
Book Reviews

Victor G. Doerksen and Harry Loewen, eds., *Arnold Dyck, Collected Works in 4 Volumes, Volume One: Verloren in der Steppe/Aus meinem Leben*, (Steinbach: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1985); Clothbound with dustjacket, illustrations by Arnold Dyck, 515 pages, \$25.00 (Special subscription price for all four volumes \$95.00).

For some years now it has been increasingly difficult to gain access to the works of Arnold Dyck. Many of his works had only been issued in small and very modestly executed editions, while others have never been presented to the larger reading public. Fortunately the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society has succeeded in redressing this unfortunate state of affairs recently with its publication of the first volume of Arnold Dyck's collected works. The exceptionally well-executed first volume of a projected four-volume edition contains the largely autobiographical novel *Verloren in der Steppe* and the previously unpublished significant autobiographical sketch *Aus meinem Leben*. The newly edited text of the novel is illustrated with charmingly unpretentious drawings by Arnold Dyck which do much to help the reader visualise Dyck's world. Other relevant illustrative material is also included in this volume. This handsome and over-sized issue of the works of Arnold Dyck features large print on fine quality paper and is well-bound, ensuring that Dyck's work will be preserved in a format worthy of its author. The editors of Volume One are Victor G. Doerksen and Harry Loewen. They provide the reader with a general introduction to the work of Arnold Dyck through a brief biography of the author, a concise summary of the important research done on the novel *Verloren in der Steppe* and an evaluation of its place in German and Mennonite literature. The short summaries of the various critical interpretations of the work provided here will prove invaluable to the first-time reader. The editors also provide the reader with a number of well-selected footnotes to explain words no longer in current German usage, exclusively Low German words and other items which the general reader can not be expected to know. By supplying this useful information the editors have ensured that the works of Dyck will remain as accessible to the modern reader as when they first appeared. Loewen and Doerksen are to be lauded on the excellent editorial work they have done.

Dyck's consistently popular novel *Verloren in der Steppe*, written

in High German, was first published in five parts from 1944 to 1948. The work is best classified as a Bildungsroman or novel of education. In it Dyck shows the development of Hänschen, later Hans, Toews from boyhood to maturity. The events are described through the eyes of Hänschen Toews, a technique which allows Dyck to instill the descriptions with a charming naiveté. Nevertheless, the author's benevolent humour is apparent throughout the work. Although Dyck describes what he essentially views as a lost paradise, his criticism of the stuffy attitudes and the questionable social situations in the old world is quite strong. Even though Dyck's convictions come to the fore very clearly he manages to keep his critical observations inoffensive. In addition to tracing the development of his protagonist Hänschen the novel also affords the reader invaluable and seemingly immediate insights into the daily life in the old Russian colonies. We are allowed to witness the daily routines on the farm, to accompany the men and women and, of course, the children on their daily chores, to enter into the world of these children and follow their routine in the schools from their perspective and to share community happenings such as pig-killing bees. Dyck, to be sure, views all of these activities benignly but certainly not without a definite sense of irony and frequent healthy demonstrations of his disapproval. Particularly noteworthy stylistic aspects of the novel are the author's sensitive nature descriptions, his character portrayals and his great skill in showing the various emotional upheavals in Hänschen.

The second work contained in this first volume, *Aus meinem Leben*, is a rather brief but most informative autobiographical sketch which is here finally published for the first time. This sketch at first more or less retraces the events described in the novel *Verloren in der Steppe* but then goes further by also telling of the author's various attempts at studying art, his term of alternative service in the forestry division and in the medical corps, his emigration and the various publishing ventures in Southern Manitoba. Dyck then describes his purchasing of the *Steinbach Post*, his publishing of the *Mennonitische Volkswarte* and the creation of the Echo-Verlag. Those readers interested in Dyck's life will find this sketch invaluable. It is noteworthy that Dyck's tone here is much more matter-of-fact than in the novel. Indeed, one senses a disturbing resignation in this work, particularly when the author describes his latter publishing ventures and voices his apprehensions about the future of German writing and publication in Canada.

Volume One of the collected works marks an exciting beginning to this important new edition of Arnold Dyck's writings. The care with which the editors have prepared the two texts is exemplary and commendable. The reader of the first volume will await the appearance of the other three volumes in this series with great impatience. Volumes Two and Three will contain the author's many Low German creations, includ-

ing the perennially popular adventures of Koop enn Bua. Volume Four will present further hitherto unpublished works, essays and letters as well as a collection of visual art by Arnold Dyck. Other editors involved in the preparation of these volumes are George K. Epp, Al Reimer and Elisabeth Peters.

