

Mennonite Historian

A PUBLICATION OF THE MENNONITE HERITAGE ARCHIVES and THE CENTRE FOR MB STUDIES IN CANADA



Drafted American men reporting for World War I service at Camp Travis, San Antonio, Texas (1917–1918). Photo from the American National Archives collection (165-WW-474B-1). See story on page 2.

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Remembering the Flight from Oklahoma

by Roger Epp, Edmonton

In 2018, our Klaassen family will mark 100 years since my grandfather, his brothers, and their father arrived in Canada. We can easily take our family story for granted, something so well-rehearsed that it contains no more surprises. Or we can treat it as a kind of *Heilsgeschichte*, the salvation history of a faithful remnant, set apart, when instead it really discloses so much of what still makes for suffering in our world—if no longer for us, then for others.

Our Klaassen story is not just our story. It is inseparable from the story of war, nationalism, dispossession, and migration. We should resist the urge to sentimentalize or limit its reach in our own times, especially after a U.S. presidential election that unleashed the kind of menacing anti-foreigner rhetoric our people and others experienced at the outset of World War I.

Now, of course, we have blended comfortably into mainstream North America. We are not a threat to anyone. But we once were. In the country where our family landed in 1884, in a harbour watched over by the Statue of Liberty, the minds and bodies of Mennonite sons would be subjected to intense and brutal

forms of abuse within a generation. Not all of them survived.

Because the Klaassen family is unusually rich in memoirs, diaries, and other documents, as well as the retellings at reunions, the outlines of the Klaassen family's quarter-century in southwestern Oklahoma and then our flight to Canada are familiar enough.

We know that Jacob Klaassen (1867–1948), my great-grandfather, claimed land near the Washita River, as did his brother and his mother Maria, born in what is now Poland and widowed on the Great Trek to Central Asia. He married Katharina Toews (1871–1908) from Kansas, built a farm, and preached in the Herold Church in the country, in whose cemetery his wife, an infant daughter, and two sons, one killed beneath a grain wagon, lie buried.

We do not often acknowledge that the Oklahoma homestead became available for settlement in the first place because the U.S. Congress had passed legislation taking away “excess” land from the indigenous Cheyenne. The Cheyenne were displaced by two of the most discreditable episodes in frontier history in 1864 and 1867, and settled near the Washita. As a result, the farming district between the towns of Bessie, Cordell, and Corn was a checkerboard of Mennonite and Cheyenne land.

We know that Jacob's nephew, Johannes Klaassen (1895–1918), who had grown up on an adjacent quarter-section, was one of the first group of three draftees from the community to report to Camp Travis in Texas. We know that he was court-martialed and sentenced to twenty-five years of hard labour at Fort Leavenworth for his anti-war views. And to his father's great distress, he was sent home in October 1918 in a coffin, dressed in an army uniform.

We know that Jacob had already instructed his oldest sons, Jacob and Martin, to board the train in Clinton under cover of night in the direction of Canada; that relatives in Montana coached them across the border into Saskatchewan; and that Martin, my grandfather, lacking any official papers, was taken from the train in Moose Jaw to prison until his Uncle David Toews could intervene for him.

We know how war disrupts lives and disperses families.

But we also live in North America, where we are tempted to place ourselves

inside the powerful settler mythology in which this continent becomes the final destination in the search for freedom—what the historian Tony Judt calls the “narrative of geographical emancipation: escaping the wrong places and finding our way to better ones.”¹ If we do so, we will be hard-pressed to imagine the anti-foreigner hysteria that was manufactured nationally and in Oklahoma in 1917 around the declaration of war.

I say “manufactured” because war and conscription were not greeted with enthusiasm in the Oklahoma countryside. In the months and years leading to 1917, rural Oklahoma had been a hotbed of political activism and agrarian radicalism.² There is no evidence that the Klaassen family, steadfastly apolitical, was involved in any of it, but they could not have missed the copies of the *Sword of Truth* newspaper or the posters in Washita County, warning landlords against mistreating tenant farmers and sharecroppers, who were a major force in organized movements to stop rent-gouging and stabilize land tenure. In this they were often supported by holiness preachers of the kind depicted in John Steinbeck's novel, *Grapes of Wrath*. In the 1916 national election, the Socialist candidate for President, Eugene Debs, got one in six votes in Oklahoma and almost 40 per cent in a neighbouring county.

When war was declared, members of a loose coalition of farmers, Seminole-Muskogee and Creek peoples, recent immigrants, African Americans, and “Wobblies”—advocates of One Big Union—led a brief uprising mostly on the eastern side of the state that took its name, the Green Corn Rebellion, from a Muskogee sacred harvest ceremony. The uprising was ill-planned; its objectives were unclear. But the combination of war and rebellion provided a pretext for the political establishment in the towns to crack down indiscriminately on a much wider circle of their opponents. The state established a Council of Defense in each county, comprised of some of those leading citizens. The Councils hired thugs and vigilantes to do their most violent work.

The real war, in other words, was often a local one in Oklahoma. A farm leader in Bessie was tarred and feathered. A newspaper editor, insufficiently patriotic, was shot on the steps of the Washita County courthouse in Cordell. A church

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Genealogy and Family History

Common Misconceptions and Errors in Mennonite Genealogy: Part One

by Glenn H. Penner <gpenner@uoguelph.ca>

Over the past 40 years, I have come across several misconceptions and errors commonly found in Mennonite genealogical research. Many of these are due to misinformation passed down over the years and now taken as fact. Many are due to speculation by genealogists without documented, or in some cases logical, bases.

1. *Associating a traditional Mennonite surname with a European location.* Suppose a novice researcher with Mennonite Wiens ancestry discovers that the German name for the Austrian city of Vienna is Wien. This researcher then assumes that the first Mennonite Wiens must have come from Vienna. To anyone with a reasonable knowledge of Mennonite history, such an assumption would seem preposterous. Unfortunately, many genealogists do not bother learning much history or geography. They are more concerned with building a family tree.

Sadly, I see this sort of thing on a regular basis. There are many European locations that coincide with traditional Mennonite surnames such as Epp, Ens, Hamm, Lepp, Klippenstein, Fehr (de Veer), Kauenhofen, etc. In some cases, connecting a surname to the location is logical, but not backed up by any real evidence (Hamm,¹ Lepp,² and Klippenstein³); in some cases, there is good evidence (Kauenhofen⁴ and Fehr⁵); in some cases, the link is wrong (Ens and Epp are derived from old first names, not locations); and in some cases, the connection is ridiculous speculation with no sound basis (my Wiens example, Wiens is also derived from an old Frisian first name). So far, I have not heard anyone claim that the Penners came from India (the river Penner [or Penna] is in India⁶).

2. *"We can trace our families back to the Netherlands."* Almost every person who has predominantly Low-German Mennonite ancestry can trace their ancestry back to the Netherlands. On the other hand, there are very few people of Low-German Mennonite ancestry who can reliably trace their family name,

generation-by-generation, back to the Netherlands. Those few cases include: Fehr (de Veer) and Kauenhofen, plus several family names that became extinct among the Mennonites, such as Momber, von Boeningen, and Harnasveger.

Many tell me that they can trace their ancestry back to the Netherlands. Such a statement is misleading. What they can do is trace one small branch of their ancestry back to the de Veers, Kauenhofens or some long extinct family name that originated in the Netherlands. I should point out that the GRANDMA database has traced several additional surnames back to the Netherlands or other pre-Prussian Germanic regions. However, these connections are based on a lot of speculation and unsubstantiated assumptions.

