

John Braun and the Radical Mennonite Union

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Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.¹

Some years ago, while researching the history of Mennonite involvement in labour unions, I came across a file in an archive labelled “Radical Mennonite Union.”² The Radical Mennonite Union (RMU) was not, in fact, a labour union, but a student group led by a young man named John Braun from Abbotsford, British Columbia. Braun was baptized into the Mennonite Brethren church in 1965 at age 16, and became a student at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in 1967. He founded the RMU in 1968, influenced by the Vietnam War draft resistance movement, SFU’s chapter of Students for a Democratic University, and its subsequent occupation of the administration building at SFU in 1968. His encounter over dinner in his parents’ home with a graduate student from Pakistan who was a vociferous opponent of both the Vietnam War and American imperialism further contributed to his political development. These collective influences led Braun to produce what he now describes as “the most ill-tempered thing ever written”:³ the manifesto of the RMU. The Manifesto’s purported goal was to unite the ideals of the New Left with those of Anabaptism.

Copies of the Manifesto rapidly spread throughout North America, reproduced in various underground student newspapers and

distributed by mail to various professors, leftist students, communes, and intentional communities. The RMU, a group of some two dozen people in British Columbia committed to the content of the Manifesto, undertook various activities in an attempt to radicalize young Mennonites and, by extension, the church. In 1972, Braun even secured a Canada Council grant for this purpose, renting a van to drive across Canada and meet with other young Mennonite dissidents to discuss the potential for radicalizing the Mennonite church.

I had the opportunity to conduct two oral history interviews with Braun at his current residence in Oregon, and was given his personal papers for archival deposit. Braun's personal history, and his changed attitudes toward the RMU, may be evaluated by comparing his statements in his personal correspondence and writings of the 1960s-1970s to his current understandings of those years of his life as expressed in the oral history interviews I conducted with him. Though Braun has revised his understanding of the significance of his past activism, the RMU offers an insight into the diversity of belief in the post-1970 Mennonite community. Braun's story is a reminder that even conservative religious groups have radicals among them, that the failure of communities to embrace those radicals sometimes leads to their disaffection, and that what was once radical can become mainstream.

Origins of the Radical Mennonite Union

Born in 1949, John Braun came of age during the campus – and general social – unrest of the 1960s. He joined the Young Liberals in 1964, and the Young New Democrats in 1967. The events of late 1968 (in particular, his involvement in the student occupation of Simon Fraser University's administration building) led him to form the Radical Mennonite Union in December 1968. In the next six months, he produced the Radical Mennonite Union's Manifesto and the Radical Confession of Faith.

Braun and the RMU were part of a much broader movement within North American Mennonite society. Braun's ideas were not formed in isolation, nor broadcast solely by his small organization, but were shaped and distributed by a wider world of underground newspapers that linked intentional communities across the continent. Perry Bush explains that "Anabaptists as New leftists" and "Anabaptists as communitarians" were two of the many new visions of Anabaptism articulated by Mennonites in the late 1960s that subsequently led Mennonites to create their own versions of

the hundreds of intentional communities and underground newspapers that existed in this time period.⁴ These intentional communities and underground newspapers saw themselves as a “radical alternative to the existing political and religious order.”⁵

The RMU’s Constitution noted that its aim was “social change in the community at large with primary interest in the churches.”⁶ Membership was open to anyone – Mennonite or otherwise – who supported this aim. The RMU voted to publicly support the political protests of Simon Fraser University’s Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology faculty members. A motion by John Braun at one RMU meeting to “form a new Mennonite Church” was tabled for further discussion.⁷

The RMU Manifesto focused on four key issues in Mennonite theology and society: Mennonites’ failure to engage with political and social issues; undemocratic practices within the Mennonite church; the failures of Mennonite schools and colleges; and Mennonites’ general conservatism. The Manifesto’s radicalism lies both in its content and its forms of expression: Mennonite church members, for example, are described as “passive, docile idiots... human near-vegetables incapable of facing life with any kind of honesty.”⁸ The Mennonite church is accused of promoting a “rigid theology and outdated social mores” as well as supporting “the status quo in the political sphere.” Nonetheless, the church itself is not rejected, but instead is called to radically transform itself. Examples of such transformation are offered, including active support of war resisters, the promotion of “free and open discussion of all theology, doctrines, rules, etc.,” and the equal treatment of women. Mennonite schools (secondary and post-secondary) are called to a similar radical transformation. But the transformation was to extend beyond the walls of the churches and schools, and into the broader, non-Mennonite society, since “to honestly follow Christ in this day is to make the social revolution.”

