

Reviews of History and Social Sciences

Paul Bramadat and David Seljak, eds., *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. Pp. xiv + 444. \$49.95

This collection of essays aims to discuss “in depth the ways in which ethnicity and Christianity sometimes work together and sometimes are at odds in the overall project of determining and communicating individual and group identities.” (xii-xii) Between a thoughtful introduction and conclusion by the editors, nine authors seek to fulfill the above aim by examining Allophone and Anglophone Catholics, Francophone Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Reformed, United, Lutherans, Eastern Churches, Mennonites, and Evangelical groups. Although the authors come from a variety of disciplines, all the essays generally follow the same template, offering a history of the subject group, its demographic challenges and prospects, and the place of ethnic identity in its religious and social expression.

The editors’ introduction surveys Christianity in Canada while skillfully outlining the choices made and problems that will be addressed in the book. The introduction points to the dichotomy of “believing without belonging” that characterizes many secularized Canadians of Christian origin, while many who are members of Christian churches are the opposite: “belonging without believing.” (14-15) A recurring theme in the articles, also elaborated in the editors’ introduction and conclusion, is the ‘discourse of loss’ that permeates mainstream Christian congregations in Canada. Some denominations have lost members at an alarming rate, particularly after the mid 1990s. According to census data the Presbyterian Church, for instance, lost 35 percent of its members between the 1991 and 2011. (186) For Anglicans the loss of charter members has meant the only real numeric growth has come from newcomers to Canada. These newcomers have tended to be more conservative with respect to many questions that had seemingly been overcome, such as the role of women in ministry, and homosexuality. Their increasing presence in the Canadian church has meant that these issues have again come to the forefront. (153)

Readers of this journal will be most interested in two chapters of the collection, one by Royden Loewen on Mennonites and the other by Bruce Guenther on Evangelical Christians, a broad category that includes, or is attractive to many ethnic Mennonites. Loewen’s article offers a careful analysis of the nuances of the ‘state of ethnicity’ among Mennonites in Canada. The task is daunting because of the

range of Mennonite practice. Loewen suggests that Mennonites in Canada find the “question of religion and ethnicity... deeply vexing” (330) and makes a case that they “cultivate a complicated relationship with ethnicity,” (346) Loewen suggests six categories of response to ethnicity, ranging from those Mennonites who embrace ethnicity but de-emphasize or disparage Mennonite religious expression, to recent immigrants who in Loewen’s typology, “resonate neither with a Mennonite ethnicity nor with Anabaptist pacifist and communitarian religious ideals.” (356). Although not addressed specifically by Loewen’s chapter, the reader cannot help wonder if in spite of Loewen’s conclusion that ‘ethnicity matters’ to Mennonites, it may continue to matter for a declining number of Canadians of Mennonite origin.

Bruce Guenther, meanwhile explores evangelical Protestant groups, which have defied the pattern of loss exhibited by their mainstream forbears. Guenther’s frame of reference for categorizing groups as ‘evangelical’ focuses on their emphases on conversion, on the atonement made for human sin by Jesus’ death on the cross, on a high regard for the Bible, and on a new motivation for doing good. (374). The ethnic diversity within the category is amply illustrated by Guenther’s analysis and his examples point to the complexities of that diversity; however he seldom goes beyond labeling ethnicity as a challenge for evangelicals. In that sense, his conclusion that evangelical Protestants most often are able to create a “unity that transcends the ethnic differences found in Canada,” (399) seems open to question.

Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada addresses Canada’s diversity in a religious context with engaging and thorough analysis. It goes a long way in achieving its aim of examining how ethnicity and Christianity interact in a multicultural Canada. Taken together, the volume suggests that while there is a fixation on decline attributable to the secularization of charter European Christians, Christianity seems to be alive and well among Canada’s new immigrants.

Hans Werner
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Jennifer Drago, *A Thousand and One Egyptian Nights, An American Christian’s Life Among Muslims*. Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 2007. Pp. 303 pages, soft cover.

This engaging autobiographical narrative begins in a home in Comer, Georgia, on a January evening in 2003 when Brad Drago with

his wife, Jennifer, invited their three children into their living room for a story. The children liked Brad's stories; this one shocked them. He began, "Once upon a time, there was a family that decided to go to the Middle East to live." (17)

Twelve-year-old Nick was enthusiastic for he would learn Arabic; ten-year-old Rebecca wept for she would lose her friends; eight-year-old Emily was both sad and glad. Although Brad and Jennifer had not lived abroad, they were immersed in refugee resettlement through Jubilee Partners. For the next months the family immersed in the study of Islam as well as Arab and Egyptian culture; within six months the family had moved into Beni Seuf 140 KM south of Cairo. They were Mennonite Central Committee appointees.

