

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Of Gods and Men* (*Des hommes et des dieux*). French film; release in France, September 8, 2010; limited U.S. release, February 2011. Directed by Xavier Beauvois; screenplay, Etienne Comar; leading actors, Lambert Wilson, Michael Lonsdale, Olivier Rabourdin. Duration: 122 minutes.

*Of Gods and Men* is about a Catholic monastery tucked away in the Atlas mountains of Algeria—hardly a subject of burning interest for most readers of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*. The message of this film, however, resounds so intimately with Anabaptist convictions, the experiences it recounts sound so familiar to Mennonite ears, and the issues it struggles with are so intertwined with those faced by any peace theology that anyone standing in our tradition cannot but take grateful and astonished note of this work. What does it mean to follow Christ in a violent world? Is it legitimate to defend myself with military means? Do I not forfeit the purpose of life by allowing myself to be butchered in senseless violence? Is nonviolence passivity? These are the questions this film asks over and over again.

In the 1990s, Algeria was caught in the throes of an increasingly bloody conflict between military autocrats—ossified remnants of the guerrilla movement that wrested independence from France in 1962—and radical Islamist groups angry at being deprived of the political fruits of their sweeping victory at the polls in 1991. Both sides were ruthless and indiscriminate in their violence, occasionally massacring entire villages. As “infidels,” the European residents of Algeria soon became preferred targets of the Islamists, and therefore left the country *en masse* during these years. This is the context in which the seven monks of the Trappist monastery of Notre-Dame de l’Atlas, near the village of Tibhirine, ponder whether their continued presence in Algeria, as Frenchmen, makes sense.

The film can be interpreted as a prolonged, collective Gethsemane experience—an entire monastery praying “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” and then, toward the end of the film, peacefully, deliberately, even joyfully proclaiming: “yet not what I want, but what you want.” The strength of the film lies in the authenticity with which it portrays this gradual, drawn-out decision, a process excruciatingly painful for all involved. The word “nonviolence” is not uttered a single time. Yet the entire film is nothing but a single, compelling plea for Christian nonviolence and a proclamation of the dignity and meaningfulness of Christian existence even in a situation of utmost vulnerability.

To be sure, some viewers will be disturbed by the apparent assumption of complete theological harmony between Islam and Christianity suggested by the monks’ deliberate participation in the Muslim religious feasts of the local village and their apparent refraining from any form of active proselytization. Others will find traces of colonial condescendence in the portrayal of French Christian

monks as social and medical benefactors of indigent Algerian Muslim villagers. Yet the fervently-felt Christian convictions of the monks and their attitude of deep humility toward their host country do not remain hidden to perceptible viewers. When a high-ranking government official, in a vain effort to convince the monks to leave, bewails the violence befalling his country, on the one hand, yet at the same time lays the blame for it all on the French colonial legacy, the response of the abbot and his fellow-monk is one of silence and contrition. They do not answer back, but tacitly assume this burden. Their conviction that Christ can be found even among the very guerrillas that threaten their lives is poignantly brought across when a fatally wounded Islamist is brought to the monastery and the only monk with medical training is forced at gunpoint to tend this guerrilla—portrayed by the director in an unmistakable visual quote from the painting “The Dead Christ” by Andrea Mantegna.

Like every good work of art, the film is not without a certain ambivalence. Even the allusion to Psalm 82:6-7 in the title is not entirely clear in its implications. No easy answers can be expected from the film. Anyone convinced that violence by armed Islamic fundamentalists, while not a pretty sight, is an understandable and logical response by the wretched of the Earth to the evils of colonialism, will be nauseated by the graphic portrayal of Croatian construction workers getting their throats slit as “infidels,” as happened on December 14, 1993. Anyone convinced that the suppression of insurgency, particularly insurgency by violence-crazed fundamentalists, is the legitimate right of any state, will be disturbed by the realistic depiction of what this suppression actually means and by the effects it has on the innocent – and, not least, on the perpetrators themselves. This movie demythologizes violence and reminds us, regardless of whether our political preferences lie toward the “left” or the “right,” of its ugly sides. Finally, anyone convinced that nonviolence is a learnable set of specific techniques that, if properly and intelligently applied, will succeed reliably in winning over any opponent, will be disconcerted by the apparently “unhappy ending” of the story: the seven monks painfully stumble their way up to their own Golgotha, accompanied by their armed captors, disappearing into the fog and snow. This film does not spare viewers the leap of faith.

*Of Gods and Men* poses questions the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition has been struggling with for almost five centuries. One is tempted to describe this film as the portrayal, in Catholic monastic garb, of a very Anabaptist understanding of discipleship and the self-sacrificial love of enemies.

*Neustadt/Weinstr., Germany*

STEPHEN E. BUCKWALTER

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*Bernhard Rothmann and the Reformation in Münster, 1530-1535.* By Willem de Bakker, Michael Driedger, and James Stayer. Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press. 2009. Pp. 325. \$34.

More than two decades ago Willem de Bakker completed his dissertation on Bernhard Rothmann and the Reformation in Münster. Now with assistance from James Stayer and Michael Driedger, it has been transformed, in de Bakker's

words, into “a scholarly, up-to-date account in English of one of the great turning points in Anabaptist and Reformation history” (ix).

The rise and fall of the Anabaptist kingdom in Münster remains one of the most captivating episodes of Reformation history. This book examines the developments leading up to the dramatic events. In the early 1530s, the Reformation began making inroads in Münster, and the city council became fragmented along confessional lines. When Rothmann and other theologians within the town began espousing heterodox ideas, pressure increased on Bishop Franz von Waldeck to take action. In turn, non-Anabaptists who feared an attack fled the city, which led to an Anabaptist majority being elected to the city council in 1534. Shortly thereafter, the bishop and his allies besieged the city. In the meantime, Anabaptists from the surrounding areas and the Low Countries had immigrated to the New Jerusalem. Among these was Jan Matthijs, who became the foremost prophet until his death in battle. He was succeeded by Jan van Leiden, who subsequently claimed to be the new King David. In the course of the siege, the Anabaptists introduced community of goods and polygamy, the excesses for which they became most infamous. After the city finally fell in June 1535, six hundred residents were killed, and three of the leaders, including Jan van Leiden, were publically tortured and executed.

De Bakker and his co-authors aim to correct a tendency of the historical literature to “exaggerate the debauchery of the Anabaptists, distort their motives, and pay insufficient attention to the events that led to their rise to power” (5). This is due on the one hand to historians’ reliance on polemical accounts of the events in Münster and on the other hand to the attempts of the pacifist Anabaptist groups that survived beyond the sixteenth century to distance themselves from the Münsterites. Pacifist Anabaptists thereby “accepted many of the claims of their confessional opponents, rejecting only the charges that they themselves were related to such anti-Christian criminals” (212).

The book alternates between describing events in Münster and analyzing Rothmann’s writings, presented as the most valuable body of “insider” sources available. Rothmann’s views are examined both in light of what was happening in Münster and in comparison to ideas circulating beyond Münster. Perhaps it is a reflection of the weakness of the historical record that the book partially fails to convey a holistic picture of how Rothmann fit into the Münster hierarchy and power dynamic. Although Rothmann was without a doubt a significant figure in the development of Münster’s Reformation, just how much authority he yielded in the final phases of the Anabaptist kingdom remains somewhat unclear, as does the extent to which his theological argumentation was a rhetorical attempt to justify events after the fact.

A central thesis of the book is that the events in Münster were the product of a gradual evolution that began with impulses similar to those in other places. In Münster, as in numerous other towns, the Reformation presented citizens an opportunity to defend their “political, economic, and religious rights and freedoms” (32). However, as Rothmann, the city’s most prominent reformer, developed sympathies for a Reformed interpretation of sacramental teachings and communalism, Münster became alienated from the north German Lutheran

Reformers. When a newly drafted church ordinance submitted for review to Lutheran theologians in Marburg was rejected, it forced Rothmann, who was at least publically still ambivalent on the question of pedobaptism, to choose sides, and he had “no choice but to move to where his followers were” (110), namely to Hendrik Roll, a prominent Sacramentarian preacher and advocate of believer’s baptism. Although the city council temporarily silenced Rothmann and the other radical preachers, the confessional fragmentation of the council soon rendered the ban ineffective. Rothmann’s negative experiences with the council and the initial setbacks in enacting his vision for a communal Reformation influenced his ecclesiology and understanding of the sacraments. He abandoned hope of a general reform and instead viewed baptism as “entry into the true church” (129) and as a “symbol on the part of reborn believers of their freely assumed obligation to lead Christian lives” (135).