A handful of copies of this Manifesto were distributed at a meeting of the RMU on 31 January 1969 on the campus of Simon Fraser. These were duplicated and distributed all over North America in the next few months. “It was truly stunning, and fast,” Braun recalled. “I handed out half a dozen copies... Two weeks later my mother wrote me the angriest letter of her life decrying that I had sent my ravings to her relatives in Ontario! Over the next couple of years I was shown copies of the document with at least a dozen different typefaces – in an age before Xerox, it had been retyped many times.”⁹ The mailing list for the RMU grew to include people from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Florida, and California.

John Rempel, editor of *Arena* (the student edition of *The Mennonite*), wrote an admiring letter to Braun.¹⁰ He noted that the Manifesto's authors were "angry, determined, and visionary" and asked to know more about the organization. "The vigorous protest that you are involved in is the kind of thing that is the lifeblood of this magazine. What you have written and the process of actualising it in which I assume you are engaged should be shared with and test[ed] by your fellow students," he wrote. He subsequently published excerpts of the Manifesto in the November edition of *Arena*.

Others also wrote to Braun about the Manifesto: Darrell Fast of the General Conference Mennonite Church's Peace and Social Concerns Committee; Paul Hiebert, anthropology professor at the University of Minnesota; William Klassen, professor of religion at the University of Manitoba; Roy Just, President of Tabor College. Fast expressed interest in meeting with Braun at an upcoming Mennonite conference.¹¹ Hiebert stated he "appreciate[d] the way your thought has been developing.... today's young radicals are not rejecting wholesale the values and positions of Christianity, but only applying them directly and without hypocrisy or cover-up to the behavior of the adults and finding them wanting. I only trust that in our own lives we do not permit ourselves to be swept down the stream of socialization in the adult world until we lose visions that once were clear."¹² Klassen wrote that he "admire[d] the intensity with which you raise the questions you do as well as your desire to maintain a genuine Christian identity and relate yourself to the ways in which Mennonites have affirmed their Christian identity in the recent past." He recommended Braun attend either the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, IN, or Harvard Divinity School: the former "just adopted a new curriculum which should guarantee you both the freedom to carry out your personal quest and also assure you of the kind of community in which such a quest could flower into an ideological framework which could serve you well for the rest of your life, regardless of what vocation you would eventually choose."¹³ Just asked for further materials by the Radical Mennonite Union to be sent to him.¹⁴

The summer and fall of 1969 were significant in many ways for Braun. He moved into a coop house where the leadership of the Students for a Democratic University lived. He attended a variety of Mennonite conferences and conventions, in Saskatoon and in Vancouver, where he had the opportunity to meet fellow Mennonite radicals Ray Funk and Tim Beachy. He participated in a political action in Saskatoon, wherein locals would visit the Hud-

son's Bay Company (HBC) department store and leave cards inside packages that read "Let's give HBC back to the Indians": "It was theatre and we loved it."¹⁵

The fall of 1969 saw the (in)famous Public Service Alliance (PSA) strike at SFU. Braun had begun at SFU as a political science student, but had shifted to the sociology of religion. Together with other students, he occupied the administration building at Simon Fraser University. He chaired sessions during the occupation's teach-ins for three days, after which he wanted to go home to shower and change, and then return. He did so, but while he was gone, police arrested 114 occupants and cleared the building. The next few weeks and months he spent attending rallies in defense of the 114. And he made a trip to Chicago at Christmas to attend a conference at Mark Wagler's intentional community where the underground newspaper *Remnant* was published. There he met and debated with Students for a Democratic Society members, Maoists, and Weather Underground members. It's during these months that Braun wrote the Radical Confession of Faith, which he describes as "more measured, much longer, and much better received."¹⁶

The Confession of Faith was written as a more radical follow-up to the Manifesto. Braun now believed that the Manifesto's suggestions for democratizing the Mennonite church didn't go far enough. In the Confession, he expressed strong support for coffee houses, communes, underground publishing, and the antiwar struggle.¹⁷ Perhaps most radically, Braun argued that Mennonites should work in cooperation with non-religious radicals. In short, Mennonites needed to participate in the broader social movement that was the New Left. Braun saw this not as the abandonment of Mennonitism, but its fulfilment. Mennonites should not ignore the moment of social change in which they were living, but embrace it, as their sixteenth-century Anabaptist predecessors would have done, he argued.¹⁸ The Confession concluded:

Down with Fat-Cat Christianity

Obscenity is stuffing yourself and your garbage can while watching
with quiet glee as 'our Boys' burn rice paddies in Vietnam,

Happiness is smashing the state

Before change, understanding; before understanding, confrontation.

