

Christianity in his analysis, even relatively unschooled believers would reject their way of life being described as a “religion.” Those trained in theology know that the drama of Christian doctrine is not centrally about creation. Early theologians fingered the issue to insert distance between themselves and the Platonists, but it is not the dramatic heart of Christianity. That title belongs to re-creation. In addition, the inclusion of a superficial sixth chapter called “Responses” undercuts the seriousness of Soffin’s work: the three contributors scholars are unclear about their assignment and fail to engage Soffin’s philosophical analysis. The fault may lie with an editorial decision to turn a monograph into a prosaic dialogue.

Doubt and the reconceptualization of religion are topics with a certain currency today. In this light both these books make a contribution. However, for younger readers educated outside parochial institutions and immersed in a wider culture awash in doubt and rethinking, the pathos driving these two volumes bespeaks the struggles of a previous generation.

*Anthony G. Siegrist*, Assistant Professor of Bible and Theology, Prairie Bible Institute, Three Hills, Alberta

Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld. *Killing Enmity: Violence and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011.

Violence. Peace. There may be no more pressing issue in our times than violence, no greater need for our world than peace. Accordingly, there may be no matter of greater relevance for the church than learning to interpret violence in the Bible as we strive to live the gospel of peace as a light to the nations. Hence the urgency and import of Tom Yoder Neufeld’s fine new book.

There would seem to be no sharper opposites than violence and peace. Yet, as Yoder Neufeld observes, the New Testament confronts us with violence in the very creation of peace. On the cross, Jesus “murders hostility”

even as he himself is murdered; and it is Jesus' own act of "killing enmity" that creates peace between former enemies and reconciles these formerly hostile parties to God (Eph. 2:11-22). Such "crossing" of violence and peace is troubling. Does God make peace by violence? How many ways could we misread this text? Yoder Neufeld aims to bring us face-to-face with violence in the NT and, far from flinching, to help us read troubling texts having significant theological and ethical implications.

This volume covers a wide range of challenging issues: Jesus' teachings on loving enemies and forgiving offenders; Jesus' action to clear the temple and his death on the cross; Paul's teaching of subordination to civic and domestic authorities; and divine warfare in final judgment. In each chapter, Yoder Neufeld takes "core samples" from representative texts for close examination, allowing him to study selections with nuance and depth.

When addressing a troubling text, the author first brings into view the violence in the text that we might otherwise miss. We might miss it because the text has become domesticated by familiarity. Thus, we are so used to citing "love your enemies" that we might forget that doing so in ancient times could easily have left oneself vulnerable to violence. We might also miss the violence in the text because it is associated with social structures to which we have become accommodated. So, if we unconsciously identify with the social role of a free male, we might neglect the potential victimization of a woman or slave exhorted to "be subordinate" to her husband or master. Once we have faced the violence in the text, we need to ask: Does the text valorize violence, or might it subvert violence? Does it validate the victimizer, or might it empower a potential victim?

By recovering the historical circumstances surrounding the text and listening to contemporary critics of the text, Yoder Neufeld puts front and center the identity and location of the reader. Who is reading the text and from what vantage point? This question opens the text to multiple readings, particularly those that might challenge traditions claiming a biblical basis for justifying violence. At the same time, this can destabilize the text and weaken its authority. While giving a fair hearing to diverse voices, including feminist criticism and the hermeneutics of suspicion, the author wisely does not allow any one voice to silence the text or set the agenda. He consciously reads the text as Scripture, an "incarnational" word from God, even as he

acknowledges its historical embeddedness. His book is thus an excellent example of wrestling with the text in both faith and humility.

One scholarly contribution that I appreciate especially for its practical implication is the extent to which Yoder Neufeld recovers the wisdom tradition of Israel as a formative background of both Jesus' ethic and Paul's teaching. Citing the Wisdom of Solomon (from the Apocrypha) at several points, he shows how Jesus' ethic of non-retaliation and Paul's teaching of subordination rely on trust in "a just and merciful God whose reign will be asserted in the end" (35). Wisdom's counsel that we entrust judgment, both vengeance and vindication, to God requires of us patience and hope, spiritual virtues sorely needed in a violent world.

While engaging critically with current scholarship, Yoder Neufeld has written a book that is accessible and useful to lay readers. It would make a good complement to Patricia M. McDonald, *God and Violence: Biblical Resources for Living in a Small World* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2004), which focuses mostly on the Old Testament. Together they would comprise an ample basis for an edifying study that could be undertaken in congregations, colleges or seminaries.

*Darrin W. Snyder Belousek*, Lecturer in Philosophy and Religion, Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio; Adjunct Instructor in Religion, Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio

Linda Huebert Hecht. *Women in Early Austrian Anabaptism: Their Days, Their Stories*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2009.

A welcome addition to the growing scholarship on the lives of women in early modern Europe, this work follows in the same vein as *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers* (1996), a collection of essays Linda Huebert Hecht edited with C. Arnold Snyder. *Profiles* introduced a new wave of scholarship that includes work from Hecht, Snyder, Mary C. Sprunger, Marion Kobelt-Groch, and others. Here, the author eschews martyrological literature and focuses on court records from the *Quellen zur*