

## Book Reviews

Carol Penner, ed., *Women & Men: Gender in the Church* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1998). Pp. 152, \$14.79.

Joan Yoder concludes her chapter in this volume by clearly identifying the paradigm shift gender roles and relationships are currently undergoing. It is not an easy time! It is a time of exploring “new models of life-giving mutuality” (138), observes Yoder. With longing, hope, fascination, and wonder she invites us to listen and hear the stories of four individuals, to sense their peace, happiness, and courage as they pursue wholeness for themselves and others. As these life-giving experiences are shared, Yoder creates and protects a sense of being on holy ground and suggests that upon hearing such stories “Perhaps the best we can do is to say amen” (138).

This study has a similar impact on readers who are interested in the topic, issues, and personal stories of what it means to be women and men in the church. If readers are looking for a book offering final answers, you will be taken by surprise. If however, you are interested in exploring assumptions about gender roles and in shaping, or more accurately re-shaping, a theology of gender, this book promises to enliven your head, heart and spirit.

The Women’s Concerns committee of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) have worked on issues of abuse and this volume emerges from that context. After having published several resource materials focusing on what to do after abuse has occurred, MCC is looking for ways to deal with abuse prevention. The project provides a forum for conversation and a stimulus for new thinking.

This book is intended as a practical guide offering direction toward a theology of gender and I believe it begins to take the reader on that journey. Carol Penner sets the course as the editor for this study guide. Penner has designed an interesting collection of writing from various authors exploring, with insight and candor, issues around gender and faith.

The format for the book is user friendly, for individual or small group study. The 13 chapters follow a standard study guide approach: content based on the authors expertise and experience followed by a prayer, a few questions to facilitate discussion and a listing of resources to extend the study on that specific issue. The chapters are distinct units, the continuity lies in that each addresses gender issues albeit with a different focus.

The first of two chapters focus on: "Gender in the Old Testament" and "Gender in the New Testament." Wilma Ann Bailey surveys the Hebrew Bible at a rapid pace, using the scholarship of Phyllis Bird to point out language and text understandings. "We know little about the realities of everyday life on the level of gender in ancient Israel, and we must be careful not to impose our own socially conditioned notions of gender roles on that society" (14), Bailey wisely advises the reader. In extending her study of gender in the Old Testament, Bailey suggests intriguing questions raised about God and gender. Both chapters are well written. However, given the quantity of material to be covered in considering gender in the biblical context and the significance of biblical study from a Mennonite faith tradition, extending this focus would benefit the educational and conversational purposes of this book.

The subsequent chapters deal with a variety of issues: gender bodies, violence in gender relationships, a black women's voice, fathering, raising nonsexist children, youth and gender relationships, and gender in the church.

"Living in our created bodies," written by Karen Schlichting and Aiden Schlichting Enns, confront the reader and the church to appreciate and celebrate the goodness in our bodies. Our bodies have usually not been something we discuss, particularly in the church. Carol Penner's chapter entitled "Physical and Sexual Abuse: Violence in Gender Relationships" offers an excellent reality check for the Christian church, "in spite of the fact that so many people have experienced sexual and physical violence, it is a sad fact that many congregations have never openly discussed healing practical suggestions. Kattie Funk Wiebe's "Gender and Aging: Male or Female—What Difference Does it Make?" and Atlee Beechy's "Raising Nonsexist Children" are outstanding for their integration of biblical interpretation, theological understanding, and being rooted in experience.

Regina Shands Stoltzfus affirms, in "A Black Women's Voice", that "We need to give the truth in ourselves and the relationships lost..." (74). She uniquely identifies the joy, pain, and craziness of living within the intersection of race, gender, and class. It is striking to note the voices not included in this study of gender, for example, Hispanic, aboriginal, lesbian, and gay. The development of a theology of gender would be greatly enhanced by inviting, hearing, and dialoguing with myriad and diversity of voices in the church.

Carol Penner is to be congratulated for encouraging listening and dialogue around issues of gender and faith. The strength of this study is in the personal stories of women and men, who challenge, invite, confront, connect, advocate, and encourage the reader. Penner's collection is a welcome addition to peace theology, and is suitable for class study, small group studies, and personal reflection.

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Albert N. Keim, *Harold S. Bender, 1897–1962* (Scottsdale, PA and Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1998). Pp. 590. \$23.99 US, \$34.25 CA.

The only time I met Harold Bender was at Goshen one Saturday in July 1961. Once he ascertained that, although a graduate of Juniata College, I was not a member or a former member of the Church of the Brethren and that my non-pacifist ideas were not those of an apostate from one of the historic peace churches, he accepted me very graciously as a future historian of Anabaptism. He directed my attention to the newly discovered treatise on the sword written in Moravia in 1529 by Clemens Adler and encouraged me to write about it. This first substantial tract on Anabaptist nonresistance has only been given the thorough attention it deserves in the 1990s by Werner Packull in *Hutterite Beginnings*. The meeting with Bender occurred just before my first year of research in Germany in 1961–62. Late in 1962, when I returned from Germany and began a teaching year at the Church of the Brethren's Bridgewater College in Virginia, I was shocked to learn that Harold Bender had recently died. I was also shocked at the comment of Academic Dean Miller of Eastern Mennonite College when I mentioned Bender and my sense of loss at his death: "Now maybe somebody else will be able to do something." Albert Keim's engrossing biography explains much about how Harold Bender became an almost legendary figure by the end of his life, but one about whom other leading Mennonites always felt a considerable ambivalence.

One senses the biographer's frustration at his inability to tell more about his subject's "inner man." Keim muses in the epilogue, which serves as a conclusion, that Bender "was never able to create a boundary between his personal and public life. As a result, his public life became all-consuming." Bender's great energies and considerable ambitions led him into many substantial undertakings and projects: his successive deanships of Goshen College and Goshen College Bible School, his editorships of the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* and the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, his perennial secretaryship of the Mennonite Central Committee executive committee, his presidency of the Mennonite World Conference. Bender appears to have been continually determined to expand his territory and his influence and almost incapable of withdrawing from a position of leverage. As a result he was always over-committed, years behind on his scholarship and writing projects, frequently absent or ill-prepared for his classes. His characteristic reply to suggestions that he delegate or share or cut back on his many responsibilities was to propose that an additional assistant or a super-competent secretary was the instrument he needed to complete his projects. There was a slipshod "busyness" that marked his years of influence. The result was continual tensions and turf-wars between Bender and his co-workers. As Keim remarks, he was often at sword's point with such important peers as Orié Miller at the Mennonite Central Committee or Cornelius Krahn, co-editor of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*; he was somewhat unpopular with

Goshen College faculty and students; and he never received his church's highest honor, that of moderator of the Mennonite Church's General Conference. Yet in his day he was the world's best-known Mennonite, with contacts to all the Mennonite groups in Canada and the United States, as well as to the Mennonite churches of Europe, a moving force behind the Mennonite conscientious objector stand in World War II, in European post-war relief and refugee resettlement, a strong pacifist voice in Protestant ecumenical dialogue, and the most important mover and shaker behind the flowering of Anabaptist scholarship. As Keim realizes, for all his limitations, Bender was too big a person to belittle.

Tenacious loyalty to his (old) Mennonite Church and to Goshen College were the dominant themes of Bender's life. The closing of Goshen College in 1923–24 by church authorities cast a shadow over the beginning of his career. He had graduated from Goshen in 1918 and enjoyed a remarkably broad liberal arts education, as the relatively independent institutional status of "old Goshen" permitted. But Midwestern Goshen had long been a target of the most conservative elements of the Mennonite Church concentrated in the east, in Virginia and Pennsylvania. It was pilloried for ill-defined worldliness, liberalism or modernism, and when it got into financial troubles the church authorities closed it and conducted a faculty purge. Complicating this picture was a Young People's Conference initiated by Mennonite relief workers in post-World War I France which challenged the church authorities. Bender did not go to France because he was then in the midst of a conservative theological education, including study at Princeton with J. Gresham Machen, but in 1922 he was elected to head the YPC. He joined the reorganized Goshen College in 1924 despite considerable reservations about the church's abridgement of its independence, with no personal allegiance to "plain clothes," and a self-image as a responsible "progressive" who was nevertheless loyal to the church of his heritage. The establishment of the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* in 1927 was a countermove (or a desertion) by Bender of the "progressive" group around the *Christian Exponent*, which from 1924 assembled "old Goshen" alumni disillusioned by the closure and liberal elements of the YPC. Concentrating on Anabaptist-Mennonite history and tradition was a way of evading the contentious fundamentalist-modernist theological polemics that were then raging in Mennonite circles and in Protestant America generally. In this way Bender designed a "middle way" for the Mennonite Church which remarkably anticipated the Protestant evangelical movement of recent decades. Theologically conservative, it eschewed fundamentalist anti-modernist polemics, and in accord with Mennonite tradition it upheld Christian social action as the fruits of faith. This was the formula for ministerial training at the Goshen College Bible School when it was established in 1944. The Mennonite Church was not in Bender's view to be burdened with a ministry that believed somewhat differently from its lay people. But by the 1950s the same generational revolt occurred that Bender had managed to manoeuvre around in the 1920s. A Concern Group, mostly composed of post-

World War II relief workers, with John Howard Yoder as its most articulate spokesman, challenged what it regarded as the authoritarian structures of the Mennonite Church. It cited Anabaptist history and Bender's own manifesto "The Anabaptist Vision" to call for a more congregational church polity. Bender did not respond in an authoritarian way as did his fathers' generation, but he evaded Yoder's demand for "binding dialogue." In the opinion of the younger men he listened more or less politely but then carried on as before.

This is the substance of Keim's interpretation of Bender's pivotal role in the evolution of North American Mennonite self-consciousness from the 1920s to the 1950s. The narrative is thoroughly documented and rich in incident, but very well organized and pleasing to read. In this fine book Bender has found a biographer worthy of him.

If a mild criticism can be ventured, it is not that Bender has been idealized but that he has been treated a bit ungenerously, seen too often through the eyes of contemporaries whose irritations were understandable but nevertheless a bit small-minded. His contribution to scholarship certainly cannot be judged by missed deadlines and unfulfilled promises to Herald Press. The Grebel biography was remarkably good—and here I cite the judgement of Hans-Jurgen Goertz, who just now has a book-length essay on Grebel to mark the five hundredth anniversary of his birth. Certainly Bender's biography lacks the social history context that a contemporary historian might give it, but it understood Christian humanism and the Reformation as did the best scholarship of its time. The *Mennonite Encyclopedia* was a half-accidental outcome of the post-war rescue of the *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, but that in itself was a generous and worthy endeavor, and the ten years that Harold and Elizabeth Bender spent on the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* could not have been better spent had Harold Bender started from scratch to produce a scholarly monograph on American Mennonite history. And the "Anabaptist Vision" was a very intelligent epitome of Anabaptist scholarship, wedding Troeltschian ideas about the sect-type of Protestant Christianity and contemporary preoccupation with nonresistance with a Christological presentation of the very authentic centuries-old Mennonite tradition of holiness. In the way that a Picasso sketch sometimes, somehow is worth more than a mural that has taken years to construct, this little essay, written hurriedly for an occasion, and documented afterward, has its enduring worth. The house of scholarship has many mansions and it would have been poorer without Bender's residence.

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Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson, *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 1998). Pp. 444, Cloth, \$34.95.

In November 1992, novelist Rudy Wiebe gets a letter from Yvonne Johnson, an inmate of the Kingston Prison for Women serving a life sentence for first-degree murder. Yvonne Johnson has read Wiebe's novel, *The Temptations of Big Bear*, and wants to know how this white man knows and understands so much about her great-great-grandfather Chief Big Bear. No writer would be able to resist such an overture and a six-year collaboration follows in which Johnson conveys her story through writing, speaking, and tape recordings to Wiebe, who investigates and researches the public record for supporting evidence. *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* is the result.

