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Book Reviews

John 1:1–7:1. By William C. Weinrich. Concordia Commentary. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015. 863 pages. Hardcover. \$54.99.

The Concordia Commentary series has proven to be a real treasure for the church. Pastors do well to own the whole series. Where else can you find such scholarship that is so faithful to the Scriptures and so immersed in the sacramental life of the church? That having been said, Weinrich's volume stands out. It is what we might call a weighty tome, covering some six chapters of John in 863 pages. You do the math. But its weight might better be expressed in its depth of argument and its groundedness in history. For the past couple of decades, the church has recognized the need to dig deeper wells and to learn again from the early church fathers. We have seen this trend, for instance, in the *Ancient Christian Commentary Series*, for which Weinrich has (not surprisingly) also offered a volume. The problems of our present age call for a renewed discovery of wisdom and a return not only to our fathers, but to our grandfathers and great-grandfathers in the faith. Weinrich's commentary provides just such an opportunity. Not only has Weinrich read the church fathers, he's clearly taken them into himself, so that upon reading the commentary you feel like you are sitting at the table with Weinrich and Chrysostom, Clement and Irenaeus, and all the rest. This hardly means Weinrich is an antiquarian. He engages deeply with Raymond Brown and Oscar Cullmann, John A.T. Robinson and Francis J. Maloney. All of this is to say, Weinrich knows of what he speaks, not to mention what others have spoken in the near and distant past. All of this scholarship, combined with Weinrich's own intellectual gravitas, love of the church, and close attention to the Greek, makes this a commentary to be reckoned with.

But enough of such weighty matters. What does Weinrich think of the fourth gospel? For him, it was written early, within the context of the persecuted church of Jerusalem, as depicted in the first chapters of Acts. The evangelist composed his narrative in synagogue debate, as he hoped to convince his fellow Jews to become followers of Christ. At the heart of this debate was the true understanding of the Old Testament. Fundamental to Weinrich's presentation is that he sees Jesus as much more than the fulfiller of the law. "The claim made by the Gospel of John is that the divine Torah, present eternally with God, has become flesh and is the man named Jesus" (15). Weinrich places a heavy emphasis on the baptismal character of John's gospel. Since Jesus' own life and ministry are baptismal, John is much more than a biography. As Weinrich puts it, "The gospel

story is the story of all the baptized by way of the only story that could be such—the story of Jesus, who is *the Way*; for Jesus, the Torah was the way to live according to the divine will” (16). Weinrich concludes, “In the Gospel of John, Jesus is the Way/Torah, and to walk in the way is to be his disciple.”

Refreshingly, Weinrich recognizes the intricate, even organic unity between the text of John and the church in which and for which it was written. This commentary, like the Gospel of John, is soaked in baptismal waters. Weinrich fights against generic calls to faith, asking where precisely a reader/hearer might find the object of his faith today. He asks rhetorically, “Did the evangelist, a member of the Christian community, bring forth a Gospel text in which the symbols and themes remained, so to speak, on the literary and symbolic level?” (309). In other words, while we might speak about the gospel as having the power of purification, we do well to ask where this power is exhibited and exercised today. The gospel must be more than history, or the record of past events. It must point us to the work of Christ within the church. It does us no good to see Jesus in the past if we cannot see him today, and if we cannot believe in the miracles he is even now performing in the midst of the church. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that Weinrich is drawn to an early dating of the fourth gospel. He is determined to demonstrate that the church and all its rituals did not rise years later, as if created as a kind of symbolic remembrance. Instead, he sees the sacramental life, and the ecclesial life, precisely within the life and ministry of Jesus. What makes this commentary so different? Commenting on the miracle at Cana, Weinrich writes, “There is a remarkable, and to my mind unwarranted, hesitancy in much modern commentary to seek and, yes, to find realities and practices in the life of the church to which such symbols as water and wine refer” (309). Weinrich is quick to note that this is in no way reading into the text, but is simply a deep reading, based upon the fact that the church is in fact the body of Christ. Abstract truths have no place in the flesh-and-blood reality of the fourth Gospel. As Weinrich summarizes, “The story of Christ is the story of the life of the church” (309).

