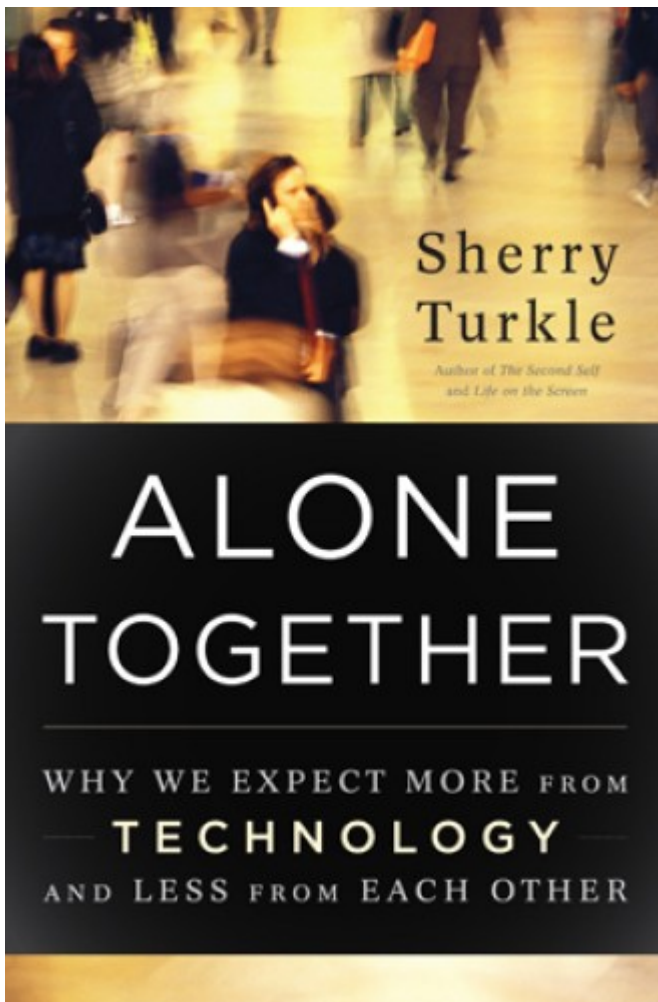


Ethics

selected by [D. Brent Laytham](#) in the [May 2, 2012](#) issue

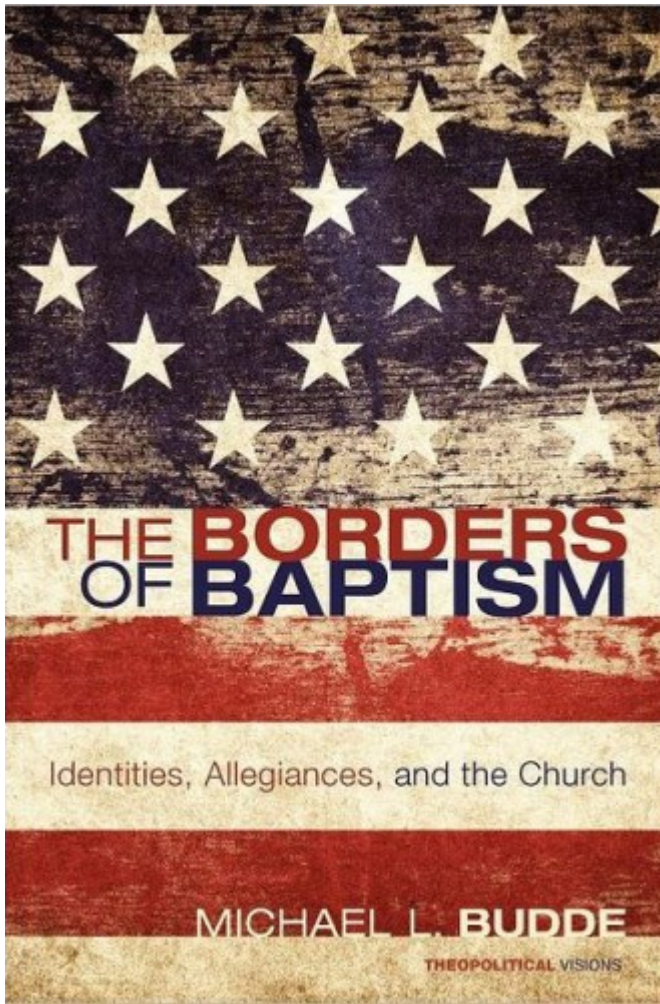
## In Review



### **Alone Together**

By Sherry Turkle

Basic Books



## **The Borders of Baptism**

By Michael Budde

Cascade

