

BOOK REVIEWS

Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective. By John Howard Yoder. Gayle Gerber Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker, eds. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic. 2014. Pp. 432. \$45.

In his writings on the Psalms, Walter Brueggemann suggests that the psalmists lead us through a process of “orientation, disorientation and new orientation.”¹ I have found Brueggemann’s comments helpful in guiding me through the recent discussions surrounding John Howard Yoder’s sexual misconduct. Yoder has provided me—as he has with so many others—my plumb line “orientation” to the world. As Wilbert R. Shenk’s introduction point out, Yoder’s vision and theological commitments were instrumental in shaping the work of Mennonite Board of Missions among African Independent Churches in Cote d’Ivoire, West Africa, where my parents served as missionaries and where I grew up. As a young adult, I attended and was baptized at Prairie St. Mennonite Church—the congregation Yoder called home for many years. And as a student at Fuller Seminary, Yoder’s writings have been, and continue to be, some of the most powerful and formative in shaping my missiological grid. Given Yoder’s influence in my own life, I now find myself experiencing a period of “disorientation.” I am baffled by Yoder’s destructive tendencies and wonder what should have been done in terms of accountability. Like the psalmists, I am trying to get to a place of “reorientation,” one that narrates how God rescues us from sin in a decisive way and that includes experiencing God’s grace, peace, and love, trusting that it will lead to reconciliation with Yoder’s legacy.²

While John Howard Yoder is best known for his work on issues of war and peace, the editors of this volume note that the theology of mission preoccupied him as a scholar, teacher, missionary, and ecumenical dialogue partner for most of his life. This book is the result of transcribing from reel-to-reel audiocassettes Yoder’s lectures in a course he regularly taught on theology of mission at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries between 1964 and 1983. While the lectures were significantly edited for publication—as would be the case with any oral transcription—the editors have managed to preserve the informal quality of Yoder’s voice in a classroom setting while producing a text that is both accessible and professional. The editors should be commended for their painstaking work,

1. See Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms* (Winona, Minn.: Saint Mary’s Press, 1993).

2. The most substantive reflections I have found regarding Yoder are by Mark Thiessen Nation and Marva Dawn: “On Contextualizing Two Failures of John Howard Yoder”: <http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2013/09/23/on-contextualizing-two-failures-of-john-howard-yoder/>. See also the A.M.B.S. Statement on Teaching and Scholarship related to John Howard Yoder.—<http://www.ambs.edu/about/documents/AMBS-statement-on-JHY.pdf>.

attention to detail, and commitment to the integrity of a project that faithfully represents Yoder's thinking in this area.

The book is intended for seminary students and professors who are studying the theology of Christian mission from an Anabaptist perspective (10). Toward that end, I would recommend using it as a textbook in missiology or ecclesiology courses. In addition, the book's material will have a wider appeal to audiences less acquainted with Yoder's missiological thinking. Because so little has been published on Yoder's missiology, this may be his most salient material to appear in print since *The Politics of Jesus*.

In the introduction, Wilbert R. Shenk, a missiologist, masterfully situates Yoder's work and thinking within the context of his Anabaptist heritage, European theological education, and North American professional assignments and roles—including direct involvement in mission program leadership—as well as historical developments and discussions in contemporary missiology. The book itself is composed of twenty-three chapters; and as readers have come to expect of Yoder, the lectures integrate biblical insights, historical perspectives, and a deep commitment to peace, ethics, and ecclesiology informed by the way of Jesus.

The primary issue Yoder seeks to disentangle is the Western inheritance of a Christendom ecclesiology, "which forces a choice between a church without mission and a mission without a church" (33). As he has done in so much of his work, Yoder teaches all of us how to think, asking questions that challenge long-held modes of thinking. Yoder's argument begins with the contention that Paul's missionary medium and message fundamentally contradict those of the modern missionary movement—namely, the strong emphasis on winning individuals and the tendency to use manipulation and domination as means of conversion. According to Yoder, Paul's work demonstrates that the "community precedes converts" as demonstrated in the fact that Paul himself began work in already existing communities of people gathered in local synagogues. Some accepted the message while others rejected it; neither was the result of coercion but of a "voluntariness."

Moreover, Yoder critiques the approach whereby a lone-ranger missionary takes the Gospel message to some distant (non-Western) land. Based on his reading of 2 Corinthians 5 and Ephesians 2 and 3, Yoder says, Christ's work reconciles people into a new social reality; this "new humanity" represents both the "medium and the message" into which others are invited to participate. The missionary impulse then is lodged in the life of the community rather than in the activity of an individual. Yoder argues that the New Testament record, as well as the life of the early church, effectively abolished the laity and taught that all members of the body have gifts for ministry. But because the "re-clergification" of Christianity was reintroduced through the Christendom project, the shape of the church's mission became distorted as specific individuals were bestowed with special missionary gifts. Yoder's contention is that because every member is in some sense a prophet or priest and because the Great Commission "As You Go" reflects a collective statement that applies to everyone, there is no distinct missionary profession as we have come to believe.

Readers of this text might be tempted to conclude that Yoder's work is dated, in the sense that it reflects themes of a bygone era. To a certain extent this is accurate in as much as Yoder was a product of his times, engaging with contemporary issues and themes such as Donald McGavran and the church growth movement. Having said that, I would argue that because one of Yoder's major contributions is teaching his students how to think about any given subject, many of the questions he raises provide a more robust critique of current mission trends than much of today's mission literature. For example, a reading of his chapter on "Christian Presence" implicitly undermines the basis for the continuation of Western short-term mission programs.