Rothmann’s decision to be rebaptized in January of 1534 and his subsequent rebaptizing of hundreds of Münster’s residents precipitated the military action against the city. The exodus of orthodox residents combined with an influx of Anabaptist immigrants to radicalize Münster. The military action of the bishop seemed to confirm their worst apocalyptic expectations and encouraged an armed response. Polygamy was adopted in part to deal with the skewed demographic of the city after more women than men immigrated to Münster and many able-bodied male residents fled to avoid being drawn into the battle.

Like many valuable works of scholarship, this book raises as many questions as it answers. If we accept the thesis that many of the extreme positions of the Münsterites resulted from the situation in which they found themselves as victims of a siege, we must then naturally ask to what extent the theology developed by radical groups elsewhere was just as much a reaction to their social contexts as inherent in consistent theological positions. The concluding section of the book hints at these implications and includes a rather abbreviated comparison of Münster with other north German towns. The conclusions drawn here are provocative, cursory, and worthy of much more investigation. For example, the claim that “Anabaptism and Sacramentarianism were labels of convenience in the dangerous game of power politics” has the potential to change how historians use the terms and read their sources (208). The suggestion that “Reformed Protestantism and Anabaptism were not in inception two different movements, but were respectively the institutional and the underground expressions of a similar reforming orientation” deserves far more attention as well (219). By extension, historians might ask themselves whether “Anabaptism” was sometimes merely a manifestation of Reformed tendencies in areas of Lutheran domination.

All in all, the authors have achieved what they set out to do. Their book provides a competent overview of the development of the Anabaptist kingdom and clearly makes the case for contextualizing the developments in Münster and elsewhere. While it is clear that a great deal of work was done to update the manuscript, the structure reflects its origins as a dissertation. It begins with a review of the extant historiography, includes a plethora of endnotes, and ends with a lengthy bibliography. Despite the academic style, the monograph is

generally readable (though there are too few commas for this reviewer's taste) and well accessible to lay readers. How fortunate that the dissertation was updated in this form; it will remain a valuable resource for historians in the field and for anyone in search of an introduction to one of the Reformation's most fascinating manifestations.

Kassel, Germany

ELLEN YUTZY GLEBE

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*Houses on the Sand? Pacifist Denominations in Nazi Germany.* By James Irvin Lichti. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. Pp. 292. \$80.95.

The searing tragedy that consumed Germany during the Third Reich (1933-1945) is among the best known and most analyzed realities of modern history. The official policy of the Reich was to eliminate Jews as a people and kill as many "misfits" (Roma, Communists, homosexuals, and Christian dissenters) as possible. The complicity with as well as defiance of government policy by the official Protestant and Catholic churches has been documented and debated for two generations. Because they were numerically and politically of minor significance, the Free Churches under Nazism have received little attention. This is even more the case with the author's subcategory of "pacifist denominations," notwithstanding a significant body of literature on the subject in German.

*Houses in the Sand* began as a doctoral dissertation at the University of California-Los Angeles under the direction of Saul Friedlaender, a prominent historian of Nazism and the Holocaust. Lichti taught at U.C.L.A. for five years and since then has been the archivist of the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust. He is a second-generation member of a Mennonite family that emigrated from Germany and settled in central California.

Lichti's purpose is to document and interpret the considerable primary sources, largely in religious journals, written by authors of pacifist denominations just before and during the Third Reich. Mennonites at that time were more or less assimilated congregations whose origins went back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Germany. The single Anabaptist exception is the post-World War I Hutterite community whose defiance of Nazi ideology forced it into exile in England. Adventists were more diverse and recent: in addition to the mainstream movement the much more stringent Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, and Reform Adventists that had emerged from the original impulse defied the state to the point of martyrdom. Quakerism had reached Germany a generation after it coalesced as a movement (1640s) but died out in Germany before World War I (15). It was reborn after the war through postwar relief work by British and American Quakers, attracting into membership a significant number of members with Jewish ancestry (195).

Lichti nowhere clarifies his unqualified use of the term "pacifist denominations," which is problematic when applied to Mennonites in Germany during the Third Reich. By the 1870s Mennonite thinkers and members were increasingly rejecting the principle of nonresistance and supporting militant German nationalism. By 1933 only a handful of dissenters refused to fight. So, in

the plain sense of the word, Mennonites were no longer pacifists even though their tradition was nonresistant. Lichti does not make this distinction in his evaluation of Mennonite writing under Nazism.

In addition to his exhaustive and meticulous research in the primary sources, Lichti turns to the sociological typologies of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, which he creatively adapts to his subjects. Among the most illuminating adaptations, essential to his methodology, are the categories of "liberalism" (conscience, secularism, democratic governance), "conservatism" (hierarchy, religion, homogeneity), "sectarianism" (apolitical, charismatic, homogeneity), and "denominationalism" (Free Churches that are not sectarian and internally democratic). The "sect" holds authority as a collective; the "denomination" transfers it to the believer (3ff). Mennonites and Adventists are internally liberal and externally conservative. The author makes a solid case that their split personality is a key reason why they succumbed to Fascism. By contrast, Quakers are internally as well as externally liberal. This trait gave them a public ethic that enabled them to oppose Fascism (10-20). Nazi policy used the belief of all three groups in the separation of church and state to neutralize their role in the public sphere (31-55).

The principal focus of Lichti's research is the religious periodical literature of the pacifist denominations. The following profiles emerge. The "ethnic" nature of Mennonite community made Mennonites particularly susceptible to the ideology of racism (75ff). It is to Lichti's credit that he illustrates the anguished struggle of individual Mennonite writers in their two denominational periodicals and elsewhere as they grappled with Nazism as well as their capacity for protest in their universal rejection of Nazi eugenics (79ff). But as the evidence is sifted it becomes stunningly clear that most Mennonites who went on record collaborated with the Nazis in thought and deed. Their anti-Bolshevism made them prey to the prevailing racist Pan Germanism (122ff). As a whole there was no difference in Mennonite journals between the views of provincial farmers and sophisticated urbanites; culturally and theologically liberal Mennonites were as nationalistic and racist as their rural co-religionists (123ff).

Lichti's assessment of the Adventists is almost as grim. Initially they were able to resist Fascism because their international identity and commitment to missions, especially in Africa, made them members of a global people (87, 130-133). On the other hand, some Adventists confused Nazi fanaticism about physical health with the Adventist emphasis on discipline and abstinence (89-93).

When Quakerism returned to Germany after World War I it was outspoken in its opposition to the Versailles Treaty and the Allied blockade of food for German civilians (95). This stood it in good stead with the German public. But its emphasis on individualism made it vulnerable to Nazi ideas about sterilization (98). Quaker journalism made common cause with outspoken religious socialists like Leonhard Ragaz and Emil Fuchs as well as Jewish leaders like Martin Buber (134).

With regard to anti-Jewish biblical interpretation in Lichti's study sample, any attempt to summarize falls short of the book's nuanced analysis. A few positions stand out. Only the Christadelphians, the rigorous, pacifist offshoot of

Adventism, remained firm in their advocacy of a solidarity of Christians with Jews (151). Individual Mennonite writers protested the demonization of Jews in the Bible, but the majority identified with historic Christian anti-Semitism, often embracing its fanatical Nazi expression (156-160). The special attachment in Adventism to the Old Testament made them somewhat less susceptible to anti-Semitism than Mennonites. The Quaker press tried to resist the power of propaganda and public opinion by focusing its criticism of Jews on their newfound nationalism in Palestine (165).

