

Foreword

With this issue, Jeremy Bergen, assistant professor of Religious Studies and Theology at Conrad Grebel University College, takes over the reins as CGR's academic editor and becomes the fifth person to serve in that capacity in the journal's 26-year history. He follows Arnold Snyder (2002-2009; 1990-1997), Marlene Epp (1998-2002), Rod Sawatsky (1989-1990), and founding editor Walter Klaassen (1983-1989).

The contents of this issue must be as diversified as those of any issue we have produced in recent years. The 2009 Bechtel Lectures, given at Conrad Grebel University College by Ched Myers and Elaine Enns and titled "Ambassadors of Reconciliation: Biblical and Contemporary Witnesses," form the core of the contents. Articles by Scott Holland and Sidonie Swana follow. Scott Holland provides an address he gave at the 2008 Believers Church conference in Winnipeg. Sidonie Swana Tanziga Falanga adds another voice – and an African perspective – to the "Mennonites and Policing" discussion that provided the theme of our Spring 2008 issue. A Reflection by poet Jean Janzen, "Piano," is part of her series of memoir essays. A spate of book reviews on a wide array of recent publications completes the agenda.

In preparation now are materials for two thematic issues. One of these issues will take up the theme of "Teaching the Bible," while the other has the working title "International Justice and Reconciliation: Challenges and Opportunities for the Peace Church Tradition" and will deal directly with the activities of the International Criminal Court.

We invite submissions – and new subscribers. Please join us as we continue to make contemporary Anabaptist-Mennonite scholarship available to a wide audience. We also remind readers that we regularly post new book reviews to the CGR website, where they can be accessed free of charge.

Jeremy M. Bergen, *Academic Editor*
Stephen A. Jones, *Managing Editor*

2009 BECHTEL LECTURES

LECTURE ONE

“Ambassadors in Chains”: Evangelizing the Powers

Ephesians 2-3 and M.L. King’s Letter from Birmingham City Jail

Elaine Enns and Ched Myers

One of the central questions facing Anabaptist identity in every generation is: What does it mean to be a Peace Church today? In this year’s Bechtel Lectures, we hope to address this question afresh. We are interested in how its contours have changed over the last 50 years under the impact of two historic developments. One is the way in which 20th-century experiments in nonviolence, from Gandhi to Martin Luther King to Christian Peacemaker Teams, have influenced how the traditional Peace Churches understand their vocation. The other is the fact that in the last half-century the just war theory has steadily atrophied among mainstream churches. This is due primarily to two factors: the moral challenge of weapons of mass destruction, and the slow but steady unraveling of the Constantinian arrangement. Today the question of how to be a peace church is increasingly one that faces *all* Christian churches, and it has opened up a vigorous ecumenical conversation in which we believe Mennonites have much to offer, but also much to learn.

A second question we wish to explore is: What does it mean to be an *evangelical* peace church? For many Mennonites over the past century, evangelicalism has meant embracing the culture and theology of Pietism while *trying* to retain a distinctive peace witness, a strategy that has yielded decidedly mixed results. In contrast to mainstream contemporary evangelicalism, Menno Simons contended famously that “true evangelical faith” is expressed not in theological dogmas but in “clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, comforting the sorrowful, sheltering the destitute, serving those that harm, and binding up that which is wounded.”

Menno further exhorted believers to wield nonviolent “weapons

with which the spiritual kingdom of the devil is destroyed.” But it is well documented how the militancy of early Anabaptism has, because of centuries of persecution and accommodation, largely been replaced by a culture of being “quiet in the land.” In these lectures, we wish to explore how Mennonites might recover a more engaged evangelism, by looking at both ancient witnesses from the New Testament and contemporary witnesses from the emerging, non-Mennonite (and non-evangelical) “Peace Churches.”

By way of introduction, Elaine is a Canadian birthright Mennonite and restorative justice trainer and practitioner, and Ched is a longtime ecumenical activist and theologian who has recently joined the Mennonite Church. We hope our reflections will help all who are committed to the gospel to embody more deeply and broadly our peacemaking faith and work in these difficult times. In that spirit, we want to acknowledge that today [March 26] is the third anniversary of the return to Canada of Christian Peacemaker Teams member James Loney after 118 days of captivity in Iraq. We dedicate this talk to Jim; may his witness continue to challenge and inspire us.

Our societies have never been more in need of courageous and creative alternatives to violence and injustice. Street crime, police abuse, and domestic violence are epidemic, while there has never been a time in history more militarized. More people are enslaved today than two centuries ago, and poverty is the number one killer around the globe. Torture seems to have again become acceptable, and even our entertainment culture is ruled by the gun. We live in a world defined by dividing walls, the expression of the social architecture of enmity and inequality. In the past these included the cultural walls of racial apartheid – the American *and* Canadian versions – as well as the political barriers of Cold War hostility. The walls persist: No sooner had the Berlin Wall come down in 1979 than another wall at the US-Mexico border went up.

From personal alienation and family abuse to urban uprisings and social prejudice, and from a domestic war against immigrants to an international war against real and imagined terrorism, we are caught in an escalating spiral of violence. This is why Martin Luther King, Jr., in his last speech, the night before he was assassinated – 41 years ago next week –

delivered this ultimatum: “It is no longer a choice, my friends, between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence.”

King was, as Vincent Harding puts it, “*the inconvenient hero*” for the US and for our churches.¹ King’s legacy and challenge belongs to Canadians as well, as our friends north of the border often point out. But we Americans have truly been “in the wilderness for 40 years” since our greatest prophet was cut down by his own government on April 4, 1968.² Harding stresses that we must learn the history of movements for social change because moral imagination begins with memory.³ For this reason, we are committed to learning from King’s work and witness, and our comments tonight will be in conversation with one of his most enduring reflections: his 1963 “Letter from Birmingham City Jail.”



We will also draw on the biblical book of Ephesians as the other essential part of tonight’s conversation. In the middle part of the 20th century, this epistle, with its emphases on peace and overcoming division, was a favorite text of three notable social movements: international ecumenism, disarmament, and Civil Rights. “If Christ is peace,” wrote Marcus Barth during the darkest period of the Cold War, “then he is by nature a social, even a political event, which marks the overcoming and ending of barriers however deeply founded and highly constructed.”⁴ In the last 30 years, however, Ephesians has fallen into disfavor in mainstream Christian circles, and is sometimes avoided today. We believe that the central character of this epistle as a manifesto of peacemaking is too important to ignore, and we want to reclaim it with a particular eye toward Anabaptist discipleship.

I

We agree with Tom Yoder Neufeld, who has helped rehabilitate Ephesians with his fine *Believer’s Church Commentary*, that the epistle probably dates from the late first century, authored by someone (or group) belonging to a

“Pauline school.”⁵ Ephesians takes on the task of summarizing the social character of the apostle’s theology for a new generation of Christians, a quarter-century or more after Paul’s death. Though tradition attached this letter to Ephesus, it was probably a circular letter sent around to churches throughout Asia Minor. Indeed, a map of the ancient Mediterranean world shows Ephesus in the geopolitical middle, roughly halfway between Jerusalem and Rome, and we know it was the hub of early Christianity in the region. Thus we find it helpful to consider Ephesians as the first “encyclical” in the history of the church.

The thesis statement of the epistle is found in the middle of a long, run-on opening prayer (1:3-14). It introduces a “mystery,” but not one which is unsolvable. It has been *revealed* in Christ: God’s desire and intention is to re-gather all things alienated back into unity through Christ. Citing the Hebrew tradition of *sophia*, upon which we reflect in the second lecture, the author lays out a vision of the reconciliation of everything. In charge of this new “administration” is Messiah. The Greek word here is *oikonomian*, from which our term “economics” comes, meaning management of a household. This theological assertion seeks to answer the perennial question of individuals and churches alike: What is God’s will for me, for us? According to Ephesians, this is a settled issue: to join Christ’s program to overcome all division, to include *all* beings, to heal every wound.

This is, by any account, a remarkably big vision for a small movement just four generations old. (It also raises the uncomfortable question of whether our big churches nurture only small visions.) That the writer repeatedly stresses this vision as a *mystery* throughout the epistle, however, testifies to his realism. It is not evident; indeed, human history has long defied the hope for true, cosmic peace. Yet the fact that God’s dream has been *revealed* invites and challenges us to be part of this messianic program.

A second key theme of the epistle is then introduced, which grounds the vision in the concrete social terrain of the writer. We read the following equation: “we” (v.12) plus “you” (v.13) will constitute an “us” (v.14). This suggests the author was Jewish, which is indicated by such phrases as “we who first hoped in Messiah” (v.12a). The audience being addressed, on the other hand, consisted predominately of non-Jewish Christians, who had “heard the word of truth . . . and believed” (v.13). This scenario is clearly

expressed in 2:11f: “Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision . . . were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise.” It is God’s plan to deliver a joint “inheritance” to both Gentiles and Jews (1:14).

Ephesians is thus a treatise on the struggle within salvation history to realize God’s great plan of reconciliation, focusing upon the conflict between Christ’s inauguration of peace and the Powers’ perpetuation of enmity. At the center of this struggle stands the church, which has inherited the messianic vocation of peacemaking. Ephesians reflects concerns of a fourth generation ecclesiology, in particular a changing social situation in which the Jewish roots of the church are in danger of being forgotten by the emerging Gentile majority. The epistle re-contextualizes Paul’s argument for inclusion in Romans, where he contends that Gentiles must be allowed into the Jewish tradition. Ephesians inverts this argument, urging a now predominately Gentile church not to forget its roots in Judaism, and to ensure that majority culture discrimination against the Jewish minority – already the norm in the Roman imperial context – isn’t reproduced in the church.

Because this joint inheritance is not just spiritual but concretely social in character, deep cultural and political segregation must be overcome. The dream of God, therefore, stands or falls on the creation of a new people, who will be tested upon the historical fact of human alienation, indeed upon a worst-case example. In Hellenistic antiquity the cultural, economic, and political conflict between Jew and Gentile was considered to be the prototype of all human hostility. In other words, we are talking about two communities that are in a protracted, intergenerational war – not unlike the legacy of American apartheid, or Israelis and Arabs today, or Protestant Unionists and Catholic Republicans in Northern Ireland. The epistle invites Christians today to face the same enmities in our historical context.

This brings us to the theological heart of Ephesians, which articulates the historical shape of the cosmic reconciliation in Christ promised in the prologue. The structure of this section is neatly concentric, articulating this magnificent vision of social reconciliation:

- A 11-12: Gentiles not citizens
 - B 13-14a: Gentiles brought near by peace of Christ
 - C 14b-16: The dividing wall torn down
 - B¹ 17-18: Peace has been declared near and far
- A¹ 19-22: Gentiles now citizens

The outer frame reflects, in explicitly political terms, on the notion of “citizenship”: v.12 – you were . . . excluded from citizenship (*politeias*) in Israel and strangers (*xenoi*) to the covenants of promise; v.19 – you are no longer strangers (*xenoi*) and ‘outside the house,’ but are fellow citizens (*sumpolitai*) with the saints and ‘members of the household’ of God. Those outside have now been welcomed in, and a new society is being built upon the radical principle of inclusion of the ethnic “other.” Texts such as this wreak havoc on modern ideologies of xenophobia and discrimination against immigrants.

The inner frame represents a *midrash* on Isaiah 57:19: “Peace, peace to the far and the near, says the Lord; I will heal my people.” Verses 13-14a – But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; v.17 – So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those near, for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

These two frames bracket the author’s central, magnificent articulation of what transpired on Christ’s cross as the great moment of cosmic peacemaking. Isaiah’s promise has been realized “in the blood of Christ” (v.13). The author now offers a series of participial clauses stacked on top of each other, as if he is searching for different ways to communicate this magnificent but incredible assertion. Christ embodies peace because he has *in his flesh* made us both one, broken down the dividing wall of hostility, the enmity, the law consisting of commandments in statutes; creating in himself one new humanity from the two; thus making peace; reconciling both, in one body, to God through the cross; thereby putting to death the enmity in himself (v. 15f).

The wall that has been torn down is a metaphor for the political, economic, social, and psychological structures and practices that enforce segregation between Jew and Gentile. This enmity was enforced by a

complex matrix of “statutory laws, cultural prejudices and institutionalized imperatives” – just as race or class apartheid was and is in our own time. Such dividing walls are made up of both outer structures and inner attitudes, and this litany claims that *every one of these* has been dismantled by Christ. This is not just a truce in which adversaries tolerate each other; it is a vision that seeks to abolish the deepest justifications for enmity. That is the only peacemaking that endures.

Extraordinary Notions Articulated

Two other extraordinary notions are articulated in this key passage. One is an image fraught with irony. The author claims that the cross – still a symbol in his day of Roman public terrorism, the executioner’s stake on which all political dissidents were strung – *itself* somehow “put to death” these deep-seated hostilities (v.16b). This is tantamount to saying today that “the electric chair killed the death penalty.” It defies logic. Here the work of René Girard is illuminating. In his comments on the parallel passage in Col. 2:14f, Girard contends that the cross unmask the scapegoat myth that ultimately lies beneath every justification for officially sanctioned violence:

The Crucifixion reduces mythology to powerlessness by exposing violent contagion, which is so effective in the myths that it prevents communities from ever finding out the truth, namely, the innocence of their victims.... Though ordinarily the accusation nails the victim to a cross, here by contrast the accusation itself is nailed and publicly exhibited and exposed as a lie.⁶

Then and now, the majority culture believes that the state’s use of violence “when necessary” is rational, noble, and just (think of the popular support today in the US for the death penalty and foreign military interventions). But “by depriving the victim mechanism of the darkness that must conceal it so it can continue to control human culture, the Cross shakes up the world”; it “discredits once and for all the untruth of the principalities and powers.”⁷

The power of nonviolent love has undone the love of power in a world of domination. Peace has been declared, not as a sentimental absence of conflict but as a unilateral disarmament for the purpose of genuine reconciliation of adversaries. This represents the core of Paul’s theology of

the cross, which with no understatement he calls a mystery. It is why Girard claims that “the explanatory power of Jesus’ death is much greater than we realize, and Paul’s exalted idea of the cross as the source of all knowledge is anthropologically sound.”⁸

The other remarkable notion is that Christ has “created in himself one new humanity from the two, reconciling both, in one body, to God through the cross” (2:15f). The doctrine of atonement implied by the order of these assertions is as unambiguous as it is controversial: reconciliation with our ethnic or political enemies is a *precondition* to reconciliation with God. This wreaks havoc on the long tradition of pietism that imagines we must first “get right with God” if there is ever to be any social change. As Markus Barth put it, “to confess Jesus Christ is to affirm the abolition and end of division and hostility, the end of separation and segregation, the end of enmity and contempt, and the end of every sort of ghetto.”⁹

This peace is neither a sentimental feeling, nor the absence or suppression of conflict, nor a truce in which adversaries tolerate each other, but the abolition of the deepest justifications for enmity. Reconciling peacemaking has thus been declared as gospel, and the gospel as reconciling peacemaking (*euēngelosato*, 2:17; see 6:15). The result, stated in almost Trinitarian fashion, is that in Christ both formerly alienated groups now “have access in one Spirit to the Father” (2:18). “Accordingly” (*ara*, 2:19a), those who abide by this unilateral declaration of peace represent a third force in history, the desegregated community of the church (2:19-22). The church is thus described, in frankly political terms, as a “house without walls.”

Note all the ways that the root *oik* appears here: 2:19 – you are no longer strangers and outside the house (*paroikos*), but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household (*oikeioi*) of God; 2:20-22 – built upon (*epoikodomēthentes*) the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the “keystone.” The whole structure (*oikodomē*) is joined together in Christ and grows into a holy Temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built (*sunoikodomeisthe*) into it for a dwelling place (*katoikētērion*) of God in the Spirit.

The apostles and prophets are the foundation of this house, and Christ Jesus the keystone – not the cornerstone, as is often translated, but the stone at the top of a Roman arch, literally lying at the extreme angle – the final

stone placed at the top of a building structure to integrate it. In fact, this house is not architectural at all but *organic*: joined sinew to sinew, heart to heart. It is what Martin Luther King, Jr. called “the beloved community.”

Members of this undivided house cannot by definition cooperate with any of the myriad social constructions of enmity – nation, gender, class, race, or sexuality. Although walls still exist in the world, Christians should live as if they have been torn down. This means we have to rethink some of our most fundamental assumptions, as the Jewish writer to the Ephesians did concerning the Law. How, for example, is the integrity of the US church compromised by the wall at the US- Mexico border? Or by the second-class citizenship of the gay and lesbian believers among us? Or by the social architecture of our cities that still insulates rich from poor by the thin blue line of police discrimination and the thick red line of economic apartheid? If we Christians are not defying these walls of division, we are not being the church, no matter what we call ourselves.

This vision sounds radical to our ears, since we have been habituated to accept political hostility and division as “the way the world is.” This is why Ephesians now turns to ground this vision in sobering reality: a true peace church *will* be persecuted because of its refusal to abide by enmity. We might say that Eph. 1-2, with its vision of comprehensive reconciliation, is analogous to King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963, which held out a new social possibility to Americans that rejected racism and embraced a common destiny for white and black. But the rest of the Ephesian encyclical speaks from and to the context of engaged struggle, as did another piece authored by King that same year, his “Letter from Birmingham City Jail.” God’s dream is not a pollyannish fantasy but a social imperative, and requires real disciples to engage strategically and nonviolently the existing dividing walls, often at a real cost.

II

Dead middle in Ephesians, almost like a fulcrum on which the epistle’s argument balances, comes this stark reality check to its lofty vision of peace: “Because of all this I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles.” The phrase is incomplete, hanging over the whole of Eph. 3 until

it is reiterated in 4:1, which begins the formal parenetic (i.e., encouraging) section of the epistle, thus firmly anchoring its exhortations in political reality.

The apostle is locked up by the very laws that were allegedly annulled on Christ's cross; obviously the good news that racial hostility has been abolished has not yet dawned on Caesar's world. We tend to romanticize the terrain in which the NT takes place, deluding ourselves into thinking these events happened in Disneyland. Even biblical scholars (few of whom have been to jail) often romanticize Paul's prison experiences, as if he endured only brief stints in a civilized holding cell. In fact, the prisons of the Roman Empire were brutal, marked by "suffering, beatings, chains, darkness and squalor," according to Craig Wansink.¹⁰ The incarcerated had no rights; then (as now) the prison population consisted either of poor people or dissidents – and apparently Paul was both. "Imprisonment might lead to death," says Wansink, "either execution by the authorities or death resulting from disease, torture, or the psychological trauma of imprisonment." The Roman historian Sallust (86-34 BC) described one prison starkly: "Its appearance is disgusting and vile by reason of the filth, the darkness and the stench.... Some have been crucified, others thrown to wild beasts; a few whose lives were spared, in gloomy dungeons amid sorrow and lamentation drag out an existence worse than death."¹¹ Roman subterranean prisons were so identified with the horrors of perpetual darkness that they became synonymous in contemporary literature with Hades.



Paul was a political prisoner, a convicted felon with years of hard time under his belt. If Ephesians was penned in the last decade of the first century, there would have been strong resonance between the author's political situation and that of the apostle. The latter was executed during the first great systematic persecution of the church under Emperor Nero (64-68 CE). Ephesians most likely circulated during the next wave of imperial

pogroms under Domitian (81-96 CE). This period, during which Jewish practices were outlawed and the emperor cult established, inspired the fierce apocalyptic rant of another political prisoner, John's Revelation.¹²

We might well wonder whether the author of Ephesians, like his teacher three decades earlier, also experienced incarceration. In any case, the letter's "origins" in prison give its grand vision of cosmic unity a distinctive realism. The Pauline tradition could indeed claim to have "lived within the monster and know its entrails."¹³ "Assuming, that is, you have already heard of my 'administration' of God's grace (*oikonomian tēs charitos*) given to me for you" (Eph. 3:2). The writer wonders rhetorically whether his audience might have heard about Paul's lock-up, which of course they had. If this isn't slightly sarcastic – something the historic Paul was surely capable of – it certainly introduces an edge to the epistle. This is intensified by the claim that the apostle's incarceration is specifically on *behalf* of the Gentile Christians to whom the epistle is addressed. The author could just as well have said "*because* of you Gentiles." For Ephesians to invoke Paul's imprisonment (in full knowledge of his eventual martyrdom) by the Roman authorities functioned as a warning to Gentile Christians not to be complacent citizens of that empire, particularly if the heat was again ramping up under Domitian.

The political significance of this scenario sharpens when viewed through the analogical lens of the more historically familiar witness of Martin Luther King, Jr. There are compelling parallels between King, appealing from jail to white clergy for solidarity with his witness against American apartheid, and Paul, calling on Gentile Christians from prison to support his challenge to the political-cultural system of social segregation between Jew and Greek. King's repeated jailings were embarrassing to polite Southern society, and we can assume the same was true of Paul's imprisonments for his Gentile converts. Jail epistles served as unwelcome reminders that all was *not* well, that good people – religious leaders, even – were being treated as criminals because of the problems everyone knew existed. This was precisely the strategy that King took from Gandhi: using civil disobedience to provoke a moral crisis. Paul is leaning on that disruptive, but divinely-sanctioned, moral authority as well.

Letters from Jails

We think, therefore, that it is fruitful to read Ephesians as a sort of ancient “Letter from Birmingham City Jail.” King’s jail epistle was penned on April 16, 1963, amidst a tough period in his struggle for integration and voting rights for African Americans in the South – his eight-day confinement as a result of civil disobedience. Biographer Taylor Branch sets the context:

Furtively through the bars – because the jail rules allowed no material possessions to prisoners in solitary – King showed [his lawyer] Jones a copy on the *Birmingham News* that had been smuggled in on a previous legal visit. All around the margins, meandering from page to page, he was scribbling a passionate response to a small story headlined “White Clergymen Urge Local Negroes to Withdraw from Demonstration.” Led by ... the Episcopal bishop of Alabama, an ecumenical group of eight religious leaders – all at least mild critics of segregation – had issued a statement calling King’s Birmingham campaign “unwise and untimely”.... He addressed the eight Birmingham clergy in dozens of voices – begged, scolded, explained, even cooed to them, and conspired icily with them as fellow experts.... Outside the jail, the finished letter was typed neatly at a length of twenty pages, then copied and distributed widely by hand and post.¹⁴

The letter, like Paul’s epistles, initially remained obscure, yet its eventual fame is justified. It is a brilliant theological and political defense of nonviolent direct action, especially enduring for activists who face (as they almost always do) the criticism of prominent leaders who inevitably appeal for more time and less agitation.

King responds to the charge that he was an “outside agitator” by appealing to the example of none other than the apostle:

I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their “thus saith the Lord” far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners

of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid....¹⁵

Then King adds one of his most sublime rationales: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”

King, a member of an oppressed and marginalized minority, was appealing directly to leaders of the Christian church who, as members of the majority culture, were also his historic adversaries, socially and politically speaking. He both defended his witness and challenged them to live up to



their faith. This is exactly what the author of Ephesians was doing: reminding his Gentile colleagues of the moral authority of the Jewish founders of the Jesus movement, while also charging them to follow Christ by refusing to cooperate with the institutionalized segregation that kept Jews and Gentiles “separate and unequal.” Both authors languished in jail *knowing* that good Christians were doing nothing about apartheid, taking comfortable refuge in their dominant culture privileges, and hiding behind pious rhetoric while avoiding real solidarity with their oppressed cousins in the faith.

King was particularly critical of “the white moderate, who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action’; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom.”¹⁶

Paul’s Jail Letter

Perhaps with similar frustration, the author of Ephesians returns to the “we/you” discourse of Eph. 1-2, now personalized:

3:1: *I* Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of *you* Gentiles—

3:2 assuming *you* have heard of the administration of God’s grace that was given *me* for *you*,

3:3 how the mystery was made known to *me* by revelation, as *I* have written briefly.

3:4 When *you* read this you can perceive *my* insight...

Ephesians challenges Christians, as King would later, to fully embrace both the gospel and their responsibilities in the historical moment. And both do so from behind bars of the system they are seeking to overturn. King, moreover, invokes the biblical precedent for his dissent:

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire.¹⁷

The radical message of these letters and the disturbing social location of the letter-writers are deeply challenging to comfortable audiences, in Paul’s time and ours. The vision of reconciliation is a tall enough order; all the more when broadcast from such an obscure, vulnerable space in the entrails of empire. This is why the author now returns to the notion of God’s will as a “mystery” (3:3,4,9).

The prospects for transformation are not at all evident to the rational or the powerful. But this counterintuitive truth was “revealed by the Spirit” to Paul, as an apostle in the prophetic tradition (3:5). The Greek verb here is *apocaluptō* (literally “to unmask”), because the dream of God requires a different way of seeing. An *apocalypsis* is always a double “revelation,” as evidenced in the writing of that other NT political prisoner, John of Patmos: on one hand, seeing realities of injustice that are being denied; on

the other, glimpsing possibilities of a world transformed.¹⁸ In Ephesians, the reality articulated was the fact of human enmity, the possibility was that this fact would be overcome in salvation history (3:6). As peacemakers, both King and Paul stressed repeatedly that members of the very group who had historically oppressed their people are welcome as full members in the movement. This was not easy for nationalists in their respective minority contexts to accept, and both men were accused of being “traitors to their race.”

Nor was their advocacy of nonviolence widely embraced. Why should the already marginalized suffer *more* in the struggle to wrest justice from the dominant culture? But both King and Paul understood that it is the oppressive majority which stands in deepest need of redemption. Those who nonviolently resist their adversaries are offering a healing gift, though it is rarely perceived that way by those with power. This is the heart of restorative justice; such work is incredibly demanding. So we can understand why the author of Ephesians repeatedly emphasizes Paul’s dependence on the transformative energy of divine grace: “Of this gospel I was made servant, according to the gift of God’s grace, given to me according to the energy of God’s power” (3:7).¹⁹ In this way nonviolent work and witness for justice becomes a “force more powerful.”

Ephesians now describes three goals of Paul’s ministry (3:8-10):

1. to proclaim to his ethnic adversaries “the unsearchable riches of Christ”;
2. to help *all* people see the “administration of the mystery,” already identified as the overcoming of social enmity; and
3. to animate the church “to make known the wisdom of God (*sophia tou theou*) in its rich variety to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”

This third aspect sets his vocation firmly in a political context. Paul is in jail because he is an evangelist for the gospel of peace in a world of hostility and division, and that includes proclaiming it to the highest authorities, the very architects of social enmity. Walter Wink has popularized the theological re-appropriation of “Principalities and Powers” language in the NT, helping us

understand that these “rulers in the heavenly places” were counterparts of the earthly authorities – the spirit of Domination, we might say today.

King’s Jail Letter

This same concern for the unavoidably *public* vocation of the church marks King’s jail letter, which includes a scathing indictment of the white church’s lack of support of the Civil Rights movement. Speaking as “one who loves the church,” King laments that whereas he had hoped that religious leaders in the South would be “some of our strongest allies,”

instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of the stained-glass windows.... In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, “Those are social issues with which the gospel has no real concern.”²⁰

King abhorred the church’s failure to preach the gospel to the Powers, and upbraided it as a community “largely adjusted to the status quo, standing as a taillight behind other community agencies rather than a headlight leading men to higher levels of justice.”²¹ King and Paul could not be more explicit, yet modern Christians still imagine that churches should “stay out of politics” – as if that were possible. The only question is what *kind* of politics the church should embody.

Archbishop Oscar Romero learned the truth of this when he began to speak out on behalf of the poor in El Salvador in the 1980s. Cesar Chavez (at right), inspired by King, often took the symbols





of his deep Catholic faith into his public struggle on behalf of farm workers. Julia Esquivel, a Presbyterian laywoman from Guatemala and a celebrated poet and activist, was exiled from her home for many years because of her outspoken advocacy for human rights. And Dorothy Day (at left), co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, was arrested many times for civil disobedience. These disciples were embodying the church's vocation to evangelize the Powers.

In light of this sobering task, it is no accident that the author of Ephesians concludes this meditation with a long, pastoral prayer for the very Gentile Christians who aren't too sure about the appropriateness of his witness (3:14-21). He asks his audience to pray that he will "not lose heart over my suffering" (3:13), which is redefined as *their* glory. This is no doubt intended ironically, since it will be his audience's response that determines whether or not Paul loses heart. He hopes they will be "grounded in love" (3:17) and will "comprehend the big picture" of this love (3:18f) – a sort of "keep your eyes on the prize" exhortation. In a final summons for these citizens of empire and disciples of Jesus to transcend their entitlements and their domesticated fears, a benediction invokes "the One who is able to do far more with us than anything we might ask or think" (3:20).

King penned a similar conclusion to his jail epistle:

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.²²

In both epistles, the authors' pastoral concern makes no attempt to hide their hope that these ambivalent colleagues will become true partners in the faith. Ephesians as a whole will close, after the well-known meditation on putting on the nonviolent armor of struggle (6:10ff), with a similar petition

for solidarity. Paul, the political prisoner, asks for courage to continue to speak truth to power:

Pray also for me, so that when I speak I will
open my mouth boldly (*parrēsia*)
to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,
for which I am an ambassador in chains,
so I might declare it boldly (*parrēσίαςōmai*; 6:19f).²³

The message of Christ’s abolition of enmity is not warmly received by those in authority – not in ancient Rome or Ephesus, and not in modern Birmingham or Washington, DC. This explains the ironic “ambassador in chains.” It also echoes 2 Cor. 5:20, in which the historical Paul urges disciples to become “ambassadors of God’s reconciliation.”

That phrase of Paul’s seemed fitting for the title of our two-volume project on Christian peacemaking and restorative justice.²⁴ Volume II includes interviews with cutting-edge practitioners who embody this kind of faith-based peacemaking work. We will conclude this lecture by sharing one of those profiles, because in order to understand the concern and call of the Ephesian and Kingian jail epistles, we must look to those who are making this word flesh in our own time.

III

Nelson Johnson of Greensboro, North Carolina (*below*) is a Baptist minister, a community leader, a dear friend and important mentor to us. Deeply grounded in the black freedom movement, he has for five decades been involved in struggles for justice, particularly around issues of race and labor. He is pastor of Faith Community Church, which also houses the Beloved Community Center, a grassroots outreach in their low-income African American neighborhood. Recently we



Photo Credit: Word and World

asked him where his courage and convictions come from. “I was born in 1943,” he replied. “Many of those who held me as a baby had been slaves or were the children of slaves. I need to bear witness to *that*.”²⁵

A powerful preacher and teacher, Johnson interprets the story of Jesus and its relevance to the present struggle for cultural and economic equality each week with his small congregation. He speaks with the moral authority of someone who has been profoundly victimized by racism: stabbed by would-be assassins, jailed on trumped-up charges, targeted by the police, and maligned by the political establishment. Yet his countenance bears none of this; indeed, as a community organizer he is more interested in helping residents find *their* voice and tell their stories. Most recently, he has animated the historic Greensboro Community Truth and Reconciliation Project, the first such effort to take place on American soil.

Greensboro has been at the crossroads of Civil Rights history. On February 1, 1960, four students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University sat down at a Woolworth’s lunch counter to protest segregation, which launched a direct action movement that re-energized the Civil Rights struggle and eventually changed the United States forever. But it was the events of November 3, 1979 that changed Johnson’s life forever. He and other labor organizers were preparing for a rally in a working class black neighborhood in Greensboro, in order to address unjust labor practices and racism in local textile mills. People were slowly gathering to begin the demonstration, with children and older folk coming out of the projects to join the singing.

Suddenly a caravan of nine cars drove towards the organizers; in it were members of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis. The Klansmen got out and began shooting at the crowd. In 88 seconds, they killed five leaders of the march and wounded ten others, all of this captured by local television cameras. The neighborhood was terrified and the city was thrown into shock. Slain were a Latino community organizer, two white medical doctors, a black activist, and a white researcher – all friends and colleagues of Johnson’s. It was learned later that the Greensboro Police Department were fully aware of the Klan’s presence and plans yet did nothing. The attackers escaped serious injury, and most were able to flee the scene unhindered. In two ensuing trials, all-white juries exonerated the suspects. Finally, in 1985, a third civil

trial found, for the first time in US history, that police were jointly liable with white supremacists for a wrongful death.²⁶

The entire community of Greensboro continued to suffer from the trauma of that day. Yet most chose to try to suppress those events from the collective memory. So it was up to the survivors of the massacre, led by Johnson, to try to help Greensboro face its past. Using some of the precedents set by the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission,²⁷ he and others launched a project to bring this process to the US for the first time.

Supported by people like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation (TRC) organizers began formal outreach to the community. In March 2003 they invited 17 different factions of the Greensboro community to form a selection committee. Only three groups declined to participate: the Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy, the Greensboro Police Department, and the Chamber of Commerce. Despite much public opposition, seven commissioners were chosen, and were installed on June 12, 2004. Klan members sent death threats to the commissioners; one read: "The only reconciliation we want is at the end of a gun."

Nevertheless, the commission held three public hearings, and over 200 people presented testimony. This number included the judge who presided over the original criminal case; the lawyer for and members of the Klan and Nazis; survivors; and residents of the traumatized community. Hundreds of people gathered to listen to riveting testimony. The Greensboro project affirms a motto of the South African project: "Without truth there can be no healing, without forgiveness, there can be no future."²⁸ The commissioners released a 600-page report on May 25, 2006, which launched a year of discussion in the city. Now the task is to see the Commissioners' recommendations implemented. We were honored to be advisors to this project, and believe that it will inaugurate a new era for those who have suffered historical injustices in the United States. Dozens of community leaders from around the country have come to Greensboro to learn how to organize their own TRC processes, as the despair of historical silence gives way to restorative truth-seeking.

The Greensboro story should be both challenging and heartening

to Canadians, for Canada is about to embark on its own Truth and Reconciliation journey concerning the terrible legacy of the Residential Schools, something in which many churches were deeply involved. From the 19th century through 1996 there were some 130 such schools spread throughout most territories and provinces. About 150,000 aboriginal, Inuit, and Métis children were removed from their communities and forced to attend these schools, and many students lived in substandard conditions and endured physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

After much organizing and advocacy, in December 2006 a \$2-billion compensation package was approved for Aboriginal people who were forced to attend residential schools, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivered an official apology in Parliament on June 11, 2008. The proposed settlement promised a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to examine the legacy of the residential schools. Its purpose is to create a historical account of the schools, help people to heal, and encourage reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. The commission will host events across the country to raise awareness about the residential school system and its impact.

The TRC process allows for acknowledgement, appropriate public mourning, forgiveness, and healing. We believe that this represents an evangelical opening for all Canadian churches – including Mennonites. We hope many will choose to become involved in this process, in the spirit of the Ephesian gospel of reconciliation. And this is just one of many important issues we need to engage in order to build just relationships with Aboriginal Canadians. Last month the United Nations review of Canada's human rights record criticized its track record on Aboriginal affairs. In fact, Canada, like the US, has refused to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Other issues include the environmental devastation on First Nations land caused by tar sands development, and the impact of Petro-Canada pipelines running through reserves; the many recent disappearances of First Nations women that have not been accounted for; the need to give more recognition to Aboriginal justice processes in the criminal justice system; and above all, the ongoing issue of land, including unsettled claims right here along the Grand River in Ontario.

* * * * *

What does it mean to be an evangelical peace church? We believe that we gain our best clues from the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the movement he led. The Lorraine Motel in Memphis, where King was gunned down in 1968, has since been turned into the magnificent national Civil Rights Museum. Underneath the balcony where he died lies a memorial stone on which is inscribed a line from the biblical story of Joseph and his brothers.

They said to one another,
Behold, Here cometh the dreamer...
Let us slay him...
And we shall see what will become of his dreams.
(Gen. 37:19-20)

We believe this verse represents an historical ultimatum to our churches. King's vision of beloved community, like the apostle Paul's vision of a church without walls, remains the dream of God. What will become of this dream, however, is up to us.

Notes

¹ Vincent Harding, *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*. 2nd. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).

² We do not make this assertion lightly. In the Fall of 1999, the King family, long convinced that Martin's convicted assassin James Earl Ray did not act alone, brought a civil suit to the Circuit Court of Shelby County, Tennessee, 30th Judicial District in Memphis, in order to discover the real facts of Martin's murder. The family statement on Dec. 9, 1999, in the wake of the jury's verdict, read in part:

1. We initially requested that a comprehensive investigation be conducted by a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, independent of the government, because we do not believe that, in such a politically-sensitive matter, the government is capable of investigating itself.
2. The type of independent investigation we sought was denied by the federal government. But in our view, it was carried out, in a Memphis courtroom, during a month-long trial by a jury of 12 American citizens who had no interest other than ascertaining the truth.
3. After hearing and reviewing the extensive testimony and evidence, which had

never before been tested under oath in a court of law, it took the Memphis jury only 1.5 hours to find that a conspiracy to kill Dr. King did exist. Most significantly, this conspiracy involved agents of the governments of the City of Memphis, the state of Tennessee and the United States of America. The overwhelming weight of the evidence also indicated that James Earl Ray was not the triggerman and, in fact, was an unknowing patsy.

4. We stand by that verdict and have no doubt that the truth about this terrible event has finally been revealed.

The story of this trial and its stunning verdict was virtually ignored in the US press. The full narrative can be found in William F. Pepper, *An Act of State: The Execution of Martin Luther King* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2003). For complete trial transcripts see <http://thekingcenter.com/news/trial.html>.

³ Vincent Harding, *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990).

⁴ Marcus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Valley Forge, PA: The Judson Press, 1959), 44.

⁵ Tom Yoder Neufeld, *Ephesians*. Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale: Herald, 2002).

⁶ René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 138.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹ Barth, 45.

¹⁰ Craig S. Wansink, *Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul's Imprisonments*. JSNT Supplements (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹² See Rev. 1:9; 2:10-13; 13:15; 17:5f; 20:4 for allusions to persecution and death for refusal to worship "the beast." Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999) point out that the only place the term *aikmalōsian* ("prisoner of war") appears in the NT is Rev. 13:10 and Eph. 4:8.

¹³ This famous phrase comes from Jose Marti, the late 19th-century Cuban independence leader and anti-imperialist, who knew the inside of prisons intimately. Paul's imprisonments were legendary for the church which survived him, as reported for example by Luke in Acts 21:23 and 28:30. Emphasizing this jail legacy, and the moral authority it freighted, was an important literary aspect of later pseudepigraphic epistles (see e.g., 2 Tim. 1:8-12 and Col. 4:3,18). Jail was nothing to be "ashamed" of; indeed, it represented a *bona fide* of Paul's apostolic stature. And for Ephesians, it offered courage to a new generation under persecution.

¹⁴ Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963-65* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 46-48.

¹⁵ James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: HarperSanfrancisco, 1986), 299ff.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 295.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹⁸ See Ched Myers, *Who Will Roll Away the Stone? Discipleship Queries for First World Christians* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 396ff.

¹⁹ The noun *energeia* (here and 1:19; 4:16) and verb *energeō* (1:11,20; 2:2; 3:20) appear more often in Ephesians than in any other book of the NT.

²⁰ Washington, 299.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 302.

²³ Both adverb and verb mean “openly,” and, in a public or political context where breaking silence can result in opposition or arrest, “boldly or courageously” (e.g., Acts 2:29; 4:13,29; 9:27-9; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31; Phil. 1:20; Col. 1:20; 1 Thess. 2:2).

²⁴ Ched Myers and Elaine Enns, *Ambassadors of Reconciliation, Vol. I: New Testament Reflections on Restorative Justice and Peacemaking* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009).

²⁵ For a fuller account of Johnson’s story, see Myers and Enns, *Ambassadors, Vol. II*, chapter 7b.

²⁶ For background and details of this incident see the accounts of Sally A. Bermanzohn, *Through Survivors’ Eyes: From the Sixties to the Greensboro Massacre* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003), and Signe Waller, *Love and Revolution: A Political Memoir. People’s History of the Greensboro Massacre, Its Setting and Aftermath* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), who are fellow survivors of the 1979 Greensboro Massacre. For a compelling personal narrative of parallel events during this period in nearby Oxford, North Carolina – just a few miles from where Nelson Johnson grew up – see Timothy B. Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004); for broader social and historical context, see William Henry Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

²⁷ See Russell Daye, *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

²⁸ See Desmond Mpilo Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

2009 BECHTEL LECTURES

LECTURE TWO

Women Clothed with the Sun: Sophia Facing the Beast

Elaine Enns and Ched Myers

This lecture means to honor the peace and justice work of women, and we would like to begin by naming just two. One is the woman who was cleaning our room at the St. Paul's United College dorm today here in Waterloo. From El Salvador, she has lived and worked in Ontario for 17 years. We asked her how she deals with the cold weather, and she replied that it wasn't nearly as bad as all the years she worked in the refrigerated environment of a local chicken processing factory. Her husband still works in the beef slaughterhouse, she said, her pain well masked; she's glad to have "graduated" to cleaning rooms. To all the women who work invisibly in the low wage sector, may we come to know your stories.

The second woman is also close at hand, in the audience tonight: Hedy Sawadsky. The first ethnic Mennonite Ched ever met, thirty years ago, she has been a dear friend and a pioneer peacemaker. Sawadsky has ventured well beyond the safe confines of her clan to build bridges of collaboration and common witness with activists across the ecumenical spectrum. She remains active today with Christian Peacemaker Teams, and we honor her as our beloved elder, colleague, mentor, and a true peace warrior.

To these two women, a new friend and an old one, we offer as an invocation a few lines from our favorite Alice Walker poem, "While Love is Unfashionable"¹:

While love is dangerous
let us walk bareheaded
beside the Great River.
Let us gather blossoms
under fire.

In the prolegomenon to the peacemaking manifesto of Ephesians that we looked at in the first lecture, the author declares: “With all wisdom (*sophia*) and insight God has made known to us the mystery of the Divine will” (Eph. 1:8). He goes on to pray that God might grant the reader “a spirit of wisdom (*sophia*) and of revelation” to understand and embrace the abolition of enmity embodied in Christ (1:17). And as we saw, the author concludes his argument by contending that it is “through the church that the diverse wisdom (*sophia*) of God might now be made known to the Principalities and Powers in the highest places” (Eph 3:10). Three times Ephesians stresses the intimate relationship between the “mysterious” vocation of peacemaking and the spirit of *sophia*.

The image of divine Sophia as a woman is beloved in the Eastern Orthodox Church. It is celebrated in the meditations of the great medieval Catholic mystic Hildegard of Bingen. And in the last two decades, this tradition, marginalized in the western church, has been recovered by Christian feminists. But its roots go all the way back to the Hebrew Bible, where the Hebrew word *chokmah* (like the Greek *sophia*) is feminine.

The most famous articulation is Proverbs 8-9, which portrays Wisdom as a female prophet trying to get the attention of the people of her village. Sophia urgently “takes her stand, crying out – on the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads, in front of the gates, at the entrance of the portals” (Prov. 8:2). A woman would not typically have been seen in such prominent public places in the patriarchal culture of antiquity, where women were largely sequestered at home. But Lady Wisdom’s message of justice (8:15f) breaks gender taboos in its insistence. The writer offers a cosmic rationale: Sophia’s truth not only pre-exists Creation (8:22-29) but indeed co-created the world with God (8:30f). In Proverbs 9, Sophia sets a table for a feast to which even the “simplest” are invited (9:1-5). Both images are profoundly maternal: the wise old crone demanding a hearing, and the householder offering warm, nurturing hospitality. Later, Jesus (perhaps reflecting the influence of a very strong mother) invoked this very tradition, warning skeptics resisting his message: “Wisdom (*sophia*) is justified by her children” (Luke 7:35).

Indeed, women have long held up the world, not only in their nurturing but also by fiercely protecting their children and making peace in the home, the neighborhood and beyond. In ancient Greece, Aristophanes’

comedy *Lysistrata* (which loosely translated means “she who disbands armies”) describes how the bloody, 20-year Peloponnesian War was finally halted only when the women of Athens refused to have sex with their husbands. Hostilities ceased in six days! Similarly, in the Hebrew Bible we find the extraordinary story of Abigail, who confounded David’s mission of vengeance against her husband by meeting David’s army in the field armed only with a sumptuous banquet. Impressed with her courage and creativity, he abandoned his plans for retribution (1 Sam. 25:18-20).

In indigenous cultures women have played special roles as peacemakers, intervening in conflicts and often declaring truces in war. For example, the entire Lenape clan of the Delaware Valley in Pennsylvania was appointed by the Iroquois Confederacy to play the role as mediators/peacemakers in tribal conflicts, and collectively referred to as ‘women.’ “It is not well that all nations should war; for that will finally bring about the destruction of the Indians,” goes the Lenape sacred story, the *Walam Olum*.

We have thought of a means to prevent this before it is too late. Let one nation be The Woman. We will place her in the middle, and the war nations shall be the Men and dwell around her. No one shall harm the Woman.... The Woman shall not go to war, but do her best to keep the peace. When the Men around her fight one another, and the strife waxes hot, the Woman will have the power to say, ‘You Men! Why do you strike one another? Remember that your wives and children will perish if you do not cease. Will you perish from the face of the earth?’ Then the Men shall listen to the Woman and obey her.²

In North American history alone, the cloud of witnesses of women warriors for peace and justice is vast: from 19th-century abolitionist Harriet Tubman to 20th-century United Farm Workers co-founder Dolores Huerta; from famous Civil Rights heroine Rosa Parks to forgotten movement martyr Viola Liuzzo; and from Nora Bernard of Millbrook First Nations Reserve in Nova Scotia – instrumental in helping to launch Canada’s first Truth and Reconciliation Commission process – to recent Brazilian forest defender and martyr Sister Dorothy Stang. In 2005, a thousand women from more than 150 countries were jointly nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, in an effort to make visible women’s work of countering injustice, discrimination,

oppression, and violence in the pursuit of peace.³ Earlier this month we celebrated International Women’s Day, which has its roots in women’s labor struggles dating back to 1857.

Unfortunately, women’s stories have long been hidden or suppressed in the dominant patriarchal culture, forever considered secondary to the “heroic feats” of men. This is definitely a problem among Mennonites. Thus we believe it is important to underline the restorative justice and peacemaking work of women who embody both the prophetic Sophia of Proverbs and the peacemaking Sophia of Ephesians.

We rightly remember women martyrs in our Anabaptist tradition, such as Maria von Monjou. But stories of Mennonite witness lie much closer to home; for example, Elaine’s great-grandmother Schultz. During the Russian revolution Nestor Makhno and his bandits were ravaging Mennonite villages in the Ukraine, murdering, raping, stealing, and demanding to be fed, clothed, and given a place to sleep. During Christmas of 1918, Makhno and his men came to great-grandma Schultz’s home. The men of the house had to flee for their safety. Great-grandma, her daughters, and small children stayed in their home; she directed Makhno and his men to sleep in the best room, served them meals, and gave them clothes. But she always kept a watchful eye on her daughters and children, never leaving them alone so they would not be hurt or violated by Makhno’s men. She courageously absorbed the violence of those men, trumping it by the power of hospitality. We imagine her telling them firmly, “There will be *no* violence in my house – I will not allow it!”

I

Tonight, however, we want to focus on Christian women outside our Anabaptist tradition, mentors of ours whose work we believe has a lot to teach those of us in the peace church tradition.⁴

Murphy Davis

Murphy Davis works to confront the death penalty in the United States and the cold shadow it casts over the life of the poor. For over 30 years, Davis has been a tireless advocate for the most marginalized people in North

America: those on the streets and those on “death row.” Davis (*right*) and her husband Eduard Loring are Presbyterian ministers who founded The Open Door Community (ODC) in 1981 in an old apartment building near downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Their focus is on the relationship between homelessness, prison, poverty, class, and racial segregation. Some of the community members were once homeless or in prison, while others are ministers, students, or lawyers. Daily, the ODC offers food, clothing, showers, toilets, telephone use, and shelter to those living on the streets.



In 1976, Davis set up Southern Prison Ministry (SPM) to work specifically with persons on death row and women in prison. She has made innumerable visits to Death Row, befriending hundreds of inmates and immersing herself in the struggle to abolish the death penalty. The loss of friends on death row hits her hard. In Advent of 1983, 54-year-old John Eldon Smith was the first man to be executed under the new Death Penalty law. For four years, Davis had visited him and fought for his life. She relates her first journey through that fire:

The days following the killing found our community about the tasks of burial and comforting Smitty’s family.... One week later we made a feeble effort to pick ourselves up to prepare Christmas dinner for our homeless friends. The temperatures in Atlanta suddenly fell to zero and below.... Even as we celebrated the Nativity of our Lord, twenty of our homeless sisters and brothers died in the streets and alleyways of our city... frozen stiff in dark corners, abandoned cars, vacant buildings.... Day and night we cooked hot food and fixed hot coffee and tea to take out onto the streets. We squeezed as many extra bodies into our dining room as the space would bear.... Nothing in my background as a white overeducated Christian; nothing

in my studies; nothing in my spiritual instruction or pastoral counseling – nothing had prepared me to meet with such utter failure, grief and suffering.⁵

Davis has done extensive research on the experience of incarceration, the rapid growth of the “prison-industrial complex,” and the disturbing relationship between prison expansion and the decline of affordable housing. When she began this work in 1976, fewer than 50 people were on Georgia’s death row; now that number is over one hundred. Davis is a powerful preacher and teacher who brings rigorous analysis together with compelling stories of her accompaniment work. But for all her prophetic advocacy, the heart of her work is pastoral: visiting prisoners on Death Row, listening to their stories, and advocating for them.

As the call for vengeance by political leaders and many churches has become even more insistent, and the poor more maligned, Davis relies on her faith to sustain her in the face of insurmountable loss. She related to us that:

The most important piece is to have a community, so the failures and the deep sorrow and grief are not borne alone. No individual can bare the crushing, hateful power of this system. We must build community and find a spiritual well to draw on. Our deep spiritual well is the discipleship movement of the vagrant Jesus, the dark-skinned Middle Easterner, the executed convict Jesus. That is the well that sustains us, that helps us find the resurrection that is hidden amidst so much crucifixion.

Davis is in her fourth round of battling cancer. Recently she told us of yet another friend she had accompanied on death row for many years. Before his execution he was asked if he was ready to die. He responded, “Hell, no. I want to live. I am not ready to die. But I *am* prepared.” This was a significant lesson for Davis as she faces her own fight with cancer.

In 1995, when the doctors gave me 6-8 months to live, I thought, “I don’t want to die. I want to see my daughter finish high school and become an adult. But if I have to die, I have had the best teachers, people who faced a much more cruel death.” Though facing execution, they did not sacrifice their dignity, they did

not hand over their capacity for love and forgiveness. This is what lives inside me.

For her tireless work and advocacy Davis was recently selected into Robert Shetterly's "Americans Who Tell The Truth" portrait series, joining such women as Rosa Parks and Dorothy Day (<http://www.americanswhotellthetruth.org>).

