

BOOK REVIEWS

Horse-and-Buggy Genius: Listening to Mennonites Contest the Modern World. By Royden Loewen. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press. 2016. Pp. 243. \$31.95, U.S.; \$27.95, Can.

Royden Loewen's *Horse-and-Buggy Genius: Listening to Mennonites Contest the Modern World* is the result of a three-year oral history project undertaken to study how the Old Order Mennonites of Ontario, Canada, and Old Colony Mennonites of Latin America have resisted modernity. Both subject groups are linked to Canada. While the Old Order Mennonites have been residents of southern Ontario for generations, their Old Colony counterparts left Canada in the early part of the twentieth century to seek religious freedom in Mexico and then, eventually, to Belize, Paraguay, and Bolivia. Both groups share a commitment to keeping their lives technologically simple and living their beliefs in farming communities close to nature, separated from modern, mainstream society. Their stories of faith and resistance make this work fascinating reading.

The first two chapters of *Horse-and-Buggy Genius* focus on the Old Order Mennonites. The first chapter, "Changelessness in Canada's Heartland," introduces the Old Order Mennonites, who have lived for decades surrounded by modern Canadian society and have confronted social change head on. According to Loewen, the stories community members recounted to him and his team of graduate and undergraduate researchers focused on daily farm life and family interaction, making clear the importance of farm and family to faith along with the challenges posed by even small technological innovations. In the second chapter, "A New Orthodoxy in Backwoods Ontario," he explores the lives of Orthodox Old Order Mennonites, who left the Waterloo Old Order Mennonite community to found a new community in Gorrie, Ontario, that restricts technology more than the parent group has done, in effect turning back the clock to a simpler way of life. Here Loewen highlights themes that appear elsewhere throughout the book: migration to resist change; an agrarian lifestyle to reinforce family and community; and a faith whose sincerity is measured by how completely the world is excluded from daily life.

Chapters 3 through 5 focus on the Old Colony Mennonites, whose ancestors left Canada in the 1920s to found several communities in Mexico. Yet while the original colonies have adopted technology and have even seen families return to their Canadian homeland, the Old Colony church members interviewed for this work are part of a diaspora that has moved south to safeguard a church separated from the world. Chapter 3, "Vows of Simplicity in the South," presents migration narratives and explores the impetus to move when communities get crowded or when it appears that the community might not be able to resist the lure of forbidden technology. As Loewen points out, migration has become an act of faith, and so dislocation is built into religious identity.

Chapter 4, "The Genius of Community Survival," begins with a description of the geographic layout of the Riva Palacios Colony in Bolivia, a spatial order the colonists' ancestors brought with them from Canada that continues to organize new colonies as they are established. Recounting in detail the construction of colony governance and economy, this chapter demonstrates the strength of traditional order, imposed in new circumstances, as a bulwark against the chaos of worldly society. In the fifth chapter, "Nurturing Family the Old Colony Way," narratives of Old Colony members demonstrate how family connections reinforce social and economic ones. Children are raised to carry on the activities of their parents, and at each stage of life—childhood, *Rommdriewen* (the Old Colony equivalent to Amish *Rumspringa*), marriage, and old age—kinship networks undergird healthy social relationships.

In the sixth chapter, "Boundaries, Race, and the Moral Economy," Loewen focuses on how interactions between the church community and the world have influenced religious identity, particularly the religious identity of Old Colony Mennonites. As new colonies confront regional and national governments and negotiate with the broader economies of different regions, they are challenged to change or resist. Given that members of Old Colony settlements, particularly women, can seldom speak Spanish, which is not taught in Old Colony schools, social interaction with their Bolivian neighbors has remained limited and generally serves to reinforce the boundaries of Old Colony Mennonite faith.

Even social interaction with more progressive co-religionists has remained limited. As Loewen demonstrates in Chapter 7, "The "Othering" of English North America," the Old Colonists may have moved south, but many still head north. For some, that migration is an attempt to earn money to maintain colony life; for others it is a search for independence from it. As the narratives in this chapter demonstrate, the trip north has become for many Old Colony Mennonites a journey back to the world their ancestors sought to escape, and the stories of hardships told by returning colony members reinforce historical narratives about the dangers of the world.

As Loewen notes in his introduction, "The very idea of a community resisting modernity is worthy of close study" (13), and he reminds readers in his conclusion that central to the interviews that inform this work is "what has changed?" In their stories of how they have changed, coped with change, and resisted change, he concludes that the Old Colony Mennonites and the Orthodox Old Order Mennonites show more similarities than differences.

