

Provenance

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12. *Facing the World*

The next war will be a total war in which all the resources of the nation will be harnessed to the supreme goal of winning a complete victory — H.S. BENDER.¹

The Mennonite people should create a standing organization to negotiate with the government a service, which conscientious objectors could perform for their fatherland in time of war — H.H. EWERT.²

THE PERSISTENT ATTEMPT to preserve values and communities with the help of geographic and cultural isolation from the world was largely due to a rather keen awareness of that world and particularly of the tensions in international affairs pointing to serious conflict. As a consequence, Mennonites contemplated the dangers of war, the avoidance of military service, a possible alternative to such service, and in general, the obligations of citizenship, even as they sought to keep their young people, to preserve their culture, and to develop their institutions.

In 1938, Mennonite leaders sent an adulatory and complimentary message to the British Prime Minister for his perceived role in heading off, for the time being at least, a second world war. The signing took place in Winnipeg on October 7 by 32 bishops and ministers from Manitoba congregations of the Conference Mennonites, from the Mennonite Brethren, and from the Chortitzer,

Holdemaner, Rudnerweider, Kleine Gemeinde, and Sommerfelder congregations.³ Having sought the counsel and sanction of David Toews in Rosthern and Jacob H. Janzen in Waterloo, they were confident that their resolution spoke for all Mennonites, both in the east and in the west. This was perhaps an impulsive act,⁴ but it meant that Mennonites were cognizant of the European confrontations and their possible effect on themselves as conscientious objectors to war.

The event was unique as a coming together of both Russlaender and Kanadier leaders of the various congregational families and also as an address on international diplomacy to an international leader. The unusual consensus could have been a consequence of several factors at work. For one, the world, including the Mennonite world, breathed a great sigh of relief when on September 30 the leaders of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy signed the Munich Agreement, by which Czechoslovakia was forced to give up to Germany the Sudetenland, equalling one-fifth of Czech territory, most of its industry, and three million people of German descent.

For a people to whom there was no greater sin than war, the diplomacy of Chamberlain was perceived as an extraordinary achievement. Where Mennonites viewed that Agreement through the eyes of empathy for Germany, which happened to be the case for some, or where they were anxious to affirm their British loyalties, as was also the case with some, Munich looked right and good. The signatories were grateful that a world-wide war had been successfully averted; they expressed admiration for the effective role of Chamberlain in bringing about "a bloodless peace for our empire and the world"; they voiced the hope "that the peace secured may be a lasting one" and that God's blessing would rest "upon His Excellency and the great Empire." Peacemakers, the message concluded, were called children of God.⁵

Thirty-two Mennonites had identified the right role in peacemaking for British leaders, but that did not mean that they had sorted out their own civic task, apart from keeping the Mennonite boys from going to war. The nature and direction of the Mennonite response to the state and to citizenship duties in the 1930s were determined by the original and traditional doctrine of separation both from the state and from society and by the historic and contemporary applications of that separation.

Separation and Involvement

The traditional separation from, and non-participation in, public life lived on in both the Swiss and the Dutch Mennonite communities, though modifications of the position were evident in both. Such changes or adaptations usually meant movement away from the traditional separation, but not away from separation itself. New forms of separation appeared to modify or replace the old forms. In all, at least five distinct forms of separation could be identified and, for want of better terms, will here be referred to as geographical separation, institutional separation, ethical separation, cultural/national separation, and chronological or dispensational separation. All forms of separation could be, and were, modified in practice and sometimes one or more forms appeared in combination with others. The various separations in effect represented various perceptions of the kingdom of God. The three forms of separation most articulated in the 1930s were ethical separation, national separation, and "chronological" separation. The latter two appeared as pro-Germanism and dispensationalism.

The full-orbed Anabaptist ethic and the single-minded approach to life had very deep roots and lived on even after the Mennonite colonies were gone. The result was that some Mennonites tried not only to face the world but also to do so with the Anabaptist ethic or with the contemporary understanding of that ethic. There was, in other words, a new attempt to be in the world, the wider world, including economics and civics, and yet not be of the world in terms of its ethic and value system. This meant that Mennonites could accept the economic, social, and political orders of the day in the same way and to the same extent that they accepted the public school and then proceed to influence the direction of these orders in the same way that they had influenced the content of education. Articulators of this latter view included H. H. Ewert, whom we have already met as the champion of the enriched public schools, and Edward Yoder, whom we have already met as the champion of nonconformity as a way of changing society.

For H. H. Ewert, whose life mission was the creation of the best possible public schools in Mennonite areas, the issues of war and peace and the requirements of citizenship had not completely faded

into the background with the end of the First World War. In his opinion, the implications of the war were that Mennonites needed not only an adequate educational philosophy but also an understanding of citizenship and a political strategy. As far as he was concerned, Mennonites had distinct duties to the state.⁶ These duties were not new, for Christians had always been under obligation to seek the welfare of the society in which they lived.

Though an aging man, Ewert was in the forefront of involvement in public affairs, while seeking to advance the cause of peace. He recommended that Mennonites stage a festival to celebrate the diamond jubilee of the Dominion of Canada.⁷ He debated writers in the public press who saw an inevitable relationship between education and militarism.⁸ He criticized the Canadian Legion and the British Empire Service League for advocating restrictive immigration and the elimination of special privilege.⁹ He attended a conference of 30 anti-war groups and was disturbed only by the high proportion of women (80 per cent), the lack of Christian motivation of same, and the advocacy of birth control to check population to reduce the chances of war.¹⁰ He spoke favourably of the Gandhi movement in India, which was transforming a society through non-violent means, and unfavourably of the fact that Mennonites were content to seek personal privilege in society and then to retreat into their own world.¹¹

The other leading advocate of what is here called ethical separation, meaning social and civic involvement based on an alternative ethic, was Edward Yoder, who, more than any other writer in the Swiss community, concerned himself with questions of Mennonite relations with, and responsibilities to, the state during this time.¹² A teacher at Goshen College, he was not part of the Canadian Mennonite story, except in the legitimate sense, previously alluded to, that Goshen College was an important source of theological and intellectual leadership for the Swiss Mennonites and the Amish in Canada and that much religious direction for them came from the Mennonite General Conference, its spokespersons, periodicals, and institutions. It can be said that Yoder and his colleagues laid the foundations for a 1937 statement on peace and war, church and state, Christianity and citizenship, later to be reported in greater detail, which was prepared by a committee of equal Canadian and American representation and which probably was the most influential statement of its time.

The state or any state, said Yoder, was not something mystical and idealistic or somehow “an entity in itself, some vague sort of super-being.”¹³ The state was people and it had no real existence apart from the people who composed it. The state was simply a community on a larger scale, a combination of peoples in a given geographic area “living and working together in certain ways.”¹⁴ Christians were members of the state in the same way that they were members of the ordinary human community “living in contact with neighbours and friends, exerting their influence among fellow men by example and testimony, and cooperating with them in a common civil life.” At the same time, their “center of gravity” did not lie “in this plane of experience.” Their ideals and principles of life were not drawn from the surrounding community, but strength and nourishment for their life came from some source outside the civil community.¹⁵ This twofold relationship did not mean that the believer was a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde but rather a single integrated personality.

He cannot live a part of his time “in the world” in one manner, and the remainder of his time “not of the world” in some other manner. He is a single person who lives all the time for God in the world, and all the time for God not of the world.¹⁶

The ethical separation, or involvement on the basis of an alternative value system, espoused by H.H. Ewert and Edward Yoder appeared to be the most likely position of the majority of Mennonites in Canada. Geographic isolation was receding but the ethical orientation to all of life lived on in the teaching of the church and in the lives of the people. Moreover, most Mennonites had not yet experienced the full impact of institutionalized religion and its tendency to isolate faith from daily life with its economic and political problems. The ongoing Mennonite involvement in, and obligations to, the larger society, in this case Canada, were being explored. The Conference of Mennonites in Canada, for instance, heard speakers encouraging responsible involvement in political affairs, including voting, though a conference resolution in 1934 cautioned the young people against those political movements which opposed the existing political order.¹⁷

Applying the values of the kingdom to everyday life and seeking the will of God on earth in accordance with Ewert-Yoder teaching

was a difficult and demanding task. For this reason, convenient ways of escape had an intrinsic appeal. Separating preaching from politics, church from state, religion from business, and Sunday from Monday were constant temptations, and there were also other ways of escaping responsibility in one's own time and in one's own land. The former was provided by an eschatological school of thought known as dispensationalism and pre-millennialism and the latter by a political movement known as National Socialism. Both represented the transfer of loyalty to another age and to another country, respectively.

For and Against Germanism

The pro-Germanism formerly noted with reference to language and racial identification also had a political dimension with a most vocal minority among the Russlaender in the 1930s. Not all those Mennonites who were fond of the German language and not all those who were proud of German ethnicity had a love for the German Reich. All of the Swiss, most of the Kanadier, and perhaps also a goodly number of the Russlaender had no particular feelings for or against Germany, but enough Russlaender were, for a time at least, enamoured of Adolf Hitler and his new Germany that a brief but intense flirtation with National Socialism cannot be overlooked.¹⁸

The nurture and promotion of foreign loyalties or causes, be they right or wrong, by members of minority groups were not unique phenomena in Canadian history.¹⁹ In fact, one of Canada's greatest worries in the Great War was religious and ethnic groups whose affinities to, and empathies with, alien states were well known. In the inter-war period, Canada had its share of communist and fascist sympathizers. And in western countries generally, generous immigration and refugee policies and unlimited political liberties produced an array of groups who were for or against communism, fascism, nationalism (for example, Ukrainian nationalism), and Zionism. Thus, Germany's National Socialism had followers in Canada other than Mennonites, whose ardour was checked for the most part before the world crossed the brink of the Second World War. Yet, so significant was the pro-Germanism among Mennonites, in Canada and elsewhere,²⁰ that the phenomenon, and the opposition to it, cannot remain unreported.²¹

Through the years, Germany had come to mean much for the

Mennonites in Russia and from Russia and this was reflected in much writing in the German Mennonite press in Canada, *Der Bote* in particular, and to a lesser extent *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*²² and *Die Steinbach Post*.²³ The Germany of Bismarck and Wilhelm had nurtured a cultural relationship with German cultural minorities abroad which all German-speaking people in Russia had learned to appreciate. The Great War and German occupation of the Ukraine had not particularly enhanced that relationship, but the magnanimity of Germany with respect to the Moscow refugees revived deep and lasting emotions. Less than 6,000 of the estimated 13,000 believed to be at Moscow were able to leave Russia and enter transit camps in Germany en route to other destinations, but it was that country's generosity in the midst of her own poverty which made such a great impact on the hearts and minds of the Russlaender. All the latent affinity for the German culture and the German nation was brought to the fore. The remembrance of Dutch origins became muted and once again Germany was recognized as a fatherland.

