of the western Roman frontier, and not bishops, chose clergy to officiate at rituals which required their presence (157–158).

The western European experience contrasts with North Africa's landholders, whose semi-autonomous churches served as loci for tenant control (161). The relative lack of large villas in this region, combined with a socially fractious topography of farms, fortified villages, and even towns (162), enabled bishops such as Antonius of Fussala, once protege of Augustine, to not only manipulate the wealth of landholders but also aggrandize ecclesiastical influence through the mismanagement of local churches (166–168).

Both the fourth and the final chapter glance behind the basilica and villa towards Christian homes and individual Christian practices. Bowes shifts her focus towards the content of private prayer and ritual along the backdrop of alleged "heretical" private practices in the post-Nicene church. She contends that homes represented arenas for doctrinal negotiations in early institutional Christianity (195). Bowes also elaborates on the very important role of women in the post-Constantinian church only at the very end of her book. Her coda underscores her criticism of a masculinized Christianization undertaken by emperors and episcopates. For Bowes, women's asceticism and domestic ritual sculpted both doctrine and liturgy. While some Christians, such as the fourth-century exegete Jerome, viewed the home as a woman's protection from the profane world and a bulwark against temptation, (203) women's home devotions and eucharists often attracted the attention of hierarchs who viewed house worship as alternate venues for clerics opposed to their theologies (190).

The power of women to direct domestic piety and worship subverts the notion that men, and especially bishops, predominantly shaped the course of Christian institutionalization in the Roman Empire (4). Bowes's last chapter not only expands upon her understanding of Christian dialectic, but also inverts a prevailing androcentric view of Christian development. Her study invites us to consider both men and women as great protagonists in the rise of early eastern and western Roman Christianity.

The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith

Stuart Murray. Scottdale, PA and Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 2010.
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Reviewed by Lance Lubelski, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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This volume seeks to introduce the fundamental aspects of the Anabaptist tradition to the person of faith in Great Britain and Ireland who wishes to reinvigorate his

or her spiritual life in the era of "post-Christendom." In attempting to examine the central principles of Anabaptism, Murray presents questions that will guide the work: "What is an Anabaptist? Where did Anabaptism come from? What do Anabaptists believe? Can I become an Anabaptist?" (16). This reviewer cannot help but think that the author asks the wrong questions, and therefore has written an ill-conceived monograph.

The question that nagged me (and remained unanswered) as I read was, Does Anabaptism have any relevance to today's world? Moreover, can Anabaptism be rendered explicable if removed from its Radical Reformation context? The author reveals ambivalence about these issues when he suggests that modern readers interested in Anabaptism may wish to "pick and choose the elements they find most helpful from Anabaptism without embracing the entire tradition" (112). To this reviewer, this approach to Anabaptism is entirely ahistorical and thus inappropriate if one seeks a proper understanding of Anabaptism. Murray does not grasp that Anabaptists did not, and *could not*, "pick and choose" between religious principles but conceived of beliefs such as antipedobaptism, communal living, and the refusal to swear oaths as working together to create a coherent whole of religious belief and practice in what was frequently a hostile world. In short, to remove Anabaptism from its historical context is to render it inexplicable to the modern reader.

Murray designs his book around what he and his colleagues see as the seven "core convictions" of Anabaptism: 1.) commitment to "following Jesus as well as worshipping him" (177); 2.) a "Jesus-centered approach to the Bible and to the community of faith" (178); 3.) an awareness of the "post-Christendom" context of contemporary life; 4.) the possibility of suffering and martyrdom for one's beliefs; 5.) the sharing of meals; 6.) the interconnection of faith and economics; and 7.) the pursuit of peace. Observance of the first two core convictions, according to Murray, can help believers to revivify an "emasculated" (55, 61) and "marginalized" (57) Jesus. The author's emphasis on the "emasculation" of Christ in contemporary life strikes this reviewer as, at the least, a very poor choice of words. This example is just one of many cases in the book in which the author fails to use precise language, thereby obscuring meaning.

Not only is the author's language imprecise, but his grasp of the historical issues surrounding Anabaptism reflects a lack of research. First, Murray asserts that "little information survives about what [Anabaptists] did and taught: almost all we know of them comes from their (hardly unbiased) opponents" (71). This is patently wrong: there is a great deal of extant writing from members of a range of Anabaptist groups in the sixteenth century and after, including the writings of Menno Simons, the extensive accounts in the *Martyrs Mirror*, and the records of Hutterite *Bruderhöfe* in Moravia, in addition to a great amount of other Mennonite, Hutterite, and Amish devotional and historical writing from every century since

the sixteenth. Second, the author insists that the question "Are you a Christian?" was "meaningless in a society where this was the default position" (74). On the contrary, I would suggest that this was *the* question that shaped early modern European life because of the sacral outlines of that society. People *constantly* asked and wondered if those around them were Christians, resulting in heresy trials, witch hunts, and the activities of the Inquisition. Finally, Murray commits errors in more specific instances, as when he claims that the Catholic Church failed to "creatively" respond the Protestant Reformation—anyone with even a cursory knowledge of sixteenth-century Europe knows that the Catholic Church succeeded in combating Protestantism in very creative ways through the work of the Jesuit order as well as through the reforms established at the Council of Trent (137–138). This reviewer does not disagree with the author's attempt to offer a "less academic" approach to Anabaptism, but these and other errors are emblematic of a thoroughgoing inability on the part of the author to understand the historical fundamentals of Anabaptism (34).

Further, Murray's approach to his audience is at once overly simplistic and condescending. He suggests, without factual support, that "Biblical scholars are usually unaccountable and in no position to test out the implications of their interpretations of Scripture" (65). Plus, he characterizes "Bible studies in the local congregation" as "an unedifying pooling of ignorance" (65). In making these comments, Murray may in fact alienate the two groups that he seeks to enter into dialogue with, again highlighting the muddiness of the author's approach.

This inchoateness extends to the title of the monograph itself. What does Murray mean by "the naked Anabaptist"? This title apparently means to suggest that the book will lay bare the issues central to Anabaptism. However, as I have already shown, the author discerns not so much the "naked Anabaptist" as some nebulous "post-Christendom" approach to spiritual life of his own invention. Overall, then, his analysis lacks an accurate historical or theological basis in the realities of the tradition which he purports to describe. Finally, the flaws of the book enter even its endnotes, where Murray offers incomplete citations for the URLs he uses as evidence (these endnotes lack the dates on which the author accessed them).

Murray's central argument, that Anabaptism contains the proper values for British and Irish Christians in a post-Christendom era, is misconceived on the grounds that he fails to accurately describe the nature of Anabaptism. The monograph is plagued by analytical, historical, and formatting errors all significant enough to undermine the basic value of the volume. To that end, this reviewer concludes that one must look elsewhere to better understand Anabaptism.