BOOK REVIEWS

Christ in Our Midst: Incarnation, Church and Discipleship in the Theology of Pilgram Marpeck. By Neal Blough. Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press. 2007. Pp. 275. $30.

Neal Blough's pathbreaking dissertation on Pilgram Marpeck's Christology, published in French in 1984, has now been translated into English and updated with significant revisions, including three new chapters. *Christ in Our Midst* incorporates a considerable amount of scholarship on Anabaptism, and specifically on Marpeck, that has appeared in the intervening two decades. Moreover, as a theological educator and ecumenical leader working in France for the Mennonite Church, Blough does not hesitate to draw implications from Marpeck's writing for contemporary debates in Mennonite theology. The result is a rewarding, if at times challenging, analysis of Marpeck's understanding of the relationship between the humanity of Christ and the mission of the church in the sixteenth century and in the present.

Blough works with six of Marpeck's explicitly confessional or theological treatises, including the two books Marpeck published in 1531, *A Clear Refutation* and *A Clear and Useful Instruction*; his *Confession* of 1532; the lengthy *Admonition*, which was borrowed and revised from Bernard Rothmann's *Confession* of 1533; and his even lengthier *Response* (to Caspar Schwenckfeld). These texts are preoccupied with the way that outer visible practices of the body of Christ relate to the inner invisible actions of God's Spirit. Blough shows how Marpeck develops an incarnational theology that stresses the unity of material and spiritual realities, avoiding dualisms that either make the material merely a sign of the spiritual (Zwingli) or that reconstitute the material in terms of the spiritual (Catholicism). This puts Marpeck in the ballpark of Luther's argument that the humanity of Christ is extended in the material ceremonies of the church, which are the means by which Christ can be known in the world.

While Blough spends a considerable amount of time working through Marpeck's debt to Luther, he seems undecided about the extent to which Marpeck departs from Luther by extending the humanity of Christ beyond the traditional sacraments to the everyday practices of faithful church members. On this issue, as with other christological themes throughout the book, Blough is inclined to see Marpeck as more reflecting medieval or contemporary perspectives than as innovating or improvising on the available theological traditions. For example, he attributes Marpeck's view that the humanity of Christ distinguishes the New Testament covenant from that of the Old Testament to the writings of Caspar Schwenckfeld, a spiritualist with whom Marpeck argued throughout his career. In his discussion of Marpeck's covenantal theology, Blough makes a distinction that appears again and again throughout the book. Is this "building block" in Marpeck's theology something "original" or did Marpeck "borrow" it from somewhere else? Here, as elsewhere, the verdict is "borrowed" and Marpeck's view is thus said to be "nothing new." Indeed, a substantial portion of Marpeck's view on the atonement is said to be

"Anselmian," and Blough downplays the difference between Marpeck's insistence that believers are "made righteous" and the Lutheran view that they are simply declared so. Yet Blough also notes that unlike Luther and Bucer, Marpeck wanted "righteousness" to be defined by the commandments of Christ even when such "righteousness" meant a rupture in civil order. Here Blough is a bit unclear about why Marpeck might exhibit difference from his interlocutors, even though he apparently shares so much theological common ground with them.

At one point, Blough emphasizes that Christologies "are reflections . . . arising in particular contexts in response to the issues at hand" (75). On the other hand, he notes that Marpeck had rejected the ethical norm of the Old Testament for civil authorities. Is Marpeck's emphasis on a form of justification that enables obedience to Christ's commandments the result of his social location of relative powerlessness in comparison to Bucer, or is it the result of his "theological" rejection of any kind of justification for coercion and violence and hence his refusal to exercise the kind of coercive role that Bucer was willing to exercise? Here Blough's commitment to finding as much common ground as possible between Marpeck and every other potential interlocutor undermines his ability to articulate a clear motivational source for the dissenting voice and the occasional "unorthodox" opinion that he also acknowledges as Marpeck's.

In my view, the problem comes with seeing Marpeck's theology as an accumulation of "building blocks" rather than as the purposeful works of rhetorical urgency and admonition that they are. Because Blough wants to emphasize Marpeck's cosmopolitan engagement with multiple theological writers as a precedent for contemporary ecumenical dialogue, Blough seems unable to come to terms with the argumentative and combative nature of many of Marpeck's writings. While Marpeck certainly urged patience and wrote with care and grace, he also rejects the Christianity of those who give up patience and take up the sword to force a particular form of Christianity on others. In the *Expose of the Babylonian Whore*, for example, he wrote: "Whoever seeks to admonish and be disciplined by means other than the gentle and humble Christ (which alone is patience and love), such as with the law of God through the letter and the external sword, as the so-called Christians do, that one too is not Christian." Here and elsewhere, Marpeck drew conclusions that contrast with the irenic and tolerant image of Marpeck that Blough prefers. Even though Marpeck exercised more patience and generosity in church discipline than did the Swiss Brethren, in the final instance he shared with Michael Sattler and the Schleitheim *Brotherly Union* a commitment to separation between the faithful church and the powers of the world.

Thus, when Marpeck used the theological commonplaces of writers such as Luther and Schwenckfeld and Bucer, it seems clear that he was seeking to rework their thinking to encourage greater faithfulness to the patience and peacefulness of Christ, rather than to find as much common ground as possible with them. Here it is instructive to consider Blough's treatment of Marpeck's *Admonition*. Even though Marpeck appropriated most of this work directly from a text by the Münsterite theologian Bernard Rothmann, Blough largely leaves aside the question of Rothmann's influence and emphasizes how Marpeck's editing of

Rothmann's text constituted a "Christological synthesis" that supported a nonviolent church. While Blough's analysis of this "synthesis" is convincing to me, I wish he had been more willing to stress this same creative "synthesizing" dimension in Marpeck's use of more "respectable" sources such as Luther, Schwenckfeld and medieval theology.

At the same time, of course, Blough's analysis of the sources from which Marpeck derived his theology yields fruitful results. It is helpful to see charted out the many possible points of connection between Marpeck and the spiritual milieu of his time. In the most satisfying chapter of the book, which deals with Marpeck's tract *The Uncovering of the Babylonian Whor*e (and first appeared in the January 2001 issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*), Blough goes beyond intellectual history for a convincing analysis of the social movements and political currents—including the broad impulse toward confessionalization—that shaped Marpeck's arguments. Especially in this chapter but also throughout the book, Blough makes it clear how fully engaged Marpeck was with the numerous Christianities of his time and place and offers a convincing case for Mennonite engagement today that reflects Marpeck's curiosity and patience. Blough is convinced that Mennonites have focused too much on "separation" from the world and that they need instead to see themselves as being "sent" into the world—a posture aligned well with the contemporary emphasis on "missional church."