Reporting in Canada on the second Mennonite world conference in Danzig in 1930, David Toews acknowledged that the greetings of German government officials had been of "special interest," for Germany showed such deep compassion for the Mennonites in Russia, China, Germany, Brazil, Paraguay, and Canada "or where else they might be."²⁴ It was the German government that really sacrificed itself on behalf of the refugees in spite of the Reich's own "rather difficult position." It was, therefore, quite natural that the Mennonite people should view Germany "as their fatherland" and remember "what Germany has done for our refugees."²⁵

Others spoke with equal recognition and gratitude about Germany, her government, her social and economic organizations, and, last but not least, President Hindenburg.²⁶ His and Germany's acts of generosity were recalled when "thankless and ungrateful" criticism of Germany followed the emergence of Adolf Hitler.²⁷ Hindenburg's words on German unity, on loving the German fatherland not only on Sunday, and on appreciating it to the point of sacrifice were quoted and remembered.²⁸ After his death, grateful immigrants in Canada sent a wreath of flowers to decorate his grave.²⁹ While his passing was an intensely sad moment in the German community, his grave was also seen as the symbol of hope. One lay leader wrote:

Even on this, and especially on this, grave we plant our hope. Hindenburg passed away, called of God, but before he died, he placed his hand of blessing on the head of Adolf Hitler. The blessing of a Hindenburg comes from above. In it there is strength.³⁰

The appreciation for Germany increased with empathetic interpretations of her history and of her economic problems.³¹ Through many years, foreign powers had either fought against the German states or fought out their quarrels on German soil, it was said, especially at times when Germany herself was inwardly divided and broken. These wars had all but destroyed the German spirit. The German soul, which was nigh dead as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars, had been revived in the Bismarckian era.³² War came in 1914 when the imperial powers sought to curb Germany's commercial prowess, industrial growth, and economic power.³³ After the war, Germany was unduly burdened by heavy war reparation payments and by the war-guilt clause written into the Treaty of Versailles. That national humiliation was followed by internal political agitations of the Communists. All of this contributed to the miraculous and providential rise of Hitler.³⁴ When all efforts had failed to clean up the internal mess and to stand up against the powers, it was good to see a man take hold of all the problem areas of Germany and to proceed to solve them.³⁵ At last there was hope for a healthy Germany in the heart of Europe, a Germany which could become a blessing to all the nations of the world.³⁶ In the words of C.F. Klassen:

We don't consider German people to be angels . . . but in spite of this we thank God, that at last a man has been found, who consolidated the national idea, who had courage to clean up the social democratic rottenness, the Communist insanity, and many Jewish machinations . . .³⁷

The coming to power of Adolf Hitler in Germany was seen as a day of national rebirth. He was able to awaken powers long dormant, to initiate progress long hindered, to unify a nation long divided—almost as by the turning of his hand. A whole generation of shallow and depressed young people had been given a new soul, a new idealism, a new cause—the German nation.³⁸ The renewal that had

come to Germany was not like the Russian Revolution, with all its ugliness. Rather, the German experience was a national uplifting, a springtime awakening, an internal rebirth.

One of the first achievements of the new regime was a domestic social clean-up, wrote Walter Quiring.³⁹ It was a big task to “take the manure out of the social-democratic-communistic barn,” to do away with the corruption of administrators and judges, the treason, immorality, and thievery, which in the Jewish press were presented as virtues, to curb the immodest displays in the windows, the filth of the theatres, of the papers, and of drama and radio. However, the clean-up was undertaken, and, as with a steel broom, the whole country was swept and scraped, and all the foreign rabble was put in its place, it was reported. The clean-up began at the top and went right down to the bottom and affected administrators, policemen, schools, sports, art, theatre, the stage, film, the press, literature, organizations, the banking system, etc. In other words, in all areas of life there was a thorough and radical purging.

All the rubbish was being replaced with things that were honest, good, and true, reported Jacob H. Janzen along with Quiring and others. The great and forgotten German writers of the past were being resurrected from the dust to take the place of the Jewish writers and to give Germany a new literary face.⁴⁰ Now a Remarque could no longer sell hundreds of thousands of copies of his filthy book. On radio there was no longer any jazz music, but instead the wonderful creations of the German masters and the fresh and lively German folk songs were being played. Prospects were good that Germany would become well again, socially and morally, and that the old Prussian spirit of purity, honesty, sincerity, and uprightness would prevail again.⁴¹

The virtues, progress, and achievements of the new Germany were presented most comprehensively by a Canadian fundamentalist, a popular evangelist whose articles appeared in the Mennonite press.⁴² In Germany there was security, said Oswald J. Smith. The people were optimistic and happy. All were working. All, old and young alike, loved Hitler. He recognized the values of recreation and encouraged the domestic life. Girls were not permitted to go to the university before they had spent six months in the home and learned how to keep house. And this was in harmony with the Christian emphasis. Immorality was curbed. Girls no longer painted

their lips and cheeks, and how beautiful they looked. Papers no longer advertised birth-control methods, which before Hitler's time had been openly discussed by the young people. A great spiritual awakening was coming to Germany. A new, spiritually clean, and pure Germany was emerging.

The outstanding achievement of the Reich was halting the advance of Communism, internally as well as externally. Germany under Adolf Hitler was the one western nation that stood up bravely against the threat from the east.⁴³ And Mennonites could understand this best of all, because Russia now represented the image that was invoked to explain all the evils of the day, including atheism, modernism, immorality, and human exploitation.⁴⁴ While pure National Socialism probably was not the desired thing for Canada, it was clear that only a similar movement could save the American continent as well.⁴⁵ Since Communism endangered the Christian faith, resolute opposition to it could be considered the primary responsibility of the Mennonites in their foreign missionary undertakings.⁴⁶

In his clear-cut stand against Communism, Hitler had proved himself a greater enemy of Communism than the church, and this also proved that the *Fuehrer* was sympathetic to Christianity. He and National Socialism based their policies on what was called "positive Christianity."⁴⁷ As a leader, Hitler was to be compared not so much with German political heroes like Bismarck but with religious leaders like Martin Luther.⁴⁸ In the words of B.H. Unruh:

There are many Germans, very many National Socialists, who are believers at heart and who would never deny the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . This year I heard Hitler on the radio call upon his people to ask God for his grace. Many people are no longer inclined to take these words in their mouth. Our Fuehrer and Chancellor does not belong to this group.⁴⁹

A defence of Hitler's Christianity required further explanation of what became known as the *Kirchenstreit*, or the quarrel between the church and the state.⁵⁰ The confrontation was explained away by Walter Quiring and others. The state, it was said, stood for a "positive Christianity," meaning a minimum emphasis on the word and a maximum emphasis on the deed, which, interpreted, meant love for the people and the fatherland. Further, Hitler had made

religion respectable again and religious instruction had again become obligatory in the schools. The members of the *Reichstag* attended religious services before beginning the day's work.⁵¹

It was further explained that church and state were separated, meaning non-interference by the state in the internal affairs of the church, provided the church did not interfere in the affairs of state. This was the essence of the agreement made with the Vatican, and the same applied to the evangelical church.⁵² The forced union of the 26 regional churches into one *Reichskirche* was a service not only to the nation but also to the church because centuries of fragmentation had harmed both. The government was concerned that all elements harmful to the German national consciousness be eliminated.⁵³ This meant that the various groups, including the Mennonites, had to place their statement of faith and their constitution before the government.⁵⁴

The relationship of the Jews to the *Reich*, of course, was another matter. Not only were the Jews friendly to Communism but they were also the founding fathers of Communism. Karl Marx, the first Communist, was a Jew, his name having been Karl Mordechai.⁵⁵ The link between Judaism and Communism had been well documented, but those who had experienced the revolution in Russia did not require any documentation.⁵⁶ Jewish connections with Communism were given as one reason for suppressing them.⁵⁷ Another reason was their dominant position in German affairs and their determination to destroy the German people.⁵⁸ Their leadership in medicine, law, the press, and literature was due not primarily to intelligence but to a determined effort to seize power and to use Germany as the base for achieving the international Communist revolution.⁵⁹ Writers from within Germany were careful to point out that the maltreatment of Jews in Germany was highly exaggerated by the foreign Jewish-dominated press.⁶⁰ Once the half-truths and falsehoods of this press were exposed, things would be different in Germany too, because anti-Jewish action would then not be necessary.⁶¹

The foreign policy of Adolf Hitler, like the domestic policy, was designed to secure for Germany and her people their rightful place under the sun.⁶² This meant political realism as well as the pursuit of peaceful international relations. The former required an uncompromising battle with Communism,⁶³ a resolute renunciation of the

demands of the Treaty of Versailles,⁶⁴ the remilitarization of Germany "as in all other civilized nations on earth,"⁶⁵ and the bringing back into the German *Reich* of German peoples on the outside, as in Austria and the Sudetenland.⁶⁶ Recruits for the German army were sought among German nationals and German ethnics around the world. The German consul succeeded in placing his recruitment notices in *Der Bote*⁶⁷ and in *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*.⁶⁸

The positive interpretation of German policies and the German leader was not universally accepted among the Russlaender Mennonites, though the opponents were certainly less vocal and fewer in number than the promoters. The first and deepest concern relating to the promotion of the German *Reich* grew out of the traditional Mennonite pacifist or nonresistance position. Although there were some who said it was the special duty of Mennonites, who knew Communism right down to its stone heart, to oppose it wherever and whenever possible and with whatever was necessary, there were also those who warned against any and all participation in, and sympathizing with, fascist movements. These were prepared to excuse the zealous participation of some young hotheads, but the wider sympathies in the constituency with the Brownshirts were inexcusable. After all, the sin against the nonresistant position in Russia, said one writer in referring to self-defence, had brought very bitter and undesirable consequences. The same had been true in other historical situations. Mennonites should not become guilty of the thirst for blood, which had made the nations of the world blind and insane.⁶⁹

"Does Menno Simons come under the National Socialists?" asked B.B. Janz, as he attacked a wrong interpretation of that foremost Dutch Mennonite leader.⁷⁰ Being nonresistant, and being a follower of Menno Simons, he said, meant being nonresistant in every situation. National and racial ambitions, or even the need for self-defence, never justified the surrender of this position. In another article, Janz protested the excessive emphasis on German blood, Aryanism, and German books and stamps, which he said had only one object, namely "to tie us geographically to Germany."⁷¹ Appreciation of the German language, he said, did not mean "adherence to German politics."

