

writers, and I have to agree. (I can add that Esi Edugyan includes a Simone Weil cameo in her Giller-winning 2011 novel *Half-Blood Blues*.)

Near the end of her study, Wallace includes a long quotation from Terry Tempest Williams on Weil as inspiration, someone who spent her life “paying attention to patterns, signs, and synchronicity in the desert to help us find our way” (233). I can’t help but think about the aphorism by the German Romantic poet Novalis, that “philosophy is really homesickness: the urge to be at home everywhere.” Whether this tracks Weil’s urge or that of her readers who wish to make of her our home in the desert, Wallace’s approachable and accountable study is a must-read for our homesick feminist selves.

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Troy Osborne. *Radicals and Reformers: A Survey of Global Anabaptist History*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2024.

At first glance, this new history has a familiar sense to it. For one, it echoes the very outline of C. J. Dyck’s classic, *An Introduction to Mennonite History*, which it will certainly replace as the go-to text. It begins with a genealogy of late medieval reformers, moves to the Protestants, and gives a nod to Anabaptism’s birth in Zurich on January 21, 1525. It follows the spread of Anabaptism to the north (Augsburg, Strasbourg, Muenster), finds Menno Simons, and outlines the “solidification” (128) of the Mennonite church in western Europe. It follows the diaspora into the Russian Empire and North America and catalogues the borrowings from other denominations along the way. Then, like later of Dyck’s editions, Osborne introduces the modern missionary movement and branches out, with a chapter for each continent of the growing global community—Asia, Africa, South America—before coming back to the West and considering how a diversity of Anabaptists “put their faith into action” today (327). It even has a ring of classical church history to it, citing prominent male leaders throughout, outlining the denominational contours of the global fellowship, and referencing central theological tenets,

especially non-resistance. It celebrates the birth of this denomination and follows it teleologically, applaudingly, into the global movement it has become.

And yet there is much new here. Osborne fully synthesizes the “normative,” seeking Bender and social history polygenesis schools in interpreting early Anabaptism. Then, all those male leaders are in fact foreshadowed by ordinary folk, with chapters variously beginning with allusions to an illiterate shepherd, a book peddler, a traveling merchant, a few “naked” Anabaptists, and a 25-year-old refugee poet. Innovatively, Osborne also provides sub-sections on the contributions of women throughout, from radical Swiss Anabaptist Margret Hottinger in the 1520s to Pastor Emma Sommers Richard of the US in the 1970s. Taking some methodological license, Osborne regularly and unabashedly connects past events in Europe to today’s global church; thus, for example, Martin Luther at Wartburg in the early 1520s and Lee Yoon Shik’s quest for pacifism in the early 1990s share the same page, while in another chapter the early Hutterites are placed juxtaposed to the modern-day JKI in Indonesia (40, 81). Finally, Osborne’s analysis of Anabaptism in the Global South reflects an engagement with a much more mature scholarship than anything hitherto published. It moves, for example, with ease between the western missionaries and indigenous converts who celebrate “parts of their own culture” (174).

Osborne’s book, however, is especially notable in two respects. The first is Osborne’s commitment to an “honest” (13) and transparent approach to telling this story. As he puts it, “it is tempting to pluck out and remove the threads that do not live up to current ideals,” (226) but he believes that it is a fuller story that “can inspire” (13). Thus, the ancient mysticism of Javanese religiosity is woven into the very story of the GITJ church in Indonesia and the bane of insidious Nazism intersects the story of Mennonites who suffered Stalin’s repression. And throughout the text are numerous other hard truths of failure and disappointment that add authenticity and veracity to this broad history.

Second, Osborne seems deeply committed to an empathetic portrayal of all the nether regions of Anabaptism. At places, this search for authenticity raises curious findings. Perhaps the Old Colonists’ escape from modernity in Canada was driven by a profound antipathy to technology, but did they really cross the United States enroute to Mexico “in a caravan of steel wheeled wagons?” (295) Perhaps Christianity in the Global South was more

open to a raw spirituality than the formal North encouraged, but is there empirical evidence that Tunggul Wulung actually “free[d] Javanese people from malevolent spiritual forces” through the “power of Jesus name”? Or that convert Tee Siem Tat actually “healed” as “he learned more about Jesus”? (181–182) And yet this commitment to walking in the shoes of his subjects turns a complex book into a rich and vibrant account of immense diversity.

Indeed, it is this impulse for empathy that, to my mind, marks the underlying strength of the book. Throughout this text, Osborne takes the reader to the very mindsets of a broad assortment of the ordinary Mennonite’s religious imagination. Readers thus obtain much more than the modernist and critical thinking of a typical Mennonite college professor. Thus, where such a cohort has emphasized “following” Christ as central to Anabaptism, Osborne recounts early Anabaptists as especially motivated “to seek new avenues to encounter God” (19). Where Menno Simons might be credited by the college crowd with the ethics of “true evangelical faith,” Osborne argues that Menno was especially bent on regeneration, “repentance and conversion” (96). Where the Hutterites are credited with excelling in mutual aid, they wrote as much about being filled with the Holy Spirit. Osborne even overturns stereotypes of African Anabaptists, pointing out, for example, how Tanzanian Mennonites have de-emphasized “the gifts of the Spirit” and focused on “confession and submission” (257). Most significantly, Osborne ends the book with a sympathetic analysis of three major streams of the faith—evangelical, neo-Anabaptist, and Old Order/Low German Mennonites—not an easy task. Perhaps this accomplishment comes from Osborne’s skill as an historian, perhaps it stems from his own faith commitment, one with stories of full “accuracy” that “draw all Christians closer to Christ” (60).

This is a rich history, an audacious, and noteworthy interpretation. One gets the sense that Osborne struggled mightily with what not to say. And yet even then Sitting Bill, Mahatma Gandhi, and other notable historical figures make their surprise cameo appearances in the book. Given its breadth of interpretation, its innumerable associations with a wider world, and its ambitious agenda, *Radicals and Reformers* will certainly become the new authoritative text we have all been waiting for.

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