



Jennifer Allen Craft (PhD, University of St. Andrews) is associate professor of humanities and theology at Point University in West Point, Georgia, where she teaches courses in theology, philosophy, and the arts. Her work has been featured on *Transpositions* and in *Contemporary Art and the Church: A Conversation Between Two Worlds*.

"Jennifer Allen Craft is one of the most important emerging voices in theology and the arts today. This book provides a fascinating exploration of the arts in relation to place, a much-neglected topic. Lucid and lively, it deserves to be very widely read."

—**Jeremy Begbie**, Duke University

A Theology of Community at the Intersection of Art

*What role does place play in the Christian life? In this *Studies in Theology and the Arts* volume, Jennifer Allen Craft gives a practical theology of the arts, contending that the arts place us in time, space, and community in ways that encourage us to be fully and imaginatively present in a variety of contexts: the natural world, our homes, our worshiping communities, and society. In the following brief interview, Craft unpacks those details to show why place is so vital to our lives.*

Your book is called *Placemaking and the Arts*. What do you mean by placemaking?

Jennifer Allen Craft: This book stems from a desire to know and feel known by the places and communities one finds oneself in. While the contemporary world supplies various rituals and mindsets for living in (and often leaving) the places we live, it is important to understand the ways in which Christian theology re-imagines those rituals and re-evaluates our placemaking practices within the biblical narrative of creation and redemption. This book addresses not only a systematic theological evaluation of place and placemaking in the contemporary world but also suggests that our engagement in and practice of the arts might be one primary and paradigmatic form of placemaking in the world today. In practical terms, this book may serve not only as an invitation to reflect more directly on one's relationship to the places of the world, but also as a call to deeper engagement in the arts as they help us re-evaluate and re-imagine the manner in which we live in the places of the world today.

How is your book different from other books on finding community?

Craft: This book argues for the value of cultivating a distinctly Christian sense of place that is enacted in the practices of placemaking through the arts. Looking at four different arenas of the Christian life—the natural world, the home, the church, and society—this book explores the contours of placemaking in each of these contexts, along with the ways in which the arts sustain and cultivate a hospitable vision of place for the Christian life today.

Its methodology is unique in its twofold approach: it presents a general theology of place and placemaking while also outlining a placed theology of the arts. It highlights the ways in which our sense of place and our engagements with the arts can never fully be disentangled.

How does this book align with your work in the academy?

Craft: As a theologian interested in the arts and culture, this discussion serves to open up an interdisciplinary dialogue and invitation for new questions and concerns in the contemporary world. I am interested in enabling the application of theology for both the church and broader Christian life in the world, and in this regard, the book sets the tone for

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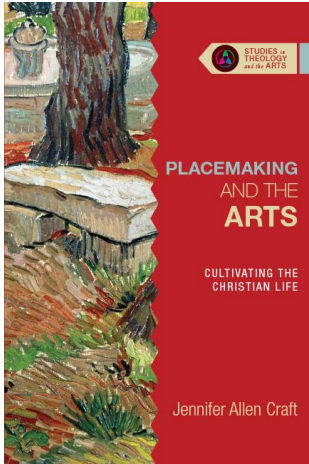


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*Placemaking and the Arts:
Cultivating the Christian Life*
(Studies in Theology and the
Arts)

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\$30, 280 pages, paperback
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“This brilliant book engages with a burgeoning interest in both the significance of place and the importance of the arts in God’s way with the world, synthesizing the two in an impressively insightful and imaginative fashion. It is highly scholarly and at the same time accessible. I am full of admiration for what the author has achieved and hope the book will be as influential as it certainly deserves to be.”

– **John Inge**, bishop of
Worcester

my own continued engagement in culture and the arts from an applied theological perspective.

Why is a theology of place vital to our understanding of this book?

Craft: This book grounds a theological evaluation of the arts in a practical theology of place, suggesting that it is not only important, but perhaps necessary, that we reassert and reimagine the role of the arts in the places of the Christian life.

While Christian theology has begun to engage more deeply in the topic of place and the practice of placemaking, little attention has been given to the role that the arts might serve in cultivating a sense of place. This book looks at the arts as one of the primary and paradigmatic ways that we might begin to re-imagine our lives together in the places of this world.

What do you hope people take away from *Placemaking and the Arts*?

Craft: While ritual and liturgy have become a much-discussed topic in theology today (as evidenced in authors like James K. A. Smith) this book addresses the specific role of the arts in understanding some of those liturgies in various arenas of our life together, along with lending the discussion more place-specific language.