

BOOK REVIEWS

Unser Leit...The Story of the Amish. Volumes I and II. By Leroy Beachy. Millersburg, Ohio: Goodly Heritage Books. 2011. Pp. 495 and 501. \$80.

This two-volume history of the Amish by Leroy Beachy, a genealogist from Holmes County, Ohio, is a remarkable achievement, generously fulfilling a vision for family history as church history described by Ernst Correll in the January 1928 issue of this journal. Correll called for genealogical research that goes beyond names and dates to recall the "immediate setting of the generations in their cultural backgrounds." Correll believed that "Mennonite families were the crux and core of the history of the Mennonite Church," a view clearly shared by Leroy Beachy. In *Unser Leit . . . The Story of the Amish*, Beachy provides an account of Amish families that places their traumas and triumphs at the center of Amish-Mennonite history. In so doing, Beachy's work contributes significantly to Amish and Anabaptist studies in at least five distinctive ways, although some of these contributions will no doubt be contested.

First, these volumes tell the story of Amish immigration from Europe to the North American continent in a way that is both comprehensive in scope and focused in detail. While many Amish-Mennonite family histories in recent decades have provided a fully documented accounting of the social and cultural pasts inhabited by the ancestors, Beachy's book offers an unprecedented integration of historical data concerning nearly all the known Amish immigrants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Much of this information had circulated in individual family histories, in collections of letters, and in the oral traditions of stories passed down, but is now organized and summarized in a coherent grand narrative for the first time in this work.

Already in 1986, the wealth of names, dates, and locations that had been gathered through a century of Amish-Mennonite genealogy research into specific family lines was brought together conveniently by Hugh Gingerich and Rachel Kreider in *Amish and Amish-Mennonite Genealogies*, now in its third edition. Beachy expands on (and at times revises) the statistical data found in the Gingerich/Kreider volume to bring into view the historical settings, life choices, and spiritual commitments of the Amish people across the centuries.

The result is a very different kind of history of the Amish than is found in the broad historical overviews or localized sociological analyses common to the dominant scholarship. Beachy's history focuses instead on the details of particular Amish family stories without losing sight of the broader horizons of the Amish movement in its varied European and North American settings. The effect reminds one of an impressionist painting: close up one can easily see the artistry and beauty of the brushstroke while from a distance the shapes and colors add up to a breathtaking landscape.

Second, Beachy retells the story of Amish beginnings in a way that will surely be new to many of his readers, even though researchers have known the basic outlines of this revisionist account for some time. The traditional story of Amish origins, especially as told by midcentury Mennonite historians, emphasized the intransigence of the Swiss Anabaptist leader Jakob Amman over polity issues like shunning and footwashing, his hasty banning of those members of the Reistian party who opposed Amman's position, and the inflexible conservatism of Amman and his group. The 1955 article in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* on the "Amish Division" summarizes this traditional perspective by stating that "the Amish party was a deviation from the main body," and that "Amman and his party represent a rigidly conservative point of view which insisted upon sharp discipline and inflexible adherence to certain practices."

Beachy dismantles this Mennonite-centered perspective on Amish beginnings by highlighting the distinctive regional and temporal origins of the original *Züricher* Swiss Brethren and their refugee communities, the old *Emmentaler* Anabaptist communities established as Anabaptism spread to Aargau, Basel, and Bern, and the *Oberländer* converts who formed Anabaptist congregations in the seventeenth century as the result of a renewal movement arising from refugee *Züricher* communities. According to Beachy's account, the emergence of the Amish was rooted in cultural and spiritual differences between the older and savvier *Emmentaler* communities and the newer and more scrupulous *Oberländer* congregations that eventually became known as Amish. So far Beachy is largely on ground established during the past several decades by academic historians of European Anabaptism like John D. Roth and Robert Baecher and reflected in more recent popular accounts of Amish history by Steve Nolt, Donald Kraybill, and others.

However, Beachy goes further. He claims that the *Oberländer* congregations were founded through the preaching of a little-known *Züricher* evangelist named Ulrich Müller, and that Müller's teachings about truth-telling and adherence to Dutch Mennonite doctrine gave the *Oberländer* churches the distinctive spiritual and cultural qualities that remained with them as they migrated from the Oberland to Alsace and the Palatinate in response to persecution. Moreover, when Jakob Amman came onto the scene, he was merely confirming amid controversy the particular spiritual stance that had already been established by Ulrich Müller and embodied in the spiritual rigor of the *Oberländer* congregations. Thus, according to Beachy, Müller should be seen as the real founder of the Amish, not Jakob Amman, and Amish beginnings should be dated twenty years earlier than the normally given date of 1693, since Müller's evangelistic campaigns in the Bernese Oberland began bearing fruit around 1673. On the other hand, the actual division between the Reistians and the Amish should be dated 1694, since that is the date in which Hans Reist excommunicated all those who accepted Amman's teachings.

Beachy's close reading of the *Letters of the Amish Division* reveals *Emmentaler* leader Hans Reist to be a greater obstacle to reconciliation than Jakob Amman, even if Reist did not initiate the quarrel. Beachy argues, somewhat persuasively, that Reist's blanket excommunication of all of Amman's group was more reckless

and harsh than Amman's excommunication of seven leaders who had been unwilling to support Amman's confessional stance or his threat to excommunicate all who were unwilling to share his stance, a threat that was never actually carried out.

Beachy presents a strong case for the influence of Ulrich Müller in building the *Oberländer* congregations, but his conclusion that Müller was the real founder of the Amish seems overdrawn since he presents no evidence that Müller intended to establish a separate new Anabaptist fellowship or that such an independent group arose from Müller's labors. Much of Beachy's narration of the events leading up to the "Swiss Brethren division" (as Beachy prefers to call the Amish division) actually reinforce the longstanding assumption that the *Oberländer* churches saw themselves as part of the same fellowship together with the *Emmentalers* and *Zurichers*. If they had not shared an identity, how could they be said to have had a "division?" If they had not at one time been the same people, why did they experience such agony over separating? In an effort to rehabilitate Jakob Amman's image, Beachy recalls the many efforts to heal the rift that Amman had helped to create, including Amman's self-excommunication letter of 1700 in which he confesses to having "grievously erred." But all of this seems to strengthen the conventional understanding that it was not until the traumatic confrontation between Hans Reist and Jakob Amman that the Amish first emerge, even if reluctantly, as a distinctive fellowship.

A third contribution of *Unser Leit* is to provide an orderly and reasonably well-documented narrative of the Holmes County Amish community from its beginnings to the year 2000. It is astonishing that no one has yet written a booklength professional history of this community—the largest Amish settlement in the world—and that the first detailed sociological study of the community, by Charles Hurst and David McConnell, was not published until 2010. Any future scholarship on Holmes County and conservative Anabaptism will need to consider Beachy's account of not only the main streams of Amish and Mennonite life in this community, but also the numerous eddies and ditches of nonconference and post-denominational Anabaptism that crowd the spiritual landscape of eastern Holmes County.

The effect of this focus on Holmes County, of course, is to undermine the comprehensive perspective that is promised in the book's title and exemplified in the fairly inclusive narrative of Amish migrations to North America found in the first volume. However, this focus on Holmes County can be justified both because the Holmes County story has not been carefully told with this amount of detail elsewhere and also because most of the other major Amish settlements already have their published histories.

Beachy's account of the Amish in Holmes County privileges the conservative perspective of those who continue to claim an Amish identity. This means that the "liberal" Mennonite churches and other derivative churches who trace origins to the first Amish churches in the community are generally regarded as having either rejected or significantly "drifted" from their Amish roots. Yet, Beachy clearly assumes these churches to be part of his audience and usually maintains a complex posture of both lament and generosity for the pluralism that

prevails in the community following "A Century of Division" (his title for the final chapter of the book).

