

## Provenance

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## 10. *Keeping the Young People*

*Who has the young people has the future* — J.J. KLASSEN.<sup>1</sup>

*The interest of the church in education lies in her interest in her young people* — S.F. COFFMAN.<sup>2</sup>

**M**ENNONITE SEPARATISM and denominationalism were at least partly rooted in the positive impulse towards self-preservation, through the winning and keeping of the young people. Without them, all the leaders knew, there was no continuity for the Mennonite way of life, no perpetuity for the congregational communities and their values. In the words of one elder, the best “ornament for the family, the church, and society” is a generation of young people pleasing to God.<sup>3</sup> And, while there was complete unanimity on the importance of every new generation in the Mennonite scheme of things, there was some divergence on how the loyalty of the young was to be won. Educational endeavours for children and young people, however, were general, and in the 1930s manifested especially with the Bible school movement.<sup>4</sup>

History revealed a wide spectrum of approaches to the winning of the young people. After the Great War, the Swiss in Canada and the U.S.A. knew that a rediscovery of, and a return to, the fundamentals of the faith was the highest priority. A large group of Kanadier was

convinced that escaping the nationalistic public schools of Canada was absolutely essential. The Russlaender knew that they had to flee communization in Russia. The Rudnerweider believed there was hope only in new experiences and styles of spirituality.<sup>5</sup> The Markhamer believed that the keeping of the young required just a slight adjustment to modernity. The Conference Mennonites needed a new catechism, a new hymnbook, and lots of education.<sup>6</sup> The Mennonite Brethren needed evangelism for every congregation, every year if possible, and a strict discipline. And so on.

The approaches to be taken varied with the leaders. H. H. Ewert of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute for over 40 years saw continuity only if the Mennonites produced a never-ending line of bilingual teachers, infused with religious values, for the public schools serving Mennonite children. A. H. Unruh believed the accent should be placed on Sunday school teachers and preachers who had four years of Bible school and maybe two years of Tabor College to make up a theology degree. Jacob R. Bender was convinced the time had come for the Amish to start preaching in English to the young people. Oscar Burkholder wanted the schools to teach pre-millennialism, the imminent end of the age, and nonconformity in this age as essential preparation for what was to come. J. J. Hildebrand and all "conservative" Mennonites wanted closed settlements. David Toews and all "progressive" Mennonites were convinced that adequate organizations and a full range of programs and institutions were essential. For him, the responsibilities of the Conference of which he was moderator were first of all to the children and the young people.<sup>7</sup>

The threatened loss of the young people was not a new phenomenon for the Mennonite churches, at least not for the Swiss, who had been in North America for over 200 years and in Canada over 100. The religious upheavals and realignments of the nineteenth century were in part a response to the decline in membership in Old Mennonite congregations.<sup>8</sup> In some cases, the loss was close to 50 per cent in the first generation and higher in succeeding generations.<sup>9</sup>

The Dutch Mennonites, who had arrived more recently from Russia in the 1870s and 1920s, and between those times in much smaller numbers also from the U.S.A. and Prussia, had thus far escaped serious losses, but the conditions in the past so conducive to the keeping of the young were giving way to new situations. The exclusive Mennonite colonies as self-sufficient economic, social, and

religious units were gone forever. Settlement patterns in the 1920s and 1930s scattered both newcomers and old-timers ever so thinly across the five provinces.

There was hardly a conference where the needs of young people and children weren't discussed.<sup>10</sup> Elder Daniel Loewen in 1929 made the point that the greater scattering of the Mennonites and the greater involvement with, and influences from, the wider community had resulted in the loss of many young people.<sup>11</sup> Besides, those who were leaving were among the most talented. Ambition, vocational pursuits, and social contacts were largely responsible for the losses. Loewen wanted residential centres in the cities and schools that combined secular and sacred learning. J.N. Hoepfner, a Bergthaler educator, expressed the view in 1936 that the young people outside the church were becoming a bigger problem than the young people inside the church.<sup>12</sup> Factors contributing to the loss of the young people, it was explained, were jobs far away from home, "foreign" schools, external propaganda, the social events of the wider community, the language, and the conservative stance of the older people.<sup>13</sup>

Benjamin Ewert, an itinerant minister for the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, noted that there were anywhere up to 500 post offices where there were Mennonite settlers, but that many settlements had no Sunday school, no youth society, and some not even any preaching services.<sup>14</sup>

There were not only 500 post offices but at least 500 public schools, 500 general stores, 500 elevators and blacksmith shops, 500 implement and fuel dealers, in all of which the Mennonite frontier was touching the Canadian frontier and where Canadianization was most rapid and effective.<sup>15</sup> To be sure, Mennonites resisted anglicization as they had russification, but they soon learned to acknowledge that the cultural environment here was more congenial and much less threatening, if only the children wouldn't accept English as their conversational language quite so rapidly.<sup>16</sup>

Acknowledging this fact, David Toews regretted at least once that it had not been possible to found large and closed settlements for the Mennonites.<sup>17</sup> After all, the loss of young people was a rare occurrence in the days when the congregations existed in isolated communities. Perhaps Toews and others felt instinctively that the external frontier with its assimilationist impact, and the internal fragmentation, were really not in their favour and that gradual disintegration of

North American Mennonite society, later predicted by Walter Quiring, could already be under way.<sup>18</sup>

A co-operative and federal approach to most Mennonite problems having been rejected for the time being, and flights into further isolation no longer an easy option, the fragmented Mennonites accepted the methods of the frontier in order to ward off its dangers just a little longer. All or most of the institutions which now became important in the keeping of the young people were borrowed from the outside. As will be seen, these included the Sunday school and the first boys' and girls' clubs, the Christian endeavour, literary society, and other youth movements, music festivals and singing schools, and last but not least, the Bible schools, as well as a serious look at the professional and salaried ministry. Thus, the effort to keep the young people meant greater dependence on institutions to reinforce the Mennonite way of life.<sup>19</sup>

### *Children and Sunday Schools*

None of the approaches to the keeping of the young people could overlook the emphasis on the home, the most fundamental of Mennonite institutions, and on the role of parents, especially the mothers. Children, said one church elder, had to be wanted by the parents, offspring they had prayed about to the Lord. And children should receive an education of the heart (*Herzensbildung*), which the parents alone could provide.<sup>20</sup> Education, he said, should consist of more than just "pounding knowledge into the heads of the young."<sup>21</sup> All the schools were emphasizing the acquisition of knowledge, but education (*Bildung*) of the heart was as important as knowledge (*Wissen*) for the head. The enlightenment of the head should not leave the heart empty. The best and the most successful means of guiding children and young people aright was the right example provided in the home.<sup>22</sup> Hence, the foremost contribution of the woman to the Mennonite society was as a mother who followed such biblical examples as Jochebeth the mother of Moses, Hanna the mother of Eli, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Lois the mother of Timothy.<sup>23</sup>

Such mothers who themselves are children of God, and whose main concern it is to raise their children also as children of God, will do their greatest service to the congregation through

their children. Mothers are the natural educators of a people. No school and no church can replace them.<sup>24</sup>

One of the institutions already strong among some of the Swiss congregations in Ontario, notably the Old Mennonites and the New Mennonites, was the Sunday school, a most useful supplement to the training in the home. Although the first Sunday schools had been held in the 1840s, they were not quickly or universally accepted.<sup>25</sup> At that time, the Sunday school was supported by some and opposed by others because it pointed to a language transition, to innovative ideas and practices, and to the use of educational materials other than the Bible. Opinion on the matter remained divided in the church, until the 1889 separation of the Old Order Mennonites from the Old Mennonites ended the debate. The first Sunday school convention in the Old Mennonite Church in North America was held in Kitchener a year later, and in 1916 the Ontario Mennonite Sunday School Conference was organized with its own constitution, yet it was responsible to the parent body, the Old Mennonite Conference of Ontario.

The purpose of the organization was “to promote, unify, and safeguard our Sunday school interests.”<sup>26</sup> All members of congregations, including those of “sister conferences of like faith,” were members. An annual meeting, usually held on a weekend late in August or early in September, dealt with such themes as the Sunday school itself, young people’s Bible meetings, mission work, and the Christian life. Typical topics were those in the 1920 program: the benefits of total abstinence, contending for the faith, how the Sunday school should affect the growth of the church, influences which the Sunday school should counteract, the superintendent’s responsibility to the Sunday school, and the value of missionary education.<sup>27</sup>

While the Sunday schools themselves were quite limited in terms of the time devoted to them — at most an hour a week — their overall impact was diverse. By the mid-1930s, for instance, the Mennonite Conference of Ontario counted 29 such schools with an enrolment of nearly 4,000.<sup>28</sup> According to Oscar Burkholder, it was a movement of multiple influences, including the promotion of good literature through the establishment of libraries, the advancement of missions, and the acceptance of systematic giving.<sup>29</sup>

By that time, the neighbouring Amish Mennonite Sunday School

Conference, first established in 1922, had become a parallel institution, which co-operated with the Old Mennonite Sunday School Conferences by conducting their annual sessions on alternate Labour Day weekends.<sup>30</sup> As with the Old Mennonites, so also with the Amish Mennonites the Sunday school found its earliest acceptance as a German-language school.<sup>31</sup> Only later were lesson helps permitted, and only in the 1930s did the English language gain entrance. For at least a generation after its inception, the Amish Sunday School Conference was "the most popular and best attended meeting of the Amish in Ontario."<sup>32</sup> The greatest problem was to accommodate the crowds, and at times large tents were rented for this purpose.

The Sunday school provided the avenue for greater lay participation in the work of the church. Lay participants in turn demanded an innovative leadership, which then stood in sharp contrast to the ordained leaders, who tended to be more conservative, at least when performing their official duties. In the context of new institutions, however, even bishops allowed themselves more latitude than when they performed in their usual settings, in official roles, and in traditional functions. According to the Amish Mennonite historian O. Gingerich, "The Sunday School was the 'cutting edge' of the church beginning in the 1920s and continuing to the 1940s."<sup>33</sup> Through the Sunday school the evils of alcohol and tobacco were taught. Missions was another program that was stimulated by the Sunday school, as was the participation of the Amish of Ontario in the Old Mennonite General Conference.<sup>34</sup>

In the church conferences to which the Russlaender allied themselves, the Sunday school, already well established, became with their arrival the all-important vehicle for formally inculcating religious knowledge and values. The Russlaender felt keenly the loss of the day schools under their control in the colonies of Russia. What they could not lose was the special education those schools had represented. Three arenas were exploited to make up for the felt deficiencies of the public school. Wherever possible, the Russlaender influenced the recruitment of qualified Mennonite teachers so that extra classes in religion and language could supplement the required curriculum. Also wherever possible, half-day Saturday schools were instituted to teach primarily the language, but also religion and music. And alongside the Saturday schools were the Sunday schools, an institution nonexistent in Russia because religious training had been accomplished in the day schools.