Readers may quibble here or there as to how this sacramental and ecclesial reality plays out within the commentary, but they will always come away richer for the engagement. Concentrating on the purifying quality of water and blood, Weinrich tends to see the marriage at Cana (John 2:1-11) in baptismal terms. He writes, “Thus, wine too is indicative of a purifying act. That act of purification is the death of the Lamb of God. It is a fact that the early church located this purification of the forgiveness

of sin through the death of Christ in the washing of Christian Baptism" (322). This reader, noting the joy of the celebration and the eucharistic link to marriage, thinks of this miracle more in terms of the sacramental wine, the blood of Christ, which indeed has a cleansing property at work in the Lord's Supper. We might note that this miracle corresponds to the multiplication of the loaves. In the bread, there is satisfaction and fullness, and in the wine, there is joy and celebration. Is this simply a baptismal miracle? Having read Weinrich's take on it, you will want to invite him as a speaker and engage him more in the question.

Reading John requires an attentiveness to irony. Indeed, the fourth evangelist recognizes the incongruity of a world in which the Word came into his own but his own knew him not. Weinrich demonstrates this keen sense of irony in the story of the "living water" (John 4:1-26), which he portrays as a delicate dance between a potential bride and groom. Many, naturally, will want to see how Weinrich tackles John 6. He does not disappoint. In an excursus on "The Multiplication of Loaves as a Eucharistic Symbol," he lays out in systematic fashion the links between this meal in the desert and the meal which he would give to his church (649). This section, which represents Weinrich at his most direct, should prove a helpful guide for many a pastor.

Here and there, Weinrich may take things too much at face value. For instance, he struggles with the seeming contraction that Jesus' carried out a baptismal ministry (John 3:22), though he himself did not baptize (John 4:1-2). Weinrich concludes, "Perhaps the best that we can say is that for a short period of time Jesus himself baptized with John's baptism (John 3:22-26)." More likely, to this reader, John is making a more fundamental point, namely that though every baptism is conducted by one of Jesus' disciples, it is nevertheless Jesus himself who is doing the baptizing. This tendency of John we also see in the "Feeding of the 5000" (John 6:1-13), in which Jesus himself is said to distribute the bread. For John, Jesus and Jesus alone is the true apostle sent by God, in which the apostleship and the apostolic ministry resides.

That having been said, this commentary will stand for years. It is the enduring work of a man immersed in the Scriptures, the fathers, and what seems like every bit of scholarship since. His answers often run deeper than our questions. Such thoughts might seem too flattering, but if you have had him as instructor, you will know it to be true. And if you have not, once you begin reading this commentary, you will see what I mean. Weinrich is intent on bringing Christ to the reader, not in some abstract way, but in the fleshly ways in which Christ now appears within the

church's life. As he writes, "Faith unites itself to Christ where he is and where he works" (732). Weinrich's commentary, in that sense, is a GPS locator, connecting us to the life and work of Jesus today, engaging us in the eternal truth.

Admittedly, reading Weinrich is a little bit like going to the gym. Sometimes his sentences are deceptively simple, at other times they are lengthy, with words used in unexpected ways. On first reading, the muscles of your mind are sure to ache. But take heart. Allow Weinrich to be your trainer, and after a few sessions the reading becomes more satisfying, even exhilarating. Indeed, this commentary is worth a life-long membership.

Peter J. Scaer

***Singing The Church's Song: Essays and Occasional Writings on Church Music.* By Carl Schalk. Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2015. 272 pages. Hardcover. \$20.00.**

Carl Schalk's whole career has been to teach the church, especially the Lutheran Church, about the role of music in her life. Because he is so knowledgeable, always insightful and practical, and a wonderful teller of jokes and stories, he has been a very popular public speaker throughout his career in a wide variety of forums. *Singing the Church's Song* is a beautiful compilation of some of his finest writing, speeches, and essays.

This is the organization of the collection in Schalk's own words: "While these essays were written at different times and for widely different occasions over an entire career, they are grouped here for convenience in five categories: three are general essays on the tradition of the Church's song; six deal specifically with the Lutheran tradition of worship and church music; three essays discuss different aspects of Lutheran hymnody; three are on the composer of church music in the Lutheran tradition; and several miscellaneous items address acoustics in worship, appearing together with several brief homilies and other devotional writings."