In 1961 Yvonne Johnson was born in Montana to a white father and a Cree mother. She was born with a cleft palate, which made it almost impossible for her to communicate even with her own mother:

It was like being deaf but still hearing, speaking but speechless....I could not ask questions, just puzzle everything around inside my head, dreaming it, bouncing it back and forth, without any guidance to help me understand....My mind was my best, really my only companion. (30)

In 1991, she was convicted of first-degree murder in the death of a man she and her companions believed was a child molester in Wetaskiwin, Alberta. This book is Yvonne's chance to tell her story. To Rudy Wiebe's caution that "...no story is ever only yours alone," she responds:

"Maybe not *only* mystery—but it is *mine*. Others maybe won't agree, but I want to tell my life the way I see it....Brother against sister, sister against sister, we fight, we shift from one clique to another of gossip and unspoken accusations. Once my sister Minnie said to me, 'So you got fucked, huh! So forget it, you'll get fucked again.' But I can't live like that....just act as if nothing happened....We all know it's not right, it's no family mystery any more, and yet the denial goes on and on....That's a mystery to most of the world—why silence? why denial? But it's no mystery to the abused.

"Predators and victims. That's why my family drinks to excess..." (24)

This book is the story of Yvonne's journey from silence to speech.

*Stolen Life* is a difficult book to read, but not because of the dense prose found in some of Wiebe's novels which forces the reader to sit up straight on a hard backed chair in order to reach the end of a sentence. (Rudy's friend, Don Kerr, once quipped that it had taken him six hours to get off the first page of *Big Bear*.) No, *Stolen Life* is a compelling page turner, but the relentless, unblinking account of Yvonne Johnson's life takes the reader places most people would rather not go and I had to budget my reading of the book according to levels of emotional energy rather than available time.

The power of this book lies in that it refuses the reader the luxury of saying, "What awful lives *those* people live." Yvonne's words are too perceptive, too

honest, too true in their resonance with emotions we have felt, thoughts we have pondered. Are her sister Minnie's words of advice quoted above so different from platitudes spouted by parents, coaches, and *Borscht for the Bottom Line* motivational books? Are the thought processes going on in the minds of Yvonne and her companions on the night of the murder so different from calls for harsher penalties and capital punishment? Are the attitudes of Lyle Schmidt, who rapes Yvonne on the night of the murder and then testifies against her, so different from attitudes found under the veneer of our civility and the institutions we support? Would Yvonne have been convicted of first-degree murder if her status in the community had been more elevated? Does truth matter in our society or is believability the only criterion we can use?

Yvonne Johnson never asks for the reader's pity—but insists that her version of the story be told—even the parts of the story Rudy has to coax out of her. Mostly the delineation between Yvonne's words and Rudy's is clear, although there are sections where the transition from third-person exposition to first-person narrative is so subtle that I was startled to realize that Yvonne's written language is often as stylistically sophisticated as Rudy's. Her voice demonstrates a range of language from the gritty skid row street talk of the oral transcripts to her eloquent, self-analytical writing influenced by her prison reading of Carl Jung.

It is a tribute to Wiebe's talent as a writer and collaborator that he has managed to keep his own voice from intruding upon and controlling the story. Rudy Wiebe functions well as the servant of Yvonne Johnson's story.

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Miriam Toews, *A Boy of Good Breeding* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998).  
Paperback, Pp. 265, \$19.95 Cdn., \$ 15.95 U.S.

Reading Miriam Toews' *A Boy of Good Breeding* is a pleasure. It's fun, has a strong narrative impulse and good dialogue with plenty of comedic touches along the way. With this second novel coming hot on the heels of Toews' well-received first novel, *Summer of My Amazing Luck*, it's possible to see her progress as a writer.

*A Boy of Good Breeding* is more soundly, if conventionally, structured. It comes complete with a beginning, middle and end, including rising action, climax and resolution. The characters, especially the male characters, are more fully developed than in her previous work, though fathers are still a rare and undependable breed.

The best of these is Hosea Funk, mayor of the small town of Algren, population 1,500. Hosea is a slightly odd fellow who has never met his father. Apparently his mother Euphemia hid her pregnancy and, after giving birth, announced to her startled family that “a mysterious man on a horse gave me his baby.”

This is close to the truth. She hadn't said no when a mysterious stranger appeared to her as she was on the way to the outhouse one night during a dance nine months previous. The stranger impregnated her, and vanished in the night on his horse, long before he became Prime Minister John Baert. When Hosea finds out who his father is, he is anxious to meet this man and has a plan to make it happen.

Prime Minister Baert has promised to visit the smallest town in Canada on July 1, Canada Day. Hosea is determined his town will win that honour. Much of the fun comes from following Hosea's efforts to ensure the town's population is as close to 1,500 as possible. Any less and Algren loses its status as a town.

Underneath all of this, there is more going on. Knute returns to Algren from the city with her daughter Summer Feelin'. Max, Knute's old boyfriend and Summer Feelin's father, chooses the same month to return from his travels, creating the expected complications, conflict, pathos and potential for humor.

Meanwhile Mayor Funk can't decide whether his girlfriend from the city, Lorna Garden, should move in with him, as it might affect the town's population and his chances to meet his father, the Prime Minister. The decision is complicated by her announcement of pregnancy, and Hosea has fatherhood to look forward to. He starts considering names for the expected child, suggesting “Areola” for starters, and in the ensuing conversation Hosea asks rhetorically, “well every name means something doesn't it?” This seems an important question in the novel.

I struggled at first with names Toews chose to give her characters. Names such as Summer Feelin', Bertha Plenty (about to have triplets), Knute's mother Euphemia Funk, Lorna Garden and even Hosea. They strained credibility and seemed to point to allegory rather than comedy.

The names are choices Toews made consciously, though it's sometimes hard to tell whether it's the act of naming or the name chosen that's important. Chance plays a large part in naming throughout the novel. Knute's last name is Corea-McCloud, given to her parents accidentally by the Justice of Peace, because her parents were in a hurry to get away from her father chasing them with a shotgun. Hosea is named by his grandmother who takes a bobby pin out of her hair and sticks it in the family bible at random.

At one point Knute and her friend Marilyn talk about Lorna's last name:



“‘Garden’? said Marilyn. ‘Weird name. Garden of Eden, forbidden fruit. What’s his name? Hosea? Strange biblical setup if you ask me. Can I meet him?’”

So we are given Hosea going back to the Garden; not just to paradise, but to the forbidden fruit, and so to fatherhood.

The theme of the single mother and the absent or abandoning father is carried over from Toew’s first novel. In this book, two out of five fathers are on the scene. Max’s father is dead, Knute’s father is dying, and Hosea’s father is the Prime Minister, unaware of Hosea’s existence.

The other two, Max and Hosea, are very much present in Algren. Hosea, though only an expectant father, is sympathetically portrayed despite his eccentricities, and, it would seem, will be a good father.

Max, the father of Summer Feelin’, returns to see his daughter and to see Knute. Max has come back to be a father even if “it feels weird,” and just maybe Knute’s partner. Experience has shown them both that sadness may come from freedom as easily as happiness, and they can’t go back to innocence again.

There is more substance in *A Boy of Good Breeding* than might first meet the eye. The novel is a quick read, even a page-turner, fuelled by the reader’s desire to find out whether Algren is selected as Canada’s smallest town. And, yes, it is a very funny book. I’ll never think of tempo or dynamic markings and piano practice quite the same way again.

Humor, however, is not always just for laughs. It can serve as a mask for sadness, a defense, a tension release, even as an aggressive impulse, or a way to release smaller tolerable levels of sadness at a time. Toews is pretty direct about which of these might apply to her own storytelling. Near the end of the book in a dream of Hosea’s, Knute’s mother says: “I like my stories happy, the sadness comes creeping out of the cracks in the story like blood, happy stories are the saddest” (265).

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Patrick Friesen, *A Broken Bowl* (London: Brick Books, 1997). Paperback, Pp. 132. \$12.95; and *st. mary at main* (Winnipeg: The Muses Company, 1998). Paperback, Pp. 94.

After *Blasphemer's Wheel*, Patrick Friesen forgot how to write poetry. At least that's how it seemed to me. This music, the Biblical cadences, the beautiful sudden images marking precise, breathtaking moments of insight, even the crafted cross-genre possibilities of the long poem, all these disappeared. What we heard from this seasoned prairie ex-poet after that was, well, blasphemy, poetically speaking: a cacophony, a jagged catalogue of grunts, cries, shouts, strings of out-of-focus images too large for the page, huge generalizations, encyclopedic lists of grandeur and decay, a long drawn-out lament for the loss of civilization, of hope, of meaning, a huge sequence of it collected here under the title, appropriately—if modestly—of *A Broken Bowl*.

This violent breaking open, breaking down, was I think necessary in Friesen's poetics, and perhaps in his life. There comes a moment where you realize that words are not going to save you, that poetry, despite its power to move, to transform, to uplift you into the realm of dream and desire, is impotent after all against mortality, the relentless destruction of the earth as we practice it these days, against death.

And if this moment happens to coincide with the ending of a millennium, with the consciousness of an age coming to a close, with the weight of the terrible violence of 1000 years bearing down on you, adding up to little more than a history of terrible suffering, of unbelievable human cruelty in a rough world, the impact on the practice of beauty and affirmation is unbearable.

What to do after that? Scream, cry, throw things, rage, rage against everything. Yes. And then what? There is something childish in the extended tantrum that is this book. Something belatedly adolescent. Defying all sense of propriety and well-being, past the recognizable dimensions of mid-life angst. A willing descent into darkness, understood here to be the darkness of the age. "*I am the black dog that follows you home that sleeps beneath the lilac hedge until the sun rises the dog that pauses in a shadow while you stop to reconsider your life the black dog that terrorizes you in a dream.*" This is Friesen's private underworld, splayed out to reveal the century's underside, "sarajevo, auschwitz, soweto, hiroshima, kanewake..." the list of places consecrated by atrocity rolls on through the poems, accompanied by the detritus of discarded lives: "scattered photos beneath the bridge/a rag doll and a bottle in a paper bag."

I feel ambivalent about the results. It's true there's something exhilarating about this breaking out of genre, out of lyric, into the unshaped aesthetic of exhaustion and ugliness. "*I am the ripper the first true terrorist... I am your family nightmare... I am the killer with his maul waiting behind the door a silhouette at your window I am the monster you dream with your secret name.*" There is raw energy here which is clearly a departure for Friesen, into a bigger,

deeper, broader voicing of things. It is an important development for a poet who has worked with a fairly narrow (and eloquent) palette of imagery and emotion. It transplants him radically, it seems to me, from the place of his first poetic vision, the pastoral pre-industrial Mennonite landscape with its still strong belief in the incantatory power of language, into an inarticulate post-industrial decaying urban environment. The poet becomes prophet, or perhaps dirge, speaking for the century, summing up for us the detritus of the age and its disappointments on the eve of the millennium.

On the other hand, there is a certain cheating in this work, emotionally and imagistically speaking: “We are romans with our headaches and anxiety we are a trivial people brutish and blind... there is murder in the streets hostages and spectators strippers become naked again and again...” The consistent lapsing into the universal and the generic — “we worship everything nothing is sacred...” — leaves me frequently untouched. It’s hard to recreate a sense of “the masses,” as we experience them on the television news every night, in poetry, without also recreating that televised sense of superficial response to them. Speak for yourself, I feel like saying often to this disembodied raging voice, get hold of yourself, find a piece of ground your feet can touch, so your vision can clear and you can speak again with sanity to us.

