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## **From Isolation and Ethnic Homogeneity to Acculturation and Multi-cultural Diversity: The Mennonite Brethren and Canadian Culture**

***Bruce L. Guenther***

The Mennonite Brethren denomination began in 1860 as part of isolated, ethnically homogenous, German-speaking Mennonite enclaves in Russia.<sup>2</sup> Today the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches is a multilingual, ethnically diverse group; its members are so culturally integrated that they are hardly distinguishable from the population at large in Canada. In this article I analyze selected aspects of the transition from isolation and ethnic homogeneity to multicultural diversity in order to understand better the historical and contemporary response of the Mennonite Brethren in Canada towards culture. I will of necessity paint a picture with broad brush strokes knowing full well that sometimes the unique features of individual situations or persons will contradict the generalizations that are based on the larger patterns. A more comprehensive study of Mennonite Brethren acculturation would include an investigation of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement, as well as those influences that precipitated the formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1860 in Russia and created some of the predispositions towards culture that have been present within Mennonite Brethren congregations during the twentieth century. Like undercurrents that are often invisible on the surface of a river, these predispositions had considerable capacity for exercising directional pull.

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*By demonstrating that the gospel makes it possible to  
embody Canadian multi-cultural ideals in an  
authentic way, Mennonite Brethren may well have a  
unique opportunity to speak into the Canadian  
context.*

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**THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE**

The Mennonite Brethren response to culture in Canada begins with a consideration of their experience as immigrants. The Mennonite Brethren arrived in North America as a part of several migrations from Russia, which were part of a much larger influx of immigrants that created an ethnic mosaic across western Canada during the early part of the twentieth century. The first group of approximately 18,000 Russian Mennonites (known as *Kanadier*) arrived in North America during the 1870s; about 8,000 settled on two land reserves in southern Manitoba. Approximately 400 Mennonite Brethren were part of this migration, and they all settled in the United States, scattered throughout Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota.

During the 1880s Mennonite Brethren itinerant evangelists living in the United States conducted services among the *Kanadier* Mennonites who had settled in southern Manitoba. These evangelistic initiatives by the Mennonite Brethren rekindled old hostilities and accusations of “sheep stealing,” and were not always welcomed by leaders of the Mennonite churches in the region. In 1888 the first Mennonite Brethren congregation in Canada was organized near Winkler, Manitoba. By the early 1920s there were about 20 Mennonite Brethren congregations in Canada; their total membership numbered less than 2,000, many of whom had come from the United States.

The Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent wars, famine, and persecution prompted another major migration of Mennonites (known as the *Russländer*), who were desperately seeking refuge from chaos and carnage in Europe. In total about 20,000 Mennonites came to Canada between 1920 and 1940; between 20 and 25 percent of these immigrants were Mennonite Brethren. A steady trickle of *Russländer* immigrants continued to arrive during the 1940s following World War II.

The *Russländer* immigrants in particular had endured terrible suffering and were deeply traumatized: not only had most lost their livelihoods and possessions but many had also been brutalized and humiliated. Virtually everyone had lost family members; some had watched family members or neighbors being killed or tortured; a significant number of the women had been sexually molested, leaving a silent stigma that was seldom discussed.

Most of the *Russländer* immigrants initially settled in the agricultural communities on the Prairies where other Mennonites were

already present. Some settled in new communities or in urban centers such as Kitchener, Ontario, and Winnipeg, Manitoba. The economic difficulties of the 1930s prompted some to move further west to the Fraser Valley in British Columbia, from where they expanded to Vancouver and other areas. They were often forced to accept menial jobs to which they were unaccustomed, but through hard work and frugal lifestyles, they slowly managed to reestablish themselves economically.

The influx of *Russländer* immigrants had an immediate impact on Mennonite Brethren congregations; between 1920 and 1950 Mennonite Brethren membership in Canada increased by almost 500 percent, and the number of congregations more than tripled. This influx created a critical mass that made it feasible to establish a more robust denominational structure in Canada. But integrating such a large number of new immigrants so rapidly was not always easy. The newcomers were predominately German-speaking, and brought to an abrupt halt the move towards Anglicization that was beginning within *Kanadier* Mennonite Brethren congregations.

At the time Canadian Mennonite Brethren made up only one of four districts in the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, with the other three located in the United States where the Mennonite Brethren had established educational institutions such as Tabor College and organizations (foreign missionary board). The *Russländer* quickly assumed positions of leadership in local congregations in Canada (“takeover” is a word that some have used), but they were frustrated with the pace at which they were included in conference leadership structures, which were centered in the United States and dominated by American *Kanadier* Mennonites.<sup>3</sup>

The *Russländer*-dominated Mennonite Brethren community did not pursue the same aggressive strategy of acculturation that they had experienced in Russia during the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Many of the *Russländer* immigrants preferred instead to maintain a degree of cultural distance from the English-speaking cultural mainstream in Canada. In part, this had to do with the time-consuming preoccupation with economic survival that is common among first-generation immigrants, and in part it had to do with the difficulty first-generation immigrants generally face in adjusting to a new cultural setting. Many of the new immigrants experienced considerable antipathy within their new country that

increased their sense of distance from the cultural mainstream. On the one hand, they were grateful to their newly adopted homeland for the opportunity to escape the chaos of Europe, and were grateful to be in a place that cherished religious freedom and valued the presence of other Christians. On the other hand, they felt a sense of alienation within Canadian society because of a growing suspicion, and even antagonism, towards German-speaking immigrants during the 1930s and 1940s.

### **MENNONITE GERMANISM**

Like other immigrants with a strong religious identity, the Mennonites imported many facets of their particular faith-embedded culture to Canada. Their preference for the German language, along with specific foods, fashions and customs, was part of a unique cultural composite that formed an integral part of their ethnic identity. This cultural composite was unique in that it was not primarily derived from participation in a specific national story but rather from a series of experiences extending over several centuries and multiple geographical locations including Holland, Prussia and Russia. The common experiences of those known as Mennonites were shaped to a significant degree by an association with a particular stream of Anabaptists, a theological movement that emerged during the early sixteenth century.

