Gott kann! Gott kann nicht!
The Suffering of Soviet Mennonites and Their Contribution to a Contemporary Mennonite Theology

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> The major lesson and bottom line of all this could be distilled into the two words that C.F. Klassen spoke so often: "*Gott kann!*" God can! God is able!
>
> – Peter Dyck, *Up from the Rubble*[1]

Christian talk of God is not complete without an account of hope in God's final and decisive victory over the powers of sin and death. Out of this conviction, interpretations of the Soviet Mennonite tragedy have typically emphasized God's sovereign leading of his people and hence the confident claim: *Gott kann!* God can. In telling the story from this perspective, the countless cases of suffering in which God did *not* stretch out his hand to deliver from human evil and tragedy tend to lose their profile in the divine triumph and mystery. The experience of suffering by Mennonites in the Soviet Union was a direct affront to their human dignity and wholeness as persons. Have Mennonites learned to say anything new about God or faith from this overwhelming experience of divine silence? The raw stories of abduction, starvation, and death during the Stalin years can suggest the possibility of divine abandonment and can provoke, at the very least, new thinking on the nature of God's agency with respect to human transience, suffering, and death. Any Mennonite theology influenced by the suffering in the Soviet Union will be a theology in the shadow of modern atheism.

The theological questions at the heart of this story are not abstract. The chaos and suffering of the early Soviet era led Mennonites into an experience

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of primeval *tohu wabohu* ("formlessness/chaos and desolation" [Gen 1:2]) in which the light of God was dim and his creative voice muffled among the abstract, ideological babel of Communism, Fascism, or National Socialism. The stories are constructed from bits and pieces overheard in our grandmothers' kitchens, of events that had not yet found a voice or convincing narrative. Dorothee Sölle proposes a helpful definition of theology as "the task of enlarging the borders of our language. A theology that could wrest land from the sea of speechless death would be a theology worthy of that name."[2] Yet any real opportunities among Mennonites to respond in a sustained and articulate way to their suffering so as "to wrest land from this sea of speechless death" were brutally curtailed. Under severe persecution and loss of leadership, a theology that had been lodged in an essentially modern, optimistic view of human progress spent much of its remaining energies finding refuge in a traditional (pre-modern) view of divine omnipotence and omniscience. Yet this old route ultimately demands a satisfying response to a question moderns find almost impossible to answer: How can an all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful God permit such atrocities?

Diaries and stories from the Soviet Mennonite experience give signs indicating another direction in which our language of God could move at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Peter and Elfrieda Dyck write:

> One [woman refugee] said, "I don't believe God sends the suffering, he probably just allows it. But I believe he suffers, too. That's why I pray to him. If God weren't involved in some way, it wouldn't make sense. The suffering wouldn't make sense. Praying wouldn't make sense." We learned so much from the refugees.[3]

The alternative suggested here is a theology that centers on the God of faithfulness and love who is manifest in captivity, suffering, and exile. God's sovereignty is thus not abstracted from human bondage but is God's free choice to suffer with and for his children, and even at their hands, for the redemption of creation. The experience of massive suffering provokes us to think God concretely in self-identification with Jesus' suffering and death. An account that thinks the eternal God together with transience and death will either offer an alternative to both traditional theism and modern protest atheism or fail altogether.

What God can or cannot do is linked to larger assumptions about God's future or eschatology. In section one below I trace a shift in Soviet Mennonite thought from a generally optimistic faith in the progress of humanity and of Jesus as ethical model, towards a pessimistic view about what is humanly possible one in which new possibilities and changes are identified with the dreaded end of the world. The two models operate with very different eschatologies, yet both are caught in what Waldemar Janzen calls "the grip of the futureless present."[4] I will suggest that this future arises out of God's creative power, and that the task of theological ethics is to create earthly correspondences of God's coming kingdom as well as to engage critically those tendencies that hinder the way into that future.

