Graeme Hunter. *Radical Protestantism in Spinoza's Thought*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005.

There are two things about Spinoza that most students of philosophy come to learn: first, that he was either an outright atheist or a radical pantheist, both of which seem to result in the same modern rationalist irreligious outlook; second, that he was a harbinger of the Enlightenment, a modernist voice of reason in the charged religious wilderness of the 17th century. That the only work of philosophical merit that Spinoza published, albeit anonymously, is a work advocating the merits of religion, the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*TTP*), doesn't seem to deter this commonplace understanding. This is explained away, most notoriously by Leo Strauss, as an act of intentional duplicity. Spinoza cultivated a "dual language": beneath the exoteric veneer of insincere Christian gesturing hides the real Spinoza, anti-religious and Enlightened. This schizophrenic magician's Spinoza is the Spinoza of commonplace assumption in the scholarship.

Graeme Hunter attempts to overhaul the commonplace. His book directly engages both Spinoza and his interpreters in order to re-evaluate the level of Spinoza's religious sincerity. In the philosophy classroom, we read the *Ethics* first and only give an occasional – often dismissive – glance at the much more religion-friendly *TTP*. Hunter's proposal is simple and bold. He proposes that we read *TTP* first (it was published first), and that we take Spinoza at his word. Hunter does away with any notion of a hidden esoteric core and an exoteric sheen. The result is a profoundly religious – and profoundly Christian – Spinoza whose "religious teachings of the *TTP* are fully compatible with what is taught in the *Ethics*" (4).

One of Hunter's goals is to establish Spinoza's Christian *sincerity* without forcing on him a Christian *identity*. He thus must navigate his view of Spinoza away from commentators wishing to find in Spinoza either a Jewish core or the germs of a new type of Jewish identity: "Jewishness" or Jewish philosophy. However, in avoiding the identification of Spinoza with his Jewish religious background in light of his voluntary exile and rational-philosophical ethics and lifestyle, Hunter must also establish that some religious sentiment, and specifically Christian sentiment, remained. He thus argues that what Spinoza says about religion and Christianity is

far too consistent to be insincere, and he locates Spinoza in the milieu of the Dutch second-reformation Christian movements, amongst the shadows of Remonstrants, Collegiants, Quakers, and Mennonites. Overall, Hunter is well aware of his Scyllas and Charybdises, and treads a careful if at times pedantic path in his analysis and presentation.

Hunter divides his book into "Context," "Christian Philosophy?," and "*Ethics* Reconsidered." In the first section he narrows in on potential candidates for Spinoza's religious affiliation with a fairly straightforward biography, offering good historical background and incorporating some recent biographical scholarship. Clearly the historical context of Spinoza's religiosity is not nearly as important to Hunter as the philosophical evidence, so he quickly moves to a philosophical analysis of the sincerity of Spinoza's Christianity in *TTP* as it is related to Spinoza's *Ethics*.

Although Hunter neither wishes nor is able to identify Spinoza as a confessed Christian (the Collegiants and some Dutch Mennonites were anti-confessional and had nebulous membership criteria), he does not spend nearly enough time on the subject. One gap is in his discussion of the Mennonites. Although "Mennonites" is missing from the index, Hunter does consider them briefly in discussing Collegiantism in chapter 2 (40-46). After Spinoza left the Jewish community, most of his closest friends were Mennonite – and influential Mennonites at that: Jarig Jelles (writer of the preface to Spinoza's posthumously published *Ethics*), Pieter Balling (influential to the Quakers), Jan Rieuwertsz (publisher of the first Dutch translations of Descartes as well as Spinoza's *Ethics*), Pieter Serrarius, Simon de Vries, and others. Most of these were also Collegiants. But Hunter only draws us into their Collegiantism without looking at their Mennonitism.

Collegiantism was closely associated with the Arminian Calvinist heresy and its repression at the Synod of Dordt. Since these radical Calvinists were not legally allowed to meet publicly or have ministers, Arminianism went underground and met at informal colleges, and the movement as a whole became known as Collegiantism. Due to the contingencies of their repression, Collegiantism developed an anti-hierarchical, anti-creedal universalist and minimalist ecclesiology. "The Collegiants soon began to find a theological justification for their religious convictions going back into the earliest Reformation theology" (41).

Although the similarities to Dutch Mennonites are both well documented and striking, Hunter doesn't even raise the option. He notes that the Collegiants around Spinoza were interested in early Reformation theology, but uninterested in Calvin and Luther. Since they were also Mennonite, it seems natural that they would have appealed – and did appeal – to their Anabaptist radical roots. Anabaptism is a clear influence on Spinoza, and Hunter misses much detail that could aid his story. Further, he says the Collegiant movement as a whole "depleted" and "demoralised" (42) the Dutch Mennonite church by attracting its members away. But later he observes that many Collegiants, including those in Spinoza's circle – Pieter Balling, for example – were both Mennonite and Collegiants; neither was an exclusive club (46). A closer analysis of the Mennonite nature of Collegiantism and the influence of Anabaptist theological and religious thinking would benefit Hunter's attempt to understand Spinoza's own religious thinking. At the very least he could have admitted the existence of such a connection, as do his sources Leszek Kolakowski and Andrew Fix.

Another insoluble problem is one Hunter is well aware of: Is Spinoza's use of Christianity and Christian terms insincere salt pinching and hand waving, sincere political golden mythologizing, or sincere religious sentiment? Hunter's solution – the last option – is to find in Spinoza a type of Christianity that is far too consistent and thought-out to be insincere (4ff.) Yet Plato's golden myth in the *Republic* was thought-out, rational, and coherent, but for all that it was really insincere. Here, Spinoza's many letters would have added gravitas to the argument, but Hunter restricts himself to only the *TTP* and the *Ethics,* with only brief remarks about the earlier *Emendation of the Intellect* and nearly nothing on the letters.

