

Book Reviews

History and Memoirs

Marlene Epp, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). Pp. 275.

Women Without Men is a compassionate study of a group of people, primarily women, profoundly affected by oppression and war. It concerns the Soviet Mennonite population that lived through the Stalinist era of the 1930s, fled the Soviet Union during the Second World War and later emigrated to Canada and Paraguay. In this book, historian Marlene Epp focuses on the intersection of gender, war and immigration. She points out that most research concerning refugees begins with a “male paradigm” and that women as a special category of immigrants have rarely been given much attention in historical study.

Between 1947 and 1952, 8,000 Mennonites came to Canada as refugees and 4,000 went to Paraguay, with many of the latter group moving to Canada in the 1950s. A high percentage of these were female-headed families. Basing her research on archival material, oral histories consisting of tape-recorded interviews, and autobiographies and memoirs, Epp examines the effect of ethnicity on the women refugees and the ways in which they coped with family fragmentation and reconfiguration.

The first chapter of the book describes the suffering of the Mennonite community in Ukraine during the 1920s and 30s. Due to famine and the arrests and disappearance of the men during the Stalinist purges, Mennonite villages became communities of “women without men.” While this story is well-known to Mennonite readers, the focus on women in this study is unique. Epp tells the story of the trek out of Ukraine in 1943, as the settlers fled the advancing Red Army and followed the German army back to Germany. In the absence of

men, the women had to be brave and strong - physically, emotionally and mentally, attributes frequently ascribed to the male gender. But the women also had to be gentle and nurturing. They faced enormous ethical dilemmas: there were issues of suicide, abortion, lying about country origin, smuggling, stealing food, bribing officials - all of these often necessary to ensure the survival of their families. They were frequently targets of rape, molestation and murder. Epp emphasizes the bravery and heroism of the women who survived these dreadful conditions. Yet when they arrived in refugee camps after the war, and became dependent the benevolence and instruction of relief workers and immigration officials, the "paradoxical adjective of 'weak' came to be applied to these women without men."

In the camps, the traditional norms of North American and Russian Mennonite culture were assumed to hold. Women had conducted informal religious practices, but in the camps male ministers from North America took over. There was a widespread perception that many of the refugees lacked spiritual and moral foundations, at least by North American Mennonite Standards.

Some of these families eventually settled in Paraguay and Canada. The patronizing attitude toward these "weak" families, that is, those without male heads, continued. In Paraguay the women again faced enormous challenges as they created new homes in the jungle. They also faced the challenge of dealing with the patriarchal attitudes of the Mennonite leaders. Epp points out that they "suffered doubly." First, living with the tragedy of loss and hardship in the Soviet Union and second, being considered by some to be morally and spiritually inferior. Those who sought to remarry were condemned by church leaders because the fate of their spouses was unknown. While state law assumed death after seven years absence, the church was much harsher in its rules.

Settling in Canada also presented problems for women without spouses. The immigrant widows, heads of families, found themselves in powerless roles. Not all churches allowed women to participate in the "Brüderschaft or to vote, despite paying full church dues. Coming from Europe to a community strongly influenced by evangelicalism and fundamentalism, with its anti-modernism and ethical legalism, they were considered "worldly." Male preachers harped on women's behavior, their use of cosmetics, fashionable hairdos and dress styles. In the hierarchy within the Mennonite church communities, based mainly on the period of migration, these "DPs" were on the lowest level. Epp suggests that because these women were examples of boldness, courage and personal autonomy, they posed a threat to a paternalist community that placed women in a subordinate position.

This book is a thoughtful, well-documented study. It represents a fine tribute to a courageous group of individuals and, sadly, the negative attitudes of their hosts.

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Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). Pp. 362.

For some two hundred years after their arrival in the New World most American Mennonites and other Anabaptists such as the Amish had very limited contact with the federal and state governments. As firm believers in the two kingdoms and as victims of savage religious persecution during the Protestant Reformation they preferred to live in isolated, rural communities. For them the American environment provided an ideal haven from bitter persecution in Europe. Mennonites and Amish very much appreciated the religious freedom denied to them in some parts of Europe and considered themselves loyal and law abiding citizens. It was not until the twentieth century that the state began to intrude on their isolation. This intrusion took the form of military conscription. Their determination to uphold pacifist beliefs gave them a sense of civic isolation when their patriotism was being questioned.

Bush confines himself to the experiences of the "Old" and General Conference Mennonites in their encounter with the state during the twentieth century when their young men were conscripted for military service from 1917 to the early 1970s. Much of his story, based upon a large amount of published and unpublished materials, has been told before and is not entirely new. His first major chapter includes the World War experience. As is well known, this episode was traumatic for many draftees who were physically and mentally abused in many military camps. But also other Mennonites suffered when their patriotism was found wanting by their fellow citizens. This unpleasant encounter with the state during this short period was partially responsible for the conservative reaction among "Old" Mennonites whose trust in the other kingdom had been shaken. Furthermore, many efforts were now made to strengthen and reevaluate the Mennonite peace position to help men prepare better for another military draft.

Many pages of Bush's book are devoted to a rather detailed discussion of the World War II experience which was not very burdensome for most Mennonite draftees who were allowed to perform civilian tasks. Also much of this story has been told before but Bush adds much by using many interviews in the Schowalter Oral History Collection in the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College, North Newton, KS. and other sources.

Next he discusses the failure in the post-war era to restore the Mennonite community and conscientious objectors who were given the option to do so-called I-W work after the draft was reinstated in 1948. Although the I-W system seemed ideal Bush, and others before him, contend that the I-W system produced considerable criticism. To many the I-W option seemed too easy, did not require enough sacrifice, and was often abused by immature draftees.

A turning point came in Mennonite-state cooperation during the 1960s when many Mennonite young men refused to register for the draft and participated in anti-Vietnam war protests. Many Mennonite leaders, who had always urged their young men to accept the government's options, were now forced to face new realities.

The book ends with an interesting discussion on Mennonite pacifism and evangelism. While American evangelism has traditionally rejected Christian pacifism, Mennonites, Bush contends, have been successful in pursuing and maintaining both.

Two Kingdoms is a good overview of two Mennonite groups trying to maintain their traditional peace principle in a time of considerable acculturation, assimilation, and public pressure to conform to patriotic demands. He shows that often the "enemy" was not the

state but “patriotic” Mennonites eager to conform. Bush seems to conclude that in general these two Mennonite groups have been partially successful. However, *Two Kingdoms* omits much that should have been included. For instance, the reader learns very little about the “theological” origins of Mennonite pacifism or Mennonite experiences with the state in other countries prior to or after World War I. Nor does he compare the experiences of America’s two largest Mennonite denominations, the Mennonite Church (MC) and the General Conference (GC), with other Mennonites, the Amish, the Hutterites, Canadian Mennonites, and the other so-called Historic Peace Churches. Furthermore, one would have expected more discussion on Mennonite reaction to the Korean and Vietnam wars and MCC’s involvement in Vietnam. Thus we learn very little about Mennonite draftees in the 1950s and 1960s. One might want to know, for instance, how many draftees chose the military option during that time and something about their experiences.

Two Kingdoms contains much very interesting material, and is well written, but the entire story of Mennonite pacifism, including all Anabaptists, in the twentieth century remains to be told.

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Louise Stoltzfus, *Quiet Shouts: Stories of Lancaster Mennonite Women Leaders* (Scottsdale, PA.: Herald Press, 1999). Pb., pp. 245.

Similar to Mary Lou’s Cummings *Full Circle: Stories of Mennonite Women* and Ruth Unrau’s *Encircled: Stories of Mennonite Women*, which provide short biographies of women leaders in the church, Louise Stoltzfus reviews of the lives of 14 Mennonite women from Lancaster County. Stoltzfus’ book spans the twentieth century starting with the early efforts of Lancaster County missionaries and ending in the struggles for female ordination at the close of the century. In each chapter, Stoltzfus provides background information about the undercurrents in the broader church so that each woman’s story is placed within its historical context. We learn about how women were inspired by turn-of-the-century revival movements, how women were effected by the rigid dress requirements of the mid-twentieth century, and how women’s ordination became an issue for the church on the eve of the millennium.

By including stories about women who were not leaders in the traditional sense of the word, Stoltzfus builds on the earlier collected biographies, which tended to focus on women whose accomplishments were easily recognized by the community. Stoltzfus’ stories about pastor’s wives, quiet church planters, and unassuming missionaries persuasively argue for broader, gender-informed notions of leadership. They also point to the twentieth century as a time of paradoxical tension and growth for women who pursued church work. Many of the women in this collection did not seek careers outside the parameters of the home or the work of their husbands. Others worked under the control and at the whim of male-dominated boards and institutions. Still others, near the end of the century, stood on the shoulders

of those that went before them and encountered little resistance to their aspirations for church leadership.

In keeping with title of the book, the women portrayed in this volume effectively challenged “the quiet in the land” feminine and domestic ideology of the Mennonite church, in which women were to submit graciously to male and church authority. For example, one lively farmwoman, Minnie Eberly Holsopple Good, surreptitiously wrote and rehearsed her husband’s sermons. The same women who submitted and wore plain clothing long after the requirement for men had faded, founded missions in the United States and abroad, built churches and preached sermons. Women, who followed their husbands from country to country, cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children as they went, started projects that resulted in church-wide institutions. Unassuming but highly gifted women sought ordination in spite of discriminatory church policies. Many of these accomplishments were achieved without titles, job descriptions and little access to resources.

Several of the women in the volume were “center women,” that is the women who held significant yet unofficial leadership positions in the church. A typical center woman’s position in the community is elevated by her broad knowledge of the people in the community; she knows everyone and everyone knows her. A center woman usually leads by example, *pulling others into the project as she works*. One of the clearest examples of a center woman in Stoltzfus’ collection is Louise Mellenger Bair, founder of the Hinkletown Mennonite church who, as Stoltzfus writes, “History shows was the visionary behind the church, doing much of the all-consuming mental and physical labor that brought the Hinkletown church into being.” Stoltzfus later notes how Bair never held an official leadership position in any church. Another common characteristic of Stoltzfus’ center women was their willingness to tackle any type of job. These women knew the value of the scrub brush, what Bair referred to as the “back around work.” These newer definitions of leadership, informed by women’s experience, serves as a challenge to Mennonite historians who often overlook “sister workers,” those who do the “back around work” and the “center women” in their stories about Mennonites.

One depressing consistency found in all the “stories of” books is that women continue to protect their leadership aspirations by cloaking themselves in pious language. Rarely do male leaders in the church “prove” a calling by mentioning how often the Lord spoke to them. Why cannot women simply pursue their careers in the church without having to justify their calling to the broader constituency over and over again? Surely, if a woman is called, if her contributions are constructive, and her talents and gifts meaningful she should not feel it necessary to verbalize repeatedly how God called her. Why cannot the church recognize that she is called and echo this call? For the most part, the church did not call the women in these stories. The church did not recognize their incredible potential. Rather, called by God, these women quietly followed their calling, often challenging church doctrine and proscriptions in the process. Perhaps a “stories of” book written at the turn of the next century will show some progress in this area. Perhaps our daughters will fully integrate into the church so that when they do express interest in the church work they are called, not only by God, but by the church as well.

Mary Swartley and Rhoda Keener, eds., *She Has Done A Good Thing: Mennonite Women Leaders Tell Their Stories* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999). Pb., pp. 272 .

It has been 25 years since the first woman was ordained for ministry in the Mennonite Church but the role of women in church leadership is still the subject of much discussion within the denomination. For the most part, *She Has Done a Good Thing* simply tells the stories of women who have emerged as leaders in the Mennonite Church context. As Lois Barrett comments, "The first step in helping people accept women in ministry is not a theological discussion. Instead, the key was (is) letting them get to know real women in ministry"(p. 44). This book is a valuable tool by which that can happen.

The stories in this book focus on women born between 1915 and 1950 and are divided into four sections - theologians, pastors, educators and administrators. Each story manages to convey the distinctive personality of its writer; most are written in an extremely gracious spirit, while a few have a harder edge to them. Despite the differences in personality and the uniqueness of each story, I was fascinated by the themes which were common to many of these women's stories.

1) Home Context - A surprising number of these women leaders grew up in pastor's homes. Early in life, many of them became familiar with those in church leadership and identified with them. Joyce Shutt speaks of a father who encouraged her to ask questions and grapple with issues. Others share about having parents who wrestled openly with ethical, social and theological issues. Lydia Harder writes, "Theology was an everyday language in our home" (p. 24). The women leaders who are married reflect consistently on the significant role their spouses have played in their call to church leadership. For the most part, these men supported and encouraged the free expression of their partner's gifts. Rather than feeling threatened by their spouses' emerging leadership roles, they were able to make changes in their marriages and households that accommodated the full embrace of God's call in their partners' lives.

2) Church Context - For the most part, these women grew up in churches that gave young people many opportunities to participate in the life of the church. Marlene Kropf shares the significance of being asked to teach a class of twenty first-graders in her freshman year of high school. June Alliman Yoder reflects on the many opportunities in her church for youth to grow and test their gifts (p. 181). From youth onwards, these women tended to accept any opportunity for service in the church that came their way, rather than sitting on the sidelines and lamenting the limits due to their gender. As they actively used their gifts, the church affirmed and recognized their giftedness. This led to further opportunities for service and ministry.

3) Yielding to the Call of God. These pages tell the stories of women who had a remarkable willingness to abandon themselves to the purposes of God. For the most part, they had no illusion of control over their destinies but simply committed themselves to following wherever God might lead. Repeatedly they express a sense of surprise and wonder at what they have ended up doing in the church. It never occurred to Barrett that she would be a minister because it simply was not an option. She says, "I had no desire to be a pioneer" (p. 41).

Mary Oyer writes, "I've moved in directions that I could not have dreamed possible or even desirable" (p. 143). The courage and sense of adventure that characterizes these stories is grounded in a deep commitment to remaining faithful to the call of God, even when that call manifests itself in ways that are new and risky.