Some highlights for this reviewer are the essays on three of the giants in Lutheran hymnody: Martin Luther, Paul Gerhardt, and Fredrich Layriz. While they are all extremely well done, I especially appreciate Schalk's insightful treatment of Dr. Fredrich Layriz. He calls him, "the forgotten influence on congregational singing in America." Schalk's essay teaches matters that are rarely discussed, such as the Layriz influence on C.F.W.

Walther and the confessional revival, and the Layriz influence on chorale rhythms found in today's Lutheran hymnals.

Another highlight is a paper first delivered to the South Wisconsin District in 2007 called, "A Primer for Lutheran Music and Worship." I find this to be a masterful overview of the whole subject in which the confessional, sacramental, and liturgical foundations of our Lutheran identity are applied to Lutheran church music practice.

A reoccurring theme throughout the book is the role of church music as a servant in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. Music serves, composition serves, hymns serve, musicians serve, acoustics serve. In other words, everything is to be seen as servant, not master, when it comes to this task of Gospel proclamation. I highly recommend *Singing the Church's Song* and believe it is important reading for all Lutheran pastors and musicians.

Richard C. Resch
St. Paul, Minnesota

***An Introduction to Biblical Ethics.* By David W. Jones. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013. 226 Pages. Paperback. \$24.99.**

Jones' approach to biblical ethics is oriented around the divine law. In Jones' introductory chapter, he addresses distinctives of biblical ethics, including the depravity of fallen man, morality as a fruit of justification, and the significance of assigning moral praise or blame in reference to God's character. There he also acknowledges the broad field of Christian ethics, including deontological, teleological, and virtue-related structures of ethical thought. From chapter two on, however, the work reads like a treatise on the divine law with sections connecting ethical methodologies and non-legal factors to the law itself.

There are interesting and accessible discussions throughout the work. Jones offers a readily understandable explanation of the relationship between God and the law: the law is not good simply because God commands it, nor are God's commands good because they conform to some ideal of law, but the law is good as the expression of God's good will and character (42–51). Chapter four is perhaps the most helpful as he gives a clear account of various methods for addressing apparent conflicts between commands in the law. His final two chapters expositing the Ten Commandments are adequate, but do not match the treasure of Luther's

catechisms in practicality and in awareness of the positive extension of the Commandments.

Because of the emphasis on the law, he does not give adequate attention to developing teleological and virtue-oriented methods, although he does devote chapter five to integrating goals and character with the biblical law. There is also very little discussion of the role and work of the Holy Spirit and the regenerate life stemming from the power of the gospel. Throughout the book, the emphasis remains on the norming function of the law for the Christian life, a somewhat limited view both in terms of the law-gospel relationship, and also for a work claiming to introduce the full scope of biblical ethics.

This volume can be helpful in summarizing particular points with respect to the law and Christian ethics, but for a general introduction to theological ethics, other resources, such as Robin Lovin, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (Abingdon, 2011) are preferable.

Gifford A. Grobien

***It's Dangerous to Believe: Religious Freedom and Its Enemies.* By Mary Eberstadt. New York: Harper, 2016. 158 pages. Hardcover. \$25.99.**

Mary Eberstadt does a great service to the church by collating and organizing a dizzying array of actions and incidents around the world which impinge upon religious freedom. The title invites one to think that faith itself is in danger, but this is not the thesis of the book. Rather, it is only the Christian faith which is under attack. What is more, it is not being attacked by some neutral secular ideology, but by an opposing religion all its own.

This opposing religion is both new and old. It is new in that it has taken on the form of the sexual revolution and has developed creeds, sacraments, and institutions over the course of the past half-century. It is old in that it is a resurgence of the same Gnosticism which threatened the ancient church of Ignatius and Irenaeus.

For the Lutheran pastor, Eberstadt's work can serve as both a primer and a research compendium. As a primer, it can help one to see the thoroughly religious contours of today's culture wars. It is a stark reminder that culture is, at its root, a *cultus*. One of the greatest deceptions that Satan has been able to orchestrate in twentieth-century western civilization is the idea that public life is neutral ground, extrinsic to the Gospel. Mary

Eberstadt goes a long way toward removing Satan's mask and reminding us what earlier generations knew intuitively.