At times Beachy's conservative bias leads him to get the facts wrong. For example, he mistakenly claims that the "liberal" Mennonites allowed the conservative *Doctrines of the Bible* by Daniel Kauffman to go out of print (II: 421). The 2011 Herald Press catalog still includes *Doctrines*. He also claims that Walnut Creek Mennonite Church and Martins Creek Mennonite Church left the Eastern Amish Mennonite Conference in 1929 to affiliate with the Ohio Conference of the Mennonite Church. By then these two conferences had already merged, so such a move would not have been possible. One could list numerous other factual errors that weaken the quality of Beachy's narrative, even if they do not necessarily undermine his primary claims.

To his credit, Beachy clearly spells out the spiritual reasoning behind his perspective. In fact, the eloquent defense of a conservative Anabaptist theological perspective should be seen as a fourth significant contribution of this book. Throughout the work, but especially in chapter 8, Beachy provides a reading of biblical and church history, as well as of major Christian and Anabaptist confessions and *Ordnung*, that largely vindicates choices made by Old Order and conservative Anabaptist communities. While Beachy acknowledges some of the excesses associated with "keeping order," he is more concerned about the influence of Protestant individualism as found in Pietism and evangelicalism.

Beachy's critique of Pietism largely follows the views of Robert Friedmann, who argued that European Pietism stressed an emotional personal experience that undermined the sober communal obedience of authentic Anabaptism. Friedmann's views have been subject to significant critique in recent years, however. For example, a recent study of the Schwarzenau Brethren by Marcus Meier makes a convincing case that the atmosphere of spiritual awakening associated with Radical Pietism played a significant role in the renewal movements behind both Amish and Brethren beginnings, including Jakob Amman's critique of established Swiss Anabaptism. One wonders how Beachy's historical and theological analysis might have interacted with such discoveries.

In any event, Beachy emphasizes that the most faithful churches strike a coherent balance between spiritual experience and disciplined obedience. This balance, he recognizes, is difficult to achieve.

Amish communities like the one in Holmes County have produced little in the way of published spiritual and theological reflection; thus Beachy's persuasive apology for a spiritually vital Amish form of obedience could have a lasting impact on Amish self-understanding; that is, if the work's high price and exhausting size do not pose too great of an obstacle to readership. Mennonite readers and academicians will also be helpfully challenged by an interpretation of Anabaptist history that assumes the Old Order path to be normative, rather than a "deviation."

Finally, this two-volume set makes an important contribution to Amish-Mennonite culture as an attractive artifact of a reading culture. Beautifully illustrated by Beachy himself, *Unser Leit* stands out as a bibliophile's delight. The pages are pleasingly designed, with the names of people mentioned in the body

of the text listed in the margins, along with significant statements or elaborations from the body, and plenty of white space to make notes. Reference notes appear conveniently at the bottom of the page. Both volumes include thorough indexes of names, as well as somewhat less complete indexes of significant events. Among the useful reference tools are chronological lists of all the known Amish immigrants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, along with their ships of passage, ports of entry, and initial destinations. The books are bound in hardcover and packaged in an elegant slipcase. Handling and reading these volumes is a great pleasure, marred only by the numerous flaws in the text, including needless repetition of details, missing documentation, and awkward or incomplete sentences. One wishes that a legacy text such as this could have been subjected to the scrutiny of an experienced copy editor.

Still, no one has told the Amish story with more affection or provocation than Leroy Beachy. He has provided a usable past for twenty-first-century Amish communities and a controversial revision of that past for all students of Anabaptist history to consider and to debate.

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The Amish Way: Patient Faith in a Perilous World. By Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David Weaver-Zuercher. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 2010. Pp. 267. \$24.95, U.S.; \$29.95, Can.

This is an unusual and refreshing book in a number of ways. In their previous book, *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*, Donald Kraybill, Steven Nolt, and David Weaver-Zuercher examined how the Amish in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, responded to the shooting tragedy at the Nickel Mines schoolhouse in 2006. They interviewed dozens of Amish people to discern why they responded with seemingly immediate and unqualified forgiveness. The three authors, recognized Amish experts, say they “soon discovered that forgiveness is embedded more deeply in Amish life than we ever suspected.” They were inspired to “listen more closely for the religious heartbeat that sustains their entire way of life” (xi). This new book, then, is a description of that way of life that includes forgiveness, but also many other practices so closely intertwined around a central core or heartbeat of religious faith that they are inseparable. The authors call this heartbeat “Amish spirituality.”

“Amish” and “spirituality” are two words rarely seen together. Amish practices and beliefs are described in many places and spirituality is the subject of countless books these days, but rarely have these two fields of study been brought together.¹ In fact spirituality is often unhinged from “religion” or any particular tradition or “real-time” community. Thus, this treatment of the Amish is a welcome description of a spirituality that has integrity, roots, and depth.

1. One exception is John S. Oyer, “Is There an Amish Theology? Some Reflections on Amish Religious Thought and Practice,” in a compilation of Oyer’s writings, *They Harry the Good People Out of the Land*, ed. John D. Roth (Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 2000), 111-133.

It is a beautifully written book that almost reads like a devotional. Full of stories and direct quotes and writings from Amish people, *The Amish Way* paints a picture of a spirituality of community, closeness to the natural world, yieldedness (*Gelassenheit*), faith lived out in everyday work and play, family connections, and contentment in limiting life choices—all to foster a common Christian life together. There is a fascinating inside look at Amish worship, including interviews with preachers who preach without notes and without knowing they are going to be preaching until the last minute. The preachers themselves understand that in not using notes and in not over-preparing they foster a sense of dependence on God and the Holy Spirit.

Because of the authors' personal relationships with the Amish, this is a look from as close to the inside as one can get. Practices are explained sympathetically and often in Amish people's own words, showing how the way of life is understood from inside a group that values the communal and the local over the individual and unlimited mobility. Patience is found to be one of the most distinctive spiritual virtues of the Amish—a practice cultivated already in childhood by sitting through three-hour, unadorned worship services. "Amish people demonstrate uncommon patience as they make their way in a perilous world. They do not skip from one thing to the next, but stick with traditional answers and approaches. When they are faced with problems their first instinct is to wait and pray rather than seek a quick fix" (xiii).

Patience is tied to another core practice: "giving-up-ness" or *uffgeevva* (Pennsylvania Dutch). This "giving-up-ness" is embedded in the community's rules for daily living and could also be called "obedience" or "submission." In the way the Amish practice *Gelassenheit* (resignation to God's will) one sees echoes of the vow of obedience that those who join Catholic religious orders take, along with the vows of chastity and poverty.

What makes the book all the more interesting is that the authors also give their own responses to these practices. For example, after describing Amish patience the authors observe: "We find this commitment to patience fascinating and admirable, but also disconcerting . . . what about working to change the world for the better? As Martin Luther King wrote in his book *Why We Can't Wait*, impatience is sometimes a virtue, for 'progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability'" (xiii-xvi). Again in the section on Amish gender roles, the authors mention several times that modern women might find the roles restrictive, and they talk about why that might be. In other words, they both value and describe the Amish viewpoint, as well as raise questions about it—an unusual combination.

Chapter headings outline the contents: A Peculiar Way; Spiritual Headwaters; Losing Self; Joining Church; Worshipping God; Living Together; Children; Family; Possessions; Nature; Evil; Sorrow; and The Things that Matter. Direct quotations offer insight in plain language. Why don't Amish businesses just keep expanding? An Amish person explains simply: "Bigness ruins everything" (7).

