

Book Reviews

Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Antiklerikalismus und Reformation. Sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995). Paperback, 140 pp.

While Hans-Jürgen Goertz is not the first scholar to see anticlericalism (resistance to, even hatred of, a corrupt religious clergy) as a motivating factor in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, he certainly has written more on the subject than anyone else. In this volume Goertz shows how anticlericalism manifested itself among the clergy who broke with Roman Catholicism, among nobles like Ulrich von Hutten, among peasants, artists and cartoonists, and among the Anabaptists.

There is no doubt that anticlericalism was present in sixteenth-century society and that it helped the reformers to advocate and bring about necessary changes in church and society. What is less clear—at least to this reviewer—is what came first: anticlericalism or a universal desire for necessary religious and ethical reforms, greater social justice, and economic betterment. Goertz states rather ambivalently that the anticlerical situation was the “Sitz im Leben,” not the cause of the Reformation. “Nach den Ursachen muss vielmehr in den Kräften, Tendenzen, Einflüssen und Reizen gesucht werden, die in dieser Situation wirksam waren. Allenfalls in dieser vermittelnd-vermittelten Form kann das antiklerikale Milieu auch zu den Ursachen gezählt werden.”

(p.118) To use anticlericalism as a key to understanding a complex movement like the Reformation is perhaps too simple.

The magisterial reformers were certainly not anti-clergy in principle. Luther and Zwingli denounced and fought against the Roman-Catholic clergy from the pope down, to be sure, but they very quickly established a new clergy with themselves at the helm. It was thus a case of a dissatisfied and reformed clergy against a powerful and often corrupt clergy of the old church. One could easily argue that it was power struggle between two sets of clergy.

Even the peasants were not against all clergy per se. They fought a clergy that in their view did not represent the church and the spiritual life according to biblical ideals and which oppressed them economically and socially. Following Luther, they wished to have the right to call their own pastors who would truly shepherd them according to God's Word (first of the *Twelve Articles*). It is thus perhaps an overstatement to claim: "Für die Bauern waren Antiklerikalismus und Reformation identisch." (p.72)

Chapter VI appears to be the weakest part in Goertz's argument. One would think that the Anabaptists would have given the author ample "ammunition" to argue convincingly that there was at least one group that was consistently anticlerical, including its motivation for reform, its ethical and theological orientation, and its ecclesiastical organization. Goertz speaks of "anticlerical impulses in Anabaptism," mentioning their anticlerical agitation, their emphasis on lay community (calling each other "brother" and "sister"), their consequent "priesthood of all believers," their rejection of the sacramental system, and their desire to establish a "pure church." Also their meetings not in churches but in private houses and their rejection of church offices and clerical designations speak of their antipathy toward all churchly things.

Instead of developing these important and valid points, Goertz merely touches upon them and then goes on to speak of the Anabaptists' and later Mennonites' tendency for and practice of church discipline, separation from the world, and ethical rigidity. The Mennonites are the only group whose historical development is pursued into the seventeenth and eighteenth century. It did not become clear to me how this apparent addendum contributed to the main thrust of the book's thesis.

Like all Goertz's writings, this book is well written and argued, challenging the reader to think about and respond to the author's thesis and material at hand. The book includes ten contemporary sketches and cartoons and useful reference notes, but no index. The book is relatively free of misprints. I found the following: The Dordrecht Confession appeared in 1632, not 1532 (p.109), and there is a mistake in *Proselytenmacherei* (p.112).

Harry Loewen
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Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?: The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870-1925* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994). Paperback.

Adolf Ens is to be thanked for providing in book-form a revision of his 1978 Ph.D. dissertation. Judged by how frequently this work has been quoted, it has become an authoritative commentary on the subject. That the book is published in the University of Ottawa's "Religions and Beliefs" series indicates its acceptance, too, in the wider field of Canadian religious history.

Subjects or Citizens? is a clearly written, well-researched study of the relationship between Dutch-North German Mennonites in Prairie Canada and governments in Ottawa, Winnipeg and Regina during the first two generations after settlement. The account begins with a background study of early Anabaptist-state relations in the sixteenth century, but moves quickly to negotiations between Mennonite immigration delegates and the Canadian government in 1873, and then on, through successive chapters, to issues of exclusive Mennonite land reserves, naturalization of pacifists, municipal government, parochial schools, military service exemptions, German-language newspapers, and ends with the Mennonite migration to Latin America in the 1920s.

