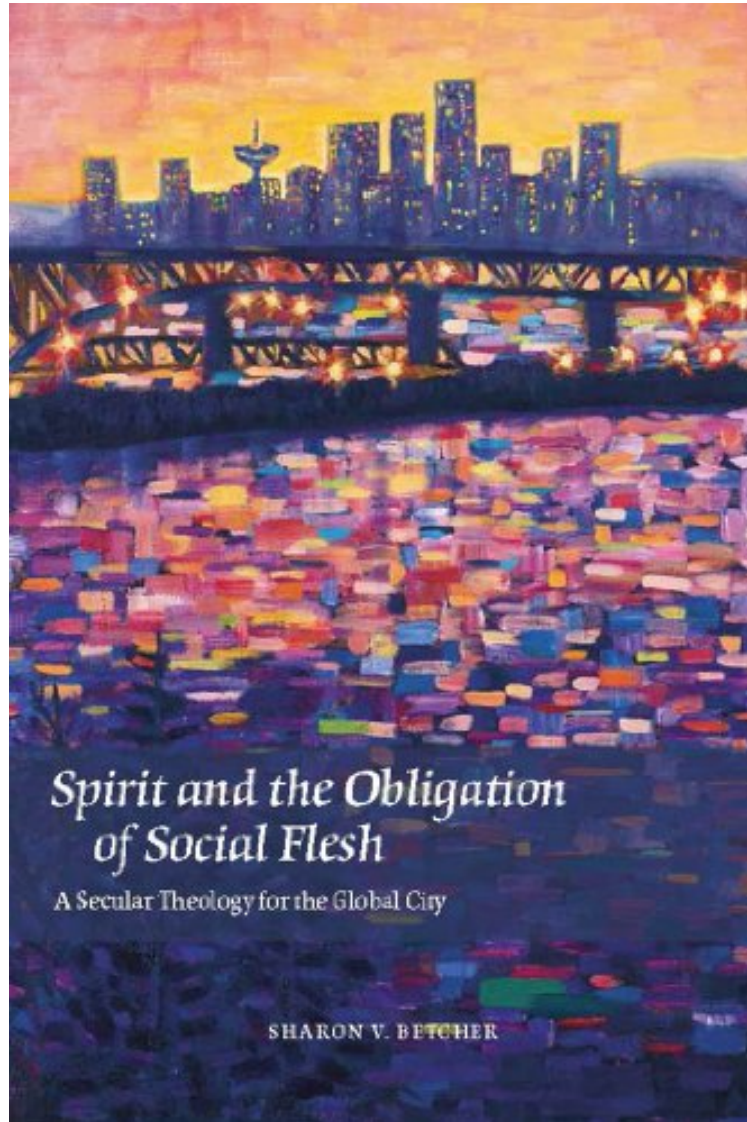


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Spirit and the Obligation of Social Flesh: A Secular Theology for the Global City

Sharon V. Betcher

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Sharon V. Betcher : Spirit and the Obligation of Social Flesh: A Secular Theology for the Global City before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Spirit and the Obligation of Social Flesh: A Secular Theology for the Global City:

Drawing on philosophical reflection, spiritual and religious values, and somatic practice, *Spirit and the Obligation of Social Flesh* offers guidance for moving amidst the affective dynamics that animate the streets of the global cities now amassing around our planet. Here theology turns decidedly secular. In urban medieval Europe, seculars were uncloistered persons who carried their spiritual passion and sense of an obligated life into daily circumambulations of the city. Seculars lived in the city, on behalf of the city, but contrary to the new profit economy of the time with a different locus of value: spirit. Betcher argues that for seculars today the possibility of a devoted life, the practice of felicity in history, still remains. Spirit now names a necessary prosthesis, a locus for regenerating the elemental commons of our interdependent flesh and thus for cultivating spacious and fearless empathy, forbearance, and generosity. Her theological poetics, though based in Christianity, are frequently in conversation with other religions resident in our postcolonial cities.

A powerful, poignant witness from an author who lives with and works through the lens of disability, Professor Betcher finds through such a perspective hopeful practices for 21st century urban living. This rich, poetic text pleading for corporeal generosity is profoundly within the Christian incarnational tradition while commending a radical practice of obligation stemming from Spirit as prosthesis, as an aid to neighbor love. I recommend this book as an outstanding example of constructive theology to move us from merely global to planetary citizens, supporting all of life in its diversity, deviancy, and limitation, as well as rejoicing in its joys and delights. (Sallie McFague Distinguished Theologian in Residence, Vancouver School of Theology, and Professor of Theology Emerita, Vanderbilt University.) Sharon Betcher's cosmopolis of 'corporeal generosity' emits an eerie beauty. Its theo-poetics for seculars does not exclude any theology worth practicing but reads Spirit in the cracks of bodies, cities, politics, wisdoms. In the brilliance of this crip/tography the sites of our acute vulnerability signal possibilities that we do not want to miss whatever our discipline or art, our religion or irreligion. (Catherine Keller Drew University) In this creative book, Sharon Betcher presents a strong case that theology does not have to end as dominant notions of the divine shatter in the life-or-death struggles of our increasingly intertwined lives. In fact, theology begins again where people of various faiths and of little faith begin to identify the work of the Spirit in their midst. That Spirit emerges from the complex intersections of our vulnerable lives, rather than descending from above, is good news to all those of us who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens (Matt 11:28). (Joerg Rieger Wendland-Cook Professor of Constructive Theology, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University) *Spirit and the Obligation of Social Flesh* makes a unique, creative, and timely contribution to an area of great interest in the study of religion and theology. (Mayra Rivera Harvard Divinity School). . . A trend setter. This book is a path to help us find a new theology of hopefulness, a spirituality of resilience. (Rev. Dr. Devorah Greenstein Starr King School for the Ministry, Graduate Theological Union) About the Author Sharon Betcher is an independent scholar, writer, crip philosopher, and farmer living on Whidbey Island, Washington. She is the author of two academic texts, *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement* (Fortress, 2007) and *Spirit and the Obligation of Social Flesh: A Secular Theology for Global Cities* (Fordham University Press, 2014) as well as chapters within many anthologies. Her theo-philosophical work engages the critical lenses of ecological, postcolonial, gender, and disability studies theory.