

Review: The Pursuit of Safety: A Theology of Danger, Risk, and Security

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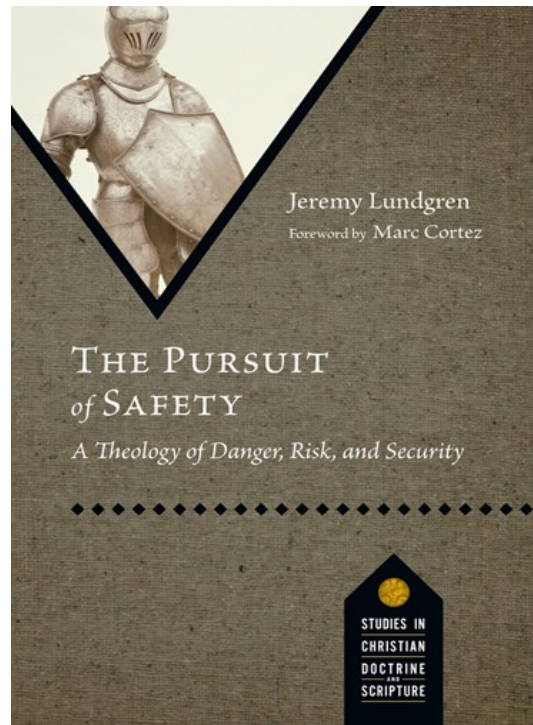
The Pursuit of Safety: A Theology of Danger, Risk, and Security

By Jeremy Lundgren (IVP Academic)

Is this world safe? No. Is it supposed to be safe, and if so, who's responsible for making sure it is? Should Christians seek safety? Whether they should, the human instinct is to pursue safety, which Jeremy Lundgren presents as an exacting taskmaster turned idol in the modern age.

In answering questions like those above, Lundgren's *The Pursuit of Safety* is a wide-ranging exploration not just of theology, but also the history, philosophy, technology and ethics of safety and security. It is an academic treatment perhaps most appreciated by those of an analytical or philosophical bent.

Lundgren begins by defining a host of terms and concepts related to safety. He then offers an extended examination of human conceptions of danger in the premodern, early-modern and late-modern eras. Premodern people viewed danger in relation to a world filled with gods and spirits. The disenchanted world of the early-modern era understood danger as a natural feature of the material world. For the late-modern world, danger resides within us.



Religious ritual gave way to calculating probability, technological innovation and the fine-tuning of safety measures. In the absence of the gods, the pursuit of safety became an idol, Lundgren contends.

Interesting discussions frequently bog down in what seem to be tangential analyses many readers will find tedious. Dedicated readers will find these apparent asides eventually support the broader argument.

The topic of safety in relation to the Christian life provides Lundgren's most interesting chapter—the next-to-last. Here, he frames the pursuit of safety as “a perpetual flight away from harm and toward nothing,” the opposite of a “pursuit of life” (p. 222). He describes this pursuit as an end in itself in conflict with obedience to Christ.

The Pursuit of Safety is less interested in ethical and conceptual prescriptions than in a thorough analysis of the whole field of safety and security.

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