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Nonviolent Action: What Christian Ethics Demands But Most Christians Have Never Really Tried (Review)

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BOOK REVIEWS

Peace, Progress, and the Professor: The Mennonite History of C. Henry Smith. By Perry Bush. Harrisonburg, Va.: Herald Press. 2015. Pp. 457. \$29.99.

Writing biographies presents a plethora of pitfalls. Some authors make their subjects the best of saints or the worst of sinners. Other biographers fall into the temptation of giving every detail about the subject's life, with little consideration of the outside world. Perry Bush's outstanding new study of Mennonite historian C. Henry Smith (1875-1948), by contrast, is the best kind of biography. It gives Smith credit at appropriate points, identifies shortcomings in his thinking, and contextualizes him in the world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most important, though, Bush's biography raises provocative questions for Christian scholars generally and Mennonites especially. It helps present-day believers think carefully about three main issues: what it means to be Mennonite; the role of history in shaping group identity; and the costs and benefits of borrowing from the larger world of ideas.

Henry Smith (he added the "C." later) grew up in Metamora, Illinois, on an Amish-Mennonite farm. Unlike most American Anabaptists of his era, Smith became passionately devoted to higher education, earning a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago in 1907. After spending a few years teaching at Goshen College, he became an early faculty member at Bluffton College, where he spent the remainder of his career (1913-1948). Bluffton appealed to Smith because of its focus on denominational unity, its establishment of a Mennonite seminary, and its openness to progressive views. Active in banking as well as teaching, Smith had, by the time of his death, accumulated a small fortune that still endows a faculty lectureship and student oratorical contest, both focused on the topic of peace.

Smith's most important achievements were his Anabaptist histories. When he began writing in the first decade of the twentieth century, he found that the quality and accessibility of most Mennonite histories were uneven. Some were riddled with errors while others were written in German and inaccessible to anglicizing Mennonites. As a trained scholar, Smith brought a new level of knowledge and scholarly rigor to the craft. Beginning with *The Mennonites of America* (1909) and concluding with his magnum opus, *The Story of the Mennonites* (1941), Smith added a wealth of knowledge for Mennonite readers in the first half of the twentieth century. Although he sometimes neglected academic practices, like including footnotes and an index, he became his generation's premier U.S. historian of Anabaptism.

While Bush's biographical treatment is first-rate, the book has ramifications far beyond Smith's life. *Peace, Progress, and the Professor* matters more broadly because it raises several important issues for Mennonites of every generation. The first is the question, "What does it mean to be Mennonite?" In the early twentieth

century, American Mennonites found themselves divided into progressive and conservative factions. Leaders of both sides debated what constituted Mennonite identity. In 1909, Smith defined “the germ” of Anabaptism as the principle that “no outside authority, either lay or religious, has the right to force any religious system upon the people” (178). In this reading, religious individualism was foundational. Others answered this question differently. Conservatives such as the (Old) Mennonite Church editor Daniel Kauffman, for example, stressed the importance of correct doctrine, and by the end of Smith’s life his friend Harold S. Bender had articulated an “Anabaptist Vision” that placed discipleship and community as the heart of Anabaptism. Bush, properly, does not identify one view as correct. However, even readers more interested in the future than the past will find that the *historical* knowledge Bush presents can shed new light on this perennial question of identity.

Peace, Progress, and the Professor also shows how intra-Mennonite battles over identity took place in the field of history. While some Mennonite leaders fought their enemies through the press or institutional structures, Smith wielded his pen to advance his vision of who Mennonites were and where they came from. Bush clearly documents how Smith created a “useable past” — a version of history useful in providing solutions to the problems of Smith’s own day. Based on his understanding of the past, Smith’s prescriptions usually involved greater denominational unity and less rigidity in doctrine and practice. At the same time, his opponents also used history for their goals. The anti-modernist writer John Horsch touted the Swiss Brethren as Anabaptist pioneers, but dismissed the early Anabaptist Hans Denck as inauthentic because Denck “advocated a rationalizing view of the scriptures” (173). Bender, who was Horsch’s son-in-law, echoed this view. In a clear attack on Smith’s perspective, Bender argued in 1924 that the sixteenth-century heroes “were not a loose society of tolerant individualists, but closed communities with strict discipline and a fixed faith and firm rules of conduct. They were scarcely modern liberals” (260). History, then, was not merely a preserve for ivory-tower types to debate minutiae. Bush shows that while neither Smith nor his opponents set out to distort the past, both camps used history as a weapon in the battles of their own day.

A final important issue raised in this biography is related to one of the book’s chief strengths: its contextualization of Smith within American history more broadly. Bush shows how the younger Smith embraced mainstream Progressivism, with its optimistic outlook on human affairs. He got involved in a local anti-saloon campaign in 1911 and demonstrated ongoing interest in the Y.M.C.A. movement. Smith’s theological opponents, meanwhile, became more involved with *their* preferred outsiders: mainstream Protestant fundamentalism. The second edition of John Horsch’s *Modern Religious Liberalism* (1924), for example, carried the endorsement of the Moody Bible Institute president, James M. Gray. In Bush’s telling, such affiliations came with a price. For both sides, involvement in mainstream Protestant culture negatively affected the Mennonite church. As Bush shrewdly notes, “both church progressives and their conservative antagonists would battle hard for the supremacy of their vision of a normative and supposedly untainted Mennonitism, but both would do so through often uncritical borrowing from outside worldviews” (166). Knowing more about past

believers' struggles with these issues can help Mennonites, moving forward, decide what is helpful and harmful from the outside world.

Peace, Progress, and the Professor is beautifully written, deeply researched, and equally appealing to scholarly and popular audiences. In addition to fine documentation of Smith's life, it raises a number of important questions that will appeal to a broad readership. Moreover, Bush's tone is generally evenhanded when describing controversies of the past, although at times he might not give Mennonite fundamentalists enough credit for defending historic Mennonite convictions. Nevertheless, professional historians, students, and ordinary readers might profit from close attention to this study.

Perry Bush has written a fine biography of C. Henry Smith. But he has done more than that: through contextualizing Smith so deeply in his time and culture, Bush has illuminated several eras in Mennonite history and American history more broadly.

University of Notre Dame

BENJAMIN J. WETZEL

Montbéliard Mennonite Church Register, 1750-1958: A Sourcebook for Amish Mennonite History and Genealogy. 2 vols. Joe A. Springer, compiler, translator, and editor. Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, in cooperation with the Association Française d'Histoire Anabaptiste-Mennonite. 2015. Pp. 1391. \$49.

Ernst Correll, co-founder of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, suggested that "Mennonite family histories described on a documentary basis would present nothing less than landmarks" in Mennonite history generally (*MQR*, Jan. 1928, 66-67). Yet, *MQR* contributions have rarely taken up Correll's challenge to engage family studies. Only a note or two on genetic studies, a few relevant articles, and a dozen or so related book reviews have graced *MQR*'s pages.