Marietta Jaeger

Marietta Jaeger's journey is marked by tragedy and agonizing grief. Yet with her moral authority as the mother of a murder victim, she challenges all of us to disarm our hearts and practice forgiveness. On June 25, 1973, Jaeger's seven-year-old daughter Susie was kidnapped during a family camping trip in Montana. For fifteen months the family knew nothing of Susie's whereabouts. Jaeger told us:



I was catapulted into a very intense, spiritual journey. Initially I was willing to kill the kidnapper with my bare hands for taking my little girl away and because of the terrible effect it had on my entire family. I made a year-long commitment to daily wrestle with God about forgiveness, justice, mercy, and love. Many people were praying for me and it was a long, gradual process. But during that year, I came to realize three things: (1) In staying full of rage I was in fact handing my power over to the kidnapper, allowing his actions to change my value system; (2) in God's eyes the kidnapper was just as precious as my little girl; and (3) if I wanted to live my Catholic faith with integrity, I was called to forgive my enemies. I eventually realized that I needed to forgive the kidnapper for the sake of myself and everyone who touched my life. And because I believe in a God who never violates our freedom or free will, I gave God permission to change my heart, and by the time we found out what happened to Susie, the miracle of forgiveness had been

accomplished in my spirit.

On the one-year anniversary of the abduction, the kidnapper called Jaeger, taunting her. But she disarmed him by expressing concern that his actions must have placed a tremendous burden on his soul. He was taken aback, and began to cry. He talked with her for over an hour, revealing enough information about himself for the FBI to identify and find him. At last Jaeger learned the painful details of what had happened to her daughter.

A few months after Susie was buried, a local church contacted Jaeger asking her to speak about how her faith sustained her through the ordeal. This opened the door to many other invitations, through which she met other murder victim family members, as well as people working in different areas of social justice. She explained that

Through my interactions with various activists, I began to make the connection between my personal stance toward the man who had taken Susie's life and our nation's stance toward its enemies. I would never have been complicit in my little girl's death; how could I then be silent about the violence of the death penalty my government was pursuing in my name and with my tax dollars? Now, my primary work is to help people understand forgiveness and its broader applications. We degrade and dehumanize ourselves by practicing capital punishment, and we put ourselves in the same mindset as the murderer. And we insult the inestimable value of our loved one's memory by becoming that which we abhor – people who kill people.

She paused, taking a deep breath. "I will never condone the killing of another chained, defenseless person such as my daughter was," she said in measured tones. "Let us not produce yet another victim and another grieving family."

Through the years Jaeger has continued to work with victims of violence, telling her story and encouraging them to find healing and wholeness. She is critical of the criminal justice system's inability to bring closure or healing, and calls on the church to offer an alternative.

Many churches have prison ministries but I don't know of one church that has a ministry to victims of violence. Most often, victim families become isolated. Victim families need to be

held, loved, prayed for, and listened to. They need to continually process their rage, loss, and grief in order to get it out rather than let it fester within. The Christian community that upholds the value of life and forgiveness needs to be present so that when the victims have processed all of their pain, they hear that the next, best move is to give God permission to change their hearts.

In 1997, Jaeger co-founded Journey of Hope, which has been on the forefront of the death penalty abolitionist movement and annually organizes a speaking tour through a state that executes people. More recently she co-founded Murder Victim Families for Human Rights, in which capacity she has testified before the United Nations Human Rights Commission.⁶ She travels widely inviting people into the struggle for personal and political forgiveness.

Marietta Jaeger reminds us of one of the core truths of restorative justice: transformative power is unleashed when the victim takes the moral initiative. Like Murphy Davis, she is a woman of justice and of mercy, embodying the Sophia wisdom and compassion of God.

II

Another extraordinary biblical metaphor sets the context for our last two stories of peacemaking women: John the Revelator's vision of a woman struggling to protect life in the face of a Beast who threatens incalculable violence:

A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon... Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. And she gave birth to a son....
(Rev. 12:1-5)

The dragon is one of many master symbols used by this apocalyptic writer,

a political prisoner of the Roman Empire in the late first century of the Common Era. In Revelation the dragon stands for the lethal violence of empire. Its intent to “devour the child” is a clear allusion to the gospel tale of Herod’s slaughter of the innocents, which in turn is patterned on the old Exodus story of Pharaoh’s war on the Hebrew firstborn, in which it was midwives who rescued the kids from the king. Like the Levite mother of Moses, this woman gives birth to a son in the teeth of the Dragon, nurturing life in defiance of the power of death. Like Abigail, she confronts a war machine armed only with the power of love.

The woman of Revelation 12 is “clothed with the sun,” standing on the moon and crowned with the stars. Such evocative celestial images are admittedly strange to our modern sensibilities. But we believe that this mysterious female embodies the dictum of the great contemplative Thomas Merton: “Christian hope begins where every other hope stands frozen stiff before the face of the Unspeakable.”⁷ Of course John’s main allusion here is to Mary of Nazareth, the courageous peasant girl who birthed Jesus while fleeing as a political refugee from Herod’s pogroms. This is why Catholic iconography celebrates Mary as the woman clothed with the sun, standing on the moon and cloaked in stars, in the beautiful image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. As the patroness of indigenous peasants displaced by Spanish colonization in Mexico, Guadalupe has inspired many to resist injustice, especially in Chicano movements in the U.S. Southwest.⁸

John’s vision continues with the biblically familiar tale – reiterated twice – of the woman taking refuge in the wilderness (Rev. 12:6,14). The Revelator is clearly drawing on the Exodus motif of Israel’s escape from Pharaoh into the desert. As in the old story, where Creation supported the Hebrews by rising up against the recalcitrant empire in a series of plagues (Ex. 7-11), here “the earth came to the help of the woman,” this time *deflecting* the plagues conjured against her by the Dragon (Rev. 12:16). Nature’s embrace of her, offering protection from imperial violence, gives new meaning to the term “Mother Nature”!

This woman also symbolizes the church as a community of nonviolent resistance, embodying a double capacity: the courage to stand in the face of the Dragon, and the fortitude to dwell in the wilderness when marginalized or persecuted by the forces of Domination. Indeed, this vision was John’s

way of articulating the Ephesian notion of evangelism as engagement with the Domination System, the focus in our first lecture. Such witness often calls us to “noncooperate with and expose the works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11) – a dimension of evangelism understood keenly by 16th-century Anabaptists but often lost on our timid churches today. It does, however, describe the work of Myrna Bethke and Liz McAlister, women “clothed with the sun” who have tried to confront the Dragon of war and weapons of mass destruction.

Myrna Bethke

If Marietta Jaeger’s journey began as a private struggle that evolved into political action, Myrna Bethke’s story began with a spectacularly public crime, to which she offered a deeply personal response. The abduction and torture of Jaeger’s daughter took place in secret; the whole world witnessed the killing of thousands of people in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Towers. One of those victims was Bethke’s youngest brother Bill. Though his remains have still not been found, a computer card swipe confirmed he was in his office at the time of the collapse. While that attack



Myrna Bethke with Arifa, who lost her husband and children when a US bomb landed on their home in Kabul.

was used as a call to war by the leaders of the United States, some family members of those killed made poignant pleas that violence not be done in their loved ones’ names, and instead turned their grief into actions for peace. Bethke was among them.

Before 9/11, Bethke would not have described herself as a peace activist. She was pastor of Freehold United Methodist Church in New Jersey, just outside New York City. After the attack, her church opened their doors for all who wanted to come pray. In our interview she explained that:

Once immediate needs were taken care of, I found myself longing to make a response that would work towards redemption and restoration. I was fairly certain at that point that we were

going to bomb Afghanistan and I was asking myself, “What can I personally do to stop this?” On October 7th the bombing began. It was my brother Bill’s birthday and that year it also happened to be Worldwide Communion Sunday. The reality that the bombing would lead to civilian deaths was deeply troubling to many of us. We had experienced this trauma first hand, as we searched for our loved ones through the rubble of the World Trade Center.

Because the war was being waged in their names, some 9/11 families organized themselves into a nonprofit group called “September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows.” “They united in a determination that the death of their loved ones should not be a cause for more killing and they committed to seeking alternatives to war and working to end the cycle of violence.”⁹ The group represents more than 100 family members of September 11th victims, and has subsequently been nominated for the Nobel Peace prize.

In June of 2002, Bethke was invited to go to Afghanistan as part of an interfaith clergy group. The delegation focused on identifying ways in which the faith community could support humanitarian projects in Kabul, including the rebuilding of schools, clinics, and mosques destroyed during the US-led bombing campaign. “One of the most powerful moments in Afghanistan,” Myrna told us, “was spending time with a beautiful little girl named Amina”:

We spent the day together playing and drawing pictures. Then I learned her story. One morning Amina had gotten up to make tea for her family. She was in the back of the house getting water when a bomb hit the front half of the house. Amina lost her entire family in that instant; she was the only survivor. When she spoke to our group she stood and listed the names of all of her family members who had been killed. I found myself thinking, “No eight-year-old child should have to do this!”

As I was listening to Amina, a memory came flooding back. About two weeks after 9/11, I was talking with my father on the phone when we were interrupted. “The State Police just arrived,” he said, “and they want me to give a DNA sample.” I

felt so horrible that my father had to do that in order to identify his son. In Afghanistan, these two events powerfully came together. It became clear to me that we are all called to build a world in which parents and children do not have to name their dead in this way.

After Bethke returned from Afghanistan she was invited to speak at a Shiite mosque in her community. “The Shias have a long history of lament tradition,” she explained. “After I spoke a woman of the mosque came up to me crying, saying, ‘We thought only the poetry of Arabic could express our lament. Today you taught us that you could lament in English as well.’ I am very grateful for my ongoing relationship with people at this mosque, and consider it one of the blessings that came out of the tragedy of 9/11.”

After the attacks of September 11, Methodist layman George Bush modeled the classic response of retribution: personalizing the evil in Osama bin Laden and launching massive retaliatory strikes against a country simply because bin Laden was resident there. On the other hand, Methodist pastor Bethke modeled a creative restorative response, taking personal responsibility by choosing to stand in solidarity with victims of war on the “other side.”

Elizabeth McAlister

Elizabeth McAlister (*at far right*), a former Roman Catholic nun, gained notoriety in the late 1960s because of her nonviolent resistance to the Vietnam War. She married activist priest Philip Berrigan, and together they founded Jonah House in the inner city of Baltimore, Maryland, which, for more than 30 years, has been on the forefront of prophetic Christian witness against militarism and the nuclear arms race.¹⁰



On Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1983, McAlister together with six others entered Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome, New York. In a symbolic attempt to turn swords into plowshares, they enacted Isaiah’s prophecy that “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any

more” by hammering on B-52 bombers carrying cruise missiles, and pouring their own blood on the planes.¹¹ They left at the site of their witness a written indictment of the US government pointing to the war crimes of preparing for nuclear war.

While such dramatic and risky “Plowshares Actions” may seem disturbing to many Mennonites who are unfamiliar with them, we should recall that Menno Simons strongly endorsed the Isaianic vision that inspired it. “The regenerated do not go to war, nor engage in strife,” he famously said. “They are children of peace who have ‘beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning forks, and know no war’ (Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3).”

In Federal Court McAlister and her companions were convicted of conspiracy and destruction of government property. They received prison sentences ranging from two to three years, which she served at Alderson Women’s Penitentiary. In our recent interview McAlister told us, “I could not have done this action unless I felt under mandate of scripture to beat swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. It was a momentous thing to do, and yet, I had to do something against this death system.”

At the time of this action McAlister had three small children at home. She is deeply concerned for her children and others around the world, since the young are most adversely affected by war. Her commitment to nonviolent resistance has infused all three of her children. As adults, each is now involved in unique expressions of peace and justice work.

In addition to her civil disobedience work, McAlister has mentored hundreds of young activists, and the Jonah House community experiments with urban homesteading, having transformed an abandoned inner city cemetery into a farm with animals, orchards, and vegetable gardens. The consistent gospel message coming from Jonah House has been that if Christians do not experiment with nonviolence as a way of life, then the world will be sentenced to unending wars of empire.

Plowshares actions might not be *the* way, but they are *a* way of stating very clearly these nuclear weapons have no right to exist. We do these nonviolent actions knowing the risk to our own freedom to try to disarm a system of domination. Because our country has weapons, [Americans] invade countries to have

access to their oil, tin, fruit, coffee. People of conscience cannot accept this violence that impoverishes the majority and provides wealth for the few. We need to practice nonviolent resistance, and also disarm our hearts.

McAlister is a gifted teacher of both scripture and the history of social change. We have organized a number of women's discipleship retreats with her in which we looked at stories of women in the Bible. We work hard to rescue these texts from patriarchal interpreters so that we can realize afresh our vocations. She helps us recognize ourselves in the stories of women like Rachel and Leah, Shiprah and Puah, Mary and Martha, and other women of courage and faith.

We give thanks for grandmothers like McAlister, elders who continue to oppose war and injustice in all its forms, who are strong enough to stand up to the Powers and gentle enough to "listen other women into speech."

* * * * *

The four women we have introduced briefly here¹² insist on justice and mercy like Sophia in the village square, and face the Beast of violence in our society like women clothed with the sun. Our peace churches must not neglect the witness of such women, and we must nurture and encourage our young women to embrace such a discipleship.

We will let one more noble elder offer the benediction for this lecture. In 1870, Mother's Day began as an anti-war protest. Echoing the sentiments of ancient *Lysistrata*, Julie Ward Howe's inaugural proclamation issued a clarion call to non-cooperation:

Arise then, women of this day! Arise all women who have hearts, whether your baptism be of water or of tears! Say firmly: Our husbands shall not come to us reeking of carnage for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy, and patience....¹³

Notes

¹ Alice Walker, *Her Blue Body Everything We Know: Earthling Poems 1965-90 Complete* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1991), 233.

² Daniel Garrison Brinton and Constantine Samuel Rafinesque, *The Lenape and Their Legends: With the Complete Text and Symbols of the Walam Olum, a New Translation, and an Inquiry into its Authenticity* (Philadelphia: D.G. Brinton, 1885).

³ www.1000peacewomen.org

⁴ For fuller accounts of these stories see Elaine Enns and Ched Myers, *Ambassadors of Reconciliation, Vol. II: Diverse Christian Practices of Restorative Justice and Peacemaking* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), chapters 4, 5, and 6.

⁵ Peter R. Gathje, *A Work of Hospitality: The Open Door Reader, 1982-2002* (Atlanta: Open Door Publications, 2002), 250.

⁶ See Rachel King, *Don't Kill in Our Names: Families of Murder Victims Speak Out Against the Death Penalty* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

⁷ Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1966), 5.

⁸ On this see Virgil Elizondo, *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

⁹ See David Portorti, ed., *September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows: Turning Our Grief into Action for Peace* (New York: ADV Books/Akashic Books, 2003).

¹⁰ See www.jonahhouse.org.

¹¹ See Arthur Laffin, ed., *Swords into Plowshares: A Chronology of Plowshares Disarmament Actions, 1980-2003*. Rev. ed. (New York: Rose Hill Books, 2003). *Editor's note:* Plowshares disarmament actions, whether symbolic or actual, originated with the "Plowshares Eight," who took action at a General Electric plant in Pennsylvania in 1980. These types of actions, their underlying rationale, and the associated movement all differ distinctly from the mission and activities of the similarly named organization Project Ploughshares. Project Ploughshares is an ecumenical agency of the Canadian Council of Churches, and was established in 1976 to implement the churches' call to be peacemakers and to work for a world in which justice will flourish and peace abound. The agency's mandate is to work with churches and related organizations, governments, and non-governmental organizations in Canada and abroad to identify, develop, and advance approaches that build peace and prevent war, and to promote the peaceful resolution of political conflict. See www.ploughshares.ca.

¹² For fuller profiles, see Enns and Myers, *Ambassadors of Reconciliation, Vol. II*.

¹³ For the complete text of Howe's call, see www.peace.ca/mothersdayproclamation.htm.

For three decades, Ched Myers has worked with various peace and justice organizations and movements. Today, with Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, located in Oak View, California, he focuses on biblical literacy, church renewal, and faith-based witness for justice. Elaine Enns has worked in restorative justice and conflict transformation since 1989 as a mediator, consultant, educator, and trainer serving individuals, churches, schools,

and businesses. She is also part of Bartimaeus Ministries, an ecumenical experiment in discipleship and mutual aid. Myers and Enns lead seminars and retreats, preach, and facilitate gatherings throughout North America and abroad. They are the authors of Ambassadors of Reconciliation (Vol. I: New Testament Reflections on Restorative Justice and Peacemaking; Vol. II: Diverse Christian Practices of Restorative Justice and Peacemaking), published by Orbis Books in 2009.

THE BECHTEL LECTURES

The Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies were established at Conrad Grebel University College in 2000, through the generosity of Lester Bechtel, a devoted churchman actively interested in Mennonite history. Lester Bechtel's dream was to make the academic world of research and study accessible to a border constituency, and to build bridges of understanding between the school and the church. The lectures, held annually and open to the public, offer noted scholars and church leaders the opportunity to explore and discuss topics representing the breadth and depth of Mennonite history and identity. Previous lecturers in the series were Terry Martin, Stanley Hauerwas, Rudy Wiebe, Nancy Heisey, Fernando Enns, James Urry, Sandra Birdsell, and Alfred Neufeld.

Three Hundred Years of Pietism, Anabaptism, and Pluralism

Scott Holland

This year [2008] we in the Brethren movement are celebrating 300 years of Pietism, Anabaptism, and Pluralism. Here in Canada there is sometimes confusion about the varieties of Brethren identity, so let me provide the historical context of this anniversary celebration of the Brethren. We are not the Plymouth Brethren or the Brethren in Christ. Canadian Mennonites know we are certainly not the MBs, the Mennonite Brethren! Who are we?

We trace our 1708 origins to eight adult baptisms in Schwarzenau, Germany. Inspired by the spiritual leadership of Alexander Mack, this renewal movement blended elements of Anabaptism, learned from Mack's Mennonite friends and neighbors, with the influences of Radical Pietism that were sweeping across Germany. Two very different but fine resources could be recommended this year for a window into Brethren history. Donald Durnbaugh's final book, *Fruit of the Vine*,¹ is the standard scholarly source. Myrna Grove has published a children's book for this year of celebration. Grove's *Alexander Mack: A Man Who Rippled the Waters*² offers a very helpful historical summary of the rise and evolution of Brethrenism.

Let me read from Grove's book to give an indication of how diverse the Schwarzenau Brethren have become in three hundred years:

The earliest church members were known as New Baptists, and later, German Baptists and German Baptist Brethren. An Annual Meeting to discuss the beliefs and policies of the church has been held every year since 1742. In 1908, a main branch took the name, Church of the Brethren. Besides the Church of the Brethren, several other branches of Brethren trace their roots to Alexander Mack's vision. Among them are the Old German Baptist Brethren (1881), The Brethren Church (1883), the Dunkard Brethren (1926), the Fellowship of Grace Brethren (1939), and Conservative Brethren International (1992).

The denominational diversity within the Schwarzenau Brethren movement began with a three-way church split in 19th-century America. The division resulted in three different denominational bodies: the Church of the Brethren (the main branch), the Progressive Brethren (now known as the Brethren Church, headquartered in Ashland, Ohio and marked by a theology more evangelical than the main branch), and finally, the Old Orders.

In total, there are currently more than 20 different Brethren bodies with over 4,000 congregations located in 23 countries. It is interesting to note that there are now more African Brethren in the Federal Republic of Nigeria than Brethren in all of North America. The Brethren were never numerous in Canada, and although there are some churches and programs representing the Brethren Church, mainly in Ontario, in 1968 the Evangelical United Brethren Church in Canada became part of the United Church of Canada.

I am a seminary professor and ordained preacher in the Church of the Brethren, and thus my reflections on themes for the anniversary year will be somewhat specific to my context and concerns. A member of another Brethren body would likely have different stories to tell.

Solidarity, Ecumenicity, Citizenship

When students enter my office at Bethany Theological Seminary, beyond the stacks of books, journals and papers, they are greeted by several visual images. They first see a large portrait of Martin Luther King, Jr. delivering his “I Have a Dream” speech. My students know that we German Baptist Brethren have deep respect and warmest affections for the witness, work, and theology of this Baptist preacher and civil rights leader. King’s dream of a beloved community where persons are not judged by the color of their skin but rather by the content of their character is likewise our dream for the church and society.

Students’ eyes quickly turn to the nearby framed poster announcing the ecumenical Feast of Archbishop Oscar Romero, the martyred pastoral advocate for El Salvador’s poor and oppressed. This poster was a gift from Salvadorian Baptist pastor Miguel Thomas Castro, a visiting scholar at Bethany. Pastor Castro taught us that in Salvador, Protestants and Catholics celebrate together the Romero Feast as a symbol of their spiritual solidarity in the quest for national and international economic justice. The Church of

the Brethren is committed to this kind of ecumenical spirit. We are active members of both the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches.

Many are curious about a large picture calendar displaying the portraits of men and women who are members of the EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria, studying theology at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria. Our large and growing churches in Nigeria have become very involved in the past two decades in the Christian-Muslim dialogue as a path to peacemaking and seeking the common good in a society marked by many tribal and religious conflicts. I take our American seminary students to Nigeria to learn intercultural theological competency in the context of an emerging global Peace Church.

We at Bethany Seminary are in partnership with the Earlham School of Religion, a Quaker graduate school and seminary. Thus, I have a print of Mary Dyer, whose image also adorns other locations on campus, including the Friends Meetinghouse. Mary Dyer was an outspoken Quaker in Puritan New England. Governor John Winthrop and other Puritan fathers sought to silence her as a heretic. However, Dyer refused to recant her awakened spiritual positions and likewise refused to retreat into silence. This unauthorized woman preacher in a dark cape dress and plain bonnet was led to the gallows by American Puritan pastors and politicians, and was hanged as a heretic on Boston Common in 1690. May God save us all from American Puritanism and all expressions of theocratic, Constantinian religion!

Visitors to my office soon observe the large, framed art poster featuring a bearded man in a black, wide-brimmed hat. More than one student has asked, "Is that Alexander Mack?" Most are surprised when I answer, "No, it's Walt Whitman." Why Walt Whitman in a theology professor's office?

For some of us, Walt Whitman has come to symbolize the possibility of deep democracy and inviting plurality in the American experiment. I have presented many Brethren heritage lectures this anniversary year at congregations and colleges across America. In these lectures, I have been inviting audiences to consider what it might mean to "Enter Whitman's America." After all, we do not simply live in Mack's church but in Whitman's America. My audiences learn that I'm not calling them to become mere

generic citizens, placid pluralists, or patriots of civil religion. Instead, I'm inviting them to revisit what it might mean to be Christians and citizens of a pluralistic public square.

Particularism and Universalism

The classical dilemmas of particularism and universalism have concerned Anabaptists and Pietists from the emergence of these religious renewal movements. Like Jews more than Greeks of the ancient world, we have tended to begin with particularism. The Jewish novelist and essayist Elie Wiesel reminds us that it is only when we live out our lives in passionate particularity that our lives can hope to take on universal significance.

Jews are good at the cultivation of particular identities, and so are Brethren and Mennonites. Indeed, the Berkeley scholar Daniel Boyarin has commented that we Anabaptists are more like Jews than Presbyterians! Yet Boyarin, as a Jew fiercely committed to justice for Palestinians, also notes the dangers of identity politics, tribalism, and sectarianism. In the rise of the early Christian movement, the Apostle Paul likewise articulated the importance of a particular religious identity finding more universal connections and confessions. Really, Christian theology began when Greek questions were first asked about a Hebrew narrative.

This challenging rhetoric of particularism and universalism requires a poetics more than a logical syllogism. Aristotle's *Poetics* can help us move beyond the temptations of sectarianism, for the philosopher insists that "to see the similar in the dissimilar is the mark of poetic genius." Walt Whitman as a strong poet can likewise help us celebrate the gifts of particular visions and voices within the context of a commitment to a deeply democratic understanding of religious, cultural, and political life. Following this poetics, in this 300th Anniversary year I'm inviting members of the Brethren movement to consider what gifts and graces we might carry into the public square of Whitman's America – or into the market of Chinua Achebe's Nigeria.

My readers must recognize that I am not inviting them into an exercise of ecclesiology or churchly theology proper. Instead, I am inviting them into a public theology or a theology of culture. We are really pondering the philosophical question, "Do particular traditions bear public resources?" Of

course they do; thus we ask, “What gifts do we carry from the sanctuary into the many streets of our civic lives?” I would like to suggest three themes from the heritage: Non-Creedalism, No Force in Religion, and Service for Peace and Justice.

Non-Creedalism

The early Brethren movement welcomed two streams of spiritual and ecclesial renewal into its theological formation: Anabaptism and Radical Pietism. Although the Anabaptists were certainly theological dissenters from mere churchly orthodoxy, the Radical Pietists offered a more developed theology of non-creedalism. Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714) was a Pietist preacher and poet who taught a stubborn but enlightened non-creedalism. His work and witness is seen in Brethren expressions of this view.

Arnold argued that the formal language of creedal Christendom had been used in the history of the church to punish dissidents and nonconformists who were often the true believers. His massive historical work, *A Nonpartisan History of Church and Heresy*, contends that “heretical movements” had actually perpetuated the true church, while the orthodox church that had disciplined and punished them was in reality the anti-church. Arnold’s preaching, poetry, and historical writing proposed that a “love theology” or a mystical theology of first love (*die erste Liebe*) must be the hermeneutical lens through which all teachings of the Christian life are understood and practiced.

One night the great Christian existential philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, was reading about Brethren non-creedalism. What he read pleased him so much that this melancholic Dane threw back his head and laughed. He was reading about the Brethren in the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. Franklin was friends with the Dunkard preacher Michael Wohlfahrt. Franklin thought Brethrenism might do much better if it had clear and concrete creeds, like other religious bodies, so that members and nonmembers alike might understand the rules of their discipline. Franklin records Preacher Wohlfahrt’s response:

He said that it had been proposed among them, but not agreed to, for this reason: “When we were first drawn together as a society”, says he, “it had pleased God to enlighten our minds so

far as to see that some doctrines, which we had once esteemed as errors, were real truths. From time to time He has been pleased to afford us farther light, and our principles have been improving, and errors diminishing. Now we are not sure that we have arrived at the end of this progression, and at the perfection of spiritual or theological knowledge; and we fear that, if we should print our confession, we should feel ourselves as if bound and confined by it, and perhaps be unwilling to receive farther improvement, and our successors still more so, as conceiving what we their elders and founders had done, to be something sacred, never to be departed from.” This modesty in a sect is perhaps a singular instance in the history of mankind, every other sect supposing itself in possession of all truth, and that those who differ are so far in the wrong.³

This principle of non-creedalism is clearly related to a companion theme in Anabaptism and Pietism: nonconformity. To be counter-cultural or nonconforming to the creeds, moral codes, and sacramental systems of establishment Christendom and its chaplaincy to various expressions of political empire is really to raise a question that is profoundly spiritual, ethical, and aesthetic at once: Will we be consumers of culture or creators of culture?

Indeed, Brethren non-creedalism is not suggesting that we believe nothing; rather it calls for more contingent yet deeply spiritual and artful epistemologies. Gottfried Arnold proposed a theopoetic lens of love piety or love mysticism through which all theology and church history could be read and interpreted. In the evolution of Brethren thought, this love mysticism, which early leaders discerned most clearly in the Sermon on the Mount, became a broader hermeneutical principle summarized by the phrase “No creed but the New Testament.”

“No creed but the New Testament” is not a call for a flat Biblicism but instead invites a hermeneutics of the priesthood of all believers. In the heritage, there is a sense that the solitary heart of the Pietist is further edified, exhorted, and enlarged by the Anabaptist communal hermeneutic. In this model of spiritual and theological discernment, believers gather together around the texts of the NT with the faith that the Holy Spirit will offer new

light and life to the scriptures. Some read as careful scribes, some read as prophets, others as strong poets, still others as pastors. Yet the goal of this committed, communal reader response is to discern “the mind of Christ” in the text and its message for the church in the world.

Brethren Old Testament scholar Christina Bucher has recently suggested that this affirmation of “No creed but the New Testament” is not quite true to the complexity of Anabaptist-Pietist habits of scripture reading, teaching, and preaching. Although we have viewed the Sermon on the Mount as a canon within the canon, we have likewise been instructed by the rich narratives of the Hebrew Bible, inspired by the Psalms, and called to personal and public responsibility by the OT Prophets. Bucher’s insight offers a helpful corrective to any tendency or temptation to make even the decree “No creed but the New Testament” another flat creed or disciplinary code. Indeed, in recent years many in our communities of faith have noted that the prophetic, Jewish Jesus challenges all the claims of a mere Constantinian Christ of the Empire as he carries the truly Jewish message of shalom, mercy, and justice into the church and society. The religion of Jesus reflected the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible.

No Force in Religion

The testimony of “No force in religion” of course invites us to be peacemakers in a broken world, but it is also marked by a progressive politics. We in the Believers’ Church tradition have resisted Constantinianism with the reminder that the church is not the *Corpus Christianum* but rather the *Corpus Christi*. We are not those christened by the State’s Church and thus received into the body of territorial Christianity, but we are instead a voluntary association of believers committed to another way of being church. The current denominational tag line for public witness seeks to capture this: “Another Way of Living: Following the Way of Jesus – Simply, Peacefully, Together.” Brethren practice believers’ baptism by triune immersion as a sign and symbol of this spiritual journey, yet it is also an ordinance of the church with progressive political implications.

When the Anabaptists and Radical Pietists said “No!” to the emperor’s baptism, they also said “No!” to his economics, armies, morality, and politics. In other words, they signified through baptism that religious faith and the

sword of the state must not be united to promote the emperor's, prince's, or president's religious agenda nor any pope's or preacher's political ideology. "No force in religion" celebrates the deeply democratic doctrine of separation of church and state, yet at the same time it does not counsel the separation of religion from public life. If space permitted, I could offer much more on this point of religion and public life. (Readers interested in a theological treatment of this issue can see my recent article, somewhat playfully titled "How Would Jesus Vote?"⁴)

The political implications of the "No force in religion" testimony are well understood within the Believers' Church guild. This assertion also has ecclesial implications. In 1908 Martin Grove Brumbaugh was preaching "No force in religion" as a core Brethren value. The first member of the Church of the Brethren to earn a Ph.D, he was a preacher and a church historian, authoring an important history of the Brethren movement in 1899. He served as the president of Juniata College, and because he understood that Brethren live not only in Mack's church but in Whitman's America – although Brumbaugh was more inspired by Lincoln than Whitman – he ran for political office and was elected governor of Pennsylvania in 1915.

As a churchman, Brumbaugh was distressed that the Brethren in early 20th-century America were applying the principle of no force in religion to political and public life but not to churchly life. Church was sometimes a mean place where Communion or Love Feasts were being used as punishing tools of church discipline. If a member in his belief or behavior did not neatly conform to the expectations of pastors and elders of the church, he could be shunned from the Lord's Table and exiled from full fellowship with the Brethren. Alexander Mack learned this theology of the ban from his Mennonite neighbors in Germany.

To this practice of church discipline, Brumbaugh declared, "No force in religion!" Living in Lincoln's America taught him the value of unity in diversity guided by freedom of conscience and loving forbearance, in the church and in the world. Several of our Brethren historians believe Brumbaugh was wrong to apply this testimony or principle to the realm of the church when it was first formulated in the heritage for the sphere of political life. As a Brethren theologian and practicing pastor, I think he was correct to connect the quest for peaceful forbearance to the life in the

sanctuary. My grandmother, Lilly Leitchman Holland, stated rather bluntly, even in her final, 103rd year of life, “Because Brethren and Mennonites don’t believe in war, they must nevertheless find some way to shed blood in church!” She had not even read Sigmund Freud on the anatomy of human aggression.

Service for Peace and Justice

Brethren, along with our Mennonite and Quaker colleagues, have been actively involved in a decade-long international project of “Seeking Cultures of Peace.” The World Council of Churches declared the first ten years of the 21st century a “Decade to Overcome Violence.” Leaders from the Historic Peace Churches were invited to work with WCC partners in this decade of programs, projects, and consultations. In important ways this ecumenical work continues and extends the aims of the Puidoux Conferences of the 1950s and 1960s in which John Howard Yoder and Donald Durnbaugh, key leaders of the Believers’ Church guild, actively participated.⁵

We have called this international and intercultural work in peacemaking “Seeking Cultures of Peace” rather than seeking doctrines, ideologies, or even theologies of peace to signal that peacemaking is a way of life, a culture, a mode of being in the world. Peacemaking is not merely protesting war, nor is peace the absence of conflict; peacemaking in the heritage of the Historic Peace Churches is engaged in seeking the presence of God’s reign, God’s Commonwealth, God’s Kingdom, on earth, in history, in life, even as it is in heaven.

Thus, the church is called to service for peace and justice as we unite with God’s work in the world. We agree with Dietrich Bonhoeffer that the church is in the world *for* the world. Therefore, we do not only ask ourselves, “What is God doing in the church?” We also ask, “What is God doing in the world?” The answer to this second question really calls us to a worldly holiness.

What is God doing in the world? My neighbor boy Miguel lives in a single-parent household. His mother asked me if I would be willing to take him to the barbershop with me and do other “guy things” with him for some male bonding. I happily agreed. One day, on the way to get haircuts, Miguel said, “Scott, sometimes when you are not around I feel like talking to you.

But Mom says you are in Africa or Indonesia or Belgium or Canada. You are away a lot.” Miguel continued, “I get this funny feeling in my stomach and something just doesn’t seem right. Then one day it came to me! Now, Scott, I know you can’t say anything, because it’s top secret, but I believe I have figured something out. Mom says you are a professor and a preacher, but that’s a cover, isn’t it? You are really a spy!”

I laughed and said, “You know, Miguel, in a sense you are right. As a preacher and theology professor my assignment is to explore what God might be doing in the world. Therefore, I must track down God like a spy in all of life – for God is active in both the church and the world.”

Like Mennonites and Friends, the Brethren have worked for peace and justice in various arenas from protesting war to involvement in local and national political action to developing rigorous peace studies programs in our academic institutions. One of our greatest gifts to the world is the long, distinguished tradition of service for peace and justice through voluntary service programs, from Civilian Public Service (CPS) as an alternative to military service to various assignments of Brethren Voluntary Service around the world. We know that the John F. Kennedy administration developed the Peace Corps after studying the successful work of the voluntary services programs of the Historic Peace Churches. Some service programs started by the Church of the Brethren, such as the Heifer Project, are now ecumenical, interfaith, and international. This is truly a theology of service that seeks global cultures of peace and nurtures cosmopolitan affections.

In the progression of Brethren tradition, the Service Cup and the Communion Cup became companion symbols of the centrality of service and worship in our theological vision. The Communion Cup is a symbol of a doxological consummation of theology. At bread and cup communion during morning worship and likewise during special evening services of Love Feast, the high ritual signifying love and service to God and neighbor in the Brethren heritage, the Communion Cup reminds us that the spiritual life comes to us from God as gift and grace, not as mere doctrine, duty, and discipline. In the 20th-century the Brethren also created a Service Cup, crafted out of beautiful myrtle wood, as a reminder that communion with God finds expression in gracious and generous service to the neighbor.

For some of us pastors in the Brethren movement, the Communion

Cup and the Service Cup are often placed together on the Communion Table during times of worship. Indeed, in recent years I have officiated at the funerals of church members who were in CPS during World War Two or served in international Voluntary Service in the years following the war. Their families have requested that I discuss and display these two cups during the eulogy as deep symbols and root metaphors which acknowledge that communion with God and service to humanity have been the core testimonies of their departed loved ones and of our denominational theological heritage.

We have had a deep understanding that the Lord's Prayer is as much about earth as it is about heaven. "May thy Kingdom come, may thy will be done, *on earth*, even as it is in heaven." When we pray this prayer we are longing to see hope and history rhyme. The Pietist tradition often expressed its most profound theology in poetry and hymns. Thus, I would like to close with two contemporary poems. Seamus Heaney won a Nobel Peace prize in literature because his verse understands how hope and history, in moments of grace, can in fact rhyme.

From the Cure at Troy

Human beings suffer,
they torture one another,
they hurt and get hard.
No poem or play or song
can fully right a wrong
inflicted and endured.

The innocent in gaols
beat on their bars together.
A hunger-striker's father
stands in the graveyard dumb.
The police widow in veils
faints at the funeral home.

History says, Don't hope
on this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
the longed for tidal wave
of justice can rise up,
and hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change
on the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore
is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
and cures and healing wells.

Call the miracle self-healing:
The utter self-revealing
double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
Or lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
of new life at its term.⁶

Poet Marge Piercy understands from her Jewish heritage that the Hebrew prophets often expressed themselves with poetic vision and voice. Piercy, along with the Poet-Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, understands that spiritual life expresses itself in the *tikkun olam*, the healing or mending of our blessed, broken world. I shall use her timely peace poem as a benediction as we leave these banquet tables and go out into the night.

Peace in a Time of War

A puddle of amber light
like sun spread on a table,
food flirting savor into the nose,
faces of friends, a vase
of daffodils and Dutch iris:

this as an evening of honey
on the tongue, cinnamon
scented, red wine sweet
and dry, voices rising
like a flock of swallows

turning together in evening
air Darkness walls off
the room from what lies
outside, the fire and dust
and blood of war, bodies

stacked like firewood
burst like overripe melons.
Ceremony is a moat we have we have
crossed into a moment's
harmony, as if the world paused –

but it doesn't. What we must
do waits like coats tossed
on the bed, for us to rise
from this warm table,
put on again and go out.⁷

Scott Holland is Professor of Theology and Culture at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Indiana and an active preacher in the Church of the Brethren.

This article was originally presented as an address at the Believers' Church Conference held in Winnipeg, Manitoba in Summer 2008.

Notes

¹ Donald F. Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine: A History of the Brethren, 1708-1995* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1996).

² Myrna Grove, *Alexander Mack: A Man Who Rippled the Waters* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 2008).

³ Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1912), 128-29.

⁴ Scott Holland, "How Would Jesus Vote?" *Brethren Life and Thought* 53.1 (Winter 2008): 1-14.

⁵ See Fernando Enns, Scott Holland, and Ann Riggs, eds., *Seeking Cultures of Peace* (Telford, PA: Cascadia; Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press; Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2004).

⁶ From the Web Archive of Panhala postings: www.panhala.net/Archive/Index.html.

⁷ "Peace in a time of war" from THE CROOKED INHERITANCE by Marge Piercy, copyright ©2006 by Middlemarsh, Inc. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc. Page 153.

Can Mennonites Support Policing?*

Sidonie Swana Tangiza Falanga

Introduction

Christian churches across the world exercise and support policing to maintain law and order in society. However, with reference to the origins of the Mennonite Church and in accordance with Mennonite doctrine, some people contend that Mennonites should not be involved in the practice of these services. The reason for this belief is based on the view that police services are worldly functions that use violence, which is a sin. This opinion is currently shared not only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) but in North America and in Europe. Nevertheless, some churches support police action and involvement to maintain order, while others deny that the use of an armed police force can be justified by those who uphold the doctrine of nonviolence.

The article by Andy Alexis-Baker, “The Gospel or a Glock? Mennonites and the Police” (*CGR* Spring 2007), opposes the views often published in North America that support a police presence to maintain order. My objective in the present article consists of asking these fundamental questions: Can Mennonite Christians participate in policing services? and Will we support Alexis-Baker’s view or the views of those who support policing?

Before I address these concerns, I will offer a reflection comprising three distinct sections. First, I will identify definitions and mission statements specific to the police force. Second, I will discuss policing, outlining its principal objective, its method of action, its specialized forces and the use of armed force, and the behavior and attitude of police officers – all for the sake of asking whether Mennonites can truly take an active role in policing. Finally, I will consider the Congolese police force in order to reveal the causes and consequences of police abuse in the DRC, to identify strategies to enable a legitimate Congolese police force to maintain order, and to talk about Congolese Mennonite individuals faced with the police profession.

I will also offer a partial synthesis and conclusion at the end of each

section, and a general conclusion at the end of the article. The article is based on documentary research, investigative inquiry, interviews, personal experiences, and reactions based on personal reflections.

Definitions and Mission Statements

Definition of “Police”

The noun “police” (in Greek *politeia*, political organization) is defined by Webster as “1. A judicial and executive system, for the government of a city, town, or district, for the preservation of rights, order, cleanliness, health, etc., and for the enforcement of the laws and prevention of crime; the administration of the laws and regulations of a city, incorporated town, or borough.”¹

According to a police officer whom I interviewed on a bus in Kinshasa in March 2008, the practical meaning of the term “police” can be represented by the following simple acronym:

P = Politeness
O = Obedience
L = Loyalty
I = Intelligence
C = Courteousness
E = Execution²

All of these positive words evoke a sense of benevolence that is thought to characterize the police profession.

Authentic General Police Missions

Richard Guhana Muninga, an ex-sergeant of the Armed Forces of the DRC [Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC)] gives two different statements of police missions: “Policing [operates] in order to allow the population and individuals to peacefully attend to their business” and [policing is] “the ability to maintain and restore public order once it is disrupted and broken; here we see use of force taken by the police.”³

“Policing” in the Strict Sense of the Word

Principal Objective

The objective in policing is to prevent disturbances and disorder in public

highways or in public areas, and, if disorder occurs, to put a stop to it with use of force if necessary.⁴

Methods of Action

Actions used by the police in specific situations are as follows.

1. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

These are measures that could be taken to prevent disturbances from arising in public order. Preventive measures also aim to assure the protection of the general public and political security.⁵

Pastor Narri Kapepe from the Mennonite Brethren Mission in the Congo is someone who recognizes the importance of a police presence to maintain order: “On April 8, 2008 our parish fell victim to the theft of church chairs. If we had a police officer to protect the building, the robbers would not operate so freely.”⁶

2. INTERVENTION MEASURES

Intervention measures consist of deployment of the public force according to the arrangements and specific techniques used to momentarily limit the freedom of movement of individuals in a given area. When necessary, these measures can comprise the use of force, with or without arms.⁷

Recently in the DRC and specifically in the province of Bas-Congo, from February 28 to March 3, 2008 the Congolese Police restored peace, in spite of some incidents resulting in loss of control, during the massacre of the population by the followers of Bundu Dia Kongo (BDK), which represents itself as defending, protecting, and promoting the interests of the Kongo people.

3. AUTHORIZED DEMONSTRATIONS

Authorized demonstrations also fall under the category of intervention. When I asked a police officer, who prefers to remain anonymous, about the action of police, he responded with this statement:

Before a demonstration, an analysis of different elements is evaluated to determine if the reasons for demonstrating are based on legitimate grounds. If so, the police supervise the

demonstrators from the beginning to the end of their public movement. The police can even accompany the demonstrators to their final destination. The deputy police superintendent Soni Rocky presented the same approaches to authorized public demonstrations on April 22, 2008. If there is an outflanking, the police target the main subjects and hold them in custody. Afterwards, the police evacuate everyone from the area and channel them into an alternate route and escort them home. The police remain in the area of the demonstration until the end of the disturbance. The Commanding Officer remains at the disposal of the political authority until the end of the proceedings.⁸

4. UNAUTHORIZED DEMONSTRATIONS

The officer provided this statement about unauthorized demonstrations:

The police will be present at the location of the demonstration to supervise the demonstrators. However, the police will appeal to authorities if the political administration needs to be present to make a judgment on the legitimacy of the movement and to declare the demonstration authorized if the demands meet the requirements.... In the case where the demands do not present legal grounds for demonstration, the police are asked by the political authority to break up the demonstrators using the following procedures: The police order demonstrators three times to end their demonstration by issuing the command that “All good law-abiding citizens withdraw, for arms will be used against the illegal demonstrators.” (The law-abiding citizens vacate, leaving the resisting demonstrators.)

A group of police officers then fire shots into the air upon their Commanding Officer’s order to evacuate remaining protestors. Another group insures the dispersion and facilitates the channeling of people to allow law-abiding citizens to return home safely in an organized and predetermined manner. The police block access to the area by preventing demonstrators from staying in the demonstration area. Yet another group of

police officers stay in place to verify that no demonstrators are left in the area until they can ensure safety and no further disturbances. Until then, there is not to be any use of arms to kill any demonstrators.

The police play their part in the protection and maintenance of order, and armed fire is not used as a means until it is required as a necessary and legitimate mechanism of defense. In other words, when a demonstrator provokes a police officer by throwing rocks or by exposing an armed weapon, the police must return fire on the offender in order to protect themselves (Art. 431-3 of the Criminal Code and Art. 122- 4 to 122-7, which treat just and legitimate defense). If the demonstrators do not take up arms, the police have no justifiable reason to fire.⁹

One can find support for this view of policing and maintaining order by referring to the opinions shared by James Reimer and Gerald Schlabach as quoted in Alexis-Baker's article, "The Gospel or a Glock?" Schlabach and Reimer, the author notes, have argued for "a 'just policing' ethic in which Christian police could have recourse to killing, albeit only as an exception under carefully delineated criteria."¹⁰

To summarize what I have just presented, but stating it in different terms, the police have three principal missions: Reinforcement Missions,¹¹ Protective Missions¹² (since the Prime Minister of the DRC took occupancy of his new dwelling, the police forbid any traffic from surrounding his place of residence), and Support Missions.¹³ Regarding the last, says Feruzi Basikola, "when there is a war between two nations, it is the police that protect the population of the country at war while the soldiers are at war."¹⁴

We ourselves are witnesses of daily actions taken by the police to maintain order. Many times have we assisted police who arrest thieves, crooks, swindlers, troublemakers, rebels, and drug users and traffickers in order to bring them before the law and to subject them to judgment and sentencing when necessary.

Alexis-Baker writes about the evolution of the role of the police, noting that "the first modern American police agencies evolved from mixing the watch system with the need to control immigrant and slave populations.

Each region had its own flavor of policing. In the South, the modern police developed out of patrols organized to catch runaway slaves, monitor their social behavior, restrict their movement, and thwart revolt.¹⁵ Among other things, Alexis-Baker's historical summary describes the police as seeking to control immigrant and slave populations; to organize and catch runaway slaves, monitor their social behavior and restrict their movement; to make sure all citizens respect the law; to protect families, churches, and society; to prevent rebellion and crimes; to enforce building regulations; to keep watch on drunkards and vagabonds; and to promote voter turnout and monitor voting stations.¹⁶

While some of the above roles were commendable, I do not support the capture and incarceration of slaves, nor the system by which blacks were monitored. That system did not uphold the just prerogative of the police. The mission of a police officer is not the problem at all. Rather it is the establishment, and the means, of maintaining order to ensure peace and security in society.

Specialized Forces and the Use of Armed Force

Policing essentially ensures protection by the use of specialized forces that include Republican Security Companies and Squadrons of the Gendarmerie Mobile that are supplemented by different levels of the National Police, Regional Gendarmerie, the Republican Guard, the Army including Land, Marine, and Air Forces as well as allied services, and Training Officers for the Gendarmerie.¹⁷

As for the use of arms, the police forces can have weapons; however, they are not primarily for the purpose of killing, because bloodshed is the difference between policing and combat. The adversary of police forces is not an enemy, but rather a citizen who is disturbing public order. The army is used because police forces cannot do the job without their support. In this case, the army serves as a scare tactic, used against the public to control disturbances and demonstrations.

Behavior and Attitude

The execution of police missions requires a calm temperament and composure, a love of humanity and courage, and absolute obedience and

discipline, because this work often takes place in an environment that is particularly violent and emotionally heated. Moral discipline is necessary in all settings, and officers must develop these indispensable moral values. Rigorous discipline, level-headedness, patience, and firmness need to be allied closely to a team spirit and a sense of solidarity and self-sacrifice.¹⁸ When necessary in a given situation, intervention measures decided by the civil authority can include the use of force with or without the use of arms. The force deployed must be proportionate to the severity of the disturbance.¹⁹

Can Mennonites Support Policing?

Four of the twenty-one people I surveyed stated that Mennonites cannot support policing based on the use of violence, whereas I and seventeen others support policing. Here are the reasons brought forward for the latter position:

- The mission of the police is to maintain order where there is disorder. Mennonite Christians can likewise act to maintain order as God himself commanded. (1 Cor. 14:40)
- Mennonite Christians already have an understanding of nonviolence and can easily establish peace and resolve conflicts by different means. Mennonites search out peace with others. (Heb. 12:14-15)
- Mennonite Christians who become police officers can enlighten those who do not properly exercise just law and order. Through this service they become salt to the earth and light to the world. (Matt. 5:13-16)
- Mennonite Christians become police officers because of their fundamental biblical belief in being a witness and an example of Christ, and to transform the negative image of police in society.
- In the world there is no stupid profession; however, there are

people who act negligently and stupidly.

- When their mission deviates from its original goals and intent, the police can still move forward and their integrity can be restored. They can continue to uphold their work through proper training, relearning, and good supervision. See Ezek. 37:1-11.
- If the role of police is to protect people and their property in accordance with article 118 of the Constitution, then there is nothing wrong in defending Mennonite Christians for taking part in policing and supporting police work.
- Police will protect our property and possessions, and the patrimony of our churches, something that relates to the example of Narri Kapepe cited earlier.
- Violence exists elsewhere as well, not just in policing. Even Jesus himself used violence. See Matt. 21:12-13.
- If Mennonite Christians abstain from policing, we are left with a void in state affairs, assuming that the state will make all the decisions for us and that only politics will take care of us. On the contrary, we must take part in policing in order to set an example of the code of conduct that should be followed, and to give a national example of what is right and good by not assaulting the people.
- Mennonite Christians are the most welcome in the policing profession to uphold justice, without which peace could not exist, and to advocate for good governance.
- Mennonite police officers will be ready to take part in the reconstruction of our nations and will respond to our plea for justice.
- Mennonite police officers will know when to use their armed weapons.

- If other Christians and a lot of missions across the world have already taken part in policing, why not Mennonites? Do these other Christians support the use of violence?
- All individuals on earth are here for the service of God. We must take part in the [policing] service in order to accomplish what Paul said in Rom. 13:7: “Give to everyone what you owe them.”²⁰

The Congolese Police

Corrupt Missions

Instead of properly exercising its mission, the Congolese Police in general fall into the trap of pillage, rape, theft, drug abuse, arbitrary assassinations, extortion, burglary, disregard for human rights, and interference in dangerous politics instead of upholding the law.

Causes of Police Abuse

- Poor wages
- Poor recruitment
- Engaging in policing services only as a means of personal revenge
- Poor retention and supervision of police officers
- Lack of alternative employment
- The socio-economic crisis of the country: when dealing with individuals, corrupt police always look for a reason to swindle money from the victim. There is, in this matter, a common expression among police officers: “Na kolia yo?” (“Will you be the one I eat?”)

All these factors contribute to harmful consequences that are causes of police abuse. Of course, the entire police force in the DRC is not corrupt; those who act with disregard for the law do so independently.

Strategies to Achieve a Congolese Police Force of Integrity

If we desire to have a police force that is truly a power to uphold and maintain order in society, then work must be done in the area of recruitment. This means recruiting qualified, competent, and mature men (with the necessary level and standard of education). After recruitment, there must be training, not to be confused with combat training. Training must aim to provide supervisors with legal and administrative knowledge as well as with spiritual and moral development skills in nonviolence, peace, and conflict resolution.²¹ Initiation rites, as Alexis-Baker points out in a different context, are indeed important for the police.²² Moreover, it would be good to reinforce this initial training by additional training later. This could be accomplished in stages, by means of retraining courses, continual supervision, and fair, consistent payment, for without that, the police would not properly execute their duties.

Congolese Mennonites and the Police Profession

Congolese Mennonites are pro-police services. The proof is in all three Mennonite communities, where there are members already engaged in these services as soldiers and police officers.

