with women's experiences of ministry? Some of the stories in this book push in that direction. I hope they serve as motivation for continued growth—that someday, being accepted and celebrated as a ministry leader would not be based on social location (race, class, age, ability, sexuality, gender), but on the calling of the Holy Spirit.

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John M. Janzen, Harold P. Miller, and John C. Yoder, eds., *Mennonites and Post-Colonial African Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2021. Pp. xviii + 298. Hardcover, $160 US.

At first blush this book sets a high bar for itself: how to convince readers that it is "post-colonial" when the cover names three white North American males as editors, and the table of contents another three from the same demographic as the very titles of the first three chapters. The cause is similarly fraught in that all but two of twenty-three chapters are penned solely by white, mostly North American male, scholars and professionals. Yet, the same volume critiques a time from fifty years ago when African studies was unjustly dominated by "men of western European descent" (2) before a time of post-colonial healing with black writers in charge. It does not help that the book traces MCC's role in Africa without much African perspective on that role and relies instead on the "particularity" of NGO workers' "own life story" (1). And then to add another wrinkle, the book intertwines "African studies" with "Anabaptist perspectives," a process the editors promise a little vaguely will "be evident in the essays of this volume" (13).

Despite these challenges, this book certainly makes a significant contribution to the history of MCC and North American service workers in Africa. It achieves this in part because the editors cast the term "post-colonial" in rather broad terms: a "decoupling from the 'neocolonial'" attributes of old empires, and replacing an "inferior" Africa with an "authentic" one (2). This broad umbrella allows for a diversity of approaches, as do definitions of "development" from Anabaptist experts. The editors, for example, laud Edgar Stoesz's 1973 work *Thoughts on Development,* exchanging a focus on African "deficiencies" with a search for "sustainability within a framework of social justice" (11), as well as Alain Epp Weaver's

more recent musings about "mutual transformation," valuing "local ideas," and collaborating with "emerging African institutions" (13).

Certainly, most of the two dozen testimonials meet these criteria. Usually, the narrative describes a white US Mennonite in Africa learning to appreciate that continent's culture—its languages, cultures, local knowledges—and then returning stateside profoundly illuminated on such issues as poverty and race. Indeed, while each of the book's three main parts—"Pioneers," "Professors," "Practitioners"—may present distinctive categories of the African sojourner, a somewhat common pathway emerges. Often the service worker begins naively, rooted in a US rural Anabaptist community, and infected by a Benderite Anabaptist idea of love and service. They obtain professional training that allows legitimacy in Africa and set out to address some African "deficiency." In Africa, they are simultaneously illuminated on the richness of the continent's culture and the shibboleth of continued colonialism. Then, in the words of Aliko Songolo's foreword, they become "Africanists serendipitously" (xiii) and carry this illumination back to the US where, heeding "biblical calling" (12), they became advocates of Africa.

The particularities of this trajectory differ significantly within this broadly cast definition of post-colonialism. The first section, "Pioneers," for example, presents three NGO workers whose operating principles seem to coincide with foundational Western ideas, be they evangelical missions or modern capitalism. In this section, John C. Yoder describes Donald Jacobs's aim to "bring the Good News to previously unreached people" (28), Melvin J. Loewen's "trust in a free economic system" (36), and David Shenk's plans "for Muslims to embrace Christianity" (45). Later, it is clear that post-colonialism is seen to also include Western-centred scientific research: David Denlinger's piece on entomology, for example, offers models of scientific expansion stemming from leading Western universities, funded by Western governments, and employing the latest genome-sequencing approaches.

A similarly rather broad definition of "post-colonial" marks the second section of the book, "Professors." Donald Holsinger's mark of post-colonial, for example, is that he has situated "the particularity" of his subject group, the Mizab of Algeria, "within the framework of world history" (63), while Curtis Keim's mark is that in the very act of writing about the Mangbetu of Congo he argued that "Africans truly had histories" (87). The test of post-colonialism among other writers is the simple thrill of learning non-Western ideas: for Mary Oyer it was the "intriguing patterns of communication" in sub-Saharan Africa (131); for David Shank it was the Harrist movement in Ivory Coast creatively "distancing the Christian faith from

colonialism" (134). Yet another group of writers simply encountered post-colonial realities: Lydia Glick Samatar's focus on the "needs of the people" bumped into cultural complexity, including Somalis who found agriculture "culturally unacceptable" (138–139); Lauren Yoder, propelled in part to escape "the rat race of academia" in the US, found the opposite, an easy entry into Burundi, riding on MCC's reputation as an NGO that "listens to local leaders and strives to work as a true partner" (164).

