Thomas Yoder Neufeld, *Ephesians. Believers Church Bible Commentary*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002.

Thomas Yoder Neufeld's commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians for the Believer's Church Bible Commentary (BCBC) provides an excellent, comprehensive guide to this remarkable New Testament manifesto for Christian peacemakers. As a lay theologian new to the BCBC series, I was impressed at the book's structure, focus, depth, and readability.

Yoder Neufeld makes a balanced but persuasive case that Ephesians represents a "Pauline school's" encyclical-type summary of the apostle's vision and witness. His comparative tables of the epistle's similarities with Colossians and other NT parenetic texts present enough evidence to establish both Ephesians' literary dependence and creative transformations of those and other (e.g., apocalyptic and even proto-gnostic) traditions. The author's enthusiasm for Ephesians' robust "second- and third-generation" ecclesiology is contagious: "Congregations and denominations that show signs of wear should listen especially carefully to this letter" (28). His translation of the Greek text often provides several synonyms or interpretive options, accurately reflecting the rich semantic field of the epistle's extravagant vocabulary. Yoder Neufeld has wisely has deferred more technical discussions to ten appendices, providing succinct critical overviews of vocabulary (e.g., "head"), concepts ("Apocalypticism"), or issues ("Pseudepigraphy") that are important.

Yoder Neufeld's grasp of the secondary literature is wide, and his sensitivity to the nuances of syntax and vocabulary is admirable. However, I do wish that he had paid more attention to the epistle's sociological and historical context. He acknowledges that the central social issue behind Ephesians is the ongoing struggle by Jews and Gentiles to live together in the church. But he could have made more of the fact that Paul's arguments to persuade a Jewish-Christian majority to welcome a Gentile minority have, by the "late first century" (25), to be inverted by the author of Ephesians; now the task is to persuade a Gentile Christian majority to continue to include the waning Jewish-Christian minority.

Although Yoder Neufeld is clear about this epistle's concern for peacemaking, he still tends to give more attention to the theological aspects of the text than to its social dimensions. He never really engages Markus

Barth's famous contention that Eph. 2:11-22 *predicates* reconciliation with God upon social reconciliation – a position as scandalous today as during the Cold War when he asserted it. And though Yoder Neufeld notes the irony that Eph. 2 has not been widely used by the historic peace churches, he ignores its importance for other traditions, most notably perhaps by the modern ecumenical movement.

This tendency holds in his expository comments as well. On one hand, the author challenges traditional Mennonite "non-resistance" by emphasizing the epistle's calls to nonviolent militance (84f; 193; 313-15). On the other hand, I would have liked more discussion of what it means to concretize this call. Given the renaissance in contemporary experiments in nonviolent engagement, I would have hoped for more than his passing mentions of Christian Peacemaker Teams or VORP and Justapaz. Contrast this with his lengthy discussion of the issue of "Praying to God the Father" (166-68). This privileging of theological and pastoral concerns over social and political ones may have been expected by the BCBC editorial board. Still, this North American bias needs to be challenged more – especially with a text like Ephesians!

Perhaps the greatest strength of this commentary is Yoder Neufeld's consistent willingness to allow several possible readings to stand side by side. It is an appropriate approach for a Believers Church audience, with its tradition of reading scripture in community. This more "rabbinic" approach affirms that different readers offer diverse interpretive perspectives that help illuminate, and find resonance in, the biblical text.

Yoder Neufeld's treatment of the Household Codes of Eph. 5:21ff is sensitive and well-informed, and he takes the problems of patriarchal context seriously without solving them by abandoning the text. The discussion may be too nuanced and equivocal for some readers, but it represents a valiant effort to work with a text that is inevitably thorny in light of recent culture wars, particularly around gender (284-89). However, a little more sophisticated social theory and some "second wave feminism" could have helped re-contextualize what for too many has been a "text of terror." There are other good discussions in this commentary of what Ephesians means for the church; for example on leadership and church discipline, particularly as related to sexual abuse. And Yoder Neufeld, a leading scholar on the "Peace-

Warrior" tradition in the Bible, does an excellent job on the great "call to nonviolent arms" of Eph. 6:10ff.

