Book Reviews

Steven R. Harmon, *Baptists, Catholics, and the Whole Church: Partners in the Pilgrimage to Unity* (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2021), 246 pages. ISBN: 9781565484979.

Reviewed by Toivo Pilli

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Recently, Baptist theology has taken significant steps to analyse the ecumenical dimension of faith and to perceive better the common vision of the church. Baptist identity is seen more clearly in the context of the whole church. Ten years ago, a document entitled 'The Word of God in the Life of the Church', based on 2006–2010 conversations between the Baptist World Alliance and the Catholic Church, was published. Theologians, such as Paul Fiddes and Curtis Freeman, have helped readers to understand the common Christian heritage shared by Baptists and other denominations. Baptists have been engaged in discussions initiated by the World Council of Churches.

Professor of Historical Theology at Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity Steven R. Harmon, the author of *Baptists, Catholics, and the Whole Church: Partners in the Pilgrimage to Unity*, is a well-known contributor in the field. His previous books on ecumenism, for example, *Baptist Identity and Ecumenical Future* (2016), as well as the volume reviewed here, present him to readers as a champion for visible unity between Baptists, Catholics, and other Christians. He argues that Baptists and the traditions from which they are historically separated, actually need one another. In the case of Baptists and Roman Catholics, the two ecclesial traditions are more similar than meets the eye, argues Harmon, and this enables them to 'travel together as fellow pilgrims on the journey toward a more visibly united church'.

The present book, however, is slightly different in style and tone when compared to Harmon's previous volumes on the topic, as it vividly shows Harmon's personal engagement in ecumenical work, encounters with theological challenges, and meeting with other theologians in

different contexts. It is a collection of lectures and presentations which have been offered on different occasions at conferences and bilateral dialogues. It also contains two sermons, which are homiletical applications of theoretical perspectives. In his homily 'The Cruciformity of Communion' Harmon describes pain that comes from the experience of brokenness 'at the Eucharistic table that we will not share'.

The author poignantly expresses the focus of this volume: 'This book harvests and presents the fruit of these more concrete applications of my theoretical work as a Baptist ecumenical theologian, informed especially by various experiences of Baptist ecumenical encounter with the Catholic tradition.' (p.15)

This is a 'must read' for students and scholars who want to be informed — intellectually and emotionally — about the Baptist search for ecumenical aspects of their tradition.

Steve Taylor, *First Expressions: Innovation and the Mission of God* (London: SCM Press, 2019), 256 pages. ISBN: 9780334058472.

Reviewed by Peter Stevenson

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This missional study comes from someone actively involved in a range of missional initiatives. Steve Taylor, a creative Baptist leader from Aotearoa/New Zealand, reflects here on new expressions of church in the United Kingdom. His reflections on practice yield insights into innovation in mission with a much wider relevance.

The book's origins lie in doctoral research carried out in 2001 when he interviewed 'alt. worship communities and various Christian thinkers about new forms of church' (p.ix). In 2012–2013 he revisited those 'initial experiments in ecclesial innovation' (p.4) and discovered that 'only five [...] seemed, from a distance, to have survived' and seven 'seemed no longer active' (p.9). Taylor argues that valuable insights arise not only from reflecting on 'first expressions' of church which 'Tried' and survived (chapter 4), but also from considering initiatives which

'Tried and Died' (chapter 5). Alongside evaluating this small group of 'fresh expressions' he also considers the *Fresh Expressions* initiative established by Anglicans and Methodists in the UK.

Taylor seeks 'hermeneutic discoveries that will guide the church as it seeks to be apostolic and one, holy and catholic' (p.5). He desires 'to hold these communities in reflective gaze before God, looking to see what patterns of God might be visible' (p.11).

There is vulnerability in the way Taylor reflects on these fresh expressions. His own experience of planting a church which later closed, raised questions about 'how to understand innovation not only in birth, but in death' (p.10). In chapter 5 he identifies treasures which can emerge even when a fresh expression appears to have 'failed'. For example, he notes that even initiatives which have not proved sustainable, have often been *leadership incubators*.

