Nonresistant or Pacifist?
The Peace Stance of the Conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites, 1874-1945

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites, who first came to Canada in 1874, were committed to absolute pacifism. This commitment—one of the basics of their faith—caused major tensions with the host society, notably in times of war.

In this thesis I investigate three kinds of resources, each offering a different perspective on the pacifist conviction of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites. The first consists of three migration accounts; the second includes six sermons; the third is a unique set of minutes of the *Ältestenrat*—the Council of Elders—which record the deliberations of the church leaders who met with government officials to negotiate the alternative service program for conscientious objectors during World War II.

The documents demonstrate that the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites were not socially or politically engaged pacifists but that their commitment to absolute pacifism was an integral part of their overall understanding of being Christian.

. . . according to the pure teaching of our Lord Jesus in the New Testament we are forbidden to take revenge, and in the spirit of the gospel, which is a spirit of peace, we are likewise forbidden to use any sword, weapon, or gun against our enemies.

Ältester Johannes Wiebe, *Confession of Faith of the Mennonites* (1881)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been interested in the life and history of the Mennonites, particularly the so-called "Russian Mennonites," as long as I can remember. These are my people, although I have never lived in the Mennonite colonies on the Russian steppes, where the *Kruschkje*, the pears, were sweeter, the nightingales sang more beautifully, and the moon shone brighter than anywhere else in the world—as my parents, Victor and Elisabeth Kliewer, nee Woelk, reminded my siblings and me even when they had lived in Canada more than half their lives. Both are now deceased, but I would like to express my appreciation for their continuing inspiration.

More immediately related to this thesis, I would like to acknowledge the lively conversations I have been privileged to have with my thesis advisor, Royden Loewen, Chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg. We have spent many hours discussing Mennonites, *Kanadier* Mennonites, conservative Mennonites, and Mennonite nonresistance, as well as topics related to immigration and the writing of social history in general. These have been stimulating times, and I very much appreciate his insights, his critiques, and his unfailing encouragement to see this project through.

Likewise, I am grateful for the perspectives and advice of many other knowledgeable scholars and friends, particularly the archivists at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Alf Redekopp and Conrad Stoesz, as well as David Schroeder, Lawrence Klippenstein, Adolf Ens, John J. Friesen, Hans Werner, and William Schroeder. All offered valuable insights as the thesis developed.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge the contribution of my wife, Waltraud, in giving me the freedom to concentrate on this interesting and challenging research project but also for offering her insights, critiques, and encouragement during many conversations, even while reminding me to keep my studies in some kind of balance with everyday life.

ABBREVIATIONS

BMC Bergthaler Mennonite Church

CGR *Conrad Grebel Review*

CMBS Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1310 Taylor Avenue, Winnipeg

CMC Chortitzer Mennonite Church

CMRC Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee (of the *Kanadier* Mennonites)

CMU Canadian Mennonite University, 500-600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg

CO Conscientious Objector

GAMEO *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (http://www.gameo.org)

GC General Conference (Mennonite Church)

JMS *Journal of Mennonite Studies*

KG Kleine Gemeinde (Evangelical Mennonite Church after 1952)

MB/MBC Mennonite Brethren/Mennonite Brethren Church

MC Mennonite Church

MCC Mennonite Central Committee

MCCC Mennonite Central Committee (Canada)

MHC Mennonite Heritage Centre, located on the South Campus of Canadian Mennonite University, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg

MHL Mennonite Historical Library, located on the South Campus of Canadian Mennonite University

MQR *Mennonite Quarterly Review*

OCMC Old Colony Mennonite Church (also: Reinländer Mennonite Church)

RMC Reinländer Mennonite Church (also: Old Colony Mennonite Church)

SMC Sommerfelder Mennonite Church

GLOSSARY

Ältestenrat. Council of the elders or bishops; also called *Ältestenkomitee*, Committee of elders. The Council emerged at the onset of World War II to coordinate the *Kanadier* Mennonites' responses to the impact of the War, especially with regard to military conscription. The *Ältestenrat* included leaders of the Reinländer (Old Colony), Sommerfelder, Bergthaler, Chortitzer, Brudertaler, Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman), and Kleine Gemeinde.

Ältester. Literally, "the oldest" or "elder." The highest elected church leader in traditional Russian Mennonite communities; often translated as "bishop" or "elder," although because of contextual associations neither term quite does justice to the position. In this thesis the term *Ältester* (plural: *Ältesten*) is used.

Conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites. Those members and descendants of the *Kanadier* Mennonite immigration who stressed the preservation of their traditional faith, values, and life style, resisting technological, educational, social, and religious change, and living as separate as possible from the surrounding society. During the period under consideration in this thesis the conservative Mennonites included the Reinländer (Old Colony) MC, the Chortitzer MC, the Sommerfelder MC, the Bergthaler MC (in the early stage and also some later groupings), the Kleine Gemeinde, the Rudnerweider MC (in some respects), the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman MC), and the Brudertaler MC. In this thesis they are also referred to as "conservative Mennonites" or "conservatives."

Gemeinde. Literally, "community." In the Russian Mennonite tradition, this term refers to the religious community (in standard German usage, it can refer to a religious or civic community). The reference may be to a local congregation or to a larger Mennonite church community with multiple local gathering sites.

Historic peace churches. The Christian churches which include nonresistance in their basic confessions of faith; specifically, these include the Society of Friends (Quakers), the Mennonites, and the Church of the Brethren.[1] At times the term is used to include the Hutterites and Doukhobors.[2] The formal "Conference of Historic Peace Churches" was organized in 1940.[3]

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[1] The expression was first used in1935. Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottdale PA: Herald Press,1994), 275, n. 4.

[2] Amy J. Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience: Conscientious Objection in Canada during the First World War*, Studies in Canadian Military History (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 12.

[3] Driedger and Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking*, 35. Also see Melvin Gingerich and Paul Peachey, "Historic Peace Churches," *GAMEO*. 1989. Accessed 17 January 2011.

***Kanadier*.** Literally, "Canadian" or "Canadians." Members of the Mennonite migration from Russia to Canada in the 1870s or their descendants; frequently used in contrast to the *Russländer*.

***Lehrdienst*.** The combined leadership of a congregation, normally including the *Ältester*, as well as the elected ministers and deacons.

***Prediger*.** "Preacher," "minister." In the older Mennonite tradition, a *Prediger* was a layman (never a woman) who was elected by the local congregation to serve the membership by preaching and assisting the *Ältester* with the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation; a *Prediger* was usually not formally educated, although often self-taught, and not salaried. When used with a proper name it is abbreviated "Rev." (Reverend), following common English usage.

Reserve. A tract of land set aside by the Canadian government for the exclusive use of a homogeneous group of settlers. The "East Reserve" was one such block in the new province of Manitoba, east of the Red River, designated for the settlement of the Russian Mennonite immigrants in 1873. It consisted of seven (later eight) townships (185,000 acres), coinciding with the present municipality of Hanover.[4] The "West Reserve" was a similar block of seventeen townships (nearly 400,000 acres) west of the Red River, designated by the government for the use of the Russian Mennonite immigrants in 1876, largely coinciding with the present-day Municipalities of Rhineland and Stanley.[5] Excellent maps are found in John Friesen's *Building Communities: The Changing Face of Manitoba Mennonites*.[6]

Russian Mennonites. The German-speaking Mennonites who immigrated to Canada from Russia in several "waves" and intermittently from the 1870s to the present, as well as their descendants; sometimes used in contrast to the "Prussian" or the "Swiss" Mennonites.

***Russländer*.** Literally, "person(s) from Russia." Members of the Mennonite migration from Russia to Canada in the 1920s or their descendants; frequently used in contrast to the *Kanadier*, although all were called "Russian" Mennonites.

<http://www.gameo.org/ encyclopedia/contents/H59ME.html> and Harold S. Bender, "Conference of Historic Peace Churches," *GAMEO*. 1955. Accessed 17 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/ encyclopedia/contents/C663ME.html>.

[4] E.K. Francis and Harold S. Bender, "East Reserve (Manitoba, Canada)," *GAMEO*. 1955. Accessed 18 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/E2383.html>.

[5] Cornelius Krahn, "West Reserve (Manitoba, Canada)," *GAMEO*. 1959. Accessed 18 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/W4755.html>.

[6] John J. Friesen, *Building Communities: The Changing Face of Manitoba Mennonites.* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2007), [13]-[15].

INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s, when my family and I lived in Altona, a quiet town in the heartland of the traditional Mennonite "West Reserve" in southern Manitoba, we got to know an elderly couple whom our young children called *Oma* and *Opa*, Grandma and Grandpa, Froese. They were gentle, humble people who had farmed all their lives and finally moved into town for retirement. One Saturday morning *Opa* Froese came to tell us that his wife had died during the night.

The death of his wife was a significant event but not a catastrophic one for *Opa* Froese. There were tears, and he knew that he would need to adjust to life alone. But the two of them had had a good life together, they had raised their children, they had enjoyed their grandchildren, and they had grown old together. Life was of one piece, it all hung together. He had seen a loving God looking after them throughout their happy and their tough experiences, and now life was coming full circle. *Opa* Froese didn't say much, but he was at peace, knowing that his wife was now in a better place and that he would join her soon.

Opa and *Oma* Froese were members of the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church, one of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonite communities in southern Manitoba.[1] They were participants in a long Christian tradition which understands life as a gift from a just and compassionate God, a gift to be cherished and lived in accordance with God's will as

[1] The conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites are discussed more fully in Chapter 2; in the further thesis I will also simply refer to them as "conservative Mennonites" or "conservatives"—not to be confused with conservative Mennonites of other traditions or "conservative" Christians, political conservatives, or conservative people in general.

taught in the Bible, before passing on to eternal life. The biblical teachings are laid out in the catechism and explained in handed-down sermons: God and the hope of eternal salvation, especially as taught by Jesus, are central for the life of the Christian and become the framework within which all other thoughts and actions find their proper place; this includes faith in Jesus Christ, joining the church through baptism upon this faith, and a humble and disciplined life characterized by a yielded trust in God and the rejection of the norms of ambition, pride, and vengefulness of the secular world.

The *Kanadier* Mennonites' teaching of peace and nonresistance needs to be understood in this context. It entails not harming others, not going to war, and loving the "enemy," even if this comes at a cost to oneself. After all, Jesus taught, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Mt. 5:44-45).[2] This teaching has been a central component in all Mennonite confessions of faith from the sixteenth century to the present.[3] However, as the various Mennonite groups have developed over time and in different circumstances they have come to differing interpretations of the peace stance.[4] The conservative

[2] The Mennonites have usually used standard Bible versions like the German Luther Bible. See Harold S. Bender and Nanne van der Zijpp. "Bible Translations." *GAMEO*. 1953. Accessed 03 March 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/ B5378.html>. Bible references in this thesis will generally be cited in English only, using the New Revised Standard Version.

[3] For example, Howard Loewen has compiled twenty-seven Mennonite confessions of faith, ranging from 1527 to 1975, and the rejection of revenge and violence is central in all of them. See Howard John Loewen, *One Lord, One Church, One Hope, and One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith*, Text-Reader Series No. 2 (Elkhart IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985), 42-43. Peace statements are no less central in subsequent confessions of faith.

[4] In the worldwide Mennonite context, not all Mennonite groups have consistently held the peace position, and even among the Mennonites in Canada there is some diversity on this conviction; however, a full discussion of this complex topic would go beyond the limits of the present thesis. See Cornelius J. Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History: A Popular History of the Anabaptists and the Mennonites*, 3rd ed. (Scottdale PA and Waterloo ON: Herald Press, 1993), 388.

Kanadier Mennonites, who have written or published relatively little on topics related to peace, have continued to affirm the nonresistant tradition nevertheless.[5]

To complicate the consideration of this topic, there were many social and economic influences that affected the Mennonite churches in Canada in the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.[6] The broader religious trends of North America, notably evangelical "spiritual renewal" movements, also impacted the Mennonite churches in varying degrees. As a result, some Mennonites gradually became more acculturated while others—the conservatives—resisted these influences, sought to keep separate from the larger "world," and even emigrated to more remote locations where their traditional existence would, they hoped, be less threatened.

Among the most significant experiences for all Canadian Mennonites—including the conservatives—have been the two World Wars, particularly World War II. This experience affected not only the individual young men faced with mandatory military conscription but also their families and entire church communities. During these critical years their understanding of peace as a fundamental component of the Christian life and their relationship to the state and to the surrounding "world" was severely tested. The responses of the different Mennonite groups to the challenge of conscription were the same in principle but differed in practice. In particular, the *Kanadier* Mennonites were not willing to compromise their fundamental conviction of Christian nonresistance which

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[5] The epigram at the beginning of this thesis is one illustration of this stance. *Ältester* Johann(es) Wiebe was the leader of the newly formed Reinländer Mennonite Church; the quotation, in German, is found in Article 15 of "Glaubenbekenntnis der Mennoniten in Manitoba, Nordamerika" ["Confession of Faith of the Mennonites in Manitoba, North America"] which is dated 1881and appended to *Katechismus oder Kurze und einfache Unterweisung aus der Heiligen Schrift. In Fragen und Antworten* ["Catechism or Short and Sinple Instruction from the Holy Scripture"], 29th ed. (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, 1962), 31.

[6] Driedger and Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking*, especially Chap. 2, presents an excellent study of the impact of modernity on the Mennonites.

for them had been at the heart of the special Order-in-Council they had received from the government at the time of their immigration to Canada.[7]

It is the purpose of this thesis to explore the peace stance of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites during the period from 1874 to 1945. My thesis is that their commitment to peace was deeply rooted in their overall understanding of what it meant to be "Christian" in everyday life. They were not socially or politically engaged peace activists: they did not adopt resolutions, lobby the government to end warfare, or even expound much on pacifism or nonresistance in their sermons. However, their lives and actions—expressions of their trust in God's providence, their humility, their repudiation of legal litigation, their willingness to suffer rather than to retaliate, their readiness to be different from the surrounding "world"—reflected their commitment to an absolute pacifism, which included, in particular, their rejection of service in the military.

I will develop this argument in several sections. In Chapter 1, "The Traditions of Peace," I begin by defining the central concepts, before reviewing the developments and the historiography of the Canadian peace movement as a whole. This literature briefly includes the Mennonites as one of the "pacifist religious sects"[8] which have been one of the groups contributing to the overall movement. Secondly and more specifically, I review the developments and the historiography of the Canadian Mennonites, with

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[7] Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: The History of a Separate People* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), 192. This book is the first volume in the three-volume series which is the most comprehensive history of the Mennonites in Canada and which subsequently was given the same name, "Mennonites in Canada"; this volume will be referred to as *Mennonites in Canada* [1]. The second volume in the series is Frank H. Epp's *Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940: A People's Struggle for Survival* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1982); it will be referred to as *Mennonites in Canada* [2]. The third volume, in which the series and volume number are formally indicated for the first time, is T.D. Regehr's *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed*, Mennonites in Canada, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); it will be referred to as *Mennonites in Canada* [3].

[8] The expression is used, for example, by Thomas Socknat in his article "Conscientious Objectors in the Context of Canadian Peace Movements," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 25 (2007): 62.

particular focus on the so-called "Russian Mennonites." There is a good deal of literature on this subject, written to a large extent by Mennonite scholars; often the topic of nonresistance is incorporated into broader studies of the history or the theology of the Mennonites. This chapter will provide the larger context for the more specific consideration of the first of the Russian Mennonite immigrant groups to Canada, the *Kanadier* Mennonites.

In the next three chapters, following historical and historiographical overviews, I consider three kinds of literature of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites which offer different perspectives on their convictions: these include historical accounts, sermons, and a unique set of minutes.

In Chapter 2, "The Conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites," I begin with a historical description of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites and a brief review of their peace stance; I will focus especially on the period from 1874 to 1945—the time from their arrival in Canada to the end of World War II, a major watershed experience for all Canadian Mennonites.[9] This survey is followed by a review of related historiographical materials. The literature is rather limited, but it includes foundational books of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites, as well as others written by or about them. Three specific migration histories by conservative church leaders are then reviewed in greater depth. While "peace issues" are addressed directly in only a limited way, most of the material deals with their total worldview which provided the basis for their peace stance. Taken together, the three books provide a remarkable perspective—the first one of three—on the peace stance of the conservative Mennonites.

[9] Focusing the thesis on the Canadian context during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth will require rather flexible boundaries of time and space, since there are many broader connections, within both the general Canadian peace movement and the Mennonite context.

In Chapter 3, "Conservative *Kanadier* Mennonite Sermons," I offer a second perspective by doing a careful reading of selected sermons of six *Kanadier* Mennonite *Ältesten*—church elders or bishops—which span some seven or more decades.[10] Both the format and the subject matter of the sermons are surprisingly consistent. Overall, the message focuses on eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ but also on the Christian life as a preparation for eternity, to be lived humbly and with integrity according to the teachings of the Bible with the trust that God will care and provide.[11] Surprisingly, the subject of peace or nonresistance is rarely mentioned in the sermons except in the formulaic phrases of invocations or benedictions; however, it is everywhere in evidence "between the lines" as part of the larger understanding of the Christian faith.

In Chapter 4, "World War II and the *Ältestenrat*," I consider a third perspective on the same subject. This is the review of a unique book which was published shortly after World War II, in German as *Erfahrungen der Mennoniten in Canada während des zweiten Weltkrieges 1939-1945* and translated into English as *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War 1939-1945*.[12] The book is a collection of the minutes of some forty meetings of *Kanadier* Mennonite leaders during

[10] These hand-written sermons, most presumably copied from earlier sources, are located in the archives of the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg, where they form part of a much larger collection of sermons and sermon outlines.

[11] In Anabaptist groups of the sixteenth century and later among the Amish and other Mennonite groups of the "Swiss" or "Old Mennonite" tradition the concept of *Gelassenheit*—sometimes translated as "resignation in God's will" or "yieldedness to God's will"—has been important; while the term itself was not used much by the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites, the underlying concept is closely related to their understanding. See Robert Friedmann, "Gelassenheit," *GAMEO*. 1955. Accessed 07 January 2011, <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/G448.html>, and Donald B. Kraybill, Steven Nolt, and David Weaver-Zercher, *The Amish Way: Patient Faith in a Perilous World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 60.

[12] [David P. Reimer], *Erfahrungen der Mennoniten in Canada während des zweiten Weltkrieges 1939-1945* (n.p., n.d.) and [David P. Reimer], *Experiences of the Mennonites in Canada during the Second World War 1939-1945* (n.p., n.d.). Further details are discussed in Chapter 4.

World War II, as they searched for ways to respond respectfully to the Canadian government's military conscription laws without compromising their own deeply held convictions. The minutes provide a fascinating "window," not only for what they reveal about the peace stance of the Mennonites but also for what they show about the Mennonite leaders' approach in dealing with complex and difficult issues when their deepest conviction clashed with that of the Canadian government and the society around them.

An introductory consideration of the subject suggests the need to clarify some central concepts. One central cluster of terms deals with the understandings of "peace," "pacifism," and "nonresistance" in a general sense but also more specifically as related to the Mennonite perspective. While the terms are related, there are also differences, and a more extended discussion follows in Chapter 1. A second cluster of terms relates to the definitions of "Russian Mennonites," "*Kanadier* Mennonites," and "conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites" which are interwoven in complex ways; they are discussed in Chapter 2.

While I deeply appreciated the insights I received in conversations with various scholars, this thesis is based primarily on library and archival research. The universities in Winnipeg—University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, and Canadian Mennonite University (CMU)—have excellent resources on topics related to Canadian history, pacifism, and Mennonite studies; I found the most helpful resources on the latter two topics in the main library and the Mennonite Historical Library of CMU. Since I have been dealing with these topics for some time, I also have collected a fair number of related publications in my personal library.

A special archival resource centre was the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC), located on the south campus of CMU, and to a lesser extent the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS) in Winnipeg.[13] While the CMBS contains primarily material pertaining to the Mennonite Brethren Church, the MHC is an inter-Mennonite archival facility holding the records of Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Central Committee, Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, Prussian and Russian Mennonite community documents, and the personal papers of many Mennonite church leaders and other individuals; in partnership with CMU it also houses the rare book collection of the Mennonite Historical Library (MHL).[14]

The internet, while needing to be used with appropriate caution, has also proven to be an invaluable resource for researching general and specific topics of the thesis. Aside from making the libraries and archives accessible via their websites, the internet provides almost endless resources relating to all aspects of this study. A particularly useful resource has been the *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (*GAMEO*), a project that was initiated in 1996 by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada and has continued to expand since then.[15]

When I began the research for this thesis I also considered the possibility of using oral or written interviews, especially of leaders or members of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites. While this approach would surely have yielded additional insights, I soon found that the materials available in the libraries and archives were substantive enough to

[13] The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies can be accessed at <http://www.mbconf.ca/home products_and_services/resources>.

[14] The Mennonite Heritage Centre can be accessed on-line at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/ programs/archives>.

[15] The *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (*GAMEO*) can be accessed at <http://www.gameo.org>.

provide more than adequate resources for my present purpose. This thesis could, of course, be profitably supplemented by further interview-based studies.

The materials which I researched in preparation for the thesis present a remarkably consistent picture of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites; they contribute to a clearer understanding of their faith, their concept of peace, and their place in relation to the broader Mennonite and Canadian peace developments. They have also given me a better understanding of and appreciation for *Oma* and *Opa* Froese of Altona.

CHAPTER 1

THE TRADITIONS OF PEACE

Introduction

Amy J. Shaw introduces her study of conscientious objection in Canada during World War I with the statement: "To many Canadians, the First World War seemed a great opportunity. . . . The war offered not only a chance to promote the young nation's greatness, but also a rare and coveted opportunity for personal heroism."[1] The national myth which grew out of this interpretation of the events, Shaw writes, has been persistent to the present. However, she continues, "one quiet and disorganized minority of young men found themselves particularly at odds with the conscription legislation. They were the conscientious objectors: men who refused military service because of religious or ethical beliefs."[2]

In this thesis I will examine the background and the peace stance of one group within this "quiet and disorganized minority"—the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites, a group which has not been the subject of much study. The conservative *Kanadier* Mennonite churches, like the Mennonite churches more generally, were committed to an absolute pacifist stance.[3] The *Kanadier* were a significant segment of the larger Mennonite population in Canada having their own characteristics and history, including a

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[1] Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience*, 3.

[2] Ibid.

[3] The term is used by Martin Ceadel, among others; see "Ten Distinctions for Peace Historians," in *The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective*, ed. Harvey L. Dyck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 21.

unique settlement arrangement—sometimes referred to as the "*Privilegium*"—with the Canadian government.[4] It was this special "privilege" which would drive a wedge between them and the other Mennonites, notably the so-called "*Russländer*," contributing to major complications among the Mennonites during World War II. This is a story that has been described by other authors but bears closer investigation.[5]

To place the stance of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites in perspective, it will be helpful to review the overall Canadian peace tradition, as well as the general Mennonite stance on peace. I begin by defining a central cluster of terms, that is, "peace," "pacifism," and "nonresistance." According to the *Compact Oxford Canadian Dictionary*, "peace" can be defined on several levels: on the personal level as "quiet," "serenity," or "mental calmness," on the social level as "freedom from quarrels or dissension between individuals" or "freedom from civil disorder," and on the level of international relations as "freedom from or cessation of war."[6] "Pacifism" can be defined as "the belief that all disputes should be settled by peaceful means rather than war."[7] "Nonresistance" is not defined in the *Compact Oxford Canadian Dictionary* but is merely identified as a noun with the negative prefix "non-," i.e., "not resisting," with examples chosen from biology, medicine, physics, and psychology. These basic definitions are

[4] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 192.

[5] John Friesen, in his history of the Mennonites in Manitoba, devotes several pages to this topic; see Friesen, *Building Communities*, 101-102; Frank Epp deals with it more extensively in *Mennonites in Canada* [1], Chap. 15, as does T.D. Regehr in *Mennonites in Canada* [3], Chap. 2.

[6] *The Compact Oxford Canadian Dictionary* (Don Mills ON: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[7] Ibid.

discussed and expanded by other scholars, providing the foundational terminology for this study of *Kanadier* Mennonite approaches to peace.

A broad theoretical approach for understanding pacifism has been provided by Martin Ceadel, a British scholar; Ceadel has developed a complex typology which he calls "ten distinctions for peace historians."[8] Conceptualizing these distinctions as "different axes of a multidimensional grid," Ceadel asserts that "there are sufficient slots to embrace all the many types of anti-war position."[9] Many of Ceadel's "distinctions" are set up as polarities, e.g., the "absolutist" versus the "reformist" position or groups that accept the use of *some* force versus those that do not accept any. Ceadel's "comprehensive taxonomy," although rather convoluted, does help to clarify the characteristics that distinguish the different pacifist positions.[10] He includes nonresistance in the position he calls "absolutist" which, in turn, has a number of further sub-categories. Charles Chatfield has pointed out that typologies, such as the ones developed by Martin Ceadel, are not usually as clear-cut in actual practice as in theory; he also notes the influence of historical circumstances and that the theoretical "types"

[8] Ceadel, "Ten Distinctions for Peace Historians," 17.

[9] Ibid., 33.

[10] Ibid. In brief, Ceadel's "distinctions" are the following: (1) Between "absolutist" ("killing is never permissible") and "reformist" ("war can be abolished by negotiation"); pacifism is represented by either one; (2) Between "pacifism" and the "just war tradition"; (3) Between "reformist" accepting and "reformist" rejecting the use of force; (4) Between intellectual distinctions and labels; (5) Between different "pacifist" ideologies or worldviews (e.g., liberalism, socialism, feminism); (6) Between intellectual of a pacifist conviction and its sociopolitical context; (7) Between "historic" and "modern" pacifism (which rejects only certain—such as nuclear—weapons); (8) Between "the various things to which pacifism can object" (e.g., any use of force, all killing including capital punishment, only warfare, only nuclear war); (9) Between different ethical inspirations for pacifism (e.g., religious faith, political or philosophical convictions); (10) Between "the three main orientations towards politics" (i.e., different involvements in society during war or peacetime).

need to be understood in their context.[11] Still, for the purposes of this study, Ceadel's distinction between "absolutist" and "reformist" positions is important.

A different perspective is offered by Johan Galtung, international mediator and pioneer of peace and conflict studies. Galtung distinguishes between "negative" and "positive" peace, i.e., between peace as simply the absence of war or participation in war and peace as the concern for justice and meeting human needs.[12]

Peter Brock, the preeminent Canadian peace historian,[13] has defined pacifism somewhat differently. He outlines six categories of pacifism labeled "vocational" (e.g., monasticism), "soteriological" (pacifism as means to salvation), "eschatological" (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses), "separational" (peace sects like the Mennonites), "integrational" (Quakers and social gospel), and "goal-directed" (nonviolent action).[14]

Thomas Socknat, another Canadian peace historian, defines "pacifism" broadly as

> an outlook based upon religious or humanitarian belief that condemns war and social violence as inhuman and irrational, if not absolutely and always morally wrong, and therefore demands personal nonparticipation in war or violent revolution as well as a commitment to nonviolent methods of resolving conflicts.[15]

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[11] Charles Chatfield, "Thinking about Peace in History," in Dyck, ed., *Pacifist Impulse*, 36-51.

[12] Note from Neil Funk-Unrau, 26 April 2011. Galtung writes as a sociologist and peace practitioner, rather than as historian, but his voluminous work is interdisciplinary and bears further study.

[13] Harvey L. Dyck, ed., *The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), ix.

[14] Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 472-476. Also see Thomas Socknat, *Witness against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 7.

[15] Thomas Socknat, "Pacifism," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. 2009. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0006043>.

Socknat has demonstrated that Canadian pacifism has twofold roots, one the historic nonresistance of pacifist religious sects—like the Mennonites—and the other the liberal Protestant and humanitarian tradition, based not only "upon the pacifist teachings of Jesus" but also on "the irrationality of war and the brotherhood of man."[16] Following Brock, Socknat distinguishes the "separational" and "integrational" traditions.[17] This is a helpful distinction for the present study, which focuses on the former.

Mennonite thinkers also provide useful definitions. For example, A. James Reimer offers two distinct definitions. On the one hand, he defines "pacifism" as "opposition to and refusal to participate in warfare or armed hostility of any kind";[18] this stance may be personal or corporate and has many variations. Further, Reimer defines "nonresistance" as "a radical form of pacifism that does not take a stand against or resist an aggressor,"[19] noting that this stand is often a general attitude toward all of life.

This distinction is also made by Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder. Like Brock, Ceadel, and Reimer, Yoder points out that pacifism "is not just one specific position . . . but rather a wide gamut of varying, sometimes even contradictory, views."[20] He outlines no fewer than twenty-four types, including, for example, "the pacifism of absolute principle," "the pacifism of programmatic political alternatives," "the pacifism

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Socknat, *Witness against War*, 291.

[18] A. James Reimer, *Christians and War: A Brief History of the Church's Teachings and Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 4.

[19] Ibid.

[20] John H. Yoder, *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism* (Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1971), [9]; *Nevertheless* was reprinted in 1976, with an expanded edition in 1992.

of nonviolent social change," "the pacifism of prophetic protest," and "the non-pacifist nonresistance of the Mennonite 'second wind'," to name only some.[21] He ends with his own preference, "the pacifism of the Messianic community."[22]

Many of Yoder's thoughts would doubtlessly have resonated well with the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites. However, he was an intellectual who carefully thought out his convictions and was in dialogue with other theologians and ethicists, both pacifist and non-pacifist, while the conservative Mennonites have had little interest in such discussion. According to Yoder, they—like the Amish and the Hutterites—would best fit the category of a "pacifism of consistent nonconformity," unquestionably rejecting the use of force, but living with a dualistic world view and basically having nothing—or at least as little as possible—to do with the outside "world."[23]

The theoretical distinction between "pacifism" and "nonresistance", while not always totally clear or consistent,[24] is a useful one for my thesis. Using other scholars' definitions, however, the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites could also be described as "absolutist" rather than "reformist" pacifists, to use Ceadal's terms, or as "separational" rather than "integrational" pacifists, following the definitions of Brock and Socknat.

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[21] Ibid., Table of Contents.

[22] Ibid., Chap. XVIII, "The Pacifism of the Messianic Community," 123-128.

[23] Ibid., 101. Yoder discusses this in Chap. 15, "The Pacifism of Consistent Nonconformity."

[24] This distinction was already made in 1944 by Guy F. Hershberger, the predominant Mennonite thinker of his time on this subject, in his now classic book *War, Peace, and Nonresistance* (Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1944): "The term nonresistance as commonly used today describes the faith and life of those who accept the Scriptures as the revealed will of God, and who cannot have any part in warfare because they believe the Bible forbids it, and who renounce coercion, even nonviolent coercion. Pacifism, on the other hand, is a term which covers many types of opposition to war. Some modern pacifists are opposed to all wars, and some are not. Some who oppose all wars find their authority in the will of God, while others find it largely in human reason"; cited in Yoder, *Nevertheless*, 106.

The Peace Tradition in Canada

The peace tradition in Canada preceded the arrival of the *Kanadier* Mennonites by almost a century. Thomas Socknat writes that religious pacifist groups were recognized by the Canadian government as early as the eighteenth century, becoming the antecedents that helped to establish later military exemption in Canadian law.[25] Frank Epp points more specifically to the Militia Act of 1793, which first exempted "Quakers, Mennonites and Tunkers" from personal militia duties.[26] It was, however, a reluctant concession by the government, with the earliest known test cases of conscientious objection occurring when Mennonites and Quakers refused to serve in the Canadian militia in the War of 1812.[27]

Active peace groups were not really recognized until the liberal Canadian peace societies began to develop after the War of 1812, with the larger peace movement gradually emerging in the late nineteenth century.[28] Socknat concludes: "It was [the] religious pacifist presence in Canadian society and its support for conscientious objection that laid a firm foundation for a broader peace movement and remains to this day its core of support."[29] The Quakers had the greatest impact on early peace legislation because the

[25] Thomas Socknat, "Conscientious Objectors," 62.

[26] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 97. Epp also reviews the precedents for Canadian law in the British legal system, which allowed for religious dissention and military exemption, with certain conditions, as early as 1761; see Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 99.

[27] Socknat, "Conscientious Objectors," 62. Socknat also notes that the Mennonites—at this time not "Russian" Mennonites but American Mennonites who had immigrated to Upper Canada as part of the United Empire Loyalist movement—agreed to pay the imposed fines, while the Quakers refused.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid. 61.

