Provenance

The Bishop on Horseback

5. The Congregations and their Leaders

Many such so-called lay preachers became effective teachers and respected pastors of their congregations. Since there were no members with more than a common education, the lay preacher was able to serve without handicap — J. C. WENGER.[1]

THE IMPORTANCE of the clergyman and the church congregation as keepers of the peace and shapers of public morality on the frontiers of Upper Canada has already been inferred. The Mennonite communities were no exception to that rule. The role of their farmer-preachers varied, however, in some ways from that of the state-salaried Anglican priests as well as from the Methodist missioners. Often, the Mennonite ministers fulfilled the functions of both of these opposite varieties of ministry, though without pay.

The most obvious difference between the state clergy and the sectarian ministers lay in the official role of the former. They were considered "highly useful in a political as well as a religious" sense, and this usefulness was rewarded, as we have seen, with clergy land reserves and pay. The "political contribution" of the Mennonite leaders, on the other hand, was not by official support of state norms but by occasional dissent from them. In their smaller world of the congregational community, however, the denominational bishops represented functions similar to those of the Ang-

licans and the Methodists. On the one hand, they symbolized all that was respectable, moral and official. On the other hand, they also reached out to all those scattered members of the flock on the fringes of the ordered community and shared with them their humanity. Theirs was a politics not so much for undergirding the British imperium as for the building up of the kingdom of God, as they saw it. This often brought them into conflict with public opinion and the law of the land, not because they were disrespectful of that law, but because they represented a higher law. In the Pelham township, for instance, one Tunker preacher, with a "beard long down to his breast and hair over his shoulders,"[2] was accused by the schoolteacher of encouraging lawlessness simply because he opposed capital punishment.[3]

Thus, apart from the petitions regarding the oath and militia taxes, most of the "politics" of the Mennonite preacher was local. Since the days of persecution the Mennonite message had been mainly directed inward for nurturing the faithful and developing congregational community. It must be remembered that the congregation, the local body of believers, was for the Mennonites the essential and maximum expression of the kingdom of God. They still feared the state-wide church against which their fathers had once rebelled, and besides, for them the fundamental features of God's kingdom could only be expressed in a living and localized community. To the development of such communities, the preachers gave their greatest attention. Among the widely scattered settlements of Upper Canada this task was quite sufficient in magnitude, especially when the leaders had their own woodlands to clear, their own crops to sow and harvest, and their own large families to feed.

The clergy of most other denominations could not work in the Mennonite style. The German Evangelical Protestants, for instance, appealed for help to the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. Addressing him as being of the Prussian Military Order of Merit, they recognized his "zeal and exertions in propagating the invaluable blessing of religious instruction among his majesty's subjects." Then the petitioners asked him to supplement the £50 ($200) that they were paying the minister and which they could raise "only with great irregularity."[4] Their goal was the allowance of the priests of the Church of England who were receiving £100 annually from the public purse.

Among Mennonites, material support for the ministers, approved at Schleitheim in 1527, had become completely unthink-

able in the long decades of persecution and deprivation. It was not revived again until the congregations began to demand better-educated ministers and, for the most part, that did not occur until the twentieth century. But, even in that eventuality, support could never have come from the state purse — that part of the Anabaptist revolt against Catholicism, Lutheranism and Zwinglianism was never forgotten. But this lack of support for the Mennonite clergy was not without ill effect. The heavy loss of membership through the absorption of Mennonites into other denominations and their communal disintegration, later to be reported, can be attributed at least in part to an unpaid and untrained clergy, too busy with their own affairs to attend to all the needs of their flock.

Be that as it may, no Canadian Mennonite community was complete without at least one minister and, if possible, a bishop who preferably resided among them or at least occasionally visited them. Among the Anabaptists it had been that way from the beginning. In one sense everyone was a priest but, for the sake of order and according to the example of the New Testament, certain persons had to be chosen for certain functions or offices. There was the deacon who served, the minister who preached, and the elder or bishop who officiated. The word "bishop" was at first avoided because of its Catholic associations, but as time went on the designation became quite appropriate to the leader's role and image. Eighteenth-century Pennsylvania and nineteenth-century Ontario knew no other term for their religious authority.