Alienation, despair, even madness, after all, are not new themes for us. They have been the defining motifs of this century, and what I want, in the mist of the “wreckage” that is forever our world now, and beyond and through that adolescent breaking out into rage and freedom, which is also so much part of the aesthetic of modernism, is an answering back, a gathering together, beyond despair, into adult, parental responsibility for this world we have fathered and mothered, and have to take care of now. This is the message I have been hearing from my students, the present generation of emerging adults, through at least the last decade: despair is passe, we were born into it, yawn, give us news, something that can take us through and beyond the ending of this worn-out calendar and your own worn-out middle age, offer us the possibility of belief in our own future. Somehow, I think they’re right. Despair is the privilege of the young. If you survive it, you lucky devil, you owe the account of your survival tricks to pass on, if nothing else.

Friesen, the anti-poet, in all his raging, wants this too, “something clean/ something still left/some last good in us, “though he reaches for hope with only the greatest of ambivalences, his final words, like the rest laced with bitterness, “a moment of sorrow/ in our disarray... *the usual crockery*.”

Friesen’s newest book, *st mary at main*, is perhaps a vindication of that mad poetic journey to the underworld. His poetic ear is back; the famous Friesen rhythms dance through the words; there is love, palpably, shimmering in every image, every intimate declaration. I’m not saying that beauty is worth more than ugliness in poems, or that love is a more worthy subject to write about than hatred, and perhaps truly you must have the one in order to have the other. It’s rather that the images fit the words again; there is a strong sense of the particular

life of the body, the senses, the emotions, lived out in a real, full-bodied place. There's a feast here, in fact, for the poetic appetite; a lovely dark undertone lacing every shade of light.

It was time someone immortalized the vibrant cultural life of Winnipeg. It has taken this lonesome, strongly independentist (to use a Frank Davey coinage), often poetically antagonistic (and lately moved to Vancouver) artist to give us, at last, a portrait of this city of artists, the home and playground of so many important writers and painters and musicians and playwrights and filmmakers. Perhaps it's not surprising; despite his dissident ways, Friesen was a catalyst and key figure in the prairies freelance writing community for more than two decades, mentoring younger writers, organizing reading series (long before it had become the trend), chairing the Manitoba Writer's Guild board. (I can't help thinking of this community-building aspect of his career as Mennonite in origin and orientation, whatever he would call it. Many observers have commented on the coincidence of the high incidence of Mennonite writers and strong community spirit in the contemporary Manitoba writing scene.)

Frank McCourt in 1949 called Winnipeg the cultural centre of Canada city, because of the number of important writers it had produced. The joke in Toronto used to be that all its important writers had come from Winnipeg (or maybe this was a joke only in Winnipeg). It is a tradition, which has flourished since then, except that nowadays many artists, even the successful ones, stay. It is a community unparalleled in Canada in its energetic interdisciplinarity and enthusiastic support for artistic expression — socially, if not economically. The recent exodus of established writers, Friesen, Sandra Birdsell, David Bergen and Ken Brand among them, signals perhaps the canary song of economic viability for the art, at least over the long haul, in Manitoba. If so, Friesen's loving celebration of Winnipeg's artistic scene in these poems carries more political weight than it overtly proposes.

It is a portrait filled with love and a poignant wealth of detail, thoroughly satisfying to this nostalgic reader (who recently left Winnipeg also, for the bread and butter promise of Ontario), homesick for the cafes of Corydon Avenue, the Red River, the huge blue prairie sky, the Canada geese flying by:

This is a city of visions  
 you don't pass through lightly  
 the city of wiseman and proch  
 livesay and breau  
 their echo on the famished streets

...

This city is hardly here  
 only a tough mirage  
 an oasis for nomads  
 drawn to its radiant core

this ain't vienna with lotte lemya in the alley with carbaret in its blood  
 this is where the ghosts are waiting as the rain dance dies

....  
 we are ophelias and lears  
 we are starlings and purple strife  
 beautiful in our homelessness  
 a white wind from another land  
 the falling seeds of manna  
 we are the heroes of our imagination  
 dreaming winnipeg where the rivers meet  
 and building our stage there

We are no longer in Earle Birney's newly minted Canada here, haunted only by its lack of ghosts. This is a city softening into middle age; with its fine-tuned layered attentions to the present and growing awareness of the other, and of death, and at the same time beginning to turn, to look back, at its memories, its "underground cities," its "tremors on the rails," a dark melody of grief running through each reminiscence, like a heart murmur.

Rosemary Sullivan compares the book to Hart Crane's *The Bridge* or Lorca's *Poet in New York*. I agree. It's that kind of profound celebration of a place which by its haunting clarity becomes for us everywhere. This is Friesen's finest writing yet, and what he will be most gratefully remembered by, this portrait of love for the windswept city, precariously perched on the edge of the prairies, with its extremes of cold and heat, its austere northern beauty and inner city stench, its artists drumming against the open sky, its poet dreaming benediction: "doesn't matter marijke because it's enough to be here in the improbability of this world."

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John Weier, *Coils of the Yamuna* (Fredericton: Broken Jam Press, 1998). Soft Cover, \$14.95.

John Weier's recently published travel journal, *Coils of the Yamuna*, traces the author's experiences in Northern India during the winter of 1995. On the surface the circumstances surrounding the writing of the journal are unremarkable, particularly so in the context of the 1990s. No longer much interested in the religion of his Mennonite forefathers, John Weier is, however, now captivated by the mysteries of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam as



the truth about India depends upon the bias of the observer, particularly so when he or she comes into contact with an alien culture. Even more evident, however, is the author's unwillingness in the space of a three-week journey to make judgements about anything concerning the world before him. His comments dated February 5 as he flies enroute from London to Delhi are typical:

How dare we? Where do we think we're going? What will we do  
dropped into the heart of this strange continent, gawk at those Indian  
lives as though they were artifacts at any tourist's disposal?

Then when he does venture disapproval the writer, true perhaps to the inbred guilt so prevalent in the Mennonite psyche, frantically backtracks in his efforts to be fair. Note the entry dated February 16, after he describes Indian poverty:

How we hate beggars.  
How white, how western we really were.

These things may all be true. Or they may not. You can try your own  
imagination.

The life Susan and I observe in India is hard to describe, even to  
conceive. We think of it as poverty. Dirty. What do we really  
know? What is poverty?

It is ultimately with a sense of relief that John Weier and his wife, Susan, step back into the safe confines of an Air Canada flight on the return journey to Canada. He feels that he knows now where home really is. It is Canada, that is all. As for India, tentative as ever in his conclusion, he says in his March 13 entry:

I have found no  
good reason for my preoccupations  
with India; what brought me there, when  
I will return....

To conclude, one has the feeling that *Coils of the Yamuna*, so aptly named for the twisting and turning movement of a north Indian River, is a noble experiment. It attempts to come to grips with a difficult subject in a variety of ways, but it does not really succeed. How is it possible for anyone to succeed in capturing the spirit of India in a 97-page journal devoted to a three-week trip? Or, more accurately, how is it possible for anyone to encapsulate in a volume so slim the inevitable tangle of emotions that India must arouse in even the most sophisticated traveler?

David H. Riesen  
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Ab Douglas Driediger, *No Dancing God: Mennonite Stories* (Kelowna, BC: Rutgers Publications, 1998). Softcover, Pp. 143.

Older readers will remember Ab Douglas as a suave broadcast journalist who appeared regularly on CTV and CBC news programmes in the 1960s and '70s. For years he was a foreign correspondent in Moscow, as well as in other locations abroad. Few people knew then that his real surname was Driediger and that he was the son of Russian-Mennonite parents who came to Canada in the twenties and settled on a farm in south-western Manitoba. After further careers as a teacher of journalism at the University of Regina and as a media consultant, Douglas, now semi-retired, is trying his hand at fiction.

The fifteen stories in this collection "hover in the twilight zone between reality and fiction," as the author states in his Introduction. Most of the stories are frankly autobiographical while several others seem to be more freely invented, although still based on the world Driediger grew up in during the period of the '30s through the '50s. The setting of these stories is a Mennonite farming community tied to an "English" town quite alien to the Russian-Mennonite immigrants.

What I like about these stories is their honesty, candor and unpretentiousness. In tone and style they remind me of Ab Douglas's straightforward, clear but always sympathetic reportorial manner. As a reporter Douglas never tried to "milk" a situation emotionally, as I recall, and while he was always empathetically involved he never lapsed into sentimentality. These short stories have the same virtues and are certainly not lacking in literary quality.

Nor are they, as stories set in childhood, adolescence and young manhood often are, mere self-indulgent evocations of a past spun out in the gossamer of nostalgia. The author is concerned to establish a solid sense of community, as indicated in his opening background sketch "A Sense of Time." The town of Kirkaldy, with its mixture of Protestant churches and Anglo-Saxon prairie culture, comes across as an often puzzling, self-contained world to which the pious, socially restrained Mennonites have to adapt as best they can.

The stories deal with such typically Mennonite themes and subjects as the soul-saving pressures put on reluctant teen-agers, the wartime prejudice against Mennonites for being "German," a teenage love affair spoiled by incompatible lifestyles coming between the lovers, and the complex problem of coming to terms with a patriarchal father who disapproves of even the most innocent of non-Mennonite social events such as a high school curling bonspiel. For the most part the stories are interestingly told, although a few verge on the pedestrian. In two of the strongest stories an adolescent boy develops a sensitive, inward-looking relationship with older, decidedly non-patriarchal men. In "Be A Gooda Boy," Ol' Rock, the town blacksmith, is an Italian outsider to whom the young Mennonite feels drawn in a sensitive bond of trust and casual friendship. In "The Gospel According to Duke," the boy is befriended by an English remittance man, an outspoken eccentric who teaches him some of the



inconsistencies and hypocrisies of born-again Christianity—it's repressive, inhuman side, so to speak.

The thematic core of this interesting collection are the three consecutive stories which depict the development of Ike Doerksen from a naively pious farm boy to an intellectually emancipated young man who can no longer take his Mennonite faith at face value and decides to go into teaching instead of the ministry his mother had chosen for him. During the war Ike is denied the C.O status he seeks because he botches his court appearance, while his more knowing friend Pete, a "worldly" type, gets his C.O status without trouble. However, at the Altbach Bible School after the war, Ike is fortunate enough to have a non-Mennonite teacher of Greek who shows the him how to resolve his doubts about blind, unquestioning Mennonite piety with its stultifying effect on his spiritual and intellectual life. The wise Dr. Heinemann, however, has a final word of advice for Ike: "Don't throw away good customs and traditional vlaues, even a faith that turns out to be based on mythology and mysticism, unless you can replace them with something of value."

There is ample evidence in these stories that the author has followed his own character's advice. If there is a master theme here it is that in today's world it is possible for Mennonites to function successfully in the "world" out there, to have public non-Mennonite careers without losing the essential values and beliefs which form the traditional Mennonite ethnic nexus, a stable personal base from which to engage a world that formerly seemed alien and menacing.

A book such as this again reminds us of how much Canadian-Mennonite fiction in English has enlarged its ground since Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many* started it all almost four decades ago.

Al Reimer  
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Fred Kniss, *Disquiet in the Land: Cultural Conflict in American Mennonite Communities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997). Softcover, Pp. xiii, 257.

This is an important book for scholars of Mennonite society. This is so even though the book engages the wider sociology of American religion rather than Mennonite scholarship. And it is so even though one of Kniss's central arguments really is not new. Non-Mennonite reviewers may be impressed that "the so-called 'quiet in the land' Mennonites were [not] quiet—they fought like cats and dogs"; Mennonites scholars have long lamented "Tauferkrankheit," that is, the Mennonite tendency to schism. The four volumes of the *Mennonite Experience in America* series, for example, are filled of references to division,

defrockings, disagreements, derisiveness. Ironically, Kniss's book is more positive about Mennonite attempts to resolve conflict, through such instruments as third party "investigating committees," than some official church histories. The book is important, too, even though the subject is not American Mennonites per se, but the "Mennonite Church," that is, "M.C." congregations in four states. The usefulness of Kniss's book lies in its remarkably ambitious portrayal and innovative analysis of conflict within the Mennonite Church.