In the Conference of Mennonites, the first comprehensive look at the Sunday school, undertaken in 1933, included a review of source materials and of Sunday school organization and administration.<sup>35</sup> The Conference that year adopted a resolution recommending the creation of a committee to prepare a unified Sunday school curriculum and to recommend appropriate Sunday school literature. Sunday school conventions, children's festivals, and meetings of Sunday school workers were commended, and the missions committee was encouraged to advance the Sunday school also in the small and scattered groups.

The recommendations were implemented immediately. In Saskatchewan, for instance, a convention attended by approximately 100 teachers was held in November of 1934 and followed by a short course in the summer of 1935, all of it geared to the implementation of the official curriculum.<sup>36</sup> This included texts for five age groups, six and under, seven to ten, eleven to fourteen, fifteen to seventeen, and adults.<sup>37</sup> Three of the Russlaender educators, P.A. Rempel, J.G. Rempel, and J.H. Janzen, were encouraged to produce supplementary curriculum materials, which all of them proceeded to do.

Among the Northern District Mennonite Brethren the Sunday school was on the front line of the struggle for the maintenance of the fundamentalist faith and the confirmation of the children in that faith. There it was reported, on the authority of the *Moody Monthly*, that the Sunday schools could be wrongly used to inculcate doubt rather than faith and that, in fact, there were in Canada already 1,700 Sunday schools "teaching not religion but promoting Communist propaganda."<sup>38</sup> The Sunday school also stood first in a wide array of church activities designed to evangelize the children and young people.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps nowhere else were the annual statistics of such activity recorded more carefully to reveal the progress or the lack of it from year to year than among the Mennonite Brethren.

Thus, in 1935, the Conference knew that of 57 reporting congregations, 56 had Sunday schools with 306 classes and 4,152 pupils, that, additionally, 45 had a *Jugendverein* (Christian Endeavour) with a total membership of 3,215, that 39 had choirs with 820 singers, that 32 congregations had conducted visits to every home with the help of evangelists, and that the average member gave \$3.06 for home, city, and foreign missions and relief, and that the congregations altogether had 124 ministers, 72 deacons, and 103 co-workers.<sup>40</sup>



Here and there, Sunday school activity was supplemented by organizations which anticipated the Kindergarten and the boys' and girls' clubs of a later day. The first known Kindergarten schools were in Steinbach in 1923 and in North Kildonan in 1938.<sup>41</sup> The North-West Conference of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ created a "junior missionary band" as an auxiliary to the women's missionary circle. Members were encouraged to contribute five cents a month.<sup>42</sup> In Vineland, a young men's society (*Juenglingsverein*) for boys 13 to 17 was begun under the motto "Faithfulness to God, truthfulness before everybody, and a morally clean life."<sup>43</sup> Meetings were held weekly in the homes of participants with music and male choir activities and the introduction of such books as *What Every Boy Should Know* by Sylvanus Stall, a doctor of divinity. Sports, retreats, swimming, acrobatics, and overnight camp-outs were designed to help boys to become strong, healthy, and useful to mankind; to avoid that which harmed body and soul; to remain loyal, conscientious, and obedient at all times; and to become good citizens of Canada, while retaining and using the German language.

#### *Youth Activity and Character Education*

While the Sunday school movements were very similar in all the Mennonite groups, the only major difference being the times in which the English language was introduced, the churchly activities for young people were focused differently among the Swiss and the Dutch, though both wanted to counteract a situation in which young people had no place at all in the church until the day of baptism.<sup>44</sup> Among the former, the Young People's Bible Meeting (YPBM) was central in the 1930s, among the latter the *Jugendverein*.

The YPBMs grew out of the revivals in the 1890s and the concern already at that time "to engage the interests of the young people."<sup>45</sup> One answer that emerged lay in the introduction by the young people themselves of informal midweek meetings in homes through which "young people found a new contact with the church" and at which they had the opportunity to deliver messages of their own. After five years, the Conference leaders agreed that these "edification meetings" were harmless or useful enough to be held in the meeting houses. About another decade later, the Conference "lent encouragement" by appointing an organizer to extend the program into all

communities, to prepare a systematic study of Bible books and topics, to organize an exchange of speakers in neighbouring communities, and also to allow occasional substitutions for Sunday morning preaching appointments. In due course, it was said that

aside from Sunday School, no form of activity has commended itself so generally and so beneficially to our young people's spiritual development.<sup>46</sup>

So effective was the Young People's Bible Meeting movement in capturing the interest of the young that the Amish too accepted the idea.<sup>47</sup> It was Jacob R. Bender, the young minister in East Zorra at Tavistock, who initiated the activity among the Amish, who then also followed their Mennonite cousins in the sponsorship of weekend young people's institutes or conferences.<sup>48</sup> But the Amish too discovered that the YPBMs, like the Sunday school, were an educational medium that conveyed the message of innovation and a reinterpretation of the tradition.<sup>49</sup> It was important, therefore, to provide some guidance for these activities.

The standards and norms of the YPBM were set forth by the Old Mennonite General Conference and included: adequate organization to carry on the work, accurate records of duties performed, instructional programs for both "saved and unsaved," growth of the Christian character, scriptural social standards, more proficient and spiritual song services, greater activity in all lines of Christian service, fuller consecration to Christ, systematic and regular Bible study, and full co-operation with the church, the Sunday school, and the home.<sup>50</sup> Provincial help for such activities came from the Young People's Educational Committee, created by the Mennonite Conference of Ontario in 1938 by merging the young people's and educational problems committees.<sup>51</sup>

A popular form of youth activity, which was promoted in numerous Canadian Mennonite communities in the inter-war period, was the literary society, a community organization for the cultural, literary, and social development of the members.<sup>52</sup> A common feature of the European and American cultural scene in the nineteenth century, the literary societies entered Mennonite congregations via the colleges and academies, first in the United States and then in Canada. Their chief function was to satisfy cultural and

recreational needs among the young at a time when they were forbidden to participate in activities of the world but weren't yet attracted by the religious offerings of the church.

As was the custom of the day, no literary society, and indeed few other organizations, existed without a constitution to set forth its purposes and procedures, its objects and rules.<sup>53</sup> The purposes of a literary society might include: the development of well-balanced character — mentally, morally, spiritually, and physically, the training of its members in the correct use and mode of thought and expression, or more specifically, the training of its members in public speaking, in the use of argument, parliamentary law, and song. A society was guided by a motto such as “master thyself” or “be thy real self, speak thy true thought, and strive for that which ennobles.”

In addition to the usual offices of president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, there could also be an usher, an attorney, and a critic, all of which roles were well defined. Undoubtedly they reflected neglected needs in the community. The usher was responsible for appropriate physical arrangements for a meeting, including heating, lighting, and ventilation. The attorney was the expert in “parliamentary law,” meaning *Robert's Rules of Order*, and on the constitution. It was the duty of the critic to criticize the general conduct of the meetings and the rendition of the programs, and to make any suggestions for the improvement of the society.

The activities of a literary society could include debates, drama, music, presentation of essays and poetry, as well as fun and games, including organized sports. The primary focus, however, was not on the social and recreational, at least not officially, but on the intellectual and educational. Since the literary society found its place in the Mennonite community as a stopgap between church activity, which was narrowly defined, and the offerings of the “world,” which were frowned upon as inappropriate for Mennonite young people, if not actually off bounds to them, it was clear that the societies were treading on delicate ground. Most literary leaders did not want to cause trouble with the church, while responding to the needs and the interests of young people. Sometimes a specific clause in the constitution made the literary society subordinate to the wishes of the church, as follows:

All organizations, memberships, and policies of the society shall be subject to the advice and correction of the church council.<sup>54</sup>

Various attempts were made within the societies themselves to reinforce the basic notion that the idealism of the literary societies was consonant with the goals of the church and helpful rather than detrimental.<sup>55</sup> The pursuit of ideals in everyday life, the building of character, the training and development of the talents of young people, all helped to “instill Christian principles and ideals” and thus “to serve a noble and useful purpose.” But certain “dangers and tendencies” were also recognized. The “past record seems to prove,” said one essayist defending the societies, “that unless there is competent church oversight, they degenerate into mere entertainment and foolishness.”<sup>56</sup>

The prevention of degeneration, it was pointed out, lay in the first place with “suitable programs” which need not be limited to “religious material” but which could be “historical, practical, biographical, agricultural, musical, and inspirational.” It was important that they “give a true conception of life” which the “world’s entertainment” did not do. The literary societies were also counselled to promote “lofty social standards” and to “avoid all that is questionable.” The maintenance of “a spiritual atmosphere in all exercises” was likewise important because “intellectual development” was “of value only when it is grounded in Christian religion.” In all things, excellence was the watchword:

Whatever we undertake we should try to do well. Aim to excel, not with a vain motive, but with a noble purpose to make good. In a literary society, the use of good English and choice of words should receive attention. In public speaking, by address, essay, reading, or debate, there are many faults and individual weak points to overcome. Notice should be taken of correct articulation, inflection, positive and general delivery. In music we should aim to have proper interpretation of songs as well as good renditions.<sup>57</sup>

The societies did not always succeed in satisfying the church fathers. In the opinion of the latter, the societies had to curtail “the social and the entertaining” and emphasize “the truly literary

endeavour" in accordance with the constitutions of the literary societies.<sup>58</sup> While literary societies opened the door to fun and games among the Old Mennonites, this was less the case among the Amish, where a freer social life had been part of the cultural tradition for years. The Amish literary societies, first introduced in East Zorra in 1934, were an intellectual supplement to a social pattern already in existence. As Gingerich has written:

It must also be recognized that during this time traditional singings, parties, and dances continued among Amish young people. However, with more and more of the cultural barriers of language and dress removed, more young people participated in non-Amish young people's activities. These included such things as community dances, movies, and sports. Although such activities were not sanctioned by the church, they were nonetheless practised.<sup>59</sup>

An event somewhat comparable to the founding of literary societies among the young people was the emergence of reading circles among the women. Obviously designed to complement the physical and social activities of the sewing circles, the reading circles were designed as centres of dialogue and intellectual discussion. Their common ground was the missionary impulse. If, on the one hand, the sewing circles were determined to alleviate physical need through articles of clothing and offerings, then, on the other hand, the reading circles broadened the understanding and lifted the horizons. The Ontario reading circle constitution defined the purpose thus:

In order to bring within reach the best literature, describing the actual conditions and problems and movements that are now going on in the mission field. . . .<sup>60</sup>

The reading circles or clubs, with a membership of 12 each, collected 60 cents per member annually, enough to buy 12 books at an average cost of 50 cents plus expenses. The clubs each had a librarian and together they had a general librarian through whom the purchase and circulation of books was co-ordinated. Such books were selected from a list of 72 dealing with various countries, religion, the Christian faith, and the missionary task. Included were J.S. Woodsworth's *Strangers Within Our Gates* and Sherk's *Pen Pictures of Early Pioneer Life in Upper Canada*.<sup>61</sup>

Literary societies also flourished among the Dutch. Indeed, the Russlaender brought that institution with them from Russia, where both German and Russian authors had been read with enthusiasm. These societies sometimes took on the characteristics of a seminar, with written reports or papers. When preparations for emigration were under way, the societies had turned to works of English literature, Shakespeare included.<sup>62</sup> Initially, many of their literary societies in Canada had no direct link with the churches or conferences. In some places, a voluntary and a church-sponsored literary society existed side by side—the one reading literary works and the other primarily devotional materials. As the churches gained more and more control, they radically changed and eventually destroyed the literary societies.<sup>63</sup>

Among the Dutch the one institution which had become universal in those Kanadier and Russlaender organizations with Sunday evening services was the *Jugendverein* (literally meaning youth society but also specifically referring to Sunday evening events; the North American Protestant parallel institution was the Christian Endeavour). The Endeavour or *Jugendverein* was not uniquely Mennonite in that it had a general Christian history similar to that of the Sunday school.

The purpose of the *Jugendverein* was also set forth in a constitution. It included the deepening and strengthening of the Christian-religious life of young people and the elevation of the cultural-social standard.<sup>64</sup> The means to accomplish this purpose were religious presentations, choir singing and music, educational lectures, literary readings and dramatizations, and the establishment of a library. The *Jugendverein* and the literary society resembled each other in that both were characterized by variety programs, the former held on Sunday evenings with more of a religious character and the latter on weekday evenings with more of a secular orientation.

All persons of both sexes, 40 years of age and under, persons not necessarily church members but leading “an unoffensive life,” were viewed as active participants in the *Jugendverein* and qualified to vote on all important issues. Those over 40 were honorary members, qualified neither to vote nor to be voted in. The administration of the *Jugendverein* was by an elected committee of three, plus the ministers, who were “obligated” to participate in all substantial discussions.

Some *Jugendvereine* were more active and influential than others. At the Main Centre Mennonite Brethren Church, for instance, the *Jugendverein* gave hundreds of programs and all meetings were recorded in great detail.<sup>65</sup> Music had an important place and over the years “many solos, duets, trios, quartets, class sings, choir, family sings, and instrumental numbers were presented.” Testimonies also were common and one time “so many shared in the testimony period that they ran out of time, so a motion was made to close the service and continue with testimonies in the following program.” In Winnipeg, the Schoenwieser *Jugendverein* divided the young people into groups to assume responsibility for various undertakings like song festivals, oratories, drama, retreats, Sunday evening programs (nine every year), and social gatherings with debates, music, and games.<sup>66</sup> At Leamington, the young people met three Sundays a month. One Sunday was devoted to choral singing, a second to presentations on various themes, and a third to a variety of forms.<sup>67</sup>

The *Jugendverein* served many uses. It represented in most places the institution of greatest freedom for involvement. Innovation was not frowned upon. New talent was discovered. New projects like church libraries were undertaken. When Russlaender congregations of different denominations went their separate ways, it was often the *Jugendverein* that still brought them together once a month. Most important was the bridge-building between the generations.<sup>68</sup> The *Jugendverein* was the point where family and congregation came together, because the talent nights, which many *Jugendvereine* actually were, began in the family with music-making and mini-worship events.

Many families practised family devotions once or twice a day. These included a Scripture reading, prayer, and sometimes hymn-singing. Some families utilized the *Abreiszkalender*, a devotional calendar with detachable daily readings.<sup>69</sup> The involvement of family members in such activities carried over into the *Jugendverein* and vice versa. Many a Mennonite preacher, Sunday school teacher, or choir director was first stimulated in the context of the *Jugendverein* and family devotions.

The first makings of a young people’s movement, run by the young people and for the young people, occurred in Saskatoon in 1938 when, for the first time, the triennial assembly of the General Conference Mennonite Church met in Canada.<sup>70</sup> At that time, it was recognized that the Christian Endeavour Societies (*Jugendvereine*)

had outlived themselves in a certain sense. They were still useful as a church institution but not so much for keeping the young people, their interest and their loyalty. The average age and interest of *Jugendverein* participants were moving upward and were way beyond the teens. Now a constitution for a North American Young People's Union (YPU) was proposed with action thereon to follow three years later.

Inspired by the Saskatoon event, various Saskatchewan young people became impatient, and, before the continental YPU officially came into being, they were working on a youth organization for Saskatchewan, as a division of the YPU, and also on a Canadian Mennonite Youth Organization.<sup>71</sup> The new organization was necessary, said Heinrich Friesen, a Rosthern area youth leader, because of the young people who were staying and those who were leaving.<sup>72</sup> Those involved in choir, Sunday school, and the *Jugendverein* needed new ways of working. And something had to be done also about those who were going to the cities and either leaving the church altogether and going along with the world, or seeking a vigorous faith and spiritual life elsewhere because they couldn't find it among the Mennonites. The youth movement, said Peter Froese, a recent Rosthern Bible school graduate, needed a more aggressive promotion of musical activity, youth libraries, youth conferences, summer Bible schools, Bible courses, and above all, a youth publication to help young people to develop their character and to find their way in the world.<sup>73</sup>

The emphasis on character-building during this period in Mennonite history was not limited to the *Jugendvereine* and the literary societies. Perhaps nowhere did *Charakterbildung* have a sharper and more consistent focus than in the church-sponsored schools, as for instance at Gretna. There, G.H. Peters, the new principal, made the disciplined life, for the individual and the institution, both the cause and the effect of excellence in Christian education.<sup>74</sup> For him, character education for all young people, be they Christians or non-Christians, was the answer to juvenile delinquency and the undisciplined nature of young people generally, whose moral deviations and criminal offences filled the pages of the newspapers.

Good character, however, was not easily achieved, he explained. It was not just a matter of plucking ripe fruit from a tree. Many years of diligent effort were required to strengthen the will, to overcome temptation, and to become master of one's self. The pursuit of



idealism was a lifelong task, even though good habits and good example were immensely useful in confirming a life marked by “the tendency to act on the basis of the Christian ethic.”<sup>75</sup>

Character training included greater respect for parents and teachers, and for older and higher-ranking persons generally, because too many of the former customs were fading. Children and young people were becoming very rude. Not only did they involve themselves in adult conversations, but they took it upon themselves to interrupt and correct not only the guests but also their own parents. Even teachers were viewed by children as being on their own level. According to one minister’s lament:

But we are in a free America, where everybody is Pete, Jake, and John. This might be alright for the world, but we are Christians . . . no one will regret an education which leads to respect and honour . . .<sup>76</sup>

### *Music, Choirs, and Choristers*

Another strong focus of youth activity was music, mostly vocal but, as time went on, including also the instrumental. While the Russlaender were not the pioneers of musical activity, their coming meant a vast acceleration of singing soon after their arrival. Four out of the five most outstanding leaders in the field, who made the big difference across Canada, were Russlaender: K.H. Neufeld, David H. Paetkau, F.C. Thiessen, and John Konrad, with Ben Horch, who was of the Mennonite Brethren with a Lutheran background.

Neither the Swiss Mennonites nor the first Dutch Mennonites in Canada, namely the Kanadier, had been a very fertile field for the cultivation of music. Both groups were in the beginning opposed to musical instruments, to four-part singing, and to special musical groups, including choirs, quartets, and the like. In the 1930s, this was still the case among the most conservative among them, namely the Old Order among the Swiss and the Old Colony among the Dutch.<sup>77</sup> In the west it was the late Kanadier who introduced musical innovations, with the encouragement of people like David Toews, who loved to quote a favourite German saying:

When there is singing, feel free to settle down; people of ill will have nothing to sing about.<sup>78</sup>

The sense that musical activity was useful as an educational force was general. To the foremost promoters, among them H.H. Ewert in Manitoba and Aron Sawatsky in Saskatchewan, music was the right means of winning young people and of building character. While not a musically gifted man himself, Ewert believed that musical training was part of teacher education. He encouraged the development of choirs and introduced a triad of popular song books already being used by the Mennonites in Russia, namely *Heimatklaenge*, *Frohe Botschaft*, and *Glaubensstimme*, available also as a *Dreiband* (three volumes in one).<sup>79</sup> It was among the Bergthaler and the Brethren where choirs were first formed, gospel songs first introduced, and the use of musical instruments first begun.<sup>80</sup>

In Saskatchewan, Aron Sawatsky, a 1903 immigrant from Russia, had amply prepared the ground before he moved to California in 1923, the year of the coming of the first Russlaender.<sup>81</sup> Under his leadership, a choir directors' association operated among the Mennonite Brethren from 1906 to 1923. The association published *Saenger-Bote*, a monthly magazine, which provided information on new hymnbooks and other musical events, and also reprints from German music periodicals. This fact came to the attention of the Canadian censor during the Great War, and publication ceased at the time, never again to be resumed.<sup>82</sup>

Few of the immigrants made as great an impact on the masses of young people as did K.H. Neufeld, "the flamboyant, theatrical . . . man from Winkler."<sup>83</sup> He became the "great 'popularizer' of lay choir singing throughout the whole of Canada."<sup>84</sup> No sooner had he arrived in Canada than he was organizing choirs and transforming the annual school festival at Gretna into a full-scale choral festival.<sup>85</sup> In 1932, he organized the southern Manitoba music festival competition, sponsored by his Winkler male-voice choir, which itself performed regularly on a Winnipeg radio station.<sup>86</sup> The biggest festival southern Manitoba had ever seen was the Ascension Day performance in 1938 by 450 singers before more than 4,000 people.<sup>87</sup>

His greatest contributions to the young people, however, were his regular cross-country tours to conduct workshops for conductors, to put together area-wide mass choirs, and to stage massive people's song fests. Mostly his work benefited the Conference Mennonites, whose musical activity was not as advanced as that of the Mennonite

Brethren.<sup>88</sup> Himself from the Brethren, Neufeld found the Conference Mennonites more open to his ways. According to one of Neufeld's contemporaries, his dramatic, often theatrical, approach to music and his casual references to opera and other worldly institutions were too much for his more pious brethren.<sup>89</sup> But the young people loved him, and the starved-for-musical-leadership Conference tolerated him.