This book chronicles three years living in an Upper Nile Muslim and Coptic Christian city of 250,000 people. The narrative includes more than the title suggests, for their primary host community and school was Coptic Christian. Much of the drama had to do with the engagement within both communities. For example, to identify with the Muslims, Jennifer veiled her hair for a downtown shopping trip; her Coptic host severely rebuked her for wearing a symbol that might suggest she is considering becoming a Muslim. She had breached a line separating the two communities.

The narrative describes an American family with three children plunging into this Egyptian Muslim-Christian ethos. The challenges leap from every page. For example, how can democracy loving Americans function happily in a Coptic school where every decision is made by an authoritarian principal. The book is also enriched by Jennifer's descriptions of nine persons with whom the family developed deep relationships.

They were present as Christians and Americans. Some might feel that in the conversations the American dimension of their presence overshadowed the Christian dimension, because people were especially interested in the "strange" notions of these Americans. A Muslim neighbor was going through very deep waters. In Islam God never identifies with us as suffering servant. I would have appreciated some indication of ways Christians in such a setting can commend Jesus who suffers with us and who offers the gift of "rest for our souls."

The dimension of the book that I rather worry about has to do with the principle that the guest should be restrained in critiquing the host. This is especially true for representatives of the church serving cross culturally. I wonder how the friends who invited and hosted the Drago family will respond to this book.

Nevertheless, Jennifer has written with a sensitive and inquiring spirit. Her descriptions of Muslim or Coptic faith reflects what her hosts themselves have shared with her. She writes as a humble and alert

learner, who genuinely loves and identifies with those among whom she and her family have lived for three years.

David W. Shenk
Eastern Mennonite Missions

Marlene Epp, *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008. Pp. xiii + 378, soft cover. \$26.95

Over the past two decades, historian Marlene Epp has documented the experiences of thousands of North American Mennonite women in her excellent volume *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (2000) and in scholarly articles on topics ranging from rural community life to urban girls' homes to ethno-religious issues of nonconformity and dress. Epp's expertise in researching and interpreting Canadian Mennonite women's history is evident in this new book, which probes gender as a central component of Mennonite identity, even though she begins with the astute observation that Mennonites today tend to be more interested in political and theological fault lines and in ethnic pluralism than in gender divisions (x).

Casting a net broadly across Canadian Mennonite women's history – from early nineteenth century immigration to late twentieth century creativity in the arts – Epp takes seriously the social historian's premise that human activity of all kinds is worthy of serious study and lends profound insights. Her book, which covers an immense amount of material from Canada's geographic landscape and sweeps across nearly two centuries, begins with pioneer and settlement stories and explores women's roles in family, work, community and church settings. Each chapter begins with profiles of three individuals who represent varied social and economic realities at different points in Canadian Mennonite history. Some of these personal vignettes may be familiar to Mennonite readers, such as Elfrieda Klassen Dyck's leading of 1940s refugees from war-torn Europe to South America, together with her husband Peter. Many other stories are not well-known but illustrate Epp's argument that most women "functioned within their churches, at least outwardly, in a manner appropriate and acceptable to the official gender constructions of the Mennonite denomination [meanwhile gaining] inward satisfaction in the power they possessed" (177).

Epp's access to extensive primary sources collections – at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, the Mennonite Heritage

Centre, and the Mennonite Archives of Ontario – reflects the ways in which Mennonite group identity has long been carried by the written word and through historic preservation. As Epp notes: “Mennonite women in all centuries and decades found an outlet in literary pastimes – diaries, letters, articles, memoirs, essays, and sometimes fiction” (267). Women’s involvement in some areas, mission activity and education, for example, are relatively easy to research due to the availability of written records. Other topics – Mennonites’ use of birth control (and sexual lives through the decades) – pose more difficult challenges for researchers. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History* breaks new ground in part because it seeks a fuller portrayal of women’s lives.

While Epp’s study documents the lack of opportunity and the second-class status evident in many women’s lives, especially during the early to mid twentieth century, she provides counterexamples of women who nevertheless lived full lives that challenged restrictive boundaries. Agatha Klassen, “a schoolteacher with an equal love for church work,” was so frustrated by the early 1970s at the limits on female authority in her British Columbia Mennonite Brethren congregation, that she rebelled. Invited to become director of Christian education, Klassen asserted that she would accept the position only if she was also appointed to her congregation’s all-male church council. Klassen’s triumph represented the shattering of a glass ceiling for Mennonite churchwomen in her community and denomination (144).

