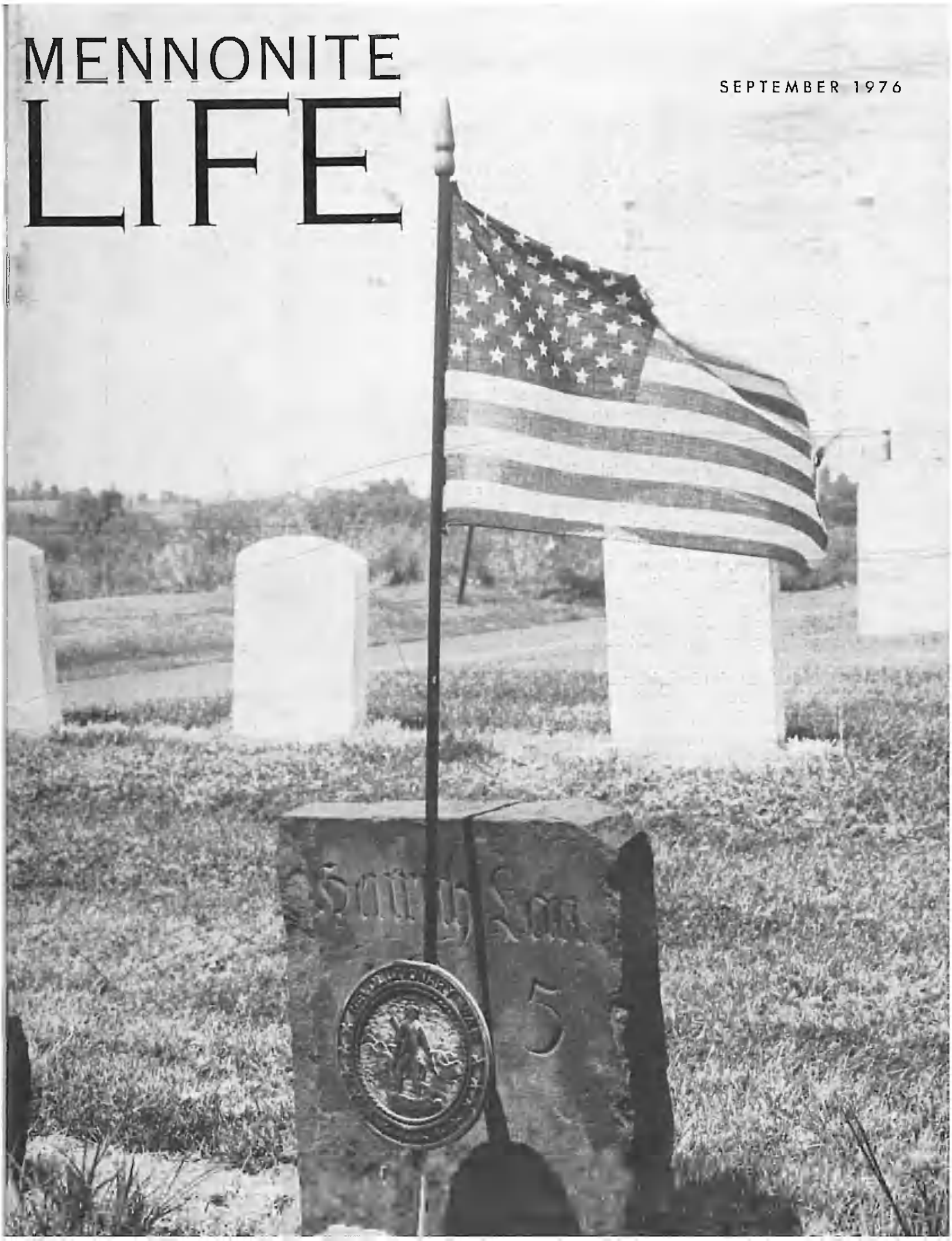
MENNONITE LIFE

SEPTEMBER 1976



IN THIS ISSUE

The bicentennial celebrations of independence for the United States of America have prompted some deep searchings into historical roots and theological understandings as Mennonites attempt to come to terms with their place in the national tradition. In this issue is featured a photographic essay of historical places in the shadow of Independence Hall where Mennonites two hundred years ago encountered a colonial world being fractured by civil war. John and Roma Ruth of Harleysville, Pennsylvania, provided inspiration for this issue. John's book on Mennonites in the Revolution, *'Twas Seeding Time,* is currently being serialized in *Mennonite Weekly Review* and will be published by Herald Press in a few months. The fractur reproduced on the back cover of this issue was done by Roma Ruth in celebration of Benjamin Hershey's posing of the issues in November, 1776. The poem by Elaine Sommers Rich celebrates in another way a national tradition that accommodates resistance to war, and the article by James Juhnke calls for a historical perspective which affirms that "the war should never have been fought."

The March, 1977 issue of *Mennonite Life,* will include a bibliography of books, pamphlets and articles produced by Mennonites in relation to the bicentennial. Readers are invited to bring to the attention of the editors any items which should be included in this bibliography.

This issue also includes a short biography of Rev. J. E. Entz, long time pastor of the First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas, and excerpts from the World War I court martial trial of Ura V. Aschliman, an Amish Mennonite from Ohio. Several poems by Elmer Suderman highlight images from the rural plains area which nurtured one part of the American Mennonite community.

September, 1976 Volume 31 Number 3

MENNONITE LIFE

An Illustrated Quarterly Published by Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas

CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES JUHNKE teaches in the history department at Bethel College.

DENNIS SCHMIDT is a teacher at the Meno Bible Academy in Meno, Oklahoma.

ELMER F. SUDERMAN is professor of English at Gustavus Adolphus College. His book of poetry, *What Can We Do Here?* celebrated the coming of the Russian Mennonites to North America in 1874.

CORNELIUS KRAHN was the founder and long-time editor of *Mennonite Life*. He is engaged in research and writing in Mennonite Library and Archives.

ELAINE RICH is an author and poet presently living in North Newton between terms in Japan associated with International Christian University.

COVER

Bicentennial flag on the grave of a nonresistant Pennsylvania Mennonite. See page 7.

MENNONITE LIFE is an illustrated quarterly magazine published in March, June, September and December by Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. Second Class postage paid at Newton, Kansas 67114.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year, $4.00; Two years, $7.00.

Statement of ownership and management as required by the Act of Congress of October 23, 1962, Section 4369, Title 39. As of October 1, 1976, MENNONITE LIFE is owned and published quarterly by Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. The owning corporation is a nonprofit educational organization, has no stock and security holders and carries the publisher's own advertising. Editors Robert Kreider and James Juhnke, North Newton, Kansas. Signed Garold Burkholder, Business Manager, North Newton, Kansas 67117.

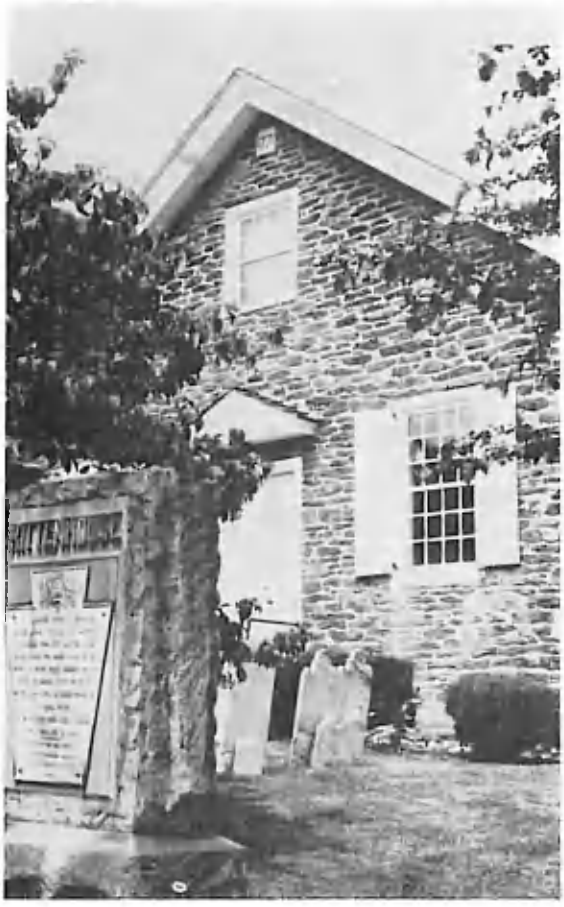
The total number of copies of MENNONITE LIFE printed during the preceding twelve months have averaged for each issue a total of 1500 with a paid circulation as of October 1, 1976 of 1275. The balance of the number of copies from each issue are available for free distribution as samples and complimentary copies, deferred sales, and library holdings.

In the Shadow of Independence Hall

The decisions to declare independence and to wage warfare, made at Independence Hall in 1776, cast a long shadow which extended 29 miles and more to Mennonites living in the Lancaster and Franconia areas.

Twenty-nine M(iles) to P(hiladelphia), Milestone on the Goshenhoppen Road in Mennonite country near branch of the Perkiomen River.

The Germantown Mennonite Church, built in 1770, was scarred by gunfire at the battle of Germantown, October 4, 1777. The Germantown congregation, like many urban Mennonites, did not prosper numerically. They had only several dozen members at the time of the Revolution. Several of the thousand or more men who died in the Battle of Germantown are said to be buried in unmarked graves in this cemetery.



After his defeat at Germantown, General Washington retreated and camped along the Skippack River for nine days. The countryside, including Mennonite homes, was cleaned out of provisions. Trees were chopped down.

General Francis Nash of North Carolina, wounded at Germantown and carried twenty miles on a litter, died and was buried with military honors in the Towamencin Mennonite cemetery. The city of Nashville, Tennessee, named after this Revolutionary War hero, asked the Mennonites for permission to disinter the remains and remove them to Nashville. But the Mennonites voted against it. So this military memorial remains to tower over the more modest gravestones of nonresistant Mennonites.

