

Mennonite Life



DECEMBER 1997
VOL. 52 / NO. 4

In this issue, led off by our Arts section, Warren Kliewer gives us a short story about childhood experiences of performance. Cheryl Denise of Philippi, West Virginia, offers a new poem. Bob Regier of North Newton, Kansas, interviewed by Carla Reimer, discusses his printmaking.

In *this* issue

In our Religion and Theology section, we have a discussion by William Klassen of

Waterloo, Ontario, about Mennonite use of the Bible and its relationship to the theology of Gordon Kaufman. Klassen's article is followed by a response from Kaufman.

Our History section presents a story of the South Dakota Mennonite experience in World War I. Merle Funk recently completed his Ph. D. in history at the University of Colorado in Boulder and has been a history instructor at the Community College of Aurora, Colorado.

Our Current Issues section contains an article by Lawrence Hart, a Cheyenne leader and Mennonite pastor, relating the Sand Creek massacre of 1864 and the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995.



Photo credits:

p. 10, 11, 12, Carla Reimer; p. 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, Merle J. F. Funk; p. 34, 36, Susan Hart, Lawton, OK.

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Excelsior

Warren Kliewer

Warren Kliewer, of Secaucus, New Jersey, was one of the honorees at a banquet at Goshen College during the conference "Mennonite/s Writing in the U.S." October 23-26, 1997. Kliewer was honored for his lifetime of work in drama. In this autobiographical sketch from his childhood, Kliewer describes for the reader his earliest infatuation with "performance."

Children are always having to look up, because everyone else is bigger and taller. All the interesting stuff is out of reach: cookies, colored glass, knives, matches. I remember thinking: "Someday I'll get big and then I'll find out what's on top of things."

We've all gone through that childhood discomfiture, of course, and that may be the origin of judgmental idioms like "to look down on" someone. "Oh, isn't he the cutest little boy," some strange lady would coo, looking down at the top of my head.

"You wait till I get big like you," I'd say to myself. "I'll show you what cute is."

Maybe the opposite idiom, "to look up to," also comes from starting out life as a miniature. I know I looked up to (in both senses) the boys next door, not only because Allen was one year and two inches beyond me, but because of the splendid things he did. Wisecracks. Funny words that made me laugh till my stomach hurt. Wherever he went, other boys gathered around to ask him dumb questions for his funny answers. The cartoons he drew in class made even the teachers laugh.

All I could do was tell solemn stories; Allen could make anything funny.

His brother, Lee, eleven years older than I, was a mystery beyond emulation, an idol surrounded by magic. I was five and hung back three steps when I followed him. I had to strain my neck back to look all the way up to his face, and was glad to do it.

One day another boy in the neighborhood raced past our front yard shouting, "It's here! It came!"

"What? What came? Where is it?"

"On their front porch."

So I followed. There, behind the thick, white railings and broad, tapered columns, the thing was . . . whatever it was. A large, wooden packing crate, partly opened. A few shiny metal cylinders and poles scattered around the porch floor. Some polished, brown wooden bars lined up against the wall.

"What is it?"

"Sh," someone said. "Just wait."

All these mysterious things had been packed in the crate in what looked like straw, only it really wasn't. "What's that stuff?"

That was the day I learned the word, "excelsior." It's not just straw, I learned, not just wood shavings. This was a word my mouth could play with, my mind could mull over: Excelsior! Ex-CEL-si-or.

Thick rubber wheels came out of the box, each one wrapped in padded paper and tied with twine. "What are those for?"

"You'll see."

Nobody was explaining anything. Then I saw a pattern. As the shiny metal tubes of different lengths, two of each length, came out of the crate, Lee laid them gently in pairs in a

row against the wall. "What are those for?"

"Resonance," Lee answered authoritatively. "And amplification." Oh, I was seized with admiration all over again. To be able to say such meaningless things with such assurance! I didn't ask what the words meant.

My mother called me for dinner, had to call twice, in fact, I was so engrossed. Since being late for meals was an unpardonable offense, I kicked my way through the hedge rather than going around it, frustrated because I still had no idea what those pipes and blocks would become. I asked my mother if she knew.

"A marimba," she said casually.

That was no help. Knowing the name of a thing didn't tell me what it did. "What's a marimba?"

"You'll see," my father said. "Eat your dinner."

And then I had to take my nap, and by the time I got back to Lee's porch, the pipes and blocks and wheels had been moved into the house, and nothing was left but the packing crate and the excelsior. So I peeked through the window and couldn't see anything, but I heard sounds from the second floor, and I couldn't go in because no one had invited me, so I knew I was never going to find out ever in my entire life what a marimba was.

But I was five years old and easily distracted. A week or two later Mr. Sorensen dropped in. He roamed throughout the county peddling Watkins Products, carrying along a heavy valise packed with shoe polish and vanilla and cinnamon and greasy ointments and, of course, liniment. Wherever he went, he trailed the smell of liniment, and it lingered for an hour after he'd left. It filled the room. So did his voice, sounding always as if on the verge of roars of laughter. Mr. Sorensen was fat. No, he was immense, his face, his calves, even his fingers. I knew what Santa Claus looked like. He was Mr. Sorensen. Though he lacked a beard, he had the belly, and when he laughed, it really did shake like a bowlful of jelly.

Mr. Sorensen's visits were conducted like a ritual. He would drop in. No one made appointments in those days. He'd head straight for a kitchen chair, plop down, and catch his breath. Then he'd begin talking—about the

weather, the crops, the local news, somebody's new baby, no politics or gossip—and casually, as if it were of no importance, he'd open a whole side of the valise and reveal a densely packed display of brightly colored bottles, tins, boxes, and paper packages. And in the middle of a very interesting story, he'd interrupt himself to say, "You see anything here you need, Mrs. Kliever?"

"No," my mother would say. Her sales resistance was formidable. The year was 1936, and even pennies were scarce. She smiled.

And without a break in his rhythm, he'd continue his story and take one bottle or box after another out of the valise and arrange the items tastefully on the kitchen table, and he'd start a

**"I knew a performance when I saw one.
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for dais, performing for an awe-stricken
audience of one."**

new story about a friend or relative or a customer at the other end of the county and unpack and arrange a few more tins and paper packages and interrupt himself with, "Anything here? This is a good salve for bee stings."

Every once in a while my mother would cave in. She'd pick up one item, only one, set it aside, go quickly into the bedroom for the little coin purse inside her large purse, and come back with exact change. As Mr. Sorensen repacked, she'd offer him coffee and something to eat—apple pie, if he came early in the week. Then if I'd been listening hard and encouraging him, he'd lean back in the kitchen chair and tell me stories about the Old Country, Denmark.

Even though I was a five-year-old who had never heard of Hans Christian Andersen and wouldn't learn about ancient Scandinavian storytelling traditions for another twenty or more years, I knew a performance when I saw one. He was a part-time bard with a kitchen chair for dais, performing for an awe-stricken audience of one.

In those days performance permeated our lives, though we would have been shocked if anyone had pointed it out that bluntly. No, the church

choir sang every Sunday, not "performed." Children memorized Bible verses in Sunday school and then recited them, not "performed." Businessmen gave speeches in the Commercial Club meetings (when Rotary had not yet arrived), and teachers told well-rehearsed stories to their classes, and we all knew them to be fine, upstanding citizens, not like the wicked men and loose women who worked on the stage. And yet, in those days before television, when radios were rarely used, we were being taught the rhythm of performance: private study followed by the public projection of a controlled persona. When I judged Mr. Sorensen to be a master storyteller, I already had criteria by which to measure him.

So I was doubly amazed when I finally saw and heard the assembled marimba—the pipe legs so shiny you could see an elongated reflection of your face on them, hanging down in graduated rows like organ pipes upside down, the burnished, brown blocks of wood laid out neatly, the longest on the left tapering down to the shortest on the right. I wanted to touch it but didn't dare, or more likely, Lee told me not to. Then he played, using

**"She stopped working at the kitchen table.
"where did you learn that word?"**

two sets of the round-headed mallets, one hard and one padded with fuzzy coverings. The music swelled to fill the sitting room with marimba throbs and then dwindled down to a whisper my ears could hardly pick up. The little mallets moved so fast they blurred. "Mama," I said when I got home, "Lee is a genius."

She stopped working at the kitchen table.
"Where did you learn that word?"

"From Lee."

She smiled. "All right."

Years later, of course, after I'd come to understand how things work, I realized Lee hadn't learned to play the marimba magically overnight. Besides, this was 1936. No one, certainly not Lee's father, the vice-president of the Farmers State

Bank, was risking money on a cumbersome toy before his son had demonstrated his commitment. No, I realized, Lee had learned on a borrowed instrument somewhere, under the thumb of a teacher, through relentless practice and drudgery, just like any other musician.

But starting out in ignorance, believing Lee was a wizard, was still the better way. For now I have the memory of the magic, and it resurfaces from time to time to remind me that a fine performance really is a mystery after all. Performers, at least the ones who reach beyond technique, find themselves floating into a region even they do not understand, and when they return, they're not able to describe that alien geography. This uncharted somewhere: is this what Longfellow had in mind when he imposed another meaning on the word "excelsior" in one of his poems—a yearning upwards toward higher things? His usage, which I am told is ungrammatical Latin, was suitably unspecific.

I learned about yearning—the experience if not the word—the next summer when I turned six. Someone told me there was going to be a show in town. I didn't dare ask what a show is because everyone else acted as if they knew. I did know what a stage is. Our school auditorium had one—a plain, dark-brown proscenium with realistically painted foliage and marble pedestals on a wing-and-drop set. If that's where the show was going to be, I knew I could go. There was only one house and an alley between us and the auditorium, so I could go there any time I wanted.

But I guessed wrong. The show was going to be in Balzer's Lumber Yard. I couldn't go! My mother would never allow me to cross the traffic on Highway 60, not on a Saturday afternoon when there were so many cars out there. Then one of the other boys mentioned tickets. Was I going to have to pay? I didn't have any money. I was just a little kid. Would anyone really expect a little kid to pay? I knew I was going to have to enlist my mother's aid.

I think she was curious about the show herself. That's why I didn't have to beg. Early Saturday morning she raided her little coin purse inside her big purse, and we set off. "There's plenty of

time," she told me when I tried to get her to walk faster.

Balzer's Lumber Yard had a driveway through the center of the building so that trucks could load and unload during the winters or when it rained. Everything had been cleared out now, and many rows of metal folding chairs had been set up, all facing a stage. Only it was too small for people to walk around on.

"How come?" I asked my mother.

"It's a puppet show," she said.

"What's a puppet?"

"It's like a doll, but it moves."

"It moves? How?"

"You'll see." People were always telling me that.

I rushed to get a seat in the front row—easy enough, since most of the chairs were still empty, except for a few other boys who had squabbled for the best seats. They tried to talk to me, but I couldn't think of anything to say, not when something so mysterious was about to happen. I turned my eyes to the stage. It was so high up I had to arch my neck backwards to look at it. The curtain was closed. Nothing moved. I studied it.

The mothers, I think, gathered in the back, but I forgot there were mothers anywhere in the world. More and more children came in and sat down. I stared at the stage curtains, hoping that if I wished hard enough, they would open. They didn't. The chairs were all full. The other children grew noisier. I was no longer able to make a sound. Maybe someone should go behind the curtains and tell the puppets we were all ready. No one did. My muscles ached. My breathing sped up.

Then the curtains opened. Bright light flooded the little stage. From somewhere behind the stage a voice said, "This is a story about a little boy named Peter." And all of us replied, "Ooooooh."

A little figure about as long as my two hands put together walked onto the stage all by himself. But he wasn't really a boy. He looked like . . . well, like one of those stick figures we had been drawing in first grade. How could that be? How could a stick-Peter come to life? Then Peter's grandfather came onto the stage, a bird, a duck, a

wolf. They all moved and each one had a different voice. I was so glad I was in the front row because I could figure out they'd been made out of pipe cleaners bent into the shape of arms, legs, wings, the duck's bill, the wolf's tail. But that didn't explain how they moved. That was a hard one. Gradually I began to notice strings going up from each of the figures. I noticed the strings got tighter and looser. Was there somebody behind the stage pulling the strings? Could be.

But at the same time I was figuring out the mechanics, I was breathing through my mouth, the story was so engrossing. I worried when the pipe-cleaner wolf swallowed up the pipe-cleaner duck. You could see the duck riding around inside the wolf's stomach. The duck didn't seem to mind much, but I didn't think it should stay there very long. Then came the scene when Peter let down a

"I had changed since yesterday and was headed in a direction that wasn't on any map."

rope to catch the wolf's tail. The rope was a long pipe cleaner bent into a hook. Slowly it reached down from the top of the stage, quivering all the way, and slowly, slowly, while we all held our breath, it worked its way into the wolf's looped tail, carefully inched up again, and then jerked the wolf up into the air and shook it. The duck fell out of the wolf's stomach and waddled away. We all cheered and clapped.

The rest of the day was gray and dreary, even though, as I remember, the sun was shining brightly. For I babbled all the way home with my mother but wasn't able to find the words in my six-year-old vocabulary to tell her what I had learned: that Lee was taller than I and magical and Mr. Sorensen was bigger than all of us and magnetic, but those little pipe cleaners on that miniature stage were the hugest of all; that the light glistening on those stick arms and legs shone brighter than a hundred suns; that I had changed since yesterday and was headed in a direction that wasn't on any map. But maybe I didn't have to explain. She smiled all the way home.

Mennonite Poet

C h e r y l D e n i s e

Dedication

We begin life crying in front of a congregation,
 in a circle of parents,
 with dark suits and crisp, clean dresses,
 grandparents sitting near the front
 wish we'd hush.
 The pastor touches our foreheads
 with rough farm hands,
 asks our parents to nurture us in Christ,
 the congregation in semi unison promises to help.
 Five minutes and it's done
 we're taken back to our seats,
 sucking our mother's fingers,
 immersed in the thunderous four part harmony
 of "Children of the Heavenly Father."

Our Father

At four we're taught to pray
 in Sunday school rooms filled with pictures
 of David and sling shots,
 long haired Samson breaking down pillars,
 white bearded Noah laughing,
 guiding giraffes into the ark.
 We fold our hands,
 bow our heads,
 "Our Father," we awkwardly mumble
 cheeks filled with crackers.
 Kneeling, we're told, is good
 but only in private.
 I spied on Mom and Dad
 but never caught them at it.

Sunday Dinners

As I grew older
 my sisters and I were expected
 to help with Sunday dinners and company.
 Our table was always full—
 we girls sitting at the corners,
 ready to refill plates of roast beef and potatoes.
 We laughed at the stories,
 the men who left the Old Order Church, at eighteen,

no longer in their horse and buggies
on back roads.
They were stopped by a policeman
when they walked through a red light,
in the city,
a ten dollar ticket.

Dessert lasted till three,
apple pies with Crisco crusts
slices of sharp cheddar on top.
We served mint tea
and offered seconds.
We had to stay seated and listen
to the last scrap of adult conversation;
from the living room window
we could see the neighbor kids
picking teams for soccer.

Dancing

Mennonites don't dance.
It's not something you ask about:
mothers frown, wave their hands,
talk incomprehensibly.
I used to sneak channel 12 on downstairs,
watch the Canadian National Ballet.
When I was eleven
and my legs were long,
I asked Dad for Nutcracker tickets.
I think he was happy,
my first time at a city stage
not filled with a choir.