Nearly fifty identifiable Mennonite groups are active in Canada, and this volume offers a comprehensive and nuanced account of gender history applied to religious/ethnic subcultures over nearly the entire spectrum, although Epp does not include Amish or Hutterites. Along the way, Epp weaves in the experiences of her own Mennonite family members, including her grandmother and mother. In telling the story of religiously-oriented people, she wisely resists the temptation to generalize, arguing instead that in engaging with the national culture around them, “Mennonite women had no singular response” (282). Still, as a feminist scholar and interpreter of Mennonite experience, Epp finds patterns of commonality in sometimes surprising places; relational bonds, for example, that developed between Hmong refugee women who in 1979 arrived in Ontario and became Mennonite, and the European Mennonite immigrant women whose arrival in Canada preceded them by decades.

Epp’s work is grounded in an appreciation of the historical narrative of human rights associated with second-wave feminism; she asserts that the post-1950s liberation of women within in the church and beyond affected “more sectors of society than did any other social movement of late twentieth century” (276). Epp’s self-identification as

a Canadian Mennonite who reached adulthood at about the same time as the first ordination of a Mennonite woman in 1979, helps to explain her interest in writing for a contemporary audience that includes both younger students of history and older readers whose personal lives are the stuff of this book. The volume's two dozen black-and-white illustrations of Mennonite women as brides, farmers, midwives, students, missionaries, quilters – in various poses of frivolity and work – underscore the book's themes of common experience through religious identity.

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Laureen Harder, *We Bear the Loss Together: A History of the Mennonite Aid Union*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2007. Pp. 7-25. Softcover. Includes Bibliography and Index, \$17.50

Many readers will have fond associations with the Ontario-based Mennonite Aid Union (MAU). You or your family may well have benefited directly from this one-hundred and forty year old organization formed in 1866, just before Canada's confederation. A predecessor of other para-church organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Foundation, the Mennonite Aid Union story is significant in our understanding of Mennonite history. With its formal dissolution in favour of a new Anabaptist Insurance organization MutualAidExchange or MAX, designed to meet the concerns of the new millennium, we can be grateful for this small volume.

Careful research and a historian's eye for a good story has allowed author Laureen Harder to place MAU in the changing social context of its 140 years. I was engaged by the compelling anecdotes describing fires and storms, and the creative and compassionate responses to those affected by the devastation that they wreaked in their wake. The founders, mostly farmers, were sons of Waterloo County pioneers. As disaster overtook some in the newly established Upper Canadian community, a commitment to mutual aid brought forth a Mennonite Aid Union.

Four chapters, coinciding with the significant developments in MAU's philosophy as it met the challenges inherent in a faith community adapting to a developing nation, address such questions as which groups would be included in the expanding organization. Issues related to western expansion, the immigration of various waves of Russian

Mennonites, and pressures of the modernizing business world and secular court system, along with a variety of others, were carefully thought through and deliberated in annual meetings.

The personalities who faithfully served, some for decades, make the history. Take, for instance, Harold Schmidt, a MAU veteran of over fifty years. His commitment as he traveled throughout Ontario, Quebec, and to meetings with counterparts in the Canadian West and the United States, often pulling cash from his pocket to cover a need before vetting with the larger organization, symbolizes what mutual aid was all about. It was the vision and work of a people committed to serving God by caring for one another.

The title of this 107-page history of the Mennonite Aid Union, *We Bear the Loss Together*, sums up the ethos and convictions of those committed over 140 years of service. This book provides both a necessary memory of Mennonite mutual aid as practiced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and a signpost as the new MutualAidExchange charts its way in the new millennium.

Lucille Marr

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Anna Sofia Hedberg, *Outside the World: Cohesion and Deviation among Old Colony Mennonites in Bolivia*. Acta universitatis Upsaliensis: Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology no 42, 2007. Soft cover, Pp. 276

Outside the World is an anthropological study of the Old Colony Durango in Bolivia. Observing the nineteen villages which make up the Old Colony community known as Durango for a total of twelve months, this work seeks to identify the physical, social, and psychological components that hold these communities together. Although the terms of their lives are indeed intricate, author Sofia Hedberg summarizes that it is the joint quest for collective salvation that attracts and maintains the Old Colony community life. The focus on this common goal brings about community through two parallel processes. It provides motivation to stay together as a group and generates feelings of belonging by which the author's informants make meaning out of their lives. As such, the collective concern becomes the social glue that joins the parts to create social cohesion. (252)

Hedberg's conclusions are based on material extracted from everyday conversations, informal interviews and observations from daily contact and interaction with a wide variety of community members.

Although her primary focus is to identify the communal cohesion at the centre, she pays particular attention to the ideas generated by those living at the margins of this colony, where she argues, “people negotiate and call into question some aspects of the structure, such as norms, rules and expected behaviour.” (38)

It is precisely this conclusion that represents the most significant conclusion of this work. Hedberg argues that this collective quest for spiritual salvation allows for a flexibility regarding individual transgressions. Therefore, those members who break either community or spiritual laws are able to leave and return to the Old Colony without fear of permanent reprisals. An individual’s ultimate spiritual well-being is dependent upon the collective action of the group rather than the individual.