Anabaptists have a persecution complex, or is it prosecution complex?

A New Christianity for a New Religious Age

God is alive; Magic is Afoot

"Welcome to you who read me today. Welcome to you who put my heart
down. Welcome to you, darling and friend, who miss me forever in
your trip to the end." – Cohen¹⁹

Shortly after writing the Confession, in the summer of 1970, Braun was released from membership in the South Abbotsford Mennonite Brethren Church. The reason given for his expulsion from the church was his denial of the divinity of Christ. Mere months after this, Braun enrolled as a student at Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. He spent time in New York City with Mark Wagler and attended a conference organized by *Remnant: A Forum for Radical Mennos*, the Chicago underground newspaper of which Wagler was publisher. Wagler, in *The Anabaptist Stomach* (another underground Mennonite newspaper in Chicago), had issued a “call for 20th Century Anabaptists... a club of people inspired by what fellows like [Felix] Manz and [George] Blaurock did, taking the message around to Mennonite communities that they aren’t worthy to be descendants of the Anabaptists.”²⁰ Members of the “club” were to be inspired as well by “Old Testament prophets, Jesus Christ, Anabaptists, communists, Thoreau, SNCC...”²¹

Mennonite Dissonance Study

These contacts led Braun to consider a new project. He wrote to a friend about the Canada Council’s Opportunities for Youth²² program, which he described as “[Prime Minister] Trudeau’s grandest welfare scheme to buy off student dissent.”²³ Braun’s plan was to “study the variety and extent of dissidence in Mennonite Communities around North America. Dissidence being anything from Jesus Freaks to Drug Abusers to Radical Mennos.” The plan was to travel with five others “in a rented van, stopping at the various Menno centers to rap with people.” The advantages to participants were that they would “walk away with about \$1000 after 3½ months of rather enjoyable work,” and that Frank H. Epp had expressed interest in publishing their findings in both the *Mennonite Reporter* and his forthcoming book *Mennonites in Canada*.

Braun’s first grant application was vague at best. His plan was to conduct a “search for the spirit of Menno [Simons]” that would be “undertaken with an open mind – I’m not sure whether I want to embrace it, attack it or merely observe it when I find it!”²⁴ The outcome of the research, he declared, would be an undefined series of papers. Not surprisingly, the Canada Council did not immediately grant this request for funding. One assessor noted that Braun “might gain, and in the long run contribute far more, if he were to apply himself at this stage to the prescribed disciplines of a recognized graduate program.”²⁵ Another reviewer expressed

“admiration for [the proposal’s] imagination, scope and temerity – its dash!” Nonetheless, they continued, the proposal did “not encourage one to expect an intensive, thorough and objective study.” And Braun’s stated goal to radically transform both doctrine and practice of a religious group “hardly merits a grant of scarce public research funds.”

Braun didn’t accept this defeat, but wrote a vigorous response to the reviewers and the head of the Canada Council – or, as he referred to it in his letter, “a sustained polemic against the assessors.”²⁶ Braun argued that ““working on this project would move me so far beyond the level of mediocrity of a graduate school as to make the statement [that he should go to grad school] totally absurd.” He nonetheless revised his outcomes: he would write not a series of papers, but a book “on the psychic and ideological tensions or contradictions that seem to have been built into Christianity. In other words, an attempt at explaining the structure of rebellion and conflict, the kind of perspective of the religion as a whole that most definitely has been lost in the last century due to specialization.” He decried his time at Mennonite Biblical Seminary as lacking in value, declared his aspiration to be “somewhere between a medieval scholar and a modern radical intellectual,” and signed off his letter with the words “Yours for a world with more flowers.” This letter, too, did not result in any funding. Braun was informed that the assessors believed his proposed research had “no definite objective.” He was nonetheless invited to submit a new application.

