

Wilson draws on Behr-Sigel's scholarship, conference presentations, and consultation proceedings to make the case for her evolving views. Drawing on patristic thought, Behr-Sigel regards the emphasis on Jesus' *humanity* rather than his *maleness* as opening the possibility that women can represent Christ as well as men. Behr-Sigel also follows patristic attention to the gender inclusivity of Genesis 1:26 and its bearing on a Trinitarian theology of the communion of persons, a key aspect of her own ecclesiology. Further, she realizes that Paul's treatment of charisms is not gender based, which leads her to call first for the reinstatement of the female diaconate and eventually for a diaconate based on charisms rather than gender. As Wilson suggests, Behr-Sigel concludes that "tradition" not "Tradition" is against women's ordination to the priesthood, even though she never officially seeks to change the church's position.

The final two chapters assess Behr-Sigel's theology of women, personhood and women's role in the church. While at times Wilson seems too quick to insist that Behr-Sigel's views are grounded in Scripture, theology, and tradition rather than in any "secular feminist thought," these chapters explore how Behr-Sigel's respect for secular feminism cannot always be neatly separated from her theological work. This book's primary audience is likely those familiar with Orthodox thought. It is also a fascinating theo-biographical study of how a female religious scholar and practitioner claims her voice within male-dominated structures and draws on the same resources as her male colleagues to insist that women as well as men have gifts for ministry and leadership inside and outside the church.

HAMLIN UNIVERSITY  
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Deanna A. Thompson

*A Case for Character: Towards a Lutheran Virtue Ethics.* By Joel D. Biermann. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014. 204 pp.

I rejoice in this volume for a number of reasons. First, Biermann is a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) theologian writing about ethics not only for that church, but also for and among other serious Christians. He has broken out of the confines of Missouri's

language, concerns, and publishing orbits in order to engage a larger world of Christian thought. That is a real plus for this LCMS theologian as well as for the book he has written. Second, he takes aim at the lamentable tendency of Lutherans to divide theology and ethics with a distinct downgrading of the latter. Third, he eschews the latent antinomianism in some strands of Lutheranism that reduce the gospel to justification and see only a negative use for the law in the Christian life. And fourth, in the main thrust of the book, he claims a place for virtue ethics in the Lutheran past and present. He thinks real possibilities exist for a Lutheran-constructed ethics of virtue.

After an introduction that happily expresses the theme, Biermann outlines the debt that contemporary Christian ethics owes to the work of Alasdair McIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas, who in tandem resuscitated virtue ethics among Protestant thinkers. Without buying into Hauerwas' neo-sectarian theology, he outlines and appreciates the Hauerwas critique of Lutheran ethics (or lack of them), some of which is shared by four Lutheran (or former Lutheran) theological ethicists whom he discusses: David Yeago, Reinhard Huetter, Robert Benne, and Gilbert Meilaender.

Biermann moves to mine the Confessions for their employment of virtue thinking. He finds Melanchthon most hospitable to such thinking. He then inquires into a paradigm for the use of virtue in a Lutheran construal of the moral life, which he finds in the Lutheran teaching on different kinds of righteousness. Surprisingly, he points out that the Reformers taught three kinds of righteousness and he adopts them as the paradigm for opening Lutheran ethics to the formation of virtue as a legitimate approach. Two kinds are familiar to Lutherans—civil righteousness and the imputed righteousness that comes from justification. Biermann points out a third kind in the thinking of both Luther and Melanchthon that concerns the righteousness developed in Christians vis-à-vis their neighbor that enables them actively to conform to God's holy law (122-132).

This three-part paradigm is conjoined to a Trinitarian creedal framework that completes Biermann's case for a Lutheran virtue ethics. Descending from high-level theory, Biermann concludes his book with a chapter on how such a Lutheran virtue ethic can be embedded and expressed in the practical life of the church. He

argues that moral formation can become a serious dimension of Lutheran ecclesiology; it is not the exclusive province of more sectarian traditions.

This book is a substantial proposal for retrieving virtue ethics in Lutheran thinking. Biermann shows that such an ethic is not alien to the Reformers, indeed it was central. He provides a theological framework for such an effort, showing how it can both result in positive results and also counter the critiques of those who think Lutheran ethics is oxymoronic. In making his case, Biermann engages an enormous literature with a fair and perceptive mind. He even has a good sense of humor: In discussing the challenge of moral formation within the church he quips: “If Lutherans can do it, anyone can” (166).

My only criticism may sound like special pleading. While Biermann has generously employed my analytical and critical work in Christian ethics, he oddly enough did not attend to my constructive effort at a Lutheran ethics: *Ordinary Saints: An Introduction to the Christian Life* (2003). In that book I try to do precisely that for which Biermann argues, a Lutheran version of virtue ethics. I explicate how the “theological virtues” of faith, love, and hope bring distinctive qualities to the Christian life, not as a way to salvation but as a Christian margin of difference in our callings. These virtues express, in his language, a third kind of righteousness. I would have been very interested in how he would have assessed my effort. Nevertheless, I give hearty endorsement to this important book.

ROANOKE COLLEGE  
SALEM, VIRGINIA

Robert Benne

*Reflections of Light: The Odyssey of a Black American Lutheran Pastor During the Civil Rights Years.* By Lonnie L. Branch. Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 2014. 266 pp.

People who know Chicago know Cabrini-Green. For much of the twentieth century, Cabrini-Green was one of the most notorious public housing projects in the country. Although located on Chicago’s near North Side near wealthy neighborhoods and the Loop, Cabrini-Green