Two markers on the landscape Lichti has painted are particularly baffling. One of them is the almost total lack of solidarity, at least in the written sources, of Mennonites and Adventists with Jews as fellow outsiders. The second bafflement is the insignificance of education and status, combined with a culturally and theologically liberal worldview, in Mennonite attitudes toward Nazism (170-180, for instance). The split personality of Mennonites in their internal liberalism and external conservatism is only part of the explanation. In this regard, Lichti mentions but does not draw out the significance of a crucial difference between liberal thought in Germany and in the Anglo Saxon world. In Germany liberalism meant emancipation into the dominant homogeneous society whereas in Anglophone countries liberalism meant heterogeneity and pluralism.

Lichti's least satisfying chapter is his fifth and longest one, "Your father the devil: the Christian Biblicist discourse on Jews." His explicit topic is anti-Semitic readings of the Bible. It is essential to his subject and should be in the book. But as he goes along his writing becomes less focused and more repetitive (172, 176, 192ff). He seems to be moving toward summary and analysis but ends up adding more information or repeating already presented facts. The effect on this reader was that the facts of the argument became overwhelming.

In chapter 6, "The Weak Points of Liberal Denominationalism," Lichti draws a number of more concise conclusions. Especially noteworthy among them are two claims. One is that Mennonites and Adventists were more naïve and unrefined in their application of the liberal principle of separation of church and state than was the official Protestant Church, uncritically legitimating the Nazi confinement of religion to the private sphere (252-253). Second, he concludes: "The free churches under consideration all demonstrated a liberal regard for conscience and thus left the observance of distinctive teachings to the discretion of each member's conscience. Radical steadfastness found expression among sectarians..." (255). Although I find Lichti's stark conclusions about Mennonites and Adventists warranted by the evidence, the contrast he sets up between them and the Quakers leaves significant factors unanalyzed. For example, Quakers were a "first generation" church with the intensity of a newly chosen identity, many of them were highly educated and cosmopolitan, and some were of Jewish ancestry.

Even though we live in a relatively open society the mind-set of pacifist church Christians in a totalitarian society has an enormous amount to teach us about the consequences of different understandings of a free church (collective conviction versus individual conscience) and its relationship to the state (the

problems that arise when an ethic for the church has no continuity with an ethic for the state).

Lichti's endnotes are exhaustive of German and English language sources. I know of no other volume in which the literature on pacifist churches, as well as the larger Free Church crisis provoked by Nazism, is so helpfully and completely represented. *Houses in the Sand* will be the starting point, and probably the standard reference in English, for research on the subject.

*Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

JOHN D. REMPEL

*This Hidden Thing*. By Dora Dueck. Winnipeg, Man.: CMU Press. 2010. Pp. 327. \$19.50.

With the publication of her second novel, Dora Dueck, who is also a writer of poems, stories, and essays, makes a substantial niche for herself in the historical novel genre. As in her first novel, Dueck focuses upon the Mennonite experience of building a life, a people, in a strange land. In *This Hidden Thing*, Dueck masterfully tells the story of one young Russian Mennonite immigrant, Maria Klaasen, who arrives to make her home in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in the 1920s. While Maria is a fictional character, Dueck is faithful to the larger story of Russian families who were part of a second wave of immigration out of Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuing civil war. Russian immigrants suffered political and economic hardship, and the Klaasen family in Dueck's novel was no exception. Dueck researched this historical experience in Winnipeg and included several interviews and an oral history project about Mennonite domestics in Winnipeg.

Dueck writes movingly about Maria's abrupt shift in self-perception from a privileged, beloved daughter of wealthy parents in a faraway land to an immigrant servant girl who is ignorant of language and appropriate cultural practices in Manitoba. Readers are soon caught in the fifty-five-year span of narrative details of Maria's story. As with many young Mennonite women who migrated from Russia to Winnipeg in the 1920s, Maria was soon hired as a domestic for a prosperous household in town, sending her earnings home to her family. She is at the service of the James and Edith Lowry family, and Mrs. Lowry, at the outset, takes the responsibility to teach Maria "English and the rules of their household" (19). Mrs. Lowry is meticulous and insistent with her teaching. While Maria, already a confident but reserved young woman, is a quick learner, she finds her relationship with Mrs. Lowry conflicted by her feelings of inadequacy and humiliation.

Dueck provides a detailed portrait of upper middle-class housekeeping duties in Winnipeg during the 1920s. She also expertly guides us through the implications of these duties and the ways in which they are internalized by one young Russian immigrant. The real work for Maria is not the labor clearly outlined by her new employers, but learning a new language and coping with homesickness. Although her family lives only a short distance from the Lowrys, Maria sees her parents and siblings very little. Maria must learn how to be servile



even though her upbringing places her on an equal footing with her employers. Often Maria feels physically ill with the difficulty of these transitions, as though she is still on the boat during the passage from Russia to Canada, never arriving on shore.

Dueck crafts a compelling story that shows the evolution of Maria's character, as she places her shoulder to the manual labor and undertakes the emotional work of being separated from her family and set among strangers. In doing so, Maria begins to carve out and develop an interior life for herself, creating a reality within which she lives. Dueck skillfully shows Maria's deeply reserved personality emerging to meet her need for affirmation and love in this place at the margins of society. As Maria grows older, she longs for someone to love and for a family of her own. Her fatal flaw is when her perception of reality fails to match the reality of her employers, leading to a series of decisions that culminate in "this hidden thing." As a result, she leaves the Lowrys' household and returns to her own Klaasen family, where she feels as though she has finally come "ashore" (205).

It is at this point that the narrative appears somewhat disingenuous. Dueck omits large blocks of time, and readers are left wondering how Maria went from being an immigrant with many adjustments ahead to the older, suave citizen they are told she has become. Dueck shows a Maria who is comfortable in her role, having raised her younger siblings and found her place in her family but, ironically, Dueck hides this transition from readers, who may well wonder how Maria slipped out of their grasp. By this time Maria is a character whom readers love, but they never quite regain their place as her confidantes.

For the remainder of the novel, Dueck surveys Maria's long life, a life shadowed by "this hidden thing." Readers learn that after having taken stock of how she must appear to her family and assessing her family's needs, Maria again chooses a life of service, but this time, to her siblings. Her mother has died while Maria served the Lowrys, and her father and siblings need her, especially the three younger ones. In her role as mother to her siblings, her life has become shrouded in what is hidden.

Just as Dueck accurately depicts the difficulties of emigration from Russia, so too she traces the possibilities for success in the newly chosen land. The Klassen family is enterprising; as the years pass by, they achieve wealth, holding close to themselves their hard-earned dignity in this new world. Dueck does not avoid the impact of World War II and the tensions this creates within immigrant families who believe in pacifism. Maria and a younger brother whom she has raised have several difficult conversations about their beliefs as a people and the implications of his choice to enlist. As she feared, she endures the heart-breaking loss of this brother to the war.

As Maria becomes older, her "hidden thing" threatens to be exposed, and as she has done many times before, Maria makes a choice. This choice is informed by the decisions she has made through her reading. She has learned to distrust happy endings, deciding that "nothing [. . .] could tie up all the stray ends like that" (267). This is a metaphor for her life, marked by what only she knows. She chooses to keep her secret entombed forever, sealing in place a "smooth and

elegant" outer life and a lonely, "weary" inner life made so by a life of silence (321).

The novel is authentic and deeply reflective. The trajectory of Maria's life is unexpected, and so too is the ending. The story is a tragedy in the sense of someone going to the grave while unknown by others who love and care. Yet, readers close the book feeling as though they have known a real person, someone they love and care for. In the telling of the story, the hidden thing is no longer hidden. It comes to light as Dueck maps out a life, a person, who holds a secret, a secret that shapes a life in material and spiritual ways. As such, this novel serves as valuable palimpsest with its traces of the Mennonite Russian immigrant experience just below the surface of Maria's fictionalized life.

