

2006 BECHTEL LECTURES

Time and Memory: Secular and Sacred Aspects Of the World of the Russian Mennonites and Their Descendants

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LECTURE ONE **Time: the Transcendent and the Worldly**

If, in casual conversation, I asked you a question about “time,” most of you would look at your watch. It is just after 7:30 pm. But it is also Thursday, March 9, 2006. “Thursday” is the name for the day of the week derived from the pagan Norse deity, Thor. “March” is equally pagan, a month named after Mars, the Roman deity of war. Indeed, our entire calendar is founded on a pre-Christian Roman system associated with the reforms of Julius Caesar, hence the “Julian” calendar. But the date of the year is profoundly Christian. All time in the western world is Christ-centered, although the actual calculation begins with his birth and not his resurrection.¹ The Julian calendar was eventually adopted by Christians some five hundred years after Christ’s birth and long after Christian churches were established. It is the work of the abbot Dionysius Exiguus. Unfortunately he miscalculated. So just over a thousand years later, in 1582, Pope Gregory XIII ordered that time be advanced by nine days.²

Hence we now calculate the year according to the Gregorian calendar – that is, if you are not a member of the Orthodox Church, or a Jewish believer, a Muslim, or a Buddhist. Pope Gregory’s recalculation was primarily motivated by problems with the calendar of religious celebration, most importantly that Easter had to be brought back into synchrony with cycles of the moon. This in turn reveals how the annual cycle of the Christian year also follows established pagan celebrations of death, rebirth, and death that once followed the agricultural seasons of the northern hemisphere. Christmas is the winter solstice celebration in the heart of winter; Easter

follows earlier pagan rituals marking the rebirth of spring, when crops and livestock would flourish and the agrarian cycle would begin again for yet another year.

This brief excursus on dates, days, months, years, and celebrations reveals some interesting aspects of the cultural expression of time. First, even in a largely modern secular age, time retains sacred points of reference. Second, even for Christians, time retains references to pagan ideas that existed before Christ's birth.³ Third, the calculation of time has varied and continues to vary in different traditions. But the time displayed on the face of your watch is really a more modern expression of time. Clock time, however, is not just modern, it is also global. Historically, it developed with the need to calculate longitude and latitude for navigation, a concern inherent in the expansion of British trade and naval supremacy and linked to Britain's pre-eminence in the industrial revolution. The need to coordinate time for transport and business eventually saw the establishment of Greenwich Mean Time in 1884. Today we all exist in real time, members of a world in which telecommunications have shrunk time and space, and trading in stocks and shares never ceases. Unlike calendar time with its links to sacred concerns in the past, clock time is profoundly secular and is still being refined by science.

The subject of my first lecture involves both sacred and secular representations of time. These I will relate to Mennonite experiences, especially in the Russian tradition. As I will approach this subject as an anthropologist and a historian, do not expect theological insights; and you will have to forgive my rather cavalier treatment of religious ideas, past and present.⁴

Unlike the French revolutionaries in 1792, sixteenth-century Anabaptists did not seek to change time by renaming the days or months or by renumbering the years.⁵ But they certainly discarded, like other reformers of the period, encrustations that the Catholic Church had added to sacred time. Just as the churches were stripped of what were seen as signs of idolatry in the form of sacred relics and depictions of the holy family and saints, so also were the

church's elaborations of ritual time in the form of masses, saints' days, and other periodic celebrations abandoned. But the basic cycle of annually re-enacting Christ's life and marking key events in his life in ritual – a practice established in the early Church – was continued. The key events emphasized were those concerned with Christ's death and resurrection, with Pentecost for most Mennonites being the time of baptism when new members committed themselves to the congregational community (*Gemeinde*) and the narrow path of life. This pattern of worship only developed once functioning Anabaptist/Mennonite congregational communities were established. Members of these communities sought, through following Christ's instructions and example, to live and die in the hope of salvation. The only way a person could hope to achieve salvation was to live a Christian life in a community of fellow believers, separated from the corrupting influences of "the world."

The "world" was trapped in the grip of time, counting down to its apocalyptic destruction. God's creation of the world, as told at the start of the Book of Genesis, occurred in a sequence of events in lineal time. It is almost as if time itself had first to be created before the acts of creation could begin. Once created, at first a timeless paradise existed; lineal time, so essential for creation, ended. After the Fall and Adam and Eve's expulsion from the timeless Garden of Eden, time began to run once again, but in the reverse of creation itself: the world and all its inhabitants were headed towards a final destruction. Having betrayed God's creation, the ancestors of humans were cast from a timeless existence into the world of lineal time-dominated events involving evil and inevitable suffering and death. At a future time known only to God, there would be a finite moment and then, infinity. The apocalypse would therefore not be just the endtime of the endtimes; it would be the end of time itself.

Christ came into the world, as a person of mortal flesh, to take upon himself the evils of the world and suffer death in order to show believers a way to escape the inevitability of time, past and future. His aim was to show mortals how they too could achieve everlasting salvation through the resurrection. It was in this spirit that many early Anabaptists welcomed martyrdom in the belief that by following Christ they would be assured of salvation.⁶ But for members of Anabaptist/Mennonite communities established once the intense period of persecution and martyrdom ended,

salvation was to be hoped for by following Christ in everyday life, participating with others in the search for salvation in the regular cycle of ritual re-enactment of Christ's life and death. This produced a continuity of existence for members of the congregational communities, out of time, away from the "world" until the time that the living and the dead would face the Day of Judgment. Just as congregational communities were situated *in* the "world" but were not *of* it, so they were also in time but not of it. In a sense, the communities lived a kind of timeless time.

The strong sense of continuity found in many pre-modern Mennonite congregational communities (*Gemeinden*) emphasized the atemporal nature of earthly life. The cyclical practice of faith in congregational worship reinforced this sense of timeless-time. But it was not just in religious ideas and practices that a sense of continuity existed; it was also apparent in the community's social life. Just as Mennonites watched season follow season, neatly paralleled by the cycle of religious worship, so also in social life generation succeeded generation. The members of a congregation were bound together in a social community where kinship and marriage, the essential bonds of connectedness and relatedness, created a deep sense of continuity of life and faith. So the sacred aspects of congregational life were integrated with more profane aspects of life.⁷

By "sacred" I mean those aspects of congregational life focused on transcendental issues associated with "otherworldly" matters and ultimately with salvation; by "profane" I mean concerns with "this worldly" aspects of everyday, communal life mainly taken up with the production and reproduction of people, food, and shelter. For Mennonites both the sacred and profane aspects were focused on life in a congregational community. However, there was a certain degree of tension between aspects of the sacred and profane as expressed in the practices of that community. The institution of marriage was central to the continuity of the profane in social life and the succession of generations, but salvation was ultimately a personal matter. Yet salvation could be achieved only through a life lived in a community which had to be replicated, and in which marriage-legitimated offspring were required to reproduce that community. In regard to death, individuals might be concerned with their personal salvation, but for their relations and friends it was a rupture in the continuity of social time; on earth it was the

living who had to deal with death's immediate consequences.