These Mennonite offices were so important to the welfare of the congregation that they could not be left solely to the wishes and machinations of men. The church members could nominate certain members for the positions of deacon and minister, and certain ministers for the office of bishop. But if more candidates were nominated than there were positions to be filled, and all of them qualified, then it was only logical to leave the final decision to God, lest human choice lead to competition and division among candidates and their supporters. That, in the providence of God, was believed to be the intention of the lot. As it was written, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."[5] Further scriptural support for the lot was found in at least one reported instance of its use, namely the selection of Matthias to complete the ranks of the apostles after the defection and death of Judas.[6]

The lot was used by Mennonites in the following manner, with

variations in detail from time to time and from district to district. After the nomination of candidates by individuals or by congregational vote, the bishop(s), resident and/or visiting, would lay a thoroughly shuffled set of hymnbooks or Bibles, equal to the number of candidates, on a table in full view of the congregation. One of the books contained "the lot," a slip of paper with Proverbs 16:33 on it. The candidate selecting the book with the lot would be accepted as the one having been selected by God, and he was then immediately ordained. Persons selected for holy office by lot rarely refused, because the decision to "follow the Lord" in this manner had been made not only at the time of nomination but prior to that — at the time of baptism. For the young men who might some day be preachers and for the young women who might some day be their wives, the baptismal vows included such eventualities. Sometimes the candidates for baptism were asked very directly concerning their willingness to be ministers or ministers' wives, and, at such times, there was only one satisfactory answer.

This method of selection, however, occasionally led to the ordination of rather poorly endowed preachers, whose weakness was compounded by lack of education and, if they were farmers, by lack of time. Nomination of such persons could arise from the desire of friends or family cliques to be represented on the councils of the church. Not surprisingly, therefore, the temptation became strong from time to time, if not to discard the lot, then certainly to give God as much help as possible in its proper use. Indeed, some bishops felt it was their responsibility to protect God from foolish nominations and undesirable candidates, which occasionally they knew how to do, one way or another. In some areas it became customary for nominations to be made only in the privacy of a bishops' meeting, where nominators could sometimes be persuaded to withdraw the nomination of "undesired candidates."

Deviations from the established practices of choosing leaders in both Canada and Russia could and did occur. As previously indicated, the first Mennonite immigrants arrived without ministers, but in both countries the concern for congregational fellowship and leadership became evident soon after the settlers had selected land. The families who had located 15 miles west of Fort Erie by 1793, for instance, established three centres of worship immediately, though little is known from the historical records of how they went about it.[7]

More is known about the congregation at the Twenty, which

eventually became the locus or bishop's seat for all the congregations in the Niagara peninsula region. The second group of immigrants had barely arrived at the Twenty in 1799, set up their log cabins, and cleared some land, when they voiced desire for a congregation with a properly chosen leadership. No minister had arrived with the first 24 families, and so early in 1800 Samuel Moyer wrote on their behalf to the parent group in Bucks County for advice and help. The bishop and ministers at Bedminster in the County advised that they should, by themselves, choose their leader without the assistance of a visiting bishop. While the presence of a senior leader was viewed as desirable, this was not considered necessary since "human assistance and arrangement are also from God" and without him "no calling is sufficient . . . even if every minister were to place his hands upon him." Thinking that such words were not sufficiently clear or precise, Bedminster Bishop Jacob Gross added a personal note to the above instruction, which was then counter-signed by his five colleagues and confirmed by an assembly of ministers in both Bucks and Lancaster counties. The postcript was intended to leave no doubt as to the course of action to be taken. It said:

> You will likely have understood that you among yourselves can acquire, with prayer and fear of God, by votes and lots, ministers and elders to teach, keep, and maintain the same rules as we.[8]

The group at the Twenty proceeded according to instructions and John Fretz, age 71, was chosen deacon and Valentine Kratz, age 41, was chosen minister. Neither of the two men was formally ordained. A year later Jacob Moyer was selected as minister and in 1805, as bishop. It is not known when, where, or by whom he was ordained, but in all probability a visiting bishop from Pennsylvania officiated.

The Mennonites going to Russia began in a similar way. The first immigrants from Prussia also started on their pilgrimage without ministers. Apart from the lot, which was used among the Dutch-German Mennonites only on rare occasions to break a tie, the process of ministerial selection was very similar, as was that of deacons, ministers, and bishops. En route they selected from their number several men to read the Sunday morning sermons, but a real minister had to be found or "made" when about a dozen couples announced their engagements and impatiently waited to get married. The Prussians would not send one out but recom-

mended instead that the emigrants nominate candidates. From the twelve names submitted to Prussia, four were approved for the ministry and one was later "ordained" as elder (bishop) by letter.

