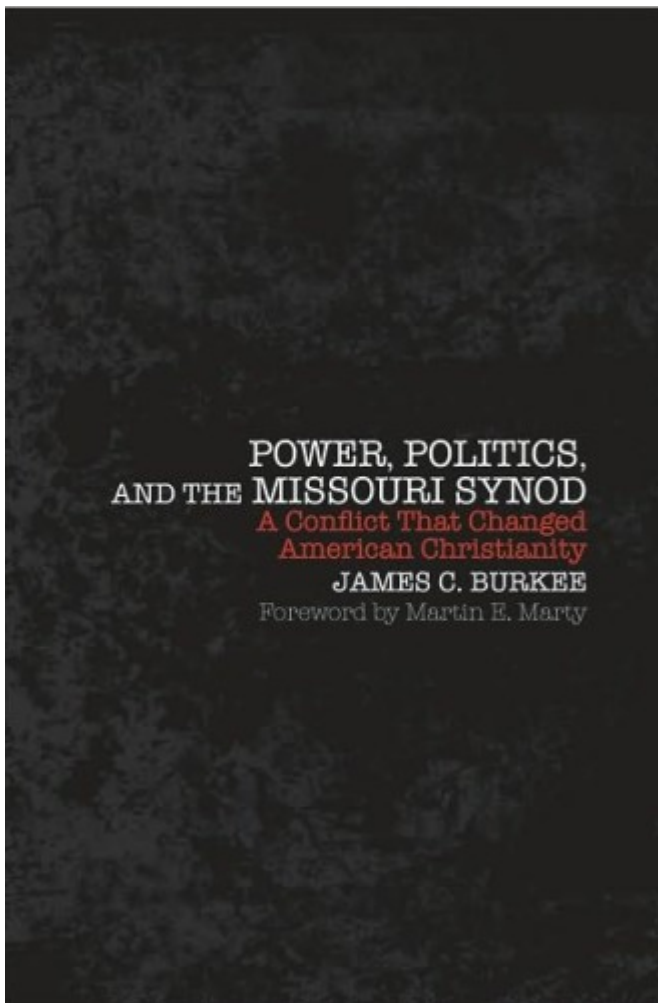


Power, Politics, and the Missouri Synod by James C. Burkee

Books in the [April 19, 2011](#) issue

In Review



Power, Politics, and the Missouri Synod

By James C. Burkee

Fortress

One of the nastiest church fights in American history took place in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The fight was ostensibly over the inerrancy of scripture, but as Burkee shows, that issue was but a token in a ruthless, successful campaign by the inerrancy party for synodical control. Like many struggles for religious purity, the cause ended up devouring some of its own. Burkee argues that the conflict was part of the larger culture war that broke out over civil rights and the Vietnam War, which is plausible enough. Yet his own focus is almost entirely on the day-by-day stratagems of a small number of pastors and church officials whose Machiavellian intrigues took on a life of their own and had little connection to the concerns—theological or political—of the people in their pews. Burkee strives for a historian's detachment, but he is clearly appalled.