This is narrative history at its best. Ens is perhaps too reticent in offering analysis and lengthy interpretations, but he does lay out carefully and thoughtfully the details of specific events. The book reflects a thorough examination of Mennonite files at national and provincial archives, as well as newspaper accounts in both the secular and Mennonite presses. The result is a well-balanced and often fascinating portrayal, providing both the Mennonite point of view and the complex workings of the state apparatus.

Two characteristics of the relationship between sect and state emerge from the text. The title juxtaposes one understanding of this relationship against another; as Ens notes elsewhere, "the first Mennonites settling in Canada... would rather be *subjects* of the British crown than *citizens* of a new nation..." (in Dueck, *Canadian Mennonites and the Challenge of Nationalism*, 1994, p. 72). As this book demonstrates, so too would the disparate groups—Reinlaender, Bergthaler, and Kleine Gemeinde—that chose to immigrate to Canada rather than to the United States in the 1870s. Rooted in an Anabaptist understanding, these groups of Mennonites "showed very little difference," each committed to being "subjects" and each avoiding full "citizenship" (46). Readers will be impressed anew by the persisting Mennonite notion of special relationship with the state; the ballot box was ignored, but direct appeals were made regularly to the "hohe Regierung," the highest authority—premier, prime minister, supreme court. Unlike other sects, Mennonites acknowledged the force of law and sought recognition in law: for example, they would seek "*exemption under* the Military Service Act instead of *exception from* its terms" (176).

The relationship between Mennonites and the state as outlined here is also surprisingly harmonious: the relationship with the federal government is one of “mutual respect, trust and cordiality” and even provincial governments could show “patience and flexibility” (232-235). The list of “accommodations”—hamlet privileges, Gebietsamt authority, German-language schools, a visit by Premier Martin to Bishop Abram Wiebe, a 1923 compromise by the Saskatchewan government on private schools—are sympathetically treated. The “conspiracy” theory that federal officials knowingly misled Mennonites in 1873 to believe church-run schools could be guaranteed is summarily dismissed. Ens seems to accept the interpretation of the Mennonite elders themselves, that the relationship became strained because of the war, that is, when provincial governments misused war-time emotions to pursue Anglo-conformity. Even, then, “full citizenship” is often as much the result of Mennonite temptation to take government resources—the *Kleine Gemeinde* acceptance of the school grants in 1879 or the *Reinlaender* acceptance of mortgaged loans in 1894—than the result of coercive laws (75/91).

Several questions arise. I would have been interesting, seeing that this book is part of a wider series, to speculate how this state-church relationship differed for Catholics, Jews, Methodists and other groups covered in the recent renaissance of Canadian religious history. It would also have been interesting to explore the realm beyond the institutional level of Mennonite-state relations. How would a cultural reading of nationalism, as an evolving form of “imagined” self-identity in the context of an increasingly integrated society, have interpreted this story? How did Mennonites in everyday life see this contest between “subject” and “citizen”? Surely, the acceptance of public schools by community leaders in the 1920s did not mean that in daily life most Mennonites became “quite open to incorporation as full Canadian citizens.” If “subject” and “citizen” are seen as states of mind, then could resistance to ideas of citizenship not have continued in informal ways? Finally, where does the author situate his work vis à vis the very rich historical tradition of “Mennonites and the State” that has been developed by E.K. Francis, Frank Epp, William Janzen, and others in nationally-recognized works? A more overt dialogue with these works would have been welcomed.

These questions aside, the book stands out as a thoughtful, detailed narrative of an important phenomenon in Mennonite history and it will be positively received by both specialist and novice.

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David H. Epp, *Johann Cornies*, translated by Peter Pauls (Winnipeg, CMBC Publications and the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1995). Paperback, xxii, 137 pp.

This volume is the sixth in the Echo Verlag series of 14 volumes to appear in translation as a result of the project initiated by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and CMBC publications. The Echo Verlag series of booklets in German were edited and printed by Arnold Dyck between 1945 and 1965. The *Johann Cornies* volume is one of the more significant ones in the series.

The name of Johann Cornies is well known to students of Russian Mennonite history. Cornies is often seen as the man who, almost single-handedly, transformed the barren steppes of southern Russia, where Mennonites arrived around 1800, into thriving and prosperous communities which served as models to be emulated by other immigrants and Russian peasants. Cornies is also sometimes depicted as an almost ruthless, despotic dictator who had little concern for fellow human beings and had little understanding or appreciation for fundamental religious values, especially those defining the essence of Anabaptism.

