

Book Reviews

Abe J. Dueck, *Moving Beyond Secession: Defining Russian Mennonite Brethren Mission and Identity, 1872-1922* (Winnipeg, MB/Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Productions, 1997). Pb., Pp. 179.

An important part of the archivist's task is making the materials within his/her collections accessible to a wider circle of scholars and interested readers. Abe Dueck has done this in an exemplary fashion in the present collection of early Mennonite Brethren documents, which have been translated and provided with annotation and an introduction. Two of these documents, the so-called "Explanation" (1916) and a copy of the "Constitution of the Evangelical Menno-nite Confession" (1917), appeared as appendices to an earlier article by Dueck, "Mennonites, the Russian State and the Crisis of Brethren and Old Church Relations in Russia, 1910-1918" (*Mennonite Quarterly Review*, October, 1996), but are given a wider context in this volume. Beside the introduction, the book contains statistical information in the form of lists of congregations and conventions, maps from around 1905, and extant minutes of annual conventions. Most interesting for general readers will be the written exchanges between church leaders like Heinrich Braun, David Epp, and Peter M. Friesen. Their titles, "Mennonites or Baptists?", "How is this Possible?", and "On the Mennonite Question" indicate the strong feelings that accompanied the ongoing debates about Mennonite Brethren identity. Together with the earlier article cited above, Dueck's introduction provides a good narrative background for the reading of these documents. The published documents tell us in detail about the missionary activities of the Brethren, including pay-scales. The inclusion of "critical" prefaces to the 1882 convention by the Russians, Kalnev and Skvortzov, give the reader a sense of the hostility of the authorities to the "proselytizing activities" of the Brethren, along with the Baptists and Stundists.

Considering the circumstances surrounding the birth of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1860, when new, revivalist worship combined with staid Mennonite practice, leading, as Dueck says, to “very disorderly conduct in worship and the emergence of despotic religious leadership” (3), it is instructive to see how an evangelical Mennonite church in fact emerged in the succeeding decades, albeit by a convoluted path.

Victor G. Doerksen
Kelowna, BC

Robert Herr and Judy Zimmerman Herr, eds., *Transforming Violence: Linking Local and Global Peacemaking* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998). Pb., Pp. 256.

Carolyn Schrock-Shenk and Lawrence Ressler, eds., *Making Peace with Conflict: Practical Skills for Conflict Transformation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999). Pb., Pp., 200.

These two recent books published by Herald Press make it clear that the Mennonite commitment to peace has come a long way from the traditional stance of quietism and withdrawal. *Transforming Violence: Linking Local and Global Peacemaking* reaffirms the call to the “third way” of nonviolence while highlighting a vast array of largely unknown expressions of this commitment. As the title implies, the volume particularly emphasizes the value of learning from the efforts of those labouring “behind the scenes” at the local or “unofficial” levels of peacemaking around the world. *Making Peace with Conflict: Practical Skills for Conflict Transformation*, on the other hand, focuses attention on living peace in our daily interpersonal and institutional relationships as found in our more immediate North American context.

The books share a common overall emphasis, however, on the need to begin one’s pursuit of peace by giving humble attention to the conflict in one’s own life and community and by cultivating a broader vision for right relationships the world over. The goal of developing “expert” conflict resolution skills, then, is consistently portrayed as secondary. This is not to say that these books call into question the body of knowledge and practice that has flourished dramatically in the last decades in areas such as nonviolent action, conflict analysis, and mediation. On the contrary, a diverse group of contributors explore the tools and conceptual frameworks of these fields in detail as they are being applied in a wide range of contexts

In the final analysis, however, we are reminded that to work for peace - whether interpersonally, in our communities, or around the globe - is to engage a task which requires, above all else, enormous spiritual discipline. It is by rooting our approach

in an honest, supportive, diverse, and accountable network of relationships – in being “known” by God and our community, as Carolyn Schrock-Shenk puts it (1999, 26) – that we make both a spirit of humility and sustained commitment over time and through “failure” possible. Of course, it should hardly be surprising that books published, edited, and largely written by Mennonites should contain an emphasis on healthy community as the seedbed in which peace can take root. It may come as more of a surprise, however, to realize the extent to which this ethos has apparently so deeply imbued the actual strategies used by practitioners “on the ground.”

This relationally grounded approach is found throughout *Transforming Violence*. Edited by Robert Herr and Judy Zimmerman Herr, Co-Directors of the International Peace Office of the Mennonite Central Committee, this volume is actually quite ecumenical in flavour. It contains contributions from the Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Dutch Reformed, and Muslim community, among others. Nevertheless, a strong peace church influence predominates.

The book is divided into four sections. In the first section, *Foundations for a Just Peace*, writers from a diverse range of traditions powerfully rearticulate the case for a spiritually grounded commitment to nonviolence. Jim Forrest opens the book, for example, by reminding us that the Church, prior to becoming “the most favoured religion of the empire,” was firmly committed to nonviolence (26). Interspersing scriptural exposition with the wisdom of the Orthodox saints, he paints a beautiful picture of peacemaking grounded in the spiritual life. Forrest concludes that “the love of enemies is not simply an aspect of Christian life but ‘the central criterion of true faith and of real communion with God, the lover of souls, the lover of humankind Through Christ’s love, everyone is made an inseparable part of our own, eternal existence’” (29).

In *A Local Culture of Peace*, the reader learns about grass-roots efforts at peacemaking being undertaken in Bosnia, South Africa, and Northeastern Kenya. Dekha Ibrahim and Jan Jenner, for example, inspire us with the story of a group of local Muslim women in Wajir District of Kenya who, working from “‘a heart for peace’ rather than training in conflict resolution,” successfully engage the diverse and conflicted groups in their community (146). We follow their steps as they slowly but steadily re-channel what was becoming an increasingly violent ethos into energy for dialogue and an evolving culture of peace.

The potential of church organizations to contribute to global peace, the role of nonviolent civilian peace teams, and the need to develop a more integrated and long-term understanding of our task are all explored in the third section. The common thread in *A Global Culture of Peace* is found, once again, in the call to invest in relationship building with the whole spectrum of players in a conflict.

The final section of the book, *Peacemaking in Ecumenical Perspective*, consists of a single chapter by Lauree Hersch Meyer. Meyer suggests that workers from Western-based peace churches have been profoundly affected by living among, working with, and learning to honour peacemakers from other traditions. She concludes that these experiences are engendering a broader shift from deductive to inductive reasoning in our theology whereby we are being increasingly

humbled, moved to accept the contextually specific limitations of what we know about faith and peace. In other words, the same values that prompt us to build partnerships of healing in our peace work compel us to take up the challenge of engaging in genuine ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.

It is a fitting conclusion to a good book. And, although it occasionally feels somewhat disjointed in terms of flow and one or two writers dally too long in the impractical, deductive realm, it is a very worthy read. Post-secondary educators focusing on peace studies and conflict resolution and lay people who are simply interested in peace and justice work will find much of value and interest here. A number of chapters would also be very suitable for the adult Sunday school and small group church contexts.

The first evidence of *Making Peace with Conflict's* emphasis on the importance of building relationships and listening to the marginalized is found before one even begins reading in the diversity of writers represented in the book. Editors Carolyn Schrock-Shenk and Lawrence Ressler, both Mennonites born into the tradition, have succeeded in giving space to voices which have too often been silenced within the Mennonite community. The book includes eight female writers, numerous "non-ethnic" Mennonites, and at least four persons of colour (but only two Canadians!).

While these numbers may seem insignificant, they represent a noticeable departure from the usual pattern of Mennonite publishing on "domestic" peace issues whereby the vast majority of contributors are of European, ethnic Mennonite descent. As such, a book which focuses a great deal of attention on the role of identity, culture, and power in conflict succeeds in "practicing what it preaches." And as that great Canadian Marshall McLuhan wrote, "the medium is the message."

The book itself is divided into five sections. The first section, *Foundations of Conflict Transformation*, lays the groundwork. While all three contributions here are solid, Schrock-Shenk's critical opening chapter is particularly strong. Beginning with a lucid discussion of connectedness to God and others as "the essence of life," the writer humbly shares dimensions of her own interpersonal struggles, prompting the reader to a parallel level of reflection. The ease of the reading here belies the profound implications Schrock-Shenk's words carry for one's basic understanding of conflict and, indeed, life as a whole.

In *Communication and Conflict Transformation*, the focus shifts to the practical tasks of listening, speaking, and interpersonal dialogue. Again, the writing is simple, accessible, and profound. Valerie Weaver-Zercher's exploration of why some people do not speak out often or forcefully enough while others speak too often and forcefully is especially striking. The brilliance here lies in her insight that while the symptoms may be different, the underlying causes of these conditions are often quite similar. In addition, unlike many authors who address themes of interpersonal communication, she seamlessly weaves in a consideration of the degree to which membership in particular societal groupings can either facilitate or constrain one's ability to speak out.

The next section, *Struggling with the Tension*, takes the reader beyond com-

munication, which brings problems to the surface, to the task of creating healing. Echoes of Forrest are heard in Dean Peachey's conclusion in chapter 7 that "living and working well with conflict is first about who we are as people, rather than about a particular set of skills and strategies. Regular time devoted to deepening a spiritual life and building physical and emotional health is critical . . ." (1999, 94).

With three excellent chapters on the topics of *Systemic Power; Race and Power; and Power; Gender; and Conflict*, the fourth section is perhaps the most important. Iris de Leon-Hartshorn, for example, contributes a nuanced and sophisticated discussion of the role of systemic power in conflict. Creatively drawing on scripture, she also weaves in her personal stories of oppression as a Mexican-American woman within the systems of dominant American culture and the Mennonite church. Her insights are bound to make some readers uncomfortable. However, if the Mennonite emphasis on servanthood has inhibited talk about power, as the editors' section preface suggests, then this discomfort can be a necessary harbinger of growth within our community.

The book's final section is entitled *Application of Conflict Transformation*. Here, writers explore efforts to work through conflicts in the family, the church, and around the world. While all four chapters are insightful, the two chapters by Richard Blackburn/Dave Brubaker and Alastair McKay on congregational conflict and decision-making are particularly practical. In the final chapter on *Global Conflict*, Gerald Shenk traces the Mennonite journey from an avoidance of warfare, to assisting in the devastating aftermath of violence, to proactively engaging in efforts to prevent war and cultivate reconciliation. The tension between celebrating a rich and expanding heritage of peacemaking and remaining rooted in humble faith re-emerges in Shenk's closing assertion that the respect Mennonites have garnered as peacebuilders "can never be reduced to technique alone... Our witness grows from faith, from understandings of sin and redemption turned inside-out for the sake of the world" (192).

This summation fits well the themes prevalent throughout both volumes reviewed here. And, like *Transforming Violence*, post-secondary educators in peace and conflict studies would do well to get a copy of *Making Peace with Conflict*. The latter volume, however, is more clearly relevant to the layperson in the North American pew than anything this reader has yet encountered. For Mennonites, it takes peacemaking from something that MCC does "out there" to something we all need to engage "right here and now." Furthermore, it is a concrete manifestation of the underlying message of both books: true peacemaking starts in our hearts, in our own backyards, and in our willingness to enter into humble and respectful relationships with those rooted in other cultures and traditions. As such, it fills something of a gap in Mennonite publishing efforts. It is to be especially recommended to conference leaders, seminary faculty, pastors, lay leaders, church council members, adult Sunday school teachers, and church small groups of all denominations.

Dave Dyck
Halifax, NS

Edgar Stoesz and Muriel Stackley, *Garden in the Wilderness: Mennonite Communities in the Paraguayan Chaco 1927-1997* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1999). Pp. xiii, 219.

Earlier generations of North American Mennonites were well-acquainted with the story of their coreligionists inhabiting the “green hell” of the Paraguayan Chaco. In the Mennonite press, they could read ongoing accounts of escapes from Russia, the successive founding of three Mennonite colonies in an isolated region of a poor South American nation, and mission efforts among Indian groups encountered there. They heard reports from Mennonite Central Committee workers who assisted the refugees. They received into their communities those who had abandoned the Chaco struggle.

Today, the story is less familiar. The life-and-death drama is over; the Mennonites of the Chaco are no longer needy. The very success which ensured self-sufficiency and prosperity has removed them from newsworthiness in the wider Mennonite world.

Still, the history of the Mennonite communities in Paraguay remains fascinating and important for Mennonitism. A new generation of English readers can therefore be grateful to have a fresh and attractive retelling in this book.

Authors Edgar Stoesz, longtime administrator with Mennonite Central Committee, and Muriel Stackley, pastor and former editor of *The Mennonite*, intend their account to be celebrative. The format enhances their aim. This is a coffee table book, 8 1/2 by 11 inches in size, containing an abundance of photographs and maps, a good bibliography, a storytelling style, and informative tidbits scattered along the margins. The book is a pleasure to browse in as well as to read.

The book opens with a brief history of Paraguay. The various groups who came to live side by side in the Chaco are then introduced through the stories of an individual or family who represent that group. Canadian Mennonites came to Paraguay in 1926 to found Menno Colony; Russian Mennonites who managed to get out of Russia via Moscow or China established Fernheim Colony in 1930; Lengua Indians indigenous to the Chaco befriended the Mennonites; post-World War II Mennonite refugees formed the Neuland Colony in 1947; and Navacle Indians who heard of the new white settlers migrated to the Chaco from the south.

