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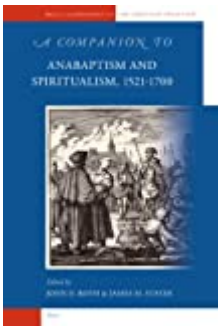

John D. Roth, James M. Stayer, eds. *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700.* Boston: Brill, 2007. xxiv + 574 pp. $163.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-90-04-15402-5.

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Zwischenbilanz in an Ongoing Conversation

This volume of thirteen essays, which aims to "take the pulse" of Radical Reformation scholarship, mostly succeeds at providing an overview of recent historiographical developments and a good introduction into some of the dominant methods and subjects of research in this field at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

As editor John Roth points out in his foreword, the coeditors represent the two leading schools in the historiographical evolution: Roth, as the successor to Harold S. Bender at Goshen College, stands for the Bender School, whose "Anabaptist Vision" and confessionally-based history of Anabaptism were challenged in the 1960s and 1970s by a group of revisionist scholars that included the other editor, the now-retired James Stayer (p. xi).[1] Thus one may expect a collection of essays spanning the historiographical spectrum. In order to keep the project within manageable bounds, the editors chose to confine the discussion of Anabaptism and Spiritualism to the Germanic lands of continental Europe, including Switzerland, the Netherlands, Moravia, and Silesia, even though these movements were to varying degrees intertwined with their English and North American counterparts as well as movements in Italy and Poland.

In his introduction, Stayer goes into minimal detail on the historiographical evolution of the field, citing within one paragraph the "first generation" of historians, mostly confessional historians who attempted to reevaluate the dissenters in a positive light, as well as the "second generation" (to which he belongs), that of the "post-confessional" historians (p. xiii).[2] Stayer's emphasis on the "irenic discourse" between these generations, their avoidance of "ideological posturing," and their willingness to "learn from each other" may well be influenced by the frustration of some scholars resulting from the recent book by Andrea StrÃ¼bind, which argues for the continuity of the pacifist, separatist tradition from the earliest stages of Anabaptism around Zurich.[3] Her central thesis stands in direct opposition to the "advances" of the revisionists, who argued for the diversity of the early movement and its post-1525 transformation. Furthermore, StrÃ¼bind starkly criticized the social historical studies of the "post-confessional" scholars for discounting religious impulses, which she views as fundamental.

Stayer uses StrÃ¼bind's book and her critique of the secular historians of Anabaptism to make a broader point about historical methods, and he philosophizes about the "Nietzschean maxim that each of us sees the past from a perspective" (p. xv). His criticism of church historians is thinly veiled: "For one thing, some of us are primarily historians, while others focus on theology or religious studies. Among the historians, some consider it proper for church history to have a theological dimension [e.g., StrÃ¼bind], while others think that the distinction between church history and profane history represents at most a topical division of labor and that, essentially, 'there is one history' " (p. xv).

At the root of his question is the disagreement over historical materialism and the power of ideas in history, and though this is an interesting question, it seems somewhat out of place here, serving merely to indicate to what extent the "second generation" scholars have taken StrÃ¼bind's (at times biting) criticism personally. Thus Stayer feels compelled to emphasize again the civility with which preceding scholars had worked in a field in which "the reality ... was neither that of opposing partisan fronts nor of neo-positivist irreversible progress of knowledge"; the more accurate image is that of "fruitful dialogue that does not always proceed in a straight line" (p. xvii-xvii). Given the fact that the next three chapters to varying degrees seem to respond to StrÃ¼bind, it seems a pity that her voice is missing from the "dialogue" in this volume. In the remaining pages of his introduction, Stayer briefly discusses historians' use of the term "Anabaptist"–a topic ripe for revision–and then briefly comments on the essays which comprise the main text. Four maps sandwiched between the introduction and the essays illustrate the spread and extent of Anabaptism in the sixteenth century.

