

# Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

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Autumn 2013

## LEAVES TURN COLOR

As every fall the colors of autumn are lovely, especially if the air is clear and the conditions are right for good color. That seems to be the case for this fall of 2013. Squirrels scurry about to pick up the walnuts and the occasional hickory nuts and acorns.

Personally we enjoy hickory nuts. In Ohio we've already picked up a considerable quantity from the hickory trees of Dorothy's niece. When they are dried properly, long winter evenings promise to be busy with cracking the nuts and painstakingly picking out the meats. Hickory nut cake is one of our favorite flavors of cake/cupcakes.

Colors of leaves are good and excellent rains recently keep grass green (weeds too if you allow them to flourish). Gardens are about done. Some fall flowers still thrive and add to the colorful landscape. Driving Skyline Drive on Sunday, Oct. 20, revealed some colors. Golds, yellows, browns and an occasional red or orange are fairly common, but a good bit of green gives one the impression that colors may not be quite at the peak yet.

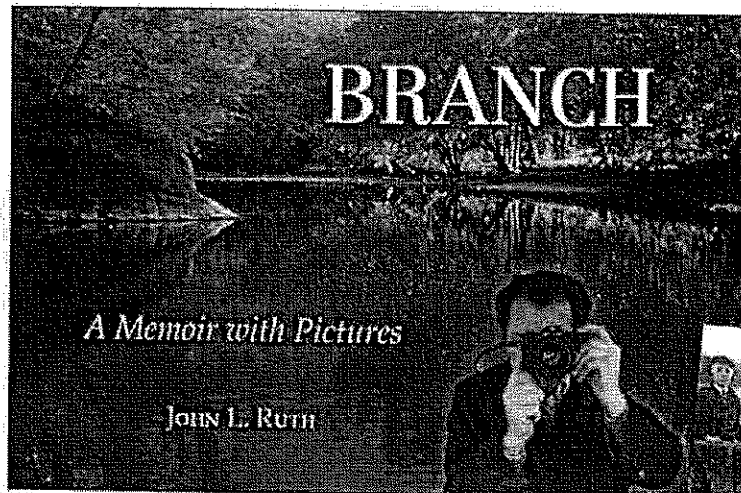
It's a fine time to visit CrossRoads and from that lovely hilltop the mountains to the east and to the west the mountains are a treat as one can see the Massanutten mountain range that sits in the middle of the Shenandoah Valley and stretches from Harrisonburg northward to the region of Front Royal.

The Shenandoah Valley from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east to the Alleghenies to the west are a treat for visitors who come to CrossRoads, the Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center. The Center is open to tours Wednesday through Saturday from 10 to 5.

Don't overlook special events upcoming, such as the John L. Ruth, Mennonite historian from PA. He will present "Travel in the Anabaptist Historical Landscape" on Sunday, Nov. 17 at the Park View Mennonite Church. He will share a pictorial presentation celebrating TourMagination's forty five years of Anabaptist Heritage touring. Look for his new book, hot off the press, *BRANCH: A Memoir with Pictures*.

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New Book from Celebrated Mennonite Storyteller John L. Ruth



*In the end this is a love story—love of family, love of community and church—all anchored in an enduring, classic Mennonite faith.*

Dick Benner, Editor  
Canadian Mennonite



In this coffee-table-style book evocative, full-page photos are paired with intimate mini-essays, rich with detail. *Branch* is the story of one life, but also a window into a family and the wider Mennonite community.



*Born on a farm in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, John Landis Ruth is an ordained minister with a PhD in English from Harvard University. A noted historical storyteller and popular heritage tour leader, John has been researching, writing, and communicating the Mennonite story for more than 60 years.*



**Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center**

**CrossRoads E-News**  
October 2013



**Blacksmith Larry Martin to turn swords into plowshares!**

Thanks to everyone who has renewed your CrossRoads membership this year! If not, we invite you to become a member of the CrossRoads family with your gift to our Annual Fund. As a member, you will help ensure that our daily operations will continue and grow.