I commend this commentary enthusiastically, and not only for those in Believers Churches. It is a state-of-the-art reference tool, as rich as the epistle it reflects upon, and offers a strong peace church reading of *the* NT text about becoming a peace church.

Ched Myers, Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, Los Angeles, CA

Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Astute political commentators on both sides of the Atlantic are bemused by the religious language so often used to justify military intervention by the United States around the world. For instance, an essay in the *Guardian* (July 28, 2003) was titled "US leaders now see themselves as priests of a divine mission to rid the world of its demons." To understand the background of such religious crusading, one can do no better than this book. Authors Jewett and Lawrence combine biblical scholarship with extensive historical and political analysis, illuminated by their familiarity with the artifacts of popular American culture. Underlying their argument is the historic tension between two competing strands in American civil religion: zealous nationalism and prophetic realism.

Zealous nationalism is grounded in the conviction that the world must be saved by the righteous destruction of all enemies. This ideology of redemptive violence emerges in the biblical conquest narratives and finds its distinctive American form in such ideas as Manifest Destiny. Prophetic realism, on the other hand, emphasizes justice, tolerance, and the rule of law, deriving inspiration from the biblical prophets (especially Hosea, Isaiah, and Jesus). American examples include Abraham Lincoln's mature wisdom and the late Senator Daniel Moynihan's appeal on behalf of international law. Although our authors strive to balance these themes, much of the book

documents the widespread destructive power of zealous nationalism. Their thorough analysis of zeal, originating in the Bible, is updated by vivid parallels with Islamic Jihad.

For three decades, Robert Jewett has used the comic book character "Captain America" to illustrate the "myth of the American superhero" – a lone crusader who intervenes dramatically to purge society of threatening evils. But this brand of heroism, embodied in many other heroes of popular culture, has a disturbing side. "When confronted with genuine evil, democratic institutions and the due process of law always fail. . . . [D]emocracy can be saved only by someone with courage and strength enough to transcend the legal order so that the source of evil can be destroyed" (29). The subtext is that ordinary citizens and normal democratic procedures are incapable of responding to the threat.

Jewett first exposed zealous nationalism in *The Captain America Complex* in 1973. After collaborating with John Shelton Lawrence to write a whimsical study of superhero themes in popular culture, *The American Monomyth* (1977), he published a revised version of *Captain America* in 1984. (During his 20-year tenure at Garrett Theological Seminary, Jewett also wrote on various New Testament themes.) Jewett and Lawrence reunited to produce *The Myth of the American Superhero* (2002), followed now by this comprehensive manifesto. This three-decade evolution demonstrates that the central argument is not a novelty but a thoroughly crafted product.

The authors' survey of more than two centuries of American history is obviously selective, but many will find it persuasive. While much of the exegetical and historical material has been recycled from the 1973 original, more recent developments in both scholarship and current events have been judiciously integrated. Just one example is the amazing congruence of the earlier perspective with post-September 11 discussion of the war on terrorism (cf. pages 4, 20,146, 213, 287-8). Topics addressed along the way include apocalyptic zealotry, conspiracy theories, the stereotyping of enemies, obsession with victory and overcoming evil, the controversy over flag worship – many of which can be paralleled by similar tendencies in Israeli militancy and Islamic Jihad. The authors pile up examples of the dangers inherent in the redemptive violence that characterizes zealous nationalism.

Occasional abrupt shifts between modes of discourse, from scholarly

analysis to ethical and political exhortation, reveal the authors' prophetic and unabashedly Christian motivation. Pacifist Mennonite readers will approve their insistence that war is futile as a response to terrorism, but the model of prophetic realism advocated here, while sympathetic to utilizing nonviolent alternatives to war, is not based in absolute pacifism. The authors recognize the need for force to back up law and order (e.g., 319).