Communion

Patsy, my best friend was Catholic.
They had communion every Sunday;
she thought four times a year wasn't enough.
They drank wine from a gold goblet;
the Priest made it into the actual blood.
We drank Welch's Grape Juice
from tiny plastic cups,
and washed feet.
The women went to the basement,
Mom said they kept their stockings on.
The men went up front,

us kids stood on the pews,
watching them wash feet without soap.
Afterwards they kissed each other,
the only time I ever
saw them touch,
and it made me sick.

School

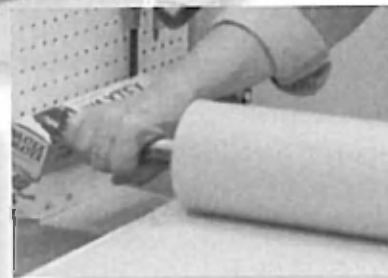
Mr. Foxall taught art,
he had unkempt thick hair
and thin arms.
He told us to draw without thinking.
He must have been from Toronto.
Sometimes after class I'd draw
pictures of farmland and pastures
burdened with corn.
Mom hung those on the fridge.

After Church

I wrote my first poem at sixteen
for Kendal's baptism,
didn't know what I was doing.
Poetry still feels weird.
I envy Catholic poets,
confession boxes, gold statues,
altar boys, holy water,
stained glass colors of salvation.
All I can see is a smooth pine cross
hanging in this jaundiced sanctuary,
where it just seems prudent to believe.
I like to write after everyone's gone,
with the hum of the janitor vacuuming
downstairs.
I long to dance,
to cry, to lose myself,
like a wild Mary Magdalene
trying to spill her perfume.

Printmaking: Interview with Bob Regier

Carla Reimer



There is nothing splashy about printmaker Bob Regier's most recent work. Even the artist himself describes the ambience of his prints as quiet. "The feeling I want to communicate is one of meditation. . . . That is more where I am at," he observed in an interview in March.

However, while the patterns in his series of prints are intricately rendered and his palette is primarily pastel, Regier's approach toward the visual image is rooted in the abstract expressionism he encountered as a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, then later as a graduate student at the University of Illinois, in the late 1950s and 1960s.

At that time, recalled Regier, "the intuitive, spontaneous paintings with big gestures" of the abstract expressionist movement felt foreign to him. "It was nothing I could relate to. It was so alien to control."

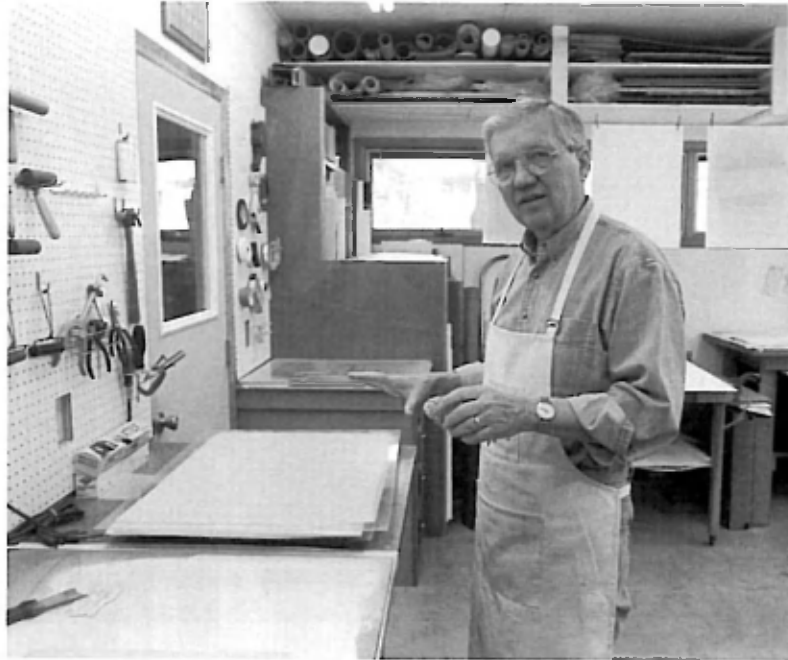
Initially, he even wondered whether he would ever be able work in a style of painting that did not seem "like an authentic expression" of his true nature.

Yet, he did, and now, over 30 years later, Regier is thankful for what he learned during that turbulent period in the American art world, despite the fact he long ago veered away from the "overt spontaneity" of abstract expressionism.

In his mind, it is the process, rather than the actual techniques, that has been helpful in his career as a printmaker. "The part that has stayed with me that I value very much is the notion of allowing the image to develop without a strong preconception of where it is going."

It was while Regier was working as a staff artist at the General Conference Mennonite Church offices that he began to feel restless and, consequently, decided to enroll in a summer printmaking class at Wichita State University.

"I wasn't particularly interested in printmaking. It was a fairly arbitrary decision. If they had been offering painting that summer I would have taken painting."



But his interaction with this new medium proved to be stimulating enough to convince Regier that he did not want to focus on graphic design for the rest of his life. He specifically liked "the indirectness of printmaking—the delay, the gap between marks put on the plate and the actual revelation [of those marks]."

"I have a strong tendency to be a perfectionist, to want to control things, to deliberate. My impulse is to overwork, to fine tune, to snuff the life out of it. . . . I wanted to find ways to interfere with that." "Printmaking is an oblique approach to the image. You are more aware of the importance of serendipity, the unexpected, being receptive to what you didn't plan."

The entire image in a print has to be "up for grabs" up until the point it is finished, he said, noting that it is quite common for him to feel disappointed when he first lifts a print off the



press. Other times, he is excited about the direction he is moving with an image, only to realize that he is a long way from resolution.

As a result, Regier said he has learned the importance of allowing for a time delay between each print run. He usually hangs up his prints in progress on a line in his studio for several days

“All my other art projects are collaborative. My philosophy resonates with that and the creativity that comes because of group activity.”

and, then, spends a fair bit of what he calls “staring time” in order to get a sense of what he would like to try next.

“What I often think about is a whole wash of visual images—this particular prairie environment—I have thousands of slides [of the prairie], but I never look at one slide in relation to my work. Yet, it is all there in the experiences of texture, color, the transitory quality of light,” he observed.

Regier, who taught art at Bethel College for 30 years and now has his own graphic design and printmaking studio, said he has become more comfortable with the solitary nature of printmaking.

“All my other art projects are collaborative. My philosophy resonates with that and the creativity that comes because of group activity.”

“Printmaking is more private, a movement into solitude. I have to work harder to rationalize [this activity], but I am much more at peace about it now.

“I like to think of Paul’s metaphor of the body. There are lots of different functions within a community; artists make a contribution. . . . I am now at a point where I don’t feel I have to justify my work, where the hours alone in the studio are not just left over in the margins of life.”

Mennonite theology is viewed by Gordon Kaufman as primarily one-dimensional. Like the theology of Karl Barth, Mennonite theology is oriented primarily in and from the Bible, according to Kaufman. Such an approach to theology he describes as "too narrow" and as leading to an "idolatry of ancient texts" which is in the end unfaithful to God and the Christ even as it perceives itself as being the most faithful of all. In its place he calls for a (peace) theology which is imaginatively constructed by the use of the God-Christ images which are in direct correlation with the biosystem in which we live.

Like all reflective Mennonites, Gordon Kaufman has had to struggle with the Mennonite attempts to remain faithful to the Bible and the clear evidence that the Bible either does not speak to many of our modern dilemmas or says something which, at least at first glance, appears irrelevant to our needs and concerns. There is no doubt the Bible has been idolized and treated as an amulet among us. Worst of all it has been used as a power tool to destroy human relationships and to alienate people from the very God whose Word the Bible is affirmed to be.

It is the thesis of this paper that while Kaufman has achieved a major success in integrating Anabaptist-Mennonite theology into a modern life style and has done so fundamentally without giving up the central affirmations of faith

found in the New Testament, he has misread current Mennonite approaches to the Bible. This thesis, I am quite aware, is not consonant with one previous published assessment of Kaufman as a "wolf wrapped in Anabaptist wool"² and closer to the praise given him by John Howard Yoder back in 1963 for remaining within the Mennonite fold and "relating the ancestral and the wider world in fruitful conversation."³ While future generations will make their own judgments, it is my thesis that more important and at least as empowering as Harold S. Bender's presidential address, "The Anabaptist Vision" to the American Society of Church History, was Kaufman's presidential address to the AAR in 1982.⁴ I shall try to analyze the factors that lead me to that conclusion.

It is, however, not my aim to polarize but rather to stimulate our thinking. For it is undoubtedly true that we need all three types: the Harold Benders, Erland Waltners, and C. J. Dycks (and countless others) who give their lives only to Mennonite institutions, the Gordon Kaufmans who give their whole lives to working in extra-Mennonite institutions, as well as the Lawrence Burkholders, John Howard Yoders, and Roy Justs who work in both at various periods of their lives.

At the same time, the Mennonite establishment has (or at least has had) a way of excluding from dialogue, even of branding as

Mennonite Biblicism and Gordon Kaufman

William Klassen

outsiders, their own people who work in non-Mennonite universities or seminaries rather than their own institutions, even when they retain memberships in Mennonite congregations.⁵

The critical question we need to raise concerns the strength and weaknesses of Kaufman's approach to the Bible. Can it serve those of us who are trying to live in faithfulness to the early Christian community and our more immediate antecedents, the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century?

First then, some definitions. Biblicism is a method of using the Bible which pays the highest respect to the Bible by studying it:

a) without regard to its background and the context in which it emerged. After all, the Bible is *sui generis*;

“Kaufman has achieved a major success in integrating Anabaptist-Mennonite theology into a modern life style and has done so fundamentally without giving up the central affirmations of faith found in the New Testament....”

b) without the critical tools of interpretation, such as the texts in their original languages, lexicons, and Bible dictionaries. After all, the Bible is its own interpreter.

c) without consulting others who have interpreted the Bible since it is believed that only the Spirit can lead one to understand it. Other voices can only confuse us.

d) without attention to the variety of literary forms or time periods in which it was written. For example, the Old Testament is taken on a level plane with the New Testament; the book of Jude seen as valuable as Galatians. After all, since God wrote it, all of it is equally important, for God does not change.

Classically defined, such “biblicism” existed to some extent among the early uneducated Anabaptists, has existed in some periods of Mennonite history, but is found only very rarely today and, I suggest, never among our church

leadership or among our Biblical scholars.

Biblicism was one of the strengths of Anabaptism, so we learned from John C. Wenger and Harold Bender. To be sure, some caveats were raised against “legalistic Biblicism” which we all abhorred even when it kind of sneaked up on us as it still seems to do. But on the whole, even those who had legitimate questions about biblicism, arid or otherwise, when forced to make a choice between widespread and expanding biblical illiteracy even among Mennonites, were prepared to advocate an engagement with the Bible which would bring people to an encounter with the living God and not just a written text.⁶

Among twentieth century Russian Mennonites who still spoke German, a dependence upon Adolf Schlatter was fundamentally liberating.⁷ Others availed themselves of the method of inductive Bible study as pioneered by W. W. White and carried on by Howard T. Kuist at New York Biblical Seminary and later at Princeton.⁸ Here they, too, found a direct encounter with the Bible which did not ignore critical questions but placed them in proper perspective. In this way they were able to pay their debt to Mennonite Biblicism (*sola scriptura*) without succumbing to its more idolatrous features.⁹ Moreover, it always seemed to be easier to move a biblicist towards a more enlightened way of thinking than it was to get someone who had no biblical knowledge or interest to take the biblical theological quest seriously.

The most important point that needs to be made here is that Anabaptists treated the written word as a witness to Christ and never, in the first century of their existence, idolized the Bible itself. High respect for the Word of God as they found it in the Bible came from the fact they had just recently been freed to read it. The enthusiasm of people who had newly discovered the Word for themselves is hard to restrain but that respect for the Word was above all rekindled repeatedly by the evidence they saw that people's lives were being radically reformed. It was this that led Marpeck to testify (against the spiritualizers) that the Word was no dead letter for him—no idol—

but rather “the breath of the Spirit” restoring him to life. It is along those lines, too, that I have experienced the work of Gordon Kaufman.

Several features of Kaufman’s approach express the finest of Anabaptist values.

a) The symbiotic relation between life and thought. Kaufman’s early years in Vanderbilt were marked by the struggle for justice and fair treatment for black students. One in particular, James Lawson, was an organizer of nonviolent protest on university campuses. As a black student, a “trouble maker,” he was summarily ejected from the Divinity School without consulting the faculty. It is surely part of Kaufman’s Mennonite heritage that caused him to join others in resigning his position at Vanderbilt in protest. Not only Jim Lawson, the student concerned, benefited from that act. The Mennonite theologian, by walking uprightly in courage, indelibly affirmed what is at the heart of Mennonite life and thought. Theology remains dead until it is lived and at the critical hour action not only follows theology but also helps to form and inform it.¹⁰

I treasure a letter from Gordon Kaufman in those days in which he responds clearly and helpfully to a half-baked paper I sent him for comments. In it I sought to find the way through the hermeneutical dilemma and in reaching out for a handle, suggested that “Biblical realism” might help us through. Not only was I grateful that he took the time to respond, the suggestions he made at that time became very much a part of my own thinking and the way the Bible was used and taught. As most of you know, I have never been cured of my naive biblicism but it should at least be part of the record that Gordon Kaufman has done his best to try.

b) Furthermore, Kaufman and the Anabaptists place “freedom” in the center of the interpretative process. I share this central motif with Kaufman.¹¹ At the same time, we have not solved the problem of “submission” or obedience.

About a decade ago, I had the fortune of traveling in an airplane with Henri Nouwen. As graduates of the Menninger program, and as

fellow teachers at Notre Dame, both of us had moved to other places of work and that day we picked up our friendship with an intense discussion about “obedience.” He was eager to learn what that meant in Anabaptist-Mennonite circles. I was eager to sort out the differences between “holy obedience” and “holy disobedience” in Catholic orders and how one could account for a Daniel Berrigan whom I loved and respected and other Catholics like Thomas Merton who allowed themselves to be silenced when they had clear voices of political testimony. As a child of the radical reformation, I was not ready to bow so easily to authority. Perhaps we children of the radical reformation have something to learn about obedience—I know I do. At the same time, to be a member of a “free church” has implications for how we read the Bible.

c) Kaufman has also made a major contribution in the area of symbolism. The argument about symbols goes back at least to the Reformation and the insistence of our foreparents that “Zeichen” (symbol) and “Zeugnis” (witness) are not unrelated is one that shines through in Kaufman as well. Moreover, there is, if I mistake not, a development in Kaufman’s theology from the somewhat naive way that we all accepted, a generation ago, that “mythopoeic” structures pervade the Bible to a reluctance to use the word “myth” and replace it instead with the term “symbol”, “image”, “narrative” and such related terms as an “act of God” or biblical “events.”

That discussion is far from over and much effort is being expended on untangling the issues.¹² On the one hand, Jews and Christians are wedded to notions of revelation within history and that means that we can become quite uncomfortable with notions like God choosing Jews, or indeed Mennonites, for special tasks. God’s persistence in faithfulness to that call even, and it seems especially, when we do not respond in faithfulness is even more disturbing. It is, moreover, problematic to be part of a “chosen people” and probably is an expression which has outlived its limited usefulness.¹³

Does the concept of “myth” help us to solve that? If I read Plato, as well as my contemporaries, correctly, the term “myth” is increasingly dysfunctional in trying to be faithful to the reality of the revelation. As Plato put it, “Myth is a deceptive word shaped in the image of truth” (μῦθος ἔστι λόγος ψευδῆς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν), a saying perhaps coined by him¹⁴ and found in slightly different form in Plutarch¹⁵ and in Theon.¹⁶ Plato argued that the politician especially found myth-formation useful, but so did teachers of morality. And what about the historian seeking to find the outlines of events in the past? Is perhaps the very idea of chosenness one of the most used myths of history for Jews and Mennonites?