One of the established roles of a bishop in North America, as well as in Europe, was to make himself available to other congregations or groups of congregations (districts) until they could choose their own leader. In such instances he was said to have "the bishop oversight." Otherwise he officiated at nominations, elections, ordinations, marriages, funerals, baptisms, communions and meetings of the ministers and congregations. As a leader chosen and appointed by God he was greatly respected and hence carried much authority, especially if a winsome personality, strong character, sound preaching, dedicated leadership and personal piety were part of his contribution to the office. Not infrequently the stature of the man would grow beyond his own and the people's expectations as he exercised his leadership role.

The normal origin of a congregational community in Canada was in the form of house meetings, sometimes held in barns, sheds or in the open air. The next step was to erect a small community building, usually of logs, which served the dual function of weekday school and Sunday worship. Finally a wooden church building was erected for use by the congregation and sometimes for community meetings. Brick buildings appeared about the middle of the nineteenth century. At the Twenty the third step came in 1824 when a wooden meeting-house was erected for a cost of $245, including materials and some labour but not including the stove. The details of its costs are given in Table 1.[9]

When a settlement expanded and distances increased, new places of worship were established. This was often followed by the election of additional ministers and the erection of more meeting places, though not necessarily by the formation of other autonomous congregations or the election of additional bishops. Whether or not a congregation or groups of congregations became independent enough to select their own bishop would depend on a variety of factors: size, distance and the initiative (or lack of it) of members or ministers. Such initiative, in turn, might depend on whether or not the present bishop was satisfactory or whether or not there was any challenge to his leadership.

As it happened, the Niagara area became a single district, for the most part served by a single bishop who was, however, not always resident at the Twenty, as can be seen from Table 2.[10]

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF MOYER'S MEETING-HOUSE COSTS IN 1824

ITEMS	COST
Johannes Schmidt: 14 bushels of lime, timber hewed, hauled, and trimmed, one gallon dram (strong drink), gable end closed and covered, shingles, nails–27 pounds, boards–684, beams, rafters, window facing, boards–2,713 feet.	$112.00
Jim Braun: for hewing, hauling timber, one day shingling, one gallon dram, shingles, nails and hinges, painting one day.	34.00
Johannes Puterbach: for six days hewing timber.	6.00
Jacob Schunk: for one day shingling.	1.00
Miscellaneous labour.	2.00
Miscellaneous (latches, nuts, bolts, nails, screws, glass).	90.00
Total	$245.00

During some periods there were several bishops. The New York congregations, for instance, had their own bishop until they became firmly incorporated into the Niagara district. Occasionally the bishop from across the border was invited to serve certain congregations in Upper Canada.

Similarly, Jacob Moyer served outside of his immediate area. In his early years he travelled to Waterloo and possibly to York. In due course, both areas became separate bishop districts. York became independent in 1808 when Abraham Grove came to Markham from Pennsylvania, having been charged with the bishop's office for that area before his departure. The initiative for that action had come in the form of a request from Markham, where the pioneer settler, Henry Wideman, had given ministerial leadership since 1803.

Waterloo district gained its own bishop with the ordination of Benjamin Eby in 1812. He was the third bishop in the province. Mennonites did not have archbishops, but in actual fact Benjamin Eby became one by virtue of the growth of his own district, the longevity of his service, his manifold abilities and creative leadership, his "bishop oversight" roles in other districts, and the ordination of bishops in Niagara and York districts. More versatile, visionary and gifted than any of his contemporaries, Eby

TABLE 2

EARLY BISHOPS AND BISHOP DISTRICTS IN UPPER CANADA

DATE	NAME	LOCATION
	I. NIAGARA DISTRICT	
	A. Upper Canada	
1805–1833	Jacob Moyer*	The Twenty
1834–1849	Jacob Gross*	" "
1850–1873	Dilman Moyer†	" "
1875–1889§	Christian Gayman	Cayuga
	B. New York	
1839–1860	Jacob Krehbiel	Clarence Centre
1860–1878	John Lapp	" "
	II. MARKHAM DISTRICT	
1808–1836	Abraham Grove	Markham
1837–1863	Jacob Grove†	" "
1867–1889§	Christian Reesor	" "
	III. WATERLOO DISTRICT(S)‡	
	A. Waterloo	
1812–1853	Benjamin Eby	Berlin
1852–1876	Joseph Hagey	Breslau
1879–1909	Elias E. Weber	" "
	B. Wilmot	
1842–1877	Henry Shantz	Wilmot
1875–1909	Amos Cressman	Wilmot
	C. Woolwich	
1867–1889§	Abraham Martin	Woolwich

* After the death of a bishop and until a new one was chosen, the bishop from another district, in this case Waterloo, would have the "bishop oversight."

