

## IN THIS ISSUE

"Music," the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote in 1835, "is the universal language of humankind." And, indeed, most of us can point to moments when the mysterious alchemy of melody, harmony, and rhythm has indeed transcended human differences. Music, we like to think, touches the human soul as much as it does the mind. At the same time, however, few expressions of human creativity are more deeply rooted in particular cultures and contexts than music. "If music be a universal language," George Bernard Shaw wrote a generation after Longfellow, "it is spoken with all sorts of accents."

We open this issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* with an essay by **Austin McCabe Juhnke** on the Lawndale choir, a musical group formed by members of the Lawndale Mennonite Church in 1970. The Lawndale church emerged in 1934 as a mission congregation in a predominantly Mexican neighborhood of Chicago; but the choir's repertoire drew mostly on popular music of the day, blending secular and religious music into a program that transcended traditional ethnic, racial, and religious boundaries. As the choir's visibility grew in more traditional Mennonite churches, however—and as the Mennonite Church increasingly wrestled with the realities of race—it came under growing pressure to represent Latino music, a category defined by ethnicity. McCabe argues that the impulse to define the Lawndale choir as "minority music" not only obscured the broader social concerns that they wished to address, but also reinforced categories of identity that marked traditional four-part hymnody as normative and the music of urban churches as the "ethnic other."

The challenge of defining identity is also a central theme in the fascinating story narrated by **Duane Stoltzfus** of Martha Jane Graber, a Mennonite nurse from Bluffton, Ohio, whose request for citizenship was twice rejected in the late 1920s because she refused to promise that she would defend the United States with lethal force. In the spring of 1928 Graber, who immigrated from the Alsace-Lorraine as an 11-year-old, tried to obtain a passport in order to pursue her calling as missionary to the continent of Africa. Her bid for citizenship, however, ran aground when a judge and naturalization official pressed the question of her patriotic allegiance. When Graber persisted in her argument that she would be willing to give her life in her role as a nurse but not take up weapons to defend herself or others, the courts twice rejected her petition for citizenship. Although Graber eventually received her citizenship following a third attempt in 1930, various legislative attempts to resolve the matter consistently failed. It was not until a Supreme Court ruling in

1946 that conscientious objectors were assured that their religious convictions against war would not stand in the way of receiving U.S. citizenship.

For most students of Anabaptism the history of the Radical Reformation focuses overwhelmingly on the German- and Dutch-speaking territories of central Europe, with Moravia, Poland, and France playing cameo roles as minor linguistic variations at the borders. That there was once a vibrant Anabaptist movement in northern Italy will likely come as a surprise to many readers. Yet as **Arnold Snyder** carefully details in a long essay, the adult-baptizing movement that started in 1525 in Zurich soon gained adherents in Italian-speaking regions as well. Snyder traces the origins of the movement in the southern valleys of the Swiss province of Graubünden and its spread into the northern Italian region around Venice. Within the larger context of Anabaptism, the nonconformist presence in Italian-speaking areas was short-lived; by 1553 the Catholic Inquisition had effectively suppressed the movement, with most adherents recanting or fleeing to Moravia. Nevertheless, the essay opens up an exciting, relatively unexplored, field of Anabaptist studies, and points to a trove of source materials that has scarcely been studied.

Finally, we conclude this issue of *MQR* with an analytical survey of the several publications by Anabaptist-Mennonite scholars in the field of political theology. **Maxwell Kennel**, a PhD candidate in religious studies at McMaster University, begins by summarizing the work of four scholars—A. James Reimer, P. Travis Kroeker, Kyle Gingerich Hiebert, and Lydia Neufeld Harder. Although Kennel is appreciative of the distinctive contributions each scholar has made to the field of political theology, he argues that their work would have been enriched by a more conscious engagement with feminist thought. To illustrate new possibilities in the field, Kennel brings the arguments of these scholars into conversation with the late feminist philosopher of religion Grace M. Jantzen.

In their own distinctive ways, each of the essays in this issue reflect the ongoing conversation between universal themes and arguments emerging out of very specific contexts. We are grateful to help give voice to these vibrant conversations. Thank you for your ongoing support of the journal!

– John D. Roth, editor