David H. Epp's biography is an unrestrained apology for Cornies. As Peter Pauls states in his Preface, "Epp's main thesis is that Cornies was a capitalist with a socialist's conscience, a man who remained unspoiled by success and uncorrupted by money and power" (p. xi). Cornies, according to Epp, was primarily concerned about helping others and also had a profound commitment to God. But, as is so frequently the case with great men, he was too often criticized by others.

Readers cannot help but marvel at the accomplishments of Cornies that are documented in the book, whatever the conclusions about his character. There is a great deal of detail, not only about Cornies himself, but also about the life and circumstances of the Mennonites and the surrounding peoples, such as the nomadic Nogais, the Molokans and the Doukhobors.

Pauls, who is a professor of English at the University of Winnipeg, is to be commended for an excellent translation. The Preface helps the reader to place the book into the large context of Russian Mennonite history. A brief biographical sketch of the author, David H. Epp, and a selected bibliography, are included at the end of the book.

Abe Dueck, Director
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Peter P. Klassen. *Die rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*. Volume 1: *Witmarsum am Rio Alto Krauel und Auhagen auf dem Stoltz-Plateau in Santa Catarina* (Bolanden-Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein e.V., 1995). Paperback, pp.490 with illustrations.

Peter Klassen, the acknowledged expert on South American Mennonites, known for his two-volume work on the Mennonites in Paraguay, now presents the first volume of a history of the Brazilian Mennonites. His division of this history follows logically the two historical phases since 1930: the attempt at settlement in Santa Catarina, and the new beginning after 1950 in Parana and Rio Grande do Sul. This history was written on assignment from the Mennonites of Brazil, with the result that Klassen was given access to the abundant archival materials without being told how to interpret them. It appears that this assignment demonstrates an interest by the Brazilian Mennonites in their own history, one rich in conflict, perhaps in order to come to terms with it.

The Mennonites of Brazil are, like those of Paraguay, refugees from Russia, who succeeded in escaping the Stalin terror of the 1920s, but who found the door to the promised land, Canada, closed in their face. These several thousand persons were not able to remain in Germany—a grotesque consideration in view of the thirteen million refugees since 1945. And so the only escape was to Paraguay or Brazil, and this choice, between a more easily accessible Brazil and the remoter Paraguay, which offered better chances for a closed Mennonite settlement, already suggests the lines of development of two very different historical paths.

Klassen describes the first years of the settlement, characterized by the “shock of the primeval forest,” as one might say. Farmers used to technology and culture and flat, rich lands, had to eke out their existence in primitive circumstances, a depressing undertaking in situation after situation. In spite of this there were good beginnings in agriculture and settlement. Klassen then describes in broad strokes but very systematically the separate sectors of this immigrant life. Self-government (which finally did not come about), life of the church and the community, schools and cultural developments, and the like. By following a thematic arrangement Klassen loses some of the chronology, but a chronological order would no doubt have been even more unclear. Each of the thematic sections is given an historical introduction, with Russia as the measure of all things—the “good old days” (before World War I) for which one longed, as in Paraguay. Sometimes Klassen reaches back to the Anabaptist times, or he places this immigration into the wider context of German immigration to Brazil.

In spite of the competent and balanced narration, the book at times is hard reading, and that is due to the fact that even the interested reader cannot always keep track who is in conflict with whom and for what reason. The history of the

Brazilian Mennonites in this early phase is a chain of conflicts: settlement against co-operative, Mennonite Church against the Mennonite Brethren, those who left against those who stayed—and behind all of this time and again: personality conflicts, so human and so bound up with real problems that they constitute a knot of argument and emotion.

The existence of the Brazilian Mennonites was determined by two problem areas, in my view, one of which was also in effect in Paraguay, while the other is typical of the Brazilian situation:

1. In Paraguay the Mennonites lived far removed from civilization, in a closed community with few links to the outside world and relatively undisturbed by that world, so that they were preoccupied by their own problems. By contrast, the Brazilian Mennonites were “in the world” from the outset. Indeed, it could be said that they were controlled from the outside. They compared themselves to the other German settlements and had been settled by the non-Mennonite Hanseatic Colonization Society, from whom they expected help. In contrast with Paraguay these settlers individually owned their land and the possibility of moving away eventually contributed to the slow death of the settlements. The question of non-resistance also set them apart. They had gone to Brazil, although the Mennonite position on this question had not been granted there. It was subsequently ignored and given up. The language of the land was adopted much earlier than in Paraguay, not least because they had to suffer under a wave of nationalism which took away their German schools and thrust them headlong into Brazilian society.