The second part of the book offers Hunter's interpretation of Spinoza's theological and political arguments in *TTP*. Hunter is primarily dedicated to debunking Robert Misrahi's thesis in "Spinoza and Christian Thought: A Challenge" that resists "the very idea of there being a Christian discussion of Spinoza's thought" (52). Hunter offers a Spinoza who is sensitive not only to figures of the Old Testament but to figures and ideas in the New – a sensitivity that suggests he held positive feelings for such Biblical figures. The purpose of Spinoza's *TTP*, Hunter argues, was reform; it was a sincere attempt at reforming the Church from false religious belief.

Here Hunter either passes too quickly over theological and religious questions or spends too much time on obvious points. For example, he gives two long explanations, one describing what the Pentateuch is, the other describing what the New Testament is. Yet he fails to discuss what the confessional differences between Remonstrants, Calvinists, and Mennonites were. Such a tactic is consistent with his general approach, but surely the audience for such a specialized monograph already grasps the structure of the two Testaments, and it is rather the denominational subtleties that would influence Spinoza's religious sentiment.

But this is a problem that straddles the whole book: Who is Hunter's audience? The philosopher has little truck with Spinoza's religious sentiment anyway, no matter how sincere or rational it might be, and the Christian theologian has little interest in Spinoza's religious credentials since Spinoza isn't a theologian.

In the final part of the volume, "*Ethics* Reconsidered," Hunter looks at the philosophical consequences of Spinoza's views put forward in the *TTP* on the *Ethics*. He finds Spinoza's theological views abundantly consistent with his philosophical views. In general, this is where Hunter shines. His skills as a philosopher and his erudite, precise analysis of problems in Spinoza's thought are a breath of fresh air. He handles the material with grace and efficiency.

Hunter's book will provide much material for discussion on Spinoza's religious affinities and their consequences on his philosophy. His novel yet straightforward reading of Spinoza answers many puzzling questions, and it should help future readers of Spinoza better understand some of the consequences and issues at stake when comparing the *Ethics* with the *TTP*.

Peter John Hartman, University of Toronto

Willi Goetschel. *Spinoza's Modernity: Mendelssohn, Lessing, and Heine.* Studies in German Jewish Cultural History and Literature Series. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

On the front cover of *Spinoza's Modernity* is a famous, rather stoical portrait of Spinoza presented in four different panels, ranging from a classic portrayal to various degrees of modern distortion using graphic touch-up software. Yet in each portrait the same Spinoza emerges in its own way, contrasting to the others. Willi Goetschel's study of Spinoza's thought and reception depicts the profundity of Spinozism at its inception and then at three crucial moments in the German Enlightenment. Far more than a specialized examination of Spinoza's relation to the Enlightenment, this book deals with the meaning and possibility of "modernity" itself. Although it does not precisely spell out what distinguishes Spinoza's modernity from other forms of modernity for a reader unfamiliar with Goetschel's historical and philosophical concerns, it does provide a detailed, convincing analysis of Spinoza's legacy as found in Moses Mendelssohn, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Heinrich Heine.

To consider the emergence of Enlightenment thought through this prism puts an entirely different perspective on the project and meaning of modernity. Similar to groundbreaking studies like Jonathan Israel's mammoth *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (2001) and *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (2006), this account of Spinoza's originality and later reception highlights his thought particularly in regard to what Goetschel calls his "Jewishness." The "scandal" of this aspect of Spinoza's thought is what connects his trajectory with two key modern Jewish thinkers, Mendelssohn and Heine, and one non-Jewish thinker, Lessing, who devoted much attention to the role and meaning of Jews in modern European society. Goetschel's analysis attempts to wrest the "critical" Spinoza from traditional depictions or distortions at the hands of late Enlightenment ideologues like Friedrich Jacobi that have largely determined Spinoza's reception until very recently.

Although the scandal of Spinoza's Jewishness is a central and original feature of Goetschel's book, this is not a theological study or an examination of Spinoza's religious thought in a narrow sense. Rather,

the angle of Jewishness aims to account for both what is particular about Spinoza's thought as a western thinker and what distinguishes the way he was received into some of the debates – though not the canon – of western philosophical traditions. This book's main argument, which resonates with Jonathan Israel's concurrent historical studies, is that Spinoza's legacy includes an element of "critical" modernity that is sharply distinguished from mainstream versions of the modern project.

Beginning with Spinoza and then receiving indirect expression in Mendelssohn, Lessing, and Heine, Goetschel finds in this critical Enlightenment tradition strong coherence with the recent "critical theory" movement in philosophy. Although some of these connections are largely inferred and not always stated explicitly, Goetschel's portrayal of Spinoza is especially fruitful for those sharing an affinity with contemporary philosophy, especially critical theory. Therefore, aside from using this as an alternative hermeneutic for reading Spinoza, one highlighting a largely unsung legacy in modernity, Goetschel finds the critical impulse in Spinoza's thought holds great potential for current thought as well.

The study provides a detailed contextual analysis of a wide range of primary texts, many unavailable in English, while using insights from recent literature. The first part offers a fresh re-reading of core aspects of Spinoza's thought that are crucial for understanding Goetschel's subsequent portrayal of late-Enlightenment Spinozism. Here his in-depth treatment of Spinoza's "critical" underlying philosophy allows readers to connect Spinoza's thought to concerns in contemporary philosophy and ethics, and prepares them for how these issues are taken up by Mendelssohn, Lessing, and Heine later in the study.

