

Foreword

Part One

I begin this foreword with reference to the last section of the *Journal*, sadly a set of narratives in memoriam of five dear friends and leaders in the field of Mennonite Studies. The tributes appear in chronological order, but appropriately also begin with reference to Harry Loewen, the founding editor of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* (*JMS*) and the first holder of the Chair in Mennonite Studies, the architect of a unique program based at a leading, public university. Al Reimer, Ted Friesen, Paul Toews and George Richert lent similar energies and gifts to the cause of Mennonite Studies. They will be missed, and always much appreciated.

Looking into the future, you will note that this issue is published not only by the Chair in Mennonite Studies, but also by the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies (CTMS), a new educational and research initiative launched at the University of Winnipeg on May 5, 2016. CTMS links the Chair's program with the community-based Plett Foundation and anticipates collaborations with other institutions to recognize the increasingly 'transnational' quality to Mennonite Studies. CMTS, in particular, seeks to foster dialogue along three trajectories: between the Global North and South, among 'Low German' Mennonites in the Americas, and between North America and Russia and Ukraine. In the spirit of this reorientation make sure to read papers in this issue by Christoffer Grundmann, James Pankratz, Benjamin Goossen, Roland Sawatsky, Grace Kehler and Susanne Guenther Loewen. They either

connect the dots along these geographical trajectories or engage in conversations that have become transnational in focus.

From another perspective, the 'Regular Research' section of this issue comprises an exploration of three highly distinctive expressions of Mennonite identity, from three different disciplines. It begins with a paper by Roland Sawatzky whose archaeology of rural Mennonite life in the long extinct southeastern Manitoba village of Blumenhof reveals surprisingly sharp social lines based on relative wealth. The next paper by Grace Kehler considers the prophetic voice within the writings of Miriam Toews and suggests the presence of a subversive, spiritually oriented subtext that addresses the trauma of social chasm. In the third paper, Nathan Dirks revisits the story of Mennonite participation in the Second World War, making the innovative argument that more men served than previously thought and that persisting division among churches was to blame.

The second section, "JMS Forum," stems from the "Mennonites, Medicine and the Body: Health and Illness in the Past and Present" conference, held on October 23 and 24, 2015 at the University of Winnipeg. I introduce the "Forum" below in Part Two of the Foreword by referencing the entire conference, introducing both the papers that were not submitted to *JMS* for publication and those that were, thus providing the scholarly context for the latter.

The third section of this issue, one arranged for by Associate Editor Robert Zacharias, features four LGBT Mennonite writers who participated in the March 2015 Mennonite/s Writing VII conference in Fresno, California. Andrew Harnish introduces this section by providing context for the session, drawing special attention to the profound desire of the four writers to fully embrace both the Mennonite and LGBT communities. In this pursuit Daniel Cruz surveys half a dozen 'queer' Mennonite novels, celebrating this voice from the margins of the community, one that gives him a personal sense of home, but one he counsels is required for the community's cultural and even spiritual health. Jan Braun surveys the slow acceptance of the 'comma-driven' category of being gay within the Mennonite literary canon, itself having come to life as a category separated by commas from a mainstream Mennonite identity. Casey Plett advances a similar idea by comparing and contrasting several noted gay writings with Mennonite writings by Sandra Birdsell and Miriam Toews, finding in both sets a theme simultaneously of inclusion and exclusion. Finally, Harnish concludes this section with an excerpt from his *Plain Love*.

As always we conclude the issue with a rich assortment of about two dozen book reviews, heralding historians, sociologists, me-

moirists, novelists and poets. Again many thanks to our book review editors Brian Froese and Rosmarin Heidenreich. This is the last year of Rosmarin's service to *JMS* and I would like to offer my deep gratitude to her for a stellar contribution, especially her eye to detail and quality, timeliness, and exacting editorial sensibility. Her good grace, sense of dignity and infective enthusiasm will be missed. Finally, thanks to Andrea Dyck, Sandy Tolman and Rob Zacharias for a variety of crucial tasks in the making of this issue.