The subsequent development and interaction of these groups is presented thematically (under economics, Indians, education, health, infrastructure, religion, service and mission, and governance.) Two transformations are described.

One is the adaptation to and alteration of the Chaco environment that made it possible for the Mennonites to reconstruct the kind of community, church, and cultural life they preferred—to experience, in short, a sense of well-being once again. This involved sheer grit and some fortunate circumstances such as the infusion of capital on credit, the introduction of buffel grass for the cattle industry, and the building of a highway to the capital.

The other is the radical change experienced by the native peoples as they

adopted Mennonite religious beliefs and were settled in farming communities within and around the colonies. They have been drawn into economic, educational, and health structures profoundly unlike what they had known earlier.

Stoesz and Stackley move carefully, even gingerly at times, between the triumphalist and troublesome memories that comprise the history. They declare this is a celebratory look and clearly admire the achievements of their subjects. Bow after bow goes to the holders of pioneer memories—to those who stuck it out and succeeded (and, by implication, vindicated the MCC's investment in them). But a sense of integrity, perhaps, keeps them inserting reminders of the "shadows" here. They also work hard to make the native communities an integral part of both written and photographic text.

"Chaco Mennonites," they write in their section on the current situation, "look ahead with a sureness bordering on arrogance." Stoesz and Stuckley counter this smugness by reflecting on the Mennonites' vulnerability in their adopted country because of their relative affluence. They muse that the "queen of the night" cactus flower, which blooms only one night, may symbolize the fragility of the Mennonite presence in the Chaco.

There are some errors in the book, such as misidentifications of people on photos. In sum, however, this is an interesting and thought-provoking overview for North American readers. It commemorates a complex history that deserves continued interest, both in popular and scholarly writing.

Dora Dueck
Winnipeg, MB.

Walter Klaassen, *Armageddon and the Peaceable Kingdom* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999). Pp. 288.

As we leave the second millennium A.D. , speculation about the end of this age has risen to a high pitch (as it did at the end of the first millennium). Walter Klaassen, former pastor and professor at Bethel College, as well as Conrad Grebel College, and now in retirement, reflects seriously on themes that have occupied his mind for many years. For Mennonite history buffs it will be of interest, that Walter is a great-grandson of Martin Klaassen, who, together with hundreds of other Mennonites, left South Russia in 1880 to make the disastrous trek to Turkestan under the leadership of Claus Epp, with the the hope of finding refuge during the coming tribulation and to be prepared for the return of Christ.

Klaassen challenges the many self-styled "prophets" in our day who are unsettling the church with their predictions of the end of the world in the year 2000 (a view based largely on the concept of a "world-week"). He challenges, in particular, the hermeneutics of dispensationalists, many of whom are convinced that the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 is a sure sign that the end is near.

The author points out that the "forecasters" of our day are not all that unique,

for they have many forerunners in the history of the church. Chapter one begins with a survey of end-time interpretations in four periods of history., 100-400 (the period of the Church Fathers); 400-1200 (when Henry IV was identified as antichrist and the Holy Roman Empire began to split apart); 1200-1650 (beginning with Frederick II, who was seen to be antichrist and leading up to the Protestant Reformation. During the Reformation both the papacy and the Muslim Turk were candidates for Antichrist. Some Anabaptists also got caught up in end-times speculation, and the debacle at Muenster (1534) gave the movement a bad name).

In the period 1650-1997 forecasters of the End continued to set dates. Perhaps the most influential person, whose system of interpreting the Scriptures lends itself to such prognostications, was John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). Darby brought his hermeneutical system to America, where schools, prophecy conferences, and particularly the Scofield Reference Bible (1909) spread his teachings on end-times. His premillennial dispensational is today popular in churches all around the world.

In Chapter Two Klaassen seeks to show the difference between prophecy and prediction. Although this is an important distinction, I would question some of Klaassen's examples of how some of the predictions, made by biblical prophets, were not fulfilled (even Paul, he claims, was mistaken, 48). In this chapter the author also reviews a series of popular books on endtimes (Lindsey, Goetz, et al.), as well as TV programs (such as that of the van Impes), which confuse and unsettle believers.

Chapter Three is a critical review of how modern forecasters use (or abuse) the Scriptures to establish the approximate (sometimes even exact) date of the End. The two biblical books that most often serve as the basis for such prognostications are Daniel and Revelation. When current events are "matched" with biblical texts the Scriptures are distorted. This, as Klaassen points out, has been done all through the centuries and so far has always turned out to be a wrong use of the Bible.

In Chapter Four our author discusses premillennial views of the rapture and the regime of antichrist that is to follow. The division of Christ's parousia into two separate comings, one before and the other after the so-called tribulation, Klaassen correctly points out, is not made by NT writers.

Chapter Five is an analysis of Daniel's "seventy weeks"—often used as a basis for the view that there will be seven years of tribulation following the so-called rapture of the church, years in which antichrist has his way. This view, Klaassen points out, stands in contradiction to 2 Thessalonians 2, where it is stated that the Man of Lawlessness (antichrist) will be destroyed at Christ's parousia.

According to dispensationalists, Israel moves to centre-stage after the rapture of the church. Even the Jerusalem temple is to be rebuilt (although the New Testament knows nothing of a rebuilding of the temple, but only of its destruction). The seven-year tribulation which is (according to Darby) to follow the rapture, ends with Armageddon. (Klaassen correctly points out that Armageddon should not be viewed as a geographical location in the land of Israel, but is a symbolical name for the final showdown between God and the forces of evil.) Armageddon is also portrayed in Revelation 19 by the Rider on the white horse (Christ), who in the end defeats all the enemies of God. (Klaassen finds it hard to accept this picture of the

coming Christ, for it contradicts, as he puts it, the Gospels in which Christ teaches us to love our enemies. I would want to take issue with this view.)

In Chapter Six our author examines millennial predictions in which Revelation 20 (the only passage which speaks of a millennium explicitly) is interpreted by dispensationalists in the light of Old Testament prophecies about the future of Israel—a glorious period here on earth during which Christ reigns from his capital, Jerusalem. What is overlooked in such interpretations is that the OT must be understood in the light of the New and not the other way round. It is hermeneutically wrong to read seemingly unfulfilled OT promises into Revelation 20:1-10.

In Part Two of this volume (chapters 7-12) Klaassen presents what he sees as a more biblical view of end-times. Several chapters are devoted to the fundamental theme of “the kingdom of God,” as seen both in the OT and particularly in the Gospels. In Chapter Ten he discusses the present and future aspects of the Kingdom of God and points out, that there are no “time references” in the Scriptures that speak of the kingdom of God in its futuristic dimension. In this connection Klaassen discusses the somewhat enigmatic passage in Romans 11, in which Paul expresses the hope that in the end “all Israel shall be saved (v. 25). In Klaassen’s view, this can refer only to those Jews who are true children of Abraham, i.e. the believers, and does not refer to a national conversion of Israel some time in the future prior to Christ’s return. Also, he points out that there is no reference in the NT to Israel’s return to the land and the re-establishment of a Jewish state. OT promises of Israel’s restoration, as he points out, are transmuted in the NT into the hope of a “better country” (Hebrews, 11).

In Chapter Eleven Klaassen focuses on the last book of the Bible. I find it hard to accept his evaluation of the book as “dangerous” because of its violent and vengeful visions” (238). Klaassen is right in emphasizing that Revelation does not supply us with a “chronological path” through history, but it has an abiding message for all generations.

In his last chapter, Klaassen, who has been hard on dispensationalists throughout the book, challenges Christians who are feeling too much “at home” in this world, to wake up spiritually and not to lose their bearing by accepting secular ways of thinking.

There is much food for thought in this volume of nearly 300 pages, and it’s a very timely book, given the fact that speculations about the end of the world are running wild. I find myself in agreement with the basic thrust and emphases of Klaassen’s book. He is particularly good when it comes to historical overviews. Here and there, however, I would beg to differ with him on his treatment of some of the texts of the NT. I would highly recommend this volume to our readers. Herald Press has put us in its debt by publishing this attractive volume on the important subject of eschatology.

David Ewert
Abbotsford, BC

Lydia Neufeld Harder, *Obedience, Suspicion and the Gospel of Mark: A Mennonite-Feminist Exploration of Biblical Authority*. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1998). Pp. 168.

I can think of no one better suited to write a monograph on the complementarity of the two hermeneutic communities of Mennonites and Feminists than Lydia Neufeld Harder. A scholar of note in the area of feminist interpretation, Professor Harder directs the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre in the Toronto School of Theology.

Her particular concern in the book, I gather, is to forge a link between the interpretive practice of the Mennonite community and that of the feminist community. After laying out in some detail—in three chapters—the parameters and principles guiding each of the two hermeneutic communities, Harder explores the gospel of Mark in an attempt to demonstrate how the hermeneutics of obedience/discipleship (Mennonite) can merge sympathetically with the hermeneutics of suspicion (feminist) while supporting the conviction about the authority of the Bible. The authority of the Bible does not, indeed cannot, be an oppressive authority over minorities or disenfranchised members of the community.

Using John Howard Yoder as key representative spokesperson for the Mennonite hermeneutic community and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza for the feminist hermeneutic community, Lydia Harder examines critically the hermeneutical principles of both communities. A major weakness of the Mennonite hermeneutic community is the lack of full involvement of all members in the interpretive process. Despite the emphasis on communal thought and life, the Mennonite community hermeneutic evolves an authority of one group dominating another, thus stifling the authority of the life-giving Spirit in the process. The feminist hermeneutic can, in its own way, exclude voices (especially male voices) from the interpretive discussion. But there is a redeeming feature in each of the two communities. In the Mennonite hermeneutic the idea of obedience/discipleship growing out of the reading process is strongly desirable, so long as it maintains its non-oppressive, life-giving orientation. The feminist hermeneutic of suspicion gives a measure of assurance that domination from traditional interpretation will be ruled out of the interpretive result, viz. theology. The feminist hermeneutic represented in Schüssler Fiorenza's women-church operates on the premise of a discipleship of equals. Incorporating this principle of discipleship into the Mennonite community hermeneutic of obedience provides an appropriate check and balance to the potential for oppressive domination within the community.

I found Harder's synthesis of the two hermeneutics, explicated rather eloquently in the first three of her four main chapters, to be appealing, although her suspicion of "transcendental statements" and "appeals to universality" could do with further explication (20). For example, Bernard Lonergan's work on transcendental (or general) method was noticeably absent from the discussion; an absence all the more surprising by the presence of a huge Lonergan resource within the context of the

Toronto School of Theology. Lonergan's methodological "rock" would have contributed greatly to Harder's effort to bring together a hermeneutics of discipleship with a hermeneutics of suspicion (more so, in my view, than Gadamer's work on "the continuity of meaning" (15).

One would expect that the demonstration of the synthesis of the two hermeneutical models would shine through in the interpretation of Mark in chapter four of the book. But that expectation meets some disappointment. Allowance must be given for the difficult task of interpreting the whole Gospel of Mark in one chapter. Still, one counts on a clear demonstration of the value of the hermeneutics of suspicion to upset the traditional interpretation. I failed to see much of that. Harder explored two parables in particular to make two major points from her reading of Mark. The parable of the sower (Mark 4) was made to illustrate "the creative function of kingdom power" (104ff), and the parable of the "wicked tenants/beloved son" (Mark 12) "the subversive function of kingdom power" (116ff). On the second point from her reading of the parable of the "wicked tenants/beloved son", I found it odd that Harder fell so easily into the traditional, allegorical interpretation of the parable of the "wicked tenants" (so-called traditionally). The rich vineyard planter/owner, who lives far away from his vineyard, is viewed as God. The tenants (religious leaders presumably) are wicked because they revolt violently against the claim that God has on their lives and livelihood from the allegorical vineyard. Harder fails to see that God responds to violence with more violence in the parable thus interpreted: God destroys the tenants and gives the tenancy to "others". If we are united to God in his work, as Harder suggests, how are we to respond to similar situations? In support of her hermeneutics of suspicion in reading this parable, I would suggest that Professor Harder consult such sources as William Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*. I recognize, of course, that Harder is interpreting redactional Mark, not the historical Jesus behind the text of the Gospel. In that way, as well, she sides with the post-Jesus tradition of the church in her hermeneutics of obedience to Jesus. One is left wondering how successful is the marriage of the two hermeneutical models.

Despite these few criticisms of the book, I strongly recommend this study to all who dare to live authentically in the present church and world.

V. George Shillington,
Concord College

John J. Friesen, trans. and ed., *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*. (Waterloo, ON and Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999). Pp. 264.

Few reformers of the radical tradition have exerted so long and powerful an influence on their followers as has Peter Riedemann. His Confession has served as

the guide for communal living for the Hutterites for more than four centuries; at the same time, non-Hutterites will find that the treatise provides biblical and historical bases for the view of Christian living outlined in the text.

Friesen has given us a very readable translation of Riedemann's work. Earlier translations, such as that published by the Society of Brothers in 1970, retained an outdated English style; Friesen's modern version is lucid and engaging. Both for its content and style, the book deserves wide reading.

An important addition to Riedemann's text is provided by Friesen's informative review of Riedemann's life and the historical setting for this book. Born in Silesia in 1506, Riedemann soon became an advocate of radical religious reform, and, as a result, was sent to prison early in his adult life. This was only the first of several incarcerations. It was during his imprisonment in Hesse (1540-42), that he wrote his Confession. Soon after his release, he became the leader of the Hutterite communities in Moravia and remained that until his death in 1556.

