Book Reviews

Disarmed: The Radical Life and Legacy of Michael "MJ" Sharp. By Marshall V. King. Harrisonburg, Va.: Herald Press. 2022. $29.99 (hardcover) / $17.99 (paperback).

In his account of the life and work of Michael Jesse (MJ) Sharp (1982-2017), journalist Marshall V. King strikes a balance between the genres of biography, memorial, and martyrology. Drawing from more than 100 interviews completed during several years of research, King describes multiple stages of Sharp's development as a "fully engaged" nonviolent advocate (242). The result is a detailed portrait that acquaints readers with Sharp's personal character as much as with his professional accomplishments.

Structurally, King chooses to avoid a strictly chronological narrative. Instead, he opens the book with a partial reconstruction of the events preceding Sharp's death in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both Sharp and his co-worker Zaida Catalán were killed near the end of their terms with a United Nations Group of Experts documenting militant rebel groups and human rights abuses in the country. King succinctly describes the troubled investigation into their deaths in 2017, taking care to reflect the perspectives of their families. King's purpose is explicitly not to solve the "murder mystery" that still surrounds Sharp and Catalán (13). However, he returns to the question of "seeking justice" near the end of the book (215), at which time he notes theories concerning the likely complicity of Congolese government and military officials along with recent progress identifying a few of those responsible. King's placement of Sharp's death as a bookend heightens the narrative's inherent questions regarding whether and how to view Sharp through the lens of self-sacrificial or martyr identities. At the same time, readers will find that the narrative is motivated far more by Sharp's passionate life than by his death.

The book supplies readers with anecdotes illustrating ethical quandaries Sharp encountered alongside humorous tales of his adolescent exploits. The second and third chapters frame Sharp's nonviolent commitments in the contexts of the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition and his early upbringing, respectively. Chapters 4 and 5 recount some of Sharp's formative experiences at Bethany Christian High School and Eastern Mennonite University. In each chapter, King includes memorable moments such as Sharp's ill-fated attempt at vermiculture in his college dorm room. Simultaneously, he traces Sharp's trajectory toward a career in service, beginning with assignments with Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Central Committee. Sharp's continued growth as a mature, effective mediator and social justice advocate is narrated primarily in chapters 6 through 8, wherein King describes Sharp's work in Germany counseling soldiers turning to conscientious objection. Sharp's move to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and his work in service of internally displaced people in the country's eastern

regions is also given particular attention. The final six chapters relate Sharp's transition into increasingly challenging work with the United Nations Group of Experts. Chapters 9 through 11 describe his courageous and personal engagement with rebel militants as well as his efforts to facilitate the repatriation of both militants and refugees. The narrative concludes with a series of astute reflections on Sharp's character and contributions told by those who knew him well. The memorial stories shared by family and friends in chapter 12 are especially moving, while the book's culminating contemplation of the meaning of self-sacrifice, heroism, and martyrdom is exceptionally pertinent to a biography of someone who exemplified these categories. Sharp, King's sources observe, would not have claimed any of these terms for himself, at least not without a joke attached.

Throughout, King's authorial style is flexible and engaging. His choice to intersperse multiple running themes, among which Sharp's adaptability and skill at poker are prominent examples, helps to tie the story of Sharp's wide-ranging ventures together. Although there are a few times when the transitions between different memories of Sharp's life can be jarring, King's juxtaposition of tense encounters with soldiers and rebel militants alongside stories of Sharp's romantic relationships also acts to maintain a clear focus on Sharp's humility and humanity, thereby circumventing the risk of over-dramatizing an extraordinary story. The inserted photographs of Sharp fishing and hiking act in a similar capacity by grounding the reality of his experiences for the reader.

A further strength of King's approach is his sensitivity to readers who are unfamiliar with the particularities of Anabaptist/Mennonite history and culture. There are many aspects of Sharp's story that will strike a chord for Mennonite audiences as well as for others in peacemaking professions, including sketches of Sharp's upbringing in Scottdale, Pennsylvania, and Goshen, Indiana, and his involvement in service assignments with denominational organizations. King's inclusion of the traditional narrative of Swiss Anabaptist beginnings is both clearly explained and directly connected to Sharp's nonviolent perspective. Additionally, King takes the time to include brief definitions of Mennonite institutions, including historical societies and church conventions, where they appear in the narrative as well as appending a brief glossary.