**Help us build a solid and secure financial base for our daily operations--consider a tax-deductible gift to CrossRoads. A gift of any amount makes a significant impact.**

The Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center is a 501(c)3 organization to which contributions are tax deductible as allowed by law. Thank you for your support!

Mail your gift to:  
CrossRoads Heritage Center  
P.O. Box 1563, Harrisonburg, VA  
22803 or visit our website at  
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*Shenandoah Mennonite Historian*

**THE MENNONITES** (last installment of L. J. Heatwole piece, "THE MENNONITES" from the June 14, 1895 *Rockingham Register*.)

"This pen picture, beautifully as it is here drawn, shows the highly favored condition under which our forefathers and mothers lived a century ago. They felled the mighty forests that skirted this section, and transformed the wilderness into smiling farms and busy thoroughfares. And though in the generation that has risen up in their stead, there is still retained much of the energy and thrift that has been so characteristic of their progenitors, the scene presented today shows that things have been wonderfully changed and modernized.

"Over the same meadows where our grandfathers wielded the short-bladed and broad-heeled Dutch scythe, or plied the crescent-shaped sickle, there now rattles along the dextrous little mowing machine or the wonderful mechanism that is seen in the harvester and twine-binder. Or where the farmer rigged his team with rope harness and straw collars, and followed a wooden mould-board plow, we now have the neat adjusted outfit in leather, buckles and trigger snaps, while in the noble emblems of husbandry as now seen in the magnificent chilled steel plows of our day, there has come an improvement that was undreamed and unthought of by our grandfathers of a hundred years ago.—And where the housewife manufactured from raw material every article of clothing worn by the family, all such articles from an overcoat to a pocket-handkerchief are now being supplied ready-made, at our wayside stores.

"All these conditions have wrought a great and marked change upon the Mennonite of today, when compared with the Mennonite of a hundred years ago. In social customs, language, education and in the usual appliances to labor, he has been as completely modernized and Anglicized, or Americanized rather, as any of his fellow-countrymen around him, but in maintaining the principles of faith and the form of doctrine the Mennonite of today stands

practically upon the same platform of principles with his forefather of several centuries ago.

"With him the evangelical life is reduced to an irresistible, though self-adjusting law that places the believer in an attitude before the world that ever serves as a challenge and a rebuke to the carnal mind. This is seen in the practice of drawing the lines of discipline severely upon any departure of members from a strictly upright and noble character.

"Another practical demonstration of the evangelical life is shown in the uniformity and plainness of apparel, as well as non-conformity to the world on the same lines.

"It might be well to notice that this latter principle 50 or 60 years ago, was in vogue with most all branches of Protestant Christians along with the Mennonites. The prayer-head covering for women, and the regulation dress for both men and women was as common with the Methodist church as it is with the Mennonite church today, and it used to be so in the United Brethren church. It used to be the same in the Baptist church, in the Presbyterian church, and in the Lutheran church. But within the past 50 or 60 years these, our sister denominations, had drifted out and away from the plain old order of their forefathers and left the Mennonites, along with their near neighbors the Dunkard brethren, to bear the brunts, the gibes, and the reproach of the world alone.

"Yet, as has already been stated, all honest and fair-minded men and women, both among such who are and who are not professors of religion, frankly confess that no higher standard is to be attained in the evangelical life than when there is an external evidence to confirm it, and that at no time does the underlying principle and the outward form make a more happy combination than where there is a righteous and upright life to confirm them."

## Conclusion of July 1895 article

“In using the terms “form” and “principle” with respect to religion, we name two elements of “which the one stands quite distinct and separate from the other. With respect to one’s Christian conduct in this life “principle” becomes the first and primary rule of all action, while “form” is that which places the believer in an attitude of sober singularity before the world, and also serves the purpose of giving external force and expression to character.

“ ‘Principle’ again remains unchanged and is always the same. “Form,” however, is susceptible of change and varies gradually with each succeeding generation of men, not to the extent, however, in which worldly fashions and the style of the day are variable, but rather by the gradual process that takes place through the lapse of ages.

