Women in Early Austrian Anabaptism: Their Days, Their Stories. By Linda A. Huebert Hecht. Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press. 2009. Pp. 281. $32.50.

This book represents the culmination of a long-term project by one of the very few scholars to focus sustained attention on the subject of Anabaptist women. The result is as detailed a picture as the sources allow of Anabaptist women in the Austrian Tirol from 1527 to 1531, the period when Anabaptism was established there and persecution was the heaviest.

The stated purpose of the book is to "name each of the individual women involved in the movement"—even anonymous women—and "to bring to light some untold stories of women who were believers, martyrs, lay missioners and lay leaders in the Austrian Anabaptist movement, commemorating and illustrating their profound faith, courage and sacrifice" (12). It would be disappointing if this were all the book did, since women's history has long ago moved from the celebratory and contribution approach to focusing on structures of domination and, more recently, agency—that is, how women controlled and impacted aspects of their lives, families, and societies, even in patriarchal settings.[1]

In fact, this is what Huebert Hecht does, as she explores individual choices that women were forced to make or chose to make. "This is the story of women making choices in the everyday circumstances of life, circumstances which challenged old ways and promised change" (1). In reality, the circumstances were anything but "everyday," as the consequences were flogging, imprisonment, or death, and might involve fleeing or leaving one's home, husband, and even children behind—surely a heart-wrenching choice for most women.

The bulk of the book is made up of court cases from the *Täuferakten* (vol. 3), with translations and additional information distinguished by italics and block lettering. While perhaps the only way to handle the sources with integrity, the format reduces readability and may not appeal to the generalist. However, the documents contain a wealth of specific information and stories that should prove useful as source material. In contrast, the introductions to each chapter (organized chronologically) are clearly written and provide a helpful overview of the experiences of the Anabaptist women of the Tirol. Main themes include women leaders, where we learn that women preached but probably did not baptize; torture, where we learn about the legal context and the reluctance of authorities to use this means of interrogation on women; and pregnant and nursing mothers, where we learn how these conditions influenced imprisonment and execution.

1. See http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/women/womensbook.html (accessed March 2, 2010).

Other themes emerge in the narrative that shed light on the entire movement in the Tirol, such as social and economic status and recantation. Despite the bad press that later generations gave to the option of recanting, it was often an important survival tactic rather than a renunciation of belief or of the community. Many Anabaptists continued in the movement after recanting, even though penalties were more severe if they were caught again and identified as "relapsi."

This book matters for several reasons. First, as the author points out, the traditional sources for studying Anabaptist women have been martyr stories or printed works by exceptional women like the prophetess Ursula Jost. The *Martyrs Mirror* has the advantage of providing a glimpse into the inner lives of Anabaptists but also the disadvantage of including only the martyrs and not all who were connected to the movement (the many who fled, escaped, and recanted as well as those who were imprisoned and martyred). Furthermore, geographic coverage in the *Martyrs Mirror* is not balanced as only one Tirolean woman was included, while Huebert Hecht's index identifies more than sixty women martyrs in the Tirol. By looking at court records, which include a range of women's choices and experiences, a more complete picture of women and their role in Anabaptism emerges. After presenting the stories of individual women, Huebert Hecht explores the reasons for their high participation during the early years and highlights how instrumental women were in establishing the young movement.

Second, the Tirol was a very important region for Anabaptism, with higher numbers of participants than were found in other areas. The careful study conducted for this book is a useful addition to our understanding of Austrian Anabaptism in general, with details and insight into how the Anabaptist community both functioned and met with persecution. Indeed, this book serves as a corrective to Claus-Peter Clasen's influential quantitative social history (1972), which identified forty-five leaders in this region between 1527 and 1531, three of them women. The additional women leaders found by Huebert Hecht brings the total number of leaders to over sixty in the Tirol, with one-third of these women (49). While scholarly consensus is that women composed about one-third of the martyrs (and this percentage is confirmed in Huebert Hecht's research), here we find, in the Tirol at least, that one-third of the *leaders* were women—a significant shift from Clasen's estimation of less than 7 percent.

The book contains several appendices of translated documents, including interrogators' questions, property inventories, and a confession written by a noblewoman, Helena von Freyberg, one of the few writings left by any Anabaptist woman. A nice surprise for a paperback of this kind is the section of over thirty illustrations, almost half in color. While very small, the pictures help bring the region and era to life. The endnotes to each chapter are thorough and extensive, but there is no bibliography. The indices are especially good with an old-style subject index (that is, not just a computer-generated keyword index) and an index of all 419 women who appear in the court records, including women whose names were not given in the records (with the page number in the *Täuferakten* where each was first mentioned and an identifier such as "pregnant

woman" or "woman leader"). This is especially helpful because, as Huebert Hecht notes, these women do not appear in the index to the *Täuferakten* themselves. All women in the index are further identified as "believer," "lay leader," "missioner," "martyr" or "indirect participant."

One wishes at times that the author was more confident of her own expertise. Surely her research makes her one of the most credible authorities on Anabaptist women, so she should rely more on her own knowledge and hunches. For example, citing sociologist Elise Boulding does not lend weight to the idea that men and women were equal in every respect in Anabaptism, since Boulding, while breaking ground with her 1976 overview of women's history, did not give sources (as the author points out in an endnote) and would not have conducted primary research on the topic herself (50, 86, fn. 44).

The author states, "The history of Anabaptist women calls us to view Anabaptism in a new light" (18). Since some of the stories and ideas already made an appearance in Huebert Hecht's and Arnold Snyder's fine *Profiles of Anabaptist Women* (1996), this new book may not alter our interpretation of Anabaptism or of Anabaptist women. In its narrow geographic focus and thoroughness, however, *Women in Early Austrian Anabaptism* does provide more documentation and stories, some rich in detail.

It is clear throughout the book that for Huebert Hecht the study of Anabaptist women is not just a scholarly exercise but a pursuit with inspirational meaning and implication for the church. Primary sources do not usually lend themselves to a popular readership, so the impact in this regard may be limited. Still, the scholarly contribution is more than enough to justify this fine volume.

Eastern Mennonite University MARY S. SPRUNGER

Lexikon der Mennoniten in Paraguay. Asunción: Verein für Geschichte und Kultur der Mennoniten in Paraguay. 2009. Pp. 473.

The editors of this excellent new *Encyclopedia of the Mennonites in Paraguay* describe their project as a way of responding to repeated questions that come from "university and seminary students (German and Spanish speaking), reporters (national and international), and employees of diplomatic missions in Asunción" (5) about matters Mennonite in Paraguay. Their intended audience is the average reader rather than the specialist scholar, and they do not wish to be judged by the standards of *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* or the *Mennonitisches Lexikon* (6). Here they may be evaluating themselves too modestly, or the other works too highly.

A project like this seems to call for some quantification: there are 618 articles in 448 pages of text. A total of 105 authors of articles are listed on page 455 (a careful reading of the book revealed two authors left off the list). The enormous amount of work completed by the seven-person editorial team is suggested by their direct contribution: they wrote more than half of the entries (58 percent). In fact, the two most prolific team members, Uwe S. Friesen and Gerhard Ratzlaff,

wrote 42 percent of the articles. Together with a third member, Jakob Warkentin, these three editors account for just over half of the content.

The longest article is "Enlhet," about the indigenous group also known as northern Lengua. The second-longest article is less surprising: "Mennoniten in Paraguay." The Enlhet article illustrates the effort to broaden the focus beyond Germanic-immigrant Mennonite groups. Terms and institutions associated with the indigenous Mennonite groups are well represented; those associated with Spanish-speaking Mennonite groups may be less so, but definitely present.

The authorial tone of articles varies considerably from a somewhat simplistic piety or even hagiographic approach found in a few biographical articles to the secular and scholarly. This is perhaps best seen in articles relating to the indigenous groups, including a portrayal of natives lost in darkness (190) and a much more positive conveyance of indigenous culture without evangelistic assumptions (as found in most of the articles about the specific indigenous groups, or related articles such as "Interethnisches Zusammenleben").

It is not really the place of an encyclopedia to do investigative reporting about longstanding controversies, but it is also not appropriate to ignore problematic topics. In this regard, this *Lexikon* seems to strike a reasonable balance. There is an entry for "Elfter März," for example, and several related topics such as "Deutsch-völkische Bewegung." The articles on controversial topics (on Alfredo Stroessner, for example) are generally cautious but do not attempt to see these historical themes through rose-colored glasses. In a few places, such as the article on "Patriotismus," the scholarship is directly critical of perceived Mennonite failings. Recent political involvements are also described, as in the article "Coordinadora de Iglesias Cristianas para la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente."

Social history topics receive some attention, such as gender ("Mennonitische Frau" and "Familienplanung") and environment ("Naturschutz," "Umweltschutz," "Wasserversorgung im zentralen Chaco" and "Unger, Jakob"; Unger was an early advocate of natural history in the Chaco). Articles on Mennonite material culture, such as clothing or food, are quite short even though such topics are often of interest to outsiders. One also finds many interesting tidbits scattered throughout the volume. Who would have expected an article on auto racing ("Ralley Transchaco") in a Mennonite encyclopedia?

