

MENNONITE LIFE

SEPTEMBER 1983



In this Issue

In this post-Holocaust and post Hiroshima world our sensitivities regarding mass death have become numb. The slaughtering of thousands of human beings—men, women and children, the aged and the young—by fellow human beings defies our capacity to comprehend. We find difficulty in comprehending both the act of mass murder and the experience of the victims. In this issue the pastor of the Mennonite church in Heilbronn, West Germany, tells the story of the destruction of his hometown and where he now serves a congregation. The date is December 4, 1944, six months before the war's end. In the days following the December 4 bombing thousands of graves were dug on the edge of Heilbronn with temporary wooden markers, each bearing the date of death, December 4, 1944. Diether Goetz Lichdi recalls the memories of that fateful night and the days immediately following. Mennonites in other European cities—Rotterdam, Hamburg, Berlin—had similar experiences. One will remember that Pastor Lichdi was the author of an article on "Nazism and its Reception by German Mennonites" in the March 1981 issue of *Mennonite Life*.

On the back cover of this issue are four photographs of a 1943 bombing of occupied Paris, France. Early in the war the Allies emphasized and publicized their precision or pinpoint bombing of military targets as illustrated by the Paris bombing. As the war drug on the Allies resorted to night saturation-bombing of whole towns as in the December 4, 1944 raid on Heilbronn.

The story of the early years of Tabor College, interwoven with the leadership of Henry W. Lohrentz, identifies themes which are akin to those of other Mennonite colleges—Bethel, Bluffton, Goshen, Freeman—which emerged around the turn of the century. One observes the drive among a separated, rural, immigrant people for higher education. One notes the groping, conflict-ridden search for a working relationship between developing conference bodies and these new educational institutions. Paul Toews, the author of this significant study, is Associate Professor of History and Director of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies at Fresno Pacific College, Fresno, California.

The extensive bibliography of 1982 publication on the Radical Reformation and the Mennonites is evidence of the growing volume of popular and scholarly writing about the Mennonites and related groups. Add to this a host of articles which appeared this past year in Mennonite periodicals. Implicit in this task of assembling this bibliography is the fact that there is a friendly network of collaboration among Mennonite libraries and centers of historical study.

The Editors

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Robert Kreider

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A grave marker for nine victims of the bombing attack on Heilbronn, Germany, December 4, 1944.

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Scenes of a daytime bombing attack on Paris, France, in 1943: upper left—targeted area along Seine River; upper right—the dropping of the first bomb; lower left—five bombs dropping; lower right—puffs of smoke showing many air strikes along Seine.

Photo Credits

All photos from the Mennonite Library and Archives with the exception of the drawing on page 11 and the photo on page 12, both from the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies at Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas. The photos on the bombing of Paris on the back cover are from the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

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Mennonite Women: A Story of God's Faithfulness

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David A. Haury and Rachel Waltner

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The Fourth of December, 1944— The Destruction of Heilbronn

by Diether Goetz Lichdi

I was a little boy, aged nine, when I left my hometown of Heilbronn in the fall of 1944 for a hiding place. The war had come very close during the last weeks of the year; we could hear explosions and artillery-fire carried to us by westerly winds. The frontline had arrived at the top of the Vosges Mountains (along the western border of the Alsace), sixty miles west of Heilbronn. It seemed that within the next couple of weeks the battle line would cross the Neckar Valley on its way eastward. Heilbronn had experienced several air raids in the past, including the devastating raid of September 10, 1944, which had resulted in heavy losses in lives and homes. The enemies' activity in the air never ceased. Single planes with giant demolition bombs, nicknamed "bomber-Charlie," were present without warning, and made the townsfolk apprehensive. We spent our nights and most of the day in the shelters;

schools and other public places were closed.¹

The war in its sixth year was obviously coming to an end. The last German military activity was launched on December 16—the so-called "Ardennes Offensive." It was the last desperate attempt to hold back defeat which had appeared in prospect two years before at Stalingrad and culminated in the invasion of Normandy by the Allied Forces. The situation of the population was hardened by "total war," the magic phrase used by Nazi-propaganda to explain all hardships and miseries. The pressure of surveillance by the Nazi Party (especially the Gestapo) strengthened; living-standards dropped sharply; food supplies decreased; textiles, clothing and shoes became scarce; it was impossible even to repair broken windows in the bombed houses. In some parts of Germany people began to starve. Many people were wandering about

in Germany in search of refuge, particularly those who had lost their homes in destroyed cities. Some sought temporary assistance by going to the countryside where food was more accessible than in the industrial centers.

After my younger sister was born in late September amid the frequent air-raids, and I had fallen seriously ill, my mother decided to leave endangered Heilbronn and seek refuge on a nearby farm estate rented by a Mennonite farmer.

On Monday evening, December 4, 1944, I heard my mother yelling: "Fire! Fire!" Both frightened and curious, I jumped out of bed (I was still ill) and ran to the window. I saw a single bright light shoot up into the dark clouded winter sky. Later, I learned that this was the indicator which marked the target. In a moment, I realized this was Heilbronn located just about ten miles northwest. I was chilled and terrified. A huge number of flares came down like an umbrella encircling the city. The air had turned alarmingly silent. I knew what was going to happen. Those flares which we called "Christmas trees" would illuminate the town, showing the air-raiders where to drop their deadly load. I ran away horrified and joined the others in the shelter. There we heard a peculiar noise—a continuing sound, a rumble; after awhile the earthen floor in the shelter began to tremble softly, occasionally as vigorous as the strokes



Scene of Heilbronn, Germany, photograph taken in 1946, approximately 18 months after the bombing.

of an earthquake. At earlier raids we had experienced simpler, short shakings of the ground in the moment of terror when "bomber-Charlie" dropped his bomb. But this was different—the strokes went on and on and on. I recall that all of us—adults and children—kept quiet for a long time after the trembling ceased. After dreadful moments we went upstairs frightened and somewhat relieved. Then we realized that the night was bright as day. We looked in the direction where that fire-shine came from, and we knew that Heilbronn was burning like a bonfire.

Heilbronn was a town of 74,000 inhabitants. Its center, the Old City, was reminiscent of medieval times. Heilbronn's importance during this period of the war was due to the movement of trains from the east, the south and the north, channeled through city marshalling yards to the war front in the west. Heilbronn had also in the northern parts an extended industrial park where tools and parts for planes, tanks and submarines were manufactured. Food and catering services were located in other parts of the town.

Heilbronn was destroyed on December 4, 1944, by the Number Five Bomber Group of the British Royal Air Force. This bomber unit under the command of Sir Ralph Cochrane was the most successful: it accounted for the destruction of several German cities. Its most devastating attack was the burning of Dresden in February 1945 with approximately 300,000 deaths. The Number Five Bomber Group carried the nickname "Lincoln-Poachers." The general policy of this Royal Air Force unit was to break the morale of the German people through the demolition of their houses and the public supply-services. The destruction of the cities was also intended to upset the soldiers in the field. The casualties among children, women and aged people were aimed to undermine the authority of the waning Nazi regime.

In the Heilbronn operation two units were commissioned with separate tasks. First, 27 Lancaster bombers should destroy the marshalling area. In this they actually failed. Second, 283 Lancasters, led

by the Master Bomber Lieutenant Colonel Maurice A. Smith (the man who later was in charge of the Dresden raid), were to burn down the densely populated Old City of Heilbronn. The Lancasters had started between four and five p.m. from their Lincolnshire bases. They had loaded 650 tons of high explosives, including "cookies" (4,000 pound high capacity bombs and 471 tons incendiary bombs). The Lancaster fleet was precisely on schedule when it arrived. Neither anti-aircraft artillery nor the German air force threatened it, although the Lancasters were unprotected by Mosquito fighters. The Royal Air Force and the U.S. Air Force were in complete supremacy of the air space over Europe. Nevertheless, only 255 Lancasters were able to drop their load on Heilbronn; 28 Lancasters crashed, landed or returned due to technical problems. They encircled Heilbronn before they dropped the first demolition bomb at 7:20 p.m. The technique had often been practiced, and now was masterly delivered. The Master Bomber in the Mosquito DZ 518, flying at a height of one to two thousand feet, had to find the most vulnerable parts of the target. He dropped red burning indicators as precisely as possible after the area was highlighted by white flares. The "Christmas tree" flares floated slowly to the ground, marking the area with glaring brilliance. Now the bombers flying at a height of 10,000 to 12,000 feet could see where to unload. The Master

bomber below the Lancasters directed by radio the waves of bombers crisscrossing over the town. His responsibility was to hit the target immediately. If the operation took too long, the target was covered by smoke and bombing became quite inaccurate.

This type of operation had three phases. First, the demolition bombs were dropped to uncover the roofs, break the windows and knock the doors open. In a few minutes, the city in flames lay helpless for the deadly stroke. In phase two, the incendiary bombs with barrels of phosphate and gasoline splattered fire all over. In phase three, the raid kept people nailed down in the shelters and kept the fire department away from the fires. It was about 7:50 p.m. when Lt. Col. Smith ordered the Lancasters back home. Not all of the bomb load was used. The Lancasters dropped within that half-hour over Heilbronn about 600 tons of demolition bombs and 290 tons of incendiary bombs in an area of 1,100 acres. They destroyed 14,390 of the 25,223 housing units in Heilbronn (57%) and killed 6,530 (9%) of 74,000 people. The death toll just inside the bombed area came close to fifty percent.

