

IN THIS ISSUE

Once considered a pariah of serious scholarship, Anabaptist studies have now found a firm niche within the mainstream of Reformation and Early Modern European historiography. One key to the flourishing of Anabaptist scholarship has been a fruitful partnership between European and North American scholars, sustained by the ongoing emergence of younger scholars eager to press forward in new directions.

In this issue we are pleased to feature the work of six scholars, all of them based in Europe, and all appearing in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* for the first time. Several of these essays (Zorzin, Monge, Meier and Miller) are revisions of papers presented at a May 2007 academic conference at the Bienenberg Mennonite seminary in Liestal, Switzerland. Others (Konersmann and Reimer) are translations of essays that recently appeared in print elsewhere. Seen as a whole, they cover a broad chronological and thematic range and offer a representative overview of the current state of Anabaptist studies in Western Europe.

Alejandro Zorzin, historian and pastor of several Mennonite congregations in the Palatinate, opens the issue by contrasting the communication style of the early Swiss Brethren with that of their evangelical counterparts. Whereas Zwingli and the reformers were quick to draw on the power of the printed word in their polemics against the Anabaptists, the Swiss Brethren—with few exceptions—preferred to circulate handwritten manuscripts and to rely on personal forms of communication. This approach, Zorzin argues, resulted less from aggressive censorship than from a conscious choice to follow the apostolic model of an itinerant, oral form of witness.

Amish studies in North America have long been dominated by a focus on contemporary topics. But recently, interest in the origins and early history of the Amish has been growing. **Mary Ann Miller Bates** offers an intriguing example of this effort to situate the Amish story within a broader historical and theological context. The Amish rejection of fashion, she argues, and their embrace of simplicity and uniformity in dress, can be understood best in the context of seventeenth-century Bernese sumptuary laws. Jacob Amman, a tailor by trade, would have been intimately familiar with these laws, as well as the moral arguments enlisted to support them. In this regard, the Amish concern for simplicity of dress made them exemplary subjects even as they were under suspicion for heterodoxy.

Older regional histories have traced the immigration of Swiss Amish and Mennonites into the territories of southwestern Germany during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The general outlines

of their reception and slow assimilation on estates scattered throughout the Alsace, the Palatinate and upper Rhine is well-known. What is missing, however, are more detailed comparative studies based on local archival sources. In this issue, **Frank Konersmann** begins to address this lacuna with an overview of Mennonite political, economic and religious transformations in the Palatine Electorate, the Duchy of Pfalz-Zweibrücken and the Nassau-Weilburg county of Kirchheim from 1664 to 1802. The full fruits of Konersmann's research—focused especially on the Mennonite role in the agricultural reforms of the eighteenth century—will soon be appearing in the form of a *Habilitationsschrift*.

In more recent decades, the landscape of European Mennonites has been fundamentally transformed by the exodus of some 200,000 Russian-German believers from the former Soviet Union to Germany. Many of these so-called *Aussiedler* retain some sense of an Anabaptist-Mennonite identity, yet they have also been profoundly shaped by their experience in Russia. **Johannes Reimer**—a Russian Mennonite historian, theologian, preacher and influential leader among the *Ausseidler*—is uniquely positioned to reflect on the challenges of integrating the German and Anabaptist themes of *Aussiedler* identity with the formative impact of their experience under Communist rule in the Soviet Union.

We conclude this issue with two research notes by younger scholars. **Marcus Meier** engages a longstanding research question—namely, the relationship between Pietism and Anabaptism—by drawing on new insights from Pietist scholarship. Meier situates the well-known Swiss Brethren devotional book, *Golden Apples in Silver Bowls*, within a broader debate among Pietists in the Wetterau over infant baptism and proposes a research agenda for examining more carefully the close associations between Anabaptist and Pietist groups in southwest Germany. Finally, **Mathilde Monge** returns to one of the most fundamental questions of Anabaptist-Mennonite studies: exactly who qualifies as an Anabaptist, and by what criteria? On the basis of her research in Cologne, Monge argues for a phenomenological approach to this question, distinguishing between administrative definitions imposed by authorities, and a complex variety of definitions that group members apply to themselves.

All of the articles featured here were originally written in German or French. Translating them into English has been a labor-intensive, sometimes tedious, process. Thus, I am especially grateful to acknowledge the contributions of James M. Stayer, Gerhard Reimer, David Shank and Al Meyer. Their efforts bear witness to the inherently collaborative nature of good scholarship.

– John D. Roth, editor

IN MEMORIAM:
ALBERT N. KEIM (1935-2008)

A highly regarded historian, especially of things Amish and Mennonite, Albert Keim died on June 27, 2008. He was born near Hartville, Ohio, into an Amish minister's family. He is survived by his wife, Kathy Fisher; a daughter, Melody; and two grandsons.

Albert Keim earned his professional degrees at Eastern Mennonite University (B.A.), University of Virginia (M.A.) and Ohio State University (Ph.D.). The two years he spent in Western Europe as a Mennonite Central Committee volunteer relief worker were particularly influential in shaping his life. The experience enlarged his universe and gave him special skills as a woodworker and brick mason.

Keim taught history for thirty-five years at Eastern Mennonite, retiring in 2000. Along the way he served seven years as academic dean and led several overseas study groups in Europe and the Middle East. Following retirement, he and Kathy Fisher lived in Saudi Arabia for several years. In 2006 he traveled in China.

While an admired and stimulating classroom lecturer, Keim made a distinct contribution as a writer. His most distinguished work was a masterful biography of a prominent Mennonite historian and church leader: *Harold S. Bender 1897-1962* (1998). This volume, along with *The CPS Story: An Illustrated History* (1990), is included in the recently compiled "The Essential Anabaptist-Mennonite History Reading List" published in the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* (April 2008).

Keim was attracted to the intersection of prophetic minorities with dominant cultures. As a young historian he edited a pioneering study, *Compulsory Education and the Amish: The Right Not to be Modern* (1975). He contributed two essays to this compilation, which included articles by Donald Erickson, John A. Hostetler, William Ball and Leo Pfeffer. In 1988 he published *The Politics of Conscience: The Historic Peace Churches and America at War, 1917-1955*, based on research initiated by the late historian Grant M. Stoltzfus. This volume deftly explored the political influence of dissenting communities.

Along the way Keim was active in numerous history related groups. He served as a member of the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church from 1984 to 1992. He has been a longtime consulting editor of this journal (*MQR*). In recent years he played a prominent role in the

development of the Shenandoah Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center.

Keim understood and never disparaged his Amish upbringing. He appreciated the wisdom of the story while recognizing the mysterious underpinnings of life. His last publication was the introduction and lead essay in *Making Sense of the Journey: The Geography of our Faith* (2007), edited by Robert and Nancy Lee. The essay "In Search of a Worldview: What Did I Know and When Did I Know It" is an insightful overview of his life journey from Amish boyhood to cosmopolitan scholar. The following paragraphs, drawn from that essay, illustrate well the master teacher-historian's thinking:

"We live in a world that is societal in quality. Everything is related to and affected by and influences everything else. We human beings belong together, move together, work together and find our fulfillment in participation. This is true from the most mundane to the most transcendent experiences. All truth, all beauty, all of life is found in relationship."

"I believe that the world (cosmos) is kept in order more by persuasion than by coercion. God is a pacifist whose will and purpose can always be rejected, but whose uncoerced invitation to respond offers the possibility of novelty and renewal in history. Coercion is a profoundly reactionary tactic, for it can enforce what is already present; its ability to enhance the new is severely limited and can at best impose order so that persuasion can become possible. Genuine freedom is only possible where decision and choice is uncoerced."

— John A. Lapp

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