In the first article, Hans-JÃ¼rgen Goertz, the doyen of the social historical vein of German Anabaptist research, writes on "Karlstadt, MÃ¼ntzer and the Reformation of the Commoners, 1521-1525." As those familiar with his work might expect, Goertz suggests that anticlericalism is essential to explaining the success of the Reformation at the grassroots level.[4] Though much can be said for his approach, his analysis seems somewhat overly simplified: he cites a transition between the anticlericalism of the pre-Reformation age, which he claims demanded the reform of the clergy, towards a new anticlericalism that aimed to abolish the estate completely. Goertz provides insufficient analysis, however, of the frequent demands of peasants and burghers for evangelical pastors who would preach the "pure gospel" and of their criticism of pastors' deficiencies, in which they nevertheless demanded improvement or replacement rather than abolition.

Goertz positions Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt and Thomas MÃ¼ntzer as leaders of the Reformation of the common man, as sources of "ideas drawn up on behalf of the common man" to be distinguished from "the common man's own ideas" (p. 34). Here he notes something slowly being realized in Reformation studies generally: "the Reformation originated not in the deep insights of its theologians but in the reception of those ideas and the way they assumed concrete reality" (p. 35). Nevertheless, one would wish a somewhat more nuanced analysis of exactly what the common man demanded in the years following the Diet of Worms and also of the theological implications of Luther's teachings. For example, Goertz emphasizes the liberating sentiment of the "priesthood of all believers," which may in some respects be an invention of later Lutheran scholars.[5] Goertz's evidence for the importance of this slogan for the common man is the demand that congregations be permitted to select their own pastors. The demand to play a more active role in the selection of the clergy is, however, hardly inherently anticlerical.

While Goertz's article alludes to StrÃ¼bind's book in the context of criticizing her interpretation of Peter Blickle's work on the communal reformation, the next essay in the book, by C. Arnold Snyder, is an earnest reply to StrÃ¼bind. It describes the beginnings of Swiss Anabaptism in the years 1523 to 1525.[6] Snyder begins with the bold, if not entirely original, assertion that Anabaptism began in Zurich in 1525. Though this had been the traditional stance, the revision within Anabaptist history in the 1970s suggested the now widely accepted "polygenetic" model, which named three "original" types of Anabaptism.[7] Snyder offers a brief summary of the Bender School and revisionist historiographies that nicely supplements Stayer's introduction for those unfamiliar with these developments.

Given the fact that some of StrÃ¼bind's most direct criticism was aimed at Snyder's previous work, it is admirable that Snyder here rejects her conclusions so professionally. He concludes that "[o]nly with the failure of the Peasants' War, with the closing of political space and in the face of intense political repression, did Swiss Anabaptism begin to establish an ecclesial understanding of the baptized church as a persecuted, separated minority, developing ideas that had been voiced by a minority of baptizers from the start" (p. 78). He reaches a radi-

cally different conclusion than StrÃ¼bind in part because he places much more emphasis on Balthasar Hubmaier and his congregation in Waldshut, which actively participated in the Peasants' War.

James Stayer reiterates Snyder's conclusion in his essay on "Swiss-South German Anabaptism, 1526-1540," in which he also points to a post-Peasants' War transformation of the Anabaptist movement. The story Stayer tells is of Anabaptism as "a gathering of diverse expressions of early Reformation radicalism" (p. 89) and the development of an Anabaptism in Switzerland and southern Germany that included competing tendencies: the pacifist separatism of the Swiss Brethren, who composed the Schleitheim Articles in 1527, and the somewhat more liberal outlook of the South German party, which accused the Swiss of being overly legalist, in addition to more eclectic mystical and spiritual impulses from individuals like Hans Denck. Though Switzerland and South Germany were named as two of three sources in the "polygenetic" model of Anabaptism that Stayer and his colleagues advocated in the 1970s, more recent scholarship has suggested a high degree of interaction between the two. This development is alluded to in Stayer's introduction (p. xvi-xvii) and is also apparent in his essay. Finally, Stayer follows the refugees into Moravia, briefly describing the controversies that arose there among Anabaptist groups over the community of goods and legalism.

