

exploration of Paul's apparently later reflections on his trauma (including prison experiences) would also seem appropriate in this connection (e.g., 2 Cor 1-7, 11-12; Rom 5, 8). For instance, the Roman triumph is helpfully explained in connection with humiliated prisoners of war, but Paul's own use of this (political) image of captivity as a self-depiction is not explored (2 Cor 2:14-16). Finally, what is missing is an interrogation into Paul's self-perception, specifically as a movement leader (as opposed to simply being a purveyor of Christ-faith and having a "social network") in connection with the challenge of the "regulation" of collective emotion in the context of the abjection of prison.

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Darin W. Snyder Belousek and Margaret R. Pfeil, eds. *Intercessory Prayer and the Communion of Saints: Mennonite and Catholic Perspectives*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2022.

That this book comes as the latest in the Bridgefolk Series will be enough to commend it to many readers. The Bridgefolk Conferences, gatherings of Mennonites and Catholics, have been a sign of hope for many of us and not only members of those two denominations. This volume gathers papers from two conference occasions in 2015 and 2016. The title of this volume accurately indicates the subject matter.

The 2015 conference presentations all engage with an inspiring story of prayer and healing. In 1987, Jun Yanada, the son of a Japanese Mennonite pastor, Takashi Yamada, was diagnosed with aggressive leukemia. He began treatment in the Japanese Red Cross Hospital in Nagoya near the Catholic Nanzan University and Monastery where Jun was a student studying the history of early Christian art. His professor was Fr. Alfonso M. Fausone, SVD. At the time, Jun's brother, Nozomu, was a student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Indiana. In a detailed account, enabled by the careful research skills of Alan Kreider, the story of the illness and the

amazing healing is recounted. This includes the engagement of Japanese and other Mennonites in prayer for Jun but also the intercessions of the Catholics, staff, and students, their sustained holding of Jun before God, the novena they offered, the anointing of the sick performed by Fr. Fausone with the will and presence of the Yamada family, and their keeping of the seminary chapel lights on night after night during the prayers. Further, unknown to the family, Fr. Fausone invoked the intercession of Blessed Joseph Freinademetz. Later, Freinademetz was canonized and Jun Yamada was present in Rome with his own part to play in the ceremony.

The first part of the volume includes papers relating to the telling of this story by Nozomu Yamada and Fr. Alfonso. Inevitably there are elements of repetition but also undisguised sensitivity to the differences in doctrine and practice. The story is told with obvious care and grace. There follow presentations by Nozomu and Fr. Alfonso recalling the events, Fr. Fausone drawing on the notes he made in preparation for the process of St. Joseph Freinademetz's beautification. Both presenters contributed with an awareness of the ecumenical context. What will Japanese Mennonites make of all this fraternization, receiving Catholic hospitality, the administering of "Last Rites"? What will Catholics make of it? The facts are recounted with a sense of peacemaking and maintaining of fellowship, the working out of growing shared love and faith where issues of difference are not ignored. In a rich sense, both writers strive for integrity. There is something beautiful in these accounts. Both presenters share a caution about the word *miracle*, knowing how easily it can be misused. They are at one in the conviction that what happened to Jun was the work of God that cannot, of itself, be attributed to any isolated tradition of the Christian faith. Fr. Fausone ends his contribution with reflections on *communio sanctorum*, the deep meaning of baptism, as he draws on his knowledge of early Christianity. This reviewer was left longing for this to be developed, especially the thoughts on baptism and the shared life in Christ, crucified and risen.

My wish was granted in the second part of the book, which includes the papers of a Bridgefolk Conference held the following year, in 2016. One of the contributors, Dr. John Cavadini, draws us into the Catholic tradition through important documents. He argues that the saints pray for us because they share the life, love, and longing of God for us. Hence theirs is a life

of perpetual intercession which will conclude only with the coming of the Kingdom of God. Meanwhile the church in heaven and on earth shares the suffering love of Christ for the world and intercedes because we can do no other in love. In intercessions with the saints, we are calling on the transfiguring love of Christ. Cavadini acknowledges that some forms of intercession in earlier times were a matter of abuse and that the Church is not rid of it even now. He asserts that we do not *have* to pray to the saints, yet we can recognise in their lives the way they shared our struggles and pains and so we can locate our experiences in theirs, in the fellowship of saints in Christ. In an important sense we are only asking for what the saints are already doing.

Dr. Karl Koop brings a Mennonite perspective to this compilation. He argues that Catholics and Mennonites have different worldviews, with Catholic understandings being shaped by pre-modern thought. He stresses that among Mennonites, intercessions are offered to God on behalf of the living, not the dead. But then there are different understandings of the life in Christ following our bodily death. Purgatory is not a concern of saints who sleep, waiting upon the Last Day. Christ alone is the sole mediator, although the saints are models of faith in life. Koop sets the Catholic/Mennonite divide in a Reformation Context and, in doing so, keeps with some basic questions such as, who are the saints and who today shares the communion of saints?

Essays by Kimberly Hope Belcher and Marlene Kropf describe practices in different traditions. For example, Belcher has a description and reflection on the Easter vigil litany and baptism, as the whole church petitions God for blessing, calling on the saints to pray for us. The litany of saints affirms the eschatological hope of the Catholic liturgy. Marlene Kropf's essay engages with research on what Mennonites believe and practice relating to intercessory prayer. She notes the changes in recent years: the overall decline in intercessory prayer, the importance of singing of prayers, the growing reluctance to pray, the turn to prayers being pastor-led, and the absence of Mary but the common request to friends to pray for us (or keep us in their thoughts). Praying *for* us is replaced with praying *with* us, a change not only made by Mennonites. Kropf gives a sharp and honest appraisal of the poverty of prayer among Mennonite congregations who may well be embarrassed by a request to pray for another, or who may even declare intercession

irrelevant, an argument that has led to a new emphasis on contemplative prayer (which hardly excludes intercession, properly understood). Now it seems it is not a question of whether intercessory prayer works but of how contemplation builds our essential relationship of love with God. Prayer deepens compassion. If this can sound hard on Mennonites, other writers say they recognize similar responses among Catholics. Four useful Appendices follow this essay giving details of the research questions and other information. Kropf's pastoral heart shows itself in her final paragraphs as she longs for Mennonites to recover a passion for intercessory prayer, for it to become again as natural as breathing, not the least because prayer breeds compassion, the love that sustains peacemakers and expands the flow of God's healing love in the world.

Two further essays, by Rebecca Slough (Mennonite) and Elizabeth Groppe (Catholic), conclude the conference papers. These essays were written as responses and are useful summaries. They draw attention to issues still needing to be faced. Additionally, they illustrate how we have already grown in Christ by such ecumenical engagements as we have met a larger Christ than we have known and a richer church than many have ever imagined. There are still questions to be asked and answered, still abuses to be dealt with, but there is also hope, of which Bridgefolk and this splendid volume give evidence. After all, it is only with all the saints that we come to know the fullness of the love of God in Christ.

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