Mennonite Dispossession of Indigenous Lands as a Challenge to Mennonite Identity

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Some Mennonite churches are rightly engaged in reckoning with their complicity in colonialism, racism, the Doctrine of Discovery, the dispossession of Indigenous lands, and the attempted erasure of Indigenous cultural and spiritual identities through Indian residential schools and other institutions. Some Mennonite churches are recognizing that the kind of work they need to do in order to truly participate in mutual, just, and reconciled relationships with Indigenous peoples must include acts of truth-telling, repentance and apology, spiritual covenants with Indigenous communities, reparations, and land back. This complicated and difficult work has no simple template or checklist. It needs to happen in denominations, institutions, local congregations, and at the personal level.[1] This paper cautions that the manner of carrying out this important and necessary work must not perpetuate white supremacy within churches or privilege particular ethnicities as "truly" Mennonite. While an "ethnic Mennonite" identity (a term I discuss below) may be helpful in terms of tying some people to their family histories and certain forms of complicity, it should not be considered *theologically* as an identity to be maintained. My focus is on Mennonite churches. This does not suggest that those who identify as Mennonite, in cultural or

family terms but not in connection with a Mennonite church, do not have their own work to do. Rather, I want to highlight the particular dangers for Mennonite churches in how this work is done and to signal the need to be more intentional about Mennonite identity as a *faith* identity.

My starting point is the settlement of Mennonite immigrants from imperial Russia to southern Manitoba in the 1870s on lands delineated in Treaty 1. This treaty and others, framed by European concepts of land ownership intent on extinguishing Indigenous sovereignty, did not honour Indigenous intentions of stewardship and land sharing. Treaties to eliminate Indigenous peoples were colonial strategies that continue to do great harm. My maternal ancestors were part of the group that settled in the West Reserve—with names like Gerbrandt, Heinrichs, Neufeld, and Penner. This is my history and also a present reality. Though I do not currently live on Treaty 1 territory, I continue to benefit from the material prosperity of these lands as well as the cultural and religious capital it facilitated for my ancestors, present-day Mennonite communities, and churches. The Russian Mennonite migrants of the 1870s understood themselves as a community defined primarily by distinctive faith commitments. After all, one motivating factor for leaving Russia was the religiously rooted concern about changing rules on exemption from military service as well as related questions about their place within the Russian social and political order. Furthermore, Mennonites were a recognizably distinct ethnic, cultural, and linguistic group[2] with complex family ties and a desire for more farmland in order to sustain thriving families and communities.

In a case study, Reina Neufeldt examines the 1870s settlements and how Mennonites in Canada became "implicated subjects." Mennonites were not the architects of British settler colonialism but did participate in a system that sought to eliminate Indigenous presence. While not at the top of the social structure with the British in Canada, Mennonite agricultural productivity and skin colour presented a path for these Mennonites to ascend within the settler-state hierarchy privileging those who were "white."[3] Community structures, sustained by civic as well as religious leadership within Mennonite settlements, contributed to their economic and social success.[4]

Neufeldt's article makes a strong case for the nuance of the term "implicated subjects" and its applicability to early white Mennonite settlers in Canada. I defer to her description of *how* this happened while I explore the question of *who* these implicated subjects are. That is, who are *Mennonites* as implicated subjects? In her paper, Neufeldt refers to Russian Mennonites as "an ethnoreligious group,"

who "arrive[d] and settle[d] en masse on a dedicated immigrant reserve area," and came to be regarded as a "model minority for the settler state." (I will refer to this group and their descendants as "ethnic Mennonites"[5]—a term that typically includes those of Dutch/Russian or Swiss/German origin in various waves of settlement. While this term is theologically problematic, it helpfully signals that such persons may be recognized as "Mennonite" simply because of familial and cultural connections rather than faith commitments.) Neufeldt notes that only recently have Mennonites raised critical questions about their settler-colonial history. This is evidenced in the recent decision of Mennonite Church Canada to formally repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery.[6]

There is a subtle but significant difference between the community that settled the dispossessed land, described in ethnoreligious terms perpetuated primarily by birth and family, and a contemporary religious entity, Mennonite Church Canada. Mennonite Church Canada is not the simple and direct successor of the 1870s immigrant group (and Neufeldt does not suggest they are). Some people have Mennonite ancestry and benefitted from settlement, but do not want affiliation with Mennonite churches—often for very understandable reasons. On the other hand, some members of Mennonite churches have no ancestral connection to these settlements or ethnicities. It is significant that a denominational entity such as Mennonite Church Canada is structured in ways that facilitate *collective* speech and collective action much more easily and effectively than for those Mennonites who hold a purely ethnic identity.

There is an ongoing tension between Mennonite identity in ethnic/cultural terms (entry by birth) and Mennonites as a church (entry by faith and baptism).[7] However, there can be some uneasy slippage between how the term "Mennonite" is used to refer to these groups. All settlers in Canada, including Mennonites by ancestry, church affiliation, or both (which describes my situation) are obliged to face complicity in settler colonialism and engage in redress and reconciliation. However, in this undertaking, I point out that naming complicities of Mennonite communities partly defined in familial and ethnic terms must not further privilege, even if inadvertently, the white Russian or Swiss/German Mennonites within the Mennonite church.

