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Hermann Gottlieb Mannhardt's Die Danziger Mennonitengemeinde. Ihre Enstehung und ihre Geschichte von 1569-1919 (1919) now appears in English translation, thanks to the efforts of several scholars, most notably Victor G. Doerksen, Mark Jantzen, and John D. Thiesen. H.G. Mannhardt, who served as pastor to the Danzig Mennonite Church for forty-eight years from 1879 to 1927, wrote and published this history of his congregation on the 350th anniversary of its founding and the centennial of the dedication of the church building. As Mark Jantzen notes in his introduction, "Unlike the original publication of this book, this translation is not tied to any particular anniversary, begging the question of why it was translated now and more importantly, why it might be of interest to an English-language reader" (p. xiv). His answer: "This congregational history offers important new perspectives on religious minorities in early modern and modern Germany for those interested either in German or in Mennonite history as well as evidence for the early roots of Europe's multi-confessional present" (p. xiv).

Although I was initially skeptical of Jantzen's claim (after all, this appears to be a history for Mennonite "insiders" by an "insider"), I soon found myself in agreement with him. To be sure, Mannhardt often explains events through the lens of his own confessional and political agenda, such as his commentary on the persecution of Anabaptists in the sixteenth century in chapter 1. Furthermore, he focuses primarily on church leaders, doctrines, council decisions, and the impact of political events on the Mennonites; little discussion is made of other minority religious groups in Danzig or the Vistula Delta region, such as the Jews. Yet within its narrow limits, Mannhardt does a good job of demonstrating the various challenges faced by the Mennonites and how they went from suspicious Dutch "Rebaptizers" living outside the city walls in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to full citizens of Danzig going off to fight in World War I. Although he rarely broadens his scope past the Mennonites in Danzig and the Vistula Delta region, his work supplements other narratives that recount similar issues faced by other minority religious groups across Europe.
during these centuries (and other groups in Danzig itself).

Jantzen focuses primarily on Mannhardt and his late-nineteenth-century context in the editor’s introduction. He first places Mannhardt’s work alongside both older and more recent volumes dedicated to urban Mennonite congregations in Europe, noting that the Danzig congregation represents a “leading example” of a continuous urban history (p. xvi). After discussing the merits of the book’s contributions to German and Mennonite history, Jantzen argues that, unlike most German Mennonites, Mannhardt wanted to build a church “that permeated the world” (p. xxiii). The son of a Mennonite father and Protestant mother, Mannhardt studied theology at Berlin, Strasbourg, and Kiel during 1875-78. He valued higher education, cultural integration, and even borrowed organizational techniques from his Protestant neighbors, as evidenced by his active role in the formation of the Alliance of Mennonite Congregations in the German Empire in 1886. Overall, Jantzen paints an interesting picture of Mannhardt as a progressive Mennonite pastor engaged with the challenges facing his congregation in the late nineteenth century, yet he tells us very little about Danzig itself. The editors provide some useful background information in explanatory footnotes sprinkled throughout Mannhardt’s own footnotes but a section in the introduction devoted to the complex political, economic, and religious history of Danzig would have been helpful.

Readers looking for useful information about sixteenth-century Anabaptists in Danzig can safely skip chapters 1 and 2. As Jantzen acknowledges, Mannhardt’s disavowal of the “fanatics,” the Münsterites, in his overview of sixteenth-century Anabaptism in chapter 1 is typical of Mennonite scholarship of this period, much like Harold Bender’s The Anabaptist Vision (1944). On the other hand, for those interested in how Mennonite leaders like Mannhardt and Bender went about constructing a “respectable” patriotic Anabaptism that had much to contribute to the liberal culture around them, chapters 1 and 2 are a must-read.

The rest of the work can be divided into two main sections. Chapters 3-8 cover the rise of the Danzig Mennonite Church from its refugee beginnings in the sixteenth century (Dirk Philips is considered its founder) to its more settled existence in the late eighteenth century, before the partitions of Poland began in 1772. Chapters 9-13 trace the church’s development from the nineteenth to early twentieth century. The reader should not expect Mannhardt to maintain a consistent chronology, however. For example, in chapter 8, “The Religious Life of the Danzig Mennonites to the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century,” Mannhardt finally discusses the specific religious practices of the Mennonites in Danzig between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. His topics include church building and alms houses; worship, preaching, and music; the transition from Dutch to German in the pulpit and catechism; baptism and communion; oaths and military exemptions; marriage customs; changes in church discipline; and funerals.

