

## Book Reviews

*Inhabiting the Land: Thinking Theologically about the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict.* By Alain Epp Weaver. Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books. 2018. \$20.

Theology is a lens shaped by location. Alain Epp Weaver's new book reflects on Jewish and Palestinian Christian theologies of land and location in four chapters: Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism; Palestinian Christian Theologies of Land and Liberation; Christian Theologies of Judaism and Assessments of Zionism; and a closing chapter on a Shared Palestinian-Israeli Future. Epp Weaver acknowledges in the opening pages that his book "privileges the voices and reflections of Palestinian Christians" (3) and is based on his work in Palestine with Mennonite Central Committee. In other words, Epp Weaver uses a Mennonite lens to look through a Palestinian lens. While the book holds important insights and portrays Palestinian views with depth and complexity, there is a distortion of Jewish narratives and theologies of land.

The book's major contribution is helping readers gain a detailed view of the evolution and tensions within the local Palestinian "mosaic" of Christian theologies of land (50). Epp Weaver's insightful description of Palestinian Liberation Theology and Palestinian Contextual Theology describes two ways location and the experience of worsening persecution and dispossession from Israeli forces shape theology.

Epp Weaver also discusses the relationship between Palestinian Christians and three separate groups: Western Christians; Muslim Palestinians; and Jews. Palestinian Christians feel abandoned by and invisible to Western Christians. The high-level post-Holocaust Jewish-Christian dialogue and Christian repentance excluded Palestinian Christians. Palestinian Christians critique Western Christian Zionists that give Israel a free pass to oppress Palestinians because of guilt over the Holocaust.

Palestinian contextual theologians describe the gospel incarnated in an "Arab tent" to emphasize constructive Christian-Muslim relationships (55). Understandably, there does not seem to be an equivalent effort to house Palestinian Christianity within a Jewish tent. As with the early Christian church that distanced itself from its Jewish roots to avoid persecution from Rome, Palestinian Christians seem to distance themselves from a Jewish Jesus. Epp Weaver does not discuss the Palestinian "Christ at the Checkpoint" conference, which alludes to Israeli Jews persecuting the Palestinian body of Christ. Nor is there reference to Jewish liberation theology, such as Marc Chagall's paintings of a Jewish Jesus on the cross representing European persecution of Jews. Epp Weaver reminds readers that denouncing Israeli policies toward Palestinians is not antisemitic but advises readers to avoid "critiques of Israel couched in antisemitic stereotypes. . ." (15).

How do Western and Palestinian Christians use liberation theology to imagine and articulate liberation for both Jews and Palestinians? The Palestinian Christian Kairos Document calls for the church to respond to Israeli persecution of Palestinians by “engaging the humanity of the enemy” (66). But how? Palestinian Christians call for Western Christians, the same group that persecuted Jews for 2,000 years, to join the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS) movement, a nonviolent tactic to coerce and punish Israel to end the occupation of Palestine. Most anti-occupation Jewish social justice theologians and peace groups interpret BDS as a replication and extension of early Western Christian Jewish boycotts. And this is the paradox. Palestinian Christian liberation is locked inside the unhealed wounds of 2,000 years of Christian persecution of Jews. For Mennonites, this paradox puts the ball in our court; we must work for justice and safety for both Palestinians and Jews.

For Mennonites who uncritically embrace a pro-Israel stance, the book offers a helpful critique of Christian Zionism, and its immoral legitimization and funding of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The book can help Christians understand and confront how Christian Zionism justifies Palestinian persecution and dispossession. Epp Weaver richly portrays Palestinian views of the terms “Israel” and “Zionism” as an oppressive military force or even as placeholders for the concept of evil, dispossession, and death.

But for Mennonites wanting to understand more about Judaism or Zionism and wanting to contribute toward a shared future, there are some gaps in the book’s description of Zionism. Epp Weaver argues that Zionism, a belief in a home for a Jewish nation, grew primarily in parallel to other nationalist movements (9-10). The book emphasizes Zionist Jews as “immigrants” colonizing Palestine rather than “refugees” fleeing persecution (22-24). While Zionism shared characteristics of other nationalist, colonial movements, most Jewish authors put more emphasis than Epp Weaver on Zionism emerging from the experience of persecution.

Prior to European nationalist movements, Christians persecuted Jews by forcing them to convert or die. Nationalism brought persecution of Jews as a nation or race of people. Conversion no longer brought safety. During the rise of nationalism in the late 1800s, both secular and religious Jews faced state-sanctioned pogroms of mass rape, torture, and death. Reluctantly turning to violence for survival after centuries of passivism and exile, some Jews embraced Zionism as a last resort, seeing the choice to either fight for survival in Europe or to fight for the land of their ancestors. For many Jews, a critique of Zionism, particularly by Western Christians, is seen as an attack on Jewish survival and Jewish connection to land.

Any shared future in Israel and Palestine requires compassion for the narratives of suffering and survival of all sides and recognition of competing definitions of Zionism. While trauma does not excuse wrongdoing, the book cautions readers not to decontextualize acts of violence (17). Epp Weaver gives a robust description of Palestinian suffering and trauma. In comparison, the book gives only a brief nod to the history of Jewish pain and loss, such as the Mizrahi Jews escaping persecution in Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, and Morocco (34). While 700,000 Palestinians lost their homes in the *Nakba* during the 1948 war, an equal number

of Jews fled their homes in surrounding Muslim countries. The book does not adequately ask the Western Christian reader, presumably the audience for the book, to contextualize Zionism and Israeli policy within a 2,000-year history of Christian and Muslim persecution of Jews.

The book's final chapter offers a Palestinian theology of resistance and *sumud*, or steadfast hope (106). Epp Weaver offers language of a "shared future" where Jewish, Muslim, and Christians live together with equal rights and shared freedoms. A shared future requires a more robust Christian-Jewish-Muslim theological dialogue about the land, and what land means to the survival of each group.