The contradictions between a transcendent sacredness centered on the congregation and the profane demands of community can be seen in the marking of events of the life cycle integral to the continuities of production and reproduction. Events associated with the profane aspects of marriage and death – weddings and funerals – were not involved predominantly with transcendental issues and occurred outside the sacred spheres of time and space.⁸ Weddings were once held on the family farm of one of the parents of the couple, and not in the meetinghouse or church. The same was true of funerals. Of course, a minister performed the brief part of the ritual connecting the sacred with the profane – blessing the couple or the corpse – but then he often hastily departed before the real “celebrations” began. In the Prussian/Russian tradition the barn (or more correctly the *Scheune*) was cleared out and cleaned, and it was here in non-sacred space that ceremonies marking the passage of the unwed to the married state and the separation of the living from the dead occurred. Marriage celebrations and the funeral wake were often times of “indulgence,” but by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century religious leaders in Russia sought to move these events from the farms and homesteads of the community into the congregational meeting houses or churches; sacred space took over from profane areas associated with everyday life.⁹ By doing so, the leaders effectively subordinated life cycle rituals to the sacred, transformed profane ceremonial into sacred ritual, and brought earthly “excesses” under control.

Another area of ambiguity encompassing the life cycle, its rites of passage, and the sacred/profane aspects of life is seen in the layout of Mennonite graveyards.¹⁰ In some, the dead are buried in the order they died.¹¹ In others, husbands and wives are buried together or in family plots. These variations in practice can be related to different views of salvation, especially the time when resurrection is thought to occur. Such issues involve a major divide between those people who believe that the resurrection or damnation will occur only at the day of judgment at the end of time, and those who believe that heaven (and hell) is a place to which the soul departs immediately after death. One issue inherent in these different views is whether the profane aspects of community, especially those associated with kinship and marriage, will be replicated after resurrection. Those supporting

the view that heaven already exists as some kind of parallel universe in time and space, to which the soul departs immediately after death, often insist that loved ones will be reunited in heaven and that kinship connections and relationships will continue after resurrection.

What happens if the widow or widower remarries after the death of a spouse? I recall looking at a gravestone in Steinbach, Manitoba, with the late Roy Vogt. A widower had engraved both his deceased wife's name and his own, leaving a space to add his own date of death when he would be interred with her. Roy pointed out that the man had recently remarried; that raised some interesting practical (and perhaps theological) issues. Is there bigamy or polygamy in heaven? And there are other issues about the profane in a transcendent state. What age is everyone in heaven? Will the resurrected remain the same age as when they died? A Mennonite once told me confidently that everyone in heaven would be 21! And what of infirmities or injuries acquired in life? Will amputees be reunited with their lost limbs?

But there is another view of the resurrection. Many years ago I asked an elderly conservative Mennonite whether or not he thought married partners and families would be reunited in heaven. He pondered for a moment and then said, "Probably not." Marriage was for this world, primarily concerned with producing children in a stable relationship; such a function would be unnecessary in heaven.

Such different views of salvation point to the gulf between the profane focus of community in this world and time and the sacred aspects of faith that hopefully will eventually transcend this world, its physical necessities, and temporal existence. While Mennonites required community and congregation in order to live a Christian way of life in the hope of salvation, ultimately their resurrection or damnation would be an individual, not a collective, matter. Mennonites are unlikely to be resurrected as a congregational community, *en masse* as it were, but I have never asked this question of either conservative or evangelical Mennonites.

I am aware that such issues as these are probably not, and probably have never been, a matter of conscious concern to most ordinary Mennonites. As every anthropologist knows, people *live* their lives more than *reflect upon* them. Most people can also live unaware of contradictions between

their ideas and practices. Some Anabaptists and early Mennonites, however, seem to have thought deeply about issues of time relating to life, death, and resurrection. While they rejected Catholic notions of purgatory – the idea of a kind of waiting room for the soul before judgment – some did subscribe to the idea that upon death the soul entered a timeless state. This was known as “soul sleep.”¹² A description of it is found in a number of sources, including the *Martyrs Mirror*:

... even as, when a man falls into a deep sleep, his heart, soul or spirit does not entirely sleep, as the body; so also the spirit or soul of man does not die or fall asleep with the body, but is and remains an immortal spirit. Hence temporal death, in the Scriptures, is called a sleep, and the resurrection of the dead an awakening from this sleep of death. And as a sleeping man cannot receive and enjoy any good gifts ... unless he be previously awakened from his sleep; so also, believers cannot receive the perfect heavenly existence, nor unbelievers the eternal death or the pain of hell, either in the soul or in the body, except they have first been awakened from the sleep of death, and have arisen, through the coming of Christ. Until this last day of judgment the souls of believers are waiting in the hands of God, under the altar of Christ, to receive ... in their souls and bodies, the rewards promised them. So also the souls of unbelievers are reserved to be punished, after the day of judgment....¹³

In a sense the timeless-time of life in a congregational community (“in the world but not of it”) was to be followed by timelessness; the sleep of the soul was “out of time” as much as in time between earthly existence and either the ageless age to come or damnation where the soul would suffer endlessly, presumably in time for eternity.

As I have already noted, Christ entered the earthly world of space and time, and through his sacrifice at a moment in time showed believers a path to salvation if they lived and died in the faith of the resurrection. But Christ

did not interfere with time already set, as it were, in reverse motion from Creation and the Fall. The end of the world was unstoppable. Such ideas imply an essentially negative view of time. Time in the world is heading towards inevitable destruction, a finite moment that will last for infinity; the past is not seen as a triumphant passage to the present leading towards a future age of improvement. Time has no suggestion of human progress leading towards a better earthly existence within time; only with the end of the world and of time would a different state of being come into existence. Such a vision of human decline from a former golden or heroic age is not unique to Christianity or the Judaic tradition; the cosmologies of many peoples, including the ancient Greeks, contain references to glorious ages past and lost and to futures of continued degeneration and decline leading inevitably to a sad end.

Sometime after the Reformation, however, European views about such matters began to change. While the past might have contained grander eras than the present, a pattern of rise and fall could be seen in other civilizations. The present world, then, might be viewed not as in decline but as improving within a cycle of time. It is but a short step from a cyclical view of past, present, and future to a lineal view of time implying constant improvement. Gradually the idea that the past might be inferior to the present, and that the future might see even greater improvement, became commonplace. At first such views were restricted to intellectual circles eager to discover new forms of knowledge rather than repeat the ideas of the past.¹⁴ This was particularly true among those living in urban areas of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, in what later historians would call that Republic's "Golden Age." Here many, including some Mennonites, experienced a degree of wealth, security, and toleration in one of Europe's wealthiest and most innovative societies. The transformations of Dutch society showed that improvement was possible.¹⁵ Later, these views found official favor outside the Dutch Republic as "enlightened" rulers elsewhere in Europe sought to expand their territories, create empires, and increase their control through the application of rational ideas. Prior to the French Revolution, a number of rulers of the *ancien régime* viewed an emphasis on continuity as a reflection of backwardness, and encouraged discontinuities as positive markers of progress.¹⁶ The modern age had begun.

