

IN THIS ISSUE

With this issue, the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* completes ninety-six years of publication, now facing the daunting task of moving forward without John D. Roth at the editorial helm. For twenty-eight years, John provided wise and prescient guidance, widening the journal's vision and expanding its reach, all the while maintaining the highest academic standards. The community of readers and scholars served by this journal owes John sincere and heartfelt thanks for his years of dedicated leadership. To say that John will be missed is to seriously understate the case. We carry on in the hope that his editorial successor will be found soon.

The essays in this issue do not share a particular theme, time period, or geography. What they do have in common is fresh scholarship that illuminates different centuries and locations of Anabaptist and Mennonite history.

It is sometimes thought that sixteenth-century Anabaptism has been so thoroughly mined that there is virtually nothing new left to discover. This is far from the truth, as is demonstrated by the first essay in this volume. Scholars have long attributed leadership to Menno Simons in the region of the Lower Rhine. With his study of the life and work of the Anabaptist bishop Theunis van Hastenrath, **Theo Brok** discovers that the functioning Anabaptist communities of the Lower Rhine owed less to Menno and Dirk than they did to local bishops whose origins appear to go back to pre-Münsterite sacramentarian circles. The Anabaptist communities of the Lower Rhine, rather than being united under Menno's leadership, are better described as "a plurality of independent, self-organized microcosms linked by regional bishops." One conclusion drawn, among others, is that the divisions that emerge later in the century have their roots in the diverse origins and independent nature of these original communities.

The second essay in this issue moves to a contemporary examination of the Old Order Amish, with a unique interpretation "from the inside." The connection between the very visible countercultural social practices of the Amish and the grounding of these practices in Scripture is not always obvious. **Christopher G. Petrovich** brings to bear his personal experience as a member of two Old Order Amish communities to address the question of how Scripture actually is read, interpreted, and applied in those communities. Outside observers, Petrovich notes, "tend to assume that the Amish scan the biblical text for rules, isolating concepts from the text and later reapplying these tidy culture-less 'principles' to their daily

lives." The Old Order Amish, to the contrary, did not follow the Protestant traditions into modern interpretive readings but rather have maintained "a precritical hermeneutic of Scripture." Based in this precritical reading of the text, the Amish go on to "interpret the Bible with the example of their immediate family members and ancestors as the starting point and apply the biblical message to situations they face in their shared cultural and geographical space across time."

The essay that follows joins the growing list of studies that examine the relationship between Mennonites in Europe and the Nazi regime. Based on extensive archival work, coauthors **Wojciech Marchlewski** and **Colin P. Neufeldt** examine events in and around the small Mennonite community of Wymyśle Niemieckie (Nowe Wymyśle today) in the interwar years in central Poland. The authors document how an assumed Mennonite "apoliticism" gradually disappeared in these communities. As the Polish government exerted increasing pressure on German-speaking groups, for its part the German government fueled the alienation process by promising Mennonites "membership in the *Volksgemeinschaft* of the Third Reich." This situation was abetted by the support of many Mennonite leaders elsewhere for pro-German political parties. In the end, the Wymyśle Niemieckie Mennonites greeted the Nazi invasion forces as liberators in 1939, not knowing the horrors that would lie ahead.

Finally, looking to the contemporary global church, a research note by **Carlos Martínez-García** reexamines the origins of the Mennonite churches in Mexico City. Although that church began "officially" in 1959, after the sending of missionaries by the Lancaster Mennonite Conference, research has uncovered significant initial work done by two Mennonite Mexican women. In fact, Dolores Delgado (Vorhauer) and Dolores Martínez Zapata established the first Mennonite communities in Mexico City prior to the sending of missionaries. As this research note demonstrates, the work of local historians and scholars of the global church significantly expands our understanding of our church's history and spirituality.

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