# A Watered Garden

Christian Worship and Earth's Ecology



Benjamin M. Stewart

W O R S H I P  M A T T E R S

## **A Watered Garden**

By Benjamin Stewart  
Augsburg Fortress

WAR  
AND THE  
AMERICAN  
DIFFERENCE



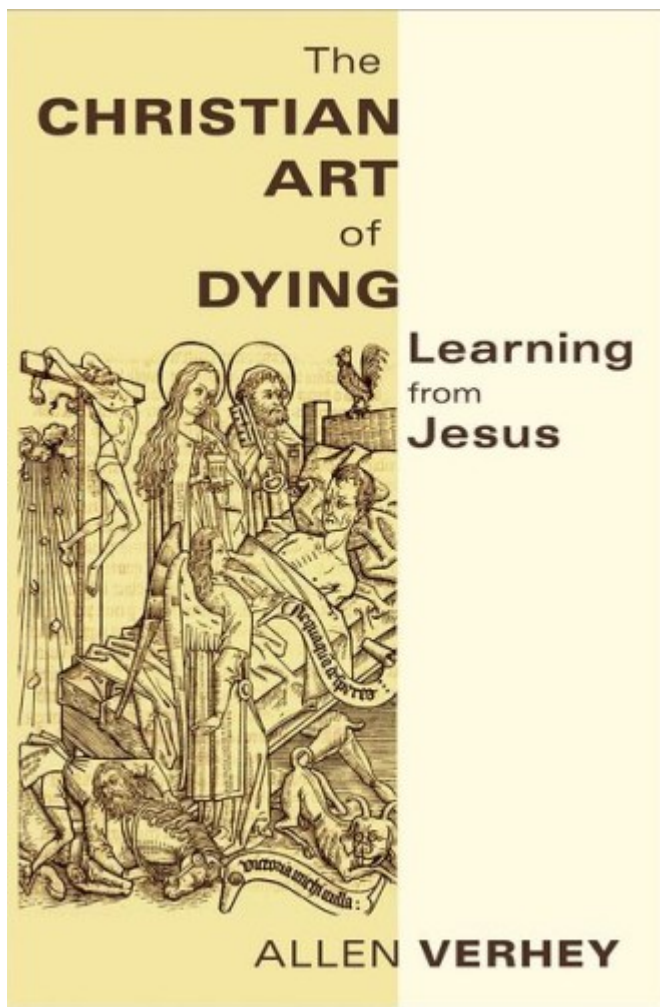
*Theological Reflections  
on Violence and National Identity*