Braun’s new proposal in 1972, for the “Mennonite Dissonance Study,” was to rent a van and travel through Mennonite centres in five western Canadian provinces as well as “a refuge or two in Montreal.” He and his fellow researchers would stop along the way to interview Mennonite dissidents. Letters of support for his proposal were provided by Mennonite scholars Frank H. Epp, Walter Paetkau, and Rudy Wiebe. This proposal was finally successful: Opportunities for Youth provided Braun a grant of \$8460. It was enough to rent a van with his friends Grant Toews, Bob Siemens, Josie Peters, Susan Penner, and Marilyn Chechik and travel the country. Each participant received \$1260 for their work; the remaining \$900 was used for expenses.²⁷

The group travelled from Abbotsford BC across Canada to Waterloo ON, with a brief detour to Elkhart IN and Black River Falls WI in the US, during the period 11 May to 14 June 1972. Interviewees included a wide-ranging group of authors, historians, university students, family friends, coffeehouse owners, commune members, pastors, professors, MCC workers, Jesus Freaks, Old

Mennonites, Holdeman Mennonites, and charismatic Mennonites. Rudy Wiebe, Roy Vogt, Leo Driedger, Jack Thiessen, and Frank H. Epp were some of the more prominent names among those interviewed. The interviews were not audio recorded nor systematically summarized in writing; instead, Braun kept an interview notebook in which he recorded his reflections. For example, his cryptic reflection on one interviewee was “What makes this wild ass tick?”²⁸

Braun’s notebook provides some insight into the diversity of experience of self-identified Mennonites (whether baptized church members or not) in the early 1970s.²⁹ A man in Abbotsford, rumoured to have theologically deviant views, had his apartment searched by church members for evidence, culminating in his excommunication, which he unsuccessfully fought. A Port Coquitlam couple operated a Mennonite Brethren church-sponsored coffeehouse that “tried to present a credible and integral alternative lifestyle (i.e., Christian) to ‘dropout’ culture.” They left this work because they wanted to adopt a more evangelical approach to their clientele. In one group interview with graduate students, Braun observes that “the whole damn thing degenerated into a heated debate on methodology” with the interviewees “demanding orthodox statistical questionnaires. Ugh!!” He encountered similar problems in an interview with a sociology professor: “Walked into a shitstorm about our lack of orthodox methodology – eyebrows flaying – he told me we won’t accomplish anything – may just be right!”

Braun submitted the Mennonite Dissonance Study’s final report, “New Wine for Old Wineskins, or Why Mennonite Young People Are Leaving the Church,” to the Canada Council in late 1972.³⁰ A copy was sent to Frank H. Epp, who forwarded it to Walter Klaassen. Epp noted “I found it very interesting, personally, and it will be a resource for me in the writing of the history of Mennonites in Canada, but we haven’t yet made up our mind whether we should publish any of it or not.”³¹

The report was written primarily by John Braun, with a dissenting final chapter by Josie Peters. Chapters included “Dissidence Among Mennonites: An Introduction,” “Notes for a History of the Radical Mennonite Movement,” and “Evaluation, or the Failure of Collective Casual Sociology.” Braun defined dissidence for the study as “any refusal to assume the role one’s Mennonite church/community assigns one in the course of one’s development.”³² He observed that “social problems that accompany dissidence – the rending of communities and even families – are much more severe in [Mennonite Brethren] communities” due to the larger number of behavioural rules and the greater pressure to

conform. General Conference and 'Old' Mennonites, he claimed, were better able "to 'coopt' a certain number of dissident types into church structures – often into positions of leadership – while the MBs more often than not alienate such independent voices, one has to say to the detriment of the whole." Mennonite dissidence, Braun concluded, could be categorized as fundamentalist, behavioural, or intellectual. Fundamentalist dissidence was demonstrated by leaving the Mennonite church for an evangelical Christian church. Behavioural dissidence manifested itself in drinking alcohol, smoking, drug use, criminal activity, and military enlistment in wartime. Intellectual dissidence involved doubt, leftist political activity, and draft resistance.

