

to see how this discussion offers some challenges. In a few weeks, I will baptize a few friends in our community. Do we really understand the depth of this practice? How radical it is or, at least, how radical our tradition once believed it to be? Can we grasp the ways that it might animate our church as a people sent into and for the world, sent into our neighborhoods?

Yet it is Godwin's discussion of Anabaptism as "minority witness" that strikes home even more. How can we, in our First World, 'post-Christian' realities (I write from Canada), learn from the marginal witness of our sixteenth-century elders? Godwin argues that current Anabaptist understandings around 'post-Christendom' are too superficial. It's not:

simply about the loss of status of the churches in the West but the loss of status of the West period. The growth of the church in Asia, Africa, and South America anticipated by Visser 't Hooft in 1959, became a reality that none could ignore by the end of the twentieth century and shows no signs of slowing in the twenty-first. (293)

How should we respond? According to Godwin, to be an Anabaptist witness, especially in the First World, demands that we have a global perspective in each of our local contexts. Since many white Anabaptists in the West find themselves in positions of power, I believe that we must learn from marginalized voices that have been overwhelmingly silenced, directly or not, by white power. Anabaptism cannot be a minority witness — and thus true to its tradition, and more importantly, true to the gospel — unless it sheds its reliance and trust in the vestiges of Christendom and Western power.

As we struggle to live and practice Anabaptism today, it is important that we understand the foundations which animated the movement at the beginning. It's important for us to track how those foundations have been re-imagined over the centuries and explore how we might do the same in our particular time and place. Godwin's book is not perfect — it's a bit too academic to garner a wide reading — but it contains valuable resources that can help us do this vital work of "seeking the old paths" (Jer. 6:16).

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John Howard Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, edited by Gayle Gerber Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL, 2014. 430 pp. \$36.00. ISBN: 9780830840335.

Between 1964 and 1983, John Howard Yoder taught a course on the theology of

mission at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries. After Yoder left the seminary the tapes were stored in the library basement and forgotten. Decades later, while guest lecturing in Gayle Gerber Koontz's course on the theological legacy of Yoder, Wilber Shenk alluded to the possibility that the tapes of Yoder's lectures might still exist, and after months of searching they were found. This book is the culmination of transcribing and editing the audio recordings of Yoder's course from 1973 and 1976. The result of this fascinating and laborious process is a major contribution to the present work of understanding the church's mission.

While the book is not formally divided, the chapters move broadly through biblical, historical, and theological engagements. Chapters 1 through 5 deal with the Bible, offering Yoder's attentive reading of Scripture which attempts to bracket later histories of interpretation. In the Bible, Yoder finds an account in which people are called, brought into covenant relationship, and expected to live as a *particular people* in light of that calling. In the Old Testament this is primarily through the election of Israel in the midst of the nations. In the Gospels, the call remains the same - be faithful as Israel was called to be faithful. In the book of Acts, as well as in the Pauline corpus, a shift takes place; here there is reflection on what happened in the spread of this movement, not an articulation of a strategic plan. "The fact of mission," Yoder asserts, "was prior to the theology of mission" (96). Later, in summarizing his exegetical work on the New Testament, Yoder writes, "[The mission] was unavoidable and even sometimes accidental. The Diaspora base was in place before the Gospel. In this sense the 'new people' *was* the message before it became the vehicle for the message" (124). This reading becomes an important orientation for Yoder. Throughout the text, he unpacks and sets forth a mission of *migration*. This mission reflects an existing community that, through its particular calling, moves and engages the world around it.

After establishing his reading of the biblical material, Yoder situates this narrative within the history of mission (and its theology) and then grapples more directly with contemporary theological issues. In the sections on the history of mission, readers familiar with Yoder will find the usual critique of Constantinianism and its perversion of the message of the gospel. While this critique is increasingly familiar, the historical and theological terrain Yoder covers with regard to mission provides a fresh perspective on his engagement, especially with his extended dialogue (and critique) of Pietism.

Chapter 15 marks a transition into more contemporary theological territory. Yoder explains the Free Church approach as one uninterested in large social engineering in the name of salvation. Rather, it is a movement that provides internal social critique which varies with given situations. The gospel still speaks in its radical particularity, and the message comes via the presence of a people committed to loving service. The mission is, in one sense, quite simple: ongoing engagement with the message of the gospel as it relates to specific environments.

Working towards something of a climax, Yoder approaches the basic questions of Christianity's relation to other religions. Until now, Yoder has outlined an image of the church in mission that needed to repent of and reject past complicity with colonial projects. However, it remains an open question as to whether Yoder actually addresses the underlying logic that led to the destructive elements of the church's mission. He makes two claims in these final chapters that will need to be acknowledged and engaged by future theologians in this field. First, while discussing 'religion' as an interpretive category, Yoder asserts that "what Christians must talk about is Jesus Christ, not Christianity as religion or culture" (397). This position is compounded with a second claim, having to do with the way in which Jesus 'positions' other religions and post-Christian movements. Yoder does not advocate active proselytizing of Hindus and Buddhists but articulates how *they are changed* when they come into contact with Jesus. Then with respect to post-Christian movements (anything from Islam to Marxism), Yoder contends that they are "derived from a Christianity that lost its way" (385). I'm suspicious of Yoder's way of explaining the relationship between Christianity and other religious movements because he makes it sound like there is some pure *essence* of truth within the Christian tradition that remains unassailable in the face of colonial experiences and wrongdoing. For Yoder, the essence, which cannot be wrong, is Jesus. But does that not contradict his emphasis on the particularity of Jesus? I don't think it is helpful to both prioritize Jesus's particularity *and* abstract some essence which remains an unassailable element of the Christian tradition.

Theology of Mission is an important contribution to what is at present a controversial topic. Yoder calls on the church to live out of its particular history and formation. This means confessing the wrongs that came from it and returning again and again to the biblical witness, which points the church towards a communal and migratory understanding of mission. These are welcome correctives to many supercessionist theologies of mission. The question that remains untouched is whether Yoder actually steers the church away from a theology that will insulate itself from *receiving* good news outside of (and perhaps otherwise than) its particularity — a theology of mission that cannot help but determine the question of salvation for others. Such a theology, weighted more on repentance than a reflexive posture of mutual engagement and formation, also adds to the tension the Mennonite church faces as it continues to sort out not only its understanding of mission but also its handling of the accounts of Yoder's sexual abuse. The Mennonite Church is currently not of one mind on these issues, but this work should stand as an important contribution to these ongoing conversations.

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