Volume 21 Number 2 June 2015

Roots and Branches

Periodical of the Mennonite Historical Society of BC

"What we have heard and known
we will tell the next generation."
Psalm 78

Mill at Westerdale, Caithness, Scotland.
Photo: Marian Penner Bancroft

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Letter to the editors

Reading R. Martens' very welcome and fine piece in your most recent issue regarding the Fraser Valley hop industry through the middle decades of the previous century, I noted you've repeated an innocent and oft made little (but in my mind historically significant) error/confusion concerning the Ord family names. Folks understandably tend to assume that the hop company's owner Mr. Ord senior's name was John, I think because the name "John" comes automatically to mind with the locals – as John was the son who spent many years living as a relative recluse and eccentric up in the American family's Majuba Hill mansion (in fact but a glorified "summer house"), overlooking the Sumas flats – once a patchwork of hop yards, at Yarrow. He lived there sporadically through the 1950s & 1960s and eventually year-round through the 1970s, till his death there in the mid-1980s.

My father, Peter (and later myself), were the house caretakers and groundskeepers there. John Ord was of course one of that family's twin sons (i.e., he and his brother Edmund – neither of whom were owners or ever in charge of the hop enterprise). Their father's (the senior Mr. Ord's) name was in fact Henry (commonly called "Harry"). It was he who owned and headed the enterprise, and upon his death his wife, Helen, from whose side of the family – via the early railroad tycoon and masterpiece art collector Henry E. Huntington – the family's vast inherited wealth and Californian high society connections came (for random example, the famous winding stair-and-balustrade balcony scene from the *Gone With the Wind* classic was filmed in one of their several L.A. county mansions) – took over the business end of their hop-growing enterprise and successfully ran things for a bit as the local hop-growing industry ran its course. That fact remains incongruous to my clearest boyhood memory of her, for several reasons, perhaps the foremost reason being that from somewhere in the early to mid-1960s, I still see the image of an elderly woman with hallucinatory dementia, wandering in her long black gown about the steep summer house lawns that I and my family had just mowed, in the blazing summer sun, pulling at her grey loosed bun, exclaiming aloud at the vast deep tangled plague of frogs she saw leaping everywhere around her, where there was not a one that I saw.

All that aside, one particular detail among many that I've wished to compliment Martens on concerns the hop yard workers and the fact brought out that local First Nations folk were very much part of the labour force. In my grandfather Rev. A. Nachtigal's German poem about "hop-picking time," he listed Blacks and South Asians, et al., celebrating the motley-coloured mix at work there, but he didn't clearly enough (to my understanding at least) draw out our Aboriginals as such, so that was most informative and appreciated. Thanks for that! It is important. And endlessly interesting I think, considering too how it came to be, in light of the huge provincial government undertaking of the 1920s, the sophisticated reclamation/draining project of what once was the shallow but expansive Sumas Lake – where for centuries the local First Nations folk had hunted and fished the lake and marshes – that then the sons and daughters, and perhaps some of the elder generation who had actually rowed about there among the reeds and rushes, now toiled on the newly dry fertile lands of the lake bottom.

Larry Nightingale
Vancouver

We welcome letters to the editor. Address them to Editor, *Roots and Branches*, 211-2825 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford, BC, V2T 6S3, or email them to archives@mhsbc.com. Please write "letter to the editor" in the subject line of the email. Letters may be edited for length or content.

Editorial

By Maryann Tjart Janzen

The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see.
-Winston S. Churchill

This issue of *Roots and Branches* takes us not only back in time but also sideways, as writers explore the historical connections between Mennonites and other countercultural religious traditions. Dr. John B. Toews' article outlines the origins of Mennonite interest in the Templer tradition, while Robert Martens writes about significant differences and similarities between Mennonites and groups like Quakers and Doukhobors, religious traditions whose members, like Mennonites, valued pacifism and autonomy in belief, and were at times persecuted for their beliefs. These pieces are supplemented by a historical excerpt narrating the impressions of two Quakers (one French-American and one British) who visited Ukrainian Mennonite colonies in the early 19th century and by a first-person account of a shared Mennonite/Doukhobor/Catholic heritage.

Exploring how our tradition has interacted and intersected with other traditions can only widen and deepen our understanding of Mennonite roots and values. Doing so also reminds us not to be ethnocentric and limited in perspective, but to see the bigger picture, as we contextualize our traditions within a larger historical and theological landscape.

As usual, this issue also offers a variety of book reviews and reports on events significant to Mennonite readers. And, as always, our writers remind us that we learn how to move into the future not only by being thoughtful about the present, but by also considering the past.

Revisiting Russian Mennonite Templer Beginnings (1863-1868)

See also "Mennonite Templers," Roots and Branches, Feb. 2012

By John B. Toews

In 1838 and 1839 the Khortitsa Mennonite minister David Epp visited two schools in the Molochna Colony, one in Ohrloff, the second a newly built private school in Steinbach. He could not have known that just over two decades later the Steinbach private school would be at the centre of an on-going drama (Epp 20; Sep. 1838; 2 Feb. 1839).

It all began when a local estate owner decided to send a talented young lad, Johannes Lange, to Germany for teacher training. Thanks to the generosity of Nicolai Schmidt, his protégé attended the Paulus Institute in Kirschenharthof, Württemberg, Germany, from 1859 to 1861. His return to teach at the Steinbach private school should have been uneventful. It was not.

...continued page 5.

Map of Templer settlements in Palestine.
Source: www.bbc.com/news/magazine-22276494

Press releases

Summer Intern

By Jon Isaak, executive secretary for the MB Historical Commission

Liz Wittrig. Photo: Jon Isaak

Liz Wittrig is the recipient of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission's summer archival internship for 2015. As intern, Liz will spend a total of five weeks visiting each of the MB archival centres in North America (Fresno, Hillsboro, Winnipeg, and Abbotsford) during the months of June and July. She will explore the stories and images housed in them, especially pursuing her interest in women's voices in relation to the Anabaptist peace witness.

Liz is a senior student completing a BA degree (Bible, Religion, and Philosophy) in May 2015 at Goshen College in Indiana. She is also currently completing an internship at the Mennonite Church USA Archives in Goshen, collecting and summarizing primary sources and assisting in exhibit creation.

New Online Mennonite Photo Database

Issued by Conrad Stoesz and Laureen Harder-Gissing

After two years of design and development, the Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID) is going live for public use at www.archives.mhsc.ca. "Never before has the public had this kind of access to photos from Mennonite archives," explains Jon Isaak of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg. "MAID opens up a host of new possibilities." The new tool helps archives manage their photo collections and provides Internet access to the photos.

The online solution is a project of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada and includes Mennonite archival partners in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. Costs for the project are shared on a sliding scale. "We could not have undertaken such a large project on our own," says Mennonite Heritage Centre Winnipeg director Korey Dyck. "By working with other partners we were able to pool our financial and intellectual resources."

Currently MAID holds over 80,000 descriptions of photos and over 9,000 images. These numbers will be expanding, explains Laureen Harder-Gissing of the Mennonite Archives of Ontario. "The technology provided by MAID is energizing our partner archives to digitize our photo collections. Having all our photos searchable through one source will be a boon for genealogists, historians, and anyone interested in finding out more about Mennonite and Canadian history."

Order online!

By Elmer Wiens, webmaster for MHSBC

Books, CDs, and DVDs can now be ordered online from the MHSBC website (http://www.mhsbc.com/index.html) by accessing the online MHSBC order form from the Book Sales webpage at: http://www.mhsbc.com/sales.html. The ordered article can then be paid for by a PayPal invoice sent to the buyer. This process is an intermediate step before setting the system for direct online purchases.

MHSBC memberships can now be purchased or renewed by accessing the online MHSBC membership form from the Membership web page at http://www.mhsbc.com/memberships.html.

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The Paulus Institute was the spiritual and intellectual headquarters of a Christian renewal group known as the Friends of Jerusalem, founded by one Christoph Hoffmann (1815-1885). Among other things, he taught that all true believers should gather in Palestine where God's temple, either figuratively or literally, would be established, hence the term "Templer Movement." Hoffman seems to have thought highly of his student. Johannes Lange was allowed to contribute two articles to his official publication, the *Süddeutsche Warte* (*South German Watchtow*er). Imbued with the fervour and idealism of youth and perhaps mindful of the religious stupor of his peoplehood in Russia, Lange's article advocated the establishment of a "new world order" (no. 14) in which Mennonite ministers became prophets, and physicians healed people like the apostles of old. In a second article (no. 17) Johannes announced that he would take on the responsibility of "purifying" the Russian Mennonites. Returning to Russia in 1861 he stopped at a Lutheran village named Hoffnungstal where a German Templer advocate named Schock was preaching. When invited to preach on October 9, 1861, Lange apparently attacked the government in his sermon.[1]

Johannes Lange then returned to the Molochna colony to take up a teaching position at the Steinbach private school. The patrons of the school, Nicolai and Johann Schmidt, were deeply committed to raising the educational standards of the community. The gifted new teacher seemed ideally suited to that task. Rather suddenly, articles penned in an obscure journal and a sermon preached in a remote location came back to haunt the young pedagogue. The catalyst fuelling the subsequent uproar likewise seemed of minor importance: Lange had taught religious classes for children on Saturdays and Sundays and adults had attended! Before long, a turmoil enveloped Johannes that included regional elders, a district council, and the Guardian Committee for Foreign Settlers in Odessa, as well as various ministries of the czarist government. Why should an obscure Mennonite teacher in a rural school in Ukraine generate such widespread interest?

In 1860, during Lange's absence, the Mennonite community had experienced a major religious rift when a small group of dissenters left the established church. The emergence of a new group challenged time-honoured working relationships between the Mennonite church and the Mennonite state. Both instinctively united to protect the status quo. In the resulting emotionally-charged atmosphere the dissident group known as the Mennonite Brethren or *Hüpfer* faced ostracism, imprisonment, threats of exile and the involvement of various czarist ministries. Tensions were especially high in the narrow confines of village life.[2]

The Brethren issue was far from resolved when a much smaller dissenting group emerged in 1863 led by Johannes Lange. The probable sequence of the Lange affair can be reconstructed from two sources. The first involves the archival sources in the Central Government Archive in St. Petersburg; the second, a considerable collection of German documents published by the Mennonite Franz Isaac in 1908 (207-266).[3]

Upon his return to the Molochna Johannes Lange was authorized to teach by the Council of Mennonite Elders which was meeting in Alexanderwohl on March 8, 1862 (Isaac 220-221). The following day he was officially appointed as a teacher by the Steinbach School Board and commenced his teaching duties in August (Isaac 226-227). He had barely completed the fall term when he was denounced as belonging to the Friends of Jerusalem sect. On January 21, 1863, he was placed under a type of "house arrest" and taken to the district office in Halbstadt and forced to work as a clerk. His personal papers were likewise confiscated. Already prior to his appointment, an official of the Guardian Committee, via the district office, asked Mennonite elders that Lange clarify his theological beliefs. In his reply Johannes rejected all charges that he had departed from the Mennonite confession of faith or engaged in any sectarian activities (Isaac 209).

While his declaration satisfied the elders, it did not satisfy Keller, a legal representative from the Guardian Committee, who questioned Johannes on January 9, 1863. Keller was somehow convinced

that adults should not attend religious instruction given to children by Lange and decreed that this not be allowed. The Gnadenfeld elder August Lenzmann endorsed his ruling on January 17 and forbade adults to attend the classes (Isaac 213). Emboldened, Keller now informed Gnadenfeld's district mayor that henceforth no religious meetings could be held outside of private household devotions, that no one except authorized clergy preach or distribute the sacraments and that all gatherings must be conducted in the church (Isaac 214-215). (In this instance Keller erroneously applied Lutheran canon law to Mennonite religious practices which allowed religious gatherings in homes. Mennonites were long accustomed to such "house groups.") Keller now continued his investigation by questioning both Lange and his patrons, Nicolai Schmidt and his brother Johann (Isaac 215-225).