Nevertheless, *Horse-and Buggy Genius* reveals how much more there is to explore. It will be important to understand how and why the attempt to remain separate from the world has resulted in such significant social differences between the two groups. For example, the narratives of church members illustrate a growing economic divide in the Old Colony world and suggest that economic inequality is becoming entrenched, with important social consequences. Those who lack money have to find it, often by migrating north and facing religious and social risks that more well-off members of the community do not. Interviews among the Orthodox Old Order and their more progressive Old Order brethren do not suggest such economic diversity. Gender also plays out differently in north

and south. Certainly both Mennonite communities understand women to be “keepers at home,” but unlike their Old Order sisters, Old Colony females receive less schooling than Old Colony males and are less likely to have the language and other skills that would allow them to succeed economically. Interviews with Old Colony widows suggest that they are more likely to experience poverty.

Throughout this work, Loewen characterizes members of both groups as “anti-modern,” yet the narratives suggest an acceptance of technology and modernity so long as it does not threaten the church-community. Similarly, this work only hints at the uneasy interaction between these most conservative Mennonites and their counterparts in more progressive Mennonite churches, and between these ultra-conservative Mennonites and the Amish. Those interviewed suggest a tension between faith, tradition, and change that is far more complex than the “anti” label indicates.

This is an important book. In exploring the tensions between faith, tradition, and change in groups in very different geographic and political contexts, Loewen contributes much to our understanding of Plain communities and how complex their continued resistance to modernity is.

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Religious Minorities and Cultural Diversity in the Dutch Republic: Studies Presented to Piet Visser on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday. Edited by August den Hollander, Alex Noord, Mirjam van Veen, and Anna Voolstra. Leiden: Brill. 2014. \$131.

Religious Minorities and Cultural Diversity in the Dutch Republic contains a selection of essays that explore the complexity of the multifaceted dissenting groups and confessional traditions that competed with one another in the religious landscape of the Dutch Republic, a topic on which the historian Piet Visser has played no small role in developing. These essays dedicated in his honor serve as a tribute to his intellectual legacy in the field of Dutch Anabaptist and Mennonite history and religious history more broadly. In the compilation, the editors focused on two central themes: identity formation and cultural hybridity. Although perhaps seemingly disparate ideas, these two themes highlight the complex ways in which religious groups evolved and functioned throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. While Dutch confessional traditions competed with their counterparts to establish themselves in the expanding religious market, they did not evolve in isolation from their rivals, often borrowing and adapting texts, practices, ideas, rituals, and images. Thus, Mirjam van Veen notes how various confessional traditions often shared elements of their faith with other traditions yet maintained their own religious identity. Many shared the same church building but held their own forms of worship, following the same liturgy but omitting or excusing themselves from specific rituals. Some even shared baptism among other confessions (though not communion). This interplay

between distinctive identity and cross-confessional fluidity serves as a common theme linking together this selection of essays.

Anabaptist, Mennonite, and Reformed traditions receive the bulk of attention, ranging from loosely defined religious dissenting groups and conventicles of the 1520s, to new forms of lay piety and spirituality in the Dutch Golden Age, to the diversity of post-Enlightenment religious thought in the eighteenth century. An essay on nineteenth- and twentieth-century American interest in Dutch religious history and culture closes the volume. Collectively, these essays reveal the diversity of religious groups in the Dutch Republic and the ways that these groups not only experienced intellectual and societal transformations such as the Reformation and the Enlightenment but actively contributed to their development and progression as well.

In recognition of Visser's research on Anabaptists and Mennonites in the Dutch Republic, this volume devotes particular attention to the contributions of these groups to the cultural formation of the Dutch Republic and complicates traditional views on turning points in the development of ideas and movements. Gary Waite's essay, for example, suggests a reappraisal of traditional periodization of the emergence of religious dissent, the Dutch Revolt, and the arrival of Enlightenment thought. Many historians identify the end of the Eighty Years' War and formation of the Dutch Republic as the shift from a confessional society to one hospitable to rational critiques of revealed religion and attempts to follow non-dogmatic forms of belief. Waite, however, argues that Anabaptists had already laid the groundwork for unraveling religious cohesion early in the previous century.

By presenting themes and developments through a cross-confessional approach, this volume successfully reflects both the breadth of religious groups present in the Dutch Republic as well as the ways in which historians can gain insight into Dutch religious history by examining these groups in comparison to one another. For example, an essay on the production and printing of a sixteenth-century Reformed Dutch Bible, the *Deux-Aes* translation, is followed by an essay on Mennonite Bibles in the same century. In the latter, Wim François demonstrates how the clandestine Mennonite printer Mattheus Jacobszoon published an edition of the New Testament that relied on interpretations of Scripture generally accepted among Reformed and other Protestant groups who favored translations of, for instance, "repent" rather than "do penance," and "congregation" rather than "church." François demonstrates that despite making use of translations from other confessions, Jacobzoon's edition also served as a way to delineate a distinctly Mennonite cultural identity with rubrics that explained Mennonite views on oaths, baptism and the new birth, and ecclesiastical structure. By understanding biblical translations from different confessional traditions in relation to one another, these types of essays allow for greater cross-confessional and comparative approaches. These two essays in particular pay tribute to Visser's own work on vernacular biblical texts and printing.