Further musical help from the Mennonite Brethren for the Conference Mennonites came through F.C. Thiessen, whose first posting in Canada was at the German-English Academy.<sup>90</sup> While Neufeld had popularized the cantata, F.C. Thiessen defended "Kunst Musica" against considerable opposition and taught Mennonites to sing Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*, Mendelssohn's oratorio *St. Paul*, and Andreas Romberg's *Das Lied von der Glocke*. All of that Thiessen had brought with him from Russia, where his last contribution had been to tell the ill-fated 1925 Conference of Mennonite leaders in Moscow that the congregations had to take up the musical mandate once carried by the schools. It was an appropriate message also for Canada:

As long as we could cultivate sacred music in our schools we did not have to be concerned that our children would not make the musical heritage of our congregation their own. Now, when the wonderful chorales can no longer be practised in the schools, things are quite different. If the congregation does not now encourage the singing of the chorales in a special way, then we may be sure that the next generation will lose this treasure, and that would be unforgivable. What was until now the work and privilege of the teacher, has become the duty of the congregation.<sup>91</sup>

Thiessen's successor at the Academy, David H. Paetkau, strengthened what Thiessen had begun.<sup>92</sup> His Mendelssohn choir was known throughout Saskatchewan and Alberta for its performances of major choral works, and even more enduring were his collections of choral works, eventually published in a two-volume *Liederalbum*, which satisfied the needs of many Mennonite choirs as long as they retained the German language.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to Winkler and Rosthern, Winnipeg also excelled as a centre of musical activity, whose radius touched Mennonites from Ontario to British Columbia, largely owing to the work of Ben

Horch and John Konrad. The former of Lutheran parentage and the latter an immigrant, both were basically studio men, but they too directed workshops for conductors and also staged mass choirs. Among the Mennonite Brethren, Horch was the outstanding leader of courses (*Kurseleiter*).<sup>94</sup> Konrad, who became a famous violin teacher in charge of his own school of music, encouraged young people to take up the study of musical instruments. His instrumental ensemble founded in 1935 laid the foundation for the Mennonite Symphony Orchestra. A year later, he initiated the annual passion-day performance for at least two decades of Karl Loewe's *Das Suenopfer des neuen Bundes*.

Among the Swiss, both Mennonite and Amish, the cultivation of music and song was not through instrumental ensembles or choir festivals but in the context of congregational singing and, at an even more popular and less formal level, in the so-called singing schools.<sup>95</sup> Singing in the congregation was viewed as a spiritual exercise, as a testimony to the praise and glory of God. Hence, singing as entertainment or as performance or as the expression of an art form was minimized and frowned upon, if not altogether forbidden. Consequently, there were no congregational choirs, smaller groups, or even soloists, and no pianos or organs; instead there were whole congregations singing a cappella under the direction of a chorister, for whom also enthusiastic singing was more important than artistic singing.<sup>96</sup> Male quartets, and other such groups, were also discouraged.

This emphasis on congregational singing exclusively was rooted in the Anabaptist principles of simplicity in worship and the priesthood of all believers. In the same way that the trained and supported ministry was resisted, so also there was opposition to selectivity of participation in the musical portion of congregational worship. As Harold S. Bender, in his generation the dean of North American Mennonite scholars, wrote:

The emphasis upon the preaching of the Word and the response of the congregation, coupled with the priesthood of all believers as over against the special functioning of the priests and the clerical assistants, and the opposition to liturgy, particularly in Latin, resulted in a strong emphasis upon congregational singing and opposition to clerical or lay choirs in the regular worship, which has continued to the present day.<sup>97</sup>

The rejection of musical instruments as aids to worship was supported both from the Bible and from history.<sup>98</sup> “Jesus did not use, or sanction the use” and there was “no evidence that his apostles used instrumental music.” Such biblical proof-texting was very selective, of course, and references to instruments in the Psalms and Revelations were conveniently ignored. After the days of the apostles, it was said, the church didn’t use instruments in worship “for several hundred years” and “in all the ages since the days of the apostles the most pious men have opposed the use of instruments in worship.” Among the men used as authorities were John Wesley and C.H. Spurgeon, two famous preachers who were quoted as saying:

Wesley: I have no objection to instruments being in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen.

Spurgeon: We should like to see all the pipes of the organs in our nonconformist places of worship either ripped open or compactly filled with concrete. The human voice is so transcendently superior to all that winds or strings can accomplish that it is a shame to degrade its harmonies by association with blowing and scraping.<sup>99</sup>

The categorical disallowance of instruments meant, of course, that the congregations and their choristers had to work all the harder at the task of improving congregational singing so as to reduce the temptation to turn to instruments.<sup>100</sup> Choristers were encouraged to attend church schools, short-term Bible schools, and singing schools to supplement that which could be learned in the home and in the public schools.<sup>101</sup> The good work of the last “in training boys and girls in singing and in appreciation for good music” was recognized, but “the worship type of songs” were seldom touched. A new *Church Hymnal* with “a better grade of music” and songs that had “musical as well as poetical merit” was published as a further contribution to the winning of the young people without instruments in the church.<sup>102</sup>

There were variations, of course, in this tradition. In Old Order communities it was the minister who, in announcing and starting a hymn, would fill part of the function assumed by the choristers. And in New Order communities, like the Mennonite Brethren in Christ or Stirling Avenue Church, musical instruments and choirs were introduced not long after those groups separated from the Old Mennonites.<sup>103</sup>

Among the Old Mennonites and Amish Mennonites, the singing schools, as they came into use, pointed in the direction of greater musical sophistication. In some sense, they performed a function similar to the literary societies, for here was a striving for greater excellence and also a context for innovation.<sup>104</sup> In the singing schools the participants learned the rudiments of music as well as improved interpretation of the hymns.<sup>105</sup> The activity of the schools was enhanced by special publications, including John D. Brunk's *Educational Vocal Studies*, in use for many years.<sup>106</sup> The *Studies* included graded exercises for elementary sight-singing, a variety of religious and folk songs cited for young people's groups, as well as statements about the rudiments of music and voice culture. The sight-reading of the singing schools helped the congregation to sing in four parts and thus made a choir of the entire congregation.

The purpose of the singing schools was to improve good singing on earth in anticipation of "singing perfectly" the song of Moses and of the Lamb in heaven. The cultivation "of one of the richest of the divine endowments of man" was also seen as an antidote for the "light, sensational, spectacular, demoralizing if not sacrilegious music"<sup>107</sup> of "this jazz age."<sup>108</sup> Then also, it was important that "the Creator's highest mechanism of music," the human voice, not be supplanted by musical instruments. As D.H. Bender wrote in introducing the *Studies*:

The only way to maintain the true chorus of the human voice, attuned to melody and expression, in our homes, in social life, in our educational institutions, and in our churches and missions, is to wisely encourage, carefully guard, intelligently foster and heartily support every rightful move made in the direction of the advancement of good singing.<sup>109</sup>

### *Bible Schools and Evangelism*

An important institution for musical activity among both the Swiss and the Dutch at this time was the Bible school.<sup>110</sup> The Bible school movement among Canadian Mennonites did not begin in the 1930s, but no decade witnessed greater attention to that educational medium. Whereas schools founded in the 1920s and earlier had as their primary focus the training of ministers and other Christian workers, the emphasis in the 1930s appeared to be not only on

TABLE 32<sup>111</sup>

## A CHRONOLOGY OF CANADIAN MENNONITE BIBLE SCHOOLS

DATE	PLACE	NAME	AFFILIATION
1907	Kitchener, Ont.	Ontario Mennonite Bible School†	OM
1913	Herbert, Sask.	Herbert Bible School†	MB
1913	Markham, Ont.	Winter Bible School	OM
1921	Didsbury, Alta.	Mountain View Bible School†	MBC
1925	Winkler, Man.	Peniel Bible School†	MB
1927	Hepburn, Sask.	Bethany Bible School†	MB
1928	Dalmeny, Sask.	Tabor Bible School	MB
1929	Gretna, Man.	Elim Bible School†	CM
1929	Coaldale, Alta.	Coaldale Bible School†	MB
1930	Winnipeg, Man.	Winnipeg Bible School	MB
1931	Yarrow, B.C.	Elim Bible School†	MB
1931	Steinbach, Man.	Steinbach Bible School‡	MB
1932	Glenbush, Sask.	Glenbush Bible School	MB
1932	Rosthern, Sask.	Rosthern Bible School†	CM
1932	Rosemary, Alta.	Rosemary Bible School	CM
1932	Tavistock, Ont.	Winter Bible School	AM
1933	La Glace, Alta.	La Glace Bible School	MB
1933	Gem, Alta.	Bethesda Bible Institute	MB
1933	New Hamburg, Ont.	Winter Bible School	AM
1934	Alberta	Winter Bible School	OM
1934	Winnipeg, Man.	Mennonite Bible School	CM
1934	Wembley, Alta.	Wembley Bible School	CM
1935	Springridge, Alta.	Springridge Bible School	CM
1935	Coaldale, Alta.	Mennonite Bible School†	CM
1936	Leamington, Ont.	Leamington Bible School	CM
1936	Vineland, Ont.	Vineland Bible School	CM
1936	Swift Current, Sask.	Swift Current Bible Institute†	CM
1936	Didsbury, Alta.	Menno Bible Institute†	CM
1937	St. Elizabeth, Man.	St. Elizabeth Bible School	CM
1938	Virgil, Ont.	M.B. Bible Institute	MB
1938	Sardis, B.C.	Greendale Bible School	MB
1939	Coghlan, B.C.	Bethel Bible Institute†	CM
1939	Countess, Alta.	Countess Bible School†	CM
1939	Drake, Sask.	Drake Bible School†	CM
1939	Sardis, B.C.	Mennonite Bible School†	CM
1939	Yarrow, B.C.	Mennonite Bible School†	CM
1940	Kitchener, Ont.	Emmanuel Bible College†	MBC

† Indicates schools still in existence in 1940.

‡ The Steinbach school became an interdenominational school after a few years.

keeping the young people but also on keeping them grounded in the Mennonite faith and way of life. Nearly 30 new schools appeared during that decade, some, to be sure, for only brief periods of time (Table 32).