Taylor creates 'thick descriptions' of missional communities, drawing upon interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and online resources. This is not a research methodology manual, but it clearly demonstrates how a range of research methods can be profitably employed in the service of mission.

This theological reflection is carried out in conversation with others. In chapters 6 and 7 his consideration of *Fresh Expressions* involves interviews with 'key pioneering influencers' such as Stephen Croft, Stephen Cottrell, and Rowan Williams. He also engages in a creative dialogue with Charles Taylor in order to 'clarify the shape of witness in a secular world' (p.17). This contributes to a stimulating discussion about 'ambient witness' in chapter 10. Combine all of this with a serious engagement with biblical material and the result is a healthy example of how to do practical theology.

For anyone interested in mission, practical theology, and empirical research, *First Expressions* contains plenty of interest. Taylor's insights will hopefully stimulate others to explore initiatives in their own contexts, 'looking to see what patterns of God might be visible' there.

Helen Paynter, *God of Violence Yesterday, God of Love Today? Wrestling Honestly with the Old Testament* (Abingdon: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2019), 176 pages. ISBN: 9780857466396.

Reviewed by Daniël Drost

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Revd Dr Helen Paynter is an Old Testament scholar and director of the Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence at Bristol Baptist College. She has written an impressively short and simple book on a complex topic: how to read the texts on the violence of God in the Old Testament. Simple is a compliment here, because in about 170 pages the author develops a method for careful Bible reading, gives some essential definitions and distinctions, and puts the theory into practice by engaging some major texts on violence in the Old Testament.

Regarding these texts, she makes the following helpful distinctions: (1) texts which describe violence, such as the violence of Samson; (2) texts which implore violence, such as the Psalms of vengeance; (3) texts which contain violence against animals, such as the commandments on animal sacrifices; (4) texts which describe violence as divine judgement, such as the death of Uzza; and finally and most difficult to relate to, (5) texts in which God summons violence, such as the conquest of Canaan.

Paynter explains that the biblical narrative is a theological composition, full of symbolic language, and that it is very helpful first of all to try to understand to what purpose these texts were written. In her exposition throughout the book, she takes the reader by the hand in an exercise of careful Bible reading, which is most of all inspiring because of her radically honest approach. She concludes at the end of the book that there are many questions left; 'at present, I am in an uneasy limbo' (p.153).

Throughout the book I sense a struggle between the Baptist theologian in her, who prefers a direct identification with the biblical narrative as God's Word, and the biblical scholar, who emphasises the complexity of the text, its genre and language, and most of all the

difference between the *Sitz im Leben* of the writers and of the modern readers of the Bible. By emphasising that Bible reading requires a community (including biblical scholars), she brings the two extremes together.

I think the careful approach — expressed in a popular level book — is helpful and impressive. Paynter emphasises the text and its context above the reader and their context. I understand she is a biblical scholar, so this is her main field of interest and expertise. I think, however, two things might have made this book even stronger: first, is the explicit hermeneutical question of which readings lead to wholesome communities and which readings are damaging community life. Second, references to rabbinic tradition might have been helpful, since rabbinic Judaism has a tendency to read the biblical narrative in ways that lead to nonviolent practices. There might be some wisdom or hermeneutical insights for us Christians as well.

Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education, 2nd Edition: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022), 367 pages. ISBN: 9781839730856.

Reviewed by Matthew Norman

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This second edition of Shaw's 2014 book incorporates feedback in three key areas to modify and develop his insights and practice with curriculum development in theological education. These three areas are thinking theologically about theological education, models of missional curricula and common characteristics, and promoting change.

Shaw holds an EdD from the Asia Graduate School of Theology Alliance and is currently the Researcher in Residence at Morling College in Sydney, Australia. This book continues to build upon his work as the Professor of Education at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut, Lebanon. Shaw notes that this book seeks to encourage and

provide practical tools for readers engaged in theological education who seek to implement a curriculum that encourages multidimensional learning by intentionally designing for cognitive, affective, and behavioural learning.

