

religion in its quest to overcome “cultural barriers” separating people through the adoption of a trans-cultural message of peace and inclusion. However, I was somewhat disappointed with Thiessen’s discarding of alternative attempts to “reinterpret and even challenge the centrality of the missionary impulse of the Christian church” (30) as irrelevant to his project. I think a germane question for just such a book would be: Is one obliged to proselytize in order to be considered a true Christian?

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Angela H. Reed. *Quest for Spiritual Community: Reclaiming Spiritual Guidance for Contemporary Congregations*. New York: T & T Clark International, 2011.

Contemporary culture has an appetite for spirituality, but it is not the church that seekers are inevitably turning to. The church, however, has historically been an essential resource for spiritual formation. In response to this disparity, practical theologian Angela Reed urges congregations to reclaim spiritual guidance as a means to grow into God’s image and to live out that reality in love with all humankind.

Influenced by a Mennonite heritage and sensitive to the Mennonite suspicion of spirituality as a withdrawal from the active life, Reed moves the spiritual formation quest beyond merely the person into community and mission. Experience as a pastor, spiritual directee, and director inform her practical and analytical, biblical, and theological proposal. Begun as a dissertation, part of this project is made up of an empirical study of three Mennonite and three Presbyterian churches that have intentionally integrated some form of spiritual direction. (Reed generally prefers the less directive term “spiritual guidance.”)

The book begins with an analysis of spirituality in culture by integrating insights from sociology. The style utilized here and throughout is easy to read, with frequent case studies employed to bring the relevant

issues to life. To further complement this user-friendly approach, questions at the end of each chapter highlight, and provide a means to think about, key ideas. Chapter two examines the experiences of those churches in the study that have intentionally engaged and utilized spiritual direction in some way. Subsequent chapters provide insight into spiritual guidance through diverse biblical and historical examples such as the apostle Paul, Julian of Norwich, Suzanna Wesley, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer; discuss the theology of Jürgen Moltmann; and conclude with a pragmatic model of spiritual guidance for congregations.

The author specifically articulates what she calls a “Protestant theology of spiritual guidance” (114) informed by the theology of Moltmann. I found this to be a rich and enlightening section; however, it left me wondering how Moltmann’s theology, and ultimately Reed’s thesis, fits with an Anabaptist-Mennonite theology. Certainly the strong emphasis on the congregation, as well as a spirituality that is lived out in the world is an indication of the author’s theological background, but those looking for an integrated Anabaptist-Mennonite spiritual theology will be disappointed. For this reason it is doubtful that Mennonites apprehensive of spirituality are likely to change their minds, though they could learn from reading this work.

While Reed comments in a footnote about the tendency of Protestant spiritual direction to be individualistic (61), and although she frequently critiques an inner-focused spirituality, this important issue could use more reflection. In fact, the frequent caution about pietistic or quietistic spirituality may give the false impression that the Christian tradition has historically been focused on the inner life at the expense of the outer life. This is where the spiritual tradition of the Anabaptists or earlier Catholic traditions, such as those of the Benedictines, could be discussed as a historical guide to offer a more balanced approach to the modern individualistic tendency of Protestantism.

In what way Reed’s Mennonite theology fits with a Protestant theology is an obvious question that leaves this reader wishing for greater theological clarity about spirituality in these two streams. To this end, some insight into the unique strengths and challenges of offering spiritual guidance in the Mennonite and Presbyterian congregations in the author’s study could aid in achieving this greater clarity.

*Quest for Spiritual Communities: Reclaiming Spiritual Guidance for Contemporary Congregations* is an important contribution to the study of spiritual formation and its relation to the church. It is written with clarity and profundity for a wide group of readers, including pastors, spiritual directors, seminarians, and lay persons. With built-in study questions, this volume is a ready-to-use resource for Sunday school classes or small group discussions, and it should aid in moving the conversation forward and lead to greater spiritual nurturing in congregations.

Receiving and providing spiritual guidance is essential for Christian growth and maturity. Though Reed reminds us that practices are “only tools” to be used in the nurturing of faith (155), she provides insightful ideas about practical guidance to deepen the spiritual journey – and to help individuals who make up the church to grow into the likeness and action of Christ.

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J. Alexander Sider. *To See History Doxologically: History and Holiness in John Howard Yoder's Ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

J. Alexander Sider's *To See History Doxologically: History and Holiness in John Howard Yoder's Ecclesiology* compares Yoder's conceptions of history and holiness with those of various theological figures. In doing so, it suggests how the church can “see history doxologically” – a saying of Yoder's (3). Following Yoder, Sider suggests that holiness and difficulty are not antithetical realities; the church can be holy despite its difficult brokenness (3, 12). Nonetheless, this doxological vision requires the church to live in the world as “a sign of the divine presence” (3-4). Such a practice is marked by a view of history centred on the lamb that was slain, requiring repentance and forgiveness while appropriating history as an exercise in praise (3, 5, 15).

Readers should not skip the “Acknowledgments” in this book, where Sider shares a biographical anecdote about his grandparents. Describing them with high esteem, he suggests their lives embody “history as praise” and provided him with a model for his faith (xiii-xiv). This link not only reveals the personal nature of Sider's work but illustrates the realism that