German city burning after air bombing attack.



Heilbronn ranked second in loss of life to the nearby city of Pforzheim where the deathrate was 16%. Most of the casualties were women and children, and about 35,000 people—nearly half of the population—became homeless. Yet despite the destructiveness and demoralizing effects of the raid, it did not succeed in destroying the militarily important marshalling yards. Furthermore, the bombers did not even attempt to hit the war production lines in the northern parts of the city; rather, they hit the food processing plants closer to the Old City. Here, no homes were left, only a sea of ashes and ruins.

There were no sufficient anti-air craft artillery in and around Heilbronn except for some small cannons which could hit planes up to a height of 3,000 to 4,000 feet but were helpless against Lancaster bombers. From a nearby airfield fourteen German fighters (Ju 88) attacked the Lancasters and shot eleven of them to the ground; three more Lancasters suffered other accidents on their way home. Altogether, 95 British soldiers were killed. During the same evening, three other towns were burned down: Karlsruhe, 40 miles west of Heilbronn and very close to the front line, and Hagen and Hamm in Westphalia. Nearly thirty years after the bombing, when a historian questioned Master Bomber Maurice A. Smith about his part in the incident, Smith explained, "I merely had to do my duty," a statement not unlike the words of many Nazis tried as war criminals.

The people in Heilbronn were not prepared for an air raid of this magnitude. Although they had suffered several small raids with many casualties, none was comparable. In the fall before the fourth of December the Heilbronners had become accustomed to living in shelters and to the commonplace delays and interruptions on the supply side, as well as the increasingly threatening news and unofficial rumors.

Life as usual vanished. Schools, theaters and some civil administrations were shut down, as teachers, clerks and retired old men had to train as "Volkssturm" (home defense force). Ninety-nine alarms

had sounded since October 31, (i.e., about one alarm every eight hours) and most of the people had moved to private or public shelters or had abandoned the city. Those who remained in Heilbronn equipped the shelters with beds, tables, candles and all kinds of food and heating materials. The shelters were in the basements of the houses, either as family-designed units or big wine-cellars with an assigned capacity for several hundred people. Shelters beneath houses required a protected emergency exit to be used in case the house was destroyed. Those emergency-exits were built, but since the steel-doors were not to be opened from the outside, most of the shelters became deadly traps. The shelters offered no protection against heat and gas asphyxiation.

The German civil defense had failed to evaluate the experiences from similar raids on Hamburg and Kassel, both struck in 1943 by combined demolition and incendiary bombing. The air defense still clung to the notion of the small stick incendiary bombs which could be extinguished by a clap and a scoop of sand. As a result they told citizens to stay in the shelters as long as something was burning and warned against crumbling ruins in the open streets. They informed the people that there would be enough oxygen to survive a raid for at least five hours. The air defense officers were to keep people in the shelters after a raid until orders were received from outside authorities to unlock the shelters. This order proved to be fatal.

In the evening on Monday, December 4, the skies were partly cloudy with scattered showers and temperatures above the freezing point. No rain fell before or after the raid; rain started the next morning at 2:00 a.m. which reduced the enormous heat of the fire. The early evening was a good time for the raid: factories and offices closed at about 6:00 p.m. Many people were leaving the factories in the north and west areas for their homes across town. As a result, many people happened to be on the streets of the Old City when at 6:59 p.m. the sirens wailed the first alarm. At 7:06 p.m. the final alarm sounded and people

everywhere headed for the shelters. Not all of them were in a hurry; some had gotten used to the continuous alarms and dallied. They were still in the streets when the Christmas trees floated down. Fear and apprehension prevailed, and many people worried because they were not at home with their loved ones. Nobody knew what was going to happen within the next half hour. The first bombs exploded in the maze of the Old City's roofs and yards at 7:20 p.m.

Those who did not dare before 8:10 p.m. to step out from the assured safety of the shelters into the blaze and the collapsing ruins were destined to death by carbon monoxide or heat. Those who made their way into the open took a desperate risk. The narrow streets, yards, alleys and lanes of the medieval town were filled with burning beams, glowing iron-parts, exploding bombs, collapsing stone walls, blasting sparks and painful smoke. The escapees were in danger of being hit by the whirling rubble. Many could not find their way out of the chaos in time. Where streets had once been were now mountains of bubbling ruins. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed houses; nothing was in its usual place. Heilbronn residents could no longer recognize the streets which they had been passing for years; they got confused and ran towards the burning houses which meant immediate death. Those who dared to step out had a good chance of survival if they covered themselves with wet blankets as shelter, from the rain of fire.

The people had only a twenty minute chance to live if they left the shelters between 7:50 p.m. and 8:10 p.m. against official advice and in spite of the burning and exploding inferno. They reached safety only when they managed to find a fast escape out of the burning area.

We do not know how many risked flight from the shelters. Although the casualties in the center of the raid were high, they would have been considerably higher than the estimated 50 percent had not many people taken the chance to run through the hell of fire. After 8:10 p.m. the pavement of most of the streets melted, the stone walls be-

gan to glow, liquid iron and phosphate started to drop from the ruins, and the smoke became deadly carbon monoxide. Survival was not possible anymore. The narrow alleys lined with dry wood acted as chimneys, as heat drove the air upward and fresh cool air came spitting in from below. The developing circle gained momentum and generated the firestorm, a deadly hurricane of flames, heat and gas. The velocity of the firestorm was estimated at 140 miles per hour or 200 feet per second. The firestorm, with its phenomenal air pressure, tore off trees and bushes quite removed from the Old City. People in the targeted area began to die after 8:15 p.m. because of a lack of oxygen, collapsing walls and vaults, flames, and heat. The temperatures in the shelters are assumed to have climbed up to 200 degrees centigrade or higher. The various causes of death were easily determined: the victims of the heat had shrunk to half size; the gassed ones had flushed faces, some like cherries. Death had come suddenly: children playing with toys, men standing together in conversation, a dispatcher holding the receiver to his ear, and men clutching axes as if prepared to break their way out.

The firestorm raged for about four hours and came to an end around midnight. It gradually slowed down and the colors of the fire changed from white to deep red. The burning ceased after 2:00 a.m. In some areas, the fire glowed for six weeks beneath the ashes and flared up whenever a helpful wind incited it. Many houses in Heilbronn outside the ring of fire were no longer inhabitable. Roofs were uncovered, walls crushed, and doors and windows broken. Electricity and gas were not available and a critical shortage of food, water, medicine and blankets ensued. Heilbronn became a dead city. Survivors left town almost immediately and general plundering of the area followed, including the robbing of unburied corpses.

A longer range impact of the bombing was the trauma on the environment. Land to the east and south of the city was buried beneath "black snow": dust and ashes

covering houses and gardens, fields and woods. During the following days miscellaneous materials were collected from the firestorm area, including invoices, marriage certificates and archival documents. A ribbon of carbonized paper reached all the way to Dinkelsbühl, about 80 miles east of Heilbronn.

Beginning on the night of December 4, charity and mutual aid became an important part of the Heilbronn story. Many people from surrounding villages arrived in search of friends and relatives. They worked together in the burning city to move exhausted and wounded victims to safe shelters. Other survivors found their way out of town without help and sought safety in rural areas. Nearby villages and hamlets were overcrowded in a short time. Assistance from the authorities was sporadic at best—the people of Heilbronn were on their own even after the bombing had ceased.

Later, the authorities erected an "honorary cemetery," *Ehrenfriedhof*, for the victims, but it took several months to rescue and bury all corpses. Their cadaverous smell was present in the Neckar Valley as well as in remote valleys of the Swabian Wood until the spring of 1945. Retrieval of the corpses and the clearing of ruins was hindered by unexploded bombs, called "blind

walkers," (*Blindgänger*). The last bomb was found and deactivated in 1959.

Eyewitness reports

The following eyewitness reports give further impressions about how survivors and other people involved reflected on the events of the Heilbronn bombing. The person in the observation post in the spire of St. Kilian Church survived to report:

"A terrifying hail of bombs began. . . . As in an earthquake the tower trembled and staggered beneath our feet. These horrible seconds became eternities. In a flash I remembered my whole life. Almost unconsciously we expected at every moment a catastrophe: the breaking of the tower, pulling us into the depth. We closed our eyes . . . Suddenly there rolled a terrible thunderclap very close to us. I felt a heavy blow against my face and had the peculiar impression of having lost my head. In the next second we were catapulted by the shock waves of air pressure—similar to the howling of a powerful hurricane—into the spiral staircase. When it broke we

A small section of the list of dead citizens of Heilbronn, killed during World War II—most dying December 4, 1944.