This edition focuses on the need to apply these concepts related to a multidimensional, integrative curriculum to develop contextual theological education models in what Shaw calls the 'Majority World'. According to Shaw, this emphasis stems from the church's rapid growth in these areas and the lack of contextually significant theological education representations and methodologies.

Following the prefaces to both editions of this text, there is a brief introduction that presents an overview of Shaw's work with the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS). The book continues in three parts. Part 1 focuses on the broader philosophical and educational underpinnings for changing a curriculum. Part 2 contributes various lenses related to what Shaw calls integrative and transformative learning. Part 3 offers practical tools and guidelines to help teachers develop pedagogical practices that focus on learning, which Shaw sees as critical when attempting to fulfill the church's missional mandate.

Shaw begins this edition by exploring how one can develop a robust theological approach to theological education. The theological approach that he suggests is missional-ecclesial, which he maintains in Chapter 1 is at the core of his orientation toward theological education. According to Shaw, 'good theology should drive our pedagogy', and his brief overview of theological affirmations 'all point to the need for a holistic and transformative approach to theological education which is both integrated and missional' (pp.17-18). The implication of Shaw's idea here frames theological education as holistic in that it engages cognitive, affective, and physical aspects of the learners and is reflective, meaning that it calls for reflection on practice via a missional understanding of God.

The book presents a concise overview of recent scholarship in education and how such scholarship can be applied practically to theological education. Shaw's hands-on experience at ABTS and other examples he includes from around the world provide tangible illustrations of the educational theories he is discussing. Crucial is Shaw's repeated demonstration that education is about learning, not teaching. This perspective on education, together with his list of nine 'Right Questions', offers tangible steps for the reader to explore a reimagining of a theological education curriculum. This book is an excellent introduction to educational theory and scholarship focused on theological education.

Najib George Awad, *After-Mission, Beyond Evangelicalism: The Indigenous 'Injīlīyyūn in the Arab-Muslim Context of Syria-Lebanon* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2021), 387 pages. ISBN: 9789004444355 (paperback), ISBN: 9789004444362 (e-book).

Reviewed by Ksenija Magda

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Evangelicalism is in a crisis and that is no news. But, asking how global criticism of (Western) evangelicalism, with its centuries-long mission endeavours and post-Christendom theology impinges on the communities it created is a relatively unresearched question. Consequently, Awad's study is fascinatingly relevant on so many levels beyond the primary concern for 'Eastern Protestants', the *'Injīlīyyūn*. The research rests on a wide spectrum of missional learning and the author's own experience as a Syrian scholar, first studying in Germany and England, and now working in the USA. Awad offers some valuable insights into how Christians in general need to handle the post-Christendom ordeal — globally — although he describes the need of the *'Injīlīyyūn* in Syria/Lebanon for a confrontation with the 'factual existential and ecclesial crisis inflicted on them by their faith' (p.4).

The book is divided into three parts: the history, the theology, and the way forward.

Awad identifies and explains the missionary endeavours and their 'otherizing' techniques which have defined evangelicalism since the eighteenth century. 'Otherizing' results from the belief that Christianity is superior and has the Truth. This is why it must be incarnated in the politics of any civilised land. Awad points to the resulting double agenda of the 'religious' and 'cultural' that flow from this for the missionaries. But the lack of success in evangelism was supplemented by a very successful acculturalisation of Christendom in the Middle East. Awad reminds us that the 1400 years of Christian-Muslim co-existence in the region prior to the 'Arab Spring' (2011) testifies to a successful Christian influence in the common Arab culture. Western evangelical mission in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries benefitted from it. Awad believes that trans-Arab Islam-dom (with its radicalism) is patterned after the radical Christendom claims of the missionaries.

