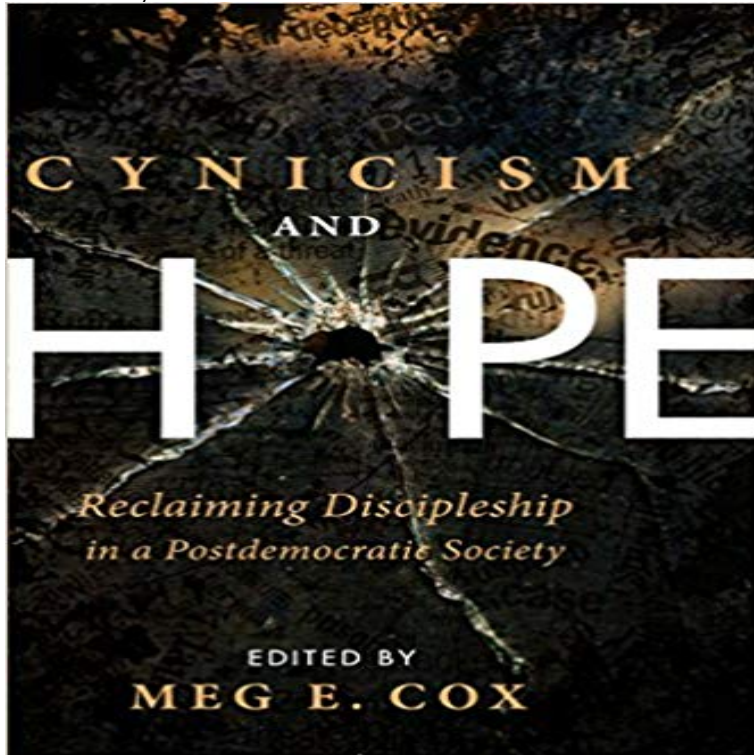


Cynicism and Hope: Reclaiming Discipleship in a Postdemocratic Society



On the morning after they walked for miles through freezing rain to a prayer vigil outside the White House in March 2007, a group of young war protesters listened to one last speech before heading home to Chicago. Peter Dula, who had served with the Mennonite Central Committee in Iraq, spoke honestly about the caustic combination of guilt and disempowerment the protesters were struggling with. He commended protesting and suggested resisting war taxes, then made two surprising final recommendations: ride a bike and plant a garden. Electrified by Dulas speech, the group wanted to talk more about their disillusionment and to learn from their elders in activism and the church. So in November 2007 they hosted a conference at Reba Place Church in Evanston, Illinois, where over two hundred people gathered to learn, worship, and contemplate a more hopeful way. This volume is a collection of the major addresses from that conference. The contributors suggest a new way to live in the tension between hope that things will improve and cynicism about whether they ever will. While creating space for lament, they point toward a radical Christian faithfulness in neighborhoods and congregations that can be both hopeful and profoundly political. Most Christians in the United States still tune their hope to the rhythm of the election cycle. For Reba Place Fellowship, Living Water Community Church and these other contributors, hope is tuned to quieter things a noisy world cannot hear--things like friendship, gardening, sitting down with enemies, and ultimately, Jesus. This collection is bracing in its timeliness. --Jason Byassee Director of the Center for Theology, Writing & Media Duke Divinity School Meg E. Cox is a freelance writer and editor.

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