There is an appendix with "the Amish lectionary"—a pattern of twenty-six Sunday texts that repeat every year, sufficient for worship meetings that take place every other week. What they choose as their lectionary readings and

sermon topics constitutes their theology in a nutshell: The Lost Son; The Vine and the Branches; Starting to Bring in the Hay. This last one—a sermon topic always falling in midsummer—uses Scripture texts from Luke 12 and 13 with the story of the farmer who built bigger and bigger barns to store his worldly goods and felt very satisfied with himself. We also notice that sermons are tied to the farming seasons and the seasonal tasks of the year so the spiritual is well connected to the daily life experiences of planting, harvesting, and so on.

The book addresses directly the relevance of Amish faith and spirituality in the last chapter (13), “Amish Faith and the Rest of Us.” The authors list the six things they believe the Amish have to teach “the rest of us” about spirituality: spiritual vitality comes at a price (189); the importance of taking spiritual perils seriously (189); the importance of habit-forming practices (190); the importance of patience in a “hurry-up world” (191); the importance of the past; and the importance of people, “sharing in a common purpose, a common set of values, and a common set of spiritual practices” (192). This is a rich, dense chapter that deserves study in spiritual formation programs.

In *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God and Love of Neighbor*, David Augsburg says that all spiritualities fall into one of three types: mono-polar (focus on the Self, the inward journey, and personal transformation); bi-polar (God and Self relationship); and tri-polar (God-Self-Other).² The Amish Way fits into this typology as one that is tri-polar—a spirituality that involves love of God, self, and others, including the enemy. One of my hesitations about trying to live “the Amish way” is that while there is much emphasis on the other and on God, there is not much acknowledgment or understanding of the “self” from a Christian perspective. There is not much about personal transformation and how the self and God relate.³

The book makes one think about the choices we make in life—what we trade to have our professional careers, what we have come to take for granted, and our opportunities and our choices. Lucid, readable, and uplifting, the book’s vignettes and stories of goodness take us to the heart of Amish “patient faith” and spirituality—a faith where “everyday life cannot be separated from . . . religion” (126).

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2. David Augsburg, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God and Love of Neighbor* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2006).

3. See Marcus Smucker, “Self-Sacrifice and Self-Realization in Mennonite Spirituality” (Ph.D. diss., Union Institute University, 1987).

An Amish Paradox: Diversity and Change in the World's Largest Amish Community. By Charles E. Hurst and David L. McConnell. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 2010. Pp. 356. \$61, cloth; \$31, paper.

There is no doubt that Charles Hurst and David McConnell's book about the Amish in the greater Holmes County settlement of northeast Ohio is an invaluable contribution to the literature. Indeed, as the subtitle correctly claims, Holmes County is the largest Amish settlement, which is sufficient justification in itself for this study and future scholarship on the Amish in this community.⁴ As well, it is one of the oldest and most diverse of the more than 430 Amish settlements in existence today, making it an excellent place for future scholarship on this group.⁵

Hurst and McConnell develop a conceptual model of cohesion and social change based on four distinctive Amish groups in the Holmes County settlement: the Swartzentruber, the Andy Weaver, the Old Order, and the New Order. A strength of the book is the historical accounts of how these various affiliations emerged. Even though these stories of schism are specific to the Holmes County settlement, the conceptual model devised by Hurst and McConnell gives them a greater significance. As a result, this book is not just about the Amish in a large community of Ohio. The stories of division and schism in *An Amish Paradox* read more like a microcosm of the Amish in the twentieth century.

The authors build their model on a foundation of three "central concepts." The first concept is that change among the Amish is a combination of "external and internal forces," with the former represented by government regulations, urbanization, economic change, and tourism. The latter is described as the growing diversity among Amish church groups as codified in their *Ordnung* or church discipline. Second, the social boundaries of Amish society are significant in the development of symbols that signify identity, change, lag, membership, power, and other social dynamics. Innovation that occurs at the borders comes by way of weak ties (i.e., bridging capital), especially with non-Amish. The third central concept focuses on terrains of tension between the individual and the community, which are themselves a product of the interaction of internal and external forces. Hence, the Amish community has the ability both to stifle individual agency through group identity and also to provide security to the individual through identity, a strong social location, and physical and psychological assistance.

Thus, the study's model is one in which internal and external forces interact and create tensions over social boundaries and definitions of the group's borders, which then result in multiple interpretations and expressions of Amish practice, and hence, multiple subaffiliations. The authors then explain how the Amish are

4. Joseph F. Donnermeyer, *County-Level Estimates of the Amish Population in North America*. Report to the Religious Congregations and Membership Study, Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies. (Columbus, Ohio: School of Environment and Natural Resources, The Ohio State University, 2011).

5. Joseph F. Donnermeyer and Elizabeth C. Cooksey, "On the Recent Growth of New Amish Settlements," *MQR* 84 (April 2010), 181-206.

able to achieve cohesion amid plurality. There are high levels of trust and social capital emerging from a dense, multilayered social network. Networks overlap for work, church, neighbors, leisure, school, and mutual aid, generating both formal (church regulations) and informal boundaries of identity.

What follows is an example of the model at work from each of the five areas. *Schism/exclusion*: the most conservative groups maintain the strongest policies on excommunication (such as when one transfers to a less conservative Amish branch), while the less conservative groups use excommunication only for biblical trespasses. *Family*: New Order Amish interior design and landscaping suggests tidiness and wealth, while Swartzentruber houses are functional but not decorative (no paint or interior decorations). *Education*: While private church schools are the norm for all, some Old Orders use public schools; Andy Weavers and Swartzentrubers maintain a firm boundary against public schools, while a few New Orders home school, a symbol of individualism to conservatives. *Labor*: Swartzentrubers place caps on family income and restrictions on whom family members can work for and what jobs are acceptable, while Old Order and New Order millionaires emerge by tapping into lucrative, distant markets for products such as furniture; the Old and New Order *Ordnungen* have changed to accommodate entrepreneurs dealing with overseas competition and higher local land prices, while conservative Amish demonstrate less readiness to make allowances for external socioeconomic changes. *Health*: Increasing regulation of midwifery has spawned birthing centers as an alternative to hospital births, but the more conservative groups continue to practice natural, at-home births.

Hurst and McConnell have made a significant scholarly contribution to the empirical study of the Amish. The dominant contemporary paradigm of Amish society, change, and culture—through the work of authors such as Donald Kraybill, Steven Nolt, and Thomas Meyers—is largely abstract and idealist. The authors tip their hats to these influential scholars and draw from their research, but they also note the limitations in the dominant paradigm in capturing other phenomenon, including the centripetal forces of internal fragmentation. Although Hurst and McConnell use a variety of sources, such as historical records and observation, they largely turn to scientific deductions through positivist inquiry by relying most heavily on surveys of Amish, local non-Amish, and ex-Amish.

Given the content of the book, the title, *Amish Paradox*, is somewhat misleading. The authors argue that the factors of change are explainable logically: diverse expression of Amish identity is the result of different responses to external and internal change. Thus, diversity makes sense. The word “paradox” is rarely mentioned in the argument, and not at all when explaining the core of the model.

The authors sometimes lose sight of their main argument when detailing the many fascinating behaviors uncovered in their ethnography; the amount of detail can at times be overwhelming, especially in the heart of the book, where the text reads more like a description of Amish life than a demonstration of their theoretical model. And, as is true with many books on the Amish, there is a limited use of literature outside of other Amish studies. That said, this book has

gone further than all but a few other scholarly works in applying sociological insights to the Amish case. The authors clearly drew inspiration from Weber and network theory.

