Mennonite Life

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In this issue, our history section leads off with an article about the Mennonite-founded Grace Bible Institute in Omaha, Nebraska, by William Trollinger. Trollinger teaches in the history department at the University of Dayton, Ohio, and lives in Bluffton. He formerly taught at Messiah College and at the School of the Ozarks.

Also in the history section is a translation of an account of the history of the Mennonite congregation in Berdyansk, South Russia, written by one of its leaders, Leonhard Sudermann, and translated by John B. Toews.

Our arts section contains a chapter from a novel in progress by Russell Binkley who grew up in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and now teaches sixth grade in Illinois.

Also included is a set of new poems by Carla Reimer of Newton, Kansas, recently named Director of Public Information and News Services for Bethel College.

In our religion section, the article by Lois Barrett of the General Conference Commission on Home Ministries was originally presented to a New Life Ministries meeting in Elgin, Illinois, in February 1998.

This issue also contains our annual Mennonite bibliography. The volume of Mennonite-related publishing gets larger every year.

To conclude the issue we have our usual selection of book reviews.

Photo credits: Grace Bible Institute Charis yearbooks, pp. 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13; Mennonite Library and Archives, p. 17.
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Grace Bible Institute and the Advance of Fundamentalism among the Mennonites

William Vance Trollinger, Jr.
majority of Grace students in the early years came out of this particular Mennonite denomination. C. E. Krehbiel, General Conference president at the time of Grace's founding, went to the extent of questioning the motives of the men who established Grace Bible; he also recommended that General Conference Mennonites concentrate their efforts on supporting denominational enterprises, as opposed to this renegade Bible institute.2

In response to these charges, administrators at the Omaha school spent a good amount of time and energy reassuring their critics that Grace Bible Institute was, indeed, a truly Mennonite institution. As the school's first permanent president, C. H. Suckau, proclaimed in an early issue of the school's periodical, Grace Tidings: "Grace Bible Institute maintains loyalty to the tenets of the Mennonite church;" moreover, as an inter-Mennonite institution, it is not "divisive but, [rather,] unifying in its attitudes." Finally, and as he elaborated upon in a later Grace Tidings article, Grace Bible was "not in opposition to nor in competition with other [Mennonite] institutions of learning."

On occasion, Grace administrators used their "Grace Bible Institute" column in the Mennonite Weekly Review, an inter-Mennonite newspaper with a national circulation, to vindicate their school as a truly Mennonite institution.3 One such column was written by P. P. Tschetter in January of 1949. At the time he wrote this piece, he was serving as Grace's field representative.4 In that role, Tschetter, who was also a Mennonite minister, visited Mennonite churches throughout the Midwest encouraging the Mennonite faithful
to send their money and their youth to his school. In his January 1949 Mennonite Weekly Review column, Tschetter made use of virtually all the standard arguments that had been offered by Grace administrators since the school’s founding. He produced a detailed and vigorous apologetic for the “Mennoniteness” of Grace Bible Institute.

Tschetter’s first argument was that virtually all of the Grace administrators were required to be Mennonites. On one level he was absolutely correct. These restrictions were relaxed only slightly in 1956, when the Board of Directors went from 100% to 80% Mennonite, and the Advisory Council went from 90% to 80% Mennonite; the dean and, most important, the president still had to be Mennonite. It was not until the very end of the 1960s that the constitution was modified to state only that “it was preferable” to hire a Mennonite as president, which was followed by the hiring of non-Mennonite Robert Benton in 1971.

The founders of Grace Bible Institute were Mennonites, but they were not the products of Mennonite higher education. Nine of the ten founders were connected with the General Conference Mennonites, but eight of the ten had studied at fundamentalist Bible schools, with
five of them having attended Moody Bible Institute. To underscore further the Bible school connection, five of the six Mennonite presidents of the school had attended fundamentalist Bible schools (and the sixth, Joseph Schmidt, was a Grace Bible graduate).

C. H. Suckau, who served as the school’s first permanent president, was educated at the Union Missionary Training Institute, graduating in 1910. He went from there to India as a General Conference Mennonite missionary. In India he became a zealous dispensationalist, which may have contributed to the tensions that developed between himself and his fellow missionaries. After his somewhat forced departure from the mission field, Suckau then acceded to the pulpit of the First Mennonite Church in Berne, Indiana. While there, he strongly promoted dispensational premillennialism, attacked the General Conference Mennonite denomination, and encouraged youth of the church to attend fundamentalist Bible schools (in lieu of Mennonite colleges). All of this, again, caused some controversy; so did his willingness, during World War II, to “consider military service [as] an authentic Christian possibility.” In 1943 he helped found Grace Bible Institute, in the process chairing the committee that came up with the school’s doctrinal statement. Suckau became the president of Grace Bible Institute in 1944, a post which he held until just before his death in 1951.

P. P. Tschetter’s second line of argument involved the historical sketch of the institution contained in the Grace Bible Institute catalog. What is interesting about this sketch (and any historical summary contained in a college catalog) is not that it provides definitive proof that this happened or that happened in Grace’s past, but, instead, that it affords us a window by which to see how Grace Bible Institute understood itself, and how it presented itself to the public. Tschetter was correct in noting that, as of January 1949, the school’s catalog did emphasize Grace Bible’s Mennonite origins and purposes. The historical sketch began with the observation that for “a number of years” many ministers and laypersons had “keenly felt” the “need of a Bible Institute for the training of Christian workers of the Mennonite denomination.” While there existed “a number of small denominational Bible Schools and Academies,” these schools were too small and did not provide in-depth Bible training. The one exception was Oklahoma Bible Academy, but its location in an isolated small town limited both its influence and its ability to attract students. With the blessings and active support of Oklahoma Bible administrators, and with the understanding that it was an “auxiliary” of OBA, Grace Bible Institute was established in Omaha. While the school was open “to all men and women of any denomination who feel the call of the Lord to serve Him,” its primary purpose was, clearly, to train “the young people of our [Mennonite] denomination” for “Christian service.”

From this catalog sketch, it would seem that the school’s administrators viewed the past and present of Grace Bible Institute as a thoroughly Mennonite affair. But
Grace Bible Institute Hymn
(Dedicated to the Faculty and Students of the GRACE BIBLE INSTITUTE on April 20th, 1945)
C. H. Suckau Franz J. Haydn

1. For Grace Bible Institute We thank and praise our God! 
2. At Grace Bible Institute The faith to saints cope giv'n
3. From Grace Bible Institute When we equipped do part,

Grace Hymn
(from 1946 Charis)

In answer to unceasing prayers By Him his work was wrought,
Our firm foundation e'er shall be, Tho' perish earth and heav'n.
To be for Him ambassadors With wholly yielded heart;

By grace He has supplied each need; By grace divine it will succeed.
The saints of old their lives laid down To gain at last a victor's crown.
True missionaries we would be, That all men Christ in us may see

At His command we forward go. Not fearing inner outward foe.
So, Holy Spirit, lead us on: We too would hear the Lord's "Well done."
And His redemption shall embrace, Provided free for every race.

O God of grace, We humbly seek Thy face!
O God of grace, To Thee our cry we raise!
O God of grace, To Thee, eternal praise!

apparently, the sense of Grace's Mennonite origins and purposes was not as deep-seated as it might appear. It is remarkable how soon the Grace leaders began to write the Mennonites out of their school's history. A few months after Tschetter wrote his Mennonite Weekly Review.
article, all references to Mennonite Bible academies were removed from the catalog’s historical sketch. This even included Oklahoma Bible Academy, which had received much loving attention in the original; there was no mention of OBA, much less any observation that Grace Bible Institute was imitative of OBA. Then, in 1958, the clause affirming that Grace Bible Institute was created to train “the young people of our [Mennonite] denomination” was deleted from the historical sketch; at the same time, the statement affirming that Grace was open to individuals of any denomination was underlined.\textsuperscript{10}

But this was just prelude. In 1964, only twenty years after the school’s founding, and years before the school hired a non-Mennonite as president, the authors of the official historical sketch removed every single reference to Mennonites. The founders of Grace were now simply “a group of ministers”; they created the school not to meet the needs of Mennonite youth, not to revitalize Mennonite denomination(s), but, instead, to promote “an enlarged Bible teaching ministry.” Anyone unfamiliar with the story of the founding of Grace Bible would not have had a clue about the school’s Mennonite heritage.\textsuperscript{11} It is true that some later catalogs made reference to the fact that the founders were Mennonite ministers, but this point was always made in passing, and with no explanation as to why this might be significant.\textsuperscript{12} The fact is that, at least in the college catalogs, the de-emphasis of the role of the Mennonites in the history of Grace Bible Institute started soon after the school’s founding; by the early 1960s, the Mennonites’ place in the catalog version of Grace’s history had all but disappeared from view.

The final two arguments made by P. P. Tschetter in defense of Grace Bible Institute as a Mennonite institution more directly dealt with the question of Grace’s Mennoniteness. It is clear that Tschetter believed, or he realized that many Mennonites believed, that an emphasis on Mennonite heritage and an emphasis on nonresistance were central to Mennonite identity. According to Tschetter, the Mennonite History course dealt with the history of “Mennonite doctrine and polity,” and was required of all Mennonite students. On the face of it, this would seem to be clear indication of the “Mennoniteness” of Grace Bible Institute.

There is evidence, however, that Tschetter was exaggerating the school’s resolve to educate its students in the Mennonite heritage. One student who took Mennonite History in those years ruefully remembers it as a tedious exercise in chronology, with no treatment of substantive doctrinal issues.\textsuperscript{13} Moreover, there is evidence that this course was not required of all Mennonites. Enrollment figures indicate that Mennonite History had an enrollment of 8 in 1945, 22 in 1946, 28 in 1947, and 38 in 1948. (The records stop here.) Given that total enrollment at Grace rose from 144 in 1945 to 312 in 1948, and given that, in the late 1940s, over four-fifths of the students were Mennonites,\textsuperscript{14} it is obvious that Mennonite students were not required to take Mennonite History. This was confirmed in
interviews with four individuals who grew up in Mennonite homes and attended Grace Bible in the late 1940s. Only one of the four took the Mennonite History course. Another interviewee had not even realized there was such a course. The other two individuals were aware of the course, but, as it was merely elective, chose not to enroll. One of these students was particularly pleased with his choice: “I didn’t have to take the Mennonite history course, and I was glad,” because “I was not interested in that subject.”

In 1953, the Mennonite History course was discontinued. This decision surely could not have had anything to do with changing denominational affiliations of the students; at the time that it was eliminated, 75% of Grace students were Mennonites. The course was replaced by “Church History,” in which, according to the catalog, “ancient, medieval, and modern church history is covered and special attention given to the great historical movements that affected the Church.” There is no indication here that Mennonite history, or even Anabaptism in general, received any special attention in this course, an impression confirmed by students who took the class.