Mennonites—the largest nonresistant group—tended to remain isolated from the broader society before World War II.[30]

The first national peace society in Canada, the Canadian Peace and Arbitration Society, was organized by 1905[31] but collapsed in 1914 with the onset of World War I.[32] The peace movement expanded again after the War, as groups like the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) were organized and support was strong for international disarmament. The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was formed in 1933, becoming the movement's political arm.[33] The groups, which came to be called the "historic peace churches"—that is, the Christian churches with nonresistance in their basic confessions, notably the Society of Friends (Quakers), the Mennonites, and the Church of the Brethren—began to meet in 1935;[34] the "Conference of Historic Peace Churches" was organized in Ontario in 1940.[35]

With the Spanish Civil War and then World War II, the peace movement again went into decline, leaving mainly the Christian conscientious objectors (COs) and a small core of activists working in the FOR.[36] At the same time, increasing numbers of men

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[30] Ibid., 62.

[31] The international peace movement began almost a century earlier in 1815; see Dyck, ed., *Pacifist Impulse*, x.

[32] Socknat, "Conscientious Objectors," 62.

[33] Ibid., 63.

[34]The term "historic peace churches" was first used in 1935; see Gingerich and Peachey, "Historic Peace Churches."

[35] Harold S. Bender, "Conference of Historic Peace Churches," *GAMEO*. 1955. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/ C663ME.html>.

[36] Socknat, "Conscientious Objectors," 64.

from traditions other than the historic peace churches, notably the United Church of Canada, claimed CO status. Following various negotiations with the historic peace churches, the government developed the alternative service program, and by 1945 more than ten thousand men had performed some type of alternative service.[37] As Socknat observes, "the Second World War was a watershed in the history of conscientious objection as well as the peace movement in Canada."[38]

Nuclear testing and armament became the major issue in the 1950s and 1960s.[39] The "Ban the Bomb" petition led to the collection of 200,000 supportive signatures, as Socknat writes, "the largest outpouring of public support for the peace movement to that date in Canadian history,"[40] while Roche argues that the Canadian "peace movement," in the narrower sense of the term, began during this time.[41] It was also during this time some of the religious groups, like the Mennonites, began to participate in political activism.[42] Major impetus was added to the growing Canadian peace movement in the 1960s by the American Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War, with the arrival of some eighty thousand "draft-dodgers" from the United States.[43]

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[37] Ibid., 66.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Douglas Roche, "Peace Movement," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. 2010. Accessed 07 January 2011: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0006163>.

[40] Socknat, "Conscientious Objectors," 67.

[41] By the early 1960s, new organizations were being starting: the Pugwash Conferences (1957), Canadian Voice of Women (1960), and the bourgeoning Canadian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, to name only three.

[42] Socknat, "Conscientious Objectors," 67.

[43] Ibid.

According to Socknat, by the end of the 1970s the growing tension between NATO—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—and the USSR once again promoted peace activism.[44] With the end of the Cold War in the 1990s the peace movement became more diffuse, including groups with concerns for the environment, human rights, and violence in Canada and internationally. The government has continued to be involved in global peace and security issues through its Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, funding other peace-related Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).[45]

In the past decade the peace movement has again become more active, with a significant challenge coming from the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Because there has been no military conscription in Canada since World War II, the traditional focus of aiding conscientious objectors is currently not a major concern; instead, attention has focused on the environment, the military-industrial complex, and nuclear stockpiling.[46]

Other recent developments include the growing number of university peace and conflict programs and "peace institutes" across the country,[47] the emerging the establishment of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, scheduled to open in

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[44] These years saw the origin of such organizations as Project Ploughshares (1976) and Conscience Canada (1978), as well as the federal government's establishment of the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security (1984); countless smaller peace groups were also established across the country. In 1985 the Canadian Peace Alliance was established, becoming an umbrella for some fifteen hundred peace organizations; see Canadian Peace Alliance, <http://www.acp-cpa.ca/en/group_directory.html>.

[45] Roche, "Peace Movement."

[46] Socknat, "Conscientious Objectors," 71.

[47] These include, among others, the Pearson Peacekeeping Center, established in 1994; the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia in 1998; the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights in Edmonton in 2000; the University of Winnipeg's Global College in 2005; and the Canadian Mennonite University's Canadian School of Peacebuilding in 2009.

Winnipeg in 2012,[48] and the introduction of Bill C-447 in the Canadian Parliament to establish a "Department of Peace" in the federal government.[49]

While such truly momentous developments were occurring in the broad Canadian context and some of the more progressive and socially conscious Mennonites were beginning to get involved in the larger Canadian peace movement, the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites kept their isolationist stance and remained quite untouched by these activities.

Canadian Peace Literature

A survey of Canadian peace literature reveals that little attention has been given to "absolute" pacifism. More literature is available on the topic of peace and pacifism in general, although again the works focusing on Canadian topics are much more limited.[50] Frequently Canadian peace literature, mirroring the peace movement itself, is intertwined with that of other countries, notably the United States; for example, peace conferences such as annual meeting of the Canadian Peace Research and Education Association often bring together scholars from different countries and deal with the theory of peacemaking

[48] See "Canadian Museum for Human Rights." Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://humanrightsmuseum.ca>..

[49] See Department of Peace Initiative, Fall Newsletter, 10 December 2010. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.departmentofpeace.ca>. The bill passed first reading in September 2008. There have been similar positions in the Canadian government earlier, but this is the first time legislation has been successfully introduced for a Department of Peace at cabinet level. Regrettably, with an election in spring of 2011, this parliamentary initiative appears to be stalled, at least temporarily.

[50] A review of the peace literature in the Winnipeg universities' integrated library system shows some 230 related items, including a wide range of topics–of which relatively few deal with specifically Canadian agenda.

or with varied international conflict situations; this more general peace literature is voluminous.[51]

The most comprehensive bibliography of twentieth-century literature on pacifism is Peter Brock's *Pacifism since 1914: An Annotated Reading List.*[52] This 108-page annotated bibliography lists 355 items, divided into nine topical sections. The listed materials extend only to 1999 and do not include non-English publications, unpublished dissertations, or primary sources. Only about one tenth of the listings relate to Canada.

Peace encyclopedias are a valuable resource. Several may be noted: the four-volume *World Encyclopedia of Peace*,[53] published in 1986; the three-volume *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, 1999, second edition in 2008;[54] and, most recently, the four-volume *Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace*, published in 2010.[55] All the encyclopedias are indispensible reference works. For example, the *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict* deals with a wide range of topics, including cultural, religious, and historical studies, warfare and military studies,

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[51] A word search of "Peace literature" in the internet yielded 37,000,000 items (on 06 December 2010), 40,800,000 (on 18 January 2011), and 71,900,00 (on 01 April 2011); of course, there are repeated and irrelevant entries, but the numbers are still staggering—and growing.

[52] Peter Brock, comp., *Pacifism since 1914: An Annotated Reading List*, 3rd slightly rev. printing (Toronto: P. Brock, 2000).

[53] *World Encyclopedia of Peace*, 4 vols. (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1986). The *Encyclopedia* was praised by *ARBA (American Reference Books Annual)* as "the first comprehensive encyclopedia to present an integrated overview of peace in all its aspects . . . a valuable overview and analysis of the persons, events and philosophies involved in the search for peace." A copy is in the University of Winnipeg library.

[54] *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, 3 vols. 2nd ed. (San Diego: Academic Press, 2008). This is a large publication, with 750 articles encompassing 2,750 pages. Copies are in the Dafoe Library at the University of Manitoba and the CMU library.

[55] *The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace*, 4 vols., Nigel Young, ed.-in-chief ([Oxford and New York:] Oxford University Press, 2010). This is also a voluminous 2,848 page edition. Copies are in the University of Manitoba's Dafoe Library, as well as the CMU library.

criminology, international relations, medical, psychological, and sociological studies; the coverage of Canadian subjects, however, is rather limited.

Other peace literature written by Canadians or related specifically to the Canadian situation is quite limited. It includes a few monographs, some multi-author collections, and a variety of addresses and journal articles. One of the most comprehensive surveys is Thomas Socknat's *Witness against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945.*[56] Focusing on the liberal progressive peace movement, Socknat documents the remarkable impact that Canadian pacifists made in the first half of the twentieth century. He notes the lack of a clear overall strategy in the diverse pacifist movement for example but also documents a variety of projects like the efforts to help interned Jewish refugees during World War II and to resist the expulsion of Japanese Canadians after the war; also included is a lucid discussion on the position of the various Mennonites groups during this period. Socknat's basic argument is that pacifism was a significant force in the developing the social values of Canada during the first half of the twentieth century. Regrettably, the work does not include the developments beyond the first half of the twentieth century.

Another informative monograph is Amy J. Shaw's *Crisis of Conscience: Conscientious Objection in Canada during the First World War.*[57] Noting the abundance of literature related to the Canadian military but the paucity of materials dealing with the pacifist alternative—a recognized military option in Canadian law—Shaw addresses one specific aspect of this lacuna: the CO experience in World War I. As she observes, this experience offers insight "into the developing relationship between Canadians and their

[56] See Chap. 1, n. 13.

[57] See Glossary, n. 2.

government, expectations of appropriate masculine behaviour, religious freedom and identity, and question of voluntarism and obligation in a democratic society."[58] Following an introductory chapter, Shaw devotes a chapter to each of the different groups of COs: the second chapter relates to the historic peace churches, including the Mennonites, Quakers, Brethren (Tunkers), Hutterites, and Doukhobors. Continuing a thought from Thomas Socknat, she notes the contrast between the "religious radicalism and the social conservatism" of the Mennonites, Brethren, and Hutterites, and their uniquely gentle and yet persistent manner of relating to the government with their concerns.[59]

Thomas L. Perry's *Peacemaking in the 1990s: A Guide for Canadians*[60] includes contributions by eighteen authors who have also been active in the Canadian peace movement. Topics like the bombing of Nagasaki, the continuing arms race, Canada's military after the Cold War, the impact of war on children, and the ecological impact of war are addressed. The book, however, has an anecdotal rather than scholarly emphasis and, as Perry notes, is intended "to stimulate its readers both to think imaginatively and to act constructively for peace."[61]

The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective, edited by Harvey L. Dyck,[62] is a scholarly publication which has the purpose of recognizing "the emergence of peace

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[58] Ibid., 3.

[59] Ibid. 43.

[60] Thomas L. Perry, ed., *Peacemaking in the 1990s: A Guide for Canadians* (West Vancouver and Seattle: Gordon Soules Book Publishers, 1991).

[61] Ibid., 306.

[62] See Chap. 1, n. 12.

history as a relatively new and coherent field of learning."[63] The book consists of twenty-three addresses, mostly presented at a 1991 Toronto conference honouring Peter Brock, the "doyen of peace history."[64] Most of the essays do not deal with "Canadian" issues in particular, but cover a wide range of topics; especially relevant for this thesis are Martin Ceadel's "Ten Distinctions for Peace Historians," and Thomas Socknat's "The Dilemma of Canadian Pacifists during the Early Cold War Years."

The book *Challenge to Mars: Essays on Pacifism from 1918 to 1945*, edited by Peter Brock and Thomas Socknat,[65] again offers a wide perspective on pacifist movements in Europe, America, and Asia, but with only two chapters related to Canada. In the chapter, "J. S. Woodsworth and War," Kenneth McNaught argues for the significance of this major Canadian spokesman for pacifism, the only Member of Parliament who voted against Canada's entry into the War in 1939. In the chapter, "Conscientious Objection in Canada," Thomas Socknat reviews the history of pacifism in Canada before World War II, arguing that the efforts of the historic peace churches and others led to the development of alternatives to military conscription during the War.

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[63] Ibid., ix.

[64] Ibid., ix. Peter Brock, who died in 2006 at the age of 86, was a remarkable man and scholar. Born in the United Kingdom, he became a conscientious objector in World War II and worked with the Quakers in postwar Poland. Fluent in many languages, Brock completed doctoral studies in Krakow and Oxford, becoming one of the foremost historians of Eastern Europe. He also immersed himself into the history of pacifism. As Oxford political scientist Martin Ceadel wrote, "No ideology owes more to one academic than pacifism owes to Peter Brock. That the scope and richness of its historical tradition can now be recognized is largely the result of Brock's sympathetic and dedicated scholarship." (Dyck, ed., *The Pacifist Impulse*, 17) Brock taught at various schools, including the University of Toronto from 1966 until his retirement in 1985; he wrote thirty books and numerous articles on different aspects of pacifism worldwide. See "In memoriam: Professor Emeritus Peter Brock," University of Toronto History Department, "News." 2 June 2006. Accessed 10 November 2010. <http://www.history.utoronto.ca/news/index.html>.

[65] Peter Brock and Thomas Socknat, eds., *Challenge to Mars: Essays on Pacifism from 1918 to 1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

There are various shorter scholarly writings on Canadian peace developments. These include Thomas Socknat's "Conscientious Objectors in the Context of Canadian Peace Movements," first delivered as the keynote address at the "War and the Conscientious Objector" conference at the University of Winnipeg in October 2006 and subsequently published in the 2007 issue of *Journal of Mennonite Studies.*[66] The article reviews the role COs played within the larger peace movements, not only during World War II but also during the Vietnam War and the anti-nuclear movement. Socknat acknowledges the contribution made by the religiously motivated pacifists, especially the Mennonites, the Quakers, and members of the United Church: "The pacifist, non-violent alternative is now a part of the Canadian tradition, thanks in large part to those Canadians who actively sought to protect and extend the principle of conscientious objection.[67] He concludes, somewhat pessimistically, that the pacifist witness is presently in danger of being lost.[68]

Another brief article is Douglas Roche's "Peace Movement in Canada" in *The Canadian Encyclopedia.*[69] Roche provides a summary of the movement, concluding that the peace groups have had a clear impact on the public opinion in Canada but that tensions between pacifism and security issues remain.

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[66] Socknat, "Conscientious Objectors": see Introduction, n. 8. At the conference a number of other papers were presented, many of which were also published in the 2007 issue of *Journal of Mennonite Studies;* almost all of these relate to the Canadian Mennonites and will be discussed further below.

[67] Ibid., 72.

[68] Ibid., 73.

[69] See Chap. 1, n. 38.

Mention should also be made of *Peace Research: The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies.*[70] It is Canada's oldest and primary scholarly journal in the field of peace and conflict studies, published twice annually since 1969; since 2007 it has been published at Menno Simons College, Winnipeg. Articles deal with varied topics, from theoretical discussions to analyses of the crises in Darfur and Zimbabwe to the role of "Middle Powers" in international diplomacy to "R2P," the "responsibility to protect." For example, in "Violence, Nonviolence, and Definitions: A Dilemma for Peace Studies,"[71] Trudy Govier argues for a narrower definition of "violence" as physical coercion; very broad definitions, she argues, become too vague; thus "structural violence" might better be called "social injustice or inequality." Despite this rich discourse few articles deal with the historical dimension of peace in Canada.

In summarizing the historiography of Canadian peace literature, it can be said that the number of monographs related to specifically Canadian subject matter is very limited, a conspicuously unattended period being the second half of the twentieth century; even multi-author publications and journals include only relatively few Canadian topics. The Mennonites are regularly mentioned, at least in passing, as one of the historic peace churches; however, little has been published about Mennonite-related topics or the differences between the various Mennonite church groups, aside from the publications by Mennonite authors or publishers. It is to this topic that we now turn.

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[70] *Peace Research: The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* (Winnipeg: Menno Simons College, University of Winnipeg).

[71] Trudy Govier, "Violence, Nonviolence, and Definitions: A Dilemma for Peace Studies," *Peace Research: The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 40:1 (2008): 61-83.

The Mennonite Peace Tradition

In addressing the Mennonite peace tradition in Canada and, more specifically, the stance of conservative groups such as those of the *Kanadier* background, a brief review of Mennonite history will be instructive. The *Kanadier* Mennonites are part of the so-called "Russian Mennonite" segment of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite family. These Mennonites developed their own history, identity, and even language—Low German—during the course of a convoluted series of persecutions and migrations lasting several centuries. Originating mostly in the Low Countries of northern Europe, they found refuge by fleeing eastward into the area of present-day Poland. By the beginning of the seventeenth century they were becoming well-established in the area of Gdansk (Danzig) and the lower Vistula River delta, where they experienced a gradual acculturation.[72] However, when new restrictions began to be introduced in the eighteenth century, a sizeable number once again decided to emigrate, this time to Russia's newly-acquired southern steppes. The migration was made the more tempting by generous offers of blocks of land in semi-autonomous "colonies" and assurances of religious freedom and exemption from military service.[73]

It is in this migration experience that the distinctive character of the Russian Mennonites and, more specifically, the *Kanadier* Mennonites began to emerge. For almost a century Prussian Mennonite settlers continued the migration to tsarist Russia, establishing four "colonies" and numerous "daughter colonies" as the original blocks of

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[72]Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 35.

[73] James Urry, *None but Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889* ([Winnipeg:] Hyperion Press Limited, 1989), 52.

land became overcrowded.[74] The Mennonite settlers—like other German settlers in Russia—prospered as ethnic German enclaves but integrated only minimally with their Russian, Ukrainian, or other neighbours. When the government introduced reforms in the mid-nineteenth century, including greater Russification of ethnic minorities and military conscription, the Mennonites once again perceived their existence as being threatened. In consequence, while many were finally willing to compromise with the government, some 17,000—about one third of all the Mennonites in Russia—reluctantly decided to emigrate to North America. Of these, some 7,300 Mennonites from the poorer and more conservative colonies came to Manitoba from 1874-1880,[75] settling in allocated blocks of land east and west of the Red River, the so-called "East Reserve" and "West Reserve."[76] This first "wave" of Mennonite immigrants from Russia came to be called the *Kanadier* —the "Canadian"—Mennonites.[77]

These immigrants may have come to Canada to escape from new constricting laws in Russia, but they did not come without examining the Canadian situation very carefully or setting some stipulations of their own. The Canadian government, desirous of attracting good agrarian settlers to the open prairies and aware of the American competition, offered them various incentives. In this context, Mennonite leaders negotiated a fifteen-point proposal (sometimes referred to as the Canadian *Privilegium*

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[74] The four original colonies were: Chortitza (Khortitsa), established 1789, Molotschna (Molochna), 1804, Am Trakt, 1855, and Alexandertal, 1859-1870; see Dyck, *Introduction*, 170.

[75] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 191. There is some variation in the exact numbers: Epp gives one number as 6,674 (*Mennonites in Canada* [1], 201), but his later statistics add up to 7,343 (*Mennonites in Canada* [1], 212); Regehr quotes 7,343. (*Mennonites in Canada* [3], 15, Table 1.1)

[76] See "Reserve" in the Glossary.

[77] The conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites are discussed further below.

or the Mennonite "Bill of Rights," as Ronald Friesen calls it[78]): the offer included free land in "reserve" blocks and the option of adding more land at advantageous prices, but even more important, the complete exemption from military service and the freedom of exercising their religious beliefs and educating their children without any restrictions.[79]

The *Kanadier* became especially distinctive against the backdrop of subsequent migrations from the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. As Russia gave way to the Soviet Union and life became more chaotic in the subsequent years, a second wave of Mennonites, numbering over 20,000, emigrated to Canada from 1923-1930; they came to be known as the *Russländer*—the "Russians"—in contrast to the *Kanadier*.[80] Many of these new settlers again settled on the prairies, partly on "Reserve" land but frequently at more distant locations like southwestern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, with subsequent moves to Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia. The *Russländer* established their own congregations, and very few joined existing *Kanadier* Mennonite churches.

A third "wave" of about 7,000 Russian Mennonite immigrants arrived in Canada after World War II; as other refugees of this period, they were often referred to as the "DPs"—the "Displaced Persons."[81] They joined existing churches of the *Russländer* or organized their own, but significantly almost none joined the *Kanadier* churches. A

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[78] Ronald Friesen, *When Canada Called: Manitoba Mennonites and World War II* ([Winnipeg]: Pub. by the Author, 2006), 212.

[79] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 192. William Janzen notes that Doukhobor and Hutterite immigrants of the same era were given very similar promises, the central one being "the fullest assurances of absolute immunity from military service." See William Janzen, *Limits on Liberty: The Experience of the Mennonite, Hutterite, and Doukhobor Communities in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 165-166.

[80] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 15.

[81] Ibid., 79.

fourth and last "wave" of emigrants from Russia brought thousands of "*Aussiedler*" Mennonites (also known as "*Umsiedler*"—"resettlers" or "emigrants") to Germany from the early 1970s to the 1990s.[82] Some of these have moved on to Canada, especially to southern Manitoba, but their numbers are difficult to ascertain.[83] At present there are relatively few Mennonites remaining in the countries of the former Soviet Union, and comprehensive information is again difficult to find.[84]

Mennonites and Peace

Before World War II the Mennonites—and in particular the conservatives—did not identify with the pacifist movement, due to the political origins and continuing associations of the term with social activism.[85] Their own understanding of "peace" was based on the teachings of the Bible and in particular on the teachings of Jesus. This was not only understood as a rejection of negative relationships (e.g., "You shall not kill," Ex. 20:13) but also as a challenge to positive reconciling action ("Love your enemies," Mt. 5:44). Keeping in mind the rich Hebrew concept of "shalom," usually translated as

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[82] Gerhard Hildebrandt, Gerhard Wölk, and Hans von Niessen, "Umsiedler (Aussiedler)," *GAMEO*. 1989. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/U458ME.htm>.

[83] Royden Loewen, University of Winnipeg, estimates that there may be as many as ten thousand *Aussiedler* in southern Manitoba. (Conversation, 25 November 2009)

[84] The 2009 membership map of the Mennonite World Conference lists 3,000 members in Russia, 300 in Kazakhstan, 200 in Kyrgyzstan, and 200 in Ukraine, a total of 3,700 in the states of the former USSR; the latest available statistics (2006) on the website of the Mennonite World Conference are similar. See Mennonite World Conference <http://www.mwc-cmm.org>. Also see the informative article by Hans Werner, "Talking Low German in Siberia," *Preservings* 30 (2010): 60-64.

[85] Driedger and Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking*, 36. Challenging political injustices is a phenomenon that has only arisen in the past half century among Canadian Mennonites, often arising out of the needs that became evident in relation to the charitable work of MCC. Even then, the Mennonite constituency has been quite divided on whether to engage in such actions; the conservative Mennonites, including the *Kanadier*, have generally not been supportive.

"peace," this also included a range of other positive characteristics like health, wholeness, justice, righteousness, harmony, and well-being, on the personal as well as the societal levels.[86] While a personal, internal peace with God was one aspect of this understanding, the basic teaching of "peace" always included the social dimension as well, e.g., mutual aid, helping others in need, loving and praying for one's enemies, returning good for evil, and suffering injustice rather than inflicting violence on others.[87]

Rather than thinking of themselves as pacifists, the Mennonites—German-speaking throughout much of their earlier history, whether North or South European—have expressed their peace conviction in terms of *Wehrlosigkeit*—"defenselessness." As the transition to English occurred in the North American context, the term "nonresistant," derived from the teaching of Jesus, "Do not resist an evildoer" (Mt. 5:38), was increasingly used.[88] In the context of the Amish and the Old Order Mennonites of Eastern Canada and the United States, the concept of G*elassenheit*—humility, meekness, the taking of one's life and fate from God and being satisfied that in God's Will everything will end well—has been a significant identity marker.[89] In the tradition of the Russian Mennonites the term *Gelassenheit* itself has not been used extensively, but the

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[86] John R. Burkholder, "Peace," *GAMEO*. 1989. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/ contents/P4ME.html>.

[87] Driedger and Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking*, 33.

[88] Ibid., 35.

[89] See Robert Friedmann, "Gelassenheit," and Theron F. Schlabach, "Humility," *GAMEO*. 1989. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/ H854ME.html>. Also see Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher, *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons [Jossey-Bass], 2007), 101-103, and Driedger and Kraybill, *Mennonite* Peacemaking, 51.

underlying understanding of life has been similar, especially among the conservative Mennonites.[90]

The faith convictions of the Mennonites have not been monolithic, and they have experienced change over time.[91] John J. Friesen, for example, divides the Canadian Mennonites into three theological "streams": those with an "Anabaptist," those with an "evangelical," and those with a "conserving" orientation.[92] The "Anabaptist" Mennonite churches, although not agreeing fully among themselves, have given much attention to promoting the peace stance.[93] The "evangelical" Mennonite churches have given the peace stance much more limited attention,[94] in fact, "peace" has sometimes been perceived negatively and has caused significant conflict;[95] the churches in this stream

[90] Conversation with Lawrence Klippenstein (19 January, 2011).

[91] James M. Stayer and others have argued that, despite Article Six of the Schleitheim Confession, nonresistance was not a central conviction of the earliest Anabaptists but only gradually evolved by the time of the second-generation Mennonites. He challenges Hans-Jürgen Goertz and Howard Loewen who, he writes, represent the biases of earlier twentieth-century scholarship in declaring Schleitheim to be *the* central confessional document of Anabaptism. See James M. Stayer, "Anabaptists and the Sword Revisited: The Trend from Radicalism to Apoliticism," in *Pacifist Impulse*, ed. Dyck, 118. However, this discussion of ambiguous origins does not detract from the later centrality of the nonresistant stance of the Anabaptists/Mennonites.

[92] Friesen, *Building Communities*, 125.

[93] "Anabaptist"-oriented churches, using Friesen's criteria, include especially the comparatively progressive Mennonite Church Canada and its predecessors, the (Old) Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church.

[94] Ibid. The largest church conference in this stream is the Mennonite Brethren (MB) Church; smaller ones are the Evangelical Mennonite Church (EMC) and the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC).

[95] Richard Kyle, an American MB historian, notes that American Evangelicalism has had major impact on the Mennonite Brethren, especially those in the United States, dividing the church into two camps: those with an "Anabaptist-Mennonite" orientation and those with an "Evangelical" orientation; see Richard Kyle, "The Mennonite Brethren and American Evangelicalism: An Ambivalent Relationship," *Direction* 20:1 (1991): 26-37.

have produced much less scholarly literature on the topic of peace.[96] The conservative or—to use Friesen's term—"conserving" Mennonites of the Russian Mennonite tradition, such as the Old Colony Mennonite Church or the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church, have published little on any subject, including peace, yet the peace position remains an important component of their faith; [97] this literature will be reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3.

It is important to note that while there are some parallels between these three theological streams and the different immigration "waves," they are not totally identical. The *Kanadier* immigration, for example, included or would come to include members of all three theological orientations because of several revivals and church schisms. In the context of this thesis, it is significant that all the conservative Mennonites were *Kanadier*, i.e., they were included in provisions of the government's *Privilegium*; it should also be noted that all of the *Kanadier* immigrants—of whatever theological persuasion—united in the *Ältestenrat* in their response to the government's conscription legislation in World War II.

Mennonite Peace Literature

The Canadian Mennonites have published few full-length scholarly monographs on the topic of peace, although there is a broad assortment of more popular books, many with a historical bent. As is the case with peace literature in general, Canadian Mennonite peace literature is intertwined with that of the Mennonites worldwide, notably those from the

[96] Earlier MB leaders emphasized the peace position more strongly than present leaders appear to be doing; see John Redekop's article "Why is Christian Nonresistance Weakening among the Mennonite Brethren?" in the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (14 November 1986): 10. In the popular *MB Herald* topics related to peace are addressed and debated fairly regularly; see *MB Herald* (November 2009). The periodicals of other Evangelical Mennonite groups, e.g., the *EMMC Recorder*, have similar emphases.

[97] Friesen, *Building Communities,* 129.

United States. In this sense, one of the basic reference works is *An Annotated Bibliography of Mennonite Writings on War and Peace*, edited by Willard Swartley and Cornelius J. Dyck.[98] Containing some ten thousand entries, this massive compilation is the most complete bibliography of Mennonite literature related to peace; only a portion of these is related to the Canadian Mennonite experience, with even fewer items addressing topics related to the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites.

A different resource is J.A. Toews' *Alternative Service in Canada during World War II.*[99] Toews, who was himself a camp pastor during the War, does not restrict the book to Mennonites only, including other conscientious objectors as well; of special value is the inclusion of numerous government documents, tables, and appendices with statistical information. He notes that the alternative service program was a new and unique phenomenon for Canada and considers it significant "that a nation would allow expression in wartime of a viewpoint which contradicted the generally accepted policy for national defence."[100] While Toews does not distinguish the conservative Mennonites, simply including them as one of the participating groups, his book is valuable for providing key primary documents and establishing the larger context.

The *Kanadier* Mennonites are the specific focus of Adolf Ens's doctoral dissertation, published as *Subjects or Citizens? The Mennonite Experience in Canada,*

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[98] Willard Swartley and Cornelius J. Dyck, *An Annotated Bibliography of Mennonite Writings on War and Peace, 1930-1980* (Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1987).

[99] J.A. Toews, *Alternative Service in Canada during World War II* ([Winnipeg:] Publication Committee of the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church, [1959].)

[100] Ibid., 7.

1870-1925.[101] As the title suggests, this well-organized and thoroughly documented study focuses on the *Kanadier* Mennonites, including the conservatives and the more progressive Bergthaler Mennonites. Chapter 5 deals with "The War Issues"—referring, in this case, to World War I—and is a significant resource for my present thesis, although it covers only the period up to 1925. Ens concludes that "throughout the fifty-year span [from approximately 1870-1920], Mennonite relations with the government in Ottawa were characterized by mutual respect, trust, and cordiality."[102] He finds that despite their similar beginnings in Canada the *Kanadier* Mennonites were not simply a single undifferentiated group of people but divided into at least two strands: some, like the Bergthaler and Kleine Gemeinde, were willing to negotiate with the government and reach compromises, while others, like the Old Colony and Sommerfelder Mennonites were not willing to compromise on what they considered to be fundamental rights and emigrated rather than conceding to government pressures. In replying to the question posed in the title of his work, Ens sees the latter as being loyal but independent "subjects" and the former as being "open to incorporation as full Canadian citizens."[103]

The impact of Canadian mobilization during World War II and response of the Manitoba Mennonites is the subject of Ronald Friesen's *When Canada Called: Manitoba Mennonites and World War II.*[104] Friesen, who writes as a self-identified pacifist, aims "to present aspects of the past in fairness and with empathy for all persons [including the

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[101] Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens? The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870-1925.* Religions and Beliefs Series, No. 2 (Ottawa ON: University of Ottawa Press, 1994)

[102] Ibid., 232.

[103] Ibid., 236.

[104] Friesen, *When Canada Called*, see n. 75.

Mennonites in both the alternative service and military service] caught up involuntarily in a national crisis."[105] He addresses such topics as the government's wartime policies and responses by Mennonite leaders, together with a chapter on Judge John Adamson, the aggressive chair of the Manitoba Mobilization Board, and other chapters on personal experiences of young Mennonites in the military and as conscientious objectors. The book also has a useful bibliography. Friesen's book does not focus on the *Kanadier* Mennonites only, although they form a significant component of his book; it is especially helpful in providing personal anecdotes of Mennonite men in both the military and alternative services; his background chapters also give a good sense of the general upheaval the War caused among Canadians.[106]

Several other works that include the *Kanadier* Mennonites' story are three unpublished M.A. theses on the topic of Mennonites and World War II. David Warren Fransen's thesis, entitled "Canadian Mennonites and Conscientious Objection in World War II,"[107] argues that the Mennonites of Canada, in dealing with military conscription during World War II, were faced with a complex problem: one aspect concerned the unity among themselves, the other concerned the government recognition of their stance.[108] As far as the internal unity of the Mennonites is concerned, the final

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[105] Ibid., xiii.

[106] The opposition of Quebeckers, for example, was evident in Montreal mayor Houde's outspoken objection to the Canadian government's registration drive and his subsequent prison sentence; and in British Columbia, unhappy recruits mutinied when they were informed that they would be reassigned to overseas duties; see Friesen, 5 and 6.

[107] David Warren Fransen, "Canadian Mennonites and Conscientious Objection in World War II" (M.A. thesis, University of Waterloo, 1977).

