area, given that almost half the essays were published half a decade or more ago. As already suggested, this book's main contribution is the previously unpublished pieces. Of those, four of five represent writers theologically formed at Duke University (Nathan Kerr is the exception). Perhaps a better title would be "The New Duke Yoder," since the book represents one set of new engagements with Yoder.

A second limitation is that despite the centrality in these essays of the witnessing community as the medium and message of Good News, most people in that community will find the book inaccessible. Deconstructionist and post-structuralist schools of thought are notoriously heady and complex while theological engagement with them is relatively new. Nevertheless, for scholars already familiar with those schools of thought these scholarly pieces from and for academic contexts provide an important resource engaging Yoder's Christian pacifism in ever broader theological circles.

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James Davison Hunter. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Throughout history many Christians have felt compelled to change the world for the better. But should Christians feel so compelled? And if so, how should they engage the world, especially in our own time? James Davison Hunter provides a fascinating exploration of these questions, and provides answers that resonate rather closely with the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition.

The first essay of three in this volume focuses on culture and cultural change. Hunter objects to the common understanding of culture as a worldview, or as the values held by the majority of people, together with the choices people make on the basis of these values. This approach focuses too much on ideas, is too individualistic, and assumes that cultural transformation depends on personal transformation occurring from the

bottom up. Hunter proposes a view of culture embedded in historical forces, institutions, and networks of powerful individuals. Cultural change can be brought about only from the top down, when networks of elites and the institutions they lead coalesce.

Hunter's analysis would be strengthened if he were to see his task as *refining* the common understanding, rather than proposing "an alternative view" (32). His own analysis is idea-driven (32, 35). While stressing the institutional power component of culture, he nonetheless admits there is a dialectical relation between ideas and institutions (34) and is forced to say that "ideas do have consequences" (40).

Hunter's alternative view no doubt explains why so many Christians today clamor for power and political influence. Indeed, there has been "a tendency toward the politicization of nearly everything" in the development of American political culture over the past century (102). Essay Two devotes a chapter each to three expressions of these tendencies. The conservative Christian right is the most obvious expression of evangelicals seeking political means to "preserve, protect and defend the Judeo-Christian values that made this the greatest country in history" (126). (For a recent analysis of the Christian right in Canada see Marci McDonald, *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada* [Random House Canada, 2010].) The progressive Christian left has a very different agenda – equality and social justice. While this agenda was at the forefront of mainline denominations in the past, the recent resurgence of the Christian left is located in progressive evangelicals; its most visible figure is Jim Wallis (137). But the new Christian left is as much a power play as the Christian right, finding its home in the Democratic Party, just as the Christian right is associated with the Republican Party (144).

Interestingly, Hunter identifies the neo-Anabaptists as a significant third approach to political theology. For John Howard Yoder, acknowledged as key to the development of the neo-Anabaptist vision and for making it intellectually respectable (152), Jesus modeled an alternative relationship with the reigning powers of the day. He rejected the temptation to exercise political power, and instead challenged and overcame the "principalities and powers" by being a suffering servant and dying on the cross. Christians are called to follow Jesus' model, separating themselves from the world and

its methods, living as "resident aliens," and being an alternate worshipping community.

Hunter faults neo-Anabaptists for succumbing to the same politicization as the Christian right and left. Christian ethics comes down to "the politics of Jesus," and the Christian community is still seen as "a political reality" (162). Here he is quite unfair to Yoder and the neo-Anabaptists, who understand "politics" in a very different way when applied to Jesus and the Christian community. Hunter also overplays the separatist tendencies of neo-Anabaptists, and unfairly criticizes them for being "so relentlessly negative," even "world-hating," and for failing to acknowledge what is good and beautiful in the world (164, 174). Much in contemporary society deserves strong critique, however, and such critique can be coupled with an equally strong affirmation of what is good and beautiful.

Indeed, Hunter's own proposal for a proper understanding of Christian witness has much in common with the Anabaptists. He shares a deep concern about Christians using political power to bring about cultural change (95, 172). What is needed is a radical rethinking of our theology of power. Power is inherent in human nature and inescapable (177, 179), but political power is not the only, or even the predominant, expression of power. Jesus exerted social or relational power, submitting to God, rejecting status and reputation, showing compassion, and dealing non-coercively with those outside the community of faith (187-93). This becomes the model for Hunter's paradigm of a post-political witness to the world, a theology of faithful presence outlined in Essay Three.

At times Hunter seems to advocate that Christians should give up trying to change the world. He suggests we should "abandon altogether" talk of "redeeming the culture," "advancing the kingdom," or "transforming the world" (280). But surely there is something wrong here; our Lord taught us to pray that God's will be done on earth. What Hunter is really concerned about is improper *means.* He agrees with neo-Anabaptists on rejecting a Constantinian approach to engagement with the world with its proclivity towards domination and politicization (280). Such an approach tends towards either triumphalism or despair (234). A humbler, more patient orientation towards a faithful incarnational presence in all spheres of life is all that God asks of us. He will take care of changing the world (241).

Hunter seeks to offer a radically new paradigm of engagement with the world (270, 278). But in the final essay he recounts examples of Christians as a faithful presence in various spheres (266-69), and is forced to concede that the neo-Anabaptists have got it right, at least partly (234, 283). Perhaps a more generous reading of both the neo-Anabaptists and the Christian right and left might have made for a shorter, more positive and constructive analysis.

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Theron F. Schlabach. *War, Peace and Social Conscience: Guy F. Hershberger and Mennonite Ethics*. Scottdale, PA and Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2009.

Theron Schlabach has written a much-needed biography of Mennonite ethicist and church leader Guy F. Hershberger. Considering the significant body of work Schlabach has produced on 20th-century American Mennonites, this volume is very welcome. The thoroughly researched and detailed account brings significant contextualization to North American Mennonite thought, especially as it concerns nonviolence. Schlabach's book is not only grounded in exhaustive research into primary sources, it is also a straightforward, accessible history. The decades of Hershberger's life were crucial to the development of Mennonite identity in North America, and a central point to that process was the question of non-resistance. Yet it was about more than just pacifism; it was also about how to be a good American.

The book follows the life of Hersberger, but more than that it uses his life as a way into the decades surrounding the World Wars and Cold War of the 20th century, and the complex responses Mennonites made in that context. In particular, Schlabach's treatment of Hershberger's seminal study of Mennonite pacifism, *War, Peace and Nonresistence*, along with