In his wide-ranging "Notes for a History of the Radical Mennonite Movement," Braun provided glimpses rather than a comprehensive overview of the movement. He redefined radical Mennonites as those who "would not let the church die in peace."³³ He outlined the work of Chicago Mennonites in the underground newspaper *Anabaptist Stomache*, of Chicago commune The Other Cheek, of *Remnant*, and of Mennonite draft resistance. "The movement," he observed, "though now more or less in ruins, is not without accomplishments. Foremost, I believe, is the instilling of a new generation, the most assimilated generation yet, with a true sense of the value of the broader Mennonite community." This was the consequence, he believed, of the support for radicals by many older Mennonites, "the kind of sympathetic hearing the broader [non-Mennonite] radical movement seldom received in its decline into shrill dogmatism and/or violence."

As for the road trip research itself, Braun concluded that "things didn't go as I hoped."³⁴ Part of the problem, he explained, was that he had designed the project "with the BC situation primarily in mind, a Mennonite area close to unique for its extreme conservatism, fundamentalism and repression of dissent. In more tolerant communities the problem of dissidence was often hardly worth studying; furthermore, generalizations over the whole of Canada proved almost impossible." Another problem was the breakdown in relationships between the project researchers. As Braun noted in his interview notebook at the time: "it went from chaos to re-structuring of power to outright mutiny – the group is forever altered. Meanwhile I sat under a cottonwood in some horse pasture smoking a Cuban cigar while stoned on magic mushrooms, with every prairie novel image flashing through my head."³⁵ Braun later summarized the project for the grant funders: "Although we were something of a failure as a research project, at least we can claim to have had an A-1 learning experience not only about the

Mennonite world but also about human nature, group living and of course how not to do a project of this nature!"

Project researcher Josie Peters was more direct, and more scathing, in her evaluation of the project. She noted that the method of selecting project researchers had been suspect: "One third were chosen for the effect of bestowing favours on friends. The other half, females, faced a more objective and rigorous interview implying that their qualities for the job, as women, were questionable. In the end the male members chose the other three to fulfill the required number to be employed in the project."³⁶ She observed that the project's research objectives were unclear: "From the beginning any definite method of how our goal was to be accomplished was obscure." Interviewing skills were "very primitive": "Usually the six researchers entered a session where sat one Mennonite dissident or otherwise to be interviewed. Invariably one member of the group did the questioning while the remaining five participated by intimidated silence. Over time this intimidation evolved to apathy." Frustration increased in the group, she said, as the "indefinability of our goal was recognized." Nothing of value was learned in the interviews outside of BC, she asserted. She wished that the researchers had done some background reading, had created definite and measurable goals, and had conducted one-on-one interviews. Nonetheless, for Peters, the project "was not a waste of time. I learned much during this project I could not have learned elsewhere however irrelevant it is to Mennonite dissidence."

In the years that followed, Braun obtained an MA and a PhD in History from the University of Waterloo, writing his doctoral dissertation on French philosopher Bertrand de Jouvenel, for whose organization, *Futuribles*, he also worked. For a time, he worked as a staff member and constituency officer for NDP Member of Parliament Max Saltsman. Since then, he has worked as an adjunct professor at a number of universities and colleges in Oregon, Washington, Michigan, and Ontario. While he declares his "stomach is still Mennonite," he says "the rest isn't."³⁷ For almost 40 years, he states he lived without any kind of religion. After the death of his fourth wife, he became active in the Unitarian Universalist Church, which he appreciates because it has "no required beliefs, only required behaviours," such as the rejection of authoritarianism.

In retrospect, Braun believes that his formation of the Radical Mennonite Union was somewhat disingenuous. He wanted to "build up credibility as a radical on campus more so than actually try to change anything in the Mennonite world, which is pretty im-

possible.”³⁸ And yet he fairly quickly experienced disillusionment with the New Left as it degenerated into sectarianism and (in some instances) violence. The legacy of the Radical Mennonite Union, for him, is the “need to work to make the world a better place for the less fortunate.”³⁹ His politics when he was an SFU student were “revolutionary and theatrical.” Now, he believes that “politics can’t be a matter of pure ideas” but must be a “matter of real solutions to real problems.”