Second, peace studies continue to be understudied and underutilized in the field of missiology. One is hard-pressed to find a mission theology text that deals substantively with the themes of violence, peace, and reconciliation.³ If the issues are raised, they are treated as only relevant to specific contexts, but most often remain marginal to the nature of the Gospel and, as a result, tangential to missiology. In this volume, however, peace is part and parcel of Yoder's framework and thus is an important resource for scholars seeking to create a more robust mission theology and ecclesiology, wedded to biblical shalom.

Third, within the last two decades migration has become a significant theme in theological and missiological circles. Yoder's treatment of "migration evangelism" in the appendix "As You Go" provides one of the most compelling bases for the biblical and historical link between the migration of communities along economic and social networks and the expansion of the Christian faith. In many ways, Yoder's thinking serves as precursor to Jehu J. Hanciles's arguments in *Beyond Christendom* regarding globalization, migration, and the transformation of the West.⁴

The most significant contribution of the book, however, is perhaps lost in the title itself: a mission theology from a "Believers Church Perspective." Readers may assume that most mission theology has been (or should be) worked out within a particular ecclesial tradition. But that is not the case. As Wilbert R. Shenk has argued elsewhere, Protestants have generally approached theologies of mission independent of particular theological and ecclesial traditions. The implicit assumption is that there is a generic theology of mission independent of ecclesiology. So for example, other than a few Catholic texts, one will not find a Lutheran- or Presbyterian-shaped mission theology. Yoder's thinking contributes to filling those lacunae by asking, Does the believers church have something to say about mission theology? Yoder's answer is, of course, "Yes!" Toward that end, almost every chapter offers concrete proposals for how one might work out the answer to such a question. The true genius of the book is a methodological model for constructing an integrative approach—one that probes the usefulness

3. One example can be found in Andrew Kirk's chapters on violence and reconciliation. See, Andrew J. Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

4. Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008).

of any theology of mission based on the rootedness and missiological significance of its ecclesial tradition.

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MATTHEW KRABILL

Participating Witness: An Anabaptist Theology of Baptism and the Sacramental Character of the Church. By Anthony G. Siegrist. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications. 2013. Pp. 198. \$24.

In this carefully argued essay Anthony Siegrist offers an ecumenically sensitive, ecclesially self-critical, and unapologetic theology of believer's baptism. He hopes that a stronger vision for the unity of the church and a renewed witness to believer's baptism among contemporary North American Anabaptists might help local churches of various denominations "maintain integrity" in countries where the church is "disestablished" in relation to the state.

Siegrist grounds his proposals regarding baptismal practices, enumerated in the final chapter, in a rich theology of the church and its sacramental character. Because of its theological depth along with practical implications this monograph has the potential both to further scholarly ecumenical conversation and to help pastors deepen the understanding and practices of baptism in believer's church traditions.

Siegrist, who is from the Swiss Mennonite tradition in the United States and now teaches in Alberta, Canada, is convinced that believer's baptism must be reconceived. He is concerned that in some congregations associated with the Anabaptist tradition children have been baptized as young as 9 or 10 years of age, which is "a crucial distortion in the implementation of believers baptism" (26). Such baptisms seem to assume that children are in danger of divine judgment and will not be saved without baptism. In addition, it is "difficult to understand how a child is capable of making a non-coerced confession of faith" (15).

This critique is familiar to Anabaptists. What Siegrist particularly contributes is contextual and theological reflection regarding baptism from another angle. He writes that this tradition's "working theology of baptism suffers from a deficient account of divine action, especially as mediated through the church," and he wants to "develop resources to mend this weakness" (x).

Siegrist draws upon the theology of Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder to demonstrate how "believers baptism need not be allergic to a strong view of the primacy of God's grace" (47) while still valuing the voluntary dimension of baptism—the believer's promise to follow Christ in life even at great cost, including potential conflicts with family or state. While these theologians hold the view that baptism is "the product of God's work and human freedom," Siegrist believes many Anabaptists are not clear about *how* God participates in the act of baptism. He notes that Barth and Yoder emphasize the narrative character of biblical faith and suggests that this narrative of God's relationship with humanity should structure our language when we talk about how God works through the church's sacraments. We should do this rather than appeal to

sociology, as Yoder does in *Body Politics*, or to a “highly developed theology of the sacraments or semiotic theory.” We should recognize that God enables human freedom “primarily, though not exclusively, through the church” (49).

Siegrist believes that “Anabaptist communities need to express more clearly how the church mediates the presence and work of God” (27). Their confessions of faith assert “the voluntary power of the individual” (25) but do not adequately speak of the formational dimension of faith in the context of the church. They do not speak directly enough of God’s grace embodied in the “ark of the gathered community” as the various elements of baptism, including its formational dimensions, “together participate in the work of the body of Christ” (161). While Anabaptists have emphasized that the church mediates God’s action in forgiving and disciplining, expecting members to live out their promises of discipleship to Jesus, their theology does not speak as clearly about mediating God’s welcome or nurture.

Siegrist proposes the phrase *participating witness* as a shorthand for a renewed understanding of baptism, a revision of the view of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist Pilgram Marpeck. Siegrist emphasizes that “baptism encapsulates the nature of the Christian life as something neither passive nor self-generating. Baptism is a focal image of the Christian experience in the way it brings together the subjective and objective characteristics of this way of life” (161-162). A theology of participating witness corrects an overemphasis on human action and religious individualism by affirming “that the church’s life is in some sense sacramental, that it constitutes God’s effective presence in the world” (xxii).