A project of this complexity will inevitably struggle with problematic generalizations. The footwashing article, for example, is rather negative and does not mention the practice in the Swiss-background groups (labeled in the *Lexikon* as "Konservative amerikanische Mennoniten in Paraguay"). The article on "Plattdeutsch" reports that it is spoken in "all" the Mennonite colonies, again forgetting the Swiss-background groups, admittedly a small minority of Paraguayan Mennonites. A project of this magnitude also cannot completely avoid technical errors: occasional typos, layout problems with subheadings, incorrect alphabetizations, blind cross-references. One of the biggest shortcomings would have been addressed with more maps. (There are five at the end of the volume.)

The editors note in their introduction that they had originally hoped to put out a Spanish version of the encyclopedia, but decided that a simple translation

of the German version into Spanish would be inadequate. They felt that a different selection of articles and topics would be needed. Although the editorial team might not wish to undertake another project of such scale, a Spanish volume would likely be even more significant than this German volume. A Web-based version of the *Lexikon* would also be desirable, and the editorial team is clearly aware of that possibility, since quite a few articles include references to online resources.

Overall, the *Lexikon der Mennoniten in Paraguay* is a remarkable achievement. It shows in Paraguay one of the most interesting and dynamic Mennonite national communities in the world today. I hope the *Lexikon* will inspire similar projects elsewhere in the Mennonite world.

Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. JOHN THIESEN

Pilgrims on the Silk Road: A Muslim-Christian Encounter in Khiva. By Walter R. Ratliff. Eugene, Ore: Wipf & Stock. 2010. Pp. 293. $34.

The so-called Great Trek of several hundred Mennonites from the Molotschna and the Am Trakt colonies to Central Asia in the 1880s has fascinated historians and lay interpreters alike and evoked diverse interpretations. One early account by Franz Bartsch, a Trek participant, warned against "committing the same errors: to interpret Scripture capriciously and arbitrarily . . . and accepting uncritically the emergence of self-appointed and self-aggrandizing leaders" like Claas Epp Jr.[2] In *Pilgrims on the Silk Road*, Walter R. Ratliff presents, in contrast, a colorful and sympathetic narration. Ratliff is film-maker (whose credits include a documentary of the Great Trek, *Through the Desert Goes Our Journey*), historian, journalist and consummate story teller. He is also a great-grandson of Trek participants.

In the subtitle and the introduction, Ratliff clearly states the aim of his own "revisionist" reading: to highlight several decades of Muslim-Christian/Mennonite respectful and mutually beneficial coexistence. A secondary but also important aim is to bring healing to the historical memories of the Trek descendants.

As a historian, Ratliff surveys a wide panorama. Apart from a brief vignette of his early childhood (xiv, 2f.), we do not meet Claas Epp Jr., traditionally seen as the chief inspirer of the exotic Trek, until page 76. Instead, we are introduced broadly to the political and military moves of the British Empire and the Russian Tsarist Empire to extend their control over the Muslim states between their realms, among them Afghanistan, Turkestan, Bukhara, and Khiva, the last of these subdued by Russia (but not annexed) only seven years before the arrival of the Mennonite Trek. Ratliff's presentation of the Muslim side in the political context of the Trek should be new and enlightening for Mennonite readers, who

2. Bartsch, *Our Trek to Central Asia*, trans. Elizabeth Peters and Gerhard Ens (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1993) [original German, 1907], xii.

have generally read the Trek story in isolation, or, at best, in the context of Russian Tsarist politics.

Ratliff also offers much valuable insight into the internal pre-Trek Mennonite dynamics—dynamics strongly influenced by German Pietist millenarianism and the European political unrest around the turbulent year 1848—that eventually led them to seek a place of refuge in the East. He highlights the multiple leadership personalities and views, thus in effect greatly relativising the significance and leadership of Claas Epp Jr. and his excessive end-time claims and delusions. Ratliff effectively draws on his sources, some of which have only recently become available, or available in English translation, to substantiate his interpretation of the Trek phenomenon, which he summarizes as follows:

> A picture emerges of the Great Trek as a collection of various factions migrating to Central Asia. Each was following the same general ideas about escape from military conscription, millennial expectations and the place of refuge. However, the various pilgrim groups traveling the same route east disagreed sharply over a wide range of theological and interpersonal issues. (116)

While Ratliff's historical presentation is a major accomplishment, the fascinating effect of his book is due largely to his storytelling skill in presenting the characters and scenes, whether they were Russian, British, Muslim or Mennonite; officials, soldiers, Turkoman tribesmen or the colorfully diverse inhabitants of multicultural cities like Orenburg, Tashkent, Samarkand and Khiva. The Trek participants themselves come to life as they move along in their horse-drawn covered wagons over dusty steppes, on long camel caravans through sandy deserts, or on boats along treacherous rivers. They experience wagon breakdowns, illness, childbirth, enemy attacks, robberies, and many, many deaths. But the reader also partakes of beautiful scenery, lush vegetation and dazzling architecture, as well as much faith, deliverance, kindness and hospitality.

For the details, Ratliff has frequent recourse to vivid autobiographical records, as for example, the observations of Elizabeth Unruh Schulz, who kept a diary from the time her family joined the Trek in 1880, when she was 14 years of age. Her autobiography, although written later and poorly translated into English, is unsurpassed for human interest, detail, vividness and unencumbered youthful perspective. Ratliff effectively introduces her as a six-year-old girl, and then returns to her intermittently.[3]

Ratliff characteristically entices the reader into his narrative by an interesting vignette. For example, we are introduced to the first Mennonite-Muslim encounter in a scene where the famous Mennonite reformer Johann Cornies, as a lone rider in the Ukrainian steppe, is approached by three ominous figures and barely escapes to a Mennonite village in a wild chase on horseback. The pursuers turn out to be Muslim Nogai nomads, tribesmen who were troublesome neighbors to the Mennonites in the Molotschna (23). The story then loops back to

3. Elizabeth Unruh Schultz, *What a Heritage: Autobiography of Mrs. Elizabeth Schultz nee Unruh,* trans. Annie Schultz Keyes (unpublished ms.).

these troubles during the Mennonite immigration, and forward again to Cornies' achievements in bettering the Nogais' living conditions and his friendship with the Nogai leader Kokan-Aga. This encounter is juxtaposed to the later positive Mennonite-Muslim relations in Khiva. A sort of poetic balance seems to be invoked here, although the connecting of the two scenarios is less than compelling. Thus Ratliff, the storyteller, repeatedly leads the reader along a tortuous narrative course, but never a dull one!

After countless adventures, hardships and positive experiences, the Trek story eventually issues into three group stories. The first Trek group, mostly from the Molotschna, stayed in Russia, accepting the offer of Turkestan's governor, Konstantin von Kaufmann, to settle near Aulie Ata in the fruitful Talas Valley. There it continued to exist as a well-respected traditional Mennonite colony, until it was subjected to the policies of the Soviet Union under Leninpol.

A second group was made up of those abandoning the Trek to make their way to North America as individual families or small groupings.

Finally, the most persistent followers of Claas Epp Jr., although often critical of him, pursued the search for a place of refuge outside the Russian borders. After forcible eviction from the Muslim Emirate of Bukhara and other trying adventures, this group was given refuge by the Khan of Khiva in a living compound called Ak Metchet, close to the capital city Khiva. Here they could establish a viable faith community—albeit with many in-group theological tensions—and live for a while in relative security and eventually even prosperity, enjoying acceptance and respect by the Muslim host society. These Mennonites tended gardens or found employment—often in the Khan's own projects—in carpentry and other skilled occupations. Epp, getting increasingly bizarre in his theological claims, lived in semi-isolation among them, forbidden to preach in the church but never formally excluded by the community, until his death in 1913.

Soon thereafter, in the context of the general turmoil of the early twentieth century, the Ak Metchet community suffered frequent harassment and violence, although it could maintain its Mennonite character until its members were forcibly removed as a group to Tadjikistan by Stalinist coercion in 1935.

Over thirty years ago, in a review article of the first major study of the Trek to appear in English, I challenged the author's characterization of the Trek as a failure, suggesting instead that Epp's excessive millenarianism did not constitute the essence of the Trek, which was, in my opinion, paradigmatic in many aspects of other Mennonite migrations in search of freedom to practice their faith through the centuries.[4] Ratliff further "rehabilitates" the Trek from long-prevailing extremely negative interpretations.

