

# BOOK REVIEWS

## History and Memoir

Ida Bender, *The Dark Abyss of Exile: A Story of Survival*. Fargo, North Dakota: Germans From Russian Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, 2000. Pb. Pp. 198. \$35.00 US.

Established in 1924 on both sides of the lower Volga River between the Saratov and Stalingrad (now Volgograd) *oblasts*, with the city of Engels as its capital, the Volga German Republic consisted of the descendants of Germans who, upon the invitation of Catherine II, had come to Russia between 1764 and 1767 - some twenty years before the first Mennonites established the Chortitza colony. The Volga German Republic was dissolved in 1941 when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union and most Russian Germans, including Mennonites, were suspected of sympathizing and possibly collaborating with Germany. Some 400,000 Volga Germans were forcibly "resettled" to Siberia where they had to live in wretched conditions and many of them died in hard labour camps. In 1964 the Volga Germans were "rehabilitated," but they were not allowed to return to their former homes, which by then had been occupied by non-Germans.

Ida Bender's well written story of her and her family's suffering in Siberia, based on the author's personal experiences and parts of her father's diary, is similar to many such accounts in Russian Mennonite writing (see, for example, Anita Pries, *Verbannung nach Sibirien* /

*Exiled to Siberia*, 1979). These stories describe in graphic detail the initial shock that comes with deportation, the loss of their material possessions, the long train rides in cold cattle cars, separation from loved ones, hard work in labour camps, and hunger, starvation and death far away from their former homes. The general difference between Bender's book and many of Mennonite stories is that Bender laments much more the loss of her people's cultural values and institutions than Mennonite writers do. Moreover, she expresses disappointment and a feeling of betrayal at the government's treatment of the Volga Germans who considered themselves loyal citizens of the Soviet Union. In Mennonite accounts a greater emphasis is placed on the loss of freedom of worship and religious institutions, and on the exiles' attempt to preserve their faith and ethical values in the face of overwhelming odds. Bender's book hardly mentions the church or religious faith.

Of great interest to this reviewer is Ida Bender's view of art and life during the Soviet period and her family's involvement in the cultural activities of Soviet-Germans before and after the Volga Germans were exiled. Bender's father, the well-known Soviet-German writer Dominic Hollmann (1899-1990), remains a somewhat shadowy figure in her book. Bender admits that he and his family welcomed the Communist regime in 1917 and hoped that the Revolution would be of social, cultural and political benefit to the Volga Germans. Hollmann advanced to teaching positions, published stories and poems, and was admitted to the Soviet Writers Union. Ida Bender was also privileged to study foreign languages in Leningrad and later worked as a translator in a Soviet-German publishing establishment. Only committed and loyal Party persons were able to advance thus in the Soviet Union.

How deeply committed a Communist writer Hollmann was is difficult to know from his published writings. For example, his story "Rote Reiter" (Red Riders) (in *Heimatliche Weiten*, 1, 1989) is about a young Volga-German Soviet soldier who fights for the ideals of the Revolution against *kulaks*, counter-revolutionaries, and other enemies of the state—and in the end is victorious. Bender insists, however, that her father's writings were heavily censored and implies that whole sections were either omitted or rewritten by the censors.

Ida Bender is no doubt on a crusade to make her father and his work known in the west. After her immigration to Germany in 1991 she came to live in Hamburg where she seeks to preserve her father's literary legacy, publishing much of Hollmann's unpublished writing. Of special interest are his diaries, the many letters he wrote to the Soviet authorities on behalf of the Volga-Germans' plight and loss of homeland, many of which are housed at the Stanford University archives on War, Peace and Revolution. Hollmann died in 1990, a

disappointed man, without seeing his unrealistic dream of a re-established Volga German Republic fulfilled.

Dominic Hollmann as a person and writer was fortunate to survive the Soviet regime, publishing, even though in censored form, in Soviet papers to the very end. There were others, including Soviet-Mennonite writers such as Gerhard Sawatsky (1901-1944) and David Schellenberg (1903-1954) who did not survive the Stalinist terror. Like Hollmann, they sought to promote Communist ideals and achievements in their writings, but in the end these writers were dispensable. Schellenberg, one of the most prominent among them, was exiled to Magadan in the mid-1930s where he died in 1954, a disillusioned man.

Originally written in German, Ida Bender's manuscript was ably translated by her first cousin Carl Anderson, his daughter Laurel Anderson, and William (Bill) M. Wiest. The book includes numerous black and white photographs, including pictures of the author and her father. Students and readers of Russian-German and Russian-Mennonite history and literature will find the book both interesting and worthwhile.

Harry Loewen  
Kelowna, British Columbia

Edward R. Brandt and Adalbert Goertz, *Genealogical Guide to East and West Prussia (Ost- und Westpreussen): Records, Sources, Publications & Events*. Minneapolis, MN: Edward R. Brandt, 2002. Pp. 458.

Drs. Edward Brandt and Adalbert Goertz have recently teamed up to write a book for those interested in the genealogical resources relative to East and West Prussia. The fruits of their effort, entitled *Genealogical Guide to East and West Prussia (ost- und Westpreussen): Records, Sources, Publications & Events*, was published last summer. The result of this obviously mammoth undertaking is a spiral bound 458-page tome printed on 8x11½ inch paper.

This new book can essentially be divided into two primary divisions. The first division, consisting of ten parts (or chapters), forms the core of the book, while the second division includes a group of appendices and maps for general reference. The first division in the book includes Parts I through X and was written principally by Edward Brandt, although Adalbert Goertz helped write Parts III and IX and wrote all of Part X. In each of these parts the authors discuss in detail the various types of records available either in published form or on microfilm or found at this time only in their original state in sundry

archives. The first ten parts of the book are as follows: I) Lists of Repositories; II) Parish and Civil Registers; III) Land, Tax, Court, and Migration Records; IV) Lineage Books, Card Collections, and Indexes; V) Religious Refugees and Non-Germanic Natives or Settlers; VI) Other Useful Records and Publications; VII) Historical, Cartographic, and Surname Resources; VIII) Regional Names, Boundaries, and Genealogical Regions; IX) Historical Dateline of East and West Prussia; X) Frequently Asked Questions about East and West Prussia.

The second division in the book, consisting of 17 Appendices, 24 maps, and assorted indexes, is found in the last three parts of the book. The first five appendices were compiled by Adalbert Goertz and provide valuable information about the localities in East and West Prussia for which the LDS Family History Library has microfilms, as well as a comprehensive list of his published works. The last twelve appendices were compiled by Ed Brandt and cover a wide variety of subjects. The 24 maps show the various changes in the region's boundaries over the centuries during the course of the political events that affected the area.

I found a number of things in the book that could be improved. The maps in some cases are very difficult to read due to the print being either quite faint or miniscule. After doing some spot-checking I also discovered that the index is, unfortunately, not comprehensive.

Edward Brandt and Adalbert Goertz should be commended for their lifelong commitment to genealogical research and for sharing with us in this volume a wealth of information that they have accumulated over the years. A complete table of contents as well as information about how to purchase a copy of the book is available on Adalbert Goertz' web site at <http://www.cyberspace.org/~goertz/new.html>.

Tim Janzen, M.D.  
Portland, Oregon

Adolf Ens, Jacob E. Peters and Otto Hamm (eds.), *Church, Family and Village: Essays on Mennonite Life on the West Reserve*. The West Reserve Historical Series, Volume 3. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2001. Pp. 310.

The third in Manitoba's West Reserve Historical Series, *Church, Family and Village* adds commentary and analysis to the impressive compilations of reference data found in the *Reinlander Gemeinde Buch* (1994) and *1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve* (1998), both edited by John Dyck and William Harms. With some eleven

contributors, this volume is reminiscent of a published “conference proceedings,” as indeed many of these articles began as presentations at local history workshops and some have appeared in shorter forms in *Heritage Posting*, newsletter of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. The volume includes six articles on the Russian background and West Reserve beginnings, nine submissions on various aspects of Sommerfeld Mennonite Church History, four on renewal movements, and three on local community histories (Neuenburg, Edenburg and Altberghal).

The West Reserve Historical Series provides a timely contribution, building the published knowledge of southern Manitoba Mennonite history. The general layout of the third volume is attractive, with numerous, high quality photographs contributing significantly to the appearance and readability. The variety and the amount of previously unpublished material included is commendable, as the book goes from general context for the migration to the West Reserve to micro-detail on such topics as village organization and reorganization, church structure and renewal, church and community conflicts and (sometimes) brotherly resolutions. Some of the notable contributions are John Dyck’s article analyzing the correspondence from youth in the Sommerfeld church and a transcription of the entire Pentecost sermon (1885) of Rev. Peter Zacharias, minister in the Bergthal Mennonite Church at Hoffnungsfeld. In the articles profiling Johann Funk (1836-1917) and *Aeltester* Abraham Doerksen (1852-1929), there is a strong emphasis on church leadership dynamics and how they affected the communities. True to its reputation for meticulous preservation of data, the volume lists the elders, ministers and deacons of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church of Manitoba from 1869 through to 1931, and includes a lengthy record of *Aeltester* Doerksen’s sermon texts for the whole church year, as well as his texts for baptisms and catechism instruction.

The level of interest, scholarship and publication that the local chapters of the Manitoba Historical Society have generated is remarkable. Students of Mennonite history and people with roots in the West Reserve will receive this volume especially gratefully. One shortcoming that might be noted is that, despite its title, the book leans toward being exclusively a church history of the West Reserve, with the “village” topic represented largely by the three very interesting village histories, and the welcome article on the Post Road. Between the various *Schultzes* and *Aeltesters*, immigration delegates, and renewal movement leaders, the “family” topic is also notably lean (although the first two volumes in the series provide much with which to work).

Largely because of this, one impression I walked away with is that *Church, Family and Village* doesn’t challenge a notion that I think is already strongly engrained in the existing literature: that those first

Mennonites in Western Canada were utterly religious in perspective, motivation, preoccupation and orientation. The sources used are perhaps most responsible for this, as they are overwhelmingly formal written records — church periodicals, church registers, church meeting minutes and other church documents, as well as private and public correspondence. While they were the most likely to be systematically created and preserved, these sources typically exude a heavily religious rhetoric, which should be understood as overstatement, or as just one side of a multi-faceted reality.