In her opening "Vision for This Book," Mary Swartley writes that "the focus for this book is on North American church leadership." She also speaks of the challenge she and Keener faced in selecting the stories for this collection. The majority of the stories originate from a fairly limited geographical region. Other than Lydia Harder, there are no stories of women who have lived out their calling to church leadership in the Canadian context. Is this because the editors were most familiar with women from their own geographical region and personal church circles or does this reflect great differences in the opportunities for women in church leadership in different regions of North America?

Swartley writes that it is her hope that "as you read these stories, you may begin to see God working in your life in new ways. God may be calling you to be courageous and willing to risk the unknown, with the confidence that God will also be your strength and guide" (p. 19). I expect that this goal will be realized in the lives of many readers as these stories combine to inspire and challenge both men and women to follow the call of God with renewed courage and commitment.

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Delbert F. Plett, *Saints and Sinners: The Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia 1812 to 1875*. (Steinbach, MB: Crossway Publications, 1999). Pb., Pp. 351.

In 1982, Delbert Plett, a Steinbach lawyer of Kleine Gemeinde descent, published the first volume of what to date has grown to seven, massive volumes of primary documents, secondary essays and genealogies relating to the Kleine Gemeinde. He has also been the main promoter of *Preservings*, a "Magazine/Journal" of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, which has published more primary material on the Kleine Gemeinde and other Mennonite groups, accompanied by interpretive essays. To cap this amazing industry, Plett now has produced a book synthesizing his discoveries presenting readers with the first concise, coherent account of the Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia.

As Plett repeatedly reminds readers, the Kleine Gemeinde received short shrift in Peter M. Friesen's history of Russian Mennonites, published in 1911 during the Mennonite Commonwealth's final days in Imperial Russia. All the Kleine Gemeinde had emigrated to North America forty years before, and although Friesen argues this was based on a rather narrow-minded choice, he also acknowledges that the decision was made sincerely, on grounds of faith. Indeed, Friesen's views on the Kleine Gemeinde, while highly critical and judgemental, are not nearly as uncharitable as Plett would make his readers believe.

However, in his own book Plett greatly expands our understanding of the *Kleine Gemeinde* in Imperial Russia, their place in Russian Mennonite history, their membership and organization, religious leaders, ideas and practices and aspects of their social history. In doing so he presents a more detailed history of the *Kleine Gemeinde* than any to date. He emphasizes the conservative beliefs and actions of the *Kleine Gemeinde* and how these relate to older, established Mennonite teachings. New depth is given to our understanding of the ideas and motives of the founder of the *Kleine Gemeinde*, Klaas Reimer. Plett also details the work of later outstanding leaders such as Abraham Friesen, the second Elder, and the Minister Heinrich Balzer. The writings and actions of the leaders and members of the *Kleine Gemeinde* clearly articulate a consistent grasp of ideas central to the Mennonite tradition, based upon a careful reading of the Bible and the books of the Mennonite tradition from Menno onwards. The leadership placed great emphasis on these books and promoted their reprinting and distribution. In discussing these positive aspects, Plett does not avoid negative aspects of *Kleine Gemeinde* life: the failings of individuals and leaders, as well as disputes and schisms.

The book reflects the particular intensity of connectedness of small religious groups centred very much in the world of people - all too human - but also committed to their faith traditions, to congregation and community and above all to their kinsfolk. It is no mistake that the documentary volumes, and this synthesis, are firmly grounded in genealogy. This reflects the essential cohesion of conservative Mennonite congregational-communities, linked by ties of descent and marriage as well as faith. Here Plett is at his best, revealing how any understanding of events must take into account not only ideas and contexts, but also the complexities of kinship which lie at the heart of religious communal life. It is not surprising therefore, to find that he interrupts the narrative to examine issues such as age and authority, gender roles with particular reference to the importance of women, and stresses the importance of biography in historical understanding.

The picture that emerges from Plett's book is of a close-knit *Kleine Gemeinde* community centred around a number of key families located within the conservative Flemish tradition. Although in their teachings and practices the *Kleine Gemeinde* represent a particularly articulate and conservative branch of this tradition, they retained connections with the Flemish congregational-communities in terms of ideas and kinship ties. As the Molochna Colony flourished, the *Kleine Gemeinde* community and its members were challenged by its increasing prosperity and resulting social inequalities. The arrival of new Mennonite settlers, often with different religious ideas and practices, caused them to reassert their position on a number of doctrinal issues. Increasing secular authority, imposed by the Russians but enforced by Mennonites, challenged their commitment to non-resistance and their recognition of 'worldly' powers. By the 1860s these various changes resulted in a period of crisis, for the *Kleine Gemeinde* and most other Mennonite groups in the colony. The *Kleine Gemeinde* community was relocated and dispersed; congregational discord and division followed. Eventually a degree of reconciliation was achieved, reinforced by the threat of military service and the decision to emigrate to North America. Plett's account of these events is consistent with the mass of translated documentation he has published and with other sources on Mennonite life in Russia, but provides new details and insights.

Plett's account, however, is not strongly contextualized. Based carefully around *Kleine*

Gemeinde documents, letters, diaries and internal histories, much of his account presents a *Kleine Gemeinde* view of the world and events. Less developed is any sense of the larger social, economic and political environment in which the community was located. The *Kleine Gemeinde* were deeply effected by both internal and external pressures during the period as they attempted to maintain a continuity of faith through the maintenance of practice. Plett has little to say about these larger forces, although they obviously helped shape and define the community as well as playing a role in the conflicts of the 1860s and the decision to emigrate in the 1870s.

Instead of examining these larger socio-economic and political forces, Plett singles out external religious challenges which he claims were critical to the continuity of *Kleine Gemeinde* faith and practice. He sets up a simplistic dichotomy: on one hand the *Kleine Gemeinde* represent the true faith community, loyal to "Anabaptist" principles; on the other are forces of evil, led by "fanatical" people promoting what Plett calls "Separatist-Pietist language and culture." According to Plett, Separatist-Pietism is a particularly virulent form of pietism, apparently originating in the Lutheran Church, which includes at its centre ideas of an imminent millennium, not "unlike American Revivalism (later Fundamentalism)". The people who promoted these ideas did so with evil intent, "prowling" around the land in order "to break apart families and congregations." To achieve their ends they used psychological methods akin to brain-washing and terrorized innocent people. According to Plett, after 1880, "a large percentage of Russian Mennonites" had adopted Separatist-Pietist ideas and millennial teachings, based on the works of Jung Stilling.

Plett's characterization of Separatist-Pietists has appeared in his other writings and been criticized by me and others. Basically, in spite of his capitalisation of the term, no such singular movement existed either in the form he describes, or for the reasons he suggests. The term is not to be found in any contemporary sources, *Kleine Gemeinde* or non-*Kleine Gemeinde*. Nor is such a term established in the scholarship of religious movements. This is not surprising, as it is little more than an "odd-job" term which lumps together a complex set of religious ideas, movements and practices which need careful examination in particular contexts. If beliefs and practices in the past are to be understood, they must be approached in their own terms and with reference to such contexts and practices. In religious history, the term "pietism" covers a number of diverse ideas and practices, none of which necessarily involve the promotion of either separatism or millennial ideas.

It is unfortunate that, in discussing non-*Kleine Gemeinde* religious ideas and practices, Plett adopts the stance of an advocate, rather than a historian. Similar recourse to advocacy occur elsewhere in the book - for instance in a discussion of education and later in a criticism of the literary works of Patrick Friesen. As with the constant negative references to Separatist-Pietism, these outbursts detract from the value of the book. Plett indicates that he intends to revise the book and include more illustrations. If so, I hope he takes seriously the points noted above. In the meantime, this is a most useful addition to our understanding of a small, but significant, community in Russian Mennonite history whose descendants are today spread through North and Central America.

Rod Janzen, *The Prairie People. Forgotten Anabaptists* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999). Pb., pp. 328.

This is an important sociological study of a group of people about whom little is known. As Janzen correctly points out, the communitarian Hutterites are well known and the object of many studies, while the Prairie People who are also part of Hutterite and Mennonite traditions, but who opted to live in private households, are “forgotten Anabaptists.”

When Russian Mennonites and Hutterites migrated to North America in the 1870s, some 7,000 Mennonites settled in Canada and 10,000 in the United States, including about 1200 Hutterites led by their delegated scouts Paul Tschetter and his uncle Lohrenz. What is less known is that only 443 of the Hutterites were colony or communal Hutterites, whereas 822, including deputy Paul Tschetter, owned property and settled on individual farms in the Dakota Territory. Under the influence of Mennonites in Russia the noncommunal Hutterites, called *Prairieleut* or Prairie People in this book, had abandoned communal living but still followed other beliefs and practices of their Hutterite forebears. Like their Swiss and Low German Mennonite cousins, they believed that the noncommunal life had biblical support as well.

The tensions between the two Hutterite groups have continued to this day, with each side insisting that it represents the true gospel teaching concerning what it means to be a true faith community. But as the book shows, the Prairie People have an uneasy feeling that it is they, not the colony people, who have strayed from the one distinguishing mark which has characterized the Hutterian communities for some 450 years, namely communal living. The communal Hutterites, on the other hand, are convinced that their numerical growth is evidence of God’s special favour upon their communities. Indeed, the communal Hutterites have grown to 40,000 members in 400 colonies in Canada and the United States, whereas the Prairie People number only 3,500 members in churches that have affiliated with Mennonite conferences.

The Prairie People, influenced by Mennonites, evangelical churches, and pressures from American society, have lost other cultural and faith values. In attempts to fit into society and be accepted by their American neighbors, especially during the Second World War, many abandoned their principles of pacifism and separation of church and state and served in the military and eventually entered all levels of government. Janzen puts it bluntly: “It was ironic that for many centuries Hutterites had prided themselves on following biblical teachings that called Christians to be ‘in the world but not of the world’ with regard to dress, culture, language, and political philosophy. Now a desire to become ‘of the world,’ and as quickly as possible, had enveloped *Prairieleut* communities” (p. 181).

The Prairie People discarded their distinctive clothing, abandoned the Hutterish language (the traditional Tyrolean dialect), did away with reading the old sermons in their services, and adopted American-style individualism in their day-to-day lives. Those who remained Christian joined with Mennonites, particularly the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, and other evangelical and fundamentalist churches. Some became members of mainline churches, including the Roman Catholic Church. It is thus understandable that the question of *Prairieleut* identity became a serious problem for these people.

Why did the Prairie People become attracted especially to evangelical churches? As the book demonstrates, American individualism, including a sense of personal responsibility for

one's spiritual destiny, was an important factor in this attraction. Moreover, many *Prairieleut* members also felt that the Hutterian beliefs and practices had become mere tradition, without a personal experience of the Christian life.

It was especially the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren emphasis of "assurance of salvation" and their missionary zeal among Prairie People which played an important role in drawing many into the KMB fold. The author calls this the "Krimmer Mennonite Brethren phenomenon" (p. 73).

Since the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren played such an important role in the *Prairieleut* communities, the author might have delved a little deeper into the history of the KMBs. This Mennonite church originated in the late 1860s in the Crimea with Jacob A. Wiebe (1839-1921) its actual founder. Initially there were connections between this group and members of the *Kleine Gemeinde* both in Russia and North America, with individual *Kleine Gemeinde* ministers exerting some influence on the KMBs. According to Harold S. Bender's entry on the KMB in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, the conservative spirit of the KG was transmitted into the KMB group, "in combination with the new K.M.B. emphasis on conversion, assurance, and experience." Thus the conservatism and individualism of the KMBs provided a new spiritual home for the *Prairieleut*. It might be added that there are other historical references that require more explanation, as for example Eberhard Arnold and his "modern Hutterites" (p. 117f.).

Once the break with tradition was made, the Prairie People continued to move further away from the "faith of their fathers." The author is not optimistic about the survival of the Prairie People as a historical Christian community. Janzen concludes: "Without communal life, this small group of Hutterians has lost its distinctive identity, has become Americanized and evangelized. The noncommunal Hutterian culture is dying a slow death with only a residual identity intact" (p. 256).

The author's conclusion is of course open to question. One might refer, for example, to groups like the Old Order Amish who also live in private households but have survived for centuries and still exist as viable, in some cases even thriving, communities. In fact, according to recent studies, conservative Mennonite groups have grown numerically at a greater rate than liberal churches. According to Janzen, however, the Amish, like communal Hutterites, "established a definitive and separate identity via distinctive dress, lifestyle, language, and belief traditions, successfully withstanding the forces of American assimilation." The Prairie People, on the other hand, like many liberal North American Mennonite groups, "were acculturated at a very rapid pace" (p. 188), hence their decline.

Not only is this an important book - it is also a good read. The many human interest stories and examples from *Prairieleut* customs, folkways, and idiosyncrasies make this sociological study a hard-to-put-down book. Aside from some mistakes in German words and expressions (pp. 23, 58, 104), the book is relatively free of misprints, and the type, tables, maps, and black and white photographs are of good quality. There are two appendixes, one on Hutterian family surnames and one on Prairie People and Mennonites in the South Dakota state legislature. The book includes copious notes, a glossary, a select bibliography, and a useful index.

Steven D. Reschly, *The Amish on the Iowa Prairie, 1840-1910*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

Steve Reschly's has written a fascinating manuscript. It is an innovative micro-study of an Amish American migrant community, set in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, thoroughly researched and generally well-conceived. The author suggests that overtime the Amish in Iowa developed certain cultural values and practices ("repertoires of community") that served to integrate the community into the wider society without breaking down the social boundaries and essential culture of the Amish community. He furthermore argues that this integration was not a static transplantation, but a dynamic social process tied to historical contingencies. These practices were developed early, in Europe during the seventeenth-century and adapted to North America, where they underwent further, indeed constant, change. The author successfully avoids the old dichotomy of change vs continuity or uprootedness vs transplantation; instead, he employs the constructs of Pierre Bourdieu and others, concluding that cultural "goals...can remain stable even as the means adjust and transmute." The author further avoids the simplistic dichotomization between agency and structure, and between mentalite and behaviour. Each is interrelated, affecting and being affected by the other. Overall the Amish possessed is a "repertoire of actions and attitudes" that developed overtime and were employed in order "preserve themselves."

