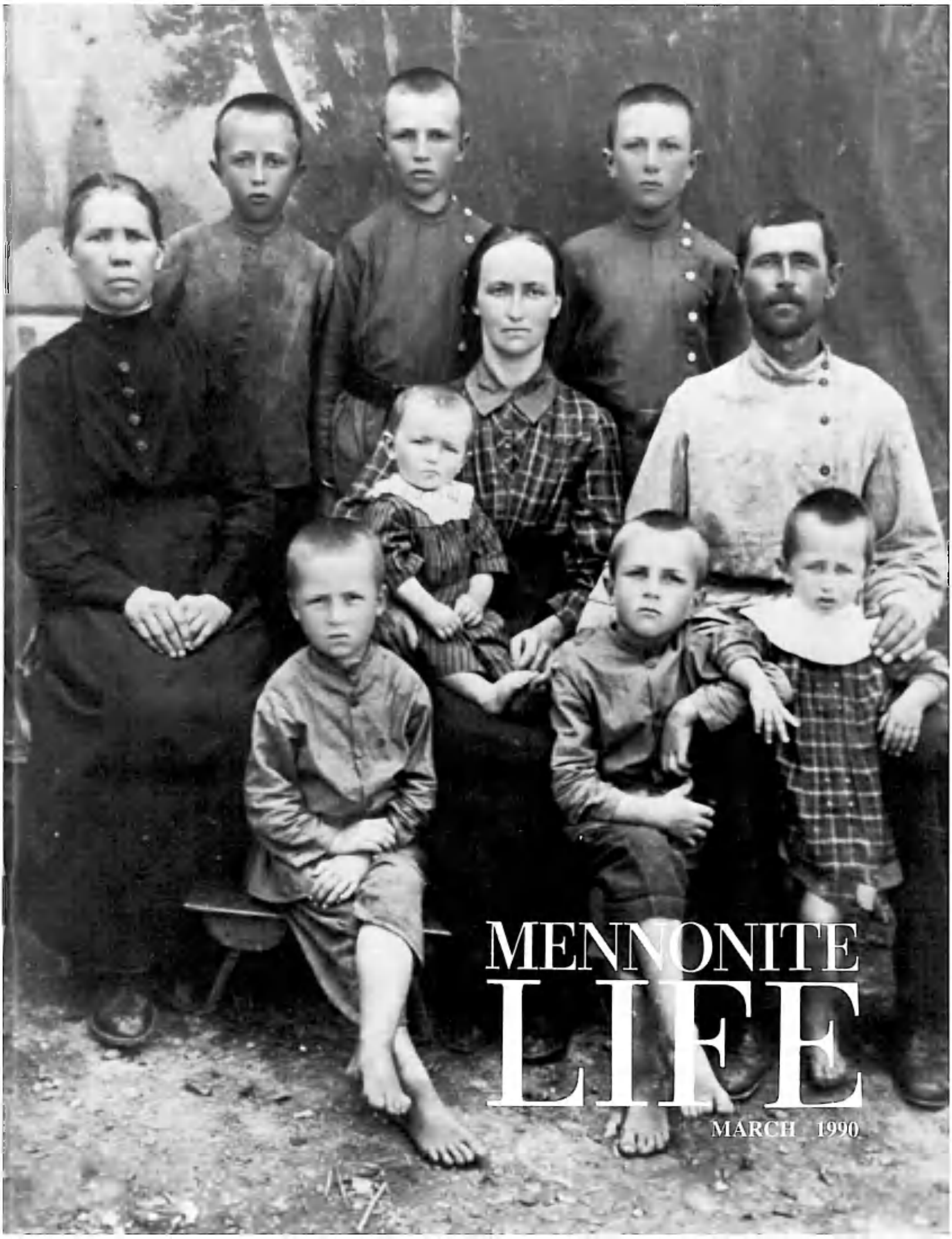

MENNONITE LIFE

MARCH 1990

In this Issue

In this issue we are reminded that memories of Mennonite life in family and congregation can be both joyful and painful. The rehearsing of tragedy and triumph through ritual and story-telling can be therapeutic for all of us. We all need to come to terms with our past.

Justina Neufeld, together with her family, recently had a collective memorial service in the Bethel College Mennonite Church for family members who had "disappeared" or died in the Soviet Union. Rehearsing the stories of its dispersed and suffering members enabled the gathered family and congregation to embrace their life and witness, as well as to say goodbye and bring closure to a chapter of history. Justina is the Director of Partial Hospital at Prairie View, Inc., Newton, Kansas.

Menno Duerksen's memories of his Oklahoma Mennonite origins are unusually forthright in recollections of family hostility, violence and poverty. The honesty and verisimilitude of Duerksen's stories heighten the stakes of the author's quest for forgiveness and transcendence. Readers drawn into these stories realize that it is a widely shared quest. Duerksen is a retired correspondent for the United Press. His autobiography is entitled *Dear God, I'm Only a Boy.*

Vance Gordon Oyer, of Champaign, Illinois, is the author (together with Mary S. Sprunger and Paul Meyer Reimer) of a congregational history, *First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana: A 25-Year History,* (1989). The article in this issue includes material from the book. Such histories remind us that wholesome faith takes shape within the ministries of the community of believers.

Janeen Bertsche Johnson is a graduate of Bluffton College and of Mennonite Biblical Seminary, now serving as Associate Pastor at Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kansas. Her article, a revision of a seminary paper, explores the impact of the "Social Gospel" in the 1920s, a decade of social change and theological reorientation.

Finally, this issue includes a continuation of excerpts from Peter Epp's manuscript, *An Der Molotschna.* Linda Falk Suter introduced Epp and his writings in the December 1989 issue of *Mennonite Life.*

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MENNONITE LIFE

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Front Cover

The Dietrich P. and Anna Sawatzky Neufeld family, Kamenka Village, 1925. Standing: Jacob, Gerhard, Peter; Seated: Margaretha Wiebe, Anna, Franz (on lap), Anna; Foreground: Johann, Dietrich, Anna.

Back Cover

Worship service of Champaign-Urbana congregation at Greenwood Acres Retreat, fall 1983.

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A Family Remembers

by Justina Neufeld

Father

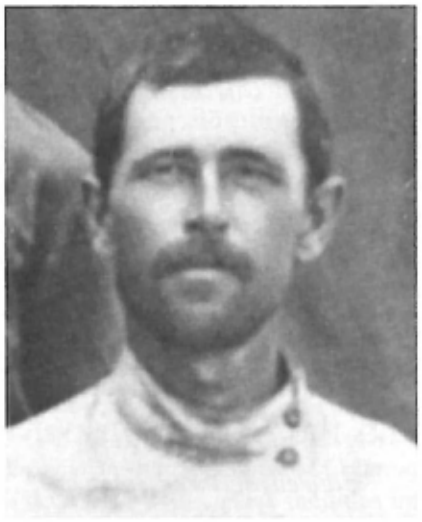
Dietrich P. Neufeld was born November 1, 1888, in Kamenka village, Dnepropetrovsk province, during the "golden age" of the Mennonite commonwealth in Russia.

Kamenka was a Jewish village about one hundred kilometers north and east of the Mennonite Chortitza colony. Mennonites had been invited to serve as model farmers for urban Jews who had been forcibly relocated to this rural area.

Dietrich was the eighth of ten children of Peter and Helene Peters Neufeld. He was baptized in his youth. He attended the School of Commerce in Simferopel and worked as an accountant most of his life.

In 1929, in the wake of world war, civil anarchy, famine, and Communist collectivization, Dietrich decided to escape from Russia and join other Mennonites who were fleeing to Canada. He sold everything, loaded his wife, nine children and Tante Gretchen on a wagon. He hired a man to drive them to the nearest train station, in exchange for the wagon and horses. They travelled at night so as not to attract attention. The officials at the station refused to sell them tickets to Moscow, the departure point for Canada. The driver and the wagon disappeared. With no home to return to, the family eventually made it to another village, Gnadental.

His dream of living in Canada was shattered. He faced reality and refused to compromise his faith in a time of confusion under the new repressive Communist regime. Dietrich P. Neufeld, our father, was arrested and disappeared in 1941. We never heard from him again.



Dietrich P. Neufeld, born 1888, disappeared 1941.

Papa, though I only knew you a bare eleven years of my life, what you gave me has been the most important ingredient for the foundations of my life. Very early, I think it was before I went to school, I remember thinking one evening "Papa loves me very much." It was very cold that winter and I didn't have any shoes. I had chilblain and my feet were hot and swollen and my toes itched and hurt as I tried to go to sleep, but couldn't. I whimpered and you came to my cot (prosh) and rubbed my toes. I don't remember what you said, but you communicated to me that I was special, and I knew you loved me.

I have one other memory that is very vivid. Justina Klassen and I were playing close to the fence between the school and the store during recess. When we say you coming out of the Kanzlei (village office building), we left the school grounds at the risk of being reprimanded by the teacher and scolded by you. But when I asked you for 5 kopeki, you didn't even scold us. To our big disappointment, there was no candy to be bought in the store that day.

I never told you how frightened I was when I was six years old and Elsa Enns' father was arrested in the night and taken away. I was so scared they would come and get you too. I knew that Mother thought so too because I found the bundle she had made up of some of your clothes and put them on the top shelf in the wardrobe in the Grosze Stube (living room). But they didn't come right away. We lived in fear for several more years. I don't remember very much more. You were always gone to work when I got up and not yet home when I went to bed—but I will never forget one night, when I was 11, June 24, 1941, you didn't come home for supper and you didn't come home from work.

The next morning Mama woke me up early and asked me to go to the place where you worked to find out if you would be coming home for breakfast. I went as I was told but with a lot of fear because I knew the KGB had arrived in the village the evening before. When I asked Mrs. Peters where you were, she said in a very unfeeling way that the KGB had taken you to Sofijewka; that I should go home and tell Mama. Something happened to me on my way home—I dawdled behind Thiessen's barn—and wished I could be a bird. I did not want to go home and tell Mama—she had not slept all night. She had waited for you and she cried. But I went home and told her—and I resolved then that if you didn't come

home, I had to be a grown up. I never saw you again.

When Mama saw you in prison, she told me you had asked about me. The boys and Anna each have their own special memories of you, one thing we all agree on is that we had the best Father we could have had. You sacrificed so the boys could leave the village and get an education. We respected you. And in recent years, as I have met other people from our village, I heard again and again only respect and appreciation for who you were and how unselfishly you helped others. Ben Rempel told me of the compassion you had shown him when someone else would have reported him to the authorities.

John and Jake told me that when WWII broke out, and you were arrested you had said, "I would rather have an end with terror than live in terror without end." To this day, we don't know how you met your end. All efforts to find out have been futile. Two different accounts were given as to what happened to the prisoners in the Dnepropetrovsk prison. One account from someone living in the area is that the prisoners were loaded into box cars and shipped East, possibly to Siberia. The other account is that the box cars with prisoners were locked and doused with kerosene and set on fire. We want to believe that your wish was fulfilled, that you had a sudden death rather than a terror without end.

Anna Sawatzky Neufeld, born 1890, died 1965.

Mother

Anna Sawatzky Neufeld was the oldest and only daughter of six children. In her youth she was baptized upon confession of her faith into the Kirchliche Gemeinde. She married at age 20 and she raised ten children during one of the most violent and chaotic periods in modern history. She survived the upheaval of the Russian Revolution, the Civil War, World War I and the famine that followed, the refugee trek to the West during World War II, and another grueling journey into exile to the northern forests and salt mines of the Urals in Eastern Soviet Union.

How can we, her descendants, summarize her life? It is not easy. Although she lived to the age of 75, I, Justina, the youngest in the family, saw her last when I was 13. Ben, the second youngest was 15 years of age at the time that World War II separated us.

After World War II there was no trace or whereabouts of mother for almost three years. Through the tireless efforts of her son John, she, her daughter Anna, and Tante Gretchen were located in exile in a labor camp in Borowsk. John and Dietrich, who at that time were both living in Kazakhstan, set about the task of securing their release by writing letters to the authorities in Moscow requesting that they be freed and be given permission to move to Kazakhstan. Permission was eventually granted.

Dietrich sold his only tattered overcoat to buy tickets to bring them to Kazakhstan. Mother was frail and emaciated from living on a mere 200 grams of bread a day.

However much she had suffered, Father gone and six of her children unaccounted for at that time, she had not lost her faith in the goodness of God. She wrote from exile: "The distress is given us to test us."

A friend of Mother's, also in Barrack #4 in Borowsk, wrote, "Your Mother was an inspiration and a blessing to many women." She would encourage others saying, "We have to trust in God and believe we will be reunited with our families." She went on to say, "Your mother survived these inhumane conditions because she had hope and faith. Those who gave up hope did not live very long."

In addition to her abiding faith Mother had a unique quality of engaging others easily—she had instant rapport with strangers. Although she had only a fourth grade education, she learned effortlessly. German was her native tongue but she spoke Ukrainian with the "Babuschkas" that came to our house. She spoke Russian with her Russian daughters-in-law and Yiddish with her friends from childhood. After arriving in Poland, it was not long before she conversed with the Polish people, mixing in their language with the help of all the other languages she knew.

While in exile in 1946, one of her many letters reached her brothers in Canada. Through them she learned that her son Jake and his family and her son Ben were alive in Germany, awaiting permission to emigrate. She also learned that her son Gerhard and family and her daughter Justina were alive, living in Holland awaiting emigration to the United States. Her hopes of being reunited with her children were high!

After Gerhard had established himself in the United States he applied for permission to have Mother emigrate, emphasizing that she was old and too ill to work. But the answer from the Russian authorities was, "NO!"

She kept in touch with her family by writing detailed letters, i.e. how many grams of bread they were able to buy, how often they were lucky enough to find milk to buy, etc. And always she included what her grandchildren's interests were and what they were doing. She also shared the memories of the grandchildren she had not seen since the end of the war.

Mother was especially fond of her first two granddaughters, Lina Neufeld Youngward and Ingrid Neufeld Brown, who are present tonight. She wrote to her brother in Canada, "Before the war I occasionally spent a week with Gerhard so I could take care of their little spirited Lina." Of Ingrid she wrote, "The last time I saw her she was 1 and ½ years old. She was so delicate, so lovable. She could already speak everything."

Her letters were not complete without a verse from the Bible, a poem or a verse from a hymn and an admonition to us to live the values that she and father had taught.

Margaretha Wiebe, born 1864, died 1947.

On April 23, 1965, after three months of suffering, she called Dietrich to her bedside and announced that she had come to the end of her life. She sat upright in her bed due to shortness of breath from accumulating edema. Although she had hoped that diuretics would be made available to her to relieve her discomfort, none could be secured for old people at that time. So she prepared to die. She asked for a cup of water and a spoon. Although very weak she took the water and sprayed it over her frail and feverish body in a symbolic gesture of blessing all her children. She requested that her friends from the small Christian believers group be called. With Dietrich and Anna at her bedside she reviewed her life briefly then gave her last admonitions to her children wherever they might be.

She said that Father and she had striven to raise the children to be honest and upright; that it was their duty to live without vanity, arrogance and pride. She hoped that they would always earn their bread honestly and treat others well. She expected to see all her children with her after this life. She gave instructions and expressed her wish of being buried in the accustomed Mennonite tradition. By then her friends from the believers group had arrived and they began to sing. Mother's voice became strong again as she joined them in singing the songs that had sustained and helped her throughout her life. The singing continued into the early morning hours.

Mother died surrounded by Dietrich, his wife Dascha, daughter Anna, and her Christian friends. Her grave is in Central Asia, among strangers, but her legacy and spirit is with us today.

Aunt

Known as Tante Gretchen to the Neufeld family, Margaretha Wiebe was Grandmother Sawatzky's sister. She was single and had worked, before the revolution, on a Mennonite estate as a nanny. She survived but the estate owner and family were brutally murdered during the revolution by Machnov's roving bands. She went to live with our Sawatzky grandparents and remained with the family of only men when Grandmother died.

In 1924 Grandfather Sawatzky and his five sons emigrated to Canada inviting Tante Gretchen to go with them. She declined on the basis that the Neufeld family, consisting of seven children, needed her, especially little Franz, a toddler of whom she was very fond. Years later she questioned whether she had made the right decision. She grieved especially when the churches were closed and religious practices were forbidden.

Tante Gretchen remained a devout follower of her Lord and Master. Hiding her Bible under her mattress, she would carefully remove it and let me look at pictures, while she related a Bible story. From her, I first learned what the word "Bekehrung" (conversion) meant. She not only knew the Word, she exemplified it with her gentle spirit. Her voice blended with Mother's in singing songs and hymns during those long dark evenings. The one she most often sang, and encouraged me to memorize was "Wehrlos und Verlassen" (Defenseless and Forsaken).

In my mind's eye, I see her even now, making mountains of noodles, cutting them so thinly that they were almost transparent. I see her, after eating cherry moos, cracking the cherry pits with her teeth and eating the kernel. I can hear her saying that the kernel is good for you and attempting to entice the rest of us to eat them likewise. It was Tante Gretchen's special task to polish the brass weights and the pendulum of our Kroger clock. She gathered the finest ashes from the cooking stove and mixed them with water. She then began ceremoniously to polish until they gleamed and sparkled when she held them up to the sun.

At the end of WWII, along with Mother and Sister Anna and other refugees, she was loaded into a box car and sent to Borowsk in the Urals, the most northern virgin forests of the Soviet Union. Here she, like other very old and the very young, died in Barrack #4, within a short time of arrival, due to lack of food. Two men dug a shallow grave for the price of Mother's last feather blanket. Mother and Sister Anna wrapped her in a cloth, placed her slight emaciated body on a small sleigh and pulled her to her final resting place.

A small group of believers knelt, surrounding her now cold body, to pray and to sing hymns as they committed her spirit to her Maker. She truly was "Wehrlos" most of her life. Those who were with her say that she did not feel "verlassen"—her faith in God was unmovable. There is no marker on her grave, but she left an indelible mark on my life. She was the only "Grandmother" I ever knew. Others in our family have their own memories of Tante Gretchen and her idiosyncrasies which made her so unique.

Franz D. Neufeld, born 1924, disappeared 1945.

Brother

For many years I refused to believe that we might never see you again. But I'm beginning to accept it after 45 years of waiting.

Although you were only 17 when Father was arrested, you now were the oldest male still at home. You bought two horses. One, "Zaya," was for riding only. Although you said I was in the way, you let me hang around you in the barn and even let me ride Zaya. When we prepared to evacuate our village, and butchered to make sausage for the journey, I just knew it wouldn't taste as good as when Papa made it. But it tasted good after I had walked all day, 35 KM that first day. You shoed the horses and supervised Willy and Ben as they made a canvas roof over our "Leiter" wagon to protect us from rain and snow. You fixed the wagon wheel when it broke just as we were lined up to leave the village.

When the horses reared as the low-flying airplanes strafed our neatly lined-up caravan of wagons, you got the horses calmed down enough so you could help Mother and Tante Gretchen off the wagon and into the ditches beside the road. The strafing stopped and we continued on to our unknown destination. You had conveyed a sense of confidence to me and as we traveled day after day, week after week, I trusted that as long as you were in charge we would somehow manage to stay ahead of the battle front.

We did make it to Poland and got into a refugee camp. You, Franz, were naturalized and drafted into the German army.

You were young
You were twenty years old
Yet you knew nothing of life
But despair, death, fear and sorrow.
You saw people set against one another
And in silence, unknowingly,
Obediently, slay one another.
You saw the keenest brains of the world
Invent weapons and words to make war yet more refined and enduring.

You were last seen alive and vibrant by Franze Enns in Budapest in 1944. He says, "The battle was bloody. They did not want more prisoners. We raised our hands in surrender but the shelling didn't stop. They mowed us down like grass."

Dear Brother—was your life taken from you in the bloody streets of Budapest? Did you have to die before you had lived? We do not know your grave, there is no headstone or monument to your memory—so we remember you today.

Peter D. Neufeld, born 1911, disappeared 1945.

Brother

Peter, you were the first of ten siblings in our family. By the time I came along you were a strong and very handsome 20-year-old man. After working on the collective farm with little reward of food or money you disappeared from the village under cover of the night so that the authorities could not restrain you from leaving. You surfaced in Engles on the Volga attending school where you earned a teaching degree. You came home and got married. Two years later your only child, Nelly, was born. Fleeing from the Soviet Union during WWII, you brought your family with you to Poland. There you were naturalized and drafted. To this day your wife and daughter, brothers and sisters, mourn the loss of your presence. Your unknown grave has no tombstone, let this memorial be a monument to your life.

Dietrich D. Neufeld, born 1918, died 1989.

Brother

At an early age, Dietrich exhibited his distinct individuality in the family. At age 8, Uncle John called Dietrich fondly "little sergeant." When faced with a problem, Dietrich plotted a strategy and took charge of the situation. Dietrich was forceful in debate with his friends, brothers and our Mother. Any topic was debatable—farming, politics or religion. Henry Klassen recalls that Dietrich had a prophetic bend. Henry says, "The things he predicted at the beginning of WWII have come true." For some, brother Dietrich became the symbolic father in the family after Father's arrest. He had the sensitivity of a caring father; he was decisive and conveyed strength and confidence.

Dietrich said last summer when visiting in Newton that he probably would have become a farmer if the land had not been confiscated after the revolution. But Father encouraged him, like all his sons to leave the collective farm and get an education. Dietrich left home at age 17 with one pair of shoes, pants, a shirt and a jacket. Two years later he obtained a teaching degree from the teacher institute of Odessa, majoring in history and German. While teaching in the Odessa region, he met and married Dascha Lysik, also a teacher. After the German occupation forces entered the Ukraine in 1941, he worked as an interpreter. When the German forces retreated, he took his wife and two small children to his parents-in-law and moved West with the forces, telling his wife he would return. And return he did—after the war. Unlike other Mennonites, he chose to go East instead of West in order to be reunited with his family. He obtained the necessary papers that gave him permission to return home.