There is one thing I should make clear. There are several early Mennonites who are known, through reliable documentation, to have immigrated to Prussia from the Netherlands or elsewhere in Northwestern Europe. A nearly complete list can be found in Henry Schapansky's book.⁷ The problem is that we do not have the sources needed to connect us to these people. This brings up a closely connected misconception—that somewhere there are records that will allow us to trace our Mennonite ancestry back to those who immigrated to what later became known as West Prussia. Such records do not exist and never did.

3. *"My ancestor emigrated from Germany to Russia."* Prior to 1871, Germany as a country did not exist. Before 1871, the geographic region known as Germany consisted of Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, and several other independent duchies, principalities, electorates, etc. Before 1871, immigration to Russia took place from West Prussia, East Prussia, and Brandenburg—all provinces of Prussia (not Germany). In 1871, the King of Prussia became the emperor of the German Empire. However, after that, the number of Mennonites moving from Germany to Russia was very small.

4. *"My ancestors emigrated from the Netherlands to Russia."* There are still people who adamantly believe this. There is no evidence whatsoever that any Mennonites emigrated from any Dutch territory to Russia.

5. *People who spell their surnames*

differently are not related. I have often heard statements such as: "Those Duecks are not related to us Dycks, because they spell their name differently." In this case, people are confusing the degree of relatedness. Prior to immigrating to North America, the spelling of Mennonite surnames was rather fluid. Soon after arriving in the new world, the head of the household was expected to choose a permanent spelling of their surname. Prior to that it was not unusual for one person to spell their surnames differently in different documents. I use the surnames Dueck (an Anglicization of the surname Dück) and Dyck as examples, since DNA results have shown rather clearly that all the Dyck, Dueck, Dick and Dück men of Mennonite ancestry who have been tested so far have a common ancestor within the last several hundred years.⁸

6. *"I am one-quarter Penner, maybe we are related."* I frequently hear or read (in my emails) statements like this. Using similar logic, I would say that I am 100% Penner. However, if I go back to my great-great-grandparents, I am only 1/16 Penner and 3/16 Hiebert. Does that mean I'm more Hiebert than Penner?

What if I were able to trace my family back to the time when family names were just starting to become permanent among the people of northwestern continental Europe, which would be about the 1500s? If I had no Penner ancestors other than those of my direct paternal line and assumed 3 generations per century, I would be about 1/33,000 Penner. One might think that this is just splitting hairs, but it is extremely important when one applies autosomal DNA testing to genealogy. This is the standard test one does with 23andMe or Ancestry.com (this test is also available with other companies such as FTDNA). I see people use these test results to make such statements about their family names and this is simply wrong!

To be continued ...

Endnotes

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamm>
2. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lippe_\(river\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lippe_(river))
3. <http://www.schloss-klippenstein.de/welcome.html>
4. http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Kauenhowen_Kauenhoven_Kaunhowen_Kauenhofen_family
5. [http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Veer_de_\(De_Fehr_Fehr_Defehr_Devchr_Devehr_Devaehr_Du_Verre\)_family](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Veer_de_(De_Fehr_Fehr_Defehr_Devchr_Devehr_Devaehr_Du_Verre)_family)
6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penna_River
7. Henry Schapansky, *Mennonite Migrations and the Old Colony* (2006), 79.
8. For more information on the Mennonite DNA Project, see: www.mennonitedna.com or contact the author.

Flight from Oklahoma

(cont'd from p. 2)

was burned. German place-names were altered (Korn to Corn); German-language schools and newspapers like the local *Oklahoma Vorwärts* were forced to close. By war's end, the Ku Klux Klan was a major force across the state.

In Oklahoma in the summer of 2000, I asked our relatives about any lingering local feelings from the war. The conversation got very quiet. A woman described how, not long ago, she had been afraid to speak at work in defense of Mennonite conscientious objectors (COs) when the subject came up; her boss was connected to one of the old notable families in town. Her husband said people still avoided talking about the war in order to get along.

Oklahoma's wartime intensity may have been exceptional, but the same popular feelings could be found throughout the Great Plains. They were amplified politically at the national level. President Woodrow Wilson, who had been re-elected in 1916, promising to keep the U.S. out of the war, also seized the moment to target so-called hyphenated Americans. He had already prepared the ground for such a campaign with these chilling comments in his Third Address to Congress in 1915: *There are citizens of the United States, I blush to admit, born under other flags, but welcomed under our generous nationalization laws to the full freedom and opportunity of America, who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life... The hand of our power should close over them at once.*³

The construction of national identity is always about defining who is inside and who is outside—who is not one of us. A serious and significant intelligence report prepared at the time for the War Department identified Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites as dangerous, unpatriotic people, communist in practice, possibly part of a pro-German conspiracy to undermine the war effort.⁴ The truth didn't matter. All members of those communities were automatically under suspicion, and often monitored by the citizen councils of defense.

At one point, close to 200 Mennonite leaders were threatened with sedition charges for signing a joint letter on the

subject of war bonds; in that case the Justice Department said no. At other times, the law sided with the mob. A Mennonite pastor in Montana, for example, narrowly escaped lynching at the hands of local notables led by the sheriff. How quickly the public mood could turn—and turn against neighbours.

For President Wilson, conscription served the larger purpose of creating a unified nation. The Selective Service Act of 1917 required all able men, aged 21 to 30, to prepare for call-up. Sociologically, the war effort was a melting pot for young men drawn from immigrant enclaves, rural and urban, by the new draft lottery and sent to one of 16 large camps across the country, mostly in the West, which presumably had more recent immigrants to integrate. There they were issued the same U.S. army uniform—a word that bears reflection.

The Act made provision for conscientious objectors to choose non-combatant roles, but required them, unlike in Canada, to report as soldiers to the designated military camp if drafted and there request an alternative assignment.⁵ The Act left the meaning of non-combatant service to the President to define, but no such definition had been given when the first trains filled with young men arrived at the camps.

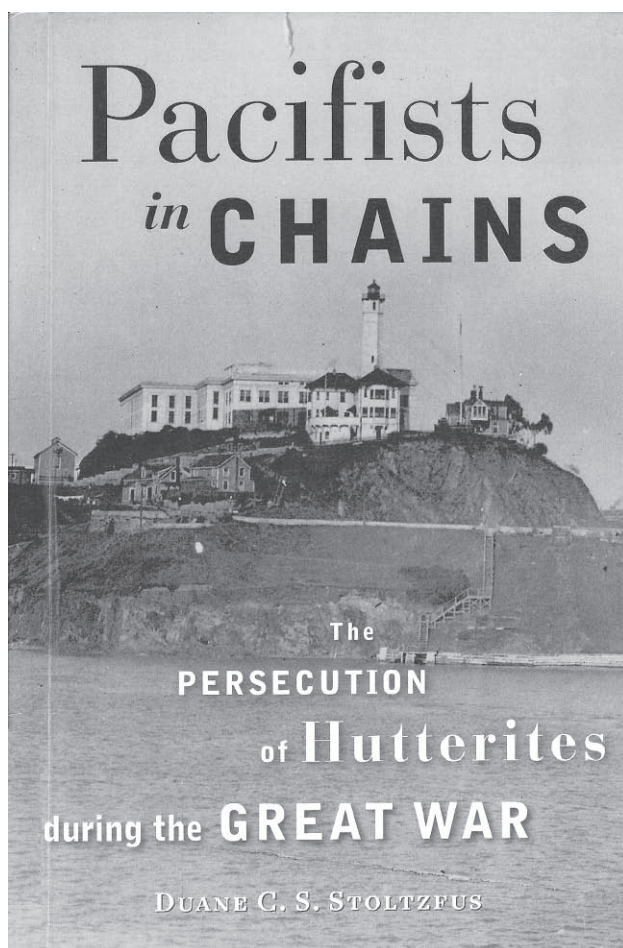
For declared COs, the physical and verbal abuse that began on the trains continued in the camps, whose commanding officers intended to uphold military discipline by dealing resolutely with pacifists. Uncooperative COs were welcomed with repeated near-drownings, beatings, sexual humiliations involving guns and sticks, and, in at least one case, at Camp Funston in Kansas, a mock execution.⁶

The culture of permission came from the top. Despite assurances given to the Mennonite leaders who travelled to Washington, politicians who had set fire to the popular mood had little room to grant special privileges or show sympathy in public.