Numerous graves in Mennonite burial grounds have been decorated with bicentennial flags, even though these people resisted participation in the war. Although their names appeared on the militia lists, many paid fines in lieu of militia service. The flags, complete with engraved minute man on the staff, grossly misrepresent the Mennonite attitude toward the war.

The Schvertle (Swartley) name (above) entered the Mennonite community through an indentured servant who joined the brotherhood.

Henry Landes (d. 1815) is buried at the Delp burial ground (right). Landes was the last preacher of the "Funkite" group which broke from the Mennonites over the war tax issue.

Ephrata Cloister, location of the printing of the 1748 German language of the Martyr's Mirror, *the largest book published in colonial America.*

The Pennsylvania Mennonites wanted a German edition of the *Martyr's Mirror* to strengthen their nonresistant faith in the context of the approaching French and Indian War (1754-63). The printing was done by a communal group of Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata.

In the Revolutionary War, six soldiers came with two wagons and confiscated copies of the *Martyr's Mirror at the cloister*. There was a shortage of paper to use as wadding for rebel muskets. Thus was the most tangible symbol of the Mennonite nonresistant martyr tradition turned into an instrument of military bloodshed.

Tielman Kolb House, 1740. Tielman Kolb was a wealthy Mennonite farmer and preacher who was active in the publication of the 1748 *Martyr's mirror*. Kolb lent his encouragement to Christopher Dock in return to teaching in 1738 after a ten-year interval of farming.

Christopher Dock gravestone in the Lower Skippack Burying Ground. The author of the earliest American essay on pedagogy (1750) has a small native stone grave marker which, in its simplicity, testifies to a godly life style which surpasses all worldly pretension. The initials "S-M-R" stand for schoolmaster.

The Hans Herr House in Lancaster County had been standing fifty-seven years by the time of the Declaration of Independence. It was used as a meeting place for Mennonite worship, as well as the dwelling for the Herr family. After decades of neglect, the house has been restored to its original condition.

Revolution Without Independence

by James C. Juhnke

In one of the more provocative fantasies of this bicentennial year, Richard E. Wentz in the *Christian Century* (June 23-30, pp. 596-9) imagined what it might have been like if the American War of Independence had never been fought. It is a satisfying vision. The American revolution, from Wentz's 19th century imaginary viewpoint, was happily not dependent upon warfare. America's ethnic diversity, religious freedom, frontier individualism, economic abundance and social democracy all developed without the benefit of national-militarist myths and catalysts. "We are," dreams Wentz, "free peoples living within the common sanctions of British dominion."

The imagining of the American Revolution as something detachable from the War of Independence is more than another parlor game. The ability to imagine an alternative history, less debauched by the evils of militarism, can help us creatively confront the urgent task of imagining an alternative future, in which we somehow resolve human conflict peaceably without resorting to military solutions which wipe out our civilization.

War and Freedom

The prevailing liberal view of American history does not allow for the separation of American national freedom on one hand from the American military achievement on the other. In American history, or so we are taught, warfare and freedom go together. The War of Independence was a freedom rebellion which has inspired millions of oppressed peoples around the world to fight for their own freedom. The Civil War in its turn extended freedom to the blacks. World Wars I and II saved humanity for democracy. "Mankind occasionally gets involved in a logjam," wrote the liberal-realist historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., of the Civil War, "and the logjam must be burst by violence." Military violence has seemed bearable in American history because it always has resulted in the extension or the defense of human freedom.

It is ironical that America celebrates her bicentennial at a moment when the old liberal faith in the national-military-freedom complex is fraying at the edges. The shadow of the mushroom cloud has unhinged the idea of freedom from the prospect of world war. War and freedom no longer go together. And now the searing Vietnam War experience has brought us to face an America in which our combination of nationalism and militarism turned demonic. By the 1970's many of us, like Bonhoeffer in the Third Reich, were willing the military defeat of our own country. We have seen the shaking of the foundations of our national faith.

The bicentennial focus on the American Revolutionary period offers new opportunities for Mennonites and others who are uncomfortable with military traditions. There is a contradiction between the peace church tradition which says that God's will is peace, and an American tradition which holds that freedom is won and preserved by violent revolution. If the way of suffering love is the core of the gospel, we are at tension with the dominant American conviction that the War for Independence was an unqualified good.

A nonresistant pacifist in America has had difficulty thinking and teaching about the war of 1776-83 because of the lack of alternative interpretations to the prevailing simplistic patriotic orthodoxy. In this context, the brilliant re-interpretation of the American Revolution by Gene Sharp of Harvard University opens up exciting new possibilities for Mennonites, as well as others in the peace church tradition. In a peace series lecture at Bethel College in January, 1976, Sharp breathed new meaning into John Adams' oft-quoted assertion that "the real American Revolution" took place in the hearts and minds of the people before the war began. Focusing upon the series of essentially nonviolent colonial campaigns against oppressive British measures beginning with resistance to the Stamp Act in 1765, Sharp argues that the colonists had achieved *de facto* independence by the time the war started. The re-

sistance movement, which used a great variety of nonviolent techniques, achieved not only great community solidarity, but fostered the evolution of alternative governing institutions which nullified British power in her American colonies. When the Americans in 1776 abandoned nonviolence and opted for war, they made a foolish gamble which almost lost what had been won in the previous decade.

In Sharp's words,

> It is arguable that the American colonists could have won full independence more quickly, with more support within the colonies and from Englishmen, had they continued to rely upon the nonviolent methods of struggle they had so successfully used to that date. *De facto* British control in the colonies was already extraordinarily weak, owing to the Americans' political noncooperation, economic sanctions and development of alternative political institutions to which they gave loyalty. (*The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, p. 713)

Sharp's work on this topic so far represents a theoretical bridgehead and a call for further research, rather than a fully documented explosion of historical analysis. He hopes to publish the fruit of his research on the topic within a few months. But this perspective already helpfully cuts down to size the heroic military tradition of the American Revolution. We can see that war as an ill-considered misadventure which has unfortunately obscured the much more significant movement of nonviolent resistance which preceded it. The war was not so much a culmination of patriotism as a mark of failed courage and imagination.

Mennonite caveat

There is one caveat to Sharp's analysis which might be offered from a Mennonite perspective. Sharp tends to see the relationship of mother country and colonies as essentially one of oppressor and oppressed. Not only was the struggle against the oppressor just and right, but the goal of national independence was legitimate and proper. The violent war may have been a misguided flirt with disaster, but the nonviolent drive toward total separation from the mother country would have been a boon for mankind. In Sharp's view, the nonviolent achievement of political independence would have been—indeed it almost was—a great monument to human ability to achieve just ends through humane means.

A Mennonite pacifist historian might ask for a more radical questioning of the goal of political independence itself. Why was it necessary for the American colonies to break completely with England in the 18th century? Would it not have been preferable to make the compromises and adjustments to keep America within the empire on terms that would to some degree satisfy the demands of both England and her colonies? In the history of conflict resolution which we are attempting to create, is not the more practical model one of agreements based upon mutual concessions rather than one of total capitulation by an alleged oppressor?

In retrospect, we know that it is not fair to consider the British of two centuries ago as evil tyrants, the impassion rhetoric of Thomas Paine and Samuel Adams notwithstanding. The American colonies by 1770 were the most free and prosperous colonies in the world, and they owed their freedom in no small measure to their heritage of British representative institutions and benign colonial administration. Great Britain had fought a series of long and costly wars against France, a by-product of which was protection for the American colonies on their western frontier. But the Treaty of Paris which drove the French out of North America, also found the British deeply in debt. The British thought that the American colonists might be reasonably asked to help pay for the costs of the empire which provided their defense and protected their markets. In the context of an evolving empire the British plan was quite sensible. The modest taxes they proposed for the colonies were a small fraction of the taxes imposed in the mother country.

The Stamp Act and its successors involved taxation without representation, a denial of tradition English liberties. The colonial grievance was legitimate. But we demonstrate a great lack of historical imagination if we assume that the only way to resolve this conflict was to "nullify the power of the oppressor" in a drive toward political separation. As sure as there were alternatives to war, there were alternatives to national independence.

It is surprising that no more attention has been given to the proposals for taxation *with* representation in the British Empire, especially since we are caught in a taxation with representation situation today. One Francis Maseres, a liberal-minded lawyer who served as attorney general of Quebec from 1766 to 1769, wrote a pamphlet in 1770 entitled "Considerations on the Expediency of Admitting Representatives from the American Colonies into the British House of Commons." Benjamin Franklin was counted among those who favored official colonial representation in Parliament. Maseres' proposal involved some obvious practical problems, but if it would have satisfied the "taxation without representation" outcry, it would have been much preferable to the bloody war as a means of conflict resolution. Maseres at least showed a somewhat more creative imagination than those on both sides of the Atlantic who so quickly reached for their muskets to resolve their conflict.

Joseph Galloway. Did his plan for Anglo-American union make more "common sense" than the drift toward war?

Another option for managing the taxation controversy, as well as other grievances which bedeviled British-American relations, was a plan for intercolonial union within the empire. Benjamin Franklin, who in the judgment of one historian was "an imperialist at heart and revolutionist only by necessity," proposed a plan of union at the Albany Congress of 1754. Under Franklin's plan, each colony would send delegates to a central council that would handle Indian affairs, dispose of lands in the Ohio Valley, govern frontier territories, and levy taxes for an intercolonial army. The colonies rejected the plan, but the idea of inter-colonial union within the empire did not die. Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania championed the idea in the 1770's.

