

REVIEWS

Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation.

WERNER O. PACKULL

Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1995. Acknowledgments, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. 441pp. \$59.95 (cloth)

Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments During the Reformation is a monumental contribution to Anabaptist historiography. Packull, in his introduction, delineates the traditionalist theologically oriented histories from the more contextually grounded histories of revisionists in Anabaptist studies, situating his own treatise paradigmatically within the latter.

Stating he's not writing from an insiders's perspective, Packull identifies his work as aiming "to provide a sympathetic account of the incredible difficulties encountered and overcome by those valiant women and men seeking the kingdom of God in community" (p.11). In this major effort to lend balance to the historic account, he acknowledges "members of the Hutterite community may find passages of this book less than flattering" (p. 11).

Packull divides his book into two parts: Part One: The First Communitarian Experiments, and Part Two: The Emergence of the Hutterites. In the first part, Packull sets the stage for his narrative history on early communitarian Anabaptism founded on New Testament biblicism. He begins with the split between Zwingli and the "radical" dissenters in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, over issues of interpretive authority of the Scriptures and reform polity. Zwingli and his learned associates had formed an alliance of the

"power elite and the preaching intelligentsia," appropriating "interpretation of the meaning of the Scriptures" for themselves. The dissenters, who "assumed a hermeneutic community with ongoing congregational conversations based on vernacular Scriptures," vested "ultimate interpretive authority" in their "believing, discerning community gathered to hear and obey God's Word" (p.15). Packull demonstrates, with rich documentation, how Anabaptist biblicism both "shaped and was shaped by the nature of the congregation" (p.16).

In his task to investigate the earliest Anabaptist organizational structures, Packull utilizes the surviving three first-generation orders, 1) The Congregational Order/Swiss Order, 2) The Church Discipline, and 3) The Common Order, and examines the relationship between these documents (reproduced in English translation in Appendix A). Following his analysis, he concludes the Swiss Order "may be considered the oldest" ' with the Discipline representing a "revised version of the Swiss Order," and the Common order reflecting "knowledge of and dependence on the Swiss order" but with adaptations "dictated by the social circumstances" in which the urban Strasbourg Anabaptist refugees functioned (p. 52).

Packull argues for a "significant Swiss influence stretching across Upper Germany and Austria into Moravia" which "moderates distinctions between Swiss and South German-Austrian Anabaptism," a distinction he, himself has made in earlier writings (p.53).

Packull's political ecology analysis of sixteenth-century feudal Moravia as a "promised land for persecuted Anabaptists" (p.66) is provocative and well documented. Members of the nobility, according to Packull, could afford to defy the anti-heretical campaigns of Ferdinand I and give protection to the Anabaptist religious refugees. Moravian aristocrats welcomed the new hard-working and honest settlers to land which had been depopulated by the Bohemian-Hungarian wars a quarter century before, and thus was forged a viable symbiotic relationship between Moravian lords and their Anabaptist leaseholders. This relationship continued for nearly eighty years, with three waves of focused persecution from the crown within that time. Ferdinand II ultimately crushed the nobility in the 1620s and the Anabaptist presence ended in Moravia.

Part Two begins with analysis of Anabaptist origins in the Tyrol. Initially, Anabaptism had active and passive support in the Tyrol, and "enjoyed the sympathies of a relatively large section of the population," coming "to represent the major Reform orientation" there (p.161). Using multiple sources, Packull skillfully addresses significant questions, such as: Who introduced Anabaptism to South Tyrol? How is the

initial popularity and rapid diffusion accounted for? What is the relationship between Anabaptism and the Gaismair-led, peasants' uprising? Additionally, Part Two provides extensive biographical details on Jacob Hutter, the Anabaptist leader from the Puster valley, effectively woven into the wider historical tapestry of steadfast commitment and martyrdom of early Hutterite men and women.

Werner Packull is a consummate scholar, whose treatment of historical sources is comprehensive, critical, and presented in a very readable style. *Hutterite Beginnings* is a valuable contribution to the field of Anabaptist studies and Hutterite history. Persons with interest in Anabaptist origins, or students interested in the internal and external dynamics affecting communitarian beginnings will want Packull's excellent book in their library. It is serving as a valuable reference book for the course I teach on anthropology of religion.