In connection with the intense experiences of systematic deception, spying, propaganda, and fear mongering by Mennonites in the Soviet era, a focus on truth in our faith language becomes particularly important. In section two I introduce the category of truth as an "event of interruption" to speak about the coming of God (or God's future) as an arrival that grants the "historical" future openness and possibility for creative anticipations of God's coming kingdom. Taking *truth* as a central theological category, we can think anew the old Anabaptist concept of *Gelassenheit*. This leads me to reflect on the peculiar nature of Christian worship as an event of truth.

I. Eschatology and Ethics

What God can or will do is related to eschatology. The christological account of truth suggested above focuses on the coming of God to his creation – that is, an arrival, a future that already begins to liberate the present from the power of the past.

With this end in mind, Jürgen Moltmann has identified two modern "syndromes" with corresponding eschatological paradigms that have dominated Western ethical thinking in the last 150 years.[5] The "progressive syndrome" works with an optimistic anthropology: humans are by nature good and can be improved through education and training. The "conservative syndrome" operates with a pessimistic anthropology: humans are in need of containment through the orders of state, family, and religion. The former syndrome is based on a millenarian faith in the progress of humanity in which the golden age of "eternal peace" comes within reach in time. In this view the Christian world is the

kingdom of Christ that has already come near as the highest good for morality and the goal of historical progress. The later syndrome cultivates a negative eschatology characterized by an ethics of preservation until the final apocalyptic battle. Both accounts are in different ways closed to the future.

These two models are nevertheless helpful for identifying and tracing the theological and ethical shift that occurred in Soviet Mennonite thought in the upheavals of the twentieth century. This in turn provides an important backdrop for contemporary Mennonite theological proposals.

1. The Progressive Syndrome. At the dawn of the twentieth century, Mennonites in Russia were no strangers to modern, optimistic accounts of human nature and corresponding moralistic expressions of faith. The *Diary of Anna Baerg* indicates that it was not only the Mennonite intelligentsia who knew the works of the great German dramatist and poet Friedrich Schiller, for example.[6] Schiller's early tragedies attack the tyrannies of political oppression and social convention that threaten individual freedom to shape the future. Education, specifically aesthetic education, would serve to develop a happier, more humane social order, according to Schiller.[7] And this is how at least choral conductors in the Molotschna viewed the work of their choirs at the height of the 1922 famine in the Ukraine. When human values had come crashing down, J. Thiessen and Isaak Regehr suggested that "our choirs should represent the sensible, religious and moral foundation of our community. They should be vocal consciences of our society. Music should keep us from doing evil, should judge evildoing, and inspire the love of the good and the beautiful."[8] For moderns the connection between the beautiful and faith, on the one hand, and moral existence and freedom, on the other, is essential and within reach.

Steve Masterson, who counseled Mennonites for twenty-two years, noted: "I have counseled enough of them to know they worship the religion of the strong . . . . When you deal with personal weakness, that pulls them into an area they don't want to go."[9] In that thoroughly modern sense, Anna Baerg and her reading circle read Ufer Hold in the midst of the famine in the Ukraine, and asked:

> How am I to develop my character to become a complete personality? The hero of the book says this: "Would you like to become a fuller, stronger, more mature and powerful human being,

> inwardly happy and a blessing to others; do you wish to rid yourself of your torments, your unsteadiness and mood swings? Then come to Jesus, the great character builder."[10]

This close and natural connection between faith and training in moral and mental fortitude, between Jesus and character formation, suggests that Mennonites in this period had become reasonably comfortable with a modern, moralistic expression of faith. Christian millenarianism offered a universal interpretive framework for the great advances in colonization, mission, and science. Russia had conquered Siberia and settled the continent. With the seizure of technological and political power, the last revolution had already taken place and what remained was only a matter of evolution and proper development. Russian, European, and American imperialism were all fueled by a messianic sense of mission to redeem the world.

But with World War I and the Russian Revolution those millenarian dreams ended for Russian Mennonites. This particular positive syndrome, was largely discarded by Europeans – including Mennonites. The Stoic stance, that one who is in possession of him- or herself will suffer no loss, that wholeness comes through an act of obedience to an imperative, was retained. In hindsight, though, many Mennonites came to view this period theologically as a time of apostasy in which creative anticipations of God's coming kingdom were few.