One missing element in this volume is a discussion of early modern Catholicism in relation to the confessional traditions that serve as the primary basis of interest—namely, Anabaptism, Mennonitism, and Reformed Protestantism. While Mirjam van Veen's essay on Caspar Coolhaes and religious

tolerance includes references to how Catholics navigated the development of confessional coexistence, the edited collection as a whole lacks an essay devoted singularly to Catholicism in the Dutch Republic. Though not the focus of Visser's research and thus perhaps seemingly out of place in this type of volume, Dutch Catholicism could have provided a crucial standard of comparison against which to assess the reform-minded confessional traditions that inundated the Dutch Republic. In a related way, an essay toward the close of the volume assesses a sermon by an eighteenth-century Lutheran minister in 's-Hertogenbosch. Yet even more explanation on the role of Lutheranism in the preceding two centuries in the Dutch Republic could have served as a useful guide to understanding its appeal, however limited, in a society already full of confessional options.

Beyond these minor omissions, this volume serves as an essential guide to understanding the way that different religious groups both asserted their own identity and borrowed from one another in the Dutch Republic. Its rich inclusion of multiple thematic categories attests to Visser's own wide-ranging interests and his exploration of a variety of religious groups and their developments over several centuries. The essays demonstrate how these groups not only experienced the intellectual, social, and religious changes around them, but also actively contributed to the culture of the Dutch Republic.

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Baptism, Brotherhood, and Belief in Reformation Germany. Anabaptism and Lutheranism, 1525-1585. By Kat Hill. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2015. \$105.

Thuringia, Hessen, and Saxony have never been considered traditional heartlands of Anabaptism. Both scholars of past centuries and modern-day Mennonite tourists have understandably been more fascinated by Anabaptist origins in Switzerland and the rapid growth of this movement throughout the German southwest and the Netherlands, followed by its survival and flourishing in the "promised land" of Moravia. With the exception perhaps of Hans Hut or Melchior Rinck, central German Anabaptism has also lacked in charismatic leaders and theological minds of the likes of Michael Sattler or Pilgram Marpeck, leaders capable of captivating the imaginations of modern-day Mennonites. Fortunately, Paul Wappler succeeded in rescuing central German Anabaptism from oblivion in 1913, when he published his *Die Wiedertäuferbewegung in Thüringen*, making a superb compilation of sources accessible. And in 1964, John S. Oyer demonstrated in his classical monograph, *Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists*, that the Anabaptist history of this hitherto neglected region was a topic of research in its own right. Nonetheless, scholarly work on this branch of Anabaptism has remained sparse.

This is reason enough to welcome Kat Hill's study, which focuses precisely on Anabaptism in central Germany or, in the words of the author, the "Wettin lands," a region more or less commensurate with modern Thuringia, eastern Hesse,

northern Franconia, and southwestern Saxony (map, 37). This book is, in the author's own words, "an attempt to reconstruct the processes by which people became Anabaptists in central Germany" (6). Yet the author's aim is not to study Anabaptism as an isolated religious movement, but as one in interaction with its Lutheran environment—thus the book's subtitle "Anabaptism and Lutheranism" and its wide chronological scope, extending from the early Reformation (1525) well into the confessional age (1585). One is immediately struck by the author's sympathy for the rank-and-file of the movement, the simple men and women of central Germany with all their imperfections and rough edges, whom she strives to give a voice. The author displays a deep respect for Anabaptism, which she describes as "a tale of endurance in the face of persecution" (3).

Hill aptly describes central German Anabaptism as "harder to define and less easy to trace" than its Swiss, southern German or Moravian counterparts. The principal sources—interrogation records emanating from unsympathetic authorities who questioned common people with the assistance of academic theologians—bring a multiplicity of individual identities to light, not the contours of a unified, coherent movement. Thus the author's emphasis on the fluidity, and even inconsistencies, of central German Anabaptist identity.