Marpeck clearly offers a strong case for a "sent" church. But it is doubtful that Marpeck, patient and cosmopolitan though he was, would see being "sent" as opposed to being "separate" in the way that Blough does. In a beautiful statement that draws together his incarnational theology with his view of the church, Marpeck writes in his letter "On the Inner Church": "(Christ's) church or communion is his bride, internally in the Spirit and truth, externally with praise to God, and to be a light before the world. But this church is separated from the world, for it is a witness over it."

Bluffton University GERALD J. MAST

Borders & Bridges: Mennonite Witness in a Religiously Diverse World. Edited by Peter Dula and Alain Epp Weaver. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House. 2007. Pp. 185. $19.95, U.S.; $25.95, Can.

Alain Epp Weaver and Peter Dula are scholars who earned their credentials first in activism, participating in the cross-cultural work of Christian humanitarian agencies. Both, in fact, have given years of service in programs of the Mennonite Central Committee (M.C.C.) in the Middle East. Together with other M.C.C. workers, they have compiled an intriguing set of case studies about service work in locations ranging from Indonesia to Nepal, Africa and the Middle East, as well as in Europe and Latin America. The collection examines decades of cumulative experience along the boundary zones among diverse expressions of Christian faith (notably Catholic and Orthodox), and documents

further encounters with adherents of other religions (especially Muslims and Hindus).

As the case studies show, most of these encounters were not structured as dialogues between theologians from each side. Nor do the accounts systematically set forth the beliefs and convictions that are required to achieve clarity about the full range of differences and similarities between Christian representatives and their counterparts in other religious groups. In other words, readers should not expect to find a handbook on how to critique and evaluate other religious groups from an Anabaptist Christian perspective. Rather, readers should be prepared to discover a set of reflections on how some Christians working across deep cultural, religious and political divides found themselves investing patiently in relationships that began with wariness but proceeded over the longer term to mutual trust. Like a tree springing from a cleft in sheer rock, these relationships' early stages seem precarious. Perhaps the seeds of peace are necessarily sown in tough soil.

Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi shows from Indonesia how a private Islamic militia has been transformed from agents of active local warfare against Christians into beneficiaries of conflict mediation and then into cautious collaborators in joint disaster recovery efforts. This amazing reversal was prompted largely by the brave witness of a persistent Christian pastor who kept up contacts even when firestorms of fear and hatred ran between the two communities. While the tale is not yet complete, these recently militant Muslim neighbors are now being recruited, as this chapter records, for training in active peacemaking.

Susan Classen provides insight into the journey of Central American Protestant Christians who have moved beyond the standard stereotyping and prejudices usually harbored toward the majority Catholic adherents. They are discovering that kindred spirits and deep affinity can replace the mutual suspicion generated over many decades of conflict. Her witness traces a deeply spiritual pilgrimage, one that becomes transformative on both sides of the encounters between evangelical believers and their Catholic majority neighbors.

Gopar Tapkida shows the deep roots of an outbreak of conflict in 2001 between Muslims and Christians in Jos, Nigeria. With empathy he recounts the story of a Muslim woman who was enraged at Christians for the losses inflicted on her family during the violence. Surprisingly, she was convinced to attend a workshop on peacebuilding, even though she feared there might be attempts to convert her. The inner transformation she experienced during this training equipped her for the work of multifaith peacebuilding, starting with Muslim women. Tapkida also warns that people who work their way across borders and bridges may be judged as "betrayers, hypocrites, and people with watered-down faith" (54).

Chantal Logan traces a lengthy pilgrimage of Mennonites with Muslims in Somalia. For more than five decades in the Horn of Africa, an unlikely alliance has forged deep friendship and trust. Those bonds have withstood the tragic murder of a mission teacher (Merlin Grove) and the rise and demise of geopolitical empires (notably Soviet and U.S.) in the region. By staying through dangers when other church-affiliated workers left, Mennonites gained a reputation for more contributions than they actually made, she reports. Logan

challenges Mennonites and M.C.C. to step up and advocate for basic religious freedoms in the context of new constitutional provisions being drafted. As a native of France and a Christian cooperating with M.C.C. (although not herself Mennonite), Logan urges Mennonites not to forget this rare example of Muslim-Christian friendship five decades long. Boldly, she asserts, "The Mennonites superseded others not because they were better people but because of their theology. They were able to develop a theology not only of presence and commitment but also of sacrifice and forgiveness" (60-61).

Edgar Metzler may well be the dean of Mennonites in religious diplomacy, serving with the Peace Corps and then M.C.C. in Iran, Thailand, Nepal and India. He describes the intricate challenges for international workers under the umbrella of the United Mission to Nepal. It is a fascinating account marked by strict avoidance of the usual patterns that characterize Christian efforts in cross-cultural witness. Proselytism was forbidden from the outset in the closed kingdom fifty years ago; Hinduism was officially sponsored by the state. Some 150 Mennonite workers have been among the hundreds of Christian workers in more than forty separate agencies cooperating in education, medical assistance and agricultural development. External pressures and internal dynamics combined to facilitate a remarkable agreement on core values for this extensive cooperation (81-83) and to produce a succinct statement of shared beliefs among the many different Christians cooperating under the United Mission (84-85). While the Christian presence among the Nepali population is a small minority, this cooperative work elaborates and multiplies the witness of Christians willing to cross borders and bridges, motivated by Christ's love for all human neighbors.

Reports from Israel/Palestine by Alain Epp Weaver, and from Egypt and Syria by Eldon Wagler and Jane Emile-Wagler, round out this collection, along with Jon Rudy's observations on the theological complexity of Christian humanitarian assistance in a multifaith context in India. Peter Dula closes the book with some reflections on the fertility of borderlands for creativity and growth, and even reformation, when approached with hope instead of fear: "engaging persons of other faiths hospitably is an imperative for Christians" (161).