STANLEY HAUERWAS

**War and the American Difference**

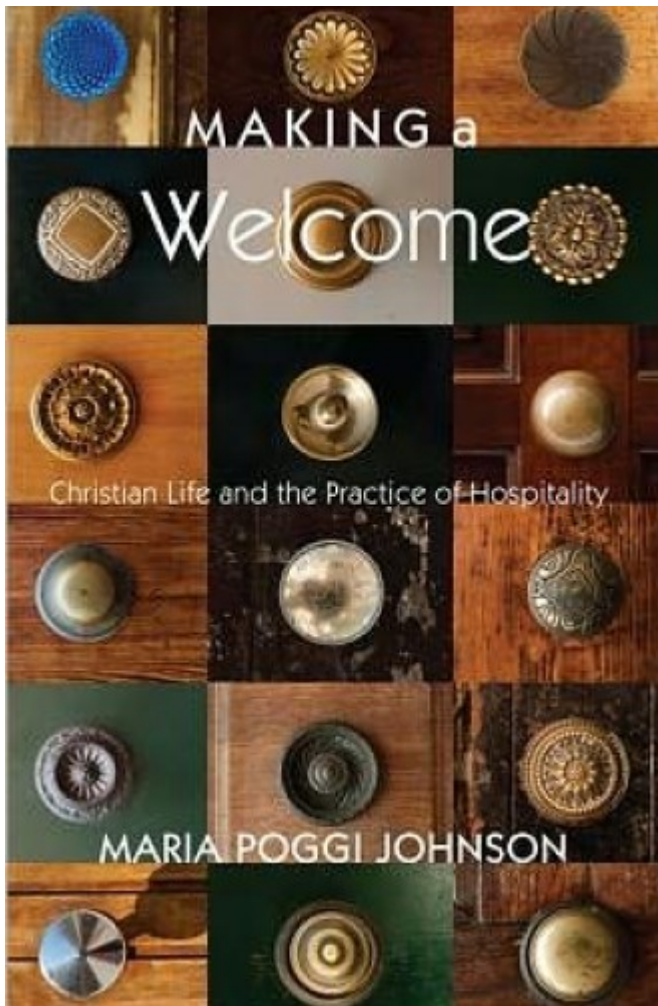
By Stanley Hauerwas

Baker Academic



## **The Christian Art of Dying**

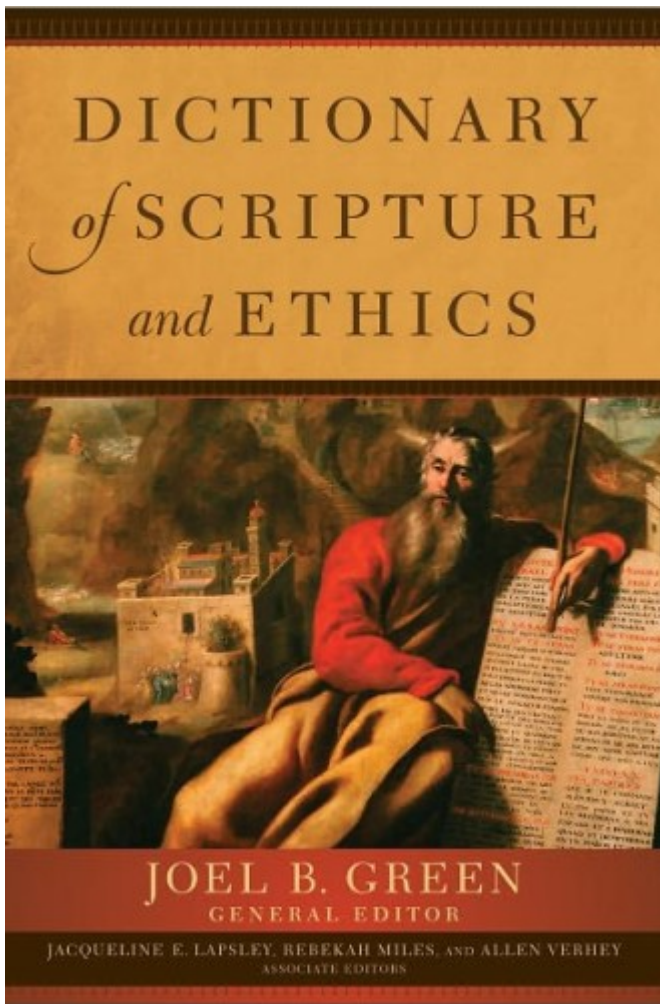
By Allen Verhey  
Eerdmans



## **Making a Welcome**

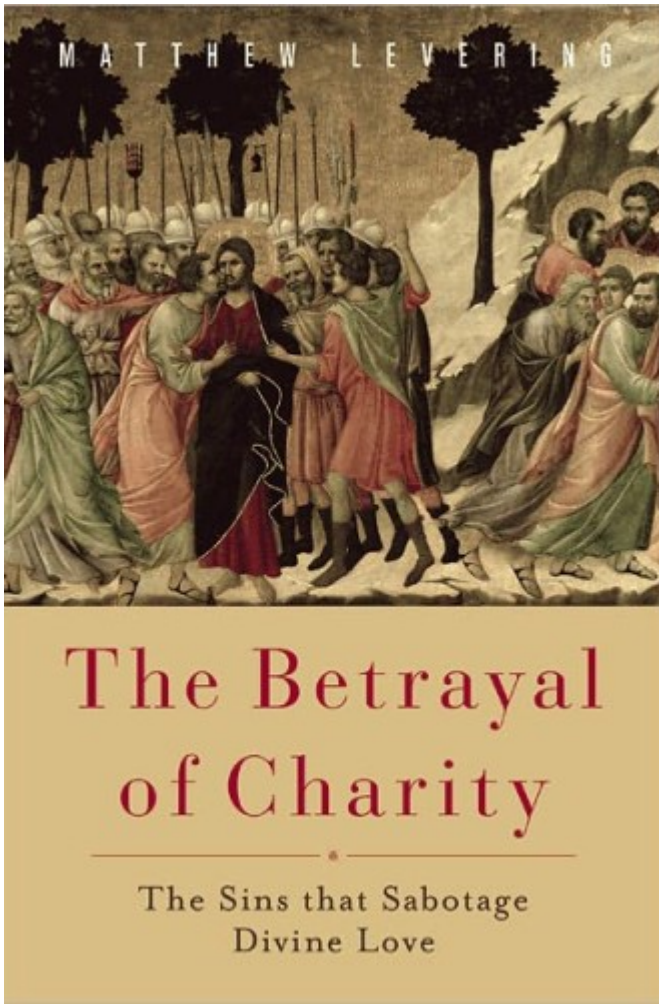
