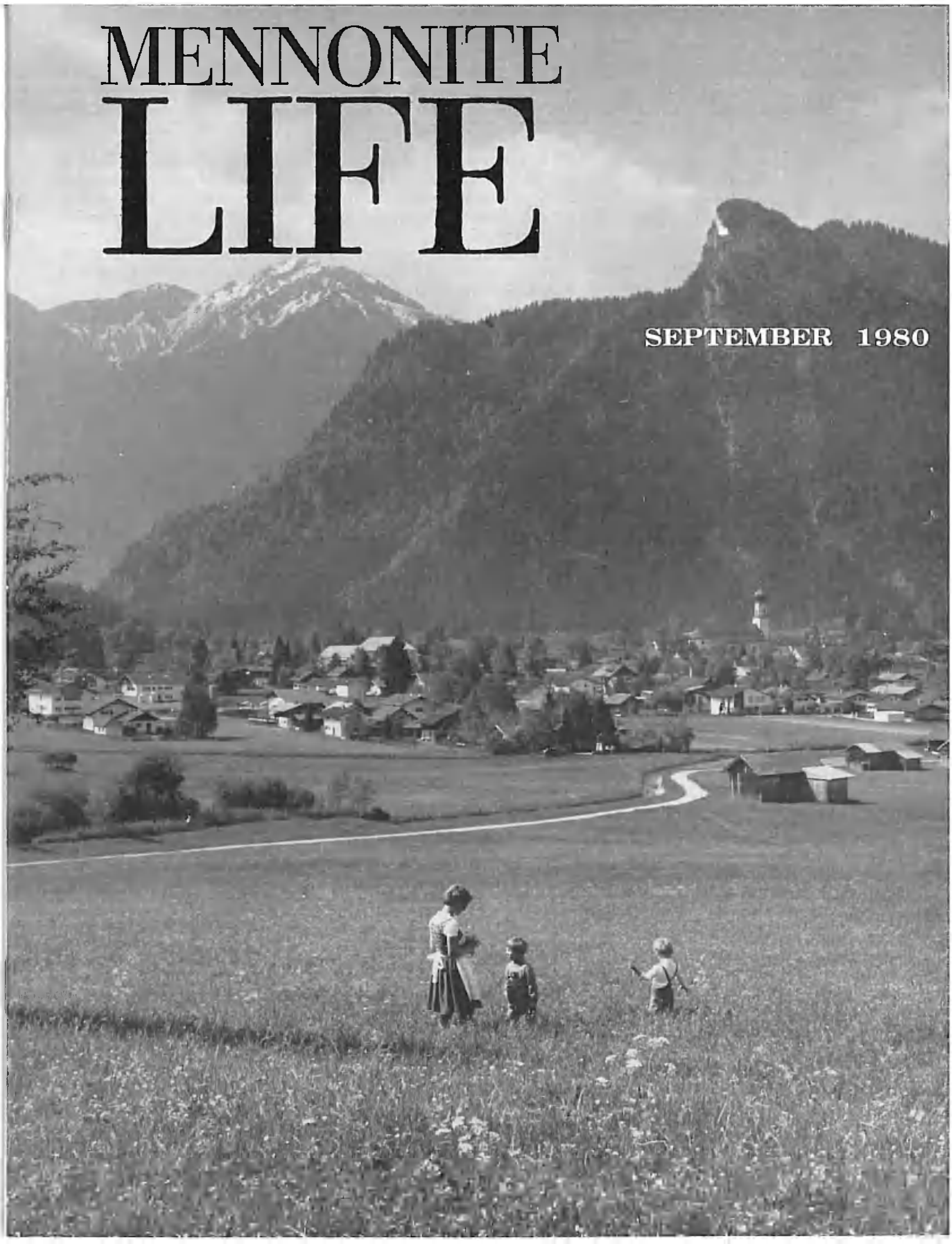
MENNONITE LIFE



SEPTEMBER 1980

In this Issue

In this year of the Oberammergau passion play it is a delight to see the play through the eyes of a thirty year old student, Christian E. Krehbiel (1869-1948), who later became a leader among the General Conference Mennonites and who in 1900 attended the passion play. His critical observations are interesting against the background of the traditionally suspect status of drama among Mennonites. John F. Schmidt of the Mennonite Library and Archives edited this report from the diary of Krehbiel.

England was the bridgehead for the Mennonite Central Committee post-World War II program in Europe. In recovering the story of MCC in embattled Britain, David Haury recalls to memory such tranquil-sounding places at Taxal Edge, Wichhurst Manor, the Woodlands, South Meadows, Highgate, and 68 Shepherds Hill. Haury is a member of the staff of the Mennonite Library and Archives.

A team of four historians is now engaged in writing the history of the Mennonite Experience in America, which is to appear in four volumes to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the coming of the Mennonites to Germantown, Pennsylvaina, in 1683. Robert Kreider, Chairman of the Editorial Committee for this project, seeks to identify motifs in the Colonial story of the Mennonites which persist to this day.

Elmer Suderman, Professor of English at Gustavus Adolphus College and a frequent contributor to this quarterly, is the author of Four Poems.

Jacob J. Enz, Professor of Old Testament at Mennonite Biblical Seminary, poses in a biblical context the haunting question: "Whose land is great-grandfather Ewert's land in Marion County, Kansas?" Whose land is Palestine? Whose land is the Persian Gulf?

Calvin Redekop, Professor of Sociology at Conrad Grebel College, adds a new perspective to the perennial search for the Mennonite identity. His distinction between "the great tradition" and "the little tradition" brings to mind the imagery of the Negro spiritual of Ezekiel's wheels, "the little wheel" and the "big wheel."

MENNONITE
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Robert Kreider

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Front Cover

The village of Oberammergau in Bavaria. Photo: German Center for Tourism

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The Passion Play at Oberammergau—1900

Notes from the Diary of a Mennonite Student, C. E. Krehbiel, 1869-1948

While attending the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Bloomfield, New Jersey, C. E. Krehbiel discovered that a ticket to Germany cost no more than a ticket home to Halstead, Kansas, so he went to Europe and registered for summer school at the University of Berlin. Arthur E. Hertzler of "Horse and Buggy Doctor" fame, and a lifelong friend, studied medicine at the same university. Krehbiel studied under such professors as Harnack, Pfleiderer, Gunkel, Delitsch, Strack and Weiss. Krehbiel and Hertzler bicycled through much of Germany and in the summer of 1900 Krehbiel also took the opportunity to see the Passion Play in Oberammergau. We take up the acount from his diary on the day he arrived by train at Oberammergau.—John F. Schmidt.

Oberrammergau — August 7 - 8, 1900. At Munchen 2:00 p.m. August 7 we bought tickets for Murnau and return 4:10 p.m. and then found a terrible jam to get to the train.... I think half of the crowd was Americans. We were among the first—Mr. and Mrs. Ayres and I.... Saw mountains in distance. Train of 15 coaches and two engines. Americans with Kodaks used to cause the brakemen trouble at stations where train stopped. They would get out and try to take snap shots. Oberammergau 6:15 p.m. Went around here and there for rooms. Tickets all sold out at [Housing] Bureau. It was said there were 700 teachers here for this and that made it difficult to get place. We took rooms in No. 132 House George Köpf (*Waffensschmied*). Then took supper at a restaurant (1.40 mark). Then over to Anton Lang's house. Went inside; saw him shave. When bells rang in (8 p.m.) evening all took off their hats and were silent, some facing church. Then all said "guten abend"—and a number sitting around table touched beer glasses together, and drank to somebody's health, I presume. The canon shot several times in the evening—I think about 7:30 p.m. This was signal for band to begin march through the streets and play two selections. Before we took the room at No. 132 we were up on the hill in the new Villa—castle-like stone building. There one room was offered us for 12 marks, but we did not like the looks of the man. He said he thought "we could get tickets in the morning;" but did not say plainly that all were sold out. We discovered this at [the Housing] Bureau and so had to take a room at the other place without knowing whether or not we would get tickets next day.

The beds we got really belonged to other South German countrymen but Mr. Köpf said they were willing and glad to let the beds go and sleep on straw in stable so as to save the 10 marks for two beds. They only took beds to be sure of tickets. We had at first planned to go to Ettal and walk in from there next morning, but glad we did not do so for we surely would have been among the 300 to 500 that stood all day. [People] who live in Oberammergau can already get tickets in the evening after the last train has arrived; all ordered tickets are not called for. Strangers must wait till about 7:00 a.m. One lady offered to set up beds in her dining room and let us stay there. The people seemed very kind and not at all crabby as you might expect with so many strangers coming and so many demands and so much inconvenience. One lady said she often had very disagreeable people to stay with her. The Americans were prominent everywhere....

August 8

We had a good sleep in our low room on third floor. From 5:45-6:00 a.m. the chimes rang announcing the day of play. It was cloudy and quite cool. By and by I went down and found that our landlord had 3-4 mark tickets for us—OK. We had coffee at the house for 25 pfennig. Of course we tipped a little for tickets. The man told us to pay the woman for rooms. The more people you have to pay, the more pleasure of tipping. This they seem to know in Oberammergau, though they are only peasants. On the whole they did not seem inclined to skin people alive. Our supper was rather expensive but not more than we expected. By and by the canon shot three times; we went to the large steel frame auditorium and the play began.

Oberammergau—Play

8:00—Orchestra

8:15 Chorus—34 voices line across stage (32 after dinner).

Every seat was filled and I think about 300-500 standing along sides

and back. The crowd well dotted with monks or long-robed priests who seemed to be in excellently good spirit. The Americans occupied mostly 6-8 or 10 mark seats while the Germans were mostly content with 2-4 or 6 [mark seats]. There were exceptions for I saw American girls standing. The opening overture did not impress me with the grandeur or sublimity of Tannhäuser.... It was a bad day for stringed instruments too, and I heard (once or twice), that characteristic noise that accompanies the breaking of a cat gut. The *Vor-Bühne* is 42 meters wide and the chorus of 34 voices stood so as to make one line almost across the whole width. And when the pantomimes were to be given the central members of chorus drew back with end members acting as a pivot, until the *Bühne* proper was reached and could be seen dividing the chorus into halves....

If I am right in directions—it was cloudy most of the time—the audience faced south or slightly southwest. The auditorium is built around a steel frame and the part between the auditorium and stage is left open, so spectators see the heavens over the stage. The *Vor Bühne* is thus open to sun and rain. Decorations on the stage are only temporary and appear to be painted on light cloth for the wind shakes them. The Moses on the separable board curtains is a copy from M. Angelo's.

To my right sits a monk, to my left an old maid and next to her a nun, so I am in good company. No. 0303 to the right, a 4 mark seat is my place. The choir leader Jac. Rutz has a very dramatic poise and holds it throughout, rain or shine.

1) Part I. Triumphal Entry — children with long palm branches leading the way to an apparently endless crowd. Some about three years old, many barefoot and all bareheaded; some wear sandals. At given intervals the whole advancing mass turns and shouts "Heil." This would hardly be so in a haphazard crowd in real life. The little donkey led by John sidles along with its heavy burden, advancing a few small steps and then making a short pause. Finally garments are spread on floor and "Lang" dismounts. Tall figure, full beard, serene face. Bareheaded and sandals on feet. He wears purple gown and red "Talar." This scene was very effective. The moment "Lang" spoke the value of the whole scene was depreciated.

2) The cleansing of the temple did not impress me much. It seemed too tame. "Lang" seemed to strike the *men*. But his motions of arm seemed more directed at holding back the lash than [delivering blows]. The tables were overturned and likewise the dove-cote from which four doves flew first over the audience then circling back out over the stage and away. The disciples had shepherds' staffs about six feet long.

3) After the chorus had sung again and left, two swallows skimmed in over the *Vor-Bühne* and now I noticed the first fine mist whipped across the stage. When the chorus came again ... they marched out into the rain. There are some fair voices in the chorus; but no attempt at artistic display. Already the gestures of chorus members became noticeable. In Simon's house there were backless stools set around common table, upon which were silver cups. Magdalena annointing feet of "Lang" seems unreal.... Much blowing of noses in audience. But the weather is con-

C. E. Krehbiel (seated) and A. Krehbiel, Newton, Kansas 1890.

trary. People in front are sitting in the rain.

