Thus, a 'Calvinist' approach to social welfare could look different in Geneva than it looked in another Calvinist refugee centre. Chung-Kim regularly incorporates examples from other places where similar institutions were established that nevertheless looked a little different to those proposed by the leading theologian representing that religious confession. Thus, the book's organisation enables an understanding of the prominent, common features of each particular theological framework, while making clear that there really was no single confessional experience.

This book provides a welcome synthesis across Protestant confessions and experiences. It is up to date on the scholarship, and readers will be left with a much broader understanding of the connections between religious values and social responses as implemented in real life in a variety of contexts. Chung-Kim's comparative approach to this complex subject is effective and allows for a richer understanding of the relationships between religious ideals, social policy and the experience of poverty.

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Kirsi Stjerna, *Lutheran Theology: A Grammar of Faith*

(London: T&T Clark, 2021), pp. xiv + 218. £24.99/\$34.95

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Aimed at seminary students who may not be familiar with Martin Luther or the principal themes in the theological tradition he shaped, this book introduces key topics in the classic sixteenth-century Lutheran sources, and it explores ways in which those

historic writings are still fruitful for contemporary reflection. The book thus guides seminarians to move from a theological understanding of these Reformation-era sources toward an appraisal of their 'transformative power' for theology today.

Kirsi Stjerna, a native of Finland and a graduate of the University of Helsinki, has taught the *Book of Concord* to such students for more than twenty years. A prolific scholar, she is currently a professor of Lutheran history and theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, California. One gathers that much of this book originated as lecture notes for her course on the Lutheran Confessions. Indeed, the work is best read in tandem with the most recent English version of those texts, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert.

The first part of the book provides a chronological overview of important events in Luther's life. Part two introduces the individual documents in the *Book of Concord* and orients the reader to their central theological concerns, namely, the justification of the sinner and the freedom of the Christian. The final part, which comprises more than half of the book, unfolds the principal teachings in this theological tradition, using the Augsburg Confession (AC) and Luther's catechisms as the main conversation partners. This third part generally follows the ordering of topics in the AC, as it moves from the doctrine of God and the centrality of Christ, through matters of theological anthropology, the sacraments and the doctrine of the church, and finally to 'lingering issues' (such as 'open communion', human sexuality and Christian freedom). Each chapter ends with a list of learning goals, questions for review and discussion, key words and related readings from the Lutheran Confessions.

Stjerna's basic approach in each chapter of the third part is to start with a summary of the historical conflicts that led to the articulation of a given Lutheran theological principle embedded in the AC and Luther's catechisms. She then proceeds to highlight how that principle could be useful for Christian reflection in the present. For example, in the chapter on 'the human condition', she explains that the second article of the AC emphasises the reality of sin as an ongoing 'force' and 'a shared burden' (p. 119). That article does not dwell on the historic origin of sin or attempt to deliberate 'between different individual transgressions that, everyone knows, are many' (p. 119). Lutheran Christians stress that this tendency toward sin is itself sin, 'our sin', and that the human condition is truly 'a fundamental ontological problem that requires God's attention and initiative for a remedy' (p. 119). Stjerna then exposes the Augustinian, anti-Pelagian background to that article on sin, relates it to Luther's understanding of the enslaved will and highlights how challenging such a perspective is today. Still, she argues, the central presupposition for the justification of the sinner by grace is 'the incapacitating power of sin' (p. 126). Grace is free and cannot be earned: 'Grace must be free, just as sin is real and prohibits human beings from reaching grace' (p. 126). Stjerna is convinced that such a perspective, which she admits 'does not make sense' (p. 126), helps to unveil and name a crucial aspect of human experience: 'Human beings do not always want or do what they should. Human beings make questionable choices, often, and against their best intentions. Human beings hurt one another, and themselves, and the world around them' (p. 134). They fail to trust, honour and love God. But rather than viewing sin as something that merely taints or problematises one's self-worth or relationship with God, 'it would seem timely to recognize sin in human beings' external relations and in the different structures of human life and, importantly, not remain there but embrace boldly and compassionately the ethical and spiritual challenges that grow from such an awakening' (pp. 134–5).

Stjerna has a lively writing style that often frames issues in a fresh way. While her ‘grammar of faith’ will help readers to learn key Lutheran concepts and emphases, the book itself contains many grammatical mistakes and stylistic inconsistencies, and these mar the overall quality of the work. One wonders why this gifted Lutheran scholar did not begin with a basic narrative of Luther’s theological development rather than with a lengthy chronological list of important events in his life. While the first chapter ends with insightful analysis of Luther’s concepts of freedom and faith, many beginning students will likely wonder what led to their development. More traditional-conservative Lutherans will also question several of the author’s assertions, for example, ‘that even unbaptized individuals are to be invited’ to the Lord’s Supper (p. 175). Still other statements will provoke discussion and debate. Consequently, the book will be a useful resource in seminary classrooms and ecumenical discussion groups.

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Shelli M. Poe, *The Constructive Promise of Schleiermacher’s Theology*

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Friedrich Schleiermacher published his dogmatics, *Christian Faith*, in the Kingdom of Prussia in 1830–1. Europe was recovering from the Napoleonic wars, and intellectual culture was shaped by Kant, post-Kantian idealism and Romanticism. Can a theology originating in such a remote situation have any relevance to twenty-first-century Christian doctrine? Poe is well aware of the objections to such relevance. As she shows by means of Patricia Gunther-Gleason’s work on Schleiermacher and women, Joerg Rieger’s claims about Schleiermacher’s complicity with colonialism, and Theodore Vial’s investigation of the implications of his work for racism, Schleiermacher’s is a mixed legacy.

Framing her interpretation in the context of concerns about racism, sexism, post-colonialism, and similar issues related to justice, Poe sets forth the purpose of this book:

My goal is to advance theological conversations around the doctrine of the Trinity, Christology and redemption, ecclesiology and pneumatology, and the doctrines of God and creation in ways that will propel the cause of social justice among Christian churches. Schleiermacher’s theology, I contend, is rich with potential for those willing to enter the present context and face its challenges and opportunities with openness to innovative ideas. (pp. 16–17)

Her book consists of interpretations of Schleiermacher’s doctrinal innovations in these areas, placed in dialogue with the work of numerous contemporary feminist, womanist,