The author limits the "actions and attitudes", that is the "repertoire of community" to eight: a sense of separation from the wider society, an intensive animal-centered agriculture, a paternal household authority, separation from the nation-state, individually-owned property and associated inheritance practices, communitarianism balanced with familial interests, an inclination to internal conflict as divergences arose with regard to religious strategies, an openness to migrate to seek community reproduction. He notes, perhaps too much in passing, that there may be other factors. One of the strengths of this study, then, is a theoretically complex sense of dynamic interrelationship of the community in question with host society, physical environment, and historical contingency.

A second strength of the study is the narrative itself. To make his argument the author focuses on a single Iowa Amish community and develops intricate portraits or "thick descriptions" that illustrate a particular repertoire. Sometimes through the use of the public record to trace the household economy and migration patterns, sometimes through autobiography and sermon to trace religious experience, and times through family history and genealogy to understand gender relations. The narrative also focuses on the periphery of the community, the exceptions - the sleeping preachers and a lone Amish soldier - to provide an understanding of the core of the community. There is generally a good balance of theory and narrative and often a good interrelatedness of the two.

Overall, however, the book will be welcomed by a wide audience. It engages current secondary literature, it is based on relevant social scientific theory and possesses enough primary evidence to make an important contribution to both Amish/Mennonite studies and immigration/ethnoreligious history. The author makes a special contribution by telling part of the Amish American story without rendering the group as a static relic of the past or as a romanticized group that possessed extraordinary degrees of human agency. These Amish are real flesh and blood human beings striving to create community amidst times of significant

change. The study uses both quantitative and qualitative research, both micro and macro analysis, and evidence from both secondary and primary sources. The work combines a richly textured theoretical analysis with fascinating ethnography.

Royden Loewen
University of Winnipeg

John H. Warkentin, *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba*. 1960. (Steinbach, MB: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 2000). Pb., pp. 409.

It is a pleasure to review this book by John Warkentin. The research contained in this book, however, is not new because the book is a republication of the Ph.D. dissertation written by John H. Warkentin for the University of Toronto in 1960. Yet it is quite appropriate to have the book published at this time because very little of the research has been published before and has therefore not been in the public domain until now. Even though Professor Warkentin has published extensively in the field of historical geography and on settlement patterns in various regions of Canada, this unique classical study was one of his earliest and has a very specific geographic and ethnic Mennonite focus.

Since Warkentin is of Mennonite ethnic background, and in fact lived in the Mennonite settlements of Manitoba during his early life, it is significant that the insight he had as a young scholar both from an academic as well as a personal perspective is now accessible by scholars of history as well as by scholars of minority ethnic groups like the Mennonites. It is also quite appropriate that the publication of this book coincides with the honour John Warkentin received in being named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2001. Audrey Kobayashi, President of the Canadian Association of Geographers, documents the reason for the receipt of this honour by stating the following in a recent new release: "...as Professor emeritus at York University and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, he (John Warkentin) is recognized as one of our country's pre-eminent geographers. Beginning with his early work on Mennonite settlements in Manitoba, he expanded the knowledge and the understanding of the exploration and colonization of our country for more than 35 years. His books, monographs and notably his work on the widely acclaimed *Historical Atlas of Canada* have contributed significantly to the literature on the geography and history of our nation." Given this Canada-wide recognition of his earlier work on the Mennonite settlements of Manitoba, it is fitting that the original research is finally published in its entirety.

The book is organized into sixteen chapters which follow basically a sequential time frame. The major themes that are analysed include the exploration and survey of the land, immigration, early settlement, the village and farm stead structures, agricultural activities, the break up of agricultural villages, changes in the landscape, and the Mennonite role in opening the Canadian West. Warkentin's overall aim was to analyse the settlement process and pattern given the natural environment of the East and West Reserves and the Mennonite's socio-economic attributes and value structures. His analysis carefully traces how the two

Mennonite settlements experienced change over time and its impact on their own socio-religious cohesiveness and identity. The Mennonites, for example, tried to establish the *Straßendörfer* settlement patterns in Manitoba. However, in Manitoba, the square township range land system and the seemingly more efficient quarter section led to the downfall of the village system.

Warkentin also looks closely at the agricultural developments of the farmers both in the East and West Reserves. The West Reserve practiced commercial grain farming until the 1930s, while most of the East Reserve struggled with a subsistence type of farming. Its advantage was its proximity to Winnipeg and hence its farmers diversified farms and sold such things as butter, cheese, livestock, and milk to the residents of Winnipeg. After the 1930s the West Reserve re-evaluated its grain farming and changed to a more diversified crop production system, adding such specialized crops as corn, sunflower, potato, and sugar beets.

During its eighty years of development, Warkentin also clearly shows how the region established a hierarchy of service centres. Initially, the Mennonite farmers had to purchase their commodities from such centres as Winnipeg, Emerson, Morden, and St. Pierre, but overtime the Mennonites established their own service centres such as Steinbach, Winkler, Altona, Morden and Plum Coulee. Thus, by the 1950s, the Mennonite settlements not only had their own flourishing agricultural landscape, but also a flourishing system of villages, towns and smaller cities.

Warkentin also tackles the concept of the contributions made by the Mennonites to the advancement of settlements of the prairies in Canada. He is surprisingly blunt in saying that the Mennonite contribution as a role model for the settlement of the prairies in general has been overstated. The socio-economic structure and settlement pattern that the Mennonites brought from Russia in fact were not successfully duplicated on the Prairies. Their own technological stage of development in Russia was only valid for a few years in North America. Over time, the Mennonites adjusted to the local conditions, learning to change and progress. A subgroup, well known for its conservative views, did leave Manitoba for Mexico and Paraguay. When another group of Mennonites came to Manitoba from Russia in the 1920s, in large part buying the farms of the conservative group that was moving to Latin America, it produced a substantial synergy in both the East and the West Reserve. By the mid 1950s both areas were well established economically and socially in their new homeland.

The book is very well researched, well-written, readable, and the information is well documented. Many photographs as well as maps, charts, graphs, tables and diagrams support the arguments made in the different chapters. The book will be especially pleasing for those readers with some family roots in southern Manitoba as well as those academics who are interested in the relationship between land, environment and people. It does not present the Mennonites as superhuman nor does it depict them as primitive peasants. It is a very realistic and accurate description of Mennonites of southern Manitoba during the first eighty years of living in the region. I recommend it highly.

Alfred Hecht
Wilfrid Laurier University

T. D. Regehr, *Peace, Order & Good Government: Mennonites and Politics in Canada* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 2000). Pb. pp. 130.

This is a valuable and easy-to-read book but it is not a complete history of the subject. Chapter one identifies three models by which Mennonites, historically, have related to the state, namely: martyrdom, where you submit and pay the price; patronage, where you gain protection via a special relationship with a ruler; and democratic participation. Chapter two deals with Mennonite political involvement in mid nineteenth century Ontario, and chapters three and four review the twentieth century involvement with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)/New Democratic Party (NDP) and Social Credit movements, mainly in the prairie provinces. Chapter five is an evaluation of some Mennonites in politics but this, by the author's admission, is less than thorough. Throughout, the book has many human interest stories.

A most significant observation is that "several Mennonites elected as Social Credit members in Alberta told me that if they had lived in Saskatchewan... they might well have joined the CCF under the concerned and devoted leadership of Tommy Douglas, Allan Blackney and Roy Romanow" while "Saskatchewan CCF Mennonite politicians...expressed great respect and appreciation for the administrative record of Alberta governments led by Ernest Manning"(p. 102). This indicates a Mennonite commitment to "good government" that goes beyond an identification with political parties. It outweighs the remark that, politically, Mennonites are, "all over the map"(p. 2). It suggests a "common ground". This should be explored further. Does it suggest a Mennonite political philosophy awaiting articulation?

One unfortunate limitation - an understandable one given that the book began as specifically assigned lectures - is that it looks only at electoral politics. Other areas also belong in the picture. Mennonite civil servants have a substantial record. Mennonite lobbying in relation to military activities and peacebuilding (Project Ploughshares), crime and corrections, refugee work, food aid (the Canadian Foodgrains Bank), recycling, disabilities, and other areas, have made a difference. Mennonite community level initiatives have been significant. And, in relation to Canadian culture, Prime Minister Trudeau referred in 1970, to the "spiritual input" of Mennonites in Canadian society, describing it as "leaven in dough." Similarly, Brian Stiller said in 1996, as head of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, that one reason why a hard "religious right" would not develop in Canada is the large influence of the non-confrontational peace oriented Mennonites. All these additional dimensions belong in the picture. They can keep us, as a church, from seeing provincial and federal electoral politics as the main method for making a witness for the common good. Jesus' parable of the mustard seed remains relevant.

William Janzen

Ottawa Office of Mennonite Central Committee Canada

Lowell Detweiler, *The Hammer Rings Hope: Photos and Stories from Fifty Years of Mennonite Disaster Service* (Scottsdale, PA.: Herald Press, 2000). Hb., pp. 184.

Did you know that over the past fifty years Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteers have contributed almost one million days (p. 171) or about 4,000 years of full-time equivalent work! Little wonder that some people consider MDS to be the most visible way that the general public has learned to know about Mennonites (p. 30).

This book is informative, beautiful, well-written, inspirational, thought-provoking, reflective, and well-titled. It will appeal to a diverse readership, from MDS volunteers interested in finding out more about the organization, to scholars interested in a well-researched and documented history of it. The book describes the people and experiences that first gave birth some fifty years ago to what has become MDS, and highlights projects and changes MDS has undergone since then. It tells stories in the first-person from a wide variety of locations and perspectives, including: volunteers, young people, cooks, project leaders, and disaster victims whom MDSers have served. There is drama, danger (even though no volunteer has died while on MDS assignment), laughter, and even some romance! The book examines changes MDS has undergone, and discusses challenges it may face in the future, with increasing numbers of disasters and victims coupled with our increasingly urban, and perhaps less voluntaristic, church.

Reading this book was a particular treat for me, an organizational theorist, because MDS is such an unusual organization. There are three inter-related themes I wish to highlight. First, MDS presents a fascinating example of what some would call a virtual organization. It is simply amazing, and perhaps miraculous, that MDS teams work together so effectively even though members often have never met each other before, volunteers often have little experience in the tasks they perform, and "until 1993 MDS never had more than two salaried staff" (p. 145). Much research has been dedicated to examine how to get everyday teams in business to work together as effectively as they seem to have under MDS.

Second, MDS provides an interesting example for the long-standing debate on the possibility of genuine altruism. In one sense, MDS has *institutionalized* altruism. MDS volunteers travel at their own expense and without pay to help people who they will likely never see again. In contrast to traditional economic motivation theory, they voluntarily do dirty work they would be unwilling to do for money. One disaster victim commented: "I want you to know that you're the nicest people we have ever met" (p. 126). Another observer says: "Just to watch them work is enough to make an agnostic stop and think." (p. 39).

Third, MDS has a lot to tell us about the "spirit of servanthood" (p. 158) and the spirituality of work, perhaps the fastest-growing area of interest in management literature. It is instructive that MDS has been called a "double-impact organization," (p. 167) which serves victims of disaster and thereby provides a venue for volunteers to practice service and strengthen their Christian faith. For this reason, it is not unusual for volunteers to testify that: "What I contribute out here in the field is so minute compared to what I receive" (p. 152) and that they come home "spiritually refreshed" (p. 126).

Allow me to substantiate my praise for the book by raising one minor concern. I am

pleased that MDS has been able to retain a binational Canada-US identity, for as one participant noted, "It is difficult for us to maintain our prejudices about other Mennonite groups when we have rubbed shoulders, working with them" (p. 35). Still, the book demonstrates that the binational parties are unequally yoked. MDS's budget, for example, is approved by MCC U.S., but not by MCC Canada. Detweiler also implies that the binational character of MDS may be due to the benevolence of the US MDSers, noting that since "its organizational beginning under MCC in 1955, MDS has always included Canadian representatives on its management board" (p. 85). Perhaps, some day, MCC Canada will also share the responsibility of approving the MDS budget, and I, as a Canadian, will be able to point to the binational character of MDS by proudly stating that Americans have always been included on its board.

To conclude, I whole-heartedly agree with Detweiler that "MDS is an incredible organization; no book can do its story full justice" (p. 161). I commend and thank him for having written an incredible book. Much like the organization he describes, it contains a diverse number of pieces but integrates them into a pleasing and unified whole.

Bruno Dyck
University of Manitoba

Paton Yoder and Steven R. Estes, *Proceedings of the Amish Ministers' Meetings, 1862-1878*, (Goshen, IN: Mennonite Historical Society, 1999).

This book is on the same subject as Paton Yoder's *Tradition and Transition: Amish-Mennonites and Old Order Amish*. But the present book is a publication of documents relating to the process in which the Amish immigrants established themselves as distinct groups in the United States. The documents include the minutes and summary of the sessions of the *Diener Versammlungen*, or Ministers' Meetings, which have been preserved in the original German version.

By making these documents available to the general public Yoder and Estes have made an important contribution to Mennonite history. The discussions reflect a period in which the Amish-Mennonite group began to adopt new ways, while the main Amish body kept traditional customs. The earliest of these meetings are especially interesting because all the immigrants of Amish origin were represented at them, including ministers from the old settlements in Pennsylvania and from communities consisting of newly-arrived immigrants from Europe. The ministers include: Joseph Stuckey from Illinois, who later became the leader of the progressive Central Conference (later a part of the General Conference); Levi Miller, the Old Order Amish bishop from Ohio; and Henry Egly, the leader of a group that came to be dubbed, the Defenceless Mennonite Church (later, the Evangelical Mennonite Church). Ministers from the Volhynian group that came from Imperial Russia in the 1870s were present at a few of the sessions, acts that reveal their Amish origin.