Academic ambivalence toward the subject comes naturally. Despite potential insight into group identity and social-political interactions, genealogical study—by Mennonites or others—often seeks to legitimize pedigree or establish in-group credentials, which sometimes casts scholarly aspersions on genealogical interest in general. A desire to welcome new members can also moderate Mennonite enthusiasm for genealogical scholarship.

But Correll, a champion of socioeconomic historical interpretation, asserted that family experience reflects the "crux and core" of Mennonite history's first four centuries. "Families stood at the very center of the movement," he argued, for "Mennonite religion was a family religion and in no way a matter of cults and ceremonies." But to add value, he felt one should approach such histories "systematically" and ground them in "documentary" research. Joe A. Springer's monumental, two-volume publication of *Montbéliard Church Records* provides an invaluable foundation to pursue exactly that.

This long-awaited work—a "quarter-century" in the making—collects not simply 200 years of a French Amish Mennonite congregation's records,

transcribed and translated into English. It also offers an array of contextual material and source documents that enhance appreciation for the congregation in its historical and geographical setting. In his role as curator at Goshen College's Mennonite Historical Library, Springer has painstakingly assisted many researchers in their genealogical pursuits. His careful work and passion for accuracy have patiently helped elevate the overall quality of Mennonite genealogical research. This publication reflects these attributes: the massive compilation of genealogical tables it includes appears to have minimal direct bearing on Springer's own genealogy, yet it will prove invaluable to that of many others.

The first volume consists largely of introductory material and primary documents. Springer opens with several pages that introduce the church record, explain his work with the document, and reproduce a short congregational history. He follows with 525 pages of the church records themselves: introductory notations ["this is the spiritual record of the congregation of the Mennonites or defenseless, baptism-minded Christians of the congregation in the principality of Montbéliard, written down in simplicity with faithful accuracy by its teachers and overseers." (3)]; baptisms; marriages; deaths; family lists; ordinations. For each set of facing pages, the left provides a transcription of the book's original (German then French) entries with the opposite side providing its English translation. The final 45 pages share five eighteenth-century documents: two governmental censuses of Montbéliard's Amish Mennonites (1733 and 1759) and three church "disciplines" European Amish Mennonite leaders formulated in 1752, 1759, and 1779. This section also includes an account of the 1929-1930 construction of Montbéliard's chapel and a fascinating essay by Jean Huckel about Amish Mennonite agricultural contributions and their local development of the Montbéliard cattle breed. Throughout this material, Springer cross-references individuals mentioned with their appearance in genealogical tables that comprise volume two.

Those tables are equally massive—550 pages—and layered with considerable detail. Springer adapts the notation system of Gingerich and Krieder's *Amish and Amish Mennonite Genealogies* (1986) to the particular needs of this publication. Preparation of these tables required Springer to move beyond his original reliance on published genealogies and embark on "extensive direct research" of his own. Using this material requires careful study of (and occasional return to) his detailed explanation of the volume's coding system, its lists of abbreviations, and the bibliography. In addition to indices for place names (25 pages) and personal names (190 pages), Springer provides a six-page "emigration index" listing Atlantic Ocean passages by both ship arrival date and ship name.

Springer recognizes that a compilation of data so massive and reliant on such an intricate notation system—where the positioning, case, and italicization of notations each conveys special meaning—will inevitably produce mistypes and errors. Indeed, one's eye may occasionally catch a minor typographic error or copy-edit oversight, and volume two adds three pages of *errata* from volume one. Springer's encouragement that users "will benefit by engaging in their own

research" in both listed and new sources, and that they "test the accuracy of data . . . as they use it in other contexts" (579), seems well advised.

The wealth of material within these volumes can inform any number of diverse research questions, particularly about the "mechanics" of family relationships. Do family ties, birth order, gender, and other aspects of "family" correlate with individual decisions about the timing of migration or choices of settlement? Do family patterns emerge in ordinations? Though not explicitly addressed here, Springer commented in a 1993 paper that his early work on this church record hinted that selection for leadership at Montbéliard may correlate with higher levels of wealth. Did members typically nominate wealthier members as candidates for ultimate selection through the "lot" (445)? Would this imply that these Amish Mennonites associated economic skill with spiritual leadership skill? To what degree did family relationships otherwise contribute to patterns of gaining/retaining wealth or land tenancy/ownership?

These records also facilitate insights into how Montbéliard Amish Mennonites interfaced with political and social structures. Springer suggests, for example, that the mandated 1759 census of Anabaptists within the principality may have prompted them to begin the church record, and that the need for data to launch French civil record-keeping in 1793 helped revive it after entries flagged. Yet as the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* notes, church record-keeping among Swiss Mennonite groups during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries generally was "politically dangerous and theologically questionable" (ME 5:328), making the Montbéliard record an anomaly. What then prompted Hans Rich, who co-compiled the mandated 1759 census, to launch this detailed documentation of an otherwise politically marginalized group? Perhaps as Springer hints, the fact that he "had lived his whole life in the region, was well-to-do, and quite probably had as secure a relationship as he could expect with his landlord/secular sovereign" (vii) coupled with his personal penchant for detail may have bearing. But what prompted others to continue maintaining it? Why did similar census requirements (such as the 1809 census of Anabaptists in Lorraine) not also spark such initiatives? Did an atypical confidence in local tolerance minimize concerns of future oppression and mitigate risks of documenting members? Huckel's description of their local impact on agricultural development implies considerable nineteenth-century acculturation, despite retaining German as their "spiritual" record-keeping language through the 1890s.

Family history also aids identity formation and self-understanding. For example, Jeff Gundy, Julia Kasdorf, and many other Mennonite poets and writers have successfully drawn creative inspiration from it. But insights gained may cut in various directions, and family histories sometimes embellish facts. Huckel considers "not possible," for example, the account of a U.S. family that their ancestors declined a noble's gift of real property lest it later tempt them to "give up their faith because they would risk becoming too attached to earthly possessions" since Anabaptist land ownership was then legally prohibited (557). Agricultural skill looms large in historic Mennonite identity, but its exercise may carry a double edge. Stories of migration to develop or "settle" land often leave untold or unrecognized the impact of their arrival on those displaced. Elaine Enns,

for example, recounts her need to expand personal family histories of suffering and faith-informed migration to also account for realities of indigenous peoples displaced by her ancestors, first on Ukrainian steppes and later on Saskatchewan prairies.¹ Montbéliard farmers considered newly-arrived Anabaptists to have “usurped” the properties they once farmed (xiv). Twenty-first-century European Mennonites face the presence of Nazi complicity in their family histories. One suspects that, beyond faith convictions, family ties may have played significant roles in certain religious divisions and congregational splits. The historically patrilineal nature of family naming (and therefore genealogical data) obscures the relationships and influences many women played in molding family histories. Springer’s index of “individuals with unknown surnames” (1386-1387), virtually all women, helps underscore this.