The portrayal of church conflict comprises the first part of the book. Here Kniss mines a rich collection of letters, diaries and church minutes to discuss the nature of conflict over time. Those records suggest four specific eras—1870–1906; 1907–1934; 1935–1958, 1959–1985—when schism and disagreement was most pronounced. These eras were linked to "changes in the larger American cultural environment" [3] and to an evolving culture of conflict, different in intensity, aim, and outcome. Through quantitative analysis Kniss asserts how often conflict was initiated by innovationists and protectionists, by antiauthoritarian and proauthoritarian, and by accommodationist and separatist forces; he also shows how often challenges to authority withered away, were defeated, resulted in schism, led to compromise or ended in victory. Such a survey allows for numerous insights: "progressives were...willing to confront [traditional] authority, especially after its failures during [the first World] war, but they were not likely to win" [57]; "antiauthority conflicts" accounted for 57% of all conflicts early on in the century, but only 22% at mid century [64]; after mid century "the peak period of internal conflict exactly coincided with the peak years of...the Vietnam War" [85] for when "the centre no longer held, traditionalists had nothing to lose by agitating." [95]

Kniss does much more, however, than describe patterns. In the second part of the book he offers explanations for the nature of these conflicts. He does this in part by dismissing a bipolar model which usually has had "progressives" battle "traditionalists". Instead he develops a cross axis that seeks to account for a broad range of differences. The cross axis separates not only "libertarian" and "traditional" forces, or "individualist" and "communitarian" interests, but differentiates between the "moral project", that is, the aim of the group, from the "locus of authority," that is, the basis of legitimation. Kniss thus is able to "map" a variety of Mennonite groups, including the Old Order Mennonites, the evangelicals or fundamentalists, and those given to social gospel orientations.

In the second part of the book, too, Kniss moves beyond the traditional sociological enterprise of quantifying social movements. In this book conflict is not merely ideological disagreement, but cultural disagreement. Kniss moves adeptly between structuralists and phenomenologists, arguing that Mennonite culture reveals "ideas and symbols [to be] 'real things' with shared meaningful content... that are intentionally constructed ...by creative agents... and perceived by various audiences in particular social contexts." [110/112] Kniss is thus able to deepen his analysis, comparing conflicts that exhibit "abstract" versus "concrete" symbolic expressions. More important he is able to see

conflict as process, ongoing, and the issues and nature of conflict as constantly changing in relation to events in the wider society and in relation to shifting concepts of internal organization.

Lay readers may find this book too focussed on debating American sociologists of religion. Others may be disappointed that the author did not allow for variables of personality or that he simplified such concepts as "traditionalism" or "mainstream society." But arguably these were not the variables that Kniss chose to engage. The book offers a particular analysis on a particular set of historical events. By focussing on the complex and evolving nature of conflict over time Kniss has significantly contributed to an understanding of Mennonite society in North America.

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Willard M. Swartley and Donald B. Kraybill (eds.), *Building Communities of Compassion* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1998). Pp. 318, \$14.99 US, \$21.50 CA.

Swartley and Kraybill have compiled this volume from invited academic presentations at a conference entitled "Building Communities of Compassion," and contributed the opening and closing essays, respectively. This collection represents the first scholarly effort to tell the story of Mennonite mutual aid in a single volume. The essays were chosen to highlight 'pivotal moments and issues,' and, says Swartley, to stir the imagination of others to explore this topic further in future.

Mutual aid, unlike other forms of help, is limited to fellow church members and includes some expectation of reciprocity. The principle of mutual aid is summarized in the words of an Amish farmer: "In the spring when I am plowing on the higher slopes of my farm, I can see six other church members plowing with their teams. I know that if I got sick or something, all six of those teams would be here ploughing my field." The problem for most modern church members has been that not only are they not in a position to see their fellow church members ploughing their fields, but most are probably not even farmers.

The first section of this collection includes essays on the Biblical, theological and ethical perspectives of mutual aid. Swartley's introductory essay explores the theological foundations of mutual aid in the New Testament, and

the practice of mutual aid among early Christians. Wilma Ann Bailey goes back to an Old Testament model through a study of Nehemiah.

A series of historical case studies provides fascinating insights into, not only the practice of mutual aid, but the nature of the community life of sixteenth century Swiss and Dutch Mennonites. John D. Roth, in his exploration of mutual aid among the Swiss Brethren, is surprised by how little reflection seems to have gone into a theological rationale for mutual aid. He surmises that the need among these people, who faced much persecution and hardship, was so clear, and the practice so deeply ingrained, that a theological rationale was not required. Mary Sprunger's study of mutual aid among seventeenth century Dutch Waterlander Mennonites reveals a more basic issue, and one which emerges in several articles in this volume. This is the problem of distinguishing between mutual aid and charity. The church was found to have used the resources of some members to serve the needs of others, quite completely, but in a way that was more paternalistic than mutual.

Under the heading of "organizational" case studies, another series of articles address the emergence of Mennonite Mutual Aid in Canada and the U.S. in the latter half of the twentieth century. The initial mandate for MMA came from the Mennonite Church, to be followed however by subsequent involvement from the GC and MB Conferences. It grew out of a special session of the Mennonite General Conference in September of 1944. Albert Keim, in his account of the founding of MMA, describes it as "the triumph of modernizing vision over the apathy and inertia of an inherited tradition." Supporters saw it from the beginning to be "a new and better way to help preserve the fragile and changing Mennonite Community." Detractors, focussing specifically on the issue of life insurance, saw this kind of plan to portray a lack of trust in God, and were concerned about links with non-Christian commercial interests. Reginald Good, in the course of a history of mutual aid in Ontario, maintains that resistance to mutual aid was based on its departure from the ideology of "Gelassenheit," as total nonresistance to God's will. This ideology is seen to have given way to the ideology of progress, as Mennonites became involved in restructuring to resist social assimilation and competition with non-Mennonites.

The concluding section provides a good follow-up to these discussions of the emergence of MMA. Articles by Kraybill and Keith Miller address the question of whether there is a "margin of difference" between Mennonite mutual aid and comparable secular commercial enterprises. Both appear to respond in the affirmative, although Miller expresses the concern that MMA could become little more than a marketing tool for products similar to those offered by commercial enterprises.

In general, this volume to some extent displays characteristics that are common to collections of this nature. This has to do with the twin problems of lack of continuity on the one hand, and overlap on the other. With regard to the former, the authors are to be credited for providing bridge statements at the outset of some of the articles, which do help the reader to see the continuity with

preceding articles. On the other hand, while there is some overlap between and among articles, especially in the same section, I did not feel it was enough to be a major concern. Another common feature of such projects, based on invited contributions, is the fact that they will frequently include a goodly number of “reflective” pieces, without much substance. I am pleased to note that this is not the case here. The quality of research and scholarship displayed by the essays in this collection is consistently high, and the articles in general are not only readable but informative. In sum, then, I heartily recommend this volume for anyone who is interested in learning more about Mennonite mutual aid.

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Siegfried Bartel. *Living With Conviction. German Army Captain Turns to Cultivating Peace.* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1994). Pp. 212.

There are quite a few autobiographical accounts by now telling us how individuals dealt with and/or suffered the events of the twentieth century as Mennonites. Indeed, war, terror, starvation, exile, and more war; these have left their mark on this people “on the way.” And every story offers yet another perspective on the whole. This is the case with the story of Siegfried Bartel, which begins on a wealthy Mennonite estate in Prussia and concludes in another amiable rural setting in British Columbia, after a series of dramatic episodes before, during and after World War II.

North American Mennonites may be surprised by the matter-of-fact way in which a young Prussian Mennonite would enter the ranks of the German army without question, but this path had been prepared for them by a previous generation, which gradually and then emphatically rejected the Anabaptist peace teaching. But when he must order the execution of a suspected informer the author, as a German Army officer, experiences what he calls his “darkest hour,” one that would stay with him and influence his later decisions. In any case, Bartel was a good soldier and rose in the ranks, finally defending Hitler’s successor, Admiral Doenitz, at Flensburg in Northern Germany.

After the war Bartel managed a large farm while reestablishing contact with his own family and also the Mennonite Central Committee [MCC], especially in the person of C.F. Klassen. With his help the Bartel family was able to sail to Canada in the spring of 1951. An uncle assisted them in settling, first in Sumas

and then in Agassiz. Bartel gives concrete descriptions of his farm life, both in Prussia and in B.C., and he is quite forthright in his depictions of church life as well.

The book is a testimonial to the value of strong family ties, which extend beyond Bartel's own family of six sons to the wider *Verwandschaft* and beyond. These are bonds which survive the trauma of war and dislocation and bring healing to a wounded and guilty spirit. In his wife, Ernusch, Bartel found a support even when he was questioning his war service.

Much of the latter part of the book is devoted to the author's work in the MCC, locally and further afield. Apparently, Bartel was not afraid to take minority positions; perhaps that is what the book's title refers to. This is useful historical information, although, like other autobiographical memoirs, it cannot avoid a somewhat self-congratulatory tone when listing achievements. In general Bartel's frank presentation is to be welcomed, and in this respect the book can be compared to J.B. Toews' *JB. A Twentieth-Century Mennonite Pilgrim* (1995), a book every Mennonite should read.

Siegfried Bartel has written a very readable and informative story. I would have wished for some reflection on the Prussian Mennonite theology and mindset, which embraced German nationalism and dispensed with one of the fundamental tenets of traditional Anabaptist faith. It seems from his account that some Mennonite women were even more entrenched in this way of thinking than were the men, perhaps because the men had to go into battle. But certainly this book is testimony to the fact that "war is hell" (Part II). And it is good to realize, as did Bartel, that even "hell" can teach us lessons and point us to a more abundant life, that is, if we survive.

Victor G. Doerksen  
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Reuben Epp, *Dit en Jant opp Plautdietsch* (Hillsboro, KS: Reader's Press, 1997). Pp. 64, \$9.95 (US)

The conversion of the Low German language into a written language was undertaken almost single-handedly by Arnold Dyck of Steinbach, Manitoba. His stories emanate from coffee cup circles in which a few protagonists gathered to tell tall tales, incurring the risk of judgement by absolute truth as defined by purists and imagined truth as defined by the church. Spoofing was their medium, a good laugh their reward. The compulsion of the "Bejchterieta" (raconteur), in assuming the risk of exaggeration and gentle ridicule by their fellows in telling their tales was strong enough for them to take their chances.

We had our own Living Poet Society closer to home, some six miles south, south east of Gruenthal in the late 1930s. Once a week, when the mail arrived and Ohmtje Priess sorted it behind a closed wicket, the locals gathered in the waiting room of the post-office, drinking Wynola, smoking roll-your-owns, and cracking Knacksocht. While Korneelse played barber to clients on an inverted herring barrel, Hau Wiebe played appealing melodies on his fiddle while the teacher, the late Victor Peters, entertained and informed but also recorded. Eadschocke Penner reported he had heard on the radio last night "that America had the biggest arsenal in the world." To which Russlenda, Fromma (Pious) Friesen responded, "That doesn't sound nice, but I think it's true."

Occasionally this oral tradition transformed the tall tale into the written (published) word with its stark, and sometimes sinister, implications. J. H. Janzen felt the resulting scourge in Russia, he claims, and he was forced to apologize for putting his observations to the test of the written word. He sustained a reprimand which accompanied him all the way to Canada, after having been forced to apologize to his brethren in the Old Country.

Arnold Dyck was somewhat more successful in making the transition. Dyck wrote in the context of Canadian democracy where the invariable village gossip had power to thwart but not to arrest. And yet he paid the price as all the trailblazers have invariably done. If literature, according to Webster, is "writing considered as having permanent value, excellence of form, great emotional effect, etc." then Dyck meets the criteria. Dyck died a lonely death in the heath of Germany, doubting himself, but in the knowledge that he had not compromised integrity at the expense of popularity.

Dyck was followed in the tradition by a number of Mennonites writing in Low German. And yet his "Twee Breew" (Two Letters) was never matched in terms of lasting emotional effect.