*Eastern Mennonite University*

VI DUTCHER

*A Mennonite Woman: Exploring Spiritual Life and Identity.* By Dawn Ruth Nelson. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House. 2010. Pp. 184. \$18.95

Almost thirty years ago, Dawn Ruth Nelson, a young Mennonite Board of Missions worker in Dublin, found herself stumped by a question when an Irish Jesuit priest, Michael Paul Gallagher, asked her: "What is Mennonite spirituality?" Since then she has been on a continuous search to answer that question, not only for herself but also for other Mennonites. The question initiated a search to understand, redefine, and share a type of spirituality that has been more implicit than explicit. With the publication of this book, Nelson shares her journey and her suggestions with the church at large.

In the introduction, Nelson describes another probing question, a more recent one. In 2006, Charles Carl Roberts IV, a milk truck driver, attacked ten young Amish girls in a schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pa., killing five of them. The Amish community, including many of the parents and grandparents of those murdered or shot, stunned the world by forgiving the murderer and his family very soon after the attack. Responding to the media attention this story aroused, Paul Schrag, editor of *The Mennonite Weekly Review*, observed that their actions seemed an example both of Christlike virtue and of an apparently unattainably high standard of obedience to the biblical command to forgive. He went on to ask the question Nelson chose as a book theme, "What if Mennonites practiced Amish-like virtue without Amish-like separation?"

As part of her quest to answer both these questions, Nelson turned to her own family and found there a role model to study in her grandmother, Susan Alderfer Ruth. She also developed a network of leaders in the field of spiritual formation, a bibliography of the growing number of books on the subject, and experiences at two seminaries—Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Lancaster Theological Seminary. The thesis that she wrote for her doctoral degree from Lancaster Theological provided the base for this book, its useful set of notes, and a substantive bibliography. Scholars of Mennonite spirituality will find this work a helpful guide to what has emerged as a movement within the Mennonite

Church USA. Nelson is now a Mennonite pastor and spiritual director, serving on the board of the Kairos School of Spiritual Formation.

The book has deficiencies in editing. It would have benefited from a more cohesive structure that integrated the two life stories (Nelson's and her grandmother's) and the other elements of the book—a history of the development of a spiritual formation program at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and a final chapter on becoming Christlike inwardly and outwardly. Nevertheless, given both the passion of the author's voice and the importance of the issue to Mennonites, the book holds the reader's attention.

Nelson cites a telling statistic. According to Conrad Kanagy's 2007 study, *Road Signs for the Journey: A Profile of the Mennonite Church USA*, more than 40 percent of American Mennonites grew up on a farm, but only 12 percent live on a farm today. The church is losing its memory of place-based spirituality as the older generation passes away. Nelson instinctively knew, and so did her grandmother, that memoir could become a many-layered means of preservation, identity, and spiritual formation. When life story interviewing and writing combine with study, prayer, reflection, and action, the elements for transformation are all present.

The opening chapters on the author's grandmother, Susan Alderfer Ruth, are riveting, full of details about faith and practice told by a 92-year-old woman who never owned her own home but lived and worked alongside her husband, who was employed as a hired man, for many years. She obviously had musical and intellectual gifts that she exercised creatively despite the fact that her formal education ended after the eighth grade. Her life story, told simply in just over twenty pages, could serve as a template for the collection of thousands of other stories of people now in retirement throughout Mennonite communities in North America. What a treasure chest of social and spiritual history resides in these places. And how liberating it can be to older people to have someone like Dawn Ruth Nelson eager to record and reflect upon those stories with a grandparent.

As they do so, the interviewer can serve something of a role of confessor as well as a legacy constructor. Susan Ruth confided some of the darker portions of her life to Nelson without giving her permission to record them. We do learn that Ruth suffered occasional depression, or "nerves," as she called the attacks. Modern memoir writers often focus on these periods in order to plumb a life for all its conflicts, thus making a more compelling, or at least more familiar, narrative of conflict and resolution. As a reader, I was not sure what I thought about such self-censorship, but I concluded that Nelson did the right thing not to publish material about a challenge that her grandmother still struggled with, while at the same time allowing the reader to know it was there. *Gelassenheit* was her grandmother's way to the end.

After telling the stories of her grandmother's prayer life, her work in mission churches, and her generosity to foster children, refugees, and anyone needier than herself, Nelson begins a more academic discussion of the subject. She shares insights from other Mennonites, notably, Marlene Kropf, Marcus Smucker, Delbert Wiens, and Arnold Snyder. She also relies heavily on Robert Wuthnow's

cogent description of the spirituality movement from place-based (dwelling) to quest-based (seeking) and borrows his emphasis on the importance of practices.

Despite her strong roots and hopeful spirit, Nelson senses danger and loss. When she started her research on her grandmother's life and on Mennonite spirituality, she expected to find more continuity and less evaporation. Instead, she found vestiges of spiritual practice rather than healthy new ones. Displacement now describes Mennonites as much or more than place. Fractured and frantic, our lives reflect our culture more than challenge it.

Nelson identifies six elements as essential to a twenty-first-century Mennonite spirituality: an everyday, embodied sacramentality; nonconformity; community service; *Gelassenheit* or meekness; the person of Jesus and the Bible.

The last chapter focuses on becoming like Christ inwardly and outwardly. Nelson suggests that we name our loss of the old ways so that we can appreciate the need for a new kind of spiritual formation. We also need to recognize the unsustainability of activism without spirituality. Identification with the person of Jesus, active seeking of his presence in silence and community, and the creation of Sabbath times have become vital not only for personal renewal but also for the future of the church itself. I hope Nelson condenses her ideas into one simple (two or three points), elegant essay. We have been waiting for a new "Anabaptist Vision." Nelson, and the other Mennonites she relies upon as spiritual formation partners, could provide that vision. In the meantime, we should all read and discuss this book.

Harrisonburg, Va.

SHIRLEY HERSHEY SHOWALTER

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*Daily Demonstrators: The Civil Rights Movement in Mennonite Homes and Sanctuaries.* By Tobin Miller Shearer. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 2010. Pp. 360. \$65.

Tobin Miller Shearer is known in Mennonite circles and beyond for his activism on behalf of racial reconciliation. He now is a professor of African-American Studies at the University of Montana, and this ambitious and important new book on Mennonite civil rights activism marks his entry into the ranks of civil rights movement historians. *Daily Demonstrators* successfully locates Mennonites within the broader civil rights movement historiography, but somewhat less successfully seeks to influence that scholarship.

Miller Shearer offers a way to write Mennonites into the civil rights movement. His timeframe, stretching from the mid-1930s to the early 1970s, reflects the revisionist thesis of a "long civil rights movement," which starts with the Popular Front of the 1930s and includes the black power activism associated with the late 1960s. *Daily Demonstrators* also conjures up what might be called a *wide* civil rights movement. Drawing inspiration from historian Robin D. G. Kelley, Miller Shearer embraces an expansive and polymorphous notion of civil rights protest as located not only at lunch counters or on the courthouse steps, but also in Mennonite homes and churches. In those latter spaces, Miller Shearer argues, "a different kind of civil rights demonstration took place" (viii). There,

Mennonites were far from quiet. "Rather than sites of escape from the civil rights movement," he continues, "living rooms and sanctuaries become arenas of racial agitation"—"active sites of, rather than staging grounds for, civil rights activity" (ix; xii). Miller Shearer offers nothing less than "a new civil rights movement story," which "seeks to shift the gaze of civil rights movement historians from paved roads and concrete sidewalks to overstuffed couches and hardback pews" (xviii; x).

*Daily Demonstrators* opens up fascinating vistas in Mennonite history, focusing largely on the (Old) Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church. One particularly memorable chapter explores the activism of African-American Mennonite women. Miller Shearer traces the activism of Rowena Lark in Harrisonburg (Va.), Chicago, and Saint Louis. Lark and many other African-American Mennonites wore prayer coverings and cape dresses. Without discounting Lark's piety, Miller Shearer points to her "sartorial strategy" designed, "at least in part, to send the message that she was a Mennonite even though many in the church did not treat her as one" (47).

