

Book Reviews

Horst Penner, *Weltweite Bruderschaft. Ein mennonitisches Geschichtsbuch*. Ueberarbeitet von Horst Gerlach und Horst Quiring (6719 Weierhof, Verlag Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1984); Hardcover, 332 pp.

Horst Penner's *Weltweite Bruderschaft*, written to provide a survey of Mennonite history for German readers, is an update of the book which was first published in 1955, and subsequently reprinted in 1960 and 1972. Although the scope of the book is world-wide Mennonitism, the amount of space allocated to the various areas is quite uneven. The sixteenth century Anabaptist-Mennonite movements are covered in considerable detail, as are also the Danzig-West Prussian and Russian Mennonite experiences. The USA and Canadian Mennonite surveys are quite brief, the Latin American Mennonite history is very sketchy, and only a few pages are devoted to the one-third of the world's Mennonites who do not originate in Europe. A third of the book consists of general regional surveys of Mennonite history since 1945. This section is written by Horst Gerlach, and includes only those Mennonites who originated in Europe.

The strength of the book lies in the ability of the writers to place the European Anabaptist-Mennonite history into its historical and geographical context. The writers' detailed knowledge of the history of the various German states, their familiarity with the terrain, trade routes and boundary changes allow them to portray the Mennonite story within its context in a way that many other writers are unable to do. The authors have also included numerous maps which aid the reader to follow the discussion. The liberal use of pictures is also helpful for the reader, although the selection of the pictures is uneven and does not illustrate the various sections equally.

Woven into the copy are numerous and frequently quite long quotations from letters and other source materials. Some of them illuminate the topics well, others, however, illustrate only one side of an issue and may help to confuse the reader. A further difficulty with the quotations is that no footnotes are attached, and it is thus not possible to go to the entire documents from which the selections are made. The fact that there are no

footnotes in the book is generally a weakness. The authors have included a brief bibliography of articles and books for each section in the book, but this does not substitute for documentation. The selection of articles and books is also quite dated. For the West Prussian and Russian sections no studies after 1954 are listed, and for North America no work after the 1964 edition of C. Henry Smith's *Die Geschichte der Mennoniten Europas* is included. It is hard to understand why recent Anabaptist Mennonite scholarship has not been included in the content or in the bibliographies in this book.

The factual content of the non-European sections also leaves something to be desired. In discussing the immigration of Mennonites from Russia into Manitoba, the book indicates that the immigrants primarily came from the Old Colony in Russia. This ignores the fact that they came from four settlements in Russia: Bergthal, Fuerstenland, Borosenko and the Old Colony. This error creates problems in dealing with the emigration from Canada to Latin America in the 1920s. The authors say that all the people emigrating were Old Colonists, some of whom moved to Mexico and some to Paraguay. In the 1920s three groups actually emigrated from Manitoba to Latin America, Old Colonists to Mexico, Sommerfelder to Mexico and Paraguay, and Chortitz to Paraguay. In the emigration to Mexico, only the settlements near Cuauhtemoc are mentioned. The settlement in the Mexican State of Durango is omitted. In Manitoba the conflict over control of the schools is identified as a conflict between Mennonites and the Canadian government. In actual fact education is the responsibility of the provinces, and the conflict was between Mennonites and the provincial government.

Coming back to the emigration of Mennonites from Russia to Manitoba in 1874, the authors say Mennonites landed in the USA, whereas they actually landed in Quebec. They also state that the Russian Mennonites stayed over winter among fellow Mennonites in Pennsylvania and settled in Manitoba in the spring in 1875, whereas in fact they proceeded directly from Quebec to Manitoba in 1874, arriving in August. This is a sample of factual inaccuracies from only one small section and suggests that closer attention should have been given to detail especially in those sections outside the expertise of the authors.

The authors overplay the degree of identification between Mennonites throughout the world and the German culture and German nationalism. At numerous points, e.g. in the Manitoba section, the conflict between Mennonites and their host society is portrayed as a conflict to maintain the German language and German culture. Although it is true that statements to this effect can be found, a closer analysis will reveal that especially for the more conservative branches of the Mennonite community in Russia and in the Americas, the stronger motivation was separation from nationalism and from what they called the "world."