Many *Russländer* were convinced of the general superiority of German culture, and expressed their appreciation for Germany's role in assisting Russian Mennonite refugees in escaping from the atheistic communist regime. Aside from the political debates that ensued among Mennonites in Canada on account of such pro-German attitudes (both for and against German Nationalism), the main point here is that many Mennonite Brethren accepted the idea that German qualities and the use of the German language were important aspects of being Mennonite and that preservation of the language was important, if not essential, for maintaining the Christian faith. Many were afraid that loss of the German language would culminate in both cultural assimilation and apostasy.

In a series of articles published in 1935 in the *Rundschau*, the inimitable B.B. Jantz illustrates well the ambivalence manifested by Mennonite Brethren leaders towards the Germanism that was present within their churches. On the one hand, he vigorously argues that no language is holy, and he distinguishes between the form or expression of faith and its content, and between the universality of the Christian faith

and the particularity of cultures. But on the other hand, he expresses his love for the German language and culture by arguing that a “mother who doesn’t teach her child German starves its spirit and contributes to the ruination of the family. Those who bow to the inevitable and give up the German language are traitors to their home, church and their precious German Bibles.”<sup>5</sup> The careless fusion of Germanism and Christian faith plagued the early Mennonite Brethren in Canada.

### **BIBLES SCHOOLS AS CATALYSTS FOR ACCULTURATION**

Upon arrival in Canada the Mennonite Brethren immigrants poured their energy into creating a vibrant congregational life and nurturing their young people in the faith. Following a pattern that was common among new immigrants who are adjusting to a new land, church leaders tried to maintain as much stability and familiarity as possible in the religious life of the group. This meant retaining the use of the German language despite the pressure to learn English, which was often felt most intensely by the children who attended public schools. German Saturday schools were organized to inculcate German cultural traditions and to augment the religious education of children.

A vital part of the Mennonite Brethren strategy for nurturing the faith of their young people was the formation of Bible schools. They were among the first to start Bible schools in western Canada, beginning as early as 1913, and organized more schools than any other denomination in Canada—more than twenty, with most starting during the 1930s and 1940s. Typical of most schools were the objectives outlined in a Bethany Bible Institute calendar issued in 1937, namely

to give our . . . youth foundational Bible instruction . . . to wrench our youth away from frivolous pursuits and the contemporary “*Zeitgeist*” . . . to nurture the German language as a special possession handed down from our fathers . . . to raise believing youth for the battle of the faith . . . [and] to take into account the needs of the congregations in the methodical training of Sunday school teachers and sundry (church) workers.<sup>6</sup>

These schools were intended to serve as agents of cultural retention by grounding successive generations in the German language and the Mennonite faith and way of life. But many schools also became the crucibles in which the children and grandchildren of first-generation

immigrants redesigned the relationship between faith and culture by drawing upon several historic Mennonite Brethren emphases: a high regard for education and the commitment to the missionary mandate.

The enthusiastic, mission-minded Bible school students were often quite intense in their demand for training that would prepare them to minister in non-German, non-Mennonite settings. For example, in 1935 an entire class confronted the teachers at Bethany Bible Institute with an ultimatum, threatening “to go elsewhere for their training” if there were not more English-language courses. By “elsewhere” they meant Prairie Bible Institute. (It is not coincidental that the Bible schools influenced by *Kanadier* Mennonite Brethren consistently led the way in adopting English as the primary language of instruction.) Church leaders were well aware, of course, that teaching young people to speak English would facilitate much more than missionary outreach: it was the highway towards acculturation.

The Bible schools had a tremendous impact on the life of the denomination: they created a common religious experience, a high level of biblical literacy, and an enthusiasm and predisposition for participation in the life of the church that was an ongoing source of vitality and energy for local congregations and that, over time, shaped the ethos of the entire denomination. Although the schools did not set out to precipitate a move towards a more professionalized ministry, they contributed, albeit unwittingly, towards the process by providing an ideal environment for identifying prospective candidates for ministry. Virtually all Mennonite Brethren missionaries from Canada had roots within the Bible school movement. Bethany Bible Institute and Winkler Bible Institute in particular served as centers from which new English-language outreach initiatives emerged (e.g., Western Children’s Mission and the Africa Mission Society). These initiatives were more flexible and responsive than the slow-moving (German-speaking) conference structures.

### **THE 1960s: ACCELERATING THE PACE OF ACCULTURATION**

The decade of the 1960s was a time of enormous change in North America in general, and for the recently settled region of western Canada in particular. Technological advances in transportation and communication, along with a post-World War II economic boom, made the vastness of the Prairies less formidable for its inhabitants and helped

create new metropolitan centers. As immigrants who were trying to build a new life, the Mennonite Brethren experienced directly the changes taking place in the region as the infrastructure for a modern society was being built.

Multiple indicators show that after 1960 the pace of acculturation among Canadian Mennonite Brethren quickened considerably as they moved from being a part of a largely rural, German-speaking sub-culture within the larger immigrant ethnic mosaic of western Canada, to becoming an English-speaking, increasingly urban, multicultural community. The transitions within Mennonite Brethren congregations mirrored many of the broader patterns of change taking place in the region.

One indicator was language change. As noted above, the Bible schools were among the first Mennonite Brethren institutions in Canada to make the transition from German to English, and what was permissible in Bible school invariably came to be accepted within congregations. From the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s many Mennonite Brethren congregations wrestled with making the transition from using German as the language of piety and religious practice to English. It is one thing to learn how to converse in a language other than one's native tongue. It is quite another thing to learn how to worship and pray in another language; these are acts that are much more intimate and personal. Resistance also came from those who continued to make a link between the German language and the Christian faith, and who thought that retention of the German language could be a useful barrier against the intrusion of "worldly" influences. Such changes were often divisive, but by the late 1960s English had become the dominant language in most Mennonite Brethren congregations. The change was a significant watershed in their adaptation to Canadian culture.<sup>7</sup>

Another indicator of increased acculturation was urbanization. Very few of the early Mennonite Brethren immigrants had a vision for life beyond the rural communities in which they settled. The difficult 1930s, however, prompted some young people to seek employment in cities. These Mennonites were among the first to be involved in evangelistic work among various ethnic groups in urban centers such as Winnipeg, which was at the time the third largest city in Canada, and Toronto. These early city-based ministries helped to reduce the suspicion of the city, and more families began living in urban centers.