In my opinion the Brazilian Mennonites were, unfortunately to their harm, dependent for a very long time on help from Germany and the Netherlands, and the role played by Benjamin H. Unruh in Karlsruhe, who had the ear of the settlers and who was one of them from Russia, in retrospect appears grotesque in its power over them. These contacts with the outside world contributed to the conflicts within, since it was possible to use such contacts as follows: “If you do not follow my advice, there will be no funds from Holland any more....” After 1945 this dependancy on Europe was replaced by contacts with North America, but the situation was the same. This book is a mine on the subject of psychological-sociological conflict and resolution, for example in the fact that all appeals for unity failed when the leaders (*Kampfhähne*) did not agree. One can say that the Mennonites of Brazil were forced to face the world from the outset, a situation which the Mennonites of Paraguay are only confronting now.

2. The other, even more basic problem area, which applies to both countries, is the question whether a closed German-Mennonite settlement pattern with its postulated (but never factual) unity of civilian and church community can be maintained in a time of growing societal connection and consciousness of individual freedom. What is the

relationship of Christianity and peoplehood (*Völkisches*), Kingdom of God and kingdom of this world? Especially when Germany provides not only direction but also National Socialist ideas and *Blut und Boden* ideology? The latter naturally brought conflict with the Dutch Mennonites.

What it means to be in but not of the world is a question that runs through all church history, and the Russian settlement model, which desired the unity of sacred and profane and never realized it, must today be understood as a contradiction in itself. On the one hand, it is no longer possible to direct and govern life as before, and on the other, this model does not take into account, theologically speaking, that even the most pious settlers take the very world which they seek to escape with them to their settlements.

Finally the settlements were all dissolved, weakened by departures, economic problems and internal conflicts. Two widely separated new settlements were the result; the Mennonite Brethren attempted once again to form a unified, closed settlement and church community, while the Mennonite Church for economic reasons relocated to the suburbs of Curitiba, in spite of their fears of the city.

Peter Klassen has written a valuable book which is of more than historical interest. Whoever wishes to inform himself about the contemporary situation of the Brazilian Mennonites will have to wait for the second volume but it should be worth waiting for.

Peter J. Foth, Hamburg
[translated and abridged]

J.B. Toew., *JB. The Autobiography of a Twentieth Century Mennonite Pilgrim* (Fresno, California: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1995).

Following on his recent assessment of the Mennonite Brethren Church, *A Pilgrimage of Faith* (1993), J.B. Toews has now released his own autobiography, two-hundred pages of compelling reading, an unusual and important book. Where the earlier work leaned heavily on other histories—a weakness of M.B. historiography generally—this text is J.B. all the way, brief, even blunt, and to the point, telling his remarkable story with a clear memory and a sharp eye, the truth spoken in love without window dressing.

In twenty-two brief chapters Toews chronicles his personal journey through the Mennonite landscapes of southern Russia and North America, and though his recall of mundane detail is remarkable, his focus is and remains on the spiritual dimensions of his life experience. From his father Toews learned

about faith and the cost of discipleship, and his long relationship with his father undoubtedly had a profound influence on the choices of “poverty and obedience” made by JB and his loyal wife, Nettie.

For the many who have benefitted from his various ministries this book permits a brief but telling insight into the motivation that kept Toews on the move, seeing in his work for the brotherhood his own place in the Kingdom. It is a serious business, and Toews knew how to impress his congregations with the seriousness of God’s work, but occasionally there is a touch of humor, usually self-deprecating, which shows him to be humane as well as human.

As one who has, even literally, sat at the feet of J.B. Toews (at an overcrowded *Bibelbesprechung* in the Northend M.B. Church in Winnipeg), I am glad that he has written this book, which will go a long way to bridging the usually unavoidable gap between the man and the myth.

Victor G. Doersen
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EnRoute. Hinjawaajis. The Memoirs of Henry J. Gerbrandt (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1994). Paperback, 314 pp.

