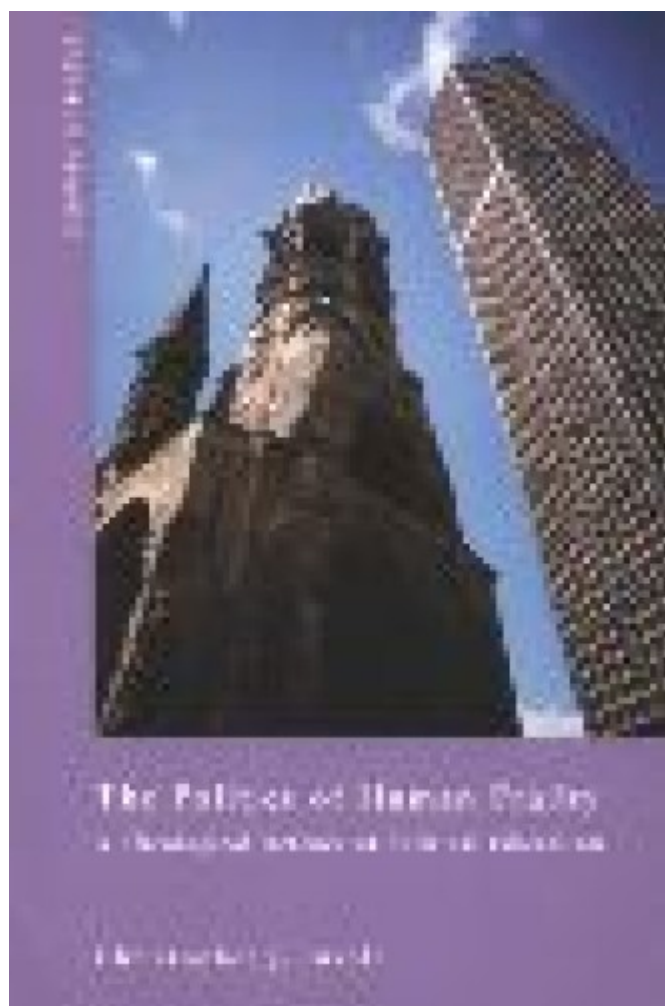


Take and Read

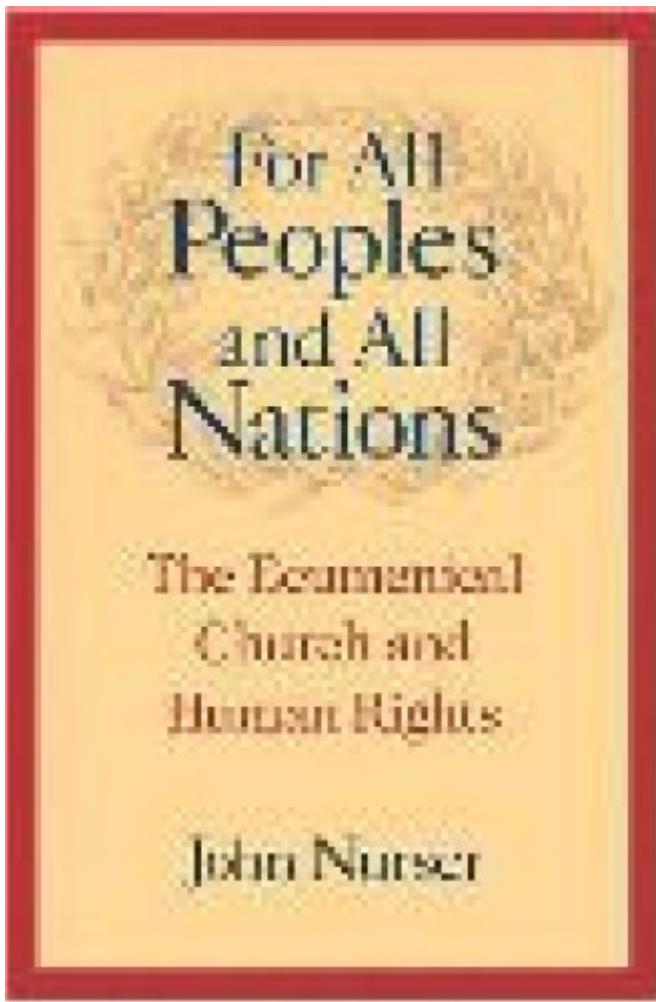
selected by [Robin Lovin](#) in the [May 30, 2006](#) issue

