

IN THIS ISSUE

Throughout its long history, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) has had a strong and productive relationship with *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*. Harold S. Bender, the founder and first editor of the journal, played a pivotal role in creating the Goshen Biblical Seminary on the campus of Goshen College in 1944, serving as both dean of the seminary and *MQR* editor until his death in 1962. At the same time, faculty at the Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Chicago were regular contributors to the journal; and when the two institutions merged in 1994 as the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, the seminary entered into a formal collaboration with Goshen College and the Mennonite Historical Library as joint owners of *MQR*.

In this special issue of *MQR* we are delighted to highlight scholarship from the current faculty of AMBS, featuring the work of a new generation of scholars who are helping to extend AMBS's long tradition of "scholarship for the church." I (John) am very pleased to acknowledge the help of **David C. Cramer**, managing editor at the Institute of Mennonite Studies and lecturer at AMBS, who served as co-editor of this issue.

Rachel Miller Jacobs, associate professor of congregational formation, opens the issue with an extended reflection on "non-moral harm"—that is, relational harm that is *real* even though the offense may have been neither objectively immoral nor understood by all parties in the same way. Drawing on two medieval soteriologies, she suggests ways of remediating non-moral harm that appropriately address its distinctive character.

Subsequent essays extend the framework of the conversation from interpersonal relationships to the larger context of public witness, particularly to the social, political, and cultural realities that shape our collective life. **Jamie Pitts**, associate professor of Anabaptist studies and director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies at AMBS, engages the current call for a "politicization" of Anabaptist environmental ethics with an extended reflection on the "hovering Spirit" of Genesis 1:2, who organizes complex structures for life and creaturely solidarity, which he then brings into conversation with a thick description of the Elkhart River watershed, where local ecologies are subject to global economic forces. By drawing connections between the pictures of the hovering Spirit and of the Elkhart River watershed, Pitts invites Anabaptist Christians to frame their participation in trans-local institutions as a political form of participation in the Holy Spirit who hovers over creation.

In a related fashion, **Drew Strait**, assistant professor of New Testament and Christian origins, challenges readers to actively deconstruct the ideology of white Christian nationalism that increasingly threatens the

integrity of the church's public witness. How should pastors and congregations effectively resist the phenomenon of Christian nationalism? Strait's essay seeks to answer that question by bringing the field of resistance studies into a deep conversation with biblical interpretation, focusing especially on Paul's speech on the Areopagus in Acts 17 and the larger questions of political idolatry.

Janna Hunter-Bowman, assistant professor of peace studies and Christian social ethics, returns to a classic question in Anabaptist-Mennonite peace theology—namely, whether the state has a legitimate role as a source of social order that enables civic flourishing, or whether its claims on individual allegiance and reliance on coercive power inevitably reduce it to a kind of idol. Drawing on examples from the early Anabaptist movement, Hunter-Bowman proposes a more nuanced account of the state. Oppressed and marginalized people, she argues, sometimes operate in “messianic apocalyptic time”—that is, moments in which “agents under duress” are forced to work outside state systems, relying on God's inbreaking into history for their physical or cultural survival. At other times, however, in what Hunter-Bowman calls “gradual time,” groups consciously cooperate in forms of social and political transformation that intersect with the state without being consumed by it. Her approach seeks to provide a more constructive account of the state than alternatives that regard the state as little more than an idol.

In a final AMBS contribution, **David C. Cramer** collaborates with **Myles Werntz**, director of Baptist studies and associate professor of theology at Abilene Christian University, in describing a recent movement in peace theology, inspired by work on sexual and gender-based violence, that shifts the focus from *nonviolence* to *antiviolence*. The essay, drawn from their forthcoming book *A Field Guide to Christian Nonviolence*, delineates a distinct approach to combating both interpersonal and societal violence.

In the spirit of Cramer and Werntz's Mennonite-Baptist collaboration, we conclude this issue with a collection of brief essays, written as part of an initiative among German Mennonites and Baptists to commemorate the approaching 500th anniversary of Anabaptist beginnings in 2025. Starting in 2020, “Gewagt! 500 Jahre Täuferbewegung” is publishing an annual collection of reflective essays. At the initiative of **Leonard Gross**, we are pleased to include a sample of translated contributions to that volume, making them accessible to English speakers. Watch for more references to 500th anniversary commemorations in future issues of *MQR*.

- John D. Roth and David C. Cramer