By Maria Poggi Johnson

Cascade



## **Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics**

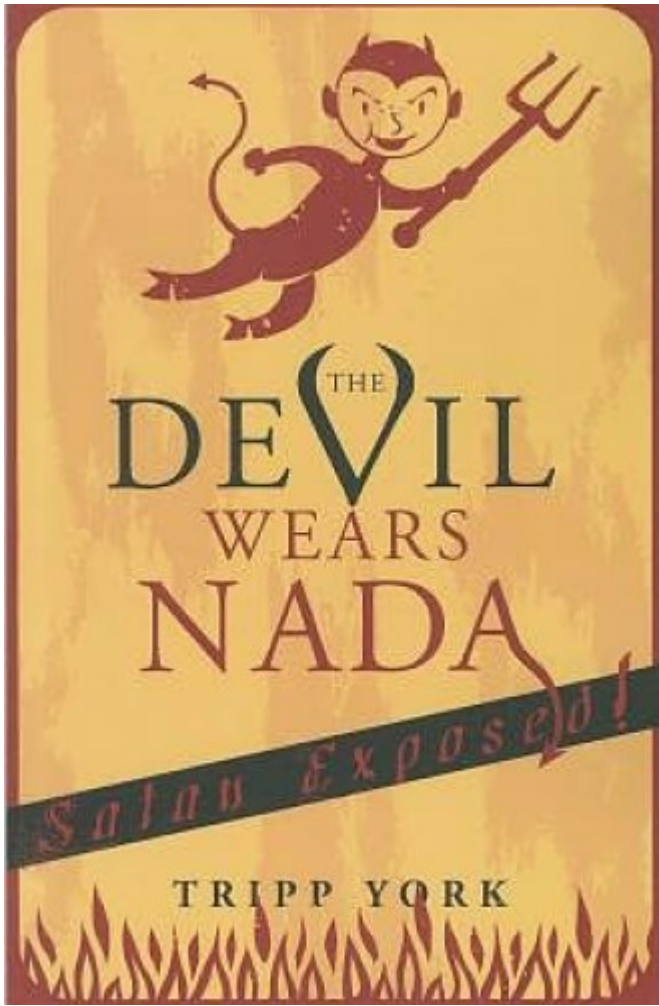
By Joel B. Green, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Rebekah Miles and Allen Verhey  
Baker Academic