Part Two

Each of the twenty-six papers presented at the 'Mennonites, Medicine and the Body' conference spoke in some fashion to the two words in the subtitle, that is, the words "past" and "present." They suggested an implicit tension, between a "preindustrial" and a "modern" set of medical understanding and knowledge. The words "past and present" mark a profound change over time: how a medical knowledge given to an acceptance of divine will, herbal medicine and received agrarian knowledge, gave way to a culture premised on scientific-based intervention. This tension carried through this remarkably rich and engaging, and even moving, conference. The papers published in this issue of the *Journal* were submitted for publication, and are ordered roughly on a continuum from the most traditional to the most modern, even the post-modern.

The conference itself began with a session titled, "Contesting Modern Medicine," and it in turn with a paper by Jesse Hutchinson who juxtaposed two texts, Rudy Wiebe's memoir, *of this earth*, and then within it, the diary of his bed-ridden sister, Helen, from earlier in the century, the latter strangely 'cold and clinical', but within it nevertheless a cosmology of acquiescence, as in "Schroeder...took me to church and after that I was well.' Rebecca Plett's "From Martyrology to the Medical" introduced an inter-generational discourse, an ethnography in the present day, but again a transformation of sorts is apparent, one from a yield-ness to God's will to a modern medical intervention of illness. Vanessa Quiring took us to 1919, the time of the Spanish Flu, when fatalism insulated Mennonites from state directions, now demonstrably to their own harm, judging by the disproportionate number of Mennonites who died from the Flu.

The second session, "Physical Well Being: Past and Present" began with Marlene Epp's "'Eat Less Pork, Take More Baths'", suggesting a conflict brewing between agrarian foodways and life-

styles, and a rising voice from modern medicine, in particular that of a proto-doctor who linked obesity and lard, coffee and senility, fruit and diarrhea, etc., the precise science of which was less important than that these associations were made in the first instance. Kathryn Fisher introduced a similar medical tension, albeit within a twenty-first century Old Order Mennonite community, perhaps exhibiting ignorance of modern health knowledge, but benefitting from high physical activity, but then again based on poor diets, their low mortality rates accompanied disproportionately by chronic health issues. In her presentation, "Healing Body and Soul," Katherine Enns argued the need for health cultures to invoke the spiritual, and in that pursuit, also the importance of community and church, and friendship, that is, the social environment.

In "Stories of the Medical 'Vocation'" three practitioners themselves spoke; they were modern achievers, each "called" by echoes of the rural communitarian past. Order of Canada recipient, Henry G. Friesen, declared that he was a "part of all that I have met," driven by the question of "what lies underneath", a question holding a tenant that directed him from Morden, Manitoba to McGill University, to Boston and back to Manitoba, researching and leading, always in both the global and the local, insisting on a billion dollar realignment of public funds to undertake research, all the while helping to build a network of Mennonite elementary schools. Joseph B. Martin, recalled small rural schools and irrigated fields in Duchess, Alberta, a learning environment he "would trade for nothing," and then his own trajectory – McGill, Rochester, and other places along the way to Harvard – but always recalling the moral philosophy and music and Anabaptist theology he had learned at Evangelical Mennonite College during a hiatus from medical school. Mary Dyck, recalled her solid grounding in her extended family at Tiegengrund, Saskatchewan, a "grounding" giving rise to a philosophy of holism in nursing, especially within the oftentimes debilitating environment of the modern nursing home. Terry Klassen, once apparently a creole-speaking 'Missionary Kid' in Belize, outlined a challenging pathway to adulthood in Canada, to med school, and deanships in Alberta and Manitoba, along the way his identity as Mennonite church member tested, but never the traits of modesty and collaboration.

In "Genetic Disorders and Anabaptists" the intersection of the pre-modern and modern occurred again. Marlis Schroeder's "Mennonite Infants and SCI" outlined the deadly CD36 defect, affecting "*Kanadier*" Mennonite and First Nations people alike, requiring bone marrow transplants, but a treatment that included

the simple charge to “go back to grandma and grandpa and see if someone lost their babies.” Victoria Siu and Jane Leach turned the focus on Ontario, highlighting the meeting of a “high tech medicine in a low tech world,” building trust with Amish bishops, seeking “a culturally sensitive healthcare,” for genetic disorders clearly exacerbated by an troubling high endogamy rate.