Galloway may indeed be the true unsung hero of the Revolution, if we see the situation of two centuries ago as an exercise in conflict management rather than an occasion for military heroics. At the First Continental Congress Galloway presented his plan for an American Parliament which would share powers with the British Parliament. Galloway got strong support from the New York delegation and from Edward Rutledge of South Carolina. But the plan was narrowly defeated and the Continental Congress embarked upon a more radical, less conciliatory course. A key opportunity for compromise had been lost.

The Galloway plan, even if Englishmen in the colonies and the mother country had had the courage and wisdom to adopt it, may not have provided a lasting settlement. A long range solution would have moved in the direction of legislative autonomy under the crown, rather than shared authority with the British Parliament. Even so, it would have been preferable to have several decades of groping towards a negotiated settlement within the empire rather than to admit failure and settle the matter by war.

Statesmen Limited

To be sure, the British statesman were limited by their own experiences, class orientations, and unfamiliarity with the requirements of their emerging empire. They might not have accepted the Galloway plan even if it had come to them from the colonies. But we too often ignore the broad support in England for the colonies. Nor have we appreciated the significance of the evaporation of that support once the decision for war was made.

Lawrence Henry Gipson, a historian of the British Empire before the Revolution whose work is quoted extensively by Gene Sharp, argues persuasively that the true context for understanding the Revolution is the Great War for the Empire (called the French and Indian War in America) which ended in 1763. This war, which resulted in French defeat and removal from America, gave the colonies a new sense of security and independence at the same time that it convinced England of the necessity of tightening the reins of Empire. It is unfortunate that Americans come out of their history classes quite unaware of this context, and rather assume that the Stamp Act arose from some unmotivated tyrannical impulse. The "Imperial School" of American Revolution historiography is very much out of fashion among American historians today. Topics of greater popularity in the 1970's seem to be the development of revolutionary ideology and the role of the "underside" (blacks, women, seamen) in the revolution. Investigations of such topics contribute much to our understanding, but they usually are set in a fundamentally nationalistic framework. The effort seems to be to claim a share in a national revolutionary tradition, rather than to ask the more radical question of whether the nation and the war were helpful or appropriate inventions in 1776.

America's historical consciousness is permeated

with myths which identify national military exploits with the advance of freedom. For such a people it is therapeutic to engage in a fantasy of non-independence. What if America had not won national independence by military means two hundred years ago? Wouldn't it have been better if the colonists had elected to extend their freedoms within the framework of the British Empire? Wouldn't it be healthier if our history books celebrated moments of negotiated conflict resolution rather than moments of military triumph?

The insights of Gene Sharp's analysis of the nonviolent struggle which preceded the outbreak of war, combined with the Imperial School's insistence that the conflict was fundamentally about the arrangements for running an empire, can break a new path which is more appropriate for those in the Anabaptist tradition. The point is not to look backward to the virtues of empire, but to discern historical moments of creative endeavor in conflict resolution which may instruct us as we in our time attempt to get out of our nationalist-militarist traps. The Anabaptist-Mennonite preference for peaceful resolution of conflict, as well as our predisposition to mistrust all earthly powers, would lead us to conclude that the war should never have been fought. It would have been far preferable in 1776 to work out an adjustment of competing colonial and imperial claims without destroying the imperial connection and setting loose the dogs of an American nationalistic militarism which two centuries later is one of the world's greatest menaces.

Thomas Paine. Did his inflammatory pamphlet against the "Royal Brute of England" damage prospects for a peaceable settlement?

J. E. ENTZ (1875-1969)

Shepherd to His Flock

John Edward Entz, whose ministry at the First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas, spanned two world wars, represented the best of a style of lay ministry that once characterized Mennonite churches. He was of a generation that had come to America to preserve their nonresistant faith, and he strove mightily to maintain the essentials of Mennonite Christian faith and practice in the twentieth century.

Entz was born on August 5, 1875 in the Mennonite community of Marienburg, West Prussia. His family emigrated to Newton, Kansas, in 1882 in order to avoid military conscription for the young sons. Because of his parents' strong Mennonite beliefs and their concern that their sons get a good religious education, Entz was enrolled at Halstead Sanctuary in 1890. The Halstead Seminary was a preparatory school begun by the Kansas Conference of Mennonites in 1883. Entz attended here for three years until the school closed its doors in 1893. His love for the Scriptures grew while under the teaching of C. H. Wedel, who later became the first president of Bethel College. His lowest grades were in singing while his highest grades were in arithmetic.

The Entz family from the beginning attended the First Mennonite Church of Newton on East First Street. Entz was baptized on May 21, 1893 and, after ten years helping his father on the farm, was ordained to the ministry by Elder Jacob Toews on November 1, 1903. Under the patterns of lay ministry of those days, Entz was one of four ministers serving under Elder Toews. To prepare for the ministry, Entz enrolled in a two-year Bible course at Bethel College, graduating in the spring of 1905. He was ordained as an elder of the First Mennonite Church on August 12, 1917, and at the age of forty-two was ready to accept the full-time pastorate in the church he had grown up in. In his twenty-nine years of ministry (to 1946) Entz baptized 368 persons and welcomed 793 persons into the fellowship of the church.

World War I

The year of 1917 found the world in the confusion of war. Several young men from the First Mennonite Church were drafted into the army, where they refused military service. One young man, however, did volunteer for military service, an act which banned him from church membership! Several of the young men corresponded with Rev. Entz during their stay in the military camps. They wrote of their difficulties in a system which had no legitimate place for conscientious objectors. Their refusal to wear uniforms and their noncooperation in other ways earned them much verbal abuse. Sometimes they were arrested and court martialed. They were strengthened by daily meetings for prayer and Bible study.

Rev. Entz's letters to the young men in military camps were filled with spiritual encouragement. He assured them of his prayers and the support of the church. He reminded them that

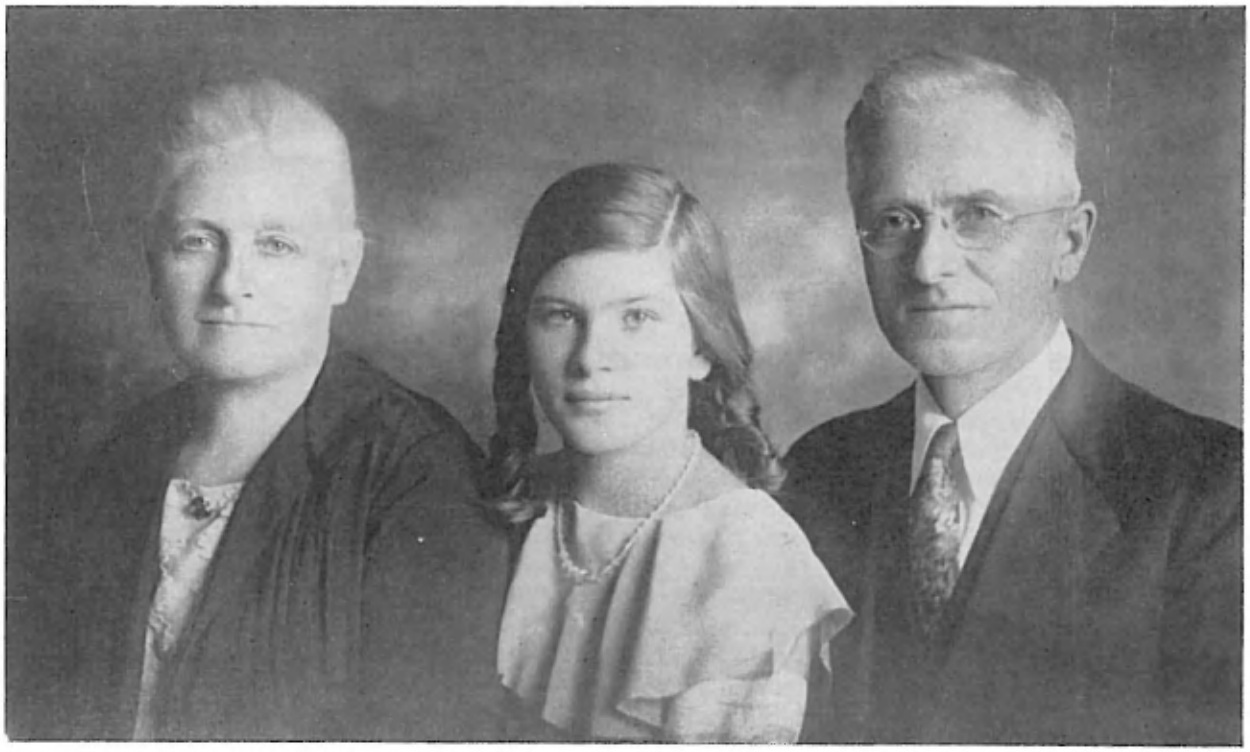
> Our God is a God of love, he will not forsake his children. He has promised to guide us and to show us what is his will for us to be done. May you at all times there feel the presence of our Lord and Savior and receive his guidance. All the precious promises of his Word are like a check that our Lord Jesus has signed. They are ours if we endorse them through our faith.

Rev. Entz would always try to keep the young men informed about what the government was doing in relationship to conscientious objectors. However, while his letters were full of encouragement and news from home, there was very little clear direction to guide in the many tough decisions that young men in the camps had to make in those times.

While the war had its greatest impact on the men who were drafted, the effects were also noticeable in the Newton community. Anti-German sentiment was expressed in the schools and even in the theater. Pressure was put on those who would not buy war bonds. They were called slackers and held up to public scorn. Rev. Entz was strongly opposed to the war effort and let his voice be heard. When the issue of universal military training was being debated in Congress in 1920, he wrote a letter expressing his disapproval to his Senator. In the letter he stated that we believe

> that compulsory military training is one of the first steps leading to militarism, the very thing that got the whole world into trouble recently and further believing that a militaristic program is unwise politically, wasteful economically, and wrong morally.

In 1924 Rev. Entz wrote in behalf of the church a letter to President Coolidge discouraging the commemoration of Mobilization Day.