Siegrist argues that Anabaptist theology today needs a stronger pneumatology—the presence of the risen Christ or the active Spirit of Christ in the church. This could, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s experience recounted in *Life Together* illustrated, display “the sacramental character of the church as the community through which Christ now acts” (64). For example, baptism witnesses to the work of Christ in each person who is baptized and it is an action of the church “through which God’s restoration effectively proceeds” (102). Baptism does something: “Through ecclesial participation in the life of Christ” baptism becomes “God’s reclamation of humanity” (71). Baptism “changes the social landscape, which is to say that it participates in God’s restoration of community” (77) and witnesses to it.

To be baptized, to baptize, or to affirm baptism is to participate in the ongoing apocalyptic life of Jesus of Nazareth. It is to be brought into the concrete presence of Christ in the world and to be transformed into a member of that presence—to be as Scripture says in an impossible metaphor, “living stones” (103).

But this strong ecclesiology is also problematic. The impurity of the church—in both Anabaptist and other embodiments—would seem to undercut its sacramental character. Siegrist is deeply aware of this contradiction and notes that it is better to say “the life of the church is included in the life of Christ” than to simply equate the two (98). But he also thinks that the presence of recognized sin in the church is “an opportunity for the Spirit working in, with, and under the life of the community to form it into the likeness of Christ” (100).

This includes delineating where Anabaptists see the Spirit's presence even in an impure church in a "manner less triumphalist and divisive than has previously been the case" (148). Siegrist's project is "deliberately interwoven with ecumenical threads" given this "age of dying denominationalism" (xii) and new initiatives of repentance and reconciliation between denominations, specifically those at the international level between Mennonites and the Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic communions. He is particularly concerned about the way Anabaptists tend to juxtapose faithful Anabaptist Christianity and "the diabolic fall of the mainstream church." He refers to Van Braght's *Martyrs Mirror* as a book that has significantly shaped Anabaptist self-perception and spirituality in this respect.

Siegrist helpfully connects the history of persecution in the Anabaptist tradition with its pneumatically underdeveloped theology of the church. While the radical reformers understandably defined themselves in opposition to Catholic and other Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century, this lingering way of articulating identity is neither theologically nor relationally sustainable. It ignores the movement of the Spirit of God in converting and reforming people in other Christian traditions—both then and now.

The affirmation of baptism as a participating witness "requires an account of how this body has remained the body of Christ despite episodes of obvious discontinuity" (109). Siegrist outlines three markers of the Spirit's engagement with the world: conversion, unity, and promise. While these three are not new marks, he creatively describes how each has the potential to critique and illuminate Anabaptist accounts of the church's history and "how it could be that the Spirit could be present in the church at a time when its members were not only the persecuted but also the persecutors" (148).

Attending to *conversion* "highlights the agency of congregations and individuals" and reminds us we can affirm the Spirit's work in the larger church "without forgetting the violence of the sixteenth century" (137). *Unity in love* as a mark of the Spirit leads us "to incorporate repentance into the story Anabaptists tell about the church" (140). While Anabaptists must continue to say that killing enemies is wrong, it is crucial to recognize "that those who were martyred, whether Anabaptist, Anglican, Lutheran, or Catholic, followed Jesus while those complicit in their deaths did not" (142). The Spirit's role as *promise* means we are not only formed by the past but can look to the future, discarding "lenses that perpetuate unfaithful division" (148).

While Siegrist's theological argumentation is complex and scholarly, this book is clearly written and accessible to those who have some familiarity with theological language and conversation. The recommendations outlined in the final chapter can assist congregations in evaluating, conversing about, and developing sacramental life, among them: affirmation of the ceremony of infant dedication; being more intentional about the process of Christian formation involving service, humility, compassion, and communal discernment; enriching "inquiry" education for new attendees and those being baptized; and recognizing previous baptisms performed by other denominations when done "with water in the triune name, the God of the apostles, by a community

affirming the Lordship of Jesus" (170). Siegrist wants to guard against a reductionist emotional and individualistic understanding of baptism by steering members away from a "second" baptism when they feel the first was not meaningful; he is not clear, however, how in this case the pledge or subjective dimension of baptism is then to be honored.

Siegrist's theological project is significant for orienting leaders in the Anabaptist tradition who will help congregations deepen their understanding of baptism and foster ecumenical relationships. He rightly identifies an overemphasis on individualism at the expense of ecclesiology that has begun to affect many North American churches in the believers church tradition, especially those in urban areas and those influenced by evangelical revivalism, including more recently formed immigrant churches. Whether his call for a more pneumatically charged understanding of the church can help guard against the divisiveness over homosexuality, for example, remains to be seen. Whether and how Christians "remember their baptisms" will be crucial.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

GAYLE GERBER KOONTZ

Village among Nations: "Canadian" Mennonites in a Transnational World, 1916-2006. By Royden Loewen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2013. Pp. 301. \$75, cloth; \$32.95, paper.

Village among Nations is a long overdue addition to the body of work about Low German Mennonites. Ambitious in scope, the book covers the evolution of the Low German Mennonite diaspora from 1916 to 2006 (and if the conclusion is included, to 2012). Royden Loewen masterfully traces the movements of the approximately 250,000 descendants of the original 7,800 emigrants who left Canada for Mexico and Paraguay in the 1920s to avoid increasing government intervention into their schools. Today, these descendants are spread across myriad countries, including Canada, Mexico, Paraguay, the United States, Bolivia, Belize, and Argentina. The three largest concentrations are in southern Ontario, northern Mexico, and eastern Bolivia.