Conclusion

All things considered, Mennonites can support policing and be involved in it, for the police officer's mission is not to kill but to maintain order in society. If, by chance, violence is used to intervene, it is in the case of self-defense. It is not possible to be a nonviolent community in the violent world to which Alexis-Baker refers.

To maintain order, the police must have a weapon at hand for self-defense and as an intimidation tactic to scare off the criminal. Peter used the sword not to avenge Jesus but to scare off the culprit with a view to protecting his Lord (Matt. 26:51). To avoid the use of weapons completely, the police must collaborate with the government in power to make sure that prevention measures go smoothly at all levels of public and private life. But until then, I think that the Gospel goes hand-in-hand with the Glock, to use Alexis-Baker's language. Take, for instance, the example of Nehemiah and his collaborators while they were reconstructing the great wall of Jerusalem (Neh. 4). And note that Jesus used force to chase merchants out of the

Temple (Luke 19:45-46).

It is better if Mennonite Christians support policing and engage in the profession of maintaining order, as they already understand the principle of nonviolence, which is rooted in their beliefs as well as in the calling to be the salt and light of the world (Mark 9:50). These attributes could influence the conduct of police and political figures. Both systems, the Church and the State, were established and guided by God, and Christians have a divine obligation and duty to serve not only in the church but in political and civic professions. There is a biblical basis for maintaining order in society, namely Rom. 13:1-2. As already noted, Mennonite police officers are desired to protect our families, the patrimony of our churches, Mennonite institutions, universities, and so on.

One can say that if we want peace we must prepare for war, but I think that if we want peace we must first seek justice (2 Cor. 6:7). The police need to be aware of ways to deal appropriately with offenders, apprehending them without mistreating them with physical force or violence, and bringing them before justice to receive a fair hearing. Simple advice and negotiations can also be used to correct offenders.

If churches welcome newly baptized police officers into their midst, they are not thereby violating their principles. The police can make an oath by committing to the terms of the acronym “POLICE” (see discussion earlier in this article) and should do so with all seriousness.

Mennonite police can help assure the world’s security by not relying solely on the style used by the CIA, the MSA, the FBI, the RCMP, or CSIS.²³ Mennonite police officers can serve as a link between the government and the people to bring forward reports or grievances of the people to the deciding powers. Contra Alexis-Baker, I agree with Gerald Schlabach and his support for a Christian police force.²⁴

Regarding disrespect of public order, it is better that such matters are dealt with by police tribunals versed in the law and security measures. Such tribunals provide important policies on security and peace that are indispensable for establishing ethical directives for the police. The maxim of the police can be justice, order, peace. In order to establish and maintain order and peace they must, therefore, fight even harder to anticipate all the injustices and wars that can arise in the country. In this task they must use

the force of spiritual weapons to transform people and their service (Eph. 6:14-18).

If the police are well aware of their mission's principal objective, we can then have at our disposal police who can measure up to the task and who will avoid loss of control and focus. The police must be ready to die, just as Jesus did for the sake of his people. And they will know that one day they will render an account to God.

Notes

**Translated by Christina Hörst from the author's original article, entitled Le Chrétien Mennonite, peut-il exercer le maintien de l'ordre?*

¹ *Webster Comprehensive Dictionary*. (Chicago: J.G. Ferguson Pub. Co., 1992). Note: The author uses the definition for the term "police" from the *Petit Larousse French Dictionary*: "Police. n.: [1] Ensemble des règlements qui maintiennent la sécurité publique." *Petit Larousse. Dictionnaire Encyclopédique pour tous* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1963), 797. – Translator.

² Anonymous. Kinshasa, March 17, 2008.

³ Guhana Muninga. Interview. Kinshasa, February 23, 2008.

⁴ Instructions Relating to the Preparation and Operation of the Armed Forces and Police. State Major of the Army 487/DEF/EMA/EMP/DR April 28, 1997, 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶ Reverend Pastor Narri Kapepe. Interview. Kinshasa, April 17, 2008.

⁷ Instructions Relating to the Preparation and Operation of the Armed Forces and Police, 8.

⁸ Anonymous. Interview. Kinshasa, Superior Military Centre, March 27, 2008.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Andy Alexis-Baker. "The Gospel or a Glock? Mennonites and the Police," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 25.2 (Spring 2007): 24.

¹¹ Instructions Relating to the Preparation and Operation of the Armed Forces and Police, 12.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁴ Feruzi Basikola. Interview. Kinshasa, April 22, 2008.

¹⁵ Alexis-Baker, 29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷ Instructions Relating to the Preparation and Operation of the Armed Forces and Police, 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁰ *Holy Bible*. New Living Translation. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996).

²¹ Aaron Jerubbal, *Etude perspicace des Ecritures*. Volume I, 179-80.

²² Alexis-Baker, 32.

²³ Compare Alexis-Baker, 26.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

A Congolese Mennonite election observer in the historic 2006 DRC national elections, Sidonie Swana Tanziga Falanga is a leader of the African Anabaptist Women Theologians group. She was among the more than 130 women theologians from Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and North America who met during Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15 in Paraguay in July 2009.

A Note on Jean Janzen

Hildi Froese Tiessen, Literary Editor

I have a little story about language. I taught piano for about a dozen years to about a dozen children. This was before I became a poet. And during this time there were many who didn't practice. And there was one . . . who hardly ever practiced. And yet she always wanted to come [for lessons]. This was seventh grade. And her mother finally asked her, "Why do you want to keep wanting to go if you never practice?" And she said, "Well, I just like the way Mrs. Janzen says the word 'Bach.'"

– Jean Janzen, in “Literature, Place, Language, and Faith: A Conversation between Jean Janzen, John Ruth, and Rudy Wiebe,” in *The Conrad Grebel Review* (Winter 2008)

The title of Jean Janzen’s first published volume of poems, *Words for the Silence* (1984), like the title of her most recent collection, *Piano in the Vineyard* (2004), suggests her sustaining interest in the power of both verbal and musical utterance. She remembers writing a book of poems when she was as young as eight, but didn’t seriously take up the craft of writing poetry until some forty years later. She is now author of six collections of poems and mentor to many younger poets at colleges in the United States. Throughout her lifetime Janzen has expressed her love of music by playing the piano, singing in a church choir, and, finally, writing hymns sung by Mennonites and members of at least seven other Christian denominations. The Reflection that follows – one of a series of what Janzen calls “memoir essays” – speaks to her passion for music and to the central place of the piano in the emergence of her poetic sensibility and her life as poet.

REFLECTION**PIANO***Jean Janzen*

Fresno, California, as we approached it on Highway 99 in July of 1961, was a glare in the eyes, asphalt parking lots, and wrecked cars in heaps baking beside the road. It was dry grass and dust held down by three rusty cars and a motorcycle in front of a two-room house. We were moving here to begin a medical practice, to a city that needed pediatricians; a hub of commerce for ranchers, immigrant laborers, and diverse businesses, we had heard, but which now seemed fragile. We would need to find something strong and sturdy if we were to stay, something that would hold us safely over dry, quaking earth.

Off the highway, however, we found a city laid out in square blocks and shaded streets with manicured lawns. We also found a small, furnished house to rent. A used baby grand piano was one of our first purchases and an oasis for me in this unfamiliar place as I coped with the demands of two preschoolers and the absence of my husband as he put himself on call day and night to get a jump start in his practice. Bach, Debussy, nursery songs, and hymns softened the harsh heat of afternoons, and the curved, simple line of the piano's body was pleasing, even if the surface was cracked with age.

We had moved a piano before. In our first year of marriage we bought an upright which scraped the bannisters as it was hoisted up to our third floor flat on the south side of Chicago. I had seen it exposed to the street from my office window, a piano abandoned by evicted tenants, the wrecking ball swinging before it like a metronome. Before the day was over my husband had arranged to buy it for twenty-five dollars and to have it moved for seventy-five more. It was a reckless, loving act, considering that its cost represented nearly half of our month's income.

My love for the instrument grew in spite of early struggle: before my first piano recital at age six, I slammed my finger in the car door. I lost my nerve and memory in school contests, and it was clear that my skills in

technique were limited. What ran deep and insistent for me, however, was the pleasure in the harmony, the dissonance and resolve, the way my hands on the keys could make the sounding board resound. Playing the piano was a co-operation with keys and hammers, an invocation of the amazing variations in the sounds of eighty-eight keys, and an assent, it seemed, to keep moving into the glorious cathedral of piano literature as an amateur. After all, the word “amateur” comes from the Latin for “lover.”

A piano was there when I was born in a Saskatchewan winter, seventh child in the family, the older siblings taking lessons. In recent years I met a man who remembered my birth. He had been a student in my father’s one-room country schoolhouse. It was December and time to rehearse for the annual Christmas program, and he with other students walked to the little teacherage on the school yard to practice with the piano. My father announced to the children that there was a new baby in the house, would they like to meet her? First sounds, children singing around the piano, music with body warmth, and then on the program night, being carried under stars as part of the procession behind the piano as it was rolled over snowy boards to the schoolhouse.

By the time I began lessons, my parents afforded them by offering the use of our home, in Minnesota then, as a studio one afternoon a week. Mrs. Roberts stepped off the Greyhound every Thursday noon at the end of our graveled street and walked to our house in her dainty boots and fur-trimmed coat. Her cultured, gentle ways carried me into another world, thirty minutes of patient instruction which was sometimes interrupted when she became enraptured with the melody, when her training in singing broke through. Then she would sing the beat in crescendo, her rich contralto melting the frost from our snow-whipped windows.

Year after year the piano stood in our small living room, an imposing presence challenging me to master another key, to drill scales and arpeggios, and to learn my first Mozart sonata. Overriding all, however, was the possibility that I could play well enough to be one of the honored accompanists for congregational singing in our church. All leadership there was adult and male. The piano and organ accompanists, however, were often female, sometimes teens. We younger girls would lean forward and watch and listen, hopeful for such an honor. My sister and I spent many summer

afternoons playing and singing hymns, partly in preparation, but also because they offered comfort in a time when music and language combined became a source of both challenge and comfort. These were the uncertain years of World War II. “Holy God, we praise thy name” and “Great is thy faithfulness” became a part of my body as our voices and hands created a resonance that grew beyond ourselves.

In Chicago, our first home after marriage, the piano became a sort of refuge. After typing cardiac reports and EKG evaluations at work all day, I would join my husband in our apartment where he was memorizing Gray’s *Anatomy*. He showed me the heart’s chambers, the way the valves work, how sometimes they close up hard as stone. He studied the ear, its delicate coil and drum, the eye’s amazing lens. I was taking classes in literature, reading Fitzgerald and Wallace Stevens, their language opening new vistas, then opened the book of Chopin’s Nocturnes seeking the path of melody and its attendant harmonies, my left hand laboring at the leaps through unexpected passages as the nocturne moved toward a resting place. Both of us learning by means of language, and both of us aware that words were limited, that the amazing body was able to know something large and shimmering, and perhaps devastating, that lay beyond language. Music without words, like Mendelssohn’s “Songs Without Words” and other “pure music” compositions called to me, inviting me to enter and discover that vast reservoir that lies under good literature.

Chicago’s gales were meaner than any I had felt in Saskatchewan or Minnesota. They tore through the skyscraper canyons from the lake and pressed me against the hospital wall. These early years of marriage, and that city with its layers of sociological challenges, corruption in the mayor’s office, and the restlessness of African-Americans in our neighborhood were dramatic. It was the offering of the arts—the Chicago Art Institute, the Chicago Symphony, and the theater that became part of our shelter and exploration. We were attending an integrated Mennonite church which nourished our roots of faith. In that church we sang in a choir that performed Bach’s “St. John’s Passion,” and heard the words of Jesus on the mountain—teachings about justice and mercy. During those years in Chicago we learned that art and faith could reside in the same space, that solutions for our world would require the giving of ourselves in ways that could be painful, but could also

lead to joy and beauty.

Twenty years later in Fresno, after our youngest child got settled in school, I began giving lessons to children on our Yamaha conservatory grand piano. It was a way to share this fine instrument and the love I held for it. Some students learned to listen to the wonder of melody and harmony, some mainly struggled with those black heads with stems dancing on too many lines. The demand of coordination was a mountain and the development of technique a never-ending range, but there it stood, offering itself. Some would walk in with their sighs and open their books once again to try to make those notes into something more, that elusive quality that reverberates at the edge of all we try to make, whether art or marriage.

During these years I began to test myself in creative writing classes at our local university. Back to language and its power and possibility. I had searched for good literature to support me in my lonely role as mother and homemaker, and discovered that excellent writing was important soul food. Gradually the yearning for creating such work myself began to lift its head. As I found myself engaged in the writing of poems and in reading many poets, I recognized the obvious crossover from poetry to music. Here too was rhythm and sound, development of the theme, and a new vista opening – what all art offers. Just as in learning to play the piano, or any instrument, one begins with rules, with technique, and practice. Joan Oliver Goldsmith writes how we are “teaching the notes to our muscles, engraving the geography of the music onto our minds; playing with phrasings, dynamics, and tempo,” yet how, after mastery, we need to let go so that the music becomes creation with its yearning, awe, and passion. I learned that in writing as in piano playing we continue to seek the “right song” that holds within it some connection to the rest of our lives, and as Goldsmith puts it, “a connection that is struggling towards consciousness.”

We are blessed in Fresno with a series of keyboard concerts that bring in the finest pianists in the world. In an intimate concert hall we are nourished over and over by the world’s greatest piano literature. We absorb technique and interpretation that consistently and variously lays a feast before us – whether Bartok or Beethoven, allowing us to awaken to those connections that are beyond words.

When my grandchildren come to our home, we often sit together at

the piano to sing. This week one chose the book of folk songs from the New York Metropolitan Art Museum, songs illustrated with visual art. He selected “Bringing in the Sheaves,” a song I remembered singing in four parts with my church congregation when I was a child, the basses rumbling like threshing machines and the sopranos soaring over them, words and music blending their powers. Before us in the book was Breughel’s golden painting of harvesters among thick stands of wheat, some resting and eating together, some working their scythes in solitude. A timeless scene. Seed and planting, the weathers, and then harvest. What we store up for the times of deprivation.

My mother spent the last twenty years of her life in Fresno, “this dusty place,” as she described it. We spent the last summer of her life sitting at her bedside singing hymns, helping her at age ninety-five to let go. It was a typically hot California valley summer, the mockingbird holding forth from the magnolia tree outside her door, the mountain snows pouring down their saving flow. “Sing a hymn, any hymn,” she would say with dry lips and bright eyes peering out of her bony face, and I would begin – “It is well with my soul” or another. After the opening phrase she chimed in with a strong alto, or a high tenor, as she often had from the kitchen when I was learning to play. One hymn and then another and another.

After her final, monumental breaths, I came home and sat down before that cool row of keys and the sturdy grace of the instrument and played Chopin, letting the sorrows and resolves wash through me. I remembered, then, her sitting near the stove knitting mittens on howling winter nights so long ago, sitting at last after a day of house and family care, calling to me to bring another basket of corn cobs to burn. That chore was a repeated irritation, my having to run into the dark, cold shed, the dry cobs scratching my hands as I scooped them into the bushel basket. They burned too quickly. But that heavy stove gradually warmed into a glow that lasted into the night.

Jean Janzen is a poet living in Fresno, California. Among her books of poems are Paper House (Good Books, 2008), Piano in the Vineyard (Good Books, 2004), and Snake in the Parsonage (Good Books, 1969). See also Three Mennonite Poets [Jean Janzen, Yorifumi Yaguchi, David Waltner-

Toews] (*Good Books*, 2003); Ann Hostetler, "Coming into Voice: Three Mennonite Women Poets and the Beginning of Mennonite Poetry in the United States," *MQR* 77.4 (2003): 521-46; and Ann Hostetler, *A Cappella: Mennonite Voices in Poetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003).

William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

What is “freedom”? According to free-market ideology, we are free when the state limits its interference in economic transactions. Using Augustine, William Cavanaugh challenges this answer. He asserts that when society lacks a good common end this “freedom” can only degenerate into a battle of wills, public manipulation through marketing, concentrated power in the hands of few large corporations, and a steady increase in economic injustice and class inequalities. Without a life that is ordered toward helping life flourish, the desire to consume is internalized in our culture until we simply move from one manufactured desire for this or that product to another, never realizing that we are being controlled under the guise of liberation. After detailing and exposing the consumer trap in which we are caught, Cavanaugh provides concrete examples of how to overcome this spiral of idolatrous desire.

Although I am convinced by Cavanaugh’s thesis that desires must be rightly ordered toward helping life flourish if we are to resist being seduced by the market’s manipulations, his argument does not fully account for how our desires prevent or sustain the flourishing of nonhuman animal life. Upon learning about the nightmare that cattle endure in typical “beef” production, the author notes his decision to purchase grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free cattle from a local farmer. He makes this choice on the grounds that while the industrial “meat” industry hides the horrors and suffering of nonhuman animals, “all the information I need is available and transparent” on the small farm (31). This statement is open to challenge on at least two points.

First, Cavanaugh neglects to note that the small farmer is a part of a larger web that is largely beyond his control. When a cow gets an infection, organic farmers may withhold antibiotics even if the cow suffers tremendously to make sure their meat can be labeled organic. Moreover, there are common farming practices necessary to production – forced impregnation, castration, and others – that, while not horrific, inflict pain and limit the nonhuman animals’ ability to be free and to flourish.

The second point is that care for nonhuman animals within Cavanaugh’s

framework demands more than simply minimizing pain, and this requires questions and answers that are not as available and transparent as the author makes them seem. For example, why do we desire “meat” in the first place, and is it a rightly-ordered desire? Do we facilitate flourishing when we kill another living being to satiate a desire that is not only unnecessary for human survival but also damages our health? Given the state of our ecosystem and the growing awareness that all life on this planet hangs together on a precipice, Cavanaugh’s anthropocentric view of the common end is incompatible with his goal of overcoming idolatrous desire.

In response to the narrative of the market, Cavanaugh offers a counter story centered on the Catholic Eucharist. He argues that consumerism detaches the consumer from the process of production and from the people who produce our goods. Furthermore, our attachment to the goods themselves has decreased because we constantly abandon each product for the latest upgrade. Our pleasure comes from the pursuit of goods, from shopping itself, so a never-ending cycle of consumption ensues. The Catholic practice of the Eucharist provides a counterweight to this frenzy by absorbing each person into a larger body. Instead of being fragmented individuals trapped in the non-stop game of pursuing the latest trinkets, we become a community shaped into the Body of Christ.

Cavanaugh’s account should provide a lot of thought for Mennonites as to how Mennonite worship shapes us into people capable of resisting consumerism. We do not have a Catholic practice or theology of the Eucharist, and I am not convinced that if we did it would be adequate. But how does our worship shape us? What have we lost or gained that might be useful in giving an account of our own?

One of the most powerful practices that Cavanaugh mentions in this book, but does not give enough attention to, is making our own stuff (57). Instead of buying free trade and relocating consumerism to a new though better corporation, making our own clothes, growing our own food, and playing our own music can shape us to be producers who have learned the value of production through doing it and who question the industrial technological society itself. Simply moving from one type of industrial, gadget-hungry model to a “fair trade” version is not enough. We have to

question it at its core. Maybe backwards is forwards. Cavanaugh provides a good base for starting to find out.

Andy Alexis-Baker, PhD student, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, eds. *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Seeking the Identity of Jesus presents the fruit of a three-year research project sponsored by Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry and conceived as a sequel to *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Intended to address the profusion of popular images of Jesus, the project seeks not to distinguish an "historical" Jesus from the church's canon and creed but instead to investigate ways in which the latter might actually serve to clarify Jesus' identity (5). With this in mind, the analogy of choice is not the archaeological dig (where the "real" Jesus awaits unearthing) but the pilgrimage (where various "reports" anticipate a common destination), and the effect is not a recovery but an encounter via the diversity of canonical witness and church tradition.

Toward this end, editors Beverly Gaventa and Richard Hays divide the collected essays into three groups. In the first, William Placher, Robert Jenson, Markus Bockmuehl, Dale Allison, and Francis Watson endeavor to lay a methodological foundation that undoes the traditional disjunct of "Jesus of history" and "Christ of faith." Particularly representative is Allison's reassertion of the relevance of Jesus' "history of influence," canonical and otherwise, for an understanding of his identity (94).

The second and third groupings follow, which is to say they represent the working out of this proposal: Dale Allison, Joel Marcus, Beverly Gaventa, and Marianne Thompson assess the identity of Jesus in the four gospels; Richard Hays and Katherine Grieb consider the "story" of Christ in the letters of Paul and the "sermon" of Hebrews respectively, and Gary Anderson and Walter Moberly discuss the christological resonance of Moses, Jonah, and Isaiah. Brian Daley, David Steinmetz, Katherine Sonderegger, and Sarah

Coakley then shift attention to the testimony of the church, exploring in turn the identity of Jesus in patristic theology (via Irenaeus, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor), in the early Reformation debate over the nature of the Eucharist, in the act of Christian worship, and in the practice of mercy to the poor. Coakley's argument that the recognition of Jesus demands the "sustaining matrix" (311) and "cumulative tangle" (316) of Christian practice – especially vis-à-vis the poor – represents the collection's most adventurous moment, but the epistemic transformation she envisions embodies well the project's creative edge.

Next to the wandering sage and/or mysterious guru of popular consumption, *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* gives no neat summary of the identity of Jesus: "no 'sound-bite' Jesus can ever be faithful to the evidence," Gaventa and Hays conclude, "because the testimony of the variety of witnesses to Jesus – past, present, and future – cannot be collapsed..." (324). The collection's embrace of rich complexity proceeds rather under the sign of identity. Whatever else it is, Jesus' "identity" is a social product (Allison's words) that necessarily includes Jesus' own (continuing) reception history among his followers, then and now. This is the crux of the project, and a timely and productive contribution. What the individual essays contribute substantively regarding the identity of Jesus in the Gospels, for instance, or in the letters of Paul, will no doubt be found a helpful orientation to their study; but this identification of the church's ongoing tradition as the privileged locus of encounter promises a basic reorientation of the scholarly discourse surrounding Jesus.

Tensions undoubtedly remain. The traditional quest for the historical Jesus remains methodologically relevant, whether "first half of an incomplete sentence" (95) or "antidote" (113), but it is not at all clear what substantive difference its demands make in the subsequent collation of canonical witness and church testimony. At very least, how precisely the Jesus we know "through Scripture" relates to the Jesus we know "through the creeds" and the Jesus we know "through practice" deserves more sustained discussion. The volume concludes with a welcome affirmation of diversity and complexity (324), yet in its introduction summarily excludes everything extracanonical from the relevant history of reception, and this on historical grounds (14). Rhetorical celebration of canonical diversity seems similarly threatened by

the apparent uniformity of “the church” and its singular testimony. Still, this collection offers an important corrective to the modern critical paradigm that underlies the traditional quest, and in this it promises an opportunity for increased precision and perception in the study of Jesus.

Rene Baergen, Biblical Dept., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Ellen Hodgson Brown. *Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System And How We Can Break Free*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Third Millennium Press, 2008.

People concerned about social justice need this book! In *Web of Debt*, Ellen Brown provides an extraordinarily compelling and vivid analysis of one of the most crucial yet least understood of the major social problems that currently imperil humanity. She exposes and explains the hidden workings of our money system. The problems deriving from this system pervade and worsen the whole range of social problems that confront us globally. Brown shows how the money system has a devastating impact, but also how it could be transformed to provide powerful impetus for needed social change.

The great majority of social activists who have worked diligently for many years to overcome a wide variety of social problems, striving to achieve social justice and peace, know almost nothing about the workings of the money system. For many years I have been among such activists, and have seen how our analyses of social problems – poverty, environmental destruction, and war, in all their many manifestations – have omitted any reference to it. Our goals have been worthy. But our analyses have been weakened and our strategies often ill-conceived because we have failed to understand or to confront the potent realities of the money system.

Our ignorance is not surprising. The workings of the money system have been carefully obscured from public scrutiny and understanding by those in the private banking system who control it. In the Foreword to *Web of Debt*, Reed Simpson, a veteran banker, writes: “I can report that even most bankers are not aware of what goes on behind closed doors at the top of their field.... I am more familiar than most with the issues raised in [Brown’s

book] and I still found it to be an eye-opener, a remarkable window into what is really going on.... [The way our money system functions] has been the focus of a highly sophisticated and long-term disinformation campaign that permeates academia, media, and publishing. The complexity of the subject has been intentionally exploited to keep its mysteries hidden” (ix).

At the heart of Brown’s revelations is her explanation of the source of our money. It is no longer based in any way on gold. Nor, as is almost universally assumed, is it supplied by governments. Some 97 percent of the money supply in capitalist economies around the world is created out of nothing by private commercial banks in their process of making loans. Banks do not lend out the money of depositors, as is also widely assumed. As they make loans, the banks create *new* money that is added to the total amount of money in circulation.

Huge problems result. Especially notable is the fact that, when the banks supply almost all the money essential for our economic transactions, they create money for the principal of the loans but do not for the interest that they invariably require to be paid. They create only debt-money. And they impose a demand impossible for us to meet collectively! Money to pay interest is simply not available. In order to make payments that include both interest and principal, people are driven to compete with each other, “to fight with each other in order to survive” (31). People must continue borrowing from the banks, further increasing their indebtedness. Inevitably some borrowers default, enabling the banks to take over their collateral. The few favored in this system become ever more wealthy, while many are impoverished.

Much more analysis of the dynamics of this system is provided in the book. The abuses perpetrated through our money system are possible only because governments have been manipulated into allowing private banks to control the system. Governments at the federal level could be using their own powers for money creation to provide interest-free loans for much-needed infrastructure, and, as the economy expands, could not only lend but spend debt-free money into existence to provide public services. Brown explains how the alternative of democratically controlled government-created money could make enormously creative contributions to human welfare.

Dealing primarily with US history, Brown describes successful cases

of government-created money – as in colonial Pennsylvania under Benjamin Franklin, and in the Civil War with the greenbacks – and shows how private banking interests fought constantly to control the US money system.

Brown’s book is an antidote to our ignorance of the money system, as is also her website: webofdebt.com.

George Crowell, Department of Religious Studies (ret.), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario

Marlene Epp. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008.

Marlene Epp has written a history of Canadian Mennonite women over the course of the past three centuries, ending in 1980. This refreshing work orients Canadian Mennonite historiography towards questions of gender in a fashion that, while grounded in extensive research into primary and archival sources, is nonetheless an effective synthesis of a complex subject. As such, it is neither a theological treatment of “power” or “gender” nor an over-specialized monograph, but rather a straightforward, brilliantly researched, and well-argued history of a topic gaining in coverage that now has its own attempt at a survey. Having set a high standard for Canadian Mennonite women’s studies in her earlier book, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000), Epp continues her masterful command of the field with this volume.

The author divides the book into five chapters, arranged thematically, each of which opens with an historical vignette clarifying the theme and interpretive methodology to follow. The chapters are organized around themes of immigration as pioneers, refugees and transnationals; family life as wives and mothers; religious life as preachers, prophets, and missionaries; worldly life as citizens, nonresisters and nonconformists; and, finally, living in a material world of quilts, canned goods, and the written word. Throughout the book, Epp provides an even-handed account of Mennonite

women's life based on her extensive research bringing to light women's experiences, often in their own words.

Epp introduces the volume with a helpful historiographical survey of the topic, in addition to making clear her own social location and how she will be working not so much with theology as with history. On this point, she summarizes how religion cannot be ignored when working with an ethno-religious group. Interestingly, she adds the caveat when discussing the influence of Harold S. Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision" that we must remember that it is not directly connected to women's experience, dealing as it does with American Mennonites joining the military during World War II (13). While that is an obvious point to make, Epp is quite strong when explicating her methodology and her hopes for the book, which is designed both to inform and inspire students while learning of historical Mennonite women's experiences to envision also relationships and institutions not given to gender inequality or discrimination (18-19).

While Epp's well-articulated hope for this volume might indicate a polemic in the making, she has written an exceptionally well-researched book and a well-reasoned interpretation. Throughout she demonstrates that Canadian Mennonite women were never without history, that they were always engaged in their communities, both religious and in the wider world, all the while exercising historical agency. The chapters progress fluidly as she defines women's experience by roles imposed and roles taken on. Her work on the conundrum of nonconformity and non-resistance in Mennonite women's experiences is especially significant as it exposes, perhaps counter-intuitively for some, how a theology of peace can become a seedbed of inequality (chapter 4).

Ultimately, Epp has done an important service by broadening Canadian Mennonite historiography and treatment of gender beyond localized studies to a national treatment that simultaneously brings to light a plethora of primary and archival sources. She balances historical detail with broader interpretations with seeming ease and in persuasive prose. Throughout she presents the experiences of women as diverse, heterodox, and embodying myriad perspectives, actions, and responses to their varied contexts.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in, or taking university courses involving, questions of church and society, gender, and the Canadian

experiences of immigration and assimilation. This is a rich resource useful for undergraduates, graduates, and teachers alike. The book's scope and self-imposed limits are reasonable and effective, and this reader looks forward to when a similar study can be written of the 1980s and 1990s.

Brian Froese, Assistant Professor of History, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David Van Heemst. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Few books are as timely or as prophetic as *Hope in Troubled Times*. Writing prior to the global economic meltdown in 2008 that caused international financial institutions to shudder, the authors warned about the volatility of the financial markets before it was fashionable to do so. They also noted the potentially catastrophic impact of other challenges such as environmental degradation, ideologically based conflict, global poverty, and insecurity.

The book opens with words that cogently and succinctly explain its premise: “[O]ur world seems to live under the curse of scrambling for solutions but not finding them” (15). The authors begin by rejecting the notion that human ingenuity can keep ahead of escalating global challenges simply by resorting to raw intelligence. They also dispute the premise that solutions which worked for past crises are adequate to enable humanity to adapt to harsh new realities. Instead, they argue that “many of today’s problems seem to have developed immunity to our well-intended solutions. They have become like viruses that resist medicine or like pests that have developed a defense against pesticide” (31).

One of the most insightful discussions pertains to the development, impact, and ripple effect of ideologies. Citing six phases of developed ideologies, the authors explain how ideologies have evolved at periods in history to justify the oppression of one people by another. While not explicitly using the language of the current “war on terror,” or significantly applying

their perspective directly to the Iraq or Afghanistan wars (mentioned on only 14 of 205 pages of text), they provide language for explaining how these conflicts have been sold to the Western world in ideological terms, and what the impact of an ideological rationale can be.

When an ideology defines a goal to be an absolute end, anything that gets in the way of it becomes evil, say the authors. Those who oppose evil are by definition good, “even if their actions result in other people suffering under cruel treatment. How close, in our view,” the authors conclude, “this lies to the demonic” (34). These statements reflect on the danger of justice and compassion being removed from discourse about contentious issues and are worth much rumination. This volume is a prophetic call to re-examine our tendency to absolutize good and evil.

Although articulating this sobering message of potential global crises comprises most of the book – which even the authors admit is “hardly uplifting” (169) – this massive dose of tough love frames the most urgent issues and stresses why these concerns must be taken seriously now. It sets the stage for suggesting a way forward. All is not lost. Rather, the authors testify they are inspired by an “enduring conviction that there is real hope for our troubled, mired world – genuine, concrete hope that deeply engages global poverty, environmental destruction, and widespread violence” (16).

This hope comes from a commitment to “live justly, to love our neighbors, and to take care of God’s creation as good stewards” (127). These actions may not seem powerful in and of themselves, but they can start a process that begins to undermine harmful ideologies that for too long have dominated social, economic, and political discourse.

This is one of the most challenging and readable books I have come across in many years. It is well written, logical, persuasive, and coherent. It inspires readers not to lose hope and to continue to work for peace and justice even though they cannot be assured of success. *Hope in Troubled Times* speaks with a common voice and effectively avoids the dissonance so often present in manuscripts with multiple authors. It is essential reading for anyone concerned about the rising tide of the seemingly intractable problems facing our globe – and the apparent impossibility that one person can do anything impactful about them. It could easily be used as a textbook in college or university courses.

Lowell Ewert, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario

Thomas P. Scheck. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.

In the lively and sometimes rancorous debate over justification that has rippled throughout the Christian world, all roads, it seems, lead back to the sixteenth century. Since the 1999 joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on Justification by Faith, new energy has poured into the conversation.¹ Even before that, descendants of the Anabaptists likewise engaged the theme. Dutch Mennonite theologian Sjouke Voolstra wrote that “Anabaptists always interpreted justification in the light of sanctification.”² J. Denny Weaver and Gerald Mast recently reflected on the views of justification of Denck, Hut, Hubmaier, and Marpeck, asserting that Sattler “affirms Lutheran justification by faith but also, in line with Catholic thought, stresses that faith will result in good works.”³

Thomas Scheck’s book makes the case that all who think this conversation matters must travel much further back in the Christian story. Indeed, he argues that Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* has influenced Christian thought on justification into the 16th-century Reformation and beyond. Further, the third-century Alexandrian’s readings of Romans were both close to Paul and remarkably relevant to 21st-century discussions.

As the first English translator of Origen’s Romans commentary,⁴ Scheck carries the credentials to back up his argument. In clear and readable prose, he makes accessible not only to patristics scholars but also to other theologians, biblical scholars, and interested lay readers the exegetical questions at stake and the history of reception that marks Origen’s influence down through the centuries. (Noting that virtually our only access to Origen’s great commentary is through the Latin translation of the fourth-century Rufinus, Scheck usually provides the Latin in text or footnote for

those who find that helpful.)

In chapter one Scheck lays out Origen's definition of justification with a "Trinitarian stress": "From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature" (CRm 4.9.192-98). Unity and synthesis of faith and works seem "to be an overriding theme" of the commentary. While the good thief of Luke 23 was justified by faith alone, because he "had no opportunity to be justified by his subsequent good works," for the most part good works must be visible "as the necessary fruit of justification."

Subsequent chapters demonstrate the borrowings from Origen and the debates with him of Pelagius, Augustine, William of St. Thierry (a 12th-century Cistercian monk), Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, and several post-Reformation theologians. In chapter two, Scheck notes that Origen and Pelagius both accepted what has become part of scholarship's "new perspective" on Paul: that Paul's great letter reflects his awareness of a dispute between Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

Although each chapter has its own fascinating insights, many readers will be most drawn to Scheck's discussion of Augustine and the 16th-century reformers. Chapter three tackles the question of Augustine's use of and challenge to Origen's commentary. The Pelagian controversy late in his life turned Augustine's reading of Romans to original sin, human powerlessness, and predestination in ways that have shaped much later Western Christian thought. However, according to Scheck, both Origen and Augustine "appeal to James as a means of correcting a false understanding of Paul" on faith and works, agreeing that faith is "a foundation on which works are built." Likewise, chapter five notes that Erasmus's devotional work *Enchiridion* "was infused with citations" from Origen's commentary, and his comment on Romans 6:4 echoed Origen: "Dead to our former sins and living now the new life, let us follow in the footsteps of piety."

Scheck notes, on the other hand, that Melancthon made "Origen's doctrine of justification an integral part of his decadence theory of Church history." Since descendants of the Anabaptists have sometimes been tempted by that same theory, Scheck's book is a must-read for anyone who may have agreed with Menno (quoting Luther) that Origen was "the falsest explainer of the Scriptures."⁵ Rather, readers considering this work will hear echoes of

Origen in Menno's call for biblical readings assuming a full-orbed practical understanding of justification.⁶

¹ The complete text of the joint declaration is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. See also Trevin Wax, compiler, "The Justification Debate: A Primer," in *Christianity Today* 53:6 (June 2009), 34-35; N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 246-52.

² Sjouke Voolstra, "Free and Perfect: Justification and Sanctification in Anabaptist Perspective," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 5.3 (Fall 1987): 225.

³ Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver, *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009), 45-46.

⁴ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., Thomas P. Scheck, trans. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001-2002).

⁵ Menno Simons, "Christian Baptism," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* [CWMS] (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 279.

⁶ Menno, "True Christian Faith," in CWMS, 333.

Nancy Heisey, Bible and Religion Department, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Miguel A. De La Torre. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethic of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

Miguel A. De La Torre, who is on the faculty of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, has written a challenging, provocative volume based on a reading of the book of Jonah and includes an engaging, brief contemporary social analysis in order to place this reading in the modern context.

De La Torre was once asked if any reading of Jonah considers Jonah's message from the perspective of "the margins of society" (ix). His work attempts to respond to his observation that he knew of no such work. In the introduction, he lays out one of his primary arguments: Jonah is a book about reconciliation. His reading presents this as reconciliation in a context of unequal distribution of power – as exemplified by the Israelite, Jonah,

facing Nineveh, symbolic of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires that were ancient bitter, oppressive enemies. The author is well aware of the potential for manipulating themes of “reconciliation” as a way for the powerful to try to get the oppressed to resign themselves to their subordinated fate.

“It is important to recognize that those who benefit from the present power structures cannot be relied upon to define reconciliation,” says the author, “or to determine how to go about achieving it” (2). He advocates no cheap “peace” that does not engage injustice: “A desire to ‘forgive and forget’ can bring about only a cheap reconciliation that sacrifices justice for the sake of serenity” (5).

In a sense, De La Torre wants to read Jonah from “Jonah’s perspective” confronting Assyria, that of a subordinate confronting the powerful. In chapter one, after briefly discussing Assyrian brutality in the Ancient Near East, he begins his read through the book. His analysis is largely literary, drawing only occasionally from contemporary historical-critical commentary. One main source is Rabbinic legends about aspects of Jonah.

In chapter two, “Who was Jonah, What was Nineveh?” De La Torre reads Jonah and Nineveh as models of the oppressed and the socio-economic realities of that oppression in the 18th to 20th centuries of the European and American West. Characteristically, his strongest focus is on the racialized borders of modern socio-economic systems within the US historical context. He is rather dismissive of attempts to work “within the system,” because the system itself must be transformed. What it is to be transformed into is not so clear, short of frequent calls for a “redistribution of income.”

Chapter three, “Reflecting on Jonah,” brings together the author’s profound interest in reconciliation as a Christian reality with the difficult “praxis” of justice – reconciliation never cancels the need for change, in his reading. Chapter four, “Praying through Jonah,” clarifies that reconciliation must be initiated only by the oppressed: “Those who presently benefit from the existing social order lack the objectivity and moral authority to define reconciliation or even recognize the need for reconciliation...” (88). The author seems to accept nothing short of revolutionary change for authentic reconciliation. This becomes problematic when he tends to minimize the courageous acts of individuals because they do not transform entire socio-economic systems. This sense of helplessness in the face of evil systems sets

up his sense of hopelessness in the final chapter.

Chapter five, "Pitfalls Jonah Should Avoid," includes comments about internal politics in various ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as problems in dealing with Euro-Americans, who are largely not trusted for a credible analysis because "Euroamerican Christians, either from the fundamentalist right or the far liberal left, probably have more in common with each other and understand each other better than they do Christians on the other side of the racial and ethnic divide" (125). So great is the task of social transformation and so little the will to do it that De La Torre despairs of its ever taking place even in his grandchildren's generation (143).

In the final chapter, "Case Studies," the author offers stories of attempts by individuals to seek social change and raises questions about each case. For example, the first case describes recent Native-American reactions to the Columbus Day celebrations in Denver, and asks the reader to consider what forms of protest or response would have been appropriate, given that Native groups were denied most opportunities for legal, peaceful protest. A second case describes Daryl Davis, an African-American, who attempted to make contact with members of the Ku Klux Klan in order to force a dialogue on racism. He even managed to make friends, leading some members to leave the Klan after long conversations with him. These and other cases are intended to raise questions about the individual actions of people of color, but one is left wondering if these studies are signs of hope or of futility, given De La Torre's previous analysis.

Reading as a Quaker informed by Anabaptist theology, I honor individual acts of faith – attempts to live an alternative reality within the rigid systems of oppression – and that same Anabaptist conscience sometimes wonders if this is the best to be hoped for. I will not minimize or trivialize such individual actions only because they fall short of the revolution. Further, I am not in sympathy with an exclusively racialized social analysis that refuses to consider the potential bridge-building (and recognition of historical realities) that are served by a more thorough-going class analysis. Finally, I am concerned with De La Torre's tendencies to homogenize the very different experiences of Latino, Asian, Native, and African-Americans. "People of color" is becoming a dubious generalization for social analysis.

My disagreements notwithstanding, I deeply appreciate De La Torre's

fascinating meditations on the socio-economic contexts of a modern reading of Jonah.

Daniel Smith-Christopher, Dept. of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Ted Lewis, ed. *Electing Not to Vote: Christian Reflections on Reasons for Not Voting*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

This volume takes up an interesting and important question: Might Christians faithfully abstain from voting? This is a provocative question in a culture which assumes that voting is a civic responsibility, even (perhaps especially) for Christians. As the essays collected here demonstrate, it is a question that should be asked and discussed carefully in our faith communities.

The essays are uniform in their affirmation that it is possible, and sometimes desirable, for Christians to abstain from voting. The nine contributors make the case for abstention from voting in a variety of ways from a rich array of Christian perspectives.

Indeed, one of the book's most interesting features is the breadth of ecclesial perspectives represented. Authors come from Mennonite, Pentecostal, Catholic, Baptist, and intentional Christian community traditions, and they write from, and sometimes to, those communities. Central to the conversation is how our identity as Christians is shaped by our political participation and how we are to understand the dual nature of our citizenship.

The authors offer a wide range of critiques of voting. Some reflect personally on their experiences of voting and participating in electoral politics, and suggest that the process damages their Christian discipleship. For instance, Michael Degan rejects voting in part "because of who I become in order to win" (61). Others share a concern about how the polarized politics of American presidential elections have affected conversations in our churches. John D. Roth's well-known essay, which begins the collection, is the best example of this concern. Others offer critiques of the candidates we

have to choose from, the US Electoral College system, and the way electoral rules and processes affect outcomes.

Perhaps the most critical difference among the contributors is on whether or not voting should be the norm for Christians. Michael Degan, Tato Sumantri, Ted Lewis, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Nekeisha Alexis-Baker offer strong rejections of voting. For these authors, not voting is apparently the norm. In contrast, for John D. Roth, G. Scott Becker, and Todd Whitmore voting is assumed to be the norm, and not voting is a selective step that should be taken after careful deliberation.

Whitmore reflects on the two candidates in the 2004 US presidential election, ultimately arguing that both George W. Bush and John Kerry advocated policies that violated fundamental principles of Catholic teaching and, as a result, not voting was his obligation. But he argues that this obligation “does not spill over to another election” (79) and concludes by noting that he is “undecided about whether I will vote in the 2008 election, pending a hearing of the views of the candidates” (80). Many of the authors in this collection need no such hearing.

The essays are strongly uniform in advocating a form of political participation that goes beyond voting. In fact, most of them argue that voting is insufficient participation in civic life. Thus in their call for abstention from voting, the authors are not calling for a withdrawal or retreat from participation in the life of the *polis*. Instead, they call for a different kind of engagement, as Roth writes, not allowing “narrow definitions of ‘political involvement’ to set the terms” for how Christians care for society (8). Instead of the apathy and cynicism that leads most Americans not to vote, these authors call for what Lewis terms an “active refraining” that “leads to proactive engagement” (114).

The volume is intentionally limited to presidential elections in the United States. It falls to others to work out what faithful political participation looks like in other countries and contexts. It also falls to others to articulate the possibilities of electoral participation at more local levels (though Degan explicitly rejects voting at other levels as well). The essays are well written and not overly technical. The volume is suitable for churches and lay audiences where it should be read and carefully considered; it is an

important entry into a difficult but critically important conversation about faithful political engagement.

Victor J. Hinojosa, Political Science Dept., Baylor University, Waco, Texas

How Do Stories Save Us? An Essay on the Question with the Theological Hermeneutics of David Tracy in View. Scott Holland. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

In this erudite, dense, and artful text, Bethany Theological Seminary professor Scott Holland takes the reader – as the back cover says – “on an intellectual adventure through narrative theology, literary criticism, poetics, ritual studies and aesthetics in the composition of a theology of culture.”

Throughout the text, the work of revisionist theologian David Tracy is “in view.” Tracy, a Catholic priest and active professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, is the author of well-known texts including *The Analogical Imagination* and *On Naming the Present*. Holland’s book concludes with a 10-page bibliography of Tracy’s writings plus a more general bibliography, including 18 books and essays by Paul Ricoeur and 8 articles by Holland.

Holland works particularly with what he refers to as two emerging self-corrective foci in Tracy’s public theology (i.e., theology that is “always involved in complex and interesting relationships with diverse historical and social realities”): “a hermeneutics in which the ‘other’ not the ‘self’ is the dominant focus; and a theological insistence that only a mystical-prophetic model of theology can save us” (35-36).

In terms of narrative theology, Holland casts his lot with Tracy and others representing the University of Chicago narrative school rather than with those representing what might be called the Yale school (e.g., George Lindbeck, Hans Frei). The latter, says Holland, see the church as the sole reference of theology (58). In that schema, the world “becomes an *object* of theological description and prophetic critique, rarely a rich and mystical *source* for imaginative and revisionary theological thought and writing”

(98). For Yale-ish narrativists, biblical narratives “catch the reader up into the sacred world of the text,” as the Bible “absorb[s] the world into its unique world” (78). It is this Yale-based form of narrative theology that has been most influential for recent mainstream Anabaptists, as mediated largely through the work of Stanley Hauerwas. Holland says one might excuse a fundamentalist for advocating for this sort of “sectarian imagination in defense of her tribal gods and goods.... But for a post-critical Christian theorist who values close readings and thick descriptions to retreat from the public square into the world of the text, pretending she has found a separate, autonomous world, is not only bad faith, it is bad fiction” (101).

In contrast, Tracy and others see the world “as a complex *source* for theology and not simply its *object*” (58). “While Yale theologians seem most interested in keeping their community’s story straight,” says Holland, “those drawn to the work of David Tracy and the Chicago school are much more interested in doing theology while listening to other people’s stories” (98). Such a theology will then be pluralistic, interdisciplinary, intertextual (rather than intratextual, as for the Yale theologians), and revisionary. Here the theologian “brings the texts, traditions, and practices of her community into conversation with others, especially communities of difference, in the search for greater insight, understanding, humane presence and connection with the divine” (98-99).

Elsewhere Holland argues the increasingly accepted view that humans are constituted both narratively and performatively, i.e., through ritual (153-78). He sensibly proposes that for Anabaptists and other low-church Protestants to develop a theory of symbol and ritual that might lead their communities toward Ricoeur’s “second naivete” in relation to religious symbolism, such transformation will come not through studying traditional theological arguments of sacramentologists but through discovering how symbolic activity is co-natural with the human person, emerging from ordinary experience (177).

How Do Stories Save Us? will most engage those already immersed in postmodern theological critiques. Illustrating the background one may need, a not atypical selection reads: “Following Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, Tracy’s theological agenda has been to rethink the dialectical relationship between language and experience. His program moves beyond

the Schleiermacher – Tillich – Rahner – Lonergan experiential paradigm to an explicitly hermeneutical one” (82). Some readers may stumble through more complex portions of the book, though most will appreciate Holland’s more accessible commentaries on narrative theology and rituals. His chapter “When Art and Ritual Embrace and Kiss” (179-230) is moving at points, thanks to some embedded autobiographical flourishes and assertions of faith.

Just under half of the 241-page text, which began as Holland’s dissertation at Duquesne University, has been published before as discrete essays in journals or books. The core of Holland’s argument, from “How Do Stories Save Us,” through chapters titled “Theology is a Kind of Writing,” “Even the Postmodern Story Has a Body,” and “Signifying Presence” have appeared in *Louvain Studies*, *Cross Currents*, and an edited volume, *The Presence of Transcendence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). A few odd, distracting editing issues have made it into the present text, likely due to its various embodiments over 16 years.

For David Tracy followers, this is an illuminating supplemental text. Those interested more broadly in narrative theology also will benefit from a few of the middle chapters, though they likely will be less engaged with the text’s first 70 pages. Students of postmodernity and aesthetically sensitive readers will be especially appreciative of Holland’s work.

Keith Graber Miller, Chair, Bible, Religion and Philosophy, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

What is “freedom”? According to free-market ideology, we are free when the state limits its interference in economic transactions. Using Augustine, William Cavanaugh challenges this answer. He asserts that when society lacks a good common end this “freedom” can only degenerate into a battle of wills, public manipulation through marketing, concentrated power in the hands of few large corporations, and a steady increase in economic injustice and class inequalities. Without a life that is ordered toward helping life flourish, the desire to consume is internalized in our culture until we simply move from one manufactured desire for this or that product to another, never realizing that we are being controlled under the guise of liberation. After detailing and exposing the consumer trap in which we are caught, Cavanaugh provides concrete examples of how to overcome this spiral of idolatrous desire.

Although I am convinced by Cavanaugh’s thesis that desires must be rightly ordered toward helping life flourish if we are to resist being seduced by the market’s manipulations, his argument does not fully account for how our desires prevent or sustain the flourishing of nonhuman animal life. Upon learning about the nightmare that cattle endure in typical “beef” production, the author notes his decision to purchase grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free cattle from a local farmer. He makes this choice on the grounds that while the industrial “meat” industry hides the horrors and suffering of nonhuman animals, “all the information I need is available and transparent” on the small farm (31). This statement is open to challenge on at least two points.

First, Cavanaugh neglects to note that the small farmer is a part of a larger web that is largely beyond his control. When a cow gets an infection, organic farmers may withhold antibiotics even if the cow suffers tremendously to make sure their meat can be labeled organic. Moreover, there are common farming practices necessary to production – forced impregnation, castration, and others – that, while not horrific, inflict pain and limit the nonhuman animals’ ability to be free and to flourish.

The second point is that care for nonhuman animals within Cavanaugh’s

framework demands more than simply minimizing pain, and this requires questions and answers that are not as available and transparent as the author makes them seem. For example, why do we desire “meat” in the first place, and is it a rightly-ordered desire? Do we facilitate flourishing when we kill another living being to satiate a desire that is not only unnecessary for human survival but also damages our health? Given the state of our ecosystem and the growing awareness that all life on this planet hangs together on a precipice, Cavanaugh’s anthropocentric view of the common end is incompatible with his goal of overcoming idolatrous desire.

In response to the narrative of the market, Cavanaugh offers a counter story centered on the Catholic Eucharist. He argues that consumerism detaches the consumer from the process of production and from the people who produce our goods. Furthermore, our attachment to the goods themselves has decreased because we constantly abandon each product for the latest upgrade. Our pleasure comes from the pursuit of goods, from shopping itself, so a never-ending cycle of consumption ensues. The Catholic practice of the Eucharist provides a counterweight to this frenzy by absorbing each person into a larger body. Instead of being fragmented individuals trapped in the non-stop game of pursuing the latest trinkets, we become a community shaped into the Body of Christ.

Cavanaugh’s account should provide a lot of thought for Mennonites as to how Mennonite worship shapes us into people capable of resisting consumerism. We do not have a Catholic practice or theology of the Eucharist, and I am not convinced that if we did it would be adequate. But how does our worship shape us? What have we lost or gained that might be useful in giving an account of our own?

One of the most powerful practices that Cavanaugh mentions in this book, but does not give enough attention to, is making our own stuff (57). Instead of buying free trade and relocating consumerism to a new though better corporation, making our own clothes, growing our own food, and playing our own music can shape us to be producers who have learned the value of production through doing it and who question the industrial technological society itself. Simply moving from one type of industrial, gadget-hungry model to a “fair trade” version is not enough. We have to

question it at its core. Maybe backwards is forwards. Cavanaugh provides a good base for starting to find out.