J. E. Entz and his first wife, Elise Bergman, and adopted daughter, Ruth. Elise died in 1934 and Ruth in 1937. Entz married his second wife, Anna Epp, in 1937.

> If it is anti-Christian to wage war, as we hold, then it is also anti-Christian to plan national events whose only results can be the fostering of a false ideal, that is the spirit of militarism, and the consequent reliance thereon.

Concern for Members and Doctrine

Rev. Entz's concern for the Mennonite faith was expressed in letters written to members who requested their church letters for transfer to a non-Mennonite church. When one couple moved to Burrton, Kansas, and planned to join a non-Mennonite church there, he wrote,

> Our Mennonite church has a great history of 400 years, and great doctrines it is standing for. Many hundreds have gladly given their lives for them. Can you dear brethren conscientiously change your view point in regard to non-resistance, baptism upon confession of faith and other precious doctrines our fathers have stood for through centuries?

Even stronger than his loyalty to the Mennonite doctrines was his loyalty to evangelical Christianity as he saw it. One person requested a church letter to join a Christian Scientist Church in Fresno, California. Rev. Entz immediately wrote back pleading with the person to reconsider and join any other Protestant church.

> Please do earnestly and prayerfully reconsider the step you proposed to take. Christian Science has very dangerous doctrines. It denies the truth of the Bible, it denies the incarnation of Christ, these very fundamental doctrines of Christianity. It is a pity that the name makes the use of the name of "Christain." It hands all the glory to Mrs. Eddy instead of Christ, thereby leading many earnestly seeking Christians away.

Equally strong were his views against divorce. When one of his members in 1937 wanted to get a divorce, he made every effort to bring the couple back together before dropping their names from the membership list. He wrote to the woman involved,

> When I was first told of the action you had taken I was shocked. Such a thing has never yet happened in our church in more than fifty years of its existence. I am sure dear sister, you must have been influenced by others who regard the marriage-vow less sacred than we do. The marriage-vow once given in the presence of God can only be severed by death. . . . If it absolutely must be, two can live separated for a time. I trust this will not be necessary in your case. But if so, then only until the grace of God you shall live happily together. Under the cross of Jesus children of God can always unite. When each one brings his own shortcomings to the

foot of the cross and receives forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb of God, the shortcomings of the other will appear in an altogether different light. Dear sister, think of what you will think of the whole matter when you come to your life's end, which we never know when that is; think of divorce a hundred years from now. How small the difficulties would seem. You surely want to be together in heaven with your whole household; why not make up now and enjoy a piece of heaven this side of the grave. . . . With sincere prayers in the matter, I am in Christian love eager to help.

Rev. Entz was ready to help with his members' financial, as well as spiritual, problems. The main way he would do this was through a low interest loan, often repaid without interest. When people could not pay, he did not pressure for payments but carried one loan for over twenty years. He considered such loans an important part of his ministry. He supported himself financially through the management of his farm as well as an inheritance. He did not receive a regular salary as minister. He gave much money in support of causes he deemed worthy, including Bethel College, Bethel Deaconess Hospital, Mennonite Central Committee, foreign missions and a variety of other agencies.

Work Outside the Church

Bethel College continued to play an important role in the life of Rev. Entz. In 1921 he was appointed to the Board of Directors and served until 1938. He also served on several committees of the General and Western District Conferences. Probably the most important of these was his participation on the Committee on Doctrine and Conduct from 1929 until 1945. This committee was originally set up in 1914 to deal with the problem of secret society memberships in the churches. While its main task was to disseminate material on various issues, it also investigated matters of doctrinal concern. In 1929 the Committee was instructed to examine a report of the board of deacons of the Berne Church (Indiana) on their accusations of Modernism in the Conference.

Rev. Entz also served on the Western District Deaconess Committee. Being a staunch believer in the deaconess movement, he promoted the cause vigorously. He ordained several young women to the Sisterhood at Bethel Deaconess Hospital in Newton and made a point to visit the Sisters there regularly. In 1912 he was appointed to the board of directors of Bethel Deaconess Hospital. He served the institution faithfully for forty years, being president of the board from 1917 to 1952.

Church Activities

At the annual business meeting of 1921, the First Mennonite Church of Newton passed a resolution to begin to collect funds for a new church and to build within three years. Actual building was delayed until 1931 due to the financial support the church gave to the Mennonites in Russia who were stricken by famine and poverty. Construction then proceeded rapidly and on October 30, 1932, the new sanctuary was dedicated.

The German language was used in church services during the first fifty years. The first Sunday school class was taught in English in 1920, but it was not until 1931 that Rev. Entz preached his first English sermon.

The music program of the church was very important to Rev. Entz. In 1937 he reported to the Western District Conference about the music ministry of the church.

> Emphasized consecration—the ministry of music. Has opened rehearsals with prayer. However, it has been a very special effort to strive towards the elimination of shallow and flighty type of song, especially that type of music which might be designated as religious jazz! That type of music which has been created by the great composers and which is recognized throughout the musical world as genuine sacred music is given preference, where the mastery of such music is possible.

To guarantee high quality and dignity in the music of the church, the choir was for many years under the direction of professors from Bethel College. Not the least of these was Walter H. Hohman, who shared Rev. Entz's disparagement of poor music. As Rev. Entz wrote, "Special effort is made to guard against the use of songs commonly resorted to by revivalists."

Rev. Entz's work as elder of a large and growing congregation took full time and attention. He was his own secretary and church record keeper. In all his work he tried to be an encouragement to other people. "Isn't it wonderful," he said, "to walk with the Lord and talk with him as our days pass on and to know he is leading and making all things well."

World War II

In the Second World War, Rev. Entz once again took a strong stand for nonresistance. Even before the United States became submerged in the conflict, he wrote letters urging the President and Congress to remain neutral. In 1940 he wrote a letter regarding conscription,

> Since there is a bill before Congress calling for conscription of men during peace time, I want to register my protest. To my understanding, it is unnecessary and undemocratic and if passed would lead to make us a militaristic nation in a few years.

Rev. Entz was pleased when the Selective Service law was passed in 1940 making it possible for men

to serve their country by doing constructive work rather than being a part of the destructive military machine. In 1944 he wrote,

> It is one of the greatest disappointments of my life that not everybody is accepting the wonderful privilege that our government is giving us under the Selective Service Law. We want to encourage and stand back of everyone who has claimed these rights as much as we can.

While many members of the First Mennonite Church did go into Civilian Public Service Camps, there was also a number who entered regular military service. Rev. Entz had heart-to-heart talks with those who were still at home and sent packets of literature to those he could not contact personally, encouraging them to accept the option of joining CPS camps rather than enter military service.

Finding it impossible to keep in touch with each person individually who was away from home, Rev. Entz began a monthly publication called *The Home Church Letter*. These comunications fostered unity in the church by keeping members informed of church activities and by spiritual exhortation and encouragement.

It is notable that these letters, which Rev. Entz sent out from November 1942 to January 1945, avoided any mention of the war which was the main reason for issuing the letter. Perhaps he feared censorship. One letter said, "We are very anxious to refrain from putting anything into this letter that might hinder its getting to all of you because of information it contains." But Rev. Entz made clear his support of the Civilian Public Service program in many other ways. His receipts show that he personally gave over $600 to Mennonite Central Committee for the operation of the camps.

A Shepherding Ministry

The most appropriate characteristic of the ministry of Rev. J. E. Entz is that of a faithful shepherd to his flock. He loved the church and he loved the individuals in the church. He tried to visit personally each member of the church at least once a year.

He had a particular gift to make festive occasions more festive. At every wedding he performed, he gave the couple the leather-bound Bible he used in the ceremony. In the earlier days in the old church, he would personally distribute the bread to each participant in communion services. At baptismal services he would have a different Bible verse memorized for each candidate, never making an error in quotation even though there were sometimes more than twenty candidates.

He took great joy in teaching catechism classes. The well-worn catechism books he used were filled with marginal comments and bulged with pertinent newspaper clipping and other notes. He outlined his priorities for these classes: "To give instruction in the fundamental truths of the Bible. Gather a treasure in heart and mind. But above all to lead to a definite decision for Christ."

Preaching was a major part of Rev. Entz's ministry. He worked hard on his sermons, writing out each one carefully in longhand. When he came to the pulpit, his voice changed into a high ministerial tone as he read the sermon from start to finish. It was very hard to listen to and follow his sermons. An examination of the content of his sermons over forty years shows some common elements: 1) He was very Biblical in his preaching. All his sermons are full of Biblical quotations and allusions. Even the language of his sermons had a sixteenth-century Biblical style. 2) There is no social comment in his sermons. His sermons were for the edification of his flock and not to express opinion on war, poverty, and other evils of society. 3) The basic message went through very little change through his forty years of preaching. The salvation and centrality of Christ that he first preached on in 1903 was his theme even in retirement.

Retirement

The closing years of Rev. Entz's years as elder were marked with tension and frustration. While there was great respect and love for him, some people grew dissatisfied with his ministry, his monotonous preaching, his patriarchal leadership, his resistance to new methods and new questions. But Rev. Entz felt he had been called for life by God to his position and did not want to step down as long as he was physically capable. In 1944 the church called Rev. D. J. Unruh to serve as associate elder, but the relationship did not work well. In addition to conflicts of authority, Rev. Unruh did not take a strong stand on nonresistance, which Rev. Entz felt was so important. In 1946 Rev. Entz, at 71 years of age, was finally unseated as elder, and given the title of Elder Emeritus. The church asked him to continue the visitation work, which he loved.