Paradoxically, however, I must now caution against underemphasizing Epp's leadership and other negative aspects of the Trek. It is in principle problematic to recast too radically the interpretation of events of some 130 years ago widely

4. Fred R. Belk, *The Great Trek of the Russian Mennonites to Central Asia 1880-1884* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1976), esp. 193-195. For the review, see Waldemar Janzen, "The Great Trek: Episode or Paradigm?" *MQR* 51 (April, 1977), 127-139.

held by many of the participants in those events, their contemporaries and their descendants. A few points to substantiate this caution must suffice: 1) It was Epp's millennial reckoning and projection of events that was at least partially responsible (together with the impending general military conscription) for the urgency of the Trek's departure in 1880 and largely determined its specific geographical destination (although Epp changed the latter en route); 2) The Aulie Ata group, by staying in Russia, did, after all, compromise the envisioned goal of escaping from all forms of military and alternative service; 3) The Ak Metchet group, although impressed by the much-respected teacher J. K. Penner's objections to Epp's teachings, decided to follow Epp's choice of course anyway (138-142) and was slow to reject his theological excesses: 4) Those "defecting" to America expressed by this very choice that they judged the Trek to have been a mistake; 5) It is hard to understand how a burden of silence and a sense of stigma could have weighed on Trek descendants for generations (xiii and epilogue), if the Trek had not provided considerable cause for negative evaluation.

Two long-lasting Mennonite faith communities (Aulie Ata and Ak Metchet) resulted in the end, developing in ways unintended by the Trek planners and leaders. We, together with the descendants of the participants, can and should praise God's gracious leading toward this end. On that basis, healing contacts between Trek descendants and the Muslim people of Khiva (now in Uzbekistan), such as Ratliff describes in his epilogue (233-239), are to be welcomed, and any respectful and positive Christian-Muslim interaction in our polarized world should certainly be embraced. On the other hand, the discovery that some Muslim people around Khiva still remember the Mennonites with respect, mainly for their gardening and carpentry skills, has but little to contribute to a fair assessment of the Trek. After all, no one has accused the Trek participants of poor craftsmanship or gardening skills, or of being bad neighbors. And the role of Ak Metchet as a place of refuge and peace was, by Ratliff's own account, rather brief before it turned into persecution and suffering. There is considerable tension between Ratliff's historical account of the often greatly troubled Mennonite experience at Ak Metchet in the body of the book, and the impression of that experience as a time of peaceful refuge among respectful and admiring Muslim neighbors, created in the epilogue. Yes, these Mennonites found protection from such violence as they experienced earlier at Lausan, but their approximately fifty years in Khiva were a time of limited toleration for a while, but also of much harassment and suffering.

My caution is further substantiated by the epic-like account of the Ak Metchet story written by Gustav Toews and recited by members of the youth choir at the fiftieth anniversary of Ak Metchet in 1934 (appendix A, 243-269). While it highlights the faithfulness of the community and the oft-experienced help of God, it also lists a litany of suffering, injustice and persecution.

To claim that the Trek was a "successful example of Mennonite expansion into a frontier" (238), a view promoted by some participants in a recent North American Mennonite tour to Khiva, seems just as insupportable as the earlier summary condemnation. Such a view makes light of the great sufferings and many deaths—especially of children and old people—and the desperately

painful struggles of conscience on the part of many originally loyal followers of Claas Epp. We must not go too far, therefore, in "rehabilitating" a venture in Mennonite history that should rightly be remembered, freshly and fairly assessed, but not ever repeated.

After highlighting Ratliff's masterful presentation and attaching a modest caution for the Mennonite community, I conclude with what I consider the most outstanding attribute of the book under review: its irenic spirit. Ratliff's mode of writing history and telling story is itself a remarkable feat. In his book there are neither villains nor saints: only human beings. Not that wisdom and folly, good and evil, are lost in a valueless ethical relativism, but neither is anyone vilified, not even Claas Epp. I appreciate it especially that the author, although reticent in sharing his personal beliefs, takes religious convictions seriously in their own right, without any condescending attempt to "explain" them from the vantage point of sociology, psychology or some other extraneous perspective.

Canadian Mennonite University WALDEMAR JANZEN

Between Horse & Buggy and Four-Wheel Drive: Change and Diversity among Mennonite Settlements in Belize, Central America. Edited by Carel Roessingh and Tanja Plasil. Amsterdam: VU University Press. 2009. Pp. 222.

Between 2002 and 2007, Carel Roessingh led a team of nine ethnographers—all women enrolled in master's programs at the Free University and the University of Amsterdam—who lived as participant-observers in five Mennonite communities in Belize: Blue Creek, Shipyard, Spanish Lookout, Lower Barton Creek and Esperanza. Their goal was to examine the stereotypical notion that conservative Mennonite groups are "an ideal community, locked away in a nostalgic past" (13). They examined the relationship of these groups to "modernity" and tried to account for the differences and evolutionary changes they observed by considering each community's history of settlement; relation to other groups, including transnational ones; and changes in *Ordnung*, especially in regard to accepting new technology.

As "outsider" (i.e., non-Mennonite) researchers, they hoped to notice and understand features that previous "insider" (i.e., Mennonite) researchers, such as Cal Redekop and Royden Loewen, have missed. Because of the researchers' Dutch native language and European appearance, they felt that they were regarded as "half-Mennonites." Because they came from an entirely different context, the women researchers also felt that they were "half male" in that the men of the community were free to talk with them. The book excels in ethnographic description and in differentiating one group from another.

The Blue Creek Mennonite community in northern Belize has become the most culturally mainstream group, thanks to early difficulties in the settlement of 1958, when the Old Colony Mennonites called for help from the Evangelical Mennonite Church in Canada, and soon chose rubber tire tractors over steel rim ones in order to clear the hilly land. That led almost immediately to more

conservative settlers moving to the Shipyard colony or, in more recent years, to Bolivia. Those who remained at Blue Creek have become virtually like their Canadian counterparts, with an *Ordnung* that tolerates mainstream clothing, television, computer games, heavy equipment, higher education and material prosperity. Much travel between Canada and Belize encourages continual change.

Their neighbors in Shipyard, a bit farther south, have maintained a stricter *Ordnung* and a rather sharp separation from Belizeans and other Mennonites, as embodied in distinctive dress and horse and buggy transportation (although allowing steel rim tractors). The Shipyard chapter focuses on the way the church hierarchy maintains community control through teaching in church services and implementing excommunication. This chapter excels in a detailed description of a church service and in interviews with excommunicated members, who have formed their own informal church in Shipyard in a quest for more personal Bible study and devotion. It is not clear that the emergence of a rival congregation within the colony is a harbinger of larger changes in this very conservative group.

Spanish Lookout, a Kleine Gemeinde community in central and western Belize, has succeeded in maintaining its traditional fellowship, despite its material success, acceptance of technology, interaction with the larger Belizean community, and toleration of a second, different set of Evangelical Mennonite churches within its boundaries. They welcome non-Mennonite visitors and customers; the men sometimes marry mestizos; the women sometimes work outside the home; and, like Blue Creek, the colony tries to meet international trade standards for the commodities that they export. Agricultural products from Spanish Lookout sustain the entire nation of Belize.

The very small Springfield settlement at Upper Barton Creek, in a very remote area of south central Belize, is the most conservative, separatist community of Mennonites in Belize, as symbolized by its distance from the Hummingbird Highway. It was founded and is sustained by people who left Shipyard and other colonies, desiring a still more conservative *Ordnung*, which excludes even tractors of any kind. These Mennonites pursue an "ideal of hardship" (154), related to the curse on the fallen Adam and Eve, Anabaptist martyrdom and Mennonite suffering in Ukraine. The community reaches out to others only by taking produce, in modest amounts, to the capital city of Belmopan, and by welcoming a few non-Mennonite neighbors to their local market. Just as the liberal congregation in Shipyard represents a thoughtful, more liberal spirituality, so the Barton Creek Mennonites articulate a thoughtful, more conservative spirituality (assuming that Shipyard represents the most historically traditional Old Colony experience).

The study of the Beachy Amish (Amish Mennonite) mission at Esperanza village in western Belize is asymmetrical in relation to the other studies. It focuses on Swiss-Alsatian-U.S. Mennonites rather than Dutch-Prussian-Russian-Canadian Mennonites; it studies a traditional missionary endeavor rather than an established Mennonite community; and it focuses almost entirely on the few expatriate, American missionary families, temporarily resident in Belize, rather

than on their Belizean "converts," who presumably constitute a new Mennonite community in the making. The Beachy Mennonite presence stems from a foreign service project of the U.S. church following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Hattie in 1961. The Beachy Amish came to help with reconstruction, stayed, and continue to evangelize native Belizeans, most of whom are already Christians. Why the researchers did not focus on the oldest Beachy Amish community in Hattieville, which is a new, native Belizean Mennonite church, independent of missionary leadership, is not explained.

Other questions arise. The book never clarifies the nature and work of the missionaries from the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Canada, even though their service work and prosetylizing has led to the establishment of new congregations in both Blue Creek and Spanish Lookout. Nor does the book do justice to the work of the Mennonite Center in Belize City, sponsored by U.S. Mennonites, which was crucial in helping the Mennonite colonies market their agricultural commodities, thereby integrating their work into the Belize national economy.