Andy Alexis-Baker, PhD student, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, eds. *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Seeking the Identity of Jesus presents the fruit of a three-year research project sponsored by Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry and conceived as a sequel to *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Intended to address the profusion of popular images of Jesus, the project seeks not to distinguish an "historical" Jesus from the church's canon and creed but instead to investigate ways in which the latter might actually serve to clarify Jesus' identity (5). With this in mind, the analogy of choice is not the archaeological dig (where the "real" Jesus awaits unearthing) but the pilgrimage (where various "reports" anticipate a common destination), and the effect is not a recovery but an encounter via the diversity of canonical witness and church tradition.

Toward this end, editors Beverly Gaventa and Richard Hays divide the collected essays into three groups. In the first, William Placher, Robert Jenson, Markus Bockmuehl, Dale Allison, and Francis Watson endeavor to lay a methodological foundation that undoes the traditional disjunct of "Jesus of history" and "Christ of faith." Particularly representative is Allison's reassertion of the relevance of Jesus' "history of influence," canonical and otherwise, for an understanding of his identity (94).

The second and third groupings follow, which is to say they represent the working out of this proposal: Dale Allison, Joel Marcus, Beverly Gaventa, and Marianne Thompson assess the identity of Jesus in the four gospels; Richard Hays and Katherine Grieb consider the "story" of Christ in the letters of Paul and the "sermon" of Hebrews respectively, and Gary Anderson and Walter Moberly discuss the christological resonance of Moses, Jonah, and Isaiah. Brian Daley, David Steinmetz, Katherine Sonderegger, and Sarah

Coakley then shift attention to the testimony of the church, exploring in turn the identity of Jesus in patristic theology (via Irenaeus, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor), in the early Reformation debate over the nature of the Eucharist, in the act of Christian worship, and in the practice of mercy to the poor. Coakley's argument that the recognition of Jesus demands the "sustaining matrix" (311) and "cumulative tangle" (316) of Christian practice – especially vis-à-vis the poor – represents the collection's most adventurous moment, but the epistemic transformation she envisions embodies well the project's creative edge.

Next to the wandering sage and/or mysterious guru of popular consumption, *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* gives no neat summary of the identity of Jesus: "no 'sound-bite' Jesus can ever be faithful to the evidence," Gaventa and Hays conclude, "because the testimony of the variety of witnesses to Jesus – past, present, and future – cannot be collapsed..." (324). The collection's embrace of rich complexity proceeds rather under the sign of identity. Whatever else it is, Jesus' "identity" is a social product (Allison's words) that necessarily includes Jesus' own (continuing) reception history among his followers, then and now. This is the crux of the project, and a timely and productive contribution. What the individual essays contribute substantively regarding the identity of Jesus in the Gospels, for instance, or in the letters of Paul, will no doubt be found a helpful orientation to their study; but this identification of the church's ongoing tradition as the privileged locus of encounter promises a basic reorientation of the scholarly discourse surrounding Jesus.

Tensions undoubtedly remain. The traditional quest for the historical Jesus remains methodologically relevant, whether "first half of an incomplete sentence" (95) or "antidote" (113), but it is not at all clear what substantive difference its demands make in the subsequent collation of canonical witness and church testimony. At very least, how precisely the Jesus we know "through Scripture" relates to the Jesus we know "through the creeds" and the Jesus we know "through practice" deserves more sustained discussion. The volume concludes with a welcome affirmation of diversity and complexity (324), yet in its introduction summarily excludes everything extracanonical from the relevant history of reception, and this on historical grounds (14). Rhetorical celebration of canonical diversity seems similarly threatened by

the apparent uniformity of “the church” and its singular testimony. Still, this collection offers an important corrective to the modern critical paradigm that underlies the traditional quest, and in this it promises an opportunity for increased precision and perception in the study of Jesus.

Rene Baergen, Biblical Dept., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Ellen Hodgson Brown. *Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System And How We Can Break Free*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Third Millennium Press, 2008.

People concerned about social justice need this book! In *Web of Debt*, Ellen Brown provides an extraordinarily compelling and vivid analysis of one of the most crucial yet least understood of the major social problems that currently imperil humanity. She exposes and explains the hidden workings of our money system. The problems deriving from this system pervade and worsen the whole range of social problems that confront us globally. Brown shows how the money system has a devastating impact, but also how it could be transformed to provide powerful impetus for needed social change.

The great majority of social activists who have worked diligently for many years to overcome a wide variety of social problems, striving to achieve social justice and peace, know almost nothing about the workings of the money system. For many years I have been among such activists, and have seen how our analyses of social problems – poverty, environmental destruction, and war, in all their many manifestations – have omitted any reference to it. Our goals have been worthy. But our analyses have been weakened and our strategies often ill-conceived because we have failed to understand or to confront the potent realities of the money system.

Our ignorance is not surprising. The workings of the money system have been carefully obscured from public scrutiny and understanding by those in the private banking system who control it. In the Foreword to *Web of Debt*, Reed Simpson, a veteran banker, writes: “I can report that even most bankers are not aware of what goes on behind closed doors at the top of their field.... I am more familiar than most with the issues raised in [Brown’s

book] and I still found it to be an eye-opener, a remarkable window into what is really going on.... [The way our money system functions] has been the focus of a highly sophisticated and long-term disinformation campaign that permeates academia, media, and publishing. The complexity of the subject has been intentionally exploited to keep its mysteries hidden” (ix).

At the heart of Brown’s revelations is her explanation of the source of our money. It is no longer based in any way on gold. Nor, as is almost universally assumed, is it supplied by governments. Some 97 percent of the money supply in capitalist economies around the world is created out of nothing by private commercial banks in their process of making loans. Banks do not lend out the money of depositors, as is also widely assumed. As they make loans, the banks create *new* money that is added to the total amount of money in circulation.

Huge problems result. Especially notable is the fact that, when the banks supply almost all the money essential for our economic transactions, they create money for the principal of the loans but do not for the interest that they invariably require to be paid. They create only debt-money. And they impose a demand impossible for us to meet collectively! Money to pay interest is simply not available. In order to make payments that include both interest and principal, people are driven to compete with each other, “to fight with each other in order to survive” (31). People must continue borrowing from the banks, further increasing their indebtedness. Inevitably some borrowers default, enabling the banks to take over their collateral. The few favored in this system become ever more wealthy, while many are impoverished.

Much more analysis of the dynamics of this system is provided in the book. The abuses perpetrated through our money system are possible only because governments have been manipulated into allowing private banks to control the system. Governments at the federal level could be using their own powers for money creation to provide interest-free loans for much-needed infrastructure, and, as the economy expands, could not only lend but spend debt-free money into existence to provide public services. Brown explains how the alternative of democratically controlled government-created money could make enormously creative contributions to human welfare.

Dealing primarily with US history, Brown describes successful cases

of government-created money – as in colonial Pennsylvania under Benjamin Franklin, and in the Civil War with the greenbacks – and shows how private banking interests fought constantly to control the US money system.

Brown’s book is an antidote to our ignorance of the money system, as is also her website: webofdebt.com.

George Crowell, Department of Religious Studies (ret.), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario

Marlene Epp. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008.

Marlene Epp has written a history of Canadian Mennonite women over the course of the past three centuries, ending in 1980. This refreshing work orients Canadian Mennonite historiography towards questions of gender in a fashion that, while grounded in extensive research into primary and archival sources, is nonetheless an effective synthesis of a complex subject. As such, it is neither a theological treatment of “power” or “gender” nor an over-specialized monograph, but rather a straightforward, brilliantly researched, and well-argued history of a topic gaining in coverage that now has its own attempt at a survey. Having set a high standard for Canadian Mennonite women’s studies in her earlier book, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000), Epp continues her masterful command of the field with this volume.

The author divides the book into five chapters, arranged thematically, each of which opens with an historical vignette clarifying the theme and interpretive methodology to follow. The chapters are organized around themes of immigration as pioneers, refugees and transnationals; family life as wives and mothers; religious life as preachers, prophets, and missionaries; worldly life as citizens, nonresisters and nonconformists; and, finally, living in a material world of quilts, canned goods, and the written word. Throughout the book, Epp provides an even-handed account of Mennonite

women's life based on her extensive research bringing to light women's experiences, often in their own words.

Epp introduces the volume with a helpful historiographical survey of the topic, in addition to making clear her own social location and how she will be working not so much with theology as with history. On this point, she summarizes how religion cannot be ignored when working with an ethno-religious group. Interestingly, she adds the caveat when discussing the influence of Harold S. Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision" that we must remember that it is not directly connected to women's experience, dealing as it does with American Mennonites joining the military during World War II (13). While that is an obvious point to make, Epp is quite strong when explicating her methodology and her hopes for the book, which is designed both to inform and inspire students while learning of historical Mennonite women's experiences to envision also relationships and institutions not given to gender inequality or discrimination (18-19).

While Epp's well-articulated hope for this volume might indicate a polemic in the making, she has written an exceptionally well-researched book and a well-reasoned interpretation. Throughout she demonstrates that Canadian Mennonite women were never without history, that they were always engaged in their communities, both religious and in the wider world, all the while exercising historical agency. The chapters progress fluidly as she defines women's experience by roles imposed and roles taken on. Her work on the conundrum of nonconformity and non-resistance in Mennonite women's experiences is especially significant as it exposes, perhaps counter-intuitively for some, how a theology of peace can become a seedbed of inequality (chapter 4).

Ultimately, Epp has done an important service by broadening Canadian Mennonite historiography and treatment of gender beyond localized studies to a national treatment that simultaneously brings to light a plethora of primary and archival sources. She balances historical detail with broader interpretations with seeming ease and in persuasive prose. Throughout she presents the experiences of women as diverse, heterodox, and embodying myriad perspectives, actions, and responses to their varied contexts.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in, or taking university courses involving, questions of church and society, gender, and the Canadian

experiences of immigration and assimilation. This is a rich resource useful for undergraduates, graduates, and teachers alike. The book's scope and self-imposed limits are reasonable and effective, and this reader looks forward to when a similar study can be written of the 1980s and 1990s.

Brian Froese, Assistant Professor of History, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David Van Heemst. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Few books are as timely or as prophetic as *Hope in Troubled Times*. Writing prior to the global economic meltdown in 2008 that caused international financial institutions to shudder, the authors warned about the volatility of the financial markets before it was fashionable to do so. They also noted the potentially catastrophic impact of other challenges such as environmental degradation, ideologically based conflict, global poverty, and insecurity.

The book opens with words that cogently and succinctly explain its premise: “[O]ur world seems to live under the curse of scrambling for solutions but not finding them” (15). The authors begin by rejecting the notion that human ingenuity can keep ahead of escalating global challenges simply by resorting to raw intelligence. They also dispute the premise that solutions which worked for past crises are adequate to enable humanity to adapt to harsh new realities. Instead, they argue that “many of today’s problems seem to have developed immunity to our well-intended solutions. They have become like viruses that resist medicine or like pests that have developed a defense against pesticide” (31).

One of the most insightful discussions pertains to the development, impact, and ripple effect of ideologies. Citing six phases of developed ideologies, the authors explain how ideologies have evolved at periods in history to justify the oppression of one people by another. While not explicitly using the language of the current “war on terror,” or significantly applying

their perspective directly to the Iraq or Afghanistan wars (mentioned on only 14 of 205 pages of text), they provide language for explaining how these conflicts have been sold to the Western world in ideological terms, and what the impact of an ideological rationale can be.

When an ideology defines a goal to be an absolute end, anything that gets in the way of it becomes evil, say the authors. Those who oppose evil are by definition good, “even if their actions result in other people suffering under cruel treatment. How close, in our view,” the authors conclude, “this lies to the demonic” (34). These statements reflect on the danger of justice and compassion being removed from discourse about contentious issues and are worth much rumination. This volume is a prophetic call to re-examine our tendency to absolutize good and evil.

Although articulating this sobering message of potential global crises comprises most of the book – which even the authors admit is “hardly uplifting” (169) – this massive dose of tough love frames the most urgent issues and stresses why these concerns must be taken seriously now. It sets the stage for suggesting a way forward. All is not lost. Rather, the authors testify they are inspired by an “enduring conviction that there is real hope for our troubled, mired world – genuine, concrete hope that deeply engages global poverty, environmental destruction, and widespread violence” (16).

This hope comes from a commitment to “live justly, to love our neighbors, and to take care of God’s creation as good stewards” (127). These actions may not seem powerful in and of themselves, but they can start a process that begins to undermine harmful ideologies that for too long have dominated social, economic, and political discourse.

This is one of the most challenging and readable books I have come across in many years. It is well written, logical, persuasive, and coherent. It inspires readers not to lose hope and to continue to work for peace and justice even though they cannot be assured of success. *Hope in Troubled Times* speaks with a common voice and effectively avoids the dissonance so often present in manuscripts with multiple authors. It is essential reading for anyone concerned about the rising tide of the seemingly intractable problems facing our globe – and the apparent impossibility that one person can do anything impactful about them. It could easily be used as a textbook in college or university courses.

Lowell Ewert, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario

Thomas P. Scheck. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.

In the lively and sometimes rancorous debate over justification that has rippled throughout the Christian world, all roads, it seems, lead back to the sixteenth century. Since the 1999 joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on Justification by Faith, new energy has poured into the conversation.¹ Even before that, descendants of the Anabaptists likewise engaged the theme. Dutch Mennonite theologian Sjouke Voolstra wrote that “Anabaptists always interpreted justification in the light of sanctification.”² J. Denny Weaver and Gerald Mast recently reflected on the views of justification of Denck, Hut, Hubmaier, and Marpeck, asserting that Sattler “affirms Lutheran justification by faith but also, in line with Catholic thought, stresses that faith will result in good works.”³

Thomas Scheck’s book makes the case that all who think this conversation matters must travel much further back in the Christian story. Indeed, he argues that Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* has influenced Christian thought on justification into the 16th-century Reformation and beyond. Further, the third-century Alexandrian’s readings of Romans were both close to Paul and remarkably relevant to 21st-century discussions.

As the first English translator of Origen’s Romans commentary,⁴ Scheck carries the credentials to back up his argument. In clear and readable prose, he makes accessible not only to patristics scholars but also to other theologians, biblical scholars, and interested lay readers the exegetical questions at stake and the history of reception that marks Origen’s influence down through the centuries. (Noting that virtually our only access to Origen’s great commentary is through the Latin translation of the fourth-century Rufinus, Scheck usually provides the Latin in text or footnote for

those who find that helpful.)

In chapter one Scheck lays out Origen's definition of justification with a "Trinitarian stress": "From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature" (CRm 4.9.192-98). Unity and synthesis of faith and works seem "to be an overriding theme" of the commentary. While the good thief of Luke 23 was justified by faith alone, because he "had no opportunity to be justified by his subsequent good works," for the most part good works must be visible "as the necessary fruit of justification."

Subsequent chapters demonstrate the borrowings from Origen and the debates with him of Pelagius, Augustine, William of St. Thierry (a 12th-century Cistercian monk), Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, and several post-Reformation theologians. In chapter two, Scheck notes that Origen and Pelagius both accepted what has become part of scholarship's "new perspective" on Paul: that Paul's great letter reflects his awareness of a dispute between Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

Although each chapter has its own fascinating insights, many readers will be most drawn to Scheck's discussion of Augustine and the 16th-century reformers. Chapter three tackles the question of Augustine's use of and challenge to Origen's commentary. The Pelagian controversy late in his life turned Augustine's reading of Romans to original sin, human powerlessness, and predestination in ways that have shaped much later Western Christian thought. However, according to Scheck, both Origen and Augustine "appeal to James as a means of correcting a false understanding of Paul" on faith and works, agreeing that faith is "a foundation on which works are built." Likewise, chapter five notes that Erasmus's devotional work *Enchiridion* "was infused with citations" from Origen's commentary, and his comment on Romans 6:4 echoed Origen: "Dead to our former sins and living now the new life, let us follow in the footsteps of piety."

Scheck notes, on the other hand, that Melancthon made "Origen's doctrine of justification an integral part of his decadence theory of Church history." Since descendants of the Anabaptists have sometimes been tempted by that same theory, Scheck's book is a must-read for anyone who may have agreed with Menno (quoting Luther) that Origen was "the falsest explainer of the Scriptures."⁵ Rather, readers considering this work will hear echoes of

Origen in Menno's call for biblical readings assuming a full-orbed practical understanding of justification.⁶

¹ The complete text of the joint declaration is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. See also Trevin Wax, compiler, "The Justification Debate: A Primer," in *Christianity Today* 53:6 (June 2009), 34-35; N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 246-52.

² Sjouke Voolstra, "Free and Perfect: Justification and Sanctification in Anabaptist Perspective," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 5.3 (Fall 1987): 225.

³ Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver, *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009), 45-46.

⁴ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., Thomas P. Scheck, trans. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001-2002).

⁵ Menno Simons, "Christian Baptism," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* [CWMS] (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 279.

⁶ Menno, "True Christian Faith," in CWMS, 333.

Nancy Heisey, Bible and Religion Department, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Miguel A. De La Torre. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethic of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

Miguel A. De La Torre, who is on the faculty of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, has written a challenging, provocative volume based on a reading of the book of Jonah and includes an engaging, brief contemporary social analysis in order to place this reading in the modern context.

De La Torre was once asked if any reading of Jonah considers Jonah's message from the perspective of "the margins of society" (ix). His work attempts to respond to his observation that he knew of no such work. In the introduction, he lays out one of his primary arguments: Jonah is a book about reconciliation. His reading presents this as reconciliation in a context of unequal distribution of power – as exemplified by the Israelite, Jonah,

facing Nineveh, symbolic of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires that were ancient bitter, oppressive enemies. The author is well aware of the potential for manipulating themes of “reconciliation” as a way for the powerful to try to get the oppressed to resign themselves to their subordinated fate.

“It is important to recognize that those who benefit from the present power structures cannot be relied upon to define reconciliation,” says the author, “or to determine how to go about achieving it” (2). He advocates no cheap “peace” that does not engage injustice: “A desire to ‘forgive and forget’ can bring about only a cheap reconciliation that sacrifices justice for the sake of serenity” (5).

In a sense, De La Torre wants to read Jonah from “Jonah’s perspective” confronting Assyria, that of a subordinate confronting the powerful. In chapter one, after briefly discussing Assyrian brutality in the Ancient Near East, he begins his read through the book. His analysis is largely literary, drawing only occasionally from contemporary historical-critical commentary. One main source is Rabbinic legends about aspects of Jonah.

In chapter two, “Who was Jonah, What was Nineveh?” De La Torre reads Jonah and Nineveh as models of the oppressed and the socio-economic realities of that oppression in the 18th to 20th centuries of the European and American West. Characteristically, his strongest focus is on the racialized borders of modern socio-economic systems within the US historical context. He is rather dismissive of attempts to work “within the system,” because the system itself must be transformed. What it is to be transformed into is not so clear, short of frequent calls for a “redistribution of income.”

Chapter three, “Reflecting on Jonah,” brings together the author’s profound interest in reconciliation as a Christian reality with the difficult “praxis” of justice – reconciliation never cancels the need for change, in his reading. Chapter four, “Praying through Jonah,” clarifies that reconciliation must be initiated only by the oppressed: “Those who presently benefit from the existing social order lack the objectivity and moral authority to define reconciliation or even recognize the need for reconciliation...” (88). The author seems to accept nothing short of revolutionary change for authentic reconciliation. This becomes problematic when he tends to minimize the courageous acts of individuals because they do not transform entire socio-economic systems. This sense of helplessness in the face of evil systems sets

up his sense of hopelessness in the final chapter.

Chapter five, “Pitfalls Jonah Should Avoid,” includes comments about internal politics in various ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as problems in dealing with Euro-Americans, who are largely not trusted for a credible analysis because “Euroamerican Christians, either from the fundamentalist right or the far liberal left, probably have more in common with each other and understand each other better than they do Christians on the other side of the racial and ethnic divide” (125). So great is the task of social transformation and so little the will to do it that De La Torre despairs of its ever taking place even in his grandchildren’s generation (143).

In the final chapter, “Case Studies,” the author offers stories of attempts by individuals to seek social change and raises questions about each case. For example, the first case describes recent Native-American reactions to the Columbus Day celebrations in Denver, and asks the reader to consider what forms of protest or response would have been appropriate, given that Native groups were denied most opportunities for legal, peaceful protest. A second case describes Daryl Davis, an African-American, who attempted to make contact with members of the Ku Klux Klan in order to force a dialogue on racism. He even managed to make friends, leading some members to leave the Klan after long conversations with him. These and other cases are intended to raise questions about the individual actions of people of color, but one is left wondering if these studies are signs of hope or of futility, given De La Torre’s previous analysis.

Reading as a Quaker informed by Anabaptist theology, I honor individual acts of faith – attempts to live an alternative reality within the rigid systems of oppression – and that same Anabaptist conscience sometimes wonders if this is the best to be hoped for. I will not minimize or trivialize such individual actions only because they fall short of the revolution. Further, I am not in sympathy with an exclusively racialized social analysis that refuses to consider the potential bridge-building (and recognition of historical realities) that are served by a more thorough-going class analysis. Finally, I am concerned with De La Torre’s tendencies to homogenize the very different experiences of Latino, Asian, Native, and African-Americans. “People of color” is becoming a dubious generalization for social analysis.

My disagreements notwithstanding, I deeply appreciate De La Torre’s

fascinating meditations on the socio-economic contexts of a modern reading of Jonah.

Daniel Smith-Christopher, Dept. of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Ted Lewis, ed. *Electing Not to Vote: Christian Reflections on Reasons for Not Voting*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

This volume takes up an interesting and important question: Might Christians faithfully abstain from voting? This is a provocative question in a culture which assumes that voting is a civic responsibility, even (perhaps especially) for Christians. As the essays collected here demonstrate, it is a question that should be asked and discussed carefully in our faith communities.

The essays are uniform in their affirmation that it is possible, and sometimes desirable, for Christians to abstain from voting. The nine contributors make the case for abstention from voting in a variety of ways from a rich array of Christian perspectives.

Indeed, one of the book's most interesting features is the breadth of ecclesial perspectives represented. Authors come from Mennonite, Pentecostal, Catholic, Baptist, and intentional Christian community traditions, and they write from, and sometimes to, those communities. Central to the conversation is how our identity as Christians is shaped by our political participation and how we are to understand the dual nature of our citizenship.

The authors offer a wide range of critiques of voting. Some reflect personally on their experiences of voting and participating in electoral politics, and suggest that the process damages their Christian discipleship. For instance, Michael Degan rejects voting in part "because of who I become in order to win" (61). Others share a concern about how the polarized politics of American presidential elections have affected conversations in our churches. John D. Roth's well-known essay, which begins the collection, is the best example of this concern. Others offer critiques of the candidates we

have to choose from, the US Electoral College system, and the way electoral rules and processes affect outcomes.

Perhaps the most critical difference among the contributors is on whether or not voting should be the norm for Christians. Michael Degan, Tato Sumantri, Ted Lewis, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Nekeisha Alexis-Baker offer strong rejections of voting. For these authors, not voting is apparently the norm. In contrast, for John D. Roth, G. Scott Becker, and Todd Whitmore voting is assumed to be the norm, and not voting is a selective step that should be taken after careful deliberation.

Whitmore reflects on the two candidates in the 2004 US presidential election, ultimately arguing that both George W. Bush and John Kerry advocated policies that violated fundamental principles of Catholic teaching and, as a result, not voting was his obligation. But he argues that this obligation “does not spill over to another election” (79) and concludes by noting that he is “undecided about whether I will vote in the 2008 election, pending a hearing of the views of the candidates” (80). Many of the authors in this collection need no such hearing.

The essays are strongly uniform in advocating a form of political participation that goes beyond voting. In fact, most of them argue that voting is insufficient participation in civic life. Thus in their call for abstention from voting, the authors are not calling for a withdrawal or retreat from participation in the life of the *polis*. Instead, they call for a different kind of engagement, as Roth writes, not allowing “narrow definitions of ‘political involvement’ to set the terms” for how Christians care for society (8). Instead of the apathy and cynicism that leads most Americans not to vote, these authors call for what Lewis terms an “active refraining” that “leads to proactive engagement” (114).

The volume is intentionally limited to presidential elections in the United States. It falls to others to work out what faithful political participation looks like in other countries and contexts. It also falls to others to articulate the possibilities of electoral participation at more local levels (though Degan explicitly rejects voting at other levels as well). The essays are well written and not overly technical. The volume is suitable for churches and lay audiences where it should be read and carefully considered; it is an

important entry into a difficult but critically important conversation about faithful political engagement.

Victor J. Hinojosa, Political Science Dept., Baylor University, Waco, Texas

How Do Stories Save Us? An Essay on the Question with the Theological Hermeneutics of David Tracy in View. Scott Holland. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

In this erudite, dense, and artful text, Bethany Theological Seminary professor Scott Holland takes the reader – as the back cover says – “on an intellectual adventure through narrative theology, literary criticism, poetics, ritual studies and aesthetics in the composition of a theology of culture.”

Throughout the text, the work of revisionist theologian David Tracy is “in view.” Tracy, a Catholic priest and active professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, is the author of well-known texts including *The Analogical Imagination* and *On Naming the Present*. Holland’s book concludes with a 10-page bibliography of Tracy’s writings plus a more general bibliography, including 18 books and essays by Paul Ricoeur and 8 articles by Holland.

Holland works particularly with what he refers to as two emerging self-corrective foci in Tracy’s public theology (i.e., theology that is “always involved in complex and interesting relationships with diverse historical and social realities”): “a hermeneutics in which the ‘other’ not the ‘self’ is the dominant focus; and a theological insistence that only a mystical-prophetic model of theology can save us” (35-36).

In terms of narrative theology, Holland casts his lot with Tracy and others representing the University of Chicago narrative school rather than with those representing what might be called the Yale school (e.g., George Lindbeck, Hans Frei). The latter, says Holland, see the church as the sole reference of theology (58). In that schema, the world “becomes an *object* of theological description and prophetic critique, rarely a rich and mystical *source* for imaginative and revisionary theological thought and writing”

(98). For Yale-ish narrativists, biblical narratives “catch the reader up into the sacred world of the text,” as the Bible “absorb[s] the world into its unique world” (78). It is this Yale-based form of narrative theology that has been most influential for recent mainstream Anabaptists, as mediated largely through the work of Stanley Hauerwas. Holland says one might excuse a fundamentalist for advocating for this sort of “sectarian imagination in defense of her tribal gods and goods.... But for a post-critical Christian theorist who values close readings and thick descriptions to retreat from the public square into the world of the text, pretending she has found a separate, autonomous world, is not only bad faith, it is bad fiction” (101).

In contrast, Tracy and others see the world “as a complex *source* for theology and not simply its *object*” (58). “While Yale theologians seem most interested in keeping their community’s story straight,” says Holland, “those drawn to the work of David Tracy and the Chicago school are much more interested in doing theology while listening to other people’s stories” (98). Such a theology will then be pluralistic, interdisciplinary, intertextual (rather than intratextual, as for the Yale theologians), and revisionary. Here the theologian “brings the texts, traditions, and practices of her community into conversation with others, especially communities of difference, in the search for greater insight, understanding, humane presence and connection with the divine” (98-99).

Elsewhere Holland argues the increasingly accepted view that humans are constituted both narratively and performatively, i.e., through ritual (153-78). He sensibly proposes that for Anabaptists and other low-church Protestants to develop a theory of symbol and ritual that might lead their communities toward Ricoeur’s “second naivete” in relation to religious symbolism, such transformation will come not through studying traditional theological arguments of sacramentologists but through discovering how symbolic activity is co-natural with the human person, emerging from ordinary experience (177).

How Do Stories Save Us? will most engage those already immersed in postmodern theological critiques. Illustrating the background one may need, a not atypical selection reads: “Following Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, Tracy’s theological agenda has been to rethink the dialectical relationship between language and experience. His program moves beyond

the Schleiermacher – Tillich – Rahner – Lonergan experiential paradigm to an explicitly hermeneutical one” (82). Some readers may stumble through more complex portions of the book, though most will appreciate Holland’s more accessible commentaries on narrative theology and rituals. His chapter “When Art and Ritual Embrace and Kiss” (179-230) is moving at points, thanks to some embedded autobiographical flourishes and assertions of faith.

Just under half of the 241-page text, which began as Holland’s dissertation at Duquesne University, has been published before as discrete essays in journals or books. The core of Holland’s argument, from “How Do Stories Save Us,” through chapters titled “Theology is a Kind of Writing,” “Even the Postmodern Story Has a Body,” and “Signifying Presence” have appeared in *Louvain Studies*, *Cross Currents*, and an edited volume, *The Presence of Transcendence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). A few odd, distracting editing issues have made it into the present text, likely due to its various embodiments over 16 years.

For David Tracy followers, this is an illuminating supplemental text. Those interested more broadly in narrative theology also will benefit from a few of the middle chapters, though they likely will be less engaged with the text’s first 70 pages. Students of postmodernity and aesthetically sensitive readers will be especially appreciative of Holland’s work.

Keith Graber Miller, Chair, Bible, Religion and Philosophy, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

What is “freedom”? According to free-market ideology, we are free when the state limits its interference in economic transactions. Using Augustine, William Cavanaugh challenges this answer. He asserts that when society lacks a good common end this “freedom” can only degenerate into a battle of wills, public manipulation through marketing, concentrated power in the hands of few large corporations, and a steady increase in economic injustice and class inequalities. Without a life that is ordered toward helping life flourish, the desire to consume is internalized in our culture until we simply move from one manufactured desire for this or that product to another, never realizing that we are being controlled under the guise of liberation. After detailing and exposing the consumer trap in which we are caught, Cavanaugh provides concrete examples of how to overcome this spiral of idolatrous desire.

Although I am convinced by Cavanaugh’s thesis that desires must be rightly ordered toward helping life flourish if we are to resist being seduced by the market’s manipulations, his argument does not fully account for how our desires prevent or sustain the flourishing of nonhuman animal life. Upon learning about the nightmare that cattle endure in typical “beef” production, the author notes his decision to purchase grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free cattle from a local farmer. He makes this choice on the grounds that while the industrial “meat” industry hides the horrors and suffering of nonhuman animals, “all the information I need is available and transparent” on the small farm (31). This statement is open to challenge on at least two points.

First, Cavanaugh neglects to note that the small farmer is a part of a larger web that is largely beyond his control. When a cow gets an infection, organic farmers may withhold antibiotics even if the cow suffers tremendously to make sure their meat can be labeled organic. Moreover, there are common farming practices necessary to production – forced impregnation, castration, and others – that, while not horrific, inflict pain and limit the nonhuman animals’ ability to be free and to flourish.

The second point is that care for nonhuman animals within Cavanaugh’s

framework demands more than simply minimizing pain, and this requires questions and answers that are not as available and transparent as the author makes them seem. For example, why do we desire “meat” in the first place, and is it a rightly-ordered desire? Do we facilitate flourishing when we kill another living being to satiate a desire that is not only unnecessary for human survival but also damages our health? Given the state of our ecosystem and the growing awareness that all life on this planet hangs together on a precipice, Cavanaugh’s anthropocentric view of the common end is incompatible with his goal of overcoming idolatrous desire.

In response to the narrative of the market, Cavanaugh offers a counter story centered on the Catholic Eucharist. He argues that consumerism detaches the consumer from the process of production and from the people who produce our goods. Furthermore, our attachment to the goods themselves has decreased because we constantly abandon each product for the latest upgrade. Our pleasure comes from the pursuit of goods, from shopping itself, so a never-ending cycle of consumption ensues. The Catholic practice of the Eucharist provides a counterweight to this frenzy by absorbing each person into a larger body. Instead of being fragmented individuals trapped in the non-stop game of pursuing the latest trinkets, we become a community shaped into the Body of Christ.

Cavanaugh’s account should provide a lot of thought for Mennonites as to how Mennonite worship shapes us into people capable of resisting consumerism. We do not have a Catholic practice or theology of the Eucharist, and I am not convinced that if we did it would be adequate. But how does our worship shape us? What have we lost or gained that might be useful in giving an account of our own?

One of the most powerful practices that Cavanaugh mentions in this book, but does not give enough attention to, is making our own stuff (57). Instead of buying free trade and relocating consumerism to a new though better corporation, making our own clothes, growing our own food, and playing our own music can shape us to be producers who have learned the value of production through doing it and who question the industrial technological society itself. Simply moving from one type of industrial, gadget-hungry model to a “fair trade” version is not enough. We have to

question it at its core. Maybe backwards is forwards. Cavanaugh provides a good base for starting to find out.

Andy Alexis-Baker, PhD student, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, eds. *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Seeking the Identity of Jesus presents the fruit of a three-year research project sponsored by Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry and conceived as a sequel to *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Intended to address the profusion of popular images of Jesus, the project seeks not to distinguish an "historical" Jesus from the church's canon and creed but instead to investigate ways in which the latter might actually serve to clarify Jesus' identity (5). With this in mind, the analogy of choice is not the archaeological dig (where the "real" Jesus awaits unearthing) but the pilgrimage (where various "reports" anticipate a common destination), and the effect is not a recovery but an encounter via the diversity of canonical witness and church tradition.

Toward this end, editors Beverly Gaventa and Richard Hays divide the collected essays into three groups. In the first, William Placher, Robert Jenson, Markus Bockmuehl, Dale Allison, and Francis Watson endeavor to lay a methodological foundation that undoes the traditional disjunct of "Jesus of history" and "Christ of faith." Particularly representative is Allison's reassertion of the relevance of Jesus' "history of influence," canonical and otherwise, for an understanding of his identity (94).

The second and third groupings follow, which is to say they represent the working out of this proposal: Dale Allison, Joel Marcus, Beverly Gaventa, and Marianne Thompson assess the identity of Jesus in the four gospels; Richard Hays and Katherine Grieb consider the "story" of Christ in the letters of Paul and the "sermon" of Hebrews respectively, and Gary Anderson and Walter Moberly discuss the christological resonance of Moses, Jonah, and Isaiah. Brian Daley, David Steinmetz, Katherine Sonderegger, and Sarah

Coakley then shift attention to the testimony of the church, exploring in turn the identity of Jesus in patristic theology (via Irenaeus, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor), in the early Reformation debate over the nature of the Eucharist, in the act of Christian worship, and in the practice of mercy to the poor. Coakley's argument that the recognition of Jesus demands the "sustaining matrix" (311) and "cumulative tangle" (316) of Christian practice – especially vis-à-vis the poor – represents the collection's most adventurous moment, but the epistemic transformation she envisions embodies well the project's creative edge.

Next to the wandering sage and/or mysterious guru of popular consumption, *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* gives no neat summary of the identity of Jesus: "no 'sound-bite' Jesus can ever be faithful to the evidence," Gaventa and Hays conclude, "because the testimony of the variety of witnesses to Jesus – past, present, and future – cannot be collapsed..." (324). The collection's embrace of rich complexity proceeds rather under the sign of identity. Whatever else it is, Jesus' "identity" is a social product (Allison's words) that necessarily includes Jesus' own (continuing) reception history among his followers, then and now. This is the crux of the project, and a timely and productive contribution. What the individual essays contribute substantively regarding the identity of Jesus in the Gospels, for instance, or in the letters of Paul, will no doubt be found a helpful orientation to their study; but this identification of the church's ongoing tradition as the privileged locus of encounter promises a basic reorientation of the scholarly discourse surrounding Jesus.

Tensions undoubtedly remain. The traditional quest for the historical Jesus remains methodologically relevant, whether "first half of an incomplete sentence" (95) or "antidote" (113), but it is not at all clear what substantive difference its demands make in the subsequent collation of canonical witness and church testimony. At very least, how precisely the Jesus we know "through Scripture" relates to the Jesus we know "through the creeds" and the Jesus we know "through practice" deserves more sustained discussion. The volume concludes with a welcome affirmation of diversity and complexity (324), yet in its introduction summarily excludes everything extracanonical from the relevant history of reception, and this on historical grounds (14). Rhetorical celebration of canonical diversity seems similarly threatened by

the apparent uniformity of “the church” and its singular testimony. Still, this collection offers an important corrective to the modern critical paradigm that underlies the traditional quest, and in this it promises an opportunity for increased precision and perception in the study of Jesus.

Rene Baergen, Biblical Dept., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Ellen Hodgson Brown. *Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System And How We Can Break Free*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Third Millennium Press, 2008.

People concerned about social justice need this book! In *Web of Debt*, Ellen Brown provides an extraordinarily compelling and vivid analysis of one of the most crucial yet least understood of the major social problems that currently imperil humanity. She exposes and explains the hidden workings of our money system. The problems deriving from this system pervade and worsen the whole range of social problems that confront us globally. Brown shows how the money system has a devastating impact, but also how it could be transformed to provide powerful impetus for needed social change.

The great majority of social activists who have worked diligently for many years to overcome a wide variety of social problems, striving to achieve social justice and peace, know almost nothing about the workings of the money system. For many years I have been among such activists, and have seen how our analyses of social problems – poverty, environmental destruction, and war, in all their many manifestations – have omitted any reference to it. Our goals have been worthy. But our analyses have been weakened and our strategies often ill-conceived because we have failed to understand or to confront the potent realities of the money system.

Our ignorance is not surprising. The workings of the money system have been carefully obscured from public scrutiny and understanding by those in the private banking system who control it. In the Foreword to *Web of Debt*, Reed Simpson, a veteran banker, writes: “I can report that even most bankers are not aware of what goes on behind closed doors at the top of their field.... I am more familiar than most with the issues raised in [Brown’s

book] and I still found it to be an eye-opener, a remarkable window into what is really going on.... [The way our money system functions] has been the focus of a highly sophisticated and long-term disinformation campaign that permeates academia, media, and publishing. The complexity of the subject has been intentionally exploited to keep its mysteries hidden” (ix).

At the heart of Brown’s revelations is her explanation of the source of our money. It is no longer based in any way on gold. Nor, as is almost universally assumed, is it supplied by governments. Some 97 percent of the money supply in capitalist economies around the world is created out of nothing by private commercial banks in their process of making loans. Banks do not lend out the money of depositors, as is also widely assumed. As they make loans, the banks create *new* money that is added to the total amount of money in circulation.

Huge problems result. Especially notable is the fact that, when the banks supply almost all the money essential for our economic transactions, they create money for the principal of the loans but do not for the interest that they invariably require to be paid. They create only debt-money. And they impose a demand impossible for us to meet collectively! Money to pay interest is simply not available. In order to make payments that include both interest and principal, people are driven to compete with each other, “to fight with each other in order to survive” (31). People must continue borrowing from the banks, further increasing their indebtedness. Inevitably some borrowers default, enabling the banks to take over their collateral. The few favored in this system become ever more wealthy, while many are impoverished.

Much more analysis of the dynamics of this system is provided in the book. The abuses perpetrated through our money system are possible only because governments have been manipulated into allowing private banks to control the system. Governments at the federal level could be using their own powers for money creation to provide interest-free loans for much-needed infrastructure, and, as the economy expands, could not only lend but spend debt-free money into existence to provide public services. Brown explains how the alternative of democratically controlled government-created money could make enormously creative contributions to human welfare.

Dealing primarily with US history, Brown describes successful cases

of government-created money – as in colonial Pennsylvania under Benjamin Franklin, and in the Civil War with the greenbacks – and shows how private banking interests fought constantly to control the US money system.

Brown’s book is an antidote to our ignorance of the money system, as is also her website: webofdebt.com.

George Crowell, Department of Religious Studies (ret.), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario

Marlene Epp. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008.

Marlene Epp has written a history of Canadian Mennonite women over the course of the past three centuries, ending in 1980. This refreshing work orients Canadian Mennonite historiography towards questions of gender in a fashion that, while grounded in extensive research into primary and archival sources, is nonetheless an effective synthesis of a complex subject. As such, it is neither a theological treatment of “power” or “gender” nor an over-specialized monograph, but rather a straightforward, brilliantly researched, and well-argued history of a topic gaining in coverage that now has its own attempt at a survey. Having set a high standard for Canadian Mennonite women’s studies in her earlier book, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000), Epp continues her masterful command of the field with this volume.

The author divides the book into five chapters, arranged thematically, each of which opens with an historical vignette clarifying the theme and interpretive methodology to follow. The chapters are organized around themes of immigration as pioneers, refugees and transnationals; family life as wives and mothers; religious life as preachers, prophets, and missionaries; worldly life as citizens, nonresisters and nonconformists; and, finally, living in a material world of quilts, canned goods, and the written word. Throughout the book, Epp provides an even-handed account of Mennonite

women's life based on her extensive research bringing to light women's experiences, often in their own words.

Epp introduces the volume with a helpful historiographical survey of the topic, in addition to making clear her own social location and how she will be working not so much with theology as with history. On this point, she summarizes how religion cannot be ignored when working with an ethno-religious group. Interestingly, she adds the caveat when discussing the influence of Harold S. Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision" that we must remember that it is not directly connected to women's experience, dealing as it does with American Mennonites joining the military during World War II (13). While that is an obvious point to make, Epp is quite strong when explicating her methodology and her hopes for the book, which is designed both to inform and inspire students while learning of historical Mennonite women's experiences to envision also relationships and institutions not given to gender inequality or discrimination (18-19).

While Epp's well-articulated hope for this volume might indicate a polemic in the making, she has written an exceptionally well-researched book and a well-reasoned interpretation. Throughout she demonstrates that Canadian Mennonite women were never without history, that they were always engaged in their communities, both religious and in the wider world, all the while exercising historical agency. The chapters progress fluidly as she defines women's experience by roles imposed and roles taken on. Her work on the conundrum of nonconformity and non-resistance in Mennonite women's experiences is especially significant as it exposes, perhaps counter-intuitively for some, how a theology of peace can become a seedbed of inequality (chapter 4).

Ultimately, Epp has done an important service by broadening Canadian Mennonite historiography and treatment of gender beyond localized studies to a national treatment that simultaneously brings to light a plethora of primary and archival sources. She balances historical detail with broader interpretations with seeming ease and in persuasive prose. Throughout she presents the experiences of women as diverse, heterodox, and embodying myriad perspectives, actions, and responses to their varied contexts.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in, or taking university courses involving, questions of church and society, gender, and the Canadian

experiences of immigration and assimilation. This is a rich resource useful for undergraduates, graduates, and teachers alike. The book's scope and self-imposed limits are reasonable and effective, and this reader looks forward to when a similar study can be written of the 1980s and 1990s.

Brian Froese, Assistant Professor of History, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David Van Heemst. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Few books are as timely or as prophetic as *Hope in Troubled Times*. Writing prior to the global economic meltdown in 2008 that caused international financial institutions to shudder, the authors warned about the volatility of the financial markets before it was fashionable to do so. They also noted the potentially catastrophic impact of other challenges such as environmental degradation, ideologically based conflict, global poverty, and insecurity.

The book opens with words that cogently and succinctly explain its premise: “[O]ur world seems to live under the curse of scrambling for solutions but not finding them” (15). The authors begin by rejecting the notion that human ingenuity can keep ahead of escalating global challenges simply by resorting to raw intelligence. They also dispute the premise that solutions which worked for past crises are adequate to enable humanity to adapt to harsh new realities. Instead, they argue that “many of today’s problems seem to have developed immunity to our well-intended solutions. They have become like viruses that resist medicine or like pests that have developed a defense against pesticide” (31).

One of the most insightful discussions pertains to the development, impact, and ripple effect of ideologies. Citing six phases of developed ideologies, the authors explain how ideologies have evolved at periods in history to justify the oppression of one people by another. While not explicitly using the language of the current “war on terror,” or significantly applying

their perspective directly to the Iraq or Afghanistan wars (mentioned on only 14 of 205 pages of text), they provide language for explaining how these conflicts have been sold to the Western world in ideological terms, and what the impact of an ideological rationale can be.

When an ideology defines a goal to be an absolute end, anything that gets in the way of it becomes evil, say the authors. Those who oppose evil are by definition good, “even if their actions result in other people suffering under cruel treatment. How close, in our view,” the authors conclude, “this lies to the demonic” (34). These statements reflect on the danger of justice and compassion being removed from discourse about contentious issues and are worth much rumination. This volume is a prophetic call to re-examine our tendency to absolutize good and evil.

Although articulating this sobering message of potential global crises comprises most of the book – which even the authors admit is “hardly uplifting” (169) – this massive dose of tough love frames the most urgent issues and stresses why these concerns must be taken seriously now. It sets the stage for suggesting a way forward. All is not lost. Rather, the authors testify they are inspired by an “enduring conviction that there is real hope for our troubled, mired world – genuine, concrete hope that deeply engages global poverty, environmental destruction, and widespread violence” (16).

This hope comes from a commitment to “live justly, to love our neighbors, and to take care of God’s creation as good stewards” (127). These actions may not seem powerful in and of themselves, but they can start a process that begins to undermine harmful ideologies that for too long have dominated social, economic, and political discourse.

This is one of the most challenging and readable books I have come across in many years. It is well written, logical, persuasive, and coherent. It inspires readers not to lose hope and to continue to work for peace and justice even though they cannot be assured of success. *Hope in Troubled Times* speaks with a common voice and effectively avoids the dissonance so often present in manuscripts with multiple authors. It is essential reading for anyone concerned about the rising tide of the seemingly intractable problems facing our globe – and the apparent impossibility that one person can do anything impactful about them. It could easily be used as a textbook in college or university courses.

Lowell Ewert, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario

Thomas P. Scheck. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.

In the lively and sometimes rancorous debate over justification that has rippled throughout the Christian world, all roads, it seems, lead back to the sixteenth century. Since the 1999 joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on Justification by Faith, new energy has poured into the conversation.¹ Even before that, descendants of the Anabaptists likewise engaged the theme. Dutch Mennonite theologian Sjouke Voolstra wrote that “Anabaptists always interpreted justification in the light of sanctification.”² J. Denny Weaver and Gerald Mast recently reflected on the views of justification of Denck, Hut, Hubmaier, and Marpeck, asserting that Sattler “affirms Lutheran justification by faith but also, in line with Catholic thought, stresses that faith will result in good works.”³

Thomas Scheck’s book makes the case that all who think this conversation matters must travel much further back in the Christian story. Indeed, he argues that Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* has influenced Christian thought on justification into the 16th-century Reformation and beyond. Further, the third-century Alexandrian’s readings of Romans were both close to Paul and remarkably relevant to 21st-century discussions.

As the first English translator of Origen’s Romans commentary,⁴ Scheck carries the credentials to back up his argument. In clear and readable prose, he makes accessible not only to patristics scholars but also to other theologians, biblical scholars, and interested lay readers the exegetical questions at stake and the history of reception that marks Origen’s influence down through the centuries. (Noting that virtually our only access to Origen’s great commentary is through the Latin translation of the fourth-century Rufinus, Scheck usually provides the Latin in text or footnote for

those who find that helpful.)

In chapter one Scheck lays out Origen's definition of justification with a "Trinitarian stress": "From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature" (CRm 4.9.192-98). Unity and synthesis of faith and works seem "to be an overriding theme" of the commentary. While the good thief of Luke 23 was justified by faith alone, because he "had no opportunity to be justified by his subsequent good works," for the most part good works must be visible "as the necessary fruit of justification."

Subsequent chapters demonstrate the borrowings from Origen and the debates with him of Pelagius, Augustine, William of St. Thierry (a 12th-century Cistercian monk), Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, and several post-Reformation theologians. In chapter two, Scheck notes that Origen and Pelagius both accepted what has become part of scholarship's "new perspective" on Paul: that Paul's great letter reflects his awareness of a dispute between Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

Although each chapter has its own fascinating insights, many readers will be most drawn to Scheck's discussion of Augustine and the 16th-century reformers. Chapter three tackles the question of Augustine's use of and challenge to Origen's commentary. The Pelagian controversy late in his life turned Augustine's reading of Romans to original sin, human powerlessness, and predestination in ways that have shaped much later Western Christian thought. However, according to Scheck, both Origen and Augustine "appeal to James as a means of correcting a false understanding of Paul" on faith and works, agreeing that faith is "a foundation on which works are built." Likewise, chapter five notes that Erasmus's devotional work *Enchiridion* "was infused with citations" from Origen's commentary, and his comment on Romans 6:4 echoed Origen: "Dead to our former sins and living now the new life, let us follow in the footsteps of piety."

Scheck notes, on the other hand, that Melancthon made "Origen's doctrine of justification an integral part of his decadence theory of Church history." Since descendants of the Anabaptists have sometimes been tempted by that same theory, Scheck's book is a must-read for anyone who may have agreed with Menno (quoting Luther) that Origen was "the falsest explainer of the Scriptures."⁵ Rather, readers considering this work will hear echoes of

Origen in Menno's call for biblical readings assuming a full-orbed practical understanding of justification.⁶

¹ The complete text of the joint declaration is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. See also Trevin Wax, compiler, "The Justification Debate: A Primer," in *Christianity Today* 53:6 (June 2009), 34-35; N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 246-52.

² Sjouke Voolstra, "Free and Perfect: Justification and Sanctification in Anabaptist Perspective," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 5.3 (Fall 1987): 225.

³ Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver, *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009), 45-46.

⁴ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., Thomas P. Scheck, trans. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001-2002).

⁵ Menno Simons, "Christian Baptism," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* [CWMS] (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 279.

⁶ Menno, "True Christian Faith," in CWMS, 333.

Nancy Heisey, Bible and Religion Department, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Miguel A. De La Torre. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethic of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

Miguel A. De La Torre, who is on the faculty of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, has written a challenging, provocative volume based on a reading of the book of Jonah and includes an engaging, brief contemporary social analysis in order to place this reading in the modern context.

De La Torre was once asked if any reading of Jonah considers Jonah's message from the perspective of "the margins of society" (ix). His work attempts to respond to his observation that he knew of no such work. In the introduction, he lays out one of his primary arguments: Jonah is a book about reconciliation. His reading presents this as reconciliation in a context of unequal distribution of power – as exemplified by the Israelite, Jonah,

facing Nineveh, symbolic of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires that were ancient bitter, oppressive enemies. The author is well aware of the potential for manipulating themes of “reconciliation” as a way for the powerful to try to get the oppressed to resign themselves to their subordinated fate.

“It is important to recognize that those who benefit from the present power structures cannot be relied upon to define reconciliation,” says the author, “or to determine how to go about achieving it” (2). He advocates no cheap “peace” that does not engage injustice: “A desire to ‘forgive and forget’ can bring about only a cheap reconciliation that sacrifices justice for the sake of serenity” (5).

In a sense, De La Torre wants to read Jonah from “Jonah’s perspective” confronting Assyria, that of a subordinate confronting the powerful. In chapter one, after briefly discussing Assyrian brutality in the Ancient Near East, he begins his read through the book. His analysis is largely literary, drawing only occasionally from contemporary historical-critical commentary. One main source is Rabbinic legends about aspects of Jonah.

In chapter two, “Who was Jonah, What was Nineveh?” De La Torre reads Jonah and Nineveh as models of the oppressed and the socio-economic realities of that oppression in the 18th to 20th centuries of the European and American West. Characteristically, his strongest focus is on the racialized borders of modern socio-economic systems within the US historical context. He is rather dismissive of attempts to work “within the system,” because the system itself must be transformed. What it is to be transformed into is not so clear, short of frequent calls for a “redistribution of income.”

