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Kent Eaton, *Protestant Missionaries in Spain, 1869-1936: "Shall the Papists Prevail?"* Lexington: Lanham, 2015; xvii + 361 pp.; 9780739194096 \$110 (hb); 9780739194119 \$109.99 (e-book)

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There is, as yet, little scholarly work on Spain's small protestant minority, and this first full-length study of British missionaries is therefore to be welcomed. The book's remit is narrower than the title suggests, as the Protestants under investigation are 'Plymouth' Brethren, the largest and most significant of the British missionaries but not the only ones. Historically, the Brethren were the largest Protestant denomination in Spain and Eaton points out that these were their hardest worked mission fields, albeit for comparatively little reward. Dr Eaton worked at a Spanish Bible college before starting work on the thesis that became this book. His stance is thus that of an 'insider', which allows for valuable reflection around mission tactics and how to evaluate the success—or otherwise—of the missionary enterprise.

The book provides many insights. There is a welcome acknowledgement of Protestantism's association with the working class and the poor in Spain, which the author associates with limiting the missions' impact, given the failure to penetrate the elites. There are also illuminating discussions of the women who were involved in mission work, though the author has disappointingly little to say about missionary families, several of whom stayed in Spain over generations, in the case of the Turralls and the Chestermans with ministry passing from father to daughter. This absence may reflect Eaton's sources, which are missionary letters published in the Brethren's *Echoes of Service* magazine. As the archives for this period were lost in bombing raids during the Second World War, this reliance is understandable. But it would have been illuminating to supplement them with the voluminous later correspondence, so as to reveal more about the mission families he discusses as well as providing retrospective material on the earlier period.

Instead, Eaton focuses on the missionaries' self-understanding, in particular, on how their reliance on the metaphor of 'sowing' not only helps us to understand their extraordinary resilience but also explains their limited success. The missionaries sowed the seed, leaving the rest was up to God. Understandably, Eaton finds such a position frustrating, and his main analytical concern is to account for the lack of return—that is, conversions—the Brethren experienced for their considerable, sustained effort. Given this investment, the author emphasizes their comparative failure, which he presents in terms of a 'colonizing' approach that left local assemblies dependent on British mission structures and the missionaries themselves reluctant to bring on local talent or to hand over to local people. Though there is no doubt these tendencies persisted, Eaton overstates their explanatory force. Other factors were at work, not least the Brethren's own ecclesiology, which dispensed with institutional structures or overarching administrative hierarchies. Inevitably this impeded

church development in Spain and may have also contributed to the rapid contraction of the sect in the second half of the twentieth century.

Other non-conformist groups have experienced similar decline. Eaton rightly points the Brethren's remarkable dominance in Spanish Protestantism, but the country was also evangelized by Baptists and Methodists and some comparative discussion of their relative fortunes would have helped make the case for the Brethren's failure. There were also other southern European mission fields and it would be interesting to know if the Spanish pattern was repeated in, for example, Italy or Portugal. This though is not the author's purpose. One of the most attractive, if unconventional, features of the book is a sense of dialogue between the author and his sources, which reflects his insider position. He takes his protagonists seriously, treats their thoughts and feelings with respect, and fully recognizes the extent of their pastoral task. Yet these strengths are in some ways also weaknesses. This sense of dialogue makes the book less sharp in terms of chronological focus; it ranges across the period and beyond, at times as if there were no difference in the treatment of dissenters under the Restoration Monarchy and under the Franco regime. Most of the historical analysis is contained in two substantial central chapters and the discussion of the Second Republic is disappointingly brief and rather muddled. More stringent editing might have removed the many digressive footnotes and encouraged more reflection on the sources. This is, in short, an interesting and thoughtful, but not always scholarly, contribution to the understudied field of Spanish Protestantism.