About three million men would report to military training camps during the course of the war. Of the three million, about 20,000 arrived in camp with CO certificates extracted from local authorities like those in Cordell. Of that number, about 4,000 continued to affirm those declarations despite intense pressure. Some chose non-combatant service, for example, in the medical corps. Some got farm furloughs.

About 450 were court-martialed and sentenced to hard labour for terms as long as 30 years for refusing to wear uniforms or perform specific duties. Among them were Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites, but also Quakers, Jehovah's Witnesses, Doukhobors, liberal Christians, secular Jews, socialists, anarchists, atheists—a melting pot, too. There were more court-martials at Camp Travis than anywhere else, notwithstanding the disciplinary practice of confining men for days in the stockade, without protection from heat, sun, or rain.⁷

Of those 450, at least 27 COs died in military prison. One of them, Johannes Klaassen, was the nephew of my great-grandfather, the cousin of my grandfather.



In his recent book, *Pacifists in Chains: The Persecution of Hutterites During the Great War*, Duane Stoltzfus gives a fascinating, troubling, and very relevant account of the targeting of the bodies and minds of young men. The book follows in close detail the story of four Hutterite men—three of them Hofer brothers—from a colony in South Dakota, who were drafted and reported to Fort Lewis, though they were married with children and might have sought exemptions. They were soon court-martialed for non-cooperation and sentenced to hard labour in Alcatraz Prison, long before it became a tourist attraction in San Francisco Bay.

When the Hutterites refused uniforms and work assignments, they were confined to isolation cells in the prison basement. Dressed down to their underwear, they slept on damp concrete; they went without food for days; and in the deepest row of cells they saw no light other than what entered when the door opened. Sometimes they were manacled, hands together, to the bars above their cell doors, so high that only their toes touched the floor and their limbs ached when they were released. Sometimes they were lashed at the same time.⁸

In November 1918, just after Armistice, the four Hutterites were shipped by train from Alcatraz to Fort Leavenworth with its 40-foot walls above the Missouri River and its Special Disciplinary Barracks, where COs were housed. From the train, they were marched together, in chains, suitcase in one hand, Bibles in the other, through the streets of the town and up the hill. Though official reports later discounted it, others recalled that they ran a gauntlet of soldiers prodding them with bayonets. Finally, they stood outside on a cold November night waiting for the camp commander.⁹

The isolation and manacling resumed. Within two weeks, two Hofer brothers were dead. Their families were alerted of their failing health by telegram; their father, wives, and children arrived in time to say their farewells. One brother died that night. When his wife demanded the next morning to see his body, she found him in a coffin dressed in an army uniform. When the brother died days later, his family appealed successfully to prison officials not to dress him in a uniform for the train trip home for burial.¹⁰

Though we know less of what Johannes Klaassen endured at Leavenworth, all of

this has a very familiar ring, as did the official cause of death: influenza. Certainly, there was a global pandemic in late 1918, helped by the disease vectors of troops moving across oceans and continents. But, as Stoltzfus notes, a place like Leavenworth presented optimal conditions for the spread of influenza: crowded, cold, damp, poorly ventilated cell-blocks, poor diets, and populations of young men, a highly susceptible demographic.¹¹

In the last days of the war, Jane Addams, the Chicago campaigner for world peace, women's suffrage, and the rights of immigrants, who won the Nobel Prize in 1931, and the National Civil Liberties Bureau, investigated conditions at Leavenworth.¹² Needless to say, these were not the sort of friends that Mennonites from Oklahoma or Hutterites from South Dakota would expect to find in the world; but then they could not look for support from the rest of Christianity—certainly not from those who had begun to call themselves fundamentalists, and not from many in the mainline Protestant denominations either.

The Bureau's report used a blunt word, "torture," to describe the treatment of CO prisoners. The U.S. government's response was dismissive: *these were radicals*. The families received no apologies. Before the last surviving COs were released from prison in 1919 and 1920—against public demands that they should serve their full sentences—some of the Hutterite families had moved to Canada.

This is a powerful, dark story. It is our Klaassen story, too. We would not be here otherwise. The story comes from a time when it mattered a great deal to the U.S. government and all of its agents, at every level, to claim the bodies, the tongues, and the undivided loyalties of young men for a war effort it had disavowed only months before; and when that loyalty was stubbornly refused, their bodies could be abused unto death, though they represented no threat whatsoever to the national security of the United States. They had no secrets to divulge.

The story comes from a time, too, when those young men bore a disproportionate share of the burden for upholding the historic peace tradition of nonresistance that had displaced Mennonite communities to a new continent in a time of war. Conscription put them front and centre. Their own leaders had been caught

unprepared by the war, the public mood, and the government's response; they could not find a common Mennonite position. The young men often felt left to themselves to negotiate a gauntlet of abuse and propaganda. But imagine the parental and community expectations in places like the Herold Church, especially where the identity of Anabaptist Christianity was taken so seriously.

We are now far removed from the circumstances that ripped the Klaassen family out of Oklahoma. We do not worry for ourselves in that way. The daily political news on our troubled continent, however, contains plenty of distressing reminders of 1917. Our story is not just our story. For others, it is far from over.

If we remember our story, it is not hard to imagine a country and some of its noisiest political—and Christian—leaders swept up in anti-foreigner hysteria.

It is not hard to imagine people and places of worship monitored and attacked simply because of the religious identities they represent. *Surely, they must be connected to the international enemy.*

It is not hard to imagine that recent immigrants can get reported and arrested for speaking in their first language in public—say, in an airport lounge—even if they are expressing everyday things, or holy things. *If they want to avoid suspicion, they should speak English!*

Let me risk one more step. The more I have learned about the events of 1917 and 1918, especially about the treatment of COs in American military prisons, the more I am struck by the echoes in what has happened more recently at Abu Ghraib in Iraq and at Guantanamo naval base, which was chosen, in fact, over Leavenworth as the place to house prisoners swept up in an indiscriminate global dragnet after 9/11; for it was thought to be beyond reach of either international or domestic law. I am not suggesting exact parallels here. But the culture of permission was much the same. So was the enlistment of rank-and-file soldiers in a familiar catalogue of cruelties: isolation, exposure, sexual humiliation, simulated drownings, manacling.¹³ *The prisoners were less than human. They deserved what they got.*

My point is that if we are true to our Klaassen story, then we also know enough to refuse enlistment in the political campaigns that now swirl around us—the
(cont'd on p. 8)

Partnership—A Way Forward

by Conrad Stoesz

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Mennonite Church Canada chose the latter of this African proverb by inviting the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies (CTMS) and Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) to become partners in the Mennonite Heritage Archives. This three-way partnership provides a strong base for collecting, preserving, and sharing with future generations the significant stories collected in the archives since 1933.

