Book Reviews

Jacobus ten Doornkaat Koolman. *Dirk Philips: Friend and Colleague of Menno Simons, 1504-1568*. Trans. William Keeney, ed. C. Arnold Snyder. Kitchener, ON / Scottdale, PA: Pandora Press / Herald Press, 1998.

In his introduction to *The Writings of Dirk Philips*, C. J. Dyck states that Philips "ranks second only to Menno Simons in his influence on Dutch Anabaptism during the first decades of the movement" (11). When it comes to the writings of Dirk – which are more systematic and comprehensive than Menno's – Dutch scholars might rank him even higher than Menno. Although *The Writings of Dirk Philips* have been available in Dutch since 1564 and in English since 1910, hardly any systematic work has been done on Dirk's theology or historic research on his life.

In order to fill this gap, ten Doornkaat Koolman's biography of Philips has been translated into English by William Keeney and edited by C. Arnold Snyder. The author was born in 1889 in Hamburg, Germany, studied theology in Marburg and Berlin, and at the Mennonite Seminary in Amsterdam from 1911 to 1915. Under the influence of professors Cramer and de Bussy, he developed a keen interest in Anabaptist history and theology. His many articles on these subjects, and his contributions to the *Mennonitisches Lexikon* and *Mennonite Encyclopedia* bear witness to his scholarship. For his *proponenexamen* in 1913 he wrote a paper on Dirk Philips. He continued his research on Dirk for a future dissertation but had to interrupt it in 1915. Not until his retirement in 1957 was he able to return to his research and finally in 1964 to have his biography published.

Ten Doornkaat Koolman knows all the available sources. The endnotes alone fill fifty-five of the 220 pages of his work, which is still the fundamental monograph on this subject. In twelve chapters he discusses Dirk's life and writings in chronological order.

According to a contemporary, Dirk received his education in the monastery of the Lesser Brothers (Franciscans) in Leeuwarden. Pieter Houtzager, a messenger from Jan Matthijs, baptized Dirk before February 2,

1535. More than twenty-five years later Dirk will call Houtzager God's messenger, one who preached the Word of God and baptized him in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The reasons for Dirk's brother Obbe's later resignation, baptism, and ordination by the false prophets of Münster remain for Dirk scriptural and binding. Upon request of the brethren, Obbe ordained Dirk as a fellow elder in Appingendam in 1534 or 1535. Ten Doornkaat Koolman agrees with the majority of Mennonite scholars that neither Obbe nor Dirk got involved in the turbulent events around the apocalyptic kingdom of Münster. Since some evidence points in a different direction, especially Obbe's confession, more research on this period is needed.

In 1537 both Dirk and Menno and other Anabaptists were in East Friesland, where Count Enno was governor. When Enno died in 1540, his widow Anna van Oldenburg came more and more under the influence of the Reformed stream, and called John à Lasco as the new leader of the church of East Friesland. His debates with Menno are well known. Ten Doornkaat Koolman assumes that Dirk was a close co-worker with Menno at this time, that he probably was present at these confrontations, and that he might even have been Menno's secretary. Under pressure from Brussels and from the emperor, the Anabaptists were expelled in 1544, and both Menno and Dirk headed for the Rhineland. In the 1540s Dirk continued in the background. While Menno risked his life traveling to Friesland, Holland, and Groningen, Dirk apparently stayed behind.

In contrast to Wilhelm Kühler, who argues that in the 1550s Dirk outgrew Menno and even opposed him where he thought it necessary, ten Doornkaat Koolman points out that in the 1550s Menno could call Dirk "our trusted and very beloved brother." In the confrontation with Adam Pastor, Dirk played a prominent role. It became clear in the 1550s that Dirk was more concise and more strict than Menno. For example, he supported radical shunning of those banned from the fellowship of believers. His importance increases when he becomes a writer around 1554. With his growing recognition and authority, he now takes his own stand on many important issues and does not hesitate to oppose Menno on the application of the ban.