There are memoirs and autobiographies I don’t like to read. Particularly pious Christians often write about “blessings” and “God’s marvellous grace” in their lives, yet generally they do not add much to our understanding of the world, life, or faith in God. They merely enumerate events and stages in their life that may be of interest to themselves and perhaps their children and grandchildren, but for readers outside their families they are of little importance.

Henry J. Gerbrandt, long-time minister, teacher, missionary and administrator of the Bergthal Church, has written his story with a keen eye for what is important to a wider constituency. He seems to have the younger and older readers in mind who look to senior leaders for inspiration, wisdom, guidance, and direction for the future. What emerges in this well-written book, is a humble, modest and personable man and leader of his religious community, a person who is candid yet kind in his criticism of his church’s failures and weaknesses.

Born and raised in the “Kanadier” Mennonite community of Southern Manitoba, Gerbrandt was often tempted to give in to feelings of inferiority in the presence of the seemingly “more educated” and “cultured” “Russlander” who came to Canada in the 1920s and later. He refused to feel inferior to anyone, serving his church with dedication and the varied talents he had

been endowed with, and moving freely among the different Mennonite groups.

Gerbrandt is frank and honest in writing about shortcomings and failures in his ministry. Whether it was the less than successful missionary venture in Mexico, his perceived overstaying his welcome as a pastor in Altona, or his failure at first to win the confidence of “Umsiedler” young people in Wolfsburg, Germany—Gerbrandt describes these aspects of his ministry with a disarming honesty and genuine humility. He is a man “in whom there is no guile.”

His “confessions” are also indicative of this man’s attractive humanness. He laments the tensions that existed between himself and the powerful Bishop Schulz. He regrets the fact that due to the pressures of the ministry he was unable to express his love for his wife Susan more “romantically.” In connection with the Mexico venture he writes: “All that took a heavy toll on our relationship. I did not give Susan the love and support she needed” (302). Later in life they “discovered the pleasure of simply being together.”

A concerned leader of his church, Gerbrandt is firmly committed to Anabaptism and the spiritual heritage of the Mennonite people. In his reflections on the state of the modern church he is both critical and prophetic. While he recognizes that “the clock cannot be turned back,” he feels that the salaried, professional one-pastor system today is neither Mennonite nor biblical. The church lost much when it abandoned the traditional practice of calling and ordaining ministers out of their own midst and surrendered the spiritual ministry to paid professionals.

The short human-interest stories in Chapter 19 belong to the most important parts of the book. They are reflective narratives about his and Susan’s experiences with Mexicans, Indians, air travel, Bible School teaching, weddings, hospital work, and “Umsiedler.” Here are Gerbrandt’s closing reflections on his attendance at Martin Luther King’s funeral: “For a few brief hours I had walked with people who were hurting yet who seemed more liberated than those who stood behind those ominous, deadly guns watching over us. Throughout that day people pressed my hands, embraced me and thanked me for making their sorrow my sorrow. I felt I had rubbed shoulders with some of the great people of our time” (294).

The book is written in an accessible style, includes numerous black-and-white photographs, and is relatively free of misprints. The professional cover design by Gerald Loewen and the format and sturdy binding leave little to be desired.

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Aus Gottes linker Hand. Stimme eines Irrenden. Gedichte von Abram Johann Friesen. Edited by Hartmut Fröschle with a foreword by Georg K. Epp (Toronto: German-Canadian Historical Association, 1995). Paperback, pp.117.

Abram Johann Friesen may perhaps be called the last of the Arnold Dyck generation of Mennonite writers, and the present selection from his works offers a resumé of poetry from the 1940s to the present, grouped under a number of telling headings. We find here not only the standard themes of love, nature, human fate, and art, but also "German Fate [*Deutsches Schicksal*]", politics, doubt and faith, and *Mennonitentum*.

Friesen is an intelligent writer, as his earlier prose demonstrated, and he does not waste words, but as a poet his work is that of an epigone, rehearsing the themes of an earlier generation after they have lost their urgency. Of course, some of these themes are "timeless," and some of Friesen's variations are fresh and witty:

Laß sie glücklich werden, bat ich
 Gott herzinniglich.
 Und sie ist es auch geworden,
 Aber - nicht durch mich.