Citing Leviticus, Epp Weaver notes: "The claim to belong to the land flows from the prior recognition that the land ultimately belongs to God" (107). He cites the late Palestinian-American writer Edward Said, who rejected calls to denounce Zionism but rather affirmed the right of Israeli Jews to assert their connection to the land and called for transforming the understanding of Zionism to this inclusive interpretation (98). Similarly, the Zionist Israeli Rabbi Menachem Froman also argued that the land did not belong to Jews, but rather that Jews belonged to the land.

There are opportunities for hope. But they require more of Western Christians than simply denouncing or boycotting Israeli policies of occupation, siege, and discrimination. A just peace in Israel and Palestine requires Western Christians to *both* address past and present manifestations of antisemitism *and* to support Palestinian human rights.

Thinking theologically about Israel and Palestine requires that we spend more time listening to and learning from Palestinians, as Epp Weaver has done so well in his book, as well as learning more about Judaism and Zionism and building relationships with Jews. And we can do that only with a more direct line of communication, not a refracted and distorted lens of seeing Jews primarily through the eyes of Palestinians.

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*Blessings and Burden: 100 Years of Hutterites in Manitoba.* By Ian Kleinsasser. MacGregor, Man.: Hutterian Brethren Book Centre. 2019. 107 pp. \$12, Can.

Hutterites permanently settled in Manitoba 100 years ago, and Ian Kleinsasser's book celebrates this story. Kleinsasser writes as an insider—a Hutterite educator, with a degree from Brandon University. He has written a very interesting outline history of his people and with a critical edge. The book consists of three chapters originally presented as three one-hour lectures in June 2019 at Trinity United Church in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. Hutterians have a history consciousness and told their stories in their Chronicles. In this tradition, Kleinsasser, in a modest, insightful way, tells their recent story.

“Beginnings: Coming to Manitoba,” the first chapter, focuses on the period from 1918 to 1930 and the difficult, costly move from South Dakota to Manitoba to escape the hostile reaction of their U.S. neighbors to Hutterian pacifism in World War I. The death of Hutterian conscientious objectors Joseph and Michael Hofer in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, was the tragic event that propelled the flight to Canada.

The second chapter, “Like the World, Only Later in Time,” covers the Great Depression, World War II, and the period up to 1973. Canadians, at times, were nearly as hostile to the colonies as the Americans were, and there was pressure, direct or subtle, for Hutterites to assimilate. However, Kleinsasser warns, “Seeing every stumbling block as a form of religious persecution is, in my estimation, extremely unwise. Instead, we must recognise that in any healthy multicultural society, tension will occasionally arise between various groups that needs to be worked out” (87).

The last chapter deals with “1974: the ‘Year of Jubilee.’” The Year of Jubilee refers to the joyful reuniting of Bruderhof with the Schmiedeleut in 1974, but this came to a difficult end around 1995. Kleinsasser describes the last three decades as “years of disunity, years of wounding, and years of deep pain for many Hutterites” (104). The Schmiedeleut themselves tragically divided in 1992 over leadership and constitutional issues into two groups, Group I and Group II, one largely Canadian, the other American.

Kleinsasser focuses on four major themes that he pursues chronologically through each chapter: First, the Hutterian relationships with their host countries, in the U.S. and then Canada, dealing with persecution, negotiating rights, legal frameworks, and taxation and pension arrangements as an ethnic minority group. Second, the struggles within Hutterian society between the three Leut, the Dariusleut, the Lehrerleut, and the Schmiedeleut, and also struggles within each group. In times of adversity, they worked well together; in good times, individualism came to the fore and they tended to drift apart, neglecting poorer colonies. Third, the relationships of the Hutterites with the Bruderhof, beginning in 1930, that could at times be mutually very positive. There were periods of unity, and then turbulent, difficult times that resulted in divorce. And finally, the struggle of Hutterian colonies to educate their own children in Hutterian ways while national and provincial governments pursued a public school educational policy of assimilation into Canadian society. Kleinsasser quotes two Canadian government officials stating government policy for First Nations people in Canada: “Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian [*sic*] in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic,” and, “We must face realistically the fact that the only hope for the Canadian Indian [*sic*] is eventual assimilation into the white race” (60-61). Hutterians were under the same pressure.

Having lived with my family in the Bruderhof for a year, in 1992 to 1993, in Darvell, England, I had been aware of how important the encounter with the Hutterites was in shaping the Bruderhof. What Kleinsasser’s book helped me see, however, was the dynamic and at times positive influence of the Bruderhof on historic and traditional Hutterians. The Bruderhof, with a twentieth-century beginning, has been freer, and sometimes more spirit-centered. Traditional

Hutterians, beginning in 1528 as part of the Anabaptist left wing of the Reformation, have developed an enduring pattern of life that has endured as the most successful Christian communal group today, with over 500 colonies and 50,000 members. In contrast, Benedictine monastics number about 7,500 monks and 13,700 nuns worldwide.

Kleinsasser, as an elementary school teacher in his colony who is passionate about well-qualified and motivated Hutterian teachers, also takes time to celebrate the nearly 100 Hutterite teachers who have qualified through Brandon University in recent years with the help of Jacob D. Maendal and Peter Maendal. He points out that the early Hutterites “developed their own system of education which even exceeded the standards of mainstream society in notable ways” (90). Kleinsasser bemoans the neglect by some Hutterians of their schools. He wants Hutterians to “create an education system which will equip [their] children to cultivate Hutterite society so it flourishes as it seeks to witness to the kingdom of God” (90).

