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Tennessee John Stoltzfus: Amish Church-Related Documents and Family Letters (Book Review)

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between Richard Allen (1760-1831) and Martin Delany (1812-1885), two influential blacks; and studies of Isaac Leeser (1806-1868), a Jewish leader, and Katharine Mary Drexel (1858-1955) and three Catholic intellectuals of Philadelphia.

Abundant documentation accompanies each essay, and the value of the collection is enhanced by a good index. The book is especially recommended for public and undergraduate college libraries.

Ursinus College

KEITH J. HARDMAN

Tennessee John Stoltzfus: Amish Church-Related Documents and Family Letters.

Edited and annotated by PATON YODER. Translated by NOAH G. GOOD. (Lancaster: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1987. 296p. Maps, index. \$24.95.)

Designed to be a companion piece to his previous biography of this Amish figure, *Eine Wurzel: Tennessee John Stoltzfus* (Lititz, 1979), Paton Yoder's recent contribution to the Stoltzfus saga sheds a number of valuable insights into the life of nineteenth-century Amish communities in eastern and western Pennsylvania as well as Tennessee. This work was specifically prompted by the discovery of new caches of primary materials (e.g., the Lydia and Christian Mast collections) related to Stoltzfus's world. This new information, Yoder argues, further illuminates this influential minister's role in several important aspects of Amish religious life—annual churchwide minister meetings, the early organization of the Amish church in Tennessee, and Stoltzfus's involvement in the so-called Great Schism between the house Amish and the meetinghouse Amish beginning in the 1850s and ending in the 1870s. In addition, the new materials add details on the migration of an Amish family, Stoltzfus's family relationships, especially with his sons, and the final days of his life.

An intriguing story of Amish church relations emerges in the first half of this collection. For me, this aspect was particularly engrossing because my initial work as a historian was focused on the origins of Anabaptism in the lower Rhineland. At Wismar in 1546 the various Anabaptist congregations held a meeting in hopes of reaching a reconciliation on their various differences. The last minister to speak at this conference was one of the great forebearers of the Amish faith, Menno Simons. The essence of his sermon was that despite the differences between their various positions, the Anabaptists must remain united in common brotherhood. Simons's admonition was ignored then, and it seems that in the nineteenth century the Amish still had not heeded the value of his words. From the letters in

Yoder's book, it appears that there were no consequential theological issues at stake in the Great Schism; rather, revisions in traditional church practices surface as the divisive force. Baptism by immersion, the establishment of Sunday schools, and the growing use of meetinghouses among the western Pennsylvania Amish congregations hardly were radical. But they were perceived as such and soundly condemned by the more conservatively rooted groups in Lancaster County. Curiously, Tennessee John Stoltzfus, whose earlier letters counseled a peaceful settlement of these concerns through the use of a churchwide ministers' meeting, finally voted to sever the fellowship with the western communities.

The personal reminiscences of Tennessee John, his family, and his friends comprise the second half of Yoder's collection and reveal the values of rural life. Their letters are filled with references to hard work, industry, good health, farm animals, and the land. The documents also offer glimpses of the world from which the Amish could not completely escape. Events and figures such as the Civil War, Presidents Andrew Jackson and U.S. Grant, the Ku Klux Klan, and even the witnessing of a public hanging make their presence known in the world of the Amish. The often rambling remarks of Jacob Stoltzfus, a grandson of Tennessee John, written in his nineties between 1942-1943, were particularly arresting and humorous. Yet, Yoder's inclusion of many other letters besides those of Tennessee John Stoltzfus, in what he termed "a shirrtail approach," makes it hard to distinguish the real John Stoltzfus amid the maze of unrelated letters.

Overall, Yoder's work clarifies several significant facets of nineteenth-century Amish life. Yoder's understanding of and sensitivity to Stoltzfus and the circumstances under which these letters were composed are impressive. Indeed, without many of Yoder's extensive prefatory remarks, one could easily misunderstand the meaning and context of a particular document. Paton Yoder's addition to his study of Tennessee John Stoltzfus provides valuable insights and depth into our understanding of Amish religious and family life and its role in Pennsylvania history.

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CHARLES T. EBY

The Immigrant Church and Community: Pittsburgh's Slovak Catholics and Lutherans, 1880-1915. By JUNE GRANATIR ALEXANDER. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987. xxii, 198p. Tables, appendix, bibliographical essay, index. \$28.95.)

Though Slovaks—natives of Hungary's northern provinces—did not make up a large percentage of the mass immigration of the late nineteenth