The West Reserve Series has provided a valuable body of documentation and reflection. Of course, what is emphasized and what arises as the dominant narrative reveals what is held most dear. Perhaps next we will see the historians of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society turn to more sociological topics. The local chapters of the Society, who have been dedicated compilers, preservers and publishers of Western Canadian Mennonite settlement history, are likely best positioned to investigate new sides of that world before more of the story dies with the storytellers, or is destroyed with continuing loss of personal diaries, vernacular architecture, cultural artifacts, photographs, household and business records.

Frieda Esau Klippenstein  
Parks Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Helmut Harder, *David Toews Was Here: 1870-1947*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 2002. Pb., Pp. xxi + 347.

This biography incorporates significant aspects of the Russian Mennonite experience into a single lifetime. David Toews' ancestral family was rooted in the Vistula Delta, yet as a child and adult he lived near the Volga River, in Turkestan, Kansas, and Manitoba, and Northern Saskatchewan. He not only personified late nineteenth and early twentieth century Russian Mennonite mobility but also the theological diversity within the movement. His father, Jacob, who was initially inspired and then disillusioned by Klaas Epp's millennialistic views, led his family in a four-year migration to and through much of Turkestan before settling in Newton, Kansas in 1884. Amazingly, Jacob was soon drawn into leadership positions in the First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas. Before long the teenaged wanderer David found himself in a teacher training program in Halstead, Kansas. Subsequently, he played an important role in the theological and educational evolution of Mennonites in Saskatchewan, both as elder

and teacher. Significant localities like Eigenheim, Rosenort, Rosthern and Tiefengrund, were all in one way or another associated with Margarete and David Toews.

Harder significantly expands our view of David's accomplishments. Toews was much more than the Canadian facilitator of the Russian Mennonite migration of the 1920s. There was Toews the elder, conference leader, school promoter, husband, father, reconciler, and at times the one reconciled. Yet in the end it was the Russian Mennonite refugees of the 1920s and the subsequent suffering of Mennonites in the Soviet Union that absorbed so much of his personal energy. Harder confirms the earlier findings of Frank Epp in *Mennonite Exodus*: from the Canadian standpoint Toews was absolutely central to the success of the 1920s immigration. Aside from the business interests and politics involved in the movement Harder depicts the human face of the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR) in the person of Colonel John Dennis, as well as in the special interest of Prime Minister Mackenzie King in the Mennonite settlers.

After reading the biography I personally felt that the true measure of Toews' stature lay in his determination to honor the CPR travel debt incurred by the immigrants. This meant frequent travel, borrowing money from individuals and organizations, pursuing reluctant debtors and at times incurring their resentment. Perhaps the greatest challenge lay in the lethargy of a constituency anxious to get on with life once the immediate crisis had passed. For me the most moving portrait in the book is that of J.J. Thiessen informing the dying Mennonite leader that the travel debt had been paid in full.

This is a timely biography as the eightieth anniversary of the arrival of the first Russian Mennonite refugees in Canada approaches. It is judicious, balanced and designed for popular reading. It contains all the markings of a good suspense novel – heroism, courage, human weakness and tragedy – but the plot is authentic and true. Helmut Harder successfully resisted the temptation “to tell all” when confronted by abundant documentation. The book is not only a fitting tribute to a man, but to an era and to a conference. Helmut also mentions Kaethe Hooge, whose broad-ranging skills and dedication ultimately made the work of such men as Toews and J.J. Thiessen possible. Personally I wish he had said a bit more about the indispensable role which was played by this remarkable woman.

John B. Toews  
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Juhnke, James C. and Carol M. Hunter, *The Missing Peace: The Search for Nonviolent Alternatives in United States History*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press and Herald Press, 2001. Pp. 321. Index.

This is a courageous, almost unpatriotic, book by two American historians: Juhnke, a Mennonite, and Hunter, a Quaker. It turns American history upside down. The great meta-narrative constructed on a trajectory of “just” wars — the Revolutionary War against tyranny, the Civil War against slavery, the Spanish-American war to liberate Cuba, World War I to “end all wars”, World War II, the “Good War,” the Vietnam crusade against Communism — is confronted at every turn. The authors argue that “alternatives” to war existed in each instance. They also argue that historians have been guilty of ignoring moments when “peace broke out” and ignoring ambassadors of peace in American history. The book’s title, “Missing Peace” combined with the book’s cover illustration featuring Benjamin West’s famous painting “Penn’s Treaty with the Indians” with the shape of a puzzle piece missing, plays on a pun. The authors thus make a twofold argument: first, that peace unnecessarily has been “missing” in the consistently violent US history; and second, that the missing “piece” from that national narrative (i.e., the moments and people of peace) has now been identified and those “facts” reinstated in the national story.

Mennonites and Quakers have long been champions of peace. In recent decades they have moved from “absolutist” separated and rural people of peace, to “reformist” and acculturated proponents of national nonviolence. This book is obviously part of the project. Juhnke, has turned his considerable professional skill to make a case for peace in the wider arena. In fact this book virtually ignores Mennonites, mentioning them only three times, perhaps recognizing their small number in the US and their traditionally separatist stance, more likely setting aside parochial interests to pursue a wider agenda. This book thus is not about Mennonites but about Aboriginal confederates, Quaker politicians, anti-slave activists, female suffragettes, Civil Rights organizers and environmentalists. It is about national and military policy and the authors lend intelligence and breadth to a scrutiny of foreign policy initiatives and military strategies. The authors also place themselves within wider national debates; they place themselves between the traditional nationalistic narrative and the radical left critique. They argue that their approach, an historiography of “constructive nonviolence,” stands as an alternative to the two traditional and contesting stances.

The only possible criticism of Mennonites and Quakers going mainstream is that their choice to publish this manuscript with



Mennonite presses — Pandora Press and Herald Press — may limit the very aim of the book, that is, to make a truly national impact on historiography and even on American culture.

I used this book as a central text for a new course, “History of Peace and Nonviolence,” at the University of Winnipeg. The book is highly readable, nicely written, void of jargon and friendly to the non-specialist in American history. It speaks to the highly visible national moments, but portrays the major players as real flesh and blood humans, caught between inherited personal convictions and seemingly inexorable political processes. It sees peace as multi-layered, found not only in the absence of national war, but in an openness to Aboriginal cultures, sensitivity to minorities, respect for women, and reverence for the environment. And it plays to the imagination by taking licence to do what history instructors usually tell their students not to: ask the “what if” question; instead of writing about the past “as it actually was;” these authors muse about history “as it might have been.” The Revolutionary and Civil Wars clearly were unnecessary, argue the authors, if the evolutionary democracy and independence of Canada is taken into consideration. Canada’s close relationship with the US today even suggests a model for close relations between the North and Confederate South, making the horrible war for unity seem unnecessary. As for slavery, the South would have had to drop serfdom eventually for even Russia abolished it in 1861. And the analysis is much more than fantasy: it identifies persons and policies that were present and plausible at the time when decisions for war were taken. Students will also find the wide array of sensible, pragmatic and imagined, voices for nonviolence fascinating; this is not an account of reactionary or fantasy-land “leftists”. Finally, the book (without mentioning it) is friendly in the “post-modernist” milieu of the present-day college and university. The book demonstrates how historical narratives have often become imbued with hegemonic political interests. Only occasionally does the book stray from its intelligent analysis and slip into sermonizing.

The book is an instrument for peace. Its ambition is great, its method innovative, its scope broad and its delivery, commendable. One hopes it will work its way into the main corpus of North American historiography.

Royden Loewen  
University of Winnipeg

James O. Lehman, *Mennonite Tent Revivals: Howard Hammer and Myron Augsburger, 1952-1962*, Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2002. Pb. Pp. xxiii + 318.

In the 1950s, Mennonite communities in Ontario and western Canada experienced successive summer tent campaigns. Mennonite evangelists from the eastern United States set up tents and held revival meetings from two weeks up to a month in one place. In western Canada, some people viewed these tent campaigns as positive, others as negative. Canadians did not get a sense of the context out of which these tent campaigns came, how recently they had begun, nor what they represented.

Canadian readers will find this book by James O. Lehman helpful to understand these campaigns better. Lehman, director of libraries at Eastern Mennonite University and author of a number of local history books, presents a well-documented study of the beginnings of Mennonite tent revivals in the eastern United States.

In the process, he places the Canadian tent campaigns into context. He shows why they began, who promoted them, what they were intended to do and why, when their appeal began to fade, they were brought to western Canada.

Mennonite tent revivals spanned a relatively short period of time, essentially the years covered in this study. They were pioneered by George R. and Lawrence Brunk in the summer of 1951 with campaigns in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Patterned after Billy Graham's mass campaigns, the Brunks used large 6,000 seat tents, set them up in open fields, appealed to area churches, and employed the latest technology. George did the preaching and Lawrence led the singing.

Lehman focuses on Howard Hammer and Myron Augsburger, two evangelists who followed the pattern set by the Brunks. Both were evangelists for an organization in Ohio, called "The Christian Laymen's Tent Evangelism" (CLTE). Hammer had been a drifter who had tried gold mining and farming and succeeded in neither. In the late 1940s, after his son's death, he left the Evangelical United Brethren Church, joined the (Old) Mennonite Church, and began to hold evangelistic services. In 1952 he was hired by the CLTE to conduct tent campaigns.

In 1955 Augsburger succeeded Hammer as the evangelist for CLTE. Better educated, the Ohio born Augsburger shifted the emphasis of his campaigns more toward Christian education, solid Bible exposition, and preaching that would "reach the soul through the mind" (152). In order not to have his campaigns known as "Augsburger Crusades," he called them "Crusades for Christ" (153). The era of tent campaigns ended in 1962 when Myron Augsburger moved to city evangelism and used auditoriums instead of tents.

