IN THIS ISSUE

Few books have done more to shape the identity of Anabaptist-Mennonite groups, especially those in the Swiss-South German branch of that tradition, than the *Martyrs Mirror.* The various German and English translations of the massive 1685 Dutch edition—which featured 104 exquisitely-rendered etchings by the Dutch Mennonite artist Jan Luyken—reminded generations of Amish and Mennonite groups that following Jesus could exact a cost. Especially in times of economic ease and social approbation, the *Martyrs Mirror* served as a cautionary admonition that Christians should not become overly comfortable with financial status or the favor of those around them. Along with the accompanying Luyken etchings, the stories of the *Martyrs Mirror*—especially those of Dirk Willems, Maeyken Wens, and Anneken Jans—have become woven into North American Mennonite consciousness, serving as a kind of shorthand for Anabaptist convictions and a distinctive group identity. Recently, however, a growing number of critics have expressed deep reservations about the Mennonite appropriation of "martyr memory." A focus on Anabaptist martyrs, some have argued, encourages spiritual arrogance, impedes ecumenical dialogue, fosters a naïve view of the past, and promotes an unhealthy identity of victimhood. In the opening essay of this issue, **John D. Roth** reviews the long legacy of martyr memory among Mennonites in North America and responds to these recent criticisms. Mennonites should continue to preserve the memory of martyrs, he argues, not only because martyrdom continues to be a contemporary reality, but also because such stories can foster faith and encourage a broader sense of ecclesial identity. The challenge ahead is not to reject martyr memory, but to develop practices of "right remembering."

One part of the world where deep tensions continue to persist among religious groups is Ethiopia. A historically Orthodox Christian state, Ethiopia has also been home through the centuries to a thriving Muslim community and, more recently, to rapidly-growing evangelical groups—including the Meserete Kristos Church (M.K.C.), the largest Mennonite national conference in the world. In their essay, **Jan Bender Shetler** and **Dawit Yehualashet** ask how it has been possible for Christians and Muslims in parts of Ethiopia to live as neighbors for long periods of time without experiencing violent conflicts. The reasons behind this peaceful coexistence, they discovered, are complex, rooted in longstanding social practices that have promoted deep personal and neighborly relationships. Building on these practices, members of the Meserete Kristos Church have emerged as peacemakers while still asserting their

distinctive religious identity and mission. The findings of Shetler and Yehualashet offer a healthy reminder that studying strategies of peace-making may yield deeper insights than the more standard impulse to focus on conflicts.

In his essay on the theology and reform program of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, **Vincent Evener**, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago Divinity School, takes *MQR* readers back to the sixteenth century. Karlstadt—an erstwhile colleague, then antagonist, of Luther, and a source of theological inspiration for many early Anabaptists—is best known for his theological emphasis on "rebirth." Evener does not dispute the importance of "rebirth" as a motif in Karlstadt's thought, but he qualifies it significantly by highlighting a host of other themes in Karlstadt's writing that are equally relevant. In so doing, he provides a more nuanced approach to Karlstadt's theology and his relation to Luther than has been evident in previous scholarship.

We conclude this issue with two additional contributions to our understanding of sixteenth-century Anabaptism. **Christian Scheidegger**, deputy director of the Rare Book Division of the Zentralbibliothek in Zurich, recently uncovered an unusual polemic against the Swiss Brethren. Written by Jörg Syz sometime around 1527, this letter-poem "Against the Crazed Anabaptists" was intended to encourage a local pastor, Hans Brennwald, in his public debates against the Swiss Brethren. The poem sheds new light on the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement and offers a sense of the vitriolic tenor of the discourse.

Despite Syz's rejection of Anabaptist theology as a novel "invention," scholars of the movement have called increasing attention to the lines of continuity between Anabaptist thought and medieval theology—especially the writings of late medieval mystics. In an intriguing research note, **James A. Dobson**, an independent scholar from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, contributes to this argument by reexamining the writings of Pilgram Marpeck, an Anabaptist lay theologian and civic engineer. Focusing especially on Marpeck's reference to the Song of Songs as an allegory of the marriage of Christ with the Church—or, alternatively, Christ's marriage with the soul of the believer—Dobson demonstrates that Marpeck drew directly on the *Sermones Super Cantica Canticorum*, a text by the Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, written in the twelfth century and made more widely available in print form early in the sixteenth century. While this finding is not surprising, it underscores a deeper pattern of continuity between Anabaptist theology and currents of medieval thought.

– John D. Roth, editor