J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent God,* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2013. 336 pp. $25.00. ISBN: 9780802869234.

I am nearing the end of my three-year commitment with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) and I plan to renew as a reservist, because I want to deepen my exploration of the "radicality of God's justice" (21), a way of life described by J. Denny Weaver in his theologically rich book, The Nonviolent God.

Readers familiar with CPT and its work of violence reduction (work that Weaver has participated in and references within this text) will know that we embrace non-violence and a theological vision that is marginal to mainstream Christianity. So, Weaver was preaching his text to the choir (albeit, a critical one). I'm on board with his rejection of divine violence. I agree with his privileging of interpretations of the gospel that come from the underside of society. And, above all, I agree with how he centres everything on the praxis of the nonviolent Christ who was crucified – a focus that produces "a theology for the living."

God is present in the life of Jesus. Through Jesus' embodied witness of the Kingdom, God engaged the brokenness of our fragile world: the outcasts and suspects, the ethnically despised and reviled. But it wasn't only interpersonal relationships that God addressed in Jesus. It was also those larger systemic forces that impacted — often disastrously so — relationships in and between communities.

God unmasked the powers and gave life in Jesus. Yet it's not all about Jesus. It's also about you and me and the entire creation. Because God raised the Crucified who embodied a truly human way of being, writes Weaver, the resurrection "is an invitation to every individual to experience reconciliation with God and the presence of the reign of God now on earth, in our lives as human beings" (87). This demands decision — personal and collective. "Experiencing the reign of God now requires a choice on our part to leave the forces of evil and to join the reign of God made present in the life of the resurrected Jesus" (87). Sadly, as we are all too aware, the church has largely strayed from the blueprint which is to guide our seeking of God's reign — that is, the very life of Jesus. Weaver explicates this failure in some detail.

It didn't take long before the church was woven into the mainstream fabric of the Roman Empire. Forgetting its history and the subversive gospel memories, the Christian community lost its sense of confrontation with the dominant social order. One memory that challenged such amnesia was the New Testament book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation is not a predictive text about some distant, future calamity. Revelation was and is a warning about complacency in the present. Specifically, Revelation implores first-century readers not to become comfortable or deceived by an empire that is not actively oppressing Christians. At the time, Rome was

not persecuting the church. Christians were tolerated and largely ignored. And it was during this period, and the following decades, that a new Christian identity was emerging; one that focused on the relationship between God the Father and the Son as deity. Regrettably, what this Son actually did while physically present on Earth — his radical kingdom ministry of non-violent resistance — was being eclipsed by a high Christology which privileged Jesus' divinity. According to Weaver, the book of Revelation is a bold call to remember that the one on the throne is the Crucified who confronted the domination system, and was slaughtered for doing it.

It is a word that is desperately needed today. Whether we identify the empire as the United States, or perhaps even global capital (as Weaver does), how do we move from complacency to resistance? And, coming to the crux of the book, how do we do it non-violently?

Weaver defines violence as "destruction to a victim by means that overpower the victim's consent" (192). We need thicker and more complex definitions than this. For in this imperial age of ecological plunder, inordinate harm is done to other-than-human persons that aren't able to articulate consent. Can we recognize that? Can we define violence as a power that dominates, destroys, and diminishes not only ourselves but all of creation (and so define non-violence as a power that liberates and heals human and non-human creation)? Such understandings would fit nicely within Weaver's "theology for the living."

Weaver also falls short in addressing North American economic realities. He states that Jesus did not propose a specific economic system but rather an order that promoted financial, environmental, and social sustainability. But then he curiously states that, as Christians, our calling is not to join efforts to replace one system with another (i.e., capitalist to socialist), but to use available mechanisms within the system to advocate for the marginalized. While giving detailed examples of what this could look like — examples which address the recent financial collapse and current health crisis within the United States — Weaver's reliance on the profit system is problematic. Capitalism certainly does not liberate, humanize, and heal ourselves and the rest of creation. And I don't think Jesus would be comfortable with the idea of working towards a kinder, gentler form of this system. As a Christian, I hear the words of Jesus ("Woe to the rich," "Blessed be the poor," for example) and the vision of the book of Revelation as calling all of us — whether you are an Indigenous Native American or a wealthy white Zacchaeus — to join a revolution. The invitation of the crucified and resurrected Jesus is to experience and practice the reign of God, now, on Earth. That is the good news of the non-violent God.

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