Retention of German language was more frequently due to unwillingness or even inability to translate their religious concepts into another language, rather than the desire to maintain a German national and cultural identity.

The area in which the adoption of German culture and German nationalism becomes an important issue is in the history of the Danzig-West Prussian Mennonite churches. Here too, questions need to be raised about the emphasis. The identification of the Danzig-West Prussian Mennonites with German culture and national ideals are presented as having always been the case. In actual fact the earliest Mennonites living in that area were mainly from the Netherlands and lived under Polish rule. The temptation to become part of the German ethos was resisted for centuries. The point of resistance was the insistence of exemption from military service. It was not until the Order in Council of 1868 and the Franco Prussian War when Prussian Mennonites accepted military service that Mennonite identification with the German cultural and national destiny became pronounced. This process of identification found its high point in the era of National Socialism. This long process of ever greater identification is not clearly enough presented as a process in which the original attitudes were transformed.

Some of the interpretations in the book are difficult to square with the facts. For example, the authors seem to want to distance the sixteenth century Anabaptist movement from the chiliasm of Hans Hut and the chiliasm which resulted in Muenster. In the section of south and central German Anabaptist leaders Hut does not appear, despite the fact that he was one of the most active and successful Anabaptist missionaries in the South-Central German states. Regarding Muenster, the argument is made that the teachings of Hofmann could not have been responsible for Muenster. Maybe in detail Muenster differed from Hofmann, but the chiliastic approach was certainly similar.

Another interpretation which raises questions is the attempt to show a positive relationship between Anabaptists and Jews. The examples which are cited of Anabaptists relating positively to Jews in the sixteenth century, must certainly be balanced by the opposite, namely the anti-Jewish sentiment among at least some early Anabaptists in Strassburg and Balthasar Hubmaier's participation in anti-Jewish campaigns.

The sections which deal with the era of National Socialism in Germany include numerous references to a history which is clearly painful for German Mennonites. The war against the Netherlands and the treatment of the Dutch, as well as the conquest of Poland and the fact that Mennonites in Poland fought against Mennonites in Germany are difficult aspects of German history. In the sections about Danzig-West Prussia most of the attention is, however, focussed on the human pain and

suffering that resulted at the end of the war. It is true that the suffering and eventual loss of the homeland is a story of almost unbearable anguish. Yet, one would also have hoped for more critical analyses of the relationship of Mennonites to nationalism, to National Socialism, and to its anti-Jewish policies and programmes. On the basis of the discussions of the historical Mennonite emphasis on peace and non-resistance in the earlier sections of the book, some critical analyses of Mennonite life under National Socialism could have been made. Such analyses would have been helpful for German Mennonites in their attempt to understand and come to terms with their painful past. Neither stout defense of Mennonite actions under National Socialism, nor harsh condemnation are likely to bring about this understanding and eventual healing.

While there are aspects of the book which are helpful, it is questionable whether the book will adequately enable German Mennonites and returnees from Russia, as the writers claim, to discover the roots of their past.

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C. Arnold Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler*. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, No. 26 (Scottsdale/Kitchener: Herald Press, 1984). Hardcover, 264 pp.

Arnold Snyder's book on Michael Sattler is most important in that it either revises many hitherto held views concerning Anabaptist beginnings or confirms the work of such historians as Walter Klaassen, Hans-Jürgen Goertz, James Stayer and Werner Packull. Snyder's revision proceeds from a careful rereading of the available sources surrounding Sattler's life and thought and particularly from his incisive analysis of the social-religious milieu of south-western Germany and Switzerland. As prior of St. Peter's, a Benedictine monastery in the Black Forest, Sattler came in touch with the peasants who favoured the Reformation, but who interpreted the Gospel in terms of "economic justice and Christian equality" (p. 64). Opposing the entrenched Catholicism of nearby Freiburg and the "sola fide" of Martin Luther, the peasants confronted St. Peter's with their demands for economic and social reforms. Snyder shows that Anabaptists from the Waldshut region were among the rebelling peasants who occupied the monastery in the spring of 1525.

