

Mennonite Studies as a Part of Religious Studies

William Klassen *Simon Fraser University*

The term Mennonite Studies is used in this paper to designate an area of study for academic credit in an accredited college or university. Both the academic study of religion and Mennonite studies in public universities in North America are a relatively recent phenomenon; neither has yet achieved universal academic respectability. This essay seeks to contribute to this discussion. It is assumed that the developments are important enough to deserve careful attention, not only in terms of where we are today, but also where sound pedagogy and Mennonite values will direct us. Our assignment is to focus on developments in Canada while being aware of the fact that we are deeply indebted to what is happening south of the border.

Theology is not covered in this survey. The present writer has spent half of his teaching career in a theological context. His movement from theology to a religious studies program does not in any way signify disaffection with theology or disillusionment with it. Indeed, it is considered urgent to see the theological developments in the church alongside of the kind of teaching that takes place in a university setting. Nevertheless the differences are real, but our assignment today lies in the area of religious studies.

1. *The Bible Colleges in Canada*

A history of our two Bible colleges in Canada remains a desideratum. Outsiders do not understand the phenomenon and in academic circles it is often assumed that they do not have academic respectability. For slightly over ten years I had the privilege of working closely with one of our colleges in Winnipeg and during that time developed a profound respect for the intellectual calibre of their faculty and the training of their students. It is important from a historical point of view to note that both colleges have sought and received approved teaching centre status from the two universities in the city. This means

that some of the courses taught in religion at these colleges by Mennonite teachers are accredited by these universities. On the surface this may not look too different from the arrangement in the United States where our church colleges are accredited. It is, however, quite different in cases where not only each course, but also each individual instructor must be approved by the Senate of the University. In the recent past it has not been restricted to that and one university has, in fact, influenced hiring policies, and ways in which decisions are made about renewal of contracts, teaching loads, and salaries.

Again this is not too different from what accrediting agencies in the States do, but since there is no national accrediting agency in Canada the relationships between the colleges and the universities which approve their work is important.

In the case of Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC), and apparently Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC) as well, such close liaison has led the university faculty members and administrators to gain respect for the academic work being done at the colleges. Likewise the benefit that has come to students in this arrangement is that they can take some of their work at a Mennonite college and receive university credit for it. The benefit of this arrangement accrues not only to the colleges but also to the university.

The university is able to draw students from these colleges and is able thus to recruit some of the most competent students it has. The values of this arrangement are periodically assessed by both sides.

Alongside of these Bible colleges we have, wherever Mennonites are settled in large numbers, the Bible schools. In spite of the fact that a number of these schools have in the recent past been upgraded through the training of their faculty and the kind of courses offered, for the most part their courses are not given academic credit by universities.

The Bible schools had their reasons for coming into existence. They provided a great service to the churches in helping people who attended them to become more sophisticated in their approach to the Bible, and were of particular value to students who did not study any religion in high school. They originated at a time when the rural form of life was still dominant and it remains to be seen whether they will be able to continue to flourish. It is clear that they are attempts to duplicate in Canada such institutions as the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and the Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, Alberta.

Insofar as the institutions have thrived on an anti-intellectual approach to the Bible, their future is secured only among those who prefer to avoid the critical problems rather than to go through them. What is clear is that Mennonite theology and certainly religious studies have

definitively tackled the critical problems and lived with religious realities in a post-critical stage.

2. *A Chair in Mennonite Studies*

The inauguration of a chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg represents the first concrete collaboration of a government funding agency and a private philanthropist. As a working arrangement in which the government prescribes that Mennonites work together rather than fight each other in the area of post-secondary education it is a major break-through. It is the boldest step in collaboration with Caesar. Since the chair is endowed there is protection from government or private interference and we may well face the prospect of this chair speaking or teaching contrary to governmental policy — a situation which is indigestible to democracy where the state often pays to keep its critics not only alive but also informed. This development also highlights most sharply the difference between the United States and Canada. In the former such a chair would be inconceivable, just as it is inconceivable for the state to fund a conference like this.

It is too early to assess this development. The most difficult questions which pertain to it have to do with the question whether Mennonite values will lose their spiritual or religious roots and dissolve into a study of ethnicity. It would be a tragedy of the first order if the observer approach, so integral to the social sciences and indeed invaluable in its own right, would displace the basic approach of the humanities which takes seriously the union of life and thought, study and commitment, emotion and will.