The 'Arab Spring' changed circumstances dramatically, but *'Injilīyyūn* did not notice. Their request for support from the West to 'save the Christians in the Arab world' from the Muslim other, added oil to the fire. They contributed to the broader Middle Eastern tragedy of 'bleeding out' of Syrians in general but of Christians in particular. Since the beginnings of Christianity, this time the Christian witness might not survive. The *'Injilīyyūn* agenda is hence no longer evangelism or acculturalisation, but sheer survival. *'Injilīyyūn* must change their slogan to 'save the humans of the Arab world', recognising the 'criminal dream of hegemony' (p.305). Christians in the region are still Arab and only religiously a minority. As such Christians have lived and thrived as a 'small but influential' group. The gospel does not need a political system to thrive.

'Injilīyyūn in the Middle East must also abandon the Islamophobia of the West. They must start dialoguing with people on all sides, Muslims and other Christians included. But they should not opt for an 'alliance of minorities' as this dangerously feeds the conflict of Christendom and Islam-dom.

The book is clearly structured and easy to follow, although sometimes the content can be difficult to swallow. Facing the truth is rarely easy. For me, the read was challenging because I couldn't help but recognise my own history of similarly unhelpful 'otherizing' and 'self-otherizing' presented as 'the Truth'. Inevitably, I was thinking up alternatives to these unhelpful traditions in Central and Eastern Europe. But that's a good thing.

David W. Bebbington, *The Evangelical Quadrilateral: Volume 1: Characterizing the British Gospel Movement* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2021), 382 pages. ISBN: 9781481313780; *Volume 2: The Denominational Mosaic of the British Gospel Movement* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2021), 358 pages. ISBN: 9781481313797.

Reviewed by David Warboys

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David Bebbington has for some time been among the most pre-eminent Baptist historians, writing definitive works on history and historiography. This two-volume collection of essays expands upon Bebbington's previous work, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, from which he takes his broad definition of evangelicals as those emphasising the quadrilateral of Bible, cross, conversion, and activism. Bebbington initially covers the broad history of evangelical origin and later revival, before offering several more specific studies on a range of evangelical figures and groups. With thirty-two essays split between two large volumes, the size of the work need not feel intimidating. Each article is written to stand alone, meaning that figures or movements are always explained when introduced. Readers looking to study specific topics will be grateful for this care taken. The amazing range of scope, from the transatlantic preaching tours of D. L. Moody to the hymns remembered on his deathbed by a congregationalist minister, can only be applauded and this huge variety means that any keen historian will find something of interest. Bebbington demonstrates throughout his familiar ability to cover complex definitions thoroughly and in comprehensible ways.

These sections, often at the start of chapters, enable the reader to set out on firm ground.

Bebbington's great strength is an ability to present thorough and painstaking research, both primary and secondary, in a readable way. While there is far too much material to mention here, and there are no bad articles in the work, it may be helpful to comment on some specifics. Bebbington explores splinter movements towards stricter Calvinism, including the Particular and Strict and Particular Baptists, who often abandoned the conversion part of the quadrilateral. These provide helpful avenues for study, but perhaps some space could have been dedicated to movements in the opposite direction, such as the Unitarianism that attracted many Baptists. These movements are mentioned, but not explored in the same depth. Another area of excellent study is essays in Volume 2 addressing the ways in which evangelical groups were shaped by, or fought against, enlightenment influences. Bebbington makes a powerful and nuanced case against the idea that historical evangelicalism should always be equated with an anti-science approach. It is particularly striking to see how far back many current faith-and-religion debates go, with evangelicals in the early eighteenth century discussing the likelihood of intelligent extra-terrestrial life.

A further strength of Bebbington's writing is the way that he presents this history to allow modern parallels to be drawn, but without attempting to steer the direction of this. For instance, there is striking contemporary relevance in the discussion around Calvin, as different evangelical traditions battled to claim or disavow his legacy. Questions of whether Calvin's theology could be separated from his behaviour as leader of Geneva bear all the hallmarks of modern discussion around separating art from artist. It is also noteworthy how explicitly many evangelicals dispensed with any part of Jesus's life other than his death on the cross. Bebbington deals very sensitively and powerfully with his study of deathbed piety of nonconformists, which provides moving insights into the thoughts, prayers, and words of the dying, as well as sketching out one of the areas of evangelical history that feels very remote today: obituaries largely concerned with the final days of evangelical lives.