Kleinsasser writes well and documents his sources carefully. His book is insightful and a pleasure to read. While critical of the painful disunity among Hutterians and the neglect of their schools, he is balanced in his treatment, paints a big picture, and invites his people, of whatever *Leut*, into a better future. There are a number of things I would have liked to have heard about, such as the Nigerian colony project that was a partnership between Hutterites and the Bruderhof. But I understand that he had to keep to a tight format. As an introduction to the Hutterian story over the last 100 years in a readable 107 pages, this is a very good book. Of course, Kleinsasser’s is just one perspective, but I think this book will help to foster good discussion among Hutterians as well as about them.

The question over why the Anabaptist Hutterite witness matters remains. Hutterites of all kinds demonstrate in an enduring way over nearly five centuries that following Jesus in Acts 2, Acts 4:32-35, and the Sermon on the Mount is possible in the modern world. Similarly, the Bruderhof, born 100 years ago in the turmoil in Germany after World War I, witnesses today to the same end. Its members do not go to war, have abolished poverty among themselves, and often support the work of Mennonite Central Committee generously. They do not need the state. As Kleinsasser points out, Hutterianism began in 1528 as a rejection to nascent modern capitalism. Instead, Hutterites developed a society which said “Yes!” to cooperation and communitarian socialism” (24). This Hutterian and Bruderhof witness remains needed in our troubled world, even more so if they overcome their internal differences and heed the challenge and admonition of Eberhard Arnold in 1930: “Brothers [and sisters] Unite!”

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*The Farm Wife's Almanac*. By Shari Wagner. Telford, Pa.: Dream Seeker Books. 2019. \$13.95.

*The Farm Wife's Almanac* is a collection of poetry by Shari Wagner, the Indiana poet laureate in 2016-2017, and Casacadia Publishing House's newest offering in the DreamSeeker Poetry Series, which has been highlighting Anabaptist poets since 2005—most notably, Dallas Wiebe, Jean Janzen, and Anne Hostetler—who examine the intersection of daily life and contemporary issues with plain speech and an ethos of embodied spirituality. *The Farm Wife's Almanac* is Wagner's third collection of poetry and in many ways builds on the rural Midwestern aesthetic and themes of her debut collection, *Evening Chore*, which was published in the series' first year. However, neither *Evening Chore* nor *The Farm Wife's Almanac* are satisfied with idyllic notions of rural life and days-gone-by. Instead, they name and wrestle with the clichés and stereotypes that surround popular notions concerning the Mennonite and Midwestern imaginary and transform them into an authentic, holistic, and quietly subversive exploration of woman-centered spaces and experiences drawn from agricultural life past, present, and future.

Drawing from the collection's namesake, *Farmer's Almanac*, *The Farm Wife's Almanac* is brimming with meteorological predictions, lists, recipes, memories, and folklore and is grounded in the passing of seasons, the phases of the moon, the juxtaposition of movement, and the stillness of people and animals within the ecosystem and cosmic convergence of space and time that is the farm. Importantly, the title of the collection is *The Farm Wife's Almanac* and not *The Farmer's Wife's Almanac*, centering the relationship of the narrative voice to the landscape and to the farm itself, rather than to the farmer. The opening poem, "The farm wife predicts the weather," sets the tone for the depth and scope of the collection and positions the narrator as an active agent in expected and unexpected situations rather than a passive recipient in the harsh and oftentimes fatalistic environment of the agrarian imaginary. The rest of the poems follow suit, with titles like, "The farm wife remembers the funerals she presided over," "The farm wife explains why she doesn't mow her ditch," "The farm wife eats out at Marner's Six Mile Café," and "The farm wife discovers the giant rattle snake of La Grange County." The poems in this collection function as episodes in the life of the Farm Wife and are organized in sections reminiscent of *Farmer's Almanac*: "In the Garden," "Recipes and Remedies," "Proverbs and Parables," "Oddities," "Tidal Chart," "Pastimes," and "Travel"; however, Wagner transforms the original almanac structure with unexpected poems like "The farm wife launches the paratroopers" and "The farm wife collects frequent flier miles." The concerns of *The Farm Wife's Almanac* are simultaneously modern and traditional, active and contemplative, local and universal. In Wagner's collection the past, present, and future converge within the interior and exterior landscapes she creates that together form "the farm."

*The Farm Wife's Almanac* is in conversation with other collections of Mennonite poetry, particularly Mennonite poetry written by women, like Julia Kasdorf's *Poetry in America* (Pittsburgh Press, 2011), Becca J.R Lachman's *The Apple Speaks* (DreamSeeker, 2012), and Anne Hostetler's *Safehold* (DreamSeeker, 2018), that examine and deconstruct stereotypes placed upon Mennonite women from

outside the community as well as gender roles and expectations applied within the Mennonite community, while navigating the changes and challenges of modern rural life, finding ritual and sacredness in ordinary activities. Wagner explores the physical strength and manual labor of women in "The farm wife cites Proverbs 31:17—'She girds her loins with strength and makes her arms strong,'" maintaining that the agrarian feminine has always been rooted in physical power and hard work. This interrogation of the feminine within the Mennonite cultural and theological framework extends to "The farm wife argues with God in the garden."

The Farm Wife reclaims domestic work as an anti-nationalist and anti-materialist practice and spiritual orientation in "The farm wife hoists the family flag" and reinforces the values of simplicity by rejecting the values of modern, capitalist, and Prosperity Gospel Christianity in "The farm wife turns off the TV evangelist." The landscape of the farm is a rich universe and its separateness is not motivated by desire to cut one's self off from the world as an act of piety; rather, is a transformational act rooted in practices based on Anabaptist third-way values as represented in "The farm wife lists the top ten virtues she keeps by hanging the laundry outside."

Though the collection presses against the margins and interrogates stereotypical understandings of gender, Mennonite culture, and Midwestern literary landscapes, it utilizes many images and tropes that are mainstays of Mennonite poetry and prose, including: Blitz, canning, milking cows, shoo-fly pie, family cookbooks, the Mennonite Game, acapella singing, and "quiet in the land." While these images are central in creating narratives that speak to an ethnic, agrarian Mennonite identity and are representative of a body of literature that is uniquely Mennonite, they highlight a tension that is omnipresent in creative and academic circles of Mennonite studies because these images exist simultaneously as embodiments of lived experience as clichés that paint a broad brush over the complex reality of Mennonite identity and experience.