Riedemann benefitted from the relatively tolerant policies of Philip of Hesse and, in addition to writing his major work, carried on a considerable correspondence while confined to prison. Friesen tells us that Riedemann's chief reason for writing his magnum opus was to inform Philip about the communal Anabaptists.

Like a number of other Reformation-era documents, the Confession includes an extensive theological section built around the Apostles' Creed. It contains numerous references to Scripture and the Apocrypha. Not surprisingly, Riedemann often reflects a theological view that is orthodox, especially when discussing the Trinity. He has no problem with concepts associated with *homoousios* or *filioque*. He will have no part of Arianism, even though some Anabaptists were charged with that heresy.

In a number of instances, Riedemann places special emphasis on interpretations often associated with Anabaptists but different from those of Luther and Calvin. Thus, when writing about original sin, Riedemann refers to a "tendency toward evil" (92) but asserts that it is not the cause of "eternal death" (93). It should be noted that sometimes the references to original sin are somewhat ambiguous; perhaps that is why Friesen concludes that Riedemann does indeed assert that original sin "is the cause of . . . eternal death" (49).

In typical Anabaptist terminology, Riedemann insists that baptism is only for those who have come to faith. He also states that pouring is the mode used. In keeping with Hutterite teaching, Riedemann places great emphasis on communal living; indeed, without community of goods, there cannot be full spiritual community. For him, private property constitutes a virtually insurmountable barrier to fellowship with God and within the community of believers. Similarly, Riedemann insists that the nature of the community of the faithful does not allow members to be rulers in a "worldly society" (134), or to pay war taxes (136).

In the latter part of the Confession, Riedemann elaborates on several themes raised earlier; now however, he places special emphasis on the need to be separate from what he regards as a society in disobedience to God. At the same time, he re-emphasizes the need for a closely-knit community that expresses love, communal living, spir-

itual sharing, community worship and caring for each other's needs. This includes concern for the education of children. All of them are to experience the love of a supporting community, and to learn to read and write. During this process, love and service of God and the community are to form the core of all teaching.

Translation of 16th century documents often calls for interpretation in a historical context, and Friesen has demonstrated that he is well versed in the linguistic changes that occur over the centuries. Many old terms translated into contemporary English reflect carefully-nuanced renderings. Sometimes, however, the reader may raise questions about reasons for choosing specific words to convey the 16th century concepts. Why, for example, is "fromm" (54) translated "righteous" (55)? The biblical pauline reference does indeed use "righteous," but the German term in Romans is "gerecht," not "fromm." Since Riedemann places such a heavy emphasis on ethical living, he may well have meant "pious" or "devout," rather than "righteous." It should also be noted that elsewhere (e.g., 228) "Frommen" is translated "devout," but in other instances the word is interpreted rather than translated (e.g., 147, where "Frommen" becomes "those who love God").

Another instance where the translation seems to add a new meaning to the original is evident in Riedemann's discussion of God's purpose in creating humankind (88-89). We read that God "gave people reason, understanding, and sense for relating to all creatures." The original, however, states that God "den Menschen. . . vor andern Kreaturen Vernunft, Verstand und Sinnlichkeit gegeben." Riedemann is emphasizing the quality of human reason; there is no reference to "relating to all creatures." In the same passage, "gemacht und erschaffen habe" become simply "created."

Scholars working in the area of Anabaptism have long recognized that the term "Anabaptist" is often used imprecisely. It may fairly be asked whether the term has retained any legitimacy, however, when it is applied to someone who, we are told, holds that "water baptism [is] almost superfluous, and the disputes about infant baptism and believers baptism irrelevant" (23).

Friesen has placed us all in his debt by giving us an engagingly written, moving translation of one of the most important Anabaptist treatises produced in the Reformation era. Highly informative endnotes as well as indexes invite the reader to further study and exploration. This volume, as the most readable, most useful guide to the life of the early Hutterites, should be read by all interested in the Reformation, not only by those wanting a clear portrait of communal Anabaptism.

Peter J. Klassen
California State University

Johannes Reimer. *Bis an die Enden Sibiriens. Aus dem Leben und Wirken des Ostjaken Missionars, Johann Peters* (Lage: Historische Kommission des Bundes Taufgesinnter Gemeinden, 1998). Pp. 155.

Among the many new initiatives to be found within the Aussiedler communities of Germany, the Logos group has chosen to follow the example of the late J. B. Toews and the Fresno (California) historical archives in learning from and preserving the fruit of their earlier experiences in the former Soviet Union. Johannes Reimer in particular has been very energetic, as can be seen from three books from his pen in the past several years. Two of them, the 1996 166-page *Auf der Suche nach Identität. Rußlanddeutsche zwischen Baptisten und Mennoniten nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* published and the 1997 115-page *Seine letzten Worte waren ein Lied. Leben und Wirken des Kirgisien Missionars, Martin Thielmann*, are missionary biographies. They tell of the work of two Mennonite missionaries in some of the most exotic parts of the Russian empire.

The third volume, which we review below, explores the question of the identity of the “Russian” Mennonite Brethren. Are they Baptists? asks Reimer. In answering this question Reimer finds that the Mennonite Brethren [hitherto MB] movement grew on the ground of the “pietist revival” of Eduard Wüst and Johann Bonekemper (30), but soon needed nourishment from the Russian Baptists who were influenced by Oncken. Indeed he credits the Baptists with saving the early MB from their “childhood illness” — the so-called Joyous Movement (33). The first MB conference in Andreasfeld (1872) chose August Liebig, a Hamburg Baptist, as its chairman for a five-year term. Reimer points out that the Mennonite Brethren then soon took on a leading role in the work of the Stundists as well as the Baptists. They eventually produced their own Confession of Faith in 1902, but between 1860 and the end of the century so much had been shared in terms of faith and practice that, apart from the so-called Mennonite distinctives, there was no difference between the Baptist and Mennonite Brethren positions. (34)

Reimer concentrates his study on the period after World War II and, in particular, on the relationship between the Mennonite Brethren and the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. According to Reimer, the rationale for joining this officially sanctioned Council was the desire to preserve German language services and in time those congregations who did retain German were known as the “Brethren”. (78) The consequences of this union were in the long run that while the older generation were able to cling to German, their children opted for the Russian-language services offered by their Baptist “brethren”. Mennonites of the old church (“kirchlich”) were not absorbed in this way, since their forms of baptism were not in conformity with the Baptist model.

Reimer blames the North American Mennonites, who through the Mennonite Central Committee [MCC] and [Mennonite] World Conference took up contact with the All-Union, for encouraging the integration of Mennonite Brethren and Baptists, with its consequential identity crisis. As a student in 1959 this reviewer carried

some questions from MCC—Frankfurt (Peter Dyck) to the troika of All-Union leaders in Moscow, and was lectured by Zhidkov, Karev and Mitskevich about the “troublesome” Mennonites. Although the USSR saw that Easter was grey and ominous-looking to an inexperienced tourist, I was unaware of how difficult a time that was for all the parties concerned, including the newly-founded German MB Church of Karaganda, which was not registered until 1967.

Reimer argues that the many years of co-operation effectively removed the differences between the MB and All-Union Baptists. Even the Karaganda *Gemeinde*, which left the Union in 1956, did not officially subscribe to the teaching of non-resistance, perhaps the most obvious distinguishing mark between Mennonites and Baptists. (95) Insofar as one may speak of Mennonites and MBs in present-day Russia, their survival is due more to ethnic characteristics than to theological distinctiveness (117f.), and especially to their clinging to the German language. In this he agrees with Walter Sawatzky (*Mennonites and Baptists*, edited by Paul Toews, p.129). Reimer adds that as *Aussiedler* they are now clinging just as passionately to vestiges of Russian language and culture. His conclusion is nonetheless that, although the question as to who they are is warranted, the MBs and Baptists have both profited from their shared history.

Johannes Reimer’s book is thought-provoking. In addition to his own experience, he has gathered an impressive bibliography on which to base his discussion of this intriguing topic. Perhaps the time has come for an international history of the MB Church, which will look more closely at the early years and especially at such alliances and relationships which Reimer deals with in this book, and which are a factor in this church’s self-understanding.

Victor G. Doerksen
Kelowna, BC

John D. Thiesen. *Mennonite and Nazi? Attitudes Among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933-1945*. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History No. 37 (Kitchener, Scottsdale and Waterloo: Pandora Press and Herald Press, 1999). Pp. 329.

One of the political movements and historical eras of 20th century history that Mennonites have been slow to come to grips with is that of National Socialism. What is perhaps more significant is the attitude of Mennonites toward it. In this regard, Thiesen’s investigation is a good first step in sorting out how Mennonites, at least those in Paraguay, reacted and, to a certain degree, embraced it.

Thiesen’s approach to his subject is workmanlike and bears the stamp of an excellent archivist. The primary sources are meticulously identified and categorized. This alone makes the book a worthwhile contribution, useful to those wishing to delve deeper into the subject. The documents chosen to support the author’s

thesis give a unique view of the positions held by the major political players in the Paraguayan colonies. While the attention to detail is one of the strong points of this work, it is also a potential weakness. Quotes from primary documents are copious; however, they are at times rather long with the point of the quotation being lost in the plethora of information. On a technical level, it appears that some of the translations from the German offered by Thiesen are inaccurate and sometimes labored.

Thiesen's own ideological leanings come through quite clearly. This is most true of his discussion of Mennonite ethnicity, which serves as a sub-text that runs through the entire work. It appears that the argument being made is that if a Mennonite felt German in any way, he or she could squarely be placed in the National Socialist camp. This is further emphasized when Thiesen describes a Mennonite's love for things German as pejoratively "nationalistic," but, if appreciation for things Russian are stated, then the tendency is described positively as "patriotic."

The question that Thiesen is trying to answer in this book is the extent of and the reason for the infiltration of National Socialist thinking into the Mennonite colonies in Latin America. The question being asked is reflective of the book's title. Unfortunately, both the question being asked and the title of the book are somewhat misleading. Thiesen dedicates relatively few pages to the rest of Latin America and focuses on the Paraguayan settlement of Fernheim. The apparent conclusion for the paucity of information provided on the settlements outside of Fernheim and its environs appears to be that the situation outside of this one enclave was not as serious as that in Fernheim. While this may be true, the presentation of the National Socialist activities in the other settlements appears as an afterthought or footnote to the story Thiesen really wants to tell. In terms of the question that Thiesen is asking of the evidence that he is presenting, he only accomplishes one of his goals. The extent of infiltration of National Socialist thought into the Fernheim colony is clearly presented in all of its horrible reality. The characters involved come to life in Thiesen's lively prose. Unfortunately, the book does little to offer new insight into why National Socialist ideology found resonance among some Latin American Mennonites. The various theories that have been offered in the past are simply restated in the final interpretations section of the book.

While Thiesen demonstrates that he has an excellent grasp of Mennonite history, the reader is left unconvinced that he is well versed in the history of National Socialism, its ideology, language, or propaganda—a critical point, if one wishes to undertake a study such as this. Thiesen relies almost solely on Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as the arbiter of what the Nazis stood for. The reality of the matter was that Hitler's approach to religion and all other aspects of National Socialist society was far more pragmatic and flexible than would be suggested in *Mein Kampf*. Thiesen takes a very complex and paradoxically contradictory political movement and presents it in a simplistic manner, which suggests that the Nazi propaganda and ideological machine acted in an internally logical manner. By doing so, Thiesen is only able to scratch the surface of the interaction between National Socialism and the Latin American Mennonites.

Jacob A. Loewen & Wesley J. Prieb, *Only the Sword of the Spirit* (Winnipeg, MB and Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Productions, 1997). Pp.346, \$15.95 (US), \$19.95 (Canada).

Only the Sword of the Spirit is not an easy book to categorize. It reads like several books in one. It is by turns informative, challenging, argumentative, visionary, hortatory, confessional and, in places, needlessly repetitious and factually inaccurate. It is both uplifting and provocative to read. It is, moreover, never dull and that is something one can't always say about books that focus on Mennonite history, ethics or faith. While there is little if any original scholarship in this study, Loewen and Prieb do a bold and mostly satisfactory job of collating, extrapolating and interpreting the secondary sources they have consulted. And they certainly present some interesting and original opinions on various aspects of Mennonite history, culture and religious traditions.

The book is divided into four "Parts", each one offering its own approach and format. Part One--"Menno's Vision"--examines Menno's "Only the Sword of the Spirit" theology in an uninhibited way that brings out his many strengths as well as some of the weaknesses in his rich body of published writing. His "sharp tongue" in admonishing others and his strange indecisiveness on the issue of the ban and shunning were his main failings, according to the authors. Part Two consists of a rather fragmented, thematically oriented retelling of the Mennonite story, an account that provides some good insights, but which is also riddled with factual inaccuracies, misleading statements and idiosyncratic judgements, especially in the Russian Mennonite section.