On October 5, 2017, a celebration of this partnership was held at the archives with 80 people in attendance. CMU president Cheryl Pauls welcomed the group and invited Drs. Hans Werner (CTMS) and Willard Metzger (Mennonite Church Canada) to give opening remarks. Professor emeritus John Friesen gave background information about the archive program, recognizing the contribution of long-time archivist Lawrence Klippenstein. Terry Elias recounted how his grandfather, Peter W. Enns, of Winkler, Manitoba, spearheaded a fundraising campaign to build the Mennonite Heritage Centre’s archival facility in 1978. Archivist Conrad Stoesz talked about the importance



On November 12, 2017, the Mennonite Historical Society of BC held a special event to pay tribute to Canadian Mennonite Conscientious Objectors (COs) and those that served in noncombatant roles during the Second World War. Thirteen COs were in attendance at the Abbotsford event and stood for a group photo following the presentation by featured speaker, Conrad Stoesz, archivist at the Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg. The men in the photo are (l-r): Walter Martens, Herb Brandt, Jake Driediger, Art Redekop, John Froese, Paul Redekop, John Dyck, Henry Martens, Jake Hooze, Abe Friesen, George Groening, David Neufeld, and John Isaac. Photo credit: Jennifer Martens.

of stories and the archives as a memory institution that will need extra support and new partnerships as it takes on the tidal wave of digital records that will be coming to archives.

The MHA has a developing partnership with Refuge31 Films, which was on display at the Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia fundraising banquet on November 12. Guest speaker Stoesz spoke to a crowd of 200 at the King Road Mennonite Brethren Church in Abbotsford. Stoesz talked about the importance that narratives play in our decision making. He quoted well-known Canadian story teller Stuart McLean: “Choosing a hero is a delicate business... for the heroes we

choose, whether real or imagined... will determine the things we do and the lives we lead.” Stoesz continued, “If we want to move the world towards a more peaceful existence, we need peace heroes, and the conscientious objectors are one example.”

Following Stoesz’s presentation, *The Last Objectors* was shown, a documentary film produced by Andrew Wall of Refuge 31 films and the Mennonite Heritage Archives. Thirteen conscientious objectors of the Second World War were in attendance, some 100 years of age! Society president Richard Thiessen called all the men who served in alternative service to the front for a group photo, which was followed by *faspa*.

Over the next two years, a **memorial to the victims of Communism** will be built in Ottawa at the Garden of the Provinces and Territories. Five jury members were chosen from across Canada to determine the final design. One of the members of the jury was **Dr. Ruth Derksen**, Emeritus at the University of British Columbia and a first-generation Canadian of Russian Mennonite descent. This appointment was the result of her research and publications on a corpus of letters written from the former Soviet Union by Russian Mennonites. Some of these letters appear in her edited work, *Remember Us: Letters from Stalin’s Gulag (1930-37)*, and in the documentary film, *Through the Red Gate*.

Tribute to Liberty has received the support of the Government of Canada and Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly in consultation with Canada’s cultural communities. This project will ensure that the monument will endure as a symbol for all those who fled their homelands and who found refuge in Canada. It is hoped that the memorial will be unveiled in November 2018.

The design winner, entitled *Arc of Memory*, is an abstract bronze sculpture that reflects light in different seasons and different hours of the day (see the design at www.tributetoliberty.com). Architect Paul Raff explains that “It remembers victims of oppression, but expresses hope It invites fascination and exploration.”

The Tribute to Liberty charity has raised \$1 million for the project, which should cost about \$3 million. The government will match donations up to \$1.5 million, and has already allocated \$500,000 for construction costs. If you would like to contribute to this memorial, see www.tributetoliberty.com. There are several opportunities for commemorating relatives or friends.

Entrepreneurial Missional Communities

by Jordan Duerrstein, Toronto

During my summer 2017 archival internship, I researched how evangelism and church extension have been “entrepreneurial” in the Mennonite Brethren (MB) Church. Of course, there are entrepreneurs in the church who actively serve their communities. But what about individual churches? Do MB churches embody an entrepreneurial spirit?

My internship took me to four MB archives in North America. In conversations with archivists and missional leaders, it was not difficult to find the entrepreneurial spirit alive and well among MBs. Here are three examples.

Reedley, California. As someone born in 1991 and raised in Ontario, Canada, I had absolutely no idea that the city of Reedley existed. Therefore, when archivist librarian Kevin Enns-Rempel gave me a tour of Fresno and then Reedley—the size and scale of Reedley MB Church’s 2000+ seat auditorium completely blew me away, especially when I found out it was built in 1952!

The construction of this massive building was not due to some post-Willow Creek influence or conference initiative. For the leaders of this MB church in the spring of 1949, it was a very straightforward matter. The planning committee said: “We believe that the erection of a new building with an approximate seating capacity of 2,250 seats at this time, would be the more economical solution, and it would give a clear testimony of our willingness to provide ample facilities for a steady

growth of the church.”

Kevin Enns-Rempel confirmed that no other MB church in North America was built in this style with theatre seating. Most of the decisions regarding the expansion of the church building revealed that sticking to tradition—keeping pews—was not important to the church. Greater size and capacity were the driving forces in the decision-making process for Reedley MB.

The church moved forward into the second half of the twentieth century evaluating what was the most fiscally responsible and what led to the greatest number of people becoming Christ followers. And in true entrepreneurial manner, this meant not sticking to the traditional way of doing things.

Kansas City, Missouri. At the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Hillsboro, Kansas, archivist Peggy Goertzen informed me of people involved in church extension and more “entrepreneurial” efforts in the Southern District of the USMB Conference. Tabor College students have long participated in inner-city mission work in Wichita and these church planting efforts have met both “success” and “failure.”

The beginnings of Watershed missional community trace back to January 11, 2009, when Paul and Amanda Bartel were prayed over at a sending service at Fairview MB Church in Oklahoma. Jason and Nancy Phelps joined the Bartels in Kansas City in August 2009, after working with World Impact in St. Louis for four years.

The church has gone through some significant changes that embody an entrepreneurial spirit. While keeping Christ at the center of their lives, work,



and worship, they have broken away from traditional church planting methods to follow where the spirit is leading them.

Their vision is “to be more of a community than a place. A church community [that] does not simply gather or exist, but serves the mission of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.” To become financially independent from external donations, the Bartels and Phelps became bi-vocational to provide their family incomes. And by doing so, they have only further integrated into the life of the surrounding community. They gather once a month on the third Sunday for the *whole day* and meet weekly on Wednesday evenings for small group “Village” gatherings.

They embody what it means to be a missional community and actively pursuing making disciples in ways that radically affect how they do church. In this way, Watershed is truly entrepreneurial, but in fundamentally different ways than Reedley MB Church.

Winnipeg, Manitoba. House Blend was a unique initiative launched by the MB churches of Manitoba. House Blend emerged out of prayer, recognizing the need for housing and Christian community in Winnipeg’s urban core. Their community was partly inspired by the character of New Monasticism.

In 2007, one year before the Manitoba Conference received Key City Initiative funding, a prayer team formed to consider what a church plant or new ministry would look like in Manitoba. The prayer team, which came to be known as Hope Winnipeg, met regularly at the Christian Family Centre MB Church, with Rachel



Interior of Reedley MB Church (Reedley, California) during fire damage repairs in May 2017. Photo credit: Jordan Duerrstein.

Due to a downsizing budget, CMBS will begin operating with reduced hours in January 2018, three days a week (Tues., Wed., & Fri.). See URL below for news story: <http://mbherald.com/changes-cmbc-budget-2018/>

Twigg Boyce gradually taking on a leadership role.