[108] Ibid., 12.

outcome—despite repeated efforts to the contrary—was the painful division between *Kanadier* and the *Russländer;* Fransen analyzes this split carefully from several perspectives, including basic beliefs, traditions, and the personalities of the leaders.[109] As far as the relationship between the Mennonites and the government is concerned, Fransen painstakingly traces the developments, noting the different attitudes and reactions by various government officials and Mennonite leaders to the *Kanadier-Russländer* differences.[110] The final outcome was, of course, the alternative service program which, in turn, also underwent changes as the War progressed. In conclusion, Fransen's evaluation of the entire experience is that it forced the Canadian Mennonites to review their own convictions as never before: there was the *Kanadier-Russländer* split, the loss of the many young Mennonite men who entered the military, and the dramatic new self-understanding and a new relationship between the Mennonite church and the larger world and state. [111]

Another thesis that acknowledges the *Kanadier-Russländer* split is Ken Reddig's "Manitoba Mennonites and the Winnipeg Mobilization Board of World War II."[112] Reddig states his thesis in the first paragraph:

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[109] Ibid. There is a lengthy review of the intricate discussions, including not only the "Russian Mennonites" but also the "Swiss Mennonites" of Ontario, in Chapter I. The various factors influencing the rift are examined in Chapter II of Fransen's thesis.

[110] This series of meetings is discussed in detail in Chapter III. Fransen highlights not only the division between *Kanadier* and *Russländer* but also among the *Russländer* leaders themselves; notably B.B. Janz, the Alberta Mennonite Brethren delegate, seems to have been somewhat of a maverick who proposed separate arrangements to the government officials. On the side of the government officials, in turn, there were also different personalities and convictions which made the negotiations difficult.

[111] Ibid, 170-171. In his conclusion Fransen insightfully summarizes the impact of the War on the Mennonites but also of the Mennonites on the Canadian government.

[112] Ken Reddig, "Manitoba Mennonites and the Winnipeg Mobilization Board of World War II" (M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1989).

> No war in Canadian history has been as disruptive to the Mennonite community in Canada as the Second World War. For the first time, Mennonites saw their historic theological commitment to non-resistance . . . eroded; not only by pressure from the general public, but also from within . . . .[113]

What Reddig refers to with the words "from within" is the division that emerged among the Manitoba Mennonites, notably between the *Kanadier* and the *Russländer*, a topic that is explored especially in Chapter III. In Chapter IV, the major section of the thesis, Reddig presents a detailed review of the role of Judge John E. Adamson, the chair of the Manitoba Mobilization Board. As the War continued, the conflict between Adamson and the Mennonites also escalated to a crisis point by 1942, one that led to an especially sharp rift between the *Kanadier* and *Russländer*. It becomes clear in Reddig's careful review of the events, discussions, and correspondences, just how convoluted and confused the entire conscription and the conscientious objection processes were.

Reddig also notes that when the alternative service program finally ended in 1946 the problems for the Mennonites were not over: now they had to deal with the returning young men from the CO camps and the military, as well as different socio-economical conditions which effectively brought an end to their earlier isolated existence.[114] He concludes, somewhat pessimistically, that "the demands of war, the pressure of society and the internal weakening of their doctrine of nonresistance cost them [the Mennonites of Manitoba] dearly at the very time when they should have been most strong."[115] However, the events can also be interpreted in another way: in the "pressure cooker" of

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[113] Ibid., viii.

[114] Ibid., 149.

[115] Ibid., xiii.

the War all Mennonites, ranging from the conservative *Kanadier* to the most progressive *Russländer*, were forced to rethink their own convictions more thoroughly than at any other time in at least a generation—potentially a very healthy development.

A third thesis is Brian Unger's "A Struggle with Conscience: Canadian Mennonites and Alternative Service during World War II."[116] Unger notes that the American Mennonites' "Turner statement" of 1937, subsequently affirmed by all Canadian Mennonites, "in all probability was the most important Mennonite peace statement of the decade."[117] However, like Reddig, he also sees the Mennonite church leaders—*Russländer* as well as *Kanadier*—as having failed badly in not "providing their boys with a solid pacifist foundation."[118]

The peace issue is frequently embedded in a larger historical work. In the three-volume "Mennonites in Canada" series,[119] for example, authors Frank Epp and Ted Regehr give significant attention to the Mennonites' experiences related to war and peace; in volume one, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920*, Epp devotes two chapters to the topic, Chapter 15, "The [First World] War and Military Exemption," and Chapter 16, "War's Aftermath and Mennonite Exclusion"; in volume two, *Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940*, related issues are particularly discussed in Chapter 12, "Facing the World," with focus on World War I; in volume three, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970*, the same issues related to World War II are discussed in Part Two, "The Crucible of War"

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[116] Brian Unger, "A Struggle with Conscience: Canadian Mennonites and Alternative Service during World War II." (M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1990).

[117] Ibid., 23.

[118] Ibid., 72.

[119] See Introduction, n. 6.

(Chapters 2-5), and in Chapter 16, "Peace, Justice and Social Concerns." In relation to World War I, Epp notes that the Mennonites in Canada were "ill-prepared" for the federal legislation, the administration, and the negative public opinion they experienced, having become somewhat complacent because of their earlier promised exemptions.[120] However, while the Mennonites' responses to the pressures of war varied, writes Epp, "the teaching on nonresistance remained relatively strong."[121] The issue of military service and conscientious objection during World War II is discussed extensively in *Mennonites in Canada [3]*. Continuing the earlier discussion about the Mennonites' different responses to the conscription order, author Regehr observes that a unity of sorts was finally forced upon the Mennonites by the 1940 Order-in-Council, which ended all earlier unconditional military exemptions:[122] if the Mennonites were not able to reach a unified response by themselves, they now found it under external pressure. In contrast to the rather negative conclusions of Reddig and Unger, however, Regehr sees the wartime experience of the Mennonites as having also had some positive sides: many of the Mennonite "boys," in retrospect, evaluated their CO experiences as positive, the government reports on the Mennonite COs were filled with praise, and the leaders of the Mennonite churches—including the *Kanadier*—wrote appreciative letters to the government: overall, a new kind of self-awareness had developed among the Mennonites that would probably not have happened otherwise.[123]

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[120] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 366.

[121] Ibid., 368.

[122] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 49.

[123] Ibid., 56.

Several other Mennonite histories address questions of war and peace, although these are not their primary focal points. John J. Friesen's excellent history of the Mennonites in Manitoba, *Building Communities: The Changing Face of Manitoba Mennonites*,[124] provides "a comprehensive but readable history of Manitoba's Mennonites."[125] The *Kanadier* Mennonites are the subject of the first major section, although their history continues throughout the rest of the book as well. Issues of peace—notably during World War II—are especially addressed in Chapter 17: Friesen briefly reviews the government regulations and the different Mennonite responses, including the reflections on the impact of the War on the Mennonite community.[126] Anna Ens's *In Search of Unity: Story of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba*,[127] Adolf Ens's *Becoming a National Church: A History of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada*,[128] and Jack Heppner's *Search for Renewal: The Story of the Rudnerweider/ Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference*[129] in various, yet similar ways, tell the histories of different Mennonite denominations; topics related to the Mennonite peace

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[124] Friesen, *Building Communities* (see Glossary, n. 6); note especially Chapter 17, "Peace—and the Challenge of War," 99-105.

[125] Ibid., xi, from the Foreword by Hans Werner.

[126] Ibid., 104-105. This impact had a number of facets, e.g., the return home after the War of both the COs and those enlisted in the military (which made up thirty-eight per cent of all registered Mennonite men) with their new experiences and insights, a new awareness of needs in the larger world and an impetus for Mennonite missionary and service programs, and a rethinking of the need to communicate the peace teaching in the churches.

[127] Anna Ens, *In Search of Unity: Story of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1996).

[128] Adolf Ens, *Becoming a National Church: A History of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2004).

[129] Jack Heppner, *Search for Renewal: The Story of the Rudnerweider/Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, 1937-1987* (Winnipeg: Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, 1987). Chapter 8, "Interacting with World War II" (131-144), deals with the question of war and conscientious objection.

position are interwoven as separate sections or within other chapters. While none of these books have the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites at their core, there are points of intersection in all of them.

There are various less formal historical works that deal with the topics of the Wars and Mennonite responses, again without singling out the *Kanadier*. For example, in the popular book *That There Be Peace: Mennonites in Canada and World War II*,[130] edited on behalf of the "CO Reunion Committee" by Lawrence Klippenstein, there are numerous photographs and anecdotes of former COs in a popular style, together with some background information on the history of the alternative service program.

A different perspective is presented in *Mennonites at War: A Double-Edged Sword: Canadian Mennonites in World War II* by Peter Lorenz Neufeld.[131] Neufeld, who does not identify himself as a pacifist, documents the names of over 4,200 Mennonites who enlisted in the Canadian armed forces during the War; regrettably, there is little information about their church affiliation. The book is a rather eclectic compilation of articles and lists from different sources, but it is the most comprehensive listing of Canadian Mennonite military personnel available.

Canadian Mennonite scholars have also wrestled with the theological and ethical issues of war and peace, although as a rule they do not deal specifically with the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites.[132] A sociological perspective on the topic of

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[130] Lawrence Klippenstein, *That There Be Peace: Mennonites in Canada and World War II* (Winnipeg: Manitoba CO Reunion Committee, 1979).

[131] Peter Lorenz Neufeld, *Mennonites at War: A Double-Edged Sword: Canadian Mennonites in World War II* (Deloraine MB: DTS Publishing, 1997).

[132] Some examples are Walter Klaassen, *The Just War: A Summary* (Dundas ON: Peace Research Institute, 1978), A. James Reimer, *Christians and War: A Brief History of the Church's Teachings and*

Mennonites and peace, although once again it does not deal directly with the conservative *Kanadier* or even exclusively with the Canadian Mennonite situation, is found in *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* by Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill.[133] Co-authored by two Mennonite sociologists, one a Canadian, the other an American, the first part of the book reviews the nonresistant heritage of the Mennonites while the second charts the responses of some three thousand Mennonites to questions about peacemaking, military service, and political participation; finally, the book presents an overview of new Mennonite peace initiatives. While the book is a rich resource, filled with sociological data, the authors point out that "a thorough and comprehensive study of Mennonite peacemaking remains to be written."[134]

Canadian Mennonites have also written scholarly and popular articles on topics related to war and peace, as well as the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites. Three journals have been of particular significance in fostering this research and writing, two of them Canadian—the *Conrad Grebel Review* (*CGR*), the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* (*JMS*)—and one American—the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (*MQR*).[135]

Practices (see n. 17), and Harry Huebner, "Christian Pacifism and the Character of God" in *The Church as Theological Community: Essays in Honour of David Schroeder*, ed. Harry Huebner (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1990).

[133] Driedger and Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking*; see Glossary, n. 1.

[134] Ibid., 15.

[135] *CGR*, published since 1982, is "an interdisciplinary journal of Christian inquiry devoted to thoughtful, sustained discussion of spirituality, theology and culture from a broadly-based Mennonite perspective" (editorial guidelines) and has frequently addressed the topics of peace and conflict. *JMS*, published annually since 1983, deals with Mennonite issues from an interdisciplinary perspective; of special interest here are the 2004 and 2007 issues which focused, respectively, on the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites and the topic of war and the CO. *MQR* is an American Mennonite journal, and while its main emphasis is on the life and thought of American Mennonites the contents also reflect Canadian and

Summary

In summary, the Canadian peace tradition has received minimal attention by general historians. However, scholars such as Peter Brock, Martin Ceadel, and John Howard Yoder have been instrumental in developing a more differentiated understanding of pacifism, notably distinguishing between "absolute" and "reformist" positions (Ceadel) or "separational" and "integrational" positions (Brock), i.e., those who were pacifists on principle without any interest in working out compromises or influencing government policies as over against those who aimed to have an impact on government laws and society in general. Furthermore, historians like Thomas Socknat, Harvey Dyck, and especially Peter Brock have made the Canadian peace tradition an accessible and respectable field of study.

As far as Mennonite peace studies are concerned, there is a substantial amount of literature that deals with the history of Mennonite migrations and life in Canada; there is also a growing body of scholarly literature that addresses the Mennonites' stance on war and peace. Traditionally, the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites, fit the category of "absolute" or "separational" pacifists, although they themselves never used these terms but described themselves as "*wehrlos"*—"defenseless" or "nonresistant." The authors addressing Mennonite peace issues are themselves almost all Mennonite, and although most of the writing does not deal primarily with the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites, they are usually included as part of the overall Canadian Mennonite story. There is not

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international topics, as well as contributions by Canadian authors—although, as already noted, the national boundaries tend not to be very significant in this context.

much literature that directly addresses the peace stance of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites in depth.

It is in the context of this review of the Canadian peace tradition and, more specifically, the peace tradition of the Canadian Mennonites, that we now turn to the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites and their stance on peace and nonresistance.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONSERVATIVE *KANADIER* MENNONITES

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Mennonites of the *Kanadier* immigration had similar backgrounds but were not a single unified group when they arrived in Canada. Three main groups came in the 1870s, basically as entire colonies: the Bergthaler Colony, the Fürstenland Colony, and the Kleine Gemeinde of the Borozenko Colony.[1] The Fürstenland group was joined by a sizeable group of immigrants from the Chortitza Colony (the "Old Colony") of which Fürstenland had been a daughter colony.[2] Each of these groups represented not only a unified civic community but also a *Gemeinde*, a closely-knit religious community organized as a single Mennonite church.

As noted in Chapter 1, the new immigrants settled in blocks of land in southern Manitoba which had been allocated to them by the government and were known as the "East Reserve" and "West Reserve" (see Glossary). The 3,403 Bergthaler immigrants initially settled in the East Reserve under the leadership of *Ältester* Gerhard Wiebe, but in the following decade about half of them relocated to the West Reserve because of the better land.[3] In time the Bergthaler group remaining in the East Reserve took the name

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[1] The so-called "Kleine Gemeinde"—the "Small Church"—originated as a renewal movement in the larger Mennonite church—the *grosse Gemeinde*—in the Molotschna Colony in 1814. In a complicated history, the entire church membership moved to the Borozenko Colony, about 140 km northwest of the Molotschna, in the 1860s and then on to North America in 1874. Here some members moved to Nebraska, while most settled in Manitoba. See Harold S. Bender, "Kleine Gemeinde," *GAMEO.* 1956. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/ encyclopedia/contents/K5446.html>.

[2] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 198.

[3] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 210, 212.

Chortitzer Mennonite Church,[4] although remaining affiliated with the Bergthaler Church in the West Reserve. The 3,240 Fürstenland and Chortitza settlers settled in the western part of the West Reserve, organizing themselves as the Reinländer Mennonite Church (also called the Old Colony Mennonite Church) under the leadership of *Ältester* Johann Wiebe.[5] The Kleine Gemeinde, the smallest immigrant group with 700 members, settled in two locations, one in the East Reserve in the area of Steinbach, and the other north of the West Reserve near present-day Morris on the west side of the Red River; the church was led by *Ältester* Peter P. Toews.[6]

In the early 1890s some of the West Reserve Bergthaler group migrated to the new provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta, carrying the Bergthaler name with them. At about the same time, the Bergthaler MC in Manitoba experienced a schism, resulting from different attitudes toward acculturation generally, but focused particularly on the issue of education; the smaller, more progressive group retained the Bergthaler name, while the latter group took the name Sommerfelder Mennonite Church.[7] To add to the confusion, the Bergthaler members who had moved further west identified more with the

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[4] The Chortitzer MC was ostensibly named after the village of Chortitz (which was later renamed Randolph) where *Ältester* G. Wiebe lived, although Henry Gerbrandt suggests there may also have been other factors, such as nostalgia for the former Chortitza Colony in Russia or the desire to break with an unhappy past as Bergthaler Church; see Henry J. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith: The Background in Europe and the Development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba* (Altona MB: Published for the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba by D.W. Friesen, 1970), 70.

[5]Ibid., 212. About 1,100 of the settlers came from the Fürstenland Colony, the others from the Old Colony. See Cornelius Krahn and Alf Redekopp, "Wiebe, Johann (1837-1905)," *GAMEO*. April 2004. Accessed 07 January 2011. < http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/ contents/W5431ME.html>.

[6] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 212, and Bender, "Kleine Gemeinde."

[7] Dyck, *Introduction*, 309; the name was chosen because it was name of the village where the first *Ältester*, Abraham Doerksen, lived; see H.H. Hamm and Cornelius J. Martens, "Chortitzer Mennonite Conference." An excellent description of the increasing tension and the final schism is provided in Chap. 8, "A New Dawn Breaks," in Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*.

emerging Sommerfelder Church, although they retained the name Bergthaler MC.[8] Thus the Saskatchewan Bergthaler MC continued to be identified with the conservative Mennonites, while the Bergthaler Church in Manitoba, even though it had been one of the constituent groups of the *Kanadier* immigration, continued on its progressive course and subsequently was no longer identified as one of the "conservative" churches.[9]

In the 1920s, following the militaristic pressures of World War I and the Manitoba government's changes in the provincial school laws, the conservative Reinländer (Old Colony) Mennonites, like all the other Mennonites, felt their identity being increasingly threatened and, after several attempts at negotiating satisfactory alternatives with the government had failed, finally decided to emigrate once again.[10] As a result, about 6,000 emigrants, children included, moved to Mexico from 1922-1926, and another group of 1,785 left for Paraguay shortly after.[11] The remaining members, left without their spiritual leaders, reorganized some years later, using the name "Old Colony Mennonite Church." The Sommerfelder Mennonites responded similarly to the

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[8] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 320.

[9] Dyck, *Introduction*, 309. The Bergthaler MC voted itself out of existence in 1972, becoming a founding member of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, the present Mennonite Church Canada.

[10] As *Ältester* Isaak M. Dyck of the Reinländer MC wrote, "The rationale for the public schools was expressed with the following slogan: one king, one God, one navy, one all-British empire . . . For us it was unthinkable that we should educate our children with [such implications]"; see Epp, *Mennonites in Canada [1]*, 333. Urry notes that the correct recital required of children for the flag-raising, according to the "All-Briton's Day Catechism, May 23, 1907," was "One king, one flag, one fleet, one Empire," but the gist was the same; see James Urry, *Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood: Europe—Russia—Canada 1525 to 1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006), 178.

[11] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [2], 122. Krahn and Sawatzky state that 3,340 of 4,526 Manitoba Old Colony Mennonites—about three-quarters—and about 1,946 of 7,182 Saskatchewan Old Colony Mennonites—about one-quarter—in emigrated during these years; see Cornelius Krahn and H. Leonard Sawatzky, "Old Colony Mennonites," *GAMEO*. 1990. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/ contents/O533ME.html>.

increasing pressure; about half of them joined the Reinländer Mennonites in migrating to Mexico and Paraguay in the 1920s, as well as in later years.[12]

In the 1930s a religious revival movement occurred among the Sommerfelder Mennonites who had remained in Manitoba; this led to the formation of the evangelically-minded Rudnerweider Mennonite Church, which in the 1950s was reconfigured as the Evangelical Mennonite Missions Conference. At the same time a group of some 500 more conservative Sommerfelder members seceded in 1958, forming the Reinland (Reinländer) Mennonite Church (Manitoba)—the second church of this name but unrelated to the earlier Reinländer (Old Colony) Mennonite Church.[13]

The Kleine Gemeinde experienced a schism of its own in the early 1880s when the American Mennonite evangelist John Holdeman came to hold revival meetings at the invitation of *Ältester* Toews. This led to the formation of a branch of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, often referred to as the Holdeman Mennonites, which about one-third to one-half of the Kleine Gemeinde members joined.[14] In the 1890s another schism within the Kleine Gemeinde led to the Brudertaler Mennonite Church, later called the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren and presently known as the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches. It had first been organized in the United States the 1880s, but then also

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[12] Harold S. Bender, Adolf Ens, and Jake Peters, "Sommerfeld Mennonites," *GAMEO*. 1990. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/ encyclopedia/contents/S666ME.html>.

[13] Harold S. Bender and Peter D. Zacharias, "Reinland Mennonite Church (Manitoba)," *GAMEO*. 1990. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/ encyclopedia/contents/R4579ME.html>. In 1984 this church experienced yet another division with the formation of the small Friedensfelder Mennonite Church over the issue of electricity in their new meetinghouse which was perceived as "too modern." See John J. Friesen, "Friedensfelder Mennoniten Gemeinde, Manitoba," *GAMEO*. 1990. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/ contents/F7542ME.html>.

[14] The numbers are ambiguous. See Dyck, *Introduction*, 304, Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 290, and Harold S. Bender, "Kleine Gemeinde."

established congregations among the Mennonites of Manitoba, primarily in the Kleine Gemeinde context.[15] In the late 1940s about 400 of the most conservative members of the Kleine Gemeinde also emigrated to Mexico, and in the 1950s the remaining members reorganized as the Evangelical Mennonite Church.[16]

The *Kanadier* Mennonites thus divided in numerous ways over time, leading to the formation of some comparatively progressive groups, others that were strongly influenced by American evangelicalism, and yet others which were more conservative and remained as isolated as possible.[17] Needless to say, the entire account of the schisms and migrations to different parts of Canada, Mexico, Paraguay, other Latin American countries, the United States, and back to Canada is a complex one.[18] Dyck estimates that in 1989 there were about 19,500 members of conservative *Kanadier* Mennonite churches in Canada.[19] As defined in this thesis, the "conservative" *Kanadier* Mennonites—in the period before 1945—include the Reinländer (Old Colony) MC, the Chortitzer MC, the Sommerfelder MC, the Bergthaler MC (in its early stage in Manitoba, as well as the

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[15] Ibid., 311.

[16] Dyck, *Introduction*, 312.

[17] Since the 1970s the term "*Kanadier* Mennonites" has also been used with specific reference to the conservative Mennonites who migrated from Canada to the various Latin American countries and their descendants, whether they live in Latin America or have returned to North America. MCCC, for example, has established the "Kanadier Mennonite Colonization Committee" to aid these groups. See John J. Friesen, "Kanadier," *GAMEO*. 1990. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/K363ME.html>.

[18] See the helpful overview chart in Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 293. Aside from the church schisms, there was also a constant movement of individual members and families from one church to another, not to mention those who for various reasons left the Mennonite churches altogether.

[19] These include 6,500 Reinländer (Old Colony), 5,500 Sommerfelder, 2,400 Chortitzer, 2,100 Reinländer (Manitoba), and 3,000 others; see Dyck, *Introduction*, 310.

Saskatchewan group), the early Kleine Gemeinde, and in some aspects the Rudnerweider MC, the Holdeman MC, and the early Brudertaler Mennonites.

What, in summary, are defining characteristics of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites? It is hard to be fully accurate in reviewing the uniquenesses and nuances of each group; however, main characteristics include the following items.[20] In terms of the basic confession, exemplified by the catechism, the conservative Mennonites share a common faith heritage with the other Dutch-Russian Mennonites—including the teaching on peace.[21] In terms of ethnic background, they also share a common history—including the history of emigrating rather than serving in the military or accepting forced acculturation.

The distinguishing features repeatedly relate to the preservation of this faith and culture, their German language, and specifically their insistence on self-governance, control of their children's education, and exemption from military service. Royden

[20] See articles on the various churches in *GAMEO*. It is also helpful, as suggested in the previous chapter, to compare the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites to the Amish Mennonites who have been studied extensively; see, for example, Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher, *The Amish Way*. Although their histories are different, the Amish and the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites exhibit some similar characteristics. In describing the Amish, Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher note their view of biblical authority as ultimate (41), the significance of voluntary baptism (49) and the faith community (33), suspicion of "instant" conversion (37) and Christian "witness" based on words of confession rather than everyday life (42), rejection of higher education and professional pastoral leadership (51), and particularly the ethos of *Gelassenheit*, "a profound acceptance of God's providence and timing" evidenced in humility, patience, and contentment (60); arising out of this ethos is the conviction of living nonviolently in the face of evil (153) and not seeking revenge but forgiving others when unjustly treated (154); concerning government, the Amish try to maintain a cordial relationship, pray for civic leaders, and obey the laws of the land as much as possible—but at the same time "it is clear that this world and its ways are not their ultimate frame of reference" (163). As other scholars have observed, these are attributes that to a large extent find their parallel among the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites; see Royden Loewen, "To the Ends of the Earth: An Introduction to the Conservative Low German Mennonites in the Americas," *MQR* 82 (July 2008):427-448.

[21] See the discussion of the catechism under "The Literature of the Conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites" below.

Loewen, in characterizing the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites at the turn of the twenty-first century, also aptly describes the earlier generation:

> These conservative Low German [*Kanadier*] Mennonites are a quiet, deferential people, whose religious faith emphasizes a simple and peaceful life of discipleship, in community, and with a willingness to pay the price to reject the ways of worldly fashion and comfort. But another fundamental aspect of their faith, a central feature of their cultural repertoire, is the idea of being "pilgrims and strangers" in this world. . . . [They] are a migrant people without a permanent home. They are a people of diaspora, living in a transnational context. They firmly believe that as a migrant people they are walking in a life of self-denial, following the ways of Jesus and, indeed, "living in Christ."[22]

While the more progressive Mennonites were willing to adjust to new laws—be this in Prussia, Russia or Canada—the conservatives rejected compromises, accepting punishments of fines and jail terms if needed, and finally emigrating rather than bowing to what they understood to be unjust government regulations and an abrogation of their faith.

When they first immigrated to Canada, the Reinländer (Old Colony) Mennonites were the most conservative group; their way of life encompassed "the total cultural pattern including language, clothing, education, furniture, self-government, mutual aid, village pattern, and all forms of customs [as] integral parts of their church concept."[23] The Chortitzer and Sommerfelder Mennonites also refused—and eventually grudgingly accepted—innovations in the life of the church, such as harmony singing, evening services, and Sunday school education.

The pressure to accept English was a major issue for all Mennonites, especially during the two World Wars with their anti-German sentiment. "Manitoba wanted no

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[22] Loewen, "To the Ends of the Earth," 431.

[23] Krahn and Sawatzky, "Old Colony Mennonites," *GAMEO*.

cultural pluralism; there was to be only an English culture"—and the conservative Mennonites refused to give in to this demand.[24] As Bender, Ens, and Peters note, "there were three conservative groups of practically identical position, bearing—almost accidentally—three different names, Chortitz, Sommerfeld, and Old Colony."[25]

One significant experience, which has already been touched on, was the encounter of the Mennonites with American evangelicalism. Beginning shortly after their arrival in Manitoba in the late nineteenth century and continuing to the present, the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites have repeatedly been seen as a legitimate "mission field" and visited by different evangelists, many of them German-speaking American Mennonites.[26] The spiritual "renewal" movements which developed had significant impact on the conservative Mennonite churches: the preaching of John Holdeman led to a major schism in the Kleine Gemeinde and the founding of the Holdeman MC in the 1880s; about the same time, American Mennonite Brethren missionaries started the Mennonite Brethren Church among the Reinländer Mennonites of the West Reserve; in the 1930s a similar "renewal" in the Sommerfeld MC led to the formation of the Rudnerweider MC; and the Brudertaler MC also had similar origins.[27]

It is beyond the limits of the present thesis to sort out the factors at work in these "renewal" movements. It is noteworthy, however, that the differences were not primarily

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[24] Bender, Ens, and Peters, "Sommerfeld Mennonites," *GAMEO*.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 288, 297.

[27] Friesen, Building Communities, 31-33.

doctrinal—for example, when it came to the topic of conscientious objection during World War II, all the *Kanadier* churches took a unified stand.[28]

Thus all of the *Kanadier* Mennonites experienced varying degrees of change during their time in Canada, due to evangelistic revivals, general social influences, and at times because the most conservative members decided to secede or emigrate. The Kleine Gemeinde, for instance, originally held a strong sense of nonconformity to the surrounding society and any "modernist" influences: activities like card-playing and other amusements, smoking, use of alcohol, higher education, musical instruments, and mission work were rejected, and any transgressions were subject to strict church discipline. However, by the 1920s the first automobiles were tolerated, and Sunday schools, choir singing, and young people's meetings were beginning to be organized; by the 1930s the Steinbach Bible Academy was established, missionary interest began, and the church even published its own paper (in German), *Christlicher Familienfreund.*[29]

The Literature of the Conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites

The peace stance of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites can be observed in their

[28] Mennonite theologian David Schroeder has suggested four distinctive differences between the "conservative" and the "evangelical" Mennonites: Christian "salvation" for evangelicals is a one-time commitment, while conservatives emphasize the gradual nature of "being saved"; evangelicals stress "conversion" as a switch of allegiance from the evil "world" to God's good "world," while conservatives understand the whole world to be God's; evangelicals stress doctrines and rules, while conservatives emphasize character formation and following Christ's way in everyday life; and finally, evangelicals emphasize individualism in the Christian life, while conservatives emphasize the significance of the church as a community of faith and discernment. See David Schroeder, "Evangelicals Denigrate Conservatives," in *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada, 1875to 2000*, ed. Delbert F. Plett (Steinbach MB: Crossway Publications, 2001), 33. Also see Dennis P. Hollinger, "Evangelicalism," *GAMEO*. 1989. Accessed 29 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/ encyclopedia/contents/E938ME.html>.

[29] Bender, "Kleine Gemeinde"; the entire collection of *Christlicher Familienfreund* is available in the archives of the MHC.

literature. Delbert F. Plett begins his exhaustive article "Print Culture of the East Reserve 1874-1930" with the comment:

> They [the Bergthaler and Kleine Gemeinde who immigrated to Manitoba in 1874] were literate peoples. The settlers in most pioneering homes in the East Reserve maintained journals, diaries, letters, genealogies, and account books of all kinds. . . . [Also, their] print culture consisted of Bibles, songbook, catechisms, and educational and devotional books.[30]

The central publication for the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites—as for all other Mennonites—has always been the Bible.[31] The Bible was the highest authority for them, and it was assumed that members would regularly read the Bible. Sometimes accused of a literalistic biblicism, Mennonites have traditionally emphasized Bible study rather than theology, giving the New Testament supremacy over the Old and focusing especially on the teachings of Jesus. These teachings form the basis of their peace stance.

A second important publication of the conservative Mennonites has been the catechism,[32] a compact outline of their Christian faith in form of questions and answers.[33] The Anabaptists-Mennonites wrote several catechisms, including the popular "Elbing" catechism.[34] This catechism was widely used by the Russian Mennonites, including the

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[30] Delbert F. Plett, "Print Culture of the East Reserve 1874-1930," *MQR* 68:4 (1994): 524.

[31] See the extended discussion in Harold S. Bender, "Bible," *GAMEO*. 1953. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/ contents/B5345.html>.

[32] *Katechismus oder Kurze und einfache Unterweisungaus der Heiligen Schrift in Fragen und Antworten*, 29th ed. (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1962). A large collection of different editions of the German catechism is located in the Mennonite Historical Library of Canadian Mennonite University.

[33] Christian Neff and Harold S. Bender, "Catechism," *GAMEO*. 1953. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/ C4574ME. html>.

[34] This catechism was first published in 1778 in Elbing, West Prussia, then went through many editions, first in Prussia, then also in Russia, North America, and Mexico. "Elbing Catechism," *GAMEO*. 1778. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/ encyclopedia/contents/E5117.html>.

conservative groups such as the Old Colony MC, the Kleine Gemeinde, and others.[35] In other words, from a doctrinal perspective there has been little diversity among the different Mennonite groups, including the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites.

A third staple among the Prussian-Russian Mennonites was the hymnbook, the most popular one being the *Gesang-Buch worin eine Sammlung geistreicher Lieder befindlich. Zur allgemeinen Erbauung und zum Lobe Gottes herausgeben*.[36] First published in 1767, it has gone through some thirty-three editions and reprints in Prussia, Russia, North America, and Mexico. The *Gesangbuch* was used in worship services as well as for family devotional time; Delbert Plett notes that it was a common practice for parents to give their children a copy of the *Gesangbuch* to commemorate their baptism.[37]

A fourth publication of some significance was the *Martyrs Mirror*.[38] This massive collection of Christian martyr stories, which focused especially on the religious

[35] The Elbing Catechism has also been used by the more progressive General Conference MC, as well as, incidentally, the "Old" Mennonite Church and the Amish in the United States and Mennonites in such other countries as Prussia and France. The only major Mennonite group that did not use the Elbing Catechism has been the Mennonite Brethren Church. See Neff and Bender, "Catechism."

[36] Cornelius Krahn, "Geistreiches Gesangbuch," *GAMEO*. 1956. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/G447.html>.

[37] Plett, "Print Culture," 544, 545.