Chapter three, “Reflecting on Jonah,” brings together the author’s profound interest in reconciliation as a Christian reality with the difficult “praxis” of justice – reconciliation never cancels the need for change, in his reading. Chapter four, “Praying through Jonah,” clarifies that reconciliation must be initiated only by the oppressed: “Those who presently benefit from the existing social order lack the objectivity and moral authority to define reconciliation or even recognize the need for reconciliation...” (88). The author seems to accept nothing short of revolutionary change for authentic reconciliation. This becomes problematic when he tends to minimize the courageous acts of individuals because they do not transform entire socio-economic systems. This sense of helplessness in the face of evil systems sets

up his sense of hopelessness in the final chapter.

Chapter five, “Pitfalls Jonah Should Avoid,” includes comments about internal politics in various ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as problems in dealing with Euro-Americans, who are largely not trusted for a credible analysis because “Euroamerican Christians, either from the fundamentalist right or the far liberal left, probably have more in common with each other and understand each other better than they do Christians on the other side of the racial and ethnic divide” (125). So great is the task of social transformation and so little the will to do it that De La Torre despairs of its ever taking place even in his grandchildren’s generation (143).

In the final chapter, “Case Studies,” the author offers stories of attempts by individuals to seek social change and raises questions about each case. For example, the first case describes recent Native-American reactions to the Columbus Day celebrations in Denver, and asks the reader to consider what forms of protest or response would have been appropriate, given that Native groups were denied most opportunities for legal, peaceful protest. A second case describes Daryl Davis, an African-American, who attempted to make contact with members of the Ku Klux Klan in order to force a dialogue on racism. He even managed to make friends, leading some members to leave the Klan after long conversations with him. These and other cases are intended to raise questions about the individual actions of people of color, but one is left wondering if these studies are signs of hope or of futility, given De La Torre’s previous analysis.

Reading as a Quaker informed by Anabaptist theology, I honor individual acts of faith – attempts to live an alternative reality within the rigid systems of oppression – and that same Anabaptist conscience sometimes wonders if this is the best to be hoped for. I will not minimize or trivialize such individual actions only because they fall short of the revolution. Further, I am not in sympathy with an exclusively racialized social analysis that refuses to consider the potential bridge-building (and recognition of historical realities) that are served by a more thorough-going class analysis. Finally, I am concerned with De La Torre’s tendencies to homogenize the very different experiences of Latino, Asian, Native, and African-Americans. “People of color” is becoming a dubious generalization for social analysis.

My disagreements notwithstanding, I deeply appreciate De La Torre’s

fascinating meditations on the socio-economic contexts of a modern reading of Jonah.

Daniel Smith-Christopher, Dept. of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Ted Lewis, ed. *Electing Not to Vote: Christian Reflections on Reasons for Not Voting*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

This volume takes up an interesting and important question: Might Christians faithfully abstain from voting? This is a provocative question in a culture which assumes that voting is a civic responsibility, even (perhaps especially) for Christians. As the essays collected here demonstrate, it is a question that should be asked and discussed carefully in our faith communities.

The essays are uniform in their affirmation that it is possible, and sometimes desirable, for Christians to abstain from voting. The nine contributors make the case for abstention from voting in a variety of ways from a rich array of Christian perspectives.

Indeed, one of the book's most interesting features is the breadth of ecclesial perspectives represented. Authors come from Mennonite, Pentecostal, Catholic, Baptist, and intentional Christian community traditions, and they write from, and sometimes to, those communities. Central to the conversation is how our identity as Christians is shaped by our political participation and how we are to understand the dual nature of our citizenship.

The authors offer a wide range of critiques of voting. Some reflect personally on their experiences of voting and participating in electoral politics, and suggest that the process damages their Christian discipleship. For instance, Michael Degan rejects voting in part "because of who I become in order to win" (61). Others share a concern about how the polarized politics of American presidential elections have affected conversations in our churches. John D. Roth's well-known essay, which begins the collection, is the best example of this concern. Others offer critiques of the candidates we

have to choose from, the US Electoral College system, and the way electoral rules and processes affect outcomes.

Perhaps the most critical difference among the contributors is on whether or not voting should be the norm for Christians. Michael Degan, Tato Sumantri, Ted Lewis, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Nekeisha Alexis-Baker offer strong rejections of voting. For these authors, not voting is apparently the norm. In contrast, for John D. Roth, G. Scott Becker, and Todd Whitmore voting is assumed to be the norm, and not voting is a selective step that should be taken after careful deliberation.

Whitmore reflects on the two candidates in the 2004 US presidential election, ultimately arguing that both George W. Bush and John Kerry advocated policies that violated fundamental principles of Catholic teaching and, as a result, not voting was his obligation. But he argues that this obligation “does not spill over to another election” (79) and concludes by noting that he is “undecided about whether I will vote in the 2008 election, pending a hearing of the views of the candidates” (80). Many of the authors in this collection need no such hearing.

The essays are strongly uniform in advocating a form of political participation that goes beyond voting. In fact, most of them argue that voting is insufficient participation in civic life. Thus in their call for abstention from voting, the authors are not calling for a withdrawal or retreat from participation in the life of the *polis*. Instead, they call for a different kind of engagement, as Roth writes, not allowing “narrow definitions of ‘political involvement’ to set the terms” for how Christians care for society (8). Instead of the apathy and cynicism that leads most Americans not to vote, these authors call for what Lewis terms an “active refraining” that “leads to proactive engagement” (114).

The volume is intentionally limited to presidential elections in the United States. It falls to others to work out what faithful political participation looks like in other countries and contexts. It also falls to others to articulate the possibilities of electoral participation at more local levels (though Degan explicitly rejects voting at other levels as well). The essays are well written and not overly technical. The volume is suitable for churches and lay audiences where it should be read and carefully considered; it is an

important entry into a difficult but critically important conversation about faithful political engagement.

Victor J. Hinojosa, Political Science Dept., Baylor University, Waco, Texas

How Do Stories Save Us? An Essay on the Question with the Theological Hermeneutics of David Tracy in View. Scott Holland. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

In this erudite, dense, and artful text, Bethany Theological Seminary professor Scott Holland takes the reader – as the back cover says – “on an intellectual adventure through narrative theology, literary criticism, poetics, ritual studies and aesthetics in the composition of a theology of culture.”

Throughout the text, the work of revisionist theologian David Tracy is “in view.” Tracy, a Catholic priest and active professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, is the author of well-known texts including *The Analogical Imagination* and *On Naming the Present*. Holland’s book concludes with a 10-page bibliography of Tracy’s writings plus a more general bibliography, including 18 books and essays by Paul Ricoeur and 8 articles by Holland.

Holland works particularly with what he refers to as two emerging self-corrective foci in Tracy’s public theology (i.e., theology that is “always involved in complex and interesting relationships with diverse historical and social realities”): “a hermeneutics in which the ‘other’ not the ‘self’ is the dominant focus; and a theological insistence that only a mystical-prophetic model of theology can save us” (35-36).

In terms of narrative theology, Holland casts his lot with Tracy and others representing the University of Chicago narrative school rather than with those representing what might be called the Yale school (e.g., George Lindbeck, Hans Frei). The latter, says Holland, see the church as the sole reference of theology (58). In that schema, the world “becomes an *object* of theological description and prophetic critique, rarely a rich and mystical *source* for imaginative and revisionary theological thought and writing”

(98). For Yale-ish narrativists, biblical narratives “catch the reader up into the sacred world of the text,” as the Bible “absorb[s] the world into its unique world” (78). It is this Yale-based form of narrative theology that has been most influential for recent mainstream Anabaptists, as mediated largely through the work of Stanley Hauerwas. Holland says one might excuse a fundamentalist for advocating for this sort of “sectarian imagination in defense of her tribal gods and goods.... But for a post-critical Christian theorist who values close readings and thick descriptions to retreat from the public square into the world of the text, pretending she has found a separate, autonomous world, is not only bad faith, it is bad fiction” (101).

In contrast, Tracy and others see the world “as a complex *source* for theology and not simply its *object*” (58). “While Yale theologians seem most interested in keeping their community’s story straight,” says Holland, “those drawn to the work of David Tracy and the Chicago school are much more interested in doing theology while listening to other people’s stories” (98). Such a theology will then be pluralistic, interdisciplinary, intertextual (rather than intratextual, as for the Yale theologians), and revisionary. Here the theologian “brings the texts, traditions, and practices of her community into conversation with others, especially communities of difference, in the search for greater insight, understanding, humane presence and connection with the divine” (98-99).

Elsewhere Holland argues the increasingly accepted view that humans are constituted both narratively and performatively, i.e., through ritual (153-78). He sensibly proposes that for Anabaptists and other low-church Protestants to develop a theory of symbol and ritual that might lead their communities toward Ricoeur’s “second naivete” in relation to religious symbolism, such transformation will come not through studying traditional theological arguments of sacramentologists but through discovering how symbolic activity is co-natural with the human person, emerging from ordinary experience (177).

How Do Stories Save Us? will most engage those already immersed in postmodern theological critiques. Illustrating the background one may need, a not atypical selection reads: “Following Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, Tracy’s theological agenda has been to rethink the dialectical relationship between language and experience. His program moves beyond

the Schleiermacher – Tillich – Rahner – Lonergan experiential paradigm to an explicitly hermeneutical one” (82). Some readers may stumble through more complex portions of the book, though most will appreciate Holland’s more accessible commentaries on narrative theology and rituals. His chapter “When Art and Ritual Embrace and Kiss” (179-230) is moving at points, thanks to some embedded autobiographical flourishes and assertions of faith.

Just under half of the 241-page text, which began as Holland’s dissertation at Duquesne University, has been published before as discrete essays in journals or books. The core of Holland’s argument, from “How Do Stories Save Us,” through chapters titled “Theology is a Kind of Writing,” “Even the Postmodern Story Has a Body,” and “Signifying Presence” have appeared in *Louvain Studies*, *Cross Currents*, and an edited volume, *The Presence of Transcendence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). A few odd, distracting editing issues have made it into the present text, likely due to its various embodiments over 16 years.

For David Tracy followers, this is an illuminating supplemental text. Those interested more broadly in narrative theology also will benefit from a few of the middle chapters, though they likely will be less engaged with the text’s first 70 pages. Students of postmodernity and aesthetically sensitive readers will be especially appreciative of Holland’s work.

Keith Graber Miller, Chair, Bible, Religion and Philosophy, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

What is “freedom”? According to free-market ideology, we are free when the state limits its interference in economic transactions. Using Augustine, William Cavanaugh challenges this answer. He asserts that when society lacks a good common end this “freedom” can only degenerate into a battle of wills, public manipulation through marketing, concentrated power in the hands of few large corporations, and a steady increase in economic injustice and class inequalities. Without a life that is ordered toward helping life flourish, the desire to consume is internalized in our culture until we simply move from one manufactured desire for this or that product to another, never realizing that we are being controlled under the guise of liberation. After detailing and exposing the consumer trap in which we are caught, Cavanaugh provides concrete examples of how to overcome this spiral of idolatrous desire.

Although I am convinced by Cavanaugh’s thesis that desires must be rightly ordered toward helping life flourish if we are to resist being seduced by the market’s manipulations, his argument does not fully account for how our desires prevent or sustain the flourishing of nonhuman animal life. Upon learning about the nightmare that cattle endure in typical “beef” production, the author notes his decision to purchase grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free cattle from a local farmer. He makes this choice on the grounds that while the industrial “meat” industry hides the horrors and suffering of nonhuman animals, “all the information I need is available and transparent” on the small farm (31). This statement is open to challenge on at least two points.

First, Cavanaugh neglects to note that the small farmer is a part of a larger web that is largely beyond his control. When a cow gets an infection, organic farmers may withhold antibiotics even if the cow suffers tremendously to make sure their meat can be labeled organic. Moreover, there are common farming practices necessary to production – forced impregnation, castration, and others – that, while not horrific, inflict pain and limit the nonhuman animals’ ability to be free and to flourish.

The second point is that care for nonhuman animals within Cavanaugh’s

framework demands more than simply minimizing pain, and this requires questions and answers that are not as available and transparent as the author makes them seem. For example, why do we desire “meat” in the first place, and is it a rightly-ordered desire? Do we facilitate flourishing when we kill another living being to satiate a desire that is not only unnecessary for human survival but also damages our health? Given the state of our ecosystem and the growing awareness that all life on this planet hangs together on a precipice, Cavanaugh’s anthropocentric view of the common end is incompatible with his goal of overcoming idolatrous desire.

In response to the narrative of the market, Cavanaugh offers a counter story centered on the Catholic Eucharist. He argues that consumerism detaches the consumer from the process of production and from the people who produce our goods. Furthermore, our attachment to the goods themselves has decreased because we constantly abandon each product for the latest upgrade. Our pleasure comes from the pursuit of goods, from shopping itself, so a never-ending cycle of consumption ensues. The Catholic practice of the Eucharist provides a counterweight to this frenzy by absorbing each person into a larger body. Instead of being fragmented individuals trapped in the non-stop game of pursuing the latest trinkets, we become a community shaped into the Body of Christ.

Cavanaugh’s account should provide a lot of thought for Mennonites as to how Mennonite worship shapes us into people capable of resisting consumerism. We do not have a Catholic practice or theology of the Eucharist, and I am not convinced that if we did it would be adequate. But how does our worship shape us? What have we lost or gained that might be useful in giving an account of our own?

One of the most powerful practices that Cavanaugh mentions in this book, but does not give enough attention to, is making our own stuff (57). Instead of buying free trade and relocating consumerism to a new though better corporation, making our own clothes, growing our own food, and playing our own music can shape us to be producers who have learned the value of production through doing it and who question the industrial technological society itself. Simply moving from one type of industrial, gadget-hungry model to a “fair trade” version is not enough. We have to

question it at its core. Maybe backwards is forwards. Cavanaugh provides a good base for starting to find out.

Andy Alexis-Baker, PhD student, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, eds. *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Seeking the Identity of Jesus presents the fruit of a three-year research project sponsored by Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry and conceived as a sequel to *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Intended to address the profusion of popular images of Jesus, the project seeks not to distinguish an "historical" Jesus from the church's canon and creed but instead to investigate ways in which the latter might actually serve to clarify Jesus' identity (5). With this in mind, the analogy of choice is not the archaeological dig (where the "real" Jesus awaits unearthing) but the pilgrimage (where various "reports" anticipate a common destination), and the effect is not a recovery but an encounter via the diversity of canonical witness and church tradition.

Toward this end, editors Beverly Gaventa and Richard Hays divide the collected essays into three groups. In the first, William Placher, Robert Jenson, Markus Bockmuehl, Dale Allison, and Francis Watson endeavor to lay a methodological foundation that undoes the traditional disjunct of "Jesus of history" and "Christ of faith." Particularly representative is Allison's reassertion of the relevance of Jesus' "history of influence," canonical and otherwise, for an understanding of his identity (94).

The second and third groupings follow, which is to say they represent the working out of this proposal: Dale Allison, Joel Marcus, Beverly Gaventa, and Marianne Thompson assess the identity of Jesus in the four gospels; Richard Hays and Katherine Grieb consider the "story" of Christ in the letters of Paul and the "sermon" of Hebrews respectively, and Gary Anderson and Walter Moberly discuss the christological resonance of Moses, Jonah, and Isaiah. Brian Daley, David Steinmetz, Katherine Sonderegger, and Sarah

Coakley then shift attention to the testimony of the church, exploring in turn the identity of Jesus in patristic theology (via Irenaeus, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor), in the early Reformation debate over the nature of the Eucharist, in the act of Christian worship, and in the practice of mercy to the poor. Coakley's argument that the recognition of Jesus demands the "sustaining matrix" (311) and "cumulative tangle" (316) of Christian practice – especially vis-à-vis the poor – represents the collection's most adventurous moment, but the epistemic transformation she envisions embodies well the project's creative edge.

Next to the wandering sage and/or mysterious guru of popular consumption, *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* gives no neat summary of the identity of Jesus: "no 'sound-bite' Jesus can ever be faithful to the evidence," Gaventa and Hays conclude, "because the testimony of the variety of witnesses to Jesus – past, present, and future – cannot be collapsed..." (324). The collection's embrace of rich complexity proceeds rather under the sign of identity. Whatever else it is, Jesus' "identity" is a social product (Allison's words) that necessarily includes Jesus' own (continuing) reception history among his followers, then and now. This is the crux of the project, and a timely and productive contribution. What the individual essays contribute substantively regarding the identity of Jesus in the Gospels, for instance, or in the letters of Paul, will no doubt be found a helpful orientation to their study; but this identification of the church's ongoing tradition as the privileged locus of encounter promises a basic reorientation of the scholarly discourse surrounding Jesus.

Tensions undoubtedly remain. The traditional quest for the historical Jesus remains methodologically relevant, whether "first half of an incomplete sentence" (95) or "antidote" (113), but it is not at all clear what substantive difference its demands make in the subsequent collation of canonical witness and church testimony. At very least, how precisely the Jesus we know "through Scripture" relates to the Jesus we know "through the creeds" and the Jesus we know "through practice" deserves more sustained discussion. The volume concludes with a welcome affirmation of diversity and complexity (324), yet in its introduction summarily excludes everything extracanonical from the relevant history of reception, and this on historical grounds (14). Rhetorical celebration of canonical diversity seems similarly threatened by

the apparent uniformity of “the church” and its singular testimony. Still, this collection offers an important corrective to the modern critical paradigm that underlies the traditional quest, and in this it promises an opportunity for increased precision and perception in the study of Jesus.

Rene Baergen, Biblical Dept., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Ellen Hodgson Brown. *Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System And How We Can Break Free*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Third Millennium Press, 2008.

People concerned about social justice need this book! In *Web of Debt*, Ellen Brown provides an extraordinarily compelling and vivid analysis of one of the most crucial yet least understood of the major social problems that currently imperil humanity. She exposes and explains the hidden workings of our money system. The problems deriving from this system pervade and worsen the whole range of social problems that confront us globally. Brown shows how the money system has a devastating impact, but also how it could be transformed to provide powerful impetus for needed social change.

The great majority of social activists who have worked diligently for many years to overcome a wide variety of social problems, striving to achieve social justice and peace, know almost nothing about the workings of the money system. For many years I have been among such activists, and have seen how our analyses of social problems – poverty, environmental destruction, and war, in all their many manifestations – have omitted any reference to it. Our goals have been worthy. But our analyses have been weakened and our strategies often ill-conceived because we have failed to understand or to confront the potent realities of the money system.

Our ignorance is not surprising. The workings of the money system have been carefully obscured from public scrutiny and understanding by those in the private banking system who control it. In the Foreword to *Web of Debt*, Reed Simpson, a veteran banker, writes: “I can report that even most bankers are not aware of what goes on behind closed doors at the top of their field.... I am more familiar than most with the issues raised in [Brown’s

book] and I still found it to be an eye-opener, a remarkable window into what is really going on.... [The way our money system functions] has been the focus of a highly sophisticated and long-term disinformation campaign that permeates academia, media, and publishing. The complexity of the subject has been intentionally exploited to keep its mysteries hidden” (ix).

At the heart of Brown’s revelations is her explanation of the source of our money. It is no longer based in any way on gold. Nor, as is almost universally assumed, is it supplied by governments. Some 97 percent of the money supply in capitalist economies around the world is created out of nothing by private commercial banks in their process of making loans. Banks do not lend out the money of depositors, as is also widely assumed. As they make loans, the banks create *new* money that is added to the total amount of money in circulation.

Huge problems result. Especially notable is the fact that, when the banks supply almost all the money essential for our economic transactions, they create money for the principal of the loans but do not for the interest that they invariably require to be paid. They create only debt-money. And they impose a demand impossible for us to meet collectively! Money to pay interest is simply not available. In order to make payments that include both interest and principal, people are driven to compete with each other, “to fight with each other in order to survive” (31). People must continue borrowing from the banks, further increasing their indebtedness. Inevitably some borrowers default, enabling the banks to take over their collateral. The few favored in this system become ever more wealthy, while many are impoverished.

Much more analysis of the dynamics of this system is provided in the book. The abuses perpetrated through our money system are possible only because governments have been manipulated into allowing private banks to control the system. Governments at the federal level could be using their own powers for money creation to provide interest-free loans for much-needed infrastructure, and, as the economy expands, could not only lend but spend debt-free money into existence to provide public services. Brown explains how the alternative of democratically controlled government-created money could make enormously creative contributions to human welfare.

Dealing primarily with US history, Brown describes successful cases

of government-created money – as in colonial Pennsylvania under Benjamin Franklin, and in the Civil War with the greenbacks – and shows how private banking interests fought constantly to control the US money system.

Brown’s book is an antidote to our ignorance of the money system, as is also her website: webofdebt.com.

George Crowell, Department of Religious Studies (ret.), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario

Marlene Epp. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008.

Marlene Epp has written a history of Canadian Mennonite women over the course of the past three centuries, ending in 1980. This refreshing work orients Canadian Mennonite historiography towards questions of gender in a fashion that, while grounded in extensive research into primary and archival sources, is nonetheless an effective synthesis of a complex subject. As such, it is neither a theological treatment of “power” or “gender” nor an over-specialized monograph, but rather a straightforward, brilliantly researched, and well-argued history of a topic gaining in coverage that now has its own attempt at a survey. Having set a high standard for Canadian Mennonite women’s studies in her earlier book, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000), Epp continues her masterful command of the field with this volume.

The author divides the book into five chapters, arranged thematically, each of which opens with an historical vignette clarifying the theme and interpretive methodology to follow. The chapters are organized around themes of immigration as pioneers, refugees and transnationals; family life as wives and mothers; religious life as preachers, prophets, and missionaries; worldly life as citizens, nonresisters and nonconformists; and, finally, living in a material world of quilts, canned goods, and the written word. Throughout the book, Epp provides an even-handed account of Mennonite

women's life based on her extensive research bringing to light women's experiences, often in their own words.

Epp introduces the volume with a helpful historiographical survey of the topic, in addition to making clear her own social location and how she will be working not so much with theology as with history. On this point, she summarizes how religion cannot be ignored when working with an ethno-religious group. Interestingly, she adds the caveat when discussing the influence of Harold S. Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision" that we must remember that it is not directly connected to women's experience, dealing as it does with American Mennonites joining the military during World War II (13). While that is an obvious point to make, Epp is quite strong when explicating her methodology and her hopes for the book, which is designed both to inform and inspire students while learning of historical Mennonite women's experiences to envision also relationships and institutions not given to gender inequality or discrimination (18-19).

While Epp's well-articulated hope for this volume might indicate a polemic in the making, she has written an exceptionally well-researched book and a well-reasoned interpretation. Throughout she demonstrates that Canadian Mennonite women were never without history, that they were always engaged in their communities, both religious and in the wider world, all the while exercising historical agency. The chapters progress fluidly as she defines women's experience by roles imposed and roles taken on. Her work on the conundrum of nonconformity and non-resistance in Mennonite women's experiences is especially significant as it exposes, perhaps counter-intuitively for some, how a theology of peace can become a seedbed of inequality (chapter 4).

Ultimately, Epp has done an important service by broadening Canadian Mennonite historiography and treatment of gender beyond localized studies to a national treatment that simultaneously brings to light a plethora of primary and archival sources. She balances historical detail with broader interpretations with seeming ease and in persuasive prose. Throughout she presents the experiences of women as diverse, heterodox, and embodying myriad perspectives, actions, and responses to their varied contexts.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in, or taking university courses involving, questions of church and society, gender, and the Canadian

experiences of immigration and assimilation. This is a rich resource useful for undergraduates, graduates, and teachers alike. The book's scope and self-imposed limits are reasonable and effective, and this reader looks forward to when a similar study can be written of the 1980s and 1990s.

Brian Froese, Assistant Professor of History, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David Van Heemst. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Few books are as timely or as prophetic as *Hope in Troubled Times*. Writing prior to the global economic meltdown in 2008 that caused international financial institutions to shudder, the authors warned about the volatility of the financial markets before it was fashionable to do so. They also noted the potentially catastrophic impact of other challenges such as environmental degradation, ideologically based conflict, global poverty, and insecurity.

The book opens with words that cogently and succinctly explain its premise: “[O]ur world seems to live under the curse of scrambling for solutions but not finding them” (15). The authors begin by rejecting the notion that human ingenuity can keep ahead of escalating global challenges simply by resorting to raw intelligence. They also dispute the premise that solutions which worked for past crises are adequate to enable humanity to adapt to harsh new realities. Instead, they argue that “many of today’s problems seem to have developed immunity to our well-intended solutions. They have become like viruses that resist medicine or like pests that have developed a defense against pesticide” (31).

One of the most insightful discussions pertains to the development, impact, and ripple effect of ideologies. Citing six phases of developed ideologies, the authors explain how ideologies have evolved at periods in history to justify the oppression of one people by another. While not explicitly using the language of the current “war on terror,” or significantly applying

their perspective directly to the Iraq or Afghanistan wars (mentioned on only 14 of 205 pages of text), they provide language for explaining how these conflicts have been sold to the Western world in ideological terms, and what the impact of an ideological rationale can be.

When an ideology defines a goal to be an absolute end, anything that gets in the way of it becomes evil, say the authors. Those who oppose evil are by definition good, “even if their actions result in other people suffering under cruel treatment. How close, in our view,” the authors conclude, “this lies to the demonic” (34). These statements reflect on the danger of justice and compassion being removed from discourse about contentious issues and are worth much rumination. This volume is a prophetic call to re-examine our tendency to absolutize good and evil.

Although articulating this sobering message of potential global crises comprises most of the book – which even the authors admit is “hardly uplifting” (169) – this massive dose of tough love frames the most urgent issues and stresses why these concerns must be taken seriously now. It sets the stage for suggesting a way forward. All is not lost. Rather, the authors testify they are inspired by an “enduring conviction that there is real hope for our troubled, mired world – genuine, concrete hope that deeply engages global poverty, environmental destruction, and widespread violence” (16).

This hope comes from a commitment to “live justly, to love our neighbors, and to take care of God’s creation as good stewards” (127). These actions may not seem powerful in and of themselves, but they can start a process that begins to undermine harmful ideologies that for too long have dominated social, economic, and political discourse.

This is one of the most challenging and readable books I have come across in many years. It is well written, logical, persuasive, and coherent. It inspires readers not to lose hope and to continue to work for peace and justice even though they cannot be assured of success. *Hope in Troubled Times* speaks with a common voice and effectively avoids the dissonance so often present in manuscripts with multiple authors. It is essential reading for anyone concerned about the rising tide of the seemingly intractable problems facing our globe – and the apparent impossibility that one person can do anything impactful about them. It could easily be used as a textbook in college or university courses.

Lowell Ewert, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario

Thomas P. Scheck. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.

In the lively and sometimes rancorous debate over justification that has rippled throughout the Christian world, all roads, it seems, lead back to the sixteenth century. Since the 1999 joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on Justification by Faith, new energy has poured into the conversation.¹ Even before that, descendants of the Anabaptists likewise engaged the theme. Dutch Mennonite theologian Sjouke Voolstra wrote that “Anabaptists always interpreted justification in the light of sanctification.”² J. Denny Weaver and Gerald Mast recently reflected on the views of justification of Denck, Hut, Hubmaier, and Marpeck, asserting that Sattler “affirms Lutheran justification by faith but also, in line with Catholic thought, stresses that faith will result in good works.”³

Thomas Scheck’s book makes the case that all who think this conversation matters must travel much further back in the Christian story. Indeed, he argues that Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* has influenced Christian thought on justification into the 16th-century Reformation and beyond. Further, the third-century Alexandrian’s readings of Romans were both close to Paul and remarkably relevant to 21st-century discussions.

As the first English translator of Origen’s Romans commentary,⁴ Scheck carries the credentials to back up his argument. In clear and readable prose, he makes accessible not only to patristics scholars but also to other theologians, biblical scholars, and interested lay readers the exegetical questions at stake and the history of reception that marks Origen’s influence down through the centuries. (Noting that virtually our only access to Origen’s great commentary is through the Latin translation of the fourth-century Rufinus, Scheck usually provides the Latin in text or footnote for

those who find that helpful.)

In chapter one Scheck lays out Origen's definition of justification with a "Trinitarian stress": "From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature" (CRm 4.9.192-98). Unity and synthesis of faith and works seem "to be an overriding theme" of the commentary. While the good thief of Luke 23 was justified by faith alone, because he "had no opportunity to be justified by his subsequent good works," for the most part good works must be visible "as the necessary fruit of justification."

Subsequent chapters demonstrate the borrowings from Origen and the debates with him of Pelagius, Augustine, William of St. Thierry (a 12th-century Cistercian monk), Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, and several post-Reformation theologians. In chapter two, Scheck notes that Origen and Pelagius both accepted what has become part of scholarship's "new perspective" on Paul: that Paul's great letter reflects his awareness of a dispute between Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

Although each chapter has its own fascinating insights, many readers will be most drawn to Scheck's discussion of Augustine and the 16th-century reformers. Chapter three tackles the question of Augustine's use of and challenge to Origen's commentary. The Pelagian controversy late in his life turned Augustine's reading of Romans to original sin, human powerlessness, and predestination in ways that have shaped much later Western Christian thought. However, according to Scheck, both Origen and Augustine "appeal to James as a means of correcting a false understanding of Paul" on faith and works, agreeing that faith is "a foundation on which works are built." Likewise, chapter five notes that Erasmus's devotional work *Enchiridion* "was infused with citations" from Origen's commentary, and his comment on Romans 6:4 echoed Origen: "Dead to our former sins and living now the new life, let us follow in the footsteps of piety."

Scheck notes, on the other hand, that Melancthon made "Origen's doctrine of justification an integral part of his decadence theory of Church history." Since descendants of the Anabaptists have sometimes been tempted by that same theory, Scheck's book is a must-read for anyone who may have agreed with Menno (quoting Luther) that Origen was "the falsest explainer of the Scriptures."⁵ Rather, readers considering this work will hear echoes of

Origen in Menno's call for biblical readings assuming a full-orbed practical understanding of justification.⁶

¹ The complete text of the joint declaration is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. See also Trevin Wax, compiler, "The Justification Debate: A Primer," in *Christianity Today* 53:6 (June 2009), 34-35; N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 246-52.

² Sjouke Voolstra, "Free and Perfect: Justification and Sanctification in Anabaptist Perspective," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 5.3 (Fall 1987): 225.

³ Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver, *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009), 45-46.

⁴ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., Thomas P. Scheck, trans. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001-2002).

⁵ Menno Simons, "Christian Baptism," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* [CWMS] (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 279.

⁶ Menno, "True Christian Faith," in CWMS, 333.

Nancy Heisey, Bible and Religion Department, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Miguel A. De La Torre. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethic of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

Miguel A. De La Torre, who is on the faculty of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, has written a challenging, provocative volume based on a reading of the book of Jonah and includes an engaging, brief contemporary social analysis in order to place this reading in the modern context.

De La Torre was once asked if any reading of Jonah considers Jonah's message from the perspective of "the margins of society" (ix). His work attempts to respond to his observation that he knew of no such work. In the introduction, he lays out one of his primary arguments: Jonah is a book about reconciliation. His reading presents this as reconciliation in a context of unequal distribution of power – as exemplified by the Israelite, Jonah,

facing Nineveh, symbolic of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires that were ancient bitter, oppressive enemies. The author is well aware of the potential for manipulating themes of “reconciliation” as a way for the powerful to try to get the oppressed to resign themselves to their subordinated fate.

“It is important to recognize that those who benefit from the present power structures cannot be relied upon to define reconciliation,” says the author, “or to determine how to go about achieving it” (2). He advocates no cheap “peace” that does not engage injustice: “A desire to ‘forgive and forget’ can bring about only a cheap reconciliation that sacrifices justice for the sake of serenity” (5).

In a sense, De La Torre wants to read Jonah from “Jonah’s perspective” confronting Assyria, that of a subordinate confronting the powerful. In chapter one, after briefly discussing Assyrian brutality in the Ancient Near East, he begins his read through the book. His analysis is largely literary, drawing only occasionally from contemporary historical-critical commentary. One main source is Rabbinic legends about aspects of Jonah.

In chapter two, “Who was Jonah, What was Nineveh?” De La Torre reads Jonah and Nineveh as models of the oppressed and the socio-economic realities of that oppression in the 18th to 20th centuries of the European and American West. Characteristically, his strongest focus is on the racialized borders of modern socio-economic systems within the US historical context. He is rather dismissive of attempts to work “within the system,” because the system itself must be transformed. What it is to be transformed into is not so clear, short of frequent calls for a “redistribution of income.”

Chapter three, “Reflecting on Jonah,” brings together the author’s profound interest in reconciliation as a Christian reality with the difficult “praxis” of justice – reconciliation never cancels the need for change, in his reading. Chapter four, “Praying through Jonah,” clarifies that reconciliation must be initiated only by the oppressed: “Those who presently benefit from the existing social order lack the objectivity and moral authority to define reconciliation or even recognize the need for reconciliation...” (88). The author seems to accept nothing short of revolutionary change for authentic reconciliation. This becomes problematic when he tends to minimize the courageous acts of individuals because they do not transform entire socio-economic systems. This sense of helplessness in the face of evil systems sets

up his sense of hopelessness in the final chapter.

Chapter five, “Pitfalls Jonah Should Avoid,” includes comments about internal politics in various ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as problems in dealing with Euro-Americans, who are largely not trusted for a credible analysis because “Euroamerican Christians, either from the fundamentalist right or the far liberal left, probably have more in common with each other and understand each other better than they do Christians on the other side of the racial and ethnic divide” (125). So great is the task of social transformation and so little the will to do it that De La Torre despairs of its ever taking place even in his grandchildren’s generation (143).

In the final chapter, “Case Studies,” the author offers stories of attempts by individuals to seek social change and raises questions about each case. For example, the first case describes recent Native-American reactions to the Columbus Day celebrations in Denver, and asks the reader to consider what forms of protest or response would have been appropriate, given that Native groups were denied most opportunities for legal, peaceful protest. A second case describes Daryl Davis, an African-American, who attempted to make contact with members of the Ku Klux Klan in order to force a dialogue on racism. He even managed to make friends, leading some members to leave the Klan after long conversations with him. These and other cases are intended to raise questions about the individual actions of people of color, but one is left wondering if these studies are signs of hope or of futility, given De La Torre’s previous analysis.

Reading as a Quaker informed by Anabaptist theology, I honor individual acts of faith – attempts to live an alternative reality within the rigid systems of oppression – and that same Anabaptist conscience sometimes wonders if this is the best to be hoped for. I will not minimize or trivialize such individual actions only because they fall short of the revolution. Further, I am not in sympathy with an exclusively racialized social analysis that refuses to consider the potential bridge-building (and recognition of historical realities) that are served by a more thorough-going class analysis. Finally, I am concerned with De La Torre’s tendencies to homogenize the very different experiences of Latino, Asian, Native, and African-Americans. “People of color” is becoming a dubious generalization for social analysis.

My disagreements notwithstanding, I deeply appreciate De La Torre’s

fascinating meditations on the socio-economic contexts of a modern reading of Jonah.

Daniel Smith-Christopher, Dept. of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Ted Lewis, ed. *Electing Not to Vote: Christian Reflections on Reasons for Not Voting*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

This volume takes up an interesting and important question: Might Christians faithfully abstain from voting? This is a provocative question in a culture which assumes that voting is a civic responsibility, even (perhaps especially) for Christians. As the essays collected here demonstrate, it is a question that should be asked and discussed carefully in our faith communities.

The essays are uniform in their affirmation that it is possible, and sometimes desirable, for Christians to abstain from voting. The nine contributors make the case for abstention from voting in a variety of ways from a rich array of Christian perspectives.

Indeed, one of the book's most interesting features is the breadth of ecclesial perspectives represented. Authors come from Mennonite, Pentecostal, Catholic, Baptist, and intentional Christian community traditions, and they write from, and sometimes to, those communities. Central to the conversation is how our identity as Christians is shaped by our political participation and how we are to understand the dual nature of our citizenship.

The authors offer a wide range of critiques of voting. Some reflect personally on their experiences of voting and participating in electoral politics, and suggest that the process damages their Christian discipleship. For instance, Michael Degan rejects voting in part "because of who I become in order to win" (61). Others share a concern about how the polarized politics of American presidential elections have affected conversations in our churches. John D. Roth's well-known essay, which begins the collection, is the best example of this concern. Others offer critiques of the candidates we

have to choose from, the US Electoral College system, and the way electoral rules and processes affect outcomes.

Perhaps the most critical difference among the contributors is on whether or not voting should be the norm for Christians. Michael Degan, Tato Sumantri, Ted Lewis, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Nekeisha Alexis-Baker offer strong rejections of voting. For these authors, not voting is apparently the norm. In contrast, for John D. Roth, G. Scott Becker, and Todd Whitmore voting is assumed to be the norm, and not voting is a selective step that should be taken after careful deliberation.

Whitmore reflects on the two candidates in the 2004 US presidential election, ultimately arguing that both George W. Bush and John Kerry advocated policies that violated fundamental principles of Catholic teaching and, as a result, not voting was his obligation. But he argues that this obligation “does not spill over to another election” (79) and concludes by noting that he is “undecided about whether I will vote in the 2008 election, pending a hearing of the views of the candidates” (80). Many of the authors in this collection need no such hearing.

The essays are strongly uniform in advocating a form of political participation that goes beyond voting. In fact, most of them argue that voting is insufficient participation in civic life. Thus in their call for abstention from voting, the authors are not calling for a withdrawal or retreat from participation in the life of the *polis*. Instead, they call for a different kind of engagement, as Roth writes, not allowing “narrow definitions of ‘political involvement’ to set the terms” for how Christians care for society (8). Instead of the apathy and cynicism that leads most Americans not to vote, these authors call for what Lewis terms an “active refraining” that “leads to proactive engagement” (114).

The volume is intentionally limited to presidential elections in the United States. It falls to others to work out what faithful political participation looks like in other countries and contexts. It also falls to others to articulate the possibilities of electoral participation at more local levels (though Degan explicitly rejects voting at other levels as well). The essays are well written and not overly technical. The volume is suitable for churches and lay audiences where it should be read and carefully considered; it is an

important entry into a difficult but critically important conversation about faithful political engagement.

Victor J. Hinojosa, Political Science Dept., Baylor University, Waco, Texas

How Do Stories Save Us? An Essay on the Question with the Theological Hermeneutics of David Tracy in View. Scott Holland. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

In this erudite, dense, and artful text, Bethany Theological Seminary professor Scott Holland takes the reader – as the back cover says – “on an intellectual adventure through narrative theology, literary criticism, poetics, ritual studies and aesthetics in the composition of a theology of culture.”

Throughout the text, the work of revisionist theologian David Tracy is “in view.” Tracy, a Catholic priest and active professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, is the author of well-known texts including *The Analogical Imagination* and *On Naming the Present*. Holland’s book concludes with a 10-page bibliography of Tracy’s writings plus a more general bibliography, including 18 books and essays by Paul Ricoeur and 8 articles by Holland.

Holland works particularly with what he refers to as two emerging self-corrective foci in Tracy’s public theology (i.e., theology that is “always involved in complex and interesting relationships with diverse historical and social realities”): “a hermeneutics in which the ‘other’ not the ‘self’ is the dominant focus; and a theological insistence that only a mystical-prophetic model of theology can save us” (35-36).

In terms of narrative theology, Holland casts his lot with Tracy and others representing the University of Chicago narrative school rather than with those representing what might be called the Yale school (e.g., George Lindbeck, Hans Frei). The latter, says Holland, see the church as the sole reference of theology (58). In that schema, the world “becomes an *object* of theological description and prophetic critique, rarely a rich and mystical *source* for imaginative and revisionary theological thought and writing”

(98). For Yale-ish narrativists, biblical narratives “catch the reader up into the sacred world of the text,” as the Bible “absorb[s] the world into its unique world” (78). It is this Yale-based form of narrative theology that has been most influential for recent mainstream Anabaptists, as mediated largely through the work of Stanley Hauerwas. Holland says one might excuse a fundamentalist for advocating for this sort of “sectarian imagination in defense of her tribal gods and goods.... But for a post-critical Christian theorist who values close readings and thick descriptions to retreat from the public square into the world of the text, pretending she has found a separate, autonomous world, is not only bad faith, it is bad fiction” (101).

In contrast, Tracy and others see the world “as a complex *source* for theology and not simply its *object*” (58). “While Yale theologians seem most interested in keeping their community’s story straight,” says Holland, “those drawn to the work of David Tracy and the Chicago school are much more interested in doing theology while listening to other people’s stories” (98). Such a theology will then be pluralistic, interdisciplinary, intertextual (rather than intratextual, as for the Yale theologians), and revisionary. Here the theologian “brings the texts, traditions, and practices of her community into conversation with others, especially communities of difference, in the search for greater insight, understanding, humane presence and connection with the divine” (98-99).

Elsewhere Holland argues the increasingly accepted view that humans are constituted both narratively and performatively, i.e., through ritual (153-78). He sensibly proposes that for Anabaptists and other low-church Protestants to develop a theory of symbol and ritual that might lead their communities toward Ricoeur’s “second naivete” in relation to religious symbolism, such transformation will come not through studying traditional theological arguments of sacramentologists but through discovering how symbolic activity is co-natural with the human person, emerging from ordinary experience (177).

How Do Stories Save Us? will most engage those already immersed in postmodern theological critiques. Illustrating the background one may need, a not atypical selection reads: “Following Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, Tracy’s theological agenda has been to rethink the dialectical relationship between language and experience. His program moves beyond

the Schleiermacher – Tillich – Rahner – Lonergan experiential paradigm to an explicitly hermeneutical one” (82). Some readers may stumble through more complex portions of the book, though most will appreciate Holland’s more accessible commentaries on narrative theology and rituals. His chapter “When Art and Ritual Embrace and Kiss” (179-230) is moving at points, thanks to some embedded autobiographical flourishes and assertions of faith.

Just under half of the 241-page text, which began as Holland’s dissertation at Duquesne University, has been published before as discrete essays in journals or books. The core of Holland’s argument, from “How Do Stories Save Us,” through chapters titled “Theology is a Kind of Writing,” “Even the Postmodern Story Has a Body,” and “Signifying Presence” have appeared in *Louvain Studies*, *Cross Currents*, and an edited volume, *The Presence of Transcendence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). A few odd, distracting editing issues have made it into the present text, likely due to its various embodiments over 16 years.

For David Tracy followers, this is an illuminating supplemental text. Those interested more broadly in narrative theology also will benefit from a few of the middle chapters, though they likely will be less engaged with the text’s first 70 pages. Students of postmodernity and aesthetically sensitive readers will be especially appreciative of Holland’s work.

Keith Graber Miller, Chair, Bible, Religion and Philosophy, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

What is “freedom”? According to free-market ideology, we are free when the state limits its interference in economic transactions. Using Augustine, William Cavanaugh challenges this answer. He asserts that when society lacks a good common end this “freedom” can only degenerate into a battle of wills, public manipulation through marketing, concentrated power in the hands of few large corporations, and a steady increase in economic injustice and class inequalities. Without a life that is ordered toward helping life flourish, the desire to consume is internalized in our culture until we simply move from one manufactured desire for this or that product to another, never realizing that we are being controlled under the guise of liberation. After detailing and exposing the consumer trap in which we are caught, Cavanaugh provides concrete examples of how to overcome this spiral of idolatrous desire.

Although I am convinced by Cavanaugh’s thesis that desires must be rightly ordered toward helping life flourish if we are to resist being seduced by the market’s manipulations, his argument does not fully account for how our desires prevent or sustain the flourishing of nonhuman animal life. Upon learning about the nightmare that cattle endure in typical “beef” production, the author notes his decision to purchase grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free cattle from a local farmer. He makes this choice on the grounds that while the industrial “meat” industry hides the horrors and suffering of nonhuman animals, “all the information I need is available and transparent” on the small farm (31). This statement is open to challenge on at least two points.

First, Cavanaugh neglects to note that the small farmer is a part of a larger web that is largely beyond his control. When a cow gets an infection, organic farmers may withhold antibiotics even if the cow suffers tremendously to make sure their meat can be labeled organic. Moreover, there are common farming practices necessary to production – forced impregnation, castration, and others – that, while not horrific, inflict pain and limit the nonhuman animals’ ability to be free and to flourish.

The second point is that care for nonhuman animals within Cavanaugh’s

framework demands more than simply minimizing pain, and this requires questions and answers that are not as available and transparent as the author makes them seem. For example, why do we desire “meat” in the first place, and is it a rightly-ordered desire? Do we facilitate flourishing when we kill another living being to satiate a desire that is not only unnecessary for human survival but also damages our health? Given the state of our ecosystem and the growing awareness that all life on this planet hangs together on a precipice, Cavanaugh’s anthropocentric view of the common end is incompatible with his goal of overcoming idolatrous desire.

In response to the narrative of the market, Cavanaugh offers a counter story centered on the Catholic Eucharist. He argues that consumerism detaches the consumer from the process of production and from the people who produce our goods. Furthermore, our attachment to the goods themselves has decreased because we constantly abandon each product for the latest upgrade. Our pleasure comes from the pursuit of goods, from shopping itself, so a never-ending cycle of consumption ensues. The Catholic practice of the Eucharist provides a counterweight to this frenzy by absorbing each person into a larger body. Instead of being fragmented individuals trapped in the non-stop game of pursuing the latest trinkets, we become a community shaped into the Body of Christ.

Cavanaugh’s account should provide a lot of thought for Mennonites as to how Mennonite worship shapes us into people capable of resisting consumerism. We do not have a Catholic practice or theology of the Eucharist, and I am not convinced that if we did it would be adequate. But how does our worship shape us? What have we lost or gained that might be useful in giving an account of our own?

One of the most powerful practices that Cavanaugh mentions in this book, but does not give enough attention to, is making our own stuff (57). Instead of buying free trade and relocating consumerism to a new though better corporation, making our own clothes, growing our own food, and playing our own music can shape us to be producers who have learned the value of production through doing it and who question the industrial technological society itself. Simply moving from one type of industrial, gadget-hungry model to a “fair trade” version is not enough. We have to

question it at its core. Maybe backwards is forwards. Cavanaugh provides a good base for starting to find out.

Andy Alexis-Baker, PhD student, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, eds. *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Seeking the Identity of Jesus presents the fruit of a three-year research project sponsored by Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry and conceived as a sequel to *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Intended to address the profusion of popular images of Jesus, the project seeks not to distinguish an "historical" Jesus from the church's canon and creed but instead to investigate ways in which the latter might actually serve to clarify Jesus' identity (5). With this in mind, the analogy of choice is not the archaeological dig (where the "real" Jesus awaits unearthing) but the pilgrimage (where various "reports" anticipate a common destination), and the effect is not a recovery but an encounter via the diversity of canonical witness and church tradition.

Toward this end, editors Beverly Gaventa and Richard Hays divide the collected essays into three groups. In the first, William Placher, Robert Jenson, Markus Bockmuehl, Dale Allison, and Francis Watson endeavor to lay a methodological foundation that undoes the traditional disjunct of "Jesus of history" and "Christ of faith." Particularly representative is Allison's reassertion of the relevance of Jesus' "history of influence," canonical and otherwise, for an understanding of his identity (94).

The second and third groupings follow, which is to say they represent the working out of this proposal: Dale Allison, Joel Marcus, Beverly Gaventa, and Marianne Thompson assess the identity of Jesus in the four gospels; Richard Hays and Katherine Grieb consider the "story" of Christ in the letters of Paul and the "sermon" of Hebrews respectively, and Gary Anderson and Walter Moberly discuss the christological resonance of Moses, Jonah, and Isaiah. Brian Daley, David Steinmetz, Katherine Sonderegger, and Sarah

Coakley then shift attention to the testimony of the church, exploring in turn the identity of Jesus in patristic theology (via Irenaeus, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor), in the early Reformation debate over the nature of the Eucharist, in the act of Christian worship, and in the practice of mercy to the poor. Coakley's argument that the recognition of Jesus demands the "sustaining matrix" (311) and "cumulative tangle" (316) of Christian practice – especially vis-à-vis the poor – represents the collection's most adventurous moment, but the epistemic transformation she envisions embodies well the project's creative edge.

Next to the wandering sage and/or mysterious guru of popular consumption, *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* gives no neat summary of the identity of Jesus: "no 'sound-bite' Jesus can ever be faithful to the evidence," Gaventa and Hays conclude, "because the testimony of the variety of witnesses to Jesus – past, present, and future – cannot be collapsed..." (324). The collection's embrace of rich complexity proceeds rather under the sign of identity. Whatever else it is, Jesus' "identity" is a social product (Allison's words) that necessarily includes Jesus' own (continuing) reception history among his followers, then and now. This is the crux of the project, and a timely and productive contribution. What the individual essays contribute substantively regarding the identity of Jesus in the Gospels, for instance, or in the letters of Paul, will no doubt be found a helpful orientation to their study; but this identification of the church's ongoing tradition as the privileged locus of encounter promises a basic reorientation of the scholarly discourse surrounding Jesus.

Tensions undoubtedly remain. The traditional quest for the historical Jesus remains methodologically relevant, whether "first half of an incomplete sentence" (95) or "antidote" (113), but it is not at all clear what substantive difference its demands make in the subsequent collation of canonical witness and church testimony. At very least, how precisely the Jesus we know "through Scripture" relates to the Jesus we know "through the creeds" and the Jesus we know "through practice" deserves more sustained discussion. The volume concludes with a welcome affirmation of diversity and complexity (324), yet in its introduction summarily excludes everything extracanonical from the relevant history of reception, and this on historical grounds (14). Rhetorical celebration of canonical diversity seems similarly threatened by

the apparent uniformity of “the church” and its singular testimony. Still, this collection offers an important corrective to the modern critical paradigm that underlies the traditional quest, and in this it promises an opportunity for increased precision and perception in the study of Jesus.

Rene Baergen, Biblical Dept., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Ellen Hodgson Brown. *Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System And How We Can Break Free*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Third Millennium Press, 2008.

People concerned about social justice need this book! In *Web of Debt*, Ellen Brown provides an extraordinarily compelling and vivid analysis of one of the most crucial yet least understood of the major social problems that currently imperil humanity. She exposes and explains the hidden workings of our money system. The problems deriving from this system pervade and worsen the whole range of social problems that confront us globally. Brown shows how the money system has a devastating impact, but also how it could be transformed to provide powerful impetus for needed social change.

The great majority of social activists who have worked diligently for many years to overcome a wide variety of social problems, striving to achieve social justice and peace, know almost nothing about the workings of the money system. For many years I have been among such activists, and have seen how our analyses of social problems – poverty, environmental destruction, and war, in all their many manifestations – have omitted any reference to it. Our goals have been worthy. But our analyses have been weakened and our strategies often ill-conceived because we have failed to understand or to confront the potent realities of the money system.

Our ignorance is not surprising. The workings of the money system have been carefully obscured from public scrutiny and understanding by those in the private banking system who control it. In the Foreword to *Web of Debt*, Reed Simpson, a veteran banker, writes: “I can report that even most bankers are not aware of what goes on behind closed doors at the top of their field.... I am more familiar than most with the issues raised in [Brown’s

book] and I still found it to be an eye-opener, a remarkable window into what is really going on.... [The way our money system functions] has been the focus of a highly sophisticated and long-term disinformation campaign that permeates academia, media, and publishing. The complexity of the subject has been intentionally exploited to keep its mysteries hidden” (ix).

