In This Issue

Commemorations of beginnings—be they of marriages, congregations, denominations, nations, or religious movements—are complicated events. On the one hand, they provide a public occasion to celebrate the original ideals and vision that gave birth to something new. With the passage of time, as the vision dims and ideals fade, commemorations can restore clarity to a fading or threatened sense of identity, and they can inspire renewed commitment to convictions that have gone out of focus. But commemorations can also be occasions for self-deception—opportunities to evade difficult issues by retreating into nostalgia or to consolidate authority by promoting a version of the past that serves the interests of the powerful. Memory, after all, is never impartial; every narrative about the past is also an argument.

As I note in the opening essay of this issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, this year marks the culmination of a decade-long series of events commemorating the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation. Those commemorations, organized largely by the German Protestant church, with major funding from the German government, have sparked a lively debate about both the meaning of the Reformation and how it should be celebrated. In the essay, I explore the controversy with a particular focus on the relationship of the Anabaptist movement to the Reformation, especially the question of how contemporary Anabaptist-Mennonites should commemorate their own sixteenth-century beginnings. The essay offers a series of principles for "right remembering" and concludes with a description of Mennonite World Conference's anticipated ten-year series of commemorative events. These events, known as "Renewal 2027," serve as an illustrative test case for exploring those issues.

In a similar vein, **Jennifer Otto**, a patristics scholar and postdoctoral fellow at the University of Erfurt, complicates another long-standard narrative: the assumption in Anabaptist-Mennonite scholarship that the conversion of the emperor Constantine in the early fourth century marked the "fall of the church." That account, she argues, is a gross over-simplification, if not an outright myth. Christianity, Otto insists, was diverse from the beginning; there never was a "pure" church uniformly committed to nonviolence. Indeed, Christian arguments legitimating violence after Constantine had numerous precedents in earlier times. "Constantinianism" marks the victory of one strand of Christianity over another, not a fundamental shift in the church's character or identity.

How the church relates to shifting cultural contexts is also the focus of **Charles Jantzi's** essay, albeit in a very different setting. Janzti, a professor

of psychology at Messiah College, has taken note of a growing use of smartphones—and with them, access to the internet—by Old Order Amish youth, especially in the large settlements in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. Although the Amish have a long history of adapting technology while holding fast to practices of humility and "yieldedness" to community norms, Janzti suggests that there may be something qualitatively different about the long-term impact of access to social media. Drawing on recent studies on how electronic media shapes behavior and an analysis of the growing popularity of Facebook among Amish youth, Jantzi raises sobering questions about the potential effects of social media on Amish community life.

Daniel Shank Cruz, an assistant professor of English at Utica College, follows with a bibliographical survey of Mennonite literature, a field that has undergone prolific growth in the past twenty-five years. Much of this creative outpouring has been encouraged and documented by seven Mennonite/s Writing conferences that have taken place in the U.S. and Canada between 1990 and 2015. Using these conferences as a frame of reference, Cruz has created a bibliography and subject index of all the published literary criticism, metacriticism, panel discussions, personal essays, sermons, and tributes associated with the events. In the essay, Cruz offers some insightful observations on the state of Mennonite writing; but the real significance of his work is its value for future scholars seeking convenient access to a wealth of published material.

We close this issue of *MQR* with a "Research Note" by **Donald Eberle**, author of a recent Ph.D. on conscientious objection in World War I that calls attention to another upcoming commemorative event—the 100th anniversary of the entrance of the United States and Canada into the First World War. Undoubtedly, many will mark the anniversary as a patriotic occasion to remember the heroic sacrifice of thousands of young soldiers. But, as Eberle reminds us, 1917 also witnessed the introduction of military conscription, and with it a national debate over conscientious objection that had far-reaching consequences. In his literature review, Eberle provides a detailed overview of published and unpublished sources related to conscientious objection in the U.S. and Canada that will prove very useful to other scholars inspired by the commemorative year to engage the topic.

Each year, the future of *MQR* is in the hands of individuals and institutions who make our work possible through your subscriptions. If you haven't already done so, please help ensure the future of the journal by renewing your subscription today. Thank you for your support!

– John D. Roth, editor