

BOOK REVIEWS

Eradicating the Devil's Minions: Anabaptists and Witches in Reformation Europe, 1535-1600. By Gary K. Waite. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2007. Pp. 319. \$65.

Following up an argument sketched a few years ago in a work *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003), Gary Waite has now connected the dots in order to provide our first detailed and comprehensive account of the intricate social and intellectual patterns underlying the parallel sixteenth-century prosecutions for Anabaptism and for heretical witchcraft. Originally trained in Anabaptist history and a well-known specialist on David Joris, Waite has also taught the history of European witchcraft for many years, thereby acquiring a rare mixture of expertise in two areas which have traditionally remained separated from each other. For almost a dozen years, Waite has been exploring their sixteenth-century intersections, giving him opportunities to interpret each field for specialists in the other. One hand composes entries on "Anabaptism" and "Mennonites" for an authoritative recent *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*; the other prepares Dutch versions of two of these chapters for the *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen*. Part of another chapter is drawn from his contribution to a *Festschrift* for James Stayer.

In this work, Waite's organization is a model of clarity. His first chapter undertakes the simple task of explaining how hostile sixteenth-century authors manipulated the figure of a clever and powerful Devil in order to depict both Anabaptism and witchcraft as manifestations of diabolical intervention. A second chapter highlights the treatment of Eucharistic miracles in the polemical literature against early Anabaptism. As Waite's text and footnotes richly illustrate, similar "miracles" had recently been deployed with devastating consequences against Jews; tales of bleeding Hosts and ritual sacrifices of Christian children had terrorized northern Europe's Ashkenazim shortly before the outbreak of the Lutheran Reformation and the rapid rise of Anabaptism.

After setting the table with such propaganda from frightened Christians, Waite devotes the remainder of his book to exploring its legal dimensions through four regional case studies. Starting in the northern Netherlands, Waite proceeds to present-day Belgium, then to the present-day German *Land* of Baden-Württemberg and finally to the Austrian province of Tyrol. In meticulous detail, Waite dissects four different sixteenth-century versions of Europe's "persecuting society" as it conducted unprecedented numbers of public executions of both Anabaptists and witches. Although rarely considered in relation to each other, these cycles of judicial persecution sometimes occurred in identical places, and sometimes at very close chronological intervals. However, they were almost never simultaneous: in other words, it is not uncommon (especially in the Low Countries) to encounter executions of Anabaptists and executions of witches in consecutive years, but they almost never occurred in the

same year. Normally, but not always, executions of Anabaptists preceded executions of witches. In Waite's first example, the northern Netherlands, the anti-Habsburg uprising led to relatively early abandonment of both types of heretical conspiracies. In the Austrian Tyrol, an early wave of intensive persecution of Anabaptists (nearly as ferocious as that in the Low Countries) preceded a more sporadic persecution of witches by several decades. In the territorial and confessional patchwork of southwestern Germany, Waite encounters yet another variant, finding a brief and relatively mild alarm over nocturnal gatherings of Anabaptists in close geographical and chronological proximity to the first massive persecution of witches. Over the next two generations, this region would experience many more witch-hunts without any accompanying fears of clandestine Anabaptist gatherings. Four regions, four models.

Occasionally, the very strengths of Waite's approach indirectly reveal one of its limitations. His brief sketch of the small, French-speaking County of Namur in the southern Netherlands (75-77) informs us that 365 people were arrested there on charges of *maleficium* while no one was ever charged with Anabaptism. As Waite's map (64) shows, this province bordered the Anabaptist-infested province of Brabant: only thirty miles separated Namur's capital from the predominantly French-speaking capital of the Low Countries, which saw Anabaptists executed as early as the 1540s (118). Hainaut, Namur's larger French-speaking province to the west, bordered the even more Anabaptist-infested province of Flanders. But because Waite ignores Hainaut, he cannot probe the intriguing issue of why no significant Anabaptist movement ever penetrated the linguistic frontier of present-day Belgium—whereas fears of malevolent witchcraft ignored linguistic frontiers in the Low Countries, just as they did everywhere else in Christendom.

Northwestern University

WILLIAM MONTER

Hard Passage: A Mennonite Family's Long Journey from Russia to Canada.
By Arthur Kroeger. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press. 2007. Pp.
269. \$34.95, Can.

Hard Passage is a combination of memoir, autobiography and family history. The book is divided into two parts, dictated by the context of the author's family history. The first section is set in the Mennonite experience in Russia before World War I, the turmoil of the Russian Revolution, and the ensuing civil war. It then culminates in the Kroeger family's emigration to Canada during the 1920s. The second section chronicles the family's resettlement on the prairies of central Alberta, a story set in the Depression, World War II and postwar years.

The Kroegers were related, but not directly connected, to the family of Russian Mennonite clockmakers, and came from Rosenthal in the Chortitza colony. After marrying Helena Rempel the author's father, Heinrich Kroeger, joined his wife's brothers in a wagon-manufacturing enterprise during the "Golden Years" of Mennonite life in Russia prior to World War I. Heinrich

served in the medical corps (*Sanitätsdienst*) during the war, when the health problems that would dog him for the rest of his life began. The Kroegers joined most other Mennonites in the experience of deprivation, fear and terror during the period of anarchy and civil war that raged in the Mennonite areas in the aftermath of World War I. Reluctantly, Heinrich consented to his wife's strong sense that they should emigrate, and in 1926 they arrived in Canada, where they joined members of her family who had arrived in Monitor in east central Alberta a year earlier.

Perhaps contrary to expectations, some of the most poignant parts of the book tell the story of the family's early years in Canada. The burden of travel debt, the difficulties of getting a farm, a large family to raise, the father's continuing health problems and lack of initiative, and the embarrassment of accepting relief make the book's title particularly fitting. The last chapters of the book become much more a memoir of the author's own experiences growing up in small-town Alberta, with biographical forays into the lives of his siblings. Two brothers became entrepreneurs and one of them entered provincial politics. Another brother became a corporate executive; Kroeger's sister remained in Alberta and cared for their aging parents. The author continued his studies at the University of Alberta and then spent time at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, before beginning a long career in the federal civil service.

Kroeger's book conveys the sense of discovery of those whose lives have taken them far away from their roots and who have returned much later to make sense of their own history and memories. In Kroeger's case the impetus for reconnecting with a neglected past is an old photo album, a box with mysterious documents, and the unexplained depth of shock exhibited by his mother in response to a local murder—a shock that would lead to her death. As he indicates in a prologue, the book is “an account of what he learned” (5) when he began to research what was behind these mysterious documents and events.