The movement was preceded and accompanied by a Bible school movement in Canada generally.<sup>112</sup> This movement, which peaked in the two decades after 1930, had its antecedents in a similar movement in the U.S.A. and such schools as the Moody Bible Institute and in a few Bible schools established in Canada prior to the 1930s, including Toronto Bible College in 1894.<sup>113</sup> Most of the Bible schools arose in the theological milieu of the fundamentalist controversy and were viewed as bastions of the faith not only in opposition to secular education but also over against those church colleges which combined biblical and theological education with the liberal arts, perhaps even with the natural sciences, and which were viewed as "hotbeds" of religious liberalism and modernism. It followed that the Bible schools left the arts and sciences alone.

In terms of appealing to young people, the schools capitalized on their idealism and their readiness to brave new frontiers, usually missionary frontiers, both domestic and foreign. The schools also opened the doors of educational opportunity for many who had dropped out before completing high school, or even elementary grades. The schools were small enough, safe enough, short enough in duration, and flexible enough in terms of entrance requirements to be rather desirable as well as affordable. And, in the words of W.E. Mann:

Bible schools . . . offered rural youth a means of improving their social status . . . Bible colleges gave individuals with little schooling who were attracted to ministerial or missionary careers a chance to rise socially. . . .<sup>114</sup>

The many-sided attractions of the Bible schools and institutes did not go unnoticed by the Mennonite young people. As a matter of fact, it was the increasing drift of Mennonite young people to non-Mennonite schools that helped prompt the Mennonite effort. Indeed, the various Mennonite conferences were not only competing with non-Mennonite schools but also with each other. After all, the Bible schools were guardians not only of the faith in general but also of the peculiarities of faith and culture. Thus, the Conference Mennonites



felt the need to found their own school at Didsbury after the Bergthaler congregation there had elected two additional ministers, both of whom had attended non-Conference schools, Jack Neufeld the Mountain View Bible College of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, and Cornelius, his brother, the Herbert Bible School of the Mennonite Brethren.<sup>115</sup> And prior to that time, a Moody Bible Institute graduate and two other Mountain View Bible College graduates had served the congregation as ministers.<sup>116</sup>

The attendance of Mennonites at non-Mennonite or non-Conference schools was a general one. According to Mennonite Brethren historian J.B. Toews, hundreds of young people flocked to "English Bible institutes, some of them vanguards of fundamentalism."<sup>117</sup> In Ontario, enough Mennonite young people attended the Toronto Bible College at one point to cause the Mennonite Conference of Ontario to consider, and even to encourage, giving liberal financial support to the school.<sup>118</sup> In the west, the Prairie Bible Institute at Three Hills and the Prophetic Bible Institute at Calgary were special attractions.<sup>119</sup> The experience of the Ernest Jeschke family was typical. Three of six attended the Mennonite Brethren Bible School at Hepburn and the other three graduated from Briercrest Bible Institute, Prairie Bible Institute, and Millar Memorial Bible Institute.<sup>120</sup>

One ministers' conference noted with regret that "many young people from our communities go to Bible schools, which alienate them from our society."<sup>121</sup> There were cases of brethren coming back from educational institutions, having departed from that way which the conference and churches had recognized as the biblical way.<sup>122</sup>

The Mennonite Bible schools were useful in many ways. They were inexpensive and safe places to learn the English language sufficiently well to obtain employment or better-paying employment. They aided in character development, because the men and women of the Bible, who were steadfast in the faith, were good examples for the young people. The role of the Bible schools in preserving the heritage for the young people was also stressed.<sup>123</sup> They were alternatives to non-Mennonite Bible schools, but often only as imitations, as Toews has explained:

... In response our own Bible institutes introduced major emphases on doctrine and apologetics. Resources for these courses were largely drawn from authors of evangelical funda-

mentalist orientations. In contrast to this emphasis there was little reference to the original . . . Anabaptist understanding of faith and life. . . . The curricula of our Bible schools provided only very limited emphasis on the understanding of our faith in distinction to that of American fundamentalism. . . .<sup>124</sup>

Of significance in the Bible school movement was not only that so many new ones were founded but also that some of the older ones reached new levels of maturity. This was particularly true of the oldest of the schools at Kitchener. The Ontario Mennonite Bible School was an outgrowth of the Bible Conferences begun in the 1890s and the one-week Bible Study Class established as an annual event in Berlin, 1907.<sup>125</sup> Gradually the time period was extended and the curriculum systematized until in 1918 the annual six-week session was designed to cover the entire Bible in six years. In 1929, the annual time was extended to three months and the cycle reduced to three years. In 1932, a constitution and bylaws were accepted. Enrolment reached 166 in 1932 and by the mid-1930s, 71 students had completed the full course.<sup>126</sup> A building program in 1936 was paid for through a special solicitation which extended to all the congregations of the Conference, to the Amish Mennonite Conference, and to the U.S.A.<sup>127</sup> Short-term Bible schools were also introduced in Amish Mennonite churches, first in East Zorra at Tavistock and then at Steinmans near New Hamburg.<sup>128</sup>

One of the most unique winter Bible schools was the one sponsored by the Alberta-Saskatchewan Old Mennonite Conference. It had no central location but travelled from congregation to congregation for 20 years.<sup>129</sup> The curriculum included doctrine and ethics, peace and evangelism and music, Bible studies and prophecy. Some students travelled with the school as it moved every three weeks, and thus could receive up to 15 weeks of study in one winter. The school made for doctrinal unity in the scattered congregations of the Conference and the inter-generational nature of the student body made for healthy adult-youth relationships.

A by-product of the Bible schools was the involvement of their students in various forms of mission activity. Most general was the summer Bible school movement, which saw hundreds of Bible school students fan out for two-week periods at a time to conduct daily Bible classes for children in rural areas of the provinces.<sup>130</sup> This program too was one adopted by the Mennonites from other

denominations.<sup>131</sup> One Conference report counted 19 workers in 15 summer Bible schools and 49 children saved.<sup>132</sup> A variation on the theme was to use the vacation school to teach not only Bible studies but also the German language.<sup>133</sup> Here and there, the summer Bible schools led to permanent preaching outposts in so-called mission stations, or even in the establishment of new congregations, as for instance the one at Lindale in the Pembina Hills of Manitoba. Some 285 children had attended the summer Bible school and various German, Russian, Polish, and Irish people had been converted. Thirty persons were baptized and organized into an MB church.<sup>134</sup> In British Columbia, the Mennonite Brethren began the West Coast Children's Mission for this purpose in 1938.<sup>135</sup>

Another form of field work assigned to the Bible school students was the distribution of tracts or the selling of books. Three students of Winkler Bible School, for instance, entered 1,270 homes one summer to achieve the wider distribution of Bibles and Christian books.<sup>136</sup> In the west, many Mennonite young people became involved in the independent and nondenominational Western Tract Mission, whereas in the east, the Golden Rule Gospel Messengers were formed by a tract director appointed by the Mennonite Mission Board and tract representatives from each of the congregations.<sup>137</sup> A 15-minute gospel radio program was begun in Winnipeg in the fall of 1940.<sup>138</sup>

Increasingly, the winning and keeping of the young required an act of personal decision for both sociological and theological reasons. As the hold of the Mennonite society on its young people weakened with greater exposure to the outside world and more frequent societal interaction, the choices of the young people were not always predictable. Thus, new means were needed to bring about decisions favourable to the church when the young people arrived at significant crossroads. That means was evangelism, defined by L.J. Burkholder as follows:

Evangelism, in the scriptural sense, is the act of going out after the lost ones and winning them to Christ. Instead of praying and waiting for the sinner to come, the church, through her servants becomes aggressive and employs special laborers to gather the wandering ones.<sup>139</sup>

Evangelism activity, of course, took on different forms. The New Mennonites, who in Ontario had pioneered not only Sunday school

conventions but also church-sponsored young people's meetings, conducted two series of "camp meetings" each year in a pavilion built especially for that purpose.<sup>140</sup> One such camp meeting attended by 128 young people reported that 96 had been "serving the Lord prior to coming to camp," 18 had been "saved or reclaimed," 13 had been "saved or reclaimed and sanctified," 19 had been "sanctified," and many others had become "better established in God's service."<sup>141</sup>

In the Mennonite Conference of Ontario, a "Home Evangelist" was appointed to promote evangelism, engage evangelists, and coordinate their work.<sup>142</sup> A typical annual report of the Home Evangelist said that eight evangelists held meetings in 19 congregations, resulting in 100 converts, of which 84 were baptized. The results were encouraging but not entirely satisfactory. Four hundred and eighteen "unsaved persons in these communities remained outside the fold."<sup>143</sup> Recommendations for improving the situation included "less visitation with Christians and more intensive work among the lost," two weeks of meetings, and much more prayer.

Closely related to the work of the home evangelist was the activity of various mission committees. The rural committee, in a typical year, reported on work at eight locations.<sup>144</sup> At Baden, the Sunday school was discontinued "owing to lack of interest and workers." Seventeen young people "took their stand for Christ" at a series of meetings but the visitation work revealed that there were "many unsaved in the village of Baden." At Bothwell, two persons were "received into the church by water baptism, one of which was a French Catholic girl." At Bright, the workers were "greatly encouraged" by the baptism of "six souls," three of which united with the Mennonite Church and three with the United Church. At Glasgow, there were three baptisms, including an "aged man [who] has since gone home to glory." At Hagerman, some members had "withdrawn themselves" but there was "spiritual growth among the few who remain." At Markstay, "several thousand feet of lumber and some logs" were assembled for the building of a log church and donations were "within twenty dollars" of the total needed. At Roseville, the evangelistic meetings yielded "no confessions" but "the congregation was strengthened and encouraged to press on in spite of problems." At St. George, "a few carloads of interested ones" gathered at the Sims home once a month.

Among the Northern District Mennonite Brethren local and outside evangelists tried to cover all the congregations with evange-

listic meetings once a year.<sup>145</sup> The Conference of Mennonites in Canada also had its evangelists, most commonly known as itinerant ministers. In one recorded six-month period, Benjamin Ewert, the foremost itinerant minister of the Conference, had travelled 4,000 miles, preached 120 times in 50 communities in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, served communion six times, baptized 12 persons, married three couples, and made hundreds of house visitations. Travel costs amounted to \$76.25, of which all but \$14.15 was covered by offerings.<sup>146</sup> He did this year in and year out in the 1920s and 1930s.