He boarded an eastbound train. The box cars already filled, he joined others on top of the train and traveled one month in rain and snow with some protection rigged up from scraps of lumber. The only food available was what people gave them as they begged at train stations. After crossing the Soviet border he learned that he and his fellow travelers were not free to return to their homes; that he was on his way into exile, the destination unknown. Eventually the train stopped in Kostroma, in the Urals where they disembarked to work in the forest felling trees. One year later his wife and daughter, age 5, joined him and lived with him in the barracks. After a long search, brother John found them near starvation. They obtained permission to leave with John to live in Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan Dietrich resumed his teaching career and taught German language and literature for 40 years. Upon retirement, many of his former students came to show their respect bringing sprays of flowers, reciting poems and wishing him well.

Dietrich was a devoted husband and loving father who took a keen interest in his children's and grandchildren's studies and activities. Against severe odds, he expected and encouraged his son and daughter to achieve their potential. He saw them both become physicians and until his death he challenged his three grandchildren to pursue professions that would benefit humanity. He valued greatly and enjoyed the love and respect that he had earned from them.

Dietrich had many interests but the most dominant was following, at high risk, world events on his short wave radio. He kept well informed of international news. He listened at night to the newscasts from foreign countries that would reach into the center of Kazakhstan. He took an additional risk of writing in his letters about what he'd heard, giving his opinions and asking for ours.

Dietrich was exposed to organized religion in his childhood and adolescence since the Sunday services were sometimes held in our home. However, due to the times that followed, he was never baptized or affiliated with any church. He was well acquainted with the Bible and its teachings. Last summer, while visiting in British Columbia, at the dinner table the conversation turned to the Ten Commandments. A mini debate followed. In his take-charge manner he had the last word, stating, "The Ten Commandments are rules to live by; they are essential to maintain a civilized society. There is only chaos in our lives if we choose to ignore them."

His visit to Canada and the United States overwhelmed him. He had not imagined the material wealth we were enjoying. He was not envious but said, "All my life I have worked hard, I wanted to own a house, a horse or a car, but I have none. But I have what is really important—a loving family."

He enjoyed the people he met and appreciated their interest and liked the free and open manner in which they related to him and one another. He said he also saw some Mennonites being indifferent about their heritage and this saddened him.

While visiting in Newton, he became interested in the book, *Medical Ethics - Human Choices* that Justina's Sunday School class was studying. In his usual manner he had a strong opinion on the issue of who shall live, saying that many philosophical discussions don't make it any easier to decide. He believed that to continue physical life when the spirit had left was unrealistic in this age of limited resources. He would not wish to have his physical body kept alive after his intellect was no longer alive.

Dietrich died October 7, six months after being given the diagnosis of Amiotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. He was alert and keenly aware of the world events until the end, dictating a letter shortly before he died.

My Brother's Keeper

by Menno Duerksen

In the beginning I had not been my brother's keeper. No, more, in that time of childhood I had been his tormentor.

I was far away and unaware in those nights of terror when it had been the sound of a bullet, slamming into the breast of a young German grenadier, which had become my brother's torment. A sound which ripped mercilessly and endlessly at his cringing soul. A crippling wound leaving scars which would never completely cease their bleeding.

Nor at the end was I there, to keep and to hold as he went gently into the sea. He had come to the moment he could share with no one.

If I may seek comfort it must come from another time, when my brother Ernie, as a teen-ager, had exploded in a fit of anger and rebellion which had left him in trouble. And I, for the first time, became his protector.

But then that early torment. Had it all begun, perhaps, at the real beginning when Ernie was born? One may only guess for a memory is forbidden to the very young and I was less than two. But had I, one may ask, resented his sudden intrusion onto the scene, robbing me of a portion of the love and attention which had, until then, been exclusively mine?

But memory has told me of another incident from a time when I was four or five and Ernie three. An age of innocence, they say, of souls so young they are incapable of sin. But capable, nevertheless, of anger, of inflicting pain.

I swore then, as best a child of five could swear, that it had been an accident. My toy had been an overturned wheelbarrow and I was spinning the iron wheel, banging it with a hammer. The ringing bongs were my music. But here was little Ernie, grabbing with his stubby child fingers at the rim of the wheel, killing the sound.

At first I had only screamed at him, jerking his hands away, then returned to my bonging. But after he had stubbornly returned to his grabbing, three or four times, spoiling my fun, it was a surge of anger which caused me to swing wildly with the hammer at his groping fingers. It was a cruel blow which crushed the bones in two of his fingers as they lay across the iron rim.

Then, as Ernie's scream of pain brought our gentle mother dashing across the yard, it was now my turn to suffer, with pains of regret at the hurt I had inflicted. For now I was trying hard to believe that it had not been an act of anger. Even wishing, somehow, that it hadn't really happened.

"I was just hammering on the wheel when he put his fingers under the hammer. I didn't mean to do it. I didn't mean to do it."

Did the repetition of the lie, so many times, reveal my guilt? I was trying so hard to believe the lie. The screams of little Ernie were now stabbing fiercely at my young soul too. Oh Cain, why did'st thou strike thy brother Abel?

Later it was my father, with his biblical fixation about due punishment, and his threat of a whipping, which led me to rekindle the lie. "I was just hammering on the wheel when he stuck his fingers under the hammer."

Even today the memory of that finger smashing remains a haunting one. Why must it remain so vivid in my memory now, when more than half a century of time has separated me from the deed? And after I have forgotten virtually everything else that happened to me in that year of childhood. Must it always be the evil, the lies, the anger, which remain?

My memory has a sharper grip on the period when I truly became Ernie's tormentor. For this was when I was eight, nine or 10, with my brother always those 18 months younger. A time when I bullied and beat him continually, forcing him to do my bidding.

That day, for example, on a dusty country road as the two of us raced madly, he in front and I behind. The day when I discovered that despite my heavier, sturdier body, Ernie could outrun me. Always before I had been able to catch him. Of course there was also fear which made him run so fast for even as we ran I was threatening him.

"If you don't stop this second I'll kick your butt 'til you can't stand. I'll knock you flat. I'll get you good. Stop. Do you hear me?" He heard but in terror he ran and left me with my gasping threats. A bitter defeat.

And yet the evil, for I did corner him later and give him the threatened revenge. Perhaps not with the full thrust of anger, as if I had been able to catch him in my moment of wrath. But nevertheless I had to "punish" him, for failure to do so would have threatened my own domination.

It was almost certain that our father would have punished me severely if he had been aware of what was going on. But I had learned the primary role of the reigning bully, the threats. It was always part of my torment to swear to Ernie that if he told Mother or Dad I would give him another beating.

Beyond this, I made sure that neither Mother nor Dad would catch me in the act of committing my crimes. To a large degree it worked. On those few occasions when Ernie did try to tell them what was going on, I had my arsenal

of lies. "He hit me first."

Most of my bullying did take place under the impetus of anger, when Ernie refused to do my bidding or committed some childish act of rebellion which aroused my temper. That finger on the wheel, over and over.

There were even times when my acts of cruelty very nearly had serious consequences, like the time when a heavy kick from my well shod foot landed right at the base of Ernie's spine and left him lying on the ground screaming with pain. Which did bring a moment of remorse to the aggressor. Until the next burst of anger.

Could it all have been because I too had entered into a time of fear? That fear caused by the ritual whippings my father was doling out to me, to punish me for what he judged to be my own transgressions? The ritual born of his religious convictions that the father must, under biblical command, apply the rod, the leather strap and the mulberry switch.

And now I, because I also felt oppressed, brutalized by my father, and because I was helpless to strike back at him, was taking it out on my younger brother? Displacing my anger to him? Except that children are spared the wisdom to understand their own psychological dynamics.

As for Ernie, he could only try as best he could to defend himself against my aggressions. And even though my threats for the most part worked, there would come a time of desperation when he would, like a cornered rat, strike back. It was on one of those days when I had tormented him and turned my back, confident that he was my cowed slave, when he grabbed a brick and hurled it. Now it was my own pain, sudden and blinding, a near blackness, which felled me to the ground.

And now, as the blood trickled down my face, it was my turn to scream in pain. Then, when Mother came to investigate it was I who assumed the role of the innocent and Ernie, despite his pleas that I had struck first, was the one to be punished.

It would be years later, long after we had reached a more gentle mode of communication, when Ernie and I talked of that troubled period in our lives. By this time Ernie knew I was sorry and he had forgiven me; but one day when we talked about it, he, too, had a confession to make. "You know," he said, "I was lying awake nights, trying to figure out a way to kill you."

It didn't matter now. Any danger had long ago disappeared into the mists of time, but this sudden confession from Ernie still had the power to bring a chilling shock. Had he truly plotted my death? But if so, had it not been I, in a sense, who invited it?

The Teen Years

But again, without understanding the psychology of our own young lives, that period of bullying became a thing of the past. As Ernie and I approached our teen years we became friends, more like real brothers now. There were, for example, endless hikes to the Washita River with our fishing poles and we became experts at luring the catfish onto our hooks. For lunch we baked potatoes we carried in our pockets, wrapping them in river mud and burying them in the coals of a dying bonfire.

The fish we took home for Mother's frying pan, and the family.

Perhaps a part of our conciliation as brothers took place because, at the age of 14, I had rebelled against my father and his whip. Big enough and strong enough to enforce my rebellion, I no longer submitted to Dad's whippings. So now, with that oppression gone, perhaps I no longer felt the need to bully my brother. We were at peace with each other.

But now it was a new chaper in Ernie's life which was bringing the bitter period in his relations with Dad. The story of "Ernie the klutz." Younger, with a more slender, delicate body, it was Ernie who was now the vulnerable one. Nor was he as tough, psychologically, as I had been. So now most of Dad's wrath was directed at Ernie, much of it centered around that "klutz" image.

Like most dirt farmers in those long ago years, Dad had waited anxiously for the time when his sons would be old enough to help with the farm work. I was born with some kind of an aptitude for mechanical things, working with machinery. I took to the farm work with ease and by the time I was 12 was driving a tractor to make furrows so straight the neighbors stared in wonder. Then here was brother Ernie for whom any assigned task at farm work turned into a hopeless bungle. And there was Dad, trying to cure the bungling with the whip.

There was, for example, that time when Ernie and I had been at work in separate fields with teams of horses. It was in the time of the great depression and Dad had lost his tractor. We were teenagers now.

There came a time, during the day, when I glanced over to Ernie's rig, a quarter of a mile away, and realized something was wrong with the horse set-up. One of the horses was three to four feet ahead of the other one and seemed to be fighting his harness. Ernie, seated on the cultivator, seemed completely unaware that anything was wrong.

I stopped my team and walked over to his field and could see immediately what was wrong. The hame strap on the horse's harness had broken, allowing the entire harness rig to slip backwards and was all in a tangle around the horse's hind legs. The straps had worn gall spots on the horse's legs as the animal struggled to work with the torn harness.

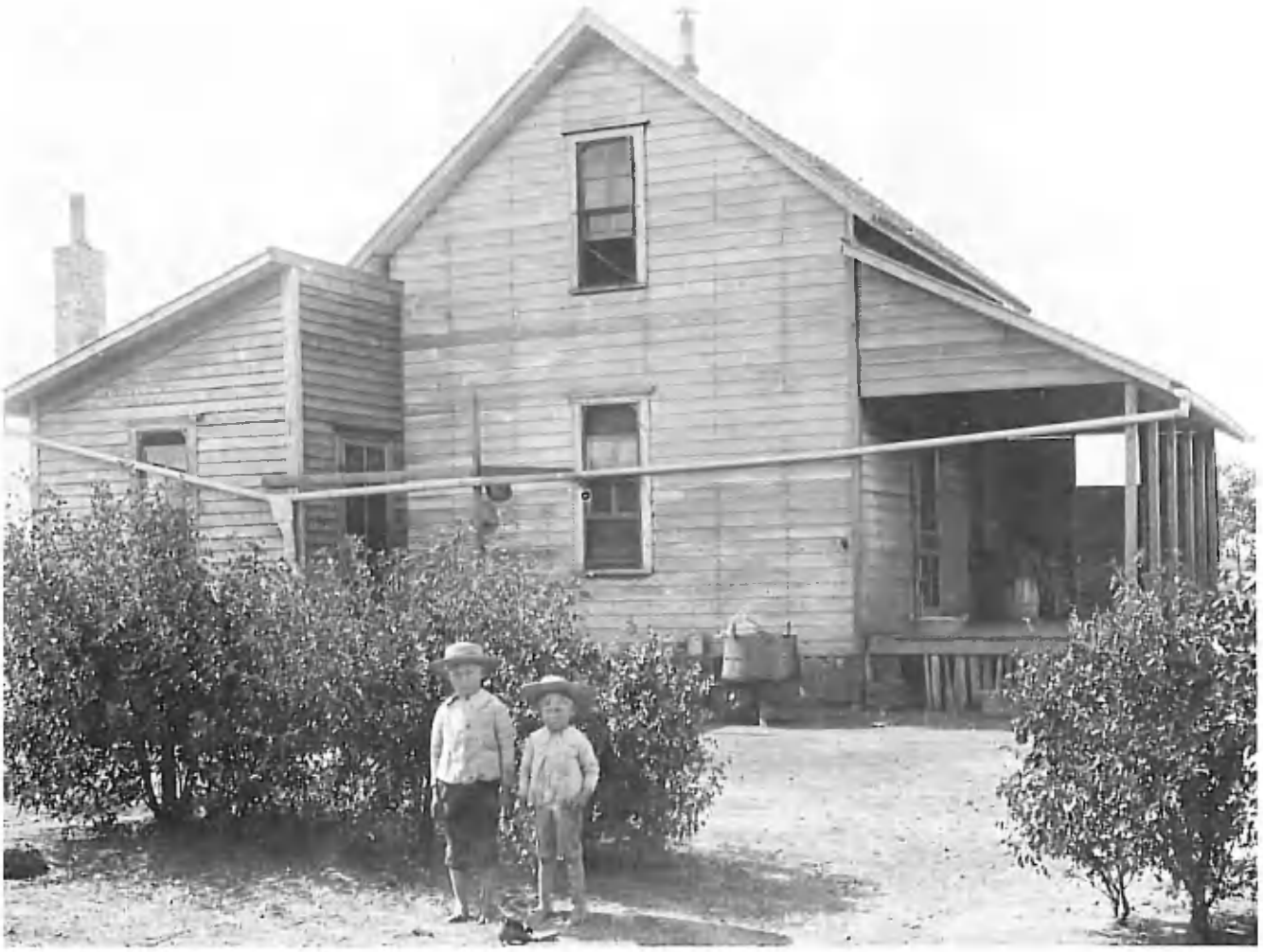
I guess I let my disgust show too. "For heaven's sake, Ernie, couldn't you see something was wrong? See all that harness tangled up around the horse's legs? Why didn't you stop and call me?" I asked.

Ernie only shrugged. It was the only kind of reaction one could get from him in a situation like that. He hated this kind of work and didn't really care. I had to be the one to straighten out the tangled harness and make an emergency repair to the broken hame strap, to get Ernie going again. The gall spots on the horse's legs would have to be taken care of later.

Then, if my disgust, duly registered out there in the field, had not been enough, it was now Dad who made certain that Ernie became the target of his scorn.

"Why can't you ever do anything right?" he demanded angrily of Ernie at the sight of the sore legs on the horse. "Anybody could see something was wrong. Your brother saw it all the way across the field. Why couldn't you see it? Now we have a horse with sore legs."

A single incident such as this may have left no scars but when it became a rote, repeated a dozen, a hundred times, it was inevitable that Ernie's soul was forced to cringe, to cower and be



Unidentified brothers at the A. B. P. Schmidt home in Oklahoma.

diminished. Nor was it within his powers to reshape his image as Ernie the klutz.

I had made my peace with Ernie, no longer his tormentor, but if I was held up as the shining example, the superior one, the dependable one, I could not fail to glory in the role. At Ernie's expense. In this sense was I yet a part of his torment?

Perhaps in that time of its happening, as we were boys, it was impossible to understand it all, why the relationship between Ernie and Dad was even more bitter than it was with me and Dad. The bitterness in my own relationship had, at the beginning, been mostly because of the whippings. Later it had been over his broken promises, our clashes over religion. With Ernie it was somehow different, possibly because his soul was more sensitive than mine, less able to take the constant blows to his shaky ego, unable to shake the image of the "klutz." For another thing, Dad had continued to whip Ernie long after I had forced an ending to mine. Again, since he was physically lighter, more slender, less strong, he had not been able to fight back as I had done.

But there was another element in that father-son conflict, for there was still another image of my brother—Ernie the artist. For even as a boy of 10 or 12, any time Ernie got his hands on a piece of paper and pencil a picture, a cartoon, almost inevitably appeared. And coming from such a young boy, with absolutely no artistic training, the results were startlingly good. All those impudent, laughing faces.

At the beginning Ernie only copied cartoons from the pages of the comic strips we sometimes borrowed from the neighbors. But then, in time, originals too. His own creations.

My role in Ernie's artistic side was an ambiguous one. In one sense I was forced to admire what he was doing. I had to admit it, here was at least one area of endeavor in which Ernie could do what I could not. But I insisted on thrusting myself into this area too.

In the manner of boys with wild imaginations, I conjured up the dream of Ernie the famous cartoonist with a role for me in the picture. I would be the idea man and Ernie would put the ideas into pictures. An exciting little boy dream.

But the presence of Dad inevitably forced itself into this picture too. For to Dad, the strict fundamentalist religious soul, those impudent faces in Ernie's cartoons, bordered on the sacriligious, the sinful.

"Of what good are those silly pictures?" he would snort. Adding, "Why can't you learn to do something useful?" More blows to Ernie's sensitive and suffering ego. Especially when Dad continued to hoist my banner as the role model. "Why can't you learn to do practical things like your brother does?" By this time I had become the

family mechanic, fixing the car, the washing machine, the farm machinery.

I wanted, in a sense, to be loyal to Ernie, now that we were friends and especially since I had pictured myself in a role as his partner in the artistic dream. But it was all a bit much for me to handle. How could I resist smirking in my own glorified role? In any case, to try to defend Ernie from Dad seemed a hopeless task.

Which left Ernie wallowing ever deeper in his morass of bitterness and hopelessness in his relationship with Dad. Seemingly completely helpless to improve his performance image, forbidden to practice his beloved art openly, Ernie was sinking to the crisis level. Without an inner strength, or counseling from someone wiser than I or Ernie himself, my brother simply suffered.

It was during this period, after one of Ernie's most humiliating clashes with Dad, when one of my sisters one day found Ernie sitting behind the chicken barn, his eyes closed and his chin resting on the end of the barrel of his .22 cal. rifle.

In her fright she called Dad, which was like pouring gasoline on a fire. For Dad's solution to the immediate problem was to jerk the rifle out of Ernie's hands and pour a stream of hysterical and screaming abuse on Ernie's head.

What happened next was probably inevitable. The ultimate explosion. The incident which finally allowed me—or was it the unavoidable challenge at last?—to become my brother's keeper. Ernie's final act of rebellion.

By this time I must have been about 19 and Ernie 17. We were no longer farming, except for chickens and a cow. I was working in town, in a shop, and Ernie too had employment of a sort, the town's poster maker, sign painter, store window decorator. It was at least making some peripheral use of his artistic talent, besides earning a few dollars. If a merchant did not specifically forbid it when giving Ernie a job, he was more likely than not to find some of those impudent but delightful faces and figures dancing through his advertising messages on the windows of his store. They were Ernie's trademark and in time the merchants came to expect it. Even to enjoy it.

But even though Ernie was now, demonstrably, doing something "useful" with his talents, and earning a few dollars, those impudent cartoon figures now flaunted before the whole town, were more like a red flag to Dad's puritan soul. If anything they made Ernie's position at home only more hopeless. There obviously came to Ernie the time when it was intolerable. One day he simply disappeared.

Then we discovered that he had managed to forge and cash several checks on the bank account of his grandfather. My wallet, which had contained $39 dollars, was empty. Cash was missing from Dad's wallet.

We didn't know it then but Ernie had also bought a pistol. Eventually we notified the police but there was no trace of Ernie in our town.

It was some three days later when the call came from the Police Department in Oklahoma City, some 80 miles away. "We have your son, Ernie," the voice on the phone told Mother. "He has been involved in some serious violations. Can you come to Oklahoma City and talk to us?"

Becoming my Brother's Keeper

It was then that I assumed the role I had never played before. It was almost as if, suddenly, I realized that Ernie's explosion of anger and rebellion, in the perverted nature of things, had been a cry for help. I began to understand that now. My own role as Ernie's tormentor was long gone and I now found myself wishing to help my brother. If never before, I must now try to become my brother's keeper.

Even today, in looking back on it all from a distance of more than half a century, it is difficult to understand from whence came my sudden wisdom in that time. My compassion. For after all, Ernie had stolen from me too and normally I would have been chomping for revenge.

But now I decided that Dad must not go to Oklahoma City alone. Nor did I want Mother to go. She must not be a witness to Ernie's shame, her son in jail. I would be the one to go with Dad and make sure he did not inflict upon Ernie more wounds than had already been inflicted.

So, it was in the car, on the way to Oklahoma City, when I suddenly blurted it all out, more or less taking the role of parent upon myself and pushing Dad out of the picture.

"Look, Dad," I began, "I know you and Ernie have not been getting along very well and that is part of the reason all this has happened. I don't know what you are planning on saying to him when you see him but I am telling you right now there will be no accusing or scolding. Not a word, you hear?

"You are going to let me handle this my way. Ernie is in trouble and needs help. If you jump on him it will just make matters worse. I want your promise right now that you will keep your mouth shut about what he has done. If you don't promise I'm going to pull off on a side road and give you a beating. You won't be going to Oklahoma City. I mean it."