In this well-structured work, the author first presents her aims (1-19), describes her sources and her methodology (19-25), and then assesses previous research (25-32). A second chapter explains the political and geographical background of Anabaptist activity (33-44), expounds on the specifics of the Reformation in Saxony (45-50), and discusses "patterns of Anabaptism" in this region, including its reliance on traveling preachers, its astonishing mobility, and its clandestine character, which made reliance on a shared system of secret signs indispensable (50-68). A third chapter seeks to uncover the legacy of the Peasants' War (69-97), while a fourth chapter examines central German Anabaptists' understandings of baptism (98-135). After chapters on the Lord's Supper (136-166) and concepts of gender, sex, and marriage (167-198), a final chapter (199-222) is devoted to the eccentric case of Hans Thon, who drew the attention of the Saxon church authorities in July of 1562 and was subject to countless interrogations and arrests in the following decades, leading to his execution in January of 1584 for his heretical views (he considered the entire visible world to be a creation of the devil). In her conclusion (223-229), the author pleads for an understanding of Anabaptism that is free from the need to define it either positively (as a coherent movement that shared a theological foundation with mainstream Reformers until the latter betrayed it) or negatively (as a reaction to the Lutheran reformation). As much as Anabaptists differed among themselves, they used "a shared rhetoric," in fact, one that "also connected them to their local religious environment," since "everyone, whether Lutherans, Anabaptists, or ambivalent Anabaptists" had to wrestle with the meaning of Christian community, baptism, and the Lord's Supper (226). She does describe the "sense of a brotherhood in Christ's body" as idiosyncratic for central German Anabaptism (227-228). After challenging the usefulness of "radicalism" as a conceptual framework for understanding Anabaptism, the author calls for "exploring the emotional impact that theological issues evoked during the Reformation" and concludes: "Central German Anabaptism . . . was

part of the dynamic that altered how people related to their social, psychological, and emotional worlds" (229).

The opacity of this last sentence is symptomatic of a flaw blemishing this otherwise very readable volume: the urge of the author to interrupt her captivating narrative with interpretative remarks, which are, on the whole, difficult to understand and are based on hermeneutical foundations that are never explained to the reader. The author has set out to capture the "emotions, hopes, fears and theological musings of ordinary people" (226) by means of a "thick description" of Thuringian Anabaptism (15). Yet the conclusions drawn from this thick description remain peculiarly blurry and vacuous, often becoming lost in platitudes.

This is a pity, because the author has obviously been scrupulous in her archival research; she displays a proximity to the sources throughout the work, and shares generously from them with a wealth of entertaining quotes. The author does the common Anabaptist men and women of the Wettin lands an enormous service, allowing them to make themselves heard and providing glimpses of their day-to-day reality. Readers unfamiliar with German can always read these abundant quotes in vivid translations, whereas scholars are consistently provided with the Early Modern High German original in the footnotes.

While the author takes previous research into account and reports accurately on the approaches of other scholars, she displays an annoying tendency to conclude these reviews with dismissive comments, never at a loss to point out the flaws of scholars as varied as Maurice Halbwachs, Clifford Geertz, Hans-Jürgen Goertz, James Stayer, or Andrea Strübind, all of whom must take turns being tested and found wanting.

The author's annoyingly intrusive interpretations and consistently disdainful judgments do not diminish the strength of this book. *Baptism, Brotherhood, and Belief* presents us with a vivid picture of central German Anabaptism based on careful work with an abundance of sources, and thus represents a long-overdue continuation of the work begun by Wappler and Oyer.

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Peter Letkemann, *A Book of Remembrance. Mennonites in Arkadak and Zentral, 1908-1941*. Winnipeg: Old Oak Publishing. 2016. Pp. 462.

Studies of the Mennonites in Russia are served by a number of accounts of individual colonies and communities, some dating back to the late nineteenth century. Largely written by amateur historians, sometimes by past members, these accounts are often rich in detail, but lack a scholarly base. This study, however, is quite different. It is an account of two settlements, Zentral and Arkadak, from their establishment in the final days of Tsarist rule until the Second World War, when their surviving populations were removed by Soviet decree following the Nazi invasion of the USSR. In its research and detail it is a work of scholarship and a major advance on earlier accounts.

The settlements in question were located in Voronezh and Saratov provinces, but were founded in quite different ways. Zentral was a private venture by a group of Mennonites who, with sufficient capital, purchased the estate of a Russian noble family. Arkadak was a daughter colony of the Khortitsa colony purchased by the colony ostensibly for its landless. The author's grandfather established a grain mill in Arkadak and his father and other relatives also lived here, so Letkemann has family connections. The account, however, is based on a judicious use of memoirs and extensive interviews and correspondence with previous residents, newspaper reports, and archival sources located in Russia, Ukraine, Germany, and North America. Additional primary sources and maps are provided online. The author's research has extended over many decades and is impressive in its scope and comprehensiveness.

The first part, dealing with the Tsarist period, draws heavily on contemporary press reports, at least up to 1914, when Mennonites were forbidden from publishing newspapers in German. It reveals a Mennonite society eager to succeed, but internally divided by wealth and religious allegiance as well as separated from the surrounding society. Such divisions created problems, particularly in Arkadak, when wealthy Mennonites illegally acquired land. Although this and other issues hindered the development of the settlement, eventually a viable, functioning daughter colony was established.

