Mennonite Life

March 2000
vol. 55 no. 1

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Welcome to the first issue of Mennonite Life to be produced solely on the World Wide Web. We had hoped to publish on March 1, but technical problems beyond our control made that impossible. We view this web site as an evolving project and welcome your feedback of suggestions and corrections.

In this issue, we begin with excerpts from a longer work by Duane Friesen on a theology of culture from an Anabaptist perspective. The selections published here are from Friesen's book of the same title scheduled to be published this year by Herald Press.

Responses to Duane Friesen come first from Scott Holland, who teaches peace, public and cross cultural theologies at Bethany Theological Seminary in partnership with Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana. He is also a contributing editor to Cross Currents: The Journal of the Association for Religion and Intellectual Life.

A second response is from Thomas Heilke, associate professor of political science at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. He has written various articles on Anabaptist political thought, and continues to work on a book on the same topic.

Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Shalom of the City: An Anabaptist Theology of Culture
Duane K. Friesen

Harmony or Polyphony? An Essay in Response to Friesen's Anabaptist Aesthetics
Scott Holland

Response to Duane Friesen
Thomas Heilke

We are pleased to bring our readers some excerpts from the new centennial history of Bluffton College by Perry Bush. The article presented here focuses on Bluffton's experience of World Wars I and II. The article is based on excerpts from *Dancing with the Kobzar: Bluffton College and Mennonite Higher Education, 1899-1999*, soon to be published by Pandora Press U. S.

The Solidification of Nonresistance: Bluffton and World War, 1917-1945
Perry Bush

Mennonite Life consulting editor Ami Regier, assistant professor of English at Bethel College, has created a "multimedia colloquy" with poet Keith Ratzlaff, including images of Paul Klee paintings which have inspired Ratzlaff's poetry and audio files of Ratzlaff reading several of his poems.

A Multimedia Colloquy with Keith Ratzlaff

Two articles in this issue survey the state of Mennonites studies in the online environment. Richard Thiessen, Director of Learning Resources at Concord College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and also the webmaster for the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, gives us a perspective from Canada, where the crown jewels of the online world are the Canadian

Mennonite Encyclopedia Online and the genealogical resources on the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society web site. Tim Janzen, a physician of Portland, Oregon, who is also an active genealogical researcher, gives a U. S. perspective. The fact that Janzen's focus is genealogical indicates the nature of online and digital activities in Mennonite studies in the United States, with much activity centered on the discovery, publication, and organization of family history sources, especially with the GRANDMA project of the California Mennonite Historical Society.

Mennonite Studies in Canada: The Digital Environment
Richard Thiessen

Researching Mennonite-Related Topics on the Internet: A Perspective from the United States
Tim Janzen

We have an unusually large set of book reviews in this issue, perhaps reflecting renewed enthusiasm for *Mennonite Life* in its new guise.

Book Reviews

Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Shalom of the City

An Anabaptist Theology of Culture[(1)]

Duane K. Friesen

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon...It said:

> *Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare (shalom) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*
>
> Jeremiah 29: 1, 4-7

For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of humankind by country, or by speech, or by dress. For they do not dwell in cities of their own, or use a different language, or practice a peculiar life. This knowledge of theirs has not been proclaimed by the thought and effort of restless people; they are not champions of a human doctrine, as some people are. But while they dwell in Greek or barbarian cities according as each person's lot has been cast, and follow the customs of the land in clothing and food, and other matters of daily life, yet the condition of citizenship which they exhibit is wonderful, and admittedly strange. They live in countries of their own, but simply as sojourners; they share the life of citizens, they endure the lot of foreigners; every foreign land is to them a homeland ("fatherland" in original), and every homeland ("fatherland" in original) a foreign land. They marry like the rest of the world, they breed children, but they do not cast their offspring adrift. They have a common table, but yet not common. They exist in the flesh, but they live not after the flesh. They spend their existence upon the earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, and in their own lives they surpass the laws. They love all people, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown, and they are condemned; they are put to death, and they gain new life. They are poor, and make many rich; they lack everything, and in everything they abound. They are dishonored, and their dishonor becomes their glory; they are reviled, and are justified. They are abused, and they bless; they are insulted, and repay insult with honor. They do good, and are punished as evil-doers; and in their punishment they rejoice as gaining new life therein.

The Epistle of Diognetus V: 1-16
Second Century

From the Preface

*Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Shalom of the City*is born out of my experience of double historical consciousness: the awareness of how our specific cultural and autobiographical experiences shape our views of life; and my conviction that we are most faithful to the Christian faith by affirming its concrete historical roots in the Jew, Jesus of Nazareth whose life, teachings, death and resurrection are the orienting center of Christian life. I write from the premise that theological reflection can be of most help and relevance to others when it begins by acknowledging and affirming the concreteness of historical context, rather than by abstracting itself from and denying our historicity. The ecumenical conversation that has enriched my work the most over the years has been dialogue with partners who have been willing to share from their own historical experiences and theological traditions. Though we all see "through a glass darkly," nevertheless it is through sharing our particular insights that we gain a fuller and richer vision of the Christian life.

The words "tension," "ambiguity," and "polarity" describe my "double" sense of Christian historical consciousness. I experienced this first in growing up as a Mennonite Christian in the farming community of Fairview near American Falls, Idaho. I had a very strong sense of Christian identity as a member of First Mennonite Church of Aberdeen, Idaho. We did not live within a homogeneous Mennonite community like other Mennonites I knew about in rural ethnic enclaves in Kansas and Pennsylvania. Our neighbors were of diverse religious backgrounds. I attended a public school. My parents were active in civic affairs in the community. In so many ways we were like those around us. Yet we were also profoundly different.

Being in the world but not of the world was an issue that pervaded our lives. That issue made us, in a fundamental sense, contemporaries of the Apostle Paul. Though we did not struggle with whether to eat meat offered to idols, or whether women should cover their heads (though I was aware of Mennonites who lived about 100 miles from us for whom that was an issue), we too lived with the tension of being "in" the world, but not "of" the world.

My friends represented a rich variety of religious backgrounds--some were Mennonite, several were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and others from various Protestant traditions. Though many of my school friends did not go to church, we shared much in common--our farm experience, 4-H projects, music, sports, the adventure of exploring the lava beds and the environments along the Snake River and around the American Falls Reservoir, and a passion for hunting. My brother and I learned Bible stories from my mother who read to us regularly. My family had regular devotions before bedtime and always prayed before meals, but many of my friends did not. Almost all our neighbors worked on Sunday. We were strict observers of the Sabbath, except for caring for the animals, milking the cows, and irrigating the crops in summer. In high school I was in a speech class with six other male students where I remember we had vigorous discussions about pacifism. When I turned 18 and registered at the local post office, I, unlike all my American Falls high school friends, registered as a conscientious objector to war. At American Falls High School I was active in student government, music and basketball. I helped plan the Senior Ball as class president, but then I did not attend because most Mennonites, as well as a few other conservative Protestants in the high school, did not dance. Many of my high school friends went to the local movies every weekend. Movies were not actually forbidden in our home; we just did not go very often. To sum up my high school experience, I shared so much in common with my friends. We enjoyed each other's company. Yet there was something profoundly different about the worlds that shaped our lives.

Though there were many areas where I experienced the tension between the larger culture and the Christian faith as it had been passed on through my Mennonite tradition and family, the most severe tension was between those in the dominant culture who believed loyalty to country required military service and our conviction as Mennonites that to follow Christ entailed a life of absolute nonviolence. But we did not withdraw from politics. We believed deeply in democracy. Pacifism and politics belonged together in our family and in the Mennonite community of Aberdeen. My parents voted. My father, usually absorbed full time with farm work, would find the time, even during summer daylight hours, to listen to the radio during the political conventions. My father was active on the Soil Conservation Service and the local hospital board. An uncle was a member of the school board in American Falls--a quite pluralistic community of Protestants, Catholics and Latter Day Saints (LDS). Aberdeen was not as pluralistic. The two largest groups in Aberdeen were the Mennonites and the LDS. The Aberdeen school board elections were a most important issue--as the Mennonites sought to resist the control of the local schools by the LDS. We believed in public education, but in a public education that was tolerant of religious pluralism.

In 1958 I left Idaho to become a student at Bethel College in Kansas. In the context of a developing strong interest especially in philosophy and literature, Christian pacifism and politics continued to "belong" together for me as a college student. As a freshman I attended meetings of the Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship of Mennonite Colleges at the United Nations in New York City. I remember the visit of Martin L. King to our campus in 1959. I began to relate pacifism to issues of justice and to international issues of war and peace. At Bethel College I became acquainted with Charles Wells' newsletter, *Between the Lines*, the pacifism of John Swomley and his analysis of current issues under the auspices of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Many students were intensely interested in the presidential debates between Nixon and Kennedy. Later when Kennedy was trying to decide whether to resume the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, I became active along with other Bethel College students in a nationwide movement of students who went to Washington D.C. to support Kennedy in his reluctance to resume nuclear testing in the atmosphere.

In the midst of these political concerns, a growing number of students had become interested in the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement. We met together in small fellowship groups, both to learn more about the underlying theology and ethic of the Anabaptist tradition, as well as to express in our own lives and community life these convictions. It was in the context of this growing interest in Anabaptist theology and growing social and political concerns that I made the decision to undertake graduate study in theology and ethics--a road that led me first to Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, then to Berlin, Germany, and finally to Harvard Divinity School.

In the fall of 1963 an article in the *Christian Century*, "The Peace Churches as Communities of Discernment" written by J. L. Burkholder, then a Mennonite professor of pastoral theology at Harvard Divinity School, caught the interest of a number of students. This article had a profound effect upon my thinking, particularly his model of the church as a community of discernment which would be the basis for "mission" to the larger society. On the one hand, Burkholder sought to describe a model of the church committed to Lordship of Christ and engaged in a process of discernment of what faithful obedience means in a culture tempted toward either individualistic pietism or pragmatic secularism. On the other hand, Burkholder called for a creative or pioneering mission to the larger society, determined by the needs of the world and the gifts of the church. Burkholder called particularly for the church to engage in projects to arouse public responsibility. The concerns of seminary students about racism in Elkhart, Indiana, and by 1965, the growing concern about the developing war in Vietnam, were both extensions I felt of Burkholder's point of view--a Biblical pacifism aimed at arousing public responsibility.[(2)]

After graduation from seminary our family went to Berlin, Germany, where again the relationship of pacifism and politics was of major concern to me--particularly the question of how a church can be faithful in a Marxist society. It was there that I first learned how the East German Christians (under the influence of Karl Barth) were applying Jeremiah's advice for people in exile to "seek the shalom of the city where they dwell."[(3)]

In graduate school I continued to struggle with the relationship of Christ and culture, particularly the relationship of pacifism and politics. I read Guy Hershberger's *War Peace and Nonresistance*, H.R. Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*, Ernst Troeltsch's *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, and the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr. These scholars all basically agreed that pacifism and politics did not mix, and this created in me a deep sense of dissonance with my experience of a passionate commitment to both Christian pacifism and to political involvement. . Their views did not fit what I had experienced growing up in Idaho. We were pacifists who were politically involved. We were Mennonites who had an identity that "marked" us off from others, yet we also participated in the culture around us. The paradigm of these thinkers did not "fit" my experience, my own sense of Christian responsibility, my reading of the Bible, my understanding of my own Anabaptist-Mennonite history, or the history of other so-called "sect" types like socially active Baptists and Quakers I knew.

And so I began the search for a new paradigm to understand and describe the relationship of the Christian and culture. That task began in earnest with my dissertation on Troeltsch's *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. I concluded that Troeltsch did not adequately portray the creative and transformative role of "sect-type" of Christianity to which I belonged. This was because Troeltsch began with "Constantinian" assumptions in which he could only envision a politically responsible ethic if the church is closely aligned with the dominant political and economic institutions of society.

I owe my orientation in this book and my deep gratitude to that "cloud of witnesses" that has gone before me. Bethel College, where I have taught since 1970, belongs within the Dutch-Russian tradition in the General Conference Mennonite Church in the United States and Canada of "culturally engaged pacifism."[(4)] "Culturally engaged pacifism" believes that Mennonites should participate vigorously in the culture and offer their peace witness as a contribution to society. It has its roots in the work of C.H. Wedel, the first president of Bethel College, who believed that Mennonites should engage culture eagerly and embrace the issues posed by modern learning. This tradition of engagement of the Christian faith with modern culture was continued by Edmund G. Kaufman who was president of Bethel College from 1932-52, and in his son, Bethel graduate and contemporary theologian, Gordon Kaufman.[(5)] In Canada this tradition is reflected in Frank Epp, also a Bethel College graduate, who throughout his life sought to address modern issues of contemporary politics and culture from the point of view of Christian pacifism.[(6)] My work in helping begin a Peace Studies Major at Bethel College in the early seventies sought to link the tradition of Christian pacifism and the insights of the social sciences. It was in the context of this work that I wrote my book, *Christian Peacemaking and International Conflict: A Realist Pacifist Perspective*.

I should also mention the opportunities I have had to work on committees whose deliberations have contributed to my perspective on a theology of culture. I serve on the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Peace Committee, an advisory committee to the International Peace Office of MCC. We have struggled with issues like how we should respond to "humanitarian" military intervention in Somalia and Bosnia, and what policy we should have on the sanctions in Iraq. Earlier I served on a committee of the Historic Peace Churches and the Fellowship of Reconciliation that is interested in how Mennonites should relate to the ecumenical dialogue on peace and justice issues in the NCC, the WCC, and other Christian groups. From 1993-98 I participated with an ecumenical group of scholars and activists in developing a "Just Peacemaking Theory," the results of which have been recently published.[(7)]

In this book I continue in the tradition of "culturally engaged pacifism," though I go much beyond issues of political ethics to address more broadly a theology of culture in its multi-faceted dimensions. In part one of the book I focus on the church's identity: the foundation of a Christian theological orientation for an alternative cultural vision to the dominant culture, and in part two I focus on how the church engages the larger culture.

My central thesis is that Jeremiah's letter to the exiles and the Epistle to Diognetus suggest a model of the church today for our North American context. Christians live with the tension of being citizens and aliens who are called to live by an alternative cultural vision. A brief survey of church history show us how an alternative cultural vision was undermined by a disembodied christology influenced by Neoplatonism and by the imperialization of the church after Constantine. The "free church" or believer's church tradition offers rich resources for a church that now lives in a post-Christendom age. The church's calling is not to withdraw from culture, but to "seek the shalom of the city where we dwell."

Artistic Imagination and the Life of the Spirit:
Toward a Christian Theology of Culture

(Excerpt from Chapter 6)[(8)]

> *"Nathan Soderblom has remarked that Bach's St. Matthew's Passion music should be called the Fifth Evangelist. So was Bach for me. One night after singing ... in the Mass in B Minor under Koussevitsky at Symphony Hall, Boston, a renewed conviction came over me that here in the Mass, beginning with the Kyrie and proceeding through the Crucifixion to the Agnus Dei and Dona Nobis Pacem, all that was essential in the human and the divine was expressed. My love of the music awakened in me a profound sense of gratitude to Bach for having displayed as through a prism and in a way which was irresistible for me, the essence of Christianity."* James Luther Adams[(9)]

Aesthetic delight is an integral part of being whole persons before God. Aesthetic delight is central to an embodied, incarnational vision of life that embraces the full range of sensual experience. A trinitarian view of God nourishes sensual delight--as the creator God who is the ground of all that is, as the one who is most vividly present in the concrete, historical Jesus, and as the one whose Spirit is present in and participates in the cosmos.[(10)] Any particular material form can become for us a "sacrament," a vehicle through which the gift of God's grace can come to us. We can experience sensual delight through the composition of sound and silence in music, the ordering of words in poetry and story, the visual impact of a sculpted wooden form or a Kansas sky.

Every day on my way to work I pass a large cottonwood. Planted near Kidron Creek, it is a wounded survivor of Kansas' droughts, wind, and ice storms. Its gnarled trunk (two of us cannot encircle the tree with outstretched arms) and broken limbs testify to the wounds it has suffered from these hostile forces, though the wind which lashes the tree also brings the rain which is its life blood. It rises majestically, over 100 feet into the sky. I watch it change throughout the seasons--its stark form against grey winter sky, the yellow of autumn against blue, and the blanket of cotton it sends to earth each spring. The cottonwood is not only there as nesting place for birds and squirrels. It is there not only because of the shade it provides in hot Kansas summers, or the firewood it can provide in the middle of a blizzard. The tree is simply there, for its own sake, a thing of beauty, a delight to the senses. It is a form of magnificent beauty, expressed in the tension between symmetry when seen as a totality in the sky and the particularity of its parts. Its beauty lies in the juxtaposition of the perfectly ordered harmony of the whole and the jarring and unsettling bruises of the particular parts. The aesthetic experience of the cottonwood symbolizes the joy and delight God intends for humans whose brokenness and alienation have been transformed by the renewing power of God's Spirit.

As creators of culture, we do not only experience life aesthetically. We participate in the creation of aesthetic form. The expression of our lives in aesthetic form is inevitable even when we are not self-conscious about it (or deny our participation, as some Mennonites have done).

> Just as all behaviors have an ethical dimension, so do all dimensions of expressive and material culture possess an aesthetic sense. There are no aesthetically neutral customs. Even those behaviors which are overtly technical, have a dimension of symbolic expressiveness which reveals the ethics as well as the aesthetics of a community.[(11)]

The issue, then, is not whether we will express ourselves aesthetically in material culture, but how. My thesis is that not only are Christians called by God to know the truth and witness to it, and to live well with Jesus as their norm, but also to create beauty or aesthetic excellence. As actors in the world Christians participate with their fellow human beings in many tasks. We design, build, and live and work in homes and other structures. We worship in churches. We design, build and use furniture, eating utensils, and tools to accomplish tasks from gardening and farming to fixing our bicycles and cars. We design, build and use various types of technology from transportation to communication. We design and construct the space in and around our homes, our farms, our institutions, our communities, our cities. It is common for us to ask what it means to be ethically responsible in the performance of these tasks. But seldom do we ask whether we have any aesthetic responsibility. Does it make any difference what appearance we give to our cities, our institutions, our communities, our cars, our furniture? Are the things we design and use simply to be judged by how well they perform their function to meet our material needs or satisfy our pleasures?

The visible, outward form of culture should truly express the spirit within, the underlying values which orient our lives. It is my contention that in so far as the visible outward form truly expresses the Spirit of God within, our lives should honor God not only in living the truth and by living ethically responsible lives, but also by the creation of beauty, or aesthetically excellent form.

The problem is that not every aesthetic expression expresses or nurtures the human spirit. Not every aesthetic expression is excellent. As in the case of other areas of culture, a Christian theology of culture should help us to develop skill at discriminating excellence from shoddiness, superficiality, and pretentiousness. We need standards of judgment to discriminate among the confusing variety of aesthetic expression in our culture--in museum, concert hall, and city plaza--as well as in the myriad forms of aesthetic expression of ordinary people in all their cultural diversity (from adornment with

clothing and jewelry to popular music and crafts). We can be awakened from our complacency and numbness to awareness and wonder. We can also be misled and seduced with values that detract from an authentic vision of life. In our response to the arts in our culture, we must delicately balance openness and tolerance so that we may grow and at the same time develop skills of discriminating judgment so that we know what is "good, acceptable, and perfect." (Romans 12:2)

But to make discriminating judgments about what is "good" aesthetically is complex and difficult. Can we do it? How can what is "good, acceptable, and perfect" be anything more than a matter of taste, relative to the context and setting in which a particular aesthetic form is developed? Is it possible to develop community standards of aesthetic excellence? Can aesthetic excellence be anything more than a matter of private opinion or personal taste? Does the Christian faith have anything distinctive to offer in this area? Given the difficulties of developing clear standards and practices in ethics, are we not being even more presumptuous to seek to develop standards of aesthetics that can guide us in our judgments and in our behavior as Christians?

First of all, I need to clarify what I mean by aesthetic quality. We can distinguish between an **aesthetic experience**, which we described above (the example of the cottonwood tree) as the sensuous experience of an object or art form, and aesthetic form. By **aesthetic form** I mean the shape or structure of an object, poem, or composition--the way it is put together. Aesthetic form is concerned with the way in which words are chosen and ordered within a poem; how a composer creates the desired affect by rhythmic patterns of sound and silence, and the arrangement of notes to produce melodic line or harsh dissonance; the use of color, light and dark, texture and line, balance and organization in a painting or sculpture; or the way light is filtered through the windows in my home and the shadows it casts on the ceilings and walls. By **aesthetic quality** I mean how well a particular form (a poem, a sculpture, a musical composition) is put together. The aesthetic quality of a form should not be confused with whether it expresses truth, whether it produces morally good effects, or whether it is useful or functional. A house functions to keep us warm, but its aesthetic qualities have to do with how it looks and how its space is arranged, judged by standards of aesthetic excellence.[(12)]

What I propose here is to open a dialogue on the question of standards of aesthetic excellence. The suggestions I make are tentative, and are intended to invite further discussion. Indeed I have more questions than answers about how we develop norms of aesthetic judgment. I can only briefly introduce this topic here, as one component in a larger theology of culture.

So why begin a dialogue, why open these questions? I raise these issues because I believe it is critical that the church not simply abandon aesthetic issues to the dominant forces of the larger culture. We cannot simply accept what the dominant cultural elites define as "high culture" or "excellence." We cannot uncritically assimilate to the cultural standards of "delight" and pleasure as defined by advertizing, the mass media, or Hollywood. Nor can we simply give in to a pragmatic functionalism that fails to include aesthetic form as a significant consideration in how we shape the communities and cities in which we live. We must find a way to be discerning, to resist those forces in the dominant culture that are destructive, and at the same time to learn from, support, and help create those aesthetic forms that contribute to the well being of the city where we dwell. I quite agree with Frank Burch Brown who connects "bad taste" with sin.

> Aesthetic sensitivity and judgment is so integral to the moral and religious life that people whose aesthetic sense is dull or perverse are in an unenviable position. The possibility that bad taste may be a moral liability is suggested in fact by the quite traditional notion that sin--which is not only wrong but also profoundly ugly--looks alluring to the unwary, whereas virtue--which is not only right but also profoundly beautiful--frequently appears drab at first sight. It follows that failure to distinguish genuine beauty from counterfeit can lead to moral error. Moral and aesthetic discernment often go hand in hand.[(13)]

However, a high aesthetic standard by itself certainly does not guarantee moral sensitivity. The Nazis are a prime example of an idolatrous aestheticism which was divorced from the moral life as a whole. The Nazis loved classical music and even brought Jews together to play for them, and at the same time treated the Jews as "vermin."

