

## IN THIS ISSUE

Few symbols are more central to contemporary Mennonite identity in North America than the dramatic images and stories of Christian faithfulness in the face of adversity preserved in the pages of the *Martyrs Mirror*. Yet this focus on the heroic accounts of Anabaptist martyrs has sometimes dulled our understanding of the larger historical context of Anabaptist prosecution, particularly the complex—often nuanced—response of local authorities and courts to the presence of the Anabaptists in their communities. In the opening essay of this issue, **Jaap Geraerts**, a Ph.D. student at University College London, offers a closer look at the prosecution of Anabaptists during the first three decades of their presence in the Netherlands. Despite the draconian Imperial edicts against the Anabaptists, which called for their prompt execution, Geraerts suggests that the response of local Dutch courts was much more complex. Drawing on a wealth of quantitative data, Geraerts demonstrates that the actual sentences imposed by Dutch courts varied significantly depending on criteria such as gender, civil status, penitence, and one's role in the movement. Execution became the punishment of last resort.

Since its origins in 1988 Christian Peacemaker Teams has attempted to provide a framework for active nonviolent witness in the cause of peace and social justice. **Rachel Waltner Goossen**, a professor of history at Washburn University, offers an insight into one particular expression of C.P.T.'s work: a campaign begun in 1992 to publicize the negative effects of war toys on children and to protest against the sale of violent toys. For more than a decade, C.P.T. sought to heighten grassroots awareness of the link between such toys and military recruitment by staging demonstrations at some of the nation's largest toy stores and disseminating information on the harmful effects of war toys. Although the protests did not stop the sale of violent toys, the initiative did raise awareness of the more subtle forms of militarization in American culture, provide C.P.T. volunteers with practical training in nonviolent protests, and encourage parents to be more thoughtful about children's play habits.

**Jeff Gundy**, a well-known poet and professor of English at Bluffton University, explores another expression of the Christian peace witness with an essay on Mennonite peace poetry. Responding to criticism that Mennonite poets have not sufficiently engaged contemporary realities of war, Gundy begins by reminding readers of the way America's current wars have become almost invisible to ordinary citizens. He then elicits a significant body of evidence to show that contemporary Mennonite poets

are indeed engaging themes of violence and war, both as contributors to the “Poets Against War” online initiative and in a wide variety of published poems. The poetry Gundy cites is likely less didactic than critics may have wished for. But it does address more subtle, though no less pernicious, forms of violence in our daily lives, and it evinces a greater sensitivity to the poet’s own complicity in structures of violence woven into modern life.

With the demise of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent purging of Marxist-Leninist defenders from East German universities, one might have expected interest in Thomas Müntzer—the eloquent leader of the Peasants’ War and erstwhile standard bearer of the “early bourgeois revolution”—to quietly fade away. Yet, as **Peter Matheson** makes clear in his review of recent research, Müntzer continues to attract a great deal of scholarly attention. Matheson surveys nearly twenty publications appearing in the past decade, and provides *MQR* readers with a welcome snapshot of the current state of Müntzer scholarship.

Thank you to all the many readers who sent appreciative responses to our October 2011 issue, which critically engaged Peter Leithart’s recent book, *Defending Constantine*. Watch for a much expanded volume of responses—with the *MQR* essays forming the core—to be published by Wipf & Stock in the coming year. In this season of subscription renewals, we remain deeply grateful for your varied expressions of encouragement and support.

– John D. Roth, editor

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