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Origins of the Shakers: From the Old World to the New World

CLARKE GARRETT

Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1998. Preface, notes, index. 294pp. \$16.95 (paperbound)

This reissue of Garrett's *Spirit Possession and Popular Religion From the Carnisards to the Shakers* (1987) begs the question: can a book be judged by its title, if not its cover? While the text of the book has not changed from the original hardcover edition, the title change graphically demonstrates the book's dual nature. (This incarnation is reviewed in this journal because the original was not.)

The first part of Garrett's book is an account of the widespread and varied manifestations of spirit possession in popular religious experience in eighteenth-century Europe and America. Acknowledging the influence of the work of Natalie Zemon Davis on popular culture in early modern France, Garrett invokes the perspectives of anthropology to consider ecstatic, emotive, forms of religious expression as "humanly universal," not as irrational cultural deviations. Spirit possession is a form of "sacred theater," a social phenomenon that communi-

cates shared meaning through culturally comprehensible words and gestures" (p. 10). This perspective is especially instructive for the study of religion in the Age of the Enlightenment, if not today. The book could be recommended on this point alone.

Garrett maintains that the eighteenth century witnessed the greatest extent of spirit possession since the early Christian church and thus begins his discussion with the outbreak of religious enthusiasm and spirit possession experiences associated with the Camisards, French Huguenots who unsuccessfully rebelled against Louis XIV after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. No doubt he could have traced back the lineage even earlier. Garrett follows the travels of the exiled French Prophets and how they influenced German and European Pietism and the transatlantic revivals. He constructs a family tree of the French Prophets which includes the Community of True Inspiration in Germany and Methodism in England.

In the second part of the book, Garrett closely examines the sources of early Shaker history to describe the origins and development of Shaker worship. Here his genealogy of French Prophets has a missing link. He is forced to state that "it must have been through some nameless Prophet" (p. 14) that the small group of worshippers that came to be the Shakers was influenced. Garrett shows that the French Prophets were one of several strains of popular religious traditions abounding in Manchester at the time, including the traditions of the radical English revolution, Quakerism, Philadelphianism, Perfectionism and Mysticism.

What is most valuable in Garrett's analysis is not so much his thorough and thought-provoking narrative of early Shaker development as his presentation of the various forms of popular religious expression that were prevalent in England and America during the Shakers' formative years. He provides a context for the Shaker experience, setting the stage for the Shaker manifestation of sacred theater and its course of development.

The spotlight on the Shakers which the new title demands unfortunately obscures Garrett's insights on the French Prophets' influence on such groups as the Methodists and the German Pietists. For example, Garrett claims that his is the first modern work to demonstrate the connection between the French Prophets and the Community of True Inspiration in Amana, Iowa. Because this is the group with which I am most familiar, I must take exception: prior to Garrett, Walter Grossmann demonstrated the connection in this journal (Volume Four). Nevertheless, thanks in part to Garrett's book the "French connection" has become a well-known part of Amana history.

This book deserves a second look by readers interested in commu-

nal societies, both for what it does and what it leaves undone. It demonstrates a common mode of religious enthusiasm among several well-known communal groups and describes how this individualistic, libertarian experience was transformed—in this case by the Shakers—into a superstructure of communal organization and discipline. The ordering of the work of the Holy Spirit is a fascinating transformation, an analysis of which could give important insight into the nature of the communal experience. Garrett's narrative stops short of this analysis and raises further questions about the development of communalism from these movements, especially the attraction of women to such movements, their role in the origins, and often their exclusion in the "ordering" process.

LANNY HALDY

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Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South: The Story of Koinonia Farm

TRACY ELAINE K'MEYER

Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia. 1997. Acknowledgments, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. 236pp. \$35.00 (cloth)

The story of Koinonia Farm is the story of intersecting currents in American history—racial history, religious history, and community history. It is a particularly engaging story, because it involves an intentional religious community that flourished in a postwar period of communitarianism and which promoted interracial living in the South in an intense period of racial antagonism. K'Meyer makes the reader witness to the difficulties of both establishing a stable Christian community and realizing the social ideals of interracialism, tracing the community's founding and relatively peaceful beginnings through its immersion in racial violence to its recovery and transformation in the midst of the civil rights movement.