[38] The Dutch edition of the 1290-page *Martelaersspiegel* by Tieleman Jansz van Braght was first published in 1660, followed by later editions. The book was translated into German and published in 1748-1749 as *Der blutige Schau-Platz oder Märtyrer-Spiegel der Tauffs Gesinnten oder Wehrlosen Christen, die um des Zeugnuss Jesu ihres Seligmachers willen gelitten haben, und seynd getödtet worden, von Christi Zeit an bis auf das Jahr 1660 . . .* ; numerous German editions followed every twenty or thirty years in the United States and Ontario. The first English edition, with the title *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians who baptized only upon confession of faith, and who suffered and died for the testimony of Jesus, their Saviour, from the time of Christ to the year A.D. 1660*, was published in 1837, with many subsequent editions and reprints (11th ed. in 1977). See Nanne van der Zijpp, Harold S. Bender and Richard D. Thiessen, "Martyrs' Mirror," *GAMEO*. March 2009. Accessed 14 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/M37858ME.html>.

persecutions of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, has been used extensively by the Russian Mennonites, including the various conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites.[39]

Other books were also used by the conservative Mennonites for their devotional reading. Plett notes the interest of Kleine Gemeinde leaders in publishing books of early church leaders like Menno Simons as well as devotional, historical, and genealogical literature, often in collaboration with American Kleine Gemeinde partners. [40]

One unique publication, directly related to the topic of peace, is the 16-page booklet *Wichtige Dokumente betreffs der Wehrfreiheit der Mennoniten in Canada* ("Important Documents Regarding the Military Exemption of the Mennonites in Canada").[41] It is a collection of documents related to the "Privilegium" granted the *Kanadier* Mennonites by the Canadian government when they immigrated to Canada. The purpose of this booklet and the extent of its use are unclear: Benjamin Ewert, who printed it, was himself not a conservative Mennonite; however, since it was published in 1917 the Mennonites referred to could only have been *Kanadier.*

A final area of publication relates to the periodicals that were read or published by the East Reserve *Kanadier.* Plett notes that both Bergthaler and the Kleine Gemeinde members were well acquainted with newspapers before coming to Canada.[42] In Canada many subscribed to *Herold der Wahrheit* ("Herald of Truth"),[43] while other popular

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[39] Robert Friedmann and John C. Wenger. "Devotional Literature," *GAMEO.* 1989. Accessed 14 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/ D493ME.html>.

[40] Plett, "Print Culture," 526, 530.

[41]Canadian Mennonite Churches, *Wichtige Dokumente betreffs der Wehrfreiheit der Mennoniten in Canada* (Gretna MB: B. Ewerts Druckerei, 1917). This booklet is available in the MHL.

[42] Plett, "Print Culture," 541.

[43] Ibid.

periodicals were the newly-founded *Mennonitische Rundschau*, the *Steinbach Post*, and the *Christlicher Familienfreund*, the Kleine Gemeinde paper established in 1935.[44] All of these periodicals were important for discussing basics of the faith and keeping in contact others in the Mennonite community.

Plett's article, "Print Culture," deals with the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites of the East Reserve during the period from 1874 to 1930, specifically the Bergthaler/ Chortitzer and the Kleine Gemeinde.[45] No comparable survey is available for the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites of the West Reserve or for the years after 1930.[46]

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[44] Ibid., 544. David Reimer, the first editor, was also the secretary of the *Ältestenrat* and later *Ältester* of the Kleine Gemeinde.

[45]Ibid., 528 and 536.

[46] A good deal of literature has been written about the conservative Mennonites by others, mostly as part of the larger Mennonite story. Examples include Frank H. Epp and T.D. Regehr in the "Mennonites in Canada" series, C.J. Dyck in *An Introduction to Mennonite History*, and John J. Friesen in *Building Communities*, all of which have already been referred to. Other works include John Dyck, ed., *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve 1874-1910: Villages – Biographies – Institutions* (Steinbach MB: The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 1994), Adolf Ens, Jacob E. Peters, and Otto Hamm, eds., *Church, Family and Village: Essays on Mennonite Life on the West Reserve* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2001), Delbert F. Plett, ed., *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875-2000* (Steinbach MB: Crossway Publications [2001]), and David M. Quiring, *Mennonite Old Colony Vision: Under Siege in Mexico and the Canadian Connection* (Winnipeg: D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation, 2009). In the 2004 issue of *JMS* the focus was on the more recent history of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites who have been returning to Canada from Latin American countries; see *JMS* 22 (2004).

A rare early publication is Klaas Peters' *Die Bergthaler Mennoniten und deren Auswanderung aus Russland und Einwanderung in Manitoba. Die wichtigsten Ereignisse vom Jahre 1872 bis auf die Zeit, wo die ersten Ansiedler von ihnen ihr Pionierleben in Manitoba überstanden hatten. Zum fünfzig-jährigen Jubiläum (1922)*. First published in 1922, the 52-page booklet was reprinted in 1983 (Steinbach MB: Die Mennonitische Post), then translated and published in the Bergthaler Historical Series as *The Bergthaler Mennonites*, with a biography of Peters and other appendices (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1988). *Die Bergthaler Mennoniten* . . . outlines the reasons for emigrating from Russia in the 1870s and then describes the settlement in Manitoba, ending with a government report of 1892 which indicates that the Mennonites have fully repaid their travel debts. The peace stance of the Mennonites is not discussed in detail, but it was clearly understood to be the underlying reason for the whole emigration. The author took part in the Bergthaler migration in 1875 but later left the Bergthaler MC, joining the Swedenborgians.

A unique publication of another kind is the periodical *Preservings*. It first appeared in 1993 on a semi-annual and later annual basis, edited by Delbert F. Plett with a "conservative and orthodox" perspective; more recently *Preservings* has been published on an annual basis by the D.F. Plett Foundation. Issues range from 75-140 pages, including articles on historical and contemporary topics, with the mission, according to masthead, "to inform our readers about Mennonite history, and in particular to promote a respectful understanding and appreciation of the contribution made by the so-called conservatives."

Three Books

In the context of this literary collection, three books stand out and merit a more careful review. Taken together as a rather unique form of literature—it might be called "sermonic history"—they present one particular perspective on the topic of the peace stance of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites. As far as I have been able to determine, these three histories are the only ones of their kind published by the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites in the first third of the twentieth century.

All historical writing is, of course, done from some perspective, whether or not it is acknowledged by the author. "History" is more complex than a simple definition like "a continuous, usually chronological, record of important or public events"[47] would suggest. As Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza write,

> thinking and writing about history . . . has always been shaped by a host of different and often conflicting ideals, aspirations, and practical objectives, including religious beliefs, political ideologies, propaganda for ruling elites (or for their opponents), literary expression, popular entertainment, academic careerism, and the search for personal and collective identities.[48]

While older histories were often understood as simply factual accounts of events "as they happened," more recently historians have become more aware of authors' biases and more self-critical about their own.[49] I have appreciated, for example, Franca Iacovetta's up-front explanation of her immigrant Canadian background and her multicultural family

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[47] First definition of "history" found in the *Compact Oxford Canadian Dictionary.*

[48] Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, "Introduction: The Cultural History of Historical Thought," in Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, eds., *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, Blackwell Companions to History (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), [1].

[49] Kramer and Maza note that the "normal" context of contemporary historical writing in the Western world—academic settings, professional meetings, etc.—really took shape only within the past century or so. ("Introduction," 3).

in the preface to *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*[50] and Marlene Epp's self-identification as a second-generation Canadian with Mennonite grandparents in *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*.[51]

The authors to be considered in this thesis, wrote their "histories" long before Iacovetta or Epp were writing; they did not introduce themselves in the same intentional way—and would doubtlessly have considered it presumptuous to do. But at the same time they did not simply write "objective" histories. They wrote as church leaders who were themselves deeply involved in making the decisions that reflected but also shaped the future directions of their churches. There are numerous indications that they were writing for the spiritual edification of the readers, and biblical references, together with pastoral admonition, are evident on almost every page of all three books.

The books being considered are Gerhard Wiebe's *Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika*, Johann Wiebe's *Die Auswanderung von Russland nach Kanada—1875—in Form einer Predigt*, and Isaak M. Dyck's *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde von Canada nach Mexiko.*

Gerhard Wiebe: *Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung . . . .*

Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika by *Ältester* Gerhard Wiebe was first published in 1900 and subsequently translated and published in 1981 as *Causes and History of the Emigration of the*

[50] Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), [ix].

[51] Marlene Epp, *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), [x].

Mennonites from Russia to America.[52] As Victor Doerksen points out in the foreword, the 73-page monograph is "a primary source of information and interpretation concerning the coming of the Mennonites to Manitoba in 1874-80."[53]

The author, Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900), was the *Ältester* of the Mennonite congregation in the Bergthal Colony in South Russia from 1866.[54] When the Russian government passed new laws to integrate minority groups in the country and introduce universal military conscription, Wiebe was initially skeptical about emigration as a response. However, eventually he concluded that the new laws presented a threat to the Mennonites' continued existence and became a leading advocate of the movement to emigrate.[55] Historian Adolf Ens notes that Wiebe, "more than any other person," was responsible for the emigration of the entire Bergthal Colony.[56] Arriving in Manitoba with his complete congregation and settling in the village of Chortitz on the East Reserve in 1875, Wiebe continued his responsibilities as *Ältester* despite personal hardships.[57] For

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[52] Gerhard Wiebe, *Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika*, Documents in Manitoba Mennonite History, No. 1 (Winnipeg: Druckerei des Nordwesten, 1900) , trans. Helen Janzen as *Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America*, (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1981; reprint, Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2001). The German and English editions are available at the MHC; page references are to the reprinted English edition.

[53] G. Wiebe, *Causes*, iii.

[54] Ted E. Friesen, Cornelius Krahn, and Richard D. Thiessen, "Wiebe, Gerhard (1827-1900)," *GAMEO*. December 2005. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/W5430ME.html>.

[55] Cornelius Krahn, "Bergthal Mennonite Settlement (Zaporizhia Oblast, Ukraine)," *GAMEO*. 1953. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/ encyclopedia/contents/B473.html>.

[56] Adolf Ens, "Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe," *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve, 1874-1910: Villages–Biographies–Institutions*, ed. John Dyck (Steinbach MB: The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc., 1994), 313.

[57] During the first three years in Manitoba, Wiebe experienced the death of this wife and three children; see Friesen, Krahn, and Thiessen, "Gerhard Wiebe," *GAMEO*.

reasons that have never been clarified he abruptly resigned from his duties as *Ältester* in 1882. The book was published in 1900, the year of Wiebe's death and twenty-five years after the immigration to Manitoba: clearly he is concerned not only about the earlier event but also about the developments among the Mennonites in Manitoba since that time.

The purpose of the book, according to Wiebe, is to explain the background and the reasons for the emigration[58] and to tell "how the Lord God led us out of Russia with a strong hand and mighty arm."[59] It thus does not purport to be a purely historical account but is specifically written from the author's faith perspective. This also quickly becomes evident in the reading of the text: aside from historical data, there are numerous Scriptural references, notably to the Israelite exodus from Egyptian slavery to the Promised Land.

The author ends the preface—as also the book itself—on a pessimistic note, not only regarding the general situation of the world but also of the Mennonite church itself: "It has become evening in the Christian world . . . the Mennonite people have become tired of listening to God's Word . . . We are nauseated by the old-fashioned teaching, so much so, that many would like to do away with it."[60] While much of the description is couched in general and vague biblical language, a few specific concerns are indicated in the final chapter: schools and education, accepting "worldly offices" (apparently local municipal positions), "ostentatious display of dress" which makes it difficult to

[58] Two specific reasons are given: first, to "save our children from military service and ruin," and second, to preserve the freedom of religion in the schools and churches; see G. Wiebe, *Causes*, 1 and 2.

[59] Ibid., 1.

[60] Ibid., 2.

distinguish between Mennonites and other citizens of the country, ambition and love of money ("as in Noah's time"), marriage with partners of other confessions, legal dealings, taking advantage of each other "through usury, lies and deceit," false teaching and unspecified "bewitching doctrines."[61] One specific concern relates to Bethel College, the "liberal" Mennonite school in Kansas,[62] and the fear that most church leaders "will have turned away from the simple Bethlehem and have gone over to Bethel College."[63] Nonresistance is not addressed directly.

Wiebe sees only three *Ältesten* as having remained faithful to God's calling: (David) Stoesz, (Abraham) Doerksen, and Johann Wiebe—all leaders of conservative Mennonite churches.[64] Gerhard Wiebe had worked together closely with Johann Wiebe throughout the whole emigration and settlement in Manitoba, but in their later years they had a serious falling-out; it is not clear what the conflict was, but it may have been related to Gerhard Wiebe's unspecified "sin" that also led to his resignation as *Ältester* in 1882. This "sin," as well as the unresolved conflict with Johann Wiebe, pained Gerhard Wiebe deeply right to his death.[65] It is also a significant statement that these dedicated church

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[61] Ibid., 67.

[62] Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas was started in the 1880s by Russian Mennonites as one of the earliest Mennonite institutions of higher learning in North America. Its purpose was to prepare teachers and church workers and to preserve the Mennonite heritage, and English was instructed from the outset. Aside from questioning the theological orientation of Bethel, the conservative Mennonites had misgivings about higher education as such. See Peter J. Wedel, "Bethel College (North Newton, Kansas, USA)," *GAMEO*. May 2010. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/B48605.html>.

[63] G. Wiebe, *Causes*, 67.

[64] Ibid., 63. David Stoesz was ordained by Gerhard Wiebe as his assistant, later becoming the leader of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church; Abraham Doerksen was the first *Ältester* of the Sommerfeld Church; Johann Wiebe, a relative of Gerhard Wiebe, was *Ältester* of the Reinländer Church.

[65] This conflict is reflected in Johann Wiebe's letter to Gerhard Wiebe, which is printed in *Die Auswanderung* below (see note 78).

leaders, who emphasized humility, peace, and unity of the Christian community as central convictions and had, in fact, chosen to emigrate from Russia because of them, were not able to find reconciliation between themselves.

Johann Wiebe: *Die Auswanderung von Russland nach Kanada . . . .*

Die Auswanderung von Russland nach Kanada—1875—in Form einer Predigt von unseren [sic] verstorbenen Aeltesten Johann Wiebe . . . ("The Emigration from Russia to Canada—1875—in the Form of a Sermon by our Deceased *Ältester* Johann Wiebe . . .")[66] is, as the title suggests, what might be called a "sermonic travel history." Upon opening the book, it quickly becomes evident that this is not a travelogue or a historical emigration account in the usual sense but rather primarily a sermon by a concerned church leader.

Johann Wiebe (1837-1905) was *Ältester* of the Mennonite Church in the Fürstenland Colony in Russia when the congregation emigrated from Russia in 1875.[67] He refused to accept or compromise with any new regulations by the government, such as the introduction of universal military service, be this in Russia or Canada; in fact, a major reason for his emigration from Russia to Canada was to enable him to rebuild what he considered to be the "pure" church—which had already begun to be too compromised in Russia. In 1880—now in Manitoba—he led in the organization of the Reinländer

[66] The complete, rather cumbersome title of this book reads *Die Auswanderung von Russland nach Kanada—1875—in Form einer Predigt von unseren [sic] verstorbenen Aeltesten Johann Wiebe mit einem Zusatz vom verstorbenen Aeltesten Johann Friesen und andere[n] alte[n] Schriften.* (Cuauhtemoc, Chihuahua, Mexico: Printed at Campo 6 ½ Apartado 297, Cuauhtemoc, 1972). Clearly this is a much later printing than the original. The original date of publication is not indicated; Wiebe's original sermon must have been given before 1905, but the printing must have been after 1935 because the title indicates that both *Ältester* Wiebe and *Ältester* Johann Friesen (1869-1935) had already died. The book is available at the MHC.

[67] Ens, *Subjects*, 21. Additional information can be found in Krahn and Redekopp, "Wiebe, Johann (1837-1905)." A more extensive biography is Peter D. Zacharias's chapter "Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905)" in Ens, *Church, Family and Village*.

Mennonite Church[68] (informally the Old Colony Mennonite Church).[69] Wiebe continued as *Ältester* of this group until his death in 1905. Krahn and Redekopp note that "Johann Wiebe possibly did more than anyone else to develop and maintain the consistently conservative attitude that has characterized the Old Colony Mennonites."[70]

Like Gerhard Wiebe, Johann Wiebe does not directly address the topics of peace or conflict to any extent. *Die Auswanderung von Russland nach Kanada* consists mostly of a review of the Mennonites' migration from Russia to Canada in 1875, couched in biblical terms. It is a complex interweaving of Scripture references, hymns, prayers, and some historical information about the migration with the primary purpose of the spiritual edification of the hearers or readers.[71] A theme that quickly emerges is Wiebe's concern about the deteriorating Mennonite church in Russia because the leaders were not enforcing God's Word strictly enough.[72] This issue came to a head when the Russian government introduced universal compulsory military service; the option of an alternative civilian service, which many other Mennonite church leaders were willing to accept, was unacceptable to Wiebe.[73] For the sake of the integrity of the church he refused all service to the government, even if this meant having to leave the country.

After an Old Testament interlude recounting the Abraham's sojourn into an unknown country (Gen. 12), Wiebe bemoans the hardships of the new homeland in

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[68] Ens, *Subjects*, 23.

[69] Zacharias, "Aeltester Johann Wiebe," 62.

[70] Krahn and Redekopp, "Wiebe, Johann (1837-1905)."

[71] J. Wiebe, *Auswanderung*, 19.

[72] Ibid., 20.

[73] Ibid., 23

Manitoba, again expressing his hope for a return to the pristine church. While specifics are missing, the concern to be faithful to God's calling and to establish the pure church was clearly close to Wiebe's heart.[74]

In a brief postscript to Wiebe's sermon, *Ältester* Johann Friesen, Johann Wiebe's successor as *Ältester*, continues the theme of the disintegration of the church in Russia, Manitoba, and finally even in Mexico.[75] Friesen is especially concerned about the "laxity" of the church, poor parenting, immoral living, and especially the acceptance of "worldly schools" under the British flag—which, as the Mennonites understood all too well, symbolized the whole world view of the British Empire.[76] He ends with the admonition to be faithful, because the end of the world is near.[77]

Similar themes are reflected in a few other short items that complete the book: for example, *Ältester* Peter Wiebe of Rosengart, Manitoba, lying on his deathbed, expresses concerns for the well-being of his wife, the purity of his congregation, and, once again, that the children should not attend secular schools.[78]

A unique, and yet a very significant addition to the book is an unaddressed letter by *Ältester* Johann Wiebe.[79] The introduction suggests it was written to the retired *Ältester* Gerhard Wiebe. It appears that Gerhard Wiebe had requested the response after

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[74]Ibid., 35.

[75]Ibid., 51.

[76]Ibid., 52.

[77]Ibid., 54.

[78]Ibid., 61. No reason is given why this letter, interesting as it is, should be included in the booklet; presumably it was because its theme—concern at the decay of the church—coincided with one of the main themes of the other items included in the book.

[79]Ibid., 75-78.

an unspecified falling-out between the two men who were pivotal leaders of the two largest conservative *Kanadier* Mennonite church groups and also related to each other.[80] While Johann Wiebe with typical humility repeatedly refers to himself as "weak," "unworthy," and "a poor crippled sinner," he refuses any reconciliation until Gerhard Wiebe will have met four conditions: he must confess his (unidentified) "sin" before God, he must confess to the whole church, he must admit his sin to the (unspecified) "apostate brothers" and "turn them around" so they can be "saved" (specific meaning not given), and then, finally, it will be possible to consider a reconciliation with "us" (and again it is unclear if "us" refers to Johann Wiebe himself or to other unnamed parties).[81]

Although the letter leaves much to be desired in terms of its ambiguities, its central thrust is very clear and really quite mind-boggling! Here is a church leader who was so deeply convinced of the principle of peace and nonresistance in the formal sense that he was willing to uproot his family and his whole church community because of it, while at the same time he was unable or unwilling to offer reconciliation to his very close relative and brother in the faith. How is this stance to be understood? It appears to me that the explanation is related to Wiebe's fundamental priorities. It is clear throughout his whole earlier description of the emigration from Russia and the settlement in Manitoba that the crucial issue for him is the preservation of the pure church. He has been concerned about its gradual corruption in Russia, fears a continued deterioration in Manitoba, and sees it as his responsibility to restore the church to its pristine purity. For

[80] Ens, *Subjects*, 21. Henry Gerbrandt writes that Gerhard Wiebe and Johann Wiebe were cousins; Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 80.

[81] Ibid., 77.

Wiebe, the conviction of nonresistance follows from the fundamental concern to obey the Bible's injunctions and be the pure church—but it is only one aspect of the overall faith. When he has to decide between reconciliation and living out the true faith, as he understands it, he has no choice but to opt for the latter.[82]

In summary, the main themes of the book are: first, the commitment to an absolute separation of church and state; second, the concern for eternal salvation and the purity of the church, not only in contrast to the life of the "world" but also in the rejection of any innovations, any "dilutions," in the church itself; and third, the topics of nonresistance and the refusal of military service—hardly mentioned, yet underlying everything else. In the understanding of Johann Wiebe, conflict and particularly warfare belong to the sinful "world" of which the Christian can have no part. It is at once an ironical and a sad statement that Wiebe's refusal to compromise with the "fallen world" extended even to his refusal to make peace with his fellow *Ältester* with whom he had shared the vicissitudes of the migration, settlement, and building the pure church in a new country.

Isaak M. Dyck: *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde . . . .*

The third book to be discussed is entitled *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde von Canada nach Mexiko Vom Aeltesten Isaak M. Dyck* ("Emigration of the

[82] Of course, there may be other explanations; for example, it is sometimes easier to make global statements and public decisions than it is to make peace and to live nonviolently in one's most immediate personal settings. And of course there may well have been personal or other issues involved which are, regrettably, unknown.

Reinländer Mennonite Church from Canada to Mexico by *Ältester* Isaac M. Dyck.")[83] The author, Isaak M. Dyck (1889-1969), was the leader of the Reinländer Church when two-thirds of the church moved to Mexico from 1922-1926 and established the Manitoba Colony there; he was elected *Ältester* of the Reinländer Church in 1933, remaining in this capacity until his death in 1969.[84]

The book is divided into twenty short chapters, starting with the early Christian church, then focusing particularly on the Mennonite experiences in Russia, Canada, and Mexico; the emigration from Canada to Mexico fills the last two-thirds of the book. As in the other two books, the author quotes many Scripture passages and also frequently weaves his own personal memories into the historical description.

The central issue in *Auswanderung* is the so-called "Manitoba school question," the conflict that arose when the Manitoba government began to exert increasing pressure to enforce a unified public school system.[85] The main concern, from Dyck's perspective, was not the change of language from German to English but the Canadian flag which symbolized the required allegiance to Canada and the British king, including the commitment to military service.[86] The Manitoba Mennonites had already begun to be

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[83] Isaak M. Dyck, *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde von Canada nach Mexiko Vom Aeltesten Isaak M. Dyck*. First ed. [*sic*] (Cuauhtemoc Chih[uahua], Mexico: Printed at Imprenta Colonial, Campo 6 ½, Apartado 297, Cuauhtemoc , 1970); second ed. (1971); third ed. (1995).

[84] Alf Redekopp, "Reinlander [*sic*] Mennoniten Gemeinde (Manitoba)," *GAMEO*. January 2004. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/ contents/R4575.html>.

[85] The topic is discussed extensively in Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], chap. 14, "Education: Church v. State."

[86] Dyck, *Auswanderung*, 43. The symbolism of the flag was not a figment of the Mennonites' imagination but quite deliberately intended by the government; in his 1907 election campaign, for example, Premier Rodmond P. Roblin announced his intention to "inculcate feelings of patriotism" and to "blend together the various nationalities in the province into a common citizenship, irrespective of race and creed";

concerned when earlier school legislation had been introduced but had reluctantly complied; the new legislation in the 1920s was even more restrictive, and finally the conservative Mennonites decided that a compromise with the government was no longer possible.[87] The divisions ran very deeply: fellow Mennonites who accepted the legislation were considered "traitors," and the whole experience was compared to the biblical "Tower of Babel."[88]

A second crucial issue, Dyck writes, had arisen with the outbreak of World War I and the introduction of general registration. The Mennonites had come to Canada assured of exemption from military service—one of their main conditions for choosing Canada—and now feared that registration would become a potential first step to conscription. The anxiety about conscription was allayed by government reassurances, but the Mennonites also felt the growing animosity among the local non-Mennonite neighbours who saw their piety as hypocritical. Dyck himself was deeply pained by the behaviour of some of the Mennonite youth:

> It was sad to see our young people. Yes, in one pocket the young men carried the cards from the *Ältester*, which would exempt them from the military service. But in the other pocket they carried their whisky bottles and went confidently to the drinking and gaming houses to indulge in godless living.[89]

Dyck provides further information about the life and the problems of the Mennonite settlers after they arrived in Mexico. The issue of control of schools had to be

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the Union Jack would encourage the students to become "filled with the traditions of the British flag" and ready to defend them; see Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [1], 345-346.

[87] Dyck, *Auswanderung*, 43.

[88] Ibid., 48.

[89] Ibid., 38.

faced again; the Mennonites were also plagued with vandalism, robbery, and even murder by Mexicans, and these experiences raised theological and practical questions about the validity of the nonresistant stance of the Mennonites; and there were issues of immoral behavior, like drunkenness, among the Mennonites themselves.[90] The author includes numerous examples of difficulties and tragedies, and his overall mood is bleak.

As in the other two books, the life experiences are interpreted from a faith perspective, and many Scripture texts and allusions are interwoven with the story line. The hardships are interpreted as being God's way of testing his followers, just as Israel was tested in the Old Testament. The book ends with final admonitions, as the author appears to be near the end of his life. Dyck closes with a prayer and hymn which summarize his conviction that this life is difficult and engulfed in sin and tragedy, and he looks forward with anticipation to eternal life where his soul will experience freedom "like a dove that is released from a cage."[91]

Military exemption and nonresistance are not the major focal points of the book, which is more like a sermonic lecture to encourage the readers to remain true in their faith and to endure the hardships of this life in preparation for the joys of eternal life. However, if "actions speak louder than words," the whole history of the migrations is in itself a vivid testimony to the deeply held peace conviction of the Reinländer Church: this was the primary reason for leaving Russia, and it was again the primary reason for leaving Canada in search of greater freedom in Mexico. In Dyck's description of the Mennonites' experiences in Mexico, the issue of nonresistance surfaces very practically

[90] Ibid., 150.

[91] Ibid., 224.

when the settlers faced increasing violence from the neighbouring Mexicans; this issue is not resolved. Dyck also acknowledges that the conflicts are not only between the church and the outside "world" but also within the church itself; it is really a battle on a spiritual, rather than a merely physical plane, a battle between the forces of good and evil, between God and Satan. While he understands life in these metaphysical terms, in looking back Dyck still believes that emigration from Canada was the only solution to the Canadian dilemma. Yet the closing mood of the book continues to be one of darkness, resignation, and pessimism, even as Dyck affirms his faith in a better life hereafter.

Summary

The three books are remarkably similar, coming, as they do, out of similar contexts. The authors were all long-time *Ältesten* of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites. They all wrote their histories near the end of their lives, with—for better or worse—the perspective of distance. Gerhard Wiebe's *Ursachen* . . . was published in 1900, the year of his death, about 25 years after the events of the immigration. Johann Wiebe's *Auswanderung* . . . cannot be precisely dated but also appears to have been written some time after the immigration took place; he must have written before his death in 1905, but the book was published in 1935 at the earliest. Isaac M. Dyck's book was printed in 1970, the year after his death, also forty or more years after the migration that he describes. In all cases, the authors are older men, looking back at experiences that happened much earlier, and reflecting on their significance from a faith perspective.

In all three books, one of the primary underlying issues is the Mennonites' stance on nonresistance—although in all cases it is hardly discussed. It is simply a "given," an

axiom, a starting assumption that is not up for discussion, the reason for the whole migration that is being described.

All three books reveal much about the overall faith of the conservatives, as experienced by the writers. It is, first, a biblicistic faith—many Bible verses are quoted or alluded to throughout the books. Gerhard Wiebe, for example, begins his book with accounts of Israel's Exodus and the crossing of the Jordan River (interpreted allegorically as entry into the heavenly Canaan), and continues with a brief survey of Israelite history, the life of Christ, and the early Christian church, before he describes the Mennonite migration; he repeatedly warns of straying from the true biblical faith.[92]

Second, it is a humble faith—the authors mention their "unworthiness" numerous times. Johann Wiebe, to name just one example, writes of his reaction to a meeting with other Mennonite church leaders with the words: "Sighing and crying to my God in heaven on the whole trip from Chortitza to Fürstenland, I drove back . . . . May the Lord have mercy on me, a poor sinner, and grant me help, strength, and support . . . ."[93] This humility is emphasized so often, that it becomes tempting to see it as merely a figure of speech. There is more to it than that, however: even as it might suggest low self-esteem and self-deprecation of the *Ältesten*, it is also indicative of their deep conviction of the omniscient power and the perfect goodness of God.

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[92] For example, "All this happened to them [the Israelites] because of their false worship. This is written for our instruction, because whoever begins to strive after worldly wisdom has already lost a large part of the straight and narrow path . . . " (G. Wiebe, *Causes*, 6)

[93] "*Seufzend und schreiend zu meinem Gott im Himmel, auf der ganzen Reise von Chortitza nach dem Fürstenlande, fuhr ich zurück . . . . Der Herr wolle sich doch über mich armen Sünder erbarmen und mir Hilfe, Kraft und Beistand schenken . . .*" (J. Wiebe, *Auswanderung,* 23)

Third, there is continual concern for the purity of the church and the deplorable corruption and decay that is occurring everywhere in and around the church: in this concern there is no room for compromise. All the writers, as *Ältesten* responsible for the spiritual well-being of their congregations, feel this burden very keenly. For Gerhard Wiebe this deterioration of the church is evident in such matters as too much education, "arrogance and pride of fashion," intermarriage into "other confessions," ambition, love of money, and the loss of brotherly love.[94] Isaac Dyck emphasizes the same concern, when he writes that "our ancestors have always chosen the way of the Cross . . . as the surest way to achieve the salvation of their souls as the end of their faith."[95]

Fourth, as already suggested by Dyck's words, it is a faith that expects suffering (the "Way of the Cross"—"*der Kreuzesweg*"). This is a theme that recurs repeatedly, notably in the emigrations with bitter departures and harsh beginnings in a new land. It is not that suffering is only seen as inevitable; it is also that suffering is part of the way God tests people of faith, just as it occurred in the biblical accounts. Isaac Dyck notes: "The entire holy Scriptures, especially the Old Testament, seem to be nothing else than a book of martyrs."[96]

These convictions form the overall context for the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites' stance on nonresistance: their biblicism, their humility, their concern for the purity of the church, and their expectation of suffering for being true to their faith. These

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[94] Ibid., 66.

[95] "*Unsere Vorfahren haben immer den Kreuzesweg . . . als den sichersten erwählet, dass Ende ihres Glaubens[,] nämlich der Seelen Seligkeit zu erreichen.*" (Dyck, *Auswanderung*, 6).

[96] "*Die ganze heilige Schrift, besonders das alte [sic] Testament, scheint weiter nichts als ein Märtyrer-Buch zu sein . . .*"; Ibid., 3.

defining characteristics stood in sharp contrast to the norms they saw in society around them: ambition, arrogance, competition, ostentatious "success," conflicts settled by litigation, revenge, and if needed warfare, patriotism and national allegiances, rather than the biblical standards of love, humility, and forgiveness for all people. Nonresistance was explicitly mandated in the Bible but also the natural outgrowth of the sum total of their convictions: it was simple, straightforward *nonresistance*—not a politically motivated pacifism with the purpose of changing the policies of governments or the opinions of their opponents. If the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites had been given to pithy one-liners, they might have said, not with arrogance or great self-confidence but with a humble and yet profound sincerity: "This is where we stand; this is what we believe; we can do no other. God help us!"

CHAPTER 3

CONSERVATIVE *KANADIER* MENNONITE SERMONS

Introduction

The search for source materials related to the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites and their peace stance led me to their sermons, and these present a second perspective on the topic. Symbolized by the central place of the pulpit in the Mennonite meetinghouse, rather than an altar, preaching has long been at the heart of Anabaptist and Mennonite worship and instruction.[1]

Sermons are, of course, also a specific genre of literature. They have their context within a particular religious worldview, most immediately the Christian faith.[2] More specifically, in Protestant churches sermons have always been seen as central to the worship service.[3] Sermons may vary in style, length, and emphasis, but, as Eugene Peterson writes, the pastor's task is "to keep telling the basic [biblical] story, representing the presence of the [Holy] Spirit, insisting on the priority of God, speaking the biblical words of command and promise and invitation."[4] Sermons are thus not primarily recitations of data or lectures or didactic speeches; they may include aspects of all of

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[1] Harold S. Bender, "Sermons," *GAMEO*. 1959. Accessed. 05 March 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/sermons>.