† Ordained by Benjamin Eby.

‡ Three bishop districts in Waterloo became official after 1879, but as the above indicates a de facto situation existed before then.

§ The year 1889 does not mark the date of termination for these bishops but rather their separation from the main Mennonite Conference. See Chapter 11.

was not only a farmer-businessman like Erb, and not only a farmer-preacher like the Moyers and the Widemans, but also a schoolteacher, a writer of school texts and teaching resources, a publisher, and a church statesman of a quality and stature the Ontario Mennonites did not see again in that century.[11]

Eby was born at Hammer Creek in Lancaster County, on the old family homestead established by his great-grandfather, Theodore Eby, an immigrant from Switzerland via the Palatinate in 1715. The eleventh child of Christian and Catherine Eby, Benjamin married Mary Brubacher in the winter of 1807 and they had eleven children. Indeed, it was his engagement to Mary that prevented Benjamin from staying in Waterloo in 1806 after he rode up from Pennsylvania and claimed Lot #2 of the Beasley Tract as his own; he did not suspect that some day his land would comprise a large part of the eastern ward of a modern city named Kitchener. Its earliest name was Ebytown after Benjamin Eby; thereafter it was called Berlin.

A small Mennonite community of about 40 families on the Grand River had already been meeting with their minister Joseph Bechtel since 1802. But due to the Beasley episode the community had not grown until 1805–7, when more than 35 additional families arrived. Young Benjamin Eby, 22 years old at the time, and his young bride were in that group. After two years in the community he was elected minister and, three years later, bishop. In both instances, his brother Peter, 20 years his senior and already a "venerable bishop," came up from Lancaster by horseback to perform the ordinations.[12]

If the lot was used according to the rules in the selection of Benjamin, then its usefulness needed little further defence. In this case it had resulted in the election of a man very much needed, and very well qualified to serve the community. It is true, of course, that not all ministerial selections were left directly to God and/or chance as it sometimes seemed. His brother Peter, to give one example, personally selected the man who would become his assistant and successor, and ordained him.[13] In the case of Benjamin, it is also probable that he was the only candidate nominated, thus essentially eliminating the lot in his selection.

As it was, Benjamin Eby the farmer-bishop left his mark not only on Berlin but also on Waterloo County and the entire Ontario Conference which emerged during his time. Though small (5′ 6″) and slight (150 pounds) — one tradition says he was frail[14] — he overcame all the physical obstacles of the frontier and

handled the equivalent of several jobs in addition to normal agricultural pioneering.

Immediately after his ordination as bishop Eby had a modest log structure erected to serve the congregation of some 150 members, which had hitherto been worshipping in private homes and barns, in buildings erected for school purposes, and in the open air. A half-acre of land for a church building had previously been reserved by Joseph Eby. Another acre was added in 1816 at the cost of $10 — the value of some land had already increased tenfold since the date of original purchase[15] — and in that same year Benjamin Eby donated three-fourths of an acre, to make a total of two and one-fourth acres. All this was for the purpose of "a meeting house, a public school house, and graveyard."[16] the latter being used for Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike.

Although the Mennonite meeting-house served primarily as a worship centre, it was also used for public assemblies of all kinds, including funerals, since there was no other facility. Weddings for the most part were at the home of the bride's parents, until the turn of the century when "real churches," in distinction from meeting-houses, were built.

The typical Mennonite worship service, about two hours in duration, consisted of several hymns led by a chorister and an introductory or "opening" sermon by a junior minister, followed by silent prayer with all the congregation on their knees facing the backs of their own benches. Then came the main sermon by the bishop or another senior minister. This was "preached quietly, with few gestures if any, with dignity and sincerity, sometimes with tears, but never with a loud voice or with exuberance — that would have been considered poor taste."[17] Other ministers then testified to the soundness of the message, sometimes adding thoughts of their own. The preaching minister would then, as the congregation knelt, conclude the service with an audible prayer, then the Lord's prayer. A closing hymn and the benediction ended the service.

