

Here is where the indirect communication displayed by Jesus in the Gospels provides a corrective to Kierkegaard's perhaps overly strategic investment in identification with the audience. From pointed dialogue with his critics to disorienting parables offered to his disciples, Jesus's most common approach to ministry is provocation, some of which provokes a backlash that eventually gets him killed. In the communication ethics of Jesus, such persecution by one's opponents is not a sign of failure but of faithfulness.

Moreover, the model of faithful communication proposed by Jesus in the parable of the sower does not assume that the sower can control the outcome of dissemination, as Kierkegaard seems to do. The seed of the word is offered to all without reserve or cunning, although Jesus nevertheless weeps because his audience rejects the things that make for peace—suggesting that resisting the temptation to control audience reception does not necessarily compromise sympathy and identification.

Whether or not Kierkegaard's indirect communication model exceeds the bounds of ICC, the wisdom and worth of the dialogical and critical model of communication ethics that Johnson advocates in this book is not in question. Both in the church and in the broader public sphere, this deeply informed call for both dialogue and criticism is timely and should prove useful to all who seek to move the world toward more peace and justice with their words—even if the tongue that utters them is difficult to tame or control, as the epistle of James reminds us.

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Jonathan Bornman, *American Murids: A Lived Practice of Nonviolence*, Peter Lang, Oxford, 2024. 281 pp. \$129.95 (Canada), \$99.95 (US) (hardcover), ebook \$99.95 (US). ISBN: 978-1-63667-144-4.

Every peace church college or university should have a copy of *American Murids: A Lived Practice of Nonviolence*. So should many congregations. While the book recounts a primarily social-scientific study, it teaches us about another version of faith-based nonviolence in practice and philosophy. That it is a *Muslim* version of those faith practices will help North Americans counteract the predominant understanding of Islam as an inherently violent religion. Let's be honest—historically speaking, Christianity was and remains an inherently violent faith also.

While teaching at a small, undergraduate Christian college, I once managed to get a course on Islam approved that a Muslim cleric and I co-taught. Shortly afterward, college administration decided the course would not run again. No rationale was given, but I suspect one of the reasons was that both the other teacher and I explicitly respected each other's attempts to follow the sole Creator God, and we asked the course participants to do so also.

Given the unfortunate reality that such an interfaith attitude is challenging to many Christians, Jonathan Bornman's theological perspective is a welcome contribution to interfaith dialogue: "God places gifts in communities," he states, "and part of our mission is to discover those gifts" (20). Recognizing the God-given giftedness of others is central to his missiological orientation.

Bornman is particularly interested in how the Muridiyya, as Muslim immigrants in the US, articulate nonviolence and practice their faith as newcomers committed to their new country. His goal for the book is that "telling their story is my contribution to the well-being of America [sic]" (20).

Bornman is head of Eastern Mennonite Missions' (EMM's) Christian-Muslim Relations Team. For ten years he lived in Senegal with EMM, where he learned the Wolof language. After returning to the United States, he began a PhD program at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies via Middlesex University. *American Murids* is a version of his research. It reads somewhere between an academic text and the sort of storytelling that is at the heart of good nonfiction. This is an ethnographic study, which means it is founded in observation and participation.

The Murids are an ethnic group from Senegal who speak Wolof. But the word "murid" (or "mourid") can also mean a spiritual novice or seeker. The Muriddiyya are a Sufi sect, part of a form of Islam in West Africa that might have its roots in the twelfth or thirteenth century and a long tradition of pacifism (studied also by the eminent West African missiologist Lamin Sanneh). These particular Murids are followers of a teacher from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—Shaykh Amadu Bamba (d. 1927). Shaykh Bamba was active during the French colonial period and advocated a pragmatic and principled nonviolence.

While there are some three million in the Murid diaspora, the Muriddiyya number some fifty thousand in the United States, with a large number in New York City, where Bornman conducted his research. As per good research practice, Bornman is clear with community members about his Christian identity; that he is obviously both White and Wolof-speaking puts him in a unique but liminal insider/outsider space.

The book's seven chapters begin with explanation of Shaykh Bamba's teaching and then move to describing how these teachings are practiced as part of a diasporic community in the West. Notably, Bamba predated Mahatma Gandhi (d. 1948) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (d. 1968) and other better-known practitioners of nonviolence. The ethnographic components focus on a corner store, a youth group, and several key events held by the community. Two of the chapters

focus on the youth, which enables Bornman to describe efforts at intergenerational transmission of the faith and nonviolent praxis. The challenges of the Muridiyya sound remarkably like what Anabaptists experience in our own churches.