Snyder argues convincingly that when Sattler decided to leave the monastery and join the Waldshut Anabaptists he was in agreement with

the anticlericalism of the peasants and sympathized with them and the Anabaptists in their reform drives. In fact, according to Snyder, both Sattler and the early Swiss Brethren at first hoped to extend their reformation to society at large, similar to the intentions of the mainline reformers. The idea of a separate community of believers, as expressed in the Schleithem Articles of 1527, came to Sattler and the Swiss Brethren after the defeat of the peasants and their failure to convince the magisterial reformers and the civil authorities of their brand of Christianity.

The important Schleithem Articles reflect the new sectarian view of the Church and Sattler's monastic background. Such points and emphases as withdrawal from a sinful world, rejection of the sword and the oath, and imitating Christ in daily living, derived from the monastic tradition. According to Snyder, Sattler's other writings emphasize man's cooperation with God's grace in salvation and the centrality of Christ, which is also more Catholic than Protestant. The influence of the peasants on Sattler is seen in his application of the Gospel to all areas of life. Sattler rejected, however, the peasants' violence in their attempts to right their situation, accepting instead the nonresistance of the Swiss Anabaptists.

While the monastic tradition and the demands of the common man had a profound influence on the life and thought of Sattler, the genius of the young reformer was to put his stamp on a movement which was "neither Protestant, nor Catholic, nor monastic: [but] Anabaptist" (p. 197). Snyder is one of the first scholars to show clearly that it was not Grebel, Mantz and Blaurock who in the end determined the direction of early Anabaptism, but Michael Sattler. In modifying the biblicism of the Grebel group by emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit and by clearly separating the Church from the world — as reflected in the Schleithem Union — Sattler gave direction to South-European and Dutch Anabaptism for centuries to come. Historically Sattler thus emerges as a more important early Anabaptist leader than any of the Swiss Brethren, including Conrad Grebel.

There are at least two questions with regard to Snyder's interpretation of Anabaptist origins that need to be raised. First, if Sattler stood somewhere in between the biblicism of the Swiss Anabaptists and the spiritualism of Hans Denck, as Snyder claims, why is this not more clearly reflected in Sattler's writings, particularly in the Schleithem Articles? Snyder obviously favours Deppermann's view that at Schleithem the Anabaptists tried to distance themselves from those of their brethren who followed Denck and questions Yoder's view that the "false brothers," mentioned in the Articles, refer to the Strasbourg reformers Bucer and Capito. It seems that Snyder has not quite resolved the question of Sattler's emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and his harsh language against the spiritualistic "false brothers."

Secondly, if Sattler favoured the demands of the peasants with

regard to social and economic reform, should this not have been more fully reflected in his writings, especially in the programmatic Schleithem Articles? It seems that there is little, if any, of Thomas Müntzer's spirit in the Articles. On the other hand, the Articles do express a repudiation of all violent force, advocate a total withdrawal from worldly society, and to a large extent internalize the faith and life of believers. Sattler's withdrawal theology thus not only renounces all carnal force but also seems to despair of affecting much needed change in society.

The book includes a Foreword by Cornelius J. Dyck, a map of the lands in which Sattler lived and ministered, copious end notes, an up-to-date bibliography of sources and secondary works, and a useful index of names and places. The book is handsomely bound and relatively free of misprints.

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Anne Chislett, *Quiet in the Land* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1983); 120 pages, paperback. \$7.00.

Quiet in the Land is a well-constructed and beautifully written play by the Canadian writer Anne Chislett. This drama was initially written for the 1981 Blyth Summer Festival (Ontario). Its first production was so successful that it was revived the following year for a longer run and has since then been performed in many important centres. In 1982 it won the coveted Chalmers Award for the best play presented in Toronto.

Chislett's drama about an Amish community addresses a number of important issues. On the one hand it explores the age-old predicaments associated with the generation conflict. At the same time the problems experienced in following the ideals of non-resistance, of aloofness from worldly things and the perennial attempts of religious groups to keep out corrupting influences by the erection of moral and social "fences", figure prominently. While an investigation of these problems is hardly in itself a novel undertaking, Chislett does manage to use the vehicle of her play to force us to take a hard new look at them and to become personally involved.

The play explores the predicament of a small Amish community in Southwestern Ontario during the final war years 1917-18. The author shows us how the conscription issue stirs up the latent hostilities of the outside world and, at the same time, brings to a head the problems already smoldering within the Amish group itself. The older members of the community cling obstinately to the established customs and beliefs, whereas the younger generation wishes to bring about enlightened

change, see genuine attempts made to answer their many troubling questions and honest, open discussion of common problems.