While the first three chapters fall into the traditional vein of social historical study of Anabaptism–albeit with much attention to the evolution of the groups' theologies, chapter 4 fits within the realm of intellectual history in a vein similar to that of George H. Williams's landmark work on the radical Reformation.[8] Though the author, R. Emmet McLaughlin, limits the scope to a few individuals, the methods he suggests are reminiscent of Williams's. McLaughlin examines two of the Reformation's most unique thinkers–Caspar Schwenckfeld and Sebastian Frank. Both can be considered radical spiritualists, according to McLaughlin, and indeed he assigns both to the category of "Radical Platonic Spiritualist," owing to their Platonic conception of the human soul bound in the material realm. Differences in their understanding of the working of the Spirit, however, lead McLaughlin to categorize Schwenckfeld as a "Radical Platonic Sacramental Spiritualist," whereas Frank earns the label of "Radical Platonic Noetic Spiritualist." McLaughlin extends his analysis to include two lesser known individuals: Dirick Volkertszoon Coornhert, a Dutchman and Radical Platonic Noetic Spiritualist, and Valentin Weigel, a Lutheran pastor in Saxony and Radical Platonic Sacramental Spiritualist.

Though McLaughlin's categorization may facilitate historical analysis, it seems nevertheless imperative to recognize the artificiality of these categories. Though the "Anabaptists" never called themselves by the term, it is at least a contemporary concept. Sebastian Frank not only never called himself a "Radical Platonic Noetic Spiritualist," he would presumably have had little idea what the term means. This gap ultimately limits the application of such a typology. McLaughlin closes his essay with useful and stimulating suggestions about the areas likely to prove fruitful for future research. He provides especially good advice when he writes that "the study of Radical Spiritualism must break out of its isolation and address larger religious, social and cultural issues. They were not socially marginal nor … religiously beyond the pale. That was precisely the threat they posed" (p. 155).

The next chapter, by Martin Rothkegel, returns to the more concrete topic of "Anabaptism in Moravia and Silesia." According to Stayer's introduction, Rothkegel's "pioneering" narrative benefits in part from the opening of the Czech archives after 1990 (p. xx). The story told extends from early Reformation movements in Moravia and the legacy of Jan Hus through the decimation of Hutterite settlements in Moravia during the Thirty Years' War and their decline and extinction in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is a narrative in which theology as well as personality play a role in the expansion and division of the various Anabaptist groups which found a refuge in Moravia. Recent scholarship estimates that around 10 percent of the population of southern Moravia–perhaps 25,000 individuals–belonged to Hutterite communities at the beginning of the seventeenth century (p. 200).

While the Moravian Anabaptists survived for centuries, the Anabaptist rule of MÃ¼nster lasted only a few years. Ralf KlÃ¶tzer tells this story in chapter 6, "The Melchiorites and MÃ¼nster." MÃ¼nster is an especially thorny problem in Anabaptist studies: traditionally, Lutheran and Catholic historians used it to discredit the Anabaptist movement, while twentieth-century Mennonite historians did their best to exclude it as an aberration. KlÃ¶tzer calls for research to clarify the religious motives of the MÃ¼nster Anabaptists, a step that requires shifting historians' focus to sources sympathetic towards the movement. Focusing on religious motives allows for reopening the question of to what extent and how the MÃ¼nsterites fit into the story of Dutch and northern German Anabaptism. More potential to seek

theological commonalities than has been assumed may appear once we look past the extreme anomalies.

Given the diversity of the Radical Reformation, it is hardly surprising that some individuals are hard to categorize. Some of these span the two broad categories of this book and cannot be classified simply as either Anabaptists or as Spiritualists. Such individuals stand at the center of Geoffrey Dipple's study, "The Spiritualist Anabaptists." In Ernst Troeltsch's typologies, which have been so influential in the study of sectarian movements, these two categories were distinct and separate, despite occasional confluence. This typology has been accepted by many historians of the Radical Reformation who have interpreted the initial sympathy of "capital-S" Spiritualists like Hans Denck for Anabaptism as based on a misunderstanding; once the movement became more well defined, they parted ways (p. 258). Dipple's introduction includes no clear definition of what he means by the term "Spiritualist Anabaptist," but he defines the term slowly by examining six individuals and reaches the conclusion that "[t]he sixteenth-century religious Reformers broadly defined as Spiritualist Anabaptists shared a number of common elements" (p. 291). These included distrust of religious ceremonies and ecclesiastical ordinances, a debt to medieval mysticism, and emphasis on a divine spark in humans and the freedom of the will. What distinguishes them from Anabaptists is their skepticism concerning liturgical practices and other outward structures (p. 292). Like McLaughlin's essay, Dipple's analysis centers on the development and justification of a typology, but Dipple addresses the question of historicity in a way McLaughlin does not. Ultimately, he recognizes that "the Spiritualist Anabaptists appear less as members of a coherent religious tradition than as groups of individuals who adopted similar responses to the problem of reconciling Spiritualism and Anabaptism," and that individual positions fall along a spectrum representing "a range of hues that are not so easily distinguishable" (pp. 293-294).

