

treatment of grace. Basing her understanding on Elizabeth Dreyer's description of grace, Cuddeback-Gedeon at times emphasizes that grace comes from God and that we can notice and name its presence in the flourishing of persons with IDD and in the realization of greater justice for them and their caregivers. At other times, however, she seems to strictly identify grace with human flourishing and justice and speaks of "struggling for grace" (130) or the call to "pursue grace" (153), as if grace were something we could achieve.

This book would be a valuable pick for upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses on theology of disability. Chapters could be assigned in more general liberation theology and theological anthropology courses, and it is suitable for general audiences interested in disability studies.

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*The Gospel of Peace: A Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke from The Perspective of Nonviolence.* By John Dear. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2024. xxix + 404 pages. \$34.00 (paper).

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Looking at Rev. Dear's career, how does one begin to review a book that represents a lifetime of work in the struggle for peace and justice through the lens of nonviolence? How do we comprehend the path that Rev. Dear has walked for decades? Trying to answer these questions, I kept coming back to J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* in which Frodo laments, "I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened." Gandalf replies, "So do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. There are other forces at work in this world Frodo, besides the will of evil. Bilbo was meant to find the Ring. In which case, you were also meant to have it. And that is an encouraging thought." This book is Rev. Dear standing before us and forcing the question of what we will do with the time that is given us. He wants us to see that we have a choice, the choice that Martin Luther King Jr. presented as one no longer between nonviolence or violence, but rather between nonviolence or nonexistence.

Rev. Dear frames his analysis of this choice through his commentary on the synoptic Gospels. Without mincing words, his introduction tells us exactly where all this is going: "If Gandhi and Dr. King are the greatest practitioners of nonviolence in modern history then the Gospels portray Jesus as the greatest

practitioner of nonviolence in all of history” (xii). The book, then, revolves around this point as each chapter and section attempts to show how Jesus embodies the fullness of what Gandhi and King referred to as nonviolence in thought, word, and deed. Rev. Dear’s point is that those who profess to follow Jesus cannot ignore the reality of Jesus’s nonviolence and still claim to follow Jesus. The problem, as Rev. Dear notes throughout the book, is that we have, for the most part, precisely done that, ignored or even rejected the nonviolent Jesus in favor of an obsessive quest for power, domination, and control. We have succumbed to the false god of empire and its culture of violence leaving poverty, death, and destruction in its wake.

The book itself comprises three long chapters on Matthew, Mark, and Luke in what amounts to an almost verse-by-verse analysis of each Gospel. Although noting the redundancies inherent in such an approach, Rev. Dear, nevertheless, uses the redundancies to develop and reinforce his central thesis that God’s kingdom is one of total nonviolence, unconditional love, and inclusivity that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus reveals to us. In his restating of Jesus’s words and the retelling of Jesus’s parables, Rev. Dear presents a Jesus that stands before his friends, and even his enemies, without fear, hatred, or rancor. Those who seek to understand and exhibit the meaning of God’s kingdom can do no less. To underscore this point, Rev. Dear relies on people such as Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, Óscar Romero, and Thich Nhat Hanh as well as André Trocmé, Walter Wink, and Ched Myers. The bibliography is well worth examining.

Now for the practical question. How might teachers use this book? At almost four hundred pages, it could be hard for undergraduate and, perhaps, graduate students to absorb it all at once. Even Rev. Dear admits this. He suggests pausing and taking time to reflect upon what is being asked of the reader. One approach would be to read and discuss the book in parts over the course of an entire class. I could see doing this in my own course on nonviolence. Then there are the foundational questions that Rev. Dear proposes. Does God demand the total rejection of violence? Does Jesus seek a “total social transformation” (249)? Can we, as Martin Luther King Jr. once stated, “just want to do God’s will”? What is God’s will? What are the consequences of our choices? These questions could occupy a class or study group for some time. Doing so would, I think as Rev. Dear suspects, have us thinking about what it means to be human, about what is justice, about what is community, about how we show compassion. And that is an encouraging thought.

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