[2] Sermons in other religious traditions, such as Judaism, have some different characteristics but are beyond the scope of the present thesis. See, for example, the article "Preachers and Preaching" in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Preachers_and_Preaching>.

[3] William H. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship* (Louisville KY: The Westminster Press, 1984), 63.

[4] Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 25.

these, but these are not their defining characteristics. Sermons have the purpose of educating but also of inspiring, encouraging, comforting, and motivating the listeners, based particularly on the story and the message of the biblical faith. Sermons are typically oral communication, meant to be spoken and heard, not read: an important aspect of the message lies in the form of communication itself, "the medium is the message,"[5] to use McLuhan's familiar aphorism. This insight also points to another crucial component of the sermon: the sincerity and integrity of the preacher. While, for example, the lifestyle of a mathematics professor may have little connection with the axioms and equations being taught, the lifestyle of a preacher has direct implications for the credibility of the sermon. Finally, writes Peterson, the "bottom line" is that "the pastor's responsibility is to keep the [Christian] community attentive to God."[6]

Broadly speaking, these criteria would also apply to Mennonite sermons. While the Swiss-South German Mennonites developed an extemporaneous style of preaching throughout their history, the Dutch-North German-Russian Mennonites developed a tradition of writing out and reading sermons. This finally led to the practice among some of the Russian Mennonites that no preachers would write their own sermons because "to preach ex tempore was condemned as pride."[7] This, writes Bender, "was once the tradition among all the Mennonites in Manitoba and is still the case among all groups of

[5] Willimon, *Preaching*, 77.

[6] Peterson, *Angles*, 2. It is a responsibility, as many cynics have observed and as Peterson acknowledges, that many pastors fail to live up to.

[7] Bender, "Sermons."

Old Colony [and other conservative *Kanadier*] Mennonites."[8] While the publication of sermons was almost unknown among the early Anabaptists and Mennonites, later Dutch and German preachers came to publish "an almost endless stream of sermon collections," among the most prodigious being Jakob Denner of Hamburg.[9] Some of these sermon collections became resources for other Mennonite preachers, including the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites. Following the style of early Anabaptist preaching, however, conservative Mennonite sermons gradually evolved so that they were not rhetorically embellished speeches but rather simple devotional and hortatory reflections on biblical texts or themes.[10]

When I began my research into the sermons of the conservative *Ältesten* and preachers,[11] I was not fully aware of their approach to sermon writing. I anticipated that

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[8] Ibid. Bender's article, focusing on Mennonite sermons, is insightful but somewhat limited in that it was written in 1959.

[9] Ibid. Jakob Denner (1659-1746) was an influential, pietistically inclined Mennonite preacher in Hamburg-Altona whose preaching was appreciated by Christians of many denominations, including German and Danish nobility; he was certainly not a "conservative Mennonite," as the term has been used here. Neff and Friedmann note that Denner's "extremely long and emotional printed sermons served both as devotional reading and as material to read verbatim from the pulpit at Sunday services"; see Christian Neff and Robert Friedmann, "Denner, Jakob (1659-1746)," *GAMEO*. 1956. Accessed 08 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/ encyclopedia/contents/denner_jakob_1659_1746>. Some of Denner's sermon books, known to have been used in the Kleine Gemeinde in Manitoba, were collected by Delbert F. Plett (conversation with William Schroeder, 21 December 2010); I was not able to locate these books.

[10] Bender, "Sermons."

[11] Due to the different contexts there is some difficulty with the English translation of the German *Prediger*. Bender notes that the "preacher" is widely used; "minister" was introduced more recently when Mennonite churches began to adopt the pastoral system of church leadership. In Russia only the terms *Prediger* and *Ältester* were used: while the *Ältester* was responsible for the overall well-being of the congregation, one or more *Prediger* had the responsibilities of preaching and assisting the *Ältester* with the spiritual care of the members. The preachers were normally lay members of the congregation—farmers, tradesmen, or teachers, rarely with any formal theological training; it was taken for granted that all preachers of the time were men. In the early twentieth century this was beginning to change among some of the Mennonites in Russia and also among North American Mennonites, notably after World War II. However, the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites being considered here followed the older tradition and would not have been affected by these changes. See Harold S. Bender, "Preacher," *GAMEO*. 1959. Accessed 05 March 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/ encyclopedia/contents/preacher>.

because most of them were deeply involved in the issues related to military service—or, to rephrase it positively, in the promotion of the nonresistant stance—their sermons would offer many useful insights. My findings turned out to be different than expected.

To begin with, I was pleasantly surprised to find a large collection of sermons in the archives of the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg: in any case, there would be an abundance of primary source material to work with. The holdings include sermons of about two hundred *Ältesten* and preachers, with files ranging in scope from single sermons to large collections. Most of the sermons are written out in full, sometimes on loose sheets of paper, frequently in cheap notebooks ("scribblers") of 25-30 pages; all are in High German, the usual language of Mennonite worship until World War II.[12] The sermons are written in Gothic script, and especially the earlier ones are works of art—reminders that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries penmanship was a valued skill.[13] Regrettably, in most cases it is difficult to identify the context of a sermon because there is no indication of the date when it was first written, no author, and no reference of any kind to earlier sources or resources that may have been used. Sometimes the name of the preacher is noted, often added later (for example, as a label glued onto the cover of a notebook). On the other hand, a record, indicating when and where a sermon was preached, is added to many of the sermons.[14]

[12] The German language of the sermons is almost uniformly of excellent quality; occasionally traces of Low German grammar can be detected, e.g., confusion between the dative and accusative case.

[13] See Sermon Facsimile 1 in Appendix Two..

[14] See Sermon Facsimile 2 in Appendix Two.

Since it is, of course, impossible to review all of the sermons, I have selected six sermons as a sampling of the preaching in the different conservative churches, spanning the period from the arrival of the *Kanadier* Mennonites in Manitoba in 1874 to the end of World War II.[15] The sermons represent various conservative Mennonite denominations: the early Bergthaler Church (sermon by Gerhard Wiebe), the Chortitzer Church (sermon by David Stoesz), the Sommerfelder Church (early sermon by Abraham Doerksen and a later one by Peter A. Toews), the Kleine Gemeinde (sermon by David P. Reimer), and the Reinländer Church (sermon by Jakob F. Penner). The Mennonite Heritage Centre also has sermons from the later Bergthaler Church, when it had moved into a more progressive direction,[16] as well as some from the Rudnerweider MC.[17] No sermons were

[15] Appendix One gives a summary overview of the included preachers.

[16] There are, for example, about five hundred sermons and sermon outlines by David Schulz (1897-1976), the long-time Bergthaler Church *Ältester* who also co-chaired the *Ältestenrat* during World War II. While the overall content of Schulz's sermons is similar to that of the conservative *Ältesten*, his format and style are quite different: his sermons are much shorter, he focuses more on a single text, provides background information about the context, makes applications to the present; most of his sermons are in German, but he also quotes English hymns; he relates the text mainly to the hearer's personal faith or the family context, reminds them that they live under the care of a loving heavenly Father. However, war and peace are, as with the conservative sermons, hardly mentioned. See "Schulz, David, 1897-1976," Index of Personal Holdings at the MHC. Further information is available in Henry J. Gerbrandt and Richard D. Thiessen, "Schulz, David (1897-1976)," *GAMEO.* January 2006. Accessed 16 February 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/ S385ME.html>. For a more extensive discussion of David Schulz and the Bergthaler MC see Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith.*

[17] The MHC holds seven sermons of Wilhelm H. Falk, the first *Ältester* of the Rudnerweider MC. Falk was ordained as a Sommerfelder minister in 1927; however, in 1936, when a spiritual revival movement swept through southern Manitoba, he joined the new evangelically-minded Rudnerweider Church, serving as the first *Ältester* from 1937 through the difficult years of World War II until his retirement in 1955. Falk's sermons are similar in form to the conservative sermons, but they are written in a livelier manner; mostly the sermons relate extensively to the indicated text with few cross-references to others; the hymns that are often found in the conservative sermons are largely missing in Falk's sermons, and he often begins with a contemporary issue to which he then links his biblical exposition. As with the other conservative sermons, there are no direct references to nonresistance in Falk's sermons, but, similar to the other *Ältesten*, he understands life as a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil which Christians are called to join—in the sure confidence that the faithful are in God's safe keeping. For additional information see Jack Heppner, *Search for Renewal: The Story of the Rudnerweider/Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, 1937-1987* (Winnipeg: Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, 1987) and Mary Neufeld, *A Prairie Pilgrim: Wilhelm H. Falk* (Winnipeg: Mary Neufeld, 2008).

available from the smaller groups, the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite or the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church (Brudertaler).[18]

The selected sermons were all delivered by men who were *Ältesten*—or preachers who later became *Ältesten*—of their churches, providing major leadership and direction for the churches for many decades. They are, in other words, not sermons of preachers who were on the periphery but of men who were at the core of defining their church life. Several were also centrally involved members of the *Ältestenrat* during World War II.[19]

Six Sermons

The sermons follow a conspicuously similar pattern. They begin with the formulaic header "*Im Namen Jesu*" ("In the name of Jesus," often abbreviated "*I.N.J.*"); typically, there is no title; an invocation is a standard opening for all sermons, often using stock words or phrases.[20] Usually one or more prayers are interspersed throughout the sermons; often the congregation is asked to kneel for silent prayer. Typical sermons begin with an "introduction" of several pages, which is followed by the main "sermon" of 15-20 or more pages. This sermon may relate to the primary biblical text or others as well. Typically, sermons address the topics of sin and salvation, eternal life, and living godly lives in general terms, and there are nearly no illustrations or specific applications

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[18] These Mennonite groups, also part of the renewal movements that swept the conservative Mennonite churches at various times, tended to have more extemporaneous preaching and had fewer preserved sermons in any case (conversation with Royden Loewen, 9 November, 2010).

[19] Peter A. Toews co-chaired the *Ältestenrat* with David Schulz during most of its meetings, while David P. Reimer served as secretary. The *Ältestenrat* is discussed more extensively in Chapter 4.

[20] For example, Gerhard Wiebe opens his sermon, "May grace, compassion, love, and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ in the accompanying power of his Holy Spirit be with the present assembly . . .. Amen."

related to contemporary life. Usually they end with the challenge to turn to God, to make one's peace with God, or to decide to live a godly life while there is still time. As a rule, the sermons end with a closing prayer or a formulaic benediction.

Gerhard Wiebe: Sermon for Communion (1862-1913)

As outlined in Chapter 2, Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) grew up in the Bergthal Colony in South Russia, becoming *Ältester* in 1866 and the church leader primarily responsible for the emigration of the entire Bergthal Colony from Russia to southern Manitoba. Wiebe arrived in Manitoba in 1875, settled in the village of Chortitz in the East Reserve, and continued to provide leadership for the church in both the East and West Reserves until his resignation as *Ältester* in 1882. Nonresistance was one of Wiebe's fundamental convictions, and as historian Adolf Ens has written, "for Wiebe the central issue in the decision to leave Russia was the prospect of military conscription."[21] This massive resettlement project became a dramatic example, as happened repeatedly with the *Kanadier*, of "actions speaking louder than words."

The Mennonite Heritage Centre has one sermon by Gerhard Wiebe in its archival holdings.[22] The original German sermon has no title; the English translation, one of only a few conservative Mennonite sermons that have been translated and published, is entitled "Sermon for Communion, 1862."[23] It is dated "4th February 1862"—a time when Wiebe would have been about thirty-five years old, still in Russia, and not yet

[21] Ens, "Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe," 314.

[22] Gerhard Wiebe, [Untitled German handwritten sermon.] Original MS, Vol. 2122-10, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg. See two facsimile pages in Appendix Two.

[23] Gerhard Wiebe, "Sermon for Communion, 1862," trans. Ben Hoeppner, *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve, 1874-1910: Villages–Biographies–Institutions*, ed. John Dyck, 381-394. Steinbach MB: The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc., 1994.

elected as *Ältester*. Following the migration to Canada the attached record indicates that the sermon was preached another thirty times or so, from 1888 to 1913, over a period of twenty-five years that extended well beyond the time of Wiebe's death.

The overall focus of the sermon is not on peace or nonresistance—in fact, the topic is hardly even mentioned. In the introduction the focus is on communion as related to the Passover in the Old Testament; there is the call to remember the saving act of Jesus, a reminder of God's grace for all sinners, and the challenge to submit totally to Christ. In the second major section Wiebe reviews the biblical story of creation, sin, and salvation; the focus is on the reconciling death of Christ and then on the text from Rev. 3:20: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." Again, Wiebe challenges his hearers to leave their way of sin, to repent, to ask for forgiveness, and to resolve to sin no more: "Oh, beloved brethren and sisters, . . . if we are to experience this salvation, then we must yield ourselves entirely to Jesus . . .."[24]

In the concluding section the hearers are once again admonished to leave worldly lusts and to prepare for communion as part of being reconciled with God. If anyone has unresolved quarrels, they should be settled before communion is taken.[25]

Does the sermon offer help in determining the Wiebe's stance on peace? As observed about conservative sermons overall, this sermon also does not address the specific topic of nonresistance or participation in the military directly. However, it does speak of the work of Jesus in reconciling God and all of humankind: "He came not only

[24] "Sermon for Communion," 390.

[25] Ibid., 392.

to friends, but also to His enemies. He came to act as a mediator and substitute between God and us."[26] It also speaks of the expectation of the Christian's attitudes and behaviours, stressing the danger of the temptations of pride, jealousy, hatred, and other destructive attitudes that easily lead to conflict; finding peace with God and one's neighbours is central to a harmonious and peaceful life. And certainly there is the challenge to the congregation to reconcile any quarrels before coming to communion:

> "But those who have hatred, jealousy and strife with their neighbour from one day until the next and who live in sordid disputation, how will you prevail before God? Or dare you approach the table of the Lord Jesus, who is love personified? . . . But now we must put off all these; [*sic*] ". . . anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Col. 3:8). Yes, we must also put away all strife, for the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 5:25, "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."[27]

While the topic of nonresistance is only implied in the sermon, the positive challenge of living in peace and harmony with God and others in the community—here meaning the church community—is clearly central. It is in the context of this overall ethos that the nonresistant stance also finds its place.

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[26] Ibid., 386.

[27] Ibid., 392. Krahn and Rempel observe that "moral integrity and unity and peace among the members were prerequisites for the observance of the Lord's Supper." In the Mennonite understanding of communion it was always emphasized that any conflicts between members should be resolved before coming to the Lord's Supper; if this was impossible some congregations would not observe the Lord's Supper or individuals not "at peace" with fellow men and God would stay away. See Krahn, Cornelius and John D. Rempel. "Communion." *GAMEO*. 1989. Accessed 06 March 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/C654ME.html>.

David Stoesz: Sermon for an Ordination (1892 and 1894)

David Stoesz (1842-1903) was born in the Bergthal Colony, Russia.[28] He was elected to the ministry in Russia in 1869, came to Canada with his family in 1874, and settled in the East Reserve. Here Stoesz continued with his responsibilities as minister in the Bergthaler Church (later renamed the Chortitzer Church), was ordained as assistant *Ältester* in 1879, and succeeded Gerhard Wiebe as *Ältester* in 1882. Stoesz was fifteen years younger than Wiebe, and while he still represented a link to Russia he also belonged to the next generation of leaders.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Bergthaler Church in the West Reserve went through a major schism in the 1890s, resulting in the development of the more progressive Bergthaler Church and the conservative Sommerfelder Church.[29] Stoesz made several attempts to bring about reconciliation between the divided groups but was not able to effect a reconciliation. Rather ironically, he was subsequently invited to officiate at the ordination services of both new leaders, *Ältester* Funk in 1892 and *Ältester*

[28] "David Stoesz family fonds," Index of Personal Holdings at the MHC. The Centre holds several sermons by Stoesz, catalogued in Volume 1559. Additional information on the life and work of David Stoesz is available in the article "David Stoesz (1842-1903)" by Conrad Stoesz, et al., *GAMEO*, and the more extensive article "Aeltester David Stoesz" by Dennis Stoesz in Dyck, *Historical Sketches*, 322-328.

[29] Church schisms, sometimes called the "Anabaptist disease" ("*Täuferkrankheit*"), are a major recurring theme in Anabaptist and Mennonite history—and, of course, also raise questions about the genuine peacefulness of the churches, their leaders, and members. While this phenomenon, not unrelated to the congregational structure of the churches, is often interpreted negatively (i.e., that members cannot work through their disagreements in amicable ways and remain united), it can be said on the positive side that most schisms have not ended in bloodshed (admittedly, this is not a very strong argument, considering the deep-seated hurts that have sometimes resulted from schisms). See Adolf Ens, "Schisms," *GAMEO*. 1989. Web. 15 February 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/S341ME.html>.

Doerksen in 1894.[30] Stoesz continued his leadership until his death in 1903. Nothing is explicitly indicated about his stance on nonresistance.

"A Sermon on Ordination of a Bishop"[31] was written for the ordination of an *Ältester*, a relatively rare event, considering the length of a typical leader's tenure.[32] While intended for a specific purpose, the outline of the sermon is a familiar one: it begins with a traditional invocation, the introduction, and an opening prayer, then the Scripture reading, 1 Peter 5:2-5,[33] and the sermon proper. The sermon divides into two parts, the first dealing with the meaning of church leadership and responsibilities of the *Ältester*, the second dealing with the responsibilities of the congregation toward the leader. This leads to the act of ordination. A traditional benediction follows, the new *Ältester* is welcomed, and the congregation is admonished to support the new leader.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the sermon does not mention the topics of peace or nonresistance directly: its focus was, after all, on a specific church rite. However, the text from 1 Peter is significant for what it says about the relationship between the leader

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[30] Dennis Stoesz, "Aeltester David Stoesz," 328. Stoesz's ordination sermon is one of the few that has been translated and published.

[31] David Stoesz, "A Sermon on Ordination of a Bishop," trans. Ben Hoeppner, *Historical Sketches*, ed. John Dyck, 404-409. Stoesz's sermon is one of the few that has been translated and published.

[32] The note at the end of the sermon states: "This message was presented on the last Easter holiday [11 April, 1892] for the ordination of Johan[n] Funk as bishop and on 18 March, 1984, for the ordination of Abraham Doerksen as bishop"; see Stoesz, "A Sermon on Ordination . . .," 409. In contrast to this seemingly sparse use, Stoesz's baptismal sermon was preached forty-three times in the twenty years from 1881-1901, while the communion sermon was preached more than fifty times during the same period ("David Stoesz family fonds," Index of Personal Holdings at the MHC).

[33] 1 Peter 5:2-5 reads: "[I exhort the elders among you] to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'"

and the church members: the *Ältester* is to exercise leadership of the "flock" under the headship of the "chief shepherd" and to do so "willingly," not "lording it" over the congregation but by being "an example to the flock." The congregation is to "submit" to the authority of the leader. Finally, all are to be subject to one another and to "be clothed with humility," because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."[34] The sermon expands on these thoughts, emphasizing the responsibility of the *Ältester* to "proclaim the counsel of God for the salvation of their [the congregation's] souls" and to "seek the best for the church."[35] The familiar theme of humility and submission in all relations again surfaces.[36]

An implicit reference to the topic of peace is contained in one of the questions posed to the candidate for ordination: "Do you promise in respect to church matters, particularly as regards the doctrine, not to introduce anything new, but to maintain the old fundamental regulations as contained in the Holy Scriptures . . .?" [37] While "loving one's enemy" was not mentioned specifically, this was certainly part of the traditional doctrine and thus included in the commitment asked of the new *Ältester.*

It may be worth noting that the sermon was first written—or copied—in 1892,[38] at a time when the Mennonite stance of nonresistance was not being particularly challenged. On the other hand, Stoesz's attempt to mediate the conflict between the two church

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[34] References are taken from the New Revised Standard Bible.

[35] Stoesz, "A Sermon on Ordination," 405.

[36] For example, "O, with these words I would like to exhort you, beloved brethren and sisters, so that in genuine humility you might esteem your ministers, especially the bishop, who is worthy of all honour"; ibid., 407.

[37] Ibid., 408.

[38] See note 9 above.

factions had just failed and must have been on his mind at this time; however, this experience, with its background or possible consequences, is not even hinted at. Another aspect related to the topic of peace, again only implicitly, is simply the fact that Stoesz was invited to lead in the ordination of the *Ältesten* of both groups. This doubtlessly also reflects the deep respect which the Russian Mennonites traditionally felt for the ritual of ordination and for an ordained person: these deep-seated convictions would have taken precedence over any conflicts within the church. Also, it is ironical—and not clear whether intentional or not—that Stoesz delivered the identical sermon at both services. So, while the general direction of the sermon is clear, there are also contradictions and paradoxes in the teaching and actual living out of the Mennonite peace stance!

Abraham Doerksen: Sermon on New Year's Eve (ca. 1893)

Abraham Doerksen (1852-1929) grew up in the Bergthal Colony in Russia. He migrated to Canada in 1874, settling in the East Reserve and then moving to the village of Sommerfeld in the West Reserve about 1880. After the 1892 Bergthaler schism Doerksen was elected as a minister in 1893 and later in the same year as the first *Ältester* of the new Sommerfelder Mennonite Church; he was ordained by *Ältester* David Stoesz on 18 March, 1894.[39]

Like Wiebe and Stoesz, Doerksen represented a link to the old homeland, since he was born in Russia, although he was not part of the church leadership there. Historian Jacob Peters points out that *Ältester* Doerksen faced four major issues during his time of

[39]"Abraham Doerksen fonds," MHC Personal Holdings Index and the archival holdings in Vol. 2230. Also see Conrad Stoesz and Richard D. Thiessen, "Doerksen, Abraham (1852-1929)," *GAMEO*. December 2005. Accessed 08 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/ D64.html>. More extensive information is available in Jacob E. Peters' article "Ältester Abraham Doerksen, 1852-1929," Chap. 8 in *Church, Family and Village*, 109-124.

leadership in Manitoba: helping the Sommerfelder and Chortitzer Mennonites in Saskatchewan resolve their leadership issues, dealing with educational programs, responding to the question of military conscription, and dealing with emigration.[40] During World War I, when the Canadian government ordered registration as a potential first step toward military conscription, Doerksen was elected to the committee to confer with the government about the Mennonites' continued military exemption.[41] The meeting with the officials in Ottawa was satisfactory, and in response the Mennonites volunteered to take up a collection for "war sufferers," to be sent on to the government.[42] Following the War, when the Manitoba government enacted laws which proscribed the Mennonites' earlier school privileges, Doerksen led the emigration of about six hundred Sommerfelder members from Manitoba and Saskatchewan to northern Mexico in 1922.[43] He died in Mexico at the age of seventy-seven in 1929.

As far as nonresistance is concerned, the biographical information documents Doerksen's extensive involvement in the issues of non-participation in wartime activities.[44] With other Mennonite leaders he struggled to find a way for the Mennonites to be good citizens of Canada while remaining faithful to their long tradition of nonresistance; ultimately, this led him to choose his faith tradition and leave the country.

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[40] Peters, "Ältester Abraham Doerksen," 112.

[41] Ibid., 117. The other representatives were Benjamin Ewert and Heinrich Doerksen from Manitoba, as well as David Toews and Klaas Peters from Saskatchewan.

[42] Ibid., 118 and 119. In 1917 the churches forwarded $5,500 in relief funds to the National Service of Canada, and in 1918 the Sommerfelder Churches alone donated $46,000 to the Red Cross.

[43] Ibid., 121.

[44] Ibid., 117; there is extended discussion on this topic in the section "Non-resistance," 117-120.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre houses, among biographical information about Doerksen and church registers, and a sermon that is entitled "*Neujahrs-Predigt über Römer Kap. 2-29*" ("New Year's Sermon based on Romans 2:29").[45] The date of the sermon is unclear but the most likely one is 31 December, 1893.[46] The sermon is introduced with a New Year's hymn of eight verses, followed by the standard abbreviation "*I.N.J.*" and an invocation. Many Scriptural references follow, but no one Bible text is emphasized in particular; this is rather unexpected, since Rom. 2:29 is specifically included in the title.[47]

Several themes emerge in the sermon: the call to be grateful for the undeserved support of God during the past year; God's grace is available for all who are willing to repent of their sin; life is not permanent, and death can come quickly and unexpectedly; Jesus Christ is Redeemer and Saviour; the prince of darkness will continue to tempt all people, even those who are already saved by grace, and it is necessary to continually test one's faith and motives; at the beginning of the New Year God's Word reminds us to

[45] Abraham Doerksen, "Neujahrs-Predigt über Römer Kap. 2-29." Original MS, Vol. 2230, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg. The original sermon fills twenty-six pages of a small notebook, and there is also a German typed copy.

[46] The notation at the end of the handwritten manuscript reads "31 Dezember, 189_," with the last digit erased; in the typed copy the date has been completed as "1896," but this is probably incorrect since there is another notation that the sermon was also preached in the village of Strasberg on 1 January, 1893.

[47] Rom. 2:29 reads: "Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart—it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from the others but from God" (NRSV). This seems like a rather odd verse for a New Year's sermon. David Schroeder, who has studied Sommerfelder preaching and, in particular, Abraham Doerksen's sermons, comments that Doerksen's sermons on the Sunday after Christmas and on New Year's Day "consistently focused on repentance and forgiveness for the failures experienced during the year and on a call to newness of life" and that Rom. 1:29 [*sic*] was one of his favorite texts. See David Schroeder, "Worship and Teaching in the Sommerfeld Church," Chap. 9 in *Church, Family and Village*, 127.

serve God alone and not to get tempted by other idols. The sermon concludes with a familiar closing benediction.[48]

The theme of peace is not a major one in Doerksen's New Year's sermon which, like the others already considered, focuses on repenting of one's sins and following Christ in daily life. "A true Christian must be prepared for battle his whole life. Yes, a Christian must learn and grow as long as he lives." General references to the temptations of the "prince of darkness" and "fleshly desires" are never spelled out more specifically. Similarly, the "total commitment" of following Christ is also not spelled out, aside from needing to "give up all else."[49] One unusual comment relates to the regrettable schisms in the church, but again it is not developed any further.

Thus the peace stance, as in the two previous sermons, is included in the general admonition to repent and "follow Christ" but not emphasized in particular. Once again, the date of the sermon may be significant: in the 1890s there was no particular external challenge to the Mennonites' peace conviction, so that Doerksen would not have had any reason to emphasize the topic particularly. From the biographical information about Doerksen it is known that later he was deeply involved in the issues of war and nonresistance, but in this sermon they are not significant. The strongest reference to

[48] Schroeder comments, "The [sermon] texts of Ältester Doerksen were most often suited to call people to commit themselves to Christ. . . . It was made clear that it was not enough to confess in word or to understand with the mind, but required a change of heart and a new relationship to Christ." See Schroeder, "Worship and Teaching . . .," 128.

[49] Schroeder comments on the absence of specific ethical teaching: "Texts used to exhort people and to call people to repentance, seem at first to be very general. . . . The reason for this may well be that they emphasized character (who you are in Christ) rather than ethics (right and wrong in terms of acts)." See Schroeder, "Worship and Teaching . . .," 129.

peace comes at the end of the sermon with the general admonition, "Pursue peace with everyone and a life of holiness."[50]

Peter A. Toews: Sermon for Catechism Instruction (1930)

Peter A. Toews (1877-1961) was born in the Chortitza Colony, Russia in 1877, coming to Canada with his parents in 1892 at age of 15 and settling in Manitoba's West Reserve.[51] Toews farmed and was active in business, community organizations, and municipal government; he was reeve of the Rural Municipality of Rhineland from 1920-29, and from 1922-1926 he chaired the board of the Mennonite Educational Institute.[52]

Toews was ordained as a minister of the Sommerfelder Church in 1931, at the age of fifty-four, then went on to serve as *Ältester* for twenty more years. His ordination represents several further developments for the *Kanadier* church: first, Toews was born in Russia but during the time when the emigration was already in full swing; he came to Manitoba about fifteen years later, when only a few Mennonite families were still emigrating. Second, Toews was ordained as minister and *Ältester* quite late in his life, following a successful life of farming, business, community, and political involvement; of these, the last was the most conspicuous, considering the hesitancy in the conservative Mennonite churches about any political involvement, at least on a larger scale.[53] Third,

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[50] The German original reads: "*Jaget nach dem Frieden mit jederman und der Heiligung*."

[51] "Toews, Peter A., (1877-1961)," Index of Personal Holdings at the MHC. Also see Peter D. Zacharias, "The Sommerfeld Mennonite Church of Manitoba," Chap. 7 in *Church, Family and Village*, 93-108.

[52] Jacob Giesbrecht, "Toews, Peter A. (1877-1961)," *GAMEO*. 1990. Accessed 15 February 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/T6494ME.html>.

[53] It is interesting to note that, as historian Peter Zacharias points out, the first four Sommerfeld *Ältesten* (Abraham Doerksen, Henry J. Friesen, Peter A. Toews, and Peter M. Friesen) had all had previous

Toews' ordination was one of the first of the leaders represented here to take place in the twentieth century and after World War I: a new era had arrived.

During Toews' leadership the Sommerfelder Church went through a time of upheaval and change. Some of the more conservative members had emigrated to Mexico in the 1920s, in the decade before he was called to serve. In the mid-1930s an evangelical revival swept through the West Reserve, leading to the departure of about 1,200 church members and four of the younger Sommerfelder ministers to the new, more pietistic Rudnerweider Church in 1936.[54] World War II and the difficult related issues of military exemption also fell into the time of Toews' leadership, and from 1939-1946 he co-chaired the *Ältestenrat* together with a much younger David Schulz.[55] Toews retired from active ministry in 1951 and subsequently participated in the conservative group that left the Sommerfeld Church to start the Reinländer Mennonite Church in 1958.[56] He died in Altona, Manitoba in 1961.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre houses one sermon by Peter A. Toews.[57] The purpose and date of the sermon are indicated on the front cover:

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experience in municipal government before becoming leaders in the church; Zacharias, "The Sommerfeld Mennonite Church of Manitoba," 101.

[54] One dramatic retelling of this experience is found in Isaak P. F. Friesen, "The Beginnings of the Rudnerweider Mennoniten Gemeinde in 1936," *Church, Family and Village*, 233.

[55] Peter Zacharias notes, "Elder [*Ältester*] Toews is remembered best by many middle-aged and older Sommerfelder members for the leadership he gave to the church during the war. Many probably recall him most vividly as a visitor to the conscientious objector camps"; see Zacharias, "The Sommerfeld Mennonite Church of Manitoba," 105.

[56] Ibid. This was a new group, not to be confused with the earlier Reinländer MC (Old Colony); see Bender and Zacharias, "Reinland Mennonite Church (Manitoba)," *GAMEO*.

[57] Peter A. Toews, [Untitled German sermon.] Original MS, Vol. 2121, MHC. It is, once again, handwritten in a clear Gothic script in a small notebook of sixteen unnumbered pages.

> This introduction to be held with the last [?] article [of faith], on the Sunday when the youth are to respond to the questions. Written to the glory of God by Peter A. Toews, Amsterdam [Manitoba] on 19th April 1930.[58]

The sermon begins with the familiar "*Im Namen Jesu*" and the invocation "May the God of peace . . . revive us all anew through his good Holy Spirit, to his honour and for our eternal salvation. Amen."[59] Three verses of what was likely a familiar hymn follow.[60] The sermon itself starts with the sixth day of Creation and the thought that spring is coming, nature is returning to life, and God cares for all creatures! In response, the hearers are challenged to repent of their selfishness and sin, to be grateful, and to honour God. Toews admonishes his hearers not to complain, even though there may be problems, and to treat others as they would wish to be treated themselves. After all, how can anyone expect to be absolved by the eternal Judge if the conflicts here on earth are left unresolved? Toews dwells further on the beauty of spring, the passing of the seasons, and the passing of life, even as the beauty of eternal life in God's presence awaits all.[61]

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[58] The German original reads: "*Diese Vorrede zu hallten [sic] beim lesten [letzten? lesen der?] Artikeln, An den [sic] Sonntag, wenn die Jugend die Fragen beantworten soll. Geschrieben zur Ehre Gottes, von Peter A. Toews, Amsterdam den 19. April 1930*"; see sermon booklet, front cover. The Sommerfelder MC and other conservative Mennonite churches had a tradition of catechetical instruction as part of the worship services in Lent, followed by the baptismal service on or near Pentecost. See Schroeder, "Worship and Teaching . . .," 129; also Erland Waltner, Nanne van der Zijpp, Harold S. Bender, and James H. Waltner, "Baptismal Instruction ," *GAMEO*. 1987. Accessed 16 February 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/ contents/B3703.html>.