In Review



The Politics of Human Frailty: A Theological Defence of Political Liberalism

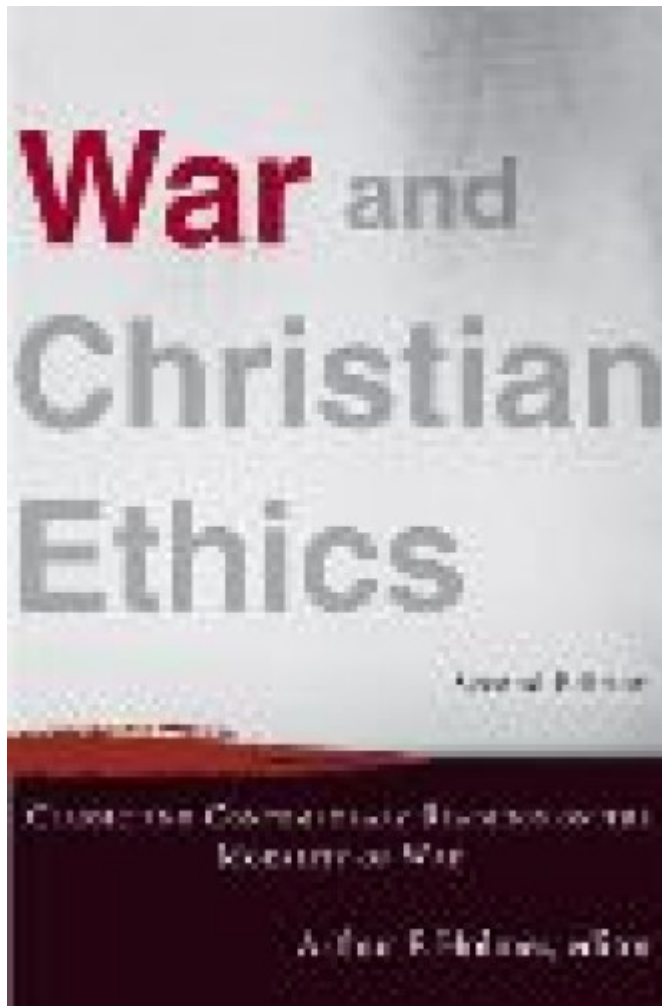
Christopher Insole
University of Notre Dame Press



