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believe in God, the Father, Maker of Heaven and Earth; I believe in Jesus Christ . . . ; I believe in the Holy Catholic Church . . . and the resurrection from the dead . . ." But what if the Church was wrong in believing in God the Father as Creator, and in Jesus Christ as Redeemer? Is this not a very false way to pose the issue and utterly without warrant in the NT?

We confess that God has made himself known in Jesus Christ and in the same way that His Spirit has brought into existence a people of God, his Church. We have the

promise of His continuous presence and guidance which is daily confirmed. Our confession in the reality of the Church as bearer of the Gospel proclamation is equally strong as in Christology. The Church's designation of an authoritative canon was simply a derivative of its Christology. This is not to claim "inerrancy" for the canon, but rather to stake out the parameters of the Christian faith and to provide a point of standing in the belief that God is faithful and will not abandon his people to confusion in spite of their sin. Just as there is no "objective cri-

terion" by which to prove that Jesus Christ is God's elect Son, the Church cannot *prove* from a neutral position shared with unbelief that its canon is from God. No degree of historical inerrancy can confirm this testimony, but only the Spirit. Thus, the Church has confessed from the beginning of its inception that the Holy Spirit continues to instruct, edify, and admonish God's people through the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ.

But enough of this. You can see that your review has stimulated further reflection and thought.

Taking Mennonite History Seriously

by Dennis D. Martin

Maintaining the Right Fellowship: A Narrative Account of Life in the Oldest Mennonite Community in North America by John L. Ruth (Herald Press, 1984, 616 pp., \$24.95).

Land, Piety, Peoplehood: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America, 1683-1790, Mennonite Experience in America, Vol. 1 by Richard K. MacMaster (Herald Press, 1985, 340 pp., \$12.00).

In 1937 a recent graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary named J.C. Wenger published a history of eastern Pennsylvania's Franconia Conference of the Mennonite Church. Fifty years later J.C. Wenger is emeritus professor of historical theology at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries and a respected storytelling guardian of the Swiss-Pennsylvania Mennonite heritage. John L. Ruth, a former teacher of literature and present freelance filmmaker and storytelling interpreter of the Mennonite heritage, has now given us a history of the Franconia Conference and its counterpart, the Eastern District of the General Conference Mennonite Church. It is not a typical regional denominational history, i.e., it is not merely a collection of biographies, congregational historical sketches and desultory photographs of high schools and retirement homes.

It is rare that a local denominational study merits attention beyond its own constituency. Ruth's book merits attention because it is a fine piece of regional history told with

considerable narrative power. Coinciding with the three-hundredth anniversary of the initial Quaker-Mennonite immigration to Germantown, Pennsylvania, Ruth's book carries the story of a people through three centuries of emigration, immigration and acculturation, following the thread of their effort to maintain identity through a disciplined church life.

Maintaining the Right Fellowship is a story of Quaker-Mennonite tensions and commonalities in Germany's Rhine Valley and of Dutch Mennonite aid to and exasperation at Swiss Mennonite refugees over a century of emigration. It is the story of Mennonite peoplehood in the midst of Pennsylvania's varied peoples: Lutheran and Reformed, Pietist, Dunkers, Schwenkfelders, Quakers. It is the story of Mennonite divisions in response to the American revolt against the king of England and in response to a nineteenth century American enthusiasm for education, evangelism, and organization. Ruth's treatment of two main schisms in the 1770s and 1840s would be profitable reading for Christians of any tradition as case studies in church discipline, leadership styles, and decision making by consensus or by "parliamentary democracy."

Ruth uses family records and tales to document and interpret many of the events he chronicles. At times the detailed narration of family interconnections will swamp the outside reader to the same degree that it will fascinate eastern Pennsylvania Mennonites: Ruth traces migrations to Ohio, Indiana and Ontario, following eastern Pennsylvania natives who assumed denominational leadership roles.

The first two or three chapters of *Maintaining the Right Fellowship* could serve as an alternate introduction for a study of American church history, contrasting with the fa-

miliar story of Puritan immigration and settlement. The fifth chapter, on the Pennsylvania Mennonite experience of the Revolution (cf. Ruth's booklength treatment of the same materials in *'Twas Seeding Time* [Herald Press, 1976]), could be used in survey courses as a reminder that there were two sides to the war for independence. Few Mennonites and even fewer non-Mennonites are aware of Mennonite involvement in the early Christian and Missionary Alliance (p. 370). (Members of the Church of the Brethren [Dunkers] and related groups were also involved in the early CMA. See *Brethren Encyclopedia* [1983], p. 259).