Although the book mentions that Blue Creek Mennonites had the contract for expanding the Belize national airport, it does not mention that they have also constructed highways for the government, and it also does not cover developments following the discovery of rich oil deposits in Spanish Lookout. Aside from questions of economic prosperity and technological change, such developments raise important questions about the "privileged" political status of the Mennonite colonies in this developing country, and about their negotiations with the Belize government—the kind of relationship that conservative Mennonites have historically been wary of. Charges that the Mennonite colonies are involved in the international drug trade also go unmentioned, although they surely affect any idealized view of Mennonites.

Some technical elements annoy. The book needs rigorous editing for a North American audience. What is a "chemical store" in Springfield (159)? What is "the shepherd's prayer" (186)? Or what does this mean: "Conform the Anabaptists, the Beachy Amish Mennonites believe . . ." (175)? The book includes many long, quoted passages in German, but gives their English translations only in notes at the end of each chapter. The chapters are presented as discretely different studies, resulting in much repetition of background information. And too often the analysis of meaning consists of citations from established thinkers and researchers, lacking direct application to the Mennonite materials that precede or follow. Also, since this is a cultural study, the photographs seem few and small.

The editors conclude with an upbeat view of all of these Mennonite communities. Despite disputes and divisions, all of the groups are very successful in "keeping the young in the faith. In their own way they are able to reconcile tradition and modernity through making selective use of modernity, adopting the techniques and practices useful to them while rejecting things that threaten the survival of their communities" (207).

Goshen College ERVIN BECK

War, Peace, and Social Conscience: Guy F. Hershberger and Mennonite Ethics. By Theron F. Schlabach. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press. 2009. Pp. 724. $39.99.

This biography is Theron Schlabach's second contribution to the Studies in Anabaptist History series sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society. Schlabach joined the faculty at Goshen College in 1965, the very year that his subject, Guy F. Hershberger (1896-1989), retired after forty years of teaching at the same institution. If anyone is well placed to reflect on Hershberger's life and work, it is Schlabach. He has produced a nuanced portrait that will be appreciated by readers who are intimately familiar with the issues Hershberger addressed, readers who know him only through his more significant writings, and readers who are interested in learning more about the development of contemporary Mennonite thought and practice.

Although Guy F. Hershberger received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Iowa, and although in his prime he was, as Schlabach put it, "North American Mennonites' foremost ethicist" (408), above all else he was one of the leading North American Mennonite "churchmen" in the middle of the twentieth century. Like his colleague Harold S. Bender, Hershberger shaped the church through much more than his academic work.

Schlabach clearly succeeds in demonstrating Hershberger's significance. Hershberger articulated a peace stance that was clearly distinguishable from Christian realists such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian pacifists who supported nonviolent resistance, not to mention Fundamentalists within his own tradition who advocated withdrawal and strict separation from the world. And Hershberger played an instrumental role in key institutions within his Mennonite Church conference, including the Committee on Industrial Relations, the Peace Problems Committee and the Mennonite Community Association. Yet this overarching goal of emphasizing Hershberger's significance is somewhat in tension with a crucial insight that Schlabach returns to throughout the volume: Hershberger was focused on the collective witness of his church, not on his own ideas or contribution to that witness. Despite all the references in this book to a "Hershbergian" way of thinking, Hershberger made it clear that his efforts were part of a much larger project, and he often deferred and gave voice to the consensus of fellow believers. Schlabach's account suggests that this was a consequence of both his ecclesiology and his personality.

Schlabach structures his account around five parts: Hershberger's growing up years ("Preparation of a Churchman"), his signal contributions when he emerged as a church leader and scholar ("Forging a Mennonite Ethical Consensus"), his role in the development of alternative social models to be embodied by the church ("Visions for Life and Witness as a People of God"), his response to theoretical and personal challenges ("Several Particular Encounters"), and the development of his thinking in his later years ("Teacher, Scholar, Biblical Pacifist"). The book is ordered chronologically, although the chapters in the middle parts are thematic, and so at times readers need to be prepared to shift back and forth through different periods of Hershberger's life.

One significant theme is Hershberger's commitment to "doing justice rather than demanding justice" (141). While his concern with faithfulness to the ideal of nonresistance was (and often still is) dismissed as being socially irresponsible or preoccupied with perfectionism, or both, Hershberger insisted that it was a strategy for truly effective engagement with the world. He thought of the church as the "conscience of society" (110), acting as "colonies of heaven" (182). His driving passion was to help the church build alternative social models through which it could bear witness to the world. Hershberger thus contributed to programs that could embody this alternative vision by proposing something positive, rather than simply rejecting something viewed as negative. Examples included moving beyond the rejection of military service to establishing Civilian Public Service camps during World War II, and moving beyond the rejection of life insurance to establishing Mennonite Mutual Aid. Hershberger was also instrumental in a variety of less institutional initiatives, including moving beyond the rejection of industrialism to promoting the Mennonite Community movement, and moving beyond the rejection of labor unions to promoting alternative business models capable of maintaining healthy labor relations.

In dealing with this range of issues, Hershberger demonstrated flexibility and pragmatism. As Schlabach put it, Hershberger had a "lifetime genius for taking ethical thought right to where church members lived day by day" (218). He "was never a perfectionist about details" (225). And the programs he supported "were forums not so much for arriving at 'solutions' as for practicing discernment and discipleship" (332). His engagement with Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement even led him to reconsider his position on nonviolent resistance. When examined more closely, Hershberger failed to conform to the stereotypes offered by his critics. Beyond the church initiatives noted above, I was surprised to see the extent to which Hershberger interacted directly with politicians, including making formal submissions to congressional committees in Washington. One of his sermons was even placed in the *Congressional Record* by an appreciative member of Congress!

At the same time, Schlabach points out that Hershberger frequently "ignored any danger of 'devils in the details,'" refusing to recognize the many ways that church institutions were susceptible to the same kinds of challenges faced by any other institutions (313). Indeed, Schlabach does not hesitate to note inconsistencies and ironies in Hershberger's thinking and life. Perhaps not surprisingly, however, at times his character flaws make Hershberger all the more endearing. The same goes for details of his daily life—dealing with the trauma of having three children die in infancy, being preoccupied with earning enough money to support his family, missing deadlines, writing excessively long and defensive letters to fellow scholars, and failing to complete a lifelong research project on Quaker pacifism. Schlabach's writing is quite engaging when he explores the various dimensions of Hershberger's identity as a husband and father in addition to his identity as a scholar and church leader. One disappointment is that only a handful of pages are devoted to his identity as a classroom teacher.

Hershberger was certainly a prolific writer, contributing hundreds of articles and reports to church papers and agencies in addition to his scholarly publications. Schlabach spends considerable time exploring Hershberger's two key books, *War, Peace, and Nonresistance* (1944) and *The Way of the Cross in Human Relationships* (1958). In addition, he unpacks several key speeches, pamphlets and articles, including: "Is Alternative Service Desirable and Possible?" (1935), "Nonresistance and Industrial Conflict" (1939), "Christian Relationships to the State and Community" (1943) and "A Mennonite Analysis of the Montgomery Bus Boycott" (1958). Schlabach also relies heavily upon extensive archival research and personal interviews, including dozens of interviews he recorded with Hershberger, family members and colleagues. All of these sources are meticulously documented in the extensive endnotes and bibliography (a comprehensive bibliography compiled by Hershberger's daughter, Elizabeth, was published in *Kingdom, Cross and Community*, a 1976 festschrift edited by J. Richard Burkholder and Calvin W. Redekop). Researchers will also appreciate the detailed index.

This book provides crucial context for ongoing debates, including the competing approaches to political engagement offered by John Howard Yoder and J. Lawrence Burkholder. And clearly many of the key issues that occupied Hershberger continue to be relevant today. These include the possibility of distinguishing between military and police functions, the challenge of building community in an urban setting marked by racial division, and the use of coercive methods such as boycotts to address labor and other justice issues. Schlabach has made a significant contribution to the church by telling this story.

Mennonite Central Committee Canada–Ottawa Office PAUL C. HEIDEBRECHT

A School on the Prairie: A Centennial History of Hesston College 1909-2009. By John E. Sharp. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House (copublished with Herald Press, Scottdale, Pa.). 2009. Pp. 503. $29.95.

A School on the Prairie, John E. Sharp's 2009 centennial history of Hesston College, chronicles the growth of this important post-secondary institution, the only two-year college established by the "Old" Mennonite Church in North America. Added to the growing body of literature on twentieth-century American Mennonite institutions and leaders, this volume reinforces the pleasure and value of such books for taking stock of the denomination's busy previous century. The book also illustrates the perennial historian's dilemma of how to strike the right balance between comprehensive coverage and critical discernment.

