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Following In His Steps: A Biography of Charles M. Sheldon by Timothy Miller (Review)

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of parallel and related associations, one for employees and one for employers in each industry. But this was not the only line taken by Neo-Thomist social thought, nor was it the path the Catholic labor movement followed. The author is certainly right to point out the retardant effect such Vatican views had on the labor movement. This is to state a historiographical problem; to resolve it satisfactorily is another matter.

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PAUL MISNER

Following In His Steps: A Biography of Charles M. Sheldon. By TIMOTHY MILLER. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987. xvii + 281 pp. \$24.95.

Charles M. Sheldon is usually remembered only for his "sermon story," *In His Steps* (1897), which popularized the idea that every aspect of Christians' lives should be guided by reflection on the question "What would Jesus do?" Though this work did catapult Sheldon to fame, and its central concept permeated virtually everything he did and wrote, Timothy Miller successfully rescues him from the customary "pigeonhole." A prolific if not profound author, he wrote some fifty books (thirty originating as stories for his congregation). As a pastor in Topeka, Kansas, he conscientiously served his parishioners' and community's needs, experimenting with forms of worship, pioneering in pastoral counseling, and building Central Congregational into an "institutional church." An activist-reformer, he worked to improve the lot of Topeka's blacks, advance prohibition (his "most passionate social cause"), and promote world peace.

The Sheldon admirably portrayed by Miller was a person of simple faith and apparent consistency between profession and practice. A "pious liberal," he adopted early, without hint of the personal crisis experienced by many evangelicals of his generation, an "untheological Christianity" comprised of love for God and humanity. Yet he adhered till his death in 1946 to daily prayer and Bible reading, abhorrence of alcohol and tobacco, and disdain for the theater and much modern literature. He refused to authorize a theatrical adaptation of *In His Steps* unless all the actors and actresses were devout Christians.

Miller probes some aspects of Sheldon's career more thoroughly than others. Three excellent chapters cover projects Sheldon launched for Topeka's black community, the enormous success of *In His Steps*, and a widely publicized experiment in publishing the *Topeka Daily Capital* as a Christian paper for one week in 1900. Sheldon's parish activities and prohibitionism also receive ample attention. In contrast, little is revealed about his private life, personal reflections, and individual relationships with parishioners,

other Topekans, or contemporary religious leaders. These imbalances reflect the uneven character of the sources.

More significantly, because Miller chose to write neither an intellectual biography nor an analysis of his subject's role in the Social Gospel, Sheldon remains somewhat isolated from the larger religious environment. *In His Steps* and the Christian newspaper are well grounded in the genre of the Social Gospel novel and nineteenth-century religious journalism. Beyond the influence that the Andover Seminary controversy may have had on him as a student there in the mid-1880s, however, one learns little about how he arrived at his disinterest in biblical scholarship and theology. Similarly, beyond his popularization of his own reduction of the Social Gospel and applications of its ideals in Topeka, contributions he may have made to the Social Gospel *as a movement* are not developed.

Miller balances affection with fair-minded discussion of Sheldon's critics, including one who found his Jesus "merely the personification of his own personal ideals" (p. 139). Excellent illustrations enrich this well-written book.

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Brothers Unite: An Account of the Uniting of Eberhard Arnold and the Rhön Bruderhof with the Hutterian Church. Translated and edited by the Hutterian Brethren; introduced by JOHN A. HOSTETLER and LEONARD GROSS. Ulster Park, New York: Plough Publishing House, 1988. xviii + 366 pp. \$16.50.

The main substance of this volume consists of the letters written by Eberhard Arnold (1884–1935) before and during his 1930–31 visit to the Hutterite communities of North America. The letters also include those written to well-known Mennonite historians such as John Horsch, Robert Friedmann, and Harold S. Bender. Arnold's desire was to unite his fledgling religious movement in Germany with the historic Hutterite communities that were experiencing renewed vitality on the western prairies.

The history of the Hutterian Brethren, as noted by Leonard Gross in his introduction, goes back more than four and one half centuries to Moravia, where a peaceful wing of Anabaptists established community of goods. Following a golden period in the late sixteenth century, they experienced severe persecution which drove their remnants to Hungary, Rumania, Russia, and finally to the western prairies of the United States by 1874. From there many of their number moved to the prairie provinces of Canada during and following World War I, because as German-speaking "communists" they experienced substantial wartime hostility in the Dakotas.

Meanwhile in Germany, by 1920 Eberhard and Emmy Arnold with their