As a research compendium, this book can be an excellent starting point for learning the details and facts of the assaults against our parochial schools, our university system, our adoption agencies, and all of our local and synodical charitable work. It can equip a pastor to engage his congregation in the struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world.

Eberstadt's central thesis is that the witch hunts of old and those of the modern variety have much more in common than a name. Hence, the history of the Salem witch trials, McCarthyism, and other such phenomena can equip us to foresee how progressive witch hunts against Christian orthodoxy will play out.

Key is her observation that witch hunts can only be brought to an end by the purveyors themselves. For this reason, she calls on Christians to engage directly with the high priests of the sexual revolution. Our strategy can be to find resonance with their own sense of freedom and justice to help them see how progressive assaults on Christian orthodoxy are contrary to their own dearest principles.

Her critics wonder if she is overly influenced by a scholastic affinity for natural law arguments. Perhaps this makes her naively optimistic that the unbelieving mind can be cured of its blindness. Only time will tell. In the meantime, *It's Dangerous to Believe* has much to offer. Among the growing corpus of works examining the modern assault on Christian orthodoxy, this one stands out. It offers a theological analysis of its cause as well as a plausible prescription for a healthy society.

Jonathan G. Lange
Pastor, Our Savior Lutheran Church
Evanston, Wyoming

***Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians' Responses.* By Bruce W. Winter. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 2015. 348 pages. Softcover. \$35.00.**

Like a cup of cold coffee on a cold morning, this book is timely and provides a much-needed jolt. As American Christianity seems to be heading into an age of persecution, Bruce Winter takes us back into the first century, where Christians' lives and livelihoods were threatened. While the Roman Empire offered many advantages to the early Christians

in terms of roads and channels of communication and transportation, the very nature of the empire posed real challenges to the Christian conscience. As Winter shows, the emperors, beginning with Augustus himself, increasingly portrayed themselves as gods and demanded from the people requisite honors, temples, and sacrifices. Augustus portrayed himself as a "savior." As the heir of Julius Caesar, he called himself a "son of a god" (67–71). As the Romans colonized various regions, the people expressed devotion to the emperors through various acts of worship. As Winter notes, "Multiple cultic activities were not only alive but thrived in the era of the first Christians, as divine honours were skillfully woven into the cultic and festive activities of inhabitants in the East of empire" (47). These cultic activities involved "sacrifices and prayers to the gods to the emperor as a divinely venerated 'god' and 'son of god'" (48). This turned the Greco-Roman landscape into a spiritual minefield. Emperor worship became the price of doing business, as well as the entry pass into the great shows and feasts of the empire.

Winter's approach is especially captivating as he sifts through primary evidence, including numerous inscriptions in public places and temples. Winter likewise leads us through the writings of Josephus, Philo, Cicero, Tacitus, and Seneca. What emerges is a profoundly pervasive emperor cult. For a while, it seems, the Christians had some immunity, as they presented themselves as what we might call messianic Jews. It was generally agreed that the Jews would not be compelled to offer sacrifices to the emperor. As a type of compromise, they set up altars on which they offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the emperor. In light of such pressure, we can well understand why Paul urged obedience to the government (Romans 13), as well as prayers for leaders (1 Timothy 2). Christians wanted to express their allegiance without selling their soul. Likewise, when Paul explained to Roman leaders that Christianity was the true continuation of the Jewish faith, he was not only evangelizing but making the case that Christians had the right of the law's protection.

After a general introduction to the problem, Winter leads the reader through various New Testament documents, analyzing each according to the template of emperor worship. Winter shows how the evangelist Luke portrayed Christ as the true Savior and Son of God, titles the emperor had appropriated for himself (67–70). The author also offers a fascinating analysis of Paul at Athens, in which the apostle chides the philosophers for not living up to their own standards. When Paul claimed that God does not dwell in temples, nor does he have need of anything, he was saying that which the philosophers also believed, but was also contradicted by

their participation in the empire cult. Likewise, Winter's take on the Christians in Galatian is intriguing, if not entirely convincing. He contends that many of the Galatian Christians were tempted towards circumcision precisely because of the immunity such an act would offer from Roman persecution. It is worth pondering that "not being 'Jewish' meant that Galatian Christians would have to operate in the wider culture without enjoying the identity and concessions that the Claudian decree had recently verified as the right of all Diaspora Jews" (242). This, Winter argues, is what Paul meant when he claimed that Christians were being circumcised "only in order that they not be persecuted for the cross of Christ" (Gal 6:12). Part of the temptation for the congregation of the Hebrews, likewise, was that a return to Judaism would have meant a return to safety.