Arguing against interpretations that see Spinoza's *Ethics* as the ultimate form of a philosophical system, Goetschel stresses the anti-totalizing character of Spinoza's thought, which is constructivist and anti-hierarchical, as a special form of rationalism. The truth Spinoza sought was not one that was static and simply waiting to be grasped but one that unfolded in the act of cognition. The *mos geometrico* of Spinoza's *Ethics* thus constitutes a set of rules for engaging subject matter whose conclusions are not determined at the outset. This open, searching rationalism also characterizes Spinoza's approach to psychology, hermeneutics, society, and politics as found in his

most mature works. The "critical" form of rationalism challenges Cartesian dualist rationalism, and this element becomes the key to those who later share Spinoza's vision and project, however implicitly. While largely avoiding sociology-of-knowledge discussions, Goetschel relates the nature of Spinoza's critical philosophy to his status as an excommunicated Jew, doubly marginalized in the context in which he lived.

It would have been helpful for Goetschel's historical approach to include some analysis of the groups forming the immediate intellectual and social circles in which Spinoza lived for the rest of his life. To draw connections between his philosophical project and the concerns of the Collegiant, Socinian, and Mennonite intellectual communities in which he lived would further clarify the concrete historical environment in which his thought developed and was passed on. Here, in the marginalized Christian communities of the period, one may also find socio-political analogues of what Goetschel describes as traits of Jewishness. Indeed, the radical religious communities in which Spinoza eventually found a home provided an important social context for understanding the new intellectual movement of which he was a key leader.

Jonathan R. Seiling, University of Toronto

Brayton Polka. *Hermeneutics and Ontology*. Vol. 1 of *Between Philosophy and Religion: Spinoza, the Bible, and Modernity*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2007.

Hermeneutics and Ontology is the first part of two volumes intended to demonstrate and present the unity of Spinoza's mature thought. The first volume deals with Spinoza's hermeneutics and ontology, and the second will cover his politics and ethics. However, as Brayton Polka indicates, the unity of Spinoza's work involves not just consistency among Spinoza's claims but reciprocal interdependence. This is reflected in Polka's refusal to divide Spinoza's approach to issues by individual work; i.e., considering the *Ethics* as Spinoza's ontology and ethics, and his other mature works as merely political. The main theme of the overall two-volume work is that "to place ourselves with Spinoza *between* philosophy and religion is to be in the position of overcoming the paralyzing dualisms between modernity and the Bible and so between reason and faith, between the secular and the religious, and, ultimately, between the human and the divine" (viii).

Of the book's four chapters, the first is an introduction and the fourth is a conclusion. The bulk of the exegetical labor is accomplished in the two long central chapters. The introduction helpfully sets outs the themes to which the book consistently returns: the ontological argument for the existence of God, Spinoza's approach to Biblical hermeneutics, and their interrelation and mutual implication. The second chapter, based on a close reading of the first 15 chapters of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, explains Spinoza's separation of philosophy and theology. Against certain readings of Spinoza, Polka argues that this separation does not imply the subordination of faith to philosophy. On the contrary, only when they are separated can one understand the proper role of each and, paradoxically, their interdependence.

This separation is accomplished by distinguishing true religion from superstition. In the realm of biblical hermeneutics, this separation indicates that the Bible must be read "from itself" and be understood to reflect "accommodation" to the prejudices of its time. The Bible must be read in light of its fundamental norm – love of neighbor (a charity reflecting the hermeneutical charity that must be extended when interpreting the biblical

text) – in order for the religious core to be brought out of superstitious overlays.

The third chapter focuses on the significance of the ontological argument for the existence of God, as presented in first two parts of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Against the "contradictory" ignorance of reality characterizing ancient philosophy, the ontological argument "constitutes the ontology of modernity by founding it on and showing that it founds the necessary relationship between thought and existence" (144). Spinoza's ontological argument moves neither from the necessity of God for thought nor from the certainty of the self to God. Instead, it shows that God and humanity, existence and thought, self and other are reciprocally necessary.

The concluding chapter pulls the book's various strands together. Spinoza shows that modernity does not involve a contradictory opposition between faith and reason, the Bible and philosophy, or God and the self, but rather a paradoxical interrelation between terms. Just as the ontological argument shows there is no thought without God or God without thought, Spinoza's hermeneutics shows there is no interpretation of the sacred text without the reader, and the reader can only interpret the sacred text (or any text, as it turns out) properly by following the fundamental norm of the Scriptures – love of God and neighbor.

Polka's passionately written book reflects enormous erudition that is nevertheless held in check in order to focus on the subject at hand. The decision to relegate discussion of secondary literature to two appendices (the first on secondary literature in general, the second a critique of Leo Strauss's influential interpretation of Spinoza) helps Polka avoid the "commenting on the commentators" conundrum.

Polka's interpretation will no doubt be controversial and important, not only for Spinoza scholars but for scholars concerned with the more general political, philosophical, religious, and ethical dimensions of modernity. Against critics of modernity claiming that Spinoza represents the modern, secular destruction of the sacred, Polka argues that Spinoza actually saves the sacred by making it accessible to the human mind. Against modernists claiming Spinoza as a representative of secularism's rightful triumph over religious superstition, Polka's Spinoza shows that modernity's own roots lie in a biblical religion deeper than any superstition. Whether Polka's

interpretation of Spinoza or the particular positions taken are defensible will be settled through the discussion that I hope will emerge around this book and its sequel.