For All Peoples and All Nations: The Ecumenical Church and Human Rights

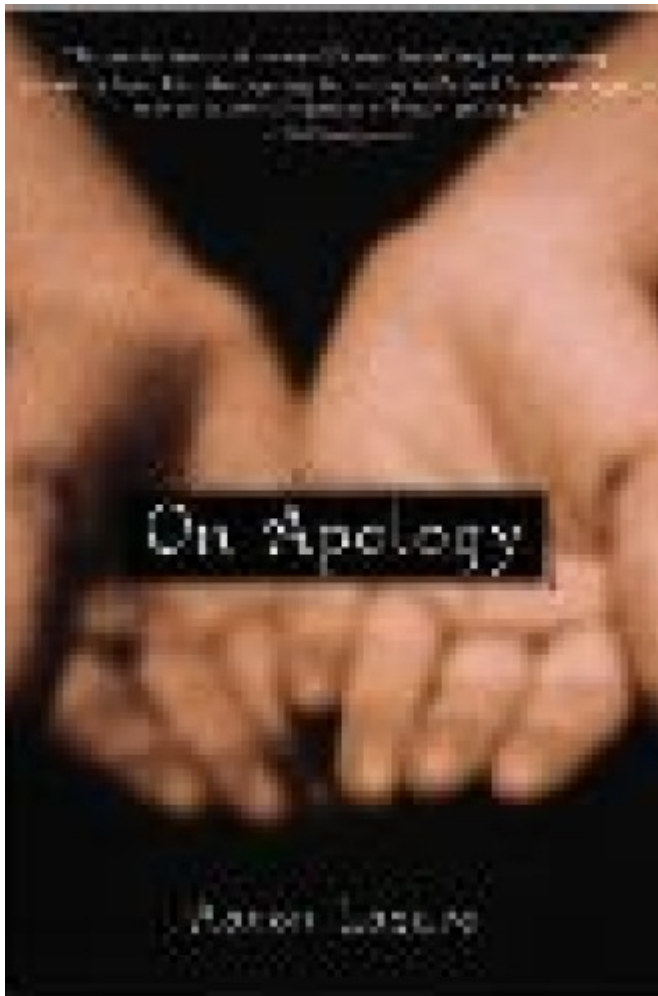
John S. Nurser

Georgetown University Press



War and Christian Ethics

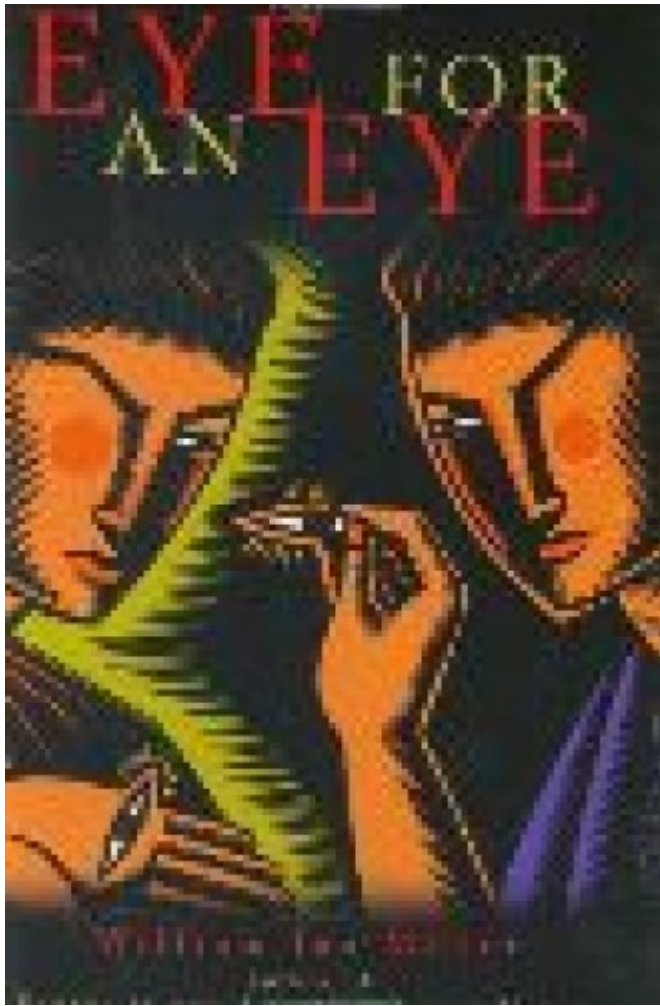
Arthur F. Holmes, ed.
Baker



On Apology

Aaron Lazare

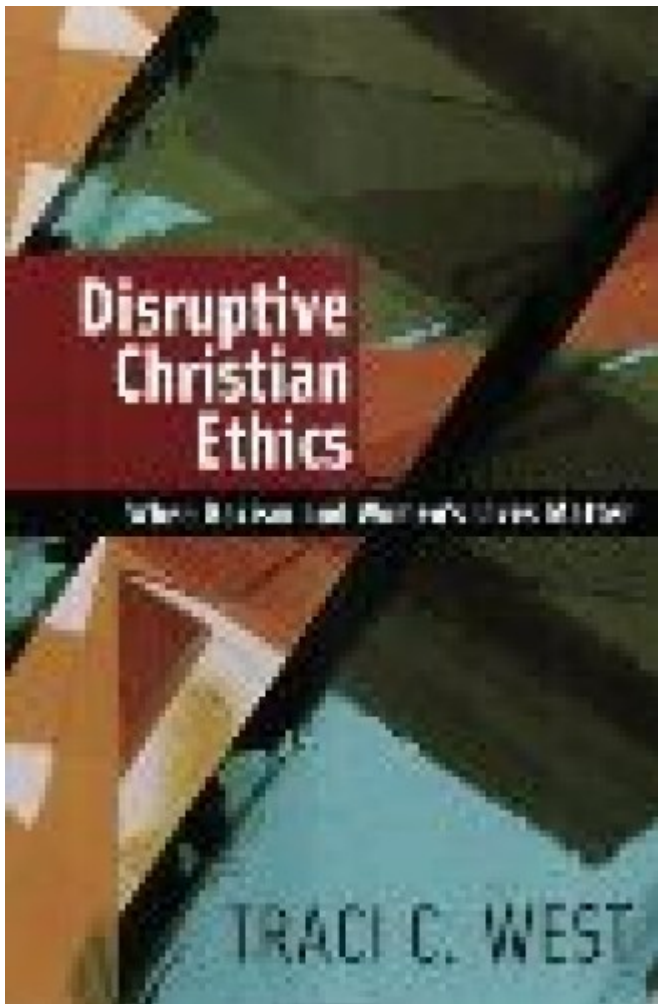
Oxford University Press



An Eye for an Eye

William Ian Miller

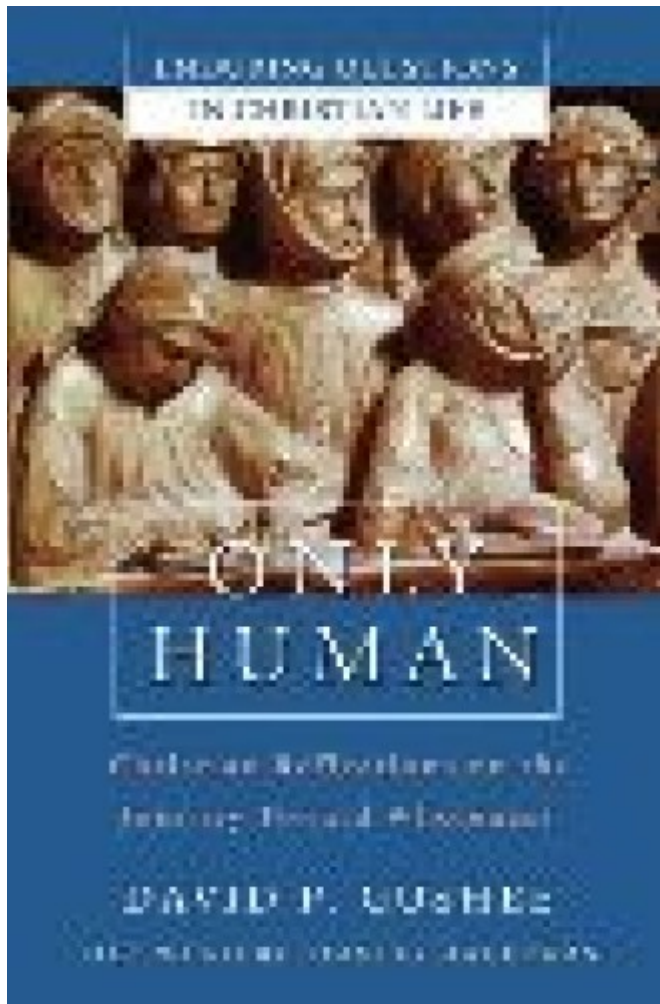
Cambridge University Press



Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter

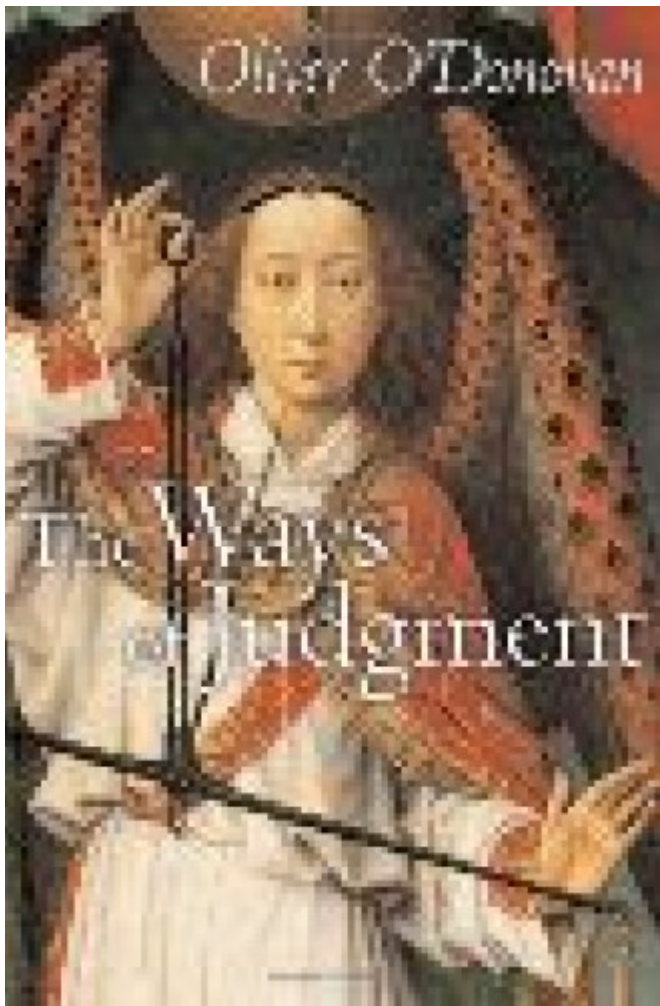
Traci C. West

Westminster John Knox



Only Human: Christian Reflections on the Journey Toward Wholeness

David P. Gushee
Jossey-Bass



The Ways of Judgment

Oliver O'Donovan
Eerdmans

The recent increase in Christian political activism in the U.S. invites deeper thinking about the relationship between Christian faith and modern democracy. Two British authors lead us into these basic theological questions. O'Donovan continues his authoritative studies of biblical ethics and the history of Christian political thought with *The Ways of Judgment*. He argues on theological grounds for an appropriately secular understanding of the judgments that deal with the imperfect but necessary business of political order, while he preserves for the church an independence that calls neither for it to submit to political judgment nor for it to impose its own judgment on the state. In *The Politics of Human Frailty*, Insole deals more directly with the currently popular idea that liberal democracy is an Enlightenment creation that is indifferent or hostile to Christian commitment. He shows that liberalism has

