Harry Loewen, *Ink Against the Devil: Luther and His Opponents*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015. Pp. xx + 335. Hardcover, $85.00.

Back in 1974 Harry Loewen published his groundbreaking *Luther and the Radicals: Another Look at Some Aspects of the Struggle Between Luther and the Radical Reformers* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1974), an analysis of the complex and often vexed relationship between the German Reformer Martin Luther and his many Protestant opponents, especially those in the so-called radical stream – Andreas Karlstadt, Thomas Müntzer, leaders of the various Anabaptist groups, Anabaptist Münster, and the spiritualists. What made Loewen's original book so important, unusual in fact, was that it was written by a Mennonite who was yet able to take a sympathetic and sensitive approach to Luther, despite the latter's condemnation of Protestant opponents as *Schwermeri* – a swarm of bothersome bees, and his partial responsibility for the vicious persecution of the Anabaptists.

Ink Against the Devil (2015) is essentially a greatly expanded version of Loewen's earlier *Luther and the Radicals.* In his preface to the new book the author notes that the reaction to that earlier volume had been mixed, as reviews from "non-Mennonite critics at the time were more positive than from Mennonite reviewers" (xiii). Loewen had indeed bent over backwards to understand Luther when it would have been more natural for him to condemn the Reformer out of hand. In this new version, Loewen has done several things. First, he updated the arguments of the 1974 edition, more than doubling the size in the process. Second, he added new sections on Luther against the Jews, Turks, and the papacy, and these sections continue Loewen's goals of achieving balance and sensitivity. While here he confronts Luther's words without flinching, and he then explains carefully the reasons for Luther's excess. Finally, Loewen has reshaped the whole book to appeal to a broad audience that would include non-scholars and students interested in the subject of confessional interaction and religious dialogue. As a result, the book has doubled in the number of chapters (sixteen from eight) from the original. And while there are no footnotes, there are parenthetical references to sources, as well as a bibliography and index. On the whole, the work succeeds in bringing Loewen's unique perspective back into public view, this time in a new context of greatly improved relations among Christian denominations, but also deteriorating relations and potentially dangerous misunderstandings among Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

Loewen has not altered his major conclusions to any great extent, although some have been modified in light of recent scholarship. His goal remains to show that the various radical reformers were not as extreme as Luther portrayed them, and that they were seeking merely to fulfill Luther's own reform aims. Their concerns about the ethical effects of Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone and rejection of salvific works were, to Loewen, reasonable ones. At the same time, the Anabaptists' emphasis on good works after justification did at times lead, as Luther warned, to legalism, as seen in the Mennonite practice of the ban or shunning. Luther too was not nearly as extreme in his depreciation of good works as his opponents claimed. His own personal struggle for salvation did not come easily, and this made him absolutely determined to protect the doctrine of justification from any assaults.

Loewen extends this argument to Luther's late works against the Jews and the papacy. These, he argues, did not express a new approach on Luther's part, but were instead an intensified effort to protect the gospel in the Last Days against those who would distort it (Catholics) or blaspheme it (Jews). Increasing illness, anger over the intransigence of the Jews to convert and their apparent success in winning Christian converts, combined with his growing anxiety about the apocalyptical battle against the forces of the devil, compelled Luther to use his extreme invective. While Loewen correctly notes that these publications did not cause the twentieth century Holocaust, they were happily utilized by Nazis to justify their atrocities. Luther's vitriol against the papacy was also linked to particular political conflicts that inspired him to anger and fear that his movement might be crushed just as he was facing his own end.

There has been a great deal of excellent research on these subjects since Loewen's first edition; however, he only refers to a small portion of this scholarship in his new version. The lack of a fully updated bibliography is not a major impediment to his goal of appealing more broadly to the post 9/11 Christian world in hopes that it would pay greater attention to the suffering and pain caused by poorly informed and inflammatory rhetoric such as that expressed by Luther. In his epilogue, Loewen comments on how former enemies – Catholics, Mennonites, and Lutherans – have recently asked forgiveness for the past hatred. While the West has been increasingly secularized, religion remains a powerful factor for those within the Islamic world. Loewen believes that Luther's relatively mild writings against the Turks – whom he expressed some admiration for – can help those in western society "learn

from Muslims" to "appreciate eastern values." Loewen also decries recent negative portrayals of Muhammad as the work of "western bigots" (291) and compares that denunciation to Luther's very negative language about the Prophet as a warning. He does not, however, find a way to balance sensitivity to the religious concerns of others with the defense of free speech, a valuable legacy of the Reformation radicals. Even so, Loewen's insightful tome provides an important contribution to such vexed questions.

Gary K. Waite
University of New Brunswick