Undoubtedly this new and important edition of the works of Arnold Dyck will stimulate a renewed interest in the author and will ensure that his works will be preserved for posterity in a worthy and meaningful format.

André Oberlé
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Al Reimer, *My Harp is Turned to Mourning*, A Novel (Winnipeg, Hyperion Press, 1985), 440 pp. Paperback; \$14.95

Many historical novelists never quite escape the tyranny of their authors' imaginations. They find it difficult to dispense with the setting of their own times, their peculiar prejudices or their favorite reconstruction of the past. Heroes and heroines become spokespersons for whatever causes the authors espouse or whatever ideologies they hold dear. Any historian sharing Ranke's aspirations to reconstruct "the past as it was" will find this novel refreshing. For once an author bows gracefully to the limits set by his historical evidence. In the end truth in this novel is not only stranger than fiction but far more gripping as well. Events of cosmic proportions engulf ordinary people and the reader is inextricably drawn into their struggle.

The historical framework of the novel is meticulously drawn. While its main focus is on the first two decades of the twentieth century, Reimer manages to sketch the broader Mennonite experience in Russia through the reminiscences of the aged Daniel Fast. Via his recollections the reader learns of the trek from Prussia, the difficulties associated with life on the frontier and the growing sense of Mennonite belonging in the new homeland. The reader is unobtrusively supplied with all the background essential to an understanding of the Mennonite world in the early twentieth century: the ideal and practice of pacifism; the increasing prosperity; the varieties of Mennonite piety. When this society shatters amidst revolution and civil war it is easy to understand the sentiments of the protagonists, whether victims or oppressors. Reimer goes out of his way to be fair to the other side. Even the anarchist Makhno, viewed by his victims as a ruthless killer, is on occasion capable of compassion.

The characters in Reimer's story remain authentic throughout. The times in which they lived always control their actions. There is no impulsive flight of fancy which suddenly takes them out of the context of

their faith and peoplehood. All the characters remain true to their individual style of peoplehood and spirituality. They reflect the dilemma of an isolated, inward looking people confronted by violence. Some endure and suffer, some engage in self-defense. Still others cannot understand why the righteous are oppressed, why honestly acquired goods can be seized or why a century of sojourn in Russia still makes one a foreigner.

Reimer's characters are diverse and individualistic. One suspects they are patterned on living persons who told their stories and related their experiences. Even if they are fictitious, their interaction with known and named personalities of that day — the evangelist Adolf Reimer or the historian P. M. Friesen — make them real and touchable. Reimer does not defend his protagonists. Men and women are given to faith and despair, heroism and cowardice, forgiveness and revenge, love and lust. Being Christian and Mennonite in confession does not protect them from hate, acts of violence, or complicity in a system oppressive to the Russian peasant. The industrialist committed to capitalism or the farmer intent on further land acquisition are not sympathetic figures.

Thank you, Al Reimer, for telling the collective story and not restricting your typology. Those of us who were raised in a Russian Mennonite community will remember the bombastic and aggressive, the poets and artists who were never quite understood, the somewhat sanctimonious evangelists, and even the rakes who still had a place on the fringes of society. With your honesty you have blessed our past.

John B. Toews
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Al Reimer, *My Harp Is Turned To Mourning*. A Novel (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1985); 440 pp. Paperback; \$14.95.

Mennonite novelists of recognizable stature and significance are few as yet and have projected only a narrow stretch of light across the ever-widening landscape of Mennonite literature as a whole. To this small cluster belong the emigré Russian-Mennonite novelists who completed most of their works while still in Europe (in Russia and Germany) — Peter B. Harder, Gerhard G. Toews (Georg de Brecht), Peter J. Klassen, Peter G. Epp and Johannes (Hans) Harder — and the more recent Canadian-Mennonite writers, Arnold Dyck, Barbara Claassen Smucker, Ingrid Rimland, and of course Rudy Wiebe. Among these novelists it is Rudy Wiebe who has to date attracted the most widespread attention and critical acclaim, particularly in non-Mennonite circles.

Now another Mennonite novelist, showing very considerable literary promise indeed, has appeared in our midst with the publication of a first novel, *My Harp is Turned to Mourning*. Al Reimer's novel, like most of the fictional works encompassed by the writers cited above, represents

an historical novel which harks back to that singular and fascinating "Mennonite world" which lived, moved, and had its being in the steppes of southern Russia during the early decades of this century. In contrast to the novels of his Mennonite predecessors and colleagues, however, *My Harp is Turned to Mourning* projects a much more spacious, fully developed, and richly textured "world," this with respect to both the Mennonite community and the Russian society and state which surrounded it and precipitated the cataclysmic events which so drastically altered the face of Mennonite society during that utterly bewildering era (1905-1924). *My Harp* is a novel, however, which, despite the wide sweep of its historical setting and milieu, never moves far away from the "closest human things," to use Herbert Butterfield's apt phrase, to the things which touch the minds and hearts of individuals and variously affect their personal lives and destinies.