Established in 1909 in central Kansas by Swiss-German Mennonite settlers from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, as "a school . . . in the West in which Bible work is made a specialty," Hesston College emerges in these pages as faithful in honoring its founders' vision, flexible in meeting its constituents' changing requirements, and, through the sacrificial service of generations of committed employees, capable even in the leanest of times of making a significant impact on

student intellect and vocation. Himself a Hesston alumnus and instructor, Sharp brings an acquisitive researcher's eye and amiable reporter's voice to telling Hesston's story.

The volume contains fifteen chapters supplemented by multiple appendices (a list of faculty and staff members is unfortunately limited to the year 2009). A pleasant feature of the book is the placement of numerous black-and-white captioned illustrations immediately adjacent to relevant passages within the text.

The author has apportioned slightly more than a third of the book to the school's founding circumstances and opening years. Sharp gives ample attention to the institution's Kansas historical context, including the nineteenth-century displacement of Native Americans from the territory; to the school's founding Pennsylvania families, particularly the Hesses and the Erbs; and to the enormous inaugural efforts of administrators, faculty and students in the college's first decade. Subsequent decades from 1919 on are covered in separate chapters, culminating in the book's final pages, which describe the 2005 inauguration of the eighth president, Howard Keim, and the 2008 dedication of the Friesen Center for the Visual Arts.

While *A School on the Prairie* does not neglect the dynamic variety of student life, its primary agenda is Hesston's institutional and administrative development. Sharp details the selection and leadership of successive presidents; documents campus buildings' construction or destruction (or both, in the case of the venerable landmark Green Gables); and describes numerous innovative experiments in curriculum and student development, for which Hesston—either despite, or perhaps because of, its modest size—seems to possess a special knack (an aviation program, the interdisciplinary Foundation Studies curriculum, January interterm, "super peer" ambassadors to congregations, and scores of Central American and Caribbean students hosted through a national "Peace Scholars" program, to cite a few).

Among the attentive portraits Sharp draws of Hesston administrations is his insightful treatment of the blithe and broad-minded fourth president, Tilman R. Smith, who turned the school toward less contentious relations with the Mennonite Board of Education and, with the capable Dean Paton Yoder and others, oversaw Hesston's accreditation by the North American Association of Colleges and Universities in 1964. Sharp also conveys with infectious enthusiasm the stimulating environment created on campus in the 1970s by President Laban Peachey and his team of visionary colleagues. And, in an illustration of how a painful institutional memory can require the passage of eighty years to finally be handled publicly, Sharp offers a sensitive but frank treatment of the confusion and trauma occasioned in 1930, when Daniel H. Bender, Hesston's revered president for twenty-two years, suddenly resigned upon confession of committing sexual abuse.

The greatest strength of this book is the author's relish and skill in relaying human stories. Having chosen in these pages to include a great deal of data related to Hesston's operational history, Sharp fortunately has also developed compelling vignettes of the people populating Hesston's landscape. These human stories reveal the college's personality and priorities in ways that

enrollment figures and construction costs cannot. Sharp begins virtually every chapter in storytelling mode, opening one section with an account of town residents' angry nighttime planting of an American flag on the college gazebo in 1917, or another with a more humorous nocturnal exploit, the foiled heist of cinnamon rolls from Hess Hall kitchen by two senior women on the eve of the 1981 commencement. Sharp has a gift for identifying the telling specifics of human drama and for narrating them effectively. He is adept not simply at collecting historical information, but also at convincingly assembling colors, sounds, characters and atmosphere—even weather—to reanimate a long-ago event or turning point. Sharp's understated "You Are There" reportage avoids overheated rhetoric, anachronism or exaggerated effects (as editor of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin,* he had promoted a similar imaginative approach, inviting guest writers to contribute to a column about pivotal past events called "I Wish I Had Been There"). Sharp also rightly follows here his instinct for odd, ironic or even absurd occurrences, since such happenings can reveal community truths (as an example from the 1920s, the children of an erudite science instructor and vehement opponent of natural selection, J. D. Charles, reluctantly but stoically agreed to donate their pet cat, Fluffy, for dissection in their father's classroom laboratory).

My main criticism of the book is that its brimming collection of well-researched information—rich in detailed stories and thorough to a fault—cries out to be shaped by a governing conceit or thesis. All college historians face the confounding challenge of how, within a reasonable number of pages, to tell an institution's whole story while placing meaningful limits on that story's wayward abundance. If, in the drive for documentary thoroughness, an author neglects to impose some analytical perspective on the information, the resulting history may report events without explaining what they mean. *A School on the Prairie* suggests that its author confronted but did not completely resolve this quandary of how to satisfy the competing goals of comprehensiveness and interpretation. One important advantage of providing a thematic overlay for such a book is that it allows a writer to identify patterns, which in turn can suggest the overall import of a college's first century. Among patterns visible in *A School on the Prairie* that might have suggested a unifying thematic framework would be Hesston College's nonconformist bent, demonstrated and articulated repeatedly in times of war but evident as well in its faculty's willingness to pursue unconventional pedagogical ideas; Hesston's powerful influence in pointing its graduates toward service in the Mennonite Church, even as the college on occasion sparred with church powers-that-be; or the role played by Hesston in its relationship to other Mennonite enterprises, such as Bethel College, its General Conference Mennonite neighbor seven miles down the road, or its "Old" Mennonite sister schools, particularly Goshen College, which appears to have played the simultaneous role of educational collaborator and poacher of faculty talent.

Some textual and organizational lapses in the book suggest that with time (invariably in short supply as an immovable centennial deadline approaches), the manuscript would have benefited from an additional round of editing. The decision to divide chapters into brief topical units under bold subheadings

interrupts the continuity of narrative, and may have proved one impediment to drawing thematic connections within and across chapters. Another problem, in contrast to the book's carefully crafted anecdotal set pieces, involves passages whose narrative style suggests uninflected transcription from research notes rather than selective evaluation and reassembly of gathered material. Finally, a few repetitions and typos have evaded the proofreaders; and the index, while helpful for what it offers, remains incomplete.

But to quibble on stylistic points, or to pine for a well-defined interpretive point of view, is not to discount this book's value as a carefully researched compendium on Hesston College. *A School on the Prairie* makes Hesston College history available not only to constituents, but also to loyalists of other Mennonite colleges, who may know Hesston alumni but tend to be woefully uninformed about their sister school. It contributes a century's worth of new material and sources for further exploration and analysis by scholars. It helps bring to life the remarkably genial Hesston milieu in which many vibrant careers got their start. And, ultimately, through Sharp's mastery of the well-told vignette, *A School on the Prairie* achieves the author's stated vision for the book, that "what will emerge most clearly are the people who make this story."

Evanston, Illinois SUSAN FISHER MILLER

Disturbing Divine Behavior: Troubling Old Testament Images of God. By Eric Siebert. Minneapolis: Fortress. 2009. Pp. 260. $22.

Jesus unequivocally commands his followers to love their enemies and to never engage in violence. By contrast, some passages of the Old Testament depict Yahweh as commanding his followers to slaughter their enemies mercilessly, women and children included. How is a person who believes that Jesus is the definitive revelation of God to respond to such ferociously violent depictions of God? This is the central question addressed in Eric Seibert's excellent book, *Disturbing Divine Behavior: Troubling Old Testament Images of God*. Though Seibert is a first-rate Old Testament scholar, this book is written in a clear and nontechnical style that makes it readily accessible to laypeople. While Seibert passionately defends a particular explanation of passages depicting God as engaging in violent behavior, he is always fair in his review and critique of other perspectives. And, perhaps most important, though it is obvious Seibert reveres God's written Word, he is nevertheless admirably honest in his refusal to accept easy, pious-sounding solutions to the problem he's wrestling with. As will be made clear at the end of this review, I have serious reservations about Seibert's proposed resolution. Yet, I have nothing but admiration for the manner in which he arrived at and defended his proposal in this book.

Disturbing Divine Behavior is divided into three parts, each containing four chapters. In Part I Seibert examines the problem of God's disturbing behavior in the narrative portions of the Old Testament and explores various ways Christians have tried to come to grips with this material. Right out of the gate it becomes clear that Siebert's approach is refreshingly different from what one often finds among Christian scholars who engage this issue. Rather than

attempting to soften the barbarism of the Old Testament's divine violence, Seibert frankly acknowledges that some texts depict God as "an instant executioner" and a "mass murderer." Appropriately enough, Seibert lays particular emphasis on the ruthless genocide of the Canaanites that was allegedly commanded by Yahweh. If we confront this vexing issue authentically, this is precisely the sort of honesty and boldness we need.

After reviewing and critiquing a variety of proposed resolutions of the Old Testament's "texts of terror," Seibert proceeds in Part II to unfold his own solution. He begins by introducing readers to the historical-critical approach to the Old Testament, primarily for the purpose of demonstrating that not all the events ascribed to God in the Bible are necessarily historical. Ancient historiographers, he argues, were often motivated more by the political and religious concerns of their day than by a desire to record past events accurately. Seibert then argues more specifically that the narratives involving divine violence are not completely historical. In Seibert's view, "[a]cknowledging that there are some things in the Bible that did not happen, or did not happen as described, effectively exonerates God from certain kinds of morally questionable behavior" (112). This, in a nutshell, is the heart of Seibert's solution.