Hence, our recommendation for getting the most out of this book is to first read and then reread pages 20-25 on the three central concepts; second, study and then re-study their conceptual model as depicted in figure 8.1 on page 270; and third, “dog-ear” those sections and proceed with reading the remainder of *An Amish Paradox* while constantly referring back to both. *An Amish Paradox* is one of the most clearly written and informative books about the Amish in the Young Center series on Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. We predict that it will merit continued research for years to come, with the promise of a revised edition in due time.

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The Mennonite Brethren Church Around the World: Celebrating 150 Years. Abe J. Dueck, ed. Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press; co-published, Winnipeg, Man.: Kindred Productions. 2010. Pp. 391. \$26.95.

As Abe Dueck, the editor of this volume, notes, the sesquicentennial book is not the first attempt to “write a comprehensive history of the Mennonite Brethren Church” (9). However, the names of the contributors to this history make clear the difference from earlier works listed in the “For Further Reading” section (382-386). Together with names that have a traditional Russian Mennonite ring, such as Abe Dueck and Harold Ens, we find Hugo Zorilla, Junichi Fujino, Maurice Matsitsa, and others from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Following a model pioneered in the Mennonite World Conference’s Global Mennonite History series, the International Community of Mennonite Brethren, which commissioned the work, urged that “these stories come from within the country of origin as much as possible” (7).

The book is laid out simply, with an introductory chapter on the beginnings of the Mennonite Brethren Church, followed by eighteen chapters detailing the denominational story in specific countries, grouped into continental sections of North and Central America, Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America. In the final section, one chapter sketches the most recent Mennonite Brethren mission efforts around the world; another provides a description of the initiation and development of the International Community of Mennonite Brethren, with a brief afterword by the editor. A statistical table of ICOMB members, a chart deciphering the many acronyms used throughout the book, a list of study questions, and brief biographies of the authors wrap up the work.

The foreword, by ICOMB Executive Secretary David Wiebe, calls on readers to approach the book “with an attitude of praise . . . [and] of prayer” (8). The editor’s preface likewise asserts that “this volume is not intended as a formal, academic history,” noting that the chapter authors were selected for their involvement in “the life of the church” rather than for their scholarly credentials (11). In *Celebrating 150 Years*, Mennonite Brethren readers can certainly be

reminded of the beginnings of their family of faith in a nineteenth-century renewal movement among Russian Mennonites. They can review a story whose broad outlines are also known by the larger Mennonite community—of the deep suffering and persecution that overtook those believers with the rise of Bolshevism in Russia, of the series of immigrations that carried the sons and daughters of the revival across the world, and of the unfading commitment to mission that built a movement that, 150 years after their beginnings, includes nineteen member conferences in sixteen countries. Without doubt, much cause for prayer and praise can be found in that history.

Celebrating 150 Years also makes a contribution to the scholarly record that should matter not only to Mennonites, but also to church historians, missiologists, and sociologists who study the growth and character of the Christian movement. At one level, the book functions as a valuable primary source. Hearing directly the voices of leaders and thoughtful members within the diverse national conferences of ICOMB may suggest approaches to further research that would not have been immediately evident had the history been articulated from a singular, and likely Northern, perspective. For example, a fascinating comparison might be made between the theological and anthropological perspectives of Indian Mennonite Brethren, emerging, as I. P. Asheervadam describes them, from among the Dalits (107-110), and the immigrant churches portrayed by Alfred Neufeld carrying out their mission call in the midst of Paraguay's indigenous communities (268-271). At a more local level, a task that calls out for attention is that of taking a deeper look at the lives of Mennonite Brethren workers and leaders, including many of the chapter authors, or at many of the congregations listed (see especially Panama, 85; Congo, 154-155, 161; Germany, 221-222, 227.) Sidebars with personal stories, inserted throughout the book, offer glimpses of individual connections to the broader story.

Further fascinating research could also be done probing themes that emerge from a careful reading of the entire text, despite the diversity of its chapters. Some themes are to be expected—for example, the carefully nurtured fervor for mission and evangelism; the desire for education and the tension about what kinds of education are appropriate; differences over the roles that women should play in the church; and ambivalence about what to make of the Anabaptist roots of the Mennonite Brethren movement. Other themes that merit attention are the strong influence of the Baptist movement within Mennonite Brethren history and across its global geography; conflicts that have repeatedly plagued relationships between Mennonite Brethren mission institutions based in the United States and Canada, and emerging national church conferences; the fissiparous character of many Mennonite Brethren communities, and the sometimes troubling survival rate of church-planting efforts..

Despite the breadth of history presented, some chapters carry few endnotes. *Celebrating 150 Years* might have included more information, whether as an editorial overview or in notes from individual authors, about the sources, both oral and written, that are obviously behind the chapter histories. I was also troubled by the fact that although many of the sidebar stories described women

of faith and courage within Mennonite Brethren fellowships, only one chapter was written by a woman.

Most moving and challenging, and most representative of the gift that the Mennonite Brethren family continues to offer to the broader Mennonite community, are the words that conclude the chapter on Colombia, written by César García, who was recently appointed general secretary of Mennonite World Conference:

[T]he Colombian Mennonite Brethren church yearns to become:

Not a church free of blame,
 But rather a church where forgiveness is the source of hope.
 Not a church free of division,
 But rather a church where reconciliation is a daily reality.
 Not a church free of conflicts,
 But rather a church where conflict is resolved according to Jesus.
 Not a church without leaders,
 But rather a church where leadership is understood as service and sacrifice.
 Not a church centered on herself,
 But rather a church that gives of herself as a testimony to the world.
 Not an independent national church,
 But rather an interdependent church where human borders are not the criterion for decision making.
 Not a church without a cross,
 But rather a church that dies with Christ and is resurrected in Him" (323-324).

Eastern Mennonite University

NANCY R. HEISEY

European Mennonite Voluntary Service: Youth Idealism in Post-World War II Europe. By Calvin Wall Redekop. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House. 2010. Pp. 132. \$14.95.

From 1950 through 1952, Calvin Redekop served as the Mennonite Central Committee's first international voluntary service director in Frankfurt, Germany. Canadian-born and American-raised, Redekop represented a generation of idealistic, college-educated North American Mennonites who traveled to Europe in the post-World War II period to assist with relief and rehabilitation coordinated through religious organizations and governmental agencies. Through the auspices of Mennonite Central Committee, Redekop and his colleagues developed two programs simultaneously. Mennonite Voluntary Service began as a seasonal work-camp program for teenagers and young adults from European Mennonite communities and elsewhere, while the new Pax program provided opportunities for North American conscientious objectors in response to Korean War-era conscription. In recent years, Redekop, a sociologist, has turned to historical projects. His 2001 book, *The Pax Story: Service in the Name of Christ, 1951-1976*, offers an insider's perspective on the history of that

alternative service program, while this new work, *European Mennonite Voluntary Service*, highlights the fluid arrangements in Mennonite Central Committee's postwar visioning and programming for young people of diverse congregations throughout Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and beyond.

European Mennonite Voluntary Service, with just over 100 pages of text, is intended to keep the story of postwar relief and rehabilitation in circulation. In the preface, Redekop challenges younger scholars to dig more deeply in the archives and to mine the journals of service workers for a fuller interpretation of European M.V.S. history than he offers in this short volume. Redekop provides an overview of the program as well as a source book, with the reprinting of key documents, such as a typescript account of a 1950 organizational meeting and a 1951 provisional constitution crafted by representatives of M.C.C. and Mennonite representatives from Switzerland, France, and Germany. *European Mennonite Voluntary Service* is also part memoir, with details of Redekop's own impressions as a young M.C.C. administrator in the early 1950s and nearly three dozen photographs of work camp scenes, gatherings, and reunions.