Butterfield has remarked, in his fine essay on the historical novel, that "it is when the *thread of incident* . . . , as well as what might be called the *texture* of the book, can in some way be called 'historical,' that the work is most effective in its grip on actuality." (*The Historical Novel: An Essay*; Folcroft Library Editions, 1979, p. 52). In *My Harp* both the "thread of incident" (or plot) and the "texture" are genuinely historical in character. In his handling of the novel's plot, Reimer skilfully entwines the personal (present and recollected) experiences and development of imagined characters — Wilhelm Fast (the central protagonist); his younger brother Nikolai (Kolya); the itinerant preacher/evangelist Erdmann Lepp; Martin ("Snapper") Loewen, Wilhelm's closest chum; Martin's sister Katya; and Clara Bock, to mention only the major characters — and those of historical personages. These historical personages include the anarchist leader Nestor Makhno (also a key character), such notable Mennonite leaders as Johann Cornies, Bernhard Harder, Adolf Reimer, and Peter M. Friesen, and a host of other (mostly minor) characters whose actions and attitudes both enlarge and enrich the historical backdrop of the central narrative. Conventionally-minded readers may find that the frequent use of chance encounter and coincidence of circumstance, in order to advance the personal affairs and destinies of central characters in the novel, taxes their sense of plausibility unduly, but the cumulative impact of the narrative as a whole, in my view, is one of compelling reality, even of verisimilitude in respect to both people and events.

In his meticulously detailed and yet vivid portrayal of the sequestered world of Mennonite society, Reimer has caught its distinctive ambience successfully. The growing prosperity and increasing self-confidence among the Mennonite colonists (still farmers, most of them); the frequently paternalistic attitude of wealthier Mennonites (estate owners, especially) towards their poorer brethren (landless "Anwohner") and condescension towards Russian servants working for them; their

increasing openness to technological invention and advance in respect to agriculture particularly; their sentimental attachment to the German language and to German literature in the romantic mode; their unquestioning reverence for the Russian (Romanov) monarchy; the fascination of certain of their preachers with apocalyptic literature (both biblical and novelistic); their vague distrust of Jews; their strong antipathy towards any signs of radical socialism among their Russian neighbors; the almost tyrannical power of leading church elders among them — these are only some of the distinguishing lineaments of this self-contained society and its “Bauernkultur” which the informed reader at once recognizes as characteristically and authentically Mennonite.

Similarly, in his representation of that other “world” in *My Harp*, the world of Russian society (both peasant and aristocratic society) and its revolutionary segments, the author has allowed a bold and yet disciplined imagination to move him beyond the mere narration of historical happenings and to fasten upon the very temper of the times. To illustrate the point, Reimer’s almost fastidious portrayal and incisive exploration of the personality and socio-political ideals of Nestor Makhno, the fiercely ambitious leader of an anarchist band whose forays into the villages of the Molochnaya Colony cause such indescribable havoc and horror among the Mennonite people, afford revealing glimpses into the quintessence of anarchist (as distinct from Leninist) thought and sentiment during those fateful years. And by moving several Mennonite characters — notably Wilhelm Fast and Erdmann Lepp — into this other “world” at different levels of culture and experience, the author of *My Harp* brings the reader into close touch with the intellectual, social, and artistic interests and pursuits which marked the upper class in Russian society in such large urban centers as St. Petersburg and Moscow.

The concept of “world,” in the sense of a largely self-contained society with its own life and orientation, acquires compelling and symbolic force in *My Harp* and radiates, unobtrusively, into several of the dominant themes explored in the novel. One of these themes pertains to the world of Mennonite society: its essential nature and catastrophic disruption, and the traumatic sense of loss felt by its members as they witness and experience that disruption. Wilhelm Fast, the central protagonist in *My Harp*, gives poignant and perceptive expression to that sense of loss at several levels of experience: the loss of his anticipated career as artist, the loss of his beloved wife Katya, and the loss of his Mennonite community especially in respect to its common life and cherished values. But other key characters — notably Katya Loewen, Clara Bock, and Nikolai Fast — also movingly lament the irretrievable loss of this cherished world in terms of their own aspirations and painfully acquired wisdom. Only Erdmann Lepp, among the central characters in *My Harp*, is able to accept the tragic loss of this “Mennonite world” with

some sense of equanimity and fortitude and this in virtue of his deeper understanding that it is precisely persecution and suffering, such as his own people have endured during these cataclysmic years, which have made it possible for Mennonites to become more genuinely "Russian," in the sense at least of comprehending the less fortunate lot of their Russian neighbors more fully and identifying with them in the spirit of true compassion.