Given the scope of this work and the depth of its scholarship, it feels unfair to question what Bebbington does not include here. Nevertheless, it must be noted that of nine individuals named in the titles of his essays, Bebbington fails to include a single woman. Women are not completely excluded, indeed are mentioned in many places, but Bebbington himself acknowledges this shortcoming. There are explorations of both female spirituality and public prominence, but the lack of a chapter exploring a specific figure is noticeable, as is any in-depth study of a woman in a role of leadership. Bebbington is also open about the relative neglect of international mission in his study. The main focus of this work is on the British picture, and by leaving out the work of international missionaries Bebbington misses the chance to explore a fascinating arena, as well as to touch on present debates about the complexities of imperialism and mission. With these areas acknowledged, it would be hard to suggest any essay that should have been discarded.

Overall, this work is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of evangelicalism. While Bebbington has produced a work of serious scholarship, this is not at the expense of readability. The approach of small, self-contained, essays means it can be read in whatever way is desired. Bebbington is very successful in showing, in his own words, that 'Evangelicals, for all their efforts to reproduce the pristine gospel of the first century, were bound up in the cultural settings of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries.' (Vol. 1, p.8) For all our efforts today, this is no less true of modern evangelicalism. The most effective evangelical movements have successfully balanced Bebbington's quadrilateral and there is much food for thought here over what can go wrong when one of Bible, cross, conversion, and activism is neglected. For evangelicalism to thrive once more, attention must be paid to the good and the bad records of our forebearers. If this is to be done, it would be hard to find a more helpful guide than Bebbington and these two volumes.

Marvin Oxenham, *Character and Virtue in Theological Education: An Academic Epistolary Novel* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019), 414 pages. ISBN: 9781783686971.

Reviewed by Jan Hábl

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Dr Marvin Oxenham was born and raised in Italy. He works currently at the London School of Theology. He has also worked for the European Evangelical Accrediting Association and other international bodies, including the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education.

The author provides the reader with a unique analysis of character and virtue education and its relationship to theological education. This book helps theologians and others to see the importance of character formation in the educational process. The book not only advocates the need for transformational pedagogy, but also offers very concrete suggestions for implementing character and virtue education into educational practice. The author draws interdisciplinarily from a vast array of sources — moral philosophy, philosophy of education, pedagogy, andragogy, political science, and, of course, theology. Oxenham demonstrates a superb grasp of the sources of character education — he is not only familiar with all the major British and American players (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, The Virtues Project, etc.), but he is also familiar with the old continental authors who pioneered character education, such as J. A. Comenius.

The book is written in the genre of the epistolary novel, as the subtitle suggests. An experienced colleague writes to a colleague, a friend whom he does not want to advise but with whom he experiences the current challenges of theological education. The author warns us in the very beginning that we must not expect any great drama; it is merely a tool to facilitate reading and awaken the imagination. Many readers will certainly be well served by this form; some academics may skip the fictional introductions to the letters. Either way, any reader will find the book serves as a uniquely holistic resource on the topic of character education. (I admit that the topic of character education was so

interesting, even thrilling to me on its own, that I tended to skip the fictional parts.)

The letters, or individual chapters, are organised into three sets. The first set presents a vision of character and virtue in theological education. The second works out a theology of character and virtue education through historical and biblical sources. The third deals with practice: how to educate character and virtues. All the letters are down to earth with the aim to provide practical instructions for any theological school that decides to make character an important aspect of its goal.

