

Book Reviews

magnificent journey through American faith. It should stand for a long time, if not as the definitive study, then certainly as the most readable and enjoyable one.

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Land, Piety, Peoplehood: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America, 1683-1790, by Richard K. MacMaster. Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1985. 343 pp. Notes, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$12.00 paper.

Richard MacMaster, who teaches at James Madison University in Virginia, is well known for his work on the family of George Mason as well as his valuable contribution, with two other authors, in *Conscience in Crisis: Mennonites and Other Peace Churches in America, 1739-1789* (1979). In *Land, Piety, Peoplehood* he turned his hand to a somewhat more popular vein of writing, though happily all of the scholarly apparatus is still present. This is the first of four volumes designed to celebrate the more than three hundred years of Mennonite life in North America.

The first volume presented difficulties for the author, who was obliged to review the complex European scene in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, then extract one swiftly changing element from that stage and relocate it across the ocean. This not-so-easy task resulted in early chapters that move back and forth both geographically and chronologically, with much detail and many names tending to make for heavy reading. Once MacMaster got his people solidly in place in Pennsylvania (and environs), however, the story became clearer, the maps and photographs more revealing.

One of the valuable services performed here is to see the Mennonites and Amish as not all that peculiar in the colonial period. Their migration is, on the whole, understood best as part of the larger flow of Germans to the New World. Their land hunger was of a piece with that of their neighbors. Their pietism found expression in a land distinguished for its emphasis on personal experience in religion, especially during the Great Awakening. They joined in the political process and, like many other Americans, had difficulties with it. They quarreled with each other, became schismatic, were not always consistent, won admirers, and found enemies. In all of this, they had much company in America. "Eighteenth-century Mennonites probably would not have wanted to sort and separate their motives as much as twentieth-century analysts want to do. They lived life as a whole, and did not make much attempt to distinguish between the religious, the social and the economic spheres" (136). Utilizing the careful demographic and so-

cial history work of James Lemon and James Henretta, MacMaster argued that these studies also demonstrate that "the occupational pattern of Mennonites in colonial Pennsylvania scarcely differed from the patterns of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians or of German Lutherans" (142). The prevailing theme is that the Amish and Mennonites cooperated with their neighbors far more than they sought to isolate themselves from them.

Of course, there was pacifism and resistance to oaths. But in Pennsylvania, the Quakers had from the beginning of the colony manifested and made room for these "peculiarities." So these emphases did not prevent cooperation even in such significant ways as supporting common schools, building "union" churches, adopting widely used Protestant hymns, and the like. In the excitement of eighteenth-century revivalism, Mennonites joined in more freely than larger churches with emphasis on creedal authority and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Mennonite Martin Boehm (1725-1812) joined in the awakening with such gusto that he (along with Philip Otterbein) created a new denomination, but in this, too, he was only being stereotypically American.

The American Revolution, of course, proved to be indeed "a wrenching experience" (249) for Mennonites as for all other pacifists. It was necessary to take sides, more definitively and more vigorously than had been required in, say, the French and Indian War. Also in that earlier conflict, Mennonites had not been obliged to choose between loyalty to Britain and to their new land. In 1776 such a choice was required, and many opted for loyalty to the empire. That option was most vividly evident in the 1780s migration of Mennonites from Pennsylvania to Canada. As the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported in 1789: "thirty families of the people called Menonists [*sic*] are about to emigrate from Lancaster County to Niagara, on purpose to avoid the disagreeable consequences of our ridiculous and tyrannical test law" (278). Pennsylvania's 1777 Test Act required a degree of allegiance that most Mennonites felt was a violation of their conscientious scruples. But even in this migration, economic motives held sway, as they had in the earlier move across the ocean. The revolution, nonetheless, did force upon the Mennonites a kind of insularity from public life, a resolution henceforth to be more than they were earlier "the quiet in the land" (279). The four-volume series is herewith well launched, especially so with respect to the twelve-page bibliographical essay. Scholars will draw with gratitude from that well for years to come.

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