

the rituals of submission to men and their conviction about distinct and separate male/female roles.

The collision between women's conservative dress and the outside world occurred when women began working outside the home in factories during World War II and other off-farm employment. To reject the collision seemed to discard the values of humility, submission to men, and commitment to the religious community.

As the conservative communities accepted more modern technology, there often came an intensification of gender prescription, preoccupation with headship, and women's subjection. Simply stated, modernity threatened male hierarchy. Women's submission clarified men's identity.

An interesting chapter describes the rite of public breadmaking, a recently created ritual of the River Brethren, as a symbol of women's submission. It takes place during a love feast weekend. In a voiceless ritual assigned to them by the men, the women mix, knead, and bake bread for evening communion before the congregation, and then return to the margins of the group at the conclusion.

Poet Julia Kasdorf states that her study of literary works by Anabaptist women suggests that violence exists in the family, both psychological and physical. Although in Anabaptist men's relationship to the state, pacifism is frequently named a key principle, nonviolence in family and social relationships is not, adds historian Jane Marie Pederson.

In a summarizing essay on Anabaptist Women and Antimodernism, Pederson ponders what will happen when deeply religious women ask, "How do I distinguish between the 'traditions of men' that would enslave me and the voice of God which frees me?" Will a new culture of protest not soon follow?

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Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003. 538 pages.

Baptist theological ethicist Glen Stassen, longtime seminary professor (now at Fuller Theological Seminary), prolific writer, and friend of

Mennonites, has teamed with a younger colleague, David Gushee (of Union University in Tennessee) to write a quite impressive introduction to Christian ethics. *Kingdom Ethics* will surely establish itself as a widely used seminary textbook, but should also find an appreciative readership among pastors, college students, and many others.

Stassen and Gushee write with exceptional clarity and cover an impressive array of issues for a single volume text. Their general approach should elicit much approval from present-day Anabaptists. They self-consciously orient Christian ethics around the teaching of Jesus, in particular the Sermon on the Mount.

The authors understand the kingdom of God motif to be the key to understanding Jesus' ethical message—and from start to finish they assert that this message is *normative* for present-day Christians. Questions concerning the timing of the kingdom are secondary to the *characteristics* of the kingdom.

The kingdom's central characteristic is holistic salvation—God's work to deliver humans from oppression, injustice, guilt, death, war, slavery, imprisonment, and exile (28). The kingdom Jesus established is *new*, but it is also in direct continuity with the Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah. Stassen and Gushee do a fine job of making this continuity clear.

Part of the importance of this book lies in its fresh treatment of the Sermon on the Mount as the orienting point for Christian ethics. Stassen and Gushee challenge the traditional idealist approaches to the Sermon that have actually led to a diminishing of its importance as a guide for Christian living. They propose a new strategy for reading the Sermon: finding throughout a series of "transforming initiatives," creative and life-enhancing practices that solve problems, provide deliverance from vicious cycles of anger and insult, and empower Jesus' followers to participate in God's grace mediated through faith communities.

I find this approach to the Sermon to be quite profound and attractive. The persuasiveness of the argument is enhanced by being applied to a large variety of present-day issues such as war and peace, criminal justice, abortion, euthanasia, biotechnology, marriage and divorce, sexuality, and gender roles.

Though necessarily brief, these discussions of applied ethics are in general thoughtful and sensitive (one exception being the rather superficial treatment of homosexuality). The general direction of the arguments likely will be seen as attractive by most readers of this journal—a consistently pro-life stance and moderately conservative views on various sexual issues.

Writers of books with the breadth of *Kingdom Ethics* face a difficult challenge in sustaining a clear narrative focus. My main criticism stems from this point. I found it a bit confusing to move from the very helpful discussion of general orientation, to various applied chapters, and then *back* to more theoretical discussions of love and justice, and then again back to more applied discussion.

Overall, though, this is an excellent book. Along with the path-breaking treatment of the Sermon on the Mount, I found the discussion of justice to be of special value.

In the context of our increasingly vengeful, materialistic, and nationalistic North American culture, Stassen and Gushee deserve our gratitude for articulating a genuinely *counter-cultural* approach to Christian ethics.

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Douglas B. Miller, *Symbol and Rhetoric in Ecclesiastes: The Place of Hebel in Qohelet's Work*. Academia Biblica 2. Atlanta, GA, and Leiden: Society of Biblical Literature and E. J. Brill, 2002. 238 pages.

This book explores the meaning of the Hebrew *hebel* in the book of Ecclesiastes, a term which many Bible translations render as “vanity.” Douglas Miller, however, renders *hebel* with the literal “vapor,” and shows that it has three distinct metaphorical nuances: insubstantiality, transience, and foulness. Miller, a Bible professor at Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas, and editor of the journal *Direction*, holds a doctorate from Princeton Theological Seminary where the book had its origin as a doctoral dissertation with C. L. Seow as advisor.

Miller’s distinctive contribution is to highlight the nuance of foulness as a meaning of *hebel*. He makes his case for “foulness” by noting such usages outside of Ecclesiastes in rabbinic material, and, most telling of all, that the term “bad” (*ra'*) serves as a “guarding” term within Ecclesiastes, much like “chasing after the wind” belongs to the overtone of “insubstantiality” in other contexts. For example, the observation that the righteous are not always rewarded and the wicked seem to



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