For the Russian chapters of the book the author skillfully uses secondary sources to sketch out the context of his parents' lives, of which there are only hints in the fragments of documents left behind by his father. He carefully mines published sources of photos and recollections by other Rosenthal residents to fill in details that his own family documents fail to provide. The result is a highly readable narrative of a difficult chapter in the Mennonite story in Russia. While the author uses a similar technique for the Canadian portion of the story, the author's personal experience and the memories of contemporaries make the Canadian context richer and more nuanced.

Kroeger ends up being intensely proud of his Mennonite past, even though by his own admission he long ago lost connection with the Mennonite church and had known little of his parents' story. He is highly complementary of the Mennonite development in Russia, suggesting that the Bolsheviks would have done well to emulate their “model of community agricultural management” (20). He emphasizes the relatively egalitarian division of labor on a Mennonite farm, which stood in sharp contrast to that of Russian nobility, and claims peasants willingly worked for Mennonites because they got paid “relatively well” (25-26). During emigration, Kroeger assures us, emigrant trains arrived at Libau in clean condition and the emigrants were well behaved and orderly (89, 95). Similarly,

he takes pains to list the names of those children of the 1920s immigrants who became noted politicians, educators, artists and writers (95).

The one aspect of *Hard Passage* that leaves this reader somewhat puzzled is the role of Mennonite faith and church in the story. While acknowledging the basic religious nature of Mennonite history and community life, Kroeger broaches the subject of religion only tangentially when it comes to his family's experience. There are the occasional hints, but these leave more questions than answers. He suggests his father Heinrich's "religious observances may have been largely *pro forma*," while his mother's were more genuine (33). In Canada, there is reference to his mother attending a Full Gospel Church in Consort because there was no Mennonite church in the area and the United Church was "too bland for her" (235). Other references suggest that some family members had bitter memories of how other Mennonites had treated them during the Depression. Kroeger notes that his mother wanted her children to marry "one of their own," but none did. It seems the family's path gradually drifted away from the Mennonite faith, but the subject is never specifically addressed.

Kroeger's book is a well-written and readable narrative. While the reader may occasionally wish for additional depth, the portrayal of his family's experiences in Russia and Canada offers a richly textured narrative in which context and specific experiences are nicely blended. The book is a unique combination of memoir, history and biography, and Kroeger subtly weaves together each genre in constructing his story.

University of Winnipeg

HANS WERNER

Building Communities: The Changing Face of Manitoba Mennonites. By John J. Friesen. Winnipeg, Man.: CMU Press. 2007. Pp. 230. \$32.50, Can.

Regionally-focused historical monographs fill an important place in Mennonite historical writing. "Macro" projects, such as *Global Mennonite History* (2003ff), the *Mennonite Experience in America* (1985-1996) and *Mennonites in Canada* (1974-1996), cannot provide detail about the mosaic of Mennonite cultures or adequately describe the increasing number of small denominational groups within the larger Mennonite community. Think of a Google map that zooms from a national view to a state or provincial view: the regional history, working within a smaller geographic area, can look beneath the most prominent features (major leaders, denominational movements and large-scale social and religious trends) and can provide added levels of detail and more nuanced description than is possible in the macro publications.

John J. Friesen, professor emeritus of history and theology at Canadian Mennonite University, has provided a fine addition to the regional Mennonite history library. He does this through a topic-within-a-time-period approach to the Manitoba Mennonite story. A substantial literature on Manitoba Mennonites has emerged in the past fifty years through local and congregational histories, published diaries and biographies, and the preservation of material culture in local museums, archives and heritage villages. Friesen makes full use of these resources and includes excellent maps, good statistical tables and a wide variety

of photographs. The basic outline of community and cultural life that repeats in successive chapters serves the narrative well, though some readers may feel its rigorous application at times a bit confining. Noteworthy are the historical resources collected and made available by the late Delbert Plett, an amateur historian based in Steinbach, Manitoba who championed the history of culturally-conservative segments of the Manitoba Mennonite community. The evidence of Plett's passion appears frequently in Friesen's endnotes.

The major Russian Mennonite migrations to Manitoba provide the parameters for the three overarching chapters. After a brief introduction to earlier Anabaptist/Mennonite history, the first chapter ("1870-1920: Pursuing a Vision") reviews the Mennonite emigration from South Russia (Ukraine) to Manitoba, primarily in the 1870s, and the early settlements in Manitoba. Friesen includes engaging description of social and church life (24ff., 30-31) and provides some of the clearest and most concise explanations that I've read of the founding church groups (Kleine Gemeinde, Bergthaler, Reinlaender) and the realignments that took place within the Bergthaler Mennonite community in the East and West Reserves (29-30). There are also sections on education, agriculture and business, health care, and political involvement—all themes repeated in the following chapters.

The second chapter ("1920-1950: Engaging Society") begins with the emigration of portions of the Reinlaender, Sommerfelder and Chortitzer church groups to Mexico and Paraguay because of their desire to control their children's education. In the wake of World War I, the Manitoba government wanted publicly supported schools to serve the task of nation-making, not the role of sustaining minority cultures. Over 5,000 Mennonites left Manitoba in the 1920s. The remainder of the chapter recounts the emigration to Canada of 20,000 Mennonites from Russia in the 1920s following the Russian Revolution and the devastating famines that ensued. Some new pieces of the Mennonite story emerge in the chapter, including the urbanization of southern Manitoba Mennonites in Winnipeg, the emergence of tension between the *Kanadier* and newly arrived *Russlaender*, new educational institutions, the nurture of a strong Mennonite choral tradition and the formation of cooperative economic models that helped to preserve the agricultural sector in the Depression years. Friesen treats all these issues concisely and fairly, and only rarely skims over difficult issues. One topic that did warrant more detailed discussion (and documentation) was the sympathy of some Manitoba Mennonites for Adolf Hitler and the Nazi movement. Friesen mentions this only briefly (105) and does not reference Frank H. Epp's Ph.D. dissertation, which discusses National Socialism in the German-language Mennonite paper *Der Bote*, widely read in Manitoba during the 1930s.