The story of the Low German exodus out of Canada and subsequent "return" migrations is both "unique and universal" (11). Loewen guides the readers on a fascinating journey of a group willing to sacrifice economic success in favor of religious freedom. One of the work's central arguments is that the account of the Low German diaspora complicates Canada's idea of itself—as a receiving nation, not a sending one, and as an ever-benevolent host welcoming the world's weary with open arms. Rather, the story of the Low Germans and their emphasis on simplicity serves as a powerful corrective to the ubiquitous narrative of upward mobility and middle-class values. Loewen highlights the ambivalent place that Canada holds within this Low German grand narrative: it is paradoxically both "a land of social unrest and religious betrayal" and a "haven in a hostile world" (85); this tension is evident throughout as many Mennonites leave and return and leave again, seeking that elusive homeland that offers the best balance of material benefits and freedom of religion. He paints a picture of a people

committed to preserving an anachronistic lifestyle and willing to uproot repeatedly in pursuit of it. Loewen draws on a wide variety of sources to make his argument, including travel narratives of the early delegates who sought new lands, newspapers both about and for these Mennonites, unpublished graduate theses, personal diaries, letters, and transcripts from interviews conducted by other researchers. Ultimately, drawing on Benedict Anderson's notion of the "imagined community," Loewen plays with the term, altering it to "imagined village," and he argues that the Low German Mennonites conceive of their world as a set of villages, spread over 100 locales, not as a set of distinct nation states. While they tend to be loyal citizens, their relationship to the state is a pragmatic one, determined by a mix of religious freedom and economic opportunity.

Even for those readers already familiar with the story of the Low German Mennonites, *Village among Nations* is sure to inform and delight. I was surprised to learn that it was apocalyptic concerns in 1969 that drove a group of Alberta Mennonites southward in an attempt to avoid the "end times" economy and a new world order that they feared was imminent (146). Loewen avoids a pitfall common among scholarship on the Low German Mennonites—namely, a tendency of many books and articles to read as polemics, in which the authors see themselves as either the defenders of the traditional ways or the critics of a people who have lost their way. Thankfully, he avoids this trap by neither glorifying nor vilifying the Low German Mennonites. For instance, though he acknowledges the propensity among some immigrants to abuse the Canadian social safety net, he does not exaggerate the practice (188).

The book shines most brightly where Loewen's voice seems to recede and all we see are the vividly conveyed images of the actors themselves, people scattered throughout the Americas, struggling to navigate the pressures of modernity while clinging to their traditional ways. Loewen rightly argues that what constitutes "traditional" is constantly being negotiated, and cites the example of the steel-wheeled tractors, machinery that was at the height of technological achievement in the 1920s when some Mennonites decided to "freeze" time and not modernize beyond them, thereby creating and enforcing tradition. The final chapter, in which he examines the moves of six women from Mexico to Canada, is the most compelling. In this chapter Loewen fleshes out the narratives so that the reader can picture the migrants as they go through harrowing trials that recall scenes from *Grapes of Wrath*. In his chapter about time, Loewen offers a sophisticated analysis of Low German conceptions of time. He argues that different media are used to reflect different conceptions of time: the diary reflects a quotidian understanding; the letter suggests the week or month; the memoir deals in spans of lifetimes and eternities; and the newspaper intimates sweeping epochs such as modernity and traditionalism (97).

The book will be a welcome addition to the library of academics and lay people alike, as it fills an obvious lacuna in the story of the Low German Mennonites and in Canadian transnational history more generally. Loewen's style is straightforward, and his occasional use of colloquialisms, such as "old-timers" (155) and Mennonite "swagger" (137), add that earthy appeal for which he is known and appreciated. He applies theory with a light touch, using it to

clarify rather than obfuscate, something all scholars aspire to, but few manage as adeptly. Finally, he concludes that the Low German Mennonites have inverted the biblical curse of being “scattered among the nations” and have come to regard it as a sign of being “pilgrims and strangers” on this earth—a Mennonite virtue that Loewen contends has all but disappeared from other Mennonite groups (232). *Village among Nations* is a patiently pieced together patchwork of memoirs, letters, newspapers, diaries, and the research of graduate students; what emerges from the many pieces is a coherent and compelling whole, the most comprehensive portrait of the Low German world to date.

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ROBYN SNEATH

Why Cows Need Names, and More Secrets of Amish Farms. By Randy James. Kent, Ohio: Black Squirrel Books/Kent State University Press. 2013. Pp. 234. \$28.95.

Randy James, a longtime county extension agent for Geauga County, Ohio, gives practical insights into the lived realities of Amish dairy farms in that county through stories drawn from his interactions with farmers. Farm numbers are growing in Amish areas like Geauga Country while most other Ohio counties without Amish populations are losing farmers (2). James discusses topics related to dairy farming, many of which are also relevant for dairy farmers who are not Amish. Readers should learn about issues such as dairy herd health, manure management, dairy breeds, soil chemistry, and environmental issues.

There are several distinct themes in this book: the value of small farms over big farms; the importance of farming to the quality of life of Amish families; and Amish wisdom on the use of technology. James focuses on one farm family in particular, the Gingeriches, to illustrate these themes. James makes a significant contribution to the literature on Amish farming.