Others remain too firmly ensconced in the idiom of pseudo-Romanticism, in vocabulary, meter and rhyme. Clearly this is an item of faith for Friesen, who complains about modern poetry:

Der moderne Dichter

Er ist ein moderner Dichter
 Und schreibt, was keiner versteht.
 Die Form, die hat er zerstückelt,
 Die Gedanken, die hat er verdreht.

Er spricht längst nicht mehr in Sätzen,
 Die Grammatik ist abgeschafft,
 Er schleudert Gedankenketten
 Um sich mit blindwütiger Kraft.

Er will seine Seele enthüllen,
 Entblößen will er den Leib,
 Begierde und Wollust erfüllen -
 Der Mensch wird zum Zeitvertreib.

Er zerstört die Gesellschaftsformen,
 Es herrscht Anarchie und - Sex.
 Moral gibts nicht mehr noch Aestetik -
 Zur Kunst wird der Tintenklecks.

Du verirrtter, verwirrtter Dichter,
 Verkrüppelt, vermessnes Genie,
 Wie soll nur die Menschheit verkraften
 Deine alberne Blasphemie!

There is much good sense in these verses, which offer an eclectic, and often critical commentary on life in general and in particular on Mennonite and "German" experience. For a poet who chooses the toleration of Lessing as his motto the lines about "German fate" and "Politik" raise troubling questions. His poem about the false celebration of war ("*Man sucht nach schönen Worten*") stands in sharp contrast to the racist overtones of "*Roosevelts Tod*" and protestations of patriotism to the German "Heimat." Was not the lost homeland of the immigrant Canadian Mennonites the Ukranian and Caucasian steppe?

Older readers (still able to read German) will appreciate the echoes of Fritz Senn in poems of reminiscence. Friesen does not share Senn's lyrical gift, but he adds more in the way of ideas and wit; he might be called a somewhat gentler Mennonite Heine. His voice is here at last added to the canon of German-Canadian-Mennonite writing, to which he contributes, if one may speak of a Mennonite cocktail, that all-important slice of lemon.

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Carrie Bender, *A Fruitful Vine* (Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1993). Paperback, 190 pp. .

Carrie Bender, *A Joyous Heart* (Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1994). Paperback, 168 pp. U.S.. \$6.95

Carrie Bender, *Whispering Brook Farm* (Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1995). Paperback, 190 pp. U.S. \$6.95

Elizabeth Hershberger Bauman, *Coals of Fire* (Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1954; revised 1994). Paperback, 128 pp. U.S. \$4.95

Carrie Bender's *A Fruitful Vine* and *A Joyous Heart* are numbers one and three of a trilogy (*Miriam's Journal*) covering a period of eleven years, written from the viewpoint of a fortyish Amish woman in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The journal begins a few days after the death of Miriam's mother, her only relative in the community in which she lives, leaving her feeling desperately

alone. Because Miriam has spent her growing years caring first for an invalid father and then her mother, she has had no time for courtship and marriage, but she still longs for a family of her own. Is it too late? She recalls that her parents were already forty-three when she was born, having long given up hope of any children. But what is God's will for her? Will he "show her the way" if she is ready to follow? Throughout both books this is of paramount importance to her.

I would classify these books as autobiographical romance, written as a diary but with form and shaping. Because the author (Carrie Bender is a pen name) is herself a member of an old-order Amish group in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, she can write with authenticity and insight outsiders would not have. The books are written in a lively, thoughtful style, interwoven with lyrical descriptive passages and down-to-earth details of quilting, baby-sitting, courting. The reader receives a vivid impression of what life is like in the Amish community, including resentment against the "englisch" who stare, live an undisciplined life, and are a threat to the stability of the quiet, rural lifestyle. Indeed, in *A Joyous Heart*, a whole year is crowded in to one twenty-four page chapter entitled "Amish or Not," in which the "englisch" lifestyle is juxtaposed with that of the Amish through a series of vignettes.

Although these books appear to be written for the Amish community (Janette Oke of the Amish?) they do deal with universal themes of loneliness, change, meaning of life, and the joys and sorrows of daily living common to everyone.

Whispering Brook Farm, written for a wider, juvenile audience, depicts the daily life of the Petersheims, a close-knit, loving, amish family. The theme of change and coming to terms with it is seen through a variety of family events: birth of a baby, death of a beloved grandfather, marriage of a sister. Much of the action is seen through the eyes of nine-year-old Nancy, who has heightened feelings about everything. Again Bender's writing is a celebration of family and simple country living, always remembering who created both. She has a keen eye for beauty, and a good understanding of human relationships.

