

Olsen's study also brings out the often-neglected distinction between the magisterial reformers and the radical reformers (e.g., Anabaptists). The major difference between the two can be traced to positive or negative views of the post-Constantine Catholic Church.

During the post-Reformation era most of Protestant theology exchanged the emphasis on the soon return of Christ for a concentration on the personal assurance of salvation. It was especially within the Radical Reformation that enthusiasm for the second advent was maintained. The seeds of this thrust were kept alive among the various churches and came to fruition in the second advent awakening of the 1840s, which heritage continues to inspire Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world.

The Advent Hope is a major contribution to the understanding of second advent expectations throughout Christian history. However, its coverage has two major gaps in its historical treatment. First, a discussion of the "Advent Hope" in the eighteenth century is absent. This is unfortunate because an abundance of rich apocalyptic material reveals that cataclysmic events in nature, as well as the significant events surrounding the French Revolution and its conflict with the papacy, had a major impact on people's eschatological expectations.

Second, an account of the "Advent Hope" outside the Millerite movement and the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century is also missing. One only can hope that someone will take up the task of filling this vacuum. It is vital for a historical understanding of Christ's advent.

Finally, while most of the chapters have subheadings, some do not. The readability of those chapters could have been improved through the uniform use of reader-friendly headings throughout the volume.

Despite these shortcomings, this symposium is a must for anyone who desires to understand the significance of the impact of the "Advent Hope" throughout the history of the Christian church.

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Scriven, Charles. *The Transformation of Culture: Christian Social Ethics after H. Richard Niebuhr*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988. 224 pp. Paperback, \$19.95.

The Transformation of Culture is a revised version of a doctoral dissertation based on H. Richard Niebuhr's landmark study, *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951). In spite of Charles Scriven's critique of Niebuhr's study at several points, he remains at one with Niebuhr in the affirmation of Christ as transformer of culture. However, he argues that the most fitting model for

Christian transformation of culture is to be found in the Anabaptist tradition and not, as Niebuhr affirms, in the Augustinian/Calvinist tradition. This is the variously stated thesis of the study: "Put briefly, the claim is simply this: the true Niebuhrian way is the Anabaptist way" (p. 20).

In the initial chapters of the book, Scriven examines the Anabaptist way of social transformation and Niebuhr's understanding of Christ as the transformer of culture. Having done this, he examines the manner in which nine contemporary moralists understand the relationship of Christians to the authority of Christ and to the wider society. In all of this, it is not surprising that he is most favorable to the answers given by Stanley Hauerwas and the Mennonite J. H. Yoder, and is rather critical of the others for either misunderstanding or not taking the radical authority of Christ seriously enough. In the final chapter, Scriven expounds his own proposals for a revised Anabaptist social ethic.

It is difficult to disagree with Scriven's concern for a social ethic in which the radical authority of Christ is affirmed and in which the Christian community takes its witness to the larger community seriously. In addition, he writes in a clear and engaging manner, which forces the reader to wrestle with the arguments he presents. Whether he carries the day in his arguments with Niebuhr is not entirely clear, however. Neither is it certain that Scriven adequately establishes that the Anabaptist tradition fits the role into which he squeezes it.

Niebuhr's five types are artificial constructs—hypothetical schemes. The entities he uses to illustrate them constitute only typical partial answers, and Niebuhr has the grace to point out that they also have characteristics that more readily fit other types. Scriven seems to harden the fluidity of Niebuhr's types and examples, and his construct builds more upon a particular religious entity than upon Niebuhr's types. Niebuhr understands the concept of culture and its usage in sociological discourse, and he knows that no person lives outside of culture. He uses the word "culture" as a kind of shorthand for the wider society in which the Christian community has its being. This usage is clear to the reader, but Scriven is critical of this and of other ways in which Niebuhr uses the word. Scriven has a point, but seems to build more on that point than is warranted. (Interestingly, the title of Scriven's study is in the form of Niebuhr's use of "culture," of which Scriven is critical.)

The thesis of this work is debatable. Is Niebuhr's overall concept of Christ transforming culture really best exemplified by the Anabaptist model? Even if it is argued that Niebuhr is perhaps too much influenced by Troeltsch's sect-typology in the construction of his Christ-against-culture type, and that this somewhat prejudices the case he makes for the Anabaptist tradition, this does not go far enough to make Scriven's thesis plausible. On the other hand, is Scriven really faithful to the Anabaptist tradition in

elevating it to the model for the transformation of society? Inasmuch as this is the central thesis of his study, it is surprising how little time he spends in explicating the Anabaptist tradition. There is nothing here (except in an obscure footnote) about the Schleithem Confession or the *Great Article Book* of the Hutterites, and there is no real discussion of the Anabaptist two-kingdoms motif and the idea of radical separation it engenders, nor of the apocalyptic eschatology of that tradition. One can certainly remain highly appreciative of the Anabaptist tradition and yet raise the question as to whether it fits Niebuhr's concept of the role of the church in the transformation of society, even when contemporary reconstructions of that tradition are utilized.

But Scriven's constructive work can stand on its own feet. In fact, it might be better if it were unencumbered by its Niebuhr-related thesis. The modified Anabaptist model developed in the final chapter, with its emphasis on a radical understanding of the authority of Christ in the Christian community and its three subthemes of political engagement, universal loyalty, and nonviolence, is clear, powerful, and compelling and deserves serious consideration. Scriven's study is certainly to be recommended for college and seminary courses in Christian social ethics.

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RUSSELL STAPLES

Thompson, Alden. *Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989. 173 pp. Paperback, \$8.95.

How should the conservative Christian react to the OT picture of God, particularly as it depicts God as a harsh and vindictive deity? Alden Thompson writes to invite conservative Christians, who are likely to ignore the OT and read only the NT, to rethink this question with the aid of modern biblical scholarship. The study provides a way to come to grips with the OT as part of the Christian canon and thus view God in the OT, not as promoting brutality through word and deed, but as condescending to meet people "where they are." God would have been misunderstood or considered unworthy of worship if he had revealed himself as he does in the NT, because people would have been unprepared for it. When conditions were right, God revealed himself in the person of Jesus.

Why did God let the race get into such a bad spiritual condition? Thompson argues that if God's authority were to be recognized, then the full impact of demonic rule must be allowed to develop. Also, humanity must have the opportunity to respond in freedom to the struggle between good and evil. This discussion leads to a consideration of the Adversary, or Satan, from the perspective of the historical development of the idea. The