The proportion of Mennonite Brethren living in cities more than doubled between 1940 and 1960. By the early 1970s, more than half of the Mennonite Brethren membership lived in urban centers. In fact, the Mennonite Brethren were the most rapidly urbanized Mennonite group in Canada. Urbanization not only brought more occupational diversity, but it also changed the character of community life that some had experienced in more rural Mennonite enclaves.<sup>8</sup>

Yet another indicator of the accelerating pace of acculturation was the pursuit of higher education among Mennonite Brethren young people. An appreciation for higher education was an integral part of Mennonite Brethren life in Russia; gradually second- and third-generation Canadian-born Mennonite Brethren young people began pursuing higher education after making the transition from German to English. They absorbed the same optimism of many other Canadians around them who saw higher education as the means for gaining access to greater economic opportunities.

As a result, the numerous Mennonite Brethren Bible schools began to face stiff competition from six new Mennonite Brethren high schools started during the 1940s. The high schools were less focused on training people for outreach and church ministry and were more concerned with establishing a Christian foundation before young people began making major life choices, which for some included attending public universities. By the early 1950s the total number of students enrolled in Mennonite Brethren high schools had doubled the total Bible school enrolment.

The preference for high school education on the part of young people coincided with a move towards more advanced theological education on the part of leaders in the denomination. In 1944 the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches established a degree-granting college, a "higher Bible school," called Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC) in Winnipeg. Prior to this time most Canadians who wanted a more advanced level of education in the context of a church institution enrolled at Tabor College, located in Hillsboro, Kansas. Frustrations about the number of Canadian students who remained in the United States after completing their studies, and a sense that their American counterparts exercised too much control over their cooperative programs and institutions, prompted Canadian Mennonite Brethren leaders to organize their own school.

The new school was strategically located in Winnipeg, a metropolitan area of considerable significance for Canadian Mennonites and for western Canada in general. Abraham H. Unruh, until then the principal of Winkler Bible Institute, was called on to spearhead the new school in Winnipeg. The declared purpose of this new school was to train Bible school teachers, missionaries and church workers to fill positions of leadership in Bible schools, churches and mission agencies. In three years it became the largest Mennonite Brethren theological school in Canada. By 1960 the enrolment at MBBC equaled almost 50 percent of the total enrolment in the four Mennonite Brethren Bible schools still in existence at the time. MBBC became the main institution for the training of Mennonite Brethren pastors and church workers in Canada as well as for missionaries and evangelists at home and abroad until the 1970s.

Shortly after it began, the school began to offer a limited number of liberal arts courses. Some denominational leaders argued that pastors of the future (particularly in urban churches) would require a more general education than that offered by the Bible schools to keep pace with lay people in their congregations, and expressed frustration when they saw their best ministerial candidates attend American colleges and not return to Canada. MBBC tried to position itself not only as a Canadian finishing school for individuals interested in professional ministry but also as a Christian alternative for Mennonite Brethren young people who were interested in obtaining a university education. As an alternative to universities, the college was not very successful. By 1965 the number of Mennonite Brethren young people attending universities was almost double that of the enrolment in Mennonite Brethren Bible schools and more than three times the enrolment of MBBC. By 1972 more than 35 percent of Mennonite Brethren had acquired education beyond the high school level; a decade later this had increased to 48 percent, which is significantly higher than the national average.<sup>9</sup>

Higher education (and urbanization) provided access to a wide range of professional occupations. By the end of the twentieth century the majority of Mennonite Brethren had become comfortably middle class, with a few having become very wealthy. This new prosperity enabled the generous support of innumerable ministries in Canada and around the world, but affluence also brought the temptations of materialism and hedonism.<sup>10</sup>

The pursuit of higher education also served as a catalyst for the professionalization of ministry among the Mennonite Brethren. In the first half of the twentieth century, most congregations had multiple ministers, with one lead minister who was not salaried.<sup>11</sup> As levels of education increased, salaried pastors gradually replaced the lead minister. The move towards a more professionalized ministry took another step forward in 1975 when the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Conference joined with their American counterparts in supporting the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (MBBS) located in Fresno, California, which in 1999 established a Canadian presence in both Langley and Winnipeg.

### **SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM**

Another telling example of the acculturation experienced by the Mennonite Brethren from mid-century onwards was the growing interest in political involvement. Like other Mennonite groups, the Mennonite Brethren historically discouraged participation in politics. Over time the generally negative attitude towards involvement in government gradually changed.

At first Mennonite Brethren political activism was focused primarily on preserving intact exemptions from military conscription. By the 1960s, however, Mennonite Brethren began to consider the church's "prophetic role in relation to the state," and periodically issued letters to government on topics such as Middle East conflicts and various relief efforts. Active involvement with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada during the 1970s signaled both a growing interest in tackling social issues at a national level and a willingness to work with other evangelical Protestants.

John Redekop's extensive documentation on Mennonite Brethren running for all levels of public office illustrates the transition very effectively. In the late nineteenth century several General Conference resolutions prohibited involvement in "the contentions of political parties" but permitted members "to vote quietly at elections."<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, a small number of Mennonite Brethren began running for public office during the 1920s. This was followed by a dramatic increase around mid-century as a growing number of candidates from Mennonite Brethren churches began to run for public office at municipal, provincial and federal levels on behalf of a range of political parties. Many were elected, and at least two, the Hon. Jake Epp (Conservative Party) and

the Hon. Raymond Chan (Liberal Party), served as federal cabinet ministers.

But it was not until 1966, after numerous Mennonite Brethren had already been elected to public office, that the denomination formally offered its members some direction on political involvement. The motion stated that

the Church and its members should be constructively critical of the political order, always ready to promote justice, respect for human dignity, and conditions of peace . . . we believe that it is proper for Christians to vote, to exert influence on government officials provided that neither the means nor the ends are un-Christian, and also under special conditions to stand for political office, if neither the attempt to gain the position nor the exercising of its function requires a compromise of Christian ethics.<sup>13</sup>

This statement is significant because it is one of the very few General Conference resolutions that offers direction to church members regarding engagement in a particular sector of culture.