Dirk moved further east in the same decade, living in Wismar, Lübeck, and then Danzig, where he was an elder in the 1560s. In this period he writes prolifically and becomes the most respected leader of the Anabaptist movement

in the Netherlands, northern Germany, and Danzig. As leader and elder Menno did his most creative work in the late 1530s and '40s; in the '50s one of his major concerns was the elimination from his early writings of any evidence of his involvement with the Münsterites. Dirk now takes over the leadership from Menno; as a writer he works mostly on the same issues. The monophysite Christology, the spiritual resurrection, the ban, the ordinances of the church, zeal for the purity of the church, and the presence of the kingdom of God among us now are also his chief concerns. Like Menno and most of the reformers, Dirk was convinced that his teaching and interpretation of scripture was correct and irrefutable. As an elder he took a firm stand on the Frisian-Flemish controversy and can be blamed at least in part for the great schism.

For Dirk, the Anabaptist movement is the great turning point in the history of the Christian church: it has now been liberated from the Babylonian captivity of Roman Catholicism. The fellowship of the believers is already the New Jerusalem. Dirk did not care that this true church was small and insignificant: Christ had predicted that only a few would enter the narrow gate and find the path to eternal life. But this true church had to be of one spirit and of one faith, otherwise it would not stand. To keep the church united and pure, the strict ban was indispensable. Ten Doornkaat Koolman admits that Dirk's role in the great schism throws a shadow over his life, yet he did guide many with his literary works and strengthen their faith.

Keeney and Snyder have produced a translation that reads easily and is concise. But by breaking up the author's long and complicated sentences and paragraphs, some of the meaning and content can be lost. An illustration is the third sentence of page one: where ten Doornkaat Koolman questions a statement, in the translation he confirms it. These details are issues only for scholarly research. For the student and the informed reader this translation is a great contribution. Since very few people read Dutch, it provides the English-speaking world access to the life and works of one of the major leaders of early Anabaptism.

HELMUT ISAAK, Abbotsford, BC

Roberta Showalter Kreider, ed. *From Wounded Hearts: Faith Stories of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered People and Those Who Love Them*. Gaithersburg, MD: Chi Ro Press, 1998.
Stanley J. Grenz. *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
Robert L. Brawley, ed. *Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture*. Louisville; KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Many reviews address whether a book respects the canons of its field of scholarship, makes a novel contribution, or effectively reaffirms some traditional argument or set of values. My approach to three books on homosexuality or gay/lesbian subject matter (the very choice of label can flag a taking of sides) is likewise based on criteria I consider important amid the anguished debating.

Certainly the more common criteria for judging books are valid. And in approaching these books I have kept in mind such typical concerns as whether the argumentation is sound, the writing competent, the material coherent. But other standards seem to me pertinent here, for two key reasons. First, many debaters already know by heart the common positions and how they are justified. Why then set out yet again to argue that here is the preferred position, or to tell how this or that book fails to take the most biblical stance? Second, my own journey has brought me to this point. Once I was pastor of Germantown Mennonite Church. This Mennonite congregation, the oldest in North America, was in 1997 disfellowshipped by Franconia Conference, a regional Mennonite association of churches, due to the church's gay/lesbian-friendly stance. By that time my Germantown pastorate was long past, and I watched at some distance but with dismay as debaters, often alienated, angry, and anguished, found no way to stitch together an outcome that both respected their differences and nurtured continuing relationships.

I watched not only as one with personal memories of earlier stages of the process but also as a researcher studying for dissertation purposes the debate's closing phases. As its title suggests, the dissertation, "Fractured Dance: Steps and Missteps in Conversation and in Application of Gadamer to a Mennonite Debate on Homosexuality," pursued through the work of Hans Georg-Gadamer its own criteria for evaluating the conversation.