The chair in Mennonite studies has already rendered a very important service to higher education by the distinguished lecturers it has brought to the city, by the impact of the incumbent's teaching and research and, above all, by the way Mennonite scholars in the city have formed a partnership with each other and stimulated each other's productivity in scholarship and literary creativity. The recent announcement of a new scholarly journal is further evidence of this new life which is stirring in Winnipeg.

3. *Mennonite Studies in a Religion Department*

Mennonite Studies as an integral part of academic offerings for credit in religion departments of North American universities is a small part of the total educational scene. A preliminary survey shows only the Religion Department of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg at present offering a course every other year entitled "Mennonite Studies," and that is taught by a Lutheran. A number of the courses of Conrad Grebel are part of the religion offering of the University of Waterloo. The University of Calgary's Department of Religion has indicated openness to pursu-

ing this if interest is expressed, and reports are that something in the area of both peace and Mennonite studies is brewing in Toronto. The chair in Mennonite studies at the University of Winnipeg is not in the Religion Department but works closely and harmoniously with it.

The course in Mennonite studies at the University of Manitoba was introduced while the present writer was on sabbatical leave from duties as head of the Department, in 1973-74. CMBC, represented by its Dean of instruction, Waldemar Janzen, made the formal request to our department and it was speedily accepted by the department, shepherded through all the labyrinthine corridors which greet such proposals, and listed as a course suitable for teaching credit at CMBC for the year 1974-75. It was considered by the University of Manitoba as an appropriate way to recognize the centennial of the coming of the Mennonites to Canada. We felt that it was a course which could very well be taught both on our campus and at CMBC, although students could not take it twice for double credit. The enrolment has been modest, never above twenty students, and it has been taught to a mixed group of Mennonites and non-Mennonites by a committed Lutheran Christian who is competent in the area of Mennonite studies and has a warm affection for Mennonites and a high regard for their theology. He has also taught a very successful course on Martin Luther and the Anabaptists and the area has also always been dealt with in the popular survey course, *Makers of Modern Christianity*. Professor Grislis is more able to provide students with an objective introduction to the thought and life of Menno than the present writer, who tends to be impatient both with Menno's heretical Christology and with his views on church discipline but above all laments the way in which Menno's rigidity has replaced the way of Christ in the church that goes by his name.

Four factors led to the introduction of the course:

1. The respect over the years for the academic standards of CMBC.
2. The respect in which Mennonite academics on the University of Manitoba campus were held.
3. The existence of a considerable body of scholarly literature about the Anabaptists and Mennonite history since the 16th century.
4. The conviction of the members of the Department of Religion that our students should be exposed to the varieties of religious expression of both East and West and that with Manitoba's heavy population of Mennonites they had a rightful place in the religious mosaic which was part of our academic offerings. It was also the centennial of the Mennonites' coming to Canada.

The University of Manitoba's religion department developed the reputation for being "churchy" due to our emphasis on Bible and History of Theology. But we were not too disturbed by that given the fact that we

also had a strong course selection in Eastern religions, ethics, women's issues, etc. We saw no reason to apologize for preparing our students to come to terms with religious movements which were a part of their experience in the province in which they lived.

The decision to place Mennonite studies in the religion department was a conscious one flowing from our natural liaison with CMBC and our conviction that whatever one may do with the Mennonites in departments of literature, sociology, psychology or history, we have not come to terms with them unless we have seen them as they see themselves: as a people of God called to a divine mission.

Another factor has been the attraction of these courses to all comers. They are not designed for Mennonites only or even for them in particular. The strengths and weaknesses of religion departments in academic settings are that students *study* religion — they look at religions other than their own often having adherents of those other religions with them in classes and this means that they must find ways of practicing whatever religion they adhere to in other contexts. A department of religion stresses the academic study of religion. Worship or other public *practice* of religion cannot belong there.

In principle this model has some commendable features. Most important of those features is that Mennonite studies has a clearly defined home within the academy. Mennonite students see Mennonites under the rubric of faith and history and accept or reject their foreparents' faith. The norms and values which come into play are drawn from a religious reservoir, which as all religion, is culturally conditioned.

The weakness is that in such a large cauldron Mennonite studies may be lost in the larger whole. The earnest seeker often views the personal quest for Mennonite identity as part of the larger quest for the church and indeed for humanity.