Koinonia's key founder and formulator, Clarence Leonard Jordan, a white Georgian raised in the Southern Baptist tradition and educated at its most elite seminary, latched onto the meaning of *koinonia* ("church, fellowship, or community" or a "gathering of disciples in early Christianity") and combined it with his experiences of racial injustice in the South to create a community that promoted true Christian principles and racial harmony and interaction.

"His approach to improving race relations was not for whites to uplift or give anything to blacks but for the two groups of people to come together in common work, worship, and recreation" (p. 34). Needless to say, in doing so he went against the cultural mainstream of the South both religiously and socially. But he joined forces with another Baptist minister from the North, Martin England, a missionary who believed in community as an expression of Christian principles. "Letting their imaginations go, they envisioned a rural community center where white and black could come together to rebuild southern society" (p. 36). They began to implement their ideas in Sumter County, Georgia, on a 440-acre farm and incorporated the community as Koinonia Farm in November, 1942.

Jordan, whose charismatic speeches recruited many of the first Koinonia members, spread the word about the community by visiting college campuses and Baptist student meetings. From the beginning, those at Koinonia farm not only implemented new agricultural techniques on their own land, but they joined in a cooperative effort to assist other farmers in the area. In addition to hiring black laborers at twice the going wage, assisting black farmers in forming seed cooperatives, teaching classes to spread the knowledge of new farm techniques, and forming joint ventures with white farmers, the ministers of Koinonia also undertook their missionary work: training black ministers and bringing blacks and whites together for worship at their interracial Sunday school and sing-alongs.

However, Koinonia encountered problems to the full realization of its ideals—some stemming from the communal philosophy they promoted, and some stemming from their violation of social norms in a racially hostile South. Increasing racial antagonism among local whites arose from the fact that blacks and whites ate together at Koinonia, and whites drove black children to school and encouraged black education. Blacks themselves feared reprisals if they were found violating these customs, and it was also difficult to get blacks to live at Koinonia, undertake communal living, and give up their individual autonomy.

As the emphasis on community became paramount, the emphasis on outreach declined, but as the nation's awareness of racial problems escalated and emerged full-blown in the mid-1950s, local intolerance turned to violence. Gunfire, burning crosses, economic boycotts, and legal injunctions threatened Koinonia's very existence.

K'Meyer does an excellent job of contextualizing the background of the community within southern Christian liberal culture and analyzing the community's strengths and weaknesses, and she has done so in a very readable yet scholarly fashion. It is particularly valuable for its description of attempts to overcome racial intolerance within the

context of community and for the seldom-told story of Christian liberalism in the postwar South.

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A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840.

JON F. SENSBACH

Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press. 1998. Abbreviations, notes, illustrations, appendices, bibliography, index. 342pp. \$17.95 (paperbound)

The story of the Moravian settlement in North Carolina is a compelling narrative of assimilation, whereby a covenanted eighteenth-century religious community converged with the society surrounding it. Yet this assimilation took a tragic, racially divided form, which historian Jon R Sensbach calls "a parable of America" (p. 296). On one side, white Moravians abandoned their communal and even race-transcending vision of spiritual equality that had allowed slaves to join as full members of the church, in favor of a more narrowly individualistic and racist American creed. On the other side, black Moravians gradually carved out a "Separate Canaan" apart from whites. This spiritual and cultural world derived much of its power from Moravian identity, but also held much in common with a broader African-American culture that emerged in the late eighteenth century. Sensbach's book therefore has two closely interwoven main threads: first, to trace the history of Moravian ideology, practice and theology that allowed this multi-racial experiment first to thrive and then to decay; and second, to reconstruct the evolution of the North Carolina Afro-Moravian community against this backdrop.

Sensbach's findings on both counts are provocative. He traces the subtle interconnections of church authority, work, and spirituality as Moravian doctrine grappled with—and succumbed to—the contradictions inherent in enslaving fellow church members. Moravians' notions of spiritual equality were tempered by a belief in a social hierarchy with church authority at its apex; since all were servants of Christ, slavery was acceptable. The power relations demanded by slavery, however, increasingly allowed notions of racial difference and hierarchy to

overcome the idea of fraternity in Christ. For instance, the sect's tight discipline was increasingly used not to maintain bonds of community, but to reinforce slaves' bondage to their masters. Even more tragic was the collapse of spiritual equality: black Moravians were first excluded from central rituals like the kiss of peace and footwashing, and were finally separated from the white congregation in 1816.