The Christian faith affirms our embodiedness, that we are earthy creatures who touch, taste, smell, see, hear, and express ourselves in bodily movement. But how do we distinguish between the joy and delight of sensuous experience and the appeal to our delight and pleasure by the dominant North American culture which also is ready to embrace a superficial sensuality? Goods and services are marketed to us for the way they can give us pleasure and meet our material needs. We lack a standard for making critical discriminating judgments that can help us distinguish between materialism, and an aesthetically responsible expression of our lives in material culture that gives honor to God.

Materialism is our idolatrous commitment to things as a means to give us an ego-centered satisfaction. Materialism is the self-centered attachment to things that results in neglecting to share our resources with others and in the exploitation of the natural environment. To be committed to materialism is to live a one-dimensional life oriented to the profane at the expense of spirituality. To express human spirituality and beauty within material culture is not to view things as objects of our devotion, but as vehicles for the expression of the image of God. We seek to create not one-dimensional profane objects which we value only for their function or how they fulfill our selfish interests. Our calling is to create a material culture which reflects our attunement and coherence with God's intentionality for the cosmos. We are called to create a material culture that is a response to the beauty of the cosmos as God has created it, that grows out of attentive seeing and listening based on profound respect for what is.

Some Christians bring to these issues a dualism of body and soul that denigrates the sensual, and that assumes human salvation is an ascent away from our earthy, embodied existence. In the absence of an aesthetic vision that embraces

earthy sensuality as an integral element of the Christian faith, these Christians lack a standard of critical judgment by which to assess aesthetic issues. They tend to reduce our "material" existence to a pragmatic functionalism. What matters to them is whether something is useful for its intended function. A chair is simply to provide a place for us to sit or a house a place of shelter. Aesthetics is important to them, but the aesthetic qualities of a chair or house are simply a matter of private taste, not a component of Christian theological reflection. Inevitably, these tastes are formed by the dominant cultural forces around them--the advertizing media, television, the movies, entertainment and sports celebrities.

Therefore, since aesthetic form concerns the very substance of our everyday lives, we must begin to discern how we honor God with the form we create. Our task is to find a way to integrate coherently form and function, so that the aesthetic excellence of something is integrated with its function. We live in the midst of aesthetic squalor, and often Christians simply participate unconsciously in producing that squalor. Is it possible to recover a sense of what it means to be faithful to God in this sphere of our lives, so that the church can contribute to a shalom that includes the kind of delight envisioned in the eschatological vision of Isaiah?

In developing aesthetic norms, we need to stress that our judgments will inevitably be contextual. They will vary according to time, cultural setting, and a people's experience. Standards of excellence change over time. Therefore, when we participate in this dialogue, we should not presume to be making definitive, universal judgments. However, it is important that we be clear about what we mean by standards of aesthetic excellence. Of course, people's tastes in art will differ. Some prefer baroque music, others the music of the Romantic period; some like modern art, others the art of the Renaissance; some prefer Amsterdam over London; we differ about whether we prefer Victorian or Colonial architecture. By standards of excellence, we want to get behind these particular preferences and ask what it is that makes any or all of them "excellent." Are there formal qualities of excellence we can identify that endure despite changes in style from period to period? What makes a city or our dwellings "good" or aesthetically excellent despite differences in style?

Should we equate "beauty" with aesthetic excellence? Much depends on what we mean by beauty. It is important that we make a distinction between two very different meanings of aesthetic excellence. When we speak of aesthetic excellence theologically, we can mean the "ideal" forms that God calls humans to create to express what humans and the universe were intended to be. Aesthetic excellence then means the ideal form God intended for creation or the new eschatological age for which we hope. The images of form in Genesis I and visions of the new Jerusalem in the book of Revelation both suggest such an "ideal" of aesthetic excellence. Such an ideal suggests a "norm" or "standard" for our own human activity as we construct a world of forms in the light of the image of God in us. The word "beauty" is an adequate word if we mean aesthetic excellence in this sense. We cite in this context Thomas Aquinas' definition of beauty in the *Summa Theologica*:

> Beauty includes three conditions, integrity or perfection, since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due proportion or harmony; and lastly brightness, or clarity, when things are called beautiful which have bright color.[(14)]

Contemporary artists sometimes create works which suggest such an ideal. Wilson Yates, for example, referring to the sculptor, Barbara Hepworth, says of her work:

> I think that the very nature of art is affirmation, and in being so reflects the laws and the evolution of the universe both in the power and rhythms of growth and structure as well as the infinitude of ideas which reveal themselves when one is in accord with the cosmos and the personality is free to develop.[(15)]

What is beauty? The experience of the beauty of something includes both a sensory feeling as well as the intellectual sense of the "rightness" of the relationship of any object to its surroundings.[(16)] Robert Regier defines beauty as

> "dynamic wholeness." It is not merely a subjective response to a fragment, but rather a response to an organic or man-made system in which many fragments are interrelated (interdependent) in a dynamic way. This interrelatedness is dynamic when both unity and variety (diversity) are present in the form of a delicate tension. If the tension breaks either boredom (sameness) or chaos is the result. An aesthetic response occurs when one intuitively or consciously experiences dynamic wholeness.[(17)]

As we become increasingly conscious of the environmental threat to our planet and become disturbed by the aesthetic squalor of a materialistic culture, one of the functions of the artist is to help us develop a more adequate notion of "dynamic wholeness," so that we might give form to our life on the earth that more nearly fulfills God's intention for humans and the cosmos.

> Aesthetic form may also express brokenness and alienation, disharmony, feelings of loneliness, anger and anguish. If by "beauty" we mean "pretty" or "nicely decorated," then the word is misleading and can contribute to a false standard of excellence. For too many of us beauty has been reduced to prettiness or ornamentation. For example, we build the basic structure of our homes with little thought to aesthetic form, until we are about finished and then decide it is now time to "decorate" what we have done. The consequence is that so much of what counts as "beauty" is simply gaudy, excessive, and pretentious. An aesthetic form can be anything but "pretty," jarring us into

Merrill Krabill; Passion series; steel, concrete, clay; 40x23x17

recognizing a truth that we have ignored or suppressed. My colleague, Merrill Krabill, a sculptor, uses rusty pieces of metal, broken chunks of cement, rusty wire, and blackened clay to construct sculptures to represent the passion of Christ. Krabill does not resist the word "beauty" if understood in the right way. One of the themes in his work is to explore the pain and deep sadness that lies at the core of life, not avoid it. In speaking of his work he says:

> None of these images are ugly or represent an evil to be avoided. They are all beautiful in their way, if you are willing to use the word as describing an ideal rather than as being without flaw.... Somehow all the work is connected to a search for how to live well in a broken world. The pieces are bound with wire and chain, but that binding also holds them together. They are broken and the barbed wire, the bent and twisted metal, the broken clay, the broken glass and the red stains are all painful images, but the pieces are put back together and they are healing.[(18)]

His works invite deeper reflection because they present us with the stark reality of the cross. The word "beauty" with its usual connotation seems inappropriate to describe his work, yet we can still call a work such as his aesthetically excellent. We should not, therefore, necessarily equate beauty and aesthetic excellence. We can appreciate an aesthetically excellent work because of the way it portrays brokenness and pain. Speaking theologically, the artist, like the prophet or preacher, describes both the fallenness of the human condition, and the need of human beings and the earth to be healed.

What, then, are the standards we can use to judge aesthetic excellence? Nicholas Wolterstorff suggests three broad categories: unity or coherence; richness or intensity; and the "fittingness" of a work. By fittingness he means whether the aesthetic qualities of an art form are appropriate for the function the work is to perform. Wolterstorff illustrates this concept in a reference to a quote from Gustave Flaubert about his novel, *Madame Bovary*. "The story, the plot of a novel is of no interest to me. When I write a novel I aim at rendering a color, a shade.... In *Madame Bovary*, all I wanted to do was to render a grey color, the mold color of a wood-louse's existence."[(19)] One aspect of aesthetic excellence, then, has to do with whether the form of a work fittingly renders what is expressed in the work. Though the "truth" and "aesthetic excellence" or an aesthetic form should not be equated, we also cannot separate them. We can then say that a work is aesthetically excellent in so far as a work's aesthetic qualities are fitting in relation to what the work is trying to do or communicate. Grunewald's or Merrill Krabill's portrayal of the cross, for example, can be said to be excellent in so far as the aesthetic forms are appropriate to express the truth of suffering and brokenness which the cross symbolizes. Or, in so far as a work communicates something about the human condition, its excellence consists in the appropriateness of the aesthetic form to the truth that it reveals.

Merrill Krabill; Passion series; steel, concrete, clay; 37x27x27

We can ask the same about church buildings, hymns, liturgical forms, sermons, and organ music. In what sense are the forms used suitable or fitting for the purpose of Christian worship? When we go to a concert hall to hear Beethoven, we expect the performance to satisfy our aesthetic interests. When we hear the organ or sing a hymn in the context of worship, it should "fit" with the purposes of the liturgy. We are not at a performance. At the same time, the aesthetic qualities of the organ music or the hymn should be excellent. The hymn text and tune should utilize appropriate aesthetical form to express the mood or idea of the liturgy. Brian Wren, theologian, poet, and hymn writer says:

> I want to suggest that at its best, the human is a complex minor art form, combining theology, poetry and music. As such it merits attention from theologians and artists alike.... When read aloud, as a poem, a hymn text is time art. Each such reading is similar, yet unrepeatable. When the poem is sung as a solo or choral item, it moves the listener as songs do. When sung by a congregation, it invites commitment. Though some congregations behave as if they didn't have bodies, singing together is an intensely corporeal, as well as corporate activity. Diaphragm, lungs, larynx, tongue, lips, jawbone, nasal cavities, rib cage, shoulders, eyes, and ears come into play. When body attitude combines with deepest beliefs, singers are taken out of themselves into a heightened awareness of God, beauty, faith and each other.... Hymns deserve to be seen as visual art: like other poems, their appearance on the page enhances their attractiveness, or detracts from it.[(20)]

In addition to this general criteria of aesthetic excellence which asks whether a form is suitable to its message or function, internal standards of excellence also apply. Though our tastes may differ, and though we may disagree about whether a particular aesthetic language chosen by an artist or a community fits our standards, Wolterstorff argues that two broad standards usually emerge in accounts of aesthetic excellence. On the one hand, we expect coherence, whether the parts fit into the whole and how the parts are arranged in relationship to each other.[(21)] Coherence can include dissonance and contrast. The principle of coherence is illustrated by a beautiful church built by Russian Mennonites soon after they came to Kansas in the late 19th century. But, when the congregation added an educational wing much later, they tacked on what looks like a "box" to the rest of the building. The addition probably serves its pragmatic function well, but there is no coherence between the addition and the original church building. Though contrast and dissonance can be an element of coherence, the addition simply clashes with the original church building and fails to enhance the aesthetic impact of the whole.

However, unity alone can be bland. So Wolterstorff says we also want aesthetic forms that are internally rich, varied, and complex. Coherence and richness come in degrees, and often the excellence of a form has much to do with how richness and coherence are balanced or proportioned to each other. One can achieve unity at the expense of richness and vice versa.[(22)]

Pete Seeger's well known folk song about middle class American suburban culture illustrates vividly bland unity and conformity at the expense of richness and diversity.

> Little boxes on the hillside, little boxes made of ticky tacky, little boxes all the same.
> There's a green one and a pink one and a blue one and a yellow one,
> And they're all made out of ticky tacky and they all look just the same.

By contrast a prairie ecosystem reveals a dynamic balance between ecological wholeness and coherence, and richness and diversity.

Learning from the natural world as a clue to aesthetic norms also suggests another important principle we must be sensitive to in our relationship with our material culture: Everything in nature is recycled. What is both suitable aesthetically and responsibly built, given the threat to the well-being of our earth? The production of "junk" that ends up in the dump within a few years (homes, cars, furniture, clothes, dishes, appliances) that does not have enduring quality, both in a functional and aesthetic sense, is irresponsible. We need to ask ourselves not only what stories and traditions we want to pass on to future generations, but what kind of material culture we are leaving them that has enduring quality. How can the material culture we pass on continue to enrich the human spirit generations after those of us who created it are gone?

In addition to Wolterstorff's standards, I would like to add the term "integrity," a term included in Aquinas' definition of beauty. What would it mean to have integrity in how we express ourselves? We would not try to make material forms look like something else--i.e. synthetic products which we make look like wood or stone. We would also choose forms that are appropriate to the environment where we live. Is there any rationale for imitation English Tudor in the middle of Kansas? In the late 40s and 50s some Mennonite churches in central Kansas copied neo-Gothic architecture. These forms may have had integrity at the time and expressed the values of those Mennonites who chose these forms. On the other hand, these examples also illustrate a lack of attention to the distinctive values of the Anabaptist tradition. The long narrow nave in these churches with elevated pulpit and straight rows, may be appropriate for an emphasis on the proclamation of the Word, but the form is not suitable to Anabaptist emphases on community and corporate discernment. I question the integrity of contemporary postmodern architecture where malls, shopping centers, retirement complexes and schools are blessed with pointed non-functional medieval arches, turrets, and towers. How can the appropriation of medieval forms within a consumer capitalist society be an appropriate use of geography and history?[(23)]

I like the sensitivity to integrity reflected in Sylvia Judson's report of a Quaker aesthetic. As originally an outsider to the Quaker tradition, she reports that she was attracted to Quaker simplicity, honesty and personal mysticism, but bothered by their unconcern for art. On the surface Quakerism would seem largely void of aesthetic expression when compared with the emphasis upon aesthetic form in the Roman Catholic tradition. But then she discovered this gem from the Book of Discipline of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of 1927:

> True simplicity consists not in the use of particular forms, but in foregoing over-indulgence, in maintaining humility of spirit, and in keeping the material surroundings of our lives directly serviceable to necessary ends, even though these surroundings may properly be characterized by grace, symmetry and beauty.[(24)]

Much of the quotation above expresses well the traditional understanding of Radical Reformation social responsibility. What struck me was the last phrase--that true simplicity consists of "surroundings properly characterized by grace, symmetry and beauty." Judson goes on to describe the integrity of some Quaker meeting houses with their good proportions, quiet calm and restful lighting, and the purity of line in honestly fashioned furniture. Meeting houses thus are forms of abstract art, where relationship of line, color, and especially of space express the spirit within. The Quakers experienced the power of God as Inner Light or Truth, and expressed that Spirit outwardly, not only in a life of social responsibility, but in the construction of their meeting houses.

These standards of excellence have important implications as well for how we view and design our cities. We, of course, open a huge and complex topic that we can hardly even begin to consider here. I nevertheless want to make a few connections for the reader. My wife and I spent a semester in Toronto while I was working on this book. One of our favorite places was Nathan Philips Square, a wonderful open space linked to the new city hall, placed among the skyscrapers of the downtown. The focus of the square is a public ice skating rink that serves as a "welcoming" place of meeting for the diversity of peoples that make up the city of Toronto. Cities are places where strangers meet. In the design of our cities it is critical that we have spaces where strangers can meet in safety and enjoy each other's company. The Boston Commons was another of our favorite spaces which we were often drawn to in the four years we spent in the Boston area.

While we were in Toronto, the city celebrated the life and work of Jane Jacobs, author of the well known book, *The Death and Life of American Cities*. Jacobs makes us aware of how critical the organization of space in a city is to safety and the flourishing of life. She is critical of city planners who have made mistakes by creating spaces in cities that are both aesthetically uninteresting and unsafe. The first several chapters of the book discuss sidewalks, sidewalks that are safe and draw people to them because they are places of joy and delight. She argues that the key to safe sidewalks is many "eyes on the sidewalk," day and night. The most dangerous places in large cities, especially after dark, are often public playgrounds and parks near large housing complexes. She argues that the way we design our cities impacts whether we will have "eyes on the sidewalk." If we zone a city so as to separate living spaces from all the functions people need, then we not only make people dependent upon the automobile or public transportation, but we also create empty spaces that can become dangerous and unwelcome for many times of the day and night. People need a reason to be on the sidewalk: a local restaurant, a sidewalk cafe where one can enjoy the art of people watching, a drug store, laundromat, tailor, cabinet maker, electrician, a church with its array of services from a day care to a food bank, a small corner grocery store, a magazine and newspaper stand. And all of these should be integrated with or in close proximity to living spaces--small apartments above stores, or houses nearby, with children playing on the sidewalk. Toronto has many such safe neighborhoods which makes it an attractive city and which draws people into these spaces. Rather than fleeing the city, many Torontonians who grow up in the city want to go back to live.

Soon after Jacobs arrived in Toronto, she led in the resistance to stop construction of the Spadina Expressway, a super expressway that would have cut the center of Toronto in half. Many U.S. cities have been ruined by such projects. Cities, cut in half, cause strips of blight right through their center. The expressways contribute to the flight to suburbs, as commuters leave central cities on the weekends and evenings only to return to the cathedrals of capitalism during the week--banks and insurance companies.

Wolterstorff outlines some of the aesthetic principles that he believes should govern how we put together our cities. He argues that the principles of aesthetic excellence in "urban space" are not different than other aesthetic forms. We should seek to balance unity and coherence with richness, complexity, variety, and contrast.

> It becomes clear that most Midwestern American cities are aesthetically bad. What is almost invariably missing is any strong unity in the individual spaces and any significant variety among the spaces. Buildings are separated from each other to such a degree that the definition of space is minimal; and everywhere one gets the same feeling of openness and slackness. The streets are just as open as the plazas, the only significant difference being that they have a stronger axial orientation. And lacking any significant degree of completeness, the spaces of these cities are singularly lacking in any intensity of character. They are bland, the epitome of blandness. Moving through them is anti-dramatic. It is as if there were a hatred of the city at work, a deep wish to be done with it as soon as possible.... The ideal of almost all urban Americans is to acquire enough money to live out in the country; failing that, to live in the suburbs; failing that, at least to escape from the city on weekends and holidays.... The Midwestern American has an abhorrence for what is absolutely indispensable to a city--shaped space.[(25)]

The standards of aesthetic excellence we have identified above are not, as such, standards unique to the church, or to a Christian view of life. Norms or standards in aesthetics have a similar status as judgments we make about truth in scientific research. We cannot say that there is such a thing as a "Christian" science or "Christian" aesthetics. What we can say, though, is that through the creation of aesthetic excellence Christians either do or do not give honor to God. In so far as we create form in the world that is untrue, deceptive, unauthentic, aesthetically mediocre, not fitted to the cosmos in which we live, or unauthentic to our humanity as God intended it, we dishonor God by creating aesthetic squalor. In an alternative cultural perspective that seeks the shalom of the city where we dwell, aesthetic excellence is an integral component of that vision.

So as we fulfill our responsibility to God as persons filled with God's Spirit of life, we will also nurture our spirits and the spirits of those around us in the creation of beauty and aesthetic excellence. Our responsibility to God will not be fulfilled if we only seek the truth and act ethically. We will also honor God in the creation of aesthetic excellence. The material culture we will create will then not only serve our utilitarian needs, but it will enrich our spirit and overcome the sensory squalor of our lives.

Notes

1. Excerpted by permission from the forthcoming book *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Shalom of the City*

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2. J. Lawrence Burkholder, "The Peace Churches as Communities of Discernment,"*Christian Century*. (Sept. 4, 1963), pp. 1072-1075.

3. See Karl Barth and Johannes Hamel,*How to Serve God in a Marxist Land*(New York: Association Press, 1959).

4. See the description of this position in the chapter by Loren Friesen, "Culturally Engaged Pacifism," in the book,*Mennonite Peace Theology: A Panorama of Types* (Akron, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 1991).

5. See James Juhnke's book, *Dialogue with a Heritage* (N. Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1987), and his article, "Mennonite History and Self-Understanding: North American Mennonitism as a Bipolar Mosaic," in *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed by Calvin Redekop and Samuel J. Steiner (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), pp. 83-100.

6. See for example Epp's writings on the Middle East Conflict:*Whose Land is Palestine* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1970); *The Palestinians: Portrait of a People in Conflict* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976); *The Israelis: Portrait of People in Conflict* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980).

7. Glen Stassen, ed. *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1998).

8. Part II of the book is organized around three arenas of cultural life: artists who create and participate in aesthetic form; citizens who help give shape to political and economic life; and philosophers who participate in the construction and assessment of the wisdom of the larger culture (from science to wisdom in other religions). I have chosen to share an excerpt from the chapter on the Christian's calling as an artist. By "artist" I mean the role all Christians play in culture in participating in aesthetic life, not only the special role of the professional artist.

9. James Luther Adams, *Taking Time Seriously* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957), p. 15.

10. In one of the chapters of Part I of the book, I lay the foundation for a Christian cultural vision with a trinitarian theology. Trinitarian thought can provide a comprehensive and integrated cultural vision that embraces the totality of human life experience.

11. John M. Janzen and Reinhold Kauenhoven Janzen. *Mennonite Furniture: A Migrant Tradition (1766-1910)* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1991) p. 201.

12. Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985). Miles urges us, surprisingly, to return to Plato to get our bearings. I use the word "surprisingly," given Plato's ambivalence to the arts. Plato was concerned that we clarify our concepts through a process of careful reflection. In Plato's dialogues Socrates' role is to help students who were confused because they misrepresented reality with concepts. Beginning by helping them to identify their linguistic flaw, Socrates helped students clarify their thinking and overcome their conceptual disorientation. She says it was not accidental that Plato, fascinated by the power of language, banished artists from his republic. Miles believes that rather than banishing artists, we need to learn to understand them to clarify how visual language is used, analogous to the way Socrates helped students clarify concepts. She also points to another side to Plato, though less well known. In Plato's description of physical vision as the foundation of abstract thought in the *Symposium* (210a-212b) we see the foundation for an understanding of the role of images in culture. It was this view that was so influential later (mediated through Plotinus) in the medieval idea of vision. In the *Symposium* Plato describes how students, attracted to the sight of a beautiful body, notice other beautiful bodies, and eventually are moved to contemplate beauty in its abstract form. Miles notes that in the contemplation of the beautiful, the visual experience of physical beauty is not eliminated, but "remains as a permanent connection between ideal beauty and the sensible world." (Miles, pp. 139-40) The visible beauty in the sensible world, then, becomes the means for expressing the ideal of beauty. Plotinus, a third century philosopher, carried on this notion, believing himself to be a faithful interpreter of Plato: "Now beauty, as we have said, shone bright amidst these visions, and in this world below we apprehend it through the clearest of our senses, clear and resplendent. For sight is the clearest mode of perception vouchsafed to us through the body." (Quoted by Miles, p. 142)

13. Frank Burch Brown, *Religious Aesthetics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 136.

14. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* I, Q. 39, art 8. *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*. ed. by Anton C. Pegis (New York: Random House, 1945), p. 378.

15. Quoted by Wilson Yates in "The Arts, Spirituality and Prophetic Imagination," an address given at Bethel College, N. Newton, KS, Jan. 11, 1991.