Redekop identifies a variety of factors that prompted Mennonite Brethren to become more directly involved in the political process: (1) Mennonites in Canada tended to settle in enclaves, which made it easier for Mennonite candidates to get elected in these regions; (2) in Canada it was easier to identify positively with government without becoming excessively nationalistic; (3) the political scene in western Canada frequently saw the emergence of parties with a substantial “Christian” presence and emphasis; (4) and rapid movement up the socio-economic ladder generated more interest in policies that influenced their well-being.<sup>14</sup>

Political activism has confronted Mennonite Brethren politicians and church leaders with questions that have seldom been discussed openly by the denomination. For example, what are the implications of having the responsibility for exercising coercive power and being a part of a Christian community that affirms the doctrine of love and nonresistance? How does one reconcile the dissonance between one’s Christian moral standards and the compromises that are often necessary to pass difficult legislation that might not measure up to these same standards? How ought a Christian to use legislative power for governing

in a pluralistic culture? There are many aspects of a theology of culture with which Mennonite Brethren need to wrestle, and political theology is certainly one of them.<sup>15</sup>

### **MENNONITE BRETHERN PIETY**

Mennonite Brethren piety invariably begins with a personal conversion experience and from there moves to membership in a community of believers where one is taught, disciplined, and encouraged in holy living. From the outset the early Mennonite Brethren in Russia used baptism by immersion to differentiate between the “true” church (i.e., themselves) and the “corrupt” Mennonite Church. But they also earned a reputation for the rigorous lifestyle standards they expected of their members.

In addition to prohibiting behaviors clearly forbidden in the Bible (e.g., dishonesty, sexual immorality, acts of violence, etc.), over the years the Mennonite Brethren adopted a considerable number of behavioral prohibitions that have not withstood the test of time. For example, prohibitions against marrying someone outside of the denomination, purchasing life insurance (1897, 1927), jesting and joking (1900), avoiding places of worldly amusements such as saloons, circuses, and theaters (1887, 1899), owning firearms (1893), joining secret societies, participating in Fourth of July celebrations (1905), and drinking alcoholic beverages (which, by the way, was most recently affirmed in 1969). During the 1920s *Russländer* immigrants were offended by the wedding ceremonies of the *Kanadier* Mennonite Brethren who permitted attendants and the use of wedding rings. In 1927, Mennonite Brethren women were forbidden to cut their hair: “the cutting of hair by our sisters is in direct contradiction with the Word of God.”<sup>16</sup> Particularly controversial during the 1950s was the television. Although the General Conference never passed a resolution concerning television, the Committee of Council and Reference of the Canadian Conference did issue a statement warning church members about the grave dangers of this new and “mighty weapon” of Satan. The statement condemned the purchase and sale of televisions but fell short of issuing an outright prohibition.<sup>17</sup> As the process of acculturation progressed, the disparity between younger and older generations grew regarding the cultural practices that should, or should not, be deemed acceptable.

What does one make of the fact that many of the prohibitions once required of Mennonite Brethren church members were later discarded?

First, Christian groups that have a predisposition towards separation from the cultural mainstream and that make rigorous lifestyle demands on their members often appeal to the Bible to support behavioral prohibitions that are used to maintain a degree of cultural separation and control the pace of acculturation. John A. Toews notes: “Throughout the history of the MB Church faith and culture have often been in conflict. Occasionally serious tensions developed in the brotherhood when adaptation to cultural change was interpreted as ethical compromise. The cultural pattern of a past age has often been accepted as the scriptural pattern and hence as normative for all time.”<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting that by the mid-twentieth century lifestyle prohibitions seldom appeared as formal policies within General Conference Mennonite Brethren resolutions; instead denominational leaders offered warnings and guidelines in sermons and publications.<sup>19</sup> Leaders stepped away from being drawn into a never-ending, and often rather arbitrary, process of redrawing the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable practices.

Second, such groups often make the mistake of defining worldliness on the basis of behaviors that are not actually proscribed in the Bible, and that may legitimately be interpreted quite differently in other times and places, thereby creating theological confusion. When practices that were once denounced and prohibited as “unbiblical” become permissible, the credibility of leaders is often questioned, church pronouncements on specific issues are trivialized and sometimes also the underlying affirmation that the Bible outlines universally applicable moral standards is challenged. After all, if one previously designated unbiblical practice could be permitted, what else should remain forbidden?

Many of the Mennonite Brethren behavioral prohibitions were gradually discontinued as leaders recognized that demanding conformity to certain codes of conduct did not necessarily protect people from the more insidious manifestations of worldliness and idolatries that lay within Canadian culture. Holy living continues to be affirmed by the Mennonite Brethren as an integral part of discipleship, but one wonders whether mistakes made in the past in defining holy living, and the contemporary sensitivities concerning “tolerance,” may have created a reticence for candidly discussing morality and behavioral expectations within a twenty-first century multi-cultural pluralistic setting.

## **EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTISM, ACCULTURATION AND MB IDENTITY**

The early, and ongoing, influence of pietism among MBs in Russia, with its stress on a personal salvation experience, along with a thorough biblicism and strong emphasis on missions, created a natural compatibility with the priorities of evangelical Protestants in North America. Although separated from other evangelical Protestant denominations in Canada during the first half of the twentieth century by linguistic and cultural differences, it did not take long before their affinities resulted in contact and an appreciative borrowing of resources during the 1940s and 1950s. In addition to the influence of radio broadcasts and the Christian literature distributed by evangelical organizations, the numerous MB Bible schools served as conduits through which evangelical Protestant theological ideas and practices were disseminated throughout the denomination. This compatibility, together with the significant degree of contact, borrowing of resources and involvement, gradually evolved into a remarkably close association with the larger evangelical Protestant community in Canada during the second half of the century. This interaction exemplifies not only the theological eclecticism of the Mennonite Brethren and the ongoing struggle to define clearly their theological identity, but also a significant facet of Mennonite Brethren acculturation in Canada.<sup>20</sup>