It was tough talk from a 19-year-old son to his father. I hadn't wanted to do it but I saw no other way. Perhaps I knew Dad's reaction would not be a defiant one. No, he seemed to cringe a bit as I said it but it also seemed as if he was somehow relieved by my new assertive stance. As if I had lifted a burden from his shoulders.

Oklahoma City, the Police Department, Lt. B., who had handled Ernie's case.

"You are lucky your son is still alive," the lieutenant said. "Lucky because the man who arrested him was an old experienced veteran, a very level headed officer. He was also very brave."

The story—Officer K. had been on routine patrol when he spotted activity in a parked car, investigated and found Ernie, trying to hotwire the machine. As the officer walked up Ernie had drawn his pistol, cocked it and pointed it at the officer.

"Go away or I'll kill you," the boy had told the policeman.

But Officer K. immediately sensed that he was facing no hardened thug, only a very frightened boy. A moment of sheer drama. The eyes of the veteran officer and the frightened boy, meeting in a challenging duel of the wills over the barrel of a gun.

"Look, son, don't do anything crazy. If you shoot you'll be in real serious trouble." Then, his eyes still meeting those of the trembling boy, Officer K. slowly reached out his hand and grasped the barrel of the wavering gun, took it carefully out of Ernie's hand. The moment of drama had ended.

In searching the personal effects of my brother the police had found a little notebook diary containing a chilling

story. Ernie had written of his intent to go to Washington and kill the President. A sheer fantasy, one would suggest. But out of such fantasies have grown stark and evil tragedies. The more likely reality, if Ernie had indeed tried to put his plan into effect, would have been that it would be my brother who would be killed.

Lt. B. had more to say. "Threatening a police officer with a pistol is a pretty serious offense. And then he was trying to steal the car. We could probably send him to prison for this. But I've talked to Ernie about it and I've decided he is no criminal. He's just a scared, mixed up kid who has been under some pressure at home. He just couldn't take it any more and decided to strike back, at anything. I don't know where he got that crazy idea about killing the president but I don't attach much importance to it."

The lieutenant was looking Dad straight in the eyes now as he spoke. "If you will promise to take Ernie home and not treat him like a criminal, not throw all this stuff in his face, I will release him in your custody. I believe he has learned a lesson. These past three or four days in jail have taught him something too. He told me he is ready to go home and stay out of trouble. There won't be anything on his record."

The lieutenant had paused a moment. Then, he added, "Mr. Duerksen, you are going to have to lift some of that pressure off this boy's back. I've got to ask if you'll promise to ease up on him. How about it, Mr. Duerksen?"

This was a moment of drama too. Dad obviously knew that Ernie had told the officer about his problems at home. Dad hesitated a moment, then looked at me. We had our agreement and I was part of the picture now too. Perhaps it was a subconscious need for my support. I nodded, and that was it.

Then they brought Ernie into the room. It was hard to read his face. Fright, perhaps? A residue of defiance, more at Dad than at me? Anxiety, what to expect?

In front of Ernie now, the lieutenant explained his decision. They brought Ernie's things. What was left of the money. Lt. B. picked up the pistol. "We will be keeping this. I don't believe you will be needing it."

We didn't talk much on the way home. We steered clear of the events of the past few days. Dad was keeping his part of the bargain. No talk of forged checks. The stolen money. The jail. In the rear seat of the car Ernie sort of cringed into a corner, silent.

At home I managed to brief Mom, the girls, and put a bit of pressure on them too. Nobody, but nobody, was to say a word to Ernie about what had happened. Ernie was home, period. I could see that Ernie was a bit puzzled by it all. I know he had been expecting the full treatment from Dad. Probably from me too, since he had stolen my money. Those $39 were a lot of money in those depression days.

We were alone, the two of us, in our shared bedroom that night when I tried to break the ice. "Want to play a game of hearts?" I asked casually. It had been one of our pastimes in those days before television or radio. Now, at my suggestion, a bit of the tension seemed to lift from the air. We were back in our old routine, our old relationship.

Several times, as we shuffled the cards, I could see Ernie studying my face, waiting for something. The unspoken question. But I was resolved not to answer his question. Not then, at least.

I know it was months, perhaps years before Ernie and I really talked about his little war of rebellion. But he had sensed, from the beginning, that I had played a role in the way it ended. And he let me know, in his own way, that he was grateful.

And then there was Dad. On the surface he kept his part of the bargain. The tension between him and Ernie, if not gone, was eased. No, Ernie never forgave Dad but at least we had a truce. Part of it was, simply, because we were no longer farming and there was no pressure on Ernie to perform those tasks which placed a burden upon his skills, bringing the pressure of Dad's wrath and scorn. No longer was he required to play his role as, "Ernie the klutz."

After the Oklahoma City incident life had simply meandered on for the both of us brothers. I, too, a restless soul, had been looking for a job, a career as a writer, a newspaperman, but had been forced, mostly by circumstances, to work as a mechanic. I had gone to Ohio for a summer, had come back and was chasing around the country searching for my own destiny.

Ernie, for reasons I never quite understood, had joined the Oklahoma National Guard. Perhaps he was simply lured by the dollar or two they paid for the weekly Saturday night drills. But it was a time when the war in Europe was arousing a measure of military preparedness in the U.S. and Ernie's Guard unit, an artillery battalion, was one of the first to be mobilized. Ernie had gone to Ft. Sill for training.

Later, as America became involved in the war, Ernie's unit was sent to Panama to guard the canal. Still later his unit would be sent to Europe to take part in the later battles of that campaign, the siege of Brest, the Battle of the Bulge, the Ardennes.

I too was gone from Oklahoma now, first landing a newspaper job in Memphis and later with the United Nations and United Press in Europe. What happened to Ernie I had to piece together from letters he wrote to me and from what he told me later, after it was all over.

Battle Trauma

Yes, his unit had been in bloody combat but the kind of long distance battles the artillery fights. Shells being fired to targets miles away, seen only by the spotters, the artillerymen never quite sure what their shells have destroyed, how many lives they have claimed. Ernie had been able to cope with that, even to maintain a measure of sanity when the enemy returned the shell fire and he saw some of his buddies being blasted to bits before his eyes. There had even been a time when he himself was knocked unconscious by a blast but not seriously hurt.

But fate and time were relentlessly bringing him to a single night, a snowy, winter night in the Ardennes during that last winter of the great conflict, the night on which the whole war and the world would change dramatically for a soldier named Ernest Duerksen.

Although artillerymen did not carry the kind of weapons an infantryman carried, they were equipped with light .30 cal. carbines for personal protection and perimeter patrol duty. That perimeter patrol came at times when there were not enough infantrymen around to maintain patrols and the artillerymen were required to patrol the immediate perimeters of their positions. Especially at night. And there came that night when PFC. Duerksen was assigned patrol duty.

"I was just out there, walking through the woods in the snow when I ran into this German soldier," Ernie told me later. "He was doing the same thing I was doing, on patrol, but we were so close before we saw each other.

"We both went for our guns but I guess I was a little faster than he was and I shot first. There wasn't anything else I could do. It was either him or me."

All as simple as that. As Ernie told me the story, years later, my mind flipped back to another day, long ago, when two teen-aged boys, brothers, had been hunting squirrels on the banks of the Washita River in Oklahoma.

Ernie had been equipped with a small .22 cal. rifle while I had a shotgun, which meant I had my brother outgunned so far as hitting a running squirrel was concerned. We had both spotted the squirrel at the same time, as the quick little animal scurried along a tree limb. But before I could get a bead on the running creature Ernie had fired, bringing the animal tumbling to earth. Ernie may have been a klutz when it came to farm work but somehow, when it came to shooting a rifle, he was fast and deadly.

Now it had happened again, but in such a vastly different setting and with such vastly more tragic results. True, they say, fifty million persons were killed in that greatest of all wars. It is a figure too monstrous to grasp. In comparison the death of a single German soldier in that cold Ardennes forest must be a small, inconsequential thing. And yet, each man has but one life to be taken by a bullet. Each man a single soul to be devastated by the living memory of inflicted death.

It would now be Ernie, the keeper of that tragedy, in his soul.

"It really didn't bother me too much at first," Ernie told me. "I went back to camp and told my sergeant what had happened. He said we would go and take a look. He asked me to lead the way. We found the body and the sergeant kneeled down, began going through the dead soldier's pockets. He found that sold-buch (each German soldier was required to carry a little passport type booklet which contained his name and military record, including his picture).

"The book had some pictures in it. The man's sweetheart, his parents, a love letter from his girl friend. It was when I looked at those pictures that it all began to hit me. I began to realize that I had not just killed an enemy soldier but a person, a human being. My bullet had gone right through that little book in his breast pocket."

I have said it before, Ernie had never been the tough one, psychologically. His long battle with his father had not helped. Now this tragic incident in the cold Ardennes. Something in Ernie's psychic make-up began to come unglued.

Again I had to piece it all together later, from letters, from conversations years later. But eventually Ernie was sent home under the classification, "Unfit for further military duty." He ended up in the psychiatric ward of a military hospital in Chicago.

"I would wake up nights, screaming. I was always hearing the thud of that bullet slamming into the body of that German soldier. Over and over again. It was driving me crazy." Ernie told me all this in a time when he was no longer under treatment, when he was supposedly cured and "well." But it was easy for me to see that even in telling it to me, the memory of it was still stirring up a storm of emotions. His speech was as if he were reciting by rote to a psychiatrist, somehow being compelled to tell the story over and over, as part of the healing process. If indeed a healing for him was possible. His eyes took on that haunted look as he spoke. His hands were trembling.

Once, back in the time when he had been in the psychiatric ward, he had been granted a week-end pass to leave the hospital and as he was crossing the street he was hit by a car, breaking both legs, badly shattering one of them. It meant more months in the hospital and now it was as if his physical hurts were helping to keep the old wounds of the spirit alive.

Somehow, in time, Ernie did recover a semblance of stability. In the hospital he had met a nurse, perhaps not the most beautiful physically but with a beauty of the soul which allowed her to understand and comfort the troubled man. They were married and now a more normal life could begin.

Ernie cashed in on his GI Bill of Rights to return to his beloved world of the arts, to study at the Chicago Institute of Art. It was his first formal training in the field he had chosen in that long ago time as a boy, when his impudent cartoon figures had landed him in trouble with Dad.

It would become his profession and since it was easiest to earn a living in the field of commercial art, advertising, it was here he found his new life. The cartooning and more serious art now became a hobby, an adjunct to his profession except that his advertising messages were often decorated with cartoons, just as they had been in those boyhood days, painting on the windows of stores. During the next 20 or 30 years dozens of his cartoons would be published in magazines.

Since one is never privileged to creep into the mind of one's brother, and since we lived so far apart during those "middle years," I could never know how completely he had recovered from those old wounds of the spirit.

Outwardly it would seem he had made it. While working at the advertising agency in Chicago he played on a softball team, played golf until he was almost good enough to turn pro. He bought a summer cottage on a lake in Wisconsin, bought a boat and learned scuba diving. Later he even bought an apartment in the Bahamas where he spent his vacations, near waters that were perfect for scuba diving.

He even took up underwater photography and became so good he was soon in demand for lectures, illustrated by his beautiful underwater pictures. A by-product, the lobsters he snared from time to time, provided gourmet dinners for family and friends.

To his first marriage had been born a son and when, a short time later the gentle nurse who had become the mother of his son, died of cancer, he would remarry, this time to a widow with children of her own. Was it possible, behind all this picture of success, recreation, happiness to see any residue of the problems which had beset his earlier life? Only time and other circumstances would bring the answer to that.

Perhaps if there was any clue it probably lay in the fact that although Mother and Dad were still living in Oklahoma, and while all of the other children made periodic visits to them, for more than 25 years Ernie refused to go home.

During all this time when everything appeared to be so tranquil, it would be difficult to say that I was really close to my brother. He had his own world now. It was only on occasional trips to

Pioneer days in Gotebo, Oklahoma. The small town Oklahoma Mennonite sign painter in this story later studied at the Chicago Institute of Art.

Chicago, or his occasional trips to Memphis, that I saw him. After he began going to the Bahamas he usually stopped off in Memphis on his way.

And it was very seldom that the subject of that incident in Germany came up. Once when it did, I asked him what had happened to the little "sold buch," the pay book of that dead German soldier. His answer startled me.

"I still have it," he said.

Then, since I could read German, I asked to see it. Again he surprised me for now he became evasive. "I don't know exactly where it is. It might take a while to find it," he said. I decided he didn't want to show it to me and dropped the matter.

Perhaps the next blow of fate to my brother came when, in his 40's and 50's, he began to develop severe pains in the back. I know, millions of people suffer from back pains. I too have had my share. In Ernie's case they became progressively worse until, I discovered, the doctors were giving him strong narcotics to ease the pain.

"I'm never free of pain any more," he told me one day when he came to visit in Memphis. He had been forced to give up his beloved golf, his bowling and, of course, the softball. But, I had to ask him, how could he continue his scuba diving?

"That is one of the things I can still do without pain," he said. "When I am down in the sea I don't notice the pain. When you are down there it is like floating on air."

His next remark came with a bit of a sardonic smile. "Besides, they say, dying in the water is the most blissful of deaths."

It was clear that he had come to love the sea. He had retired and now lived in Florida, near the sea shore. He still managed a few trips to the Bahamas. But things were falling apart now. The constantly worsening pain, the narcotics and, perhaps, a growing depression, were changing the man, my brother, the one time boy I had tormented.

Ernie really wasn't that old, still in his early sixties, when things really began to unravel. That night in Florida when Evelyn, his wife, was in the bedroom and heard the shot in the den. When she rushed to investigate she found Ernie, seated in a lounge chair, blood trickling down his face and a German Luger pistol in his hand. The gun was a souvenir he had brought home from Germany.

The shot had almost missed, the bullet grazing his skull. "I'll never forget that look on his face," Evelyn

told us later.

The results, another trip to the veterans' hospital, more psychiatric treatment and a "drying out," from the worst of the drugs. Then, home again for a new beginning.

Then we visited him for the last time, in Florida. In talking to Ernie I decided that he had come to some sort of a plateau. Perhaps he would make it now. Both he and Evelyn seemed to be in good spirits. They were having a swimming pool built in the back yard. It would be therapy.

But once more, one evening, the subject of the incident in Germany came up. Once more I asked to see the sold buch. I suggested that if the young soldier's address was in the book we might be able to locate relatives, return the book to them. They might like to know what happened.

Now it was my turn to be surprised. Without any hesitation, Ernie got up, walked to his desk, opened the top center drawer, reached in and picked up the book. It apparently had been lying there, right on top, not hidden away as he had suggested on another occasion. He handed it to me.

It was indeed interesting. The picture of the 19-year-old Grenadier, Horst Loeser. Pictures of his parents. One of a young girl, with a note on the back indicating she was probably his fiancee. And then the bullet hole, all the way through the book. A poignant souvenir.

I had assumed Ernie wanted to keep it so I copied the names and addresses and was handing it back to Ernie when he stopped me, abruptly, "Keep it," he said. "I don't want it any more."

Now it was my turn to be bewildered. All those years he had kept the little book hidden, guarding it, refusing to even let me see it but now, suddenly he wanted to be rid of it.

All so puzzling. Why had the little book been lying there in his top center drawer? Had he been looking at it and brooding over it? Did it still hold some sort of a haunting influence on him? Why had he been reluctant to allow me to see it earlier? So many unanswered questions. But now I didn't want to press him for answers.

It was only a few months later when we were provided with some dramatic answers to at least some of the questions.

The Last Letter

Perhaps I should have been warned by the last letter Ernie wrote me. Part of it was good news. A son had been born to his only son, making it Ernie's first grandchild. He was making plans to go to Boston to see the new baby. But, he wrote, he was also planning another trip to the Bahamas to, "take some supplies to the condo and do some diving."

It was the last part of the letter that was troubling. "My worst problem now is that my right leg is becoming paralyzed. I walk a few steps and it starts throbbing. Then it collapses, with no feeling in it. I have fallen quite a few times and I have gotten a cane for support. Also, the arthritis pain in my hips and legs becomes unbearable at times."

The last line, "We are so thrilled about our little grandson."

Evelyn had assumed they would go to Boston first, to see the baby but Ernie suddenly changed his mind, insisting that the trip to the Bahamas must come first. So they went, both going out in the little rubber dinghy they used for the diving. Ernie made a few good dives and was happy because he had nabbed a few lobsters.

Then, that last day. They had gone out in the morning and Ernie seemed pleased with his dive. But then, after lunch, Ernie said he was going out again, alone. He insisted on it.

"It was a bit strange," Evelyn told us later, "He almost never went out twice in one day. And never alone."

So, Ernie hobbled away on his cane, somehow managing with his air tanks and scuba gear. With pain, but he went. It was the last time Evelyn saw him alive.

Some fishermen found him. First they saw the dinghy, empty. And when they went to investigate they found the scuba tanks, floating on the water. And then they found Ernie, afloat, gently bobbing, cradled in his beloved sea. His pain was gone now.

For me, now, there were left only the memories. Reflections about our relationship as brothers. One is never completely able to control the thoughts that come tumbling into the mind. Could I ever be completely free from a tinge of guilt from those years when I had been his tormentor?

Guilt or not, the memory is less than pleasant. Nor have I ever completely understood the whys. Unless, as I said before, I had felt oppressed, abused by our father and took it out on Ernie.

Even another nagging thought, something I really didn't want to think about. Had some of those kicks I gave him as a boy, some landing on his lower spine, contributed to his back problems later?

I ease my conscience by remembering that millions of people have those back problems, the pain. I too have had them for years and I had no tormenting brother to kick me.

No matter, if the guilt, in any degree did remain, had Ernie truly forgiven me? Yes, we had talked about it in those later years. He said he had forgiven me. But I also knew he had never forgotten.

May I believe that his greatest measure of forgiveness had come in that long ago time when Dad and I brought him home from Oklahoma City? And when he came to know that I had been the one to forge the wall of protection around him, to guard him against further hurts?

If only once, but yet, my brother's keeper.

Birth of a Dual Conference Congregation in Champaign-Urbana

by V. Gordon Oyer

Our century has witnessed significant erosion of traditional boundaries separating American Mennonites. Urbanization, alternative service, post-war and other disaster relief efforts all provided settings for Mennonites to meet, mingle, and work with their Anabaptist siblings. This integration created opportunities for worshiping together, as well. The growing inter-Mennonite familiarity which resulted soon fed the rise of Dual Conference Churches—congregations holding membership in more than one Mennonite denomination. One setting which spawned such a phenomenon was Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. Located amid the farmlands of east central Illinois some 120 miles south of Chicago, this college town of 90,000 holds the state's oldest Dual Conference congregation: First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana. First Mennonite's emergence, like that of most dual conference experiences, relied on a fusion of various dynamics wrought by our rapidly changing society.

Setting the Stage

Members of an Anabaptist tradition began arriving in east central Illinois about 1865. These settlers were Amish who formed a community near Arthur, Illinois, 30 miles south of Champaign-Urbana. They arrived from eastern states, and sided with those who strongly resisted acculturation, ultimately settling in the Amish's Old Order camp. During the 1930s an "old" Mennonite congregation emerged at Arthur. The region's second Anabaptist community began in the 1880s near Fisher, less than 20 miles north of Champaign. They also possessed Amish roots, but originated from Illinois' Tazewell and Woodford County settlements between Peoria and Bloomington. These Amish incorporated change more readily, participating in the Western District Amish Mennonite Conference (formed in 1890) and later merging with the "old" Mennonite Church (1920). The presence of these two settlements, particularly the East Bend congregation near Fisher, played an important role in the formation of Champaign-Urbana's congregation.

Mennonite and Amish Mennonites began trickling through the twin cities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Two major attributes of the community prompted these brief visits: its role as Champaign County's political and economic center and its opportunities for higher education. The Fisher settlers traveled here to conduct legal business, finalize land transactions, and obtain goods and services. As urbanization and technology led to shrinking opportunities on farms and in farming communities, Champaign-Urbana's importance increased for area Mennonites. The cities' greater economic opportunities attracted their first permanent Mennonite residents.