Two accounts will draw further comment here. Roy Hange's quick summary of almost two decades of contacts between North American Mennonite Christians and Iranian Shi'ite Muslims will no doubt figure in ongoing controversies, perhaps on both sides of this deepest current divide in our polarized world. Clashes at the level of international geopolitics will assure the salience of these contacts for years to come, even though they seem the most precarious of all the encounters recounted in this slim volume. Yet Hange is both bold and provocative when he asserts that "this encounter attempts proactively to create a new kind of history together" (107). He points out that all three Abrahamic leaders (Moses, Jesus and Muhammad) "were formed amid religious difference and learned to be comfortable in multiple worlds" (112). He further declares that "encounter with Muslims has strengthened the Christian identity and conviction of the Mennonites involved" (112). This living dialogue of daily encounters becomes a community of shared awareness and provides clearer witness in each direction (109). Hange's account of the growing trust, respect and

consideration between the groups, even to the point of showing honor across deep differences, contrasts brightly with the fear and loathing so evident in the wider societies, which have been manipulated for dire purposes often opposed to God's reign.

My own direct participation in some of the efforts described in this volume allows me to comment with appreciation for the stories set in southeast Europe, described by Randall Puljek-Shank. Intrafaith and interfaith collaboration has marked Mennonite presence there from the earliest chapters. During nine years of residence in then-communist Yugoslavia, my wife and I shared the journeys of local Christians and encouraged those who were confident enough to reach across cultural and religious divides. Even for those Protestants with the widest horizons, this was a cross-cultural task. As president of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Croatia, Peter Kuzmič has always been generous and encouraging in his friendship to Mennonites as guests in the region. From his work with education, mission and church development, he spoke as one who knew and appreciated the witness that peace-seeking Christians brought into the mix. Evangelical Christians, Kuzmič affirmed, could learn much from Mennonites, who know that the kingdom of God is greater than their own efforts and thus seek to support other Christians without needing to put their own brand on everything.

The editors and M.C.C. deserve commendation for bringing together these varied narratives. They render tribute to faithful pioneers on paths of shared service across the borders of our world. Like scouts exploring regions of real promise, these writers provide a witness that should encourage many others to take up similar tasks with confidence. We all need to forge new ties with persons whose faith and practices are different from our own. Each chapter confirms Roy Hange's claim that there is, indeed, a "certain finesse" in this cumulative witness of intercultural, interfaith diplomacy, and an enduring "blessing in the dislocation that comes with such encounters" (110-111).

Eastern Mennonite Seminary N. GERALD SHENK

Christianity, Democracy, and the Radical Ordinary: Conversations Between a Radical Democrat and a Christian. By Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles. Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books. 2008. Pp. 378. $39.

As I write this review during the week of Pentecost, Christians proclaim by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is Lord. But is lordship a benign category, or does the term itself make, or at least *risk* making, subjugation a condition of peace? And if lordship makes us uneasy, what would we have in its place? Democracy? Whose democracy? Which tradition? These are the sorts of questions that Christian theologian Stanley Hauerwas and radical democrat Romand Coles illuminate in *Christianity, Democracy, and the Radical Ordinary.*

This collection of letters and essays about the "politics of life and death" seeks to embody, through the medium of friendship, how a politics of life might overcome the politics of death (1). The authors argue that "[b]oth radical

democracy and Christianity are lived pedagogies of hope inspirited and envisioned through memories of the 'good, at its best'" (3).

They contend that "good at its best"—for both Christianity and radical democracy—is discovered in the "radical ordinary," the superabundant goodness that surprises us, *if* we learn to pay attention to the particulars of everyday life. The goodness of the radical ordinary exceeds expectations, surprising us with joy that our thin theoretical grasp of the world cannot contain. Hauerwas and Coles find the "good at its best" most clearly in the examples of their friends, living and dead, who cultivate the practices of patient and generous receptivity that are required if we are to have friends who are really different from us. In other words, the "good at its best" involves learning the practices we will need to find friends where we thought we had only enemies, to find peace. With these practices, Hauerwas and Coles discover themselves surprised with friends neither expected: each other.

Both Coles and Hauerwas recognize the necessity of theory for the ongoing formation and social reproduction of a peaceful people *as well as* the inherent danger of theory making us deaf to that which falls outside our conceptual categories. The trick, of course, is how to theorize about our friends without letting that theory exclude new possibilities for friends where theoretically we expect only enemies. For instance, will Hauerwas expect Coles to give up the radical democrat's endless struggle against "odious forms of power" in order to rest in the peace of Christ? Will Coles expect Hauerwas to give up the jealous language of Jesus' lordship for titles less odious to non-Christians? Just how far can the traditions of Christianity and radical democracy overlap without eviscerating the very difference that stimulates the best in the other?

Were we to transpose these questions into a Mennonite key, this book could be read as an important contribution to the current debate over John Howard Yoder's legacy. At issue in this debate is the question of whether Yoder can consistently assert that Jesus' lordship *makes possible* radical openness to the other, or whether Yoder's own hermeneutic requires that he be read against himself, with a radically democratic openness, to the questioning even of Jesus' lordship. Should Yoder, as Coles suggests, call Christians to "infuse mission with a certain silence," namely, to silence the claim of Jesus as Lord because lordship too easily closes us off from those who refuse to be his subjects?

Peter Dula and Alex Sider, Mennonite students of Hauerwas and Coles, have criticized Hauerwas's appropriation of Yoder because he, unlike Yoder, "fosters skepticism about democracy's potential for creating a social climate in which the church can 'be the church.'"[1] As Hauerwas himself summarizes in the book under review, "Dula and Sider, who are sympathetic with my criticism of liberal democracy, think I rarely take 'the opportunity to give an alternative account of democracy,' particularly as it might have implications for how the church itself is ordered" (29). They suggest he misappropriates Yoder in ways that "have expunged conflict internal to the Christian community by privileging an authoritative ministry and orthodoxy. Accordingly, Dula and Sider ask, 'Is

1. Peter Dula and Alex Sider, "Radical Democracy, Radical Ecclesiology," *Cross Currents* 55 (Winter 2006), 485.

radical democracy really compatible with an orthodox theology? If so, how?'" (29).

But what exactly is "radical democracy"? According to Coles, "[r]adical democracy names the intermittent and dispersed traditions of witnessing, resisting, and seeking alternatives to the politics of death wrought by those bent on myriad forms of immortality-as-conquest" (3). And Coles argues that, like the intermittently faithful believers church that resists Constantinianism, the radically democratic practices of struggle and conflict, far from representing the endless battle of the will to power, actually represent the best mode for ongoing vigilance against violence and the Constantinian temptation. How radical democracy might help the church "be the church" is precisely what Dula and Sider fear Hauerwas overlooks in his dismissal of democracy and deference to orthodoxy.

