Michael D. Driedger. *Obedient Heretics: Mennonite Identities in Lutheran Hamburg and Altona during the Confessional Age*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002.

Michael Driedger's work concentrates on Mennonites in the Hamburg-Altona region of Germany during the second half of the seventeenth century. These Mennonites had become "ethno-confessional," consisting "almost entirely" of people born into the "Flemish" Mennonite community of Hamburg-Altona. Since Hamburg was officially Lutheran, Mennonites were barred from participation in its political life and forbidden to build churches. A more tolerant attitude prevailed in the adjacent Danish enclave of Altona. Although here, too, religious non-conformity meant a "precarious legal existence," the economic contribution of Mennonites was welcome and they were permitted to meet for worship in Altona. Some entered the lucrative whaling market and prospered, controlling for a time 50 per cent of its proceeds. In 1675 the first church was built in Altona. The cemetery which followed suggested a new permanency and, according to Driedger, set a new benchmark in the "institutional history" of the Altona congregation, which by the late seventeenth century claimed a membership of 250 baptized adults. Congregational governance permitted all baptized males to participate in the election of the leadership. Ordained elders performed marriages and baptisms, and presided during the Lord's Supper.

The book's second chapter delves into the mid-seventeenth century Dompelaar schism. Seventeen members left the Altona congregation, insisting that baptism should be by immersion, and that the Lord's Supper be held in the evening with unleavened bread and only after a foot washing ceremony. While attempts to resolve the dispute failed, immersionists eventually underwent a metamorphosis into non-denominational pietists and dissolved.

The third chapter deals with the "confessionalist strategy" of Altona's church leaders caught in the "war of the lambs" between Zonists and Lambists. The Zonists advocated a stricter confessionalism and had Thielemann Jansz van Braght, compiler of the *Martyrs Mirror*, on their side. In addition to the Apostolic Creed, van Braght included three confessions approved at the Synod of Leiden, chaired by him, in the *Martyrs Mirror*. While van Braght insisted on confessional orthodoxy, the eloquent representative of the Lambists, Galenus Abrahamsz de Haan, sought to retain a less dogmatic ethical piety. The Altona church was drawn into the Zonist confessionalist network, thanks in part to

its influential preacher, Geeritt Roosen. Nevertheless, Abrahamsz was permitted to preach in the Altona congregation. Driedger implies that confessionalism constituted a qualified accommodation to mainstream trends while permitting the preservation of unique Mennonite identities; hence the numerous Mennonite confessions during the second half of the seventeenth century.

Chapter 4 initiates readers into the growing historiography of confessionalism which Driedger has mastered. He describes the paradigmatic shift from "absolutism" to "confessionalism," and how this shift broadens the historical investigation to "the linkages between religion, society, politics, economics and culture" (77). Viewed in this larger context, Mennonites maintained religious nonconformity but became increasingly part of the established order, accepting its legal norms, including their own "subordinate position" (81). In this view, "self-directed . . . preemptive social discipline" exercised by the Mennonites served those interested in obedient subjects and in the maintenance of the existing political-social order.

The last three chapters deal with nonresistance, oath swearing, and mixed marriages. Driedger notes that activist peacemaking would have seemed absurd to early modern Mennonites; "non-resistance" remained the ideal, but it was undermined by economics. Mennonite merchants and ship owners required armed protection against pirates. If they did not outfit their own ships with cannons, they accepted the protection of armed convoys. Some were involved in the arms trade (122). Others, like the Roosens, prominent members of the Altona church, had for generations produced gun powder. Thus economics led to strange bedfellows. The issue of oath swearing, personalized by the story of Hans Plus, illustrates additional difficulties. Plus came to the attention of Hamburg's authorities because he refused to swear the common oath. His case became politicized when the city of Hamburg was accused of harboring Anabaptists. At the trial before Germany's High Court, Hamburg's lawyers argued that Mennonites were not Anabaptists (sic!) and that Plus had sworn an alternative oath, "by the truth of men" (Mannen Wahrheit), in a ritual with all the trappings of a normal oath swearing ceremony. The trial petered out when Plus moved to Russia.

Driedger documents that relations between Hamburg's administrators and Mennonites continued on a relatively cordial trajectory and that increasing tolerance led to increased interaction with outsiders. "Mixed marriages," initially perceived as a threat to the religious-ethnic purity of the community, increased.

Interestingly, the most stubborn resistance against intermarriage came from Mennonite oligarchs primarily interested in protecting family businesses. Leaders who sought to prevent mixed marriages on purely religious grounds faced an increasingly difficult task.

