Rooted and Grounded: Essays on Land and Christian Discipleship

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For the historic peace churches that interpret Scripture and view discipleship through a lens of nonviolent resistance to war, it should be a natural step to resist the systemic violence against the created order being done intentionally or carelessly with modern industrial technologies and institutions. That is the argument in a nutshell that courses through both of these anthologies.

The first one, Rooted and Grounded, is a selection of presentations and worship materials from the first conference by that name on the topic of land and Christian discipleship, which was convened at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in 2014. As a volume in the distinguished Studies in Peace and Scripture series from the Institute of Mennonite Studies, it retains a strong focus on interpretation of the Bible. This is especially clear in the first and lengthiest section of the book, "Biblical Reflections," which includes the conference's keynote addresses by Ellen Davis, Barbara Rossing, and S. Roy Kaufman. Davis and Rossing briefly summarize their well-known research in agrarian interpretation of the Old Testament and the New Testament apocalyptic, respectively. The third keynote address is an interesting outlier: Kaufman draws on his long career as a pastor on the Great Plains to push back against criticisms that rural congregations are too ethnically homogenous and out of touch with current culture to be relevant. "For generations we have been taught as Mennonites to despise our heritage as... "the quiet in the land," he laments, as though they were mere diminished remnants of "a strong urban missionary movement [that] lost its edge as it devolved into local, rural, agrarian Mennonite communities" (21). He presents a compelling vision of rural congregations forming communities that can preserve a diversity of local agrarian cultures by resisting industrial agriculture conglomerates and the government bureaucracies that support them. "Rural people are called to represent what God's rule of love should be in every diverse and unique local setting" by forming "a community..."