The key goal was to investigate from a Gadamerian standpoint what makes communication across differences successful and to seek instances of success or failure in conversations conducted by three clusters of Franconia delegates prior to the final Germantown decision. I was drawn to Gadamer through sensing connections between his views and the Anabaptist commitment to peacemaking – as well as Paul's vision in 1 Cor. 12-13 of a body of Christ which must learn to love its many different parts as all contributing to one body. Leaving aside the many complexities inherent in Gadamer's thought, I'll focus on this key point*: My ability to grasp why your position is persuasive to you, and vice-versa, is what enables the true understanding which defines conversational success.*

Gadamer believes that as we seek to understand another we must always begin through the lenses of our own biases and prejudices. We have no way to get outside ourselves to see in some neutral or objective way what's "really there." We can only start from how we see as a result of who we uniquely are as shaped by culture and experience, and Gadamer wants us to treasure our initial perspectives as our only way of beginning to perceive each other.

But Gadamer then asks us to risk having these initial stances enlarged by placing them in contact with other views. He asks me to converse with your prejudices, and you with mine, so profoundly and genuinely that little by little we see why the other's position seems right to her or him. Success doesn't require fully agreeing with each other, but it does demand our entering the other's position deeply enough to sense why the other person holds it and why it deserves our respect and readiness to learn from it. My main job, then, was to look in the Franconia conversations for instances of readiness to risk one's own prejudices and to value and be enlarged by other prejudices. Let the often sobering conclusions remain in the dissertation, even as the underlying quest now provides the criteria I apply also to these three books.

I conclude that two of them – *From Wounded Hearts* and *Welcoming but Not Affirming* – are helpful in clarifying the prejudices being held even as their authors are perhaps less interested in modeling how prejudices might be risked. Meanwhile *Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality* tends to generate the same assessment if treated chapter by chapter, but if taken as a whole it helps illustrate what risking of prejudices can look like and why such risking can be valuable.

Hearts is a treasure trove of narratives divided into three sections fulfilling the promise of the book's subtitle. The first and largest section focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (hereafter "LGBT") experiences; in remaining sections, parents and then "families and friends" tell their stories. The book's key prejudice is summarized in the "Publisher's Note" by R. Adam Debaugh, who suggests to the reader that "if you have doubts about the place of God's sexual minority children in the scheme of things, this book might help" (xvii). Story after story shows the pain a judgmental church has inflicted on the teller or loved ones. Implicit in most accounts is a hope that the reader, identifying with the teller, will come to see that here is a human being who deserves the same full acceptance the church gives straight Christians.

In contrast, Stanley Grenz's prejudice is that the appropriate "evangelical response to homosexuality" is indeed to be "welcoming but not affirming." What this means is that all – LGBT or straight – are equally welcome in the "discipleship community," but disciples will join "on God's terms, not their own." And God's terms demand that the community always welcome the homosexual while not affirming those "old sinful practices" homosexuals are called to "leave behind" (157).

Despite their nearly opposing stances, each book does contribute to one significant ingredient of Gadamerian communication: The other person's prejudice must be made available in as persuasive and rich a form as possible. This then gives the holder of a different prejudice potential access to what makes the prejudice under study valuable and convincing to the one holding it. Both books provide a well-defined, attractively delineated path for walking into what makes these stances persuasive to those who treasure them. *Hearts* welcomes us into, precisely, the warmly beating hearts of those speaking. If in more cerebral style, *Welcoming* invites us, through generally fair and careful reasoning, to understand why Grenz thinks that the appropriate evangelical and biblical position is his own.

Each book also makes some effort to risk its own central prejudice at least sufficiently to acknowledge the potential integrity and value of opposing prejudices. Amid comment on sexuality as a central challenge faced by Christians in a "permissive society," Grenz notes that "because the challenge is one we all face, whether 'straight' or 'gay,' we best face it together" (156). And

Kreider poignantly articulates her effort to see value in two very different sets of prejudices:

> I feel caught in the middle! I very deeply love and care for each of you and do not want to hurt you in any way. It has been very comfortable to walk along together, affirming and encouraging one another without many major conflicts. Truly it is good when God's people dwell in peace! But when I am ready to say, "Let's just keep it that way," then I immediately see the faces of our many gay and lesbian friends and their parents. (266-67)

However, neither book shows significant evidence of readiness to risk its own prejudice, as opposed to the meaningful yet less challenging effort to value or respect another prejudice. Each book is largely committed to its own stance. There is much reasonable concern for opposing stances, but these are not primarily viewed as potential sources for enlarging the writer's own prejudice. Rather, the writer's bias is in the end what is cherished.