Among the "Practioners" in the third section are writers who seem to define "post-colonial" in much more politically engaged and structural tones. Musuto Mutaragara Chirangi writes boldly of being deeply Christian but also shaped by "African philosophies that emphasize socialism, interdependence, and communal responsibilities" (182), appreciating an indigenous Tanzanian sense of time, work, and relative honesty, and a "balanced view of Traditional Medicine" (189). Merrill Ewert invokes the controversial Brazilian socialist Paolo Freire in his testimonial of "rethink[ing] what I believed about poverty" (210) and sharply critiquing one-time MCC ideas on "development as the transfer of foreign knowledge and technology" (212). Ronald Mathies, in reflecting as past MCC executive director on decentralization writes that "the real issue had to do with the willingness to incorporate the indigenous wisdom . . . into administrative process" (224) and offers a stark confession of MCC's complicity with "Africa's problems" (227).

This diversity of the meaning of "post-colonialism" is also reflected in other aspects of the book. It is there in a diversity of the meaning of "Anabaptism," the second main working term. Most of the writers expound on some aspect of Bender's "Anabaptist vision" of "following Christ" in love, peace, and community. Others find it elsewhere: Lauren Yoder in terms of "living on the margins" (165), John Janzen in Mennonite historicity that encouraged "engaging empathetically in life with real people" (75), and Sara Regier in seeing that a rural-based sense of service was "integral to our DNA" (241). The diversity is also there in the nether regions when seemingly patently colonialist terms pop up—"daughter colonies" (7), "Russian Mennonite" (30), "the Indians" (114)—without reflection on how such problematic colonialist terms inscribe themselves unwittingly in the very fabric of our self-understandings.

This book, as focused on testimonials of mostly white US MCC service workers in Africa, no doubt representative of thousands of such volunteers, is a most welcome volume in the diverse global history of the Mennonites. It is evidence of a remarkable reworking of what it meant to be "Mennonite" among them and also what Africa meant for them. Whether the book meets the bar of finding a place

in "post-colonial African studies" with its broad understanding of that project may be bit more controversial.

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S. Roy Kaufman, *The Drama of a Rural Community's Life Cycle: Its Prehistory, Birth, Growth, Maturity, Decline, and Rebirth*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020. Pp. xii + 277. Softcover, $34 US.

Freeman, South Dakota, the centre of distinct German-Russian Anabaptist agrarian cultures, is the source for S. Roy Kaufman's rural drama. This insightful and sometimes idiosyncratic "biblical critique of current agricultural systems" (202) that occasionally cites Bible passages resists easy categorization, but Kaufman's experiences, as a fourth-generation settler colonial and a career rural pastor, drive the narrative. Kaufman argues the community lost its connection to the agrarian communal cultures its founders hoped to preserve by immigrating to America from Russia, starting in 1874. He acknowledges German-Russians served as the US's "agents of imperial control and colonization" of Yankton Sioux land, even as he views these immigrants as "exploited" by the same system (22). By the 1950s, Freeman had "a viable and sustainable agricultural life" (130) marked by small-scale machinery, manual labour, and small-acreage diversified farms. Industrial farming based on science and technology after the Second World War caused a decline and the separation of "communal and agrarian values" from religious faith and mission (179–180). Soil became "inert dirt to be exploited as a medium for the production of commodities" (156). Kaufman holds special derision for corporations and the "technocracy" (167) of land-grant universities and federal agricultural bureaucracies. Religious debate among modernists and fundamentalists in the 1920s and 1930s, in which some aspects of fundamentalism "undermined the communitarian aspects of their agrarian culture" (143), however, helped prepare the way for competitive individualist industrial agriculture.

Core chapters of accessible prose describe the immigrant and settlement history of the Swiss Volhynian Amish, Low German Mennonites, and Hutterian Prairieleut German-Russians, from the rise of Anabaptism in Europe to their development in South Dakota's Turner and Hutchinson counties. The immigrant generation saw