

PREFACE

George Wolfgang Forell (September 19, 1919–April 29, 2011) was the Carver Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Iowa. The following tribute that appeared in the online *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* expresses the high regard in which Professor Forell was held by so many:

George W. Forell has been one of the theological giants of the Lutheran churches in America for over half a century. During this time, he has been a major figure in helping to interpret Luther, and particularly a Lutheran understanding of Ethics, to generations of students and scholars alike. . . . Forell's influence on Lutheran churches is particularly remarkable given the fact that his teaching career has been primarily within the context of a secular state university, the University of Iowa. Here he has faithfully maintained his integrity as a Christian theologian, while at the same time being open to and respectful of all the points of view that comprise the pluralistic culture of a major university.

Notwithstanding Forell's clear identity as a Lutheran ethicist, the wide scope of his grasp and appreciation of the multiple traditions of Christian thought and ethics is amply illustrated by the discerning selections in the original version of this book.

I am grateful to Fortress Press for the invitation to undertake the revision and updating of Professor Forell's 1966 publication of *Christian Social Teachings*. It is an honor to be associated with Dr. Forell's name. I am also deeply grateful for the approval he gave for me to carry forward the continuance of his work in this project. I approach the task with a genuine sense of humility and with the fond hope that, had Professor Forell lived to see the finished project, he would have approved.

This new edition has a good deal of new introductory commentary, and newer translations of older works have been used where available and helpful. A large portion of this expanded edition is the material representative of Christian social teaching since the publication of the original volume. So much has happened since that time—I am well aware of the fact that, when all is said and done, one cannot do justice to the full range of Christian social witness in these last decades of our time within the confines of a printed book. Selections must be made, and that is the hardest part. However, despite these restraints, I am confident that the selection of readings provides leading and important voices on major themes as routinely covered in college and university courses.

There are, of course, many perspectives on matters of Christian ethics that have remained unchanged in the faith and practice of Christian communities. These convictions should be evident in the texts when the book is viewed as a whole. At the same time, new and influential contributions to social ethics have come about in response

to changing cultural and political realities. The new selections have been chosen to reflect those developments. In making these new selections I have also attempted to choose those thinkers whose work has been well-established enough to claim a place in the emerging “history” of the discourse. Such a judgment may seem presumptuous but it also seems unavoidable. Additionally, I have sought to pay appropriate attention to ecclesial and ecumenical sources that claim to represent the voice of the larger community of faith. Finally, the new selections have been made following the principle that they represent “social” teaching; ethical concerns that speak to the ethos of a society and may also have implications for public policy even as they give expression to the churches’ witness for justice and peace.

Readers should note that I have included three “tools” for navigating and locating the content of the many readings. First, the table of contents includes authors’ names and titles of selections in several cases, for easy identification and later reference. Second, the thematic organization of sources provides key themes and topics and their location among the numerous readings in the anthology. Third, unlike the vast number of anthologies for any discipline, especially religious studies and theology, an index is provided to assist the reader in finding additional themes or subjects (for example, atonement, covenant, sacrifice), as well as important titles or selections (for example, The Ten Commandments, The Beatitudes), for ready reference. I am hopeful that these various compilations of the anthology’s content will enhance the use of this volume.

James M. Childs Jr.
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