The third chapter ("1950-2000: Expanding Horizons") is the first attempt to survey comprehensively the post-World War II Manitoba Mennonite world. Friesen does this survey exceedingly well, supplementing written and Internet sources with personal interviews of leaders from smaller Mennonite denominational groups. Again with the help of some excellent maps and statistical tables, he traces the continuing Mennonite urbanization in Winnipeg, as well as the revitalization of traditional rural centers. Even the smallest Mennonite groups have their stories summarized, and Friesen also analyzes the

impact within the Manitoba Mennonite community of revivalist George R. Brunk II's evangelistic campaigns in the 1950s and of historian Harold Bender's "The Anabaptist Vision." He fully describes dramatic increases in Mennonite involvement in the arts (especially literature) and provincial and national politics.

Building Communities closes with an appendix that includes the text of the Mennonite *Privilegium* provided in 1873 by the Canadian Secretary of Agriculture, John Lowe, to the prospective immigrants. The appendix also includes larger tables listing all Mennonite groups and congregations in Manitoba in 2000, all Mennonite private schools, periodicals published by Manitoba Mennonites, all Mennonite candidates for provincial and national political office and a helpful diagram of divisions within the Manitoba Mennonite community.

The primary weaknesses of the book are not in the text or the supporting maps and charts. Rather, I found the book's 8 ½ x 11-inch format awkward. The pages are laid out in three columns—two for text and one for sidebars. The font size for the core text is small, with a significantly larger font for sidebar quotations. Some photographs were too small, and the quality of reproduction in too many was muddy. The illustration credit list was confusing when linked with the photographs.

Nonetheless, these are minor quibbles compared to the strength of the narrative that John J. Friesen has given us. *Building Communities* is a standard work that will not be superseded for a long time.

Conrad Grebel University College

SAM STEINER

Seeking Peace in Africa: Stories from African Peacemakers. Edited by Donald E. Miller, Scott Holland, Lon Fendall and Dean Johnson. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House. 2007. Pp. 246. \$22.95, U.S., \$29.95, Can.

As part of the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010), the World Council of Churches challenged the historic peace churches to carry on conversations with Christians in Africa, Asia and Latin America. *Seeking Peace in Africa* summarizes the first of those discussions held near Nairobi in 2004. Gathering Brethren, Friends and Mennonite leaders from around Africa, as well as from Germany, India, Indonesia and North America, the Nairobi conference was designed to lay the groundwork for an African peace theology, describe examples of violence in Africa, recount stories of peacemaking in Africa, consider strategies for future Christian peacebuilding activities in Africa and provide lessons from Africa for the rest of the world. In addition to the book, a well-produced DVD captures some of the highlights of the Nairobi event.

Seeking Peace in Africa contains several contributions that support the laudable goal of listening to the voice of the global south. Among the best are introductory essays by Kenyan World Council officials Samuel Kobia (Methodist) and Agnus Abuom (Anglican), who call on Christians to make the church a safe place to discuss oppression, government misconduct, gender violence and religious

differences. Such places are rare in countries ruled by one-party autocrats and in societies deeply divided by economic disparity, ethnic tension and Muslim-Christian hostility. A number of other contributions, notably that of Nigerian Toma Ragnjiya (Brethren), continue the theme of tolerance by admonishing Christians to take the initiative in reaching out to Muslims as brothers and sisters rather than adversaries.

In the main body of the book, which offers accounts of violence and stories of African peacemaking efforts, readers will be struck by the fact that African Christians are not dealing with violence as a distant reality or with peacemaking as a polished theoretical formula developed in academic comfort. They live in countries where individuals may be killed when they seek reconciliation between Christians and Muslims, where both the government and the media promote conflict rather than supply accurate security information, and where they worship in churches that may turn to the police or the legal system to resolve internal disputes. Tales of genocide, looting, government persecution, ethnic wars and religious fighting make clear that many Africans experience violence as an ever-lurking reality. Cathy Mputu (Mennonite from Congo) describes the destructive effects of widespread looting, in which some Christians not only participated in the plunder but also praised God for their good fortune. A number of Nigerian pastors write about how church members wanted to use money from the offering plate to buy guns for use against Muslims. Rwandans and Zimbabweans explain their tragic losses from ethnic or governmental violence. Africans in historic peace churches do not have the luxury of pontificating about peace in the abstract; they must struggle to practice peace in the real world where justice, forgiveness and reconciliation come at a very high personal cost and must be exercised by people with good reason to feel guilt, fear and hatred.

Seeking Peace in Africa is a testimony to the many ways in which Africans work to take preventative action against violence and to respond to the needs of the innocent and the guilty after violence takes place. Women's prayer groups, trauma counseling, work with prisoners accused of genocide, material relief to widows and orphans of war, assistance to victims of AIDS, peace education in elementary schools and mediation between groups divided by ethnicity or religion are all mentioned repeatedly by the twenty-eight Africans who write in this volume. *Seeking Peace in Africa* is also a testimony to the fruitful interaction between African and western peacemakers. The impact of peace studies programs at historic peace church universities and seminaries is apparent in numerous references throughout the book. The theological foundations and well-tested peacebuilding strategies developed at those institutions have been transferred to an African context. However, the fact that initial historic peace church missionaries did little to integrate the message of peace into their evangelism—a shortcoming made clear in essays by Malesi Elizabeth Kinaro (Friends), Komeas Kalunga (Mennonite) and Filibus Gwama (Brethren)—means that African members of these churches were initially ill-equipped to apply a peace theology and peace practices at the grassroots level.

In spite of its unmistakable benefits, *Seeking Peace in Africa* falls short of its promise to give voice to African efforts at peacemaking. In part, this may be

because none of the editors are African specialists. Too many of the book's early essays are uneven descriptions of macro-level conflicts unconnected to the peacemaking efforts of the conference participants. Too many times an essay about problems in a country or community and the corresponding essay about confronting the problems are separated by dozens of pages of unrelated discourse. However, the greatest disappointment is that even a careful reader learns very little about *African* perspectives on peacemaking. Although the book reminds us that Africans face much oppression and violence and that Africans are involved in many peacemaking efforts, with rare exceptions—for example, the essay about listening and forgiveness by Burundian David Niyonzima, or the essay by the Congolese Ramazani Kakozi about the Women and Families for Peace project in South Kivu—the book almost never explains those efforts in satisfying detail. Consequently, the reader often has no way of knowing how Africans approach those problems in a way that is different from a strategy designed in a Western context.

Uniquely African perspectives and approaches should have been the major concern of the conference and the book. Although the following were never explicitly acknowledged by the book's editors, the following perspectives and approaches—at least alluded to by conference participants—merit much greater attention.

