In This Issue

When *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* was founded nearly a century ago, scholarship in English on the Radical Reformation was still in its infancy. In the decades since then, the renaissance of academic interest in the Anabaptist movement has been nothing less than remarkable. Scores of source collections, hundreds of books, and thousands of articles have all helped to bring the Radical Reformation into the mainstream of scholarship on Early Modern European history. Indeed, for younger scholars surveying the literature today, it may sometimes appear as if the ground has been thoroughly plowed—that the sources have now been exhausted and nothing new remains to be explored.

Fortunately, that perception is quite mistaken. In the opening essay of this issue, **Stuart Murray**, director of the Centre for Anabaptist Studies in Bristol, England, calls our attention to Melchior Rinck, a nearly-forgotten figure in the early history of the Anabaptist movement who was active in the central German territories of Hesse, Saxony, and Thuringia. In his overview of Rinck's life and writings, Murray traces the development of this largely unheralded Anabaptist leader from his early days as a sympathizer of Luther, through his radicalization during the Peasant War of 1524-1525, and on to his evolution as an Anabaptist apologist and missionary who operated at the borders of Hesse, western Thuringia, Electoral Saxony, and the Landgraviate of Saxony. Murray offers several explanations for the relative obscurity of Rinck in Anabaptist scholarship and makes a convincing case that his life and literary legacy deserve a closer look. A biography of Rinck and an English translation of his extant writings are forthcoming.

In the following essay, **Kat Hill**, senior lecturer in early modern history at Birkbeck College, provides deep insights into the cultural context of Rinck's preaching and teaching, particularly on the theme of baptism. Much of what we know about Anabaptist understandings of baptism is mediated through various Anabaptist theological texts that helped to establish a kind of orthodox justification for the practice of adult baptism. Yet the actual experience of ordinary people who first heard Rinck and others preach on the subject was likely very different than might be suggested by the biblical exegesis and linear arguments laid out in these theological treatises. How, Hill asks, did the deeply-engrained habits and assumptions surrounding a central ritual of parish life become "unsettled" by the introduction of new practices? In her essay on competing understandings of baptism in Electoral Saxony in the early decades of the Reformation, Hill suggests that the success of Anabaptist teachings regarding adult baptism required first a kind of "fracturing" of the

symbolic coherence of infant baptism, which the Lutheran reforms provided. Although Luther retained infant baptism, his early German baptismal liturgies sought to simplify the traditional ritual, stripping away various external paraphernalia and the "magical" elements associated with exorcisms. These reforms raised questions in the popular imagination about the link between baptism and salvation, creating a space within which adult baptism could seem plausible. But the actual baptisms of adults, Hill suggests, often happened with only a minimal amount of instruction and were susceptible to a wide range of understandings. Her work helps to "rehistoricize" Anabaptist baptisms within a deeper cultural context and suggests new areas of study in Radical Reformation research that are focused more on the reception of Anabaptist teachings than on the teachings themselves.

Roger Drinnon explores a similar question of reception by tracing the influence of the second-century Christian apologist Tertullian on the theology of Thomas Müntzer. At the heart of Müntzer's thought was the principle of the "order of creation" (*ordo rerum*), which regarded the universe as a great chain of being that joined God with the material world. The central question for humans—and, as Müntzer insisted, for human society—was how the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit enabled humans (and societies) to be transformed in such a way as to participate fully in the Divine. In addition to the German mystics, Müntzer drew heavily on Tertullian for key themes in his doctrine of divinization. But Drinnon argues that Müntzer failed to recognize one of Tertullian's key metaphors in describing the work of Christ—that is, Christ as *sequester* rather than mediator. In Roman law, mediators were understood to be independent, neutral arbitrators in disputes about possessions; sequesters, by contrast, had a relationship with both of the disputing parties, holding the property in trust until it could be fully restored. The image of sequester, Drinnon suggests, would have served Müntzer's theological argument more effectively than mediator if he had recognized it in Tertullian's writings.

Finally, we conclude this issue with a Research Note by **Steven Nolt** and **Lydia Nolt** on the life and career of Bertha Leaman (1893-1975), a historian from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who was the first Mennonite woman to earn a Ph.D. The Nolts trace Leaman's professional trajectory from her studies at Goshen College, through her 1935 doctoral degree in history at the University of Chicago, and then to her subsequent life as a professor and scholar at various universities. Despite her productive career, Leaman has received little recognition. We hope that this essay will inspire further scholarship on the life of this remarkable woman.

– John D. Roth, editor