

circulation as is the case here; James Stayer deservedly gets credit for translating essays by Hans-Jürgen Goertz, Ralf Klötzter, and Andrea Stübind. Another strength of several of the essays is the signalling of where further research work needs to be done (e.g., Nicole Grochowina suggests that the role of women in Anabaptism is more complex than we know and deserves attention; Breanna Nickel insists that our understanding of the influence of medieval scholastic theology should be pursued more deeply).

This handbook offers a solid contribution to the study of early Anabaptism while providing counsel regarding further investigation of the many diverse areas of scholarship that deserve further attention.

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Alain Epp Weaver, *Service and the Ministry of Reconciliation: A Missiological History of Mennonite Central Committee*. North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 2020. Pp. 124. Softcover, \$20.99.

When a group of North American Mennonites gathers for practically any reason, if asked how many have done “voluntary service,” quite likely a handful will respond in the affirmative. To many Mennonites, “voluntary service” implies the two-year stint that has become almost a rite of passage in some circles and provides the core identity of Mennonite Central Committee. If asked who has participated in MCC’s work of reconciliation, on the other hand, the response may be a set of puzzled looks.

In this book, Alain Epp Weaver explores MCC’s mission and its evolution, from a primary focus on service to the contemporary emphasis on reconciliation. Based on a sermon and four addresses that he presented in North Newton, Kansas, for Bethel College’s 2019 Menno Simons Lectures, Epp Weaver has ably distilled a wealth of information in his exploration of MCC initiatives over the past century. Thinking theologically, but with the eye of a historian, the author has taken it upon himself to sift through an abundance of archival materials that preserve MCC-sponsored projects, programs, and personalities in a wide array of contexts and landscapes. He identifies and analyzes the major shifts that have taken place and how the assumptions inherent in the traditional definition of voluntary service have been re-shaped for a ministry of reconciliation.

Chapter 1 recaptures Epp Weaver's sermon, which speaks theologically to the reconceptualizing of MCC service from its traditional model of the privileged of the Western world aiding the needy to one of reconciliation. The second chapter focuses on "landscapes," the various places where MCC has connected with peoples around the globe. Right from the start Epp Weaver emphasizes the significance of land, describing how he opened his lectures by asking the audience to join him in recognizing they were on the traditional homeland of Indigenous peoples, including the Wichita, Kaw, and Osage, who were forcibly removed from Kansas in the late nineteenth century by the US government. This concluded with a moment of silence to lament "the suffering of Indigenous nations who once had thriving villages and livelihoods in Kansas" (14). Those sacred moments set the stage for a chronicling of MCC's history well-grounded in the landscapes where "service in the name of Christ" has planted its seeds (14-15).

Chapter 3 follows with a thorough discussion of Christian service in MCC and its history. This history is recounted from its earliest manifestations, when young men and women provided relief in times of war, to their observance of alternative service. Epp Weaver analyzes motives in these practices as Mennonite young people perceived their opportunities to witness to their faith and the potential for change as MCC began to structure educational opportunities as a way of transforming patriotic acts into new ways of responding to the state. In chapter 4, he tackles the big questions of Mennonite identity and humanitarianism. He gives a multitude of examples of the kinds of questions addressed in work with a variety of interfaith and secular organizations: Who comes first? Who comprises the "household of faith" in a global world (66)? When does human need take priority over that of one's own people?

Finally in the fifth chapter Epp Weaver addresses theological questions that take understanding of MCC and its work outside of its traditional framework to an analysis of its mission. Focusing on such concepts as presence, connection, solidarity, and measurement, he unpacks some of the tensions that have arisen as MCC continues to expand its ministries, its connections, and its self-understandings. Published while MCC was celebrating its centennial, his final words encourage MCC to consider the moment as "a time for rededicating itself to ongoing grappling with what serving in the name of Christ means and what it calls Anabaptist churches in Canada and the U.S. to undertake" (124).

This short book is well worth reading. Epp Weaver is a veteran MCCer; he is grounded in the stories that his parents told of their experiences, and in his own stints with MCC, including with his wife

Sonia. He has also spent a great deal of time and energy buried in MCC archival materials. From my own research for *The Transforming Power of a Century: Mennonite Central Committee and Its Evolution in Ontario* (Pandora Press, 2002), I can attest that researching and writing MCC's history is no small task. In short, *Service and the Ministry of Reconciliation* is a welcome addition to the abundance of recorded MCC histories and stories, including Weaver's own edited collection, *A Table of Sharing: Mennonite Central Committee and the Expanding Networks of Mennonite Identity* (Cascadia, 2011).

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Literary Reviews

Julia Spicher Kasdorf, *As Is*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2023. Pp. 90. Softcover, \$18 US.

What does it mean to live with things as they are? When I first picked up *As Is*, Julia Spicher Kasdorf's fifth collection of poetry, this was the question that came to mind. On the one hand, learning to accept a thing—like, for example, myself—“as is” struck me as radical, even rebellious, when faced with an endless stream of social media influencers peddling body hacks and self-improvement tips. On the other hand, after shutting my windows against wildfire smoke all summer long, acceptance of the apocalyptic seemed defeatist and irresponsible. I soon learned that Kasdorf's new poems, which take careful stock of human error and effort, of fracking fields, family farms, and air force bases, aren't posing questions of acceptance but rather questions of attention. What does it mean to try to perceive what is, exactly as it is?

“Let go your desire to wrap / it up; closure's a hoax,” Kasdorf writes in an early poem, immediately countering any pretense about human ability—through language or faith or observation—to come to a full understanding about life as we encounter it. Still, whether gently turning over an eastern box turtle to inspect the underside of its shell or standing on the shore of Lake Perez and imagining what was there before (“a barley field . . . wood hicks, charcoalers, soot