According to Dula and Sider, this dismissal of democracy in favor of orthodoxy cuts Christians off from constructive engagement not only within the church but also outside it. Political theorist Jeffery Stout, in his book *Democracy and Tradition,* argues that too often conversations between Christians and non-Christians "are typically discussed at such a high level of abstraction that only two positions become visible: an authoritarian form of traditionalism and an antireligious form of liberalism"; and worse yet, "[a]cademics have done remarkably little to correct the resulting forms of paranoid fantasy."[2] In Stout's eyes, New Traditionalists like Hauerwas, Milbank and MacIntyre have only encouraged this "paranoid fantasy" by their wholesale rejection of democracy as "antireligious liberalism," imagining "modern democracy as the antithesis of tradition, as an inherently destructive, atomizing social force."[3] While Stout thinks this antithesis to be a spurious dualism, he does warn that such a "picture of our cultural situation, if accepted by enough people, will become true."[4] Stout fears that Hauerwas's wide readership might comprise "enough people" to *make* the picture true and thus undermine the possibilty of a democratic tradition including both religious and nonreligious voices, all speaking for the common good.

Stout fears, therefore, that Hauerwas corrupts the state, while Sider and Dula fear he corrupts the church. What does any of this have to do with Romand Coles? As it turns out, Coles is the surprising gift that enables Hauerwas to overcome the "high level of abstraction" and polarization typical of discussions between democrats and Christians and that allows honest engagement with a real, live, particular, radically ordinary, radical democrat. Coles makes impossible Hauerwas's all-to-easy caricature of democracy. Coles embodies the thoughtful and traditional brand of hopeful democracy that Stout calls Hauerwas to engage. Coles rejects the ahistorical and individualistic conceptions of democratic liberalism Hauerwas so often eschews, calling Stout to leave behind his own "rhetoric of excess" regarding democracy so that he might better hear

2. Jeffery Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 10.

3. Ibid., 11.

4. Ibid., 10.

how Hauerwas's critique might aid democracy itself.[5] Coles calls Christians and democrats alike to the practice of patient, honest, nonviolent and generous receptivity to the other. And as Hauerwas's friend, Coles exemplifies the careful and patient attention that must be paid if friends are to talk. He does so by reading the Christian tradition better than most Christians.

The friendship between Coles and Hauerwas demonstrated in *Christianity, Democracy and the Radical Ordinary* exhibits the sort of practices that are required if we are to have friends who really are different from us—in other words, how we might find friends where we thought we only had enemies, how we might find peace.

Des Moines, Iowa MICHAEL L. GULKER

Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood: Europe—Russia—Canada 1525 to 1980. By James Urry. Winnipeg, Man.: University of Manitoba Press. 2006. Pp. 400. $27.95.

For some years now, the anthropologist James Urry has been regarded, in Harry Loewen's words in the foreword to this volume, as "one of the most knowledgeable historians of the Russian Mennonites today." Urry further cements his reputation here. In *Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood,* he has pieced together a thoughtful, well organized and immensely detailed survey of the political attitudes and practices of this important Mennonite group, from their origins in early Anabaptism to their rapidly acculturating communities in contemporary Canada.

Concurrent with the recent and hotly contested national elections on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border, politics has emerged as a topic of much scholarly and lay attention in the North American Mennonite world. Hence Urry's contribution is both a timely and a nuanced one. Too often, he argues, Mennonite political practices have been located at opposite ends of a sociopolitical spectrum: either toward an apolitical, "quiet in the land" withdrawal or a nearly total and assimilated civic engagement. Instead, Urry aims at a more complex picture of Russian Mennonite political practice, a portrayal facilitated by the more wide-ranging and inclusive way he defines his central terms of peoplehood and politics. Mennonite political analysis has been, he argues, primarily produced by theologians and intellectual historians, resulting in a predominant focus on ideas such as nonresistance rather than on the actual political behavior. Focusing on the latter allows Urry to develop a much more complex and nuanced picture of Russian Mennonite politics, ranging from congregational battles to negotiations with governmental officials.

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5. For more on Coles's critique of Stout's "rhetoric of excess" see his "Democracy, Theology, and the Question of Excess: A Review of Jeffery Stout's *Democracy and Tradition,*" *Modern Theology* 21 (Apr. 2005), 301-321. For Stout's reply, see his "The Spirit of Democracy and the Rhetoric of Excess," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 35 (Mar. 2007), 3-21.

Even so, amid the complexity, a central historical trajectory appears that mirrors the very polarities that Urry is trying to escape. In their pilgrimage over the centuries from Europe to Russia to the plains of Western Canada, Urry's Russian Mennonites do seem to have trod a familiar path: from initial, persecution-bred Anabaptist political hesitation to increased civic participation in Holland, Russia and especially Canada. In the middle centuries, the central arrangement of the "privilegium" dominated their experience. He develops this analysis in the three major parts, "Europe—Russia—Canada."

Urry argues that, despite their experience of persecution, "early Anabaptists were highly political in their early teachings and actions" (18) in early Reformation Europe, a claim he unpacks with some depth and care and with particular attention to key figures such as Pilgram Marpeck. Gradually, European Anabaptists won a kind of grudging toleration "on the fringes of legality," in most places. But, not surprisingly, Urry focuses much attention on Dutch Mennonites in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The relative freedom and civic acceptance of Dutch Mennonites led some to embrace Enlightenment ideas like sympathy for the French and American revolutions and even for popular nationalism.

For European Mennonites who later emigrated eastwards, however, more critical developments occurred in places like Poland and heavily militarized Prussia where they existed on society's margins. In such places Mennonite leaders negotiated the protections and limited autonomy of the privilegium, a legal charter that came to function centrally in their centuries-long Mennonite commonwealth in Russia. There, by the mid-nineteenth century, Urry argues, Russian authorities had come to regard Mennonites as a kind of special colonial success story, a view that dovetailed with a growing Mennonite self-perception as "a superior and privileged people" (95). Here again, though, Urry is careful to stress the complexities, arguing that the privilegium soon came to be "interpreted in different ways by different groups" (94). The arrangement became increasingly untenable to more conservative Mennonites, a perception that helped fuel their emigration to North America after 1870, while an educated "clerisy" of progressives remained in Russia and further expanded the powers and privileges of a Mennonite state within a state. Deepening levels of Mennonite political activity resulted, both in the creation of Mennonite social and educational institutions like schools and orphanages, and then in Mennonite participation in Russian electoral politics. By 1910, he shows, they displayed an increasing political sophistication until the Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuing persecution accelerated the emigration of the survivors.