[59] Ibid., [1].

[60] The first verse reads: "*Was soll ich, O Gott, bringen Dir/Wenn ich auf Deiner Schöpfung Zier/Mit stillem Auge blicke,/Wenn Deine Sonne mich bescheint,/Wenn Tief und Höhe sich vereint,/dass sie mein Herz erquicke,/Wenn mich, lieblich/Deine Güte, in der Blüte, in den Halmen,/Weckt zu Dank und Wonne-Psalmen?"* (In awkward, unpoetical English: "What shall I, O God, bring to you/when I look upon the beauty of your Creation/with a quiet eye,/when your sun shines on me,/when the depth and the height unite/to revive my heart,/when sweetly/your bounty in the bloom and in the stalks/awakens me to thankful and joyful Psalms?") [1].

[61] Toews writes: "What appeared to have died, has now received new spirit and sap, and one can now see fields, meadows, woods, and heath with pleasure and joy. Yes, everything in nature is rejuvenated and joyful in spring, and the birds in the air give the signal for this by their chirping song, as if they want to

The sermon has a clear direction, but the style and content are similar to the other sermons, and it is clearly part of the conservative Mennonite preaching tradition. Once again, it remains general, with illustrations from the Bible but none from everyday life.

This sermon, as the others analyzed above, contains no direct or indirect references to war or peace. Once again, the date and circumstances of the sermon may be noted: it was springtime, the youth of the congregation were being prepared for baptism in the near future, the year was 1930 and no war was on the horizon. So there may well have been other joys or concerns more important to Toews than war or nonresistance. On the other hand, he was certainly concerned about the faith of the church members, most obviously including the baptismal candidates, and his subsequent actions show how deeply he was involved in the issue of military exemption. In any case, the silence of the sermons on a topic as central for the *Kanadier* Mennonites as nonresistance can also suggest that such topics got discussed and settled in other contexts like brotherhood meetings and that the Sunday morning worship service was not seen as the proper venue to expound on such topics: this was the time to focus on the worship of God and the basic way of salvation for the Christian.[62]

David P. Reimer: Two Sermons from the Kleine Gemeinde (1930s)

David P. Reimer (1894-1962) was born in Blumenort, East Reserve, and lived in this

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praise their Creator and Preserver . . .” [2]. The relationship of the Mennonites to nature and to the land has been the subject of some studies; see, e.g., Royden Loewen, “The Quiet on the Land: The Environment in Mennonite Historiography,” *JMS* 23(2005): 151-164.

[62] David Schroeder writes that to be properly understood the sermons need to be seen in their context: in the Sommerfelder Church the Articles of Faith were read twice every spring, the catechism was reviewed, and new church members affirmed their faith in baptism. “The way of salvation was thus presupposed—it was common knowledge. . . . Both the texts chosen and the way they were presented indicate that they were intended to invite people to offer their lives fully to Christ.” See Schroeder, “Worship and Teaching in the Sommerfeld Church,” 129.

area all his life.[63] Following his elementary education, he studied further by correspondence and began work as a teacher.[64] In 1929 Reimer was called to the ministry in the Kleine Gemeinde. When the periodical *Christlicher Familienfreund* was started by the Kleine Gemeinde in 1935 he became the first editor, carrying this responsibility until 1959. During World War II Reimer was deeply involved in the work of the *Ältestenrat,* the negotiations with the authorities about conscription, and pastoral care of the conscientious objectors. In 1948 he became *Ältester* in the Kleine Gemeinde. When his brother, *Ältester* Peter P. Reimer, led a group of Kleine Gemeinde members in their emigration to Central and South America, David Reimer stayed in Manitoba, continuing to give leadership to the church and working with interdenominational organizations on peace issues. He was also on the board of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* from 1946-1959 and edited several other books, including *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War* which is the focus of the following chapter.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre contains two files related to David P. Reimer, including what appears to be a two-part sermon outline.[65] A notation indicates that the sermons were given separately eight times in different locations from 29 March, 1931 to 25 October, 1936. The order of the sermon(s), as far as can be discerned, appears to be

[63] "David P. Reimer fonds," Index of Personal Holdings at the MHC.

[64] While the Kleine Gemeinde, in the earlier years, was part of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonite tradition, Reimer's interest in education already sets him somewhat apart; probably this was also a reflection of the larger ethos of the Kleine Gemeinde, as evidenced in the new church periodical.

[65] David P. Reimer, [Untitled German sermon outlines.] Original MS, Vol. 2117-6, MHC. The sermon notes, about one hundred small unnumbered sheets, are handwritten in Gothic script, but difficult to read: Reimer's hurried handwriting is distinctively different from the careful penmanship of the older writers.

similar to that of the preceding ones discussed above.[66] The invocation is followed by the emphasis on familiar themes in a somewhat rambling fashion and with references to various Bible texts: themes like the difference between "the flesh" and "the spirit," human sinfulness, God's grace, and the admonition, based on Col. 3:2 ("Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth") and other texts. Besides Scriptural allusions Reimer also quotes some verses of poetry to reinforce his themes.[67] Overall, there is again the theme of the overarching importance of salvation and the urgency to get one's priorities right before it is too late.

One new component of Reimer's sermon, which I have not found in any of the preceding sermons, is his use of a non-biblical illustration: "Recently I read a parable of a boat that came to an island . . . ."[68] The parable is meant to emphasize Reimer's concern that the hearers get their values and priorities in life right. As in the case of the other examined sermons, Reimer does not address the topic of war or peace in any way—just as he doesn't address other current issues that may have been current in the 1930s. Once again, the sermon deals almost entirely with the theological topics of sin and salvation.

So, here is a sermon by a *Kanadier* Mennonite minister—who was ordained as *Ältester* shortly after World War II—of a slightly different tradition than the previous

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[66] Since the pages are loose and unnumbered, the order of the sermons is rather difficult to reconstruct.

[67] One example is the first verse of a longer piece: "*Wem willst du folgen, Meschenkind? / Fleisch oder Geist muss unterliegen. / Doch besser, dass der Geist gewinnt / Und kann das Fleisch besiegen*." ("Whom do you want to follow, child of man? / The flesh or spirit must succumb. / But better that the spirit wins / and can defeat the flesh.")

[68] The basic thrust of the—somewhat far-fetched—parable is that a boat was stranded on a remote deserted island with no possibility of escape or rescue for the survivors; however, they found that they had the options of digging for gold, which was plentiful, or working the fields to produce food for their survival—and opted to collect the gold; as a result, they did not have any food, and in their stranded situation the gold ended up being worthless as well.

ones, yet a man who was also deeply involved in the issues related to military exemption. Once again, the sermon focuses on Christian salvation and overall priorities in life but is silent on the specific topic of peace, seeming to assume that this was part and parcel of the larger meaning of faith and living the Christian life.

Jakob F. Penner: Sermon on Ascension Day (1930s)

Jakob F. Penner (1898-1974) was baptized in 1919 in the Reinländer Church in Chortitz, West Reserve, and apparently lived there his whole life.[69] In the 1920s the majority of Reinländer Church leaders and members emigrated to Mexico, leaving those who remained in Manitoba in disarray. By 1930 they began to reorganize, and in 1936 the Old Colony Mennonite Church of Manitoba was formally constituted. Together with several others, Penner was elected to the ministry of the new Old Colony Church in 1936, becoming *Ältester* in 1959 at the age of sixty-one and serving the church in this capacity until his retirement in 1974; he died later the same year.

The "Jakob F. Penner fonds" at the Mennonite Heritage Centre[70] includes one small notebook of handwritten sermons which were preached from 1937-1944 and four other similar sermon books without precise dates; since the books are not numbered, it is hard to determine any sequence. One book consists of several funeral sermons from the 1960s; several of the others are sermons which were preached "when the youth give their

[69]Not much information is available about Jakob F. Penner; most of it comes from the information sheet "Penner, Jakob F., 1898-1974," Index of Personal Holdings at the MHC. There is some information about him in Alf Redekopp and Richard D. Thiessen, "Old Colony Mennonite Church of Manitoba," *GAMEO*. December 2008. Accessed 08 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/O526.html>. There is additional background information in Abe E. Rempel, "The Reorganization of the Old Colony Mennonite Church," in *Church, Family and Village*, 243-249.

[70] Jakob F. Penner, [Untitled German sermons.] Original MSS, Vol. 2116, MHC. Included in the file is a newspaper obituary of Jakob Penner as well as a photograph of him.

testimony,"[71] that is, for worship services that focused on the instruction of baptismal candidates. Since Penner was first ordained in 1936, they could all come from the latter 1930s or later. In the context of this thesis, it is of interest to explore what Penner said to the youth, as well as the attending congregation, when the basic questions of faith were being reviewed; here the most illuminating sermon is the one identified only as an "Ascension sermon."[72]

This sermon, given on Ascension Day, introduces the catechism and then systematically reviews the standard questions and answers, together with some pertinent Bible verses and additional expository comments.[73] The nature and being of God is discussed, followed by the significance of the Bible, and then the big theological themes of creation, sin, and salvation. Special attention is paid to the Ten Commandments, and here the sixth commandment, "You shall not kill" (Ex. 20:13), is lifted out in particular: all of life is holy, and all killing is prohibited. Penner emphasizes that this includes not only the prohibition against killing others but also against killing oneself (suicide).[74] He expands on this theme, introducing the teaching of Jesus, and says that the injunction against killing includes not even hating anyone and, indeed, loving one's enemies (according to Mt. 5:44-45). In an unusual application of this injunction, Penner also asks, rhetorically, "Is he not also a murderer who leads a dissolute and drunken life, sinking

[71] The German heading of one of the sermons reads "*Eine Predigt wenn die Jugend Zeugnis ablegt.*"

[72]. Since the sermon books are not systematically numbered or dated, it is awkward to identify them; this "Ascension sermon," for example, has no year indicated.

[73] While this is not stated, Penner seems to be referring to the familiar *Katechismus.* This sermon deals only with the first half of the catechism; the second half was apparently addressed in a following sermon.

[74] This is the only mention of suicide that I have found in any of the sermons.

into the grave prematurely?"[75] No further explanation of this comment is offered. Penner concludes the sermon/lesson on the Commandments by summarizing them, loosely following the words of Jesus (Mt. 22:40): "The first tablet commands us to love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul and whole mind, and the second tablet demands that we love our neighbour as ourselves."[76]

This exposition of the Commandments contains the clearest statement related to peace found in any of the sermons. However, the main point of the sermon is not to challenge the hearers to live with their neighbours in peace and love—although that aspect is also included—but rather that human willpower alone is inadequate to do this and that salvation, finally, is based on faith in Jesus Christ. Beyond this, nonresistance is, once again, not specifically addressed.

Summary

In summary, what information do the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonite sermons offer on their understanding of peace? The themes of the sermons are remarkably alike, both in what they include and what they omit. While many and varied Bible texts are used, the main overall themes are repeatedly God's good creation, human selfishness and sinfulness, and the biblical plan of salvation, coupled with calls to repent and turn from evil ways and the challenge to live in harmony with God's will and one's fellow human beings.

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[75] The German text is: "*Ist es nicht ein Mörder, der durch Unmässigkeit und Trunksucht frühzeitig ins Grab sinkt?*"

[76] The German text reads: "*Die erste Tafel gebietet uns, Gott zu lieben von ganzem Herzen, von ganzer Seele und ganzem Gemüte, und die zweite Tafel verlangt, den Nächsten zu lieben wie uns selbst.*"

I was rather surprised to find that topics such as peace, nonresistance, and military service are, with rare exceptions, never mentioned in any of the sermons—despite the fact that the most of the men who delivered the sermons were deeply involved in the practical issues of what might be called "applied nonresistance." In the sermons any reference to peace is related to the internal peace of the Christian ("peace with God") or peaceful living with one's neighbours in general; any references to conflict relate to spiritual battles between the forces of good and evil which the Christian has to deal with on the journey to the heavenly home. Topics like "Should Christians participate in war?" are never addressed, not even in the midst of war. Nonresistance was one of the conservative Mennonites' central convictions that self-evidently followed from "loving God and your neighbour as yourself." It did not need to be reiterated—and it wasn't by the conservative preachers.

On the other hand, other theological or ethical topics which might be considered as "current issues"—such as the ethics of family life, political participation, business ethics, or other moral issues—are not addressed in the sermons either. Such topics may well have been discussed in other contexts but were clearly not considered to be "sermon material."[77] David Schroeder also notes that the expectations of a sermon for the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites may have been quite different than the expectations

[77] The absence of any teaching on specific theological or ethical issues in the sermons raises the question about where this teaching then occurred or how community mores were developed—for example, on the topic of nonresistance. Theologian David Schroeder, of Sommerfelder MC background himself, suggests that—as long as the Mennonite village and church communities remained intact, as they mostly were prior to World War II—such teaching largely happened informally in family settings, neighbours' visits, or other informal contexts: ethics were "caught" rather than "taught." (Conversation with David Schroeder, 20 November 2010.) Schroeder also notes that this form of education—"just *knowing* what was right"—may have been adequate for village life but was quite inadequate for the Mennonites' encounter with the larger "world."

of other Mennonite or Protestant sermons at the turn of the twenty-first century: it may well be "that they emphasized character . . . rather than ethics. . . . American Evangelicalism has taught us to look for correct doctrine and right acts rather than a proper relationship to Christ that results in the transformation of character."[78] It seems to me that this is an important insight—and one that was probably very apt in the context of the fairly isolated and self-sufficient church and community life of the conservative Mennonites.

It was an understanding, however, that would be severely challenged by the onset of World War II. To once again quote David Schroeder, who was a fifteen-year-old Sommerfelder youth when War was declared in 1939 and became a conscientious objector a few years later:

> We were not prepared for war, for objection to war, for giving a reason for our faith, for speaking with the non-Mennonite world about war, for challenging the mindset of a country at war, or for giving an alternative to violent responses to conflict. All we knew as youth was that we were against war and should not be expected to participate in the war.[79]

It is to a consideration of the challenge of World War II to the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites and their response that we turn in the next chapter.

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[78] Schroeder, "Worship and Teaching in the Sommerfeld Church," 129.

[79] Schroeder, "Theological Reflections of a CO," 184.

CHAPTER 4

WORLD WAR II AND THE *ÄLTESTENRAT*

Introduction

A third perspective on the peace stance of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites is found in the publication entitled *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War 1939-1945.*[1] This book is the collection of the minutes of the so-called *Ältestenrat*—the Council of Elders[2]—and related meetings of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites during World War II.

Minutes are again a unique literary genre, quite different from history books or sermons. Good minutes provide a clear, terse, objective summary of the discussion and decisions of a committee, council, or other group that is meeting.[3] They are intended to inform people who were not present at the meeting, as well as to provide an accurate record for those who were present (and may have divergent memories of the discussions). Minutes will include varying amounts of information; they generally do not need to give detailed accounts of everything that was said but should be sharply focused, judiciously

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[1] [David P. Reimer,] *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War, 1939-1945* [n.p., n.d.] and [David P. Reimer,] *Erfahrungen der Mennoniten in Canada während des zweiten Weltkrieges, 1939-1945* [n.p., n.d.]. Both books are available in the Mennonite Historical Library of CMU; the bibliographical information of the Library suggests the German edition was published in 1946 and the English in 1951, although Gingerich writes that the German edition was published in 1948. See Melvin Gingerich, "Alternative Service Work Camps (Canada)," *GAMEO*. March 2009. Accessed 19 February 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/ A4541ME.html>. The further references to this book will basically be to the English publication, hereafter referred to as *Experiences*; the German title will be referred to as *Erfahrungen.*

[2] The *Ältestenrat* is variously also referred to as "*Ältestenkomitee*" and in English as "Council" or "Committee" of Elders or Bishops. In this thesis I will generally refer to this body as "*Ältestenrat.*"

[3] Jane Watson, *The Minute Taker's Handbook: Taking Minutes at Any Meeting with Confidence* (Vancouver: Self-Counsel Press, 1992), 22.

highlighting the main items of discussion; often they will include motions which are recorded verbatim. Once formally accepted, minutes are considered legal documents of the organization and can be used in legal proceedings. Typically, minutes include the name of the group or organization that is meeting, date and location of the meeting, attendance, review and acceptance of previous minutes, reports of activities, finances, unfinished or new business, adjournment, and date and time of the next meeting; additional information may be added in form of attachments. Depending on the degree of formality, minutes may be signed by the chair and secretary.[4] Minutes may be written in different styles, with varying degrees of formality, but in general they are not written to offer advice, reminiscences, moral or ethical teachings, or entertainment—in fact, at times they may appear pedantic and boring. At the same time, as Stoesz and Raber write, "minutes serve as the memory of an organization."[5]

The minutes recorded in *Experiences* offer an excellent insight into the discussions and activities of the *Ältestenrat* and the peace stance of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites generally. The purpose of this chapter is to trace the events that led to the formation of the *Ältestenrat* and its further activities. It will become evident that the organization of the *Ältestenrat* was a unique undertaking by the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites that brought their historic peace stance—so frequently only implicitly evident in their literature—into sharp focus. The primary resource material for

[4] Watson, *Handbook*, 24.

[5] Edgar Stoesz and Chester Raber, *Doing Good Better! How to Be an Effective Board Member of a Nonprofit Organization* (Intercourse PA: Good Books, 1994), 53.

this review, as already suggested, will be the minutes of the *Ältestenrat* meetings which were published in German and in English shortly after the meetings concluded.

At the heart of the crisis that led to the formation of the *Ältestenrat* was the peace conviction of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites, more particularly, the churches' insistence on the exemption of young Mennonite men from military service. When the *Kanadier* Mennonites had first decided to leave Russia in the 1870s, the threatened loss of this item of "privilege" had been one of the main—if not *the* main—factors leading to their decision, and before agreeing to consider Canada as a new homeland it had again been a crucial question which they had checked very thoroughly with the Canadian government. At that time they had received the "fullest assurances" of military exemption through an Order-in-Council of September 1872, which was subsequently confirmed by another Order-in-Council in August 1873.[6] Although these assurances were quite clear, the Mennonites had also experienced the suspicion and even the hostility of their non-Mennonite neighbours during World War I. And they had experienced the negotiations with the government which, as late as January 1917, assured them, "Canada will respect to the utmost its obligations under that Order-in-Council,"[7]

[6] The Order-in-Council of 25 September 1872 gave the Mennonite delegates who were exploring the option of immigration "the fullest assurances of absolute immunity from military service" and went on to explain: "The Mennonites are expressly included, are absolutely free and exempted by the law of Canada from military duty or service, either in time of peace or war." The second Order-in-Council of 13 August 1873 confirmed the earlier assurances, reading in part: "An entire exemption from military service is by law and Order-in-Council granted to the Denomination of Christians called Mennonites." (Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 165)

[7] Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 171.

even though restrictive measures were introduced to deal with other conscientious objectors by October 1918.[8]

Since the War ended shortly after this date, in November 1918, the practical considerations of conscription resolved themselves—for the *Kanadier* Mennonites and any other conscientious objectors. However, as a result of the unfinished negotiations, the legal status of the Mennonites was left with some ambiguity.[9] At the same time, public antagonism and agitation was significant enough for the government to introduce an Order-in-Council on 1 May 1919 which prohibited further immigration by members of "the Doukhobor, Hutterite and Mennonite class."[10] Although this Order was rescinded a few years later, the relationship of the Mennonites to the several levels of government, as well as their image in the public opinion, remained an ambiguous one during the 1920s.[11] This led, on the one hand, to the emigration of over seven thousand conservative Mennonites to Latin American countries in the 1920s,[12] while, on the other hand, more

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[8] Ibid., 182.

[9] Ibid., 183. Janzen presents a thorough review of the entire negotiations during World War I in Chap. 8.

[10] Ibid., 183-4. Janzen cites an editorial from the Winnipeg *Free Press* which reflected the popular mood of the time: "We do not want in Canada anybody who is not prepared to become a citizen in the full meaning of the word . . . . People of 'peculiar' religions living in colonies and clinging to an alien tongue and to racial habits are from every point of view undesirable . . . If this country is not good enough to fight for, it is not good enough to live in."

[11] Related to the conflicted situation and the possibility of a Mennonite emigration, Epp notes the contrasting comments in the *Saskatoon Phoenix* ("It would be difficult indeed to replace the sturdy, honest, and hard-working farmers who are leaving their Canadian homes in disgust and disappointment") and the *Victoria Daily Times* ("Canada will be much better off in the long run without that type of citizenry whose tenets constitute the taking of all it can get without giving anything in return"). He also notes the mixed messages in a letter which the emigrating Mennonites wrote a letter to the Canadian government: they expressed their appreciation for the benefits they had received during their stay in Canada but also their hope that their experience would lead to greater tolerance in the future. (Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [2], 126)

[12] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* [2], 122.

than twenty thousand new Russian Mennonite immigrants, albeit with a slightly different background, were accepted into Canada during the same period.[13]

The peace stance of the Mennonites in Canada reached a critical testing point, both internally and externally, with the onset of World War II.[14] As signs of this major international conflict began to appear in the late 1930s, the various Mennonite groups felt an urgent need to clarify and confirm their traditional peace stance as well as their status as citizens of Canada.[15]

As early as July 1937, in anticipation of a war, the (Old) Mennonite Church—mainly represented in the United States—had met to discuss and adopt a common position paper on their peace stance. The result was the acceptance of the so-called "Turner Confession," a document that was subsequently also adopted by other Mennonite conferences.[16] In Canada over five hundred Mennonite delegates and observers from

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[13] Ibid., 178.

[14] World War II began 1 September 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. Canada declared war against the German Reich on 10 September 1939, against Italy on 10 September 1940, and against Japan on 7 December 1941. The War officially ended in Europe on 7 May 1945 and in Japan on 2 September 1945. On 15 August 1946 the government of Canada revoked the Order in Council P.C. 3030, and all COs could return to civilian life. See C.P. Stacey and Norman Hillmer, "World War II," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. 2010. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0008717> and Gingerich, "Alternative Service Work Camps (Canada)."

[15] The Canadian census of 1941 lists 16,913 Mennonite males between fifteen and thirty-five years of age; about 12,043 (71 percent) provided some kind of service during World War II; of these, some 4,500 enlisted for active military service (a significant 37 percent, in view of the church's official teaching), while 7,543 (63 percent) went into alternative service as conscientious objectors (COs); others got different deferments, worked in wartime industries, or got involved in other volunteer work. See Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 35. While the traditional peace stance was upheld by all Mennonite leaders, the large number of Mennonites enlisted in active military service indicates that this stance was not nearly as unanimous among the members. I was not able to locate statistics related more specifically to the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites.

[16]Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 37. The formal title of the document was "Peace, War, and Military Service. A Statement of the Position of the Mennonite Church. Resolution adopted by the Mennonite General Conference [i.e., the (Old) Mennonite Church] at Turner, Oregon, August, 1937." Central statements include the conviction that the Gospel of Christ is "a Gospel of Peace, requiring a life of

across the country—the large number indicating the seriousness of the gathering—met in Winkler, Manitoba on 15 May 1939 to discuss the possibility of war, military conscription, and possible Mennonite responses.[17] Groups represented included the General Conference, Mennonite Brethren, (Old) Mennonites, Bruderthaler, Kleine Gemeinde, Reinländer (Old Colony), Rudnerweider, Holdeman, and Hutterites.[18] While the "Turner Confession" was not formally accepted by the delegates, since they were not at a decision-making assembly, it clearly resonated positively with them.

Even though the assembled Mennonite representatives were agreed in their opposition to participation in war, there was a divergence of opinion about appropriate responses.[19] Three general directions became apparent: the earliest Mennonite settlers, coming from the U.S. with the United Empire Loyalists, were willing to offer some form of alternative service if it would be entirely non-military; the *Kanadier* Mennonites of the 1870s immigration who had received military exemption by the special Orders-in-

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love and goodwill, even toward our enemies . . . to be at peace with all men [*sic*] . . . and to renounce the use of force and violence in all forms as contrary to the Spirit of our Master"; further that "war is altogether contrary to the teaching and spirit of Christ and the Gospel, that therefore war is sin, as is all manner of carnal strife"; and that "in light of the above principles of Scripture we are constrained as followers of Christ to abstain from all forms of military service and all means of support of war, and must consider members who violate these principles as transgressors and out of fellowship with the Church." The complete document is reprinted in *Experiences*, 31-37, and is also available online: see "Statement of Our Position on Peace, War and Military Service, A (Mennonite Church, 1937)." *GAMEO*. 1937. Accessed 18 February 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/ S7269.html>.

[17] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 38. Regehr notes that a "sizeable" delegation of American Mennonites was also present. The minutes of the meeting are recorded in *Experiences*, 37-56. They are also published as a separate 48-page booklet published by "Mennoniten Gemeinden Canadas," entitled *Bericht über eine Besprechung in der Wehrfrage von Vertretern Mennoniten Gemeinden Canadas, abgehalten am 15. Mai 1939 in der M[ennoniten] B[rüdergemeinde] Kirche zu Winkler, Manitoba* (Winkler MB, 1939); this book is available in the CMU library.

[18] *Experiences*, 37. The minutes note that only the Sommerfelder Mennonites were absent, although the Chortitzer Mennonites were also not listed as present.

[19] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 38.

Council of 1872 and 1873 rejected any kind of compromise or alternative service; the *Russländer* Mennonites of the 1920s immigration, who had not received any special exemptions, were also willing to consider alternative services.[20] They were not able to achieve a united response, in particular to the challenge of military conscription.[21] This internal disagreement eventually led to the formation of several committees which were charged with the tasks of communicating with the government authorities on behalf of the different Mennonite constituency groups as well as giving leadership to other related matters.[22] The committee representing the *Kanadier* Mennonites, was the so-called "*Ältestenrat,*" the "Council of Elders."[23]

The *Ältestenrat* was formed in 1939-1940 in response to the immediate crisis of World War II and needed to define its structure, assignment(s), and modus operandi as it developed. Its responsibilities eventually wound down after the War ended.[24] To

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[20] Ibid., 39.

[21] Ibid., 38.

[22] The other Canadian Mennonites cooperated in the Conference of Historic Peace Churches (representing the Mennonites of Ontario, together with the Quakers and the Brethren in Christ) and the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (representing the *Russländer* Mennonites of Western Canada). (Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 65) These will not be discussed further in this thesis.

[23] A list of the members of the *Ältestenrat* is found in Appendix Three.

[24] There is some ambiguity in the minutes about both the beginning and the ending of the *Ältestenrat*. The first Mennonite gathering "regarding military problems" on 15 May 1939 included, as noted, representatives of all Canadian Mennonite churches (and some Americans), with only the Sommerfelder listed as absent in the minutes. The "Representatives of the Various Mennonite Churches in Manitoba" met the next time on 7 September 1940; eight of the ten churches present were *Kanadier* Mennonite churches, the other two being the "Conference Church (Blumenorter)" and the Mennonite Brethren. At this meeting it was agreed to establish "a committee . . . consisting of the [ten] bishops present." (*Experiences*, 58) At the meeting on 16 September, apparently the first of the separate *Kanadier* churches, it was decided to elect an "executive committee" which "during the unrest of war should stand at the head of [the churches] and constantly represent them in their relations with the Government." (61) Elected were P.A. Toews, D. Schulz, and J.F. Barkman, with D.P. Reimer as secretary; all continued their responsibilities for the duration of the War. As described below, the *Kanadier* and the *Russländer* eventually decided to go separate ways.—The last recorded minutes of the *Ältestenrat* deal with the meeting held on 23 August 1946, although it is noted that some concluding activities remained to be

formulate and implement their tasks the church leaders and other participants gathered some forty times from 1939-1946.[25] The collection of the minutes of these meetings, published as *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War 1939-1945*, offers a wealth of information about the *Kanadier* Mennonites' peace conviction, the manner in which they interacted with each other, the other Mennonites, and the governmental authorities, and the practical details that had to be addressed in implementing the alternative service program which gradually emerged. The basic underlying peace stance of the conservative Mennonites is mentioned specifically at a few points but is also found implicitly throughout the mass of details of the meetings.

Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War

The purpose of the book is stated in the Preface:

> Since the Second World War, with all its adversities, belongs to the past, . . . it was being agreed by the Directors and Representatives of the different Churches, to compose this little book, wherein our descendants may find traces worthy of remembrance, concerning our faith and belief of non-resistance.[26]

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completed and the last minute of the meeting reads, rather ambiguously: "Finally it was decided to have the whole committee continue to function as during the war." (*Experiences*, 37, 56, and 142) The only further information I have been able to find about the *Ältestenrat* is that in December 1963, seventeen years after the end of the War, it merged with a plethora of other Canadian Mennonite relief, service, and peace committees and councils to form the new unified Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), presumably phasing out as a separate entity in the process. (Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 393)

[25] A schedule of the meetings of the *Ältestenrat* and other representative groups is found in Appendix Three.

[26] *Experiences*, [3]. The German text reads: "*Nachdem nun der zweite Weltkrieg mit all seinen Verhängnissen, Gott sei Dank, wieder vorüber ist, . . . wurden die Vorstände und Vertreter unserer verschiedenen Gemeinden auf den Gedanken gelenkt, durch die Verfassung dieses Buches unsern Nachkommen Spuren zum Andenken zu hinterlassen, die von unserm Grund und Glauben der Wehrlosigkeit und von den mannigfaltigen Erfahrungen, die es darunter gegeben hat, Zeugnis geben.*" (*Erfahrungen*, [1]) The quality of the German language used in *Erfahrungen* is considerably superior to the English of *Experiences*, which was translated from the German. (Regehr, *Mennonites* [3], 447, n. 15) A note at the beginning of the 7 September 1940 minutes states, "The discussions were carried on in the Low German language" (*Experiences*, 57)—another reminder that German was still the primary language of the *Kanadier* Mennonites in the mid-twentieth century.

The book is well organized, although there are some weaknesses: there is no title page, no clearly identified author,[27] no table of contents, and no index.[28] There are a few errors, [29] but overall it is carefully edited. No publisher is listed, although the text indicates that the mandate to publish the minutes came from the final "Manitoba Ministers' Meeting"—i.e., the leaders of the *Kanadier* Mennonite Churches—held on 23 August 1946 at the Bethel Mission Church in Winnipeg.[30] There is no place of publication, but this would have meant little in any case, since the member churches were scattered throughout southern Manitoba.[31] Regardless of these formal weaknesses (by contemporary publication standards), the book contains a wealth of primary information in a generally clear and understandable format.

The first section of the book provides background materials for the minutes of the meetings, which are then found verbatim on pages 37-142 in *Experiences* (and more extensively on pages 42-177 in *Erfahrungen*). The background materials include the following subsections:

> General review and the organization of the [Manitoba Mennonite] churches
> Our C. O.'s [Conscientious Objectors] in prison
> Camp and civil service
> First trip [of the Mennonite delegation] to Ottawa [in February 1941]

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[27] *Experiences*, [3]. The preface notes that "the secretary of the Committee [who is subsequently named as Rev. David P. Reimer] was being authorized to compile this book."

[28] It might be noted that this format is similar to that of other Mennonite publications of the time.

[29] In *Experiences* the date of the minutes of 5 March, 1942 is given as "March 5, 1951" and that of 27 October, 1942 as "October 27, 1943." The minutes of the 13 September 1940 are out of sequence (following three later meetings) in both the German and the English texts, and, again in both, the minutes of 8 April 1943 record the reading of the minutes of 12 April which occurred four days later.

[30] *Experiences*, 141.

[31] The printers are listed on the last page of each book: *Erfahrungen* is printed by Derksen Printers Ltd. , Steinbach, and *Experiences* by D. W. Friesen & Sons, Altona—both well-known Mennonite printers in southern Manitoba.