16. Richard Cartwright Austin, "Beauty: A Foundation for Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics*. (Vol. 7, Fall, 1985), pp. 197-208.

17. Robert Regier, "Aesthetic Values in Environmental Decision-making." Unpublished lecture given at Bethel College, N. Newton, KS, Feb. 28, 1992.

18. Merrill Krabill, "Thoughts About Art," *A Drink from the Stream*, Vol II, ed. by John J. Sheriff and Heather Esau (N. Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1996), p. 98.

19. Quoted by Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), p. 97.

20. Brian Wren, "Poet in the Congregation," *Arts: The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies*. (Two/One, Fall, 1989), p. 10.

21. We must be clear that coherence does not necessarily mean symmetry. In another part of the chapter I discuss the value of the aesthetic tension between symmetry and asymmetry in conversation with Soetsu Yanagi's book, *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty* (Kodansha International, 1972).

22. See Wolterstorff's discussion of aesthetic excellence, pp. 156ff.

23. I am grateful to Robert Regier for suggesting these examples of postmodern architecture that raise questions of integrity.

24. Sylvia Shaw Judson, *The Quiet Eye: A Way of Looking at Pictures* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1982).

25. Wolterstorff, pp. 181-182.

Harmony or Polyphony? An Essay in Response to Friesen's Anabaptist Aesthetics

Scott Holland

It is January 6, 2000 as I begin this response to Duane Friesen's fine new work. It is Epiphany and thus it seems quite in the spirit of the day to offer some responses to what Friesen calls "an Anabaptist theology of culture." The reader must beware. This is not a mere Mennonite ethnography nor is it an Anabaptist sociology. This work is written by a Christian intellectual who is both a theologian of culture and an interpreter of the Mennonite and broader Christian traditions. One finds no mere churchly theology here but a thoughtful consideration of the continuing possibilities of worldly holiness and holy worldliness beyond any sectarian or tribal sacred reservation. I must confess, I find great delight in speaking aloud the very language of Friesen's essay within the context of Anabaptist thought: Artists, Citizens, Philosophers, City, Culture, Creation, Aesthetics, Imagination!

Sectarian religious traditions, whether Mormon, Mennonite, or Brethren, tend to sharply divide the sacred and the secular. It is therefore not surprising that they express little enthusiasm for the Feast of Epiphany. Epiphany of course celebrates the manifestation of God in Christ to the Magi from the East. It is a root metaphor of the manifestation of God in the world beyond national, ethnic and generic boundaries. Those pagan Wise Men followed neither the voices of the angels nor the paths of the Hebrew shepherds to Bethlehem. They were guided instead by the stars. With the strange scents of Babylon on their bodies, they entered the house provided for Mary and Joseph with exotic gifts for the Christ Child.

The Magi from Persia, like Persian mystics, sages and poets who followed them, such as Rumi, understood that the breath of the divine touched the primordial elements of life: Earth, Water, Fire, Wind. Many Christian mystics, poets and artists through the ages have likewise understood well how the metaphors and rituals of creative religion return us to our elemental passions: the waters of baptism are wet with the longings and losses of life.

Normative Anabaptism has resisted such a sacramental view of the universe and its liturgical performance, in favor of an emphasis on a separate, holy community funded by a word above, not upon, the waters. Baptism into a churchly community too often signals a separation from culture and even creation. Some Anabaptist thinkers have even explicitly stated that baptized, disciplined community or peoplehood is the only sacramental reality. Not earth, water, fire, or wind. Not body, breath, bread, or wine. In short, God inhabits ethics, not earth. This is one reason why ethics and aesthetics and church and creation have been pried apart in modern Anabaptist denominations and theologies. At its worst, Anabaptism is tempted to split nature and grace, and therefore body and soul, Christ and culture. I find Duane Friesen's work very satisfying in its his bold and catholic claim that because Spirit participates in the cosmos, not only in the church, "any particular material form can become for us a sacrament." This returns us to the wonder of sacramental universe through the reminder that God is revealed not only through the spiritual proclamation of the Word but also in the carnal, corporeal manifestation of the world, even by the waters of Babylon.

I would like to limit my remaining comments to three intersecting themes in Friesen's project: Shalom in Babylon, nature and grace, and ethics and aesthetics.

Shalom in Babylon. Unlike many traditional churchly theologies or newer expressions of communitarian theology, whether postmodern, postliberal or orthodox, Friesen's project is public; culture itself beyond ecclesiology is a theological category. There are indeed religious dimensions of art, literature, music, philosophy and politics. Friesen understands well that when the Jews were living in exile down by the waters of Babylon some of their prophets and priests insisted that it was necessary to return to Jerusalem to protect and practice holiness. Jeremiah said not to believe them. Instead, he urged them to build houses, plant gardens, take spouses, have children, and seek the shalom of the city. The peace of the city was to be found, at least for a season, in Babylon, not Jerusalem! This divine shalom and good work of *tikkun*--repairing the world--could not be pried apart from the worldly pleasures and problems of houses, gardens, lovers and babies in a strange land. Here, Jeremiah suggests, is the locus of God's revelation and peace, far from the holy mountain.

As a Babylonian rather than a communitarian, Constantinian or theocratic enterprise, theology becomes engaged with the plurality of cultures surrounding its faith community, attempting some critical and creative mediation or conversation--and at times even a correlation--between the Christian message and the cultural situation. Duane Friesen practices this model and expresses this mood in his good work. This is not a light, liberal accommodation to culture. It is rather a mutually critical engagement, a genuine conversation between church and society, recognizing that religion itself is a cultural system. There is no revelation that is not embodied in the historicity of religion. Friesen is a theologian who must worry some of his puritan Anabaptist colleagues. Why? I think because he understands something profound about the task of theological reflection that they would rather deny: *Christian theology began by asking Greek questions about a Hebrew narrative*. It is thus always about Christ *and* culture.

Nature and Grace. I appreciate the way Friesen enters into conversation with both classical and contemporary theology. Although many Anabaptist thinkers do not know what to do with the dance of church, creation and culture, Friesen's project is marked by the classical theological wisdom and hope captured well in the forgotten dictum of Thomas Aquinas: "Grace presupposes nature; it does not destroy it but completes it." In Friesen's theology of culture, grace does not swallow up nature nor does revelation eclipse religion nor does the category of the disciple cloak the materiality of the human.

Indeed, his understanding of the shalom of the city as a kind of "integration" is confirmed in some recent findings by anthropologists and phenomenologists of religion. My own work has recently drawn upon the exciting aesthetic and anthropological research of Ellen Dissanayake and Roy Rappaport. They explore the ideas of *Homo Aestheticus* and "art and grace." (See my "Even the Postmodern Body Has a Story Has a Body: A Theopoetic Meditation on Narrative, Poetry and Ritual," forthcoming in *Louvain Studies*). Both Dissanayake and Rappaport present a convincing case for the bio-historical origins and evolutionary interconnections of art, ritual and religion. They claim that art, ritual behavior and religion were central to human evolutionary adaptation and co-extensive with the invention of language and culture. The seeking out of a well-integrated life then, is as much of an "art" as it is an ethics. In fact, they argue that the aesthetic faculty is an organic psychological component of every human being. To ignore this is to diminish the gift of humanity.

Interestingly, Rappaport, when writing about the integration of life--the vision of some imperfect harmony in the universe in the midst of many conflicts and contradictions--suggests that such a way of seeing is dependent upon "art and grace." Rudolph Otto called this ultimate sense of integration "approaching the holy," but Rappaport, following William James and Gregory Bateson, calls it "grace." This is a truly artful and anthropological notion of grace in which grace does not eclipse or destroy nature. Instead, it completes it. However, it should be noted that this is not a vision of an easy coherence. It is not a sweet integration of the good, the true and the beautiful; rather, it is a recognition that light and darkness, day and night, sun and moon together make up a day.

Ethics and Aesthetics. Friesen knows that for life to be truly ethical it must likewise be graceful and artful. I personally salute and celebrate his attention to aesthetics. I too have been giving much thought to the interaction of ethics and aesthetics within the context of the Anabaptist-Pietist and broader Christian faith traditions. Thus, I am tempted to conclude my comments with a further expression of the hermeneutics of connection and compliment as a gesture of gratitude for Duane Friesen's constructive work. However, I am troubled by the haunting voice of that great yet terrible master of suspicion, Friedrich Nietzsche:

> For a philosopher to say, "the good and the beautiful
> are
> one," is infamy; if he goes on to add, "also the true,"
> one
> ought to thrash him. Truth is ugly.
> We possess *art* lest we *perish of the truth*.
> -- *The Will to Power*

There is something disruptive, de-centering and disorientating in Nietzsche's bold proclamation. There is something hard and harsh, true and ugly. It makes even the unapologetic aesthete uneasy about cultured correlations of the good, the beautiful and the true. Happily, Friesen is quick to admit that beauty does not always mean "pretty." In conversation with the work of sculptor Merrill Krabill, he acknowledges that aesthetic form might also express "brokenness, alienation, disharmony, feelings of loneliness, anger and anguish." The reality of a dark aesthetic is recognized. Yet the tone and texture of Friesen's sympathetic theoretical use of Aquinas on "integrity" and Wolterstorff on "coherence" will likely lead some contemporary Anabaptist critics to ask, "So is this a Catholic aesthetic, a Reformed aesthetic or an Anabaptist aesthetic that you are composing?" This is a fair question since he does claim to be at work on an Anabaptist theology of culture.

This question interests me less than the possibility of integrity and coherence in a comparative reading of the *Summa Theologica* and the *Martyrs Mirror*. It is not an easy read to move from the Thomistic system of "integrity, harmony and brightness" to the discordant and dark witnesses on the stage of that bloody theater of free church and dissenting church history. In fact, the suspicious critic must ask if there is not a disturbing correlation between a system or metaphysics guided by a desire for integrity/perfection, harmony and brightness and the purging or punishment of a dissonance or contrast that fails to cohere with the meta-aesthetic of the good, the beautiful and the true? Prophetic religion knows that often truth is ugly, and that the strong, alive and awake soul is marked more by mystery, plurality and ambiguity than by brightness and clarity. Art in this blessed fallen world conceals as much as it reveals.

I would like to see Friesen do more with this problem as his project develops. I too need to do more with this difficulty in my own work. This semester I am teaching a graduate seminar on "the aesthetic turn" in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's thought. The work of the later Bonhoeffer as a dissenting theologian is suggestive here. We are only now beginning to better understand how important Bonhoeffer's year in New York City was for the development of his final theology of resistance to European totalitarianism. New York taught him as much about aesthetics as ethics, indeed, an art of resistance. (See my "First We Take Manhattan, Then We Take Berlin," forthcoming in *Cross Currents*).

While in New York Bonhoeffer read many of the works of the Harlem Renaissance. He read and worked with James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man, The Souls of Black Folks* by W. E. B. DuBois, and the collected poetry of Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen. He spent the year teaching Sunday school and worshiping in Harlem at the senior Adam Clayton Powell's black Baptist Church. There he not only picked up the notions of "cheap and costly grace," which found their way into his most famous book, but he also learned and embraced a musical metaphor that was to later blend into theology and ethics.

As a classical pianist, it is likely that Bonhoeffer was already acquainted with the term "polyphony." Yet in Harlem within the context of the improvisation of jazz, the contingency of the blues and the rhythm of gospel music, the profound meaning of polyphony came alive for Bonhoeffer as an aesthetic reality and later even as a theological metaphor. A *polyphony* is not a neat harmony nor even a traditional symphony but rather a more complicated musical piece in which two or more very

different melodies come together in a satisfying way. To ears trained in the integrity, harmony and clarity of Wagner's symphonies, the new Negro art, literature and music of Harlem must have first seemed as disharmonious and disruptive as a Nietzschean prophetic aphorism. But it gradually came together for Bonhoeffer and helped form and inform his ethics of resistance to fascist totalitarianism.

I suppose I am suggesting that if there is in fact such a thing as an "Anabaptist aesthetics and theology of culture" it must tend more to the category of polyphony than to received notions of harmony, integrity, or even coherence in both church and society. In his final reflections on beauty in his prison letters, Bonhoeffer speaks of a beauty that is neither "classical" nor "demonic" but simply "earthly." Earthly, I like this because the story of creation returns us to infinite mystery beyond all finite morality. There can be no metanarrative or master-image to domesticate either the wildness of creation or the wonder of transcendence. We look for icons, not idols. In an "Anabaptist aesthetics," then, all elements and all elemental passions are at best icons or incomplete traces, not idols, dogmas or systems of beauty, goodness, truth and divine presence.

There can be no official "Christian art," for the waters of baptism flow from the vast waters of all creation. Like all elements of this large life, those waters are *mysterium tremendum*-- mysterious, fascinating and terrifying. Before creation knew word, it was water. Before religion became morality touched with emotion, it was emotion. We must struggle with the Thomistic truism relative to nature and grace in light of a more complicated coherence than Thomas and the tradition were ever willing to ponder--a polyphony--still trusting that grace presupposes nature; it does not destroy it but completes it.

In suggesting this am I implying that an Anabaptist aesthetics must distance itself from the integrity, brightness and clarity of the beloved four part harmony? Of course not! In this context yet another truism applies: We possess *art* lest we *perish of the truth*.

Response to Duane Friesen

Thomas Heilke

By the time we reach the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, we recognize that Abraham's desire for peace gave him the better choice. The lush plain has lured his nephew Lot nearly to destruction. The cities in that beautiful place are cesspools of hubris and corruption. The city, as Jacques Ellul reminded us in *The Meaning of the City*, is both a blessing and a temptation.

The temptation that is Sodom and Gomorrah is also the object of a prayer--from the hill overlooking the green expanse where the cities lie, Abraham bargains with the messengers from the Lord not to destroy them. The messengers accede to his request; the most tragic part of the story emerges when not even ten righteous people can be found in the cities on the plain and Abraham must accept the punishing judgment of the Lord.

In this story we see revealed the tension of shalom and judgment, beauty and ugliness, truth and lie, virtue and hubris that Duane Friesen explores from a fresh perspective. It is that tension which would induce one theologian to write a book entitled *For the Nations*, and his friend to write another, entitled *Against the Nations*. While Jeremiah sends a message from the God of Israel to pray for the shalom of Babylon, his prophetic colleague Daniel will years later pronounce a judgment from that same God; the king of the city has been weighed in the scales and found wanting. That night, the city is overthrown and subjected to the rule of a new king. About six centuries later, in the Apocalypse of John, Babylon is a "great whore," a symbol of evil, oppression and wantonness, a force of destruction against God's people. How to pray for her shalom?

The power of this fragment from Friesen's forthcoming book is not so much in his awareness of the tension between praying for peace and pronouncing judgment--that is a theme with which the spiritual descendants of the Radical Reformation are intimately acquainted--but with his clear awareness that such prayer and declaration encompass more than the social and political realms where they are most often spoken. Other human endeavors, including the arts, can faithfully participate in activities that are colored and warped by the culture in which they are located and which they themselves shape. Friesen calls such participation "culturally engaged pacifism," which is not merely a theoretical or hypothetical activity for him, but a life experienced. He is quite right to point out that we all "participate in the creation of aesthetic form," and that Christians must attend to the question of what faithful participation in this realm, and not only in strictly defined political or social matters, will look like. I suspect, in fact, that these various realms cannot be as easily separated as those who deny participation in culture, while they maintain a pacifist "witness" would assume.

Friesen's stated intent to develop a critique of cultural participation based on a theology of the Trinity carries considerable promise, as the last few pages of this present excerpt indicate. It remains our task as Christians to witness to unbelievers and even to fellowship with those whom we might consider "unclean," as Peter was taught to do, but without the resentment over God's grace and mercy even to our enemies that aggravated Jonah. If Friesen can present us with a coherent theological argument for such an enterprise in the aesthetic realm, for the Christian creation of "beauty or aesthetically excellent form," then that is all to the better. Since we all participate in such creation by virtue of our very existence, it behooves us not to do so willy-nilly, but thoughtfully. Clear thinking is what Mennonites, among others, have given the rest of us for so long in questions of political and social responsibility. One can only welcome Duane Friesen's seemingly solid effort to lead us toward the same radical reformation thoughtfulness in other realms of human endeavor. The excerpt that we have before us shows clearly how attention to aesthetics is integral to our overall Christian witness and Christian life. As for Abraham and Jeremiah, so for us, seeking the shalom of the cities and cultures in which we live includes critical attention to both beauty and squalor; and that includes not only moral squalor, but the equally oppressive and closely connected "sensory squalor" that so easily sneaks into our lives.

The Solidification of Nonresistance: Bluffton and World War, 1917-1945

Perry Bush

Several historians have noted how what became standard peace teaching among American Mennonites in the twentieth century became firmly nailed into place in the period between World Wars I and II. Certainly, conscientious objection toward war had been foundational to Anabaptist understandings for centuries. Yet there had been a paucity of literature on Mennonite peace theology in the thirty-five years preceding World War I, Paul Toews has noted, and when the war came Mennonites responded in a variety of ways to the challenges it presented. Partly because of their searing collective experience in the war, in the interwar era Mennonite leaders refocused and redefined their peace teaching in a manner that left fewer gray areas for individual Mennonites to navigate. While, in the World War II era and afterwards, individual Mennonites would continue to enlist in noncombatant service, buy war bonds or work in defense industries, they would do so under less ambiguous disapproval from their church.(1)

Toews and others have articulated such analyses broadly, largely divorced from any particular context. The Mennonite academic and church community of Bluffton College in northwest Ohio would seem an ideal place to examine the validity of this larger argument on a local level. From its very beginning, Bluffton had been founded and led by a zealous and talented group of progressive academics. These were scholars and church leaders like college presidents Noah Hirschy and Samuel Mosiman, academic dean (and former Goshen College president) Noah Byers, and Bluffton's star history professor C. Henry Smith. Educated at prestigious universities in the United States and Europe, altogether these were men who had tasted the heady brew of mainstream, progressive American culture and found it good. Much of their life's very mission would be to take simple Mennonite farmhands and transform them into cultured Christian citizens. Assimilation, such progressives argued, was not a process that Mennonites should fear or try to stave off with silly mechanisms like dress codes; instead, assimilation was a prospect Mennonites should welcome.(2)

If there was a collection of Mennonite educators anywhere who seemed ready to forsake Mennonite distinctives like the peace position, it would seem to be the scholars gathered in World War I era Bluffton. The fact that the Mennonite peace teaching both survived and was strengthened, both nationally and at Bluffton, speaks volumes both about its increasing importance in Mennonite life, and also something about the particular and changing nature of academic leadership in Bluffton. By comparing Bluffton in both the World War I and World War II era, such an analysis should be rendered quite clear.

Progressive Mennonites and the Great War

In 1917, as the United States embarked upon holy war against Germany, it correspondingly launched into a vicious and high strung offensive against anyone it deemed as dissenting from that effort at home. The postmaster general routinely banned from the mails any publication he judged threatening, and the Congress passed laws such as the Sedition Act which made unlawful any statement which might be construed as disloyal. A huge war propaganda machine kicked into high gear, and a spirit of intolerance came to take on a life of its own among the American people. Labor leaders and war dissenters were lynched and beaten, the teaching of German outlawed from the schools, and vigilante mobs of "patriots" whipped up a frenzy of fear and suspicion against anyone seen as detracting from "one hundred percent Americanism."(3)

As members of a Germanic-derived religious group whose theology rooted them in pacifism, Mennonites appeared as doubly suspect. Especially in the Mennonite communities in the great plains, where their Germanic culture had held on the longest, individual Mennonites who had attempted to remain faithful to their tradition by refusing to buy war bonds, for instance, were tarred and feathered or smeared with yellow paint. In Ohio and West Virginia, Mennonite leaders were tried and convicted under the Sedition Act. Two Mennonite churches, in Michigan and Oklahoma, were burned to the ground, as was the administration building at the Mennonite college in Tabor, Kansas.(4)

Altogether this new climate, which burst upon them like a sudden storm, left Mennonite leaders confused about how to advise their young men. Some of them counseled draftees to take up the position of noncombatant service, in which they would join the army but be assigned to a non-combat position like a medic or hospital orderly. Mennonites giving this advice tended to be more acculturated church leaders east of the Mississippi, particularly those with the General Conference Mennonite Church. This group included a number of Mennonite college professors and administrative leaders. Other church elders told the young men in the camps to retain Mennonite teaching and stay firm in their rejection of all military service and orders. Draftees who accepted this advice found themselves paying a high price for such stands of conscience. Isolated away in army camps, they were raked raw with brooms, beaten with fists and court-martialed to lengthy prison terms when they disobeyed directives from officers.(5)

A Mennonite college would clearly need to proceed carefully in such an incendiary environment. Because of its own declining sense of German ethnicity, Bluffton's peril was not as great as that of Mennonites on the great plains. The *College Record* had not been printed bilingually since 1910, and in 1917 former president Hirschy observed from afar with regret that the college "has largely lost its German life and tone."[(6)]

Bluffton students carry a flag in Armistice Day parade in Bluffton, 1918

Still, students and faculty knew they were being watched carefully. One day in April, 1918, for example, two secret service agents arrived at the college from Washington, demanding why it had "appointed a censor on patriotic news" in the student newspaper the *Witmarsum*. With Mosiman out of town, Smith, Byers and business manager John Thierstein managed to assuage their concerns, and afterwards called the paper's student editors in for some "very sane advice. The whole matter gave Dean Byers a text for the very best sermon I have heard in a long time," Langenwalter told the president.[(7)]

Byers was right to be nervous, for the specter of patriotic violence hovered not far away. The next month one of the newspapers in nearby Lima began to encourage mob violence against the pacifists at Bluffton. Vigilantes bypassed the college in June but visited three Mennonite churches in the county, placing American flags over their entrances and left notes warning congregants that their removal would be taken as a confirmation of their rumored "un-American sentiment."[(8)]

The college was able to entirely escape the dangers that threatened, however, because it mostly rung with enthusiasm for the war. To be sure, Mosiman defended traditional Mennonite pacifist principles where he thought they applied. He took pride in the fact that, by May, 1917 at least, no Bluffton College man, Mennonite or not, had enlisted for regular combatant service, and that two had enlisted instead with the Friends' war reconstruction unit heading for Belgium. The president affirmed the college would not give academic credit for army service. Because of his fear of the growth of militarism at home, he adamantly refused to consider the college's acceptance of a Students Army Training Corps unit on campus, despite evidence that it might attract students.[(9)]