Evangelistic activity, of course, was another channel for innovation, another arena for borrowing from the outside, and much of the newness had its severe critics, who thought gimmickry and shallowness were making their entry. J.G. Rempel, the Rosthern Bible school teacher, for instance, was critical of all those fashions and fads designed to entice youth into the fold: slide projections and motion pictures, billboards and ads in the papers with exciting themes, sports facilities in churches, discussion sessions instead of worship services, and various other sensational techniques.<sup>147</sup>

Rempel did not object to adjustments and accommodations—after all the exemplary Paul became a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks—but he could not see such methods as having the desired long-term effect or as being suited for “our situation and our people . . . [their] essence and character. . . .”<sup>148</sup> Techniques related to mass production inevitably led to shallowness. Fewer but deeper wells in the long run delivered more water than many shallow wells. Mennonites, therefore, should

Treat the Word as a revealed mystery not just to awaken passing emotions but above all to achieve a lasting change of mind . . . deepen also the singing, the singing of the congregation as well as the choir, so that the content isn't sacrificed to the form and we become victims of superficiality.<sup>149</sup>

The movement of Mennonite young people to the cities was evident everywhere except in Toronto, where the reverse was true, at least in terms of Mennonite young people showing up at the Mennonite church.<sup>150</sup> There undoubtedly were hundreds in the city itself.<sup>151</sup> In cities like Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary, and Vancouver, the focus of youth-related activity in the 1930s was in the girls' homes,

TABLE 33<sup>152</sup>  
 HOMES FOR GIRLS  
 (ESTABLISHED BY CM AND MB CONFERENCES)

CITY	CM	MB
Winnipeg	1926	1925
Calgary	1945	1942
Saskatoon	1929	1930
Vancouver	1935	1931

which were established beginning in the 1920s in the major urban areas by the two large conferences (see Table 33). Run by a matron or houseparents, the homes served as places of temporary residence, as employment referral centres, and as centres of fellowship and worship for girls who had been attracted to the cities by the employment opportunities available to domestic servants. In all the cities where they were established they evolved sooner or later into city congregations. In Saskatoon, one such mission was led by J.J. Thiessen, an emerging leader in his own Conference.<sup>153</sup> The importance of these homes was illustrated by a report on the Maria-Martha Home for girls in Winnipeg, established in 1925:

The Maria-Martha Home is a very important branch of our mission, the full meaning of which we would acknowledge if one day we should be without it. . . . Let us think for a moment, 250 of our precious young women, our daughters tossed by circumstances into the whirlpool of the big city, without this home.<sup>154</sup>

### *Marriage and Vocation*

The homes also became counsellors to the parents and the home congregations concerning their young people. In 1940, the directors of the CM girls' homes jointly recommended that parents not send their daughters at too young an age, that they advise their daughters to visit the home and to attend Mennonite worship services, that they warn their girls about places of temptation in the city, and that mothers inform their daughters about sexual matters in good time.<sup>155</sup>

Of sex education, that is, overt, formal, and direct sex education, there was very little in most Mennonite homes and communities. Children growing up in large families and on farms well-stocked with animals of all kinds were hardly ignorant of what was essential to the continuity of life and the consummation of the attraction that males and females of all species had for each other. Even so, the need for some instruction and guidance was recognized, because the issues and problems of bad sex were ever-present in the lives of individuals and communities.<sup>156</sup> The dangers were many, and history provided much evidence of strong and prosperous societies declining because of sexual licence. Among Mennonites, the main issue was the purity of the young people, and in this regard two particular issues were raised publicly by Russlaender, namely venereal disease (*Geschlechtskrankheiten*) and masturbation (*Selbstbefleckung*).

Venereal disease had been a problem among the Mennonites in Russia, it was said, though the incidence of infection was relatively small compared to the population in general. However, the war, with its temptations and compulsions, had not left Mennonite communities and individuals, especially the thousands in the medical service, untouched. Life in the big cities, the many stops of the medical trains at the various stations, the population ratio favouring the women, and the absence of men—all represented temptations which overcame some young Mennonites as well. The percentage of infected young people in Russia was small, however, and in Canada even smaller. The many incidents of rape during the revolutionary and civil war years resulted in the venereal infection of a significant number of women.

Much more serious, especially among young men, was masturbation, a “secret sin” widely practised among Mennonites, it was said. In Russia, it had been possible for teachers of the upper elementary grades to provide enlightenment and warnings helpful to boys entering adolescence, but this had been possible because the sexes had been separated in these grades. In Canada, boys and girls were everywhere together, making sex education in schools more difficult, because the teacher would have difficulty establishing “the right tone” and finding “the right words.” Some sex education had customarily been included in the catechism classes leading to baptism. At least one of the sessions would involve a special after-meeting with young men only, at which time they would be warned

against this secret sin on the basis of Genesis 38:8–10, which records the Lord's displeasure over Onan who "spilled the semen on the ground."<sup>157</sup>

Masturbation was believed to be injurious to both the individual and society. Some Mennonites thought it inevitably led to insanity, lunatic asylums, suicide, death, and hell. Others were sceptical of this extreme view which, if true, would not leave enough "healthy people around to staff all the asylums." Masturbation, nevertheless, was thought to weaken the family if practised from generation to generation. It sapped energy essential to creativity. It reduced the desire to live, as well as the joy of faith.

The best means for curbing this evil and the temptation to indulge were perceived to be education and enlightenment, healthy social activities involving both boys and girls and including also adults, eating and drinking in moderation in order to reduce "unnecessary stimulation and day-dreaming." Strenuous work and exercise was also recommended because it produced a normal weariness, thus reducing sleeplessness and a long tossing to and fro in bed. Most important of all was purity of thought and clean conversation, which contributed to positive living and healthy action and became the foundation for a happy marriage.

In their warnings against masturbation, Mennonite leaders reflected the conventional and contemporary wisdom of society in both North America and Europe at the time. The aforementioned Stall book, introduced to teenagers at Vineland, was one of a popularly packaged series that circulated widely in Canada and somewhat secretly in Mennonite communities. Sylvanus Stall, a Lutheran minister, was a book publisher and for the most part author and editor of eight volumes in the best-selling series "Self and Sex," manuals that were published in Philadelphia and advertised in Canada as "pure books on avoided subjects" with "glowing commendations from prominent clergymen, medical experts, popular writers, and other public figures" and distributed, among others, by church agencies. These books, four for males and four for females, explained successively what boys and girls, young men and young women, young husbands and young wives, and men and women of 45 "ought to know."<sup>158</sup>

Generally, the books began by praising the powers and pleasures of sex, but then proceeded to deal with all its difficulties and



problems. For the unmarried, “the most persistent and pernicious difficulty” of all was “the temptation to indulge in the habit of the secret vice, the solitary vice, self-pollution, self-abuse, onanism, or masturbation.” Often innocently learned, masturbation led to declining health, eyes losing their lustre, skin becoming sallow, muscles turning flabby, backs plagued with pain and heads with dizziness. The appetite suffered, the entire body was wasted, and the mind, in extreme cases, fell victim to insanity.

Sexual intercourse outside of marriage was no substitute for masturbation because of the dangers of venereal disease. In any event, sexual excess was bad, even within the marriage relationship, and some degree of continence and discipline was always essential. Fortunately, nature provided that the natural aggressiveness of males was moderated by the sexual passiveness of women and after age 45 by the decline of desire and need on the part of both sexes.

Most marriage education happened shortly before the wedding. Parents and ministers would take their responsibilities seriously and counsel couples concerning the significance of their undertaking. The sanctity of marriage as an ordinance of God for procreation, fellowship, and the avoidance of sin was always emphasized.<sup>159</sup> Marriage partners were encouraged to love each other, to pray, to read the Word of God, to share joys and sorrows, and to train their children in the discipline and fear of the Lord. The women were also taught to be submissive and to obey. Both the engagement of a couple and the wedding day were family events, the latter involving the extended family, broadly defined, and most often also the entire community.

The traditional position concerning faith and marriage was that persons getting married should be of the same faith, baptized, and members of the same congregation.<sup>160</sup> But the times and conditions were changing, requiring exceptions to the former rules. According to elder P.H. Enns, Mennonites couldn’t at one and the same time sanction new patterns of living and not accept the implications thereof.

If we want to follow more strictly the rules of our fathers then we should also follow the way of the fathers and prevent those things which lead to undesired relationships, live more isolated, and not send our girls at 15 - 16 years of age in large

numbers into the cities there to work for people who hold different faiths, likewise not allow our boys to hire out to strangers.<sup>161</sup>

Apart from the girls' homes, city mission work included evangelistic meetings, street meetings, hospital visits, home visitations, Sunday school and other children's gatherings, *Jugendvereine*, young men's and young women's meetings, prayer meetings and Bible study, song and music activity, and tract distribution.<sup>162</sup> One of the most far-reaching and courageous efforts to gather in the young people was undertaken in Winnipeg in 1937 by Benjamin Ewert, who had come to the conclusion that he couldn't in good conscience travel the length and breadth of rural Saskatchewan as an itinerant minister in search of lost Mennonites and at the same time neglect those at his Winnipeg doorstep. His was a lonely initiative, because the beginnings of the English-language Bethel mission for students and young workers in the city was perceived by the rural church leaders as encouraging anglicization and urbanization, both of which they opposed.<sup>163</sup>

A resolute look at the youth problem also led to the conclusion that the agricultural situation, the movement to the cities, and the educational aspirations of the young people took them away from the farm into other vocations. On the positive side, the entry into various professions was seen as motivation for Christian service.<sup>164</sup> The new options for young Mennonites were defended and encouraged by some church leaders. Speaking about "Christianity and Vocations" at a Conference session, J.J. Klassen concluded that the apostles had worked with people in a great variety of occupations and none of them had been asked to leave.<sup>165</sup>

They were persuaded that every honourable work could be penetrated by the spirit of Christendom and that one could in every occupation help to build the kingdom of God. An occupation by itself is neither good nor bad, Christian nor unchristian but neutral. The bearer of a vocation, the human being, determines whether it will be a blessing or a curse.<sup>166</sup>

He made exceptions to the rule, of course. There were activities excluded by Christianity, "the businesses of the night which thrive only in the darkness," for instance.<sup>167</sup> Klassen established that no

occupation could be isolated from other aspects of life. All things belong together and are interlocked with each other to form an organic whole. As much as one may specialize, there is no detachment possible from the sum total of things. The farmer, for instance, is intimately tied to all manner of professionals, including the technologists, chemists, agronomists, and scientists generally. The farmer is also related to the doctor, the teacher, the businessman, and many others, because no one is excluded.

Consequently it is impossible to differentiate between a more Christian or a more worldly vocation. Everything depends on what the human being puts into it.<sup>168</sup>

Daniel Loewen also felt that the acceptable professions for Mennonite young people shouldn't be listed too narrowly. After all, why shouldn't Mennonites be chemists and participate with God in the stewardship of resources also in that area, or businessmen, or doctors?<sup>169</sup> In other words, young people should not be pressured to follow the traditional way. It was more important that their individual interests and uniqueness be recognized.