The Mennonites who emigrated to Russia at the end of the eighteenth century in many ways thought they were moving into a land ruled by a supreme autocrat. Certainly many later immigrants believed they were escaping the time clocks of Europe as nationalism, constitutional reform, and rationalism advanced across the continent. But the reality was that Catherine the Great was an enlightened autocrat, and the imperial manifestos she issued in the 1760s that set the framework for Mennonite migration were intended to help develop the country according to the latest thinking on economic development.¹⁷ Her successors basically followed her lead in trying to develop the empire, reforming government, and adopting policies of reform – even if at times they hesitated at the pace of change or halted reforms and even tried to reverse them. Mennonites had entered a land where rational change was official policy.

At the local level, however, Mennonites moved into a new physical and cultural environment where time was marked in ways new to their previous experience. Most important among the new influences were their Ukrainian and Russian neighbors, most of whom followed the Orthodox faith but also continued older pagan folk traditions.¹⁸ As Mennonites increasingly associated with these people, and especially as they employed growing numbers as workers in the home, fields, and factories, their own views of time had to adjust to the ritual cycles of the Orthodox calendar. Seasonal workers were employed for periods defined by this calendar, and all the ritual holidays had to be observed.¹⁹ This was just one aspect of what I have called the unofficial “russianization” of Mennonites.²⁰ No one who has dealt with Mennonites from the Russian experience can avoid noting the influence of Orthodoxy on their passion for Easter, with the greeting “Christ is risen” requiring a response and the varieties of *paska* added to older baking traditions associated with sacred time.²¹

In addition, the periodic markets held in towns situated around Mennonite settlements also provided a new rhythm to Mennonite life. These aspects of time were linked primarily to an agrarian peasant rural culture that was not really so alien from older Mennonite traditions that

stressed continuity within the regular cycle of timeless time. But the official forms of time Mennonites were to experience in their dealings with the state involved a more discontinuous, lineal time that was rational, bureaucratic, and ultimately secular in its intent.

Interestingly, the first confrontation over time between Mennonite religious leaders and Russian state officials concerned a fundamental misunderstanding over sacred and secular time. In the early 1820s state officials requested that Mennonites move from the Gregorian calendar they had adopted in Prussia during the eighteenth century to the Julian calendar used in Russia. Although the move mainly involved synchronizing bureaucratic procedures, it would also result in the ritual worship calendar reverting to the old dates.²² Some conservative Mennonite religious leaders interpreted the requested change as a veiled attempt to force them into Orthodoxy. While the Julian calendar was used by the Russian Orthodox Church, the official request had nothing to do with converting Mennonites to another form of Christianity. The reality was that Russian officialdom had long operated according to the Julian calendar, at least since an earlier reforming Tsar, Peter the Great, had introduced it in the early eighteenth century.²³

This alignment of Mennonite practices with secular governance was greatly intensified in the 1830s and 1840s as Mennonites became models for the reform of State Peasants led by the Ministry of State Domains. Under the leadership of Johann Cornies, a host of social and economic reforms were introduced, first into the Molochna colony and later elsewhere. These included new forms of agriculture, industry, and a general reorganization of education and local government. Each reform brought more emphasis on time management, aimed at maximizing Mennonite development through the application of rational procedures.²⁴ To achieve his ends, Cornies believed the old ways had to be abandoned and progressive policies be adopted across all areas of Mennonite life. Time and the times had to change. As Cornies is supposed to have announced: “Es ist Zeit, dass die Mennoniten die Pelzhosen ablegen” (*It is time that the Mennonites put aside their old-fashioned dress* – literally their sheepskin pants).²⁵ Nothing and no one were exempt from Cornies’ plans, and when conservative religious leaders questioned his authority, he had them removed and their congregations reorganized into

more rational units. Under Cornies' leadership the different congregations, historically constituted often by their opposition to each other, were also forced to co-operate and meet in a common council. Sacred continuities were subordinated to secular reforms and ultimately to the demands of the state.

Although following Cornies' death there were attempts to reassert religious authority, the changes made with the state's support proved irreversible. The agricultural reforms led to highly profitable forms of agriculture, based mainly on grain production. As a consequence agriculture became more mechanized, and to meet the demand for machines local Mennonite industries were developed. A number of the early industrialists had first acquired their mechanical skills as clockmakers.²⁶ There is a charming picture, reproduced below and on the cover of this issue of *CGR*, of one successful industrialist in old age, holding in his hands the key component of both a mower and a clock's mechanism: a cast metal cog.²⁷ As David Landes has argued, elsewhere in Europe the craft of watch and clockmaking provided much of the skill and technology for producing the first machines that would eventually power the new factory economies of the industrial revolution.²⁸ The Mennonite experience, where clockmakers played a leading role in the rise of industry, appears to confirm his argument. It also confirms another contention linking new forms of time with the industrial revolution. Other scholars have pointed out the connection between clocks, machines, and the



Kornelius Hildebrand. Photo courtesy of Pandora Press, Kitchener, ON.

new factory workplaces where workers, accustomed to the more irregular time rhythms of seasonal agricultural labor, had to be disciplined into new forms of continuous shift work.²⁹ Again the same pattern occurred in Mennonite factories where workers, mainly non-Mennonites but including some Mennonites, experienced new regimes of time-intensive labor driven by clock time.

Clock time also invaded almost every home of the rural Mennonite world, as every prosperous farmer purchased a clock.³⁰ Life once ruled by the seasons and the agricultural cycle was now supplemented by the regular order of clock time. As the compulsory elementary education system became an accepted feature of village life, teachers, children, and their parents were disciplined by its daily and term time routines. Schools had to be organized, and local and regional school boards became an important bureaucratic factor in Mennonite life, especially after the period of the Great Reforms (ca. 1860 -1880). Clerks in the district offices worked to clock time. The Forestry Service introduced in the 1880s to run the Mennonite alternative to military service created almost a military discipline for recruits. Meanwhile its organization meant the establishment of complex bureaucratic structures, including a system of taxation to manage its massive capital expenditure and considerable ongoing costs. In time other institutions were set up to provide social welfare services: hospitals, a school for the deaf, an orphanage, and an old peoples' home. Co-operatives, credit unions, and even a bank were also created before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.³¹ These essentially secular Mennonite organizations formed just a part of the complex world that emerged between the Great Reforms and 1914, creating almost a state within a state more generally referred to as "the Mennonite Commonwealth."

In Russia the end of the Great Reforms followed the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. This was followed by a long period of reaction under his successor Tsar Alexander III that continued well into the reign of the next Tsar, Nicholas II, roughly from 1881 until 1905. The decline of official interest in social and political reform, and the government's support for a very conservative and stable agrarian society, provided Mennonites with a period of relative calm after the earlier hectic period of reforms between the 1830s and 1880s. No longer did they have to react to further homogenizing and integrating reform policies. The period of conservative reaction in the Russian Empire thus allowed Mennonites to consolidate and build on the changes already made to their organizations through earlier bureaucratic

reforms. This allowed time to strengthen the foundations of their society and to develop institutions under their own control. During the same period Mennonites continued building on the economic base founded on commercial agricultural and industrial production. Mennonite entrepreneurs also drew on the benefits of improvements in education and rational organization that had begun earlier in the century. All these factors helped establish the state within a state that the government now, through neglect, permitted to develop.