Templers in Wilhelma, Palestine. Photo: G. Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection at the Library of Congress

Supporters of the private school appealed directly to the Guardian Committee in Odessa, protesting the actions of both Keller and Elder Lenzmann (Isaac 226-227). Even the one-time chairperson of the Committee, Eugene von Hahn, now in St. Petersburg, was informed of the crisis (Isaac 228-230). Further appeals citing freedom of conscience and the right of adults to attend religious instruction given to children fell on deaf ears (Isaac 232-237). (One was addressed to the "Brotherhood of the Gnadenfeld Church," 2 Mar. 1863; the second, to the Molochna Council of Elders, 6 Apr. 1863.) Some three years after the Mennonite Brethren secession from the Gnadenfeld Mennonite Church, the Steinbach dissidents did the same on April 6, 1863 (Isaac 237-238).

Now, as in the case of the Brethren secession in 1860, official communiqués replaced face-to-face dialogue. Johannes Lange's youthful ardour did not help matters. Though he was possibly better educated than most of the Molochna elders, his letters to the Molochna ecclesiastical leadership not only betrayed his learning but also a trace of arrogance not readily given to corrective dialogue (see e.g. his letters of 13 May, 1863, Isaac 243-246, and a late May letter addressed to the Molochna elders, Isaac 246-247). As had been the case with the Mennonite Brethren, official correspondence between Lange and the Mennonite community produced little compromise. Similarly, Elder August Lenzmann, largely supported by his co-elders in the Molochna, refused further dialogue. Isolated and feeling persecuted, Johannes and his brother Friedrich travelled to St. Petersburg to seek protection from Mennonite civil and religious officials, to whom they cited the promise of complete religious freedom by the czarist decree of 1800. Like the Brethren advocate Johann Klassen before them, Lange's appeal set the relevant czarist ministries into action.

On November 8, 1866, the Ministry of State Property informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that Mennonite authorities had Johannes under police surveillance, had forbidden him to teach children, and even wished to exile him. For ministry officials the key issue revolved around one question: did the group have the legal right to establish a new church? (CGA Document 3, 8 Nov. 1866) A letter was dispatched to the Evangelical Lutheran General Consistory requesting an "investigation of the main points" of "the teaching of a new sect called 'Friends of Jerusalem'" (CGA Doc. 4). On December 16, 1866, Bishop Ullman, vice-president of the General Consistory, submitted a lengthy report. He observed that the stated dogmas of the "Friends" were only general statements, noting that they claimed that the gifts and powers of the early church were "obligatory attributes" of the new sect, that members received the "full measure of Christ's Spirit" after baptism, and that the group allowed infant baptism. Wisely, Ullman suggested that more information was needed before giving them official recognition. Mennonite calls for exile were not in order (CGA Doc. 9, p. 17 ff).

Matters became more complex when Johannes' brother Friedrich, who had remained in St. Petersburg, petitioned that a Mennonite who had joined the Orthodox Church in 1855 be allowed to

"return to his former Mennonite faith." The issue was referred to the Governor General of New Russia and Bessarabia (CGA Doc. 12, p. 24 ff). The Governor's Office in turn requested more information from the Guardian Office in Odessa. On February 16, 1867, the governor dispatched a lengthy report back to the Minister of Internal Affairs (CGA Doc. 15, p. 32 ff). It was not favourable to Johannes Lange, stating he encouraged "division among the Mennonites," showed disregard for the clergy, was guilty of "harmful fanaticism," and was generally a "suspicious, unreliable individual" who should be exiled to Germany and not allowed to come back. The governor's report was obviously based on two reports sent by the Guardian Committee as well as Keller's report of February 10, 1863. The contents of the documents suggest that the Guardian Committee had not investigated the Friends of Jerusalem since early 1863 and reflected Keller's prejudices (CGA Doc. 17, 6 Feb. 1866; Doc. 16, 10 Feb. 1867). Hence the report maintained that the group remained "contrary to the Mennonite Church and public order" and noted that Johannes still spoke "sharply against the government" (CGA Doc. 17, 6 Feb. 1866). (Keller claimed that Johannes Lange was "insincere, contradictory, full of fanaticism and evasiveness.")

...did the group have the right to establish a new church?

As late as April 1867, the Governor General of New Russia and Bessarabia still believed that the Friends of Jerusalem wished to exercise the same gifts [of miracles] as the prophets, apostles and Christ, then noted that the Mennonite Brethren by contrast "only say thanksgiving prayers" (CGA Doc. 21, 21 Apr. 1867). Finally on June 15, 1867, the Interior Ministry, writing to the Minister of State Properties, argued that the Lange issue raised two basic questions. First, did the group have the right to organize a new church? Second, could the teachings of Lange and his followers be tolerated? The documents concluded that Mennonites had the right to organize a new church, but that the brothers Lange broke the law by seeking the conversion of a person belonging to the Orthodox faith. For this offense both Johann and Friedrich should be exiled (CGA Doc. 22. See also Doc. 23, "Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Governor General of New Russia and Bessarabia." n.d.) . In later July 1867 the Ministry of State Property finally reached a verdict on the Lange issue. Not all the charges could be supported. The group was small in number, belonged to "the poorest Mennonites" and did not receive "any respect from their brothers." It would be inappropriate to exile Johannes. In any case they were moving to the Caucasus (CGA Doc. 24, p. 86 ff., 20 Jul. 1867).

In retrospect the Russian Mennonite Friends of Jerusalem episode seems little more than a tempest in a tea pot. There were very few persons involved, and the issue focused on the right of one or two persons to teach in a private school. Whether adults could attend classes in which religious instruction was given to children was hardly a question needing civil or ecclesiastical approval. Viewed from either a Mennonite or Lutheran standpoint, the dissenters of the 1860s appeared theologically orthodox, even though some may have approved of erecting God's temple in Jerusalem, either literally or symbolically. The documents also suggest that the "Friends" were viewed as marginalized members of society and that Johannes himself was of little consequence since "Mennonites laugh at his teaching" (CGA Doc. 20).

As in the case of the Brethren secession, the Templer Mennonite story is largely based on official documents. There are no records of sermons preached, prayers spoken or meetings held by the dissident group. While the later history of the movement is better known, we shall probably never know the "inner story" of the early Mennonite Templers. Central to the drama was Johannes Lange. A unique Russian Mennonite letter collection from the 1860s provides a few passing glimpses of the young teacher. A fellow teacher, David Goerz from the Taschenak estate near the Molochna, happened to attend the year-end public examination (*Prüfung*)

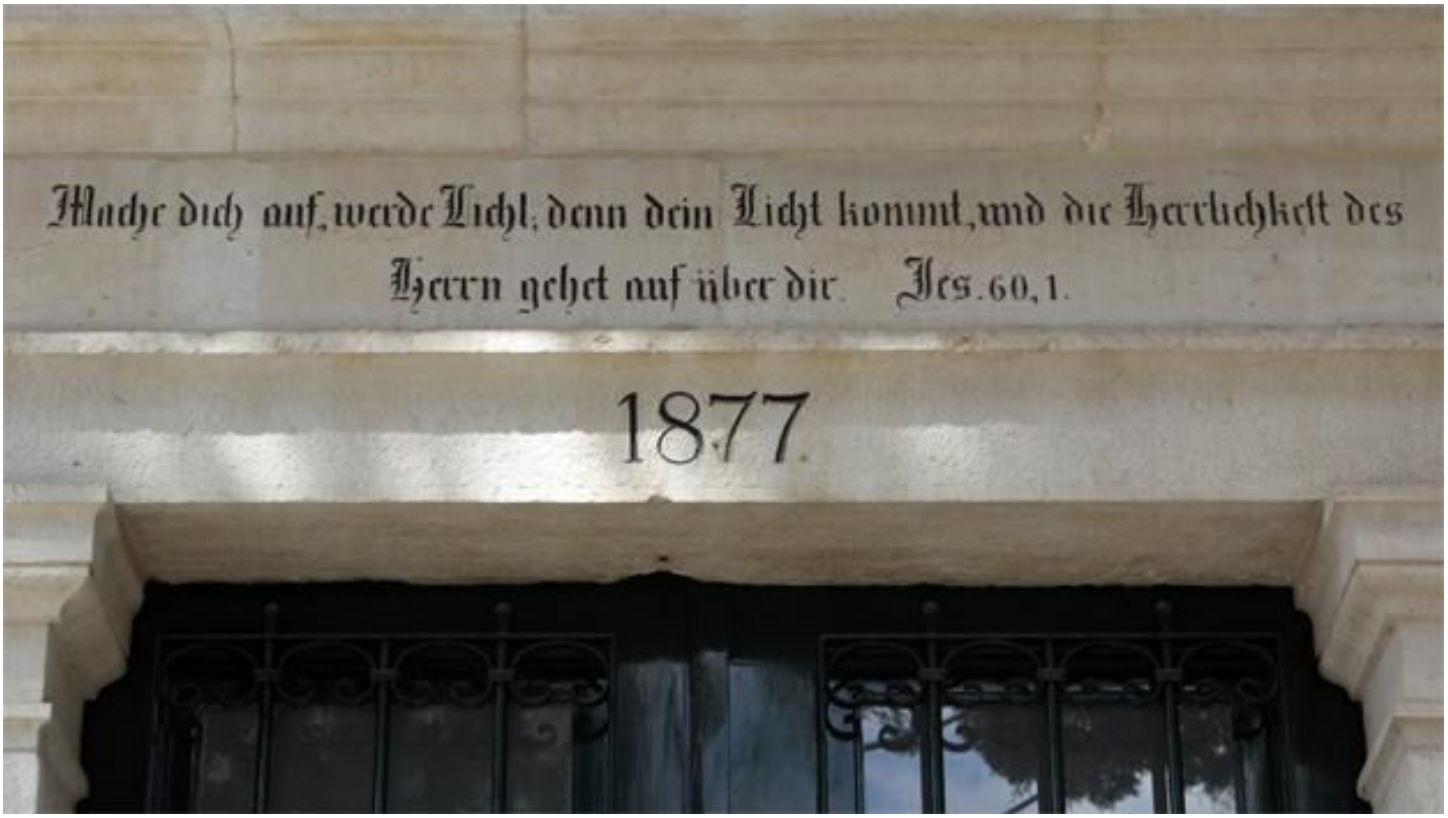
of Lange's Steinbach school. In his estimation the "little ones did extremely well" and the singing was "outstanding" (Goerz. "David Goerz to beloved Parents," Taschenak, 29 Sep. 1864). David was also aware of Johannes' and Friedrich's journey to St. Petersburg in 1866 (Goerz. "Parents", 5 Sep. 1866). Some months later he observed that "Johannes, with his large fur hat, frightens people in the colony" (Goerz. "Parents," 12 Feb. 1867). (The fur hat was apparently purchased in St. Petersburg.) Three months later, David's father, who was living in Crimea, wondered if that "dandy Johannes had taken off his fur hat, otherwise there might be a lot of life [lice] on his head."

Some of the prevailing discomfort certainly related to Johannes Lange's personality. As a talented student he was obviously well thought of at Kirschenharthof, even being allowed to contribute to the *Süddeutsche Warte*. His three-year absence from Russian Mennonite society and his piety provided perspective and, like other co-religionists in mid-nineteenth century Russia, he felt the need for religious renewal. Deeply religious and obsessed by a vision for reform, he possessed no other paradigm than the piety and theology of his Württemberg sojourn. Upon his return he was probably better read and educated than the majority of Mennonite elders and was highly skilled in the use of the German language. Perhaps he should have waited to articulate the perceived shortcomings of his peoplehood and certainly should have been more cautious in proclaiming his reform program. Government ministries, relying on Mennonite informants, heard that Johannes proposed a "new world order" (CGA Doc. 19) and spoke "sharply against the government" (CGA Doc. 17). Naturally they wondered about possible sedition. Perhaps this is what the Ministry of State Property had in mind when it reported that the "Lange brothers are disrupting civil order" (CGA Doc. 24).