Lehman's strength is that he presents the details of the history. Along the way he also provides some analyses. He notes that in Ohio the campaigns were not supported by the Amish Mennonites, Old Orders, and the General Conference Mennonite Churches. He briefly comments on the reasons why they did not participate. He notes the tensions raised between mass evangelism and the Mennonite Church's emphasis on non-conformity, with the result that a number of new divisions occurred within the (Old) Mennonite Church. He notes some of the weaknesses of tent evangelism.

Despite the book's strengths, one wishes that Lehman would have placed the study within a larger interpretative framework in order to shed additional light on the phenomenon of tent campaigning.

John J. Friesen  
Canadian Mennonite University

Royden Loewen, *Hidden Worlds: Revisiting the Mennonite Migrants of the 1870s*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: The University of Manitoba Press, 2001. Pb. Pp. xii + 139.

*Hidden Worlds* is Royden Loewen's unique look at the lives of 1870s-era Russian Mennonite migrants to Canada and the United States. Instead of focusing on official government or church records, Loewen analyzes the content of diary and journal accounts, wills and newspaper articles. He is thus able to connect more closely with the voices of everyday life, and also at times incorporate a stronger woman's perspective. Diaries especially, as Loewen notes, provide important "self-analysis and reflection" when dealing with migration events.

Loewen thus gives special attention to the thoughts, feelings and understandings of what he refers to as the "ordinary migrant." He also discusses the "creative dimensions" of culture as compared to the strict "transplantation" of culture. For example, what transpires as a result of the interaction between the European Mennonite way of life and the North American environment?

Loewen refers to this process as "re-grafting," and as a "mental passage to the New World," referencing the way in which markets, the land, economics and environment impact cultural essentials. He looks at the interplay of nature, climate, crops and religious belief. As Loewen puts it at the end of his work: "This book's concern, therefore, has not been to identify unique Mennonite features as much as it has

been to identify the social and cultural arrangements that allowed Mennonites to evolve as an ethno-religious group (p.106).”

Loewen also makes interesting comparisons between those Mennonite diarists analyzed who wrote from a stationary position (in Europe or North America) and those who wrote while they were in transition (from the European homeland to the West). Particularly striking is Loewen’s discovery of a widespread yearning for the homeland after re-settlement. One woman’s comment is illustrative. She wrote that she was “completely alone in America.”

Loewen spends time as well discussing the equalitarian inheritance system that Mennonites transplanted to the Canadian prairies and American plains and the significant impact of this system on community-building processes and ethnic identity.

All of this is fascinating stuff - but there is one place where Loewen perhaps reaches. For example, one entire chapter discusses the similarities between a third generation Ontario Swiss Mennonite and a first generation Low German Manitoban. A common focus on the land as central to Mennonite identity does tie these two individuals and their communities together. But one might just as easily have focused on differences between the two communities (which to his credit, Loewen also mentions). Still, one wonders why, in a book which deals with a very specific, time-focused Russian Mennonite enclave, it was necessary to add a chapter on Swiss Mennonites in Ontario. The fit appears forced, perhaps, in order to meet the author’s contention that the construction of a “pan-Canadian experience” is not merely an “intellectual construct,” but a “lived reality” in this Mennonite case. Still when Loewen describes the two Mennonite individuals (Bergey and Plett) as members of “a single ethnic group in two regions of Canada” (p. 87), the reader is presented with a highly controversial definition of “ethnicity,” an amalgamated Swiss/Low German identity.

In general, however, *Hidden Worlds* is a well written, captivating social history, that brings forth much new information and important insights from a different source of information than Mennonite historians have traditionally utilized.

Rod Janzen  
Fresno Pacific University

Paul Toews and Kevin Enns-Rempel, eds. *For Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren in North America, 1874 - 2002: An Informal History*. Winnipeg and Hillsboro: Kindred Productions, 2002. Hc. Pp. 188.

In 1911 the publication of P.M. Friesen's *Die Alt-evangelische Mennonitische Brüderschaft in Russland* marked 50 years of Mennonite Brethren existence. Maybe the size of this volume – 930 pages! – foreshadowed the amount of attention this group would give to recording its history. Subsequent histories were not as long in coming – nor as long. But well over a dozen have been published in North America since then, some quite recently.

Given this prolific output of historical material, why another history? The “Season” that prompted this volume is the ending in 2002 of “the dominant conference structure” of Mennonite Brethren in North America since 1879: The General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. As at the funeral of a beloved relative who attained a ripe old age, *For Everything a Season* is celebration with some tinges of regret. The book is in coffee table format: hard cover, glossy paper, numerous photos, generous sidebars, and even a cartoon. The sub-title calls it “an informal history.” Thus, there are no footnotes and no bibliography. But the thirteen contributors are all thoroughly competent writers and scholars. The result is a very readable book with solid content.

The opening chapter on Mennonite Brethren beginnings by historian John B. Toews, retired professor of Regent College in Vancouver, is a concise and balanced account reflecting the author's broad knowledge of the Mennonite context in Russia in the mid-19th century. Kevin Enns-Rempel, archivist and historian now in Fresno, pictures the very difficult beginning years in the USA (1870s - 1890s) when at least 21 Mennonite Brethren (MB) settlements failed before they were 20 years old. Abe Dueck, well-known historian in Winnipeg, shows the impact on the North American MB community of the arrival of new immigrants to Canada in the 1920s and again after WW II, bringing with them the many changes they had undergone in Russia during the decades since the first small MB contingent came to the USA.

Lynn Jost, Biblical scholar from Hillsboro, Kansas, shows the interaction in MB theological development of its 16th century Anabaptist heritage with Lutheran Pietist and German Baptist influence in Russia, and with various types of Evangelicals and Fundamentalists in North America. He credits the seminary in Fresno and the Bible College in Winnipeg as the most significant centres in shaping MB identity.

Since the termination of a major church structure - the General Conference - prompted this volume, the chapter on "Searching for the Right Structures" by Fresno historian Paul Toews is central to the book. His examination of the tensions between "brotherhood" and "congregational autonomy," and among local, national and global loyalties is instructive for other Mennonite groups as well. The centrality of mission throughout MB history and its "brotherhood" emphasis make for a strong argument in favour of global partnership among the quarter million MBs world wide, argues Fresno seminary dean, James Pankratz. The picture of the Mennonite Brethren mosaic in North America drawn by Wally Unger, President Emeritus of Columbia Bible College, corroborates such a conclusion. No fewer than 20 languages are used in worship by MB congregations in the US and Canada today.

Journalist Wally Kroeker of Winnipeg and author Katie Funk Wiebe of Hillsboro show both the restrictions felt by writers and the enormous variety and quantity of literary output by MB agencies and individuals. In tracing developments in higher education from Bible schools to Bible colleges to seminary, and from Bible college to liberal arts college to university, Paul Toews and Abe Dueck show the sometimes erratic involvement of the Conference in this key area of shaping the MB community.

It is a bit ironic that a book whose text and photos quietly but consistently illustrate the strong hold of church leadership by men should have the two chapters describing life of the congregation written by women. In both essays, university professor Doreen Klassen of Newfoundland on music and seminary professor Valerie Rempel on congregational life, one detects a sense of loss of human intimacy as a result of the increasing size and diversity of both local congregations and the "brotherhood" as a whole. Early resistance to musical instruments emphasised the human voice and the blending of voices in congregational singing. Members calling each other "brother" and "sister" and practising the "holy kiss" and foot-washing experienced a connection that is hard to achieve in a mega-church (or perhaps in any large urban congregation).

Political scientist John H. Redekop, now Langley, BC, shows how the enormous changes that have taken place in the MB community as a result of urbanisation, higher education, professional diversification, economic prosperity and upward social mobility have strained the sense of brotherhood. Mennonite Brethren have become active in public life disproportionately to their numbers in society. Yet, says Redekop, the Conference has struggled with considerable success to continue "to apply Christian truths to its times and surroundings."

In the year 2000 the three largest Mennonite denominations in North America - MC, GC and MB - all had bi-national conferences.

Although the dust of restructuring into national entities has not yet settled, in 2003 the continental structures are gone. Pastor-journalist Herb Kopp of Winnipeg concludes this volume with a very brief exploration of new possibilities for the future. One vision he proposes would expand the present International Committee of Mennonite Brethren into a new International General Conference representing the 18 MB national conferences reflecting a global church and dealing with global agenda.

Perhaps, to paraphrase the words of Isaiah 49:6, "it is too light a thing ... to raise up" that kind of body only for the MBs. Could not all the Mennonite groups of North America dream together about how best to embody the global Mennonite reality, where historic European and American divisional differences fade into relative insignificance in the light of the convictions and agenda they share? This book may provoke such a development. I hope that leaders of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA, who have recently participated in a similar dismantling of bi-national structures, will read this book and join in the dreaming of what new things could now happen.

Adolf Ens  
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Kimberly D. Schmidt, Diane Zimmerman Umble and Steven D. Reschly, eds., *Strangers at Home: Amish and Mennonite Women in History*. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

The provocative pose of a conservatively-dressed young woman draws the reader in to an exciting exploration of varied experiences of Amish and Mennonite women. The sullen expression framed by the young woman's prayer veiling with its distinctive black ribbon suggests the paradox of women in these traditions who find themselves *Strangers at Home*. This collection of fifteen articles emerged from "The Quiet in the Land Conference," held at Millersville, Pennsylvania, in 1985. The first academic conference ever on women in the Anabaptist tradition, this collection is a labour of love, nurtured by its editors for seven years.

As the carefully designed cover suggests, *Strangers at Home* shows how women and the gender constructions that have bound them have shaped both the female experience and Anabaptist-Mennonite history. The various analyses were selected both to advance "the fledgling field of Anabaptist women's history," and women's history (2). As one peruses the various articles, several themes emerge. It becomes clear

how the experience of Anabaptist women illuminates the relationship of individuals to the community and to the broader society and how Anabaptist women's history advances religion and ethnicity as topics within women's history. It also becomes increasingly evident that this history raises critical questions about assumptions of gender constructs. Finally, the multiple experiences of the women in this collection illustrate the incredible diversity in the history of women.