In taking a relational approach to the varying needs of the poor in Winnipeg, House Blend resolved in 2008 that they would purchase a house, which would become their central place of ministry. House Blend would consist of members that lived in the house and formed a community committed to a Rule of Life—there were live-in members (“in-housers”), non-live-in members (that came to be affectionately known as “out-housers”), and an empty room or two for people in need of housing.

In Spring 2010, House Blend purchased a house on Furby Street and renovations began. That fall, three members moved in and more joined as the years went on. The rest of the “House Blenders” lived in the West Broadway community. Together they worshipped, prayed, studied the Bible, and ministered in the neighbourhood. The community regularly met on Tuesday evenings for potluck dinner and prayer.

Over the course of 10 years, some people’s commitment to their Rule of Life declined, particularly because original members left and new people joined. The Rule was under revision in early 2017 to better reflect the present community. After difficult and frank assessments, the House Blend board announced in April 2017 that they would be selling the house—being landlords had too many negative effects on doing ministry.

It is healthy to recognize that some entrepreneurial efforts fail—that we can “fail” in church planting endeavors. These are, by definition, risk-taking efforts.

All three examples of missional communities, though significantly different from one another, give evidence to an entrepreneurial spirit active among MBs in the U.S. and Canada.

Flight from Oklahoma

(cont’d from page 5)

campaigns that give permission, that draw hard lines between those inside and those outside. For we have been outsiders longer than not. We have felt the hand of power, in those chilling words, close over us. That is the story we know. That is why we are here. Let it not happen to others.

Roger Epp is professor of Political Science at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. This article is adapted from a talk he



Renovated House Blend house at 70 Furby St. in Winnipeg. Photo credit: Rachel Twigg Boice.

gave at a Klaassen family gathering in Saskatchewan on August 6, 2016. The article was first published in the March 2017 issue of Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta newsletter. It is reprinted here with permission.

Endnotes

1. Judt is describing the various east-to-west migrations of his own Jewish family (Tony Judt, with Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century* [New York: Penguin, 2012], 24).

2. In these paragraphs, I am drawing partly on what I have written in *We Are All Treaty: Prairie Essays* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008), especially chapter 6, and on the historical sources indicated there.

3. Woodrow Wilson, Third Annual Message to Congress, December 7, 1915, The American Presidency Project, at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29556>.

4. See Allan Teichrow, “Military Surveillance of Mennonites in World War I,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 53 (1979): 95–127; and “World War I and the Mennonite Migration to Canada to Avoid the Draft,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 45 (1971): 219–249. In the latter article, Teichrow writes: “For a man of German ancestry who happened also to be a conscientious objector, America was in some ways the worst of all possible places in 1917–18” (pp. 227–28), especially Oklahoma, where “mob violence . . . always lurked beneath the surface” (p. 246). He notes that Mennonite group emigration was greatest from Oklahoma.

5. Duane Stoltzfus, *Pacifists in Chains: The Persecution of Hutterites during the Great War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), provides a very good recent overview of the circumstances in which Mennonites as well found themselves. See also Melanie Springer Mock, *Writing Peace: The Unheard Voices of Great War Mennonite Objectors* (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2003); Gerlof Horman, *American Mennonites and the Great War: 1914–1918* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994); James C. Juhnke, “Mennonites in Militarist America: Some Consequences of World War I,” in *Kingdom, Cross, and Community: Essays on Mennonite Themes*

in Honor of Guy F. Hershberger, eds. J. R. Burkholder and Calvin W. Redekop (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976); and Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Civil Disobedience: An Encyclopedic History of Dissidence in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 195–197. Three valuable online sources of documents and oral histories are the Bethel College Library World War I Oral History Collection at <https://mla.bethelks.edu/ww1.html>; the Swarthmore College Peace Collection at <https://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/conscientiousobjection/co%20website/pages/HistoryNew.htm>; and the Home Before the Leaves Fall Project at <https://www.wionline.org/introduction>.

6. Stoltzfus, *Pacifists in Chains*, 36–38.

7. The Bethel Oral History Collection contains an interview with Peter Quiring, who had enlisted with Johannes Klaassen from the Herold Church and whose family had also been on the trek to Central Asia. The audio files are available at https://mla.bethelks.edu/audio/ohww1/quiring_peter_j1.mp3 and https://mla.bethelks.edu/audio/ohww1/quiring_peter_j2.mp3.

See also John W. Arn, *The Herold Mennonite Church, 1899–1969* (Newton, KS: Mennonite Press, 1969), which provides local details of the war at pp. 13–17. Transcripts from the court-martial of a Quaker CO at Camp Travis can be found at <http://civilianpublicservice.org/sites/civilianpublicservice.org/files/HarryLCharles.pdf>.

8. Stoltzfus, *Pacifists in Chains*, 117–121.

9. Stoltzfus, *Pacifists in Chains*, 159–161.

10. Stoltzfus, *Pacifists in Chains*, 172–174.

11. Stoltzfus, *Pacifists in Chains*, 174–175.

12. Stoltzfus, *Pacifists in Chains*, chapter 8. The NCLB report by David Eichel was released in December 1918 under the title *What Happens in Military Prisons: The Public is Entitled to the Facts*.

13. Confidential reports prepared by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and leaked to newspapers in 2004, for example, identified the use “humiliating acts, solitary confinement, temperature extremes, use of forced positions”—each “a form of torture”—against prisoners at Guantanamo, as well as similar abuses at US military prisons in Iraq. See Neil Lewis, “Red Cross Finds Detainee Abuse in Guantanamo,” *New York Times*, November 30, 2004, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/30/politics/red-cross-finds-detainee-abuse-in-guantanamo.html>; and “Red Cross report details alleged Iraq abuses,” *The Guardian*, May 10, 2004, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/may/10/military.usa>.

Readers Write

I was reading a friend’s *Mennonite Historian* Sept 2017 edition and was drawn to a photo on page 8 of Randy Klassen’s article. The photo shows my grandparents, Katharina (1889–1964) and Klaas Enns (1880–1955) with B.B. Jantz and C.F. Klassen. The date is October 1929. The 2 children in the photo are not identified.

Checking with family members this fall, I am able to confirm that the two children are Uncle George Enns (who at some point changed his name to Earl Barg) and my mom’s sister, Aunt Helen (Enns) Martens. Uncle George/Earl is deceased, but Aunt Helen and my mom (Nita [Enns] Siebert) are both doing well and living in the apartments at Tabor Manor in St. Catharines.

Paul Siebert, Ottawa

Telangana Churches

by Henry Jonnalagadda, London, Ontario

The nine Mennonite Brethren (MB) churches—referred to as Navaratnas or nine gems planted in the 19th century by pioneer Mennonite missionaries from Russia and North America in the Telangana region of India—have not faded with the years or “fallen like ninepins,” as the expression goes. Instead, these church plants have remained faithful and fruitful communities of hope, sowing fresh seedlings of more Anabaptist churches for a new generation of Christ followers.

Bethlehem MB Church at Malakpet in the outskirts of Hyderabad was the first of these nine, planted in 1907. Recently, it was bulldozed to make room for a multi-storey brand-new church building. The church dedication took place on November 29, 2015.

Kendall Jongejan Harder and Charleen Jongejan, co-pastors of Valleyview Mennonite Church (London, Ontario), and I had the privilege of visiting the hundred-year-old Bethlehem Church on World Fellowship Sunday, January 22, 2017. It was a significant event, marking the collaboration of the global body of Anabaptist believers, as Pastor Kendall from a sister Mennonite church in Canada gave the sermon.

Pastor Menno Joel of the Bethlehem Church, located in the old city area known for historic forts, mosques, and temples, summarized the church’s vision: “The church has a spacious balcony and a seating capacity of 2,000 congregants on a regular Sunday and even more on special occasions such as Christmas, New Years, and Easter. Our congregational life is lively and growing, with new members being added every year.”