At the heart of Brown’s revelations is her explanation of the source of our money. It is no longer based in any way on gold. Nor, as is almost universally assumed, is it supplied by governments. Some 97 percent of the money supply in capitalist economies around the world is created out of nothing by private commercial banks in their process of making loans. Banks do not lend out the money of depositors, as is also widely assumed. As they make loans, the banks create *new* money that is added to the total amount of money in circulation.

Huge problems result. Especially notable is the fact that, when the banks supply almost all the money essential for our economic transactions, they create money for the principal of the loans but do not for the interest that they invariably require to be paid. They create only debt-money. And they impose a demand impossible for us to meet collectively! Money to pay interest is simply not available. In order to make payments that include both interest and principal, people are driven to compete with each other, “to fight with each other in order to survive” (31). People must continue borrowing from the banks, further increasing their indebtedness. Inevitably some borrowers default, enabling the banks to take over their collateral. The few favored in this system become ever more wealthy, while many are impoverished.

Much more analysis of the dynamics of this system is provided in the book. The abuses perpetrated through our money system are possible only because governments have been manipulated into allowing private banks to control the system. Governments at the federal level could be using their own powers for money creation to provide interest-free loans for much-needed infrastructure, and, as the economy expands, could not only lend but spend debt-free money into existence to provide public services. Brown explains how the alternative of democratically controlled government-created money could make enormously creative contributions to human welfare.

Dealing primarily with US history, Brown describes successful cases

of government-created money – as in colonial Pennsylvania under Benjamin Franklin, and in the Civil War with the greenbacks – and shows how private banking interests fought constantly to control the US money system.

Brown’s book is an antidote to our ignorance of the money system, as is also her website: webofdebt.com.

George Crowell, Department of Religious Studies (ret.), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario

Marlene Epp. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008.

Marlene Epp has written a history of Canadian Mennonite women over the course of the past three centuries, ending in 1980. This refreshing work orients Canadian Mennonite historiography towards questions of gender in a fashion that, while grounded in extensive research into primary and archival sources, is nonetheless an effective synthesis of a complex subject. As such, it is neither a theological treatment of “power” or “gender” nor an over-specialized monograph, but rather a straightforward, brilliantly researched, and well-argued history of a topic gaining in coverage that now has its own attempt at a survey. Having set a high standard for Canadian Mennonite women’s studies in her earlier book, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000), Epp continues her masterful command of the field with this volume.

The author divides the book into five chapters, arranged thematically, each of which opens with an historical vignette clarifying the theme and interpretive methodology to follow. The chapters are organized around themes of immigration as pioneers, refugees and transnationals; family life as wives and mothers; religious life as preachers, prophets, and missionaries; worldly life as citizens, nonresisters and nonconformists; and, finally, living in a material world of quilts, canned goods, and the written word. Throughout the book, Epp provides an even-handed account of Mennonite

women's life based on her extensive research bringing to light women's experiences, often in their own words.

Epp introduces the volume with a helpful historiographical survey of the topic, in addition to making clear her own social location and how she will be working not so much with theology as with history. On this point, she summarizes how religion cannot be ignored when working with an ethno-religious group. Interestingly, she adds the caveat when discussing the influence of Harold S. Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision" that we must remember that it is not directly connected to women's experience, dealing as it does with American Mennonites joining the military during World War II (13). While that is an obvious point to make, Epp is quite strong when explicating her methodology and her hopes for the book, which is designed both to inform and inspire students while learning of historical Mennonite women's experiences to envision also relationships and institutions not given to gender inequality or discrimination (18-19).

While Epp's well-articulated hope for this volume might indicate a polemic in the making, she has written an exceptionally well-researched book and a well-reasoned interpretation. Throughout she demonstrates that Canadian Mennonite women were never without history, that they were always engaged in their communities, both religious and in the wider world, all the while exercising historical agency. The chapters progress fluidly as she defines women's experience by roles imposed and roles taken on. Her work on the conundrum of nonconformity and non-resistance in Mennonite women's experiences is especially significant as it exposes, perhaps counter-intuitively for some, how a theology of peace can become a seedbed of inequality (chapter 4).

Ultimately, Epp has done an important service by broadening Canadian Mennonite historiography and treatment of gender beyond localized studies to a national treatment that simultaneously brings to light a plethora of primary and archival sources. She balances historical detail with broader interpretations with seeming ease and in persuasive prose. Throughout she presents the experiences of women as diverse, heterodox, and embodying myriad perspectives, actions, and responses to their varied contexts.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in, or taking university courses involving, questions of church and society, gender, and the Canadian

experiences of immigration and assimilation. This is a rich resource useful for undergraduates, graduates, and teachers alike. The book's scope and self-imposed limits are reasonable and effective, and this reader looks forward to when a similar study can be written of the 1980s and 1990s.

Brian Froese, Assistant Professor of History, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David Van Heemst. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Few books are as timely or as prophetic as *Hope in Troubled Times*. Writing prior to the global economic meltdown in 2008 that caused international financial institutions to shudder, the authors warned about the volatility of the financial markets before it was fashionable to do so. They also noted the potentially catastrophic impact of other challenges such as environmental degradation, ideologically based conflict, global poverty, and insecurity.

The book opens with words that cogently and succinctly explain its premise: “[O]ur world seems to live under the curse of scrambling for solutions but not finding them” (15). The authors begin by rejecting the notion that human ingenuity can keep ahead of escalating global challenges simply by resorting to raw intelligence. They also dispute the premise that solutions which worked for past crises are adequate to enable humanity to adapt to harsh new realities. Instead, they argue that “many of today’s problems seem to have developed immunity to our well-intended solutions. They have become like viruses that resist medicine or like pests that have developed a defense against pesticide” (31).

One of the most insightful discussions pertains to the development, impact, and ripple effect of ideologies. Citing six phases of developed ideologies, the authors explain how ideologies have evolved at periods in history to justify the oppression of one people by another. While not explicitly using the language of the current “war on terror,” or significantly applying

their perspective directly to the Iraq or Afghanistan wars (mentioned on only 14 of 205 pages of text), they provide language for explaining how these conflicts have been sold to the Western world in ideological terms, and what the impact of an ideological rationale can be.

When an ideology defines a goal to be an absolute end, anything that gets in the way of it becomes evil, say the authors. Those who oppose evil are by definition good, “even if their actions result in other people suffering under cruel treatment. How close, in our view,” the authors conclude, “this lies to the demonic” (34). These statements reflect on the danger of justice and compassion being removed from discourse about contentious issues and are worth much rumination. This volume is a prophetic call to re-examine our tendency to absolutize good and evil.

Although articulating this sobering message of potential global crises comprises most of the book – which even the authors admit is “hardly uplifting” (169) – this massive dose of tough love frames the most urgent issues and stresses why these concerns must be taken seriously now. It sets the stage for suggesting a way forward. All is not lost. Rather, the authors testify they are inspired by an “enduring conviction that there is real hope for our troubled, mired world – genuine, concrete hope that deeply engages global poverty, environmental destruction, and widespread violence” (16).

This hope comes from a commitment to “live justly, to love our neighbors, and to take care of God’s creation as good stewards” (127). These actions may not seem powerful in and of themselves, but they can start a process that begins to undermine harmful ideologies that for too long have dominated social, economic, and political discourse.

This is one of the most challenging and readable books I have come across in many years. It is well written, logical, persuasive, and coherent. It inspires readers not to lose hope and to continue to work for peace and justice even though they cannot be assured of success. *Hope in Troubled Times* speaks with a common voice and effectively avoids the dissonance so often present in manuscripts with multiple authors. It is essential reading for anyone concerned about the rising tide of the seemingly intractable problems facing our globe – and the apparent impossibility that one person can do anything impactful about them. It could easily be used as a textbook in college or university courses.

Lowell Ewert, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario

Thomas P. Scheck. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.

In the lively and sometimes rancorous debate over justification that has rippled throughout the Christian world, all roads, it seems, lead back to the sixteenth century. Since the 1999 joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on Justification by Faith, new energy has poured into the conversation.¹ Even before that, descendants of the Anabaptists likewise engaged the theme. Dutch Mennonite theologian Sjouke Voolstra wrote that “Anabaptists always interpreted justification in the light of sanctification.”² J. Denny Weaver and Gerald Mast recently reflected on the views of justification of Denck, Hut, Hubmaier, and Marpeck, asserting that Sattler “affirms Lutheran justification by faith but also, in line with Catholic thought, stresses that faith will result in good works.”³

Thomas Scheck’s book makes the case that all who think this conversation matters must travel much further back in the Christian story. Indeed, he argues that Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* has influenced Christian thought on justification into the 16th-century Reformation and beyond. Further, the third-century Alexandrian’s readings of Romans were both close to Paul and remarkably relevant to 21st-century discussions.

As the first English translator of Origen’s Romans commentary,⁴ Scheck carries the credentials to back up his argument. In clear and readable prose, he makes accessible not only to patristics scholars but also to other theologians, biblical scholars, and interested lay readers the exegetical questions at stake and the history of reception that marks Origen’s influence down through the centuries. (Noting that virtually our only access to Origen’s great commentary is through the Latin translation of the fourth-century Rufinus, Scheck usually provides the Latin in text or footnote for

those who find that helpful.)

In chapter one Scheck lays out Origen's definition of justification with a "Trinitarian stress": "From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature" (CRm 4.9.192-98). Unity and synthesis of faith and works seem "to be an overriding theme" of the commentary. While the good thief of Luke 23 was justified by faith alone, because he "had no opportunity to be justified by his subsequent good works," for the most part good works must be visible "as the necessary fruit of justification."

Subsequent chapters demonstrate the borrowings from Origen and the debates with him of Pelagius, Augustine, William of St. Thierry (a 12th-century Cistercian monk), Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, and several post-Reformation theologians. In chapter two, Scheck notes that Origen and Pelagius both accepted what has become part of scholarship's "new perspective" on Paul: that Paul's great letter reflects his awareness of a dispute between Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

Although each chapter has its own fascinating insights, many readers will be most drawn to Scheck's discussion of Augustine and the 16th-century reformers. Chapter three tackles the question of Augustine's use of and challenge to Origen's commentary. The Pelagian controversy late in his life turned Augustine's reading of Romans to original sin, human powerlessness, and predestination in ways that have shaped much later Western Christian thought. However, according to Scheck, both Origen and Augustine "appeal to James as a means of correcting a false understanding of Paul" on faith and works, agreeing that faith is "a foundation on which works are built." Likewise, chapter five notes that Erasmus's devotional work *Enchiridion* "was infused with citations" from Origen's commentary, and his comment on Romans 6:4 echoed Origen: "Dead to our former sins and living now the new life, let us follow in the footsteps of piety."

Scheck notes, on the other hand, that Melancthon made "Origen's doctrine of justification an integral part of his decadence theory of Church history." Since descendants of the Anabaptists have sometimes been tempted by that same theory, Scheck's book is a must-read for anyone who may have agreed with Menno (quoting Luther) that Origen was "the falsest explainer of the Scriptures."⁵ Rather, readers considering this work will hear echoes of

Origen in Menno's call for biblical readings assuming a full-orbed practical understanding of justification.⁶

¹ The complete text of the joint declaration is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. See also Trevin Wax, compiler, "The Justification Debate: A Primer," in *Christianity Today* 53:6 (June 2009), 34-35; N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 246-52.

² Sjouke Voolstra, "Free and Perfect: Justification and Sanctification in Anabaptist Perspective," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 5.3 (Fall 1987): 225.

³ Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver, *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009), 45-46.

⁴ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., Thomas P. Scheck, trans. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001-2002).

⁵ Menno Simons, "Christian Baptism," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* [CWMS] (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 279.

⁶ Menno, "True Christian Faith," in CWMS, 333.

Nancy Heisey, Bible and Religion Department, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Miguel A. De La Torre. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethic of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

Miguel A. De La Torre, who is on the faculty of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, has written a challenging, provocative volume based on a reading of the book of Jonah and includes an engaging, brief contemporary social analysis in order to place this reading in the modern context.

De La Torre was once asked if any reading of Jonah considers Jonah's message from the perspective of "the margins of society" (ix). His work attempts to respond to his observation that he knew of no such work. In the introduction, he lays out one of his primary arguments: Jonah is a book about reconciliation. His reading presents this as reconciliation in a context of unequal distribution of power – as exemplified by the Israelite, Jonah,

facing Nineveh, symbolic of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires that were ancient bitter, oppressive enemies. The author is well aware of the potential for manipulating themes of “reconciliation” as a way for the powerful to try to get the oppressed to resign themselves to their subordinated fate.

“It is important to recognize that those who benefit from the present power structures cannot be relied upon to define reconciliation,” says the author, “or to determine how to go about achieving it” (2). He advocates no cheap “peace” that does not engage injustice: “A desire to ‘forgive and forget’ can bring about only a cheap reconciliation that sacrifices justice for the sake of serenity” (5).

In a sense, De La Torre wants to read Jonah from “Jonah’s perspective” confronting Assyria, that of a subordinate confronting the powerful. In chapter one, after briefly discussing Assyrian brutality in the Ancient Near East, he begins his read through the book. His analysis is largely literary, drawing only occasionally from contemporary historical-critical commentary. One main source is Rabbinic legends about aspects of Jonah.

In chapter two, “Who was Jonah, What was Nineveh?” De La Torre reads Jonah and Nineveh as models of the oppressed and the socio-economic realities of that oppression in the 18th to 20th centuries of the European and American West. Characteristically, his strongest focus is on the racialized borders of modern socio-economic systems within the US historical context. He is rather dismissive of attempts to work “within the system,” because the system itself must be transformed. What it is to be transformed into is not so clear, short of frequent calls for a “redistribution of income.”

Chapter three, “Reflecting on Jonah,” brings together the author’s profound interest in reconciliation as a Christian reality with the difficult “praxis” of justice – reconciliation never cancels the need for change, in his reading. Chapter four, “Praying through Jonah,” clarifies that reconciliation must be initiated only by the oppressed: “Those who presently benefit from the existing social order lack the objectivity and moral authority to define reconciliation or even recognize the need for reconciliation...” (88). The author seems to accept nothing short of revolutionary change for authentic reconciliation. This becomes problematic when he tends to minimize the courageous acts of individuals because they do not transform entire socio-economic systems. This sense of helplessness in the face of evil systems sets

up his sense of hopelessness in the final chapter.

Chapter five, “Pitfalls Jonah Should Avoid,” includes comments about internal politics in various ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as problems in dealing with Euro-Americans, who are largely not trusted for a credible analysis because “Euroamerican Christians, either from the fundamentalist right or the far liberal left, probably have more in common with each other and understand each other better than they do Christians on the other side of the racial and ethnic divide” (125). So great is the task of social transformation and so little the will to do it that De La Torre despairs of its ever taking place even in his grandchildren’s generation (143).

In the final chapter, “Case Studies,” the author offers stories of attempts by individuals to seek social change and raises questions about each case. For example, the first case describes recent Native-American reactions to the Columbus Day celebrations in Denver, and asks the reader to consider what forms of protest or response would have been appropriate, given that Native groups were denied most opportunities for legal, peaceful protest. A second case describes Daryl Davis, an African-American, who attempted to make contact with members of the Ku Klux Klan in order to force a dialogue on racism. He even managed to make friends, leading some members to leave the Klan after long conversations with him. These and other cases are intended to raise questions about the individual actions of people of color, but one is left wondering if these studies are signs of hope or of futility, given De La Torre’s previous analysis.

Reading as a Quaker informed by Anabaptist theology, I honor individual acts of faith – attempts to live an alternative reality within the rigid systems of oppression – and that same Anabaptist conscience sometimes wonders if this is the best to be hoped for. I will not minimize or trivialize such individual actions only because they fall short of the revolution. Further, I am not in sympathy with an exclusively racialized social analysis that refuses to consider the potential bridge-building (and recognition of historical realities) that are served by a more thorough-going class analysis. Finally, I am concerned with De La Torre’s tendencies to homogenize the very different experiences of Latino, Asian, Native, and African-Americans. “People of color” is becoming a dubious generalization for social analysis.

My disagreements notwithstanding, I deeply appreciate De La Torre’s

fascinating meditations on the socio-economic contexts of a modern reading of Jonah.

Daniel Smith-Christopher, Dept. of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Ted Lewis, ed. *Electing Not to Vote: Christian Reflections on Reasons for Not Voting*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

This volume takes up an interesting and important question: Might Christians faithfully abstain from voting? This is a provocative question in a culture which assumes that voting is a civic responsibility, even (perhaps especially) for Christians. As the essays collected here demonstrate, it is a question that should be asked and discussed carefully in our faith communities.

The essays are uniform in their affirmation that it is possible, and sometimes desirable, for Christians to abstain from voting. The nine contributors make the case for abstention from voting in a variety of ways from a rich array of Christian perspectives.

Indeed, one of the book's most interesting features is the breadth of ecclesial perspectives represented. Authors come from Mennonite, Pentecostal, Catholic, Baptist, and intentional Christian community traditions, and they write from, and sometimes to, those communities. Central to the conversation is how our identity as Christians is shaped by our political participation and how we are to understand the dual nature of our citizenship.

The authors offer a wide range of critiques of voting. Some reflect personally on their experiences of voting and participating in electoral politics, and suggest that the process damages their Christian discipleship. For instance, Michael Degan rejects voting in part "because of who I become in order to win" (61). Others share a concern about how the polarized politics of American presidential elections have affected conversations in our churches. John D. Roth's well-known essay, which begins the collection, is the best example of this concern. Others offer critiques of the candidates we

have to choose from, the US Electoral College system, and the way electoral rules and processes affect outcomes.

Perhaps the most critical difference among the contributors is on whether or not voting should be the norm for Christians. Michael Degan, Tato Sumantri, Ted Lewis, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Nekeisha Alexis-Baker offer strong rejections of voting. For these authors, not voting is apparently the norm. In contrast, for John D. Roth, G. Scott Becker, and Todd Whitmore voting is assumed to be the norm, and not voting is a selective step that should be taken after careful deliberation.

Whitmore reflects on the two candidates in the 2004 US presidential election, ultimately arguing that both George W. Bush and John Kerry advocated policies that violated fundamental principles of Catholic teaching and, as a result, not voting was his obligation. But he argues that this obligation “does not spill over to another election” (79) and concludes by noting that he is “undecided about whether I will vote in the 2008 election, pending a hearing of the views of the candidates” (80). Many of the authors in this collection need no such hearing.

The essays are strongly uniform in advocating a form of political participation that goes beyond voting. In fact, most of them argue that voting is insufficient participation in civic life. Thus in their call for abstention from voting, the authors are not calling for a withdrawal or retreat from participation in the life of the *polis*. Instead, they call for a different kind of engagement, as Roth writes, not allowing “narrow definitions of ‘political involvement’ to set the terms” for how Christians care for society (8). Instead of the apathy and cynicism that leads most Americans not to vote, these authors call for what Lewis terms an “active refraining” that “leads to proactive engagement” (114).

The volume is intentionally limited to presidential elections in the United States. It falls to others to work out what faithful political participation looks like in other countries and contexts. It also falls to others to articulate the possibilities of electoral participation at more local levels (though Degan explicitly rejects voting at other levels as well). The essays are well written and not overly technical. The volume is suitable for churches and lay audiences where it should be read and carefully considered; it is an

important entry into a difficult but critically important conversation about faithful political engagement.

Victor J. Hinojosa, Political Science Dept., Baylor University, Waco, Texas

How Do Stories Save Us? An Essay on the Question with the Theological Hermeneutics of David Tracy in View. Scott Holland. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

In this erudite, dense, and artful text, Bethany Theological Seminary professor Scott Holland takes the reader – as the back cover says – “on an intellectual adventure through narrative theology, literary criticism, poetics, ritual studies and aesthetics in the composition of a theology of culture.”

Throughout the text, the work of revisionist theologian David Tracy is “in view.” Tracy, a Catholic priest and active professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, is the author of well-known texts including *The Analogical Imagination* and *On Naming the Present*. Holland’s book concludes with a 10-page bibliography of Tracy’s writings plus a more general bibliography, including 18 books and essays by Paul Ricoeur and 8 articles by Holland.

Holland works particularly with what he refers to as two emerging self-corrective foci in Tracy’s public theology (i.e., theology that is “always involved in complex and interesting relationships with diverse historical and social realities”): “a hermeneutics in which the ‘other’ not the ‘self’ is the dominant focus; and a theological insistence that only a mystical-prophetic model of theology can save us” (35-36).

In terms of narrative theology, Holland casts his lot with Tracy and others representing the University of Chicago narrative school rather than with those representing what might be called the Yale school (e.g., George Lindbeck, Hans Frei). The latter, says Holland, see the church as the sole reference of theology (58). In that schema, the world “becomes an *object* of theological description and prophetic critique, rarely a rich and mystical *source* for imaginative and revisionary theological thought and writing”

(98). For Yale-ish narrativists, biblical narratives “catch the reader up into the sacred world of the text,” as the Bible “absorb[s] the world into its unique world” (78). It is this Yale-based form of narrative theology that has been most influential for recent mainstream Anabaptists, as mediated largely through the work of Stanley Hauerwas. Holland says one might excuse a fundamentalist for advocating for this sort of “sectarian imagination in defense of her tribal gods and goods.... But for a post-critical Christian theorist who values close readings and thick descriptions to retreat from the public square into the world of the text, pretending she has found a separate, autonomous world, is not only bad faith, it is bad fiction” (101).

In contrast, Tracy and others see the world “as a complex *source* for theology and not simply its *object*” (58). “While Yale theologians seem most interested in keeping their community’s story straight,” says Holland, “those drawn to the work of David Tracy and the Chicago school are much more interested in doing theology while listening to other people’s stories” (98). Such a theology will then be pluralistic, interdisciplinary, intertextual (rather than intratextual, as for the Yale theologians), and revisionary. Here the theologian “brings the texts, traditions, and practices of her community into conversation with others, especially communities of difference, in the search for greater insight, understanding, humane presence and connection with the divine” (98-99).

Elsewhere Holland argues the increasingly accepted view that humans are constituted both narratively and performatively, i.e., through ritual (153-78). He sensibly proposes that for Anabaptists and other low-church Protestants to develop a theory of symbol and ritual that might lead their communities toward Ricoeur’s “second naivete” in relation to religious symbolism, such transformation will come not through studying traditional theological arguments of sacramentologists but through discovering how symbolic activity is co-natural with the human person, emerging from ordinary experience (177).

How Do Stories Save Us? will most engage those already immersed in postmodern theological critiques. Illustrating the background one may need, a not atypical selection reads: “Following Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, Tracy’s theological agenda has been to rethink the dialectical relationship between language and experience. His program moves beyond

the Schleiermacher – Tillich – Rahner – Lonergan experiential paradigm to an explicitly hermeneutical one” (82). Some readers may stumble through more complex portions of the book, though most will appreciate Holland’s more accessible commentaries on narrative theology and rituals. His chapter “When Art and Ritual Embrace and Kiss” (179-230) is moving at points, thanks to some embedded autobiographical flourishes and assertions of faith.

Just under half of the 241-page text, which began as Holland’s dissertation at Duquesne University, has been published before as discrete essays in journals or books. The core of Holland’s argument, from “How Do Stories Save Us,” through chapters titled “Theology is a Kind of Writing,” “Even the Postmodern Story Has a Body,” and “Signifying Presence” have appeared in *Louvain Studies*, *Cross Currents*, and an edited volume, *The Presence of Transcendence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). A few odd, distracting editing issues have made it into the present text, likely due to its various embodiments over 16 years.

For David Tracy followers, this is an illuminating supplemental text. Those interested more broadly in narrative theology also will benefit from a few of the middle chapters, though they likely will be less engaged with the text’s first 70 pages. Students of postmodernity and aesthetically sensitive readers will be especially appreciative of Holland’s work.

Keith Graber Miller, Chair, Bible, Religion and Philosophy, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

What is “freedom”? According to free-market ideology, we are free when the state limits its interference in economic transactions. Using Augustine, William Cavanaugh challenges this answer. He asserts that when society lacks a good common end this “freedom” can only degenerate into a battle of wills, public manipulation through marketing, concentrated power in the hands of few large corporations, and a steady increase in economic injustice and class inequalities. Without a life that is ordered toward helping life flourish, the desire to consume is internalized in our culture until we simply move from one manufactured desire for this or that product to another, never realizing that we are being controlled under the guise of liberation. After detailing and exposing the consumer trap in which we are caught, Cavanaugh provides concrete examples of how to overcome this spiral of idolatrous desire.

Although I am convinced by Cavanaugh’s thesis that desires must be rightly ordered toward helping life flourish if we are to resist being seduced by the market’s manipulations, his argument does not fully account for how our desires prevent or sustain the flourishing of nonhuman animal life. Upon learning about the nightmare that cattle endure in typical “beef” production, the author notes his decision to purchase grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free cattle from a local farmer. He makes this choice on the grounds that while the industrial “meat” industry hides the horrors and suffering of nonhuman animals, “all the information I need is available and transparent” on the small farm (31). This statement is open to challenge on at least two points.

First, Cavanaugh neglects to note that the small farmer is a part of a larger web that is largely beyond his control. When a cow gets an infection, organic farmers may withhold antibiotics even if the cow suffers tremendously to make sure their meat can be labeled organic. Moreover, there are common farming practices necessary to production – forced impregnation, castration, and others – that, while not horrific, inflict pain and limit the nonhuman animals’ ability to be free and to flourish.

The second point is that care for nonhuman animals within Cavanaugh’s

framework demands more than simply minimizing pain, and this requires questions and answers that are not as available and transparent as the author makes them seem. For example, why do we desire “meat” in the first place, and is it a rightly-ordered desire? Do we facilitate flourishing when we kill another living being to satiate a desire that is not only unnecessary for human survival but also damages our health? Given the state of our ecosystem and the growing awareness that all life on this planet hangs together on a precipice, Cavanaugh’s anthropocentric view of the common end is incompatible with his goal of overcoming idolatrous desire.

In response to the narrative of the market, Cavanaugh offers a counter story centered on the Catholic Eucharist. He argues that consumerism detaches the consumer from the process of production and from the people who produce our goods. Furthermore, our attachment to the goods themselves has decreased because we constantly abandon each product for the latest upgrade. Our pleasure comes from the pursuit of goods, from shopping itself, so a never-ending cycle of consumption ensues. The Catholic practice of the Eucharist provides a counterweight to this frenzy by absorbing each person into a larger body. Instead of being fragmented individuals trapped in the non-stop game of pursuing the latest trinkets, we become a community shaped into the Body of Christ.

Cavanaugh’s account should provide a lot of thought for Mennonites as to how Mennonite worship shapes us into people capable of resisting consumerism. We do not have a Catholic practice or theology of the Eucharist, and I am not convinced that if we did it would be adequate. But how does our worship shape us? What have we lost or gained that might be useful in giving an account of our own?

One of the most powerful practices that Cavanaugh mentions in this book, but does not give enough attention to, is making our own stuff (57). Instead of buying free trade and relocating consumerism to a new though better corporation, making our own clothes, growing our own food, and playing our own music can shape us to be producers who have learned the value of production through doing it and who question the industrial technological society itself. Simply moving from one type of industrial, gadget-hungry model to a “fair trade” version is not enough. We have to

question it at its core. Maybe backwards is forwards. Cavanaugh provides a good base for starting to find out.

Andy Alexis-Baker, PhD student, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, eds. *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Seeking the Identity of Jesus presents the fruit of a three-year research project sponsored by Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry and conceived as a sequel to *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Intended to address the profusion of popular images of Jesus, the project seeks not to distinguish an "historical" Jesus from the church's canon and creed but instead to investigate ways in which the latter might actually serve to clarify Jesus' identity (5). With this in mind, the analogy of choice is not the archaeological dig (where the "real" Jesus awaits unearthing) but the pilgrimage (where various "reports" anticipate a common destination), and the effect is not a recovery but an encounter via the diversity of canonical witness and church tradition.

Toward this end, editors Beverly Gaventa and Richard Hays divide the collected essays into three groups. In the first, William Placher, Robert Jenson, Markus Bockmuehl, Dale Allison, and Francis Watson endeavor to lay a methodological foundation that undoes the traditional disjunct of "Jesus of history" and "Christ of faith." Particularly representative is Allison's reassertion of the relevance of Jesus' "history of influence," canonical and otherwise, for an understanding of his identity (94).

The second and third groupings follow, which is to say they represent the working out of this proposal: Dale Allison, Joel Marcus, Beverly Gaventa, and Marianne Thompson assess the identity of Jesus in the four gospels; Richard Hays and Katherine Grieb consider the "story" of Christ in the letters of Paul and the "sermon" of Hebrews respectively, and Gary Anderson and Walter Moberly discuss the christological resonance of Moses, Jonah, and Isaiah. Brian Daley, David Steinmetz, Katherine Sonderegger, and Sarah

Coakley then shift attention to the testimony of the church, exploring in turn the identity of Jesus in patristic theology (via Irenaeus, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor), in the early Reformation debate over the nature of the Eucharist, in the act of Christian worship, and in the practice of mercy to the poor. Coakley's argument that the recognition of Jesus demands the "sustaining matrix" (311) and "cumulative tangle" (316) of Christian practice – especially vis-à-vis the poor – represents the collection's most adventurous moment, but the epistemic transformation she envisions embodies well the project's creative edge.

Next to the wandering sage and/or mysterious guru of popular consumption, *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* gives no neat summary of the identity of Jesus: "no 'sound-bite' Jesus can ever be faithful to the evidence," Gaventa and Hays conclude, "because the testimony of the variety of witnesses to Jesus – past, present, and future – cannot be collapsed..." (324). The collection's embrace of rich complexity proceeds rather under the sign of identity. Whatever else it is, Jesus' "identity" is a social product (Allison's words) that necessarily includes Jesus' own (continuing) reception history among his followers, then and now. This is the crux of the project, and a timely and productive contribution. What the individual essays contribute substantively regarding the identity of Jesus in the Gospels, for instance, or in the letters of Paul, will no doubt be found a helpful orientation to their study; but this identification of the church's ongoing tradition as the privileged locus of encounter promises a basic reorientation of the scholarly discourse surrounding Jesus.

Tensions undoubtedly remain. The traditional quest for the historical Jesus remains methodologically relevant, whether "first half of an incomplete sentence" (95) or "antidote" (113), but it is not at all clear what substantive difference its demands make in the subsequent collation of canonical witness and church testimony. At very least, how precisely the Jesus we know "through Scripture" relates to the Jesus we know "through the creeds" and the Jesus we know "through practice" deserves more sustained discussion. The volume concludes with a welcome affirmation of diversity and complexity (324), yet in its introduction summarily excludes everything extracanonical from the relevant history of reception, and this on historical grounds (14). Rhetorical celebration of canonical diversity seems similarly threatened by

the apparent uniformity of “the church” and its singular testimony. Still, this collection offers an important corrective to the modern critical paradigm that underlies the traditional quest, and in this it promises an opportunity for increased precision and perception in the study of Jesus.

Rene Baergen, Biblical Dept., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Ellen Hodgson Brown. *Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System And How We Can Break Free*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Third Millennium Press, 2008.

People concerned about social justice need this book! In *Web of Debt*, Ellen Brown provides an extraordinarily compelling and vivid analysis of one of the most crucial yet least understood of the major social problems that currently imperil humanity. She exposes and explains the hidden workings of our money system. The problems deriving from this system pervade and worsen the whole range of social problems that confront us globally. Brown shows how the money system has a devastating impact, but also how it could be transformed to provide powerful impetus for needed social change.

The great majority of social activists who have worked diligently for many years to overcome a wide variety of social problems, striving to achieve social justice and peace, know almost nothing about the workings of the money system. For many years I have been among such activists, and have seen how our analyses of social problems – poverty, environmental destruction, and war, in all their many manifestations – have omitted any reference to it. Our goals have been worthy. But our analyses have been weakened and our strategies often ill-conceived because we have failed to understand or to confront the potent realities of the money system.

Our ignorance is not surprising. The workings of the money system have been carefully obscured from public scrutiny and understanding by those in the private banking system who control it. In the Foreword to *Web of Debt*, Reed Simpson, a veteran banker, writes: “I can report that even most bankers are not aware of what goes on behind closed doors at the top of their field.... I am more familiar than most with the issues raised in [Brown’s

book] and I still found it to be an eye-opener, a remarkable window into what is really going on.... [The way our money system functions] has been the focus of a highly sophisticated and long-term disinformation campaign that permeates academia, media, and publishing. The complexity of the subject has been intentionally exploited to keep its mysteries hidden” (ix).

At the heart of Brown’s revelations is her explanation of the source of our money. It is no longer based in any way on gold. Nor, as is almost universally assumed, is it supplied by governments. Some 97 percent of the money supply in capitalist economies around the world is created out of nothing by private commercial banks in their process of making loans. Banks do not lend out the money of depositors, as is also widely assumed. As they make loans, the banks create *new* money that is added to the total amount of money in circulation.

Huge problems result. Especially notable is the fact that, when the banks supply almost all the money essential for our economic transactions, they create money for the principal of the loans but do not for the interest that they invariably require to be paid. They create only debt-money. And they impose a demand impossible for us to meet collectively! Money to pay interest is simply not available. In order to make payments that include both interest and principal, people are driven to compete with each other, “to fight with each other in order to survive” (31). People must continue borrowing from the banks, further increasing their indebtedness. Inevitably some borrowers default, enabling the banks to take over their collateral. The few favored in this system become ever more wealthy, while many are impoverished.

Much more analysis of the dynamics of this system is provided in the book. The abuses perpetrated through our money system are possible only because governments have been manipulated into allowing private banks to control the system. Governments at the federal level could be using their own powers for money creation to provide interest-free loans for much-needed infrastructure, and, as the economy expands, could not only lend but spend debt-free money into existence to provide public services. Brown explains how the alternative of democratically controlled government-created money could make enormously creative contributions to human welfare.

Dealing primarily with US history, Brown describes successful cases

of government-created money – as in colonial Pennsylvania under Benjamin Franklin, and in the Civil War with the greenbacks – and shows how private banking interests fought constantly to control the US money system.

Brown’s book is an antidote to our ignorance of the money system, as is also her website: webofdebt.com.

George Crowell, Department of Religious Studies (ret.), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario

Marlene Epp. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008.

Marlene Epp has written a history of Canadian Mennonite women over the course of the past three centuries, ending in 1980. This refreshing work orients Canadian Mennonite historiography towards questions of gender in a fashion that, while grounded in extensive research into primary and archival sources, is nonetheless an effective synthesis of a complex subject. As such, it is neither a theological treatment of “power” or “gender” nor an over-specialized monograph, but rather a straightforward, brilliantly researched, and well-argued history of a topic gaining in coverage that now has its own attempt at a survey. Having set a high standard for Canadian Mennonite women’s studies in her earlier book, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000), Epp continues her masterful command of the field with this volume.

The author divides the book into five chapters, arranged thematically, each of which opens with an historical vignette clarifying the theme and interpretive methodology to follow. The chapters are organized around themes of immigration as pioneers, refugees and transnationals; family life as wives and mothers; religious life as preachers, prophets, and missionaries; worldly life as citizens, nonresisters and nonconformists; and, finally, living in a material world of quilts, canned goods, and the written word. Throughout the book, Epp provides an even-handed account of Mennonite

women's life based on her extensive research bringing to light women's experiences, often in their own words.

Epp introduces the volume with a helpful historiographical survey of the topic, in addition to making clear her own social location and how she will be working not so much with theology as with history. On this point, she summarizes how religion cannot be ignored when working with an ethno-religious group. Interestingly, she adds the caveat when discussing the influence of Harold S. Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision" that we must remember that it is not directly connected to women's experience, dealing as it does with American Mennonites joining the military during World War II (13). While that is an obvious point to make, Epp is quite strong when explicating her methodology and her hopes for the book, which is designed both to inform and inspire students while learning of historical Mennonite women's experiences to envision also relationships and institutions not given to gender inequality or discrimination (18-19).

While Epp's well-articulated hope for this volume might indicate a polemic in the making, she has written an exceptionally well-researched book and a well-reasoned interpretation. Throughout she demonstrates that Canadian Mennonite women were never without history, that they were always engaged in their communities, both religious and in the wider world, all the while exercising historical agency. The chapters progress fluidly as she defines women's experience by roles imposed and roles taken on. Her work on the conundrum of nonconformity and non-resistance in Mennonite women's experiences is especially significant as it exposes, perhaps counter-intuitively for some, how a theology of peace can become a seedbed of inequality (chapter 4).

Ultimately, Epp has done an important service by broadening Canadian Mennonite historiography and treatment of gender beyond localized studies to a national treatment that simultaneously brings to light a plethora of primary and archival sources. She balances historical detail with broader interpretations with seeming ease and in persuasive prose. Throughout she presents the experiences of women as diverse, heterodox, and embodying myriad perspectives, actions, and responses to their varied contexts.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in, or taking university courses involving, questions of church and society, gender, and the Canadian

experiences of immigration and assimilation. This is a rich resource useful for undergraduates, graduates, and teachers alike. The book's scope and self-imposed limits are reasonable and effective, and this reader looks forward to when a similar study can be written of the 1980s and 1990s.

Brian Froese, Assistant Professor of History, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David Van Heemst. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Few books are as timely or as prophetic as *Hope in Troubled Times*. Writing prior to the global economic meltdown in 2008 that caused international financial institutions to shudder, the authors warned about the volatility of the financial markets before it was fashionable to do so. They also noted the potentially catastrophic impact of other challenges such as environmental degradation, ideologically based conflict, global poverty, and insecurity.

The book opens with words that cogently and succinctly explain its premise: “[O]ur world seems to live under the curse of scrambling for solutions but not finding them” (15). The authors begin by rejecting the notion that human ingenuity can keep ahead of escalating global challenges simply by resorting to raw intelligence. They also dispute the premise that solutions which worked for past crises are adequate to enable humanity to adapt to harsh new realities. Instead, they argue that “many of today’s problems seem to have developed immunity to our well-intended solutions. They have become like viruses that resist medicine or like pests that have developed a defense against pesticide” (31).

One of the most insightful discussions pertains to the development, impact, and ripple effect of ideologies. Citing six phases of developed ideologies, the authors explain how ideologies have evolved at periods in history to justify the oppression of one people by another. While not explicitly using the language of the current “war on terror,” or significantly applying

their perspective directly to the Iraq or Afghanistan wars (mentioned on only 14 of 205 pages of text), they provide language for explaining how these conflicts have been sold to the Western world in ideological terms, and what the impact of an ideological rationale can be.

When an ideology defines a goal to be an absolute end, anything that gets in the way of it becomes evil, say the authors. Those who oppose evil are by definition good, “even if their actions result in other people suffering under cruel treatment. How close, in our view,” the authors conclude, “this lies to the demonic” (34). These statements reflect on the danger of justice and compassion being removed from discourse about contentious issues and are worth much rumination. This volume is a prophetic call to re-examine our tendency to absolutize good and evil.

Although articulating this sobering message of potential global crises comprises most of the book – which even the authors admit is “hardly uplifting” (169) – this massive dose of tough love frames the most urgent issues and stresses why these concerns must be taken seriously now. It sets the stage for suggesting a way forward. All is not lost. Rather, the authors testify they are inspired by an “enduring conviction that there is real hope for our troubled, mired world – genuine, concrete hope that deeply engages global poverty, environmental destruction, and widespread violence” (16).

This hope comes from a commitment to “live justly, to love our neighbors, and to take care of God’s creation as good stewards” (127). These actions may not seem powerful in and of themselves, but they can start a process that begins to undermine harmful ideologies that for too long have dominated social, economic, and political discourse.

This is one of the most challenging and readable books I have come across in many years. It is well written, logical, persuasive, and coherent. It inspires readers not to lose hope and to continue to work for peace and justice even though they cannot be assured of success. *Hope in Troubled Times* speaks with a common voice and effectively avoids the dissonance so often present in manuscripts with multiple authors. It is essential reading for anyone concerned about the rising tide of the seemingly intractable problems facing our globe – and the apparent impossibility that one person can do anything impactful about them. It could easily be used as a textbook in college or university courses.

Lowell Ewert, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario

Thomas P. Scheck. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.

In the lively and sometimes rancorous debate over justification that has rippled throughout the Christian world, all roads, it seems, lead back to the sixteenth century. Since the 1999 joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on Justification by Faith, new energy has poured into the conversation.¹ Even before that, descendants of the Anabaptists likewise engaged the theme. Dutch Mennonite theologian Sjouke Voolstra wrote that “Anabaptists always interpreted justification in the light of sanctification.”² J. Denny Weaver and Gerald Mast recently reflected on the views of justification of Denck, Hut, Hubmaier, and Marpeck, asserting that Sattler “affirms Lutheran justification by faith but also, in line with Catholic thought, stresses that faith will result in good works.”³

Thomas Scheck’s book makes the case that all who think this conversation matters must travel much further back in the Christian story. Indeed, he argues that Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* has influenced Christian thought on justification into the 16th-century Reformation and beyond. Further, the third-century Alexandrian’s readings of Romans were both close to Paul and remarkably relevant to 21st-century discussions.

As the first English translator of Origen’s Romans commentary,⁴ Scheck carries the credentials to back up his argument. In clear and readable prose, he makes accessible not only to patristics scholars but also to other theologians, biblical scholars, and interested lay readers the exegetical questions at stake and the history of reception that marks Origen’s influence down through the centuries. (Noting that virtually our only access to Origen’s great commentary is through the Latin translation of the fourth-century Rufinus, Scheck usually provides the Latin in text or footnote for

those who find that helpful.)

In chapter one Scheck lays out Origen's definition of justification with a "Trinitarian stress": "From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature" (CRm 4.9.192-98). Unity and synthesis of faith and works seem "to be an overriding theme" of the commentary. While the good thief of Luke 23 was justified by faith alone, because he "had no opportunity to be justified by his subsequent good works," for the most part good works must be visible "as the necessary fruit of justification."

Subsequent chapters demonstrate the borrowings from Origen and the debates with him of Pelagius, Augustine, William of St. Thierry (a 12th-century Cistercian monk), Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, and several post-Reformation theologians. In chapter two, Scheck notes that Origen and Pelagius both accepted what has become part of scholarship's "new perspective" on Paul: that Paul's great letter reflects his awareness of a dispute between Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

Although each chapter has its own fascinating insights, many readers will be most drawn to Scheck's discussion of Augustine and the 16th-century reformers. Chapter three tackles the question of Augustine's use of and challenge to Origen's commentary. The Pelagian controversy late in his life turned Augustine's reading of Romans to original sin, human powerlessness, and predestination in ways that have shaped much later Western Christian thought. However, according to Scheck, both Origen and Augustine "appeal to James as a means of correcting a false understanding of Paul" on faith and works, agreeing that faith is "a foundation on which works are built." Likewise, chapter five notes that Erasmus's devotional work *Enchiridion* "was infused with citations" from Origen's commentary, and his comment on Romans 6:4 echoed Origen: "Dead to our former sins and living now the new life, let us follow in the footsteps of piety."

Scheck notes, on the other hand, that Melancthon made "Origen's doctrine of justification an integral part of his decadence theory of Church history." Since descendants of the Anabaptists have sometimes been tempted by that same theory, Scheck's book is a must-read for anyone who may have agreed with Menno (quoting Luther) that Origen was "the falsest explainer of the Scriptures."⁵ Rather, readers considering this work will hear echoes of

Origen in Menno's call for biblical readings assuming a full-orbed practical understanding of justification.⁶

¹ The complete text of the joint declaration is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. See also Trevin Wax, compiler, "The Justification Debate: A Primer," in *Christianity Today* 53:6 (June 2009), 34-35; N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 246-52.

² Sjouke Voolstra, "Free and Perfect: Justification and Sanctification in Anabaptist Perspective," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 5.3 (Fall 1987): 225.

³ Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver, *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009), 45-46.

⁴ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., Thomas P. Scheck, trans. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001-2002).

⁵ Menno Simons, "Christian Baptism," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* [CWMS] (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 279.

⁶ Menno, "True Christian Faith," in CWMS, 333.

Nancy Heisey, Bible and Religion Department, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Miguel A. De La Torre. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethic of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

Miguel A. De La Torre, who is on the faculty of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, has written a challenging, provocative volume based on a reading of the book of Jonah and includes an engaging, brief contemporary social analysis in order to place this reading in the modern context.

De La Torre was once asked if any reading of Jonah considers Jonah's message from the perspective of "the margins of society" (ix). His work attempts to respond to his observation that he knew of no such work. In the introduction, he lays out one of his primary arguments: Jonah is a book about reconciliation. His reading presents this as reconciliation in a context of unequal distribution of power – as exemplified by the Israelite, Jonah,

facing Nineveh, symbolic of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires that were ancient bitter, oppressive enemies. The author is well aware of the potential for manipulating themes of “reconciliation” as a way for the powerful to try to get the oppressed to resign themselves to their subordinated fate.

“It is important to recognize that those who benefit from the present power structures cannot be relied upon to define reconciliation,” says the author, “or to determine how to go about achieving it” (2). He advocates no cheap “peace” that does not engage injustice: “A desire to ‘forgive and forget’ can bring about only a cheap reconciliation that sacrifices justice for the sake of serenity” (5).

In a sense, De La Torre wants to read Jonah from “Jonah’s perspective” confronting Assyria, that of a subordinate confronting the powerful. In chapter one, after briefly discussing Assyrian brutality in the Ancient Near East, he begins his read through the book. His analysis is largely literary, drawing only occasionally from contemporary historical-critical commentary. One main source is Rabbinic legends about aspects of Jonah.

In chapter two, “Who was Jonah, What was Nineveh?” De La Torre reads Jonah and Nineveh as models of the oppressed and the socio-economic realities of that oppression in the 18th to 20th centuries of the European and American West. Characteristically, his strongest focus is on the racialized borders of modern socio-economic systems within the US historical context. He is rather dismissive of attempts to work “within the system,” because the system itself must be transformed. What it is to be transformed into is not so clear, short of frequent calls for a “redistribution of income.”

Chapter three, “Reflecting on Jonah,” brings together the author’s profound interest in reconciliation as a Christian reality with the difficult “praxis” of justice – reconciliation never cancels the need for change, in his reading. Chapter four, “Praying through Jonah,” clarifies that reconciliation must be initiated only by the oppressed: “Those who presently benefit from the existing social order lack the objectivity and moral authority to define reconciliation or even recognize the need for reconciliation...” (88). The author seems to accept nothing short of revolutionary change for authentic reconciliation. This becomes problematic when he tends to minimize the courageous acts of individuals because they do not transform entire socio-economic systems. This sense of helplessness in the face of evil systems sets

up his sense of hopelessness in the final chapter.

Chapter five, “Pitfalls Jonah Should Avoid,” includes comments about internal politics in various ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as problems in dealing with Euro-Americans, who are largely not trusted for a credible analysis because “Euroamerican Christians, either from the fundamentalist right or the far liberal left, probably have more in common with each other and understand each other better than they do Christians on the other side of the racial and ethnic divide” (125). So great is the task of social transformation and so little the will to do it that De La Torre despairs of its ever taking place even in his grandchildren’s generation (143).

In the final chapter, “Case Studies,” the author offers stories of attempts by individuals to seek social change and raises questions about each case. For example, the first case describes recent Native-American reactions to the Columbus Day celebrations in Denver, and asks the reader to consider what forms of protest or response would have been appropriate, given that Native groups were denied most opportunities for legal, peaceful protest. A second case describes Daryl Davis, an African-American, who attempted to make contact with members of the Ku Klux Klan in order to force a dialogue on racism. He even managed to make friends, leading some members to leave the Klan after long conversations with him. These and other cases are intended to raise questions about the individual actions of people of color, but one is left wondering if these studies are signs of hope or of futility, given De La Torre’s previous analysis.

Reading as a Quaker informed by Anabaptist theology, I honor individual acts of faith – attempts to live an alternative reality within the rigid systems of oppression – and that same Anabaptist conscience sometimes wonders if this is the best to be hoped for. I will not minimize or trivialize such individual actions only because they fall short of the revolution. Further, I am not in sympathy with an exclusively racialized social analysis that refuses to consider the potential bridge-building (and recognition of historical realities) that are served by a more thorough-going class analysis. Finally, I am concerned with De La Torre’s tendencies to homogenize the very different experiences of Latino, Asian, Native, and African-Americans. “People of color” is becoming a dubious generalization for social analysis.

My disagreements notwithstanding, I deeply appreciate De La Torre’s

fascinating meditations on the socio-economic contexts of a modern reading of Jonah.

Daniel Smith-Christopher, Dept. of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Ted Lewis, ed. *Electing Not to Vote: Christian Reflections on Reasons for Not Voting*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

This volume takes up an interesting and important question: Might Christians faithfully abstain from voting? This is a provocative question in a culture which assumes that voting is a civic responsibility, even (perhaps especially) for Christians. As the essays collected here demonstrate, it is a question that should be asked and discussed carefully in our faith communities.

The essays are uniform in their affirmation that it is possible, and sometimes desirable, for Christians to abstain from voting. The nine contributors make the case for abstention from voting in a variety of ways from a rich array of Christian perspectives.

Indeed, one of the book's most interesting features is the breadth of ecclesial perspectives represented. Authors come from Mennonite, Pentecostal, Catholic, Baptist, and intentional Christian community traditions, and they write from, and sometimes to, those communities. Central to the conversation is how our identity as Christians is shaped by our political participation and how we are to understand the dual nature of our citizenship.

The authors offer a wide range of critiques of voting. Some reflect personally on their experiences of voting and participating in electoral politics, and suggest that the process damages their Christian discipleship. For instance, Michael Degan rejects voting in part "because of who I become in order to win" (61). Others share a concern about how the polarized politics of American presidential elections have affected conversations in our churches. John D. Roth's well-known essay, which begins the collection, is the best example of this concern. Others offer critiques of the candidates we

have to choose from, the US Electoral College system, and the way electoral rules and processes affect outcomes.

Perhaps the most critical difference among the contributors is on whether or not voting should be the norm for Christians. Michael Degan, Tato Sumantri, Ted Lewis, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Nekeisha Alexis-Baker offer strong rejections of voting. For these authors, not voting is apparently the norm. In contrast, for John D. Roth, G. Scott Becker, and Todd Whitmore voting is assumed to be the norm, and not voting is a selective step that should be taken after careful deliberation.

Whitmore reflects on the two candidates in the 2004 US presidential election, ultimately arguing that both George W. Bush and John Kerry advocated policies that violated fundamental principles of Catholic teaching and, as a result, not voting was his obligation. But he argues that this obligation “does not spill over to another election” (79) and concludes by noting that he is “undecided about whether I will vote in the 2008 election, pending a hearing of the views of the candidates” (80). Many of the authors in this collection need no such hearing.

The essays are strongly uniform in advocating a form of political participation that goes beyond voting. In fact, most of them argue that voting is insufficient participation in civic life. Thus in their call for abstention from voting, the authors are not calling for a withdrawal or retreat from participation in the life of the *polis*. Instead, they call for a different kind of engagement, as Roth writes, not allowing “narrow definitions of ‘political involvement’ to set the terms” for how Christians care for society (8). Instead of the apathy and cynicism that leads most Americans not to vote, these authors call for what Lewis terms an “active refraining” that “leads to proactive engagement” (114).