Matthew Klaassen, University of Toronto

Ursula M. Franklin. *The Ursula Franklin Reader: Pacifism as a Map*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006.

Canada has been blessed by visionary public intellectuals and social justice activists whose influence carries far beyond the borders of the "true North strong and free." One might think of Rosalie Bertell, a renowned scientist and Grey Nun of the Sacred Heart, who eloquently and passionately alerted the world to the dangers of nuclear power and weapons. Or Jane Jacobs, who challenged and transformed how we understand and organize cities.

Another such luminary is Ursula Franklin, an experimental physicist who has written and lobbied long and hard on issues of technology-gone-awry. Her analyses grow out of Quaker convictions, relying on deep-rooted pacifism and feminism. In 1989, she delivered the CBC Massey Lectures. (The Massey Lectures are remarkable examples of public intellectualism, and a striking number have been delivered by people of faith.) Besides teaching for decades at the University of Toronto, Franklin has often testified to her concerns before government bodies.

This collection explores Franklin's understanding of pacifism as a map, a paradigm for examining all of life, an act of alternative imagination. While Quaker versions of nonviolence or nonresistance are not equivalent to Mennonite understandings, we nevertheless benefit from knowing these are not just quirky ideas. Franklin is absolutely correct: if we take a peace position seriously, it affects our whole lives. If the Mennonite Church were less ambiguous and ambivalent about shalom-making commitments, it would sound a clearer alternative to middle-class North American culture and its inevitable compromises, and it would offer a more telling witness in a world possessed by globalization.

Peace, as Franklin speaks of it, means the presence of justice and the absence of fear, and thus has huge social implications. She forthrightly explains how seeing things through a pacifist paradigm is a lonely enterprise. Her social convictions are no naive enumeration: a native German, she was imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps where some of her relatives died, she endured the bombing of Berlin, and she lived through the Soviet occupation. Still, in one interview here she matter-of-factly observes that "I have spent the best part of my life trying to put these thoughts into the stream that makes decisions, and I've been spectacularly unsuccessful."

Franklin shows how our technology-dominated society is value laden, but the values are not ones we explicitly choose. Even more troubling is that there is little deep reflection on how technology shapes our lives. Why are people of faith not more articulate about how so many industrial technologies contradict human priorities of respect and love, interpose themselves between people and supplant relationships, displace meaningful work, pollute our landscapes, and deleteriously affect local communities? Why are we not more upfront about the fact that much modern technology either aims at, or derives from, changing understandings and practices of war? And how can people of conscience live with the fact that technology has freed nations from explicit physical conscription, meaning that all taxpayers are complicit with war? (Franklin is a major advocate for the peace tax movement.)

The issue is not one of simplistically arguing that technology is intrinsically good or evil. There has always been technology. But how do we choose technology that promotes lives of peace, honors justice, and frees us from fear? Franklin helps us to see differently. For example, she tellingly critiques various technological practices, including electronic systems in the classroom and even ski lifts! She raises questions that few others do.

> The ability to separate message from messenger, sound from speaker, and picture from depicted, together with the speed with which information is transferred, has created a reality in which the manipulation of space and time has become one of the driving forces behind a new and complex way of doing things. We need to think about that reality and what it means for us as citizens, as a country, as a community, and as a culture. Collectively and

> individually, ... we need to think about how much of society is determined by the dictates of new technologies. (237)

In another essay Franklin reflects on "Silence and the Notion of the Commons." Previously sound was connected to its source, and most sounds were temporary. But now, without our consent, we are exposed to constant background noises whose purposes and intentions are clearly manipulative. So even our very soundscape has been colonized.

There are other gems, such as a telling analogy about the arms race. Imagine a community where neighbors keep acquiring dogs and devoting themselves to such acquisition. The resulting problems – and smells – are remarkable.

Edited collections suffer predictable downsides, however, and this one is no exception. Some pieces feel dated, there are occasional overlaps, and an index would be useful.

Arthur Boers, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN

Gordon Oliver. *Holy Bible, Human Bible: Questions Pastoral Practice Must Ask.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006; Ray Gingerich and Earl Zimmerman, eds. *Telling Our Stories: Personal Accounts of Engagement with Scripture.* Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2006; Paul Ballard and Stephen R. Holmes, eds. *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Gordon Oliver began ministry as "a rather fundamentalist evangelical" (xviii), but he intends *Holy Bible, Human Bible: Questions Pastoral Practice Must Ask* to spark renewal among "conventionalized adults who dominate the biblical gate-keeping leadership of the churches" (149). After decades of ministry Oliver is convinced that "treating the Bible as some kind of literary pope that utters holy truth without regard to…context will only serve to close some issues that should be left open to the speaking of God" (43). Instead, reading the Bible should take us to the boundaries of our lives and show us the way forward.

Many culturally Western pastors will recognize the various reading settings that open this volume: among inter-religious community organizers for justice, amid an adolescent's digital devotional life, within a seminary New Testament class, at a home Bible study, in a high church liturgical setting, and in a theological dispute between ordained leaders. Oliver labors on behalf of Christians encountering the Bible in these settings who may wonder how it relates to the Word of God, who owns the Bible, how it witnesses to Jesus Christ, and whether it is a bridge or a boundary. These and other hermeneutical questions form the book's chapter titles.

Oliver affirms many of the "pre-critical" and experientially-based ways that scripture is used today, while aiming to bring critical scholarship to bear on pastoral practice in ways that create a desirable "disruption" (15). Congregations can strive for a more adult relationship with the canon of scripture "instead of the Church speaking on Scripture's behalf like a parent on behalf of an inarticulate child" (13).