The Bethlehem Church is a resounding testimony of transformation and growth that is characteristic of MB churches across the Telangana region. These churches remain a witness to God’s provision and a tribute to the early MB missionary movement—a movement that began with Rev. Nicholas N. and Susanna Hiebert who came in 1899 to serve and show the love of Christ in India.

The early missionaries helped establish churches and service institutions, such as boarding schools and medical hospitals, in Hyderabad, Mahbubnagar, and Nalgonda districts of Telangana province.

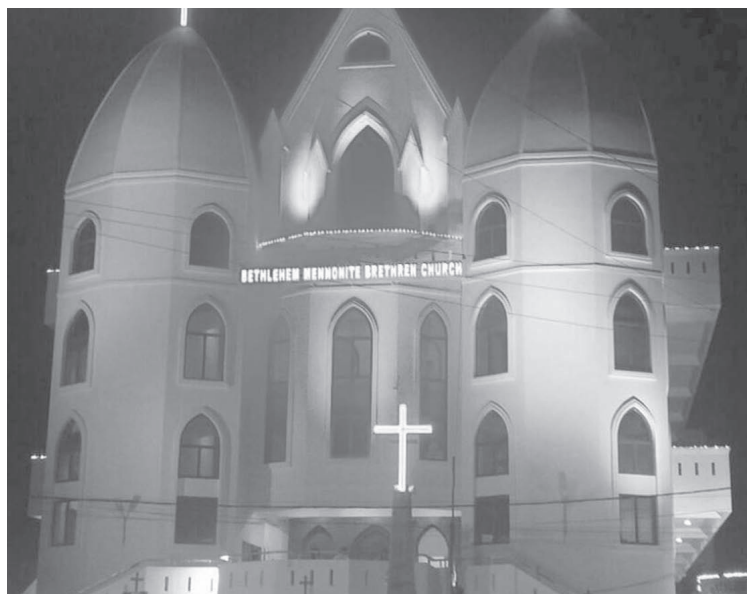
These mission initiatives were to serve the spiritual, educational, and medical needs of the people in the surrounding villages and towns. Even after the North American missionaries ended their leadership role in 1973 and “handed over the reins” to the local Indian leadership, these service

institutions managed quite well under the stewardship of MB Governing Council President, Dr. P.B. Arnold, until the early 2000s. In recent years, the ever-increasing competition from other well-equipped corporate and government-run schools and hospitals has posed a threat to the viability of some of the MB schools and hospitals.

However, the Telangana churches seem to have better withstood the challenges of the times, remaining strong and faithfully serving the spiritual needs of inquirers from various castes and religious backgrounds, including Hindu and Muslim. For example, the Bethel MB Church in Hughestown—started by Rev. John H. and Maria Pankratz in 1913—is now finishing construction on a new church building. This church draws people of different faith backgrounds to gospel preaching and now has close to 3,500 congregants, many of them millennials. “When the new construction is finished, the numbers will go up even higher,” said an excited young member from the church.

As one who was born in the MB medical centre in Jadcherla—founded by missionary physician Dr. Jake Friesen in 1952—and raised in an MB family, I graduated from the MB High School in Hyderabad and worshipped in several MB churches in the region, before immigrating to Canada 15 years ago. For me, this return visit evoked mixed feelings.

There was a tinge of sadness and nostalgia that filled my heart as I saw the deteriorating high school in Hyderabad and the mission hospital in Jadcherla.



Bethlehem Mennonite Brethren Church (Hyderabad, India) at night.
Photo credit for both images: Henry Jonnalagadda.

Even the MB mission hospital at Wanaparthi—where Dr. George B. Froese and others served—closed some years ago. However, I was encouraged by our visit to the Telangana churches. Their sense of ownership, gratefulness, and generosity is commendable. The dilapidated buildings of some of these MB churches are being renovated or rebuilt. Even the MB Centenary Bible College campus near Hyderabad airport is getting a facelift with the construction of a brand-new church building and new classrooms, according to Principal I.P. Asheervadam.

Several smaller churches, including the Living Waters MB English Church established three decades ago in Hyderabad, continue to serve its congregants. Worship times at Living Waters come alive in this church as one of its youngest members capably plays the drums while the choir sings. Some of the bigger mission churches, such as Calvary MB Church in Mahbubnagar—established in 1937 by missionaries Rev. John A. and Viola Wiebe—and Olive MB church in Wanaparthi are also in the process of building new places of worship. In addition, they are actively supporting smaller satellite churches to accommodate an ever-increasing number of congregants.

The conference of MB churches in India now has 840 congregations and 200,000 members. The majority of these churches are located in the Telangana region. Undeniably, the MB Church is growing rapidly. The presence of a large contingent of congregants from Telangana

at the Mennonite World Conference at Pennsylvania 2015 was evidence of this growth over the last hundred years.

Interestingly, the Bethany MB Church in rural community of Jadcherla—also started by Rev. John A. and Viola Wiebe in 1942—was the first to construct a magnificent new church building in 2005, inspiring other churches to follow suit. The old church building is still intact and serves as a poignant memorial. Wiebe, who died tragically in 1963 in a swimming mishap, had prayerfully groomed several new believers for pastoral ministry at the church. One of these was my grandfather, Rev. John Jonnalagadda.

The current Bethany Church chairman, Benjamin Gaddam, remembers the church's early days. "This humble and faithful church used to be attended by few people and most of them were illiterate or daily-wage workers," he says. Now, celebrating its 75th platinum jubilee, the church has a capacity to hold 3,000 members. And yet, it continues to minister beyond the confines of its four walls, holding outreach gospel ministry in surrounding villages and towns.

A hundred years have rolled by and God's faithfulness continues to be experienced in these Telangana churches and institutions. My prayer is that God will continue to empower the Indian churches and their leaders—like those early MB missionaries—for a life of effective ministry and mission in the name of Christ.

Henry Jonnalagadda was a member of Living Waters MB English Church in Hyderabad until he immigrated to Canada in 2002. Currently, he is a member of

Valleyview Mennonite Church in London, Ontario. In January 2017, he along with several others toured the land of his birth, visiting the Telangana MB churches, schools, and hospitals.

Ending the Silence

by Ben Goossen

Why has it taken until the twenty-first century for the global Mennonite church to begin reckoning with Nazi collaboration? More than seventy years after Hitler's death and the liberation of Europe's concentration camps, only now are people publicly, extensively discussing Mennonite entanglement with National Socialism. During the 1930s and '40s, pro-Nazi movements arose among Mennonites in Brazil, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Paraguay, and Ukraine. At the height of Hitler's empire building, one fourth of Mennonites lived in the Third Reich.