Conclusions

Braun no longer sees himself as a Radical Mennonite, or even as a Mennonite. Stories like his, however, are central to understanding the history of the Mennonite church and community in Canada after 1970. Scholarly interpretations of secularization and “Sheilaism”⁴⁰ (or individualistic spiritual beliefs) have undergone significant revision over the last twenty years. Unorthodox religious beliefs are not necessarily secular or selfish, or even particularly contemporary. Unorthodoxy of various kinds has played a key role in religious history, through its rejection, modification, and/or acceptance by the religious mainstream(s). Indeed, the emergence of the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith itself was the consequence of unorthodox religious thinking. The declining membership of the various Mennonite churches of North America in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is not the whole story of the Mennonite community. The work of sociologists Wade Clark Roof and Robert Wuthnow helps us understand that religious individualism or religious syncretism is not a uniquely postmodern phenomenon. Individualism and community are parts of the same whole; neither can exist without the other.⁴¹ Many of the Mennonites I interviewed for my book *Not Talking Union* who were no longer Mennonite church members continued to see themselves as part of a larger Mennonite community.⁴²

Braun’s story reveals that Mennonitism is neither static nor cohesive, and that what was once radical can become mainstream. Braun’s ideas regarding the Mennonite church in the 1960s and 1970s, as outlined in his *Manifesto and Confession*, were no longer radical by the turn of the millennium. Much of that for which he had agitated has been embraced by the denominations of both the Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Brethren Church: acceptance of war resistance, greater involvement of women in decision making within the church, relaxation of prohibitions on lifestyle choices like smoking or movie theatre attendance, greater

understanding of the role of colonialism in Canadian society, and even cooperation with non-Christians in social protests (such as the Women's March).

A fourth volume of *Mennonites in Canada* (if and when there is such a publication) would need to view people like John Braun not as anomalies, but as essential to telling the story of Canadian Mennonites in the post-1970 period. Ted Regehr's discussion in volume 3 of the period 1939-1970 notes that by the end of that period, church leaders' sanctions "were not as effective as they had once been when people had lived in relatively closed communities."⁴³ Regehr recognizes that those living in religious community had to address the community's failures, and that telling the Mennonite story requires telling those stories, too.⁴⁴ Canadian Mennonites in the period 1939-1970, he concludes, were "a people transformed. They had lost some of their distinctive traits but retained many others and also rediscovered some that had been neglected in the rural enclaves but which were relevant to life in a modern Canadian setting."⁴⁵ Canadian Mennonites like John Braun sought to reconcile their encounters with modern Canada with the comparatively conservative and rural religious environments in which they had been raised. Their struggles to find a new way of living in both the Mennonite church and Mennonite community were not always embraced by Mennonites in positions of leadership. It is not surprising that some of those who left or were expelled from the churches – like John Braun – no longer identify as Mennonite today. And yet the willingness of people like Braun to share their personal stories and documents, to be interviewed for the archives, suggests that they believe that their lives have meaning for the Mennonite community. The story of Canadian Mennonites after 1970 is as much about these radicals and non-conformists as it is about those in the pews: "Before change, understanding; before understanding, confrontation... God is alive; Magic is Afoot."⁴⁶

Notes

- ¹ Leonard Cohen, lyrics from "Anthem," *The Future*, Columbia, 1992.
- ² John Braun fonds, Hist. Mss. 1.156 (s.c.), Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Waterloo ON.
- ³ John Braun, interview by Janis Thiessen, McMinnville OR, 14 June 2016, audio recording.