Perhaps most fascinating, and jarring, is Winter's analysis of Revelation and the mark or name of the beast. At the time, Winter notes, "As a prerequisite to engaging in any commercial transaction they had to give specific divine honours to the Caesar" (286). Even more, they would have to be inked with the imperial seal upon their forehead or hand. Thus, one could neither buy nor sell without offering up a kind of confession to the divinity of the emperor. Many, of course, would die for their faithfulness to God, and many others, more tragically, lost their faith.

As Winter helps lead us through such challenges, we cannot help but think of the pressures that Christians face and will face in the coming days. In what ways will Christians bow, or refuse to bow, to the secularism of our day, offering acknowledgment to it by flying the rainbow flag? But, as Winter reminds us, the Book of Revelation reveals to us what really matters. We are encouraged to remain faithful, that we might stand among the 144,000. The wrath of God comes upon anyone who "worships the beast and his image and receives the mark on his forehead or on his hand" (Rev 14:9). Those who remained faithful, bearing the name of the Lamb and his Father, will be given the crown of life. Timely indeed.

Peter J. Scaer

***The Pastor.* By Wilhelm Loehe. Translated by Wolf Knappe and Charles Schaum. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015. 363 pages. Softcover. \$39.99.**

Wilhelm Loehe (1808–1872) cannot be understood apart from his commitment to the pastoral office. Like others in the nineteenth century, Loehe was engaged in debates over church and office. *The Pastor*, however, is not about those skirmishes; it is rather a repository of ministerial wisdom gleaned from the author's careful study and his own often painfully acquired experience as a shepherd of Christ's flock. It was not written in a detached academic environment but in the setting of a small, Bavarian village pastorate. Loehe writes as a working pastor. He is not content to present a theoretical or scientific study of pastoral theology, but as a learned, pious, and seasoned pastor he writes for his brothers in office, covering the topics of pastoral care, rooted in Confession and Absolution, homiletics, liturgics, catechetics, and the visitation of the sick.

The Pastor is actually a compilation of two books by the Neuen-dettelsau pastor published under the title *Der evangelische Geistliche*. The first volume, published in 1852, was gleaned from articles Loehe had published in 1847–1848 in the *Zeitschrift für Protestantismus und Kirche*. These essays deal mostly with the formation of the pastor and his relationship in the office, including his marriage. The second volume appeared in 1858 and covered particular aspects of the pastoral craft, such as preaching, catechesis, liturgy, and the care of souls. Taken together, these two volumes form *The Pastor*, reflecting the mature Loehe at the height of his career.

Like C.F.W. Walther, who also wrote a pastoral theology, Loehe draws on the earlier work of Johann Ludwig Hartmann (1640–1680). Loehe was obviously well acquainted with Hartmann and other writers in classical Lutheran pastoral theology and he incorporates their insights into his own presentation. Likewise, he draws on both the dogmatic writings and what he calls the "aesthetic literature" (59) of the Lutheran fathers.

The bulk of the first part of *The Pastor* is devoted to the life of the pastor. Here Loehe writes of both the public and hidden conduct of the pastor. Both dimensions are necessary. In these pages Loehe not only offers practical advice and guidance for rookie pastors but also seeks to provide spiritual care and direction to men who hold the office. He offers his opinions on a variety of topics, including the relationship of the pastor to his predecessors and successors, the place of the "interim pastor," and the behavior of clergy emeriti. Naturally, this material bears the marks of its context in the German territorial church of the nineteenth century. Yet

there is significant wisdom in these pages that is not bound by time or place.