APELT, Martin, verh., Ufa-Theaterleiter, * 6. 3. 1900, Mönchseestr. 68	† 4. 12. 1944
Ottilie, Ehefrau, * 29. 11. 1910, Mönchseestr. 68	† 4. 12. 1944
Jürgen, Kind, * 21. 4. 1939, Mönchseestr. 68	† 4. 12. 1944
Ulrich, Kind, * 2. 6. 1940, Mönchseestr. 68	† 4. 12. 1944
Hartmut, Kind, * 15. 9. 1942, Mönchseestr. 68	† 4. 12. 1944
APFELBACH, Johanna, Witwe, * 21. 1. 1863, Gr. Metzgergasse 26	† 4. 12. 1944
APIN-APINIS, Herta, verh., Hausfr., * 31. 10. 1903, Herbststr. 11	† 9. 12. 1944
APPRILIA, Vorname unbekannt, Geburtsort Lausach	† 4. 12. 1944
ARLITT, Alma, verh., Hausfrau, * 26. 1. 1921, Turmstr. 26	† 4. 12. 1944
Hans-Dieter, Kind, * 26. 3. 1943, Turmstr. 26	† 4. 12. 1944
ARMBRUSTER, Friedrich, verh., Oberfeldwebel, * 12. 12. 1919,	
Deutschhofstr. 13	† 4. 12. 1944
Margarete, Ehefrau, * 23. 11. 1919, Deutschhofstr. 13	† 4. 12. 1944
Peter, Kind, * 24. 2. 1944, Deutschhofstr. 13	† 4. 12. 1944
ARMBRUSTER, Johannes, verh., Sattler, * 26. 5. 1898,	
Gr. Metzgergasse 26	† 4. 12. 1944
Paula, Ehefrau, * 22. 12. 1902, Gr. Metzgergasse 26	† 4. 12. 1944
Sieglinde, Schülerin, * 30. 6. 1931, Gr. Metzgergasse 26	† 4. 12. 1944
ARNOLD, Adolf, verh., Kaufmann, * 30. 9. 1888, Karlstr. 39	† 4. 12. 1944
Eugenie, Ehefrau, * 3. 12. 1899, Karlstr. 39	† 4. 12. 1944
Irmgard, led., Bürogehilfin, * 20. 4. 1927, Karlstr. 39	† 4. 12. 1944

were pulled down." The writer reports that he was buried in the ruins together with his comrade who died within hours. He himself was rescued by friends the next day.²

A journalist published another survivor's account: "Our office building . . . had a big shelter. . . . It had exits on four sides providing safe escape in the event of a bomb. The first bombs set fire to the houses in our neighborhood. When we opened the windows . . . smoke, heat and a rain of sparks intruded. Beds, mattresses and other inflammables were removed. We turned to the main exit but the staircase had collapsed from a heavy strike and the iron door was mangled. The upward exit was locked. Our attempt to break through the wall with pick and chisel failed after a few hopeless tries. We turned to the exits of the opposite side of the building. When we opened the protective iron windows we suffered a flood of smoke, heat and sparks, causing us to shut the windows again. Finally we turned to the exit . . . which led to a tunnel shaft to the street. With horror we realized that a bomb had hit this exit also. I was crushed by

falling stones and lost my consciousness. After some hours I awoke and heard . . . two of my fellow sufferers asking: 'Is there anybody alive?' Around me was deadly silence. I answered and crawled in the direction of the voices, across corpses of men, women and children lying over each other." The survivor then described how he and two others dug their way into another room where they could not detect an exit. They shouted repeatedly for help. After fourteen hours they were rescued. "Now I realized," he reported later, "that my leg was completely burned, stripped of flesh down to the bones. The bones of my foot were completely carbonized."³

The pastor of St. Nikolai Church gave another report. To save his medieval church he hurried there at the first alarm. In the church he was hit by the air pressure of a demolition bomb and slung against a wall. When he recovered he realized the urgency of finding an opening through the ocean of fire. After several tries he succeeded, but was aghast at the sight when he reached home. "The entire front of the building has been

blown off from the roof down to the foundation. I am terribly frightened. What happened to the residents of the shelter? Are they still alive? . . . I drag myself to the emergency exit. All doors are locked from the inside. There is but one possibility—to knock on the doors for warning. Nearby is a piece of wood. When I reach for it I recognize for the first time that my arms hang loose in a strange manner. They are no longer in my command."

The pastor tried in vain to find someone. After long hours of wandering he was picked up by a Red Cross unit and taken to safety. Later he learned that his wife and children had suffocated behind the very door on which he sought to pound a warning.

My mother, Dr. Elisabeth Lichdi, wrote about the raid several weeks

A shepherd with his flock amid the ruins of Heilbronn, the 13th century Kilianskirche in the background. Photograph from 1946.



later: "On the walls of the destroyed houses, you can read moving stories such as: 'We are alive and are in . . . ' or 'All are dead, Where is Mr. . . . ?' A long list of names was written on a ruin in the Karlsstrabe—all dead. . . . The big shelters downtown could not be cleared of the corpses, so they were burned out with flame throwers. The shelters became modern crematories." In another letter she wrote: "Since no phone worked, Helmut drove into town the next morning with his carriage full of food. In the evening he returned quite agitated; he told of the bad news and prepared himself to return right away to pick up some homeless persons. . . . Mom arrived that evening; she had saved nothing but a purse. Fortunately she had put on her good fur coat before going downstairs into the shelter. I helped her out of the coat and recognized a strong odd odor. Lodged in the collar of the coat was a lump of black pitch which reeked of phosphate, I was frightened because she must have walked through a rain of fire; had it hit the skin of her neck she would have burned. All night long she lay whimpering, unable to calm down. It took another day before she could tell me what had happened. She had left the shelter in time and spent the following night beneath the floor of a terrace where she was protected from sparks and other objects flying through the air. When the next day dawned she wandered among corpses, ruins, mountains of rubble and craters of bombs. After a long time she reached a safe refuge with relatives."

The following accounts were offered by eyewitnesses and were later published:⁴

A. Renz reported: "We were twelve persons in the shelter: two men, four women and six children. Shortly after locking the emergency exit we heard the first explosions. . . . We laid down on the floor, fearing the arches of the ceiling would fall on us. Again an explosion: the light went off, the children began crying. . . . Suddenly we heard chopping, knocking and calling from the shelter next to us. . . . Men in our shelter broke through the wall with our axes. Now twenty-five peo-

ple invaded. . . . All of them had fear of death written on their faces. . . . After a while three men and six children climbed outside. They ran through the firestorm to safety but suffered heavy burn wounds. We remained in the shelter; I was the only man left. Around nine o'clock Miss B. and I tried to find help. We dipped our blankets into water. When I left the shelter the firestorm had decreased but the rain of sparks continued furiously. Miss B. became afraid, returned, and locked the door. I continued looking for help but could only move slowly. The streets were barricaded by stones, burning beams and tangled wires. On both sides the houses were aflame. The roaring of the firestorm filled the air. Walls were crumbling. Gutters, bricks and tiles whirled around as if driven by unseen forces. In the boulevard all trees were burning. . . . I met an officer and ten men who were ready to help me. . . . With difficulty we reached the shelter. Two hours had passed since my absence. Six of the twenty-eight who had stayed behind were already dead, the rest unconscious. More died enroute to the hospital and only seven of the group survived.

A. Weller reports: "I realized that all of us were going to die. I lay on the upper bunk holding my five-year-old daughter in my arms

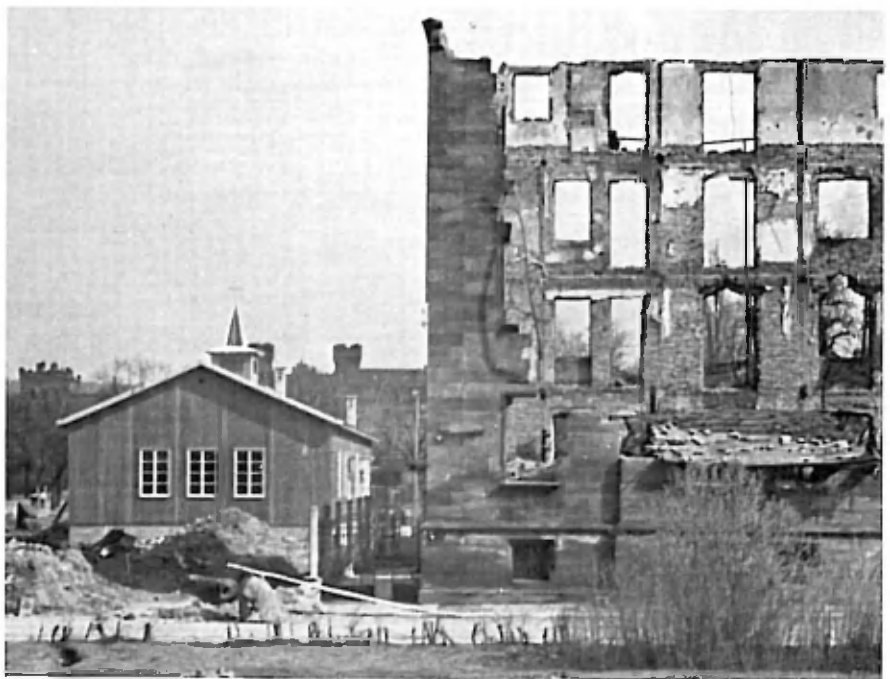
and lost consciousness. Three days later I woke up in the hospital. I had been rescued by my brother around midnight. My little girl and my mother were dead and my father died later."