The organizational skills required to run the structures of the Mennonite Commonwealth were honed in school, especially in the high schools that had initially been founded in Cornies' time to train clerks for local government offices. Anyone dealing with the records of Russian Mennonite organizations, and those of their successors as Mennonites migrated to Canada in the 1920s after the Russian Revolution, cannot fail to be impressed – and at times overwhelmed – by the complexity of bureaucratic structures they created. Committees, boards, endless minutes of meetings, account books, conference proceedings, annual reports, and large letter files all bear witness to the triumph of rational bureaucratic organization. All this required a careful structuring of time in order to run efficient organizations across many communities and large distances of space. Truly one is looking at the records of a secular, state-like civil service, often in a situation where the Russian state itself lacked many of the same provisions or organizational genius.

But what place did religion have in the midst of all this essentially secular activity? In terms of congregational structures, considerable rationalization also occurred, a process begun in Cornies' time but greatly expanded following the Great Reforms. Long-established congregational differences between Flemish/Frisian/Groningen Old Flemish congregations, based largely on historical factors and minor distinctions in ritual practice, weakened as more parish-based structures were set up. Promoting these changes was a new generation of ministers, more highly educated than the lay farmer-ministers of old. These were the “teacher-preachers,” many of whom increasingly dominated both sacred and secular affairs before 1914. These educated ministers also served on school boards, forestry boards, and other institutions in conjunction with other teachers and businessmen, all

of whom were devoted to the improvement of the Mennonite world. Not surprisingly, the structures and procedures adopted to run congregational affairs, and especially the larger conferences that grew increasingly important, were influenced by the new educational system, bureaucratic forms, and expansion of secular institutions within the Mennonite world.

The secular world thus entered the sacred world of religious organization in ways that closely resembled how the governmental role of the Roman state had been assumed by the Church in the first centuries after the fall of the Roman empire. By doing so, Richard Fenn has argued, the Church in fact established the foundations of modern secular society:

The Church (not Christianity per se) was largely responsible for creating in the [European] West a world where organizations, institutions, and the state seemed to transcend the passage of time.... In an effort to administer a large and complex organization with claims to universality, the Church not only introduced high levels of rationality to systems of law and governance but focused on technical matters of procedure and precedent – highly pragmatic concerns in which the transcendental aim [of Christianity] can easily be lost.³²

In light of the development of the Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia, it is ironic to reflect that for some early Anabaptists it was the establishment of just such a link between state and society by the Emperor Constantine that had corrupted the original Christian faith!³³

An important factor in the development of the Mennonite Commonwealth was the adoption of a sense of collective Mennonite peoplehood – an identity broader than just membership of a religious community. Mennonites in Russia would become *Russian* Mennonites. At first the development of a sense of common peoplehood was encouraged by officialdom. Despite congregational differences and other profane distinctions derived from descent, dialect, and settlement patterns among those who immigrated to Russia, all Mennonites were treated as a single people by the government. Identified just as “Mennonite colonists,” they were differentiated from

other peoples, colonists and non-colonists, and the special attention they received as “model” colonists helped further a broader sense of identity not based solely on religious factors. When in the later nineteenth century some Mennonites tried to argue that the schismatic Mennonite Brethren were not really Mennonites but Baptists, the government initially rejected their accusations. Being “Mennonite” was a matter of an official designation of a group of foreign colonists who were also legally state peasants; internal differences of religious identity were something Mennonites would have to settle among themselves.

Paradoxically, the process of Mennonite identity formation was given a major boost once the Great Reforms ended, not by further official encouragement of their distinctiveness as a people but by increasing opposition to their continued separateness. The rise of Pan-Slavist sentiments, proto-Russian nationalism, and increased anti-German feelings resulted in public accusations of disloyalty aimed at Russian subjects of alleged German origin, including foreign colonists such as the Mennonites.³⁴ These accusations forced Mennonites to insist upon their loyalty to the state and to assert their identity as one of the Empire’s many peoples not of Great Russian origin. This made them develop an identity in terms of the same discourses in which they were attacked. Thus they had to discover an identity as a distinct people with an origin in time and space expressed in nationalist sentiments. This required them to identify as a people in largely secular, not religious, terms.

To achieve that aim, they drew on the profane aspects of their identity rather than on the transcendental markers of faith. Existing profane aspects of identity associated with kinship and descent were greatly expanded into broader secular identities. Mennonites began to speak of themselves as a *Volklein*, another “small people” in Russia’s multi-peopled Empire. In pre-Revolutionary times this concept of “*Volk*” was extended to identify Mennonite schools (*Volkschulen*) and even the church (*Volkskirche*).³⁵ In a sacred congregational community separated from “the world,” individuals sought a safe environment to hope for salvation; in a secular colonist community situated in the Russian Empire, they sought ways to fulfil their destiny as a *Volk* and loyal subjects of the Tsar.

In this manner, economic growth, bureaucratic reorganization, and the emergence of a pan-Mennonite identity were combined in the Mennonite Commonwealth to give Mennonites that sense of being members of a state within a state. In its emergence, the Mennonite Commonwealth as social, economic, and institutional structures that also provided a sense of distinct identity mirrored the processes of state development and national identity formation that occurred in western states when industrialization and nationalism transformed social life.

By the early twentieth century, therefore, the experience and organization of time in the Mennonite Commonwealth no longer related to a timeless time, and was no longer centered just on congregational communities. The emphasis on the continuity of faith and practice and a concern with transcendent time in a future life was not so dominant. Instead, Mennonite life was now clearly located *in* time; for younger Mennonites the general idea about – and experience of – time was that they lived in an age of improvement and a world that was moving forward. This was obvious from their surroundings and in terms of the secular achievements of the Commonwealth: greater wealth, improved education, expanded opportunities for many young people. This essentially lineal view of time encouraged them not to expect continuities with the past but instead to welcome discontinuities between their present, the past, and their futures. It involved a positive, expansive view of the future but also entailed a similar view of the past, as the present was now seen a continuum of positive developments moving forwards. This stimulated the view that the past, if interpreted rightly, might provide not just an explanation of the present but a guide to the future. Past time thus acquired a sense of teleology that allowed progress to be measured and connected through selected key events and the lives of leading individuals – secular and religious – to models of positive growth and improvement.

The experience and expression of time as essentially lineal, now integrated with a particular view of the past, meant that most historical accounts published by the Russian Mennonites before 1914 concentrated positively on their Russian experience.³⁶ As historical accounts they tend to

be rather shallow in their time focus, only briefly tracing Mennonite life and faith back to its alleged foundations, if at all. Not surprisingly, most accounts lay greater stress on secular achievements than on religious affairs.³⁷ Many were written in an attempt to prove to Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike that as a people Mennonites had always been loyal subjects of the Tsar and valuable members of the Russian Empire. The secular emphasis was thus linked to the further development of a sense of peoplehood loosely connected to the idea and practices of a faith community.

The issue of Mennonite loyalty to Russia that had been questioned during the 1890s in sections of the Russian press re-emerged in the years before 1914 and became critical during World War I. Accused of being of German descent and political loyalty, Mennonites were now threatened with expropriation of their property and even banishment from the western borderlands. The use of history then became important in “proving” that Mennonites were of Dutch and not German descent.³⁸ *Volk* now became an issue of origin and identity clearly outside the bounds of the sacred. History, as the ultimate realization of lineal time linked to the present, was now implicated in a search for an acceptable national identity and, despite their foreign origin, proof that Mennonites had always been loyal, patriotic Russians.