Parts Three and Four go off in different directions altogether. The former consists of an informal survey eliciting reader responses to some of the basic issues in Mennonite secular and spiritual history as formulated by the authors. It examines such issues as the "One Kingdom" versus "Two Kingdoms" theology; Mennonites developing a "church state"--especially in Russia--and even defending it with the sword; the transition from "stewardship" to "ownership in a "social-class-based" Mennonite society; the changes in the Mennonite "canon" and in the function of Mennonite congregations; and, finally, the move from physical isolation away from the world to almost complete integration with the outside world. These responses are anonymously quoted and though interesting offer little more than a highly partisan and random range of views. Part Four--"The Hope"--turns personal as the two authors examine the nature of Mennonite "martyrdom" and reflect on their own individual attempts to recover such lost Mennonite ideals and neglected tenets of faith as complete nonviolence and "radical renewal."

Only the Sword of the Spirit is deliberately written from a Mennonite Brethren perspective and seems to be pointing most directly at an MB readership, although not in any narrow, partisan sense. The intention is to show how much Mennonite Brethren, and Mennonites in general, have drifted away from sixteenth-century Anabaptism. At the core of the book is the authors' attempt to show that the MB

belief in radical conversion and spiritual individualism can be integrated with the pure Anabaptist faith in discipleship and spiritual communality. In this connection, Prieb introduces the idea of “process” conversion as opposed to “instant” conversion, whereby the soul is seen as a house with many rooms which have to be “cleansed” one by one through a conversion process over a period of time that might take many years. An ingenious compromise, to say the least.

Loewen and Prieb are frank and straightforward in exposing the shortcomings of Mennonite society and the church over the centuries. They remind us that the original Anabaptist-Mennonite vision was of one kingdom only-God’s-and not the two-kingdom idea that was embraced later. They also point out that the Anabaptist ideal of “complete nonresistance-”only the sword of the spirit”-was gradually narrowed down to a principle of nonresistance that was applied only to exemption from military duty. They trace the gradual acceptance by Mennonitism of Caesar’s world, including the excesses of materialism and political power.

The trouble is that the authors do not develop this thesis of Mennonite spiritual decay and betrayal of principles with enough consistency. For example, while they strongly condemn the greed and unChristian practices of the Russian-Mennonite business elite, they refer to the wealthy Mennonite elite in Holland and Prussia without criticism. Similarly, they describe how Dutch and German Mennonites gave up the principle of military nonresistance early on as the price to be paid for acceptance into the larger world with hardly a word of criticism. Instead, they reserve their strongest moral condemnation for the *Selbstschutz* (Self-Defense) in Russia during the Civil War. While it is true that this was the only time in history that Mennonites actually formed their own military units and sent them into action, the moral cowardice of Mennonites in Holland and Germany was also a shameful betrayal of Anabaptism.

There are too many errors of fact and distortions of emphasis in this book to list them all, but here are a few more. The account of the feud between the *Lehramt* and the *Gebietsamt* in the Molotschna is skewed and misleading, especially the part involving the *Kleine Gemeinde*. The authors are simply wrong in stating that, “Except for widespread ridicule, some threats of banishment and incidents of minor harassment . . . the new church was not systematically persecuted”(103). It was, in fact, systematically persecuted for thirty years before the “*Grossegemeinde*”, under pressure from Cornies, finally acknowledged the KG as an official church in 1843.

Another rather cavalier approach to the facts can be found in the section on the *Selbstschutz*. To say that when the Austro-German army of occupation retreated from Ukraine in 1918 “not nearly all the foreign officers and soldiers left” is again not accurate. A small handful of non-commissioned officers stayed behind, and that was all. Equally inflated is the statement that a Mennonite army “of some two thousand men tried to defend seventy Mennonite villages with fifty thousand inhabitants” (141). The Molotschna *Selbstschutz*, assisted by men from the nearby German villages, did make a stand north of the colony for several months, but they were far from defending seventy Mennonite villages with a population of fifty

thousand. Nor is it true that in World War II "Canada . . . opened a noncombatant medical corp [sic] under military auspices, similar to that of Russia in World War I" (150). The Canadian Mennonite soldiers who served in Medical Corps did so as individual volunteers.

Setting aside its shortcomings, this book is well worth reading with its timely thesis that Mennonites have for a long time now been guilty of betraying Anabaptist ideals and principles. Having integrated with mainstream society, Mennonites, especially in North America, need to be reminded forcefully of how far they have drifted from the Anabaptist vision (or visions). The question, however, that this reviewer is left with after reading this didactic book is this: Can the Anabaptist ideal of one kingdom on earth and in heaven lived on the principle of complete nonresistance ever again be an achievable reality for Mennonites? Sadly, given the uneven history of Mennonitism over the centuries, one would, I think, be reluctant to answer that question in the affirmative.

Al Reimer
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Fred Stambrook and Bert Friesen, eds., *A Sharing of Diversities: Proceedings of the Jewish Mennonite Ukrainian Conference, "Building Bridges"* (Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Centre and the Jewish Mennonite Ukrainian Committee, 1999). pb. Pp. xv + 264, \$19.95 Cdn.

A Sharing of Diversities is the long-awaited publication of selected papers from the Jewish/Mennonite/Ukrainian conference held at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, in August, 1995. The purpose of that event was, in the words of the planning committee chairperson, Ken Reddig, to offer a jointly-hosted conference "to reflect on the similarities and dissimilarities of the respective cultures and experiences of (three) disparate communities" (vii). The papers also do, as co-editor Dr. Fred Stambrook puts it, "make their own contribution to scholarship and understanding (ix)"

The nineteen published presentations of themes on Jewish, Mennonite and Ukrainian topics represents well over half of the total offered at the conference. An excellent introductory essay by Dr. Stambrook surveys the multi-focal research of the contributors, with astute comments on relational aspects of identity and co-existence pertinent to the minorities under study here.

Principles of selection for publication include an emphasis on studies that deal with interactional features of the three groups represented at the conference. Hence, one finds the sub-titling of sections as follows: Interaction in Eastern Europe, with only one paper (19 - 32); Comparative Ethnic Landscapes, with two papers (33 - 62); The Immigrant Experience in Canada (63 - 124), an obvious aspect

of commonality and the most widely covered theme in this series, with five papers; Encounters and Responses (125 - 174), with three papers; Mirrors: Literature, Theatre and Art (175 - 216), with four papers; and History in Perspective (217 - 256), with three papers.

Readers are clearly invited to take advantage of an opportunity to go beyond the reading of "their own stories", though one has that option also, of course. This reviewer will therefore resist the temptation to "highlight" the titles with possible special interest to the Mennonite readers of *JMS* and encourage all subscribers to buy a copy of the volume in order to do a careful read of all the essays. The following comments may still suggest that that temptation is difficult to overcome altogether.

Conference participants in 1995 and Mennonite readers of these essays today may find it somewhat surprising to learn about some of the conflicts among the three groups. Indeed, one senses that a good deal more could be said, and may well have been written about this sort of problem in other contexts. A "Building Bridges" conference such as this, and publishing on this topic, certainly gains credibility and authenticity when it refuses to ignore the darker sides of historical experience, and begins to discuss them more openly as was attempted here. And it is appropriate to acknowledge that much more work needs to be done to reconcile inter-group differences and latent hostilities that persist even today.

The essays reflect a number of different approaches. Sociological analysis, historical surveys and literary sketches are all represented. The papers are of unequal length and vary considerably in academic rigor and sophistication. In this instance such variety does not necessarily devalue the end product. It would in fact have been quite interesting to see some published examples of the art exhibited by the three groups in the context of these meetings. As a participant of the conference this reviewer can say that the papers not published here contain additional very significant material.

There is a clear call in the introduction and elsewhere to pursue the exploration of mutuality illustrated by this conference and publication enterprise. Some readers may be reminded of the International Mennonite History conference held at Zaporizhzhie, Ukraine in May of last year. This Ukrainian/Mennonite and, to some extent, the Jewish experience was closely related to the Winnipeg proceedings, although they were placed in a very different venue and cast in a different mould.

The papers were basically about Mennonites but the personal interchanges brought excitement and a good bit of informal learning to those who were involved. When some Jewish questions actually came to the floor they were quickly dismissed by the chairman who obviously felt that this subject could create problems for which more adequate preparation would have been needed.

The Mennonite museum exhibit created for the Zaporizhzhian Regional Museum brought with it the complex thematics of Nestor Makhno's activity because a major new exhibit in his honour had been set up right next to the Mennonite hall. Interestingly, our collection offers a well-researched essay (157 -174) which sets

the new Ukrainian interest in Makhno into a context which was very new to Mennonite visitors.

A Sharing of Diversities certainly suggests that more work should be done in the Manitoba/Canadian setting. The Jewish/ Mennonite experience in southern Manitoba is hardly explored, and the same can be said for Ukrainian/Mennonite relations. In this regard the new data about Ukrainians in Gretna (63 -76) was also of interest to this reviewer. Essays related to anti-Semitism closing this essay series suggest that more study is required here as well. A recent Low German/Yiddish program held at the Mennonite Heritage Village at Steinbach opened the field of linguistic studies at least a crack. Who will widen that opening a little further?

A few more maps and some photos would have been useful additions. The editors should be commended for generally careful work in creating good copy and for including an index. The slightly irregular page size used by the printers allow a somewhat slimmer volume, but some readers may prefer the commonly-used format.

A Sharing of Diversities brings another phase of an interesting community learning venture to a very meaningful conclusion. Where and how can the next phase begin?

Lawrence Klippenstein
Mennonite Heritage Centre

Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out. The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Company, 1998). Pp.470. C\$45.00.

The Canadian Jewish Community was transformed in the decades following World War I. In 1920 the majority of Canada's 125,197 Jews lived in poor, lower-middle- to working-class immigrant enclaves in Montreal. They had great difficulty fitting into the confessional Protestant school system and faced considerable antisemitic hostility, particularly from some Roman Catholic clergy and French Canadian intellectuals. Smaller Jewish communities had been established in downtown wards in Toronto and in Winnipeg's notorious North End. Small Jewish communities in other urban centres, and in struggling western Jewish agricultural settlements, were not large enough to support viable Jewish religious and cultural institutions.

At the end of the twentieth century the Canadian Jewish community of 360,000 had become much more diverse and complex. Toronto had replaced Montreal as the great Canadian Jewish metropolis, while Winnipeg had given way to Vancouver as the home of the largest and most influential western Jewish community. There were still sizeable Jewish communities in Montreal and Winnipeg, and growing ones in Calgary and Ottawa, but elsewhere there was decline. Jews living in the larger cities had the highest average income, the best levels of education, and the highest rates

of participation in the professions of any Canadian ethnic group. Most had been born in Canada and faced few of the barriers which had earlier prevented their entry into the professions and elite economic activities. They were prominent in universities, the arts, the media, and some had become very rich business tycoons. Antisemitism had virtually disappeared from the mainstream of Canadian life, persisting only on the fringes. The transformation of Canadian Jewish life is the central theme of Gerald Tulchinsky's new book.

The early chapters of the book are thematic, dealing with interwar Jewish Canadian geography, restrictive Canadian immigration policies before World War II, Jewish involvement and dominance of the fiercely competitive clothing industry which resulted in conflict between Jewish and French Canadian workers and their Jewish employers. A separate chapter deals with socialist traditions among east European Jewish immigrants and their support of communist and other left-wing political movements in Canada. Another discusses manifestations of antisemitism in Quebec and, to a lesser extent, in the rest of Canada.

The author argues that covenant, Torah and diaspora marked the co-ordinates of the Jewish experience. After 1920 Zionism and the Holocaust were added to that list. He explains that inter-war Canadian support for the establishment of Jewish settlements in Palestine were mainly financial, and addresses directly and candidly the controversial subject of Jewish Canadian enlistments in the Spanish civil war, World War II and the Israeli Defence forces. Jews, it seemed, had exceptionally strong reasons to fight Fascism and Nazism. Yet, only a small number of Canadian Jewish men enlisted to fight in the Spanish civil war. Even in World War II Canadian Jewish military enlistments were slightly below and their casualty rates significantly lower than national averages. Jewish men, on the other hand, comprised more than their share of the so-called "Zombies" who were conscripted under the National Resources Mobilization Act for home defence but refused to volunteer for overseas service. Explanations, Tulchinsky suggests, lie in the higher educational levels of Canadian Jews, and hence fewer front-line assignments, lack of a Jewish Canadian military tradition, and memories of antisemitic harassment in and by armies in their former eastern European homelands.

Discussions of events in the post-war years focus on Zionism, antisemitism and Jewish efforts to bring Nazi war criminals resident in Canada to justice. The perspective of the author is that enunciated by leaders of Jewish Canadian organizations, particularly the Zionist Organization of Canada and the Canadian Jewish Congress. While admitting that antisemitism before World War II may not have significantly affected the material conditions of Canadian Jews and that it virtually disappeared from the mainstream of Canadian life after the war, the author devotes a disproportionate amount of time and space to that subject. Discussions of Jewish family life, gender relations, religious practices, and even business activities, by contrast, are very short. Thus, in the chapter on postwar adjustments, eight pages are devoted to a discussion of antisemitism - this after an entire earlier chapter is devoted to that topic. The discussion of the realm of Jewish women, by contrast, is covered in one and a half pages and the section on religious life is equally brief.

Tulchinsky admits that the continuing determination to create Holocaust memorials, arrest alleged Nazi war criminals, excessive concern over anti-semitism, and the equating of Canadian Jewish interests with those of the state of Israel, may seriously distort Canadian Jewish community priorities. This book, focused as it is on the actions and policies of the largest Canadian Jewish organizations and their preoccupation with those issues, contributes further to the distortions. Jewish life, we are told, became very diverse and complex. This book, particularly in the later chapters, explains how the leaders of major Jewish institutions viewed and responded to that growing diversity and complexity. It is not, as the dust jacket suggests, “the definitive history.” It is a top-down history in which dissident, outsider or, more generally, views “from the bottom up” are ignored or dealt with superficially. Understandably, however, a former head of the Canadian Jewish Congress and respected historian, describes it as “history at its best.”

