Chosen nation. Mennonites and Germany in a global era. By Benjamin W. Goossen. Pp. xvi + 266 incl. 16 ills, 6 maps and 1 table. Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017. £41.95. 978 0 691 17428 0
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For many, the title of Benjamin W. Goossen's book is bound to brook controversy, or at least confusion. Whatever can it mean to speak of Mennonites as a 'chosen nation'? When is this 'global era' during which this examination of Mennonites and Germany is set? Far from being accidental, the interplay between notions of nation, globalism, religious community and Germany lies at the heart of Goossen's project. The result of his interrogations is a sophisticated, well-argued study that encourages us both to rethink – even discard – the idea of communal (religious, national) identity and to reflect on the role of human agency and individual choice in such constructs.

In part, the volume narrates the fascinating story of how a community of religious outsiders, German Mennonites, largely became national insiders and with what consequences. He thus shows how, in the wake of Germany's political unification, the progressive wing of the Mennonite community sought to create a national church organisation, the Union of German Mennonite Congregations, to which a majority of German Mennonites had by 1914 finally adhered. Accompanying this modernisation of German Anabaptism, though, was an energetic campaign by Unionist leaders to promote Anabaptism as the truest form of German Protestantism, a tack that aimed to align the faith and the national communities' fortunes. After 1918, Goossen notes, the intertwining of religion and nation *vis-à-vis* the Mennonites took a critical, even surprising twist: in Mennonite and National-Socialist rhetoric they emerged as the 'anti-Jew', that is the ethnic, religious and even economic embodiment of the traits ostensibly lacking in Jews.

But, as Goossen adroitly stresses, Mennonites' very ability to fulfill the role of *ur*-German 'anti-Jews', most notably by their participation in the Nazi resettlement schemes for Eastern Europe and the Ukraine, owed much to German Mennonites' stylisation of the global Mennonite community as a sort of German diaspora. And yet, this was basically another German colonial fantasy. Mennonites living abroad rarely saw themselves as nationally German, even if they still used versions of the German language. Indeed, when they found it useful, and particularly after World War II, German Mennonites themselves distanced themselves from national identifications, preferring instead to be defined, like Jews, only as members of an ethnic group. However, while Anabaptists rejected membership in a specifically German diaspora, they did broadly recognise the existence of a global Mennonite community, whose numerical strength lay not in Europe, but in North America. Moreover, much like early nineteenth-century German Anabaptism, this community was more religiously conservative, averse to politics and decentralised than had been the German Mennonite Union.

A notable, original contribution to the history of religion in modern Germany, *Chosen nation* also succeeds brilliantly as an extended reflection on the very nature of personal identity in the context of complex cultural, social and political environments. On both accounts it merits a wide readership.

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