Regarding these larger questions, Aurora Levins Morales, in *Medicine Stories: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity* (1998), encourages knowledge of personal family histories to provide “an accounting of the debts and assets we have inherited” that reflects “an act of spiritual and political integrity” (75). Especially when viewed alongside contemporary social realities either engaged or ignored, such knowledge nurtures “greater integrity and less shame; less self-righteousness and more righteousness, humility, and compassion; and a sense of proportion” (76). She suggests these histories can empower racial and ethnic minorities to reclaim integrity and worth in a culture that devalues them, and also encourage those holding privilege to grasp their historic complicity in that devaluing. Mennonites have at various times found themselves on either side of the privilege divide. As Correll understood ninety years ago, well-documented family histories can help explore how they as a faith tradition have chosen to navigate that divide. Works like Springer’s are essential to that exploration.

Champaign, Ill.

GORDON OYER

Principalities and Powers: Revising John Howard Yoder’s Sociological Theology. By Jamie Pitts. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications. 2013. \$31.

In July 2016 several hundred Mennonite delegates, including me, traveled to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, for Mennonite Church Canada’s biennial assembly. I took along *Principalities and Powers: Revising John Howard Yoder’s Sociological Theology*, the first book by Jamie Pitts, a professor at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. The book is, as Pitts describes it, “a light revision” of his Edinburgh University doctoral thesis (ix). Reading it in the context of a delegate assembly highlighted the fact that it is a rather theoretical piece of work. This comes not so much from the fact that it was a dissertation in its first life as it does from the angle of the book’s argument. Pitts’s burden is to further “‘Yoderian’ theology,” and toward that end he engages critics of the Mennonite theologian’s work and suggests a series of constructive revisions (xxiv). The object each of these

1. “Facing History with Courage: Toward ‘Restorative Solidarity’ with Our Indigenous Neighbors,” *Canadian Mennonite*, March 2, 2015, 4-9.

emendations is Yoder's "sociological theology," which Pitts intends to bring to the surface as "social theory." Once there he tries to revise it in such a way that it ceases to be vulnerable to a variety of oft-raised charges of reductionism: critics claim Yoder reduces the complexity of church history to fit his own agenda, reduces theology to ethics, and reduces Christianity's metaphysical and ontological elements to sociological practices.

To execute this theological rescue operation Pitts focuses almost exclusively on what Yoder says about the principalities and powers. Pitts does so because this Pauline concept is, in Yoder's view, "'roughly analogous' to contemporary social scientific terminology" (xxxv). This allows Pitts to apply the work of the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu as a sort of broad spectrum medication. The structure of this argument is very formal: after the introduction, each of the six chapters in *Principalities and Powers* presents a revision of one key aspect of Yoder's theology, thus each one bears a title that begins "Revising Yoder's . . ." Pitts takes on Yoder's view of creation, anthropology, violence, theological method, politics, and, finally, the meta-issue of particularity versus universality. Each chapter begins with an overview of Yoder's perspective and an outline of its weaknesses, then moves to a description of a relevant concept from Bourdieu and its application to Yoder's oeuvre, and concludes with a summary of the reworked Yoderian concept.

The book is strongest when Pitts sketches these key aspects of Yoder's theology and when it surveys the resulting scholarship. This body of literature has grown quickly in the past twenty years, and Pitts is familiar with the key streams of research. That this is not an easy task is evidenced by the additional literature Pitts engages in the book's preface, material too new to have been included in the body of the book. Likewise, Pitts communicates Bourdieu's theory in concise and surprisingly direct ways.

Yoder scholars, and let us now say that Pitts has joined their ranks, are a peculiar fraternity for at least a couple of reasons. First, there is the now infamous ream of Yoder's interpersonal indiscretions and inappropriate manipulation of relationships. It is not easy to know how to take seriously the work of an ethicist with such a track record. Thankfully Pitts does not sidestep this, even though he probably does not do enough to convince critics that Yoder is still worth their attention. Given the infamies, given the need for revisions that form the basic premise of *Principalities and Powers*, why not simply ignore Yoder? There are good reasons why we shouldn't, but Yoder scholars are in the awkward place of needing to make this case. The second reason Yoder scholars are peculiarly situated is that Yoder's theology itself places little value on such scholarship. I'm not quite sure that Yoder scholars have grappled with this. If Pitts had been in Saskatoon when I was reading his book I would have asked him to explain how Yoder scholarship can itself be Yoderian.

That generic question leads to several additional observations. First, the book's rigid structure, its neat formalism, sits awkwardly atop Yoder's unruly corpus. This kind of structural dependence is not uncommon in dissertations, but here I think it obscures the fact that the book's thesis does not do much work. That's not to say this wasn't a good dissertation, just that its usefulness as a book is limited.

Second, the focus on the principalities and powers seems to have been forced in an attempt to construct this meeting between Yoder and Bourdieu. It's a theoretical meeting and a meeting in theory that, to my reading, casts Yoder as more of a theoretician than he was. That is not to say that his theology lacks strong theoretical or methodological positioning. It does not. Yet it is to say that Yoder's starting and ending points are rarely as theoretical or as methodological as one might guess from *Principalities and Powers*. Third, and most significantly, I worry that the surfacing of Yoder's sociological theology is less a "surfacing" than it is a "foundationalizing." Admittedly, this concern could be the result of my having read Pitts's book amidst the wrangling of church life. However, I think such wrangling and the occasional theologizing it necessitates is not unlike the occasion for much of Yoder's own work. I recognize that this claim cuts across the grain of Bourdieu's social theory itself, especially his concepts of habitus, freedom, and reflexivity. Even so, it is hard to see how the limitation of dialogue partners, the conversation's structure, and the positioning of social theory as the controlling rubric for the broad list of issues engaged can be seen in any other way. Things would have been different had Pitts also engaged the burgeoning literature on theology and ethnography. Such a move would have kept the revised Yoderian theology a bit closer to the ground and kept it in contact with actual communities. And it would have maintained the focus on Yoder's sociological theology, a topic that is worth serious study.

In addition to his direct treatment of Yoder and the relevant secondary literature, Pitts is equally helpful when addressing current intellectual issues in his own voice. When he does this he leaves little doubt about his constructive ability, analytical talent, and spiritual sensitivity. Consider what he says here in the final chapter: "The choice between narrow particularism and capacious universalism is a false one. Moreover, the choice between fixed universals and relativism is false, as Christian love, reason, and virtue are produced with God in the struggle for faithfulness to God." Pitts concludes the section this way, "[Christ's] universal lordship is not an obstacle to dialogical receptivity, but its animating principle" (190-191). One finds in lines like these a pastoral awareness of the questions bubbling away in contemporary churches. This leads me to hope that this will not be the last book we get from Pitts. As was evident at the Mennonite assembly in Saskatoon, our communities are in need of voices capable of speaking to just such questions with a precision and sensitivity that comes from a deep immersion in the blighted beauty of the Christian tradition.