The same kind of subtle analysis characterizes Urry's narrative as he follows these emigrants to Canada. Most arrived, he says, suspicious of popular democracy and looking for another privilegium relationship with the state. But in Canada, as elsewhere, Mennonites became drawn into a more intensive political fray. While they had initially rejected electoral participation as "worldly" (164), by the 1890s resistance to voting had declined as Russian Mennonite immigrants found themselves actively courted by emerging Canadian politicians in the western provinces. At the same time, periodic flash points of tension with the state—nationalistic school systems and bellicose

national cultures that rubbed raw against Mennonite nonresistant commitments—performed what was probably, in retrospect, a healthy function for these politicized Canadian Mennonites, guarding them against a more rapid and unhealthy acculturation. In this culminating stage of his argument, Urry explores how, in the climate of post-World War II prosperity, Manitoba Mennonites in particular became deeply immersed in Canadian politics, avidly supporting politicians from the left and the right of the political spectrum. By the 1970s, old patterns of separation appeared to be fading as a Canadian-born and highly educated set of Mennonite leaders emerged who spoke mostly English, were fully at home in mainstream Canadian society, and had become fully conversant with local and national political issues. In such a climate they even produced some politicians of their own, in people like Jacob Froese and Jake Epp.

The title of Urry's concluding chapter—"the loud in the land"—underscores the basic continuities in the political trajectory he traced. Gently critical of scholarly characterizations of Russian Mennonite political behavior as primarily defensive and reactive, Urry instead stresses the creativity of their political engagement with the world. "The silent in the land had never really been entirely quiet," he concludes, "but the Mennonite experience shows that the loudness of their voices has varied according to time and circumstance" (262).

Altogether, Urry's work is convincing, though not without small faults. While his command of Russian Mennonite history is masterly, at times when he ventures onto other terrain his grasp of the scholarship seems less sure. It is disconcerting to read, for example, that "the impact of post-World War II political events on Mennonites, including the Cold War . . . , has not received detailed scholarly attention" (10). There are many relevant books here, by scholars such as Keith Graber Miller, Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, and beyond, including the fourth chapter of my own *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties.* Moreover, his material on political developments in recent Canada, especially a Canadian Mennonite recovery of an Anabaptist vision and a new identity as politicized evangelical Christians, seemed a bit hurriedly and too-easily condensed.

Yet such small critiques do little to mar Urry's overall accomplishment. In a time when Mennonites seem to be engaging the political sphere more than ever before, he has furnished a detailed reminder that this is by no means without precedent. From their emergence in early Reformation Europe, Mennonites have always been a political people.

Bluffton University PERRY BUSH

Of Widows and Meals: Communal Meals in the Book of Acts. By Reta Halteman Finger. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 2007. Pp. 326.

In this careful and detailed study Reta Halteman Finger uses insights from the social sciences, archaeology and economics to explore the practices of common meals and shared possessions in the early church. She argues that the communal

lifestyle summarized in Acts 2:41-47 and 4:32-37 represents actual historical practice and was not invented by Luke to showcase an idealized church. Whereas most commentators in the history of interpretation have envisioned something less than total property sharing, she argues for the viability of such a community of sharing, including daily common meals, when one considers the social context. Moreover, an understanding of these meals is necessary for a proper reading of the conflict in Acts 6:1-6.

Part 1 is devoted to a lengthy review of the history of interpretation concerning economic sharing and table fellowship in Acts. Finger evaluates not only historical critical commentaries but also several specialized studies, including social scientific explorations. Her primary critique is that scholars have not given adequate attention to the social, economic and cultural context of meals and economic sharing in Acts. In chapter 4 she explores the relationship of the daily meals in Acts 2:42-46 to the "*diakonia* of tables" in 6:1-6. She maintains that the conflict in Acts 6 is not about handouts to poor widows, but instead concerns sharing of food among all believers.

In part 2 of the book, Finger reconstructs the social world of Jerusalem Christians in an attempt to provide a broad background for interpreting Acts 2:41-47 and 6:1-6. Here she addresses a central question: "In what sort of community, with what sort of economic organization, would daily communal meals make sense" (98). She examines the socioeconomic structures of an agrarian society (chapter 5) and the geography, economics and culture of first-century Jerusalem (chapter 6). In chapter 7, using insights from cultural anthropology, she examines first-century social values that shed light on communal practices of believers in Acts. In particular, she notes how the generalized reciprocity that was practiced by this new fictive kin group—a radically inclusive group defined by allegiance to Jesus as Messiah—was necessary for spiritual and physical survival. Such communal sharing would not have been foreign to first-century Jewish believers familiar with similar communal practices among the Essenes (chapter 8).

In part 3 Finger narrows her discussion of social context to food and shared meal practices in the ancient world. Social stratification, kinship bonds and cultural values all made eating together a highly symbolic event. She argues for the historicity of Jesus' radically inclusive table fellowship, contrasting it with the practices of the Pharisees and Essenes, and for continuity between the communal meals in Acts and Jesus' open commensality. She also examines the central role of women in preparing and serving meals, a role that gave them considerable authority in the private sphere of the home and that extended into the public life of the church.

In the last section of the book Finger presents a detailed exegetical analysis of Acts 2:41-47 and 6:1-6, in which she incorporates insights from her previous chapters on the social historical context of early Christian meals. Throughout, she argues that similar to the Essenes, the early Christians practiced daily commensality in the context of a shared community of goods. The conflict in Acts 6:1-6 over the neglect of the Hellenist widows in the *diakonia* of the tables is not about poor widows being overlooked as recipients of charity. Widowhood in Judaism was often a temporary condition, and not all widows were poor. Finger

surmises that the Hellenist widows were offended at being left out of the administration of the communal meals, an honored role in the daily life of the fellowship of believers. She concludes the book with some contemporary examples of inclusive table fellowship in the context of intentional community.

Of Widows and Meals is lucidly written and well-organized. Especially helpful are the conclusions at the end of each chapter, which tie all the detailed research together. The book offers a wealth of information about the social context of meals and communal living in the ancient world and makes an invaluable contribution to understanding a crucial aspect of the early church's life, as it is portrayed in Acts. Finger convincingly shows how past scholarship has paid insufficient attention to the social context of Acts and how commentators have allowed biases and preconceptions to influence their judgments about the historicity and viability of communal meals and shared ownership of possessions. She helpfully and honestly identifies her own presuppositions throughout the book.

