

Q & A



Every Somewhere Sacred *Rescuing a Theology of Place in the American Imagination*

June 16, 2026 | \$27.99, 256 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0941-3

Ben Norquist (PhD, Azusa Pacific University) has served as director of grants and academics for Churches for Middle East Peace and as director of the Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East, where he helped American Christians pursue holistic peace with their neighbors around the world.

Brian Miller (PhD, University of Notre Dame) is professor of sociology at Wheaton College and regularly teaches about and publishes on Christian residential and cultural patterns.

God's Intentions for People and Land

What motivated you to write *Every Somewhere Sacred*?

Ben Norquist: The book emerged from certain thoughts and conversations. Having lived in places with very different cultural values and spent time with people all over the world, a few years ago I began to realize how frequently we reduce people from other parts of the world to the broadest generalizations. We collapse whole societies into flat labels based on their location, many of them deeply problematic. At the same time, I began to notice the Bible has a lot to say about land and people, about nations and communities, but the biblical ideals I was encountering were quite different, sometimes in direct opposition, to the ways we actually live in and approach our landscapes. This book is an attempt to explore these differences.

Brian Miller: I entered the field of sociology, in part, because of an interest in suburbs, cities, and places. As I have studied the character of communities, I have also sought to better understand God's plan for places and land. Americans consider suburbs to be a promised land; is this consistent with the Christian story? If God calls people and organizations to different kinds of places and lands, how are they to live for the flourishing of people and creation? This book offered an opportunity to wrestle with these questions in ways that honor God's mission in the world.

What is the main thesis in your book?

Norquist and Miller: The stories Americans tell about land—emphasizing exceptionalism, closing frontiers, private property and wealth creation, often downplaying problematic colonial histories and inequities perpetuated against peoples and creation—obscure God's intention for land and place. These common stories are accepted as natural or God-ordained but we argue the Bible tells a very different story about land and place: it consistently emphasizes that God created and cares for land and place. We review the American and scriptural stories and offer ways individuals and communities can live toward the positive relations God intends for people and land. In joining in with what God has done, is doing, and will do, we can establish better ways of engaging with the places we live.

What are the top three contributions your book makes to the scholarly community?

Norquist and Miller:

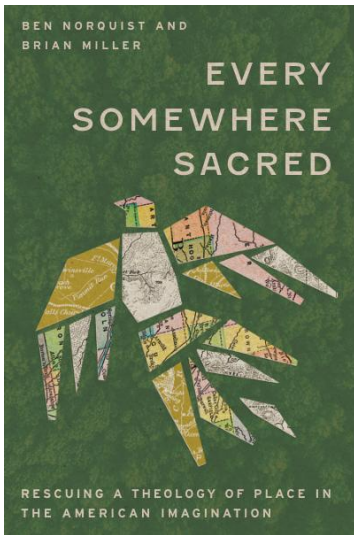
1. Contrasting American stories of land and place with biblical stories of land and place,
2. Acknowledging and lamenting the ways Americans have approached land, places, and people in the past, and



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3. Working with multiple Christian metaphors of place—gift, home, kin, and sacrament—to offer ways forward for Christians as individuals and communities to join God’s plan for places.

Who did you have in mind as you were writing this book?

Norquist and Miller: We think this book is most directly for American Christians whose faith is important to them, but who are uneasy, alarmed, or disillusioned with the ways their country and their church have participated in injustice in the land and regarding places. Also written for those who want to learn more about the role of land, place, and creation in Christian life when American land stories present particular narratives.

They might already be moving toward communities and institutions that address social justice concerns, but not all of them will have—for some, their hunger for a faithful Christian response to American injustices has been growing but is still latent.

This book is also for American Christians who want to engage deeply in their communities and places. They want to be rooted in the place where God has set them. Perhaps unsure about how to do this, they are looking for histories and hope. They are eager to be part of God’s plan and desire help in thinking and acting as Christians in their particular setting.

How does this book relate to the body of your scholarly work?

Norquist: In my scholarly and peace-building roles in Israel and Palestine, I am sensitized to relations between people, power, and land. These are relations that have parallels in the American experience with Indigenous people and land. This book is an opportunity to explore how my Christian faith speaks to these realities and to God’s intentions for people and land.

Miller: I see it as part of an ongoing journey to understand the complexity of places and God’s work in places. This book is an opportunity to explore Christian dimensions of how humans interact with each other and land and places. Wherever God leads people—and me—we should be ready to participate in God’s ongoing work in those places.



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Drawing on social science research and their experiences across American landscapes and the Middle East, Ben Norquist and Brian Miller show how Christians in the US can develop a redemptive imagination for place in Every Somewhere Sacred.

Developing a Redemptive Imagination for Place

Ben Norquist (PhD, Azusa Pacific University) has served as director of grants and academics for Churches for Middle East Peace and as director of the Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East, where he helped American Christians pursue holistic peace with their neighbors around the world.

Ben currently works on the ways educational and epistemological structures develop responsively to physical landscapes, especially those that are highly configured and imposed. Previously he also worked as a leader on the spiritual formation and community engagement team at Bryan College (Dayton, Tennessee) and with the Center for Faith and Innovation at Wheaton College (Illinois).

He has been featured at

- [Religion News Service](#),
- [The Dispatch](#),
- [Christian Century](#),
- [Sojourners](#),
- [Theology in the Raw](#),
- and more.

See more at Ben's website, <https://www.bennorquist.org/>.



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Brian Miller (PhD, University of Notre Dame) is professor of sociology at Wheaton College and regularly teaches about and publishes on Christian residential and cultural patterns. His books include *Sanctifying Suburbia: How the Suburbs Became the Promised Land for American Evangelicals* and *Building Faith: A Sociology of Religious Structures*, coauthored with Robert Brennenman.

Brian's research interests include the American suburbs (particularly their development, culture, depictions in media, and housing), cities, religion and place, McMansions, social-network site use among emerging adults, and American evangelicalism and culture. He teaches about these topics and also enjoys teaching statistics and research methods courses. He enjoys spending time with his family, watching several local sports teams, playing the piano, and reading all sorts of nonfiction works.

He is affiliated with the American Sociological Association, the Association for the Sociology of Religion, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and is a chapter representative for Alpha Kappa Delta.

Brian has been featured at

- [Business Insider](#),
- [Chicago Tribune](#),
- [The Christian Science Monitor](#),
- Dallas Morning News,
- and more.

See more at Brian's website, <https://legallysociable.com/>.



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