Of all the arguments offered by Grace administrators in defense of their school as a truly Mennonite institution, the most common was that Grace Bible promoted nonresistance. P. P. Tschetter continued this tradition, asserting that the GBI doctrinal statement included an admonition that Christians not engage in violence. But this statement needs to be put into the context of the document as a whole. The “Doctrinal Statement of the Grace Bible Institute,” written and adopted just prior to the school’s founding in 1943, certainly did not reflect the traditional General Conference Mennonite reluctance to create creedal statements. It was an extraordinarily long document, consisting of fifteen sections, or articles, sixty-three paragraphs, 374 lines, and 345 separate Bible verse citations.


The fifteenth and last section included the affirmation of what could be called Mennonite distinctives. Here was the admonition for Christians not to engage in violence. In the fourth paragraph (out of five) of Article XV we find, in the context of prohibitions against “worldly amusements, unclean habits... the swearing of oaths, [and] affiliation with secret societies,” a statement...
calling on Christians to abstain from "taking personal vengeance and participating in carnal strife."22

The fact that this seven-word clause was located in line 361 of the doctrinal statement was telling. So was the wording, which made no reference to resisting the state's coercion, and which seemed to leave the door ajar for Christians to engage in violence if their motives did not involve vengeance. The Biblical texts used to validate this statement were from Paul's Epistles;22 there were no references here to the more radical passages from the Gospels,
particularly Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, that are staples of arguments in behalf of a more thoroughgoing Christian pacifism.

Individuals who attended Grace in the 1940s and 1950s repeatedly observed in interviews that, as one person commented, “we hardly dealt with the subject of nonresistance at Grace.” Another Grace graduate stated it more strongly: “I have no memory of dealing with issues of nonresistance when I was there.” It was true, as another graduate noted, that “dyed-in-the-wool Mennonite speakers” did occasionally come to campus preaching nonresistance, but “they did not go over very well at all.” As this Grace alumnus saw it, this was not surprising, given that “administrators and faculty members placed very little emphasis on nonresistance,” and given that many “students were opposed to the whole idea.”

Nonresistance was optional at Grace. Dispensationalism, on the other hand, was not. And to look at the place of dispensationalism at Grace Bible Institute is to bring into focus what really mattered at this school. To teach at or graduate from Grace Bible Institute, one had to hold to the details of dispensational premillennialism as spelled out in the school’s “Doctrinal Statement.” Briefly stated, this meant that all individuals at Grace had to affirm the following: that “the next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy will be the pre-tribulation coming of Christ into the air to receive to Himself His own”; that this event, the Rapture, will be followed by “the Great Tribulation,” when “God’s righteous judgments will be poured out upon the world,” and when the world will “be headed by a personal Anti-christ”; that at “the close of this period the Lord Jesus Christ will personally, visibly, and gloriously descend from heaven with the Church . . . to bind Satan in the bottomless pit, judge the living
nations, establish His glorious and literal kingdom over all nations for a thousand years; that at "the end of the thousand years, Satan shall be loosed for a short season to deceive the nations"; and that, when this brief period is over, "the unsaved dead shall then be raised, judged according to their works, and cast into the Lake of Fire," and Christ will finally deliver up the Messianic Kingdom to God the Father.

Interviews revealed that Grace students and faculty members who, for example, simply questioned the timing of the Rapture (suggesting that it may occur in the middle or at the end of the Tribulation), were denied permission to graduate, or asked to leave the school. Each student was instructed to purchase and use the Scofield Reference Bible, with its detailed dispensationalist commentary; as one student remembers, the Scofield "was our theological guide." All students were required to take the Prophecy courses, in which they learned (in keeping with the doctrinal statement) about "the prophecies concerning the first and second advents of Christ, the Jews, the land of Palestine, the end-time, and other important prophetic truths and their relation to the Christian's present day life." In the process of taking these courses and attending the prophecy conferences, "every student," one alumnus reminisced, "could draw an [eschatological] time line," with the tribulation and the rapture and so on, and "they could draw it fast!"

As that alumnus articulated it, "dispensational premillennialism was the dominant intellectual paradigm at Grace." This commitment to dispensationalism had some interesting curricular effects, besides the required Prophecy courses. In examining the catalogs of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, it is fascinating to note how many separate Bible classes were offered. To take the 1955-56 catalog as an example, the Bible offerings included (besides the Old and New Testament surveys) courses on Romans, Hebrews, Acts, I and II Corinthians, Galatians and James, the Prison Epistles, I and II Thessalonians, and the Petrine and Johannine Epistles, plus eight more courses on Old Testament books. But despite this surfeit of courses on individual books of the Bible, there were no courses on a Gospel, the Gospels, or the life and teachings of Jesus. This curiosity, particularly at an ostensibly Mennonite school (given that Mennonites have
typically emphasized the Gospels), was most likely due to the school’s dispensationalist commitments: traditional dispensationalism emphasizes that Paul’s teachings are for the present age, while Jesus’ teachings are for a future, or kingdom, age. In this same vein, Grace’s commitment to dispensationalism might also explain, at least in part, the school’s de-emphasis on nonresistance.30

The school’s emphasis on dispensationalism helps bring into focus what really mattered at Grace Bible Institute. From day one Grace Bible Institute was much more a fundamentalist institution than a Mennonite institution. It was only inevitable that, over time, the fundamentalist commitments became even more pronounced, and the Mennonite commitments even fainter. The hiring of a non-Mennonite fundamentalist as president in 1971 did not mark the start of a “new era” at the school, nor did it indicate some sort of inexplicable fall from Mennonite grace. Considering Grace Bible’s fundamentalist commitments, this had been just a matter of time.

Notes


The relationship of Grace Bible Institute to the General Conference Mennonites is a fascinating and important story, particularly given the degree to which (the protestations of Grace Bible founders notwithstanding) Grace was a terribly divisive force. But this topic is outside the purview of the article at hand.


7 Constitution of the Grace Bible Institute, Omaha, Nebraska (1945); Berry, *Committed to the Vision*, 64-65.


10 Grace Bible Institute Catalog (1949-50), 6; *Grace Bible Institute Catalog* (1958-1959), 8; *Grace Bible Institute Catalog* (1964-65), 15; *Grace Bible Institute Catalog* (1966-67), 12; *Grace Bible Institute Catalog* (1968-69), 11. While some administrators have talked recently about the need to give greater emphasis to the school’s Mennonite heritage, it is interesting to note that the 1991-93 catalog continues the practice of briefly mentioning the “ten Mennonite ministers” who founded the school, with no further discussion of Mennonites and the school’s origins and purposes.


13 This was Glendon Klaassen, quoted above.

14 Interview with Donald Tschetter, Omaha, Nebraska, September 20, 1994, p. 1. Tschetter served as academic dean and vice president of education at Grace Bible until his retirement in 1992. But he continues to work at the school, and after
our interview he graciously took me to
the closet in the academic dean’s office
where the school records are stored.
There we discovered the records
indicating that there was indeed a
Mennonite History course, and that it
had been taught every autumn from
1945 through 1952. We also discovered
the enrollment figures for the first four
years the course was taught.

Interview with Leo Thomas, Omaha,
Nebraska, September 21,1994, p. 1;
interview with Virgil Dirks, Omaha,
Grace Bible Institute enrollment files;
academic dean’s office, Grace College of
the Bible; “Enrollment Statistics,” Grace
Tidings 10 (December 1952), 5.
Grace Bible Institute Catalog (1955-56),
56; interview with Melvin Friesen,
Omaha, Nebraska, September 20, 1994,
p. 1.

There were Mennonite students at
Grace who were perturbed by the fact
that the school paid so little attention to
the Mennonite heritage. John Esau, who
attended Grace in the late 1950s, was so
disturbed by the lack of a Mennonite
History course that he “somehow
summoned the nerve to ask [GBI]
President Schmtd” why there was not
such a course. Esau can’t “remember his
explanation, but I do remember that he
seemed regretful.” Interview with John
Esau, North Newton, Kansas, July 9,

Kuhlmann, Grace, 43. Kuhlmann was
the primary author of this document.
Unabridged Doctrinal Statement of the
Grace Bible Institute, Omaha, Nebraska
(Omaha: Grace Bible Institute, 1945).

The two passages cited are Romans
12:17-21 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-4. It is
not clear that the latter is properly used
as an argument against Christian
participation in violence. Indeed, we
live as human beings, but we do not
wage war according to human
standards; for the weapons of our
warfare are not merely human, but they
have divine power to destroy
strongholds. We destroy arguments.”

Interview with Glendon Klaassen,
Newton, Kansas, July 9, 1992; interview
with John Esau, North Newton, Kansas,
July 9, 1992; interview with Virgil Dirks,
Omaha, Nebraska, September 20, 1994.

These impressions were confirmed by
other Grace graduates: interview with
Darrell Fast, North Newton, Kansas, July
9, 1992; and interview with Randall
Basinger, Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, April

Doctrinal Statement of the Grace Bible
Institute, Omaha, Nebraska, Articles XI-XII.

The most remarkable story in this
regard came from Jim Chancellor, who
taught physical education and coached
the basketball team in the late 1960s and
early 1970s (and who now teaches

comparative religions at Southern
[Baptist] Seminary in Louisville,
Kentucky). According to Chancellor, a
student informed the administration in
the spring of his senior year that, while
he wholeheartedly affirmed most of the
doctrinal statement, he had some doubts
as to the timing of the Tribulation and
Rapture, and thus he could not in good
conscience affirm that part of the
document. At the faculty meeting to deal
with this issue, an administrator argued
that the school simply could not allow a
person like this to graduate from Grace;
the faculty agreed, and voted
overwhelmingly to withhold the
student’s diploma.

Chancellor was very upset about this,
particularly because he knew that
students and faculty alike could opt out
of signing the section dealing with
Christians not participating in violence,
and yet there was no flexibility when it
came to the details of dispensationalism.
Interview with Jim Chancellor,
Louisville, Kentucky, November 11, 1994,
p. 1.

Interview with Randall Basinger,
Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, April 23, 1992,
p. 2.

Grace Bible Institute Catalog (1955-56),
47-50. As regards this question of
dispensationalism and nonresistance, it
is beyond the purview of this article to
deal with this matter, about which a
great deal has been written. For a
succinct examination of this issue see
Homeliter, American Mennonites,
223-234.

For a very brief but provocative
discussion of dispensationalist pacifism
see John Howard Yoder, Nevertheless:
Varieties of Religious Pacifism, 2nd ed.
(Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992), 115-
116.
Leonhard Sudermann, was born in Goldschaar-Heubuden near Marienburg (Malbork), West Prussia/Poland on April 21, 1821. He was the youngest of twelve children. Following a period of religious instruction, he was baptized on the second day of Pentecost, 1838. At least eight members of his family had migrated to the Ukraine prior to his father's death in December 1840. In 1841 he and his mother also undertook the arduous five week journey. The following year, Leonhard married Maria Sudermann, the daughter of the Berdyansk minister and church leader Abraham Sudermann. Leonhard actively participated in the life of the Berdyansk congregation and was ordained to the ministry in 1859, then elected elder in 1865. Sudermann was included among the first deputies dispatched to St. Petersburg by the Alexanderwohl Conference in 1871. They were to present to the czar "the pleas of our people for further gracious tolerance and legal affirmation of our freedom from military service both now and in the future." Two years later the elder was elected as one of twelve delegates sent to explore emigration possibilities in North America. A strong advocate of emigration, he himself left for the United States in 1876 and settled in Whitewater, Kansas, in 1877. Here he served as elder of Emmaus Mennonite Church until his death on January 26, 1900.3

Leonhard Sudermann figures prominently in the Russian Mennonite migration to North America in the 1870s. He was, in his own words, one of the "twelve spies" sent to investigate the potential of a homeland. Chance comments in his published account of the journey suggest he belonged to the conservative wing of Russian Mennonite church leaders. For him the alternative service proposed by tsarist authorities gave "indirect support to the military," exposed Mennonite youth to "the dangers of life in the barracks" and placed "our future existence in Russia in jeopardy." Available evidence suggests that most ministers and elders shared his views. The Russian Mennonite world of the 1870s was still very narrow. Inward looking and preoccupied with its internal disputes and struggles, it still lived in cultural isolation. It was unfamiliar with most things Russian, was generally suspicious of the outside world, and practiced a pacifism which rejected war and violence but resisted active peacemaking. Sudermann was simply a person of his times, a person constrained by the limitations of his day. For him, pacifism was associated with a closed community, strict separation from the world, and resistance to cultural assimilation. It was a sacred trust handed down by his forebears. If Russia refused to have it, he would seek other countries.4

His conservatism in no way detracts from his talents as a minister and elder. A colleague and long-time co-worker in Whitewater, Kansas, Edward Claassen, cites the seriousness with which he viewed...
his calling, his effectiveness as a pastor and reconciler, his diplomatic and teaching skills, as well as his evangelistic fervor.

Wisely and carefully he led the congregation, always concerned with our welfare. None of us ever sensed that he wanted to dominate or control us. The years of our common pilgrimage passed in love and harmony and no sour note shattered the harmony of that sweet melody. . . . Faithfully and lovingly he encouraged, supported, admonished and taught us. As a wise teacher he also pointed out our shortcomings. He was always there for us if we
were discouraged and even amid the weakness of his declining years was ever ready to help.7

Leonard Sudermann's description of the founding of the Berdyansk Mennonite church is the only known account to date. As such it provides a small insight into the early urbanization of the Russian Mennonites, the nature of their business activity, and the destructive impact of the Crimean War. It further reflects the prevailing sense of Mennonite interdependence both with the mother colony and the mother congregations. The conservative nature of the ecclesiastical structure and the respect for traditional religious practices is also clearly evident. Above all, the account is autobiographical. It provides unexpected details about Sudermann's personal life as well as his ecclesiastical career. The memoir reflects a self-deprecating modesty rather characteristic of Russian Mennonite writing in the later nineteenth century. Sudermann, using the third person, is reluctant to identify himself as the author until almost the end of the manuscript. The tone of the account is rather grave and serious. Only once when he comments on Bernhard Buhler's short extemporaneous sermon which "had to be complemented by a fellow minister" is there a hint of levity.

The German language usage is complex and convoluted, not unlike P. M. Friesen's later history. The use of vague suggestion, allusion, and overdescription generated momentary translation crises from time to time. I tried to shorten the length of the sentences, render obsolete expression into modern English, and reduce the excessive wordiness of the account—all I hope without undue violence to the text.

How and in What Manner a Mennonite Church was Founded in the Port City of Berdyansk, South Russia

During the 1830s of this century, the governor general of the southern portion of the Russian Empire, Count Voronzov, extended an invitation to our Mennonite leaders in Chortitza and Molotschna on behalf of the newly founded port city of Berdyansk on the Sea of Azov. It expressed the wish that several families interested in horticulture (for which purpose he offered rather large areas of good land), business, and trade might settle there. During 1839-40 several families of our co-religionists, some from the Chortitza and others from the Molotschna Colony, responded to this invitation and were given horticultural sites or built windmills. Since the milling industry was promising and other enterprises were also profitable, the number of families [moving to Berdyansk] steadily increased. The chairman of the Agricultural Union in the Molotschna, Johann Cornies, even found it necessary to appoint a regional representative to look after organizational matters [in the city].

Meanwhile, a church teacher who served the Mennonite congregation of Heubuden near Marienburg for seventeen years decided to emigrate to South Russia with his family. Once he arrived, he decided to seek his future in Berdyansk and moved there in 1841. He built a treadmill in order to secure his livelihood.4 Inwardly constrained to work according to the gift and grace given to him and called by both the Lord and the congregation to the office which preaches reconciliation, he found a small sphere of activity among those who, until now, had been spiritually orphaned co-religionists and co-confessionalists. After he secured his livelihood by establishing himself in business, he began to hold Sunday services in a large room in his own home. The services were rather well attended from the very onset. As new families arrived from the colonies, the membership increased. Among them was Abraham Wiebe from Rudnerweide, a wealthy person who moved to Berdyansk. He built a rather large home and offered the second storey as a meeting place for our Sunday services. We gratefully used this home until, constrained by our growing children, we decided to build our own school. Once complete, the school room was also used for Sunday services. As the size of the
congregation gradually increased, extra benches ensured that there were always enough seats for the members.

The communicants who lived here had relatives in the colonies who occasionally came to visit. From time to time, visiting ministers from there, whose members lived [in Berdyansk], attended the services. Their presence constituted a pleasant change for the listeners since such ministerial visits generated much interest. Periodically the elder of the Pordenau church, Heinrich Toews, also came to visit. The majority of Mennonites living here belonged to his congregation. This elder considered it his duty to hold a ministerial election in order to provide supervision and nurture for his members. In the summer of 1848 he initiated such a process. The church elected brother Isbrand Friesen as the congregational teacher. He was [originally] from the Tiegenhof area in Prussia and had moved here from Rosenort [Molotschna]. He was about 43 years old when elected. Brother David Fast, who had settled here from Rudnerweide, Molotschna, was elected as deacon. Since 1848 our small group was served by two teachers who alternately led worship services.

Seven years later (1855) the Crimean War, so significant for Russia's history, brought the English and French fleets into the Sea of Azov. Since they threatened the port cities, the inhabitants of the city of Berdyansk were in serious jeopardy. In order to save their families' lives they fled to the steppe, leaving their possessions behind. Our people sought refuge with their relatives in the colonies.

The sudden cessation of business [and commerce] caused considerable losses. Nevertheless the Lord, who has all things in His hands and rules as He will, had His great and serious purposes with our co-religionists. His healing and chastising grace prepared many a heart and soul to bear fruit and opened them to the leading of the [Holy] Spirit. To Him be glory forever. When peace was concluded between Russia and its enemies in 1856, it afforded the inhabitants of the port cities on the Sea of Azov the prospect of reclaiming their former possessions. Almost a year passed before the completely devastated city was reunited with its former inhabitants. The wounds inflicted upon property and possessions gradually healed, in some cases earlier, in others later. People returned to their own households and once more pursued their [former] professions. May God grant that we understand the purpose of this divine correction and utilize it for our inner edification.

Several years prior to the intrusion of war, several [people] in our fellowship who were concerned with the inner growth of the church expressed the wish that we construct our own house of prayer. This desire was partially justified by the fact that the school benches were uncomfortable, especially for the women. It was also difficult to change the benches every Sunday. If one seriously wishes to do something, an effort is made to accomplish it. That was certainly the case here. They began by organizing a fund drive among our co-religionists in the old Prussian homeland. One of our brethren, Cornelius Jansen, who lived in Berdyansk as a resident alien and returned to the old fatherland with his family during the years 1853-56 helped us by initiating the fund drive among our fellow confessionalists.

When the enemy drove us from the city in 1855, we had an available capital of some nine hundred rubles. Certain funds were deposited in the Molotschna district office and some were left with an investment specialist. They had already thought of constructing a church when the school house was built and so reserved sufficient land on which to erect such a building. The collection of foreign monies compelled the Berdyansk Mennonites to
begin construction as soon as possible. They began to build in 1858. There was soon controversy as to whether the building should be eight or nine faden long. Without getting the approval of the congregation, the building committee decided it should be nine faden long and five faden wide. This decision was made in May of 1858 and the foundation was laid. In addition to the foreign funds, we had sizeable contributions from our own members. A segment of the congregation was incensed by the somewhat arbitrary actions of the building committee. A member who had a special talent for causing disruption in the congregation utilized his talents in order to hinder construction. He was successful and the building project was postponed. The building committee was dismissed.

Under the leadership of the Molotschna district head David Friesen, the chairman of the Agricultural Union, Peter Schmidt, and the elders Heinrich Toews and August Lenzmann, a new building committee was elected in the spring of 1860. A building was erected upon the existing foundation and finished during the same year. In order to help our small congregation erect a church, there were additional sizeable contributions from our co-religionists in the Molotschna. A fund drive by our parent churches in 1861 brought in 245 rubles from the Orloffer Kirchenkonvent, 213 rubles from the Lichtenau and Petershagen Kirchenkonvent and in 1862 the Chortitza Kirchenkonvent sent us 78 rubles. Through these and other freewill offerings given by local members (we could only build the church with the Lord’s help and these freewill gifts) we, with God’s assistance, held our first worship service in our solidly built brick church on the feast of Pentecost in 1863. Though it was far from finished at the time of the festival and many things were incomplete, for example the seats were not adequate, we nevertheless felt very comfortable in this lovely, large, airy building. Since then we have regularly held our worship service in it. It was dedicated without too much fanfare by lovers of God who had come to worship the Lord in spirit and truth. The incomplete structure was gradually finished and with thankful hearts we could say to the Lord, whose name was to be praised in this little temple and whose kingdom enlarged through living witnesses, “hitherto has the Lord helped us.” We had a fine chapel with sufficient space for our purposes and thanks to the Lord’s help, it was completely paid for. We could rejoice and praise the Lord with all our hearts.

The oldest minister, Abraham Sudermann, then aged sixty-nine, deteriorated physically in the summer of 1859 and could not fulfill the duties of his office because of a persistent cough. He wished to resign and requested a replacement. Many of the Berdyansk members still felt they belonged to the congregation in the colony from which they had come. For example, Abraham Sudermann remained a member of the Gnadenfeld congregation, which he joined when he immigrated to Russia. Since the Gnadenfeld congregation, with the exception of Pordenau, had the largest membership and had a minister here since 1848, the ministerial election to replace the aged and weakened servant was held in Gnadenfeld itself on Sept. 30, 1859 (Gregorian calendar). Leonhard Sudermann, the son-in-law of Abraham Sudermann, was elected with seventy-nine votes. According to his own judgement, he was the least qualified for this office.

He was born in Goldschar near Marienburg in West Prussia on April 21, 1821. He spent his childhood and youth in his homeland. Following the death of his father, Abraham Sudermann, he and his mother left for South Russia in the fall of 1841, where eight of his brothers and sisters already lived. After marrying the second daughter of the congregational leader Abraham Sudermann in October 1842, he took up residence in Berdyansk. When the Lord gives an office, he also provides the talent. As one called of the Lord, he submitted to the divine will. In order to bolster his limited talent, he prayed for abundant grace from the Lord, which he extolled on many occasions. Trusting the almighty God, he obediently submitted to His holy will and allowed himself to be inducted into this holy office in the Gnadenfeld Colony. Following the solemn act of

The vacancy in the small congregation in our city was filled and there were again two ministers in the vineyard of the Lord earnestly pursuing their calling. The elderly minister Abraham Sudermann withdrew from the ministry and took his leave of this world for the eternal one on September 2/14, 1865, at the age of seventy-five years. For many years here [on earth], he had labored and won souls [for that eternal world].

During the last months of 1863, several people expressed the wish that we should organize ourselves as an independent congregation. It was discussed at length and soon we ministers were pressed to take appropriate action in order to implement this wish. Interested members made special efforts and gathered signatures to this end. It was soon apparent from the signatories that the desire for such a course of action was universal.

We held a meeting in January 1864 in which we discussed our manner of procedure. It was decided to select a Molotschna elder by lot who would then bring our wish and desire to fruition. The lot selected Dietrich Warkentin, the elder of the Lichtenauer congregation. We wrote to him requesting that, if time and circumstances permitted, he visit us and inaugurate the elder selection process.

In the meantime, an ugly inter-family dispute erupted which, though of minor origins, aroused the feelings of various individuals against one another. As a small fire ignites a large forest, so the conflict generated great disunity in the congregation. Satan’s plan was to alienate the two ministers, but by God’s grace this did not happen. The event nevertheless scuttled the planned merger. Elder Warkentin was duly notified and remained at home, though he had been willing to fulfill our wishes. The plan was postponed. It was not the Lord’s time. The intended changes in the congregational life were put on hold. An important step was taken in this matter in June of 1864. Membership discussions concluded that a ministerial election should be held before any further decisions were made. The two elders in the colony also endorsed the decision. Later on it would be easier to select a man for the office of bishop (elder) from a greater number of ministers. It was the unanimous wish of a brotherhood meeting that elder Warkentin, to whom the Lord had already directed us, now take up the matter. This request was made by letter of June 29, 1864.

[The elder] replied that he would come on July 26, celebrate communion with us, and proceed with the ministerial election on the following day.

The important day in the life of our congregation, when the first step for the union of members of various congregations was to be taken, drew nigh. Every congregation has its own peculiarities and its own character. One adapts to certain worship practices and to customary forms learned from youth, learns to love them and reluctantly parts with them. One must be prepared to sacrifice one thing or another in a merger of various households and to practice self-denial. Our weakness, however, is often so great that it is difficult to give up precious practices and sacrifice personal preferences for the sake of the congregation. Many people were concerned about the future and wondered whether the soon to be elected elder would introduce changes and upset the existing order with its time honored customs, practices, and habits. Others were deeply concerned about the welfare of the congregation. They prayed diligently to the Mover of Hearts that this election would serve our best interests and give us people in leadership who have a heart for the salvation of undying souls.

The Lord generously acknowledged the petitions of his children. The brethren Cornelius Friesen and Bernhard Buhler were elected as ministers and David Huebert was elected as deacon. All three men, whose hearts the Lord touched, did not hesitate to follow the call of the Lord. On August 9, 1864, the eighth Sunday after Trinity, brother Buhler began his ministry with an inaugural sermon which, because it was extemporaneous, was short and had to be complemented by a fellow minister. Brother
Cornelius Friesen hesitated to assume his position. He finally took up his assigned tasks on the first Sunday of Advent, 1864. With God’s help, there were four ministers and one deacon in our fine new church, not counting the invalid minister Abraham Sudermann who was still alive and took a lively interest in the expansion of the ministerial staff.

In the spring of 1865, two Mennonites living in the city engaged in rather reprehensible actions. It became necessary for the church leadership to take action. The regrettable event demonstrated how disunified we were as a church and that we were quite incapable of taking action in this case. We informed elder Warkentin of the unfortunate affair by letter, and he felt compelled to come to us and regulate the matter. This provided a new pretext for strengthening the organizational structure of our congregation and it was decided to implement this in the fall of this year by electing an elder. The election was held during the first days of September. The old teacher Abraham Sudermann witnessed the election of his son-in-law Leonhard Sudermann to this important, responsible post. When the installation was held several weeks later, he had, on September 15, already gone to his eternal rest.

The minister Isbrand Friesen had moved out of our city some time earlier. He had been offered another position. He suffered a great deal from a cough which also made it difficult for him to fulfill his duties in the congregation. At the time of our formal founding, the personnel consisted of three persons for the preaching of the Word and one deacon. Our new independent congregation celebrated the Lord’s Supper for the first time on January 16, 1866, with some fifty participants. The Lord blessed us. On January 30 of the same year the new elder began to teach Sunday School and general catechism classes on Sunday afternoons. After Easter, five young ladies declared their intention to be baptized, who, in the next seven weeks, were instructed as grace and giftedness allowed. They received baptism on the second day of Pentecost, 1866. Fourteen days after Pentecost these new members celebrated the Lord’s Supper with the congregation for the first time. Also in attendance were a number of our co-religionists and fellow celebrants who had not yet signified their intention of joining our church.

The new elder still needed to win the confidence of his members, for some kept their distance and were not a part of this important work. The Kingdom of God has always had its enemies and they were also present here. God has his purpose even with these. The poet rightly says:

The world covetously glances to see how the small flock advances.

This was also the case here. Whoever seeks faults in others will have the opportunity to find them. They will easily find them in persons who occupy important postings and even more easily when one is not well practiced in this new office. This meant that the new elder, who was so aware of his great weakness and imperfection, had to exercise extreme caution and be on his guard in the administration of his office. The person who had caused all the fuss during the construction of the chapel carefully watched his every step. At a brotherhood meeting, which he eagerly attended though he did not join the congregation and even had his children baptized in the colony, he personally concluded that the elder had committed an administrative error. He complained to the brethren next day and added, “Such a man is not worthy of his office.” The brethren now informed the elder of his words as well as his complaint. The elder agreed with the complaint and declared himself willing to openly confess his failing. The brethren replied, “If you can and will do this, do it as soon as possible.” No sooner said than done.

The writer of this account has spoken in the second person until now, but is actually the elder in question and will use “I” from now on, even though he finds it uncomfortable at times. I went directly to my friend and declared that I was completely and entirely in agreement with the sentiments he had expressed. This put him in an obviously difficult
situation and at first he had little to say. Then he said that if I had that insight he was content. He cordially invited me for a cup of tea. After we were finished, a bright moonlight illuminated the way to my house where the brethren were still waiting [to be informed] of the results of my action. If one is so inclined, such a spirit of contrariness is difficult to overcome, especially if a person feels comfortable with it and nurtures it. In the case of this dear man, it produced only new, wretched fruit. He was well educated and worked in an office as secretary for a lengthy period. Later he used these talents in preparing documents addressed to the high authorities which resulted in the expulsion from the Russian Empire of the brethren Cornelius Jansen and Isaak Peters. There was also proof that if I had waited a few more months with my emigration, an exit visa would have arrived in my house courtesy his actions and without any effort on my part. When taken to task for these actions, he is to have said that he considered it his duty to perform them. [Through such experiences] one comes into dialogue with the apostle Paul who was also in danger from false brethren.

According to Bogatzky all difficulties must benefit God's children. That was certainly confirmed in my insignificant work in the Kingdom of God. I had the opportunity [to minister] to the sick and at the deathbeds of such people who had been estranged from me for a long time. I not only won them through the consolation which I was able to convey with the help of the Lord and the Holy Spirit, but often won their families as well. To God be the glory. He directed the hearts [of my parishioners] in such a way that when I left the congregation in June 1876, they participated wholeheartedly in my decision. I mentioned this experience in my farewell address. The church in Berdyansk lost its independence soon after I left. The minister Cornelius Friesen died a few years later. Bernhard Buhler and David Hiebert emigrated to America in 1877. A newly elected minister, Abraham Jantzen, now served the congregation in the Sunday worship service while an elder from the Molotschna presided over baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Notes

2 F. Isaac, Die Molotschner Mennoniten (Hallstadt, 1908), 295-296.
3 The papers of Leonhard Sudermann at the Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, cover many aspects of his career, though most of the material relates to his activities in the United States.
4 Leonhard Sudermann, Eine Deputationsreise von Russland nach Amerika (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonitische Verlagshandlung, 1897).
6 Sudermann seems to have been an advocate of emigration prior to his 1873 journey to North America. His good friend Cornelius Jansen, the Prussian consul in Berdyansk, strongly promoted emigration. When Mennonite leaders met in Alexanderwolh, Molotschina in December 1870, an observer noted that Sudermann and Jansen "had already ordered many little books from America... and distributed them among us." G. Wiebe, Ursachen und Geschichte der Auseinandersetzung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Nordwesten, n.d.), 21. In 1872 Jansen published a pamphlet detailing many aspects of life in America, Sammlung von Notizen über Amerika (Danzig, 1872).
7 Claassen, 6.
8 Watermills and windmills were the oldest milling devices in both the Chortitza and Molotschina colonies. The first Mennonite owned horse- or treadmill was built in the city of Ekaterinoslav sometime after 1805. Treadmills were still in widespread use in the 1840s and 1850s. The first Mennonite operated steam mills were erected in the 1860s. See "The Emergence of German Industry in the South Russian Colonies," Mennonite Quarterly Review 55 (October 1981), 312ff.
9 A faden was equal to seven feet or 2.13 meters.
10 The term Kirchenkonzent officially emerged in 1850 when elders and ministers from various congregations organized the Molotschna Mennonitischer Kirchenkonzent. In later years it was rather hierarchical in structure and often ignored or overruled congregational wishes. Sudermann's use of the term refers to the jurisdictional district of a given elder, not the overall organization.
Russell Binkley
grew up in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, went to college in Texas, and worked for a church in inner-city Philadelphia. My family was Mennonite, but we were different. I watched the people in our Lancaster conference church, resenting their normalcy. I was taught to be separate from the world, but I also felt excluded from the church. Consequently, I have always had empathy for outsiders, people who cannot feel welcome, and must observe from the edges.

This story, "Comic Books," is from a novel-in-progress about a family in Lancaster County. It is a flashback, providing background on the family of the twelve-year-old named Buzzy who is the protagonist.

Now, I teach sixth grade in a small Illinois town. I try to recognize the student who is separate. I sometimes still experience this, so I can remember the acute ache of being an adolescent on the periphery of the community.

Mary Ann dreamed all the kids in the family were picnicking in the pasture down by the creek. Even Mom was neither too sick nor exhausted to be with them. The new clean blanket they'd spread out was surrounded by snowy clumps of Queen Anne's lace. Carl threw handfuls of buttercups and dandelions into the stream and their bright heads floated on the slow brown water. For once they had more than enough food: a basket of thick ham sandwiches slathered with yellow mustard, a sweating jar of pickled red beet eggs, a thermos jug full of orange Kool-Aid, and a whole plate of fresh chocolate cupcakes with pastel frosting. Black and white cows grazed calmly on the lush grass and the fierce bull wasn't anywhere in sight.

She surfaced when the doorknob rattled. Her two younger sisters shared this attic bedroom with her. Elma had the narrow cot under the eave and Irene slept in the double bed with Mary Ann. Carl's feet made sticky pats on the worn linoleum. He crawled up over the splitting footboard and she raised the quilt for him as if she were still back in the pasture, opening the gate. Irene moaned in her sleep and moved away from the trough in the middle of their mattress. Mary Ann drew the little boy to her.

Most mornings she'd hear him come in. But sometimes she'd awake, sensing his weight already by her feet. He'd be curled up like a kitten on top of the covers, shivering in his sleep, too thoughtful even at the age of six, to disturb her.

Mary Ann, a fifth grader, was the oldest of the seven children and he looked up to her. It was easy to feel close to Carl because he wasn't like the others. He never griped when she scorched the oatmeal, never whined about not having milk money, and he seldom questioned what she found to smear on their bread when she made lunches: mashed potatoes and ketchup, or canned baked beans. When she invented silly lyrics to 'Oh, My Papa' or 'How Much Is That Doggie In The Window?', he'd collapse giggling on the couch, head thrown back, his gums blank from newly missing baby teeth. He'd taped the portraits
of Maggie and Jiggs she'd copied from the funnies to the wall above his bunk.

Carl wore only the shirt to his pajamas, Paul's hand-me-downs, blue flannels printed with cowboys and Indians. Once again, he'd kicked off the bottoms because they were wet. His thin legs and buttocks were smooth and cold against her. Still, he was welcome, the smell of his pee not yet that acrid through the covers.

And Irene, unaware, did not protest. Nothing ever seemed to disturb either of Mary Ann's sisters when they slept, not their father's shouts downstairs after midnight, not chairs shoved across floors and rammed into walls, and not even the shocking clatter of the knife drawer being flung through the glass of the kitchen window. Irene would barely murmur, and Elma, a pillow tight over her head, wouldn't stir. But Mary Ann, too frightened to go down to the bathroom for hours afterward though her bladder ached, crouched in the dark by the window and once more convinced herself that she indeed could drop the story-and-a-half to the ground if Pop were to come up to their room.

She could not return to sleep now. Work traffic had begun. Most drivers slowed down on the turn before the old house, but their tires still sprayed cinders against its brown shingles. Headlights swept across the curled pages of the careful drawings that were thumb tacked to the slanted ceiling: Blondie, Dagwood, Henry, Daisy Mae, Mutt and Jeff, the Katzenjammers, and at least a dozen more. She lay waiting to hear the mill's 6:50 whistle, her signal to get up. Carl's fine blonde hair fluttered with her breathing and tickled her cheek. He made a steady sucking noise as the infant Helen had when Mom was still able to nurse her. Irene hugged the high edge of the bed, enviably far from consciousness. In the dimness, the black thicket of her hair was the angry face of a bearded prophet from a Bible story comic.

Now the baby Helen was fussing down in her parents' bedroom. Mary Ann listened for the groan of the bed slats and the creak of the floorboards below, but Mom made no sound. Helen kept crying, not terribly loud, but enough so that Mary Ann felt the familiar tug of responsibility.

Since Pop was working again, second shift this time, he would have gone to bed only a few hours ago. If he got up now he would surely be in a foul mood, shuffling around barefoot and unshaven, a complete stranger to their rituals, forcing his involvement on them as they tried to get ready for school. He would criticize their clothes, say their fingernails were dirty, and slap at the backs of their heads for imagined disrespect. The young ones would sob into their cocoa, their day already hopeless, while the older ones, wiser, would know how to stay out of his way.

Mary Ann quickly buttoned her blouse and slipped the corduroy jumper over her head. She felt her way down the narrow stairs. If Mom's door were open, even just a crack, she would duck in and scoop up the baby, shove a bottle into her mouth, and quiet her in seconds.

But the door was closed. She stood on the cold register, not sure what to do. She reached out to the
sloppily varnished wood with her fingertips, then abruptly withdrew, fearful of touching it because he lay on the other side. Of course, the panels were not hot with current as the electric fence had been where Pop once took them to watch him fish. He’d coaxed and tricked her into lifting the wire and then howled with laughter when she’d jerked back from the shock, clutching her throbbing arm.

For several minutes she stood there, shifting from foot to foot, listening to the baby’s crying. She was sure they were just sleeping through it, but then again, they could be dead in there, even murdered. Or maybe Pop had gone again, run off to Lancaster to move back into the apartment with the fat lady, and Mom was alone, too defeated to get up. Mary Ann was reluctant to leave her post and afraid to stay and wait. As usual, no one else in the house was worried. They were not even awake. But here she was again. She looked up to the dark ceiling and braced herself. Sometimes she almost doubled over under this weight, as if a heavy animal pounced onto her back, its rancid breath whistling past her ear. The claws dug deep into her shoulders and the spiked tail whipped against her tender legs. If she’d had her tablet and colored pencils she could have squatted down right there in the hallway, and even without light, she’d have drawn the beast exactly.

Don’t pay any attention, Elma warned, skipping ahead. Ignore the ignorant.” She was eager to get to school early these days because she had a crush on her teacher. Irene lagged behind, unaware, mumbling numbers, her notebook a portable desk held out in front of her. She was trying to finish the arithmetic homework she’d been too tired to do last night and she kept tripping on the uneven sidewalk. Paul and Ronnie were more than two blocks away poking with sticks at a brown hump of something that lay in the gutter.

“We wanted to talk to you,” Jane said, running with her sister to catch up. They were a year apart and very pretty. Their blonde hair and dimples got them chosen to play queens and princesses in plays and angels in Christmas pageants.

Carl swung his lunch box and kicked through the leaves. “Yeah,” Patsy said, “we have something to ask you, Mary Ann.” Her smile was disarming. It was the first time in about two weeks that she hadn’t teased Mary Ann about her gangliness by calling her “Olive Oyl.” She usually followed that up by pointing at Carl and crying, “and there’s smelly little Sweet Pea.” Mary Ann was suspicious.

They were joined by Gwendolyn Stauffer. She was dark and brash with a bust rivaling their teachers’ in its fullness. “Look at my brand new sweater,” she interrupted. “It was very expensive.” She was always showing off something one of her estranged parents had bought. Her father was a chiropractor and she bragged about that, too. “It’s from Philadelphia,” she said, sticking out her chest. Mary Ann looked at the pink mohair with skepticism. She’d seen it before but she didn’t want to say so. Mary Ann had worn the same two outfits since school had begun that fall and she didn’t want to give the larger girl any additional ammunition for ridicule.

“So did you tell her about you know what?” Gwendolyn asked.

“We were about to,” Jane replied, a bit perturbed. She said they’d started a club and they were only inviting certain people to join. They met on weekends to drink Cokes and eat snacks. Mary
Ann watched carefully for the catch in this, but
saw no winks, no sidelong glances.

“Our clubhouse is that little yellow building
between the lumberyard and the railroad tracks,”
Gwendolyn said. Mary Ann’s mother had always
asserted that depraved hoboes hid out there
between trains and if little girls ventured too close
they would drag them into the shack and do
something to “hurt their insides.”

“And the really neat part is,” Patsy said,
making her eyes wide, “there’s comic books in
there!” Of course, now Mary Ann was nearly
convinced. Her notebook pages, like her bedroom
walls, were filled with drawings from the comics
she loved.

“The Boy Scouts store them in there,” Jane
explained. “Some real rich family donated them to
their newspaper drive.”

“There’s hundreds of them!” Gwendolyn said.
“And they’re like new!” Mary Ann owned only
nine herself and they were all tattered.

“More like thousands,” Patsy corrected, an
edge of impatience in her voice. “You can just lay
around all day and read them.”

“Funny ones?” Mary Ann asked, hardly
believing her good fortune. “I don’t like the ugly
ones with soldiers and war and monsters.” Carl
looked up at her happily. His gray eyes were
slightly crossed.

“Oh, none of that kind,” Jane assured her.

“Lulu, Tubby, and Iodine?” Mary Ann asked.

“Right.” Patsy said. “There was a whole
bunch of those. And Little Lotta and Archie and
Richie Rich. All the good ones.”

“Casper the Friendly Ghost?” Carl guessed.
He hopped off the curb on one foot.

“Boy!” Mary Ann exclaimed.

“But first there’s the initiation,” Patsy said.

“Tonight at the clubhouse.” She waved
enthusiastically to a group of girls across the
street.

“Don’t worry about that,” Jane said. “It’s
nothing much. All you have to do is show up.
That’s all there is to it.”

“But you have to show up at midnight,”
Gwendolyn added. Her black eyes looked hard
into Mary Ann’s incredulous face. “That is, unless
you don’t really want to be a member of our club.”

“Sure she does,” Jane said, taking Mary Ann’s
arm and slowing her down to keep Carl from
can sneak out tonight. It’ll just be this one time.
After you’re in, you can come anytime you want.”

“Well, is she going to do it,” Gwendolyn asked
loudly, “or is she going to be a skinny little
chicken?”

“Are you with us, Mary Ann?” Mrs. Garber
had to ask, snapping her fingers that were dry
with chalk dust.

Mary Ann nodded her head dreamily.

“She hasn’t accepted their invitation
to be a club member without some
reservations. The three girls had
demonstrated their fickleness before.”

She hadn’t accepted their invitation to be a
club member without some reservations. The three
girls had demonstrated their fickleness before. It
was true that Gwendolyn was sometimes her
friend, but if she had an audience, especially the
Martin sisters, her loyalty dissolved.

Once Mary Ann had caught her at it, acting out
an incident she had witnessed at Mary Ann’s when
Pop’s new car had been repossessed by the finance
company. With exaggerated gestures she’d mimicked

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his stumbling from the back porch. His pants were falling down and he was waving his fists at the men who’d come for the automobile. He’d swung at the empty air, the men grinning and ducking easily. The scene ended with Gwendolyn taking a pratfall as Pop had at the foot of the driveway, then bawling loudly as the 1955 DeSoto pulled away. Gwendolyn looked right at Mary Ann when she saw her standing there watching. She laughed, not a bit ashamed about humiliating her friend. It was as if all she’d been doing was recounting last Sunday night’s zany episode of *I Love Lucy*.

“She would dash to the shack just to see, just to make sure, and then she would hurry back to school in time to walk Carl home.”

Throughout the school day, Mary Ann waited for them to rescind their offer; she watched for them to pass knowing smiles. She saw them sitting together at lunch but she didn’t have the nerve to pull up a chair to join them and they didn’t ask. Gwendolyn had been dissecting her slab of chocolate cake, eating only the thick icing. The Martin sisters nibbled disinterestedly on their trimmed bread. The three had been whispering and it may have been only coincidence, but they’d giggled just as Mary Ann bit into her mealy little apple.

Still, it wasn’t entirely improbable they’d want her in their club. Everyone acknowledged Mary Ann as the best artist in her class. While the others drew little more than stick figures floating stiffly over a flat backdrop of ocean and shore, her Christopher Columbus was fully fleshed, his steps heavy on the sand. The jungle he faced was not just a monochromatic green scribble. It looked deep and real. Maybe it could have been full of Indians. She’d been the one Mrs. Garber selected to draw the large map on butcher paper when they had the unit on Scandinavia. Her classmates showed a grudging admiration for her talent.

When the three o’clock bell rang, Mary Ann rushed from the building. A male teacher’s voice called after her, “Young ladies don’t run, they walk!” but she ran anyway. The afternoon sun shone bright as comic book ink. She flew across the playground, parting the chains of the swings, their wooden seats banging together. She would dash to the shack just to see, just to make sure, and then she would hurry back to school in time to walk Carl home. If she were quick, he would not have to wait long.

She scaled the wooden fence agilely and cut through the alley behind the IGA, startling to flight the gray pigeons that pecked around the trash cans. She went in through the backdoor of Pearson’s Drugstore past the prescription counter, running down the narrow aisle that was crammed with merchandise, stirring scents of medicine, soap, and chocolate in her wake. She barged right between a clerk and her customer, who had to clap her hands together to save the change that was just given to her. Mary Ann eliminated a whole block by taking this shortcut.

She wove through the carlot, dodging the threatening jab of Chevrolet fins. She passed the side entrance of the newspaper office where boys were picking up papers for their afternoon routes and then headed through a series of vacant lots, leaping over broken bricks and high wiry grass. Something small and dark ran off in the weeds, but she did not take time to be startled by it. She was only beginning to breathe hard when she came to the lumberyard. It was surrounded by a high chain-link fence topped with barbed wire.

She followed the barrier, searching for an opening. She could only stay a minute. She’d have to turn right around because she didn’t want Carl to worry. Once, at the beginning of the school year, a teacher had carried him onto a bus, insisting over his struggles that she knew best. She forced him into a seat among children who lived out in the country. When Mary Ann had come out and not found him waiting, she’d assumed he’d already left for home with Elma and Irene. The door had whooshed shut and the bus had started to roll when Mary Ann saw his terrified face at the window. She rescued him and the teacher looked
resentful, but said nothing. “I thought you didn’t want me anymore.” Carl choked. She’d make today’s wait up to him; next weekend she’d take him with her to the clubhouse for comics and Hershey bars.

She had to inhale to make herself skinny enough to fit through the narrow gap at the corner of the fence. It was hard to believe Gwendolyn could squeeze into this space. Mary Ann hoped there were no police dogs guarding the property, but all she saw in the yard were tall stacks of boards, heaps of gravel, and pyramids of two by fours. If Mom were right about the hoboes, they were nowhere in sight. Maybe they were watching from behind the lumber, camouflaged in their drab railroad clothes, waiting to reach out and grab her with their greasy fingers. She shaded her eyes and looked into the window of the little building but saw nothing. The glass had been painted over on the inside. She tumbled a cinder block over to the door and stretched to get a look through the small diamond pane.

It was very dim inside and her eyes took a few seconds to discern that there was only junk in there: wood scraps, boxes of nails, and rusty old machine parts. Her shoulders dropped in disappointment. She should have expected as much from those three. And their plan was for her to show up at midnight!

She hurried back toward school the way she’d come. Her lungs hurt and her eyes stung with their betrayal. Over the row of cedars she saw the long yellow back of the last school bus pulling away. Only a few children lingered on the building’s granite steps. They waited for their mothers to drive them to music lessons or take them shopping for new winter clothes. Carl was not among them.

Mary Ann was panting now, but she ran almost a block more in the direction of home, pressing the heel of her hand into the stitches in her side. Ahead, on the opposite side of the street was Carl. He paced slowly, head down. A woman scratched around on the sidewalk with a rake, dragging leaves to a smoldering pile. Mary Ann stood in the blue smoke and called out to Carl.

And the little boy responded immediately, almost dancing, waving a Weekly Reader at her, as excited as if he hadn’t seen her in days. He appeared to look both ways before crossing the street as Mary Ann had taught him, but in his relieved joy he did it only superficially. “WAIT!” Mary Ann shouted, “NO!” He was already halfway across. The woman looked up, suspended her raking. Her face went slack.

It was a shiny blue and white Ford with a leering grill that struck him. It had just turned the corner so it was not really going fast, but still the brakes screeched and the tires drew wide black marks on the pavement. Carl was slammed hard against the street and his Davy Crockett lunch box skittered across the bricks.

The driver, a smooth-faced young man with a flattop haircut, covered his mouth with his hand and rested his forehead on the steering wheel. He just sat there, still. The car’s radio was playing ‘The Yellow Rose of Texas.’ The woman stopped to lean her rake against a tree before circling Mary Ann with her arms. A man in a dark gray suit bent over Carl. Other people were venturing from their porches to have a look.

Mary Ann gulped for air and opened and closed her fists and strained against the woman’s arms. She pressed her cheek into the rough green wool of the woman’s sleeve. “Carl,” she pleaded. “It’s my little brother.” The mound of plaid flannel and blue denim was still.

“I never did care about Little Lulu or Tubby,” Mary Ann said. She dared to look into the grown-up woman’s blue eyes. “Nancy and Sluggo don’t mean a thing to me.”
Gravel

When we were young we raced on gravel, reveling in its roughness, callouses on the soles of our feet. We hated sidewalks, their smoothness ordinary, deceptive. Once, I ran their greyness at full throttle, was surprised by broken glass, my foot a pool of blood. Though I screamed all the way home, I was more angry than afraid, not wanting to be absent at the next day's swimming test. All that mattered then were our bodies. We owned each stone, every street, our brazen feet able to bear anything. Now even the scar left by your father's stitches shrinks like a memory, like those summers we'll never know again: before breasts, before boys, when blood was only blood.

On the Brink

Standing on the southern tip of India, I watch the waves lick my toes, sink my nails into soft sand. Dusk floats to shore, dark-skinned as the fishermen returning in small boats. The air is heavy and sweet, like the incense burning inside the ancient temples I am allowed to enter because I have not begun to bleed. Soon every living thing will blur, from fringed coast to massive shrines, even the water swirling under my feet. I will be unanchored, tossed and turned, emerging to taste the salt on my hands.
So Much Unexplained

That was the winter our family plummeted
south to Cape Cormorin, three long days
on the Grand Trunk Railway, you and I restless,
the constant jostling of our limbs,
hour after hour barren plains.
On the last leg, the scenery shifted.
We woke from our daydreams to shimmering palms,
our bodies blinking open, sultry air.
You were too young to grasp
why our parents led us to an empty stretch of sand,
far removed from the muscled fishermen
who tried to knot around us,
or why we spent only one night at that cheap hotel,
the sounds of sex seeping through the thin walls. Me,
standing by the door in the early morning,
staring at the prostitute, water streaming
down her almond-colored breasts,
her hair brilliantly wet.
That was the winter I longed to linger for days
beside the stone sculptures
hidden inside the towering temples,
desperate to decipher the multitude of erotic poses,
their carved beauty causing me to wonder when
my pale body would begin to swell.

Husks

As I shed my clothes,
I think about husking corn, how my sister
and I bent over bowls on our back porch, hair long
and thick,
our faces hidden.
No matter how hard we rubbed
our hands against those cobs of corn,
their silky strands left
a tangled web.

Our hair is shorter now;
we cannot be found.
At night we leave
our husks on the floor,
ask our lovers
to run their hands
up and down our bodies;
the threads
of our brown-blond
hair wrap
around their fingers.
Anabaptist Evangelism in the Context of Modernity and Postmodernity

Lois Barrett

We are living between the times. We are living in the transition from the modern world view to the understanding of the nature of things that is being called "postmodern," which is a euphemistic way of saying that we don't know yet what to call this new world view except that it is different from what went before. The dominant culture in North America, in which power belongs primarily to the white, wealthy, and educated male, has both modern and postmodern elements, so it is important for us to look at both as we survey the context in which we want the church to proclaim and to be a sign of the reign of God.

Modernity

Modernity began in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe out of a desire to assert and foster individual freedom. It was an alternative to the authoritarian constraints of monarchies and church hierarchies. In order to achieve personal freedom, the theorists of the Enlightenment proposed that one's individual identity should be the self-construction of a rational, autonomous self (rather than drawing identity from the communal whole).

Secondly, they said this self can decide what is truth through reason and the scientific method. This tended to limit truth to what could be experienced through the five senses. Only that was fact, and therefore objective and true. Values were not fact, revelation was not fact, and therefore were less true. Technology dictated that what is efficient is more desirable and must necessarily replace what is only workable.

Thirdly, the way to explain the nature of society was through social contract theory. The thinkers of the Enlightenment suggested that society or government came to be because freely choosing, autonomous individuals decided, out of rational self-interest, to build a progressive society. In the United States the tradeoff for individual freedoms has been pressure to take one's identity from the nation state as a "neutral" identity into which all other identities were to dissolve. In Canada, the notion of rights and freedoms has also been deeply woven into the culture, but without a melting-pot mentality, with the result that there is more of a possibility for the nation to fly apart.

Modernity has had a great influence on church life in North America. Both fundamentalism and liberalism have been Christian attempts to respond to modernity and its understandings of truth attained through reason and the five senses (one through demythologization, the other through claiming that biblical truths
are true according to the Enlightenment definition. Both applied social contract theory to the church and made the individual the center for religious experience and the church as the association of freely choosing, autonomous individual Christians. Both liberalism and fundamentalism have been willing to trade being in the service of the nation-state for religious liberty.

Modernity, though it began in Europe, has affected virtually every nation of the West and, to some degree, all the nations of the world. Lesslie Newbigin in Foolishness to the Greeks has called modernity the most pervasive culture of the world and one of the most resistant to the gospel.

Postmodern world views

In the postmodern understanding, the individual is not rational and autonomous. We cannot look inside ourselves and find a common core of values or decency or world view. Social norms, early experiences, and the subconscious shape who we are. The postmodern world view also values the “now” as the primary reality. Thus, it is possible to recreate oneself without a sense of history or morality, except as one invents it. Robert Bellah in Habits of the Heart tells of a woman named Sheila who had constructed her own private religion out of bits and pieces from here and there and had named her new religion “Sheila-ism.”

The postmodern world view also questions objective truth. It recognizes that there is not a neutral, objective place from which to stand and judge truth. There is no general; all interpreters of truth are particular. Context, culture, gender, race, and history always influence the way we perceive. Some would go even farther to say that all truth is relative, subjective, and at core unknowable.

Moreover, society and culture are plural. Multiple ethnic cultures and traditions live in the same neighborhood. The structures that used to shape a common national identity, or a common sense of public civility, are disappearing. Families change; neighborhoods change; community must be sought. New forms of virtual community do not satisfy people’s desire for a face-to-face community “where everybody knows your name.”

Extramodern world views

Modernity and postmodernity are the world views of the dominant culture in North America. But outside and on the edges of this dominant culture are many subcultures with other world views: ethnic groups, people of many faiths, Christians “sects” (meaning groups that don’t subscribe to Constantinian understandings of Christian faith). All these communities are “extramodern,” that is, they are outside the
categories and assumptions of modernity.

The churches that claim the Anabaptist tradition are one of these subcultures. Anabaptism is, at its roots, extramodern. Anabaptist communities have been influenced by modernity (and postmodernity) and have been in conversation with modernity. But the tradition has been mostly outside modernity. From its beginnings, Anabaptism understood the church as intended to provide an alternative society that brought people into the reign of God and itself pointed toward the reign of God.

An Anabaptist world view

How shall we define the Anabaptist tradition? At the beginning of this century, partly under the influence of fundamentalism, there was an attempt to name Mennonite “distinctives,” or “restrictions,” (what you called it depended on which branch of Mennonites you were with). The assumption was that the fundamentals of the faith were the same for all Protestants, e.g., doctrines about the Trinity, salvation, the Bible. Anything else was an extra, a distinctive. It was as if you were buying a new car and you could choose the basic model, or get the options such as power windows or air conditioning. So, conscientious objection to military service or not swearing oaths or discipleship in general were the distinctives, important for us, but not really necessary for salvation.

At mid-century Mennonite historian Harold S. Bender attempted a rescue from the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, which was tearing apart churches and colleges, by formulating the Anabaptist vision. Anabaptism was a third way, he said, different from both fundamentalism and liberalism. The driving forces of Anabaptism were defined as discipleship, the church as brotherhood [sic], and an ethic of love and nonresistance. A later generation has faulted Bender for not saying much about the atonement or revelation or the nature of God, but these subjects were omitted from his statement of the Anabaptist vision because they were precisely the topics on which fundamentalists and liberals were fighting, and Bender wished to sidestep that fight.

“What is needed now,... is a more comprehensive understanding of the Anabaptist tradition. Such an understanding must recognize some diversity, but must also clearly define a center.”

“... The Anabaptist tradition as ‘extramodern’ understands the church as a ‘holy nation,’ an alternative political and social community, a people that lives under the rule of God.”
Lois Barrett

I will condense my description of the Anabaptist tradition to four points that try to go beyond naming Anabaptist distinctives and to describe an Anabaptist understanding of the Christian worldview.

1. The Anabaptist tradition as “extramodern” understands the church as a “holy nation,” an alternative political and social community, a people that lives under the rule of God. Through their worship, they pledge their allegiance to God alone, rather than to idols or to other rulers and authorities (principalities and powers). Their mission is to proclaim and to be a sign of the reign of God. Such nonconformity goes hand in hand with engagement with the surrounding society, but living by a different set of assumptions than the dominant culture. To pull this off, it is necessary to develop the ability to be different and to stay connected.

“‘The church is the community of the Spirit that values both knowing and doing’”

This stance recognizes that being different, for righteousness’ sake, may bring persecution and rejection.

2. The church is the reconciled and reconciling community following Jesus Christ. The message of reconciliation is to be both announced in the world and practiced in the church. Thus, peace is both a matter of doing and being, of being peacemakers among others and becoming transformed into the image of the One who loved his enemies, even to the end. The church is called to share in the sufferings of Christ, that it may also share his resurrected life. How can one separate knowing Christ and keeping in step with Christ? There is thus a close connection between salvation and discipleship.

3. The church is the community of the Spirit that values both knowing and doing. The church is called to affirm the Spirit’s guidance in the past, especially through the Scripture, as well as the possibility of present revelation in continuity with the norms of the past, discerned in the community of believers. To affirm this is to break the rules of modernity, which often limits facts to its own definitions. The community of the Spirit recognizes that real “knowing” involves not a detached stance, but a commitment. The church affirms the possibility of knowing and discerning the old and the new word of God.

4. The church is the eschatological community, the preview of the age to come, the community living now according to the pattern of God’s future. The early Anabaptists, before 1535, in all branches in Europe, were convinced that God would intervene in history someday to bring in a new heaven and a new earth. A belief like this is threatening to the powers that be,
because it relativizes their control. The dominant culture, beginning with Augustine and the era of Constantine, has much preferred an

“Both Anabaptism and postmodernism have a commitment to allowing plural and diverse traditions to live peaceably side by side.”

eschatology that deals only with the fate of individual souls immediately after death, rather than dealing with a cataclysmic break in history, the resurrection of the dead, and the fulfillment of the reign of God. The hope in such a future is essential for a consistent peace theology and for dealing with suffering in the present.

This Anabaptist world view, this theology lived out in the Christian community, is extramodern because it is outside the dominant culture’s understandings of the way things are.

**Missional conversation between Anabaptist and postmodern world views**

How might there be conversation between an Anabaptist world view and a postmodern world view, in the context of the evangelistic task of the church? Notice, I am not asking how Anabaptism might adapt itself to postmodernism. I want to go beyond contextualization to talk about how we might be both nonconformed and engaged with the dominant culture around us.

**Points of agreement:**
1. Both Anabaptism and postmodernism have a commitment to allowing plural and diverse traditions to live peaceably side by side. Not everyone has to be the same.
2. Both recognize experience beyond the five senses and reason. This allows room for intuition, emotional intelligence, and revelation.
3. Both believe there is no neutral place from which to perceive truth. Truth is always from a context. In Anabaptist thought, that context is the unity of knowing and doing.
4. Both recognize the importance of praxis. Reason is not enough.

**The postmodern collapse of confidence in the modern, rational, autonomous self has led to a search for new communities of belonging”**

5. The postmodern collapse of confidence in the modern, rational, autonomous self has led to a search for new communities of belonging.

**Points of disagreement:**
1. All truth is subjective and relative, vs. truth is revealed in Jesus Christ and known by doing it.
2. Transient, secondary, partial communities vs. an alternative primary community under the rule of the triune God.
3. A meet-my-needs mentality vs. worship that focuses on God.
4. The moral neutrality of violence, promiscuity, and other “sins” vs. naming sin and offering salvation from sins—sins that I commit, as well as sins committed against me.
Fruitful places of dialogue: How can we create communities of knowing and doing as a response to the breakdown of other communities? How can persons find a new identity of the individual-in-community that is different from self-created identities and nation-state-created identities? How can we affirm knowing other than through the five senses and reason, but expand understandings of spirituality beyond the individual and private, to the ethical and the communal? How can we help people move beyond knowing about Jesus or thinking certain things about him, to knowing Jesus? How can we explain and demonstrate truth, as the biblical languages define it, being true to the facts and true to relationships? How can we help people make sense of suffering, find healing, and have hope beyond the present, hope in God's new future?

If we can carry on this conversation, it will enable us better to proclaim the reign of God and to be a sign of the reign of God as extramoderns in an increasingly postmodern context.

Notes

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John A. Hostetler, emeritus professor of sociology and anthropology at Temple University and former director of the Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College, is well known for his writing on minority religious groups in North America. One of his more significant works is *Hutterite Society*, first published in 1974. While still an excellent resource on Hutterites, a problem with the second edition of this book is its lack of new information.

*Hutterite Society* is a historical-anthropological account of a communally oriented, Anabaptist based people. The ethnographic research was done by Hostetler from 1959 through 1974 primarily in Alberta, Canada. Some of that research was done with anthropologist Gertrude Enders Huntington, which resulted in their co-authored *The Hutterites of North America* (1967, 1996). Hostetler also did extensive research on Hutterite history while in Vienna during 1970-71. The first edition of this text was done in part to mark the centennial of the Hutterites’ arrival in North America.

In the preface to the second edition of *Hutterite Society*, Hostetler says that “Hutterites anticipate the future with confidence. With colonies growing and dividing approximately once each generation, there is always the anticipation of new beginnings. Hutterite society exemplifies a creative blending of continuity and change” (p. xiv). I wish there were more detail about this change in this book.

Also in this preface, the author directs the reader to other material on the Hutterites, including Werner O. Packull’s *Hutterite Beginnings* (1995), Benjamin Zablocki’s *The Joyful Community* (1971, 1980), and *The Hutterites of North America* noted above.

Hostetler divides *Hutterite Society* into three sections: historical development; contemporary social and cultural organization; and the problems and techniques of survival. In the first section of the text, the author traces Hutterite history from its birth in 16th century Anabaptism through 1974 on the western plains of North America. Amidst the persecution experienced by the early Anabaptists, Hutterites developed in the 1530s in Moravia taking their name from Jakob Hutter. The uniqueness of the Hutterites vis-a-vis the Swiss and Dutch Mennonites was their practice of community of goods which still sets them apart from other Anabaptist based groups.

While Hostetler’s overall description and analysis of Hutterite history up to the 1970s is done in depth, his neglect of their interaction with the Bruderhof (the Society of Brothers) is a significant omission. In the early 1930s, Eberhard Arnold, then leader of the Bruderhof, visited the Hutterites to see how these two communal groups might relate to each other. As Hostetler says in the preface to the second edition of *Hutterite Society*, their relationship from the beginning has been problematic. By the mid-1990s, the two groups had cut formal relationships with each other. But that is all Hostetler says on this subject. I would like to know more about this issue. The problem between these two groups as related to the anthropology and psychology of communal based Christianity needs to be addressed.

Part two of *Hutterite Society* focuses upon how Hutterite colony life is organized, their use of the German language, schooling, and life span development. Colony life is the...
underpinning of Hutterite social structure and is likened by them to Noah’s ark. For the Hutterites, according to Hostetler, “Only those in the ark (colony) are prepared to escape the judgement of God and to receive eternal life” (p. 154). By 1995, as noted in the preface of the second edition, the overall Hutterite population is over 35,000 individuals (up from 22,000 in 1974) living in 382 colonies. In 1974 the Hutterites lived in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana, and Washington in the U.S. and in the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. An update of which provinces and states are now inhabited by the Hutterites is needed.

In part two also, Hostetler describes the Hutterite agrarian-based economic system and their distribution of goods. Along with this he notes their pattern of authority. The Hutterite communal nature has significant implications for the individual and Hostetler provides an excellent anthropological analysis of this subject. In American society, what is good for the individual is good for society. In general, Americans from infancy are taught to be individualistic. We are told to be self-actualized and to develop our unique talents. For the Hutterites, this is sinful because the self is based in evil and needs to be directed by the group. While Americans typically make a distinction between self and society, communitarian societies, and many pre-modern and/or non-western societies do not see this dichotomy. Hutterite interpretation and practice of the self and society should be troubling to most Mennonites. While contemporary Mennonites today claim to emphasize the group, most in reality are more likely to be shaped by the individualized national character of the United States.

Part three of Hutterite Society looks at “The Problems and Techniques of Survival.” Problems of Hutterite communal living include external hostility, affluence, and encounters with other communal groups (noted above in terms of the Bruderhof). Hostility towards the Hutterites includes that felt in Europe in the 16th century, persecution of their men in the U.S. during World War I because of their status as conscientious objectors, and restrictions on their use of land in Canada and the United States. The affluence felt by many Hutterite colonies can be problematic for both specific colonies and individuals. For wealthy colonies, there is the problem of exclusiveness, a feeling of ethnocentrism toward less wealthy Hutterite groups. Private income beyond small allowances given by the colony can be a problem in that individuals may become somewhat independent of the group. There needs to be an update by Hostetler on Hutterite wealth. Has Hutterite affluence kept up with the general affluence of the United States and Canada over the last quarter century and, if so, how is it being handled by the Hutterites?

Pages 305 through 373 of this text are composed of appendices that explain certain aspects of Hutterite culture in detail. Rites of passage from adolescence to adulthood, table rules, ordination vows and other subjects are covered in this section. The bibliography is 19 pages in length and provides an excellent foundation for study of the Hutterites.

While some of the material in John A. Hostetler’s second edition of Hutterite Society is dated, it is still a must reading for anyone doing serious study of the Hutterites. It provides an excellent history of the Hutterites. His description of Hutterite culture as of 1974 will serve for many years to come as a good benchmark for an analysis of change in the way of life of this extraordinary group.

The continuation of Hutterite communal society amidst the tremendous forces of American capitalism since 1874 borders on the miraculous. To what extent is this communal society likely to continue in its sharing of goods over the next several decades?

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In Keeping Salvation Ethical, Weaver’s stated goal is to provide an historical analysis of the theologies of eight late nineteenth century Mennonite and Amish leaders—Jacob Stauffer, David Beiler, Gerhard Wiebe, Cornelius H. Wedel, Johannes Moser, John M. Brenneman, John Holdeman, and Heinrich Egly—to demonstrate that their “atonement theologlies] contained a latent threat to the peace theology and to the peace practice of succeeding Mennonite generations.
Their understanding of salvation stood, figuratively speaking, on the brink of losing its strong ethical component" (27). Weaver believes that their use of a satisfaction theory of atonement, which was taken over from "conservative evangelicalism," views Christ's suffering and death as a means of satisfying the justice of God. The problem, he argues, is that this view of atonement implicitly disconnects ethics from the process of salvation, and thereby threatens what is central to Mennonite identity (27). For Weaver, this is an issue with important consequences for current Mennonite theology, which he thinks is going even farther down the road of identifying with conservative evangelical theology than its nineteenth century forebears. Insofar as Mennonites assimilate conservative evangelical doctrines of atonement, they risk losing their unique identity, if not their very soul, to a theology in which Anabaptist distinctives such as pacifism and nonresistance are merely options.

Weaver's analysis rests in part upon a typology of atonement theories developed by Gustaf Aulen in *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* (Macmillan, 1969). The three types of atonement theories are the classic theory (called Christus Victor), the satisfaction theory, and the moral influence theory (35). The classic theory, dominant in the early church, understands the work of Christ in the context of a battle with Satan, which Satan apparently won with the crucifixion, but which turned into Christ's victory through the resurrection (35-36). The satisfaction theory, dominant since Anselm's articulation of it in the eleventh century, views the work of Christ in terms of his sacrificial death which fulfilled or satisfied the penalty of humanity's sin against the justice of God (36-37). The moral influence theory, associated with Peter Abelard (also eleventh century), views the work of Christ as an ultimate example of God's love aimed at transforming humanity's view of God from angry judge into an accepting parent (38). Weaver supplements Aulen's analysis by convincingly interpreting the Christus Victor type of atonement within the context of the church's opposition to the power of an evil world embodied in the Roman Empire. Not surprisingly, this view of atonement began to pass out of prominence with the rise of the Constantinian church and the so-called Christianization of the empire. Subsequently, the satisfaction type of atonement has dominated.

Unfortunately, Weaver pays scant attention to the moral influence type, either historically or as a modern alternative for Mennonite theology. The bulk of Weaver's analysis focuses on the atonement theories and ethics of his eight subjects. Weaver's detailed discussions are admirably thorough, working from notebooks, letters, sermons, and publications. He finds in all eight subjects an acceptance of the satisfaction theory of atonement along with a strong commitment to ethics, particularly with regard to nonresistance, pacifism, discipline, and humility, all understood in the context of following the example of Jesus. In spite of their strong ethics, Weaver is convinced that their adherence to a satisfaction type of atonement slowly but surely drives a wedge between their view of salvation and their ethics. Weaver seems to be saying that if one understands oneself as already saved by Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, then there seems to be little reason left to live a holy life.

Surprisingly, however, Weaver's own analysis shows each Anabaptist leader who holds to a satisfaction type of atonement thinks that true salvation is demonstrated in living a holy life.

All of these subjects shared a foundation on the satisfaction or substitutionary atonement. They all assumed that the focus on atonement alone was an incomplete understanding of salvation, and that individuals who properly seized upon the atoning work of Christ went on to manifest it in the way they lived. (155)

It does not appear that the subjects of Weaver's study were all that prone to losing sight of ethics in spite of their substitutionary atonement theologies. As far as I can tell, the primary argument that Weaver gives that their atonement views were driving a wedge between salvation and ethics is based upon his analysis of two other Mennonites: John S. Coffman (a contemporary with many of the subjects of Weaver's study) and Daniel Kauffman (whose adult career was primarily in the early twentieth century). These two thinkers illustrate the separation that Weaver fears. However, it is not clear from Weaver's brief comments about them that they actually represent a trend that is becoming dominant in Mennonite circles, or that the satisfaction theory of atonement is the culprit in their separation of ethics from
salvation.

Weaver concludes his book with a call to reject the satisfaction atonement theory in favor of Christus Victor as a type that is more faithful to the Mennonite tradition, particularly its ethical heritage. It takes little to see why Weaver champions the Christus Victor theory of atonement, since its very history parallels much recent Mennonite historians’ account of what happened to the true church after Constantine (3945). Yet even if one grants his historical account of the diminishing of Christus Victor—which I find largely compelling—Weaver has not really offered readers positive reasons why it should now be preferred by Mennonites over the other two theories. In order to provide a positive account, Weaver needs to address several issues. First, given the military imagery that is intimately bound up in the Christus Victor type (see 36), is there any guarantee that it will support an ethics of nonresistance and pacifism more than the other two theories? Second, although the great articulators of the other two theories come from the eleventh century, the language supporting them is certainly biblical. Indeed, in Weaver’s analysis of the nineteenth century Anabaptist leaders, he finds evidence for the satisfaction type of atonement in the use of terms such as “redeemer,” “intercessor,” “sacrifice,” “washed by the blood of the lamb,” and “mediator” among others (e.g., 191, 193). Yet these terms are clearly rooted in the New Testament, and insofar as they are indicators of the satisfaction type, the satisfaction type is as ancient as Christus Victor. (A similar case can be made for the moral influence type as well.) Third, by Weaver’s admission, at least one of the nineteenth century Anabaptist leaders, Stauffer, interpreted the theory of satisfaction atonement as the “foundation” of nonresistance (138). Stauffer points out that Christ’s atoning death embodies nonresistance to God’s enemies, and thus by accepting salvation in Christ one accepts nonresistance as a means of living out that salvation (138). It would seem, then, that even if some later thinkers disjoined nonresistance from their satisfaction atonement views, it does not follow, as Weaver claims, that the satisfaction theory of atonement inherently pushes toward that disjunction. Indeed, Stauffer’s interpretation of atonement’s necessary relationship to nonresistance would seem at least to call into question Weaver’s thesis, and more promisingly, provide a model of the satisfaction theory apologetic vis a vis today’s conservative evangelicals, particularly those within the Wesleyan tradition.

In closing, I think Weaver provides the reader with an admirably comprehensive and perceptive analysis of sermons, letters, and articles of his subjects, drawing out their major theological views on atonement and their common concern that the salvation of the believer includes ongoing ethical growth in discipline, humility, and nonresistance. The theological and ethical questions that Weaver raises are important and will hopefully contribute to an ongoing discussion among Mennonite theologians. I would register one caution for prospective readers: while Weaver’s detailed historical analysis is appropriate at one level—the book is part of the “Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History” series—its historical interests sometimes distract from Weaver’s stated objective. For, in addition to analyses of these leaders’ views, we find fairly detailed discussions of their biographies, their political ups and downs in their respective denominations, as well as general histories of those denominations. The book even includes photographs of German language publications, handwritten letters, grave markers, desks, and barns! I am not sure that the readers who would be most interested in the pictorial, social, and biographical history will be willing to wade through theological analyses. The historical background that is not directly relevant to the theological discussion probably deserves its own volume so that Weaver’s important theological discussion not be lost.

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