In order to hear the gospels and the "trajectories of truth" they offer for pastoral practice, the author suggests five features of our reading. First is receiving the Bible as a *holy inheritance*, both deserving our best questions about how it fits and does not fit with contemporary concerns, and able to guide us into holy living. Second is the *gradual discovery process* of discipleship as well as the moments of profound disclosure that communities of Bible readers experience. Third is the *reflection process* of discerning "what to do next" in light of an encounter with God's word. Fourth is *disillusion*: here Oliver wisely notes that in the gospels the disciples very often question, misunderstand, and confuse who Jesus is and what he means to do and be. Likewise, much pastoral practice includes not knowing the precise connections between the gospel and current pastoral issues. We should not assume we always know what is going on and how Christ is leading us. Jesus "calls his disciples to become literally disillusioned with all that is expected of the Messiah as they encounter the horror of his crucifixion, and then as they come to terms with their experience of him risen, alive and still calling them to follow" (102). Finally, for pastoral faithfulness, this disillusionment must result in *commitment*.

For Oliver, Christians must receive the canon of scripture into the life of their communities in such a way that God can speak into situations never anticipated by the biblical writers. Credible pastoral practice will

acknowledge the weight of difference between biblical and contemporary contexts, but also the deep resonances between the world of the Bible and our world today. The author suggests that intercultural and theologically diverse reading groups might serve as a guard against “increasingly static and conventional hearing and readings of Scripture” (112). Arguments arising from reading in the context of differences are ultimately bridges for the people of God across the swirling issues of homosexuality, militarism, and religious tolerance, among others.

At his pastoral and biblical best, Oliver describes what it means to be fully human in a biblical sense. Using scriptural themes of calling, covenant, wisdom, reconciliation, and maturity, the final chapter sketches a portrait of humanity in the image of God. “To be human and biblical at the same time involves living with the discomfort and the protest that arise from the connections and the disconnections that come from taking part in the living tradition and the active remembrance of the speaking and actions of God” (153).

Telling Our Stories: Personal Accounts of Engagement with Scripture includes just such discomfort and protest. In this volume 23 Mennonite leaders (scholars, pastors, and administrators) share their personal journeys with scripture. While my personal acquaintanceship with most of these leaders may contribute to my enthusiasm for the stories, I commend them because they record the stirrings of the heart, the boiling blood, the search, and the sweat of true engagement with the Word of God. Those of us whose aim is to preach, teach, and live the scriptures in faithful and winsome ways will be strengthened and supported by *Telling Our Stories*.

This book was published as an outcome of a non-traditional conference. In Part One the editors commend the conference process as one that could be useful in many other settings. In Part Two, the contributors, prompted with an essay by Walter Brueggemann (republished as an appendix) and the controversial topics of militarism and homosexuality, tell their personal stories of living with scripture. Part Three includes chapters in which four storytellers state their “presuppositions” as they read and interpret the Bible, and four others share their “theological grids” for reading it. These are helpful statements for students to examine, and invaluable for teachers and

church leaders to review. There is an invitation to consider one's own story, assumptions, and theological perspective so as to hear, better and more often, the good news of scripture.

Many of the contributors narrate childhood understandings of the Bible that are renegotiated in adolescence and young adulthood. A young Owen Burkholder on a camping trip hunkers down in a tent reading his New Testament while other boys are chasing rabbits. Liz Landis narrates the pain of church division over biblical interpretation regarding women's roles in the church. Jo-Ann Brandt admits once being more familiar with big-screen versions of the Good Book than with the Bible itself. An Amish-born man goes to college, serves abroad, earns a Ph.D., and persists in interpreting the Bible as Jesus did, through the eyes of the prophets. A gay man sees his story reflected in the eunuchs of biblical times and soars with the Spirit who inspired these words. Also described is the loss of households like the childhood homes of James Krabill and Marilyn Rayle Kern, which were steeped in scripture. Another contributor resists this assignment a bit, noting that one's experience with scripture may not easily conform to the logic of story.

Comparing these personal accounts with our own and those of our Bible-reading companions will release some of the tension we may feel to get it right, to win our case, or to prove our next point with the Bible. Paths toward adult faith and intellectually satisfying appropriation of scripture, as represented here, are varied. For a great many of the storytellers (and this reviewer), seminary education was an asset in learning to read the Bible. Yet seminary is not intended to supply all the answers, and the next stages of life – particularly community and vocation – seem to govern subsequent growth for these Mennonite Christian readers.

In contrast to the confessional voices in *Telling Our Stories*, contributors to *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church* use their professional voices. And what Gordon Oliver pursues as an individual scholar, roughing out a bridge between academic biblical studies and pastoral theology, this book does through a multi-voiced project. *The Bible in Pastoral Practice* is divided into three parts. "Listening to the Tradition" includes six essays on the history of

Biblical interpretation, including a chapter on interpretation of scripture prior to canon formation and one on Eastern Orthodox appropriation of scripture. For brevity, authors choose rich examples to illumine broader themes in the historical periods treated, as when one author compares Christmas sermons by Friedrich Schleiermacher, John Henry Newman, and Karl Barth.

The second section, "The Problems Posed by Contemporary Biblical Scholarship," charts the academic territory since the historical critical method was dethroned. John Rogerson roots the interpretive concerns of biblical scholarship in scripture and Christian liturgy. He encourages church leaders to share the insights of current scholarship with their congregations for the purpose of enhancing Christian discipleship. This section takes scripture readers beyond the text as "material for scholarly adventure" (154) and toward contextual, theological, and churchly readings that take into account the whole scope and narrative of the Bible. These post-liberal, post-colonial directions are attentive to non-dominant voices in history (Anabaptists) and in the church (women, persons in the global South).