Kaufman has remained essentially at the heart of the New Testament and Anabaptist message: Whatever symbols we may use to describe God, the central metaphor is the giving up of the life of Jesus on behalf of needy humankind. This paradigm needs to be reviewed and applied to each situation but it has a normative character far more telling than any commandment to love the enemy or turning of the other cheek—important as those may be. For such commandments cannot be ripped out of their context and viewed in a vacuum. They have to be contextualized. Who

“Whatever symbols we may use to describe God, the central metaphor is the giving up of the life of Jesus on behalf of needy humankind.”

said it? Under what circumstances? To whom?

d) The strongest connection between Kaufman and the Anabaptist approach to the Bible is in his stress on the imaginative use of the Bible. I suggest that he shares this with the Anabaptists over against some modern Anabaptists claiming to follow “the Bible” or the Anabaptists in their interpretation of the Bible. As Harry Huebner says, “our response to Kaufman should not question whether creative imagination is fundamental to the theological enterprise. Here Kaufman is quite right.”¹⁷

We distance ourselves from Huebner in his judgment that Kaufman has “rejected all that the Christian tradition has held dear: the Bible, the church . . .”¹⁸ Apart from that, Huebner’s essay is as fine a tribute as could be given to a theologian.

It has been noted for many years now that Anabaptists were rather easily read along the lines of the proclivities of their modern interpreters. Kaufman himself may have been a victim of that

“The strongest connection between Kaufman and the Anabaptist approach to the Bible is in his stress on the imaginative use of the Bible.”

temptation in one of his earliest and perhaps only writings on them. But the discomfort the Bender school had with Hans Denck, Melchior Hoffman, and Pilgram Marpeck has largely disappeared. Even the old canard that the Anabaptists had interest only in love and not in justice has been thoroughly disproved by Stephen Boyd in his brilliant study of Pilgram Marpeck.¹⁹ Unfortunately there is little evidence that younger Mennonite scholars have tried to integrate this new view of the tradition and it is here that Bender’s legacy shows its flaws most visibly; there is too little incentive to venture forth and do imaginative theological work.

There are, of course, many uses of the term “imagination” and it would take a whole paper to explore this aspect of Kaufman’s thought alone. It means, surely, in the first instance, that we allow ourselves to use that most important human gift, the imagination, to work.

What if? is the determining question. What if we imagined the kingdom of God to be like a mustard seed? What if we imagined God to be a verb? Which one would we choose? To avenge? To hate? To love unconditionally? To be? What if we imagined God to be a parent? A shepherd?

Surely we are in the realm of poetry or art and not rational theology. And have we not looked especially to our theologians—the ones informed

by philosophy—to guide us here into the intricacies of Divine being, immutability, inscrutability, inaccessibility, etc.

Wherever he got it, I suggest that Kaufman's use of the imagination in the exploration of Divine being has a strong affinity with the Anabaptist way and that in the manner in which he has defined and used it he is also in deep harmony with them. For them as for him there is joy in the quest and some tentativeness in the results, or as they would call it, "humility."

They were not afraid to venture forth and there is an authentic Anabaptist ring to Kaufman's call:

For those of us who understand ourselves to be called as peacemakers in our horribly torn world, it is therefore essential that we engage in careful theological work as we think through problems of this sort. . . .

There can be no true peace anywhere apart from justice on one hand and attention to the ecological crisis on the other. . . . If one brings the radical christic themes and images of the New Testament into significant interconnection with a biohistorical conception of the human, these images and themes receive an anthropological context which illuminates them, even as they suggest ways to address the enormously destructive problems generated by our deeply corrupted historicity.

We will not succeed in developing an adequate peace theology for today simply by reflecting on biblical ideas, or commands, or images thought to be especially pertinent or authoritative for Christian ethics: an idolatry of ancient texts is in fact unfaithful to God, not faithful. Rather: we must open ourselves to as full an imaginative exploration as we can of the significance of the central Christian symbols, 'God,' and 'Christ,' for addressing this task. In their power to evoke from us visions of a reconciled world and a reconciled humanity and in their demand that we be reconcilers in our desperately torn world and our polluted and deteriorating environment,

they can provide precisely the orientation we need today. It is as a response to the God-manifest-in-Christ (and not simply as an attempt to be in conformity with biblical doctrine) that we must set ourselves the task of imaginatively constructing a peace theology which will articulate . . . our deepest convictions about the problems and possibilities of human existence in the world today and will provide us with guidelines for pursuing the ministry of reconciliation to which God-in-Christ has called us.²⁰

This call is one that I have no difficulty affirming. It could well form the agenda for all who heed the call to be members of a reconciled and reconciling community and would apply with certainty to scholars, as well as to people working in Christian Peacemaker Teams in Jerusalem and Hebron, Zaire and Kabul.

What do I miss in Kaufman's work? Two missing dimensions:

a) There is little evidence that Kaufman is aware that Mennonite biblical and theological scholarship speaks to the world in highly imaginative and creative ways and with an authority which is quite remarkable. This has not happened in four hundred years. Moreover, Mennonite Biblical scholars speak through the medium of publishers who are no longer only Mennonite. One should not name names here for fear of overlooking important contributions. One problem which vexes us all and certainly also Kaufman, "the warrior God" of the Hebrew Bible, has been addressed skillfully by Millard Lind, Wilma Bailey, Waldemar Janzen, Ben Ollenburger, Patty Shelly, and Tom Yoder Neufeld. The fundamental hermeneutical challenges with regard to Sabbath, war, women, and shalom Willard Swartley has imaginatively addressed in a variety of forums. Moreover, Duane Friesen has consistently and courageously reminded us that when it comes to finding justice the issues are not simple and indeed repeated Gordon Kaufman's warnings about bibliolatry.²¹ In a most ingenious way, John Howard Yoder has addressed the

politics of Jesus and cocked the ears of both the World Council of Churches and the evangelicals. Mary Schertz and David Schroeder have made important contributions to the ethical tables of the New Testament. Jo-Ann Brant, Willi Braun, and David Rensberger have done fundamental work on literary analysis. In no way do these efforts, and especially the sober rational and thoroughly intellectually respectable efforts of Perry Yoder, resemble what Kaufman too dismissively and too comprehensively calls "Mennonite bibliolatry."

Most striking, perhaps, is the evidence Mennonite biblical scholars provide that a denomination can move from taking I Corinthians 11 literally and prescribing female headdress to female ordained ministers in one generation—indeed to have two female college presidents!

"Few people have been as creative in their imaginative thinking about God as the Jews have."

Scholars like Dorothy Jean Weaver and Gordon Zerbe have dealt with the standard texts imaginatively and found new ways of looking at old formulations and by so doing have helped to bring the almost total transformation of a passive nonresistant ethic to an imaginative, dynamic ethic of commitment to love of enemies and the pursuit of justice.²² To be sure, there is always the danger of bibliolatry. Evidence that Mennonites have succumbed to it I see only on the issue of sexual orientation. On that I suggest the work of the Holy Spirit is not yet finished.

Moreover, occasionally we hear voices from the theologians which seek to recall us to our childhood catechisms and historians who wish to present us with a purified portrait of Harold S. Bender. But these are not the main stream. Mennonite Biblical scholars are not in a ghetto. Their voices are being heard and taken seriously.²³ It could well be that Mennonite scholars have, like Kaufman himself, achieved a major success in integrating their sixteenth century roots with an

understanding of Biblical faithfulness that could be a model for others.²⁴

b) Kaufman's overtures toward the east are welcome. What his concept of correlation owes to Tillich is worthy of study. Surely it is not an accident, however, that both Tillich and Kaufman turn towards the east in their exploration of other faiths. What is missing is an engagement with Judaism. Before he lays down his pen in retirement (or turns off his word processor), let us hope that he will engage our sister faith, our mother faith, or whatever you wish to call it. Judaism has been a creative force in the imaginative construction of theology. The most formidable challenge of Christian theology in our day is the resurgence of dialogic Judaism. We have not been well served by Christian theologians or Biblical scholars here; either we are co-opted as Paul van Buren has been or sound the triumphalist note still heard in Barth. Kaufman's theology would especially lend itself to a fruitful dialogue with Judaism. For both, the goal of thinking about God is ultimately to learn to work with God, to argue with God, even to name God as a "problem," but above all to build a society in which justice, joy, and peace can flourish. Few people have been as creative in their imaginative thinking about God as the Jews have. Christianity was born in that womb and can only exist when it nurtures that relationship. But part of growing up also is to come to terms with one's parents. The symbols of Christianity have been cut loose from the mother faith. But perhaps not as far as first century Jews and Christians were forced to believe under the pressure of the destruction of both the temple and Jerusalem. Perhaps people of both faiths, and together with people who are Muslims, we may build an imaginative reconstruction of our belief in God and find strength to walk on paths that will lead to a better life—not for the few only but for all.²⁵

Endnotes

¹ Gordon D. Kaufman, "Mennonite Peace Theology in a Religiously Plural World," *Conrad Grebel Review* 14 (1996): 47.

² George R. Brunk, *A Crisis among Mennonites* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sword and Trumpet, 1983), as quoted in H. Victor Froese, "Gordon D. Kaufman's Theology 'Within the Limits of Reason Alone': A Review," *Conrad Grebel Review* 6 (1988): 2.

³ John Howard Yoder, review of *The Context of Decision*, by Gordon D. Kaufman, in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 37 (April 1963): 133.

⁴ Published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 15 (March 1983): 3-14, and reprinted in Gordon Kaufman, *Theology for a Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 1-15.

⁵ Lest I be misunderstood, that has never been my experience after leaving either the Mennonite seminary to teach in a state university, nor after I served in a college of the United Church of Canada. As this is written, I teach a course on the biblical theology of peace at the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre.

⁶ On this concept see especially Heinrich Karpp, "Das Aufkommen des Begriffs 'Biblizismus'," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 73 (1976): 65-91. He based his conclusion that the term emerged in 1843 on the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In Carlyle's correspondence with John Sterling, the biblicists are compared with "our modern Evangelicals" who "sought the Lord by the light of their own pistol-shots" (see Karpp, 69). See also J. M. Vincent, "Aspekte der Begegnung mit Gott im Alten Testament: Die Erfahrung der göttlichen Gegenwart im Schauen Gottes," *Revue biblique* 103 (1996): 38n168. The concept of biblicism is a provocative word (*Reizwort*) because it is close to "bible faithful fundamentalism" or "bibliolatry" (p. 38 note 168). Biblicistic thinking includes a rationalism foreign to the Bible, Barth explains (*Kirchliche Dogmatik* iv, 1, 406). Cf. G. Gloege, "Biblizismus," *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 1 (1957): 1262-1263. Vincent defines it as: "I mean by the term biblicism not a world view but a Weltentwurf based on an encounter with the living God and which has been laid down in the form of the Holy Scriptures at the right time through faith in God who continually meets us with surprises."

⁷ See Stephen Dintaman's *Creative Grace: Faith and History in the Theology of Adolf Schlatter* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), an excellent study of Schlatter's hermeneutics. A bridge now needs to be built between that and Mennonite hermeneutics. My review in *Conrad Grebel Review* 14 (fall 1996): 305-307 seeks to spell out ways in which these approaches converge and ways in which Mennonite scholars might come to terms with the differences.

⁸ See Steve Nolt's "An Evangelical Encounter: Mennonites and the Biblical Seminary in New York," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 70 (1996): 389-417, an excellent study of the influence of New York Biblical Seminary on Mennonites and the way that influence was carried over into Goshen Biblical Seminary and Mennonite Biblical Seminary. The term "biblical" was thus institutionalized and at times seen as diametrically opposed to "theological" seminaries.

⁹ It surely is striking that Mennonites have made little use of the prayer of Jesus that his followers all should be one and should display that unity to the outside world in order that faith in God's Son could be spread around. Instead, divisiveness has been justified. Thus Ira Landis, when asked why there were so many splits or fusses among the plain folk, replied: "I always say only good wood splits." Richard Gehman, "Plainest of Pennsylvania's Plain People: Amish Folk," *National Geographic* 128 (August 1965): 235.

¹⁰ Kaufman's action stands in sharp contrast to the Mennonite Central Committee's rejection of Martin Luther King's appeal for help during the Montgomery bus boycott. In those days the Hershberger nonresistant way did not permit the "pressure" of a boycott or strike.

¹¹ Compare "Anabaptist Hermeneutics: The Letter and the Spirit" in Willard Swartley, ed., *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist Mennonite Perspectives* (Elkhart, IN: Institute for Mennonite Studies, 1984), 77-90 (reprint from *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, April 1966). That theme was more fully developed in the paper "What does it mean to be Biblical?" prepared for the Aspen Consultation in 1969 published in A. J. Klassen, ed., *Consultation on Anabaptist Mennonite Theology* (Fresno, CA: Council of Mennonite Seminaries, 1970).

¹² David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). See the perceptive review by E. H. Gombrich, "The Edge of Delusion," in *New York Times Book Review*, 15 February 1970, 6-9.

¹³ Walbert Bühlmann has it right when he prefers to speak of *God's Chosen Peoples* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1982).

¹⁴ *Politeia* 377A.

¹⁵ *De gloriae Athenae* 4, 348D.

¹⁶ *Progymn.* 3.

¹⁷ Harry Huebner, "Imagination/Tradition: Disjunction or Conjunction?" in *Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Kaufman*, ed. Alain Epp Weaver (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1996), 62-63, 73.

¹⁸ Huebner, "Imagination/Tradition," 63.

¹⁹ Stephen B. Boyd, *Pilgrim Marpeck: His Life and Social Theology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992).

²⁰ Gordon D. Kaufman, "Mennonite Peace Theology," 47.

²¹ "We must overcome an idolatrous biblicism in which we use the Bible (including the New Testament) to continue to support systems of oppression. . . . reflected in passages like I Timothy 2:11f. . . . We must be willing to bring to bear a Christ-centered hermeneutic to New Testament texts." Duane Friesen, "Toward a Theology of Culture: A Dialogue with Gordon Kaufman," in *Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Kaufman*, ed. Alain Epp Weaver (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1996), 111.

²² Indeed I find it somewhat ironic that Kaufman's lack of attention to detail in reading a New Testament text causes an ethical distortion. He repeatedly refers to forgiveness of one's enemies and alludes to the act of Jesus on the Cross as of "great importance to Mennonites, and Jesus' own forgiveness of his persecutors even as he went to the cross has been seen as the paradigm to which Christians should aspire in their lives of self-giving love and service in this world. . . .

Important questions are being raised today whether so-called self-giving love may not itself be debilitating rather than liberating in situations of injustice and oppression." Kaufman, "Mennonite Peace Theology," 47. He overlooks that according to Luke 23:34 Jesus did not forgive (no words of absolution were spoken) his enemies, but prayed to God that God might be able to do so. From the standpoint of the dynamics of human personality, it seems to me that the text is much more wholesome than our modern misreading of it. Kaufman's error is very widespread, and although I have been flogging my understanding of this text for over thirty years it doesn't seem to get through (William Klassen, *The Forgiving Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 133).