“Hence it is not to be understood that Mennonites in any way ascribe to the “form” of religion any saving virtue, or that the form of their worship should remain a fixed method or ritual to be adhered to from one generation to another. In such a case it would become necessary to adhere to the form of apparel worn by Christ and his Apostles, viz: The “Keffich” (head dress)”; the “Aba” (seamless coat); the “Tunic” (undergarment) with the belt and sandals, all of which are to this day worn by the Arabs and Syrians and imitated by the monks and friars of the Orient, as well as by the priests, the cardinals and the Sisters of Charity in the Roman Catholic Church of today.

“If the principles that our Mennonite forefathers and mothers so nobly lived for in the face of the persecutions of the Fatherland, the privations of migration from Europe, and the hardships of pioneer life in America, consisted only in the mere outward forms of piety that they maintained through all those perilous time, then it would be needful to readopt the form of apparel that was in vogue among them 200 years ago. This consisted in a very large, broad-

brimmed hat, with long cloak-shaped coats and jackets, knee breeches and long stockings, all of which were of uniform (drab) color as worn by men, or the frilled cap, neck-kerchief, bodice and lindsey frock as worn by women.

“That form of apparel that was worn by the followers of Christ in the primitive days of the church no doubt plainly showed the line of demarkation between themselves and a child of the world in their day. And thus that form of apparel worn by our forefathers and mothers of 200 years ago, doubtless showed just as plainly the same line of difference between themselves and the style of the world in their day. Yet these two forms of dress just described were widely different as to form any pattern, but must have been strikingly similar in voicing the principle of plainness to each of the different periods of the world in which they were used.

“Again when we notice the regulation coat and pantaloons worn by our grandfathers of 100 years ago, who were then members of the Mennonite church, though they bore a striking resemblance to those worn as uniforms by the officers and soldiers in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, were of a pattern quite different and distinct from those that are now being worn by our members of today, but as to voicing the principle of plainness before the world, each have served and are serving the purpose for which they were originally intended.

“Thus it is readily seen how the evangelical life in its demands upon the human heart has always readily adjusted itself to every age of the world in which it has lived and prospered, as well as to the different customs and usages of the various nations to which it has been carried, and moreover, it is capable of adjusting itself to the present period just as speedily and as readily as it did to any previous age. When the evangelical life becomes established and lives in the principle, it is then that grace begins its wondrous work in

the soul. The understanding becomes enlightened, the conscience softened, the mind pliable and perfectly submissive, and the believer really desires and wants to comply, not only with every ordinance of God, but willingly yields himself to all the restriction that brings him into fellowship with the brotherhood.

“The Mennonites have never made public any report or statement of their work prior to the year 1890, at which time reports were rendered for use by the U. S. census officials, by whom explanatory statements respecting their custom, faith and practices have been published.

“With a few slight alterations we append the following from “Census Bulletin” No. 131, Statistics of Churches:

“All Mennonites accept the Confession of Faith, consisting of 18 articles which was framed and adopted in Holland in the year 1682. In addition to the principles generally advocated by other creeds this confession also enjoins the practice of Feet-Washing, the marriage only of members of the same faith, and the nonresistance of violence rather than the use of the sword. The ordinance of baptism is administered to candidates while on their knees by a bishop or minister, who takes water with both hands from a vessel and pours it upon the head of the candidate. Applicants who request it are baptized in the water, kneeling therein while the minister pours the element upon their heads.

“The Lord’s Supper is observed twice a year, usually in the spring and fall. Every intending participant is carefully examined separately concerning his spiritual life before the day appointed for the celebration. After the communion comes the ceremony of Feet-Washing.

“The members of the sexes perform this office among themselves, each in turn washing wiping the feet of his brother or her sister, and giving at the same time the hand of fellowship and the kiss of peace.

“Those who fulfil the office of the ministry are chosen from the congregation to be served. After an appropriate sermon has been preached the bishop, with two or three other persons, retires to the council room where the members go in one at a time and name the person they believe to be best qualified for the office. If the choice is unanimous it is announced to the congregation and the person thus chosen is, after due examination, ordained.