Among the memorable events of Rev. Entz's retirement was a trip to Europe in 1952 to attend the Mennonite World Conference in Switzerland. His seventy-seventh birthday was celebrated in Paris with a small dinner party planned by Mrs. Entz. In 1960 he was awarded the first Distinguished Alumnus award from Bethel College. Although he became hard of hearing and his reflexes slowed down as he entered the tenth decade of his life, his alertness and sharpness of mind never left him. He continued to memorize Scripture verses and hymns until the day of his death. He died in 1969 at a meeting of the Bethel College Corporation. A memorable life of service was now over.

COURT MARTIAL 1918

PVT. URA V. ASCHLIMAN (420382)

Ura V. Aschliman of Stryker, Ohio, was among the Mennonite conscientious objectors of World War I who was imprisoned at Fort Leavenworth for his refusal of military duties. Microfilm copies of the case files containing transcripts of court-martials for 131 such men have recently been acquired by Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College from the National Archives in Suitland, Maryland. Extra copies of the three reels of microfilm are available at cost from Mennonite Library and Archives.

The Schowalter Oral History Collection at Bethel College includes a tape recorded interview with Aschliman about his military camp experiences. From that interview we learn that his court martial and imprisonment were hardly the most dramatic events for him in 1918. Earlier a group of soldiers had dragged him out of bed at night, tied a rope around his neck, and jerked it over a tent rafter several times as if to hang him. Aschliman's refusal of KP duty at Camp Sheridan, Alabama, came when he was still bearing scars on his neck from this incident.

The following excerpts from the court-martial trial are only a portion of the official record, but they do reveal much about the mentality of American World War I patriotism as well as the witness of one Mennonite young man under test.

CAMP SHERIDAN, ALABAMA September 16, 1918. The United States v. Private URA V. ASCHLIMAN, Company 1, 46th Infantry.

1. The accused was tried upon the following charge and specification:

> CHARGE: Violation of the 64th Article of War.
> Specification: In that Pvt. Ura V. Aschliman (420382) Co. L, 46th Inf., having received a lawful command from 1st Lieut. A. F. Oeming, I. R. C., his superior officer, to work in the company kitchen, did, at Camp Sheridan, Ala., on the 18th day of July, 1918, wilfully disobey the same.

To which the accused pleaded not guilty. He was found guilty of the charge and specification thereunder, and sentenced to be dishonorably discharged the service with the usual forfeitures, and to be confined at hard labor at such place as the reviewing authority might direct for five (5) years. No evidence of previous convictions was introduced. The reviewing authority approved the sentence and designated the U. S. Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, as the place of confinement. Under the provisions of G. O. 7. 7. D., 1918, the record was forwarded to the office of the Judge Advocate General for review and determination of its legality.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

DEFENSE: Aschliman, did you recognize the officer who testified in here a while ago, as your commander, some time ago, as your company commander while you were in the Depot Brigade?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you remember him giving you an order which you did not obey?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What was that order?

A. He told me to go to the kitchen, and I said that I could not conscientiously go on account of my religious belief.

Q. What are your religious beliefs, Aschliman?

A. My belief, according to the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, is that it is wrong for me to take part in carnal warfare.

CROSS EXAMINATION

JUDGE ADVOCATE: What church do you belong to?

A. Well, I have been going to the Amish Mennonite Church all my life but I have not yet been made a member. I just neglected it.

Q. When did you first decide you wanted to be a member of the Amish Mennonite church?

A. Well, on the 1st day of May.

Q. Of this year?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. 1918?

A. Yes.

Q. When were you drafted?

A. 13th May I left the County seat.

Q. Were you inducted into the service May 18th?

A. Yes.

Q. When did you draw your draft number, when was your number published?

A. I could not say as to that.

Q. When did you first know that you were apt to be called in service?

A. Just a few days before I left.

Q. You read the newspaper, don't you?

A. A little, not very much.

Q. You knew that they were calling young men into the army for some time before that?
A. Yes.
Q. You knew you were liable to the draft?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And you did not decide to become a member of the church until about 13 days before you were actually inducted into the service; in other words, that was after you knew that you were going to be put into the service, wasn't it?
A. No, I did not figure about the service at all; that was the time Christ called me, and that was the time for me to listen.
Q. Christ's voice was not very loud, but you knew that there was some danger in your going into the service—you did not hear that call before?
A. Yes, sir, I heard it before, but I put it off.

. . . . . .

Q. Why does going to work in the kitchen have anything to do with carnal warfare?
A. Because if I do that I am bearing the non-combatant's end of an organized effort to take human life and destroy and overcome the enemy by means of violence, which is a service that non-resisting people cannot do.
Q. You would not go out and help the wounded—what?—would you or wouldn't?
A. Wherever we can, that is not considered under Military Service.
Q. Would you work in the hospital to help the sick?
A. No, I could not do it, because I would be bearing the non-combatant end.
Q. You would consider it a sin to minister to people who are suffering, wounded and in pain?
A. Where that is considered under the Military Service it is against my religion.
Q. You consider it a sin to go out and clean up the company street?
A. Yes, for me it is.
Q. Why?
A. Because I am bearing the noncombatant end of an organized effort to take human life and overcome the enemy by violence which nonresisting people cannot do.
Q. Wouldn't you fight to protect your home?
A. No, sir.
Q. To protect your mother?
A. No, sir.
Q. If a man attempted to rape your mother, wouldn't you fight?
A. No.
Q. You would permit to have that taken away from her which she probably values more than her life, without your turning your hand to prevent it?
A. I would pray to Almighty God for help.
Q. You would ask for a miracle, would you.
A. I would put my trust in the Lord that he would help.

. . . . . .

Q. What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States, do you owe any duty towards your country as a citizen of the United States?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. What are those duties in time of war?
A. For me it is to pray to Almighty God that He may rule through those whom are in authority.
Q. Is that the duty of every citizen?
A. I believe it is.
Q. That is all his duty, that is all he has to do?
A. He has to work to help the poor—
Q. I know—but suppose an enemy wishes to invade this country, to destroy your home, your mother and yourself, suppose he will do it unless you keep him from doing it—what do you think your duty is?
A. My duty for me is, if the enemy comes to attack my home, that I should flee rather than to give any offense.
Q. What do you think the United States is going to do—where are the people of the United States going to flee to?
A. I trust the Almighty God will have a way .

. . . . . .

Q. What did you raise on the farm?
A. General crops—wheat, oats and hay.
Q. What did you do with the profit?
A. Fed some, sold some.
Q. Who did you sell it to?
A. To the elevator man.
Q. Who was the elevator man?
A. Willie was the man at our home, Stryker our home town.
Q. Do you believe in raising crops to support the allies?
A. I believe in raising crops to keep the price down, and to help the poor.
Q. You stated you sold these crops, wheat, corn, oats, etc., is that right?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. How are you going to explain you raised crops to sell, but you won't do anything else?
A. We give money, and send clothing and different things to poor people.
Q. What poor people—did you ever send any to the Belgians?
A. Yes, sent some there.
Q. Why did you send it there, don't you know that the Belgians are fighting?
A. We sent it to those that were suffering and needed help.
Q. Would you raise corn, wheat, oats, etc., for the Allies?
A. I would raise it for to help poor people, and so on.

Q. Do you consider them poor people; who do you consider poor people?

A. Those who are suffering, and some that cannot make their own living.

Q. Have you donated anything to Red Cross?

A. They have organizations in the church there.

Q. Have you bought any War Saving Stamps?

A. Well, they have their organizations under all of that.

Q. Have you invested in any Liberty Bonds?

A. They have all of them there, it comes under that.

Q. Who do you mean by them?

A. The church as a whole.

Q. Have you conserved any food, denied yourself anything in the way of luxuries?

A. Well, we always managed to have a plain living.

Q. Have you reduced it any since the war on account of the war?

A. No sir, we have always had plenty, always raised plenty for our own wants—well, there were certain things that we could not get such as sugar that we could not get as before.

. . . . . .

Q. Would you sell a bushel of wheat if you knew that it was going to war use—you did sell, didn't you?

A. Yes, sold some.

Q. Each year since the war has been on, and it helps to win the war?

A. Well, I did not know; we don't know where it went to.

Q. You had a pretty good idea, didn't you? Did you have any idea what became of the wheat—your neibhbors (sic) did not eat it up in flour?

A. Well, we had a certain amount.

Q. Did you ever eat any War bread?

A. I could not say as to that.

Q. Did you ever make any bread out of anything except flour?

A. Well, I don't know as to that, unless it had been mixed.

Q. You have eaten bread since you have been in camp?

A. Some.

Q. Do you know by eating that bread you are helping to win the war, do you know that, and thereby aiding the Allies; is it a part of your belief not to eat bread to help win the war, are you going to stop eating, or still going to eat War Bread?

A. It is just as the officers with me.

Q. If they tell you to work to help win the war?

A. No, sir. I cannot work.

. . . . . .

Q. Suppose somebody came up to you on the street and called you a son-of-a-bitch—what would you do?

A. I would ask God to forgive him.

Q. Do you know what a son-of-a-bitch is?

A. No, sir.

Q. You don't know what the meaning of that expression is?

A. Not the exact explanation of it.

Q. Suppose somebody came along on the farm you live on and stole some wheat, would you stop him?

A. No, I would let him have it.

Q. Let him take it all?

A. Yes; our duty is that we should overcome evil with good.

Q. Suppose a man held you up on the street with a gun, would you do anything to him?

A. No.

Q. You would let him kill you?

A. Yes, sir.

MEMBER: What reward do you expect from all of this; are you a martyr, set yourself up as a martyr?

A. My reward will be whatever the Lord gives me—such as Eternal Life.

. . . . . .

MEMBER: Why did you plead exemption on Agriculture grounds?

A. Because my mother needed me at home.

Q. Where were the rest of your brothers?

A. They were there too; there is enough work there and we could not get it done the way that it should be with them there.

Q. Why don't you resort to the prayer method?

A. We do continually pray to God, hoping that a brighter day may soon come.

. . . . . .

