Chris Huebner and Tripp York, eds. *The Gift of Difference: Radical Orthodoxy, Radical Reformation.* Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2010.

One virtue of this fine collection of essays is displayed in the frank dualism of morals expressed by John Milbank in his foreword. He contrasts "ideological purity" with "expediencies of power," suggesting that the great question of Christianity and politics boils down to a choice between a Dostoevskian Eastern Orthodox monastic purity refusing any ecclesial compromise with coercive worldly power and a Latin Augustinianism seeking to make good use of the compromised earthly city, including its coercive power. Once again Anabaptists seem to have succeeded in stripping away the veil of rhetorical convention over the biblical meaning of the power of weakness.

Yet Milbank deduces from his interlocutors "that modern Mennonites would tend to say that they offer, *not* the path of misguided purism, not the illusion of 'beautiful souls,' but rather their own middle way between apoliticism and political compromise" (xiii). This is a welcome complication of the Mennonite position by a mainstream Anglican theologian, even if it might also be more generously applied to the entire radical reformation. Predictably, this is not enough for Milbank, who, like Niebuhr and all other mainstream orthodox reformers, insists that "the survival of Christianity was enabled by acts of military defiance and its survival otherwise would have been either marginal or non-existent—the religious pluralism of the American polity being nowhere yet in sight" (xvi). With this, he puts his Mennonite interlocutors back into their place, praising them for bearing witness to the radicality of messianic peace but making them rely upon more worldly and nuanced incarnational theologians like himself to work out the necessary compromises allowing such radicality to survive politically and religiously in the *saeculum* "between the times." Fortunately, the book makes its own case on quite other terms.

I highly recommend this thoughtful, provocative, and most interesting collection of essays to a range of readers: students, professors, pastors, and ethically engaged citizens of both Augustine's cities. Radical Orthodoxy (RO) and the Radical Reformation (RR) have much to learn from mutually critical provocations, and these essays explore new frontiers in political theology, particularly on violence and pacifism, and on forgiveness and

patience, which are read in a more complex ecclesio-political context than older church-state dualisms allow.

Peter Blum questions both RO and RR positions on the impossibility of nonviolence through a creative reading of Derrida's essay on forgiveness, showing that a "no" to violence inhabits a different moral economy (hence a different "ontology") than does ideological (or perfectionist pacifist) nonviolence. Kevin Derksen deconstructs Milbank's account of violence as rooted in a kind of self-possession (and self-knowledge) that makes an ethic of self-sacrifice nonsensical and that is due to a division between theology and ethics which Milbank generally eschews. Tripp York contrasts the Anabaptist apocalyptic Christ and Milbank's "tragic-ridden ecclesiology" (52), suggesting that the former must resist the historical necessitarianism of the latter. Rosalee Velloso Ewell argues that RO fails to come to terms with the particularity of scriptural narrative but then reduces this to identity politics and the "historical particularity of Israel" rather than the "figural" particularity of poetic, prophetic singularity—the latter (despite its being, e.g., Benjamin's and Rosenzweig's approach) is deemed "marcionite." Craig Hovey argues against this kind of historicism to suggest that Christian witnesses must bear testimony to the Christ event "in the present tense" (101), that is, figurally, rather than reduce such witness to developing grand historical RO metanarratives.

Dula inaugurates the second half of the volume with a substantial essay on "Fugitive Ecclesia" (trading on Wolin's "Fugitive Democracy" that so influenced Hauerwas, Coles, and Stout) that nicely complicates the relationship between Christianity and democracy by developing a more robust ecclesiology, showing why the church is not a pure ideal and why it is a bad idea for the church to have recourse to authoritarian (mainline) models of leadership. This opens the door to discussions about fugitive intimacy (no discussions of nonviolence without addressing the question of desire!). Stephen Long shows his RO credentials by insisting on the distinction between natural and supernatural desire, and engages a fascinating comparative discussion of von Balthasar, Barth, and Girard before ending, dialectically, with Milbank. Cheryl Pauls takes up the metaphor of *harmonia* in RO rhetoric, showing with considerable musical sophistication the theoretical and practical interpenetration of theology and aesthetics in

liturgical expression, and arguing for an improvisational "harmony in exile" (169) over against the classical idealism of RO (Pickstockian) liturgics. Harry Huebner helpfully brings Milbank and Yoder into dialogue on the complex relations between violence, peace, and forgiveness, showing what is at stake when one takes Pauline rather than medieval theological accounts of "participation" as primary—a revealing point as pertains to historicism. Finally, Chris Huebner's capstone essay considers what RO and RR might learn from one another, and recommends an ongoing risky radicality that embodies critical and dialogical vulnerability, in keeping with the power of weakness that refuses to make the world safe—since that is not a human prerogative.

P. Travis Kroeker, Professor of Religious Studies, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario

Paul Martens and Jenny Howell, eds. *John Howard Yoder: Spiritual Writings*. Modern Spiritual Masters Series. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011.

> Before it is a social strategy, nonviolence is a moral commitment; before it is a moral commitment, it is a distinctive spirituality. It presupposes and fosters a distinctive way of seeing oneself and one's neighbor under God. That "way of seeing" is more like a prayer than it is like a shrewd social strategy, although it is both. It is more a faith than a theory, although it is both. (23)

Paul Martens and Jenny Howell use the above quotation from John Howard Yoder's *Nonviolence: A Brief History* to frame their collection of excerpts from the renowned 20th-century Mennonite theologian's writings. It defines the distinctly Yoderian spirituality and theological logic explored in their volume, an impressively concise distillation of Yoder's corpus of writings. Beginning with a brief biography and an overview of Yoder's contributions to academy and church, Martens and Howell organize their selections into four major sections, each of which is introduced by the editors.

The first section, "The Meaning of Jesus," touches on Yoder's biblical