²³ Mention could be made of the prominent place given to the love of enemies idea as one that must be taken seriously in Wolfgang Schrage's *Ethics of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), or the frequent references to the work of both John Howard Yoder and Willard Swartley in Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996).

²⁴ One reads Swartley's conclusions and both Erland Waltner, "Preaching the Bible in the Church" and Ross

Bender, "Teaching the Bible in the Congregation," alongside of our definition of biblicism and can only conclude that there is no idolatry of the Bible there (see Swartley, *Essays*, 291-325).

²⁵ It has not been possible to list the many articles Kaufman has written which show his deep commitment to discussing this issue. In addition to the works cited in this paper I have found the following the most helpful: "Critical Theology and the Bible: A Response to A. James Reimer," in *So Wide a Sea: Essays on Biblical and Systematic Theology*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger (Elkhart, Ind.: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1991), 59-64; "The Ground of Biblical Authority: Six Theses," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 24 (1956): 25-30; "Can a Man Serve Two Masters?" *Theology Today* 15 (1958): 59-77; "On the Meaning of 'Act of God'," in *God the Problem*, by Gordon D. Kaufman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 119-147; "What Shall We Do with the Bible?" *Interpretation* 25 (1971): 95-112; "Jesus as Absolute Norm? Some Questions," in *The Limits of Perfection: A Conversation with J. Lawrence Burkholder*, ed. Rodney J. Sawatsky and Scott Holland (Waterloo, Ont.: Institute of Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies, Conrad Grebel College, 1993), 118-121.

I am grateful to the editors of *Mennonite Life* for inviting me to respond to Bill Klassen's paper on "Mennonite Biblicism and Gordon Kaufman." Klassen has presented a thoughtful, substantially correct (I believe) exposition of the rootedness of my thought in fundamental biblical themes, while at the same time pointing out (also correctly) some significant shortcomings in my treatment of biblical materials and especially in my attention to Mennonite writers who have carefully studied major biblical issues. I thank him, therefore, for helping to clear the air somewhat on the contested issue about my attitude toward and concern with the Bible, and I thank the editors of *Mennonite Life* for publishing his article together with my response to it.

In order to keep these remarks short I shall make only three brief points about Bill Klassen's paper. The first is to thank him for the generosity of his interpretation of my views on the Bible. Though I have always regarded my theological work as deeply rooted in central biblical contentions (especially those about God and Christ), I have written comparatively little explicitly on the Bible and its interpretation, and I have often criticized sharply the way in which the Bible is sometimes used (by Mennonites and others) as a kind of arbitrary but (virtually) absolute authority before which Christian faith and reflection must bow. It is

not difficult, therefore—for those who wish to caricature my thought instead of carefully probing it, seeking to uncover the hermeneutical principles with which I work—to claim that my views are far removed from Anabaptist-Mennonite ways of thinking.¹ Bill has not taken that course but has chosen instead to present my views as "remain[ing] essentially at the heart of the New Testament and Anabaptist message," particularly in my "stress on the imaginative use of the Bible" (16). He suggests that my "use of the imagination in the exploration of Divine being has a strong affinity with the Anabaptist way" (17), and he criticizes "younger Mennonite scholars" for their reluctance "to venture forth and do imaginative theological work" (16). In all of this I can only express my gratitude for the generosity of Bill's remarks and for the correctness of his interpretation of my theological intentions.

Klassen is not, however, unqualified in his commendation of my theological writing. He speaks of two "missing dimensions" (17) to which he thinks I should pay more attention: I give "little evidence" of being "aware" of current Mennonite biblical scholarship and its impact on the wider world of biblical interpretation; and I have not paid much attention to Judaism (18). I plead guilty with respect to both of these criticisms, and offer the following explanations. For the most part (as Bill notes in his paper) I have

A Response to William Klassen

G o r d o n D .

K a u f m a n

I have always regarded my theological work as deeply rooted in central biblical contentions (especially those about God and Christ).

been concerned in my theological work with the basic intelligibility and meaningfulness, in the modern world, of such central Christian symbols/themes as *God* and *Christ*, and the necessity to imaginatively reconstruct these symbols today. This has led me to focus much of my scholarly life on methodological issues in theology, and—when I felt I had finally found my way through to some resolution of the profound methodological issues with which modernity/postmodernity confronts Christian faith—to move directly into exploratory attempts at radical imaginative reconstruction of some traditional Christian ways of thinking.³ I was particularly concerned to begin addressing (such problems as) theological aspects of the nuclear and ecological crises, questions connected with the relation of theology and the sciences, the growing new awareness of religious and cultural pluralism, and the like. I am a slow worker, and with these sorts of issues on my plate, I have had to pass by many other important questions which certainly warrant theological address today.

I have from time to time taken up specifically Mennonite issues; and I am in fact quite well aware of most of the works by Mennonite authors cited by Klassen (on pp. 17f. of his paper), though I have not engaged in careful study of the Mennonite contribution(s) to contemporary biblical interpretation. Bill is quite right in calling attention to the effects this obvious deficiency has when I participate in dialogue on theological and biblical issues (written or oral) with other

Mennonites. In my own defense here I might just observe that most Mennonite thinking on these issues seems to me to continue a kind of “biblicism” that I have not found helpful in addressing the sorts of problems that have consumed me. Perhaps this is a mistaken judgment. It is worth noting, however, that despite his illuminating definition of biblicism (14), bringing out clearly its limitations, Bill Klassen confesses that even he continues to this day to hold what he calls a “naive biblicism” (15). In any case I do acknowledge the basic correctness of his observation that I have not attended as carefully to Mennonite writing on these matters as I might have.

The question about my interest in Judaism is of a different sort. I have paid some attention to the renewed conversations (since World War II) between Christian theologians and Jewish scholars, and I have participated in some of these myself (though I have not published anything on this matter, as I have in connection with my dialogues with Buddhists). I certainly concur in the judgment about the immensity of Christian guilt for the twentieth-century Jewish holocaust (as well as much other persecution of Jews in the past), and I strongly agree with those who hold Christian theological traditions responsible for much that has gone wrong here. These traditions, especially in some of their important christological features, must be drastically revised today. My own revisionary work on christology has been in part addressed to some of these problems; and I am happy to note

that Bill Klassen regards my theology as of a sort that should “lend itself to a fruitful dialogue with Judaism” (18).³ I agree with him that Christians have thus far not been “well served by [either]

“For the most part I have been concerned in my theological work with the basic intelligibility and meaningfulness, in the modern world, of such central Christian symbols/themes as *God* and *Christ*, and the necessity to imaginatively reconstruct these symbols today.”

Christian theologians or Biblical scholars” (18) on these issues.

This is in part, I think, because of the difficulty that Christians (including Mennonites) and Jews have in leaving behind the doctrine of “election,” of thinking of themselves as a “chosen people.” (Klassen seems to concur that this doctrine is no longer very helpful; cf. p. 15) The problems here are thus rooted deeply in what we have in common with Jews (and not simply in our christological differences). I have sought to get some distance on this matter of the Christian relation to other religious communities by participating actively in dialogues with those who come from traditions of a very different sort, particularly Buddhists. And I think the “wider christology”⁴ that I have proposed—a christology that opens Christian faith to both dialogue and collaboration with adherents of many quite diverse religious traditions, giving no special advantage to those coming out of an “Abrahamic” past (Jews, Muslims,

and other Christians)—is a direct consequence of that “wider” sort of dialogue in which I have participated. Nevertheless, Klassen’s remark here remains well-taken: I ought to become more engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue than I have been in the past—precisely because it is important that Christian voices, which see beyond the impasse to which doctrines of election bring us, need to be participants in that conversation.

There are many other points in Bill Klassen’s paper that deserve comment from me; but I shall conclude here. Let me express once more my thanks to Bill for his perspicacious and generous remarks, and my gratitude to *Mennonite Life* for publishing these comments of mine along with his.

Endnotes

¹ Klassen mentions two such writers, George R. Brunk II and Harry Huebner (pp. 19 n 2, 17), and indicates his firm disagreement with their extremely critical judgments about this aspect of my work. (Hereafter all references to Klassen’s paper will be given in parentheses in the main text.)

² For my basic methodological reflections, see *An Essay on Theological Method*, Third Edition (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); and *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), esp. chs. 2-5. For my attempt to develop a full-blown theological position that takes account of my methodological conclusions, see *In Face of Mystery and God—Mystery—Diversity: Christian Theology in a Pluralistic World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

³ A doctoral student of mine is engaged, in her dissertation, in showing some respects in which this is indeed the case.

⁴ For discussion of this “wider christology,” see *In Face of Mystery*, esp. chs. 25-27; and *God—Mystery—Diversity*, chs. 7, 9.

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Divided Loyalties: Mennonite and Hutterite Responses to the United States at War, Hutchinson County, South Dakota, 1917-1918

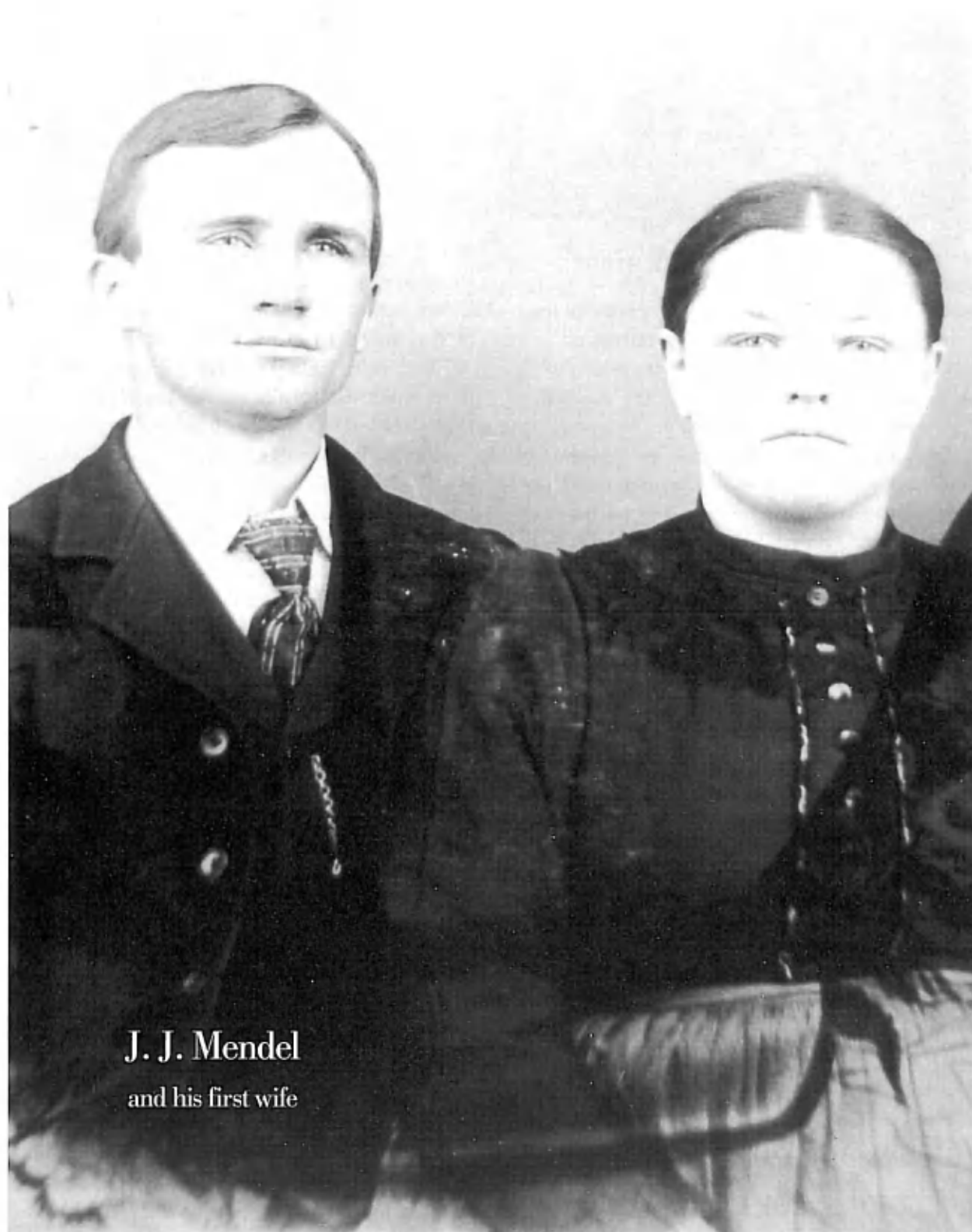
Merle J. F. Funk

Two distinctively designated graves lie in a gentle hillside in rural Hanson County, South Dakota, amid the numerous markers of their deceased brethren.¹ The Hutterites, who communally own and farm the acres surrounding the fence-enclosed cemetery, consider brothers Joseph and Michael Hofer, who died in late November 1918 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to be martyrs. The tragic story of these two men and their families clearly illustrates the drastic effects the Great War had on the lives of many Americans, especially those of questioned loyalty. In a similar rural South Dakota cemetery in adjacent Hutchinson County lies another Hofer, Jacob Joshua, who also died in late 1918. However, Jacob Joshua Hofer's grave is not that of a martyr, but rather that of a faithful soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice at Verdun.² While these three young men shared a similar ethnic and religious background they acculturated to the United States in very different ways. Joseph and Michael Hofer represent intransigent resistance to all the forces of Americanization, while Jacob represents American patriotism, breaking with the traditional Mennonite belief in nonresistance. Ironically, both sets of Hofers paid the ultimate price for holding to their convictions. I wish to explore the divergence and development of these two very different world views within the shared social, economic, and political environment of early

twentieth-century rural southeastern South Dakota.

One of Hutchinson County's most outspoken citizens—J. J. Mendel, publisher and editor of the *Freeman Courier*, a locally published weekly—is an excellent case study in the shifting patterns of allegiance among the Mennonites and Hutterites in the early decades of the twentieth century. Mendel had a foot in both worlds, as he spoke for both the progressive minded *Freeman* businessmen and the more conservative minded rural Mennonite and Hutterite farmers. While Mendel's social and religious roots were in the non-colony Hutterite farming tradition and he owned and farmed land himself, he made a name for himself in the *Freeman* area by owning and publishing the town newspaper and actively sponsoring modern economic development such as telephone service for eastern Hutchinson County. The Great War forced Mendel to choose between his traditional beliefs and his new progressive loyalties, defined respectively as nonresistance and patriotism.

The economic backdrop of this personal and community struggle was the eminently successful agricultural development of Hutchinson County. Hutchinson County farmers worked hard to make a living from the fertile soil of the lower James River Valley. Mixed farming was the rule in Hutchinson County with farmers raising



J. J. Mendel
and his first wife

livestock and planting grain crops. By 1919 the predominant cereal grain crops were corn, oats, and wheat, with corn claiming the most bushels and wheat claiming the most acreage.⁵ With 95.9% of the land area of Hutchinson County dedicated to farming, it was the fourth most agriculturally oriented county in the state.⁴

Farm values in the county also point to the relative prosperity of Hutchinson County's farmers in the early twentieth century⁵. The farmers of Hutchinson County had an average total farm value of \$53,494 and a land and buildings only average value of \$48,699 in 1920, ranking them second in the state in per farm value.⁶ These figures attest to the expertise of the farmers in the county and the generally good years from 1900 to 1920. The average value per farm also shows the willingness of the Hutchinson County farmers to reinvest their profits in their farming operations. Most of these farmers were in it for the long term and were committed to farming as a way of life, not just a speculative enterprise.