Ottawa Mennonite Church

ANTHONY G. SIEGRIST

Forward in Faith: History of the Kenya Mennonite Church. A Seventy-Year Journey, 1942-2012. Francis S. Ojwang, ed. Nairobi: Kenya Mennonite Church. 2015. Pp. 287. \$15.

Although never explicitly stated, the thesis of *Forward in Faith* might be that the Kenya Mennonite Church (K.M.C.) has persevered through many conflicts on the way toward becoming a peace church in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition.

Indeed, the theme of conflict advances the plot, as the chapter titles in the lengthy middle portion of the book (pp. 79-184) indicate: “the church experiences growth while *struggling for unity*” (chapter 5); “faith and hope *amidst tensions*” (chapter 6); “patient persistence *within challenging relationships*” (chapter 7); and, “*reconciling relationships and reaching beyond*” (chapter 8). Hinting at conflict, Francis Ojwang writes in his preface that “a basic commitment of the editors was to write the truth, in love,” while being “committed to share the story of the church in ways that are seasoned with grace and that are for the encouragement of the church” (2). Referring to Ojwang’s words and touching on the theme of conflict, César García, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference, commends K.M.C. for “not hid[ing] the troubles and failures of the church,” in part because “how reconciliation and forgiveness among leaders were achieved will give interesting lessons to our global church” (4). That García has written a foreword indicates K.M.C.’s commitment to belong to a global community of Anabaptist-related churches that foregrounds the ministry of peacemaking and reconciliation in Christ. In fact, the final chapter states that “the commitment to be reconciled to Christ and one another within Kenya extends to K.M.C.’s commitments to the world-wide church, as well,” and its very title implies that to move “onward in faithfulness as ambassadors of the Gospel of Peace” is to move “forward in faith” (226). Thus the editor has framed the history and the future of K.M.C. by uniting the themes of transforming conflict (reconciliation and peace) and faithfulness.

Yet if the theme of reconciliation predominates, the purpose of the narrative to simply record a story also shines through. After the first two chapters, which set the church within the contexts of Western missions to Africa and the “African religions and cultures” of Kenya (17), the story unfolds chronologically, with section titles tied to spans of time (e.g., 1942-1972). Interspersed with significant events are lists, usually within the main text though sometimes formatted vertically, of the names of founding members and prominent families within each diocese and congregation. In the epilogue, Nelson Okanya refers to “the narrative reading like a sacred text,” while Ojwang calls it an “account of the acts of the Holy Spirit in . . . the Kenya Mennonite Church” (241-242). Although lists of names also are featured in the biblical book of Acts, *Forward in Faith* evokes the feeling of other Scriptures in which names predominate, such as 1 and 2 Chronicles. To be sure, it is necessary to record, and thereby honor, the names of important figures; but lists may distract uninitiated readers of this story from its other main track—the signs of God’s grace in the midst of conflict. Moreover, since the appendices of the book, which are helpful as a quick reference to information, include a comprehensive list of “ordained persons” (pastors, bishops, and deacons, both men and women), the pace of the story might have been quickened and its thesis clarified by omitting some of the lists from the main narrative chapters.

Forward in Faith contributes to the burgeoning body of writing on Christianity in Africa by Africans. Within the Mennonite family of faith, Ojwang notes that this history helps to round out the picture of the church in East Africa, since both the Tanzania Mennonite Church and the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia—churches also included in the Africa volume of the Global Mennonite History Project—already had their own published histories.¹ Moving beyond Africa, the title of the epilogue proclaims that “this story is for everyone”—and indeed the

text is replete with potential lessons for the global church. For example, in terms of mission and evangelism, the text cites several examples of K.M.C. members drawn from other churches (e.g., Anglicans), but also includes the account of outreach (since 1980) to certain Maasai and Kuria groups that “had no Christian tradition” (241, 201). Since the text refers to the latter as K.M.C.’s “first experience in cross cultural mission,” does this imply that the first Tanzanian Mennonites who left their homes to preach the gospel in Kenya—the “founding” event of K.M.C.—were not missionaries (201)? Is it the “cross cultural” dimension that defines mission, whereas evangelism, the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ, is in fact a broader category of ministry? Since “mission” and “evangelism” are popularly synonymous, such questions arising from the historical record can help the church in every place to reexamine its modes of ministry and the dynamic relationships between such ministries. For example, can a church be missional without itself being (re-) evangelized? And where mission is on the wane, does the church lack an awareness of the power and presence of Christ?

Another issue to which the text points pertains to the structure of church unity. Attributing certain tensions within K.M.C. to different understandings of leadership among various ethnic communities, the text implies that the church allowed space for groups “to develop as different church communities with cordial relations but different Anabaptist groups” (34, cf. 211-212). This begs further specificity as to the meaning of “cordial relations” and to the existence or extent of collaborative witness between “separate” Anabaptist bodies. In the case of K.M.C. and an erstwhile member body, the charismatic Nakuru Happy Church, partnership takes the form of belonging together on the International Missions Association, a “fellowship of Anabaptist churches from around the world” who are connected to Eastern Mennonite Missions, Salunga, Pennsylvania, and “who are committed to . . . taking the Gospel to the unreached” (187, 236-237, 214). Is the Kenyan church’s journey toward collaborative models of ministry, a unity of sorts, at all instructive to the Mennonite church in North America, which likewise contains contrasting perspectives on both polity and spirituality?

Such questions—and a host of others—can arise from the reading of particular church histories heretofore hidden from the church universal. With the publication of this history, the Kenya Mennonite Church’s experience too has become a mirror into which other members of the global church might gaze and see something of themselves—and move forward in faith.

Mennonite Mission Network

JOE SAWATZKY

The Church in Mission: Perspectives of Global Mennonite Brethren on Mission in the 21st Century. Victor Wiens, ed. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions. 2015. Pp. 691. \$30.

Most of the forty-five essays in this volume were written specifically for this book by Mennonite Brethren authors not widely known beyond their own circles, and it was refreshing to hear what, for me, were new voices in the field. Four chapters are reprints of articles by well-known Mennonite Brethren missiologists

whose contributions to mission theory and practice were so seminal that they continue to wield an enormous influence that transcends denominational lines: "The Anabaptist Approach to Mission" (123-140) by Hans Kasdorf; "The Gospel: Its Content and Communication" (291-304) and "Pastoral, Evangelistic, and Missionary Discourse" (377-383) by Jacob Loewen; and "The Bicultural Bridge" (305-317) by Paul Hiebert. Other reprinted articles include Heinrich Klassen's "Immigrant Witness in Germany" (363-376) and Marlene Wall's "Mission through Christian Universities" (651-660).

The chapters are arranged under four major headings: seven chapters offer a range of theologically conservative "Biblical/Theological Perspectives" (17-120); eight chapters—the book's most denomination-specific content—provide "Historical Perspectives" (123-287); eight chapters—arguably the most useful material for non-Mennonite readers—provide a potpourri of "Cultural Perspectives" (291-383); and twenty-two chapters present a kaleidoscope of "Strategic Perspectives" that are the stock in trade of instrumentalist American evangelical understanding (401-688). A three-page afterword complements the foreword and editor's preface, all of which should be read.