Finger utilizes and engages an impressive body of literature and is incisive and fair in her assessment of past scholarship. What is puzzling, however, is that she interacts almost entirely with older commentaries on Acts, ignoring major works within the last twenty years, such as Ben Witherington's *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1998) and Beverly Gaventa's commentary on Acts (Abingdon, 2003). This is especially noticeable when she critiques the work of redaction and narrative critics. Given the amount of work done in narrative criticism in the past twenty years, this is a significant omission. The lack of attention to current scholarship is also evident when she discusses table fellowship of the Pharisees (178), where she ignores major research done on that group within the last twenty-five years (e.g., by Anthony Saldarini or Jacob Neusner).

Finger's discussion of the vital role of women in the administration of communal meals in believers' homes is especially fascinating and noteworthy. What is less convincing, however, is her assessment of the conflict involving widows in Acts 6:1-6. I would very much like to believe that the Hellenist widows were not poor recipients of charity but, instead, were not being given the same administrative responsibility as other widows in the production of meals. Certainly the sociological research that Finger draws on makes such a scenario possible. However, it is hard to see how the appointment of seven men in 6:2-3 can in any way be a solution to that problem, especially since such an appointment was intended to release the Twelve for the work of preaching and teaching (which I would also consider to be "practical, concrete ministry," contrary to what Finger implies on p. 266). This proposal as well as some of her other conclusions seem to be rather speculative and, in the end, not entirely convincing.

In her book Finger gives considerable attention to the Essenes, who had been living and eating communally for centuries before the Christian church began. Her discussion of the Essenes as a possible parallel to the practice of the first Christians is important. Does she, however, overplay the connection? The Gospels are totally silent about the Essenes (not "for the most part," p. 278), and while it is an interesting possibility to think that the early Christians would have

"borrowed and adapted communal and social practices for their own growing group" (278) from the Essenes, to infer direct influence is to put more weight on the evidence than it can bear. At times, moreover, the information about the Essenes hardly seems relevant to her argument (e.g., the quotes on p. 243). Finally, to conclude that the Gospels' silence about the Essenes "indicates that there was not an antagonist relationship between them and the Jesus movement as there was with the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (278) is an argument from silence.

There are times when Finger makes too much of minor points (e.g., the difference between "believers" and "disciples" [252] or a possible Semitic source as an indication of historicity [243]). Overall, however, *Of Widows and Meals* makes an extremely valuable and insightful contribution to the study of Acts and prompts readers to reflect on the role of shared meals and shared possessions in the church today.

Canadian Mennonite University SHEILA KLASSEN WIEBE

Evangelical, Ecumenical, and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation. James R. Krabill, Walter Sawatsky and Charles Van Engen, eds. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books. 2006. Pp. 336. $25.

Evangelical, Ecumenical, and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation provides a glimpse into the life and work of a well-respected and noted missiologist, Wilbert R. Shenk. Academics tend to focus their research, writing and practice narrowly, but Shenk's interests extended broadly, a characteristic reflected well in this volume. The book begins with a chapter introducing the reader to Shenk. This chapter not only considers the influences that formed Shenk as a person but also those influences that helped shape him as a practitioner, teacher and scholar in the field of missiology. This first chapter also introduces five themes that will shape the books five main parts: mission history, mission theology, mission and ecclesiology (the church), mission to the West, and facilitating missiological conversations among evangelicals, ecumenicals, Anabaptists and Roman Catholics.

Part 1, mission history, contains five chapters that challenge the reader to consider the subject from a broader non-Western, more apostolic and polycentric perspective. The authors in this section, all well-known scholars in their fields, bring a wealth of knowledge that can be used as valuable resources for further reflection and learning for both beginning and more experienced missiologists. Considering the section's unifying theme, however, it would have been valuable to include the perspective of more majority world authors and thinkers.

Part 2, mission theology, identifies four critical issues: peace, technology and finances, contextualization and concern for social justice. In the chapter on peace, reflections center on Isaiah 52:7, upon using New Testament citations of the text as well as other New Testament texts that "echo" the passage. This focus on peace, which is central to the Gospel and which ultimately brings alienated parties together, weaves itself through the remaining chapters of this section. For example, in the chapter on contextualization editor Van Engen challenges the

reader to "go beyond the initial emphases on contextualization as communication to develop ways in which we may recontextualize the gospel in always new local and global contexts. . . . Mission theology needs to rediscover the church's fundamental calling: to help people know God in context" (89). He presents this challenge in three "seemingly contradictory, dialectical couplets" (90) which reflect a dynamic tension that requires "critical contextual theologizing" (90). While not explicitly stated, the unifying component that allows the dynamic tension in each couplet to be resolved and understood is the gospel of peace, which leads to a contextual understanding of God.

Part 3, mission and ecclesiology, provides practical insight into the following issues: indigenous partnerships and contextualization that help to overcome fears and prejudices; dialogue that moves toward relationship; authentic witness as it relates to the people of God, evangelism and the church; Christian spiritual missiology that challenges us to strive for Christlikeness and the restoration of the image of God as a witness in the real world; practical application of the position and work of a missionary as a learner and servant; and missional practice as applied to the eucharist. This section provides a loud call to the church of the West to consider the value of relationships, here defined by equality, respect and interdependence. It is refreshing to hear this call coming from within missiology, since typically, it has come from other sources (for example, in the field of conflict transformation, John Paul Lederach, in his 1997 book *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, identifies interdependent relationship as the key component to sustainable reconciliation). It is exciting to watch the development of scholarship and practice in missiology as it relates to relationship.

Part 4, mission to the West, consists of six chapters, four of which provide insight into issues relating to the church and mission in the West and two of which present an overview of Anabaptist missions in the West. The four issues relating to church and mission in the West discussed here are: the historical and emerging importance of studying people in order to share the Gospel; a historical overview of the development of the "missional church idea"; a dialogue between modernity and postmodernity in the church; and, the postmodern and global challenge to move from structure to liminality or from linear to spatial. The move from modernity to postmodernity challenges the church and missions. The authors here provide a menu of ideas to engage the changes taking place in the world and the church so that Christians can be relevant, not only to those in the West, but also to those from the majority world.

Finally, part 5, facilitating missiological conversations, engages an eclectic group of topics concerning relations between established churches and visionaries, the development of the American Society of Missiology, serving and respecting African-initiated churches, Anabaptist and liberationist theologies, and missionary care. Each of these topics provides the reader an introduction to the issues as well as helpful insights into further dialogue on the issues.

Evangelical, Ecumenical, and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation is one of the better and more cohesive edited volumes available in the field of missiology. It is written at a level not too intimidating for the casual reader yet also sufficiently challenging for the person seriously engaged in missiology. It provides a unified

presentation of current issues that are the centerpieces of scholarly thinking, dialogue, research and writing in the field of missiology. At the same time, its parts can be selected to engage specific issues in the field.

Bethel College, Mishawaka, Ind. KENT EBY

The Purple Crown: The Politics of Martyrdom. By Tripp York. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press. 2007. Pp. 199. $18.99.

The topic of Tripp York's first book is timely, given the surge of interest in martyrs. A quick survey turns up more than a dozen monographs and collections of essays that have been published in the past five years on martyrdom in the Christian tradition alone. York's contribution is to provide a theological reading of martyrdom that, as one would expect of the second volume of Herald Press's new Polyglossia series, is shaped by the Radical Reformation tradition.

As suggested by the subtitle, York highlights the political significance of martyrdom. Indeed, he is convinced that martyrdom provides the most profound illustration of the inherently political nature of Christianity. Thus York argues that preparation for martyrdom continues to be relevant for Christians today. In my view, York succeeds on both of these fronts, and in so doing he makes two larger contributions. First, he shows how the "ecclesial turn" in contemporary theology—the concern to help the church focus on being the church—provides a particular kind of public theology. Second, he shows how the "liturgical turn" in contemporary Christian ethics—underscoring the formative power of the practices of the church—provides resources Christians can continue to draw upon to prepare themselves for the ultimate witness of martyrdom.

York builds his overall argument through five chapters and an epilogue that include reflections on martyrs in the early church, the sixteenth century and the twentieth century, interspersed with related, although more theoretically dense, reflections on martyrdom as it pertains to the themes of body, city and gift. The first pair of chapters highlights the way in which conflict between early Christian martyrs and the Roman Empire embodied and bore witness to the spiritual battle between Christ and the rebellious powers. For example, it is from Cyprian's description of the church in the third century that York gleans the politically charged image of martyrdom used in the book's title:

> She was white before in the works of the brethren; now she has become purple in the blood of the martyrs. . . . Let them receive crowns, either white, as of labours, or of purple, as of suffering. In the heavenly camp both peace and strife have their own flowers, with which the soldier of Christ may be crowned for glory (47).

York goes on to focus on how the physical bodies of early Christians were viewed as "the site where the battle for the cosmos takes place" (51). He argues that the bodily transformation that was necessary to enable the martyrs to do what does not seem humanly possible can be attributed to liturgical practices. And the most determinative of these practices is the Eucharist: "By feeding on

the flesh and blood of Christ, martyrs are capable of having their own flesh and blood broken in service of God" (57).

In the second set of chapters York moves into more familiar terrain for Mennonites, although here too fresh insights are provided. These include: providing a charitable explanation for why Catholics and Protestants alike saw the "prosecution" of Anabaptists as a necessary measure to contain the spread of dangerous heresies; and demonstrating that martyrs in every tradition continued to be defined by how they lived, not just how they died. They embodied what they understood to be true doctrine, and this discovery of new ways of living threatened the powers-that-be: "Christians were not killed simply because of ideas" (79). With the sixteenth-century "debacle" as background, York argues that the primary allegiance of Christians to the heavenly city actually makes them better, more engaged, citizens of earthly cities. Here he leans heavily on John Howard Yoder's vision of the church as being most faithful and most effective when it is "not in charge." But he also draws upon additional biblical images and contemporary voices to emphasize the antitheological biases of the modern nation state, and the inherently vulnerable nature of the witness of the church.

The power of this vulnerability is demonstrated in the final chapter through York's study of a contemporary martyr, Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. York is convinced that the story of the life and death of a martyr such as Romero constitutes the most compelling argument for the political nature of martyrdom. York makes it clear that if the church is going to continue to be a political body, and if this body is going to continue to be for the world, it "should never find itself without people like Romero" (122). The epilogue summarizes the theology of martyrdom that York has been developing throughout the book. Martyrdom is not tragic, and martyrs are not victims. Rather, martyrdom is political because it is an exercise in persuasion that points beyond itself to the gift of Christ. The martyr imitates Jesus to the point of following him to the cross, and in the process bears witness to and participates in the ongoing creation of the "authentic world" made known by Christ's death and resurrection (147).

This book makes a number of contributions, but several questions remain. First, even as York includes new historical and theological perspectives on martyrdom, he does not engage recent Mennonite reflections on the legacy of Anabaptist martyrs. In arguing for the political relevance of martyrdom, not to mention the importance of preparing for martyrdom in contemporary times, York has much to offer to debates about the use and misuse of this heritage. Second, York rightly desires to highlight the formative power of Christian liturgy. In addition to the social witness that the performance of these liturgical practices provides, worship is political because of the way it helps to form faithful witnesses to Christ. What needs more explaining, however, is the central role that the eucharist plays in York's view of liturgy. He may be right to say that an inadequate understanding of the eucharist proves "that Anabaptists require the presence of Protestants and Catholics as much as Protestants and Catholics require the witness of the Anabaptists" (94-95). But I was not convinced that "the Eucharist has always served as a—if not *the*—crucial practice to a life directed toward martyrdom" (150). Nonetheless, precisely because it is able to prompt

questions that linger, this book has the potential to helpfully shape further conversations on martyrdom.

Marquette University PAUL C. HEIDEBRECHT

Practicing the Politics of Jesus: The Origin and Significance of John Howard Yoder's Social Ethics. By Earl Zimmerman. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House. 2007. Pp. 273. $22.95.

Earl Zimmerman's *Practicing the Politics of Jesus* is an important book for Christian theology and ethics because it is the first book to treat John Howard Yoder as history. Rather than looking to Yoder as the obvious representation of contemporary Anabaptist-Mennonite theology, Zimmerman endeavors to set Yoder within his context and offer an interpretation of how that context shaped Yoder's thought, life and concerns. In particular, Zimmerman examines the context that drove Yoder toward a conception of "the politics of Jesus" "as an exercise in hermeneutics . . . which . . . seeks to put the social and political meaning of Jesus' life and ministry, as seen in the gospel narratives, into conversation with contemporary theological ethics" (29).

While much of the history contained in this book has been recounted in briefer fashion elsewhere, it is nonetheless deeply instructive to have it compiled in one volume and given an argumentative vector. *Practicing the Politics of Jesus* is divided into seven chapters, the first six of which recount salient features of Yoder's intellectual career and the last of which develops "the politics of Jesus" as it might be socially embodied in just-peacebuilding efforts. Zimmerman's first chapter, "Yoder Rearranges the Theological Landscape," introduces the overall outline of the book and shows how Yoder's development of the politics of Jesus challenged dominant conceptions of Christian theology and ethics in the second half of the twentieth century, a challenge that has had to be accounted for by scholars as different in theological orientation as Stanley Hauerwas and James Gustafson.