This was one period when they met together. As they discussed the various subjects, it became apparent immediately that there were vast differences in practice. The first confer-

ence was held in 1862 in Wayne County, Ohio and in the Amish tradition the conference was held in a large barn near Smithville, the very community where I grew up. The main sermon of that first conference was by John K. Yoder, one of the leaders of the Amish-Mennonites, and bishop of the host church. Of interest is that Yoder was the great-great-grandfather of the late theologian John Howard Yoder. Another leader of the discussions was Bishop Moses P. Miller of neighbouring Holmes County, who was the leader of the progressive group there who wished to have church buildings, a central issue at the 1862 conference. Ironically, Levi Miller, who was a leading minister of the Old Order group, was Moses Miller's brother-in-law. Also prominent in the discussions was Joseph Stuckey of Illinois, mentioned above. It is seldom that one gets to read the minutes and discussions and in some cases, the actual questions raised, and their responses in that early period, of a group that generally avoided publicity.

Yoder and Estes effectively use footnotes to explain the issues, including those of appropriate dress, the ban or *Meidung*, attendance at fairs, jury duty, and military service, a crucial subject as the first conference took place during the Civil War. Yoder and Estes also describe each of the conferences and add related documents, such as letters between the ministers, and reports of small groups dissenting from conference decisions. There are also several articles from the secular press describing the conferences. In addition, there is a list of ministers attending, including their addresses and short biographies. It is interesting that nearly 50% of the ministers were born in Europe, and not only Alsace and Lorraine, but also Baden, the Palatinate, Bavaria and Hesse, with its adjacent county, Waldeck. The other half of the participants were descendants of immigrants from the 1700s, or children of those coming after 1800. There were few Canadian representatives, with only five ministers coming from the Amish-Mennonite groups near Waterloo, Ontario. The book also has 16 pages of pictures, mostly of ministers and church buildings of the time, a surprising feature, considering that photographs were frowned upon by Amish-Mennonites at that time. Ironically, photography was one of the subjects discussed at the conferences.

The cover of the book has an illustration showing the transition from the old to the new—the figure of a head, half of it a man with full beard, and half with a short beard and hair in more modern style. Oddly enough, the two men were ministers in Holmes County, Ohio known to me, and both would be considered part of the progressive wing. All in all, the book is a worthy contribution to our knowledge of Amish-Mennonite history.

J. Virgil Miller
Sarasota, Florida

Peter Hildebrand. *From Danzig to Russia. The First Emigration of Mennonites from the Danzig Region to Southern Russia*. Translated by Walter E. Toews with Adolf Ens. (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications and Mennonite Historical Society, 2000). Pb., pp. 62.

Much has been written about the migration of Mennonites from Prussia to New Russia, but this brief account is of special value because it is written by a participant who was a

careful observer of events that shaped this historic development. Here is an account of the difficult beginnings of the first of the “mother colonies” in Imperial Russia. The difficulties, disappointments, but also the rugged determination and robust faith become evident to the reader.

The author recounts the efforts of the Russian Imperial Agent George Trappe to persuade Mennonites in Danzig and its possessions to take advantage of the generous offer extended by Tsarina Catherine. Jacob Hoepfner and Johann Bartsch, as the deputies selected by the Mennonites to go to New Russia to evaluate the situation, made their exploratory journey, met with the Tsarina and her officials, and returned with optimistic reports. It should be noted that the reader is usually not sure of the precise source of some of the accounts; presumably, since Hildebrand did not go on the exploratory trip, his father-in-law Hoepfner provided much of the information.

The response to the report was strong and immediate. Soon would-be emigrants began to make preparations for the difficult journey. Political, economic and ecclesiastical factors had to be considered. The Prussian government was basically opposed to the early emigration, although there was a remarkable lack of uniformity in the positions taken in Berlin and in West Prussia (Geheimes Preussisches Staatsarchiv, I. Abtheilung, General Direktorium, Westpreussen, CIX, I, II, p. 1 ff.). Despite these difficulties, the emigration began and after delays and harrowing experiences the settlers arrived at their destination and founded Khortitsa.

Hildebrand addresses a number of social and religious issues, although he does not analyze the reasons for what surely must have been one of the most glaring episodes of injustice in this whole drama – the excommunication of Hoepfner and the “secret meetings” associated with this travesty. Hildebrand notes with satisfaction that the Frisians refused to participate in this incident. A century later a grateful community erected a monument in his honor. The author also expresses a more ecumenical and cooperative approach when he expresses regret that the Flemish-Frisian division was transplanted into the new settlement and applauds the generous spirit of the neighboring Lutheran and Orthodox settlements.

This account is followed by a brief description of a “Sunday in 1840 on the Island of Chortitza.” After an account describing worship on a Sunday morning, and a number of comments depicting dress and social customs, the author describes how this community responded when it learned that a wolf was prowling the vicinity. Hildebrand allows himself a bit of levity as he describes the resolute and successful pursuit of the “cunning old sinner.”

The brief volume is translated in a readable, engaging style. Occasionally, editorial decisions are somewhat ambiguous, as when “Khortitsa” is spelled three ways on page 29, or when the treaty ending the Russo-Turkish War in 1774 is given an unusual spelling (p. 5). Also, West Prussia did not yet exist in 1754 (p. xi).

For those wishing to have a glimpse of this important facet of Mennonite migration, here is a good opportunity to see an engaging mix of adventure, courage, planning and insight, all too often confronted by petty grievances and limited perspective.

Helmut T. Huebert, *Events and People: Events in Russian Mennonite History and the People That Made Them Happen* (Winnipeg: Springfield Publishers, 1999). Pb., pp. xvii + 258, \$25.00.

This privately published book reflects the author's ongoing passion for the history of his people. Having published articles and books on Mennonite history, including the popular *Mennonite Historical Atlas*, Dr. Huebert, an orthopaedic surgeon, will no doubt be better remembered (at least among Mennonites) for his writings on Mennonite subjects than for his medical work. But his training as a scientist is evident in all his writing.

The book outlines events and biographies of important leaders, beginning with the migration of Mennonites to the Russian Empire in 1789 and ending with the Berlin escape of Mennonites in 1947. Both the events and the biographies are more sketches and notes than fully developed stories. Yet these historically accurate sketches, resembling encyclopedia articles, provide a wealth of detailed and interesting information. Both the interested lay reader and the historian will benefit from the information in this book.

There are a few chapters which include drama and suspense in the Mennonite story. "Murder at Midnight (1926)," "Amur Crossing December 16, 1930," and the "Berlin Escape" are such stories. Of the biographies, those of Benjamin H. Unruh and Cornelius F. Klassen, among a few others, stand out in terms of detail and significance for Mennonite history.

While the biographies are not hagiography, the author might have been more critical of some of the leaders' political views, including, for example, of B. H. Unruh's sympathies for the National Socialist regime. On the other hand, Huebert includes less known figures such as John Kroeker, whose important work with the refugees right after the war was not fully recognized by MCC "because of his blemished SS related work record, and his problem with alcohol" (p. 229).

The book includes black and white photographs, numerous maps, and a useful general index. For each event and biography documentation and sources are provided. There are even some cartoons, including one representing Stalin and Death carrying sickle and scythe, with Death saying: "You were always a great friend of mine, Joseph" (p. 212).

Hary Loewen
Kelowna, B.C.

Geoffrey Hayes, *Waterloo County: An Illustrated History* (Waterloo: Waterloo Historical Society, 1997). Hd. Pp 274. \$65.00 Can.

It is difficult to imagine a more daunting task than to write a stimulating monograph on the history of an administrative, municipal unit. Fortunately, Geoffrey Hayes rises to the challenge, transforming the history of Waterloo County from a mere list of council members or inventory of votes on road-building and garbage collection into an enticing story about the development of a "cultural idea." In fact, this handsomely produced book, which follows at

the heels of Elizabeth Bloomfield's equally successful *Waterloo Township through Two Centuries* (1995), offers surprisingly fresh insights into how the identities of ordinary people are shaped by this, the lowest of three levels of government in Canada. By interweaving political and economic developments with an analysis of communal identity and its deliberate construction (and revision), Hayes offers material for ethnic, local and public historians alike.

As could be expected, the book's first chapter explores the pioneer roots of the area by tracing the well-known story of the Pennsylvania Mennonite settlement on land along the Grand River purchased from the Six Nations people. Hayes points out that Waterloo Township, which was formed in 1816, was almost exclusively settled by Mennonites and this trait "would leave an indelible signature on Waterloo County" in public commemoration and celebration. (8) However he also stresses that not all of the pioneer families in the region were Mennonites and that very soon settlers of different origin, especially Scots and European Germans and even including a few freed American slaves, transformed the area into a culturally diverse landscape of farms and growing villages and towns. By the time the townships of Waterloo, Woolwich, North Dumfries, Wilmot and Wellesley were amalgamated into Waterloo County in 1853, there was little common history or identity. What bound the townships together, according to Hayes, was "only faith in economic progress." (26)

Waterloo County did indeed develop into one of Ontario's most progressive counties with a sound commercial and industrial base and leading in the areas of education and social reforms and institutions. Internal divisions did not seem to detract from the pace of development. In particular, the competition between Galt and Berlin for the spot as political centre of the county developed into long-standing ethnic, religious and economic rivalries between North and South Waterloo. The churches of the area reinforced this split between the German north and the Scottish south of the county, and both remained separate in many ways. At the same time the gap between towns and rural areas widened, especially in the 1870s. By the end of the century the centre of political gravity had moved into the towns, further removing the county from its Mennonite pioneer roots.

How did Waterloo County manage to develop a communal identity? Hayes credits a new class of local professionals and businessmen with integrating the diverse parts through institutions such as courts, markets and schools. These self-made men of the county's "golden age" from the 1870s to the 1890s, mostly Canadians of German descent, created and sustained the idea of the county as a progressive manufacturing and commercial area and a self-consciously German and German-speaking part of Ontario. Berlin quickly affirmed its place as the German cultural capital of Canada with *Sängerfeste* and *Turmvereine*. Hayes suggests that the "prominence of a continental German culture in the towns in the 1870s did not necessarily force a decline in rural Pennsylvanian-German culture. But the age favoured one at the expense of the other." (78) Soon little but memories was left of the Pennsylvania Mennonite rural origins.

Not surprisingly, the Great War struck at the heart of the county's cultural, economic and political identity. Waterloo County's military battalion, in existence since 1866, featured a respectable regimental band but little else to distinguish it in the eyes of militaristic jingoists. The proposed raising of two new battalions in the county proved impossible. By 1916 Canada's Berlin had a bad reputation in the rest of the country and attacks on the county's German identity became ugly, leading to a somewhat less than voluntary name change from

Berlin to Kitchener. The issue of conscription in 1917, just like the postwar prohibition issue, decisively split the county into north and south; charges of disloyalty and pro-German sentiment became political forces. With Berlin's and Waterloo County's former German identity discredited and suppressed, a cultural vacuum remained. In the meantime, Waterloo County continued to do its best to demonstrate its loyalty to the British Empire and its institutions, publishing lists of wartime casualties and erecting memorials in honour of the almost 500 county men and women who lost their lives.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the wartime wounds barely healing, a new county identity was constructed out of the desire to commemorate a simpler and less political past. This was a time of outside investments gaining control of the county's industries, cars appearing and farms disappearing, and people moving into towns and the two cities, Kitchener and Galt, which no longer sent representatives to the county council. The pioneer roots had never been so remote, and the share of Mennonites in the county's population had declined to one tenth. And yet the county reached for this part of the population to reclaim and transform its identity. As Hayes explains: "Loyalties both to Germany and Canada were unacceptable after the First World War, but the area's Pennsylvania roots offered another German identity to celebrate." Through the efforts of W.H. Breithaupt, one of the organizers of the Waterloo Historical Society, and Mabel Dunham, local librarian and author, select aspects Waterloo County's historical past were neatly fitted into the accepted history of Canada; the story of the county itself was retold and a new Pioneer Memorial Park now honoured the loyal Mennonite founders of Canada. This national-cultural awakening found its economic counterpart in a revival of rural life and its most colourful institution, the county fair.

The good times continued throughout the Depression and the Second World War. Canada had changed and so had Waterloo County. The result was greater tolerance on one side and more willingness to contribute on the other, and hence a remarkable "lack of tension that befell Waterloo County's German identity." (178) Hayes's distinction between the county's "German-Canadian identity" before 1914 and its "Canadian-German" identity in 1939 may be awkward but the point is well taken: Waterloo County's population contributed to the war effort against Nazi Germany through production on "essential farms," majority support for conscription (though barely at 65% of the vote) and the participation of the area's armed forces in Normandy and the crossing of the Rhine. This war was also "Waterloo County's war." (178)

Waterloo County existed for nearly three decades after the war's end before the creation of the new Regional Municipality of Waterloo was imposed by the provincial government in 1972. The county's administrative structure had outlived its usefulness in the postwar period but its nostalgic pioneer identity persisted. The 1952 Centennial Celebrations featured a re-enactment of the Trail of the Conestogo culminating in a musical in Waterloo Park with a cast of 600. Increasingly commercialized, the exploration of one part of the county's Pennsylvania-German origins helped gain Waterloo County a "national reputation as an unusual cultural centre." (195) Although postwar immigrants from Germany also left a distinct cultural mark, the two very different German identities had fully merged in the public mind by the 1970s. Neither had much to do with the region's future. Today's celebration of Oktoberfest in Kitchener may seem as incongruous as the location of Doon Pioneer Village near Highway 401; what has survived of Waterloo County's tradition, according to Hayes, is the area's remarkable ability to adapt to new technologies and its commitment to progress.