The focus on the centrality of community and the sovereignty of God. While North American historic peace church theology tends to begin with Christology, African thinkers place more emphasis on community and God's role as life-giving creator, sovereign and father. God's creatures/subjects/children then have a duty to serve as obedient ambassadors in ways that enhance life and promote harmony.

The role of women. In her essay on dealing with ethnic and political tension in Kenya, Nora Musundi points to the importance of women as peacemakers. Concerned with family and community more than with power or status, women joined together to share their experiences and call on male politicians and community leaders to make peace instead of incite conflict.

The emphasis on prayer and fasting. Prayer has always been a central element of African faith, whether in traditional religions, Islam or Christianity. All-day (and all-night) prayer gatherings are not uncommon. Frequently, as Musundi notes, prayer is combined with fasting. Africans have much to teach Westerners about the importance of deep spiritual cleansing and the fact that true peacemaking is based on a dependence on God and turning away from self-centered activities, not just on applying correct textbook strategies.

The role of authority. Westerners promote a democratic approach, whereby people in conflict confront each other, listen to stories of pain and grief, express forgiveness and develop egalitarian plans for reconciliation and justice. In contrast, as noted in the essays by Adamu Buba, Toma Ragnjiya and Pascal Tshisola Kulungu, Africans often are more comfortable relying on the authoritative intervention of respected and powerful leaders, who investigate a situation, determine a strategy for action and impose a solution on the community.

The place of patronage. Pascal Tshisola Kulungu describes how the Congolese church resolved a conflict among church officials by multiplying and then distributing offices and leadership positions. That solution parallels the strategy used by longtime Zairian president Mobutu, who kept “peace” by rewarding compliant clients with public offices.

Relying on the vengeance of God. In writing about a religious conflict in Nigeria, Filibus Gwama described how Christians refused to retaliate after Muslims had destroyed their church. In his view, that response was vindicated when one Muslim became deranged and another died unexpectedly. Frightened and amazed Muslims then converted to Christianity. Gwama’s understanding of peacemaking would not be shared by most Western historic peace churches.

The use of signs and wonders. Attentive to the way God rewards or punishes people for their deeds—a common theological theme in African traditional religion—African Christians look to supernatural signs as confirmation that their peacemaking has been rewarded. In describing the situation in the Congo, Ramazani Kakozi notes that a baby was born while bullets were flying. Kakozi regards this gift of life as tangible evidence that peace was at hand.

Seeking Peace in Africa is a first step in the direction of learning from the voices of African, Asian and Latin American victims and peacemakers. It is also a reminder that the next task will be to hear those voices for who they are, not as Western echoes.

Whitworth University

JOHN C. YODER

Politics Under God. By John H. Redekop. Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press. 2007. Pp. 224. \$11.99, U.S.; \$14.99, Can.

Professor Redekop has written a wide-ranging, perplexing book of proposals for how Christians should be involved in politics. Alongside a career as a professor of political science, he has also been a political pundit and practitioner for much of his life, thereby bringing impressive credentials to the work.

In twelve chapters and an introduction, the book proposes to show how a Christian may “live a life of obedient discipleship” in relation to the state. Chapters include treatments of the major modern ideologies that have influenced Christian thinking about politics, a doctrinal review of dogmas and theologies concerning church-state relations, multiple reviews of biblical accounts of political authority and religious claims, and several chapters on Christian political involvement in the institutions of the modern nation-state. Lists of principles and of practical moral advice abound. Professor Redekop proposes to introduce readers to “the key issues in church-state relations,” to provide “some practical suggestions and guidelines for Christian citizens who take both their faith and their citizenship seriously,” and to introduce “Anabaptist realism” as a way of thinking about and practicing modern church-state relations (23). For Christians *not* to consider carefully their relationship to the state and its implications for Christian action is to fall short in their discipleship (28, 34ff., 67).

Pronouncements such as this ought to make the reader pause, since the context in which the earliest Christian considerations of political authority and

its relationship to the church were formulated was not a "state" in the modern sense. Few Christians were "citizens"; rather they were subjects, as they also were throughout much of the history of Christianity anywhere. A book that refers to "biblical examples" as much as this one does should be aware of such problems of temporal and cultural translation. Even Canadians, among whom Redekop lives and works, are not "citizens" in the French or American meanings. The author recognizes the translation problem but without concern, and then misdescribes the Roman Empire, for example, as "totalitarian" and mistakenly implies that its rule was merely "secular" (33). He understands politics to generally have "temporal and not religious purposes" (21). That would surprise almost anyone living under any political regime anywhere at any time before the late modern period. Similarly, to conclude that "the Anabaptists' highly negative view of the state probably owes at least as much to the forms of the state that existed in the sixteenth century as to biblical teaching," and to imply that "democratic transformations" of the state should make them more sanguine about its possibilities (66-67), is to ignore altogether too much of twentieth- and early twenty-first century political history. But do such points of definition, nuance and history really matter? Perhaps not: a Christian policy advocate recently remarked publicly that the problem with theorists, theologians and questions like these is that "they circle the airport, but never reach the ground."

How to arrive without crashing? The first chapter, "Biblical Guidelines Concerning Church-State Relations," begins with working definitions of politics. But, as too often occurs in this book, these are particularist in their statism, institutionalism and temporality in ways that the theoretical statements of noted political philosophers concerning the basic nature of politics never are. Redekop understands politics almost entirely within the boundaries of the twentieth-century universal and homogenous liberal nation-state. This is understandable since the author primarily studies and debates policy within such an entity. Except then we turn to biblical examples of political involvement, where the relationships among, for example, "government," "state," "politics," "political authority," "[divine] mandate" and numerous other theological and political terms ("secular," "civil order," "kingdom of heaven") are never clarified.

Professor Redekop did not intend to write a theological account of Christians, culture and politics in the manner of, say, Duane Friesen's superb *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers* (2000); the lacunae I have cited alone do not make or break a primer whose first purpose is to give practical advice. The ethereal realms of philosophical theology and its sister disciplines seem unhelpful when the most important concern is how to get along with neighbors and get through the day. And yet, the debate concerning the relationship between theory and praxis, as the tradition of philosophical thought from Plato and Aristotle through Kant shows, cannot be passed over if we wish to have truly informed moral practices in whatever realm. After all, Professor Redekop calls for a *thoughtful* engagement with the political realm as part of obedient Christian discipleship.