Driedger's study captures the dynamics of Mennonite interaction within the larger context. His study suggests that collective identity and ethno-religious purity are more likely to be maintained under persecution. Readers will find a mine of information in *Obedient Heretics*. Appendices provide the names of preachers and deacons, and offer information on marriages, on conversions (in or out), and on discipline administered. Driedger's book invites discussion and debate. His meticulous scholarship and even-handed interpretation reveal him to be a scholar *par excellence*. Mennonites are fortunate to have such talent and dedication interested in their history.

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Christopher D. Marshall. *Crowned With Glory and Honor: Human Rights in the Biblical Tradition*. Telford, PA: Pandora Press US, 2002.

Christopher Marshall begins this 119-page treatise with a brief review of the origins of the idea of human rights from its emergence in eighteenth century Western secularism until its flowering in the twentieth century. Marshall has two abiding interests: (1) to find the ideology that undergirds human rights; (2) to promote an understanding of human rights grounded in community and paired with responsibility.

Marshall notes that the earliest thinking about human rights was primarily concerned about limiting the rights of oppressive governments. Then theorists formulated ideas that focused on positive goods such as a living wage. Later additions included issues related to economic and ecological justice. As rights thinking evolved in the West side-by-side with individualism, much attention began to focus on individual rights. This is problematic for cultures that are community and family oriented. In their view, some ideas about human rights undermine their value systems.

The author believes that the ideological base for human rights is found in the Bible. Human rights ideology, he argues, is grounded in a theology that

affirms human beings as created in the image of God. He points to the first article of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which "states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (46). He insists that such a belief is not compatible with religions "that believe human existence is determined by the karma accrued in previous lives, so that people are *not* born equal in dignity, rights and freedom" (46). Therefore, he concludes that Article 1 reflects an idea that is specifically Christian (and Jewish).

Marshall identifies six themes that set the theological foundation for human rights: Creation, Cultural Mandate, Covenant, Christ, Church, and Consummation (54-115). Humans are created in the image of God as relational beings. They have worth and also responsibilities because they are the representatives of God on earth. Christians have an obligation to care for the environment (ecological rights), not just for the sake of future generations but also because it is God's creation. Noting that the Apostle Paul was more interested in inner freedom than outer freedom, the author suggests that Christians should, from time to time, voluntarily accept a limitation of their human freedom for the sake of a greater good.

Marshall frequently uses the phrase "right to life," which currently has the very specific meaning of opposition to abortion. However, he uses it differently in much of the book to oppose capital punishment and mutilation, for example (74-75). At the end of chapter 7, he writes that it is essentially a question of "the rights of the woman versus the rights of the unborn child" (106). He concludes, "An ethos of duty would recast the debate in terms of the relative responsibilities of the parents to the unborn child and the wider community to the parents and the child" (106). The reader is left with the feeling that the "right to life" language was used as a subliminal code to prepare for the punch line, which is opposition to abortion.

Following Paul, Marshall implies that slaves and women living in patriarchal and slave-holding cultures can submit to the oppressive structures of their society, knowing inside that they are free and equal before God (100, 96). While this may be a coping mechanism adopted by some, no one should find it acceptable to be free and equal only on the inside. Marshall fears that calling on governments to enforce human rights will lead to "a new kind of totalitarianism . . . . It also permits governments to infringe virtually any right in the name of supporting other rights . . . ." (105). He is also uncomfortable with secular notions of human rights. He writes "the biblical emphasis on duty and

obligation should cause us to question the wisdom of casting so many of the issues of modern social life solely in terms of rights. Rights and responsibilities are complementary and indivisible in the biblical tradition . . . ." (117).

Marshall is right to balance notions of human rights with those of obligation, in stressing the need to set rights in the context of community, and in unearthing the foundation of human rights in Western religion and specifically, I would argue, in Jewish as well as Christian theology. (Marshall does not give enough credit to the earlier Jewish traditions from which Christianity developed.) This provocative and informative study is particularly well suited to college courses in ethics or Bible, or to adult Bible study groups.

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Paul A. Bramadat. *The Church on the World's Turf: An Evangelical Christian Group at a Secular University*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Mennonites and others who attended a Christian college affiliated with a larger secular university will find a way of understanding their experiences by reading this enlightening and useful book. Written from a social scientific perspective, *The Church on the World's Turf* studies the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) at McMaster University, a group of about 200 members (almost exclusively white, seventy percent female) at a large, culturally diverse, secular university of some 14,000 students in Ontario's industrial heartland.