From the late 1940s through the early 1970s, young European Mennonites, together with volunteers from around the world, took part in more than 260 work camps. In the early years, camp projects centered on Mennonite Central Committee's broader postwar relief and refugee resettlement efforts, often involving food and clothing distribution, as well as building construction. Redekop gives special attention to Espelkamp in north Westphalia, Germany, which provided a jumping-off point for Mennonite Central Committee workers and served as a training locale for leaders and volunteers in the fledgling European program. At rural and urban sites in Germany and beyond, European young men and women developed close relationships with each other and with M.C.C. workers in a cross-cultural mix that, Redekop argues, served to convey "beliefs, ideals, and motivations, . . . especially the gospel of peace and nonresistance" (31). Over time, as immediate postwar relief needs subsided, the work camps, where stays ranged from two weeks to several months, evolved into more extensive projects, including the building of schools, youth centers, and children's homes; sanitation projects; and the construction of reservoirs and hydraulic systems.

Redekop acknowledges the stresses and strains that developed over leadership, financial responsibility, and the role of Mennonite Central Committee in ensuring the service program's continuation in the face of European Mennonite tensions through the 1950s. He frames these difficulties as a dilemma in which "leadership, vision, and finances were precarious, since MCC did not have unlimited resources" (71). Moreover, differing theological orientations of the more conservative Swiss and French Mennonites prevented strong alliances from developing with the more progressive Dutch Mennonites. National allegiances of the German Mennonites provided yet another source of friction among European Mennonites in the post-World War II context.

While this book offers a clearer discussion of the origins of Mennonite Voluntary Service than its evolution through the 1950s and 1960s, it offers some explanation for the program's dissolution by 1972. Subsequently, German and

Dutch Mennonites developed national voluntary service efforts while Swiss and French Mennonites encouraged their young people toward more evangelical Bible camps. While not delving deeply into the European Mennonite rifts, Redekop clearly identifies them as a “fundamental dissonance” that pitted those concerned about young people’s spiritual life against those who embraced the social service potential of work camp activities.

Some of the most interesting material in *European Mennonite Voluntary Service* appears in the discursive endnotes. Here Redekop probes why European Mennonites were amenable to Mennonite Central Committee’s leadership in the postwar period but did not easily assume responsibility for administering young people’s service activities across national boundaries. Redekop also discusses, as part of the book’s documentation but inexplicably not within the text itself, the legitimizing of conscientious objection to military service within Dutch, German, and Swiss governmental channels through several decades of encounters with the Mennonite Voluntary Service program. This is a significant topic that deserves further study and historical analysis.

Given the hybrid nature of this book, it is likely to appeal primarily to alumni of the program, as well as to scholars interested in Redekop’s documentation of historical evidence currently scattered throughout private collections, as well as materials housed at the *Mennonitische Forschungsstelle* (Mennonite Research Center) in Weierhof, Germany, and in *MVS Newsletters* at Mennonite repositories in the United States. While Redekop’s presentation of primary source material and documentation is useful, the book lacks careful editing and contains a significant number of typographical errors. Nevertheless, *European Mennonite Voluntary Service* fulfills its author’s intention of presenting “a narrow slice of the worldwide voluntary service movement” (13). The work makes a compelling case that for more than two decades, M.V.S.’s short- and longer-term programs throughout Europe and in northern Africa (in Algeria and Morocco) helped to transform the lives of thousands of youthful participants through collaborative work projects, cross-cultural exchange, and compassionate Christian service.

Washburn University

RACHEL WALTNER GOOSSEN

From Nonresistance to Justice: The Transformation of Mennonite Church Peace Rhetoric, 1908-2008. By Ervin R. Stutzman. Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press. 2011. Pp. 424. \$39.99, U.S.; \$45.99, Can.

From Nonresistance to Justice opens with a memorable boyhood story of the author, Ervin Stutzman, working alongside his grandfather to clear brush from a wooded shelterbelt around the family house. When the dead branches had been chopped up and fed to make a blazing fire, Stutzman’s grandfather turned to him, axe in hand. “This axe once belonged to my grandfather,” he said. “He passed it down to my father, who passed it down to me. It’s gotten hard use. The handle had to be replaced twice. I think they replaced the head on it too” (11). Stutzman came to realize that his grandfather was “a steward of that axe,” so that the axe might continue to be passed from one generation to the next.

Stutzman tells the story in the same earnest voice with which he also makes plain why this long-ago day with his grandfather holds fast in his memory: it reminds him of the many ways in which the Mennonite Church is also a steward. With this volume, he ensures a deeper appreciation for one of the enduring convictions of the church, “the rich legacy of peace given to us as a gift from our Anabaptist/Mennonite forebears” (12).

At the heart of Stutzman’s story is the profound transformation of the peace doctrine and practice in the branch of the Mennonite Church with Swiss-German historical roots. Though the book does include ample references to General Conference Mennonites, he focuses on the “Old” Mennonite Church in part because that branch was the larger of the two and produced more peace-related material. In examining peace rhetoric from 1908 to 2008, Stutzman draws heavily on corporate resolutions and other formal church statements, supplemented by index terms, articles, letters, and editorials in the church press. In the early years, he notes, the doctrines of nonconformity and nonresistance held sway in the life of church communities. Stutzman uncovers a significant shift in official statements over time, from advocating nonresistance to embracing peace and justice. The texts reveal a church that moved steadily toward political engagement, increasingly willing to confront the state and to recommend specific policies and actions.

The editor and church leader Daniel Kauffman figures prominently in the early going. The *Gospel Herald* offered an influential platform for Kauffman, who saw himself as “an ‘aggresso-conservative’ with a mandate to keep modernism from putting down roots in the Mennonite Church” (51). Stutzman deftly applies understatement, as when he quotes Kauffman reflecting on church values during World War I. Kauffman wrote: “A cannon shot or shell explosion is heard but a few miles distant; but a silent prayer is heard before the Throne millions of billions of vigintillions of miles beyond the most distant star.” And then Stutzman noted: “Kauffman was not averse to the use of hyperbole to make a point” (59). Delegates from the church adopted a confession of faith in 1921 (in effect, updating the Dordrecht Confession of 1632) “in order to safeguard our people from the inroads of false doctrines which assail the Word of God and threaten the foundation of our faith” (63). While Mennonites provided famine relief in the Ukraine through the new Mennonite Central Committee in the 1920s, the church was more intent on preserving boundaries from the world than applying peace principles in visionary ways. To many church members, nonresistance served as a reminder of what *not to do* rather than as an invitation to take positive action. But in the decades that followed, the church found a different voice and pair of hands through which to express its peace convictions.

Perhaps not surprisingly, church rhetoric became especially heated in the 1960s and 1970s, when the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War roiled the nation. John Drescher assumed the editorship of *Gospel Herald* in 1962, prepared to beard the lions of Washington. He challenged the nation’s evangelist, Billy Graham, when Drescher believed that Graham’s visit to Vietnam suggested that the American side enjoyed God’s blessing. Stutzman points out that an editorial critical of President Richard Nixon drew a record number of letters to the editor

(i.e., Drescher). Peacemaking was replacing nonresistance, signaling a new kind of social engagement. A study series from Mennonite Publishing House challenged church members to get with the times: "Ask someone in your congregation what peace means. Ask yourself. You will likely get a string of non answers—like noninvolvement, nonparticipation, nonresistance. . . . We must get the wall-breaking action-oriented word for peace into our vocabularies and into our blood" (165).