The decade of the 1960s marked an important watershed not only for the Mennonite Brethren but also for evangelical Protestants in Canada in general. As evangelical Protestants became more affluent and better educated, they began to feel less like estranged outsiders in Canadian society and more like cultural insiders with a sense of responsibility for the character of Canadian society.<sup>21</sup> As the different denominational groups that made up the evangelical Protestant mosaic emerged from their respective enclaves around mid-century and began to discover one another, they created mutually supportive networks of organizations and individuals.<sup>22</sup> The identification on the part of the Mennonite Brethren with the larger evangelical Protestant network coincided with their own growing involvement within Canadian culture. The desire to be an integral part of a larger multi-denominational evangelical network in Canada was marked more formally by membership in 1973 with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, an organization started in 1964 to further the collective social action

interests of evangelical Protestants.<sup>23</sup>

The response to the openness on the part of some Mennonite Brethren to non-Mennonite theological influences and cooperation with those outside of the peace tradition has been mixed. It contributed substantially towards, what some have called, “an awakening effect” among young people and a surge of missionary vision and commitment during the first half of the twentieth century. Understanding the attraction of evangelical Protestantism during the first half of the twentieth century, particularly the strands of transdenominational evangelicalism influenced by American fundamentalism, was more complex: association with evangelical Protestants facilitated and accelerated the pace of acculturation among Mennonite Brethren by providing an attractive English-speaking religious world that was compatible enough with their own theological priorities and that was, at the time, predisposed towards a suspicious reticence of Canadian society. By prioritizing points of theological commonality as “essentials” that transcend all other so-called theological “distinctives,” transdenominational evangelicalism became a potent force for theological and cultural homogenization. Moreover, evangelical Protestantism mediated and even legitimated certain North American cultural values (for example, individualism) that mitigated against historic Anabaptist communitarian emphases. In short, association with, and involvement in, a larger evangelical Protestant network helped the Mennonite Brethren become more North American.<sup>24</sup>

In comparison to their Mennonite Brethren counterparts in the United States, the Mennonite Brethren in Canada played a much more prominent role in the development and life of transdenominational evangelical Protestant institutions and organizations. Open the door to any evangelical Protestant organization or institution in Canada and one will find the influence of Mennonite Brethren people and money.<sup>25</sup> The more prominent presence of Mennonite Brethren in Canadian evangelicalism is due in part to the fact that Mennonites in Canada comprise a larger proportion of Protestant demographics than is the case in the United States (attendance in Mennonite churches in Canada represents about 7.5 percent of the total attendance in all Protestant denominations). Mennonite Brethren in Canada have found evangelical Protestants in Canada to be less nationalistic and militaristic, more theologically diverse, and therefore more compatible compatriots than is the case for Mennonites generally in the United States.

But the close association with evangelical Protestantism has also left the denomination with an ongoing legacy of ambivalence with regard to its own identity as a faith community and its place within the larger Mennonite world. The influence of dispensational premillennialism, Calvinistic approaches to eternal security and atonement, or Pentecostal ideas regarding the gifts of the Holy Spirit and healing, to name a few, have generated theological conflict. The current promotion of a dual evangelical-Anabaptist theological identity represents an attempt to resolve the theological identity crisis created by the incorporation of evangelical Protestant influences.<sup>26</sup>

### **“MENNONITE” ETHNICITY?**

It would be almost impossible to find a person in a Mennonite Brethren congregation in Canada who has not made, or at least heard, reference to so-called “Mennonite” names, genealogy, language, foods, tendencies, and places. One cannot talk about Mennonites and culture in Canada without reference to the question of whether “Mennonite” is an ethnic or religious term. Many have tried to argue that it is both.<sup>27</sup>

The question is not exclusive to Mennonites in Canada, but it has been experienced more acutely in Canada for several reasons: the Mennonite Brethren who immigrated from Russia and who embodied a unique Dutch-German-Russian ethnic composite, settled in relatively isolated regions where they were able to preserve their ethnic homogeneity for a considerable period of time. During the 1960s the Canadian government adopted an official policy of multi-culturalism that encouraged immigrant Canadians to maintain and celebrate their ethnic heritage.

The most extended and forthright discussion of Mennonite faith-ethnic fusion and its implications for the Mennonite Brethren came in 1987 in a book written by John H. Redekop.<sup>28</sup> The book was prompted, in part, by an internal debate over the possibility of a name change for the denomination that would remove the term “Mennonite,” a move that Redekop identifies as the “secondary issue.” The publication of the book was followed by a symposium on “Faith and Ethnicity Among Mennonite Brethren” that served as a further catalyst for discussion.<sup>29</sup> Twenty years later, some of the issues raised by this book still resonate within the denomination.<sup>30</sup> The issue is complex and multifaceted; the following offers a basic description and a somewhat more prescriptive approach to the issue.

First, it is exceedingly unfortunate that a label used for centuries to identify a religious tradition also became an adjective associated with the specific Dutch-German-Russian-Swiss (D-G-R-S) ethnic composites that characterized Mennonites in Canada during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> The result has been considerable confusion regarding the relationship between faith and ethnicity.<sup>32</sup> The ongoing use of language within Mennonite Brethren congregations that implies that only Mennonites with D-G-R-S roots are “true” or “real” Mennonites is a kind of terminological imperialism that creates unhealthy insider/outsider social boundaries. The association between a particular ethnic identity and the Mennonite faith tradition has made many non-D-G-R-S people in Mennonite Brethren congregations feel like second-class citizens, a practice that is inappropriate within a Christian community of faith. Testimonies abound from those who have been attracted by Mennonite Brethren theology and piety but who have been repulsed by ethnocentric insensitivity. To perpetuate the association of the label “Mennonite” with D-G-R-S ethnicities contradicts the fundamental affirmation that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for all peoples, all tongues, all tribes and all nations.

Second, as noted above, some Mennonite Brethren leaders made intentional efforts to reach out to people in their surrounding communities. The association of the label “Mennonite” with D-G-R-S ethnicities has sometimes been seen as a barrier to such outreach. This perception prompted some congregations to prefer “Community Church” as a public label instead of “Mennonite Brethren Church.” The need to avoid using the label “Mennonite” in order to make Mennonite Brethren congregations more attractive in Canada is ironic in view of their successful cross-cultural missionary activities in other countries that enabled the Mennonite Brethren to become a global, multi-ethnic community of faith during the twentieth century. The significance of this global multi-ethnic reality is evident, for example, when one considers Mennonite Brethren membership statistics from India and Congo, two national conferences with membership numbers that vastly exceed the combined Mennonite Brethren membership of Canada and the United States! In many countries around the world, “Mennonite Brethren” is a religious label without particular D-G-R-S ethnic associations.<sup>33</sup> It is important for church leaders to insist that the term Mennonite Brethren refers to a community of faith and not one particular kind of ethnicity.