The strong collective impulse of Mennonite theology and culture is reflected in its literature and Wagner is no exception. The aforementioned images can be viewed as a testament to the centering of community rather than the modern impulse of chasing novelty and individuality as a form of consumption. These archetypes push back against the idea of centering the individual writer; however, Wagner's Farm Wife lives in and navigates the modern world as well as the traditional agrarian imaginary and does not leave these images unexamined. For the most part, she navigates this tension by transforming these archetypes in ways that are neither nostalgic nor idyllic, though it is a difficult line to walk. The farm is not a closed system, but is actively interrogating its identity with the outside world and the Farm Wife holds multiple conflicting realities within these intersecting spaces.

*The Farm Wife's Almanac* is a valuable contribution to the creative and academic canon of Mennonite and Midwestern literature and extends its reach beyond these fields through its arresting litany and embodied spirituality of contemplation and action in everyday life. Wagner's collection is unique in using its organizational structure and traditional forms in ways that are liturgical and meditative to

embrace and subvert the lived and imagined experiences of women on the farm, in all its forms, past, present, and future.

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*Come Out from Among Them and Be Ye Separate, Saith the Lord: Separationism and the Believers' Church Tradition.* Edited by William H. Brackney with Evan Colford. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications. 2019. \$31.

Since 1967, a group of scholars consisting primarily of theologians and historians representing "believers' churches" has held regular meetings to discuss issues and challenges identified with this ecclesial tradition. It is not clear how many people beyond this gathering really know what constitutes the "believers' church" tradition or which church groups are included under this rubric. Although believers' churches share in common the normative practice of baptism upon confession of faith, along with rejection of infant baptism, most members of these churches would be surprised to learn that they are considered, at least by a small group of academics, to be part of the same broad tradition—be they Baptist, Mennonite, Brethren, Pentecostal, or Disciples of Christ—to name a few distinct varieties of believers' churches. This is because believers' churches tend to be congregational in focus with relatively loose ties to larger church networks—whether denominational or ecumenical. Such a local focus discourages awareness of how specific issues or challenges may reflect common patterns rooted in theological and cultural systems shared with other like-minded faith communities.

The knowledge of such similar patterns and challenges among believers' church bodies has been developing in over fifty years of conference presentations typically gathered in somewhat obscure essay collections devoted to particular themes such as The Lord's Supper, Christology, or voluntarism. The latest such volume gathers together papers presented at the 17<sup>th</sup> Believers' Church conference, held on June 22-25, 2016, at Acadia University in Nova Scotia, focused on the theme of separationism in the believers' churches. As indicated by the title of the book, separationism is a response to the biblical injunction: "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (II Cor. 6:17 KJV).

In believers' church traditions, the practice of separation has typically been a central teaching, both for the individual believer who is invited to "come out" from the world in order to receive believers' baptism and also for church bodies that feel called to "come out" from cultural or denominational affiliations that they have come to regard as iniquitous. This teaching is developed in numerous confessional statements associated with believers' churches, perhaps the most notable being the Schleithem Brotherly Union, composed in 1527 by Swiss Anabaptists, and cited by Anabaptist historian James Stayer in his useful foreword to the book. As Stayer notes, the practice of separation as articulated at Schleithem was for the purpose of uniting with the true Christian church and yet, of course,



this separation for the sake of unity ended up being the ground for a proliferation of schisms within that church.

Many of the chapters in the book address this central paradox of separationism: on the one hand, to be genuinely united with the undivided and uncorrupted body of Christ means that an individual or a community must come out from worldly and corrupted church systems; on the other hand, to come out from compromised church bodies means to further divide the body of Christ.

This paradox is perhaps most dramatically illustrated in the chapter by Douglas Foster on the Stone/Campbell movement—the origin of American restorationist churches like the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ. This movement began in the early 1800s during the Second Great Awakening with the purpose of gathering Christians together from various denominations into one unified nondenominational church. Ultimately the Stone-Campbell churches were unable to agree on the specific grounds for non-denominational unity and endured numerous internal schisms that contradicted the central goal of the movement. In this instance the striving for unity amplified disunity.

Other inflections of this paradox are developed in chapters that offer either broad surveys or specific case studies. Among the broad surveys is Martin Rothkegel's parade of dissenter communities from the Hussites and the Waldensians to the Hutterites and the Mennonites. These groups articulated their relationship to the apostolic succession of the true church by separating from the Catholic Church, while offering conflicting models of succession. Equally broad and sometimes difficult to follow is William Brackney's encyclopedic account of Baptist schisms—framed as a kind of genetic map of the historic separations that constitute an essential Baptist inheritance: identity grounded on division. In Colin Godwin's survey of early Anabaptist spiritual formation, he shows how Anabaptist withdrawal from social and cultural structures like the established church was at the same time an embrace of the coming return of Christ and universal kingdom he would establish. John D. Roth's overview of Mennonite divisions—with a focus on recent conflict in Mennonite Church USA—shows how the Mennonite emphasis on a disciplined visible church without spot and wrinkle has repeatedly led to a visibly divided and wrinkled church.

More specific case studies offer fascinating twists. Karen Smith shows how British Baptist women found new freedom to give testimony and advance the church's mission when they bound themselves in covenant life within separated churches. David Emmanuel Goatley outlines the painful history of racial prejudice in American society to explain how African-American Baptists opened up space to serve the church by separating from the white denominational networks that suppressed their gifts. Russell Prime describes how union efforts between Maritime Disciples and Baptists in the early twentieth century ended with a continued separation. Allison MacGregor explores how Newfoundland Pentecostalism came out of Methodism as an expression of the holiness principles identified with early Methodism.