Readers may reach the end of King's account still wanting to know more about the motivations, struggles, and successes of Sharp, Catalán, and the circle of peacemakers surrounding them. Readers may also ask where and when comparable narratives could be told regarding other individuals who tread the boundary line between pacifist traditions that are wary of public and political service and the necessity of entering the same spheres in order to provide alternative voices regarding peacemaking applications. While Sharp's efforts offer an exceptionally inspiring model, King also acknowledges the unique nature of the path Sharp chose, calling him "a living paradox as one of the few Mennonites who could be called an expert on guns and US military armaments" (23). Thus, King's book also demonstrates the need for further biographies and recognition of similar figures as well as further critical analyses of Mennonite and pacifist methods working within national and international political or governing structures.

In sum, King does a great service not only by recording a portion of MJ Sharp's life through the memories of those who knew him but also by conveying a story that invites all readers to rediscover the efficacy and urgency of the nonviolent model that Sharp exemplified.

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Mennonites and Post-Colonial African Studies. Ed. John M. Janzen, Harold F. Miller, and John C. Yoder. New York: Routledge. 2021. Pp. Xv, 298. $160, hardcover.

From the 1960s until the 1980s, a small group of North American Anabaptists transitioned from volunteer work in Africa through graduate school and into development agencies and academic research related to African studies. This anthology provides the perspectives of this community. Besides their exceptional achievements in their own fields, Mennonites engaged with African studies stand out in other ways. Most Anabaptist North American volunteers who served in African countries with Mennonite Central Committee or Mennonite mission boards never returned to North America. They were also unusual in that very few anthropologists, historians, or other scholars working on African topics owed their careers to volunteer work with any religious organizations (especially after the 1960s).

A central set of questions holds the collection together. Although this leads at times to a somewhat formulaic biographical tone, this approach also allows for some major themes to emerge. The cross-pollination between academia and Mennonite institutions in the 1960s and 1970s is certainly striking. Church leaders such as Donald Jacobs pursued anthropology to further their goals in promoting Mennonite church growth. Although not particularly highlighted here, this effort to broaden theological perspectives and missionary practices fits with the highwater mark of Protestant ecumenicalism in the 1960s and 1970s. More commonly, Mennonite volunteers inspired by their Africa experiences during the Vietnam War era then went to graduate school or sought out work in secular institutions. Melvin Loewen, for example, served as a dean at the Université Libre du Congo in the mid-1960s before eventually becoming a major figure in the World Bank.

These narratives also expose how the realities of volunteer work could collide with the idealism of North American Anabaptists. Merrill Ewert's chapter is especially notable in this regard. Rather than pretend he was competent to teach math in a Congolese school, Ewert admitted that he had his students vote to decide which answer correctly solved a math problem. Such a moment points to the larger assumptions of alleged white North American superiority placed upon individual volunteers in the 1960s, who sometimes began their work without even a year of university under their belt. After their volunteer experiences, these academics and practitioners often worked to build alliances with African organizations as equal partners rather than as sidekicks.

Most chapters are consistently engaging, especially in their effort to track the intellectual development of their authors. For Mennonite academics, several trends take precedence. They credit their Mennonite background for appreciating other societies and their willingness to try to listen to others without passing judgment. Historian Curtis Keim observed, "Growing up as part of a particular people gave me a distance from mainstream American culture from which I could make observations" (87). Although no authors directly reference the ideal of Mennonite innocence from politics, they do share a common theme of trying to hear others without imposing themselves. Keim was one of the few authors to suggest this was not always what happened in the field, as he briefly describes his role as a manager.

The decision of the editors to include no fewer than three outside evaluations of the book speaks to the self-reflection so notable among Mennonite intellectuals. One of those respondents, Emily Welty, notes how the anthology focuses largely on men and how the authors often do not consider how their own upbringing in a racially segregated background influenced their development. Historian Steven Feierman remarked that he did not feel the authors delved deeply enough to connect their Mennonite heritage with their outlook on Africa. Paul Gifford contends that perhaps Mennonite commitments to cultural relativism went too far in ignoring negative aspects of African culture.

While I share Feierman and Welty's views, one also could argue that a more thorough excavation of the intersections between gender, race, and class among Mennonite volunteers would be a different (though hardly easy) task that would need to look at former volunteers who never wandered afterwards into a career that centered on Africa. It also would have to consider broader trends in missions and secular development in this period, as well as changes within the Mennonite Central Committee itself. North Americans Mennonites were hardly alone in their naïve optimism or their often-unquestioned assumptions about Africans in the early decades of independence. However, it is hard to determine here how Mennonite organizations fit into larger currents of development practice or academic research or how they evolved as institutions.

Readers should be aware of other ways in which this collection is quite unusual outside of Anabaptist circles. African studies scholars are all too aware of the role of particular mentors and universities in their field. Other than a few studies on major figures in mid-twentieth-century African studies like Jerry Gershernhorn's book on Melville Herskovits (University of Nebraska Press, 2007) though, little work exists on secular networks of researchers in this field with a common intellectual background after the 1960s. With few exceptions, including *History Lessons: A Memoir of Madness, Memory, and the Brain* by Clifton Crais (Abrams, 2014) and *Living With Africa* by Jan Vansina (University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), professors of African studies rarely write autobiographies for public audiences. This loose genealogical approach to Mennonites inside and outside the university thus offers inspiration for other ways of tracing the role of particular university and institutional North American networks. Musuto Mutaragara Chirangui, Lydia Samatar, and Alioko Songolo's contributions also reveal African perspectives on Mennonite transnational intellectual relationships. Although US and Soviet

competition to recruit African students are well known, the dynamics of US church-affiliated organizations in solidifying bonds with African students and researchers is much less understood.

Mennonites and Post-Colonial African Studies is a major contribution to Mennonite engagements with the wider world in the late twentieth century. Although to some degree the experiences of its subjects may defy generalizations, this book marks an important effort to bridge Mennonite studies into a broader intellectual and cultural context of transnational relationships after the end of colonialism in Africa. Although one cannot say with much certainty how much the lessons these individuals learned was truly typical for Mennonite volunteers abroad in the mid-twentieth century, this collection is a valuable resource in the ongoing discussion about Mennonite participation in scholarship and development that transcends global divides.

Marywood University JEREMY RICH

European Mennonites and the Holocaust. Ed. Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2020. $40 (Can.).

The history of Mennonites in the Nazi era is receiving plenty of attention these days. Both *Intersections: MCC Theory and Practice Quarterly* and *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* (January 2022) have recently published entire issues on the role of Mennonite Central Committee in the first half of the twentieth century. In 2017 the German Mennonite historical society published a collection of essays titled *Mennoniten in der NS-Zeit*; last year Alle G. Hoekema published *Hardship, Resistance, Collaboration: Essays on Dutch Mennonites During World War II and Its Aftermath*; and, in between these two volumes the volume currently under review here— *European Mennonites and the Holocaust*, edited by Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen—appeared in 2020.

European Mennonites and the Holocaust provides many new insights, in-depth studies, and important glimpses into events of a period that is certainly not one of the highpoints in Mennonite history. The contributors' case studies take a granular, regional view, revealing the involvement of Mennonite actors in ethnic cleansing as well as the multiple benefits Mennonites derived from the persecution of Jews and other minorities. Their analysis of new sources sheds light on the opportunism that ensured that identities and personal assignments could morph seamlessly from collaboration with the Soviet Union to collaboration with Nazi authorities. The volume's theological studies reveal the contemporary and retrospective legitimation of behavior, and the place of Mennonites in Nazi ideology and organization.

Studies dealing specifically with the actions of Mennonites in the context of ethnic cleansing take up significant space in the present volume. These include: contributions by Colin P. Neufeldt, Aileen Friesen, and Gerhard Rempel, whose article was edited posthumously by Doris L. Bergen and John D. Thiesen. The

writers show the extent to which Mennonites participated in the persecution of Jews, Roma, and other so-called undesirable and thus intolerable minorities, not only as members of the SS and its special units, but also as mayors and in other administrative roles.

Mennonites were among the commando units that roamed villages in preparation for ethnic cleansing, rounded up Jews and others, led them to execution sites, took up arms themselves to carry out the executions, and coordinated similar actions by others. Mennonites like Heinrich Wiens were responsible for various massacres of Jews, as were mayors such as Isaak I. Reimer (Nove Zaporizhzhia) and Rudolf Federau (Molochans'k). Mennonites were also active for the "Security Service" (*Sicherheitsdienst*) as well as for the auxiliary police (*Selbstschutz*).

The studies collected here also shed light on how Mennonites were repeatedly beneficiaries of the actions against Jews, moving into Jewish homes and taking the belongings of the persecuted. The case study on the developments in Dt. Wymyschle by Colin Neufeldt illustrates this in a striking way. Mennonites moved to nearby Gabin, participated in the ghettoization of Jews there, and thus actively contributed to the destruction of the Jewish community, eventually taking over Jewish homes and businesses. Pacifism and nonresistance no longer played a role. The new attitude was reflected not only in the willingness of Mennonites to participate in the National Socialist administration of the city, the military, and various National Socialist organizations such as the "Hitler Jugend" and the "Bund deutscher Mädel," but also in the redrawing of religious lines. For example, the sign at the entrance to the Mennonite church of Dt. Wymyschle stated that Jews were forbidden to enter. Supporters from abroad were also complicit. Canadian newspapers such as the *Mennonitische Rundschau* circulated in Mennonite communities in Poland, thereby contributing to the growing openness of Mennonites to National Socialism with their pro-NS coverage.

Two other articles—by Dmytro Myeshkov and Erika Weidemann—provide fascinating insights into these changing identities. The analysis of the files from newly-accessible KGB archives shows how malleable the identities of individuals were. When the secret police of the Soviet Union sought agents among the German settlers in the 1920s, Mennonites allowed themselves to be recruited. Some of them even held leading positions, such as David Kornevic Wiens, who headed an entire network of Soviet agents. Conversely, when the German front line reached Ukraine, Nazi authorities found willing supporters among Mennonites who helped organize government and local administrators, as translators and more.

Sometimes, those who had previously worked for the Soviets were the same people who now assumed important functions for the Nazi authorities. Johann Genrichovic Dierksen from Gnadenfeld in Molotschna, for example, was active for the Soviet police under a Russian name in the early 1920s, largely concealing his German background. After the conquest of Ukraine by Nazi troops, however, he became a translator for the Wehrmacht, and after the return of the Red Army, he again entered their service and fought against the Germans.

After 1945, MCC officials in particular resurrected and promoted the argument that Mennonites in the Soviet Union were of Dutch origin in an effort to help

resettle Mennonites from the Eastern regions to the Netherlands, and ultimately overseas. The undetected transport of SS men and other members of the Nazi administration on this route to the West is part of the story as well.

Other studies in this volume—particularly the contributions by James Irvin Lichti, Imanuel Baumann, Arnold Neufeldt-Fast—deal with the broader context and the theological justifications for collaboration with the Nazi hierarchy. The distancing from the "Jewish" Old Testament, the desire to free Christianity from "Judaization," and the calls to preserve the "purity of blood" in order to secure the future of the *Volk* exemplified a growing alignment of Mennonite thought with Nazi ideology. In his 1938 "Grundworte des Glaubens," which earned praise from Mennonites in Germany and in the Soviet Union, Horst Quiring outlined a racial-biological theory. The basis for his interpretation of the Christian faith was no longer the Sermon on the Mount, but rather categories such as blood, *Volk*, and race. The correspondence of the Mennonite Youth Circulation Community reflected an engagement with similar themes, although critical voices were repeatedly raised.

The accounts of Mennonite conformity with National Socialism is complicated here by several essays—from Pieter Post, Alle G. Hoekema, Hans Werner, and Steven Schroeder in particular—on the situation in the Netherlands and the complexities of memory. While attentive to the necessary source criticism, the authors also highlight doubts about the factual veracity of some memoirs. Sometimes, for example, a new realism set after Mennonites had enthusiastically welcomed the Germans. Mennonites learned that the National Socialist reign was not particularly interested in strengthening Christian churches. And Mennonites were shocked at being labeled a "sect" or "white Jews." However, the memoirs also make clear that Mennonites knew about the mass murder of the Jews and the suffering in the concentration camps. The contributions on the Mennonites in the Netherlands open up yet another view of the events. There, a lively resistance movement existed alongside a group of supporters for the "National Socialist Movement" (NBS); members of the resistance hid and rescued Jews and opened the so-called Brotherhood houses to refugees from Austria, which had been occupied by the Nazis in 1938. A strong peace movement grew after 1945. Some of those involved in resistance are honored at Yad Vashem.

European Mennonites and the Holocaust adds telling details to the picture of Mennonites during the Nazi era. The long record of Mennonites as a peace church did not prevent actions in World War II that resulted in harm, death, expulsion, or betrayal—even including denunciations of brothers and sisters in the faith. The contributors do not shrink from addressing the gray areas, especially the question of who can be regarded as a "Mennonite" and where boundaries are to be drawn. Does Mennonite membership come by way of family background or concrete baptism in a congregation or self-definition? As Dmytro Myeshkov asks: "Can those who broke with their community and who worked actively with the Soviet authorities, often to the detriment of their community, still be identified as Mennonites? How should we refer to those who hid their social or national origins and took on a completely or partly new foreign identity?" (218 f.).

The present volume also opens up fresh perspectives on further research. For example, it seems promising to focus more on global communication and the global transfer of ideas during the Nazi era. Also, a broader study of changing identities under different governments in the first half of the twentieth century could shed new light on Mennonite history.

At the same time, the book makes clear that the Nazi period cannot be interpreted without considering the period that came before. German troops were welcomed in the Eastern regions as liberators and saviors who helped to combat the traumas suffered at the hands of repressive Polish and Soviet authorities and troops. Here, again, a historical motif is re-affirmed: Violence begets vengeance and still more violence.

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Experiments in Love: An Anabaptist Theology of Risk-Taking in Mission. By Emily Ralph Servant. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications. American Society of Missiology Monograph Series 49. 2021. $26.

Originally written as a doctoral dissertation, *Experiments in Love*, by Emily Ralph Servant, expresses concern that Mennonite theologians no longer demonstrate risk-taking in mission endeavors as did their Anabaptist forebears. Ralph Servant prefers that new stories of "experiments in love" combine insight from social and behavioral sciences, along with feminist and liberation theologians, as well as the Anabaptist tradition. Those stories need to reflect God the Source who risks being vulnerable in our world.

In light of varied views toward *missioning*, a clear definition of *mission* for the writer early in the book would be useful. Ralph Servant mentions being a child of a church planter, sharing stories of Jesus, anticipation of revival meetings, and "bringing neighbors to reconciliation with God and others" (xi-xii). She sees that for Mennonites faithfulness in mission came to be linked with martyrdom and suffering while for Jesus mission meant to "bring all of creation into union with God" (129). Katie Eisenbise, Anabaptist theologian writing in *Brethren Life and Thought*, characterizes Jesus' effort as "restoration—in terms of releasing the captives, restoring sight to the blind, and delivering the oppressed" (159). When done through taking risks, it would seem that all such activity is what Ralph Servant expects Mennonites to practice in missioning.

Chapter 1 presents a history of early Mennonite Church patterns of mission effort including: evangelical urgency (in part due to a sense of approaching end times); a volunteer church; making disciples; Jesus being the way to salvation; and a commitment to piety and church purity that prompted multiple schisms. The model also included local mission outposts and international efforts advanced by individuals specifically called to that task rather than the entire church membership.

Ralph Servant notes that when the number of immigrants near Mennonite communities increased, they often feared losing the distinctive features of their identity as related to war, nonconformity, or modernization. She observes a 2006 survey by sociologist Conrad Kanagy's suggesting that as fertility and evangelical outreach declined, fewer Mennonites formally related with unchurched folk. The focus of the chapter then shifts to a need for God-stories of love. Ralph Servant's claim that Mennonites give excess attention to a Christocentric emphasis on ethics and costly discipleship at the expense of attention to God and Spirit continues to be a worthy judgment.

Ralph Servant's call for a "correlational methodology of liberation" is the focus of Chapter 2. Her theology—which both draws on and differs from that of Paul Tillich—reflects Divine risk-taking via broad feminist and social science voices that both convey Jesus' life and teachings and emerge in relationships of love and discipleship. She prefers to call the latter term "formation." The practice of such risk-taking involves vulnerable relationships, a loving community, creativity, admission of failure, and ethical justice.

Chapters 3 and 4 highlight risk-taking, its practice and theology respectively. However, given that the Chapter 4 focuses on five writers who fail to demonstrate risk-taking, this reviewer wonders about giving so much attention to their inadequacies. Might Ralph Servant's focus instead have centered on God's wisdom in planning for diversity of religions, and on balancing loyalty to one's faith with that diversity? Compared to five centuries ago when Anabaptists and other Reformers felt compelled to bring change to some Roman Catholic practices, a primary need today is for genuine understanding and community with others, a willingness to learn from people of religious faith who differ from us.

Might Ralph Servant be averse to commending features of those loyal to the one God through other religions? With her mention of "mindfulness" (66), she could credit Buddhist insight. Her references to "diversity" (69, 71) could be illustrated from religious pluralism. What is she implying when she writes that early Anabaptist risk-taking may not be "as relevant today for Mennonites living in the relative safety of religious plurality in the United States" (98)? Do we not have responsibility to take vulnerable risks to speak for or unite with Muslims, Jews, and Sikhs when they are unfairly stereotyped and persecuted in the US?

Readers of *Experiments in Love* should anticipate extensive discussion of writers who illustrate key points in multiple chapters. Over 400 resources and 1,100 footnotes appear in this book, which can sometimes obscure the main point and basic content. The writer may refer to six different writers within one paragraph or nine notes from one resource might appear on one page (75), six of which appeared within ten pages of each other. This reviewer wonders why Ralph Servant's rearrangement of an original author's content is more valid. Accuracy in citations is a concern. Since this reviewer owns many of the resources by feminist writers that are quoted, she is aware that not all page numbers given are correct. Other features of Ralph Servant's writing might be improved: occasional rambling; failure of paragraph development to build on the first sentence; some footnote ties to risk-taking effort in mission; and excess discussion of J. Denny Weaver's focus on the atonement.

Ralph Servant specifically faults Mennonites in relation to risk-taking in mission for their fear of *change*. No doubt the fear of what change requires or might lead to is real, not only with theology. The titles of chapter 5, "New Room to Breathe"—which repeats concerns about Mennonite aversion to risk-taking because of fear for change—and chapter 8, "God's Dream, Fulfilled," anticipate improvement and newer stories. But Ralph Servant might miss her goal of attending more to God's or the Spirit's transforming qualities given that titles for chapters 6 and 7 both focus on Jesus: "The Human One" and "Jesus of the Spirit." The latter does discuss how Jesus depends on the Spirit's activity as she "Hovers" in the World, in God's community, in Jesus, and in the Church. But a reference to professor Elizabeth Johnson's fine book *She Who Is*, which explains how biblical writers and interpreters have diminished the Spirit's value by crediting some of her key qualities to Jesus instead, could have offered profound insight into change.