2. The Conservative Syndrome. This syndrome operates with a pessimistic anthropology and assumes that humans are predisposed to evil. The conservative syndrome demands the strong hands of: (a) the Fatherland, which promises identity, (b) the patriarchal family, and (c) an absolute fear of God. Only thus do children and adults learn to control and master themselves and become obedient: God-Czar-Family, or after 1941 for a time, God-Führer-Family. When these God-given structures are undermined, the dams break open, bringing forth chaos. With the fall of the Czar and the ensuing rape, murder, and looting which Mennonites suffered at the hands of Nestor Machno and his anarchist bandits, Mennonites in the 1920s had good reason to interpret human nature in terms of this paradigm.

This view was later reinforced with the coincidence of official atheism and the closing of churches with economic breakdown, famine, and the

destruction of families. Already in the early 1920s the Soviet regime began to ban all religious instruction in the schools. But it was after the Fifteenth Party Congress held in December 1927 that the government-sponsored "League of the Godless" ardently began to establish itself in many Mennonite communities with the aim of converting Mennonite young people to atheism.[11] The League of the Godless provided public lectures and anti-religious instructional sessions, and held open debates with local Mennonite ministers to show the folly of belief in God. The League enjoyed some success in Schönwiese (Alexandrowsk) and a few villages in the Molotschna where they were able to enlist new recruits.[12] By all accounts, government intimidation and repression of the church leadership made serious debate, reflection, and intellectual exchange all but impossible. Against this background, Mennonites in the Soviet Union were systematically and inescapably confronted with the intellectual possibility that God is unnecessary as a foundation for thought or being. This context of official atheism was understood as the beginning of the end, and was accompanied by the rise of inept and corrupt bureaucrats and a widespread breakdown of morality.

The most horrible evidence for this conservative world view came with the terrifying arrests and brutal persecution of male heads of Mennonite households (and churches) in the mid-1930s. Jacob Sawatzky describes his father's arrest by Soviet secret police:

> His father entered the corner room, followed by a low-ranking, husky NKVD officer [secret police] . . . . It became clear to Jacob. Here, in their own corner room, his father had lost his authority as master in his own house, of his own family. Authority belonged to the NKVD. And that "you" with which the NKVD-ist had yelled at his father? Wasn't it lacking in courtesy? Wasn't it even brutal?[13]

Sawatzky goes on to describe subsequent losses in his village: "Six fathers of families were arrested in this first fateful night . . . . By the end of 1938 the total had risen to thirty-six men. With a population of 340 people living in the village, all in large families, that meant that almost no family remained with a father still present.[14]

With the destruction of the Mennonite world, the end-time apocalyptic beast was now seen to be rising out of the abyss and bringing chaos and

destruction. Only the arrival of the German armies in 1941 and the strong hand of the *Vaterland* could restore order, discipline, identity, and security for these German-speakers – and apparently hold back the apocalyptic chaos of the evil empire. This view would only slowly be challenged with Nazi Germany's defeat and the publication of its atrocities.

Moltmann is as critical of this conservative eschatology and ethics as he is of the progressive alternative. The conservative syndrome "blocks off every alternative future, because it immediately identifies new possibilities and changes with the dreaded end of the world. Because authoritative powers of history only 'delay' the end, they make the arrival of new possibilities impossible."[15] Moltmann contrasts both syndromes with pre-Constantinian church life – to which early Anabaptists also appealed – "life in the community of Christ, lived according to the measure of the justice of God's future world"; not a proclamation of Christian love within unchanging structures but the hoped-for "transformation of changeable structures" as announced by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.[16] Like the progressive syndrome, the conservative syndrome stifles creative anticipations of the coming of God's kingdom, i.e., of freeing one's own present to be open for the expected future of God's kingdom. In both cases the eternal God remains distant, above, and in judgment of the transient human realm of suffering and change.