One telling image sums up the book. Jewett and Lawrence reproduce a 2002 cover from Germany's *Der Spiegel*, depicting President Bush as Rambo, flanked by Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, and Powell costumed as other pop culture superheroes, all armed to the teeth (40). But what was intended as critical satire was taken over with pride by the key players: Bush and friends eagerly displayed poster reproductions! The sobering reminder is that those who most need the message will be the last to get it.

J.R. Burkholder, Professor Emeritus, Goshen College, Goshen, IN

Elmer John Thiessen. *In Defence of Christian Schools and Colleges.* Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.

Do religious schools and colleges promote division and fragmentation in a society? Do they foster intolerance? Do they violate academic freedom? Does funding religious schools violate a separation of church and state? Are religious schools elitist? Do they indoctrinate? In raising and responding to these and other questions, Elmer Thiessen invites us to listen carefully and patiently to those opposing religious schools. He often begins by asking whether definitions are clear. At many points he says that he is not prepared to defend every religious school—he would not expect others to defend every public school. Thiessen's purpose is to defend the idea of having religious schools and colleges in a system of educational pluralism.

In its scope and deftness in dealing with controversial issues, Thiessen's work is without equal in the current literature. It deals with issues arising in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education. It adduces evidence not only from the experience of educators in Canada and the US, but also

from the UK, and, at points, from the Netherlands, Australia, and other developed countries. Its findings will be of interest to public policy makers as well as to adherents of many religious traditions and advocates of good common schools in general.

In attempting to move beyond past differences and to further a more inclusive conversation, Thiessen says he wants "to respond to objections against religious schools using arguments that will be accepted by Christians and skeptics alike, as well as adherents of other religious traditions. [He says his] approach aims specifically at bridging language and world-view barriers" (4). In the best Anabaptist tradition, he expresses strong convictions in ways that invite conversation.

Several questions arise from Thiessen's way of dealing with the role of the church as church in education. Thiessen emphasizes that it is impossible to rear children "neutrally." They need to have roots in a community and tradition in order to have an orientation from which to make their own decisions as they mature. He has a remarkable chapter on "The Possibility of Christian Curriculum and Scholarship." He comments very briefly on "intermediate institutions" in a society – "families, clubs, corporations, unions, churches, and schools" (223). But then at several points he writes:

> It should be noted in my analysis of shared responsibilities for education, I made no mention of the church. I believe authority for religious schools rests in religious parents, not in the church. (78)
>
> . . . I am quite deliberately distancing myself from any position which gives the church a stake in the schooling of children. (225)

Thiessen is trying to distance himself from established church traditions, where most of us would say the role of the church was inappropriate. He seems to be talking here primarily about elementary schools, which can be operated effectively by groups of parents. Is he saying that Christian colleges and universities should be founded and run by parents? Is it reasonable to say that citizens should cooperate in *states* in supporting *state* colleges, but that Christian parents and other church members should not cooperate in *churches* in supporting *church* colleges? Will there be Christian colleges for parents to support if churches that provide the larger settings in which children can mature do not, as churches, play a role? Do churches as churches have

absolutely no role or involvement, beyond the Sunday school, in the educational preparation of future generations and in having groups of scholars grappling with issues confronting Christians? Thiessen's attempt to deal with education at all levels in general terms and his focus on basic and philosophical understandings, rather than on practical and structural implications, may lead to his silence on these questions that need further attention.

At various points, Thiessen expresses his conviction that "monolithic state-maintained systems of education are a mistake" (241). He objects to monopolies, especially in the realm of ideas. In the last two chapters, he adopts an "offensive strategy" and outlines an alternative model: "a plurality of schools, each school reflecting differing cultural/religious values, while at the same time, requiring each school [that would receive some state recognition and support, presumably] to teach the same universal and civic values that are thought to be essential for a multicultural society and a democracy" (226). In this last requirement, Thiessen may be reflecting his experience in the Canadian environment. American readers may have more questions about the degree to which Mennonite schools would be ready to commit themselves to values Washington might propose as "universal."

