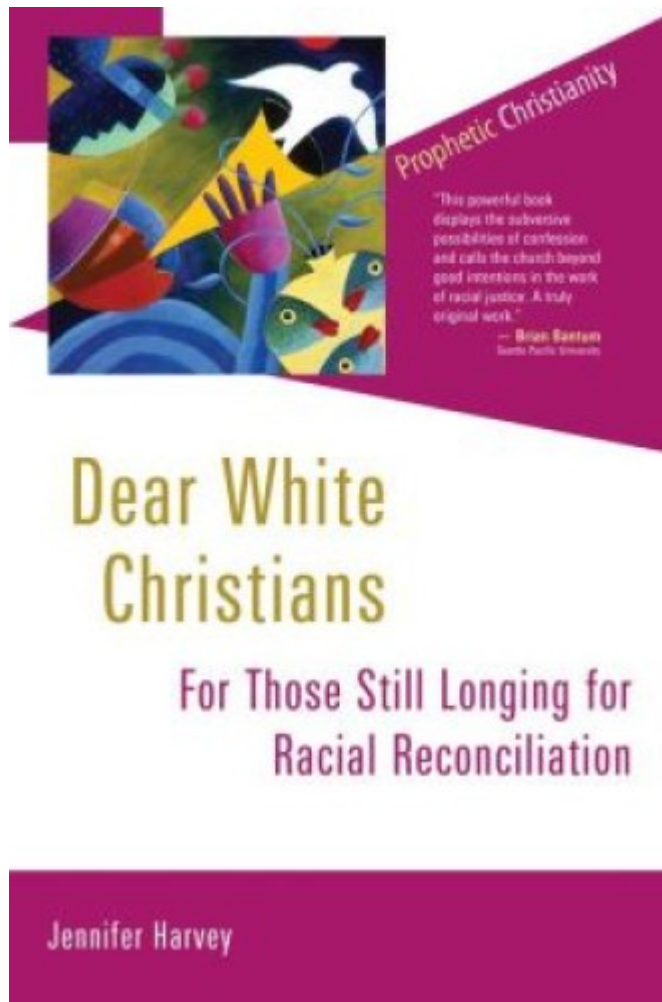


Ethics

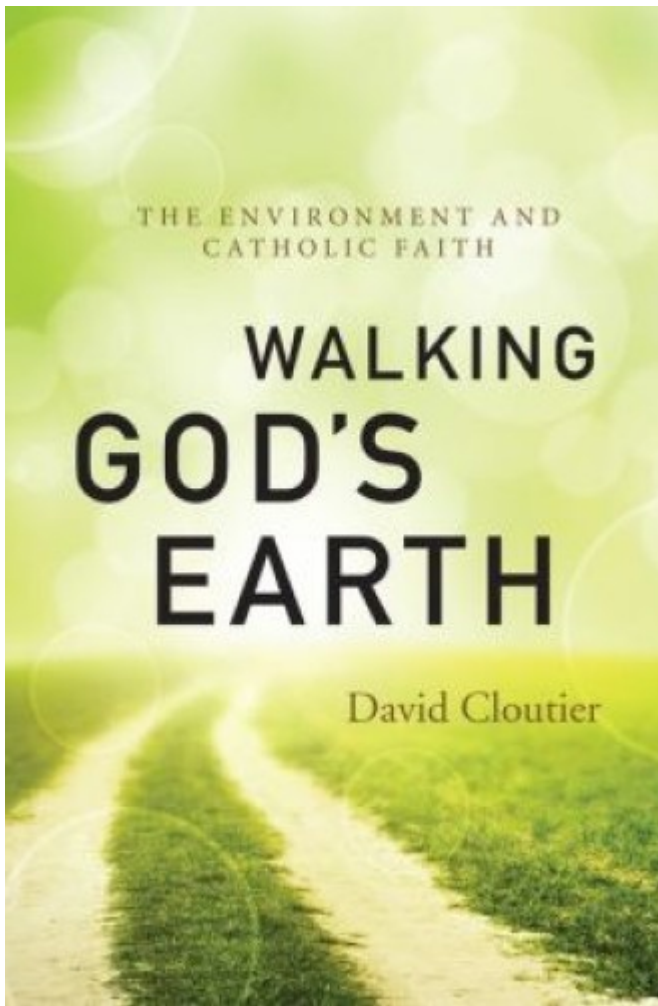
selected by [D. Brent Laytham](#) in the [April 29, 2015](#) issue