This is generally the pattern as well in *Biblical Ethics*, whose nine chapters by different authors provide a sampling of viewpoints presented at a largely Presbyterian Consultation on Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality held at McCormick Theological Seminary in 1995. The most scholarly of the three books, in handling prejudices *Biblical Ethics* nevertheless encompasses roughly the same moves as the other two volumes. Most of the chapter writers skillfully express a clear prejudice, again helping readers enter the force of a writer's reasoning and why the author finds it persuasive. For instance, Ulrich Mauser carefully explains why he views maleness and femaleness as grounded in the basic order of God's creation itself and why this leads him to view homosexual conduct as the "denial that the human being is good as God's creature in the polarity of being male or female. In one form or another, homosexual conduct fears or denies, despises or ridicules, the goodness of God's creation of male and female" (13). J. Andrew Dearman appears to head in a similar direction in his treatment of "Marriage in the Old Testament."

Then take Elizabeth Gordon Edwards. Her bias regarding the Apostle Paul's understanding of the flesh or body is clear: "Redeeming Paul's use of *sarx* is a futile task; an abortion is required" (69). A more body-affirming (and implicitly LGBT-friendly) "ability to proclaim the blessing of our sexuality as a

God-given gift" is needed (82). Herman C. Waetjen and Dale B. Martin articulate their own LGBT-friendly prejudices. Waetjen treats the gay-straight "binary" as part of a "pollution system" (114) cleaving humans into clean and unclean that the gospel has overcome.

The occasional rhetorical nod toward opposing prejudices may be found. But the writers remain largely interested in articulating their own biases, not in risky exploration of how an alternate one might enlarge their own. Nevertheless, the effect of placing all these prejudices under the cover of one book is powerful. At the level of the entire work, as these contrasting biases jostle against each other, each is placed at risk, shown potentially to need the perspective it may itself tend to deny or minimize. Editor Robert L. Brawley seems aware of this. He reports that participants in the consultation "affirm with deep respect for one another the value of our dialogue. Significantly, this profound respect comes not from avoiding our differences but through confronting them" (153). Highlighting the polarization afflicting conversations on homosexuality, Brawley notes that

> Debates from such opposite extremes leave little room for negotiation. In the midst of varieties of methods [such as of biblical interpretation], social locations, and plays for power, the multi-vocality of the dialogue in our Consultation has broadened the vision of us all. (154)

I write here for a journal circulated among Anabaptists afflicted by their own opposite extremes. No peaceful way forward seems yet in sight. Yet perhaps treating viewpoints as they have been treated here, as means to grasp the multi-vocality of our dialogue in the quest for a broadening of all our visions, is one productive way to proceed.

MICHAEL A. KING, Telford, PA

George R. Hunsberger, *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit. Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Cultural Plurality*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.

This is the latest book in a projected series from the Gospel and our Culture Network, a network attempting to "foster the missional encounter of the gospel with North American culture." Hunsberger is coordinator of this network and professor of missiology at Western Theological Seminary in Michigan.

To facilitate a missional encounter in a pluralistic world, a theology of cultural plurality is needed. According to this book, such a theology is not a reflection on the religious nature of culture but is, rather, a theological response to culture and to the plurality of cultures in the world. Hunsberger prefers the word "plurality" to "pluralism," because the latter implies "a certain form of commitment to the pluriformity" (12), while the former simply speaks of pluralism as a fact. Serious reflection about the intersection of gospel and culture is also needed as the church lives with renewed awareness within the pluralism of cultures and religions that surround us. Hunsberger believes that a solid framework for such reflection is already present in the thought, experience, and writings of Lesslie Newbigin. Drawing our attention to this resource is a gift from Hunsberger to the church.