## **The Betrayal of Charity**

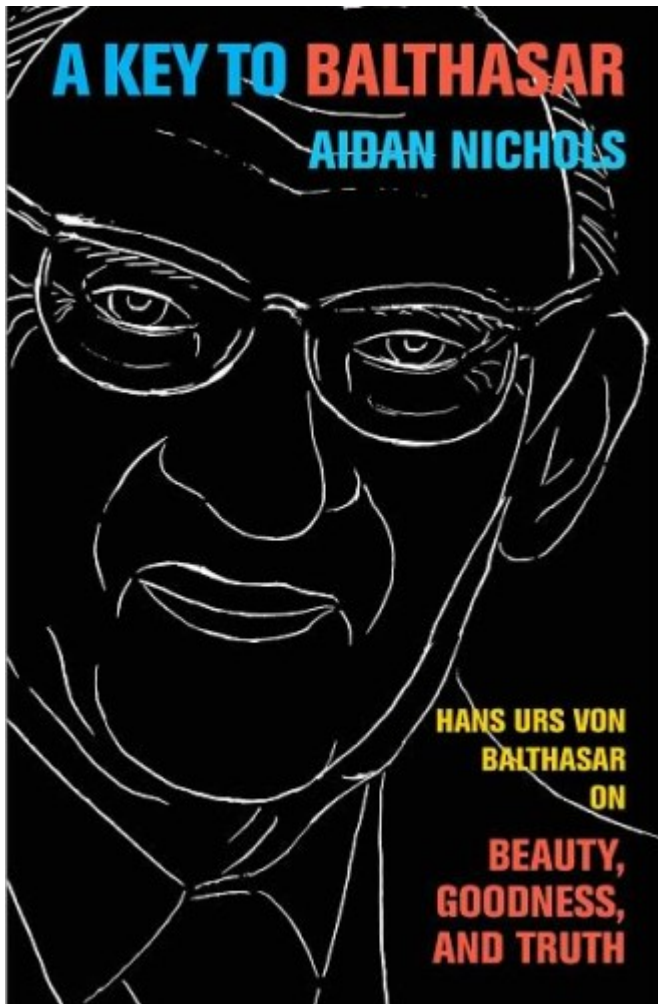
By Matthew Levering  
Baylor University Press





## **The Devil Wears Nada**

By Tripp York  
Cascade



## **A Key to Balthasar**

By Aidan Nichols, OP  
Baker Academic

*Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, by Sherry Turkle (Basic Books, 384 pp., \$28.95). Amidst the deluge of propaganda, technophilia and idolatry that masquerades as objective assessment of digital culture, Turkle offers us galoshes and a sump pump. A researcher at MIT whose focus is the social and psychological impact of technology, she gives a clear-eyed, reflective and wise assessment of what we gain and lose in the current configurations of digital culture. Her imperative is this: we have to love our technology (and ourselves) enough to tell the truth about what it does to us. Increasingly, what it does is draw us apart.

*The Borders of Baptism: Identities, Allegiances, and the Church*, by Michael L. Budde (Cascade, 204 pp., \$22.00 paperback). Budde invites us to notice how baptism redraws the geography of our world, claiming us for ecclesial solidarity. Belonging to Christ, we belong to one another in a way that subordinates the finite claims of ethnicity, ideology or the nation-state. Budde offers a compelling map of how dislocated American Christians have become, in that we are all too willing to kill for other lords, to proclaim other securities and to immerse our imaginations in other loves. His book is an invitation for exiles to return to our baptismal home.

*A Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth's Ecology*, by Benjamin M. Stewart (Augsburg Fortress, 96 pp., \$9.99 paperback). Although written as Lutheran adult curriculum, this book is too rich to be hoarded by Lutherans and too relevant to wait for a class to convene. Stewart takes us on "short hikes" into the relation of baptism to water, of the calendar to days and seasons, of the Eucharist to fields and vineyards, and of funerals to our earthly bodies.