The second section is devoted to practice. Here Loehe outlines an approach to preaching, incorporating an appropriate use of rhetoric and warning against “Methodistic” techniques that would deny the fact that the office is dependent on the power of God’s word alone. Catechesis is seen as “mouth to mouth” (251), as Loehe attends to both the content and form of this teaching. Known for his interest in reverent, liturgical worship, Loehe engages liturgics, including treatments of sacred times, sacred space, sacred vessels, as well as the parts of the Lutheran ordo. In this section, Loehe also carefully examines the dynamics of pastoral care, using medicinal and pharmaceutical images as the pastor must render an accurate diagnosis of the soul’s condition and prescribe a corresponding remedy. Special attention is given to Confession and Absolution and the care of the sick and dying.

In contrast to contemporary approaches to pastoral theology that have been heavily influenced by the psychological and social sciences, *The Pastor* represents a churchly approach to pastoral theology that needs to be retrieved in our day. A careful and reflective reading of this text by one of the master pastors of the Lutheran tradition will edify and enrich ministers and strengthen them for faithful service to Christ’s flock.

John T. Pless

The Paradox of Church and World: Selected Writings of H. Richard Niebuhr. By Jon Diefenthaler. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. 534 pages. Softcover. \$44.00.

Helmut Richard Niebuhr (1894–1962) has been described as a “public intellectual” in an era when the church enjoyed a privileged place in North America. His writing career reflects the realities of the Depression, World War II, and the post-war years. With astute criticisms of his work by theologians as diverse as John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas, George Marsden, William Willimon, and D. A. Carson, Niebuhr’s work has largely been dismissed as a relic of the middle part of the last century. Persuaded that Niebuhr still has something to say to the church in our day, Jon Diefenthaler, formerly district president of the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and more recently an adjunct professor at Concordia Seminary, has set out to retrieve a sampling of Niebuhr’s many writings and suggest ways in which they might serve contemporary

Christian reflection and mission. In Diefenthaler, Niebuhr has found a sympathetic interpreter.

Over a forty-two year period, Niebuhr was the author of twenty-one books and over 2,600 articles. Diefenthaler has divided this anthology into three parts. Part 1 embraces the formative years of 1914 to 1929 when Niebuhr was serving in institutions of the Evangelical Synod (which would merge in 1934 with the German Reformed Church to become the Evangelical and Reformed Church; this body would become a component in another merger in 1957 that would create the United Church of Christ), the American counterpart to the German Prussian Union. Part 2 includes writings from 1930–1940, the time of the Great Depression. Part 3 covers 1941–1962, World War II, and its aftermath. It was during this period that Niebuhr authored what is perhaps his most well-known but highly debated book, *Christ and Culture* (1951). Diefenthaler surveys numerous critics of *Christ and Culture* but overlooks Robert Kolb's fine essay "Niebuhr's 'Christ and Culture in Paradox' Revisited," published in the autumn 1996 issue of *Lutheran Quarterly* (259–279). Kolb points out significant flaws in Niebuhr's use of Luther and thus the inadequacy of "paradox" as an accurate description of Luther's position.

Niebuhr was not able to incorporate the picture of Luther emerging from the Luther Renaissance and its leading scholar, Karl Holl's rejection of Ernst Troeltsch's critique of Luther. Niebuhr broke with the older liberalism's rejection of original sin, but his overall theological orientation remained marked by the nineteenth century. He remained committed to the so-called "Social Gospel," even as he attempted provide a theological foundation for it that would transcend the modernist/fundamentalist debates. The essays assembled in this reader demonstrate that Niebuhr's version of the Christian faith accented ethics but paid much less attention to dogma. Like his contemporary, Paul Tillich, Niebuhr was interested in the symbolic value of doctrinal themes.

The book concludes with an Epilogue, "Niebuhr and Post-Church America," which is Diefenthaler's recommendation of Niebuhr for the challenges of the present day. Given the fact that Niebuhr's United Church of Christ, which in many ways was shaped by his theological vision, has experienced drastic numerical decline and ever-increasing cultural irrelevance, while its trajectory moves further away from any semblance to biblical or Reformational orthodoxy, it is unlikely that an enthusiastic embrace of Niebuhr will offer much help.