Maintaining the Right Fellowship is, however, a denominational regional history and, despite Ruth's narrative skill, reveals its origins: the list of donors at the back of the book, the use of the in-house Mennonite code-words "unordained" and "ethnic" on the dedication page, occasional untranslated German ("zersplitter" on p. 303), and chains of family-transmitted anecdotes (pp. 172ff). Most blemishes are editorial: The book has excellent maps for Mennonite origins in Europe but a good map for colonial eastern Pennsylvania would have been a great help to readers plowing their way through the intricate interconnections of families and villages. The modern map of the area on p. 479 is inadequate for that purpose. Cross-referencing in footnotes is outstanding; the index is thorough, especially for names.

At times Ruth's colloquial story-telling style and his tendency to tell what the future held for an individual, family, or congregation under discussion becomes distracting (e.g., p. 213 bottom, p. 284 top). Colloquial language, as in the case of references to two congregations that "had gotten stone meetinghouses" and to another that "seems also

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to have gotten one about this time" (pp. 139-40) might work orally but seem questionable in print. Strings of (partly parenthetical) modifiers abound: "This musical (like his mother Magdalena Hunsberger), conscientious, Bible-steeped pastor was an overpowering orator" (p. 347). The term "squaw" on p. 165 will be disconcerting to some readers.

The second book under review here also picks up where J.C. Wenger left off. Twenty years ago Wenger edited *The Mennonite Church in America* (Herald, 1966), a survey that was not really intended to be a definitive reference work, certainly not for all Mennonite groups in the United States. Scholarship on North American Mennonites has lagged far behind scholarship on sixteenth-century Anabaptism. Frank H. Epp's still unfinished multivolume history of *Mennonites in Canada* (1974, 1982) and the projected four-volume *Mennonite Experience in America* (MEA) series seek to remedy that situation. The first volume in the MEA series, Richard MacMaster's *Land, Piety, Peoplehood* is a promising downpayment on the endeavor. It belongs in the library of every university or seminary that is committed to the study of American religious history.

MacMaster, like the authors at work on subsequent volumes in the series, is a professional historian. In MacMaster's case this involves an interest in settlement patterns and tax and land records. After several generations of Mennonite historical scholarship led by theologian-pastor-historians (Harold Bender, J.C. Wenger, S. F. Pannabecker, J.B. Toews, John A. Toews), a growing pool of historians, aided by a network of several dozen Mennonite archives and historical libraries (e.g., Lancaster, Pa.; Fresno, Cal.; Winnipeg; Newton, Kans.; Goshen, Ind.), is hard at work on a variety of local and regional studies.

Whereas John Ruth's history of eastern Pennsylvania Mennonites narrates rather expansively the immigration process, MacMaster covers both immigration to Pennsylvania and migration to surrounding areas during the eighteenth century concisely. Rather than family connections and anecdotes, the connecting thread for MacMaster's study is provided by the economic and social forces that pushed and pulled Mennonites from Europe to eastern Pennsylvania and onward to Lancaster County, to Maryland and Virginia, and to western Pennsylvania. Determined to put the lie to the filiopietistic Mennonite image of a devout people migrating primarily for religious reasons and settling in compact, closed, Mennonite communities, he repeatedly points to ways in which Mennonites were stimulated by land prices and commerce and emphasizes their interaction with Dunker, Pietist, Lutheran, Reformed, and English neighbors. At times he overdoes the debunking. I find unconvincing his cautiously nonseparatist, nonsectarian explanation for the American republication of the Mennonite martyrology in the 1740s (143-45). Geographical intermingling does not necessarily preclude sectarian separateness (138-51). On the other hand, his

careful work with tax lists and land ownership records amply documents the variations of wealth and poverty within supposedly tidy Mennonite communities.

Thus, the corrective emphasis on variety within the Mennonite world and on Mennonite interaction with non-Mennonites is needed and welcome. Yet the story of Mennonite separateness and religious subculture should not be completely abandoned in the colonial period or in later centuries. MacMaster occasionally shows caution. He rightly points out that Mennonite communities became more compact over time as land prices rose and wealthier Mennonites bought up surrounding land to establish their children in farming. It will remain for subsequent volumes of the *Mennonite Experience in America* series to explain the degree to which a self-conscious subcultural separatism does or does not characterize the Mennonite story in the 19th and 20th centuries. MacMaster's chapters on colonial and Revolutionary politics and Mennonite pacifism begin the explanation: the seeds of a Mennonite isolationist subculture may have sprouted during that trial by fire.