While the methodology and narrative is relatively clear and easy to follow, *Outside the World* is the author’s dissertation. Completed and published in 2007, this work contains some of the weaknesses inherent to an unrevised dissertation. The author does not disclose why she chose to study this particular Old Colony community. There is also some question as to the methodology employed. Hedberg states that she did not use a tape recorder, but took notes on the conversations hours after they occurred from memory. Furthermore, one of the most serious weaknesses of the work is that the author admits she does not speak or understand Low German, the primary language of the Old Colony. Consequently, she was unable to engage with a majority of the community members leaving her dependent upon those Old Colonists and Bolivians who speak Spanish. In other words, the primary sources for this work are derived from those who already have traversed the cultural and physical divide between their world and broader Bolivian culture. As such, her search for the reasons people leave the Old Colony is self fulfilling as these are the only sources Hedberg uses. The author also acknowledges that she does not engage with many Old Colony women with the result that her conclusions regarding gender roles and women’s lived experiences of this social construction are primarily male. The absence of women’s voices within this world is palpable and unfortunate.

Finally, the author reminds Mennonite readers (or at least this particular reader) of the fascination elicited by the unique Old Colony world. As a non-Mennonite from Sweden, Hedberg approaches her subjects with a curiosity for cultural practices other Mennonites take for granted. This work reminds us of the importance of community and the meaning it brings to life. It also reminds the Mennonite world of how integral and integrated cultural and religious identity is to the formation and retention of both Old Colony and the larger Mennonite collective consciousness, because even when

members of the Old Colony leave, they do not stop being voluntarily Mennonite. This work also confirms the strong conservative religious identity with the land.

Patricia Harms
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Conrad L. Kanagy, Foreword by John D. Roth, *Road Signs for the Journey: A Profile of Mennonite Church USA*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2007. Pp. 207, soft cover, \$19.99 U.S.

A few years ago, a team of U.S. sociologists joined in a project called Church Member Profile 2006. The research, intended to advance earlier studies done in 1972 and 1989 by an earlier generation of sociologists, examined the current faith and practice of three denominations – Mennonite Church USA, Brethren in Christ, and Church of the Brethren. This book reports only on the findings for Mennonite Church USA.

In presenting these findings, Kanagy has produced a jeremiad, both literally and figuratively. He frames each of his chapters within the proclamations and actions of the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah, because he sees contemporary Mennonites facing a parallel crisis in their own communal faith and practice. And like the prophet before him, he calls today's church to repentance and renewal.

This combination of scientific analysis and theological exhortation is certainly unusual in social science writing. It is a risky strategy, because the author needs to appeal to (and satisfy) very different audiences with distinct interests and varying criteria for what counts as a convincing case. Kanagy is well-suited for such a difficult task because he is both a professional sociologist and an ordained pastor. He admits early in the book that his primary audience is church members and leaders, with social scientists a secondary interest. As such, a review based on purely social scientific criteria would be unfair. Still, to its credit, the book contains much careful social scientific analysis, a perspective that is often lacking in ecclesiological conversations.

His core argument is that Mennonite Church USA faces a crisis that threatens its very survival, and that the solution to the crisis is to become a "missional church." The crisis is essentially demographic, but with theological and cultural components, and Kanagy uses the research findings to document this in careful detail. The solution he proposes is based on his theological and pastoral instincts, but even here, he uses the data to point to areas of potential growth and action.

Hence, the “road signs” metaphor in the title, borrowed from the words of Jeremiah.

The demographic crisis is that Mennonite membership is getting older, having fewer children, and including fewer young adult members over time, even compared to other denominations also facing decline. This is somewhat countered by growth and fertility in “Racial/Ethnic” congregations, but not enough to arrest the numerical decline. While Kanagy’s demographic data is convincing, I think he does not give enough credit to the recent denominational mergers in the U.S. for declining membership numbers. Loss of membership is a nearly universal consequence of denominational merger, so to the extent that recent declines are a reaction to the merger, they may be temporary.

This is a specific example of a more general critique – that is, Kanagy tends to prefer pessimistic interpretations of his data. This serves a useful rhetorical purpose, especially when his intentions are jeremiadic, but at several points in the book, I found myself thinking, “But wait, might there not be an alternative explanation?” For example, Kanagy presents data on the increasing urbanization, education, and political involvement as evidence of assimilation and loss of a distinctively Mennonite identity/mission; but one could also argue that such data signals greater engagement with the world, which might itself be missional.