A major theme of the book is the social, animal welfare, and economic benefits of smaller, diversified farms over larger, specialized farms. James hits on the theme of small-scale farming so insistently that it may turn some readers away from the book. In a sense, that issue of scale is what is behind the book's title: “Why cows need names.” The naming of cows is a family affair and children often name the cows (70-71). James states that “assigning an individual name” to the cows “somehow also gives an animal moral authority and provides a powerful deterrent to wanton cruelty—a deterrence that is absent on enormous dairy farms with thousands of completely anonymous, sequentially numbered animal units” (70). He uses minimal academic research (228) to support his statements, perhaps because he feels that the university and agricultural extension system have brushed off the negative consequences of concentration and specialization (36; 187). However, it would have been informative to place his thoughts about the negative consequences of farm specialization and concentration into the larger context of research on these issues. It also would have been helpful to separate the scale issue from Amish farming in particular since his presentation intertwines these issues. He could have achieved this

separation by comparing Amish farm systems with non-Amish farms having a similar size and using similar practices.

Another related theme is the incompetence of government and how that mismanagement hurts small farms in particular. For example, regarding the current state of subsidies, he says, "we have paid these folks well to develop one of the worst cases of persistent adult diaper rash in history" (35). He also discusses, in what some readers would likely consider a rant, the incompetence of government as exemplified in a bill to ban horsemeat (122). He said he was dismayed when the bill actually passed in Texas and Illinois (156) and editorializes on how it will hurt both farmers and potential consumers in low-income countries. He repeats himself more than necessary on these themes related to government and the university.

James gives some general positive insights into Amish culture. James states that the Amish will consider what the ramifications are for the community when choosing to adopt different technologies (25; 174). We learn that the rules of the church (the *Ordnung*) are effective for each local congregation (24; 174). For example, James discusses the diversity in adoption decisions around bulk tanks among different Amish churches (25). He also connects these ideas about the social implications of technology to his own life, which may promote similar reflection on the part of readers. For example, he thinks it is important forgo having a G.P.S. device in his car because not having one means that he would have to ask for directions from the local Amish and build relationships while navigating his way (137). Although James does give some background on the Amish faith, many readers would likely benefit from more extensive background on the faith, culture, and history of the Amish to better grasp the meaning behind some of the stories James relates in the book.

James discusses some anecdotal differences between the Amish and non-Amish ("Yankee") farmers that highlight the frugality and resourcefulness of the Amish such as growing and preserving some of their own food. James works through the economics of the Gingerich farm to determine if they will be able to survive as a family farm (30). The author goes into great detail to nail down the finances associated with Amish farm implements that could be used to help other Amish families trying to discern if they can be economically viable (47). Some of the descriptions of the workings of an Amish farm were challenging to follow and visualize such as his detailed description of working with the Amish on threshing (81). More illustrations would have served well, as in his first book, *Why Cows Learn Dutch and Other Secrets of Amish Farms* (Kent State, 2005).

There is no doubt that James's connection to the Amish and his particular farm knowledge is unique and that readers can learn a lot through his experiences. However, it seems that James emphasizes his insider position more than necessary. By the middle of the book he is still mentioning his insider position (130 and 136) and says that his Amish contacts talk about their church rules with him, which he claims is a rare privilege for outsiders.

The importance of farming to these Amish families' quality of life and sense of purpose may be the strongest contribution of the book. It is especially touching to read about how farming may be passed on through the generations

within Amish families. James has a keen sense of purpose in helping Amish achieve these goals and it is refreshing to read a positive story about family farming in an era when most of the information about family farming is not at all promising (225).

University of Missouri-Columbia

CAROLINE BROCK

A Faith Embracing All Creatures: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions about Christian Care for Animals. Tripp York and Andy Alexis-Baker, eds. Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books. 2012. Pp. 194. \$23.

In his afterword to *A Faith Embracing All Creatures*, Brian McLaren invokes the rule of kindness as a spiritual practice that shapes our reflection of God's care for animals: "And when we apply the rule of kindness to our eating, clothing, and entertainment, we will lose our taste for certain foods and products. . . . Some of us might become vegan, some vegetarian, some more conscientious omnivores" (183).

McLaren's writing, on the heels of and mostly in response to Danielle Nussberger's excellent concluding essay, "Vegetarianism: A Christian Spiritual Practice," adequately sums up the best aspects of this excellent volume. McLaren notes that in his life he has, often inarticulately, taken small steps away from eating meat. He remains uncommitted to vegetarianism, "But I am more convinced—thanks to this book—that making that commitment would be a good choice, one that should be celebrated rather than criticized. I hope you agree" (182).

I do, but the argument that vegetarianism is a good and responsible Christian spiritual practice is considerably narrower than the wide scope promised in the title to this volume, and I can't quite decide if that gap is the book's greatest strength or weakness.

My indecision probably owes to the reality that it is exceedingly difficult to think about animals in our contemporary context. We are decisively past a time in which we think of animals as machines; but factory farming is arguably the one of the greatest moral sins in human history. Excellent essays like John Berkman's subtle "Are we Addicted to the Suffering of Animals," which is about factory farming, and news stories about Michael Vick may not convince us to stop eating meat, but they nudge us toward kindness and open up significant questions about our complicity. When *A Faith Embracing All Creatures* answers questions that we didn't even know that we had, it lives up to Matthew Halteman's optimistic blurb: "only a few [books] merit the stockpiling of a stash of copies to give [away]."