Eby soon realized that the traditional liturgy administered by uneducated farmer-preachers, sincere and dedicated though they might be, could sometimes become quite sterile. He set about compiling aids for a more vital experience. One of his first projects was to improve the congregational singing by shortening the songs, quickening their pace a little, and adding tunes learned from other sects in Pennsylvania. By 1836 he had published his first collection of hymns for use in Ontario churches. *Die Gemein-*

schaftliche Liedersammlung became the accepted hymnbook in the churches until the end of the century and was reprinted five times in Ontario and twice in Pennsylvania.[18]

With his compilation of hymns Eby reinforced a strong Anabaptist emphasis on hymnology, concluded in part from the fact that 130 Anabaptist hymn writers have been identified by name. Hymns were used for private devotional reading, family worship and congregational singing. For a long time the chief source of hymns was the *Ausbund*. This was a collection of hymns on the martyred heroes of the faith, and was brought to America and used for over two centuries by those congregations whose cultural and theological conservatism linked them most easily with the past. For some, the new world required a hymnody at least a little different. Both Franconia and Lancaster conferences had by 1804 produced their own hymn collections; Benjamin Eby's collection represented a synthesis of the two. His chief innovation was a further reduction in the number of stanzas. All hymns were sung in unison, four-part singing being considered too worldly.

At the same time Eby searched for adequate materials for the religious instruction of youth. This led him, in the space of 15 years, to publish two catechisms. One was borrowed in 1824 from Prussia and was first used in America. Subsequently it went through eight German and five English printings.[19] The second catechism was known as *Christliches Gemuetsgespraech* (Christian Soul-Talk or Heart-to-Heart Conversations), which had originated in Hamburg. Containing 148 questions, this catechism was reprinted five times in Germany and went through 20 editions in America, including six in English.[20] Eby himself arranged for the first English edition, which appeared shortly before his death. He may even have done the translating himself, a full generation before the language issue really troubled the churches.[21]

The catechisms were outlines of Christian doctrine, presented in question-and-answer form. Used as an instrument of instruction in early Christian times, the catechism had been rediscovered by the Reformers, including the Dutch Anabaptists among whom the catechism was most used in Prussia and Russia. It was the Elbing, Prussia, version of the catechism, first printed in 1773, which found entry among the Amish and Swiss Mennonites and which Eby promoted for use in North American churches. Used in both school and church, the catechism served the purposes of both education and evangelism. Through it the young people were taught and brought to a public confession of faith. This con-

fession was followed by baptism. Although the baptismal age tended to be close to the marriage age, some church leaders insisted that baptism was related to faith alone:

> We do not look on the age of a person. We endeavour to preach the Word as plainly, and with as much unction in our meetings as the Lord enables us to do; we seek to declare to them from the Scriptures the will of God; we keep nothing back from them but announce to them repentance toward God and faith in Christ, and, as soon as they become willing to submit to the Word of Life and desire to be baptized, we then proceed to impart to them further special instructions in the principles of non-resistance, for which purpose we use here in Canada the eighteen articles drawn up in Dordrecht, Holland; and as soon as they are sufficiently instructed and convinced that the doctrine of non-resistance is taught by the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, and are willing to live in accordance with the same; and to aid in building up the church, they are then baptized in the three holy names and received into the church, whether they have been brought up in the church or otherwise.[22]

Under Eby's leadership the congregation grew. In one year more than 50 persons were baptized into the Eby church, 40 of them being of Mennonite descent and between the ages of 17 and 24, and the others of Lutheran or Reformed descent. Non-Mennonites were constantly being attracted by Eby and received into the church after instruction and rebaptism upon confession of faith. Soon additional congregational groups were being formed under his supervision in the Waterloo County area. By mid-century, when the Mennonite population in Upper Canada had reached about 6,600, about half of which lived in Waterloo, 12 congregations had already built their first meeting-houses (see Table 3).[23] In Ebytown a frame annex with a movable partition was added soon after the first church was built in 1813. This annex accommodated additional hearers at worship on Sunday and, beginning in the winter of 1818–19, weekday classes for children.

Eby was himself the teacher, a profession decided on for him by his relatives. Observing his frail form as a youth, they had predicted that "Aus 'em Bennie gebts ka Bauer, er muss Schulmester Werre" (Bennie will never make a farmer, he must become a schoolteacher).[24] The curriculum was limited to reading, writing,