Mennonites in Heilbronn

. . . . About twenty Mennonites lived in Heilbronn. Some had left the town before the air raid. None died in the raid, though most of them lost their homes and possessions. The first Mennonites to escape the city after the raid fled to the home of a Mennonite farmer. A Mennonite preacher was among the first to arrive shortly after the raid in the burning city. He rode his bicycle about eight miles, but was unable to get into the downtown area because of the firestorm and the smoke. Instead, he joined a group of volunteers in fighting a house fire. When they ran out of water, they used cider stored in the cellar to extinguish the fire.

Early the next morning, several Mennonite farmers came to town with horses and wagons, bringing food, straw and blankets. They searched for brethren and friends,

Swedish-fabricated building on left given to Heilbronn Mennonite congregation as a neighborhood house.



picked up the homeless and took them home. Using wagons, they rescued some of the furniture from damaged houses which otherwise would have been ruined by rain and snow or might have been stolen by plunderers. The Mennonite escapees in general were more fortunate than other Heilbronners because they were immediately taken in by neighboring Mennonite families. The Mennonite farmers, primarily renters of large estates, also aided and gave refuge to other homeless citizens. Nevertheless, it was difficult for most of them to board more than a few of the Heilbronn homeless because most of their rooming capacity had already been filled with evacuees from the western parts of Germany. The Mennonites donated food generously to families and individuals during the last crucial month of the war.

Nadja Landes, wife of Christian Landes, chairman of the Conference of the South German Mennonites (*Verband*), lived eight miles north of Heilbronn. She reported: "When the bombardment began we headed for the shelter. We heard an infernal noise and could feel the air pressure of the exploding bombs. After the raid came to an end we realized that bombs were continuing to explode. . . . When we left the shelter we saw a great brightness. It was the fire raging at Heilbronn. We tried to phone friends in the city. No one answered, and the deathlike silence alarmed us. Obviously all connections had been severed. When we called a butcher in a nearby village his wife announced the arrival of refugees from

Heilbronn. She reported that the town was a lake of fire. Crying, she said, 'The town is burning, the houses as well as the streets, everything. . . .' The next day Christian drove to Heilbronn with a horse and wagon loaded with bread and milk. Years later we encountered strangers still thankful for the food. Christian searched for friends and acquaintances. Over the course of the day our house filled with homeless refugees. . . . He also took a tractor to the destroyed city to rescue furniture and belongings from the shelters of the homeless. All over the city were corpses and ruins. The corpses were carried out of the shelters by soldiers and were carelessly thrown on trucks and then transferred to a common grave."

Although the town was devastated, air raids and bombing continued on a broad scale. It was a waste of munitions, gasoline and time, for the only effect was to churn the ruins over and over again. The goal of the Allied Forces was to use further air raids as a means of demoralizing the German people rather than of destroying the German war potential. The enemy became more concerned with the compounding of the terror than with ending the war swiftly. The victims of this strategy were civilians, primarily women, children, aged and disabled persons. The bombing of Heilbronn was only a small part of this sad story. Furthermore, the German authorities, the Nazi regime, became an accomplice to the terror, as they failed to respond effectively to the firestorm attack. Heilbronn did provide a lesson, how-

ever, to those in charge of Württemberg. The authorities decreed that everyone must leave the shelters immediately after a raid. This helped to lessen the casualties when the city of Ulm was attacked two weeks later on December 17. Although Ulm suffered a raid of similar dimensions there were only 707 casualties. A significant result of the disaster at Heilbronn, Ulm and other towns was that even the staunchest supporters of Nazism realized that the regime was ending.

The pain of the Heilbronn survivors persisted, particularly in the vivid memories of that night, December fourth. And yet, as time passed and the ruins vanished, a new Heilbronn was constructed in a relatively short time. The culmination of the rebuilding effort came in 1965 with the consecration of the reconstructed Church of St. Kilian.

The hours of desperation and death revealed some important aspects of human nature. We witnessed examples of compassion and charity and at the same time saw the outbreak of reckless egotism and criminal instincts. We know of many people in the same situation in the same shelter lying side by side: one died and one was saved, one fighting in vain for survival and the other sacrificing himself for a stranger. We do not know any explanation for an individual's death or survival. The apocalyptic event of December 4, 1944, shows God the Almighty handling the world in justice and grace. He allows men to become guilty and he saves men without any apparent justification. He shows mercy where he wills and he pities whom he chooses. "I have raised you up for this purpose to exhibit my power in my dealings with you, and to spread my fame over all the world." (Romans 9:17 and Exodus 9:16). To Him be praise and glory for ever!

ENDNOTES

1. I wish to acknowledge two sources for the account of the Heilbronn bombing: W. Steinhilber, *Heilbronn—Die schwersten Stunden der Stadt* (Heilbronn: n.p., 1961), and K. H. Misteale, "Die Geschichte eines Luftangriffs auf Heilbronn (4 December 1944)" in *Jahrbuch 27/1973 Historischer Verein Heilbronn*.
2. A. Gloeggler, "Der Letzte Wächter von St. Kilian," Heilbronn: n.p., 1949.
3. R. Bauer, "Heilbronner Tagebuchblätter," Heilbronn: n.p., 1949.
4. W. Steinhilber.



Mennonite Central Committee and Christenpflicht supervised food distribution program in Heilbronn, c. 1946.

Henry W. Lohrenz and Tabor College

by Paul Toews

I

There are not many Grecian buildings on the plains of Kansas. Yet in the small village of Hillsboro stands a college building, erected by rural Mennonites, some fifty years removed from the Russian steppes, that could stand in Athens. The Tabor administration building with its urns, modified doric and ionic pillars and facade is an impressive structure worthy of the style and aesthetic taste of the ancient Greeks. It may have been built by peasants one generation removed from the sod house, but it was conceived by a folk whose imagination was obviously large.

Mennonites are a people who historically prized the virtues of simplicity and humility. Architectural ostentatiousness, high culture and refined sensibilities hardly seem appropriate for a people who have wandered over the face of the earth in search of a corner where they could practice their demanding religious faith.

The Grecian building which replaced the original administration building that burned in 1918, however surprising, becomes comprehensible when placed within the progressive ideal present at the founding of the college. The most clearly articulated statement about the educational philosophy that inspired the creation of Tabor is a 1944 address given by Henry W. Lohrenz, the founding president of Tabor. It was fitting that on his last Tabor Day, before his death in 1945, he would recall the inspiration of the early 1900s. The aims were threefold: "to make the benefits of a liberal education available to the youth of our people"; "to provide



trained leadership to the churches that would support the school"; and "to give preparation for certain vocations."¹ Behind those three primary aims was a view of the world in which faith and intellect, faith and work, and the church and the world were linked together. The liberal education envisioned is one that saw no conflict between the findings of scholarship and the truths of scripture. An elevated mind, one trained in the classics of literature, awakened by the findings of science could more clearly understand the scriptures. Lohrenz's affirmation of the liberal arts was categorical: "There is nothing that can substitute for a good liberal education . . . this enrichment is something that is of far greater value than any material possession. . . . There are no earthly goods that a father can leave to his child which are of greater value than an education of the right kind."² Tabor meant to offer the right kind to the youth of the church. It would link learning and faith together to produce people of "nobility and character."³

The concern to provide trained leadership was essentially a hope for unity in the churches. Tabor would provide a place where the leadership of the church could be socialized into a similar set of religious and cultural values and expectations. This would maintain "unity of aim and spirit in our churches." Without that shared training the churches would be hard pressed to keep both "the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace."⁴

The concern for vocational preparation linked the emerging academy



and college into the larger world of work. Training in the professions—teaching, medicine, nursing, business, expression, home-making and many other vocations—was part of the work of the church. Lohrenz hoped that every student would go forth "to occupy a larger sphere of service than otherwise would have been possible." His vision of Christian faith included the obligation that "every person tend to his business and work with his own hands." Here is a commitment to a worldly activism. Tabor graduates had work to do in the world.⁵

The 1944 statement is, however, incomplete. A fourth aim, although unstated in 1944, was very much present both at the beginning in 1908 and in subsequent years: Lohrenz hoped that the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches would own the school. It might start as a regional enterprise, but the expectation was that the school would win the full acceptance and thereby support of the churches. Lohrenz was committed to the liberal arts tradition, but he was also a conference loyalist committed to building an institution that the conference would embrace.⁶

Henry W. Lohrenz, together with P. C. Hiebert and others, was both founder of Tabor in 1908 and its first president from 1908 to 1931. He is as complex and paradoxical a person as the contradictory imagery of an Athenian Mennonite. Born of immigrant parents he moved in educational, religious and political circles far beyond the boundaries of the immigrant world. Tied in his youth to the landscape of Reno and Marion counties, he felt at home in the universities of the nation's urban centers. Born only fourteen years after the divisive split between the Brethren and the Kirchliche in Russia, he experienced fraternity and friendship with the General Conference Mennonites, the American heirs of the Kirchliche,

Henry W. Lohrenz, c. 1916.

and even took refuge at Bethel College when Tabor floundered. A reserved man, almost shy, who never sought leadership, he became a leader in the Mennonite Brethren as few before or after him. His lifelong intellectual passions were science and religion in an age when the two seemed mutually exclusive and threatened the stability of many a religious college and denomination. He possessed a deeply pious and devout soul that was hinged to a classical mind. Little did he know in 1908 that these commitments would be severely tested. The liberal arts college could be built, but the General Conference adoption could not be secured during his twenty-three years as president. Science and religion, even at Tabor, came to be seen with mutual suspicion. The spacious and constricted elements of his imagination and his people would disagree. Much of his presidency was an attempt to maintain an equilibrium between these varying positions. In the end that equilibrium was lost. But the story of the loss is not the story of Lohrenz alone. The paradoxes are not personal but are rather part of the social biography of his people.

