

# Book Reviews

the scope of their personal Christian beliefs. *Trauma-Informed Evangelism* is well conceptualized and worthy of a careful read. The discussion questions at the end of each chapter help facilitate reflection and planning for individuals or groups interested in developing this mode of evangelism.

As a clinical trauma specialist and Christian, I found this work especially relevant to my current task, building the mental health department in a residential drug and alcohol treatment center for adult males. The vast majority of these men report trauma, including childhood sexual abuse, violent experiences during incarceration, family of origin abuse, and medical trauma inherent in abusing substances. They have been the victims of trauma, and they have been the perpetrators of trauma. They identify the church as the key component of their healing, but also a key factor of their wounding. The explanations of spiritual wounding and trauma-informed care in this book are sound; they are as applicable to the neighbor who has found moderate offense as to deeply wounded brothers and sisters with complex consequences. I plan to use this material to deepen the focus on the concepts of spiritual wounding and trauma-informed care into my practice.

*Reviewed by Jennifer Durham, MBA, LPCC-S, Director of Mental Health and Special Services at New Destiny Treatment Center, Clinton, OH 44216.*

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**DISCIPLES AND FRIENDS: Investigations in Disability, Dementia, and Mental Health** by Armand Léon van Ommen and Brian R. Brock, eds. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2022. 330 pages. Hardcover; \$59.99. ISBN: 9781481317009.

It has been almost fifty years since I started supporting individuals affected by intellectual and developmental disabilities, and I wish this edited book had been available at that time. While the focus of the different chapters in this book touches on subjects having to do with disability, dementia, and mental health, the real emphasis is on the practical theology of John Swinton, and the ways friendship in and through Jesus informs the “tension between reflection and action, and research and practice” (p. 56).

The book has an introduction and an afterword, and it is divided into four sections: (1) Practical Theology in a Swintonian Key, (2) Vulnerability Subverted, (3) Quests for Faithful Embodiment, and (4) Gently Living in a Violent World. According to the publisher’s description of the book, it is directed toward “students and scholars of practical theology, disability theology, mental health, dementia and cognate fields” (<https://www.baylorpress.com/9781481317009/disciples-and-friends/>). While some of the language is almost inaccessible without a theological background, much of the writing is practical and applicable to those of us who see working for and with

people affected by disability, dementia, and mental health as a vocation rather than as a career.

Readers will each have their favorite authors based on their own interests and passions. As a behavior support practitioner as well as a social work professor, I was most affected by the chapter written by Grant Macaskill, a theologian from the University of Aberdeen who identifies as autistic. He writes movingly about the autistic gain for the church when we radically empower the neurodiversity model to discontinue talking about normalcy as a goal and embrace the differences diversity brings within the rich tapestry of the body of Christ. In a similar way, Bill Gaventa’s chapter, entitled “All God’s Children Got a Place in the Choir” provides another view of the many members of the body whose differences make the body stronger by embracing Paul’s vision of God’s choice to use the “weak” to bring strength and the “foolish” to bring wisdom to the world the church ministers to (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1 & 2). In his chapter, he asks three questions that I wish I had been asking years ago:

1. Who am I?
2. Why am I?
3. Whose am I?

I have spent some hours reflecting on these three questions, trying to move past the role definitions we so easily gravitate to. Finding the “why” of my existence, the purpose I have in life, is an equally deep question, and asking who I belong to within our kingdom relationships will hopefully help me find my place in God’s choir. Reading this book will, I believe, prompt readers to ask the same questions I asked myself. Finding the “why” of our existence and the purpose of our lives are deep questions for all of us. In our Christian lives, finding out who we belong to will help us to find our place in God’s choir with all the other critters. For some of us, the call is to be “disciples and friends” to persons with disabilities, dementia, and neurodiversity, and this book may bring that into focus for some readers.

The body of Christ is far more than the worship center of the Christian faith; it is the place where Jesus interacts with all the people Jesus came to minister to as recorded in Luke 14:13–23 – “the sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf, the prisoners, the poor, the weak.” According to the United Nations, the largest minority group in the world is people affected by various disabilities, accounting for approximately 650 million people out of a population of 7.88 billion people (<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/toolaction/pwdfs.pdf>). It is with and for these people that John Swinton’s work seeks to create opportunities for friendships to develop amongst people who come together to experience the friendship of Jesus. Within these relationships we come to know the peace of Jesus, and as Medi Ann Volpe writes in one of the chapters, Jesus *is* our peace, Jesus *makes* our peace,

and Jesus *preaches* our peace. The people I have known over the years whose differences were labeled and diagnosed have ministered the peace of Jesus to me in ways that are too deep for words. They have taught me what friendship is, and reading this book I have come to understand that John Swinton's life and teaching is devoted to cultivating friendship and creating communities in which there are no dividing walls—where all people in need of grace and redemption, love and forgiveness, healing and hope come together as one body with many members.