Other chapters likewise widen the parameters for Mennonite civil rights demonstrations. Fresh Air programs, which offered urban children a turn in rural America, provide "a seldom-told civil rights-era story of children changing adults and adults changing children" (65). They also were a defensive move for rural Mennonites anxious to find "a practical way to become involved in a kind of civil rights initiative" (93). Miller Shearer's next subject, Vincent Harding, a Mennonite minister and civil rights activist, "bridged the gap between the streets and Mennonite homes and sanctuaries" (99). Vincent and Rosemarie Harding left the remarkable Woodlawn congregation in south Chicago (which, along with a suburban Chicago congregation, gets a separate chapter) to establish the Menno House Voluntary Service unit in Atlanta, just a block away from the home of Martin and Coretta Scott King.

Miller Shearer's African-American protagonists profoundly influenced the Mennonite Church because, as he convincingly argues, they staked a claim to being Mennonites. So did the interracial couples who sought matrimonial recognition in Mennonite sanctuaries. Miller Shearer's findings of slipshod theology and paranoia about black male sexuality are hardly surprising. Yet he demonstrates how such pioneering interracial couples as Gerald and Annabelle Hughes (married in Ohio's Oak Grove Mennonite Church in 1954) "changed what it meant to be a Mennonite" (158). Here was a case where "theological contradiction and evangelical impulse brought about changes as dramatic as those precipitated by more overtly political forces" (132). By the late 1960s, black men who wedded white women "provided white church leaders with the means to counter a growing perception that the Mennonite community lacked integrity in [its] professed support of racial equality" (131). Those perceptions only heightened in the aftermath of James Forman's Black Manifesto movement, which called for reparations payments from white churches. While Miller Shearer likely exaggerates the significance of the manifesto itself, he shows how Mennonite black power influences—often caricatured as divisive—instead kept the conversation going.

Readers familiar with Miller Shearer's service as a church leader might be struck by the generally upbeat tone of *Daily Demonstrators*. Overall, white Mennonite leaders come across as much more engaged with the civil rights movement than were, say, their evangelical contemporaries (although, somewhat curiously, Miller Shearer often compares Mennonites with more liberal Protestant groups). While Miller Shearer chides civil rights historians for placing King and other "charismatic male leaders" in the foreground, his book is filled with figures worthy of the label *hero* or *heroine* (xviii). Among them are the aforementioned Rowena Lark and her husband, James, who planted Bethesda Mennonite Church in Saint Louis, and their successors, Hubert and June Schwartzentruber, who lived in the city's notorious Pruitt-Igoe housing project.

Drawing from over forty interviews and a wealth of personal papers and church publications, *Daily Demonstrators* makes an obvious contribution to U.S. Mennonite historiography. Miller Shearer applies the standards of professional historical writing to memories that are at times cherished and, perhaps more often, painful. He does an excellent job of addressing white Mennonites' belief that they hailed from an egalitarian faith tradition. Like all shibboleths, this one held complex implications. Mennonitism represented an appealing counterculture for some African-Americans in the late Jim Crow era, although the doctrine of nonconformity often limited the reach of Mennonite social witness. "Within the Mennonite community," Miller Shearer argues, "racial oppressors were also racial egalitarians" (232).

*Daily Demonstrators* should spark interest among civil rights movement historians. The prayer covering chapter, which features striking photographs of plain-clothed African-American women, likely will find a place on many course syllabi. Still, readers will need some patience when wading through repetitive constructions and several prolonged passages of interpretation.

The book ultimately points to the challenges of doing Mennonite history as American history (and, even more specifically, as African-American history). If Miller Shearer's methodology prioritizes a local focus, his ambitions propel him toward intriguing but unfulfilling comparisons: covering-wearing black Mennonites with dashiki-wearing Kwanzaa celebrants, or a protest against a segregated communion service with a threatened 1941 march on Washington. At one point, Miller Shearer argues that a white Mennonite friend "offered Lark the same kind of support that moderate white southerners offered civil rights activists" in Birmingham and elsewhere (60). Elsewhere, he avers, "Those who ventured across racial lines in intimate settings displayed courage equal to that of demonstrators who faced fire hoses and attack dogs" (ix). No historical figure is ever "the same" as or "equal to" another, and for that reason comparisons are best made sparingly and with maximum specificity. In imposing historical equivalencies, Miller Shearer also risks imposing ideational coherence on his subjects, who may or may not have internalized a notion of civil rights (which is, after all, an essentially secular concept). However, many mid-twentieth-century Mennonites—black or white—likely had internalized a distinction between the law and the church. Also, unlike many evangelicals, Mennonites did not possess

a custodial sensibility vis-à-vis American society. It thus is tricky to credit them even indirectly with political work.

Still, these analytical risks are largely worth it in the end. Miller Shearer has produced one of the most interesting works of Mennonite history in some time. A cynic might note that nowadays just about every group desires retroactive inclusion in the civil rights movement. Yet Miller Shearer makes a worthy case for demarcating a specifically Mennonite wing of the civil rights movement.

Webster University

STEVEN P. MILLER

*A President's Journey: The Memoirs of Henry Poettcker.* Winnipeg: CMU Press. 2009. Pp. 216. \$26.50, Can.

*At Powerline and Diamond Hill: Unexpected Intersections of Life and Work.* By Lee Snyder. Telford, Pa.: Dreamseeker Books. 2010. Pp. 202. \$14.95.

In two recent books, two Mennonite college presidents relate their lives in their own words. The memoirs of Henry Poettcker, president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College (1959-1978) and Mennonite Bible Seminary, now part of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (1978-1990), and Lee Snyder, dean of Eastern Mennonite University (1984-1996) and president at Bluffton University (1996-2006), both provide models of Mennonite academic leadership: understated, with an emphasis on team-building and a willingness to embrace unexpected opportunities.

Yet these memoirs are a study in contrasts: two Mennonite college presidents, one male, one female, in different but overlapping times and milieus. Poettcker's scholarly work began in biblical and theological studies, Snyder's in English literature. Poettcker writes with an interest in family history: his work opens with the birth of a Prussian ancestor, and the first two chapters deal with his family's emigration from the Molotschna colony. His chronological personal history is more autobiography than memoir. Snyder's book is more truly memoir as in brief, thematically linked essays; she holds up specific events and interrogates them for their personal and spiritual meanings. The presidents' responses to their inaugurations vary, too. Snyder feels she was, in a sense, "an accidental president—being in the right place at the right time" (151). Poettcker, called at the age of 34, seems to have anticipated his invitation, if not its timing: "I had not expected that the request for me to take the presidential role would come so quickly" (90).

The strength of Poettcker's book is the detailed journey itself. Poettcker roots his story in his Russian Mennonite heritage and specific family history. As Poettcker describes his roles in school and church administration (nineteen years at the college, twelve at the seminary, and twelve as vice moderator and moderator of the General Conference Mennonite Church of North America), we see how the church evolved around him, though rarely do we see how he directly influenced these changes. He shares the preoccupations of the church at particular times: why Canadian Mennonite Bible College stopped teaching Bible courses in German; the tensions surrounding "double ordination" as the church

transitioned from an elder system to paid clergy; racial tensions and relationships in Chicago in the 1950s while he studied at Mennonite Bible Seminary. Occasionally, Poettcker grants his readers a fly-on-the-wall perspective on critical decisions, like the 1956 General Conference debate over moving the seminary to Goshen, where it would affiliate with Goshen Bible School, and ultimately merge into Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Poettcker gives fair warning in his introduction that this book is intended primarily for his family. Given his wealth of experience and the short space allotted for it, non-family readers may find themselves impatient as they skim over descriptions of the floor plans of each house in which the Poettckers resided. At times, the narrative fails in prioritization. In 1978, as the Poettckers drive from Winnipeg to Elkhart, readers will learn the details of an advantageous U-Haul rental situation, but find no reflection on the end of Poettcker's nineteen years heading Canadian Mennonite Bible College and his upcoming presidency at Mennonite Bible Seminary.

The simple cover of Poettcker's book features a dapper young Henry ready to swing himself onto a train, a suitable image for his chronological history. Snyder's book cover likewise suits its content. It features details from the painting "Grandmother and the Coburgs," an evocative hillscape over which an ancient female spirit broods.