*War and the American Difference*, by Stanley Hauerwas (Baker Academic, 208 pp., \$19.99 paperback). The reason to read yet another book by Hauerwas is his reason for writing it: to "help us, Christian and non-Christian alike, to confront the reality of war." He confronts us with compelling evidence that "war is America's central liturgical act" by which it renews its sense of being a unique nation. Our sacrifices and the sacrificed, beginning with the Civil War, compel us to engage in war as a noble calling to redeem the world. Absent a church disciplined by divine justice (that is, by Jesus) and articulate about human suffering (a Pentecostal gift), war will remain the most compelling option we have. Hauerwas concludes the book with five chapters meant to call forth "The Ecclesial Difference."

*The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus*, by Allen Verhey (Eerdmans, 423 pp., \$30.00 paperback). Writing as "a mortal theologian," Verhey traces three episodes in the history of death. He finds wanting the 20th century's medicalized war against dying. More surprisingly, although he sees much to appreciate in the 15th century's "art of dying," he finds it, too, wanting in light of the gospel. The death of Jesus provides the third episode, one that presents dying as neither a virtuous art nor a medical war. Verhey draws us into the presence of the risen One in worship and the practices of dying into his life.

*Making a Welcome: Christian Life and the Practice of Hospitality*, by Maria Poggi Johnson (Cascade, 124 pp., \$15.00 paperback). Johnson's initial description of her

own hospitality sounds more like an extreme sport than a work of mercy. But this book is not off-putting; it is inviting—in structure, content and accomplishment. In successive chapters Johnson discusses hospitality toward guests, spouses, ideas and strangers, and finally encourages readers to accept God’s hospitality as a reversal of Eden. She deftly weaves stories of scripture, her own life, novels and saints into a tapestry that reveals the beauty of divine hospitality in the ordinary. The book succeeds brilliantly, through equal parts style, wisdom and grace.

*Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, edited by Joel B. Green with Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Rebekah Miles and Allen Verhey (Baker Academic, 912 pp., \$59.99). No one is likely to read this comprehensive text front to back, but it does lend itself to reading from season to season and conundrum by conundrum. With articles on every biblical book, it offers preachers a welcome guide to the ethical import of scripture. With entries on almost any issue readers might confront, it is an invitation to start with a “hermeneutics of engagement,” rather than a “hermeneutics of dismissal.” Three orienting essays introduce the book, guiding us into the subtle depths and multiple interrelations hidden in the conjunction of scripture and ethics.

*The Betrayal of Charity: The Sins that Sabotage Divine Love*, by Matthew Levering (Baylor University Press, 229 pp., \$24.95 paperback). Levering demonstrates that “contemplating charity in light of its opposites” will deepen our understanding of the primary theological virtue. This work of moral theology takes scripture and Thomas Aquinas as chief sources for insightful reflections on hatred, sloth, envy, discord, schism, violence and scandal. Levering’s brilliance lies in clearing away the sins that sabotage divine love through critical readings of Christianity’s critics.

*The Devil Wears Nada: Satan Exposed!* by Tripp York (Cascade, 164 pp., \$19.00 paperback). If you think ethics is seldom fun and never funny, York’s exposé of Satan-centric Christianity is necessary medicine. His satirical pokes at unreflective Christianity are equal parts laugh-out-loud funny and write-it-down wise. This book is about ethical matters—how we negotiate and narrate life’s contingencies; but more important, this book is an instance of ethics in the way it evokes living joyfully before the face of God.

*A Key to Balthasar: Hans Urs von Balthasar on Beauty, Goodness, and Truth*, by Aidan Nichols (Baker Academic, 128 pp., \$17.99 paperback). Because beauty and goodness are inseparable from truth, ethics and theology are not discrete disciplines but complementary discourses on the same subject. Balthasar helps us to realize that the subject of theology and ethics is a Subject, the triune One who draws us

into divine beauty, goodness and truth. Nichols shows us how Balthasar does that in this winsome and elegant introduction.