On the other hand, believing his nation's effort "the cause of righteousness and justice," Mosiman threw himself and the college he led behind the war in every way short of contributing to actual combat, and sometimes did not draw the line at that. Immediately upon the president's declaration of war, he wrote his old friend, Ohio Governor James Cox, to offer his services and those of the college. "Believing it to be the duty of each citizen to bear his part of the burden of war and his share of the perils...assign me to any work that I can do," he begged. While suggesting in particular YMCA or Red Cross work, he also assured the governor that the Bluffton's student body stood ready "to do all that lies within their power to alleviate the sufferings of our soldiers and to inspire our young men in camp with high ideals, or to do any other work that they can do and to which you may call them."[(10)]

Bluffton students with newspapers reporting the armistice, 1918

No, he proclaimed, "we are not slackers"; like others in the struggle, the college would join the president's fight for a "Christianized democracy" with only a slight and qualified nod to Mennonite peace principles. To an ex-student in an Iowa army camp, Mosiman expressed his own particular pride that "the American boys have been giving a good account of themselves" in battle in France. Because he believed in some variant of his church as a peace church, Mosiman thought the best course for Mennonite young men was noncombatant work, and repeatedly told them so. "I have consistently urged our boys to be patriotic, and have told them that every citizen owed his country some service in war-time," he assured an assistant secretary of war in Washington.[(11)]

Mosiman had little patience with Mennonite draftees who did not fully cooperate with officers, and damned as "wicked and foolish" advice from Mennonite Church (MC) and Amish leaders encouraging noncooperation with military orders. He took pride that none of the Bluffton men had done this, urging them not to engage in "hairsplitting" over military commandments to don "the uniform and such things." He likewise extended this kind of advice to a wholesale embrace of noncombatant activities at home, enthusiastically backing the extensive Red Cross activities and war bond sales at the college.[(12)]

Properly inculcated into the progressive spirit that now waged total war as its ultimate reform, students naturally followed where their president led. In 1919 Mosiman estimated that about 150 BC students had served in the military in some capacity, along with five faculty members. Several of these technically served as YMCA personnel, but Mosiman could not have been under any illusions that this agency remained very separate from the regular army. Former athletic director Oliver Kratz bragged that they were drilled by army officers on board their ship to France, and were considered as non-commissioned army officers. May, 1919 found Byers in France, teaching psychology at an American Expeditionary Force university there; when the army had assumed the contract from the YMCA, Byers was happy to switch employers. Music Conservatory dean G. A. Lehman was enrolled in the regular army, along with chemistry professor Herbert Berky, who served his country doing munitions research for the chemical research section of the Picatimny Arsenal in Dover, NJ.[(13)]

Students greeted such activities with acclaim, particularly celebrating the exploits of Pvt. Edwin Stauffer, who had won the Croix de Guerre for gallantry in battle and returned home in March, 1919 to a heroes' welcome from his fellow students. Throughout the war the *Witmarsum* breathlessly reported on the adventures of former student Pvt. Clayton Welty, following his boot camp experiences in the United States, through his embarkation for France, his wounding in the battle of Belleau Wood and the combat death of his brother, to his slow convalescence in a Brooklyn hospital, still coughing up blood and the bits of uniform that German bullets had smashed into his lungs.[(14)]

Bluffton student Wilmer Shelly in uniform in front of College Hall

For its part the 1918 student yearbook, the *Ista*, published a drawing of the president with his slogan "the world must be made safe for democracy" printed underneath, and proclaimed "let us pray for peace but we cannot have peace until the 'God of War' is overcome...We are firm believers in pacifism but in order to attain immortality we must sacrifice." The women of Ropp Hall dormitory organized a Red Cross unit in the spring of 1917 and soon plunged into making thousands of bandages. That fall the students and faculty together raised over $1,000 towards the YMCA's war fund, and the glee club periodically traveled down to Chillicothe, Ohio to entertain the troops training at Camp Sherman. The Science Club found a lecture by the inventor of the "torpedo with ears" stimulating, and enjoyed hearing from Berky on his work making explosives.(15)

Throughout the 1920s, Mosiman and his faculty colleagues continued to solidify the college's peace commitments without blinking an eye. In 1922 they hosted a major conference of the three historic peace churches, and Mosiman's baccalaureate address that spring contained a ringing condemnation of warfare. The college joined the larger 1926 movement on college campuses protesting compulsory military training proposals, turning over the chapel pulpit to peace speakers and distributing pamphlets against this prospect. Mosiman even paid two visits to Henry Ford in an unsuccessful attempt to induce the automobile magnate to endow a professorship of peace for the college.(16)

This sudden peace advocacy in the 1920s can be read in several different ways. Mosiman and his colleagues clearly continued to reflect the analyses and agenda of a mainstream progressivism which had itself begun to express a profound disillusionment with war. At the same time, the apparent inconsistencies in the peace position of Bluffton College leaders also reflected the deep ambiguity and confusion about their church's participation in war-related activities expressed by a wide variety of Mennonites, from the top leadership down through the pews. In 1918, for example, no less a stalwart Mennonite thinker as the young Harold Bender--who would later spend much of his adult life as a dominant Mennonite peace leader--accepted a job making gas masks in a defense plant, and quietly determined to accept noncombatant work if called by the draft.(17)

Into the 1930s, however, partly because of these traumatic experiences in the war, Mennonite leaders like Bender, Smith and others began to sharpen their thinking about the extent of Mennonite participation in warfare. Bender and other MC peace activists like Guy F. Hershberger and Melvin Gingerich took a leading role in rethinking the peace commitments in their denomination. In 1935, these three leaders performed key roles at a landmark conference on War and Peace in Goshen, where Hershberger clearly anticipated the fundamental outlines of what would be the wartime alternative service program of World War II, the Civilian Public Service system. In 1937, Bender, Hershberger and Orie Miller pushed across a new MC peace statement which reinforced the Mennonite commitment to conscientious objection and condemned the former gray areas of participation in noncombatant service, war-related YMCA or Red Cross work, war bond purchases, or defense employment. For his part, Bluffton's Smith began to temper his progressivism, worrying instead about the rise of a new totalitarian warfare state which had begun to position itself as the focal point for all civilian loyalties.(18)

As the world once again darkened with war in the early 1940s, these same Mennonite leaders would discover that, while such teachings would not command universal obedience from the laity in the pews, they had at least clarified some of the grounds for ambiguity. Once again, Bluffton illustrated the contrasts.

Total War, the Home Front, and Bluffton College

In his baccalaureate address on the eve of World War II, Bluffton's new president signaled that this time, the college would have a different response to the coming world cataclysm. As a graduate with the class of 1924, Lloyd Ramseyer had cut his intellectual teeth on the enthusiastic progressivism of Mosiman, Byers and Smith. As a young high schooler during World War I, he had desperately wanted to join the heavy artillery, and only his father's need for his help on the farm had kept him home. His peace commitments had developed later, during the national disillusionment with warfare in the 1920s. Two years into his presidency, in June, 1940, he left no doubt about where he stood. He condemned war as "one of the greatest enemies of man. It is not Hitler, Mussolini or Stalin that is our chief foe; it is war itself." With the peacetime draft bill of 1940 obviously in mind, he cried that "we are in danger of letting a vast military machine control our lives and our resources."(19)

Such an emphasis surely must have affected individual students who had to make their own decisions about war and peace. In the fall of 1940, Ramseyer noted that even quite a few non-Mennonite students leaned towards pacifism. Yet a sense of duty to the national community pulled quite strongly in other directions. In a questionnaire distributed by the Peace Club in March, 1940, half the students indicated their willingness to serve if drafted.(20)

Less and less were these simple, abstract questions. When the coming storm finally broke, students, faculty and college leadership alike would have to choose from a variety of difficult choices that would send them in opposite and sometimes dangerous directions. It also promised a different kind of difficulty for the functioning of a college. In the dark summer of 1941, as the US lurched towards war, Don Smucker phrased the key issue quite clearly to Ramseyer, hoping that "the Army, Navy, Marines, CPS and plain ordinary cranky Mennonites do not get the college down."(21)

Two days after Pearl Harbor, Ramseyer realized that colleges "primarily interested in maintaining Christian principles" faced a difficult year. One critical fact is that their young men might be drafted at any time. In a special meeting early in 1942, the faculty voted to cancel all vacations and set commencement several weeks earlier. They also decided that seniors who were drafted before the term ended could take comprehensive exams that might substitute for their remaining classwork. And to seize the initiative and declare their own position, the faculty instituted two new courses entitled "Biblical Teaching on War and Peace" and "The Economics of War and Reconstruction." They also reaffirmed "the position of the Mennonite Church in relation to participation in armed conflict...as the belief and practice of the College."(22)

The most direct and inescapable impact of the war on the college came not in new classes or hurried graduations but in the more fundamental matter of enrollment. With no student deferments, colleges and universities across the country quickly saw most of their young men leave. Young women also deserted the colleges, lured by well-paying defense jobs. Already by April, 1942, Bluffton's student enrollment had fallen by 25%, and that was only the beginning. In March of 1944 Jacob Schultz informed the board that they could count 93 students taking classes. The next year the number dropped even lower, to 77 students, enrollment totals the college had not experienced since its very earliest days. Professors commonly addressed courses of 5-10 students, and individual classes could barely round up enough members to work up a loud cheer. The Class of 1944 had consisted of 67 freshmen in the fall of 1941, but by the time they became juniors their numbers had dwindled to sixteen full-time students.(23)

When the choice finally came, most of them opted for military service. Of the 167 men listed in the "Bluffton's Boys in Service" chart in the 1944 *Ista*, 38 of them, or about 22 percent, were in CPS. In the context of 1944, these were not surprising totals, not even for a college which had upwards of forty-five percent of its students listed as Mennonites. In fact, they indicated a higher CO percentage than did the college's constituent churches; the Middle District Conference sent only fifteen percent of its young men to the CPS camps.(24)

Back on campus, students reflected some real ambiguity in regards to Mennonite peace teaching at a moment when their nation embarked upon a course of total war. The *Witmarsum*, for example, continued to reflect the diversity of viewpoints that had characterized the campus before the war. Editor Margaret Berky signaled the nation's entrance into the war with a firm plea for gracious tolerance of diverging opinions, and certainly the campus responded in kind. The paper regularly published regular letters and guest articles from former students, whether they were like conscientious objector Don Gundy, who called the college to a steadfast adherence to peace principles, or Johnnie Leathers, who wrote from Navy boot camp to express his pride in his own service.(25)

At the same time, many students held fast to the peace and service commitments that continued to characterize the college. Student Senate organized a War Relief Committee, which threw itself into activities like blood donations, and collecting clothes and gauze for relief and first aid. With Ramseyer's warm approval, the Peace Club expanded its energies considerably to include providing assistance to the men in the conscientious objector labor camps, the Civilian Public Service (CPS) system, and bringing to campus national pacifist leaders such as A. J. Muste and J. Nevin Sayre.(26)

The peace-minded students were following the lead of their president, who created a very different model of the college's commitment to nonresistance in wartime than had its leadership in the earlier world conflict. This president did not promote war bond sales or join such campaigns. He turned down a request from the Navy to run an advertisement in the *Witmarsum*, and no war recruiting posters or slogans appeared in the *Ista*. In contrast to Mosiman's open advocacy of the noncombatant position twenty years before, Ramseyer refused to counsel young men about how they should respond to the draft. Instead, he pointed to the college's peace position and urged them to serve their country "in the manner in which your own conscience dictates."(27)

Still, when he heard word that a former student was considering transferring from CPS into the military, he penned a scarcely disguised attempt to dissuade him, and when three former students did transfer to noncombatant service, the president wrote to a CPS administrator wanting to know why.(28)

In a nation at total war, continued dedication to peace principles was a sometimes risky business. In the fall of 1942, despite signals of opposition from many people in town, the college admitted three Japanese-American students who had left internment camps. Even more hazardous was the decision by the Board of Trustees, prodded by the president, to deny the request of a local defense plant, the Triplett Corporation, who wanted to use empty campus buildings for its work. The decision alienated a powerful local leader who had previously been a generous contributor to the college.(29)

Meanwhile, the college consciously strengthened its ties with the CPS system. Some of its grads rose to key positions in CPS. Roy Wenger of the class of 1932, for instance, helped to found the "smoke-jumpers" program, CO firefighters who parachuted into hot spots. Art professor Klassen toured the camps extensively, giving demonstrations in wood carving and ceramics, while education prof Jacob Schultz and sociologist Irvin Bauman taught a number of courses to conscientious objectors (COs) at the Ypsilanti, Michigan unit. Home Economic professor Edna Ramseyer helped to create a women's equivalent of CPS, the "CO Girls," and also taught dietetics in a CPS camp in Virginia and at MCC's relief training program in Goshen. The president himself visited COs in Florida, returning home from one trip with a chameleon which he had caught himself. He turned it over to biology professor M'Della Moon, who lodged it in a glass cage in Science Hall.(30)

Quite soon Ramseyer realized the wealth of future faculty talent in the CPS camps, and began to focus his recruiting efforts accordingly. Equally important for the future vision of the college, he also grasped something of the impact that the war years


Lloyd Ramseyer, president of Bluffton College

would have on an entire generation of Mennonite young people. "We hope that out of this experience of college in the war years you would have received a new vision of service," Ramseyer told the graduating class of 1944. For if "your education has not made you more discerning of human needs, more concerned about them, and better prepared to meet them, then your education has failed its purpose."(31)

While remaining clear about his own pacifism, Ramseyer did his best to maintain cordial relationships with BC students who had entered military ranks. He readily wrote letters on behalf of their promotion to higher military rank, responding to the news of one that "it is always encouraging to hear of alumni who are making good." In return, numbers of such men sent small checks in support for the college, along with expressions of warmth for the president and for their alma mater. "My hat is off to you," Russell Fellers wrote Ramseyer, along with a ten dollar check, "because I think you are a man."(32)

Throughout the 1930s an increasing number of non-Mennonites had been coming to the college, and numbers of them wrote back to Ramseyer indicating that they had absorbed something of the college's mission, even as they bent themselves to the task of war. Former student Calvin Workman wrote Ramseyer from his air base in Virginia with sober thoughts about his job at hand. "The job I am preparing to do myself I do not believe in, so I can imagine how religious people would look upon it," he confessed. "Whenever you hear and read of the glory of the Air Corps, you can be assured that quite a number of those heroes (so called) flying in our bombers shall hate and be ashamed of that part of their lives, forever... I am just a small cog in the machinery that must deal out the destruction." Assigned to a bomber crew and stationed in England, Fellers penned Ramseyer between missions that "sometimes as I am flying over enemy territory and the flak is terrific and at the same time I'm trying to drop bombs, I think, 'how silly and childish the entire thing is.'" Ex-student Dale Francis said it more simply, telling the president that "next time I'll stand with the objectors."(33)

Such comments provide a telling indication of the kind of transformation in peace teaching that had swept through Bluffton and also, by extension, larger sections of the GC and MC Mennonite world in America in the first half of the twentieth century. To be sure, this transformation was best seen on the level of official church teaching. As Bluffton's and other Mennonite draft census numbers revealed, large numbers of lay Mennonites, young and old and in both groups, continued to decide on different courses in regards to war and peace than official church counsel preferred.(34) Nonetheless, the change in this official church teaching was still remarkable. In contrast to the ambiguity of Mennonite responses to World War I, to a great degree, the relative firmness of course illustrated by Lloyd Ramseyer twenty years later was indicative of the choices made by leaders across the church. There would be further adjustments to Mennonite peace theology in the latter half of the century, but by the end of World War II, at least, Mennonite leaders appeared to have mapped out some clear choices for the laity to accept or reject.

Notes

1. The most concise summary of the solidification of Mennonite peace teaching in the interwar era is Paul Toews, "The Long Weekend or the Short Week: Mennonite Peace Theology, 1925-1944," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 60 (Jan., 1986): 38-57. Also see Toews, *Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970: Modernity and the Persistence of Religious Community* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1996), 107-128; and James Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America, 1890-1930* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1989), 294-299.

2. On the progressive orientation and agenda of the college leadership at Bluffton, see Perry Bush, *Dancing with the Kobzar: Bluffton College and Mennonite Higher Education* (Telford, Pa: Pandora Press, forthcoming, May, 2000), 59-69. Much of the following analysis is drawn directly from this text.

3. David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), 45-92;

4. Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War*, 208-224; Gerlof Homan, *American Mennonites and the Great War* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1994), 57-86.

5. Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War*, 229-30, 234-40; Homan, *American Mennonites and the Great War*, 87-88, 99-128; James Juhnke, "Mennonites and Ambivalent Civil Religion in World War I," *MQR* 65 (April, 1991): 162.

6. Hirschy to Thierstein, Sept. 9, 1917, Hirschy Papers, I-A-a, Box 2, "photocopies of N.C. Hirschy," Bluffton College Archives (hereafter abbreviated BCA).

7. Langenwalter to Mosiman, April 20, 1918, Mosiman Papers, I-A-b, Box 8, "J. H. Langenwalter..." BCA.

8. Mosiman to Aaron Augsburger, May 14, 1918, Mosiman papers, Box 7, "Rev. Aaron Augsburger..." BCA; Homan, *American Mennonites and the Great War*, 71.

9. Mosiman to J. Bechtel, May 23, 1917, Mosiman Papers, I-A-b, Box 9, "Corresp., A.S. Bechtel, J. B. Bechtel..." BCA; Mosiman to P.H. Richert, March 23, 1918, Mosiman Papers, Box 12, "War Committee on Exemptions, 1917-19,"; Mosiman to V. Schlagel, Aug.10, 1918, Mosiman Papers, Box 11, "Mosiman personal corresp., 1913-31"; Mosiman to C.J. Claassen,

Sept. 13, 1918, Mosiman Papers, Box 1, "Claassen corresp.," BCA.

10. Mosiman to Claassen, June 22, 1918, Mosiman Correspondence, I-A-B, Box 1, "Claassen Corr." BCA; Mosiman to Cox, April 11, 1917, Mosiman Papers, Box 4, "Mosiman letters to Governor," BCA.

11. Mosiman to William Clegg, Nov. 2, 1917, Mosiman Papers, Box 12, "War, 1917-19," BCA; Mosiman to V.C. Ramseyer, July 25, 1918, Mosiman Papers, Box 2, "Misc, Ramseyer, Rickert..." BCA; Mosiman to F. P. Keppel, Aug. 13, 1918, Peace Papers Collection, I-X-a, Box 1, "Corr. to people in the Army," BCA.

12. Mosiman to J. W. Kliewer, April 15 and June 28, 1918, Mosiman to Mussleman, Oct. 22, 1917, all in Mosiman Papers, Box 12, "War Committee on Exemptions, 1917-19," BCA; Homan, *American Mennonites and the Great War*, 132-3, 87, 91-2.

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15. 1918 *Ista* pp.183, 189; *WIT* 4 (May-June, 1917): 24-5; *WIT* 5 (Dec. 8, 1917): 2; *WIT* 5 (Nov. 10 and 17, 1917): 4; *WIT* 5 (May 18, 1918): 2; *WIT* 6 (March 29, 1919): 3.

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17. Toews, "Long Weekend or Short Week," 42-43; Albert N. Keim, *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1998), 61-2.

18. Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 41-43, 55; Toews, "Long Weekend or the Short Week," 40, 48-49, 55.

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25. *WIT* 29 (Jan. 12, 1942): 2; *WIT* 29 (March 30, 1942): 3 and (Feb 23, 1942): 2.

26. Student Senate minutes dated Nov. 16, 1942, Ramseyer Papers, I-A-d, Box 10, no folder; 1943 *Ista*, 50; *WIT* 30 (Jan. 16, 1943): 1, and (April 19, 1943): 1942 *Ista*, 68.

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28. Ramseyer to Henry Fast, Jan. 11, 1943, Ramseyer Papers, Box 6, "Corr., 1938-46," BCA.

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32. See Ramseyer letters of recommendation for Mark Houshower, Ramseyer Papers, Box 11, "Kaufman, Edmund G," BCA; for Richard Backensto, Feb. 2, 1942, Box 4, "Letters, 1938-42"; Ramseyer to Myron Brown, Jan. 7, 1943, same file; Fellers to Ramseyer, June 28, 1944, Ramseyer Papers, Box 6, "Corr., 1938-42," BCA.

33. Calvin Workman to Ramseyer, Jan. 20, 1944, Dale Francis to Ramseyer, May 3, 1944, all in Ramseyer Papers, Box 6, "Corr., 1938-42," BCA.

34. See Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties*, 80-89, 97-105.

A Multimedia Colloquy with Keith Ratzlaff

Ami Regier

Keith Ratzlaff's poetry has received national attention since his book length manuscript, *Man Under a Pear Tree*, was selected by poet Robert Dana for the 1996 Anhinga Prize for Poetry. His second book of poems, *Across the Known World*, was published in the same year by Loess Hills Press. In addition to two previous chapbooks, Ratzlaff's poems have appeared in major poetry journals including *Poetry Northwest*, which awarded him its 1996 Theodore Roethke Prize. Originally from Henderson, Nebraska, Ratzlaff earned his B.A. degree from Bethel College, and his MFA from Indiana University. Now Associate Professor of English at Central College, in Pella, Iowa, he teaches writing courses and, he claims, bowls an average game of 144.

As the resonant titles of his two recent books suggest, his work offers a series of maps for varied geographies--the regionally defined landscape, the personal territories of memory and body, as well as the conceptually wide spaces of liberal-arts knowledge. Visual art becomes a kind of topographical map, layering the relations among all of these areas of inquiry in *Man Under a Pear Tree*, which draws its title from a painting by Paul Klee (1887-1940), and maintains an ongoing relation to Klee's paintings referentially throughout the book. However, the paintings do not appear in the book, with the exception of one image on the cover, Klee's "ach, aber ach!" *Mennonite Life* now offers readers the opportunity to enter these poems in *Man Under a Pear Tree* through several kinds of interpretive maps: by reading a recent interview with Keith Ratzlaff, listening to the poems read by the author, and examining images of Klee paintings which are relevant to the book.

Man Under a Pear Tree

Reading: wav file (15 MB)
Reading: mp3 file (616 KB)

August and pears falling.
It's as if I've gone
blind, as if my life has been.

As if I were a boxer pummeled
and pummeled
with soft, left-handed jabs.

There's a radio somewhere,
a parking lot,
a boy singing along

his voice like a great mallet
beating a car engine.
"Oh," they sing, the boy and the radio,

"oh and oh baby." It's as if
pears were breasts
if breasts were like that,

like rain on a day I remember
when the everywhere nature
of rain was on my face, in the trees,

in my hands outstretched.
As if I had
climbed the pear tree

with one part of my body and
shaken the limbs
for the delight of the rest of me.

One fall I climbed the ridge,
acorns dropping
in the oak leaves like gunfire --

but this is not like that.
Pears fall,
and what green is left

leaches quietly into the air
just before
they hit the ground.

Then yellow, then blush pulled
into the earth
like multiple lovers -- if pears

and the everywhere nature
of seed and fruit
can be imagined that way.