Generally speaking, the arguments used in defence of the nonresistant position were historical, theological, and practical. The Anabaptist pioneers of the Mennonite church were cited as evidence that it was possible to remain true and faithful even in persecution.⁷²

The words of Jesus were quoted in a theological defence of nonresistance, and *Der Bote* published a series of articles answering in the negative the question “May Children of God Take Part in War?” After “proving” that the Old Testament wars were actually not God’s will, but the people’s choosing, the writer proceeded to show from New Testament scriptures that the higher loyalties of Christians to Christ should prevent them from participating in war. Some paragraphs from the church fathers and the early church history, as well as quotes from more contemporary leaders on the hellish nature of war, were further conclusive evidence that Christians were called to abstain.⁷³

The religious argument was also used to challenge the politics of Germany in other areas. The cross of Christ could not give way to another cross, the swastika.⁷⁴ There was danger in overemphasizing family and blood ties. Had Jesus not warned the leaders of Israel to repent rather than to depend on having Abraham for a father? The important thing was not the pure race but the genuine faith.⁷⁵

It was further pointed out that National Socialism had many shortcomings. Hitler was not without mistakes.⁷⁶ Germans, while they had their virtues, also had their vices. Germans had the capacity for selfishness, for crankiness and eccentricity, for flaming hate. Germans were bellicose and lacked consideration for others.⁷⁷ Germans, as fascists, preached a gospel of hate.⁷⁸ Germans, as National Socialists, were too much persuaded of the superiority of their own nation and race. As one teacher in Germany said, “The German young people have learned something in these times. They have learned to hate.”⁷⁹

This also meant that the Jews could not be blamed for the problems in Germany and the world. Admittedly, the Jewish people had abused the privilege of their chosenness, but the real reason they were feared so much was because of their ability. The Jews, it was said in their defence, combined the talents of both the Germans and Englishmen, could both research and theorize, and could also apply theory.⁸⁰ Another writer, the author of *The Russian Dance of Death*, sharply refuted all the talk about “*juedische Weltherrschaft*” (Jewish world domination) and about Jewish direction of the Communist revolution. Race had very little to do with it, he said. As a matter of fact, no race suffered as much from the Communist revolution as did the Jews.⁸¹

Mennonites who were international in their religious outlook had

no reason to participate in a campaign against any one race, he continued. Mennonite ministers should condemn hate literature against the Jews in the same way that other filthy literature was attacked. *The Friends' Intelligencer* and *The Christian Century*, rather than Gerald B. Winrod's *The Defender*, were recommended as source materials for the Mennonite press.⁸²

German-speaking Canadians were reminded that they owed their political loyalty to Canada and that Canada had remarkable achievements of her own. Canada had a friendly government and freedom to develop a religious and cultural life as one pleased. Canada also offered the rich values of English language and literature.⁸³ Besides, most of the Russian Mennonites in Canada had been saved from Communism not by Germany, but by Canada. One writer expressed alarm that every political gust of wind in Europe should bring such intense discussion and interest, when hardly any questions were asked about the country of one's own citizenship.

Let us not make the mistake of nurturing to maturity a German beer patriotism and remaining strangers in our own country. Let us make Canada our real homeland. . . . Dear reader, if you have come into this country as an immigrant and if you have given vows to obedience before God and man, then become a citizen of this country also in your heart.⁸⁴

The view that Mennonite citizenship obligations and national loyalties belonged in Canada prevailed in the end, as will later be seen more clearly. The older generation went out of its way to make public and official its appreciation of Canada and its fidelity to the crown. But the deep erstwhile empathy for Germany could not easily be set aside, and later, when Hitler occupied the Ukraine, some Russlaender cherished the hope of once again taking possession of the properties they had left behind. And the younger generation, undoubtedly reacting to a pacifism of the elders that was cloaked in pro-Germanism, went to war on the side of Britain in unexpectedly large numbers. But that story too must await a later unfolding.

The Nations and the Kingdom

Meanwhile, yet another school of thought, theologically verbalized but with political implications and affecting citizenship obligations,

swept through the Mennonite communities. An eschatology characterized by dispensationalism and pre-millennialism was not entirely new. Both in North America and in Russia, Mennonites had been exposed to the teachings of John Nelson Darby (d. 1882), an outstanding leader of the Plymouth Brethren and a promoter of dispensationalism. The earliest and strongest Mennonite carriers of these ideas in Europe were the Mennonite Brethren and in North America the Mennonite Brethren in Christ.

The leading proponent in the former group was Jacob W. Reimer, who frequently attended the Blankenburg Alliance Conference, a centre in Germany for the propagation of dispensationalism.⁸⁵ With his migration to Canada in the 1920s, the Dutch Mennonite congregational families were exposed to dispensationalism and pre-millennial teaching as never before. The Bible schools, almost without exception, reinforced the itinerant educational role of J. W. Reimer and his disciples. The curriculum and textbooks of the schools were largely based on dispensationalist sources, and the Scofield Reference Bible, heavily footnoted in dispensationalist directions, was regarded as “equally inspired with the biblical text.”⁸⁶

At least four important emphases followed from this interpretation of Scripture and of history.⁸⁷ First of all, the saving of souls, as many as possible, in preparation for the rapture was the most important task of the church in the dispensation of grace. Least important were the concerns about the kingdom on earth. All that would be taken care of in a future dispensation. The Sermon on the Mount applied to that future age, as did other ethical imperatives of the New Testament. Thus, every social ethic and every aspect of the social gospel was minimized in favour of personal salvation.

Also flowing from dispensationalism was a concern for the Jewish people, specifically their conversion. Expectations in this regard were heightened by their movement to Palestine under the British Mandate. Missions for the Jews sprang up in many places. Mennonite groups most preoccupied with dispensationalism were also most interested in missions. The Mennonite Brethren regularly received reports from Hugo Spitzer and his Jewish mission in Winnipeg.⁸⁸ In Kitchener, the House of Friendship for people of all nations was founded by the Old Mennonites, at least partly with the Jews in mind.⁸⁹

Perhaps no Mennonite group was taken in as much by dispensational and pre-millennial teaching as were the Mennonite Brethren, largely owing to the work of J.W. Reimer. According to the denomination's historian, "possibly no other theological system has influenced Mennonite Brethren theology...as much as dispensationalism."⁹⁰ Little wonder that the Brethren also had a great aversion for the social gospel and were careful to shun all who represented the socio-economic political implications of the gospel in the present age. Dispensationalism postponed all of that to another age.

The Conference of Mennonites in Canada was much less affected by dispensationalist thought, though the influence was strong enough for the issue to appear on several conference agendas. There was, however, no fear of challenging some of the dispensationalist assumptions, as was freely done by persons like Jacob H. Janzen in public presentations. J.H. Janzen, who had been asked to speak on the signs of the times, complained that he could not do this in terms of a system or systems because world history for him was not a chart with columns and paragraphs but an artistic production in which the colours often flowed into each other and the lines of demarcation and transition weren't always clear.⁹¹ He rejected the manner in which the Bible was used to shape a system, namely by taking various Scripture passages out of context and fitting them to other passages likewise taken out of context, and in the process forgetting, neglecting, or relegating to an inferior position other passages equally important in God's revelation.

Dispensationalist thinking, along with fundamentalism and pre-millennialism, had made strong inroads in the Swiss Mennonite communities in the 1920s and became stronger yet in the 1930s. The Old Mennonite Conference of Ontario felt entirely at liberty to request Goshen College and the Mennonite Publishing House not to neglect "the pre-millennial view of prophecy," since the Conference was part of the constituency of those institutions and since the majority of the membership in the Conference accepted that view.⁹²

It is also true, however, that the Old Mennonites did not leave some of their old teachings as they accepted some of the new ones. Along with fundamentalism there were the Anabaptist fundamentals and alongside dispensationalism there was Anabaptist ethics, nonconformity and nonresistance in particular. These, said the *Christian*

Monitor, were the two “great fundamentals of the Christian faith [which] must be defended at any cost,”⁹³ even while it also carried a yearlong series of articles on “the prophetic word.”⁹⁴ The dual emphasis produced contradictions, especially in the *Monitor*, and no one articulated these better than C. F. Derstine.

Among Mennonite periodicals, the monthly *Christian Monitor* stood out as an attempt to comment in a regular and systematic way, from the perspective of the Christian faith, on important world happenings. Such events included the obvious power plays of the leading European states, but also the great changes coming to China,⁹⁵ the opening up of Africa,⁹⁶ the resistance movement building up in India,⁹⁷ the international implications of the Russian revolution,⁹⁸ and the real human need arising out of the Spanish Civil War.⁹⁹

Responsibility for all of this rested with C. F. Derstine. When the Kitchener bishop laid down his task as editor of the *Monitor* in 1929, he became the World News Editor, whose assignment was to fill anywhere from one to four pages a month of the 32-page magazine with relevant material. The “Comments on World News” Section was subtitled “the voices of the age in the light of the voice of the ages.” Almost every article was prefaced with a relevant—at least to the editor—scripture verse, which might or might not be referred to again in the material. From a variety of sources¹⁰⁰ the editor culled “the outstanding events of the day in church, educational, political, and social circles with an interpretation of the news in the light of the word of God.”

Derstine’s task and approach were characterized by a basic paradox and consequently filled with many contradictions, in which, in all probability, he mirrored the confusions and contradictions in significant sectors of the Mennonite community. At one and the same time, he and the *Monitor* editors were commenting on the problems of the world while minimizing Mennonite and Christian responsibility towards that world. As Mennonites, Derstine and the *Monitor* editors resolved “to remain aloof from politics” since they were committed to a platform of “separation from the world.”¹⁰¹ As evangelists and preachers, they insisted that the only remedy for the world’s ailments was the gospel.¹⁰² And as dispensationalists, they did not expect any improvement until the last dispensation and the millennial age was ushered in by Christ’s second coming.¹⁰³ Thus,

the immediate social and political responsibilities of Christians were left somewhat in limbo and many other issues were left unresolved.

Hence, the contradictions. Remaining “aloof from politics” was right and the official *Monitor* stance, but to remain silent in the face of “such giant evil forces [as] Communism” was wrong.¹⁰⁴ It was not for the church to introduce economic programs, but reforms such as those in Sweden could be welcomed.¹⁰⁵ It was good that “our testimony as a church against war is being effective” and that denominations like the Presbyterians—two million strong—wanted recognition in time of war for their conscientious objectors,¹⁰⁶ but the Federal Council of Churches, “a radical pacifist organization probably representing 20 million Protestants,” was condemned. The reasons for the harsh judgement included its being listed by the Bureau of Naval Intelligence as subversive because of its “communist character or connections” along with 222 other organizations.¹⁰⁷

The FCC was too “unorthodox, liberal, and unwise,” yet its Social Creed for the Christian Churches was probably right because “the best way to defeat the atheism of Russia is to build a more human and righteous civilization ourselves.”¹⁰⁸ Fundamentalism was in error because the peace principles of Christ required antagonism to war and because all Scripture, not just a 7-point creed, was fundamental and essential, yet the three-year program adopted by the World’s Fundamentals Convention had in it much that was worthy.¹⁰⁹ All sinners needed saving and should be saved, so that there would be none “where murder may be lying dormant,” but murderers themselves, especially Bruno Richard Hauptmann, the convicted kidnapper and murderer of the Lindbergh infant, should be executed.¹¹⁰ The readers of the *Monitor* were discouraged from associating Gandhi’s passive resistance with Bible nonresistance, and still it was said “the guns of the mightiest nations” were no match for “the boycott of the hapless Chinese [and] the passive resistance of India’s millions.”¹¹¹