Government ministries, relying on Mennonite informants, heard that Johannes proposed a "new world order."

In all likelihood, the Mennonite community was not seriously disturbed by Lange's proclamation that Mennonite ministers "should become prophets" and "doctors heal like the apostles" (CGA Doc. 19). It had after all already experienced the much more widespread *Hüpfer* movement with its fairly extensive geographic range and its lively forms of worship. It impacted villages and churches far more drastically than the few dissidents associated with the Steinbach private school. It was probably the Brethren secession that best accounted for the over-reaction against the Friends of Jerusalem. In that scenario, district officials had overreached their authority by imprisoning several religious dissidents while religious leaders rigidly upheld the status quo and refused to engage in any dialogue. The delicate balance between Mennonite church and state had been seriously disrupted and had yet to regain its equilibrium when a second group of dissenters emerged. As in the case of the Mennonite Brethren in 1860, Molochna elders could not entirely agree on a common strategy in dealing with the Friends of Jerusalem. In the end it was a trifle ironic that in each instance the Russian state became the final arbitrator. Both groups were allowed to form a new church and both were granted the right to resettle in the Caucasus.

Viewed collectively, the documents surviving in the St. Petersburg Central Government Archive and those published by Isaac suggest that limited information sources were continuously recycled. Early in 1863 sole investigator Keller's carefully framed questions were almost guaranteed to suggest a theological deviance with respect to the "Friends of Jerusalem." Statements by elders and the innuendo of village gossip added to the accumulating information. Once sent to the Guardian Committee in Odessa, Keller's information naturally found its way to the relevant government ministries. The circulating reports, repetitive and exaggerated, were never subjected to a new inquiry as had happened in the case of Alexander Brune's



Biblical verse on the lintel of a former Templer house in the German Colony, Palestine, which reads,"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you." Isaiah 60:1. Photo: www.bbc.com/news/magazine-22276494

investigation of the Mennonite Brethren. In one of the last letters addressed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs by the Ministry of State Property, the Lange brothers are still considered "dangerous to public order in the Molochna" (CGA Doc. 24). Though the Mennonite community was still hostile towards Johannes Lange, exile "would not be appropriate." After all, Lange and his followers were Russian citizens and should be treated "according to our laws." Since the group was moving to the Caucasus "with no right to return," the issue of the Friends of Jerusalem appeared to be solved (CGA Doc. 25).

[1]Official reports and letters dealing with the Mennonite Templers (or Friends of Jerusalem) can be found in the Central Government Archive in St. Petersburg. Fonds 821, Inventory 5, Case 981. See Document 19, Keller's Report of Feb. 10, 1863, p. 55 ff; also Document 15, "Governor General of New Russia and Bessarabia to the Minister of Internal Affairs," Feb. 16, 1867, p. 32 ff.

[2]Late in 1863 the Minister of Internal Affairs, Peter A. Valuev, commissioned an investigation of the Mennonite Brethren by the Lutheran magistrate, Alexander Brune. His reports and correspondence generated a large file (much of it microfilmed in the early 1990s) that was entitled *Hüpfer*, a German word describing persons who jump or hop. Applied to the early Brethren, the term reflected worship services characterized by dancing, robust singing with lively musical accompaniment and the shouting of hallelujahs: Central Government Archive in St. Petersburg. Fonds 821, Inventory 5, Cases 975 and 976. The microfilm is available in the archive of the Mennonite Historical Society of BC.

[3]An expanded history of the Mennonite Templer movement can be found in Heinrich Sawatzky's *Templer mennonitischer Herkunft*. Winnipeg: Echo Verlag, 1955.

Sources

Central Government Archive in St. Petersburg. Fonds 821, Inventory 5, Case 981. Abbreviated in text as CGA.

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The Society of Friends and Mennonites: Connections and Conflicts

By Robert Martens

When George Fox, a leader of the Religious Society of Friends, was brought before Justice Bennet of Derby on charges of blasphemy in 1650, the judge, according to Fox, "called us Quakers because we bid them tremble at the word of God" (Wiki 3). The derisive nickname stuck, just as the label, "Anabaptist," or "rebaptizer," also intended as ridicule, had previously stuck to the early Anabaptists. The proud adoption of a name imposed by their persecutors is just one of many features shared by Quakers and Mennonites. Although the Religious Society of Friends originated in England more than one hundred years after the birth of Anabaptism, the list of similarities is remarkable.

The house where the 1688 Petition Against Slavery was written. Photo: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1688

Both Anabaptists and Quakers believed that, in defying the official religious authorities, they were restoring the true early church, and for that they were suppressed, often brutally. Both distrusted hierarchy, placing their faith instead in the priesthood of all believers and in the direct experience of God. In 1670 a Quaker wrote, "It is not enough to hear of Christ, or read of Christ, but this is the thing – to feel him my root, my life, my foundation" (Wiki 4). Both Anabaptists and Quakers practised a "mysticism" of community that was intended to express itself in practical activity, in an ideal of selfless love and deed. Both were independent minded, to the point that their movements split and split again. Anabaptists could also have essentially agreed with the Friends' four basic principles known by the acronym, STEP, which is sometimes affectionately altered to PEST: Peace, Equality, Simplicity, and Truth (or Integrity). And like Mennonites, Quakers today have what might be termed an "ethnic" component, with members referred to as either Birthright Friends, born into the movement, or Convinced Friends, outsiders who have joined the church. The enormous influx of members from the developing world over the last decades is also currently transforming both communities.

Certainly there are profound differences. The Friends completely reject all sacraments such as baptism or the Eucharist, believing that *all* life is sacred; that, for example, *any* shared meal can be considered a holy communion. Consequently, they have no written creeds, and there are no sacred days in the Quaker calendar. And where Anabaptists trusted that the revealed Inner Word would then clarify the Written Word of Scripture, the Friends carried this doctrine to an extreme: Robert Barclay wrote that the Scriptures "are only a declaration of the fountain, and not the fountain itself, therefore they are not to be esteemed the principal ground of all Truth and knowledge" (Wiki 6). The Friends generally may have less of a sense of "judgementalism" than Mennonites, in that they focus on the good in people, on "the light of God in everyone" (Wiki 5). Also in contrast to Mennonites, about eleven percent of Quaker congregations practise "silent worship," in which speech is kept to a minimum.

The Quakers, under the leadership of such individuals as William Penn and George Fox, developed in the 1650s as a Nonconformist reform of English Puritanism. Since they almost immediately began dividing into varying belief groups – liberal and conservative and all the shades in between – it is difficult even today to describe what the Friends stand for. Today they can be known as the Religious Society of Friends, Children of the Light, Friends of the Truth, Quiet Helpers, Saints, or Seekers of Truth. Worship can be programmed or unprogrammed, silent or spoken, congregation- or minister-led. (The proliferation of Mennonite denominations, sometimes called "the Mennonite

sickness," is markedly similar.) Quaker beliefs are known as Testimonies, and are activist-oriented. Administratively speaking, their international and regional organizations are called Yearly Meetings. Business is conducted by consensus. There is a World Committee with various sections.

The historical relationship between Mennonites and Friends is marked, at least until recently, by conflict as well as by cooperation. In fact, Quakers proselytized among Mennonites in Europe and even in Russia, with William Ames the most successful at converting Mennonites to the fold of the Friends. In Krefeld, Germany, a small Quaker group composed of former Mennonites was established. The Quaker success in converting Mennonites to Quakerism, however, is partly due to the similarity between the two groups, and overall cooperation was the norm. Substantial aid was given by British Friends to the Russian Mennonite settlers in America during the 1870s. In Pennsylvania – land granted to William Penn and consequently named after him – a Mennonite, as well as two Mennonites who had turned Quaker, were co-signers in 1688 with the Friends of the Protest against Slavery. This formal public opposition to slavery was apparently the first in the New World; it contained the admonition that it was "a terror, or fearful thing, that men should be handled so [as slaves] in Pennsylvania" (horseshoe).

Mennonites and Quakers enjoyed an amicable relationship in the New World, initially in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Their cordiality was largely based on their common peace stand and refusal to take oaths. No evidence exists, however, that Mennonites settled there at the explicit invitation of William Penn, and in fact most of the Germantown pioneer families that sailed from Krefeld were Mennonites *turned* Quaker. The Mennonite minority was swamped by the much larger group of Friends and never really thrived as an independent community in Germantown. On the other hand, Quaker administrators welcomed the votes cast for them by their Mennonite neighbours, and the two churches shared a single meeting hall for a time in Germantown, until Mennonites, wanting a minister of their own, elected to build their own church building.

Germantown, Philadelphia, Mennonite Meetinghouse, built 1770. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mennonite

William Rittenhouse, the first papermaker in the colonies, was then chosen as the first Mennonite minister in the New World.

In more recent times, Mennonites and Friends have collaborated on peace issues. The Conference of Historic Peace Churches, formed in 1940 in Waterloo, Ontario, by Friends, Mennonites, and Brethren in Christ[1] provided support to conscientious objectors during World War II and later presented briefs to the Canadian government. In the United States, the Conference of Pacifist Churches was organized by Friends as early as 1922; at a 1935 meeting in Newton, Kansas, which included representatives from the Mennonite and Brethren faiths, it was renamed the Conference of Historic Peace Churches (HPC) to distinguish it from politically-based pacifism. Speicher writes, "Participants felt that cooperation was urgent because of the growing international crisis, and that they had an obligation to share their message with other Christian bodies and with the United States government" (1). The HPC helped set up alternatives to military service for conscientious objectors during the Second World War. Later, HPC sponsored peace study programs at Earlham (Friends) and Manchester (Brethren) Colleges, as well as at two Mennonite institutions: Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Indiana and Conrad Grebel College in Ontario. In addition, before MCC was capable of acting completely on its own, it received aid from the Quaker service and relief agen-

cy, the American Friends Service Committee.

When the World Council of Churches (WCC) was formed in 1948, the Historic Peace Churches – Friends, Mennonites, and Brethren – were among the founding members. The first WCC Assembly issued a statement that "war is contrary to the will of God" (Speicher 1). For many years, the WCC and HPC, hindered by the diversity of their membership, fumbled in their attempts to issue a common affirmation on peace until "A Declaration on Peace: In God's People the World's Renewal Has Begun" was released by the WCC in 1991. At the WCC Harare, Zimbabwe Assembly in 1998, Dr. Fernando Enns, a Mennonite from Brazil, moved that peace be made a central part of the organization's mandate, and in 2001 the Decade to Overcome Violence was launched by the WCC. "All over the world, churches are facing the challenge of violence," said Enns. It is easy to say, he added, that "we're fed up with turning the other cheek because they'll slap us again," but Historic Peace Churches must "stick to the conviction that nonviolence is essential to Christian identity" (qtd in Wiltschek 2).

In 2008, Mennonites and Quakers were lambasted by the Anti-Defamation League when they jointly hosted a dinner meeting with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, then the president of Iran and noted for his anti-Semitism and human rights abuses. The meeting was an attempt, according to organizers, to encourage understanding and peace, but was controversial even among Mennonite and Quaker congregations. Peace initiatives, however, have prompted frequent and close cooperation between the Historic Peace Churches, despite their significant differences. Both Mennonites and Friends, independent, stubborn, anti-hierarchical, and governed from the bottom up rather than top down, have quarrelled with each other and themselves over the centuries. This may seem strange, coming from churches largely founded on peace principles, but perhaps it is this very obstreperousness and single-mindedness that enable them to differentiate themselves from a culture of war and to work together against local and global violence.

[1] The Brethren in Christ developed in the late eighteenth century out of the reformist activity of a group of Pennsylvanian Mennonites.