The theme of peace and nonviolence, as a way of life in fundamental response to the threatening forces of hate, vengeance and violence, is also amply and compellingly developed in the context of individual as well as collective Mennonite experience. Several other themes less insistently pursued in *My Harp* include the following: (1) the interaction between external forces and influences (such as family background, cultural milieu, economic situation or political climate) and internal forces of personal decision and response, in the shaping of character and destiny; (2) the actual foundations and appropriate expression of authentic religious piety; and (3) the value and impact of aesthetically and morally creative responses, as over against merely instinctual or stock responses, to the exigencies and challenges of life.

A large measure of the cumulative power and impact of *My Harp* derives from its generally sensitive and convincing portrayal of character. The principal characters appear before us with individual clarity as the author shapes them into vibrant reality by means of relevant description, distinctive manner and mode of speech, revealing dialogue, personal musings upon the past (these particularly in the midst of interpolated "flashbacks"), and the pointed contrasting of individuals. Wilhelm Fast emerges as an aspiring, venturesome, and questing individual who ever yearns for a larger and richer experience of life on both its aesthetic and religious sides. He stands in obvious and yet meaningful contrast, at different levels, to a number of other characters: (1) to Lepp who, as one passionately and uncompromisingly dedicated to the cause of evangelism and missionary witness among the Russian people, cannot permit himself any participation in either the artistic or ordinary social experiences of life; (2) to his older brother Heinrich, who is a much more compliant and conventionally pious individual; (3) to his younger brother Nikolai (Kolya), whose stubborn, spiteful, and fiercely independent nature is shaped by a mixture of anarchistic ideals and an increasing cynicism about the Mennonite way of life so that it gives way to revolutionary violence and, finally, frustration; (4) to Martin ("Snapper") Loewen, his garrulous and pragmatic friend who is much more intrigued by the skills involved in efficient administration than by artistic or religious quests; and (5) to August Bock Jr., the arrogant and rather indolent heir to the prosperous farm implement firm, Bock and Riesen, who thoroughly enjoys the experience of administrative control and

power and the taste of affluence. And Clara Bock, the culturally refined, self-centered, and coquettish sister of August, is adroitly contrasted (earlier in the novel) with Katya Loewen whose maidenly radiance, unaffected charm, and transparency of character attract Wilhelm to her in a deep and abiding way. The transformation which occurs within Clara's character and basic outlook upon life, in the course of very unsettling events, is so thoroughgoing and remarkable that the reader's belief in its reality may at times be severely tested. The assiduous attention given to the gradual progress of this personal transformation, in terms of both internal and external factors involved, renders it entirely plausible in the end, however.

Reimer's portrayal of Erdmann Lepp sometimes falters, it seems to me, in respect to matters pertaining to the plausibility of action and the consistency of tone. The accounts of Lepp's morbid preoccupation with certain religious and sexual irregularities of his youth, as also his passing love affair with Countess Mathilde (while in St. Petersburg), for instance, incorporate elements of mawkishness and melodrama which render them inept and rather unconvincing in tone and thrust. The portrayal of Lepp gathers strength and plausibility, however, in the course of the novel and he eventually emerges as a towering figure of indomitable faith, awesome courage, and deepened compassion.

Whether *My Harp is Turned to Mourning* will become a veritable "classic" among Mennonite novels, only time can tell. That a novel which pulsates with as much human and historical vitality, manifests as much literary finesse, and probes both Mennonite and basic human themes as passionately and insightfully as does this one, finally deserves such an enviable reputation, seems clear to this reviewer at any rate.

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Richard K. MacMaster, *Land, Piety, Peoplehood. The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America 1683-1790. The Mennonite Experience in America, Volume 1* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania/Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1985); 344 pp. Paperback.

The physical appearance of this attractive paperback volume is the first indication to the reader that this is a different kind of history, especially of Mennonite history. Its introductory image is that of a Conastoga wagon rather than a scene from the *Martyrs Mirror*. And when he has read a few chapters, or perhaps the whole book, that reader will know that Mennonite historiography has come a long way in a relatively short time, a long way from the church-institutional orientation found not only in history books but also in newspaper and periodical reporting of recent vintage.