Sensbach is at his best as he reconstructs the world of spirit, family, work, and community that black Moravians built against this backdrop of exploitation and oppression. His richest sources, including spiritual memoirs of several black Moravians, come from church archives and describe the ways black Moravians lived and prayed day-to-day. In the early years of the settlement, black and white Moravians shared experience in worship and work, which helped create a core of Afro-Moravian identity that helped maintain the black Moravian congregation after it was separated from the whites. Especially important, Sensbach finds, was a system of kinship, cemented by god-parentage, that resonated powerfully with African traditions. Yet as racial divisions emerged in the church, Afro-Moravians were also drawn towards other denominations, notably the Methodists, which preached a message of spiritual equality in a more liberating style, and towards the non-Moravian African-American community. Forms of culture—kinship and styles of worship, for instance—thus emerged among Moravians that reflected the broader patterns of African-American life and which tied black Moravians more closely with non-Moravians.

African culture thus plays a large role in Sensbach's analysis, if only to tie together his slippery subject, the people of African descent living among the Moravians. Sensbach's deployment of African culture does not quite capture the cultural diversity and liminality of the early Afro-Moravians, who came from all comers of the Atlantic world and might better be understood as what Ira Berlin has termed "Atlantic Creoles."¹ In some ways, the story of the North Carolina settlement is how these culturally adept men and women came first to embrace a communal sect and then partially to melt into a broader African-American culture. As such, the book might more properly be subtitled, "The Unmaking of an AfroMoravian World."

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1. Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. Ser., 53 (1996): 251-288.

Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

SISTERS, SERVANTS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, CCOMPILERS

Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press. 1997. Foreword, contributors, introduction, afterword, appendix, bibliography, index. 392pp.

In 1987, the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) resolved to reexamine their history, applying feminist scholarly methods to their experiences as women religious. Three years later, sister-scholars within the community formed a collective, "Claiming Our Roots," and imposed a set of common principles on their archival material and historiographical tradition. An appendix provides a manifesto outlining the collective's aims and underlying philosophy—a model that all historians might be well advised to adopt. The resulting volume thus has an inner coherence that sets up a complex and haunting resonance throughout its individually signed chapters. These are organized on a topical basis whose rough chronological progression produces only a hazy linear narrative. The authors seek to define their collective fate as part of a larger on-going enterprise in sisterhood, social justice and Christian spirituality. In claiming their own roots from the domination of a tradition imposed by the male hierarchy within which their community struggled to find its place, they also seek to claim a place in the larger history of women and humanity which we are all seeking to construct. Thus the disparate chapters are tied together by a series of short introductions by the secular historian, Margaret Susan Thompson, an expert on American Catholic and Women's history.

The troubled theme that binds these essays together is the tension between the needs of individual sisters and the demands of their communal identity; between the community itself and the larger community of the American Catholic Church. This is a common theme in the history of women religious but it has particular interest in the IHM. The congregation is haunted by a shadowed foundation. The original bold charisma of the biracial Theresa Maxis and her associates was occluded by a second foundation after Maxis' exile from the group. Biographies of the two founders emphasize the somewhat contradictory spirituality fashioned from these opposing legacies. The same duality is found in opposing essays on the heroic history of the IHM's rigorous, authoritarian period of expansion under the dynamic Mother Ruth and the sorry failure of its efforts to democratize after Vatican II. Similarly, two essays on the tradition of friendship contrast the effects

of the prohibition on "particular friendship" for the sake of group charity and individual chastity with the reality of "permanent friendship" among sisters bound together by a common vocation and a common bond strengthened by the practice of bringing the sick and dying "home" to the mother house where the entire community was periodically gathered to reinforce the bonds established at their formation.

My allotted space forbids any meaningful exploration of the riches of this nuanced and layered book. Suffice to say that the essays are individually fascinating in their analytical skill and their narrative power. My favorite was the history of Immaculata, the elite Detroit High School which combined a feminist vision of high quality education for girls with a feminine script for behavior becoming to ladies. But each chapter has its own charms for the reader, ranging from biographies through a variety of social scientific approaches. At the time of writing, the congregation, like its teaching mission, appears largely to have succumbed to a changing world. Its retirement facility has now become the focal point for the never-ending project of Building Sisterhood. "Claiming Our Roots" has left us a sturdy bid to transform that ongoing enterprise into a larger union with the world of secular feminism. Everyone who has an interest in women's history, in the history of community psychology and sociology, or in the human experience itself should read this book.