There are a number of other interesting and provocative findings presented throughout the series of thematic chapters. They illuminate key differences between generations, between pastors and laypeople, and between white Mennonites and Mennonites of color. They also suggest potential solutions or areas for growth if Mennonite Church USA wishes to remain a dynamic, vibrant and diverse Anabaptist presence in the contemporary world. Kanagy’s interpretations of the data and the theological/prophetic perspective he offers will make this book a valuable resource for congregations and for denominational leaders. The fact that those interpretations may provoke argument in response makes the book even more valuable, because the issues he raises are matters of great import.

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Walter Klaassen and William Klassen, *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2008. Pp. 423, Hardcover, \$32.99

Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity – co-authored by two recognized masters and respected deans of Anabaptist and Marpeck scholarship – has been many years in the making. The book, published this past year by Herald Press, proves to be well worth the wait.

The authors set out to write a thorough biography of Pilgram Marpeck, the first of its kind. Klaassen and Klassen pay careful attention to all extant documentation referring to Marpeck, as one would expect from both scholars. What is equally significant – and most rare – is the careful attention paid to the social and political settings in which Marpeck is known to have lived and worked. And so we learn about the process of mining and transporting ore in the sixteenth century; of Marpeck’s successful engineering ventures (Strasbourg, St. Gall, Augsburg), as well as his personal responsibility for a spectacular engineering disaster (also Augsburg). Archduke Ferdinand runs like a strand of Hapsburg barbed wire throughout, menacingly overlapping with Marpeck in Augsburg toward the end of Marpeck’s life. Strasbourg comes to life as Marpeck tries to navigate its religious rapids and political eddies, as does Augsburg in the years of the Schmalcaldic League, the Interim and the Peace of Augsburg (1555). In short, the book is an impressive demonstration of how mastering a complex *Sitz im Leben* can significantly enrich an historical narrative.

The book proceeds chronologically, and Marpeck’s writings are successively integrated into the vivid historical tableaux. Notable for adding historical texture to the man and his thought is the careful attention paid to the persons important to Marpeck along the way. We read of Castenbaur, Schiemer, Schlaffer, Bänderlin, Entfelder, Schwenckfeld, Scharnschlager, Maler and many, many more, in carefully crafted miniatures. Their lives and their thought are revealed and explored in relation to Marpeck’s own. In the account of Helena von Freyberg and the role of women in Marpeck’s movement, for example, we read also of Argula von Grumbach and Ursula von Weylin, thus expanding our horizon on the subject of religiously-engaged women in the sixteenth century. The summaries and analyses of Marpeck’s own thought are especially lucid throughout; Appendix A provides a useful and succinct organization of central themes, especially helpful because of the occasional and scattered nature of Marpeck’s writings (359-366).

The authors are writing biography, but as they explain in the “Introduction,” they “believe that the recovery of the past is important for the present.” (33) The “lessons from the past” make brief appearances here and there in the text, but are explicitly addressed in the Epilogue,

“Marpeck’s Legacy,” in conclusion (351-357). In light of the current surge of interest in Pilgram Marpeck, evident in a major planned conference and numerous publications, the reflections of Klaassen and Klassen on the significance of Pilgram Marpeck for twenty-first century Christians are incisive, timely and wise. Inspired by Marpeck and reflecting on the matter of coercion in the church, for example, they write: “Unless the church can be seen to be a model of patience and charity both in its process as well as its outcome, it will have failed at a vital point in its ministry to the world.” At this point, and others, I would say “Amen!” even though the authors here transcend biography and conclude with admonition.

My own quibbles are minor, and do not detract from my overall enthusiasm for the book. In the early chapters, in the relative absence of documentary evidence, there was a profusion of speculative questions about what Marpeck may have thought, felt or done; as the unanswerable questions proceeded page after page, patience began to wear thin. Thankfully, this rhetorical style subsided quickly enough, replaced by rich and robust content. The notation, while generally good, contained more errors than one would expect from authors of this caliber. It may be that a final stage of copy editing was missed.

Quibbles aside, *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity* is a wonderful book to read: learned, informative, and written in an easy and engaging prose. The hardcover book is beautifully printed and bound by Friesen’s in Altona, Manitoba and, coincidentally, features Canadian spelling throughout.

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Conrad Grebel University College

David W. Kriebel, *Powwowing among the Pennsylvania Dutch: A Traditional Medical Practice in the Modern World*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press. Pennsylvania German History and Culture Series, no. 8; Publications of the Pennsylvania German Society, no. 41., 2008. (xi + 295 pp.), hard cover, \$30.00 U.S.