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Netherlands Quakers and Mennonites expressing their support for Aboriginal rights and sovereignty. Source: www.canadianprogressiveworld.com/2013/01/05/

A Visit to Mennonite colonies in South Russia by Quakers Allen and Grellet, 1819

From Grellet, Stephen. *Memoirs of the Life and Gospel Labours of Stephen Grellet*. Edited by Benjamin Seebohm. Philadelphia: Longstreth, 1860. p. 452-458. Google e-book

Selected and introduced by Louise Bergen Price

In 1818, two Quakers, philanthropist and abolitionist William Allen of Great Britain and his associate, the French-born American evangelist Stephen Grellet, who had been travelling the world speaking on issues of education, prison reform and spirituality, met with Tsar Alexander I in St. Petersburg to discuss these issues and to encourage him in his work for the Russian Bible Society.

The following spring, with the Tsar's blessing, the men set out to visit non-Orthodox colonies, including Mennonite settlements, in New Russia and the Crimea. The purpose of the trip was to encourage non-Orthodox Christians as well as to collect knowledge of religious sects found in the area. In Ekaterinoslav, the men met 70-year-old Samuel Contenius, director of the Guardianship Committee, who offered to accompany them on a tour of Mennonite colonies. The following is excerpted from Grellet's account:

Accompanied by dear Contenius we left Ekaterinoslav early in the morning of the 23rd, for the colonies of the Menonites, on the Dnieper; we came sixty-five versts to the chief village of the fifteen that form this part of their settlement; they are an interesting people; much simplicity of manner, and genuine piety appear prevalent amongst them. I felt my mind so drawn towards them in the love of Christ, that I apprehended it my duty to endeavour to have a religious meeting among them; their Bishop, who resides in this village was sent for by Contenius to consult on the place and most proper time to hold the meeting; the dear man, who is very plain in his manners and way of living, was at the time in the field behind the plough; for neither he nor any of the clergy receive any salary. They maintain themselves and families by their honest industry. They are faithful also in the maintenance of their testimony against oaths, public diversions, and strong drink. The Emperor exempts them from military requisitions. The Bishop concluded that there was no better, or more suitable place than their meeting-house, which is large, and in the centre of the other villages; the time was fixed for the next day, and he undertook to have notice spread. At the time appointed, they came from all the other villages; the house was crowded with the people, and their ministers; much solidity was evinced. The people gathered at once into such stillness and retiredness of spirit, that it seemed as if we were amidst our own friends, in their religious meetings. I was enlarged among them in the Gospel of Christ; Contenius interpreted from the French into German; dear Allen had an excellent communication to them, which I first rendered into French, and then Contenius into German; we also had access together to the place of prayer; our spirits were contrited before the Lord; the dear children, who also felt the Lord's power over them, were in tears. ...

Thence we went over the river called Moloshnaia. ...The Menonites, here, are preserved in much Christian simplicity, in their worship, manner of living, and conversation. They have also a testimony against making the Gospel chargeable, and against wars and oaths. I felt it my religious duty to have a meeting amongst them. It was agreed to be held in the evening of the next day, and the Bishop readily offered to have notice of it sent to the villages, round – ten in number. In the forenoon we had a meeting with the children of several villages, collected on the occasion; their sobriety and religious sensibility give pleasing proofs that their parents

…continued bottom of page 14.

Doukhobors and Mennonites

By Robert Martens

For those of us acquainted with the Sons of Freedom, the term "Doukhobor" may evoke a stereotype of naked protesters, arson, and bombings. But stereotypes are never accurate, and Mennonites might be reminded of how much common ground they share with the Doukhobor tradition. Both groups have historically espoused pacifism and the refusal to take the oath. Both have been generally distrustful of secular government, partisan politics, and high church orthodoxy. The Doukhobor slogan, "Toil and Peaceful Life," might be happily adopted by many Mennonites. Abstention from tobacco and alcohol was often practised by both Doukhobors and Mennonites. Even the frequently violent Doukhobor offshoot, the Sons of Freedom, has its counterpart in the armed occupation of Muenster by Anabaptists in 1534.

Of course there are significant differences as well. For Doukhobors, inner revelation has priority over Scripture, and consequently the concepts of the resurrection, the trinity, and the divinity of Christ are understood more metaphorically than literally: Jesus, for example, is not so much a historical figure as the divine that incarnates itself within us. Doukhobors have also frequently practised vegetarianism, rare among Mennonites. But perhaps the most

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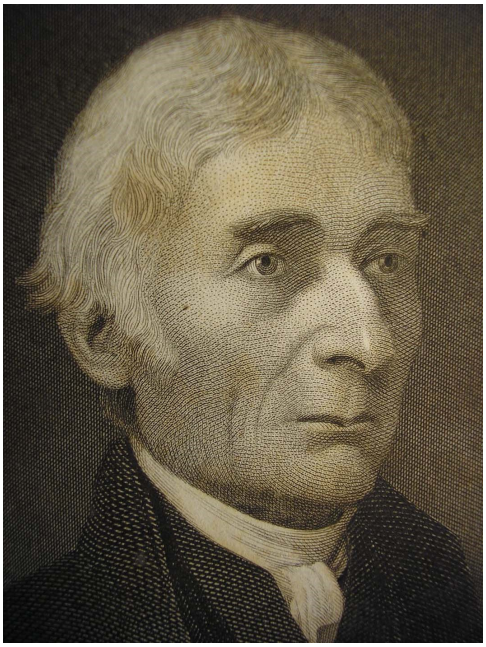
…continued from page 13.

have not attempted in vain to instruct them, by example and precept, in a Christian life. We also visited with much satisfaction several of their families. The meeting in the afternoon was largely attended.

…

Next morning, we had another meeting with about five hundred of their young people. I have rarely met more general religious sensibility than among these. I had not spoken many sentences, when a great brokenness and many tears gave evidence of their religious feelings. In the afternoon we had a meeting with the people at large; a very satisfactory season. Dear Contenius is a faithful helper to us; he is so feeling in his manner of interpreting. After visiting many of these people in their families, we went to another village, where we had a very large meeting. Many of these dear people came to it from fifteen different villages round, their meeting house being large.



Etienne (Stephen) Grellet detail by William Miller, sculptor. Source: Wikipedia

We then went to Altona, their most distant village, which stands pretty near the colonies at the Duhobortzi. We put up at the house of a Menonite, a young man, who is a minister among them. The order of his family and children is most gratifying; piety seems to prevail over them all; the simplicity and neatness of the house are beautiful. Much quietness and simplicity is also apparent in the religious meetings of this people. They are very regular and punctual to the hour at which their meetings for worship are held. When gathered, they all kneel. They continue so in total silence, in secret meditation or prayer, about half an hour. After resuming their seats, their minister is engaged either in preaching or in prayer; both extempore. Before they separate they kneel down again, and continue for some time in silent prayer. …[H]ere was light, as in Goshen; the Lord's presence was over us; the stream of the Gospel of life and salvation freely flowed towards the various ranks in life; many in the assembly were contrited before the Lord, and under a sense of his redeeming love and presence we took a solemn leave of each other.

remarkable distinguishing Doukhobor characteristic is the extreme activism of their ethics: in general they aggressively and openly resisted military service and the swearing of the oath of loyalty to the state, while Mennonites tended to accommodate, to negotiate, to live as "the quiet in the land."

The origins of the movement are unclear. Doukhobors first appeared in the Russian Empire in the seventeenth century, and their stubborn resistance to rituals, icons, and the Orthodox priesthood earned them the mocking name of "Doukhobors," meaning "Spirit Wrestlers," that is, fighters *against* God. Like the Anabaptists, who proudly assumed the name of "rebaptizer" flung at them by their persecutors, the Doukhobors simply reinterpreted the epithet to mean "fighters *with* God." Under the Tsarina Catherine the Great, laws that suppressed religious dissidents were relaxed, but on the local level, Doukhobors were often in conflict with authorities and their immediate community. They may have been partly at fault. Like Mennonites, their ideal was "Love thy neighbour as thyself," but in practice, again like Mennonites, Doukhobors sharply (perhaps arrogantly) separated themselves from "the world." Buchnaya writes, "[T]he Doukhobors considered themselves the 'sons of Abel' wrestling against the 'sons of Cain,' a synonym for all other people" (2).

Alexander I, who granted the Privilegium (conferring certain rights, among them exemption from military service) to a grateful Mennonite community, was more tolerant of dissident groups than most tsars, and worked towards peaceful accommodation with Doukhobors. In 1802 he resettled many Doukhobors in the Molotschnaya region, ostensibly in order to protect them from persecution, but the greater purposes may have been to resettle newly acquired lands and to keep the dissidents far removed from the heart of the Russian Empire. Over the next decades, Mennonite and Doukhobor settlers of the Molotschnaya enjoyed a congenial relationship. Doukhobors admired and quickly adopted the successful farming practices of the Mennonites. Doukhobors even incorporated German clothing and houses into their lifestyle, and their villages

A group of Mennonites visiting with a Doukhobor man, April 2, 1965, in the Castlegar area BC. Photo: Justine Sawatzky

were structured on the Mennonite scheme of a single main residential street with farming properties surrounding the community. In situations of conflict, Mennonites sometimes acted as mediators for Doukhobors. Both groups felt common cause in their refusal to take up arms. While Mennonites benefited from a firm exemption from military service, however, the Doukhobor situation was much more unstable, and Doukhobors sometimes paid the local nomads, the Nogai, to serve as their substitutes in the armed forces.

Unlike the "quiet in the land," Doukhobors felt compelled to proselytize, a practice that was illegal in the Russian Empire, and were vociferously vocal in their opposition to the state, military, and Russian Orthodox Church. Tsar Nicholas I was far less tolerant than his predecessor – in fact he created the first Russian bureaucratic police state – and he enacted laws enforcing conscription into the military and prohibiting Doukhobor gatherings. Eventually, between 1841 and 1845, about five thousand Doukhobors were transported to Georgia in an effort to isolate them. Under these crisis conditions, a major split occurred, with the Small Party Doukhobors seeking accommodation; and the Large Party, under the leadership of Peter V. Verigin, relentlessly resisting the authorities, who were demanding oaths of allegiance as well as registration of births and deaths in their efforts to rein in the dissidents. In 1887 Verigin was arrested, and he spent the next sixteen years in exile in the north of Russia. Finally,

in 1895, the Large Party Doukhobors attracted international attention when, in an act of open rebellion against state and militarism, they gathered to burn their weapons. Arrests and torture followed, villages were dispersed, and many died of malnutrition.

Discussions began concerning possible flight to Canada. At this point, the novelist Leo Tolstoy stepped in to help. He admired the nonresistance of the Mennonites, but felt a far greater connection with Doukhobors, and had corresponded with Peter V. Verigin for years. Tolstoy remarked that Doukhobors embodied his own beliefs, and that they deserved to win the Nobel Prize. He contributed the royalties, about 17,000 rubles, from his novel *Resurrection* to the cause of Doukhobor migration to Canada.

Doukhobors, like Mennonites, share a history of emigration and exile. In 1899 about 7400 of them emigrated to the Northwest Territories (on land which is now part of Saskatchewan) and established four communal colonies. Quakers lent them money and aid, and Mennonites may have assisted as well. James Mavor, a professor of political economy at the University of Toronto, had noted the success of Mennonites and Hutterites in opening up prairie land, and now suggested to the Canadian government that Doukhobors would also be successful pioneers. Fortunately for the Doukhobors, the Dominion Lands Act of 1872 contained the Hamlet Clause, which permitted communitarian property holdings and lifestyles; the clause had originally been adopted into law to accommodate the communal wishes of Mennonite immigrants. Peter V. Verigin arrived in Canada in 1902. He continued to radicalize his followers, sometimes bizarrely, counselling, for example, that "animal brethren" should be set free, and that women pull the plough. Verigin also contrived to register all landholdings in his own name.