4. *Mennonite College within a University*

The establishment of Conrad Grebel College on a university campus significantly advanced Mennonite Studies in North America. The College was in existence before the department of religion and according to Walter Klaassen:

Our involvement with R.S. has been an ongoing and changing one. I was on the first committee which sat to formulate plans for a department back in about 1965-6. We have had a functioning department now for six years (although many of the course offerings are much older).

Sometime during the late sixties our supporting churches encouraged us to participate in a department, knowing that this would set some limitations on what we could do and also that appointments to the faculty would have to be acceptable not only to the College and its constituency but also to a department, in which the majority of the faculty would be non-Mennonite.

By and large it has been a positive experience, even though the department is a hybrid, being composed of five agencies, four of which are the four Colleges (Roman Catholic, Anglican, United Church of Canada, and Mennonite), all of which are autonomous and related to the University by federation or affiliation. The fifth agency is a complement of two faculty directly under the Dean of Arts. We have managed so far to cooperate well while at the same time keeping a careful eye on what we perceive to be CGC's role on this campus and our responsibility to the supporting constituency.

As you know, teaching R.S. in a university setting makes for more rigorous attention to how that is done. At Bethel, my only other experience, we were too often doing apologetics and vanquishing opponents who were not there to defend themselves. The present setting has driven me, for example, to look at medieval Catholicism, Luther, etc., much more carefully inasmuch as I regularly meet spokesmen for those positions and have students from those traditions in my classes. The result is also that I do the Anabaptist history more carefully and critically. That is also the experience of the other faculty, John Miller and Rod Sawatsky. A weakness is that sometimes one leans over too far in one's attempt at objectivity. Also there is not the same room for a legitimate apologetic. Usually I gather the Mennos from my class for a special session where we can do some of that.

We teach a good many more non-Mennonites than Mennonites. In my Radical Reformation course this term, for example, I have nine Mennos out of a total of 26. In my history of Christianity it is the same story, and the other faculty report similar proportions.

I believe that Grebel has a fairly high profile in the University. We have, comparatively, a very good teaching and research/publishing record, better than any other constituent part of the department, and especially also in history and sociology. Grebel has the whole music program on campus and is, in addition, responsible for extra-curricular music activity on campus (university choir, bands, orchestra, etc.).

It has given what appears to me to be a very high profile to Mennonites on campus. Mennonites know how to do things. They know how to raise money and are shrewd in its use. They are very energetic. They also get more than their fair share of media coverage and tend to be somewhat imperialistic in terms of what they label "Mennonite". The Mennonite kitchen in the *Meeting Place* in St. Jacobs is no more Mennonite than it is Catholic or Lutheran. Well, I'm not sure what all of it means, but there it is. It is unquestionably a stimulating setting to be in.

The question as to where Mennonite studies are best handled depends in part on what one's goal is. If the goal is to share what we have, then, clearly we need to be at a public institution. (My italics). If the goal is more specifically preservation and cultivation of a heritage, then CMBC or Goshen or Bethel are perhaps relatively better settings. I would, at this point, have real difficulty going back into a "separated" institution.

At Grebel we work in a public setting but have the advantage of regular interaction with Mennonite colleagues. The cliché "the best of both worlds" does express something of Grebel's reality for both faculty and students. About one-half of our 116 residents are Mennonite.¹

It would seem clear that in this model the community ideal which is so

important to our faith can be retained and it has clearly been productive in terms of scholarship and relationship to churches.

Particularly encouraging has been the extent to which Conrad Grebel faculty members have participated in national learned societies. It is surely striking that of the four Mennonites who are members of the Canadian Society for Biblical Studies two have worked in university departments of religion, a third is a graduate student in such a department and only one teaches at one of our Mennonite colleges. The Conrad Grebel research and publication record is second to none among Mennonite institutions.

Perhaps one of these days we will be given an assessment by a competent outside team of assessors on the strengths and weaknesses of Conrad Grebel College's way of doing Mennonite studies. From a distance it has always seemed to be an imaginative, bold affirmation that we as Mennonites belong in the center of the academic jungle and have over the years not only maintained our identity there but also grown in self-assurance and in our capacity to communicate our faith to outsiders.