The earliest of these urban "settlers" was the Massanari family. Lead poisoning forced painter Joseph Massanari of Fisher to temporarily abandon his trade in the mid-1920s. He replaced this livelihood by selling Watkins products door to door. These sales efforts led him to Champaign, where he gained additional customers. After he and his sons later re-established the painting business, contacts made through the old sales route generated new clients for the painters. Their growing Champaign clientele warranted a move to the city, and in 1938 Bob (Joseph's son) and Lila (Grieser) Massanari arrived. World War II forced a temporary return to Fisher to fill the void left by absent Massanari brothers. But in 1946, Bob and Lila returned, and were followed by Bob's brother Joe and his wife Frances (Dean) Massanari in 1947. These families have remained in Champaign since that time, providing much needed continuity and stability to the eventual congregation.[1]

Other early examples of economically influenced movement to the cities include photographer Wilmer Zehr and wife Evelyn (Schertz), who arrived in 1950 from the Fisher area; truck driver Duane Swartzendruber, who arrived in 1960 from Peoria, Illinois; salesman and eventual truck driver David Swartzendruber and wife Judy (Jensen), who arrived in 1962 from Princeton, Illinois; Christian bookstore operator Roy Smucker and wife Ellen, who arrived in 1963 from Bloomington, Illinois; and telephone operator Marilyn (Stalter) and husband Dick Early, who arrived in 1964 from Paxton, Illinois.[2]

Though economic pulls were important attractions, local educational opportunities proved even more crucial to the congregation's birth; they unquestionably provided the environment prompt-

Twenty-fifth anniversary worship service, February 5, 1989.

ing First Mennonite's dual affiliation. Especially since the 1950s, the University of Illinois, a land grant college chartered in 1867, presented an increasingly powerful attraction for diverse Mennonites. Illinois Mennonites were rather slow to embrace higher education, particularly higher education at a state school. Despite this hesitancy, however, some young Illinois Mennonites did attend the university during the century's first half. The most famous of these was C. Henry Smith, the pioneer Mennonite historian. Beginning in 1900, Smith resided in Champaign-Urbana for about two years and obtained his bachelor's degree in 1903. His academic success led to membership in the university's Phi Beta Kappa honor society.[3] Another early Mennonite who took advantage of the state university was Oscar J. Sommer of Pekin. In the early 1900s Sommer took special seed corn courses which the university offered, and by the 1910s had established a growing seed corn company.[4] As the century progressed, other Mennonites came briefly to study in the community. Most University of Illinois students of the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s seem to have been Illinois natives pursuing graduate studies after undergraduate attendance at Goshen College. Known attendees included: Orie J. Eigsti (early 1930's; M.S.; Botany); Carl Birky (early 1930's; Ph. D.; Sociology); Mark Smucker (early 1930's; B.S. and M.A.; Electrical Engineering); Walter Zehr (1931-33; B.S. work; Business Administration); Vernon Rocke (mid-1930's; B.S.; Education); Christian Imhoff (1936-40; B.S.; Journalism); Melvin Springer (1936-mid 1940's; Ph. D.; Mathematics); Walter Massanari, brother to Bob and Joe (1940-41; M.D.); Karl Massanari, brother to Bob and Joe (1942-44; Ph. D.; Education); Vernon Zimmerman (1945-present; B.S., M.A., Ph.D.; Business Administration); Art Smucker (1949-1953; Ph.D.; Chemistry); Nelson Springer (1950-1951; M.S.; Library Science).[5]

By the middle 1950s, Mennonites began warming to higher education as professional occupations increasingly replaced diminishing agricultural opportunities. Earlier justifications for higher learning often focused on its religious and community value;[6] it was now becoming worthwhile in its own right. Interestingly, Champaign's academic environment attracted at least one community resident during this period. Starting in 1951, Carroll Moyer taught school in the Fisher community, but from 1955 until they left the state in 1961, he and his wife Verda (Good) chose to reside in Champaign. Their primary motive for residing here was to better enjoy the university's resources; Moyer took night courses at the institution.[7]

Most of those attracted by the twin cities' academic community came primarily as students, however, or occasionally as professors. In Illinois, closer location, lower costs, and broader curricula probably encouraged Mennonite attendance at the University of Illinois. But attendance by non-Illinois Mennon-

Voluntary Service Unit, 1982. lr. Bob Holmes, Audrey Leighty, Kathy Troyer, Freddy Holmes, Sue Holmes, Jo Ellen Culp, Kerri Brammer, Mike Barber

ites also increased during the late 50s. The Cold War inspired increased federal funding for scientific research; this funding and its corresponding overhead benefits allowed universities (including Illinois) to improve a variety of programs and increase scholarships.[8] This development undoubtedly enhanced non-Illinoisans' access to the university.

Denominational leadership began recognizing this trend of Mennonites attending secular institutions and sought ways to minister to their spiritual needs. One such attempt was formation of the "old" Mennonites' Student Services Committee, sponsored by the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. In the mid-1950s, Pastor Virgil Brenneman of Iowa City's Mennonite Church established a University of Iowa Mennonite student fellowship. Shortly thereafter he reported his concern for this population to the Mission Board.[9] Promptings such as these led to appointment of the committee in August 1958.[10] The General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Brethren Church soon formed similar committees, as did regional bodies such as the Mennonite Student Services Committee in Illinois.[11] In October 1958, as one of its first actions, the "old" Mennonite Student Services Committee asked Virgil Brenneman to visit Urbana and survey the presence of Mennonites at the University of Illinois.[12] Brenneman arrived on December 8, 1958, and during his three day stay, initiated the first known gathering of Mennonites on campus.

From Mennonite Student Fellowship To Established Congregation

After reaching Champaign-Urbana on Monday afternoon, Brenneman pursued names of Mennonite students. Through the YMCA, he located 27 names of individuals registered as "Mennonite." Assisted by local student and personal acquaintance Evelyn Rowner, he invited them to a Wednesday evening meeting through mail and telephone contacts. Fourteen of the 27 met, a good showing considering finals were at hand. Brenneman reported that "all were surprised at the number of Mennonites on campus"; one thought himself the only Mennonite at the university. Of those attending this meeting, graduate students typically had earlier attended a church school, and seemed more interested in "things Mennonite" than did the typical undergraduate. Students' fellowship and spiritual needs were being met in a variety of ways: some attended East Bend, some spent weekends at home churches elsewhere in central Illinois, some involved themselves in non-Mennonite campus fellowships. Brenneman observed from this visit that "Of necessity, student fellowships on campus must include all Mennonite groups and might include any other persons from outside the Mennonite fellowship who would be interested in our type of witness and fellowship."[13]

Although plans were made for future, locally-initiated meetings, none occurred during the next year-and-a-half. Apparently many from the 1958 meeting soon left the community, and no one pursued the matter further. In May 1960, however, Brenneman returned on behalf of the Student Services Committee and organized another meeting with

help from local student Harold Boyts. Twenty-nine student names were identified, but only a "small group" met. A couple of the 29 had changed religious affiliation; one indicated he had become an atheist. Brenneman's visit again occurred close to final examinations, undoubtedly inhibiting attendance by some. This meeting also included three resident families who lived in the community but attended East Bend. A committee of three organized to plan future fellowship opportunities: Harold Boyts represented graduate students, Nancy Birky represented undergraduates, and Bob Massanari represented community families. Brenneman observed that perhaps, relative to other campuses, fewer Illinois Mennonite students were interested in Mennonite fellowship activities. He noted that one central Illinois General Conference congregation had five students on campus, but they represented those least interested in meeting. Brenneman also perceived differing objectives between the students, who sought temporary fellowship, and community residents, who sought a "larger opportunity for witness and perhaps an emerging church." He also observed that "it would be extremely unfortunate if these groups would not find a way to coordinate their interests and benefit by each other's presence and sharing of concern." This coordination was realized, and from the start, community residents played active roles in the Mennonite Student Fellowship's life.[14]

The three-person committee appointed at the May 1960 meeting achieved its task of planning for future gatherings, and the Mennonite Student Fellowship organized for the 1960-61 academic year. Officers for this first year included President Keith Sprunger, Vice President Vernon Rocke, Secretary Bernita Boyts, Community Representative Bob Massanari, and Program Chairman Lester Zimmerman. In February 1961, the Fellowship invited Virgil Brenneman to make his third visit and provide input regarding their future options. By this time it had compiled a mailing list of 36 households or individuals. Brenneman identified their backgrounds as: 12 GC, 11 OM, 1 MB, 1 Amish, 1 Doopesgezinde, 3 not known, 7 non-students. He seemed impressed with the group, indicating that it had "organization and interest which will provide continuity" and that they were "honestly seeking the correct answer to their fellowship needs."[15] Thus the Student Services Committee's role as catalyst had helped inspire an autonomous, highly motivated student/resident fellowship.

East Bend also played something of a role in organizing the Fellowship. Its pastor Alton Horst maintained contact with the group, meeting with them as early as November 1960.[16] Horst had also been in contact with Brenneman regarding events in Champaign-Urbana,[17] and was involved with Illinois' Inter-Mennonite Student Services Committee.[18] East Bend had also discussed possibilities for establishing a local congregation during the early 1960s.[19]

The Fellowship's activity steadily increased over the next three years. In May 1962 gatherings increased from monthly to bi-weekly meetings. These events alternated between a Friday night "social" meeting and a Sunday evening "devotional" meeting. The social evening often centered around a lecture or panel discussion; the devotional meetings around a Bible study, sermon, or "serious discussion." This activity resulted in an "extremely successful" 1962-63 year, with increased attendance, particularly from undergraduates. By mid-1963, the group's mailing list had grown to 42, and attendance averaged 25.[20] The success of their efforts, particularly of the Sunday evening meetings, inspired the Fellowship to enlarge its vision. In June 1963, they were "entertaining the possibility of Sunday morning services" during the following academic year, planning to "begin with one Sunday morning meeting each month."[21] By early October, they were "seriously contemplating the establishing of a permanent fellowship group in the Champaign-Urbana area."[22] Five month's later, on February 9, 1964, a new Champaign-Urbana Mennonite congregation held its first Sunday morning service.

This major step was an act of faith. The group had no minister, no meeting-place of its own, no organizational structure. Excitement and the opportunity to form their own congregation fueled the early participants' activity. Although members initially did not know whether their experiment would succeed, they immediately began planning for their future. Within two months of organizing, congregational leaders met with Illinois Mennonite Conference and "old" Mennonite General Mission Board officers to discuss leadership and facility options. During the congregation's first two years, services were held in a Seventh Day Adventist facility, which was unoccupied on Sundays. In 1966 they purchased a Free Methodist building near the university campus, sharing the facility for a year until the Free Methodists' new structure was completed. Richard Yordy, the congregation's first pastor, did not assume responsibilities until June of 1965. In the meantime, lay leaders carried on church business. Participants and guest speakers filled the Sunday morning pulpit and operational tasks were divided among the congregation. Although participants' energy had waned by Yordy's arrival, the congregation was already firmly taking root as he began his ministry.

Deciding For Dual Affiliation

The choice for dual affiliation seems an inevitable outcome. The Champaign-Urbana group had always reflected multiple backgrounds, and its urban, academic setting virtually assured diversity in years to come. Pastor Richard Yordy (1965-1969) roughly estimated the congregation's initial composition as 50% "old" Mennonite, 30% Mennonite Brethren, and 20% General Conference Mennonite Church (GC), with a handful of non-Mennonites as well.[23] At least two early families in attendance reflected Conservative Mennonite ties.[24] Over time the participation of non-Mennonites apparently increased. In 1970 new pastor Jim Dunn (1970-1979) commented that "Roman Catholic, Mennonite, humanist, River Brethren, Christian Radicals, atheists, etc. are participating . . . in four intergenerational Sunday morning groups."[25] Again in 1975 he wrote that of the roughly 65 attendees, half were "born into the fold of Menno," a quarter "decided to identify here rather than their own background," and the other quarter "are still asking 'What is a Mennonite?' "[26] An informal poll taken in 1986 indicated that only 60% of the 40 respondents had at least one Mennonite parent. The remainder reflected 11 different denominational backgrounds.[27]

This diversity has not been evenly distributed, however. The greatest involvement almost certainly came from

"old" Mennonite, especially Illinois Mennonite Conference, participants. A review of the 1988/89 church directory supports this. Of the 140 adults listed, 26% come from Illinois Mennonite Conference origins and another 25% from other "old" Mennonite conferences. About 11% reflect GC backgrounds, 3% come from Old Order Amish (turned Conservative Mennonite) families, and 3% from other Mennonite/Anabaptist groups. The remaining 32% reflect a variety of non-Mennonite traditions.[28]

First Mennonite's members valued these personal inter-Mennonite relationships from the church's inception, but they placed a low priority on formal conference affiliation. Members primarily concerned themselves simply with including the greatest number of participants as possible. This approach was necessary, because any one background probably possessed too few members to sustain a viable congregation. Their inclusiveness was more than a response to necessity, however. Founding participants consciously desired that First Mennonite would not promote the barriers and boundaries which prior generations of Mennonites had erected. Such desires emanated strongly from the student population, which affirmed the 60s' rejection of institutional structures. One student later reflected, "Some of us rather naively said, 'Maybe we're proving something to this conservative Mennonite world: the interdenominational aspect.' "[29] Another remarked, "We could go back and tell our parents, 'Hey, this works! What's the matter with you people?' "[30]

The local residents also upheld this focus, and fully supported inclusion of diverse backgrounds. As one resident commented, "Rather than trying to affiliate with these conferences, we tried to have a group that didn't *exclude* any of the people, so they would all feel welcome."[31] The congregation's first two communion services, both held in 1964, were jointly administered by "old" Mennonite and General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) representatives, a clear indication of intentionally pursuing broad participation.

Denominational leadership quickly recognized the congregation's multiple interests. In June 1964, the General Conference Student Services Committee sent First Mennonite a message congratulating their formation, acknowledging their inter-Mennonite character, and commending their "significant pioneer work" in such relationships at a time when "we in the Mennonite household are . . . striving toward greater unity."[32] The same month, Albert Meyer, Academic Dean at Bethel College, sent a note to John H. Yoder and Virgil Brenneman of the "old" Mennonite Student Services Committee suggesting they encourage the congregation, area Mennonites, and the local conferences to consider dual affiliation for First Mennonite. Meyer, of "old" Mennonite background, previously served with the Student Services Committee. He had recently discussed the Champaign-Urbana congregation with former Mennonite Student Fellowship president Keith Sprunger, then on Bethel's faculty. Meyer referred to the Columbus, Ohio, congregation, which had obtained dual affiliation in 1963 under similar conditions (Ohio and Eastern Conference/Central District Conference). "One cannot expect a group like the Columbus Mennonite Church to carry on delicate negotiations with two conferences when this is not the usual . . . arrangement."[33] Brenneman promptly responded with a letter to Pastor Alton Horst of East Bend, indicating that "a number of us have discussed [Champaign-Urbana's conference affiliation] recently." Acknowledging that they were not well-informed of the congregation's development, Brenneman enclosed a letter which Erwin C. Goering, Chairman of the Student Services Committee of the General Conference, had sent to the Columbus group in 1962. This letter outlined four affiliation possibilities: function independently, affiliate with "old" Mennonites, affiliate with General Conference Mennonites, or explore affiliation with both.[34]

R. L. Hartzler of Bloomington, Illinois, recently Conference Minister of the Central District Conference (GC), also raised possible dual affiliation before the young congregation. On November 8, 1964, he had participated in the church's worship service. While there, he promoted the dual option, discussing the Columbus model with acquaintance Roy Smucker, chair of the congregation's Pastoral Committee. Smucker seemed open to this possibility. Hartzler then wrote to Central District Conference leadership encouraging action. Richard Yordy, then pastor at Arthur and an Illinois Mennonite Conference leader, would likely accept their pastoral call, and Hartzler felt that Yordy "would be mindful of it being a composite group, but [he did] not know how much [Yordy could] or [would] endeavor to find a between-conference direction." Hartzler also noted that pastoral support would come from the congregation, the Illinois Mennonite Conference, and the Mennonite Board of Missions. He had suggested to S. T. Moyer of the Central District Conference mission committee "some time ago" that they should share in Champaign-Urbana's pastoral support. According to Hartzler, Moyer "heartily concurred, and the arrangement is that if Yordy accepts, I will so advise Moyer and he will make contact with Roy Smucker regarding our committee lending some assistance."[35] This assistance actually came not with Yordy's 1965 arrival, however, but with the congregation's acceptance into the Central District Conference in 1966.

In January, 1965, the Central District's new Conference Minister, Gordon R. Dyck, followed up Hartzler's affiliation question with Roy Smucker.[36] Smucker indicated that:

> When [Yordy] arrives and gets into the swing of things we will then look into the "dual" church affiliation. We hope to have some such a working arrangement but just what or who or how will need to be looked into. It would be great if there was [sic] only one so that question would not need to be discussed, but that time is still in the future. We hope that by our example we can hurry the day along.[37]

In March, Dyck sent First Mennonite a copy of an eight page document describing "Dual Conference Affiliation: The Columbus Experience" (John H. Yoder, January 5, 1965). He hoped to discuss the paper with First Mennonite's council during an upcoming visit.[38]

Thus both the conferences and the congregation seemed favorably disposed toward dual membership. The Central District Conference, which reportedly sought greater student ministry involvement,[39] seemed especially enthusiastic. Interestingly, significant disagreement over traditional practices such as footwashing and head coverings seems not to have surfaced during the affiliation discussion, though differences existed. Official action was slow in coming, however. The delay undoubtedly resulted from several factors,

not the least being the very newness of such a concept as dual affiliation; it was indeed pioneering work. Additionally, as mentioned above, those at Champaign placed minimal emphasis on formal institutional ties; they seemed more concerned with inter-Mennonite cooperation on a local, personal level than on a denominational level. The diversity of their immediate fellowship had inspired a dream of ultimate ties with Mennonite Brethren and Evangelical Mennonites, as well as "old" and General Conference Mennonites. Perhaps this broad scope also inhibited immediate action. Finally, their initially pastorless arrangement required devotion of much energy to simply administrating the congregation, focusing more on immediate, practical concerns than on larger affiliation questions.

But despite higher priorities, First Mennonite did not discard the issue. In March 1965 the congregation met briefly with representatives of both conferences to review affiliation options.[40] Shortly thereafter the church council reported to the congregation that the Central District Conference had approached them regarding dual membership, and council expressed support for affiliating with "all Mennonite groups."[41] A 1965 ad hoc committee on organization issues included conference affiliation as one of its central considerations.[42] None of this activity led to congregational action in 1965, however. During 1966, First Mennonite took significant strides toward dual affiliation. In February the Executive Committees of the Illinois Mennonite Conference and the Central District Conference met jointly for the first time. This meeting focused primarily on dual conference affiliation for First Mennonite and cooperative mission work in the Chicago area. Representatives of First Mennonite also attended.[43] A joint statement resulted from this gathering, indicating that they both "look with favor on [First Mennonite's] membership in more than one conference and accept the administrative implications of these associations."[44] As reported to the congregation, the conferences "will share in the subsidies necessary for the establishment of our congregation . . . . These conferences also will respect the desire of our congregation to relate to other Mennonite conferences."[45]

The congregation took no immediate action, however, perhaps partly because First Mennonite was simultaneously preoccupied with negotiating the purchase of its facility. The Central District Conference had scheduled its 1966 annual meeting for May 5-8. Since First Mennonite wished to propose its membership at this gathering, the congregation needed to act soon. As Yordy reminded, "there is wide agreement in our group that this step will affirm our desire to be a Mennonite Church relating fully to persons of various groups."[46] On May 1, the Sunday before the conference, First Mennonite acknowledged its desire to join both conferences unanimously resolving that the congregation would:

> formally affiliate with the Illinois Mennonite Conference and the Central District Conference of the General Conference Mennonite Church, and . . . seek to establish lines of communication with Evangelical Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren Conferences.[47]

The following Thursday, on May 5, the Central District Conference approved First Mennonite's membership.[48]

Initiative now rested with the Illinois Mennonite Conference to accept the church into its membership. This did not occur until over a year later, however. The delay apparently resulted from administrative slowness rather than reservations at conference level.[49] It is a bit surprising that Illinois Mennonite Conference membership did not occur sooner, given its significant involvement in First Mennonite's early life. The conference was represented at a December 1963 local planning meeting[50] and a March 1964 council meeting.[51] During 1964, reports on the congregation were read at conference gatherings.[52] The conference administered First Mennonite's building fund starting in 1964 and assumed its building mortgage in 1966.[53] When Pastor Yordy arrived in 1965, it (along with the Mennonite Board of Missions) immediately subsidized his salary. Furthermore, the surrounding congregations were "old" Mennonite.

But Illinois Mennonite Conference membership finally occurred. Action VII of the conference's September 16, 1967, annual meeting reads, "It was moved and carried that the First Mennonite Church of Champaign [sic] be received as a member of conference. This also recognizes their dual membership."[54] Thus, although First Mennonite possessed a significant inter-Mennonite character from its inception, it did not officially become dual affiliated until three-and-one-half years after it formed.

The desire to affiliate with more than two Mennonite bodies was never realized, but some informal dialogue with Mennonite Brethren did occur. As many as five graduate student families claimed a Mennonite Brethren background during its first few years. Some of these individuals served in congregational leadership roles, and raised the affiliation question with their home congregation in Canada. This church offered some token financial gifts to the young congregation,[55] and individuals extended personal encouragement, but the denomination's traditional reticence toward inter-Mennonite ties inhibited further progress.[56] The presence of Evangelical Mennonite congregations in Illinois and the likelihood of Evangelical Mennonite students attending the university probably led First Mennonite to consider ties to this denomination. Unfortunately, no record of communication with the Evangelical Mennonite Church has been preserved, so we cannot determine reasons why none developed.

Although Central District Conference membership began in 1966, membership in the General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) did not occur until 1971.[57] Much of First Mennonite's leadership during the 1960s possessed "old" Mennonite backgrounds. In that tradition, membership in a regional conference, such as Illinois Mennonite Conference, ensured membership in the larger denomination. First Mennonite members were unaware that the differing polity of the General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) required separate membership applications to the district and national bodies.[58]

Impressions of Dual Affiliation Status

Life as a dual conference pioneer produced some frustration. Richard Yordy in particular faced tensions as a dual conference minister. Some of these early difficulties arose from the conferences' unfamiliarity with each other. Yordy, an Illinois Mennonite Conference pastor, recalled his unawareness of certain reports which the Central District Conference assumed he would complete. In other cases, duplication of reports and mailings added administrative burdens.