Powwowing among the Pennsylvania Dutch is an illuminating compendium of information about powwowing old and new. David Kriebel, a folklorist by training, sets out to show that despite repeated declarations of its demise, powwowing is an extant and evolving cultural practice. At the end of his book, Kriebel voices his hope that his study will contribute to the further evolution and sustenance of

powwowing, by framing it as one among many “alternative and complementary medical treatments” that deserves both public attention and medical assessment (221). Shrouded in both secrecy and suspicion, and with a complicated relationship to Mennonite communities, powwowing is a practice that has drawn from diverse cultural reservoirs to effect healing and hexing.

Kriebel revises Don Yoder’s definition of powwowing (also known as *Brauche*) to emerge with the following: “Powwowing is an unofficial traditional magico-religious practice—originating with and chiefly practiced by the Pennsylvania Dutch and emphasizing healing of humans and animals, but with other goals as well—that uses words, charms, amulets, and physical manifestations to achieve its objectives” (16). A mixture of laying on of hands, talismanic Bible rituals, wart cures, and apotropaic charms, powwowing has an uncertain future; the youngest person in Kriebel’s classification of authentic, active powwowers was born in 1950, but this does not include the neo-pagan powwower Silver RavenWolf, who did not fit Kriebel’s standards of authenticity (232). Framing his narrative as “detective” story set in several Pennsylvania counties, Kriebel demonstrates that the work of finding people to talk with him was a difficult and sometimes unsettling task; while some people clammed up at the mere mention of such a “diabolical” practice as powwowing, others quietly beseeched or openly begged Kriebel for information about how to find a powwower to cure their ills. Kriebel is engagingly open about the methodological challenges of his research. His argument would have benefited from considering further the anthropological literature on ethnographic reflexivity as he pondered his relationships to the communities of his study.

Kriebel divides his book into eight chapters and seven appendices. With the help of previous folkloric, historical, and ethnographic research, he outlines the history of powwowing, its ritual structures, its therapeutic goals and techniques, its specific Pennsylvanian setting, and its contemporary practitioners. A somewhat clinical catalogue of a range of stories about visits to powwowers throughout the twentieth century, the book provides much data for thinking about what brought people to powwowers, and what they encountered once there. Kriebel ventures some analysis, but with the help of medical anthropology and the wider historical literature on faith or divine healing among Christians, he could have better situated powwowing in its North American context. I would have been especially interested in learning further about the significance of powwowing’s many borrowings. From Kriebel’s description it is clear that powwowing was a hybrid tradition that posited its authority via such diverse sources as the Bible, palimpsests of Catholic ritual, and mediations of “antiquity” and “Islam” such as *Albertus Magnus: Egyptian Secrets*.

Kriebel is less explicit about the ways powwow shared commonalities with diverse therapeutic traditions such as the charms of African-American conjure, the distance healing of Christian Science, and the “Indian guides” of spiritualism. Thinking more broadly about how powwowing cultivated itself as a hybrid yet Christian practice would help to understand its evolution – and its opponents – more comprehensively.

Kriebel’s changing approach over the course of the book to the categories of magic and religion demonstrates the complex social worlds of powwow. At first he adopts the problematic (and outdated) anthropological distinction between magic (e.g. witchcraft) as coercion of supernatural forces and religion (e.g. Christianity) as hopeful supplication, arguing that powwowing has shifted from a magical to a religious function over the course of the twentieth century (15; 196, fn. 6). By the end of the book, however, he points to the fuzziness of the categories of magic and religion in the context of powwowing – the line between witches and powwowers, between hexing and healing, is not always clear (203). The power in powwow is at the heart of its controversy. Its practitioners and critics come up with different sources for its effectiveness: the Christian God, devilish forces, or superstition.

Whether or not Kriebel’s book is best understood as “a passport to the secrets of the centuries-old art of Pennsylvania Dutch powwowing” (3), it certainly offers an excellent entry into a fascinating set of cultural practices which Mennonite traditions and communities have met with both ambivalence and enthusiasm. Powwowing is a helpful lens for realizing that Pennsylvania Dutch peoples, and by implication Pennsylvania Mennonites, were not (and are not) as culturally sealed as they are often portrayed.