From Nonresistance to Justice will make a valuable addition in libraries across the church and provide an essential resource for historians and others with an academic bent. The casual reader may find the reading heavy going. A book that emerges from stacks of corporate resolutions and other written documents is on serious ground. Stutzman passed up some opportunities to develop stories alongside the arc of rhetorical analysis. For example, when he traces the church's engagement with race relations, he refers to a declaration by delegates in 1955 that racial prejudice and discrimination are a "violation of the basic moral law which requires a redemptive attitude of love and reconciliation toward all men" (111). Stutzman could have engaged the reader at a different level by describing with rich imagery the stirrings of the civil rights movement at the time, and the actions of church leaders apart from conference sessions.

The book is gracefully, if formally, written. The editors might have reconsidered the heavy use of abbreviations in the text. Full or partial names of church bodies could have been put to better use. For example, even armed with a two-page list of abbreviations in the front of the book, readers may get lost in this account of the Peace Problems Committee: "For decades, the PPC and MCC worked closely together to encourage and shape peacemaking convictions in the MC Church. The PPC worked as a committee of the MGC, highlighting vital concerns regarding peace and nonresistance" (63). The list of abbreviations contains one of the few errors spotted in the book: MGC stands for Mennonite General Conference, "the name of the church begun in 1998, later called Mennonite Church, generally abbreviated here as MC Church" (29). The first chapter makes clear that the Mennonite General Conference emerged 100 years earlier. Photos provide an important supplement to the text, though not always with requisite details. For example, a photo of six people who attended all Puidoux theological conferences includes all their names, but without any identification. The index is no help in tracking down some of the six, such as Colin Fawcett and Jean Lasserre.

The research that underlay this study of Mennonite Church rhetoric was clearly a labor of love, carried out over many years. The study is grounded in doctoral research completed in 1993 at Temple University; in 2008, Stutzman, as a dean, pressed forward with the manuscript during a summer sabbatical at Eastern Mennonite Seminary. To be sure, he speaks with authority in a scholar's voice, as when he explains how rhetorical analysis takes a measure of the arguments and counterarguments that shape a denomination on the macro-scale. But Stutzman also speaks as one who is deeply committed to the church in the most personal of ways, having served as an ordained minister, evangelist, bishop, denominational moderator, district overseer, seminary dean. In 2010, he

became executive director of Mennonite Church USA. One hears the voice of Stutzman as a denominational leader when he writes: "I love Mennonite Church USA and desire for her to be faithful as a steward of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a keeper of the Anabaptist legacy of peace" (13).

In the final chapter, Stutzman turns from description to prescription, as he weighs "the next frontier in corporate peacemaking" (281). He reminds readers that Mennonites have long paired peacemaking with other ideas. Early in the twentieth century, peacemaking stood alongside the twins nonviolence and nonconformity; in time, peace and justice replaced them. Stutzman proposes that the church now embrace triplets instead of twins: grace, peace, and justice. He writes: "Grace must be considered an equally valued member of the family as the siblings named Peace and Justice" (281). The language of grace and of the cross of Christ should remind Mennonites that they do not possess a special "peace know-how" to leaven the world on their own. Grace, which keeps God in the foreground, figured prominently at the most recent Mennonite Church USA convention, Pittsburgh 2011, when delegates agreed to forgo voting on formal resolutions in favor of extended conversation and discernment. In looking ahead to the next convention in Phoenix in 2013 one wonders whether the church will return, as it so often has, to issuing corporate resolutions from the debate floor. However the delegates decide, as executive director of the church, Stutzman can be expected to advocate for a process that conveys a sense of God's action, a gracious tone, and a recognition of "our own shortcomings" (297).

Goshen College

DUANE C.S. STOLTZFUS

Cities of Refuge: Stories from Anabaptist-Mennonite History and Life. By Harry Loewen. Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press. 2010. Pp. 342. \$32.50.

With *Cities of Refuge*, his second collection of "historical tales," Harry Loewen underscores that historical understanding is not the sole domain of the academically inclined, but also belongs to the general public. As with his 1993 book, *No Permanent City*, Loewen tells stories from Anabaptists and Mennonites in Europe, Russia, and North and South America that range from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century. *Cities of Refuge* is not original scholarship, but gleanings from previously published works. Those works include broadly known sources, such as *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, C. Henry Smith's *The Story of the Mennonites*, and Peter and Elfrieda Dyck's *Up from the Rubble*. In addition, Loewen has mined non-Mennonite and especially German-language books and journals for material that are probably less well-known to North American readers. He then wove everything together to create thirty-seven stories, each a short, readable chapter unto itself.

Some stories have already received considerable popular and academic attention, such as the Anabaptists of Münster in 1534-1535 or aspects of the Soviet Mennonite experience. But many are relatively unknown in the church's collective historical consciousness. Often lacking is our knowledge of Anabaptism's early development, and so Loewen's chapters on Strasbourg and

Cologne as early Anabaptist centers are most welcome. So is his section on two Dutch Mennonite pastors, Albert Keuter and Andre de Croix, who died in Nazi concentration camps. Two chapters highlight northern European Mennonites and the fine arts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Increasing the visibility of stories like these is the book's greatest strength. Mennonites continue to be seduced by "worldly" influences that dilute belief, reduce membership, and undermine church institutions. They can be countered, at least in part, through the popular dissemination of stories that explain who Mennonites are as people of faith and why. As a Mennonite storyteller and history popularizer par excellence, Dale R. Schrag, has pointed out, the greatest periods of revitalization in the church have occurred when it has returned to its heritage and the lessons it provides.

But while *Cities of Refuge* is for a nonacademic audience, it is a narrow one: largely Canadians of Russian Mennonite extraction. That demographic is the focus of seventeen of the book's chapters (including Loewen's autobiographical epilogue) on topics ranging from Catherine the Great to Paraguayan immigration. Ten chapters specifically address Mennonites under Soviet persecution. That is out of proportion for a book claiming to take a broader view of the faith. "Old" Mennonites are briefly mentioned once, in a chapter about Russian Mennonite refugees. There are no Amish or Hutterite tales. Even more glaring is the absence of people of color. Loewen admits in the preface that the African and Asian Mennonite stories are beyond his expertise. Understandable, perhaps, but nonetheless the complete omission of African-Americans, First Nations/Native Americans, Hispanics, and others in the United States and Canada is disappointing. It is imperative that our historical efforts go beyond the easy Anglo-centric accounts and embrace the church's racial and cultural diversity.

Cities of Refuge's unacknowledged Russian/Canadian Mennonite assumptions are also evident in a number of the book's unexplained passing references. Among them, an immigrant to Canada is identified as working for Christian Press, as if all readers are familiar with the Mennonite Brethren publisher in Winnipeg. In another instance, the chapter on a medical worker, Katharina Epp, notes that one of her friends later married A. A. DeFehr, the Mennonite founder of the successful Canada-based company Palliser Furniture. Yet neither the friend nor the furniture-maker plays any role in the story.

Some stories beg for more clarity on key points. For example, Amsterdam's Zonist Mennonites are called liberal, and then in the next paragraph labeled conservative. The Mennonite-Quaker anti-slavery statement of 1688 was both "the first of its kind" and "not the first voice against slave-holding" in the New World; the two claims aren't necessarily mutually exclusive, but the apparent contradiction is not explained. That same chapter also asserts that the document was "no doubt more Mennonite than Quaker," but provides no evidence. Elsewhere, mention is made of the Society of the Godless and the Casado Society without describing the organizations. And is the "well-known Jacob Kroeker of *Licht im Osten* fame" really someone who needs no introduction?