TABLE 3

MENNONITE POPULATION, CONGREGATIONS, AND MEETING-HOUSES IN UPPER CANADA COUNTIES AROUND MIDDLE OF NINETEENTH CENTURY

COUNTY	POPULATION*	CONGREGATION	DATE OF FIRST MEETING-HOUSE BUILT
Brant	26	—	—
Bruce	7	—	—
Carleton	5	—	—
Elgin	106	Port Elgin	1861
Grey	3	—	—
Haldimand	213	Rainham	1830
		Cayuga	1840
Halton	34	—	—
Huron	94	—	—
Kent	7	—	—
Lambton	51	—	—
Lincoln	713	Moyer	1810
		Mountain	1850
		Jordan	c. 1845
Middlesex	7	—	—
Norfolk	37	—	—
Ontario	182	—	—
Oxford	447	Blenheim	1849
Peel	4	—	—
Perth	116	—	—
Simcoe	27	—	—
Victoria	1	—	—
Waterloo	3,620	Berlin	1813
		Hagey	1814
		Snyder	1817
		Dettweiler	1830
		Cressman	1838
		Latschar	1839
		Conestoga	1842
		Geiger	1842
		Weber	1842
		Shantz	1849
		Waterloo	1853
		Wanner	1853
Wellington	74	Glen Allan	—
Welland	1,171	Bertie	1810
		Black Creek	1828
Wentworth	192	—	—

COUNTY	POPULATION*	CONGREGATION	DATE OF FIRST MEETING-HOUSE BUILT
York	1,033	Wideman	1817
		Schmitt	1824
		Altona	1852
		Almira	1860
		Risser	1857
		Cedar Grove	1861
Total	8,230		

* 1851-52 Census of Mennonites includes Tunkers. The latter represented about 20 per cent of the total, if the the 1841 census, when Mennonites and Tunkers were kept separate, can be considered as a guide.

spelling and arithmetic, and in Eby's school most of this was done in German. In due course Eby produced his own German spelling-reading books, *Neues Buchstabier und Lesebuch* (New Speller and Reader) and *Fibel* (Primer). For Eby the education of the young was not complete, however, without theology and church history. The lessons he prepared for this purpose, supplemental to the catechism, were published as a *Kurzgefasste Kirchengeschichte und Glaubenslehre der Taufgesinnten Christen oder Mennoniten* (Brief Church History and Doctrine of Anabaptist Christians or Mennonites).[25] With some interruptions, he taught until the 1840s, assisted when he was busiest by wandering unattached men, old soldiers as well as masons and carpenters without work in the winter months.

As the week-day schools became more public, i.e. less parochial, the need to preserve the values of the frontier educational program became a crucial issue for certain Mennonite communities. In that context the first Mennonite Sunday schools in North America arose in Upper Canada. The very first one was begun jointly in 1840 by the Wanner congregation near Hespeler and the Hagey congregation at Preston. It was conducted on alternate Sundays and in its second year boasted an attendance of 75.[26] Though not permanent — it gave way to community-wide union Sunday schools for periods of time — it anticipated the time 50 years later when Sunday schools would become a strong movement throughout the church.

Benjamin Eby's writing activities led him to pioneer in another

venture — printing and publishing — beginning in 1835. He had already involved himself in various business ventures, including the establishment of a furniture factory, although the credit for Ebytown's first industry goes to Joseph Schneider, who erected a saw-mill in 1816.[27] But Eby anticipated the development of a town and, recognizing that farming was not his first love, he became, in 1814, the first settler to sell land (56 acres) to incoming townsmen. He thereafter divided the remainder of his land among his children.[28]

The first printing press in Ebytown was established in 1835 by H. W. Peterson, an 1832 German Lutheran immigrant from Virginia who, in all probability, worshipped at Benjamin Eby's meeting-house. The bishop was one of Peterson's "oft-proved friends."[29] As one of the shareholders in both the printing press and the newspaper, *Das Kanadische Museum,* which first appeared on August 27, 1835, and which "catered particularly to the Mennonite group,"[30] Eby may very well have been the first Mennonite printer in North America.[31] One of the items in an early issue of the *Canadian Museum*, apparently placed there by Benjamin Eby, announced that a stray pig had entered the church premises and could be claimed from him upon payment of entailed expenses. Before the coming of the newspaper such announcements were made from the pulpit on Sunday morning or at other public assemblies.[32] By 1840 the Eby interests in printing were being carried on by Benjamin's son, Henry, who proceeded to publish some of his father's works. He also replaced the *Museum* with *Der Deutsche Kanadier.*

The church also served the function of community discipline until the provincial government extended its own legal arms to the frontier. If a wrong was committed, complaint was laid with the elders of the church. The offender, if found guilty, would either have to make proper amends or forfeit the privilege of church membership, the latter being a dreaded alternative.[33] One such disciplinary action involved a member whose bushel measure for purchasing purposes was larger than standard. This would give him an unfair advantage when buying commodities from his neighbours. One of the disadvantaged was a non-church member who entered his complaint with church officials, who then investigated the matter and had the wrong redressed.[34]

In Waterloo, as the number of congregations and ministers expanded, it became necessary for the bishop and his colleagues to meet on a regular basis to discuss their problems, regulate their affairs, and arrange for preaching appointments. Within a bishop's

district all the preachers essentially belonged to all the worship centres and they would circulate within practical limitations. Not all the centres, especially the small and outlying ones, could be serviced every Sunday, but efforts were made "to bring the word" to them at least once a month, if not every two weeks. So that all members might know where services were being held on a given Sunday, beginning about 1835 the "appointments" were published in advance in booklet form.