The bright, detailed covers and pencil illustrations of all three books, by Joy Dunn Keenan, add to their attractiveness.

Elizabeth Hershberger Bauman's *Coals of Fire* is a reissue of the children's peace classic she was commissioner to write by the Peace Problems committee of the Mennonite church after World War II. Since this is the fiftieth anniversary of the end of that war (1945-1995) it seems an appropriate time for it. The seventeen stories, as well as the illustrations by Allan Eitzen, are the same as in the original. One helpful change is the note on "coals of fire" in the preface, explaining the Ancient Egyptian custom of carrying a pan of burning charcoal on the head to the one who has been mistreated, to cook a meal for him, thus celebrating the renewal of friendship.

All of the stories are true examples of living out Jesus' admonition to love our enemies; to return good for evil. I found the story "Marie's Flight" particularly moving, as it recounts the plight of Yugoslavian refugees returning to their

homeland, after years in a refugee camp in the Sinai Desert during World War II. How little life has changed; how great the need still to demonstrate Christ's love to our enemies! Books such as this one are an excellent means of communicating this truth and challenge to our children and grandchildren.

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James D. Yoder, *Black Spider Over Tiegenhof*, a novel (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995). Paperback, 232 pp., \$15.50 Can.

The novel *Black Spider Over Tiegenhof* has as its principal characters the Claassen family which lives in the village of Ladekopp, near the town of Tiegenhof, east of Danzig (Gdansk). The story begins in 1939 just prior to the start of World War II. The principal characters in the Claassen family are Esther, the wife of Gerhard, a moderately successful Mennonite farmer, their son Christian who is 11 years old when the novel begins, and Ruth a Jewish girl whom they adopt because her life is threatened. The novel follows the family through the war years to the terrifying flight to the west at the end of the war.

In many respects Yoder's novel is to be complemented. It deals with a dramatic segment of Mennonite history, one which has had little literary attention. The novel touches some of the moral dilemmas Mennonites experienced during the National Socialist era. It also allows the reader to feel Mennonites' profound sense of loss when they were evicted from lands they had called home for 400 years.

Yoder interviewed numerous people in order to gain the material for the story line. The story line is good, and has the ingredients of conflict, tension, and suspense.

Yoder places his characters in the village of Ladekopp which was located within the Free City of Danzig and thus under Polish jurisdiction. He shows how strongly the people in Danzig supported Hitler even before the area was captured by Germany in September 1939.

There are, however, a number of features which detract from the strength of the novel. What the reader notices almost from the start is that some of the historical references are inaccurate.

That there was strong support for Hitler in the Free State of Danzig before the war is well documented, but that the school children in the Free State of Danzig would have had to say "Heil Hitler" repeatedly each day prior to September 1939 and chant an oath of allegiance to Hitler, is questionable.

Prior to the war, Yoder has a visiting Mennonite state that in the United States Mennonites "may choose alternative service to military service. They help in forestry, conservation work, and hospitals" (15). The US government, we know, only accepted alternative service in April of 1941.

What is further troubling is that Yoder assumes that the Claassens are living under German rule. The whole complex division of the Mennonite areas in the Vistula-Nogat River areas into three political jurisdictions of Germany, Poland and the Free State of Danzig, is not even mentioned. Yoder oversimplifies a complex situation and frequently leaves the reader puzzled.

In the summer of 1939 Yoder has Jews from Danzig being sent to Auschwitz (p.34), yet Auschwitz was set up by the German government in Polish territory well after the invasion of Poland. Yoder even has Gerhard Claassen in the summer of 1939 listing the various concentration camps, most of which did not exist at that time (p.41).

This listing of concentration camps also gives the impression that ordinary German citizens knew about all the concentration camps right from the time they were established by the German government. He thereby pointedly accuses German citizens of complicity in the death and terror the camps caused. The accusation is too sweeping and at any rate is made at the wrong time in history; namely before the camps even existed.

Yoder has Stalin burning Mennonite villages in 1939, exiling Mennonite men to Siberia, and forcing women and children to flee to Berlin (p. 59). The Berlin refugees he sees as being settled in Paraguay by "Hitler's Germany" (59). In this instance, one can only conclude that the author collapses the events of the Russian civil war (1918-1920), the emigration from Moscow to Paraguay in 1930, the Soviet deportation of Mennonite men in the 1930s, and the flight from Berlin to Paraguay in 1947 into one episode which he locates in 1939.