All these examples are Mennonite-related. The connections are more tenuous in other stories. One is the eight-page chapter on Martin Luther's anti-Semitism, including his links with the Holocaust. Mennonites do not appear in the chapter until the second-to-last paragraph, and then only briefly to note their silence during World War II and that some Ukrainian Mennonites participated in the "Final Solution." The chapter then concludes by declaring that "Mennonites no doubt" agree with a 1994 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America statement repudiating Luther's attitudes toward the Jews. Anabaptist/Mennonite anti-Semitism is a significant topic for examination, but in this case, it seems to be an afterthought and an excuse to criticize Luther. In fact, *Cities of Refuge* devotes all or substantial parts of four chapters to disparage the reformer, which is curious given his rather distant connection to Anabaptism.

Finally, the publisher's sloppy copy editing was a great disappointment. From cover to cover, *Cities of Refuge* is afflicted with misspellings, wrong verb tenses, transposed phrases, poor punctuation, and inconsistent capitalization, among other errors. Given Loewen's deserved reputation as a scholar and the success of *No Permanent City*, this collection of stories will no doubt find a receptive audience. But the frustrations readers may feel as a result of these shortcomings greatly weaken an otherwise worthy and needed attempt to raise the profile of Anabaptist/Mennonite history among a broad range of readers in the church.

Historical Committee, Mennonite Church USA

RICH PREHEIM

New Testament Theology: Extending the Table. By Jon M. Isaak. Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books. 2011. Pp. 381. \$44.

Here is a solid, rich, and delightfully accessible resource for scholars, seminary students, and laypersons committed to serious study of the New Testament. In this volume Jon Isaak seeks "to write a NT theology in a popular format that is *historically* rigorous in its reconstruction of the NT voices . . . *theologically* grounded in Jesus's story as witnessed by the NT writers. . . , and *thematically* constructive for the church in its ongoing witness to the watching world" (xviii, emphasis Isaak's). Isaak comes to this task from a perspective that he describes as "anabaptist-evangelical," based on an

optimism about human transformation as a journey of growth and development, including commitments to community building, nonviolent peacemaking, and lifelong discipleship—a few of the key *anabaptist* ideals; [and on the] deep conviction that such transformation is best rooted in a personal connection to Jesus . . . the one who was uniquely grounded in the active pursuit of the mission of God to reconstitute the people of God for the transformation of all creation—a key *evangelical* ideal (xii, emphasis Isaak's).

In methodological terms Isaak identifies his New Testament theology both as "*descriptive* in that it deals with the accounts that the NT writers narrate of their experience with Yahweh" and as "*constructive* in that it joins the diverse testimonies of these writers into a textured and thick space" (xi, emphasis

Isaak's). In line with this dual approach Isaak frames his volume metaphorically as a theological conference at which the New Testament writers first sit around a conference table and speak descriptively, each in turn, of "their driving vision or passion" (20): chapter 3: "The Theological Contribution of Paul"; chapter 4: "The Theological Contribution of the Synoptic Gospel Writers"; chapter 5: "The Theological Contribution of the Johannine Traditions"; and chapter 6: "The Theological Contribution of the Remaining Canonical Witnesses."

Then, following a "Conference Intermission" (chapter 7), which points toward the constructive task ahead, Isaak, the conference moderator, organizes the respective contributions of the New Testament writers constructively around standard theological rubrics: chapter 8: "Christology: The Person and Work of Messiah Jesus"; chapter 9: "Revelation: God's Self-Disclosure to Humanity and All Creation"; chapter 10: "Theology: God-Talk and Imagination"; chapter 11: "Anthropology: What It Means to Be Human"; chapter 12: "Pneumatology: God's Living Presence through the Resurrected Lord"; chapter 13: "Ecclesiology: The Identity and Mission of the Gathered Messianic Community of God"; and chapter 14: "Eschatology: Picturing the Goal and Completion of Creation."

The strengths of Isaak's volume are many. Prominent among these strengths is Isaak's clear commitment to a holistic, textually-based, and community-oriented theological effort. Isaak's criteria for his own volume stipulate, among other things, a New Testament theology which is "firmly rooted in the language of the NT writings themselves" (16), which "incorporate[s] in some way all the theologies represented in the NT" (16), which is a "theology of the whole Christian Bible," without restricting Old Testament study to the search for christological evidence (17), and which "emerge[s] from and also shape[s] local ecclesial communities of biblical interpretation" (17).

Isaak's scholarship is indeed rigorous, even as he writes in accessible fashion for a potentially or partially non-academic readership. Isaak's solid acquaintance with scholarly debate over the New Testament is readily visible in his discussion of such issues as Pauline theology (chapter 3), synoptic source theories (chapter 4), hermeneutical approaches to the Apocalypse of John (chapter 5), textual criticism of the New Testament manuscripts (chapter 7), and theological perspectives on the atonement (chapter 8). And Isaak's own analysis of varying theological perspectives is significantly thoughtful and perceptive throughout.

Structural features of Isaak's work provide helpful assistance for the scholar, student, and study group as well. Isaak's discussion, chapter by chapter, of the "theological vision" of each New Testament writer and the "thematic implications" emerging from the respective theologies of the writers provide focus and substance for the "conference table" discussion that Isaak seeks to moderate. And the "exercises" at the conclusion of each chapter—including questions, bibliographical tips, and background material—provide outstanding resources for further study and discussion.

Along with its manifest strengths, however, Isaak's work also raises issues that beg for greater resolution. More than once in his "constructive" chapters Isaak appeals to the way in which things are "usually" categorized within biblical theology: "Usually Christology is divided into two sections . . ." (238);

“Usually the topic of revelation is divided into two sections . . .” (255). Such appeals to traditional categories beg the obvious question as to whether these “usual” modes of operation are adequate for the “constructive” task that Isaak sets for himself. Do these “usual” theological categories in fact grow organically out of the New Testament evidence? This is a pertinent question, given Isaak’s self-identified “constructive” task, but a question that Isaak fails to engage.

Elsewhere, in spite of his stated commitment to a New Testament theology “firmly rooted in the language of the NT writings themselves” (16), Isaak occasionally draws conclusions that move beyond the language and the concepts of the writers in question. Speaking of the Gospel of Mark—which ends strategically at 16:8, before anyone has met the resurrected Jesus—Isaak surprisingly concludes that “in meeting the resurrected Jesus God offers a new chance for the world” (118). Discussing the Markan account of Jesus’ return (13:26-27), Isaak identifies the *parousia* as that time “when all people (both far and near) are compelled to acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord” (119), an event clearly depicted in Philippians 2:9-11 but nowhere envisioned within Mark’s Gospel. And speaking of John’s Apocalypse, Isaak curiously avoids specific reference to John’s hallmark “Lamb” Christology, referring instead in 5:5 to “the exalted Messiah Jesus” as “the only one worthy ‘to open the scroll’ ” (176).

Eastern Mennonite Seminary

DOROTHY JEAN WEAVER

Recovering the Love Feast: Broadening our Eucharistic Celebrations. By Paul Fike Stutzman. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock. 2011. Pp. 281. \$32.

Paul Stutzman organizes *Recovering the Love Feast* into two sections: the first and largest traces the history of the Love Feast in Christian tradition; the second suggests ways contemporary congregations might appropriate the forming practices of the Love Feast. He argues that it is important to know the history and context of those practices to understand not only the purpose and meaning of the Love Feast, but also Christian worship and eucharistic practice in general. Most crucially, “[r]ecovering the Love Feast is important because it has great potential to shape the habits and character of the church” (161).