American Murids focuses mostly on the Murids' practices of the faith in their contemporary circumstances. Their practice of nonviolence is significant, not only because of its historical use in the resistance to French empire but also because dozens of Wolof-speaking taxi drivers have been murdered in New York in a recent four-year period. Anti-Muslim threats from other Americans also challenge the Murids' nonviolent ethic-in-practice.

In order to articulate what type of pacifist Bamba was, Bornman describes a number of different forms of violence and nonviolence. Of particular interest to Bornman is the question about how a leader committed to nonviolence reads the Qur'an and follows in the tradition of Mohammed. Mohammed was nonviolent during the Mecca period (the early stages of his religious organizing). But after the *hijrah* (flight) to Medina, he became a sociopolitical leader as well as a religious one, and the burgeoning Muslim community engaged in defensive and then offensive battle with their enemies.

Reading the Qur'an and understanding the Muhammadan tradition (which varies from the post-Muhammed caliphate eras) yields three crucial considerations *vis a vis* nonviolence:

1. Is the Meccan model of nonviolence exceptional or potentially normative for ethics and practice? That is, what is the role of the faith-full (sic) citizen?
2. Is there an *a priori* basis for nonviolence? That is, are nonviolence practices mostly to be strategically employed when they appear more pragmatic or effective in the conditions of a sinful world (e.g., the only feasible resistance to more powerful colonial authorities)?
3. What is the extent to which Bamba's nonviolence is based in Murid cultural values of community-based well-being? As Bornman explains, this value emphasizes what is good for society and Bamba concludes that violence generally speaking is not-good and therefore nonviolence is normative.

Bornman concludes that "Bamba's hermeneutic of community well-being influenced him towards a non-violent exegesis of the Quran" (54, emphasis added). Therefore, Bamba follows Mohammed in Mecca but not Medina.

Although the study shows that Murids believe their Islamic form of nonviolence is a valuable contribution to American culture and American discourse about Muslims, Bornman points out numerous practices that inhibit the efficacy of their contribution. One example is the need to speak Wolof to participate in the community. Another is the practice of sending children back to Senegal

for a few years of faith and cultural formation. I could not help but think of ways that insider Anabaptist practices likewise reduce the effects of Anabaptist peace-charisms on the greater Christian church.

A couple of quibbles with the book: I would have preferred a better summary of the history of the Muridiyya and the French colonization of Senegal. More effectively placing Bamba and the Murids in that context would have deepened my understanding of Bamba's version of pacifism and how it developed. Furthermore, there is a bit of repetition in the book as some of the same events are revisited. However, the conclusion itself is a summary worth reading even if one does not read anything else. It is a mere ten pages. The glossary and effective appendices and index are also helpful. Therefore, I will reiterate: In learning to know the Murids, we Anabaptists will better know ourselves—as minority groups and nonviolent practitioners in larger faith traditions. *Alhamdulillah!*

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Peter M. Sensenig, *Good Guestwork: Christians and Muslims as Guests and Hosts*, Santos Books, 2025. 239 pp. \$24.99 USD. ISBN-13: 979-8218821432.

After a year of living in Zanzibar with his family as Christian missionaries, Peter Sensenig hesitantly accepted his Muslim friends' invitation to pray at the mosque. The result? "I felt closer to Jesus in the mosque than I did anywhere else in Zanzibar," concluded Sensenig. "I hope that my Muslim friends receive the same warm hospitality when they cross the threshold of a church building" (38, ch. 3, "Strangers Say Yes").¹

Examples like these abound in Sensenig's book, which is a powerful plea, in a time of travel bans and fear of terrorist attacks, for Western Christians to embrace a radically new understanding of their missional calling by learning to be both hosts and guests of Muslims—and encountering Jesus in new ways in the process. His book overflows with vivid and moving stories of surprising encounters with Muslim believers—and, through them, with Jesus—in Chad, Iran, Somalia, and elsewhere. Sensenig weaves these personal stories seamlessly together with biblical analysis and theological exhortation. In this engaging way, he develops a provocative call to radical hospitality that challenges preconceived religious categories

¹ Page number references are from an e-version of the book and may vary slightly from the print version.