II

The commitment to the liberal arts produced very quickly a college with a remarkable progressive quality. In the initial year, 1908-1909, forty-four different classes were offered in fields as diverse as Bible, Music, Business, Penmanship, German, Mathematics, Natural Science, English, Literature, History and Psychology.⁷ By 1912 the range of courses had expanded to also include Greek, Latin, French, Geography, Sociology, Political Science, Political Economy, Accounting, Physics, Art, Vocal and Instrumental Music.⁸

As the curriculum expanded so did the student organizations. The first was the Olympian Literary Society, founded during the inaugural year for the purpose of fostering "a desire for good literature and high literary achievements." The Debating Club followed in 1909, The YMCA and YWCA were founded in 1910 and 1911. The Student Volunteer Movement, more frequently called the Mission Band, began in 1914.

In addition to these academic and religious organizations, a layer of political associations emerged in the early years. The Intercollegiate Prohibition Association and the Reform League both were part of the young college scene by 1912.⁹

These student organizations like other elements of the college point to its connectedness with the larger cultural, political and religious world. While the YMCA, YWCA and Student Volunteer Movement were clearly devoted to the moral and spiritual nurture of their members, they were also heirs of the social activism of the nineteenth century American evangelicalism. These organizations at the national level were part of the crusading temperament in American protestantism at the turn of the century. Devoted primarily to world mission and evangelization they also worked with considerable effort at the reform and purification of American culture. They were a bridge that linked the religious conservative with the political progressives. This was the era when the theological liberals and conservatives could still agree on the promise of America. The ideal common to the American

puritan and evangelical past of building a Christian civilization was still shared by people of both persuasions. The war had not yet crushed the liberal dream of the "kingdom" and the profanization of American culture had not challenged the conservative hope for a moral order.

Progressivism was the culminating expression of a culture that had long understood and defined itself by protestant moralism. The progressives assumed that a previous American righteousness could be either continued or restored by their appeals to conscience and civic morality. Progressivism was the social conscience of American protestantism during its most expansive time.¹⁰

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are full of protestant crusaders liking with the political reform or progressive tradition. Organizations like these student groups could be orthodox in theology yet liberal in their embrace of the American national promise.¹¹

These progressive sentiments are present elsewhere in the college. The first annual issued in 1916 and covering the first eight years of the

school is a revealing document and a commentary on, what for Mennonites, seems an interesting and perhaps even strange veneration of cultural and political traditions and the progressive spirit of the early twentieth century. The class members of 1913 are each characterized by a set of terms. Included are these descriptions: hopeful optimist; revolutionary, undecided and skeptical; a vivacious, versatile pedagogue; cold, haughty and distant; energetic, active and progressive; doubtfully optimistic.¹² The class of 1915 is characterized by a set of terms that are to define the entire class. The complete set of terms reads: "Classical, socratic, calm, healthy, congenial, strong, enthusiastic, triumphant, prominent, hospitable, benevolent, didactic, liberal, implicit, humble, amiable, accurate, frank, heedful, specific, subjective, unblemished, non-resident, modest, premier, joyful, sociable, perseverent."¹³

Students and faculty of Tabor College, 1915-16. P. C. Hiebert is eighth from left and H. W. Lohrentz, ninth.



Both sets of descriptions are the language of the early twentieth century with its faith in itself, its skepticism, its irreverence about many inherited cultural traditions. It is also the language of the liberal, humane and cultured class. It is hardly the language of the Mennonite congregation. Neither is it profane language. It is the language of an era that was able to be both cosmopolitan and Christian, both sacred and secular, both moralistic and pious.

The class predictions of the early years further suggest how these early Tabor students simultaneously inhabited the worlds of faith and national cultures. Peering into the future to determine where the members of a class will eventuate suggests the range of the imagination when unbounded by reality, the social and professional aspirations of the youth looking for productive lives. The 1910 college class looking towards 1960, fifty years after graduation, includes an imaginary dialog between two members of the class. The conversation turns to the recent trip of one who has just returned from visiting Europe. A few days stop in Northern Germany included a stay at the home of Renetta Schulz. Her husband, the General Field Marshal August von Lohengrin, was a German war hero from the last Russo-German war. Frau Renetta von Lohengrin through her devotion and sacrifices to the wounded soldiers had also won a place in the heart of the German people. They were known as the "Grand Old Couple" in Berlin circles.¹⁴ The embrace of the future even included the German military.

The class of 1917, appearing in 1945, includes one who has just finished a distinguished term as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, a second who as Secretary of the Treasury after the close of the great European war had so distinguished himself that he "is admired by the whole world." Another's poetry had won her the honor of poet laureate of the twentieth century and an artist's work had "accomplished the true art, that is to crystallize emotion into thought."¹⁵

The class poem for the 1915 graduates even more clearly symbolizes

this engagement with the affairs of the world. It is a poem of thirteen stanzas written by a member of the class. Included are the following verses:

"Perhaps there is among our members
one,
Who by keen arguments in congress
halls
Will solve hard problems, pining long
begun
And blot same evil that his land ap-
palls.

Or, others with a bleeding heart will
move
The wicked from their broad destruc-
tive way,
Direct their misled thoughts of joys
alone,
And bring on hearts of winter day of
May.

Or, some will rule Muses' mountain
crest
Word into swinging rime or charming
prose
Responding feelings nursed by na-
ture's breast
And wreath for others many a flush-
ing rose.

A warm farewell we bid to our friends
all;
The evening dumbs the voices of the
air;
The world extends to us her pleading
call
To go for service and make her more
fair."¹⁶

Politics and poetry did not claim most of the early graduates. Rather they went into education. Seventy-five percent of the graduates of the first eight years went on to graduate school. Ninety-four percent of the next ten year's graduates took further schooling.¹⁷ Renetta Schulz, in 1922 could report of the 1910-1912 graduates that forty-five percent earned Master's degrees and sixteen percent had Ph.D's. Of those first three years, eighty-eight percent of the graduates were teachers. fifty-six percent were college professors.¹⁸ Many went to the nation's finest universities. By 1920 A. A. Groening, Henry Schenkofsky and Tina Harms were studying at Berkeley; P. S. Goertz (an earlier McPherson graduate), Adolf Frantz, M. H. Schlichting and A. J. Harms were at Yale Divinity School; Gustave Nikkel was at Northwestern University; A. R. Ebel was at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Boston Museum of Art; C. C. Janzen

and many others were at the University of Kansas. If the educational attainments were remarkable, Renetta Schulz could also comment of these early graduates that 100 percent were church members and 88 percent were still active in the YMCA or YWCA.¹⁹

The progressive spirit nourished also a specific identification with cultural and national achievements. The retention of German culture is a frequent theme among the Mennonite immigrants and their first generation descendants. While some may have argued for the cultural continuity on the grounds that German was the language of the soul and of familiar religious discourse,²⁰ others wished for its preservation because of its linkage to a noble culture. An unidentified writer in the *Tabor College Herald* (November 1916) argued for the maintenance of the German language because it would show "weakness of character" to "forget that we come from the noblest stock in the world. What nationality can boast of nobler ancestry? The Trustees were a strong and healthy race. They were pure and honest of heart and had the noblest aspirations. After they accepted the Christian religion, there were no other people more true to the faith."²¹ The loss of the German language, in these odes to German culture, seemed to presage the loss of cultural and religious vitality. The German people had combined culture, political and religious achievements in a way that suggested the vitality of any one was to be found in connection with the presence of the others. The linkage made it as easy to applaud the political/economic/cultural achievements as it was to praise their religious devotion.

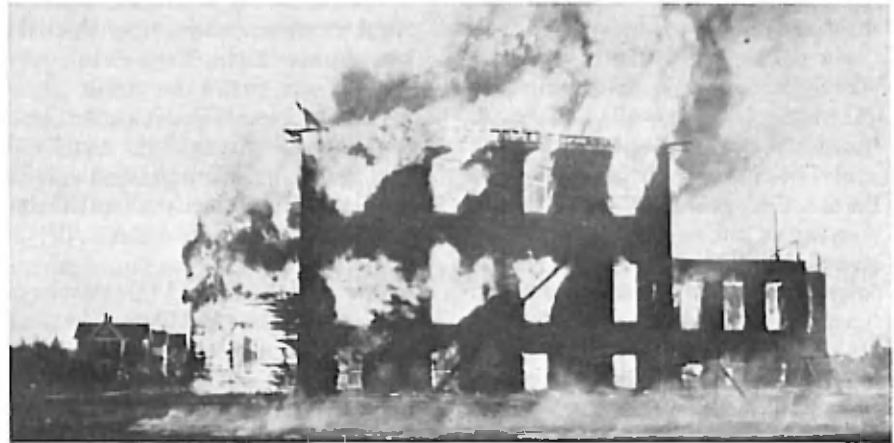
Lohrenz as early as 1901 in a speech to the German Verein at McPherson college linked the perpetuation of German culture with the retention of religious faith. The point of the intersection between the two was not that German was the language of faith but that it was the language of a superior culture. American and German culture had many elements which were honorable and could be recommended to Mennonite people. German culture

should be respected because American culture "will be almost always misunderstood by those who despise their own culture, who stir it into the dirt and spoil their Christentum along with their Deutschtum. Therefore it is the duty of every German . . . to disseminate German ways of thinking and true Christianity at the same time."²²

The German who had no self-esteem about his own culture would be unable to appreciate the noble aspects of American culture. But beyond this affection for cultural development seems to lie the pervasive American belief that religious, cultural and political development were interrelated. If that were true in a general rather than specific way then one could applaud either American or German developments.