The issue of landing on the ground with this primer reduces to this: what will be the source of our ethics? What will be the basis for our action? What will be the basis for Christian discipleship over against (or, in many theologies, within) the political realm? If it is true, for example, that our moral activities are a matter

of habit, whence those habits? And if, as Aristotle claimed, practical judgment is the combination of principle with the need of the moment, whence the principles? What distinctions must we understand, what terms clearly define? Missing in Professor Redekop's discussion is any answer to precisely such questions. That deficiency might not be a mortal error if the presuppositions unveiled in the course of his arguments about the nature of politics and its relationship to religion and Christian faith were not of a purely conventional generic evangelical and classical liberal ("contemporary conservative") type. For Anabaptist theologians like John Howard Yoder (whose work Redekop may or may not reject [15, 18-19]), the basic sources of habits, principles and Christian action reside in the practices of the church in its faithfulness to Jesus as Lord. What does "the law of love" or "obedience to God" look like? According to Yoder, for earlier Anabaptists, and in traditional Catholic theology, they are revealed in the practices of the church in its imitation of Christ. Ecclesiology of this kind is the missing link in Redekop's account of both Anabaptist realism and Christian participation in the political.

To be sure, Redekop alludes to the church and its moral priority in many places. Yet Anabaptist realism, in his account, is weak on church and very strong on state and individualism. One finds few traces of traditional Anabaptist sensibilities in this mainstream evangelical, democratic-individualist account, which is never clear about the actual nature of the church or its relationship in history to the plethora of human institutions, whether "divinely ordained" or not. This account is therefore indistinguishable *politically*, to my mind, from generic North American evangelicalism, which, in its political manifestations, is increasingly disconnected from Christian historical understanding and straying ever closer to religious tribalism. Redekop cautions against such drift, but he does not provide help in braking it. *Politics Under God* resembles Luther's *Large Catechism*: theologically thin and ecclesiological threadbare, Luther's famous work contains reams of frequently useful, practical, utilitarian advice for the individual Christian, as one would expect from an administrative genius and conceptual simplifier of Luther's rank. Luther's Christian, however, is revealed to be remarkably isolated, as is the later citizen of the modern nation-state. Given his Anabaptist roots and his scholar-practitioner credentials, it is this similarly nonecclesiological quality of Professor Redekop's advice, along with a remarkable conceptual sloppiness, that especially perplexes.

The University of Kansas

THOMAS HEILKE

Telling Our Stories: Personal Accounts of Engagement with Scripture, Ed. by Ray Gingerich and Earl Zimmerman. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House. 2006. Pp. 287. \$21.95, U.S.; \$31.95, Can.

Wrestling with the Text: Young Adult Perspectives on Scriptures, Ed. by Keith Graber Miller and Malinda Elizabeth Berry. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House. 2007. Pp. 191. \$19.95, U.S.; \$24.95, Can.

“Then God said, ‘Come no closer! Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground’” (Exodus 3:5, NRSV). In June 2002 a group of leaders from Mennonite Church USA met at Laurelville (Pa.) Mennonite Church Center to share their personal journeys with the Bible. One year later, a group of young adults gathered in New York City to add their stories to the conversation. These stories are now presented in two volumes: *Telling Our Stories* and *Wrestling with the Text*. *Telling Our Stories* contains the reflections of those colloquy participants who are “older than Jesus” while *Wrestling with the Text* continues the conversation with the “younger than Jesus” cohort. Through their refreshingly honest sharing and willingness to be vulnerable, the contributors to these two books, like God calling to Moses through the burning bush, have invited readers onto holy ground.

The gatherings that led to these volumes came about as an attempt to address two contemporary issues—violence and sexual ethics—and a recognition that the conflicts that arise over these issues are often rooted in our varied approaches to Biblical interpretation and application. Rather than plan another academic conference to deal with these traditional ecclesial disputes, the organizers of the gatherings sought a narrative approach. In place of the academic model of papers and responses, participants were each invited to tell the story of their life with Scripture. As the editors of *Telling Our Stories*, Ray Gingerich and Earl Zimmerman, articulate in their introduction, they intended to be attentive to the social processes that are at work in these theological issues, not just the academic and intellectual issues that are at stake (18). They suggest that an Anabaptist hermeneutic requires storytelling in order to create the social fabric that undergirds a true community of learning and discernment (19).

Both volumes are intended to provide a model and tool for churches, schools and seminaries. The editors hope that the larger Mennonite community will use this model to create similar opportunities for reflection and sharing around the place of Scripture in our lives. The second chapter of *Telling Our Stories* provides a practical guide for leaders wishing to build on these examples, suggesting they consider such questions as whose stories should be heard, how the stories should be written, and how the time of sharing might be structured. One fundamental question is whether readers should expect to find a metanarrative within a diverse collection of individual reflections. Extensive attention is also given to the presuppositions, or theological grids, that readers bring to the text. *Telling Our Stories* in addition provides a shorter section in which contributors describe the theological lenses through which they read and interpret the Bible. The primary material that would help those interested in replicating these gatherings is contained in *Telling Our Stories*. However, the collection is essentially a two-volume set that ought to be read in tandem.

There is a significant and readily apparent shift between the two generations represented by the volumes. While the theme of presuppositions is common to both, a new question arises in the collection of younger voices, *Wrestling with the Text*. As editors Keith Graber Miller and Malinda Berry note in their introduction, a central question is that of Biblical authority. While the contributors to *Telling Our Stories* generally hold the authority of Scripture as an assumed starting point, the “younger than Jesus” contributors do not. In

Wrestling with the Text, there is a challenge to any notion of authority and a general consensus that any authority that is granted to the Bible is an active choice (14). Regardless of age, the contributors to both volumes all tell of their struggles to move from a childhood perception of the Bible to an ownership of the text as an adult, fully aware of Scripture's texts of terror and other confusing passages that were not evident in the early Sunday school years. The final destinations of these sojourners are by no means uniform. The majority of the contributors continue to look to the Bible as a forming authority, although a few in *Wrestling with the Text* honestly admit that the Bible is no longer the sole sacred text that they look to for guidance and formation.

