

***Deliver Us from Evil.*** By John Swinton. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022. 130 pp.

John Swinton is Chair of Divinity and Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. He has extensively published in practical theology, mental health studies, and disability theology. *Deliver Us from Evil* emerged from a series of lectures Swinton presented as the Didsbury Lectures at the Nazarene College in Manchester, UK, in 2020. The book discusses the hidden nature of evil and how everyone, knowingly or unknowingly, may be ensnared by evil and inadvertently perpetrate evil among those who are often society's most vulnerable. Swinton's basic premise is, "If we can't see evil, we can't resist it. If we can't resist it, we get sucked into it" (back cover).

Swinton begins by presenting the reader with recent cases of social evil. He mentions the killing of George Floyd, stories of Christians being persecuted globally, and the World Health Organization's statistics about the vast number of children who die each year from preventable and treatable causes. At the end of these presentations, Swinton asks why more people are not driven to action: "*How can we know such a thing and simply go on living our lives as if the deaths of millions mean little to us?*" (3). According to Swinton, more people are not driven to action because evil is elusive, invisible, and difficult to see, so it is difficult to resist.

Using the work of New Testament scholar Susan Eastman and political philosopher Hannah Arendt, Swinton argues that the Apostle Paul locates evil within the cognitive confusion that humans experience as they move further away from God, thereby mistaking good for bad. Within this concept, sin is a dominating power that lords over humans, and only the death and resurrection of Jesus can redeem humans from the power of sin. Swinton claims Arendt's analysis of evil is similar to Eastman's assessment. For Arendt, there are banal and radical forms of evil. Banal evil occurs in the innocence of everyday thinking, attitudes, and actions by which people ignorantly implicate themselves in evil. Banal evil can lead to radical evil, which is the "demonic, dark, unimaginable," and "more than dehumanizing" kind of evil, like that which occurred in Auschwitz (16).

Swinton then explores the different forms that evil can take. He argues that evil can be personal, structural, or systemic. Personal evil is the evil humans do to each other as individuals. Structural evil is the evil built into society's structures, such as racism, sexism, and poverty. Systemic evil is embedded in our world's systems, such as the global economy and the arms trade. Swinton argues that all of these forms of evil are interconnected. Personal evil can lead to structural evil, and structural evil can lead to systemic evil. The question is, how should Christians respond to evil? Swinton argues that Christians should not try to avoid evil but instead actively resist it. This resistance

can take many forms, such as speaking out against injustice, working to change the structures of society, and offering compassion and care to those harmed by evil. Swinton also argues that Christians should not despair in the face of evil. He believes that God is present amid evil and working to overcome it. Therefore, Christians can find hope knowing God is with them, even in the darkest times.

*Deliver Us from Evil* is a challenging and thought-provoking book that raises questions about the nature of evil and how Christians should respond to it. His thesis that evil is not only a problem of individual sin, but also a systemic problem embedded in society's structures is not new. Yet, how he embeds the discussion in contemporary situations relatable to most people, like the COVID pandemic, the killing of George Floyd, and the Rwandan genocide, is refreshing and very timely. Swinton's writing is clear and engaging, and he draws on various sources, from Scripture to the work of social scientists and theologians. The book is what one would expect from a scholar of Swinton's caliber. It is a valuable resource for anyone seeking to understand and respond to evil in our world. Overall, *Deliver Us from Evil* is a timely and essential book that speaks to the challenges of our time. It is a call to action for Christians to resist evil in all its forms and to work to create a more just and compassionate world.

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