Ted Regehr
University of Calgary

Richard B. Hays, *New Testament Ethics: The Story Retold*. J.J. Thiessen Lectures for 1997 (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1998). Pp. 81.

Richard B. Hays, professor of New Testament at Duke University, is also the author of *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996). In this case the length of the title is representative of the substantive importance of Hays' book, which is a *tour de force* of critical scholarship and theological interpretation of the New Testament, and a not uncontroversial retrieval and restatement of its moral vision. It is a difficult book to summarize or to condense. Yet in these J.J. Thiessen lectures for 1997 (CMBC) Hays has done just that, with remarkable success.

This book therefore serves as a useful introduction to Hays' vision of New Testament ethics. He states as his proposed goal for the lecture series: “to place my approach to NT ethics in the context of some other approaches and to develop my own reflections” in response to challenges to *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*. In the first chapter then, Hays shows how his approach, which he calls the “metaphorical embodiment of narrative paradigms,” differs from other approaches. Hays first outlines two purely descriptive approaches to the field, the historical (e.g., Wolfgang Schrage) and ethnographic (e.g., Wayne Meeks) reconstructions of NT ethics—the first describes the ethical ideas found in the text, the second offers a “thick description” of the social world of NT communities and its operative moral norms. The difference between these approaches and the others Hays describes is that they do not attempt a normative interpretation or retrieval of NT

ethics. Hays then makes what this reviewer considers a strange claim: “As long as one thinks of the university as one’s primary audience, this is understandable. However, when the correlation of NT and ethics arises as an issue for the **church**, it is impossible to defer normative questions indefinitely” (10).

Of course, there is a difference in the kinds of normative interests and questions that the church and university might raise regarding the moral vision of the NT, but it is not clear why the university should not consider the normative appropriation of NT ethics as well. Despite the fact that Hays is here offering only a brief overview of types, it is a distortion to suggest that “pure description” is even possible, given the complexity of the hermeneutical enterprise about which Hays is clearly aware. It seems to me that each of Hays’ approaches can (and do) find application in both church and university, and this could be the subject of fruitful further inquiry—a direction that Hays’ comment unfortunately precludes. It seems that on this point, Hays is content to accept the characterization of the field offered by the “descriptive” approaches of people like Wayne Meeks.

The second chapter offers a further concise elaboration of Hays’ approach to NT ethics with reference to three focal images that help to synthesize its overall moral vision: community, cross, and new creation. These images can only be understood in a narrative unity, not in a system distilled from the narrative, and it is a unity that is tied to a “mode of reading” in the church, which Hays calls, following the early church, the “rule of faith.” The church is a counter-cultural community of discipleship in which the primary moral concern is not, “what should I do in light of scriptural principles,” but rather, “what should we do” in the light of the story of Jesus, and in particular his death on the cross. The cross, says Hays, is the paradigm for faithfulness to God in this world; the church experiences the Kingdom of God by participating in “the *koinonia* of [Jesus’] sufferings,” which also entails the renunciation of violence. Such a participation has in view the eschatological power of new creation realized in the resurrection of Christ. It is evident that there are many parallels between traditional Anabaptist hermeneutics and Hays’ more sophisticated theological and critical approach.

Chapter three takes up the significance of the historical Jesus for Christian ethics, a task that must be undertaken, says Hays, if the NT narratives are making reference to real events presumed to be true. Here it is important to see Jesus within the context of first century Judaism and the particular ties of the NT to Israel’s traditions and hopes. Rather than do this directly, however, Hays proceeds via an extended description of the work of his friend, NT Wright, which comes as a rather lengthy interruption in the development of Hays’ own project. Hays’ concluding lecture, “Male and Female: a test case for metaphorical method,” takes up a particular moral issue found both in the NT and within the present-day church—namely, the issue of gender-based authority (one of the few issues not treated in Hays’ longer book). There are internal tensions in the NT canon on this issue, some calling for the subordination and silence of women, others suggesting that women are in positions of leadership and proclamation. In the light of the cross, of course, leadership means subordination and service, and Pauline references to the “new

creation” clearly imply the full equality of male and female, but not of a mechanistic kind. This changes the conventional ideological terms by which the NT texts are approached, but it also offers new pragmatic possibilities for the ordering of life and exercise of leadership in today’s church. This concluding chapter nicely displays Hays’ impressive approach in action.

P. Travis Kroeker
McMaster University

John Paul Lederach, *The Journey Toward Reconciliation* (Scottsdale, PA and Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1999). Pp. 206.

John Paul Lederach has worked as a mediator in a great variety of contexts on all the continents of the world. Conflicts within smaller units like local churches in his home area of Virginia to major ideological and political disputes in Latin America, Northern Ireland, South Africa, and in the Basque region of Spain, have challenged Lederach’s insights and beliefs to the core.

Journey Toward Reconciliation is an attempt to reflect analytically upon those experiences and then to do some integrative projections about their meaning. His method is communication by telling stories. It seems a bit sad to me that he chose to focus so extensively upon an Anabaptist readership with these stories. While John Paul justifies this because he feels “accountable to them” (15), these “stories” seem totally relevant to a much broader audience. And there are many in today’s world who hunger for the stories told in this significant book. To be fair to Lederach, he does add that he wants to be “transparent” about his faith and also to engage in a “dialogue across faith traditions”(15).

The stories in *The Journey Toward Reconciliation* range from the gut-wrenching experience of having his firstborn daughter Angie’s life threatened in Nicaragua, taking the “heat” for the USA in a context where American foreign policy had contributed to the violence Lederach now wanted to address in terms of reconciliation, the shock of seeing a “violent” colonel appear with a 10-year-old daughter who wore metal braces on her legs— maybe violent but nevertheless a caring father, his own personalizing the peacemaking process through use of the metaphors truth, mercy, justice and peace as actual personal participants in that process, meeting the warlords in Somalia, a visit to the genocide museum in Phnom Penh, his agonies at being invited to teach peacemaking at the War College in Carlisle (Pa.), discovering that Mennonite churches have their own Ten

Commandments on how to deal with conflict in the church, to a story about working “through” disillusionment based on experiences in Northern Ireland and with Justapaz in Colombia, to a concluding story about Sam Doe’s dream for Liberia. Each story carries a significant message for one who has the patience to listen and to learn. These stories by themselves are worth the price of the book and all who read them will not easily forget them.

There are several important contributions that John Paul makes in this book:

First, the complex “Big Picture” of conflict/violence and of peacemaking/reconciliation.

Lederach tells how he continues to learn more about first establishing what “enemy” means (chapter 2), including the biblical teachings in the Old Testament along with his experiences of encountering “enemies.” Lederach concludes: “Living faithfully in the face of enemies is only possible with a deep spiritual connection to God’s love and a willingness to live as vulnerably as Jesus did”(41). Secondly, in joining the journey toward reconciliation, Lederach says he has begun to see “beyond conflict resolution” (51) to reconciliation. While I was unable to understand fully why or how he separates the two, it appears that he is looking for a more holistic way of responding to conflicts, i.e. go further than conflict *resolution* into building new relationships. This he illustrates quite meaningfully with a methodology he has developed, based on Psalm 85 (53). He gets four key people to take on the roles of justice, peace, mercy and truth. He then presents them in a conversation of how in a specific conflict these four can somehow come to harmony. It is an intriguing method that has a lot of potential, especially in church conflicts. I have to wonder whether John Paul tries too hard to make Psalm 85 be an adequate key for mediation. In my own experiences, I have had to include the elements of self-esteem, patience or tolerance, growth, transformation, encounter, as essential “characters” in the process (he does add “hope”[p.761]). It is here that Lederach reinforces his insight that reconciliation is a “journey;” usually not the destination. Although I do get the feeling that at times he sees the journey getting to the destination eventually, both socially and spiritually. In my own experience, that has been very rare. I have come to see reconciliation on a continuum. It is indeed a journey, but it may move people only in the right direction and, when we are done, they may still only (but very significantly) be a few incremental steps into that direction. Occasionally I set people before the continuum line from crisis to resolution and ask them how far they believe they have journeyed. It has been extremely helpful. Lederach’s insight about the paradoxes on this journey are significant for the journey at all stages.

Second, for Mennonites, John Paul does an excellent service by revisiting some of our traditional approaches to conflict and then giving us reflections from his experiences. This makes us take another look at the place of tears and of anger (1-43); how to deal with “sinners” (49) and that we might discover God more readily if we could follow the way Jesus related to sinners. It is helpful when he reminds us that too readily we have applied “monochronic” approaches where we need to use polychronic ones (78ff). It is one of the few times John Paul wanders into academic discourse; but it is essential for us to see the dynamic nature of both conflict and reconciliation “energies.” John Paul says that traditional Mennonite “two-kingdom theology”(92) has often kept us from being involved in the “messy” dilemmas of today’s world. He encourages us to examine our “unspoken Ten Commandments of Conflict in the Mennonite Church”(101ff) as not having helped us to be mediating influences at many critical points. One way to facilitate the process of changing our

attitudes is to recognize that all of us are created in the image of God (as the Quakers say: there is a “thatness” of God in each person); yet it is also apparent from the Bible that conflict was present “in the beginning”(112). Nowhere does the Bible suggest that conflict itself is evil; instead, it is natural and creative. It becomes evil only when we are unwilling to learn from it. And, while this book is not a “how to” manual, he then reviews with the readers once again the details Jesus expresses in Mt. 18 on how we are to deal with conflict.

Third, Lederach’s concluding chapter talks of “the dream” about what the future might hold. He dares to think we can expect hope out of disillusionment — it has happened in Northern Ireland, in South Africa, in the former Soviet Union. This will come only with the “groans of creation in all its parts — Rom.8:22-23” (189). We need to embrace the paradoxes. “We are shackled by a lack of imagination and dreaming that things can be otherwise..”(202); and Lederach challenges all readers to take up the journey of reconciliation by keeping our “feet on the ground and our head in the clouds.” The greatest strengths of *The Journey Toward Reconciliation* are two. It is a deeply authentic attempt at analysis and reflection based on actual experience and an unshakable commitment to the Christian Faith. This then helps John Paul Lederach paint *for* us a genuine piece of art that includes the realities of violence and disillusionment, but these are overshadowed by highly dynamic images of revelation, hope, and the quality of prophetic projection sending us forward to eagerly engage the world’s presenting conflicts. *The Journey Toward Reconciliation* is a book from which all of us can learn. Anyone interested in more appropriate responses to conflict *will* be moved to fresh and energizing hope that will empower our efforts in this direction. I recommend it highly.

Bernie Wiebe,
Menno Simons College

Angelika E. Sauer and Matthias Zimmer (eds.), *A Chorus of different Voices. German Canadian Identities* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998). Hd. Pp. 244.

The 13 essays in this volume were all papers presented at a workshop on German-Canadian identity in Edmonton in 1996, edited by Angelika Sauer, Chair in German-Canadian Studies at the University of Winnipeg, and Matthias Zimmer, a DAAD Visiting German Studies Professor at the University of Alberta. *A Chorus of different Voices*, appears as Volume 189 of an American University Studies series in History, published by Peter Lang. It is a welcome collection, because studies of German identities in North America are not that common.

The Table of Contents does not show any obvious organization. The focus is on German-Canadians, and the first contributions begin with a conceptual and theoretical context, followed by issues related to maintenance of German identities, including German language retention, institutions, history, writings, family, migra-

tion and politics. Collections of papers presented at conferences usually vary in quality, and that is the case here too. Since it is difficult to review all papers significantly, let us focus on the half dozen which are the best.

Dieter Haselbach, Reader at Aston University in Birmingham, United Kingdom, develops the social construction of identity, providing some theoretical perspectives. He begins with Hegel and his dialectical system, who says that "die Wahrheit ist nur in der Einheit der Identität mit der Verschiedenheit vollständig," where truth is only complete in the unity of identity, showing the full range of differentiations. Identity is complex, varied, and there are many dimensions to identification. These many facets of identity are changing in dialectical relationships. Haselbach develops the various dimensions including the formation of individual self, which may involve identity crises. Such crises certainly were operating during World Wars I and II, which forced Canadian-Germans to deal with stigma, spoiled identities, split identities and forced identities. This reviewer's mother identified herself as Canadian, whereas her brother identified himself as German during World War II. Identity change and reconstruction were in the making. The policy of multiculturalism in Canada encourages many identities, so groups and individuals are making their choices.

Wsevolod Isajiw works on the identity retention of German-Canadians using their Toronto survey data presented earlier. Since they collected data which compared three generations, he could see the extent to which German identity was maintained using nine indicators. They found that by the third generation, Toronto German-Canadians had lost their mother tongue with only one percent able to speak it any longer. In the first generation 70 percent of Germans said they still ate ethnic foods at holidays, but by the third generation this had declined to 28 percent. Only 15 percent still practiced ethnic customs, only 23 percent possessed German articles, only one or two had close German friends, only 20 percent felt obligations to help Germans, and only 2 percent felt obligated to marry someone who was German.