It is interesting that other Mennonite daughter settlements founded in the later period of Tsarist rule, such as those at Orenburg and Terek, also suffered from internal conflicts. Many of the issues involved in the divisions would also re-emerge among Mennonite immigrants to Canada in the 1920s, although here Mennonites were not as well placed to re-establish their previous way of life as they were in Russia. Letkemann's account of both settlements continues through the period of the First World War, revolution, and subsequent civil war, although his account of this period is less detailed since newspapers were published only sporadically after 1917.

The second part of the book deals with the early Soviet New Economic Policy (1921-1928), a period frequently neglected in Mennonite accounts. One is struck by the difference in the numerous photographs that Letkemann includes between those from Tsarist times and those from later periods. The pictures reveal not only a profound change in dress, but also in how Mennonites pose. Well-dressed Mennonites arranged in almost arrogant postures give way to figures in plainer dress and workers' flat caps; in later photographs they appear in worn garb, unhappy, and looking pensively at the camera. The inhabitants have clearly become Sovietized even though many resisted the process, some openly and others in underhand ways. Religious life, although restricted, continued. A number chose rather late to immigrate to Canada, mostly as full-paying passengers after liquidating their property. Some made the decision too late and had to remain.

Letkemann provides only a basic outline of Soviet policy during this turbulent time and says little about the sudden shift in policy in the late 1920s, a process he treats as if it were inevitable. In reality, as modern scholarly accounts reveal, the

radical change in policy was accompanied by fierce internal debates in the Bolshevik Party about future directions, and by a struggle for power in an atmosphere of fear concerning possible foreign intervention. Mennonites who had adjusted to the new system and prospered found themselves designated as *kulaks*, a social group that needed to be purged. As Letkemann relates, this saw the first wave of repressions and arrests as the countryside was “dekulakized.”

The third section covers the years 1928 to 1941 and therefore includes not just the story of Collectivization but also the Great Terror and the Second World War. Once again Letkemann’s presentation of context is cursory. The attempt to settle Russia’s agrarian problems by collectivization was accompanied by a massive industrialization drive that transformed the Soviet Union into a modern industrial society. But it all came at a terrible cost. It required the forced restructuring of Soviet society according to ideological principles and the final repression of religion. Eventually it became a terrible campaign to eliminate an entire class of people and persecuted ethnic groups connected with foreign states deemed potential enemies. All this occurred against a backdrop of a continuing sense of global isolation and the rise of fascist, and semi-fascist, states across Europe, most notably Nazi Germany. Mennonites were classified as German and many also had “foreign” contacts in Germany and North America, where a massive immigration had occurred following the establishment of Soviet power. This made Mennonites even more open to persecution, especially as some of those who had immigrated were sympathetic to the Nazi regime.

Letkemann’s account of this period carries an additional burden of providing a description of the challenges Mennonites faced in changing circumstances. This involves his attempt to list and account for the fate of all the Mennonite victims under Soviet rule. This is part of a much larger project to which Letkemann has committed himself over many years, mainly to trace and account for all the Mennonite victims since the Revolution. This volume is obviously intended as just the first of many as it has the number “1” on its spine. Whether or not future volumes will concentrate on the rise and fall of other Mennonite settlements or just consist of detailed lists of victims is unclear. But this account of the two settlements and their inhabitants tends to lose a sense of narrative as it focuses closely on listing those who suffered, many to the point of death.

What is missing is a sense of what everyday life was like during this period. It must be remembered that while many of the inhabitants had been born in and grew up in the Tsarist period, a new generation who knew only the Soviet system also emerged. The Soviet system also was one that favored the new generation while it rejected the old. What life on a *Kolkhoz*—in a factory, in a school, as a member of youth organizations, etc.—was like for those involved is not really discussed. Such an account, focused on the communities, might have provided a counterpoint to the description of life under the Tsar.

Finally, in view of the otherwise comprehensive and scholarly nature of the study, I was surprised and disappointed to see the author has chosen to use the term “final solution” twice in reference to Soviet policies. In the first usage (299) he points to the time of the “Great Terror” (1937-1938) and claims the intent was the “extermination of any potential opponents to Stalin and his regime.” In the

second (382), he claims the Soviet's ultimate aim was the destruction of the "ethnic-German peoples of the USSR." The term "final solution" is associated with the policy the Nazis adopted after 1942 ("the final solution to the Jewish question"; *Endlösung der Judenfrage*) indicating their intention to exterminate totally all Jews living in areas they controlled. It is not used in standard historical accounts to account for Soviet policies of terror and repression.