4) Chorus—much feather movements. Songs slightly monotonous. Pantomimes are under roof in outer-scenery. Jerusalem is distant background. So much rain that people in front put up umbrellas, while some leave for wraps or to stand along the sides.

5) This chorus of a brighter nature. Still rain and cold. I have overcoat on and still cold. Real foot-washing, chorus in the distance. Strong wind and the steel building creaks from the strain. The players cannot get right hold on the audience. The bread is put directly into mouths by Lang. His motions are somewhat dramatic. Regular cold wind and rainstorm. The hair of actors is tossed in the wind. Table cloth flutters. Judas shows too plainly even before it is announced that he is the betrayer. His companions certainly would not have needed to inquire "who is it?" Judas took the [bait] as a dog snaps for a bone. His abrupt departure overdrawn. I should think he would sneak away. It would probably be better to act the story of *wer mit mir in die Schüssel taucht der ist es.* The actions were not natural consequences, but carried out because the story runs so.

6) Court of High priests. Nothing remarkable, but Court of High priests parted by saying in unison *"Er sterbe"* etc. which I consider a mistake.

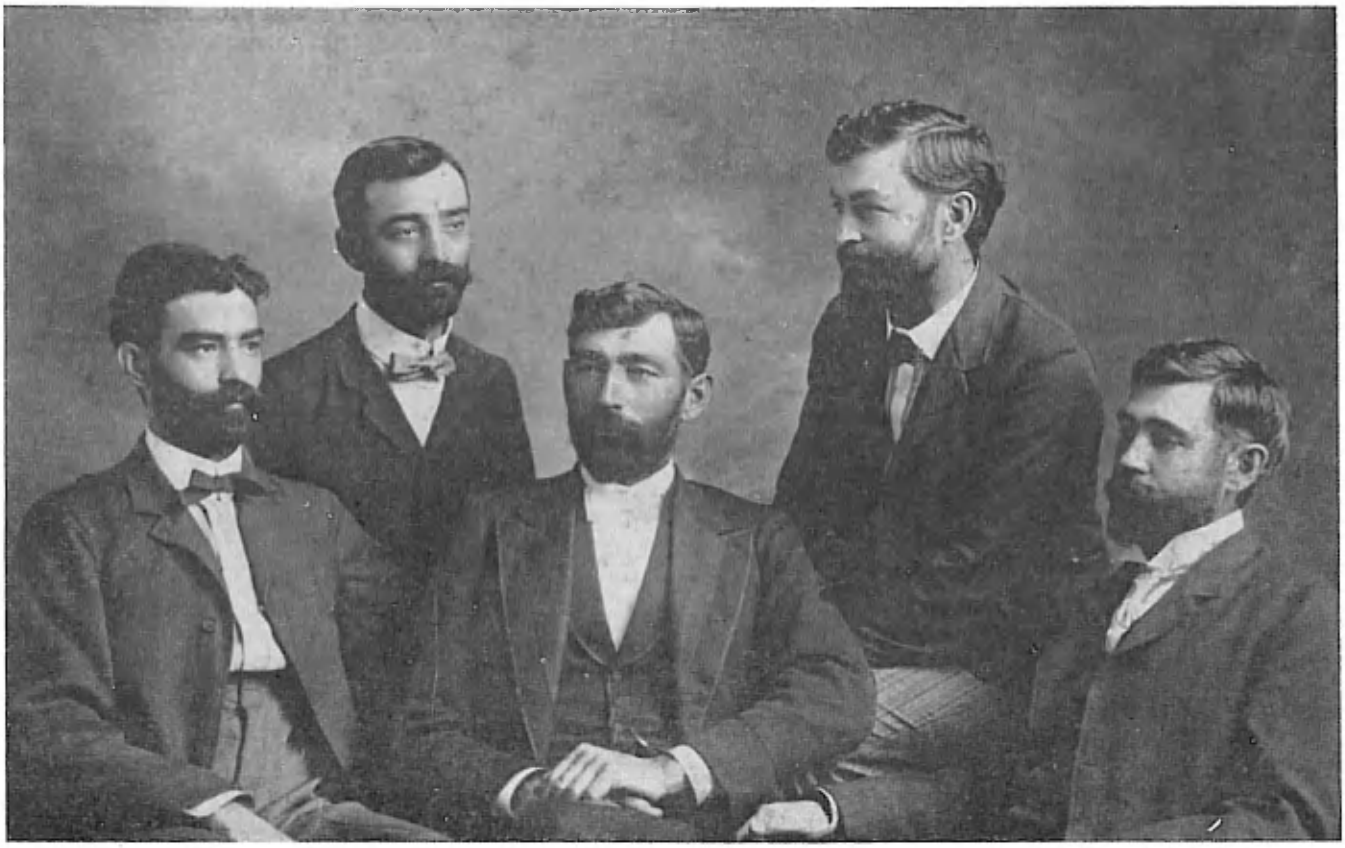
7) Gethsemane. Lang's walk exceedingly dramatic. Voice not enough so—capture of Lang very unreal. Rain still.

The lunch pause is a great detriment to the effect of play. It required a long time for players and audience to get back in to the spirit of the play. I began to fear it would not at all be accomplished, because of the very unfavorable weather. I think this accounts in part for the subsequent giggling and suppressed laughter in the audience. Closed 11:45 a.m.

Part II Began 1:15 p.m. We had gone to the first stand and being among the first out, we took no chances and rushed in. Already several monks were eating soup and I tried to get an order for three soups. But monks had preference and soup ran out, so I ordered sausages with sauerkraut, which was fine but it ran out too. Then we got coffee and being very cold a bottle of wine. (1 mark). Mr. Ayres and I got one more sausage together and this ended our dinner —a mark a piece, except the wine. Mr. Ayres began to speak about a fine looking old monk next to him, but I winked him off and we soon found it good for he spoke English and we had a little chat. After dinner Mr. Ayres went for our baggage and I went to the station to purchase tickets so we would be sure to make the 5:28 train just after the play.

8) The cannon shot as I was coming back so I went directly to my seat. It was still raining. The chorus numbered 32 now and were a pitiable sight standing in rain on the wet stage. The high priest, Annas, did well, entering into the spirit of the piece. Maltreatment of Lang not at all real. Annas' very voice

Five Krehbiel brothers, 1908, left to right, Christian E., Daniel R., Jacob S., Henry P. and John W. Krehbiel.



sounds like blood. If all were like him the thing would be effective in spite of weather.

9) Caiphas—Cock crowing sounds like mocking and many in audience laugh. Peter goes out into rain. All this is played too fast. One cannot imagine that in reality it all occurred in a few moments.

10) Judas meditation—no good. Before the court of high priests, better. But again people laugh when Judas goes to the tree and breaks off twig and curtain falls. That seems to me to be the plainest indication that there is something wrong in the play. A real scene of despair [which moves] unto suicide should produce anything else rather than laughter.

12) Pilate no good, Caiphas and Herod better.

12) Rain stopped—a nice simple chorus.

13) The elements are quiet outside. Effect better. "Crucify him" spoken in unison. Not good. Chastisement a plain sham. Thorn crown forced on head, very effectively done. Lang's body seems to give way under strain of pressure.

14) Nice simple chorus. Caiphas and Annas, etc. do good "canvassing" work among people. They say Pilate has agreed to leave decision with people as to who shall be given freedom and they instruct them to ask for Barrabas.

III Part Clearing up. 4:15 p.m. (no pause)

15 Sun peeps through a bit. The men with their crosses come.... One is about twelve feet long.... Lang sinks down several times with his and so Simon is forced to carry it saying *"den Gefallen will ich dir Thun."* The scene is quite touching.

16) Curtain drops. The two murderers hang—tied to their crosses. And now the third cross is being raised. This one looks real. The other two hang on more like wax figures than like live beings supposedly under pain. I do not notice the slightest movement of writhing under pain or agony which certainly must be present. Lang speaks the "seven words" and ends. The thunder, etc, are very good, but the players about the crosses do not seem sufficiently frightened. The breaking of the bones was very realistic—among the best of all and the lancing of Lang— side almost evoked a scream from the lady next to me. The spear apparently had a squirting arrangement on it's point. This was the climax of the afternoon. Taking from crosses followed. All this was very well done. The crucifixion and all appeared real. And yet I was convinced that this all is not made for the stage. No living man can put into the seven short words on the cross what they mean to a Christian and every attempt seems like sacrilege.

17) Noise in audience and people begin to leave. Some hissing to restore order. Resurrection like a dream.

18) Much noise in audience. Bad effect. Many leave as chorus comes and sings last song. Applause and away for train. The very worst possible thing for good effect. Quiet and meditation ought to follow the whole but here is noise and dissipation. Thus ends the great Passion Play. It is only a play. As I was far away it had much fascination for me. As I drew near it charmed me less. Since I have heard it I am disappointed.

He who condemns theaters summarily and without exception must condemn this. It may have been rural and simple in times past. Now it has doubtless become "stagy." That the people of so small a village (1400) can carry out such a monstrous project is almost a wonder in more ways than one. 1) It requires much talent in acting, 2) and some in singing aand above all 3) it requires unity and mutual confidence, that is, trust. The moment one allows this to enter in the final estimation of the play, the whole assumes a much more favorable aspect. But why should one do this in trying to get at the subjective value of the thing. And that is where it must be estimated now that it has assumed so nearly the business type of the modern theater. Curiosity does not play the part it once did on the part of the visitor, and simplicity not there on the part of those participating.

When a thing is done once every tenth year it may claim with some consistency to be done for its own sake. But when it is repeated in that tenth year no less than thirty times, does it deviate from its original purpose?

Of all these things I say if they are good, then well and good. I do not want to stand in the way. But then I do not see why the best available talent anywhere should not be employed and places most easily accessible . . . chosen, and good done with a will. I am perfectly confident that there are any number of people who would be willing to be employed in doing good that way, who are in no wise inclined to do it in the old time-honored way. Many men think it more honorable to earn a living with the fiddle and bow, than the shovel and hoe. But I think the effect on the actors will be less commendable even here in this play as it becomes more theatrical. All in all the Oberammergau people did not impress me as being inclined to rob their visitors outright. Of course even 5 marks for a bed is not a pittance, nor is 6 marks for a ticket a beggar's price; but the play costs money too and this as well as the profit must be made in a short season. In another way I think the value of the play might be questioned. It takes the villagers from their customary occupations and centers their whole attention on something totally different. They must employ laborers to do their regular work and give themselves to something else which may be more fascinating, especially to the young.... If they were wholly an agricultural people instead of wood carvers the contrast would be more difficult to mend. They will probably lose their identity more and more as they come into closer contact with the world at large. Now that they have the auditorium I should not be surprised if they would not wait ten years to repeat this or a similar play. But as their interest centers more upon large audiences the intrinsic value of the presentation must deteriorate.

I am more convinced than ever that the true story of Christ was not intended for the stage—though to show this kind would be the ideal for actors, as it is free from the

sensual and coarse. In order that it may be played most effectively there must be at least slight deviations from the actual as recorded by history. This will tend to bring the whole history into discredit, first because it does not actually abide by the real and finally because it places the history of Christ on one category with mythical creations of the imagination as even the very best of dramatic productions are. The various travel bureaus, Cook especially, are thought to be making as much money off the Passion Play as the Oberammergau people themselves.

After the play 5:15 p.m. we went directly for our baggage and away to the train where we found a great jam about the ticket office while we, having bought our tickets at noon, went to the train at once and found plenty of room. Train soon started, leaving many behind. We took our last look at the much talked of Dorf (village) from the train window and soon were off probably never to return. We found only kind treatment from first to last and have only pleasant recollections of the people. The two engines soon rolled us away out of the beautiful hill country past hay mowers . . . and patches of potatoes etc., out towards the level country about München. . . . As we ate our little lunch the evening brightened and all hearts were glad. Once as we passed a laboring woman with a wheelbarrow I waved my hand at her, whereupon she let go of the handles and made vigorous gestures indicating that I ought to come out and get to work and not be riding over the country while others work so hard. When the level country came we began to figure out Mr. Ayres' trip to Paris and thus found employment as darkness stole over us and we finally reached München about 8:55 p.m. Here Mr. Ayres began to argue in his goodnatured but energetic way that we could get coffee in the I class waiting room for 20 pfennig per cup, the same as in the III class room and to convince ourselves we went in. We paid 20 pfennig and then off to the Hospitz Mathilden Str. 7, where our card from Oberammergau had arrived and our rooms were secure. And withdrawing to our apartments we soon closed one of the most memorable days of our lives by being wrapped in peaceful slumber.