The final section, "The Bible and Pastoral Theology and Practice," deals with pastoral care, ethical discernment, worship, preaching, eucharist, spirituality (both classically evangelical and Roman Catholic Ignatian exercises), community building, and singing. Many of the essays demonstrate a satisfying interdisciplinary wholeness. For example, David Lyall in "The Bible, worship and pastoral care" traces the teaching, proclaiming, and nurture functions of preaching as well as the contemporary forms these functions take. "Biblical good news should be shared in diverse ways," he writes. "The Church lives within the tension of proclamation and pastoral care. It needs preachers who represent the ministries of both prophet and priest" (233).

If these three books have a common claim, it is that the essential critical distance required for reading our ancient Scripture should never be used to stifle the living conversation between God and God's people. Let anyone with ears to hear, listen.

Jennifer Davis Sensenig, Pasadena Mennonite Church, Pasadena, CA

Marlene Epp and Carol Ann Weaver, eds. *Sound in the Land: Essays on Mennonites and Music*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2005.

Oh, the echoes of Mennonite singing that arose in my memory while I perused these pages! Brought up in the New England Congregational Church, I experienced a musical epiphany when I first heard the *a cappella* sound of familiar and unfamiliar hymns sung with such beautiful tone and such radiant intensity. I've always felt that it compares favorably with the most sophisticated choral singing in the land.

This book contains many references to *Hymnal: A Worship Book,* published in 1992. Its fifteenth anniversary occasions a looking back from both data-based and anecdotal sources. Among the conclusions drawn is the inescapable fact that these hymns spring from many different traditions and reflect the trends at work in all Christian music-making. There is both a strong and healthy respect for past tradition, and a welcoming of international and living voices, without kow-towing to the fripperies of our commodity-driven culture.

In articles by and about contemporary composers, we find that they do not share a Mennonite "style" but are torn between the demands of concert/academic circles and of community churches. Those interviewed confessed a deep love for the sound of unaccompanied voices that persists through years of performing and teaching in the secular world. That double-grounding, I think, results in a paradoxical tension which bodes well for the music of the future.

An evocative poem opens each of the four sections of the book, making it clear that Mennonite poets are also flourishing in creative tensions. Well-written articles about young folksingers, orchestral musicians, peace texts in the *Ausbund,* and trying to define "Mennonite" as a people and/or a music demonstrate both the breadth of the field that the book surveys and the vitality of its probing.

In addition to Mary Oyer's valuable opening overview of Mennonite Hymnals from the *Ausbund* to the present, I particularly enjoyed the viewpoint on Mennonite thinking in Allison Fairbairn's article, "Mennofolk Manitoba: Cultural, Artistic, and Generational Perspectives in a Music Festival Setting." She quotes Hildi Froese Tiessen from *"Beyond the Binary: Re-inscribing Cultural Identity in Mennonite Literature"* to the

effect that "Mennonites tend to view the world in terms of binary categories or opposites such as community/individual or insiders/outsiders." She notes that Mennonite folk festivals in Manitoba and Ontario operate in a "grey area" between these opposite poles, bringing together both insiders from the cultural and religious tradition, and outsiders drawn by the music into new fellowships. I would add that Mennonites are not alone in attempting to transcend this binary worldview: one of the dominant themes of this age is the tension between the traditional and the new. We all need to explore the grey areas that invite new openings and fruitful overlappings.

Another provocative idea is expressed in "Encountering (Mennonite) Singer-Songwriters: J.D. Martin and Cate Friesen" by Jonathan Dueck. He quotes Arjun Appadurai's "characterization of the world as a set of overlapping 'scapes,' routes that are traveled rather than places that are inhabited." [Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996).] Five "scapes" are listed: "finanscapes (money), ideoscapes (ideologies), mediascapes (sounds and images), technoscapes (technologies), and ethnoscapes (people) … [that] are disjunct—they are not moved through at the same time." This disjunction is again especially characteristic of this age, where people move about the world so frequently and change the focus of their lives almost as often. I find it fascinating to contemplate my own life (or any other person's) through this lens, as if the five categories were discs floating on an oily surface: They move apart, collide, coalesce and move on, constantly changing. What a change from a settled farmer two hundred years ago! No wonder we moderns feel dislocated – and look for connections that make life meaningful.

A final essay by Laura H. Weaver, entitled "Pleasure Enough: Four-Part A Cappella Singing as a Survival Strategy for a Mennonite-in-Exile," eloquently states the place that singing holds in the Mennonite imagination. Little more than the thought of such singing, the memory of a song, can bring one to tears, experiencing a joy that over-rides all the contradictions and stresses of our confused society. We're transported back to a world where we can "sit in a circle and sing" – and rediscover our true identity. Even for those of us not born Mennonite!

Alice Parker, Artistic Director of Melodious Accord, Inc., Hawley, MA

Rebecca Slough and Shirley Sprunger King, eds. *Nurturing Spirit through Song: The Life of Mary K. Oyer*. Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2007.

Broader than its title suggests, this collection marries *Festschrift* to life history in celebrating influential Mennonite musician, scholar, and teacher Mary K. Oyer. It offers biographies of her life and work; stories and poems by students exploring her influence on Mennonites, global churches, and other institutions; and selected writings by Oyer that offer both a window on Mennonite music since the mid-twentieth century and still provocative ideas about church music.