5. *Individual Teachers in the University*

In addition to the above there are also a number of Mennonite teachers who have found their life's work in a department of religion in a non-Mennonite setting. We need an adequate inventory of this phenomenon. As far as I can tell we have three persons who as practicing Mennonites have made the teaching of religion in the university their profession: Ron Neufeldt, Calgary, Don Wiebe, Toronto, and myself. In the appointments of these three the church has had no say. One might say that the teachers of Conrad Grebel also belong in this group since they teach religion in a university, but since the church employs them they will not be considered here. In the United States, Paul Wiebe, Wichita, is alone in this regard.

The emergence of teachers of religion with some distance from the church is a new phenomenon which deserves some reflection. For the first time in Mennonite history we have a host of professionals who have no church appointments doing theology for the church; not only the academics but also therapists, pastoral care specialists, prison chaplains, etc. This is a difference of such magnitude that it is not to be treated in the same category as the occasional appointment taken by people who did theology and preferred to do it in Dallas Theological Seminary, Harvard or New York Biblical or Notre Dame.

Those of us who are called to teach religion in the university surely are builders of the common good like those of our people who have built houses across this country, built up marketing systems of houses, hauled freight across this land, worked in agricultural labs developing new strains of wheat or pesticides, the doctors and public servants, etc.

We find ourselves in unusual circumstances. Four hundred years ago we believed that religion must be free from the dictates of the state. Today we find that we are freest to teach and practice our Anabaptist faith within the state's institutions and after our experience in church institutions would find it hard to return to them. For the ideals of open-mindedness, tolerance, and respect for other human beings and the commitment to open inquiry are, we believe, ideals espoused also by our Anabaptist foreparents but practiced too infrequently by contemporary Mennonite institutions. We may indeed get homesick for Mennonite students and miss especially the communal worship which sustains our spiritual man, but find our rewards in the evidence that God's spirit used our efforts not only to strengthen the sons and daughters of Menno, but also to help other students to reassess their values as they come to terms with the Free Church tradition.

It is clear that many models of education must be used. The way in which we have seen young people and older people respond to new information which is freely given makes us believe that the insight of our foreparents that faith flourishes best without coercion still shines as brightly as ever.

The context of the modern university is very different and at times demanding. The first time I visited the University of Manitoba as a candidate the students of the University were blocking the Dow Chemical recruiters. Already at that time I was told that there were a very large number of Mennonite students on that campus. Did I not belong there?

I have not ever regretted that decision. It has been a profound privilege to work there for twelve years with a host of dedicated colleagues. Anyone who knows that University knows that it owes much to men like Roy Vogt, Leonard Siemens, Leo Driedger, Victor Doerksen, Henry Wiebe, Henry Rempel and Don Wiebe, to mention only a few of the Mennonites who have made their contribution there in the past years. Little has been said about this new form of witness and that is lamentable, since the largest number of our young people both in the States and in Canada still attend our large public universities. Nor is this likely to change since the professional faculties will always draw a large number of students and we must make it possible for this large group of students also to have available to them courses in Mennonite faith, History and Bible. We cannot assume that they will all take courses in Mennonite history in high school or Bible School before they enter university, or that such courses are adequate.

It would be wrong to ignore the great impetus given to Mennonite studies by American educators like Roland Bainton, George Huntston Williams (Yale and Harvard respectively), Franklin Littell (Temple Uni-

versity), or Claus-Peter Clasen, none of whom are Mennonite but all of whom have made an important contribution to Mennonite studies.

What is most striking about the study of religion in the university and gives it its particular attraction is that it is done alongside of other disciplines some of which challenge most critically the student's faith. It is important therefore that the study of religion as an academic discipline proceed at the same time that the student is looking at history, biology, philosophy, psychology, and English literature. While integration of faith and knowledge cannot be guaranteed, the university campus affords a unique opportunity for that to happen. If we have done our work right in the home, the church, and the church high schools there is no reason why it cannot take place. At any rate it is surely consistent with our Mennonite philosophy of witnessing that our young people be encouraged to witness on our university campuses. Their task will be made easier if there is also a group of Mennonite university professors who, like the students, see themselves called to build with integrity in that location. Unfortunately students and teachers are often left with the impression that if they do not work at one of our church institutions they have already forsaken the faith, although fortunately that attitude is not as often expressed any more and never was as prevalent in Canada as it was in the States.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Before the reader can accept the validity of the Mennonite student or professor pursuing the study of religion on a university campus a short description of its nature and extent to which it is being pursued may be in place.