The editors have carefully devised three movements to illustrate how gender is constructed and how it shapes history. In Part I, five scholars analyze how cultural practices have created gendered roles. A Jewish scholar specializing in Irish women's history was invited to set the stage for several ethnographic discussions. Her analysis illustrates how "'insider' and 'outsider'" positions influence the "practice of history" and readers come to see how these positions have played themselves out in ethnographic studies of Conservative Mennonite, Old Order Amish and Old Order River Brethren women (8). In all of these groups, despite a history of generations in these communities, women find themselves on both sides of the paradigm, sometimes insiders and sometimes outsiders.

Part II pulls together five additional pieces, showing women's agency in the "immigration, settlement, community formation, and schisms "that make up so much of Anabaptist-Mennonite history (8). Ranging from sixteenth-century Augsburg to post-World War II Paraguay, from nineteenth-century Iowa to the Hopi community of Oraibi in Arizona, it is evident that knowledge of gender is essential to our understandings of the development of Anabaptist communities. Finally in Part III, the last quintet of essays illustrate the fluidity and changing nature of gendered lives, illustrating that as all women throughout time, Anabaptist women have also been "actors in historical dramas" (12).

Put together, these studies raise important questions about what women represent in their various traditions, and who they really were/are. Figures silenced by a history that has focused on male leaders and their directives take on lives of their own. For instance, "women's villages" in Paraguay show the strength and agency of the women who hewed lives for themselves from a "green hell". Contrast these women with those among the Old Order River Brethren whose voices were literally silenced by church dictums that took the making of communion bread out of their kitchens to be performed as a ritual under the watchful eye of the community. Observe how the Conservative Mennonite women in Croghan, New York refused to carry the symbol of the prayer veiling to the workplace and how their decision impacted that group. Listen to the lyrical and provocative interpretations by a panel of poets who also participate in the discussion. This brief sampling illustrates the literary feast the fifteen



chapters in the collection provide, while a treasury of photos illustrate each article, enriching their subjects further by the proverbial thousand words.

Careful editing has tied together a diversity of material into what amounts to a text book on the construction of gender and its impact on ethnic and religious communities. No metanarrative, this research challenges our notions of Anabaptist-Mennonite history, raising as many questions as it does answers, questions around women's dress and the way in which women's submission has been constructed in the shaping of community. In communities structured around gender roles that make women's bodies the symbol of their separation from the world, how do women experience God's call? Only hinted at, on the other hand, are queries around how the Mennonite ethic of love and nonresistance plays itself out in women's lives. We need further research that will answer questions around how the Mennonite ethic of peace can salvage women caught in a morass of domestic violence or serious depression.

The collection ranges across time and place, yet the focus is surprisingly narrow with the spotlight on Conservative and Old Order Amish and Mennonites in four states of the United States. Only two articles come out of sixteenth-century studies, and one piece looks at women's experience in post-world War II Paraguay. In contrast, Canadian women are conspicuous by their absence. Among the goals of conference organizers was to create an opportunity for dialogue between Canadian and American historians, yet only three Canadian scholars are published in the collection and no one wrote on a Canadian topic.

This major oversight notwithstanding, the book makes a remarkable contribution to Anabaptist-Mennonite scholarship. The first of its kind, it begs the question: what would our history look like if it was re-written to take gender into account? Seven years in the making, this is a book well worth waiting for. I recommend it as mandatory reading for serious students of Anabaptist-Mennonite history and lay readers alike. All who follow the invitation of the young woman featured on the dust jacket to explore the experiences of the women who share the predicament of finding themselves *Strangers at Home*, will be greatly enriched.

Lucille Marr,  
Montreal, Quebec

Tena Wiebe, editor, and John Isaac, trans. *Neu-Samara: A Mennonite Settlement East of the Volga*. Edmonton, Alberta: Jackpine House, 2002. Pb. Pp. 196.

Many individuals were involved in the production of this captivating volume, although it would not have come to fruition without Tena Wiebe of Edmonton and her brother John Isaac, a very adequate translator. Tena's family, as well as the families of many other Mennonites in North America, comes from the region between the Upper Volga and the Urals, peopled by Mennonites who went there around 1891. Their village, Donskoj, a leading village, was also the site chosen by the Frank Klassen family for their general store. This was the family that has given Russian Mennonites one of their foremost leaders, C. F. Klassen, as well as the impressive clan related to him.

This reviewer has never read the original volume, entitled *Neu-Samara am Tock*, by Brucks and Hooge, published forty years ago. That volume provided brief chapters on almost every aspect of the colony of Neu-Samara. John Isaak comments: "We owe a debt of gratitude" to these writers for "capturing images of the life in the fourteen villages" from living memory with "thoroughness and perseverance" (6). The nine sections cover the period from 1891 to 1941, when Hitler invaded Russia and Stalin deported all the Germans from the Volga Republic. The publisher's handsome recreation of the attractive topographical area lends pathos to the fate that befell the populace, including the Mennonites.

The additions made by editor Tena Wiebe enhance this volume. During her visits in recent years to Donskoj and to the colony now renamed Pleschanova, Tena recaptured the history in wonderful colour photos and included some of the most handsome architectural creations. Black and white pictures of her family speak eloquently of former times. One cannot help but be amazed at what the colonists of the 1890s were able to accomplish through their agricultural activity and economic independence within the short time given them.

Although nothing is said of the reasons why some left for greener pastures in the Altai region of western Siberia about 1909, there are glimpses of the early years, a look at colony administration, trade and industry, a look at the schools, churches, and community life. All of this was disrupted and bedevilled by war and the revolution, famine, collectivization, and terror.

The book ends with examples of correspondence, the brief life story of Margareta Peters (1924-2001) who stayed there, several village people maps, two other maps of the area, a glossary, detail of a typical farm house and barn, and a short reading list. With this publication it is possible for the reader to join the authors on a visit to the old mill, to

the churches, and to walk along the banks of the Tok river, thus reliving the stories of the ancestors of many North American Mennonites.

Peter Penner

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Calgary, Alberta

John B. Toews, ed., *The Story of the Early Mennonite Brethren (1860-1869): Reflections of a Lutheran Churchman*. Winnipeg, MB and Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Productions, 2002. Pb. Pp. ix, 188.

With the publication of these documents, Toews has substantially broadened the discussion of the beginnings of the Mennonite Brethren Church. By presenting archival evidence only recently made available to researchers, he has opened a window on new perspectives and demonstrated that some traditional interpretations will have to be modified or discarded as a new picture emerges.

This volume presents materials gathered and interpreted by a Lutheran churchman and magistrate, Alexander Brune. The tsar's Ministry of Internal Affairs regarded the division within the Mennonite community significant enough to send this special emissary to investigate. The result is a fascinating portrait of a movement that is seen through a variety of prisms, including those of Mennonite religious and civic leaders, Russian government and church officials, as well as participants in the new movement, both from the Mennonite community and from others. Readers will soon note that the harshest indictments of the Mennonite Brethren come, not from the tsar's officials, but from leaders within the Mennonite colonies.

Much has been written about the hard line taken by Mennonite leaders opposed to the "separatists." Brune presents a number of documents that show considerable sympathy for this body. Thus, Elder Johann Harder (Ohrloff) is depicted in his usual conciliatory stance. Brune includes references to a number of other Mennonites who opposed policies of expulsion or imprisonment as urged by prominent Mennonite leaders. Some of these moderates suggested simply that if there would be greater emphasis on living "according to the Holy Scriptures," the *raison d'être* of the Brethren would be eliminated.

Brune's analysis demonstrates his adherence to traditional notions of maintaining boundaries between different religious groups and, at the same time, accepting the state's right to regulate religious affairs. Thus, he castigates the early Brethren for accepting "anyone into their

community.” In a similar stance, the Molochna district mayor does not hesitate to tell Mennonite elders how to respond to the dissidents. When the Brethren asked that their views be examined from a scriptural perspective, Mennonite leaders responded with an appeal to quash the new movement.

In an apparent effort to be impartial, Brune reports that early Brethren leaders said that if they would be allowed freedom of worship, they would not break from the larger Mennonite body. Documents presented here do not establish that this view was indeed typical of the Brethren leaders, especially when seen in the context of the declaration made by them on January 6, 1860. Nonetheless, when this idea is combined with public statements of some conciliatory Mennonite churchmen, most notably Elder Harder, it is easy to conclude that the course of Mennonite history in Russia could have been different.

As Toews notes in his informative introduction, the Brune documents allow us to see different interpretations of the rise of the Mennonite Brethren. At the same time, sometimes one can only marvel at the wild canards, some of them survivors of Reformation vitriol, thrown at the early Brethren: baptism for forgiveness of future sins (83)? “use the death penalty for drunkenness” (91)? believers are to “destroy the wicked” (91)? the wealthy are to “give all their property to the poor” (91)?

One of the important contributions made by this collection of documents is that it adds considerably to our understanding of the appeal of Brethren teaching in non-Mennonite communities. Evidently sixty-six Evangelical Lutherans in Neu-Danzig joined the Brethren. Elsewhere, converts came from Catholic, Reformed, and Orthodox churches. Toews suggests that this impact beyond the Mennonite settlements may well have given impetus to the imperial investigation. Parenthetically, it is conceivable that the view, expressed by several Brethren, that in communion the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ may have its origin in these converts from non-Mennonite bodies.

Many readers will be surprised to note that five years before the signing of the Founding Document in 1860, a group of thirty-five men in Khortitsa tried to organize a new church, but apparently threats of excommunication, as well as actual imprisonment, delayed development of the new movement. This is only one of several issues that will demand further analysis as the new documentary evidence continues to become available.

Also worth noting is the fact that some Russian officials whose reports are included in this volume questioned negative comments about the Brethren. Vice-Director Sivers of the Ministry of Internal

Affairs, for example, dismissed as “unfounded” allegations of polygamy among the Brethren. The reader is left wondering whose fertile imagination gave rise to such a preposterous charge.

This volume – one of several recently published and based on new archival discoveries – adds to our understanding of the Russian Mennonite community. At the same time, it encourages us to hope that other riches will be found in the vast archives of the former Soviet Union.