As if blindness were a cure
and delight
for the eyes; as if

the blind man hit
by lightning
in his own back yard

had his sight restored
as a curse.
I am not in danger.

Woman Flying

Reading: wav file (19 MB)
Reading: mp3 file (773 KB)

There's beer on the table
And the woman with red hair is thinking
What if the door opened
What if the roof blew off
What if the whole bar didn't have its arms in the air
    watching the playoffs
What if she broke into flames
The whole bar, its arms and fists in the air
    as if this were Fidelio and tragic
And wishing it could happen: flames, corolla, ash,
    and none of it her fault.

Someone else has been looking over her shoulder
    all day, mimicking her
The way pearls on a string mimic each other
The way a dancer's movements in one stopped moment
    finally rush up to be her and now
And she's thinking of apples
    the moment before the moment they hit the ground
Thinking of the old woman in the street

kneeling in the traffic, praying, her voice raised
Of a female house finch faking a broken wing
Of the woman in traffic with her eyes closed,
her green tam, the blue of her eyelids
Wishing then that God would simply lift her out
And thinking, this self at any one moment,
the man who survived being hit by lightning
seven times, who then committed suicide

And the glaze on the road going home
The picture her daughter drew of a house
some clouds, two ankles, two shoes
disappearing off the top of the page
It's a woman flying above our house, the girl had said
And thinking of the abstraction, the new stage
it signaled in her daughter's development
The five simple lines around the shoes that mean motion
and up and trailing away
And wishing it might be her, the woman flying
blessed for no reason with a great invisible gift

Q: Your poetry seems to me to hint at the meditative side of the Mennonite farmer, the "man under the pear tree," never pure farmer, always part thinker, ambivalently torn between his feelings of loss and his feelings of his own growth, his own ripening. Given the historical moment, I want to position him as a millennial figure in the text, along with another potentially millennial figure, who might also have a relation to the Mennonite past: the woman of the last poem, closing the text in flight out of and above the house. In these senses your poetry documents sadness while gesturing toward "a great invisible gift." The gift of change? Perhaps cultural change?

A: My first recollection of anything millennial was in the "end of days" context of conservative Mennonites I grew up with. One family in town, I think, had the entire history of the world on a chart, beginning to end. They didn't claim to know the exact date of Christ's return, but you got the impression they had a pretty good idea. I've always been jealous of--and alarmed by--that kind of certainty.

I shouldn't be proud of this, but my ambivalence often seems to find its real twin in Robert Frost's. Frost's speaker in "For Once, Then, Something" looks and looks into the well's depths but sees only reflection. Then the one time he thinks he sees "something white, uncertain" in the water it's so vague he's only left with a "something"--but something nonetheless.

If characters in the poems are "millennial" it's by the accidental context of the times. I think the last part of the 20th Century--the time I've been alive--has been lived under the gloom or promise (take your pick) of the millennial, but so has most of the last 1000 years. I do hope, though, there's at least a hint of my own sense of grace to both the characters you mention. For what it's worth, both the man under the pear tree and woman in the bar speak about their "something's"--their "gifts"--in the subjunctive, wishing for them rather than actually holding them in their hands.

Q: It is irresistible to ask you a millennial question related both to poetry and to*Mennonite Life*, since this interview will appear in the first issue of this newly online journal existing in the highly visual, spatial world of cyberspace. What is your take on the forms and needs of poetry at this historically interesting time?

A: It's obviously exciting and flattering to be translated into cyberspace (whatever or wherever that is). The lateral connections you can make with computers and the web are models for the kind of liberal arts mind we've preached in higher education since the Greeks. I hope these types of connections are reflected in the method of the poems in *Man Under A Pear Tree*, but you see this kind of thing in other poets, too, the need to include, to pile up what we know and try to unify it. I'm thinking here of poets like Jorie Graham or Gerald Stern, and also of Jeff Gundy's *Inquiries* and his latest work.

I read in the paper the other day that poetry is "hot," with some small poetry publishers even making money! Imagine. The truth is most major publishers--Oxford University Press only the latest--have suspended or canceled poetry publishing. For the most part, poetry has never had a wide readership. Imagine any poet at any moment in history who could draw even a fraction of the average National Basketball Association audience--15,000 people paying $50 a seat. Plus Cokes and hotdogs. The strength poetry has always had is intimate: the connection between the poem itself and the individual reader, no matter how the poem is delivered. The poems I love best are still the ones where I find my own voice meshing with that of the poet; those are the ones I read aloud to myself and my students.

As far as *Mennonite Life* and this inaugural issue, I don't know if what we're doing is really different in kind, even though it's surely more efficient, easier, faster. The danger as always--I'm going to go off on the usual rant here--is that we become passive, make a virtue of simply connecting things up without thinking through the connections. Maybe right here in the interview--at this point on the screen--there should be a place for the reader, viewer, web crawler (you ARE out there, right?)

to click if they'd like to read the poem aloud to someone else in the room or click if they'd like to copy the poem down with a pencil in their own hand writing in their journal.

Q: *Man Under a Pear Tree*, the title of this 1996 book, wraps this collection of poems in a highly structured, referential relation to the work of Paul Klee, most clearly to the 1921 painting by that title. An epigraph from his *Pedagogical Sketchbook* further opens this collection:

Revelation: that nothing that has a start can have infinity.
Consolation: a bit farther than customary!--than possible?

How did your interest in the visual experiments of Klee come to shape this book?

A. I'd been living in London, England for two years and I was going through what I thought of then as a crisis. I'd been forced to change the way I spoke to make myself understood to my English colleagues. The nasal short "a," for example, that is part of my Henderson heritage had to be swallowed, refocused into my throat; I had to use more air and talk more softly--not to sound British, but just to keep people from cringing. The American Midwest accent sounds to British ears, I think, much like the Australian one sounds to us.

In the same way, the poetic voice that I'd learned from American poets I admired--William Stafford, William Kloefkorn, James Wright, Richard Hugo, Robert Frost--seemed odd and flat and parochial and unrelated to the urban, international, theatrical, artistic world I found myself in. (Of course none of these poets are really flat and parochial but I thought so at the time.) I literally stopped writing. Then I saw an exhibition of Paul Klee's work. Immediately--I still have the notebooks from that day--I was struck with Klee's humor and playfulness, the endlessly inventive and serious use of materials, color, form, language, story. These seemed to point a way out of the narrative, regional box I had locked myself in.

Ah,

Reading: wav file (5.7 MB)
Reading: mp3 file (733 KB)

it was worse before.
Now I have learned
to open one eye,
now my hair has turned
into its own comb,
now my heart is
inseparable from my body.

It is all so much gravity
stacked at the end of a board;
it is all so much fulcrum
to have grown so light
that small and uncentered
things are my equals.
I have grown so light

snow could tip the scales.

Take the cover drawing of the book-"ach, aber ach!" The imagery in the first stanza can be seen in the picture: comb, hair, eyes, heart. But what interested me most was that little squib of black ink at the bottom left. Without that small touch, the huge head would topple over from its own weight. That balance, the pathos of that vulnerability, is the point of the picture for me, and the point of the poem. That was a completely new way for me to set up the tensions and voice of a poem.

In the section of the *Sketchbook* I took the epigraph from, Klee is lecturing about the form of the arrow in drawing, its strengths and limitations. Even with all its energy and movement and promise it can't overcome its built in inertia. And humans, of course, are like arrows: "Half winged -- half imprisoned, this is man!" he says.

The "revelation" is really no revelation--we know we are alterable, and that we die. But the "consolation" has two distinct emotions you can hear if you read it aloud--the dramatic exclamation we all make at one time or another, a bravado that says we will achieve something more--go "a bit farther than customary!" Sound and fury. And the softer, wishing question that implies the real and paradoxical revelation--that there's hope even if it's impossible to go "further than possible."

Paul Klee (1879-1940)
Athlete's Head
Watercolor, gouache and pencil on laid paper mounted on light cardboard, 1932.
Credit: The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1987.
(1987.455.20)

Athlete's Head

Reading: wav file (19 MB)
Reading: mp3 file (733 KB)

At the fairgrounds
a women *With the Body Of a Snake*
will speak to you for three bucks
and you pay it, even if it is only
an *Amazingly Real Illusion*. Poor body
disclaimed like that, poor head
for three crappy bucks. And
for three bucks more Tracy Steele,
the *Voluptuous Centerfold Model*,
decapitated in the car accident,
her body *Kept Alive! A Medical Marvel!*
will stand and walk around, the barker says,
and why not? What other purpose is there
than travel and glamour and the fair?

It's 1932. Paul Klee has left the Bauhaus
and is cooking veal and cauliflower
with grated cheese and butter in Düsseldorf.
"Such a meal stimulates me mentally," he wrote
his wife, Lily. "Afterwards I feel
especially healthy and not at all sleepy."
In Düsseldorf, in a portrait of an athlete,
it would take Klee only 4000 dots of paint
to separate the athlete's head
from the athlete's body -- and the brain
from the head as if it could be removed
and why not? Think of the woman
who plays Tracy Steele's body,
who jitters in her hospital gown as if galvanized,
whose body has been removed from her head
if only for *5 Big Shows A Day,*
someone who could pull back the little drape -- Ta-Da --

and reunite the body and the mind
and why have they been apart for so long?
But she doesn't, and she usually has Monday off.
What if she were to jog in the park,
anonymous like all the rest of us,
our bodies running by themselves,
silver stars falling,
no one's head doing much of anything --
thinking of recipes or dogs or
rerunning that hackneyed movie
in which the body is famous
and athletic and safe --
How Would We Know It Was Her?

Q: Focusing on the poem "Athlete's Head" in relation to the painting brings into focus a central theme running through the book: that the body is where we live and suffer, and yet its metaphoricity, its richness, its structures are intellectually--and hilariously, in this poem--elusive. Through subject matter ranging from pop-cultural fetishism, to cancer, to racial violence, the troubled treatment of suffering bodies and souls comes up over and over again in this book, from "The Body Pledges its Allegiance" to "Gospel," which features "the first day my body discovered / its real predicament / and sent my voice out for help."

How do you approach the body in your work?

A: Klee thought you didn't use your mind in sports and so didn't have much time for them. What would the Bauhaus football team have been called--the Fighting Functionalists? By the way, did you know that there's a college in California--Whittier College--whose athletic teams are nicknamed "The Poets"? Could you yell, "Smash 'em up, Poets," with any conviction?

Anyone who grows up in a farming community knows how vulnerable the body is: I think in national statistics farming is rated the most dangerous occupation--more so than mining or police work. I'm thinking here of my uncle who nearly lost his arm (and life) when he caught his sleeve in a power takeoff shaft. But any rural place would have its own stories. I didn't set out to write a book of poems about the body as the place we "live and suffer," as you say, but that's obviously the battleground of the poems in the first section. A cynic would say I wrote the poems because I had just turned 40 and needed to vent my anger at my first real back pain and first pair of bifocals. Maybe so.

Photo by Fred Nelson, 1994 Photo by Fred Nelson, 1994

Before I wrote "Athlete's Head," I'd just been to the Iowa State Fair and had seen sideshow signs for the Tracey Steele show. (A friend later actually saw the show and so my descriptions of it are second hand.) The body of the woman in the show is a different sort of body than in the rest of the poems, silly and American: A centerfold model reduced to just her body, her sex; the body then rescued by technology; then re-commodified in an even worse way than the original centerfold. The most honest (and best) part of the whole thing is that everyone knows it's a con.

Q: Your exposé of the visual con in this poem seems to me to be related to one of the poems in the collection that I find to be tremendously powerful. "Gladiolus" is such a loving poem, first giving an exposé of forms of racist historical violence perpetrated upon the black body, and then honoring the integrity of the body and the metaphoric resonances of all the Latinate words used to anatomize it. And, the poem is packed with visual images all the way through.

Gladiolus

Reading: wav file (16.6 MB)
Reading: mp3 file (675 KB)

There has never been a shortage
of places the body wanted not
to be: in the lifeboat,
at the awards dinner, under the tree
after falling, in the tree hanging,
in the box, in the box exhumed.

Or here in a photo on an inside page
of the Times: a skeleton
from the African Burial Ground, hands

folded across the now-collapsed chest.
A gesture, the Times says, meant
to help the spirit find Africa

again. And now scaphoid,
the wrist's bone boat, rides
in what was the heart's little harbor.
And cuneiform the wrist's wedge,
and semilunar the wrist's half moon
rises over the ocean. Remember

how often the torso was just bloody
cloth, the groin a red triangle,
the arms fired and set adrift.
That's over. Now fingers, wrist,
ribs, spine are mixed, all crossed,
all merely cups in the same cupboard.

But spirit you were right all along --
the journey is a map of the body.
Here in the backwash of the chest,
above the Inlet of the Pelvis,
north of the great and nameless
Os Innominatum, here at the sternum

you crossed your two lucky arms
at the middle bone called Gladiolus --
north of Ensifor, the false one,
south of the Manubrium -- Gladiolus,
also called the sword of the body,
once called the wild iris of Africa.

A. On the same day I'd clipped the photo the poem mentions from the *New York Times*, I was--for whatever reason--browsing a copy of *Gray's Anatomy*. I know some teacher of mine, somewhere, must have told me this, but I'd never realized that the Latin names of bones are metaphoric--except for the Os Innominatum (literally the bone with no name), because whoever was in charge of the skeleton that day couldn't come up with anything it looked like.

I thought it was poignant that those who buried this person must have crossed the body's arms in a secret sort of gesture that would let the spirit transcend geography. And my own map tries to use the history of the word "Gladiolus" itself as a way "home."

Q: Your snapshots from sideshow advertisement really are evidence of how important the role of the visual world (and visual blight) is in your work. The technical term for a book of poetry interacting so deeply with visual art is ekphrasis: as Grant F. Scott suggests, "it is the genre specially designed to describe works of art, to translate the arrested visual image into the fluid movement of words" (xi). Scott derives his terms from the *Laocoön*, which famously presents visual art as a static representation of subject matter in spatial terms, and verbal art as the unstopped, temporal, always fluid medium. As we gaze at the ekphrastic poems in this book, listen to them, and gaze at the paintings from which they come, how would you position your work in relation to this art-historical problem?

A: I suppose Keats' urn is the great ekphrastic symbol in English literature--the static moment held forever where love is never consummated, but also never dies. And the urn may well be a "friend to man" and "beauty may well be truth and truth, beauty" but it's also a "cold pastoral." Keats couldn't have known that his poem may well outlast the urn, but I'll bet he hoped it would. Those last two famous lines have always seemed to me less about the pottery and more about the poem itself.

I tried to use the Klee paintings more as starting points for language, the way any poet might use trees or sunsets or the beloved or children. If they work, there ought to be a kind of symbiosis, but it's almost impossible for me to judge that. Do the poems need the paintings? I hope not. I don't think so. But I do hope--for my sake and *Mennonite Life's* cyberstatus--there's a little shock of recognition, a broadening of context for both when they're seen together.

Q. Scott describes a sort of "Medusa" model when things don't even out--the weight of the art stuns the viewer or the poems themselves, and sort of kills them off. I like to think that the language of poetry, with its leaps and its open, multiple references, prevents the paintings from becoming too weighty or powerful.

A. I never wanted the poems to merely "illustrate" the paintings. That leads to Scott's real problem--that the art simply outweighs the poem, becomes the sole reason for the poem's existence. What fun could that possibly be for a writer or reader? That the plastic arts--and music and dance, too--are more immediate is a given. But poetry has, in addition to the "fluid" attributes you mention, the advantage of being spatial, aural, oral--even tactile in the weight of a book, the texture of the page--so I think things even out.

Paul Klee (1879-1940)
Rough-Cut Head
Black ink wash and pencil on wove paper mounted on light cardboard, 1935.
Credit: The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1984.
(1984.315.55)

Rough-Cut Head

Reading: wav file (17.3 MB)
Reading: mp3 file (704 KB)

When the woman in the purple trousers
on the bicycle -- now at the corner
now up the street now by the sign
now by the tree -- turned the corner,
I thought of her in the dual wind:
the cold one from the west today --
and the other wind beginning with her,
spreading out behind her like geese.
I thought about her flying hair
and the cowl of her skin
and her forehead
defined and reddened by the wind,
of her lips defined and burnished
by the wind. And how even on a bicycle,
how easily we breathe and how easily
our wondrous heads are invaded by the wind.

How open and hollow are the mouth's courtyards,
or the sinuses, or the hallways of the ear.
How vulnerable. How much of us is absence
like drawers, or pictures of absence --
the sky in photos of clouds at night,
the outline of a breast in an x-ray
taken before the mastectomy.
How easy it is to find a place in the skull
for the chisel, or the gun, or the wind
and its glitter. We are alterable.

I know a plastic surgeon who put the gun
in his mouth, fired, and lived.
Think of the echo. The brain in its great hall
banqueting, then besieged. And the joy of impact --
the eyes unbolted, shifting, siting new stars
in the new red sky, the jaw turned to grit
and glitter the wind would fling at us later.
He was depressed for reasons he couldn't name.
In woodshop he has made a letter holder
covered in curious purple spangles.

Q: When I showed a slide of the painting "Rough-Cut Head" to the poetry workshop class, while interpreting the poem, students commented on the seeming fortress-like monumentality of the head in the Klee painting. They were fascinated with the poem's reshaping of the head into a structure with vulnerable spaces: "How open and hollow are the mouth's

courtyard's, / or the sinuses, or the hallways of the ear. / How vulnerable. How much of us is absence." For me, the translation of the spondees "rough-cut" from hewn to abstractly drawn and therefore transmutable can be a great thesis of this book (despite your earlier note that such knowledge is not necessarily a revelation): "We are alterable," the poem asserts, capable again of producing our own desire for death, even for great devastation, and then of recasting it again as a desire for growth.

In the class, we were all fascinated with the story of the cosmetic surgeon who would know better than anyone else the structure of the head, and who thus would feel its devastation, and its survival so very strongly.

A. When I looked out the window one morning, my neighbor across the street was riding her bike, wearing really brilliant magenta slacks that made her the brightest thing in the neighborhood. My eye simply had to follow her. Klee's painting was on my desk and the rough, faceted head became a way for me to link that small initial meditation with the story of the "sculpting" done by a plastic surgeon who was on the ward when I worked at Prairie View Mental Health Center in Newton, Kansas. The "head" of the painting becomes a theme I can play variations on. Except for the title, there's really not much of the painting in the poem, but that title is crucial. Like most of the people who are "altered" in the book, the plastic surgeon's message--his art, I guess--of "spangles" at the end is enigmatic to the speaker of the poem.

Paul Klee (1879-1940)
Winter Journey
Watercolor and transferred printing ink on laid paper bordered with black ink mounted on light cardboard, 1921.
Credit: The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1984.
(1984.208.5)

Winterreise

Reading: wav file (29.5 MB)
Reading: mp3 file (1.17 MB)

This is the boy next door discovering
what he wants his voice to do --
that his lungs in the cold
and throat and teeth and tongue
can mirror alarm if he likes.
He fakes a bicycle crash on the ice,
jumps up, and yodels his imitation of a siren.

This is the red folder blown open in winter.
This is the street under a window.
Inside Schubert is at the piano,
singing *Die Winterreise* for the first time
to friends: "Never again will the leaves
be green at the window. Never again
will I hold my love in my arms."
And they hate it.

This is Paul Klee's *Winterreise*,
a portrait of the artist one-eyed,
caped and hooded at his mother's grave.
This is Klee's mother on the way to his studio.
This is Schubert in the November marigolds.
This is the boy outside my window
making the journey again and again
down his driveway, pedaling hard on the ice,
staging his accidental death,
rising and singing like an ambulance.

This is the white fog changing to yellow.
This is Klee's mother after tea in his studio.
This is Schubert dying of syphilis.
This is Schubert singing to the crows:
"Krähe, crow, even if you want to leave me
don't leave me. Don't leave me."

This is Ida Klee walking into Klee's studio
after tea on the day she died.
Klee was in his chair, asleep.
Evergreens were on the horizon.

This is Ida Klee released from paralysis,
This is her ghost walking the studio
after tea, after she had died,
winking at her son as if it mattered --
that kind of message from the dead --
winking at Klee, who was not surprised,
who for the rest of his life took it seriously.

This is the folder blown open in winter.
A week later Johann Vogel sang
Die Winterreise to Schubert's friends
and they listened
and loved it this time.
This is Vogel's baritone in the marigolds,
the wondrous conduit of his throat
and mouth, diaphragm, teeth and lungs.
These are the crows who throw snow
at Schubert's scorned lover
from every roof of every house in town.

There are accidents of the flesh;
there are the unbalanced lovers
we have been and still are.
Yesterday the twist of sunlight in a room
filled me with longing.

This is me putting on my coat,
walking downtown to sing
Christmas carols in the open square.
This is Klee painting himself from memory.
This is the boy who has been dying all day
hoarse and unrescued, going in to supper.
I've driven by the same woman's house
for 20 years remembering she kissed me.
This is me in the December marigolds.
These are her father's fields blown full of snow.

Q: In the poem "Winterreise," I want to see the boy who "fakes a bicycle crash" and then imitates the sounds of an ambulance as a cycle of play all day, and finally goes in "hoarse and unrescued" as a millennial figure also--seeking solace in sound, singing in the winter of our many discontents, knowing song is not redemption, but that it is one important way of seeking love, and of responding to the partial, incomplete loves we experience in families, through deaths, through winters. Is there a relationship to the Schubert song cycle by this name?

A: The method is again theme and variation, to try to literally keep four stories in the air at once, like a juggler. I knew Schubert's song cycle, but when a commentator suggested that Klee might have taken his title from Schubert, the connection seemed somehow right even though there's nothing in the painting other than the title that would lead you to the music. As with most of the Klee poems, it was only by linking up the two other "real" stories--the kid outside my study window and an autobiographical bit about a girl I loved in high school--that the poem became satisfying for me. I've fragmented the story lines to "disrupt" the narratives, but I never wanted to lose any of the threads. Instead I wanted to cement the connections in a sort of democratic form that the anaphora of "This is" tries to underline.

Group Portrait with Ukuleles

Reading: wav file (15.7 MB)
Reading: mp3 file (640 KB)

Once I was a boy
in a classroom
of boys learning to play

the ukulele. In the end, even
the stumpfingered
learned three chords:

G, C, D7. Our big felt picks,
our whiny
little strings. We were a part

of the American Folksong
Revival
inspite of ourselves,

in spite of our penises
and voices
rising and falling like elevators.

Imagine us, our 25 faces
still forming,
heads slightly out of round,

singing "I Gave My Love
A Cherry,"
or "Big Rock Candy Mountain."

There was the recital
we never gave
because, to tell the truth,

we weren't very good.
One boy is dead
now, three are welders,

two joined the Navy, one
sells used cars,
half a dozen are farmers,

one has been convicted
of exporting
Nazi literature to Germany.