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Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World

ALAN WEISMAN

White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green Publishing Company. 1998. 227pp. Bibliography, maps, photographs, illustrations.

Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World is not an academic study. Gaviotas itself is not a commune; at one time, residents were not even sure if it could be called a community. But this book, by American journalist Alan Weisman, should be read by anyone—scholar or communitarian—interested in intentional communities, and especially by those who believe that the communities movement should become more actively engaged in the task of societal reconstruction.

The idea that became Gaviotas began to take form in the mid-1960s

in the mind of Paolo Lugari Castrillon, a Colombian development worker who envisioned designing "an ideal civilization for the planet's fastest-filling region: the tropics." For his site, Lugari chose not the rainforest, although he had experienced it through development projects in the Philippines and the Colombian Choco, but the *llanos*, the vast eastern grasslands of Colombia and Venezuela, a remote and, some felt, inhospitable region of poor soils, a five-month dry season of stifling heat and powerful winds, and soaking rains the rest of the year. It was inhabited by a scattering of ranchers, *vaqueros*, and nomadic Indians, and Lugari fell in love with its beauty. He began visiting the *llanos* as his work permitted, eventually gaining possession of two concrete sheds, former warehouses of an abandoned highway construction project. These became the nucleus of his plan, and over the next several years Lugari's enthusiasm and charisma drew others to the spot to begin creating their *topia* (he did not like the negativity implied by "utopia"), a cross between a technology research laboratory and what we would call today an ecovillage.

Gaviotas's ultimate objective was to develop innovative technologies from inexpensive, ready-to-hand materials that would improve the lives of the *llaneros* and make settlement on the *llanos* more attractive and feasible for others. Consequently, Lugari especially sought to recruit people with backgrounds in engineering, but ones who would "think big" in the sense of stepping outside conventional approaches. To judge from Weisman's account, Lugari succeeded almost beyond belief. Among other things, Gavlotas technicians developed a solar kettle for sterilizing water, a solar clothes dryer for the hospital linens (the community established an innovative hospital for local people which included a wing where shamans and family members could stay with Indian patients), a solar kitchen, a submersible double-action water pump run by a teeter-totter, wind turbines which could harness the slight breezes of the rainy season but stand up to the strong ones of the dry season, pliable building blocks made from burlap bags filled with *llanos* dirt and cement, and a rotating-drum peanut sheller. They borrowed ideas from wherever they could, experimented endlessly to adapt them to the conditions of the *llanos*, and shared their inventions freely. Their achievements began to attract attention, drawing even more idealists to Gaviotas until by the mid-1970s a community of perhaps two hundred people had grown up that included both ex-urbanites and locals.

Gaviotas's story is not one of unbridled success, however. Money was habitually scarce, salaries were late and sometimes never materialized, guerrillas and *narcotraficantes* invaded the *llanox* as Colombia plunged into protracted political instability in the 1980s, and many of

the early key members began to leave in the late 1980s for a variety of reasons, many going to more traditional jobs. Through the turmoil, Lugari's vision occasionally flickered but never dimmed, and his efforts at Gaviotas continue to the present.

Weisman packs his account with engaging details about the personal stories of many of the Gaviotans, the inventions themselves, and the natural history of the *llanos*. The book is well-written, but does not satisfy on other points. Apparently, Weisman wanted to avoid academic trappings in his account of Gaviotas. As a result, his presentation has little of the structure that would make it useful as a scholarly study. There are no footnotes, index, coherent chronology, systematic description of the community itself, census statistics, indication of the nature of the author's presence in the study (it is written in an "anonymous outside observer" style), and only one brief mention of any other intentional community (the kibbutz). Furthermore, Weisman adds no analysis to his account, perhaps believing that the story speaks for itself. To an extent it does: as Lugari said, if the Gaviotans could accomplish so much under such adverse conditions, it meant that people almost anywhere could also do so. Yet the critical reader is left uncertain about what accounts for Gaviotas's success, whether its vision really could be exported, and what the community is like today.

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