However, the same focus on vegetarianism as the *sine qua non* of animal care creates significant problems at other points. It leaves out a significant group of theorists and practitioners who want to consider other questions concerning animals—for example, the long history of domestication as a positive site of animal care. Is it possible to tell the story of a shepherd who protects and cares for her sheep, the kind of shepherd who would search for one missing sheep

from a flock of one hundred, in a way that both ends with slaughter and remains a good story? Should Christians think through the much greater numbers of domesticated animals on our planet as a sign of evolutionary success, of cooperation and community between humans and animals? This volume brackets these and other questions, and although I am personally disappointed by this inattention, I do not find this a failing of this volume. A slender volume like this one can only do so much and using vegetarianism as a theoretical starting point works well generally. A larger problem arises when vegetarianism overdetermines the argument. That happens at a number of points.

It happens throughout the volume when meat eating and factory farming are elided. It happens particularly decisively when Judith Barad argues that humans are designed to be vegetarians. A detailed and progressive argument from cultural evolution could be made, but such an argument is missing. Tripp York moves beyond simple assertion in his essay, which theologially considers the eschatological possibility of an end to predation. It's a beautiful essay devoted to imagining the happiness of animals as they pursue God's glory, but in the one footnote in which he considers vegetarianism directly he fails to consider the possible happiness of the cow.

Both York's and Berkman's essays are situated at the end of the volume, which is unfortunate as the longer arguments they make could have informed the assertions in essays that appear at the beginning of the volume. The structure of this book follows a Mennonite approach to doing theology, which begins with Scripture and then moves through ethics, theology, and spirituality. This ends up working against York's crucial statement that

by imagining that pigs should be named 'bacon,' or snakes 'belts,' or crocodiles 'boots,' or elephants 'circus entertainment,' or cows 'milk machines,' or rabbits 'safe cosmetics,' we make it difficult to recover adequate theological language. Is it not the case that the story of creation, as found in Genesis, Romans, and Isaiah, provides us with resources for naming animals differently than the above designations? If so, I imagine that the first eschatological act we must perform, as intimated above, is getting our language right (158-159).

We need to clear the ground of words like bacon, belt, machine, and cosmetics before attending to the biblical texts. Our prejudices about animals are simply too inchoate, inarticulate, and deep to allow for a simple retrieval of a peaceable kingdom.

Happily the vast majority of *A Faith Embracing all Creatures* works diligently and effectively to shape our language, imagination, and faith in ways that, if heeded, could shape both creation and salvation towards God's purposes. One of the most welcome ways that this has happened is in the selection of authors for this volume. Important animal theologians, including Carol Adams, Laura Hobgood-Oster, and David Clough, join an admirably diverse list of contributors. The biblical work is extensive and careful and covers much of what should be covered in thinking through vegetarianism in a contemporary context. An essay on purity law is probably the key missing piece, but the inventive and

imaginative attention to Jesus' diet in Steve Webb's and Andy Alexis-Baker's essays is worth the omission.

The book holds together as threads in a deliberate tapestry do. Like any work communally written, it has uneven spots, but the diversity of styles and voices make a multifaceted argument that is more compelling than one that Alexis-Baker and York would have simply cooperated on. This diversity is needed given the complexity of the topic, and they have succeeded masterfully. I look forward to further work in their Peaceable Kingdom series and to further attention to the web of life, the ways we find ourselves trapped in it, and how to extricate ourselves from sin and to move toward glory.

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TREVOR BECHTEL

Daniel Colucciello Barber. *Deleuze and the Naming of God: Post-Secularism and the Future of Immanence*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2014. Pp. 232. \$120.

The question of God is not one that can be answered with a yes or no. What is evoked instead is "the task of imaging a world, the task of world-making." With God—or at least with the name of God—"the stakes of world-making are pushed to the highest degree" (3). With this orientation Daniel Barber furthers his project of exploring the implications of philosopher Gilles Deleuze's idea of immanence in the context of religion and secularism. Barber challenges the notion that the critical question is between religion and secularity by claiming that religion (as Christianity or defined by Christianity) and secularism work under the same supercessionist logic that is able to name and position all non-adherents; as Christianity re-positioned Judaism and eventually non-Christian or heretical others so too secularism re-positioned Christianity and religion in general.

Thus, the question of God is not yes or no. The question of God is one of imagination, world-making, and politics. In *Deleuze and the Naming of God* Barber identifies the crucial element in this question as between transcendence and immanence; the naming of God remains operative on both sides. Barber lays out his argument in three movements.

Chapters 1 and 2 offer his reading of the Deleuzian project of immanence. Briefly stated, the emergence of immanence as expressed by Deleuze comes out of a medieval and modern question of how difference is understood and expressed. Immanence is a challenge to the prevailing notion of transcendence in the West, which posits another plane from which God, Reason, Nature, and so forth, establishes and maintains the order and distinctions of reality. Immanence denies the existence or appeal to another plane and asserts a single plane and substance of reality. Distinction and change in immanence come not from a prior unity but from the *differential* structure of reality. Difference is a key term. In transcendence difference is mediated between two planes. With immanence difference is an unconditioned function of reality that can only be expressed and re-expressed. These are dense chapters that will require patient attention,

especially for those unfamiliar with some of the larger philosophical conversations.