Hayes's research, based on council minutes, newspapers and personal collections as well as more than eighty volumes of the published proceedings of the Waterloo Historical Society, measures up to strict scholarly standards. At the same time, the book is engagingly written and appeals to a broader public with its wide selection of illustrations, photographs and maps from public and private collections. The "corporate patrons" of this project are featured in brief historical sketches in the appendix. They, along with the Waterloo Historical Society, which published the book, collectively represent the historical efforts to construct an identity which is, of course, the ultimate aim of this book as well. Geoffrey Hayes and his sponsors have produced an excellent example of how to bridge scholarly and popular history, and how to integrate private sponsors without sacrificing academic integrity.

Angelika Sauer,
Texas Lutheran University

Literature and Music

Miriam Toews, *Swing Low: A Life* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2000). Pp 191, Cloth, \$27.95.

"*Nothing accomplished.*" That's the phrase with which Miriam Toews begins this remarkable and disturbing book. Italicized, in quotation marks, set off from the main text – the words stand apart and demand special attention. Words of the father they may be, but written in stone they are not. Conspicuous ambivalence attends the sentences that follow, marking language instantly as radically unstable. The first sentence seems plain enough: "I don't know what my father meant when he said it." It is immediately contradicted, however, by the daughter's assumptions about what her father might have meant. "Two hopeless words, spoken in a whisper by a man who felt he had failed on every level."

To say that the father in question was a manic-depressive who eventually committed suicide would be to pathologize his life. This book sets out, instead, to celebrate his life. The daughter chooses to do so by writing from his point of view – a biography posing as a fictive autobiography. Her need to get closer to her father is made urgent by the puzzling fact that it was following her birth that he became a voluntary mute, remaining so for the first year of her life. Left with so painful a legacy, surely a daughter could be forgiven for trying to imagine what her father might have said, had he given himself permission to speak. I suspect, however, that some readers will find this appropriation of voice an unforgivable transgression. As Miriam Toews draws close to the father who was so withdrawn, she comes too close for comfort because she does so in public(ation). I've heard it described as an outing, but I prefer to imagine her swinging low with her fictive autobiographical container, like a trickster scooping up the biography of her own father.

This construction of "father," a Mel Toews who is and is not the real Mel Toews, cannot think why there are an "unusually high number of Mennonites who suffer from depression," but his ventriloquist daughter gives us a clue when she reports that he calls himself a "*schinde*." Like peace, humility is the virtue that may destroy many. Daughter projects the fictive voice

of father who quotes the voice of male nurse who, in turn, quotes father (referring to himself in the third person) back to himself: "You said, Mel es en schinde is a Low German expression meaning 'lower than low,' originally, I believe, one who tortures horses, a taskmaster, a tyrant." The tortured syntax and the absence of quotation marks renders the disguise nearly transparent here. This, like other Low German quotations, seems the least likely to be a fictive quotation. It rings true. I can imagine the daughter looking up *schinde* in a Low German dictionary and I find myself wondering whether she knows that "Mel" is Low German for "dirt."

Toews concedes that her father did not share her feeling that dragging "awful details into the light of day" is a way of making them "much less frightening." She makes no apology, however, for this violation of his wishes: "he found a way to alleviate his pain, and so have I." Undeniably, then, the book is written as personal therapy. At the same time, the "life" of the father who vows to keep his mouth shut is a kind of parody of "*die Stillen im Lande*." What is offered in opposition to the silence of denial and repression, however, is no ordinary talk therapy. Mel's response to the shrink's request for talk is, "Not everything does matter so much after all." Thinking about what kind of talk his doctor "wants to hear," Mel wonders, "why do they allude to my writing as garbage?" The popsicle sticks and pipe cleaners for craft projects used by hospital workers to distract him from his writing are odds and ends that come to stand for an absurd world of meaningless objects, garbage that can be redeemed only by love.

With such refuse, Toews defies the joyless literalism that she seems to hold partly responsible for her father's suffering. Father recites passages from the Bible as he looks into the mirror and shaves. Even as she concedes that the order in those texts helped him cope, daughter moves behind the mirror to shatter that order. Her fictive identification with her father exposes the cruelty of the literalist language that dominates fundamentalist thinking. As father's ventriloquist, daughter writes: "I don't believe anybody. What I do believe is that I have accomplished nothing in my life, nothing at all. I have neglected my children and I have killed my wife. There is nothing left to do but to record the facts, as I always have." From behind the mirror, Toews exposes these "facts" as cruel, malignant, self-punishing fictions compared to which her own fiction is benign.

The daughter's fiction is hidden out in the open, like Poe's purloined letter, but it is paraded as fact – a cunning trap for the unwary literalist reader. The sheer audacity of it is such that we become keenly aware of her leap of faith. There is a conspicuous scattering about of blank paper – recipe cards, post-it notes, legal pads – given as evidence that the father, when still alive, freely granted his daughter the permission that he refused to give himself. The inviting blankness of the "bright yellow recipe cards" left on the tracks after the father's death, like the hearts drawn by him in the hospital, are alike in opening up a space for love and for a consciousness that continues to live in the writing of the daughter. The fact remains that the father, being dead, cannot make this "life" an authorized version and this is the painful open secret of this book.

While it aims to draw her closer to the father she so loved, this fictive autobiography paradoxically emphasized his estrangement once and for all. The effort to release her father from the prison of his silence is bound to fail. We hear only the daughter's voice, playing "let's pretend." It's what griefwork is all about, this gradual learning to accept the reality of death, but seldom is it cast in such an absurd light.

Absurd is the word. “Nothing accomplished” is a phrase that quotes not only Mel Toews, but also Albert Camus. Mel, indeed, could be seen as a version of Sisyphus, “the absurd hero” of whom Camus wrote: “His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing. This is the price that must be paid for the passions of this earth.”

Consumed by the belief that he killed the wife he adored, Mel finally killed himself. The book, however, is subtitled “a life,” not “a death” or “a case study.” It is Mel’s lifelong rejection of suicide that makes the book possible and that rejection is made possible by a marriage that clearly worked. Toews weaves a loving tribute to her mother into the texture of the book, and it is clear all along that Mel’s life is buoyed by the laughter of his wife, Elvira. A hilarious family trip to Ecuador, complete with “documented head-shrinkings,” represents the family, at its best, as a group of clowns.

This is a daring venture, this combination of grieving and clowning, and I will not deny that there are aspects that I find troubling. The daughter seems in danger of believing in the literal truth of her own fiction. C.S. Lewis points out, this is the trouble with grieving, that we can invent the person in our memory after death, when what we really loved was the unpredictable living otherness that contradicts and exposes our version as falsification. I was disturbed by the blurring of the line between fictive document and actual document. Troubling also was the inadequacy of the historical context: at one point horrors of Mennonite suffering under Stalin are invoked apparently only to heighten the image of the father as victim.

Most deeply disturbing is the power imbalance inherent in this inversion of the creative act. When the father is not the maker but a construct made up by his child, then the patriarchal imbalance is replicated in reverse. On the back of the dustjacket is a photograph of a baby – presumably Mel Toews before he was a father. The last words of the epilogue could be read as an ironic reflection of this infantilizing gesture: “Dad, you’ve earned your rest. Schlope schein.” Sleep well.

To read it this way, however, you have to turn a blind eye to the fact that it is written with love and ultimately I chose not to do that. That her words are absurdities and that language itself is refuse redeemed by love is, in the end, the only answer to those who would “protect” this father from his daughter’s words.

Perhaps everything doesn’t really matter so much after all. Quotation marks, too, are merely odds and ends. Taking on her father’s identity may not be such a big deal. It seems a little like wearing one of your father’s old shirts after his death – in public to show your love – even when the public would think of it as garbage. The texture is comforting and warm and who cares if it doesn’t quite fit.

Oddly enough, there is much that is deeply comforting in this bleak book. What remained with me, after I finished reading it, was not the image of the father’s body crushed by a train, nor was it the image of a sweet chariot swinging low. What remained with me was the “fact” that Mel loved petunias.

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Bernie Neufeld, ed. *Music in Worship: A Mennonite Perspective* (Scottsdale, PA and Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1998). Pp 242, Paper.

Featuring the viewpoints of fourteen prominent church musicians who have actively led and participated in the worship services of Mennonite churches across North America in the last several decades, this book is an invaluable guide to worship leaders and laity alike. It not only engages the reader in the philosophical issues related to worship but offers practical advice and actual worship models.

The plethora of convictions ranging from “music as handmaiden” to “music as Art—art as process, as experience” delivers heady grist for the mill. In that sense this collection of sometimes disparate views serves as a microcosm of the likewise disparate opinions of worshippers in the pews.

The book opens with a chapter on “Worship” by Eleanor Krieder, which underlines the importance of Christ’s actual words in worship and recommends the early New Testament church and sixteenth-century Anabaptist worship services as models of worship. She, along with many of the writers in this book, stresses the necessity of giving the spirit free reign. We must avoid “domestication of the spirit,” John Remple reminds us, “so that our worship will somehow always be more than we have rehearsed.” Mary Oyer gives us a brief forty-year historical retrospective on hymnody. She points to a gradual embracing of music beyond North American boundaries. These “musics,” she asserts, give us insights into other cultures that extend far beyond the music itself.

Practical examples of indigenous hymnody from various traditions are outlined in Bernie Neufeld’s chapter, in addition to hymn festival program suggestions. Similarly, Marilyn Hauser Hamm details “recreative” approaches to specific hymns while Jane Grunau, in a plea for the inclusivity of children in the worship service, includes helpful programing ideas in her narrative.

The loss of four-part singing is a familiar subject in this collection of chapters. The restoration of the “voice of the congregation” is urged by Evan Kreider, who details the dangers of the microphone and acoustically challenged spaces. “Those of us without microphones are virtually powerless,” he argues. Integrated worship patterns are championed by Christine Longhurst and Gary Harder, the latter lamenting the abundance of worship music that is both theologically and musically impoverished. George Wiebe invokes silent preparation in worship, the anticipation of God’s mysterious presence, which Dietrich Bartel maintains is heightened by worship music that suggests transcendence.

The value of choral music that has sustained the church over time is underlined by Ken Nafziger who believes the choir to be the keeper of the “Crown Jewels,” and the currency of music as communicator is further reinforced by Len Enns pointing out that “Music addresses us at a broad sensory level unlike precise media such as print.”

The book ends with a chapter by Jean Janzen entitled, “The Hymn Text Writer Facing the Twenty-First Century.” Herself a writer of lyrics, Janzen advocates employments of our most excellent efforts in worship. Convinced of the great need for art (visual, literary, music, and drama) in our worship, she asserts: “[it] awakens and probes, it supports truth, it exposes deceit, and it adds order and beauty to our corporate acts.”

Music in Worship is an engaging search for profound meaning in worship.

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Jack Thiessen, *Mennonitisches Wörterbuch/Mennonite Low German Dictionary* (Steinbach, MB: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 1999). Pp. 518, Paper, \$25.00.

Samuel Johnson defined a lexicographer as “a dictionary writer, a harmless drudge.” Dr. Jack Thiessen might reject the latter part of that definition, but he can certainly lay claim to the first part. His new Low German dictionary is a must, not only for those who still use Plautdietsch as an everyday language, but particularly for those who value it as a literary language. In addition to being an excellent wordbook, it also includes a rich compilation, in Thiessen’s words, of “adages, aphorisms, children’s rhymes, ditties, moralisms, and peasant wisdoms.” And he might have added that it also includes entertaining and often humorous bits of Mennonite social history and folklore. For those who know their Plautdietsch, it offers hours of serendipitous delights.

Thiessen, a retired professor of German, has all the necessary skills for the daunting task of compiling a Low German dictionary. He is a trained linguistic scholar who not only knows Plautdietsch like a native, but who also knows High German and English, the language of his definitions, equally well. He is known as a witty raconteur who understands Russian and Canadian Mennonite culture and traditions inside and out. To include so much additional material in a dialect dictionary in order “to embody a time and culture, and a way of life that is rapidly disappearing” was a wise decision. Thiessen did much of his research and writing at the University of Kiel’s comprehensive word and language bank and gained valuable knowledge pertaining to lexical organization there as well.

One way to illustrate the considerable strengths (and a few inevitable weaknesses) of Thiessen’s dictionary is to compare it with the only other Low German Mennonite dictionary we have, namely Herman Rempel’s *Kjenn Jie Noch Plautdietsch?* Where Rempel’s dictionary contains (at a rough count) 10,000 word entries, Thiessen’s is closer to 15,000, not counting the many pages of encyclopedic information. Rempel’s dictionary, by intention, focuses largely on Plautdietsch as used by Canadian Mennonites descended from the 1870s group. Thiessen’s is clearly designed to appeal to a much wider readership, including as it does many Russian and Ukrainian loan words brought over by Russian Mennonites in the 1920s, as well as Spanish loan words used by Mennonites in South America. Thiessen generally gives fuller definitions, in High German as well as English, than Rempel and boldly includes four-letter and other vulgar Low German words not to be found in the latter’s dictionary.

On the negative side, comparing these two dictionaries reveals once again that written Plautdietsch is hampered by the lack of a standardized orthography. While Thiessen and

Rempel use orthographies that are compatible enough to make them mutually readable, their differences can cause confusion in looking up words in a dictionary. Rempel lists no entries under “Z.” To find the Low German word for “quarrel,” for example, one has to look for it under “Ssank” in Rempel and under “Zank” in Thiessen. If you want to look up “watermelon” you will find it under “Arbus” in Thiessen and “Orbus” in Rempel. Similarly, for “lawyer” it is “Afkot” in Thiessen and “Offkot” in Rempel. Not only do Thiessen and Rempel employ differing orthographies, but two other prominent writers of Plautdietsch—Reuben Epp and Jacob Loewen—have also devised their own systems in recent years. While these various systems have enough in common to make them accessible to most readers, their spelling differences can create uncertainty and confusion in the use of these Low German dictionaries.