The volume is intentionally limited to presidential elections in the United States. It falls to others to work out what faithful political participation looks like in other countries and contexts. It also falls to others to articulate the possibilities of electoral participation at more local levels (though Degan explicitly rejects voting at other levels as well). The essays are well written and not overly technical. The volume is suitable for churches and lay audiences where it should be read and carefully considered; it is an

important entry into a difficult but critically important conversation about faithful political engagement.

Victor J. Hinojosa, Political Science Dept., Baylor University, Waco, Texas

How Do Stories Save Us? An Essay on the Question with the Theological Hermeneutics of David Tracy in View. Scott Holland. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

In this erudite, dense, and artful text, Bethany Theological Seminary professor Scott Holland takes the reader – as the back cover says – “on an intellectual adventure through narrative theology, literary criticism, poetics, ritual studies and aesthetics in the composition of a theology of culture.”

Throughout the text, the work of revisionist theologian David Tracy is “in view.” Tracy, a Catholic priest and active professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, is the author of well-known texts including *The Analogical Imagination* and *On Naming the Present*. Holland’s book concludes with a 10-page bibliography of Tracy’s writings plus a more general bibliography, including 18 books and essays by Paul Ricoeur and 8 articles by Holland.

Holland works particularly with what he refers to as two emerging self-corrective foci in Tracy’s public theology (i.e., theology that is “always involved in complex and interesting relationships with diverse historical and social realities”): “a hermeneutics in which the ‘other’ not the ‘self’ is the dominant focus; and a theological insistence that only a mystical-prophetic model of theology can save us” (35-36).

In terms of narrative theology, Holland casts his lot with Tracy and others representing the University of Chicago narrative school rather than with those representing what might be called the Yale school (e.g., George Lindbeck, Hans Frei). The latter, says Holland, see the church as the sole reference of theology (58). In that schema, the world “becomes an *object* of theological description and prophetic critique, rarely a rich and mystical *source* for imaginative and revisionary theological thought and writing”

(98). For Yale-ish narrativists, biblical narratives “catch the reader up into the sacred world of the text,” as the Bible “absorb[s] the world into its unique world” (78). It is this Yale-based form of narrative theology that has been most influential for recent mainstream Anabaptists, as mediated largely through the work of Stanley Hauerwas. Holland says one might excuse a fundamentalist for advocating for this sort of “sectarian imagination in defense of her tribal gods and goods.... But for a post-critical Christian theorist who values close readings and thick descriptions to retreat from the public square into the world of the text, pretending she has found a separate, autonomous world, is not only bad faith, it is bad fiction” (101).

In contrast, Tracy and others see the world “as a complex *source* for theology and not simply its *object*” (58). “While Yale theologians seem most interested in keeping their community’s story straight,” says Holland, “those drawn to the work of David Tracy and the Chicago school are much more interested in doing theology while listening to other people’s stories” (98). Such a theology will then be pluralistic, interdisciplinary, intertextual (rather than intratextual, as for the Yale theologians), and revisionary. Here the theologian “brings the texts, traditions, and practices of her community into conversation with others, especially communities of difference, in the search for greater insight, understanding, humane presence and connection with the divine” (98-99).

Elsewhere Holland argues the increasingly accepted view that humans are constituted both narratively and performatively, i.e., through ritual (153-78). He sensibly proposes that for Anabaptists and other low-church Protestants to develop a theory of symbol and ritual that might lead their communities toward Ricoeur’s “second naivete” in relation to religious symbolism, such transformation will come not through studying traditional theological arguments of sacramentologists but through discovering how symbolic activity is co-natural with the human person, emerging from ordinary experience (177).

How Do Stories Save Us? will most engage those already immersed in postmodern theological critiques. Illustrating the background one may need, a not atypical selection reads: “Following Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, Tracy’s theological agenda has been to rethink the dialectical relationship between language and experience. His program moves beyond

the Schleiermacher – Tillich – Rahner – Lonergan experiential paradigm to an explicitly hermeneutical one” (82). Some readers may stumble through more complex portions of the book, though most will appreciate Holland’s more accessible commentaries on narrative theology and rituals. His chapter “When Art and Ritual Embrace and Kiss” (179-230) is moving at points, thanks to some embedded autobiographical flourishes and assertions of faith.

Just under half of the 241-page text, which began as Holland’s dissertation at Duquesne University, has been published before as discrete essays in journals or books. The core of Holland’s argument, from “How Do Stories Save Us,” through chapters titled “Theology is a Kind of Writing,” “Even the Postmodern Story Has a Body,” and “Signifying Presence” have appeared in *Louvain Studies*, *Cross Currents*, and an edited volume, *The Presence of Transcendence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). A few odd, distracting editing issues have made it into the present text, likely due to its various embodiments over 16 years.

For David Tracy followers, this is an illuminating supplemental text. Those interested more broadly in narrative theology also will benefit from a few of the middle chapters, though they likely will be less engaged with the text’s first 70 pages. Students of postmodernity and aesthetically sensitive readers will be especially appreciative of Holland’s work.

Keith Graber Miller, Chair, Bible, Religion and Philosophy, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

What is “freedom”? According to free-market ideology, we are free when the state limits its interference in economic transactions. Using Augustine, William Cavanaugh challenges this answer. He asserts that when society lacks a good common end this “freedom” can only degenerate into a battle of wills, public manipulation through marketing, concentrated power in the hands of few large corporations, and a steady increase in economic injustice and class inequalities. Without a life that is ordered toward helping life flourish, the desire to consume is internalized in our culture until we simply move from one manufactured desire for this or that product to another, never realizing that we are being controlled under the guise of liberation. After detailing and exposing the consumer trap in which we are caught, Cavanaugh provides concrete examples of how to overcome this spiral of idolatrous desire.

Although I am convinced by Cavanaugh’s thesis that desires must be rightly ordered toward helping life flourish if we are to resist being seduced by the market’s manipulations, his argument does not fully account for how our desires prevent or sustain the flourishing of nonhuman animal life. Upon learning about the nightmare that cattle endure in typical “beef” production, the author notes his decision to purchase grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free cattle from a local farmer. He makes this choice on the grounds that while the industrial “meat” industry hides the horrors and suffering of nonhuman animals, “all the information I need is available and transparent” on the small farm (31). This statement is open to challenge on at least two points.

First, Cavanaugh neglects to note that the small farmer is a part of a larger web that is largely beyond his control. When a cow gets an infection, organic farmers may withhold antibiotics even if the cow suffers tremendously to make sure their meat can be labeled organic. Moreover, there are common farming practices necessary to production – forced impregnation, castration, and others – that, while not horrific, inflict pain and limit the nonhuman animals’ ability to be free and to flourish.

The second point is that care for nonhuman animals within Cavanaugh’s

framework demands more than simply minimizing pain, and this requires questions and answers that are not as available and transparent as the author makes them seem. For example, why do we desire “meat” in the first place, and is it a rightly-ordered desire? Do we facilitate flourishing when we kill another living being to satiate a desire that is not only unnecessary for human survival but also damages our health? Given the state of our ecosystem and the growing awareness that all life on this planet hangs together on a precipice, Cavanaugh’s anthropocentric view of the common end is incompatible with his goal of overcoming idolatrous desire.

In response to the narrative of the market, Cavanaugh offers a counter story centered on the Catholic Eucharist. He argues that consumerism detaches the consumer from the process of production and from the people who produce our goods. Furthermore, our attachment to the goods themselves has decreased because we constantly abandon each product for the latest upgrade. Our pleasure comes from the pursuit of goods, from shopping itself, so a never-ending cycle of consumption ensues. The Catholic practice of the Eucharist provides a counterweight to this frenzy by absorbing each person into a larger body. Instead of being fragmented individuals trapped in the non-stop game of pursuing the latest trinkets, we become a community shaped into the Body of Christ.

Cavanaugh’s account should provide a lot of thought for Mennonites as to how Mennonite worship shapes us into people capable of resisting consumerism. We do not have a Catholic practice or theology of the Eucharist, and I am not convinced that if we did it would be adequate. But how does our worship shape us? What have we lost or gained that might be useful in giving an account of our own?

One of the most powerful practices that Cavanaugh mentions in this book, but does not give enough attention to, is making our own stuff (57). Instead of buying free trade and relocating consumerism to a new though better corporation, making our own clothes, growing our own food, and playing our own music can shape us to be producers who have learned the value of production through doing it and who question the industrial technological society itself. Simply moving from one type of industrial, gadget-hungry model to a “fair trade” version is not enough. We have to

question it at its core. Maybe backwards is forwards. Cavanaugh provides a good base for starting to find out.

Andy Alexis-Baker, PhD student, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, eds. *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Seeking the Identity of Jesus presents the fruit of a three-year research project sponsored by Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry and conceived as a sequel to *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Intended to address the profusion of popular images of Jesus, the project seeks not to distinguish an "historical" Jesus from the church's canon and creed but instead to investigate ways in which the latter might actually serve to clarify Jesus' identity (5). With this in mind, the analogy of choice is not the archaeological dig (where the "real" Jesus awaits unearthing) but the pilgrimage (where various "reports" anticipate a common destination), and the effect is not a recovery but an encounter via the diversity of canonical witness and church tradition.

Toward this end, editors Beverly Gaventa and Richard Hays divide the collected essays into three groups. In the first, William Placher, Robert Jenson, Markus Bockmuehl, Dale Allison, and Francis Watson endeavor to lay a methodological foundation that undoes the traditional disjunct of "Jesus of history" and "Christ of faith." Particularly representative is Allison's reassertion of the relevance of Jesus' "history of influence," canonical and otherwise, for an understanding of his identity (94).

The second and third groupings follow, which is to say they represent the working out of this proposal: Dale Allison, Joel Marcus, Beverly Gaventa, and Marianne Thompson assess the identity of Jesus in the four gospels; Richard Hays and Katherine Grieb consider the "story" of Christ in the letters of Paul and the "sermon" of Hebrews respectively, and Gary Anderson and Walter Moberly discuss the christological resonance of Moses, Jonah, and Isaiah. Brian Daley, David Steinmetz, Katherine Sonderegger, and Sarah

Coakley then shift attention to the testimony of the church, exploring in turn the identity of Jesus in patristic theology (via Irenaeus, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor), in the early Reformation debate over the nature of the Eucharist, in the act of Christian worship, and in the practice of mercy to the poor. Coakley's argument that the recognition of Jesus demands the "sustaining matrix" (311) and "cumulative tangle" (316) of Christian practice – especially vis-à-vis the poor – represents the collection's most adventurous moment, but the epistemic transformation she envisions embodies well the project's creative edge.

Next to the wandering sage and/or mysterious guru of popular consumption, *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* gives no neat summary of the identity of Jesus: "no 'sound-bite' Jesus can ever be faithful to the evidence," Gaventa and Hays conclude, "because the testimony of the variety of witnesses to Jesus – past, present, and future – cannot be collapsed..." (324). The collection's embrace of rich complexity proceeds rather under the sign of identity. Whatever else it is, Jesus' "identity" is a social product (Allison's words) that necessarily includes Jesus' own (continuing) reception history among his followers, then and now. This is the crux of the project, and a timely and productive contribution. What the individual essays contribute substantively regarding the identity of Jesus in the Gospels, for instance, or in the letters of Paul, will no doubt be found a helpful orientation to their study; but this identification of the church's ongoing tradition as the privileged locus of encounter promises a basic reorientation of the scholarly discourse surrounding Jesus.

Tensions undoubtedly remain. The traditional quest for the historical Jesus remains methodologically relevant, whether "first half of an incomplete sentence" (95) or "antidote" (113), but it is not at all clear what substantive difference its demands make in the subsequent collation of canonical witness and church testimony. At very least, how precisely the Jesus we know "through Scripture" relates to the Jesus we know "through the creeds" and the Jesus we know "through practice" deserves more sustained discussion. The volume concludes with a welcome affirmation of diversity and complexity (324), yet in its introduction summarily excludes everything extracanonical from the relevant history of reception, and this on historical grounds (14). Rhetorical celebration of canonical diversity seems similarly threatened by

the apparent uniformity of “the church” and its singular testimony. Still, this collection offers an important corrective to the modern critical paradigm that underlies the traditional quest, and in this it promises an opportunity for increased precision and perception in the study of Jesus.

Rene Baergen, Biblical Dept., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Ellen Hodgson Brown. *Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System And How We Can Break Free*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Third Millennium Press, 2008.

People concerned about social justice need this book! In *Web of Debt*, Ellen Brown provides an extraordinarily compelling and vivid analysis of one of the most crucial yet least understood of the major social problems that currently imperil humanity. She exposes and explains the hidden workings of our money system. The problems deriving from this system pervade and worsen the whole range of social problems that confront us globally. Brown shows how the money system has a devastating impact, but also how it could be transformed to provide powerful impetus for needed social change.

The great majority of social activists who have worked diligently for many years to overcome a wide variety of social problems, striving to achieve social justice and peace, know almost nothing about the workings of the money system. For many years I have been among such activists, and have seen how our analyses of social problems – poverty, environmental destruction, and war, in all their many manifestations – have omitted any reference to it. Our goals have been worthy. But our analyses have been weakened and our strategies often ill-conceived because we have failed to understand or to confront the potent realities of the money system.

Our ignorance is not surprising. The workings of the money system have been carefully obscured from public scrutiny and understanding by those in the private banking system who control it. In the Foreword to *Web of Debt*, Reed Simpson, a veteran banker, writes: “I can report that even most bankers are not aware of what goes on behind closed doors at the top of their field.... I am more familiar than most with the issues raised in [Brown’s

book] and I still found it to be an eye-opener, a remarkable window into what is really going on.... [The way our money system functions] has been the focus of a highly sophisticated and long-term disinformation campaign that permeates academia, media, and publishing. The complexity of the subject has been intentionally exploited to keep its mysteries hidden” (ix).

At the heart of Brown’s revelations is her explanation of the source of our money. It is no longer based in any way on gold. Nor, as is almost universally assumed, is it supplied by governments. Some 97 percent of the money supply in capitalist economies around the world is created out of nothing by private commercial banks in their process of making loans. Banks do not lend out the money of depositors, as is also widely assumed. As they make loans, the banks create *new* money that is added to the total amount of money in circulation.

Huge problems result. Especially notable is the fact that, when the banks supply almost all the money essential for our economic transactions, they create money for the principal of the loans but do not for the interest that they invariably require to be paid. They create only debt-money. And they impose a demand impossible for us to meet collectively! Money to pay interest is simply not available. In order to make payments that include both interest and principal, people are driven to compete with each other, “to fight with each other in order to survive” (31). People must continue borrowing from the banks, further increasing their indebtedness. Inevitably some borrowers default, enabling the banks to take over their collateral. The few favored in this system become ever more wealthy, while many are impoverished.

Much more analysis of the dynamics of this system is provided in the book. The abuses perpetrated through our money system are possible only because governments have been manipulated into allowing private banks to control the system. Governments at the federal level could be using their own powers for money creation to provide interest-free loans for much-needed infrastructure, and, as the economy expands, could not only lend but spend debt-free money into existence to provide public services. Brown explains how the alternative of democratically controlled government-created money could make enormously creative contributions to human welfare.

Dealing primarily with US history, Brown describes successful cases

of government-created money – as in colonial Pennsylvania under Benjamin Franklin, and in the Civil War with the greenbacks – and shows how private banking interests fought constantly to control the US money system.

Brown’s book is an antidote to our ignorance of the money system, as is also her website: webofdebt.com.

George Crowell, Department of Religious Studies (ret.), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario

Marlene Epp. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008.

Marlene Epp has written a history of Canadian Mennonite women over the course of the past three centuries, ending in 1980. This refreshing work orients Canadian Mennonite historiography towards questions of gender in a fashion that, while grounded in extensive research into primary and archival sources, is nonetheless an effective synthesis of a complex subject. As such, it is neither a theological treatment of “power” or “gender” nor an over-specialized monograph, but rather a straightforward, brilliantly researched, and well-argued history of a topic gaining in coverage that now has its own attempt at a survey. Having set a high standard for Canadian Mennonite women’s studies in her earlier book, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000), Epp continues her masterful command of the field with this volume.

The author divides the book into five chapters, arranged thematically, each of which opens with an historical vignette clarifying the theme and interpretive methodology to follow. The chapters are organized around themes of immigration as pioneers, refugees and transnationals; family life as wives and mothers; religious life as preachers, prophets, and missionaries; worldly life as citizens, nonresisters and nonconformists; and, finally, living in a material world of quilts, canned goods, and the written word. Throughout the book, Epp provides an even-handed account of Mennonite

women's life based on her extensive research bringing to light women's experiences, often in their own words.

Epp introduces the volume with a helpful historiographical survey of the topic, in addition to making clear her own social location and how she will be working not so much with theology as with history. On this point, she summarizes how religion cannot be ignored when working with an ethno-religious group. Interestingly, she adds the caveat when discussing the influence of Harold S. Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision" that we must remember that it is not directly connected to women's experience, dealing as it does with American Mennonites joining the military during World War II (13). While that is an obvious point to make, Epp is quite strong when explicating her methodology and her hopes for the book, which is designed both to inform and inspire students while learning of historical Mennonite women's experiences to envision also relationships and institutions not given to gender inequality or discrimination (18-19).

While Epp's well-articulated hope for this volume might indicate a polemic in the making, she has written an exceptionally well-researched book and a well-reasoned interpretation. Throughout she demonstrates that Canadian Mennonite women were never without history, that they were always engaged in their communities, both religious and in the wider world, all the while exercising historical agency. The chapters progress fluidly as she defines women's experience by roles imposed and roles taken on. Her work on the conundrum of nonconformity and non-resistance in Mennonite women's experiences is especially significant as it exposes, perhaps counter-intuitively for some, how a theology of peace can become a seedbed of inequality (chapter 4).

Ultimately, Epp has done an important service by broadening Canadian Mennonite historiography and treatment of gender beyond localized studies to a national treatment that simultaneously brings to light a plethora of primary and archival sources. She balances historical detail with broader interpretations with seeming ease and in persuasive prose. Throughout she presents the experiences of women as diverse, heterodox, and embodying myriad perspectives, actions, and responses to their varied contexts.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in, or taking university courses involving, questions of church and society, gender, and the Canadian

experiences of immigration and assimilation. This is a rich resource useful for undergraduates, graduates, and teachers alike. The book's scope and self-imposed limits are reasonable and effective, and this reader looks forward to when a similar study can be written of the 1980s and 1990s.

Brian Froese, Assistant Professor of History, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David Van Heemst. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Few books are as timely or as prophetic as *Hope in Troubled Times*. Writing prior to the global economic meltdown in 2008 that caused international financial institutions to shudder, the authors warned about the volatility of the financial markets before it was fashionable to do so. They also noted the potentially catastrophic impact of other challenges such as environmental degradation, ideologically based conflict, global poverty, and insecurity.

The book opens with words that cogently and succinctly explain its premise: “[O]ur world seems to live under the curse of scrambling for solutions but not finding them” (15). The authors begin by rejecting the notion that human ingenuity can keep ahead of escalating global challenges simply by resorting to raw intelligence. They also dispute the premise that solutions which worked for past crises are adequate to enable humanity to adapt to harsh new realities. Instead, they argue that “many of today’s problems seem to have developed immunity to our well-intended solutions. They have become like viruses that resist medicine or like pests that have developed a defense against pesticide” (31).

One of the most insightful discussions pertains to the development, impact, and ripple effect of ideologies. Citing six phases of developed ideologies, the authors explain how ideologies have evolved at periods in history to justify the oppression of one people by another. While not explicitly using the language of the current “war on terror,” or significantly applying

their perspective directly to the Iraq or Afghanistan wars (mentioned on only 14 of 205 pages of text), they provide language for explaining how these conflicts have been sold to the Western world in ideological terms, and what the impact of an ideological rationale can be.

When an ideology defines a goal to be an absolute end, anything that gets in the way of it becomes evil, say the authors. Those who oppose evil are by definition good, “even if their actions result in other people suffering under cruel treatment. How close, in our view,” the authors conclude, “this lies to the demonic” (34). These statements reflect on the danger of justice and compassion being removed from discourse about contentious issues and are worth much rumination. This volume is a prophetic call to re-examine our tendency to absolutize good and evil.

Although articulating this sobering message of potential global crises comprises most of the book – which even the authors admit is “hardly uplifting” (169) – this massive dose of tough love frames the most urgent issues and stresses why these concerns must be taken seriously now. It sets the stage for suggesting a way forward. All is not lost. Rather, the authors testify they are inspired by an “enduring conviction that there is real hope for our troubled, mired world – genuine, concrete hope that deeply engages global poverty, environmental destruction, and widespread violence” (16).

This hope comes from a commitment to “live justly, to love our neighbors, and to take care of God’s creation as good stewards” (127). These actions may not seem powerful in and of themselves, but they can start a process that begins to undermine harmful ideologies that for too long have dominated social, economic, and political discourse.

This is one of the most challenging and readable books I have come across in many years. It is well written, logical, persuasive, and coherent. It inspires readers not to lose hope and to continue to work for peace and justice even though they cannot be assured of success. *Hope in Troubled Times* speaks with a common voice and effectively avoids the dissonance so often present in manuscripts with multiple authors. It is essential reading for anyone concerned about the rising tide of the seemingly intractable problems facing our globe – and the apparent impossibility that one person can do anything impactful about them. It could easily be used as a textbook in college or university courses.

Lowell Ewert, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario

Thomas P. Scheck. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.

In the lively and sometimes rancorous debate over justification that has rippled throughout the Christian world, all roads, it seems, lead back to the sixteenth century. Since the 1999 joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on Justification by Faith, new energy has poured into the conversation.¹ Even before that, descendants of the Anabaptists likewise engaged the theme. Dutch Mennonite theologian Sjouke Voolstra wrote that “Anabaptists always interpreted justification in the light of sanctification.”² J. Denny Weaver and Gerald Mast recently reflected on the views of justification of Denck, Hut, Hubmaier, and Marpeck, asserting that Sattler “affirms Lutheran justification by faith but also, in line with Catholic thought, stresses that faith will result in good works.”³

Thomas Scheck’s book makes the case that all who think this conversation matters must travel much further back in the Christian story. Indeed, he argues that Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* has influenced Christian thought on justification into the 16th-century Reformation and beyond. Further, the third-century Alexandrian’s readings of Romans were both close to Paul and remarkably relevant to 21st-century discussions.

As the first English translator of Origen’s Romans commentary,⁴ Scheck carries the credentials to back up his argument. In clear and readable prose, he makes accessible not only to patristics scholars but also to other theologians, biblical scholars, and interested lay readers the exegetical questions at stake and the history of reception that marks Origen’s influence down through the centuries. (Noting that virtually our only access to Origen’s great commentary is through the Latin translation of the fourth-century Rufinus, Scheck usually provides the Latin in text or footnote for

those who find that helpful.)

In chapter one Scheck lays out Origen's definition of justification with a "Trinitarian stress": "From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature" (CRm 4.9.192-98). Unity and synthesis of faith and works seem "to be an overriding theme" of the commentary. While the good thief of Luke 23 was justified by faith alone, because he "had no opportunity to be justified by his subsequent good works," for the most part good works must be visible "as the necessary fruit of justification."

Subsequent chapters demonstrate the borrowings from Origen and the debates with him of Pelagius, Augustine, William of St. Thierry (a 12th-century Cistercian monk), Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, and several post-Reformation theologians. In chapter two, Scheck notes that Origen and Pelagius both accepted what has become part of scholarship's "new perspective" on Paul: that Paul's great letter reflects his awareness of a dispute between Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

Although each chapter has its own fascinating insights, many readers will be most drawn to Scheck's discussion of Augustine and the 16th-century reformers. Chapter three tackles the question of Augustine's use of and challenge to Origen's commentary. The Pelagian controversy late in his life turned Augustine's reading of Romans to original sin, human powerlessness, and predestination in ways that have shaped much later Western Christian thought. However, according to Scheck, both Origen and Augustine "appeal to James as a means of correcting a false understanding of Paul" on faith and works, agreeing that faith is "a foundation on which works are built." Likewise, chapter five notes that Erasmus's devotional work *Enchiridion* "was infused with citations" from Origen's commentary, and his comment on Romans 6:4 echoed Origen: "Dead to our former sins and living now the new life, let us follow in the footsteps of piety."

Scheck notes, on the other hand, that Melancthon made "Origen's doctrine of justification an integral part of his decadence theory of Church history." Since descendants of the Anabaptists have sometimes been tempted by that same theory, Scheck's book is a must-read for anyone who may have agreed with Menno (quoting Luther) that Origen was "the falsest explainer of the Scriptures."⁵ Rather, readers considering this work will hear echoes of

Origen in Menno's call for biblical readings assuming a full-orbed practical understanding of justification.⁶

¹ The complete text of the joint declaration is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. See also Trevin Wax, compiler, "The Justification Debate: A Primer," in *Christianity Today* 53:6 (June 2009), 34-35; N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 246-52.

² Sjouke Voolstra, "Free and Perfect: Justification and Sanctification in Anabaptist Perspective," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 5.3 (Fall 1987): 225.

³ Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver, *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009), 45-46.

⁴ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., Thomas P. Scheck, trans. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001-2002).

⁵ Menno Simons, "Christian Baptism," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* [CWMS] (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 279.

⁶ Menno, "True Christian Faith," in CWMS, 333.

Nancy Heisey, Bible and Religion Department, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Miguel A. De La Torre. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethic of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

Miguel A. De La Torre, who is on the faculty of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, has written a challenging, provocative volume based on a reading of the book of Jonah and includes an engaging, brief contemporary social analysis in order to place this reading in the modern context.

De La Torre was once asked if any reading of Jonah considers Jonah's message from the perspective of "the margins of society" (ix). His work attempts to respond to his observation that he knew of no such work. In the introduction, he lays out one of his primary arguments: Jonah is a book about reconciliation. His reading presents this as reconciliation in a context of unequal distribution of power – as exemplified by the Israelite, Jonah,

facing Nineveh, symbolic of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires that were ancient bitter, oppressive enemies. The author is well aware of the potential for manipulating themes of “reconciliation” as a way for the powerful to try to get the oppressed to resign themselves to their subordinated fate.

“It is important to recognize that those who benefit from the present power structures cannot be relied upon to define reconciliation,” says the author, “or to determine how to go about achieving it” (2). He advocates no cheap “peace” that does not engage injustice: “A desire to ‘forgive and forget’ can bring about only a cheap reconciliation that sacrifices justice for the sake of serenity” (5).

In a sense, De La Torre wants to read Jonah from “Jonah’s perspective” confronting Assyria, that of a subordinate confronting the powerful. In chapter one, after briefly discussing Assyrian brutality in the Ancient Near East, he begins his read through the book. His analysis is largely literary, drawing only occasionally from contemporary historical-critical commentary. One main source is Rabbinic legends about aspects of Jonah.

In chapter two, “Who was Jonah, What was Nineveh?” De La Torre reads Jonah and Nineveh as models of the oppressed and the socio-economic realities of that oppression in the 18th to 20th centuries of the European and American West. Characteristically, his strongest focus is on the racialized borders of modern socio-economic systems within the US historical context. He is rather dismissive of attempts to work “within the system,” because the system itself must be transformed. What it is to be transformed into is not so clear, short of frequent calls for a “redistribution of income.”

Chapter three, “Reflecting on Jonah,” brings together the author’s profound interest in reconciliation as a Christian reality with the difficult “praxis” of justice – reconciliation never cancels the need for change, in his reading. Chapter four, “Praying through Jonah,” clarifies that reconciliation must be initiated only by the oppressed: “Those who presently benefit from the existing social order lack the objectivity and moral authority to define reconciliation or even recognize the need for reconciliation...” (88). The author seems to accept nothing short of revolutionary change for authentic reconciliation. This becomes problematic when he tends to minimize the courageous acts of individuals because they do not transform entire socio-economic systems. This sense of helplessness in the face of evil systems sets

up his sense of hopelessness in the final chapter.

Chapter five, “Pitfalls Jonah Should Avoid,” includes comments about internal politics in various ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as problems in dealing with Euro-Americans, who are largely not trusted for a credible analysis because “Euroamerican Christians, either from the fundamentalist right or the far liberal left, probably have more in common with each other and understand each other better than they do Christians on the other side of the racial and ethnic divide” (125). So great is the task of social transformation and so little the will to do it that De La Torre despairs of its ever taking place even in his grandchildren’s generation (143).

In the final chapter, “Case Studies,” the author offers stories of attempts by individuals to seek social change and raises questions about each case. For example, the first case describes recent Native-American reactions to the Columbus Day celebrations in Denver, and asks the reader to consider what forms of protest or response would have been appropriate, given that Native groups were denied most opportunities for legal, peaceful protest. A second case describes Daryl Davis, an African-American, who attempted to make contact with members of the Ku Klux Klan in order to force a dialogue on racism. He even managed to make friends, leading some members to leave the Klan after long conversations with him. These and other cases are intended to raise questions about the individual actions of people of color, but one is left wondering if these studies are signs of hope or of futility, given De La Torre’s previous analysis.

Reading as a Quaker informed by Anabaptist theology, I honor individual acts of faith – attempts to live an alternative reality within the rigid systems of oppression – and that same Anabaptist conscience sometimes wonders if this is the best to be hoped for. I will not minimize or trivialize such individual actions only because they fall short of the revolution. Further, I am not in sympathy with an exclusively racialized social analysis that refuses to consider the potential bridge-building (and recognition of historical realities) that are served by a more thorough-going class analysis. Finally, I am concerned with De La Torre’s tendencies to homogenize the very different experiences of Latino, Asian, Native, and African-Americans. “People of color” is becoming a dubious generalization for social analysis.

My disagreements notwithstanding, I deeply appreciate De La Torre’s

fascinating meditations on the socio-economic contexts of a modern reading of Jonah.

Daniel Smith-Christopher, Dept. of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Ted Lewis, ed. *Electing Not to Vote: Christian Reflections on Reasons for Not Voting*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

This volume takes up an interesting and important question: Might Christians faithfully abstain from voting? This is a provocative question in a culture which assumes that voting is a civic responsibility, even (perhaps especially) for Christians. As the essays collected here demonstrate, it is a question that should be asked and discussed carefully in our faith communities.

The essays are uniform in their affirmation that it is possible, and sometimes desirable, for Christians to abstain from voting. The nine contributors make the case for abstention from voting in a variety of ways from a rich array of Christian perspectives.

Indeed, one of the book's most interesting features is the breadth of ecclesial perspectives represented. Authors come from Mennonite, Pentecostal, Catholic, Baptist, and intentional Christian community traditions, and they write from, and sometimes to, those communities. Central to the conversation is how our identity as Christians is shaped by our political participation and how we are to understand the dual nature of our citizenship.

The authors offer a wide range of critiques of voting. Some reflect personally on their experiences of voting and participating in electoral politics, and suggest that the process damages their Christian discipleship. For instance, Michael Degan rejects voting in part "because of who I become in order to win" (61). Others share a concern about how the polarized politics of American presidential elections have affected conversations in our churches. John D. Roth's well-known essay, which begins the collection, is the best example of this concern. Others offer critiques of the candidates we

have to choose from, the US Electoral College system, and the way electoral rules and processes affect outcomes.

Perhaps the most critical difference among the contributors is on whether or not voting should be the norm for Christians. Michael Degan, Tato Sumantri, Ted Lewis, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Nekeisha Alexis-Baker offer strong rejections of voting. For these authors, not voting is apparently the norm. In contrast, for John D. Roth, G. Scott Becker, and Todd Whitmore voting is assumed to be the norm, and not voting is a selective step that should be taken after careful deliberation.

Whitmore reflects on the two candidates in the 2004 US presidential election, ultimately arguing that both George W. Bush and John Kerry advocated policies that violated fundamental principles of Catholic teaching and, as a result, not voting was his obligation. But he argues that this obligation “does not spill over to another election” (79) and concludes by noting that he is “undecided about whether I will vote in the 2008 election, pending a hearing of the views of the candidates” (80). Many of the authors in this collection need no such hearing.

The essays are strongly uniform in advocating a form of political participation that goes beyond voting. In fact, most of them argue that voting is insufficient participation in civic life. Thus in their call for abstention from voting, the authors are not calling for a withdrawal or retreat from participation in the life of the *polis*. Instead, they call for a different kind of engagement, as Roth writes, not allowing “narrow definitions of ‘political involvement’ to set the terms” for how Christians care for society (8). Instead of the apathy and cynicism that leads most Americans not to vote, these authors call for what Lewis terms an “active refraining” that “leads to proactive engagement” (114).

The volume is intentionally limited to presidential elections in the United States. It falls to others to work out what faithful political participation looks like in other countries and contexts. It also falls to others to articulate the possibilities of electoral participation at more local levels (though Degan explicitly rejects voting at other levels as well). The essays are well written and not overly technical. The volume is suitable for churches and lay audiences where it should be read and carefully considered; it is an

important entry into a difficult but critically important conversation about faithful political engagement.

Victor J. Hinojosa, Political Science Dept., Baylor University, Waco, Texas

How Do Stories Save Us? An Essay on the Question with the Theological Hermeneutics of David Tracy in View. Scott Holland. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

In this erudite, dense, and artful text, Bethany Theological Seminary professor Scott Holland takes the reader – as the back cover says – “on an intellectual adventure through narrative theology, literary criticism, poetics, ritual studies and aesthetics in the composition of a theology of culture.”

Throughout the text, the work of revisionist theologian David Tracy is “in view.” Tracy, a Catholic priest and active professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, is the author of well-known texts including *The Analogical Imagination* and *On Naming the Present*. Holland’s book concludes with a 10-page bibliography of Tracy’s writings plus a more general bibliography, including 18 books and essays by Paul Ricoeur and 8 articles by Holland.

Holland works particularly with what he refers to as two emerging self-corrective foci in Tracy’s public theology (i.e., theology that is “always involved in complex and interesting relationships with diverse historical and social realities”): “a hermeneutics in which the ‘other’ not the ‘self’ is the dominant focus; and a theological insistence that only a mystical-prophetic model of theology can save us” (35-36).

In terms of narrative theology, Holland casts his lot with Tracy and others representing the University of Chicago narrative school rather than with those representing what might be called the Yale school (e.g., George Lindbeck, Hans Frei). The latter, says Holland, see the church as the sole reference of theology (58). In that schema, the world “becomes an *object* of theological description and prophetic critique, rarely a rich and mystical *source* for imaginative and revisionary theological thought and writing”

(98). For Yale-ish narrativists, biblical narratives “catch the reader up into the sacred world of the text,” as the Bible “absorb[s] the world into its unique world” (78). It is this Yale-based form of narrative theology that has been most influential for recent mainstream Anabaptists, as mediated largely through the work of Stanley Hauerwas. Holland says one might excuse a fundamentalist for advocating for this sort of “sectarian imagination in defense of her tribal gods and goods.... But for a post-critical Christian theorist who values close readings and thick descriptions to retreat from the public square into the world of the text, pretending she has found a separate, autonomous world, is not only bad faith, it is bad fiction” (101).

In contrast, Tracy and others see the world “as a complex *source* for theology and not simply its *object*” (58). “While Yale theologians seem most interested in keeping their community’s story straight,” says Holland, “those drawn to the work of David Tracy and the Chicago school are much more interested in doing theology while listening to other people’s stories” (98). Such a theology will then be pluralistic, interdisciplinary, intertextual (rather than intratextual, as for the Yale theologians), and revisionary. Here the theologian “brings the texts, traditions, and practices of her community into conversation with others, especially communities of difference, in the search for greater insight, understanding, humane presence and connection with the divine” (98-99).

Elsewhere Holland argues the increasingly accepted view that humans are constituted both narratively and performatively, i.e., through ritual (153-78). He sensibly proposes that for Anabaptists and other low-church Protestants to develop a theory of symbol and ritual that might lead their communities toward Ricoeur’s “second naivete” in relation to religious symbolism, such transformation will come not through studying traditional theological arguments of sacramentologists but through discovering how symbolic activity is co-natural with the human person, emerging from ordinary experience (177).

How Do Stories Save Us? will most engage those already immersed in postmodern theological critiques. Illustrating the background one may need, a not atypical selection reads: “Following Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, Tracy’s theological agenda has been to rethink the dialectical relationship between language and experience. His program moves beyond

the Schleiermacher – Tillich – Rahner – Lonergan experiential paradigm to an explicitly hermeneutical one” (82). Some readers may stumble through more complex portions of the book, though most will appreciate Holland’s more accessible commentaries on narrative theology and rituals. His chapter “When Art and Ritual Embrace and Kiss” (179-230) is moving at points, thanks to some embedded autobiographical flourishes and assertions of faith.

Just under half of the 241-page text, which began as Holland’s dissertation at Duquesne University, has been published before as discrete essays in journals or books. The core of Holland’s argument, from “How Do Stories Save Us,” through chapters titled “Theology is a Kind of Writing,” “Even the Postmodern Story Has a Body,” and “Signifying Presence” have appeared in *Louvain Studies*, *Cross Currents*, and an edited volume, *The Presence of Transcendence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). A few odd, distracting editing issues have made it into the present text, likely due to its various embodiments over 16 years.

For David Tracy followers, this is an illuminating supplemental text. Those interested more broadly in narrative theology also will benefit from a few of the middle chapters, though they likely will be less engaged with the text’s first 70 pages. Students of postmodernity and aesthetically sensitive readers will be especially appreciative of Holland’s work.

Keith Graber Miller, Chair, Bible, Religion and Philosophy, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

What is “freedom”? According to free-market ideology, we are free when the state limits its interference in economic transactions. Using Augustine, William Cavanaugh challenges this answer. He asserts that when society lacks a good common end this “freedom” can only degenerate into a battle of wills, public manipulation through marketing, concentrated power in the hands of few large corporations, and a steady increase in economic injustice and class inequalities. Without a life that is ordered toward helping life flourish, the desire to consume is internalized in our culture until we simply move from one manufactured desire for this or that product to another, never realizing that we are being controlled under the guise of liberation. After detailing and exposing the consumer trap in which we are caught, Cavanaugh provides concrete examples of how to overcome this spiral of idolatrous desire.

Although I am convinced by Cavanaugh’s thesis that desires must be rightly ordered toward helping life flourish if we are to resist being seduced by the market’s manipulations, his argument does not fully account for how our desires prevent or sustain the flourishing of nonhuman animal life. Upon learning about the nightmare that cattle endure in typical “beef” production, the author notes his decision to purchase grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free cattle from a local farmer. He makes this choice on the grounds that while the industrial “meat” industry hides the horrors and suffering of nonhuman animals, “all the information I need is available and transparent” on the small farm (31). This statement is open to challenge on at least two points.

First, Cavanaugh neglects to note that the small farmer is a part of a larger web that is largely beyond his control. When a cow gets an infection, organic farmers may withhold antibiotics even if the cow suffers tremendously to make sure their meat can be labeled organic. Moreover, there are common farming practices necessary to production – forced impregnation, castration, and others – that, while not horrific, inflict pain and limit the nonhuman animals’ ability to be free and to flourish.

The second point is that care for nonhuman animals within Cavanaugh’s

framework demands more than simply minimizing pain, and this requires questions and answers that are not as available and transparent as the author makes them seem. For example, why do we desire “meat” in the first place, and is it a rightly-ordered desire? Do we facilitate flourishing when we kill another living being to satiate a desire that is not only unnecessary for human survival but also damages our health? Given the state of our ecosystem and the growing awareness that all life on this planet hangs together on a precipice, Cavanaugh’s anthropocentric view of the common end is incompatible with his goal of overcoming idolatrous desire.

In response to the narrative of the market, Cavanaugh offers a counter story centered on the Catholic Eucharist. He argues that consumerism detaches the consumer from the process of production and from the people who produce our goods. Furthermore, our attachment to the goods themselves has decreased because we constantly abandon each product for the latest upgrade. Our pleasure comes from the pursuit of goods, from shopping itself, so a never-ending cycle of consumption ensues. The Catholic practice of the Eucharist provides a counterweight to this frenzy by absorbing each person into a larger body. Instead of being fragmented individuals trapped in the non-stop game of pursuing the latest trinkets, we become a community shaped into the Body of Christ.

Cavanaugh’s account should provide a lot of thought for Mennonites as to how Mennonite worship shapes us into people capable of resisting consumerism. We do not have a Catholic practice or theology of the Eucharist, and I am not convinced that if we did it would be adequate. But how does our worship shape us? What have we lost or gained that might be useful in giving an account of our own?

One of the most powerful practices that Cavanaugh mentions in this book, but does not give enough attention to, is making our own stuff (57). Instead of buying free trade and relocating consumerism to a new though better corporation, making our own clothes, growing our own food, and playing our own music can shape us to be producers who have learned the value of production through doing it and who question the industrial technological society itself. Simply moving from one type of industrial, gadget-hungry model to a “fair trade” version is not enough. We have to

question it at its core. Maybe backwards is forwards. Cavanaugh provides a good base for starting to find out.

Andy Alexis-Baker, PhD student, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, eds. *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Seeking the Identity of Jesus presents the fruit of a three-year research project sponsored by Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry and conceived as a sequel to *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Intended to address the profusion of popular images of Jesus, the project seeks not to distinguish an "historical" Jesus from the church's canon and creed but instead to investigate ways in which the latter might actually serve to clarify Jesus' identity (5). With this in mind, the analogy of choice is not the archaeological dig (where the "real" Jesus awaits unearthing) but the pilgrimage (where various "reports" anticipate a common destination), and the effect is not a recovery but an encounter via the diversity of canonical witness and church tradition.

Toward this end, editors Beverly Gaventa and Richard Hays divide the collected essays into three groups. In the first, William Placher, Robert Jenson, Markus Bockmuehl, Dale Allison, and Francis Watson endeavor to lay a methodological foundation that undoes the traditional disjunct of "Jesus of history" and "Christ of faith." Particularly representative is Allison's reassertion of the relevance of Jesus' "history of influence," canonical and otherwise, for an understanding of his identity (94).

The second and third groupings follow, which is to say they represent the working out of this proposal: Dale Allison, Joel Marcus, Beverly Gaventa, and Marianne Thompson assess the identity of Jesus in the four gospels; Richard Hays and Katherine Grieb consider the "story" of Christ in the letters of Paul and the "sermon" of Hebrews respectively, and Gary Anderson and Walter Moberly discuss the christological resonance of Moses, Jonah, and Isaiah. Brian Daley, David Steinmetz, Katherine Sonderegger, and Sarah

Coakley then shift attention to the testimony of the church, exploring in turn the identity of Jesus in patristic theology (via Irenaeus, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor), in the early Reformation debate over the nature of the Eucharist, in the act of Christian worship, and in the practice of mercy to the poor. Coakley's argument that the recognition of Jesus demands the "sustaining matrix" (311) and "cumulative tangle" (316) of Christian practice – especially vis-à-vis the poor – represents the collection's most adventurous moment, but the epistemic transformation she envisions embodies well the project's creative edge.

Next to the wandering sage and/or mysterious guru of popular consumption, *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* gives no neat summary of the identity of Jesus: "no 'sound-bite' Jesus can ever be faithful to the evidence," Gaventa and Hays conclude, "because the testimony of the variety of witnesses to Jesus – past, present, and future – cannot be collapsed..." (324). The collection's embrace of rich complexity proceeds rather under the sign of identity. Whatever else it is, Jesus' "identity" is a social product (Allison's words) that necessarily includes Jesus' own (continuing) reception history among his followers, then and now. This is the crux of the project, and a timely and productive contribution. What the individual essays contribute substantively regarding the identity of Jesus in the Gospels, for instance, or in the letters of Paul, will no doubt be found a helpful orientation to their study; but this identification of the church's ongoing tradition as the privileged locus of encounter promises a basic reorientation of the scholarly discourse surrounding Jesus.

Tensions undoubtedly remain. The traditional quest for the historical Jesus remains methodologically relevant, whether "first half of an incomplete sentence" (95) or "antidote" (113), but it is not at all clear what substantive difference its demands make in the subsequent collation of canonical witness and church testimony. At very least, how precisely the Jesus we know "through Scripture" relates to the Jesus we know "through the creeds" and the Jesus we know "through practice" deserves more sustained discussion. The volume concludes with a welcome affirmation of diversity and complexity (324), yet in its introduction summarily excludes everything extracanonical from the relevant history of reception, and this on historical grounds (14). Rhetorical celebration of canonical diversity seems similarly threatened by

the apparent uniformity of “the church” and its singular testimony. Still, this collection offers an important corrective to the modern critical paradigm that underlies the traditional quest, and in this it promises an opportunity for increased precision and perception in the study of Jesus.

Rene Baergen, Biblical Dept., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Ellen Hodgson Brown. *Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System And How We Can Break Free*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Third Millennium Press, 2008.

People concerned about social justice need this book! In *Web of Debt*, Ellen Brown provides an extraordinarily compelling and vivid analysis of one of the most crucial yet least understood of the major social problems that currently imperil humanity. She exposes and explains the hidden workings of our money system. The problems deriving from this system pervade and worsen the whole range of social problems that confront us globally. Brown shows how the money system has a devastating impact, but also how it could be transformed to provide powerful impetus for needed social change.

The great majority of social activists who have worked diligently for many years to overcome a wide variety of social problems, striving to achieve social justice and peace, know almost nothing about the workings of the money system. For many years I have been among such activists, and have seen how our analyses of social problems – poverty, environmental destruction, and war, in all their many manifestations – have omitted any reference to it. Our goals have been worthy. But our analyses have been weakened and our strategies often ill-conceived because we have failed to understand or to confront the potent realities of the money system.

Our ignorance is not surprising. The workings of the money system have been carefully obscured from public scrutiny and understanding by those in the private banking system who control it. In the Foreword to *Web of Debt*, Reed Simpson, a veteran banker, writes: “I can report that even most bankers are not aware of what goes on behind closed doors at the top of their field.... I am more familiar than most with the issues raised in [Brown’s

book] and I still found it to be an eye-opener, a remarkable window into what is really going on.... [The way our money system functions] has been the focus of a highly sophisticated and long-term disinformation campaign that permeates academia, media, and publishing. The complexity of the subject has been intentionally exploited to keep its mysteries hidden” (ix).

At the heart of Brown’s revelations is her explanation of the source of our money. It is no longer based in any way on gold. Nor, as is almost universally assumed, is it supplied by governments. Some 97 percent of the money supply in capitalist economies around the world is created out of nothing by private commercial banks in their process of making loans. Banks do not lend out the money of depositors, as is also widely assumed. As they make loans, the banks create *new* money that is added to the total amount of money in circulation.

Huge problems result. Especially notable is the fact that, when the banks supply almost all the money essential for our economic transactions, they create money for the principal of the loans but do not for the interest that they invariably require to be paid. They create only debt-money. And they impose a demand impossible for us to meet collectively! Money to pay interest is simply not available. In order to make payments that include both interest and principal, people are driven to compete with each other, “to fight with each other in order to survive” (31). People must continue borrowing from the banks, further increasing their indebtedness. Inevitably some borrowers default, enabling the banks to take over their collateral. The few favored in this system become ever more wealthy, while many are impoverished.

Much more analysis of the dynamics of this system is provided in the book. The abuses perpetrated through our money system are possible only because governments have been manipulated into allowing private banks to control the system. Governments at the federal level could be using their own powers for money creation to provide interest-free loans for much-needed infrastructure, and, as the economy expands, could not only lend but spend debt-free money into existence to provide public services. Brown explains how the alternative of democratically controlled government-created money could make enormously creative contributions to human welfare.

Dealing primarily with US history, Brown describes successful cases

of government-created money – as in colonial Pennsylvania under Benjamin Franklin, and in the Civil War with the greenbacks – and shows how private banking interests fought constantly to control the US money system.

Brown’s book is an antidote to our ignorance of the money system, as is also her website: webofdebt.com.

George Crowell, Department of Religious Studies (ret.), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario

Marlene Epp. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008.

Marlene Epp has written a history of Canadian Mennonite women over the course of the past three centuries, ending in 1980. This refreshing work orients Canadian Mennonite historiography towards questions of gender in a fashion that, while grounded in extensive research into primary and archival sources, is nonetheless an effective synthesis of a complex subject. As such, it is neither a theological treatment of “power” or “gender” nor an over-specialized monograph, but rather a straightforward, brilliantly researched, and well-argued history of a topic gaining in coverage that now has its own attempt at a survey. Having set a high standard for Canadian Mennonite women’s studies in her earlier book, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000), Epp continues her masterful command of the field with this volume.

The author divides the book into five chapters, arranged thematically, each of which opens with an historical vignette clarifying the theme and interpretive methodology to follow. The chapters are organized around themes of immigration as pioneers, refugees and transnationals; family life as wives and mothers; religious life as preachers, prophets, and missionaries; worldly life as citizens, nonresisters and nonconformists; and, finally, living in a material world of quilts, canned goods, and the written word. Throughout the book, Epp provides an even-handed account of Mennonite

women's life based on her extensive research bringing to light women's experiences, often in their own words.

Epp introduces the volume with a helpful historiographical survey of the topic, in addition to making clear her own social location and how she will be working not so much with theology as with history. On this point, she summarizes how religion cannot be ignored when working with an ethno-religious group. Interestingly, she adds the caveat when discussing the influence of Harold S. Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision" that we must remember that it is not directly connected to women's experience, dealing as it does with American Mennonites joining the military during World War II (13). While that is an obvious point to make, Epp is quite strong when explicating her methodology and her hopes for the book, which is designed both to inform and inspire students while learning of historical Mennonite women's experiences to envision also relationships and institutions not given to gender inequality or discrimination (18-19).

While Epp's well-articulated hope for this volume might indicate a polemic in the making, she has written an exceptionally well-researched book and a well-reasoned interpretation. Throughout she demonstrates that Canadian Mennonite women were never without history, that they were always engaged in their communities, both religious and in the wider world, all the while exercising historical agency. The chapters progress fluidly as she defines women's experience by roles imposed and roles taken on. Her work on the conundrum of nonconformity and non-resistance in Mennonite women's experiences is especially significant as it exposes, perhaps counter-intuitively for some, how a theology of peace can become a seedbed of inequality (chapter 4).

Ultimately, Epp has done an important service by broadening Canadian Mennonite historiography and treatment of gender beyond localized studies to a national treatment that simultaneously brings to light a plethora of primary and archival sources. She balances historical detail with broader interpretations with seeming ease and in persuasive prose. Throughout she presents the experiences of women as diverse, heterodox, and embodying myriad perspectives, actions, and responses to their varied contexts.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in, or taking university courses involving, questions of church and society, gender, and the Canadian

experiences of immigration and assimilation. This is a rich resource useful for undergraduates, graduates, and teachers alike. The book's scope and self-imposed limits are reasonable and effective, and this reader looks forward to when a similar study can be written of the 1980s and 1990s.

Brian Froese, Assistant Professor of History, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David Van Heemst. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Few books are as timely or as prophetic as *Hope in Troubled Times*. Writing prior to the global economic meltdown in 2008 that caused international financial institutions to shudder, the authors warned about the volatility of the financial markets before it was fashionable to do so. They also noted the potentially catastrophic impact of other challenges such as environmental degradation, ideologically based conflict, global poverty, and insecurity.