As evil as Communism was, there were some lessons to be learned about religion and about economics. In the first place, the whole situation in Russia was but “a natural reaction to the failure of the Russian Orthodox Church . . . a system that was dead, and preyed on the ignorance of the masses.”¹¹² The Soviet insistence on economic communism was bad, very bad, but a sense of common ownership of the world’s goods would surely be good since “looking out for

number one”—Derstine was referring to trade barriers and high tariffs—“is the cause of the breakdown of civilization.”¹¹³ Besides, the world would have to choose “the communism of the New Testament which is Christian,” in order to avoid “the Christless Communism of Russia.”¹¹⁴

Mussolini, the Fascist leader of Italy, was somewhat of a problem, because he was viewed as “a protector from Vaticanism and Communism.” And anybody who opposed both could not be far from Derstine’s heart. Criticism of the Pope abounded in his columns,¹¹⁵ and the Catholic Church itself was “the great whore” of revelation.¹¹⁶ The Catholic Church had held “a powerful grip upon the nations of the world” but this grip was fast slipping, as in Fascist Italy, Republican Spain, and modern Mexico.¹¹⁷ While Fascism was the enemy of Communism, as clearly illustrated in Germany, Italy, and Spain, it represented the rule of force by a minority.¹¹⁸ Fascism, like Communism, exalted the state above the individual, the former in co-operation with capitalists, the latter in co-operation with the proletariat. Fascism was an opponent of other political bodies, of the free church, and of almost everybody. Besides, Fascism glorified war.¹¹⁹

Similarly, Adolf Hitler and Germany represented a dilemma. The *Fuehrer* and all Nazis were militant anti-communists and the guardians of certain values like the vigilantes of the West in America.¹²⁰

They are for the home. They are for marriage. They are for children. They are against sex-saturated moving pictures. They are for nationalism as against communism. They are for the peasant, and for putting back millions of people on to privately-owned farms, the re-establishment of a stout yeomanry. They are for an industrious, God-fearing body politic. They are for Christianity, through a vigorous ecclesiastical organization. . . .¹²¹

Hitler was given credit for resisting Communism in Germany, but why did he have to resort to Fascist tyranny, as was evident in the execution of nearly 70 men of his own party?¹²² With Hitler assuming all the power, democracy in Germany was dead.¹²³ Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* was a combination of terror, hatred, and racial prejudice, with hardly any humanitarian or moral spirit in it.¹²⁴

The *Monitor* was not optimistic about Germany's future with Adolf Hitler as chancellor. She had chosen between two possible evils, Fascism and Communism.¹²⁵ The Germany of the day was not the Germany of the Reformation, because higher critics had emptied the churches and destroyed her spirituality. The courageous pastors of the confessional church were praised because "no group of men of science, no academy of teachers or of artists, no bar association, has risked concentration camp for scientific, academic or artistic ideals."¹²⁶

In some areas, Derstine and his selected correspondents did not contradict themselves. They were certain that there was little else but evil in the world and that there was no salvation apart from that which individuals could experience in their hearts, that which Mennonites could retain by remaining separate from the world, and that which Christ would achieve upon his return. There were evil systems of thought, evil nations, evil leaders, evil deeds, and evil events, all of which pointed to chaos and revolution as the best the world could bring forth, the need for revival which was the task of the Christian church, and the return of the Lord to set everything right.¹²⁷ Referring to the sabre-rattling by Mussolini, to the rearmament program of France, and in general to the preparation for war, the *Monitor* commented:

The world at large certainly has not been able to deal with the fundamental antagonisms of unregenerate life. This takes the power of the Gospel, which the masses still reject. However, all these conditions only make louder the footfalls of the coming of the Prince of Peace, the "Great Umpire," who will finally speak the last word to the nations, a word of judgment for their rule.¹²⁸

For Derstine and the *Monitor*, the nations, be they fascist, marxist, or capitalist, were "ferocious beasts,"¹²⁹ all of whom would be judged by the Lord. Their constant grabbing for more land was wrong and Italy should have stayed out of Ethiopia.¹³⁰ Because of their evil ways, nations and empires and thrones were temporary. The dethronement of King Alfonso of Spain was another example of mighty thrones falling according to biblical prophecy. In the last 13 years alone, four powerful kingdoms had been overthrown: Austria, Germany, Russia, Spain, all a sign of the nearness of the return of the

King of Kings.¹³¹ The *Monitor* viewed the daily happenings, the Russian nightmare, the Japanese invasion of Manchukuo, the antics of Hitler, the uprisings of grudging labour, and the crushing blows of conscienceless capital, as leading to “a final crash—a catastrophe unparalleled in the ages past.”¹³²

All that was happening in the world, including the realignment and power struggles in Europe and the migration of Jews to Palestine, were perceived to be the fulfilment of prophecy, leading to an imminent end of the present age, the return of the Lord, and the ushering in of the new age in which also the Jewish people would once again have a special role. This position made the *Monitor* a constant and consistent champion of the Jewish people, but it also assumed their conversion. Since the predestination and pre-millennialism of Derstine assumed a special role for the Jewish people, his contradictions disappeared when they became the focus of his commentary.

The Lord would punish nations “which take a jingo (warlike) attitude to the Jew.”¹³³ The Jews had been oppressed too much and the Lord would judge the anti-Semitic spirit in both Germany and Italy. The way Germany was touching God’s chosen people was unforgivable. Noting the measures being enacted by Hitler affecting negatively and seriously the Jewish merchants, the *Monitor* warned Germany:

It has never paid any nation to misuse the Jew. Nations that kick this ancient and beloved people usually suffer seriously from stubbed toes. Hatred works like a boomerang. Germany, beware.¹³⁴

God had a special place for the Jews because of their antiquity and their outliving of many empires, because of Abraham, who cast the world’s longest shadow, because of Israel’s custodianship of the Ten Commandments, because of their contribution to the Gentiles, because of the prophecies, because of the supreme personality emerging from the Jewish people, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, because of their contribution to the early church and the sacred writings, and because of their contribution to world knowledge and to science.

The Lord’s judgements have always fallen upon nations which touched Israel, the “apple of his eye.” All the great nations that persecuted the Jews are but historical incidents, and the Jew

still lives on. . . . Truly, the Bible declares that the sufferings of Israel are part of God's judgements upon them. This, however, does not give any nation or individual the divine permission to persecute the Jews.¹³⁵

The *Monitor* observed that the Jews were being taunted, persecuted, and ostracized in many lands. In the U.S.A., 156 anti-Semitic organizations had sprung up overnight.¹³⁶ The validity of the Jewish Protocols was denied, and they were described as forgeries.¹³⁷ Evidence that Jews were in any way determinative or even influential with respect to Communism and Germany was refuted.¹³⁸ As far as the relationship between Jews and Communists in the U.S.A. was concerned, the exhaustive research of the American Hebrew Society had determined that in the New York area there were only 2,000 out of 2 million Jews in the Communist Party and the proportions weren't greater in cities like Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Chicago. No more than five of the 29 members of the Central Committee of the Party in the U.S.A. were Jews, and only about 30 out of 250 Party organizers were Jews.¹³⁹

Christians should love and accept the Jews, refuse to persecute and malign them, believe in the eternal purpose God had for the nation of Israel, deny the lies being told about the Jewish people—Jewish bankers did not control the world's finances—help them in their hour of distress, explain that antagonism could bring about repentance, and preach the gospel to both Jew and Gentile.¹⁴⁰ The Jew "is cuddling closer to the Christian Church than any other group of people," it was said, meaning that the opportunities for preaching the gospel were increasing.¹⁴¹ The apparent failure of political Zionism in Palestine, its hopes "blasted through the antagonism of the Arabs," clearly meant not that Jerusalem was out of focus as far as the Jews were concerned but that their spiritual salvation was a higher priority than their political entrenchment.¹⁴²

Four Conferences on Peace and War

The concerns about world affairs, the threat of war, and civic responsibility found their immediate and ultimate focus in the issue of nonresistance, the avoidance of military service, and whether or not there was an alternative. The discussions of militarism and military service produced examples of all the separations previously

described. There were those who insisted on total exemption and non-involvement in accordance with the position of geographic separation¹⁴³ and there were those whose involvement on the basis of an alternative ethic produced calls for international disarmament, on the one hand, and an alternative service for Mennonite boys, on the other hand.¹⁴⁴ These two positions involved the majority of Mennonites. Minority positions were pacifism or militarism on the basis of empathy with Germany. A few Canadian Mennonites actually responded to foreign recruitment notices.¹⁴⁵ Others were affected by individualism and institutionalism to the extent that, whether or not persons became militarily involved, this was viewed as a personal decision beyond the discipline of the community of believers.¹⁴⁶ And there were those who insisted that disarmament could only happen in a future age.¹⁴⁷

The discussions of these issues in the 1930s began in the separate congregational families but were then transferred to inter-Mennonite gatherings, where once again some differences between and among Russlaender and Kanadier and the Swiss became obvious. The discussions in four conference families are especially noteworthy: among the Swiss, the Old Mennonites and the Mennonite Brethren in Christ and among the Dutch, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada and the Northern District Mennonite Brethren Conference.

The Old Mennonites, for whom nonconformity and nonresistance were often the same issue and concern, kept alive their North America peace/military problems committees in the inter-war period. The task of these committees was to guide the church, including the conferences in Canada, in the peace witness.¹⁴⁸ The activities of these committees were varied. A petition bearing 20,000 signatures protesting a proposed program of universal military training was prepared in book form for mailing to Congress, but the joining of other movements that had been launched to find an alternative to war was discouraged.¹⁴⁹ Government officials were not only informed about the Mennonite position but urged to proceed with disarmament. The President of the United States, members of Congress, the 1930 London Naval Conference, and the 1932 Geneva Disarmament Conference all received communications encouraging stronger efforts for international peace and discouraging all movements that had an opposite tendency. The need for world

disarmament was frequently stated in the *Monitor* as it noted with alarm the military build-up around the world.¹⁵⁰

The Mennonite Conference of Ontario represented the Canadian side of the Old Mennonite peace position. S.F. Coffman, who had been the chief spokesman in the Great War, continued to press for true nonresistance, which neutralized or removed anger, antagonism, and hatred. He urged the avoidance of "aggressive" pacifist organizations like War-Resisters and the Anti-War League. Non-resistance negatively meant not suing at law and not resisting evil, and positively it meant turning the other cheek, going the second mile, and giving to him that asked.¹⁵¹

In the Conference itself, internal peace education and the external peace witness were both matters under discussion.¹⁵² The position on peace of the Russlaender now in Ontario was also clarified upon the initiative of the Conference. Interviews with Bishop Jacob H. Janzen of the Conference Mennonites and with pastor Henry H. Janzen of the Mennonite Brethren had produced the conclusion that the Russlaender were opposed to participation in war, that "they, with us, believe in nonresistance upheld by love," that they desired help in clarifying that noncombatant service in Canada had a different status than had been the case in Russia, and that consultation and co-operation leading to united action in the event of war was desired by them.¹⁵³

Three Canadians, working with three Americans as the Mennonite General Conference Peace Committee, prepared the "Statement of Position on Peace, War, and Military Service" which was accepted by the Mennonite General Conference at Turner, Oregon, in 1937 and by the Mennonite Conference of Ontario in 1938.¹⁵⁴ This so-called Turner Statement became a reference point also for other Mennonite groups, and was in all probability the most important Mennonite peace statement of the decade.¹⁵⁵