Chapters 3 and 4 bring elements of Christian theology into conversation with differential immanence. Chapter 3 responds to the theological tradition of *analogy of being* here represented by the work of John Milbank and David Bentley Hart. Milbank rejects differential immanence because he reads it as reflecting the pagan myth of original and necessary violence. Milbank offers an “ontology of peace” based on participation (via analogy) in the transcendent vision of God’s original order. Both Barber and Milbank agree that both positions are “unfounded,” requiring some sort of metadiscourse for appeal. Barber proposes that these contrasting accounts should be evaluated based on their ability “to imagine new possibilities of existence” (85). Barber claims that accepting Milbank’s model of transcendent participation in the divine *does not enable the introduction of peace but baptizes all pasts and futures as somehow affirmed in the present* (even despite their real violence). Chapter 4 asserts that theology need not be antagonistic toward immanence. Barber presents John Howard Yoder as an example of Christian theology that immanence is able to affirm. While Milbank suggests a transcendent alternative to the world, Yoder explores the particularity of Jesus “as the name of the world’s resistance to domination and as the capacity to produce a world that departs from such domination” (19).

Chapters 5 and 6 address the question of mediation in immanence. In transcendence there is the question of the mediation between two realms, the conditioned and the unconditioned. Immanence rejects this and must be considered thoroughly unconditioned. In this way there are not stable expressions of immanence that allow immanence itself to be an object of study (remember immanence is an understanding of relation not an object of study). In this respect Barber develops his notion of metaphilosophy that attends to philosophy’s (necessary) failure in trying to create (or recover) order from chaos. Through a meditation on shame and suffering Barber proposes that we must attend to what resists thought, what remains senseless. It is only through this practice of immanent attention that change is possible in contrast to the appeal to transcendence, which only allows us “to bathe and ignore the senselessness of experience” (168).

Chapter 6 then takes up the challenge of what it means to give attention to the present without escape to another world (whether religious or secular). One example is the life of Malcom X, born Malcom Little. Little did not change his name but marked the site of a name with an X. This X demanded attention to the present because of its constant reminder of a now inaccessible genealogy of his past, his marking under the Christian colonial naming in the present, and his refusal of effacing the present by taking on some eschatological future name. The X remained and resisted the present, opening new possibilities. Barber concludes the chapter with a section called the “Fabulation of Icons.” This section returns us to the opening comments regarding imagination, politics, and the naming of God. At some point all these elements converge on particular types of storytelling. We are told a story in which the question of God can be answered with a yes or no, but this story and others keep us from asking the question of

yes or no with regard to capitalism, nationalism, and other ideologies. In the face of these competing imaginations Barber proposes the act of *fabulation*, which “names the capacity to tell a story that outstrips the criteria that would decide on its truth or falsity” (200). A fable takes the materials of the present and creates an account that refuses the present criteria of truth or falsity and so opens a space for the new. These accounts come most clearly from a place of suffering because suffering demands attention to the present but is itself already outside the discourses of truth (inasmuch as suffering remains senseless).

This is an intellectually demanding book. It will likely prove the better of those who are not already invested in the work of critically examining the present discourses of theology and secularism as well as their attendant politics. But to the diligent reader there is a glimpse in this work of what might open up to those willing to re-configure and re-express the prevailing domains of political theology. To the extent that there remains a question mark over the current criterion of truth and falsity this book invites its readers to pay attention, to resist escape to another realm. To escape is to seal off the crack by which we might see something new; to remain attentive to the senseless sites of life there may yet come, well, I guess we will wait to see.

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Giovinezza di Rembrandt. La committenza mennonita. By Silvia Danesi Squarzina. Rome: De Luca Editori d'Arte. 2013. Pp. 127. €20.

This small volume—in English, *The Young Rembrandt and the Mennonite Artistic Community*—recently published by a prominent Italian art historian marks the first time that a major figure in the art history community has made a sustained and credible argument that Rembrandt was a member of the Mennonite community during the early years of his career. The question of his formal membership in one of the Mennonite congregations is outside her field of inquiry. Her focus is on the relationship between what Rembrandt painted in those years and his involvements in the Amsterdam Mennonite artistic community.

Squarzina is a professor emeritus at Sapienza University, where she taught for many years. She is the author of a large volume of published work, all in Italian, much of it on seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish art. The book originated in her lectures at Sapienza in the 1990s. The volume includes sixty-two black-and-white illustrations and thirty-six color plates.

Although the question of Rembrandt's connections with the Mennonite community has been widely studied in the past, Squarzina offers five contributions to this long-running debate. The first contribution is to regard the evidence published by the seventeenth-century Italian art historian Fillippo Baldinucci as valid. In her view, “Baldinucci provides us with a view of Rembrandt whose importance and reliability have not been sufficiently appreciated.” She points out that Baldinucci's account is based on firsthand

evidence provided by Eberhart Keilhau, who spent two years studying with Rembrandt in Amsterdam in 1644-1647, followed by three more years at the "famous Academy of [Mennonite art dealer Hendrik] Uylenburgh," while retaining his close relationships with Rembrandt. Shortly thereafter Keilhau moved to Rome, where he became Baldinucci's informant. Baldinucci reports that Rembrandt

at that time professed the religion of the *Menisti*, which, although everything it holds is false, is however contrary to Calvin's religion because they do not baptize until the age of 30. They do not select educated preachers, but raise to that office men of ordinary status, so long as they are regarded, as we would say, gentlemen and men of good taste, and able to support themselves financially.

"Whether he persevered in his false religion," Baldinucci adds, "is something that has not come to our knowledge."