It has been charged that Verigin's control of landholdings was motivated as much by corruption as by belief. In any case, another crisis ensued when the federal authorities began requiring individual ownership of land, a policy which would overturn the Hamlet Clause and undo the communitarian

Peter Verigin residence and prayer house, Veregin, SK.
Photo: Louise Bergen Price

Doukhobor lifestyle. Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, aggressively pursued this new policy, and broke another promise by demanding that Doukhobors swear the oath of allegiance to the Crown. Doukhobors at this point split into three groups: the *Edinolichniki*, or Independents, who were willing to give up communal ownership of land and assimilate; the largest group, the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood, who remained loyal to Peter V. Verigin; and the small splinter group, the Sons of Freedom.

What followed was the largest mass migration in Canadian history. Verigin bought up huge tracts of land near Grand Forks and Castlegar, and between 1908 and 1912 about eight thousand Doukhobors moved to BC in order to preserve their communal way of life. In the mild west coast climate – like the Russian Mennonite refugees of the 1920s, Doukhobors never enjoyed the harsh prairie winters – the Community Doukhobors successfully raised fruit and vegetables for several decades. Their story, however, was beginning to unravel. In 1924 Verigin was murdered in a Canadian Pacific Railway bombing that remains unsolved to this day. Relations with political authorities began to deteriorate in an atmosphere of suspicion. Doukhobor customs such as withholding children from school did not help calm the waters. And the Great Depression eventually bankrupted the Community, with the BC gov-

ernment intervening in 1940 to buy out the Doukhobor lands and then rent them back.

In 1928 Peter P. Verigin, the son of Peter V., arrived in Canada from the emerging Soviet Union, and soon became regarded as a talented conciliator and mediator. The Sons of Freedom, regarding him as a traitor to the Doukhobor cause, responded with a series of nude parades, arsons, and bombings. In less than fifty years, their 1,112 acts of violence would result in $20,000,000 in damages. Schools, railway bridges, the Nelson courthouse, and a transmission tower in East Kootenay were bombed, resulting in the arrests of some three hundred men and women. Although the imagery of nudity and burning homes persists in the public mind to this day, the violence of the Sons of Freedom was condemned by other Doukhobors as a violation of pacifist norms.

In 1947-8, the federal Sullivan Royal Commission recommended some moderate measures aimed at integrating Doukhobors into mainstream society. When W. A. C. Bennett's Social Credit Party came to power in BC in 1952, however, the provincial government took a hard stand. About 150 Sons of Freedom children were forcibly separated from their families and interned in a school in New Denver. The results were of course deeply traumatic, and situations of abuse were reported[1]. It was in this atmosphere that the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, perhaps feeling some kind of affinity with the Russian Doukhobor refugees, decided on an evangelical outreach to the Doukhobor community, and particularly to their children. Representatives of the West Coast Children's Mission worked among them for several years, without firm or lasting results.

Today the Doukhobor religion seems to have entered a period of decline. A handful of Canadian Doukhobors had returned to Soviet Russia in the 1920s, lured by Bolshevik promises, but the experiment ended in disaster. During the following decades, the state's anti-religious brutality was responsible for the loss of books and archival material and for the suppression of the religious tradition. Leaders were murdered or exiled. Paradoxically, some Doukhobor survivors adapted relatively well to the large Communist collective farms, which were in a sense a continuation of their tradition. At this time, however, no records exist as to how many Doukhobors, if any, still live in Russia.

In North America, between 20,000 to 40,000 individuals of Doukhobor heritage reside in Canada, and about five thousand in the United States, but a mere four thousand of the Canadian population identify themselves as Doukhobor in their religious affiliation. Unlike Mennonites, who have largely opened their doors to seekers around the globe, the "old guard" among the Doukhobors in North America may have clung to their ethnicity too long; without new blood in their ranks, their numbers declined. As for younger generations, the great majority of Doukhobors have adjusted and assimilated to the secular society, and communal living is no longer practised. But Doukhobors have a proud history behind them: in Russia they lived together without police or prisons for one hundred years, fought for their right to worship as they chose, and proclaimed to the world their dedication to peace. Doukhobors deserve our admiration for their fierce commitment to the ideals of their gospel.

[1] In 2004 the BC government issued a statement of regret. It fell well short of an apology and many Doukhobors were disappointed by the tepid response.

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Bread and Salt and the Word

By Harry Tournemille

Heritage carries a manufactured meaning. A person sifts his or her history from the surrounding soil, from blood, from people and song and divine invention. A mythology of life travelling to death, which they arrange and present as *identity.* Sometimes these things are strung out on a timeline, though heritage is never completely congruous with linear time; it is a cultured, expanding narrative. If I were to consider my heritage, I would have parts of Doukhobor, Mennonite, and Dutch Catholic. I was born Doukhobor, raised Mennonite, and had a Catholic mother. I am theologically nomadic – a spirit wrestler and an Anabaptist and a receiver of transubstantiation. I would be both a part of and apart from all these things. They would overlap in unexpected ways – and like so many stories of heritage, what I know begins with emigration and struggle and ultimately death.

In 1975, my father died a few months before I was born. A pipefitter and welder working out of town on contract, his hotel caught fire one night while he slept. Though his friend swore they were together in the smoke-filled corridor, trying to find a way out, Harry did not emerge. With his death went most of my Doukhobor-ness. He was my connection to a culture I would grow up knowing very little about. His parents and grandparents had come from Russia, followed a similar route as the Mennonites to Canada, created communities with the hopes of religious freedom and perhaps a bit of isolation too. Before I was even born, I was on the outside of his story. I would not know of it until much later. But when you stand in front of a tree – no matter when – you become aware of its roots underneath your feet. You sense them.

They had a habit of forgetting their explosive packages alongside railway beds.

My mom – a Dutch Catholic – also came to Canada in search of a better life. After the Second World War, her father (my Opa) worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway. Her mother – all four feet eleven inches of her – raised ten children. One of Opa's first jobs: to walk long, moonlit sections of track as a lookout for Sons of Freedom, or Freedomites (a fringe, extremist sect of Doukhobor). They had a habit of forgetting their explosive packages alongside railway beds. My Opa and his lantern, the tiny watchman shack with its pot-belly stove and military cot where my mother as a child would sometimes sleep while he walked and walked. The constant, potential threat – which he must have found familiar. A member of the Dutch Resistance – his name written down in a book in Utrecht. *Johannes Cornelius Van Leur*. I picture his breath ghosting from behind the lapels of his winter coat. Small deaths in the night air as he walked the outskirts of town in complete silence.

After Harry's death and my birth, his family tried to stay connected. For a time it worked. I recall visits with uncles and aunts. The cheek-pinching, beer-drinking sort. I remember my *Baba* and *Dyeda* (Grandma and Grandpa). Their scent: sweat and onions and tobacco as they sat side-by-side on our threadbare, tweed sofa. Their faces tanned from outdoor work. They smiled a lot. When *Baba* died, *Dyeda* was with Ruth for a short time. Then, like Harry, even they died unexpectedly one night. The oxygen in their little camper consumed by a lantern, leaving them breathless. Ruth curled up in her camper bed as if asleep. Dyeda at the table, his head resting on his hands. Like Harry, Dyeda was buried in the Russian Cemetery at the edge of town. A resting place on a hill, overlooking the valley and the winding tree-lined Kettle River.

In Russia, relocated Mennonites and Doukhobors lived near one another in the *Molochnaia Vody* – Milky Waters: settlements north of the Sea of Azov. Though they did not relate well with each other, they shared similar principles: pacifism, objection to military involvement, an emphasis on inner spiritual living. They were profoundly adept at agriculture, shared as a community, lived simply and without embellishment. They both practised

choral singing. Yet their differences kept them distant. The Mennonites did not know a lot about their neighbours – perhaps out of preference. Perhaps because the Doukhobors did not believe in a single saviour, but that God was in each person and therefore the onus was on the individual to live pure. I wonder sometimes which is easier to fathom: light from a distant source, or light from within. Which one carries more gravity?

Trestle railway bridge near Grand Forks. Photo: Harry Tournemille

Mom remarried when I was sixteen months. We had been living in a trailer – the two of us. My name changed from *Novokshonoff* to *Tournemille,* a transition from earthen to airborne. I received siblings. My new dad was not Russian, though he was a good man. A school teacher from a hard home, a Catholic at first, and then a Mennonite for most of my life. Later he became a Pentecostal, then back to a Mennonite again, then finally Pentecostal one last time. The spirit moves – or maybe it is attached to a string. Strong-armed and strong-backed, my dad could garden like a Doukhobor. He could be kind and also fiercely angry. He was a storyteller, he knew animals. He was good at speaking, though not always good at listening. He worked himself – many times – to a breaking point.

Perhaps I was only Doukhobor for sixteen months? With the name change and new dad – which to be honest are all I've ever really known – there was no semblance of Doukhobor life in the house. The one exception being my mother's remarkable ability to cook a good Russian feast. *Borscht, pyrahi, vereneki.* Food for winter weight. My *Oma* and *Opa* remained, and I spent much time with them, loving how they laughed quietly together. But the Doukhobor part was gone – perhaps forgotten, or there in name only.

In our home, Sundays burned bright with paradox. Mother and father parted ways. Mom to the Sacred Heart church; my siblings and I to the Mennonite one with my father. This was an unspoken arrangement. This is where most of my upbringing lies – in a church planted and built with the sole purpose of bringing the divinity of Christ to the Doukhobor community. To *save* them.

I do not recall any mention of the word Mennonite growing up. It is a term I only discovered years later at Bible college. I do remember hard, wooden pews and singing, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" or, ironically, "Onward Christian Soldiers." I remember harmonies that I will hum out of the blue – even though I am many years removed. A heavy wood Jesus Fish on the front wall above the choir seats. In small racks on the backs of pews, burgundy hymnals with pink-edged pages. One Sunday my younger sister vomited all over her hymnal. Her expectorate the exact same colour pink. I remember itchy crocheted homemade vests pulled over turtlenecks. Most of all, I remember Dad's voice brash with harmony in the sanctuary, singing above all others, making me proud and embarrassed at the same time – like only fathers can.

And there was Sunday school. Ms. Popoff's class – a rite of passage for all young students before they graduated to the older ranks upstairs. She was a

saved Doukhobor. She delivered her lessons grimly in a blue cinder block room that smelled of stale bodies and mildew. There were paper Bible character cut-outs and felt boards. Our only source of daylight: a small window above our heads, out of reach, ground level. We sat on small, green asbestos-flecked chairs at a white, plywood table. Ms. Popoff with her grey hair pulled tight into a bun on the back of her head. Her striped blouse holding back large, Doukhobor breasts. Her stern Russian accent and work-worn hands. Her constant warnings of the fires of hell. A scene so severe it bordered on the comical.

But this was my understanding of "Mennonite" and "Doukhobor." People placed on either side of an ideological line: the saved and the unsaved. Two different worlds; one bathed in "truth" – the other a facsimile in need of adjustment. But yet – as it was in Russia – the similarities had a way of reaching out with light fingers. Once in a while, often at Christmas, a hymn would be sung in Russian. It would sound like another world. There were other Doukhobors who had converted to the Mennonite faith. Old Harry Harshenin, who would drive his dinted, olive-coloured Datsun pickup to hand out tracts at the Greyhound station. His paint-splattered clothes and endless reserve of God.

And there were other stories – confusing ones. Protestors stripping off their clothes to set them on fire in front of Peter Verigin's home. The near-fable of Mary who was arrested for her protest. Who attended the courtroom naked, but not before stopping at a washroom to produce a match from a hidden fold of her body and light the paper towels on fire. The top floor of the courthouse burned.

I would discover that protests were longstanding, and deeply rooted in distrust. I would watch videos of marches in the Fraser Valley, read newspaper articles about children taken and placed in Christian orphanages and corrective facilities. Their fingers reaching through chain-link to reach their parents. What saving is this? Of what value is such a conversion? Holy outrage unmatched and unresolved and to read it even now, as one completely and utterly outside of the history, to see the anguish in their frozen faces, I can't help but feel it breathe into me. I want to march too. I want to rend my clothes and defy.

