

David L. Weaver-Zercher, ed. *Writing the Amish: The Worlds of John A. Hostetler*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005.

What is the relationship—professionally, personally, ethically—of a scholar and the subject she or he studies? What public responsibility does expertise bestow or preclude? What role does advocacy play among academics? Such questions emerge in virtually every discipline but were unusually focused in the life of John A. Hostetler (1918-2001), an Old Order Amish-reared man who opted for Mennonite Church membership and taught anthropology for many years at Temple University. He produced groundbreaking studies of the Amish, and from the early 1960s to the 1990s was the leading authority on their culture. His academic acclaim rested uneasily with his shy, unassuming personality, even as he became the public spokesperson for a people who preferred not to speak publicly. (Hostetler's teaching at the University of Alberta and his important work in Hutterite studies receives minimal attention in this volume.)

Hostetler was not only a scholar who documented culture but an activist who tried to shape and protect it. Sometimes he chided and sought to reform the Amish; more often he urged mainstream society to leave the Amish unmolested, as he did as an expert witness in a 1972 U.S. Supreme Court case legitimating Amish exemption from high school. In later years Hostetler became an outspoken critic of urban sprawl. Along the way, his writing used the Amish as a window and mirror, reminding modern readers of values they had lost in the rush to stay relevant.

Advocacy was not without controversy. When Hostetler denounced commercial exploitation of the Amish, critics retorted he had made a career of public interpretation. And in the early 1980s when he tried to derail production of the Amish-themed Hollywood movie *Witness*, the director fought back, pointing out Hostetler had once helped create a documentary on Amish life that was shot surreptitiously with hidden cameras.

*Writing the Amish* celebrates and analyzes Hostetler's work, focusing on the complex insider-outsider status he balanced. Part I includes assessments from a daughter, a colleague, and two scholars—Simon Bronner

and David Weaver-Zercher—who skillfully interpret Hostetler as a man who moved in multiple worlds. It also includes a revealing autobiographical essay in which Hostetler describes his father’s painful excommunication from the Amish. Part II reproduces 14 of Hostetler’s writings, from 1944 to 1989, which editor Weaver-Zercher believes illustrate the development of Hostetler’s thought and activity. The book concludes with a comprehensive bibliography of his publications.

Perhaps most obviously, this book is of interest to academics studying the Amish. The materials included in Part II document the emerging, evolving interpretations of a pioneer in the field, reminding a later generation of scholars of their intellectual roots and debts. Two other audiences would benefit from this volume as well. Readers of *CGR* who are Mennonites should know more about Hostetler simply because he was undoubtedly the Mennonite most widely read by non-Mennonites. His influence and significance were different from, say, those of John Howard Yoder. But sales of Hostetler’s books outpaced those of any other Mennonite author during his life and included both popular works and renowned academic publications. If Hostetler rarely wrote *about* Mennonites, *Writing the Amish* makes clear that he wrote *as* a Mennonite, interpreting the Amish in ways that also created, even if unintentionally, associated images of Mennonites in popular and scholarly minds. Although Hostetler cast a low profile in Mennonite institutional circles (a term as chair of the Historical Committee of the former Mennonite Church was as close as he came to denominational work), he played a remarkable role in how millions of North Americans—from tourists to tenured professors—understood later-day Anabaptists and their relationship to modernity. Mennonites would do well to understand his role in mediating them.

Second, academics of any faith or tradition will find Part I of this book a thought-provoking tour of questions about professional relationships and responsibilities. How is one’s background a resource and a hindrance to engaging certain topics? What does it mean to research the “Other” when one recognizes one’s connection to it? How are insiders simultaneously outsiders? I can imagine Weaver-Zercher’s essay, for example, or Hostetler’s autobiographical piece serving as a useful discussion tool in an undergraduate seminar or a graduate course exploring professional formation and ethics.

John A. Hostetler spent a lifetime wrestling with the meaning of community and the individual's place in it. If the scholarly community is to be a community, it must attend to the questions this book explores.

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Mark Thiessen Nation. *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Mark Nation's exposition of the theology of John Howard Yoder is a clear and nuanced introduction to the thought of this provocative, "patient Mennonite who provided an evangelical witness" to the church catholic (202). Not so much a critical evaluation as a valuable overview of Yoder's work, the book will benefit both church and academic communities, Mennonite and beyond.

The main chapters interpret Yoder's writings on Anabaptism and neo-Anabaptism, ecumenism, peace theology and just war, and Christian social responsibility in light of the cross of Jesus, and the book concludes with a brief chapter summarizing and commenting on Yoder's contributions to the church and academy. The book also includes the only available biographical essay, slightly revised from Nation's previously published essay in the Festschrift for Yoder, *Wisdom of the Cross*. Nation is currently gathering material for a full biography.

Chapter 4, focusing on "The Politics of Jesus, the Politics of John Howard Yoder" explains why Yoder's *Politics of Jesus* had such a profound impact when published in 1972 and why the politics of Jesus remain particularly challenging to U.S. Christians today. Nation quotes Stanley Hauerwas, who said that "prior to Yoder the subject of Christian ethics in America was always America." Nation underlines that for Yoder the confession that Jesus is Christ—and the Trinitarian God this confession assumes—must be kept in sharp focus in thinking and living ethically. Loyalty to this God directs humans toward a transnational community in Christ. And it is the politics of Jesus and the gospel of Christ that are the