Squarzina's second contribution is to view many of Rembrandt's paintings, especially those on biblical and religious subjects, as autobiographical in content. She regards Rembrandt's paintings and etchings as products of deeply-held beliefs. To put it simply, she believes that Rembrandt painted what he did because of what he believed, and that his beliefs came from the Mennonite community. Much previous discussion of Rembrandt's relationship with the Dutch Mennonites has been hampered by a lack of evidence. Squarzina's approach offers historians a new body of evidence. Historians accustomed to relying on textual evidence may be skeptical, but the approach has gained credibility among art historians.

Her third contribution is to make a credible case that a careful reading of Rembrandt's work (and Rembrandt's images must be read, not simply looked at) indicates that many of them are comprehensible only when Baldinucci's report that Rembrandt was a Mennonite is accepted. Rembrandt lived at a time when a multilateral conflict was taking place that not only pitted fundamentalist and liberal Calvinists against each other, but also set both portions of the Calvinist community against the Catholic community, and both Calvinists and Catholics against the Mennonite community. To believe that Rembrandt would have been unaffected by the fierce religious and political conflicts engendered by this tangle of opinions would be unlikely, and Squarzina's reading of his early paintings indicates he was not.

Her fourth contribution is to establish the existence of a Mennonite artistic community in Amsterdam. The most significant portion of that community had formed around Hendrik Uylenburgh, and when Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam from Leiden as a young unknown artist he lived for several years in Uylenburgh's home. The existence of this community has been reported in earlier scholarly work, but its importance can only be appreciated when viewed from an art historical perspective. Squarzina states that in Rembrandt's paintings we find "justification for the thesis of Rembrandt's personal, direct adherence to Mennonite beliefs at a point in his life when he was surrounded by members of this religious community."

Her final contribution is to point out that all seventeenth-century artists worked in the shadow of the late sixteenth-century destruction of art in northern European churches. She points out that this not only destroyed centuries of accumulated artistic production, but that it also eliminated what had been the largest single market for artists. Even more important, the iconoclastic movement de-sacralized art, thereby transferring its ownership from the ecclesial realm, where they had been on public view, to the private collections of wealthy individuals. Squarzina believes Rembrandt's religious works were an attempt to re-sacralize art, by presenting Mennonite beliefs in images that its members could understand, but that would not be controversial in the heated confessional environment of the time. She states, "For Rembrandt, his paintings were the place where he could express his unconventional beliefs about individual conscience, and express his moral convictions, using the resources possessed by the artist."

She observes, for example, that Rembrandt's painting of John the Baptist preaching "provided the opportunity for self-identification by religious minorities who had no buildings of their own in which to meet, and who were accustomed to worshipping outside under the trees in the forest, and to freely choose their own pastors." She adds, "The autobiographical elements in this work . . . have always been recognized by scholars, but have never been considered in relation to his adherence to the Mennonite faith." Squarzina's knowledge of Anabaptist and Mennonite beliefs is necessarily limited but not inaccurate. She informs her Italian readers that Mennonites "sought to restore the Christianity of its time to the apostolic era, and to affirm the message of love found in the Sermon on the Mount."

Most twentieth-century Rembrandt scholarship has simply ignored his religious beliefs, apparently viewing them as irrelevant. This became the consensus view, and so this monograph represents a significant departure in Rembrandt studies. Squarzina is joined by at least one other major art historian, Arthur Wheelock, curator of the Dutch paintings at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., who in a catalog for the exhibition of Rembrandt's paintings of the apostles that he organized in 2005, noted Rembrandt's connections with the Mennonites several times. There have been other recent indications of a readiness to look at Rembrandt's religious beliefs, but none have entertained the possibility that those beliefs originated in Anabaptism.

The fact that the two artists widely regarded as the greatest of Dutch poets and painters—Joost van den Vondel and Rembrandt van Rijn—were both shaped by the Mennonite community surely indicates something important about the Dutch Mennonite community and its contribution to the cultural flourishing of a seventeenth-century Golden Age. That this insight should have come from an Italian Catholic is surprising, but not unprecedented. It is consistent with the growing appreciation of the Mennonite tradition that has emerged in the Catholic community in recent years. Difficult as it is for her to understand adult baptism, which from her perspective deprives children of the grace of sacramental baptism, she nevertheless takes a positive view of Mennonites. That appreciation is summed up in the concluding sentence to this

book: "In many of Rembrandt's paintings, and especially in those that we have examined, the environment in which the individual acts has changed, thanks to the new opportunities for individual consciousness provided by a religion that believes in a free and informed will."

There remains much to be learned, both about Rembrandt and about the early history of the Dutch Mennonite community, along the path of inquiry Squarzina has pioneered.

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BOOK NOTES

Living Gift: John's Jesus in Meditation and Poetry, Art and Song. By Willard M. Swartley. Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Publishing House. 2013. Pp. 183. \$24.

In the course of researching and writing *John* in the Believers Church Bible Commentary Series (2013), Willard Swartley collected a great deal of devotional and worship resources related to the fourth Gospel. In *Living Gift* he presents many of these items, organized in twenty-two sections keyed to portions of the biblical text, such as "John 1:1-18" or "John 16:5-33." Each section opens with a "Nuggets" heading in which Swartley summarizes major elements of the specific passage. Thereafter follow poems, hymn lyrics, responsive readings, full-color reproductions of visual art, short drama scripts, and brief meditations that connect to that section's biblical passage. Swartley is the author of some of the responsive readings and reflections, but most of the material comes from other authors and sources. The book includes topic, genre, and author indexes. The book would be a useful companion to a study of John in Sunday school classes or similar settings, and as a resource for worship planners and preachers working with the Gospel of John.

– Steven M. Nolt

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