Louise Labé (parce que l’appareil péritextuel, pourtant considérable, renvoie à des œuvres qui comprennent un Débat en prose).

En plus d’une copieuse bibliographie et d’un « Index des nominum » (sic), un important dossier iconographique (une soixantaine de figures) complète ce remarquable ouvrage qui, lu en parallèle avec celui non moins impressionnant de Cécile Alduy, renouvelle notre connaissance du canzoniérisme en France au milieu du XVIe siècle.

FRANÇOIS RIGOLOT, Princeton University

Notes


Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition 1527–1660
Edited by Karl Koop, translated by Cornelius J. Dyck, James Jacob Fehr, Irvin B. Horst, Walter Klaassen, Karl Koop, Werner O. Packull, John D. Rempel, Vic Thiessen, Gary K. Waite, and John Howard Yoder

Caspar Schwenckfeld. Eight Writings on Christian Beliefs
Edited with an introduction by H. H. Drake William III, foreword by David F. Wells

Helmut Isaak
Menno Simons and the New Jerusalem

Pandora Press of Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, calls itself “a small, independently owned press dedicated to making available modestly priced books that deal with Anabaptist, Mennonite, and Believers Church topics, both historical and theological.” Operated by Reformation and Anabaptist scholar C. Arnold Snyder, the Press has produced a number of scholarly and popular books of which the three under review here were all published in 2006. In this review, space will not allow
for more than mere mentioning of the books’ contents and their significance for the scholarly community.

The collection *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition* includes several Confessions of the two major Anabaptist groups in Europe: Confessions of Swiss/South German Anabaptism; and Confessions of North German/Dutch Anabaptism. The latter group is subdivided into Mennonite Confessions of the Lower Rhine and at Wismar; Waterlander Confessions; and Mennonite Frisian, Flemish, and High German Confessions.

According to Harold S. Bender (1897–1962), the dean of Anabaptist-Mennonite studies, and his colleagues in Goshen, Indiana, “true” or “evangelical” Anabaptism began with the Swiss Brethren in 1525 when the first adult baptism was performed near Zürich. Anabaptism then developed more fully in South Germany and along the Rhine regions. In the Netherlands Menno Simons (c. 1496–1561), a former Catholic priest and convert to Anabaptism, organized the North European groups, later called Mennonites after his name.

Earlier radical leaders such as Thomas Müntzer, the “Zwickau Prophets,” and the Münster Anabaptists (1534–35) were not considered true Anabaptists by the “Bender school,” even though some of them practised adult baptism. Later historians of Anabaptism, in contrast to Bender’s view, developed the so-called “polygenesis theory” of Anabaptist beginnings, emphasizing their multiple origins and variety, including the non-pacifist groups like Balthasar Hubmaier’s followers in Waldshut, South Germany, and mystics like Hans Denck.

The significance of this volume of confessions is, that while there are variations in the doctrinal and ethical issues they stress, there is a remarkable unity and agreement on the main beliefs in the period between 1527, the year the first Confession was drafted at Schleitheim, Switzerland, and the Prussian-Mennonite Confession of the seventeenth century. They all adhere to the main Mennonite doctrines and practices, including adult baptism, the Last Supper as a memorial rite (not a “sacrament”), the church as a community of believers, church discipline (including the ban or excommunication), separation of church and state, and belief in non-violence or pacifism. Anabaptists shared with the magisterial reformers (Luther, Zwingli, Calvin) and the mainline Christian denominations doctrines concerning God, the Trinity, salvation, the church, and the last things; hence there is less emphasis on them in the earlier Confessions.

While the Anabaptist-Mennonites were historically more concerned with the practice of their beliefs than with doctrines and creeds, they eventually came to write Confessions in an effort to bring about greater unity among the various
Mennonite groups and to give them a denominational identity. The collection of Confessions at hand confirms most modern historians’ view that Mennonites are a Christian denomination and not a sect, as they were often judged to be and therefore persecuted by the mainline churches and states in the past.

Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489–1561), a Silesian nobleman and reformer, produced many writings which were later collected in eighteen volumes known as the Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum. The first fifteen volumes were published in Leipzig (1907–1939) and the rest later in Pennsylvania. There are today no more than two thousand members belonging to the Schwenckfelder denomination. Emphasizing the “inner word” and the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, Schwenckfeld was not interested in founding visible or local churches. While various Christian groups quarreled over Sacraments in the sixteenth century, Schwenckfeld decided to discontinue baptizing and administering the Lord’s Supper (calling it stillstand, “standing still”) until there would be more clarity and unity with regard to the Sacraments and an improvement in Christians’ lives. To the disappointment of the nobleman, such clarity and unity with regard to the Sacraments was never achieved.

Editor H. H. Drake Williams III summarizes well some twentieth-century views concerning Schwenckfeld’s beliefs and thinking (156–66). Some have called Schwenckfeld’s theology “Christocentric” and “Johannine” after the Gospel of John, while others have seen Schwenckfeld as a warrior, a “knight,” of the true faith. Some have compared him to such secular writers as Kafka, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Pascal and others. This seems far-fetched to this reviewer, for Schwenckfeld was no speculative philosopher but a deeply committed Christian believer.

The most useful and widely read biography of Schwenckfeld is that of Selina Gerhard Schulz, Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig: A Course of Study, published in 1964. Schulz equates the nobleman’s religious concern with that of Christ. Schulz writes, “The kingdom which Jesus was intent on building was a kingdom within the hearts of men. It was to be done not by worldly power but by spiritual teaching.”