That linkage become more apparent with the increasing veneration of American culture. Much as Germany was exalted because of its high culture and religiosity, so American society was worthy of patriotic affection. In successive issues of the *Herold*, in 1916, J. H. Lohrenz and Adolf Franz exhorted the college community to be hopeful of America's future. For Lohrenz, brother to H. W. Lohrenz, America was the bulwark of freedom, prosperity and virtue in the world. This prominence had been achieved as "true patriots fought for the stars and stripes." This birthright of true liberty and justice would be preserved for future generations. The article closed with the rhetorical flourish: "Today we stand at the height of prosperity. Shall this Republic continue its progress? Shall we protect our nation's life and warrant its stand for the future?" The answer was self evident. The preservation of morality, civilization and cultural attainments were linked.²³

Frantz pressed the linkage further. Christianity by solving the social, political and cultural problems of American society would position the nation for bringing the gospel to the farthest corners of the earth. The nation had become the ark of the covenant, the bearer of good tidings. In its hands lay the destiny of the world. He would write "such then are our opportunities for



Above, administration building of Tabor College under construction; below, the fire of 1918.

the future. Will we dare to grasp them? Will we lead the world in the things which are noble and just? It is ours to dare and do; it is ours to neglect and rue. In our hands lie the momentous issues of the future. We will pay the price, we will dare and do."²⁴

Frantz's confidence was shared. For P. F. Wall, many years mathematics instructor at the college and interim president after Lohrenz's departure in 1931, Christianity and civilization were intertwined in ways that made the building of American society part of one's contribution to the evangelization of the world. Those nations that were civilized were so because of Christian convictions. The uncivilized were so because of their unbelief. The logic was that since faith and civilization were hinged together one was obliged to value civilization. It buffered the demise of faith.²⁵

Education in this environment which linked morality, culture and civilization was preparation for service in the church, community, nation and world. G. M. Doerksen, in a

1917 article in the *Herold*, made a series of suggestive comments. Those who possessed nobility, character and virtue would participate in the moral uplift of humanity. The highest expression of that noble ideal was the life and example of Jesus. Colleges were designed to "inspire men and women for this great ideal." But the ideal was one that clearly accepted and cherished much of the national political and cultural order. Doerksen would write: "were it not for education, happiness, prosperity and all morality would decline. Nations would again fall into barbarism. Therefore education is one of the brightest stars in the world of human happiness, prosperity and progress."²⁶

Lohrenz of course can hardly be held accountable for the expressions of his contemporaries. Yet in a

series of addresses and articles stretching from 1912 to 1944 on the nature and function of education, he showed his own commitment to these progressive sentiments. A 1912 article on the Sunday schools revealed the degree to which progressivist assumptions shaped his thinking. He was impressed with the advances of civilization. Scientific investigation and social reform had produced a "great reconstructive work in commercial and industrial lines." He now wished to bring these new principles into the life of the church and saw the Sunday School as the agent for such reconstruction.²⁷

Much later, in 1938, Lohrenz delivered an address, "Contributions of American Mennonite Colleges to Home and Society", at the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Bethel College. It was an artful weaving of the responsibility of the Mennonite college to preserve, refine and awaken. The preservation function included the essential values of faith and Mennonite life. Refining involved the purifying of the esthetic, literary and musical talents of the students. Like his contemporaries, Lohrenz linked the refinement of these sensibilities to the development of character and to a more spacious spirit. The human mind and spirit that was cultivated could more fully encounter the divine. The last contribution of the Mennonite college to society was to develop an appreciative patriotism, a cosmopolitan citizenship and a response to world needs.²⁸

III

This openness of Mennonite participation in the larger culture and even the assumption of some notions of social responsibility may seem strange for a people who had historically lived by privileges which sequestered them from participation in the larger public order. The early Tabor must be seen as part of a cultural and intellectual change that affected the Mennonites in both Russia and America in the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mennonites heretofore lived largely on the boundaries of various social systems. The forms of political consolidation that resulted in the

building of national cultures coupled with the industrial and urban revolution made this isolation more difficult. The very nature of the immigration into the United States without its guarantees of Mennonite lands or Mennonite territory and without political autonomy forced the Mennonites (including the Brethren) into much more contact with the larger world than heretofore.²⁹

This generation of Mennonite Brethren, as well as other Mennonites, did not shrink from these contacts. They linked their religious devotion, moral rectitude, and cultural development to more than the boundaries of the Mennonite world. Theirs was not a sectarian vision of the people of God isolated from the national culture. They could link the path of Christian virtue, diligence and discipline to scientific and cultured progress and the uplift of humanity.

The opening line of the statement of purpose in the Tabor catalog, from the first complete English edition of the catalog (1917) and for many years to come, stated with clarity this progressive assumption. "The purpose of the school from the beginning has been to benefit humanity in general and in particular the denomination that erected it through the dissemination of general culture and biblical information and the development of character . . ."³⁰

IV

But progressivism was not the only current running thru the MB world. The nature and style of the young college became a matter of debate and concern almost as soon as the doors opened. The liberal arts ideal was tested almost immediately and continuously. The third annual meeting of the Tabor College Corporation in May, 1911 revealed the differing mentalities that were to persist throughout Lohrenz's tenure as president. The part of the college that the corporation could praise was the missionary societies, the YMCA and YWCA, and the interest in missionary activity. The corporation members had two concerns; first whether the secular lecture course and the Literary Society

should be continued and secondly, whether the main purpose of the school was "to measure up intellectually with other schools" or to teach the fundamentals of faith. Distinctions were drawn between those activities that "have only an intellectual worth" and those that "serve spiritual life."³¹ This distinction, real in the minds of the corporation members, was also present in the faculty. In the following year faculty members resigned both because the new college was intellectually too spacious and because it was intellectually too constrictive. It was simultaneously too pious and too worldly.

The 1911-12 school term was fraught with conflict between the contending positions. In October, B. E. Ebel and D. E. Harder, leaders of the progressive party, felt that there was a "check upon our ambitions in the lurking unrest already manifest upon the horizon." Ebel could write that the criticism of the previous spring were "merely a pretension and others will be found till the real end is gained."³² The Literary Society, the focus of the criticism, was reigned in. Its independence was checked and carefully controlled by faculty supervision.

The organization of a chapter of the Reform League in January, 1912, and a coed social early in the year, however, only precipitated another crisis. Both were opposed by the conservatives. P. C. Hiebert, studying in Lawrence at the University of Kansas that year, wrote to B. E. Ebel, as "the general of the progressive party," that while the social was doubtless a violation of school policy, the conservatives had manipulated the incident for their own benefit.³³ The progressives meanwhile feared that so long as the school was guided by this "guilted mockery of conservatism,"³⁴ there would be little growth. Tabor stood at 95 students that year and Bethel had an enrollment of over 200. The gap was to be explained in terms of Bethel's more progressive style.

Lohrenz was caught between the factions. Some of his faculty pitied the position in which he found himself. What was not to be pitied was the tenuous position in which the

young school found itself. Lohrenz in varying moods of resignation and courage corresponded with Hiebert in February and March of 1912. In February he wrote that "the future is dismal." By March he more precisely stated the issues that needed resolution. The college had been founded to operate "in commitment to the spirit of our conference." That spirit was now threatened by the differing perceptions and conflict between the board of directors and the faculty over what were to be the "governing principles" that would shape the curriculum and the social life of the college.³⁵ By late spring a purge of some faculty seemed possible, and P. C. Hiebert debated returning to the college for the next year.³⁶

In the fall of 1912, Lohrenz was studying at the University of Kansas, and Hiebert was acting President. He wrote to Lohrenz on the eve of a meeting of church leaders in Hillsboro that prospects were not good: "The whole affair is so disagreeable that I wish I were in Saskatchewan. . . ." While there were many staunch supporters of the college and he expected "no radical anti-college action," he did assume that there would be "a good many thunderbolts whizzing about." His consolation to Lohrenz was "well brother, don't worry about this matter either, at least I try to tell myself every day, just to work on conscientiously for the good cause regardless of what others may do and if the thing then fails, I will at least have the satisfaction of having done what I could."³⁷

One contemporary observed that the root of the misunderstanding was that from the outset there were those who expected the new college to be a Bible school with a restricted curriculum instead of a liberal arts college with its expansive offering. Furthermore the students sought more liberal forms of social activity and engaged in more cosmopolitan activities than had been anticipated. Some supporters had been willing to give the college a few years to establish the conservative atmosphere. The seeming inability or unwillingness to do so created such doubt that by 1912 the leadership questioned the en-

during viability of the new venture.³⁸ The fact that the largest percentage of the students were preparing for teaching or church vocations did not mitigate these concerns.

