

Foreword:

This year's journal begins with a dozen historiographical papers delivered at the "State of the Art of North American Mennonite History" conference held on 1 and 2 October 2004 at the University of Winnipeg. The conference was held seven years after a similar conference in Abbotsford, BC. But while the 1997 Abbotsford conference celebrated the completion of history projects, the two historical series, the *Mennonite Experience in America* and the *Mennonites in Canada*, the 2004 Winnipeg conference plotted the writing of history, the North American volume in the *Global Mennonite History Project* (GMHP). The Winnipeg conference asked a basic question: what are the trends in various sub-fields of North American Mennonite history that should be reflected in the GMHP volume. Perhaps the most interesting presentations were oral reports by regional Anabaptist leaders and by representatives of the Aboriginal, Asian, and African-American Mennonite communities. Unfortunately we were not able to publish other excellent papers by Marlene Epp on gender, Bruce Guenther on evangelicalism, Karl Koop on Anabaptism, Janis Thiessen on labour and Tom Penner on literature, but will be honoured to publish works by these scholars in the future.

The first three historiographical papers focus on the unconventional themes of gender, race and ethnicity. M.J. Heisey argues that a history of family life can also shed light on issues of generation, gender, class, cultural ritual, and even inter-ethnicity. Hans Werner raises a controversial prospect for the GMHP, that is, the variable of a Dutch-Russian (Low German) or a Pennsylvania Dutch ethnicity within an increasingly multicultural church community. Juan Martinez reports that the rich historiography of the Latino/a Mennonite community includes published oral history projects, missiologies, inter-ethnic studies and theses on "German-Russian"-Latino/a Mennonite relations.

Three studies relating to the field of economics, both of charity and of production, follow Lucille Marr surveys both the early narrative and the more recent critical examinations of Mennonite Central Committee and suggests this organization is intrinsic to the North American Mennonite identity. Steve Nolt concedes that Mennonite scholars have considered religious values that affect giving, but not the social and cultural consequences of philanthropy. Perry Bush argues that Mennonite historians need to highlight economic history, especially as Mennonites have become fully integrated into a global economy.

The next four papers examine aspects of church history, albeit from infrequently assumed positions. Fred Kniss revisits the findings

of his book, *Disquiet in the Land* and argues that an “essentialist” historiographical account, emphasizing core Anabaptist teachings, ignores a tension between a “separatist, sectarianism” and a “progressive, activism,” and between “congregational” or “episcopal” church polities. Rachel Waltner Goossen outlines how peace literature from educational and theological perspectives has evolved in healthy fashion since World War II. Nate Yoder argues that by seeing fundamentalism as antithetical to Mennonite history, historians have distorted both Anabaptism and Fundamentalism and simplified a complex theological dialectic. Jonathan Dueck traces the way music has changed in the Mennonite churches from hymnody to more popular and inter-ethnic forms, and from boundary-consciousness to individualized musicology.

The historiographical section closes with two papers on common elements within Mennonite history, but ones not often been examined by historians. Ann Hostetler considers the rich repertoire of fiction and poetry in both Canada and the U.S., a source that can offer an imaginative, reflection on the nature of being Mennonite in North America. Royden Loewen searches Mennonite, Amish and Hutterite writings for traces of environmental history.

The issue continues with highly personal presentations by John Lapp, the director of the GMHP; he recounts lessons learned from providing advice on the African, Asian, European and South American volumes. Barbara Nkala offers a personal reflection from an African perspective on the challenges and rewards of participation in GMHP.

The article section of this issue concludes with two papers on Mennonite male leaders. Titus Guenther interprets the biography of *Aeltester* Martin C. Friesen, the progressive church leader of the Canadian-descendent Menno Colony of Chaco, Paraguay. Rachel Mills turns a recently completed MA thesis on the “Loewen Lumbermen of Steinbach, Manitoba” into an examination of the interplay of entrepreneurship, masculinity, religion and ethnic identity.

The issue also offers reviews on 29 books in the fields of literature, history, the social sciences and peace studies. It closes with a tribute to Delbert F. Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba, who will be missed not only as a friend to many Mennonite historians, but as a singular force in the rewriting of the history of conservative Dutch-Russian Mennonites scattered throughout South and North America.

Royden Loewen, editor