Compounding the awkwardness of Yordy's position was his part-time role as Illinois Mennonite Conference Extension Secretary, administrator of that conference's missions projects. Members of both conferences expressed some discomfort with this relationship. He perceived more pressure from the Central District Conference mission committee, however, and felt that this became a significant factor for ending his pastorate. "To fill a leadership role from the stance of a dual affiliation finally seemed to call for giving up leadership in a respective conference."[59]

Jim Dunn assumed his First Mennonite pastorate in 1970 as a General Conference (GC) member. Accordingly, Dunn's perspectives reflected that denomination's stronger congregationalism. He approached this dual affiliation as a positive opportunity for doubled resources and input, though he admitted it easily could become burdensome. When responding to one conference, he often sent the other a carbon copy. "It maybe didn't fit their form, but I figured it was their problem to work that out, not mine. My philosophy is that the conference is not the boss. The primary action where the church is alive is the congregation."[60]

Congregational leadership also experienced frustration with the dearth of conference support in their 1980 pastoral search. Undoubtedly some unfamiliarity with the dynamics of traditional Mennonite congregationalism compounded this frustration. Lay leader Earl Kellogg chaired the search committee. "Being a former Methodist, I was looking around for the phone number of the Bishop, trying to find out who was going to tell us who our pastor would be." Kellogg recalled that although one conference minister sent some names, in general these leaders "just didn't help." Of available candidates, "some would have been terrific and some would have been disasters. Nobody tried to help us with that at all."[61]

Co-pastor Sheryl (Short) Dyck (1981-1987) sensed that First Mennonite sometimes "fell between the cracks" of the two conferences. "With conference ministers, we always felt a caution. No one wanted to tread into another's territory." Her husband Peter Dyck (1981-1987) observed that when the question of the Dycks' 1983 ordination arose, congregational leadership became somewhat frustrated because conference leadership "didn't seem to know what to do" about addressing it.[62] Pastor David Habegger (1987-present) had dual conference experience prior to his 1987 arrival as pastor. Consequently, the dual conference status presented minimal adjustments or surprises for him.

As a whole, First Mennonite members often seemed unaware or uninterested in the work of these conferences, however. Sheryl Dyck felt that the dual status itself contributed to this distance. "We tended not to feel much ownership in conference because we related to two." Peter Dyck added that significant membership from non-Mennonite backgrounds also contributed. These people lacked a history of conference involvement and were not used to fellowshipping with friends at conference. "It was not the place to meet people as Mennonites have used it."[63] First Mennonite members with the greatest conference participation tended to be those with strong ethnic Mennonite and family ties to involvement. In selecting delegates, Jim Dunn indicated "we would sometimes say, 'Conference is on such and such a weekend. Can anyone get away?' That's not the way to decide whether to attend conference."[64]

Finances also played a significant role in First Mennonite's dual conference experience. It received significant support from both conferences in its building acquisition. Three organizations also subsidized its operations: Illinois Mennonite Conference ($28,000 from 1965 to 1980), Mennonite Board of Missions ($21,600 from 1965 until 1968), Central District Conference ($35,000 from 1966 to 1981).[65] Upon entry into the Central District Conference, First Mennonite formally contacted them regarding a subsidy "in response to the offer of the conference to give its assistance to a congregation that would endeavor to serve the interests of various Mennonite groups in its life and witness." Pastor Yordy assured them that First Mennonite was "sincerely seeking to make fellowship and cooperation across conference lines a significant thing."[66]

The congregation's resources were too meager to quickly return contributions to these conferences, however. When it was able, First Mennonite typically contributed equally to each conference, occasionally prorating according to subsidies received. It often based contribution amounts on the availability of funds. The typical per-member contribution formulas break down in such a dual conference setting. These churches would either have to assign members to a particular conference or donate twice as much as single affiliated churches. Furthermore, at First Mennonite, membership status has been a nebulous concept; active participants often exceed official membership. During its first 15 years, members funded most contributions through special offerings or designated giving rather than from regular operating funds. The first recorded conference contribution occurred in 1966, when the council sent $35 to each conference. Between 1967 and 1974, total annual gifts ranged from nothing to $600. Regularly budgeted conference contributions began in 1974 and have continued to the present.[67]

Conclusion

First Mennonite's dual affiliation seems to have arisen more out of local adaptation than grand design. Diverse Mennonites were drawn to the community for various reasons. As they discovered each other, they soon learned that despite varying traditions, they could help meet each other's spiritual and fellowship needs. Dual affiliation then occurred as a formal reflection of already existing informal relationships. Denominational leadership, particularly those familiar with student ministries, played a catalyzing role in initially helping individuals discover each other and in raising dual affiliation before them as a viable option. But once they began finding one another, local Mennonites grasped their opportunities and, working together, made the most of them.

For those who participated in the church's early years, their diversity represented a liberating, tradition-breaking, novel environment. As Pastor Yordy recalled, one student wife expressed great satisfaction as a "Mennonite without a prefix."[68] In 1966 the congregation reported to the Illinois Mennonite Conference that "the inter-Mennonite character of our group has provided the opportunity to discover how differing traditions and concerns can contribute to a meaningful Chris-

tian fellowship and unity."[69] In retrospect, Yordy acknowledged that Champaign-Urbana's affiliation was not a visionary drive to "shake up the conference system," but rather a practical approach to pursuing both conference and congregational interests. From the congregation's perspective, "It seemed the right thing to do." The feeling was simply that "we are free here to ignore these [conference] differences and be a church together."[70]

But the enthusiasm of this inter-Mennonite fellowship did not translate into smooth structural ties with the conferences. As Yordy later reflected, "the position of dual affiliation seemed to be that of a gadfly, to point to a need for conference integration, rather than a position of strength from which to work toward greater organizational unity."[71] But even if First Mennonite's primary denominational role has been that of a nagging irritant, its dual affiliated pilgrimage undoubtedly helped accentuate growing calls for Mennonite integration and merger.

ENDNOTES

[1]Bob and Lila Massanari, interviewed by writer, 7/29/88.

[2]Obtained by writer through personal conversations with these individuals.

[3]C. Henry Smith, *Mennonite Country Boy* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1962), pp. 192-196.

[4]Willard Smith, *Mennonites In Illinois* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983), p. 110.

[5]Obtained by writer through conversations and correspondence with: Walter Zehr, Roy Springer, Robert Massanari, Vernon Zimmerman, Art Smucker, Nelson Springer.

[6]For example, see "Why Attend Our Church Schools?," Roy Roth, *Missionary Guide*, August 1949, pp. 5, 11.

[7]Carroll Moyer, interviewed by writer, 10/29/89.

[8]Prof. Winton Soleberg, University of Illinois historian, interviewed by writer, September 1988.

[9]Virgil Brenneman, interviewed by writer, 9/3/88.

[10]J. D. Graber to Paul Erb, Melvin Gingerich, John Howard Yoder, Christine Weaver, Don Augsburger, 8/16/58. Archives of the Mennonite Church. File IV-9-3 box 1, Mennonite Board of Missions, Student Services, Communication and Correspondence, Correspondence and Memos—1958-1963.

[11]This inter-Mennonite body emerged in early 1960 from an inter-Mennonite ministers' meeting held by the state's pastors in fall 1959. "Mennonite Student Services Committee," *Missionary Guide*, February 1960, p. 2.

[12]John H. Yoder to Virgil Brenneman, 10/2/58. Archives of the Mennonite Church. File IV-9-8, Mennonite Board of Missions, Student Services, 1958-1972—Centers—Illinois—Champaign-Urbana—1958-1969.

[13]Virgil Brenneman, "Report in Visit to University of Illinois (Urbana), December 1958," written March 1961 from notes made during 1958 visit. Archives of the Mennonite Church. File IV-9-3 box 2, Mennonite Board of Missions, Student Services, Communication and Correspondence (Al Meyer)—Urbana.

[14]Virgil Brenneman, "Report of Visit to University of Illinois, May 20-21, 1960." June 2, 1960. Archives of the Mennonite Church, File IV-9-3 box 2.

[15]Virgil Brenneman, "Report on University of Illinois Visit, February 10-11, 1961." Feb. 21, 1961. Archives of the Mennonite Church. File IV-9-3 box 2.

[16]"Mennonite Students' Fellowship Meets," *Missionary Guide*, December 1960, p. 5.

[17]Virgil Brenneman to Alton Horst, May 28, 1960. Archives of the Mennonite Church. File IV-9-8.

[18]J. Alton Horst, "Inter-Mennonite Student Services Committee,' *Missionary Guide*, October 1961, p. 4.

[19]"East Bend Mennonite Pastoral Visitor: Progress Report - Champaign Mennonite Church," February 1964. Archives of the Mennonite Church. File II-4-4.2, Illinois Mennonite Conference, Executive Committee/Conference Minister, Yordy Correspondence—First Mennonite Church (Champaign).

[20]"Report," author unknown, ca. mid-1963. Archives of the Mennonite Church. File IV-9-8.

[21]Leonard N. Neufeldt to Virgil Brenneman, June 15, 1963. Archives of the Mennonite Church. File IV-9-8.

[22]Leonard N. Neufeldt to Virgil J. Brenneman, Oct. 4, 1963. Archives of the Mennonite Church. File IV-9-8.

[23]Richard Yordy, interviewed by writer, 3/7/88.

[24]Bob Massanari conversation with writer, 10/20/89.

[25]James Dunn to Mr. and Mrs. George Lehman, 10/14/70, First Mennonite archives.

[26]James Dunn to Laban Peachy, 2/6/75, First Mennonite archives.

[27]John H. Otto, "Stereotypes Shatter as First Mennonite Participants Reveal Themselves," *Menno Memo*, 8 Oct. 1986.

[28]Review of First Mennonite's 1988-89 directory. Of the 45 individuals (32%) with two non-Mennonite parents, 18 married Mennonite spouses. In comparison, the 1982 Mennonite Church (MC) census indicated that on a denominational level, only 21% of adult members/participants came from non-Mennonite backgrounds. (*Mennonite Quarterly Review*, October 1985, p. 317.)

[29]Del Good, interviewed by Mary Sprunger, 7/16/88.

[30]Leonard and Mera Neufeldt, interviewed by writer, 7/16/88.

[31]Bob and Lila Massanari interview.

[32]Milton J. Harder to First Mennonite Church, June 8, 1964, Archives of the Mennonite Church. File IV-9-8.

[33]Albert Meyer to John H. Yoder and Virgil Brenneman, June 16, 1964, Archives of the Mennonite Church. File IV-9-3 box 2.

[34]Virgil Brenneman to Alton Horst, July 14, 1964. First Mennonite archives, Bob Massanari file.

[35]R. L. Hartzler to J. T. Friesen, December 8, 1964. Archives of the Central District Conference. Champaign-Urbana Congregation file.

[36]Gordon Dyck to Roy W. Smucker, January 2, 1965. Archives of the Central District Conference, Champaign-Urbana Congregation file.

[37]Roy W. Smucker to Gordon R. Dyck, Jan. 14, 1965. Archives of the Central District Conference, Champaign-Urbana Congregation file.

[38]Gordon R. Dyck to Roy W. Smucker, March 3, 1965. Archives of the Central District Conference, Champaign-Urbana Congregation file.

[39]Richard Yordy interview (Oyer).

[40]First Mennonite Bulletin, 3/7/65. Richard Yordy and Gordon Dyck were the conference representatives. Dyck had spoken at the Sunday morning service; he requested the discussion when confirming this speaking engagement with the congregation. See also note 38 and related text.

[41]First Mennonite Bulletin, 4/11/65.

[42]First Mennonite Bulletins, 9/12/65 and 1/9/66.

[43]First Mennonite Bulletin, 3/7/65.

[44]"First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana Takes Steps Toward Church Organization," *Missionary Guide*, April 1966, p. 7. This meeting was held at the Richard Miller home, Meadows, Illinois. Richard Yordy recalled that Loris Habegger and Rachel Kreider were two Central District Conference leaders who actively pursued First Mennonite's dual affiliation.

[45]First Mennonite Bulletin, 2/13/66.

[46]Yordy to congregation, 4/26/66. First Mennonite archives, Pastoral Letters file.

[47]First Mennonite Congregational Meeting Minutes, 5/1/66.

[48]First Mennonite Bulletin, 5/15/66.

[49]Richard Yordy, interviewed by Paul Reimer, 10/19/89.

[50]"Minutes," Illinois Mennonite Mission Board Executive Committee, Dec. 13, 1963. First Mennonite Archives, Bob Massanari file.

[51]First Mennonite Church Council Minutes, 3/30/64.

[52]Minutes of the 47th Annual Meeting of the Illinois Mennonite Mission Board, April 17, 1964. "Minutes," Executive Committee, Illinois Mennonite Mission Board, August 15, 1964. Both from First Mennonite Archives, Bob Massanari file.

[53]"Building" file, First Mennonite archives.

[54]Minutes of the 1967 Annual Meeting of the Illinois Mennonite Conference.

[55]First Mennonite Bulletins, 10/24/64 and 5/9/65: two $25 gifts received from Elmwood Mennonite Brethren Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

[56]Leonard and Mera Neufeldt interview.

[57]Heinz Janzen to James Dunn, 9/14/71. First Mennonite Archives, Church Council Minutes.

[58]Bob and Lila Massanari interview.

[59]Richard Yordy interview (Oyer); "Notations On Dual Affiliation At Champaign-Urbana," Richard Yordy, 1/20/89.

[60]Jim Dunn, interviewed by writer, 7/2/88.

[61]Earl and Jan Kellogg, interviewed by writer, 6/29/88.

[62]Peter and Sheryl Dyck, interviewed by writer, 1/17/89.

[63]Dyck interview.

[64]Jim Dunn interview.

[65]Financial records, First Mennonite Archives.

[66]Richard Yordy to Heinz Janzen, 5/24/66, Archives of the Mennonite Church. File II-4-4.2.

[67]Financial records, First Mennonite archives.

[68]"Notations," Yordy.

[69]First Mennonite Church Council to Central District Conference, 5/5/66, Archives of the Mennonite Church. File II-4-2.4.

[70]Richard Yordy interview (Oyer).

[71]"Notations," Yordy.

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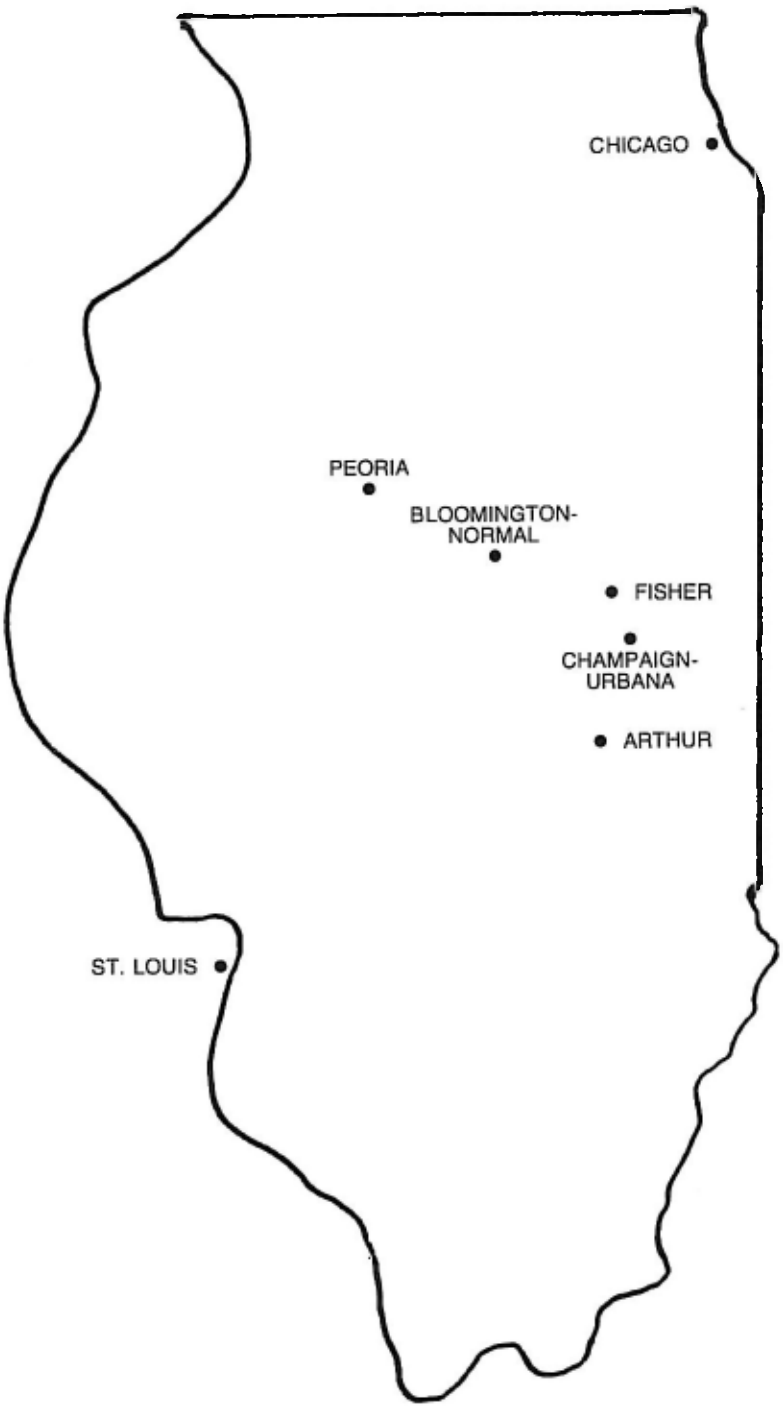
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"Old" Mennonites and the Social Gospel

by Janeen Bertsche Johnson

During the period from 1920 to 1925, the fundamentalist-modernist battles were at their height in the "old" Mennonite Church (MC).[1] The growth of theological and cultural liberalism confronted almost every American denomination in the early decades of the twentieth century, and Mennonites reacted much the way other conservative evangelicals did—by redefining the boundaries of acceptable belief and action. One major redefinition for Mennonites came in the area of social and humanitarian involvements. Some progressive Mennonites adopted the language and outlook of the liberal Social Gospel movement, calling for greater impact on society through participation in social programs and structures. Conservative Mennonites, influenced by fundamentalism, shifted their emphasis to verbal evangelism and doctrinal orthodoxy. Caught in the polarities, the "old" Mennonite Church had to struggle to maintain a balance between evangelism and social concern.

The Rise and Decline of Evangelical Social Concern

The history of social concerns among nineteenth and twentieth-century American evangelicals is complex and fascinating. Before the Civil War, many evangelicals were attempting to alleviate social problems through both private charity and political means. After the Civil War, due partly to the influence of the holiness movement, political action was less attractive to evangelicals. Social concern was still expressed, but primarily through private agencies and endeavors.[2]

The holiness movement was characterized by a more pietistic understanding of the state than that of traditional Calvinism. Government was viewed as ordained to restrain evil, rather than to advance the kingdom of God. Along with this shift came an emphasis on the consecration of each individual to service, enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit. Together, these factors led to a more "private" view of Christianity.[3] This "privatization" of Christianity led evangelicals to place more emphasis on humanitarian relief to the poor and oppressed than on political action to improve their plight.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, holiness-minded evangelicals were leaders in humanitarian work, providing food, medicine, and education to the poor. According to church historian George Marsden, "preaching the Gospel was always their central aim, but social and evangelistic work went hand in hand."[4] However, between 1900 and 1930 evangelical interest in social concerns diminished greatly, and "progressive social concern, whether political or private, became suspect among revivalist evangelicals and was relegated to a very minor role."[5]

This "Great Reversal," as it has been named by historians, was for the most part a reaction to the rise of the Social Gospel at the turn of the century. The Social Gospel movement, led by New York clergyman Walter Rauschenbusch, developed from within the context of evangelical social action. However, Rauschenbusch put priority on social action and reform rather than evangelism. Salvation was viewed as primarily a matter of social improvement rather than individual regeneration.[6] To conservatives, this exclusive emphasis on human action seemed to deny the orthodox understanding of salvation through Christ's atonement. In addition, the Social Gospel viewed the progress of civilization as evidence of God's kingdom. This view was at variance with the conservatives' premillenialist understanding of an eschatological kingdom.[7]

As "social Christianity" became more and more identified with liberalism throughout the first two decades of this century, conservative evangelical involvement in social concerns declined. Tensions and even battles between "fundamentalists" and "modernists" were growing, and the Social Gospel was one of the most frequently attacked aspects of liberalism. George Marsden aptly described the consequences for evangelical social concern: "In the barrage against the Social Gospel it was perhaps inevitable that the vestiges of their own progressive social attitudes would also become casualties."[8] By the 1920s the battle lines were drawn so clearly that it was difficult for anyone to hold evangelism and social concern in balance, as had been done earlier.

Mennonite Responses to the Social Gospel

In general, Mennonites were slower than most American evangelicals to reach beyond their communities in mission and humanitarian work. However, once Mennonite outreach began at the end of the nineteenth century, the parallels to evangelical social involvement were fairly close. Early Mennonite missions adopted the general

Protestant approach, in which social concern and evangelism were held together. As Mennonite historian Theron Schlabach has pointed out, mission-minded Mennonites at the turn of the century combined social service and preaching with no great problem, although evangelism was seen as the primary reason for outreach and the intended end of humanitarian work. For example, the letterhead of the Chicago Home Mission (the first mission of the "old" Mennonite Church) proclaimed it as a place "where the sick are healed, the needy clothed, the hungry fed, and to the poor the Gospel is preached."[9] Some turn-of-the-century Mennonites were even attracted to liberal Social Gospel views which saw in Christianity the potential to defeat societal as well as personal sin:

> The business of a true Christian is to conquer the world. This is a greater task than most of us realize, and invokes a wider view of life than we ordinarily take. We are not merely to kill sin in our own hearts, but we are to make the entire world better in its social, political, intellectual and religious life.[10]

In general, "quickened" Mennonites at the beginning of the twentieth century had a socially conscious evangelicalism. Working to improve persons' life situation was seen as part of the mission of the church.[11]

By the mid-1920s, however, the same phenomena were happening in the "old" Mennonite Church as in the larger evangelical arena. Fundamentalism had greatly influenced the Mennonite Church, and ideas similar to the Social Gospel outlook were suspect. Direct evangelism and personal salvation were emphasized, rather than institutional work and social concern.[12] Leading this Mennonite rejection—or at least suspicion—of Social Gospel influences was John Horsch, an important MC leader who was also involved with the wider fundamentalist movement.