The next nineteen years of the Lohrenz presidency are replete with similar tensions between what might be termed the progressive and conservative elements in the college and the church. A particular poignant encounter is the experience of the Yalies who came to teach at Tabor. M. H. Schlichting, Adolf Frantz, A. J. Harms, graduates of Tabor, and P. S. Goertz, an earlier graduate of McPherson college, all attended Yale Divinity School, earned Bachelor of Divinity degrees, and returned to teach at Tabor during the 1920's. They were primarily trained of courses in biblical and religious studies but all essentially taught in other departments. That would not be particularly noteworthy if their stay did not coincide with the college's inability to staff the Bible Department. Lohrenz in his annual report to the board in 1924 noted that the "Bible department which is to constitute the very core of our entire school life does not have the necessary strength we need for our assignment."³⁹ H. F. Toews and D. E. Harder, both long time members of the Bible Department, left in 1922 and 1923. While Harder returned for the 1925-27 period, the department lacked a strong and continuing presence from 1923 until 1935 when Lohrenz returned to the new Bible School as full time faculty member in the newly reconstituted Tabor. The Yalies were obviously not acceptable replacements for the previous generation. They all exited from Tabor between 1925 and 1930 because in varying degrees they found the general religious, cultural and intellectual conservatism of the community and school too restrictive.⁴⁰

Their departure was part of the conservative ascendancy at the college during the twenties. The decade is noted for its religious controversy. Fundamentalist/Modernist quarrels erupted in many religious communities. Denominations fractured and denominational schools were frequently the center of such controversies.⁴¹ The conflict among the

Mennonite Brethren was not between modernists and fundamentalists. No charges of modernism were leveled at the college during the decade. But there were new strains to be reckoned with. In the West, pentecostalism made inroads into Brethren communities. In the North a new generation of immigrants arrived with a distinct history and a strong set of leaders. The experience of the World War introduced a peculiar set of tensions for mid-western Mennonites in particular. The cumulative effect of these experiences was to squeeze the progressives and to enhance the position of the conservatives. Lohrenz increasingly found it difficult to work in the situation. He wrote in 1927 that he had always hoped to "direct the school in such a way that a thorough academic education with deep true piety would go hand in hand."⁴² There had never been any conflict between the two for Lohrenz, but for others they were seen increasingly as separate and perhaps even unrelated.

In this world where commitments previously held together were being pitted against each other, where the equilibrium was distorted, Lohrenz seemed to drift towards the conservatives. A letter written to his brother-in-law in 1927 is symptomatic of the drift. He wrote about various issues dividing the school and suggested the time had come for a "deep purification which would affect the basic motivations and lead to the unification of the faculty so that one could continue to work more in keeping with the position of our brotherhood and . . . the word of God."⁴³

By the time Lohrenz resigned in 1931, P. E. Schellenberg, a fellow faculty member and future president, would define the division as a "hopeless separation of what remains of faculty and students and interest into College and Bible School" factions. Behind this division Schellenberg ventured a constituency "that has always looked askance at the whole enterprise and has now practically lost its faith in it."⁴⁴

A change from the progressive beginnings had indeed occurred, and two movements at the outset of the

thirties symbolized the new mood. The 1930 organization of the Bible School on a different basis than it had previously existed was a clear signal that the Bible School movement was more than Schellenberg's imagination. The school was a response to some leaders in the church who thought that a Bible and Mission school could train more specifically workers for both foreign and home ministries. It operated under the supervision of a General Conference committee and the Executive Committee of the Board of Foreign Missions.⁴⁵

The Bible School movement, generally as it gained strength in the larger culture during the 1920s, was many things. It was surely a response to the rift in theological positions. But it was also part of a growing estrangement with American culture. They expressed cultural resistance as well as theological resistance. For those who had long resisted identification with American society, this movement was part of the search for disengagement that countered the Liberal Arts ideal with its cultural connections.⁴⁶

The 1931-32 Tabor College Catalog, the first after Lohrenz had resigned as president, suggested another important change. The statement of purpose was substantially revised. The previous statement, in effect from the first complete English edition of the catalog in 1917 thru 1931, began with the spacious statement that "the purpose of the school from the beginning has been to benefit humanity in general . . ." The new statement of purpose began with the concern "to impart genuine Christian education that will qualify for the general needs of everyday life." The scope had narrowed. A new addition to the 1931 version called the college "to meet the need for a fundamentalist College and Bible school. This is the need of the Christian people in general and the churches that sponsor the school in particular." The use of that language in the context of the fundamentalist/modernist debate signaled a different kind of college.⁴⁷

In 1922 Lohrenz submitted his first letter of resignation. Although he later rescinded the action, the letter reflected the difficult posture

in which he found himself. He reflected back on the beginnings when he "tried to confront two large opposing forces" when all he had "was just a rod." He clearly understood the tensions in which he functioned.⁴⁸ But they should not be thought of only in terms of the progressive and conservative forces, or the college and Bible school forces. There were personal forces as well. The administration of the college lacked unity. Friction between Lohrenz, the president, and P. C. Hiebert, the vice-president, persisted during his entire presidency.

Beyond the ideological and personal forces that worked with differing impulses, there were other opposing forces in the conference that provided the larger context in which the college functioned. The college began with the clear assumption that the conference would soon adopt the fledgling institution. The church's reluctance to own the college was apparent in the General Conference sessions of 1915 and persisted until the college collapsed in the 1930s.⁴⁹ The beginning of the college in 1908 coincided with the creation of district conferences as regional entities and the meeting of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren churches on a tri-annual rather than annual schedule. It was the beginning of a fracturing process that made cooperation more difficult and estrangement easier.⁵⁰ National and regional loyalties increasingly made it difficult to cooperate on programs of mission and education in North America. The district and General Conference repeated expressions of support for the college but offered little tangible support. The resolutions to pledge fixed amounts on a per member basis or to raise substantial annual contributions received the delegates' votes but not their checks. The notable exception to this general pattern of insufficient giving was the response to the crisis of April 30, 1918. The burning of the school created a wave of support, sympathy and giving that seemed to indicate the deep rootage and acceptance of the college in the churches. The wave peaked in 1920, and by 1922 the financial status of the school was again doubtful. Even the mag-

nificence of the new building and the increased enrollment that followed the war could not generate the support to insure the school. The economics of the depression linked to the other strains caused the college to falter.

V

But the college faltered because the MB world was fractured. Held within the boundaries of a small denomination were the contradictions of the emerging modern world with its cultural, political and theological pluralism. The college, existing on the boundary between the smaller ethno-religious community and the larger social order, felt the fracturing sooner and more intensely than did the elements of the church yet removed from the boundary. The college, with one face directed towards the larger world into which its graduates would move and the other face directed back towards the Mennonite village, would always be in a tenuous position. Three years after Lohrenz left the presidency in 1931 the college closed for a year. The Grecian temple stood closed and empty in 1934-35. At stake were many issues. The Mennonite Brethren have historically been uncertain whether they wanted Bible institutes or colleges; whether science and faith could be reconciled or not; whether intellectualism or ignorance was the mother of heresy; whether they were progressive or conservative; whether schools should be sponsored by the General Conference, the National Conferences or District Conferences.

Lohrenz sought to bridge the distance from the Mennonite village to the learned centers of the world. He could link an openness to the intellectual, cultural and artistic world of the twentieth century with a commitment to a life of prayer, devotion and faith. He could personally contain the multiple and frequently contradictory impulses that characterized the Mennonite Brethren of his era. His people could not resolve them. But neither could the generations that followed. The subsequent history of Tabor College, Fresno Pacific College, the Mennonite Brethren Bible College of Winnipeg and the Mennonite Brethren

Biblical Seminary of Fresno all contain elements of the same story. The contradictions are part of the biography of an ethno-religious immigrant people adapting to the requirements and possibilities of life in an increasingly pluralistic environment.