Oberammergau village street scene, 1980. German Tourist Office Photo.

In the Name of Christ: MCC Relief Work in England During World War II

by David A. Haury

On May 22, 1940, as the German forces completed their sweep through Belgium, Theodore E. Claassen, a member of the First Mennonite Church of Newton, Kansas, left Paris to spend two weeks in London. This was not a tourist journey, and Claassen was never to return to taste the supply of special coffee left with most of his luggage in a Paris hotel. Escaping only a few days before the heroic evacuation of the British army at Dunkirk, he was among the last civilians to cross the English Channel. At the beginning of World War II, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) had given Claassen a six-month assignment to study the situation of war sufferers in France and England, but after the fall of France his field was confined to England alone.[1]

MCC had been born through inter-Mennonite efforts in America to aid Russian Mennonites during the famine which followed World War I, and MCC was incorporated as a permanent relief organization as a result of its program of assistance to Mennonite refugees in the Paraguayan Chaco in the 1930's. However, MCC first developed an ongoing, nonpartisan, and broad relief program during World War II. In early 1940 M. C. Lehman and Benjamin H. Unruh directed assistance to Poland. Amos Swartzentruber simultaneously toured Spain, France, and England. MCC reacted to his accounts of the refugees from the Spanish Civil War in southern France with a major effort to provide food for refugee children in 1941 and 1942.[2]

Meanwhile, Hitler's rapidly advancing armies halted any plans for extensive programs in Poland or France, and several MCC workers were interned by the Germans. However, Claassen's follow up on Swartzentruber's brief visit to England initially found few unmet needs there. Claassen himself was greeted by dancing in the streets. Neville Chamberlain had resigned on May 10, but no overt signs of war were found. Official agencies seemed equipped to handle any emergencies. It appeared that the Mennonite witness during World War II might be confined to North America.

Yet the situation had drastically changed when John E. Coffman, the librarian of the Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen, Indiana, and originally from Vineland, Ontario, arrived in London on October 21, 1940. Coffman was the first long-term MCC volunteer in England. After a brief orientation in Akron, Pennsylvania, at MCC headquarters, then a desk in a corner of Orie Miller's shoe factory, Coffman joined a convoy sailing from New York to Liverpool. He recalls keeping watch for torpedoes after deciding that this did not violate his nonresistant position. Widespread German bombing had begun to pound English cities, and air raids, blackouts, and showers of shrapnel, not dancing, welcomed Coffman on his trip from Liverpool to London. At one point the train stopped and everyone sprawled on the floor as planes and bombs filled the sky. The tube (subway) stations in London were littered with people seeking sleep in relative safety.

Coffman joined Claassen in a flat (apartment) in South Kensington, a wealthy residential area near Westminster in London. Claassen's original flat, provided by the Friends Service Committee, had been closer to central London, but Claassen, who was in several hundred air raids, awoke one morning to discover that the windows had been blown in and the entire block was cordoned off because of an unexploded bomb nearby. Even South Kensington was not entirely safe, and one evening Claassen, Coffman, and John Barwick, the Church of the Brethren representative in London, hid under a heavy table while their front windows shattered against the shutters during a close call.

Thus the war had harshly and deeply penetrated English life since Claassen's arrival less than six months earlier. Although his term of service was over, Claassen himself was unable to find passage home until July, 1941. The English at first seemed quite well prepared and organized to meet their own needs for relief during the air raids, but Claassen reported to Harold S. Bender, when they met in Lisbon, Portugal, in August, 1940, that avenues for MCC involvement were developing. MCC already provided some money and clothing to the Save the Children Fund, a private social service agency which undertook to assist the many children evacuated from bomber cities. MCC's association with this organization soon led to further opportunities to assist war sufferers. MCC with only a small budget and a hand-

full of personnel could hardly expect to have a major impact in the face of the war's massive destruction. However, Claassen, Coffman, and others instituted a broad program with a surprising multiplicity and range of involvements.

Through the Save the Children Fund and other organizations, MCC donated money and clothing to several groups of foreign refugee children. MCC intended to adopt one hundred twenty Polish boys as a major project by providing teachers and textbooks for their education and about $500 a month toward their support. However, only limited financial assistance was distributed through a Polish committee. Similar support was also given to some Basque children in the Ivanhoe Hotel in London, to other Spanish children in Plymouth, and to Belgian children in Devonshire.[3]

As 1940 drew to a close, Claassen and Coffman still sought a focus for the MCC program. In the meantime several miscellaneous tasks presented themselves. The YMCA, through John Barwick, requested funds to provide Bibles for British POW's in Germany. MCC secured 900 New Testaments and 1600 Bibles imprinted with a notice that MCC had donated them.[4] Claassen and Coffman also assisted a settlement of the Society of Brothers (a group similar to the Hutterites) at Ashton Keynes in the Cotswolds near Reading. A local boycott of the Bruderhof's dairy produce threatened its survival. Claassen and Coffman discussed possible relocation in South America and provided them with information about Mennonites. Substantial financial aid proved unnecessary, but Claassen and Coffman spent several days at the Bruderhof in late 1940. They returned again in April, 1941, when the last members of the settlement emigrated.[5]

In early January, 1941, Claassen visited Birmingham and Coventry, which were being heavily bombed, and suggested another avenue for service. The Lady Mayoress of Birmingham requested groups to purchase and supply mobile canteens to bring food and drink to those spending long hours in bomb shelters or factories. On February 10, 1941, Coffman traveled to Birmingham and completed final arrangements for a MCC canteen, which was delivered in May. Although the bombing soon stopped, the canteen was taken to Liverpool for several weeks of active service distributing "soup, sandwiches, tea, coffee, biscuits, and cake" at the docks. The roof of the canteen soon resembled a sieve punctured by raining shrapnel. Coffman and the canteen were back in Birmingham by June 12 and were officially presented to Princess Mary as a contribution of the Mennonites in America and Canada. Coffman remained in Birmingham through August, 1941, doing clerical work with the Municipal Air Raid Precautions Department.[6]

Mennonite Central Committee Service locations in England during World War II, 1940-45.

A brief trip to South Wales on November 15, 1940, indirectly led Claassen and Coffman to develop the major type of MCC work in England. They observed a series of community centers, operated by the Save the Children Fund, which cared for young children. Many undernourished and impoverished children existed in English cities before the war, but their evacuation from bombed areas compounded the need for relief. In December, 1940, MCC opened a residential nursery at "Wickhurst Manor," forty-five kilometers southeast of London near Sevenoaks in Kent. Wickhurst Manor was a two hundred year old manor house decorated with fine oak paneling and surrounded by

The Woodlands

beautiful gardens and lush fields. Soon this stately home was filled with thirty to forty active two to five year old children.

MCC administered Wickhurst Manor, but the staff consisted of several English women. John Coffman's frequent visits aroused considerable excitement as he was the substitute "father" for all of the children, who expected to be thrown and swung in the air whenever John arrived. A measles epidemic and inspection by Henry J. Allen, former Kansas governor and senator, provided other breaks in the routine. The children who resided at Wickhurst Manor flourished with a steady diet of nourishing food and fresh air. After the war, Wickhurst Manor reverted to a private estate, but the picturesque setting which proved so beneficial for the children survives today.[7]

In the 1890's Neville Mander purchased a small estate, the "Woodlands," along Penn Road near Wolverhampton and constructed a commodious twenty-one room house surrounded by stables and coach-houses. Today the estate remains set apart from the nearby city, and the ornate mantlepieces and oak-paneled rooms remind one of the house's luxurious Victorian past. The Woodlands served briefly as a girls' school before World War II, but in July, 1941, John Coffman and members of the Friends' War Victim's Relief Committee decided to begin a joint project and use the facility for evacuees. Although not as old as Wickhurst Manor, the Woodlands became the elegant setting for the second major MCC center.

Students from the University of Manchester helped to refurbish the Woodlands, and the large "M" above the front door now seemed appropriately to stand for Mennonite. A mother and her daughter were among the first evacuees to arrive in late September, 1941. The daughter, aged sixty, was the youngest resident at the Woodlands. For this facility was used to care for old and infirm people, who as well as the children required assistance as the war uprooted them from familiar surroundings. Peter J. Dyck, who had arrived with twelve other passengers on the Norwegian whaler, *Hectoria,* directed the Woodlands for MCC and the Friends. Soon thirty old folks, who had lost their homes in Coventry, Liverpool, Birmingham, and as far away as London, enjoyed the escape from the terror of those cities.

Dyck, who had originally expected to staff the MCC canteen, described the impact of the German bombing of Bath and Exeter, where he assisted the stream of families blasted from their homes and possessions: "Never have I felt the insignificance of a day's work when compared with a day's need, as I did then. . . . Ten days after the raid I found an old couple, starved, dirty, and frightened, still in the place which was once their sitting room, but which now was but a heap of debris and rubble. At the sight of me they recoiled like frightened animals."[8] It was from settings such as this that MCC took people into the Woodlands.

After the war many of the evacuees did not leave the Woodlands. The Warwickshire Monthly Meetings of the Friends voted to purchase the estate and found a home for the elderly. MCC provided half of the purchase price. Today a large addition to the central house and a group of condominiums on the grounds have somewhat altered the appearance of the Woodlands, but forty-two elderly people still enjoy the elegant surroundings. Thus the influence of MCC's wartime relief work survives through this project of the Friends.[9]

One of the earliest MCC activities in England was the provision of clothing for evacuees and refugees. Thousands of Mennonites in the United States and Canada participated in supplying this clothing, and in December, 1940, the first bales arrived in London. An office was temporarily set up in the boardroom of the Save the Children Fund headquarters at 20 Gordon Square. On October 25, 1941, the Mennonite Clothing Center established its own office next door. John Coffman supervised this work and was assisted by several others who sorted the clothing. During the first month in the new office, eighty-four bales of clothing arrived from Pennsylvania.

The Mennonite Clothing Center resembled a large store's clothing department piled to the ceiling of two small rooms. Urgently needed items such as shoes and coats were

immediately distributed. MCC delivered most of the clothing through other organizations to the needy evacuees, and MCC received many letters of gratitude from the recipients. Coffman occasionally warned people not to send cotton dresses or very worn clothing, but most clothing was appreciated and met a real need.[10] Chocolates, which were surreptitiously packed inside the bales of clothing, provided some children with a special treat in times of severe rationing.

MCC opened up two other centers in England. "South Meadows," in Abergale near Liverpool on the Irish Sea, bore little resemblance to Wickhurst Manor or the Woodlands. It was not an isolated country estate, but one of a long row of houses typical of English cities. South Meadows also had a considerably younger clientele than the Woodlands, and the oldest residents were two years old. A desperate need had developed for facilities to care for babies who were ill and had to be evacuated without their mothers. The Liverpool Child Welfare Association operated South Meadows, but MCC provided funds and some staff.

Elfrieda Klassen, an MCC volunteer and registered nurse, described the situation at South Meadows: "To say that most of the babies come to the Home filthy dirty, full of vermin, with nasty coughs, bad habits, under-nourished, deformed and sickly gives such a horrid picture that one hesitates to broadcast it, and yet, it is sadly true."[11] South Meadows had beds for twenty babies, and a new group arrived every three weeks.