Thiessen's book does well what it proposes to do: to take the charges of opponents seriously and to make the case for having religious schools and colleges today. A parent or school administrator can use this book as a reference work, turning to its well-labeled chapters and helpful index for informed comments on specific questions.

Albert J. Meyer, Educational Research, Goshen, IN

Samuel Terrien. *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

This volume is the first Old Testament volume in Eerdmans' Critical Commentary series, which aims at both the "serious general reader and scholars alike." By critical is meant a "detailed, systematic explanation of the biblical text." While in Terrien's published work Job plays a larger role

than do the Psalms, he has published on the Psalms since 1952. The present work thus represents half a century of attention to this material.

The commentary begins with a 65-page introduction that illustrates the difficulties of writing for both a specialized and a general audience. The footnotes, intended for scholars, cite scholarly literature in French and German as well as English. As for remarks in the text of the introduction itself, many of these presuppose specialized knowledge. For example, on pages 8ff. Terrien mentions Canaanite sacred poetry, by which he means "the proto-Canaanite literature of Ras Shamra – Ugarit" (9). He then mentions that many new gratuitous translations have been based on this material, with a footnote to his review of Dahood's multi-volume commentary on the Psalms. While a scholar will immediately recognize the history and dynamics behind this remark, the lay reader may well wonder, What is 'Canaanite sacred poetry,' how is it related to the Ugaritic material, and how are these related to 'Phoenecian – Canaanite models'?

In the commentary itself, each psalm is given a title, some of which are quite traditional – Psalm 23 is titled "The Lord is my Shepherd" – while others are given a more interpretive title, such as Psalm 12, "Prayer against Astrology." Following the title of each is a new translation of the psalm, divided into strophes and arranged according to literary pattern. Psalm 12 is divided into five strophes and arranged on the page to show its chiastic structure. A scholarly bibliography is given after the translation.

The commentary proper is divided into three parts: Form, Commentary, and Date and Theology. The coupling of date with theology is surprising, since the notion of dating biblical literature based on a presumed schema of intellectual development has gone out of style. Terrien's dating of Psalm 12 is a case in point. He implicitly dates this psalm to the seventh century, when Manasseh reintroduced astrology into Judah. He does not commit himself as to whether the psalm preceded or followed the prophetic critique of Jeremiah and Habakkuk. But Psalm 12 does not talk about astrology, at least not on a simple reading of the text. Furthermore, and surprisingly, this interpretation of the text is not argued in the commentary. Apparently it is to be presumed. Of course, if the text is not about astrology, then the putative dating of the text is without basis. Generally Terrien dates the psalms early, as illustrated by Psalm 82, which he places in the early days of Israelite settlement, when syncretism entered Israel along with agriculture. This psalm is said to precede

the ninth-century prophets Elijah and Elisha by several centuries. Such datings are rare today.

In the Form and Commentary sections we encounter some unexpected suggestions. Taking Psalm 1 as an example, we find that the verbs "walk," "stand," and "sit" (v. 1) suggest "nomadic transhumance with its necessary choice between two tracks in the sand." The footnote (note 2) states that "semantic reminiscences of nomadic or seminomadic existence have been preserved" and refers to several scholarly works for supporting evidence.

Under Commentary, Terrien begins with a discussion of the first word of the psalm, *ashre*, which, as he notes correctly, is probably a wisdom term. However, he translates the term with "blessed" (normally Hebrew *baruch*) rather than with "happy" or "fortunate," which would be more in keeping with a sapiential background. He further comments that this root, based on Akkadian and Arabic, means "to go forward," "to walk on," "to march steadily." He concludes from this evidence that *ashre* is "a hortative of felicitation for blazing a trail." What is problematic are his arguments from comparative philology and from a putative root meaning. Indeed, the most recent edition of Koehler-Baumgartner, the standard scholarly Hebrew lexicon, derives *ashre* from the Hebrew root meaning "happy" rather than from "stride or step."