Gerhard Bassler, in his chapter, admits that the 2.8 million Canadians of German origin in 1991 were among the most assimilated, largely because they were of north European culture, like the dominant groups in Canada, and they are very diverse with a variety of religious and national origins. Many came from the Holy Roman Empire which was very diverse to begin with. His study of Lunenburg County Germans in Nova Scotia and Waterloo County Mennonites in Ontario, illustrate Lutheran and Mennonite religious differences and some of the problems of identity change involved.

Barbara Lorenzkowski's study of the Canadian homefront during the second war in 1939-45, shows what it was like to be of German descent. RCMP raiding parties seized German-Canadian civilians and put some into concentration camps. Discrimination and prejudice were rampant. Many were considered Nazi sympathizers and a threat to national security because of Canadian fear of sabotage and espionage. After World War II, 270,000 German immigrants left Europe and came to Canada. Hans Werner describes the suffering the immigrants went through and

the adjustments they had to make as these immigrants came to a new country. Many women and children came without their husbands and fathers, including many Mennonites who migrated to Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil.

This is a welcome collection of German-Canadian studies. It is a handsome volume, part of an ongoing series, which hopefully will receive wide exposure.

Leo Driedger
University of Manitoba

Royden Loewen, ed. and intro, *From the Inside Out: The Rural Worlds of Mennonite Diarists, 1863-1929* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999). Pb. Pp. 350

That Mennonites have placed much emphasis on literacy and historical awareness is perhaps most evident in rich collections of letters and diaries written in the past by 'ordinary folk' and preserved in family collections and archives for use by historians. In his research on the social history of rural Canadian Mennonites, historian Royden Loewen has discovered and made use of this richness in life-writing to analyse patterns of family, church, and market in ordinary Mennonite farming households. Now he has made a sampling of these 'private' documents available to the public in *From the Inside Out*, a collection of diary excerpts written between 1863 and 1929.

The translated and edited excerpts are from the diaries of 21 Mennonites living or travelling in rural Ontario and Manitoba in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. More specifically, the diaries emerge from two of the earliest established Mennonite communities in Canada: the Swiss-American Mennonites of Waterloo County, and Dutch-Russian Mennonites in the Rural Municipality of Hanover (East Reserve). The book includes the diaries of 14 men and 7 women and is organized mainly around themes of migration, life cycles, church, and work. Most of the selections are drawn from one year in the life of the diarists, though several represent spans of up to a decade.

A quick glance at most personal, daily diaries might lead one to ask, what is there of significance in reading minutiae about the daily weather, about crop yields, about childhood maladies, and about visits from the relatives, for instance. In a well-constructed and insightful introduction, Loewen makes a sound argument for exploring and making public the "poor stuff" – the daily routines as opposed to emotion and analysis – of these diaries. In his rationale for both the initial writing of, and the later reading of, the diaries, Loewen proposes that they provide an "inside out" view of individuals and households which allow us to nuance social patterns in seemingly homogeneous communities, to gain an understanding of a writer's sense of identity, and to establish the importance of literacy for a religious minority.

Loewen distinguishes several types of writing in the diaries which are revealing of the writer's degree of "evolution towards literary self-consciousness" (7) or sense of individualism. Most common among his selections is the rural household journal – the repetitive, concise, sometimes tedious record of everyday life. The diaries of "Migrating Men" Cornelius W. Loewen and Ezra R. Burkholder are examples of travelogues in which descriptions of time and space that exist outside of the writer's familiar territory prompt a greater "literary awareness" and thus more reflective analysis. The third genre of diary-writing is what Loewen describes as the "highly individualistic, private diary of Mennonites who lived in more urbanized worlds" (7). Examples of this more descriptive and introspective type of writing include the diary of 24 year-old Margaretha Jansen, a new immigrant from Russia living temporarily in Waterloo County (1873-74). She writes extensively about her admiration for the evangelist Daniel Brenneman, about her sorrow over her brother's misbehaviour, and about her curiosity regarding Waterloo County courtship customs, as follows in an entry from February 14, 1874: "When we drove home from choir practice that evening, somebody drove behind us very silently without bells. I was wondering about that, but the others were quiet. Now I know what it was. Susanne had a visitor. It seems so strange to me. A person, whom she did not know, comes that late in the evening when all the others had already gone to bed! But that is a custom over here!" (50).

Though all of the diary writers have religion, ethnicity, and rurality in common, there is otherwise great variety in the subjective identities that shaped their inside worlds. Class differences can be gleaned from the diary excerpts of Ontario miller and merchant Elias Eby as compared to those of 15 year-old Heinrich Kornelson, who worked as a servant on neighbouring farms in southern Manitoba. Age and life cycle also coloured the lens through which daily life occurrences were viewed. For instance, the life stage of 71 year-old Abraham Reimer is central to the emphasis in his diary on his offspring and their children, and in the case of Moses Bowman (also 71), the concern with generational succession. As well, gender is a category that draws together the diaries of Ontario Swiss women with those of Manitoba Russian women, even while differentiating them their respective menfolk. Loewen observes that women's diaries offer a perspective on the farm "from within the house" and thus contain more detail about domestic labour within the home, as well as information about births, marriages, and health. As Loewen concludes, "specific mixes of gender, class, and generation produced specific worlds of Mennonite diarists" (19).

What is especially noteworthy about this collection, for the field of Mennonite studies, is that diarists of both Russian and Swiss Mennonite ethnic ancestry are represented (the ratio is 13:8). Despite disparate histories, culture, and theology, the personal writings of Russian and Swiss Mennonites depict both difference and sameness in their common experiences of farming, raising families, and dealing with the cycles of weather, economy and health. Loewen points out that the diaries reveal differing regional socio-economic contexts within which Ontario and Manitoba Mennonite contemporaries were living.

Departing from the dominant trend in Mennonite scholarship whereby ethno-religiosity is definitive, Loewen's book raises the important point that the multiple identities – class, gender, age, region – and activities of the agrarian household are (possibly) more fundamental to daily living than being Mennonite. Given this emphasis, one wonders if the diaries might not also offer insight into establishing definitional meaning for the actual label of Mennonite, given that this is really the main organizing category for the collection. If Mennonite is one component of the composite of subjective identities represented in each diarist, rather than foundational to who they are, then should not Mennonite be problematized as well? What does 'Mennonite' mean to the diarists? Did they give account of their lives at all in ways that might be construed as Mennonite? Loewen intriguingly suggests that in the very act of recording details about "household, kin group, community, and wider society," the diarists were "mentally designing ... an envisioned community" (5). As such, perhaps we might view these pieces of life-writing, not as Mennonites writing diaries, but as individuals creating personal and community identities as Mennonite through the vehicle of literacy. The availability of these diary excerpts offers the potential for understanding how social profiles are constructed, not just that they were recorded.

Given the lack of reflective material in most of the diaries in this volume, one might well wonder about the usefulness of publishing the repetitive and mundane details such as are characteristic of Judith Klassen Neufeld's journal; for example, her entry for May 19, 1922 reads: "The weather is still changeable, cloudy and raining. Johan and Heinrich are ploughing. Set a brooding hen. One hen hatched some chicks today" (297). Yet it is exactly in the rhythmic reading of such entries, as opposed to a biographer's creation of Neufeld's life story based on those entries, that one gains a sense that her daily life was structured by rhythms – of birth and death, of winter and summer, of production and consumption. In fact, these small bites of information may get us closer to the 'reality' of Mennonite lives at the turn of the century than any interpretive re-construction based on such discourse-laden sources as the memoirs of community leaders or archived church records. As Loewen points out, daily weather entries were not indicative of mundane thoughts by "idle minds" but "critical aspects of life" (13).

The book will be of interest to a variety of readers: social historians looking for published primary sources related to turn of the century agrarian life; scholars of memoir and life-writing; rural Mennonites interested in comparing their present-day lives with that of their ancestors; and anyone else interested in getting an 'outside' glimpse 'in' to the rhythms of daily life in turn of the century Canada.

Marie Schroeder, a 19 year-old farm woman writing in 1926, offers her "secret hope that [she might] write things that have a real worth someday; things that are worth printing, and things that other folks would love to read and pay for" (19). Schroeder would be delighted (and possibly horrified) that Loewen has made her secret hope come true.

Robert S. Kreider, *Looking Back into the Future* (Bethel College: Newton, KS, 1998). Pb., Pp. 302.

Many notable community leaders use their retirement to “look back,” produce their memoirs, or perhaps an autobiography. Kreider - long time history professor and archivist at Bethel College (Kansas), earlier an academic dean and president at Bluffton College (Ohio), and before that a Mennonite Central Committee worker in Europe - has gifted the Mennonite community with such a work. It is, however, an unusual piece. It is mostly the reproduction of articles that he published during his lifetime. The first is a letter written at age 15 in 1934 to President Roosevelt, lamenting in an articulate hand the practice of child labour in the United States. One of the last pieces is a 1996 letter to a grandson upon his high-school graduation, voicing the same social concerns as those sixty years earlier. In between are about sixty short writings, most marking significant episodes to which Kreider responded. In each instance one obtains a glimpse of an energetic, curious, loving, and courageous man surrounded by family, children, kin, friends and colleagues.

It is the same person I have come to like and respect. In my visit to Bethel College in November 1999 Professor Kreider took me on a field trip in his red truck. Here was a man at age 80 presenting an engaging lecture on everything one should know about the “Low Germans” north of Newton - the Goessel museum, the land adjoining the Chisholm Trail, the Alexanderwohl Church, Heinrich Ewert’s birth place. I was most impressed by his own excitement at our “discovery”, confirmed by circling one of the sections close to Alexanderwohl, of evidence of the Russian Mennonite village system from the 1870s. “You will need to come and study this landscape on your next research project,” he counselled. In the summer of 1998 I also met Robert; he bought me lunch and the conversation was all about my research trip through Kansas, to Mexico, and back through Denver. Reading this book I’m a little embarrassed that that conversation was all about me, the youngster, when this seasoned traveler could have “one-up-man-shipped” me at every turn.

The book is much more than a record of accomplishment. It is a history of the twentieth century American Mennonite community through the lens of one man’s experience. As community leader, world traveller, and perennial thinker, Kreider has had the enviable position of obtaining a unique perspective of the Mennonite community. His mind was never isolated, wrapped in the myopia of church politics, nor was it one given to banal or esoteric scholarship. Kreider has lived the great events. He has encountered the New Deal in the Depression, Nazism as a young bicyclist in Europe, the devastation of post-war Europe, the disorienting and disturbing 1960s, the betrayal of Nixon’s Vietnam War, the invasion of an electronic culture. Throughout Kreider pursued an “Anabaptist Vision”, more radical than Bender’s (willing to critique his own country) and more cosmopolitan (insistent on appropriating for the Mennonite community the best of modern society’s literature and art).

But in the book Kreider never leaves his roots. His are the concerns of the typical American Mennonite. He knows the farm crisis, the lure of evangelicalism,

the reticence of Mennonites, the depth of Mennonite church lines, and the comfort of the "Christian College." This is a man who has met presidents, written to them chidingly, but he is also a folksy man who weaves a seamless account interspersed with biblical passages, English poetry, Garrison Kealer, Peanuts, and bits of conversation with innumerable ordinary people. He loves America, he claims to be staunchly conservative, but he is unwaveringly a Mennonite. He has clearly moved far beyond the world of many Mennonites, but his roots are never restrictive: he can laugh at shallow fundamentalism, express admiration for children, quote the great thinkers, recount his favourite animals, and always see the possibility of peace and goodness.

This is a delightful, insightful, exquisitely written book that charts the life of one man but in doing so also offers a glimpse of Mennonite society in the United States through the twentieth century.

Royden Loewen
University of Winnipeg

John D. Ruth and Ervin Beck, eds., *Migrant Muses: Mennonite/s Writing in the U.S.* (Goshen: Mennonite Historical Society, 1998). Paper, 227 pp.

This interesting volume is a compilation of papers presented at a 1997 conference on Mennonite writing in the U.S. sponsored by the English department of Goshen College. It includes warm and well-deserved tributes to John Ruth, Elmer Suderman, and Warren Kliever (now deceased), American Mennonite writers who blazed a trail for the younger writers of today. There are also seven book reviews of recent Mennonite fiction and poetry. The conference, the first of its kind in the U.S., was modeled on the first-ever Mennonite writers' conference held at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario in 1990, a conference that focussed on Mennonite writing in Canada. Both conferences were highly successful, with the Goshen conference attracting 300 Mennonite writers, critics and readers. There are plans afoot to hold an international conference on Canadian and U. S. Mennonite writing in 2002.

These conferences suggest that Mennonite literature in North America is coming of age and is making a contribution to the creative literature of both countries. It is interesting to note that the Mennonite literary renaissance which began in Canada thirty years ago did not really gain momentum in the U.S. until the last decade. That in spite of the fact that Swiss-American Mennonitism is 300 years old, compared with less than half that age for the Russian-Mennonite tradition in Canada. The anomaly can probably be explained by the fact that the Swiss Mennonites in the U.S. have traditionally harbored an even deeper antipathy towards secular creative writing—and the creative arts in general—than have Canadian Mennonites coming from a Russian-Mennonite background.