One cannot, of course, control how people outside the denomination use the term, but leaders certainly can do something about what happens inside a denominational world. An aggressive stance is necessary in clarifying what it means theologically to be Mennonite Brethren.

Third, multiple linguistic strategies have been used to address the difficulties created by the association of the word “Mennonite” with D-G-R-S ethnicities. One approach has been to distinguish between “non-religious” and “religious” Mennonites. This approach has been used by many to identify those who have a connection to D-G-R-S ethnicity but who are not a part of any Mennonite church. It is also used by some who are part of a Mennonite Brethren church but who do not have a D-G-R-S ethnic heritage. Aside from the theological question of whether it is possible to be a “non-religious” Mennonite, this strategy obscures the fact that all Mennonite Brethren are “ethnic” Mennonites—but not all are D-G-R-S Mennonites!<sup>34</sup> A line needs to be drawn not between religious or non-religious Mennonites, or between ethnic and non-ethnic Mennonites, but between ethnicity and ethnocentrism.

Another commonly used strategy is to identify newly organized non-English-speaking Mennonite Brethren congregations that are made up of recent immigrants as “ethnic churches,” in order to differentiate them from older, largely Caucasian English-speaking congregations. This linguistic practice creates the impression that the Caucasian English-speaking members in older Mennonite Brethren congregations are somehow no longer “ethnic.” This practice reflects the degree to which the dominance of D-G-R-S ethnicity within older Mennonite Brethren congregations has waned in recent decades. It also obscures the degree to which many of the individuals with a D-G-R-S ethnic heritage in Mennonite Brethren congregations have now adopted a “Canadian” ethnicity. (According to Statistics Canada, 55 percent of Canadians in 2002 identified their ethnicity as “Canadian.”)

These linguistic strategies divert attention away from the way culture, including ethnic identity, continues to shape and reshape the expression and practice of faith in Mennonite Brethren congregations. Canadianized Mennonite Brethren in Canada today are still every bit as ethnic as their D-G-R-S ancestors and recent immigrants in newly formed congregations. But because of the high degree of acculturation in Canada, many are also much less aware of how the Canadian cultural

environment has shaped personal identity, as well as the expression and practice of religion. Transitions in ethnic identity now make it possible to see more clearly the problems created by elevating the D-G-R-S ethnicity as an integral part of Mennonite identity. The presence of multiple ethnicities should make it easier to identify faith-culture fusions that might be problematic and to explore how these ethnicities, including a “Canadian” ethnicity, have shaped Mennonite Brethren practices in ways that are both consistent and inconsistent with their theological affirmations.<sup>35</sup>

### **CANADIAN MULTI-CULTURALISM AND THE MENNONITE BRETHREN**

Due to intentional and aggressive outreach initiatives and the openness towards immigration created by Canada’s official policy of multi-culturalism, the demographics of the Mennonite Brethren church in Canada is much different today than one hundred years ago. Influenced by the church-growth movement started by people such as Donald McGavarn and C. Peter Wagner, the Mennonite Brethren began allocating substantial resources during the 1980s towards church planting. A significant number of new congregations were added either by starting new congregations or adopting congregations made up of recent immigrants from a wide variety of ethnic groups including Chinese, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Laotian, Arabic, Persian, Indonesian, and Korean. Today Mennonite Brethren in Canada worship in more than twenty languages. Guiding Mennonite Brethren church planting during this period was the controversial “homogeneous unit principle,” which suggested that people become Christians most easily when they do not need to cross racial or linguistic barriers.<sup>36</sup>

By far the largest non-white Mennonite Brethren group in Canada are the Chinese with the majority found in the greater Vancouver area. Since the formal organization of the first Mennonite Brethren Chinese congregation in 1977, at least a dozen more have been started in order to reach the successive waves of Chinese immigrants that have arrived in Canada.<sup>37</sup> Leadership within these congregations is complicated as congregations have tried to incorporate more recently arrived, predominately Mandarin-speaking immigrants, older first-generation, mostly Cantonese-speaking immigrants, and second- and third-generation Canadian-born English-speaking Chinese.<sup>38</sup> The difficulties surrounding the transition to English in these different Chinese ethnic

groups are remarkably similar to some of those experienced by the German-speaking Mennonite Brethren immigrants who came to Canada during the 1920s.

New debates have recently emerged about the nature of denominational multiculturalism: some leaders prefer congregations in which ethnic homogeneity is used as a feature for enhancing community, while others suggest that congregations should aim to be intentionally “intercultural.” Aside from the question of which approach towards denominational multi-culturalism is the better way to proceed, the current ethnic diversity among congregations is a signal that the denomination has moved away from its former D-G-R-S homogeneity, although the same ethnic diversity that now exists within Mennonite Brethren congregations is not yet present within denominational leadership structures.

Canada is a country that has made multi-culturalism its official policy (it was the first country in the world to do so): the affirmation of all Canadian citizens as valued, as equal, regardless of racial or ethnic origins, language, or religious affiliation is an integral part of this vision. There is a deep level of compatibility between such a vision and the inclusivity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Canada is a difficult country in which to give verbal witness to the gospel; people want to see consistent and authentic living before they hear words. By demonstrating that the gospel makes it possible to embody Canadian multi-cultural ideals in an authentic way, Mennonite Brethren may well have a unique opportunity to speak into the Canadian context.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is not possible in an overview such as this to include reference to all of the changes that have taken place within Mennonite Brethren congregations in Canada. Obvious omissions include a survey of the changing role of women in the life of congregations and the denomination at large,<sup>39</sup> the response of the Mennonite Brethren to war,<sup>40</sup> changes in the way Christian education has been done within congregations, theological shifts in areas such as eschatology and biblical hermeneutics, and changes in corporate worship, particularly in the area of musical styles.<sup>41</sup>