At first glance only one of the essays appeared to have been authored by a woman (Marlene Wall) with two more identifying women as co-authors—suggesting that the denomination's missionary initiatives are *of* and *for* "Brethren." But first glances can be misleading. The brief historical surveys of Mennonite Brethren missions in Europe, North America, Asia, Africa, and Latin America are complemented by Doug Heidebrecht's collection of minimalist but useful vignettes of four women missionaries (259-270) who served in the United States (Magdalena Hergert Becker); India (Katharina Shellenberg); China (Paulina Foote); and Paraguay (Myrtle and Robert Unruh). They are a reminder of the key roles played then and now by understated and often unnoticed women in the servant mission of the church. These stories remind the reader that women—if seldom noticed—have been and continue to be in the forefront of the Christian missionary endeavor.

In a book featuring so many authors, it is impossible to review each essay within the assigned editorial parameters, so I will mention several chapters that, in my opinion, are outstanding and worth careful reading beyond Mennonite Brethren circles. The first is E. D. Solomon's "Jesus' Inaugural Sermon: Clues to a Theology of Mission in the Gospels" (37-50). Because of its gospel focus, this is among the most distinctively Anabaptist essays in the book, and could well serve as the basis for Anabaptist missiologies across the Mennonite spectrum. Complementing this essay is Alfred Neufeld's "Anabaptist Theologies of Mission: An Overview" (83-97). Hans Kasdorf's chapter, "The Anabaptist Approach to Mission" (123-141), first appeared thirty years ago in a book edited by Wilbert R. Shenk, *Anabaptism and Mission* (Herald Press, 1984), and is still worth reading.

Each chapter of *The Church in Mission* includes a list of recommended readings, as well as three or four study questions. While the lists of further readings are helpful, the same cannot be said of the discussion questions, which in many cases seem to be tacked on to make the book a little easier to use in a classroom. The authors or editors might have been advised to consult with peer educators in

formulating this material, since a number of the questions are poorly articulated and don't naturally elicit the kind of probing thinking or discussion that the chapters themselves warrant.

If a multiple-author book such as this one is a kind of barometer, then it is clear that Mennonite Brethren understanding of mission over the past fifty years has been heavily influenced—for good and for ill—by powerful cultural perspectives and theological doctrines peculiar to American conservative evangelicalism. This is not censure, but observation—and perhaps also a personal lament as I have over my now considerable lifetime watched the adjective in “*Mennonite Brethren*” leach away as congregations and their leaders shift to theologies and ethics more congenial to consumerism and the American way of life. Is it inevitable that Mennonite communities of faith should surrender to the theological, ecclesiastical, and cultural influences of mainline evangelical and Reformed colleges and seminaries that have little *comprehension of or patience with* an Anabaptist hermeneutic that gives primacy to Jesus and the gospels rather than to Paul and his epistles in determining the purposes, priorities, and approaches to faith and mission?

Thus, while the authors do indeed identify as *Mennonite Brethren*, with a few exceptions the theologies and missiologies in this book are not particularly Anabaptist, though they are *evangelical*. For a distinctively Mennonite understanding of and contribution to Christian mission, one will need to look elsewhere. It is salutary, for example, to compare the content and thrust of the articles in this volume with those comprising an earlier, shorter (and strictly male authored!) volume on the same subject, *The Church in Mission: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J. B. Toews*, edited by A. J. Klassen (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, 1967). That volume includes two sections that are distinctly “Mennonite” in both the sectarian and theological senses of that word: a set of essays on the “historical recovery of mission” and extensive appendices on Mennonite-Brethren historical and then-current global mission engagement.

I was grateful for the opportunity to read *The Church in Mission: Perspectives of Global Mennonite Brethren on Mission in the 21st Century* and was both informed and heartened by much of what I read. It should serve a modestly useful purpose in Mennonite Brethren circles and beyond.

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Sons and Mothers: Stories from Mennonite Men. Mary Ann Loewen, ed. Regina, Sask.: University of Regina Press. 2015. Pp. 144. \$19.95.

In a range of prose and poetic voices, the essayists assembled by Mary Ann Loewen offer reflections that weave past and present as they strive for a deeper understanding of their Mennonite mothers. Perhaps inevitably, and as the title suggests, many of the stories shared in *Sons and Mothers: Stories from Mennonite Men* say as much about the sons as about their mothers. Indeed, Loewen frames the volume as explorations of both maternal identity and self-identity: “We are all

children born of mothers, and all of us seek to understand one another in an attempt to make sense of our own lives" (xii).

The religious fervor of Mennonite mothers runs throughout the volume as a nearly ubiquitous theme. These are the women whose lives revolve around the church, unquestioning and ever-faithful. Many of the sons offer their adult selves as the foil to such religiosity, having significantly revised their views since childhood, rebelled, or even left the church entirely. Josiah Neufeld writes of the theological differences between himself and his mother: "In the figure of Jesus I see a feminist who struggled to subvert the oppressive power structures of his society. I think my mother would be happier to hear me say that I have a personal relationship with him" (38). Occasionally, though, a writer offers a more nuanced (and perhaps more objective) view of his mother's religious beliefs and experiences. Paul Tiessen shares how his mother gradually moved away from what she experienced as materialistic expectations of those in the church, a move that eventually brought him back to the church. "Through her own detachment from the church after 1950, she modelled a way of creating distance from the church body, without severing ties. And I did choose to return. . ." (13).

Along with religious devotion, loss appears as a theme throughout the book, the latter theme often bound up with the former. Unsurprisingly, many of these sons reflect on the influence of their mothers near the end, or just after the end, of their mothers' lives. The poignancy of debilitating illness and the finality of death provide emotional frameworks through which to review turbulent mother-son relationships. Nathan Klippenstein opens his essay by noting the toll that illness has taken on his mother: "My mother is a fortress. Well, she was a fortress. You'd never know it now. . ." (41). Much of his text details the history of his mother's firm hand, particularly around religion, and his ever-growing rebellion against that hand. By stringing stories together from past and present, Klippenstein perhaps deliberately puts the reader off-kilter, unsure of the eventual outcome of the mother-son dynamic. In closing the essay with his mother's death, Klippenstein acknowledges his own role within the relationship: "I needed to forgive, not my mother for her lack of acceptance of me, but myself for my lack of acceptance of her" (56).

Bryon Rempel employs a similar back-and-forth historical-contemporary framing in his essay, "Fifteen Ways to a More Beautiful You." One of the best pieces in the volume, Rempel's essay moves naturally and with lovely turns of phrase between time periods, gradually making clear not only how his mother defined herself and rebelled through fashion but also how fashion and appearance became a thread to connect mother and son: "it was simple to rebel in my town. You fought with what you had; and our ammunition appeared to be dress" (64).