At the same time the bishops of the various districts consulted together. Before long their meetings involved the ministers and deacons. Together they formed the Canada Conference district which met annually, alternating between each of the three main areas — Niagara, Markham, and Waterloo. Thus, about 100 years after the founding of the Franconia and Lancaster conferences, the Canada district followed their example. The three conferences themselves, however, were not related except through the very rare consultations of the bishops. Similar conferences began in Virginia in 1835, Ohio in 1843, and Indiana-Michigan in 1864. The Upper Canada conferences, held in October before 1840 and afterward in May, were known as *Die grosze Zusammenkunft* (The Big Gathering).[35] In addition the separate bishop districts held semi-annual conferences.

The formation of general conferences, embracing all the Mennonite congregations and districts in North America, as well as the involvement of unordained laymen in policy decisions at any level, had to await an unknown future. Militating against the wider fellowship was not only the problem of distance but also questions of principle and practice. The primacy of the local community and congregational autonomy and the independent role of the bishop made large-scale conferring somewhat difficult even when the problem of distance was overlooked.

Most separated of all were the new Amish-Mennonite congregations that were emerging in counties west of Waterloo (see Table 4).[36] Some day in the next century they too would relate to the *grosze Zusammenkunft*, but for the time being they remained an island unto themselves. Indeed, they were often islands *among* themselves.

Some recognized the long-term survival of isolated Mennonite communities as a serious problem. Apparently Benjamin Eby and some of his colleagues recognized it on the international scale. He tried to find all those islands and to relate to them. The publication of Eby's church history and "Letters to the Mennonite Community in Upper Canada" in 1840 revealed that he, as well as

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF ORIGINAL AMISH SETTLEMENT-CONGREGATIONS

NAME*	DATE	ORIGIN	BISHOPS
Wilmot Waterloo County	1824	Pennsylvania Europe	Peter Nafziger (1825–1831) John Oesch (1831–1848)
East Zorra Oxford County also Perth	1837	Europe Wilmot	Joseph Ruby (1853–1897)
Hay Huron County	1848	Wilmot East Zorra	John Oesch (1818–1850)
Wellesley Waterloo County	1859	Europe Wilmot	John Jantzi (1859–1881)
Mornington Perth County	1874	Wilmot Europe East Zorra	Joseph Gerber (1875–1893)

* Name indicates location, since congregational settlements were unknown by the townships.

Jacob Moyer, had been in touch with the community of Mennonites in Europe. Eby surveyed for himself the extent of that community — about 260 congregations in 16 European states or regions — entered into a relationship with its leaders, and shared with them their problems. Eby's hopes of an international Mennonite fellowship, implicit in his activities, could not be considered, let alone fulfilled, for at least another 100 years.

There were other elements of internationalism and universalism in Eby's view of the church. The purpose of his church history, among other things, was to demonstrate that the Mennonites were not descended from the Muensterites but rather that they were spiritually related to the apostles. Accordingly, he traced the Anabaptist history to like-minded nonresisting Christians, including the Waldensians of Italy and numerous churches in the region of Thessalonica, which dated back to the first century and which, he said, had established contact and served communion with sixteenth-century Anabaptists both in Moravia and in the Netherlands. His universalism also made him optimistic about the church's future. He expressed the confidence that in times to come all Christians would recognize that *Kriegfuehren, Eidschwoeren, und Ehescheidung* (war, oaths, and divorce) were unacceptable to the kingdom of God, indeed that they were evil, and

that the governments of the world would then also become willing to uphold the teachings of Jesus.[37]

For most Mennonites, the main issue of the times was not a redeemed world but simply a satisfactory community. Far from speculating about the universe and hoping for international community, common congregationalists were preoccupied with their particular and local affairs and, in that preoccupation, increasingly restless. Somehow the new beginnings on virgin lands were not resulting in a kingdom of God as pure and true as the people had expected. The result was that new migrations were set in motion, not so much physical migrations as spiritual migrations into new movements of one sort or another. Some movements reached back into history for their models; others began to imitate the Protestant environment around them.