In the margins of Snyder's chapter "Keep Me From Stupid Sins," I scrawled, "I feel I am being made wiser and stronger by this encounter." Some of her collected short essays originated in a spiritual memoir class with Jeff Gundy, and "spiritual memoir" is an apt classification for this book. Snyder interrogates major themes from her life in a competent and compassionate voice. Two of these themes are place and identity and the dynamics between individuals and communities. She writes:

Being a child of the West has meant many things, including a certain sense of destiny and calling nurtured by the religious community in which I grew up. That this could include an overture to the stranger, a welcome to persons from far places, was an enormous gift . . . (43)

She is also interested in "fortuities" and their role in calling and discernment—like the chance encounter at a math teachers' dinner that ultimately funded her husband's graduate studies.

Snyder has a writer's eye for significant detail, describing the moments following her baptism thus: "The rough whiskery kiss of Mrs. Yoder so took us aback that we forgot our damp hair" (27). While she generally limits her descriptions to her own experiences, Snyder moves into creative speculation when she reconstructs her mother's encounter with a hobo.<sup>1</sup>

The high points of Snyder's career, or the ones she chooses to emphasize, have more to do with relationships than with historic achievements, like the tribute from a young athlete who says Snyder "worked her butt off" to bring

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1. The hobo scene pairs well with Julia Kasdorf's "When the Stranger is an Angel" in *The Body and the Book*. (2001; reprint, University Park, Pa.: PSU Press, 2009), 26-35. Is anyone collecting these Depression-era stories of encounters between Mennonites and wanderers?



Bluffton into a particular athletic conference. *"That's as good as it gets, I thought"* (148). Wit keeps the bitterness out of Snyder's description of her home church's patriarchy: *"The Bible's God-man-woman hierarchy, with angels somewhere in there, ordered our lives"* (33).

At times, Snyder holds us at arm's length, for diplomatic or personal reasons. She doesn't explain why her family chose not to return to their Amish Mennonite congregation after six years of mission work. She acknowledges but doesn't emphasize the role of an episode of childhood abuse. Some of her short sketches like *"Grandmother and the Coburgs,"* which introduced complex themes of identity, heritage, and place, deserve to be plumbed more deeply in an extended essay form. Also, the nonchronological structure of Snyder's narrative may confuse some readers who wish to know how old she was at particular moments. She provides a timeline halfway through the book, indicating that she recognizes our need for context.

Don't expect to see how motherhood informed Snyder's administrative roles. Her daughters are mentioned only in passing. It is Poettcker who describes his children's interests in school and music lessons. Not that Snyder's work is entirely free of the domestic occupations: she's doing laundry when the invitation to serve as president of Bluffton comes, and she shows us how chopping onions offers relief from the pressures of her job: *"resting in uncertainty seemed best expressed by going home and cooking a meal"* (148).

Both memoirs offer perspective on the expanding role of women in the church. Poettcker describes how Canadian Mennonite Bible College made the case for women in pastoral ministry in the 1970s, and how, in the 1980s, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary promoted inclusive language and representation of the women's advisory council on its administrative committee. Snyder shares her personal experience of the evolving church; she acknowledges the *"burdensome expectations"* of hierarchy and dress in her Amish Mennonite congregation in the 1940s (26). Yet her rise to academic leadership appears effortless, and later she was invited to serve as moderator for Mennonite Church USA. In *"The Woman Question"* she writes, *"for some inexplicable reason, I have been spared the poisonous discontents that are often associated with a strict insistence on the traditional women's subordinate role. I cannot explain why, but the traditional woman's place did not diminish my sense of possibility"* (119). All the same, as a new dean, she was deeply fearful of giving speeches, and points to her childhood conditioning against women speaking in public.

Snyder and Poettcker both provide a taste of the duties and packed schedule of academic administrators. Poettcker's work is richest in case studies, descriptions of growth and change in the institutions where he spent his life. Snyder reflects more deeply on the necessary ingredients of leadership, from humility to risk-taking to gratitude. Both books lack in-depth *"war stories"*—descriptions of how the presidents made difficult decisions in the face of untenable situations—perhaps because of the amount of territory to cover, perhaps because of the wish to be diplomatic or retain confidentiality. Yet each book is satisfying in its own right: Poettcker's for the rich context it provides,

Snyder's in its quest for wisdom. Readers may find themselves, as I did, longing for extended conversation with the writers.

*Eastern Mennonite University*

KIRSTEN BEACHY

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*New York Amish: Life in the Plain Communities of the Empire State.* By Karen M. Johnson-Weiner. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. 2010. Pp. 224. \$24.95.

In a recent conversation, a well-read Amish friend introduced me to his warm-up routine before reading a new book: skim through the table of contents and then page through the index. "It's like being in the on-deck circle," he told me. "You rub your hands, you spit, you watch the pitcher and then you have some idea of what's coming."

I took his advice before reading Karen Johnson-Weiner's book on the state with the fastest-growing Amish population in the U.S. The book begins with the requisite chapter on Amish origins, but the next six all focus on specific geographic regions in New York: Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties in the west; Lowville, St. Lawrence, and Franklin counties in the north; Mohawk Valley in the east; and Swiss Amish settlements in several parts of the state. For readers unfamiliar with New York's geography, this approach may initially appear to be too encyclopedic. However, Johnson-Weiner's writing is lively, and each chapter is grounded in keen ethnographic observations.

A key advantage of this organizational structure is that it fits neatly with the three goals of the book: 1) to "introduce the Amish to their non-Amish neighbors"; 2) to "highlight the diversity of Amish settlements in New York State"; and 3) to illustrate "the contribution of New York's Amish to the state's rich cultural heritage" (viii). Since each of the substantive chapters can stand alone, readers can go quickly to the Amish regions of New York that interest them the most.

The overarching theme that runs throughout the book is "being Amish differently" (ix). Much of recent scholarship on the Amish highlights the question of internal variation amidst a people with a common heritage and principles, but Johnson-Weiner explores Amish diversity in three compelling ways. First, she does a superb job of piecing together the complex migration histories that have led to settlements in various parts of the state. Based on meticulous research at the Heritage Historical Library, she provides a nuanced account of tensions within the Swartzentrubers, the Andy Weavers, the Abe Troyers, the Swiss Amish, and other groups in nearby states that gave rise to their respective migrations to New York. In many cases, parental concern revolved around the "rowdy" behavior of youth in more "worldly" settlements, and "moving became a way to avoid conflict and schism" (133). As a result, New York has become something of a haven for the more "tradition-minded" Amish groups.

Second, Johnson-Weiner focuses not only on the ties that bind Amish affiliations and church districts together but also on the boundaries they erect

between each other. Even in remote areas of New York, Amish settlements are becoming increasingly crowded places. To understand Amish identity in the twenty-first century, we must learn not only "how the Amish interact with the modern world and hold their own" (viii), but also how different Amish groups interact with each other. St. Lawrence County, for instance, has three Swartzentruber affiliations, reflecting the schisms that occurred in the Holmes County, Ohio, settlement; none of the factions are in fellowship with the other. In another particularly revealing example, Andy Weaver families in Ashland, before traveling, sent a letter to church officials in one settlement to make sure that their arrival would not offend (they were told it was fine as long as they stayed on the other side of the river).

Similar divisions are found in other areas of the state. In northern New York, the Troyer Amish of Conewango Valley and the Byler Amish of Mayville are in fellowship, but they are not "back and forth" with the Clymer settlement, which is populated by more liberal Old Order Amish from the Geauga settlement in Ohio. The Swiss Amish who have moved to Clyde, Prattsburgh, and Norfolk have been particularly conflict-prone, disagreeing not only about technology and tobacco, but also about whether an individual can have personal knowledge of salvation. In each case, Johnson-Weiner takes us inside the church Ordnung and shows us the different buggy and dress styles, approaches to technology and key rites of passage, and even educational and linguistic choices that characterize Amish affiliations in geographical proximity.