both historic Christian roots and a theological connection to Christian ideas of sin and the limits of human judgment.

The connection between theology and international politics also receives attention in recent works. Nurser, in *For All Peoples and All Nations*, details the work of ecumenical activists and Christian organizations in shaping the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The complex relationships between religious truth and secular authority that O'Donovan develops in history and theory are here discussed on a global scale in reference to recent times. Holmes provides a longer historical view of Christian attitudes toward power and conflict between nations in a new edition of *War and Christian Ethics*. The first edition of this anthology of writings on war, peace and international law has served theological students and interested lay readers for three decades. The new edition recognizes developments in recent history with writings on nuclear deterrence, pacifism and international terrorism that are quickly becoming classics.

Pastoral ethics requires a sensitivity to social practices that often go unanalyzed because they are so familiar. Lazare considers one of these in detail in *On Apology*. A psychiatrist, Lazare helps us to understand why apology is becoming more important in personal life, professional practice and even politics. He offers reflections on how to make an effective apology and observations on the cultural differences that sometimes prevent apologies from being offered or received. A theological study of how apology relates to forgiveness and reconciliation, however, still remains to be done. In a similar vein, Miller, a legal scholar with a profound understanding of how biblical images and folk traditions shape modern ways of life, traces the themes of retribution, equality and justice in *An Eye for an Eye*. As Miller recognizes, these deeply rooted values do not add up to a theory of justice or a theology of judgment, but any pastor will observe that ancient expectations of retribution, equality and justice are at work in the lives of contemporary Christians.

In quite different ways these two works raise questions about how Christian ethics can speak to human diversity. In *Disruptive Christian Ethics*, West proposes a method that would take seriously the details of lives affected by racism and sexism before attempting to make universal moral claims. Gushee, in *Only Human*, begins with the question of whether we can say that human nature exists and proposes an approach to ethics in which claims about sin, human freedom and moral virtue grow out of ordinary moral experience. His discussion culminates with a diverse series of portraits of people who exhibited moral greatness, including Florence Nightingale

and Martin Luther King Jr. Gushee's approach is engagingly direct, and his book is suitable for specialists and general readers alike. West, however, might pose this question to Gushee: Whose experience is considered the ordinary experience on which a Christian account of human nature is based?