> The second trip to Ottawa [in May 1942]
> Results and facts regarding the new [Canadian government] program during the year
> Important explanations [of the Board of National War Services]
> [The German edition inserts a separate subheading: Statistical information on C.O.'s]
> "Peace, War, and Military Service: A Statement of the Position of the Mennonite Church. Resolution adopted by the Mennonite General Conference [i.e., the (Old) Mennonites] at Turner, Oregon, August, 1937"

The minutes begin with the extensive minutes of the 15 May 1939 meeting of all Canadian Mennonites.[32] The minutes of the following meetings are organized chronologically. They are rather difficult to follow, however, because they record the meetings of different bodies in a state of flux: meetings of "representatives of the various Mennonite churches in Manitoba," meeting of "the bishops of the various Mennonite churches," the "Ministers' Meeting," the meeting of the "*Ältestenrat*,"[33] and others. The evolution of the proceedings is suggested by the more frequent minutes of church "representatives" initially, gradually shifting to a predominance of minutes of the ministers' meetings and the meetings of the *Ältestenrat*.[34]

Setting Basic Directions

As already noted, the church leaders of all Mennonite groups in Canada were unified in their conscientious opposition to military service. However, the legal status of the Mennonites in Canada was not a consistent one, as the Board of National War Service

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[32] See note 17. This meeting was chaired by *Ältester* David Toews (General Conference), and recording secretaries for this meeting were C.F. Klassen and F.C. Thiessen (both members of the MB Church). The next meeting, on 7 September 1940, appears to have been mainly attended by *Kanadier* Mennonites, and there are hints of a parting of the ways. There would be one more decisive "all-Mennonite" meeting on 14 October 1940, at which it would it would be formally decided to establish two separate committees to represent the Mennonites.

[33] See note 1.

[34] An overview of the minutes is provided in Appendix Four.

also noted.[35] Thus the *Kanadier* Mennonites who had immigrated to Canada during the years from 1873-1898, as well as their direct descendants, were granted unconditional freedom from military service on the basis of the Order-in-Council of 1873. On the other hand, the *Russländer*, those Mennonites who had immigrated in the 1920s and their descendants, would not be automatically exempted but would have to testify to their conviction of nonresistance before the Board. Finally, those Mennonites who were no longer members of the Mennonite church (either "by marriage" or "at heart") would be disqualified from any exemption.[36]

Based on the distinctions made by the Board, the Mennonite leaders responded in two general ways which began to emerge during the first meetings. First, the *Kanadier* churches wanted to stand on their special privilege of absolute military exemption and were not willing to make any compromises with the government. Second, the *Russländer* churches were prepared to negotiate with the government by accepting a civilian alternative service instead of the required military service, a compromise they were already familiar with from their Russian experience. As a result of these emerging differences, it became clear that working together in one joint committee would not be possible. Therefore, at the crucial meeting on 14 October 1940 the basic decision was reached after a "long debate" that one committee should represent the *Kanadier* churches—i.e., the Sommerfelder, Bergthaler, Kleine Gemeinde, Holdeman, Chortitzer, Old Colony, and Rudnerweider churches—while a second one would represent the more

[35] "Important Explanations," *Experiences*, 29-30. The Board of National War Service is also called the National War Service Board and later the Selective Service System or Selective Service Board; throughout this volume it is usually referred to as "the Board." (This is not to be confused with the Mennonite Council of Elders, which in the later minutes is referred to as the Board of Elders.)

[36] *Experiences*, 30.

recent immigrants, the *Russländer* churches—i.e., the Mennonite Brethren and the General Conference Mennonites;[37] the Bruderthaler delegates decided to keep their decision in abeyance until additional information would be obtained.[38] While it was agreed that two committees would now represent the Mennonites to the government, concern was also expressed that they should work together as much as possible.[39]

The minutes following the crucial meeting of 14 October 1940 thus record the meetings of the following participants in the newly-formed *Ältestenrat*: Sommerfelder MC (*Ältester* Peter A. Toews), Chortitzer MC (*Ältester* Peter S. Wiebe), Bergthaler MC (*Ältester* David Schulz), Rudnerweider MC (*Ältester* Wilhelm Falk), Kleine Gemeinde (*Ältester* Peter P. Reimer and Jacob B. Kroeker), Holdeman (*Ältester* Jacob T. Wiebe and Rev. Jacob F. Barkman), Bruderthaler (Rev. B.P. Janz and later by G.S. Rempel), Old Colony MC (*Ältester* Jacob Froese); also Holdeman of Alberta (Rev. Isaac W. Toews), Brudertaler of Saskatchewan (Rev. H.H. Schulz), and three unspecified "smaller denominations" ("*drei kleinere Gemeinden*") which were added later.[40]

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[37] Ibid., 73. Interestingly, the minutes of the 14 October meeting do not mention any *Russländer* representation of the General Conference orientation.

[38] To make the already complex discussions even more complicated, by 14 October the *Kanadier* representatives had already met separately and elected a committee of their own to represent them before the government, as J.F. Barkman informed the meeting on 14 October. (*Experiences*, 73) Furthermore, it was reported that the Manitoba "immigrant conference churches"—meaning the *Russländer* churches related to General Conference—had met in the previous week, electing *Ältester* Johann Enns as their "representative." (*Experiences*, 69) C.F. Klassen also noted that a meeting of the Mennonites of the four western provinces [who were basically all *Russländer*] was being scheduled for October 22—i.e., the following week—in Saskatoon. (*Experiences*, 73)

[39] *Experiences*, 74.

[40] Ibid., 7.

From these representatives a "Committee of Directors"[41] was elected which consisted of Peter A. Toews, David Schulz, and Jacob F. Barkman; David P. Reimer was appointed as secretary and Jacob I. Bartel as treasurer.[42] The Committee was given the mandate "to represent the united churches [i.e., the church groups listed above] before the government and the National War Resister Board."[43] Toews and/or Schulz co-chaired almost all subsequent meetings of the *Ältestenrat*, while nearly all minutes were recorded by Reimer.

The Minutes of the *Ältestenrat* Meetings

As already noted, when the signs of a major war began to loom ominously on the horizon, representatives of all Canadian Mennonite churches—except the Sommerfelder Mennonites who joined later—gathered for a crucial first meeting on 15 May 1939. It was called an "informal" time of taking inventory, rather than making decisions, although

[41] The "Committee of Directors" is also referred to as the "Executive," "Executive Committee," or "the Committee," variously written with upper or lower case; the German equivalents are "*Ausschusskomitee*" or "*das Komitee.*" In this thesis the term "the Committee" will generally be used.

[42] Ibid., 8. The minutes indicate that the Committee was already established at the meeting of 16 September 1940. Peter A. Toews (1877-1961) was *Ältester* of the Sommerfelder MC from 1930-1951; earlier he had been a farmer, businessman, educator, and civic politician, serving as reeve of the rural municipality of Rhineland from 1920-1929; he was chairman of the board of directors for the Mennonite Educational Institute from 1922-1926; when World War II was declared, Toews would have been 62 years old; see Giesbrecht, "Toews, Peter A. (1877-1961)," *GAMEO*. David Schulz (1897-1976) was 20 years younger than Toews; he was a teacher and farmer in the Altona area and was *Ältester* of the Bergthaler MC for forty years from about 1926, providing leadership and direction for many church and community programs; see Gerbrandt and Thiessen, "Schulz, David (1897-1976)," *GAMEO.* Jacob F. Barkman of Steinbach was ordained to the ministry in the Holdeman (Church of God in Christ, Mennonite) Church in 1921. David P. Reimer was a minister in the Kleine Gemeinde; he was ordained as *Ältester* in 1948 and also edited the German periodical of the Kleine Gemeinde, *Christlicher Familienfreund*, from its inception in 1935 to 1959; see David P. Reimer, "Christlicher Familienfreund (Periodical)," *GAMEO.* 1953. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/ contents/C4814.html>. Jacob I. Bartel is called "deacon" but is not mentioned elsewhere; see *Experiences*, 8.

[43] *Experiences*, 8.

in the end several resolutions were adopted.[44] The meeting was pivotal, since it was the first gathering of all Canadian Mennonites for a time of fact-finding and setting basic directions. All agreed on nonresistance in principle, as indicated by the following resolution:

> Therefore be it resolved as follows:
> (a) We thank God for the assurance that all the Conferences and Churches represented here stand firmly on the biblical principle of nonresistance as received from our fathers.
> (b) We confess that we have not always been faithful to our principles of faith and we also want to repent of this sin.
> (c) We feel it to be urgently necessary to much more fully teach the doctrines [*sic*] of nonresistance in our churches and especially to our young people.
> (d) As disciples of Christ and as citizens of Canada we are grateful to our country that it not only took us in when we were in need but also granted freedom of religion and conscience in an exemplary manner. It is our desire to remain loyal to our Canada as God's Word teaches us to be.[45]

The representatives also agreed on three further actions. First, as an indication of their basic goodwill as Canadian citizens, they approved the submission of a letter to King George VI, who was about to start a Canadian tour.[46] Second, they elected a "committee" which was mandated to call further meetings as needed.[47] And thirdly, they unanimously agreed to ask the publishers of two Mennonite newspapers, *Mennonitische*

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[44] Some resolutions are recorded as unanimous, others simply as "carried" or with "general approval"; negative votes are rarely indicated. The implication is that the votes were generally unanimous. The significance of the meeting is suggested not only by the large number of participants but also by the extensive minutes, which take up nineteen pages in the book.

[45] *Experiences*, 51.

[46] The two-page, fine-print letter to King George VI is reproduced in *Experiences*, 54-56. The Mennonites assure the king of their gratitude and devotion, explain their history of immigrations to Canada, and commit themselves to continued prayers for the king and his subjects, "so that Your reign may always be remembered rather because of its accomplishments in the ways of peace than in the achievements of war." No other specific concerns or requests are mentioned.

[47] *Experiences*, 52. The "committee"—not to be confused with the Committee of the *Ältestenrat*—was made up of three members, representatives of the largest conferences, were: Bishop D. Toews (General Conference), Rev. B.B. Janz (Mennonite Brethren), and Bishop S.F. Coffman (Old Mennonites). It is noteworthy that this committee did not include any *Kanadier* representatives, potentially an indication of the future direction(s) of the Mennonites.

Rundschau and *Der Bote,* not to print "any news or articles contrary to our Mennonite principles."[48]

There is no record of any further meetings by any Mennonites until September 1940, when—with considerable urgency—six further meetings of variously configured groups were called to discuss the political developments and the possibility of a unified Mennonite response to the question of military service.[49] While the minutes are not fully clear, the organization of the separate *Ältestenrat* apparently took place during this time as well.[50] The Committee had clearly begun its work by 24 September 1940, reporting that the Order-in-Council of 1873 would, in principle, be honoured by the government.[51]

The crucial meeting of "Representatives of the different Mennonite Churches in Manitoba" was then held on 14 October 1940,[52] where it was decided to establish two committees, one which would represent the *Kanadier* churches and the other which would represent the later immigrants.[53] The gathering then divided into two separate

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[48] Ibid., 54. No additional information is provided, but the implied reference is to the pro-German political content of some of the items in the newspapers at the time.

[49] The long delay between the first and second meeting—a good fifteen months—is probably explained by the government's reluctance to get actively involved in the War and the Mennonites' decision to wait out the further developments. While Canada already declared war on Germany in September 1939, the National Resources Mobilization Act was only passed in June 1940, and even then—despite resentment and some hostilities among their non-Mennonite neighbours—the Mennonites continued to be assured that the government would respect their peace position; however, the first required registration of all Canadian men between sixteen and sixty in August 1940 was seen as a warning signal, leading to the subsequent spate of Mennonite meetings; see Regehr, *Mennonites* [3], 41.

[50] This is indicated in the minutes of 7 and 16 September (*Experiences*, 58 and 61) and confirmed at the larger meeting on 14 October (*Experiences*, 73).

[51] Ibid., 62.

[52] The extensive minutes of this meeting are recorded in *Experiences*, 67-75.

[53] The subsequent minutes of the separate General Conference/Mennonite Brethren committee meetings are not included in *Experiences* and, as noted above (n. 16), are not dealt with further here.

groups to discuss their respective agendas, coming together once more at the end of the sessions to unite in a closing hymn and a concluding prayer by H.P. Toews of Arnaud to wrap up the dramatic decisions of the day.

From 28 October 1940 through 4 June 1942 a series of twelve *Kanadier* ministers' meetings were held; they took place irregularly, usually one or two months apart; from June 1942 to July 1945 the meetings became less frequent, with one final meeting on 23 August 1946. Overlapping with the ministers' meetings were eleven meetings of the *Ältestenrat*. After an initial meeting on 16 September 1940, nine of them were clustered together from 5 March 1942 to 4 April 1944, with a final meeting taking place on 20 March 1945. The relationship between the ministers' meetings and the *Ältestenrat* meetings—the headings of the minutes also vary slightly—is not explicitly clarified: many church leaders participated in both, the agenda is basically identical, and in fact, the minutes of one were sometimes—but not always—read and adopted at the other. These irregularities suggest the early efforts to develop an adequate structure for dealing with the emerging issues; it gradually takes on a more standardized format as the war years continue.

At the ministers' meeting on 28 October 1940 Committee members Schulz and Barkman reported on their visit to the Saskatoon meeting of the Mennonite representatives from the four western provinces held on 22 October. They had, one last time, seriously tried to find a unified stance together with the later immigrant groups, but this had proved to be impossible: the "Mennonites who immigrated later," i.e., the *Russländer*, had been classified as "Conscientious Objectors" under the new War Services Act, which meant they would not receive the automatic exemptions of the

Kanadier. While the latter still wanted to wait out further developments, the former wanted to be proactive and suggest alternative service options to the government, expecting that these would be more acceptable to themselves than other options which the government might impose.[54] Schulz added that he had "earnestly begged"[55] the representatives to proceed more slowly with offering an alternative service option and, when this did not appear to be acceptable to the other representatives, that he had finally made the following proposal:

> We then wanted to promise the Government to be good citizens, to contribute not too small an offering of money on the condition that the Government use the money in a way that would economically benefit our country or for other constructive purposes. At the same time we wanted to ask the Government to exempt our young men from all military service with the confidence that it would honour such a procedure.[56]

The proposal reflects the Mennonites' time-honoured way of dealing with governments: giving reassurance of the Mennonites' good will, reinforcing this assurance with a monetary gift, and then asking for a special favour—like military exemption. While there is no doubt that the underlying conviction was sincere, the approach suggests no lack of political acumen. Schulz's words had, however, fallen on deaf ears among the other representatives. Without further explanation, the minutes continue: "This plea and motion did not satisfy the immigrants [*Russländer*]. It was then left to them to elect their own committee . . . . Our [C]ommittee from that moment took no further part [in the meeting]."[57] After hearing this report it was decided to have separate treasuries for the

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[54] *Experiences*, 77.

[55] The German minute reads, "dass er kindlich gebeten habe." (*Erfahrungen*, 89)

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

committees and also that the Mennonites should make separate arrangements with the government to discuss their concerns.[58] In other words, the break between the two Mennonite groups was now final.

However, it soon became apparent that it would not be an easy matter to put absolute pacifism into practice. On 9 November 1940 the Committee reported that the meeting with the Board had been a respectful one; however, it had also been made clear that all Mennonite men, aged 21-24 years, would need to appear before the Divisional Registrar and that, if approved, all would probably be required to perform some form of alternative service.[59] This was a significant change to the existing blanket exemption. A second focus of the meeting was on how to raise funds—with a clear purpose: "When the question of alternative service arises, our Committee would not have to appear before our Board authorities with empty hands to appeal for exemption from undesirable services."[60] So it is clear that the Committee—and the *Ältestenrat*—was still planning its activities in the style of their past methods of dealing with kings and tsars: payments of funds for special privileges.

An Order-in-Council of 24 December 1940 amended the National War Services Regulations, effectively nullifying the 1873 document and providing for three types of alternative service: non-combatant military service, non-combatant medical service (both under military control), or other non-military civilian services such as work in national

[58] Ibid., 78. A motion to inform the *Russländer* of these decisions was also accepted. No response is recorded in the minutes, but it is evident from the further activities that the dual-committee system was implemented.

[59] Ibid., 80.

[60] Ibid.

parks, public roads, or on farms under civilian supervision.[61] However, the ministers would not easily give up their position. At the ministers' meeting on 24 January 1941 D. Schulz explained the changes. First, all young men would now have to take a medical examination after receiving their call from the Board, and second—pending approval of their CO status—they would need to choose one of the three alternative service options. There was unanimous agreement to once more press the government for complete exemption and, if this should absolutely not be acceptable, to request the third option.[62]

A different issue dealt with the purchase of government non-interest bearing war bonds; after information was given about the bond drive, the minutes record that "the meeting endorsed the plan, recommended that they be bought and further passed a resolution that the churches take this matter in hand."[63] This decision is not explained further; however, it is noteworthy that it departed from the Turner Statement which had been tacitly, if not overtly approved,[64] as well as the resolution of the important all-Mennonite meeting in Winkler on 15 May 1939, which stated that the Churches should "in no way help finance the war through 'War Loans.'"[65] On the other hand, there had already been decisions to come to the government meetings with monetary "gifts," so this decision to support war bonds may not have appeared to be much different in principle. There was also the earlier history, going back to World War I, when the Mennonites had

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[61] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 49.

[62] *Experiences*, 82.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., 34; No. 3 reads: "We can have no part in the financing of war operations through the purchase of war bonds in any form . . . ."

[65] Ibid., 43.

been willing to support the Red Cross and the Patriotic Fund, while refusing to support the Victory bond drive until they were assured that their funds would be used only for relief purposes like "convalescent homes and hospitals."[66] This also appears to be the deciding criterion when the topic of the Victory Bond drive comes up in World War II.[67]

The topic of special financial contributions to the government or acceptable charities continues to be mentioned in the minutes. On 26 April 1941, for example, P.A. Toews reported on the meetings in Ottawa and with Judge Adamson in Winnipeg; the Mennonites had been criticized for not being well organized, and Judge Adamson had declared that much larger contributions were expected of the Mennonites;[68] the fundraising was slower than had been hoped for: the aim had been to collect $1.00 per church member for a total of $10,000; to date only $4,000 had been sent to the Red Cross.[69] On 6 June 1941 D. Schulz reported that Judge Davis of the Supreme Court[70] had acknowledged with appreciation the receipt of "the attractive sum" of $42,000 from the Mennonites.[71] Nothing is said in the minutes about the implication of this support for the Mennonites' basic nonresistant stance, and the topics of participation in government bond drives and donations to charities disappears in the later minutes.

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[66] Ens, *Subjects or Citizens*, 185.

[67] For example, the fundraising drive for $10,000 and the Victory Bond drive are mentioned on 26 April 1941; if funds can be used "charity organizations" the drive would be endorsed. (*Experiences*, 85)

[68] *Experiences*, 83.

[69] Ibid., 84.

[70] The reference to "Judge Davis of the Supreme Court" is not explained further. It is confusing because the Supreme Court of Canada was only established in 1949; the reference is likely to Deputy Minister of War Davis with whom the Mennonite delegations had already met earlier. See Gil Rémillard and G. Gall, "The Supreme Court of Canada," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. 2010. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0007798>.

[71] *Experiences*, 86.

A one-time concern relates to topic of Mennonites "boys" being diverted to work in war factories and military training centres.[72] There is consensus that this is unacceptable, and the topic does not appear to have come up again.

Yet another item of discussion that gets repeated attention in the minutes relates to the collection of clothing through Mennonite Relief Work,[73] together with an estimate of funds that each church should raise for this effort.[74] While the practical aspects of this participation continued to be discussed, the participation in principle did not seem to be an issue.[75]

From 6 June 1941 onward, the bulk of the discussions and decisions relate to the challenges of organizing and supervising the emerging alternative service program: the first group of fifty men with their accompanying chaplain will have to report on 12 June for work in "National Riding Mountain Park;"[76] the visiting camp chaplains are to receive $20 per week and the members of the Executive Committee $3 per day plus

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[72] Ibid., 84.

[73] "Mennonite Relief Work" is not defined in the minutes; the reference is to the Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee which had been organized a month earlier, on 30 December, 1940 by the *Kanadier* churches. The committee collected funds and material aid, channeled through the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), which had begun relief work in England in early 1940. The committee disbanded in 1963, becoming one of nine inter-Mennonite service agencies that united to form MCC Canada. See Guy F. Hershberger and Atlee Beechy, "Relief Work," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. 1989. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/R4594ME.html> and J.G. Toews, "Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online.* 1953. Accessed 07 January 2011. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/C3650ME.html>.

[74] Expected contributions were as follows: Sommerfelder - $500, Bergthaler - $350, Rudnerweider - $200, Old Colony - $50, Kleine Gemeinde - $150, Holdeman - $100, Chortitzer - $200, Bruderthaler - $50. No explanation is given for how these figures were calculated (*Experiences*, 83), although at the next meeting the figure of one dollar per member is mentioned.

[75] The minutes of 26 April 1941 state: "The assembly is quite unanimous in that we should continue to contribute freely to government sponsored relief agencies." (*Experiences*, 84)

[76] Ibid., 87.

expenses; And, of course, funds were always needed to operate the alternative service program.

A continuous question that had to be grappled with was what it meant to be nonresistant in an absolute sense. At the meeting on 15 October 1941, for example, it was reported that "the assembly is . . . given a detailed report of the nine boys who are in prison."[77] The members of the Committee were convinced that the "boys" were genuine in their CO stand and had tried to intervene on their behalf: this included a consultation with Judge Adamson, who referred them to the provincial attorney-general, who "had shown sympathy and had advised them to appeal to Ottawa."[78] After serious discussion it was decided to make this appeal but without making it a legal challenge and without employing lawyers because "such an action would not be in harmony with our convictions.[79]

The stance of absolute pacifism was again challenged when the government announced a general plebiscite. This topic received considerable discussion at the meeting on 5 March 1942; it was considered to be directly related to the military and conscription, and D. Schulz recommended that the Mennonites not participate lest they lose their special privileges.[80] The question came up for discussion again at a special meeting on 6 March 1942 when it was learned that Mennonite COs at the Seebe Camp in Alberta had been instructed to build a camp for prisoners of war, work that some of them

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[77] Ibid., 90.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., 96.

felt unable to do in good conscience.[81] The Committee was instructed to investigate the issue, and nothing specific is noted in the further minutes. However, the Seebe Camp issue was one of the questions the Committee took to Ottawa at their next visit. Other questions that were also prepared for the meeting with the authorities addressed the length of the COs' terms, the option of farm leaves, and—conspicuously amid the other practical matters—"whether it would be possible to emigrate now."[82] The Committee was in frequent conversation with the government by mail or visits about these and other issues—including, when necessary, to Prime Minister Mackenzie King; overall, the communications appear to have gone fairly well.[83]

The matter of nonresistance as evidence of a more general Christian faith was also challenged from an entirely different perspective, as various concerns were expressed about the attitude of the some of the young Mennonite men: for example, while most were taking their responsibilities as COs seriously, there was evidence of "increasing laxity" among the called-up men in applying for their exemption from military service;[84] and some of the COs who had been transferred from Manitoba camps to British Columbia, as Rev. Berg reported, "do not co-operate very well with their church leaders. A number of them do not seem to be very spiritually minded."[85] No further information

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[81] Ibid., 98.

[82] Ibid., 100. There is no further explanation for this question and also no report of any discussion that grew out of it.

[83] On 4 May 1942, for example, it was reported that the Committee had written to Prime Minister Mackenzie King about their non-participation in the plebiscite and had received a "very favourable" reply (98).

[84] Ibid., 97.

[85] Ibid., 102.

is given, but the comment is a reminder that the Committee had to deal with this side of the alternative service program as well. The behaviour of the COs was a concern that came up again several times during the following years.[86]

While such problems needed to be addressed, there were many more indications that the alternative service program was developing into a positive experience. A major government policy shift was explained at the 4 June 1942 ministers' meeting, when, due to the Canadian manpower shortage, the Board introduced the option of "farm leaves" for the COs;[87] other service options, such as work in sawmills, coal mines, and overseas fire fighting, also appeared to be developing. At the "Ministers' Annual Meeting"[88] on 15 January 1943 David Schulz and others reported on the activities of the past year, noting that the Committee had met with the Board over fifty times in the past year and had "without fail" been received very respectfully.[89] This number of meetings seems almost unbelievable! It is never stated where the meetings were, but even driving to Winnipeg (not to mention Ottawa) from southern Manitoba once a week, plus the other planning and supervisory meetings related to the alternative service program—all on top of the regular pastoral duties of the *Ältesters*—is mind boggling! It comes as no surprise that the members of the Committee, notably Schulz and Barkman, asked to be relieved of their responsibilities on more than one occasion; repeatedly, however, the response they

[86] For example, at 22 June 1942 meeting there was discussion about the "boys" who didn't return from their leaves of absence and the negative impact this was having (105); concern was also expressed that good literature should be provided for the COs, as well as more adequate ministerial visits.

[87] Ibid., 103.

[88] This was the first time a meeting was called an "annual" meeting, suggesting that a kind of routine was developing.

[89] *Experiences*, 110 and 111.

received was that their resignations could not be accepted because "the time is too critical to make a change now."[90]

The nonresistant position led to yet another kind of conflict. At the 12 April 1943 meeting of the *Ältestenrat Ältester* Bueckert[91] reported that "a number of our teachers have been taken out of their schools" because they did not endorse the military programs; the Committee was asked to investigate this matter.[92] The topic was again raised at the meeting of 22 May 1943 and by July had become "very critical." Thereupon, D. Schulz reported, the Committee, together with three Mennonite reeves and three "representatives from the legislature," had discussed the matter with officials of the Department of Education, apparently with "the desired effect."[93]

Another meeting that was one more indication of the turmoil of the time and possibly also of the impatience with the work of the *Ältestenrat* among some Mennonite took place on 15 May 1943. It was noted as a "Joint Meeting of the Executive, some assistants, and the newly-formed committee of the West Reserve" that was held in Lowe Farm.[94] An exchange with the spokespeople for the committee—Dr. C. Wiebe, Rev. Paul

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[90] Ibid., 109. The refusal to accept their resignations indicates that the leadership provided by the Committee was understood and appreciated; the overloaded Committee members, especially the two co-chairs did eventually begin to appoint assistants to ease their load. (116)

[91] No explanation is given for the presence and participation of *Ältester* Bueckert, who had earlier requested membership in the *Ältestenrat* but—as far as the minutes show—had not yet received a clear response.

[92] *Experiences*, 119. At this point in the minutes there is no additional information about the actual "number" of teachers affected or just what the "military programs" entailed.

[93] Ibid., 122. The following motion was then accepted: "We are satisfied how the Department of Education has solved the teacher problem and are thankful for the prospects of keeping our teachers in our schools, but we are unanimous in our stand against the 'Cadet Training' plan and wish they [sic] would not be introduced into our schools." (122)

[94] This "newly-formed committee" was apparently the organization referred to disparagingly at the earlier ministers' meeting on 4 June 1942.

J. Schaefer, and H. H. Hamm—led to an evaluation of the developments of the war, implications for COs, and if there would be any ground for working together. There is no further background explanation, and no agreements are recorded. A following meeting of the *Ältestenrat* agreed that there should not be two separate committees, especially since the members of the second committee also came from *Kanadier* congregations; the churches were to be informed accordingly.[95]

A new point of stress emerged at the meetings in July and October1943, when the act to establish a non-combatant medical corps, which would not require military training but would be under military command, was introduced.[96] Concern was expressed that this program might tempt many young men, and a motion was unanimously passed rejecting any service, even non-combatant, within the army.[97]

And the "boys" themselves and their welfare continued to generate concerns. At the next *Ältestenrat* meeting, held half a year after the previous one on 4 April 1944, it was reported that nearly all "boys" were now working "under a contract," i.e., at various placements like mines or sawmills, rather than in camps. This meant a higher pay for the "boys" and therefore greater donations to the Red Cross; but it also made spiritual supervision and pastoral care more difficult.[98] Initiating a new thrust, a motion was also

[95] *Experiences*, 121.

[96] Ibid., 122 and 123.

[97] Ibid., 124.

[98] Ibid., 125.

passed to send one man, Vernon Toews, to England to work as a representative in the relief distribution with MCC.[99]

By the time of the "Annual 'Peace Problem' Conference" on 7 January 1944 some routines had clearly been established and the issues related to the alternative service program were basically being taken care of.[100] Reports on already familiar topics were given by the Committee members: ministers' visits to the various CO sites, review of the service programs, regrets at inadequate aspects of the programs. The cooperation with the Board had basically continued to go well, and Cadet Training programs would not be introduced into "the Mennonite school."[101] Reports were also heard from the ministers who had visited camps and mental hospitals; most problems—no specifics were given—appeared to come from the "boys" who were working on farms.[102] Finally, the Committee was reaffirmed for another year. Then, at the Ministers' Meeting on 24 June 1944, J.F. Barkman observed that the work with the Board "has now become much easier,"[103] the financial report was unusually positive, revealing a "good surplus," and in what seems like a rare upbeat mood, it is recorded that "the [C]ommittee brethren,

[99] Ibid.

[100] This was the first meeting thus named, but clearly followed the annual "Ministers' Meetings" of 24 January 1941, 2 January 1942 (where it was decided to have two representatives' meetings a year), and 15 January 1943. Similar "annual" and "semi-annual" meetings with slightly different titles were subsequently held on 24 June 1944, 9 January 1945, 24 July 1945, and 18 December 1945.

[101] The reference is not further spelled out, but may be an allusion to the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Manitoba.

[102] *Experiences*, 128.

[103] Ibid., 130.

Barkman and Toews, express a feeling of satisfaction which they receive from their work."[104]

Then came reports that it was becoming "much easier" to receive CO status; only few "boys" were still in prison, usually not longer than two months; there was continuing good cooperation with the Board; and conditions in the hospitals and coal mines were generally "favourable."[105] Reports were again given at the "Annual Ministers' Meeting" on 9 January 1945, including the report of the Relief Committee that in the past four years $40,000 had been received for relief work, mostly in England. While it isn't stated directly in the minutes, there does seem to be a general sense of relief, possibly reflecting the turning tide of the war itself.[106]

Nevertheless, the Committee never relented in its consideration of all actions, to determine whether or not they fit the Mennonite commitment to absolute pacifism. When the *Ältestenrat* met for a final time on 20 March 1945, a new discussion item was the donation of blood to the Red Cross and whether or not donating blood meant support of the military campaign; it was agreed to leave the decision up to the each church and individual.[107] Another "lengthy discussion" dealt with the new Family Allowance Act which was considered to be a "serious problem": would it be acceptable to receive finances from the government, or would this be the beginning of a compromise with the

[104] Ibid., 131.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., 134.

[107] Ibid., 135.

"world"? Even though most of the *Ältesten* opposed the Act, no formal action was taken.[108]

With the War in Europe already over and the end of the War with Japan in sight, another "Semi-Annual Ministers' Meeting" was held on 24 July 1945: clearly the Committee was eager to phase out its wartime activities as well. Immediately after the cease-fire in Europe, the Committee had successfully appealed to the Board to have contributions to the Red Cross reduced.[109] By now some statistics could also be presented that gave an overview of the larger Canadian alternative service program. In total, it was noted, 19,700 men had been involved in the alternative service programs and up to 1 April 1945 had contributed a total of $1,784,259.95 to the Red Cross.[110] Even though the War was almost over, there appeared to be some unfinished business—specifics are not mentioned—and it was agreed to keep the Committee intact for the time being. It was further agreed to send a "letter of acknowledgment" to Prime Minister Mackenzie King "thanking him for the privileges and protection granted us by our good government during the war."[111]

Nevertheless, a spirit of humility pervaded the Committee, and there were still loose ends to tie up. At the next "Annual 'Peace Problem' Ministers' Meeting" on 19

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[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., 136.

[110] Ibid., 137. The minutes do not record the numbers of COs from the conservative *Kanadier* churches or even more generally the numbers of Mennonite COs. Regehr gives the number of Mennonite COs as 7,543; see Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 54.

[111] Ibid., 138-139. This letter of appreciation came at the end of a long correspondence that had stretched throughout the entire War; it was also reminiscent of an earlier letter sent to the government by the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites who were emigrating to Mexico; and it represents a continuing tradition of later petitions and meetings with government leaders like John Diefenbaker and Pierre Trudeau. See Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 383-385.