Finally, Johnson-Weiner shows us how local and regional contexts affect Amish settlements, and, conversely, "how the different ways in which the Amish realize their core values shape adjustments to new environments" (ix). Although we encounter familiar misunderstandings as conservative New York Amish clash with local ordinances and attitudes, other stories involve a reversal of expectations. Some rural communities in New York, for instance, have embraced Amish settlements as potential catalysts for economic renewal, seeking to replicate the growth of vibrant cottage industries and tourism in the larger Amish settlements. Surveying the landscape of both failed and successful settlement, however, Johnson-Weiner concludes that, for state and local officials, there is "no one-size-fits-all means of integrating their new Amish neighbors into everyday life" (158).

The richness of Johnson-Weiner's analysis comes in large part from her deep commitment to the time-consuming but rewarding methodology of "participant observation." Yet she also draws extensively on published works, makes good use of Amish publications such as *Die Botschaft* and, quite innovatively, relies on letters exchanged with Amish friends for additional insights. The subtle observations Johnson-Weiner makes about Swartzentruber life reveal a level of trust and acceptance by her Swartzentruber friends that, to my knowledge, is almost unparalleled among Amish scholars.

The penultimate chapter touches on the challenges that face Amish migrants to New York. Some Amish view child labor laws, for example, as a recipe for "forced idleness" during the crucial ages between 14 and 16, a regulation that seems "to imperil their children's education in the Amish way of life" (169). New

state building codes requiring windows in residential dwellings to be 5.7 sq. ft. run up against Ordnungs that are not so easily changed. Johnson-Weiner also shows how non-Amish stereotypes “inspire irrational expectations,” (167) such as the woman who felt betrayed when the Amish-grown watermelon she bought turned out to be tasteless.

It is hard to find shortcomings in this book, though I will mention a few quibbles. Perhaps because much of her research is based in rural, fairly conservative Amish communities, Johnson-Weiner’s overview (*Who Are the Amish?*) in the first chapter occasionally lapses into generalizations that may not always hold true for more liberal Old Order members: “Amish communities are agriculturally based” (22); “to assert that one is saved is the ultimate in pride” (21); “even those closest to the excommunicated congregant will cut their ties” (22). In addition, only three pages are devoted to the New Order and Beachy Amish and the various Mennonite congregations that inhabit New York, just enough to whet the appetite and make us wonder how the various Old Order affiliations interact with their more liberal Anabaptist neighbors. Like most scholarly books on the Amish, this one largely sidesteps Amish attitudes towards abortion, divorce, day care, gays and lesbians, and race relations that more liberal New Yorkers might find problematic, though Johnson-Weiner argues in the final chapter that mainstream society “needs the Amish” because they reinforce our “legal and cultural commitment to religious liberty, freedom, and the right to be different” (183). Importantly, she adds that the Amish raise for all Americans the question of to what extent faith-based initiatives will be allowed to replace secular institutions.

Other features of the book add to its effectiveness, not the least of which is Johnson-Weiner’s clear and jargon-free prose, which makes it accessible to both the general reader and Amish scholars. Excellent maps at the beginning of each chapter help readers get their spatial bearings and visualize the migration histories prior to reading about them. From the on-deck circle, it’s pretty clear that Johnson-Weiner has hit a home run.

*The College of Wooster*

DAVID MCCONNELL

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*Mission and Migration. A Global Mennonite History: Latin America.* By Jaime Prieto Valladares. Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books; and Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press. 2010. Pp. 362. \$11.95.

*Mission and Migration* is a long-awaited and inspiring contribution to the literature on the experiences of Mennonites and related denominations in Latin America. The book is the third in the *Global Mennonite History* series, which began in 1997 to promote awareness and knowledge about the spread of Anabaptist-related Christianity. The author of this volume, historian Jaime Prieto Valladares, is a professor of church history and cultural studies in Costa Rica, with a doctorate from the University of Hamburg. The scholar’s multinational, multilingual, and multicultural experience adds significant depth to his analysis

of the arrival, spread, and influence of these settlers, missionaries, and denominations throughout Latin America.

Any historian would be challenged to document such a broad subject. The geographic scope of over twenty-three nations is set within the chronological framework that extends over more than a century. This story, complicated by multiple Anabaptist groups, some of which settled in Latin America and others of which grew out of missionary proselytism and relief work in the region, creates a complex subject.

To focus this complicated task, Prieto organized the study thematically within three broad chronological sections that trace the history of the Anabaptist presence in the larger Latin American nations. At the beginning of each chapter, the author sets the historical context. Readers unfamiliar with Latin American political, economic, and social history will find these introductions very helpful in understanding the situations that foreign settlers and missionaries encountered when they arrived.

During the first period, 1911-1958, Mennonite groups in the United States and Canada sent missionaries, first to Argentina, during a time when two and a half million European immigrants were building the working classes there. Beginning in the 1920s, Mennonite refugees from Canada and Europe settled in Mexico, Paraguay, and Brazil. While emphasizing the challenges the refugees encountered and their early successes, Prieto also highlights some of the settlers' support of Hitler and the influence of Nazism, especially in Paraguay's Fernheim Colony. Such sentiments may surprise readers, though fascist support in Latin American nations between the wars, as well as the refugees' experiences in fleeing communism in Europe, help to explain these ties. A very different theme during this first period is a missional emphasis. Mennonite colonists engaged in formal missionary work and spread their faith to indigenous people in Paraguay and to nationals in Brazil and Mexico.

During the second period, covering the years 1959-1979, Mennonites and Brethren in Christ extended and consolidated missions within the Southern Cone, the Andean Region, the Caribbean, and Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America). Mission activity was part of the rapid extension of Protestant denominations throughout the continent during these years. The book reveals tensions between Mennonite refugee settlers who arrived in search of homes and the missionaries assigned to convert Latin Americans. The author balances an affirmation of settlers and missionaries with critical questions.

For their part, mission workers used relief work, health care, and, especially, educational efforts to gain local acceptance. In some countries these endeavors encouraged a strong national church leadership (and sometimes tensions with Catholics). The goals at times varied with the country. In Peru, evangelism focused on indigenous people, while in neighboring Bolivia, conservative immigrants sought economic opportunities and a place to continue traditional Old Colony Mennonite social structures, rather than to extend their faith to neighbors. Still, mission efforts from abroad led to the creation of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Bolivia after 1970.

In some areas, notably the Caribbean, missionaries conveyed a sense of superiority when they arrived: they “believed Puerto Rican people embodied a combination of superstition, religious fatalism, ignorance and distrust of strangers” (185). Over the years, however, missionaries created influential schools, radio and television stations, and correspondence Bible courses. The European cultural affinity with Caribbean societies proved propitious in expanding churches, especially in the Dominican Republic, but also in Haiti. In Mexico, notably, missionaries from the Franconia Mennonite Conference in Pennsylvania had developed, by 1965, the Council of Evangelical Mennonite Churches of Mexico. In Honduras, Protestant influence had spread contiguously with the United Fruit Company during the period of Gunboat Diplomacy. Mennonites first sent missionaries to Honduras in 1948, but their work was largely divorced from the sociopolitical context, and churches did not question the dictatorships or developmental models pushed by the United States. Given existing tensions between the Protestant and Catholic populations in Honduras, the missionary insistence on converting people seems to only have complicated a delicate social situation. In contrast, Mennonite colonists who settled in Belize in 1958 did not proselytize. Their interaction with neighbors was largely economic, and they became successful suppliers of dairy products.

The final section (1979-2009) insightfully traces the Anabaptist influence into the twenty-first century through twenty-six glimpses of changing religious communities. During the late Cold War period, amid military dictatorships, revolutions, debt crises, rapid Pentecostal growth, and broad social movements, the testimony of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches “spoke to Christians of all cultures” (312). Congregations ministered through radio broadcasts, as well as through agencies that cared for drug addicts, prisoners, and street children. In some instances, as in Chile, the Anabaptist commitment to nonviolence influenced national discourse at critical junctures.