The Turner Statement referred to other historic documents (Dordrecht of 1917, Germantown of 1725, Goshen of 1917, and Garden City of 1921), and there sought to apply "the main tenets of our peaceful and nonresistant faith" to present conditions.¹⁵⁶ This application forbade participation "in carnal warfare or conflict between classes, groups or individuals," the personal bearing of arms, service with "civilian organizations temporarily allied with the military" (such as the YMCA and the Red Cross), "the financing of war

operations . . . in any form," "the manufacture of munitions and weapons," "military training in schools or colleges," and "any agitation, propaganda, or activity that tends to promote ill-will or hatred among nations. . . ." This position ruled out government-administered alternative service, though the willingness "at all times to aid in the relief of those in distress or suffering," regardless of the danger and the cost, was emphasized. Should war come:

we shall endeavour to continue to live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; avoid joining in the wartime hysteria of hatred, revenge and retaliation; manifest a weak and submissive spirit, being obedient unto the laws and regulations of the government in all things, except in such cases where the obedience to the government would cause us to violate the teachings of the Scriptures. . . . ¹⁵⁷

The New Mennonite Brethren in Christ were relatively silent on peace and military matters, but in 1938 the Ontario Conference appointed a committee to study the Old Mennonite statement.¹⁵⁸ The Committee found itself "in substantial agreement with this statement, though differing somewhat in a few details." It was decided, therefore, to prepare a statement—the word used was "Memorial"—based on the Turner Statement but with "such additions or other changes . . . as would make clear our MBC position." Subsequently, support for the Memorial was sought and secured from the Canadian North-West Conference of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ and from the Brethren in Christ Church (Tunkers) with whom the Mennonite Brethren in Christ formed a joint committee, to forward the message to Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King. The hope had been to have the message endorsed also by the Mennonite Conference of Ontario, and, while S.F. Coffman attended one of the joint meetings as an unofficial representative, he explained that the Turner Statement had already been forwarded to the Prime Minister by that Conference.¹⁵⁹

Since the Mennonite Brethren in Christ would drop the Mennonite identity in less than a decade, it is of interest that the 1938 Memorial recognized commonality "with other present-day branches of the Mennonite church" with respect to the doctrines of peace and nonresistance as well as continuity with the historic Dordrecht Confession of Faith.¹⁶⁰ In regard to military service, the

MBC Memorial followed word for word the Turner Statement on carnal warfare or conflict between nations and classes, on the financing of war operations through voluntary loans and contributions, on the manufacture of munitions, on military training in schools and colleges, on propaganda producing ill will or hatred, and on wartime profiteering.¹⁶¹ But, significantly, the Memorial omitted the Turner paragraph having to do with alternative service, namely:

. . . consistency requires that we do not serve during war time under civil organizations temporarily allied with the military in the prosecution of the war, such as the YMCA, the Red Cross, and similar organizations which, under military orders, become part of the war system in effect, if not in method and spirit, however beneficial their peace-time activities may be.¹⁶²

A subsequent report of the Committee to the Conference made clear that the omission was deliberate, but this did not mean that there was to be no co-operation with other Mennonite groups.¹⁶³ The Non-Resistant Relief Organization, founded during the Great War as an agency of all the Ontario Mennonite and Amish groups, and dormant since 1924, was reactivated in 1937, and the Mennonite Brethren in Christ resolved to forward their relief money through the NRRO.¹⁶⁴ That co-operation also helped prepare the way for participation in a new organization, the Conference of Historic Peace Churches and its Military Problems Committee, embracing also Quakers and Brethren in Christ (Tunkers).¹⁶⁵ The Conference restored the nineteenth-century alliance on matters of peace and nonresistance among the Mennonites, Quakers, and Tunkers which had existed since pioneer days.¹⁶⁶

The two conferences of the Dutch Mennonites most concerned with issues of peace and war were the Conference of Mennonites in Canada and the Northern District Mennonite Brethren Conference. The former had the matter on its agenda at regular intervals during the inter-war period.¹⁶⁷ The Conference expressed willingness to explore with other Mennonite groups the possibility of an alternative service,¹⁶⁸ voiced concern about militarism in the schools,¹⁶⁹ insisted that new congregations joining the Conference hold to nonresistance,¹⁷⁰ encouraged the preparation and distribution of peace literature,¹⁷¹ approved membership in the World Peace Union

of Mennonites, whose headquarters was in the Netherlands,¹⁷² requested research into the status of conscientious objectors in the military laws of the country,¹⁷³ and heard various position papers on nonresistance.¹⁷⁴

The many articles about nonresistance in the periodicals, said J.J. Klassen, were a sign that the matter had become a problem among the Mennonites.¹⁷⁵ This he had difficulty understanding because 400 years of nonresistance had been part of the confession, and repeatedly the forefathers had sacrificed all their possessions in order to maintain what for them was a holy and precious conviction. And now there was a favourable climate for nonresistance in the universal anti-war movement, which was a continuing reaction to the Great War. Even the victors did not enjoy any good results. The war had been so terrible that many who had been part of it, including ordinary soldiers and the highest generals, were totally opposed to war. In many other Christian groups now, there was also a conscience about war, and even governments were denouncing war as a crime against humanity.

Responsibility, faithfulness, and loyalty were main themes of the 1937 Conference sessions, and they were also applied to the state.¹⁷⁶ Faithfulness to the state was seen to be the will of God, except in cases where the will of the state contradicted the will of God. For Mennonites, there were two areas of contradiction: participating in war and swearing of the oath. Otherwise, Mennonites were loyal citizens of the state, a special requirement at this time because "the spirit of disloyalty, disobedience, and revolution" was also at work in the west, especially through the press, making people unhappy and ungrateful and unmindful of the many things that come via the state, namely the promotion of the general welfare of its citizens.¹⁷⁷ Christians, and especially the Mennonite immigrants of the 1920s, could express their gratitude by engaging in a useful vocation, thus becoming an example to others, by not becoming a burden to the state and, indeed, by helping to carry the burdens of those needy persons who did not qualify for state aid, and by maintaining a moral and religious stance, especially with reference to educational matters.¹⁷⁸

David Toews had written to Prime Minister King, Bishop S.F. Coffman, and four lawyers to clarify the situation with respect to Mennonite exemption from military service. The most definitive clarification received came from T. Magladery, the Deputy Minis-

ter of Immigration.¹⁷⁹ Magladery explained, first of all, that all the Mennonites were the same before the law and there was no difference whatsoever arising out of the various periods of immigration. Nor were orders-in-council determinative in this matter, he advised, because orders-in-council could only give or take away that which statutes gave or didn't give. The famous order-in-council of 1873, which granted exemptions specifically to the Russian Mennonites, was to give them assurance that they also were covered by the statutes. All exemption from military service, he explained, had been defined by statute since Confederation and was applicable to persons who, because of the teachings of their religion, were opposed to the bearing of arms. In brief:

The only conclusion I can come to is that the Mennonites are as free now from military service as they have ever been. And if no changes are made in the militia act and if the confession of faith remains unchanged then they will be free from military service also in the future.¹⁸⁰

In the Northern District Mennonite Brethren Conference, the issues of war and peace were placed on the agenda at Waldheim in 1934 by an unusual source. It so happened that there were in Saskatchewan several communities of Russian-speaking believers who had come under Mennonite influence before and/or after their migration from Russia. The Conference of Mennonites in Canada had such a connection¹⁸¹ and the Mennonite Brethren were even more involved, evangelism among Russian people having been one of their special strengths.¹⁸² In 1934, representatives of these people brought a resolution on the war question in language quite unusual for a Mennonite Brethren Conference.¹⁸³ The resolution asked that all wars be condemned because war did not resolve conflict, because it destroyed the moral foundations of society, because it left huge debts and many orphans, widows, cripples, and persons mentally ill, and because of the role in war played by capitalist industry and power-hungry diplomats.

The Conference declined to support the resolution because in its view its task was not "to proclaim anti-war resolutions into the wide world" but rather to deepen the peace conviction in the churches and to find a way to protect the consciences of the brothers in wartime.

The Conference also indicated that, while they would work together with all nonresistant bodies, they would have nothing to do with Quakers and other “popular movements which employ force.”¹⁸⁴ With respect to the military question,¹⁸⁵ the Conference adopted a position on alternative service which included the medical corps:

. . . as citizens we are duty-bound to our homeland to serve not only with taxes but with a service not contrary to our conscience. . . . we should be willing to do anything that serves the principle of life, even if this is tied up with problems. Cowardice or convenience or other considerations have no place in this matter. As disciples of Jesus Christ we cannot take a position against the medical corps. . . . if those healed are sent back to war and to their death, that is not our responsibility and it may not rest on our conscience.¹⁸⁶

Needless to say, perhaps, the Russian brethren were never heard from again.

The alternative service and medical corps option was being promoted by the Brethren on the assumption that what was possible in Russia would also be desirable in Canada. But it was known already that Kanadier Mennonites didn't see things that way, so the Brethren decided that their own position should be interpreted on an inter-Mennonite committee by one of their own Kanadier.¹⁸⁷ The compromise was insufficient, because not all the Brethren were themselves satisfied with the Waldheim resolution. It was modified in 1937 to the effect that individual persons should not be coerced to go into the medical corps if they didn't want to and that understanding should be reached with the authorities so that medical corpsmen need not be armed and could be under civilian direction.¹⁸⁸

Other positions were not modified. The Conference agreed to participate in all-Mennonite committees, provided they did not establish connections with social-political pacifist organizations. And peace literature could be distributed to the young people but not “the so-called pacifist writings [which] had a political basis and campaigned for a world peace which the Scriptures did not project” or other writings with a religious basis but with a radical approach to nonresistance. “One-sided pamphlets wouldn't be of help to our young people,” said the Conference, only those writings which harmonized obedience towards the government with the love of one's neighbour and enemy.¹⁸⁹

Mennonites, Militarism, and Their Majesties

The many-sided expressions of readiness to approach the problem of war and discussions with the government on an inter-Mennonite basis eventually led to such meetings, encouraged in part by events outside of Canada. In the U.S.A., meetings between Mennonites, Quakers, and the Church of the Brethren had begun in 1935 and were being held regularly under the auspices of a Continuation Committee.¹⁹⁰ And in 1936, Harold S. Bender, the chairman of the Old Mennonite General Conference Peace Problems Committee, was seeking the signatures of American Mennonite church leaders for the "Peace Manifesto," originating with some Mennonites in Holland and adopted at the third Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam.¹⁹¹

Mennonites in Canada were not ready for a broad ecumenical approach among peace churches, except in Ontario, where Quakers, Tunkers, and Mennonites had a history of joint witness and action. However, a March 10, 1939, Chicago meeting of seven American Mennonite groups to prepare a plan for joint action became an acceptable model. David Toews, C.F. Klassen, and B.B. Janz attended the meeting, and proceeded to plan a similar gathering in Canada.¹⁹²

The inter-Mennonite meeting of representatives to discuss problems related to military service was held at Winkler, Manitoba, on May 15, 1939.¹⁹³ Intended to be fully representative of all the Mennonites in Canada, seven congregational families of the Dutch heritage were present, and one from the Swiss heritage, namely the Old Mennonites. The former included the Conference Mennonites¹⁹⁴ and the Mennonite Brethren, both predominantly, though not exclusively, Russlaender, and the following Kanadier congregational families: Altkolonier, Bruderthaler (Evangelical Mennonite Brethren), Holdemaner (Church of God in Christ Mennonite), Kleine Gemeinde, and Rudnerweider. The Bergthaler, a leading Kanadier congregation in Manitoba, was also present and included in the Conference Mennonites. Not represented among the 230 registered participants were the Bergthaler(S), Chortitzer, and Sommerfelder.¹⁹⁵ The Hutterian Brethren, having been invited, were present.