Horsch's first warning about the dangers of liberalism appeared in the new *Gospel Herald,* in 1908. By 1912 he was attacking Social Gospel ideas in particular. During the next decade and a half, Horsch published many articles and books calling Christians—and especially Mennonites—to reject modernism and the Social Gospel.[13] Horsch's criticisms of the Social Gospel fell into three broad categories: its understanding of the world, its understanding of salvation, and its understanding of the church's purpose.

Horsch said the Social Gospel had an unrealistically optimistic view of the world. It rejected the sinfulness of humanity, and said that sin could be overcome or "outgrown" if the social order was Christianized and conditions were made conducive to the development of human nature. The Social Gospel denied the fundamental contrast between the kingdom of darkness (the world) and the kingdom of light (the church). By its futile attempts to Christianize the entire social order, the principle of separation from the world was lost:

> To the extent that the Church is identified with these movements she is becoming worldly, antagonistic to New Testament Christianity. The absorption of the world by the Church means the Church's secularization. It means worldliness for the Church.[14]

Second, Horsch criticized the Social Gospel for holding that salvation was attained through civic, economic, social, and political means of bettering external conditions. Horsch said this made salvation wholly a matter of social improvement, and religion nothing more than a plan for social welfare. Since the Social Gospel implied that being Christian was dependent on serving others and living in a Christianized social order, it brought a message of despair, both to those unable to render service and to those whose social order had not been reconstructed. According to Horsch, salvation was an individual matter, not a social one. Only personal regeneration, not social reformation, could bring about real and lasting social improvement in the world. Furthermore, the kingdom of God, being of a spiritual nature, could not be inaugurated by reforms.

Finally, Horsch challenged the modernist position that the church's primary purpose was to influence society through trying to permeate the world with Christian principles and reforms. Horsch claimed instead that the church's purpose was to hold particular doctrines, convert individuals, and save individuals out of the world. The Social Gospel overlooked the fact that the greatest needs of humanity were spiritual needs, and that therefore the greatest service Christians could give was to show people the way of salvation and win them for Christ:

> The business of the Church is not mere moral reform and social improvement among the children of this world, but it is to show them how to become citizens of the kingdom of God and how to behave as such . . . . If the church can be prevailed upon to engage in social service work where she should be given to Gospel work, the enemy has scored a victory.[15]

According to Horsch, social reform was excellent as long as it was the outgrowth of Christianity and not a substitute for it. Horsch said that "there will always be social improvement to the extent that the message of the gospel is accepted and the precepts of the gospel are lived."[16] Likewise, Horsch did not excuse Christians from all concern for the physical well-being of other persons. Believers manifested living, biblical faith through a deep sense of responsibility for the temporal needs of others, as long as that was balanced by a sense of responsibility for their eternal needs as well.

Few Mennonites saw the Social Gospel as a threat to orthodox Christianity or Mennonitism to the extent that Horsch did. Yet many in the "old" Mennonite Church, including most of its official leadership, were influenced by the anti-Social Gospel mentality of the fundamentalist movement. These Mennonites agreed with Horsch that—as one *Gospel Herald* writer put it—"the primary aim of Christianity is to bring about a right spiritual relation, and material conditions will adjust themselves automatically."[17] The salvation of individuals was the necessary prerequisite for societal change and the only remedy for the world's problems. Their slogans included statements such as "world evangelism, not world improvement" and "win the soul, not the world."[18]

For such Mennonites, the Social Gospel and liberal optimism about the progress of the world did not fit the traditional Mennonite dualism between church and society with its pessimistic view of the world. There were other Mennonites, however, who stressed involvement in the world rather than separation from it. Several progressive Mennonites (especially those identified with Mennonite institutions of higher education)[19] were attracted to aspects of the Social Gospel, or at least tried to defend social concern and action along with evangelism. Several articles in *The Christian Exponent,* an unofficial Men-

nonite paper of the 1920s, reflect some of their ideas.

A. E. Kreider, for example, agreed that when the primary spiritual needs of people were satisfied, other needs were taken care of as well. The task of the church was, therefore, to preach the gospel. However, Kreider added, that gospel included matters of social justice and social improvement as well as personal salvation. Kreider summarized by saying, "there is inherent in the gospel of Christ a moral and spiritual force which if properly released in this world will make this world a more just world."[20]

According to several other writers in *The Christian Exponent*, Christians could not ignore the needs and evils of society. In fact, they were in the best position to establish ideals and create better social conditions in the world. The church, therefore, had the duty of applying the gospel to the problems of modern civilization, including war, the industrial and economic systems, and racial conflict.[21] Outspoken progressive J. E. Hartzler went so far as to say that if the church was to have a place in the modern world, it must produce a new type of social order which was like the kingdom of God.[22] Finally, *Exponent* contributor W. W. Oesch presented Social Gospel ideas without apology:

> An increasing number of earnest Christians are coming to believe that our industrial and social order, our national and international relations can be Christianized. Why cannot the Golden Rule, the principle of Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, be applied to our industrial order or to our confused international relations? There is a growing conviction that a realization of the Kingdom of God on earth demands the application of Christian principles to every institution, to every phase of life.[23]

Effects on Mennonite Involvements in the World

As is evident from the previous survey, "old" Mennonite responses to the Social Gospel were diverse. But the important question remaining to be asked is, How did the theological disagreements surrounding Social Gospel ideas affect Mennonite practice? At least three aspects of "old" Mennonite involvement in the larger world were debated during the early 1920s: political involvement, relief work, and mission work.

1. Political Participation

Because of their two-kingdom theology and their strong sub-group identity, "old" Mennonites had for the most part separated themselves from the political world in America.[24] In the late teens and 1920s, Mennonite cultural identity was breaking down and their separation from the world was being threatened. World War I had put pressure on Mennonites to abandon the German language and to support the efforts of the nation. At the same time, many Christians were urging involvement in politics in order to bring about societal changes. The Temperance movement probably gained the broadest support, from conservative Christians as well as progressive ones. The liberal Social Gospel, however, was calling for Christians to attack other social problems through political avenues. The 1920s saw "old" Mennonites struggling to define their relationship to the political order.

Conservative Mennonites maintained the church's separation from political involvement. Politics were seen as defiled or corrupt, and Christians were to have nothing to do with them. For example, MC leader and *Gospel Herald* editor Daniel Kauffman said that churches only pollute themselves when they try to reform politics.[25] Likewise, Pennsylvania minister John Mosemann saw no reason for churches to be involved in political matters:

> Nowhere are we commanded to devote our time to discuss social standards, civic righteousness, political issues, etc., and thereby bring people to Christ and the Gospel. Jesus never commanded His disciples to set higher ideals and standards socially as a means of salvation, nor to preach to obtain better laws and governments and help straighten out crooked politics and politicians.[26]

J. B. Gehman chastised Mennonites who sought to make society better through politics, saying that this was a denial of the power of Christ, who alone can bring salvation.[27]

Some "old" Mennonites took a more mediating position, believing that—even if corrupt—political means could be used to affect the world. One person taking this view was Vernon Smucker, editor of *The Christian Exponent*. He acknowledged that the only permanent solution to the world's evils was the rebirth and regeneration of human hearts through acceptance of Jesus' principles, not through politics. However, he said, some Mennonites were drawn to political involvement as a way to make present conditions better, while at the same time working toward more permanent solutions.[28] Another *Exponent* writer, economist O. B. Gerig, identified the important moral issues in politics as part of the reason that socially-minded Mennonites were attracted to voting and holding office.[29]

2. Relief Work

In 1917, the "old" Mennonite Church created the Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers to respond to the needs of World War I victims. Three years later, the Mennonite Central Committee (in which the MCs participated) was formed to distribute aid to Mennonites and others in famine-struck Russia. It is somewhat ironic that these two committees began during the time that the Social Gospel was very suspect among Mennonites. James Juhnke, J. Lawrence Burkholder, Theron Schlabach, and others have shown that the war was a stimulus to the Mennonite social conscience. As a group that dissented from war, Mennonites showed their concern for the world (their patriotism) through giving relief rather than armed service.[30] Also, Schlabach noted, the vision of these groups was rather limited, with much of their aid being directed to fellow Mennonites. However, the Relief Commission and MCC "kept alive the idea of a ministry not emphasizing direct evangelism, even though Mennonite Fundamentalism was at a high tide."[31]

Even among "old" Mennonites who rejected the Social Gospel in theory, few of them advocated giving up all material aid to the less fortunate. According to Schlabach, benevolence was too deeply imbedded in the history and practice of Mennonites for them to ignore persons' physical needs entirely. However, during the 1920s it became more necessary for Mennonites to defend (mostly to themselves!) their humanitarian programs. This was especially true of their relief work.[32]

For example, in 1921 an article appeared in the *Gospel Herald* by Orie O. Miller, one of the first MCC workers. Miller's rationale for writing was to explain the aspects of missionary significance in their Constantinople relief work. From the nature of the article, it seems that Miller was assuring Men-

nonite supporters that their money was not just being spent on temporal needs. In addition to holding religious services for Mennonite refugees and giving religious reading materials to those who were receiving food and clothing, the MCC workers were preparing the ground for later missionary work among non-believers:

> Just now they do not know what the word MENNONITE stands for . . . . But later when our missionaries can go into the country itself, hearts will be favorably prepared for the truths of the simple Gospel which we teach, believe and practice. The Spirit will then find readier entrance into hearts that have been touched first by the spontaneous gifts given them by these Christian people in the time of their great need and suffering.[33]

Miller's defense of relief work was not unwarranted. John Horsch and Daniel Kauffman, weighty voices in the "old" Mennonite Church, were both calling for relief work to be connected to direct evangelism.

Already in 1919, Horsch was drawing the implications of his concerns about the Social Gospel. He noted that Mennonite relief work in Europe and the near East was started in response to immediate physical needs, but with the expectation that it would soon develop into mission work. The time had come for Mennonites to make relief work a part of the mission program:

> If we are true to our principles we will not labor in a given country for any length of time without following up the relief work by direct Gospel work . . . . It is a Christian duty to feed the hungry, to clothe the destitute, and help the needy. Relief work is a part of Christian service. But it should be done in the name of Christ and connected with direct mission work . . . . If relief work is done in connection with mission work it is often found an effective means of getting people interested in the most important matter—the soul's salvation.[34]

Horsch's comments were echoed in 1924 by Daniel Kauffman in *Gospel Herald* editorials. Kauffman said that the state of emergency was sufficiently past and that post-war reconstruction work should be connected more closely with mission work. From Kauffman's perspective, "the idea of extending relief for humanity's sake is noble, but it is impractical unless the relief work can be followed by direct evangelistic work under the same organization." He proposed that relief work be used "as a forerunner for more substantial mission work" and that the Relief Commission be placed under the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities.[35] That reorganization happened in 1927.

The more social service-minded "old" Mennonites took a somewhat different attitude toward relief efforts. From their point of view, relief work was in itself a valuable Christian endeavor. Vernon Smucker, for example, called for *Exponent* readers to remember the great physical needs of the world. The duty of Christians to provide relief aid was not done, for the needs were still urgent. However, Smucker also said that the spiritual needs of the world must be addressed along with the material needs.[36] This again seems to support Schlabach's observation that Mennonites of the 1920s found humanitarian relief without direct evangelism difficult to justify.

3. Mission Work

Social service had been a factor in the founding of Mennonite missions, both city and foreign. Along with evangelism, missions had provided food, medical care, educational programs, and vocational development. Most of this institutional and benevolent work was called into question by the emphasis on direct evangelism which became prominent in the 1920s. As the "old" Mennonite Church leadership rejected the Social Gospel, there were sometimes conflicts between the mission board and Mennonite missionaries over "non-direct" mission programs.[37]

Daniel Kauffman's position represented the thinking of most "old" Mennonite leaders. Kauffman insisted that salvation was the primary motive for missionary work and could not be replaced by concerns for social uplift or civilization.[38] In speaking of the orphanage work in India, he said that such humanitarian work was "simply incidental to bringing the most necessary relief in the form of the Gospel of Christ."[39] J. B. Gehman, E. Ruth Charles, and others agreed with Kauffman that the primary motive of missionary work was to take the gospel to the lost, not to make the world a better place in which to live.[40]

Other "old" Mennonites rejected the Social Gospel's approach to missions without repudiating all social service. Writing from her perspective as a foreign volunteer, Mabel Groh affirmed that the primary burden of missionaries was to save souls and build them up in Christ. However, the work through which missionaries expressed their burden for souls included feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, enlightening the ignorant, and training the helpless to help themselves. True missionaries, according to Groh, rejoiced to see the outward benefits of their work—moral, social, intellectual, and economical changes—but never counted those results as the most important goals of mission work.[41]

Because of the "old" Mennonite reaction against the Social Gospel, there was little acceptable theology by which missionaries could justify their humanitarian efforts. Theron Schlabach has noted that "old" Mennonite missionaries were forced to develop other rationale for keeping benevolence alive:

> Crusading Mennonite Fundamentalists and their orthodoxy-minded allies by no means stopped evangelism by deeds. Had anyone asked the question bluntly, they would hardly have said they wanted to. Yet they did manage a shift toward greater priority for verbal evangelism and propositional truth, until the Mennonite Church's missionaries often had to stutter hard to say fundamentally why they should use God's time and money to feed the hungry or educate the unlettered.[42]

An example of an attempt to justify vocational training is an article from the *Gospel Herald* in 1923. A. C. Brunk, missionary in India, acknowledged that industrial work and instruction may create the appearance that missionaries were too concerned with "the things connected with the body." He also assured his readers that spiritual matters had first place in mission work. However, Brunk argued, industrial work had a place in missions to the extent that it contributed to spiritual growth and God's intention for humanity. God created the human body, and without labor the needs of the body would go unmet. The training the missionaries were supplying allowed people to find jobs and support themselves. Without work, people's spiritual lives would be put in jeopardy, for they would be tempted to steal to survive. In short, work provided moral and spiritual benefits, and was a legitimate mission activity.[43]

Summary

In response to the many changes and influences of the modern world, Mennonites at the beginning of the twentieth century were forced to redefine their relationship to society. The controversy over the Social Gospel brought to the forefront the issue of Mennonite social consciousness. Those who did affirm the Social Gospel agenda called for increased social outreach, yet did not often accept the theological liberalism associated with the Social Gospel movement.[44] Most "old" Mennonites of the 1920s, however, reacted against the Social Gospel emphasis on human potential and social reconstruction. Consequently, the "old" Mennonite Church experienced its own version of "The Great Reversal" in attitudes toward social service. However, an exclusive emphasis on verbal evangelism and a total separation from the world was not entirely acceptable for most Mennonites, either. The decade of the 1920s was a period in which "old" Mennonites carefully re-evaluated their involvements in politics, relief work, and institutional mission programs, attempting—sometimes successfully—to find middle ground between the "individual gospel" and the Social Gospel.

ENDNOTES

[1]This article examines the viewpoints of American Mennonites from the Mennonite Church tradition. General Conference Mennonite attitudes would parallel the MC views in many cases; however, only GC Mennonites who broke away from the "old" Mennonite Church in the first two decades of this century are represented in this study. "Old" is used to identify the Mennonite Church as a specific sub-group of Mennonites.

[2]George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 86.

[3]Marsden, pp. 73, 86, 88.

[4]Marsden, p. 84; see also p. 81.

[5]Marsden, p. 86.

[6]Theron Schlabach, *Gospel Versus Gospel* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), p. 112.

[7]Marsden, p. 92.

[8]Marsden, p. 91.

[9]Schlabach, p. 66.

[10]Lewis D. Appel, *Herald of Truth*, Feb. 23, 1905, pp. 58-59.

[11]Schlabach, p. 271. J. Lawrence Burkholder, in *The Problem of Social Responsibility from the Perspective of the Mennonite Church* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1989), argues that the breakdown of traditional isolationism and social separatism (due in part to their involvement in missions and higher education) confronted and continues to confront Mennonites with the problems of the world and their need for social responsibility.

[12]Schlabach, pp. 99, 108.

[13]The following three paragraphs will compile John Horsch's position from several articles and chapters on the Social Gospel: "Is the Church an End in Itself?" *Gospel Herald* 4.47 (Feb. 22, 1912), pp. 742-744; "Social Service and Mission Work," *Gospel Herald* 12.39 (Dec. 25, 1919), pp. 730-731; "The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the World," *Gospel Herald* 16.30 (Oct. 25, 1923), p. 609, and *Gospel Herald* 16.31 (Nov. 1, 1923), pp. 624-625; "The Social Gospel" in *Modern Religious Liberalism* (Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1924; also printed in 1920, 1921 & 1925), pp. 127-139; "The Social Gospel" in *The Mennonite Church and Modernism* (Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1924), pp. 58-61; and "The Great Factor for Social Improvement" in *The Failure of Modernism* (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1925), pp. 31-32.

[14]Horsch, "The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the World," p. 625.

[15]Horsch, "Social Service and Mission Work," p. 730.

[16]Horsch, *The Failure of Modernism*, p. 31.

[17]Allen B. Christophel, "The Kingdom of God," *Gospel Herald* 16.5 (May 3, 1923), p. 82.

[18]See E. J. Blough, "The Gain of the World, and the Loss of the Soul," *Gospel Herald* 18.19 (Aug. 6, 1925), pp. 380-381; Christophel, p. 82; C. F. Derstine, "A Heart to Heart Talk with the Church on a Vital Issue—Liberalism," *Gospel Herald* 13.26 (Sept. 23, 1920), pp. 506-507; J. B. Gehman, "God's Way of Salvation," *Gospel Herald* 14.41 (Jan. 12, 1922), pp. 802-803; Daniel Kauffman, "The Present Evil World," *Gospel Herald* 16.18 (Aug. 2, 1923), pp. 353, 368; Daniel Kauffman, "The Two Standards," *Gospel Herald* 15.36 (Dec. 7, 1922), pp. 690-691; Noah H. Martin, "Problems of Social Unrest," *Gospel Herald* 18.11 (June 11, 1925), pp. 234-235; Leander Smith, "The Power of the Gospel," *Gospel Herald* 15.27 (Oct. 5, 1922), pp. 514-515, 519; and W. B. Weaver, "The Message of the Church," *The Christian Exponent* 1.11 (May 23, 1924), pp. 170-171.

[19]Many of these progressives left the "old" Mennonite Church during the first two decades of the 1900s because of their struggles with official MC leadership. Several joined the more progressive General Conference Mennonites.

[20]A. E. Kreider, "The Gospel of God," *The Christian Exponent* 1.1 (Jan. 4, 1924), p. 10; also A. E. Kreider, "The World for Christ," *The Christian Exponent* 1.8 (Apr. 11, 1924), p. 118. Amos Kreider, a Goshen College graduate who taught there from 1917-1923, moved to Witmarsum Seminary at Bluffton, Ohio, when Goshen College closed for reorganization during the 1923-24 school year. Kreider was a staff member for the *Exponent*.

[21]Vernon Smucker, "Making Ideals Practical," *The Christian Exponent* 2.23 (Nov. 6, 1925), p. 357; I. R. Detweiler, "The Open Door," *The Christian Exponent* 1.2 (Jan. 18, 1924), p. 26; O. B. Gerig, "The Machine Era and The Simple Life," *The Christian Exponent* 1.6 (Mar. 14, 1924), p. 86; and Nellie A. Yoder, "Christianity in Society," *The Christian Exponent* 2.22 (Oct. 23, 1925), p. 342.

[22]J. E. Hartzler, "The Christian Church," *The Christian Exponent* 2.14 (July 3, 1925), p. 219. John Ellsworth Hartzler left his post as Goshen College president already in 1918, serving as president of Bethel College for 1920-21 and then as president of Witmarsum Seminary, 1921-31.

[23]W. W. Oesch, "Our Victorious Faith," *The Christian Exponent* 1.12 (June 6, 1924), p. 186.

[24]According to J. L. Burkholder, Mennonite voting practice since the American Revolution has been inconsistent. After World War I, however, there was a general "old" Mennonite withdrawal from the polls, encouraged by those who believed a total absence from the political order would make the conscientious objector stance appear more consistent. Elected office has been avoided. Before 1925, the only "old" Mennonite attempt to influence public opinion was a statement of the Mennonite peace position sent to President Wilson in 1921 by the Peace Problems Committee of the denomination. Burkholder, pp. 163-168.

[25]Kauffman, "The Present Evil World," p. 353.

[26]John H. Mosemann, "What is the Message of the Church?" *Gospel Herald* 17.16 (July 24, 1924), p. 338.

[27]Gehman, p. 803.

[28]Smucker, Vernon. "The Election," *The Christian Exponent* 1.23 (Nov. 7, 1924), pp. 355-356.

[29]O. B. Gerig, "The Christian's Relation to the State," *The Christian Exponent* 1.23 (Nov. 7, 1924), pp. 358-359.

[30]James Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), pp. 243-257; Burkholder, pp. 176-177; Schlabach, p. 123.

[31]Schlabach, p. 125.

[32]Schlabach, p. 123.

[33]Orie O. Miller, "The Missionary Phases of Our Relief Work," *Gospel Herald* 14.1 (Apr. 7, 1921), p. 20.

[34]Horsch, "Social Service and Mission Work," pp. 730-731.

[35]Daniel Kauffman, "Our Relief Commission," *Gospel Herald* 16.41 (Jan. 10, 1924), p. 830.

[36]Vernon Smucker, "Lest We Forget," *The Christian Exponent* 2.3 (Jan. 30, 1925), p. 35.

[37]Schlabach, pp. 127, 135.

[38]Daniel Kauffman, "Our Lord Jesus a Missionary," *Gospel Herald* 16.32 (Nov. 8, 1923), p. 661.

[39]Daniel Kauffman, "Our Relief Work," *Gospel Herald* 17.38 (Dec. 25, 1924), p. 753.