The seventeen critical essays gathered here, while not all of equal merit or interest, set an impressive standard for critical writing. Several essays are theoretical in nature and deal with an issue that has preoccupied Mennonite literary criticism for years: should the Mennonite novelist or poet be a spokesperson for the Mennonite community (in the highest sense, naturally), or is she free to stand on her own creative feet and to speak from the margins of the community as a kind of creative prophet? These two contrasting positions were defined years ago by John Ruth, representing the Swiss-Mennonite community-based position, and this reviewer, arguing on behalf of the writer as an individualized, in many cases disenfranchised, voice. Now, in an essay entitled "Re-Inscribing Identity in Mennonite Literature," Hildi Froese Thiessen moves this discussion forward by discarding the binary opposition of the earlier theories as too simple—center/margin, community/individual, home/exile, insiders/outside—and argues instead for a more fluid critical approach. She denies the "monolithic" concept of Mennonite community and opts instead for a multiplicity of views and positions which Mennonite writers and critics can express while still remaining faithful to Mennonite religious and ethnic values.

As a proponent of the artist-as-prophetic-voice theory, I have no problem (and I suspect John Ruth holding the artist-writing-for-the-community position wouldn't either) with this more fluid theory advanced by Froese Thiessen. In a way her sophisticated theory subsumes the earlier two while adding flexibility of approach to them. There is a point to be made here, however, and that is the need to differentiate between the creative writer and the critic who addresses his/her work. To my mind, Froese Thiessen does not establish this difference clearly enough, tending as she does to treat artist and critic as on the same level with apparently the same creative impulses and resources. In this, she follows the tendency of recent critical trends. But the creative writer has always needed to inhabit his/her own space, to take creative directions that may cut across or skirt the formal lines and categories set up by the critic. Criticism, by its very nature, will always be forced to try to catch up with creative forms.

Which brings me to Jeff Gundy's brilliant essay "In Praise of the Lurkers (Who Come Out to Speak)." Here is a critical essay written by a creative writer, a fine practicing poet, who knows how to make his case with grace and wit from the inside and without resorting to the technical jargon and the fixed categories of formal criticism. He designates the creative writer as a "lurker," that is, someone who operates within a certain community or world but is never completely of that world, one who always remains partly "other." This creative-artist-as-lurker concept allows Gundy, like Froese Thiessen, to establish an acceptable compromise between the earlier binary positions of the artist representing the community and the artist as individual detached from the community.

There are other ingenious critical pieces in this collection. Ervin Beck offers a provocative analysis of ten Mennonite literary "archetypes" ranging from Menno Simons in a molasses barrel to the traditional migratory caravan of a Mennonite community on the move. The idea is a good one, although some of Beck's applica-

tions of these archetypes to Mennonite works of fiction strike me as rather forced or far-fetched. And his claim that Mennonite archetypes as applied to Mennonite literary works are more valid than the universal archetypes of critics like Frye, Campbell, and Frazer would seem to fly in the face of the Jungian concept of archetypes as universally embedded within the human psyche. Beck's statement that Northrop Frye "has long ago been discredited for thinking that he had identified the universals of world literature" will come as a surprise to critics and readers who regard Frye as one of the great seminal thinkers of the age. Embarrassing, also, is the misidentification of Frye as an "Anglican priest" who "mistook the European tradition for the world tradition." Frye was as far from being that naïve as he was from being an Anglican priest. Actually, he was trained as a United Church minister but never practiced the ministry, preferring to become an academic and critic. I find it difficult to see how anyone who has read Frye could be so cavalier in his treatment of one of the great critics of the century.

One of the best essays in this volume is Paul Thiessen's fine reading of Dallas Wiebe's complex historical novel *Our Asian Journey*. Thiessen, as is his custom, offers acute insights expressed in critical terms that are at once incisive, accurate, and innovative. He is helped by having a first-rate literary work to consider, which is not the case for some of the other essays in the book. Other informative and illuminating analyses are those by Ann Hostetler on U.S. Mennonite poetry and David Wright on Jeff Gundy's poems.

There are also four excellent essays on Mennonite women poets. The best of these, in my opinion, is John J. Fisher's analysis of Julia Kasdorf's first volume of verse, *Sleeping Preacher*. Fisher not only gives an exemplary reading of one of the better volumes of verse to come from a Mennonite pen in recent years, but also does what very few of these analytical essays do, and that is to place Kasdorf's poetry in the larger perspective of a literary tradition, in this case the genre of pastoral elegy. This makes for a nicely balanced presentation of analysis and evaluation. While more limited in critical scope, the analyses of the poetry of Jean Janzen and Janet Kauffman are also sound and nuanced. And I particularly liked Beth Martin Birky's treatment of Mennonite women's poetry on the theme of the female body as reincarnated in the poetic word.

My main criticism of this impressive volume is that some of the more sensitive criticism is lavished on works that are at best mediocre and/or too obscure to warrant such elaborate treatment. The large amount of plot summary and character description in some of these essays is in itself a good indication that the critics in question do not expect most readers to be familiar with these works. The body of American Mennonite writing that can lay claim to literary distinction is still very small (and is not all that much larger in Canada) and of relatively recent vintage. And while digging up earlier, less than memorable, attempts at creative writing may be of some value in defining a Mennonite literary tradition, critics should also, I would argue, make some attempt to place these works in their proper literary context. On the other hand, it is quite possible that these enlightened and talented Mennonite critics will stimulate more good Mennonite writing in the years to come,

so that, in another decade or two, the critics will have many good literary subjects.

Finally, while I know that literary evaluation of the hierarchical kind is not in fashion in critical circles these days, it would be interesting to know just how good these Mennonite critics think U.S. Mennonite writing is when compared with American literature generally. A few of these essays hint at such comparisons, but most of them focus rather narrowly on their subjects and make few, if any, attempts to go beyond their religious and ethnic aspects or to delve into the literary craft employed by these writers. Perhaps doing so will be the next step in Mennonite criticism, a step that may propel both critic and writer into a wider literary world.

Al Reimer
Winnipeg, Manitoba

David Bergen, *See the Child*. (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1999). Paper, 234 pp. \$18.95.

Like the story of Job, Manitoba writer David Bergen's second novel poses the question, what does a good and prosperous man do if he loses what he most loves? As *See the Child* opens, Paul Unger, the second-generation owner of a profitable furniture store in the small town of Furst, answers a knocking at his door to learn that his teenaged son Stephen has been found dead in his neighbour's field, improbably drowned in the mud into which he has fallen on his way home drunk from a party. Unger's well-stocked world, which has seemed until now to be "innocent, as if this is how it was, is, and always will be," becomes "a swollen river with no means to reach the other side." In his grief and guilt, Unger turns away from his home, his work, his wife, his daughter, and his friends to live alone on his hobby beekeeping farm. There appears to be the possibility that Unger will find a way back to solid ground when Stephen's girlfriend Nicole returns to Furst with a child he claims as his grandson. But, while he opens his house and heart to Nicole and Sky, he must, finally, relinquish them, too.

Bergen explores Unger's situation through the traditional terms of tragedy, isolating one man—and this is very much a novel about a *man*—against implacable and impersonal forces, what Unger at one point calls the "awful symmetry" of the world. Less common is the nature of the loss Bergen takes as his subject. While many tragedies focus on the dying of personal power, the leaving of a lover, or even the passing of a parent, Bergen probes the bottomless depths of pain of a father mourning a son for whom he has failed to make the world safe.

The structure Bergen has chosen for his novel beautifully conveys the dissociative condition of grieving. Many sections begin with accounts or announcements of specific events—linear time continues to pass in the world around Paul Unger—and then spiral back through layers of memories, Unger's subjective sense of time. For the reader, it is difficult to construct more than a tenuous sense of the

timeline of the novel; a firm hold on the sequences of causes and effects by which we customarily anchor ourselves to normalcy give way here to the rhythms of commemoration.

Given the subject Bergen has chosen, one might expect rage or railing in his prose. But Bergen renders despair rather as a delicate and tender pain: Paul Unger feels the need and longing of his wife and daughter even as he moves away from them. Bergen explicitly contemplates and refuses the easy compensations of melodrama. In the sequence of the novel set in Montana, Unger identifies Nicole's new boyfriend Wyatt as the block to the return of his son's son. Unger briefly considers playing the role of rescuer and avenger of Nicole and Sky, going so far as to buy a gun to use against Wyatt. In the end, however, he buckles Sky carefully into the seat of Wyatt's truck, choosing the best possibility for the boy's safety over futile heroic gestures.

The large themes of Bergen's novel are inflected by the geographical and cultural landscape of small-town Manitoba. For example, when Unger first begins to search for his son, he reflects, ironically, that the "flat earth" of his world is "fully available and empty of surprises." The attention Bergen pays to the intricacies of beekeeping and the special pleasures of swimming in gravel pits places the novel, as well as pointing to its thematic concerns. It is clear that successful Mennonite businessmen like Unger and his father have considerable power and prestige in the town of Furth. Because of his position, for example, Unger knows that his behaviour and that of his family is the subject of interested conversation among his neighbours.

These circumstances supply the texture of Bergen's novel, but he does not write a Mennonite novel or even a novel about a Mennonite man in any obvious sense. Questions of church or cultural authority are absent from Unger's search to define "who he was and what he knew." When Pastor Herb reads a few verses from the Psalms and whispers a prayer, Unger can see only a dim reflection of his own eye in his coffee cup. In a scene that is repeated several times in the novel, Unger methodically scrapes from the beehives the propolis of previous years, the glue used by bees to stop up crevices in hives. The scene seems emblematic of Bergen's procedure as a writer: he too is concerned to write a novel that does not find formulaic answers to its difficult questions in established religious, cultural, or literary traditions.

Perhaps because Bergen eschews examination of Unger's Mennonitism, his frequent references to the ethnicity of the French people of the area are somewhat jarring. While both Nicole and Lise are complex characters, the fact is that both women and Daniel, who is also French Canadian, are represented as glibly promiscuous. Both Nicole and Lise have fathers who drink too much. Because ethnicity as a category is not interrogated here, these characterizations come uncomfortably close to stereotypes of the feckless ethnic other.

But, this is a novel that confirms Bergen as an accomplished and important writer. It is also a courageous book. Children, says Paul Unger, "work their way up to the heart" and then "they go away." There is no flinching here from the starkness of those terms. The biblical story of Job ends with full restoration: not only does

Job become twice as rich as he was before he was made a pawn in the contest between God and Satan, but a new set of seven sons and three daughters neatly replace those struck down at the beginning of his ordeal. In his extended meditation on inconsolable loss in this novel, David Bergen disputes the sufficiency of such a conclusion.

Mavis Reimer
University of Winnipeg

Diane Driedger, *The Mennonite Madonna* (Charlottetown, PEI: Gynergy Books, 1999). Paper, 89 pp. \$10.95.

Bernice Friesen, *Sex, Death, and Naked Men* (Regina, SK: Coteau Books, 1998). Paper, 86 pp. \$8.95.

Audrey Poetker, *Making strange to yourself* (Winnipeg, MB: Turnstone Press, 1999). Paper, 67 pp. \$10.95.

The Canadian prairie continues to spawn Mennonite poets who illuminate for us the pleasure and pain of being human. All three women poets reviewed here guide the reader into the realm of the personal, uncovering, each in her own way, what's often kept private. For all three, the body becomes both subject and metaphor.

Despite its title, Diane Driedger's *The Mennonite Madonna* foregrounds a male figure. He is Johann Driedger, the poet's great-grandfather who, in 1908, was shut out from his church in Saskatchewan. A series of poems recounts the events, exposing both the Mennonite church's extreme fear of worldliness and Johann Driedger's feisty character. "Johann 1911" illustrates his outrage at the injustice: "I will not be silenced/in my opposition/ will not accept/ no never accept/ their shunning."

Driedger's stubborn persistence in pursuing justice and his conflict with the Mennonite church are reflected in the work of his poet-granddaughter, who, in a different era and under different circumstances, also struggles with issues of justice, and what it means to be Mennonite. In poems driven as much by memory as by imagination, Driedger explores themes of growing up, abuse, illness and desire. Some of the poems are set in Trinidad where the author lived for a time and worked with Women with Disabilities.

In Driedger's uncomplicated poems the personal is often combined with socio-political comment:

how the light careens off
his face the way the cheekbones inch

up to his eyes
 coal and liquid oil black
 I want to talk about the caress
 of his long fingers along
 my body the satin reach
 of tongue.

....

I want to talk about all this but
 I'm Mennonite.
 ("on the body")

It's the male body that's exposed in Bernice Friesen's first poetry collection, *Sex, Death and Naked Men*. The authority in these irreverent and visually vivid poems stems not so much from vision as from the poet's confidence and wit, a wit that's sharp and sometimes bitter. All manner of patriarchal figures—God, Adam, Darwin, Atlas—are targets of this wit: "Pull a man's penis/ and he'll unravel/ like a skein of wool./ It was something my mother taught me ("Mae West Does Eve"). The poet is having fun with the male member, and with sexuality in general, but she also offers a serious critique of unquestioned power and unexamined attitudes.

But I found a very different take in "Bathing N," a blunt, almost mechanical, description of a woman caring for a handicapped male:

I've clipped your toenails
 cut your hair
 brushed your teeth
 wiped your bum
 worked suntan lotion
 into the fold of your lotus ear
 aimed your penis into the toilet.
 You have bitten me on a whim
 and I have mingled the wound
 with blood and peroxide and
 lift you up again.

The simple line that ends this excerpt lifts the scene into one of human kindness, maybe even tenderness.