Christian eschatology, by contrast, assumes that the future arises out of God's creative power, such that the historical future of the world is granted the openness and possibility for creative anticipations of God's coming kingdom.

II. Suffering, Truth and Meaning

The tenth anniversary of the collapse of "realized socialism" in the former East Bloc provoked many to reflect on the experience of Mennonites under Communist rule in the Soviet Union, and how that experience has shaped Mennonites' theological existence. At the heart of that experience was a sustained attack on *truth*.

The monopoly on truth claimed by the Communist party in the Soviet Union beginning in the 1920s has been well-documented by Mennonite historians and testified to in many published letters and diaries. Corresponding to this total claim to truth was a total distrust and a totalitarian surveillance state implemented by government-sanctioned violence. The ideological control

of thought under Stalin demanded a corresponding suspicion of every deviation from Marxist dogma and its official interpretation by party officials. The new human was to be "realized" through the creation of the new, classless society by way of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The state perceived the church as a source of ideological opposition that could delay the socialization of the children and youth into the "new species of being" in accordance with Marxist-Leninist ideology; hence the church had to be rendered as ineffectual as possible. In such a context the pressure to lie is strong. Christians learned that questioning or contradicting official truths meant persecution and, too often, exile and death. Jacob Sawatzky describes a letter he received from his father in prison that speaks of betrayal by two other Mennonites:

> "Jacob Krueger and Peter Loewen have accused me. They have signed a paper . . . ." But how did father . . . fit into the big lie? Only the NKVD [Secret Police] and Krueger and Loewen knew! The truth was hidden in the signature of the two . . . . And that was enough for the NKVD.[17]

Many Mennonite men and women were denounced as 'enemies of the republic,' often on account of their public or private piety.

The experiences of the last century, especially the ideological incursions on thought, suggest the value of giving the traditional Mennonite commitment to truth telling and rejection of oaths a more central systematic function in our theology. Our post-Soviet era theology will do well to focus on truth as a central theological category.

1. Jesus as Truth of Life. Contemporary Mennonite theology has emphasized Jesus as the wisdom teacher who makes known God's will for human conduct. Specifically in his suffering Jesus offers an example to follow by extending love, not violence, toward his enemies. Yet in the experience of persecution the role of agent recedes, and one becomes increasingly passive, that is, an object at the hands of others. Humans can break both under the enforcement of ideology and in the imposition of ethical ideals. The intense experience of systematic deception, spying, and propaganda as well as torture invites an emphasis on Jesus as wisdom teacher, but it also demands a concrete theological clarification of Jesus specifically as the *truth* of life who makes whole.

"The truth will make you free" (John 8:32) – that is, free for living communion with God, free for the neighbor. In the New Testament truth is a power that interrupts one's self-sufficiency (agency) and enables humans to achieve fullness of being. Here truth is more than faithfulness to facts or ideals; it is connected with wholeness. It points toward an eschatologically new situation in which God desires to be together with us in Jesus Christ. As such Jesus is "the truth" (John 14:6) and whoever receives him *and* exists in love is "from the truth" (1 John 3:19). The Pauline writings add that it is in "speaking the truth in love" that one "grows up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15). Truth understood christologically addresses the mystery of being human, clarifies what is obscure in our existence, and sets us free for faithfulness in relationships to God and the neighbor. Under this category humans appear as both active and passive; Jesus as the truth of life opens a new situation in which truth as correspondence to a particular state of affairs, and ethics as correspondence to God's will, become possible. Minimally, such an account unleashes Christian thought both from pre-modern notions of God as ground or cause and from modern expectations of building God's kingdom on earth. It suggests that the togetherness of God and humanity is ontologically prior to our attempts of "grounding" that which is. The biblical materials suggest that God's coming to humanity in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is an event of truth that reshapes the questions of God's presence or absence that arise especially in times of suffering.