The answer—as I discovered during the seven years I spent researching my book, *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era*—is that prominent Mennonite leaders, scholars, and institutions did not want this story told.¹ The most recent example is Peter Letkemann's disparaging review of *Chosen Nation* in the previous *Mennonite Historian*. Letkemann describes my book as "an interpretive essay full of factual errors." It is "unfortunate," he writes, that I did not "take more time to make significant changes in order to provide a more accurate and complete picture."²

Some deciphering is necessary here. Letkemann likes neither *Chosen Nation's* methods nor its content. He uses the term

"interpretive essay" to dismiss definitions of nationalism or collaboration or pacifism that he does not share. "Take more time," similarly, is code for Letkemann's belief that if I had only thought harder, I would have come around to his view, explaining German patriotism as the pragmatics of desperation.³

Unmentioned is that we know each other well. While I was

drafting *Chosen Nation*, Letkemann read and critiqued most chapters. My book is certainly richer for his involvement, including his boundless energy, vast knowledge, and trove of unpublished sources. But I also chose to discount much of his advice. Otherwise, *Chosen Nation* would never have been written. While Letkemann generally encouraged Anabaptist research, he consistently attempted to steer me from the "minefield" of Nazism.⁴

Chosen Nation is a work of history. It uses the tools of historical inquiry to thoughtfully examine a difficult period. My own interpretations draw heavily on the groundbreaking, prize-winning scholarship of other experts on nationalism, including Rogers Brubaker, Peter Judson, Helmut Smith, and Tara Zahra, to name a few.⁵ The "errors" Letkemann flags are well-established concepts regularly deployed by these authorities, as I explain in *Chosen Nation's* introduction and endnotes.

I consider Letkemann to be a personal friend, and I am willing to extend him the benefit of the doubt. I assume he does not consider his review part of a longstanding, multi-country cover-up of Mennonite-Nazi collaboration. But I also think his particular understanding of the calling and practice of history is too narrow to do justice to the full scope and importance of the Anabaptist story. Letkemann himself writes movingly about the suffering of many European Mennonites under communism.⁶ This is true and tragic. Yet surely a nuanced and complete reading would also find Mennonites who acted as "nationalists," "activists," or "anti-Semites."⁷

Debate about the level of collaboration dates to the aftermath of the Second World War, when thousands of Mennonite refugees sought transatlantic passage. As I show in *Chosen Nation*, virtually all had received Nazi aid as Aryans, and draft-age men served in German military units.⁸ Yet these were "not collaborators," according to Mennonite Central Committee's Peter Dyck, who in 1946 claimed they were "neither Russian nor German" but persecuted migrants characterized by nonresistance and comparable to Jews.⁹ Dozens of such memos from leaders like Harold Bender, Melvin Gingerich, C.F. Klassen, Cornelius Krahn, and C. Henry Smith made their way to military officials, bureaucrats, refugee organizations, and the United Nations.¹⁰



The new Bethany Mennonite Brethren Church (Jadcherla, India).

Nevertheless, countervailing reports trickled out. As early as 1949, files from Heinrich Himmler's SS opened a window onto refugees' wartime activities. Mennonite leaders feared that up to 95 percent would be implicated, and they drowned allegations with strongly-worded challenges.¹¹ This pattern continued for decades. During the 1950s, MCC worked to sanitize official accounts of its refugee operations.¹² Canadian historian Frank Epp garnered searing criticism when he broached the issue in the 1960s.¹³

Back in Germany, right-wing historians and churchmen defanged 1970s assessments. The multi-year controversy yielded a moratorium on discussing "a 'religious downfall' of Mennonites."¹⁴ Likewise in Paraguay, the subject remained taboo until the 1980s, when international efforts to locate Auschwitz physician Josef Mengele drew unwanted attention.¹⁵ Only in the 1990s was scholarship printed.¹⁶

The same logics that suppressed discourse for generations operate in Letkemann's review. Letkemann—who was born in a German refugee camp and currently manages a press "dedicated to the preservation and remembrance of Russian/Soviet Mennonite History"—has spent decades chronicling his "people."¹⁷ I understand his attachment to humanitarians like Benjamin Unruh, who helped Letkemann's own family escape the Soviet Union.¹⁸ Yet Unruh was also a self-identified National Socialist who contributed enthusiastically to SS race programs.¹⁹

Justifying Unruh and company is a dark road, requiring dangerous suspension of scholarly skepticism. Letkemann's definition of "collaboration," for instance, is so limited, it includes only the physical execution of Jews. Respected historians from Detlev Peukert and Geoff Eley to Ian Kershaw and Peter Fritzsche have long accepted that consensus among ordinary people enabled Hitler's crimes.²⁰ Yet Letkemann speaks of "individuals, mostly young men."²¹

He goes on to explain—arguably to excuse—their participation in mass murder. Letkemann hypothesizes that killers from Mennonite communities were "probably acting in revenge.... They were well aware that a large number of men and women of Jewish background worked as administrators, agents, and interrogators in the [Soviet government]."²² The

myth that Jewish Bolsheviks carried out ethnic cleansing against Germans has been thoroughly exposed by historians Jeffrey Herf and Lorna Waddington as a cornerstone of Nazi propaganda.²³ The trope is frankly anti-Semitic.

Apologists once commanded powers of institutional censorship. No longer. Since 2015, church-affiliated organizations in the Netherlands, Germany, Paraguay, and the United States have rigorously studied Mennonites and Nazism, yielding three edited volumes and a conference series.²⁴ With clear, extensive documentation widely available, we are finally able to ask: what responsibility—after decades of silencing—do we have to this history, and to its victims?

Ben Goossen is a historian of religion and nationalism at Harvard University. He is the author of Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era, published in 2017 by Princeton University Press.

Endnotes

1. Benjamin W. Goossen, *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

2. Peter Letkemann, "Book review," *Mennonite Historian* 43, no. 3 (2017): 11–12.

3. Referencing Mennonite aid worker Benjamin Unruh's wartime collaboration with SS chief Heinrich Himmler, for example, Letkemann writes: "Unruh could not but take advantage of an opportunity to speak with this powerful leader and his associates.... Unruh was in constant communication with these officials to ensure the well-being of his fellow Mennonites." *Ibid.*, 12.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

6. Peter Letkemann, "Mennonite Victims of Revolution, Anarchy, Civil War, Disease and Famine, 1917–1923," *Mennonite Historian* 24, no. 2 (1998): 1–2, 9; Peter Letkemann, "Mennonite Victims of 'The Great Terror,' 1936–1938," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 16 (1998): 33–58; Peter Letkemann, "The Fate of Mennonites in the Volga-Ural Region, 1929–1941," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 26 (2008): 181–200; Peter Letkemann, *A Book of Remembrance: Mennonites in Arkadak and Zentral, 1908–1941* (Winnipeg, MB: Old Oak Publishing, 2016).

7. Letkemann contests each of these labels in "Book review," 11.

8. Goossen, *Chosen Nation*, 147–173.

9. Peter Dyck, "Mennonite Refugees in Germany," July 1946, FO 1050/1565, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

10. Benjamin W. Goossen, "From Aryanism to Anabaptism: Nazi Race Science and the Language of

Mennonite Ethnicity," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 90, no. 2 (2016): 148–161.

11. Frank Epp, *Mennonite Exodus* (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1962), 406–408; Ted Regehr, "Of Dutch or German Ancestry? Mennonite Refugees, MCC, and the International Refugee Organization," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* (1995): 15–17.

12. *Ibid.*, 18.

13. Ted Regehr, "Walter Quiring (1893–1983)," in Harry Loewen, ed., *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets: Leadership among the Russian Mennonites (ca. 1880–1960)* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2003), 329–330. Epp's meticulous dissertation remains unpublished: Frank Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority Group, the Mennonites, in the 1930s" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1965).

14. Diether Götz Lichdi, "Vergangenheitsbewältigung und Schuldbekenntnisse der Mennoniten nach 1945," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 64 (2007): 49. See also Goossen, *Chosen Nation*, 187–194.

15. Daniel Stahl, "Wie die Fernheimer lernten, über die 'Völkische Zeit' zu sprechen: Zur langen Nachgeschichte eines Konflikts," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kultur der Mennoniten in Paraguay* 18 (2017): 161–186.