Still, until recently, the summa summarum of Mennonite literary efforts was accurately capsulated by the late Germanist Hermann Boeschstein as "scraping the bottom of the literary barrel" and "coming up with little but doggerel."

Things have changed suddenly and permanently since Boeschstein's critical lament of 1967. Mennonite writing is now literature, as Rudy Wiebe, Armin Wiebe, Sarah Klassen, Pat Friesen, Di Brandt, Andreas Schroeder, David Bergen, Miriam Toews and Audrey Poetker etc. demonstrate.

Then there are Mennonite writers like Arnold Dyck, Victor and Elisabeth Peters, Reuben Epp and myself, etc. who exercise their craft in the narrower genre.

Reuben Epp's writing must be regarded within the latter context. It is highly tempting, and certainly safe, to praise everything that draws sustenance from the Mennonite Low German inkwell. This is not good enough, neither is the excuse that dialects cannot be expected to stand the test of a difficult pull. Isaac Bashevis Singer also wrote in a Germanic dialect, namely Yiddish, and yet, one day, he found himself mounting the highest literary podium known to our globe, the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Epp is one of the best of the few who are writing in our own *Muttersprache*. He has sufficient clay under his feet to qualify him as an earthy writer, but he also has a mud-scraper to brush off his sole towards alleged respectability. There is one story in this collection "Sariah" which intrigues, as literature should: it is ambiguous, rare for any story teller, but a must for a writer. The story offers two conclusions: either the caring nurse is very much the Mennonite who serves the master through her charges, or she is prepared to murder the one most dependant on her for financial gain. Ambiguities appeal to the mature mind which realizes that living beyond the confines of the utopian Mennonite church massages, constitutes life.

The volume contains a series of peasant wisdoms, written in the wry wit and humor that is the author. Then there are other stories written in various Low German dialects of the Mother Country proper and re-modelled to fit the Mennonite craft; they work. Also included are poems, previously published by Epp's well-intentioned printer; these range from doggerel to high amusement with most guaranteeing a quick laugh by an uncritical audience with the wallop lasting as long as Jimmy Swaggert's resolve to re-pant.

The book is well bound although the drawing on the cover does little to add to the attractiveness of this modest volume or to appeal to the potential buyer.

If Epp, who is now well on in his productive years, could have been persuaded to add a few more short stories, and/or poems, more literary buds would have been coaxed into potentially beautiful blossom.

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*Mennonites in Manitoba*. A one-hour documentary film. Director, George Siamandas. Prairie Public Television, 1998.

The film *Mennonites in Manitoba* was produced by Prairie Public Television, which is based in North America, and released in late September 1998. The film premiered in three Manitoba Mennonite communities: Altona on September 29, in Steinbach on September 30, and in Winnipeg on October 1: and on Prairie Public Television on October 6, with additional broadcasts on October 9 and 18. Numerous Manitoba Mennonite businesses contributed to the production cost of the film.

The film begins with a survey of the history of Manitoba Mennonites from the sixteenth century to the present. It briefly describes the Anabaptist move-



ment in the Netherlands, and recounts the story of how Mennonites were persecuted in the Netherlands and subsequently fled to the Vistula River area of Poland. When the militaristic Prussians took control of their regions, Mennonites accepted Catherine the Great's invitation to move to south Russia. When Russia threatened to abrogate the promises of exemption from military service and freedom to run their own schools in the middle of the nineteenth century, about 7,000 of the Mennonites in Russia migrated to Manitoba.

The historical part of the film is presented in deft, well-balanced strokes. The one drawback is that the historical survey does not include the 1920s immigrants nor those who came to Canada from the Soviet Union after World War II.

From the historical survey, the film moves on to a more thematic presentation of present-day Mennonites in Manitoba. Even though the film covers numerous themes, the well-written narration moves seamlessly from one scene to the next, and complements the visual images. Much of the information in the film is provided through interviews with different people. The photography and visual imagery in the film is of uniform high quality.

The film discusses numerous themes, including the Mennonite relationship to the host society, Mennonite businesses, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Economic Development Associates, Mennonite Disaster Service, and the role Mennonites play in starting organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. The film pays special attention to the issue of identity, in which Mennonites find themselves being both an ethnic community and a faith community.

One of the dominant themes in the film is the role of the church in shaping Mennonite identity. Church services are portrayed, and the active role Mennonite churches have played in managing cultural adaptations and creating community boundaries is discussed. It is noted that churches addressed the issues of acceptable clothing styles, whether Mennonites could engage in business activities, or whether young Mennonite women could have both a family and a profession. Changes in the ethnic complexion of Manitoba Mennonites is noted.

Although Mennonites are presented as a people concerned about peace, the film honestly describes the tensions within the Mennonite community over this issue. In World War II, while the majority of Mennonite men followed the historical Mennonite teaching of peace and entered alternative service, a large number joined the Canadian forces. It is pointed out that, in one small town in southern Manitoba alone, more than a hundred men volunteered for military service.

One can ask how well the film presents Manitoba Mennonites. Does it fairly reflect the diversity of Manitoba Mennonites? Does it deal with the right issues? Do Mennonite viewers see themselves reflected in the film?

The film focuses primarily on urban Mennonites. The film correctly observes that the majority of Mennonites in Manitoba are rural or live in small towns, but then spends relatively little time portraying them. One result of this

approach is that those Mennonites who have chosen to be different from the larger society (the conservatives) receive practically no attention. Their view is at most presented as old-fashioned and one from which Mennonites have now moved away. No attempt is made to understand their own reasons for being different.

On the crucial issue of acculturation, the people interviewed are primarily from the Mennonite Brethren church group. The diversity of views within the Mennonite community on how to relate to the larger society does not come to the fore.

On the issue of Mennonite economic activity, the film notes the success Mennonite towns have had in developing a viable economy. The important contribution of individual Mennonite businessmen is highlighted. What is omitted is the contribution that co-operative ventures have made to building strong local economies. These co-operative enterprises range from traditional Mennonite community institutions to the many co-ops and Credit Unions established in recent years. In many cases, the co-op enterprises laid the economic foundation for the success of the individual entrepreneurs.

Another omission that seems particularly puzzling concerns Mennonite professionals. A large percentage of Mennonite young women and men who left the farms for the city after World War II entered professions. The emergence of Mennonite professionals is one of the most important developments among Mennonites during the past half century. It is they who played an essential role in Mennonite adaptation to the modern world (or the "reinvention of Mennonites," as the film describes it). The professionals provided the energy, time, intellectual ability, and dedication to transform rural Mennonitism into urban forms, yet they are almost completely missing in the film.

A final omission which should be noted is that of education and health care facilities. At present there are a number of Mennonite elementary schools, four Mennonite high schools, and four Mennonite colleges in Manitoba. In addition, Mennonites entered the public education system (as teachers and administrators) in large numbers. Mennonites have found numerous hospitals and personal care homes in rural communities, and a number in Winnipeg. Not even to mention the schools or health care facilities is a puzzling omission.

In many respects, the film is good, even powerful. Does it get at the major themes that characterize Manitoba Mennonites? Despite some very good content, the film has major omissions. Filling in these gaps would have shifted the composite image but also would have presented Manitoba Mennonites more accurately.

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Leona Wiebe Gislason, *Rueckenau: The History of a Village in the Molotschna Mennonite Settlement of South Russia from Its Founding in 1811 to the Present* (Toronto, ON: self published, 1998). Paperback, Pp. 267.

Ted Friesen and Elisabeth Peters, with Glenn Bergen, eds., *Memoirs of Grigorievka* (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 1998). Paperback, Pp. 295.

Historical studies on former Mennonite communities in South Russia (Ukraine) have formed an important part of the growing literature on the Mennonite experience in Eastern Europe. One hears of various new unpublished manuscripts, but some appear in print now and then. The titles here are a case in point.

Actually Gislason's work falls into the category of historical study more easily than the Grigorievka volume. *Rueckenau* covers a number of themes in the full sweep of that village's history, with the fullest energy of research focussed on the period up to WWII. It does, however, include a listing of Rueckenau persons who emigrated to Germany from the former Soviet Union up to the year 1992.

With the 1998 study of *Hierschau* Dr Helmut Huebert sets the standard for contemporary research on the former Mennonite villages. One is really surprised to discover the detail which this author has managed to amass. The names of all the early farmstead owners are there, most informative discussions of various phases of community life—social, economic, religious, and even political—follow, and then come the final lists of people who were dispersed from the village at various points. It seems almost everyone who ever lived there is accounted for in some way. Remarkable, really!

The periodization is another interesting facet of the study—founding years, building years, transitions years, years of fulfillment—these bring the study up to the World War I in the first 100 pages. Then come the war and revolution years, famine and emigration, collectivization, and the final years which cover a total of 30 years in just a little more than 100 pages. One could almost use the model for other studies of these villages.

Much new data appears on sub-themes of the total account. Because the author remains so focussed on one community, it becomes more alive than do many general accounts of the periods in question. The Selbstschutz story, for instance, is a facet which has not been detailed for a village community in this way before. But the broader context is not forgotten. All is set against the background of the bigger picture which readers will know much better than the experience of this village as a smaller part of the whole.

A number of simple but informative maps, tables of all sorts, and prolific notes, as well as the periodic, thoroughly researched lists of names contain an

additional wealth of data. Extensive quotes from diaries, memories, etc., help to personalize the story. One wonders almost immediately what marvelous new sources make all this possible, only to find that though some hitherto unused materials have been utilized, most of the book comes together from an unusually fine combing of well-known publications.

*Grigorievka* has been prepared in a more episodic, less systematic, even *ad hoc* fashion. It is based on memoirs in its first section (where a translation of George F. Loewen's pioneering more popular work leads the way), detailed at some points, but more general at others. There is also an account of a recent visit by one group of family members as late as 1996. All in all, this approach does evoke quite effectively the ethos of this community, perhaps with even a little more "personality" than is true for *Rueckenau*, although one finds that element there too.

Rueckenau was a village among the many in the Molotschna settlement, begun in the early years. Grigorievka emerged much latter, in 1886, far removed from the main settlement clusters and 75 years after Rueckenau had begun. By 1926, at age of 40, this village ended its history as a Mennonite community—a much shorter, almost ephemeral experience than Rueckenau had by the time its story ended in 1943—over 130 years in existence.

The personal part of *Grigorievka* comes in nearly a dozen and a half family sketches, varying in length, detail and character, sometimes mainly genealogical (as in the Peter J Harms story), other times with significant levels of family life included (as in the Bernhard Krahn account). Some biographical material takes readers well into the Canadian experience, and may seem more pertinent to another story, not part of Grigorievka's itself. Many who submitted these sketches, no doubt, would have wished to have more information on their stories, but what they had together is what we get here. Some family photos are included, one finds diaries here too, and there are few very helpful maps.

The subject matter is well organized and attractively published, although a list of *errata* did need to be added for better accuracy and reporting. It will have special significance for persons individually connected with Grigorievka in some way. To provide a broader and more complete historical treatment will require more work. Perhaps that will be attempted with some foundational work now finished.

Neither of the books is strongly interpretive in character, but the ground-work is laid by valuable details, which have been gathered, and made available to work with in published form. *Rueckenau* comes with a good bibliography and index, while *Grigorievka* includes an index and glossary of terms. Not least of all, it has a useful map of the relevant area, and a clear view of where the village may be located today.

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Heinrich Goerz, *Memrik. A Mennonite Settlement in Russia*. Trans. by Eric Enns with Esther E. Enns & Ingeborg H. Enns (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1997). Paperback, Pp. 103, \$9.95.