[40]Gehman, p. 802; E. Ruth Charles, "God's Gifts and the Mission Field," *Gospel Herald* 17.22 (Sept. 4, 1924), p. 473.

[41]Mabel Groh, "The Burden of the True Missionary," *The Christian Exponent* 2.5 (Feb. 27, 1925), p. 70.

[42]Schlabach, pp. 146-147.

[43]A. C. Brunk, "Should Missions Teach People Trades?" *Gospel Herald* 16.21 (Aug. 23, 1923), p. 420.

[44]Juhnke, p. 175.

An Der Molotschna

by Peter G. Epp
translated by Clara Dyck

Excerpt Three

Some fifteen hundred Mennonites are trekking from Prussia to the Molotschna valley—a children of Israel to the Promised Land. Several traditional Mennonite characteristics are clearly evident: they are an orderly people; each has his assigned task; each is encouraged to be industrious and frugal. They travel as families, where each member accepts his traditional role. And it is assumed that the community will act by consensus.

Epp is particularly good at details. For example, the family sits down to an evening meal and each of them is to peel his cooked potato. But mother with her quick fingers will first of all peel father's, then the youngest children's and finally her own. Another fine example of detail is Epp's description of making "Prips." (How vividly I remember both examples practiced in our Mennonite home in Canada many years later during my childhood.)

The trek includes life and death. Five babies are born, and a mother of four young children dies. And it is during the time of death that community is particularly important. It is a time for the community to sorrow, to recognize the transience of life, but also to support and sustain. Epp describes this profoundly moving experience of his people.

And then finally, after many days of travel, they see the Promised Land, the Molotschna valleys.

Slowly the train moves forward. A brief rest period at noon. The animals are fed and watered; the people have a snack. Their main meal will follow at night. Two horsemen ride ahead to find a suitable lodging place for the night. This is a problem that has to be solved daily, and that takes much forethought and care. There must be wells nearby, fuel for the many campfires, fodder for the animals to supplement the provisions they brought along. The local officials, particularly the police, are in charge at the rest stations and have the responsibility of supplying any assistance the Mennonites may need.

Their first night lodging is on a large market square, behind a Polish farm village. Their leaders have anticipated everything in advance; in order to avoid confusion, the long train, which ordinarily moves in one long line, now divides and moves into ten streets, along the ten rows that had been staked off earlier. Then they bed down in this manner: horses and cows at one side of the row of wagons, people on the other. This is what it looks like: in the first row of wagons horses and cows take the outside row, people the inside; the people of the second street bed down opposite those of the first; the second street is for animals; the third, for people again; this is how they alternate, always in such a way as to have the animals of each family on the other side of their wagons. Each family watches and cares for its animals. Only at night do they station watchmen in short distances from each other all around the camp. In less than half an hour the wagons have divided into streets and now the bedding down begins.

The moment the people hear the call, "Halt!" the wagons stop. The older people climb down, the younger ones jump off. The men and boys take care of the animals before anything else. The people cannot sit down to eat before the animals stand behind full cribs. The horses are tended to first of all. Adolescent boys unhitch the horses, take off their bridles and place comfortable leather halters around their necks. Meanwhile father and the grown-up sons prepare the cribs for fodder. The horses had been watered during the day, therefore they are not too thirsty now, only hungry. The whole family is delighted to see how the horses enjoy their fodder. Only now can they themselves enjoy their supper.

The women, too, have their chores. First of all they must milk the cows, even before they are fed. That milk which they do not need, they feed to the pigs before bedtime. All these preparations don't take long—very quickly each animal in that great number stands before its well-filled trough.

At the other side, where the families bed down, there is also much activity. Women and girls prepare the meal, but the men lay the fire: a small hole dug slantwise into the ground, somewhat more than handbreadth in depth; an iron tripod straddles the hole, on it they place either the frying pan or kettle. And what about the fuel for these many, many fires? The riders who rode ahead of the train to find suitable night accommodation, tell the village mayor that dry wood or else shrubbery will be needed. In order to avoid any misunderstanding or bartering they also state the exact price they are prepared to pay per bundle or armful, and how big an armful must be.

The populace is desperately poor; it is springtime, which follows upon a long winter, the time of harvest is far in the future, they have no means of

earning their livelihood—need announces its presence in many huts. So a small sum of money is most welcome. Everyone wants to bring whatever he has to the encampment himself, in order to feel the payment of the Kopecks into his hand. Eager searching starts on all the farmsteads; yards, gardens are rummaged through; every piece of wood is overturned—and then they come in droves with their bundles in their arms, pressed to their breasts, on their backs, in old sacks, in baskets, even a couple of wagons full of sawed up and split wood from the forest. They throw down their wood in two rows, as planned, and each receives his couple of Kopecks.

And when the wagons stop at that place in the evening, there is enough fuel at either side of the encampment for all; each family gets its supply from the nearest pile, as much as it needs—and soon 342 families, approximately 1500 persons sit at their campfires, each family at its own tripod on which the water kettle rests, while the tripod stands on an upturned box.

The others wash themselves in a huge iron washbasin, while mother and daughters are busy preparing the meal. Everyone quietly folds his hands for the ancient grace, before supper begins: "Come, Lord Jesus, be Thou our guest, and bless what Thou provided hast." And now they, too, can relax.

Each person peels his potato. This requires a certain dexterity, for the potatoes are hot. Mother is most adept at it, of course. While the others burn their fingers, she flicks it around so quickly that its hot surface scarcely touches her hand. But she doesn't peel the first potato for herself; she takes care of the smaller children first, then of father for his calloused work fingers slowed him down. In a flick she has cleaned a potato and it lies on father's plate, and she takes the potato he has started to peel. Then mother places an ample slice of ham on each plate; she pours the fat into a deep plate and sets it in the center of her family circle atop an upturned bowl. Now everyone cuts up his potato, sprinkles it with salt and with his fork dips the pieces into the communal plate of fat. This action, too, requires a certain kind of adroitness to land the piece of potato happily in one's mouth without dropping spots on one's clothes. The smallest children haven't learned this art yet, their hands are still too unsteady; mother dips some of the fat onto their plates for them. Mother forgets about herself until all the smallest children and father are busily eating. This is her nature, and you can't change it, she can't enjoy her food until every family member has some food on his plate.

But just as mother consistently thinks of her family (father remains a child in certain respects, one who has to be mothered constantly; that's the way mother likes it), so father, no matter how he relishes his food, always has his mind on his horses. They are at the other side of their wagon and, although he can't look into their trough from where he sits, he can tell precisely, by the sound, whether or not there is something left in their trough.

"Peter," he says, "take a look at the horses, if they have nothing left in their troughs, mix another portion so they will get enough, and then take a look at the cattle also."

And Peter, or Hans, or Isaak rises. To be sure, father had heard rightly: the trough is licked clean, didn't take those hungry horses long.

And how has the family made camp? In the dust of the ground, on the trampled grass? O no! Before they settle down, Johann or Peter or Papa brings a couple of man-sized blankets which they spread on the ground. They are made of a rough, closely woven material that can stand every kind of weather. One doesn't have to be careful with these blankets. They are so closely woven that rain cannot easily penetrate them. Dust and mud don't affect them and a bit of beating will get rid of that. They are called horse blankets for they were originally used to cover the horses during inclement weather to shield them against rain and cold. But their general usefulness was recognized, consequently every family now owns several of them. They don't belong in the house, of course. They are usually kept in the harness closet of the barn. They are indispensable on the field, and at times as at the present. The blankets all look the same, and all 342 families now sit on such blankets, eating the same kind of supper. But they still have fine delicacies coming: Peppernuts and oven-toasted Zwieback. And they have not forgotten about their thirst either: the smaller children get a cup of milk, fresh and warm, straight from the cow; the older children get Prips; mama, papa, Grandpapa and Grandmama get something special: genuine coffee made from real coffee beans.

Well, every reader knows the meaning of genuine coffee and how it fortifies and cheers up a person, how it rouses one's thinking and tongue to renewed energetic activity, and how it stimulates older people in particular, those with a headful of thoughts and experiences and a heart and soul full of memories. A cup of coffee activates all these, added to their plans for the future, to form a lively, very enjoyable time for all. But the younger generation that hasn't experienced very much yet, whose heads and souls haven't yet been filled with a great deal of serious spiritual input, cannot respect the effect of the coffee at all; the Prips is good enough for them, and then it doesn't cost anything either.

Prips? It is made of beautiful large carefully cleaned kernels of rye which have been thoroughly roasted on a baking pan in the oven, but not to the burning point—then these have been crushed to a fine powder between two flat stones. A portion of this pulverized rye is placed into the Prips kettle and then the kettle is filled with boiling water. After it steeps for a little while, it is poured into cups and looks very much like genuine coffee, but lacks the latter's aroma and noble effect. The young people think it's pretty good, but the old and wise ones find it disgusting.

The coffee grounds remain in the kettle when it is empty for this is the very thing that cost them money. Has it really retained no power at all so that one can readily pour it away? Let's test it—and more boiling water is poured into the kettle. The cups are filled once more. All those who know the meaning of genuine coffee, say: if you're going to serve coffee, then serve REAL coffee, not simply a substitute.

Tinchen or Mariechen begins washing and packing away the dishes while Mama and Papa are still sipping their coffee, and Johann or Heinrich tends to the animals.

And now they have to take care of the children. All ages are represented in this large flock. Most families are very large. It is taken for granted that childhood diseases take their annual toll. Few families have not lost one or more of their children during the course of the years. That is sad, to be sure, but it must be God's will to reduce the size of their families in this manner. It hurts

to have God take back these little children which He had first given; they are unharmed, however, when He takes them, for He immediately places them into eternal glory where they are free of human suffering once and for all time.

And after all, how could a mother possibly take care of so many children, along with all her other work? Well, her work is actually never finished; she is on her feet from dawn to dusk and her thoughts are continuously occupied with her family and household. Custom and habits, too, are a great help. Children born into this firm tradition are very pliable, like plants who are acclimated to a certain climate. And besides that, they don't all arrive at the same time. The first one may be six or seven years old by the time the third one arrives. A Mennonite boy or girl of six years is no longer helpless; they can be quite a help to father and mother in many respects and can understand instruction very well; they are able to watch younger sisters and brothers. As soon as mother calls her six-year-old daughter "my big girl" and father calls his six-year-old boy "my big boy" they try with all their might to justify the designation. And all of them are a little older when the newest arrives. The first day of their long, long journey seems unbearably long to them. Although Mennonite children have to learn early to sit still, it is tiring to sit still on a wagon the whole day long. They get a bit more attention in the evening after they have been washed and had their supper. They are allowed to play, within prescribed boundaries: they have to stay within the confines of their camp street, so that they can hear when father or mother calls. And soon loud laughter, jubilation, running, calling of seven to fourteen-year-olds is heard. The younger ones stay with their mother or older sister, and those above fourteen years deem themselves too sensible for such child's play.

But finally they've played enough. Tired out, each one drags himself to the family wagon. It's bedtime, and Mama or Tienchen have already prepared a sleeping place for them. It has turned dark; the watchmen have taken their places around the camp. An announcement is heard: there will be a sermon in the centre of the camp! It is only for the grown ups. Each family leaves someone at the wagon, for the children are already in bed. A large assembly gathers. *Aelteste* Warkentin will lead in evening devotions. He is standing on a short kitchen bench beside his wagon.

"At this time of our first night lodging place, we are all occupied with the thought: God has been with us this far. In deep gratitude we express this thought. The Lord has blessed us remarkably on this day. From a blue sky His sun shone warm and friendly upon us. He has given grace before the eyes of the governor of this province through which we are now travelling. He has disposed the hearts of the people of this area to be friendly to us. He has removed all hindrances from our way, as though He had sent His angel before us to make smooth our path. Therefore it is fitting that we not only feel our gratitude, but that we express it verbally as well: Praise to the Lord! the Almighty, the King of creation! O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation! All ye who hear, Now to His temple draw near. Join me in glad adoration!"

The *Aelteste* recites a line at a time, then the song leaders and the congregation sing: Praise to the Lord! who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth, Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth; Hast thou not seen How thy desires have been Granted in what He ordaineth? Praise to the Lord! who doth prosper thy work and defend thee, Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee; Ponder anew What the Almighty can do, If with His love He befriend thee! Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him! All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him! Let the Amen Sound from His people again, Gladly for aye we adore Him! Amen.

They all know this song, but perhaps they have not always felt and experienced the depth, the eternal vitality of these words. Doesn't it seem that the poet had written these words expressly for them?

It is already late when they sing the last stanza. The *Aelteste* continues to recite one line at a time, and they sing.

A brief closing prayer follows, and all these tired wanderers go to prepare a place of rest for themselves as well, a hard sleeping place—they have carefully packed away all their huge featherbeds, featherticks, wool blankets, down-filled pillows. They couldn't use those on their journey, for it would dirty and ruin them. They will use them again in their new homes, in real *Schlafbaenke.* During the journey they will all sleep on horse blankets, straw ticks, hay bundles, sacks filled with straw; they will cover themselves with old wool blankets that are not so good anymore, and with old overcoats and furs.

The congregation increases, as is customary, during the trek: three little girls and two boys, or, as the people laughingly say: three spanking new Russian gals and two spanking new Russian fellows. The health of the travellers is excellent; they are tolerating the journey much better than could have been expected. Only one person died, the young wife of Johann Epp, a mother of four children. She had been sick for a long time and had been asked whether she would not rather remain in Prussia and postpone her emigration. But she didn't want to hear of that. "Perhaps I will get well there," she had said. "Here I have to die; I want to go along, Johann, I want to go along."

Johann Epp is a pious man. He had a long, hard battle of it, slowly he came to a decision. So be it, he finally said. Naturally, the congregation had discussed the case. The general concensus was: It is right that we should honor the wish of this sick woman. Johann Epp felt surrounded and upheld by the general empathy. The sick woman received every humanly possible assistance during the journey, they tried to anticipate her every need, cared for and gave her every comfort as best they could. She was never left to herself; day and night someone stayed at her side. There were so many compassionate ones to take turns that it didn't become a burden for any one person.

Her husband suffered deeply. He struggled in vain to achieve peace and tranquillity. This up-and-down of her condition was such a torture for him that it sapped all his physical strength. He was unable to think anymore. But he didn't have to think either; friends, neighbors did all his work for him, he needed only to care for his sick wife.

During the third week of their journey it became evident that her condition was hopeless. They buried her near their camp, in the cemetery of a Russian village. They did not continue their journey on that day, for it was to be dedicated to her memory. Perhaps death is the most important event in the life

of a pious Mennonite. He is not to shrug off the thought, is to nurture it; he is to allow himself to be permeated with the awareness of the futility of all earthly things, and with the thought that the actual life only begins with death. And the deceased one in the coffin is the best reminder of the end that awaits everyone, no matter how firmly he is presently rooted to the earth.

The age-old custom must not be neglected, not even on this journey. They must not permit themselves to remove the dead one from the eyes of the living as quickly as possible. No indeed, there is no travelling on this day of burial. It is to be a day of prayer and repentance, a festivity and day of remembrance. They make their preparations in the forenoon, doing everything according to ancient custom. They have to ask permission of the authorities to bury the deceased in a lonely corner of the local Russian cemetery, for she will be a stranger, resting here. But it is natural that this transaction cannot be finalized without the obligatory bartering and gifts. Our friend, Peter Langemann takes care of this. Others dig the grave. The carpenters have had the forethought to pack their tools and place them where they can be easily reached, and so they construct a coffin. They make it in the customary way and with their customary care, just as they would have done in their workshop at home, although they must do without the workbench that they are accustomed to.

Mennonite coffins do not have squared ends, but octagonal ones, so that a finished coffin has eight sides. The lower part, in which the deceased one rests is lower than the lid, and has three sides. The lid of the coffin has five sides and is fitted onto the lower part of the coffin by means of round cones. The uppermost side consists of one narrow board and protrudes a little on both ends. These protruding ends serve as handles for lifting the lid. The head end of the coffin is considerably wider than the foot. The coffin is generally painted black and varnished. But this is only possible when the burial takes place on the third or fourth day after death. On this journey all preparations must be made on that one day. There will be no time for the paint to dry. Therefore the coffin will be covered with a black cloth. At home they trimmed the sides and headpiece of the coffin with all kinds of decorations such as pious verses on white silver paper. The carpenters say this will not be possible this time, but they have not reckoned with the inventive Gerhard Wiens. Gerhard Wiens is a merchant. He ran a small shop in the old country where he sold those hundreds of small items that are necessary in a Mennonite household. Gerhard Wiens knew precisely what was seemly for a Mennonite family. What is more, he had a keen sense of how to dare to introduce any little new item into Mennonite circles from time to time, in such a way as not to disturb the firm old custom and the seemly character of Mennonite life, or shatter or endanger, and yet in a way that would bring a somewhat new activity into the life of the community.

When the carpenters and friends thought that the coffin would have to be lowered into the ground without the customary decorations, Gerhard Wiens stood there with a cardboard box in his hands which contained everything one could wish for to decorate the coffin. Wreaths, palm branches, kneeling and standing angels and mottos such as: "Rest in peace!" "Farewell!" "How quietly they rest!" "Blest are they, who die in the Lord, for their works shall follow after them"—all these were constructed of stiff silver paper so that it could be fastened to the coffin by means of small nails.

The softest, finest and cleanest wood shavings were carefully gathered up to form the last mattress for the deceased. That concluded the work of the carpenters. The rest was woman's work. Carefully and lovingly they spread out wood shavings in the coffin, fluffed them up in order that there should not be any lumps. They spread a white sheet on top of this. The pillow, too, was filled with these wooden chips and covered with a white pillow slip. They decorated the deceased one. They placed a white dress over her deathshroud which she had sewn for herself some years prior to her death, as is the custom. The women sewed her burial dress of a fine white material, exactly as they had always done. They put light, low shoes on her feet.

So here she lay now, the deceased one, combed, decorated, quite as beautifully and correctly as she would have at home. She herself, as the women said, looked so beautiful, so young and pure "as an angel." They were happy to decorate her, as though they were doing it for her eternal glory where there is no wilting, no fading, rather than for her grave.

Now the children are carefully washed and dressed in clean clothes so that they, too, will look "like angels" when they sit beside the coffin later on. Her husband, too, will wear his Sunday clothes. The decorating is finished by noon. The funeral service begins about an hour after the noon meal, for the animals must first be taken care of. The coffin rests on two trestles beside the hayrack that had been the last home of the deceased here on earth. The husband and children of the deceased, and other close relatives, and the *Aelteste* and *Ohms*, sit beside the coffin, and all around them, on all sides, sit, stand, on wagons, beside wagons—the guests, the entire camp. They have all gathered here in order that their hearts be deeply and thoroughly softened.

And the *Aelteste* is preaching so beautifully, so touchingly; it is so easy, so sweet to cry under the flow of his words. And they sing the old funeral hymns: "The sin-wearied soul seeks a home, seeks a rest; Whose pinions will shelter the spirit oppressed. Does life have no source of a freedom, or peace Where sin and its tempting forever will cease? Peace eternal! None can be found! Since earth has no rest for the soul here still bound. Peace eternal! None can be found! Since earth has no rest for the soul here still bound."

Another of the *Ohms* speaks after the *Aelteste* and then they sing: "O glorious home! At last to reach thy portals, At last to see earth's shadow fade away! A stranger here within the vale of sorrow,—At last the bitter trials no more dismay! No more to weary feet earth's dust is clinging, No more the marks of toil the face can mar! What glory then to hasten to His presence, Who greets the weary pilgrim from afar!"

And after the first *Ohm,* a second speaks briefly and then they sing: "A haven of rest awaits God's children: O wand'ring pilgrim, welcome home! Beneath sin's fetters thou art sighing, And in earth's shadows thou dost roam. Look to the Lamb who leadeth gently, Exceeding joys and faith will send thee; Oh, leave thy cares and come to Him! This weary battle soon is over; There dawns a day which endeth never; A glorious light that ne'er grows dim!"

And finally a third *Ohm* speaks and they sing an extraordinarily beautiful

hymn in conclusion; it is a very sad hymn, but that is precisely why it is so beautiful, because it is so sad. It speaks of the deceased one in her coffin, pale in her white death shroud, no more pain, no more sorrow, that's how I see you now, most faithful mother, in my silent sorrow! Now we are carrying you to your last rest. Slumber sweetly in the cool ground, until you awaken on resurrection day!

This song and short prayer ends the service. Now they go to the cemetery for the burial. Two staves are pushed under the coffin, one at either end. Four men lift the coffin onto the wagon. It is a simple board wagon from which the sideboards have been removed. A black cloth is spread over the floor of the wagon. Two men lead the horses at the halter, one on either side; the pallbearers walk beside the wagon, two on each side, in order to support the coffin if necessary; the husband, children and nearest relatives follow behind the coffin. The father carries the smallest babe on his arm, just as he had held it on his lap during the service. Then follow the *Aelteste*, the *Ohms*, the deacon, the song leaders, and finally the guests.

They all gather around the grave. The pallbearers lift the coffin from the wagon with the staves and carefully lower it. Once more, for the last time, the lid is lifted for a final farewell; the *Aelteste* speaks another word, the last blessing. The carriers lower the lid and press the cones down into the lower part of the coffin. The lid will never again be lifted, unless it lifts itself, perchance on the great day of resurrection—which is not at all impossible—before the coffin rots away to dust. Two double ropes are drawn in under the coffin; one man is at either of the four ends, two men at each side of the grave. The four men lift the coffin slightly, two other men pull out the staves, then it is slowly and carefully lowered into the grave and the ropes drawn back up. Meanwhile six men have fetched shovels from the wagon. They shovel the earth that is heaped up at either side of the grave onto the coffin. This is the last act of love that they can do for the deceased, and it is customary for as many as possible to take part. Every two or three minutes one of the nearby young men steps to one of the shovelers and quietly takes the shovel from his hand, so that, alternately, he, too, can add a few shovelfuls of earth to the grave. The grave mound is carefully heaped up and pounded down firmly with the flat surface of the shovels. That concludes all the festivities. Only now the deceased one has finally and conclusively left the circle of the living who now have to return to everyday life.