All these efforts, however, came to nothing, as any idea they were part of an Empire that most of their ancestors had adopted over a hundred years before ended in revolution and civil war. Time was ruptured by violent events, and the hopes and prospects for a better future were destroyed. Many Mennonites became refugees, forced either to flee or to emigrate to other, usually more backward, lands. Those who remained were eventually swept into the destructive forces of the Soviet state under Stalin. Those who became refugees outside their Russian “homeland” (*Heimat*) developed a strong sense of exile that often resulted in overemphasizing past achievements and drawing sharp distinctions between “then and now,” and between “there and here.” At the same time Mennonites in exile developed a sense of being victims that led many to concentrate on issues of Mennonite suffering, past and present. These issues helped to shape Mennonite collective visions of the past, often mixing sacred and secular issues through drawing on models of suffering from their own experience and beyond.³⁹

For those forced into exile in Canada, Germany, and Paraguay, the loss of a homeland and an uncertain future at first resulted in a reconsideration of their past and a search for peoplehood linked to different markers of identity than they had used in Russia. Immigrant leaders in Canada, and later in Paraguay, tried to rebuild not just the religious base of their communities but also many of the secular institutions of the old Mennonite Commonwealth. In Canada these efforts had failed by the early 1930s, and in Paraguay the backwardness of the country severely limited progress.⁴⁰ However, this did not stop some Mennonites from fantasizing about creating a Mennonite state that would replace the lost Russian Commonwealth.⁴¹ For many Mennonites, understanding the significance and destiny of the Mennonite *Volk* now became crucial. Such views were increasingly associated not just with a religious community but with a sense of peoplehood founded on blood. These ideas drew from ideas derived from Germany and were couched in the language of Nazi ideology.⁴² Now Mennonites had to prove their identity in terms of race more than religion, and the profane world of kinship connections became entangled with a search for racial origins of families and Mennonites as a distinct people of German descent. The idea that Mennonites had been founded as a faith community was replaced by a need to establish a legitimate, secular racist ancestry, one that reached back in time well beyond the Reformation.⁴³ As a *Volk*, defined primarily in terms of race, Mennonites had a racial destiny to fulfil with the German people rather than a faith to follow with other Christians in the hope of salvation.

Time and destiny also manifested itself in the few post-revolutionary accounts of Mennonite history that Mennonites published in the Soviet Union, but in rather different terms from those of the racially motivated accounts of Mennonites in exile.⁴⁴ The Soviet accounts tend to condemn the path of progress that other Mennonite historians described in triumphant terms and instead, in Marxist language, stress the exploitive ways of pre-revolutionary Mennonites. These accounts are written within a model of materialist history that assumes the past has a structure, is open to scientific analysis, and leads to one, inevitable end. This finality, though, was not a triumph of faith in a final apocalypse, or of the fulfilment of a racial destiny, but instead a victory of a social class – the proletariat – within a historically determined socio-economic formation. In both *völkisch* and communist views time was to be

transcended, but not in terms of faith in the resurrection. Instead, Mennonite fulfilment would be achieved through peoplehood: either through the racist inheritance of the *Volk* or through the worldwide victory of a social class, the *narod* (the “people”).⁴⁵

The emphasis on placing Mennonites in historical time, where religion played a secondary role to the destiny of peoplehood, was to a great extent also a logical outcome of the expansion of secular spheres of activity in the late Imperial Russia Mennonite Commonwealth. One consequence of this was that the generation who grew to maturity during this period, and especially those who attended high schools and often went on to higher education (even to Russian and foreign universities), was an increased diversity in personal expressions of belief. These ranged from a withdrawal from organized forms of worship into personal piety and even into what might be called varieties of unbelief.⁴⁶ In the older established congregations in Russia, there had been few outlets for any public expression of personal faith. After their formation in the 1860s and '70s, members of the Mennonite Brethren developed ways of expressing their faith through recounting their conversion experiences.⁴⁷ Individual Mennonites expressed their faith by quietly rejecting organized religion through withdrawal into personal reflection instead of attending church services.⁴⁸ For others a kind of natural religion developed.⁴⁹ Most notable in this regard were the Templers, many of Mennonite descent and highly educated, who developed forms of faith in which rational reflection on the world and their place within it appears almost devoid of the established forms and expressions of Mennonite faith.⁵⁰

Varieties of unbelief certainly existed, but there are major problems in identifying their nature and the people involved. Mennonites holding such views either left the Mennonite community or, if they remained, were careful never to discuss such matters openly. Questions about Johann Cornies' views have long been raised. Later in the nineteenth century doubts arose about the noted Khortitsa teacher Abraham Neufeld, who left the colony world to found an advanced school in the city of Berdiansk. Some Mennonites who adopted socialist and later communist ideas were self-declared atheists;

but the beliefs of others such as Heinrich H. Epp, who cooperated with the Soviet regime, are harder to ascertain. In Canada, however, some of the more radical supporters of the idea of a Mennonite *Volk* exhibit signs of unbelief in their writings and actions. This might best be characterized as a form of general agnosticism, in which religious matters were rarely if ever discussed and religious ideas were subordinated to *völkisch* concerns with racial origins and purity of descent. Some Mennonites, even ministers, appeared to possess a split allegiance to sacred and secular views, expressing themselves publicly in religious terms but at other times speaking and writing in a quite secular language.⁵¹

A number of Mennonites also seem to have been only casually committed to a religious Mennonitism. Prominent among them were some who had emigrated from the Soviet Union in the 1920s and by the 1930s dominated the publication of newspapers and creative and historical forms of writing, much of it with a marked secular emphasis. Some held important positions in Mennonite “secular” organizations.⁵² Arnold Dyck, today remembered more for his humorous Low German writing than for his other activities, edited an influential newspaper, and in 1935 founded the first secular Mennonite literary and arts periodical in North America, the *Mennonitisches Volkswarte*.⁵³ His commitment to promoting the idea of the Mennonite *Volk* is clear from the periodical’s title and is confirmed from a reading of its contents.⁵⁴ Dyck published articles on Mennonite history with an obvious stress on the world of the Russian Mennonites before the Revolution, and the more radical writings of people excluded from publishing in other Mennonite newspapers.⁵⁵ In later life he became quite alienated from Canada and settled in Germany; he died never having found a suitable *Heimat* for either himself or his vision of the Mennonites as a people.⁵⁶

While Dyck’s allegiance to a secular version of Mennonite peoplehood is clear, the position of the editor of the major immigrant newspaper, *Der Bote*, Dietrich H. Epp, is harder to discern. Epp’s elder brother David, a teacher-preacher like his father Heinrich before him, was a major writer of historical accounts of the Russian Mennonites before 1914. But Dietrich, like his other brother Heinrich who never immigrated to Canada, did not become a minister. A leading teacher in Russia, in Canada Epp was active

in the central organizations of the immigrants and headed the major body, the *Zentrale Mennonitische Immigranten Komitee* (ZMIK), founded to re-establish the secular cultural and welfare institutions of the Mennonite Commonwealth before economic and political circumstances forced its closure in 1933.⁵⁷ Although in his newspaper Epp published religious articles and news of the Mennonite conferences, he resisted all overtures to make it the official organ of the conferences. As editor he permitted a considerable degree of freedom to immigrants of obviously rather secular and extreme political views to argue their case, often to the chagrin of many religious leaders of the Mennonite immigrant communities. Eventually he and the other editors of Mennonite newspapers agreed to restrict these discussions and not to permit certain Mennonites a voice in their columns.

