

## IN THIS ISSUE

The story of the Anabaptist movement in England is one of the neglected fields of Radical Reformation historiography, a reality complicated by the fact that most of the available sources are hostile to the Anabaptists. The earliest influence came from Dutch and Friesen Anabaptist émigrés, fleeing persecution under the Hapsburgs, who found a foothold in areas traditionally receptive to Lollard dissenters. After the debacle at Münster in 1535, however, the term “Anabaptist” became a generic pejorative, appearing frequently throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to describe all kinds of religious heterodoxy. In the opening essay in this issue of *MQR*, **Kirk MacGregor**, assistant professor in the philosophy and religion department of McPherson College, offers a fresh perspective on Anabaptism in England through an analysis of the life and thought of Joan Bocher, who was burned at the stake for her beliefs in 1550. MacGregor identifies four convictions distinctive to Anabaptism and then demonstrates how Bocher’s theology aligned with these beliefs, highlighting in particular the original contribution that Bocher made to the Melchiorite doctrine of the Incarnation. Along the way he argues that, despite the paucity of sources, Anabaptism was well established in England by the middle of the sixteenth century.

**Alexander Ames**, a Ph.D. student at the University of Delaware, explores hidden theological currents of a different sort—namely, persistent traces of medieval mysticism among German-speaking religious communities in colonial Pennsylvania, including the Schwenkfelders, members of the Ephrata Cloister, and various Mennonite groups. His particular field of interest is “artful writing”—calligraphic art and illuminated manuscripts generated within these communities that capture a tension between the inward, ineffable reality of the Spirit and the external, visual, literal word. Traditionally, scholars have regarded the decorative writing produced by these communities as a genre of folk art and material culture. Ames, by contrast, approaches these texts from a theological perspective, seeing them as spiritual artifacts that attempt to mediate the textual, visual, and spiritual dimensions of the word. His essay outlines a promising new research agenda that brings material culture and religious studies into closer conversation.

The fall of 2017 marks the anniversary of several significant historical events, including the centenary of the Russian Revolution. As with the Russian Empire as a whole, World War I marked a significant turning point for the 100,000 Mennonites living at the time in South Russia. In response to the war, thousands of young Mennonite men volunteered as hospital orderlies, many of them tending wounded soldiers in Moscow.

Thus, when the Bolsheviks seized power there in October of 1917, these men had an eyewitness perspective on the revolution as it unfolded. Several years later, Johann G. Rempel, a serviceman attached to the headquarters of one of the units, wrote a memoir in which he recounts the events in Moscow. The text, translated by **David G. Rempel** and edited by **James Urry**, offers a remarkable window into the confusion and excitement of the times. Rempel describes, for example, the participation of young Mennonites in local democratic assemblies (*Soviets*), and how that experience radicalized some of them to engage more vigorously in the affairs of their home communities following the war. The memoir also serves as a poignant reminder that the initial Mennonite response to the Bolshevik Revolution was much more nuanced, and even divided, than current Russian Mennonite historiography might suggest.

Finally, this fall also marks the culmination of a decade-long series of events commemorating the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation, popularly associated with Martin Luther and his “Ninety-Five Theses” nailed to the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. These commemorations have been the occasion for numerous celebratory events honoring the legacy of the Protestant Reformation. But they have also sparked a lively debate about the Reformation itself, the divided nature of the church, and the challenges of collective memory. In this issue of *MQR*, we are pleased to include an essay by **Hans-Jürgen Goertz**, the doyen of Anabaptist scholarship in Germany, in which he reminds readers that the Reformation itself might be better understood as a “revolution” or, at least, as a context that provided all the elements necessary for revolutionary change. Anabaptists and other radical groups who emerged in the opening decades of the sixteenth century, were not anomalies within the Reformation proper. Rather, these radical social movements were a natural consequence of the confluence of Reformation slogans with traditional forms of anticlericalism. Goertz also challenges arguments that trace modern conceptions of freedom and liberty to the Reformation; if such connections exist at all, he argues, they must be traced to Thomas Müntzer, the rebellious peasants, and the Anabaptists—not, as some modern German Protestants have claimed, to the writings of Martin Luther. The essay is followed by a series of Book Notes that summarize for *MQR* readers a small selection of the scores of publications that have recently appeared commemorating the Reformation.

Readers should watch for renewal notices in the coming months; if you enjoy what you find in *MQR*, please extend your support!

– John D. Roth, editor