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Hans Werner, *Imagined Homes: Soviet German Immigrants in Two Cities*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007. Pp. 292 pages, soft cover. \$ 29.95

As Hans Werner indicates in his introduction, his book considers the immigrant experience of two comparable groups of Eastern European ethnic Germans who migrated from the Soviet Union to the west. The first group settled in Winnipeg in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s and the second group followed settling in Bielefeld, West Germany in the 1970’s. The study was to test “the concept of immigrant integration

in the context of a return home to Germany (the Bielefeld group) as compared to integration in the foreign context of Canada (the Winnipeg group)” (5) In addition to the “different trajectories of their future lives in their respective cities” (7), the immigrants entered into receiving states with significantly different conceptions of what citizenship involved and what role the state should play in assisting the newcomers’ integration into their new contexts. Canada’s citizenship was based on place of birth and desire; Germany’s on ethnic blood ties. In Germany the welfare state played a much more significant role in directing the affairs of its newcomers while Canada’s laissez faire approach left considerably more discretion and freedom to its immigrants

Werner’s book is divided into four parts with nine chapters. Section one describes the historical background in the Soviet Union prior to migration, the two receiving cities and the immigrant’s value to the receiving states. Section two portrays immigrant efforts to put down roots; that is, find jobs and places to live in Germany and Canada. Section three discusses “reproducing community” by analyzing immigrant family life, religious identity and language use. Finally, section four deals with how the two groups participated in their new contexts as members of social groups.

Although there are frequent repetitious passages throughout, Werner’s book is clearly and effectively written, the author’s reliance on sociological jargon and models notwithstanding. The anecdotes and personal reflections gathered in his interviews, often quoted at length, are interesting and well chosen. His thesis of more successful integration by the group in Canada than in Germany seems convincing. These are all strengths. The book’s basic weakness relates to its narrow scope. Werner makes the point about the differences between immigrant responses in his two cities but he does not relate either of them to a larger context. Was the Winnipeg response representative for Germans who immigrated to Toronto or Saskatchewan after World War Two? Was Bielefeld’s refugee experience similar to that experienced by the Vertriebene in Stuttgart or Heidelberg? Werner describes the Bielefelder’s disillusionment effectively but was his Canadian German group as happy and adjusted as he suggests? The author does not relate the experiences of his Winnipeg Germans, for example, to the findings of Porter’s *Vertical Mosaic*. Were the Germans not aware that they were perceived by some in the English majority as lesser Canadians? Or if they were unaware, was not this unawareness the result of being less integrated or adjusted than Werner has described them in the book? What role did economic status play in adjustment in both cities? Where did the two immigrant groups fit in the larger socio-economic context of Canada and Germany?

These are legitimate questions that were not answered. Despite the short comings, the book's comparative approach is both refreshing and suggestive for future studies.

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Petr P. Vibe (Wiebe), *Nemetskie kolonii v Sibiri: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie aspekt* (German Colonies in Siberia: Socio-economic Aspects). Omsk: Omsk State Historical Museum, 2007. Pb. Pp. 368.

Since the 1991 opening of Russian state and Communist Party archives to scholars the study of Siberian Mennonites and Colonist Germans has made significant progress. A notable leader in this development is Peter P. Wiebe. A long-time Director of the Omsk State Historical Museum, Vibe is also a senior professor of history at the Omsk State Pedagogical University. He is at the centre of a varied group of scholars and graduate students from both institutions who work in fields from museology and the history of Siberia to Siberian German and Mennonite studies. Vibe has written a score of articles, volumes of sources and studies in these fields.

In this important monograph, Vibe focuses on the main demographic and socio-economic trends and dynamics in the history of German-speaking minorities in Siberia. These he sets within the larger physical and socio-economic environment and the drama of titanic political change. The study begins with the successful settlement of German-speakers on state, private or leasehold villages, farms (khutors) and estates along the Siberian frontier before World War I. It closes with the onset of collectivization, Stalinist terror and a panicky flight of many to Moscow in the late 1920s. Half the volume is devoted to developments through to the end of World War I, and half to in-group developments and Soviet-induced change from the Revolution until the late 1920s.

Although German-speakers in Siberia represented only about one percent of the total Siberian population, the concept of Mennonites as a preponderant presence in the agricultural economy is woven into every brushstroke of Vibe's pre- and post-war portrait. He explores their pioneering development and revolutionary regime change and suffering. A crucial point, Vibe defines Mennonites as distinctive in important respects from their Lutheran and Catholic German neighbours. (While such distinctions are firmly grounded in the record,

Vibe, as the son of a German Lutheran mother and a Mennonite father, is perhaps well-placed to spot and analyze them dispassionately.)

Vibe sees Mennonites as distinctive in facets of their group “mentality” and character. More drawn to goal oriented tasks and rational planning, they succeeded by dint of hard work, the social integration of their villages and the ability to call on the support and financial assistance of their fellow Mennonites in Ukrainian mother settlements. Vibe attributes much importance to mutual help and “brotherhood” as living realities among Mennonites. The results in Tsarist times were better teachers, schools, and higher rates of literacy. There was also, in his view, an orientation to mechanized and more efficient farming, higher crop yields, superior animal husbandry and the capacity to integrate Mennonite society in villages, churches and community-run enterprises.

