

IN THIS ISSUE

From the moment of the movement's inception in the sixteenth century, various Anabaptist groups, along with their descendants, have engaged in a lively debate regarding the relationship between the church—a voluntary gathering of Christ's followers joined together in the bonds of baptism—and the broader network of social, economic, political and cultural relations often described as the "world." The question of how best to engage the world matters for all Christians, but it becomes even more urgent for those in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition who have explicitly linked salvation to a transformed way of life and understand the church to be a visible social reality whose collective identity is inevitably in tension with the society around it. That tension is expressed most vividly by the Old Order groups—chief among them the so-called "colony Mennonites" coming out of the Russian tradition and the Old Order Amish in the Swiss-South German tradition. But as the history of even these separatist groups makes clear, the boundaries dividing church and world are always fluid, theological understandings are always in flux, and identity is always contested.

This issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* explores four expressions of this tension in a variety of settings. **Steven M. Nolt**, a professor of history at Goshen College, opens the issue with an essay detailing the creative ways in which North American Mennonites have participated in the process of globalization during the twentieth century, while also retaining a distinctive identity: A commitment to the principle of separation, he suggests, need not imply a strategy of withdrawal. Not only have a significant number of Mennonites in North America served for a period of time as relief workers, missionaries or teachers, but they have also hosted trainees, supported refugee resettlement projects, drawn on international recipes from the *More-with-Less* cookbook and decorated their homes with items from Ten Thousand Villages. More comparative research is needed to know just how unique the Mennonite experience has been in this regard, but in these and many other ways, argues Nolt, North American Mennonites have been shaped by globalization without being completely assimilated in the process.

Gerhard Rempel, a professor emeritus of history at Western New England College, offers a much more sober account of the church's engagement with culture by exploring Mennonite complicity in the Holocaust during the Second World War. Drawing on new archival sources and a rich trove of secondary literature, Rempel provides evidence of at least three forms of involvement: Mennonite guards who

served at the Stutthof concentration camp near Danzig, along with Mennonite farmers and factory owners who benefited from the slave labor of inmates there; evidence of Mennonite passivity—and even active involvement—in the massacre of Jewish residents from villages around Chortitza and Molotschna in the Ukraine; and the direct involvement of two individuals, Jack Reimer and Heinrich Wiens, in mass executions of Jewish civilians. Few members of that generation of Mennonites are still living; thus, the goal in probing this painful part of the Mennonite story is not to accuse, but to bear witness to the suffering of innocent people and to soberly acknowledge the powerful seduction, even in our own times, of xenophobia, nationalism and militarism.

Old Colony Mennonites left Russia in the 1870s for Canada where they were promised exemption from military conscription and the freedom to retain a distinct cultural and religious identity. In the aftermath of World War I, however, several provincial governments began to insist that all schools be taught in English. In response, thousands of Old Colony Mennonites emigrated once again, this time to places like Mexico, Paraguay, Belize and Bolivia. Less well-known, however, is the fact that a sizeable proportion sought an alternative solution by moving to frontier regions in northern Alberta—regions so remote that they hoped the government would leave them alone. There they were initially free to run their own schools; but as the population increased and the region became less isolated, the provincial government once again insisted that their children attend public schools taught in English. **Dawn Bowen**, an associate professor of geography at the University of Mary Washington, describes the struggle of Old Colony Mennonites in the northern Peace River country of Alberta to negotiate the boundaries with the world—focused here on the question of education—in a story that continues to unfold.

Finally, we conclude the issue with an account by **James C. Juhnke** of political attitudes of Kansas Mennonites during the presidential campaign of 1940. Although Mennonites had traditionally been divided in their political loyalties, rising concerns about military conscription prompted a new level of political engagement and growing support for the Republican Party, especially among a cadre of young activist church leaders associated with Bethel College in North Newton.

Together, the articles gathered in this issue suggest the variety of forms that the church/world relationship has taken in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition—one small expression of an ancient and ongoing dynamic within the larger history of Christianity.

