

with the same blunted objects? These difficult questions—arguably central to the NDP’s history—repeatedly surface in Davies’ story of attempting to transform the master’s house. Regardless of how one might judge her success, this memoir compels us to applaud her efforts.

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## **WATER MY SOUL: 90 MEDITATIONS FROM AN OLD ORDER MENNONITE**

Darla Weaver  
Harrisonburg, VA: Harold Press, 2017

**REVIEWED BY CAROLYNE VAN  
DER MEER**

When I selected this book from the list of volumes to be reviewed, I had no idea that it was a religious book—not that that would have stopped me. I just didn’t expect that a reference to “old order Mennonite” meant something to do with religious practice—even though we do generally understand that Mennonites are part of certain Christian groups. I still thought this book would be more about lifestyle as opposed to

beliefs, but of course, lifestyle is often intrinsically and inextricably tied to beliefs. As it turns out, I had quite a churchy upbringing and while a religious approach to a book might be uncomfortable for some, it is not the case for me. I was fascinated to learn though, that Herald Press is “a Christian publisher known for transformative books on reconciliation, community, discipleship, mission, spirituality, and theology.” I’ve learned a lot about publishers over the years but admittedly, don’t know much about Christian publishers—and certainly did not know about this one. There is clearly much the Christian publishing world has to offer that mainstream buyers will miss.

What’s interesting about Weaver’s little volume—and I say little because even though it’s just over 200 pages, none of the entries is more than a page and a half—is that it doesn’t necessarily feel like a religious book. That’s in part because the scripture referred to in each reading is not mandatory. You don’t HAVE to read it. Of course, it’s helpful because it provides context for the stories Weaver tells in her entries. But frankly, I didn’t feel like I had to follow the scripture suggestions—and in many cases did not. I felt like Weaver gave me so much of her own experience that I “got” the lesson. She doesn’t need to hit you over the head with a frying pan for you to get it.

The book is divided into 13 weeks of “meditations”—with one meditation per day. One of the great metaphors she uses is tending garden—so themes that dominate her meditations are along the lines of preparing soil; setting down roots; reaping and sowing; flowering and bearing fruit; birth, growth, and blooming; and pruning back the forest. Weaver has three children: Cody (14), Alisha (12), Matthan (5)—and is married to Laverne, who shares a woodworking shop with his father.

All of her meditations are woven in and around her relationships with her children and husband, exploring the richness—and the pitfalls—of raising kids and navigating marriage. She also shares details of her life as an author of books (she has written three) and a writer of articles for publications serving Amish and Old Order groups.

In addition to a scripture reading, each meditation is accompanied by a prayer and a reflection. These are extremely short, found in smallish type at the bottom of the second page of each meditation. I found I grew to look forward to reading them, as somehow, they succinctly summed up the theme of each meditation and left me with food for thought. “How can I be less fearful and more trusting today?”; “What is one good thing I have learned from pain?”; and “What small beginning to some large task can I make today?” are some examples of the reflections. Some of these, however, were very God-focused, while others, like the examples I’ve cited here, were rather general—but they all succeeded as advertised: they got me to reflect, either on the content of Weaver’s meditation or on my own day.

I thoroughly enjoyed Weaver’s devotional volume and found her meditations a refreshing way to end the day. By the time I finished *Water My Soul*, I felt as though I had walked briefly alongside a fellow writer, mother, and friend. There is much we can learn from an Old Order Mennonite approach. And much that Christian publishers might have to offer the mainstream seeker of peace and relaxation.

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