“When more than one person has been nominated, a day is appointed to choose by lot one from among the persons so nominated. On this occasion, after a sermon, as many books as there have been persons nominated are taken, and in one of the books a slip of paper is placed, on which has been written the sentence, ‘Herewith God has called thee to the ministry of the Gospel.’ The books which are alike in appearance, being thus prepared are brought into the audience room and placed on the pulpit. Each one of the persons nominated then takes one, and he who gets the book containing the paper is considered chosen and is ordained.

“Deacons are chosen in the same manner and are ordained to care for the poor and sick, to assist in the ordinance of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and in the absence of ministers to pray and exhort.

“Bishops or elders are ministers having pastoral charge of a district in which there may be one of more places of worship and a number of ministers, all of whom are under his direction.”

“To be continued”

The original 1895 document reads that it will be continued, but no such continuation has been located after this July 26 piece in the newspaper.  
Editor J. O. Lehman

## *Of Books and Reading*

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Ray C. Stedman, *For Such A Time As This: Secrets of Strategic Living from the Book of Esther*. Grand Rapids: Discovery House. 155 pp. Prbk.

The best book I ever read on Queen Esther and King Xerxes! Author mined the story deeply for spiritual lessons. Treats the book as an allegory.

It first mentions that many scholars tend to see people dying as dogs, nothing more than a collection of nerve cells. But humans are much more than animals. God gave humans a soul and spirit. The body is a marvelous creation in design and efficiency.

Ruling over the whole of this kingdom is a king. Whatever the mind, emotions and will choose to do, the body obeys (like King Xerxes) Our kingship is programmed into our souls and encoded into our DNA—made to glorify God.

Esther, the queen, suggests soul and spirit. The “hinges of history” happen sometimes on trivial factors. Haman typifies the sinful flesh and must die. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, died in our place.

The cross of Christ is the crisis of history. He became sinful man and died in our place. Esther typifies the beautiful Holy Spirit. She symbolizes the human spirit. Soul is king, regenerate spirit is Queen Esther, informed by Mordecai, who becomes highly exalted.

The earth is not eternal. The universe, though seemingly ageless, has been stamped with an expiration date. So God’s work is timeless and ageless.

Salvation is an ongoing process, not a once-and-for all event. This is a very thoughtful book—a beautiful allegory and parable of profound and practical revelation of truth.

Paul Brand, *He Satisfies My Soul: A celebration of God’s Creative Gifts for Body, Mind, and Spirit*, Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2008. Prbk. Originally published as *God’s Forever Feast* 1983. ISBN: 1572932732

Good to read in pieces – pick it up time after time and reflect some on it.

Notes: p.50+ Regarding water. “Just as water is the medium in which all the chemistry of the physical body takes place, so the Holy Spirit is the medium of all spiritual activity.” p.51

Our bodies have a built-in trigger, a gauge, which alerts us to need water. That gauge is thirst. (52) Not only do we have wonderful thirst-meter, we also have a remarkable water conservation system. Solid food is turned into a thin soup. (53)

Kidneys are a perfect water conservation system. Every drop of our blood visits a kidney every few minutes (54). Our spirits need the water of life for cleansing and growth, Isaiah 55 (p. 55) We are depleting our water supply, “squandering our life source.” (57) Clean water is everyone’s responsibility. (59). Death of a saint means “dust to dust,” but also spirit leaping up to report to God about the adventure of life. (62)

Earth and soil are wonderful in concept and design (63) Wasted topsoil never comes back (63) Soil erosion is one of great tragedies of our time. Little being done to halt the loss. (70) Trees provide excellent picture of the spiritual life (81) Nipples, then breast and milk come on cue when needed. There is perfection in mother’s milk.

Life in fellowship. Like trillions of cells in our bodies have friendly cells on all sides. So the benefits of Christian community and living body of the family. In marriage two people become one flesh (123-24).