There were those, of course, who continued their striving to keep the young people close to home. For J.J. Siemens, the socialist reformer of southern Manitoba, the issues of the day centred not only in a restored economy with the help of co-op philosophy and institutions, but also in the retention of the young people. He issued an open invitation to all people to enlist in an enterprise that transcended religious, racial, and international lines for the sake of all. Mennonites had customarily divided on the basis of their church affiliations. However, these divisions had broken down, and where the churches had failed to achieve harmony, the co-ops had succeeded in bringing new life and vision to the community. In Siemens's own words:

We virtually became alive with the possibilities open to us in making farming a vocation full of interest and fascination. We became so occupied with the things we could do ourselves that we spent less time criticizing others. We talked a lot, held innumerable meetings in various districts, published a quarterly magazine with articles on farm practices, advice, and news of our fellow farmers. We kept the pot boiling and stirring. . . . We changed the pattern of our thinking as well as the

pattern of our farming along aggressive and progressive paths. The young people were having visions and the old people began dreaming dreams. The future was ours to make it what we desired it to be.<sup>170</sup>

Siemens regarded education as the key to developing a society confident in itself yet respectful of the other cultures and creatures with which it shared the planet.<sup>171</sup> Farmers had been conditioned to view their profession as second-rate and socially inferior to city employment, but Siemens believed that a well-rounded education at home and at school could erase the stigma attached to farming and instil in children a deep sense of dignity and pride in their family's livelihood.<sup>172</sup> Here too he referred to the tremendous role that could be played by parents and teachers. They could impart to children an understanding and respect for nature that would guarantee that generations yet unborn would inherit a world environmentally sound.<sup>173</sup> Siemens also introduced literature that reinforced the heritage. He saw to it that the Rhineland Agricultural Institute sponsored courses in Bible, Ethics, and Mennonite history,<sup>174</sup> and that the Rhineland Agricultural Society subsidized a Mennonite historical project—the publication of P.J. Schaefer's three historical booklets entitled *Woher? Wohin? Mennoniten!*<sup>175</sup>

Literature programs, specifically targeting the young people, were another mark of the period for both the Swiss and the Dutch. In Ontario, the Old Mennonites led the way in the production and distribution of literature. They worked closely with the Mennonite Publishing House at Scottdale.<sup>176</sup> In the mid-1930s, S.F. Coffman and M.H. Shantz were members of the Board, the latter as vice-president, while M.C. Cressman and Oscar Burkholder were members of the Finance and Publishing committees, respectively. S.F. Coffman and C.F. Derstine were non-resident editors. Lewis S. Weber wrote a 122-page book *Ideals for Christian Youth* while he was superintendent of the Toronto Mission.<sup>177</sup> C.F. Derstine wrote some smaller works, including "Forty Principles in Bible and Sunday School Study," "The Great Apostasy," and "The Last Message of Jesus Christ."<sup>178</sup> Oscar Burkholder wrote "True Life Stories" and "The Predicted Departure from the Faith."<sup>179</sup>

Book distribution centres arose in Kitchener with the founding of the Golden Rule Bookstore, in Winnipeg at the Rundschau Publish-

ers, and in Rosthern under Board of Colonization auspices.<sup>180</sup> Special Conference committees were established to oversee literature preparation, and one reported in 1940 a list of 20 pamphlets for distribution, half of them in German and half in English, on such subjects as baptism, nonresistance, the oath, missions, eternal security, communism, Mennonite history, and Mennonite faith.<sup>181</sup>

### *Secondary and Post-Secondary Education*

The educational problems committee of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario monitored and made recommendations concerning literature but also concerning high schools and colleges, generally. With respect to the high schools, it criticized the undue emphasis on sports and encouraged instead manual and agricultural training as well as other "useful and practical pursuits."<sup>182</sup> The trustees and ratepayers associations were commended for opposing cadet training in the schools.<sup>183</sup> The possibility of students taking one more year of high school locally, the so-called "fifth class," was noted with enthusiasm.<sup>184</sup> The Student Christian Fellowship movement in both high schools and colleges was perceived to be a good thing.<sup>185</sup> However, in spite of all these and other efforts to keep the high schools from danger, the Conference remained uneasy about the high school, and before the decade was out the school of the Brethren in Christ at Fort Erie was recommended "to all our high school students as a school affording safe Christian influence."<sup>186</sup>

Since Ontario Mennonite students attending college tended to go to Mennonite schools in the United States, which were not accredited in Ontario, successful efforts were made to obtain at least some academic credit for them. Both McMaster University and Waterloo College, the latter in affiliation with the University of Western Ontario, agreed to grant degrees to Goshen College graduates upon their completion of an additional academic year at the respective institutions.<sup>187</sup> The teaching content of Goshen College was also monitored by the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and one year the College was asked to represent pre-millennial views and nonconformity teachings to the students.<sup>188</sup>

Many young people attending colleges and universities moved out from their homes into the wider world. Some of the most gifted young people left the Mennonites not because they turned their backs on the faith but occasionally the better to express it in the wider arena.

A particular case was that of John K. Friesen, one of six brilliant sons and daughters of one of southern Manitoba's most concerned Mennonite leaders. A deacon in the Bergthaler church, D.W. Friesen was also Altona's postmaster and the proprietor since 1907 of a stationery and printing business. As an important wholesaler, he also got into the business of marketing books, especially Mennonite materials, the first copies of which always found their way into his own personal library. The best-read Canadian Mennonite of his day, he had become so impressed with his heritage that he wanted nothing more than to pass it on to his children and to have his children pass it on to others.<sup>189</sup> To one of his sons away from home at the Gretna boarding school he wrote:

In all the hundreds of years of Mennonite history I know of no single case of a people receiving a greater blessing than we ourselves. Therefore, we have a debt and a duty . . . we are obligated to respond to our people and to participate in their endeavours, to unite ourselves with them . . . we are also obligated to our country . . . and the greatest of all obligations we have toward God.<sup>190</sup>

Human society, or "humanity in general, but our own people in particular," he told his boys, was facing a great future. It was important, therefore, to set the right goals, to avoid temptation, to look upon school as a time of preparation, and also to marry right. After all, with one's marriage, "one sets one's direction in life and often much more."<sup>191</sup> The elder Friesen was overjoyed when John, the second of his sons, but the first to enter university, became a teacher at the MCI and when he was elected a candidate for the ministry in the Bergthaler church. And he was equally saddened when, after completing a B.A. in history and music, the son sought a teaching position in a non-Mennonite area. Trying desperately to help his son find the right place, he advised him as late as the middle of July:

I heard Steinbach still needs a teacher in the high school. If only you could serve among our own people. It is such a concern to me. I pray much about it.<sup>192</sup>

The Mennonite world, however, was too narrow for the idealistic young man. And what he wanted most in and from the Mennonite

community—a strong youth movement and a positive promotion and wider application of the peace ideal—he found in the United Church of Canada. At last, he told his parents, he was exposed to a minister who was “an extraordinary thinker and speaker,” whose sermons were thought out and well prepared.<sup>193</sup>

As a teacher of history and music at Hargrave first and then at Virden, he immersed himself in the local young people’s society and through it in the Young People’s Union of the United Church, becoming president of the Manitoba Conference in a few short years.<sup>194</sup> Along the way, he was also chairman of the Peace Commission of the Young People’s Union of the United Church of Canada. Every context gave him an “outstanding opportunity to speak up for peace and nonresistance.”<sup>195</sup> Acknowledging the militaristic attitudes of a community like Virden, he none the less insisted that his school choir sing two peace anthems “irrespective of opinions” at the Armistice Day ceremony.<sup>196</sup> In the local youth society he arranged a debate on Canada’s preparation for war, and through the national executive he lent “full support to the anti-conscription movement” and to those who insisted that there “be sacrifice of profits if there is to be sacrifice of life.”<sup>197</sup>

The college and university student became the new focus of the modernist-fundamentalist debate, this time in western Canada, as John Horsch continued his writing into the 1930s, using also the Russlaender paper, *Der Bote*, where his excellent German was appreciated.<sup>198</sup> In that paper, also, he met his literary and intellectual match in Jacob H. Janzen, who never shied away from controversy and who had his way of criticizing most points of view and who rarely saw either fundamentalism or modernism as black and white. Janzen’s intellectual ability had been demonstrated at an early age in a variety of experiences.<sup>199</sup> He had become a school teacher at the young age of 16. His linguistic training in Russia already included Greek, Hebrew, English, and French, in addition to German and Russian. In Germany, he had studied at the ultra-conservative University of Greifswald and at the ultra-liberal university at Jena. His fields included theology, psychology, philosophy, and the sciences. Later, again a teacher, he had debated with the Soviets until they dismissed him. Janzen’s antidote to modernism as a threat to the churches was not an incessant denunciation of modernism but rather the elimination of that which was “hollow and empty” in the life and

faith of the churches. After all, modernism was a response, however erroneous, to a real need:

I am bound to admit the conviction, that the danger of our churches lies in the defective lives of those who confess fundamentalism. . . .<sup>200</sup>

Janzen's problem with the fundamentalists and with Horsch was their inclination to condemn "as modernists everyone who does not believe in their schemes even if they would believe in the whole Bible."<sup>201</sup> He further took issue with anti-intellectualism apparent in the fundamentalist movement. And the error of the modernists, he said, was their resort not to reason but rather to false reasoning and a general reluctance to accept as possible truth anything they themselves couldn't grasp with their minds.<sup>202</sup> Janzen's clear explanations were understood by the fewest of people.

For university students who had been exposed to the wider world of literature and science and of non-Mennonite culture, the Mennonite world suddenly became very narrow, much too narrow, in terms of religion, culture, and intellectual activity, generally. The experience of I.G. Neufeld was typical.<sup>203</sup> He had ended up at McMaster University in Hamilton in 1933–34. United States Immigration at Emerson, Manitoba, had refused his admission en route to Tabor College, his first choice as per the recommendation of A.H. Unruh, his principal and teacher at Winkler Bible Institute. His second choice was McMaster, because Unruh's missionary brother in India had met and praised John McNeil, the principal of the McMaster (Baptist) Divinity School and president of the World Baptist Union. If he, Neufeld, found McMaster "safe," Winkler would send some of its graduates there, Unruh had told him.

Following a year at McMaster, Neufeld crossed the country to the West Coast and was visiting relatives at Sardis. The leader of the *Jugendverein* happened to be a son-in-law of A.H. Unruh and that connection brought Neufeld an invitation to address the Sunday night service on "The Greatness of God in Nature." Neufeld was willing to speak but not on that subject, though in the end he consented. The young people were taken by what he had to say and a repeat invitation was given. Again Neufeld consented, on condition that the Wednesday night meeting be for young people only.