In its original context, the Love Feast drew from the banqueting practices of the Greco-Roman world. For example, the evening banquet on which the Love Feast was modeled was divided into two parts: the feast proper and the after-dinner entertainment, which consisted of hymn-singing and the reading of sacred texts or poetry. The hinge between these two was a ritual libation. It is not a big leap from this to the pattern of Christian worship we see in Acts and 1 Corinthians: a communal evening meal followed by the ritual sharing of bread and cup in the context of worship (singing, Scripture reading, and testimony).

While it retained several key banqueting practices of the surrounding culture, the Love Feast also transformed them in telling ways. Footwashing, for example, was carried out in the example of Jesus (washing each other’s feet rather than having them washed by slaves) and as a sign of Christian submission and cleansing from sin rather than merely a means of avoiding smelling the feet of

one's banqueting partners. It may come as a surprise to contemporary readers that the early church's practice of footwashing was no more comfortable in its original cultural context than it is today.

The most significant difference between the Christian worship meal and its cultural parallels was that the former was radically inclusive, gathering not just men of wealth and position for an evening that reinforced cultural norms but instead creating new patterns by welcoming women, slaves, and the poor and by dividing food equally among all. Other practices that highlighted the distinctly Christian nature of the gathering included the invitation to communal confession; the holy kiss as a greeting that signified reconciliation in a new, non-biological "family"; the reading of letters and Hebrew Scriptures; the offering of prayers; the singing of hymns; and instruction of the faithful instead of after-dinner entertainment.

It was in part the radical nature of the Love Feast that contributed to its waning. Most basically, a gathering of such diverse types of people to share food and worship was "socially awkward" (108), and there is evidence very early of struggles with elitism, selfishness, and drunkenness (1 Cor. 12:17-22) at this form of table worship. In addition, many changes introduced into church structure and practice through the Constantinian shift set the stage for an "over-spiritualization" of the Christian meal. "With the decline of the Love Feast and its related practices, many of the physical and practical aspects of the early church meal were left behind," writes Stutzman. "The liturgical practices that remained tended to overemphasize the spiritual nature of the Eucharist and to overlook the importance of fellowship between members of the church" (137).

Beginning in the early sixteenth century, groups of Christian reformers re-appropriated neglected practices from the early church, among them the Brethren whose practice of the Love Feast in a variety of forms continues to this day. Stutzman argues that the meal and its associated practices need not be peculiar to Brethren; the meal has important contributions to make in broadening the eucharist and in shaping the lives of all Christians. The remaining chapters then look at five Christian practices that embody important spiritual disciplines (footwashing/submission, fellowship meal/love, examination/confession, holy kiss/reconciliation, and communion/thanksgiving) and provide an apologetic for each as valid, and valuable, today.

This is an interesting book, and especially useful for two reasons: its thorough grounding in the research, including primary sources from antiquity, and its breadth of perspective, both historical and formational. Particularly in postmodernity, we in the church need to be explicit about why we do things and why they matter. *Recovering the Love Feast* can make significant contributions to worship planning, preaching, catechism, and the ritual life of congregations.

Recovering the Love Feast is also a frustrating read for the same reasons that it is valuable: the quantity of detail is so encyclopedic that the reader easily loses sight of the bigger point. This is exacerbated by Stutzman's excessive use of long block quotes; too many pages read like a list of points the author wants to make rather than well-digested information that constructs a coherent argument. The

project is a good one, the subject matter worthwhile, the argument provocative — yet the book needs significant editing.

Part of the problem may be a lack of clarity about the intended audience. Stutzman suggests that some readers may struggle with his choice to look at the “interplay between historical analysis and contemporary practice” (xi). In my estimation, that combination is fruitful, but greater clarity about who the reader is would organize and tip that interplay more productively. In its current format, I find myself frustrated both as a scholar and a practitioner: regardless of which hat I wear, I need to proceed through too much material whose relevance to my interests is unclear.

Goshen, Ind.

RACHEL MILLER JACOBS

BOOK NOTES

Multifaith Musings: Essays and Exchanges. By Dorothy Yoder Nyce. Goshen, Ind.: D. Yoder Nyce. 2010. Pp. 168. \$10.

This collection of twelve essays and dialogues “addresses how people might receive or learn from people loyal to diverse living faiths” and works from the conviction that “religious plurality reflects the Creator’s Wisdom and Divine richness” (1, 5). Yoder Nyce, who spent many years in India as a Christian interacting with Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Buddhist believers, has written a series of fictional dialogues set among cross-cultural and interfaith conversation partners. The dialogues aim to communicate information about diverse religious beliefs and values, and also to model respectful exchange. Among the nine dialogues are a conversation about Hinduism between an Indian Christian and a North American Christian; a conversation among Christian, Hindu, and Muslim college students who find themselves assigned to the same dorm room at a U.S. university; and a conversation between a Hindu woman and a Christian woman who seeks to understand Hindu goddess imagery. The book also includes three essays in which Yoder Nyce reflects on her evolving understanding of interfaith exchanges and on the paradox of religion as a source of conflict and peace.

Beneath the Cross: Proclaiming the Gospel under Czars and Soviets. By Cornelius Martens. Helene Sigrid Fast, trans. Abbotsford, B.C.: Fast Publishing. 2010. Pp. 165. \$20, Can.

Helene Fast has produced the first English translation of a book that has long been popular among German-speaking Mennonite Brethren. It has appeared in eleven German editions, and one French and one Russian edition, since it was first published in 1928. Kornelius J. Martens (1876-1974) was baptized into the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia, and in 1905 was one of the founders of the All Russia Baptist Union. He was a longtime evangelist in the late Russian

Empire and, later, in the Soviet Union, especially in the Caucasus region. In 1927 persecution drove Martens and his family to Germany. He spent his remaining years in church work in Europe and North and South America, based mostly in Canada. His spiritual autobiography recounts his dissolute teenage years, dramatic conversion, and persistent preaching—often staying a step or two ahead of the authorities. Much of the book details the suffering of Christians in the Soviet era and Martens’s imprisonment and interrogation by the Communists’ secret police. The tone of the book highlights both the terror of the times and God’s providential care.

The Nonviolent Atonement, 2nd ed. By J. Denny Weaver. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans. 2011. Pp. 346. \$28.

This edition expands by almost 100 pages the original 2001 edition, in which J. Denny Weaver presented an argument for understanding atonement in what he termed narrative Christus Victor, which “encompasses victory in both human historical and cosmic realms and emphasizes Jesus’ life and ministry” (23), and that Weaver then placed in conversation with black, feminist, and womanist theologies. The first six chapters remain essentially the same, though Weaver has added a new section on “Jesus’ Death as a Sacrifice” to chapter 2. Chapter 7, “Conversation with Anselm and His Defenders and Detractors,” is substantially new and greatly expanded. In a section titled “Conversations: Round Two,” Weaver engages the writings of five theologians who have defended traditional atonement theories (and sometimes directly questioned Weaver’s approach): Daniel Bell, Hans Boersma, Richard Mouw, Peter Schmiechen, and Robert Sherman. Next, he discusses the work of ten scholars whose publications since 2001 provide what Weaver calls “Nonviolent Atonement-Compatible Conversations”: Anthony Bartlett, Gregory Boyd, Steve Chalke, Thomas Finger, Stephen Finlan, Mark Heim, Alan Mann, Brian McLaren, Darby Kathleen Ray, and Leanne Van Dyk.