Coming from a non-theological university setting, I can furthermore confirm that if we drop the 'theological' adjective from the book, everything the book offers applies perfectly well to any type of school. Every educator who identifies with the motto 'character matters' is excited by the author's opening questions like: 'What kind of learning will transform character? How can we structure education so that *being* rises to a place of prominence alongside *doing* and *knowing*?' (p.16)

In my opinion, this book is excellent, readable, thoroughly supported by sources, and lays emphasis on one of the most important topics in contemporary (not only theological) education.

Hwa Yung, *Leadership or Servanthood? Walking in the Steps of Jesus* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2021), 166 pages. ISBN: 9781839735769.

Reviewed by David Dunlop

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In this very helpful, provocative, and timely book, Yung challenges and calls into question the increasing and questionable emphasis on leadership development courses and programmes within the church, which are more influenced by the secular, corporate, and academic fixation on leadership than on biblical teaching, priorities, and models. Yung is not suggesting that leadership and leadership skills are unnecessary in today's church, but he is highlighting that the key emphasis in scripture is that we are called first and foremost to be

servants and not leaders. In fact, he goes so far as to say that we do not find a single verse in the Bible telling us to train leaders for God's work, and that the heart of the New Testament understanding of ministry is primarily about servanthood and not leadership.

As the subtitle indicates, Yung builds a case for servanthood and not leadership as the fundamental character for Christian life and ministry by profiling and stressing the example and teaching of Jesus. I did find myself wondering if this was another, or the latest, book on the whole idea/subject of 'servant leadership' but, early on, Yung addresses that popular term and basically dismantles it by saying that it confuses our thinking about the fundamental nature of Christian ministry, which he strongly believes, and goes on to explain, is servanthood.

Using the example of Jesus, Yung demonstrates how he had authority as a servant via his total submission to the Father, and that a second critical aspect of Jesus's servanthood was his clear sense of identity, as the beloved Son of the Father. And for us as servants, in and of the church today, those two realities are essential: to live in submission to God the Father, and to live in the awareness and security of Abba's deep love.

Another important feature of servanthood that Yung underscores is Christian character, and in one of my favourite chapters, he identifies five marks of what being a true servant meant for one particular New Testament servant and their implications for us.

As I have mentioned, Yung does not dismiss or undermine the need for real leadership in the church today, but in his own words: 'leadership in the cause of Christ does not come from striving to be leaders but is the by-product of a life of humble service to Him and others' (p.129). Leadership as a by-product of servanthood is an interesting and potentially transforming perspective.

As local chair of a Christian leadership development programme, I initially found this book quite uncomfortable, but having read on and engaged further, I also found it insightful, thought-provoking, and extremely relevant.

Harvey Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom — Ethnic Diversity, Mission and the Church* (London: SCM Press, 2020), 256 pages. ISBN: 9780334057529.

Reviewed by Andrea Klimt

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The kingdom of God is multicultural and therefore local congregations should not be monocultural in structure. This is Harvey Kwiyani's basic conviction in his discussion of ethnic diversity and mission. Kwiyani, originally from Malawi, is the founder of the Missio Africanus learning community and taught African Christianity and Theology at Liverpool Hope University. He is now CEO of the United Kingdom network *Global Connections*.

The UK is now home to people from many nations. Many of the immigrants have established their own ethnic churches. There are good arguments for this. Life in a monocultural community is easier. People who come from the same culture do not need to cross cultural boundaries to be converted. As a result, these communities initially grow faster. However, they do not mirror the kingdom of God as it appears in the New Testament. Already in the Acts of the Apostles it becomes clear that the church is made up of different cultures — Jews and Greeks. And in the eschatological kingdom of God people from all nations will worship together.