Richard MacMaster has done his research on some different ground

and uses his statistical information about immigration and settlement to argue a more pragmatic rationale for the American Mennonite beginnings: "The families who stepped ashore at Philadelphia and at other Atlantic ports had emigrated for a variety of reasons. Virginia Mennonites declared in 1785 that their 'forefathers and Predessors came from a far Country to America to Seek Religious Liberty.' Such a statement is often heard, and emphasises the attractions pulling Mennonites to America. It also emphasizes religious rather than economic motives: But in fact economics was also very important to the men and women who sought 'to better their fortunes in Pennsylvania.' And much of the economic motive was not the attraction of America but the difficult conditions that pushed Mennonites, Amish and others out of lands along the Germany Rhine" (77).

This push and pull of emigration/immigration occupies MacMaster in the first several chapters and allows him to reach several interesting conclusions about these events. Not only does he see the economic factors as real driving forces in the pilgrimage to the New World, but MacMaster also deduces from the manner of their land acquisition that the Mennonites were not that concerned about forming closed or even close communities; rather, they came to America together with and took up residence with other groups, especially Quakers, and continued to interact with these groups in many ways.

Land, the first word in his title, is thus meant seriously as such, and MacMaster's research reveals itself in the detail of his presentation. The reader will have good reason to appreciate this approach, but he may also find himself somewhat "at sea" in this welter of real estate detail, and wish that the author had rather selected several typical model situations and described them perhaps somewhat more fully and in keeping with a narrative history.

The second word of the title, *Piety*, is the keynote for the sixth chapter, which deals with the American Mennonite response to Pietism. MacMaster distinguishes between the older Pietism which came to the New World from the Old and the new "Pietism" of the Great Awakening, which has such a direct bearing on the American scene. The whole question of the relationship between Anabaptism and Pietism is complex indeed, and MacMaster must be complimented for not oversimplifying it in his presentation. Which elements of these movements are truly similar and which are fundamentally inimical to each other? What of the fact that one is born in and of the 16th century and the other is the product of another time?

MacMaster unifies his first section on immigration and location with the theme of mutual aid; the interaction with Pietism he sees as resulting in the teaching of humility (certainly not in itself derivative from Pietism!). Although he documents it rather fully, MacMaster does not

point out explicitly the similarity of the Mennonite adaptation of Pietism in northern Germany (and in part the Netherlands) and America. The great wealth and power of the northern European Mennonites was very plainly clothed, as both negative and positive witnesses attest, and something of this same character was seen in the Mennonites of the colonies, who became relatively wealthy but not ostentatious and who appeared prepared to give up this wealth rather than defend it by force. Still, as MacMaster states it: "Mennonites and Amish were of course part of a white society that was inexorably pushing red people off eastern lands" (242). And despite their efforts to serve as peacemakers in many individual instances they too had to share in the responsibility of this larger reality. The last part of the book deals with the Mennonites accommodation to the political life in the Colonies and their role in the American Revolution. The Mennonites had generally been reluctant to disavow the monarchy and to join in with movements that involved for them an "oath of enmity." They consequently had to take upon themselves considerable hardship in the form of dispossession and even imprisonment. They also willingly paid war taxes and made other accommodations which they could square with their consciences. But by and large, the Mennonites "broadened their peace stand" (277) through the revolutionary experience, and indeed, as MacMaster remarks, became once again more of a people apart.

MacMaster's book does not make for the easiest reading, especially for readers who do not share the "Swiss-American" tradition. That is due less to his writing style than to his closeness to a myriad of sources, especially those which he uses to document his theses about the economic reasons for immigration and settlement as well as the responses of these people to the events leading up to and including the American Revolution. His social history approach moves along case by case rather than by means of more continuous narrative. But one has the impression that the case he is making needed this kind of undergirding and, in addition, that the discussions of the questions of congregational life, of the influence of Pietism, etc., no doubt gain at least to some extent from this new perspective.

This first volume of the Mennonite Experience in America series is a welcome addition to North American Mennonite historiography. Richard K. MacMaster has begun this series with a very down-to-earth study, grounding the traditional Mennonite themes, like mutual aid and non-resistance, firmly on the economic base. It will be interesting to see how this approach is carried further in the subsequent volumes.

Victor G. Doerksen
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Clarence Bauman, *The Sermon on the Mount. The Modern Quest for its Meaning* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985).

At least since his doctoral studies on the peace position of the Anabaptists (*Gewaltlosigkeit im Täuferum*, 1968), Clarence Bauman has been dedicated to the exploration of and meditation on the radical teachings of Jesus, particularly as presented in the Sermon on the Mount. He had always hoped to complete a study of that teaching, one that he estimated would take perhaps thirty years to accomplish. This book is the preface to that study, itself some quarter century in the making, a prolegomenon which in itself constitutes a rich harvest of scholarship and meditation and perhaps anticipates, in its brief conclusion, the gist of the book that has not as yet been written.