Heinrich Goerz, the well-known Mennonite lay-historian, published his history of Memrik in German in 1954. Like all of Goerz's other works, including his Molotschna history which was also translated in the Echo-Verlag series, the history of Memrik was written by a most sympathetic "insider" who lived and taught school in Memrik and who in this book mourns the destruction of this Mennonite colony established by Molotschna settlers in 1885. In 1943, less than sixty years after its founding, Memrik ceased to exist as a Mennonite colony. Goerz ends his story on a somber note: "...unlike many other Mennonite colonies in Russia where a relatively large number of the settlers were able to regain freedom [in the west], in Memrik the entire population... together with their homeland was lost" (p.103).

The story of Memrik is the story of the Mennonite colonies in a nutshell. Time and again the author introduces the sections on the various institutions of Memrik with the words as "in other Mennonite colonies..." Whether one reads about settlement patterns, the architecture of houses and barns, education, church matters, or farming in general, one finds that life in Memrik was similar to life in Chortitza, Molotschna or any other Russian-Mennonite colony. Goerz has the ability to portray his colony clearly as a concrete Mennonite settlement in its own right, and at the same time show that Memrik is a microcosm of Russian-Mennonitism.

Perhaps the most interesting part of Goerz's story is the last chapter of the book, "The Dark Road Leading to the End" (pp.79-103), showing how the events of the twentieth century, including the two world wars and the Stalin terror of the 1930s, affected the settlement. With regard to the arrests and exile during the mid-1930s Goertz explains briefly the reasons for the deportations ("One of the reasons behind this inhumane and cruel course of action was the desperate need for great numbers of unpaid slave labourers that were needed for the huge industrial installation in the north." p.92), and shows that some Mennonites not only became Communists, but also collaborated with the Soviets in exiling their fellow-Mennonites. ("These were bad people who became spies and informers. Even though there were only very few in Memrik, they nevertheless caused a great deal of harm." p.94). However "embarrassing" these issues, Goerz notes, they cannot be avoided "if we are to portray the Communist period accurately."

Whereas historical accounts of the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies deal with the German occupation during the Second World War, including how Mennonites received the German forces, how some of the traditional institutions were in part restored between 1941 and 1943, and how Mennonites experienced the trek west during the German retreat, Goerz's Memrik account

has little to tell about these events. Located east of the Chortitza colony, the Memrik settlement with its 4,000 inhabitants in 11 villages, was forcibly evacuated by the Soviets before the Germans arrived and its people exiled to eastern regions. Only a few individuals, mostly older and sick persons, remained in their homes and later found their way west, eventually immigrating to Paraguay and Canada.

The translation is generally quite accurate, and it reads well. Occasionally an idiom or word caused the translators difficulty, as, for example, *Entkulakisierung* (p.90). The translators state that for this word “there is no English equivalent,” when in fact the word “dekulakization” is commonly used in English. The translation is relatively free of misprints, although “forcibly” (p.100) is misspelled. The slender volume, like all the other Echo booklets, is beautifully formatted and illustrated.

Harry Loewen  
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Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Konrad Grebel: Kritiker des frommen Scheins, 1498–1526* (Bolanden: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein; Hamburg: Kümpers Verlag, 1998).

The year 1996 marked the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Menno Simons, an event that was celebrated in the worldwide Mennonite community by numerous conferences, publications, and special events. By contrast, the year 1998—a year that could have been marked as the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Conrad Grebel—has now quietly come and gone with a remarkable lack of fuss or fanfare. Like an argument from silence or a point made with faint praise, a non-event sometimes speaks volumes.

How is it that the 500<sup>th</sup> birth year of a man once called the “founder of the Swiss Brethren” (Harold Bender)—the man who performed the first documented adult baptism in the sixteenth century—passed by with so little public attention? For those seeking an answer to this question, there is no better book to consult than Hans-Jürgen Goertz’s “biographical sketch” of Conrad Grebel, published on Grebel’s 500<sup>th</sup> birth year.

The irony of the matter (and a partial answer to the question posed above) is that this book—to my knowledge the only volume devoted to Grebel in 1998—does anything but celebrate the centrality of Conrad Grebel’s contributions to either the Swiss Brethren or to the Anabaptist movement at large. Rather, Goertz cements the current and more modest historical judgment concerning Conrad Grebel: He cast a fair shadow in Zurich and its environs for perhaps three years

(1523–26) and then disappeared, leaving precious little behind. As Goertz notes in his concluding comments, “Conrad Grebel was not the founder of the Swiss Brethren.” Neither was he an original theologian like Hubmaier, a pastor like Menno, nor a martyr like Sattler. Conrad Grebel was “a critical agitator” (pp. 127–28). If a “founder” of the Swiss Brethren were to be sought, the mantle might best fall on Michael Sattler, or perhaps even Balthasar Hubmaier.

All this explains the lack of eulogistic enthusiasm in 1998 in the Mennonite world at large, but it does not explain the appearance of new monograph devoted to Conrad Grebel. Why, if too much was made of Grebel in the 1940s and 50s, would a book be devoted to the man in 1998? Several answers are given. Goertz notes that the only critical and complete biography of Grebel is by Harold Bender, published in English in 1950 (Herald Press). There is no equivalent or complete picture of Conrad Grebel available in the German language, and Goertz’s book intends to fill that gap. It is fair to say that it does so in a clear and concise manner. But equally to the point is the fact that re-telling the Grebel story takes us once again to the historiographical debates that have marked Goertz’s work since the 1970s. For those who have followed the development of those debates and the growth of the new scholarship, there is very little new offered in this book, as Goertz himself advises (p. 9). Nevertheless, there is value in synthesizing scholarly advances into a coherent narrative. By focussing the story of Swiss Brethren origins through the prism of Grebel’s life (now suitably revised and nuanced beyond Bender’s depiction, pp. 19–20), the book does offer a good thumbnail sketch and summary of mature revisionist scholarship at century’s end.

The historiographical points of advance are remembered in the manner one would expect: As opposed to Bender’s search for an “Anabaptist Vision,” Goertz recounts the social, political, and religious experiences that led Grebel onto the path of radicalism. Rather than depicting Grebel (and the early Anabaptists) as being interested in “purely religious” things, Goertz builds especially on the work of James Stayer and brings to the fore the city/countryside tensions related to anticlericalism, opposition to the tithe, images, and the Mass, and points to the social and political tensions made evident there. The fairly early emergence of a “radical party” in the countryside and in Zurich is recounted, although Walton’s early dating is disputed (p. 48).

Rather than depicting the first Anabaptist groups as apolitical and separatist, Goertz reminds readers that the early Anabaptists (Grebel included) were interested in presenting a reforming alternative to the Zwinglian reform which, they believed, was controlled by a conservative and “unreformed” city council. Neither the “break” that came following the disputation on the Mass, nor the first adult baptisms in January 1525, marked the beginnings of a separatist “free church,” which happened only with Schleithem in 1527 (p. 111). Far from being guided by a clearly apolitical, purely religious and separatist vision, Conrad Grebel and the early Anabaptists were improvising a reforming direction. They were led finally to a radical path by their own impatience, lack of

power, and inability to influence reforming events.

Perhaps the most original chapter is the third, in which Goertz analyzes again the letter written to Thomas Müntzer by the Grebel circle in 1524. Goertz supports the position that Grebel was neither dependent on Müntzer (Holl), nor simply opposed to him (Bender). Rather, by 1524 Grebel had assumed a mature position that allowed him to dialogue with Müntzer (Wiebe), criticizing points at which he disagreed as well as affirming points with which he agreed (pp. 85–86). Also noteworthy is the attention Goertz pays in this chapter to the spiritualist underpinnings of Grebel's position (inner baptism) and Grebel's insistence that a spiritual renewal (faith) must be manifested in outward works of obedience to Scripture. In supporting this "Tatcharakter der Frömmigkeit," Grebel and the early Anabaptists formed common cause with Karlstadt and Müntzer, against Luther and Zwingli (pp. 80–81).

As in all narratives, there are also omissions in this one that may be mentioned. Andreas Karlstadt hardly figures in this telling of the Grebel story. This is surprising in light of Calvin Pater's revisionist monograph that pronounced Karlstadt to be the "Father of the Anabaptist Movements" (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). More surprising to this reviewer was the gingerly and uncertain treatment given to the relationship of the Grebel circle to the sword of government. In his analysis of Grebel's letter to Müntzer, Goertz takes Grebel's rejection of the sword at face value, and explains that rejection as a function of powerlessness (p. 94). Nevertheless, Goertz fails to resolve an obvious dilemma, namely the fact that less than one year after the letter to Müntzer was written, prominent members of the Grebel circle (Reublin, Brötl, Hubmaier, Krüsi) either openly supported the sword of war or accepted armed protection, during the Peasants' War.

There is no written record that Grebel ever opposed any of his baptizing comrades-in-arms, in spite of what he had written to Müntzer in 1524. Even Hubmaier remained publicly uncriticized, for example, in spite of the fact that Grebel visited Hubmaier in a Waldshut defended by armed peasants, many of them baptized by Hubmaier. The fact that Grebel was willing to simply look the other way when members of his own baptizing circle of reform were in contention for political power simply strengthens the broader revised picture Goertz has summarized, but the same fact does tend to undermine his depiction of Grebel as a critic of duplicitous piety. Grebel's ambivalent position vis-a-vis Hallau, Waldshut, and Grüningen during the time of "uproar" (chapter 4) calls for a more fundamental re-evaluation of his pacifist statements in 1524 than Goertz provides here.

As one would expect from a synthesis composed by Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "anticlericalism" receives repeated attention throughout, and is especially prominent in the concluding chapter, where it is portrayed as a fundamental motive force for change. The author's commitment to the explanatory power of anticlericalism remains undiminished. But even if one does not share Goertz's degree of enthusiasm for that particular thesis, his "biographical sketch" of



Grebel, refracted as it is through the social/political lenses he favours, has resulted in a valuable, densely-hued miniature. *Konrad Grebel* masterfully summarizes the scholarly advances and revisions of the past thirty years concerning the origins of Anabaptism in Zurich.

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Merle Good and Phyllis Pellman Good, eds., *What Mennonites are Thinking—1998* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1998). Paperback, Pp. 306.

*What Mennonites are Thinking* is a collection of featured articles, short fiction, poetry, book reviews and film ratings. The editors are well known for their active role in the Mennonite community and particularly for their publication of *Festival Quarterly* magazine for the past 22 years. In fact, the contents of this book closely resemble those of the magazine. The stated goal of the editors is to “create an annual containing some of the best current Mennonite writing and thinking.”

A positive feature of this volume is the inclusive nature of the material. The growing diversity of the Mennonite community is well reflected in the variety of writers representing different branches of the church, different parts of the world and different age groups.

If there is one over-riding theme in the book it is the growing difficulty of maintaining the original Mennonite ethos of simplicity in faith and life-style now that most Mennonites are fully integrated into mainstream society. At the core of the book are essays by the editors. In “Guerrillas in the Community,” Phyllis Pellman Good writes of the “two-track lives”—our career life and our church life—that most of us live. She is troubled by the issue of power. Professionals and business people have become accustomed to the use of power in the workplace, but are unsure about how power should be used (or might be abused) in the church, where in theory at least we yield to each other. She argues that most of us have not kept our practice of a faith community up-to-date with the rest of our lives.

In “Affluence and Edfluence,” Merle Good defines “edfluence” as the dangerous tendency to place too much value on formal learning and the securing

of degrees. He maintains that business and academic entrepreneurs tend to use language and organizational structure to exclude the majority while keeping their own positions safely established. He wonders what an accumulation of formal learning or of material goods does to our heads. "Is it a given," he asks, "that the higher the income the lower the esteem for other folk; the bigger the university degree, the smaller and more narrow-minded the attitude toward others?" He warns that if "Affluence and Edfluence determine who's in and who's out, who may speak and who may decide, and even how we define who we are, wisdom and humility will long ago have disappeared to other hearts more open to the voice of God." This is a warning on which we should reflect.