Successful farming brought both prosperity and



J. J. Mendel and Katie Gross
(bookkeeper), in the *Freeman Courier* office
in the 1950s.

social tension. The number of farms in Hutchinson County fluctuated very little from 1900 to 1920. There were just over 1,500 farms in 1900 with a net drop of 53 by 1910 and a subsequent growth to 1,553 in 1920.⁷ Census statistics also point out that Hutchinson County farm families owned most of their farm land.⁸ This slow growth in the number of farms and the high rate of ownership indicate that the farmers of Hutchinson County were beginning to experience the dilemma common to most family owned farms in North America since the beginning of European settlement in the seventeenth century. Once the first generation claimed and improved the land, the next generation had to make do with smaller, less profitable farms or move on. Some of the farmers of Hutchinson County started this process early in the twentieth century. Land was available in North Dakota and Montana, as well as in other areas of South Dakota. Central and western South Dakota provided some of the improved opportunities that the younger generation of Hutchinson County was looking for. Even western Canadian provinces advertised heavily in local newspapers hoping to lure successful farmers to their localities.⁹ The social and economic pressure to secure sufficient arable land for the next generation continued to mount during the years before the First World War.

What these statistics point to is that the farmers of Hutchinson County were some of the most productive and prosperous farmers in South Dakota and the region, and that they accomplished this by farming on a relatively small scale. This was a great source of pride for the individual farmers as well as for the entire population of the county. Local boosters, like J. J. Mendel, fed this local pride by promoting the productivity and accomplishments of the people of Hutchinson County. Both the general prosperity of the area's farmers and the corresponding boasting by the local weeklies created Hutchinson County's inflated civic ego.

Hutchinson County was both more prosperous than and distinctly different from the surrounding counties in the nineteen-teens. Its larger than average number of foreign-born and first

generation of at least one foreign-born parent gave it a definite foreign cast even in a region full of immigrants and their families. The 1910 census specified 17.2% of the state's population as being foreign-born while Hutchinson County had 23.9%.¹⁰ The difference between the state and the county was even more pronounced in the foreign parentage category. South Dakota had a foreign or mixed parentage factor of 37.3%, while Hutchinson County's non-native-born parentage percentage was 54.4, one of the highest in the state in 1910.¹¹

Most of the people of Hutchinson County, whether foreign or native born, were of German descent. The 1915 South Dakota state census gives a figure of 77% for those of German ancestry in Hutchinson County.¹² This compares to the 22.4% of German ancestry for the entire state.¹³ The 1910 federal census counted over 2,500 foreign born from Russia and Germany and another 3,800 native whites with both parents from either Russia or Germany¹⁴. Russia is included because almost all the immigrants from Russia were ethnically German, having lived in Russia but having adopted very little of the Russian language or culture.

While the Germans from Russia were becoming acculturated to the United States, they still maintained a certain amount of separateness from the dominant American culture. The German language was the most prominent ethnic identifier for the German-Russians in South Dakota. The first generation of Germans from Russia born in the United States learned English as well as German, but the language of church, home, and even school, where German-language instruction was available, was German. The immigrant generation often knew very little English and conversed almost entirely in their native tongue. This was not unusual, for immigrants to the United States often maintained their original written and spoken languages for at least two generations. Most immigrant groups went through this bilingual stage of acculturation in which they learned English as a second language but still preferred their original dialect. It was the large number of German speakers in Hutchinson County that set them apart from some of the other



Freeman draftees leaving for camp 1917

areas dominated by ethnic groups such as Swedes and Norwegians.

When the European War broke out in August 1914 the struggle to fit in began. German-American Hutchinsonians such as J. J. Mendel struggled to remain loyal to both his ethnicity and his country. Hutchinson County had four local weekly newspapers that covered local, national, and international events. The *Parkston Advance*, the *Tripp Ledger*, the *Freeman Courier*, and the *Hutchinson County Herald* of Menno each provided its own perspective on American neutrality and later American belligerency. Although most Hutchinsonians, like most Americans, never achieved President Wilson's neutrality in thought as well as in action, they did wish to stay out of the European War. John H. Craig, publisher of the *Tripp Ledger*, spoke for both his town and region when he said: "The citizens of the prairie states will back the government in any step it may take. But if the advice of these states is asked, there will be no war."¹⁵ J. J. Headley of the *Hutchinson Herald* concurred. In reference to the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915 he condemned "Germany's drowning innocent women and children," but also condemned England for "trying to starve them." Headley emphatically stated that, "the U. S. should keep out of it," and that, "America should



Parade in Freeman, July 3, 1915

keep hands off in every way until those nations recover their sanity."¹⁶ Both John W. Peckham, publisher of the *Parkston Advance*, and J. J. Mendel of the *Freeman Courier* ran similar sounding articles during the period of American neutrality. They believed that the best interests of both the locality and the nation were served by American neutrality. Not surprisingly, these four newspapers, in a predominantly German county, spoke out against American participation in the European conflict.

The Wilson administration's policy, clearly favoring Britain, placed Hutchinson County locals in a predicament by late 1916. The county's predominantly German population would be suspect if they failed to show adequate enthusiasm for the war against their fatherland. An even more severe dilemma faced the strongly pacifistic Mennonites and Hutterites who believed that military service was morally wrong. German-

Americans had to wait for the federal government to establish acceptable patriotic service standards.

The Wilson Administration, arguing for the most efficient use of the nation's labor force, decided to conscript the necessary soldiers for the war effort. After the mass registration of all eligible men between the ages of 21 and 30 on June 6, 1917, the War Department randomly selected the first draftees in July. German-Americans could be detained as enemy aliens or they could report for duty to their adopted country. Although there was a provision for religious conscientious objectors in the Selective Service Act of May 18, 1917, there was a universal obligation to report to the military. Those who had scruples against military service would have to report to the training camps as any other conscript and await the president's definition of noncombatant service.

When President Wilson finally defined noncombatant duty in March 1918 it was too late

for many objectors to comply with the government's order and be true to their consciences. Wilson's executive order of March 23, 1918, gave three options: the medical corps, the quartermaster corps, or the corps of engineers. Most Mennonites and Hutterites who were drafted and stuck to their convictions of nonresistance wanted to be out from under direct military control, but were willing to work, which was indicated by their frequent requests for Red Cross service. They did not want to shirk their duty. They only wanted to serve in a way that did not violate their consciences. However, no farm furloughs or alternative agricultural jobs were available until the summer of 1918.

While many of the conscientious objectors viewed their segregation in the camps as the army accepting their pacifist position, it was hardly so. In fact, the Adjutant General wrote a confidential memo to all camp commanders on October 10, 1917, encouraging a policy of subtle persuasion aimed at getting the conscientious objectors to forget their convictions and fight like everybody else. The memo stated that the Secretary of War was directing the local commanding generals to "be instructed to segregate the conscientious objectors in their divisions and to place them under supervision of instructors who shall be specially selected with a view of insuring that these men will be handled with tact and consideration and that their questions will be answered fully and frankly."¹⁷ H. G. Learnard, the Adjutant General, explained this tactic by stating that, "When treated in this manner, [a number of conscientious objectors] renounced their original objections to military service and voluntarily offered to give their best efforts to the service of the United States as soldiers."¹⁸ Most military men did not understand conscientious objection, and therefore assumed most, if not all, conscientious objectors were frauds looking for a way to avoid combat duty. Although this memo encouraged kindly treatment to facilitate converting conscientious objectors to soldiers it was not the only means employed. Most commanding officers gave their junior officers wide leeway in the

treatment of conscientious objectors. Government officials rationalized that efficiency took priority over individual rights. It was for the good of the whole. Personal pacifistic convictions were like pesky insects that could potentially distract the American war horse and therefore should be eliminated.

All four papers supported the decision to go to war once Congress declared war on 6 April 1917. The most politically active of the four was the *Parkston Advance* with its publisher John W. Peckham, the county's Republican state senator. Under a column entitled "Parkston Contributes Men" Peckham detailed the voluntary enlistment of six young men from the Parkston area and prominently featured their names in "The Role of Honor."¹⁹ In an accompanying editorial Peckham stated that there was only one thing a loyal citizen could do—"stand firm by his country, *whether it be native or adopted*."²⁰ Despite the fact that many Americans did not want to go to war with Germany, Peckham insisted that "the great majority of American people thought otherwise. So did the president, and the congress."²¹

It was with great pride that John Craig of the *Ledger* reported that seven of its boys were accepted into the South Dakota National Guard and that an eighth was attempting to get on with the coast artillery. The public show of support for this patriotism was overwhelming as Craig pointed out: "On their return to Tripp (from Yankton) that evening they were greeted by a large number of friends and the band, and were escorted to a cafe for a lunch. Tuesday night a dance was given in their honor, and other festivities are planned in their honor."²² The media clearly tried to portray this as the dominant public mood as the United States went off to war in the spring of 1917. John Craig even offered consolation to two additional volunteers who failed their physicals in Yankton. They "feel very badly about it, but they showed their patriotism just as much as the others."²³

J. J. Mendel's Mennonite and Hutterite readers represented a different type of audience than even the other Germans from Russia in Hutchinson



Freeman celebrating the end of the war, Nov. 11, 1918

County. Their religiously based belief in “nonresistance” placed them in a precarious situation as the United States geared up for its largest military endeavor since the Civil War. The April editions of the *Freeman Courier* are good examples of J. J. Mendel’s ambivalent coverage of war news. He drew very little attention to the fact that the United States had declared war on Germany. Except for a very small item in the April 5 issue about eight men from Olivet volunteering for the National Guard, Mendel made no reference to America’s impending declaration of war.²⁴ In the April 19 edition there was a brief announcement in the “Locals” column that gave the time and place for a Mennonite church Northern District Conference meeting concerning the war and its effects on its members. It was to be held April 21 in Freeman and, “Neighboring Mennonite churches [were] invited to attend and participate

in the discussions.”²⁵ One April 26 article described the military training of more than 100 men at the University of South Dakota, commenting that the hour-per-day spent drilling was making the men “far more serviceable to Uncle Sam . . . if they are called to the colors.”²⁶ Another article in the same edition gave a pep talk to the farmers to do their patriotic duty and raise as much as possible to feed both the army and the civilian work force. Mendel echoed Peckham’s call for patriotic farm labor to win the war. The article ended with an exhortation to, “Ask the people of our own community to arise to the occasion and produce every ounce [sic] of foodstuffs that is within our power. We may not all serve in the ranks, but we can demonstrate our loyalty and our devotion to our country by heeding the plea of the president in an increased production of food supplies. Let us not have an acre that is not under cultivation or in

pastureage [sic]. Let us not have even a back yard or vacant lot that is not producing something. Patriotism lies here just as strongly as it does on the battle line."²⁷ Mendel seems to have come to terms with his divided loyalties by stressing the nonmilitary patriotic options available to his readers.

Although Mendel and his peers encouraged both patriotic farming and conscription compliance, their county became conspicuous for its high number of exemption seekers. Even counties with comparably high concentrations of Mennonites and Hutterites, like Turner, Beadle, and Hanson, did not have Hutchinson County's high numbers of conscientious objectors. Their total of 46 men, more than 25% of the state's registered COs, caused significant strain on the county's political, economic, and social leaders as they tried to direct the war effort of a seemingly reluctant population. At times the situation deteriorated to such a point that the local newspaper apologists had to defend their county against charges of "slacking" from critical neighbors. Hutchinson County's leaders could not afford to be disloyal.

Lacking any enforcement mechanism, the federal government sought cooperation with the war effort by encouraging the formation of state and local support organizations. Councils of Defense organized around the country and took upon themselves the responsibility of encouraging compliance with the Selective Service Act, the Espionage and Sedition Acts, and the Liberty Loan bond drives. The councils' responsibilities ranged from "Promot[ing] patriotic spirit," to "Reduc[ing] waste in the home."²⁸ Fittingly, three of the county's four newspapers editors—Peckham, Headley, and Mendel—served on the Hutchinson County Council of Defense and Peckham also represented Hutchinson County on the state Council of Defense at the request of Governor Peter Norbeck.²⁹ These three were influential men before the war, but with the addition of their Council of Defense appointments they became the ultimate insiders on the home front. They controlled the formal internal communications

network in the county and served on the major enforcement committee for wartime rules and regulations.

One of the first obstacles that the local draft board and the Council of Defense had to overcome was that of exemptions for married men. On the first call most draftees with a dependent wife and children received an exemption. However, Hutterite draftees with dependent families did not receive this exemption. John Peckham, also the chairman of the local draft board, felt obliged to defend the draft board's treatment of the Hutterites. He reasoned that since the Hutterite draftees had their colonies to look after their families, they could not say that their wives and families were depending exclusively on them for support.³⁰ It is not surprising that the Hutterites believed they were being persecuted for their religious beliefs.

The rumored mistreatment of conscientious objectors in the army was another difficult issue that the Hutchinson County press tried to handle. Since Peckham was the county's member on the State Council of Defense and the chairman of the local draft board it made sense to have another local leader inspect the military training camps for evidence of possible mistreatment of conscientious objectors. J. J. Mendel was the perfect representative since he had legitimacy in the Mennonite and Hutterite communities and he spoke for the establishment. Mendel found no abuses at Camp Funston and reported that there were generally good conditions at the Kansas military training camp where many local boys were stationed.³¹ This incident, more than any other, illustrates the loyalties of Mendel and the more progressive Mennonites. They chose to believe the publicity campaigns rather than their own people. For Mendel and many others it was more important to appear loyal and maintain one's status in the community at large than to insist on fair treatment for individuals holding an unpopular conviction.

The Hutterites, on the other hand, steadfastly held to their convictions and eventually paid the ultimate price. Four Hutterite boys from the

Rockport Colony arrived at Fort Leavenworth from Alcatraz to finish out their sentences for insubordination regarding their refusal to put on the military uniform. After being forced to march from the train station to the camp and left outside in the cold November night air the four became extremely ill, and the two Hofer boys mentioned earlier, Michael and Joseph, died. Upon finding Joseph's body in a military uniform in his casket, his family and his people decided to emigrate to Canada.

J. J. Mendel ran a very abbreviated reference to the two Hutterite deaths.²² He had come to terms with his allegiance and the Hutterites with theirs. Mendel continued to publish the *Freeman Courier* until his death in December 1960, and the self-exiled Hutterites remained in Canada until a more favorable social climate allowed their return in the 1930s. Both Mennonites and Hutterites prospered in Hutchinson County in the middle and late decades of the twentieth century. The Hutterites continue to remain separate from the world in their socially insulated colonies, while Mennonite churches and communities are having an increasingly difficult time maintaining their unique ethnic identity in today's homogeneous American consumer society. It seems as if the short-range losers of the war on the home front—the Hutterites and their descendants—have the upper hand in the 1990s as they flourish and multiply throughout North America. The trends set in motion by American participation in the war to end all wars remain with us to this day.

Endnotes

¹ Hutchinson County, broadly defined, is the political unit for this article. There are at least four communities represented in the county and several of these include territory that is technically outside of the geographical boundary line of Hutchinson County. Freeman is the best example of this overlap as it is within a mile of Turner County with many of the rural Mennonites in the area of western Turner County calling their area, outside of Hutchinson County, East Freeman. The Rockport Hutterite colony is another such instance. It is actually in Hanson County several miles north of Hutchinson County, but originated as a daughter colony of the Old Elmspring colony which was near Parkston in Hutchinson County.

² South Dakota Graves Registration Project for

Hutchinson County, South Dakota State Historical Archives, Pierre, South Dakota.