FOOTNOTES

1. J. C. Wenger, *The Mennonite Church in America* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1966), p. 79.
2. PAC, *Upper Canada Sundries,* Record Group 5, A1, Vol. 74, pp. 39259–39262, James Linsey to Lieutenant-Governor Maitland concerning a sect called "Dunkers," September 14, 1825.
3. *Ibid.*
4. PAC, *Upper Canada Sundries,* Record Group 5, A1, Vol. 173, pp. 94612–94615, Rev. F. W. Bindman to Sir Francis Bond Head, December 8, 1836.
5. Proverbs 16:33.
6. Acts 1:23–26.
7. Oscar Burkholder, "Bishop Benjamin Eby (1785–1853)," *Gospel Herald,* XXIX, April 19, 1929, pp. 61–2.
8. Letter from Jacob Gross, Bucks County, to Samuel Moyer, September 4, 1801 (CGC).
9. Hist. Mss. 1–10.1 (AMC).
10. Burkholder, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–51.
11. J. Boyd Cressman, "Eby, Benjamin," *Mennonite Encyclopedia,* II, pp. 138–9; "Historical Plaque . . ." issued by the Department of Travel and Publicity; Burkholder, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–2; M. E. Gingerich, "Mennonite Leaders of North America: Benjamin Eby (1785–1853)," *Gospel Herald,* March 2, 1965, p. 178; J. Boyd Cressman, "Bishop Benjamin Eby," *Waterloo Historical Society,* XXIX (1941), pp. 152–58.
12. Ira D. Landis, "Bishop Peter Eby of Pequea," *Mennonite Quarterly Review,* XIV (1940), pp. 41–51.
13. Landis, *op. cit.*, and Martin C. Eby, "Peter Eby," *Mennonite Encyclopedia,* II, pp. 139–40.

14. Cressman, "Eby, Benjamin," *op. cit.*, p. 138.
15. Cressman, "First Mennonite Church, Kitchener," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XIII (July 1939), pp. 172–3.
16. Cressman, *ibid.*, p. 172.
17. Wenger, *op. cit.*, p. 77. Among the Old Order this service has changed hardly at all, with the exception that some English words have crept into the German and Pennsylvania Dutch usages.
18. Burkholder, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, I, pp. 529–30.
21. Burkholder, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
22. Based on correspondence between David Sherrick, Preston, Ontario, and Baden ministers Christian Schmutz, Ulrich Hege, and Heinrich Landis (1859–1862), in CGC Archives, translated in Leslie D. Witmer, *Pioneer of Christendom of Waterloo County 1800–1967: History of the Hagey-Preston Mennonite Church* (n.p.: 1967 (?)), pp. 33–5.
23. Compiled from Census of the Canadas for 1851–52 from J. S. Hartzler and Daniel Kaufman, *Mennonite Church History* (Scottdale, Pa.: Mennonite Book and Tract Society, 1905), pp. 247–49, and from Burkholder, *op. cit.*
24. *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, I, pp. 128–39.
25. Benjamin Eby, *Kurzgefasste Kirchen-Geschichte* (Berlin, Ont.: published by the author, 1841).
26. Mrs. O. A. Snyder, "The First Mennonite Sunday School," *Waterloo Historical Society*, LI (1963), pp. 27–28.
27. Uttley, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–18.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.
29. Cressman, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, *op cit.*, p. 176.
30. Herbert K. Kalbfleisch, *The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario 1835–1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 24.
31. According to John A. Hostetler, "the first Mennonite printing house in America" was established by Joseph Funk in 1847. See John A. Hostetler, "Joseph Funk: Founder of Mennonite Publication Work 1847," *Gospel Herald*, XXXIII (December 23, 1941), pp. 830–31.
32. "Interesting Highlights . . ." (n/d. c.1950), unidentified newspaper article (CGC).
33. Miriam H. Snyder, *Hannes Schneider and His Wife Catharine Haus Schneider: Their Descendants and Times, 1534–1939* (Kitchener: published by the author, 1937), p. 246a.
34. "Interesting Highlights . . .," *op. cit.*
35. "The Mennonite Conference of Ontario" (CGC II: 5–7).
36. Gingerich, *The Amish of Canada*, p. 39.
37. Benjamin Eby, *Kurzgefasste Kirchen-Geschichte*, p. 140.