Kwiyani emphasises his credo in a variety of ways throughout his book. He highlights the great change in British society through migration (chapter 1). He traces the history of mission, focusing on the major mission conferences in Edinburgh 1919 and 2010 and the major changes in mission between these conferences (chapter 2). Kwiyani points out that church growth is predominantly in the countries of the South, while church membership in Europe is declining and society is becoming more and more secularised (chapter 3). Through the current migration movement, world Christianity has arrived in Europe (chapter 4). Multiculturalism is the appropriate way to treat each other as equals (chapter 5). For a real multicultural interaction, mutual respect and welcoming the stranger are necessary (chapter 6). Multiculturalism is

theologically well founded in the theology of Creation, Trinitarianism and Christology (chapter 7). Therefore, there must also be a multiculturally oriented ecclesiology (chapter 8). Humans like to associate with their peers; that is the principle of homogeneous unity. But in ecclesiology we should reflect a principle of heterogeneous unity (chapter 9). 'Oasis International', a kind of Pentecostal church, wants to be a house of prayer for the nations and practises multiculturalism through hospitality, mutual learning, and cross-cultural relationships (chapter 10). Life and mission in monocultural churches seems easier, but it is not consistent with the New Testament (chapter 11).

To support his basic premise, the author takes a long journey. He substantiates his arguments from theology and the history of mission, reporting very knowledgeably on the current social and ecclesiastical situation in Great Britain. His thesis is well-founded and convincing, his reasoning makes sense, but his evidence is rather repetitive. In contrast, the ideas for practical implementation seem very thin. However, they can be taken as a suggestion to follow the basic conviction with one's own implementation.

For me personally, Kwiyani's perspectives were an eye-opener, because it becomes clear that ethnic Christians and their churches will no longer remain a marginal phenomenon in our European society, but will make up the majority of the number of Christians in a few decades as secularisation progresses. Therefore, the question of the multiculturalism of churches and congregations is becoming increasingly relevant.

Laura Schmidt Roberts, Paul Martens & Myron A. Penner (eds), *Recovering from the Anabaptist Vision: New Essays in Anabaptist Identity and Theological Method* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2020), 189 pages. ISBN: 9780567692740.

Reviewed by David McMillan

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This book was the first publication in the T&T Clark Studies in Anabaptist Theology and Ethics initiated by faculty at the Anabaptist

Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Its origins lie in an Anabaptist Theology Project established by the Humanitas Anabaptist-Mennonite Centre at Trinity Western University.

The main purpose of the book is set out by Paul Martens in the opening chapter 'Challenge and Opportunity: The Quest for Anabaptist Theology Today'. Martens outlines the challenges that have arisen for Mennonites and those of an Anabaptist disposition following the exposure of the full extent of John Howard Yoder's sexual violence and the consequent difficulties in regard to the appropriation of this theology, which was fundamental to twentieth-century Anabaptist self-understanding and identity. Martens argues that releasing the Yoder hold on Anabaptist theology opens up the opportunity for a greater range of voices to engage in Anabaptist theological reflection on a greater range of contemporary and pressing issues.

Martens is one of nine contributors to the book and his fellow contributors explore new possibilities for Anabaptist theology engaging with tradition, text, narrative identity, feminist, queer, and trauma-informed theological methods, as well as ecumenical and intercultural theological dialogue and engagement. It is left to Paul Doerksen to conclude the discussions. Doerksen recognises that theology conceived within an ecclesial or religious identity can by default have a 'grasping quality', seeing to its own needs even if claiming to be for the benefit of the wider church. Doerksen addresses this by proposing a theological method of restlessness: '[…] restlessness as theological method in the Mennonite context implies that our theological work be pursued by a community of penitents that resists doing its work through grasping modes of domination' (p.167).

The great strengths of the book are, on the one hand, the very public and honest engagement in a process of re-evaluation of much that the contributors have held dear as part of their sense of identity. On the other hand, the book does not degenerate into an introspective retrospective, but models engagement with a broader contemporary agenda from a diverse community of Mennonite scholars. The editors have ensured that diversity is not merely alluded to but embraced within the range of approaches to theological method included.

I appreciated the opportunity this book affords to listen in to conversations that express and address the pain of betrayal or of exclusion, but do so by seizing, in a very positive way, the opportunity upheaval creates. That the book models a process of interrogating the taken-for-grantedness of identity and convictions makes it much more than just a window into Mennonite struggles; it serves as an illustration of the non-grasping, restless theological method described by Doerksen.