I don't remember any of us
as mortal
or talented or cruel.

All we ever learned was that
chord progression,
knowable and sequential --

beautiful as gears shifting --
something useful
and at the bottom of all

the music we imagined we

could care about.
We knew who Mozart was

but there wasn't any Mozart
for the ukulele.
That would have been wrong

and we knew it -- some of us.
Or none
of us. Either way.

Almost no one will remember this, but I started out as a music major at Bethel. I quit because--like the guys in the Ukuleles poem--I wasn't very good and hated to practice. So I like the idea that music isn't redemption but solace.

Paul Klee (1879-1940)
Angel Applicant
Black ink, gouache, and pencil on wove paper, 1939.
Credit: The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1984.
(1984.315.60)

Angel Applicant

Reading: wav file (25.4 MB)
Reading: mp3 file (1.01 KB)

Because Paul Klee has stopped playing the violin
I am lifting my arms to heaven
Because in Switzerland you are nothing without wings
I am applying in place of Paul Klee, who lives in Switzerland
Once I applied in place of Mondrian
Because three is two put in motion
Because it is harder to apply in place of myself
Because obviously I was turned down
Once I applied as a man hanged in a barn behind a house
    Cezanne painted in Auvers
I am not immortal enough
If I were given the chance to remake the world I would defer
If I were on a third floor balcony I would test the railings
The barn behind the house with the blue door
I am not sure photography is an art
Because Klee has stopped cooking, too
Where else would I go
From the hayloft there was a grand view of the green
    Provence hills
The dry rope and the dry esophagus
Above my head starlings were in the rafters
There was the moon
I do not think irony has a place here
Van Gogh painted the same house -- but not with such
    fervor
Because not everything is up to me
Not like Cezanne
Who signed his paintings with a little gallows for years he
    was so pleased
The rope and the twisted nature of the cedar
Pisarro and Cezanne in the clear Provence air. Their pallets
    slowly brightening
Because he cannot swallow solid food
Red for Pisarro, blue for Cezanne
Because Klee has given me three arms to raise
Because I will have to apply next as a woman in a late Picasso

etching
And nobody wants that
Three arms
The moon above me
I had always been told birds living in your eaves were a sign of
good luck
But I don't know why
Because in the Talmud, a man turns into a worm but I am not
Where I am the ground is mottled; the room is small and the
flat has sheets hanging in the hallway
And my legs are vague
And because the moon
Who dies in photographs? At what moment?
If I thought there were a chance
Because the moon
Is pulling my head up into the first prong of a crown

Q: In the poem "Angel Applicant," I love the idea of an artist being an applicant to be an angel--and I also love the idea of any of us, out there struggling with meaning in our lives, being such an applicant! Certainly the recent spate of angel movies resonates with the image of angel applicants as well.

Yet this is the most discontinuous of the poems, and perhaps the most disturbing of the paintings. The narrator in the poem, when applying to be an applicant in person, "obviously was turned down" in the beginning. By the end of the poem, the moon appears to pull the arms of the pictured applicant toward itself, as if by gravitational, lunar pull, like the pull of the moon on the tide, or upon female physical cycles. Is there a nature theology connected to the system of art perceptions pictured here?

A: Klee knew he was dying from scleroderma (a disease where the connective tissues of the body thicken and harden) when he painted this in 1939--and he painted or drew 50 angels in the last two years of his life. It's hard not to see this late one as a kind of self-portrait; Klee's angels always seem to be caught in transit--half in heaven and half on earth, unable or unwilling to make the leap. The speaker of the poem--the applicant--isn't really interested in saving Paul Klee, but in getting into heaven any way he can. The semi-tragedy is that he can't seem to find the right modernist art persona that the immigration folks in heaven will accept. By the end he'd even try applying as a "real" person in a photograph. This angel is certainly one of Klee's ugliest. That the "applicant" seems to have begun the transformation into angel at the end in spite of his ugliness wasn't meant as anything more than a small bow to the idea of grace--and perhaps my joking way to elevate Klee above other modernists who can't seem to get their subjects into heaven.

The moon is just the moon.

Q: Yes, I grant that perhaps the flailing critic will just have to live on the real earth! I do think your comment on a "small bow to the idea of grace" is all the more important for the modernist context, which, as you suggest, tended to limit or critique gestures toward transcendence. Along these lines, you commented earlier that the body is the ground, even a battleground, for one section of the book, and the last section of the book seems populated by a number of angels, restless and middle-aged, speaking to "God, who was once behind the door," as in "Fitful Angel." What kinds of ideas and images ground or shape the second and third sections of the book?

A: The structure of the book was just a matter of corralling poems with similar interests. In the first section I meant to treat the body in general--I wish there were a better metaphor than "battleground," but that's the idea. The second section I saw as more narrative, more connected to the actual "me" (whoever that is), more related to, as Johnny Carson used to say, "my boyhood on the plains of Nebraska." I wanted the general arc of the last section to go up, to lean toward the redemptive if not actually get there.

Q: Your invocation of Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook* in the epigraph of your book suggests a theoretical line of thinking. Klee's theories suggest that the act of looking/interpreting is an act of constructing the object as well as simply perceiving it; all acts of perception involve editing or other actions. No act of perception is purely passive and innocent. Yet, the *Pedagogical Sketchbook* emphasizes in bold print, "The eye travels along the paths cut out for it in the work." Would you like to comment on the relation of your poetry to contemporary literary theory?

A: No. Or instead, let me use the *Pedagogical Sketchbook* examples to try and answer. The Klee of the first quote is the teacher intent on helping his drawing students understand how readers/viewers make meaning or "continuity" as he says later. "Meaning" is the joy that readers, viewers, listeners have made since the first story was told, or the first picture was scratched onto a cave wall, or the first song was sung. That it took until the 20th century for theory to catch up to this notion tells you something about theory. But it's a good thing we've finally recognized the basic truth: Readers will own poems they

love and will interpret them, connect them to their own life stories, bend them to individual human need, will "love" them. We talk about art (and sports and politics) in these subjective terms all the time.

But no poet I know writes to make meaning, at least not initially. I write to make things, to control the world in some modest way. One thing many of my beginning literature students seem to believe is that poets are intentionally obscure. When students are really paranoid, they seem to believe poets mean for them *personally* to feel stupid. But that confuses the reader's problems with the writer's. I don't know any poet who is willfully obscure. When I'm in the act of writing a poem--and during that first ur-reading writers do--I'm convinced there's only one meaning for the poem and that the meaning is clear. Content isn't the issue, style is. Thus Klee's emphasis--always in the *Sketchbook*--is on the how. Criticism and theory, interpretive acts that rightfully belong to the reader, come later, hopefully traveling along at least some of the paths the work has cut out for it. When it works right, the poet and reader walk the path together.

Bonus (more poetry readings):

Forgetful Angel (wav) (12.5 MB)
Forgetful Angel (mp3) (512 KB)

Gospel (wav) (14.6 MB)
Gospel (mp3) (595 KB)

My Students Against the Cemetery Pines (wav) (25.5 MB)
My Students Against the Cemetery Pines (mp3) (1 MB)

Surgeon (peeling an orange) (wav) (14.2 MB)
Surgeon (peeling an orange) (mp3) (578 KB)

The Body Pledges Its Allegiance (wav) (15.6 MB)
The Body Pledges Its Allegiance (mp3) (637 KB)

Mennonite Studies in Canada: The Digital Environment

Richard D. Thiessen

Introduction

The advent of the so-called information age and the increasing popularity of the Internet and the World Wide Web in particular have had a significant impact on the discipline of Mennonite studies in Canada. While members of the Mennonite academic community have been involved in some of these efforts, it is quite apparent that many others have been able to take advantage of the digital environment in which we live to foster growth in the discipline. Thus, the interests of a wide variety of people are now being served by various Mennonite Internet sites, and in a sense the Internet has levelled the playing field for all interested in Mennonite studies. Three examples of Mennonite studies activities in a digital environment in Canada are the *Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, the web sites of a number of the provincial Mennonite historical societies, and the web sites of some of the Mennonite archival centers.

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada / Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (CMEO)

First, one of the most promising Mennonite web sites is that administered by theMennonite Historical Society of Canada. The web site, which features the *Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (*CMEO*), has its origins in the *Mennonites in Canada* series of three volumes, of which the first two were written by Frank H. Epp and published in 1974 and 1982. While conducting research for volume two of the series, Epp decided to create a Canadian Mennonite congregational database of approximately 1,000 congregations, which his daughter Marlene Epp entered into digital form. After the completion of volume two, the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada decided to make this database available to the larger general public.

The database was printed out and distributed to several Mennonite archives in Canada. However, the dream of several individuals in the society was to make the database available in some sort of digital format. In the 1980s the most obvious choice was as a database that could be housed on a computer hard drive, or as a CD-ROM database. These options were explored for a time, but nothing really came of these discussions. Near the end of the 1980s, individuals in the society such as Sam Steiner of Conrad Grebel Library and Archives, Ken Reddig, who at that time was the archivist at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, and Bert Friesen of Winnipeg, who had worked on several electronic indexes of Mennonite publications, were appointed to the Database Committee of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. This committee continued to look at ways in which the society's database could be made more readily available to the general public.

The committee's goal was finally realized with the advent of the Internet and the explosion in its popularity. Under the leadership of Sam Steiner, the database was mounted on the University of Waterloo Library's Internet server and thus made publicly accessible. Once this initial step was taken, the vision broadened to that of an online encyclopedia. As a result, the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada formed a committee to focus specifically on the augmentation of Frank Epp's original database and the creation of original articles focussing on various aspects of Mennonite history in Canada. At a meeting of the committee in Winnipeg in 1997 it was agreed that articles of the five volume Mennonite Encyclopedia which contained Canadian content should be incorporated into the web site. Permission was obtained from the Institute of Mennonite Studies (Elkhart, Ind.) and Mennonite Publishing House (Scottdale, Pa.) in 1998 and work began on mounting hundreds of articles on Canadian Mennonite life onto the web site. Much of this work was made possible through a grant received from Industry Canada, a federal government ministry, through its SchoolNet project.

Throughout 1999 a subcommittee of the committee centered in Winnipeg began to commission original articles, focussing on Mennonite educational institutions. By the late fall of 1999, a number of these articles were approved for inclusion in the *CMEO*. As of February 1, 2000, the online encyclopedia included around 2,025 articles.

The development of the *Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* is consistent with a general trend in society to place less of an emphasis on print encyclopedias and other types of reference works and more of an emphasis on digital and online encyclopedias. The high production cost of encyclopedias and the relatively low demand for subject specific reference works dictates the move to digital or online-only versions of these items. Other factors which have led to the growth in the number of digital and online encyclopedias include the demand for up-to-date information that is quickly and easily accessible, and the expectation that keyword and boolean assisted searches will be available to the user.

The positive benefits to the reader of an online encyclopedia like *CMEO* are numerous, but embarking on this type of venture demands much from those who create and maintain this type of reference work. The demand for up-to-date content means constant revision of the articles, the soliciting and writing of new articles, and continual editing of the web site, and the demand for advanced search options requires a fairly sophisticated level of web site management. All of this of course takes time and money, especially when the *CMEO* is freely available over the Internet and not a revenue generating enterprise. This issue has forced the *CMEO* committee to discuss ways in which the web site can generate some revenue to

offset expenditures without creating a fiscal barrier to the end-users. The hope is that this could be accomplished through advertising and sponsorship from the larger Mennonite community.

Provincial Mennonite Historical Societies

A second level of activity by Mennonites on the Internet is that of provincial historical societies. The first society to mount its own web site was the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society (MMHS) in 1995. Richard D. Thiessen, chairman of the Membership and Publicity Committee for the society at the time, decided that a presence on the web by the society would allow it to make a number of research projects available to the wider public at a relatively low cost, while giving the society a higher profile. Items of interest to those researching Mennonite genealogy have tended to form the bulk of the articles placed on the web site, although the society's newsletter articles have also found their way onto the site.

Some of the first articles placed on the MMHS web site include a composite index of early Manitoba Mennonite church registers, of which the most recent version includes names from the Bergthal, Chortitzer, Reinlaender, Sommerfelder and Kleine Gemeinde church registers. Researcher Adalbert Goertz of the U.S.A., who specializes in the history of Mennonites in Prussia, has submitted several dozen articles that he has written which focus on transcriptions of church registers, immigration lists, census lists and court records. Other items include indexes to Russian census lists, church registers and school attendance lists, as well as items relating to Mennonite history in Latin America.

The Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan has chosen to focus its web site on a cemetery transcription project. Their goal is to create a database which will eventually contain the names and burial details of 7,000 Mennonite interments. The Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta features an index of hundreds of names submitted by society members related to their genealogical research. The Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia features a detailed inventory of their holdings along with a list of family histories held in their genealogical library.

In the case of the provincial historical societies, it is apparent that amateur Mennonite historians have been able to use the Internet to publish items that would otherwise not be available to the general public. Scholars in the discipline of Mennonite studies, and the journals they publish, tend to focus on the political, economic and social forces that have impacted the Mennonite church. Scholarly journals have focussed on the recorded history of the Mennonite church, and the impact of government and society on Mennonite life. Amateur historians working on genealogies and family histories are interested in these kinds of articles, but they are also looking for other types of sources of information, sources to which they have had a hard time obtaining access. Today's Mennonite provincial historical society web sites have started to meet this need.

For example, researcher Adalbert Goertz has carried out extensive research and writing on the history of Prussian Mennonites, focussing on items of great interest to anyone researching Mennonite genealogy in Prussia. While some of Goertz's genealogy articles have been recently published in periodicals like *Mennonite Family History*, most articles were written for relatively obscure genealogical journals published in Germany. However, through the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Mennonite Genealogical Resources web site a number of Goertz's articles are now available to the general public. Goertz has also compiled a number of indexes of Prussian Mennonite church registers not published elsewhere that are also available on the web site. Others like Glenn Penner, Bert Friesen and Richard Thiessen have also compiled lists or indexes of interest to Mennonite genealogists that are available on the web site. These items, like Goertz's, have a very limited audience and the cost to publish in print form is prohibitive. However, the costs in making these documents available on a web site are low, and the audience is broader, since individuals from around the world can access them through the Internet.

The Mennonite Archival Community

A third level of Mennonite studies activity on the Internet is that of the various Mennonite archival centers in the country. The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (Winnipeg) web site focuses both on the various services they provide as well as the beginnings of a detailed guide to their archival holdings. For example, the guide contains an inventory of the centre's personal papers collection, complete with biographical data on the individual along with detailed information on the files contained in the collection. The site also features a detailed inventory of the congregational records of several provincial Mennonite Brethren conferences, along with a short history on each congregation.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre archives of the Mennonite Church Canada, also focuses on the various services they provide as well as a general guide to their archival holdings. A recent addition to the site is the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization Index to the Registration forms for immigrants, 1923-1930. The site also contains a bibliography of Anabaptist-Mennonite works held in their historical library.

In the case of the two Winnipeg-based archives, their web sites serve several purposes. First, they identify and describe the services available to the church constituency and to the larger general public. Second, they attempt to describe in some detail the holdings of the collections, both in terms of archival as well as library holdings.

Conclusion

In summary, Mennonite studies and the Internet are alive and well in Canada. Efforts by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada through the *Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, the four western Mennonite provincial historical societies, and the Winnipeg, Manitoba-based Mennonite archival centers have increased the amount and the types of information available to those interested in Mennonite studies. The digital environment has helped the amateur Mennonite historian in particular to obtain information that would otherwise be almost inaccessible to the general public, and the future looks promising as access to the Internet increases and more people use the Internet to disseminate their research.

Researching Mennonite-related Topics on the Internet: A Perspective from the United States

Tim Janzen

If you have had Internet access for very long you are probably aware that the amount of information available online via the Internet has been increasing exponentially, particularly in the past 5 years. The astounding growth of the Internet has been transforming the way we engage in research and exchange information. This online revolution has made it possible to click on a mouse and quickly gain access to enormous amounts of information that had previously been only available to those able to travel to the archives and libraries that held that information. Those of us actively involved in various areas of research in Mennonite studies have been increasingly using the Internet to access information that hitherto had been difficult to obtain. I have personally approached this primarily from a Mennonite genealogical research perspective, but scholars involved in research on a wide variety of Mennonite-related topics will find information on the Internet that will be useful to them. In this article I will outline some of the more useful web sites and other resources available to Mennonites interested in pursuing research through the Internet.

Many Mennonite archives now have web sites on the Internet. Researchers will find these very valuable in their efforts to locate little known material or allow them to research various topics. Below I have listed information about the largest Mennonite archives, libraries, and historical associations in the United States. Many of these have catalogs of portions or all of their holdings available online through their web sites and I have made comments about the current status of their online material in this list. The archivists at the various institutions can be contacted for additional information as well.

- Archives of the Mennonite Church
  1700 S. Main St.
  Goshen, Indiana 46526
  Phone: (219) 535-7477
  Web site
  Director: John E. Sharp
  Archivist: Dennis Stoesz
  Summaries of some of the 922 personal collections housed in the archives are online

- California Mennonite Historical Society
  4824 E. Butler Avenue
  Fresno, California 93727-5097
  Web site

- Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies at Fresno Pacific University
  1717 S. Chestnut
  Fresno, California 93702-4709
  Phone: (559) 453-2225
  Web site
  Archivist: Kevin Enns-Rempel

- Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies at Tabor College
  400 S. Jefferson
  Hillsboro, Kansas 67063
  Phone: (316) 947-3121
  Web site (for Tabor College library)
  Director: Peggy Goertzen

- Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society
  2215 Millstream Rd.
  Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17602-1499
  Phone: (717) 393-9745
  Web site
  Index to collections in the library is available online.

- Mary Miller Library, Hesston College
  325 S. College Dr.
  Hesston, Kansas 67062-2093
  Phone: (316) 327-4221
  Web site
  Director: Margaret Wiebe

- Menno Simons Historical Library and Archives, Eastern Mennonite University

1200 Park Rd.
Harrisonburg Virginia 22802-2462
Phone: (540) 432-4177
Web site
Catalog of holdings in the archives is available online

- Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania Historical Library and Archives
  565 Yoder Rd.
  Harleysville, Pennsylvania 19438-0082
  Phone: (215) 256-3020
  Web site

- Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College
  1700 S. Main St.
  Goshen, Indiana 46526
  Phone: (219) 535-7418
  Web site
  E-mail
  Catalog of holdings in the library is available online; enter "gonetpac" at the login prompt.

- Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College
  300 East 27th Street
  North Newton, Kansas 67117-0531
  Phone: (316) 284-5304
  Web site
  Archivist: John D. Thiesen
  Catalog of holdings in the archives is available online

- Musselman Library, Bluffton College
  Mennonite Historical Library
  Bluffton College Archives
  280 West College Ave.
  Bluffton, Ohio 45817
  Phone: (419) 358-3271
  Web site
  Catalog of holdings in the archives is available online

There are a number of other organizations and libraries besides the various Mennonite archives which have web sites that can be useful to Mennonite researchers. Below is a list of these:

- American Historical Society of Germans from Russia
  631 D Street
  Lincoln, Nebraska 68502-1199
  Phone: (402) 474-3363
  Web site

- Federation of East European Family History Societies
  P. O. Box 510898
  Salt Lake City, Utah 84151-0898
  Web site

- Germans from Russian Heritage Collection
  North Dakota State University
  1301 N. University
  Fargo, North Dakota 58105
  Phone: (701) 231-8416
  Web site

- Germans from Russia Heritage Society
  1008 East Central Avenue
  Bismarck, North Dakota 58501-1936
  Phone: (701) 223-6167
  Web site

- Library of Congress
  101 Independence Ave., SE
  Washington, DC 20540
  Phone: (202) 707-5000
  Web site

- National Archives
  700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
  Washington, D. C. 20408 and other locations
  Web site

- Salt Lake City Family History Library
  35 North West Temple St.
  Salt Lake City, Utah 84150
  Web sites: Family Search and Family History Library

MennoLink is also a resource that is becoming increasingly valuable to Mennonite researchers. MennoLink's web site has been developed by Jon and Laura Harder of Mountain Lake, Minnesota. In the past several years they have expanded MennoLink to provide a number of services helpful to researchers including providing articles from Mennonite periodicals online and other information. Probably most useful, however, is the forum it has established through the various E-mail lists that MennoLink hosts. On these E-mail lists researchers can post messages and queries and hopefully make connections and exchange information with others doing similar research. Some lists may be accessed free of charge, but other lists are restricted only to subscribers who pay an annual fee for membership to MennoLink. Mennonite-related E-mail lists to which one can subscribe are available for many topics including genealogy (menno.rec.roots), history (menno.rec.study.history), theology, music, and general chat groups. This forum will no doubt continue to expand and evolve in the future. MennoLink has also recently become the host of the Mennonite Information Center, a catalog of links to the web sites of hundreds of Mennonite-related organizations. The information is provided in a well-organized manner and often a brief description of the organization is included on the web site.

Another web site offering links to the multiple Mennonite organizations and churches that currently have web sites is Mennonite Connections on the WWW. This web site is supported by Dr. Bradley Lehman and contains a catalog to Mennonite and Amish resources on the Internet. It is reasonably well organized and allows researchers to quickly locate web sites to many Mennonite-related organizations.

An E-mail list of interest to Mennonite genealogical researchers is the RootsWeb Menno-Roots list. This list is dominated by genealogical researchers of Swiss Mennonite ancestry although there is also some participation by Low German background researchers. Subscribers to this list are encouraged to financially support RootsWeb, but payment is not required at this time. An E-mail list that may be of interest to those researching people from nonMennonite German colonies in Russia as well as Mennonites is the GR-Genealogy (Germans from Russia Genealogy) list which is hosted by North Dakota State University.

For Mennonites interested in pursuing genealogical research online many web sites offer information of interest. The most frequently used web sites may be accessed through a web site known as Cyndi's List. This site has links to over 59,000 web sites containing genealogical information. Cyndi's List has categories for Mennonites and for Germans from Russia as well as for many localities in the United States. Within each category are links to multiple web sites that may be of interest. I have also developed an outline of Low German Mennonite genealogical resources which is available at my web site. This outline includes links to many sites of interest to Mennonite researchers and also summarizes the currently available Mennonite genealogical information.

The Odessa Library is an important web site hosting a number of databases helpful to Mennonite genealogical and historical researchers as well as those interested in other German background groups from Russia. This site is supported primarily by the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia and by the German Russian Historical Society. Mennonite-related databases on this web site are only a small portion of all the information available at the site, but these are gradually increasing.

Genealogical researchers of Low German Mennonite ancestry will want to become familiar with the GRANDMA database. The GRANDMA database is a genealogical database of people whose Mennonite ancestors originally came from West Prussia and/or Russia.