Two central aspects of Oyer's work are evident, both running counter to scholarly and popular assumptions that musical meaning is situated in music's lyrics: first, the idea that musical *sound* has meaning; and second, that musical *practice* has meaning. In a 1965 essay, Oyer draws attention to the melodic question a tune may pose by rising and answer by falling (185). She argues this theologically as well, suggesting that beauty has meaning, in that God has given us a desire for beauty that encourages us to engage with creation (147-50); thus, beautiful musical sound has meaning, and it can call us to right relationships with others and creation. In a 1992 essay Oyer suggests that the organizational structure of the 1989 *Hymnal Sampler* and the 1992 *Hymnal* reflects a functional view of sound, recognizing, for example, that both the lyrics and the music of a hymn might have a function of "gathering" (211-13).

This volume also includes Oyer's 1967 article, "Cultural Problems in the Production of a Mennonite Hymnal," signaling a cultural turn in her work – a concern with the way musics represent and are owned or shared by the communities that practice them. Oyer places the making of the 1969 *Hymnal* in the popular-cultural sea changes of the 1960s and the divergent musical practices of the General Conference and (Old) Mennonites who partnered to produce it (189-92). But she also suggests that differences *within* each group might well outweigh differences between them (194).

The book's biographies weave together Oyer's work and its institutional contexts. Rachel Waltner Goossen considers Oyer as an insider scholar in Mennonite institutions, a gendered subject in Mennonite orthopraxis, and an anthropologist in relation to "world" Christian musics.

Rebecca Slough contributes a life history focused on Oyer's career, including doctoral studies, work at Goshen College and travels to Scotland and Kenya, and, later in life, work at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and in Taiwan. Slough focuses on Oyer's "improvisational" work, putting together her life from musical and social materials at hand (78-87). This useful frame allows Slough to track structures that both enabled and constrained Oyer, while taking her very seriously as an agent.

Reminiscences from students and colleagues illustrate Oyer's strong mentoring of students over long periods. Jean Ngoya Kidula notes that some North American Mennonite hymns taught by Oyer at Kenyatta University became part of the singing repertoire of Kenyan Christians, including "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" and "When All Thy Mercies" (117). When Kidula attended Goshen College, she encountered under Oyer's tutelage Zimbabwean music and the marimba for the first time (119).

The volume includes poems that were important to Oyer and art she chose as Goshen College's *Maple Leaf* art editor. But it is not a canonization. The biographical materials include stories of her regrets as well as triumphs. Slough, for instance, sees Oyer's nonlinear thinking as problematic for modernist scholarly argument but helpful for initiating creative change in academy and church (83). As a whole the volume contextualizes Oyer's work in terms of the larger scholarly and churchly influences on it, as well as the contributions Oyer made.

This focus on context extends the book's purview beyond Oyer's own life to that of the development of church music (and church leadership structures) among Mennonites. Her essay, "Two Centuries of American Mennonite Hymn Singing" (235-56), is a fine example, presenting a historical sketch of Mennonite hymn singing focused on the intersections of Mennonite practices with broader mission movements, Baptist ministers, diasporae, singing schools, and so forth.

Nurturing Spirit through Song succeeds marvelously as both *Festschrift* and biography, and exceeds the bounds of both. It should be of interest to scholars and students not only of Mennonite music but of Mennonite history, institutions, and society.

Jonathan Dueck, University of Maryland, College Park, MD

Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI. *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration.* Trans. Adrian J. Walker. New York: Doubleday, 2007.

Some people familiar only with Joseph Ratzinger's role as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under John Paul II were taken aback by his election to the pontificate in 2005. There was substantial criticism of the cardinals' decision by those seeing Ratzinger as little more than a rigid enforcer of doctrinal conformity. Less well known at the time was his reputation as a renowned theologian, academic, and pastor, and it was only after the publication of *Deus caritas est*, his first encyclical as Pope Benedict XVI, that many discovered his theological depth. This depth is fully on display in this newly-published monograph.

Benedict's *Jesus of Nazareth* is the culmination of research and writing that began prior to his pontificate. In the foreword Benedict stresses that his book is to be understood not as an exercise of the magisterium (i.e., as doctrinally authoritative) but as his personal search for the face of the Lord. This search has roots stretching back to the 1950s when, Benedict notes, a substantial gap appeared between the "Christ of faith" and the "historical Jesus." Widely divergent reconstructions of Jesus grew in number at the same time as historical-critical scholarship gained ascendancy, and the emerging overall impression was that the testimony of the canonical gospels could not be trusted to provide an accurate portrait of the actual Jesus because they were composed after faith in Jesus' divinity had advanced. Benedict's book is a direct response to this development, and its central argument is straightforward: The Jesus of the canonical gospels is "much more logical and, historically speaking, much more intelligible than the reconstructions we have been presented with in the last decades" (xxii).

On the one hand, therefore, Benedict positions this book as an academic work. On the other, the starting point for his examination of Jesus differs sharply from that of historical Jesus scholars. Benedict unapologetically approaches the canonical gospels from a position of faith, and from the perspective that the words of scripture continually point beyond themselves to the divine. He emphasizes that the historical-critical method is essential

for interpreting scripture, but its limitations must be recognized, particularly its inability to transcend the historical so as to arrive at an understanding of scripture's unity and of its faculty to speak in the present. Each of these attributes is due to scripture's emergence from, and continual life within, the people of God, the church. Benedict thus advocates for a theological exegesis; exegetes are to take full advantage of the historical-critical method at the same time as they attend to the divine voice speaking through the words of scripture. Advocates of the historical-critical method would clearly view Benedict's hermeneutical approach as altogether incompatible with academic investigation, but the pope would not be bothered by their disapproval. He is far more interested in recovering for the church the wealth of Christian hermeneutical tradition, in order to arrive at a portrayal of Jesus that makes *both* historical *and* theological sense, than in pleasing ivory tower critics.