In Review



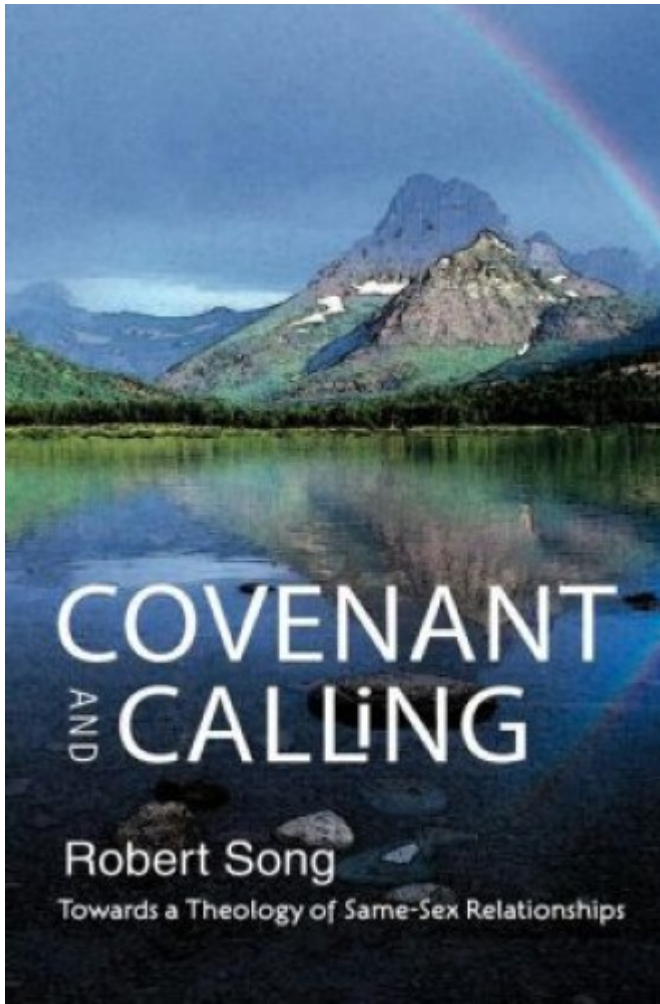
Dear White Christians

by Jennifer Harvey
Eerdmans



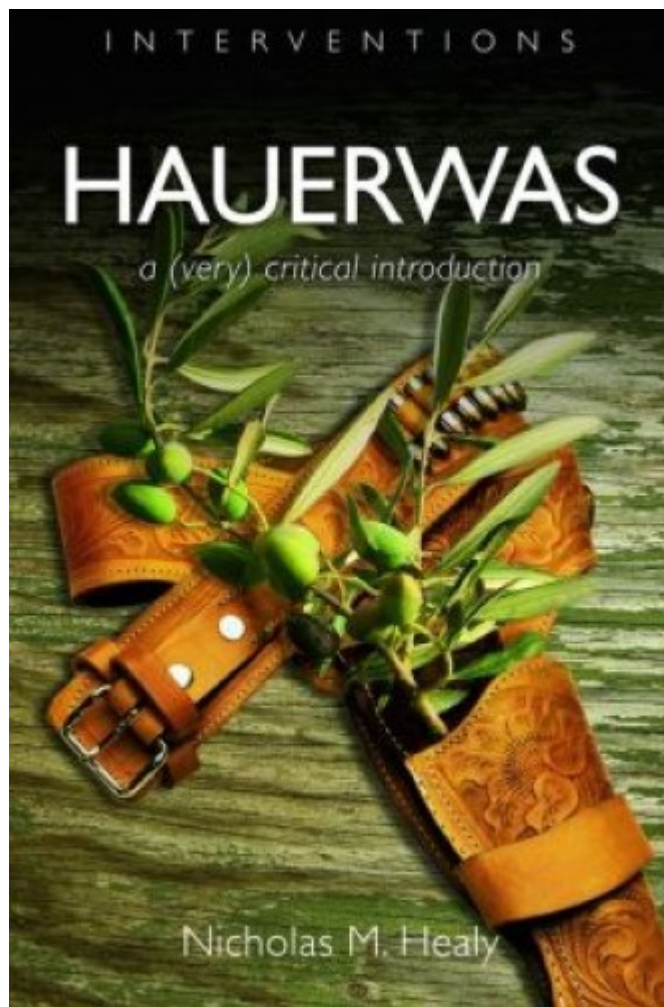
Walking God's Earth

by David Cloutier
Liturgical Press



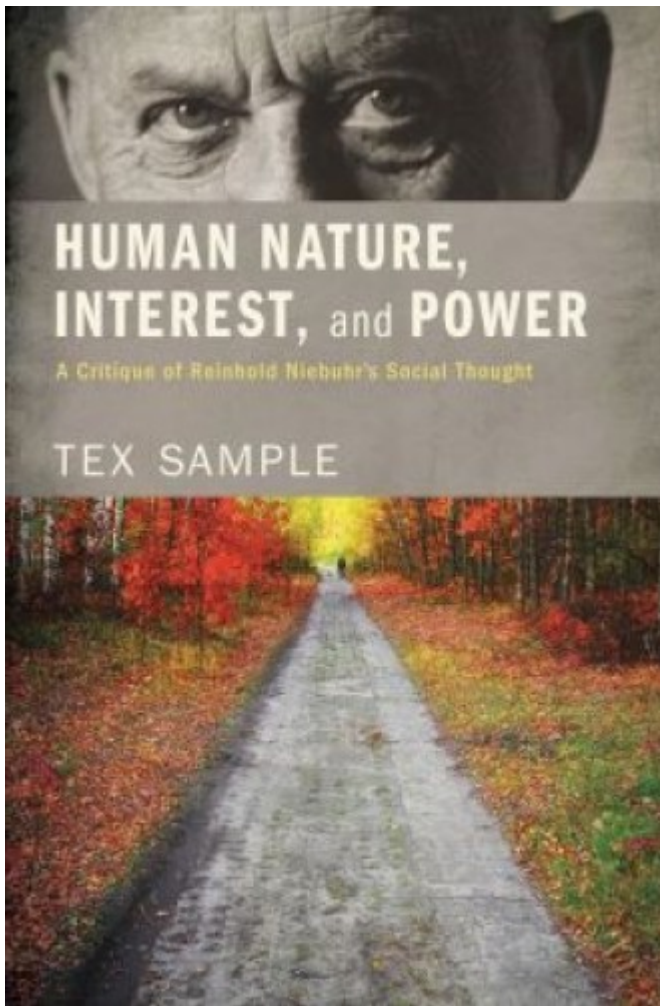
Covenant and Calling

by Robert Song
SCM Press



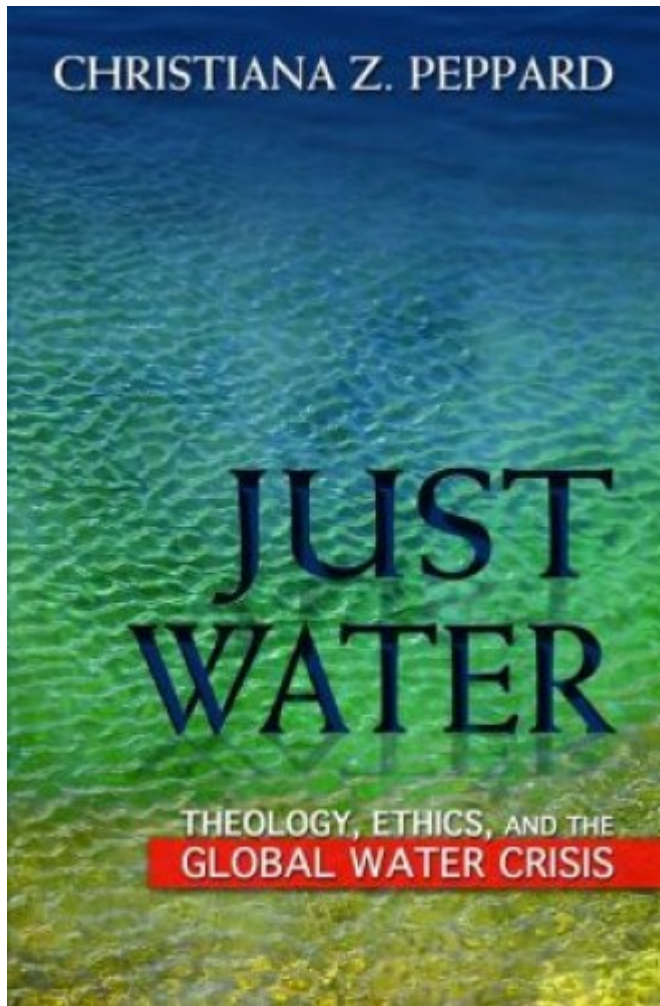
Hauerwas

By Nicholas M. Healy
Eerdmans



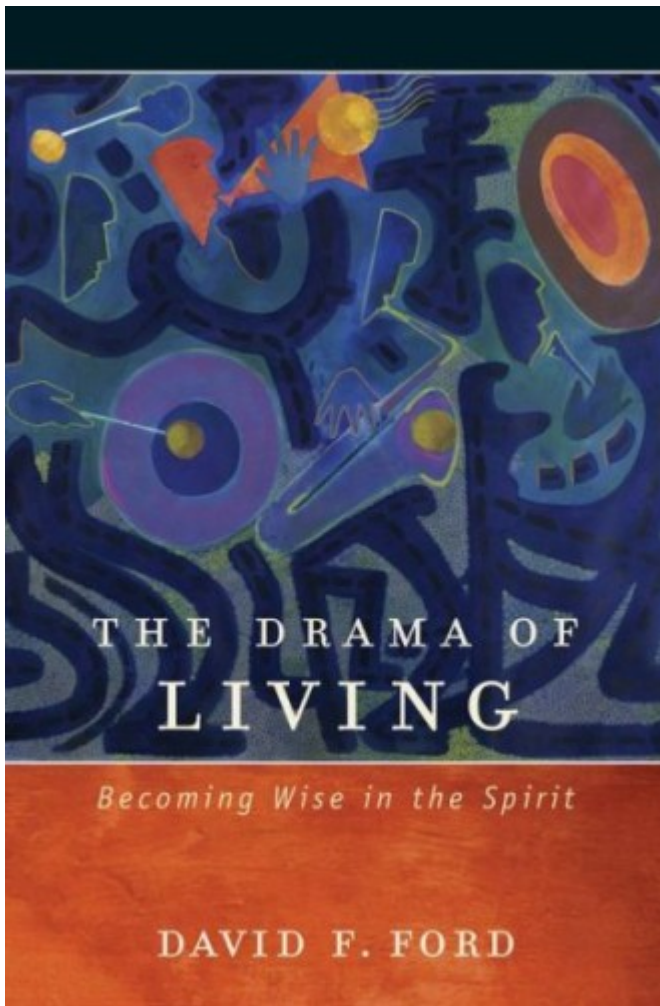
Human Nature, Interest, and Power

by Tex Sample
Cascade



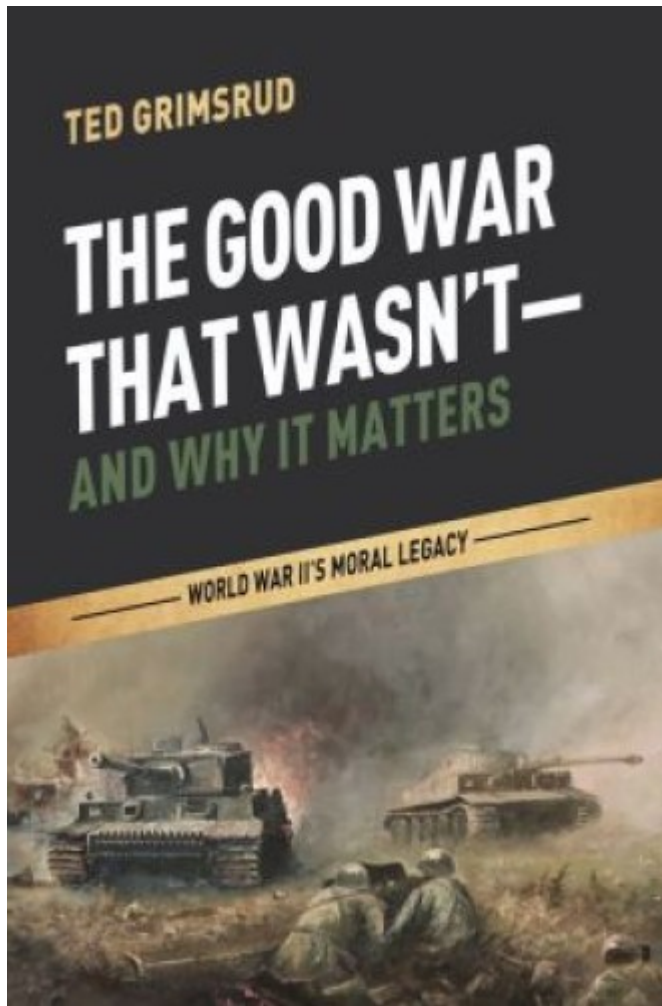
Just Water

by Christiana Z. Peppard
Cascade



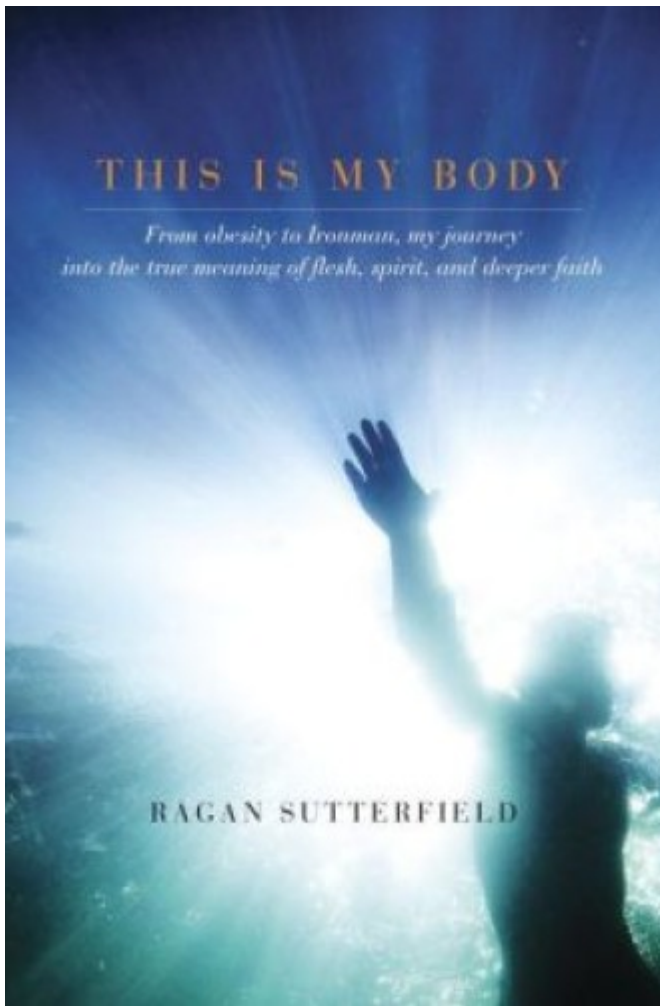
The Drama of Living

By David F. Ford
Brazos Press



The Good War That Wasn't—and Why It Matters