The next chapter in many ways continues the story told by KlÃ¶tzer; Piet Visser focuses on "The Mennonites and Doopsgezinden in the Netherlands, 1535-1700." Visser's study is an examination of how "religious, political, socio-economic, and cultural contexts became factors of change" among the Dutch Anabaptists (p. 300). Following the defeat of the Anabaptists in MÃ¼nster in 1535, Anabaptism in this region faced an identity crisis and ultimately became more spiritual and pacifist. Instrumental in this transformation was Menno Simons, who stressed a Christocentric congregational ideal and rejected the violent, theocratic character of MÃ¼nster. The ideals he propagated became the basis for a religion exported throughout Europe and to North America. In his homeland, however, internal conflicts repeatedly resulted in schism. As persecution within the Netherlands ebbed, the path was opened for reassimilation into Dutch society. Anabaptists flourished economically in the seventeenth century, lending large sums to support the Dutch government and also sending financial support to persecuted Anabaptists in other areas of Europe.

Some of those who received help from the Dutch are the subject of the next essay, "Marpeck and the Later Swiss Brethren, 1540-1700," by John Roth. His is a "narrative of identity formation" (p. 347) in which an identity emerges "only slowly in the course of the sixteenth century as congregations struggled for survival within a hostile political context and for self-definition amidst on-going debates with state church theologians, fellow Anabaptists, and Spiritualist dissenters" (p. 349). Roth follows the migration of the Swiss Anabaptist tradition out of Switzerland and ends with the schism of the Swiss Brethren which resulted in the emergence of the Amish–a more conservative group under the leadership of Jacob Ammann–in Alsace. He also suggests topics still scarcely covered by the historiography, like the interaction of the Swiss Brethren with local populations in areas where they lived.

Whereas Roth's contribution recommends topics to which historians would be well advised to pay more attention, John Rempel's essay, "Anabaptist Religious Literature and Hymnody," tests three frequent generalizations about Anabaptist religiosity: first, an idea that central to the Anabaptists was an "existential Christianity" in which spiritual rebirth and living a life of surrender were the dominant elements; second, an expectation of a transformative experience of grace; and third, a spiritualistic impulse that created ambivalence about the relationship of outer and inner forms (p. 391). Rempel's analysis of diverse Anabaptist devotional texts leads him to conclude that these generalizations "represent a stereotype not borne out by the evidence" (p. 418). Furthermore, he issues a mild challenge to the polygenetic thesis by arguing that despite the diversity of spiritualities represented in the texts he examined, "in tracing the path of its religious literature it becomes clear how interpenetrating and interdependent the streams of the movement are from the beginning" (p. 422).

The fact that the next chapter–an overview of gender roles among Anabaptist and spiritualist groups–is the only essay in the book by a female author is surely

a reflection of the skewed gender representation within the field and not the fault of the editors. Sigrun Haude bemoans the decline of research on Anabaptist women since the 1990s and suggests that a study of masculinity within Radical Reformation groups might prove particularly fruitful precisely because Reformation-era radicals defied traditional practices and expectations. She briefly outlines some questions raised by the existing research concerning women's leadership in the radical Reformation, their domestic roles, their numeric representation within these movements, and their motives for joining.

Brad Gregory briefly discusses gender within the context of the next essay, which covers Anabaptist martyrdom. Gregory has already dealt at length with this central theme in the formation of early Anabaptist identity.[9] Anabaptist martyrs have long been a subject of historical, hagiographic study, but Gregory's innovation is in stepping back from individual subjects to discern what martyrdom reveals about the religiosity of the period. Two groups act here: "Anabaptists' willingness to die met authorities' willingness to kill" (p. 469). Those willing to die became the protagonists in a vast collection of martyr stories passed down within Anabaptist groups, most famously in the Dutch *Martyrs Mirror* (first published in 1660 and later expanded), which was intended to inspire and reprimand Dutch Anabaptists who became increasingly integrated (and decadent?) in the seventeenth century as the result of decreased persecution.