2. Gelassenheit. A similar christological account of truth and wisdom is reflected in the medieval Anabaptist understanding of *Gelassenheit*, a term that can be variously translated as letting-be, releasement, yieldedness, self-surrender or resignation before God, and that is often connected with a willingness to suffer for the sake of God. Primarily *Gelassenheit* is an open, patient mode of being and thought arising from the eschatological hope and experience that the kingdom of God is nearing in time and spirit. The attitude is prevalent in the *Martyrs' Mirror* (1660), elaborated as a virtue by Menno Simons,[18] and developed as a central teaching by the Hutterite Brethren. The idea is first and most consistently articulated by Hans Denck. *Gelassenheit* in the Anabaptist tradition is a christologically established mode of being – an open, a non-manipulative or self-serving engagement with the world. It emerges from passivity and includes the readiness to yield to the call to become an

instrument of the divine, even to the possibility of external suffering.

This rich mode of 'letting beings be' rooted in the mystical tradition is being revived in post-modern philosophy. Stalinist era ideology is one extreme example of the collapse of thought in modernity, i.e., thought is reduced to calculation, such that things – and human beings – lose their mystery. Beings are assigned being, and are viewed, used, and misused in a technical way for purposes or ends outside themselves. In contrast, the meditative thinking that releases life and is identified with love is a radical alternative both to conceptual thinking, which grasps and grounds beings in self-reflection, and to the modern demand for "meaning," which takes the inquiring human subject as its starting point and criterion for truth. The following reflection from the Soviet Mennonite experience is an example of *Gelassenheit* in action:

> But, somehow she knew, this time there would be no reunion [with father] . . . . Toward noon, the storm broke out . . . . Thunder and lightning did not bother her. Rather, it was just the opposite. They calmed her. Here was a force not to be controlled by the Communists. It was the voice of God, and it gave her confidence and peace. Everything that was happening was as it should be.[19]

In the experience of faith or suffering, one's being in the world is interrupted in such an elemental way that one begins to see more originally, without imposing a meaning, and lets beings be. Recent philosophical work on truth suggests that truth is more originally an event of interruption.[20] Not only faith or suffering, but a declaration of love or a work of art can also break open our everyday engagement with things and gather a world – enabling us to let beings (ourselves and others) be. "*Gelassenheit* is a certain intervention in these power systems which releases their grip and lets things be and lets mortals be, lets them go. *Gelassenheit* is freedom . . . giving us a taste of a non-metaphysical experience of things – and of one another."[21] From this perspective I suggest that authentic theological thinking and ethics is concerned with keeping the mystery open, which entails that the theological and political relevance of faith consists in its ability and obligation to speak the truth in love.[22] It was precisely this openness to speak truth that was lost among Soviet Mennonites through the 1930s.

For medieval theology, the ontological significance of *Gelassenheit* grew out of the ancient Greek understanding of truth, which is literally an "uncovering" (*a-letheia*) that makes actuality recognizable and expressible, an event that is the condition of the possibility for truth as faithfulness to the facts. This event notion of truth is reflected in the pre-Socratic understanding of the human as the *logon zoon echon*, the living being interrupted by a word (later understood simply as the "rational" animal). In this sense, to be truly human is to be existentially "interrupted" or beside oneself, and thus opened by and for truth. Christianity can confirm and speak to this, ever while recognizing that not every elemental interruption of one's life connections enhances one's being. The experience of suffering is essentially ambiguous and does not necessarily point to or away from God; moreover, it can break the individual. Examples from the Soviet Mennonite story could be cited for each of these possibilities. I am arguing, however, that faith is different in that it is an event of truth that unambiguously enhances life and makes whole.

3. Worship as Event of Truth. I have suggested that the post-Soviet era Mennonite church has a not-fully-articulated conviction that in the midst of competing ideologies it must understand and preserve itself as an institution gathered and enabled by truth. In a context in which the new human was to be 'realized' – the sacrifice of millions of lives notwithstanding – the church can proclaim that the new humanity is already realized in Jesus Christ, who we are to put on through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Worship is the central event of Christian existence insofar as it recognizes, expresses, and points in all its humanness toward an eschatologically new situation, one in which God himself is together with us in Jesus Christ. Worship opens both the separateness and towardness of God and humanity, bringing God into our midst and translating us onto a new path through this world towards God's future with creation. This is the presupposition of the Christian's engagement with the world, and in this sense worship is an event of truth.