MacMaster's study of the impact of Pietism and revivalism (ch. 6, 8) are also insightful. With Robert Friedmann (*Mennonite Piety through the Centuries*[1949]), MacMaster points to differing shades of meaning for key terms like *Gelassenheit* (yieldedness) in sixteenth-century Anabaptism and eighteenth-century Pietism. Yet MacMaster lacks Friedman's polemical tone and finds much that is positive in the Pietist impact on Anabaptism, pointing to the schoolmaster Christopher Dock as an example of the way in which Pietism provided connections between Mennonites and the general Pennsylvania-German world. MacMaster's descriptions of congregational life and preaching in chs. 6-7 are well worth reading as cross-sections of the colonial Mennonite experience.

Editorial problems are few: the map of "European Rhinelands" might have been better placed in chapter 1; some effort to provide modern equivalents for the frequent references to colonial and European currencies, despite the perils that accompany any such attempt, might have been in order; the reference to American Indians as "friendly reds" on p. 242 will offend some readers.

Apart from hagiographical chronicles and martyrologies and except for the 18th- and 19th-century Dutch Mennonite historians, Mennonite history-writing began only about one hundred years ago in Germany, Russia, and North America. Fifty to seventy-five years ago, C. Henry Smith and Harold Bender began an apostolate aimed at telling the Anabaptist story to the larger church and world. These efforts succeeded in rehabilitating sixteenth-century Anabaptism so that by the 1950s and 1960s, it was a major branch of Reformation studies that was no longer exclusively carried on by Mennonites. (This historiography is reviewed by James M. Stayer in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research* ed. Steven E. Ozment [1982] pp. 135-39 and by several authors in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, [1956] II: 751-69).

During the last fifty years Mennonites have increasingly entered the North American mainstream culturally and socially. From a base in the education and health-care professions (1900ff), they have entered a wide variety of professions and the business world. It is unlikely that non-Mennonites will take up the study of post-sixteenth-century Mennonite history in the same way that Anabaptist studies have expanded. In-house Mennonite scholarship is only the beginning to work over the four centuries of Mennonite history since the formative decades, 1525-75. From genealogical studies and personal reminiscences by the remaining eyewitnesses of the Mennonite exodus from the Soviet Union sixty years ago to numerous regional, institutional, topical, and denominational histories by professional historians it is evident that the last two centuries are receiving the greatest attention. (A partial list would include the following: Theron F. Schlabach, *Gospel versus Gospel* [1980]; James Juhnke, *A People of Mission* [1979] and *A People of Two Kingdoms* [1975]; Richard K. MacMaster and others, *Conscience in Crises* [1979]; John B. Toews, *Czars, Soviets, and Mennonites* [1982]; Carlton O. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience* [1978]; Paul Toews, ed., *Pilgrims and Strangers* [1977]; and James O. Lehman's excellent histories of congregations and Mennonite communities). The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries remain the stepchildren of Anabaptist-Mennonite history.

Future research will be aided by the two-volume *Mennonite Bibliography, 1631-1961*, compiled by Nelson P. Springer and A.J. Klassen. Significant sociological studies are also emerging (John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society* [1963, 1968, 1980] and *Hutterite Society* [1974]; Leland Harder and J. Howard Kaufman, *Anabaptists Four Centuries Later* [1975]; numerous articles in sociological journals and *Mennonite Quarterly Review*). The Institute of Mennonite Studies at Elkhart, the Chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, and two journals (*Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Winnipeg and *Conrad Grebel Review*, Waterloo, Ontario) have taken the lead in stimulating biblical, theological and literary research and dialogue. No longer is history the sole focus for Mennonite scholarship in the humanities.

Yet historical studies remain an important part of the Mennonite scene and the books by Ruth and MacMaster represent some of the best efforts to synthesize the present state of American Mennonite historiography. They should serve a dual purpose: to remind Mennonites of their past in an era when Mennonites are rapidly leaving behind their distinctive subculture and experiencing in the process a significant identity crisis and to call on the members of mainstream Christian traditions in North America and Europe to take Mennonite history as seriously as they have begun to take Anabaptist history. The third stage—when Mennonites sufficiently resolve their identity transformation in their post-sectarian epoch—will, this reviewer hopes, find Mennonites taking the mainstream Christian traditions equally seriously.