The mouth is a great crossroad between food, water and air. Food digests and gets into blood stream. Air is breathed. But there are guardians at the gates (150-51) God provides soil, water, seed and sun (161)

Food tastes better when shared (167) Where do we find Joseph (Egypt) for today's plenty? Body, mind and spirit work together (182) Nourishment of our bodies and the enrichment of our souls should be seen together ( Lord's Supper}. We renew our sense of oneness with our Savior and with each other (201) Spirit of God lives in me as "distinctly God in distinctly me." (212)

Blood is life, energy and cleansing, it brings us food and carries waste away (221-2) There is an underlying unity of life. God has created a world that nourishes our bodies, minds, and spirits.

(This book worth keeping. I put it in my library!)

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Stu Weber, *Four Pillars of a Man's Heart*, Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 1997. 286 pp., Hardbound.

Advises men to "play the man." The four pillars are: The King Pillar, the Warrior Pillar, the Mentor Pillar, and the Friend Pillar, and finally a chapter about a Woman Among the Pillars. He describes each kind lucidly. He tends to emphasize, perhaps glorify the military approach. Occasionally, he almost borders on being flippant and cute in his language..

Set in Oregon and begins with a military perspective, which tends to crop up here and

there. Talks about the U. S. "becoming an increasingly fatherless society" the most harmful demographic trend of this generation.

Our society sees too much divorce, our-of-wedlock child-bearing, poverty, violence, unsafe neighborhoods, domestic violence, parental authority weakening. It's been downhill for father since the Industrial Revolution. So we tend to blur gender -- (masculinity and femininity). That brings "disorientation, destruction, and death." Society thus eventually collapses.

Against unisex society when men are not men. We haven't consulted the "owner's manual" (Bible) enough. Buzzword is diversity. That men and women are really different is profound, foundational and essential.

The mentor section is one of the best. A mentor builds men who understand life and pass it on-- it is "passing the secrets of life." Don't only teach people to live well, but also to die well. The biblical Joshua is a great example.

Life tends to be a series of successes and failures. He strongly emphasizes friendship and connecting. Don't worry about having and showing emotions. Our God is the ultimate friend who seeks relationship.

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Mary-Ann Kirkby, *I am Hutterite*; true story of a young woman's journey away from a very historic and plain culture to popular American life. Fascinating readable memoir of the very difficult transition.

True freedom is an inside job of the heart, not on or off a Hutterite colony (Hutterites began as Anabaptists soon after Mennonites began-1520s)

Thoughtful, well written. (J. O. Lehman)

Jack Miles, *GOD: A biography*, 1995. National bestseller and winner of the Pulitzer Prize. The Prelude asks: "Can God's Life Be Written?" Some interesting chapter questions and sections: What makes God Godlike? Liberator, Lawgiver, Liege (Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), Conqueror, Father, Arbiter, Executioner, Holy One. Counselor, Ancient of Days

Does God fail? Does God Love? How can an unbeliever enter the presence of God? Much that the Bible says is rarely preached from the pulpit. Does God lose interest, the Postlude asks.

Heavy theological writing. Genesis 1:1 assumes God's presence and involvement in the world. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. When was that? As the Spirit of God hovered over the empty formless darkness, his first pronouncement was "Let there be light," and there was light. Then we have a cataloging of the other creative acts of God, including the creation of male and female "in his own image."

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Want to learn more? Subscribe to the daily free version available by computer, "On This Day in Church History." Helpful to learn more about how God has worked since Jesus' time and the development of the Church throughout the last 2,000 years.

What a wonderful place awaits us as Christians when we pass off this earth and enter Paradise and Heaven and get into the presence of God. Eternity awaits us and will be a glorified existence that we can barely comprehend.

\* \* \* \* \*

After a considerable journey, most things come to an end. Beginning in 2002 I began serving as editor and writer for *SMH*. Now it's time to pass the baton to the next editor, Elwood Yoder. Support him well. He's industrious but he needs help with ongoing subscriptions to *SMH*. Keep him on the road to the future with its hills and valleys, as depicted on the front cover. Thanks much for all the affirmation you gave to me over the years.

James O. Lehman

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