Hunsberger gives four reasons why Newbigin's contribution provides a solid basis for considering questions of gospel and culture. First, is his missionary career that has immersed him in a culturally plural world. Second is his extensive participation in public debate about these issues. Third, he has consistently reflected on a theological understanding of cultural plurality. And fourth, in his debating process he has in effect created a theology of cultural plurality.

Hunsberger methodically analyzes Newbigin's writings, a literary contribution of over 260 pieces that cover about fifty years of missionary experience and reflection. As a missionary in India, Newbigin dealt with questions about the authority of the church to engage in mission. Upon his return to England he had to deal with questions about the authority of the church to have faith. These two questions, suggests Hunsberger, continue to underlie our own contemporary debates about the appropriateness of the

proclamation of a particular faith and the invitation to a particular mission within cultural plurality.

Hunsberger examines Newbigin's thought about the really tough issues involved in inter-cultural and inter-religious mission. Is cross-cultural mission valid? What are the forms that church unity must take? What is the basis of inter-religious dialogue? Newbigin's framework for answering these questions is both surprising and predictable. Much of his understanding of the role of particularity within cultural plurality is based on the biblical doctrine of election. This is a surprise for most, yet it is this emphasis that makes dialogue and particularity both necessary and authoritative. He also points to issues of history and eschatology, the communal implications of conversion, and the gospel as "secular announcement" to the world. Newbigin suggests that interreligious dialogue and particularity within plurality must ultimately be understood according to the triangular relationships among gospel, church, and culture.

Hunsberger identifies three important contributions of Newbigin's work for theology within cultural plurality. First, it "enables churches to engage their own culture in a missionary way" (278). Second, it gives to churches "powerful resources for the inner dialogue in which they must be engaged" (279). Third, "Newbigin's vision nourishes congregations toward their calling to be the hermeneutic of the gospel, the interpretive lens through which people will see and read what this gospel has to do with them and the world in which they live" (279).

Hunsberger's book is timely and encouraging, though at times one feels that things could be stated more succinctly and that repetition could be eliminated. But these weaknesses are also strengths. Hunsberger desires to communicate carefully and thoroughly the thought of Newbigin. The book demonstrates Hunsberger's integrity in subjecting himself to the thought of another, and even in areas of potential disagreement he allows Newbigin to speak without biasing the perspective. It is inspiring to see how "outdated" material continues to be "contemporary" and relevant. I recommend this book to college and seminary classes, to missiologically minded persons, and to those wishing to think carefully about the role of particular faith witness within cultural plurality.

ROBERT J. SUDERMAN, Winnipeg, MB

Roland H. Worth, Jr., *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997.

The purpose of this book is narrower than the title suggests. Worth wants to demonstrate that Jesus' teachings in the so-called six antitheses of Matt. 5:17-48 do not contradict the teachings of the Old Testament. He believes that this is important in order to sustain his understanding that Jesus must uphold the Jewish Law during his lifetime, because the Law continues to be valid until Jesus' death (his understanding of "until all is accomplished," v.18). This allows Worth to contrast Jesus' supposed strict adherence to the Law to Paul's later insistence that the Law is no longer binding on Jesus' followers (45ff).

The book's first two chapters set out the problem and give a brief description of scholarship on it. The next two chapters explain in greater detail his understanding of 5:17-20 as the context for the antitheses, and provide a brief commentary on other places in the gospels where Jesus might be seen to be either advocating or actually breaking the Torah. Worth uses the old standby argument of "intent" vs. "letter", which allows him to interpret the Law in such a way that Jesus is not actually breaking its "intent." Unfortunately, in doing so Worth denigrates the religious leaders of Jesus' day for their "well-intended but misguided human accretions to the divine law" (73). These accretions are, of course, of a completely different character from the human accretion which this book entails. Worth's denigration of the Pharisees should also be noted (55-57), especially since his bibliography cites books which should correct his bias (Neusner, E. P. Sanders). These types of arguments tend to preserve rather than combat anti-Semitic bias in parts of Christian thought.