³ Corn total was 2.6 million bushels, while wheat total was 123,912 (35.8%) acres harvested. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Agriculture*, vol. VI, part I, prepared under the supervision of William Lane Austin, Bureau of the Census (Washington, DC, 1922), 671.

⁴ Census, *Agriculture, 1920*, 654-660.

⁵ Hutchinson County land was valued at \$140.73 per acre. The value of land per farm in Hutchinson County was the second highest in the state. Census, *Agriculture, 1920*, 657-658.

⁶ Census, *Agriculture, 1920*, 657.

⁷ Census, *Agriculture, 1920*, 657.

⁸ Hutchinson County's average ratio of debt to value was 21.8%. Census, *Agriculture, 1920*, 675-677.

⁹ Almost every issue of the *Freeman Courier*, the *Tripp Leader*, and the *Parkston Advance* surveyed from 1914 to 1919 had advertisements listing the readily available and fertile land in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

¹⁰ Census, *Population, 1910*, 695, 706.

¹¹ Census, *Population, 1910*, 695, 699, 706.

¹² Darrell R. Sawyer, "Anti-German Sentiment in South Dakota during World War I," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 446.

¹³ "State Census Bureau Has Finished Ancestry Table," *Tripp (S. Dak.) Ledger*, 26 Aug 1915, p. 2.

¹⁴ Census, *Population, 1910*, 706.

¹⁵ *Tripp Ledger*, 3 June 1915.

¹⁶ J. S. Headley, *Hutchinson (S. Dak.) Herald*, 20 May 1915, p. 5.

¹⁷ War Department, *Conscientious Objectors*, 37.

¹⁸ War Department, *Conscientious Objectors*, 37.

¹⁹ *Parkston Advance*, 27 April 1917, p. 4.

²⁰ *Parkston Advance*, 27 April 1917, p. 4, italics added.

²¹ *Parkston Advance*, 27 April 1917, p. 4.

²² *Tripp Ledger*, 26 April 1917, p. 1.

²³ *Tripp Ledger*, 26 April 1917, p. 1.

²⁴ *Freeman (S. Dak.) Courier*, 5 April 1917, p. 1.

²⁵ *Freeman Courier*, 19 April 1917, p. 1.

²⁶ *Freeman Courier*, 26 April 1917, p. 1.

²⁷ *Freeman Courier*, 26 April 1917, p. 1.

²⁸ *Freeman Courier*, 24 May 1917, p. 1; *Tripp Ledger*, 24 May 1917, p. 1; *Parkston Advance*, 25 May 1917, p. 5.

²⁹ It is unfortunate that wartime copies of the *Hutchinson Herald* are not available. However, it does appear from his appointment to the county Council of Defense that Headley was in general agreement with his fellow editors. An interesting sidelight to this story is that J. J. Mendel mistakenly named John H. Craig as the representative from Tripp (*Freeman Courier*, 24 May 1917, p. 1), which would have made the editors a perfect four-for-four on the local committee. A week later Mendel apologized for his mistake and correctly named Paul Wildemuth as the representative for Tripp (31 May 1917, p. 1), which corresponded to the lists printed in both the *Advance* (25 May 1917, p. 5) and the *Ledger* (24 May 1917, p. 1).

³⁰ *Tripp Ledger*, 11 October 1917, p. 7, and *Parkston Advance*, 12 October 1917, p. 4.

³¹ *Freeman Courier*, 25 October 1917, p. 1.

³² *Freeman Courier*, 5 December 1918, p. 8, and 12

The Sand Creek Massacre of Nov. 29, 1864, victimized Cheyenne people and is still haunting to this day. Many stories of this terrible, violent tragedy are passed generation to generation through oral tradition and from historical records. Sand Creek is embedded in the psyche of many Cheyenne people.

The Oklahoma City bombing of April 19, 1995, has affected countless numbers of people. Today, 133 years after Sand Creek, one man has been convicted for the Oklahoma City crime and sentenced to death, and another man's fate hangs in the balance. Despite the differences, there are tremendous parallels between the two tragedies as both are persistent reminders of violence in our land.

Before the Oklahoma City bombing, I was assisting Cheyenne people in repatriating the remains of ancestors. Two major acts, the National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989 (NMAI) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), mandate the return of human remains and certain objects to lineal descendants and tribes. I was named to serve as liaison on repatriation by the Cheyenne societies and chiefs.

While a focus on the Oklahoma City bombing is engaging many, the two acts are engaging Native American tribes and seeking to rectify an injustice. In 1860, a General Otis of the U. S. Army ordered his field medical personnel

to collect the crania of Indians. By 1880, more than 18,000 skulls had been shipped to the Army Medical Museum for scientific study. These remains were later transferred to the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution.

Through the years, scientific institutions connected with universities and museums also collected human remains. Tribes are beginning to contact the repositories and are repatriating remains of their ancestors as a first priority. Funerary objects, cultural patrimony objects, and sacred objects are secondary. In September 1996, I was appointed by Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt to the review committee to oversee the implementation of the act, make recommendations, resolve disputes, and report to Congress.

In the process of repatriating human remains, Cheyenne people again became directly involved with the Sand Creek Massacre. NMAI permitted the Cheyenne in Oklahoma to repatriate 18 remains of their ancestors. Five were victims of the Sand Creek Massacre. This repatriation was from the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution. It was especially difficult to prepare and handle the remains of a 10- to 12-year-old female victim, for Cheyenne people knew from oral tradition and from Congressional testimony that this child was deliberately shot. To repatriate and bury her remains was traumatic.

Sand Creek and Oklahoma City: Constructing a Common Ground

Lawrence H.
Hart



Lawrence Hart reading names of victims at the Oklahoma City memorial service.

One of the closest parallels between Sand Creek and Oklahoma City has to do with locations. The grounds at the site of the Sand Creek Massacre in Colorado are venerated by Cheyenne people. The site where the Murrah Federal Office Building once stood in Oklahoma City is considered a place apart from the ordinary. The Oklahoma City assistant fire chief described the Murrah site as "a kind of holy place, for so many died there." The street in front of the site is now permanently closed as the wishes of the families of victims prevailed over merchants.

For a memorial service for the families of the Oklahoma City bombing victims, I was asked to serve as a reader of the first 42 names of the 162 victims. The private service was conducted north of the Murrah site on the closed street on the first anniversary of the bombing. I shall never forget that experience. Before the arrival of families, I secured permission to enter the gated site. I knelt and prayed by the gate. I then touched the earth four times to make a connection to this very special ground.

Native Americans have many such sites that are special. It has been difficult for most Euro-Americans to understand this aspect of our culture. I testified before a Congressional subcommittee a few years ago when a Native American Religious Freedom Act was being considered. It was difficult to convey Native American views of sacred geography. In August 1996, I testified for another piece of legislation concerning a special site. This time, in the context of the bombing, the members of the House subcommittee grasped the meaning of special ground.

As one of the contemporary Cheyenne peace chiefs, I have as a role model White Antelope, a victim of the Sand Creek Massacre. He was one of those who had traveled to Camp Weld, near Denver, Colorado, and on Sept. 28, 1864, discussed peace with Territorial Governor Evans and Col. John M. Chivington. On the morning of Nov. 29, when 700 hundred mounted U.S. troops commenced an attack, White Antelope ran out from the village toward the troops. He held his hand high in the air shouting in clear English "Stop! Stop!" The troops continued to charge and began firing into the village. White Antelope stopped and stood there unarmed and began to sing his final song. His song is probably one of the same songs we sing today. From Cheyenne oral tradition, the words White Antelope sang were:

Father, have pity on me. Father, have pity on me.

The old men say you have spoken truly.
Nothing lives long except the earth and the mountains.

Nothing lives long except the earth and the mountains.

In his book *The Peace Chiefs of the Cheyennes*, author Stan Hoig called White Antelope "a martyr to the cause of peace."

During the massacre, White Antelope was scalped and his body mutilated. As liaison on repatriation, I worked to repatriate his scalp from the Putnam Museum of Science and Natural

History in Davenport, Iowa. Cheyenne traditional people carried forth the wishes of White Antelope's descendants, as stipulated in NAGPRA. The oldest descendant was the late Joe Antelope, a highly respected elder and one of the principal chiefs of the Cheyenne. Following his wishes, we interred the scalp of White Antelope on Nov. 29, 1993, the 129th anniversary of the Sand Creek Massacre.

Soon after that, I met Susan Ferrell, an advocate for peace and justice, during a symposium on justice issues. This was about 15 months before the Oklahoma City bombing. We both served as presenters at the symposium. Then on April 19, 1995, I was in Lawrence, Kansas, as a resource person at a NAGPRA training session at Haskell Indian Nations University. The session was interrupted to inform participants of the Oklahoma City bombing. I was horrified to see on a television screen what had been the north side of the Murrah Building, where Susan's office was located. She was an attorney for the Department of Housing and Urban Development and worked with Tribal Housing Authorities. She was in her office at 9:02 a.m. when the explosion occurred.

Peace chief White Antelope was a victim at Sand Creek, and peace and justice advocate Susan Ferrell was a victim of the Oklahoma City bombing. The memory of White Antelope will always exist. So will the memory of Susan Ferrell. Susan's mother, Sally, writing for herself and her husband, wrote me this note: "We hope to be supportive of her work for peace and justice." I also want to be a part of that effort.

There is one Cheyenne teaching transmitted orally by elders to young people of both genders, for they are prospective parents. My translation of this pedagogical vignette is: "Children are to be cherished." The elders repeat this teaching many times. It's little wonder that discussion of child victims of the Sand Creek Massacre always stirs deep emotion.

According to Hoig, the most thorough and dramatic Congressional investigation of the Sand Creek Massacre took place in Denver. Ironically, that city is also the location of the trials for those

accused in the Oklahoma City bombing. In the Congressional investigation of Sand Creek, testimony was taken from soldiers who served under the command of Col. Chivington. Major Scott J. Anthony testified:

There was a little child, probably 3 years old, just big enough to walk through the sand. The Indians had gone ahead, and this little child was behind following after them. The little fellow was perfectly naked, traveling on the sand. I saw one man get off his horse, at a distance of about 75 yards, and draw up his rifle and fire; he missed the child. Another man came up and said: 'Let me try the little son of a bitch. I can hit him.' He got down off his horse, kneeled down and fired at the little child, but he missed him. A third man came up and made a similar remark and fired, and the little fellow dropped.

Baylee Almon was 1 year old on April 18, 1995. On that Tuesday, the Almon family celebrated. The next morning, April 19, she was in the America's Kids child care facility in the Murrah Building. She became a victim at 9:45 a.m. Baylee's name was the fifth name I pronounced in the memorial service. Baylee's name was heard worldwide. Upon hearing her name, the Almon family rose from where they were sitting and walked to the site—to that holy place where so many died. I continued reading names of victims. In addition to Baylee's, I read names of five other children whose ages were 3 months, 6 months, 15 months, 2 years, and 3 years.

Just as the Cheyenne child traveling on the sand at Sand Creek, the innocent children who died in the senseless and violent tragedy of Oklahoma City will be remembered. Baylee will be particularly remembered by the entire world. A photograph of Baylee, a year and a day old, carried by Oklahoma City firefighter Cris Fields, was published on the front pages of many newspapers and magazines. The photograph gripped the entire world.

Just like the testimony of Major Scott J. Anthony is gripping.

As one involved with both tragedies, I wish to note a concern about dealing with traumatic events, that some counselors may be counseling their Oklahoma City clientele to bring closure to their grief too quickly. There must be an allowance for people who have experienced traumas such as Sand Creek and Oklahoma City to mourn. Vamik Volkan, a Russian psychoanalyst, has noted that if mourning is blocked, a tragic event will become a

A memorial task force and the Oklahoma Historical Society are gathering and filing records of the Oklahoma City bombing. For Sand Creek, accurate documentation has been the record of Congressional hearings.

Immediately after the Oklahoma City bombing, there was clear evidence of cohesion and community among people. It was worldwide. Empirical proof of this exists in memorial items and words on cards, letters, posters, and banners from all over the world, placed at the site. In the memorial service, following the reading of the victims' names and allowing a few moments for families to spend time on the special ground, a walk began southward several blocks to the Myriad Convention Center for a public service. I walked with the families. Many personnel who had been involved in the rescue stood on both sides of the street as if to make a corridor. Men had their hats off as the families walked in front of them. I saw many individuals break away from their families and run toward men and women to embrace them. This heart-warming scene was repeated many times.

I have also experienced a renewed sense of cohesion and community among tribal groups who are repatriating remains of their ancestors. To be sure, there are intra- and inter-tribal disputes, and disputes between tribes and museums. But by and large, there is cohesion and community for a large segment of Native people as a result of repatriation.

Sand Creek and Oklahoma City show parallel views of special sites. Another parallel indicates a need to internalize a common teaching that children are to be cherished. Sand Creek and Oklahoma City remind us that victim groups must not be obstructed from mourning their loss. There is a parallel underlining the critical role of depositories to keep accurate records of events for the benefit of future generations. Yet another important parallel is that cohesion and community in the human race can exist.

Douglas Comer, a historian with the National Park Service, mentions the Sand Creek and Oklahoma City tragedies in his book *Ritual*

Lawrence Hart kneeling at Oklahoma City memorial service.

“chosen trauma.” Volkan first wrote about chosen trauma in early 1994 in the journal *Psychology*, saying: “Chosen trauma is linked to a groups’ inability to mourn. Mourning is an obligatory response that is initiated by change or loss. In order for an event to become a chosen trauma, it must be an event that cannot be mourned adaptively. The group may be too humiliated, too angry, or too helpless to mourn—or the opposite, too guilty.”

There is one other very important aspect about chosen trauma, Volkan states: “Once a trauma becomes a chosen trauma, the historical truth about it is no longer consequential.”



Ground. The use of Cheyenne ritual is central to his book. I have noted with interest and satisfaction that use of ritual is increasing in Anabaptist worship services, and it seems women are leading this paradigm shift. Use of ritual may be a 20th century reformation that will truly create a priesthood of all believers. In his conclusion, Comer writes:

In sum, to ignore the presence and power of ritual is to be willfully naive and to place ourselves at great risk. In the absence of activities in which all can meaningfully participate, there develop alienated individuals and factions that often provide an identity to its members through opposition to others. All too frequently this leads to . . . atrocities . . . Children have died horribly in

Bosnia, Rwanda, and Oklahoma City, demonized by the excluded as surely as were the innocents in the 19th century Colorado Territory. We recoil from the very thought of these events, but unless we find a way to construct a ground that can accommodate us all, . . . we must know that we are doomed to more tragedies in the future. It is the hope of humanity that we can hope for the understanding we will need for this task.

Sand Creek and Oklahoma City will always stir deep emotions. The most important parallel of both violent tragedies points to a need for those like White Antelope and Susan Ferrell to advocate peace and justice. Only through such dedicated efforts can we construct a ground that will accommodate us all.

Book Reviews

Millard C. Lind, *Ezekiel* (Believers Church Bible Commentary). Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1996. Pp. 416. (\$19.95—paperback) ISBN 0-8361-9016-5

Millard Lind's study of the Book of Ezekiel is the most recent in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series. Lind, professor emeritus of Old Testament at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, is a recognized biblical scholar who has also served as a pastor, writer of adult Sunday school materials, and editor of *Christian Living* magazine. His published works include *Yahweh is a Warrior* (1980) and *Monotheism, Power, Justice* (1990).