GRANDMA stands for "Genealogical Registry ANd Database of Mennonite Ancestry."

The GRANDMA database is a compilation of the contributions of genealogical information from dozens of Mennonite researchers in which the data has been merged together to create one unified database. The first version of the GRANDMA database was released in 1996 on a compact disk holding information about 135,482 people as GRANDMA Volume 1 and since then the database has continued to grow rapidly. When the third version of the GRANDMA database is released on compact disk as GRANDMA 3.0 this spring it will contain about 400,000 people of Low German ancestry. In addition to the

GRANDMA database, each GRANDMA compact disk also holds scanned images of material such as maps, Mennonite church records, or census records and a database of Mennonite immigrants to the United States. For example, GRANDMA Volume 2 includes scanned images of the census records from Benjamin H. Unruh's book, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*.

The GRANDMA Project is organized by the Genealogical Project Committee of the California Mennonite Historical Society in Fresno, California. An index to the GRANDMA database is available online at the Odessa Library web site. There are plans to have an up-to-date version of the GRANDMA database omitting currently living people available online in the near future. The California Mennonite Historical Society is seeking additional Mennonite genealogical material to add to GRANDMA and is also interested in correcting errors that researchers discover in the database.

People doing research on Mennonites of Swiss/South German ancestry will be interested in the OMII Project. OMII stands for "Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois". This genealogy research group has pooled together 52 different databases totaling over 1.3 million people. The databases have not yet been merged into one unified database, however. The largest databases are the Kidron database which currently contains 319,750 individuals and James Hostetler's database which contains 227,317 individuals. These may be searched online at the OMII Project web site.

Databases such as GRANDMA and those under the OMII umbrella are quite valuable for genealogical researchers as they have made it possible to have access to early records and information that previously was more difficult to obtain. These databases will no doubt continue to grow and become more refined in the future as more genealogists contribute data.

At present, we are no doubt seeing just a small portion of the Mennonite-related material that will eventually become available for viewing via the Internet. Robert Kreider laid out his vision of some of the possibilities for future online research in the last issue of *Mennonite Life*. I endorse many of his suggestions. I believe it would be especially valuable to provide online access to large collections of electronically scanned material taken from sources currently housed in the various Mennonite archives. Collections of material such as this would give researchers easier access to little known sources and would facilitate their research. I hope we can work together to bring more and more of this material online in the future.

Book Reviews

Hans-Jürgen Goertz. *The Anabaptists*. Trans. Trevor Johnson. New York: Routledge, 1996. Pp. 215. ($80.00) ISBN 0-415-08238-2

Hans-Jürgen Goertz's book *The Anabaptists* was first published in German in 1980 as *Die Täufer: Geschichte und Deutung*. This third edition is the English translation. In addition to several more minor changes and editing, the author has added an additional new chapter entitled: "Simple Brothers, Self-confident Sisters."

Goertz begins with a very helpful, brief, and carefully nuanced overview of nine Anabaptist alternatives, all from the first half of the 16th century. (1) The group centered in Zurich around Zwingli with the humanist Konrad Grebel as their leader. (2) Michael Sattler and those who shared in the Schleitheim Articles who envisioned the alternative church of the persecuted and defenseless. (3) Those who participated in the Martyr's Synod with leadership from Hans Hut and strongly connected to the views of Thomas Müntzer. (4) Hans Romer, Melchoir Rinck, and several others who struggled to find a place for secular authority while weaving between pacifism and militancy. (5) Jacob Hutter and those Anabaptists committed to the community of goods. (6) The Pilgrim Marpeck circle with its more moderate theology and open encounter with society. (7) The apocalyptic followers of Melchior Hoffman who led the debacle of a so-called New Jerusalem in Münster. (8) The Dutch group centered around the long leadership of Menno Simons. (9) Anabaptists in England who passed on their heritage to Quakers and Baptists.

Goertz acknowledges that these groups often were in contact and dialogue with each other and occasionally influenced each other, but collectively they do not represent a 'real' Anabaptist position but many Anabaptist alternatives. As he concludes this chapter: "I have written in this overview not of the alternative of Anabaptism, but rather of Anabaptist alternatives."

If there is not a mono-genesis but a poly-genesis of Anabaptism, may one then ask another simple question: Is it possible to find a single uniting feature which all these pluralistic Anabaptist groups of origin can share? Can one quality or a single aspect of faith drawn out of the social and religious world of 16th century Anabaptism be used to define an imagined or actual unity after all? It is that question which forms the basis for the second chapter of this volume.

Entitled "Anticlericalism and Moral Improvement," the second chapter sets the context for Goertz's basic and continuing interpretation of Anabaptism; namely, that it grew out of a cultural context in which anticlericalism was thriving. Furthermore, he claims that Anabaptism participated in and contributed to this anticlericalism, and it now serves as an essential touchstone for Anabaptist interpretation. It is both the historical and theological key to understanding all Anabaptist essentials.

In the Menno Simons lectures given at Bethel College, North Newton, KS, in October, 1995, Sjouke Voolstra entitled his second lecture "The anticlerical priest: From father confessor to lay preacher of true penitence." In the printed version of these lectures (*Menno Simons: His Image and Message*, published by Bethel College, 1997) Voolstra writes: "In the recent socio-historical approach to the Reformation, the concept of anticlericalism has been present as an inclusive explanatory model of the third decade of the sixteenth century, when the Reformation was still going through its 'plastic phase.'" In an extended footnote at this point he discusses Hans-Jürgen Goertz and others; there he writes: "Goertz also stuffs Menno Simons' life and teachings into a tight anticlerical straitjacket, and this sometimes leads to forced interpretations such as those regarding Christology, the doctrine of justification, ... In this way anticlericalism, as a monocausal explanatory model of the early Reformation, appears to confer a new cohesion to Anabaptism which, from the viewpoint of a similarly strict socio-historical approach, has lost the innocence of its monogenetic beginnings and disintegrated into polygenetic factors."

A question which I found myself asking while reading Goertz was: How am I to understand the term "anticlericalism"? Voolstra ventures a very brief comment offering three understandings: "We must distinguish several forms of anticlericalism--the laymen complained about the clergy (and vice versa!), the lower clergy opposed the higher clergy, and the clergy could come to hate itself." Generally our assumed understanding rests in the first of these alternatives, though it might be interesting to speculate whether the second or even third option might have been present in some measure among the Anabaptist reformers.

As a minister myself and now a former Director of Ministerial Leadership Services for the General Conference Mennonite Church, I confess that my defensive sensitivities rise appreciably when the discussion turns to anticlericalism. It is not because I feel compelled to protect and defend any form of clergy elitism, and certainly I am not called to defend the actions of all clergy persons, but I know that within our present North American context of the last fifty years there has lingered around the edges of Anabaptist interpretation an anticlericalism that believes that if we were true to our heritage we would abolish anything that marks a difference between those who serve in pastoral roles within the church and those who do not. In the popular language of our day: "Everyone is a minister." To diffuse and confuse the issue, much of the church speaks of

leadership in preference to ministry.

I recall John Howard Yoder once saying: "If one is to be ordained, all should be ordained." This too is a form of anticlericalism--of a type not known to the 16th century Anabaptists. At least Yoder was honest enough to acknowledge that when he wrote that the Anabaptist reformers "should not be looked to for special guidance or illumination on the matters of how to renew ministerial patterns." Indeed, he adds later, "The universalism of ministry is the radical reformation that is still waiting to happen."

One could site passage after passage from Menno Simons (and I'm confident from others as well) that speaks vigorously in critique of the clergy as he knew them and as he knew himself. From his writing on "The New Birth" we read: "If we turn to the divines, whether preachers, priests, or monks, there we find such an idle, lazy, wanton, and carnal life, such a corrupted, anti-Christian doctrine and interpretation of the Scriptures, such hatred, envy, defaming, betraying, lying, and turmoil against all the pious, that I would be ashamed to mention it before the virtuous and honest." But this never meant for Menno a rejection of the call to the office of ministry. From his "Foundation of Christian Doctrine" we read: "They (the true preachers) were driven into this office by the Spirit of God, with pious hearts, and did ever esteem themselves unfit to serve the people of God or to execute such a high and responsible office." "For no one can serve in this high and holy office conformable to God's will, except he whom the Lord of the vineyard has made capable by the Spirit of His grace."

It is significant that Menno and all the early Anabaptist confessions speak concerning the "office" of ministry in a way that affirms its importance to the life of the church. His anticlericalism was never a rejection of the need for ministerial leadership within the church, but it was a strong critique of the abuse which is always a potential within every responsible office, both within and without the church.

Using anticlericalism as the key to interpret the Anabaptist reformation reminds me of the saying: "If the only tool you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail!"

Searching for the single key by which to interpret Anabaptist life and faith is not new to Goertz nor to the present socio-historical approach. Various themes have been suggested in recent history: Anabaptist theology of the church as community, believer's baptism, discipleship, the free church in relation to state and society, pacifism, and martyrdom. Shall we now add a new key in anticlericalism?

Or should we better follow the course of those like Goertz who have asked us to approach Anabaptist history from a poly-genesis interpretation of its beginnings? Would not he and we alike be better served by a poly-thematic understanding rather than the mono-thematic approach which his anticlericalism seems to ask of us? Does it not seem reasonable to enlarge our Anabaptist interpretation by moving both from mono-genesis to poly-genesis and from mono-thematic to poly-thematic understandings?

We could then acknowledge that the multiple Anabaptist groups, from the 16th century to the present, have chosen to emphasize one or several themes, even while their sisters and brothers chose to emphasize others. It would enrich and enlarge our understanding of all Anabaptist groups whose life and faith could not be reduced to single and simple interpretations. It would allow us to embrace the paradoxes which are endemic to faith and faithfulness. It would allow us to be more historically honest as we are freed from some of our present persuasions and contemporary biases.

Despite my basic critique of the anticlerical key to interpret Anabaptist history which dominates this volume by Goertz, I did find my understandings enlarged and enriched by the book as a whole. In a quite concise manner, he has a way of giving a close reading to the story. He combines history and theology in a manner not often experienced. He offers an occasional critique of other North American and European Anabaptist scholars, which I found enlightening. He has a broad enough ecumenism that Anabaptism itself is not always portrayed as God's greatest and only wisdom. As a North American Mennonite too often limited by provincial interpretations, I found it an important experience to read our history from a contemporary European interpretation.

John A. Esau
North Newton, Kansas

Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. Pp. 362. ($39.95) ISBN 0-8018-5827-5

Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties is the story of changing attitudes and relations between Mennonites and the state during the middle of the 20th century. The story is intentionally limited to the Mennonite Church (MC) and the General Conference

Mennonite Church (GC). The dominant theme of the story is the steady movement away from isolation and separation to one of more active involvement. This movement has a number of different stands, among them: nonresistance to political activism; nonconformity to acculturation; noninvolvement to service; and subject to citizen. Underlying these radical changes is a steady constant--the search for ways to strengthen and maintain pacifism defined as refusal to participate in the military. As Perry Bush tells the story, the Mennonites begin with a two kingdom theology that envisages two separate societies, the church and the state, with a minimum of interaction and ends with a view that the church is differentiated from the state primarily in its commitment to peace and service.

Whether this difference is sufficient to be called a two-kingdom view is not clear, nor does the author commit himself on this point. He ends the work with the observation that "it is very hard to draw the line [between the church and] the state" (p. 275).

As the story unfolds it displays a grand variety of themes, many of which are clearly laid out and copiously documented, and all of which are well worth contemplation. Some of the more helpful include:

War as a major catalyst of change and clarifier of issues

- 1. The way total war makes all citizen either combatants or enemies.
- 2. The consequence of seeing the primary role of the state as providing welfare rather than keeping order.
- 3. How the need to be seen as good citizens fostered the service ethic.
- 4. How the perceived need for equity impacted the design of alternative service
- 5. The use of fundamentalism to maintain older nonconformist practices, with the consequent weakening of commitment to nonresistance.
- 6. The search for a third way "combining an evangelical concern for the soul with a liberal concern for peace and justice" (p. 263).

The book tells a single story showing that the experiences of both the MC and GC churches can be seen as a unified story. The differences between the two communities are made clear and are well documented but in the end it is the overwhelming similarities that predominate. In this regard the book is very timely and useful as the process of MC/GC transformation comes to a climax.

All in all, this is a very readable book that provides a great deal of material for thought. It should be near the top of the list of books to be read by those who are interested in the identity and future of the Mennonite venture in America. Its copious documentation provides a wealth of material for further study. In many ways *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties* is the historical counterpart to the sociological *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* by Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill. The two books tell the same story in different ways.

All stories are told from a certain point of view, this is unavoidable and useful. It is clear that Perry Bush views the changes in the Mennonite self-understanding as positive. There is a fine line between acknowledging ones own biases and denigrating the contrary views. Bush comes too close to this line for this reviewer's taste with such value laden descriptions as "complacently complied" (p. 182), "meekly encouraging" (p. 258), "timid and reserved Mennonites" (p. 268), "devoting themselves merely to preserving," "meekly voiced" (p. 270), and "a group huddled toward this escape hatch" (p. 271).

A more subtle aspect of the author's point of view is his need to portray the change from quietism to activism as a recapturing of a lost aspect of the Anabaptist vision (pp. 68, 118, 152, 183, 247, 271). This claim is certainly debatable, at least when it is used to support activities designed to change the political order. Bush does try to give an account of the purported Anabaptist activism. He rightly points to the early Anabaptist critique of the emerging Protestant establishment, and their stubborn refusal to conform (pp. 11-12), but neither of these characteristics implies a political end. In fact, he seems to destroy any connection when he says of the early Anabaptists, "Rejecting the state church conceptions of both Catholicism and emerging Protestantism, they called for a voluntary association of believers" (p. 19). The repeated claim that the new Mennonite identity is a recapturing of an original vision needs much more documentation at best.

Another consequence of the author's point of view is a relative neglect of the importance of the work of John Howard Yoder. Much of Yoder's work is too supportive of the conservative point of view for comfort, especially as detailed in *The Politics of Jesus*. It is significant that this book is not even included in the bibliography. In fact, Yoder appears in the notes only a couple of times with references from early and minor works. In the end Bush tries to dismiss the importance of Yoder by saying, "Yet in the service of not just Yoder's vision but of a larger Anabaptist whole," (p. 273). Giving credence to the weight of Yoder's thinking would apparently have required a more sympathetic treatment of the conservative point of view.

The liberal bias that is apparent here is equally apparent in *Mennonite Peacemaking*. We still await an account of this crucial transition period in the American Mennonite experience that is more sympathetic to the values and goals of the conservative point of view. If the Mennonite academic establishment could find a way to provide such an account, it may well be very

helpful in the long road to true integration of the MC and GC peoples.

There are a number of interrelated concepts central to the story of*Two Kingdoms.* Concepts such as two kingdoms, witness, lordship, nonconformity, nonresistance, separation, responsibility, civil disobedience, protest, etc. All of these are susceptible to fairly different meaning and nuance. In such a fluid field of ideas it is easy to lean heavily on one dimension of a term's meaning to make a favored point while leaning on a different dimension to avoid some threatening tension in one's argument. Further progress in describing and understanding the various interpretations of the Anabaptist vision will require careful concept clarification and more precise definitions.

Take as an example the idea of two kingdoms. The simple view that there should be two different worlds that shall never meet is not a possibility and probably has never been advocated as an ideal. There have always been many aspects of the "world" that Anabaptists have been willing and anxious to participate in. The bare idea of pacifism contemplates a kind of qualified obedience to the state. "In but not of the world" tries to specify a particular relationship between church and state. The relationship contemplated by the two kingdoms idea has necessarily been more complex than simple separation, or nonparticipation. This implies that it is not enough to show that a "two kingdoms people" is entering into a new relationship with the state in order to establish that the two kingdoms view is breaking down. What is required is a more specific account of what sorts of things are to be resisted, what sort of nonconformity is desired, what things one is not to be responsible for, etc.

Or take the idea of witnessing to the state. In one sense any words or deeds that are directed to the state or to some requirement of the state are a kind of witness. Taking the concept of witnessing in this broad sense tends to blur and hide a number of crucial distinctions. On the one hand there is a distinction between informing (answering questions, stating likely consequences, detailing views on what is expedient or moral) and doing (performing service to the oppressed, refusing to participate in expected public rituals, civil disobedience for conscience sake). There is the distinction between speech and action that is its own end and speech and action that is directed toward some further end. There is the distinction between speech and action that is not intended to coerce or have political effect and political speech and action. All of these distinctions are subject to indeterminate cases and tend to overlap in complex cases. Nevertheless, it is this kind of careful distinction that people of conscience must necessarily struggle with in trying to be faithful.

In the course of his account Perry Bush suggests that the central hinge point of change was the acceptance of the idea that there is a single moral law for both state and church (pp. 68 & 201). Here Bush has almost certainly put his finger on the key ethical/theological issue. The question of a single moral law deserves a good deal of investigation, conversation, and study. Does one want to claim straight out that the Sermon on the Mount should apply directly to the national state? Is it our view that non-Christian peoples are morally obliged to obey the Sermon on the Mount even though they do not acknowledge Christ as Lord? If one holds that Christians have no higher obligations than the state, there would seem to be little ground for a two kingdom theology. Here again one will want to make some more careful distinctions.

All in all, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties* is an important book. It is a book that people who are interested in the question of the future of the Mennonite idea would be well advised to read.

Marion Deckert
North Newton, Kansas

Calvin W. Redekop, *Leaving Anabaptism: From Evangelical Mennonite Brethren to Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches*. Telford, Pa.: Pandora Press U.S., 1998. Pp. 267. ($19.99 paperback) ISBN 0-9665021-0-8

The conference known today as the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches came into existence in 1889 as the Conference of United Defenseless Mennonite Brethren in Christ of North America. The conference was originally a reform movement within the North American Mennonite churches that had immigrated from Russia in the 1870s. The United Defenseless Mennonites sought to recapture both a rigorous adherence to Anabaptist-Mennonite ethical ideals and also a renewed emphasis on personal salvation and regeneration.

Today, the conference is known as the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches (FEBC), and willingly reveals little of its original Mennonite identity. Firmly identifying itself with the evangelical world, the FEBC seems to view its Mennonite origins as a liability and even an embarrassment. How could a group so firmly rooted within a Mennonite faith tradition, in less than a century, almost completely reject its original identity and adopt a new one? This is the basic question that sociologist Calvin Redekop sets out to answer in this book.

Given the small size of this conference (less than 4,000 members in 1998), one might legitimately wonder what relevance this story has for the larger Mennonite world. Redekop, however, persuasively argues that "this story is one instance of that archetypal story experienced by hundreds of other Christian reform movements which have made the long trek from protest

and renewal to loss of direction and loss of the bond of unity" (p. 13). The FEBC is not the first such group, and presumably not the last, to follow this path. For that reason alone, an analysis of their story is instructive for the larger Mennonite and even Christian story.

The FEBC came into existence in North America, but its roots lie in the Russian Mennonite context. Its founding members had all migrated from Russia in the 1870s, and so that setting provides much of the impetus for the new movement. Redekop appropriately places the early FEBC into the context of religious renewal among the Mennonites in Russia. Both of the group's founders, Isaac Peters and Aaron Wall, were converted under the preaching of Lutheran evangelist Eduard Wüst. They were both strongly influenced by the Pietistic teachings of Wüst, and sought to incorporate these emphases into their Mennonite belief system.

Following migration to North America, Isaac Peters became a minister in the Bethesda Mennonite Church of Henderson, Nebraska. Aaron Wall, meanwhile, migrated to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, where he also became a minister. Both eventually found themselves at odds with some fellow church members over issues of lifestyle and expressions of personal salvation, and both eventually led schisms out of the existing congregations.

Recognizing a commonality between events in Nebraska and Minnesota, Peters and Wall soon began discussing the possibility of creating a new Mennonite conference. They did so in 1889, when the Conference of United Defenseless Mennonite Brethren was founded. A few other like-minded congregations soon joined the conference, and others came into existence when conference members moved to new communities across western North America.

In chapter three Redekop defines the basic ideology of the young conference. Among the most important articles of faith were an emphasis on salvation and regenerated life, the maintenance of a strong spiritual life, the obligation of evangelism and missions, nonresistance, and nonconformity. Despite a commonality of vision, Redekop discerns divergent tendencies within the United Mennonites. Whereas Isaac Peters "tended to focus on nonconformity to the world . . . and recovery of traditional Mennonite ethical life," Aaron Wall's "orientation emphasized the experience of personal regeneration and the pious humble walk through intimate acquaintance with Jesus and the Bible" (p. 57). While these differing emphases were hardly contradictory, Redekop does note that the conference would eventually find it difficult to hold onto them both. It is in this difficulty that Redekop finds the most telling explanation for the conference's eventual movement away from a Mennonite self-identity.

In chapter four Redekop describes the conference's efforts to establish new congregations across the West. While numerous such congregations were established, a surprisingly large percentage failed to survive. Today only fourteen of the forty-two congregations established between 1889 and 1950 still remain in the conference. Since 1950, the conference has been more successful in establishing congregations that survived. Even then, however, the numbers are striking: out of seventy-eight total congregations established, only forty-one remain in the conference today. Total membership of the conference also remained low: 952 members in 1920, 1919 members in 1950, and 4380 members in 1990. For a group so devoted to evangelism and saving "lost souls," such numbers must have been reason for concern. Some conference leaders blamed a Mennonite ethno-religious identity for the failure to grow, thus hastening the movement away from that identity, both culturally and theologically.

By the 1930s, the conference was beginning to seriously question its religious influences and identity. Most of the founding leaders had by this time died, and a new generation of leaders had taken their place. These men did not, for the most part, share the cultural and religious context of their predecessors. Most had been born in North America and had absorbed the religious environment of that culture. These new leaders were particularly influenced by the rising evangelical and fundamentalist movements of the time. These younger leaders were moving in a religious direction that had less and less to do with the vision of Aaron Wall and especially Isaac Peters. It seems clear that the 1937 decision to change the conference name to Evangelical Mennonite Brethren arose largely out of this growing identification with the evangelical movement.

For a time, the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren was satisfied to maintain this dual identity--both Mennonite and evangelical. By the 1960s, however, its leadership had come to believe that only one identity could survive, and that the conference would have to choose between the two. The 1968 decision to withdraw from Mennonite Central Committee reveals clearly the EMB dissatisfaction with the larger Mennonite world, as did the first discussions during this decade about dropping the word "Mennonite" from the conference name. Though the debate over a name change would continue for more than two decades, the conference did eventually formally terminate its public identification with Mennonites in 1987, when it became the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches.