The academic study of religion has been extensively described in many learned books and numerous scholarly journals are devoted to it. One of the largest gatherings of scholars which takes place annually is the meeting of the American Academy of Religion (of which Gordon Kaufman currently serves as President) combined with the meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis. The Canadian Society for the Study of Religion has flourished since the mid-sixties and was strong enough to host the XIV Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions in 1980 under the able direction of Donald Wiebe. That association publishes the prestigious journal *Numen* and on the occasion of the XIIIth Congress the journal *Religion* published a special issue surveying the study of religion on the international scene.

Among many people the academic study of religion connotes "Comparative Religions", that is a discipline which looks at the various religions from a comparative point of view. Scholars today prefer to use the term, "History of Religions". When a study is done comparatively

there is a strong temptation to conclude that one is better than another. In academic circles we tend to favour the less "primitive" and so we are committed instead to view the various religious literatures, cultural forms, institutions, and religious figures within their historical context analysing what may have led them to become what they were, what they were dissenting from, and what their impact was in subsequent times. Obviously the history of religions approach shares much with the historian's approach. And yet his focus is different. When studying the radical reformation he is concerned about the religious motivations, the religious shape which emerged, and the religious goals which were being pursued. While he will allow that there were economic and social factors as well as psychological factors at work he will return ultimately to the question of the religious center of a movement or a person. In studying persons like Martin Luther King or Ghandi in a religion class the work is not completed until the religious dimension is analysed. In that analysis the careful student will use all critical tools, e.g. historical research methods, sociological analysis, psycho-historical research, but will not hesitate to state that in the last analysis there may be a religious explanation. In whatever form this is expressed, e.g. an intervention of the Divine upon the human, the transcendence of the imminent, the vision that came to Martin Luther King, etc., a student of religion does not depart from his academic podium when he uses religious categories to describe a historical phenomenon.

The goal in all this is simply to understand. To understand there must be a degree of empathy. The teacher of religion does not seek to recruit for the religion he teaches but rather to help students to understand it. He cannot make it his goal to bring students to faith; it is rather his goal to help students to understand what faith is in the religious tradition he is describing.

One of the reasons why the academic study of religion has been so popular in recent times is that it respects the intellect of the student. It does not ask him to sacrifice his thinking in favour of faith. Rather it allows him the opportunity to compare his personal faith with that of the fascinating religions of the East or to look at other Western religious traditions (e.g. Islam) and the native religions of North America and as this is done a deeper understanding of the student's own religion results. For a number of years the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion published an inventory on the number of students and the kinds of courses offered on our Canadian university campuses. Prepared by Charles P. Anderson this book served an important purpose for it demonstrated how avidly Canadian students pursued the academic study of religion, how many majors there were, and how students shifted their interest from the study of Eastern religions to the West, in particular the

study of the Bible. The two volume work by Claude Welch, *Graduate Education in Religion A Critical Appraisal* (University of Montana Press, 1971) and *Religion in the Undergraduate Curriculum* (Association of American Colleges, 1972) contains not only some very important tables and charts about the number of schools who have programs but also some very perceptive essays by scholars in the field on the nature of the discipline.

A considerable impetus was given this area by the Supreme Court decision in 1963 legitimating the formal study of religion in all U.S. schools. Justice Clark wrote:

... It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relation to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historical qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such a study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistent with the First Amendment.²

The academic study of religion on a university campus differs from the teaching of religion on a church campus in the following ways:

1. Universities cannot make any requirements of faith from their faculty members.
2. The attempt must be made to be objective in presenting the faith and history of a religious group.
3. Students must be encouraged to read materials from another tradition than their own and if this leads to their movement from faith to unfaith that is not a matter of concern to the teacher any more than if the movement goes in the opposite direction.
4. While the majority of faculty members who teach religion in the university practice religion as well as teach it, it is of no concern to those who hire them what religion they practice.
5. Whereas in church-related colleges there is a constant concern for relating to the constituency which is served, the university is more free to take a long-range view and is dedicated to the pursuit of truth. If a scholar in the university comes to the conclusion that the truth he has always identified with his faith community does not hold, he is free to renounce it and is indeed honour-bound to do so.

On the surface this looks like a direct contradiction to the Anabaptist missionary posture. If, however, we look at the way in which we collaborate with the state in Canadian International Development Agency, bringing in refugees, health care and retirement homes, to say nothing of government subsidies in marketing boards, we receive a deeper appreciation for what it means today to be in the world but not of it. It takes a certain shrewdness to live in such a way as to witness

faithfully and at the same time to engage in the cultural pursuits of our time.