The examination of Jesus is multifaceted. Benedict explores various important events in Jesus' life; considers Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God; provides intricate analyses of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, and the major parables; discusses differences between the synoptic gospels and the gospel of John; and investigates the titles ascribed to Jesus. Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection are to be explored in a subsequent book. With each exploration Benedict tries to detail the historical, cultural, and/or religious context as a means of demonstrating the viability of the gospels' portrayal of Jesus, and of drawing out the theological, christological, and soteriological ramifications of Jesus' life and teachings.

One of the most noteworthy chapters is the pope's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. Here Benedict draws on Rabbi Jacob Neusner's work to argue that Jesus' Jewish audience would have clearly understood that he was making bold claims about his identity and authority which would have been offensive to many of his hearers.

Benedict articulates his ideas and arguments in a nuanced and subtle manner, and many interpretive treasures are found throughout *Jesus of Nazareth*. At every point he seeks to bring the full weight of tradition to his portrayal of Jesus, and his command of patristic and medieval literature as well as contemporary scholarship is evident in each chapter. But this is not

a book written only for the theologically educated. Rather, it is a work of devotion to Jesus Christ that manages the difficult task of being accessible to the lay reader while providing more than enough substance for the scholar.

Gregory K. Hillis, McMaster University

Don S. Browning. *Christian Ethics and the Moral Psychologies.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

This book is part of the Religion, Marriage, and Family series, edited by Don S. Browning and John Witte Jr., that stems from research projects originally located at the University of Chicago and, more recently, Emory University. Here Browning presents the fruits of a decade of work on the relation of Christian ethics and the moral psychologies, a time when he developed and expanded material included in earlier books such as *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies: A Critical Conversation in the Theology of Culture* (Fortress, 1987; rev. ed. 2004) and *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Fortress, 1991).

Browning seeks to fully answer key questions: Can the normative disciplines of moral philosophy and Christian ethics learn something from the workings of psychotherapy and the nature of moral development? Can Christian ethics trust these new psychologies? His main thesis answering these and related questions is this: "*Yes, contemporary moral psychology can contribute to Christian ethics, but only when it does its research with competent pre-scientific or pre-empirical understanding of morality* [the kind of philosophical and conceptual clarification of the meaning of morality that all good empirical moral psychology requires for conducting its observations, tests, and experiments]…. Christian ethics must critique these psychologies at the same time that it learns from them [and] must also help develop more adequate pre-empirical and philosophically sound models of morality" (2-3).

The Introduction develops a perspective on the relation of modern moral psychologies and Christian ethics by identifying the book's main themes. Chapter one, "Multidimensionality of Praxis in Christian Ethics,"

presents the author's view of the content of Christian ethics with special attention to Reinhold Niebuhr. Chapter two, "Moral Psychology and Critical Hermeneutics," discusses human development as seen by various perspectives in contemporary moral psychology, including a critique of foundationalism (the attempt to find, and work with, an objective, value-free, and tradition-free way of considering moral development).

Chapter three, "Going Deeper: The Relation of Moral Education to Christian Ethics," focuses on Johannes van der Ven's view of the formation of the moral self and his application of Paul Ricoeur's theory of moral education and communication.

In chapter four, "The Dialectic of Belonging and Distantiation," Browning proposes using the phrase "practical theological ethics," one that constructively combines two fields: "Practical theology needs to be more normative and theological ethics needs to be more descriptive and transformative" (85). He also discusses critical hermeneutics in light of Hans-Georg Gadamer and, especially, Ricoeur.

The next two chapters –"Attachment, Love, and Moral Development" and "Altruism, Feminism, and Family and Christian Love"– focus on the multidimensional reality of human love and Christian love. "Generativity, Ethics, and Hermeneutics: Revisiting Erik Erikson" follows as chapter seven. In these three chapters Browning illustrates the diagnostic value of two of the more recent and commanding moral psychological traditions, evolutionary psychology and the psychoanalytic ego-psychology of Erikson. Chapter eight, "Flanagan's and Damasio's Challenge to Theological Ethics," introduces readers to moral psychologist Owen Flanagan and cognitive neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, who help clarify some premoral aspects of ethics and morality. "Christian Ethics and the Premoral Good," chapter nine, discusses why Christian ethics must attend more carefully to the premoral (morally relevant but not morally definitive) goods of life, and makes the case for "a Christianity that includes within the themes of creation, judgment, and salvation a proximate concern for human flourishing" (220).

Finally, in chapter ten, "Violence, Authority, and Communities of Reconstruction," Browning focuses on youth violence. He proposes that the most comprehensive reason behind this violence is the deterioration of the voluntary, face-to-face institutions of civil society, and that the most

inclusive strategy for curing youthful violence entails reviving society's authoritative and grassroots communities.

A thoughtful reading of this book takes considerable time and energy, mainly because of the complexity of its subject matter and the plurality of sources and voices that Browning brilliantly engages while constructing his own practical theological ethics. Also, his revision of a series of articles eventually leading to the publication of this volume would have benefited from further editing to make the reading smoother, especially the transitions between chapters and the flow of the overall argument.

This book should be required reading for advanced courses focusing on Christian ethics and the human sciences, as well as for interdisciplinary studies engaging psychology, philosophy, ethics, and theology.

Daniel S. Schipani, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN