

## **Social Sciences, and Peace and Development Studies**

James R. Kraybill, David W. Shenk, and Linford Stutzman: *Anabaptists Meeting Muslims: A calling for Presence in the Way of Christ*. Scottdale, PA; Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2005. Pp. 561.

This book is a collection of articles by different writers. Although the common theme of the book is Anabaptist-Muslim relations, the topics of the individual articles are quite diverse.

After the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, the image of Islam in the West, in particular in the United States, changed drastically. "The Islamic threat" almost replaced the Soviet or Communist threat of the Cold War period. North American media and public opinion became more and more preoccupied with news coming from the Muslim world.

Negative images created by most of the North American media did not help to heal the wounds of September 11. On the contrary, these images nourished hostile and even belligerent feelings toward Muslims in general. The invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq by the United States forces created the prevailing hostile public opinion in the Muslim world toward the U.S and the West in general

In a world troubled with conflicts and crises, any effort of reconciliation and building peace should be considered a noble action. The publication of *Anabaptists Meeting Muslims* serves no doubt this noble aim: creating an ideal world where peace, love, mutual respect reign between groups from different religions and civilizations. The main theme of this book is to create a favorable ground for dialogue between Muslims and Christians in light of the teachings of Jesus Christ and Muhammad. These two religions, together with Judaism, known as the "Abrahamic religions," share many common principles and ideas since they all developed in the same Semitic religious environment of the Middle East.

Unlike Christianity, which had to remain underground because of the Roman domination of the Middle East and the Mediterranean basin, Islam, in the absence of a strong and dominating political force in Arabia at the time of its emergence, very quickly became a political force itself. Consequently, unlike Christianity where the realms of Caesar and Jesus are separated and therefore the institutions of church and state evolved distinctly, in Islam a split between the temporal and spiritual does not exist. Instead, Islamic law and institutions cover both spiritual and temporal domains. Within only a hundred years after Islam emerged as a political force as well as a

new religion in Arabia, it became a world empire controlling a vast area extending from the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal) to the Indian subcontinent. This swift expansion of Islam as a political power in the Mediterranean basin had a very important and lasting impact not only on Islam's relations with Christianity, but also on the emergence of Western Europe as a distinct political civilization.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west, Europe was nothing but a geographical entity. The conquest by Islam of half of the Mediterranean world, including the Middle East, North Africa and the Iberian peninsula, helped define and shape a distinct Christian European consciousness. Relations between Islam and the Christian West were often also constructive. This was especially true when Muslim scholars acquired, translated, and transmitted the scientific and cultural heritage of the classical Mediterranean world to Western Europe. The early modern age witnessed the rise of Europe as a political and economic force. Nevertheless, early European colonial expansion from the sixteenth century onwards did not upset the equilibrium of power that had existed between Islam and the West since the end of the crusading movement in the latter part of the thirteenth century. It actually coincided with the rise of Islamic powers. In the middle of the sixteenth century three major Islamic empires: the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals, were at their golden age and dominated an area extending from central Europe to south-eastern Asia. Among these Muslim empires, the Ottomans fared extremely well by bringing under their control half of Christian Europe.

After the last quarter of the eighteenth century, however, the balance of power was upset, and the Islamic world began to lose ground in the face of European military and political expansion. Many parts of the Muslim world came under European rule. Russia occupied the Crimea in 1783, which was then an independent Muslim khanate. The Christian Balkan states threw off Muslim Ottoman domination and became independent during the nineteenth century. France seized Algeria in 1830 and Tunisia in 1881. Britain occupied Egypt in 1882. Russia expanded its territory in the Caucasus at the expense of the Ottomans and the Safavids between 1800 and 1829. In the 1860's, most of Central Asia came under Russian colonial rule. The same was true for India where Britain established herself as a colonial power after the 1820's. The Indonesian islands were already a Dutch colony.

In the late nineteenth century, European colonial expansion became the main cause for the emergence of Islamism as a modern political ideology. Islamism aimed to defend the Muslim world against Western colonial aggression, reform Islamic institutions, and rejuvenate Muslim societies. Although a modern ideology, Islamism

based itself on the main sources of Islamic teachings: the Quran which is the holy book of Islam and the revealed word of God, and Sunna and Hadith which are the acts and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad who transmitted the divine message to humankind.

It is heartening to this reader to see that Christian and Muslim intellectuals are receiving inspiration today from the teachings of Jesus Christ and Muhammad to establish a dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding.

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Rodney James Sawatsky, *History and Ideology: American Mennonite History Definition Through History*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press (co-published with Herald Press), 2005. Pp. xv, 216. Paper. \$24.50 Cdn; \$22.00 US.

Although this book's first incarnation was a 1977 Ph.D. dissertation at Princeton University, it is at least as relevant now as when first written. Its author, Rodney Sawatsky, served as professor, dean and president of Conrad Grebel University College, and then as president of Messiah College. He succumbed to cancer late in 2004, without seeing the published version of his work.

Sawatsky worked from the idea that for minority groups, history is the ideology with which to resist assimilation and maintain their identity. His first chapter rehearses literature on history as social construction, and he states, "ethnic ideologues frequently offer the group ideological alternatives to absolute assimilation through ethnic history" (7) As James C. Juhnke stated in the introduction, Sawatsky's particular thesis is that rather than producing "reliable history," Harold S. Bender "fashioned Anabaptism into his own American Mennonite evangelical image to meet the needs of his own denomination. Bender's 'Anabaptist Vision' was ideology more than it was history"(xi). As the context for his portrayal of Bender's "Anabaptist Vision," Sawatsky developed the theme of history as ideology throughout North American Mennonite history. Chapters treat the use of the *Martyrs Mirror*; the shift from active suffering to the memory of suffering as Mennonites dealt with the aftermath of the American Revolution, the Oberholtzer schism and the work of John F. Funk; the differing approaches to Anabaptist history of C. H. Wedel, C. Henry Smith, and John Horsch; the context of

the two world wars; the controversy provoked by fundamentalism and the conflicting forces that produced *The Christian Exponent* and *Mennonite Quarterly Review*; and the emergence of “biblical nonresistance” as the quasi-normative Mennonite peace stance. The last chapter then describes Bender’s “Anabaptist Vision” as the historical foundation for biblical nonresistance.

Sawatsky’s dissertation was the first major Mennonite statement to argue the perspectival nature of historical writing (xi). He had hoped to publish the dissertation in *Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History*, (SAMH) the Goshen series begun by Harold S. Bender. However, pointing to an ideological rather than a historical basis for “Anabaptist Vision,” accompanied by a critique of the fundamentalist theology that Sawatsky saw behind the “Vision,” contributed significantly to the failure of SAMH to publish the dissertation. Juhnke tells that story in the introduction.

However, it is precisely Sawatsky’s awareness of the perspectival nature of historical writing that makes the book interesting and relevant to current debates about Anabaptist history and theology. Recent discussions of the condition of postmodernity have made historians of Anabaptism and Mennonitism well aware of the perspectival nature of all historical writing. Reading this book will compel each writer of history to ask about his or her purpose in writing history, even those who claim to present historical observations bare of ideology.

In reading this book’s discussion of the impact of social forces and the shaping of historical writing to meet those forces, I was reminded of the “hermeneutical circle” appealed to by Bible scholars. The biblical text influences the reader who engages the world with new sensitivities, an engagement which then impacts the reader who returns to the biblical text with new eyes and sees the text in another way. Such a circle may well describe the processes of the current debates about whether Anabaptism is a distinct movement or is better understood as a representative of some other movement—as we return again to retell the sixteenth-century Anabaptist story out of our ever-changing contemporary contexts and learnings. In the materials from the epochs analyzed by Sawatsky, the options were fundamentalism or liberalism or a third way that Bender attempted to locate. Today the several options include defining Anabaptists as some form of evangelicalism or Catholicism or in terms of another version of a distinct Anabaptism. Wherever one stands in these debates, this is an important book for the light Sawatsky’s discussions of yesterday’s historiography sheds on today’s debates.

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Richard A. Yoder, Calvin W. Redekop, & Vernon E. Jantzi, *Development to a Different Drummer: Anabaptist/Mennonite Experiences and Perspectives*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2004. Pp. 362. Paper. \$8.95 US .

The book *Development to a Different Drummer* seeks to articulate an “Anabaptist/Mennonite ethic of development” drawing on studies of Mennonite development and missionary agencies and reflection papers from a group of North American Mennonites. The book is composed of three parts. Part 1, chapters 1-3, is the shortest section and it seeks to describe “mainstream” development thinking and provide a sketch of the principal Mennonite mission and development agencies. Part 2, chapters 4-6, is a longer section made up of nine “reflection” papers written by Mennonites active in development a variety of ways. Part 3, chapters 7-9 also a longer section, is the analytical heart of the book, and it seeks to articulate the Anabaptist/Mennonite development ethic.

Part two is made up of nine reflection papers drawn from a selection of 24 presentations from a conference held at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in October 1998 (222). The nine papers contain the new “data” that the book contributes to the literature. The nine papers, with the exception of one (from a Canadian), are written by US Mennonites. This includes three papers each from what the authors describe as: “grassroots,” “middle ground” and “large-scale” development perspectives. Grassroots encompasses people who have done field-level development work but who also articulate a more community-focused notion of development. The authors state that middle ground is a residual category of people who articulate a view somewhere between the grassroots and the large-scale perspective. The large-scale category includes public policy workers who, “focus on big-picture issues at the national and global levels” (153).

Chapter 8, possibly the key chapter for the book, presents an Anabaptist/Mennonite development ethical framework, drawing on secondary sources and the reflection papers from the EMU conference (the nine included in the book and the other 15, 3). Exhibit 5 (224-227) summarizes this ethical framework that includes eight “mutually reinforcing values: people-centeredness, service, integrity, mutuality, authenticity, humility, justice, and peace” (223). The authors state that while this ethical framework may not be unique to Mennonite organizations it is consistent with individual Mennonites working at the grassroots, middle ground and large-scale (238). While Mennonite organizations with a grassroots or middle ground orientation significantly embody the Anabaptist/Mennonite ethical framework, the authors state that Mennonite individuals working

in large-scale organizations will embody the ethic as individuals and seek to influence these organizations to be “kinder and gentler” (238).

This book is a useful resource particularly for the attempt to develop an Anabaptist/Mennonite development ethic and the analysis found in part 3. There are, of course, some controversial points in the book. First, the nine papers in part 2 are all written by North Americans, in fact only one is from outside of the US. Using this sample of Mennonites to develop a framework will generate some bias in the results. Second, it is not clear why the authors rely so extensively on the individual reflection papers in developing the ethical framework when they themselves state that one of the values of the Mennonite community is mutuality. If mutuality is central to the ethic, then one might expect the authors to analyse the values embedded in the work of Mennonite organizations in addition to the work of Mennonite individuals.

The book provides some other interesting discussions including the relationship between development ethics and Anabaptist theology (end of chapter 8) and a reflection on dilemmas and opportunities in development (chapter 9). The description of development theories in chapter two, particularly what the authors’ say dominated mainstream development thinking in the 1980s may also be open to controversy.

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*Tricia Gates Brown (Editor), Getting in the Way: Stories from Christian Peacemaker Teams. Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 2005. Pp. 160. \$21.00.*

*Elizabeth F. Boardman, Taking a Stand: A Guide to Peace Teams and Accompaniment Projects. Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2005. Pp. iv + 159. Index. \$14.95.*

At the time of writing this review, freedom has been secured for three of the four members of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) who were held hostage in Iraq for about three months: Harmeet Singh Sooden, James Loney, and Norman Kember. One of the four—Tom Fox, a US citizen and Quaker—was killed by the hostage takers.

The international exposure that this incident has given CPT has been enormous, and has prompted many people in North America to ask: Who are these people? What do they believe? Why are they doing what they are doing, and how do they do it? If you are one of these people, then *Getting in the Way* may begin to answer some of your questions.

In the Iraq hostage context, reading these personal stories of CPT workers helps to put a face on the organization; much as CPT itself wishes to help to put a face on the thousands of victims of violence in places where they work or have worked like the West Bank, Haiti, Columbia, Iraq, Canada, and Mexico. With this book, CPT comes alive as an organization. Poignantly, we find a meditation by Jim Loney—one of the four men who was held captive in Iraq—on whether or not he is prepared to die for his faith:

When I decided to join CPT, I generally accepted the idea of laying down my life for peace. But am I ready to do that now? What if I am asked to pay some terrible cost? Am I prepared to embrace whatever happens, regardless of what that might be? I force myself to admit it: I am afraid.(18)

The stated purpose of the book, as articulated by the current Co-Director of CPT, Doug Pritchard, is “to invite the reader to ‘enter into this work.’”(10) One *could* think of it as a gentle form of recruitment, as a counterbalance to the more aggressive forms used to seduce people into the military. Its purpose is also, however, to *inform* through the medium of story in the form of personal witness. As witness, the book accomplishes its goal well.

The eleven stories which comprise this 160 page book vividly engage the reader in the day-to-day experiences of CPTers. The stories vary in length and depth. For the most part they read like well edited journal entries, the effect of which is to engage the reader at the level of both heart and mind. I found some stories more engaging and informative than others. In his piece on CPT work at Esgenoôpetitj (Burnt Church, New Brunswick) called “Blueberries, Rubber Boots, and Boats Rammings,” Matthew Bailey-Dick suggests that “our first act of peacemaking must be to listen.”(57) His description of getting in the way of Department of Fisheries and Oceans boats trying to ram native fishermen’s boats impressed me as an authentic and critically self-aware engagement with nonviolent direct action. Equally so, I was struck by the unpretentious and faithful witness of Bob Holmes in the midst of the Dirty War in Columbia, a war “waged with threats and death lists, abductions and assassinations, massacres and displacements.”(143) There, CPTers move up and down the Opón River providing space for villagers to find refuge from paramilitaries

who target “the guerrillas’ clandestine support networks and suspected sympathizers among the civilian population”—a process called ‘drying up the water where the fish swim’, which was a method taught to Latin American military officers at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia.(143)

This is not an academic book, nor does it pretend to be. It is written by Christians, mostly for Christians and those of like-mind, and published by a Christian press. It does not claim a critical stance, although the stories can raise critical issues. In what ways, for example, do foreigners traveling in conflict zones do good? What does it mean to “get in the way”? The title of the book, which is also a motto for the organization found on their website, carries a lot of weight. It can be read in more ways even than those intended by CPT. The meaning given to it by CPT is to get in the way of violence between aggressors and victims, to challenge forms of structural violence and domination, and “the practice of active nonviolence as taught by Jesus.”(14) As I read it, a more subtle reference may be to “getting on the path of Jesus” more broadly speaking (reinforced by the front cover photograph of sandal clad ‘Jesus’ feet standing on barbwire); but for those who are not believers, it could also mean getting in the way of truly effective actions, or getting in the way of clear critical thought. It is by raising these questions about “how to get in the way” that the book may be useful in a variety of settings. I could imagine it being used in Christian schools, church study groups, and, if framed in a critical discourse, maybe even in a first year university class on nonviolence.

It is incontestable that the depth of the personal faith of these CPTers is reflected in their willingness to place their bodies in the midst of violence. To what extent this personal witness has an impact on the conflict zones in which they work is not fully understood, but we do know that for many people it represents hope. This is not the place to engage in a thorough analysis of the principles and actions represented in this book (nor to address what may be overstatements of effectiveness and, for my taste, too zealous a tone found on the book’s back-cover promotional blurbs). But it is precisely in raising questions that the courageous work of these committed practitioners of nonviolent intervention in violent conflicts will be furthered. My hope is that this book will further the conversation on nonviolence at a much broader level. For while I support the notion of nonviolent social change whole-heartedly (and have participated actively in it), I’m less convinced that it can happen without genuine universalism at its heart, one that rejects claims that associate it with any one tradition.

CPT is not the only organization involved in interpositional forms of nonviolent direct action. If you are interested in finding

out more, Elizabeth Boardman offers a guide to peace teams and accompaniment. In *Taking a Stand*, she identifies the key organizations involved in this work, including CPT, Peace Brigades International, International Solidarity Movement, Nonviolent Peaceforce, Witness for Peace, Voices in the Wilderness and others. In 150 short pages she leads readers through application processes, practical questions about what to expect when getting involved, what kind of support is available as well as probing deeper questions about danger, training, and commitment. She includes a helpful annotated list of resources and contact information for all major organizations currently facilitating this form of peace work.

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