It is this honest, open vulnerability that makes this narrative approach so challenging and full of much potential for transformation. These volumes, and especially *Wrestling with the Text*, offer an impressive model for positive, and perhaps essential, risk-taking in the hope that risk will lead to transformation and the development of a more deeply rooted relationship with our sacred text. In their introduction, Graber Miller and Berry acknowledge the influence of Walter Brueggemann's perspective on this process of reflection and sharing: "We took our cues from Walter Brueggemann, who has observed that attentiveness to the ways we have come to know the Bible 'may lead us to recognize that the story of someone else's nurture in the faith could be a transformative gift that allows us to read the text in a new way'" (16). Contributors to this second volume asked the question of where may be the safe spaces in the church for this conversation to happen. In addition to offering a collection of reflections that kept my attention and interest throughout, these volumes present our faith communities with a challenge. Is this conversation happening in your churches or schools? If not, are we willing to take the risk, learn from the model offered to us, and dive into the discourse?

Without hesitation, I recommend these volumes as essential reading for church leaders who want to deepen our relationship to the Scriptures in ways that move beyond either proof-texting or deconstruction to the point of dismissal. My only concern is that for some readers the level of formal education evident in the vocabulary and articulation of these stories may be intimidating and obstruct their willingness to present their own similar reflections. But for individuals and communities willing to work toward bridging hermeneutical divides through narrative vulnerability, these two books offer an invaluable resource as we reach down to untie our sandals and step toward God's call to come and stand on holy ground.

Goshen College

TAMARA SHANTZ

Recovering Jesus: The Witness of the New Testament. By Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press. 2007. Pp. 336. \$22.99.

The title of this book, *Recovering Jesus*, sounds almost as if we have lost Jesus and it takes the Emerging Church to find him again. Or perhaps the author is sifting through Jesus Seminar facsimiles, the plethora of gnostic Gospels or the many layers of "Q" that have covered Jesus over in order to dig up the real Jesus.

Wrong on both counts. In his preface, Tom Yoder Neufeld immediately clarifies that this book has grown out of years of teaching undergraduate university students and is directed toward this audience—whether believers, skeptics or those indifferent to religion. Pedagogically, that's a tall order—but the author succeeds remarkably well. Though both a believer and a scholar, he presents a range of opinions on the tough questions about Jesus without demanding adherence to his own opinions.

I found the first two chapters the hardest to get into, though Yoder Neufeld's image of a toolbox at an archeological excavation was very helpful. Beginning with current popular images such as the Jesus of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*, he digs down through the historical development of Jesus traditions—such as source criticism and Q, along with the question of historical accuracy in the Gospels, which were all written at least a generation after Jesus.

Chapter 3 profiles each of the canonical Gospels in turn, thus introducing redaction and narrative criticism along with each author's theological emphasis. No matter how hard we try, we cannot get behind these four portraits from a later generation to the "real Jesus" underneath. We can, however, learn something about the history, geography and culture that made up Jesus's world, the different Jewish parties he interacted with, and the classes of women and men, rich and poor, sick or possessed to which he related (chapter 4).

Chapters 5 through 12 trace Jesus' life using material from all four Gospels. "The Birth of Jesus" (chapter 5) shows how whatever is historical has been influenced by the theological and literary concerns of Matthew and Luke. Though they both stress Mary's virginal conception, the silence of the rest of the New Testament about it must also be considered. Is it myth, history or both? Yoder Neufeld leaves us with mystery.

The "Kingdom of God" is the major organizing theme through chapters 6 to 10. Jesus announces the kingdom (7), teaches the kingdom (in parables—chapter 8), enacts the kingdom (through healing, exorcism, and food—chapter 9), and lives the kingdom and its justice (chapter 10). The tenth chapter primarily discusses the Sermon on the Mount/Sermon on the Plain from Matthew and Luke. Here, Yoder Neufeld lays out four different interpretations, drawing grains of truth from the first three to assert his own view that these teachings are intended for both the present and the future.

Yoder Neufeld traces the death of Jesus through all four Gospels (chapter 11) and then offers a more theological discussion on the meaning of his suffering and death. When we arrive at Jesus' resurrection in chapter 12, we might ponder what a young postmodern skeptic in Yoder Neufeld's college class might make of such a supernatural event. The chapter first compares each resurrection account in the four Gospels, Acts, and Paul's letters, then ties the concept of resurrection to Jewish apocalyptic hopes, as well as to the otherwise inexplicable growth of the Jesus Movement. After pondering what Jesus' risen body might have been like, the author discusses the meaning of Jesus' resurrection as (1) God's vindication of the way Jesus lived his life and (2) an eschatological event. He diplomatically concludes by saying, "controversies over Easter will continue both because of the importance of Easter for the Christian religion and because of

the historical and scientific difficulties attending the claim that God raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead" (289).

A final and lengthy chapter discusses Jesus' overall identity as "Christ and Lord." In a section called "development from low christology to high christology," Yoder Neufeld lays out the many names and titles given to Jesus in scripture and shows in what ways they are or are not divine titles. I was pleased that he reserved "the grandest of the christological titles for last: Wisdom"! After quoting magnificent poetry about Lady Wisdom/Sophia from Proverbs 8 and Wisdom of Solomon 7:22-8:1, he lyrically concludes,

Sophia bears the image of God, creates the world, pervades all that is, inhabits God's human creatures, and thus befriends them with God, making them prophets. . . . Sophia is the one through whom God and humans meet. Can we miss the similarity to how Jesus is celebrated in the New Testament? (319)

Besides the index, helpful features of this book include short sections with bolded headings, a map, occasional charts for text comparisons, and at the end of each chapter a list of "key terms and concepts" and suggestions for further reading. There are no footnotes or endnotes, and the lists of books for further exploration are brief and include mostly recent and accessible writings. In short, it's the kind of layout that college students and other interested laypeople will find welcoming.

As a New Testament college teacher myself, I was familiar with the issues surrounding Jesus scholarship and did not find much new ground broken academically. I might quibble with the author on small points here and there (like assuming Jesus was born in a stable!), but that is not the point of this book. What I find very useful is Yoder Neufeld's attitude and tone and his striking ability to explain complex and controversial issues clearly without oversimplifying. This book will be very useful for my own teaching challenges.

Reading through *Recovering Jesus*, I kept wondering whether this book could be used in Sunday School classes or similar group study in congregations. True, those with a more rigid, inerrantist view of the Bible would soon write it off. Otherwise, I think it could be very helpful, given a high level of commitment and curiosity. (For laypeople, I might recommend skipping the first two chapters and beginning with the third: "One Jesus—Four Gospels.") Pastors can also find substantial background material and content for sermons.

Overall, I recognize with joy the Jesus that Tom Yoder Neufeld has recovered for us in this book—whether we are pedagogues or interested laypeople, believers or skeptics!