But who can sustain such anger? And it would not be my own – nor shared the way the fruits of labour are. And for every good person, regardless of creed, there exist those who take and covet and grind their teeth against the weak.

But there is also this: a final childhood memory that comes only as I now write. My dad taking me and my sisters to a Russian Christmas concert at the USCC (Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ) Hall in town. Music sung by a Russian choir. Their harmonies long and mournful, not quite in tune. The sound filling the hall until an overtone emerged that vibrated at my centre. Music to be felt. Hymns we all knew, and sang to. The room cold but not unforgiving. And at the front, resting on an altar below the choir, a glass decanter of clean water, a loaf of bread on a wooden cutting board, and a bowl of salt.

Born and raised in Grand Forks, BC Harry Tournemille now lives in St. Catharines, Ontario, with his wife and daughter. He's still not sure how that happened. His writing has found its way into several Canadian literary journals and he is currently working on his first novel. A fair amount of his spare time is spent practicing jiu-jitsu and mixed martial arts, an endeavour he can only attribute to an early onset of midlife crisis. Harry recommends as further reading an article available online by Robert J. Sawatzky: "A Comparison of the Mennonite and Doukhobor. Emigration from Russia to Canada, 1870-1920." Master's thesis material for Dalhousie University, 1998. The link is http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/tape17/PQDD_0009/MQ36523.pdf.

Annual MHSBC Fundraising Banquet

October 3, 2015, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, BC

Featured speaker Stephanie Phetsamay Stobbe will talk about the "boat people," a commonly used term referring to the mass flight of Vietnamese people from the political chaos of their country from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. Mennonites were involved in helping boat people immigrate to North America from refugee camps. Stobbe, who fled Laos with her family in the late 1970s, is an expert in conflict resolution studies and teaches at Menno Simons College at the University of Winnipeg. Tickets on same soon at the MHSBC office and website.

Ties that Bind: The Genealogical Corner

By Dolores Loewen Harder

From 1969 to 1970 my husband and I lived in Njoro, Kenya, East Africa, on a Plant Breeding Station, where my husband Don was part of a wheat improvement research team funded by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) and the University of Manitoba. My husband knew of a research station located in Lyamungu (near Arusha), Tanzania, that was involved in wheat development in Tanzania. We arranged to visit the station and were invited to stay with Dora and Bill Davis, Canadians from Indian Head, Saskatchewan. Our son was five weeks old when we visited and, of course, Dora did not have a bed for a baby. She took it all in stride and had the perfect solution. She emptied a fairly large drawer from one of her cabinets, put a big pillow inside and commented, "You just wait and see – he will sleep all night because he will be so warm and comfy in there." She was right.

During the course of our visit, Dora told me that her maiden name was Loewen and that she had grown up in Saskatchewan. Loewen is also my maiden name. She told me about herself and her family but we could not find anything that connected us as relatives. It was also apparent that both of us knew very little about our extended families.

After our stay in Kenya we moved back to Winnipeg where we lived until the summer of 2000. It was in Winnipeg where some years later I began researching both my maternal and paternal heritage. It turns out that exploring my maternal heritage was rather easy; not so for my paternal ancestry, and this is where I concentrated my energy. I spent a lot of time doing searches in archives and contacting people. Through these contacts, I met numerous Loewen relatives who were very interested in knowing more about my research and who were very helpful in providing me with information. My research concentrated on my great-great-grandparents, Heinrich Loewen and Sarah Toews, who came to Canada

Njoro, Kenya. Photo: www.travelluck.com

in 1876 with four of their five children. One daughter, already married, arrived two years later.

I looked at all five family branches of Heinrich and Sara. The couple's youngest, Peter Loewen, lived in Gretna, Manitoba. One of Peter's sons enlisted in the military, serving in both wars. When he returned after the First World War he was ostracized by the Gretna community and decided to leave the town. He settled in a non-Mennonite community and married a non-Mennonite girl. I managed to contact Howard Loewen, one of the sons of this family. He became very interested and enthusiastic about my research. Howard and his siblings, having grown up in a non-Mennonite community, knew very little of their Mennonite background nor did they know very much about their father's family.

In the 1990s a regular contact of mine knew that my husband and I were planning a road trip to Abbotsford, BC, and she informed me that I had a relative named Hazel Buglass living in Indian Head, Saskatchewan. When I called Hazel, I explained who I was. I asked her whether we could have a cup of coffee with her on our way to Abbotsford. She persuaded us to come in time for dinner, stay the night and leave the next morning. It was hard to argue with her. We had a delightful evening with her. She told us about her family, brought out pictures, etc. We talked about ourselves and remarked that we had spent time in Kenya. It was then that she mentioned that her sister Dora and husband Bill had spent a few years in Tanzania. It was a revela-

tion to learn that Dora Davis, with whom we stayed in Tanzania, was a close relative. Hazel also told me that her sister Dora, then a widow, was living in Mission, BC. I certainly was excited to hear this and contacted her on our arrival in Abbotsford. We then visited her in Mission. She remembered our visit with them in Tanzania, and this is when I told her I now knew that she was my grandfather's niece. My regret is that I was not able to introduce her to my Loewen grandparents who had been living in Abbotsford. Both had died by the time I saw Dora again. She could have told my grandfather many things about her father (his brother), who unfortunately had completely lost touch with my grandfather over the years.

Howard, in the meantime, was instrumental in planning a Loewen reunion in Gretna in the summer of 2002. More than two hundred people attended, arriving from many parts of Canada, the USA and as far away as Mexico. I believe everyone thoroughly enjoyed that weekend and it was exciting to see how my work on the Loewen family history led to such a large event.

I see the same enthusiasm in people who visit us at the Mennonite Historical Society wishing to learn more about their family history. We are rich in resources at the Society and look forward to helping people with their research.

Dolores works as a volunteer at the Society office on Wednesdays. Wednesday also happens to be the day when Society volunteers focus on genealogy and on helping visitors in genealogical research.

Stories from Berry Flats: The Drowning

By Helen Rose Pauls

Three of the lay ministers of the Berry Flats Mennonite Brethren Church filed around Deacon Harder's ample dining room table and sat down.

"So," Johann Thiessen finally said, after clearing his throat noisily. "We have this difficult matter before us."

"Yes," replied Phillip Driediger hesitantly, his eyes studying the assembled church leaders.

"Well, we must prayerfully go over the details of this unfortunate event," replied Isbrandt Goosen from the head of the table, realizing that the fourth lay minister, Henry Plett, was absent from the meeting.

"Our hearts go out to Henry Plett and Marie and all the family at this difficult time," he stated. "Who could have foreseen this tragedy?"

All eyes lowered onto the white crocheted tablecloth, a labour of love made by Mrs. Harder's mother. "So young Bobby Plett is drowned, the funeral is this Friday and we have yet to plan the service," Deacon Harder pointed out, his hands splayed on the white cloth.

"Well," said Johann, again clearing his throat," the difficulty lies with what was found after the death. You see, when Henry Plett re-

And the youth of Berry Flats continued to swim in Cedar Lake...

Photo: www.fishingwithrod.com

ceived the clothes young Bobby shed to dive into Cedar Lake, his wife found the quarter Henry had given him for admittance right there in the pants pocket. Obviously, Bobby intended to keep the quarter for himself, sneaking behind the fence to get to the lake that way. We cannot take this lightly. For all intents and purposes, the young lad stole from the resort owners."

"So you are saying he died with unrepented sin in his life?" asked Isbrandt, looking up abruptly.

Johann continued, "How do we preach a sermon of comfort and hope when we have no assurance that young Bobby is with the Lord?"

Phillip replied, "He was always playing tricks on the girls, scaring them to death with slugs and snakes, running after them in the berry patch. He didn't pick clean either. Why, he even called young Dorothy Geddert names in Sunday School, I'm told."

Deacon Harder wrung his hands together, studying the intricate pattern of the white cloth before him. "They say he once skipped school, took a chicken from the Wieler farm and he and his friends plucked it, roasted it and ate it up on Vedder Mountain. When Wieler found out, he and Henry made Bobby muck out the barn for a whole Saturday, a suitable punishment, it seems to me."

Phillip suppressed a smile but nodded in agreement.

Johann raised intense eyes to the group. "So we have a young rascal who perished very suddenly in the lake even though many tried to save him. I even heard that young Johnny Lenzmann almost lost his own life struggling with Bobby in the water. Was it the Lord's will for the young lad to die at thirteen in front of his entire youth group and most of his family to teach us all a lesson? Perhaps it is up to us to use his death as an example of what can happen to wild young boys who give no serious thought to the state of their eternal future. We are charged by the church to see to everyone's spiritual welfare and this funeral could be used to make our young folk consider their end."

Phillip and Isbrandt looked down and rested their eyes on the white tablecloth. They hardly noticed as Mrs. Harder came round with fresh coffee and apple piroshky, serving each man quietly and with deep respect. Phillip finally spoke into the long silence, "Was Bobby really any different from our own young lads? No teenage boys like picking berries, and the banter between boys and girls is not unnatural for their age. Don't you recall, Johann, the time back in Russia when we took the Giesbrecht twins for a wild ride at night in your grandfather's buggy and they giggled so much, we were caught red-handed?"

Isbrandt, remembering his last pastoral visit with the lovely widow Dick, felt a warm flush coming up from beneath his collar. He managed to say, "And who among us or our children is without fault? Who will cast the first stone?"

Phillip added, "Well, we have the biblical example of David as God's favourite. The Bible doesn't hide his many mistakes and grievous sins either and it is quite clear that God took delight in him."

Johann surveyed his preaching brethren with disappointment. His hard line was outvoted once again and he would have to tone things down a bit.

Finally Johann spoke, "Why don't you preach the main sermon, Phillip? I will make the *Einleitung* [introductory remarks] and perhaps you, Isbrandt, could close with a prayer. I'm sure that the Plett family will arrange for the reading of the obituary."

"And I'll make sure that Bertha has the details for the funeral luncheon in hand in cooperation with the *Frauenverein* [Ladies Aid]," offered Phillip.

And so Bobby was laid to rest. The girls in the front rows admired the blonde eyelashes on his ashen cheeks and his turned-up nose: his folded hands as if in prayer. Hulda Enns affirmed to Bertha Driediger sitting next to her that, indeed, Giesbrecht and Giesbrecht Funeral Parlour from Clearbrook had again done a beautiful job preparing the body. Bobby's mother found some comfort in Phillip Driediger's healing and hopeful words and Isbrandt Goosen's moving prayer.

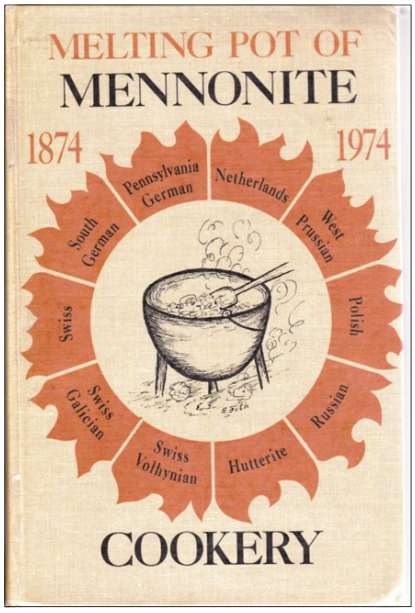
And the youth of Berry Flats continued to swim in Cedar Lake, only more carefully.

Book Reviews

Melting Pot of Mennonite Cookery.

Comp. by Edna Ramseyer Kaufman. North Newton, KS: Mennonite Press, 1974.