The problems posed by separationism for the unity of the church are addressed by most of the chapters in an ironical way. When Brackney claims that separation is a genetic trait in the Baptist tradition, he is expressing this irony: the coherence

of the separated church relies on its capacity to splinter. This is possibly humorous and at least tragic. But two authors offer proposals for how believers' churches might transcend their separationist tendencies. Rothkegel expresses admiration for the Augsburg Confession and recommends article VII in which the church is defined as that place where "the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered." Of course, the emphasis on sacraments here seems to suggest that believers' churches need to stop being believers' churches, so this approach seems a likely nonstarter.

John D. Roth provides a more fully developed proposal that should be taken seriously by all who are invested in the future of the believers' church as a coherent and faithful ecclesial reality. Roth develops the metaphor of the rhizome—plants connected beneath the soil by an invisible web of interconnecting roots—as a vision for locally visible congregations of believers attached by a lively and nourishing network of mostly hidden roots to faithful Christian communities everywhere. By contrast with unity from above—the focus of much ecumenical effort during the past century—the rhizome suggests unity from below, on the ground and beneath it, where local needs are addressed by the actually existing collaborations of diverse living churches working on neighborhood problems together. Such a nonhierarchical understanding of the ways congregations are attached to one another might serve the whole church, not just the believers' churches.

Indeed, this image of unity from below, even unity out of sight, may not be far from what was on the mind of Thieleman J. Van Braght, editor of the *Martyrs Mirror*, when in addressing the issue of succession he compared the faithful church to the moon, which is "not always seen in her full light by the human eye." In other words, believers' churches, when they are healthy, assume a unity with the broader body of Christ that is often obscured in real time and space, even if enduring in the heavens as surely as does the moon on a dark night.

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*Recapturing an Enchanted World: Ritual and Sacrament in the Free Church Tradition.* By John D. Rempel. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic. 2020. \$30.

An overarching purpose of this book is to strengthen the church's work of Christian formation, especially the spiritual formation that happens through the sacraments of baptism and communion. In a poignant passage, John Rempel laments that in Christian history theologians have rarely emphasized how the Eucharist changes people so they are "one with Christ, their neighbor, and their enemy." If the Eucharist is intended to change people, then a question arises: "When German and French, Russian and British Christians—all fellow members of the body of Christ—went to war with one another in 1914, did their destruction of the body of Christ on the battlefield invalidate their doctrine and liturgy of the

Eucharist?" (140). His implicit answer is yes. With the two world wars and other horrors on his mind, Rempel proposes to re-enchant our theological world so that sacramental rituals will once again effect what they are intended to do: change us through encounters with Christ.

The center of this book is a robust theology of the incarnation, backed in turn by a robust theology of the Trinity, which in the author's view are the best ways to recreate a vibrant sense of the sacramental. The incarnation is not merely a thin theological gloss on Jesus' birth or death, but more profoundly is about helping us perceive that the triune God's presence and activity pervade the universe. Matter is not simply governed by immutable laws of the universe, but mediates God. Therefore, in the sacrament of baptism, ordinary water (with the cooperation of a believer's faith) becomes a channel of the Spirit. In the sacrament of communion, ordinary bread and wine convey the very presence of Christ. In rituals like these, holy transcendence becomes sensually tangible through our bodies and our actions in ways our words cannot adequately express.

As the author well knows, rituals can be flat. In the Mennonite congregations that formed me, the Lord's Supper was generally seen to be not much more than a memorial, an act of remembering what the historical Jesus did 2,000 years ago. We went to the table as an expression of our discipleship, renewing our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus no matter what price we might have to pay. While good as far as it went, there was little sense that the eternal Christ (or any member of the Trinity, for that matter) was sacramentally present in the bread and juice, enabling the congregation to encounter Christ in the present moment through the power of the Spirit so that our witness in the world might have integrity.

The initial chapters discuss what it means to move beyond the disenchantment that characterizes much contemporary life in order to live with a second naiveté—an "unselfconscious participation"—in which the material can mediate the spiritual, while at the same time remaining distinct from the spiritual. These chapters also explore the nature of ritual and sacrament, as well as the sacramental aspects of language and time. For Rempel, the heart of living in an enchanted world is receiving and savoring the ineffable experience of divine love.

The middle part of the book evokes the enchanted ritual world of the New Testament and the patristic church through much of the medieval period. It then traces the complex historical reasons why many contemporary Western Protestants no longer live in that enchanted ritual world. As a historical theologian, Rempel is well suited for this survey. With his guidance we watch how the Reformation, Renaissance, and, especially, the Enlightenment made us suspicious of ritual, gave us a rationalist worldview, and chipped away at our ability to experience Christ in baptism and the Lord's Supper. We come to see why many modern churches have a slender sense of meeting the living Christ in sacraments and rituals.

The final two chapters harvest the fruit of this biblical, historical, and theological survey. Here the author's practical and pastoral sensitivities sparkle. He offers clear yet gentle counsel on how congregations might navigate through the complexities of infant and believer's baptism, as well as whether to regard the communion table as "inclusive" (a term he thinks has too many meanings) or

“covenantal,” all while remaining open to the Spirit’s freedom to rearrange our carefully crafted forms. Particularly when it comes to the Lord’s Table, he reminds us that this meal is about abundance, intended to be shared generously.

Rempel writes with an irenic, ecumenical spirit. Though a specialist in sixteenth-century Anabaptism, he happily integrates wisdom from scholars in other traditions and of other time periods. For instance, he uses insights from “liturgically stout” churches to help people in “liturgically lean” churches. Where possible, he looks for common ground among those who were historically at odds. He even acknowledges that non-Christians sometimes display the “hidden work of Christ in them” (72). When he disagrees with others his charity is evident, for he is a passionate, yet gracious, churchman.