These negative comments do not suggest that this commentary lacks merit, because on the whole it does have considerable merit, but rather to suggest that it is not a commentary for those outside Old Testament studies. The general educated reader will not be able to separate the pearls from the dubious, nor will s/he have ready access to the copious scholarly literature cited.

Perry Yoder, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN

Robert S. Kreider, *My Early Years. An Autobiography*. Kitchener, ON and Scottdale, PA: Pandora Press and Herald Press, 2002.

Robert Kreider is one of the grand old men of the Mennonite church and community. This book is the story of the first thirty-three years of his life, years during which he devoted much of his time to the service of humanity,

working within the framework of Mennonite charitable, relief, educational, and church structures. He helped to shape wartime and post-war events which radically changed much in world-wide Mennonite perspectives and programs.

The work falls into six parts: ancestry, childhood, education, civilian public service, overseas post-war service, and further education. The writing in the several parts differs considerably. Most of the early material is based on primary research, family records, and personal childhood recollections. In the later chapters, the author relies on and reproduces major portions of numerous detailed letters and reports that he, and later his wife Lois, wrote. Most were addressed to his parents or to colleagues and administrators of agencies Kreider served.

The information on Kreider's Anabaptist ancestors provides interesting biographical and personality portraits, as well as individualized insights into the life and times of early Swiss/southern German and American Anabaptists and Mennonites. Similarly, but based on personal recollections, the author provides portraits of family members, childhood friends and acquaintances, and of the communities and conditions in which he grew up. Many of his relatives were traditional Mennonite farm folk, but Robert grew up in town since his father was a teacher in Mennonite colleges in Indiana, Ohio, and Kansas. The individual portraits shed light on Mennonite life in the United States before World War II.

The entry of the US into the war in 1941 resulted in the creation, by leaders of American historic peace churches, of a Civilian Public Service program in which those who objected to military service on grounds of conscience could serve their country. Kreider was in the vanguard of these developments. He worked in the CPS program for four-and-a-half years, mainly in an administrative capacity, either as project leader or in the Akron, Pennsylvania office. Those were exciting, creative times when Mennonites looked for innovative and therapeutic avenues of service, and Kreider provides intimate portraits of the key Mennonite Central Committee CPS leaders and of their dreams and programs. There are only scattered references to parallel, in some respects quite different, developments in Canada. The perspectives are American and international.

Civilian Public Service provided the background for post-war Mennonite relief efforts in Europe. Kreider, who married Lois Sommer shortly before accepting an overseas appointment, was slated for post-war service in China, but when that became impossible he became the MCC representative

on the Council of Relief Organizations Licensed for Operations in Germany (CRALOG). He worked in post-war Europe for three-and-a-half years, assisting in and directing the distribution of relief supplies to the needy. Lois, after several years, joined him there.

Kreider's work brought him into close contact with representatives of other relief organizations and with officials of the military occupation forces. Excerpts from his and Lois's letters and reports are quoted extensively. There is much information about individuals, places to which Kreider travelled, and meetings and conferences he attended. Kreider and other MCC officials often became frustrated with bureaucratic bungling and rivalries between relief agencies. But it is difficult from these excerpts to gain a good overall understanding of the interrelations between MCC programs, other relief and rehabilitation programs, and the much larger German and European reconstruction efforts. Having read many of Kreider's complete reports, I admired the breadth of his understanding of the larger situation which was, in my opinion, not matched by any other MCC worker. Excerpts in this autobiography, however, are weak in documenting that broader understanding.