The most annoying of these orthographic variants, at least to this reviewer, is the purely artificial difference between “tj” and “kj” in words like “Tjoatj” (in Thiessen) and “Kjoakj” (in Rempel) for “church,” or “Tjäatjsche” and “Kjäakjsche” (cook). It has often been alleged that this is a difference between Old Colony and Molotschna pronunciations, but that does not bear up under scrutiny. No matter where your Mennonite ancestors originated, you will make this sound in exactly the same way when you speak Plautdietsch. The difference is purely orthographic and the one symbol serves as well as the other. To ascribe these two conventional signs to social and linguistic differences is nonsense. All this pretended difference does is to create confusion when it comes to writing or consulting words in a Low German dictionary.

As already noted, Thiessen has enriched his dictionary immeasurably with Low German sayings, proverbs, verses, ditties, and fascinating bits of folklore and history. He has an anecdotal flair that serves him well, and a knack for translating verses so that they rhyme as neatly in English and High German as they do in Low German without losing any of their meaning. Here is one delightful example. Under the definition for “Schnetje,” Mennonite soda biscuits, we find this Low German verse and Thiessen’s English translation:

Wie send tjliene Schnetje—
 Ma haft ons jebackt;
 Süre Maltj enn Sooda
 Haft see toop jereat;
 Sat ons en den Owe.
 Nemmt ons wada rüt
 Kost en bestje Oabeit,
 Oba schmatjt uck goot.

We are little biscuits—
 Ma has done the baking,
 Buttermilk and soda
 Then mixing and shaking;
 Set us in the oven,
 Took us from the grate—
 Takes a bit of doing,
 But it’s worth the wait.

Good lexicographers – most notably, of course, Dr. Johnson – are not afraid to reveal their own biases, often in a humorous way, and Thiessen is no exception. Here is his definition of “Bethaus”: “church which was termed. . . House of Prayer by the Mennonite Brethren to emphasize their superior piety as compared to other Mennonite churches.” He illustrates “Boll” with the saying, “beware of preachers’ sons and angry bulls.” He includes the word “Hungawäähdie” with three definitions, the last one reading, “The poorest part of a town, explicitly the area east of Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada.” (I note in passing that that once poor area of Steinbach is now a comfortable suburb.) And under “Brommtopp” we get not only a full description of the instrument and the custom, but also the entire traditional mummer’s song which went with the custom.

Users of this dictionary will be hard put, I would think, to come up with Low German words that are not included in it. I looked up some of my own favorites like “Schintjeschwoaga” (bigamist or adulterer), “Schmaundjooop” (a shapeless or tatty dress), “Jülbassen” (vacuum cleaner), “Blitzowe” (microwave), and found them all there. Some other interesting words are “Reeschiesä” (toaster), “Menjselearea” (egg-beater), “Funkefiesta” (blacksmith), “Rachenpusta” (a stiff drink), and “Prallzadel” (speeding ticket). And there are hundreds of others that are equally colorful and up-to-date. Thiessen is particularly strong in traditional Russian-Mennonite words and expressions, a vocabulary that will appeal to readers of Arnold Dyck— words like “Chlodne” (prison), “Schmatock” (bite or snack), “Plemmenitj” (nephew), “Kotlett” (hamburger), and many more.

This dictionary also contains many informative, often amusing little essays like the one on “Nippaenja,” the tough Mennonite boat operators who fished and plied their boats as water taxis between Chortitza Island and the mainland in the Old Colony. There is also a description of the old-style Mennonite “Trajchtmooaka” (chiropractor), “who set bones, probed, massaged and gave sympathetic advice by way of setting things right again.” Under “nofädme” (to trace) we find this humorous entry: “threading the genealogical needle, tracing relatives; a typical Mennonite indulgence of which they never tire, namely to determine who is related to whom and how closely. Nothing gives Mennonites more satisfaction than to ferret out relatives all over the Mennonite globe and to draft plans to visit them.” There is also a fine little essay on “Tjraäsch Klocke” (Kroeger clocks), and others on “Jiddisch” and the “Judeplon” (Jewish settlement) in pre-revolutionary Russia.

The one thing lacking in this dictionary is an English to Plautdietsch section, but that deficiency is to be rectified soon. Thiessen has already completed this much-needed, complementary section and both sections are to be published in one large volume by the University of Wisconsin Press later this year. What that new edition will give us is a Mennonite Low German dictionary as close to being definitive as any we are ever likely to get before this precious language fades into oblivion forever, at least in this part of the world.

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Patrick Friesen, *carrying the shadow* (Vancouver: Beach Holme, 1999). Pp. 111, Paper, \$ 12.95.

The seventy-nine poems in Patrick Friesen's latest book return, more consistently, coherently, and elegiacally than Friesen's poems ever have, to death as the poet's familiar – a recurring shadow, voice, and presence. "Return," because the abiding sense in these poems is that death has always been waiting for these quiet acknowledgments, and there is a lyrical grace attending many of Friesen's finer poems here that results from his careful and crafted surrender to this need for acknowledgment. As well – as if this willing surrender to mortality's call had set love free to say its name more passionately – there are several fine love lyrics woven through the book, although the abiding tone remains shaded and, at times, almost serene, too yielding, and too dark.

Darkness haunts these poems as a trope and figure: consider the fine opening piece, "nothing dark," in which the first lines open out with surprising energy and vividness:

Death is here a river of smiles running through the house
 a red tulip bending in its thirst
 a still curtain at noon and a bird fluttering in the eaves the
 screen doors slams but no one's there

The relaxed and fluid familiarity of Friesen's "running" lines – a technique he used to powerful effect in poems like his "talk new york: waiting on love," and continued to work with in his 1996 collection, *st. mary at main* – is brought up short with the menacing "screen door slams"; by poem's end, the opening fluidity has become layered, and death has become an intimate familiar, not menacing, but friendly and beckoning:

these things these deaths the gorgeous evening and the summer
 night drifting down
 there is nothing dark about darkness the sleeping town filled
 with shadows
 a willow near the well and a silver birch a cat straying through
 the night
 the call you hear laughter from a doorway and the air stirring
 in the leaves

At their best, and this is often, these poems work with mortality in a seductive and languorous idiom, making language and memory agents bound up in time, but also bound to yield, sooner and more unexpectedly than later, to the insistent and friendly call of headstones, cemeteries, and the very earth underfoot; speaking, writing poems, even and especially love, become pastimes quick with living, carrying with them the abiding sign of the first and last familiar. There are a few points at which I wanted a more crafted line; "rolling home," for example, which follows a hearse on its passage down a small town street, feels too simply enumerative rather than evocative:

. . .
 the tires rolling
 with the smell of rubber
 the dark casket
 ominous inside
 the chrome and tinted glass
 of the hearse
 rolling through the intersection
 past the pharmacist in his doorway
 an old man and his dog
 past the bicycle leaning
 against a wall. . .

But this is an exception. More often, Friesen's lines invite and engage by virtue of a practiced eloquence, the result of a long apprenticeship all the more effective for its apparent transparency and apparent ease; as Purdy reminds us and Friesen demonstrates here, the "crafte so long to lerne" is a labour of hard love, and Friesen has worked for years to arrive at this fluency. In this collection, something like a language native to his theme emerges, too – a language rife with repetitions of word, image, phrase, and scene (willows, blackbirds, headstones imprinted with names and signs hard to read; the muted patterned eloquence of rain, cloud, wind, and sky; a figure remembered, poised or falling; friendly death entering the house, entering the body, entering memory; the recurrent and regained, recurrently lost father or family member, equally at home in memory, in a field or a doorway, or in the earth). And always, the gathering sense that the poet is "carrying the shadow," too, not as a burden, but as a gift and promise.

I found the few interspersed prose poems – these are italicized and spoken in a voice a bit familiar and conversational – generally not as effective as the rest of the book; they seem too rehearsed to me, although they are mostly attractive variations on death and dying. Interestingly, most of the finest poems are the slightly longer pieces ("learning braille," for example, or the love lyrics, like the exquisite "I will cut you a diamond"); and when Friesen opens this throat – more, often, this collection wears its dignity and restraint on its sleeve – the effect is very powerful, as in "sorrow." To witness the happy success of more than a mere exercise in form enacted before readers' very eyes – a kind of extended, graphic onomatopoeia, in which not the sound but the shape of the verse deftly imitates the turn towards meaning – see "the door."

It would seem as though meditating on these shadows, conjuring with these griefs, has made Friesen more attentive, and more receptive, to singing love and desire as brief, intense, and yet lasting as long summer afternoon. Although I look forward to hearing Friesen read these poems (they seem remarkably suited to that familiar slow and swinging cadence he has been tuning for years), they are as comfortably, richly at rest, liquid and plangent, on the page.

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Jean Janzen, *Tasting the Dust* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2000). Pp. 69, Paper, \$9.95. U.S.

Jean Janzen's poems are spare and tight, but the richness of her imagery takes my breath away. The poems are about the earth and how she occupies it; about nature and how it receives us; about history and how it reaches forward to us; about life and death and how they call us beyond our understanding. The book is divided into four sections, each one introduced by a poem describing a painting by the Dutch artist, Vermeer. The paintings are of women alone in a room, each one suspended in a moment of activity; opening a window, pouring milk, reading a letter, weighing pieces of gold. Like Vermeer's paintings, Janzen's poems reach out beyond themselves to something we yearn for and yet fail fully to comprehend.

In Part I, "Window facing South," the poems are about the valley where Janzen has made her home and the mountains that overlook it. Janzen celebrates the land's fertility, the mountains' beauty and provision of water for the valley. Comparing the "necessity" of the one and the "grace" of the other, she asks, ultimately, "Where is home?"

Part II, "Windows facing North," is an exploration of human relationships. "Our stories are too big/ for our bodies," she writes. Our lives, dreamlike, circle around "that non-dream/ we try to imagine, around which/ my poems circle –," from which we come and which we try all our lives to understand.

Images of Holland, Mennonite martyrs, and Italy are the subjects of the poems in Part III. In these poems we are treated to a gallery of descriptions of paintings: those of Dutch painters, including Vermeer, a stunning poem likening Van Gogh to the suffering servant in Isaiah 53, and the Italian frescoes of Fra Angelico. Like those in the rest of the book, these poems pull the reader through the painting to the artist's imagined intent or captured moment and to Janzen's, and our, apprehending of it.

Part IV returns closer to home, with poems remembering the lakes of Janzen's childhood and recording the death of her ninety-five year old mother. In the final poem, "Tasting the Dust," she returns to the garden where the sweat of her husband's toil is his restoration. But the garden also

tells the story of dust. an origin
so deep and dense. it rose
like fire to make the mountain.
a narrative of tumble
a breakage from its sides.
the wet roar of ages
under the slow beat of the sun.

In her repeated use of natural elements such as dust, air, leaves, Janzen grounds us in the paradox of earth and spirit. Though the dust covers everything, it is the air, she says "into which we sail,/ breath by dusty breath,/ toward a different shore." In the end, though, "it is the air/ itself, which finally claims us,/ drawing our last exhalations/ into its reckless burning, this air/ which we have borrowed since/ our first stunned gasp." What we try to capture is

transcient, always in motion so that we can only glimpse it. Even so something “is saved somewhere” and in our longing for that something that is saved,

what we finally hold in our empty hands
is what we glimpsed – a memory
of beauty and sweetness like a secret home.
where, when we enter, someone
calls us by a new name.

For me, what finally makes these poems attractive, beyond the exquisite use of language, is Janzen’s capturing of both the beauty and the frailty of earthly existence, framed by an apprehension of something more enduring. Here are words worth staying with, images that both delight and invite further thought.

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Carla Funk, *Blessing the Bones into Light* (Open Eye Poetry Series; Regina: Coteau Books, 1999). Pp. 84, \$8.95 Cdn., \$7.95 U.S.

I first encountered Carla Funk’s poetry, three or four years ago, when I heard her read from a suite of poems entitled “Solomon’s Wives” in Prince George, British Columbia. What struck me immediately was the maturity of language and perspective in a young, essentially unpublished, poet. As I settled into the rhythms of her voice, I was delighted to hear both the freshness and the depth of her work. There was a dignified sensuality. No easy flash of eroticism, but a deep paying attention to sensuality without being caught by its obviousness. In that suite of poems, one of Solomon’s future wives is twice visited by him, and his entourage:

. . . With your
three wives whose arms were ivory
next to my sun-dulled skin. Their necks ringed
with silver and sapphire. . .

And on a later visit:

It must have been a dream the next time you came,
startled me as I washed my hair in a bucket of water
your fingers wiping soapsuds from the back of my neck. . .

First the obvious beauty, then the deep sensuality.

The title of Funk’s first collection, *Blessing the Bones into Light*, catches her weaving together of the spirit and the flesh. The earth is sensual. Its inhabitants, in these poems mostly her family, husband and child, are also sensual. And they are spirits with yearnings of the spirit. And, isn’t yearning itself desire?

There was a lake and a canoe
and pelicans dipping through the orange sky
against a backdrop of poplars.

. . .

. . . She feels
his breath in her hair and smells
the cold water. There is the sound
of laughter carrying
from one side to the other.

A sense of the human partaking of human ceremonies and yet being a stranger on earth is caught in "Dancing, My Parents":

In their wedding photograph, my mother
in her white gown is caught, a startled
ghost against my father's black suit. His face
turns away from my mother, her eyes
avoid the camera and sudden flash of light.

At their moment of marriage, that fundamental human connection, they are alone, even startled to be caught in this ceremony. She is a ghost, and he wears a black suit. One can see their physical end even in this beginning of life together. In the poem the parents stumble through their dance. Humans, clumsy in their desire for grace.

And this touches on the core of the book. The poems observe human frailty unsparingly, but they also embrace it. As there is no easy division between spirit and flesh, there is no splitting of the human being into good and bad. One should read all of "The Broken House," for example, to see this. It's a poem about a young woman trying to separate, within herself, her young lover from her flawed father and yet love them both:

And me feeling for the first time
what it's like to be caught
in the act of love and loathing. . .

. . .

what it feels like to love
inside the broken house, to be on my knees
at the mercy of a God who sees everything,
what it feels like to turn away
and still turn back.