The book succeeds admirably. I wish I would have had it three decades ago when I began working as a pastor, and again a decade ago when tensions developed in the congregation over the role of children’s participation in communion and over whether the table was “open” or “closed.” It would have guided me well through the complex biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral issues. Moreover, it would have grounded me more firmly in the ramifications of the incarnation, which in turn would have influenced my preaching and teaching, especially at baptism and communion services. And it would have more often helped me to sense the presence and power of Christ as I came to the Lord’s Table.

I have a small doubt. One purpose of the book is to interpret the sacraments so they give life to “worshippers and leaders of worship, especially those from liturgically lean traditions” (xv). I wonder to what extent this will actually happen, given the book’s extended exploration of subtle complexities. How many lay congregational leaders, let alone ordinary worshippers, will take the time and intellectual effort to read it? Given the scholarly aspects of the book, it may be best suited as a text for seminary students in courses on the sacraments or on worship, and for pastors looking to revitalize congregational rituals for themselves and others. However, the book’s three appendices—which contain artfully crafted orders of service for the Lord’s Supper, for footwashing and an agape meal, and for “Emmaus Communion,” based on Luke 24—will be extremely useful to congregational worship committees. Though the scholarly aspects may turn some people away, those very features of the book nevertheless demonstrate how scholarship serves the church. With this book in hand, pastors and others so inclined can help to make church rituals more meaningful.

Rempel’s endgame is nudging the church to participate more fully in the mission of God. His well-argued thesis shows how re-imagining our rituals can take us to the threshold of sensing Christ’s ineffable yet visceral presence, reforming us to contribute to the world’s healing instead of its pain.

*Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

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*Necessary Idealism: A History of Westgate Mennonite Collegiate.* By Janis Thiessen. Winnipeg, Man.: CMU Press. 2018. \$24.99.

At first glance *Necessary Idealism* might seem to be a typical history of a Mennonite institution, but Janis Thiessen provides more than a description of the ebbs and flows of institutional life. In addition to reviewing the origins of Westgate Mennonite Collegiate in 1958 and its subsequent growth, Thiessen explores important questions of Mennonite identity, relationships among Mennonite churches, and a Mennonite school's efforts to be faithful in a changing world.

Thiessen argues that from its beginning, Westgate asked questions about Mennonite identity as it navigated differences among supporting churches, differences between urban and rural Mennonites, and competing visions of the school's purpose. Thiessen raises these questions primarily in a Canadian Mennonite context, but the issues are relevant in the United States, where Mennonites live in increasingly urban areas and Mennonite schools struggle against declining enrollments.

Thiessen identifies unique factors in the Westgate case. The founders saw the school "as an alternative to existing Mennonite schools as much as to the public school system" (14). They wanted Westgate to be a place of "academic excellence" that fostered "intellectual curiosity and independent thinking" while transmitting "Mennonite values, traditions, and culture" (17-18). All this was to be done in the German language, seen as key to the preservation of Mennonite identity (15). At the same time, the school eschewed an evangelical approach, choosing not to hold annual prayer or revival meetings for students. Instead, the school focused on creating a supportive culture in which students were encouraged to explore faith. An early motto captures the culture created at Westgate: "'Frisch, Frei, Fromm, und Fröhlich' [fresh, free, pious and, merry]" (38).

U.S. readers may note with interest Thiessen's summary of a speech by Victor Peters, an early proponent of Westgate, and his critique of American public education. Peters argued that the purpose of the American public school system was to assimilate all cultural groups, "weakening the family . . . and church" (21). U.S. Mennonites likely agreed with concerns about assimilation along with the pressures faced during World War II, as at least nine Mennonite high schools started in the U.S. between 1945 and 1961.

A school created to preserve the German language and Mennonite culture and identity, and that eschews an evangelical approach to its students, is bound to experience conflicting pressures to change and to hold the line, all while keeping its different constituents happy. Thiessen admirably sorts through these issues in chapters 2 and 3. Given Westgate's urban location, the pressures were more pronounced as school leaders sought to balance the conflicting desires of supporting churches from outside the city. School leaders sought to create a professional educational experience at the expense of what some considered its religious purposes. In the meantime, students did what students often do: They pushed boundaries and called for changes to make their educational experience more relevant to their lives.

The use of German at Westgate is one example of the struggle over Mennonite identity. At the start, the school directed that German be used in "religion and

Mennonite history” classes and in chapel services; students were “to speak only in German on Tuesdays and Thursdays” (44-45). In this context, Thiessen points to a key dilemma church schools often face, that of maintaining a boundary or practice local churches are no longer willing to enforce. While church leaders wanted Westgate to preserve German, their churches were “giving up the struggle to preserve the language” (45).

Discussions about religious education at Westgate over the years raised issues that Mennonite educators will recognize. A central question Mennonite schools face regarding their purpose is that of passing on a faith while recognizing that in a Mennonite context a student’s faith decisions should be voluntary (56). When does an institutional interest in passing on the faith become religious indoctrination?

Concerns over religious education and the direction of the school manifested themselves through Westgate’s somewhat tumultuous relationships with supporting churches. Student dress, behavior, and discipline; course materials; evangelism; and finances became fodder for contentious discussions and fraught relationships between churches and the school. Mennonite school leaders will recognize the tension of trying to keep one church happy but realizing that to do so, makes another church unhappy. In many cases Westgate played an important but difficult role, providing a place for dialogue among the different Mennonite churches in its constituency (88). The balancing act between church and school is often perilous, as when, in response to criticism, Westgate took steps to improve its relationship to local churches, only to be faced “with a declining commitment of the church to the school” (106).

