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Though the claim may initially sound improbable—especially for those who think of the Anabaptists as defiant separatists—the earliest Anabaptist leaders were deeply committed to ecumenical dialogue. To be sure, the outcome of those exchanges was frequently determined in advance by the more powerful party; and what we today call "dialogue" was often more closely akin to interrogation than to genuine conversation. Nonetheless, historians have identified more than twenty formal "disputations" among the Swiss Brethren alone in which Anabaptist representatives exchanged theological ideas and convictions with their Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic counterparts.

As confessional lines hardened in the course of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, however, such conversations became far less frequent. Though informal interactions with other Christians continued among virtually every Anabaptist-related group, the impulse to pursue formal conversations that might heal the divided church nearly disappeared. In the twentieth century, Mennonites in North America were particularly skeptical about the "ecumenical movement," refusing to join either the World Council of Churches or the National Council of Churches. For the most part, they lived at peace with Catholic and Protestant neighbors, often collaborating in local service initiatives and sometimes even absorbing significant theological influences. But they expressed little interest in formal dialogues—the lines of ecclesial division had simply become inevitable.

In recent years this situation has changed dramatically. During the past three decades, Mennonites in various parts of the world have engaged in numerous interchurch conversations, including formal dialogues with Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans, Pentecostals, and Seventh-day Adventists, and a host of less formal, lay-initiated exchanges that have promoted closer fellowship at the local level.

This issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* offers a glimpse into the new theological questions and ecclesial realities set in motion by the recent series of conversations between Mennonites and Lutherans. **Larry Miller**, former general secretary of the Mennonite World Conference, begins with an essay describing the context of these exchanges, which focused primarily on the condemnations of the Anabaptists in the Lutheran Augsburg Confession and culminated in July of 2010 with a formal service of reconciliation between the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonite World Conference. After tracing the background of the reconciliation event, Miller reflects on the significance of the mutual commitments made by each group and proposes a series of principles for guiding Free Church ecumenical dialogues in the future. He closes with a vision of ecclesial "pilgrimages"—a commitment to walking alongside

each other and engaging in conversation, while pausing at stations along the way for face-to-face exchanges that express a more visible unity.

Jeremy M. Bergen, a professor of religious studies and theology at Conrad Grebel University College, follows with a close analysis of the Mennonite-Lutheran reconciliation event at Stuttgart in 2010. Bergen is especially concerned that Mennonites not interpret the Lutheran act of repentance for acts of violence against sixteenth-century Anabaptists as a triumph for Mennonite denominational identity. Instead, Mennonites should share fully in a confession of Christian disunity. One step toward reconciliation from the Mennonite side, he argues, would be a reinterpretation of Anabaptist martyrs as witnesses to the faith for the entire Christian church, rather than defenders of Anabaptist distinctives.

In the following essay on the biblical meaning of *koinōnia*, **Tom Yoder Neufeld** probes deeply into the theological dimensions of Christian faithfulness and church unity. In his study, Yoder identifies five interrelated dimensions of the term, explores the possibilities of diversity—even contentious diversity—as being a gift of God, and concludes with some reflections on the relevance of *koinōnia* for the work of Mennonite World Conference. Yoder's succinct analysis is likely to become a significant point of departure for future reflection on Mennonite ecclesiology.

We conclude this issue of *MQR* with two research notes, both suggesting tantalizing directions for future study. The first, by **Gerlof Homan**, a retired professor of history at Illinois State University, provides a glimpse into a short-lived effort among U.S. Mennonites in the 1930s to combine a relief program with a vision for church planting in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. The evangelistic component of the effort, called *Ayuda a los Niños,* or "Aid to the Children," ultimately failed. But the work provided valuable experience for Mennonite Central Committee administrators that helped prepare them for relief efforts on a much larger scale following World War II.

Finally, **James W. Lowry** concludes the issue with a brief essay on the life and labors of Joseph Sohm, translator of the most enduring English-language version of the *Martyrs Mirror*. In 1881 John F. Funk, churchman, entrepreneur, and owner of the Mennonite Publishing Company in Elkhart, Indiana, announced his intention to publish a new English version of the *Martyrs Mirror*. The resulting translation, which did not appear until 1887, became the standard edition throughout the twentieth century. Yet little scholarly attention has been given to Joseph Sohm, the translator of the massive volume. Lowry, who is a well-regarded expert on the *Martyrs Mirror*, has tracked down new biographical details on Sohm's life and offers insights on the merits of his translation, especially in the context of several other English translations that appeared prior to Funk's edition.

– John D. Roth, editor