A day before the scheduled event, two ministers showed up in the barn where he was doing chores and told him that the church council had denied him the use of the church. A two-hour dialogue ensued, but the ministers would not change their minds. Although they could point out no error in his Sunday night presentation, they feared the influence of a university-educated man: "You have been one year in the University; you must be a modernist!" For preachers and a congregation whose continuous message for the young people was conversion and rebirth, any reference to astronomy, geology, and science generally, even when connected to the greatness of God in nature, was too much. As for Neufeld, those conversations about his alleged modernism followed him throughout his adult life. It had been said, people had heard, that I. G. was a modernist, and that was that!

At least in one Conference the leaders felt keenly that ministers of the congregations would require special and more advanced theological training than was offered by the existing Bible schools if the churches were to meet the needs of the educated young people.<sup>204</sup> One ambitious proposal called for elevation of at least one Bible school in every province to the level of the seminary.<sup>205</sup> Some even advocated an advanced general university education for the sake of better preparation for the ministry and better communication with educated young people.<sup>206</sup>

Ministers should have a good knowledge of the Bible but also a general education. On the paths of true knowledge were revealed many of the wonders of God, His greatness, and His might. Truth and atheistic tendencies, of course, were two different things, and it was for that reason that the minister should also be equipped in the science of nature so that the atheists didn't monopolize the field and mislead the young people. History as a discipline—both church and world history—was also most enlightening. Psychology likewise could be helpful in understanding the soul.

By the end of the decade, there was a general endorsement of the idea of a school for preachers which could evolve from one or more of the Bible schools already in existence.<sup>207</sup> Professional education, it was said, was essential for ministers just as much as for doctors, teachers, and lawyers.<sup>208</sup> The higher educational level of the members, as well as the dangers from unbelief, false cults, and materialism, made better education for the ministers necessary.<sup>209</sup>

TABLE 34<sup>210</sup>  
 MENNONITE POPULATION INCREASES  
 COMPARED TO SELECTED MEMBERSHIP INCREASES  
 (IN THE 1930S)

	1931	1941	% INCREASE
Total Mennonite Population	88,736	111,403	26
Old Mennonite Conference, Ontario	2,284	3,149	38
Mennonite Brethren in Christ, Ontario	1,927	2,294	19
Northern District of Mennonite Brethren Churches	4,186	6,732	61
Conference of Mennonites in Canada	8,911	12,471	40

Implementation was delayed, however, because of the times and other needs. The reader already knows how economic considerations determined many priorities in the 1930s.

As the 1930s came to a close, there was evidence that the effort to keep the young people was successful to a very considerable extent (see Table 34). Not only did selected Mennonite conferences show membership increases but for the main three groups these increases were in excess of the general increase in Mennonite population. In interpreting these figures, caution must be given that all of the three groups in question gained members from other Mennonite groups during this period. The Mennonite Brethren, for instance, completely absorbed the Alliance churches. The Old Mennonites received people from the Old Order churches and also from others. And the itinerant ministry of the Conference Mennonites to lonely outposts had also paid off.

How many of the gains could be credited to innovation in church programs and to institutional "borrowing" from the outside cannot be ascertained, but that conference-oriented Mennonites believed in the efficacy of those innovations there can be no doubt. However,

those very innovations and borrowings meant greater Mennonite adjustment to society generally, and to fundamentalist religion in particular. This had the effect of changing not only the Mennonite theology but also the Mennonite culture, and such change was not the intention. The Mennonites wanted to keep not only the young people but also those aspects of culture believed to be essential to the historic faith.

### FOOTNOTES

- 1 J.J. Klassen, "Bericht des Schulkomitees," *Jahrbuch*, 1931, p. 51.
- 2 S.F. Coffman, "Our Educational Interests," *Mennonite Year-Book and Directory*, 1930, p. 15.
- 3 Johannes Regier, "Was bedarf unsere Jugend?" *Jahrbuch*, 1928, p. 49.
- 4 The oldest of the schools, OMBS at Kitchener, completed a modest and much-needed building program in 1936. For the school's historic role, see Clare L. Martin, "An Evaluation of the Program of the Ontario Mennonite Bible School" (research paper, Goshen College Biblical Seminary, 1951).
- 5 The Rudnerweider placed the emphasis on the winning and teaching of the young people from the outset and met with considerable success, baptizing up to 100 in a single year. See Walter Sawatsky, "History of the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference" (research paper, Goshen College, 1967), pp. 15-16.
- 6 J.H. Enns, "Der Ausbau unserer Bibelschulen," *Jahrbuch*, 1935, p. 45, put it this way, "Our history and the history of other denominations shows very clearly that the spiritual life rose where the churches placed a great deal of emphasis on the schooling of the young generation and that it sank irretrievably where this was not the case."
- 7 *Jahrbuch*, 1939, p. 3.
- 8 William W. Dean, "John F. Funk and the Mennonite Awakening" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1965), pp. 42-43. See also L.J. Heatwole, "The Mennonite Church— Her Past and Present Conditions Compared," *Mennonite Year-Book and Directory*, 1907, p. 14; J.S. Hartzler and Daniel Kauffman, *Mennonite Church History* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Book and Trust Society, 1905), p. 371; Douglas Millar, "Mennonites in the Melting Pot" (research paper, Conrad Grebel College, University of Waterloo, 1980), pp. 4-5.
- 9 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), pp. 234-35.
- 10 Jakob Gerbrandt, "Was die Konferenz gewirket hat und weiter wirken sollte," *Jahrbuch*, 1932, pp. 41-44; see also D.A. Rempel,

- “Die Stellung der Jugend innerhalb der Gemeinde,” *Jahrbuch*, 1931, pp. 37–47.
- 11 Daniel Loewen, “Unsere Aufgaben unserer Jugend gegenueber,” *Jahrbuch*, 1929, p. 46.
- 12 J.N. Hoepfner, “Wie steht es mit der Nachfolge Jesu in den Gemeinden?” *Jahrbuch*, 1936, p. 56.
- 13 “Protokoll der Predigerversammlung,” *Jahrbuch*, 1938, p. 5.
- 14 G.G. Epp, *et al.*, “Bericht von der Arbeit in der Inneren Mission . . .,” *Jahrbuch*, 1934, pp. 61–62.
- 15 Frederick Jackson Turner, *Frontier and Section: Selected Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 39.
- 16 See next chapter for the attempt to preserve the language.
- 17 David Toews, “Wie koennen wir dem Mangel an Predigern unter uns abhelfen?” *Jahrbuch*, 1929, p. 64.
- 18 Walter Quiring, “Zum Problem der innermennonitischen Abwanderung,” *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch*, 1934, pp. 19–34.
- 19 Raymond Breton, “Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 70:193–205; L. Driedger and G. Church, “Residential Segregation and Institutional Completeness: A Comparison of Ethnic Minorities,” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 11:30–52.
- 20 Johannes Regier, p. 49.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 Jakob J. Nickel, “Die Ausuebung unseres Dienstes,” *Jahrbuch*, 1939, p. 36.
- 23 J.J. Klassen, “Die Frau im Dienste der Gemeinde,” *Jahrbuch*, 1939, pp. 39–43.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 25 *Calendar of Appointments*, 1934, p. 29.
- 26 CGC, II-1.A.1, “Conference Programs, Reports, and Resolutions.” See “Constitution of the Ontario Mennonite Sunday School Conference.”
- 27 *Ibid.* From “Programme of a Sunday School Conference to be held in the Floradale Mennonite Church.”
- 28 L.J. Burkholder, *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario* (Markham, Ont.: Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935), p. 159.
- 29 Oscar Burkholder, “The Sunday School Movement and the Sunday School Conference,” *Calendar of Appointments*, 1934, p. 29.
- 30 L.J. Burkholder, p. 160.
- 31 Orland Gingerich, *The Amish of Canada* (Waterloo, Ont.: Conrad Press, 1972), p. 69.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- 34 *Ibid.*, pp. 95–96.

- 35 J.N. Hoepfner, "Die geistlich-religioese Pflege unserer Kinder in der Sonntagschule," *Jahrbuch*, 1933, pp. 36-43. See also *Jahrbuch*, 1933, p. 11.
- 36 "Bericht des Sonntagschulkomitees in Saskatchewan," *Jahrbuch*, 1935, p. 80.
- 37 *Jahrbuch*, 1934, pp. 17-18.
- 38 *Verhandlungen* (ND), 1937, p. 19.
- 39 John A. Toews, quoting I.W. Redekopp, says that among the Brethren, Sunday schools were there "to evangelize, rather than to train children." The Brethren objected to a "memorized faith," an obvious reference to the catechetical instruction so common in the Kirchengemeinden. See Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, pp. 216-17.
- 40 *Verhandlungen* (ND), 1936, pp. 52-53.
- 41 Arnold Dyck, "Der Kindergarten," *Warte-Jahrbuch*, 1943, pp. 14-20.
- 42 *Conference Journal* (NW), 1931, p. 15.
- 43 "Bericht des Vinelaender Juenglingsvereins: Wahrheit, Treue, Reinheit," *Jahrbuch*, 1939, pp. 52-53.
- 44 D.H. Rempel, "Die Stellung der Jugend innerhalb der Gemeinde," *Jahrbuch*, 1931, p. 38.
- 45 Joseph C. Fretz, "The Young People's Meeting Movement in Ontario, *Calendar of Appointments*, 1934, pp. 30-31.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 47 Orland Gingerich, *The Amish of Canada* (Waterloo, Ont.: Conrad Press, 1972), p. 103.
- 48 *Ibid.*, pp. 124-25; *Calendar of Appointments*, 1931-32, p. 25.
- 49 This is effectively portrayed in the drama "The Quiet in the Land" by Anne Chislott, first presented at the Blythe Theatre in Ontario in the summer of 1981.
- 50 *Calendar of Appointments*, 1934, pp. 31-32.
- 51 "Conference Resolutions," *Calendar of Appointments*, 1938-39, p. [24]. See also *Calendar of Appointments*, 1938-39, p. [18].
- 52 Harold S. Bender, "Literary Societies," *Mennonite Encyclopedia* 3:353.
- 53 For sample constitutions, see CGC, Hist. Mss. 5.1, "A Literary Society Constitution."
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 George S. Good, "Christian Ideals for a Literary Society," *Christian Monitor* 24 (January 1932):4, 5.
- 56 CGC, Hist. Mss. 5.1, "Ideals for a Literary Society," n.a., n.d., pp. 2, 3.
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