The book opens with words that cogently and succinctly explain its premise: “[O]ur world seems to live under the curse of scrambling for solutions but not finding them” (15). The authors begin by rejecting the notion that human ingenuity can keep ahead of escalating global challenges simply by resorting to raw intelligence. They also dispute the premise that solutions which worked for past crises are adequate to enable humanity to adapt to harsh new realities. Instead, they argue that “many of today’s problems seem to have developed immunity to our well-intended solutions. They have become like viruses that resist medicine or like pests that have developed a defense against pesticide” (31).

One of the most insightful discussions pertains to the development, impact, and ripple effect of ideologies. Citing six phases of developed ideologies, the authors explain how ideologies have evolved at periods in history to justify the oppression of one people by another. While not explicitly using the language of the current “war on terror,” or significantly applying

their perspective directly to the Iraq or Afghanistan wars (mentioned on only 14 of 205 pages of text), they provide language for explaining how these conflicts have been sold to the Western world in ideological terms, and what the impact of an ideological rationale can be.

When an ideology defines a goal to be an absolute end, anything that gets in the way of it becomes evil, say the authors. Those who oppose evil are by definition good, “even if their actions result in other people suffering under cruel treatment. How close, in our view,” the authors conclude, “this lies to the demonic” (34). These statements reflect on the danger of justice and compassion being removed from discourse about contentious issues and are worth much rumination. This volume is a prophetic call to re-examine our tendency to absolutize good and evil.

Although articulating this sobering message of potential global crises comprises most of the book – which even the authors admit is “hardly uplifting” (169) – this massive dose of tough love frames the most urgent issues and stresses why these concerns must be taken seriously now. It sets the stage for suggesting a way forward. All is not lost. Rather, the authors testify they are inspired by an “enduring conviction that there is real hope for our troubled, mired world – genuine, concrete hope that deeply engages global poverty, environmental destruction, and widespread violence” (16).

This hope comes from a commitment to “live justly, to love our neighbors, and to take care of God’s creation as good stewards” (127). These actions may not seem powerful in and of themselves, but they can start a process that begins to undermine harmful ideologies that for too long have dominated social, economic, and political discourse.

This is one of the most challenging and readable books I have come across in many years. It is well written, logical, persuasive, and coherent. It inspires readers not to lose hope and to continue to work for peace and justice even though they cannot be assured of success. *Hope in Troubled Times* speaks with a common voice and effectively avoids the dissonance so often present in manuscripts with multiple authors. It is essential reading for anyone concerned about the rising tide of the seemingly intractable problems facing our globe – and the apparent impossibility that one person can do anything impactful about them. It could easily be used as a textbook in college or university courses.

Lowell Ewert, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario

Thomas P. Scheck. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.

In the lively and sometimes rancorous debate over justification that has rippled throughout the Christian world, all roads, it seems, lead back to the sixteenth century. Since the 1999 joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on Justification by Faith, new energy has poured into the conversation.¹ Even before that, descendants of the Anabaptists likewise engaged the theme. Dutch Mennonite theologian Sjouke Voolstra wrote that “Anabaptists always interpreted justification in the light of sanctification.”² J. Denny Weaver and Gerald Mast recently reflected on the views of justification of Denck, Hut, Hubmaier, and Marpeck, asserting that Sattler “affirms Lutheran justification by faith but also, in line with Catholic thought, stresses that faith will result in good works.”³

Thomas Scheck's book makes the case that all who think this conversation matters must travel much further back in the Christian story. Indeed, he argues that Origen's *Commentary on Romans* has influenced Christian thought on justification into the 16th-century Reformation and beyond. Further, the third-century Alexandrian's readings of Romans were both close to Paul and remarkably relevant to 21st-century discussions.

As the first English translator of Origen's Romans commentary,⁴ Scheck carries the credentials to back up his argument. In clear and readable prose, he makes accessible not only to patristics scholars but also to other theologians, biblical scholars, and interested lay readers the exegetical questions at stake and the history of reception that marks Origen's influence down through the centuries. (Noting that virtually our only access to Origen's great commentary is through the Latin translation of the fourth-century Rufinus, Scheck usually provides the Latin in text or footnote for

those who find that helpful.)

In chapter one Scheck lays out Origen's definition of justification with a "Trinitarian stress": "From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature" (CRm 4.9.192-98). Unity and synthesis of faith and works seem "to be an overriding theme" of the commentary. While the good thief of Luke 23 was justified by faith alone, because he "had no opportunity to be justified by his subsequent good works," for the most part good works must be visible "as the necessary fruit of justification."

Subsequent chapters demonstrate the borrowings from Origen and the debates with him of Pelagius, Augustine, William of St. Thierry (a 12th-century Cistercian monk), Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, and several post-Reformation theologians. In chapter two, Scheck notes that Origen and Pelagius both accepted what has become part of scholarship's "new perspective" on Paul: that Paul's great letter reflects his awareness of a dispute between Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

Although each chapter has its own fascinating insights, many readers will be most drawn to Scheck's discussion of Augustine and the 16th-century reformers. Chapter three tackles the question of Augustine's use of and challenge to Origen's commentary. The Pelagian controversy late in his life turned Augustine's reading of Romans to original sin, human powerlessness, and predestination in ways that have shaped much later Western Christian thought. However, according to Scheck, both Origen and Augustine "appeal to James as a means of correcting a false understanding of Paul" on faith and works, agreeing that faith is "a foundation on which works are built." Likewise, chapter five notes that Erasmus's devotional work *Enchiridion* "was infused with citations" from Origen's commentary, and his comment on Romans 6:4 echoed Origen: "Dead to our former sins and living now the new life, let us follow in the footsteps of piety."

Scheck notes, on the other hand, that Melancthon made "Origen's doctrine of justification an integral part of his decadence theory of Church history." Since descendants of the Anabaptists have sometimes been tempted by that same theory, Scheck's book is a must-read for anyone who may have agreed with Menno (quoting Luther) that Origen was "the falsest explainer of the Scriptures."⁵ Rather, readers considering this work will hear echoes of

Origen in Menno's call for biblical readings assuming a full-orbed practical understanding of justification.⁶

¹ The complete text of the joint declaration is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. See also Trevin Wax, compiler, "The Justification Debate: A Primer," in *Christianity Today* 53:6 (June 2009), 34-35; N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 246-52.

² Sjouke Voolstra, "Free and Perfect: Justification and Sanctification in Anabaptist Perspective," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 5.3 (Fall 1987): 225.

³ Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver, *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009), 45-46.

⁴ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., Thomas P. Scheck, trans. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001-2002).

⁵ Menno Simons, "Christian Baptism," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* [CWMS] (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 279.

⁶ Menno, "True Christian Faith," in CWMS, 333.

Nancy Heisey, Bible and Religion Department, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Miguel A. De La Torre. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethic of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

Miguel A. De La Torre, who is on the faculty of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, has written a challenging, provocative volume based on a reading of the book of Jonah and includes an engaging, brief contemporary social analysis in order to place this reading in the modern context.

De La Torre was once asked if any reading of Jonah considers Jonah's message from the perspective of "the margins of society" (ix). His work attempts to respond to his observation that he knew of no such work. In the introduction, he lays out one of his primary arguments: Jonah is a book about reconciliation. His reading presents this as reconciliation in a context of unequal distribution of power – as exemplified by the Israelite, Jonah,

facing Nineveh, symbolic of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires that were ancient bitter, oppressive enemies. The author is well aware of the potential for manipulating themes of “reconciliation” as a way for the powerful to try to get the oppressed to resign themselves to their subordinated fate.

“It is important to recognize that those who benefit from the present power structures cannot be relied upon to define reconciliation,” says the author, “or to determine how to go about achieving it” (2). He advocates no cheap “peace” that does not engage injustice: “A desire to ‘forgive and forget’ can bring about only a cheap reconciliation that sacrifices justice for the sake of serenity” (5).

In a sense, De La Torre wants to read Jonah from “Jonah’s perspective” confronting Assyria, that of a subordinate confronting the powerful. In chapter one, after briefly discussing Assyrian brutality in the Ancient Near East, he begins his read through the book. His analysis is largely literary, drawing only occasionally from contemporary historical-critical commentary. One main source is Rabbinic legends about aspects of Jonah.

In chapter two, “Who was Jonah, What was Nineveh?” De La Torre reads Jonah and Nineveh as models of the oppressed and the socio-economic realities of that oppression in the 18th to 20th centuries of the European and American West. Characteristically, his strongest focus is on the racialized borders of modern socio-economic systems within the US historical context. He is rather dismissive of attempts to work “within the system,” because the system itself must be transformed. What it is to be transformed into is not so clear, short of frequent calls for a “redistribution of income.”

Chapter three, “Reflecting on Jonah,” brings together the author’s profound interest in reconciliation as a Christian reality with the difficult “praxis” of justice – reconciliation never cancels the need for change, in his reading. Chapter four, “Praying through Jonah,” clarifies that reconciliation must be initiated only by the oppressed: “Those who presently benefit from the existing social order lack the objectivity and moral authority to define reconciliation or even recognize the need for reconciliation...” (88). The author seems to accept nothing short of revolutionary change for authentic reconciliation. This becomes problematic when he tends to minimize the courageous acts of individuals because they do not transform entire socio-economic systems. This sense of helplessness in the face of evil systems sets

up his sense of hopelessness in the final chapter.

Chapter five, “Pitfalls Jonah Should Avoid,” includes comments about internal politics in various ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as problems in dealing with Euro-Americans, who are largely not trusted for a credible analysis because “Euroamerican Christians, either from the fundamentalist right or the far liberal left, probably have more in common with each other and understand each other better than they do Christians on the other side of the racial and ethnic divide” (125). So great is the task of social transformation and so little the will to do it that De La Torre despairs of its ever taking place even in his grandchildren’s generation (143).

In the final chapter, “Case Studies,” the author offers stories of attempts by individuals to seek social change and raises questions about each case. For example, the first case describes recent Native-American reactions to the Columbus Day celebrations in Denver, and asks the reader to consider what forms of protest or response would have been appropriate, given that Native groups were denied most opportunities for legal, peaceful protest. A second case describes Daryl Davis, an African-American, who attempted to make contact with members of the Ku Klux Klan in order to force a dialogue on racism. He even managed to make friends, leading some members to leave the Klan after long conversations with him. These and other cases are intended to raise questions about the individual actions of people of color, but one is left wondering if these studies are signs of hope or of futility, given De La Torre’s previous analysis.

Reading as a Quaker informed by Anabaptist theology, I honor individual acts of faith – attempts to live an alternative reality within the rigid systems of oppression – and that same Anabaptist conscience sometimes wonders if this is the best to be hoped for. I will not minimize or trivialize such individual actions only because they fall short of the revolution. Further, I am not in sympathy with an exclusively racialized social analysis that refuses to consider the potential bridge-building (and recognition of historical realities) that are served by a more thorough-going class analysis. Finally, I am concerned with De La Torre’s tendencies to homogenize the very different experiences of Latino, Asian, Native, and African-Americans. “People of color” is becoming a dubious generalization for social analysis.

My disagreements notwithstanding, I deeply appreciate De La Torre’s

fascinating meditations on the socio-economic contexts of a modern reading of Jonah.

Daniel Smith-Christopher, Dept. of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Ted Lewis, ed. *Electing Not to Vote: Christian Reflections on Reasons for Not Voting*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

This volume takes up an interesting and important question: Might Christians faithfully abstain from voting? This is a provocative question in a culture which assumes that voting is a civic responsibility, even (perhaps especially) for Christians. As the essays collected here demonstrate, it is a question that should be asked and discussed carefully in our faith communities.

The essays are uniform in their affirmation that it is possible, and sometimes desirable, for Christians to abstain from voting. The nine contributors make the case for abstention from voting in a variety of ways from a rich array of Christian perspectives.

Indeed, one of the book's most interesting features is the breadth of ecclesial perspectives represented. Authors come from Mennonite, Pentecostal, Catholic, Baptist, and intentional Christian community traditions, and they write from, and sometimes to, those communities. Central to the conversation is how our identity as Christians is shaped by our political participation and how we are to understand the dual nature of our citizenship.

The authors offer a wide range of critiques of voting. Some reflect personally on their experiences of voting and participating in electoral politics, and suggest that the process damages their Christian discipleship. For instance, Michael Degan rejects voting in part "because of who I become in order to win" (61). Others share a concern about how the polarized politics of American presidential elections have affected conversations in our churches. John D. Roth's well-known essay, which begins the collection, is the best example of this concern. Others offer critiques of the candidates we

have to choose from, the US Electoral College system, and the way electoral rules and processes affect outcomes.

Perhaps the most critical difference among the contributors is on whether or not voting should be the norm for Christians. Michael Degan, Tato Sumantri, Ted Lewis, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Nekeisha Alexis-Baker offer strong rejections of voting. For these authors, not voting is apparently the norm. In contrast, for John D. Roth, G. Scott Becker, and Todd Whitmore voting is assumed to be the norm, and not voting is a selective step that should be taken after careful deliberation.

Whitmore reflects on the two candidates in the 2004 US presidential election, ultimately arguing that both George W. Bush and John Kerry advocated policies that violated fundamental principles of Catholic teaching and, as a result, not voting was his obligation. But he argues that this obligation “does not spill over to another election” (79) and concludes by noting that he is “undecided about whether I will vote in the 2008 election, pending a hearing of the views of the candidates” (80). Many of the authors in this collection need no such hearing.

The essays are strongly uniform in advocating a form of political participation that goes beyond voting. In fact, most of them argue that voting is insufficient participation in civic life. Thus in their call for abstention from voting, the authors are not calling for a withdrawal or retreat from participation in the life of the *polis*. Instead, they call for a different kind of engagement, as Roth writes, not allowing “narrow definitions of ‘political involvement’ to set the terms” for how Christians care for society (8). Instead of the apathy and cynicism that leads most Americans not to vote, these authors call for what Lewis terms an “active refraining” that “leads to proactive engagement” (114).

The volume is intentionally limited to presidential elections in the United States. It falls to others to work out what faithful political participation looks like in other countries and contexts. It also falls to others to articulate the possibilities of electoral participation at more local levels (though Degan explicitly rejects voting at other levels as well). The essays are well written and not overly technical. The volume is suitable for churches and lay audiences where it should be read and carefully considered; it is an

important entry into a difficult but critically important conversation about faithful political engagement.

Victor J. Hinojosa, Political Science Dept., Baylor University, Waco, Texas

How Do Stories Save Us? An Essay on the Question with the Theological Hermeneutics of David Tracy in View. Scott Holland. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

In this erudite, dense, and artful text, Bethany Theological Seminary professor Scott Holland takes the reader – as the back cover says – “on an intellectual adventure through narrative theology, literary criticism, poetics, ritual studies and aesthetics in the composition of a theology of culture.”

Throughout the text, the work of revisionist theologian David Tracy is “in view.” Tracy, a Catholic priest and active professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, is the author of well-known texts including *The Analogical Imagination* and *On Naming the Present*. Holland’s book concludes with a 10-page bibliography of Tracy’s writings plus a more general bibliography, including 18 books and essays by Paul Ricoeur and 8 articles by Holland.

Holland works particularly with what he refers to as two emerging self-corrective foci in Tracy’s public theology (i.e., theology that is “always involved in complex and interesting relationships with diverse historical and social realities”): “a hermeneutics in which the ‘other’ not the ‘self’ is the dominant focus; and a theological insistence that only a mystical-prophetic model of theology can save us” (35-36).

In terms of narrative theology, Holland casts his lot with Tracy and others representing the University of Chicago narrative school rather than with those representing what might be called the Yale school (e.g., George Lindbeck, Hans Frei). The latter, says Holland, see the church as the sole reference of theology (58). In that schema, the world “becomes an *object* of theological description and prophetic critique, rarely a rich and mystical *source* for imaginative and revisionary theological thought and writing”

(98). For Yale-ish narrativists, biblical narratives “catch the reader up into the sacred world of the text,” as the Bible “absorb[s] the world into its unique world” (78). It is this Yale-based form of narrative theology that has been most influential for recent mainstream Anabaptists, as mediated largely through the work of Stanley Hauerwas. Holland says one might excuse a fundamentalist for advocating for this sort of “sectarian imagination in defense of her tribal gods and goods.... But for a post-critical Christian theorist who values close readings and thick descriptions to retreat from the public square into the world of the text, pretending she has found a separate, autonomous world, is not only bad faith, it is bad fiction” (101).

In contrast, Tracy and others see the world “as a complex *source* for theology and not simply its *object*” (58). “While Yale theologians seem most interested in keeping their community’s story straight,” says Holland, “those drawn to the work of David Tracy and the Chicago school are much more interested in doing theology while listening to other people’s stories” (98). Such a theology will then be pluralistic, interdisciplinary, intertextual (rather than intratextual, as for the Yale theologians), and revisionary. Here the theologian “brings the texts, traditions, and practices of her community into conversation with others, especially communities of difference, in the search for greater insight, understanding, humane presence and connection with the divine” (98-99).

Elsewhere Holland argues the increasingly accepted view that humans are constituted both narratively and performatively, i.e., through ritual (153-78). He sensibly proposes that for Anabaptists and other low-church Protestants to develop a theory of symbol and ritual that might lead their communities toward Ricoeur’s “second naivete” in relation to religious symbolism, such transformation will come not through studying traditional theological arguments of sacramentologists but through discovering how symbolic activity is co-natural with the human person, emerging from ordinary experience (177).

How Do Stories Save Us? will most engage those already immersed in postmodern theological critiques. Illustrating the background one may need, a not atypical selection reads: “Following Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, Tracy’s theological agenda has been to rethink the dialectical relationship between language and experience. His program moves beyond

the Schleiermacher – Tillich – Rahner – Lonergan experiential paradigm to an explicitly hermeneutical one” (82). Some readers may stumble through more complex portions of the book, though most will appreciate Holland’s more accessible commentaries on narrative theology and rituals. His chapter “When Art and Ritual Embrace and Kiss” (179-230) is moving at points, thanks to some embedded autobiographical flourishes and assertions of faith.

Just under half of the 241-page text, which began as Holland’s dissertation at Duquesne University, has been published before as discrete essays in journals or books. The core of Holland’s argument, from “How Do Stories Save Us,” through chapters titled “Theology is a Kind of Writing,” “Even the Postmodern Story Has a Body,” and “Signifying Presence” have appeared in *Louvain Studies*, *Cross Currents*, and an edited volume, *The Presence of Transcendence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). A few odd, distracting editing issues have made it into the present text, likely due to its various embodiments over 16 years.

For David Tracy followers, this is an illuminating supplemental text. Those interested more broadly in narrative theology also will benefit from a few of the middle chapters, though they likely will be less engaged with the text’s first 70 pages. Students of postmodernity and aesthetically sensitive readers will be especially appreciative of Holland’s work.

Keith Graber Miller, Chair, Bible, Religion and Philosophy, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

William T. Cavanaugh. *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

What is “freedom”? According to free-market ideology, we are free when the state limits its interference in economic transactions. Using Augustine, William Cavanaugh challenges this answer. He asserts that when society lacks a good common end this “freedom” can only degenerate into a battle of wills, public manipulation through marketing, concentrated power in the hands of few large corporations, and a steady increase in economic injustice and class inequalities. Without a life that is ordered toward helping life flourish, the desire to consume is internalized in our culture until we simply move from one manufactured desire for this or that product to another, never realizing that we are being controlled under the guise of liberation. After detailing and exposing the consumer trap in which we are caught, Cavanaugh provides concrete examples of how to overcome this spiral of idolatrous desire.

Although I am convinced by Cavanaugh’s thesis that desires must be rightly ordered toward helping life flourish if we are to resist being seduced by the market’s manipulations, his argument does not fully account for how our desires prevent or sustain the flourishing of nonhuman animal life. Upon learning about the nightmare that cattle endure in typical “beef” production, the author notes his decision to purchase grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free cattle from a local farmer. He makes this choice on the grounds that while the industrial “meat” industry hides the horrors and suffering of nonhuman animals, “all the information I need is available and transparent” on the small farm (31). This statement is open to challenge on at least two points.

First, Cavanaugh neglects to note that the small farmer is a part of a larger web that is largely beyond his control. When a cow gets an infection, organic farmers may withhold antibiotics even if the cow suffers tremendously to make sure their meat can be labeled organic. Moreover, there are common farming practices necessary to production – forced impregnation, castration, and others – that, while not horrific, inflict pain and limit the nonhuman animals’ ability to be free and to flourish.

The second point is that care for nonhuman animals within Cavanaugh’s

framework demands more than simply minimizing pain, and this requires questions and answers that are not as available and transparent as the author makes them seem. For example, why do we desire “meat” in the first place, and is it a rightly-ordered desire? Do we facilitate flourishing when we kill another living being to satiate a desire that is not only unnecessary for human survival but also damages our health? Given the state of our ecosystem and the growing awareness that all life on this planet hangs together on a precipice, Cavanaugh’s anthropocentric view of the common end is incompatible with his goal of overcoming idolatrous desire.

In response to the narrative of the market, Cavanaugh offers a counter story centered on the Catholic Eucharist. He argues that consumerism detaches the consumer from the process of production and from the people who produce our goods. Furthermore, our attachment to the goods themselves has decreased because we constantly abandon each product for the latest upgrade. Our pleasure comes from the pursuit of goods, from shopping itself, so a never-ending cycle of consumption ensues. The Catholic practice of the Eucharist provides a counterweight to this frenzy by absorbing each person into a larger body. Instead of being fragmented individuals trapped in the non-stop game of pursuing the latest trinkets, we become a community shaped into the Body of Christ.

Cavanaugh’s account should provide a lot of thought for Mennonites as to how Mennonite worship shapes us into people capable of resisting consumerism. We do not have a Catholic practice or theology of the Eucharist, and I am not convinced that if we did it would be adequate. But how does our worship shape us? What have we lost or gained that might be useful in giving an account of our own?

One of the most powerful practices that Cavanaugh mentions in this book, but does not give enough attention to, is making our own stuff (57). Instead of buying free trade and relocating consumerism to a new though better corporation, making our own clothes, growing our own food, and playing our own music can shape us to be producers who have learned the value of production through doing it and who question the industrial technological society itself. Simply moving from one type of industrial, gadget-hungry model to a “fair trade” version is not enough. We have to

question it at its core. Maybe backwards is forwards. Cavanaugh provides a good base for starting to find out.

Andy Alexis-Baker, PhD student, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, eds. *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Seeking the Identity of Jesus presents the fruit of a three-year research project sponsored by Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry and conceived as a sequel to *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Intended to address the profusion of popular images of Jesus, the project seeks not to distinguish an "historical" Jesus from the church's canon and creed but instead to investigate ways in which the latter might actually serve to clarify Jesus' identity (5). With this in mind, the analogy of choice is not the archaeological dig (where the "real" Jesus awaits unearthing) but the pilgrimage (where various "reports" anticipate a common destination), and the effect is not a recovery but an encounter via the diversity of canonical witness and church tradition.

Toward this end, editors Beverly Gaventa and Richard Hays divide the collected essays into three groups. In the first, William Placher, Robert Jenson, Markus Bockmuehl, Dale Allison, and Francis Watson endeavor to lay a methodological foundation that undoes the traditional disjunct of "Jesus of history" and "Christ of faith." Particularly representative is Allison's reassertion of the relevance of Jesus' "history of influence," canonical and otherwise, for an understanding of his identity (94).

The second and third groupings follow, which is to say they represent the working out of this proposal: Dale Allison, Joel Marcus, Beverly Gaventa, and Marianne Thompson assess the identity of Jesus in the four gospels; Richard Hays and Katherine Grieb consider the "story" of Christ in the letters of Paul and the "sermon" of Hebrews respectively, and Gary Anderson and Walter Moberly discuss the christological resonance of Moses, Jonah, and Isaiah. Brian Daley, David Steinmetz, Katherine Sonderegger, and Sarah

Coakley then shift attention to the testimony of the church, exploring in turn the identity of Jesus in patristic theology (via Irenaeus, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor), in the early Reformation debate over the nature of the Eucharist, in the act of Christian worship, and in the practice of mercy to the poor. Coakley's argument that the recognition of Jesus demands the "sustaining matrix" (311) and "cumulative tangle" (316) of Christian practice – especially vis-à-vis the poor – represents the collection's most adventurous moment, but the epistemic transformation she envisions embodies well the project's creative edge.

Next to the wandering sage and/or mysterious guru of popular consumption, *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* gives no neat summary of the identity of Jesus: "no 'sound-bite' Jesus can ever be faithful to the evidence," Gaventa and Hays conclude, "because the testimony of the variety of witnesses to Jesus – past, present, and future – cannot be collapsed..." (324). The collection's embrace of rich complexity proceeds rather under the sign of identity. Whatever else it is, Jesus' "identity" is a social product (Allison's words) that necessarily includes Jesus' own (continuing) reception history among his followers, then and now. This is the crux of the project, and a timely and productive contribution. What the individual essays contribute substantively regarding the identity of Jesus in the Gospels, for instance, or in the letters of Paul, will no doubt be found a helpful orientation to their study; but this identification of the church's ongoing tradition as the privileged locus of encounter promises a basic reorientation of the scholarly discourse surrounding Jesus.

Tensions undoubtedly remain. The traditional quest for the historical Jesus remains methodologically relevant, whether "first half of an incomplete sentence" (95) or "antidote" (113), but it is not at all clear what substantive difference its demands make in the subsequent collation of canonical witness and church testimony. At very least, how precisely the Jesus we know "through Scripture" relates to the Jesus we know "through the creeds" and the Jesus we know "through practice" deserves more sustained discussion. The volume concludes with a welcome affirmation of diversity and complexity (324), yet in its introduction summarily excludes everything extracanonical from the relevant history of reception, and this on historical grounds (14). Rhetorical celebration of canonical diversity seems similarly threatened by

the apparent uniformity of “the church” and its singular testimony. Still, this collection offers an important corrective to the modern critical paradigm that underlies the traditional quest, and in this it promises an opportunity for increased precision and perception in the study of Jesus.

Rene Baergen, Biblical Dept., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Ellen Hodgson Brown. *Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System And How We Can Break Free*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Third Millennium Press, 2008.

People concerned about social justice need this book! In *Web of Debt*, Ellen Brown provides an extraordinarily compelling and vivid analysis of one of the most crucial yet least understood of the major social problems that currently imperil humanity. She exposes and explains the hidden workings of our money system. The problems deriving from this system pervade and worsen the whole range of social problems that confront us globally. Brown shows how the money system has a devastating impact, but also how it could be transformed to provide powerful impetus for needed social change.

The great majority of social activists who have worked diligently for many years to overcome a wide variety of social problems, striving to achieve social justice and peace, know almost nothing about the workings of the money system. For many years I have been among such activists, and have seen how our analyses of social problems – poverty, environmental destruction, and war, in all their many manifestations – have omitted any reference to it. Our goals have been worthy. But our analyses have been weakened and our strategies often ill-conceived because we have failed to understand or to confront the potent realities of the money system.

Our ignorance is not surprising. The workings of the money system have been carefully obscured from public scrutiny and understanding by those in the private banking system who control it. In the Foreword to *Web of Debt*, Reed Simpson, a veteran banker, writes: “I can report that even most bankers are not aware of what goes on behind closed doors at the top of their field.... I am more familiar than most with the issues raised in [Brown’s

book] and I still found it to be an eye-opener, a remarkable window into what is really going on.... [The way our money system functions] has been the focus of a highly sophisticated and long-term disinformation campaign that permeates academia, media, and publishing. The complexity of the subject has been intentionally exploited to keep its mysteries hidden” (ix).

At the heart of Brown’s revelations is her explanation of the source of our money. It is no longer based in any way on gold. Nor, as is almost universally assumed, is it supplied by governments. Some 97 percent of the money supply in capitalist economies around the world is created out of nothing by private commercial banks in their process of making loans. Banks do not lend out the money of depositors, as is also widely assumed. As they make loans, the banks create *new* money that is added to the total amount of money in circulation.

Huge problems result. Especially notable is the fact that, when the banks supply almost all the money essential for our economic transactions, they create money for the principal of the loans but do not for the interest that they invariably require to be paid. They create only debt-money. And they impose a demand impossible for us to meet collectively! Money to pay interest is simply not available. In order to make payments that include both interest and principal, people are driven to compete with each other, “to fight with each other in order to survive” (31). People must continue borrowing from the banks, further increasing their indebtedness. Inevitably some borrowers default, enabling the banks to take over their collateral. The few favored in this system become ever more wealthy, while many are impoverished.

Much more analysis of the dynamics of this system is provided in the book. The abuses perpetrated through our money system are possible only because governments have been manipulated into allowing private banks to control the system. Governments at the federal level could be using their own powers for money creation to provide interest-free loans for much-needed infrastructure, and, as the economy expands, could not only lend but spend debt-free money into existence to provide public services. Brown explains how the alternative of democratically controlled government-created money could make enormously creative contributions to human welfare.

Dealing primarily with US history, Brown describes successful cases

of government-created money – as in colonial Pennsylvania under Benjamin Franklin, and in the Civil War with the greenbacks – and shows how private banking interests fought constantly to control the US money system.

Brown’s book is an antidote to our ignorance of the money system, as is also her website: webofdebt.com.

George Crowell, Department of Religious Studies (ret.), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario

Marlene Epp. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008.

Marlene Epp has written a history of Canadian Mennonite women over the course of the past three centuries, ending in 1980. This refreshing work orients Canadian Mennonite historiography towards questions of gender in a fashion that, while grounded in extensive research into primary and archival sources, is nonetheless an effective synthesis of a complex subject. As such, it is neither a theological treatment of “power” or “gender” nor an over-specialized monograph, but rather a straightforward, brilliantly researched, and well-argued history of a topic gaining in coverage that now has its own attempt at a survey. Having set a high standard for Canadian Mennonite women’s studies in her earlier book, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000), Epp continues her masterful command of the field with this volume.

The author divides the book into five chapters, arranged thematically, each of which opens with an historical vignette clarifying the theme and interpretive methodology to follow. The chapters are organized around themes of immigration as pioneers, refugees and transnationals; family life as wives and mothers; religious life as preachers, prophets, and missionaries; worldly life as citizens, nonresisters and nonconformists; and, finally, living in a material world of quilts, canned goods, and the written word. Throughout the book, Epp provides an even-handed account of Mennonite

women's life based on her extensive research bringing to light women's experiences, often in their own words.

Epp introduces the volume with a helpful historiographical survey of the topic, in addition to making clear her own social location and how she will be working not so much with theology as with history. On this point, she summarizes how religion cannot be ignored when working with an ethno-religious group. Interestingly, she adds the caveat when discussing the influence of Harold S. Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision" that we must remember that it is not directly connected to women's experience, dealing as it does with American Mennonites joining the military during World War II (13). While that is an obvious point to make, Epp is quite strong when explicating her methodology and her hopes for the book, which is designed both to inform and inspire students while learning of historical Mennonite women's experiences to envision also relationships and institutions not given to gender inequality or discrimination (18-19).

While Epp's well-articulated hope for this volume might indicate a polemic in the making, she has written an exceptionally well-researched book and a well-reasoned interpretation. Throughout she demonstrates that Canadian Mennonite women were never without history, that they were always engaged in their communities, both religious and in the wider world, all the while exercising historical agency. The chapters progress fluidly as she defines women's experience by roles imposed and roles taken on. Her work on the conundrum of nonconformity and non-resistance in Mennonite women's experiences is especially significant as it exposes, perhaps counter-intuitively for some, how a theology of peace can become a seedbed of inequality (chapter 4).

Ultimately, Epp has done an important service by broadening Canadian Mennonite historiography and treatment of gender beyond localized studies to a national treatment that simultaneously brings to light a plethora of primary and archival sources. She balances historical detail with broader interpretations with seeming ease and in persuasive prose. Throughout she presents the experiences of women as diverse, heterodox, and embodying myriad perspectives, actions, and responses to their varied contexts.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in, or taking university courses involving, questions of church and society, gender, and the Canadian

experiences of immigration and assimilation. This is a rich resource useful for undergraduates, graduates, and teachers alike. The book's scope and self-imposed limits are reasonable and effective, and this reader looks forward to when a similar study can be written of the 1980s and 1990s.

Brian Froese, Assistant Professor of History, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David Van Heemst. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Few books are as timely or as prophetic as *Hope in Troubled Times*. Writing prior to the global economic meltdown in 2008 that caused international financial institutions to shudder, the authors warned about the volatility of the financial markets before it was fashionable to do so. They also noted the potentially catastrophic impact of other challenges such as environmental degradation, ideologically based conflict, global poverty, and insecurity.

The book opens with words that cogently and succinctly explain its premise: “[O]ur world seems to live under the curse of scrambling for solutions but not finding them” (15). The authors begin by rejecting the notion that human ingenuity can keep ahead of escalating global challenges simply by resorting to raw intelligence. They also dispute the premise that solutions which worked for past crises are adequate to enable humanity to adapt to harsh new realities. Instead, they argue that “many of today’s problems seem to have developed immunity to our well-intended solutions. They have become like viruses that resist medicine or like pests that have developed a defense against pesticide” (31).

One of the most insightful discussions pertains to the development, impact, and ripple effect of ideologies. Citing six phases of developed ideologies, the authors explain how ideologies have evolved at periods in history to justify the oppression of one people by another. While not explicitly using the language of the current “war on terror,” or significantly applying

their perspective directly to the Iraq or Afghanistan wars (mentioned on only 14 of 205 pages of text), they provide language for explaining how these conflicts have been sold to the Western world in ideological terms, and what the impact of an ideological rationale can be.

When an ideology defines a goal to be an absolute end, anything that gets in the way of it becomes evil, say the authors. Those who oppose evil are by definition good, “even if their actions result in other people suffering under cruel treatment. How close, in our view,” the authors conclude, “this lies to the demonic” (34). These statements reflect on the danger of justice and compassion being removed from discourse about contentious issues and are worth much rumination. This volume is a prophetic call to re-examine our tendency to absolutize good and evil.

Although articulating this sobering message of potential global crises comprises most of the book – which even the authors admit is “hardly uplifting” (169) – this massive dose of tough love frames the most urgent issues and stresses why these concerns must be taken seriously now. It sets the stage for suggesting a way forward. All is not lost. Rather, the authors testify they are inspired by an “enduring conviction that there is real hope for our troubled, mired world – genuine, concrete hope that deeply engages global poverty, environmental destruction, and widespread violence” (16).

This hope comes from a commitment to “live justly, to love our neighbors, and to take care of God’s creation as good stewards” (127). These actions may not seem powerful in and of themselves, but they can start a process that begins to undermine harmful ideologies that for too long have dominated social, economic, and political discourse.

This is one of the most challenging and readable books I have come across in many years. It is well written, logical, persuasive, and coherent. It inspires readers not to lose hope and to continue to work for peace and justice even though they cannot be assured of success. *Hope in Troubled Times* speaks with a common voice and effectively avoids the dissonance so often present in manuscripts with multiple authors. It is essential reading for anyone concerned about the rising tide of the seemingly intractable problems facing our globe – and the apparent impossibility that one person can do anything impactful about them. It could easily be used as a textbook in college or university courses.

Lowell Ewert, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario

Thomas P. Scheck. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.

In the lively and sometimes rancorous debate over justification that has rippled throughout the Christian world, all roads, it seems, lead back to the sixteenth century. Since the 1999 joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Declaration on Justification by Faith, new energy has poured into the conversation.¹ Even before that, descendants of the Anabaptists likewise engaged the theme. Dutch Mennonite theologian Sjouke Voolstra wrote that “Anabaptists always interpreted justification in the light of sanctification.”² J. Denny Weaver and Gerald Mast recently reflected on the views of justification of Denck, Hut, Hubmaier, and Marpeck, asserting that Sattler “affirms Lutheran justification by faith but also, in line with Catholic thought, stresses that faith will result in good works.”³

Thomas Scheck’s book makes the case that all who think this conversation matters must travel much further back in the Christian story. Indeed, he argues that Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* has influenced Christian thought on justification into the 16th-century Reformation and beyond. Further, the third-century Alexandrian’s readings of Romans were both close to Paul and remarkably relevant to 21st-century discussions.

As the first English translator of Origen’s Romans commentary,⁴ Scheck carries the credentials to back up his argument. In clear and readable prose, he makes accessible not only to patristics scholars but also to other theologians, biblical scholars, and interested lay readers the exegetical questions at stake and the history of reception that marks Origen’s influence down through the centuries. (Noting that virtually our only access to Origen’s great commentary is through the Latin translation of the fourth-century Rufinus, Scheck usually provides the Latin in text or footnote for

those who find that helpful.)

In chapter one Scheck lays out Origen's definition of justification with a "Trinitarian stress": "From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature" (CRm 4.9.192-98). Unity and synthesis of faith and works seem "to be an overriding theme" of the commentary. While the good thief of Luke 23 was justified by faith alone, because he "had no opportunity to be justified by his subsequent good works," for the most part good works must be visible "as the necessary fruit of justification."

Subsequent chapters demonstrate the borrowings from Origen and the debates with him of Pelagius, Augustine, William of St. Thierry (a 12th-century Cistercian monk), Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, and several post-Reformation theologians. In chapter two, Scheck notes that Origen and Pelagius both accepted what has become part of scholarship's "new perspective" on Paul: that Paul's great letter reflects his awareness of a dispute between Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

Although each chapter has its own fascinating insights, many readers will be most drawn to Scheck's discussion of Augustine and the 16th-century reformers. Chapter three tackles the question of Augustine's use of and challenge to Origen's commentary. The Pelagian controversy late in his life turned Augustine's reading of Romans to original sin, human powerlessness, and predestination in ways that have shaped much later Western Christian thought. However, according to Scheck, both Origen and Augustine "appeal to James as a means of correcting a false understanding of Paul" on faith and works, agreeing that faith is "a foundation on which works are built." Likewise, chapter five notes that Erasmus's devotional work *Enchiridion* "was infused with citations" from Origen's commentary, and his comment on Romans 6:4 echoed Origen: "Dead to our former sins and living now the new life, let us follow in the footsteps of piety."

Scheck notes, on the other hand, that Melancthon made "Origen's doctrine of justification an integral part of his decadence theory of Church history." Since descendants of the Anabaptists have sometimes been tempted by that same theory, Scheck's book is a must-read for anyone who may have agreed with Menno (quoting Luther) that Origen was "the falsest explainer of the Scriptures."⁵ Rather, readers considering this work will hear echoes of

Origen in Menno's call for biblical readings assuming a full-orbed practical understanding of justification.⁶

¹ The complete text of the joint declaration is available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. See also Trevin Wax, compiler, "The Justification Debate: A Primer," in *Christianity Today* 53:6 (June 2009), 34-35; N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 246-52.

² Sjouke Voolstra, "Free and Perfect: Justification and Sanctification in Anabaptist Perspective," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 5.3 (Fall 1987): 225.

³ Gerald J. Mast and J. Denny Weaver, *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009), 45-46.

⁴ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., Thomas P. Scheck, trans. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001-2002).

⁵ Menno Simons, "Christian Baptism," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* [CWMS] (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 279.

⁶ Menno, "True Christian Faith," in CWMS, 333.

Nancy Heisey, Bible and Religion Department, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Miguel A. De La Torre. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethic of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

Miguel A. De La Torre, who is on the faculty of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, has written a challenging, provocative volume based on a reading of the book of Jonah and includes an engaging, brief contemporary social analysis in order to place this reading in the modern context.

De La Torre was once asked if any reading of Jonah considers Jonah's message from the perspective of "the margins of society" (ix). His work attempts to respond to his observation that he knew of no such work. In the introduction, he lays out one of his primary arguments: Jonah is a book about reconciliation. His reading presents this as reconciliation in a context of unequal distribution of power – as exemplified by the Israelite, Jonah,

facing Nineveh, symbolic of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires that were ancient bitter, oppressive enemies. The author is well aware of the potential for manipulating themes of “reconciliation” as a way for the powerful to try to get the oppressed to resign themselves to their subordinated fate.

“It is important to recognize that those who benefit from the present power structures cannot be relied upon to define reconciliation,” says the author, “or to determine how to go about achieving it” (2). He advocates no cheap “peace” that does not engage injustice: “A desire to ‘forgive and forget’ can bring about only a cheap reconciliation that sacrifices justice for the sake of serenity” (5).

In a sense, De La Torre wants to read Jonah from “Jonah’s perspective” confronting Assyria, that of a subordinate confronting the powerful. In chapter one, after briefly discussing Assyrian brutality in the Ancient Near East, he begins his read through the book. His analysis is largely literary, drawing only occasionally from contemporary historical-critical commentary. One main source is Rabbinic legends about aspects of Jonah.

In chapter two, “Who was Jonah, What was Nineveh?” De La Torre reads Jonah and Nineveh as models of the oppressed and the socio-economic realities of that oppression in the 18th to 20th centuries of the European and American West. Characteristically, his strongest focus is on the racialized borders of modern socio-economic systems within the US historical context. He is rather dismissive of attempts to work “within the system,” because the system itself must be transformed. What it is to be transformed into is not so clear, short of frequent calls for a “redistribution of income.”

Chapter three, “Reflecting on Jonah,” brings together the author’s profound interest in reconciliation as a Christian reality with the difficult “praxis” of justice – reconciliation never cancels the need for change, in his reading. Chapter four, “Praying through Jonah,” clarifies that reconciliation must be initiated only by the oppressed: “Those who presently benefit from the existing social order lack the objectivity and moral authority to define reconciliation or even recognize the need for reconciliation...” (88). The author seems to accept nothing short of revolutionary change for authentic reconciliation. This becomes problematic when he tends to minimize the courageous acts of individuals because they do not transform entire socio-economic systems. This sense of helplessness in the face of evil systems sets

up his sense of hopelessness in the final chapter.

Chapter five, “Pitfalls Jonah Should Avoid,” includes comments about internal politics in various ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as problems in dealing with Euro-Americans, who are largely not trusted for a credible analysis because “Euroamerican Christians, either from the fundamentalist right or the far liberal left, probably have more in common with each other and understand each other better than they do Christians on the other side of the racial and ethnic divide” (125). So great is the task of social transformation and so little the will to do it that De La Torre despairs of its ever taking place even in his grandchildren’s generation (143).

In the final chapter, “Case Studies,” the author offers stories of attempts by individuals to seek social change and raises questions about each case. For example, the first case describes recent Native-American reactions to the Columbus Day celebrations in Denver, and asks the reader to consider what forms of protest or response would have been appropriate, given that Native groups were denied most opportunities for legal, peaceful protest. A second case describes Daryl Davis, an African-American, who attempted to make contact with members of the Ku Klux Klan in order to force a dialogue on racism. He even managed to make friends, leading some members to leave the Klan after long conversations with him. These and other cases are intended to raise questions about the individual actions of people of color, but one is left wondering if these studies are signs of hope or of futility, given De La Torre’s previous analysis.

Reading as a Quaker informed by Anabaptist theology, I honor individual acts of faith – attempts to live an alternative reality within the rigid systems of oppression – and that same Anabaptist conscience sometimes wonders if this is the best to be hoped for. I will not minimize or trivialize such individual actions only because they fall short of the revolution. Further, I am not in sympathy with an exclusively racialized social analysis that refuses to consider the potential bridge-building (and recognition of historical realities) that are served by a more thorough-going class analysis. Finally, I am concerned with De La Torre’s tendencies to homogenize the very different experiences of Latino, Asian, Native, and African-Americans. “People of color” is becoming a dubious generalization for social analysis.

My disagreements notwithstanding, I deeply appreciate De La Torre’s

fascinating meditations on the socio-economic contexts of a modern reading of Jonah.

Daniel Smith-Christopher, Dept. of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Ted Lewis, ed. *Electing Not to Vote: Christian Reflections on Reasons for Not Voting*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

This volume takes up an interesting and important question: Might Christians faithfully abstain from voting? This is a provocative question in a culture which assumes that voting is a civic responsibility, even (perhaps especially) for Christians. As the essays collected here demonstrate, it is a question that should be asked and discussed carefully in our faith communities.

The essays are uniform in their affirmation that it is possible, and sometimes desirable, for Christians to abstain from voting. The nine contributors make the case for abstention from voting in a variety of ways from a rich array of Christian perspectives.

Indeed, one of the book's most interesting features is the breadth of ecclesial perspectives represented. Authors come from Mennonite, Pentecostal, Catholic, Baptist, and intentional Christian community traditions, and they write from, and sometimes to, those communities. Central to the conversation is how our identity as Christians is shaped by our political participation and how we are to understand the dual nature of our citizenship.

The authors offer a wide range of critiques of voting. Some reflect personally on their experiences of voting and participating in electoral politics, and suggest that the process damages their Christian discipleship. For instance, Michael Degan rejects voting in part "because of who I become in order to win" (61). Others share a concern about how the polarized politics of American presidential elections have affected conversations in our churches. John D. Roth's well-known essay, which begins the collection, is the best example of this concern. Others offer critiques of the candidates we

have to choose from, the US Electoral College system, and the way electoral rules and processes affect outcomes.

Perhaps the most critical difference among the contributors is on whether or not voting should be the norm for Christians. Michael Degan, Tato Sumantri, Ted Lewis, Andy Alexis-Baker, and Nekeisha Alexis-Baker offer strong rejections of voting. For these authors, not voting is apparently the norm. In contrast, for John D. Roth, G. Scott Becker, and Todd Whitmore voting is assumed to be the norm, and not voting is a selective step that should be taken after careful deliberation.

Whitmore reflects on the two candidates in the 2004 US presidential election, ultimately arguing that both George W. Bush and John Kerry advocated policies that violated fundamental principles of Catholic teaching and, as a result, not voting was his obligation. But he argues that this obligation “does not spill over to another election” (79) and concludes by noting that he is “undecided about whether I will vote in the 2008 election, pending a hearing of the views of the candidates” (80). Many of the authors in this collection need no such hearing.

The essays are strongly uniform in advocating a form of political participation that goes beyond voting. In fact, most of them argue that voting is insufficient participation in civic life. Thus in their call for abstention from voting, the authors are not calling for a withdrawal or retreat from participation in the life of the *polis*. Instead, they call for a different kind of engagement, as Roth writes, not allowing “narrow definitions of ‘political involvement’ to set the terms” for how Christians care for society (8). Instead of the apathy and cynicism that leads most Americans not to vote, these authors call for what Lewis terms an “active refraining” that “leads to proactive engagement” (114).

The volume is intentionally limited to presidential elections in the United States. It falls to others to work out what faithful political participation looks like in other countries and contexts. It also falls to others to articulate the possibilities of electoral participation at more local levels (though Degan explicitly rejects voting at other levels as well). The essays are well written and not overly technical. The volume is suitable for churches and lay audiences where it should be read and carefully considered; it is an

important entry into a difficult but critically important conversation about faithful political engagement.

Victor J. Hinojosa, Political Science Dept., Baylor University, Waco, Texas

How Do Stories Save Us? An Essay on the Question with the Theological Hermeneutics of David Tracy in View. Scott Holland. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

In this erudite, dense, and artful text, Bethany Theological Seminary professor Scott Holland takes the reader – as the back cover says – “on an intellectual adventure through narrative theology, literary criticism, poetics, ritual studies and aesthetics in the composition of a theology of culture.”

Throughout the text, the work of revisionist theologian David Tracy is “in view.” Tracy, a Catholic priest and active professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, is the author of well-known texts including *The Analogical Imagination* and *On Naming the Present*. Holland’s book concludes with a 10-page bibliography of Tracy’s writings plus a more general bibliography, including 18 books and essays by Paul Ricoeur and 8 articles by Holland.

Holland works particularly with what he refers to as two emerging self-corrective foci in Tracy’s public theology (i.e., theology that is “always involved in complex and interesting relationships with diverse historical and social realities”): “a hermeneutics in which the ‘other’ not the ‘self’ is the dominant focus; and a theological insistence that only a mystical-prophetic model of theology can save us” (35-36).

In terms of narrative theology, Holland casts his lot with Tracy and others representing the University of Chicago narrative school rather than with those representing what might be called the Yale school (e.g., George Lindbeck, Hans Frei). The latter, says Holland, see the church as the sole reference of theology (58). In that schema, the world “becomes an *object* of theological description and prophetic critique, rarely a rich and mystical *source* for imaginative and revisionary theological thought and writing”

(98). For Yale-ish narrativists, biblical narratives “catch the reader up into the sacred world of the text,” as the Bible “absorb[s] the world into its unique world” (78). It is this Yale-based form of narrative theology that has been most influential for recent mainstream Anabaptists, as mediated largely through the work of Stanley Hauerwas. Holland says one might excuse a fundamentalist for advocating for this sort of “sectarian imagination in defense of her tribal gods and goods.... But for a post-critical Christian theorist who values close readings and thick descriptions to retreat from the public square into the world of the text, pretending she has found a separate, autonomous world, is not only bad faith, it is bad fiction” (101).

In contrast, Tracy and others see the world “as a complex *source* for theology and not simply its *object*” (58). “While Yale theologians seem most interested in keeping their community’s story straight,” says Holland, “those drawn to the work of David Tracy and the Chicago school are much more interested in doing theology while listening to other people’s stories” (98). Such a theology will then be pluralistic, interdisciplinary, intertextual (rather than intratextual, as for the Yale theologians), and revisionary. Here the theologian “brings the texts, traditions, and practices of her community into conversation with others, especially communities of difference, in the search for greater insight, understanding, humane presence and connection with the divine” (98-99).

Elsewhere Holland argues the increasingly accepted view that humans are constituted both narratively and performatively, i.e., through ritual (153-78). He sensibly proposes that for Anabaptists and other low-church Protestants to develop a theory of symbol and ritual that might lead their communities toward Ricoeur’s “second naivete” in relation to religious symbolism, such transformation will come not through studying traditional theological arguments of sacramentologists but through discovering how symbolic activity is co-natural with the human person, emerging from ordinary experience (177).

How Do Stories Save Us? will most engage those already immersed in postmodern theological critiques. Illustrating the background one may need, a not atypical selection reads: “Following Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, Tracy’s theological agenda has been to rethink the dialectical relationship between language and experience. His program moves beyond

the Schleiermacher – Tillich – Rahner – Lonergan experiential paradigm to an explicitly hermeneutical one” (82). Some readers may stumble through more complex portions of the book, though most will appreciate Holland’s more accessible commentaries on narrative theology and rituals. His chapter “When Art and Ritual Embrace and Kiss” (179-230) is moving at points, thanks to some embedded autobiographical flourishes and assertions of faith.

Just under half of the 241-page text, which began as Holland’s dissertation at Duquesne University, has been published before as discrete essays in journals or books. The core of Holland’s argument, from “How Do Stories Save Us,” through chapters titled “Theology is a Kind of Writing,” “Even the Postmodern Story Has a Body,” and “Signifying Presence” have appeared in *Louvain Studies*, *Cross Currents*, and an edited volume, *The Presence of Transcendence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). A few odd, distracting editing issues have made it into the present text, likely due to its various embodiments over 16 years.

For David Tracy followers, this is an illuminating supplemental text. Those interested more broadly in narrative theology also will benefit from a few of the middle chapters, though they likely will be less engaged with the text’s first 70 pages. Students of postmodernity and aesthetically sensitive readers will be especially appreciative of Holland’s work.

Keith Graber Miller, Chair, Bible, Religion and Philosophy, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana