

Review Essay

A Quiet Diversity in the Land: Mennonites in Ontario

Draper, Barb. 2010. *The Mennonites of St. Jacobs and Elmira: Understanding the Variety*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press. Pp. 378.

Martin, Donald. 2003. *Old Order Mennonites of Ontario: Gelassenheit, Discipleship, Brotherhood*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press / Herald Press. Pp. 381.

Steiner, Samuel. 2015. *In Search of Promised Lands. A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario*. Kitchener, ON: Herald Press. Pp.877.

By Mark Loudon, *German, University of Wisconsin—Madison*

For over two centuries, the Anabaptist presence in Ontario has been a visible part of the province's religious, social, and cultural landscape. Readers interested in understanding the diversity of Mennonite and Amish groups in Ontario, past and present, are well served by the recent appearance of these three fascinating books that complement one another.

The most recent of these, Steiner's is also the most comprehensive in terms of scope and heft, containing nearly 600 pages of text and over 150 pages of notes. Its content is organized chronologically, tracing in detail the history of mainly Mennonite, but also Amish, groups in Ontario from their earliest arrival in the late eighteenth century all the way to the present. In his book, Donald Martin, himself an Old Order Mennonite affiliated with the Markham-Waterloo Conference (similar to the Weaverland Mennonite Conference in the United States), also proceeds chronologically, focusing on the spiritual history of the conservative groups to which he is closest. Finally, Barb Draper's book aims—and succeeds admirably—at introducing readers to the major Mennonite groups active today north of Kitchener and Waterloo, the region where Anabaptists in Ontario are currently most numerous, against a historical background. All three books are written in such a way as to be accessible to a broad spectrum of readers.

Samuel J. Steiner was for many years a librarian and archivist at Conrad Grebel University College, affiliated with the University of Waterloo. Among Steiner's numerous scholarly accomplishments was his service as founding managing editor of the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, the premier reference for information related to Anabaptist history and life. Steiner's *In Search of Promised Lands* will undoubtedly be considered *the* standard work on the development of Ontario Mennonite and Amish groups; no other monograph comes close in terms of breadth and depth in describing what is a profoundly complex and diverse tapestry of Anabaptist communities in Canada.

The bulk of *In Search of Promised Lands* consists of fifteen chapters, beginning with a review of the history of Mennonites of Swiss and southern German background in colonial

Pennsylvania, who provided the first settlers to what was then Upper Canada after the American Revolution. As is true for Anabaptist groups in the United States—Mennonite and Amish, as well as Brethren and Hutterite—the history of Ontario’s spiritual communities has been characterized by a profound degree of differentiation through divisions, some benign, others more emotionally fraught. The relatively tolerant religious climate of North America has offered Anabaptist groups of considerable outward diversity the opportunity to thrive. At the same time, the overall (though by no means total) lack of persecution of Anabaptists in Canada and the United States, certainly in comparison to what their spiritual ancestors and cousins experienced in Europe and Russia, has allowed especially Mennonite groups the freedom to live their shared Christian faith and form affiliations that can appear dizzyingly complex to outside observers.

Throughout his book, Steiner does an excellent job of clearly showing how this complexity has arisen as Mennonite and Amish groups in Ontario have been influenced by or defined themselves against their non-Anabaptist neighbors in spiritual, cultural, and material ways. Too often the diversity of Anabaptist groups around the globe is depicted by outsiders in mainly material terms, especially with regard to dress and the acceptance or rejection of technology, without attempting to understand the Christian faith that underlies the choices Anabaptists have made and continue to make in deciding how best to put their faith into action. Steiner never loses sight of the spiritual issues at stake in disagreements among Ontario Mennonite and Amish believers, individually and collectively, over practical questions such as whether or how to endorse Sunday schools, the use of automobiles, etc.

In general, both Steiner and Donald Martin, in his book focused on Ontario Old Order Mennonites, explain clearly how influences from outside the Anabaptist tradition, both spiritual and secular (including material), have shaped the identities of the various Mennonite and Amish groups that have emerged in Canada, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this respect, the Ontario history resembles the experiences of Anabaptists in the United States. For example, Steiner and Martin both address the influence of Pietism, a renewal movement that emerged in seventeenth-century Europe and, like Anabaptism, was also brought to Pennsylvania during the colonial era. While early Pietists and Anabaptists may be seen as sharing much in common with one another in their yearning for a deeper experience of their Christian faith independent of formal institutions, especially political structures, Martin in particular underscores some of the major differences between Pietistic groups, such as the various Brethren churches, on the one hand, and Mennonites and other Anabaptists, on the other.

Early in his book, Martin discusses how Pietist thought posed a challenge to the “spirit of *Gelassenheit*” that he sees as central to traditional Anabaptism and contemporary Old Order Mennonite churches. A crucial difference between the two expressions of Christian spirituality lies for Martin in the importance for Anabaptists of living one’s faith in a clearly defined community of like-minded brethren. Pietism, as Martin explains, emphasizes the individual believer’s relationship with God. “Pietists sought personal salvation and godliness, while the Anabaptists believed in a *visible* church of Christ” (34). A further difference has to do with the

Pietists' inclination to share their faith actively with others, as opposed to the preference of traditional Anabaptists to remain "the quiet in the land." Martin points out the strong Pietistic influence in the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s, especially in Wesleyan Methodism and the spirit of "holiness" associated with it. On holiness, Martin writes

Non-theologically-minded Mennonites found the 'holiness' movement difficult to decipher, but they certainly felt it. Wesleyan 'holiness' or Christian perfection did not blend with Mennonite humility. 'It was in the mutual yielding to Christ within a disciplined covenant that the Mennonites 'felt' their religion. It hardly occurred to discuss the emotional states that accompanied this yielding and mutuality, as subjects in themselves.' [quotation from MacMaster *Land Piety*] [...] 'Holiness' advocates taught that by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit it was possible to attain such a degree of holiness that one no longer had to struggle with one's carnal nature. However, this presented a very confident, even boastful, attitude that was contrary to traditional Mennonite thought (38).

In Martin's view, which is a widely held one among Old Orders today—Mennonite and Amish alike—more modern or assimilated Mennonite groups have been drawn away from traditional *Gelassenheit* under the influence of the more individualistic expressions of faith and life found in pietistically inclined Protestant churches.

For his part, Steiner also sees the impact of Wesleyan holiness on Ontario Mennonites, especially among the Mennonite Brethren in Christ (MBC), which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, an era of momentous change across multiple Anabaptist groups in North America. The MBC, which existed as a distinct denomination under this name from 1883 to 1947, had its roots in an early division in the North American Mennonite church, in 1847, when the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference was formed out of the Franconia Conference. The leading figure in this split was John H. Oberholtzer (1809–1895), who, though not technically a Pietist, was nonetheless "interested in modernizing the church through better education in Sunday schools and through church publications, improved organization of the conference, and mission outreach" (Steiner, 112). Donald Martin captures the Old Order valuation of Oberholtzer's role in the 1847 split aptly:

He defied church order and refused to wear the regulation coat as required of all ministers. In May 1844 the conference silenced him. Although there were open issues, the root of the dissension was Oberholtzer's democratic procedures and his different definition of piety versus *Gelassenheit* and brotherhood. When the unity of the conference snapped, Oberholtzer and fifteen of his colleagues walked out of the conference on October 7, 1847. These progressive leaders then formed the General Conference Mennonites (82).

Later changes in Mennonite practice that divided progressives from conservatives in the

decades before the MBC was formally constituted included the holding of private prayer and public revival meetings, expressions of a more Wesleyan as opposed to traditional Mennonite form of piety. The increasing use of English rather than German in worship was also a marker of progressivism in the MBC and other churches.

The divide between progressive denominations and the Old Order continued to widen as members of groups like the MBC became active in missionary work and established formal, supra-congregational governance structures. In 1947, in a clear sign of their continued movement away from a distinctively Anabaptist identity, the MBC decided to drop “Mennonite” from their name, becoming the United Missionary Church. Eventually, after two more mergers, in 1969 (yielding the Missionary Church) and 1993 (resulting in the Missionary Church of Canada), the Anabaptist stream of which the MBC had been a part, flowed into what is today the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada. The description of their history on the EMCC’s website is instructive, recognizing both their Anabaptist and Pietist roots, yet with a clear emphasis on the latter: “Our [Missionary Church of Canada] background brought deep Anabaptist values of community, mission, and discipleship so characteristic among Swiss Mennonite streams. When Wesleyan evangelism brought to life the Person of the Holy Spirit in the lives of our predecessors, a movement of Jesus-led counter-culture emerged” (emcc.ca/who-we-are/our-story).

Impressive is Samuel Steiner’s ability to situate crucial details of the development of Ontario Anabaptist groups such as the MBC and many others without losing sight of the larger doctrinal and cultural issues at play. Likewise, Donald Martin presents Old Order Mennonite history by making clear that the causes of divisions go much deeper than spats over questions such as what is the appropriate cut of a minister’s coat. Martin devotes one chapter to “Old Order Mennonite Life” (261–90) that will be of particular interest to non-Old Orders, Anabaptists, and others. Martin is sensitive to the fact that some readers may view aspects of Old Order culture negatively. He writes, for example, that “[a]lthough modern women may assume that Old Order Mennonite women are very limited by tradition, the opposite reflects Old Order women’s feelings” (271), then quotes an unnamed Old Order woman at length:

[...] To an outsider, Mennonite women appear restricted when they honour the sequence of headship, but in reality they are free. A Mennonite woman desires that her husband is the head of the home, yet together they are partners in the work of Christ. When the order of headship is regarded, there is harmony in the home, for each one is working in God’s order and there is no strife in seeking or coveting the other’s position. I’ve never felt restricted—it is just relaxing to live in the order of God. Obedience to God’s order is an expression of inner liberation [...] (271)

Another area of Old Order life that outsiders are particularly curious about—and which has been the subject of considerable attention and distortion in popular media, with regard to the Old Order Mennonites’ close spiritual cousins, the Amish—has to do with youth. Martin’s

section of the “Old Order Mennonite Life” chapter on young people makes clear what the community’s expectations are and how these expectations are grounded in Scripture. He also points out differences across Old Order subgroups. The most traditional group, for example, the so-called David Martin Mennonites, continues to allow bed courtship and the limited consumption of alcohol and tobacco.

The diversity of contemporary Ontario Mennonite groups is the focus of the third book under review here, Barb Draper’s *The Mennonites of St. Jacob’s and Elmira*. Draper, a modern Mennonite whose parents grew up in Old Order communities, approaches her subject matter with the same degree of sensitivity and respect as Steiner and Martin show in their books. And crucially, she does not reduce Mennonite diversity to superficial differences in, say, the acceptance of the bicycle or the style of women’s coverings. Though scholars will benefit from Draper’s book, her target audience is the curious non-academic reader. She concentrates her discussion on Swiss/southern German–descended groups with roots in colonial Pennsylvania, with the exception of a chapter on Old Colony Mennonites. After an introductory chapter titled “From Switzerland to Woolwich Township,” Draper devotes roughly one-third of her book (approximately 90 pages) to an overview of nineteenth-century Mennonite history that clearly lays out the growing divide between traditionalists and progressives, thereby helping readers understand the diversity across contemporary groups.

The bulk of Draper’s book consists of chapters on the six major Mennonite groups living in or near the communities of St. Jacobs and Elmira, which are located just north of Kitchener and Waterloo: Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Old Order Mennonites, David Martin Mennonites and Orthodox Mennonites, Markham-Waterloo Conference Mennonites, Conservative Mennonite Churches, and Old Colony Mennonites. Each chapter has a strongly historical component, succinctly explaining how the modern expressions of faith and lifestyle found in each group have come about. In this way, these chapters build nicely on Draper’s earlier discussion of major trends in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Mennonite history.

Any book on Mennonites or related Anabaptist groups that is intended for a general audience should take care not to depict its subjects, especially more conservative groups, as fixated on material questions, such as whether or not to allow pneumatic tires on tractors or electricity in homes. Likewise, such books and other popular media, which are usually produced by non-conservative Mennonites or authors with no Anabaptist background, need to ensure that they do not represent groups who keep their distance from more progressive believers and the secular mainstream as being “stubbornly ignorant.” Draper is to be commended for the balanced and nonjudgmental tone throughout her book when she discusses groups such as the David Martins, Orthodox Mennonites, and Old Colony Mennonites. She does this by drawing on reliable sources, including texts written by conservative insiders themselves. In the first section of her chapter on “The Nineteenth Century: Changing Theology,” titled “Humility Theology,” Draper quotes two verses from the text of a German hymn that is one of the most familiar to conservative North American Mennonites and Amish today (in German, *Demut ist die schönste*

Tugend).

Humility is the greatest virtue
 For all Christians' glory and honour.
 For it adorns our young people
 And the aged even more.
 Take care not to praise
 Those who have been highly successful.
 Humility is more than gold or money
 And what is highly esteemed in the world [...] (104)

The dichotomy of humility versus pride (*Demut* vs. *Hochmut* in German) is central to an understanding of traditional Anabaptist thought.

The one group discussed by Draper that is objectively beset with the greatest challenges, at least on the material level, is the Old Colony Mennonites. Most of those living in Ontario today are closely tied to conservative communities in northern Mexico that have experienced numerous difficulties in recent years, especially with regard to their youth. Draper does an admirable job of describing the ways in which Old Colony migrants have adapted to life in Canada, including their interactions with other Mennonites. Different from their coreligionists of Swiss and southern German descent, the Old Colony Mennonites are the heirs to a longer legacy of hardship, especially from their time in Russia, the negative effects of which can still be seen today. Popular media treatments of Old Colony Mennonites, especially those living in Latin America, often dwell on their problems, yet Draper, to her credit, paints a balanced picture for her thoughtful readers. Of special value is the final section of her chapter on the Old Colony Mennonites that compares them with their Old Order counterparts, a fascinating look at how these two conservative Anabaptist groups have developed.

Overall, readers with a range of backgrounds and interests will benefit from these three books on the Mennonite presence in Ontario. Each is written in an accessible style and effectively edited and collectively provide a wonderful complement the sizable and growing literature on North American Anabaptist history and life.

Book Reviews

Review of **Bailey, Keith. 2009. *They Counted the Cost: The History of the Dunkard Brethren Church from 1926 to 2008*. Dunkard Brethren Church Board of Publication. Pp. 535.**

By Dale Savage, *Brethren Heritage Center, Brookville, OH*

A book dedicated to the history of the Dunkard Brethren Church was a long time in coming. Although a desire for such a book was expressed and moved upon by the Standing Committee of the church's Annual Conference as early as 1984, the fruition of that action was not realized until published in 2009. During that period of time, much historical material and data was collected by various individuals, of which two were Frank Reed and Shirley Frick. In one sense, Keith Bailey was more of the editor in putting together this denominational history rather than its author. This is partly due to Bailey not having been from the Dunkard Brethren tradition.

Keith Bailey affiliated with the Dunkard Brethren in the mid-1990s. Although he had ministered in the (Ashland) Brethren Church as a young man, he was an active leader in the Christian & Missionary Alliance denomination for more than fifty years. Although this does not change the facts, it does change how the facts are interpreted or presented. As much as an historian may try to be objective, a measure of subjectivity and personal perspective comes through. This is found in some of the vocabulary that is used to describe events and people. For example, on page 26 it states, "The cornerstone for the early brethren was Jesus Christ as Redeemer, Savior, Sanctifier, Lord, and King." This is clearly a statement belonging more to a history of A.B. Simpson's movement than the Brethren movement. Other examples include, "A great outpouring of the Spirit fell on the congregation..." (pg. 34), references to Brethren leaders John Kline and James Quinter as "great soul winners" (pg. 39), and to those who are "saved and baptized into the church" which does not seem to support the Brethren understanding of the necessity of baptism in salvation. When giving a presentation on his book, Bailey also referred to the Dunkard Brethren founder as being "gloriously saved". The reader needs to keep in mind the author's background when encountering language usually associated with Evangelical and Holiness settings.

As this is a history of the Dunkard Brethren church, Bailey spends little time in background for the Brethren movement. The Early Church through Protestant Reformation occupies 1½ page of chapter one. The movements which more directly affected the Brethren, Anabaptism and Pietism, are given approximately five pages. The remainder of the first chapter, seven pages, relates the story of the Brethren expansion in Europe. Although it appears that Bailey rushed through this important formation of the Brethren, it should be kept in mind that there are many books that can be referenced for further reading on these subjects should one desire to have a deeper understanding of them.

At the beginning of chapter two, Bailey relates some of the issues the Brethren faced in the early years in the New World and how they brought about the formation of the Annual Meeting (which is still held in some form by most Brethren groups today). Unfortunately, he does not give many details of how the Annual Meeting or Conference functions and the role of the Standing Committee. This knowledge is important in order to understand the Old Order, Conservative, and Progressive divisions discussed later in this chapter as well as the discussion of the *Bible Monitor* movement with the resulting formation of the Dunkard Brethren Church.

As Bailey moves more into the direct history of the forces which helped form the Dunkard Brethren Church, he begins to bring out more details. His reports on the causes and actions of the separation from the parent body, the Church of the Brethren, in 1926. He rightly enumerates the differences between the Old German Baptist Brethren who separated in 1881 and the Dunkard Brethren of 1926. The Old Order division focused on how the ordinances were practiced, higher education, and innovations related to church programs (Sunday Schools, foreign missions, prayer meetings, revival meetings, etc.) Those involved with the Dunkard Brethren split had already accepted the changes brought in by the Church of the Brethren after 1881. Those involved in the controversy of 1926 wanted to hold on to the innovations but practice them in a “plain” way, avoiding what they called acculturation. However, it seems that did not look the same for all who supported the forming of a new denomination. This is alluded to in chapter give with the listing of the radio, women in ministry, dress, and leadership and governmental structures as issues. Unfortunately, one cannot tell what the controversy was related to some of these issues. Clarification in this would have helped to understand better the position of the Dunkard Brethren Church.

The majority of this book is the specific histories of leaders, congregations, and mission work. One interesting chapter is entitled “New Wine Skins”. This chapter lists the newer ministries and programs supported by the Dunkard Brethren Church. These include: Mt. Hope Dunkard Brethren Rest Home, Youth Retreat, Men’s Retreat, Annual Leadership Conference, The Dunkard Brethren Bible School, and the Dunkard Brethren Ladies’ Retreat. The conclusion of this chapter reads,

As these new ministries were born, some in the brotherhood became apprehensive that such efforts might erode the biblical stand historically held by the Dunkard Brethren. As time passed it became evident that these new wine skins brought new vitality to the Brotherhood without altering Brethren beliefs and practice.

The outcome of these new programs is yet to be seen. As stated there was apprehension about them being a form of acculturation to the wider church environment, however, the history of the Dunkard Brethren Church allows for adoptions and adaptations of this kind as seen in Sunday schools, revival meetings, etc.

In conclusion, when reading *They Counted the Cost*, it is again clear how the history of

the Brethren mirrors so much the history of the Mennonites, the divisions of the Progressives and Old Orders from the Conservatives in the 1800s. Afterwards, the Conservatives moved toward a more mainstream church position resulting in the emergence of the “conservative” bodies in the early to middle 1900s. For those who desire to gain a glimpse into what they look like today, Keith Bailey’s book gives a picture of what the conservatives in the Brethren movement look like in the early 2000s.

Review of **Loewen, Royden. 2013. *Village among Nations: “Canadian” Mennonites in a Transnational World, 1916-2006*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press. Pp. 301.**

By Kira Turner, *York University*

Intent on preserving their deep-seated beliefs and values, the most conservative of the Russian Mennonites (Old Colony) made their way to Western Canada with promises of religious freedom, exemption from military service, the right to maintain their distinctive Low German language, and the right to educate their children within their own schools. However, in the early 1900s, Canada was changing and developing its own cultural and nationalistic identity. Under threat of compulsory attendance at public schools, and drawing from past experiences of governments retracting special dispensations afforded to the Mennonite population, Old Colony religious leaders, fearing what was to come, began searching for a new home, one that would allow them to maintain their unique culture separate from nationalistic boundaries.

Similar to the Canadian government’s efforts, in the nineteenth century, to build up its population in central Canada, Mexico, intent on reproducing a western styled modernity, desired experienced farmers from the global north (39) and were willing to grant the Old Colony the same freedoms they had originally negotiated in Canada. This marked the beginning of a new transnational migration to Mexico and eventually deeper south into British Honduras, Paraguay, and Bolivia, resulting in some eventually returning to Canada, and some continue today to shuttle back and forth between North and South America.

In *Village among Nations*, historian Royden Loewen argues that academic inquiry concerning nationalism excludes those who are unwilling to conform to or integrate within a specific country (9). Taking up Benedict Anderson’s conceptualization of nationhood and imagined communities, Loewen asserts that traditional Mennonites, in their desire to remain separate, and through a pattern of persistent migration, developed an “imagined transnational village” not tied to any specific nation-state. Rather, through extensive social networks, they formed alternative engagements both locally and globally living “among nations.” To support this claim, Loewen offers an analysis of various texts dating between the period of 1916 to 2006, including letters, memoirs, diaries, reflections, and newspaper articles written both by Mennonites and outsiders, and oral histories gathered through academic research, painting a well-rounded picture of an distinctive transnational community. Adding significantly to a global

narrative on nationalism, Loewen portrays a specific view of Mennonite life and of the continual migration back and forth between North and South America.

Loewen has organized his work around eight thematic chapters. Chapter one takes up the general unease brewing in Canada and the merits of migrating to a new land, forsaking economic certainty for religious freedom. Chapter two tracks the formation of an extensive social network as letters and other correspondence found their way into the Mennonite newspaper, *Steinbach Post*. As a way to share experiences, and maintain links between the diasporic families and those who either remained in Canada or who had not yet begun the journey southward, the printed texts contributed to the linking of communities along the migration route.

This widening textual network expanded over time to include themes surrounding nostalgia for Canada, religious uncertainty, uneven distribution of resources, economic disparity and other shared stories of loss and sacrifice, themes taken up in chapter three. Of particular interest is the way, in chapter four, Loewen envisions time and space as contracting and expanding as those caught up in the cycle of migration move in and out of local and global contexts. This conceptualization brings to life a complex and dynamic story of persistent migration evolving over three generations, linking an ongoing relationship with traditional Mennonites scattered across the Americas (206). In chapter five, Loewen examines the texts produced by local populations, media outlets and international experts curious about these disparate peoples, which he asserts also contributed to the formation of this vast social network. Importantly, in chapter six, Loewen pushes us to think about “imagined villages” outside of the scope of the nation-state and how actors through shared stories, networks, and connections create their own realities beyond the mainstream. In chapter seven, Loewen addresses memory-making and geographic reimagining as strategies for turning lived experiences and concrete diasporic villages into a shared “imagined village.” Finally, chapter eight, relying on oral histories in which female migrants discussed their experiences of living transnational lives, takes up the accounts of these women between the period of 1985 to 2006. As Loewen explains, these narratives “rode roughshod over the officially patriarchal contours of their worlds” (226). Their personal stories portray a hard life fraught with uncertainty, disappointment, and disparity. Their accounts of hardship and sacrifice sit side-by-side with narratives of survival and self-sufficiency within their transplanted communities. This chapter seems to sit somewhat apart from the rest of the book and does so possibly because it draws from oral histories rather than the written record. Consequently, it feels as though the subject matter—current lived transnational experiences of Old Colony women—could contribute to a rich and vital book of its own.

Theoretically, *Village among Nations* will appeal to both those interested in thinking differently about migration, trans/nationalism, citizenship, and identity-making practices. As well, it will appeal to cultural history, anthropology, and religious studies students and scholars. While the letters, diaries, and other texts paint a vibrant picture, they also bring up questions, such as, what is left out of or omitted from these texts? What is obscured or altered? What is hidden is as much part of the story as what is out in plain view. We can learn quite a bit from

letters, diaries, and memoirs, but only as much as someone is willing to reveal or able to articulate. What happened in those two years that Johan A. Theissen (42) failed to write in his journal? What questions, concerns, and uncertainties could not be written down, knowing the letters would be shared with many communities? These kinds of questions may never be answered, but perhaps they speak to the complexity of understanding of Mennonite culture and imaginings of a transnational “village.”

As captivating as it is unsettling in recounting the transnational experiences of living within the world, yet outside of the nation-state, Royden Loewen’s book is both an accessible and invaluable text. Replete with engaging personal stories of varied experiences, he paints a vivid picture of the difficulties and countless challenges the diasporic Old Colony Mennonites faced each day as it tracks three generations across varied spaces and geographies. Providing a glimpse into the multifaceted lives of these people, *Village among Nations* importantly takes us through the shifting political and economic climate of nation-states and its effects on a vibrant and often misunderstood people. This important work provides a rich understanding of alternative visions of transnationalism and identity making within and without the nation-state.

Reference

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Review of Stauffer, Romaine. 2014. *The History of Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship*. Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship. Pp. 145.

By Jennifer Anderson

In 2012, Mid-Atlantic Fellowship (MAF)—a conservative Mennonite group rooted in southeastern Pennsylvania—felt a need to document the history of the constituency before many of the charter members of the church passed on. The result is a handsome, full-color, hardcover volume of 145 pages of church, ministerial, and ministry program profiles, with full-color photos of church buildings, active and former ministry, and some snapshots of mission ministry activities. The book is broken into four sections: the history of the Mid-Atlantic Fellowship, profiles of each church (the congregation and its current and former ministers), MAF choruses, and MAF ministries.

The history, which is all too brief, begins with the Anabaptist movement, then jumps to the division between Lancaster Mennonite Conference and the Weaverland Mennonite Conference (Old Order) in the late 1800s, then to the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church division with Lancaster Mennonite Conference in the late 1960s, and then finally the Mid-Atlantic beginnings from the Eastern Church, with Bishop Homer Bomberger leading out in the early 1970s. The Mid-Atlantics felt the Easterns upon leaving Lancaster Conference were

becoming too strict and sought a path between the two. From there, the history depicts an explosion of Mid-Atlantic churches in various localities. At the end of the history, it mentions ministries and stats of MAF. In essence, the history section is but an overview of the entire book.

The second section is the bulk of the book which begins with an open-ended summary about each church's history and present activities. The rest of each church's entry is a profile of the ministers and their family. Information in the profiles include the couple's church origin, their call to ministry, hobbies and occupations, their children, and occasionally where they have transferred if they are no longer within the fellowship.

In section three, the book discusses former choruses and the current regional youth choruses. Each chorus gets a paragraph or so describing their work, the recordings that were made, influential people, and the participants.

The last part of the book mentions Mid-Atlantic ministries. All of the ministries, except one, are to encourage and build up current members and leadership through counseling, books, and tent-type inspirational meetings. The final ministry, which is a children's Bible club ministry, is mainly facilitated by youth in a micropolitan area as an outlet for youth to do local mission work under the guidance of the ordained.

The History of Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship serves as a good introduction to the present identity of the Mid-Atlantic Mennonites. It captures the spirit and battle-cry of this conservative Mennonite fellowship seeped in revivalist phraseology, of carrying the banner of Christ and proclaiming the Gospel. It also accurately depicts the ministers (as opposed to the laity) as the cogs and core of Mid-Atlantic that keep the fellowship on the straight and narrow. However, saying this, it certainly reflects more the spirit of older and previous generations than the current. Yet, this book can still serve as a reminder of the vision of why Mid-Atlantic started, possibly to reboot the spirit of the fellowship's origins as it faces its third and fourth generations.

The book was compiled and printed in a short amount of time, which crippled some of the rich value of the book. Among conservative Mennonites, Romaine Stauffer is known for her detailed historical writings. Yet, in the case of this work, she misses some important specifics of Mid-Atlantic history, such as the large influx of Weaverland Mennonite Conference members (Old Order) in the years after it began (more members today would trace their roots to Weaverland transfers in the years after Mid-Atlantic started than to the Eastern Church or Lancaster Conference). This unacknowledged development explains much of the church boom, but, by leaving these details out, it looks as if people were flocking to the churches from all over. While many were coming to the Mid-Atlantic to "receive truth," the undercurrent of Mid-Atlantic being a home for ex-Weaverland members more than anything else is carefully bypassed. Mid-Atlantic has basically become a progressive step up for ex-Weaverland members, not Eastern. In the history, Stauffer instead focuses heavily on the genesis of Mid-Atlantic being conflict over material lines within the newly established Eastern Church.

Being a fellowship whose history is largely in receiving ex-members from an Old Order plain Mennonite counterpart, such a history is, granted, difficult to write when the book is intended to celebrate the Mid-Atlantic churches, not critically assess their history. Stauffer does use some of her skill in prose to suggest a current of dissatisfaction and restlessness without openly reporting it (moods anymore characteristic of many affiliations). While Stauffer attempts to present a fairly sterile reading of the Mid-Atlantic story, concerns and internal differences through the Fellowship's history and even to today remain hidden, though they are critical to understanding MAF's development and growth. Such narratives, though not easy to write, depict who a people are with much more meat and openness and can still be told in a way that is respectful on all sides. This book is not that, nor does it try to be.

Beyond the history, the book is basically a compilation of profiles. Stauffer leans heavily on reporting the word-for-word profiles ministers submitted, some of which is used verbatim without careful editing or consistent rephrasing to third person. This tattletales a bit on the project's time-crunch, unfortunate given the book's otherwise beautiful layout.

One is left wishing more time would have been dedicated to creating an in-depth history, adding interesting details and snippets about the post-revivalist era (such as the defining impact of tent meetings on Lancaster Conference that carried through to the MAF), attempting to draw some conclusions as to what actually happened beyond the textbook explanation of Mid-Atlantic's origins and developments.

For those who are Mid-Atlantic, *The History* serves as a unifying work to synthesize the current generation of Mid-Atlantic leadership and some overview of Mid-Atlantic's beginnings. As the charter members pass on, the book serves as evidence of the original vision and cadence of the church, with apparent hope that that beat will continue. The book also serves as a quick reference to Mid-Atlantic ministry and churches, and for those interested in a more analytical history, a careful combing of ministerial and church profiles hints at some deeper trends and patterns not explicitly mentioned otherwise (as with the surprising amount of ministerial turnover). Researchers looking at the history of Mid-Atlantic will have to put a lot of such fragments of information together to draw some sort of tentative conclusions.

Review of Nolt, Steven. 2015. *A History of the Amish* [3rd ed.]. New York, NY: Good Books. Pp. 406.

By Dorothy Pratt, *University of South Carolina*

In recent years, the Amish have become surprisingly popular in American culture. Books, television shows, and movies expose the curious to a relatively unknown religious sect, though most of these productions have little to do with the real lives of the Amish. Twenty years ago a very young man from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Steven Nolt, produced a well-documented

handbook giving the history of the Amish and explaining their many schisms and subsequent sub-groups. A new third edition of the study provides verification of the popularity of the group as well as the skill of Nolt in explaining their history to a general audience.

In this third edition, Nolt relies heavily upon his original manuscript but has supplemented it in a number of ways. He delves into the origins and European history of the group in more detail and more depth. Some of this new material is a result of his own research, some reflective of others. Further analysis on the original schism led by Jacob Amman invigorates the narrative, especially when the author concentrates on shunning as a pivotal issue that becomes a running theme reappearing throughout the book. The chapter on the Amish in Europe in the eighteenth century includes far more information on their migratory patterns as they searched for a welcoming space in a reconfigured and modernizing Europe. The result is a helpful sets of links to the reasons that the Amish emigrated to the new world.

Nolt also spends a bit more time illustrating the people who espoused new ideas, whether they provoked schism or not. For instance, “White” Jonas Stutzman appears only in passing in the original edition, but the new edition allocates two pages to him and covers his interest in the apocalypse and his startling preference for always wearing white. These side stories (and there are a number) help to personalize the story, provide interest, and keep the reader engaged. Nolt also makes use of charts, old photographs, and encapsulated inserts of quick biographies or primary documents to illustrate the issues or the people involved. Thankfully, he also includes a detailed index, since occasionally, the sheer number of names in the text becomes overwhelming, and the variety of spellings makes the reader think they have read the name earlier when they have not. The names and detail, however, do keep the narrative grounded in realism.

Completely new are the sections covering recent events, which includes the sad, but illustrative story of the Nickel Mines school shootings. Also included are the changes of vocation within the Amish community, as more have turned from farming as a primary source of income to small businesses. This shift requires constant evaluation within the community about cultural boundaries and ways to protect community life from the ethos of modernity. Nolt does an excellent job of providing a quick survey of the issues, changes, and avenues of persistence. In short, in the last twenty years, he has become the historical authority on the Amish through these editions of the history.

As welcome as this new edition is, and as learned as Nolt has become on the Amish, there are a couple of problems with the book. First, the third edition is not as well edited as the two previous ones. For instance, paragraphs repeat on pages 49 and 52. A hyphen shows up in the name “Schwarzen-druber” (159), obviously a leftover from a previous edition. A reference to the issue of belt-driven tractors is referenced on page 267, but explained on page 270. None of this takes away from the excellence of Nolt’s work, but it does reflect on the publisher. The book and the author deserved better.

Finally, the biggest frustration is that the book, which is aimed at the casual reader, provides hints as to what Nolt could do with an academic or more serious examination. He has the skills: for instance, the new edition reflects more frequent reference to the context of the time period in which the schisms arose. Much, however, is missing; Nolt is trained as an historian – he knows. The new material on the European origins only hints at the surrounding issues of religious wars and the rise of nationalism. References to Zwingli briefly allude to a different side to the great divide of the sixteenth century. Nolt is on surer ground with American history, but even then he refers to the Second Great Awakening, but ignores the similarities between William Miller’s awaiting the Second Coming in 1843 and 1844 and Jonas Stutzman’s similar ideas – though he thought Christ’s return would be in 1853. The list goes on. Part of the issue may be the traditional approach to analyzing the Amish through only Mennonite eyes, but the story is much bigger and more important than denominational schism. Such a book is needed, and at the moment, Nolt is the only one who could pull it together. I hope he does; it will be good, and I will purchase it.