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the Brethren mirrors so much the history of the Mennonites, the divisions of the Progressives and Old Orders from the Conservatives in the 1800s. Afterwards, the Conservatives moved toward a more mainstream church position resulting in the emergence of the “conservative” bodies in the early to middle 1900s. For those who desire to gain a glimpse into what they look like today, Keith Bailey’s book gives a picture of what the conservatives in the Brethren movement look like in the early 2000s.

Review of **Loewen, Royden. 2013. *Village among Nations: “Canadian” Mennonites in a Transnational World, 1916-2006*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press. Pp. 301.**

By Kira Turner, *York University*

Intent on preserving their deep-seated beliefs and values, the most conservative of the Russian Mennonites (Old Colony) made their way to Western Canada with promises of religious freedom, exemption from military service, the right to maintain their distinctive Low German language, and the right to educate their children within their own schools. However, in the early 1900s, Canada was changing and developing its own cultural and nationalistic identity. Under threat of compulsory attendance at public schools, and drawing from past experiences of governments retracting special dispensations afforded to the Mennonite population, Old Colony religious leaders, fearing what was to come, began searching for a new home, one that would allow them to maintain their unique culture separate from nationalistic boundaries.

Similar to the Canadian government’s efforts, in the nineteenth century, to build up its population in central Canada, Mexico, intent on reproducing a western styled modernity, desired experienced farmers from the global north (39) and were willing to grant the Old Colony the same freedoms they had originally negotiated in Canada. This marked the beginning of a new transnational migration to Mexico and eventually deeper south into British Honduras, Paraguay, and Bolivia, resulting in some eventually returning to Canada, and some continue today to shuttle back and forth between North and South America.

In *Village among Nations*, historian Royden Loewen argues that academic inquiry concerning nationalism excludes those who are unwilling to conform to or integrate within a specific country (9). Taking up Benedict Anderson’s conceptualization of nationhood and imagined communities, Loewen asserts that traditional Mennonites, in their desire to remain separate, and through a pattern of persistent migration, developed an “imagined transnational village” not tied to any specific nation-state. Rather, through extensive social networks, they formed alternative engagements both locally and globally living “among nations.” To support this claim, Loewen offers an analysis of various texts dating between the period of 1916 to 2006, including letters, memoirs, diaries, reflections, and newspaper articles written both by Mennonites and outsiders, and oral histories gathered through academic research, painting a well-rounded picture of an distinctive transnational community. Adding significantly to a global

narrative on nationalism, Loewen portrays a specific view of Mennonite life and of the continual migration back and forth between North and South America.

Loewen has organized his work around eight thematic chapters. Chapter one takes up the general unease brewing in Canada and the merits of migrating to a new land, forsaking economic certainty for religious freedom. Chapter two tracks the formation of an extensive social network as letters and other correspondence found their way into the Mennonite newspaper, *Steinbach Post*. As a way to share experiences, and maintain links between the diasporic families and those who either remained in Canada or who had not yet begun the journey southward, the printed texts contributed to the linking of communities along the migration route.

This widening textual network expanded over time to include themes surrounding nostalgia for Canada, religious uncertainty, uneven distribution of resources, economic disparity and other shared stories of loss and sacrifice, themes taken up in chapter three. Of particular interest is the way, in chapter four, Loewen envisions time and space as contracting and expanding as those caught up in the cycle of migration move in and out of local and global contexts. This conceptualization brings to life a complex and dynamic story of persistent migration evolving over three generations, linking an ongoing relationship with traditional Mennonites scattered across the Americas (206). In chapter five, Loewen examines the texts produced by local populations, media outlets and international experts curious about these disparate peoples, which he asserts also contributed to the formation of this vast social network. Importantly, in chapter six, Loewen pushes us to think about “imagined villages” outside of the scope of the nation-state and how actors through shared stories, networks, and connections create their own realities beyond the mainstream. In chapter seven, Loewen addresses memory-making and geographic reimagining as strategies for turning lived experiences and concrete diasporic villages into a shared “imagined village.” Finally, chapter eight, relying on oral histories in which female migrants discussed their experiences of living transnational lives, takes up the accounts of these women between the period of 1985 to 2006. As Loewen explains, these narratives “rode roughshod over the officially patriarchal contours of their worlds” (226). Their personal stories portray a hard life fraught with uncertainty, disappointment, and disparity. Their accounts of hardship and sacrifice sit side-by-side with narratives of survival and self-sufficiency within their transplanted communities. This chapter seems to sit somewhat apart from the rest of the book and does so possibly because it draws from oral histories rather than the written record. Consequently, it feels as though the subject matter—current lived transnational experiences of Old Colony women—could contribute to a rich and vital book of its own.

Theoretically, *Village among Nations* will appeal to both those interested in thinking differently about migration, trans/nationalism, citizenship, and identity-making practices. As well, it will appeal to cultural history, anthropology, and religious studies students and scholars. While the letters, diaries, and other texts paint a vibrant picture, they also bring up questions, such as, what is left out of or omitted from these texts? What is obscured or altered? What is hidden is as much part of the story as what is out in plain view. We can learn quite a bit from

letters, diaries, and memoirs, but only as much as someone is willing to reveal or able to articulate. What happened in those two years that Johan A. Theissen (42) failed to write in his journal? What questions, concerns, and uncertainties could not be written down, knowing the letters would be shared with many communities? These kinds of questions may never be answered, but perhaps they speak to the complexity of understanding of Mennonite culture and imaginings of a transnational “village.”

As captivating as it is unsettling in recounting the transnational experiences of living within the world, yet outside of the nation-state, Royden Loewen’s book is both an accessible and invaluable text. Replete with engaging personal stories of varied experiences, he paints a vivid picture of the difficulties and countless challenges the diasporic Old Colony Mennonites faced each day as it tracks three generations across varied spaces and geographies. Providing a glimpse into the multifaceted lives of these people, *Village among Nations* importantly takes us through the shifting political and economic climate of nation-states and its effects on a vibrant and often misunderstood people. This important work provides a rich understanding of alternative visions of transnationalism and identity making within and without the nation-state.

Reference

Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, England: Versa.

Review of Stauffer, Romaine. 2014. *The History of Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship*. Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship. Pp. 145.

By Jennifer Anderson

In 2012, Mid-Atlantic Fellowship (MAF)—a conservative Mennonite group rooted in southeastern Pennsylvania—felt a need to document the history of the constituency before many of the charter members of the church passed on. The result is a handsome, full-color, hardcover volume of 145 pages of church, ministerial, and ministry program profiles, with full-color photos of church buildings, active and former ministry, and some snapshots of mission ministry activities. The book is broken into four sections: the history of the Mid-Atlantic Fellowship, profiles of each church (the congregation and its current and former ministers), MAF choruses, and MAF ministries.

The history, which is all too brief, begins with the Anabaptist movement, then jumps to the division between Lancaster Mennonite Conference and the Weaverland Mennonite Conference (Old Order) in the late 1800s, then to the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church division with Lancaster Mennonite Conference in the late 1960s, and then finally the Mid-Atlantic beginnings from the Eastern Church, with Bishop Homer Bomberger leading out in the early 1970s. The Mid-Atlantics felt the Easterns upon leaving Lancaster Conference were