Mark Jantzen, Mary S. Sprunger, and John D. Thiesen, eds. *European Mennonites and the Challenge of Modernity over Five Centuries: Contributors, Detractors, and Adapters*. North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 2016.

This anthology, stemming from a 2010 conference at Bethel College, evaluates Mennonite contributions to European society, politics, and church structures in the centuries following the period of Anabaptist origins. As Thomas Brady indicates in his revised keynote, at the heart of this collective project rests a basic historiographical problem: Do scholars justify their study of Mennonites by stressing their marginality and opposition to modernity, or by integrating them into broader narratives that explicate modernity?

Contributors to this volume largely select the latter option. They find that Mennonite communities shaped political, social, and religious affairs in various European contexts. Tellingly, of the three sections into which the book's 19 chapters have been divided—Contributors, Detractors, and Adapters—the first is longest. Yet, despite this distribution, all the essays speak to common themes: Mennonite ambivalence about modernity and its truth claims, Mennonites' place in and relevance to society, and possibilities for the exercise of agency by those on society's edges.

The editors' decision to avoid defining modernity draws a wide variety of scholars into conversation but leaves the reader wondering what, exactly, Mennonites contributed to or what they detracted from. The most effective essays incorporate discussions of modernity's content while positioning Mennonites in relation to it. Michael Driedger, for instance, traces the "meme" of so-called irrational, fanatical Anabaptist violence in Münster from the 16th through the 21st century, illuminating the changing intellectual concerns of authors who invoked this event. He contends that uncritical adoption of this meme has served to legitimate state violence against misunderstood religious minorities.

In a different vein, Ernst Hamm explores shifting relationships between religious faith and natural knowledge in his study of scientific instruments and education at the Mennonite seminary in Amsterdam founded in 1735. Dutch Mennonites' innovative incorporation of "experimental philosophy" into pastoral training curricula makes him question assumptions of a Mennonite suspicion of science and technology. Frank Konersmann

investigates class differentiation in the southwestern German countryside by tracing developments within economic and social relations of six Mennonite families in the Rhenish Palatinate between 1740 and 1880. He finds that their agricultural and commercial innovations turned them into "peasant merchants" who increasingly associated with local nobility and the urban middle class and, as a result, generated new values, patterns of socialization, and forms of self-representation.

Each of these essays furthers efforts to move Mennonite historiography past the 16th century. The 18th century, often neglected by historians of both early modern and modern Europe, attracts the most attention. Many studies, including Hamm's, explore Mennonite contributions or reactions to the Dutch Golden Age. Through the lens of Max Weber's association of ascetic Protestantism with a capitalist ethos, Mary Sprunger examines Mennonites' application of capitalist practices to problems within their communities, thereby challenging the simplistic equation that more wealth equals less faithfulness. Troy Osborne argues that Mennonites' commitment to church discipline and charity coincided with the ordering objectives of the Dutch state, helping to create domestic conditions favorable to the creation of Europe's first "capitalistic empire." In his investigation of the involvement of Mennonite elites in the Frisian Patriot movement in the 1770s and 1780s, Yme Kuiper demonstrates that Mennonites on occasion shaped Dutch political culture more directly. Moving east into Prussia, Mark Jantzen reveals further political influence. Suggesting that the transition from enlightened absolutism to democracy impinged on Mennonites' religious freedoms, he nonetheless identifies Hermann von Beckerath, a liberal Mennonite from Krefeld, as a chief opponent of military exemptions.

Other essays examine Mennonite theological discourse, pedagogy, and art history, and provide narrative histories of Mennonite settlements in Poland and southwestern and central Asian Russia.

This volume's diversity in topic, scale, method, periodization, and contributors' countries of origin is an achievement. The results of the project are significant, not least because the contributors' demonstration that Mennonites were often implicated in long-term economic, political, and religious developments challenges a simple understanding of the marginality of Mennonites' past. The fruitful interaction of historiographies here leads

one to wonder how else stories of Mennonite actions across time and place could be brought together. If present realities shape how we analyze the past, has Europe become an increasingly problematic framework for such conversations as the Mennonite demographic center moves to the global South?

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