Chapter 2 tells the story of Yoder's early interaction with North American Mennonites, including the Concern Group and his mentors at Goshen College, particularly Harold Bender, Guy Hershberger and J. Lawrence Burkholder. Zimmerman not only recounts Yoder's frustration over the lingering Niebuhrianism in Hershberger's and Burkholder's accounts of Mennonite theology and the way this affected Mennonite views of nonviolence, but also, and perhaps more important, he displays Yoder's struggle for mutual understanding with Bender concerning issues of church polity and the "Anabaptist vision." Zimmerman is right, it seems to me, to point to this as a decisive factor in shaping Yoder's conception of the politics of Jesus, for, far from being a simple recommendation that Christians "follow Jesus" in situations of overt conflict, the politics of Jesus as Yoder conceived it recommends a pattern of sociality in which structural issues like group organization and authority are the conditions of possibility for peaceably negotiating difference.

In the next chapter, "European Experience and the Debate About War," Zimmerman argues that Yoder first articulated and honed his conception of the politics of Jesus in three arenas during the latter half of the 1940s: his work in post-war Europe with European Mennonites; his ecumenical engagements with European Protestants; and the World Council of Churches discussion of the ethics and theology of war. In many respects, chapter 3 illustrates the arguments of chapter 2. It shows Yoder crafting enduring yet malleable ecumenical relationships and church structures that could enable meaningful discussion of interchurch and intrachurch conflict without simply sweeping substantive differences under the carpet (88).

Chapters 4 and 5 discuss Yoder's graduate studies at the University of Basel. Zimmerman helpfully illuminates the ways in which the politics of Jesus that Yoder developed were influenced by people like Oscar Cullmann, Karl Barth, Jean Laserre, André Trocmé and Hendrik Berkhof, information that heretofore has been largely ascertainable only on the basis of suggestive footnotes in Yoder's own writing. Zimmerman also focuses an entire chapter on Yoder's dissertation, "Täufertum und Reformation in der Schweiz," and it is arguably here that Zimmerman makes his deepest contribution to understanding Yoder. He argues that one must understand Bender's efforts to craft for Mennonites what Paul Toews called a "usable past" and see Yoder's dissertation as a continuation of that mission if one is to understand the full implications of the politics of Jesus. In this respect, Zimmerman touches on one of the most intriguing avenues for reflection on Yoder's thought—namely, the relationship between history and theology in his work. Zimmerman quotes Mark Thiessen Nation in this regard: "One could argue . . . that John Howard Yoder's whole academic career was committed to communicating in ecumenical terms what he learned through his studies of sixteenth-century Anabaptism in the early to mid-1950s in Europe." This is fair enough; however, Zimmerman suggests, one needs to recognize that the "basic theological orientation" of Yoder's work "was already formed before his doctoral research" (143). Yoder, in good Benderian fashion, was intensely interested in crafting an Anabaptist *Vergegenswärtigung*, or updated theology, and this should raise questions for contemporary studies of Yoder and Anabaptism of the kind that Nietzsche himself raised in "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life." What is, or ought to be, the normative value of historiography? To what extent do our own virtues amplify our faults? How do our attempts to produce edifying histories blind us to the deleterious effects of our own interpretive activities? It is to his credit that Zimmerman elicits these and other questions clearly enough to provide much food for further thought.

In the final chapter of *Practicing the Politics of Jesus*, Zimmerman puts Yoder into conversation with contemporary theories for building a "just peace," including those of the Catholic peace tradition and Glen Stassen's transforming initiatives. This is a herculean task, largely owing to the contextually relative and occasional nature of Yoder's work, and Zimmerman generally handles it well. In one respect, however, I find this chapter problematic. In order to elucidate Yoder's theology as lived practice, Zimmerman seeks a handle on his thought by listing ten "basic principles" of the politics of Jesus. While these ten principles are perhaps a useful heuristic device for summarizing Yoder's

thought, it seems to me that such a distillation of Yoder's work militates against an understanding of the politics of Jesus as a deeply embodied set of social practices. For that kind of work to be persuasive, we need thick descriptions and histories of actual groups and their negotiations, conflicts, cooperations and agreements, as they seek to live the politics of Jesus. Otherwise, an underexamined distinction between theory and practice remains entrenched in theological reflections on peace, and Yoder's theology will continue to be viewed as a theoretical offering that needs to be applied.

My deepest concerns with *Practicing the Politics of Jesus* are occasioned by a comment John Paul Lederach made in his foreword. Lederach wrote, "For those of us born during or after the time when Yoder was working through his European postwar experience and embarking on his Ph.D. work . . . *Practicing the Politics of Jesus* reads like a novel" (11). Lederach's comparison is apt not least because it contains a caution, or the seed of caution, for readers of the book. If *Practicing the Politics of Jesus* reads like a novel, then Yoder quickly emerges not simply as the novel's main character but also as its clear hero. The caution that needs to be voiced, therefore, is this: insofar as *Practicing the Politics of Jesus* portrays Yoder as a hero of contemporary Anabaptist-Mennonite theology, it runs the real risk of transmuting intellectual biography into vicarious autobiography or perhaps apologetics. I will not endeavor to speak for others here except by invitation, but I find the story of a smart-but-socially-awkward-Mennonite-boy-who-made-it-good-on-the-scene-of-ecumenical-theology both deeply appealing and comforting. Yet that effect tends to blind me to the more deleterious and authoritarian effects of Yoder's theology. It tends to help me obscure the extent to which the betrayals and heartbreaks of Yoder's biography are of a piece with facets of his theology, especially with its posture of humility and respect for the other. Those are also aspects of John Howard Yoder's theological legacy that his inheritors need to examine thoroughly and searchingly if in the coming decade we are indeed to cultivate a healthy and robust picture of the politics of Jesus.

Bluffton University J. ALEXANDER SIDER

AUTHOR ADDRESSES

Jonny Gerig Meyer, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517. E-mail: jgerigmeyer@gmail.com

Prof. Colin Neufeldt, Department of History, Concordia University College of Alberta, 7128 Ada Boulevard, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T5B 4E4. E-mail: colin.neufeldt@concordia.ab.ca

Timothy W. Reardon, 2228 Amber St., Philadelphia, PA 19125, E-mail: timothywreardon@gmail.com

Prof. J. Denny Weaver, 3246 Stonecreek Drive, Madison, WI 53719-5250. E-mail: weaverjd@bluffton.edu