In 1944 Dietrich Epp and Arnold Dyck organized a reunion of former pupils of the Khortitsa High School who had immigrated to Canada, mostly since 1923. The reunion was to mark the centenary of the school's foundation in Russia, and was held in Winnipeg in July. The actual date of the centenary fell in 1942, but this was during one of the darkest years of World War Two, as the conflict expanded to global proportions and involved Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan, as well as Britain, the U.S., and the Soviet Union. And in 1942 the very future of the British Empire and Canada seemed uncertain. Since the outbreak of war in 1939, Mennonite supporters of a *völkisch* peoplehood had learned to assume a low profile in Canada, but they were privately excited when Hitler attacked the "evil" Soviet empire and German troops occupied the Mennonite homeland in Ukraine. But by July 1944 the tide had turned. The Red Army had retaken Ukraine and was rapidly advancing on Germany itself. Just a month before, in early June, British, American, and Canadian forces had landed in Normandy, opening a third front on mainland Europe to help their Soviet allies destroy the Third Reich. The Reich's future now looked doubtful, although no one could know that within less than a year the War would be over, Hitler would be dead, the Reich destroyed, and Stalin's Red Army would occupy Berlin. I am just speculating as to the atmosphere at that meeting of former teachers and

students of the high school in Winnipeg, but to many it must have seemed that any hope of Russian Mennonites regaining their lands and reclaiming their destiny had finally been dashed. In terms of history, the time of the Mennonites in Russia as they had known it had ended.

At the meeting, with typical Russländer efficiency, a formal program was prepared, and a president and secretaries were appointed to record the decisions.⁵⁸ A number of former pupils spoke, and the religious blessing was provided by a minister and former pupil, Johann G. Rempel. Rempel's closing address was strangely devoid of religious references; instead, he included quotes from Pushkin, the German poet von Kotzebue, and a German student fraternity (*Burschenschaft*)!⁵⁹ It was decided that a new publishing series be created to produce books on Mennonite history – in German, of course. As the meeting consisted of the “former members of the Chortitzer Zentralschule in Canada” so this title, in abbreviated form, gave the new venture its name: the Echo Verlag.⁶⁰

Arnold Dyck designed a seal for the new series, featuring the great oak that had stood in the main settlement of Khortitsa long before Mennonites first settled in the region at the end of the eighteenth century. What better symbol to give Mennonite history a sense of time and rootedness in the Russian environment? Indeed, all but one of the fourteen books published in the series over the next twenty years were devoted to aspects of the history of Mennonites in Russia. The only exception was a volume marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the colony of Fernheim in Paraguay, for some the closest that Russian Mennonites in exile came to recreating the Mennonite Commonwealth. Not one of the books was devoted to Mennonite settlement in Canada, even though none of the organization's statutes excluded such a consideration or required that only accounts of Russia be published. Some books in the series reprint works published in Russia before 1914, but the new accounts of Mennonite settlements in Russia tend to follow a common template. In



Echo Verlag logo first appeared in C.P. Toews, Die Tereker Ansiedlung (Rosthern: Echo Verlag, 1945).

the volumes devoted to individual colonies, the initial years of settlement are dealt with first, often stressing the hardships of pioneering. Then secular achievements such as those in agriculture, industry, education, and community institutions are carefully chronicled, along with biographies of the leading figures in the community, many not ministers. Religious affairs are usually restricted to a single chapter.

Despite the obvious continued emphasis on Mennonite achievements in the past, there is a certain sense of pathos in most of the accounts. Most end with details of the particular settlement's decline and destruction, either during the revolution and civil war or later under communism.⁶¹ The accounts are unlike those written before the Revolution that treat time as a continuum, where past, present, and future are united in a single, forward-looking triumphant narrative. In the new books any triumphant discussion focuses solely on the past. Overall, the books are dominated by a memory of time past, not of a sense of time connected with a fulfilment of destiny. Time seemed to have either stopped or stood still for an entire generation of Russian Mennonites; time present had turned into time past without any real links to the future. Perhaps, as the title of the series suggests, all these Mennonites could deal with was an echo of the past in the present that they alone could still hear in the far distance.

In presenting the proposal for creating the Echo Verlag series in 1944, Arnold Dyck noted that discussions on how to mark the centenary of the High School in the Mennonite press since 1942 had centered on a search for a suitable memorial to the school's achievements. The words he chose to express the process of creating a memorial naturally involved the German term *Denkmal* (monument): a *Denkmal-Frage* had been proposed and this had resulted in a *Denkmal-Projekt*.⁶² The history of Mennonite time in Russia now had not just turned into a memory; it also entailed the need to establish a proper form in which memory could be memorialized. The issue of how Mennonites have shaped time into collective memories of their past, and realized them through memorials, will be the subject of my next lecture.

Notes

¹ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1962), 17-18. As Cullmann points out, originally there was only time after Christ's birth (*anno domini*) and such time

was referred to as “in the years of the Lord” with time before being counted from the date of creation. Later, in the eighteenth century, the idea of counting back developed so Christ’s birth was seen as a mid-point in time.

² David Ewing Duncan, *The Calendar* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998); see also A.F. Aveni, *Empires of Time: Calendars, Clocks and Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

³ On the persistence of paganism into Christian time names see Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Seven Day Circle. The History and Meaning of the Week* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 24-25.

⁴ Useful sources on anthropological approaches to time include Alfred Gell, *The Anthropology of Time. Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images* (Oxford: Berg, 1992), Carol J. Greenhouse, *A Moment’s Notice. Time Politics across Cultures* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), and the contributions by historians and anthropologists in Diane Owen Hughes and Thomas R. Trautmann, eds., *Time: Histories and Ethnologies* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1995).

⁵ Quakers in North America, however, did attempt to rid their calendar of pagan-derived names. See Zerubavel, *The Seven Day Circle*, 147 quoting Samuel G. Barton, “The Quaker calendar,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 93 (1949): 32-39.

⁶ Many Anabaptists also believed that they were living in the endtimes so their salvation was close.

⁷ The distinction between the sacred and profane was developed by Émile Durkheim in his *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915).

⁸ There were no birth ceremonies as these were associated with rituals of child baptism in most other Christian traditions. Due to high rates of infant mortality in most pre-modern societies rituals associated with birth were often muted.

⁹ This was in the context of the emergence of a larger institutional “church” and conference in Russia that in turn subordinated the authority of the old, localized congregations; see below.

¹⁰ John M. Janzen has discussed this variation in his entry “Burial customs,” *Mennonite Encyclopedia* (from now on, *ME*) 5, 110-11; it is an area that needs further research.

¹¹ Sometimes unbaptized children are set to one side as they would be treated differently from the baptized on the day of judgment.

¹² Soul sleep was roundly condemned by both the Protestant and Catholic opponents of Anabaptism; Calvin in particular condemned the idea.