Messiah College

RETA HALTEMAN FINGER

Die Wahrheit ist Untödtlich: Berner Täufer in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Edited by Rudolf Dellsperger and Hans Rudolf Lavater. Bern: Schweizerischer Verein für Täufergeschichte. 2007. Pp. 330. CHF25.

This collection of essays contains lectures presented in the winter semester of 2006-2007 to the Christ Catholic and Evangelical theology faculties at the University of Bern as part of a lecture cycle in anticipation of the *Täuferjahr* (Year of the Anabaptists) 2007. The fifteen contributions come from thirteen authors, predominantly historians and theologians, who are either Mennonites or members of the Reformed State Church. Because January 14, 2007 commemorated the 475th anniversary of the "Berner Synodus" of 1532—which marked a somewhat milder approach to the Anabaptist question—two of the essays have been dedicated to this document that is so important to the Bernese church. The structure of the volume is largely chronological and stretches from the sixteenth-century beginnings of Anabaptism in Bern, through the emergence of the Amish in the late-seventeenth century, to the present, addressing issues of the contemporary ecumenical church.

Chapters by Martin Haas and Hans Rudolf Lavater open the volume, both of whom have devoted many years of study to the history of the Bernese Anabaptists in the early modern era. Both write on "the Bernese Anabaptists in their Swiss context," with the Zurich historian Haas concentrating on "Society and Civil Authority" while the Bernese theologian Lavater focuses on "Theology and Confession." The origins of Bernese Anabaptism, evident in the sources beginning in 1525, can be pinpointed to the Bernese Aargau. Independent from this movement, the first Anabaptist congregation in the city of Bern formed in 1527 as a filial branch of the Anabaptists in Basel. Despite numerous expressions of anticlericalism, no clear connections are evident between participants in the Peasants' War and the Anabaptists in the region of Aargau, Bern and Solothurn. The Anabaptist networks elucidated by Haas on the basis of his thorough knowledge of the sources are especially interesting. They extended from a group in the district of Rinmur in Aarau, to Burg Wartenfels in Solothurn (where Anabaptists gathered, sometimes from great distances), to networks of neighborhoods and extended family relationships (*Früntschaft*) in the countryside. As is well known, the authorities pursued the Anabaptists vigorously. In contrast to the *Martyrs Mirror*, which reports forty executions in 1571, Haas puts the figure of historically verifiable capital sentences at thirty, perhaps thirty-two.

In his contribution, Lavater explicates the theology of the Swiss Brethren with special attention to the circumstances in Bern. As an introduction he calls attention to the "Berner Gemeindeordnung" that Haller sent to Zwingli in 1527—a document that, oddly enough, has not received much attention until now. Lavater regards the two letters from the Grebel circle to Müntzer (September 5, 1524), the Protestation of Felix Manz (December-January, 1524-1525), the petition of the Grüninger Anabaptists (sometime before June 4, 1527) and the Schleithem articles (February 24, 1527) as the foundational texts for the theology of the early Swiss Brethren. He illuminates the particularly contested points of Anabaptist theology addressed in the Schleithem Confession and repeatedly underscores the theological continuity between the Grebel letters and Schleithem, which revisionist historiography has wrongly called into question. Finally, Lavater turns his attention to the Anabaptist congregation in Aarau, which, as in other cities, emerged out of a Bible study circle. One interesting observation is that,

before the Schleithem agreements, unbaptized believers also participated in communion.

Following Lavater's contributions, three essays focus on the themes of ecclesiology, persecution and emigration. Ulrich J. Gerber investigates the ecclesiological concepts of the reformers and the various Anabaptist groups and compares them to each other. Once again we find here the irritating reference to Schlatten as the place where the Schleithem Confession was composed, which has led to a frequent confusion in the literature with the Schaffhausen town of Schlatt. Hanspeter Jecker follows by calling the reader's attention to the sobering story of Anabaptist repression and persecution. He offers a concise overview of the events from the first decades of the sixteenth century through the inquisitorial activities of the *Täuferkammer* (Anabaptist Chamber), which was active from 1659 to 1743, and then concludes with the nineteenth century, when Anabaptists came under renewed pressure because of the introduction of general military conscription. Among the numerous fascinating documents that Jecker presents are the newly discovered letter from the Zofinger pastor Adam Forrer, dated May 16, 1626, which contains interesting details regarding Anabaptist life, and the previously unknown complaints of Pastor Malacrida of Schlosswil, which had been slumbering in the Staatsarchiv Bern. Next, Michel Ummel focuses on "Exile, Emigration and Deportation from Sixteenth to the Twenty-First Century" and sketches the history of governmental repression and emigration since 1527. The repressions of the Anabaptist Chamber also feature prominently in this chapter: it is no wonder that so many Anabaptists settled in the highlands of the Jura, Alsace, various regions of Germany, Holland and the United States. Ummel also introduces various texts that testify to the beginning of a new and more tolerant era—for example, memoranda by the Basel prince-bishop in 1716 and by the king of Prussia in 1738. In the end, the Proclamation of Unity between the former prince-bishopric of Basel with the Canton of Bern in 1815 marked a significant advance in relations with the Anabaptists, though this did little to diminish emigration, especially to the United States.

Chapters by the ethnologist Brigette Bachmann-Geiser and the theologian Bernhard Ott are devoted to two prominent divisions in Anabaptism, namely the Amish and the Neutäufer. Bachmann-Geiser describes the history, settlement and manner of life (clothing, occupations, architecture and living patterns) of the Amish with great factual understanding and sensitivity. Ott, for his part, presents a deeply informed summary of the life of Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich and the establishment of the Evangelical Anabaptist church. Within a decade, the latter group grew so rapidly that it numbered fourteen congregations, with 427 baptized members, already in 1836. Ott also puts his finger on several sensitive points, as, for example, the strong tendency over time toward legalism and the dissolution of the Evangelical Anabaptist congregations between 1902 and 1909.

Chapters on the "Bernese Synodus" come from the well-known Bernese church historian Rudolf Dellsperger and the Synodal Council president Samuel Lutz. Whereas Lutz compares the "Bernese Synodus" with the contemporary "Dienstanweisung für die Pfarrerschaft" of 2005, Dellsperger traces the fascinating and dynamic history of the eighteen complete and three partial editions of the Synodus. Here the reader frequently encounters unknown and

unexpected information, including the fact that the Synodus also played a role in early Bernese pietism and in the Herrnhuter Brüdergemeinde.

