

*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

accompanies a doxological vision of history. This background accentuates the pastoral concern evident in the author's work and, given the highly academic nature of this book (much of the content is taken from Sider's doctoral dissertation), it is clear that Sider uniquely balances practical application with rigorous scholarship.

The author begins with exegetical work in Hebrews, where he suggests the church must believe the promises of Jesus while retaining a measure of frailty. Accordingly, while juxtaposing Yoder with Oliver O'Donovan, he suggests the church must embody the gospel with openness to society's "outsiders" (55). Sider also notes Ernst Troeltsch's influence on Yoder, particularly on Yoder's view of "history as presenting a set of methodological aporiae" (59). Nonetheless, Yoder differs from Troeltsch by refusing to use history to secure Christianity's cultural dominance.

Given this distinction in Yoder's historicism, Sider asserts that an adequate view of salvation must be non-Constantinian. That is, it must be nonviolent and avoid political infidelity. The non-Constantinian nature of the gospel cultivates the church's "habitus" in history (100). Such a habitus is characterized by praise to the lamb that was slain, a vision in Revelation 5 that illustrates Christ's control over history and its eschatological end. With recourse to Miroslav Volf, Sider shows that a doxological vision of history does not exclude acts of penitence or lament. In fact, it insists upon "forgiveness as conversation" (159). Finally, Sider places Yoder's thought alongside that of Alasdair MacIntyre to investigate Yoder's voluntarism and the church's dialogical nature.

One of the strengths of Sider's book is its critical engagement with various scholars and ideas. Sider places Yoder alongside people as diverse as Troeltsch and Volf while generously summarizing and appraising their work. The author also critically engages with his own tradition, suggesting that those with a "Radical Reformation" heritage should engage the history of Constantine and the 4th-century church with greater honesty (99). Ultimately, his ability to critically assess a plethora of information produces unique insights on Yoder's thought, particularly with reference to the church.

One area that may prove striking to readers is Sider's argument that holiness is difficult. While this position rightly draws attention to the difficulties endured by a holy, crucified Christ, it risks under-emphasizing

the comfort and peace found in a holy life in Christ. Although I do not think Sider wishes to say a holy life is *only* difficult, his definition of holiness does not fully express other adequate conceptions of holiness. In opposition to Sider (and Yoder), it could be said that the unholy life is difficult while the holy life is, in a sense, easier. Such a conception is common in Proverbs, where it says, “The one whose walk is blameless is kept safe, but the one whose ways are perverse will fall into the pit” (Prov. 28:18). While Sider admits that his conception of holiness is debatable, a wider engagement with other perspectives might have strengthened his argument.

Sider’s work offers an important comparative study of Yoder’s ecclesiology that issues an important challenge. While the content of the book is accessible to the general educated reader, the in-depth study it provides would best commend itself to those who are passionate about Yoder’s theology or the theologies covered in this book.

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Shelly Rambo. *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010.

In *Spirit and Trauma*, Shelly Rambo describes trauma as a place where “death haunts life and life bears death within it” (155). Trauma disrupts our sense of time, body, and word. Yet God’s Spirit is present as witness to both the pull of death and the movement of life in the space of suffering, and love remains with us in body, time, and word even in the unspeakable places of trauma and violence.

For Rambo, salvation is not a linear victorious jump over the abyss of death into life. She sees such a view as problematic from a trauma perspective because it bypasses, or “elides,” suffering, oppression, and violence. Instead, salvation as seen from the middle is found in the presence of love in the Spirit, who remains with us: “The middle story is not a story of rising out of