This book contains much thought-provoking and heart-warming material in a variety of genres. Katie Funk Wiebe has a fine article on growing older; Gordon Houser's "Dreams of Light" is a touching account of a battle with childhood leukemia. There is also some good poetry in this volume from veteran poets Leonard Neufeldt and Jeff Gundy, as well as from relative newcomer Kristen Mathies, to name a few.

For those interested in the scope of what Mennonites today are thinking and feeling, I would recommend this book.

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Nathan Hege, *Beyond Our Prayers: An Amazing Half-century of Church Growth in Ethiopia, 1948–1998* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998). Pp. 280, \$21.50.

This new volume is a fast moving account of the phenomenal growth of Mennonite churches in Ethiopia in the years 1948 to 1998. It has a number of strengths. The work is very readable and will be found accessible by the layperson. The story of the growth of Mennonite churches in Ethiopia is told from a perspective that is clearly affirming, while also providing the occasional critical insight which gives some balance.

A few noteworthy passages: the account of Emperor Haile Selassie's visit to the Mennonite run schools in Ethiopia gives us remarkable insights into the delicate balance foreign missions trod. On the one hand, the Mennonite church was seen by Ethiopians as a distrusted foreign influence, bringing a Christianity they thought of as very different from and competitive with the Ethiopian Orthodox church. On the other hand, the Emperor was very concerned for education, and strongly believed that his people should be educated in the teachings of the Bible as a foundation for knowledge of all kinds. This is brought

out strikingly when he gives the students at the Mennonite school a quick Bible knowledge quiz!

The question of the relation between Mennonites and the state became even more critical during the period of the Marxist regime of Mengistu. An important theme in this book is the thesis that the Mennonite churches came to be seen as places of refuge for people who questioned the absolute status of the Marxist regime set up by Mengistu Haile Mariam, and that as a result, the Mennonite church came to grow more substantially during the decade of persecution than it had in all of the previous decades combined. The ancient dictum that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church would seem to be born out in this case. Frequently in older popular accounts of church history written along confessional lines this idea is taken virtually for granted. But critical scholarship has sometimes revealed that periods of persecution weaken the Christian church by dividing its members and creating mistrust. Churches do not automatically grow as a result of persecution; a point one does well to remember when reading any account such as this. But Nathan Hege documents his case well: the evidence of rapid growth in the decade of persecution appears very solid.

An interesting aspect of this book is its attention to the role of charismatic phenomena in the Mennonite church experience in Ethiopia. While the charismata were not strongly emphasized in the teaching of the missionaries, nevertheless converts experienced them, and often Mennonite church leaders defended these new converts. This fact, Hege points out, made it easier for members of Pentecostal churches to come under the umbrella of the Mennonite church in the period of persecution from the late 1970s to the late 1980s.

Another strength of the book is that the research is right up to date, including statistics and events right up to the present.

Just one criticism: on page 38 Hege gives rather short shrift to the thorny issue of relations with the Ethiopian Orthodox church. Non Orthodox missions were allowed to run schools, but if the school had any Orthodox students then it must teach only what all Christian bodies hold in common. This would mean that the Mennonite distinctives would have to be ignored. However, the possibility that Mennonites might work through the existing Orthodox church, as other denominational missions had done, is dismissed in a single sentence here. While there were, no doubt, good reasons for the choices made at the time, nevertheless the problem of ecumenical relations is not easily dismissed. One might wish for a more in depth treatment of this topic.

On the whole, the book is a well paced, fascinating and frequently inspiring account of the spread of the gospel in an African country with much in it from which the church today can learn. It is a good read I heartily recommend!

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Nancy R. Heisey and Daniel S. Schipani, eds., *Theological Education on Five Continents: Anabaptist Perspectives* (Strasbourg, France: Mennonite World Conference, 1997). Pb., Pp. 138.

The week before the thirteenth Assembly of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) held in Calcutta, India, January 1997, there was a Consultation on Theological Education (CTE) on Five Continents. Fifty-five persons representing even more programs in theological education participated in a two-day exploration of primary needs and the "transnational pooling of resources." Nancy Heisey served as convenor/organizer of the gathering. Daniel Schipani wrote the background paper.

This volume includes four major papers and 12 respondents. These writers represent 11 countries and programs ranging from theological education by extension in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to doctoral programs in Toronto and Amsterdam. The consultation asked MWC to publish the papers and to create a network for continuing interchange and cooperation.

Daniel Schipani, Professor of Pastoral Psychology and Practical Theology at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, provided a masterful keynote on "The Church and its Theological Education: A Vision." The church in the Anabaptist tradition, he proposes, "audaciously assumes that... it is called to become God's project for the world, God's dream in the process of being realized." Using the Divine Trinity as his controlling metaphor, he used the images of people of God, body of Christ, and temple of the Spirit to define the church's identity and character. The church's threefold reason for being is for worship (life with God), community (life with one another), and mission (life in the wider world). Theological education, the consultation agreed, is "for the sake of the church in the world in the light of God's reign." This in contrast to other models which emphasize academic theological study or professional preparation. "Ecclesial" oriented theological education will utilize these models as well as others in the "formation and transformation of the faithful church." The most widespread and local theological education will emphasize discipleship. More advanced training will emphasize training for "apostleship."

The other papers were more narrowly focused. Leonor de Mendez of Guatamala described "Congregational Theological Education." Bedru Hussein of Ethiopia authored "Non-formal Theological Education" in the Meserete Kristos Church. Lydia Neufeld Harder explored the dialectic between "the centre and the boundaries" in "formal theological education." Mendez noted the absence of adequate resources. Hussein described the complex organization and hundreds of people involved in training thousands of new members. Harder noted the different languages required for theological conversation in a church context and for such conversation when located in a more generalized context. The responses to each were rooted in the diverse experience of the participants. Most interesting were Wendy Binks of India and Jose Gallardo of Spain, both of

who noted how difficult it is “to translate what is happening in the Meserete Kristus Church” to their situations.

The concluding summary noted some of the tensions felt at the consultation: the absence of an agreed-upon definition of Anabaptist beliefs: distance between vision and reality: the professionalization and separation of education from the church; teaching and learning discernment and discriminating; the necessity of choosing priorities; literacy and the choice of language; appropriate methodologies; biblically-based education with an Anabaptist orientation yet recognizing commonalities with the larger Christian family.

This excellent compilation provides agenda and insight that will be useful for faculties and boards as they assess their task. These articles also illustrate the need to highlight theological education within the growing Mennonite and Brethren in Christ majority churches of the South.

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Peter P. Klassen, *Die rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien, Bd. 2* (Bolanden-Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1998). Pp. 458.

The dwindling twentieth century is a standing invitation to strike our balance, historically speaking. Of course, looking at the sheer volume and tragedy, especially of Russian Mennonite history during these one hundred years, all efforts necessarily appear to be pale intents, nothing but piecemeal. And yet, considering our open agenda, not just historically—but also psychologically speaking, we should welcome every thorough work of research and interpretation of our turbulent history this past century. Historians and writers throughout the Mennonite community seem to have recognized this challenge. Archives in the former Soviet Union are opening. Materials that help to document family—and personal lifestories, re-emerge *en masse*. A veritable pilgrimage toward the old homeland has set in. For people who still carry an image of the once thriving, peaceful villages in their soul, it is a truly existential experience to deal with the very mixed feelings occasioned by such visits.

To deal with our history, is by no means a superfluous luxury, but an essential necessity. “Healing of memories,” is a common term used in ecumenical dialogue these days. Description and interpretation serve to re-confront semi-submerged experiences, opening them for evaluation, learning our lesson, and, literally, healing our memories—a profoundly humanizing task of history writing today.

Considering the specifically Russian Mennonite story, many of the most dramatic episodes are due to uncontrollable external forces. Yet a very substantial part of our historical experience is due to internal factors inherent in the structure of the typical Mennonite community, its social dynamics, its worldview, its interaction with the larger society. The ultimate fate of such a community is often more attributable to such internal factors, rather than outside pressure. Suspicion, power struggles, stressed relationships, lack of communication, have sometimes caused a community to become paralyzed and to disintegrate slowly but inexorably. "Every Mennonite must be a pioneer settler, at least once in life", is an old saying among Mennos. This part of our history, though less dramatic, should also be interpreted, perhaps throwing more light on our true identity than the dramatic Russian story. This is precisely what Peter P. Klassen sets out to do.

Whereas in Canada, more than two decades ago, the Mennonite Historical Society commissioned Frank H. Epp to write a comprehensive history of Canadian Mennonites, in Brazil it was the Cooperative of Witmarsum that offered to finance such a venture. In 1993 work was begun, the first volume appearing in 1995. The second one was to follow in early 1997, but financial difficulties delayed printing until November 1998.

The first volume is a vivid account of the foundation and gradual demise of the original Mennonite settlement in the state of Santa Catarina, southern Brazil. Attention in the second volume, here under consideration, is geared toward the geographical dispersion of Mennonites in Brazil, following upon the disintegration of the original settlement, and their assimilation into Brazilian society. Special attention is devoted to the move from the country to the city—a move so incisive for the self-image of Mennonites. The economic, cultural, social and religious changes following on the heels of this movement, are well analyzed. Pressure for integration was much stronger in Brazil than in Paraguay, for example. During and after WW II, all public use of German was repressed, schools were nationalized and serious diplomacy was necessary to allow the use of low German in church services.

The organizing motive of Klassen's work is focused on this challenge, presented to a traditional Mennonite community, that lives through the stress of wanting to preserve its own cultural and religious heritage in an environment that inexorably draws it into its own cultural orbit.

The second volume divides systematically into eight thematic units: 1) Settlements and groups; 2) Economic development; 3) Congregations; 4) Cultural life; 5) Social institutions; 6) Mission and missionary congregations; 7) Between tradition and integration; 8) What has become of us?

The last chapter represents a global analysis of different currents of Prussian-Russian Mennonitism, focused on their adaptational strategies, as well as on the dialectic between secular and religious dimensions, inevitably at work in a self-contained colony structure, as it crystallized in Russia.

In Brazil, Mennonite communities have experienced profound structural

crises as they split, partly moved to the cities, adopted Portuguese as their language and blended into middle class life. In spite of these crises, the present investigation reveals that after the dust settled, in most cases a new synthesis formed, where the religious congregations became the carriers of identity, strong churches were formed, mission and social services were initiated, and ultimately a "Mennonite" face became quite evident again. Such processes did leave their scars, especially among the older generation, but the encouraging observation is that even though traditional structures, considered almost "holy", may be chaotically tumbling, yet the community of faith re-emerges, well adapted to the environment and with a new sense of identity and mission.

A number of questions remain to be answered. The different strategies of dealing with the world, so lucidly described in the last chapter, signal the necessity of suspended judgment when considering how more conservative and more liberal groups of Mennonites have dealt with this issue. Though the perspective is naturally that of the insider, this may be taken positively, given the fact that the author has a broad perspective on the cultural-religious roots of the people he deals with, permitting a differentiated interpretation.

This book is no novel which can be read through in a day or two. Reading it invites discussion and comparison. Footnotes and a good bibliography make this possible. A brief index of names facilitates finding persons and places. Several maps, as well as good quality photos, make the book attractive in spite of its length. For history writing on Brazilian Mennonites it represents a landmark. Other than that, it will be a significant addition to literature on Russian Mennonites in the twentieth century. A suggestion may be appropriate: it should also be made available in English and Portuguese.

Gundolf Niebuhr,  
Fernheim Colony Archives,  
Asuncion, Paraguay

Stephen Longenecker, ed. *The Dilemma of Anabaptist Piety: Strengthening or Straining the Bonds of Community?* (Bridgewater, VA: Forum for Religious Studies, 1997), Pp. 237.