- ⁴ Perry Bush, "Anabaptism Born Again: Mennonites, New Evangelicals and the Search for a Useable Past, 1950-1980," *Fides et Historia* 25 (Winter-Spring 1993): 38-40. Examples include *Remnant: A Forum for Radical Mennos* (published in Chicago by a Mennonite intentional community), *Piranha* (an underground newspaper at Eastern Mennonite College in Virginia), *The Fly* (an underground newspaper at Bethel College in Kansas), *Menno-Pause* (an underground newspaper at Goshen College in Indiana), and Reba Place (an intentional community in Illinois that is still in existence).
- ⁵ Bush, 44-5. For more on Mennonite underground newspapers in North America, see my chapter "Religious Borderlands and Transnational Networks: The North American Mennonite Underground Press in the 1960s" in *Entangling Migration History: Borderlands and Transnationalism in the United States and Canada*, ed. Benjamin Bryce and Alexander Freund (Gainesville FL: University Press of Florida, 2015).
- ⁶ Radical Mennonite Union Constitution. Unless otherwise noted, all such primary sources may be found in the personal papers of John Braun, currently in my possession and awaiting archival deposit.
- ⁷ Radical Mennonite Union meeting minutes, 18 September 1969 and January 1969.
- ⁸ John Braun, "Manifesto of the Radical Mennonite Union," typescript, John Braun fonds, Hist. Mss. 1.156 (s.c.), Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Waterloo ON.
- ⁹ John Braun, personal correspondence, 1 March 2016.
- ¹⁰ Letter from John Rempel, editor of *Arena*, to John R Braun, 30 May 1969.
- ¹¹ Letter from Darrell Fast, Peace and Social Concerns, Commission on Home Ministries, General Conference Mennonite Church, to John R Braun, 2 June 1969.
- ¹² Letter from Paul Hiebert, anthropology professor at University of Minnesota, to John R Braun, 24 November 1969.
- ¹³ Letter from William Klassen, religion professor University of Manitoba, to John R Braun, 9 January 1970.
- ¹⁴ Letter from Roy Just, President of Tabor College, to John R Braun, 29 December 1969.
- ¹⁵ John Braun, interview by Janis Thiessen, McMinnville OR, 14 June 2016, audio recording.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ John Braun, "A Confession of Faith," 31.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 32.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. Portions of this conclusion are quotations from Leonard Cohen's novel *Beautiful Losers*.
- ²⁰ Mark Wagler, "Call for 20th Century Anabaptists," *The Anabaptist Stomach* (26 June 1967), 4.
- ²¹ Ibid. SNCC was the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.
- ²² Opportunities for Youth was created by Pierre Trudeau's government in 1971 as a job creation program for Canadian young people.
- ²³ Letter from John Braun to "John," n.d.
- ²⁴ John Braun, "The Political, Sociological and Psychological Functions of Christianity and Mennonitism in Particular," grant application for Opportunities for Youth program, The Canada Council, summer 1970.

- ²⁵ Letter from Jean Morrison, Executive Officer, Research Grants Section, Humanities and Social Sciences Division, The Canada Council, to John R Braun, 7 December 1970.
- ²⁶ Letter from John R. Braun to Jean Morrison, Executive Officer, Research Grants Section, Humanities and Social Sciences Division, The Canada Council, 21 January 1971.
- ²⁷ John R. Braun, Susan Penner, "Mennonite Dissie Society: Accounts," n.d.
- ²⁸ John Braun, Interview Notebook, 11 May-14 June 1972.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ John Braun, Marilyn Chechik, Susan Penner, Josie Peters, Bob Siemens, Grant Toews, "New Wine for Old Wineskins, or Why Mennonite Young People are Leaving the Church," final report of Mennonite Dissidence Study, Opportunities for Youth, 1972.
- ³¹ Letter from Frank H. Epp to John R. Braun, 16 March 1973.
- ³² John Braun, "Dissidence Among Mennonites: An Introduction" in "New Wine for Old Wineskins."
- ³³ John Braun, "Notes for a History of the Radical Mennonite Movement" in "New Wine for Old Wineskins."
- ³⁴ John Braun, "Evaluation, or the Failure of Collective Casual Sociology" in "New Wine for Old Wineskins."
- ³⁵ John Braun, Interview Notebook, 11 May-14 June 1972.
- ³⁶ Josie Peters, "Evaluation of OFY Project: Mennonite Dissidence Study" in "New Wine for Old Wineskins."
- ³⁷ John Braun, interview by Janis Thiessen, McMinnville OR, 14 June 2016, audio recording.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ "Sheilaism" is a term used by the pseudonymous Sheila Larson to describe her religious beliefs in *Habits of the Heart*. It was subsequently used by scholars to label individualistic or narcissistic religions of late-twentieth-century North America. See Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
- ⁴¹ See Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Wade Clark Roof, "Religion and Narrative: The 1992 RRA Presidential Address," *Review of Religious Research* 34, 4 (June 1993): 297-310; Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993); Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).
- ⁴² See *Not Talking Union: An Oral History of North American Mennonites and Labour* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016).
- ⁴³ T. D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 221.
- ⁴⁴ "People had to admit and find redemptive ways of dealing not only with the evils of the outside world but also with the imperfections of their sacred communities." Ibid., 417.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 418.
- ⁴⁶ John Braun, "A Confession of Faith," 32.