Located amidst the scenic Cheshire Hills, "Taxal Edge" became the final and perhaps most significant center operated by MCC. Twelve MCC workers eventually served at Taxal Edge, which was the only center administered and staffed directly by MCC. Taxal Edge, perched above the village of Whaley Bridge, was originally a private estate, and the caretaker still recalls his work as the chauffeur for the owners almost fifty years ago. Taxal Edge provided accommodation for up to twenty convalescent boys,

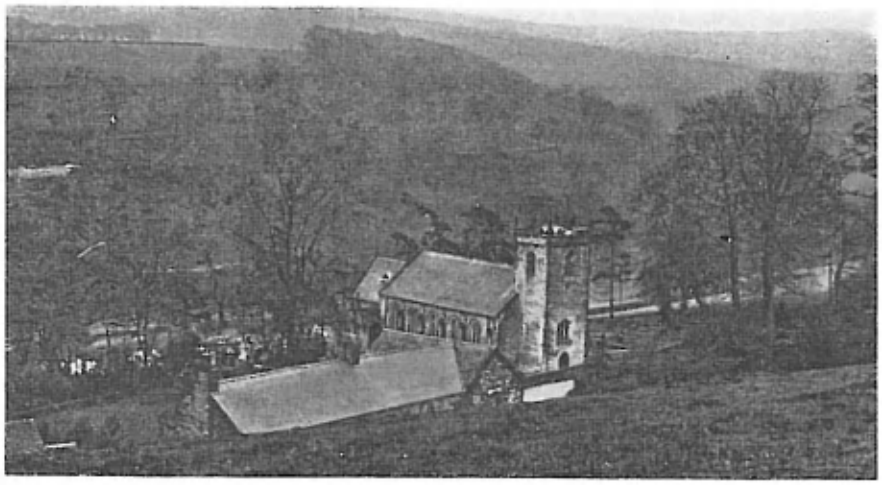
Taxal Edge Boys

aged eight to fourteen, who had just been released from hospitals, but were not well enough to return home. The boys remained about six weeks while they completed their recovery, and by early 1944 over one hundred boys had stayed at Taxal Edge.

Taxal Edge proved in many respects to be the most challenging of the MCC centers as the MCC workers sought to develop personal relationships with the boys. The boys said grace before meals, had morning prayers, and sang in the evening around the fireplace. The boys and staff also did chores together. Yet despite the weakened condition of many boys, fighting was common. One night a boy was overheard to say, "Let me alone or I'll bash your head in. Can't you see I'm saying my prayers." Carving on the furniture and stealing also were problems. The boys defined their own laws and established a court to administer discipline. A staff member smelled smoke upon approaching the woodshed, but a group of boys inside denied smoking. One lad seemed quite uneasy, and a few seconds later a puff of smoke emerged from his pocket.[12] The MCC workers were often frustrated by the short time to instill better habits, but the healthy atmosphere undoubtedly speeded the boys' recovery. Many of them gained eight to ten pounds during their stay at Taxal Edge.

At the end of the war the Manchester Invalid Children's Aid Association assumed the operation of Taxal Edge, and today this charity still uses Taxal Edge to care for about twenty young boys (mostly from broken homes and wards of the court). The once isolated estate is now surrounded by a new housing development, and the beautiful terraced garden long ago was abandoned. All of the fine paneling and the great staircase have been removed from the main house, and a gymnasium and asphalt playground further hide the splendor that characterized the home while MCC operated it. Also gone is the Christian atmosphere. Yet the basic work initiated by MCC continues, and a recent annual report expressed a desire to continue the work in the spirit of the Mennonites. Young boys from urban areas may still be seen hiking through the hills or gathering eggs at the chicken coop behind the house, just as they did almost forty years ago.

In late April, 1944, following a visit from Ernest Bennett, Orie Miller's assistant, MCC opened the London Mennonite Centre or MCC Centre. John Coffman had continued to operate the Mennonite Clothing Center, and in mid 1943, moved from South Kensington to Glasslyn Road in Highgate, a northern residential area of London. Later he noticed a large house, named Blencathara, for rent a few blocks away at 68 Shepherds Hill. MCC renovated this spacious old



Taxal Church, Whaley Bridge, where Elfrieda Klassen and Peter Dyck were married.

residence, and it became the new office and clothing center. The Centre was also used as a hostel for displaced children. By the end of 1944, fifty-eight children had stayed at the Centre.

John Coffman often escorted the children from the MCC Centre to evacuation points. Once a concerned lady stopped and asked him about the mother of two youngsters he was escorting. John remarked that their mother had deserted them. She replied, "What a pity! And you seem such a nice man."[13] Every night for their safety the children crowded into a basement bomb shelter to sleep. John Coffman's bed was covered with a steel plate and wire mesh, and this contraption produced the imagery of sleeping in a cage as one night John observed a cat peering in at him. However, these precautions were necessary as several bombs hit nearby, and the windows were broken. One became familiar with the drone of V-1 rockets zooming overhead, followed by a brief, but terrible, silence as they dropped toward their targets.

Almost as suddenly as it had begun, MCC's work in England halted when the war ended. In less than five years, twenty-four volunteers from the United States and Canada served in England. Unfortunately the story of each individual volunteer cannot be retold here. Wickhurst Manor and South Meadows closed first in 1945, and MCC withdrew its involvement from the Woodlands and Taxal Edge during the following year. The London Mennonite Centre was deemed too large and expensive and was turned over to the Brethren Service Committee. MCC retained three rooms for its workers passing through London. Many of the MCC volunteers in England left to begin new projects on the continent. In March, 1945, Peter and Elfrieda Klassen Dyck prepared for this move by leaving Taxal Edge for a camp near Hull to work with Dutch children, recently liberated and evacuated by allied forces.[14] In July, 1945, the Dycks moved to Holland.

How did the war affect the volunteers who served in England? The terror and destruction of the bombing have been mentioned. Ted Claassen once left London during a short leave, but he had grown so accustomed to the air raids that he could not sleep in the quiet countryside. The MCC workers often marveled at the resiliency of the English. When an air raid siren sounded, people applauded, thanking Hitler for honoring them. Signs in battered buildings proclaimed "Business as usual," and at first a certain pride was exhibited by those whose establishments had been hit. Yet this pride was often accompanied by fear and panic, and stampedes to the shelters occasionally left people trampled behind. Most MCC workers at the evacuation centers had only an indirect contact with the burning cities through the people they served, but they left England with a special comprehension of the impact of modern warfare on civilians.

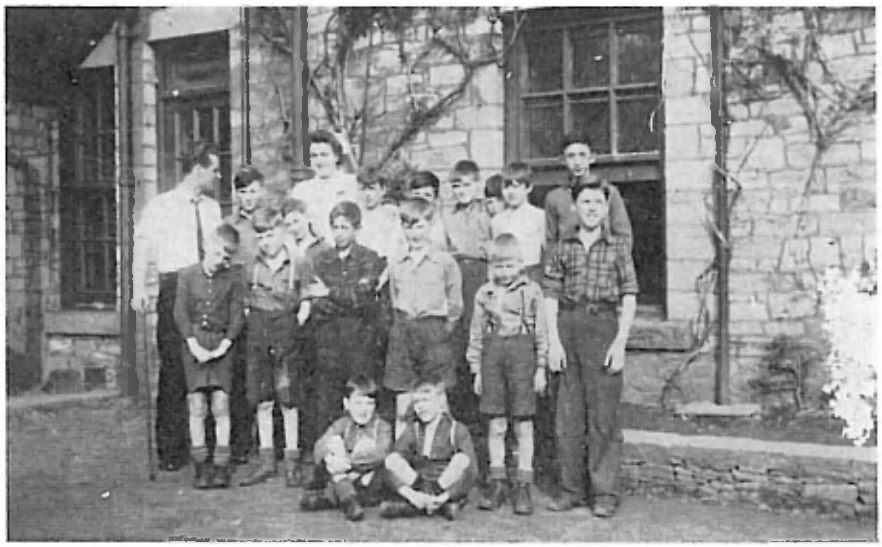
The MCC volunteers also received unexpected benefits from their experience in England. Two marriages resulted. John Coffman met his English bride, Eileen Pells, while teaching a Sunday school class at Finsbury Mission. Eileen had joined the Mission which distributed blankets and sandwiches to people who found shelter underground in a huge, abandoned freezer at the Smithfield market. On November 22, 1943, John and Eileen were married. The marriage of Peter Dyck and Elfrieda Klassen took place at Taxal Edge on October 14, 1944.[15]

What did MCC accomplish in England? Hundreds of people received the benefits of MCC relief goods or care in MCC centers. Each of the centers operated by MCC made a different, but significant contribution to people suffering from the war's devastation. Anabaptists had sought refuge in England in the sixteenth century, but they had been persecuted and died out. Thus MCC brought the first Anabaptist witness to England in over three and a half centuries. (A few Russian Mennonites, who were detained at Southampton during their migration in the 1920's, represented the only other Anabaptist contact with England during the early twentieth century). The MCC volunteers showed the willingness of outsiders and conscientious objectors to become personally involved, and consequently improved the image not only of Americans and Canadians in general but also indirectly of English conscientious objectors. Moreover, Peter Dyck, as a Canadian citizen, received his call to report for military duty in England. Separated from his home and supporting comunity, he was tried first in Manchester and then in a higher court before his CO status was finally granted. Although many Friends received similar recognition, Dyck was probably the only Mennonite to receive CO status from the British government.

Some aspects of the MCC work were less satisfying. The opportunity for an evangelical or peace wit-

ness was quite limited by the nature of those served in MCC centers. Moreover, almost all contact with the English was short-term. Some MCC workers, through their own initiative, found avenues for a broader witness, but few continuous contacts developed. Of course, the MCC program was small and not very visible to the English as a whole. Once a repairman fixing a car carrying the MCC label was puzzled until a friend explained, "They're a firm of American explosives' manufacturers."[16] Often the people helped by MCC were not exactly war sufferers, but people whose impoverished condition had been exposed or slightly aggravated by the war. This did not lessen their needs or the value of the MCC service, but to these people MCC was simply another social service agency. These factors did not detract from the vital assistance given to many people by MCC, but they influenced the decision not to continue a program in England after the war.

MCC itself received many unexpected benefits from its program in England. As a result of the need for volunteers in England, in late 1943 MCC first developed qualifications for its relief workers. The earlier programs with Russian refugees and in Paraguay had not required the adoption of such standards. How to organize a unit of volunteers in a distant land under difficult conditions originally became a question in England. In many respects the volunteers in England compromised the first large-scale MCC unit. The English unit prepared its own newsletter, *England Notes*. Most important, MCC's work in England prepared the way for other service projects after the war. Concern about general needs for relief in other countries was stimulated by the wartime experience of aiding non-Mennonites. John Coffman even suggested the MCC slogan, "In the Name of Christ," when he observed that people in England who received clothing were not aware of its origins. MCC aid materials still bear this label which should serve as a reminder of MCC's roots in England.



Taxal Edge with Peter and Elfrieda Dyck in charge.

During late 1946 and 1947 Harry Willems alone continued MCC's involvement in England and worked with prisoners of war. John Coffman, who visited Canada in 1946 and 1947 after five years of MCC service, intended to continue his mission work independently and returned to England in late 1947. Coffman expanded his work with the Finsbury Mission and also aided MCC workers and other Mennonites who traveled through London. In November, 1948, Menno Travel Service entered into a formal arrangement with Coffman for these services, and in 1954 Coffman received an official appointment with the Mennonite Board of Missions (MC).

The story of John Coffman's activities after the war and the Mennonite Board of Missions' program in England require separate treatment. The London Mennonite Centre, located at 14 (16) Shepherds Hill, Highgate, since 1954, has no direct relationship with the earlier Centre a few hundred yards down the street. However, through the efforts of John Coffman, the Mennonite mission in England survived after the withdrawal of MCC, and 1980 marks the fortieth anniversary of the Mennonite presence in England.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Interviews with Theodore E. Claassen (27 March 1980), John E. Coffman (17, 22 and 23 January 1980), and Peter J. Dyck (10 February 1980) provided the primary sources for this study. I would like to thank them and also Alan F. Kreider, who interviewed Coffman. The interviews are now part of the Schowalter Oral History Collection (MLA).

[2]For a general history of MCC, see John D. Unruh, *In the Name of Christ* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1952), and Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., *From the Files of MCC*, vol. 1, *The Mennonite Central Committee Story* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1980).

[3]Unruh, pp. 49 and 51. Also see Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., *Responding to Worldwide Needs*, vol. 2, *The Mennonite Central Committee Story*, pp. 34-5).

[4]*Mennonite Weekly Review*, 18 December 1940, p. 1.

[5]*Christian Monitor* (November 1941): 337, and Dyck, ed., vol. 2, p. 35.

[6]*Christian Monitor* (January 1942): 18-19, and Dyck, ed., vol. 2, p. 40.

[7]*Christian Monitor* (October 1941): 305 and (November 1941): 337-8.

[8]*England Notes* (October 1944).

[9]"The Woodlands," (pamphlet, 1975).

[10]*Christian Monitor* (February 1942): 50-51 and (October 1944): 297.

[11]*England Notes* (July 1944): 6-7.