The purpose of the meeting was explained by David Toews, who

was then also elected to chair the day's proceedings, the recording of which was entrusted to C.F. Klassen and F.C. Thiessen, both of Winnipeg, both Russlaender, and both Brethren.¹⁹⁶ Toews identified the agenda of the day as follows: the possibility of "the outbreak of a disastrous war," the disunity of the Mennonites in the last war, and the desirability of "all Mennonite churches who esteem the principle of nonresistance to agree and proceed unitedly."¹⁹⁷ Knowing full well that no Mennonite group at the meeting would want to be coerced into a united position, Toews gave the Winkler event the status of an unofficial and informal meeting, the decisions of which could be official and binding only for those groups who chose to make them so.

Of greatest significance for the discussions of the day were the positions of the various congregational families to be taken in the event of war and the calling up of the young men, namely whether or not some alternative service instead of military service would be acceptable. It soon became clear that there was a sharp division of opinion on the question, and that it was the Russlaender, whose Russian history included alternative service in the forestry and medical corps, who were promoting a position favourable to an alternative service.

Helpful to those who were opposed was the Turner Statement and its chief interpreter, Harold S. Bender, who was present not only as the guest speaker of the day, but also as the representative of the Old Mennonites of Ontario, having been authorized in that capacity by S.F. Coffman. H.S. Bender "emphasized that the Old Mennonite churches are entirely opposed to any work in any organization which has anything to do with the conduct of the war, such as the medical corps or a war industry." Speaking for S.F. Coffman, Bender recommended "that if no service is requested none should be offered by the Mennonites in general."¹⁹⁸ Bender was supported in his stand by Bishop Schmidt of Guernsey, representing the Old Mennonites in Western Canada, by Bishop Jakob Froese of the Altkolonier, Rev. Jacob Wiebe of the Holdemaner, Rev. David Hofer of the Hutterian Brethren, Bishop William Falk of the Rudnerweider, and Rev. H.R. Reimer of the Kleine Gemeinde. Two groups expressed readiness "in case of need for an alternative service in the medical corps, thereby manifesting that the churches are willing to save life, but not to destroy it."¹⁹⁹ They were the Mennonite Brethren and the

Evangelical Mennonite Brethren (Bruderthaler), whose spokesmen, from Coaldale and Steinbach respectively, coincidentally bore the same name: Benjamin Janz.

Representatives of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada tended to speak in more general terms about adherence to the principle of nonresistance, but it was Jacob H. Janzen of Waterloo who stressed the need for a positive expression of one's citizenship, especially in Ontario, where the immigrants were highly suspect and where the meeting house at Virgil had been searched, unsuccessfully, for explosives alleged to be hidden there. Part of the Mennonite problem, it was recognized, was the excessive amount of German literature being brought into the communities, literature carrying propaganda for another state.

In the end, the meeting agreed to set forth those matters in a resolution on which there was full agreement.²⁰⁰ They included a continued firm stand on the biblical principle of nonresistance "as received from the fathers," confession of failure to adhere to the principle consistently, a sense of urgency to much more fully teach the doctrines of nonresistance to the young people, gratitude for freedom of religion and conscience, and willingness "to remain loyal to our Canada."

The latter was further elaborated on in a special address to their majesties for which there was unanimous consent. The meeting also agreed to the formation of a continuing committee consisting of three persons from the three leading conferences: David Toews, B.B. Janz, and S.F. Coffman, to which others could be added. And, finally, a unanimous request was addressed to the editors of *Rundschau* and *Bote* "to refrain from printing any news or articles contrary to our principles." There was no need to specify what was meant because it was clear that writers in both papers had carried their pro-Germanism far enough to suggest disloyalty to Canada and a discarding of nonresistance.

Harold S. Bender was impressed with the strength and unanimity of nonresistance convictions expressed, but for him and others enthusiastic about the outcome it was premature relief. The differences on an alternative service were deeper than most were ready to admit. Most ominous for the future also was the exclusion of any one of the Kanadier bishops or churches—David Toews and the Rosenorter hardly spoke for them—from the continuing committee.

The Mennonites had come together to record the things on which they agreed. Very soon those things on which they did not agree, which disagreements they did not record, would matter the most, at least when it came to forming a united Mennonite front as the war clouds gathered ever thicker.

As the horizons darkened, the Mennonites became even more aware not only that they were not united and that they had not adequately prepared their young people but also that they had given both them and Canadian society a mixed message. Basically, they were concerned about doing the will of God and advancing His kingdom, but they had postponed it into another age, transferred it to another country, or limited it to their colonies and their conferences. The time had come, following the cues of H. H. Ewert and Edward Yoder, to take society very seriously, not to withdraw from it, but to be involved on the basis of, and separated from it in terms of, an alternative ethic and value system.

The first, most obvious step was to accept that they were Canadian, to express appreciation for that fact, and to do so both by acknowledging those placed in authority and by rendering service to others. In the latter category were the reactivation of the Non-Resistant Relief Organization in Ontario, already noted, and in the West the raising of funds for the Red Cross Society.²⁰¹ And in terms of ethnic identification, people like C. F. Klassen, who had once praised Hitler, were beginning to say that Mennonites were Dutch, not German.²⁰² David Toews went to the public media to explain that Mennonites might be German in a cultural sense but not in a political sense,²⁰³ and later, B. B. Janz gave to the Lethbridge paper an article denying National Socialism on his part.²⁰⁴

B. B. Janz, like David Toews, had made it his special assignment to give the public a better understanding of Mennonites. Perhaps it was the ongoing experience with anti-Mennonite agitators in Coaldale, but Janz had early come to the conclusion that flirtation with Germany was wrong and that some service in wartime would be right. He also used every public occasion possible to praise Canada and its leaders. One such event was a visit to the Mennonites at Coaldale of Colonel J. S. Dennis and Sir Edward Beatty, the president of the CPR, who was referred to by a Calgary newspaper as Coaldale's "sugar daddy."²⁰⁵ Both were profusely thanked by Janz and David Toews, who offered their loyalty to Canada.²⁰⁶ The event

was good for the Mennonites, inasmuch as the *Lethbridge Herald* observed editorially:

The Mennonites are a God-fearing, hard-working people who left Russia with a curse in their ears, and as Bishop Toews said Sunday, were received in Canada in the spirit of St. John. . . . There is a lesson in the Mennonite ceremony of Sunday for many of us who are apt to regard much too lightly these days the freedom which is ours here in Canada.²⁰⁷

Another occasion for mutual admiration by Mennonites and Canadian leaders was the 1939 session in Coaldale of the Northern District Conference. Acknowledging the presence of Senator W. Buchanan from Ottawa and W.H. Fairfield, the superintendent of the Dominion Experimental Farm at Lethbridge, B.B. Janz praised the "full freedom to establish ourselves economically and spiritually." There was no country in the world where "the people enjoy such religious liberty as we do here in Canada."²⁰⁸ J.F. Redekop of Main Centre likewise affirmed the desire of Mennonites to be good citizens:

. . . we would like to be citizens of the British Commonwealth of Nations, which pledge their loyalty to and pray for their country and their Government and endeavour to perform their duties and obligations in every respect as far as they are in accordance with the Scriptures and with their Christian conscience.²⁰⁹

The best opportunity of all for expressing loyalty and obligation was the unprecedented visit to Canada in 1939 of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. The response to that visit had more Mennonite unity and integrity in it than some other public relations events, for positive feelings about the British monarchy dated back to that time in the late seventeenth century when William and Mary took up the cause of the dissenters and generous portions of religious liberty became one of the general characteristics of the British Empire.²¹⁰ It was partly the trust in the monarchy and British laws that had brought the Swiss from the U.S.A. and the Amish from Europe to Ontario,²¹¹ and, later, the Mennonites from Russia to Manitoba.²¹² At this point in history, the most conservative of the Kanadier would likely have at least one portrait of the King in their homes,²¹³ and it

was one imperial symbol which was not out of bounds in their schools. And, at the other end of the Mennonite continuum, the New Mennonites were known not only for their enthusiasm for George VI but also for their message to Edward VIII upon his assumption of power, assuring him of “our loyalty” and prayer “always for God’s blessing on Him, His Government, and His subjects, and for peace and prosperity in all his realm.”²¹⁴ Nothing was said when a short while later he abdicated to marry a person he loved but who was unacceptable as a queen.²¹⁵

The Winkler message to “George VI, King of Canada” conveyed the “deepest devotion and unwavering loyalty” of the 80,000 Canadian Mennonites both “to yourself and the Government of which you are the head.”²¹⁶ Reviewing the history of Mennonite migrations, the message acknowledged that “in this Dominion” the Mennonites had found “a haven of rest, freedom, and security after having been severely oppressed at different times and in different countries . . . because of their faith.” The Canadian government had “by and large kept the promises made” and the Mennonites had been allowed “to live their lives according to the dictates of their conscience,” to follow their occupations “as they pleased,” and to enjoy the fruits of their labour “without any molestation or interference.”

