

Beyond Apathy: A Theology for Bystanders

Elisabeth T. Vasko



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Theological conversations about violence have typically framed the discussion in terms of victim and perpetrator. Such work, while important, only addresses part of the problem. Comprehensive theological and pastoral responses to violence must also address the role of collective passivity in the face of human denigration. Given the pervasiveness of inaction-whether in the form of denial, willful ignorance, or silent complicity-a theological reflection on violence that holds bystanders accountable, especially those who occupy social sites of privilege, is long overdue. In Beyond Apathy, Elisabeth T. Vasko utilizes resources within the Christian tradition to examine the theological significance of bystander participation in patterns of violence and violation within contemporary Western culture, giving particular attention to the social issues of bullying, white racism, and sexual violence. In doing so, she constructs a theology of redeeming grace for bystanders to violence that foregrounds the significance of social action in bringing about God's basileia.

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