Redekop describes this transition as "The Great Change." He notes that "a great ideological struggle had been taking place in the soul of the Peters/Wall movement soon after it began," and that this struggle eventually resulted in its rejecting a Mennonite identity (p. 164). This struggle was epitomized, Redekop suggests, by the differing visions of the two founders. Though Peters and Wall considered themselves to be kindred spirits, their visions for the ideal church were strikingly different. Elements of Wall's vision, more compatible with American evangelicalism, survived long after his death. The

influence of Peters, however, rooted more firmly in a distinctive Mennonite ethos, fared less well over the long run.

Despite tentative efforts to align itself with other Mennonite groups, the EMB came to exist largely in isolation from the larger North American Mennonite world. Too small to maintain its own institutions and identity, the conference turned increasingly to American evangelicalism for that identity. Influenced by evangelicalism, the EMB came to see its Mennonite identity as merely a cultural/ethnic liability and therefore something to be abandoned in the name of evangelism and church growth. Ironically, as Redekop notes at various places, this rejection of a Mennonite theological orientation has not resulted in the rapid growth that many conference leaders claimed would occur. Indeed, the FEBC has lost membership since abandoning a public identification as Mennonites (from 4366 members in 1987 to 3563 members in 1998).

In Redekop's concluding chapter he most clearly outlines the trajectory that transformed the United Defenseless Mennonite Brethren in Christ into the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren and then the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches. The early movement received much of its vitality and purpose from combining an "Anabaptist stress on discipleship and nonconformity to the world with the invigorating pietist renewal, which emphasized heartfelt conversion and living and sharing of *personal* spiritual experience" (p. 184). Unable to hold together these complimentary yet different visions, the conference moved increasingly in the direction of the latter vision during the twentieth century. As Redekop concludes,

The Peters/Wall movement embarked on a pilgrimage determined by its original evangelical Anabaptist commission. However, because it lacked a self-correcting mechanism, it became disoriented by the ubiquitous attraction of individualistic religious movements and lost its sense of direction and history. Meanwhile, it is tending not to meet its own central goals of evangelism and growth (p. 194).

Redekop's analysis of the FEBC is both insightful and helpful in understanding the religious pilgrimage of that conference. While some earlier interpretations of the movement (including my own) have tended to interpret the story as one of rejecting one religious tradition in favor of another, Redekop more helpfully locates the tension within the very roots of the conference itself.

This difficulty of holding Anabaptist/Mennonite emphases in tandem with pietist/evangelical ones is a valuable case study for many Mennonite groups today. The FEBC is not the only group to be born out of such multiple motivations. Others, such as the Mennonite Brethren and Evangelical Mennonite Church, also share these dual emphases, and have also struggled with how to hold them in creative tension. Redekop's analysis will provide a helpful interpretation for members of those groups trying to understand their own story.

Few books are without flaws, and this one is no exception. More care should have been given to the editorial process. There are several instances of words run together, omitted letters, and even a line on p. 106 that was deleted in my copy with adhesive tape. The bibliography, furthermore, attributes one article to me actually written by H. F. Epp.

Not all the chapters seem to promote the main argument of the book equally well. Chapter six, which addresses political, economic and social issues, is perhaps the best example of this shortfall. While Redekop briefly discusses the ways in which these contexts changed for the Peters/Wall movement, he fails to show how these changes affected the unique development of that movement. The way in which the conference experienced these social phenomena seems to have been typical of most Mennonite groups, and so the analysis lacks any useful explanatory value for the book's larger thesis.

These relative minor criticisms aside, Redekop's book is a valuable and important contribution not only toward understanding one particular Mennonite group, but also in understanding the forces influencing many religious reform movements.

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Sharon Hartin Iorio, *Faith's Harvest: Mennonite Identity in Northwest Oklahoma*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999. Pp. 320 + xv. ($27.95 hardback) ISBN 0-8061-3119-5

Among the thousands of settlers who rushed to stake claims in the Cherokee Outlet of northwest Oklahoma in 1893 were hundreds of Mennonites. This book examines how these Mennonites understood themselves and adjusted to change. The author's approach is not that of a historian or social scientist but of a professor of communication. Iorio looks at the role of communication and language in shaping identity and preserving the past.

Each chapter of the study contains two parts: a short narrative based on secondary sources and then a memoir or interview with one or two individuals telling their personal experiences. Iorio conducted and recorded some sixty interviews and attended Mennonite worship services and other activities to learn about their beliefs, concerns, and changes in their life and

community.

The story begins with a brief history of Mennonite origins and migrations, which eventually led to the plains of the United States and Canada in the 1870s. As land in Kansas became more scarce and expensive, Oklahoma offered new opportunities. Generally it was younger and less affluent Mennonites who joined the over one hundred thousand settlers who sought land in Oklahoma in 1893. They formed small, agricultural communities centered around the church and, at least in part, maintained by their use of the German language. Isolation and hardship made it more difficult to maintain their identity.

Iorio singles out the two world wars as the major challenges to the identity and survival of the Mennonites in northwest Oklahoma. Urbanization became another strong force in threatening their community life during the second half of the century. However, the anti-German and anti-pacifist feelings during World War I provided the most significant threat to the Mennonite ethic. English replaced German very quickly during and after the war. Interest in relief work and a more activist form of non-resistance were stimulated. Acculturation rapidly accelerated.

Iorio observes that during just over a century of living in northwest Oklahoma that the boundaries of Mennonite life shifted. They moved from poverty to prosperity, from nonconformity to integration, from closed congregations to open worship, and from quiet nonresistance to active peace initiatives. Other more visible changes included the transition from German to English and from parochial to public schools. The role of women has changed, more non-Mennonites joined the church, many youth left the church of their parents.

The diaries and memoirs at the end of each chapter give the study a good personal touch. Nevertheless, some significant questions regarding the uniqueness of the Mennonite experience in Oklahoma remain unanswered. Iorio only begins to capture the uniqueness of the Mennonite communities in Oklahoma. The original communities were much smaller than those in Kansas, and the families were generally young and poor. Individual farms frequently failed and entire communities dissolved. Some families moved a dozen times from central Kansas, to western Kansas, to eastern Colorado and to various sites in Oklahoma. Churches lacked leadership and depended on itinerant ministers. Iorio notices these factors but doesn't explain how the dissaffection, isolation, and even turbulence impacted the development of the Mennonites in Oklahoma. How did their environment and development differ from that of Mennonites in central Kansas?

Iorio's approach also resulted in a tendency to generalize. Were there no significant differences between the communities of the General Conference Mennonites and the Mennonite Brethren? While the focus is on Mennonites of Dutch-Russian backgrounds, the Deer Creek and Medford groups were largely South German in origin. Institutional developments other than that of the Oklahoma Bible Academy and more recently of the Mennonite Central Committee receive little mention. What role did the Oklahoma Convention and regional conferences play in identity maintenance?

The book includes a useful index, bibliography of secondary sources, and list of churches with their locations and dates. What is missing is a list of those interviewed, citations to the interviews, and the location of the transcripts of the interviews. In fact, only three of the ten chapters reference the interviews as the personal narrative in the second half of the chapter, and it is largely unclear how and when the author is using the oral histories. Twenty-five photos are grouped together in the center of the book, and strangely are all identified as being from the author's collection rather than indicating their original sources.

Those seeking a more traditional historical account may be disappointed by this work, but the insights into the beliefs and lives of the Mennonites of northwest Oklahoma are nonetheless valuable. Those with roots in the community will appreciate the chance to read the story of their ancestors and how they arrived at where they are today.

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Rod Janzen, *The Prairie People: Forgotten Anabaptists*. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1999. Pp. 326. ($21.95 paperback). ISBN 0-87451-931-4

It probably shouldn't be surprising that Low Germans dominate the Russian Mennonite story. After all, they were the largest group to emigrate to the Ukraine and from there to North America and later to South America and Germany. In Russia, the Low German Mennonites proceeded to flourish in agriculture, industry, education and health care, creating longstanding structures and institutions; they also had more than a few religious dramas, such as formation of the Mennonite Brethren and the Claas Epp adventure. Then factor in the great saga of the Communist experience, and the Low German story becomes almost intoxicating for historians, authors and artists.

The multi-faceted Russian Mennonite experience, including the immigration stories, has thus become virtually synonymous with Molotschna and Machno, famine and Volendam, Plautdeutsch and Paraguay. That has left non-Low Germans from Russia in many ways absent from North American Mennonite historical and cultural consciousness. Into that void Rod Janzen has thankfully stepped with *The Prairie People: Forgotten Anabaptists*, about the noncommunal Hutterians in North America. But the book's flaws leave the void only partially filled.

The Hutterians were part of the 1870s migration from Ukrainian Russia, joining Low Germans and Swiss-Volhynians in settling in what is now southeastern South Dakota. Only about a third of the 425 Hutterian immigrants organized themselves into colonies, located in river-bottom lands. The rest chose noncommunal living on the prairie west of the town of Freeman, hence their name "Prairieleut" or prairie people. The communal Hutterite identity has remained firm, which has been underscored by the many historical, sociological and scientific studies about the colonies and their members. But the Prairieleut have struggled to maintain their identity: "They were not communal Hutterites, but neither were they Mennonites until a generation or two later, and even then they continued to think of themselves first as 'Hutterians' and only secondarily as 'Mennonites'" (p. 4). As a result, Janzen laments, Prairieleut identity as Hutterians has "vanished in a Mennonite fog" (p. 3)

The Prairie People lifts Prairieleut identity out of that fog in a number of ways. While Janzen unfortunately offers little insight into why the Prairieleut eschewed colony life, his contributions include a chronology of their settlement and organization, folkways, and interactions with their colony cousins and various aspects of the non-Hutterian world (including a fascinating look at political involvement). From a Mennonite perspective, of particular interest is the Prairieleut attraction to the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren prior to the turn of the 20th century, born out of real or perceived spiritual malaise. Ethnic Hutterians, at one point constituting nearly half of KMB membership, exuded great influence in the denomination, something that remains largely unstudied, as Janzen points out. While noting the KMB arrival caused some families to go different directions on church membership, the book virtually ignores the deep emotional and relational scars the disagreements left on the Freeman-area Prairieleut. Those injuries have apparently only begun to disappear in recent years.

While Janzen appropriately devotes significant space to the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, he does not grant similar attention to Hutterian congregations joining the General Conference Mennonite Church around the time of World War II. *The Prairie People* makes only a couple of references to those congregations' desire to join a pacifist denomination in order to uphold the peace position at a time when it was threatened by world events. Because they had not previously joined a Mennonite denomination, these noncommunal Hutterians presumably held the strongest Hutterian identity. An examination of their joining the General Conference Mennonite Church no doubt would have shed more light on that identity's disappearance into the surrounding Mennonite world.

Despite the welcome insights to an Anabaptist immigrant group, *The Prairie People* is burdened by its lack of definition of who exactly these people are. That is desperately needed considering that the chief defining attribute of colony Hutterians is their common community of goods. Without that, what defines the Prairieleut? Are they still a faith community (as the book's subtitle indicates)? Or are they merely a cultural and ethnic remnant of a faith community? The answer is not readily apparent. Janzen repeatedly laments the disappearance of Hutterian characteristics with little delineation of what they may be. To be sure, Janzen sprinkles throughout the book suggestions such as language, martyr hymns, nonresistance, common communion cup, separation of the sexes at church meeting and changes in sermons and congregational leadership. But many of these--other than nonresistance and perhaps the hymns and sermons--could be identified as cultural trappings that can be separated from the fundamentals of faith. Both cultural expressions and religious beliefs are important elements to any group's story. It is essential, however, that distinctions be made between the two, lest culinary distinctives, for example, be equated with theological ones. It is not until the end of the book that Janzen finally confesses that the Prairieleut are only a cultural and ethnic group: "Whether a people could successfully mediate historic Hutterian principles without experiencing a traditional communal way of life, however, was extremely questionable" (p. 254).

The absence of a clear articulation of a noncommunal Hutterian faith propels Janzen into dangerous, unproven territory when he asserts tensions between Mennonitism and Prairieleut beliefs. He even charges without substantiation that "Mennonites wanted Hutterians to get rid of their cultural and theological distinctness" (p. 246). It is unclear what was in peril. The local Low Germans and Swiss-Volhynians of the times had some similar cultural attributes, such as German-language services and separation of the sexes for worship. And the Mennonites and Prairieleut shared basic Anabaptist beliefs. Disturbingly, Janzen provides zero supporting evidence for his accusation, either anecdotal or factual.

The Prairie People is also peppered with errors, such as the wrong name for the North American Mennonite Brethren conference, a reference to the South American country of "Columbia," misspelling a writer's name in a footnote, placing a South Dakota lake on the wrong highway, and claiming that the General Conference Mennonite Church was started by renegades from the Mennonite Church. Such mistakes are inexcusable, particularly considering that Janzen teaches social sciences at Mennonite Brethren-affiliated Fresno (Calif.) Pacific University; taught for six years at Freeman (S.D.) Junior College and Academy, just six miles south of the mislocated lake; and is part of a congregation that is member of both the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church.

Rich Preheim
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Walter Klaassen, *Armageddon and the Peaceable Kingdom*. Waterloo and Scottdale: Herald Press, 1999. Pp.288. ($15.99; in Canada $23.79) ISBN 0-8361-9080-7

As we cross the threshold from one millennium to the next, prophecy experts seem to be at the forefront, interpreting current events and predicting what the future will bring. Countless television and radio programs are broadcasted into homes, and thousands of books are circulated around the globe, offering advice regarding how Christians should prepare for the End.

The practice of predicting future events is not new. As Walter Klaassen's recent book on eschatology observes, there is "nothing new under the sun" in the field of end-time calculations. In virtually every era of Christian history, people have concerned themselves with the future. While countless predictions offered throughout history have not been fulfilled, this has not discouraged persons at some later date from trying their hand at calculating what the next year, decade or century may bring.

The abundance of unfulfilled predictions, however, has left many serious-minded Christians skeptical about end-time discussions. Such discussions seem irrelevant at best, and superstitious or heretical at worst.

While critical of the forecasters of our time, Klaassen argues in his book that eschatology is not a dispensable aspect of Christian faith. In his view a basic confession of the church is that Christ will come again. He offers a critique, not only of the forecasters of popular religion and culture, who try to force-fit the Scriptures into some kind of preconceived premillennial framework, but also of those Christians who would rather understand their faith exclusively in this-worldly terms.

The first half of the book seeks to analyze the ideas and interpretive methods of today's popular forecasters; the second half is devoted to constructing an alternative eschatology. A major premise in this latter section is that the question of "when" is unanswerable, and that setting the time of the End is completely up to God. A further premise is that any faithful and scriptural interpretation concerning the future must take into account the fullness of the gospel, a view that represents the heart of the traditional teaching of the church, where the Bible is allowed to interpret itself.

The book makes a valuable contribution to the topic of eschatology. The author's critique of premillennial views is detailed and comprehensive--perhaps more than necessary. Klaassen's own construction effectively avoids narrow interpretations of Scripture. The apocalyptic books of the Bible are read and interpreted in light of other major themes in the Scriptures. The topic of eschatology is skillfully woven together with other central theological themes in Christian theology, such as God, Jesus Christ, creation, salvation and ecclesiology.

Like all interpreters of Scripture, Klaassen does not entirely avoid reading the biblical text through a particular interpretive lens. His reading is shaped by the biblical tradition that focuses on the kingdom of God--a theme that the popular forecasters seem to avoid. Klaassen takes up the prophetic notions of the kingdom in the Old Testament and links them with New Testament notions as understood in Jesus Christ. In his view, it is the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ which supplies the meaning of the End. "From those central realities, all the rest of the future derives any significance it has." Klaassen insists that "the events of the End have to be interpreted in the light of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (202).

This point of view ultimately leads the author to question popular descriptions of a violent God, who ushers in an "Armageddon" filled with violence and destruction. Readers sympathetic to Anabaptist-Mennonite perspectives will find this perspective insightful, for it exposes a serious problem in the theology of the premillennial forecasters; namely, that their conception of the Divine appears to have little in common with the God whom Jesus invited humanity to trust and love. Klaassen maintains that our eschatological visions must be consistent with the "peaceable kingdom," which God has inaugurated in Jesus Christ.

I found *Armageddon and the Peaceable Kingdom* an accessible and comprehensive study concerning how Christians should view the future. We can be grateful to Walter Klaassen for his contribution to an important topic of our time.

Karl Koop
Elkhart, Indiana

Elaine Sommers Rich. *Pondered in Her Heart: Hannah's Book: Inside and Outside*. Newton, KS: Wordsworth, 1999. Pp. 135. ($12.95 paperback) ISBN 0-945530-20-X

Pondered in Her Heart by Elaine Rich is a novel about Hannah's thoughtful search for meaning in her life. Living in a retirement home, Hannah Herschberger reviews her life by writing about it and "remembering experiences I play in my brain like old memory tapes."

We first met Hannah Elizabeth as an 11-year-old in a book written earlier by Rich. Hannah Elizabeth loved the sound of words and wanted to be a poet. She lived in an Amish community in Indiana, where church, family, and school were a united influence. She mirrors this by thinking of Bible verses and hymns appropriate for the occasion and reciting them to herself.

Grown-up Hannah Herschberger, too, recalls scripture and hymns and frequently recites them to herself. She still holds up the unfulfilled dream of becoming a writer, although she is careful to keep that secret.

Now 76 years old and a college graduate with bachelor's and master's degrees, Hannah has come a long way from her sheltered childhood. Living at Shalom Home means adapting to a new way of life and represents a last challenge.

The restrictions placed on residents at Shalom are not to Hannah's liking, but the many free hours denied to her as a busy mother and now available give her pleasure. This journal-autobiography helps her sort out her feelings. As time passes, Hannah finds peace and comfort at the Home.

"Wherever I go this community is the place where I get my sense of direction in the universe," she writes.

Among the questions Hannah ponders is how love happens and what makes a marriage. She wonders, too, about the mystery of intercessory prayer and how prayer really works. At the threshold of a new millennium, she feels deep anguish at the tremendous amount of evil in the century in which she has lived. "How shall I cope with evil?"

Interspersed in this account of Hannah's life are some gems of insight. John Wesley Troyer, a resident of Shalom and former pastor, wonders if it's all right to talk aloud to himself. His career has included a lot of speaking. "Now that his audience has dwindled to one, why should his voice be silent?" He gives himself permission.

In another vignette, Hannah refers to times in her younger years when as a woman she had to leave the room when men wanted to have a serious discussion. One time when the New Birth was the topic, she heard a woman say of the patriarchal system in her church, "Some men will have to have their heads reshaped to be born again."

Hannah sometimes wonders, "How much of a lifetime goes into details like grating carrots, answering the telephone, and emptying wastebaskets. . . . Can one empty a wastebasket to the glory of God? Only if the contents are bio-degradable, no doubt."

Reflecting that at Shalom they think more about death than new life or new birth, she asks, "Is death also birth?"

In ways more characteristic of the old than the young, Hannah calls a disposition of the dead as the chief priority in life. Next most important was helping women in childbirth, followed by care of babies and children.

Hannah's peaceful death and the coming of her children to honor her shows this a book affirming life and love.

Switching from past to present makes for some uneven transitions in the book. Young people will not be drawn to the story, but older readers can resonate with Hannah's ponderings and questions. The book moves slowly in keeping with Hannah's unhurried findings about her life. It is her "soul searching" which is the heart of the book.

Gladys Goering
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David C. Wedel, *The Story of Alexanderwohl: Celebrating 125 Years*. 2nd ed. Goessel, KS: Goessel Centennial Committee, 1999. Pp. 260. ($11.95 paperback)

Originally published in 1974, David C. Wedel's *Story of Alexanderwohl* has been brought up to date to include a new closing chapter by Brian Stucky, an updated appendix listing church elders, ministers, pastors, and missionaries, and an index. The

appendix supplements and Stucky's epilogue pick up where Wedel's original text left off and provide an account of the church and community over the past twenty-five years. Other than a few source additions that reflect the opening of records in Russia, the primary text remains unchanged from the first edition. It continues as a celebration of a church and a community for members of that community.

Presenting his story as a series of homey vignettes, Wedel divides his book topically into chapters that cover church origins and migration across Europe, settlement in Kansas, community building and issues of faith in a new land, and social life. He briefly follows the church from its earliest beginnings in the Netherlands but reserves most of his narrative emphasis to highlight the insular nature of the congregation in Kansas and the strengths such a commitment to community imparted. As Wedel stresses, members of the congregation viewed church membership as a "God-given privilege" and to "be outside the church membership was practically synonymous with non-membership in the community" (81).

Despite Alexanderwohl's roots in Prussia's Przechovka Church and subsequent fifty-four years in Russia, the bulk of the text focuses on the congregation's experiences in the United States. Although this is reflective of the largely American source material Wedel had available, it is also part of his celebration of the church's continuity and stability as a congregation in Kansas. Unfortunately, he presents the story as if in a vacuum and leaves the larger social and political events surrounding the Alexanderwohl community largely unexplored. While Stucky's epilogue emulates this pattern, he makes a stronger effort to place events of the past twenty-five years within the larger context of the times. However, both authors write with the words of Reverend Ronald Krehbiel in mind. Krehbiel, in a 1974 sermon at Alexanderwohl said: "May God help us, each one of us, every one, to follow the winds of His Spirit, rather than the other winds which may be blowing at this time" (198).

Although Wedel originally wrote the book as a centennial profile of the Alexanderwohl community, it is also presented in its reissue as a preservation of church history, and taken from a purely historical perspective, the text has some glaring weaknesses. Because Wedel presents the story with few references to outside events, one is left with the impression that the Mennonites who settled the Alexanderwohl Church were exceptional. Of course that was never the case. For example, although the group had the advantage of migrating as an intact community, which was not unusual in 1870s Kansas, many members still had difficulties in paying their transportation debts after settlement. The unstated reason, despite the much heralded importation and eventual acceptance of hard winter wheat, was a national decline in agricultural prices that grew steadily worse throughout the late nineteenth century. This affected all Great Plains farmers and most certainly would have given the Alexanderwohl congregation a materialist interest in the larger world around them.

What the Alexanderwohl Mennonites did have was a strong spiritual center and an unyielding faith in God. This, according to historian Robert Hine, is what enabled religious communities to survive in the American West while their secular counterparts faded into obscurity. This is Wedel's point as well, and it is his book's strongest argument. Nevertheless, as Stucky astutely notes in the closing epilogue, economics "are the hidden force behind church existence" (217). With family farming in decline and little economic development in the Goessel area, the Alexanderwohl Church must address these new, secular realities if the congregation wants to survive into the next century.

The Story of Alexanderwohl is an amiable book that will appeal largely to current members and descendants of the Alexanderwohl community. General readers of Mennonite history should find it of interest, while historians will find the primary source notations a useful reference tool.

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