Worship bears more likeness to suffering than to those many explanations offered to justify or give suffering meaning. One account of religion holds that "every culture has its own sacred stories that give meaning to suffering and joy, birth and death." From this perspective Christian pastors "are mandated storytellers. By what they say and do they reinforce the larger story. Their accumulated knowledge and wisdom is born in the context of a culture and in

turn reinforces that culture."[23] Though this view of religion is widespread and accounts for much of what happens in worship on a sociological level, we should not neglect Nietzsche's critique of both God and truth – namely that both introduce a supersensual horizon of meaning that robs the sensual of its vitality.[24] Thus I argue that in our post-Soviet era theology worship should be explored as event which interrupts and concentrates our being present in the world. As the sabbath rest or day of worship breaks the unending cycle of seasons and work, so also in prayer, singing, and proclamation individuals are removed from their activities and achievements in order to return to themselves – with God. Understood in this way, worship moves beyond the experience of suffering as an event which accrues being, that is, an event which interrupts in order to enhance human presence. As such, worship has ontological significance. This identifies the key difference between worship as an event of truth and worship as offering only another horizon of meaning. A closer examination of Mennonite worship emerging from the prolonged period of religious persecution in the Soviet Union might well conclude that the heart of a Mennonite theology is in its worship.

V. The Future of Mennonite Theology

At the end of World War II Harold Bender's Anabaptist Vision was already deeply entrenched in the American Mennonite colleges and was influencing Canadian leaders like C. F. Klassen and Peter Dyck who worked with Mennonite refugees emerging from the Soviet Union. The Anabaptist Vision was overwhelmingly successful in addressing the desperate physical needs of the Mennonites coming out; the recipients of this aid and their descendants are deeply grateful. But this same Anabaptist Vision and its emphasis on radical discipleship failed utterly to meet the moral and spiritual plight of those refugees. Tossed about as unwilling participants in the great upheavals of the twentieth century, they could not but carry a measure of "guilt" for hoping that Stalin would be stopped at any cost and that Hitler's armies – and if need be, British and American armies – would liberate them. These refugees participated in the fallen orders and benefited from their largess. Yet the Anabaptist Vision declared discipleship to be the essence of Christianity and placed it in direct opposition to the Protestant-evangelical tradition of justification.

J. Lawrence Burkholder, an American Mennonite critic of Bender, argued the Vision's positive anthropology did not acknowledge the tragic side of life or take seriously the deep, structural, persistent character of evil, the frailty of human flesh, the subtleties of sin, and the ambiguities of existence.[25] So many left the Soviet Union with blood on their hands, all having fought inwardly, if not outwardly. Refugees who came to North America or were helped to resettle in Paraguay by the Mennonite Central Committee were challenged to process their experiences without a doctrine of justification, without a mature doctrine of God's forgiving grace, without a careful Mennonite articulation of Luther's *simul iustus et peccator* (simultaneously saved and sinner). As Burkholder observed, the "confident and triumphant" Anabaptist Vision enlivened one's moral sense but was closed to criticism and question, and was altogether "too narrow, too simplistic, too arbitrary and unrealistic when it comes to life in this world"[26] – of which these refugees had a huge dose.

Rather than reduce talk of divine action to a discussion of ethics and discipleship (the progressive syndrome) or see divine action in the sovereign containment of chaotic forces through the orders of state, family, and religion (the conservative syndrome), Mennonite theology that has seen the precipice must begin to think God's 'essence' out of God's own movement into the void. This implies a christology that enters into and emerges out of the struggle between life and death, theism and atheism. It suggests that we change our focus from an abstract reflection on what we or the metaphysical God can or cannot do, to a more concrete, original thinking of the life and wholeness (future!) that springs from God's own sovereign self-identification with suffering humanity and death: *Gott kommt!* God comes.