There is a remarkable maturity of experience. No easy fixes, no ready theories, just the contradictions of living. And it is precisely here that Funk become poet. Out of this acceptance of human failure and glory, she emerges with language. She makes a transitory sense of it all:

Words slip into the places
I once was and can no longer go.

Carla Funk is a marvelous poet. There are times when I think the language is too flat, but this is infrequent. It is the cost of trying to fuse the conversational language of her terrain, ethnicity, and culture in northern British Columbia with poetic resonance. Out of this she creates a heightened language that is accessible but not easy. There is a fine physicality present in these poems and an affirmation that reminds me of Molly Bloom's famous speech:

Yes to the bones coming together, syllables
of sinew and flesh rising to cover them. Yes
to the mouths opening for air, the dry tongues
unfolding. Yes to breath and fingers lighting
the dark corners with touch. Yes to the body's
map. Yes to words that name and heal,
call forth and bless. Yes
to the contagious memory.

Patrick Friesen
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Hilda Lohrenz Bergen, *Hilda's Pilgrimage*, (Edmonton: John J. Bergen, 2000). Pp.199.

Hilda's Pilgrimage is a personal book in more ways than one. It is a collection of poems and prose pieces written over a period of forty years by Hilda Bergen and edited after her death by her husband John Bergen into an impressionistic autobiography. The illustrations done by grandson Jeff Bergen make the book even more of a family enterprise. Moreover, Hilda Bergen was the daughter of the late Gerhard Lohrenz, a well-known minister, teacher, historian, and writer in Winnipeg.

Hilda Bergen clearly loved writing and, while her literary ambitions were modest, she captured her feelings, impressions, ideas and visions with a refreshing simplicity and a verbal transparency which not infrequently achieves eloquence. What really makes this book worth reading, however, is that its many deeply felt poems and biographical sketches express the inner life of a woman whose life was molded within the context of a Mennonite way of life that was still highly paternalistic in all areas. There are several poems and sketches in this collection that poignantly touch on what it was like to grow up in a family totally dominated by a father-minister who probably found it easier to express love and affection publicly to his obedient, admiring flock than to do so privately to his family. But Bergen was able to find an identity and voice through her writing, and over the years, judging by this book, that voice grew ever more confident and independent. Her passionate love for her family, her acute awareness of her role and responsibility towards it, her sensuous attachment to the natural world, her fondness for travel and its often unexpected epiphanies, her affectionate loyalty to friends and indeed to all the people who had meant something to her, and her vibrant spiritual life are recorded here in diverse ways.

John Bergen's editing is discreet and sensitive. He occasionally adds a personal note to

fill in the picture and adds a touching epilogue about his many years of marriage to Hilda. The book stands as a tribute to a beloved wife, whose dignity and uniqueness he has honoured by preserving her voice in this collection of her writing.

Al Reimer
University of Winnipeg

John Unrau, *Iced Water* (Cliffs of Moher Co., Ireland: Salmon Publishing, 2000)

As much as current academic critics of Canadian Literature might try to deny landscape and displacement as stalwart poetic pilgrimages, they continue to haunt our imagination. John Unrau's first poetry collection eloquently enters this hallowed ground with grace and flair. Unrau, on the one hand, echoes such Canadian predecessors as A.M. Klein and F.R. Scott, and, on the other, flashes such influences as Seamus Heaney (take the first poem "Father" as an example) and American William Carlos Williams.

Unrau's poetic foundation is imagism – that crystalline landscape presence, that deft brushstroke of texture and colour. Poems like "On Lake Agnes," "Winter Day Near Etzikon, Alberta," and "Bereavement" are traditional imagist poems, which depend on short, uncluttered lines, unjudgmental language, and an absolute reverence for the visual scene (and so, an unmitigating de-emphasis on the viewer of the scene). Ezra Pound's dictum that there is "no ideas but in things" holds sway here. This poetic stance is nowhere more evident than in "Your Thirteenth Birthday" which compresses imagism back toward its haiku roots:

Late winter storm
sky blanched in April light
gulls tack across driving snow
kildeer [sick] cry again
around the hyrdo towers.
birch birds start to feather out.

Ideas 'feather out' of these poems in quiet understated ways, free of the heavy-handedness that first poetry books tend toward.

Almost clashing with the vivid imagist sections are seemingly anachronistic references to such cultural reaches as Greek myth, high modernist poetry (Whitman especially), postmodern art (Warhol), and high tech. This might make a slim collections of poetry seem uncohesive and unsettling, but through it all is a keen gentle wit and a poet's eye for the sadly beautiful:

in the still air
a cluster of pigeons

over your gravestone
a mantle of snow

on this young maple
 a clutch of dead leaves
 knuckling in against
 the push of spring

The poignancy of the book is often reserved for a longing for ancestors, a Canadian Mennonite heritage that seems to be accessible only through gravestone, ghost town, and insufficient haunts of memory:

....I stand with these
 scarcely discernible
 scoops and scratchings
 in the dryland dirt
 where your thousand walls once rose
 from their shallow dream bed.

This longing and distance is allegorized in the second last poem called "Visiting Grandfathers" where the narrator recalls "Dickens read aloud by kerosene lamp to improve the family English." The tension and contemplative ardour of the collection surrounds the narrator's struggle to "span by/ word or look or touch/ this distance fixed between us finally."

The poems are, in turn, elegiac, nostalgic, playful (for example "To Wordsworth, From Ontario" which bemoans technology and portrays a pandemonium-like Toronto), sarcastic ("Celebrated Visiting Poet"), and pastoral ("Walking Home to Mayfair, January 1928"). *Iced Water*, as a whole, comes across as sincere, delicate and absolutely located in Canadian soil. The blue-orange imagine by Mary Klassen on the cover (called Resting *Quail*) and light blue-grey cover perfectly cradle the cool serenity and latent motion that comes from this place of poetic origins.

Rob Budde
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 University of Winnipeg

Social Science and Theology

Duane K. Friesen, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City: An Anabaptist Theology of Culture* (Waterloo ON: Herald Press, 2000). Pp. 347, Paper, \$25.29 Canada, \$16.99 U.S.

The full title of this book identifies the purpose and substance of the book. Duane K. Friesen wants Christians to claim our own specific cultural and autobiographical experience while we work out of faithfulness to the Gospel. In the introduction, he outlines some of his own story of being raised in a Mennonite family in culturally diverse rural Idaho, as well as the richness of his active adult life experience. Of particular concern to him, as a committed Mennonite, was (and is) the relationship of politics and pacifism. Growing up, he encoun-

tered too many who misrepresented Mennonite cultural engagement and civic responsibility.

Friesen has produced an impressive theology of culture – soundly Trinitarian and Christologically based. The central text (reflected in the book’s title) finds the prophet Jeremiah encouraging his Israelite neighbors in Babylon to “Seek the shalom of the city where you dwell...” (29:7). Friesen, a contemporary Jeremiah, challenges disciples of Jesus to seek *shalom* in “the materialistic-capitalistic society where we live [which] is not a Christian society” (p. 38).

Part One of Friesen’s book provides a comprehensive alternative Christian vision within the dominant culture. His own spirit and intellect have been stretched along life’s way. His thinking has been profoundly influenced by Latin American and other liberation theologies, feminist analysis (although there are few references here), and the emerging prominence of non-Christian world religions. However, some might find the analytical framework of Ernst Troeltsch and H. Richard Niebuhr in Chapter two to be curiously dated.

Chapter three consciously moves readers back from their particular cultural restrictions to imagine a faithful life style. “Language makes it possible for humans to transcend themselves and reflect self-consciously on the world picture they have created” (p. 75), Friesen claims. If we fail to use language in this way our unique ministry is undermined. This chapter reminded me of how skilled the dominant system is at serving its own ends, by adopting the language Christians use to herald the Reign of God. As a role model, Friesen commends Martin Luther King, who “integrated...three elements of Christian theology” (p. 85): philosophy, the love of wisdom; citizenship, seeking the good of the human community; and artistic excellence.

In the concluding chapter of Part One, Friesen outlines how the church might incarnate an optional societal vision. Twenty practical methods encourage the Christian community to resist absorption into the encompassing culture. Reviewing these familiar practices in this context demonstrates their radical potential.

Part Two expands those three characteristics of alternative living noted in the book’s title. To start, Friesen argues that “aesthetic experience is an integral part of our response to God, the Creator of the cosmos. Aesthetic delight is central to an embodied, incarnational vision of life....” (p. 17). The opening quote recognizes the value of J.S. Bach’s musical genius; most of the reference points for acclaiming art that follow also arise from (dominant) culturally accredited forms. This feels out of place, given the point of the book. Perhaps I missed them, but there seemed a lack of references to artistic expressions arising from oppressed peoples (such as Afro American gospel music before it came into popular vogue) or modern communities of resistance (such as the fabric art of the Mothers of the Disappeared in Latin America). Yes, there are references to humble demonstrations of artistic awareness in the Mennonite community and elsewhere. But art itself is not celebrated as an unselfconscious type of resistance to the dominant culture.

The two final chapters are particularly valuable. Christians are encouraged to be good citizens (the dynamics of dual citizenship) and philosophers (incorporating Christian faith and human wisdom). These chapters demonstrate extensive research, and show practical ways for Christian communities to take action. Friesen’s generous spirit is particularly clear here as he examines new possibilities for restorative justice, religious pluralism, the complex spiritual and political issues related to abortion, God’s preferential option for the poor, the

dignity of homosexuals and other minorities, etc. He concludes, "We are participants in an ongoing conversation, a discerning process, as we seek the peace of the city where we dwell" (p. 251).

It will be interesting to see if younger disciples of Christ's gospel find the style of the book accessible to them. The reference points are almost entirely American. However, this aging non-Mennonite reader felt no sense of being discounted in the unfolding of this Anabaptist consideration of a theology of culture. While working through the book, one sensed the companionship of a generous, curious, and competent mentor.

Paul Campbell
University of Winnipeg

Jacob A. Loewen, *Educating Tiger: My Spiritual and Intellectual Journey* (Hillsboro, KS: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 2000). Pb., pp.346. \$19.99.

The author of this book has spent many years in mission work in Colombia and Panamá. Then, while on a "forced leave" in North America (certain missions were closed by Colombia in the 1950s), Loewen obtained a doctorate in cultural and linguistic anthropology. But whether relating to foreign cultures, or teaching in the college of his conference, or studying at the secular university, he was always engaged in "mission," the reader will discover. Thus, when the anthropology department admitted this "missionary student" with the explicit intent of "destroying his faith in one year," Loewen restated the Christian world view to the department head (an evolutionist) so persuasively in her language that she exclaimed: "Gee, that is truly fascinating! I never knew that you Christians thought like that. This is terrific!" (p. 122).

The greater part of his career Loewen dedicated to being a language consultant with the United Bible Societies. He also became a much sought-after trouble shooter for missionaries experiencing inter-ethnic conflict or tension among fellow workers. These interventions brought astonishing results in conflict transformation and precipitated a multitude of stories that are both entertaining and full of lessons about Christian missions. Thankfully many are gathered here into one integrated volume. Because many parts of this book have been previously published, an extensive bibliography of Loewen's writings is included as an Appendix (pp. 310-28).

Loewen's unusually productive career in mission is shown here as bracketed, on the one hand, by his fragile, sickly childhood in Russia - he was not expected to live, but his mother dedicated her son to God's service if God would heal him - and, on the other, by his debilitating stroke in 1993 that gave his life a drastically new turn. Before the stroke, he confesses, his life was largely achievement oriented; now he concentrates more on being, not an easy shift for one who has been so active for so long. Judging by the number of books he has published even after the stroke, he is certainly far from inactive.

In *Educating Tiger* (Tiger is the aborigines' apt nickname for the author), precisely by narrating his experiences, Loewen identifies and lucidly discusses numerous challenging is-

issues common to missions everywhere. These issues include diverse understandings of conversion, the unexpected workings of God's Spirit, sharing the faith across cultural lines, faith-healing in a pre-scientific community, the key role of peace theology in mission, the challenges in Bible translation, truth in other religions, scientific versus primal worldviews, among others. What stands out in his treatment of all these topics is the humble courage of the author to approach these issues with a spirit of openness and learning. As well, Loewen has discovered the principle of "becoming the first sinner" (admitting short-comings in his own life) as an aid for opening up communication with fellow humans everywhere.

In fact, this book is above all a testimony to his willingness to examine and correct his assumptions, even in regards to the most sacred convictions. Often his deeper understanding of Christian teaching and practice is learned from people of primal societies. Thus Loewen credits the Waunana of Panamá for teaching him that conversion is not a once-and-for-all event (as his home church then taught) but is rather an ongoing process whereby successive "rooms" in the person's (or community's) life are discovered. These new rooms or dimensions must be placed under Christ's Lordship at that point. This insight was also corroborated for Jake and Anne Loewen in connection with their children's conversions and their subsequent development.

Likewise, Loewen freely confesses to having learned from a village drunk not to judge him but instead to become a helping friend. Further, he has gained his deepest insights about peaceful living from the Lengua Indians of Paraguay, who in this regard could have taught so much to their "peaceful" Mennonite neighbours now settling on their hunting grounds, had the immigrants been more willing to learn.

His observations during life abroad have led Loewen, who formerly had little use for the voluntary service approach to "mission," to revise his opinion. While missionaries frequently retreat at the first signs of serious trouble, Mennonite Central Committee workers often stay and share the lot of those who have no choice but to stay. In his words: "In troubled times I have seen missionaries scurry for safety while MCC volunteers continued helping, even under fire." This gesture of solidarity is not lost on the local peoples (cf. 290, 292-93), for Loewen notes: "When I asked [Third World people] to identify the best and most Christlike foreigners they knew, people invariably picked the MCC volunteers over soul-winning missionaries" (p. 290).

Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to Loewen's learning approach to all things and thus to missions itself is that in his lifetime he has subscribed to three successive mission models. His own words say it best: "I began my Christian witness as an ardent nondenominational soul-winner who consistently and consciously tried to hide his German Mennonite background. Next, I spent a decade-plus as a self-replicating church planter. Then followed some thirty years of learning what it means to operate as a catalyst" (p. 215). The latter approach avoids imposing on people one's own culture-based formula for salvation and inquires instead whether God may already be at work and what God might be doing in their lives. Nevertheless, Loewen is not rejecting any one model. Rather, he posits that these models relate one to the other analogously, that is, as primary and high school relate to university education. He has found that God has used all three models for adding to his family. Each strategy needs to be evaluated in the light of Scripture, anthropology and the needs of the masses still waiting to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Other key learnings from his lifetime are listed by Loewen. First, his image of the “church as a fortress” has given way to the church “as a hospice for sinners.” Second, he regards “peace as a vital premise to Mennonite written theology,” even if the practice in our churches often falls short on this score. The source of this insight may surprise us, when he defers: “the great peacemakers I have learned to know were the Lengua” (p. 269). “Finally,” says Loewen, “I have come full circle to face my Mennonite heritage. . . . I began as a young man ashamed of my heritage and my Mennonite name but my experience overseas has increasingly made me proud of this label” (p. 269f.). Particularly illuminating for him was a visit to an evangelical church in Spain. Upon learning of his Mennonite identity, the organist (pastor’s wife) ran the full length of the church, threw her arms around him and kissed him loudly. Noticing his embarrassment, she explained: “During the civil war my family and I were kept alive by food that came in bags with clasped hands on them and a logo which read, ‘In the name of Christ, Mennonite Central Committee.’ As a family we then and there vowed that if anyone survived the war and ever met a Mennonite, that person was to kiss the Mennonite on behalf of the whole family” (p. 293). Loewen was the first one they met. This and many other indicators, some from other missionaries, have led Loewen to realize that Mennonites indeed have a precious heritage to share. He was therefore devastated when finding, upon his retirement in Canada, “that so many Mennonite ministers today are ashamed of the Mennonite name and the heritage it represents.” Indeed a “leading Mennonite Brethren minister told me, ‘The first thing I do with every church I pastor is get rid of the Mennonite name on the sign in front of the church. I consider it an impediment to evangelism’” (293f.). They could not possibly do this, Loewen contends, if they knew the value that our name has acquired for people around the world. Aided by his son’s query about Anabaptist pacifism, Loewen (typically) responded to this disappreciation by writing a book, *Only the Sword of the Spirit*, to give “fuller testimony of why I today am a committed Anabaptist/Mennonite” (p. 294).

Not surprisingly, Loewen concludes his biography with humility and gratitude, saying: “As a missionary, I had to learn to leave my home church agenda at home. I was only truly helpful when I functioned as a catalyst,” discerning the Holy Spirit’s activity among and through indigenous peoples. “All in all,” he reminisces, “I found that in four decades of mission I had more to learn than I had to teach! So thank you, all my Third World teachers!” (p. 301).

Just by being such a willing learner, the author has served as a gifted teacher. He has unlocked for others a clearer understanding of God’s mission to all peoples, a project in which he wants us to be active participants. In my view, this book represents a narrative missiology of the best sort. We will long be in Jacob Loewen’s debt for this candid autobiography – not to mention his many other writings.

Titus F. Guenther
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Leo Driedger, *Mennonites in the Global Village* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). Pb., pp. xiv + 264.

In 1996 the final volumes of a four-volume history of Mennonites in the United States and of a three-volume history of Mennonites in Canada were published. Both series took their respective histories only up to 1970. In this volume Leo Driedger, a well-known Canadian sociologist, discusses the Canadian Mennonite experience in the last half of the twentieth century.

The book is a collection of ten essays, focusing on different aspects of the Mennonite encounter with modern life. The author argues that before 1940 most North American Mennonites were rural and agricultural people, living in relatively isolated communities where traditional village values and ways of living were perpetuated. This changed rapidly during and after the Second World War when Mennonites by the thousands moved to the towns and cities. There they entered the professions, operated businesses, lived and worked in close proximity with people who did not necessarily share their values and ideals, and read or listened to modern newspaper, radio and television communications. They faced the challenge of preserving and protecting cherished traditional values while living and working in a modern society dominated by global rather than local village values and lifestyles.

The first essay provides an overview of recent world-wide Mennonite demographics showing dramatic membership increases in less modern countries such as Africa and India and stagnation or only modest growth in Europe and North America. Interesting statistical evidence is cited to demonstrate the more individualistic, materialistic and secular traits of European and North American Mennonites when compared with the local village and communal values prevalent in pre-modern or underdeveloped countries.

The introductory chapter is followed by chapters dealing almost entirely with the Mennonite experience in Canada and the United States, and in some instances with only a small segment of the Canadian Mennonite scene. In these chapters Driedger relies on various sociological theories, on broad Canadian or North American statistical surveys, and on the much more extensive Mennonite statistical data gathered in 1972 and 1988. The specific topics covered include the emergence of Mennonite urban professionals, individualism, life in one small and relatively isolated rural Mennonite community, the impact of mass media, attitudes regarding the role and place of women in society, problems and challenges faced by Mennonite teenagers, efforts by Mennonite academics to integrate secular and sacred concerns, the emergence of women as new leaders, and changes in the Mennonite peace witness.

Much of the information provided in this book has also appeared in various scholarly articles and books published by Leo Driedger. Each chapter, however, defines the key issues somewhat differently, relying on different sociological theories, and presenting the evidence in ways which seem compelling in that particular context. But the larger work lacks coherence and consistency. Thus, key modernization factors identified in the first chapter are urbanization, life expectancy and fertility. Elsewhere the more usual traits of individualism, materialism and secularism are used as indicators of modernization. Modernization, as discussed in the first chapter, seems an obvious threat to Mennonite identity, but in the next

chapter the reader is informed that the most rapidly growing Mennonite congregations are in the modern urban communities of Winnipeg and the lower Fraser Valley while rural white traditional Canadian Mennonite communities face serious difficulties.

The chapter on individualism, as applied to Canadian Mennonites, does not seem to fit the overall interpretation of the work. Citing Alexis deTocqueville's influential work on democracy in America, Driedger argues that North American Mennonites, like others, "left behind the old feudal states and ecclesiastical structures to find new freedoms in North America." (p. 49). But elsewhere he argues that Mennonite strangers in a new land "turned to familiar elements such as religion, community, culture, institutions and land to use as poles to stake their Mennonite claims" (p. 71). Some American historians have placed great emphasis on the transforming power of the frontier experience. But E. K. Francis, in his influential work published in 1955, and Driedger elsewhere, strongly suggest that, at least until 1940, Canadian Mennonites successfully resisted such a transformation. There were exceptions, such as Driedger's grandfather, but before 1940 the Canadian Mennonite experience generally did not match the interpretation offered by Tocqueville and American frontier historians.

Leo Driedger's impressive publication record contains numerous interesting insights into the Mennonite experience. Much of that work, however, consists of well-crafted individual building blocks. Each chapter in this book has a good introduction and conclusion, but linkages between the various chapters are inadequate. These chapters, as individual building blocks, still await the touch of an architect who will transform them into a magnificent scholarly edifice.

Historians and sociologists often survey similar terrain. Theories, models, surveys, and statistical documentation, calculations and inductive interpretations are the stock in trade of many sociologists. Historians focus on documents, correspondence, minute books, government files, memoirs and interviews, which are subjected to deductive interpretations. It often takes time before much of the relevant archival material becomes available for historical research. Historians are, therefore, more reticent in dealing with recent events than sociologists

The findings of some sociologists of the Canadian Mennonite experience, most notably perhaps those of E. K. Francis, have been validated, but also modified, by later archival research by historians. Leo Driedger's work, like that of E. K. Francis, provides the reader with much useful and interesting information. It will also provide helpful reference points for further scholarly research once relevant additional materials become available.

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Stanley Hauerwas, Chris Huebner, Harry Huebner, and Mark Thiessen Nation, eds.. *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

The Wisdom of the Cross is a *Festschrift* that was published about ten years after it

was first discussed. The reason for the delay is instructive - John Howard Yoder, the scholar being honored, was under "discipline" by the Mennonite church. Thus it was felt that it would be inappropriate to celebrate his work with one arm of the church while discipline was being exercised with the other (p. x). This impulse seems in keeping with the work of Yoder himself which is discussed, extended, applied, and critiqued in this important book.

Several features of this book deserve immediate highlighting. Mark Thiessen Nation has written a fine biographical sketch of Yoder (which comes a bit too close to hagiography). Nation has also provided a supplement to his earlier 'comprehensive' Yoder bibliography published in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, and a previously unpublished Yoder essay entitled "'Patience' as Method in Moral Reasoning: Is an Ethic of Discipleship 'Absolute?'" is included. This inclusion is well-chosen, especially as it shows Yoder working in his very methodical way while avoiding methodologism.

It is impossible to summarize the content of this very long and expensive book. However, James McClendon is surely correct when he claims that Yoder's "influence is even more felt through other scholars' use of his work than through his own extensive teaching career" (p. 309). All of these essays show in one form or another how this is the case. I want to highlight several such 'uses' to illustrate some of the breadth of Yoder's influence.

Reinhard Huetter, a Lutheran scholar at Duke University, assesses Lutheran faithfulness (or not) to the Just War theory through the lens of Yoder's work in this area. Huetter shows how Lutherans, by superficially and halfheartedly subscribing to the Just War theory, have actually done nothing more than support national interest warfare (p. 79). Thus Yoder's attempt to have Christians be 'honest in Just War thinking' bears fruit in Huetter's work. Another example of similar use of Yoder is found in Tobias Winwright's essay on the question of policing. Winwright describes himself as a non-pacifist student of Yoder's, and yet he uses Yoder to address a weakness in pacifist writings regarding the complex issue of policing.

Other essays function as a kind of defense or extension of Yoder's work. For example, Harry Huebner, in an essay on embodiment as moral agency, again defends against the tired sectarian charge so often levelled against Yoder. In addition, Huebner shows that a social ethic which is based on Jesus, as is Yoder's, need not compel us to a focus on God and a creation ethic that is in tension with a Jesus ethic. William Klassen also defends Yoder's work on Jesus, but this from a biblical studies point of view, showing how Yoder's work in *The Politics of Jesus* represents a better reading than that of Richard Horsley. Michael Cartwright alerts the reader to the fact that Yoder's historical work is central to his ethical analysis. Gayle Gerber Koontz offers a concrete example of how some of Yoder's material has been used by describing a Mennonite institution's work in a difficult situation.

Two of the essays in this collection stand out in the sense that they are more 'argumentative' than the others. James Reimer, in an essay he claims is a personal tribute to Yoder, takes vigorous exception to Yoder's reading of the relation between 'early Jewish Christianity' and 'classical orthodoxy.' The argument is not a new one - Reimer has written contra Yoder in this regard before, and this essay points to an important discussion which will no doubt continue. I suppose here we have something like a 'quest for the historical Constantinianism' developing.

Gerald Schlabach, in what I consider one of the best essays in this collection, offers a critique of Constantinianism that is very different from Reimer's. Schlabach does not take

issue with Yoder's trenchant critique of Constantinianism, nor does he try to assess the level of Constantinian influence in the creeds. Instead he seeks to redescribe it as the "most prominent instantiation of an even more basic problem" that of the Deuteronomic temptation, which is the problem of how to receive God's blessing without violently defending and hoarding it (pp. 450, 451). This enables Schlabach to acknowledge the Constantinian danger, but also to show its limits, and to understand what factors exist which give Constantinianism such power among us. This subtly argued essay extends Yoder's point without denying its power for Christians seeking to be faithful.

This is an extremely valuable book for Yoder studies—for understanding his work, for examples of how his work can be used, and for possible streams of constructive critique. I have only a few hesitations about the project. This huge book has no index (as pointed out elsewhere by Alain Epp-Weaver), which baffles me. I also would wish that Stanley Hauerwas and Chris Huebner had written separate essays. Both of these scholars have important things to say about Yoder. If they had written individual pieces with attendant footnotes it would have allowed readers to follow some of the issues hinted at in their conversation-style contribution more closely. Finally, the lack of a significant presence of Karl Barth needs to be corrected. Yoder studied under Barth, wrote about his thought, and apparently was significantly shaped by him. Some such work has and is being done (cf. Craig Carter) and I was hoping to see this area of inquiry explored further. Having said all of that, *The Wisdom of the Cross* is currently perhaps the most important secondary source on the work of John Howard Yoder.

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Terry L. Brensinger, *Judges: Believers Church Bible Commentary*. (Scottsdale, PA; Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1999). Pp. 262.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this new Believers Church Bible Commentary on the book of *Judges*. Brensinger has managed to produce a very interesting and highly readable commentary on a book which provides a glimpse on one of the most difficult periods in the history of Israel. This commentary is organized clearly, provides detailed outlines of the text, and consistently relates the text both to its historical and literary contexts. The reader always knows how the entire book of *Judges* fits into the broader historical background and, as importantly, how each specific section relates to the book as a whole. This constant movement from text to context is certainly one of the great strengths of this commentary.

The author who, incidentally, is well acquainted with the archeology of the ancient Near East, judiciously inserts relevant archeological information to shed light on various aspects of the text. Although the commentary is targeted at a general audience, Brensinger does not hesitate to address some of the more difficult exegetical and historical problems the reader will encounter (see, for example, *Judges* 3:22). For each section of the book of *Judges*, the author provides a preview, an outline of the text, and explanatory notes. In addition, Brensinger suggests various ways in which the specific section under study is connected to

the wider canonical context, and he also supplies insightful and helpful comments designed to help the reader grasp the contemporary relevance of the biblical text. Among the helpful features of the commentary, the reader is regularly directed to various short essays on important topics such as ancient Near Eastern texts, archeology, Canaanites, historicity and truth, role of the judges, violence and war, etc. Pastors, Sunday school teachers, and Bible study group leaders will find Brensinger's commentary to be particularly useful. I warmly recommend it to all those who wish to understand more adequately this important biblical book.

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