This is a sample of the problematic historical references. The author may have felt that in a novel the context need not be historically accurate. However, when an author chooses to write a historical novel, and furthermore chooses as his subject matter a setting which is as well known as the era of National Socialism and World War II, to garble the events of the context does not help the reader to feel and understand the lives of the people in the novel.

Another shortcoming of the novel is that the characters do not really become characters within a social setting. The characters seem to be types, even stereotypes, and the Claassen family appears to be largely an isolated entity. Relationships to people in the community are reported editorially, but they are not woven into the fabric of the story.

In the field of history it is often observed that history is written by victors. In this novel, the author Yoder, an American, is a citizen of one of the countries that won the war. By choosing to write about a German family during the war, Yoder takes on the daunting task of trying to enter the imaginative world of the vanquished, and seeing life from their perspective. Yoder fails to do this. At

too many points the novel reflects the views, perspectives, and judgements of the post-war allied world, and not those of a Danzig area German family.

The novel is thus a disappointment. Although some readers may find the novel interesting and engaging, its considerable potential is not realized. At crucial points, it serves to misinform rather than inform; it confirms western views rather than to open up to the reader the mind and soul of German people who lived through those traumatic and ambiguous years. The book ends up being judgemental and does not help the reader to understand the moral dilemmas of the world within which its characters lived.

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John Toews with Eleanor Loewen, *No Longer Alone: Mental Health and the Church* (Waterloo/Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1995). Paperback, 174 pp.

This book represents the meeting of two traditionally very separate realms: mental health and the church. Ironically, as people search for balance and truth in their lives, they have been so often discouraged from either exploring their Christian faith or seeking the help of mental health professionals. In this book Toews and Loewen integrate faith and mental illness.

Toews is a psychiatrist, currently a faculty member at the University of Calgary. He provides the knowledge base for the understanding of mental illnesses and invites the readers to accept this understanding in the context of their Christianity. He accomplishes this by using Scripture throughout the text, paralleling experiences, emotional states and interactions of Biblical figures to present-day occurrences. The titles of chapters addressing anxiety disorders, mood disorders, and addictions are verses from the Bible. This frames the topics in a new and different light, capturing the essence of these issues.

Loewen is currently a faculty member at Catherine Booth Bible College and has an extensive background in education. With the use of her skills as an adult education specialist, Loewen's contribution is apparent in the organized and focussed layout of the material.

The chapters generally begin with a Scripture text, opening thoughts, a story, a focus section, followed by a search section. As the book is designed to be a study guide, for either personal or group work, questions for further study and additional resources are included at the end of each chapter. This is valuable, since Toews gives only a brief treatment of the topic. Further study and discussion is necessary within the church in order that its role become clear.

Generally the presentation of the material is clear, with concise explanations of psychiatric and theological terms. The content flows logically from the initial questions of what mental health is and the life stages of the Christian faith. These first few chapters provide the background for the more complex subjects of “Who Sinned?” and “The Need for Healing.” Exploration of sources or causes of mental illness and the spiritual component of healing—“to restore to wholeness”—are addressed.

A shift to a focus on emotions and responses to life events gently moves the text toward the review of specific mental disorders. Several chapters briefly describe panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, depression and schizophrenia. The basic information is good, but greater detail and further study is required to fully comprehend and to respond in a helpful manner to persons with such illnesses. The sketchy accounts of some of the disorders tend to present a simplistic view and to minimize the severity of the disorders and their impact on daily life.

The final chapter deals with the stigma of mental illness and how society perpetuates this false view. In the context of how Jesus challenged stigma, as he ate with tax collectors and spoke to women as equals, the question of how the church should interact with people with mental illnesses becomes easier to answer. Practical suggestions for individuals and groups are included in the final pages of the book.

The value and use of this book cannot be more strongly emphasized and recommended. The blending of psychiatry and Christianity is initially frightening, as it has been so seldom addressed openly in the potentially caring and supportive community of believers. Toews writes clearly and directly about fears and the individual as follows: “Like all things, once we start to understand them, fears decrease. Fears are largely based on the unknown. We begin to see people who struggle with these difficult disorders in a different light. We see them as people first.”

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