Peter J. Klassen  
Fresno, California

## Poetry and Fiction

David Bergen, *The Case of Lena S.* Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2002. Pp. 286, Hardcover, \$32.99.

Described on its flyleaf as a “coming-of-age” story, David Bergen’s *The Case of Lena S.* delves into the dangers of the maturation process. But if coming-of-age implies a successful transition from unshaped impulses to individuated self, Bergen challenges the formula with a story of failure and tragedy.

Mason Crowe, one of the two main characters, is a sixteen-year-old boy with the usual sexual cravings, some unusual sexual misgivings, and a developing thirst for meaning. Son of a non-descript itinerant encyclopedia salesman and a bored, sensual, working mother, and brother of a self-absorbed Don Juan, Mason continually tries to escape the limitations of his embarrassing family. Despite his efforts to become a poet (the novel is named after one his poems), Mason is conservative in his outlook. He is uncomfortably aware of his mother’s sexuality, disapproving of his friend’s coarse scripts, and unwilling to deviate from social and sexual conventions. For her part, Lena Schellendal, the novel’s other main character, has a history of mental instability. She struggles to free herself from her restrictive, middle-class family through rebellion and sexual abandon. Significantly, she does not want to learn German, her father’s tongue, because it is (shades of Sylvia Plath?) too full of “*Ichs*” (196). As both these characters seek a sense of self, however, their lives disintegrate. Lena needs inner stability and believes she can find it by giving up the one thing she really wants: Mason. Sad and mistaken, she proceeds down a path of self-destruction. Mason’s quest for salvation, by contrast,

eventually ends in caution and compromise when he moves in with his mother and her rich boyfriend.

Through these two characters' relationships, Bergen takes us into a world of carefully formulated dualities. Mason and Lena seem designed to interact from opposing and constantly shifting poles: like/dislike, desire/fear, and belonging/alienation. The ever-present problem of self and salvation revolves around the poles of religious fervour and personal consciousness. The polarities are supported by vivid imagery. For instance, almost exactly halfway through the story, Lena notices Mason has "a raised furrow like a perfect line dissecting the fundement, as if a man were an assembly-line product, two halves glued together" (135). "Sad" and "happy" are probably the two most-often used adjectives in the story. And although life seems to foil our best efforts to glue together these two states, the novel suggests that they must somehow be fused if a person is not to lose his or her "self." An epigraph from Kierkegaard warns us that loss of self is "the greatest danger." It happens "quietly as if it were nothing."

There is much good writing throughout the novel. Lena enters the story gradually, like a stalker. Her sexual escapades are described by Bergen with effective restraint. When driving the restaurant truck to pick up fresh supplies from a farm, Lena says, "We can have sex. Just be careful of the eggs." Later, Mason's brother tries to pick her up in what is by far the sexiest scene in the book. With no mention of reproductive organs, Bergen uses feet to show sexual desire and possession. The novel is rich in carefully interwoven allusion and imagery. My copy is laced with cross-references to subtle hints and confirmations that guided me along developing themes. And Bergen describes Winnipeg's landmarks and streets as if it were a beloved New York of the north.

There are problems, however. The footnotes, for one, seem to be written by someone outside the story, yet contribute nothing that could not be included in the text. If I were a woman, I would feel uncomfortable about the many descriptions of breasts, which go beyond even what I'd expect even from teenage observers. Similarly, I would not appreciate the attention to my toilet procedures – the oft-seen "pee and wipe" (279) – nor would I guess, from this novel, that males "pee and shake," since none of the men in this story seem to pee at all. In a similar vein, only the women seem to wear clothes. If a woman's apparel can reveal her inner state, shouldn't men's clothes be afforded a similar importance? Bergen keeps sentence fragments (apparently a staple of Canadian fiction) to a minimum, but they still seem excessive at times. Subordinate phrases. Without commas. Irritating. Finally, there is Mason's father. Possibly the only person in the novel who seems sane, humane, and growing in wisdom, Mr. Crowe

nevertheless remains a minor character. In this work of startling dualities, the gentle encyclopedia salesman represents a missed opportunity to contrast chaos with solidity. But perhaps Bergen had enough balls in the air.

Joe Simons  
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Carla Funk, *Head Full of Sun*. Robert's Creek, B.C.: Nightwood Editions, 2002. Pp. 127, Paper.

I know the sacred head  
taste the bread and wine  
each Sunday morning  
and tell him I'm aiming  
myself toward heaven  
and the bright journey  
then say something vague about holiness

the narrator of the poem "Tongues of Men and Angels" explains to a door-to-door spiritual salesman. Saying "something vague about holiness" is what Funk seems to be doing in *Head Full of Sun*, though she is also plainly articulate about tasting "the bread and wine/each Sunday morning." This book is a *Christian* poetic meditation; there is nothing vague about that. The book is organized and inspired by biblical texts such as the Psalms and Revelations, but the gleanings from, and interpretation of, these texts is experiential and sensual rather than theologically tight or intellectually gripping.

The first section, "Darkness Like Dresses," in which women characters of the Bible are given voices, is lyrical and well executed. (This is not a new exercise for Funk; she has worked with female biblical characters before in her first book, *Blessing the Bones into Light*.) The characters presented here offer highly nuanced versions of their stories. Particularly engaging is the poem "Mary Magdalene." Magdalene, who never speaks in the gospel accounts, describes herself being raped by four men. The rape engenders "seeds" that "split open into a chorus" that croons ominously. "My voice," says the narrator, "is lost in all that singing." The poem offers a glimpse of how a woman's voice is appropriated in the experience of Christ.

The second section, "Alphabet of Psalms," is moving in its account of personal experience. Each of the 'psalms' are arranged by themes in alphabetical order – Psalm of Assumptions; Psalm of the Bedroom

Floor, 1991; Psalm of Carla; etc. I half-expected a re-writing of the original Psalms such as past Christian writers (i.e. Sidney, Herbert, and Milton) have undertaken, but Funk works from the original definition of 'psalm' (sacred song) and makes 'songs' out of contemporary experience. As new songs, these psalms express and exhibit a wide range of emotions; unlike their biblical counterparts they are occasionally 'vague' in their 'holiness' or reference to God.

The book of Revelation is the subject of the third section, "In the Gallery Apocalypse." In this section, Funk handles the material in an evocative and vivid manner. Revelations is a book of apocalyptic imaginings and Funk paints some grisly scenes, particularly when describing the various afflictions that will arise when the 'vials of the wrath of God' are poured on the earth. In the second poem of the section, "In the Gallery Apocalypse" (the poem and the section share a title), scenes in Revelation are presented as if viewed in an art gallery. "Perspective is everything," states one poem and indeed it is, especially on

whether you see or do not see  
this lamb with the torn throat  
standing in the center of every story

Perhaps Funk ultimately intends to aim for this center in all of her work. *Head Full of Sun* achieves much in this direction. Lyrical and moving, the poems are emotionally powerful, though not intellectually rigorous. Not that intellectual rigour is always necessary, but it can add depth to the spiritual perceptions and sensations Funk so aptly presents in her poetry. Perhaps this development will be seen in future work. In the meantime, *Head Full of Sun* is a satisfying read.

Sally Ito  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Maurice Mierau, *Ending with Music*. London: Brick Books, 2002. Pp. 89, Paper, \$15.00.

This is the first book from Maurice Mierau – a Winnipeg writer who has published poetry, fiction and reviews – since the mid-'80s. It's the kind of poetry book you can read at one sitting; it reads more like a *book* than a collection of assorted poems. And it knits itself together more tightly as it goes on, from the first section – a group of loosely related poems held together by the reappearance of grandparents – through the second, which has a consistent theme throughout, to the



third, which feels almost as if it were conceived as a single whole.

And through the whole book, there's death. It starts with the front cover photo: the bridge in Minneapolis from which poet John Berryman jumped to his death in 1972. A miniature version of this photo appears on the title page of each section, a visual reminder that this is a serious book. Not a depressing book, and not a book without a fair bit of dry humor, but, nevertheless, as the back-cover blurb accurately describes it, a book "bursting its seams with losses, war crimes and tragic suicides."

There is not quite as much death in the first part, "Family and Others," as there is later, and what there is here is of the expected and accepted kind. About half of the poems in this group are about family, and grandparents are prominent here. They stand out as complete characters in a vividly-drawn physical world. For this reason I preferred these poems to the others in this section, although there are some fine ones among them, specifically, "Silent referendum" and "Easter morning, Jamaica, 1973."

The second section, "Murders," contains as much violence as its title suggests. There are poems based on stories from *Martyrs Mirror*; others contain snippets of relatives' experiences in the Second World War; still others deal with subjects as varied as the Peasants' Revolt, an uncle throwing a couch out the window, and brutality in Srebrenica. These deaths and losses are treated with detachment, which is particularly noticeable – and effective – with such grim subject matter.

Most of these poems use simple sentences with few adjectives. They do not explore the reasons for things as much as they set things down, laying out one violent event after another like so many snapshots: here's another, and another, the poet seems to say. The last lines of "What you can't write about" capture what this group of poems does; they "make people say yes/ that's war, as if it were like the weather,/ uncontrollable but strangely part of us."

The poems in the last section, "Ending with Music," are almost all about people who have committed suicide. Like the grandparents in the earlier poems, the characters in these are vivid, palpable. Here there is no feeling of detachment. There is more questioning, a stronger sense of loss, and also a strong sense of the beauty in the lives that were cut short. This comes through most strongly in "Suite for Michael," especially part 3, in which the narrative is interspersed with lines based on Psalm 51:

In the blue truck where his uncle found him  
 There was a mattress for a pillow and  
     (cast me not away from your presence)  
 his flesh had begun to change colour  
     (my soul is cast down, it is cast down)

Like the book as a whole, individual poems are carefully constructed, with a satisfying fit of form to content. A few poems are very short, compact, with a distinct form: "Soldiers," for instance, has three two-line stanzas, each expressing one succinct thought, while "Nothing beats silence," has two six-line stanzas separated by a pair of longer lines. By contrast, "Musicians in love" is written in couplets, with long lines and run-on sentences. Others have an irregular pattern of lines but use repeated lines or phrases to hold them together.