In the “Featured Evening’s” session, “Mennonites, DNA and Gene Discovery,” Matthew Farrer presented his landmark findings on the “Parkinson’s Disease” gene and reintroduced the idea of interventionist modern medicine, but in full cooperation of an extended Mennonite family, permission granted in a gathering in a church basement north of Saskatoon. Cheryl Rockman-Greenberg, told a similar story, but one regarding Mennonites and Hypophosphatasia, in this case illustrated with moving testimonials of children (including those of traditionalist communities), successfully treated, to happy, healthy, mobile childhood.

In the session, “Old Traditions and Health Culture,” Judith Kulig and Hai Yan Fan’s “Body, Mind and Spirit” again spoke of the intersection of preindustrial and modern medical knowledge, the need to respect received knowledge and to present modern interventionist models with utmost patience. Ralph Friesen’s “School of Suffering” considered a particular “cosmic heroism,” one of “suffering alongside Christ,” grateful for slow deaths that gave opportunity for confession and grace, and one amidst an engaged public, where singing and narration of suffering accompanied death.

In “Race, Racialization and Medicine” this dichotomy between preindustrial and modern continued. David Daniels and Jason Dyck’s comparative “Ojibwa and Mennonite Health” told a story of overcoming racialized boundaries, of a mutual appreciation of parallel nature-based cultures: the herbalist and botanist, and the “midwife and bonesetters,” certainly, but also spiritual intersections, directed by both the Ojibwa medical chest and the notebooks of the Mennonite midwife. In his “Measuring Mennonitism,” Ben Goossen brought another turn to the ‘race’ question, now not with Mennonites ‘racializing’ another people, but with Nazi doctors ‘racializing’ Mennonites, in a troubling trope, considered sometimes to “be more Aryan than the typical German.”

In the session, “Mission, Church and Medicine,” the medical missionary was introduced and now the dichotomy between “pre-industrial and the modern” became blurry. Brian Froese spoke of Mennonite Brethren missionaries contesting ostentatious Pentecostal faith healers, but pursuing their own culture of the miraculous, “apocalyptic and chiliastic,” intersecting the terrestri-

al and transcendent, all melding within the modern hospital. Christoffer H. Grundmann, took listeners to Margorejo, Chung Hung, Matopo and many other places, to argue the uniqueness of the “Mennonite Medical Missionary,” an example of “lived discipleship,” propelling the rise of the ethnically and racially diverse, globalized Mennonite community of today. Jim Pankratz, found late-nineteenth-century Andhra Pradesh to be a place of high western medical confidence, propelled by a colonial culture involving the Mennonite missionary, confronting the “fraudulent” Indian diviner and priest, perhaps a pathway into the Indian heart, but not without an unconditional embodied Christianity.

The last session, “Feminism and Concepts of the Body,” announced the feminist voice, in both pre-modern and modern societies. Susanne Guenther Loewen helped us “Re(dis)covery Mary,” the subversive “re-baptized Mary,” from early Anabaptists speaking of her ontological humanity, to the intra-christian, patriarchal, centuries-long desert of a subordinate but royal Mary, to the more modern works of A. James Reimer and others, finding in a revolutionary Mary an advocate of justice and peace. Rachel Waltner Goossen introduced another woman, now one thoroughly modern, a victim-turned-courageous-whistle-blower, identifying sexual abuse at the highest possible ranks, by a revered Anabaptist ethicist. Then Conrad Stoesz, returned to the pre-modern, and found within it the text of the agrarian midwife, a hidden medical tradition, that gave women a further, even shocking subversive voice.

The convergence of these papers constituted a rich conversation of the coming together of two broadly conceptualized medical cultures – the past and the present – each implicitly critiquing the other. Within this dynamic was a changing Mennonite community, but one rediscovering the communitarian even within modern medicine. Sometimes this change caused conflict, but oftentimes too a revitalized Mennonite identity and community. This focus on ‘medicine’ in Mennonite culture illuminates the history of the medical, perhaps, but more clearly, a central dynamic within these people, stumbling along, seeking peace and justice, in an evolving world.

I hope you enjoy the papers by Fisher (including Newbold, Simone and Eckel), Froese, Goossen, Grundmann, Guenther Loewen, Pankratz, Rockman-Greenberg, Schroeder, Stoesz, and Waltner Goossen They represent a first rate cross section of a rich conversation.

Royden Loewen, editor