Chapter 4 focuses on the school’s finances and growth. Like many Mennonite schools, Westgate struggled to develop its facilities, pay staff living wages, and develop its programs. Westgate faced additional issues because of its urban location, the cost of property, and its relationship to its neighbors. Thiessen pays special attention to the important role of the Ladies Auxiliary, which generated funding for the school through the operation of a thrift store and other fundraisers. Not content to only raise money, the women asked to have a voting representative on the board, a request granted in 1962, at a time when some supporting churches still did not allow women to vote in congregational meetings (140). When Manitoba began providing funding to private schools in the province, new questions emerged. Would government funding lead to reduced support from churches? And what governmental strings might be attached to the funding?

Chapters 5 and 6 examine aspects of student life and the roles of teachers and staff. The performing arts are often one of the more visible parts of a school and can easily become the focus for conflict. Such was the case at Westgate. Performances of music from Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, jazz, and world music led to complaints that the school should instead emphasize the German choral tradition as a way of maintaining and promoting their Mennonite heritage (160). Likewise, gaining recognition beyond Mennonite circles can be fraught with peril as Thiessen illustrates in the story of Westgate’s 1970 choir performance on *Sunday Scope*, a Canadian television program. Aired across Canada, the performance generated positive reviews in the press but many Mennonite churches “were

appalled" by the broadcast, which directly affected fundraising efforts for the school (156).

Thiessen was given full access to the school's records for this well-documented history. These records were supplemented with oral histories based on a process developed by Alexander von Plato.

Thiessen provides an engaging, thought-provoking look at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate and does so in a way that makes her work helpful to others involved in Mennonite education or faith-based schools. Thiessen's focus on questions about Mennonite identity, assimilation, and religious identity; what it means to be a Mennonite school when the majority of its students are no longer Mennonite; and the relationship between Mennonite schools and its local churches, are all important. Readers will learn how Westgate answered these questions, a response that confirms one school's efforts to remain faithful and relevant.

*Hillcrest Academy*

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*Matthew within Sectarian Judaism.* By John Kampen. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2019. \$65.

In *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, John Kampen, a professor at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, sets out to demonstrate how the Gospel of Matthew should be understood as the product of "a distinctive Jewish sectarianism, rooted in the Jesus movement, probably in Galilee toward the conclusion of the first century" (6). Relying on social scientific approaches, Kampen makes extensive use of the sectarian writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially the Rules, to build his case, which he rightfully identifies as our best and most extensive sources to understand first-century Jewish sects. This is complemented by references to other sources, including archaeology, Josephus, rabbinic literature, and more. The volume is thoroughly researched and very well written.

After an introduction in which he highlights some of the issues that will need to be addressed, Kampen provides background, first to the first-century Jewish world in the "Land of Israel" (Mt. 2:20) as part of "Syria" more generally (Mt. 4:24); and second, to the history of Matthean studies. In the first chapter he sets forth some of his presuppositions—namely, that Matthew is a Greek composition; that it uses at least Mark and Q as sources; that it was composed in urban Galilee; that it should be dated to the end of the first century CE after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; and, most significantly for his thesis, that it reflects Jewish concerns about how to live as faithful Jews without a standing temple, over and against other Jewish groups who resolved that issue differently. This last point can be seen best in material unique to Matthew, either not found in, or different than, Mark and Q. This chapter includes discussions about how best to understand such terms as Jews, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and rabbis.

Building on a survey of early (especially patristic) understandings of the Gospel of Matthew's origins in the first chapter, Kampen then considers the status of Matthean scholarship in chapter 2, pointing out a renewed interest in the Gospel's Jewishness. He concludes that Matthew is not a Jewish-Christian text, but a sectarian document of a Jewish group that has broken off from a parent movement and which stands in opposition to other Jewish groups, all of which assume the Law's validity even as they disagree about how to live it out. This conclusion is informed by a detailed discussion of how to define sectarianism, the impact of Qumran studies on understanding Jewish sectarian development in the first century BCE and first century CE, and efforts to understand Jewish sectarian movements thereafter. He adopts Albert Baumgarten's definition of a sect as "a voluntary association of protest, which utilizes boundary marking mechanisms—the social means of differentiating between insiders and outsiders—to distinguish between its own members and those normally regarded as belonging to the same religious entity" (48), as building upon Stark and Bainbridge's sociological traits of "difference, antagonism, and separation" (49) that characterize new religious movements.

Chapter 3 focuses on the Sermon on the Mount. The use of beatitudes, evidence of a continuation of the biblical wisdom tradition, and terms used to refer to Jesus' followers, have striking parallels in the Dead Sea Scrolls, suggesting that this was part of a pattern used to establish boundaries governing insider and outsider status. The antitheses in the Sermon, "You have heard . . . but I say to you. . .," reveal Matthew's perspective on Law to be similar to that found in other groups, in which Law is not so much the specific words of the Pentateuch but a revelation more broadly understood, with Jesus' teaching being a new, or second, Sinai-like revelation. This segues into chapter 4, which traces the development of wisdom tradition in the post-biblical period, primarily in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as an explanation for why it became prominent among Jewish sectarian groups. In that vein, Kampen argues, Matthew is positioning Jesus as the sole authoritative dispenser of God's will, or wisdom, so that by obeying his teachings, only Jesus' followers are the wise of the world.

Chapter 5 focuses primarily on Matthew 18 and the process for reproof and restoration. Kampen details the many parallels—and differences—with how discipline was practiced among the Qumran sectarians, noting closer affinities between Matthew and the Rule of the Community than with the Dasmascus Document. Comparing these texts leads him to conclude, *inter alia*, that the Greek term *ekklesia* (church) should not be understood as being in opposition to the synagogue of the Jewish community, but as a kind of sub-group of the Jewish community.

Chapter 6 looks at the opposition to the Jesus movement, first as reflected in Jesus' sharp criticism of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23, and of the Sadducees when considering the broader context of that chapter, and in the description of Jesus' trial and crucifixion in Matthew 26–27. These chapters reveal an apocalyptic perspective in which only the followers of Jesus have the insight necessary to understand God's intervention in the life of Israel and the wisdom to remain faithful to God, even as all other Jews incur divine wrath for their failure



to respond in like manner. “For Matthew,” Kampen writes, “there is no other group that understands what God wants from and for the Jewish people at the end of the first century” (183).