¹³ Thieleman Jansz van Braght, *Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenceless 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....* Trans. Joseph F. Sohm. (Scottsdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1964), 406-07.

¹⁴ Although not without some debate and controversy; see R. F. Jones, *Ancients and Moderns: a Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England*, 2nd ed. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1975).

¹⁵ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches. An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988).

¹⁶ The classic study is J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress. An Inquiry into its Origin and Growth* (London: Macmillan, 1920).

¹⁷ See Roger Bartlett, *Human Capital: the Settlement of Foreigners in Russia, 1762-1804* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979) on the intellectual and modernizing context of imperial immigration policy at this period.

¹⁸ On the background to Russian time see R.E.F. Smith, "Time, space and use in early Russia" in T. H. Aston et al., eds., *Social Relations and Ideas: Essays in Honour of R. H. Hilton* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 273-93.

¹⁹ On these connections see Leonard G. Friesen, "Mennonites and their peasant neighbours in Ukraine before 1900," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* (from now on, *JMS*) 10 (1992): 56-69.

²⁰ As opposed to official *rossification* (making Mennonites subjects of the Tsar in a multicultural empire) and *russification* (making them Russian by identity and culture); see James Urry, "The Russian Mennonites, nationalism and the state 1789-1917" in Abe J. Dueck, ed., *Canadian Mennonites and the Challenge of Nationalism* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1994), 21-67.

²¹ See Norma Jost Voth, *Mennonite Foods and Folkways from South Russia* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1990), vol. 1, 24-30, 94-104; vol. 2, 113-25.

²² Franz Isaak, *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten* (Halbstadt: H.J. Braun, 1908), 94; 98; I have discussed this episode elsewhere: "Mennonites marking time: a message for the Millennium," *Mennonite Historian* 25.4 (1999): 1-2.

²³ Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1998), 249. Peter's reforms of time and the liturgy provoked a massive counter-reaction that led to the formation of the Old Believers, who were subsequently severely persecuted by church and state.

²⁴ See the careful planning of the Mennonite agricultural year reported in an official scientific journal by Philip Wiebe, Cornies' son-in-law and successor, "Ackerbauwirtschaft bei den Mennoniten im südlichen Russland," *Archive für wissenschaftliche Kunde von Russland* 12 (1853): 496-536.

²⁵ Quoted in the memoirs of Abraham Braun, "Kleine Chronik der Mennoniten an der Molotschna seit ihrer Ansiedlung bis in mein 80. Jahr," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1907), 72-73. "Pelzhosen" referred to large sheepskin pants Mennonites had probably adopted from their neighbors the Tatars, and which Cornies obviously thought were opposed to modern forms of dress that indicated Mennonite progress in society.

²⁶ Clocks had been manufactured in Prussia; see Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen, "Keeping faith and keeping time: Old Testament images on Mennonite clocks," *Mennonite Life* 55.4 (2000) (http://www.bethelks.edu/mennonitelife/2000dec/2000dec_toc.html); Arthur Kroeker, "Old clocks – keeping time, yesterday and today," *Preservings: the Journal of the Flemish Mennonite Historical Society* 23 (December 2003): 128-30.

²⁷ The picture is of Kornelius Hildebrand; another Khortitsa clockmaker, Peter Lepp, founded the industrial giant Lepp and Wallmann; on these figures and their links to clockmaking see David H. Epp, *Sketches of the Pioneer Years of Industry in the Mennonite Settlements of South Russia*. Trans. Jacob P. Penner. (Leamington, ON: Jacob P. Penner, 1972).

²⁸ David Landes, *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press for Harvard Univ. Press, 1983).

²⁹ The most famous paper in this regard is E. P. Thompson's "Time, work-discipline, and

industrial capitalism,” *Past and Present* 38 (1967): 56-97.

³⁰ Although not just for practical reasons. Arthur Kroeger, descendant of the Khortitsa clock manufacturing family, told me that a large clock formed part of the dowry of the daughters of wealthy farmers even when they had become outdated in terms of their technology. His father would not have one of the old-fashioned clocks his firm still manufactured to meet this demand in his house, preferring modern German clocks (Arthur Kroeger, personal communication).

³¹ I have discussed the economic aspects of this institutional complex in my “The cost of community: the funding and economic management of the Russian Mennonite Commonwealth before 1914,” *JMS* 10 (1992): 22-55.

³² Richard K. Fenn, *Time Exposure. The Personal Experience of Time in Secular Societies* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 3.

³³ Walter Klaassen, “The Anabaptist critique of Constantinian Christianity,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (from now on, *MQR*) 55 (1981): 218-30.

³⁴ These attacks were mainly a reaction at the international level to the rise of the German Empire as an economic and military threat to Russia, especially its crucial western regions. See Terry Martin, “The German question in Russia, 1848-96,” *Russian History* 18 (1991): 371-432.

³⁵ For references to such usage and its connection to the idea of a state-within-a-state, see my *Mennonites, Politics and Peoplehood: Europe – Russia – Canada 1525-1980* (Winnipeg: Univ. of Manitoba Press, 2006), 95-96, 127.

³⁶ The earliest Mennonite “history” in Russia is *Kurze älteste Geschichte der Taufgesinnten (Mennoniten genannt)* (Odessa: Franzow & Nitzsche, 1852). This was probably produced by Philipp Wiebe of the Molochna-based Agricultural Union; a manuscript copy slightly longer with details on agricultural production is in the Peter Braun Archive (File 1636).

³⁷ Even P.M. Friesen’s massive attempt to document the emergence of the Mennonite Brethren, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Brüderschaft in Russland (1789-1910) im Rahmen der mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte* (Halbstadt: Raduga, 1911), became burdened with details of Mennonite secular achievements. On Russian Mennonite historiography with special reference to the Khortitsa writers, see David G. Rempel, “An introduction to Russian Mennonite historiography,” *MQR* 48 (1974): 409-46.

³⁸ This matter has been thoroughly investigated by Abraham Friesen in his *In Defense of Privilege: Russian Mennonites and the State before and during World War I* (Winnipeg: Kindred, 2006).

³⁹ On the importance of the collective shaping of past time, see Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps. Collective Memory and the Shape of the Past* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press), 2003; on its realization in memorials see my next lecture in this issue of *CGR*.

⁴⁰ On the efforts in Canada see my *Mennonites, Politics and Peoplehood* Chapter 8; on Paraguay see Peter P. Klassen, *Die Mennoniten in Paraguay. Reich Gottes und Reich dieser Welt* (Bolanden-Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1988); *Die deutsch-völkische Zeit in der Kolonie Fernheim, Chaco, Paraguay 1933-1945. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der auslandsdeutschen Mennoniten während des Dritten Reich* (Bolanden-Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1990); John D. Thiesen, *Mennonite and Nazi: Attitudes*

among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933-1945 (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Books, 1999).

⁴¹ J.J. Hildebrand and others; see my “A *Mennostaat* for the *Mennovolk*: Mennonite immigrant fantasies in Canada in the 1930s,” *JMS* 14 (1996): 65-80. Hildebrand, fascinated with proving the destiny of Mennonites as a *Volk*, also produced a detailed chronology of Mennonite history: J.J. Hildebrand, *Hildebrand's Zeittafel: Chronologische Zeittafel. 1500 Daten historische Ereignisse und Geschehnisse aus der Zeit der Geschichte der Mennoniten Westeuropas, Russlands und Amerikas* (Winnipeg: the author, 1945).