There are other significant studies of the Silesian nobleman. Edward J. Furcha in a 1970 study saw Schwenckfeld’s work as focusing on the new man and on regeneration: “The most striking aspect of Schwenckfeld’s thought is his stress of the necessity of rebirth.” And Schwenckfeld specialist Peter Erb, in his book Schwenckfeld in his Reformation Setting (1978), stresses the Reformer’s concern for the “glory of Christ” and for a “practical Christianity that affects the believer’s life.”

The selections from the Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum, translated by a competent team of scholars, are most helpful in introducing modern readers to a sixteenth-century Reformer who was not a church builder like the mainline reformers and
most Anabaptists, but who has much to say especially to modern-day Christians who are turning increasingly away from organized religion and instead feel more comfortable with what today is called “spirituality.” The sixteenth-century reformer Schwenckfeld thus seems quite “modern.”

Helmut Isaak’s slim volume Menno Simons and the New Jerusalem presents a new image of the Dutch reformer after whom the Mennonites are named. What is new in this “spiritual biography,” as Isaak calls his study, is the author’s view that Menno in his early writings was in greater sympathy with the Münster fanatics of 1534–35 (calling them his “dear brothers and sisters”) than previously assumed. Only in his later revised writings, according to Isaak, did Menno become more critical of them, especially when he realized that because of the militant Münsterites even the peaceful Anabaptists, including his own followers, were severely persecuted by the states and churches.

Also new is the author’s placing Menno Simons and the emergence of Anabaptism in the Netherlands within a social and religious context. To my knowledge, no other writer has portrayed Menno so well as a child of his time. Previously, Menno Simons was seen as the revered leader and organizer of his followers and as a visionary of the true and pure New Testament church. In Isaak’s study he is the pastor who is torn between radical groups, including members of his family and his friends. Menno in this study becomes most human, perhaps even tragic.

It has been known that Menno’s view of secular governments was different from that of the Swiss and South German Anabaptists. While the southern groups viewed the state negatively and were generally against believers’ participation in it, Menno thought that rulers could be Christian and hoped that governments would help to promote just, even Christian, legislation. Isaak shows, however, that Menno in his later writings became more pessimistic about governments, especially when he saw that rulers did not heed his call to repentance but continued to persecute his followers. In reading the Complete Writings of Menno Simons, translated into English from the Dutch in 1956, the reader is not all that much aware of the differences between the earlier writings of Menno and his later revisions of the text. Isaak, who worked primarily from Menno’s original writings, has made a good case for the differences in the Reformer’s early and later emphases.

At the end of the book it comes as a surprise that a “Mennonite nation” remained “a hoped-for theoretical possibility for Menno to the end of his life.” Isaak even suggests that the idea of “states within a state,” such as existed among Mennonites in Russia prior to 1917 and currently still exists in Latin America, might have come close to what Menno had in mind. To this reviewer, however, the New Jerusalem in
Menno’s thinking was not an earthly state or a Mennonite nation but a spiritual or “heavenly” reality. It is true, however, that the Mennonites have dreamed from time to time about an earthly state of their own, as in James Urry’s interesting essay on Mennonite immigrant fantasies in 1930s Canada, “A Mennostaat for the Mennovolk?” (published in the Journal of Mennonite Studies in 1996).

HARRY LOEWEN, Professor Emeritus, University of Winnipeg

Ioannis Deligiannis
Fifteenth-Century Latin Translations of Lucian’s Essay on Slander. Studia Erudita 1

About eighty short works by Lucian of Samosata were known in the Renaissance, enough to take up eight volumes in the Loeb edition. Although they were condemned as sceptical by authors from Arethas of Caesarea to Gabriel Harvey, the fact that they are very entertaining must have helped them survive, as must the high quality of their Atticist prose. The encounters of readers such as Erasmus, More, and Rabelais with Lucian have been discussed in a number of studies: nearly thirty years ago, Christopher Robinson’s Lucian and his influence in Europe gave a helpful overview with limited scholarly apparatus, and since then, monographs such as Christiane Lauvergnat-Gagnière’s Lucien de Samosate et le Lucianisme en France au XVIe siècle, Manuel Baumbach’s Lukian in Deutschland, and David Marsh’s Lucian and the Latins have attended with more precision to particular traditions of reading this author.

In his Fifteenth-Century Latin Translations of Lucian’s Essay on Slander, Ioannis Deligiannis expands in very great detail on part of the story which is handled briefly in the first chapter of Marsh’s study. His subject is Lucian’s essay on slander, the De calumnia. This is probably nobody’s favourite piece of ancient prose today, but it was admired in the period treated here, for several reasons. It is a neat piece of rhetorical work; the subject was close to the hearts of humanists whose success depended significantly on their reputations; and its account of Apelles’ picture of Calumny Apelles became very famous as taken up in writing by Leone Battista Alberti and in graphic form by Botticelli and Mantegna. Deligiannis discusses a Greek manuscript of the De calumnia, Vat. Urb. Gr. 121, with Latin glosses and scholia made by a pupil of Manuel Chrysoloras between 1397 and 1400, and then the first three extant Latin translations of the whole essay, namely those of Guarino Guarini (1405–1406), Lapo da Castiglionchio the younger (1436), and Francesco