Notes

[1] Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, *Up from the Rubble*: *The Epic Rescue of Thousands of War-Ravaged Mennonite Refugees* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 377. The dedication reads: "We wrote this book to give glory to God for his great mercy in delivering people from the ruins of World War II. The day of miracles is not over. The arm of the Lord is not shortened. In the words of C.F. Klassen, *Gott kann*! God can!" (5). From 1945 to his death in 1954 C.F. Klassen was director of the Mennonite Central Committee in Europe on behalf of the Russian and Danzig refugees.

[2] Dorothee Sölle, *Suffering*, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), 7.

[3] Dyck, *Up from the Rubble*, 379f.

[4] Cf. Waldemar Janzen, "Time of Terror: Biblical-Theological Perspectives on Mennonite Suffering During the Stalin Era and World War II," in this issue.

[5] Jürgen Moltmann, "The Liberation of the Future and its Anticipations in History," trans. A. Neufeldt-Fast (forthcoming). Read at an Eschatology Conference at Princeton Theological Seminary on February 20, 1998. For this section of the paper I am indebted to Moltmann and his analysis.

[6] See *Diary of Anna Baerg, 1916-1924* (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 1985), 55.

[7] See Friedrich Schiller, "Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen," *Werke*, II (Leipzig: VEB Bibliographisches Institut, 1955), 509-604.

[8] Anna Baerg's diary (January 12, 1922) gives a summary of an inspirational speech by choir conductor Isaak Regehr, quoting J. Thiessen on the meaning of a choir (*Diary of Anna Baerg*, 79; cf. also 157f.).

[9] Steve Masterson, *Mennonite Reporter*, January 21, 1991, as cited by Pamela Klassen, *Going by the Moon and the Stars. Stories of Two Russian Mennonite Women* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994), 88.

[10] *Diary of Anna Baerg*, 80.

[11] I thankfully acknowledge the research on this topic by Colin Neufeldt: "The Fate of Mennonites in Soviet Ukraine and the Crimea on the Eve of the "Second Revolution' (1927-1929)." Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Alberta (Edmonton, 1989), 67. For a report on the League of the Godless, cf. "Merkblatt des Gottlosen," *Mennonitische Rundschau*, October 30, 1929.

[12] Cf. Colin Neufeldt, "The Fate of Mennonites," 121, n.153.

[13] Jacob Sawatzky, "Never a Pioneer. For the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Arrest of my Father and Five Other Men," in Sarah Dyck, ed. and trans., *The Silence Echoes. Memoirs of Trauma and Tears* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1997), 113.

[14] *Ibid*., 117. The village Sawatzky refers to is Felsenbach.

[15] J. Moltmann, "The Liberation of the Future and its Anticipations in History," 13.

[16] *Ibid*., 6.

[17] Sawatzky, "Never a Pioneer," 111-118.

[18] Cf. "The Cross of the Saints" in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, ed. J. C. Wenger (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984), 579-622.

[19] Jacob Sawatzky, "Never a Pioneer," 116f.

[20] Cf. Martin Heidegger's "On the Essence of Truth," *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed.

D. F. Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 113-141; cf. also the more recent work of Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, in *The Lévinas Reader*, ed. S. Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

[21] John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 205. Heidegger's pieces on *Gelassenheit* are found in the collection *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. and ed. by John H. Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

[22] Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, "Toward the Heart of the Matter," *The Christian Century* 108 (Feb. 27, 1991), 228-233, 229.

[23] Alvin C. Dueck, *Between Jerusalem and Athens*: *Ethical Persepectives on Culture, Religion and Psychotherapy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 76, 82.

[24] The early Nietzsche spoke instead of art as "the great stimulant of life." Cf. M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche* I, trans. D. F. Krell (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1979), 75f.

[25] J. Lawrence Burkholder, "Autobiographical Reflections," in *The Limits of Perfection* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1993), 49f.

[26] *Ibid.*, 21f, 24.