Earlier the author suggests (377 and *passim*) that the "secret agenda of the Communist party and state officials . . . was the moral and physical genocide against Germans in Russia." By 1941 he claims this was aimed at "all" Germans. In fact his own evidence suggests that even though those deemed "German" by the Soviets, including Mennonites, would suffer disproportionate persecution when compared with other ethnic groups, the arrest, imprisonment, and forced labor during the Second World War was not a policy of total liquidation. And while those who suffered were treated with a casual brutality that showed little concern as to whether they lived or died, there was no formal policy to exterminate entire categories of humans on racial terms, as was the case with the Nazi policy towards Jews and other groups singled out for destruction.

It appears that in certain quarters Mennonite suffering under the Soviets continues to be viewed through a distorted mirror of the Jewish experience under the Nazis, even if the comparison, as in this case, is never openly stated or fully explored. Although both the Soviet and Nazi regimes committed horrific crimes in the name of their twisted ideologies, and although Mennonites and Jews suffered as a consequence, the misappropriation of that language of suffering should be avoided, particularly in scholarly studies. It might seem insidious to suggest a scholarly comparison of Nazi and Soviet policies and practices, or of Mennonite and Jewish experiences in relation to these policies, but some day someone may have to attempt such a comparison if only to prevent the misappropriation of the Jewish experience and the vocabulary of the Holocaust.

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Re-Imagining the Church: Implications of Being a People in the World. By Robert J. Suderman. Edited by Andrew Gregory Suderman. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock. 2016. Pp. 242. \$24.80.

Robert J. Suderman is passionate about the church as the center of God's redemptive strategy, and as the place where the world can concretely experience a foretaste of God's all-encompassing plan of peace and healing. Each of the sixteen chapters in this edited collection speak to this passion from a slightly different angle, bearing testimony to the multitude of ways in which Suderman, in his various roles as teacher, administrator, missionary, and theologian, has sought to articulate his Anabaptist ecclesiological and missiological convictions for different contexts and audiences.

The sixteen papers are divided into two sections. Essays in Part I ("The Nature and Being of the Church") are more focussed on North American Mennonite

churches and service agencies, while those that make up Part II (“A People in the World”) pertain more directly to wider questions of peacemaking and education beyond the congregation and have a somewhat more global flavor. Within the scope of Suderman’s overarching ecclesial theme, the chapters are of widely varying focus, structure, and length. Four highlights of the collection are Chapters 3, 8, 12, and 13, which showcase Suderman’s keenly prophetic voice, his creative yet careful biblical study, and his capacity for contextual analysis.

In Chapter 3, Suderman makes a strong plea for MCC to conceive of its vision and strategy in explicitly ecclesial terms, suggesting that the “strengthening of . . . assemblies of salvation” in every context should be MCC’s highest priority (24). Suderman’s understanding of church as larger than the local congregation (115-117) allows him to address MCC directly as church, and to provocatively ask if MCC might sometimes function too much like a “toe . . . trying to serve the body from an amputated stance” (29). Suderman makes the powerful claim that MCC must see itself as part of the church, both feeding and gaining nourishment from the rest of the Body. The questions he raises about the relationship between congregations, service agencies, national church structures, and educational institutions may have particular resonance for readers familiar with the ongoing activities of the Future Directions Task Force that has resulted in a significant reduction in the role of the MC Canada national church structure.

Suderman is at his strongest when he walks his readers/hearers through biblical exegesis, as in Chapter 8. In a poignant speech delivered near the beginning of MC Canada’s *Being a Faithful Church* process, Suderman’s careful exploration of the nuances of politics and logic in Philippians is compelling. At a time when the church faces the temptation of entrenchment or of “political manoeuvring” (74), Suderman problematizes the distinction between liberals and conservatives by asking the probing question, “Are we like Paul—hanging on to radical advances—or like the Pharisees—resisting changes that new insight, knowledge, and experience bring to us?” (78).

I particularly appreciated Suderman’s loving, yet provocative response to the WCC draft documents about *Just Peace*, drafted for the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence (Chapter 12). While Suderman applauds the writers of the documents for reclaiming the nonviolent ethic of Jesus as normative for the church (165), he regretfully concludes that the WCC documents remain “steeped in the logic of Christendom” because they fail to foreground the vocation of congregations, bypassing these crucial instruments of peace in favor of programs, outstanding individuals, and nation-states (171). Suderman laments the failure of imagination that leads the WCC to “speak ecclesial language” but still to “opt for a non-ecclesial plan” that leaves the door firmly open to the option of enforcing law through violence (170-171).

Finally, Suderman has the valuable gift of being able to distill an Anabaptist perspective on the gospel into a clear and practical overview for those who may be unfamiliar with Anabaptism. Chapter 13, based on a presentation to students at Asian Theological Seminary, exemplifies his ability to express his passion for the church in dialogue with the specifics of an international context.