MEMBER: If the Government were to send you back to your home, and take over part of the crops you raised for the use of the Government service, would you be willing to bo (sic) back, stay with your mother, and raise wheat for the service—finish up on this crop, you and your brother?

A. If I was to go back I would go back with the intention of working to help the poor.

Q. That is not answering the question: Would you be willing if the Government took over part of that crop, if they let you go back?

A. I would leave that up to them to decide their own way.

Q. If they told you that they were going to take it, would you go back and do your best?

A. I would do as I have always been doing.

MEMBER: Did you ever pay taxes?

A. Not myself, but I have paid taxes for my mother, she sent me up there.

Q. Did you ever pay any War Tax?

A. I could not say as to that.

Q. What did you pay tax on?

A. On the farm and chattels on the farm.

Q. Have you ever been to a theatre?
A. I was to a small moving picture once or twice that we have in our own home town, that is all.
Q. Did they have a War Tax?
A. I have not been in there for several years.

MEMBER: Have you got lightning rods on your house?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Have you a telephone in your house?
A. Yes, sir.

MEMBER: Why did you put lightning rods on your house?
A. Well, one reason is that it makes the insurance cheaper for us.

MEMBER: What is another reason?
A. Well, I believe lightning has a tendency to go towards the rods.

. . . . . .

JUDGE ADVOCATE: I just want to say a word or two to the court in this case. The test whether or not a man shall be exempt from Military Service by reason of religious convictions, as I understand it, is whether or not he was a member of a religious sect. It is only fair to the accused here to say that the Mennonites is one of the sects particularly designated in either an order or Act of Congress which was published some time ago. I have attempted to get hold of it for the last few days but have been unable to do so, but the Mennonites is a religious sect one of the tenets of whose belief is that it is not proper to go to war.

The main proposition involved in this case is that the accused is not a member of that church. It is very significant that he never joined this church, or openly professed belief in this creed, until about two weeks before he was inducted into the service, and after he had every reason to expect that he was going to be drafted.

As to his sincerity, that of course is for the court to pass upon. Whether he is defiant we have no testimony before us at this time; but I believe that inasmuch as he is not a member of the church, and evidently made no effort to become a member of the church until just before being called in the service, the court, properly, may consider this the governing point in this case.

DEFENSE: The defense does not wish to make any argument in this case.

The court was closed, and finds the accused:
Of the Specification: Guilty
Of the Charge: Guilty

. . . . . .

The court was closed, and sentences the accused to be dishonorably discharged the service, to forfeit all pay and allowances due or to become due, & to be confined at hard labor at such place as the reviewing authority may direct for five years.

. . . . . .

Statement of Ura V. Aschlima, (sic) . . .

I am an Amish Mennonite. My home is at Stryker, Route 2, Williams County, Ohio. The Commanding Officer of Fort Thomas has explained to me that those who conscientiously object to military service would be assigned to a noncombatant branch of the service and would not be transferred to a fighting branch of the army and also has explained to me that by law I am just as much a soldier and subject to military rule as the man in uniform, but on account of my religious belief I object to performing any military service for the Government whatever. Neither can I conscientiously wear the military uniform. I am not yet a member of the Amish Mennonite church but have been brought up along the lines of that belief all my life. It has also been explained to me that I am liable to severe punishment on account of refusing the orders of those appointed over me. I am twenty-four years of age.

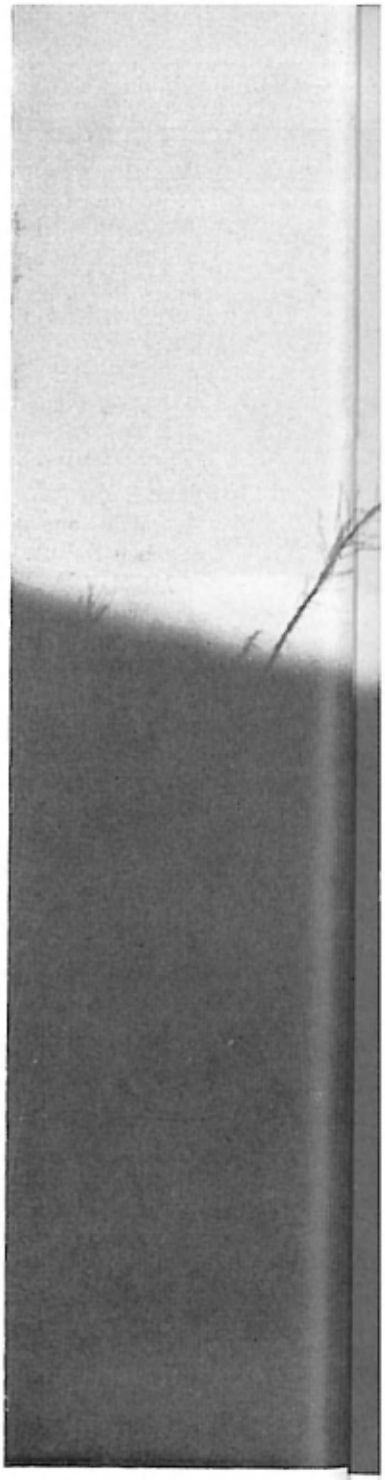
(signed.) Ura V. Aschliman

Ura Aschliman had been sentenced for a five year term, but he was in the military prison at Fort Leavenworth for only eight months. The war ended in November, 1918, and Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, pardoned the imprisoned conscientious objectors within a few months.

The "hard labor" to which Aschliman had been sentenced consisted of strenuous work in the stone quarry. Later he was transferred to work at a big dairy farm near the prison. He reports that the officers in charge of the dairy were sorry to see the conscientious objectors released because they were such good workers.

In his Showalter oral history interview in 1974, Aschliman reported of some disturbances in the Leavenworth prison. "I've seen different times when some of them had their heads busted. One time there was a riot in the mess hall. Tin plates and stuff and everything else was flying. You sat pretty quiet." Aschliman expressed special appreciation for the ministry of J. D. Minninger, Mennonite pastor who visited the prison on various occasions.

Aschliman has spent his entire life in the Archbold, Ohio, area after his World War I experience. He never married, nor did he attend school past the eighth grade. He is a quiet-spoken man who has seldom told anyone about his dramatic personal story of fifty-eight years ago. But he has lived to see a new historical and literary interest in the events of 1918. On his reading list has been the World War I novel by Ken Reed, Mennonite Soldier, *parts of which correspond directly to his own experience.*



TRIFLES

Years ago
I heard the windmill
groan as it worried
its way to face the wind.
Listening carefully
I hear it yet,
a melody lingering long
after far more memorable
music has been blown
out of my memory.

ACHING TO SING

Casting an old shadow
the gaunt windmill
leans against blue sky,
straining to remember forgotten music
and aching to sing again
its ancient song.

MENNONITE MORNING PRAYER

The Mennonite Elder woke early
and walked into the fields.
The good seeds of Turkey Red
brought along from Russia
watched with him as the sun rose.
As the east became gray,
before the sunrise, the sunflower
turned its dark brown face
with it halo of yellow leaves
to catch the first ray of morning light
The Mennonite, the Turkey Red Wheat,
the Sunflower prayer—prayed
for rain that wheat and melons
and mulberries might grow—
prayed that America would let them live
in peace, prayed that the whole world,
everybody in the world,
might someday live in peace.

—Elmer F. Suderman

photo by Ken Loewen

In The Fullness of Time

Walter Quiring and Helen Bartel. *In The Fullness of Time, 150 Years of Mennonite Sojourn in Russia.* Translation of the 1963 German edition by Katherine Janzen and edited and published by Aaron Klassen, Kitchener Ontario. 1974. 210 pp., $16.50.

No other group of Mennonites has produced as many memoirs, autobiographical and historical narratives of experiences as have the Mennonites of Canada that came from Russia. They were originally all written in German and were primarily produced by those who came from Russia after the Revolution of 1917. The Centennial observations have created a new impulse and a new stream of writings. The focus continues to be on the Russian background but there are strong efforts being made to feature the settlements, experiences and developments of Mennonite life in the new country with a full participation of those who came to Canada hundred of years ago. Another observation that can be made in that photographs of life in Russia as well as in Canada have been gathered and published with appropriate introductions and captions.

The pioneer in this effort was Walter Quiring, former editor of *Der Bote,* a General Conference paper for the German reading constituency in North and South America as well as Europe. In separate illustrated volumes he features the Mennonites in South America, Russia and Canada. That the publications were sold out in a short time indicates that an illustrated book or magazine is popular in our day. We deal with the one that has now been reprinted in an English and German version using the same illustrations. The publisher of these two editions is Aaron Klassen, Rt. 1, Waterloo, Ontario.

In the Fullness of Time, 150 Years of Mennonite Sojourn in Russia, is divided into 17 chapters with appropriate headings relating the story of the beginnings of the settlements in the Ukraine on the Dnieper River and on the Molotschna River and the establishment of daughter settlements in European and Asiatic Russia. The illustrations and the text feature the difficult beginnings, the development of agricultural and milling industries, educational institutions, hospitals, architectural traditions pertaining to homes, schools, churches and other aspects of life.

The climax of the economic and cultural achievements during the first quarter of the twentieth century is presented. The results of the Revolution (1917) and civil war, deportations under Stalin and the exodus of the Mennonites from the Ukraine during Hitler's withdrawal of his defeated army present the tragic end. It is surprising how much of all phases of Mennonite life in Russia was photographed and preserved in the days when destruction for one or another reason seemed to be the order of the day.

The chapters are not equally long which may have been due to the fact that photographs were not available or of acceptable quality. But the 1500 photos used are sufficient to tell the story effectively. It is therefore, not surprising that the German edition of 1963 compiled and edited by Walter Quiring and Helen Bartel was soon sold out.