Experiments in Love needs to be read by scholars of Mennonite history as well as by people in the pew. The word "experiments" in the title suggests a testing quality; not all features desired will be achieved or equally worthy. But learning takes place in the process. To practice *love* expresses readiness to extend or receive well-being. Religious people expect the Divine One to model love for human interaction. Characteristics prominent centuries ago, for all church reformers, may not be the ones most needed today because times change. While risk-taking suggests a cause or incentive behind an action, mission builds on conviction. Most people have some fear of difference or change due often to misinformation. As readers feel challenged to broaden their sources for missioning stories, what Christians call "the Golden Rule" will continue to be practiced by people of all religious faiths as we anticipate the Divine Inclusive Will being done.

Goshen, Indiana DOROTHY YODER NYCE

Book Notes

The Roots of Concern: Writings on Anabaptist Renewal 1952–1957, ed. Virgil Vogt. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009.

Concern for Education: Essays on Christian Higher Education, 1958–1966, ed. Virgil Vogt. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2010.

Concern for Anabaptist Renewal: A Radical Reformation Reader, 1971, ed. Virgil Vogt and Laura Schmidt Roberts. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2022.

Concern for the Church in the World: Essays on Christian Responsibility, 1958–1963, ed. Laura Schmidt Roberts. Wipf and Stock, 2022.

Concern for Church Renewal: Essays on Community and Discipleship, 1958–1966, ed. Laura Schmidt Roberts. Wipf and Stock, 2022.

Concern for Church Mission and Spiritual Gifts: Essays on Faith and Culture, 1958–1968, ed. Laura Schmidt Roberts. Wipf and Stock, 2022.

Concern for Church Polity and Discipline: Essays on Pastoral Ministry and Communal Authority, 1958–1969, ed. Laura Schmidt Roberts. Wipf and Stock, 2022.

This seven-volume series republishes the content of *Concern: A Pamphlet Series for Questions of Christian Renewal, 1954-1971*, a publication born of concerns a handful of young Mennonite scholars and practitioners shared over a gap between an Anabaptist vision and their contemporary Mennonite reality. They viewed the increasingly hierarchical denominational structure of the Mennonite church in Canada and the US and its institution-building as inconsistent with an Anabaptist notion of church as community, calling for a more radical and authentic expression of the communal Christian life. Wide-ranging in topic and authored by over fifty contributors, the historical essays broadly reflect pursuit of renewal following two prominent themes: the nature of the church (mission, characteristics, leadership, polity, structural forms) and the relation of church to society (church as alternative community critically engaging social, political, economic realities and ideologies). Such questions remain vital today. Republishing these essays makes more readily available resources shaped by Anabaptist tradition for addressing current iterations of these concerns. But the model the pamphlet series provides is equally important. Especially at its inception, Concern was intended to be a forum for works in progress—a place to test ideas, raise questions, challenge practices, even change one's mind. The pamphlets present articles reflecting varying viewpoints intended to promote discussion, critical reflection, and ultimately transformation of understanding, practices, and structured forms of Christian discipleship. This example of dialog across difference as a shared path toward renewal is welcome in the current increasingly polarized context, where disagreement seems more likely to end a conversation than begin one. To this end, the four volumes in the series edited by Roberts include response essays from contemporary Mennonite writers, critically engaging the contribution and limitations of the historical essays and building out concerns of their own in the current global, ecclesial, and historical climate.

From Isolation to Community: A Renewed Vision for Christian Life Together. By Myles Werntz. Oxford: Baker Academic. 2022. 208 pp. $23.

This book applies Dietrich Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology to contemporary church practice. Myles Werntz engages with Bonhoeffer's work, particularly Life Together, to argue for a renewed vision of the church community as a theological therapy to cultural, moral, and sociological isolation. Insofar as the church fails in this task, it fails to be the body of Christ and magnifies the isolation that permeates creation. Werntz offers an account of how familiar church practices--such as Scripture reading, worship, prayer, and eating--contribute to community formation in the body of Christ. Shifting church practice away from isolation is not simply a matter of social engineering but also a matter of embodied theological practice characteristic of the church as a community.

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