

Rebecca L. Copeland, *Entangled Being: Unoriginal Sin and Wicked Problems*. Baylor University Press, 2024. 250 pages. \$47.99.

Rebecca Copeland's *Entangled Being* takes up the timely and important task of seeking the language and categories necessary to account for the reality of structural evil in the world within a Christian theological framework in order to clarify what an appropriate and faithful response should be. The book is structured in two parts. Part I treats the substance of her systematic proposal. Here Copeland presents an overview of the ways Christians have traditionally understood and categorized sin and argues for the need of her newly proposed category, "unoriginal sin," to describe broad human culpability within the globalized and intergenerational "wicked problems" we face (chapter 1). In doing so, Copeland seeks to tighten the theo-logic that would then require a Christian response to such problems. Chapters 2 and 3 seek to recover an understanding of repentance that includes taking responsibility for structural harms and engaging in the work of their repair. Throughout this discussion she interacts with the issue of global climate change as a guiding example. Part II engages three additional case studies to demonstrate further the utility of her theological framework: further investigation into environmental injustices, the problem of economic globalization and exploitation, and the problem of systemic health disparity.

Copeland's book has many valuable features that recommend it to theologians, pastors, and informed laity engaged with the question of how we are to think about the world's wicked problems and frame them productively within the life of the church. The discussion of repentance and responsibility in chapter 2 is itself worth the price of the book as she sorts through the western moral inheritance of individualistic notions of moral responsibility and carves out ample room in her critique for a more relational, future-oriented, and globally-scaled approach. Particularly instructive here is her engagement with recent discussions of moral luck and her constructive interaction with womanist and *mujerista* theologians in recommending a profitable way forward. No doubt, this rich section of the book will be especially useful for homileticians seeking thoughtful ways to address such topics using the standard rubrics of Christian theology.

While Copeland is clearly onto something in detecting the need for new language and categories, it is precisely the systematics aspect of the book, located in chapter 1, that is least compelling and most in need of expansion. Many readers will ask themselves why "sin" should be the most appropriate category of analysis for dealing with wicked problems when the obligation to resist evil is already part of the baptismal vows in most major Christian denominations. For Copeland, this choice does more work in being "more competent to account for Christian action and responsibility in the complicated world we actually inhabit" (11), but it is not fully clear that that is true, and Copeland does not fully argue the case or provide us with an account of evil. A more detailed discussion of biblical hamartiological frameworks might have aided her in making the case that such are often made with reference to larger societal and ecological systems—the Priestly hamartiology in the Pentateuch being a case in point. A deeper

exploration of that and other available frameworks might have helped to shore up her case for an application of the category of sin for systemic problems apart from individual culpability. Perhaps the biggest issue, however, is the treatment here of original sin, which seems rather critical here as the category over and against which her new category “unoriginal sin” is offered. The interaction with original sin here is overly brief and done mainly with a view toward the congenital sense of St. Augustine’s original theory (the *peccatum originale originans*) and much less with regard to its reception and its relationship to the structural problem of the impaired human will (*peccatum originale originatum*), which strikes this reviewer as much more relevant and important to the theme of this book. If original sin in this latter sense already names a structural problem as well as a challenge in addressing structural problems, why should unoriginal sin be thought of as a separable category over and against it rather than a feature of it? These are just a few of the many questions that this aspect of the project leaves unanswered.

These criticisms notwithstanding, Copeland has done the world and the church a service in bringing wicked problems within the domain of the church’s traditional area of central concerns, and preachers and congregations will benefit from the ways she has taught us to understand and take up our work of repair.

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