Dressed up in the best calligraphy the Mennonites could provide,²¹⁷ the sentiments thus expressed in western Canada were echoed in eastern Canada. It so happened that the dates of the annual session of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario coincided with the visit of Their Majesties to Kitchener-Waterloo. But the opening of the session was delayed until the royal train left the cities. The Conference engaged in special prayer for Their Majesties’ safety and in the singing of “God Save the King.”²¹⁸ A message sent after the King’s and Queen’s departure thanked the Prime Minister for their visit to Canada and reminded him that the Mennonites had “entrusted the safeguarding of these [religious] liberties to the British Crown.”²¹⁹

These positive expressions were reinforced in the *Monitor*, where strong words of praise for the monarchy and the monarch found repeated outlet.²²⁰ If C.F. Derstine was generally negative about the nations and their leaders, he was effusive about Great Britain. He attributed the “ovation” and “thrilling reception” received by Their Majesties to the fact that “here is one nation that God has used

through the ages, which still stands—and stands for something.”²²¹

Great Britain was admired for the immensity of its territory, for laying “the foundation of political and religious liberty for the world,” for “one of the finest systems of law in the world,” for its attitude towards Christianity, and for its present King and Queen, whose “home life appeals to the nations.”²²² Derstine considered that the Munich Agreement had halted “the four grim, deadly horsemen”²²³ and that British statesmanship deserved its fair share of praise because “the world may have been saved a bath in blood.”²²⁴

The world was not saved a bloodbath. World War II broke out in September of 1939, and Canada was immediately drawn into it. Though the mobilization of manpower and conscription were delayed for a time, the beginning of another world-wide conflagration marked a turning point not only in world and Canadian history but also in Mennonite history. For the present, it was clear that the Mennonites had to focus on new and unaccustomed ways of exercising their faith and citizenship. They could not escape into a future kingdom or to a foreign country. A retreat into their geographic enclaves or conference institutions was also not a way out. They were facing the world, and they needed to decide on the ethic which would guide them at the crossroads.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Harold S. Bender, “Church and State in Mennonite History,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 13 (April 1939):103. The original says “totalitarian war” but the probable meaning is “total war.”
- 2 H.H. Ewert, “Welche Aufgaben haben wir jetzt nach dem Kriege unserm Lande gegenueber?” *Der Mitarbeiter* 13 (February 1920):9–11, 16; (April 1920):31.
- 3 Signatories were the following: Benjamin Ewert as chairman and J.G. Toews as secretary; from Conference congregations: D.D. Klassen, John F. Nickel, Jacob J. Loewen, Wm. S. Buhr, David Schulz, J.N. Hoepfner, J.J. Siemens (Bergthaler); P.A. Rempel, John P. Bueckert, J.H. Klassen, J.P. Klassen (Blumenort); J.H. Enns, Jacob Paukratz (Schoenwieser); Brethren congregations: Jacob Epp, J.W. Reimer, A.A. Regier, C.N. Hiebert, F.F. Isaak, H.S. Voth; others: P.S. Wiebe (Chortitzer); J.T. Wiebe (Holde-maner); P.W. Friesen, H.R. Dyck, P.P. Reimer, P.J.B. Reimer, D.P. Friesen, H.R. Reimer (Kleine Gemeinde); W.H. Falk (Rudnerweider); Peter A. Toews (Sommerfelder); B.P. Janz (Bruderthaler).

- 4 Benjamin Ewert and Julius G. Toews, "Eine wichtige Versammlung," *Der Bote* 15 (26 October 1938):3-4. See also CGC, XV-31.2, "1930—Chamberlain," Benjamin Ewert, et al., "To the Right Honourable Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain, London, England," 10 October 1938.
- 5 Benjamin Ewert, et al., *ibid.*
- 6 H.H. Ewert, *op.cit.*
- 7 H.H. Ewert, "Zur diamanten Jubilaeumsfeier der Dominion von Canada," *Der Mitarbeiter* 20 (May 1927):6.
- 8 H.H. Ewert, "Sind die Mennoniten Canadas auf dem Wege Militaristen zu werden?" *Der Mitarbeiter* 20 (June 1927):6-7.
- 9 [H.H. Ewert,] "Das Zunehmen der Unduldsamkeit und Engherzigkeit in unseren nordamerikanischen Laendern," *Der Mitarbeiter* 21 (April 1928):6-7.
- 10 H.H. Ewert, "Eine Versammlung der Friedensfreunde in Winnipeg," *Der Mitarbeiter* 22 (May 1929):6-7.
- 11 [H.H. Ewert,] "Gewaltlosigkeit," *Der Mitarbeiter* 23 (November 1930):4-5.
- 12 Yoder published the following articles in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* in the 1930s: "The Christian's Attitude Toward Participation in War Activities," 9 (January 1935):5-19; "The Need for Non-Conformity Today," 11 (April 1937):131-41; "Christianity and the State," 11 (July 1937):171-95; "The Obligation of the Christian to the State and Community—'Render to Caesar,'" 13 (April 1939):104-22. See also Harold S. Bender, "Church and State in Mennonite History," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 13 (April 1939):83-103; Guy F. Hershberger authored the following in the *MQR* in the 1930s: "Is Alternative Service Desirable and Possible?" 9 (January 1935):20-36; "Some Religious Pacifists of the Nineteenth Century," 10 (January 1936):73-86; "The Pennsylvania Quaker Experiment in Politics, 1682-1756," 10 (October 1936):187-221; "Nonresistance and Industrial Conflict," 13 (April 1939):135-54; *Can Christians Fight?* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House) was published in 1940. His comprehensive treatment *War, Peace and Nonresistance* (Scottsdale, Pa.) did not appear until 1944; Melvin Gingerich, "The Menace of Propaganda and How to Meet It," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 13 (April 1939):123-34.
- 13 Edward Yoder, "The Obligation of the Christian to the State and Community—'Render to Caesar.'" 13 (April 1939):106.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.
- 17 H.H. Ewert, "Welche Aufgaben haben wir jetzt nach dem Kriege unserm Lande gegeneuber?" *Der Mitarbeiter* 13 (February 1920):9-11, 16; (April 1920):31; D.J. Loewen, "Welche Stellung

- nehmen wir dem Staate gegenueber?" *Jahrbuch*, 1934, pp. 55-60; *Jahrbuch*, 1934, p. 20; H.J. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith* (Altona, Man.: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1972), p. 317.
- 18 E.K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia* (Altona: D.W. Friesen & Sons, Ltd., 1975), pp. 233-34.
- 19 Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1975); Watson Kirkconnell, *Canada, Europe, and Hitler* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1939); Watson Kirkconnell, "The European-Canadians in Their Press," *The Canadian Historical Association*, 1940, pp. 85-92; Sam Steiner, "Kitchener Germans and National Socialism" (research paper, Conrad Grebel College, University of Waterloo, 1973); Jonathan F. Wagner, "Transferred Crisis: German Volkish Thought Among Russian Mennonite Immigrants to Western Canada," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 1 (Fall 1973):202-20; Jonathan F. Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1980).
- 20 James C. Juhnke, *A People of Two Kingdoms: The Political Acculturation of the Kansas Mennonites* (Newton, Kans.: Faith and Life Press, 1975), pp. 137-43; Theo Glueck, "Mennoniten im Dritten Reich — und heute," *Mennonitische Blaetter* 5 (June 1978):84-85; "Adolf Hitler von deutscher Seite betrachtet," *Bethel College Monthly* 29 (April 1934):13-17; "And Thou Too, Brutus," *The Mennonite* 52 (22 June 1937):3; John C. Wenger, "German Mennonites," *Gospel Herald* 30 (11 November 1937):706-7; Gerhard Ratzlaff, "An Historical-Political Study of the Mennonites in Paraguay" (M.A. thesis, University of Fresno, 1974).
- 21 This subject is treated extensively in, and what follows is largely borrowed from, an unpublished work by the author, namely, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority Group, the Mennonites, in the 1930s" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1965).
- 22 Examples of materials in *Rundschau* are the following: "Reichkanzler Adolf Hitler Rede," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 56 (8 March 1933):14; "Das grosse Sterben," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 56 (24 May 1933):1 ff.; "Die Nationalsozialisten," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 56 (7 June 1933):13; "Zeitspiegel," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 58 (9 January 1935):12; Ein Mitglied, "Deutscher Bund, Ortsgruppe Kitchener-Waterloo," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 58 (23 January 1935):12; J. Goebbels, "Jeder der ihn wirklich kennt..." *Mennonitische Rundschau* 56 (22 March 1935):12; "Begegnung mit Hitler," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 59 (29 April 1936):10; Dr. Weber, "Die Losung: Gutes Deutsch," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 59 (8 July 1936):9; "Tag der Nationalen Erhebung," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 61 (2 February 1938):3, 10; Hein-

- rich H. Schroeder, "Was heiszt voelkisch?" *Mennonitische Rundschau* 61 (2 February 1938):12-13; Heinrich H. Schroeder, "Was heiszt voelkische Kultur," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 61 (23 February 1938):12-13; C. DeFehr, "Meine Reiseeindruecke," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 61 (25 May 1938):10; "Zum 11. Deutschen Tag fuer Manitoba," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 61 (6 July 1938):13. See also Lothar Fromm, "Nazistische Einfluesze in mennonitischen Zeitschriften" (research paper, Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, 1961).
- 23 Examples of relevant materials in *Post* are the following from the year 1933: "Die Hintergruende der Hetzpropaganda," *Die Post* 20 (27 April 1933):1-2; "Die Hitlerregierung in Christlicher Beleuchtung," *Die Post* 20 (8 June 1933):3; "Editor-Spalte," *Die Post* 20 (3 August 1933):3; "Zum mennonitischen Problem," *Die Post* 20 (3 August 1933):4-5; "Die Rede Hitlers," *Die Post* 20 (25 May 1933):1; "Kampf gegen den Bolshevismus," *Die Post* 20 (17 August 1933):2-3; "Kanadische Nationalisten halten meeting in Winkler," *Die Post* 20 (December 1933):1.
- 24 David Toews, "Reise und Konferenzbericht," *Der Bote* 7 (5 November 1930):1-2.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 D. Enns, "Aus dem Fluechtlingslager," *Der Bote* 7 (9 July 1930):1; Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, "Jahreswende bei den Auswanderern," *Der Bote* 7 (22 January 1930):1-2.
- 27 B.H. Unruh, "Zur Aufklaerung," *Der Bote* 11 (25 April 1934):3.
- 28 "Hindenburg sieht vertrauensvoll in die Zunkunft," *Der Bote* 10 (25 January 1933):4.
- 29 C.A. DeFehr, "Unsere Winnipeger," *Der Bote* 12 (13 February 1935):3.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 A.J. Fast, "Was geht in Deutschland vor?" *Der Bote* 10 (17 May 1933):5-6, (24 May 1933):4.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Amerika-Herold, "Die Hitlerpartei und was sie Deutschland bringen mag," *Der Bote* 9 (11 May 1932):4.
- 35 "Die Anstrebung einer politischen Konzentration in Deutschland," *Der Bote* 7 (21 May 1930):3-4; Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, "Buecher fuer den Unterricht," *Der Bote* 10 (24 May 1933):4.
- 36 A.J. Fast, *op.cit.*
- 37 C.F. Klassen, "Gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," *Der Bote* 10 (19 April 1933):2.
- 38 Eugen Kuehnemann, "Das neue Deutschland," *Der Bote* 10 (15 November 1933):2-3.
- 39 Walter Quiring, "Im fremden Schlepptau," *Der Bote* 11 (5 September 1934):3.