Aaron Klassen must be congratulated that he decided to publish a third edition of the book simultaneously in the English and another one in the German language so that the old and the young of the North American and South American, as well as European Mennonites, can fully benefit by this unusual record.

The 1500 photos used were obtained from 500 families. They were made available to all who have an interest in this unusual story of 150 years of struggle and achievement in Russia, that has in most instances totally come to an end as far as the original inhabitants are concerned. Exceptions are the settlements in Siberia which were not affected by the invasion of the German Army in World War II and Stalin's removal of the German population at that time.

This book has become a most valuable record in many families in Canada and deserves to be placed in all Mennonite libraries of the USA and in the homes that wish to have a visual record of the achievement of their fellow believers in Russia and what happened to them in modern warfare.

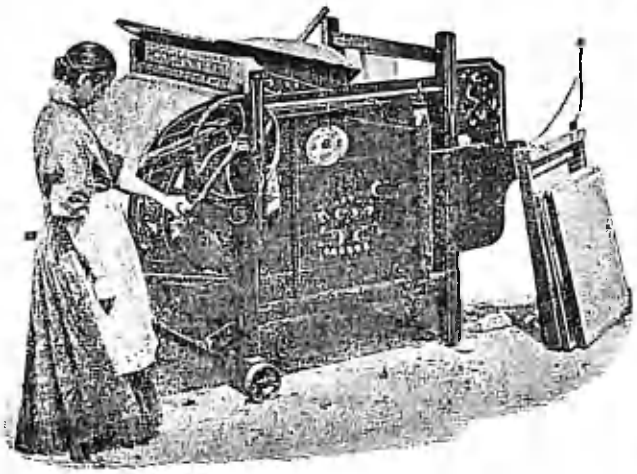
Those who have recently been in Russia and driven through the settlements now occupied by a Russian population could furnish some photos showing present conditions in the areas where Mennonites formerly lived. In all fairness, one must say that great progress has been made in many instances. This is the case particularly in the realm of industrial development. It is most vividly illustrated in cities like Alexandrovsk, now Zaporozhe.

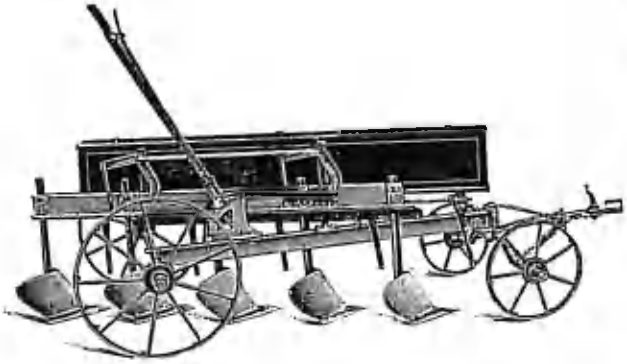
An appendix to the present book could contain illustrations of the homes of the Mennonites that were removed from the Ukraine and live in Siberia, Central Asia and other places where they now live. Much information (and some pictures) could also be obtained for this purpose from those Mennonites that have come out of Russia during the last few years.

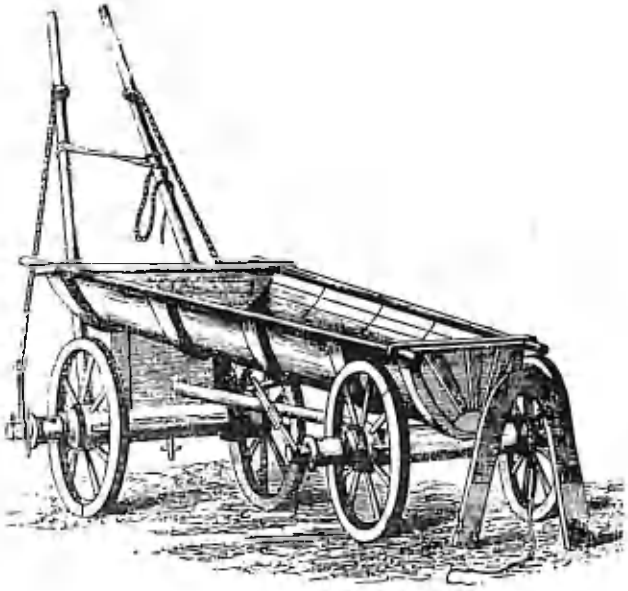
Cornelius Krahn

Photographs reproduced in the book, In the Fullness of Time, *display the rich variety of Mennonite life in Russia. Russian Mennonites had attained a high degree of industrial development already before World War I. These photos of the Jakob G. Niebuhr facturies which produced farm implements are evidence of prosperity and progress. The photos are dated from about 1910.*

In the Fullness of Time documents the story of a Mennonite people who were in transition from a peasant society to a middle class society. The faces of people—men, women and children—are caught at work and sometimes at leisure. Included are faces of joy, of confidence, of fear, or sorrow, and of many other human emotions of a people at home and on the way.







Books in Review

Against the World, For the World: The Hartford Appeal and the Future of American Theology. Edited by Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus. New York: The Seabury Press. 1976. Pp. ix+164. $3.95

Eight signers of the 1975 Hartford Appeal for Theological Affirmation present essays "to clarify and elaborate the intention of the Appeal." The Hartford Appeal intended to restore theological balance to American Christianity by emphasizing the centrality of transcendence. The essayists in this volume include: Peter Berger, George Lindbeck, Avery Dulles, George Forell, Carl J. Peter, Richard Mouw, Alexander Schmemann, and Richard John Neuhaus. In addition to developing the Hartford viewpoint, these men also reply to recent critics of the Hartford Appeal. Three topics in the book will especially interest Mennonites.

First, some critics argue that Hartford advocates a conservative political theology. However, several essays insist that Hartford's "high" view of transcendence condemns equally both the "right" and the "left" of contemporary American Christianity. These essays deny both that the world sets the agenda for the Church (Theme 10) and that an emphasis on transcendence limits social concern (Theme 11). According to Peter Berger, Hartford attacks equally the Americanization of Christianity and Third World revolutionists (p. 15). Thus, Hartford "seems to fit beautifully" as "it battles both reaction and accommodation in the name of that which transcends both" (Lindbeck, p. 23). Mennonites will appreciate this argument which intends to play no political favorites.

Secondly, several essayists examine the relationship of Christian theology to American culture. Hartford warns of the dangers and tensions for theology in the cultural context. Hartford stresses that America's unspoken assumptions run counter to the Christian faith. "Thus we imbibe from our environment a kind of latent or implicit heresy" (Dulles, p. 58). For Berger, the influence of modernity with its utilitarian mindset and the fragmentation of cohesive communities distorts religious perception (p. 11). In response, the Church "must question the world's questions" in order to challenge the world's values (Dulles, p. 55). Such emphases derive from the original Hartford Themes 1 and 4 which deny that modern thought is normative for Christianity and that Jesus can only be understood in terms of contemporary human models. Mennonites will agree.

A third emphasis in the essays pleads for a reasonable proclamation of the Christian gospel. Hartford Theme 2 reflects this basic concern: "Religious statements are not totally independent of reasonable discourse." Themes 3 and 10 support that religious language refers to more than simply human experience and that there is hope beyond death. But this proclamation must take place "in such a way that participants as well as nonparticipants in this movement can honestly say 'yes' or 'no' to the Christian message because they have at least some idea of what is being proclaimed." (Forell, p. 67.) According to Richard John Neuhaus, Christianity "asserts a public hope, based upon public evidence, and subject to public discussion" (p. 162).

Most Mennonites will probably find themselves in agreement with the Hartford viewpoint on the three topics above. But there are also emphases in the Hartford approach which counter Anabaptist-Mennonite traditions.

Richard Neuhaus thinks that a person can confess "Jesus Christ as Lord" and yet live in peace with the world. Though Neuhaus does speak of the world as in a "twisted and provisional state of present reality," he tells the Christian to accept the world and its ethic (p. 153). For example, he argues that warfare, current economic and political systems are so entrenched as to appear inevitable, thus they are acceptable (pp. 153-54). Indeed, says Neuhaus, Christians must accept the moral confines of "natural sentiments of patriotism," American identity, and the "average businessman and church elder" (p. 142 and p. 151). Yet having said this, Neuhaus contends that Christianity must be presented as objective and normative (p. 158). This is simply a contradiction in terms. So much for Neuhaus' plea for Christian social action "sustained by a relationship of command and obedience" (p. 150).

We Mennonites surely must be grateful for Hartford's reaffirmation of divine transcendence and the importance of a critical Christian stand over against the modern world. However, it must be noted that the authors make no claim to present a complete theology (Lindbeck, p. 25). Were we to ask what equally important affirmations next should be added, it would be that the life of Jesus of Nazareth and His sufferings show us how the transcendent God is also God with us.

John K. Hershberger

Open Doors: A History of the General Conference Mennonite Church by Samuel Floyd Pannabecker. Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1975.

History is premised on questions asked of the past. If the question is: "What is the history of the organization known as the General Conference Mennonite Church?" one answer will emerge. If the question however reads: "What is the history of those Mennonite people who associated as the General Conference Mennonite Church?" another story follows. This book asks and answers both questions, Part One the latter and Part Two the former, with the last chapter suggesting the author's ambivalence as to what his question really was.

Part One creatively describes the chronological evolution of this people known as G.C.'s from the 1840's division in the Franconia Conference, on through additions of new immigrants of Swiss, Amish and Russian heritage, to the organization of a denominational structure with primary commitments to education and mis-

sion. It is very appropriate that a denomination with these dual themes should have as its historian an educator and missionary! And in this first half, Dr. Pannabecker offers a convincing reading of the interplay between the Mennonites and their American environment, reflective of his 1944 Yale dissertation on which this present volume is based.