⁴² Heinrich H[ayo] Schroeder, *Russlanddeutsche Friesen* (Döllstädt-Langensalza: Selbstverlag, 1936), a book widely distributed among refugees from the Soviet Union in the 1930s in Germany, Canada, and South America. At the start of his book Schroeder lists “German” Mennonite “Kameraden” murdered in the “struggle” against Bolshevism, thereby establishing a sense of racial victimhood.

⁴³ Most notable in this genre was the work of Benjamin H. Unruh in his *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Karlsruhe: Selbstverlag, 1955). Although published ten years after the end of World War II, the work was originally conceived in Nazi Germany where, though not a Party member, Unruh had close links with the Nazi regime. See Diether Götz Lichdi, *Mennoniten im Dritten Reich. Dokumentation und Deutung* (Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1977).

⁴⁴ Heinrich H. Epp, “Aus der Geschichte der Deutschen Kolonien” in M. Jaworsky, ed., *Kurzgefasste Geschichte der Ukraine* (Kharkov: Zentralverlag, 1928) and especially Reinmarus [David Penner], *Anti-Menno: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland* (Moscow: Zentral Völker Verlag, 1930).

⁴⁵ There is a difference here in the apparent similarities; while Mennonites who supported *völkisch* ideas thought they would survive as a distinct *Volk*, communists believed that a separate Mennonite identity would disappear as a member of the *narod*; in terms of salvation, individual Mennonites would be judged but all the *Volk* and the *narod* would share in a collective destiny.

⁴⁶ I have adopted the phrase “varieties of unbelief” from Martin E. Marty’s book of the same name, *Varieties of Unbelief* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964); his discussion is relevant to my theme, especially Chapters 7 and 8. On secularization in British and German society during this period see Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848 -1914* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2000), and on intellectual ideas associated with secularization, Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975).

⁴⁷ On the expression of conversion experiences see John B. Toews, “The early Mennonite Brethren and conversion,” *JMS* 11 (1993): 76-97; John B. Toews, “Mennonite Brethren founders relate their conversion,” *Direction* 23 (1994): 31-37. As an organized church the Mennonite Brethren were as influenced by secular institutional forms as all other Mennonites, and in spite of their emphasis on personal experience, as a church in Canada they have perhaps become even more centralized and influenced by rational organizational procedures than other Mennonites.

⁴⁸ David G. Rempel's father rarely attended church but instead on Sundays would retire to the sitting room for a period of quiet reflection and personal devotion. See David G. Rempel (with Cornelia Rempel Carlson), *A Mennonite family in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union 1789-1923* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2002), 98, and personal communication; I have heard of similar things from other Mennonites about their father's attitudes to organized religion.

⁴⁹ The schoolteacher, poet, and writer Gerhard Loewen reveals such tendencies; see Harry Loewen, "Gerhard Loewen: Bridge between the Old World and the New (1863-1946)" in Harry Loewen, ed., *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets: Leadership among the Russian Mennonites (ca. 1880-1960)* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press/ Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 279-95. There is also the interesting natural history and conservation society established by school teachers in Khortitsa before 1914; see the account by Heinrich H. Epp in N.J. Kroeker [ed.], *First Mennonite villages in Russia 1789-1943; Khortitsa – Rosental* (Vancouver: N.J. Kroeker, 1981), 142-44.

⁵⁰ Heinrich Sawatzky, *Mennonite Templers*. Trans. and ed. Victor G. Doerksen. (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1990); Victor G. Doerksen, "Mennonite Templers in Russia," *JMS* 3 (1985): 128-37.

⁵¹ Jacob H. Janzen, the influential elder of the Russian Mennonites in Waterloo, might be included in such a consideration. Of course, all educated religious leaders had to face the reality that their understanding of faith varied considerably from that of the Platt Mennonite members of their congregations.

⁵² These include Gerhard W. Sawatzky of the Mennonite Land Settlement Board, the writer Walter Quiring, the poet Gerhard J. Friesen (Fritz Senn), the author Gerhard Toews, and a host of other writers on Mennonite issues in the 1930s including J.J. Hildebrand, B.J. Schellenberg, and others.

⁵³ On Dyck see Al Reimer, "Arnold Dyck (1889-1970)" in Harry Loewen, ed. *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets: Leadership among the Russian Mennonites (ca. 1880-1960)* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press/Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 69-84.

⁵⁴ Dyck outlined the aims of the periodical in the first number; see "Ein Geleit vom Herausgeber" in which he also explains why this "newest child" off the Mennonite press is "baptized" with the term *Volk: Mennonitisches Volkswarte* 1.1 (1935): 1.

⁵⁵ For instance, the racist writings of Heinrich Hayo Schroeder, including his "Russlandfriesen erleben ihre Urheimat," *Mennonitische Warte* 4.44 (August 1938): 286-92; 4.45 (September 1938): 318-25; by this time Dyck had dropped the Volk in the title but not in the content.

⁵⁶ In April 1963 Dyck wrote to the Mennonite poet Fritz Senn (Gerhard J. Friesen), who was visiting South Africa, noting that Senn was in "exactly that spot on the globe where I would have liked to go with our Mennonites and try to establish our own state in proximity to our ethnic cousins, the Boers, in order to make it manifest – especially to ourselves – that we are truly capable of the utmost accomplishments." Quoted in Gerald K. Friesen (trans. and ed.), "Life as a sum of shattered hopes: Arnold Dyck's letters to Gerhard J. Friesen (Fritz Senn)," *JMS* 6 (1988): 128. On the Russian Mennonites' strange liking for the Boers, see my "Russian Mennonites and the Boers of South Africa: a forgotten connection," *Mennonite Historian* 20.3 (1994): 1-2, 12.

⁵⁷ On ZMIK, Epp's work, and the circumstances of its closure, see my *Mennonites, Politics and Peoplehood*, Chapter 8.

⁵⁸ *Die ehemaligen Schüler der Chortitzer Zentralschule in Canada* [Rosthern: Echo-Verlag, 1945].

⁵⁹ Johann G. Rempel, "Nachklang" in *Die ehemaligen Schüler ...* [Rosthern: Echo-Verlag, 1945], 40-41; Rempel was secretary to the Conference of Mennonites in Canada and elder brother of the noted historian David G. Rempel. I am grateful to Walter Sauer of Heidelberg and Jack Thiessen for identifying the anonymous German sources.

⁶⁰ The name was derived from selecting the first letters from the phrase, *die ehemal-Schülern der Chortitzer Zentralschule*.

⁶¹ It was, in the words of a popular picture book on the Russian Mennonites, a time when their destiny as a people had been fulfilled: Walter Quiring and Helen Bartel, *Als ihre Zeit erfüllt war: 150 Jahre Bewährung in Russland*, translated as *In the Fullness of Time: 150 Years of Mennonite Sojourn in Russia* (Kitchener, ON: A. Klassen, [1974]).

⁶² Arnold Dyck in *Die ehemaligen Schüler...*, 34-35.



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