16. Peter Klassen, *Die deutsch-völkische Zeit in der Kolonie Fernheim, Chaco-Paraguay (1933–1945)* (Boland-Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1990); John Thiesen, *Mennonite and Nazi? Attitudes Among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933–1945* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1999).

17. "About," *Old Oak Publishing*, <http://oldoakpublishing.com/about-2/>. Letkemann identifies "people" as his preferred translation of the German "Volk," uncritically asserting that the "race" background of most white Mennonites can be described as "Flemish, Frisian, Swiss, or German." Letkemann, "Book review," 11. By contrast, one of *Chosen Nation's* main arguments is that Mennonite intellectuals developed narratives of both coherent peoplehood as well as Germanic identity in recent centuries for strategic political reasons.

18. Letkemann has written positively about Unruh: Peter Letkemann "Nachwort," in Heinrich Unruh, *Fügungen und Führungen: Benjamin Heinrich Unruh, 1881–1959* (Detmold: Verein zur Erforschung und Pflege des Russlanddeutschen Mennonitentums, 2009), 361–447.

19. Goossen, *Chosen Nation*, 147–156, 166–171.

20. Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); Geoff Eley, *Nazism as Fascism: Violence, Ideology, and the Ground of Consent in Germany 1930–1945* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013); Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2015); Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

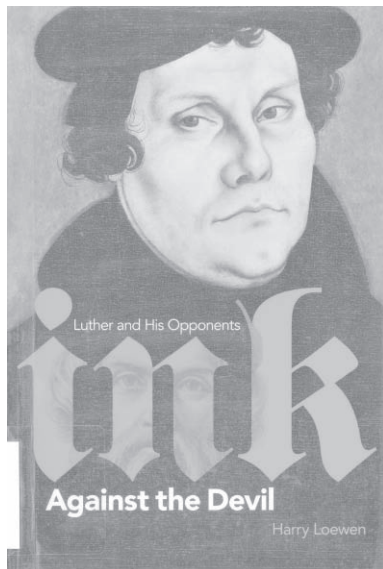
21. Letkemann, "Book review," 12.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006); Lorna Waddington, *Hitler's Crusade: Bolshevism and the Myth of the International Jewish Conspiracy* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

24. Published volumes include the special journal issues: Jelle Bosma and Alle Hoekema, eds., "Doopsgezinden tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog," *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* 41 (2015); and Uwe Friesen, ed., "Die völkische Bewegung und der Nationalsozialismus bei den Mennoniten in Paraguay," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kultur der Mennoniten in Paraguay* 18 (2017); as well as Marion Kobelt-Groch and Astrid von Schlachta, eds., *Mennoniten*

in der NS-Zeit: Stimmen, Lebenssituationen, Erfahrungen (Bolanden-Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 2017). The next academic conference on this topic, entitled “Mennonites and the Holocaust,” will be held in March 2018 at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas.



Book Review

Harry Loewen, *Ink Against the Devil: Luther and His Opponents* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 298 pp.

Reviewed by Andrew D. Brown, Winnipeg

Harry Loewen's *Ink Against the Devil: Luther and His Opponents* is a well-researched book that caps off Loewen's extensive academic work on Martin Luther and the Reformation. This book, published only four months before Loewen passed away in September 2015, is part of a larger project that started with his 1961 master's thesis, "Luther and the Dissident Sects of the Sixteenth Century."¹ Loewen expanded upon his thesis with the publishing of *Luther and the Radicals* (1974)² and finished the project with *Ink Against the Devil* (2015).

I recently reviewed Loewen's 1961 thesis for a Research and Methodology graduate course at Canadian Mennonite University. And so, writing this review is special because it brought me full circle—having read Loewen's work at all three stages of its fifty-four-year history.

The first two versions of Loewen's Luther project, "Luther and the Dissident Sects" and *Luther and the Radicals*, focus on the relationship between Martin Luther and the Radical Reformers, including the Anabaptists. Loewen argues that this relationship has been thought of in two different ways: the first, from the Lutheran

perspective, champions "Luther's righteous struggle against fanatics who maliciously attempted to thwart the Reformer's cause";³ and the second, from the perspective of the Radicals, sees "the dissenters as more or less innocent people who merely proposed to live in accordance with biblical precepts and who on account of this, had to suffer persecution at the hands of the leading Reformers."⁴ Rather than fully endorsing one side over the other, Loewen argues that the relationship is actually a synthesis of the two perspectives. In this way, Loewen vindicates the dissident sects on the one hand, and lends a sympathetic ear to Luther on the other.

Loewen reminds scholars of Anabaptism that "in their zeal to correct the image of the Radical Reformers they sometimes become one-sided and less than charitable toward the mainline reformers who in good faith could not tolerate what they considered to be alien views."⁵ When one considers the major events and leaders that Luther engaged—such as Thomas Müntzer and the Peasants' War of 1525 or the Münster Rebellion—Loewen's argument is not hard to appreciate.

Despite writing from the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, Loewen presents a balanced view of both Luther and the Radicals. He notes that *Luther and the Radicals* received more positive reviews from non-Mennonite readers than from Mennonite readers. Loewen attributes this to his fair and sympathetic treatment of Luther, which is not a common position from the Anabaptist perspective.⁶

Ink Against the Devil, Loewen's final edition of the Luther project, builds on his earlier publications by including chapters on Luther's writings against his many opponents—such as Erasmus and the Humanists, the European Jewish community, the Ottoman Turks and Islam, and the Catholic Church and Papacy. Loewen suggests that this engagement was shaped by Martin Luther's dramatic conversion experience and his subsequent theological convictions of *sola fide* (by faith alone) and *sola scriptura* (by scripture alone), which led him to believe that he was the prophet of the true Gospel.⁷

Luther considered any opposition to him to be opposition to God. Through the principle of *sola scriptura*, Luther believed that having people interpret the Bible on their own would lead everyone to the same

truth. However, when that did not happen, he believed that anyone who disagreed with his truth must be from the devil. *Ink Against the Devil* is an allusion to the pools of ink that Luther spilled while writing against his opponents—a very fitting title.

I believe the book would have been strengthened by the inclusion of selections from Luther's writing against others in the Protestant Reformation—such as Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, the Reformed tradition, and the Anglicans. Perhaps Loewen did not include them because Luther may not have seen them as opponents, but rather as fellow reformers in the Protestant Reformation. I also noted numerous grammatical errors and misspelled words throughout the book, something that makes Loewen's otherwise excellent writing come across as sloppy. Because the book was published only four months before Loewen's death, perhaps some of the normal editing processes were skipped.

I really enjoyed reading this book because it provided a deep understanding of the Reformation with a very accessible vocabulary that did not oversimplify the story or become too thick to read. It helped me in my studies this semester by providing a good account of the Anabaptist story in relation to the Reformation and in relation to Martin Luther.

The topic of Luther could not be more relevant today, given the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses nailed to the Wittenberg Door in 1517, an act which marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Plus, there is the Lutheran World Federation's formal apology to Anabaptist-Mennonites in 2010 for past persecutions.⁸ I would recommend Loewen's *Ink Against the Devil* to anyone interested in understanding better this significant segment of the history of Christianity.

Endnotes

1. Harry Loewen, "Luther and the Dissident Sects of the Sixteenth Century" (Master's Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1961).
2. Harry Loewen, *Luther and the Radicals: Another Look at Some Aspects of the Struggle Between Luther and the Radical Reformers* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1974).
3. Loewen, "Luther and the Dissident Sects," ii.
4. Ibid.
5. Loewen, *Luther and the Radicals*, 8.
6. Harry Loewen, *Ink Against the Devil: Luther and His Opponents* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), xiii.
7. Ibid., 8.
8. Ibid., 294.