Chapters 3-8 focus on the relationships between the Mennonites and the citizens of Danzig, who often sought to take advantage of the Mennonites’ precarious status as resident aliens. Mannhardt’s detailed account of the conflict between the Mennonites and the local craftsmen of Danzig over the manufacture of lace trim in the seventeenth century in chapter 4 is a particularly revealing example of how the Mennonites were treated in Danzig during these centuries. On the basis of this and other confrontations, Mannhardt argues that the Mennonites—who could still only worship in private homes in the mid-seventeenth century—were treated much like the Jews and “Gypsies,” protected or persecuted as it fitted the needs of the moment. My main criticism of these chapters is Mannhardt’s treatment of the schism between the strict Old Flemish congregation at Schottland (founded 1569) and the more moder-
ate Frisian congregation at Neugarten in the late sixteenth century. While Mannhardt devotes some attention to the schism, he generally glosses over the division by using the general term "Mennonite" in his treatment of these centuries, often giving the impression of a unified Mennonite community that did not exist. In fact, he admits in chapter 10 that he has largely overlooked the Frisians "due to the sparse sources available" (p. 159).

Chapter 9 is Mannhardt's transition to West (Royal) Prussian Danzig. The late-eighteenth-century partitions of Poland led to several important changes for the Danzig Mennonites. He notes that while the approximately fourteen thousand West Prussian Mennonites were no longer regarded as resident aliens, they came under increasing pressure to give up their commitment to nonresistance during the Polish period, when "the refusal to bear arms did not cause any particular problems for the Mennonites in Danzig" (p. 126). Mannhardt thus asserts that "the next hundred years, from 1772 to 1868, were an almost uninterrupted struggle to maintain this article of faith" (p. 138). Moreover, many Mennonites chose to immigrate to Russia after a 1789 edict restricted their right to buy land. This migration, along with the general decline of the Danzig economy between 1772 and 1793, greatly weakened the Mennonite community.

Chapters 10-13 cover several significant events in the life of the Danzig Mennonite Church in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the destruction of the church building at Neugarten during Napoleon's siege of Danzig (1806-07) and the reconciliation of the Flemish congregation and its rival Frisian counterpart in 1808. A recurring theme in these chapters is the question of military service among the Mennonites, for, as Mannhardt observes, "the year 1848 naturally brought a great deal of unrest. Politics, formerly foreign territory for the Mennonites, invaded their offices and shops and then also the families. The principle of nonresistance was in danger when local civil militias were to be organized" (p. 191). Some Mennonites favored joining these militias and becoming "armed and marching Mennonites," while others did not (p. 191). Indeed, following Prussia's victory over Austria in 1866 in the Austro-Prussian War, military exemptions for the Mennonites were rescinded by the Prussian Crown, but they were allowed to serve in the army as drivers, medics, or craftsmen instead of soldiers (p. 198).

Mannhardt's personal history and progressive politics begin to color his increasingly autobiographical narrative in the final two chapters. He focuses primarily on the rise of modern Germany and what it meant for his congregation. He argues that "the great year of 1870, which brought our German fatherland its long desired unification, was for the Danzig Mennonite congregation the year of complete integration into the new times and into the new laws of the great German nation" (p. 203). Mannhardt celebrates the Mennonites' new status as "fellow citizens" with their Protestant neighbors (p. 206). This optimism carries over to his attitude toward the Danzig congregation's revocation of their requirement of nonresistance, the prohibition against mixed marriages, and their refusal to accept persons from other "denominations" into the Mennonite Church, also in 1870. Many Danzig Mennonites took advantage of this relaxing of church discipline and enlisted in the German army during wartime. Mannhardt reports that 250 members of the Mennonite Church—about half of its baptized male membership—fought in various capacities during World War I, of which at least 28 died in battle or shortly thereafter. As Jantzen notes in the introduction, "it may come as a surprise to Mennonite readers to hear that there were many Mennonite soldiers in the German armies of both World War I and II and no conscientious objectors" (p. xxiii). Mannhardt looks forward to the Mennonites' role in the new Free City of Danzig (1920-39) after the war, ending the narrative by citing Jeremiah 29:7.
to express his wish that the Danzig Mennonites continue play an active role in the city: "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (p. 244). He did not live to see the dissolution of his congregation due to the destruction wrought by World War II.

The epilogue, written by Tomasz Ropiejko, pastor of the Pentecostal congregation that has used the building since the 1950s, provides additional information about the Danzig Mennonite church building after World War II. The maps depicting Danzig's political changes, the illustrations, the bibliography of Mannhardt's writings, the German and Polish place name table, and the index are helpful additions to the English translation.

I agree with Jantzen that this book provides interesting perspectives about religious minorities in early modern and modern Europe and I am very pleased that Mannhardt's work is more accessible to native speakers of English, but I do have a few reservations. Given the text's age, this English translation is probably best suited for scholars looking for a point of reference for further research on the Mennonites in Danzig and Prussia. Furthermore, recent English-language studies are available of the Mennonites in Prussia that are more up-to-date than Mannhardt, if not as comprehensive (see the editors' works cited list, pp. 258-263). Finally, Mannhardt's narrative about the Danzig Mennonites may be most valuable to historians of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Anabaptism as evidence of the kind of history-writing that progressive Mennonites were doing at the turn of the twentieth century, both in Europe and North America, to demonstrate that Anabaptists could be good citizens of the modern nation-state.
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