Given the myriad studies on conservative Christian groups in the United States and Canada, it is amazing that this is the first social scientific study of an evangelical student group. The majority of such studies employ the "church-as-fortress" metaphor. According to this model, conservative Christian groups or institutions serve as a fortress against liberalism and modernity, with their individualism, materialism, and loose sexual morality.

While Bramadat accepts that the ICVF operates as a fortress against secularism for these students in some cases, he balances this idea with the metaphor of IVCF as bridge. He argues that the Fellowship allows students to reach past their smaller, denominational identity to other Christians and to their secular counterparts, and provides a means to negotiate with the secular university. So, for example, students learn not to interrupt biology classes on

evolution with their ideas on creationism. Instead, they treat the theory of evolution as "one theory among many," learn it, describe it on tests and papers, but distance themselves from it intellectually and psychologically. On the social side, they participate in student activities and do not segregate themselves. However, they refuse to participate in the "sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll" culture that dominates much of student life. They use the ICVF to facilitate contact with other students on their own terms (at least as much as possible). Bramadat emphasizes the freedom and creativity behind these negotiated contracts and the myriad ways that individual students and the ICVF work out their relationships with others.

Anyone who has attended a Christian college at a secular university could easily apply this model to their own experience. When I attended St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto, my friends and I were very much open to what the secular university had to offer. Still, St. Mike's provided a space where we were allowed to nourish and celebrate an alternate worldview with its unique values, practices, and beliefs.

What issues separate IVCF students from their secular counterparts? Some are obvious. Christians attend a university in which the dominant culture disputes or dismisses some of their most important truth-claims. For example, one cannot claim the existence of God as a "fact" in a secular university in the way one can at a Bible college or church school. But in formal subjects, most students do not feel that their beliefs are challenged. It is usually only in classes where topics such as evolutionary biology, sexual and social ethics, and philosophy are discussed that any conflict is felt. Bramadat shows how students negotiate that tension in a variety of ways. His students report that they are not alienated so much from the curriculum as from the youth culture as it is expressed in student life. Sexual promiscuity, swearing, and parties marked by heavy drinking are all features of life on campus, especially in residence. Conservative evangelicals establish a parallel social network through ICVF, for example, organizing social events without alcohol.

While some tensions are resolved rather easily, others are more difficult. For example, conservative Christians steadfastly maintain a "different but equal" stance on woman's rights. Men are to hold the leadership positions in society, church, and the family. Given that seven of ten IVCF members are women, how do they negotiate between their traditional beliefs about the role of women and the challenges to those beliefs posed by liberal individualism

and feminism? Bramadat argues that, through IVCF, women have developed complex, innovative, and empowering strategies that allow them to remain loyal to evangelicalism and, in their words, 'stretched' by the liberal educational institutions that more and more of them are deciding to attend" (101).

The strength of this book is its "postmodern" ethnographic approach. Bramadat takes on the role of participant/observer and befriends his subjects, listening to them patiently, interviewing them endlessly, questioning them gently, and noting their responses responsibly. Through this method of non-judgmental and patient observation, Bramadat can learn how the IVCF functions for these students without rushing to the conclusions of deprivation or social control theory.

Bramadat's tolerant and patient style is challenged by his subjects' sometimes exclusivist claims and chauvinistic attitudes. For example, many IVCF members believe that adherents of the world religions are mistaken or, worse, misled by Satan. Even other Christians are dismissed because they do not use the special vocabulary of the conservative evangelicals, that is, they don't have a "personal relationship" with Jesus as their "Lord and Savior." So Roman Catholics, encountered in great numbers during an IVCF mission to Lithuania, are not Christians. While Bramadat finds some of their attempts to convert him condescending, he is also moved by their genuine concern for his spiritual welfare. Still, he criticizes their judgment on world religions as well as their ignorance of fundamental facts about life in Lithuania. One wonders if Bramadat could not have applied this humanistic critique to other elements of conservative Christian belief. Is evangelical Christianity compatible with the freedom and dignity of women willed by God? Christian feminists will wonder why the author does not pursue this question more aggressively. Moreover, Bramadat fails to mention, never mind critique, conservative Christian attitudes to alternative sexual orientations. Surely this is an issue that separates conservative Christian students from their peers and one that would be open to his humanistic criticisms.

The Church on the World's Turf would make an excellent text in a "Religion in Canada" or sociology of religion course. Administrators and supporters of religious colleges will also learn much about themselves, their institutions, and their students from this interesting, accessible study.

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