The female body, too, is unveiled. Breasts abound, nursing children, invaded by cancer, luring and cradling lovers. The energy in these poems derives from the smorgasbord of lively images that seem to come naturally to Friesen, who is also a visual artist and has written a novel for young adults.

Although all three poets reveal the personal, it is Audrey Poetker, in her third collection, *Making strange to yourself*, who does so most unflinchingly, exposing the rawness left by experiences of love and loss. The self-exposure can be painful for the reader, who might wish that less had been laid bare. But Poetker is a mature

poet and knows how to evoke emotion without becoming maudlin. Her poetic sensibility is in tune with the sounds and rhythms of language that, skilfully employed, create the necessary mood:

How softly you quote Goethe
to me, when I am frantic with grief,
a high note, a song not of sorrow,
how tenderly you suck clean
the smallest wound on my finger.
("Loving")

Poetker's growth as a poet is evident in poems that picture the woman in a variety of circumstances: travelling with a new lover, married to an older husband, visiting her child's grave, confronting fear. Particularly poignant are the poems that deal with a woman's inability to have children. In "Mothers," the narrator imagines, and even names, these never-to-be-born children:

Rebecca, serious, dark-haired Rebecca. Bookworm. The plans
you had for her. And Gerald, ah Gerry, freckle-faced son,
carefree singer of songs. Your desire hurts like a wound.

The prologue-story at the beginning of this book contains this sentence: "Just breathing leaves scars sometimes and you cannot tell how much grief is yours." Grief runs like a thread through this volume in which Poetker gives less prominence than in her two previous collections to Mennonite themes and more to probing the unanswerable "whys" of life.

The final poem, "Song to be sung alone, in the dark," is a musical listing of places and possible ideas, ending with the words: "...finding/ idea of voice, of nearly, home." This drew me back to the prologue-story and its reference to the search for "reason to go on living." This search is, in Poetker's work, fraught with fear, not unrelated to the possibility of faith, and not yet completed.

All three collections will be welcomed by those who follow the development of Mennonite poetry in Canada.

Sarah Klassen
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Sarah Klassen, *Dangerous Elements* (Kingston: Quarry, 1998). Paper, 120 pp.

Sarah Klassen's fourth collection of poems, *Dangerous Elements*, reminds us that we are never safe in this treacherous world. The book starts off slowly, with lyrical descriptions of pelicans, egrets, loons and snow geese, but danger lurks

everywhere under the layers of beautiful language, and, as the book draws to a close, it surfaces with shocking and brutal clarity.

Klassen's title poem emphasizes the main theme of the volume, revealing the illusory nature of an ordinary day in the domestic sphere. The speaker cooks a meal, cautiously substituting low-fat cheese for Swiss, omitting sugar, "my head telling me to/go easy." Meanwhile, her friend rides a mountain bike down the highway, through possible rain, headwind, traffic and icy pavement. The message is clear: no matter how carefully we follow the recipe, or how rigorously we attempt to order our lives, disaster may strike the ones we love at any moment. In her exploration of this theme, Klassen once again proves herself a skilled wordsmith, a highly accomplished poet with a keen intelligence and an observant eye. She also raises some disturbing questions about the dangerous nature of art, her own included.

The risky relationship between life and art provides the subject for numerous pieces in this volume. In "reading at the underground cafe" and "The Heaven Art and Book Cafe," Klassen describes two Winnipeg venues, famous among poets, and links their architectural eccentricities with the paradoxical demands of poetry. As the names of these spaces suggest, The Underground is reached by a descending staircase and Heaven by an ascending one. Thus, Klassen plays with two spatial metaphors for the creation of art: that it requires a descent into the underworld and yet it can also transcend the sky.

Many of the poems offer responses to the work of various visual artists, including Aganetha Dyck and Helene Dyck, and to museum displays. Klassen is fascinated by the transformation of life's dynamic motion into static artifact. In "At the amber museum, Palanga, March 1997," the trapped insects in their "amber prisons" become metaphors for human moments frozen in time. Imagine, Klassen urges us, if "a sticky liquid rains gold over you//then turns capricious, hardens into destiny." The poem reminds us that death is always a surprise. The small, twisted bodies of the insects "wait involuntarily with blank expressions/like the rest of us, not for release but for continuation:/one more sunrise."

Klassen has chosen to end this book with a series of poems called "Singing at the Fire (after the engravings of Dutch artist Jan Luyken, 1649-1712)." Jan Luyken's work depicted the persecution of Anabaptist heretics, and this final section is horrific, combining sickening descriptions of torture and murder with an almost perverse insistence on the beauty of the martyrs' suffering. Aeltgen Baten's falling body is described as a graceful thing: "a plumbline's perfect weight, plunged/straight and sank." As she drowns, "Her young cheeks/bloomed like tulips, a soft south wind/made a sail of her skirts" ("Brides"). And as the martyrs are burned at the stake, Klassen invites us to imagine "lascivious tongues of flame/licking your skin/caressing your quivering arms and legs" ("Repenting" 117). No thank you, I thought, this is one fire at which I will not sing.

Klassen notes that Jan Luyken's artistic method was appropriate to his subject matter: the needle, acid and copper plate of the etchings comprise the only medium austere enough to depict "a song torn from between charred lips/the way a sword's

torn from the heart" ("Artist and Medium"). Perhaps this is true. And perhaps it is necessary to document the beautiful humanity of the victims in order to love them. Nevertheless, the aestheticization of suffering is highly disturbing.

So the world, even the snug and cosy kitchen, is full of dangerous elements. The line between life and death is slender and watery, and at any moment you might slip through to the other side. Perhaps it is true, also, that art is dangerous and deceptive, that a carefully curved line can turn our attention away from the truth. Why, in the full knowledge of pain and horror, do we celebrate beauty? In "Chopin Cafe (in the afternoon)," Klassen seems to offer an answer:

...Doggedly
 the soul (no matter what the season
 no matter how close death waits)
 longs for water, sharp scent of pine,
 one startling glimpse of the blue heron
 that great, ungainly wingspan
 skimming the reeds.

Catherine Hunter
 The University of Winnipeg

John Weier, *Marshwalker: Naturalist Memoirs*, illus. Rudolph Koes (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1998). Paperback, 183 pp. \$17.95 Cdn.

In this book the author invites the reader to accompany him on his walks through Oak Hammock Marsh in Manitoba. Like all avid naturalists, John Weier draws the reader's attention to the innumerable sights and sounds of a world that most city dwellers have long since forgotten or have never experienced. At times the reader is challenged by means of gentle but direct questioning: "Have you watched how the morning passes?...Have you watched how the earth reaches deep into the horizon?...Have you taken the time to kneel, [to] survey the conference of frost on a stalk of slough grass?...Have you captured the look of geese flying?" At other times the author attempts to motivate his reader even further: "You can change your way of looking." Weier humbly confesses that, at the age of forty-five, he also is still learning to see.

There is a wealth of encyclopedic knowledge on virtually every page, fascinating facts that naturalists love to share with those of us who are mere novices. That brood parasitism among birds is more widely practiced than commonly believed, that grebes eat their own feathers or that spiders are the first living creatures to return to a volcanic site are all highly interesting and valuable bits of information, but they are not what give this chronicle its unique appeal. The peculiar charm of this journal is to be found in the almost innocent joy it evokes as the author, like the mythical Adam, names the countless creatures he encounters. The observations

recorded on a micro-cassette recorder while striding through wetland are dramatically conveyed by means of run-on and fragmented sentences. As he says at one point, "My breath comes in jumps and starts."

In the transcriptions of his cassette recordings, John Weier's accounts become much more than a detailed commentary on birds and animals. His descriptions are frequently interspersed with contemplative statements and provocative questions: "I walk through time and the marsh....What is it we'll need when we're old and ready to die?" The writer is on a journey, trying to come to terms with his place in the great scheme of life, with his own mortality. His quest comes to have greater meaning and brings more satisfaction when the joys and insights it provides can be shared with special friends who are also named - Daryl, Jon, David, but above all his partner Susan, who must confront her own mortality in her battle with cancer.

In *Marshwalker* John Weier presents us with a constant interplay between first-hand experience and what has been learned from books. He begins his narrative by acknowledging his predecessors and mentors, in particular Henry David Thoreau, but he also declares his independence and his readiness to strike out on his own:

I suppose this has been tried often enough by other people - Henry Thoreau on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, Peter Matthiessen in the highlands of Nepal, pilgrims and travellers to Samarkand....Still, what's the use of their experience to me.

Nevertheless, what he has learned from reading Thoreau and others is not so easily forgotten. Like Thoreau, Weier extols the virtues of the simple life. Like Matthiessen, who sought the rare snow leopard, this writer often waits patiently, sometimes in vain, to gain a fleeting view of an exotic bird. And like his predecessors he needs his readers: "You hope your words will reach an audience." He needs to share his enthusiasm: "What a wonder-filled land....Can heaven be any more beautiful than our earth?"

The illustrations by Rudolph Koes add much to the appeal of this book. The bibliography provides the reader with some of the author's sources, as well as some interesting suggestions for further reading.

Peter Pauls
University of Winnipeg

Helen Litz, dir., Mennonite Children's Choir Concert. With Ben Heppner. Centennial Concert Hall, Winnipeg, MB. 6 Oct. 1999.

You don't have to be a booster of Mennonite culture to acclaim Ben Heppner as one of the great operatic tenors of our time. His international reputation continues to soar with one success after another in the world's leading opera houses. And his

rapid rise is all the more impressive when the modest and remote circumstances in which he grew up in B.C. are considered. The path to operatic stardom must have seemed anything but clear to him early on.

Heppner's appearance with the renowned Mennonite Children's Choir under the direction of Helen Litz at Winnipeg's Centennial Concert Hall on October 6, 1999, was a remarkable event in a number of ways. Sponsored by MEDA and World Vision, this was a "makeup" concert for one that Heppner had been forced to cancel two years ago. As he forthrightly informed the audience: "When you're sick, you're sick." That a singer with a schedule as full and demanding as Heppner's would be willing to reschedule a missed date like this speaks well for his integrity and sense of commitment to charitable causes.

One of the most impressive aspects of Ben Heppner's artistry is the tremendous range of his repertoire. Completely at home in Italian opera, he has, in recent years, been moving deeper into the vast reaches of Wagnerian opera. He is singing *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and will soon be ready for the supreme test of a heldentenor, the role of Siegfried in the *Ring* cycle. In addition, he is a superb oratorio and Lieder singer and has enjoyed great success with Mahler's "Das Lied von der Erde." He also demonstrated in this concert that he can sing with equal skill the Russian songs of Rachmaninov as well as popular parlor songs by the "Schmaltz Brothers," as he put it in his informal remarks to the audience.

Impressive also is Heppner's mastery of languages (a talent for singing is not always supported by an equal linguistic talent). He sang in German, Russian, French, Italian and English, a feat in itself, but what was even more amazing was the way in which he changed vocal style and timbre for each of these languages. When he sang the Rachmaninov songs he sounded like a Russian tenor, complete with the sweetly floating top notes and the little catch in the voice Russian tenors like to use. And, while his French sounded a bit Germanized, his rendition of Massenet's "Adieu donc, vain objets" from *Herodiade* was nevertheless convincing. Beginning with Beethoven's lovely "Adelaide," this great tenor sang a long and varied program that ended with five exquisitely rendered popular concert songs in English. It is characteristic of Heppner that he would give an old encore chestnut like "Roses of Picardy" the same passionate and soulful treatment he gave to the serious operatic arias on his program.

The voice itself is an awesome instrument that gathered warmth and power as the evening progressed. It is a large, resonant voice that produces a brilliant seamless flow of sound up and down the register. And no matter how brilliant the high notes, one was left with the feeling that this singer uses only the interest and not the capital of his voice, as another famous singer once put it. Heppner's singing was set off by the splendid playing of accompanist Craig Rutenberg, who is himself a star in the musical firmament.

For many in the audience, I'm sure, the highlight of the evening was the utterly charming way in which the tenor joined forces with the Children's Choir in the first half. After singing a captivating medley of songs, the Choir, sensitively accompa-

nied by Dr. Karin Redekopp-Edwards, combined with Heppner to produce a most appealing visual and aural tableau that had the audience spellbound. The number began with Heppner's soul-tingling singing of "Selig sind die Verfolgung leiden" from Kienzel's largely forgotten opera *Der Evangelimann*. Surrounded by the children, he then led them in a delightful singing lesson. Relaxed and amiable, Heppner displayed not a trace of tenor egoism in this benign and gently affectionate vocal interaction. And the audience loved it.

His down-to-earth manner was also evident in the chatty remarks and jokes he shared with the audience between numbers. Before singing Wagner's "Preislied," he joked that the audience had only been waiting an hour and a half to hear him sing it, instead of the five hours it would take if they attended the opera. And apropos of MEDA and World Vision, he mentioned that he and his wife were now sponsoring their second child for World Vision, the first one having grown up.

Like many other members of the audience, I'm sure, I came away from this concert knowing that I had been royally entertained by a consummate vocal artist who had revealed, both in his singing and in his personal manner, a depth of passion and a warmth of personality and respect for his art few artists could match. In the coming years Ben Heppner will reach the summit of his career as the outstanding Wagnerian heldentenor of his generation and perhaps the greatest since Lauritz Melchior mesmerized operatic audiences in the first half of the century.

Al Reimer
Winnipeg, Manitoba