It would be helpful to have reliable statistical data by which to measure and analyze the behaviors, attitudes, and priorities of the

people in Mennonite Brethren congregations today. In the absence of such data, however, I'll conclude with several comments based both on my own observations and those extrapolated from broader statistical studies of religious groups in Canada. In a number of ways Mennonite Brethren in Canada today are virtually indistinguishable from the population at large: they are as educated, as affluent, as healthy, as voluntaristic, as generous with money, if not more, than the general population.<sup>42</sup> Contrary to reports circulated by George Barna and Ronald Sider about Christians in North America,<sup>43</sup> there is less divorce, less abuse, less sexual promiscuity, and less crime, among those who regularly participate in the life of Mennonite Brethren congregations than in the general population.<sup>44</sup>

But aside from avoiding with greater frequency the “major” sins of cheating, illicit sexuality and violence, Mennonite Brethren, nevertheless, struggle in much the same way as others with the lure of the deeper idolatries of North American culture. There are some recent trends within evangelical Protestant denominations such as the Mennonite Brethren that are troubling: evident is a decline in biblical literacy and the regularity with which people participate in spiritual disciplines, including attendance at public worship. Evident also are the high levels of uncritical participation in pop culture entertainment media and the consumeristic behavior of church members. These characteristics raise questions about how the people of God ought to live in a pluralistic, globalized, technological, materialistic, entertainment- and pleasure-oriented culture. My hope and prayer is that the Mennonite Brethren, as evangelical-Anabaptist Christians, might use this challenge to acquire both a sounder theology of culture, along with a sharper capacity for the critical assessment of Canadian culture.

## NOTES

1. This article is an excerpt from a plenary lecture presented in October 2007 in Abbotsford at the Gospel, Culture and Church Study Conference of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, and again at pre-conference workshops prior to Gathering 2008 in Montreal.
2. The story has been told by various people. See for example John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers* (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975); John B. Toews, *Perilous Journey: The Mennonite Brethren in Russia, 1860–1910* (Winnipeg: Kindred, 1988); John B. Toews, *A Pilgrimage of Faith: The Mennonite Brethren Church, 1860–1990* (Winnipeg: Kindred, 1993); and Paul Toews, and Kevin Enns-Rempel, eds., *For Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren*

- in North America, 1874–2002* (Fresno: Historical Commission, 2002).
3. Abe J. Dueck, “Kanadier, Amerikaner and Russländer: Patterns of Fragmentation among North American Mennonite Brethren Churches,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 19 (2001): 180–94.
  4. See John Friesen, ed., *Mennonites in Russia, 1788–1988: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*. (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989); and James Urry, *None but Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia, 1789–1889* (Winnipeg: Hyperion, 1989).
  5. “Wherefrom and Where to: Spotlights on the Mennonite Past, Present and Future”; cited in Benjamin W. Redekop, “The German Identity of Mennonite Brethren Immigrants in Canada, 1930–1960” (M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1990), 68.
  6. Bruce L. Guenther, “‘Wrenching Our Youth Away from Frivolous Pursuits’: Mennonite Brethren Involvement in Bible Schools in Western Canada, 1913–1960,” *Crux* 38, no. 4 (2002): 34.
  7. See Gerald C. Ediger, *Crossing the Divide: Language Transition Among Canadian Mennonite Brethren, 1940–1970* (Winnipeg: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 2001).
  8. See Chapter 8 in T.D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 169–93; Leo Driedger, “Post-War Canadian Mennonites: From Rural to Urban Dominance,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 6 (1988): 70–88; and Johann Funk and Ruth Kampen, “Urban by Default: Mennonites in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 20 (2002): 199–224.
  9. Bruce L. Guenther, “Slithering Down the Plank of Intellectualism? The Canadian Conference of Christian Educators and the Impulse Towards Accreditation Among Canadian Bible Schools During the 1960s,” *Historical Studies in Education* 16, no. 2 (2004): 197–228.
  10. Ted Regehr, “The Economic Transformation of Canadian Mennonite Brethren,” in *Bridging Troubled Waters: Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Century*, ed. Paul Toews (Winnipeg: Kindred, 1995), 97–116.
  11. Changes in the organizational and leadership structures utilized by the Mennonite Brethren generally reflect transitions taking place within North American culture (Paul Toews, “Searching for the Right Structures,” in *For Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren in North America, 1874–2002*, eds. Paul Toews and Kevin Enns-Rempel [Fresno: Historical Commission, 2002], 55–65. See also Paul Toews, “Faith in Culture and Culture in Faith: The Mennonite Brethren in North America,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 6 [1988]: 36–50).
  12. John Redekop, “Decades of Transition: North American Mennonite Brethren in Politics,” in *Bridging Troubled Waters*, 20–21.
  13. Herbert Giesbrecht and A. E. Janzen, eds., *We Recommend . . . Recommendations and Resolutions of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches* (Fresno: Published by the Board of Christian Literature of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978), 228.
  14. Redekop, “North American Mennonite Brethren in Politics,” 34–37.
  15. A recent issue of *Direction* was devoted to a discussion of Anabaptist political theology (*Direction* 38, no. 1).