Amos Kreider, Robert's father – and in his view the ideal parent, was involved in the Fundamentalist upheaval of the 1920s that shook Mennonite colleges and resulted in the closure of Goshen College for a year. The Kreider family established itself at Bluffton, where Amos taught at Bluffton College and Robert received much of his education before going on, before the war, to the University of Chicago. He returned to Chicago in 1949 after his service in Europe and earned a doctoral degree in 1952. There he was part of a small but very active and visionary group of Mennonite students closely associated with the Mennonite seminary, then located in Chicago. These men laid the intellectual groundwork for a generation of leaders. It was a mark of the high esteem in which he was held that, even before completing his studies, Kreider was offered both teaching and administrative positions at several Mennonite colleges. He chose Bluffton, and with it the beginning of the next chapter of his life.

Kreider seemed able to bring out some of the best in his Anabaptist and Mennonite tradition without the intense personal crises and struggles that beset so many of his contemporaries. Readers will eagerly await the sequel in which the later years of a remarkable Mennonite leader will be documented.

Ted Regehr, University of Saskatchewan, Emeritus

Eberhard Bethge. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Theologian. Christian. Man for His Times. A Biography.* Rev. and ed. by Victoria J. Barnett. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

Anyone who is seriously interested in the life and legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) will at one point have to read the monumental biography written by his close friend Eberhard Bethge. It was first published in a German edition in 1967 and then in 1970 was translated into an abridged English version (based on the third German edition). The present work "brings into English for the first time the complete text of the German edition of 1967. All material that was omitted or abridged in the 1970 English translation has been restored" (ix). The result is that no other biographical work could match the detail, depth, breadth, or sophistication of this volume. It is, truly, a classic standard work.

The 1048-page opus is divided as follows. Part One: The Lure of Theology consists of five chapters dealing with Bonhoeffer's childhood, student years, pastorate in Barcelona, lectureship in Berlin, and first visit to America. Part Two: The Cost of Being a Christian has six chapters treating Bonhoeffer's first pastoral responsibilities, his lecturing in Berlin, his pastorate in London, and his time at the underground seminary in Zingst, the seminary in Finkenwalde, and the collective pastorates. Part Three: Sharing Germany's Destiny consists of chapters discussing Bonhoeffer's extensive travels, the conspiracy against Hitler, Bonhoeffer's imprisonment in Tegel, and his final custody by the state. The work is completed by two appendices, one on the Zossen files and another one on Bonhoeffer's reading list in prison, endnotes, a table of chronology and a very extensive general subject index.

Victoria Barnett has accomplished a great feat by examining and comparing the German and English texts while revising and completing the latter for this edition. A considerable achievement is the updating (with some additions) of the endnotes to include English translations of works that were previously only cited in German. Equally as significant, especially for the scholar, is the updating of the variously published works of Bonhoeffer in older editions (in particular, *Gesammelte Schriften*) to the corresponding volumes of the new standard critical edition, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke* (*DBW*), completed in 1999. Since all research now uses *DBW* as the

benchmark for citation, this bibliography can easily be used with reference to Bonhoeffer's written legacy.

Given the large amount of text in this biography, the number of stylistic and editorial mistakes is nearly negligible. Two minor factual inaccuracies, however, should be corrected. First, on p. 78, Bonhoeffer is described as listening to J. S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion while in Tegel prison in 1943. Yet, as a comparison with *DBW* 8, 184 indicates, Bonhoeffer's own letter to his parents from 17 November 1943 suggests he was merely remembering (but not actually listening to) Bach's music while in prison. Moreover, it is evident from the context of the letter that he was referring to Bach's Mass in B Minor and not to the St. Matthew Passion (only the first work opens with the Kyrie Eleison, a matter noted by Bonhoeffer in the letter). Second, on p. 429, the correct translation of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's short prose writing *Die Judenbuche* is not "Jewish Books." Since the writing itself focuses on two murders that happened under the same beech tree, the correct translation is "The Jewish Beech."

In sum, anyone – scholar or lay person – who wishes to gain a detailed understanding of Bonhoeffer's family background, his theological formation, ecumenical interests, social and political perspectives, pastoral concerns, extensive relationships, international travels, or involvement in the conspiracy against Hitler – in short his highly complex life, needs to turn to the pages of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. With this work the cliché that some books are a "must read" is unreservedly true; for this biography is simply a goldmine.