In places the book suffers from a repetition of key historical material, multiple analyses of the same historical events, and disjointed leaps through time. The writing, too, can be confusing; this appears to be a result of the translation and editing rather than owing to the scholarship of the author. The publisher’s decision to put footnote references online may frustrate scholars who want an immediate reference to sources.

*Mission and Migration* raises important questions about Anabaptist goals and mission activities. One central question that should be developed further, perhaps in a second edition, is the initial reason for Anabaptist missions. When Mennonite and Brethren in Christ missionaries began proselytizing, the majority of Latin Americans would have identified themselves as Christians. Given that Catholicism is a Christian denomination, why did Anabaptists believe it so important to convert Latin Americans to their own branch of the faith? The book might also have explored more fully the contributions that settlers made to the societies to which they moved.

*New Perspectives in Believers Church Ecclesiology*. Abe Dueck, Helmut Harder, and Karl Koop, eds. Winnipeg, Man.: CMU Press. 2010. Pp. 323. \$29.50.

The tension between individual and communal dimensions of the church and the interplay of congregational, denominational, and global aspects of the church lie at the heart of this new collection of essays on believers church ecclesiology. Emerging from the sixteenth Believers Church Conference, held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 2008, the volume contains several high quality essays, including a description of the Apostle Paul's ecumenical theology of the church and a study of the implications for the believers church of the southward shift in world Christianity.

Because of the location of the conference many of the authors are Canadian, a welcome turn from U.S.-dominated conversation. In addition several contributors are from the Mennonite Brethren Church, which has been underrepresented in the past. Fernando Enns, the vice chair of the Association of Mennonite Churches in Germany and a lecturer at the University of Hamburg, also wrote two chapters, both of which were shaped by his extensive experience with the World Council of Churches.

However, with the exception of contributions from one Baptist and two Church of the Brethren members, all of the essays were written by Mennonites. Missing are other believers church voices—Disciples of Christ, Churches of Christ, other Baptists, Pentecostals—who could bring additional perspectives to a conversation about unity and diversity in the Christian church. As I write this review in Guatemala City, I am struck by the realization that North American believers church conferences have been wrestling with issues of ecclesiology without including some believers church theologians from the global South, an omission especially problematic given the development of theological leadership in the two-thirds world in recent decades.

In spite of these limitations, the volume deserves broad attention by believers church leaders, pastors, and scholars. Some of the contextual realities that the writers address—the changing evangelical world and nondenominational “emerging” churches; challenges to believers church baptism when individuals are cynical about church membership; fragmenting conflict within congregations and denominations; long histories of misunderstanding that shape believers church interactions with other Christians—are realities shared by believers churches across North America and some of them by “baptists” in other places as well.

The book is organized in six sections: Biblical Perspectives; Dynamics of Denominationalism; Reviewing Assumptions; Trinitarian Foundations; Ceremonies Reconsidered; and Recent Trends. The volume opens with two essays that respectively anchor the call for Christian unity in the testimony of the Gospel of John and in Paul's profound trust in God's redemptive work through the Messiah. Sheila Klassen Wiebe moves beyond the typical appeal to Jesus' prayer for unity among his disciples in John 17 to consider how the Johannine tradition responded to competition between Peter and the Beloved Disciple, accepting their diversity by blessing both. Gordon Zerbe, addressing the

relevance of Paul's eschatological ecclesiology in a fresh way, concludes that it "allows no room either for any final ecclesial self-assurance or for any confidence in a presumed destiny of the other, the enemy" (45). Paul's vision is ecumenical; it encompasses reconciliation of the entire inhabited world. This challenges "any final form of 'denominationalism'" and "any retreat to 'congregationalism'" (46). The careful biblical interpretation in these essays should fruitfully engage readers from a variety of believers church groups.

Several of the contributors push the believers church to more explicitly embrace its implicit trinitarian heritage. Fernando Enns, building upon Miroslav Volf's development of free church ecclesiology rooted in a trinitarian relationship of love, suggests that the believers church "ethically-directed, local and experience oriented understanding of community . . . complements and completes the predominantly ontological description of *koinonia* in ecumenical discussion" (191). He further argues that peace churches would benefit from a trinitarian grounding for nonviolence centered "in the *koinonia* that God offers to all of humanity" because it does not risk legitimizing suffering the way a focus on Jesus sometimes does. In the trinitarian view, "Resorting to violence is the strongest manifestation of breaking away from community, since such a course of action always degrades the personhood of not only the victim but also the perpetrator . . . Violence has no place in a relation established by God in Christ through the Spirit" (196-197). Anabaptist feminists and liberation theologians concerned about the way a simplistic "turn the other cheek" ethic can result in continued victimization may find this a helpful reorientation.

Arnold Neufeld-Fast adds further reason for a stronger trinitarian theology of the church—"the missionary grounding of the Christian community in the being and act of the Trinitarian God . . ." (200). Such a believers church ecclesiology can hold together peace theology and missional theology, appealing to trinitarian theologians like Karl Barth and Thomas Finger, an ecumenically articulate Mennonite theologian who draws these emphases together.

Supplementing these essays on theological foundations, Jonathan Wilson, Paul Doerksen and Gareth Brandt consider recent ecclesial trends, particularly among evangelicals. Wilson, a Baptist, describes ecclesial ferment among evangelicals and gives five examples: ancient/future Christianity; the Ekklesia Project; emerging churches; the missional church; and new monasticism. He suggests a contribution each can make to believers church ecclesiology and something that believers churches can offer in return. Brandt and Doerksen both engage Brian McClaren and the "omnivorous ecclesiology" his emerging/emergent church movement represents. Doerksen is concerned that accepting all ecclesiologies without standing within one of them actually supports radical individual choice, an aspect of the existing evangelical church from which McClaren "is so desperate to emerge" (295).

Unfortunately, Wilson did not include neo-pentecostalism among his examples. However, George Pickens's essay at the end of the book identifies this type of ecclesial ferment, at least in the global South. Pickens believes that it is a *kairos* ecumenical moment for the believers church because of shared themes "in the faith stories of Christians within the Believers Church and inside the majority



church in the South" (312), one of which is "communities formed without the support of the powerful." As a result he suggests that in ecumenical relationships, the believers church is in a special position to interpret God-talk between Northern and Southern Christians. If the church responds to this significant call, I hope that members of believers churches from the South and North would carry this role together in genuine partnership.

Two chapters focus on ceremonial dimensions of ecclesiology—one on Pilgram Marpeck's sacramental legacy and the other on contemporary challenges to believer's baptism. Irma Fast Dueck's chapter offers a culturally sensitive and theologically sound approach to believer's baptism that can be helpful for congregational teaching and shaping practice. Andrea Dalton rightly encourages a stronger sacramental sense in believers church approaches to the Lord's Supper but unfortunately ends her essay with the statement that this ceremony is the means (rather than "a central means") by which the church maintains its unity with Christ.

Some tension between recommendations in the book might be explained by the way specific authors read challenges facing the believers church. For example, a Church of the Brethren professor, Scott Holland, calls for believers churches, especially Mennonites, to recover an emphasis on the individual, the solitary experience of God, love of God, and the role of emotion in thought and theology. The essays by Gareth Brandt and Irma Fast Dueck, on the other hand, undergird the need for believers churches to emphasize communal dimensions of ecclesiology. The difference in part is due to their line of vision—Holland focuses on the "traditional" believers church, which has a strong external community life and ethic, while Brandt and Dueck focus on the culture that is shaping many contemporary believers churches—individualistic consumerism, evangelicalism that tends to focus on individual salvation, and an increasingly secular ethos in which the identity of the church is at risk.

From an intriguing chapter on the struggle for denominational consensus regarding ordination of women among Canadian Mennonite Brethren to a chapter defending aspects of denominationalism, the collection as a whole reminds us that ecclesiology makes a difference. Recurring themes provide a compass. The church is first and last of God's making, not ours. A trinitarian believers church ecclesiology, spilling out from the love of God, emphasizes unity not enforced by creed or structure but based on personal relationship. And while believers churches rightly recognize that diversity in the larger church can be both gift and fault, they should never forget that unity is important in order "that the world might believe" (140), for the church is only the church when it exists for others (304).