Tolerance brought vast changes for Anabaptist society, as many of these essays suggest. The last chapter focuses on the political evolution of the Anabaptists in a period when "territorial rulers were more accepting of religious diversity and Anabaptists were more accepting of established secular authority" (p. 507). In "Anabaptists and the Early Modern State," Michael Driedger describes a process of "domestication or de-radicalization" of Anabaptism based in part on "preemptive obedience" (pp. 509-511). According to this theory, Anabaptism contributed to the emergence of the early modern state, even without direct state intervention, by promoting social order and conformity. By the seventeenth century (and earlier in the Netherlands), pockets of recognized and tolerated Anabaptist settlement dotted central Europe because many lords valued their work ethic and discipline. As toleration increased, the traditional Anabaptist rejection of secular authority as, at best, a necessary evil became increasingly difficult to maintain. Thus Driedger's narrative, like Visser's, ends with the example of seventeenth-century Dutch Anabaptists and political involvement, which in many cases included abandoning the principle of non-resistance.

The fact that so many of the essays in this volume tell the story of social reintegration suggests a remarkable transition in the scholarship. Whereas the Bender School was intent on telling the "Mennonite" story and emphasizing the persecution and migration of their forebears and the "post-confessional" historians never moved much beyond the first generations of the movement, a transition towards tracing the impulses from Anabaptism and radicalism back into early modern society in a more general sense is apparent. This tendency can only have positive implications for a field that had become somewhat bogged down in the polygenetic paradigm. A certain tension in this book makes it clear that these are, at some level, provisional conjectures rather than definitive statements, and that interesting and important research is still being done. This transition is what makes the volume, as Roth says in his introduction, a *Zwischenbilanz*. Its potential as an introductory text is hampered most of all by the hefty price tag, which will exclude it from most students' (and many scholars') budgets. While it may not provide the last word on any of the topics it covers, it will surely prove a valuable and stimulating resource on library shelves for some time to come.

Notes

[1]. Originally delivered in 1943 as a presidential address to the American Society of Church History, Bender's essay "The Anabaptist Vision" became a seminal publication. It is available online at `http://www.mcusa-archives.org/library/anabaptistvision/anabaptistvision.html` (Accessed on June 13, 2007).

[2]. Stayer's former student Werner Packull included a lengthy description of this historiography in his recent book on the Hutterites: *Hutterite Beginnings* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1995).

[3]. Andrea StrÃ¼bind, *Eifriger als Zwingli. Die frÃ¼he TÃ¤uferbewegung in der Schweiz* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003).

[4]. Goertz has published extensively on this topic, including his *Antiklerikalismus und Reformation. Sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (GÃ¶ttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995) and _PfaffenhaÃ und groÃ Geschrei. Die reformatorischen Bewegungen in Deutschland 1517-1529 (Munich: Beck, 1987).

[5]. Timothy Wengert has written an essay to argue that the concept of the "priesthood of all believers"

played a more prominent role in later Lutheran thought than in the writings of Luther himself: "The Priesthood of All Believers and Other Pious Myths," in *Saying and Doing the Gospel Today*, ed. Rhoda Schuler, *Occasional Papers of the Institute of Liturgical Studies* 12 (2007), 92-115. Also available at: http://www.valpo.edu/ils/documents/05_wengert.pdf (Accessed on June 13, 2007).

[6]. Snyder recently published a lengthier version of his findings in "The Birth and Evolution of Swiss Anabaptism," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* LXXX (2006): 501-684. Multiple responses to his findings were published in the same issue. They can be accessed at: http://www.goshen.edu/mqr/pastissues/oct06responses.html (Accessed on June 13, 2007).

[7]. James Stayer, Werner O. Packull, and Klaus Deppermann, "From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 49 (1975): 83-121.

[8]. The first edition of Williams' *The Radical Reformation* was published in 1962; the current edition of the book is comprised of 1,516 pages. George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Kirksville: Truman University Press, 1992).

[9]. Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

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