ENDNOTES

1. Henry W. Lohrenz, "The Early Aims of Tabor College." (Tabor Day Address, 1914).
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. William J. Schmidt, "History of Tabor College" (M.A. thesis, University of Wichita, 1961), p. 49; Henry W. Lohrenz, "Ein Bericht für Tabor College," *Yearbook of the 1927 General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren* (Henderson, Nebraska).
7. "First Year Report of the Faculty of Tabor College to the Board of Directors," Henry W. Lohrenz Papers, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies—Fresno, Box 2, folder 1.
8. "Vierter Jahresbericht des Directorium an den Tabor College Schulverein," Lohrenz Papers, Box 2, folder 1.
9. *Tabor College Bluejay*, 1908-1916.
10. Clyde Riffen, "The Progressive Ethos," in Stanley Cohen and Lorman Ratner, eds., *The Development of an American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1933), pp. 144-180.
11. Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); Clarence P. Shedd, *Two Centuries of Student Christian Movements: Their Origin and Intercollegiate Life* (New York: Association Press, 1934); C. Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott, 1865-1955: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979); C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951).
12. *Tabor College Bluejay*, 1908-1916, p. 30. Each of the characterizations separated by a semi-colon represents a different student.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 42-43.
17. Leo J. Goentzel, "A Followup of the Graduates of Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas, 1948" (M.A. thesis, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1948), pp. 20-21.
18. Tabor College Alumni Association Minutes, May 24, 1922, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies—Hillsboro.
19. *Ibid.*
20. see for example John E. Hartzler, *Education Among the Mennonites of America* (Danvers, Illinois: Central Mennonite Publishing Board, 1925), ch. ix; H. P. Peters, *History and Development of Education among the Mennonites in Kansas* (Hillsboro, 1925), p. 22.
21. "The German Language our Ideal," *Tabor College Herald V* (November, 1916): 25. B. J. Klehn, "Der Duetsche und seine Sprache," *Tabor College Herald I* (March, 1912): 1-3; Gustav Enns, "Wie gross sollte unse Interesse für das Deutschum sein and wie is dasselbe ausrecht zu erhalten?," *Tabor College Herald V* (January, 1916): 8-16, are further examples of the high view of German culture.
22. Henry W. Lohrenz, "Der Wert der Deutschen Bildung," Lohrenz Papers, Box 1, folder 6, Translation by James C. Juhnke.
23. John H. Lohrenz, "America's Future," *Tabor College Herald V* (October, 1916): 29-30.
24. Adolf I. Frantz, "The Future of America," *Tabor College Herald V* (October, 1916): 28-30.
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26. G. M. Doerksen, "An Education," *Tabor College Herald VI* (September, 1917): 14-16.
27. Henry W. Lohrenz, "Emphasizing the Essentials in Sunday School Work," *Tabor College Herald I* (September 1912): 10-15.
28. Henry W. Lohrenz, "Contributions of American Mennonite Colleges to Home and Society," Lohrenz Papers, Box 6, folder 3. See also "What Studies are of Greatest Value?," commencement address to the Eighth Grade Graduates of Ramona, Kansas (May, 1931), Lohrenz Papers, Box 6, folder 3.
29. Cornelius Cleero Janzen, "Americanization of the Russian Mennonites in Central Kansas" (M.A. thesis, University of Kansas, 1914), p. 114.
30. *Tabor College Catalog*, 1917.
31. Report of the Third Annual Meeting of the Tabor College Corporation (1911), p. 2. Lohrenz Papers, Box 2, folder 1.
32. B. E. Ebel to P. C. Hiebert, October 12, 1911, P. C. Hiebert Papers, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies—Hillsboro.
33. P. C. Hiebert to B. E. Ebel, April 7, 1912, Hiebert Papers.
34. B. E. Ebel to P. C. Hiebert, January 15, 1912, Hiebert Papers.
35. H. W. Lohrenz to P. C. Hiebert, February 4, 1912 and March 3, 1912, Hiebert Papers.
36. B. E. Ebel to P. C. Hiebert, April 20, 1912 and P. C. Hiebert to P. E. Nickel, April 28, 1912, Hiebert Papers.
37. P. C. Hiebert to H. W. Lohrenz, August 12, 1912, Hiebert Papers.
38. Janzen, *Americanization of Kansas Mennonites*, pp. 125-126.
39. President's Report for the Annual Meeting of the Tabor College Corporation, January 24, 1924, Lohrenz Papers, Box 2 folder 1.
40. Their experiences are more fully explored in my "Fundamentalist Conflict in Mennonite Colleges: A Response to Cultural Transitions," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (forthcoming, July, 1983).
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43. H. W. Lohrenz to J. B. Friesen, April 3, 1927, Lohrenz Papers, Box 13, folder 7.
44. P. E. Schellenberg, "Editorial," *Tabor College Herald New Series*, I (September, 1931): 7.
45. *Tabor College Herald New Series*, I (July, 1931): 5; *Tabor College Herald New Series*, I (August, 1931): 26.
46. see S. A. Witmer, *The Bible College Story: Education with Dimension* (Manhasset, New York, 1962); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).
47. *Tabor College Herald New Series*, I (June, 1931): 8; *Tabor College Herald New Series*, I (July, 1931): 1.
48. H. W. Lohrenz to Tabor College Board of Directors, November 7, 1922, Lohrenz Papers, Box 2, folder 1.
49. *Yearbook of the 1915 General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren* (Winkler, Manitoba), R. C. Seibel translated version, p. 13.
50. J. F. Doerksen to P. C. Hiebert, December 18, 1915, Hiebert Papers.

Book Reviews

Elaine Sommers Rich, *Mennonite Women: A Story of God's Faithfulness, 1683-1983*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1983, Pp. 257. Paper \$9.95.

The first four paragraphs of *Mennonite Women* include eleven questions about the women in the immigrant group that came from Krefeld, Germany, to Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1683. Thus the author deliberately emphasizes the scarcity of available information about Mennonite foremothers. Thanks to the *Martyrs' Mirror*, we have known more about Anabaptist women than about 18th and 19th century American Mennonite women.

When the Women's Missionary and Service Commission of the (MC) Mennonite Church commissioned this 300th anniversary study, it sent out a call to all churches and WMSC groups in the denomination, requesting historical information on women. But it was the task of Elaine Sommers Rich to follow up the leads in this fragmentary material, sending hundreds of letters, and searching through many decades of *The Herald of Truth* and *The Gospel Herald*. The "WSC Collection," which she cites so often in her footnotes, is her own compilation of the resulting materials, now lodged in the Archives of the Mennonite Church at Goshen, Indiana.

Dozens of "unknown" women come to life in Rich's lively biographical sketches.

—Eva Yoder and Esther Bachman successfully petitioned the Pennsylvania Assembly to revoke its severe punishments of 12 Mennonite men during the Revolutionary War.

—Horse-and-buggy doctor Sarah Gross Lapp delivered 1200 babies in late-19th-century Nebraska and was also the mother of four bishops of the Mennonite Church.

—Ella Shoup Bauman started a

church almost singlehandedly in Youngstown, Ohio, in the late 1940's, in connection with her frequent visits to that city for medical treatment.

Many of the anecdotes are told in the words of the women themselves or of their granddaughters. Rose Lambert worked with Armenian orphans in Turkey from 1899 to 1910, at a time when Armenian Christians were being massacred. She recalled:

"After peace was restored and I was ill with typhoid a mounted Turkish officer met one of our boys on the street. He stopped his horse and asked him if he was one of our boys and then asked, 'How is Miss Lambert?' The reply, 'She is very ill.' He said, 'Allah willing she cannot die! The Gregorians in their churches are praying for her recovery and we in our Mosque are praying for her recovery. Allah must hear some of us.'"

A decade or two later in Colorado, when the new LaJunta hospital became crowded and student nurses complained about giving up their beds to emergency patients, the nursing director, Lydia Heatwole—always the first to give up her own beds—exclaimed, "Why girls! That's just what we need! It's up to us to make room."

Stories such as these give an overall impression of Mennonite women's energy, courage, and insistent self-sacrifice, in their surprising range of activities. However, there is little analysis of their situation and limitations or of the trends in women's activities and the conflicting ideologies of "women's place" that developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rich has alertly gathered raw material for such analysis and has categorized it for wives, mothers, and "aunts," or for areas of work such as home congregation, education, overseas and home missions, health care, and

sewing and mission organization. Readers can draw their own conclusions from each chapter or follow Rich's warm comments of appreciation, indignant exclamations, and questions for further research.

Mennonite Women provides a solid foundation for further research. Most of the chapters have appended lists of women whose contribution to education, missions, etc., is sketched in four to ten lines each. Rich has been particularly scrupulous in tracking down full names and dates, even for women mentioned most briefly, such as "Barbara Bowman (Mrs. David) Shuh (1857-?), president" of Sisters' Aid in Kitchener, Ontario. The index includes more than 600 women. However, they usually are listed only under their maiden names. Thus, Mrs. Gustav Enss, who taught at Bethel, Hesston, and Goshen Colleges (and is one of the few General Conference Mennonites in the book) is listed as "Greaves Sudermann Enns, Amy Evelyn."

The lives of women in other Mennonite branches should soon receive the same careful documentation and lively expression that Elaine Sommers Rich has given to MC Mennonite women. (Unfortunately, her title, the foreword by Barbara Reber, and the text itself give the misleading impression that "Mennonite women" is an inclusive term. Only the author's preface explains the limitations of the study.) Many more women's biographies need to be researched and written. But the time will soon be ripe for a chronological, in-depth study of American Mennonite women, of the sociological and theological forces shaping their lives, and of their interaction with Protestant Sunday School and women's missionary movements as well as the broader tides of women's experience in America.

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Radical Reformation and Mennonite Bibliography, 1982

by David A. Haury and Rachel Waltner

Assisted by Ann Gingerlich (Mennonite Historical Library), Grace Schowalter (Eastern Mennonite College), Mark Froese (Mennonite Heritage Center), Laurie Wolfe (Mennonite Library and Archives) and Rachel Hiebert (Fresno).

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