Lloyd Ratzlaff's "Queen of Clubs" offers another high point of the volume. Rather than using death to frame retrospective reflections, Ratzlaff's text is primarily in the moment: his is a narrative of extended loss as his mother suffers an attack of meningitis and slips away, but only slowly. His exquisite use of language beautifully conveys the heartache of such prolonged grief around gradual loss: "we sit quietly in her room and commune by candlelight, our tears and silence more profound anyway than words. And yet, when the queen of clout

reaches out the one semi-functional arm in a crook to ‘hug’ her son, it’s a benediction no old-time religion ever gave” (118).

There were various points throughout the book in which the authors idealize their mothers to a frustrating degree. In this respect, Andrew Martin is to be commended for his unflinching acknowledgement of less-than-glowing memories, alongside the positive ones. Like Rempel and Klippenstein, Martin frames his text with his mother’s death. The memories he offers in retrospect, however, veer wildly between his mother’s service, generosity, and hospitality on the one hand and the emotional and psychological warfare between his parents on the other. Rather than glossing over a difficult family history, Martin instead sees his mother’s death as an “opportunity to ponder further her legacy to me” (112), finding that the act of reading offered a shared escapism to both mother and son.

While the authors that Loewen brings together speak earnestly and seemingly honestly about their mothers and their sometimes troubled mother-son relationships, a greater diversity of contributors would have been welcome. Nearly all of these Mennonite sons and mothers are of Russian-Mennonite heritage, almost all are Canadian, and most appear to come from rather homogenous social, educational, and class backgrounds. No single volume can include all voices, of course, but if Loewen intended for a specific framing of geography and ethnicity, discussion of that direction would have been helpful to the reader in the introduction.

That said, it is refreshing to see the topic of Mennonite mothers embraced by more than female writers. As one of the co-editors of *Mothering Mennonite* (2013), I am, naturally, primed to appreciate such offerings. When Mennonite mothers have played such crucial roles in the conveyance of religion and culture, it remains surprising that most historians have paid little attention to their contributions. Mary Ann Loewen’s volume adds significant voices to the discussion. We may only hope that other writers and historians will take note and continue to build upon this increasingly strong foundation.

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RACHEL EPP BULLER

Living the Anabaptist Story: A Guide to Early Beginnings with Questions for Today. By Lisa D. Weaver and J. Denny Weaver. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House. 2015. Pp. 112. \$19.95.

The authors, a father/daughter team, have created an attractive, user-friendly overview of the Anabaptist story. The book begins with the birth of the Anabaptist movement and ends with the Anabaptist experience in the world today. In between the book is replete with maps, a flowchart, timeline, and many photographs and illustrations. It even includes a study guide at the end for those who use the book at school.

The book is not intended to be a complete history. Rather it takes snapshots of significant parts of the Anabaptist story. For example, the Munsterite story is highlighted in all of its bizarre detail, including a picture of the three cages that displayed the rotting bodies of the revolutionary leaders. The Munsterite story

naturally leads into an account of Menno Simons, who dedicated his life to shepherding the Dutch Anabaptists who escaped the Munsterite error.

The *Martyrs Mirror* is also highlighted. Three of its stories are briefly told. But then the historic value of the book is highlighted by the Ephrata Cloister's involvement in translating and printing this huge book for the Mennonites in Eastern Pennsylvania who were trying to prepare their young people for impending war.

Probably the weakest part of the book is the way it stretches the past to emphasize Anabaptist women's leadership. While women participated fully in the Anabaptist movement they hardly held broad leadership roles as this book suggests. The book's emphasis on this point seems to me to be an effort to make the past more acceptable to modern sensibilities.

One of the interesting strengths of the book is the higher-than-average profile of the plain side of the Anabaptist tradition. Pictures of present-day Hutterites, Old Order Amish, and plain Mennonites are all included along with descriptions of their lifestyles. Historically the Anabaptist peoples have been distinguished visually throughout their history; thus this book provides culturally assimilated Mennonites and other readers a visual glimpse of how this tradition is being expressed today. This fact fits well with the title of the book, *Living the Anabaptist Story*.

This soft-cover book contains about 100 pages of text, including the study guide and index. About half of the book space is given to photographs, illustrations, and interesting sidebars, creating an inviting investigation by readers both young and old. Hopefully the book will quickly find a place in Christian school libraries and elsewhere across the United States and Canada.

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CHESTER WEAVER

From Suffering to Solidarity: The Historical Seeds of Mennonite Interreligious, Interethnic, and International Peacebuilding. Andrew P. Klager, ed. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications. 2015. Pp. 409. \$47.

In 1996 the Rwandan Genocide scattered refugees all across central and southern Africa. Some ended up in the tiny Kingdom of Swaziland where my wife, Carolyn, and I were country co-representatives for Mennonite Central Committee. One of my job responsibilities was to liaise with government and the United Nations, which took responsibility for coordinating services for the refugee community in the country. I routinely suggested conflict resolution and reconciliation programs for this small band of Rwandan refugees who had fled the orgy of violence. During one memorable meeting, the representative from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees looked at me and said in a tone of quizzical admiration, "Where do you get all these ideas [of peace and reconciliation]?"

The truth was they were not my ideas. Rather, I had been shaped by a long line of Mennonites who moved toward conflict in an attempt to transform violence into just and peaceful relationships. Decades before I arrived in Swaziland, Mennonites

stood with the South Africans and front-line churches as they sought to transform the racist and oppressive system of apartheid. The Mennonite legacy in southern Africa prompted the moniker “those JPR types,” meaning activists committed to working for justice, peace and reconciliation.

From Suffering to Solidarity is an important work that gathers many authoritative voices addressing the same question; Where do we Mennonites get all these ideas to promote peace and reconciliation? In the introduction, editor Andrew Klager states the book’s objective as showing:

through the lens of a particular ethno-religious group, how a historical infrastructure that preserves and disseminates narratives, stories, memories, and myths of suffering and nonviolence—either through withdrawal early on in their history or positive action and advocacy in recent decades—in the midst of persecution can inspire identity groups, whether ethnic, religious, or otherwise, to act in solidarity with those who suffer in similar ways today and work for peace and justice on their behalf in nonviolent and transformative ways (2).

The seventeen essays that follow offer, as Klager introduces them, present history, then frameworks and lenses for thinking about peacebuilding, and, finally, case studies. The authors of *From Suffering to Solidarity* weave together reflection and action to suggest how the experience of suffering in turn becomes solidarity with others who suffer. As noted by Marc Gopen in his foreword, “there is a remarkable trajectory between Menno’s Pacifism and today’s Mennonite peacebuilders” (xi).