Reviewed by Robert Martens



In the 1970s, the idea had been circulating in Kansas of a cookbook with recipes emanating from the various streams of Mennonite groups in Kansas and surrounding states. In 1974 the Bethel College Women's Association of North Newton, Kansas, took this idea on as their project. The material was organized by Edna Ramseyer Kaufman, and included recipes, drawings, and anecdotes relating to ten Mennonite cultural groupings: Pennsylvania Amish/Mennonite, South German pioneers in the prairie, the Swiss, Swiss Galician, Swiss Volhynian, Hutterites, Netherlands Mennonites, West Prussian Mennonites, Polish Mennonites – and finally, "The Russian (Low German) Mennonites."

Ramseyer Kaufman wrote in the introduction that recipes were often variations on a theme: "Foods, with different names reflecting a certain country, were basically the same" (9). She added that the women on the book committee "became aware of their differences ... but, even more important, discovered a oneness, a unity, from the standpoint of a common faith and heritage" (9).

Being the Church in Abbotsford.

Edited by Ron Dart, David Giesbrecht, J. H. Kouwenberg & J. Christoph Reiners. Abbotsford: Judson Lake House, 2013. 110 pp. + appendix.

Reviewed by Robert Martens

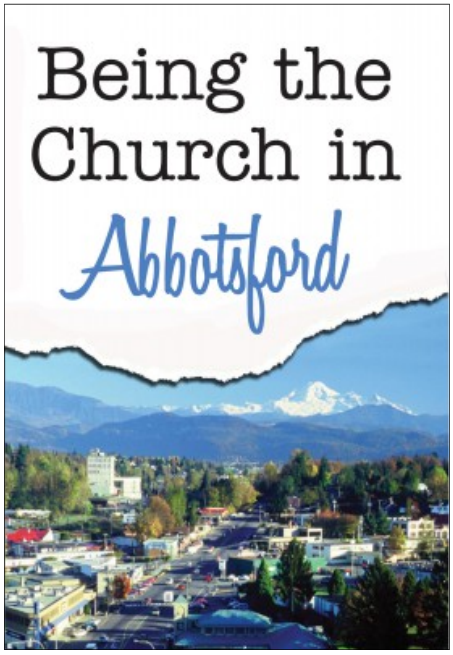
Abbotsford, home to at least 108 churches and twenty denominations, has long been known as the "Bible belt" of BC. In the public mind, it often seems to be a cartoonish city of Bible bangers, child spankers, and hopeless political troglodytes. The book *Being the Church in Abbotsford* attacks that stereotype as hopelessly inaccurate. In a series of eleven essays on the church in this city, the argument is made that Abbotsford's religious community is far larger and more complex than the public stereotype. That claim is made with various degrees of success – but always interestingly.

For example, local Presbyterian Hans Kouwenberg begins the volume with an interesting history of the growth of the Abbotsford Christian Leaders Network, which began in 1995 as the Abbotsford Ministerial Association. Kouwenberg argues that this organization has grown more ecumenical over the years and has reached out far more to the community – but he pleads for a still greater emphasis on social justice issues. This essay is typical of many of this book's essays: its writers frequently combine analysis with recommendations for further change. Unquestionably, biases abound, but they are out front and in plain sight.

John Sutherland follows the same pattern when he writes on the growing social consciousness of business leaders in Abbotsford. His essay suggests that younger entrepreneurs may have a greater sense of ethics than their "baby boomer" counterparts. At the same time, he urges business to pay much more attention to issues such as poverty and hunger in the city of Abbotsford.

Some of the essays are more polemical than analytic, such as university teacher Ron Dart's chapter on politics, or Jim Burkinshaw's urgings to Abbotsford churches to participate more fully in his City of Refuge team which reaches out to the marginalized in the city. And Lutheran Christoph Reiners speculates that interfaith activity has as its goal a genuine community, rather than a city based on mere economics. Other writers, however, are content to investigate the expanding boundaries of Abbotsford's churches. John Redekop scrutinizes

the maturation of a previously insular Mennonite ethnic community into a local powerhouse in education, politics, business, and healthcare. MB leader Ray Harris describes a burgeoning arts scene in Abbotsford churches, and Reformed minister Bert Slofstra presents the local history of his church and its growing interaction with the city at large.



Being the Church in Abbotsford is clearly incomplete, a snapshot of a particular time and place. Two major deficiencies, as the editors admit in their introduction, are the lack of any Catholic contribution to the book, and the absence of coverage of some major evangelical organizations. The editors, though, are cheerfully honest on these issues: "Perhaps a future volume will remedy these and other omissions. But we felt it was time to go to press!" (4)

Being the Church in Abbotsford is available for purchase for a very modest price at the MHSBC office.

The Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists: Restoring New Testament Christianity. Essays in Honor of Paige Patterson.

Malcolm B. Yarnell III, ed. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013.

Reviewed by John Friesen

The book, *Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists*, edited by Malcolm B. Yarnell, is a collection of essays written largely by Baptist scholars and practitioners describing the historical significance of 16th-century Anabaptists to contemporary Baptist theology and church life. The essays originate from a 2012 conference at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Fort Worth, Texas) and are devoted to re-examining Anabaptist theology as a vital resource for Baptist theological development. They were published in honor of Paige Patterson, professor at and former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, for his lifelong scholarly contributions advocating 16th-century Anabaptist thought and church life.

The chapters in this book are arranged in three sections: Theology, Balthasar Hubmaier, and History. Thirteen chapters in total, the essays consider everything from religious liberty, theological method, and church organization and mission. Four chapters are devoted to the contributions of Balthasar Hubmaier, whose political theology and academic scholarship are preferred by Baptists over that of other early Anabaptist leaders. In the History section, four chapters are devoted to Erasmus, Hans Denck, Italian Anabaptists and Gerhard Westerburg's Doctrine of Purgatory.

This volume is a Festschrift for Paige Patterson who was a "fountainhead of radicalism" within the Baptist denomination. While rooted in Baptist identity, Paige read Anabaptist literature widely and developed theological kinship with Anabaptists such as Conrad Grebel, Georg Blaurock and Pilgram Marpeck.

Patterson found much inspiration and conviction in the writings of Anabaptists. He promoted such Anabaptist beliefs as the authority of Scripture, the centrality and necessity of the conversion experience, baptism for believers, the understanding of the church as a gathered community, and the courage to live and die for these beliefs. Patterson had strong convictions on freedom of choice and was deeply concerned about the growing commitment to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and determinism within the Baptist denomination. He rejected Calvin's understanding of the relationship of church and state and the tendency of the state to use the church as an instrument of power.

It is deeply encouraging to read this series of inspirational essays forging a new relationship between Baptist and Anabaptist theological traditions.

This is particularly validating during a time in which Mennonite leaders and congregations seem to be courting new relationships with Calvinist doctrine and practices. Where are the Mennonite scholars who stand up for Anabaptist beliefs and principles in shaping a Mennonite identity in the twenty-first century? Increasingly, Mennonite theology and principles are being influenced by forces outside of the Anabaptist tradition. This development is particularly evident in contemporary Mennonite ecclesiology.

The essay written by Rick Warren entitled, "The Anabaptists and the Great Commission: The Effect of the Radical Reformers on Church Planting," has particular relevance to Mennonite theology. Warren, the author of the book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, and pastor of the Saddleback Church (a Southern Baptist megachurch in Lake Forest, California), declares in his essay that he and his pastoral team have been building on lessons learned from the Anabaptists for more than three decades and that his publications are filled with Anabaptist teachings. He suggests that "The modern generation is largely rootless. They are fatherless and rootless, and so they get blown around like tumbleweeds" (85). Anabaptist theology provides much-needed roots for theological and personal development.

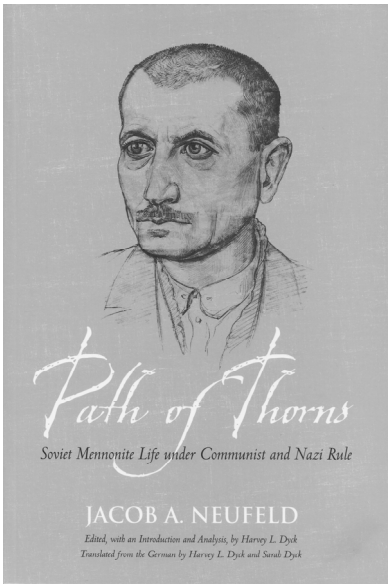
I very much enjoyed this book. My only significant criticism is its lack of a commitment to a theology of peace. The essays in this book fail to fully address the significance of a peace theology in a world which faces nuclear annihilation unless differences and disagreements are solved through peaceful methods of negotiation. This lack of appreciation for a commitment to peace, justice and reconciliation in Christian churches is unfortunately a condition prevalent around the world. To be committed to a radical understanding of the 16th -century Anabaptists demands taking seriously the teachings of Jesus on the peaceful resolution of conflict, forgiveness and reconciliation.

The Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists can be accessed in the MHSBC library.

John Friesen, PhD, is professor emeritus at the University of British Columbia where he has taught for over 30 years in the Department of Counselling Psychology. He has published several books and numerous articles and has conducted many evaluations for government, universities and various organizations. He has conducted numerous research projects including "An Assessment of Family Needs in British Columbia," "The Alcohol Recovery Project," and "Career Aspirations of Canadian Youth."

Path of Thorns. Soviet Mennonite Life under Communist and Nazi Rule.

Jacob A. Neufeld. Ed. and trans. by Harvey L. Dyck and Sarah Dyck. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. 444 pp.



Reviewed by John B. Toews

Path of Thorns brings new life and vibrancy to Jacob A. Neufeld's largely forgotten German memoir, *Tiefenwege* ("deep" or dark ways), first published in 1957. I know of no other surviving narrative, either in scope or depth, that better articulates the Russian Mennonite experience between 1917 and 1948. The Civil War, attempts at reconstruction, the drastic shifts under Stalin's First Five-Year Plan, the terrors of the 1930s – Neufeld documents one man's survival journey through these times. He personifies the twenty percent of Mennonite male heads of families who eluded imprisonment, exile to labour camps, or outright execution. In addition, he joined the German and Mennonite colonists in the so-called "Great Trek" from Ukraine to Germany that began in the fall of 1943. Co-translator Professor Harvey Dyck is to be congratulated for his informative and incisive introduction that so aptly sets the stage for a better understanding of the memoir. In doing so he also provides the reader with a substantial bibliographic resource.

As a translation the book very successfully transitions the agonies of a Germanic/Mennonite soul into an idiomatic English that will deeply resonate with the reader. It is a masterful translation that at times, while not at all distorting the German text, frequently appears to elucidate the essence and imagery of the narrative more clearly and graphically than the original.

The reader might be struck by Neufeld's pro-German sympathies. The Great Trek, via the Warthegau in Poland, brought Neufeld and his co-religionists into a collapsing German nation and its subsequent post-war disasters. Readers who are accustomed to western attitudes towards a defeated enemy capable of great brutality may be taken aback by Neufeld's deep empathy for things German. From his perspective, the German *Wehrmacht* "rescued us from our oppressors" (369) when they occupied Ukraine. Later, German citizens, themselves in great deprivation, shared their rations, offered sympathy, and housed fleeing Mennonites. As one who had found refuge, Neufeld writes, "our deep sympathy for the Germans is probably understandable … yet we had never imagined that judgment [upon them] would be so pitiless" (339). He was a man of two worlds. His homeland had rejected him; Germany had given him shelter and shown him kindness. Many had been victims of Nazi atrocities; he, on the contrary, experienced kindness at the hands of ordinary Germans. For him there was another side to the story.

Neufeld periodically pauses in his memoir and struggles to make sense of his experiences. As a deeply pious Mennonite Christian, he seeks to come to terms with the countless assaults on his innermost being. For him, Stalinism had battered traditional Mennonite identity in every possible way. He observes how quickly, during the Great Trek westward, the human being could change "under conditions of threat, affliction and severe poverty" (285); and yet, amid all the failings, there were the "matchless deeds of our women … not one of them collapsed" (287). Throughout the narrative Neufeld, amid calamitous situations that might generate despair or rebellion, maintains a "Kingdom of God" perspective: God is in charge (370-72). Consistently he provides a clear personal perspective on who he is and on the worldview he firmly holds. Most moving, for me, was the letter he addressed to his wife, Lene, in September 1947, while he was still in the Gronau, Westphalia, transit camp.

