

William T. Cavanaugh. *Field Hospital: The Church's Engagement with a Wounded World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016.

In *Field Hospital: The Church's Engagement with a Wounded World*, DePaul University professor William Cavanaugh offers a precis of his work-to-date while providing a window into his wider ecclesiological project. Mennonite readers may recognize his name from *Constantine Revisited*, a 2013 volume of essays responding to Peter Leithart's positive evaluation of the 'Constantinian shift'. In an essay originally published in *Constantine Revisited* and reproduced in this new volume, Cavanaugh describes himself as "a Catholic who has been attracted to the thought of John Howard Yoder" (158). This influence is felt keenly throughout the thirteen essays, as Cavanaugh explores the church's relationship to economics, politics, and violence, providing fresh Catholic perspectives on topics frequently explored in Anabaptist scholarship.

The book's title is a reference to Pope Francis's description of the church in a 2013 *America* magazine interview. When asked what kind of church he dreams of, Francis replied, "I see the church as a field hospital after battle" (1). Cavanaugh builds on this metaphor as a basis for developing and demonstrating a third way between sectarianism and assimilation. He writes, "A field hospital is unconcerned about defending its own prerogatives, and instead goes outside of itself to respond to an emergency. . . . It neither withdraws from the world, sect-like, nor resigns itself to the world as it is" (3). This position entails that the church be creating "new mobile and improvised spaces where different kinds of politics or economic practices can take root" (4).

This approach is defended and demonstrated in the book's three major sections, which respectively deal with economic theory, political theology, and religious violence. In each section the author deconstructs the boundary separating the sacred from the so-called secular, thereby unveiling the hidden 'religious' motivations, sacrifices, and "worship of false gods" (194) at work therein. In defiant contrast to the secular cultus, Cavanaugh envisions the church's own distinct rite—the sacrifice of Jesus' broken body and blood in the Eucharist—as a hopeful and creative protest with wide-ranging contemporary socio-political implications.

Cavanaugh's overall vision of the church evokes the pop-up performances and flash-mobs of Internet fame. Like a flash-mob, the church in this conception is not always easy to discern from the crowd within which it is situated: the public is its stage, and the crowd is a part of its performance. The church becomes visible when it springs to action, transforming the public square and the tragedy of its violence, apathy, and materialism into a place of unexpected unity and joy. In Cavanaugh's view, the church is involved in an unpredictable dance in which it must adapt and respond to its context as it seeks to transform the world's tragedies into comedies (155). Like the Spirit, who comes and goes like the wind, the church appears unexpectedly and spontaneously—like a field hospital—to perform its healing work, a vocation that is predicated, sustained, and equipped through the incorporating act of Eucharistic participation, “which serves to bind the members together . . . by an act of bodily consumption” (18).

Given this highly sacramental focus, this volume notably lacks any extended reflection on the meaning of baptism as a politically constitutive act. This is surprising, given Vatican II's many emphatic statements about baptism as the means of initiation into the church. *Lumen Gentium*, one of Vatican II's principal documents, states that the faithful are “incorporated in the Church through baptism” and that “through baptism as through a door men enter the Church.” Moreover, non-Catholic Christians “are consecrated by baptism, in which they are united with Christ.” Such statements would appear to have far-reaching implications for Cavanaugh's ecclesiology, yet the sacramental vision in *Field Hospital* remains disappointingly limited to the Eucharist.

Setting aside this critique, *Field Hospital* presents a highly commendable collection of essays that will widen the political and sacramental imagination of Anabaptist readers. By exploring the church's relationship to violence, economics, and political power in practical detail, Cavanaugh successfully articulates a vision of the church that is truly in the world but not of it, a church that offers a vision of God's Kingdom in surprising and redemptive ways as a testimony to the authority of Jesus Christ. *Field Hospital* offers a strong summary of Cavanaugh's work that introduces his basic arguments while extending a compelling invitation to read further.

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