

IN THIS ISSUE

From the moment of the movement's inception in the sixteenth century, various Anabaptist groups, along with their descendents, have engaged in a lively debate regarding the gospel of peace, the role of the state, and the practical expressions of biblical nonresistance in daily life. In this issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, **Darrin Snyder Belousek** addresses one dimension of that larger, sustained conversation: the question of capital punishment. In contrast to some voices in the Anabaptist tradition, Snyder Belousek resists the impulse to draw a sharp line between the Old Testament pattern of retributive justice—in which the death penalty seemed to accord fully with the will of God—and the model of redemptive love advocated by Jesus in the New Testament. When Jesus challenged those preparing to stone the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8:2-11), saying that the one “without sin” should cast the first stone, he was not introducing a new teaching but rather calling for the fulfillment of covenant law. Although Jesus did not eliminate the death penalty in principle here, he extended the legal requirement in such a way as to put the death penalty unconditionally beyond human reach: God alone is “without sin.” In a similar fashion, argues Snyder Belousek, Paul's description of the cross in Colossians also challenges the logic of expiatory punishment or retributive justice that has frequently grounded Christian arguments favoring the death penalty. Rather than satisfying a legal demand for justice, God works redemption through Christ by nailing the very principle of retribution, along with human transgressions, to the cross (see Col. 2:13-15). In so doing, God has “crucified the death penalty” itself.

Adam Darlage extends the conversation about the nature of God's justice by examining Hutterian interpretations of martyrdom as they found expression in the Hutterite *Chronicle*. Echoing the “divine vengeance” motif evident in Christian martyrologies going all the way back to Eusebius, Hutterite chroniclers sometimes concluded stories of persecution with accounts of unexpected suffering or painful death that befell the authorities responsible for the executions. Although such stories may seem incongruous in a text honoring nonresistance and suffering love, they offered assurance to the powerless that God's justice would indeed ultimately prevail. At the same time, however, Darlage also notes a significant counter-motif in the *Chronicle*. Interspersed throughout the stories of divine vengeance are other accounts of Hutterites expressing deep pity, even compassion, for their persecutors. In these instances the *Chronicle* acknowledges that authorities are ensnared by the obligations of their secular offices, and calls them to

repentance out of a genuine concern for their spiritual well-being. That these two themes—both of which are also evident in the *Martyrs Mirror*—are not fully resolved, points to the theological complexity of Anabaptist martyr literature and invites further study.

Such research will be aided by a deeper understanding of the primary sources themselves. To that end, **Matthias Rauert**, an independent scholar working in Germany and Hungary, guides readers through a detailed linguistic and paleographic analysis of several late-sixteenth-century Hutterite manuscripts. In an earlier groundbreaking essay published in *MQR* (Oct. 1999; Jan. 2000), historian Arnold Snyder called attention to the Swiss Brethren manuscript tradition of piecing together texts by borrowing freely, often without attribution, from an eclectic range of theological sources. Here Rauert does something of the same thing for the Hutterites in his careful study of a theological treatise called “Ein schön lustig Büchlein.” Whereas Robert Friedmann conflated this text with the so-called “Great Article Book,” Rauert demonstrates that “Ein schön lustig Büchlein” — whose first fully extant manuscript dates to 1583 — is a significant reworking of that text with newly-edited materials. In the course of his analysis, Rauert argues that the text was likely compiled by Hans Zuckenhammer rather than Peter Walpot, and he demonstrates the manuscript’s clear dependence on the “Admonition” (or *Vermahnung*) of Pilgrim Marpeck who, in turn, drew heavily on a work by Bernhard Rothmann. Along the way, Rauert also reflects on the anomaly of the Hutterite readiness to draw on the work of their theological opponents and challenges earlier arguments that “Ein schön lustig Büchlein” was a central “dogmatic” text of the Hutterites. As with Snyder’s essay, the analysis is complex; but Rauert has offered scholars a crucial service by teasing apart the intricate context of editors, compilers, copyists and binders out of which these manuscripts emerged.

We conclude this issue of *MQR* with a research note by **Linda Huebert Hecht**, a noted scholar of Anabaptist women. Hecht focuses on household inventories of thirty-six Anabaptist families in Tirol who fled the region or were martyred. Her essay challenges the notion that Anabaptism was primarily a movement of the poor. Indeed, some 72 percent of these families had household property worth 50 gulden or more, and several owned property valued at several thousand gulden. Hecht’s work is more suggestive than conclusive. But it does underscore the complexity of motives behind the Anabaptist movement: clearly Tirolese Anabaptists had much to lose for their convictions, both financially and in terms of separation from their children and families.

– John D. Roth, editor

IN MEMORIAM
ERLAND WALTNER (1914-2009)

Erland Waltner, a prominent Mennonite pastor, teacher and church statesman, died April 12, 2009, at ninety-four years of age. His career of church leadership culminated with twenty years as president of Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana (1958-1978). He served as president of the General Conference Mennonite Church (1956-1962), as president of the Mennonite World Conference (1963-1973) and as executive secretary of Mennonite Health Association (1979-1992).

Waltner's family heritage included European Hutterite, Amish and Mennonite roots. His ethnic people, the "Swiss Volhynians," migrated to South Dakota in 1874. He grew up in the Salem church near Freeman and was tapped for church leadership at an early age. The return of his great uncle from Leavenworth Military Prison after World War I was one formational event for Waltner's lifelong commitment to Christian pacifism. Waltner graduated from Bethel College in Kansas (1935) and from the Biblical Seminary of New York (1938), where he was drawn to the inductive method of Bible study. During pastorates in Philadelphia and in Minnesota, he worked toward a Th.D. degree at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. His dissertation was "An Analysis of the Mennonite Views on the Christian's Relation to the State in the Light of the New Testament."

In his theology and church relationships, Waltner successfully strove to find a middle ground between Mennonite liberals and conservatives. The conservative leaders at Grace Bible Institute invited him to become president of that institution. He declined. For eight years (1949-57) he taught Bible at Bethel College. His theology was strongly Christocentric. Waltner also built bridges between his General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church. He enjoyed a mutually respectful relationship with Harold Bender, dean of the Goshen Biblical Seminary, that helped pave the way toward cooperation and eventual union of the two seminaries.

Waltner wrote the commentary on the New Testament book of 1 Peter for the Believers Church Bible Commentary (1999). In his preaching career he delivered more than four thousand sermons. In retirement he served as mentor to many students and friends, and invested much time and energy in the ministry of spiritual direction.

Erland Waltner was married to Mary Winifred Schlosser, the daughter of Free Methodist missionaries in China. Erland and Winifred were the parents of four daughters.

- James C. Juhnke

AUTHOR ADDRESSES

Adam Darlage, 7554 S. Essex Ave, Apt. 1A, Chicago, IL 60649. E-mail: adarlage@uchicago.edu.

Linda A. Huebert Hecht, 117 Ralston Place Waterloo, ON, N2T 1C7, Canada. E-mail: lhhecht@watserv1.uwaterloo.ca

Matthias H. Rauert, Mária dűlő 28, H-7634, Pécs, Hungary. E-mail: mhrauert@aim.com

Darrin Snyder Belousek, 1106 Mordecai Dr., Raleigh, NC, 27604. E-mail: dwbelousek@juno.com