It is clear however that our task is hardly more difficult than was the task of a Pilgram Marpeck or a Hans Denck. Marpeck as civil servant remained true to his Anabaptist convictions at whatever costs and so did Hans Denck. They were prepared to take the risks and in taking those risks consistently affirmed that the truth flourishes in a context where communication is open and respect is shown for the opinions of those who differ from us.

CONCLUSION

The history of the early church as Luke records it presents us with fascinating anecdotes about the way in which the Spirit of God pushed the first apostles into new fields and frontiers. Peter questioned whether the Samaritans and the Gentiles could really become members of the new people. He ventured forth and while it took a vision or two to get him going he did not resist.

We share Peter's conservatism which wishes to retain the value of the past. He took religion seriously. As a people we can only be sustained by a divine sense of mission. Our parents have taught us hard work and frugality and we have practiced it so that we have attained the respect of our contemporaries. It is one thing to obtain the respect of our co-workers, it is another to open the doors of collaboration in such a way as to present to them through work and word a faith which affirms the value of life on this planet in such a way that people find hope for the living of these days. There are, in my judgment, few places in this world that need that witness more than our universities.

The university today is in a crisis much deeper than it was in 1969. While student unrest has diminished few teachers in the humanities really believe in what they are doing and can communicate a basic enthusiasm for their discipline or for life itself to their students.

One cannot force one's own opinion on others, especially students who would like so much to quote you when they attack an atheist teacher or friend. One works then with them to show them that the most important Christian witness is often the way one lives and not what one says. The most important witness we leave on a university campus is the integrity of our dealing with colleagues, the caliber of our research and the way in which we have honored the trust which our administrators have placed in us.

Whether we like it or not we live in a pluralistic world. As Mennonites we have been granted a place in this world — a place which God in his grace has preserved for us in spite of our faithfulness and lack thereof. We have every reason to cultivate that virtue which spans both

ambition and humility, called by Walter Kaufman, "humbition". We have no reason to apologize or be deferential about our faith and need not fear to enter into the academy. We will have to abide by the same rules as anyone else but there is simply no conflict between the best of the Mennonite heritage and such values as study for its own sake, the training of the mind, tolerance for people with other points of view, and respect for life whatever form it may take. Surely at this late and crucial stage of human history we need not cringe because our tradition has always stressed that there is a better way for human relations to evolve than the escalation of violence, of threat and counter-threat.

It is, in our judgment, not by accident that there are far more Mennonites at work in the academic study of religion and theology and other disciplines at places like Harvard, Notre Dame and the secular campuses of North America than at the schools which seek to constrict what faculty members believe and to determine what students believe when they graduate. Mennonites, as part of the Free Church, following upon the Anabaptists are free to allow the unfettered search for truth to bring its own results. In Mennonite studies, as in the academic study of religion, all truth is tested within a community and the solidity of an identifiable, sometimes even rigid tradition, is the best anvil on which the young can test their changing perceptions of truth. It is only through that lengthy and sometimes painful process that true commitment to the values of the past is brought about. When that happens they are understood and they are paid their highest tribute as they are translated into life. Then the goal of "ego integrity" is in sight.

This category of Erik Erikson applies not only to the individual but also perhaps to the ethnic group which moves towards such integrity as a group. According to Erikson it involves:

the acceptance of one's one and only life cycle as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions . . . It is a comradeship with the ordering ways of distant times and different pursuits . . . Although aware of the relativity of all the various life styles which have given meaning to human striving, the possessor of integrity is ready to defend the dignity of his own style against all . . . threats. For he knows that an individual life is the accidental coincidence of but one life cycle with but one segment of history; and that for him all human integrity stands or falls with the one style of integrity in which he partakes. The style of integrity developed by his culture or civilisation thus becomes the 'patrimony of his soul', the seal of his moral paternity of himself.³

Without such integrity all that is done in Mennonite studies in or outside of the academic study of religion and all that is done in the latter is vapid and partakes of that vanity so eloquently described by the author of Ecclesiastes.

Notes

¹ An unpublished report by Walter Klaassen to William Klassen.

² In Claude Welch, *Graduate Education in Religion. A Critical Appraisal* (Univ. of Montana Press, 1971), p. vii.

³ Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, p. 268, as cited by Robert Michaelson, "The Engaged Observer: Portrait of a Professor of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XL (1972), p. 424.