Although there is much to commend in this book, it also has several shortcomings.

The poor quality of the editing is a significant flaw. The essays are sprinkled with typos, especially in Part I. Both the uneven quality of the different pieces and the relative arbitrariness of the organization into sections detract from the reading experience. The unwieldy, fifty-two-page Chapter 9 reads more like personal notes than a well-crafted essay, and its best sections are cited repeatedly in Chapters 14 and 15, sometimes without acknowledgement (e.g. 205, 206-207, 208-209). I cannot help thinking that readers would have been better served by a more streamlined and less repetitive selection of eight to ten essays. Many of these pieces were originally oral presentations, and more effort should have been put into the footnotes and citations in order to properly manage the shift from oral to written form. Sometimes Suderman has a gem of an insight, but it is buried deep in a numbered list in a sub-sub-section that is sometimes difficult to differentiate from insights that he draws from others, occasionally without sufficient acknowledgement. While the editor provided some context for each piece, a brief biography of the author would have been very helpful in order to match different essays with the various roles that Suderman was playing at the time.

Suderman's goal is not usually to construct a new scholarly argument, but rather to apply existing foundational concepts of Anabaptist ecclesiology to new contexts. On occasion, however, Suderman's lack of engagement with relevant scholarship flaws his work. For example, his interaction with the ideas of contextualization and indigenization is awkward and uninformed (104-105). Suderman seems unaware of the well-established meaning of these words among missiologists, as classically defined by leading scholars such as Andrew Walls and Stephen Bevans. More significantly, his engagement with the missional church debate has the potential to conflate two quite separate theological discussions. On the one hand, Suderman is responding to the relative ecclesiological vacuity of missional church discourse by insisting that the new "missional" language provides an opportunity to promote not just a new focus on mission, but a new focus on the church (94). The "missional ecclesiology" that Suderman proposes is the "art of becoming the church in such a way that it becomes a living sign of the presence of God's Kingdom" (98). This is an important plea for a clearer awareness of the overlap of ecclesiology and missiology. On the other hand, Suderman's tendency to conflate the missional church agenda with the Anabaptist emphasis on peoplehood as missionary strategy may be somewhat misleading. Mennonites who have hitherto been suspicious of missional church language may come away thinking that the Anabaptist emphasis on peoplehood has now finally been recognized by the wider church; arguably, that is only very partially true. Conversely, the missional church theorists who read this may not realize the specificity of the Anabaptist vision that undergirds Suderman's interpretation of the missional church. By interacting more closely with the relevant literature, Suderman could have done more to clarify the terms of the conversation between these two movements and to identify more clearly his own contribution to this discussion.

Finally, while Suderman makes a strong theological case for the role of the church, he does not engage substantially with the question of how church structures should develop in response to major historical abuses of power by more privileged or richer segments of the church, which have often included Mennonites. If Suderman's constant emphasis on peoplehood as God's central or preferred salvific strategy had been tempered by self-criticism of the dark side of Mennonite "peoplehood" in North America, some might have found his proposals more convincing.

Regardless of where individual readers stand, however, Suderman is an important voice in the global Anabaptist church, and this book allows his voice to be heard. I am convinced that it is worth persevering to excavate Suderman's profound insights about the church from the relatively disorganized way in which they are presented here. Suderman courageously and freshly articulates the church's vocation in ways that are both hopeful and hope-giving, and his keen and wise insights into the art of being church make an important contribution at a time when Anabaptists are increasingly called upon to articulate a vision for peace in a violent world.

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ANICKA FAST

In Pursuit of Faithfulness: Conviction, Conflict and Compromise in Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. By Rich Preheim. Harrisonburg, Va.: Herald Press. 2016. \$45.99.

From where I sit, as a pastor of an Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference congregation, healthy middle judicatories (conferences in Mennonite Church USA, of which IMMC is a member) are vital to the health and future of the church, yet are given the task of addressing the most conflictual issues among us. The fault lines of the culture wars which divide congregations slice through conferences, and in some cases slice them up. IMMC is no exception. This is a painful story, and in Preheim's telling such conflict has characterized the history of IMMC and its forerunners from the beginning.

Congregations have the capacity to sort themselves out, with like-minded members attending, even if it means travel, to join a church with like-minded Mennonites. Conferences are in the process of sorting themselves, but this is less easily done. And valuable resources used for articulating and carrying out a vision for how a conference can share God's blessing with its region get directed to the culture wars, to determining identity. In the process, congregations lose heart, vision dies, and some drift away.