"Piety, like jazz, resists definition." This opening sentence sets the stage for a wide-ranging discussion of the relationship between piety and Anabaptism. This is an appropriate way to begin, since the essays collected and edited by Longenecker (from a 1995 conference) struggle to come to grips with the impact of piety on Anabaptism, seemingly realizing that both piety and Anabaptism are not easily circumscribed. In the introduction, Longenecker points out that the joint Brethren-Mennonite Hymnal includes the Fanny Crosby hymn "I am Thine, O Lord." He suggests that this inclusion "represents the assimilation of non-Anabaptist impulses into Brethren and Mennonite life." The essays that follow try to make some sense of whether such impulses move those who sing such songs nearer or further from traditional Anabaptism.

*The Dilemma of Anabaptist Piety* is a collection of 15 essays (and six testimonies) grouped under four headings: "Anabaptism and Pietism", which focuses on the relationship of these movements as expressed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; "Anabaptism and Revivalism," which investigates the impact of eighteenth and nineteenth century awakenings, meetings of various kinds, and revivalistic methods; "Time, Place, and Anabaptism," a discussion of the impact of familiar places, practices and time have had on the Anabaptist faith; "Modern Tensions," a look at the current struggle between piety and community. Part of the value of this book lies in its interdisciplinary nature. The list of contributors includes historians, sociologists, theologians, pastors, and a professor of counselling. The effect is a far-reaching and multi-faceted look at the issue raised by the title of the book.

I want to cite several examples to illustrate the point. John Roth, in his essay, "Anabaptism and the Pietist Soul," produces a nuanced argument which forgoes the assumption of a dialectic between Anabaptism and pietism. He does this in part by rejecting the pervasive thesis of Robert Friedmann's *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries*, which Roth summarizes as "Pietism robbed the Anabaptist movement of its essential core." Roth argues instead that the "story to be told is not how communities preserved or lost some abstract essence of the faith but rather how competing understandings of Anabaptist faithfulness were present from the very beginning, struggling with each other for power and permanence". Roth uses the example of Peter Weber and the South German Mennonite church as a way of investigating the issue. In doing so, he notes that in Weber's theology, we do not see a tension between a life of the spirit and active Christian discipleship.

Susan Fisher Miller's effort in some measure parallels that of Roth. Her treatment of John S. Coffman's Mennonite revivalism attempts to show Coffman threading his way "between the Scylla of formalism and the Charbydis of excessive sentiment." Coffman is profiled as someone willing to use revivalist



methods directed toward building up the church in a specifically Mennonite way. Miller in this way also appears to be rejecting the notion that Anabaptist community and pietism are necessarily antithetical.

One more example: Al Dueck's essay concerning Anabaptists and the therapeutic culture is quite different from the examples above. Dueck's interaction with cultural analyses and especially psychological literature in an attempt to grapple with the question of community and pietism is an invaluable addition to this discussion. While he confirms many of the criticisms of the therapeutic culture, in the end Dueck argues that Anabaptists must enrich our "language of the soul" or stand in danger of shallowness and seduction of psychological or religious 'magic.'

As indicated above, I think this is a strong collection of essays that moves the discussion of Anabaptism and piety beyond the territory seemingly staked out by Friedmann. The interdisciplinary nature of the book makes it interesting and useful to a wide audience. Many of the essays work well as stand-alone contributions not only to this particular issue, but to others as well. Dueck's essay, for example, ought to be read by anyone interested in psychology and religion. The six short personal testimonies add a dimension to the work that is not often found in collections such as this one.

My reservations about *The Dilemma of Anabaptist Piety* center on the structuring of the discussion itself as announced by the title of the book. To label an issue as a dilemma is to predetermine a dialectical treatment of it. However, many of the essays (including the Roth and Miller pieces mentioned above) do their best to reset the issue in different terms, evidently having identified a need for reconsideration of an old way of perceiving the issue. I am convinced (especially upon reading this book) that pietistic impulse as a threat to Anabaptism is in fact not a given. Further, it seems to me that this book does a good job of acknowledging the difficulty of definition in the case of pietism, but is not as strong regarding the same difficulty in Anabaptism. Perhaps one could say that if piety, like jazz, resists definition, then Anabaptism, like *Gelassenheit*, also resists definition. In the end, attempting to analyze the relationship between two movements which resist definition is a rather slippery task. *The Dilemma of Anabaptist Piety* is a helpful contribution to the endeavour.

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Calvin H. Redekop, *Leaving Anabaptism: From Evangelical Mennonite Brethren to Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches*. (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 1998; co-published by Herald Press, Scottdale, PA), Paperback, Pp. 267. \$29.00.

This book traces the development of the group originally known as the Conference of United Mennonite Brethren of North America (later Defenseless Mennonite Brethren, then Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, and finally Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches) from the beginnings in 1889 to the present (early 1990s). Redekop does not presume to write a definitive history of the denomination, calling it a "sociohistorical analysis of a religious movement rather than a narrative account only" (p. 14). Redekop was himself at one time a member of the denomination (a great grandson of one of the co-founders, Aron Wall) which gives him a passion about the subject which, he acknowledges, may be a strength and a weakness at the same time.

The title clearly indicates the primary thesis (leaving Anabaptism) which determines the organization and content of the book. The story of the denomination, which has had four formal designations during its 100 years (and was also informally known as *Bruderthaler*), is essentially one of gradual weakening of its Anabaptist/Mennonite heritage in favor of North American mainstream evangelicalism or fundamentalism. Today there appears to be little left that harkens back to the Anabaptist heritage.

By and large the book documents the trend away from Anabaptism well. The sources are mined for all they will yield. The 1940s and 1950s are pivotal in the move from Anabaptism. Still, the shift is already noticeable in the early decades of this century. One wonders, therefore, why a title was chosen which focuses on the name change in 1987 when the book tells the whole story and portrays the shift as one which began almost at the beginning.

Redekop shows how the strong emphasis on mission and evangelism made the denomination receptive to mission agencies and educational institutions which were evangelical/fundamentalist in orientation. Although the church did not self-consciously and deliberately become extensively involved in the fundamentalist/modernist controversy, it nevertheless formed various alliances with those who were steeped in fundamentalism. The individualism of North American evangelical culture was adopted increasingly as the Anabaptist/Mennonite values of nonconformity/community/nonresistance became less and less significant and, eventually, even an embarrassment.

While in general the analysis seems plausible and is particularly instructive for groups like the Mennonite Brethren, some doubt remains about what Redekop calls the archetypal nature of the group's history and to what extent it provides insights into all religious movements. There are many unique elements in the story which make it risky to draw analogies. At times Redekop becomes prophetic, as when he states: "I propose that influence of the original vision will last until the final vestiges of family and community connections with the

Anabaptist/pietist heritage and tradition have dissolved. At that point the congregations will become identified as community Bible churches cohering around local religious entrepreneurs”(pp. 12–13).

Unfortunately, the many errors in the book detract from the overall favorable contribution of the book. Typographical and spelling errors abound (e.g., disciple instead of discipline- p. 36; Gleichstellung vs. Gleichstellung-p. 38; Friedreich Lang should be Friedrich Lange-p. 70; immigrants of the 1870s—not 1970s-p. 9; 1973 should be 1873-p. 74). In several instances lines or complete sentences are missing (p. 13, lines 10–11; p. 33, top line). There are factual errors (the RSV did not appear in 1940—pp. 141, 189), the Saskatchewan River (p. 77) should be the North Saskatchewan River, and the growth percentages listed as 6.3% annually (p. 135) are closer to 3%. The German words are sometimes italicized and sometimes not, the *Allianz Gemeinde* is sometimes also called the Alliance church (p. 80 ). Many other errors and inconsistencies could be cited.

Three appendices (Official Names of the Movement, Constitution of 1889, Introduction to Church Record Book) add valuable information. The book does not have an index, which would have been a useful tool.

As indicated, the book is not intended to be a definitive history of the movement. Nevertheless it will serve as the most comprehensive and thorough treatment available for a long time.

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John B. Toews, ed. and trans., *Journeys: Mennonite Stories of Faith and Survival in Stalin's Russia*. Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought 14 (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 1998). Paperback, Pp. 226.

Mennonite history has been written in many ways, but there is none more gripping than the kind of personal, experiential narrative that one finds in this collection. Recent historiography has rediscovered the value of documents like diaries, letters and the like, which, though subjective, are capable of filling in much of what was left out by analytical academic studies.

There is a rich tradition of this kind of history, beginning with the primary literature of the Anabaptists, their songs and hymns above all, which depict their sufferings and joys in drastic black and white imagery. The stories collected in this volume are more detailed but similar to the martyr ballads in their paradoxical juxtaposition of cruelty and kindness, torture and healing, hate and love.

These are stories which today seem unreal, though there is not doubt of their truth. Here we see at ground level, on the micro scale, what was happening in the Soviet Union, and it helps us to understand that monstrous history. But, as the title indicates, these are at the same time “stories of faith,” or at least stories in which faith is at issue. They are Mennonite history.

Readers will find these texts hard to read and hard to put down. There is adventure. In one story I found a grandparent of mine caught in a battle between the Reds and the White army. We had heard of this story, which took place a few kilometers from our parents home village in the Caucasus. In this story he becomes part of a much larger story.

It is hard to read these stories without long moments of reflection and, hopefully, tears. Ours is a rich religious heritage and such texts as these testify to the quality of life of our forefathers and mothers, tested in the “refiner’s fire.”

John Toews has brought many historical documents to our attention over the years, and these should stand at par with the other more official ones. The introduction is helpful in approaching the stories, though one would have wished for more information about the original German texts, especially since they are not complete in these translations. Kindred Press deserves our thanks for publishing these stories, along with our hope that they will be successful in finding a better cover material and binding for books that should be much read.

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Jakob Warkentin with Heinrich H. Dyck, Johann Gossen, and Monika Gossen, *50 Jahre Kolonie Neuland Chaco, Paraguay: Eine Gedenkschrift zum fuenfzigjaehrigen Jubilaeum*. (Asuncion: Artes Graficas Zamphiropolus, 1997). Paperback, Pp. 226.

The Mennonite colony Neuland in the Paraguayan Chaco was established after the Second World War. The 2,474 persons who were settled with the help of Mennonite Central Committee beginning in 1947 were different from the earlier Mennonite settlers in the Chaco. The Menno Colony consisted of Mennonites who had come from Manitoba (1920s) and the Fernheim Colony of Mennonites from the Soviet Union (via Germany in 1930). The Menno settlers had left Canada because their culture, the German language, and their independence in education were threatened by their Anglo-Saxon society. The Russian Mennonites had fled Communism and had no place to go except to Paraguay.

The Neuland Mennonites, having experienced the terror under Stalin and the devastation of defeated Germany, comprised a heterogeneous group searching for a safe and peaceful homeland. At least one third of the Neuland settlers (over 250 families) were without a husband or father. Pioneering life in the Chaco was most difficult, especially for the women who were without the help of men. It is thus no wonder that in the first decade many Neuland residents emigrated to Canada or returned to Germany.

Better years followed, and those who persevered saw the fruits of their hard labours. Agriculture was mechanized, a cooperative was established to regulate the economic life of the colony, churches and schools were built, and Mennonite cultural life developed along traditional lines in which, as in the other colonies, congregational and colonial affairs were closely integrated. By the mid-1980s there were 21 villages with a total population of 1,325 persons.

In 1997 the colony celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its founding. This book, published on the occasion of this anniversary, provides valuable insights into the many aspects of the colony. Divided into three parts—institutions, people, and experiences—the longer and shorter articles are written by men and women intimately involved in the life of the colony.

The “institutions” part includes such things as administration of the colony, the cooperative, industry, health care, churches, youth work, missions, service to neighbors (natives), schools, and music. The “people” part has the following occupations and professions represented: farming (dairies and poultry), business, pastoral work, mission work, medicine, social work, teaching, and police work. In the “experiences” part, authors write about office work, housekeeping, farming, hunting, traveling, teaching, nursing, and vacationing.

Some articles provide statistics and some history about the colony's early years, but most are informal, celebratory and narrative in nature, emphasizing the daily life and often humorous experiences of the people. The numerous black-and-white photos in the book add vivid insights into the life of the colony and its people.

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