Chapters one through five take the reader through a historical understanding of some key influences on the Anabaptist commitment to nonviolent peacemaking. Through understanding the cultural context in which Mennonites read Jesus theologically and how they tried to live out their faith, the authors present a realistic picture of a work in progress. These first five chapters move from European Reformation times, through the Russian Revolution, to the emergence of the group exemption from military service, conscientious objection status, and social engagement through the Mennonite Central Committee. This section also describes how the Anabaptist reading of the Gospels has gone global. While piecemeal and incomplete, this historical section sets the foundational understanding of “why” believers should engage with a broken world.

Current frameworks and lenses of peacebuilding follow in chapters six through ten. Topics include how John Paul Lederach, Mennonite practitioner and scholar, changed the conflict resolution paradigm to focus on transformation; and how mythmaking impacts peacebuilding and restorative justice. A chapter on Mennonites and human rights explores how the U.N. and member states have made great progress toward justice in the twentieth century, yet left Mennonites with a high degree of discomfort. Mennonite women’s contributions to the field of peacebuilding domestically and internationally and self-care of peacebuilders round out this section of the book, which focuses on the “what” of engaging suffering neighbors.

Chapter eleven, “Called to Be Snakebirds: Mennonite Historical Conditions for Peace Work,” is a bit of an anomaly in the middle of this book. Using the

invocation of Jesus in Matthew 10:16 to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, Virgil Wiebe – who must be an avid bird watcher – skillfully weaves the imagery of the Snakebird (genus *Anhinga*; common name Darter) into a description of how Mennonites have focused on peacebuilding in the changing social climates where they find themselves.

Finally, chapters twelve to seventeen contain six case studies from around the globe showing where Mennonites have stood in solidarity with neighbors in places of violence. Examples include Egypt and interreligious hospitality, Colombian Anabaptists experiencing and intervening in the violence around them, Indonesian Mennonites engaging the religious violence around them, peacebuilding in Palestine-Israel, the Congolese Mennonite response to interethnic division, and the use of nonviolent reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. What these chapters have in common is describing, over a process of years, how Mennonites both as indigenous actors and as outside agents, have engaged the neighbors and communities around them to address violence whose roots lay in religious, resource, or identity differences, or a combination of the factors. These chapters give a glimpse into the “how” of Mennonite peacebuilding.

Taken together, the essays in this book tell the story of how a people, now a global Mennonite community, inspired by the suffering incarnation of Jesus, are creating peacebuilding moments by standing with neighbors. Klager hopes that the book will “inspire influential leaders among other groups who have faced violence and injustice to ask, How can we also preserve and disseminate our stories, memories, and myths in ways that will encourage nonparticipation in the ongoing cycle of violence and instead” (5).

How successful is this volume in doing what it sets out to do? As both an international peacebuilder and one who is enmeshed in the current controversies on scriptural interpretation on welcoming persons with LGBTQIA orientations, I wonder what a book like this would look like if focused, as author Marlene Epp focused chapter nine (“Mennonite Women: Making Positive Peace”), on *intra*-Mennonite peacebuilding around issues that have divided the church in the past fifty years. I wonder if or how any of the exemplary peacebuilding work done throughout the world by Mennonites is being applied to the current North American church impasse. Is standing with the suffering something only done outside church walls? I wonder also why only four of the seventeen chapter authors are women.

In the end, these chapters are snapshots, historically and contemporarily, and give only glimpses into the complicated undertaking of peacebuilding. As a Mennonite “insider” who absorbed Mennonite peace theology from the pew and tried to live it in international service, I found myself wishing for more “outsider” observations and assessments of Mennonite praxis. For the outsider curious as to the inner workings of Mennonite peacemaking, the book gives solid and scholarly, even cutting-edge, insights into the spectrum of theology to practice. For those studying the patterns of historical, theoretical, and practical Mennonite peacemaking, this book provides generous resources.

Voices of Harmony and Dissent: How Peacebuilders are Transforming Their Worlds. Richard McCutcheon, Jarem Sawatsky, and Valerie Smith, eds. Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite University Press. 2015. Pp. 350. \$19.48.

Peacebuilding institutes introduce practitioners and students to a wide variety of topics related to conflict analysis, transformation, and social change. Typically these institutes offer weeklong courses that operate in the space between academic study and field practice; they provide people with opportunities for professional or personal knowledge and skill development, as well as for inspiration and reflection. The collection of chapters in *Voices of Harmony and Dissent* give readers a taste of the offerings provided by one such institute, the Canadian School of Peacebuilding. The school, which began in 2009, is hosted by Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This volume will be of particular interest to readers who are considering taking a course in peacebuilding or learning more about one of the authors or topics in the edited collection.

The thirteen chapters of the book, written by instructors who taught courses at the Canadian School of Peacebuilding between 2009 and 2014, include edited speeches, reflections on pedagogy, topic-specific analyses, and overviews, as well as stories of personal journeys related to peacebuilding and teaching. The topics include advocacy (Stuart Clark and Sophia Murphy), mediation (David Dyck), sustainable food systems (Martin H. Entz), truth and reconciliation (Stan McKay and Piet Meiring), circle process (Kay Pranis), mindful feminist activism (Ouyporn Khuankaew), nonviolent social change (Mubarak Awad and George Lakey), indigenous pedagogy (Maxine Matilpi), compassionate pedagogy (Karen Ridd), Mennonite peace theology (Harry Huebner), and the use of art in the form of an inter-ethnic choir in the process of social change (Ivo Markovic). The writing styles are as diverse as the topics. The chapters are assembled in alphabetical order by the editors, Richard McCutcheon, Jarem Sawatsky, and Valerie Smith, who invite readers to find their own connections between the chapters. In the foreword, Ovide Mercredi, a one-time instructor and a former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, grounds the work (and school) in the important challenge Canada faces in addressing its broken and divisive relationship with Indigenous Peoples. The foreword underscores the efforts by the Canadian School of Peacebuilding to address issues that are local as well as national and international.

The book as a whole is informed by a commitment to conflict transformation and a relational approach to peacebuilding that seeks larger systemic change. Each of the authors conveys her or his passion for peace and justice work through personal stories—usually his or her own, although sometimes through the stories of other people. Some stories are offered as short vignettes, such as the stories of three women shared in Stan McKay’s chapter, and others provide the vertebrae, such as in Ouyporn Khuankaew’s chapter. The introduction to the book suggests that the authors were asked to “share first-hand stories about their experiences of working for peace over a lifetime,” to reflect on what they have found profoundly moving, or learned about “how peace can be fostered” (19). The degree to which chapters succeed in doing this is uneven, with authors operating from different

starting points and employing stories for a variety of purposes. Nevertheless, the collected volume makes a contribution to the literature in terms of offering a set of works that seek to embody reflective practice connected to teaching peacebuilding. Kay Pranis's chapter stands out in this regard as it weaves its insights in, around, and through her experiences in running an exercise called driftwood in teaching about circle processes.