In the chapters of this book Bauman has arrayed a host of New Testament theologians who have dealt with the Sermon on the Mount in the past century. He does this without confusion by concentrating on major statements and positions by thinkers from Tolstoy to the present and then adding substantial footnotes which bring in relevant variations and additions from other sources. In this way he is able to include nineteen major analyses and over twenty supplemental notes, without losing control of his difficult subject matter.

Bauman begins with Tolstoy because, as he says, "it is through him that the Sermon on the Mount first becomes a problem to the modern conscience." Tolstoy came to the realization that "Christ meant exactly what he said" and also that "the law of nonresistance was indeed the essence of the Gospel" (16). At the end of his detailed discussion, Bauman states: "If Tolstoy has not understood the Sermon on the Mount correctly, it is up to us to say where and how he erred" (34). He is thus holding up Tolstoy as a kind of standard against which to measure the interpretations of theologians like Leonhard Ragaz, Albert Schweitzer, Rudolf Bultmann, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Joachim Jeremias, to name but a few.

It is patently impossible to do any justice here to the detailed theological discussions which follow. Bauman himself has characterized them with short titles, as in "The Sermon as the Magna Charta of Christian Socialism" (Ragaz) or "The Sermon on the Mount and Paradoxical Obedience" (Bonhoeffer). In his Introduction Bauman has attempted to give an idea of the range of interpretation of this "most important and most controversial biblical text": "it has been either dramatized as imitatio Christi (St. Francis) or traumatized as Oriental impossibility (Naumann); either clericalized as councils of perfection (Aquinas) or secularized as metaphysical mind science (Fox); either absolutized as impracticable ideal (Kittel) or relativized as eschatological stimulus (Dibelius)" (3) and thus for another thirty comparisons!

One of the most interesting of the chapters is that on Dietrich

Bonhoeffer, who wrote the influential book, *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937) and then was executed for attempting to assassinate what he believed to be the embodiment of evil, namely Hitler. Although he uses the term "paradox" in the chapter title, it seems that Bauman is pointing out something more like a contradiction, when the exponent of "costly grace" removes the literal reading of the call to discipleship and replaces it with a sola fidei rationalisation: "When Jesus invites someone . . . it matters not what that person does. What matters is only his faith in Jesus, irrespective of poverty or riches, marriage or celibacy: 'Everything depends on faith alone'" (256).

Following upon the analyses are a series of chapters on themes like the Jewishness of Jesus, on Eschatology and Ethics, on Jesus and the Law and on the practicability question. For a mystic Clarence Bauman writes with great clarity and his brief conclusion is a masterly summing up. A sample:

All eloquence has been commanded to establish the infinite worth, eternal validity, and universal relevance of Jesus' unfathomable precepts on the subtle supposition that his intention could never have been to legislate so deliberately, prescribe so pedantically, or demand so legalistically as to imply that the actual cases of prohibiting anger, lust, divorce, retaliation and war should or could be taken literally. Rather these 'examples' are made to serve a far nobler function as picturesque Oriental illustrations of a much broader, more profound, more universal, more natural, more humane, more responsible, and more Christological principle than that which Jesus himself had in mind (419).

And though radical in his analysis, Bauman is not one-sided in his conclusion. He leaves us at the close with "the call to Imitatio Dei that issues from the Mosaic Torah and finds its fulfilment in the Messianic Torah as an invitation to Imitatio Christi in the faith and love, freedom and foolishness, joy and agony, grace and mercy that characterize the Christian way" (423).

The quest for the meaning of the words of Jesus is or should be the quest of everyman. Clarence Bauman has accomplished a great work in sorting out the responses of our age to the Sermon on the Mount. His analyses are, among other things, implicitly his own response. Readers who take the time to delve into this book will have reason to be grateful for this labor of love.

Victor G. Doerksen
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Harry Loewen and Al Reimer, eds., *Visions and Realities: Essays, Poems, and Fiction Dealing With Mennonite Issues*, (Winipeg: Hyperion Press Limited, 1985); 260 pp. Paperback. \$15.95.

This remarkable volume (a kind of sequel to *Mennonite Images*:

Historical, Cultural, and Literary Essays Dealing With Mennonite Issues, also edited by Harry Loewen and published by the same press in 1980) contains nineteen separate contributions in 253 pages, and ranges from a highly scholarly interpretation of apocalypticism in Reformation Europe to a lively interview with a veterinarian who writes poetry. The volume also includes several poems, excerpts from novels, and various thoughtful essays. While most of the contributions have been written recently, a few are older works, now translated or edited for the first time. Of the eighteen contributors all, except four, are university or college professors.