Finally, in Part III Seibert gives more specific guidance on how Christians can responsibly deal with troublesome biblical texts. Among other things, Seibert argues that responsible Bible readers need to critically discern the extent to which "the textual God" corresponds to "the actual God." The strongest aspect of this final section, in my opinion, is the case Seibert makes for a "christocentric hermeneutic," which stipulates that Jesus is the central criteria for determining the level of correspondence between the "textual" and "actual God" (185-187). I was puzzled, however, as to why Seibert waited so long to put forth this all-important hermeneutic. Had he done so earlier, I suspect it would have significantly alleviated a concern I had for the first nine chapters of this book: that Seibert's thesis was overly dependent on his personal intuition about what God must be like along with the disputable conclusions of the skeptical-tending branch of historical-critical scholarship he seems to find most compelling, at least as it concerns those narratives that involve divine violence.

Seibert ends his book with a helpful chapter offering guidance to religious leaders on how to teach and preach from troubling biblical texts. Among other things, Seibert rightly notes the urgent need for Christian leaders to emphatically repudiate biblical texts that legitimize violence. Remaining piously silent about this material only ensures that people will continue to cite these texts to give divine authority to their own sinful violent inclinations.

I found myself in complete agreement with the heart of Seibert's book. For example, I couldn't agree more that the God revealed in Jesus Christ is a God of unconditional love and total nonviolence and that this portrait of God contradicts the portrait of a genocidal deity found in the conquest narratives. At the same time, and as I noted above, I have deep reservations concerning Seibert's claim that we must dismiss as nonhistorical all passages involving divine violence. The heart of my reservation can be expressed in three closely related points.

First, it seems to me that Seibert's proposed solution comes at an exceedingly high price. If we decide we must dismiss as nonhistorical all texts depicting God as commanding or engaging in violence, we are going to end up dismissing a *great deal* of the Bible! For as much as we might like to deny it, the biblical narrative largely turns on, and is woven together by, violent divine judgments. Subtract from the Old Testament narrative events such as the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the destructive plagues on Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, the falling of the walls of Jericho and the judgment of the Israelites in the Babylonian and Assyrian conquests and captivities, and it seems to me there is not much of a coherent narrative that remains.

Second, I'm not sure Seibert is able to defend his thesis in a perfectly consistent and coherent manner. For example, Seibert correctly observes that "[s]ome of the most beautiful and moving portrayals of God are those in which God speaks words of promise and hope to people in exile" (230). I agree. The trouble is that these beautiful portrayals of Yahweh as a merciful God are inextricably bound up with the harsh portrayals of Yahweh as the one who judged them by sending them into exile in the first place. It's not clear to me how we can affirm as inspired God's beautiful promise to relent from his judgment and bring his children back home if we at the same time deny the divine inspiration of God's original judgment that banished them.

The consistency and coherence of Seibert's thesis is also in question when he concedes that "God may resort to violence at the end of the age" (253) as he passes final judgment upon the wicked. Despite this eschatological violence, Seibert insists that "our description of God as one who does not engage in violence in historical time still stands" (ibid.). I frankly do not see how it does. If engaging in violence (in some sense) at the end of this age is not out of character for God, why think it to be so *during* this age? Indeed, why could one not argue, as does Daniel Card, that God's historical judgments simply anticipate God's eschatological judgment, similar to the way Jesus' healing miracles anticipate the eschatological restoration of creation? (See D. Card, "The Case for Eschatological Continuity" in C. S. Cowles et. al., ed., *Show Them No Mercy* [Zondervan, 2003]).

Finally, and in my opinion most importantly, it seems to me that Seibert's proposal creates a rather serious christological quagmire. It seems clear that Jesus accepted the traditional Jewish view that the Old Testament in its entirety was divinely inspired. Throughout his teachings Jesus virtually equates the voice of Scripture with the voice of God. He frequently, and without exception, cites Scripture as the final, unassailable court of appeal. He even goes so far as to insist that heaven and earth would pass away before the least mark of the law could pass away. Most significantly, as many have noted, Jesus' understanding of his identity and mission was deeply rooted in the Old Testament, to the point that he saw himself as the fulfillment of all that had been written (e.g., Lk. 4:18-21).

Consistent with this high view of Scripture, Jesus alludes to an assortment of figures, cities and events in the Old Testament as historical, including some that are embedded in narratives involving divine judgment. For example, Jesus presumes the truthfulness of the biblical account of the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the divine judgment of Tyre and Sidon as he warns

his audience of an impending judgment that would be worse than these if they did not repent. Most scholars agree that the judgment Jesus was referring to concerned the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. (a point that Seibert is understandably somewhat uncomfortable with [258]).

So far as I can see, to accept Seibert's thesis, I would be forced to conclude that Jesus was fundamentally mistaken in all of this. While I do not believe the Son of God was omniscient while on earth (Mk. 13:32; Lk.2:52), I find it very hard to imagine him being wrong on a theological matter as foundational as this one. Of course, if there was absolutely no other way of preserving the revelation of the nonviolent God in Christ from being compromised with the Old Testament's portraits of a vengeful warrior deity, I would have no choice but to accept this. But if there is any other way of accomplishing this without having to correct Jesus' theology of the Old Testament, it seems to me this would be a preferable route to take.

While I, of course, cannot begin to discuss it here, I will conclude by simply registering my conviction that there may be an alternative route. As I shall argue in a forthcoming work (tentatively titled *Jesus Versus Jehovah?*), when we interpret passages that depict Yahweh as engaging in violence through the lens of the Incarnation and especially from the perspective of Calvary, I believe there is a plausible way of affirming that God in some sense involves himself in violence for redemptive purposes while at the same time denying that God ever actually engages in violence. Moreover, I believe there is a plausible way of accepting these disturbing passages as divinely inspired and as reflecting actual historical events while at the same time adamantly repudiating their barbaric depictions of Yahweh as a divine warrior.

The extent to which this future project will be considered plausible remains to be seen. In the meantime, I enthusiastically commend to you the work of Eric Seibert as an honest, bold, scholarly and insightful wrestling with this supremely important issue.

Minneapolis, Minn. GREGORY A. BOYD

Yon Far Country: A Social and Personal Memoir of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. By Sara Stambaugh. Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press. 2009. Pp. 345. $32.

Yon Far Country is a memoir of a woman born and raised in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, but it is also a memoir of a particular community. The novelist Sara Stambaugh (1936-2002), daughter of Evelyn Hershey Stambaugh and Clarence Stambaugh, was born in the town of New Holland and spent most of her childhood life in surrounding Lancaster County. Today Lancaster is known for its Amish population and attracts thousands of tourists every year. Stambaugh describes a different era in *Yon Far Country*, one in which Mennonites owned more of the farmland and tourists were fewer in number. The book depicts this earlier time in the rural country culture and in the Mennonite Church

community in Lancaster. The book is also a fascinating window into the early life of a writer who, despite moving to Canada and living there most of her life, still felt rooted in and connected to her childhood homeland.

Yon Far Country is divided into three sections. In the first, Stambaugh describes her Mennonite forebears (Landises, Denlingers, Ebys and Hersheys) and kinship networks, nineteenth-century farm life, and her mother's childhood and teenage years. The second section focuses on her father's "fancy Dutch" (that is, nonsectarian) background, her parents' marriage, her family's job-related move to Lorain, Ohio, when Stambaugh was a young child, and the family's return to Lancaster County. The final section is about Stambaugh's growing up years in East Lampeter Township and later, the area around the town of Lititz. She also writes about her journey away from Lancaster County—undergraduate years at Beaver College in Philadelphia, graduate school in Minnesota, and her eventual relocation to western Canada to teach English literature at the University of Alberta.

Particularly interesting was Stambaugh's chapter on changes in the Mennonite Church at the end of the nineteenth century. These changes were also the subject of her first novel, *I Hear the Reaper's Song* (1984). Stambaugh's great-aunt Barbara Hershey was killed by an oncoming train at a railroad crossing while coming home from a party in 1896. Enos Barge, the young man who was with her, died the following day. The tragedy caused a large number of young people to join the church at a much earlier age than was customary. This paved the way for a series of revival meetings, which had been opposed by Mennonites in the early 1890s, and also ushered in stricter dress and behavior regulations. The revival's impact was not, in Stambaugh's opinion, "officially recognized" by the Lancaster Conference (84), and her older relatives and their contemporaries did not often discuss the revival, even though it greatly influenced the Lancaster Conference during the twentieth century. Not everyone had agreed with the changes the revival brought, including Stambaugh's grandfather, Silas Hershey, who was the protagonist in *I Hear the Reaper's Song*.

Besides discussing changes in the Mennonite Church and her family connection to them, Stambaugh portrays a different Lancaster County countryside and culture in *Yon Far Country*. During her grandfather's time, inns were gathering places, and moderate drinking was accepted among Mennonites before the revival and the temperance movement. As automobiles became a new mode of transportation in the late 1920s, the surface of Lancaster's roads changed. Stambaugh's father was a truck driver, and he hauled the gravel that first covered dirt roads near New Holland. He later helped the road crew that constructed an underpass at the railroad crossing where Barbara Hershey and Enos Barge had been killed years earlier. There were also different cultural expectations around communication devices. When Stambaugh was growing up, telephones in most homes were only used when necessary—anything more was frivolous—and some towns had party lines. Her family had a telephone, but it was for her father's business use only.

Even some place names in the county were slightly different. The town most current Lancaster County residents know as "Gap" was referred to as "the Gap"

by earlier generations. "The Gap" was short for "the Gap in the Hills" where early roads and railroads had been built. Today's Lincoln Highway used to be "the Pike" because it was once a turnpike, and Old Philadelphia Pike used to be "The Old Road." The recent changes in its countryside and culture—tourism industry, different resident cultures, renamed roads, huge volume of traffic—make Lancaster County a different place than the one in which Stambaugh grew up. In the final chapter of *Yon Far Country*, she notes: "More than distance separates me from the life I grew up in" (341). She also points this out in her choice of the book's title, which comes from a line in a poem by A.E. Housman. The past is a far country to which one cannot return:

> Into my heart an air that kills
> From yon far country blows;
> What are those blue remembered hills,
> What spires, what farms are those?
>
> That is the land of lost content,
> I see it shining plain,
> The happy highways where I went
> And cannot come again.

Yon Far Country contains a wealth of information and is a well-researched social and personal memoir. In addition to covering some Lancaster Mennonite history, Stambaugh gives attention to the social and religious dynamics in other parts of the county, including the city of Lancaster, where she once worked as a waitress at the Hotel Brunswick. *Yon Far Country* is also well-crafted. The language is smooth, clear and often fun to read aloud, which brings out Stambaugh's humorous understatements. At a few places the text lags, but this may be because the book was published after Stambaugh's death, and the author was absent from part of the editing process.

Yon Far Country is about growing up and moving away from one's home community, but it is also about how the home community itself changes. Although Stambaugh lived at considerable geographic distance from Lancaster County, and wrote as its cultural distance was widening for her, *Yon Far Country* has surprisingly little nostalgia. While it is clear that she misses the Lancaster County of her childhood and would like to see the farmland respected and cared for, Stambaugh passes no judgment on whether or not the changes in Lancaster are good or bad; she merely says they are different. Her tone is earnest, careful and thoughtful. She understands that time passes, and changes come. Stambaugh's connection to and love for her homeland, however, remain constant in *Yon Far Country*, as well as in her other written works.

Quarryville, Pa. EILEEN R. KINCH

Gefahr oder Segen? Die Täufer in der politischer Kommunication [Schriften zur politischer Kommunication, 5]. By Astrid von Schlachta. Göttingen: V & R Unipress. 2009. Pp. 484.

This book considers the long process of political interaction between Anabaptists and rulers that eventually secured the permanent presence of Anabaptists in several regions of Germanic Europe. It concentrates on the 200 years following the first wave of annihilating persecutions that threatened the very existence of Anabaptist congregations, extending to the full toleration of Anabaptists by Enlightenment governments and rulers at the end of the eighteenth century. The regional stories were very different from the Netherlands to the Hanseatic cities to the Rhineland, to the Prussian-Polish lands of the Vistula basin, to Switzerland and the Palatinate, to Hungary and Siebenbürgen.

With the imperial mandate of 1529 Anabaptism was outlawed in the Holy Roman Empire, punishable by death or exile; the Reformed governments of Switzerland promulgated similar decrees. In fact, these decrees were often not enforced by Protestant authorities in the empire and executions became exceptional in all jurisdictions toward the end of the sixteenth century. Beginning in 1555, Lutherans as well as Catholics could exercise their religion freely in the empire; but most territories were uniconfessional according to the religious persuasion of the ruler; the Imperial cities were biconfessional. Hence the religious freedom of believers was for the most part limited to a right to emigrate to territories where their religion was practiced. Reformed Protestantism subsequently established itself unofficially in a number of German Lutheran territories; and at the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648 Reformed, Lutherans and Catholics became the legally recognized religions of the empire. The Treaty of Westphalia also extended an ill-defined toleration to the private exercise of religion. Throughout this period Anabaptist congregations were in fact tolerated, as a matter of government privilege, in various territories. They were the major but not the only religious dissenters tolerated in regions of Germany—Schwenckfelders were present in Silesia from the early years of the Reformation; in the seventeenth century Quakers and Socinians appeared particularly on the fringes of Anabaptist congregations to which they had a certain appeal, and complicated the relations of Anabaptists and governments; later on Pietist conventicles challenged Protestant Orthodoxy, attracted Anabaptists and Anabaptist sympathizers, and often disturbed ad hoc arrangements that governments had made to tolerate Anabaptists.

The exceptional situation of Mennonite Anabaptists in the Netherlands from the 1570s onward transformed the circumstances of Anabaptist congregations in the northern parts of Germanic Europe. In the decades preceding the revolt of the Netherlands against Spain the Mennonites had been the most visible dissenters against the established Catholic Church and suffered the approximately 1,000 martyrdoms memorialized a century later in the *Martyrs Mirror* of Tieleman Jansz van Braght. The Reformed aristocrats and burghers who started the revolt against the Spanish crown were themselves a religious minority, at first no more numerous than the Mennonites, and they needed to

rally the support of other dissidents, Lutherans, Mennonites and religiously unaffiliated to prevail against the larger number of practicing Catholics. In this way the religious pluralism of the young Dutch Republic came into existence; the Dutch Mennonites were beneficiaries and sympathizers of the new order. Liberal Anabaptists in the Netherlands like the Waterlander congregations made substantial monetary contributions to the war effort of William of Orange. Mennonites asked in prayers for God's blessing on the rulers of the new country. Eventually the Mennonites became a minority group (always divided by recurrent internal schisms) in the Netherlands, including persons of wealth, and devoted themselves to assisting Protestant refugees throughout Europe, some of them fellow Anabaptists, but also Schwenckfelders, Huguenots and Waldensians.

The most extensive parts of Astrid von Schlachta's book explore the efforts of the Dutch Mennonites, often seconded by the Dutch government, to help the Anabaptists of Switzerland against waves of persecution inflicted upon them throughout the seventeenth century and extending into the eighteenth century by the Reformed governments of Switzerland, particularly Zurich and Bern. The situation of the Swiss Reformed seemed precarious in a period of aggressive Catholic missionary activity. Their attitude towards the Swiss Anabaptists was not too different from that of Zwingli in the years after 1525—by setting up a "special church" the Anabaptists had deserted the cause of the Reformation in a time of great peril.

The matter of whether the Mennonites were to be considered "a kind of Protestant," and whether the Dutch Mennonites and the Swiss Mennonites were of the same religious persuasion, became central to the different treatment they received in the seventeenth-century Netherlands and seventeenth-century Switzerland. Names were important in this respect; for the Swiss authorities their Anabaptists were *Wiedertäufer* (rebaptizers) involved in the German Peasants' War of 1525 and the rulers of communist and polygamous Münster for sixteen months in 1534 and 1535. For the Dutch their Anabaptists were Protestant "Mennonites" who had nothing to do with Müntzer and Münster, loyal citizens who made their contribution, primarily economic, to the common weal in the Netherlands. Astrid von Schlachta, whose specialty is Hutterite studies, is well acquainted with Anabaptist divisions and with the scholarship on the first fifty years of the Anabaptist movement that has emphasized these divisions. She traced the sympathetic accounts of the Anabaptists from their Spiritualist contemporary Sebastian Franck to the Pietist Gottfried Arnold's *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie*, which appeared in three volumes from 1699 to 1703. Arnold's work began a historiographical trend that pointed forward to Ernst Troeltsch and Harold S. Bender. Schlachta glides lightly over the inner-Mennonite controversies and divisions; and she does make the important point that the ignoring of these divisions was an important element in the self-defense of Mennonite spokesmen in the Netherlands and Switzerland. Recent scholarship has seen a dispute about the importance of the Seven Articles of Schleitheim (1527) in Anabaptist history. However important this early Swiss Anabaptist declaration may have been, some of its content left a permanent mark on the self-understanding of all early modern Mennonites (and Hutterites) and

their relation to the governments under which they lived. Specifically, characteristic Schleitheim principles included: rejection of war and violence as non-Christian behavior; refusal to swear oaths; and the belief that the holding of government office was not permissible for Christians. These beliefs were adopted by Dutch Mennonites, but only with the circulation of the account of Michael Sattler's martyrdom shortly after the death of Menno Simons. Menno himself believed that rulers could be Christians; and later Mennonites had a markedly more positive view of the temporal authorities than did Swiss Anabaptists or Hutterites. The beliefs of Swiss and Dutch Anabaptists became increasingly similar in the seventeenth century, which amounted to a Swiss reception of the ideas of the better educated and more prosperous Dutch. A milestone in this spread of Dutch influence was the translation of the Dutch Dordrecht Confession (1632) into German in 1664. The Dordrecht Confession was closer to being a universally received Anabaptist statement than the Schleitheim Articles.

The seventeenth-century Swiss Anabaptists lived under a regime of unremitting persecution. In 1614 the Zurich government executed the 70-year-old Anabaptist leader, Hans Landis of Richerswil. The Zurich authorities were dismayed at the outrage this created but determined to totally crush their Anabaptist movement, even insisting that Anabaptist emigration could only take place with government permission. In Bern after 1657 Anabaptist families were imprisoned in the "orphanage," a sort of workhouse-prison devoted to cloth manufacturing and to the indoctrination of the children in the Reformed religion. There was internal controversy in Bern about the harsh treatment of the Anabaptists, and Dutch intercession achieved permission for Bern Anabaptists to emigrate to the Palatinate, where the rulers were seeking settlers to rebuild their agrarian economy, which was devastated by the Thirty Years' War. In Bern territories Anabaptist villagers continued to enjoy the sympathy and support of their neighbors, the "Halb-Täufer," who often were influenced by Pietist preachers. The fluid lines between Anabaptism and Pietism in the Bern villages made the Anabaptists even more of a threat to the Bern government's objectives of territorial control and religious uniformity. The different conditions of life in Bern and the Palatinate contributed to the Amish schism in the 1690s. Around the same time, because of a combination of religious and economic factors in the Palatinate, Protestant immigrants were not sought so assiduously as before. Consequently, emigration to Pennsylvania became more appealing in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to the mixture of Mennonites, Quakers and Huguenots living there. In connection with Mennonite resettlement to Pennsylvania, one of the last surges of persecution in Bern involved a project of forced deportation of Bern Mennonites through the Netherlands to Pennsylvania in 1710. The Dutch Mennonites had been assisting their Swiss and German coreligionists to settle in America; but they and the Dutch government refused to cooperate with the Bern authorities in removing Anabaptists from Europe. The Bern authorities were informed that the moment their dissidents set foot on Dutch soil they would enjoy full personal and religious freedom. The Swiss governments seem to have been more than a little uneasy about their stance against currents of freedom of conscience that became ever stronger as the seventeenth century moved into the eighteenth century. But they insisted that

the Anabaptists' refusal to swear civic oaths and to defend their country in war made them bad citizens. The Dutch, on the other hand, compromised with the Mennonites, allowing formal affirmations in place of oaths and financial contributions in place of military service.

The Dutch toleration of the Mennonites became the model for a sort of Dutch Mennonite diaspora along the North Sea and Baltic coasts. In the early seventeenth century three new commercial cities, Friedrichstadt, Glückstadt and Altona, were established on the basis of general religious tolerance and with the object of attracting the business techniques of immigrants from the Netherlands. The rulers who founded them sought commercial advantages, particularly against Lutheran Hamburg, but, given the proximity of Altona to Hamburg, the barriers against Mennonites and other religious minorities were gradually relaxed in Hamburg itself. Further east, the Lutherans had a similar privileged position in Danzig; but Mennonites established themselves in the suburbs and gradually became too prosperous to be excluded from the life of the urban center. In the Vistula valley Dutch settlers, Mennonites among them, became important as builders of dikes and drainers of wetlands, skills that they brought with them from the Netherlands. In eighteenth-century Prussia Friedrich Wilhelm I was torn between the advantages of Mennonites to his economy, most strikingly in the Rhineland center of Krefeld, and their unavailability for military recruitment. The success of Mennonites in the trades sometimes worked against them and led to their expulsion on specious religious grounds, as in the case of the riots against the Mennonites in Rheydt in 1694; but Rheydt's loss turned out to be Krefeld's gain. Increasingly in these northern European regions relations between Mennonites and governments were more a matter of economics than of religion.

But the author is well aware that economic rationality did not always win the day in early modern Europe. The forced conversion of the Hutterites in Slovakia in the 1750s and 1760s, during which their elders were confined in cloisters and "re-educated" by Jesuit missionaries (and then pensioned, since their previous responsibilities rendered them unfit for ordinary work), occurred on the eve of the Enlightenment under Maria Theresa of Austria. At about the same time the Lutheran Siebenbürgers, newly won to the Hutterite beliefs, made a dramatic escape over the Carpathian Mountains in 1767 to Wallachia and Russia, in order to escape a similar fate. When Maria Theresa's enlightened despot son and co-regent, Joseph II, published a patent of toleration for his lands in 1781, the only outcome was the vain attempt of a minority of younger Hutterite leaders in Slovakia to undo the damage of previous decades. As a case in point of the limits of forced conversion, we are given a brief description of the emigration of the Schwenckfelder dissidents from Silesia in the 1720s. There were not enough Catholics in Silesia for Habsburg absolutism working through Jesuit missions to succeed in its purpose; with the connivance of Lutheran neighbors, landlords and officials the Schwenckfelders sold their property and emigrated, eventually to Pennsylvania, without the permission and against the wishes of the government in Vienna.

Astrid von Schlachta has written an important book, based on an omnivorous study of the growing literature on Anabaptists and governments in the part of the early modern period in which religious toleration of dissidents was a real option but not a matter of course. She has shown in a study of printed materials, petitions and correspondence that the public was increasingly scrutinizing the actions of princes and magistrates. The Anabaptists were part of this public. They examined what was happening around them and to them on the basis of a strong historical memory. Others also judged them—Münster was important; had it not occurred Anabaptist martyrs would probably have become martyrs for Lutherans and Catholics, too, as can be inferred from the writings of Protestant observers and contemporaries on the martyrdom of Michael Sattler in 1527.

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BOOK NOTES

Das Gästebuch der mennonitichen Bauernfamilie David Möllinger Senior, 1781-1817. Eine historisch-kritische Edition. By Frank Kornersmann. Alzey: Verlag der Rheinhessischen Druckwerkstätte. 2009.

Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Mennonite Möllinger family played a leading role in the agricultural revolution in the Palatinate and Rhine Hesse. David Möllinger Sr. (17xx-17xx) was especially noted for his innovative use of fertilizers, his detailed recordkeeping, and his integrated approach to cattle, grain, clover and brandy production. Möllinger's economic success—which won him widespread renown—played an important role in the growing social integration of Mennonites into southwest German society. Frank Kornersmann, who has been studying Mennonite agriculture in southwest Germany for many years, has now published the guestbook of the Möllinger family. Started by David and continued by his sons, the guestbook offers a rare window into the wide-ranging social network and high regard the family enjoyed. In addition to the text of the guestbook itself, the volume includes several interpretive essays, detailed identification of the names listed in the guestbook, a comprehensive bibliography and several indexes.

El sacrificio del Señor. Farmington, N. M.: Publicadora Lámpara y Luz, 2010. $9.95.

Before the initial appearance of the *Martyrs Mirror* in 1660, the stories of Anabaptist martyrs were preserved in lesser-known compilations. The most significant of these collections was *Het Offer des Heeren* (*The Sacrifice Unto the Lord*), which appeared in at least 11 editions between 1562 and 1599, generally with additional stories, hymns or letters added to each subsequent edition. This volume is a translation from Dutch into Spanish of the 1560 edition. Although it does not include the hymns, the publication by Lamp and Light, a conservative

Mennonite publishing concern, makes this important—though often overlooked—martyrology accessible to a new readership.

Hutterite Studies. Essays by Robert Friedmann. Edited by Harold S. Bender. 2nd ed. [Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 1961] Rprt. MacGregor, Man.: Hutterian Brethren Book Centre, 2010.

First published in 1961, this collection of essays by Robert Friedmann, a well-known Anabaptist historian and expert on the Hutterites, covers a wide range of topics: Hutterite history, doctrine, and daily life, as well as analyses of significant Hutterian texts and biographies of several important Hutterite leaders. Supplemented by an appreciative foreword by Astrid von Schlachta and an afterword by Leonard Gross, the publication makes these essays—long out of print—accessible to new generation of Anabaptist scholars.

First Generation Anabaptist Ecclesiology, 1525-1561: A Study of Swiss, German and Dutch Sources. By Dennis E. Bollinger. Lewiston, N.Y. The Edwin Mellen Press. 2008.

This published dissertation explores the ecclesiology of first-generation Anabaptists in Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands between 1525 and 1561. The strong focus on ecclesiological concerns among early Anabaptists, Bollinger argues, "contributed to a practical and theological imbalance resulting in rapid divisions . . . during the first generation, to weakened Christological and anthropological considerations, and to continued susceptibility to heresy in succeeding generations." The author concludes that there is no evidence to "bolster claims that Baptists had a historical or theological connection to the Reformation . . . by way of the Anabaptists."

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