

communicating outside the faith community. So mutual interests were formed and disagreements put into a new perspective, especially in the face of the nuclear threat. It is out of this context that the book emerges, with contents as follows:

Alan Geyer (Director of the Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy, former editor of *The Christian Century*, and consultant to several denominations writing statements on nuclear policy), "From Haunted Sleep to a New Awakening: The Churches and Disarmament in America." Paul Peachey (a Mennonite Professor of Sociology at Catholic University and former executive secretary of the Church Peace Mission), "Minorities with a Mission in the Churches" (on the role of "peace churches"). J. Bryan Hehir (staff person for the U.S. Catholic Conference and primary drafter of the Pastoral on nuclear policy), "Church-Type Reinvigorated: The Bishops' Letter." Charles C. West (Ethics Professor and former Dean, Princeton Theological Seminary), "Forgiven Violence: Christian Responsibility Between Pacifism and Just War." John H. Yoder (a leading Mennonite theologian teaching at Notre Dame), "Neither Guerrilla nor Conquista: The Presence of the Kingdom as Social Ethic." James F. Childress (Professor of Ethics at University of Virginia, a Quaker just-war theorist and a major contemporary ethicist), "Moral Discourse About War in the Early Church." LeRoy Walters (Director of the Center for Bioethics at the Kennedy Institute for Ethics, now Presbyterian, a graduate of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries), "The Simple Structure of the 'Just War' Theory." Charles P. Lutz (Director of the Office of Church and Society, American Lutheran Church), "Objections to Participation in Combat: Legality and Morality" (a defense of selective conscientious objection). Donald E. Miller (Ethics Professor at Bethany Seminary), "A Biblical Approach to Human Rights." John Oliver Nelson (formerly Professor at Yale Divinity School and chair of the Fellowship of Reconciliation), "An Overview with Study Questions."

We all owe Paul Peachey a debt of gratitude for collecting these essays, which provide an excellent introduction to the state of the current debate. We Mennonites are especially indebted to Paul and to John H. Yoder for representing us so ably in this arena during the last two decades.

*Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries*

TED KOONTZ

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*Mennonites and Reformed in Dialogue.* By Hans Georg vom Berg, et al. Lombard, Illinois: Mennonite World Conference, and Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches. 1986. Pp. 89. \$3.00.

This important small booklet is the fruit of a Reformed/Mennonite consultation in July 1984 at Strasbourg, France, just a week before the eleventh Mennonite World Conference. It is the seventh in a series of studies which the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has published, including two on dialogue with the Baptists and the Disciples of Christ.

Five brief but dense chapters with appendices from Mennonite and Reformed historians, theologians and international bodies constitute a call to

the two constituencies to reexamine and compare their distinctive identities as churches of Christ and to engage in serious dialogue about the meaning of obedience to Christ in a world so different from that of the 1500s, when they became separate ecclesial realities and broke off conversation in positions of rejection and condemnation. This is therefore a historic document; giving official recognition that the churches too have changed, it helps us to see the old issues in a new light as well as to discern new issues.

Fundamental Reformation principles held in common by the two traditions are clearly indicated, along with differences in understanding and application of those beliefs. An excellent description of Mennonites today (C. J. Dyck), balanced by a delineation of the Reformed family (Alan F. P. Sell), analyzed theologically (Jean-Marc Chappuis), permit the reader to appreciate the changes that have taken place. But since the classic Reformed confessions of faith specifically condemned Anabaptists, how is it possible to dialogue with such official condemnations still on the books? A historical study of the evolution of early Reformed confessions by Ernst Saxer, edited by Hans Georg vom Berg and Lukas Vischer, reports that today's Reformed accents on the classic confessions open up a new opportunity for dialogue. The first is that there is in *sola scriptura* a historical development leading to one Gospel, with many scriptural voices—this in contrast to the Reformers' monolithic understanding of scripture. The second is the current Reformed recognition that the validity of the Reformers' assumptions about the church/state alliance is now questionable; this includes the clear need today for a witness to peace by the Church. These two shifts have led the Reformed to reexamine the relevance of infant baptism and have made them more open to believers' baptism. "The Reformed Churches can state openly today that they have been led beyond the stage of their earlier insights." This fact opens the way for dialogue in a way that was not possible in decades past.