Despite the wide range of concerns, the individual contributions succeed in constituting a unity. The piety is authentic, the concerns intense and relevant, and the presentations as professionally polished as they are sophisticated. The authors and the editors need to be congratulated for their first class accomplishment.

In "Visions of the End in Reformation Europe" Walter Klaassen from Conrad Grebel College offers a scholarly overview of apocalyptic thought from the Early Church through the Middle Ages, and then proceeds to undertake a more detailed analysis of several key participants and situations within the Radical Reformation. Three key insights may very well merit special mention: 1) the quietistic and revolutionary stances, while distinct in their extremes, are blurred at their centre, as representatives of both believed to be living in the endtime; 2) while in some areas the prophetic and eschatological undercurrent was hidden, it was present nevertheless; 3) traditional Mennonite historiography has all too quickly dissociated "Mennonites from Melchiorites and Münsterites." Indeed, Walter Klaassen's recognition of the intense endtime expectations as a major ingredient in the rise of Anabaptism is a very significant observation.

Harry Loewen in "Anabaptists and Utopia in Grimmelshausen's *The Adventurous Simplicissimus*" masterfully analyzes the problems and possible solutions in regard to Grimmelshausen's sources and intentions. Walter Schmiedehaus in eight pages offers a succinct introduction to the theme of "Peace and the Spirit of Brotherhood: The Old-Colonist Mennonites of Mexico." Unfortunately, there are no footnotes, no discussion of sources, and no suggestions for further research. Calvin Redekop in "The Mennonite Romance With the Land" investigates with insight both the content and the responsible Christian limits of this romance. In another article entitled "The Mennonite Transformation: From Gelassenheit to Capitalism," Redekop discusses the decline of the meetinghouse and the increase of Mennonite material prosperity.

As suggested by the title, in "The Martyrdom Method: A Cycle of Poems," Maurice Mierau reflects on martyrdom, both ancient and modern, as the most demanding of all human experiences. The sixteenth

century accounts are highly condensed and presuppose some knowledge of the *Martyrs Mirror*. Does poem number three, entitled "The Story of Michael Sattler who died for his faith in Munich," intend some special message? — or is there an oversight in the title, since Sattler was martyred outside Rottenburg on the Neckar?

Harry Loewen in a hauntingly beautiful poem "The Land" celebrates the bearing of the cross with both biblical and contemporary references to the experience of exile and mission, which, often enough, are all too quickly subverted into a quest for comfort and security.

"A Mennonite Mother's Joys and Sorrows: Three Excerpts from Peter G. Epp's *Eine Mutter*" have been translated from the German by Peter Pauls. Certain words, however, have been left untranslated. They are placed in an alphabetic order at the end of the statement and then interpreted. I wonder whether the result is totally felicitous. "My Harp Is Turned to Mourning: Four Excerpts from a new Russian-Mennonite Novel" by Al Reimer, although only a few pages in length, gives the indication that here we may be very well dealing with a major Canadian literary contribution.

Victor G. Doerksen has carefully edited and introduced — but left untranslated — Fritz Senn's "Hinterm Pflug/Stimmungen" of twenty-two pages. Johannes Harder's one-page poem "Heimweh nach der Steppe," also in German, likewise celebrates the rural Russian past in expressive language with deep symbolism. Patrick Friesen, "The Shunning: Excerpts From a Narrative Poem" reflects with sensitivity on a traditionally neuralgic theme. The editors might have wanted to note that the excerpts are from pages 28, 68, 87, 95, 97-98 of Friesen's *The Shunning*. David Waltner-Toews' "Good Housekeeping: Excerpts from a Collection of Poems" is, on the surface, somewhat lighthearted, but hides many rather serious clues.

Finally, the volume contains several essays of literary criticism, all of high quality: Johannes Harder, "Eine Deutung von Fritz Senns *Hinterm Pflug/Stimmungen*," Peter Pauls, "Time, Mutability, and the Matriarch in Peter G. Epp's *Eine Mutter*," Peter C. Erb, "Critical Approaches To Mennonite Culture In Canada: Some Preliminary Observations," Herbert Giesbrecht, "The Significance of 'Words and, Above all, Voice' in the Fiction of Rudy Wiebe," Katie Funk Wiebe, "The Mennonite Woman in Mennonite Fiction," and an interview with Patrick Friesen and David Waltner-Toews by Margaret Loewen Reimer and Paul Gerard Tiessen.

Throughout the volume the editors have placed reproductions of the steel engravings from the *Martyrs Mirror*. These poignant reminders of the historical basis of Mennonite self-understanding set a sombre tone to the entire presentation. One wonders occasionally, however, whether the intense concern with martyrdom can be sustained with consistency. The danger could be an unintended trivialization of martyrdom!