16. For details concerning this, and many other, resolutions see Giesbrecht and Janzen, *We Recommend*; Abe J. Dueck and David Giesbrecht, eds., *We Recommend . . . (Part III, 1978–2002): Recommendations, Study Papers and Other Leadership Resources* (Winnipeg: Historical Commission, Conferences of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 2002); and Herbert Giesbrecht, ed., *Moved and Seconded: Resolutions of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1960–1990* (Winnipeg: Kindred, 1991).
17. For a list of detrimental effects anticipated by church leaders, see Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, 339–40.
18. *Ibid.*, 338.
19. Recognizing the difficulty of drawing precise boundaries on cultural practices, the General Conference issued a resolution on “Consensus and Change on Ethical Issues in the Brotherhood” in 1969, which outlined a process for decision-making. It did not, unfortunately, offer guidelines for critiquing culture (Giesbrecht and Janzen, *We Recommend*, 201–3).
20. Richard Kyle, “The Mennonite Brethren and American Evangelicalism: An Ambivalent Relationship,” *Direction* 20 (Spring 1991): 26–37; and Delbert Wiens, “Mennonite Brethren: Neither Liberal nor Evangelical,” *Direction* 20 (Spring 1991): 38–66.
21. John G. Stackhouse, Jr., describes how evangelical Protestants in Canada gradually moved from a “sectish” mentalité to a more “churchish” mentalité (*Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century: An Introduction to Its Character* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993], 177–204; and “The Emergence of a Fellowship: Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century,” *Church History* 60 (June 1991): 248).
22. John G. Stackhouse, Jr., “The Protestant Experience in Canada Since 1965,” in *The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1760–1990*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Burlington: Welch Publishing, 1990), 198–252.
23. Mennonite Brethren individuals were actively involved during the 1960s and early 1970s in the formation and development of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). At the outset, EFC only accepted memberships from individuals and churches. The Mennonite Brethren Conference became a member after EFC decided to include denominations as members (*Mennonite Brethren Herald* [August 3, 1973], 7).
24. Bruce L. Guenther, “Living with the Virus: The Enigma of Evangelicalism among Mennonites in Canada,” in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George Rawlyk (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 223–40.
25. Harold Jantz, “Canadian Mennonites and a Widening World,” in *Religion and Public Life in Canada*, ed. Marguerite Van Die (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 329–45.
26. See for example Tim Geddert, “What’s in a Name?” *In Touch* (Fall/Winter 2008).
27. See the taxonomy of Mennonite identities described by Royden Loewen, “The Poetics of Peoplehood: Ethnicity and Religion among Canada’s Mennonites,” in *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*, ed. Paul Bramadat and David Seljak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 330–64.

28. See John H. Redekop, *A People Apart: Ethnicity and the Mennonite Brethren*; and "Ethnicity and the Mennonite Brethren," *Direction* 17 (Spring 1988): 3–16.
29. See the Spring 1988 issue of *Direction*, which published many of the papers from this symposium; and "A Symposium on Faith and Ethnicity Among the Mennonite Brethren: Summary and Findings Statement," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 6 (1988): 51–59.
30. This issue is active within other Mennonite denominations in Canada as well: see for example Terry M. Smith, "Reflections on Identity: Evangelical, Mennonite, and Anabaptist," *Theodidaktos* 3 (February 2008): 8–13.
31. Although the first Mennonite Brethren congregations in Canada were uniformly Dutch-German-Russian, the earliest Mennonite immigrants to Canada embodied a Swiss-German ethnicity.
32. Some of the issues surrounding "Mennonite" ethnicity are discussed by Rodney Sawatsky, "Mennonite Ethnicity: Medium, Message and Mission," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 9 (1991): 113–21.
33. In recent decades a number of Chinese congregations in British Columbia have intentionally exchanged the word "Chinese" in their public labels with "Mennonite Brethren."
34. In the past it was common to apply the label "ethnic" only to those who were a minority within a particular society. This has changed: within scholarly literature ethnicity is now a category that is applied to all people regardless of their majority/minority status in society.
35. This discussion is not intended to denigrate in any way the D-G-R-S ethnic heritage of many Mennonite Brethren. Challenging the use of the word Mennonite as an ethnic category can sometimes feel like a personal loss of identity for some people. This is not a request for people to give up their ethnic identity but rather to be more precise and theologically consistent in how they talk about their ethnic identity. That is, it is about using more exact adjectives such as German, Chinese, Russian, Canadian to describe their ethnicity rather than the word Mennonite, which ought to encompass all ethnicities. I want to see Mennonite Brethren who have a D-G-R-S ethnic heritage continue celebrating their heritage but not in an elitist way that excludes or minimizes the other ethnicities that are also present within Mennonite Brethren congregations.
36. See *Direction* 20 (Fall 1991), which contains papers presented at the North American Mennonite Brethren Consultation on Church Growth.
37. Joseph Kwan, ed., "The Growth of Chinese MB Churches," *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 9 November 2001.
38. Bruce L. Guenther, "Ethnicity and Evangelical Protestants in Canada," in *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*, 378–83.
39. Katie Funk Wiebe, "Women in the Mennonite Brethren Church," in *Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Women in the Ministry of the Church*, ed. John E. Toews, Valerie Rempel, and Katie Funk Wiebe (Winnipeg: Kindred, 1991), 173–89; and Douglas Heidebrecht, "Sisters Leading Brothers? The Hermeneutical Journey of the Mennonite Brethren" (S.T.M. Thesis, Saskatoon Theological Union, 2003).
40. Abe Dueck, "War, Peace and Nonresistance at Mid-Century," in *Bridging*

*Troubled Waters*, 3–18; and Ted Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 35–78.

41. Doreen Klassen, “From ‘Getting the Words Out’ to ‘Enjoying the Music’: Musical Transitions among the Canadian Mennonite Brethren,” in *Bridging Troubled Waters: Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Century*, ed. Paul Toews (Winnipeg: Kindred, 1995), 227–46; and “To Improve Congregational Singing: Music in the Church,” in *Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren in North America, 1874–2002* (Fresno: Historical Commission, 2002), 121–35. Musical styles used in public worship events are recognized by many as “languages of the heart.” It is ironic that the recent emphasis among the Mennonite Brethren in Canada on becoming a more diverse, multi-cultural denominational community of faith has occurred simultaneously with a move towards the homogenization of public worship through the widespread acceptance of “contemporary” (pop-rock) music within worship events, including denominational events where one might expect to see more of the diversity represented within the denomination.
42. See Paul Reed, with Kevin Selbee “The Civic Core in Canada: Disproportionality in Charitable Giving, Volunteering, and Civic Participation,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2001): 761–80.
43. Ronald Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why Are Christians Living Just Like the Rest of the World?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). Sider’s use of statistics has been called into question by scholars such as John G. Stackhouse, Jr., “What Scandal? Whose Conscience? Some Reflections on Ronald Sider’s *Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*,” *Books and Culture* 13 (July/August 2007).
44. Andrew Grenville, Lorne Hunter and Don Posterski, “Canadian Religious Beliefs and Practices: Results of an Ipsos-Reid Survey,” Presentation for EFC Presidents Day, 23 October 2003.

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