Peter Frick, St. Paul's United College, Waterloo, ON

Daniel Liechty, ed. *Death and Denial: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Legacy of Ernest Becker*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002.

Many readers will remember the wide popularity during the 1970s of Ernest Becker's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Denial of Death*. Various factors conspire to slant this memory towards being one of a passing academic fad. One prominent factor is its explicit reliance upon psychoanalysis and existentialist thought, both of which are commonly considered *passé* in many

academic disciplines. Another is its speculative or philosophical flavor, in contrast with the more rigorous empirical orientation that has dominated the social sciences in recent decades. Yet Becker's influence endures, and Daniel Liechty has done us the immeasurable service of gathering together a set of "progress reports" in this single volume.

The essays collected in *Death and Denial* are required reading for anyone with an interest in Becker's work and influence, but they also provide a widely accessible introduction as well. Liechty's book should prove stimulating and provocative for any broadly informed reader with either theoretical or practical interests in the significance of death in contemporary society and culture.

Liechty's introduction sets the book's tone very effectively, summarizing the general theoretical rubric of "Generative Death Anxiety" of which Becker's work is a central part. "[GDA theory] suggests that at the deepest level, human behavior is motivated by the unavoidable need to shield oneself from consciousness of human mortality" (ix). Liechty's summary of the history of this idea makes clear that Becker's contribution was much more synthetic than seminal, that Becker was not its originator but probably was its most eloquent and compelling voice. Liechty, whose own credentials and experience are widely interdisciplinary (encompassing theology, ministry, social sciences, and social services), is well-placed to provide a responsible, accessible perspective on how Becker's influence, though dispersed over a startling array of academic and therapeutic fields, may nonetheless be seen as providing theoretical unity and coherence that transcends disciplinary boundaries.

One refreshing characteristic of Liechty's book is that this broadly interdisciplinary thrust does not display any stereotypical "humanities" animus toward empirical scientific inquiry. The first chapter, in fact, is a wonderfully compact summary by three research psychologists of their experimental studies in "terror management," and a discussion of how these studies provide significant empirical support for Becker's more theoretical analysis of death anxiety and human behavior. This empirical aspect is reinforced throughout chapters on psychology, psychotherapy, and social sciences.

But neither does the book represent any simplistic bifurcation of sciences and humanities. Though I may be somewhat biased by my own

disciplinary background and inclinations, I am tempted to claim that the most interesting and important chapter is by sociologist James Aho. Aho evokes Becker's assumption that empirical social science must have a "transcendent dimension," a theological reference, in order to make sense of human action as both meaningful and free. As he puts it, "social scientists must begin entertaining the strong possibility that faith in a transcendent dimension, in a Thing that is not a thing, an Object that is not an object, is a precondition for creativity and psychological health" (124). This general direction gains further resonance in chapters on Feuerbach (by Van A. Harvey) and on Emmanuel Levinas (by Richard Colledge).

What I have emphasized only scratches the surface of *Death and Denial*. Of particular interest to many readers in the Anabaptist tradition will be the chapters on issues of violence, war, and the defining of enemies (e.g., chapters by C. Fred Alford, Gavin de Becker, and Sam Keen). Other chapters discuss GDA theory in relation to forgiveness, neuroses, addictions, children and poverty, industrial organization, medicine, communication, Buddhism, Christian anthropology, and feminism. The scope is encyclopedic, and the chapters are all rigorous and substantial without being intimidating.

This book provides valuable perspective for those already somewhat familiar with Becker or with GDA theory, but it also provides an excellent springboard for others looking for beginning orientation. Its only significant weakness is that its wide scope will probably result in most readers finding some chapters much more interesting and helpful than others. Kudos to Daniel Liechty for the energy and insight he brings to the furtherance of Becker's legacy!

Peter C. Blum, Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, MI