All in all, *Visions and Realities* is an outstanding contribution to further Mennonite studies and self-understanding. The variety of excellent contributions assures that the selection has not been narrow, but is a genuine accomplishment in depth.

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Leland Harder, ed., *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism: The Grebel Letters and Related Documents*. Classics of the Radical Reformation Series (Scottsdale, Pa./Kitchener, Ont.: Herald Press, 1985); 815 pp. Hardcover; \$69.00 U.S., \$96.00 Can.

Students of the Radical Reformation are grateful for every collection of primary sources in English translation. While scholars will continue to consult the original documents, students and teachers welcome the increasing number of volumes in translation. In his General Editor's Preface to the present volume C. J. Dyck writes: "There are still relatively few sixteenth-century Anabaptist materials available in the English language . . . It is to meet this need that the . . . series was begun some years ago with the aim of making available in the English language a scholarly and critical edition of the primary works of major Anabaptist and free church writers of the late fifteenth, sixteenth, and early seventeenth centuries" (15).

The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism is the fourth volume in the Classics of the Radical Reformation series, published under the direction of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, Elkhart, Indiana. Earlier volumes include *The Legacy of Michael Sattler* (1973), translated and edited by John H. Yoder, *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck* (1978), translated and edited by William Klassen and Walter Klaassen, and *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources* (1981), edited by Walter Klaassen.

The heart of the present 815-page book are the seventy-one extant letters of Conrad Grebel in which the emerging and developing Swiss-Anabaptist leader bares his soul, so to speak, and registers the birth pangs of the early Anabaptist movement. In addition, there are approximately 100 documents related to the Swiss Brethren, comprising the years 1517 through 1540. These documents include trial and court testimonies pertaining to Swiss martyrs, the court records about the trial and execution of Jacob Grebel, Conrad's father, and documents revealing the attitudes and arguments of the opponents of the Anabaptists. By including the arguments against Anabaptism the editor has provided "the other side" of the Anabaptist story, thus contributing to the much needed dialogue between Mennonite and Reformed churches today.

The most useful introductions to the letters and documents in this volume and the copious notes at the end of the collection, provide a

workable tool for the study of this period and the many personalities related to it. In addition, the volume includes a general index of names and subjects, an index of biblical references, fourteen pages of illustrations of the places, towns and buildings relative to the Swiss-Anabaptist story, and fifty pages of character profiles arranged in alphabetical order.

Leland Harder, a sociologist, states in the Editor's Preface that "there was some question as to whether this essentially historical assignment should be entrusted to a sociologist" (19). Harder justifies his involvement by recalling that H. S. Bender had once taught sociology and Ernst Correll had been an economist. Judging from this impressive volume, there is no doubt that Harder is well qualified to do serious work in Anabaptistica. His introductions and interpretive comments throughout the collection testify to his sound knowledge of Anabaptist historiography and the historical method.

What is somewhat surprising, however, is that the sociologist Harder describes the historical period he treats as a "drama with five acts, prologue, and epilogue" (26), with Conrad Grebel as the main character. Following the classical division of drama Harder groups the letters of Grebel and other documents into the following five "acts" of unequal length: Act 1, 1517-1518: The Student; Act 2, 1518-1520: The Prodigal; Act 3, 1520-1522: The Seeker; Act 4, 1522-1523: The Advocate; and Act 5, 1523-1526: The Ringleader. This reference to conflict and drama might be taken as a hint by playwrights. That the period and the characters lend themselves to good drama, has been ably demonstrated by a Swiss dramatist, Caesar von Arx, who has written a fine historical play, *Brüder in Christo* (Zurich, 1947).

This large volume is relatively free of misprints, the type is clear, and the chapters (or acts) and sections are well spaced. It would have been more useful had the notes been placed at the foot of the pages rather than at the end of the book. On page 17 there appears to be a discrepancy. In the first paragraph the editor states: "Plans for the publication of this book began some fifty years ago, before the present editor was born." Yet in the following paragraph we read: "The initial plan was formally approved at the first regular meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society . . . November 7, 1924 . . ." This would make it over sixty not fifty years.

It is a pity that for most students — except for the very rich — the price of this book (close to \$100.00 Can.) will be well out of reach. Most readers will have to borrow this important historical reference book from libraries. Due to the high cost of producing this volume even editors of journals found it difficult to obtain a review copy. To add insult to injury, the copy which this reviewer managed to obtain was breaking up along the spine. On the inside back cover was stamped: "Imperfect copy; sell at

reduced rate''! In spite of the criticism, this reviewer is most grateful to the editor and publisher for what was obviously a labour of love.

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