The format of this volume is determined in part by the intention of the Believers Church Bible Commentary series to be accessible to Sunday school teachers, Bible study groups, students, and pastors. Though critical issues are not avoided, they do not determine the scope or content of the interpretation. Reflecting the common format of the series, each section of commentary offers a preview and outline of the passage, explanatory notes and exposition, followed by focused articles, usually 1 or 2 pages in length, entitled "The Text in Biblical Context" and "The Text in the Life of the Church."

In keeping with the expressed intention of the series to provide a new tool for basic Bible study from the believers church perspective, Lind carefully elucidates his understanding of the Anabaptist principles which have guided his study of Ezekiel and his composition of the commentary. These principles include the following understandings: the church as the hermeneutical community; the historic relationship between the two Testaments; the separation of church and state; and Anabaptism's ecumenical dimension (13f.).

The text is cross-referenced to facilitate access to essays on selected

topics located in an appendix at the back of the book. These essays contain helpful summaries on themes such as "Economic Justice," "the Glory of the Lord," "Messenger Formula," and "Son of Man," to name a few. Other helpful resources at the back of the book include a full outline of Ezekiel, a chronology of the prophetic oracles, a compendium of maps, charts, and illustrations, a full bibliography, and an index of biblical and extra-biblical textual citations.

Lind opens with an introductory essay which, though only 6 pages long, brilliantly lays out the essential features of the Book of Ezekiel. Not only does the reader gain a clear understanding of the way in which Lind interprets the book, but the characteristic themes of Lind's hermeneutical principles are here introduced. Lind's understanding of the Ancient Near Eastern background of biblical texts informs his analysis and permeates his exposition. It is this perspective which, above all, elucidates the political character of the prophetic text in its original setting, and provides a framework for understanding the political implications of faith in the contemporary world.

One of the formative presuppositions of this commentary, already evident in the introductory essay, is reflected in Lind's assertion that the primary orientation of the people of God is one of moral vision. This has a political dimension, though not that of state power. Rather it is the "politics" or an alternative community of the faithful ("believers church"). Those who know Lind's previous work will not be surprised by this emphasis. In this view idol worship and the alternative religion of the Ancient Near Eastern pantheon is understood as another form of state power, both dependent upon and supportive of the power of state institutions and ideology.

The alternative vision of Ezekiel, as elucidated by Lind, is one in which the temple (worship, cult) becomes the apex of restored Israel's new order. Although the Israelite state is eventually reconstituted in the wake of traumatic exile, it is not the royal palace in Ezekiel's vision which signifies God's rule, but true worship in an idealized temple.

Ezekiel's internationalism is also not one of empire-building, as Lind reiterates, "but calls for a servant people to lead the nations through the example of an alternative religious, social, and economic life" (21). This analysis should resonate with all those who come to the text expecting not only a definitive word from the past, but also a defining vision for the present.

Millard Lind's commentary is an indispensable resource for those serious about undertaking the rather daunting task of studying Ezekiel. Lind has made the biblical book more accessible through his clear outlining of sections and explanatory notes about the structure of the text. For those interested in pursuing difficult passages in more depth, insights abound in Lind's careful exposition.

The commentary presents a fairly dense text, though section and sub-section headings help to break up the verbal onslaught to the eye. Whatever one might give up in ease of perusal, however, is no doubt gained in the affordable compactness of this rich product of 30 years of scholarship and teaching of Ezekiel. This book is to be recommended for serious-minded students of the Bible in congregations and schools.

Professor Lind dedicates this commentary "to the church's struggle to understand these redefining texts" (21). With this tool in hand, we come better equipped to the task.

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Badru D. Kateregga and David W. Shenk. *A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1997. Pp. 219. (\$14.95—paperback) ISBN 0-8361-9052-1

A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue, co-authored by Badru Kateregga and David Shenk, is a unique and important book in the field of religious studies. The authors avoid following the ways of "least resistance" so common in other efforts at Muslim/Christian dialogue which either gloss over and ignore differences in order to project a facile

and illusory commonality or exaggerate differences in order to inflame hatred and division. Both errors leave the reader ignorant, yet full of a false sense of assurance that finally the relationship between these two religious traditions has been revealed.

Kateregga and Shenk offer us a very different picture of the elements shared by Islam and Christianity as well as the very serious differences. Both, thankfully, are presented with barely a hint of the mind-numbing rhetoric representatives of both traditions are often guilty of spouting. The authors leave the rehashing of old issues in previous attempts at dialogue to the writers of the two forewords which precede this volume. These forewords, by Sheikh Abdulla Saleh Farsy and Kenneth Craig, not only help the reader catch up on the tone of previous dialogues, they also provide a contrast which helps even the novice appreciate the insight, compassion, and honesty which make the body of this book so refreshing.

The form of this encounter is meticulously fair. The spirit which emerges from the pages reflects a relationship between the authors based not only on mutual respect, but on genuine affection. It is this relationship which ultimately produces an exchange of ideas unparalleled in the scholarly literature and yet accessible to every reader, not only those with a formal education in religious studies.

It is significant that David Shenk stands firmly in the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition. Of equal importance is his position within the portion of this tradition with a strong commitment to missions. Although belonging to this minority within a minority places him on the margins of Christian culture, the margin has the potential to be the "cutting edge" of inter-religious dialogue, particularly between Islam and Christianity. Many Christians who read this book will not only discover Islam, but, perhaps more importantly, they will be confronted by a form of Christianity that is both familiar and disturbing. That is, after all, exactly what the Gospel was meant to be.

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Harry Loewen and Steven Nolt, with Carol Duerksen and Elwood Yoder. *Through Fire and Water: An Overview of Mennonite History*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1996. Pp. 350. (\$14.95—paperback) ISBN 0-8361-9015-7

Through Fire and Water is a survey of Anabaptist and Mennonite history through the ages; its scope comparable to Cornelius J. Dyck's standard *An Introduction to Mennonite History*. This newer volume fills a gap in Mennonite historical literature by aiming for a younger audience—the book's format and tone are meant to appeal especially to teens in Mennonite congregational settings and in North American Mennonite high schools. The authors have a secondary audience in mind as well: adults with little familiarity of Mennonite history who want a starting point to learn more about this faith tradition. High school and college-age students, as well as adults (who might want to overlook the volume's sophomore cartoons) can benefit from *Through Fire and Water*, for it offers a straightforward approach to the complex evolution of Mennonite-related groups from Anabaptist beginnings to our own time.

The authors organize Anabaptist/Mennonite history around five major themes: pre-Reformation Christianity, sixteenth-century Anabaptist origins, Swiss and South German streams of Mennonite history, Russian Mennonite history, and twentieth century patterns of migration, missions, service, and globalization. They explore each of these themes in sections that contain several short chapters, features of historical figures, and vignettes and photographs related to the book's historical narrative. One element missing from the book—considering its introductory mission—is a selected bibliography. Why not encourage readers to go deeper by listing important recent historical works like the four-volume *Mennonite Experience in America* series?

Through Fire and Water explores in some detail the broader religious history from which Anabaptism emerged; nearly half the volume is devoted to pre-Reformation and Reformation-era events and context. Because this material may be relatively unfamiliar to many readers, the authors have chosen wisely to not "rush through" earlier church history, despite the understandable urge to write about Mennonite history in ways that seem germane to the worldview of contemporary younger readers. Near the end of the book, an

effective anecdote on late twentieth-century peacemaking focuses on the experiences of Jennifer Lindberg and Patricia King, voluntary service workers with Mennonite Board of Missions who mounted an exhibit, "100,000 Faces," to make tangible the Persian Gulf War statistic of a hundred thousand Iraqi soldiers dying. Young readers may resonate emotionally with this story, especially because their own memories of North American involvement in that war are still fresh. This book, then, after offering accounts of Anabaptist/Mennonite figures in other eras who participated in radical reform or faced crises of conscience, offers readers the chance to reflect on Jennifer Lindberg's thoughtful (and activist) response to a crisis and tragedy in our own time. The book works well as a resource from which to draw inspiration from peacemakers and faithful servants, past and present.

While the book instructs primarily by storytelling, it also contains occasional analytic passages designed to help readers make sense of many Anabaptist and Mennonite peoplehood stories. A section titled "How different were the Anabaptists?" for example, draws on the scholarship of Walter Klaassen and Roland Bainton to explain key points of disagreement between sixteenth-century Anabaptists and the Protestants and Catholics in their midst. Although the book's analytic passages tend to be on the light side, their inclusion enables readers to make connections between stories (i.e., individual martyr accounts) and between broader themes of church history (i.e., persecution's effect on Mennonite denominationalism centuries later).

The title *Through Fire and Water* underscores the authors' thematic fondness for Anabaptist martyrology. Sixteenth century martyr stories are attention-grabbing, dramatic, inspiring, and discussible, and it is not hard to understand why the authors chose to weave these narratives and themes throughout the book. But I wonder about their apparent assumption that readers will readily identify with martyrdom as a motif in their own lives. Noting that the threat of martyrdom still faces some Christians worldwide today, the authors suggest that "each of us . . . faces [the martyr's] decision. . . . Will you leave the past behind to discover a living faith, to join others who choose to follow Christ regardless of the cost?" (p. 142) Young readers who engage this book will undoubtedly have some interesting responses to that question; some may find the heroic tradition of

the Anabaptist martyrs worth pondering but not an absolutely crucial connecting link to their own religious faith or Mennonite-informed identity.

Some readers may wonder about schism and disunity in the Mennonite past, themes that have surely been significant throughout Mennonite experience but are rarely explored in this work. Others will find the authors' emphasis on churchwide unity overly simplistic, as in the assertion that "friendly cooperation and pleasant church growth are important themes in recent Mennonite life" (p. 313). But despite the book's weaknesses, it succeeds overall in helping to make Anabaptist/Mennonite history accessible to a wide audience and offers a framework for students and young adults to test their ideas about what it means to be Mennonite.

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Ted Wojtasik. *No Strange Fire*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1996. Pp. 400. (\$14.95—paperback) ISBN 0-8361-9041-6

Readers interested in Amish life, detective fiction, and quality storytelling need look no further than *No Strange Fire*, Ted Wojtasik's first novel. On a single night in 1992, six Amish barns are set afire in central Pennsylvania's Big Valley, destroying considerable property and killing Eli Yoder, a ten-year-old boy who enters a burning barn to save his colt. A local state policeman, Sergeant Henry Stuter, and Special Agent Michael Tate, an outside FBI investigator assigned to the case, soon identify and begin searching for a prime suspect—Jacob Hostetler, a 19-year-old who recently left the Amish community—but he seems to have disappeared.

Part of the novel falls into the genre known as "policy procedural," the story of Stuter and Tate's search for Jacob, moving back and forth between the worlds of the Amish and the *Englisch*, questioning, observing, making sense of what seems to be senseless violence. The novel is also a *Bildungsroman*, the story of Jacob Hostetler's dissatisfaction with Amish life, his departure from the Amish, and his immersion in secular society. Wojtasik intersperses his chapters on the investigation, set in "present time," with Jacob's story, told in flashbacks.

Because it would be rude to reveal the ending of a mystery story, I'll say little more about the plot.

People who think they can anticipate the ending by recalling the historical record of 1992 (in which the non-Amish 19-year-old grandson of an Amish bishop pled guilty to the arson) should be reminded that *No Strange Fire* is a work of fiction and that Wojtasik had completed the first draft of the novel before any arrest was made.

According to a brief "Author's Note," Wojtasik lived and worked among the Nebraska Amish for months after deciding he wanted to write about the fires. Coming from a Polish and Roman Catholic background, he had much to learn about the German Amish, and his book testifies that he gained much more than a superficial familiarity with the Nebraska Amish, also called "White Tops" because of their distinctive buggy hoods. Like other writers of historical romance or of texts set in esoteric cultures, Wojtasik had to deal with a common dilemma: How can ethnographic detail be worked smoothly into the text without distracting from the story? Foregrounding details can make a book read like a sociology or history textbook; on the other hand, taking details for granted can leave readers unclear on important cultural details needed to appreciate a text.

Wojtasik deals with this plight by creating two characters who are outside Amish culture but who want to learn about it. Agent Tate receives much briefing on Amish culture from Sergeant Stuter, and Jacob befriends Paul Virgilia, a university student with whom he occasionally discusses his thoughts about Amish life. The strategy works fairly well. At some spots, however, the narrator provides ethnographic detail directly, and these passages seem intrusive, an unfortunately common feature of literature about the Amish (and Mennonites).

Even though *No Strange Fire* is based on actual events, it remains a creative work of literature. As already mentioned, the plot is arranged artistically. Rather than present a straight linear narrative, Wojtasik juxtaposes two narratives, letting readers see the past and present alternatively. As the policy investigation moves forward, the time frames of the alternating storylines become closer and closer until they finally converge, a technique that effectively builds suspense.

In creating his characters, Wojtasik also makes effective use of structural oppositions. Many of the characters with whom Jacob interacts reflect or contradict different aspects of his own character. For example, Jacob is a young adult who questions and challenges the Amish way of life; Esle, his fraternal twin, unquestioningly accepts Amish

tradition. Danny Yoder, another member of the community who leaves the Amish and loses himself, contrasts with Jacob, who must decide whether to return to the church. Jacob is also juxtaposed with his grandfather, Abraham Hostetler, a stern Amish bishop with whom he shares many characteristics. This web of structural oppositions creates a tension beyond the plot. Readers can see how like and unlike Jacob is from people around him, and we want to see how the oppositions can be resolved.

Other literary figures include Wojtasik's notable prose style (the opening passage with its description of a burning barn is exceptional) and the novel's use of symbols (although toward the end some of the death-rebirth imagery seemed self-conscious to me).

This book is educational and compelling. It combines sensitive insight to Amish life, a finely drawn cast of interesting characters, and the suspense of a detective novel. If any Mennonite film makers are looking for potential script material, this would be a prime candidate. After all, it's been over twenty years since Merle Good's *Happy as the Grass Was Green* was filmed as *Hazel's People*.

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William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism*. (3rd edition). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996. Pp. 332. (\$20.00—paperback) ISBN 0-8028-0886-7

C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction*. Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1995. Pp. 433. (\$35.00—paperback) ISBN 0-9698762-0-3

H. Wayne Pipkin, ed., *Essays in Anabaptist Theology*. Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1994. Pp. 271. (\$15.00—paperback) ISBN 0-936273-21-6

The three books under review here provide three quite distinct perspectives on the history and theology of the Anabaptist movements in the sixteenth century. Estep's and Snyder's accounts aspire to an historical narrative that is closely

informed by theological issues, whereas the third volume is a collection of essays more directly topical in their treatment. The first two volumes are generally introductory in nature, while Pipkin's edited volume assumes that its readers have the information the first two provide as its articles move to more specialized terrain.

William Estep's volume is well-known in its first two editions. For the third edition, he has provided extensive new footnotes that take into account some of the more recent work in Anabaptist studies. The narrative is clear and concise, and it has a specific purpose. It is written, Estep tells us in his preface to this third edition, "from the conviction that the study of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists can be instructive for those who seek to follow Christ in obedient discipleship in this last decade of the twentieth century" (p. xiii). Thus, he seeks to make the "world of the sixteenth century . . . come alive, and the Anabaptists within it" (p. xiii). Despite the changes from previous editions, however, Estep does not achieve his purpose as well as he might; even this new edition is essentially outdated in several ways.