Two further chapters are devoted to Mennonites in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Moisés Mayordomo and Hansulrich Gerber offer an overview of the worldwide Mennonite fellowship as a free church and as a peace church, as well as an account of Mennonite participation in the ecumenical movement.

Four short essays on the theme of "Anabaptists and Reformed today" round out this well-produced, reasonably priced volume, which merits a broad readership.

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URS B. LEU

BOOK NOTES

Embodying the Way of Jesus: Anabaptist Convictions for the Twenty-First Century. By Ted Grimsrud. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2007. Pp. 254. \$27.

This volume collects fifteen essays, most previously published, by Ted Grimsrud, who is an associate professor of theology and peace studies at Eastern Mennonite University. The collection begins with three chapters that present Anabaptism as a dissident movement "understanding Jesus' message . . . of peace, of separation from the politics of empire, and of upside-down notions of power and economics" (7). Nine essays then develop a fourfold interpretive approach to theology, employing Scripture, tradition, experience and hopeful envisioning. Such interpretation must take place in the local faith community, a point argued in the final two essays. Throughout, Grimsrud insists that "practice-centered" Anabaptist convictions (in contrast to overly theoretical reflection) are increasingly relevant for twenty-first-century life. Two of this book's chapters are reprinted from *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*; others come from *The Conrad Grebel Review*, *Mennonite Life*, *The Mennonite* and *DreamSeeker Magazine*, as well as from book chapters, sermons and Grimsrud's graduate school work.

Colonial Germantown Mennonites. By Leonard Gross and Jan Gleysteen. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House. 2007. Pp. 79. \$12.95, U.S.; \$14.95, Can.

Leonard Gross and Jan Gleysteen, historians long associated with the Germantown Historic Trust, introduce readers to Germantown, Pennsylvania, a community formed in 1683, and which was home to the first permanent Mennonite settlement in North America. The first third of the book is an essay describing Germantown's origins, its religiously mixed population, the 1688 Quaker antislavery petition and the Revolutionary War battle of Germantown. The authors also reproduce several contemporary accounts of colonial-era life in the village. Part 2 is a pictorial section of thirty-one historical and contemporary

prints and photographs—fully captioned—that document historic Germantown. Part 3 is a detailed description of nine Germantown sites, presented in a format suitable to guide a walking or driving tour, and including a map. The book concludes with suggestions for further reading.

Martyrdom in an Ecumenical Perspective: A Mennonite-Catholic Conversation. Ed. by Peter C. Erb. Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press. 2007. Pp. 211. \$20, Can.

This collection brings together six papers presented at two colloquia held at St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota in 2003 and 2004, along with several responses and two essays originally published elsewhere. Bridgefolk, a group of Mennonites and Roman Catholics who gather annually to celebrate, explore and honor one another's contribution to the universal church, sponsored the gatherings. Historian Brad Gregory's opening essay distinguishes between prosecution and persecution in the sixteenth century, and suggests distinguishing between social and doctrinal ecumenism today. Arnold Snyder and John D. Roth each offer a case study of a particular Anabaptist martyr (Hans Schlaffer and Hans Landis, respectively) and its interpretation across time. Margaret O'Gara, Helmut Harder and Drew Christiansen, S.J., each spoke to the challenge and opportunities that memories of martyrdom pose to ecumenism. The collection concludes with essays by Chris Huebner and Jeremy Bergen reprinted from other journals, which address martyr violence and epistemology and reflect on more recent Roman Catholic comments on martyrdom.

Windows to a Village: Life Studies of Yarrow Pioneers. Ed. by Robert Martens, Maryann Tjart Jantzen and Harvey Neufeldt. Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press. 2007. Pp. 457. \$45, Can.

This book presents fifteen biographical studies, almost all based in part on oral interviews, of a wide variety of people who lived in Yarrow, British Columbia, from the village's founding 1927 through its height in the 1940s and during its slow economic decline since then. For its founders, Yarrow offered the opportunity for Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren *Rußländer* immigrants of the 1920s to reestablish a traditional Russian-style Mennonite village—a strategy that did not, ultimately, succeed but that produced a thriving center of Mennonite rural life for much of the mid-twentieth century. The fully documented chapters include life-sketches of ministers and other church leaders, a local politician, businesspeople, a social worker who was also one of the first women in the community to pursue higher education, artists and a man who left Yarrow as a young adult and became a renowned anthropologist. Chapters on musicians and people with disabilities do not focus on one person's story but present the lives and influence of several individuals and households.

Send Forth Your Light: A Vision for Peace, Mission, and Worship. By Willard M. Swartley. Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press. 2007. Pp. 349. \$18.99.

In 2006 Willard Swartley authored *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology* (Eerdmans) as a comprehensive scholarly study of peace themes in the New Testament canon (*MQR* review, July 2007). *Send Forth Your Light* complements this earlier book, has a somewhat broader focus and is "intended for a wider readership," including congregational study (13). The four chapters that comprise Part One of the book provide an overview of peace in the Bible. Part Two consists of three case-study chapters, each exploring a matter that had produced divergent interpretation even in peace churches: Christian witness to "the Powers," payment of war taxes and how to interpret biblical promises to Israel. Part Three contains four chapters connecting peace with worship and mission; the last of these chapters is a script for a forty-five-minute worship service based on the Book of Revelation.

AUTHOR ADDRESSES

Mary Ann Bates, Route 4, Box 214, Porterville, CA 93257. E-mail: mary.ann.53@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Frank Konersmann, Fakultät für Geschichtswissenschaft, Philosophie und Theologie, Postfach 100131, Universität Bielefeld, D-33501, Bielefeld, Germany. E-mail: frank.konersmann@uni-bielefeld.de

Mathilde Monge, 14, rue André Bollier, 94100 Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, France. E-mail: monge.mathilde@gmail.com

Dr. Marcus Meier, Institut für Europäische Geschichte, Alte Universitätstrasse 19, D-55116. Mainz, Germany. E-mail: meierm@staff.uni-marburg.de

Prof. Dr. Johannes Reimer, Gesellschaft für Bildung und Forschung in Europa e.V., Aehlenberg 2, D-51702 Bergneustadt, Germany. E-mail: johannes.reimer@gbfe.org

Dr. Alejandro Zorzín, Burgstrasse 5-7, D-67159, Friedelsheim, Germany. E-mail: reyzorzin@t-online.de