I suppose this wouldn't be a proper review without a few complaints. Two poems in the second section seem out of place, not because they aren't as good, but because they so completely lack identifying detail, which was a little jarring among the other vivid evocations of people and places. I also found "My son learns to ride a bike" an odd choice for the last poem of the book. But these are quibbles. *Ending with Music* is well worth reading — and gets better each time.

Joanne Epp  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Lloyd Ratzlaff, *The Crow Who Tampered with Time*.  
Saskatoon: Thistledown Press, 2002. Pp.134, Paper.

*The Crow Who Tampered with Time* tampers also with genre and with literary fashion. Although written in prose — often the deliberately informal prose of personal letters or conversations — the language is delicately precise, with a John Donne-like fondness for startling images and plays on words. Ratzlaff has said that he doesn't aspire to poetry, doesn't think he's writing poetry, yet his prose is so sensual, so sensitive to sound, and so layered with meanings that it often elicits a gasp of surprise followed by delight over the rightness of the phrase. This is language to be savored.

The content is no less resistant to labels. It might be called a collection of personal essays except that the book has the unity and focus of a single journey — Ratzlaff's own journey away from his fundamentalist Mennonite background and toward a vision of wholeness. At the same time, the autobiographical details are often quite secondary to descriptions of, and meditations on, the natural world. For him, as for Annie Dillard whom he quotes, "the point of Creation is that each thing should get noticed" (133). "If the doors of perception were cleansed," he suggests in a mystical recollection of his baptism in the muddy North Saskatchewan River, "everything would appear infinite; I would be born again for the first time, have a

fresh God walking and talking with my woman and me innocent in the evening in the garden. It happens sometimes, with or without baptism” (60). Ultimately, there is no adequate label for a book that inspires wonder. The world – and that includes earth and universe and people and God – writes Ratzlaff in a piece called “Humdinger,” “keeps me [. . .] permanently startled” (44).

Although he was raised in a Mennonite church whose “sense of the sacramental had been . . . sparse” (13), Ratzlaff’s response to what he sees around him is intensely sacramental and, thus, redemptive. Grace is everywhere present (except in the church pews he occupied for so many years), and angelic messengers of God can appear as raucous crows or archangel-sized aurora borealis. For him, the earth is “the body of God” (14), there for all who sit and watch and hold their senses out for the Presence. In the midst of the rather plain prairie scene of Diefenbaker Park in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, he perceives mystery and union: “William Blake and spring’s first butterfly and I were another trinity kissing the flying joy” (18).

Perhaps because of his ability to feel beauty so acutely and to experience all of life so richly, Ratzlaff’s criticism of his childhood church, “that curious hybrid between sixteenth-century Anabaptism and nineteenth-century frontier revivalism” (66), is often harsh, but more often simply bewildered and hurt. Even his most satirical piece, a wickedly funny discussion of the differences between the North Church and the South Church, is softened by its guise as a story of a young lad agonizing over when it is time to “get saved” (85). Ratzlaff doesn’t so much examine his former theology (certainly not methodically) as reveal his inner struggles at various stages in his journey toward grace and joy in worship. Thus his very personal tone defuses much of the bitterness, yet without grandstanding his vulnerability.

That unusual vulnerability has a singular effect on the reader; it automatically begins a conversation, as if the reader and Lloyd Ratzlaff had been introduced in the flesh and were moving rapidly toward intimate friendship. When I began making notes for this review, I realized that I was actually writing a letter to Ratzlaff, a thank-you letter, because I was so grateful to him for guiding me into his wonder-filled world, for putting ecstasy into words. I gave the book as a gift to a friend, who responded by mailing me a copy of a four-page letter addressed to “Lloyd.” The authenticity with which Ratzlaff shares his growth in spiritual understanding calls his readers to abandon barriers as freely as he clearly has.

If I were to categorize this book at all, I would call it wisdom literature in the richest sense of the term. For the best wisdom literature, whether in the Judaic tradition or among the Zen masters whom Ratzlaff often quotes (along with numerous poets and novelists),

clothes its wisdom in narrative and disguises its profundity with a subversive innocence. It is not possible to read these short essays – whether the meditations on the natural world or the brief narratives of human encounters – without having one’s vision expanded. Not the least of such changes, for me, was a new willingness to recognize that in our miserable failures, “grace [can make us] laugh” (73). Thank you, Lloyd.

*The Crow Who Tampered with Time* demands rereading. Though the first reading tempts one into hasty, indulgent consumption of new perceptions, such a wholesale plunge into mysterious ordinariness leads to a sudden, unfulfilling, satiety. Much better to read slowly, one short essay at a time, for, as Ratzlaff notes, “the world [has] not gone anywhere; it [waits], as always, to be inhabited with presence” (46).

Edna Froese  
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David Wright, *Lines from the Provinces*. great-unpublished.com. 2000. Pp. 83, Paper.

The first time I encountered David Wright was in person, fall 2002, at the “Mennonite/s Writing” conference in Goshen, Indiana. As various writers struggled to negotiate their Mennonite identity, often framing it in terms of an inescapable past, Wright provided a blast of relief, jumping up on stage and saying that he was a Mennonite “by choice,” reminding us that, indeed, such a thing is possible. (Another conference participant later referred to poet Yorifumi Yaguchi as an “unlikely Mennonite,” which made me wonder if there should be any other kind.) In *Lines from the Provinces*, his first book of poetry, Wright demonstrates the same kind of energy he did that day on stage – forward motion but motion that isn’t ever untouched by an ironic sense of exile. These are, after all, lines from the *provinces*, and Wright occupies many — that of the new Mennonite, the son mourning the death of his father, the commuter in strange company, the would-be poet, learning from a difficult master — in his search for “our real world/ Beyond your territories” (“Lines from the Provinces,” 83).

Samuel Taylor Coleridge writes that, in poems, “genius produces the strongest impressions of novelty while it rescues the most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission” (*Biographia Literaria*, chapter four). Wright visits many scriptural and liturgical places in this collection, making the familiar strange in ways that allow the possibility of fresh readings. In “Chicken Scratches on the Back of Sunday’s Bulletin,” he revisits

Luke 13: 34, in which Christ longs to gather us “as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.” Wright takes the line seriously, looking unblinkingly at that chicken-God: “Not the strutting, crowing rooster, but the scratching, laying, shitting/ mother of a happenstance, misbred brood.” He nonetheless submits himself to the image, beseeching this God to “Clutch us under your mottled wings” (11). In these provinces, God him- or herself is a traveler. “What kind of disappointing/ God arrives like an infant, anointing/ its slight body with dust and afterbirth?” asks the speaker in “Bethlehem Sonnets” (13).

Wright challenges the reader, but always from a position of humility — he, too, is on the journey. In “A New Mennonite Replies to Julia Kasdorf,” he sings the song of the convert, protesting the stability of Mennonite identity and its apparently stabilizing markers: “As best I can tell, most of our quilts here were inherited . . . Not much borscht,/ few shoofly pies at potlucks — instead it’s/ humus, free range chicken, carob brownies.” At the same time, he acknowledges and even celebrates those with whom he contends: “We park ourselves in pews/ next to women and men who know better/ what real Mennonites are, at least/ have usually been, who tolerate us/ when we do not know (or want to) the so/ many stories we should” (17).

Wright takes us into intimate places in his life, but only, it seems, after having learned not to elevate “private grievance into highest horrific display” (“Lesson in Confessional Poetry,” 43). We become witnesses to the woman spitting sunflower seeds on the train; the business of changing an aging grandfather’s piss-soaked sheets; the dream-like visit with a dead father who’s folding laundry, though he never did in life. Coming along with Wright, though, you don’t realize complicity until it is too late; he asks for nothing except your companionship, which is the least, but also the most, one can ask.

And don’t be put off by the fact that this book has been self-published: Wright has earned his claim to an audience by publishing nearly half of these poems in journals. His next book, *A Liturgy for Stones*, will be published by Cascadia in spring 2003.

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Douglas Reimer, *Surplus at the Border: Mennonite Writing in Canada*. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 2002. Pp. 206, Paper, \$22.95.

Interest in Mennonite literature is on the rise in Canada, as witnessed by national mainstream coverage of recent novels by Rudy

Wiebe and Sandra Birdsell. Critical attention has been somewhat sparser, which makes Douglas Reimer's new book a timely intervention in the critical discussion. Reimer's text addresses the gap in the critical discourse with a collection of essays that locate Prairie Mennonite writers within the wider context of Canadian literature.

Reimer begins with a brief discussion of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's theory of the "deterritorialization" that they identify in the "minor literatures" of writers like Franz Kafka. According to this theory, writers from communities identified as "minor" produce literature that is subversive of the literature of the "major" – i.e. dominant – social group. In the case of CanLit, Reimer identifies the "major" tradition with the lyric poem and its "long, Euro-English semantic history, predictable system of meanings, and long-baked, cleverly transmitted, potentially binding moral structures" (66). "Minor" literatures, on the other hand, speak the language differently: they deform dominant literary traditions by incorporating other languages and, perhaps most significantly, by reflecting the dominant tradition back to itself in a way that Reimer calls "uncanny" (96). Here, as he points out, Freud's original *unheimlich* captures more fully the sense of "un-homing" the comfortable, in this case the lyric tradition.

The scope of Reimer's project is ambitious. Although the core of the book lies in his close readings of the Mennonite Holy Trinity – Rudy Wiebe, Patrick Friesen, and Di Brandt – he also devotes significant space to David Bergen, Armin Wiebe, Delbert Plett, Sandra Birdsell, and Miriam Toews. This broad scope is one of the book's strengths and one of its weaknesses: by gathering so many authors under one theoretical tent, Reimer forces some uneasy comparisons. This is clearest in the sections on Friesen and Brandt; here Reimer de-emphasizes his earlier focus on "deterritorialization" as inherent in Mennonite literature in favour of close readings that stress Friesen's intra-communal problematic and Brandt's anti-patriarchal stance.