[12]Ibid., (August 1944), and *European Relief Notes* (May 1946): 2-6. Also see Dyck, ed., vol. 2, p. 41.

[13]*England Notes* (October 1944): 5.

[14]Ibid., (April 1945): 2-3.

[15]Unruh lists the MCC personnel in England, p. 55: Elizabeth Brauer; Theodore E. Claassen; John E. Coffman; Mabel Cressman; Cornelius J. Dyck; Peter J. Dyck; Elfrieda Klassen Dyck; Peter Epp; Samuel Goering; Ellen Harder; Frank B. Hartzler; Edna Hunsperger; Lucinda Martin; Evangeline Matthies; Glen R. Miller; George Neufeld; Frederick S. Peters; Susie Peters; Martha Ann Rupel; Arlene Sitler; John Thut; Vernon Toews; Harry Willems; and Howard C. Yoder.

[16]*England Notes* (July 1944): 5.

The Colonial Experience Which Sticketh Closer than a Brother

by Robert Kreider

. . . and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24.

Fifty years ago this very month (October 1929) 18,000 Mennonite refugees descended on Moscow in a last desperate effort to escape from the Soviet Union. Our refugee brothers and sisters had found temporary refuge in a string of dacha villages northward 30 miles along the Moscow-Yaroslav rail line. A group of these nonresistant people sent to six branches of the Soviet government a petition which ended with the threat that if they were refused emigration they would march in a body on Red Square and "there perish." On the advice of a sympathetic party official, a mass of women and children staged a demonstration in the reception room of President Kalinin. Meanwhile, behind the scenes the German Foreign Ministry was negotiating vigorously for permission for the refugees to leave. Boris Stein of the Foreign Commissariat granted an extraordinary concession: "all refugees then in Moscow or in transit to the capital were allowed to leave." Fifty years ago tomorrow, October 27, trainloads of Mennonite refugees began leaving for Leningrad. Three days later all transports were stopped. That which followed was our own Gulag Archipelego. One of the great tragedies of our people's history.

What could be the relation of this to the story of those 18,000 Mennonites in Colonial America? We should view the stories of our people less in linear, chronological terms and more in wholistic circular terms—as does the environmentalist for whom "everything you pick up is connected with everything else" —circle/cycle, a world of linkages, a world of interconnectedness as in the Pauline metaphor of the body and its members.

That year 1929 when Mennonite refugees were pouring into Moscow two highly significant and interrelated Mennonite books were published:

> Harold Bender's *Two Centuries of American Mennonite Literature*
> C. Henry Smith's *The Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania*—perhaps the best of all Smith's writings

In his 1929 volume Smith included a letter written in 1773 by several ministers of Skippack to the Dutch Mennonites replying to a number of questions:

> . . . our forefathers have left little or nothing in writing of their origin or progress of our communities. They came poor into the country, and were compelled through hard labor to seek the means of a livelihood, and there was little time left for writing and recording events. (p. 377)

I am deeply grateful to Richard MacMaster, Samuel Horst, Robert Ulle and others who in the Colonial sourcebook, *Conscience in Crisis*, recovered for us from a thousand archival fragments hitherto unrecorded dimensions of the story of our people. This volume just off the press contributes much to a correction of perceptions. Even so distinguished a Mennonite historian as Robert Friedman, writing just 30 years ago in *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries*, said of Colonial Mennonitism:

> they faced a world which did not oppress them, a world of toleration for all types of Christianity, liberal and friendly, which gave every religious group full independence. There was no conceivable conflict with such a "world," and there existed no "minority" problem. (p. 224)

Conscience in Crisis corrects such a perception. It gives a portrait of the nether side of the American Revolution: the fury of the "political enthusiasts"; the constant personal harassment, abuse and intimidation of Quakers, Mennonites, Dunkers and other nonresistant people; and the hostile acts—sentenced to jail, fined for failure to take the oath, whippings for acts of kindness to British prisoners on the loose, property confiscated, exiled, baited, paying enormous sums in inflated currency for their nonparticipation in war, stripped and splattered with eggs, house and barn sold out to the bare walls. They were made scapegoats for an angry-frustrated populace. One remembers the words of Governor Thomas Hutchinson: "Nothing is more frequent, than for men, in the height of their struggles for liberty for themselves, to deny it to others."

If we can understand the 1770's —with its new cult of American civil religion and the sense of alienation from and rejection of the nonresistant minority—then, perhaps, we can better understand the unhappy Mennonite experiences in World War I or in the years of the Vietnam War or, perhaps, the experiences of those harassed congregations in the first century in Jerusalem, Ephesus, Rome . . . or the Grebel circle in Zurich 1525 . . . or the 18,000 in Moscow 1929.

In the final pages of *Conscience in Crisis*, one notes how close in the

Rittenhouse House, Germantown, Pennsylvania, where David Rittenhouse was born.

1780's those weary, chastened, but wiser state governments and even the young federal government came to granting as a constitutional right exemption from military service to the members of the nonresistant sects. One has a compelling impression that toleration for religious dissent comes less from the polished theory of Erasmus or Voltaire than it comes from sturdy "conscientious scruplers" obstinate and unyielding, "the terrible meek."

As one seeks to understand this story of the springtime of the Mennonite experience in America one looks for linkages, connections, motifs, themes which bind us to those distant kinsmen who lived along the banks of the Pequea, Indian Creek, and the Conestoga. In this presentation we shall look for themes which link the colonial experience with the Mennonite story in succeeding centuries. Thus, if I am a Low German Mennonite whose family arrived in America just fifty years ago, the story of early Franconia is also my story. If my family came on the Concord to Germantown in 1683, the story of our Hopi brothers and sisters at Oraibi is also my story.

Theme one: *child rearing*. I am particularly attracted by a fresh approach to the writing of denominational history offered by Philip Greven in *The Protestant Temperament*, subtitled "Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America." Greven writes:

> Most historians are preoccupied with the outer life of people in the past.... Although we know much about their behavior in public, their institutions, their theologies, and their ideologies, we rarely are able to discover the ways in which these aspects of their lives are connected to their psyches and selves.
>
> By seeking to understand people's temperaments, we can begin to comprehend the nature of the self that took shape during the years of infancy, childhood and youth, and to observe some of the ways in which this sense of self was expressed and manifested in the consciousness, sensibilities, beliefs, and behavior of people as adults.
>
> To discern this evidence requires that we learn to listen carefully for themes that recur and become dominant in the personal lives of innumerable adults. Until we begin to hear such themes of childhood experience, we will continue to be unable to bridge the gap between the public and private realms of consciousness and thought.

Wispy bits of information are to be found in the Colonial Mennonite experience on how they passed on their faith—"bringing their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That chain reaction of remembrance: the "unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice." It is the search for the answer on how you keep the Anabaptist vision alive on the edge of the American wilderness in a society intermingled with proselytizing Methodists, redneck Scotch-Irish neighbors and English-speaking city tradesmen.

A beautiful story is that of the gentle schoolmaster of Germantown and Skippack—Christopher Dock. Gerald Studer's biography tells us much on how the faith was planted afresh in that generation and again in the next generation. School house and meeting house have an intertwined history.

Incidents are recorded of nonresistant fathers and mothers standing firm in crisis, speaking truth to power. We see a father during an Indian attack putting out a restraining hand on a son ready to use a gun or a mother implanted

in the doorway as the constable came to confiscate the family's possessions. Powerful teaching models for those children standing by who watched, listened, and remembered forever.

In 1745 there were rumblings of war among the French, Indians and colonial settlers on the western frontier. Bishop Henry Funk and Dielman Kolb of Franconia—fearing that their people were not ready for the test, sensing an erosion of nonresistant understanding and commitment among their people—sought out the Ephrata Brethren on the edge of the wilderness to translate and print the *Martyr's Mirror*—the Mennonite book of stories. Three years later it appeared, all 1482 pages, 1200 copies—read by parents to their children in hundreds of Mennonite households through those French and Indian Wars. Perhaps the most providentially timed publication in all Mennonite literature. A friend of mine tells of how his father in Franconia during World War II would gather the children about him on Sunday afternoons and read from this big book of stories of the martyrs.

Theme one—then is this: how does a spiritual community transmit the exhilarating commitments from the first to the second generation?

Theme two: *the land.* "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." When my ancestor Jacob Shoemaker, set foot on his acreage by Indian Creek, what were his thoughts? What prayer rose from his lips? Did he see this as the earth of the Lord? I love John Ruth's little book with the title drawn from the notation in the Lancaster County militia officer's roster next to the name of "conscientious scrupulous" Mennonite Jacob Hoover who failed to appear for the muster: "twas seeding time." As John Ruth comments, "The rhythms of God's seasons were to be recognized, rather than the ebb and flow of political rivalries."

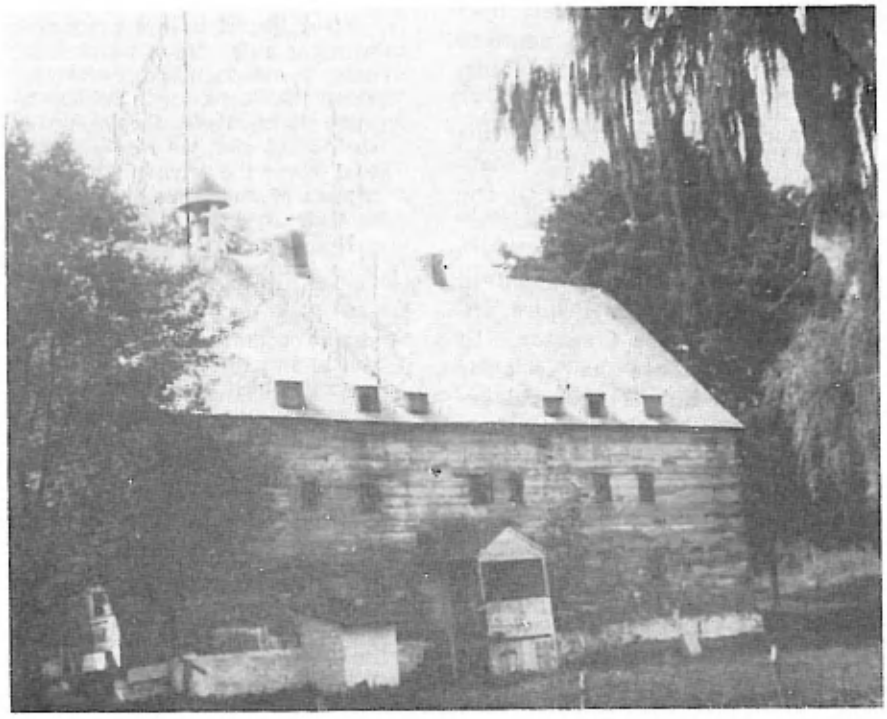
A gnawing question comes from those first days which we may want to thrust out of our mind. It is a contemporary question: Whose land is Palestine? Whose land is Pennsylvania? Whose land is Indian Creek? John Ruth asks this question in *'Twas Seeding Time*: "Had not the Mennonite farmers in Skippack, along the Conestoga, along the Susquehanna accepted deeds to their land from the Proprietor's government that had taken it from the Indian natives at a pitifully small price . . . ?"

Was this not the story of Mennonites on the frontier repeated again and again across the continent? They broke ground about ten to twenty years after the Indians had been "cleared out"—in Juniata County, in the Casselman Valley, in the Valley of the Miami, along the upper tributaries of the Maumee in Allen and Putman counties in Ohio. My Brubaker and Shellenberger ancestors arrived in Stephenson County, Illinois, a decade or two after the Blackhawks had been expelled. Ten to twenty years after the Cheyennes, the Arapahoes and the Pawnees had been "cleared out," the Mennonites came to Harvey County, Kansas, or settled along the Washita in Oklahoma. This is a haunting refrain: "the Mennonites came after the Indians had been cleared out." . . . Whose land is Indian Creek?

On the edges of the Mennonite experience in America are those violent incidents of displacement: the Paxton Boys' Massacre of the Conestoga Indian Village in Manor Township, Wounded Knee in South Dakota, and the Massacres of Sand Creek and the Washita. One wishes there were more stories like that of Christian Hershey who hid on his farm in Warwick Township two Conestoga Indians to help them escape the ferocity of the Paxton Boys.