As the play opens eighteen-year-old Menno and Katie are being admitted to full membership in the church. Yock (Jacob) Bauman, who is the same age or even a little older, on the other hand, has been steadily refusing to seek baptism despite intense pressure from his orthodox father Christy (Christian) because of deeply-felt doubts. While his friend Menno becomes a member of the church and, with visiting bishop Ely's permission, starts a Sunday School for the young people where they can openly discuss their problems, Yock remains an outsider, torn within himself and in daily conflict with his father. This conflict is heightened when Christy is elected bishop and puts further pressure on Yock to conform without asking questions. The alienation finally leads to a public confrontation when Yock defiantly tells his father in the presence of fellow church members that he for one never asked Christ to die for him in the first place and is physically chastized by his outraged father. Although Yock has come to love Katie, who returns his love, and has previously made plans to marry her and settle down in the community, he now despairs and runs away to join the army as a soldier. Not having heard from Yock for a long time, Katie submits to community pressure and marries the upright and progressive Menno. Yock's father Christy has become an alcoholic and submits his flock to a tyrannical fanaticism which alienates even his best friends. When Yock returns from the war he has become a "Hun-killing" hero to the outside world but to his own people he is nothing but a common murderer. However, Yock has learned his lesson over the dead body of a German soldier he killed and is now a pacifist by conviction. When he remorsefully seeks his father's forgiveness he is rejected selfrighteously and not permitted to return to the fold. As the play ends Yock has to leave once more and we see a lonely, worn-out Christy who has turned away his only son and his community. His only triumph now can be the fact that his son has finally admitted that his father has been right all along.

Chislett's staging is very straightforward and proves most effective. The homes of the Brubachers and the Baumans and their yards are visible side by side. Actions often take place simultaneously in both places and throw an interesting light on one another. This technique also serves to underline the community aspect of the plot. The language of the characters is simple and borrows heavily from Scripture. Yet, this same simple language can turn quite poetic as well, particularly in such emotionally charged scenes as the love encounter between Yock and Katie and the final confrontation between Yock and Christy. The characters come across as very real people and keep us intimately involved with their problems. The audience is permitted to become part of the small community portrayed.

While the play ably creates the atmosphere of a small community, its most impressive aspect is that the author manages to go beyond the immediate problems of a particular Amish group whose spiritual fences threaten to collapse. The disturbing questions raised by the soul-searching of the characters are of great concern to us today as well. The interpersonal conflicts shown are those of any tightly knit group with a common goal. We too are made to see, along with the characters, that material and technological progress, so often sought with a plea for personal freedom, can indeed become Pandora's box.

The book is a well-made paperback. It sports a most attractive cover and is printed on high quality paper. Excellent black and white photographs showing us the characters as they were portrayed in the original production stimulate the reader's imagination. An introduction and production notes by the author give the reader and potential director the necessary tools to a full understanding of the play.

Quiet in the Land does not provide any new answers but it is sure to generate a lot of discussion. This excellent play is not only to be recommended to those who are deeply concerned with the issues raised but also to all who enjoy good theatre.

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Patrick Friesen, *Unearthly Horses* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1984); Paperback, 78 pp.

Unearthly Horses is the fourth volume of Patrick Friesen's poems to be published by Turnstone Press. The previous collections, *The Lands I am* (1976), *Bluebottle* (1978) and *The Shunning* (1980), all include poems in which Friesen deals with his Mennonite past. In this volume Friesen takes a more personal approach to this ethnic theme than he did in *The Shunning* and develops it in a more mature, more thoughtful way than he did in the first two books. In *Unearthly Horses* Friesen charts his own highly individualistic spiritual pilgrimage. It is also the archetypal journey from Eden, or the garden-like world of childhood, to the fallen adult world and, finally, to a state that both combines and transcends the previous two. This final state is achieved by coming to terms with his own human limitations, his mortality.