That said, Reimer's readings of Wiebe, Friesen, and Brandt are fully elaborated and illuminating, as he casts a sympathetic eye on their positions as writers simultaneously challenging two traditions: that of their own "minor" community and that of the "major" national literary culture. He accurately describes Wiebe's early novel *Peace Shall Destroy Many* as illuminating the emerging – and problematic – role of the artist in the Mennonite community. In Friesen, Reimer sees a poet wrestling with the tension between the "lyric" and the "material" in poetry, a tension that mirrors the "struggle he as a poet in Canada . . . faces in his desire to 'represent' himself, and his people, and their experiences" (66). Reimer discerns a "waiting" – a kind of anticipatory absence – in the poetry of "The Shunning," a "minor waiting that refuses the major, both thematically and stylistically" (97). Friesen

thus becomes, for Reimer, the very model of the poet as “a spokesman for a new poetics in a new land,” whose “duty . . . is to be the voice of the conflict between European arrogance and tyranny (that is, fear) and the new land’s patient, material goodness.” According to Reimer, Di Brandt’s writing is, at its core, revolutionary, encouraging its (female) readers to “join the resistance against disempowerment,” which will “result in a new and delightful singing, and the end of Mennonite Canadians’ ‘terrible God,’ whose very language hurts the innocent” (196-97).

Space does not allow me to comment properly on Reimer’s discussions of other authors, although they are generally insightful and useful starting points for further reading. There is, however, one important absence in this text, an absence that is confusing given the text’s otherwise finely nuanced nature: Reimer pays little attention to the geographically, religiously, and historically varied nature of the Mennonite community. The authors who form the core of his study certainly come from, and write against, very similar communities, but other authors fit less easily within Reimer’s generalizations about the Canadian Mennonite community. Certainly a community as fond of debate – occasionally very fractious debate – as the Mennonite community deserves to have its differences represented in a collection that claims to be comprehensive.

Reimer’s text is, nevertheless, a useful survey of the current state of Prairie Mennonite writing. It does an excellent job of scanning the horizons of this emerging field and placing it in historical and cultural contexts.

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## Sociology and Religion

David Weaver-Zercher, *The Amish in the American Imagination*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Pp. xv + 280, Hardcover, \$34.95.

It might not be immediately evident from the title that this book is not about the Amish. It is, instead, about popular images of the Amish generated by a wide variety of cultural and commercial interpreters in the United States in the twentieth century. David Weaver-Zercher’s purpose is not to expose the falsehoods or compare the veracity of

these images to the realities of Amish beliefs and practices. It is, rather, to display the uses to which Americans have put their interpretations of the Amish. Thus, the book lays out for us a mosaic of distorting mirrors. These variously-surfaced mirrors primarily reflect the motivations of their creators and employers. The total effect is a survey of an astonishing array of ideologies, often at odds with each other.

Weaver-Zercher tackles his subject chronologically, examining a series of themes, interpretive processes, and groups over the span of a century. He demonstrates how the Pennsylvania-German Society sought to contradict condescending stereotypes about the Old Orders by celebrating instead the vigorous virtues of the Amish and endeavoring "to relocate the *entire* Pennsylvania German family in the scheme of American life, thrusting it from the margin of American culture to the center of it" (23). In his chapter "Civilizing the Amish," Weaver-Zercher places later images and stories about the Amish into historical contexts, showing, for instance, how the "rising wave of interest in America's folk cultures" culminated in a "representational transition . . . in the late 1930s and early 1940s . . . that explicitly and consistently identified the Amish with a robust American past" (40). The pivotal event in this era was the East Lampeter Township dispute, in which a group of Amish farmers sought to keep their one-room schools open when Township officials wanted to send Amish pupils to a consolidated school. Weaver-Zercher shows how the case helped to associate the Amish with an icon of American cultural identity – the little red schoolhouse – and provoked many observers, themselves ambivalent about progress, into sympathy with Amish resistance.

It was not necessary to transform the Amish into nostalgic symbols of a vanishing way of rural life in order to market their image, but it certainly helped. Weaver-Zercher cleverly describes the shift from showing images of Amish people out of place in urban settings to representing them in rural surroundings; "the Amish," he says, "moved to the country in the late 1930s and early 1940s" (70). In "Consuming the Simple Life," Weaver-Zercher traces the marketing of the Amish in the post-World War II era and focuses on the 1955 musical *Plain and Fancy*, which was vastly influential in popularizing the Amish as appealingly simple folk. The musical invited outsiders to sympathize with the homespun values of the Amish, yet reaffirmed the "audience's moral sensibilities" (111) in the end.

Weaver-Zercher does not condemn mass tourism and its inevitable distortions but regards it instead as a form of play in which participants accept the artificiality of the activity and its trappings, yet derive a sense of satisfaction from a few selected signs of "authenticity." He offers a similarly differentiated reading of the contradictions inherent in commodifying the Amish, taking a largely dispassionate view of both methods and consequences.



"Defining the Faith: Mennonites and the Amish Culture Market, 1950-1975" traces the role of Herald Press as mediator and interpreter of the Amish in this era. Despite the fact that their life histories are remarkably similar, sociologist John Hostetler and novelist Clara Bernice Miller published books – both with Herald Press – during this period that express almost diametrically opposed views of the Amish. Weaver-Zercher explains this apparent contradiction cogently, delineating the contemporary tensions within the Mennonite Church regarding its position in relation to modernity and the future. These tensions are clearly exposed in the self-censorship Herald Press exercised in connection with Dan Neidermyer's 1973 novel *Jonathan* and Kenneth Reed's manuscript, "Amish Soldier," submitted the same year, but rewritten and published as *Mennonite Soldier* in 1974. Weaver-Zercher reveals how John Hostetler's behind-the-scenes interventions in the editorial debates about these books, reflected the Mennonite Church's ambivalences about the direction of Anabaptist life in America.

In one of his best chapters, "Projecting the Amish," Weaver-Zercher thoroughly and lucidly considers the controversy surrounding the filming of Peter Weir's thriller *Witness* (1985). He lays out the opposing arguments, articulated best by John Hostetler (who sought to prevent the making of the film) and Merle Good (who defended the right of the "story-teller" to tell any story of his or her choosing) and follows each argument with rigorous logic. He dissects Hostetler's claim to articulate "the Amish position" (as if there were a single such thing), while demonstrating how Hostetler massaged, manipulated, and, arguably, even generated Amish opposition behind the scenes. Weaver-Zercher contextualizes Hostetler's excessive optimism about rural life and his dubious confidence in the unshakable objectivity of sociology.

Weaver-Zercher's central argument is that the Amish have become, through their complicated twentieth-century mediations, an exceptionally useful and potent source of symbolic meanings to America as a nation. Weaver-Zercher's thorough research, his inclusion of many historical gems of fact and myth, and his dispassionate, nuanced analyses of the varied appropriations of images of the Amish make this an exceptionally solid and valuable scholarly contribution.

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Donald B. Kraybill & C. Nelson Hostetter, *Anabaptist World USA*. Scottdale, PA and Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2001. Pb. Pp. 296. \$38.99 Cdn.

*Anabaptist World USA* represents the further maturation of a concept that began with Margaret Loewen Reimer's *One Quilt Many Pieces: A Reference Guide to Mennonite Groups in Canada*. This slender volume published by the *Mennonite Reporter* went through three editions between 1983 and 1990, and presented basic statistical and descriptive information on organized Mennonite groups in Canada. Early editions divided the material into "Swiss Mennonite" and "Russian Mennonite" groupings; the third edition used national, multi-provincial and "regional" categories. Minimal information was provided on the Brethren in Christ and Hutterian Brethren.

C. Nelson Hostetter, inspired by this Canadian venture, produced *Anabaptist-Mennonites Nationwide USA* in 1997 through Masthof Press in Morgantown, PA. This 180 page volume included Mennonites, Amish and Brethren in Christ groups. After a very brief historical introduction Hostetter provided short narrative descriptions of 46 different "Anabaptist-Mennonite" groups, though some were subunits of larger bodies. The largest part of the volume included a brief state-by-state description of Mennonite groups located within each state, followed by a listing of every congregation within each state, organized by group name, but without contact information. Donald B. Kraybill wrote the Preface for this book, and clearly was taken by the concept!

The present volume has expanded coverage to all Mennonite, Amish, Brethren and Hutterite groups in the United States, including Puerto Rico. This expansion tries to be inclusive of all "Anabaptist" groups that emerged in significant measure from the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement. Donald Kraybill has emerged as the lead author, and his sociological orientation is evident in the book's numerous graphs, charts and statistical details.

Part I of *Anabaptist World USA*, a section of interpretive essays that forms 40% of the book, is the most useful feature of the book. These essays include "Anabaptist Beginnings," "Contemporary Communities," "Common Convictions," "Division and Diversity" and chapters on each of the four Anabaptist "tribes." Each chapter provides an excellent introductory-level survey that will be usefully read even by the most seasoned academic. The "Common Convictions" chapter, for example, suggests historical memory, Christocentric biblicism, believers baptism, discipleship, church as community, mutual aid, peacemaking, service ministries, church as counterculture and the Lordship of Christ as shared Anabaptist convictions.

Part II includes "Resources," featuring thumbnail sketches of almost 100 groups organized by "tribes." Mennonites are by far the

most complex tribe with almost 60 groups, though some groups are quite arbitrarily formed. A few independent Mennonite congregations (e.g. Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship) are listed in the table of groups, but are not described in a thumbnail sketch because they did not have 250 members. Some marginal Anabaptist groups, like the Apostolic Christian Church of America, were assigned to the Mennonite tribe, even though the group's historical links more often intersected with the Amish. Similarly the Conservative Mennonite Conference is "Mennonite" despite its Amish roots. A limitation of the thumbnail sketches is the narrow focus on U.S. context. For example, the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church gives no indication that any of its congregations exist in Canada, and the one Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church in Texas is said to be an outreach of a Canadian conference, but no contact information for the conference is provided. Many of the Mennonite and Amish groups extend beyond the borders of the United States, especially to Canada, but references to this are minimal.