by Ted Grimsrud
Cascade



This Is My Body

by Ragan Sutterfield
Convergent



Giver of Life, Hear Our Cries!

by Jessie Fubara-Manuel

World Council of Churches Publications

Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation, by Jennifer Harvey. Harvey believes that reconciliation is so desirable that we must abandon the “reconciliation paradigm.” Why? Because it fails to diagnose the situation truthfully: it obscures history and occludes whiteness, and thus undermines our ability to work at real reconciliation. The answer, she brilliantly argues, was originally proposed by the Black Power movement: only a “reparations paradigm” can address our past and present with any realistic hope of rectification. This book is the right place to start that conversation.

Walking God’s Earth: The Environment and Catholic Faith, by David Cloutier. Explicitly Catholic in the best sense, this lovely book speaks to all

Christians, from its opening invitation to walk mindfully through creation's wondrous variety to its concluding exhortation to consecrate the world. Cloutier elegantly balances four chapters that display the theological roots necessary for environmental faithfulness with four chapters that reveal the deep patterns of life that will require reconfiguration.

***Covenant and Calling: Towards a Theology of Same-Sex Relationships*, by Robert Song.** A good work of ethics views the tradition and the times through the lens of the gospel of Christ's resurrection. In the process of unsettling well-rehearsed arguments on both sides of the same-sex marriage debate, Song's very good work of ethics attends to "the significance of the advent of Christ for sexuality." Acknowledging that Christ's coming affirms that marriage is oriented in creation toward procreation, Song develops with nuance and insight his proposal that Christ's advent makes eschatological time for nonprocreative, covenanted same-sex partnerships. In a pastorally astute final chapter, Song explores the question of whether to call such partnerships marriage.

***Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction*, by Nicholas M. Healy.** As someone who thinks Stanley Hauerwas is usually right, I learned a great deal from this very critical yet respectful book. Healy thinks that "Hauerwas's project is neither The Only Way Forward, nor A Terrible Mistake, nor The Right Direction After Some Tweaking." Distinguishing Hauerwas's agenda from his argument, Healy critiques both, suggesting that Hauerwas, like Schleiermacher, is ecclesiocentric where he should be theocentric, and "theologically thin" to boot. Given Hauerwas's own sense that his work has been about "the difference Christ makes," Healy's book should introduce, rather than conclude, a (very) lively conversation.

***Human Nature, Interest, and Power: A Critique of Reinhold Niebuhr's Social Thought*, by Tex Sample.** As someone who thinks Reinhold Niebuhr was often wrong, I was skeptical. But I learned a lot from reading this book. Sample has been a Niebuhrian since the early 1960s. Focusing explicitly on Niebuhr's understanding of human nature, self-interest, and power—areas in which Niebuhr plotted the course for 20th-century mainstream Christian social ethics—Sample offers a more compelling account of each one. In the end, he suggests that "tradition, discourse, and faithful practice" are resources that can help us "challenge the dominations, the normalcies, and the coercions of our times."

***Just Water: Theology, Ethics, and the Global Water Crisis*, by Christiana Z. Peppard.** Part primer on the complexities of ensuring access to fresh water, part exposé on how “clean water flows towards power,” this book is an ethical and theological call for contextualized water justice for the poor and vulnerable. Such justice will require more than elective personal choices like taking shorter showers. Peppard makes the case that everyone—individuals, governments, and corporations—is responsible for discerning what is required and doing it.

***The Drama of Living: Becoming Wise in the Spirit*, by David F. Ford.** This rich, relevant volume, a sequel to Ford’s stunning *The Shape of Living*, is an author’s report on his past books, a participant’s report on Scriptural Reasoning meetings, an annotated anthology of the poetry of Micheal O’Siadhail, and a dramatic reading of the Gospel of John. The surprising thing about the book is its wholeness, as Ford seeks to draw readers (and rereaders) to wiser living.

***The Good War That Wasn’t—and Why It Matters: World War II’s Moral Legacy*, by Ted Grimsrud.** It’s one thing to recognize that Dresden and Nagasaki were clear violations of just war principles, but another thing entirely to reckon with a comprehensive analysis of World War II in terms of just cause and just conduct. And that’s only the first part of this fine book, which goes on to consider the legacy of the “good war”: “a militarized state, a mobilized society, a permanent war economy.” Grimsrud offers a tutorial in not taking for granted the inevitability of the current American way of war. His analysis could foster some interesting conversations amid the growing consternation—even panic—about what ISIS makes “necessary.”

***This Is My Body: From Obesity to Ironman, My Journey into the True Meaning of Flesh, Spirit, and Deeper Faith*, by Ragan Sutterfield.** If completing the Ironman Triathlon seems an impossible accomplishment—swim 2.6 miles, bike 112, then run 26.2 more—so does this memoir: tell a good story, unveil a damaging culture, reveal a bodied gospel. Sutterfield deftly alternates between his final three months’ preparation for his first Ironman race and his first 30 years’ preparation for bodily resurrection. He offers an embodied ethical analysis from inside the cultural patterns and Christian practices that either dismember or remember the body as gift. This quick read about a long race covers the distance from birth to death, from soulless work to climate change, from fitness culture to spiritual practices, helping us discover along the way that in our bodies “we are practicing for forever.”

***Giver of Life, Hear Our Cries!* by Jessie Fubara-Manuel.** To read this book is to be addressed by African women in the first person: “I search for my land,” Fubara-Manuel says, describing its despoilage from oil exploration. “Who am I, wife or widow?” she asks, narrating the dispossessions of widowhood. In these and two additional chapters, Fubara-Manuel poignantly articulates the pain of living the gospel cry for justice in an Africa both replete with “pleasures and joys” and “diminished by sin and finitude.”