Conservative Mennonite Storybooks and the Construction of Evangelical Separatism

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Abstract:
Group-produced literature is representative of and reinforces group behaviors, norms, and beliefs. This study focuses on the missionary theme in literature from three Conservative Mennonite publishers, identifying two major constructs of what we term evangelical separatism. First, Rod & Staff depicts evangelism as establishing stable, integrating church communities in places where none exist, making their offering accessible to any who would care to join while also withholding assessment of outsiders. Second, Christian Light Publications and TGS present missions in a more aggressive, individualized mode, whereby the outside is viewed as a land of darkness and the missionary, in embodying Christ's incarnation, bring light to that place. The focus of evangelism is conversion to Christianity, with the church as a social system peripheral to the action. Separatism is maintained by staking claim to authentic Christianity against inferior outside offerings. This latter plotline has birthed the new missionary adventure genre, which both entertains readers through secular adventure techniques while emphasizing a sacred end mission. The classic Anabaptist suffering theme is present in both types of stories, though transformed to include social / personal sacrifices and patience needed to engage in mission work.

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Penguin books. The social construction of reality. Peter L. Berger is Professor of Sociology at Boston University and Director of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture. He has previously been Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University, New Jersey, and in the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research in New York. He is editor of Phenomenology and Sociology and The Changing Face of Religion (with James A. Beckford). Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. The Social Construction of Reality. A. Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.