There are precious few things I would change about this book. I would make the last chapters in the section "Gently Living in a Violent World" the first chapters: I think they are much more inviting to readers, and from my perspective, they contain more information on how to live out this theology of friendship.

Overall, I would encourage all Christians whose lives intertwine with people on the margins of ability and disability to read this book and let it speak to their hearts and their minds. I am looking forward to being able to use this book both as a practitioner and a professor, and in these roles, I am thankful to have read about all the ways I can learn to be a deeper and better friend and human being.

*Reviewed by Bob Bowen, Adjunct Professor of Social Work, Malone University, Canton, OH 44709.*

## HISTORY OF SCIENCE

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**HELMHOLTZ AND THE CONSERVATION OF ENERGY: Contexts of Creation and Reception** by Kenneth L. Caneva. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021. 735 pages, including notes (138 pages), bibliographies of primary and secondary sources (80 pages), and an index (17 pages). Hardcover; \$125.00. ISBN: 9780262045755.

By examining the pagination details mentioned above, one could easily surmise that one will be reading and examining a book grounded in textual detail. And one would be spot on. The weight of the author's research is, quite honestly, breathtaking. Kenneth L. Caneva has devoted his academic life to an examination of energy concepts. He is a professor in the Department of History at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. A former student of Thomas S. Kuhn, he has also authored two other books: *The Form and Function of Scientific Discoveries* (Dibner Library Lecture, 2000) and an authoritative biography, *Robert Mayer and the Conservation of Energy* (Princeton University Press, 1993). *Helmholtz and the Conservation of Energy* is his latest contribution.

Before we examine the book proper, the obvious question arises: Who was Hermann von Helmholtz? To answer that question one can best turn to the 937-page

scientific biography of Helmholtz by David Cahan (*Helmholtz: A Life in Science*, The University of Chicago Press, 2018). Helmholtz (1821–1894), a German physiologist and physicist, is described by Steven Shapin in his review of Cahan's book as "a theorist of (not quite) everything." Helmholtz had an immense range of scientific and cultural interests: physics, physiology, psychology, aesthetics, philosophy. He invented the ophthalmoscope, measured the nervous impulse, contributed to meteorology and atmospheric physics, and helped build some of Germany's scientific and technological institutions.

Caneva wants to explore the context and reception of one of Helmholtz's early (1847) seminal essays, "*Über die Erhaltung der Kraft*" ["On the Conservation of Force"] by examining how this essay shaped the discussion and acceptance of a physical principle: the conservation of energy. How was "conservation of force" eventually transformed into a principle of energy conservation? Caneva offers us a contextualist historiography of this long and complex transition by providing an in-depth analysis of Helmholtz's contribution and influence in the discovery process.

The discovery of the principle of energy conservation is a classic case in the history of nineteenth-century science. Although overshadowed in the public mind by Charles Darwin's principle of natural selection, its historical development raises similar issues. Who discovered the principle of energy conservation? An easy question to pose, but a very complicated one to answer. And more to Caneva's point of interest: Is conservation of energy what Helmholtz initially meant by the conservation of force?

Caneva offers this book as an example "of how what is generally accepted as scientific knowledge is reshaped as it passes through the hands of people with different agendas using different language." It is not an individualistic process, but rather reflects a "collective construction of scientific knowledge." Caneva concludes the book with this assertion: "The cumulative force of this study has implicitly rendered otiose the question of who discovered the conservation of energy" (p. 466). In a real sense, no one individual has discovered the conservation of energy: one could reference Robert Meyer (1842), Helmholtz (1847), William Thomson (1851) [force to energy], and Helmholtz (1853) again. With meticulous detail Caneva highlights the terminological shifts that have taken place as well as the rhetorical skills exercised when the "law" or "principle" was presented to various publics, even in popular scientific settings.

The book has eleven chapters, followed by a "Historiographical Excursus: How Others Have Interpreted Helmholtz's Achievement" (pp. 471–99). In chapter 1, "Helmholtz's Self-Described Principal Concerns,"