The first state is preserved in a series of word photographs, often focusing on his mother:

in the garden
 leaning on her hoe
 pushing back strands of hair
 her eyes lock on mine
 where I lie on my stomach
 between rows of raspberry bushes
 this is how I was chosen

This innocent world occasionally includes his father:

in the garden
 pa making straight lines with string
 scooping a shallow trench and dropping seeds
 he waters it from a can stands up satisfied
 turning when the back door opens
 he smiles watching ma walk toward him
 their arms lock around each other's waists
 he swings her off her feet she gasps and he sets
 her down
 turning to where I stand in twilight
 she sings 'the sandman look the sandman's here'

It is a world of trees and grass and summer foliage:

ma's voice floating in july air
 across lawns past '50s bungalows
 along a dirt road
 through knee-deep grass
 spreading among poplar leaves where I sit
 at the top above homes
 seeing beyond the outskirts of town
 to grandfather's farm

The second world, a fallen state of consciousness, is most vividly portrayed in the "pa poems." The stern yet loving father is reminiscent of Old Testament justice and New Testament grace. In "pa poem 4" the poet recalls an encounter with his father that has profound religious connotations:

and there we were in front of the furnace
 me pleading across your knee both of us wishing
 we were someplace else
 but you not spoiling the child
 and you swung that leather high

me twisting to look up your arm flung out
 seeing you naked and nailed like a child to a tree
 how could there be so much love?

The second state is one of suffering and death. In the suffering and death of his father the poet perceives his own mortality but, at the same time, he also finds his place in the eternal scheme of things. "Pa poem 3" describes the night following his father's death:

after I stood the night through in pa's basement
 writing his obituary as if it was mine
 handed it to the minister
 watched him stroke out 'died' and scribble in 'passed away'
 as if there was no end to it
 even for me

The third state, though hinted at in some of the "pa poems," is anticipated more strongly in the three Easter poems. It is a state in which the poet finds himself out of tune with the "solemn surrender" of his ancestors, "that certainty of theirs" ("easter morning 1966"), their pious attitude which excludes and denies all those who do not adhere to a particular creed. The poet celebrates instead the broader, mythical implications of the event. "Easter morning 1956" concludes as follows:

the sky is faultlessly blue
 on easter morning 1956
 the dove has flown
 and father calls me for church
 I jump the shattered ice and water
 each death gives life to me
 I want to commemorate this morning
 this nostalgia for the momentary man in his pain
 in the name of
 the father
 for his bereavement
 in the name of
 the son
 and the ghost

This broader, mythical interpretation of the resurrection can also be seen in the poem "easter":

I can say
 that my birthday each summer is here
 in this field

that I see how the world turns here
 dawn to dusk
 and this is it
 how the world happens for me
 this is the place
 I am here
 wherever I am I am
 here

For the poet, Easter symbolizes the constant cycle of death and renewal within the life-span of the individual, a miracle in the here and now. Its celebration leads to a celebration of life in general and ushers in a redeemed state of forgiveness and love. However, this state is not as idyllic as the garden of childhood. It is one in which the fallen and the unfallen, good and evil, must coexist, illustrated by conflicting images such as lions and lambs, shadows and sunlight, winter and summer, grey hydro lines and lilacs. The poem "celebration," addressed to his father, is the poet's acceptance of this truth:

carol's reading a book on bulbs pa
 this spring she planted offshoots of your old glads
 I'm reading a book of saints
 last night on television I saw marshal zhukov
 sending infantry into minefields to save his armour
 to authenticate his resolve an image
 of seven peasants dangling from a gallows
 almost off-camera a german officer with frost on his breath
 stamps his rag-wound feet

At this level of consciousness the poet celebrates the here and now in spite of its uncertainties and ambiguities. It is a disordered garden but not totally without hope. The poet's as yet innocent children in many ways compensate for the fallen world all around him:

we're planning marijke's birthday
 possibly an afternoon on the beach
 she'll be nine if you could see her
 pa you'd be so proud
 just at that age of long legs and grace you should see
 her dance
 and learning about the rest of the world too
 arab bazaars sombreros and the violin
 and first inklings that the world's coming down around us
 is the war coming here she asks

Marijke's "first inklings" suggest that her innocent world is about to be destroyed too. And so the cyclical process continues.

Patrick Friesen is always striving to reach an audience beyond the narrowly ethnic. He knows he must root his poetry in his own particular ethnic experience. At the same time, he knows he must also transcend the restrictions of a specific faith or creed. In *Unearthly Horses* Friesen describes his own personal spiritual journey but it is one that is also universal.

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