– John D. Roth, editor

IN MEMORIAM

J. LAWRENCE BURKHOLDER (1917-2010)

J. Lawrence Burkholder, a Goshen College and Harvard Divinity School professor and administrator, as well as a scholar and interpreter of Mennonite theological ethics, died on June 24, 2010, in Goshen, Indiana, at age 92.

Burkholder grew up in Newville, Pennsylvania, near Shippensburg State Teachers' College, where his father taught from World War I to the end of the 1940s. He graduated from Goshen College, where he met Harriet Lapp (1915-2007), with whom he was married for sixty-seven years. They had four children: Myrna, Howard, Janet (Loren) Friesen and Gerald (who died in 1981).

Burkholder was among the earliest (Old) Mennonites to secure a B.D. (Gettysburg Theological Seminary) before ordination in 1942. In 1944, after a two-year pastorate in Croghan, New York, he volunteered for relief work in China. Burkholder spent most of a year in India before flying over the Himalayas into China. In 1946 his family joined him in Shanghai, where they resided until being evacuated in December 1948.

These years in China were deeply influential in shaping Burkholder's lifelong interests and creative thinking. Appointed by the Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Indiana, he directed programs for both Mennonite Central Committee and Church World Service. As a relief administrator he worked closely with the United Nations China Clearing Committee. He later observed that these years in China introduced into his thinking "complexity and ambiguity, and sometimes tragic necessity." He added, "Nothing in my Mennonite background prepared me to make any but unambiguous choices."

On returning to North America, he began a graduate program in theology and ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary, where he eventually earned a Th. M. (1951) and Th. D. (1958). He taught at Goshen College between 1949 and 1961. In 1961 he joined the Harvard Divinity School faculty as the Victor S. Thomas Professor of Divinity and first chair of the Department of the Church. In 1971 he responded to the call of Goshen College to serve as president.

Burkholder's thinking centered on two themes. The first was discipleship. In his teaching and several essays he connected the Anabaptist notion of "Nachfolge Christi" to the writings of Dietrich

Bonhoeffer. At Harvard he once had Bonhoeffer's fiancée, Maria von Wedemeyer, visit his seminar on discipleship. He lived his commitment "to serve Christ by loving the neighbor with greater understanding and effectiveness."

The second theme is represented by his dissertation title: "The Problem of Social Responsibility from the Perspective of the Mennonite Church" (1958; published in 1989). Here he connected his China experience to what he felt were inadequacies in Mennonite ethics. He asked whether Mennonite ethics could deal with "both the essentials of Christianity and the realities of modern life." He appealed for church discernment (another of his favorite terms) to consider "perplexing contemporary issues, not to abandon the way of the cross [but rather with] creative imagination, courage to face suffering, and a renewed commitment of faith to follow the way." In a noteworthy autobiographical reflection, *The Limits of Perfection* (1993), he connected his life experiences to his ethical thought in a stimulating narrative.

As a highly respected president of Goshen College, Burkholder made unique contributions that enhanced the visibility of the college in both the local community and in Mennonite congregations. He encouraged and directed a successful campaign to build an endowment called "The Uncommon Cause."

One of his singular achievements was to extend the college's international education component—the Study-Service Term—to China. He first returned to China in 1975. After several additional visits he negotiated an undergraduate exchange with the Sichuan Provincial Bureau of Higher Education. This program initiated in 1980 continues to the present, and has included dozens of Chinese scholars who spent a year at Goshen studying English language, North American literature and culture, and Christian theology. He also negotiated an inter-institutional program then known as China Educational Exchange. He lived the pain of China in the 1940s as well as the satisfaction of China's renewal after 1975.

Lawrence Burkholder was a faithful servant of the church, denominationally and ecumenically. He is widely considered to be one of the twentieth-century Mennonite movement's most provocative and creative thinkers.

– John A. Lapp