Theme three: *the glue.* Before there were conference structures, publishing houses, bureaucracies, *Gospel Heralds, Mennonite Weekly Reviews,* and our contemporary conference networks, what held those 10,000 to 18,000 widely scattered Mennonites together in Colonial America? One sees the same patterns which provide the bonding among the Amish—much visiting. Mennonites visited from congregation to congregation. Ministers and deacons travelled far to see their people in settled communities and on the frontier. The gracious arts of hospitality and visiting held this world together. One senses that women were really the glue. As hostesses they opened their doors

Ephrata Cloister, Ephrata, Pennsylvania.



to relative and stranger and fed at table the stream of guests. And always there was talk of their Mennonite people. This continued down to my childhood. My Illinois relatives in Stephenson and Whiteside Counties in Illinois still had their cousins back in Lancaster County. Families visited back and forth. Cousins came out to Illinois to work as hired hands or domestics and sometimes remained to marry Illinois girls or boys. My grandfather Kreider born south of Lancaster near Willow Street and who moved to Sterling, Illinois in the 1850's often visited the kinfolk back in Lancaster County. He returned to his home at Sterling, to tell those who would listen that back East they did things the right way. As I read another grandfather's diaries written in the 1870's in Stephenson County, Illinois, I observe that although there was little formal church life there was almost daily entertaining of visitors—travelling ministers, relatives from the East, people going West, and scores of non-Mennonite neighbors.

Mennonite homes and communities came to be way stations on the journey west: Juniata County; the Casselman Valley; Wayne County, Ohio; Butler County, Ohio and the Valley of the Miami; Wadsworth, Ohio; Sommerfield, Illinois; Donnellson, Iowa. One senses in this the Old Testament theme of hospitality to the wayfarer. In this women were the keepers of the Mennonite network of hospitality.

Theme four: *the spirit of a people*. One observes in the records of those Revolutionary War years the classic themes of the Mennonite personality: humility (*Demut*), yieldedness (*Gelassenheit*), lowliness (*Niedrichkeit*). One observes the competitive attraction of a counter set of values: the emergence of entrepeneurial skills, a go-getter or can-do mentality, traces of individualism. Witness Bishop Christian Funk — farmer, churchman — who wasn't about to take admonitions from his preacher colleagues or congregation on the war tax and oath questions. One sees men and women who had risen rapidly from poverty to modest wealth, who were figuring out the power structures in this new society, who were resourceful in their shops. More and more of these humble Mennonites asserted their independence from the restricting embrace of the congregation. They were tempted to marry out into the world, to invite Methodist preachers into their homes (as did Martin Boehm), to allow themselves to read those tracts on immersion baptism passed out by their Dunkard neighbors. Even so early as the colonial period we see the emergence of self-assertive individuals, Mennonite go-getters who "buy into" American culture. The tension between the humility and the go-getter strains in the Mennonite spirit extend back deep into the colonial experience.

Theme five: *Mennonite wealth and power*. Richard MacMaster has told us that in the colonial period Mennonites were to be found in the middle or upper part of the tax lists. In telling the 300 year Mennonite story it becomes as important to report on net worth, acreages, and the power status of Mennonites in the community as it does to report on missions and the percentage of CO's.

Mennonites have found themselves—providentially or with the aid of their own wily and worldly wisdom—in highly strategic geopolitical spots: the best land on the highways leading north and west of Philadelphia (remember how George Washington positioned himself at Valley Forge to control the access routes to Lancaster County grain), in the agriculturally rich Shenendoah valley (later crucial as a breadbasket for Confederate armies), in the heartland of Illinois corn country, in the center of Kansas wheatlands, and in the fertile, irrigated valley of the San Joaquin in California.

Along with the story of Mennonite affluence and acquisitiveness flows a counter impulse to help the unfortunate. In the Colonial period one notes the wagonloads of relief goods sent to Boston, to the Moravians, and to the disaster-stricken communities on the frontier. These colonial philanthropies may have their linkages to disaster service programming in the twentieth century.

Theme six: *renewal from the right*. Much has been said of the renewal of Mennonites by their more worldly neighbors—the Quakers, the Methodists and others. From colonial days Mennonites have also been renewed continuously from their right flank. Among the Amish were the more acculturated ones who crossed over and joined their more liberal Mennonite cousins, bringing with them a remembrance of the ancient ways and a more firm commitment to the disciplined church. The Russian Mennonites arrived in the prairie states after the Civil War and immediately infused existing conferences with new hope and vitality. In our day liberated fundamentalists, who wed radical obedience with the new birth experience, often help restore an Anabaptist-mindedness to conventional congregations.

Theme seven: *splits*. Often when a people takes its faith seriously splits and schisms occur. Dissenters emerge who wish to restore, to reform, to correct, to challenge what they see to be an erring or a complacent church. All theology is correction, sometimes over-correction. Renewal movements arose among Mennonites to make explicit that which was faintly implicit, to state more forcefully that which had been understated. A people characterized by humility (*Demut*) were particularly subject to correction from the more activist, assertive members among them. Beginning in the colonial period one observes these movements to correct and renew: John Engel and the Brethren in Christ, Martin Boehm and the United Brethren, John Holdeman and the Church of God in Christ—Mennonite, Daniel Brenneman and the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, Henry Egli and the Defenseless Mennonites, and Joseph Ramseyer and the Missionary Church Association. For 300 years faith and practice issues have been so important among Mennonites that they are ready to split to preserve their fidelity.

The Mennonite experience in America contains within it the

Sketch of original Germantown Mennonite Church.

stories of the loyal opposition. They are the ones who may have listened to other voices but have remained within the church. Their stance has often been ambivalent: in the conference but not enthusiastically of it. The external influences have been varied: the Wesleyans, the Dunkards, the Swedenborgians, the Calvinists, the Bible institutes, faith missions, ecumenical bodies to the right and to the left, seminaries to the right and to the left, religious periodicals to the right and to the left. The many strands of dissent or loyal opposition within Mennonite peoplehood needs to be more fully reported along with the better recorded story of the mainstream or the winners.

Theme eight: *the city.* One observes in this colonial period the commanding presence of "The City," which was Philadelphia: "going down to the city," "to Market Street Station." Then came the story of the hucksters and going to market in Lancaster, Reading, and Allentown. From the beginning were those anxious perceptions of the city, anxieties which have inhibited Mennonite urban programming to this day.

Theme nine: *Who are our kinsmen?* In the period of the American Revolution the Quakers and the Dunkards were friends and brethren of the Mennonites. From the colonial period on the Mennonite story could be told in terms of who from that wider non-Mennonite world were those perceived to be their best friends.

Other themes could be discerned in the colonial Mennonite story which persist to the present day—not the least which would be "those things most assuredly believed." A review of the colonial experience suggests that the three hundred year Mennonite story has in it from the beginning linkages, bindings, motifs which are a controlling presence, much as in the words of the hymn, "O Love that wilt not let me go."

Four Poems

by Elmer Suderman

THE GREATER MIRACLE

St. Anthony of Padua,
inspired by the Holy Spirit,
once preached in Spanish
to Germans, French and Englishmen
so effectually, devoutly, sweetly
and so wisely
that all understood
as if he had spoken in their
native tongue,
and once, we are told,
he preached to a multitude
of fish who bowed
their heads in reverence
and honor to God
at his clear voice.

It was a miracle.
wouldn't it be
an even greater miracle
if preachers today spoke
clearly enough to be understood
by their congregations?

SMALL THOUGHTS

Before I fall asleep,
so still I hardly notice,
small thoughts stand sheepishly
around waiting to be noticed.

Some are memories and some
from corners of my mind
I had quite forgot
until, like old friends

From the long dead past, they
come to pay a visit. Others
I've never seen before,
and both, the old and the new,

Are welcome. Sometimes I walk
with new, sometimes with old thoughts.
None are too small,
too still, too old, too new,

Too insignificant to follow
through the paths of mind
to lead to who knows what
strange conclusion.

THE GRAVESTONE WINK

in the dusk
the gravestones
winked at me
seductively
i did not look
back
but drove on
into the meshes
of society
where i had
a previous engagement
i could not stay
to catch
the meaning
of their look
though it was
the most penetrating
anyone
had ever
given me
i
will go back
sometime
to see
what was
intended

TO A CHURCH

To a church
where yesterday sometimes
becomes today and memories
like old friends sit quietly
beside us;

To a church
where we breathe the air our parents
breathed and follow paths
they followed before we were born;

To a church
where the pastor asked us once
"Do you confess Jesus Christ
as your Lord and Savior?"
and "Will you be loyal to
the church?"
and we said "Yes!"

To a church
where we have taken friends
for the last time
and heard so many times
"The Lord is my shepherd
I shall not want"
we believe it.

To this church
we come every Sunday
to find out what and who
and where God and we are.

John's Message: Book of Exodus Revisited

by Jacob J. Enz

"Chivington became violently angry . . . and brought his fist down close to Lieutenant Cramer's face. 'Damn any man who sympathizes with Indians!' He cried. 'I have come to kill Indians and believe it is right and honorable to use any means under God's heaven to kill Indians.'" Thus writes and quotes Dee Brown in best-selling BURY MY HEART AT WOUNDED KNEE (Holt, Rinehart, Winston, New York, 1970, p. 85).

In 1874 my great-grandfather Ewert brought the flock from Prussia that became the Bruderthal (now Trinity Mennonite Church) Church, near Hillsboro, Kansas. How could he consent to participate with the United States Government in taking Indian lands?

Of course, they bought the land from the railroad companies, who in turn received the land as a grant from the government.

"This Land Is Ours" is a pageant-drama that dramatizes forcefully how cheaply the land was purchased. A European-based national power assumed Canada belonged to them by virtue of the fact that they had planted their flag or taken it from the French. Again the Mennonites or Amish settlers were a step or two removed from the actual take-over (should we not say stealing?) of the land from the Indians.

I have had to ask myself how my forebears could countenance such an involvement. True, they bravely sold their goods to make the treacherous journey across the Atlantic to carve a new existence in the forests and prairies. Had they stayed I might have had to suffer and might not be living now; had I escaped death, I might now be in South America. I have nothing but admiration for their sacrifices, but how could they be so oblivious to the situation they were helping to create in their country?

I have had honestly to ask myself the question whether the Bible itself with its narrative of the Israelites driving out the Canaanites may not have prepared them to accept the white man's taking over by force the lands of the Indians. The Book of Exodus specifically has God slaying the Egyptians in the plagues and at the Red Sea. Did our forefathers see the destruction of their enemies and the taking of the lands from the pagan Indians as an act of God in their behalf as in the Old Testament?

If this was the case then we must take a hard look at the Bible's own view of the deliverance from Egypt and the conquest of the land. The Gospel of John helps us to do just that.

We find the statement of purpose in John 20:30: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is

the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name."

Basic in this theme of John's Gospel is the word "signs." They are referred to first negatively (those not included) and then positively—a summary statement of those mentioned.

The Gospel is consciously structured in a large part on the basis of "signs." The changing of water to wine in John 2 is summarized in verse 11: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed him."

In John 4:54, after the healing of the official's son, it is noted, "This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee." The result of the healing is indicated in the previous verse where the official "believed and all his house," as well.

Thus one moves through the Gospel with the other five signs: the healing at the pool of Bethesda (5:9), the feeding of the 5,000 (6:11), the healing of the blind man (9:7), raising Lazarus from the dead (11:44), and climactically the resurrection from the dead (20: 14, 20). Seven signs or great deeds performed by Jesus.

If, as we believe, the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old; if the New Testament is built squarely on the Old, then we shou'd always look back and see if the New Testament writers are expressing themselves in the language of the Old Testament. For their Jewish brothers and sisters to whom they wanted to preach Christ they would have to begin there. Many God-fearing Gentiles also studied the Jewish Scriptures intensely and would need to be appealed to through the Old Testament.

Where in the Old Testament do you find a series of signs that the people might know the Lord, believe, and live? We have not long to look. In the Book of Exodus there are a series of twelve signs from the rod becoming blood to the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. These are all summed up in Exodus 14:30, 31: "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did against the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord; and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses." As in the case of John, specific mention is made of a first and second sign (Ex. 4:8, 9).

There are other reasons for thinking that John must have had Exodus in mind when he wrote his Gospel. In his teaching after the feeding of the 5,000 Jesus presents Himself the true Bread from heaven; "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world." Thus John recalls the giving of manna in Exodus (Ex. 16:14).