Finally, chapter 7 considers how the role of Gentiles is integral to Matthew’s eschatological perspective. Beginning with Isaiah’s vision of Israel’s restoration in chapters 55–66, which explicitly mentions “all the nations” (LXX 61:11, 66:18), later Jewish intertestamental texts pick up a kind of universalism in which Gentiles play a role in God’s final redemption of the Jews, as they too come to submit to God’s kingdom rule. For Matthew, this means calling all peoples, not just fellow Jews, to submit to the teachings of Jesus.

*Matthew within Sectarian Judaism* is an invaluable resource for advancing our understanding, placing Matthew’s Gospel within the Jewish sectarian landscape of the first-century Land of Israel. The few points singled out above only suggest the study’s richness. Part of what makes the volume such a gem are the many concise summaries that reveal the current status of the field.

Instead of pointing out incidental points of disagreement, I wish to highlight two methodological caveats. Kampen is careful to state his presuppositions about Matthew in chapters 1–2, but what if one should disagree with one or several of those? For example, Kampen treats Matthew as a Greek composition. There is, however, strong evidence for an underlying Semitic source, in line with the testimony of the church fathers, suggesting an earlier layer to the Gospel than just a late first-century CE composition; and it is not impossible that some of this early layer has its source in the historical Jesus. Separating such layers is admittedly fraught with difficulties, but at a minimum it suggests some of the Gospel’s content is not sectarian in nature, even if recast in a later Greek sectarian text. Similarly, while some scholars reject a continuity between Pharisaic Judaism in the first century CE and that which is reflected in later rabbinic writings, a position generally espoused in this study, neither view enjoys a consensus. Such issues nuance the way one understands some of Jesus’ claims” that he has come to fulfill the Law (5:17; cf. Hebrew לקיים); the authority he gives to bind and loose (16:19; cf. Hebrew אסור ומותר); and that his disciples should be careful to obey the Pharisees (23:3).

Even so, one of the greatest contributions of this volume is that it highlights the fact that “there is no clear evidence in [the Gospel of Matthew] of a *move away* from the Jewish community; it is rather *within* the Jewish community that such a sectarian reading finds explanation” (205, italics in the original). This proposition holds true even if one does not fully agree with the proposed “sectarian reading.”

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## BOOK NOTES

*Going Global with God as Mennonites for the 21st Century.* By Walter Sawatsky. North Newton, Kan.: Bethel College. 2017. \$8.

This book, originating as the Menno Simons Lectures at Bethel College, offers the framework for a revisionist understanding of Anabaptist-Mennonite history. Sawatsky begins by challenging the dominant historiographical narrative focused on the Swiss-South German tradition that emerged out of the first baptisms in 1525 in Zurich, arguing that the Russian Mennonite story—dynamic, evolving, and contextual—provides a more appropriate paradigm for understanding the Mennonite “global church.” Sawatsky also reframes the traditional narrative of Anabaptist-Mennonite history by situating the free church tradition within the broad sweep of the entire Christian church and argues for a truly ecumenical approach to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations of the Reformation. He concludes with a critique of contemporary Mennonite peace theology.

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*Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Schriften und Briefe Andreas Bodensteins von Karlstadt,* Vol. 1. Ed. Thomas Kaufmann. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus. 2017. €224.

This edition of the complete writings and letters of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, Luther’s more radical colleague in Wittenberg, marks the first publication of a project started in the 1980s. Volume 1—divided into two smaller volumes—consists of ninety-nine texts from Karlstadt’s early career in Wittenberg (1507-1518). Each of the texts is preceded with a concise introduction and supported with detailed notes. Although Karlstadt was among Luther’s most important and trusted conversation partners, at least until 1518, the volume features even more letters from Karlstadt to Georg Spalatin, the German humanist, theologian, and secretary of the Saxon Elector Frederick the Wise. The book concludes with an exhaustive bibliography, as well as name, place, and scripture indices.

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*Scandalous Witness: A Little Political Manifesto for Christians.* By Lee C. Camp. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company. 2020. \$20.

This book continues the basic line of argument of Camp’s *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World* (Brazos, 2008<sup>2</sup>). In *Scandalous Witness*, Camp sets forth his vision of what it means to truly follow Christ, challenging Christians to put obedience to Jesus as Lord ahead of allegiances to all earthly authorities, be they nationalistic, political, economic, or cultural. Christian identity is in moral and political crisis, Camp argues, undermined by the many ways in which it has been coopted and misrepresented. Authentic gospel truth is a scandal to the American myth, and Christians are called to be “scandalous witnesses.”

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*Multiple Reformations? The Many Faces and Legacies of the Reformation.* Ed. Jan Stievermann and Randall C. Zachman. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. 2018. €109.

This volume, an edited collection of twenty-two essays, explores the inherent pluralism of the Reformation and its various legacies from an ecumenical and interdisciplinary point of view. The essays interpret the Reformation as a historical and theological event as well as a historiographical category and a cultural myth. Of special interest are explorations of the Reformation's impact on nation-building, the Enlightenment, legal traditions, Pietism, and biblical interpretation. The volume also addresses the long term global consequences of the Reformation.

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*Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization.* Ed. Steve Heinrichs. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books. 2018. \$25.

In this collection of texts more than sixty indigenous and settler authors wrestle with scripture, with the goal of reclaiming the Bible—which has been employed for generations by settler colonial societies as a weapon to dispossess indigenous peoples of their lands, cultures, and spiritualities—as an instrument of justice. Created by Mennonite Church Canada's Indigenous-Settler Relations program, the devotionals, homilies, poems, and reflections in *Unsettling the Word* are intended to nurture unsettling conversations with the Bible, particularly in settler colonial contexts.

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