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Anne Krabill Hershberger, ed. *Sexuality: God's Gift*. Second edition. Scottsdale/Waterloo: Herald Press, 2010.

Given that contemporary theology has seen a renewed interest in the significance of embodiment, the second edition of *Sexuality: God's Gift* is a timely addition to Anabaptist-Mennonite pastoral theology. According to editor Anne Krabill Hershberger, the book aims "to put in accessible form some topics on sexuality which have special meaning for Christians and to interpret them from a Christian, Anabaptist, biblical perspective" (13). With its 16 chapters tracing issues related to sexuality from childhood through old age, this volume is an updated, more comprehensive version of the first edition, and is sure to be useful in congregational, small-group, and individual settings.

*Sexuality: God's Gift* draws from the wisdom and experience of a number of authors without attempting to harmonize their views, giving the book an interdisciplinary and intergenerational flavor. Hershberger and Willard S. Krabill begin the collection by framing sexuality in terms of a divine gift, in contrast to the negativity about sexuality and indeed about embodiment itself in the history of the Christian tradition (19). Sexuality is further understood as broader than genital sex, encompassing gender as well; thus the authors state that "[a]lways, from birth to death, we are all sexual beings" (18). This is followed by a thorough and realistic look at biblical depictions of sexuality by Keith Graber Miller that concludes, not with a simplistic appeal to so-called 'biblical marriage' or 'family values' but with an appeal to emulate sexuality at its "biblical best" (50). After Krabill places sexuality within the broader category of human intimacy, the discussion turns to sexuality at different life stages.

While the first edition addressed youth and children in a single chapter, the second edition distinguishes between the two age groups, resulting in James H. Ritchie Jr.'s chapter on "The Gift and Its Youngest Recipients" and Barbara J. Meyer's "The Gift and Nurturing Adolescents." In "The Gift and Singleness," Julie Nash writes candidly of her experience of singleness, followed by Krabill's chapters on marriage, same-sex orientation, and "Cross-Gender Friendships." Miller and Hershberger discuss sexuality and aging, and Rachel Nafziger Hartzler discusses sexuality "After Losing a

Spouse.” The final essays explore sensuality (Hershberger), the arts (Lauren Friesen), celibacy (Sue L. Conrad), the “misuse” of sexuality (Krabill and Hershberger), its “restoration” (Delores Hestand Friesen), and offer resources for further reading compiled by Hestand Friesen and Hershberger.

Many chapters are compelling and well-researched, drawing from well-known scholars in Christian sexual ethics such as James B. Nelson and Lisa Sowle Cahill. Still, several chapters stand out. Meyer provides a sensitive account of sexuality and the complexities of adolescence that encourages and challenges youth pastors and parents to discuss sexual ethics openly with youth. Krabill’s take on same-sex orientation is likewise nuanced and hospitable, an appropriate tone given the still-charged nature of the subject in many congregations. Both Friesen’s discussion of sexuality in the arts and Conrad’s artful and quite theological portrayal of celibacy deepen the definition of sexuality beyond sex or marriage to include broader aspects of church and community life.

I was less drawn to Krabill’s discussion of marriage, which focuses more on the downfalls of pre-marital sex than on the positive values of healthy marriage relationships. Since same-sex marriage is not a possibility in many contexts, there are hints here of a possible double standard regarding acceptance and hospitality: those who identify as gay or lesbian are welcomed without judgment, while heterosexuals remain accountable to a cut-and-dried sexual ethic. This distance is troubling and requires further reflection. The emphasis on the legal aspect of marriage was also somewhat puzzling, as Anabaptist-Mennonite marriages have historically relied primarily on the church community, not the state, for legitimation. Krabill’s look at “cross-gender friendships,” among other chapters, made several generalizations about gender that reveal an area the authors could have researched further. Consultation with feminist and womanist theologies, and with theologies of gender and embodiment could have strengthened the discussion significantly.

This edition of *Sexuality: God’s Gift* delves deeper into the controversies of sexual ethics than its predecessor, tackling singleness and celibacy, widowhood, and divorce, in addition to same-sex orientation and various kinds of abuse. Though readers seeking a more sustained Anabaptist-Mennonite theology of embodiment and sexuality will have to look

elsewhere, this volume book provides a fitting introduction for Mennonite and other congregations who have yet to begin the conversation on sexuality.

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Peter J. Leithart. *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010.

What does an emperor do when he becomes a Christian? What should he do? Does the life of Constantine have something to teach us? These are the questions that Peter Leithart tries to answer in this book. *Defending Constantine* is mainly a careful yet engaging biography of the first overtly Christian Roman emperor. Leithart tries to summarize the results of the extensive recent scholarship on Constantine at a fairly popular level. The reader is warned in the preface that the author has an ax to grind. Indeed, “as the book progresses biography recedes as polemic comes to the forefront” (10). Leithart’s aim is to take sides on the many things that are disputed about Constantine and to rebut the many caricatures that have arisen. As the title suggests, his aim is to defend Constantine.

Is the story only a positive one? By no means. Yes, any number of very unchristian attitudes and actions can be held against Constantine; yet complicating circumstances can partly explain these negatives. Yes, he was in some ways like any other Roman emperor, but he initiated significant changes to Rome’s political landscape because he was a Christian (Leithart judges that Constantine’s conversion was genuine). After an apparently careful tallying of the balance sheet, the author finds more positives than negatives in Constantine. I am not an historian and thus not able to assess the fairness of his evaluation, except to say that historical evaluations of political figures are unavoidably subjective. Leithart relies heavily on the writings of Eusebius, a fourth-century bishop, whom he admits exaggerated Constantine’s virtues and ignored his vices (28). Other writers of the time were much more critical of the emperor. In any case, according to Leithart, Constantine left an enduring legacy, and provides in many respects a model