The heart of the book (chs. 5-11) is a careful study of the six antitheses. In each case, the goal is to find OT parallels to the "but I say to you" part of the antithesis. The final chapter may be of particular interest to Mennonite readers, as it deals with non-violence.

Worth begins it by giving a detailed interpretation of Matt. 5:38-42, Jesus' commands to turn the other cheek, give your cloak, and go the second mile. His understanding of "turn the other cheek" limits it primarily to judicial settings, with secondary application to everyday life situations (235-43). While Worth does see here a "repudiation of the central attitudes of the Zealot-type movements," he regards this as "an indirect consequence of (Jesus') teaching,

rather than its central thrust or purpose" (243). Having decided on the (only?) correct understanding of Jesus' commands, Worth then goes on to find OT parallels in Job 16:10, Lamentations 3:28-30, and Isaiah 50:6. While the final text is used only as a possible background for the attitude of the Messiah, Worth congratulates himself on having found "two prophetic texts that advocate nonretaliatory conduct and that could have been easily in (Jesus') mind when he spoke his antithesis" (254).

This section reveals the limits of the author's study. His parallels only work if his is the correct interpretation (or human accretion?) of these commands. If, for example, we would choose to interpret 5:39 in light of 5:43, the command to love our enemies, and thus to see it as a command to non-violent resistence in general, then Worth's passages fail to provide the parallels necessary to prove his case. Further, his initial concern was whether or not Jesus' teachings contradict the Prophets or the Torah (4). None of his passages is from the Torah, the Job and Lamentation texts are not "prophetic" (in the Hebrew Bible these books are part of the Writings, not the Prophets).

In general, Worth employs a number of presuppositions that detract from his argument. First, he wishes to show that Jesus is "bringing the people back to the original intents (sic) of the ancient sacred works" (30). While concern with original intent was certainly a normative position in the twentieth century, it was not part of the method of textual interpretation in Jesus' day. It is anachronistic at best to show Jesus' superiority to rabbinic teaching on the basis of a method of interpretation that neither would have recognized. Second, Worth appears to believe that there is complete continuity and agreement within the early church. He does not allow for the possibility that Matthew's position regarding the relationship between Jesus and the Law might be quite different than that of Mark, Paul, or James. While he may be right on this issue (though I think that unlikely), it would need to be proven not assumed.

Third, the author generally ignores the possibility that Matthew had an influence upon the wording of the Sermon on the Mount. While Worth has read many authors who would disagree with his position, he treats their ideas with "major skepticism" (4) rather than counter-argument. He attempts to get around this problem by claiming to be concerned with "the meaning of the text in the form that we have it today," but later goes on to speak about "Jesus' listeners" (21) as historical rather than textual persons. Fourth, Worth assumes

that the New Testament's picture of Messiah was a prescriptive norm which the Messiah had to follow (72). Yet clearly the NT writers spent considerable energy redefining "Messiah" for their audience, in order to fit Jesus into the definition. This is one of the key themes of the book of Mark. Our Christian picture of what a "Messiah" should be is largely based on a retrospective position which assumes that Messiah = Jesus. It is a picture which begins with Jesus and reads him back into the Old Testament. (This is well within the rules of the day for "correct" biblical interpretation but does not fit with our "original intent" rules.) Worth would have us believe that Jesus is following a course laid down by the OT writers.

These four questionable presuppositions make it difficult to find Worth's overall argument valuable. They are also fundamental to his overall plan, making it hard to read around them in order to find more general insight. Worth's bibliography, nevertheless, is extensive and wide-ranging, and hundreds of notes enhance the arguments, although their placement at the end of each chapter make them less useful than they might have been.

WES BERGEN, Newton, KS