John T. Pless

The Nazi Spy Pastor: Carl Krepper and the War in America. By J. Francis Weber. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2014. 208 pages. Hardcover. \$48.00.

This book presents what facts we have about the life of a Lutheran pastor who became a Nazi spy. Born in Germany in 1884, Carl Krepper studied at the Ebenezer Seminary, also known as the Kropp Seminary, in order to serve as a German speaking Lutheran pastor in America. He arrived in America in 1909 and served as a pastor in various congregations in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. These congregations were of the Pennsylvania Ministerium in the General Council, which later became part of the United Lutheran Church of America. These twenty-six years were a time in which the Lutheran churches in America were moving away from German language and identity, a trend that Krepper fought. He supported the use of the German language in the church and promoted German identity and heritage, yet at the same time became an American citizen and even served in local governmental roles. His stress between German and American identity paralleled the problems with the German speaking church as a whole. Krepper also became active in many German organizations such as the German-American Bund, the Association of the Friends of New Germany, and the German-American Business League which boycotted Jewish owned stores. Eventually, Krepper became so overt in his pro-Nazi stance that he hung a Nazi flag in his church in New Jersey and used Nazi orders of service.

In 1935, Krepper returned to Germany to serve as a pastor in a congregation of the German Lutheran Church. While there, he was recruited into the *Abwehr* to return to America and to be a contact person for a group of saboteurs. This was all part of Operation Pastorius, in which the saboteurs were sent to destroy factories and transportation hubs. Krepper returned to America in 1942, and the operation started soon thereafter. Yet from the beginning, Pastorius was plagued by problems, and eventually all the saboteurs were captured. Krepper played no real role in the Operation and spent most of his time until his capture living off the stamp collection he brought with him from Germany and leading a rather dissolute life. He was taken in by the FBI in New York City in 1944, and condemned as guilty during his subsequent trials.

Watson, who is himself a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, tries to unveil the sinister influences on Krepper as best he can. He traces the different friends and acquaintances that Krepper knew and the different societies that he was a part of. Nevertheless, one can only wish that there were more materials to flush out what Krepper believed, confessed, and preached as a pastor. This would help us understand why

and how German identity was so important to Krepper. The clearest glimpse we have into the mind of Krepper is the last line of the book, a quote from Franklin Clark Fry, "Yes, Krepper was strongly pro-Nazi in sentiment. God and the Reich were closely identified in his mind."

Roy Axel Coats
Church of the Redeemer, Baltimore

***True Faith in the True God: An Introduction to Luther's Life and Thought, Revised and Expanded Edition.* By Hans Schwarz. Mark Worthing, trans. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. 295 pages. Softcover. \$7.99.**

This new edition of Hans Schwarz's discussion of Luther's theological approach comes nearly two decades after its original publication. With the addition of new chapters, it is not only a reliable theological entry to Luther's thought as we approach the coming Reformation jubilee, but also an avenues for those without a religious bent to find areas of interest.

Schwarz begins with a chapter tracing Luther's biography. In forty-odd pages, it's impossible to plumb the depths of Luther's career, but the task here is to lay out the historical context for the discussion that follows, and Schwarz's narrative is wise in his choice of details to include.

Each of the remaining thirteen chapters (and two excurses) takes up a single theological question or topic and gathers evidence from across Luther's works to show how the reformer's evangelical insight answered the *locus*. This volume includes the original edition's chapters on epistemology, faith and reason, God's divinity, theodicy, two kingdoms, scriptural authority, law and gospel, ecclesiology and sacraments, marriage and family, and vocation. In addition, we have three new chapters on matters that, while worthy of discussion, seem to be included for secular readers: education, economics, and music.

In his first excursus, Schwarz tends all too briefly to Luther's view of Christology, free will, sin, and eschatology. Each of these essential topics in Luther's thinking merits its own chapter, and it would have been a pleasure to see how Schwarz's nimble mind would distill these facets of Luther for today. The second excursus makes Luther's scurrilous writing on the Jews, if not palatable, at least understandable.

This book is a wholly readable primer to Luther's thought and a solid review for those already familiar with his theological stance. It could make for a fertile congregational book study for the coming Luther anniversary.

Ken Sundet Jones
Grand View University, Des Moines