Vibe’s interpretation is largely supported by the German/Russian study of Detlef Brandes and Andrei Savin, *Die Siberien-deutschen im Sowjetstaat 1919-1938* (Essen, Germany: 2001). It is an understanding that breaks sharply with the earliest post-Soviet studies of Germans in Siberia era where Mennonites appear as members of a largely undifferentiated German-speaking community. In those studies, Mennonites were described simply as Germans and used without attribution to illustrate German success stories in Tsarist times as well as opposition to Soviet abuses later on.

This valuable study is well illustrated and richly provided with charts and graphs. It uniquely draws on an impressive array of rare statistical print and archival sources for its narrative and analysis. These provide comparative data respecting demography, village and estate land leaseholds, crop cycles and yields as well as animal husbandry and

breeding. All indicators adduced by Vibe point to a commanding Mennonite lead in all branches of the Siberian plowland and livestock economies in Tsarist and Soviet times.

The research and publication of this volume was partly funded by several grants from a consortium of Western Mennonite individuals and institutions bound together in a collaborative program entitled “Khortitsa ’99 Mennonite Studies Grants Program in the Former Soviet Union.”

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Diane Zimmerman Umble and David L. Weaver-Zercher, eds., *The Amish and the Media*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. Pp. ix +275. Index. Hardcover. \$35 (US).

This collection of essays reflects the recent expansion of Amish studies in North America beyond a focus on Amish culture and practices to an examination of the reception of the Amish way of life by societies that surround the Amish – especially popular representations of the Amish in consumer culture. Moreover, the editors – Diane Zimmerman Umble, a communication professor at Millersville University and David Weaver-Zercher, a professor of religious history at Messiah College – have produced a book that also exhibits the increasing interdisciplinarity of Amish studies. Although Amish studies originated in the pioneering sociological work of John Hostetler and Donald Kraybill, this book is proof that the future of Amish studies will likely not be an exclusively sociological one. Besides the disciplines of communication, history, and sociology, three other disciplines are represented: anthropology, film studies, and literature.

The mix of methodologies makes for a path-breaking and challenging book, organized broadly around two primary themes: Amish images in the media and Amish use of the media. The media is defined broadly in this book, ranging from the architecture of tourist-oriented villages in Amish country to the textbooks used by Amish parochial schools. The introduction and conclusion set the context for the book in the aftermath of the Nickel Mines School shooting, although the rest of the essays in the book leave that event aside.

The editors highlight questions about power and agency in relationship to the media that emerge when studying Amish interaction with and use of media. To what extent are the Amish the victims of media exploitation? In what ways do the Amish exercise control over media images of the Amish? How does consumer desire shape media representations of the Amish? The answers to questions like these found in the book's chapters challenge the dominant perception of the Amish as an uneducated and withdrawn sectarian community with a relatively unsophisticated relationship to modern technologies and institutions. For example, Steven Nolt's chapter on Amish newspapers demonstrates how two distinctive yet overlapping Amish subcultures are construed in the pages of *The Budget* and *Die Botschaft*: one inscribed by genealogy and geography, the other focused around Old Order identity.

In a similar vein, Karen Wiener-Johnson highlights contrasting parochial school cultures created by the explicit Amish piety of Pathway Publishers curricula on the one hand, and the more religiously

neutral reproductions of late nineteenth and early twentieth century American public school textbooks by the Gordonville Print Shop, on the other hand. Donald Kraybill explains how “Amish informants” negotiate complex and qualified interactions with journalists and media companies in order to influence depictions of the Amish in the media, while at the same time managing their own sometimes marginal relationships to the Amish community. Even media representations of the Amish which are quite obviously shaped more by North American consumer expectations than by actual Amish practices nevertheless carry marks of Amish “otherness,” as Susan Biesecker describes in her chapter on tourist-oriented villages in Holmes County, Ohio, and Dirk Eitzen finds in his analysis of popular documentary films and reality T.V. shows about the Amish.

Of course, the question that interests Biesecker and Eitzen the most is the question of what kinds of middle American desires and anxieties are profitably addressed by images and narratives about the Amish. This question is also pursued thoughtfully by Crystal Downing in her confessionally framed study of the film *Witness*, by Julia Kasdorf in her anti-racist analysis of “whiter than whiteness” in poetry about the Amish, and by David Weaver-Zercher in his insightful exploration of non-fiction narratives about outsiders living among the Amish. While it is not an explicit conclusion of the editors and authors of this book, the accounts they provide of the critical engagement by the Amish with North American media culture suggest that there is much for North American consumers and academics to learn from the Amish about how to resist passive consumption of media products and technologies. Indeed, the ongoing Amish enthusiasm for print media in an electronic age that is increasingly abandoning books and newspapers challenges all of us to think a bit more critically about whether we really want to give up reading for browsing.

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