The clearest problem of datedness occurs in Estep's insufficient provision of a socio-political and socio-historical context to allow us to make sense of what the Anabaptists and those who opposed them seem to have thought they were doing. What, in the minds of their enemies, justified the persecution of Anabaptists? Were the ruling powers simply evil, or did they have more noble, even if misguided, motivations? What were the social, political, and ecclesiological implications of Anabaptist baptism on both sides of this question? What made Anabaptism possible at all in this time and place as contrasted with some other time and place? Who were the predecessors of the Anabaptists, and how were these earlier movements or thinkers influential? If, as Estep claims, the Gospel is eternally true, why did its truth become apparent in the time and place that it did among Anabaptists? If the Roman Catholic church could assimilate Francis of Assisi, why not Pilgram Marpeck? Estep needs to address such questions in order to close in a credible way the fifteen century gap between the New Testament era and the emergence of Anabaptism, especially since he interprets Anabaptism as being in certain respects a "recovery" or revitalization of a New Testament pattern for personal and communal life. This absence of historical nuance may also be seen in the anachronistic title of the tenth chapter ("Church and State"), which is a phrase that has become a topical

liberal cliché. Estep's account should have given more attention to much recent scholarship on questions of Anabaptist context. Estep might have more closely consulted the writings of Friedmann and, more recently, Goertz and Klaassen in his analysis, even if he would ultimately come to a different conclusion than they do.

On the positive side of the ledger, Estep's treatment of Menno's conversion to Anabaptist Christianity is nicely narrated, and the beginning of the tenth chapter carries on a more thorough "conversation" with recent scholarship than do other chapters. His argument that "it is the view of the church that distinguishes the Anabaptists from other contemporary reform efforts" (p. 239) is suggestive, even though he does not develop it. Ultimately, it seems to me that Estep tries too hard for a "standard account" in the tradition of Harold Bender (see pp. 255-56, 265-66). More attention to a contextual defense of this perspective would make for a stronger volume, even at the introductory level.

In a brief, readable way, Snyder fills in some of the historical lacunae that Estep leaves outstanding, and he provides throughout his book a historically more nuanced account. He provides an understandable historical, cultural, and theological context for the rise of Anabaptism in its several origins. He points well to such "predecessors" as Karlstadt and Müntzer and to their "medieval" roots that also inform the emerging Anabaptists. Missing in both Snyder and Estep is a notion that theological critique of the kind Karlstadt and others provided should be considered "interior" to the Catholic tradition itself before we see it as purely an instance of the "Protestant Reformation."

Snyder's treatment is largely topical, with chapter titles such as "Anabaptist and Political Reality," or "Anabaptists and Scripture." At the same time, he gives his study a historical flow by dividing it into chronological periods within which the specific issues treated by the topical chapters appear most fully. There are places in which Estep's treatment is stronger, for example in his more thorough discussion of the place and significance of Balthasar Hubmaier.

Snyder is clear and consistent throughout his volume in his methods and his objectives. First, he argues that "the full Anabaptist story must be told within a framework that highlights not only diverse historical origins, but also deeply significant commonalities" that are supported by a variety of "'intramural' conversations" (p. 97, 101-

127). Second, these origins and conversations must be understood within their various social, political, and economic contexts. Finally, Snyder hopes with this dialogical approach to bring forward into the present a "continuing conversation," which he develops most fully in the final chapter. Thus, his ultimate intention is not at odds with Estep's, but he establishes it on a more solid foundation. Snyder pays close attention to recent scholarship; in fact, the bibliography itself is an education in Anabaptist studies of the past fifteen or twenty years. The book is also strengthened by excellent summaries of the various chapters and sections. Chapter 20 and summaries on pp. 97, 232, and 351 especially stand out in this regard.

Readers will undoubtedly have quibbles or even serious quarrels with aspects of the book. In such a broad-ranging study, this may be perhaps more a complement than a criticism. It seems to this reviewer, for example, that Snyder is less critical of the "real-historical" social science approaches of Goertz, Stayer (in his early work), and Clasen than these warrant. On the other hand, he does not follow their lead, and that is commendable. Snyder examines several questions (the role of women in the early Anabaptist movements, the "inner/outer" theological distinctions) that are often not mentioned or only touched on in other standard treatments. His review of Anabaptist historiography in the appendix is useful, and each of the preceding thirty chapters can stand nearly alone as a place from which to begin inquiries or guide thoughtful discussion. The volume is thoroughly referenced. In the end, it seems to me that Snyder achieves his historiographic objective of "shedding light on Anabaptism as a relatively coherent movement which, nevertheless, manifested much diversity in its geographical expressions" (p. 401). His further and less broadly declared objective of helping "to cultivate lovingly all that encourages" "a life rooted in the living God" within the Believers' Churches that trace their origins to the Anabaptist movement(s) is best accomplished, to my mind, by the kind of closely informed, non-ideological, and historically sensitive account he gives us in this well-researched volume.

Pipkin makes clear in his preface that his intention has been to assemble a text reader on issues of Anabaptist theology. The book is therefore a collection largely of previously published work ranging from 1952 to 1991 that have been used by teachers over the years as supplementary reading in courses on the Anabaptists. Only three essays appear in this volume for the first time.

Accordingly, some of the essays may already be familiar to readers of *Mennonite Life*, and one can usefully read the entire volume as a supplement to Estep's and Snyder's efforts. The topics included here are all covered to some degree in Snyder's account; they include examinations of the substance and origins of Balthasar Hubmaier's thought, of the doctrines of sin and renewal in early Anabaptist theology, of the Anabaptist conceptions of the work of the Holy Spirit, of Anabaptist ecclesiology, and the like.

One linking essay in this volume is Snyder's "Beyond Polygenesis," which presents, as he claims, "the essential rationale and methodology" of *Anabaptist History and Theology* (p. 27). The first part substantially repeats the "Appendix" of *Anabaptist History and Theology*, but the second half of the paper is a good review of what Snyder is trying to do in the book.

The essays in this volume are, on the whole, well-researched, thoughtful, and thought-provoking. Many are interested in extending the past debates within the Anabaptist movements into the present (as are Snyder and Estep), but that is a virtue, not a fault. The student and layperson alike will find interest in comparing methods and subject matters across essays. The two pieces on Hubmaier, for example, allow for close comparison on both counts, as do the two on Menno, or the one on Menno's understanding of sin in comparison with Friedmann's more general study of the doctrine of original sin among the Anabaptists, or the three very different studies of Anabaptist hermeneutics. Burton-Edwards' annotated bibliography on Anabaptist theology that concludes the collection will be very helpful to a variety of readers.

Overall, these three volumes are to be commended to both the interested layperson and the specialized scholar as good places to begin a careful study of the origins and meaning of Anabaptism.

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Cornelius J. Dyck, ed. *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995. Pp. 311. (\$16.95—paperback) ISBN 0-8361-9024-6

Daniel Liechty, ed. *Early Anabaptist Spirituality: Selected Writings*. New York: Paulist Press, 1994. Pp. 304. (\$19.95—paperback) ISBN 0-8091-3475-6

Marlene Kropf and Eddy Hall. *Praying with the Anabaptists: The Secret of Bearing Fruit*. Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1994. Pp. 176 + 1 sound cassette. (\$19.95) ISBN 0-87303-228-4

Anabaptism in recent years has developed an unmerited reputation for being overly concerned with ethics on the one hand and inadequately connected with spirituality on the other. In my view, this perceived lack of spirituality in Anabaptism is more the result of North American obsessions with the individual in general and of American Christendom's concern for the individual's relationship to God in particular than it does with the character of Anabaptist texts and traditions themselves. Nevertheless, in a time when most North American Anabaptist-identified Christians find themselves living in a fragmented and alienating society while attending churches that more often reflect than challenge the trend toward isolation and individualism in the surrounding worldly culture, it is understandable that the category of spirituality would emerge as an agenda item of some urgency. Contemporary Christians who speed off to their work cubicle on the interstate before stopping at the mall on the way back home to the suburb have a legitimate need for a humanizing experience of spiritual transcendence that is as portable as a cellular phone and as efficient as e-mail. Hence one finds in the bookstores a growing literature on spirituality, under such categories as "new age" or "inspirational," which seeks to offer spiritual self-help to an increasing number of people who have trouble making it through the day with their humanity intact.

Three new books on Anabaptist spirituality by Cornelius J. Dyck, Daniel Liechty, Marlene Kropf and Eddy Hall can be seen as a contribution to this broader literature on spirituality, as well as an appeal to Mennonites and other Anabaptist groups to drink from their own rich streams, not only those that flow from other religious traditions that may appear at first glance more "spiritual." At the same time, these books can be viewed as an extension of the project of Anabaptist renewal

begun by intellectuals like Harold S. Bender in the 1940s, a project that had as one of its central strategies the making of previously untranslated Anabaptist sources available in English to Mennonites who could no longer read German.

The book of excerpts by Cornelius J. Dyck takes the renewal project a step further by making Anabaptist ideas available in nugget form to North Americans who no longer have the time or patience to read through the lengthy and often redundant treatises of sixteenth-century Anabaptist writers. The book is divided into chapters on such themes as the new birth, word and spirit, discipleship, peace and justice, lifestyle, letters of faith and encouragement, and the Church. The book also contains a few full length translations: Leonard Schiemer's commentary on the Apostles' Creed, Menno's account of conversion, and a dialogue by the *Waterlander* minister Pieter Pietersz entitled "The Way to the City of Peace." While it is always disappointing to see old texts chopped up and reorganized into contemporary categories, Dyck has edited these readings with obvious concern for maintaining historical and spiritual integrity. Each chapter is introduced with a short essay that provides contextual and biographical information about the writers and most of the excerpts are lengthy enough to give the reader full exposure to the rhetorical and literary forms employed by the writers.

The accumulated evidence in this book for the Anabaptist integration of spirit and flesh, of word and deed, is quite overwhelming. Leonard Schiemer's meditation on the Apostles' Creed, for example, turns practically every article of belief in the Creed into an ethical imperative for the believer. Belief in God the Father demands surrender with "body, life, honor, and goods"; acknowledging God as Creator leads to human divinization through suffering; accepting Christ as God's son demands rejection of the "rulers of this world" in favor of the "ruler of heaven" and so on. Pieter Pietersz' devotional dialogue about the utopian "city of peace" is a gentle pietist text that weaves a beautiful, almost seamless, tapestry of spiritual admonition combined with ethical teaching, elevating human dignity and hope above decadence and despair. It is hard, in fact, to find one paragraph in the whole book that doesn't somehow communicate the two-fold concern of Anabaptist writers for both spiritual transcendence and obedient discipleship. This book, in short, while lending itself primarily to devotional and liturgical contexts, is also a good resource for

scholars of Anabaptist thought, containing numerous fresh translations (many unprecedented) of writings that ought to be central to the ongoing conversation in North America about the proper shape of Mennonite theology and polity.

Daniel Liechty's translation of Anabaptist writings for Paulist Press' popular *Classics of Western Spirituality* avoids the annoying fragmentation of Anabaptist texts into thematized tidbits and gathers together instead complete translations of texts representative of the three main hearts of the Anabaptist flame: the Swiss, the South German and Austrian, and the Dutch. Some of the texts translated by Liechty have never appeared in English before, such as the writings of South German Anabaptists like Leonard Schiemer, Hans Hut, and Hans Schlaffer, and several of the hymns from the Swiss Anabaptist hymnbook, the *Ausbund*.

Liechty's introduction to the book is a distinguished and persuasive synthesis of Anabaptist spiritual themes placed in their historical, political, and social context. After the disintegration of the historical narrative of Anabaptist origins associated with the *Anabaptist Vision* we could do worse than to reconstruct a provisional Anabaptist spiritual identity along the lines suggested by Liechty: spiritual immanence, discipleship, and corporate Christianity. According to Liechty, "Anabaptists did not dwell on the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' Rather they were concerned with the question, 'How should a Christian live?'" The writings gathered together by Liechty in this attractive and stimulating volume quite powerfully support this admittedly controversial claim about Anabaptist spirituality.

Especially does Liechty's assertion seem true in the case of the translated *Ausbund* hymns, each of which reminds the reader of the strange and winsome spiritual heritage that English-speaking Mennonites have largely neglected. The hymns collected here address the prospect of unjust human suffering from a profound standpoint of excessive joy, vulnerable fleshliness, and resolute commitment. The following words penned by Felix Manz open *Ausbund* hymn #6: "With joy I will sing, / My heart delights in God, / Who brings me the ability / To escape from that death / Which is eternal and has no end. / I praise you, Christ in heaven, / Who frees me from anxiety." Later in the same hymn, we find the words: "Pure love in Christ / spares the enemy." Rejoins Annelein of Freiburg in *Ausbund* hymn #36: "O God, keep my heart and mouth / Watch over me,

Lord, always / Do not let me part from you / Whether in anguish, fear or need / Keep me pure in joy." Such words of spiritual desire and holy commitment speak to us from another time and place of the human capacity for exceeding self and circumstance on behalf of God and neighbor. While many of the other texts collected by Liechty work out the spiritual dynamics illustrated here with more specificity and elaboration, all of the texts incorporate in some way this basic insistence on a joyful expression of solidarity and love in the face of absurdity and violence.

Thus, it is disappointing that the cassette tape of hymns accompanying the book by Kropf and Hall, *Praying with the Anabaptists*, contains only one rendition of a hymn written by an early Anabaptist, especially given the availability of several good singing translations of *Ausbund* hymns in recent Mennonite hymnbooks. Even if, however, they do not prepare us to sing with the Anabaptists, Kropf and Hall encourage us to pray with our forebears in their book of spiritual exercises and prayers that follow the intense orientation of Anabaptist spirituality toward fruitful discipleship and self-giving love. While they simplify and reinterpret Anabaptist spirituality for contemporary readers more thoroughly than either Dyck or Liechty, their writing and editing have not downsized the Anabaptist emphasis on an ethically fruitful spiritual life, although they do go to great lengths

to emphasize that ethical fruits are gifts of God's grace, more than human will and intention. Even though this book appropriates much of the self-oriented language associated with contemporary devotional literature, the preoccupation of contemporary devotional practices with self and inner renewal is subverted in this text by constant reference to Anabaptist writings that insist on the centrality to self-sustenance of reconciliation with the other.

Historians of 20th century Mennonitism have noted that Harold S. Bender used history to perform an "end run" around the liberal/fundamentalist quagmire into which Mennonite theologians and bible scholars had fallen at mid-century. It might be argued that the language and discipline of spirituality provide the materials for a new "end run" around the more recent work of Anabaptist social historians who have made a productive but chaotic quagmire of the terrain of early Anabaptist history and teaching. Readers hoping to find easy formulaic answers to the dilemmas and demands of contemporary human existence will be disappointed with these texts. Those who wish to be challenged by substantive and intense meditations that call the believer back to the love and holiness of Christ will be blessed.

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Mennonite Life

An Illustrated Quarterly Devoted to Mennonite History and Culture
ISSN 0025-9365

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Mennonite Life

is a self-supporting, non-profit publication, and appears each March, June, September, and December.

Subscription rates:

1 year - \$20.00; 2 years - \$30.00. Foreign: 1 year - \$25.00; 2 years - \$35.00.

Single copies: 1990-present \$4.50, pre-1990 \$3.00.

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Postmaster

Periodical postage paid at North Newton, Kansas 67117. Please send change of address to Mennonite Life, Bethel College, 300 East 27th Street, North Newton, KS 67117-0531.

Abstracted and indexed

in Religion Index One: Periodicals, Historical Abstracts, and America: History and Life.

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