I would have appreciated if the volume had included deeper reflective practice from the editors themselves. It would have been helpful to have an introduction or conclusion that provided more extended reflection on the contents of the book beyond the three threads noted: authors' character; a sense of hope; and belief in personal agency (21-22). I would have benefited from their further reflection. This would not necessarily mean finding thematic unity in the volume; rather it might mean drawing out and considering the lessons and insights the editors themselves had gleaned from five years of running the school, or, perhaps their insights from working with instructors on developing and consolidating the material for the present volume. This suggests a missed opportunity as Sawatsky and Smith were co-directors of the Canadian School of Peacebuilding, and the volume is framed as making a contribution based upon learning from reflection.

As a whole, *Voices of Harmony and Dissent* offers content that extends from inspiring life stories to general overviews of topics, to discussions of course-specific content, teaching, and training material. The volume functions best as an introduction to the richness that a peacebuilding institute like this one offers. The breadth of material covered means that its chapters will likely appeal to a wide range of readers.

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REINA C. NEUFELDT

Nonviolent Action: What Christian Ethics Demands But Most Christians Have Never Really Tried. By Ronald J. Sider. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press. 2015. Pp. 191. \$19.99.

In this book, Ron Sider breaks no new scholarly ground. But that was not his purpose. Sider's purpose is to motivate his intended audience—Christian leaders of churches, denominations, parachurch bodies, and other ecclesial groups—to make a bold and sustained commitment to nonviolent activism on a grand scale.

In the first ten chapters, Sider offers his readers multiple accounts of nonviolent campaigns in order to make a compelling case that nonviolent resistance to oppressive ruling powers has proven remarkably effective. Focused primarily on the nonviolent movements that toppled unjust regimes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, these chapters describe the nonviolent campaigns of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and the American civil rights movement, "people power" in the Philippines, the Solidarity movement in Poland, the toppling of the Communist government in East Germany, the courageous leadership of women in the ouster of Charles Taylor and the ending of civil war in Liberia, and the events of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt. In addition, he calls attention to the success of Witness for Peace in Nicaragua and the work of

peacemaker teams that have intervened in situations of violent conflict, documented injustices and abuses, and accompanied vulnerable persons as advocates and protectors.

In the final two chapters, we arrive at the real agenda of the book. Because non-violent resistance has proven successful on so many occasions, it is time for churches, denominations, and other ecclesial bodies to make a bold commitment to explore the possibilities for nonviolence on a scale never before attempted in human history. Sider throws down the proverbial gauntlet to leaders across the ecumenical spectrum when he makes this statement: "could we not all agree that it would be worthwhile to see what would happen if for two decades we spent at least one-tenth as much on nonviolent methods as we do on preparation for lethal violence" (169)? The dream and vision he hopes to call forth is a bold commitment on the part of Christian leaders to fund centers for research on nonviolent resistance and methods of conflict resolution, to fund training centers in nonviolent tactics that parallel military academies around the world, and to mobilize tens of thousands of peace activists willing to move *en masse* into dangerous situations.

Sider argues that Christians in both pacifist and just war traditions, if they wish to be consistent with their convictions, have an obligation to commit themselves to this project. One of the criteria of just war theory is that lethal violence must be the last reasonable resort in any situation. In light of the proven success of nonviolent resistance, future claims that resort to war is the last resort will ring hollow unless advocates of just war theory have previously committed themselves to sustained testing of the possibilities of nonviolent alternatives. Pacifists will also lack integrity if they are unwilling to invest their financial resources in this project and to risk their own lives in massive nonviolent campaigns to confront and resist bullies and tyrants. If pacifists believe that they have an alternative to war, he argues, they must have the courage and integrity to prove it in confrontation with oppressive regimes (167).

This book is an excellent introduction to the history of nonviolent resistance and its many victories. Because it is written for a nonspecialist audience, it would be a valuable resource for church study groups, especially those outside of the peace church tradition, as an introduction to nonviolent resistance as a strategy for social change. *Nonviolent Action* could also be extremely helpful in undergraduate introductory courses in Christian ethics or in peace and conflict studies.

Sider achieves his two fundamental objectives: to make the case that nonviolent activism has been remarkably successful and to articulate a strong challenge to Christian leaders to make a serious commitment to this endeavor. What Sider accomplishes in this book is terribly important. But there are some significant limitations that render the book less likely to persuade those who are not already sympathetic to nonviolent activism. First, he writes as if his conclusions are self-evident. At various turns he fails to identify and address possible objections to this proposal or to take seriously obstacles that might be encountered if Christians seek to implement the book's proposal. Second, his narratives focus primarily upon nonviolent revolutions that toppled oppressive regimes within nation-states. Left unaddressed is the potential of nonviolent action for halting or mitigating war

between two nation-states or the possibilities for nonviolent national defense strategies in the case of a foreign invasion. Since Sider is a citizen of the United States and this book will be marketed to American Christians, the absence of any discussion of terrorist violence is a serious omission. The capacity of this book to persuade may be stymied by the simple question, "But what about ISIS?"² If the book is to be persuasive, there is a need for scholarly work that breaks new ground with significant research and analysis of the potential of nonviolent initiatives for mitigating the violence of terrorist organizations. A fruitful line of further inquiry might have involved the study of the collaborative efforts, to which he devotes a mere half of a page, between Christian Peacemaker Teams and the emergence of Muslim Peacemaker Teams in Iraq.

If we take into consideration that Sider's career has been characterized by a courageous willingness to articulate prophetic challenges to evangelicals in the United States to take seriously the Bible they profess to believe, especially when it comes to matters such as hunger, poverty, and social justice, one wonders why this prophetic edge is missing in this book. Since a revolution, even a nonviolent one, is not necessarily desirable in a democracy, the book's preoccupation with nonviolent revolutions in tyrannical nation-states conveys the impression that there are no fundamental injustices here in the United States that might call for other modes of nonviolent resistance. Focusing on nonviolent revolutions in the most oppressive contexts as the primary paradigm of successful nonviolent activism unwittingly facilitates an avoidance of the urgent need to talk about the proverbial elephant in the evangelical room. In light of the broad support among many American evangelical Christians for a militarily aggressive U.S. foreign policy, a question that must be faced squarely is what the sustained commitment to nonviolence Sider is calling for might mean when it comes our own nation's massive investment in a military apparatus with global reach and devotion to military action, often as the first resort and preferred solution to global problems. Sider's appeal to nonviolent activism will lack credibility if it fails to resist our own nation's role in fueling violence, whether by direct military action or through arms sales or military aid to many corrupt and violent regimes.

Nonviolent Action is an eloquent invitation to take nonviolent action seriously as a realistic and effective strategy in a brutal and unjust world. But the moral consistency required for the implementation of the challenge levied by the book will require wrestling with some of these more difficult and controversial issues that were left unaddressed in this otherwise very important book.

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2. Though the book was published in 2015, the bulk of the research and writing of *Nonviolent Action* likely took place prior to the emergence of ISIS as a threat on the global stage. Nevertheless, in light of the centrality of terrorism in American foreign policy since 2001, this is a serious omission.

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