This translation is a key contribution to the telling of an incredible story. In its scope, depth and presentation, no other book better articulates the bitter Mennonite experience under Stalinist rule. Beautifully written, masterfully translated and meticulously introduced, it belongs in every Mennonite home.

MHSBC event: Harvey Dyck lecture on *Path of Thorns,* April 17, 2015

Report by Robert Martens and Louise Bergen Price

Harvey Dyck, professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, had long been intrigued by Jacob Neufeld's memoir, *Tiefenwege*, and that interest eventually led him to co-translate and edit the memoir along with two other works written by Neufeld. During that process, Dyck told a large crowd at Clearbrook Mennonite Brethren Church, "Jacob Neufeld became my friend."

More than translation was required in the publication of this volume: a hefty amount of research was involved as well. The police records of Jacob Neufeld's arrest, stored in the vaults of the state archives in Zaporizhye, Ukraine, were now accessible to the public, provided that a request for release was made by a member of Neufeld's family. Accompanied by Jacob Neufeld's son, Dyck travelled to Zaporizhye to research the secret police documents. What he found there was remarkable: 6,000 pages of files relating to the arrest in 1934 of one hundred Russian Mennonite leaders, Neufeld among them.

Although Stalin's Great Terror of 1937-38 was yet to come, the arrests in 1934 effectively "decapitated the Mennonite leadership in Russia," said Dyck. This catastrophic event might be better understood in its totality, Dyck continued, by seeing

Photo: Elmer Wiens

it through the eyes of one of its victims, Jacob Neufeld. Typically, Neufeld was taken away from his family at night. He was detained in a prison – ironically, quite beautiful from the outside – in Dnepropetrovsk. The usual nighttime interrogations followed, and the now depressingly familiar stories of hunger, thirst, and torture. Neufeld and the other Mennonite men arrested concurrently were accused of spying for Hitler, who had just come to power in Germany. Eventually, after threats were made to his family, Jacob Neufeld confessed to all charges. He was sentenced to five years in labour camps. The Gulag was not yet fully organized, said Dyck: Neufeld was shuffled erratically from camp to camp.

Few Mennonites survived their prison terms in the Gulag, but Jacob Neufeld managed to endure five years of misery and return to his family home. Neufeld survived, said Harvey Dyck, because he understood the culture of the prison camp, built on fraud, violence, and the cultivation of relationships with men of power. During this time, though, the intense pain of arthritis became Neufeld's constant tormentor. In consequence, he could not do heavy labour in his later years in Canada; instead, he wrote his memoir, based on his memories as well as on notes he had taken in camp. The notebook survives to this day.

It was a moving evening. In the post-lecture discussion period, many in the audience spoke of their connections with Stalinist era sorrows.

Path of Thorns can be purchased at the MHSBC office at Garden Park Tower, 2825 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford.

Helping with Joy: Ukraine's Florence Centre

By Vi Thiessen Chappell

In May 2011, my brother and I walked peacefully through the streets of the busy city of Zaporizhzhye in eastern Ukraine to visit the Florence Centre. City crews were busy planting flowers in the park. We walked past churches and schools and noted the buildings and the architecture that reminded us that our Mennonite family had once lived there. We found the grey, five-storey apartment building that looked like all the others in the area and rang the buzzer. We were warmly greeted by Lucy Romanankova, Director of the Florence Centre, and taken up a flight of stairs to the apartment which housed the Centre. A wonderful, warm place greeted us. Children were laughing and happily playing. As we observed the activities, we saw that every activity the children were engaged in had been designed to promote the development of children with severe disabilities. We were seeing the Kangaroo program, one of the many programs developed by the Florence Centre, in action.

So what is happening today in Zaporizhzhye amidst the turmoil in eastern Ukraine, just a little over 200 kilometres away? On March 19, 2015, Lucy Romanankova, Director of the Florence Centre and a resident of Ukraine, brought us an update at a lunch event held at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, BC. The event was sponsored by Communitas Supportive Care Society. Lucy, a former university professor, told the story of how, with eight staff members and many volunteers, the Florence Centre is continuing to offer and develop programs which provide education and support for children and adults dealing with disabilities, abuse, addiction and mental health issues. Fulfilling its motto, "Helping with Joy," the Centre radiates warmth and joy. Lucy's presentation included stories, humour, videos and much information regarding the many facets and broad

impact of the centre.

Program Kangaroo, promoting physical and social rehabilitation for children with disabilities, currently provides family support and a daycare program for seventeen children aged zero to six. Due to the severity of their disabilities and their parents' lack of financial resources, these children are not eligible for other services. At the Florence Centre the children are loved, and taught to eat, use the washroom, and dress and undress themselves, etc. Parents often have a hard time believing that their children are capable of doing these things. In the past these children would have been kept in institutions, away from the public eye, and parents would have been ashamed to admit to having a child with a disability.

Staff interacting with children at the Florence Centre.
Photo: Lucy Romanankova

In order to help parents and children to feel more comfortable in social settings, the Centre holds an annual "Integrative Concert." An equal mix of children with and without disabilities play games and then perform on stage together. The children seem to forget which of them has a disability. Parents are happy to see their children interacting with other children, having fun and demonstrating that they too have abilities. Over the last six years, participation has grown from 200 children and spectators to 600. Over sixty university students and volunteers are involved in making this event happen—developing a culture of volunteerism is an important goal of the Florence Centre, and students coming to the Centre to complete their social work practicums often stay on as volunteers.

The Florence Centre provides additional important services. Another program, Healthy Life Styles, focuses on issues such as smoking, alcohol and drug use. University students and volunteers involved in the program undergo intensive training in order to ensure that their presentations are fun, interesting, and highly interactive. Last year the FASD (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder) program reached over 11,000 students, teachers and parents, while 2,500 people participated in the HIV Aids program. Both programs are funded by MCC. The "We Are Just Like You" program is geared to the rehabilitation of children aged eleven to fourteen who have committed violent crimes and reside in detention centres. Its aim is to teach healthy living and life skills to the children and to educate staff. In addition to staging presentations, university students come out monthly to play football with the children, promoting active living. The Family Co-op program works with parents and women's groups to promote effective parenting. In addition, in-service training for social work practitioners is offered monthly. This program provides much needed training, support and encouragement for those working in the social work field.

All these services and more are operating with very limited resources but a great deal of commitment, enthusiasm and vision.

Donations to support the Florence Centre may be sent to Communitas Supportive Care Society, 103-2776 Bourquin Crescent West, Abbotsford, BC, V2S 6A4. Phone: 604.850.6608. For more information on the Florence Centre see http://www.communitascare.com/services/other/370-florencecentre.

Vi Thiessen Chappell is a MHSBC board member and a former University of the Fraser Valley administrator. She and her brother Steve travelled to Ukraine and Russia in 2011 to explore their family roots, with Lucy Romanankova as their tour guide.

Marian Penner Bancroft

By Robert Martens

In the autumn of 2014, The Reach Gallery Museum in Abbotsford featured the work of the Vancouver-based artist Marian Penner Bancroft. She used a variety of media in this exhibit, including text, maps and family photographs, but the primary focus was on her own photos taken in Scotland and Ukraine. As suggested by her name, Marian Penner Bancroft has a multi-ethnic background. A press release by The Reach describes the exhibit as charting "the journeys of her father's Mennonite family from what is now Ukraine and her mother's Presbyterian family from northern Scotland." Her exhibit at The Reach, By Land and Sea (Prospect and Refuge), investigated "a family history and relationship out of a narrative of forced migration and relocation" (Reach press release). In other words, for Marian Penner Bancroft, the human story is inextricably connected with the land on which we live, and both Russian Mennonites and Scots suffered the enormous tragedy of being forced off their land.

On November 8, 2014, Penner Bancroft led a lecture tour of her photo exhibit of Scottish and Ukrainian landscapes at The Reach. Her artwork emphasizes the fact that both the Scots and Mennonites of her ancestral past treasured their land and landscapes. She, however, had grown up alienated from her surroundings: born in Chilliwack, in her youthful years she knew very little of her "prospect," a word she uses to describe the social geography of an area. For example, she remarked, she was barely aware of the First Nations people who were living around her. In the 1990s Penner Bancroft took two trips to Scotland and one to Ukraine (the latter in 1997) to investigate the landscapes of her ancestors, "prospects" which have of course greatly altered over time. With her she had a simple "point and shoot" camera with 35 millimetre film. The resulting photos, enlarged many times, have an eerie quality of being something else altogether. Frequently, Penner Bancroft said, she has been asked if these photos were actually paintings.

Photo coutesy of Marian Penner Bancroft

She talked that November evening about her ancestral heritage. Penner Bancroft's parents, Mennonite Philip Penner and Scot Isla Iverach, were married in 1940. Philip loved the English language and ultimately taught English literature at UBC. Marian's Mennonite grandfather was a teacher and minister in Tiege, Sagradovka Colony, South Russia (now Ukraine). Her Scottish grandfather was also a teacher and minister, and both grandfathers, said Penner Bancroft, "knew how to laugh in the face of adversity."

Considering the trials that both Scots and Mennonites were forced to endure, laughing in the face of adversity would be a great gift. Penner Bancroft said that she thinks these two ethnic groups share a great deal of common ground. They are "refugee cultures": Russian Mennonites were driven from their homes by revolutionary violence, and Scots by British aristocrats who increased their holdings by forcing Scottish farmers from their plots of land. The latter occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and is known as the Highland Clearance.

When asked about dissimilarities between Mennonite and Scottish immigrants to Canada, Penner Bancroft replied that she found more similarities

Roots and Branches

is a publication of the Mennonite Historical Society of BC and is mailed four times per year to all members. An annual membership is $35.00.

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than differences: they were both Protestant (though some Mennonites might dispute that), settled in the prairies, and constituted close-knit communities. And of course Scots and Russian Mennonites were torn from their roots and the landscapes they so loved.

They lost so much – and how much we lose every day. In the mid-1990s, Marian Penner Bancroft was commissioned by the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Parks Board to create a permanent outdoor installation on a vanished water ecology. She called her production, which consists of sixteen in-ground and four above-ground markers, *Lost Streams of Kitsilano*. Penner Bancroft later wrote that "my desire became to find a way of recalling what was now invisible, of marking the routes of the streams and in doing so, to call up an earlier image of this place, to bring some history into the present" (Lost Streams 2).

Streams disappear, and so do peoples. As an artist, Marian Penner Bancroft has become a voice for the displaced. Meanwhile, she is a happy resident of Vancouver. To live in this city, she says, is to be "a person whose roots are mostly elsewhere," and she enjoys that sense of diversity, of disparate groups coming together to build a new home. "I see Vancouver as a city mostly of immigrants, and that is a wonderful thing" (qted in Leonhardt 2).

Marian Penner Bancroft has now been exhibiting her work for over thirty years and since 1972 has been involved in a large number of art shows. She studied at the University of British Columbia (UBC), the Vancouver School of Art, and Ryerson University. Since then she has also taught at various institutions, including the Emily Carr University of Art and Design. In 2012 Penner Bancroft was awarded the Audain Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts.

A gallery book by Marian Penner Bancroft, et al., *By Land and Sea (Prospect and Refuge)*, North Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery, 2000, is available in the reference section of the MHSBC library.

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Photographs by Marian Penner Bancroft (see biography on page 30). Top: The 700 year old oak tree at Chortitza, site of the first Mennonite gathering in Southern Russia in 1789. Above: On the road to Sagradowka. Red cows introduced to the region by Mennonites.