The Resources section also includes detailed listings of groups by state, a feature that for this reader has limited usefulness. Good bibliographical information is included, although the overview "resource" section is confusingly separated from the more extensive bibliography by a section of "endnotes" found in the middle of the book.

Part III is described as a directory of congregations by group within each state, but provides only congregational name and membership information, and not contact/address information, as the term "directory" usually implies.

In summary, *Anabaptist World USA* feels like a concept that still needs further refinement. The survey articles are excellent, but the remainder of the volume contains too many puzzling quirks to feel finished. There is a whole series of short "forewords," by notable Mennonite and other leaders, which would simply be included as promotional material in most books. The organization and allocation of the church groups feels arbitrary and strained at points, and the nature of the data included in Part II may need further review – is it really helpful to know that 60% of the Anabaptist church members in Arkansas are Mennonite, but only 59% of the Arkansas Anabaptist community population is Mennonite? Finally, the "directory" of individual congregations should be enhanced with more usable information, or perhaps the directory could be integrated into Part II.

Future development of this commendable project might look toward publication on the Internet and should consider expansion of the focus beyond North America.

Sam Steiner, Librarian & Archivist  
Conrad Grebel University College

Benjamin W. Redekop and Calvin W. Redekop, eds., *Power, Authority, and the Anabaptist Tradition*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 2001. Hc. Pp. 246.

The editors are to be commended for presenting a well-integrated and thought-provoking book, encompassing nine chapters by eleven different authors, all examining the issue of power from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective.

The first two chapters provide valuable background information. First, J. Lawrence Burkholder makes a convincing case for the importance of examining power from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective. I whole-heartedly agree, but wish that his discussion would have differentiated his vision of what is needed explicitly from the important contribution already evident in John Howard Yoder's highly-influential *The Politics of Jesus*. In the second chapter, Benjamin W. Redekop provides a helpful history-of-science overview of how our understanding of power has changed over time, from Plato and Aristotle through to postmodernism and feminism. As with the first chapter, I would have appreciated a clearer critique/linkage to existing Anabaptist-Mennonite thinking.

In chapters three and four the spadework done in the first chapters starts to pay dividends, and the Mennonite perspective becomes clearer. First, historian James Stayer provides a stimulating description of the power dynamics evident during the formation of the Anabaptist movement, especially vis a vis the Catholic church and the revolt at Muenster. Then theologian Lydia Harder examines the Anabaptist-Mennonite teachings of power starting from Menno Simons (reflecting his personal struggle as a member of the Catholic clergy) through to Guy F. Hershberger (his integrated "two kingdom" theology) and John H. Yoder ("revolutionary subordination").

The next three chapters provide case studies of power dynamics at work in Anabaptist-Mennonite communities. First we get a vivid and humbling account by Jacob Loewen and Wesley Prieb of how Mennonites in South Russia struggled with issues of power between 1789-1919; well-meaning people can sometimes create abusive power structures. Then Joel Hartman provides a thoughtful analysis of the various power systems at play in the tragic story of HIV/AIDS in an Amish community. In chapter 7 sociologist Stephen Ainlay provides an interesting investigation of how power-knowledge systems, especially with reference to Mennonite periodicals, have shaped the evolution of the American Mennonite "worldview" over time.

I found chapter 8 to be especially provocative, perhaps because in their presentation from a feminist perspective Dorothy Yoder Nyce

and Lynda Nyce were sometimes not clear enough about the definitions of power/authority that they were using (occasionally it seemed as though power held by males was bad, whereas power held by women was good).

Calvin Redekop does an excellent job in his concluding chapter arguing that much work remains in order to develop and model the sorts of Anabaptist-infused power structures and systems that the rest of the world craves. The book provides a great service insofar as it (re)kindles in readers a passion toward meeting these goals.

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John D. Roth, ed., *Engaging Anabaptism: Conversations with a Radical Tradition*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001. Pb. Pp. 121. US \$19.99 Cdn. \$31.29.

This is a thought-provoking book and John Roth is to be highly commended for making it available. Thirteen Protestant and Catholic contributors write, biographically, about how their encounter with the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition has affected their thinking about Christian faith. Readers should be warned that while a lot of complimentary things are said about the tradition and they should take courage from them, they should also move on to the invitation in the critiques to become more conscious of the fact that our tradition is part of the whole Christian story.

The rediscovery of the "Anabaptist Vision" by Mennonites has, with all the good it has brought, unfortunately also produced a new variety of sectarianism. We have taken two steps forward and one backward. Perhaps the reflections of our fellow-Christians can help us deal with this loss.

Unfortunately one cannot deal with each author in a review like this. Readers need to get the book to receive the riches here available. I shall not dwell on the bouquets presented but on the warning lights offered. These come, repeatedly, at the interface between ethics and sacrament.

Ethical living based on the example of Christ has been and remains a central pillar of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. More Christians than ever now share this view. The revelation of God in Christ, in particular Cross and Resurrection, offers us a view of reality that is truly radical, especially the renunciation of the use of power for control. Readers should consider Anglican New Testament scholar

N.T.Wright's work on Jesus and the early church as well as of Roman Catholic literary critic Jack Miles.

An attending problem several writers notice here is that Mennonites tend to individualize discipleship into a personal moral code and legalism is often nearby, with the Cross being reduced to a moral symbol. A number of our writers confess that ethical Christianity is impoverished Christianity. A sacramental orientation can save it from moralism and mere human effort, for the sacraments presuppose the prior action of God to which we respond with a life of obedience.

Mennonite worship is described by one writer as rationalistic and non-aesthetic. We have virtually forgotten that Mennonites can also be sacramental. The reviewer grew up in such a church. But his experience in another Mennonite church is perhaps more typical. It was Pentecost, a major church festival, but there was no mention of it or even allusion to it.

Anabaptists in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were, and some Mennonites in the present are, convinced that a new beginning is necessary—as though the whole history and life of the larger church between the apostolic age and the present is of no account. Such a view, we should be warned, can only produce prejudice against other Christians and drive Mennonites more firmly into a sectarian mind set. This is, regrettably, also reflected in the view that the interpreter of Scripture is the contemporary gathered church. Interpretation of Scripture should certainly happen in the gathered congregation, but only while remembering that there is an enormously rich tradition of scriptural interpretation available from every century of the church's life which dare not be neglected.

Nancy Murphey tells us that the nonviolent Cross has profound implications for the Christian doctrine of creation, because the crucified One is the One through whom the world was made. This is a vital subject to which Mennonites have given virtually no attention in their theologizing. It has important implications for our attitude to the natural world.

It is wonderfully affirming to hear so many writers testify to the towering influence of John Howard Yoder and, in a somewhat warmer and more personal way, the work of Allan and Eleanor Kreider. Yoder called us with intellectual power to follow Christ in this world with eyes wide open. The Kreiders remind us always to listen to other Christians, past and present. The work of these Mennonites is an offering to Christians of other traditions, and many are listening and receiving.

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David Weaver-Zercher, ed., *Minding the Church: Scholarship in the Anabaptist Tradition*. Telford, PA: Pandora Press U.S., 2002 Co-published with Herald Press, Scottdale, PA. Pp. 280.

This is a volume of seventeen essays published as a *Festschrift* in honour of E. Morris Sider, who recently retired after a career of almost forty years as professor of church history at Messiah College. The title of the volume and the themes taken up in the essays intend to represent, in a general way, the milieu in which Professor Sider made his contribution to church and to scholarship. Each writer reflects on the intersection of Christian faith and academic pursuit from the standpoint of his or her discipline. The Anabaptist heritage is a persistent consideration throughout.

The title, *Minding the Church*, can be taken in several ways. One can think of contributing the discipline of the mind (thought, analysis, ideas) as a resource to the faith and work of the church. One can think of 'minding' as the task of nurturing or tending to the spiritual welfare of the church. One can also understand "minding" in the sense of giving heed and remaining faithful to the church. All three meanings will cross the mind of the reader who takes the time to work through these essays.

The essays are grouped under three sub-headings. Part I, on the humanities, has essays by Jeff Gundy (Literature), Caleb Miller (Philosophy), Susan Biesecker-Mast (Rhetoric), Perry Bush (History) and David L. Mosley (Music). Part II, on the social sciences, contains essays by Donald B. Kraybill (Sociology), Alvin C. Dueck (Psychology), James M. Harder (Economics), Mark W. Charlton (Political Science) and Polly Ann Brown (Education). Part III, on biblical and religious studies, has essays by Terry L. Brensinger (OT), Mary H. Schertz (NT), Lydia Neufeld Harder (Theology) and J.E. McDermond (Christian Ministries). A fourth section has responses and conclusions written by Harriet Sider Bicksler, David A Hoekema and Shirley Hershey Showalter. With the exception of one respondent, all contributors stand within the Anabaptist tradition. The majority of the writers teach in Mennonite or Brethren in Christ colleges and seminaries. This fact, coupled with the autobiographical approach throughout, gives the set of essays a common focus and creates a unique overall impact.

A recurring theme throughout is the challenging and difficult relationship that pertains between the academic world and the church community. Biblical scholars and theologians find they are often not taken seriously by the very institution – the church – which they love and feel called to serve. Some even say they are feared by the church.

Those engaged in the humanities and the social sciences face the constant challenge of proving the relevance of their pursuits to the church. Yet virtually every writer is tenacious about the crucial importance of the intersection of the church with the academy.

This *Festschrift* offers an excellent resource for aspiring and seasoned scholars and educators within the Anabaptist tradition. Board members and administrators, who are burdened with the task of shaping Anabaptist-oriented colleges and universities in our time, would also find the book to be stimulating for their task.

Here and there throughout the book there are references to the influence of E. Morris Sider on students and colleagues. A page and a half of biography is included at the end. This reviewer would have welcomed the inclusion of an essay or two from the writings of Sider himself. Nonetheless, this is an intriguing set of essays—a “must” for professors and administrators of Anabaptist oriented educational institutions. Every one of the essays provided thoughtful stimulation to this reviewer. Taken as a whole, this is a timely volume whose service goes far beyond offering a gesture of gratitude to a fine scholar and teacher in our midst.

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