Lest the shift be interpreted as unilateral, Mennonite Heinold Fast gives a response. Mennonite rejection of the Reformed people was as unchristian as the others' condemnation; scripture and the one Gospel—Jesus Christ—must be interpreted not to justify past interpretations but to truly understand Christ's authority for Christian obedience; Mennonite understandings of distinctions between church and society have led them to refuse the scriptural call to witness to the whole of society; baptism in Mennonite practice has also sometimes been a form of socialization of family, ethnic group, economic achievers, or "a part of the reservoir of the absolutely faithful servile." Such captivity, he concludes, is unrelated to the "witness for the Kingdom of God in a worldly world." He thus recognizes the need for further conversation with the Reformed.

An illustration of such dialogue in the Netherlands from 1975-1978 is provided in the appendices, as are messages emerging from the ninth, tenth and eleventh Mennonite World Conferences, as well as a statement on peace and justice from the executive committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to call for local meetings and conversations between Mennonites and Reformed. Probably many, in light of their own local situations, will judge the call to be irrelevant; the statistics alone (Mennonites 730,000; Reformed 50-60 millions) could create fears of being consumed after conversa-

tion. For this reviewer, one-time pastor of a congregation with dual Reformed/Mennonite affiliation, such a document and the call are long overdue.

*Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire*

DAVID A. SHANK

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*The Threshold Is High: The Brethren in Christ in Japan.* Doyle C. Book. Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press. 1986. Pp. 209. \$7.95.

To anyone well acquainted with the Christian missionary effort in Japan, the title of this book triggers immediate recognition. "The threshold is high," a Japanese saying, has often been quoted by missionaries commiserating with one another about the slow growth of the church there. Although this figure of speech is mentioned only twice in the book, the perceptive reader will discern the author's unspoken reference to it at several points.

This well-documented study chronicles the 30-odd-year Brethren in Christ mission effort in Japan. Doyle Book, along with his wife, served as a Brethren in Christ missionary in Japan from 1955 to 1972. At present he is director of the English Language Institute at Azusa Pacific University. Book sets out three purposes for his monograph: (1) to record a history of the Brethren in Christ mission and church in Japan from 1953 to 1985, (2) to provide "insights into the dynamics involved in communicating the gospel across cultural barriers" and (3) "to evaluate the reasons for the growth of the church or its lack of growth and to assess the policies used by the mission in its approach to evangelism."

The author puts the reader in touch with some significant moments in history as he unfolds the drama of developing mission strategy in the Brethren in Christ encounter with Japan. A number of influences helped to shape that strategy: expectations of the American church, Japanese cultural expectations, missionary perceptions of need and even the educational needs of missionary children. A strength of the book is its evidence of research—the use of correspondence, published articles and interviews with both missionaries and Japanese Christians (as late as 1980), although direct quotes are few. Excellent notes, a simple map, photographs, an index and a mission chronology provide the reader with additional helps. Late in the book we learn that parts of it were written to fulfill doctoral program requirements, although a search for the title of that work proved futile. The lean appearance of the paperback is deceptive; with its small print and compact style a great deal is packed into eleven chapters.

Some chapters contain excellent detailed descriptions of Japanese settings, missionary foibles (including examples of language errors and interpersonal clashes) and background information regarding the principals of the narrative—all set in the context of an awareness of divine guidance in the work of mission. Continuity suffers at some points because of frequent returns to earlier dates to retrieve other threads of the story. The vignettes from the lives of four Japanese Christians recorded in the final chapter, while interesting in themselves, would lend more strength to the work had they been woven into the narrative at appropriate points.



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