Slowly the guests return to the camp. There the women who had remained behind for this purpose have already prepared the afternoon coffee for the funeral guests. It is an ancient custom that the guests gather in the home of the mourners once more for coffee when they return from the cemetery. The mood of this coffee hour has its own very special tone—even tones are strictly prescribed in the Mennonite world. It is of course serious, but not depressed. Eyes are not damp anymore. Women and girls have stopped crying. They have cried their fill earlier, when they sang all those beautiful hymns and when the *Ohms* spoke so movingly. The conversation is carried on in subdued tones. But one doesn't talk about things pertaining to death anymore. The four children—for what would a man do with four children—have been committed to the care of friends and relatives, therefore they will be taken care of in the best possible way.

Johann Epp stands there, looking around helplessly and lost. A terrible sense of fatigue invades him; he holds on to the edge of a wagon.

"I can't go on any longer," he says. "I have no strength left. I am unable to think." Despairingly his eyes glide over his three wagons. "All those things, the horses, cattle, sheep and chickens—who will take care of all that? I just can't do it, I'm thinking only of her."

The men: "You don't have to do anything, Johann, you don't have to stir one finger; we will take care of everything. You just think of your dear Trudchen, of nothing else. Come, go to bed!"

They help him climb on the hayrack; relieved, he lies down on the bed the women have prepared for him. He has only the one desire, to lie quietly and think of his Trudchen and of the future that he wanted to build with her at the Molotchnaja. He sleeps briefly, quietly, deeply, peacefully, and dreams a dream that is more refreshing and comforting than that half-awake thinking, a dream where the terrible reality doesn't exist.

* * * * *

In another one-and-a-half days the wagons stop, just before evening, at a deep precipice. It has the appearance of a high, sometime steep, sometime gentle slope at a low-lying sea, or like a ridge at the entrance to a valley. The wagons stop where the slope begins and turns south. The announcement flies through the train: We have arrived; we just have to go down this slope yet, down there lies our new little homeland!

The *Aelteste* stands on his wagon; he is in a festive mood, points along the straight line with his hand.

"See, down there is the little river Tokmatschka, that's where our land starts; it is our northern border. And over there, in the Molotschnaja valley the new mother colony will be founded."

In silent reverence the settlers look down into the sea of grass. The physical eye sees a piece of monotonous steppe. We can only guess at that which the soul's eye of these mothers and fathers sees, at the thoughts, hopes and prayers that fill their hearts.

Now the sun is sending its last rays onto their land, from the west, but in the morning, when it will rise again in the east, then they will enter the promised land—on the Molotschnaja.

Book Reviews

Theron F. Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation: Mennonites and Amish in Nineteenth Century America.* The Mennonite Experience in America, vol. 2. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988. Pp. 415. ($19.95—paperback)

This second of a projected four volume series on the Mennonite experience in America begins circa 1790 and carries the story to 1890. The account opens with a review of the several major Mennonite migratory streams in Europe. These are important, for they became shapers of Mennonite denominational patterns in America. Migration is also an important part of the American story, especially during the years this volume treats, and Schlabach tells the story with considerable color and detail. Between 1790 and 1890 Mennonites migrated to the midwest both from Europe and from the early settlements in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland, and north into Canada. The migrations to Upper Canada (Ontario) which took place around the turn of the nineteenth century are mentioned only briefly since the policy of the series is to focus on the United States.

The move westward following 1800 was continuously spurred by the need for land at affordable prices. Both the place of emigration and the time of immigration tended to result in variations of practice which sometimes caused tensions that eventually resulted in schisms, mergers, and the formation of old orders. This is well documented as Schlabach tells the story of the Amish Mennonite immigration from Alsace, beginning circa 1830 and stretching into the 1860s. It made a profound impact over the decades, altering the shape of both the Amish and the Mennonite Church (MC).

Differences between the early Amish settlers in Pennsylvania and the new Amish Mennonite immigrants in Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska and elsewhere were brought to the fore in a series of ministers' conferences beginning in 1862. After a dozen years the more traditionally minded withdrew (or still declined to participate) from the conferences, and soon were designated as Old Order Amish. The moderating Amish Mennonites adopted Sunday Schools, meetinghouses, and over a period of half a century gradually amalgamated with the Mennonite Church (MC). The majority of Mennonites (MC) west of the Mississippi stem from these Amish origins.

By the mid-nineteenth century stresses caused by Americanization were also straining the unity of the church, and Schlabach gives an interesting and readable account of this process. In response to new patterns of organization in America, the young school teacher John Oberholtzer in eastern Pennsylvania pressed for a constitution and the keeping of minutes among the Franconia Mennonites. One of the reasons was that he saw this as a way to protect the rights of the individual—again a new American emphasis. About a fourth of the members and leaders in the conference chose to support Oberholtzer as his group divided from the traditionalists in 1847. Much earlier, in 1812, the Reformed Mennonites ruptured the unity in Lancaster Conference as they withdrew. Similarly, Jacob Stauffer and his followers had founded a new group in 1845. American revivalism met a need for other Mennonites, and at mid-century Daniel Hoch of Ontario and William Gehman in Pennsylvania led groups that responded to this influence. In a few decades they were joined by followers of Daniel Brenneman in Indiana and Solomon Eby in Ontario in forming the Mennonite Brethren in Christ church.

Schlabach uses the theme of humility as a central focus for describing the religious understanding of nineteenth century Mennonites. Sandra Cronk has similarly used the theme of *Gelassenheit* (selflessness, yieldedness) for describing the religious stance of the Old Order Amish and the Old Order Mennonites. ["Gelassenheit: The Rites of the Redemptive Process in Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonite Communities," Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1977] Cronk suggests that *Gelassenheit* represented the refraction of the Anabaptist emphasis on suffering through a crystal of Pietism in the American context where persecution was absent. Schlabach concurs that humility was a common theme in Pietism, but holds that Mennonites applied humility to life styles and behavior rather than to the inner attitudes necessary to salvation. He relies heavily on the writings of the early minister Christian Burkholder for his thesis that humility is the key word for understanding the Mennonite ethos of the nineteenth century. Burkholder wrote as Mennonites were being drawn into the newly formed River Brethren and United Brethren in Christ, both of which were direct responses to pietistic revivalism. The New Nation was also in the process of formation, and humility, as Schlabach notes, contrasted markedly with the theme of the Righteous Empire that drove much of American religious activism. The keynote of humility seems least satisfactory in the summary of chapter 5 (p. 140) where it appears to this reviewer that the attempt to apply it is too broad.

The arrival of large numbers of Mennonites from Russia in the 1870s, the unfolding of their institutions and the establishment of missions, is a major part of the nineteenth century story recounted by Schlabach. Not only was it the largest immigration of Mennonites at one time, it also elicited the cooperation of Mennonites and Amish already established in America. While the earlier Mennonite immigrants were of Swiss-South German origin, the Mennonites coming from Russia traced their origins to Anabaptism in the Netherlands and North Germany. Furthermore, under the terms of their immigration to Russia beginning in 1789, they had created exclusive, autonomous, largely self-governing Mennonite communities. Schlabach looks briefly at the experience of the Mennonites in Russia,

including their establishment of flourishing institutions and the beginnings of the Mennonite Brethren in response to a pietistic revival movement led by a German itinerant evangelist named Eduard Wuest. In the United States the church Mennonites (main group) chose to affiliate with the recently formed General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, and were soon taking a leadership role.

Nineteenth century Mennonites, whether of Dutch-North German or Swiss-South German origin, were not without their celebrative occasions. Schlabach writes interestingly of expressive musical and other activities of Mennonites, often documented from critical accounts of persons who left the group for an alternate type of piety. Weddings were apparently celebrated with great gatherings that included feasting, dancing, and drinking.

As the century advanced, voices within the churches began to question these activities. The General Conference Mennonites frowned on *Leichtsinnigkeit* (frivolity or light-mindedness) as illustrated by a ruling in Oberholtzer's Eastern District which authorized congregations to discipline members for attending a place whose main purpose was "foolishness" (p. 61). What activities were appropriate also became a testing ground between community-oriented conservatives and institutional progressives in the Mennonite Church. Sunday schools were pitted against Sunday visiting. In many communities the progressives won, and actions passed by an Indiana ruling in 1897 typify many in the Mennonite Church (MC) in the next several decades: "that our people refrain from such amusements as croquet, baseball, birthday parties; also from questionable places such as pool rooms, race horses, etc." (p. 63). This ruling does not, of course, sound "progressive" to late twentieth century readers. But they were attempting to redefine and reshape piety.

A century later, in Lancaster County, it is astounding to note that the community-oriented conservatives (the Old Order Mennonites and the Old Order Amish) have increased ten-fold and thirty-fold respectively, while the progressives have increased five-fold.

There is much more in the book. Furthermore, Schlabach's initial manuscript is said to have been twice the length of this published volume. I hope that some day we will have opportunity to read all of it.

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Leo Driedger. *Mennonite Identity in Conflict*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988. Pp. 237.

Leo Driedger, professor of sociology at the University of Manitoba, is a senior member of the small group of professional sociologists who are concerned with utilizing their academic skills in the service of the Mennonite heritage. During the thirty-year span of his professional career, Driedger has been a prolific author, listing in the bibliography of *Mennonite Identity in Conflict* twenty-eight articles of which he is the sole or primary author (plus one in which Alan Anderson is identified as primary author). Driedger has recently authored three books: *Ethnic Canada: Identities and Inequalities* (an edited anthology, 1987), *Mennonite Identity in Conflict* and *The Ethnic Factor: Identity in Diversity* (1989). In most of his work, Driedger has focused on issues related to ethnicity in the North American context. Among his significant contributions have been his creative utilization of the sociological tradition in descriptions and analyses of a broad range of Mennonite social experiences.

Mennonite Identity in Conflict presents Driedger's mature reflections on insights and observations gleaned from the latter period of his long professional career as a Mennonite sociologist. The book is a collection of previously published articles ("scenes"), selected and revised for this edition, framed in new introductory and concluding statements which suggest integrating themes. As in much of his work, in this book Driedger relies upon the work of a variety of other social scientists for the theoretical framework which he uses to interpret the data he presents. In *Mennonite Identity in Conflict* he begins with the suggestion that Mennonites may be fruitfully considered to belong to the "middleman" type of minority group as described by Pierre van den Berghe in *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (1981). He concludes with insights rooted in the "conflict" perspective of Simmel, Coser, *et al.*, noting issues specific to the Mennonites in an "identity-accommodation dialectic" which is common to the "middleman minority."

Driedger argues in chapter 1, which introduces this perspective, that Mennonites, like Jews, Armenians and others of the "middleman minority" type, are voluntary immigrants who have established culturally enclosed communities and maintained strong extended family networks. But their membership in the petty bourgeoisie social class and their political powerlessness have left them in perpetually precarious circumstances. The heirs of the Anabaptist tradition, additionally, have found themselves religiously "in-between" since they were "neither Protestant nor Catholic" (Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism: Neither Protestant nor Catholic*, 1973). The sense of identity for the Mennonites as "middleman minority" has been provided by a "sacred canopy" (Berger, 1967) which is constructed by a particular theology, community, culture, and place.

The "conflict in identity" for the "middleman" type comes with the changed religious, economic, and political circumstances which accompany urbanization (chapter 2). In the main body of the book (chapters 3 through 12) Driedger presents data concerning several components of the Mennonite experience of this conflict in identity: theological changes (chapter 3); patterns of migration (chapter 4); tensions between individualism and the community (chapter 5); the intrusion of bureaucracies (chapter 6) and large corporations (chapter 7) into the sheltered communities; struggles related to urban mission endeavors (chapter 8); and changed patterns of kinship and social networks (chapters 9-11). These and other changes inevitably confront the "middleman minority" with a series of conflicts which constitute an "identity-accommodation dialectic" (chapter 13).

In support of these general theses, Driedger cites a variety of types of data, all of which are readily accessible to the general reader. Data include biographical sketches, community studies, and surveys (which are summarized in tables and statistics no more complex than percentages, except in chapter 10 where Pearson's r is added).

Among the many strengths of this book are Driedger's exemplary use of a "sociological imagination" in linking personal and group identity to the larger issues of the social, economic, and political context; the host of insights which are suggested by Driedger in his application of a great variety of sociological concepts to a broad range of Mennonite social experiences; the case studies and survey data which add to our stock of information about Mennonites past and present; and the ten pages of bibliographic "references" which offer access to the theoretical concepts and empirical data upon which he draws in his work.

There are problems, of course, in attempting to organize previously published studies under a new conceptual framework. Linkages between the "middleman minority" model and each subsequent chapter are suggested in chapter 1 and connections between an "identity-accommodation dialectic" and most of chapters 3 through 12 are suggested in the concluding chapter. But articles 3 through 12 in fact contain no internal references to the "middleman" thesis and they include little direct utilization of the "identity-accommodation dialectic" as an interpretive framework. The articles, then, are presented as illustrative "scenes" rather than as components of a tightly structured argument. A collection of articles such as this suffers, too, from redundant introductions to related materials such as the history of Anabaptism and the sociology of Peter Berger and other theorists upon whom Driedger draws.

The book suffers from the stylistic malaise of repeated utilization of the "sociologese" which characteristically afflicts sociological writing (including this review!). The symptoms appear to be most acute when the author works in the tradition of Parsonian functionalism. On page 23, for example, we read that

> In this volume we shall assume that there is a constant dialectic or struggle between stability and change, between integration and differentiation. Indeed, we are aware that individuals, groups, communities and nations have a strong urge to integrate and survive, which if it becomes too successful can become dysfunctional. Too much concentration on egointegration (egocentrism), too much concern for group solidarity (ethnocentrism, clannishness), too much emphasis on community survival (segregation), and too much glorification of the nation (hypernationalism) can be harmful. On the other hand, those who cannot find a stable niche, an identity of their own, succumb to the ravages of change in such forms as anomie and normlessness, loneliness, detachment from others, distrust, and community disintegration.

I was bothered, too, by a series of editorial lapses such as "tenant" instead of "tenet" (p. 17), "complimentary" instead of "complementary" (p. 145), "benefactors" instead of "beneficiaries" (p. 43 and 204), and disagreements in number between subject and verb (e.g., ". . . solidarity in cities exist . . .", p. 188). Responses to his repeated (but inconsistent) use of "I" and "we" in referring to himself as author will vary with personal tastes as will sensitivities to his use of the amoeba (p. 47) and "a bedraggled, soaked gopher who had just escaped his flooded hole" (p. 45) as metaphors for various aspects of the Mennonite experience. One might wonder, as well, about the appropriateness of "middleman" as a concept for analyzing a tradition which includes more than one gender and about the adequacy of an analysis of conflicts in Mennonite identity which is limited to the North American context.

The book concludes with an observation and a question: "If in this modern age Mennonites seek to continue their distinctive Neither-Catholic-Nor-Protestant identity quest, these dialectics and conflicts will surely continue. Or perhaps, modern Mennonites will no longer wish to be distinctive in the middle?" (p. 208). Surely this is an important question and Driedger has done us all a good service by suggesting some useful ways to frame the issues in asking and answering this question. His work merits contemplation and response.

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C. P. Toews, Heinrich Friesen, Arnold Dyck. *The Kuban Settlement*. Trans. Herbert Giesbrecht. Winnipeg: CMBC Publications and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1989. Pp. 93. ($9.00 Canadian—paperback)

From 1945 to 1965, the Ehemalige Schüler der Chortitzer Zentralschule organization (Former Students of the Chortitza Secondary School), under the rubric Echo-Verlag and the leadership of Arnold Dyck, published a series of 14 small volumes of Mennonite history. In 1987 the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society decided to arrange for the translation of the series into English. *The Kuban Settlement*, volume 9 in the original series, is the first of the translations to appear.

The volumes in the Echo series are not scholarly works but eyewitness, personal accounts of sometimes obscure episodes of Russian Mennonite history. The Kuban volume originally appeared in 1953 and now has been translated by Herbert Giesbrecht, librarian at Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. Giesbrecht himself has family roots in the Kuban settlement.

In addition to a clear translation that required some knowledge of Russian in addition to German, the translator provided an excellent preface reviewing the historical context of the events described in the book and commenting on other source materials on the Kuban settlement. The book itself covers the Kuban settlement from its beginning in about 1862 as a refuge for Mennonite Brethren persecuted by the Kirchliche establishment to its dissolution in the 1917-1945 period.

The photographs of the original 1953 volume have been appropriately supplemented from the holdings of Canadian Mennonite archives and of the translator Herbert Giesbrecht. Not all of the photos from the original were included (perhaps because of difficulty in reproducing them clearly); it might have been better to include these to maintain continuity with the German original. Many general readers will no doubt turn to the translated Echo volumes for stories on specific families and events and will be hindered by the lack of an index. This is a lack that can be remedied in future volumes.

We eagerly await the rest of the translated Echo series, which have an excellent model to follow in Herbert Giesbrecht's translation of *Die Kubaner Ansiedlung*. The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society is to be commended for its initiative in the Echo translation project.

John D. Thiesen

W. R. Estep, *Religious Liberty: Heritage and Responsibility.* Cornelius H. Wedel Historical Series, vol. 3. North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1988. Pp. 88. ($6.00—paperback)

Bethel College and the Mennonite Library and Archives of North Newton, Kansas, serve their denomination and the larger Christian family in many ways, but none more profoundly than by sponsoring a number of lectures each year which inform, stimulate and challenge those who attend. Among the best of these various presentations by eminent scholars and citizens are the annual Menno Simons Lectures, which, fortunately, are now published as a part of the Cornelius H. Wedel Historical Series, thus manifoldly increasing the audience for these occasions. The 1987 Menno Simons Lectures, contained in this volume, continue the high quality of intellectual and spiritual fare characteristic of this series.

William R. Estep, Distinguished Professor of Church History at the world's largest theological seminary (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas), brings his considerable learning to bear on the topic of the American heritage of religious liberty. This slim volume contains the five lectures he presented in the Menno Simons series. Estep's purpose is to put into historical context the struggle for religious freedom in this country. His thesis is that those Christians in what the British call the Free Church tradition (e.g., Mennonites, Quakers, Brethren, and Baptists) became the channels by which the concepts of voluntarism, religious liberty, and the limitations of the state were transmitted to a nation in the process of being born. However, overarching both scholarly purpose and thesis is Estep's concern as a Christian believer living in the United States that the historic American understanding of religious liberty and its corollary, the separation of church and state, is currently under attack in what he describes as a "crisis of faith" concerning the benefits of freedom itself.

Estep develops his theme and articulates his concern with an initial chapter on this crisis of faith in which he sees America's experiment in religious liberty coming under increasing fire, particularly from a number of those in the very evangelical community which helped establish the tradition and which stands to lose the most should it be abandoned. He leads off his first chapter by giving a number of striking examples of that which he speaks. The most startling of these is probably the comment made by W. R. Criswell, pastor of the influential First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, who, in a statement that would have made his Baptist forebears shudder, declared on the CBS Evening News in August, 1984, "I believe the notion of the separation of church and state was the figment of some infidel's imagination." (p. 3) The ensuing chapters carefully delineate the quest for religious liberty in the Anglo-American world from the Reformation through the Revolutionary War era.

Chapter Two outlines the contribution to this quest by the Anabaptists, especially by the often neglected figure of Balthasar Hubmaier (d. 1528), an early Anabaptist martyr. As Estep correctly points out, Hubmaier's ideas flowed into several streams of the Radical Reformation, including the Hutterites, Mennonites, and, later, the Baptists. It was the shared Anabaptist consensus concerning religious liberty and church and state that kept these ideals alive until later embraced and popularized by the English Baptists. Estep's next chapter, entitled "The English Connection," carefully demonstrates the link between continental Anabaptism and the beginnings of the Baptist movement in England in the seventeenth century, a link which included the important loop of religious freedom which constituted a part of this ideological chain. Chapter Four shows how the idea of religious liberty was transplanted from English to American shores, especially to the luxuriant religious soil of Rhode Island colony. As Estep points out, Rhode Island (and not Massachusetts) under the leadership of sometime Baptist Roger Williams (d. 1683) and resolute Baptist John Clarke (d. 1676) became the prototype of the future American republic, especially in matters of civil liberties, religious freedom and separation of church and state. Estep's concluding chapter focuses on the Revolutionary War era when Baptists such as Isaac Backus (d. 1806) in New England and John Leland (d. 1841) and the Baptist General Committee in Virginia joined hands with rationalistic scholar-politicians like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison to write the concept of religious liberty into the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. In so doing, these individuals took part in what one church historian insightfully described as "one of the two most profound revolutions which have occurred in the entire history of the church." (p. 82) In the final two pages of this concluding chapter, Estep returns to his concern that the concept of religious freedom is now under challenge in America. This is especially true, he believes, in connection with the principle of separation of church and state, which he correctly observes is absolutely necessary in order to preserve religious liberty and avoid returning to previous practices of mere toleration, or worse.

Estep raises important and profound questions for Christians in America, and indeed for all Americans, to ponder. What are the reasons, biblical and rational, for religious liberty? What are its benefits? What is the best way to establish and retain religious freedom? And finally, what are the primary dangers in America today to the maintenance of the kind of full-blown religious liberty for which the early Anabaptists, Baptists and Quakers suffered and died? Christians need to give immediate and serious attention to these questions because the alternatives are grim.

Those in the Anabaptist tradition in particular should be profoundly grateful for published lectures such as found in this volume. Given human history and human nature, there can never be enough of this kind of exposition!

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