As a pastor who loves the church and longs to see it thrive, to see it fulfill God's calling on it to bless the world and to share the good news, this is disheartening. As such, I was eager to read a history of my own conference. "From the past will come the future," in the words of the Natalie Sheeth hymn inspired by T. S. Eliot. Perhaps something from the past, from the history of the conference, will give direction and vision for the future. What was it that energized and animated the

work of the conference through its history? When was the conference at its healthiest and most vital? What good thing brought this group of Mennonites together? How did it bless its region and the world in the sharing of the gospel?

I was disappointed. Unfortunately these questions do not animate this history in Preheim's telling, although one can see glimmers of these things throughout the book. The primary animating force is bickering. Conflict is too ennobling. A friend who had read the book came to the conclusion that we are a "bickering bunch." Somebody please put this conference out of its misery.

IMMC commissioned a history project when maybe what we need is a discernment project. At a time when we need some vision—a way through challenging times, an inspirational word of hope that we can thrive as God's people, that we can be a blessing on our communities—what we read is more of the same. Reading the history is like looking in the mirror. But I believe, not as a student of history, but as a matter of faith, that God has been at work throughout this history of IMMC, and that God is at work today.

In Pursuit of Faithfulness is exhaustively researched and filled with primary sources. In short, it is a work of fine scholarship in that what is reported is accurate, reliable, and well sourced. Preheim did his homework, and as such he has done a great service. The driving characters in IMMC history come through with richness and texture. These are people the reader can imagine knowing. Preheim writes well and with clarity. The book is a clean read. Photographs, pictures of primary documents, and stories of intriguing people help keep the reader's interest and the pace of the book moving. The information is organized in a way the reader can clearly understand.

An opening story in one of Preheim's chapter describes a deacon at the Howard-Miami Mennonite Church near Kokomo who enjoyed attending high school basketball games (101ff). It turns out, however, that attending high school basketball games was controversial within the conference, along with other frivolous pursuits like baseball and theater. From the vantage point of our time, it's hard to imagine a sillier controversy. The bickering around a deacon attending high school basketball games feeds a narrative built around conflict between urban progressive compromisers and reactionaries fearful of outside influence. This is truly a story worth telling in some way, perhaps in a humorous light even. But what if it, and similar stories, were moved to the background, and stories of mission and ministry moved to the foreground?

The subtitle makes clear that this is a book about conviction, conflict, and compromise. But what if it were a book about the remarkable missionary efforts of the conference, planting churches widely and effectively, some of which are thriving today? The work of church planting in Saginaw and other cities transformed the conference and the wider Mennonite church in ways still felt today. Recently, Goshen College renamed a building in honor of Rowena Lark. Leaders of color emerged and expanded what it meant to be a Mennonite. Irene and Leroy Bechler and others are living eyewitnesses to this story. Could their story have been told more fully?

Without question, Preheim mentions these efforts at mission and its impact on the church. But the focus of his story remains on the conflict. My interest is what

God is up to. When I think of the threads of mission work, and the pioneering leaders, I begin to imagine how the present and the future might connect with the past in ways that give life. I begin to imagine how the spirit is moving today.

I am a pastor. Preheim writes as a historian—a competent and capable one. As a work of history, *In Pursuit of Faithfulness* is excellent. Perhaps it is unreasonable for a work of history to do pastoral work, offering hope, vision, and comfort to God's people in a time of need. It's time for me, and others like me, to take Preheim's scholarship and do the work of pastoral leadership.

I would begin with this. Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference has always been reaching out, expanding the community, drawing others into the circle of faith, and sharing good news and the goodness of community with those around us. Come Holy Spirit!

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RESEARCH GRANTS

The Mennonite Historical Society announces an "Open Research Grant" of \$2,000 to promote research and publication in Anabaptist-Mennonite studies. To apply, send the following materials by March 1, 2018, to Leonard Gross, Secretary, Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen College, Goshen, IN 46526: a two- or three-page summary of the project stating its significance to the field of Anabaptist-Mennonite history, a budget of anticipated expenses, a vitae, and one letter of recommendation. All applicants must be members of the Mennonite Historical Society. Recipients of the award will be announced at the May meeting of the M.H.S. Board of Directors. Disbursements will be made by June 1. The Prize Selection Committee may choose not to award the grant if none of the applications is deemed acceptable. *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* has the "right of first refusal" for scholarly articles that result from research funded by the grant.

The Schafer-Friesen Research Fellowship is awarded annually by the Mennonite Historical Library (MHL) at Goshen College to support scholarship in Reformation and Anabaptist History. First priority for the award is to individuals doing advanced research using the resources of the Mennonite Historical Library. The award will support travel costs to the Mennonite Historical Library, and up to three weeks of room and board. The Fellowship may also be used, secondarily, to support publications on Reformation and Anabaptist topics. To apply, please send a letter of interest, along with a one-page research plan and budget, by March 1, 2018, to John D. Roth at johndr@goshen.edu.