Or consider that John alone among the Gospels quotes Jesus in the great "I am" sayings: "I am the bread of life" (Jn. 6:35); "I am the light of the world" (8:12); "I am the door of the sheep" (10:7; for rest, see 10:11, good shepherd; 11:25, a resurrection and the life; 15:1, true vine). It is precisely in the Book of Exodus that the expression "I am" is found. When Moses asks by what name he shall call God when he returns to his people after his call in the desert, God tells him to say that his name is I AM who I AM," and that "I AM has sent me to you" (Ex. 3:15).

John is consciously rewriting Exodus. It is no longer gospel, good news, that the Lord in the midst of Israel, a slave people, destroyed the Egyptians, even though the word "salvation" comes from that experience! Already in Isaiah 53:1 the "arm of the Lord" does not destroy men but rather in the Servant of the Lord takes upon Himself destruction: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:5).

The Book of Isaiah speaks thus of a new work of the "arm of the Lord" and John insists that this is the work of Jesus (Jn. 12:39-41). Prophecy has come to glorious fulfillment in Jesus! John read the Book of Exodus; then he read the Book of Isaiah and knew that the true deliverance of God's people was from sin and to the Lord.

If both Isaiah in the Old Testament and John in the New Testament say that the true signs of deliverance are food for the hungry, healing, recovery of sight for the blind, and life for the dead, then modern slaughter of pagans and taking over of their lands cannot be justified. The only take-over of land open to Christians is that in the Acts (1:8), where we are to take over the whole world inspired by the Spirit of the brilliant imperialism of self-giving love; "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you: and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Many celebrations are in process or in preparation to commemorate the Mennonite part in the take-over of Indian lands by the white man. The land was so cheap because it was stolen land. Surely these celebrations should be sober, characterized by repentance, especially because we are a part of nations who threw integrity to the winds as one treaty with the Indians after another was broken. Are our very limited efforts at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, or Mennonite Pioneer Mission even the beginning of an adequate reparation? We received so much at so little cost to us but the price to the native people was the destruction of a life.

I have deliberately "wallowed in the past" so that we may see clearly how we have been implicated as Mennonites because we did not read Exodus and Joshua with Isaiah and John.

Let our celebrations uphold the signs of declaring salvation and deliverance, declaring release of prisoners, healing, feeding, clothing, and raising to life rather than the signs of destruction and profiting by hurts and destruction of other people. This both Old Testament and New Testament reject.

The Individual and Tradition

by Calvin Redekop

Several months ago a professor was returning to the campus and of course was faced with the problem of moving his furniture and belongings into his rented house. "Richard"," I asked "can you use some help in moving?" He looked at me with some surprise and said: "Cal, you are the first person who has offered to help me. The rest have all been very friendly and free with their handshakes, but nobody offered to help me. Why did you offer to help me?" To this I replied (without reflection) "I don't know, I guess it is just the natural thing to do."

Richard's questions and my answer lingered and I began to reflect why I had offered to help, and why I had answered the way I did. Suddenly the answer came to me: "I am a Mennonite! It is traditionally Mennonite to help one another." This realization came as something of a shock and gratifying experience. It has caused me to reflect time and again on what tradition is, and what Mennonite tradition is.

I

Before delving into the discussion of the relation of tradition to the individual's ethical life, it is necessary to define precisely what I mean by tradition. By tradition I mean: A deep-set and channeled activity (thought patterns or behaviour patterns) in which the essence of a culture or social system expresses itself in strong preference to other possible ways. (Cf. Gordon Willey, "Archeological Theories and Interpretations New World," A. L. Kroeker, *Anthropology Today;* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1953, p. 373-4). The important concepts here are: 1) deep-set activity; 2) expressing the essence of a group; 3) consciously chosen in preference to other possible patterns.

The operation of tradition can best be understood by looking at it from an anthropological perspective. Robert Redfield has given us a stimulating perspective of the operation of tradition. Redfield suggests that the great civilizations of history can be viewed as consisting of two traditions: the great tradition and the little tradition. The great tradition is composed of the "reflective few"—the tradition that is cultivated in the universities and in the towns. The little tradition is composed of "the unreflective many," of the unlettered in the rural communities. Let me quote: "The (great) tradition of the philosopher, theologian, and literary man is a tradition consciously cultivated and handed down; that of the little people is for the most part taken for granted and not submitted to much scrutiny or considered refinement and improvement." (Redfield, *Peasandt Society and Culture* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1960).

Redfield maintains that the great and little traditions are interdependent. The basic or "kernel" idea normally emerges in the little tradition in myths and legends. It is then refined and organized by the great tradition and "handed back" again to the little tradition. He suggests that the ethics of the Old Testament arose out of "tribal peoples and returned to peasant communities after they had been subject of thought by philosophers and theologians" (*op. cit.* p. 42). Redfield proposes that this "rhythm" applies to all social systems.

This interdependence of the great and little traditions he maintains also applies to smaller societies and ethnic groups. Let us accept his view for the moment and see how this applies to the Anabaptist movement. There is increasing agreement that the genius of the Anabaptist movement emerged in the context of two social revolutions which accompanied the Reformation proper. The Anabaptists were not "solid middle class intelligentsia"; the Anabaptist believers who went to the stake were not the learned theologians and philosophers, but predominately the villagers and craftsmen, the simple believers (Peter Klassen, *The Economics of Anabaptism,* p. 83).

Almost simultaneously, however, the Anabaptist genius was "refined and reflected upon" and became a "great tradition" and was given again to the "lay" segment in the form of confessions, letters and pamphlets of men like Menno Simons and others. The lay society (and this is a synonym that Redfield uses for the little tradition) had received back its original idea in a refined and organized form, from the "hierarchical" (Redfield's term) or great tradition.

This may not be a convincing interpretation of Anabaptism in *historical* perspective. But Redfield's scheme can be applied to the Anabaptist system, it seems to me, in more contemporary circumstances, with possibly more persuasion.

We can perceive among our people a "lay" tradition, which is an unreflecting instinctual response to the Anabaptist genius (what I felt my response to the professor was). This we call the Mennonite tradition. The reflective and conscious evaluation of the tradition which takes place in our schools, seminaries and other intellectual centers has produced in my generation the "Anabaptist vision" tradition. This you will agree, emerged as a conscious re-evaluation of the little or lay tradition and "resurrected" and /or created a "grand tradition" which was and is being handed back to the little tradition.

So far, nothing more than an interesting typological analysis has been proposed which may have little consequence. But Redfield makes a very crucial point: the two traditions need each other. The unreflective "mass" needs the reflective "few" and the reflective "few" need the unreflective many. Why? Very

Mennonite Disaster Service workers cleaning up after a tornado at Clay Center, Kansas, 1973. Photo by Richard Blosser.

simply this: every society needs people to evaluate the validity of a tradition, but needs just as badly the majority who will initiate and carry out these traditions. The tragedy for an ethnic system like the Mennonite church occurs when the two traditions are separated, allowing either to die out, or allowing both to operate separately without interaction.

II

The best solution to the weakness or tendency for the two traditions to want to separate is to have both traditions operating in each individual and congregation. This brings me to the second part of the problem, namely the individual and tradition.

Tradition is a most significant force or factor for the individual. It gives the individual an "Archimedes point" from which to begin. *He has to use it.* He has no other alternative: he has no identity without a tradition. But he can use it in many ways: 1) he can accept it totally; 2) he can totally reject it; 3) he can form a synthesis of aspects of one and two. But in any case, *he has to come to grips with his tradition.*

A Harvard theologian recently told me of a young Mennonite graduate student who has been "reflective" upon the Anabaptist? (great?) or Mennonite? (little?) tradition for an agonizing three years. Just recently he left the Mennonite church and joined the Episcopalian church. He would illustrate the second alternative, but nevertheless, he had to painfully take a look at his tradition and take a position on it. I know this man and it seems he reflected only upon the little tradition because that is all he knew. This case illustrates the absolute necessity of having a taste for both the great and little tradition when one first begins to reflect. Which is more unfortunate: A person who reflects on the little tradition alone? Or the person who does not reflect at all?

This points up, I believe, the difficulty facing the individual as he comes to terms with his tradition. Shall he reflect? If he reflects, which shall he reflect? That which he knows? Or that which the "thinkers" propose to be the "real" essence of Anabaptism? Shall he accept his tradition? Or shall he reject it? Which part shall he accept or reject?

This problem can be pointed up or explicated by dividing it into

parts. The problem emerges for several reasons: 1) other traditions may become options to the person involved. Thus a graduate student has other traditions presented to him in the literature and in interpersonal contact. He then begins to wonder whether his tradition (little or great) is after all the best.

2) Another source of the problem may be the fact that other traditions have infiltrated his tradition so that he does not know what is the "pure" tradition and may throw it out because of this unclearness. (Parenthetically, I would suggest that this dilemma is easily solved if he will read or listen to the "reflective great tradition"—if the denomination has one, but woe to him if there is no such! My Harvard friend probably did not reflect upon the "great" tradition.)

3) The third source of the problem for the individual could be the nature of his "community." If he comes from an unreflective community, a "little" society where tradition is accepted blindly, he will be in misery when he moves into the larger world and meets other options. If there has been some reflection present, he will have a better chance of integrating his tradition well.

4) A final source of the problem is the nature of the individual himself. Is he able to accept tradition without reflection, or must he reflect on everything he accepts? It seems that an individual must be flexible and be able to do both if he is to be a functioning member of society. An important qualifying clause must be inserted here. I am not proposing that tradition must not be challenged and changed. By definition, tradition is that which is considered most desirable in the face of other options. As other options change, it is clear that any tradition must constantly be re-evaluated and reflected upon—which is precisely what the "great" tradition does, it reflects upon its own validity.

III

This brings us to the central problem facing the individual and his tradition: How can the individual know what to accept and what to reject? He is caught in a dilemma which faces every person who tries to come to terms with his tradition. On the one hand tradition gives every individual his point of orientation, his way of viewing reality. He is what his tradition is. On the other hand, every individual senses that a blind and docile acceptance of a tradition is deadly—for it is a greenhouse conviction, which cannot stand up under adverse conditions.

The solution to this dilemma seems to me to demand that 1) every individual must belong to a tradition and realize that he does, or else he would have no identity. 2) every individual must belong to a "reflective community" within that tradition, which takes the little tradition and attempts to help make it into a great tradition. 3) that this reflective tradition must commit itself to be in touch with other great traditions so as to check itself from being in reality unreflective and the little tradition in disguise.

If this situation obtains, the individual should not have an impossible task to perform in coming to terms with his own tradition. If the three above conditions have been met, then I cannot lament the loss of a member of the tradition to another one. But I am confident that in most losses, one or any combination of the three have not been present.

The Mennonite tradition will stand or fall upon whether the three conditions above have been met for the individuals that are born into it. This means: 1) that the Mennonite Church needs to have a concise and articulated tradition which will give the "neophyte" an unmistakable image of what it feels he is supposed to become; 2) every congregation in the Mennonite church will need to strive to be both an unreflective "lay" fellowship (little) *and* a reflective fellowship (great) where the tradition is constantly and honestly reviewed—on the basis of the Bible; 3) a constant connection with other traditions must be maintained to guard us from unconsciously becoming a little tradition when we mistakenly suppose we are carefully reflecting on the greatness of our tradition.

The existential community founded on the Bible is the source of the Mennonite tradition. As each new individual joins the stream of the tradition, it is his responsibility to go back to his existential community and the Bible to see whether the tradition is correctly reflecting its genius. Any insights or criticisms of the tradition that the individual receives must be brought to the notice of the tradition. It is irresponsible for him to hide his candle under a bushel, or run off with his candle, for every Christian tradition is in fact the result of the interaction of individuals over the word of God.

In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul says: "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is sound." I am sure that he included his own admonitions in that command. But the important points to be made are: 1) the letter was written to a fellowship or congregation; 2) the "reflecting" or the creation of the "great tradition" was to be done by individuals *in the fellowship;* 3) it is imperative that all the contents of the tradition must be consciously considered and adopted, or rejected, as the case may be.

A final word about the little tradition. I hope I have not disparaged it. It is necessary, as indicated above, to carry out the great tradition. But an unreflective little tradition is deadly for the tradition. The Mennonite denomination has been long on the little tradition, and short on the great tradition for only in this way can some of its recent history be explained.