Part Two by comparison to Part One is quite disappointing. A different question is asked as is apparent in the organization of these materials on the twentieth century era. Rather than continuing chronologically the story of the G. C. Mennonites in relationship to the larger society, Pannabecker truncates the drama by dividing his data according to conference programs. An encyclopedic amount of information is gathered on the work of each board, which in itself is of significant value and interest. Yet, this form of casting the material allows (or possibly forces) the author to virtually neglect the Mennonite struggle with their American and "German" identities as in the traumatic experiences of the two world wars, to miss even mentioning the formation of Grace Bible Institute which epitomized an ongoing conflict of Mennonite self-definition in the General Conference, and to reflect only in hindsight in the last chapter on the evolving G. C. understanding of itself as unique among American denominations.

At least one highly significant deduction can be drawn from Pannabecker's interpretation. One could conclude that in the twentieth century the General Conference Mennonite Church is less a people than an organization, and that the facets of the organization are quite unrelated to each other and result less as responses to ever new open doors than as consequences of organizational self-perpetuation. Perhaps this *is* the reality of the General Conference, and by holding up a mirror the author is playing the prophet! Or, as this reviewer would hope, the Conference is a dynamic people of God not merely godly programs, and this book has simply miscast this reality.

However the author perceives himself, as prophet or/and historian, the reader soon realizes that Pannabecker both knows and loves this Conference on intimate terms. This empathy gives him the understanding so basic to denominational history. Indeed, his lifelong involvement in the institutions of the General Conference probably has resulted in losing sight of the forest for the trees. In counsequence, as *A* history of the General Conference this book bares a rich lode of material, but as *The* history, which the book occasionally suggests, some reservations need to be registered.

Rodney J. Sawatzky
Conrad Grebel College

Our Star-Spangled Faith by Donald B. Kraybill. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1976.

Our Star-Spangled Faith by Donald B. Kraybill is a critique of American civil religion which Kraybill views as the false marriage of Christian faith and American patriotism. Kraybill calls for a renewal of genuine Biblical Christianity which moves beyond America's "God and Country" religion toward "a new patriotism which loves the international homeland." Kraybill illustrates the idolatrous nature of this civil religion by numerous quotes from the following sources: inaugural addresses of the presidents of the United States, the congressional record, the weekly compilation of presidential documents, White House sermons, and significant public speeches in America by leading spokesman of the civil religion. Special attention is given to the role of evangelist Billy Graham. Kraybill largely focuses upon the recent past, from Eisenhower to the present.

Kraybill's book views civil religion in totally negative terms. He sees it as a watered down folk religion capable of including practically everyone under its umbrella. It must be careful not to offend anyone. He sees civil religion as primarily serving political purposes. Civil religion is "a superficial display of piety which . . . brings no word of judgment on perverted cultural values but sanctifies the way things are so that they appear to be what God intended." (pp. 24-25) "The will of God becomes synonymous with national goals and priorities." (p. 34) "The politicians of our land are viewed as God's special ministers." (p. 36) The civil religion sees God as on the side of America and its enemies on the side of the devil. Myths conveying America's commitment to justice and freedom, America as a haven for the oppressed, as a light to the nations and as a champion of liberty over the globe, mask America's real, perverted values of military power, economic wealth at the expense of the poor, and political repression. "National fables and tales which distort the transnational nature of the kingdom of God are perversions of holy revelation which melt the nation into a 'golden calf.' The scriptures tells us: 'God so loved the (whole) world.' God no longer has special affairs with particular nations. His love welcomes persons in every land. Jesus calls us to membership in a supernatural kingdom—which transcends all earthly kingdoms." (p. 45)

The book reads easily as Kraybill intends it, by avoiding scholarly jargon and academic verbiage. It is filled with quotes from presidents and other political leaders, from religious leaders like Norman Vincent Peale and Billy Graham, and from patriotic hymns. There is a analysis of patriotic slogans, heroes, shrines, holidays, etc. A chapter entitled the "Star-Spangled Cross" demonstrates how religious and patriotic symbols are skillfully blended together. Overall the book is helpful in raising our consciousness to the subtle ways in which the Christian faith is prosituted by Americanism.

Kraybill's values, however, sometimes color his analysis so much that he distorts reality. He says that in civil religion the "will of God becomes synonymous with national goals and priorities." To illustrate this notion he proceeds to quote from a number of prayers where presidents and others ask God for guidance and help in doing His will. It is one thing to claim one *is* doing God's will as a nation, and quite another when one asks God to *help* one do His will.

Kraybill's weakness in the book is his one-sided and oversimplified view of civil religion as totally evil. Kraybill describes the *worst* aspects of civil religion as *practiced*, and the *ideal* aspects of Christianity as it should be believed by true Christians. Kraybill accuses the civil religion of oversimplifying life by dividing the

world into two blocks, but he does the same: civil religion as idolatry vs. the Kingdom of Christ which is supernational, and thus not idolatrous.

Kraybill fails to note the transcendent dimensions within the civil religion itself which can become the basis for prophetic judgment and renewal. Robert Bellah in his article on "Civil Religion in America" (*The Religious Situation* 1968, ed. by Donald Cutler, p. 355) points out this dimension of civil religion when he says:

> "The will of the people is not itself the criterion of right and wrong. There is a higher criterion in terms of which this will can be judged; it is possible that the people may be wrong."

John Kennedy acknowledged this in his inaugural address when he said that "the rights of man come not from the generosity of the State but from the hand of God." Bellah goes on to say:

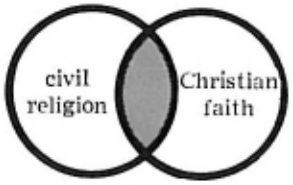
> The rights of man are more basic than any political structure and provide a point of revolutionary leverage from which any state structure may be radically altered." (p. 335)

It is this non-idolatrous transcendent element that is the prophetic basis for Martin L. King's appeal for social justice. King's speeches and writings are full of prophetic appeals to civil religion. One of the most famous is in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail":

> "We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights . . . We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny . . . We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands . . . One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage." (*Why We Can't Wait*, p. 76-95)

The root of Kraybill's problem lies in his radical two Kingdom dualism. Kraybill sees the relationship of civil religion and Christianity as follows:

A more accurate analysis would see the relationship is as follows:



In this view the darkened area where the two circles overlap is a recognition of certain value agreements. As King demonstrated in the quote above, there is a point at which the values of civil religion and Christian faith are similar. While it is legitimate to point out those aspects of civil religion that do not overlap with Christianity, as Kraybill has done, it is also important to recognize some overlap of values. If there were no such agreement at all, the only possible relationship between Christians and political reality would be negative or disassociation. There would be no basis at all to work toward social justice in society if the values of civil religion and Christianity are always mutually exclusive. The implication of Kraybill's dualism is an almost total negativism. His counsel to the Christian in relation to civil society is stated in negative terms: renunciation of allegiance to all forms of civil religion.

Kraybill's dualism also leads him to a serious distortion of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Evidently because civil religion is largely based on Old Testament religion, Kraybill is led to the conclusion that "the provincialism of the God of the Old Testament who worked through one nation was superseded by the Kingdom of Jesus Christ which transcends all modern political boundaries." This is another false dichotomy. The God of the Old Testament is also the God who created the earth and all the people in it, the one who is portrayed as the champion of the poor and oppressed, the one to whom prophets appeal in their cry of judgment on all the nations, including Israel. As in American civil religion, the religion of the Old Testament has both universalistic and particularistic elements. Jesus himself went back to the idea of the Jubilee (Leviticus 25) in his opening manifesto when he began his ministry in Galilee. (Luke 4, See John Yoder's analysis of this in his book *The Politics of Jesus*). One aspect of the Jubilee is also imprinted on the Liberty Bell: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land." (Lev. 25:10) It is simply false for Kraybill to contrast this with Jesus' message and to speak of this Old Testament passage (along with several others) as "not directly applicable to the modern experience in any nation, since they report God's past work with the children of Israel but do not represent his present-day blueprint." (p. 177) Jesus represents in relationship to the Old Testament the kind of relationship we should have to civil religion: a sense of discrimination rather than total condemnation. Even as he selected from the tradition of the Old Testament those dimensions of transcendence and universality, so we must do with respect to the civil religion. The problem is not civil religion as such, but the idolatrous and counter revolutionary aspects of civil religion which bless an unjust status quo in which America protects its power and prestige at the expense of social justice. There are other sources in civil religion for prophetic judgment and impetus for social change which can be and should be affirmed by Christians.

Duane Friesen
Bethel College

For the U.S. Bicentennial 1976

My great-great (how many greats?) grandfather,
Peter Drushel, blacksmith, shoed a horse
for George Washington
but would not fight the Redcoats.
Why should he?
Hadn't Englishman William Penn opened
his green woods to such as he?
In Pennsylvania Palatine Peter
could worship freely,
not dragged before a magistrate
for not baptizing his babies,
grateful to King George and William Penn,
unperturbed by the red-hot pen
of Benjamin Franklin.
Two hundred years later, and I have considered
founding a nationwide organization of D-COAR,
Daughters of Conscientious Objectors
to the American Revolution,
in honor of my distant ancestor.
I am an American living in Tokyo
next door to an English poet,
whom I invited to our Fourth of July
celebration.
I am glad to be an American,
a truly revolutionary American,
to belong to a nation catholic enough
to welcome all kinds of people,
Vietnam refugees through Fort Chaffee, Arkansas
And Peter Drushel, blacksmith,
who shoed a horse for George Washington,
but would not fight the Redcoats.

—Elaine Sommers Rich


We have
Blessed are the Peacemakers
dedicated ourselves to serve
all men in every Thing that can be helpful to the
preservation of Mens Lives, but we find no free-
dom in giving, or doing or assisting in any Thing
by which Mens Lives are destroyed or hurt.
Benjamin Mershey, Mennonite Minister November 1776