- 40 J.H. Janzen, "Deutschland's Erwachen," *Der Bote* 10 (3 May 1933): 4; Walter Quiring, "Woche des deutschen Buches," *Der Bote* 8 (11 December 1935):1-2.
- 41 J.H. Janzen, "Deutschland's Erwachen," *Der Bote* 10 (3 May 1933):4. See also N.J. Neufeld, "Als Kanada-Deutscher in Deutschland," *Der Bote* 13 (12 February 1936):2-3; "In Deutschland," *Der Bote* 13 (13 May 1936):3.
- 42 Oswald J. Smith, "Mein Besuch in Deutschland," *Der Bote* 13 (28 October 1936):3.
- 43 Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, "Unsere Meinung," *Der Bote* 7 (30 April 1930):3; "Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft, Saskatchewan," *Der Bote* 15 (9 March 1938):6; M.Q., "Bin ich Nationalsozialist? Bewahre." *Der Bote* 15 (7 December 1938):3; H. Goerz, "Arden Manitoba," *Der Bote* 16 (22 February 1939):5; H. Goebbels, "Kommunismus ohne Maske," *Der Bote* 12 (4 December 1935):5; G. Toews, "Was ein Laie so aus dem politischen Teich fischt," *Der Bote* 15 (9 March 1938):4; B.H. Unruh, "Strafflich-Leichtsinnig," *Der Bote* 16 (8 March 1939): 1-2; Ein pro-Nazi, "Kritisches beurteilen oder kritiklose Aufnahme?" *Der Bote* 11 (4 April 1934):2.
- 44 See, for example, J.H. Janzen, "Gebt acht auf die Zeichen der Zeit," *Jahrbuch*, 1933, p. 66; *Jahrbuch*, 1930, p. 44; *Jahrbuch*, 1931, pp. 54, 65.
- 45 G.G. Schmidt, "Die andere Seite," *Der Bote* 16 (8 February 1939):2.
- 46 Christlicher Bundesbote, "Der Kirchenstreit in Deutschland," *Der Bote* 11 (2 May 1934): 3; m., "Unsere Aufgabe," *Der Bote* 14 (17 February 1937):1-2.
- 47 T.J., "Unsere Pflicht," *Der Bote* 14 (14 April 1937):4-5; Fritz Kliewer, "Schwierigkeiten," *Der Bote* 13 (22 January 1936): 203; P. Schulz, "Etwas ueber 'Das Verhaeltnis der Nationalsozialisten Partei zur Kirche' im deutschen Reiche," *Der Bote* 11 (28 February 1934):3; Julius Heinrichs, "Bewahre uns vor . . .," *Der Bote* 16 (22 February 1939):4.
- 48 Eugen Kuehnemann, "Das neue Deutschland," *Der Bote* 10 (15 November 1933):2.
- 49 B.H. Unruh, "Um die deutsche Sache," *Der Bote* 14 (10 February 1937), 2.
- 50 Water Quiring, "Der Kirchenstreit in Deutschland," *Der Bote* 11 (13 June 1934):1; Muenchener Zeitung, "Um die Einheit des Volkes," *Der Bote* 11 (20 June 1934):4; Walter Quiring, "Warum schlaegst Du deinen Naechsten?" *Der Bote* 11 (31 October 1934):2-3; "Um den deutschen Kirchenstreit," *Der Bote* 12 (23 October 1935):1-2; H.H. Schroeder, "Aus dem neuen Deutschland," *Der Bote* 12 (27 March 1935):5; Fritz Kliewer, "Schwierigkeiten," *Der Bote* 13 (22 January 1936):2-3.

- 51 P. Schulz, "Etwas ueber 'Das Verhaeltnis der Nationalsozialistischen Partei zur Kirche' im deutschen Reiche," *Der Bote* 11 (28 February 1934):3.
- 52 Walter Quiring, "Der Kirchenstreit in Deutschland," *Der Bote* 11 (13 June 1934): 1; Walter Quiring, "Um den deutschen Kirchenstreit," *Der Bote* 12 (23 October 1935):1-2; P. Schulz, *op.cit.*, p. 3.
- 53 "Die Glaubensbewegung in Deutschland," *Der Bote* 11 (9 May 1934):4.
- 54 "Die Mennoniten in Deutschland in Verlegenheit," *Der Bote* 11 (14 February 1934):2.
- 55 H. Goebbels, "Kommunismus ohne Maske," *Der Bote* 12 (13 June 1935):4.
- 56 Walter Quiring, "Judentum und Weltpolitik," *Der Bote* 11 (20 June 1934): 5; C.F. Klassen, "Gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," *Der Bote* 10 (19 April 1933): 2; D.H. Epp, "Gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," *Der Bote* 10 (12 April 1933):3; A. Reimer, "Gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," *Der Bote* 10 (26 April 1933):2-3; "Rusland-Briefe," *Der Bote* 12 (23 October 1935):2.
- 57 C.F. Klassen, "Gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," *Der Bote* 10 (19 April 1933):2; "Neue Verordnungen fuer Eheschliessungen im deutschen Reiche," *Der Bote* 13 (25 December 1935):4.
- 58 G. Hege, "Wie ich Deutschland widersah," *Der Bote* 12 (13 March 1935):2; H.H. Schroeder, "Einiges ueber unseren Vierjahrplan," *Der Bote* 14 (28 April 1937):5; A. Kroeker, "Eine gewissenlose Hetze," *Der Bote* 16 (5 April 1939):4.
- 59 Eugen Kuehnemann, "Das neue Deutschland," *Der Bote* 10 (15 November 1933):2-3.
- 60 C.F. Klassen, "Gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," *Der Bote* 10 (19 April 1933):2; A. Reimer, "Gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," *Der Bote* 10 (26 April 1933):2-3; "Greuelpropaganda im Ausland," *Der Bote* 10 (26 April 1933):3; A. Kroeker, "Waffen der Gerechtigkeit," *Der Bote* 16 (15 March 1939):1.
- 61 "Greuelpropaganda im Ausland," *Der Bote* 10 (26 April 1933):3.
- 62 H.H. Schroeder, "Die Aussenpolitik des Dritten Reiches," *Der Bote* 12 (18 September 1935):4.
- 63 B. Wiens, "Bericht des Vertreters des Zentralen Mennonitischen Immigrantenkomitees," *Der Bote* 9 (7 December 1932):5-6; J.P. Classen, "Gedanken ueber Gemeindebau," *Der Bote* 16 (10 May 1939):1-2.
- 64 G. Toews, "Was ein Laie so aus dem politischen Teich fischt," *Der Bote* 11 (19 December 1934):4; 14 (10 February 1937):4-5; 15 (15 June 1938):4-5; Adolf Hitler, "Hitler's Rede vor dem Reichstag," *Der Bote* 14 (10 February 1937):4.
- 65 H. Seelheim, "Bekanntmachung," *Der Bote* 13 (18 March 1936):5.
- 66 Karl Goetz, "Karl Goetz schreibt," *Der Bote* 16 (25 January

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- 145 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 324.
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- 180 *Ibid.*
- 181 In 1929 Herman Fast, a former teacher at the German-English Academy and then a mission worker at Perdue, Saskatchewan, extended greetings from Russian Christians and the delegates gave a standing response. *Jahrbuch*, 1929, p. 5.
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- 183 "Wehrfrage," *Verhandlungen* (ND), 1934, pp. 76-77.
- 184 *Ibid.*, p. 77. See also B.B. Janz, "Bericht des Komitees in Bezug auf Wehrlosigkeit," *Verhandlungen* (ND), 1935, pp. 49-55; *Verhandlungen* (ND), 1936, p. 80.
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- 188 "Wehrfrage," *Verhandlungen* (ND), 1939, pp. 61-63.
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- 190 Guy F. Herschberger, pp. 7-10.
- 191 *Ibid.*; Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, pp. 326-27.
- 192 Frank H. Epp, pp. 326-27.
- 193 David P. Reimer, comp., *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War, 1939-1945* (Altona: Committee of Directors, c. 1947), pp. 37-56.
- 194 Both the German and the English editions identify this group as

- General Conference (Allgemeine Konferenz), but, as has been previously pointed out, not all Conference congregations in Canada, notably the Bergthaler, were members of the General Conference, though they were members of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.
- 195 *Ibid.*, p. 37. Reasons for non-attendance aren't given. It is probable that not all were invited, since Reimer says that nine of ten invited congregational families were present.
- 196 The record, referred to as "Report of a Discussion," is contained in *ibid.*, pp. 37–56.
- 197 *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38.
- 198 *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.
- 199 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 200 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 201 "Red Cross Activities among Mennonites," *Morden Times* (29 November 1939):1; "Red Cross Activities at Winkler," *Morden Times* (19 June 1940):1.
- 202 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 325. A statement to that effect was given to the RCMP in 1940, but Klassen had changed his emphasis before that.
- 203 Letters to *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* (29 April 1939), (13 June 1939).
- 204 "Canadian Mennonites Loyal to New Fatherland Leader Coaldale Colony Declares," *Lethbridge Herald* (1 June 1940):14. This article first appeared in Mennonite weeklies in January 1939.
- 205 Ted D. Regehr, "Mennonite Change: The Rise and Decline of Mennonite Community Organizations at Coaldale, Alta.," *Mennonite Life* (December 1977):13–22; "Sir Edward Beatty and Col. J.S. Dennis Receive Presentations from Mennonites of Coaldale," *Lethbridge Herald* (20 September 1937):1, 3.
- 206 "Happy Welcome Tendered Sir Edward Beatty at Coaldale; Mennonite Colony's Tribute," *Lethbridge Herald* (22 September 1937).
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- 208 *Verhandlungen* (ND), 1939, p. 6.
- 209 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 210 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786–1920*, p. 37.
- 211 *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 81, 98. See also *Calendar of Appointments*, 1939–40, pp. [7, 25–27].
- 212 Gerhard Wiebe, *Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to Canada*. Translated by Helen Janzen (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1981), p. 34.
- 213 H.J. Gerbrandt, p. 313.
- 214 *Conference Journal*, 1936, p. 10.
- 215 According to a review of subsequent issues of *Conference Journal*.
- 216 David P. Reimer, *op.cit.*, pp. 54–56.
- 217 David Toews, "Die Hilfsarbeit," *Jahrbuch*, 1939, p. 69. A copy of the text is in CMCA, XXII-A, Vol. 1178, File 107, David Toews

- on behalf of the Mennonites in Canada "To His Most Gracious Majesty George VI, King of Canada," May 1939.
- 218 "The King and Queen Leave American Shores," *Christian Monitor* 31 (July 1939):223. Another record says S.F. Coffman led an Ontario Conference delegation to the train depot to greet the royal family. After a brief public ceremony, he led the audience in singing "God Save the King." *John S. Weber*, p. 159, based on an interview with Coffman children.
- 219 *Calendar of Appointments*, 1939-40, pp. [7, 25-27].
- 220 "George V, King for Twenty-Five Years," *Christian Monitor* 27 (June 1935):190; "The Far-Flung Empire Greeted by the King," *Christian Monitor* 28 (February 1936):63; "The Passing of King George V," *Christian Monitor* 28 (March 1936):94; "The Coronation and Protestant England," *Christian Monitor* 29 (May 1937):157-58.
- 221 "The Coming of the King and Queen of the British Empire to Canada and the United States," *Christian Monitor* 31 (June 1939):190-91.
- 222 *Ibid.*
- 223 Revelation 6:2-8.
- 224 "The Four Grim Deadly Horsemen Halted in Europe," *Christian Monitor* 30 (November 1938):353-54.