SUMMARY

I have proposed that great and little tradition are present in the Mennonite Church. I have stated that the Mennonite church needs to keep the two traditions together, by having each individual participate in both. I have proposed that for the individual to reflect on his tradition he needs to 1) know what the tradition is; 2) belong to a fellowship that ties the great and little tradition together; 3) engage in interaction with other traditions through his own fellowship.

Lawrence Klippenstein, ed., *That There Be Peace—Mennonites in Canada and World War II.* Winnipeg: The Manitoba CO Reunion Committee, 1979, 104 pp., 6.00 pb, 9.00 hardbound.

This book begins with Les Derksen's succinct survey of the Anabaptist/Mennonite peace experience, from Conrad Grebel and Menno Simons on to 18th and 19th century Mennonites in Russia, and the experiences of Mennonites in Canada during two world wars. Reference is made to the *Forsteidienst* and *Sanitaetsdienst* in Russia and the experiences of Mennonites in Canada during World War I. During the early 1920's Mennonites were perceived by immigration authorities as undesirable citizens for Canada. Regretably, the *Kanadier* and *Russlaender* Mennonites of Canada did not arrive at consensus and made separate submissions to the Federal Government during World War II.

A wealth of pictures illustrate the life of Mennonite boys serving in forests and in hospitals. Bushes were cleared, roads and bridges built, forest fires fought, and in British Columbia alone more than 17 million trees planted and a total of 320,000 man-days provided.

Most Mennonite boys were used to long and hard hours of work. Camp life, therefore, was not an experience of hardship except for the separation from home and family. The hours of work were reasonable, likely much shorter than the boys were accustomed to on the home farms. There was time for recreation and entertainment. They organized worship services, choirs and Bible study groups. The degree of participation varied from unit to unit. Newsletters were published and many a CO was able to test his literary skill in prose or poem. Also, the visits of Mennonite ministers were appreciated.

Not all boys in the camps were Mennonites. There was also representation from other denominations such as the Seventh Day Adventist, Pentecostal, United Church and Doukhobor.

Other CO's spent time in hospitals and farms. Two of these, Gerhard Ens (*Bote* editor) and David Schroeder (Canadian Mennonite Bible College professor) recount their experiences on farms and in hospitals. Several other respondents provide testimonials to the value of their experience. At times the work was tedious, at times the significance of their contribution seemed questionable, but generally being together for several months or years with fellow CO's was seen as a maturing and worthwhile experience.

Newspaper clippings provide a glimpse of the mood of the times. Those included in this volume suggest a good measure of tolerance for Mennonite war objectors and at times even reported praise of their work. Other excerpts provided transcripts of the examination of CO's by War Service Board judges. Some applicants appear as naive "babes in the woods," others as more confident. One of the feared judges named in the book was Justice Adamson. One must take into account that judges themselves were "on the spot" and were making decisions in a troubled political context (just as war-time judges in Germany were acting in another political milieu). Though not mentioned in this book, it is of interest to recount that Bishop David Schultz of the Manitoba Bergthaler Church, who appeared before Adamson many times on behalf of members of his church, more than once was also invited into the Justice's home for dinner following court sessions.

Two experiences are recounted in detail, one by Kornelius Krahn who joined the army, underwent regular basic training and later was transferred to the Medical Corps. The other is by Peter Friesen who was sentenced to jail by the judge who would not grant him CO status. Both stories are somewhat tedious, however, they do give a detailed account from the perspectives of individuals whose experiences were different from those in the civilian camps and hospitals.

Missing from the text is any reference to the many Mennonite teachers who were stripped of their teaching certificates. This reviewer and Tony Funk were the first two to be summoned before the Discipline Committee of the Manitoba Department of Education and then given formal notice that their teaching certificates had been cancelled forthwith. However, within months the Department reversed its stand and "froze" Mennonite teachers to their positions for the duration of the war at $25 per month and subsistence, with the rest of their salaries being submitted to the Red Cross.

It is regretable that no account is given in this excellent volume to another form of alternative service which attracted hundreds of Mennonite boys to the Medical and Dental Corps. The Russlaender Mennonites had negotiated such an arrangement with the Federal Government. This reviewer was also part of that experience and fondly recalls the visit of Bishop J. H. Janzen to the basic training camp at Peterboro, Ontario. Such basic training did not include arms training, and CO's marched alongside the armed troops carrying stretchers instead of rifles. These CO corps included members of denominations such as the Seventh Day Adventist, Plymouth Brethren and the United Church.

This reviewer spent two and one-half years as a CO in the service of the Dental Corps in Canada and overseas. As in the forestry camps and in the civilian hospitals, the CO's in the uniformed services proved to be diligent and trustworthy workers. It was not unusual for a CO of lowly private rank to be entrusted with responsibilities normally not assigned to other than officers. The Daniel experience tended to be repeated.

The boys who elected this latter form of service did so believing that it had the "blessing" of the Mennonite congregations. Generally, they did not enjoy the comfort of group support and more often than not they stood alone, constantly under the critical eye of comrades and officers. Many of them were a living testimony within their environment and generally received the respect and even admiration of their peers and superiors. This story, too, is

part of the record of "Mennonites in Canada and World War II."

This volume contains a bibliography listing additional books and articles relating the Mennonite experience in Canada and the United States during World War I and II. It is to be hoped that it may add to the continuing consciousness of Mennonites respecting their peace witness at all times, whether their countries be actively involved in an armed conflict or not.

The editor has performed a commendable task in preparing this record of "Mennonite peace making" which is dedicated "to all those who want not to fight, but seek rather the Christian way of love and reconciliation." No doubt this book will be found in the homes of those who were actors during that time and also in the homes of their children. However, it is worthy to be found in every Mennonite home and every Mennonite church library.

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Gordon D. Kaufman, *Nonresistance and Responsibility and Other Mennonite Essays.* Institute of Mennonite Studies Series Number 5. Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1979. 144 pages.

"For some time it has seemed to me desirable that there be available to Mennonites a more liberal and open interpretation of Christian faith and life than customarily appears under Mennonite auspices." Thus, Gordon D. Kaufman, a professor of theology at Harvard Divinity School, introduces his collection of ten essays which with one exception have been published elsewhere between 1958 and 1978. Although active in the Mennonite fellowship in Cambridge, a board member of Bethel College and Mennonite Biblical Seminary and the son of the late Ed. G. Kaufman, a longtime president of Bethel College and a leading force in the General Conference Mennonite Church, this well-known American theologian has not in recent years been identified as a major participant in the quest for a viable Mennonite witness in the modern world. Cornelius J. Dyck in his introduction implies a hope that this book will activate Kaufman's contribution to this dialogue. It may well be helpful to this end. But as Kaufman admits, most of the articles are somewhat dated, and their applicability to present conversations is not always immediately obvious.

Even if these essays don't fully conform to his own latest thinking, Kaufman presents them as a needed "more liberal and open interpretation." At least three questions are provoked by this bold claim. What is this more liberal alternative? How is the less liberal perspective characterized? Is this less customary reading unique or does it have a location in Mennonite theologizing, and what may be its present contribution? Space will allow only brief reflections on these kinds of questions.

Not many would perceive undue liberalism in Kaufman's argument that the essence of Mennonitism is not to be found "in terms of any idiosyncratic details of Mennonite custom or consciousness." Although not basically disagreeing with him, some Mennonites may sense a humanistic bias in his definition of the Mennonite genius "in terms of the central vision of the human, and the fulfillment of the human . . . that it is in relationships of love and trust and self-giving in the reconciling community that true humanity is realized, and that the image of Jesus in ministry, teaching, and death is the criterion or paradigm in terms of which this conception of the human is concretely pictured and defined." (131)

Yet Kaufman remains basically conservative in his view of the Mennonite calling. Inasmuch as the Mennonite understanding of Jesus calls for a "radical discipleship of nonresistance," Kaufman asks rather provocatively: "Is it not our special and particular mission as Mennonites to preserve and cherish and witness to this aspect of the Christian message which is either not understood or not accepted by other Christian groups? Has not God, by making us heirs to a tradition which sees the significance of these emphases, singled us out as those whose special task is to witness to this understanding of the Christian faith to all of Christendom, yes, to all of the world? No one else has been given this particular role to play, this particular task to perform, for no one else has the particular heritage which Mennonites enjoy." (17)

Even if Kaufman appears basically conservative of the tradition thus far, the liberalism of which he speaks becomes readily apparent in the authority he posits for the Christian life and the implications he perceives for a nonresistant ethic. "I do not think traditional Mennonitism, rooted as it is in biblical authoritarianism, is equipped to deal with problems faced by persons in modern professions," he says (127 and 128). Modern scholarship has undermined past understandings of the Bible and its traditional applications to the modern world. The importance of the Bible remains, but only insofar as it indicates the purposes of God in history, most notably in the events of Jesus Christ. God and Jesus are the Christian's authority, not the Bible. But how is this authority to be translated in concrete situations? "The existing church can no longer be regarded as *the* norm-giving society," for it is only one among a number of communities out of which a Christian acts (109). Rather ultimate authority rests in the individual Christian, as he remains true to his conscience, which in turn responds to the normativity of love as revealed in Jesus.

Basic to Kaufman's social ethic is his definition of love as that which goes into the very heart of an evil situation and attempts to rectify it. Hence, there can be no legitimacy in quietism or withdrawal from evil. Responsibility for society is a given, the only question is how best to be responsible. Kaufman advocates not only witnessing against evil, but also participation in the implementation of the best insights of society

even if this means serving as a Secretary of Defense. To do any less based on withdrawal from evil and in the interests of purity is to abort the depths of love's meaning for a less than Christian alternative.

Kaufman formulates his liberal option in part against the more conservative and traditional stance of John Howard Yoder. Actually Kaufman and Yoder agree on many issues over against the naive optimism of many modern pacifists. They agree on the essentially eschatological nature of pacifism, the impossibility of the state to implement agape and the consequent necessity of the Christian to call the state to its best possible attainable goals. They differ essentially in their ecclesiology and the consequent duality between church and world. Following through on his individualism, Kaufman sees the duality as only subjective in terms of a way to understand society, not objective in terms of a basis for separation. His duality, says Kaufman, is one of a dichotomy of understanding whereas Yoder's is a dichotomy of condemnation. Accordingly, Kaufman deems Yoder's argument that the Christian is responsible for the church not the world heretical, while Yoder would see Kaufman compromising the essence of the Gospel.

Kaufman's more liberal reading is not entirely outside the tradition, even though this approach has been rather muted in recent years. It could readily be argued that he stands in a line of largely General Conference Mennonites beginning with John H. Oberholtzer, through C. Henry Smith, J. E. Hartzler and the editors of the *Christian Exponent*. This lineage survived World War II in weakened form yet it periodically gains voice to advocate a more individualistic than churchly authority, and a more responsiblist than separationist ethnic. It may in fact be possible to see the Kaufman-Yoder differences to be historical GC-OM distinctions.

These denominational differentiations are of historical interest, but should be of decreasing importance in formulating a relevant ethic for modern Mennonites. Kaufman does make a major contribution in his phenomenological and sociological analyses. He rightly recognizes that church-world dualities are incredibly complex, that sin is found in the church even as in the world, that professionalism has added significant dimensions to the problem, and that traditional norms are culturally conditioned. His ethical constructions are less compelling. Mennonite theologian A. James Reimer in *Theological Method, Modernity and the Role of Tradition* argues that because Kaufman is so totally committed to the assumptions of modernity "his theological method is an inadequate basis for developing a theology capable of criticizing the modern age as radically as necessary. For this, ironically, a more traditional approach may in fact be required." (III, 1978 Mennonite Graduate Seminar papers). A "more liberal and open" interpretation needs to be heard, but Kaufman's version is not necessarily the best answer to the critical issues he identifies so well.

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Above left, Melchior Hoffman, who transplanted the Anabaptist movement from Strasbourg to Emden, East Friesland. This etching by Christopher van Sichem shows him in prison in Strasbourg. In 1530 he baptized 300 followers in the Emden Reformed Church, launching the Anabaptist movement in the north. Above, left, Menno Simons. From Emden the Anabaptist movement spread to the Netherlands where Menno Simons was converted in 1536 and soon gave leadership to the harassed Anabaptist people.

1530 — 1980
The 450th Anniversary of the Founding of the Anabaptist Movement in the Netherlands