December 1945 it was reported that final payments to the Red Cross were still outstanding and that the work of the Relief Committee continued to be urgent.[112] In closing the meeting, the Committee asked the assembly "to treat with brotherly forebearance [*sic*] the many blunders which they have made during the critical days of the war," and the assembly showed its appreciation "by rising to their feet."[113]

With the War finally over, it was time to evaluate the alternative service program that had emerged in the crucible of a major world conflict and to conclude the work.[114] A final set of minutes records the "Manitoba Ministers' Meeting" of 23 August 1946, chaired once again by David Schulz. There were the last housekeeping matters to arrange and final payments to be made to the Red Cross; the camps were asking for Mennonite men, whom they had got to appreciate, to return for winter work; it was agreed to compile the experiences of the last six tumultuous years into a book, and the secretary of the Committee, David P. Reimer, was given this assignment; a "Thanksgiving Festival" ("*Rückerinnerung- und Dankfest*") was to be planned with thanks to God "for the wonderful protection enjoyed during the dark days of the war"—in fact, one "festival" was to be held in the Mennonite East Reserve and one in the West Reserve. Finally, it was decided "to have the whole [executive] committee continue to function as during the war."[115]

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[112] Ibid., 139.

[113] Ibid., 140-141.

[114] Ibid., 141.

[115] Ibid., 142.

The minutes do not record if the planned "festivals" were actually held, nor what happened further to the *Ältestenrat*, in terms of activities, programs, or even the existence of the council as such. Historian T.D. Regehr suggests it became one of the many Mennonite relief and service agencies that eventually merged in 1963 to form Mennonite Central Committee (Canada).[116]

Summary

The minutes of the *Ältestenrat* reveal a number of themes that are pertinent to this thesis. First, it becomes very clear that nonresistance was a basic tenet held in common by all Mennonite churches in Canada, including the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites. This was reaffirmed at the historic meeting of all Canadian Mennonites in May 1939, when the first of a series of resolutions to be accepted read: "We thank God for the assurance that all the Conferences and Churches represented here stand firmly on the biblical principle of nonresistance as received from our fathers."[117] This basic conviction was never again the focus of discussion—in fact, it was hardly even mentioned again—throughout the rest of the meetings: it was assumed and axiomatic for all further discussions and decisions.[118]

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[116] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 391 and 393.

[117] *Experiences*, 51. While it is noted that the Sommerfelder MC was not represented at the May 1939 meeting and thus did not participate in the vote, the Church was a full participant in the later meetings, with the Sommerfelder *Ältester* Peter A. Toews involved centrally as co-chair of the *Ältestenrat*.

[118] Of course, the Mennonites' nonresistant stance was severely challenged by the Board of National War Services, specifically by its registrars, as well as informally by the Mennonites' non-Mennonite neighbours; statistics and anecdotal evidence also indicate that not nearly all Mennonite church members or adherents agreed with the nonresistant position. Nevertheless, the "official" stance of all Mennonite groups—be this in their statements of faith, in their positions vis-à-vis the various government officials, or in the votes of church leaders and delegates such as the one in May 1939—was consistent and very clear.

Secondly, the Mennonites, especially the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites, clearly fit the category of "absolute" pacifism (to use Martin Ceadel's typology) or "separational" pacifism (Peter Brock's) or the "pacifism of consistent nonconformity" (John Howard Yoder's), unquestionably rejecting the use of force, but living with a dualistic world view and basically having nothing—or at least as little as possible—to do with the outside "world." They did not see themselves as political pacifists: their stance of nonresistance was a *religious*, not a *political* conviction, even though it had political aspects and implications. The Mennonite leaders never indicated any interest in challenging or influencing overall government military policy; there is also no indication in the minutes that they had any particular interest in working together with other non-Mennonite pacifist groups, except as some of them also became involved in the emerging alternative service program. They simply did not see this larger picture as being their area of concern or responsibility; however, they were deeply concerned to protect their faith convictions and the members who would be affected by the clash between their world view and the view represented by the government and most of Canadian society around them.

Third, after serious initial efforts to find a unified response by all Canadian Mennonites, it became evident fairly quickly that this would not be possible. Two general responses became apparent among the Mennonites, in part because of their differing legal status in Canada, in part because of differing convictions about the practical implications of being nonresistant: some of the churches were willing to consider a compromise with the government on some form of alternative service, while others were firm in rejecting compromises of any kind. Of major significance was the

difference in the legal status between the *Kanadier*—who had received the official assurance of military exemption when they first immigrated to Canada—and the *Russländer*—who were accepted with general rights of conscientious objectors but without any blanket assurance of exemption. However, the responses were not only based on the different legal status of the two groups. While the *Kanadier* had basically sought to defend their convictions and way of life vis-à-vis the Canadian government and the "English"—that is, the non-Mennonite—world since their arrival in the 1870s,[119] the *Russländer* had been experiencing a drastically changing environment in Russia on many levels—the political and legal, the educational, as well as the religious, social, and cultural. As a result, the *Kanadier* felt much less of an obligation toward the Canadian government and society than the *Russländer* did and were much less willing to consider some form of alternative service.

Fourth, while they were surely sincere in their convictions and these convictions were primarily religious, the *Kanadier* Mennonite leaders displayed considerable confidence and skill when it came to dealing with the governmental authorities. For example, it was unanimously decided on 9 November, 1940, that "large sums of money" should be raised so that "our Committee would not have to appear before our Board authorities with empty hands to appeal for exemption from undesirable services."[120] This topic surfaced again several times throughout the meetings, and substantial funds were actually raised—usually with the qualifiers that the money should go for non-military

[119] Adolf Ens writes that the *Kanadier*, especially in the early period of settlement, behaved as "subjects" rather than as participating "citizens" of Canada (Ens, *Subjects or Citizens*, 46)

[120] *Experiences*, 80.

purposes.[121] Even the somewhat surprising affirmation for the government's Victory Bond drive was not unconditional: the funds donated by Mennonites should go for "charitable" work.[122] Of course, the down-to-earth "wheeling and dealing" happened on the other side as well, for example, when Judge Adamson demanded substantially larger donations "for the suffering caused by the war"[123] and "Judge" Davis subsequently expressed appreciation for the Mennonites' gifts, promising that they would be "treated with special favour."[124]

Fifth, true to their convictions, the conservative Mennonites refused to get into legal battles or to retain lawyers—even to help the "boys" in prison for their CO stand.[125] The way in which the Committee approached this particular matter was typical: they kept a careful eye on the legal procedures involving the hearings of the "boys"; when these did not go well, Committee members met with Judge Adamson and other Manitoba authorities and "sought their advice"; when this step also proved to be inadequate, they met with the provincial attorney general who advised them to bring their concern to Ottawa—which they proceeded to do. However, none of these situations were confrontational or based on a legal adversarial approach. Similarly, when the [presumably Mennonite] teachers' loss of their positions due to refusing military training

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[121] Comprehensive statistics are missing in the minutes, but there are glimpses into the financial dealings at various points, e.g., the Canadian COs (here apparently including many but not only *Kanadier* "boys") raised $1,784,259.95 for the Red Cross up to 1 April 1945 (*Experiences*, 137), and in 1945 the *Kanadier* Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee spent $75,000 "in clothing, food, and money." (140)

[122] Ibid., 85.

[123] Ibid., 83.

[124] Ibid., 86.

[125] Ibid., 90. The minutes of15 October 1941 read: "An appeal can only be successfully made by a lawyer, and such an action would not be in harmony with our convictions."

programs in schools became a critical issue in April 1943, Committee members proceeded in the same manner.[126]

Sixth, as suggested by the above examples, a basically positive working relationship developed between the Committee and the various government authorities, notably the National War Services Board. Repeatedly there is mention of mutual respect and even "cordial" meetings.[127] Both sides brought their perspectives and concerns to the negotiations, but they were able to work constructively at resolving their problems together, with the emerging alternative service program as the result.[128]

Seventh, despite their separation from the *Russländer*, the *Kanadier* Mennonites were not totally averse to working together with other Mennonite churches or other organizations in addressing the government or contributing to relief efforts: witness the joint efforts through the Mennonite Central Committee, Ontario Peace Problems Committee, and the Red Cross. Their cooperation was, however, never uncritical or unconditional, e.g., a basic stipulation was always that no support should go toward military operations.

Eighth, even as the basic directions were still needing to be sorted out among the *Kanadier* leaders themselves and also between them and the government, the practical issues of establishing the new alternative service program took on increasing importance.

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[126] Ibid., 119 and 122. As noted above, the Committee pulled in three Mennonite reeves and three representatives from the legislature and "discussed the teacher situation" with the Department of Education; the minutes conclude that "to all appearances this seemed to have the desired effect."

[127] For example, at the meeting on 15 January 1943 Schulz reported that "they have visited the War Services Board about fifty times during the past year. They have been cordially received every time." (*Experiences*, 111)

[128] The *Ältestenrat*, in the same spirit, agreed to send an appreciative letter to the prime minister at the end of the War, "thanking him for the privileges and protection granted us by our good government during the war." (*Experiences*, 138)

There were also continuing concerns about the spiritual and moral life of the "boys" in the camps, e.g., planning the pastoral care visits. The Committee and the whole *Ältestenrat* recognized that their leadership was needed not only in relation to the "external" world but also to the "internal" world within their own churches, not only in relation to the "big" fundamental principles but also to the practical, down-to-earth concerns of organizing and running the alternative service program—and they attempted to provide this multi-faceted leadership to the best of their abilities.

Ninth, one practical matter that gets mentioned repeatedly in the minutes is the matter of finances: finances for donations to the government, money to buy Victory Bonds (if used for charitable work), funding for relief work and charitable organizations, funding to operate the basic alternative service program itself. It becomes evident that the members of the *Ältestenrat* and by implication the members of their churches were prepared to pay a substantial price for their convictions.

Tenth, overall the minutes suggest some initial scrambling to find direction and a coherent response to the crisis of the War: many decisions appear to be made on an ad hoc basis at first, gradually leading to some order and a sense of direction as programs are developed, reports become more routine, and meetings are called on a less frequent and more regular basis. At the same time, the minutes do not reflect a sense of panic; rather, they suggest an orderly process for dealing with a major unexpected concern. They also reflect the deep commitment of the leaders, especially the members of the *Ältestenrat* and within this context the members of the Committee in particular, to

provide direction for the churches and the members during a critical time.[129] At the end of the War there is a sense of relief—but also the quiet confidence that their foundational conviction had not been misplaced. The meetings end with the reaffirmation of their faith and with gratitude to God, as "Thanksgiving Festivals"[130] are proposed for both the East and West Reserve.

[129] The weight of this commitment is suggested by the repeated requests of the Committee members to be released of their responsibilities, especially in the latter half of the War. The fuller implication of the commitment of the members of the *Ältestenrat* becomes even clearer in other literature, such as the biography of Wilhelm Falk; see Mary Neufeld, *A Prairie Pilgrim*.

[130] The German expression is "*Rückerinnerung- und Dankfest*." (*Erfahrungen*, 177)

CONCLUSION

In his *Confession of Faith* of 1881 Johann Wiebe, wrote: "According to the pure teaching of our Lord Jesus in the New Testament we are forbidden to take revenge, and in the spirit of the gospel, which is a spirit of peace, we are likewise forbidden to use any sword, weapon, or gun against our enemies."[1] These words of the influential first *Ältester* of the Reinländer (Old Colony) Mennonite Church provide a compact summary of the peace stance of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites who arrived in southern Manitoba from Russia in the 1870s.

Wiebe's words also suggest the overall direction of the present thesis. In examining the peace stance of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites during the years from 1874 to 1945—the time from their initial arrival in Canada, through a lengthy period of relatively closed community life, to the upheavals of World War II—my thesis has been that their absolute commitment to peace was rooted in their overall understanding of what it meant to be Christian. The conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites did not see themselves as peace activists, they did not agitate for changes in government policies on warfare, they did not even see themselves as "witnessing" to their faith—they were not, to use Peter Brock's term, "integrational" pacifists. From this perspective they—like most other Mennonites in Canada at that time—did not consider themselves as having much in common with the broader Canadian pacifist movement which they saw as being primarily political and part of the "world." At the same time, their lives and

[1] Wiebe, "Glaubensbekenntnis," 30.

actions—their trust in God's providence, their humility, their insistence that they must be different from the surrounding "world" and even be prepared to suffer for their convictions—reflected their commitment to peace. Most visibly, this commitment included their refusal to participate in military service during a time of war, but beyond this it also undergirded their teachings which directed their everyday lives and shaped their total identity.

In defining the conservative Mennonites' peace stance, I have situated them in the context of the larger Mennonite and the Canadian peace traditions and then focused, in particular, on three kinds of literature which provide complimentary, albeit distinctive, perspectives on their conviction. The first of these, consisting of several history books published over a seventy-year time span between 1900 and 1970, offered one perspective, a remarkably consistent one, both in what the authors wrote and in what they took for granted. While these history books had conspicuously little to say on the topic of military service and nonresistance as such, the topic was everywhere "between the lines," like an unspoken axiom that did not need to be explained or justified. After all, the migration accounts were themselves ample testimony to this conviction, even as they dwelt on the practical consequences of the basic conviction.

Throughout the accounts much was also said about the faith of the conservative Mennonites more generally: the biblical basis of their faith, their concern for the purity of the church, and their expectation of possible deprivation and suffering for their convictions. In the larger society around them they saw other values, such as selfishness, ambition, nationalistic allegiances, and the settlement of conflicts by litigation and warfare. These were values that clashed sharply with their own understandings of the

Christian life: a humble and sincere trust in God to meet their daily needs and dealing with all people with honesty, integrity, and compassion. They saw nonresistance as explicitly mandated by Jesus but also as an extension of their total religious convictions.

The second literary genre I examined was the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites' sermons. The six representative sermons were written by different *Ältesten* and preached at different times and in different conservative Mennonite churches, but they showed remarkable similarities, so many, in fact, that they strongly suggested the use of earlier sermons as templates or even as sources for direct, if unacknowledged, copying. One of the conspicuous similarities, in relation to the topic of this thesis, was that there was hardly a mention—and certainly no extensive discussion—of nonresistance, even in the midst of a major world war. At first this seemed like an odd omission to me, all the more because I knew from other sources that the *Ältesten* who delivered the sermons were deeply committed to the peace stance and that at least some of them were actively involved in the negotiations and implementation of the alternative service program. The omission began to make sense, however, when I became aware of the tradition, which eventually evolved to become a rule, of quite intentionally reusing existing sermons only, rather than writing one's own, lest any creative original work reflect the vice of pride.

Not unlike the previous genre, the sermons dealt extensively with such general topics as the biblical story of salvation, life as a preparation for eternity, and living according to the values that Jesus taught: faith, integrity, compassion, "living at peace with God and with one's neighbour." It was, once again, out of this larger milieu of religious values that non-participation in the military arose as a self-evident corollary, undergirded by Jesus' explicit teaching of nonresistance in the Sermon on the Mount.

The third genre I analyzed consisted of a single book of minutes, a unique and telling source that documents forty meetings of Mennonite church leaders, in particular the *Ältesten* of the *Kanadier* Mennonite churches, held just before and during World War II. In contrast to the two previous kinds of literature, the minutes include almost no elements that could be considered as theologizing or "sermonizing"; there is little mention of eternity or right Christian living. In this crisis time, from about 1939 to 1945, when the Mennonites' faith and particularly their conviction of nonresistance was more severely challenged than at almost any other time in their recent history, the church leaders became very practical. Once again, the minutes reflect almost no discussion of the fundamental issue of nonresistance. After recording a vote at the representatives' meeting on 15 May 1939, which affirmed the basic nonresistant stance of the Mennonites, the minutes turn to the practical and even mundane issues of deciding how to respond to government directives, getting organized, planning the emerging alternative service program, raising the necessary funds, and then monitoring the developments of the program. Even as the minutes record the numerous specific decisions, however, underlying all is the premise of the rightness of the nonresistant stance and the need to remain separate from the wider militarized Canadian culture. Nowhere do the minutes even suggest that this fundamental conviction was ever challenged or in doubt.

In conclusion, then, does the examined literature provide a clear answer to the question: were the Kanadier Mennonites nonresistant or pacifist? It certainly does—although to a considerable extent it is given by implication rather than by direct evidence. Definitely the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites were nonresistant. This conviction was so deeply rooted, so axiomatic for them, that it did not require any extensive discussion.

It was so basic that it was a major factor contributing to the migrations of thousands of Mennonites, both into and later out of Canada; it was so fundamental that it led to the establishment—with the other Canadian Mennonites—of an entire war-time alternative service program during the 1940s.

Were the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites pacifists? They would not have called themselves pacifists, but the fuller response to this question depends upon one's definition of the term. Using the introductory definition of pacifism as "the belief that all disputes should be settled by peaceful means rather than war," they were certainly pacifists; according to Brock's definitions, they were "separational" rather than "integrational" pacifists; following Martin Ceadel's distinctions, they were "absolute pacifists" but not "reformist" pacifists; and using John Howard Yoder's categories, they would have identified with the category of the "pacifism of consistent nonconformity" but not with others such as politically motivated pacifism, objection to specific wars, or pacifism that allows for use of arms under certain circumstances (i.e., "just war theory").

So the question of "either—or," as posited in the title of my thesis, may finally not be the most useful one to frame the discussion, however helpful it may be in introducing it. In any case, the peace stance of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites from 1874 to 1945 as evidenced in the literature, whether labeled as "nonresistant," "absolute pacifist," or by another title, was very clear.

Other related subjects remain to be studied: for example, how this unequivocal peace stance of the conservative church leaders and their confessional literature compared to the convictions of the "ordinary" church members of the time; how the churches were impacted by the returning young men, either from alternative service or

also from military service assignments; if the peace understandings of young Mennonite women were identical to those of the men; how the cooperation of the *Ältesten* of the different churches—some of whom had been at odds with each other before the War—affected their further personal and congregational relationships; if and how the convictions of the conservative churches have changed since World War II; and how their relationships with other churches, the surrounding society, and the government were affected by of the experience.

In terms of the historiographical aspects of this thesis, the published literature of the conservative Mennonites is still relatively sparse, although there are surely more unpublished materials available, like the sermons at the Mennonite Heritage Centre or other unpublished writings in private holdings. Additional studies of the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites are being undertaken by others, both Mennonites and non-Mennonites, with a major impetus coming from the Chair of Mennonite Studies and the Plett Foundation, as well as the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and other Mennonite historical societies. The sermons of the conservative Mennonites could be examined much more extensively, including studies of their antecedent sources as well as their theology. It would also surely be a useful study to trace how the conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites, who opted to work separately from the other Canadian Mennonites at the outset of World War II, came to work cooperatively with them during the War and subsequently also in other organizations such as the Mennonite Central Committee (Canada).

In terms of the broader Canadian developments, Thomas Socknat has observed that the historical study of pacifism in Canada has been largely ignored.[2] He notes, however, that historians have begun to reconsider and reevaluate the pacifist movement in the context of Canadian social history, and that some of the best contributions in this regard have come from historians writing about specific pacifist groups.[3] One of these historians, T.D. Regehr, writing about the Canadian Mennonites, concludes that they were transformed, in varying degrees, by the experiences of the twentieth century, particularly those of World War II.[4] He points, in particular, to the diminished significance of absolute values, the growing awareness that the message of the Gospels was not to be understood in abstract absolute terms but was intricately interwoven with its cultural contexts, and the embarrassing need to acknowledge that even their own Mennonite organizations had not managed to remain without their failures and conflicts: all were difficult experiences that tended to relativize their convictions.[5]

The conservative *Kanadier* Mennonites have been among those most resistant to such changes, preferring to emigrate rather than to enter into any compromises with the surrounding society.[6] They may not have received much space in the history books, but their story—the story of their everyday lives, their migrations for sake of their

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[2] Socknat, *Witness against War*, 5.

[3] Ibid., 6.

[4] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada* [3], 416.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Loewen, "To the Ends of the Earth," 445.

convictions, and their peace stance during times of war—is a significant component of the overall Canadian peace movement.

APPENDIX ONE

SERMONS BY SELECTED *KANADIER* MENNONITE *ÄLTESTEN*

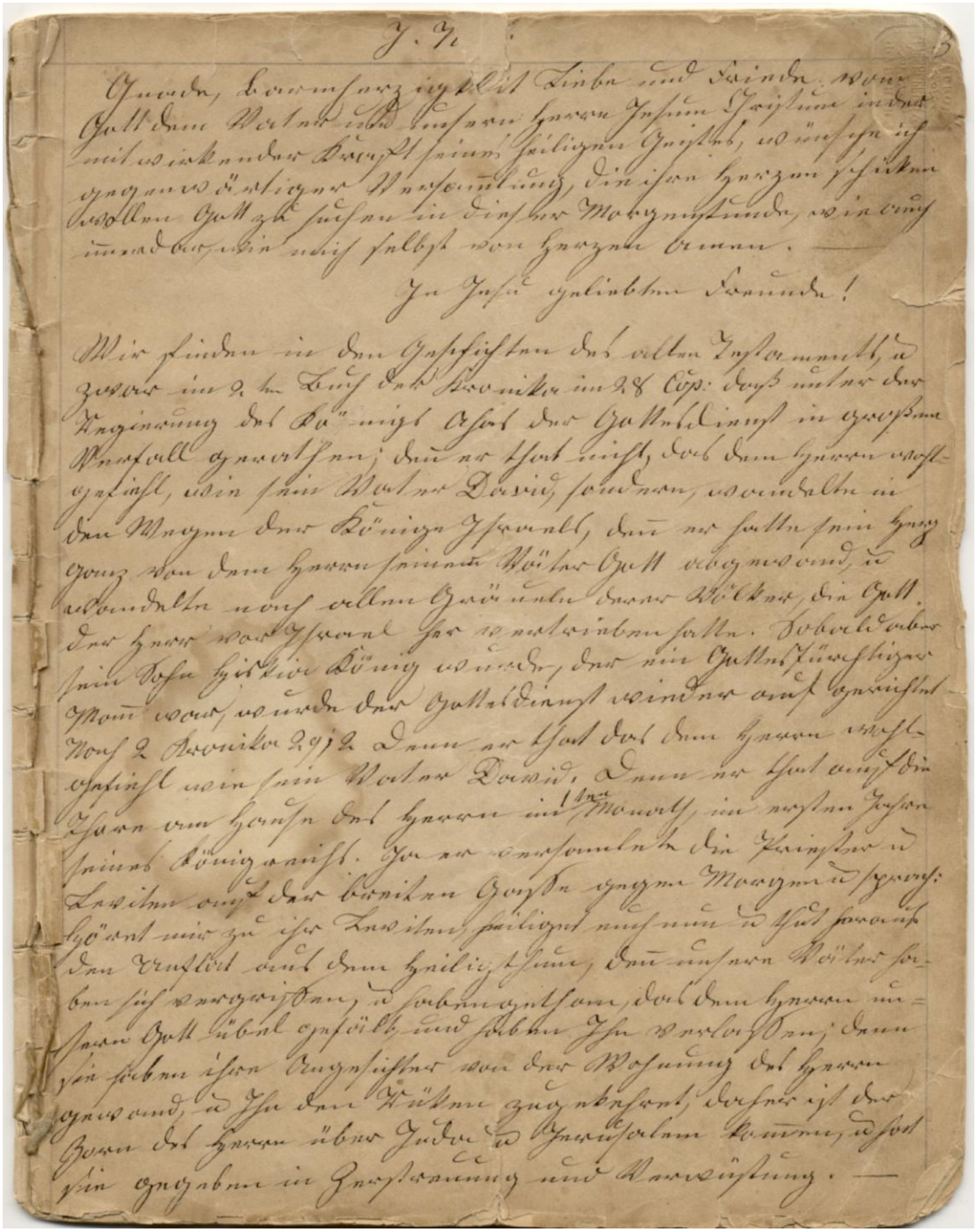
Sermons by the following *Ältesten* are reviewed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. All the sermons, handwritten in High German, are located in the archives of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg.

Bergthaler	**Chortitzer**	**Sommer-felder**	**Kleine Gemeinde**	**Reinländer**	**Rudner-weider**
Gerh. Wiebe (1827-1900) Minister 1861- *Ältester* 1866- Sermon used 1862-1913					
	David Stoesz (1842-1903) Minister 1869- *Ältester* 1879- Sermon used 1892, 1894				
		Abraham Doerksen (1852-1929) *Ältester* 1894- Mexico 1922 Sermon ca.1893			
		Peter A. Toews (1877-1961) Minister 1930- *Ältester* 1931- (*Ältestenrat* co-chair) Sermon 1930			
			David P. Reimer (1894-1962) Minister 1929- *Ältester* 1948- (*Ältestenrat* secretary) Sermon 1930s	**Jakob F. Penner** (1898-1974) Minister 1936- *Ältester* 1959- Sermon 1930s	

APPENDIX TWO

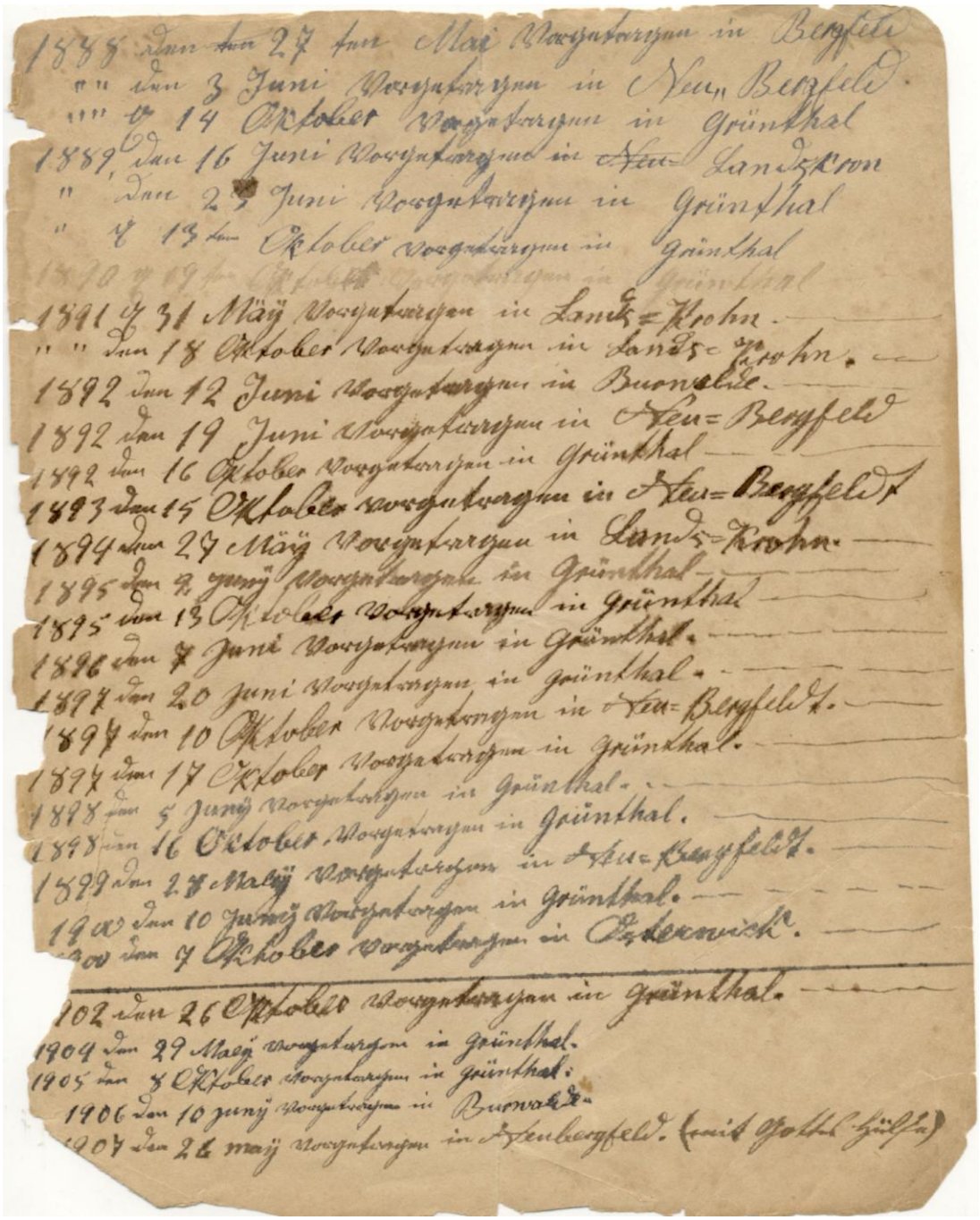
SERMON FACSIMILE 1

First page of a sermon by *Ältester* Gerhard Wiebe with typical header "I[m] N[amen Jesu]" (partly obliterated) and invocation; the original sermon is located in the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg. (See sermon discussion, pp. 83-85.)



SERMON FACSIMILE 2

Page at the end of a sermon by *Ältester* Gerhard Wiebe, listing locations and dates of sermon delivery from 1888 to 1907; the original sermon is located in the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg. (See sermon discussion, pp. 83-85.)



APPENDIX THREE

MEMBERS OF THE *ÄLTESTENRAT* (COUNCIL OF ELDERS)

(From *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War*, 7)

CHURCH	REPRESENTATIVE(S)
Sommerfelder MC	*Ältester* Peter A. Toews
Chortitzer MC	*Ältester* Peter S. Wiebe
Bergthaler MC	*Ältester* David Schulz
Rudnerweider MC	*Ältester* Wilhelm Falk
Kleine Gemeinde	*Ältester* Peter P. Reimer and Jacob B. Kroeker
Holdeman MC	*Ältester* Jacob T. Wiebe and Rev. Jacob F. Barkman
Bruderthaler MC (EMB)	Rev. B.P. Janz, later G.S. Rempel
Reinländer (Old Colony) MC	*Ältester* Jacob Froese
Holdeman MC (Alberta)	Rev. Isaac W. Toews
Bruderthaler MC (Saskatchewan)	Rev. H.H. Schulz
Three smaller churches were added later	
Appointed members	Rev. David P. Reimer and Deacon Jacob I. Bartel
Executive committee (Committee of directors, "the Committee")	*Ältester* Peter A. Toews (co-chair) *Ältester* David Schulz (co-chair) Rev. Jacob F. Barkman Rev. David P. Reimer (secretary) Deacon Jacob I. Bartel (treasurer)

APPENDIX FOUR

MEETINGS OF THE *KANADIER* MENNONITES, 1939-1946

(From *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War*)

Church Representatives	**Ministers' Meetings**	***Ältestenrat* (Council of Elders)**	**Other Meetings**
15 May 1939 (37-56)			
7 Sept. 1940 (56-58)			
			D. Toews report, 12 Sept. 1940 (58-60); 13 Sept. 1940 (64-67)
		16 Sept. 1940 (60-62)	
	24 Sept. 1940 (62-63)		
28 Sept. 1940 (63-64)			
14 Oct. 1940 (67-75)			
	28 Oct. 1940 (75-78)		
	9 Nov. 1940 (78-81)		
	24 Jan. 1941 (81-83)		
	26 April 1941 (83-86)		
	6 June 1941 (86-88)		
	25 June 1941 (88-89)		
	15 Oct. 1941 (89-92)		
	2 Jan. 1942 (92-95)		
		5 Mar. 1942 (95-97)	
	6 Mar. 1942 (97-98)		
	4 May 1942 (98-101)		
	15 May 1942 (101-103) *[Ger.: 13 May 1942]*		
	4 June 1942 (103-104)		

Church Representatives	**Ministers' Meetings**	***Ältestenrat* (Council of Elders)**	**Other Meetings**
		22 June 1942 (104-106)	
	27 Oct. 1942 (106-108)		
		21 Nov. 1942 (108-110)	
	15 Jan. 1943 (110-114)		
		5 Feb. 1943 (114-115)	
	8 April 1943 (115-118)		
		12 April 1943 (118-119)	
			"Joint Meeting of the Executive, some assistants and the newly-formed committee of the West Reserve," 15 May 1943 (119-120)
		22 May 1943 (121-122)	
		28 July 1943 (122-123)	
		18 Oct. 1943 (123-124)	
		4 April 1944 (124-126)	
			"Annual 'Peace Problem' Conference," 7 Jan. 1944 (126-130)
	"Semi-annual," 24 June 1944 (130-131)		
	"Annual," 9 Jan. 1945 (131-135)		
		20 Mar. 1945 (135-136)	
	"Semi-annual," 24 July 1945 (136-139)		
			"Annual 'Peace Problem' Ministers' Meeting," 19 Dec. 1945 (139-141)
	23 Aug. 1946 (141-142)		

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