I acknowledge three important issues that are beyond the scope of this paper. First, some Mennonites, however defined, deny there were historical wrongs committed and/or deny that people in the present bear some responsibility for this past. A very different paper would be needed to address those claims. Second, some people are Mennonite and Indigenous—these are not exclusive identities.[8]

This paper will refer to Mennonite churches in Canada as overwhelmingly *settler* churches, though I recognize the dangers of erasure potentially conveyed by this definition. Third, my focus on particular "Mennonite" responsibility is not intended to detract from the responsibility that the Crown and all settler Canadians, including settler Mennonites, have *as Canadians* with respect to past and present injustices.

I am not proposing a resolution to the ethnic-religious tensions within Mennonite communities per se. Rather, I am arguing that for the sake of justice and reconciliation to which all churches are called, Mennonite churches ought to be especially attentive to ways that their reflection on the history of Mennonite settlement in Canada can function to reassert white supremacy[9] in these churches even in the process of pursuing reconciliation.

My congregation, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario, is currently deciding whether to enter into a spiritual covenant with Six Nations of the Grand River regarding the church property.[10] On one particular Sunday in this process, members were invited to tell personal and family stories of Mennonite settlement in the region.[11] Some could talk about family histories that extended back nearly two hundred years. It was interesting to learn about these personal histories, about whose ancestors settled in which township, how they cleared the land, what kinds of farming they did, and how they survived and thrived in harsh conditions. Many were eager to share, tell their family stories, and point out historical connections to other families in the church. During this discussion I detected several underlying dynamics. Congregants seemed to know a lot about their family histories of settlement in the region and took pride in their pioneering spirit. At the same time, there was recognition that the reason these stories were being told was to reckon with a problematic history of the dispossession of Indigenous lands, although most were unclear about how this process unfolded.[12] Some confessed that their family stories were silent about whose land they settled on and what their presence meant for Indigenous people. This sharing of family histories provided concrete ties to settler colonialism and signalled an openness to learn more about a suppressed history.

Yet, the conversation remained an overwhelmingly "ethnic Mennonite" one. Mennonites of European descent were at the centre and their stories were the ones offered as the church's collective narrative. This narrative, formerly only celebrated, now required interrogation for the sake of reconciliation. If "Mennonite settlement" occurred in family units with distinctive cultural/ethnic characteristics, then the conversation about what one Mennonite

congregation ought to do in response can be bound up with normative conceptions of Mennonites as defined by particular ethnicity and history. Those church members who are also settlers, but whose ancestors were not ethnic Russian or Swiss/German Mennonites, were not active in this conversation. They listened and learned from the "ethnic Mennonites." And while they may not all be complicit in the same way, their silence reinforces a view of who is "truly Mennonite" and, therefore, who defines who Mennonites are and what Mennonites ought to do in response.

Settler colonialism did not end with settlement. Some subsequent mechanisms of white supremacy, such as Indigenous residential schools and culturally insensitive forms of mission, were undertaken more directly by Mennonite churches and organizations supported by these churches. Mennonite churches are therefore the collective agents which must speak to their responsibility for these actions. However, the initial settlement of land in Waterloo Region two hundred years ago was undertaken at a time when ethnicity, familial ties, and church identity were intricately bound up in one another. How can that history be reckoned with in ways that resist and undo that binding? My cautionary advice should not be taken as an excuse to pause that necessary work. But I maintain that telling the truth about the past and reflecting on how histories and lands relate to present Mennonite identities are aspects of the repair work that needs to be done.

The dispossession of Indigenous lands, whether in Waterloo Region where I currently live or in southern Manitoba which reflects part of my own family's story, presents a challenge to Mennonite identity in at least two ways. The first relates to Mennonite exceptionalism, a dynamic with several dimensions. Exceptionalism refers to a self-identity as special because of the perceived truth of Mennonite convictions and/or history of suffering for those convictions. This may manifest in the belief that Mennonites are not susceptible to the violence that is taken to be characteristic of the "world" from which we have sought separation. In particular, the use of violence by nation-states and the alignment of many Christian traditions with the armed forces of nation-states has traditionally been viewed by Mennonites as inimical to the biblical principle of nonresistance. This can locate violence outside of the (Mennonite) church that explicitly seeks separation from the overt violence of armed forces. Many Mennonites have understood themselves to be *the* people of peace—nonresistant objectors to military service, and more recently, active agents for peace and justice. This is rooted in a (contested) belief that Anabaptism best captures the essence of the early church and of a discipleship following the example of

Jesus. Unfortunately, at times Mennonites have taken this aspirational self-identity to be a description of their reality. Mennonite exceptionalism has inhibited recognition of various forms of violence within the community,[13] but also externally.[14] It is manifested in the kind of settler colonial violence upon which Mennonites negotiated for and received land and special privileges from state authorities. Exceptionalism can also claim persecution and martyrdom, partially because of commitments to nonresistance with respect to state violence, as proof of Mennonite faithfulness. According to this form of exceptionalism, such faithful suffering on account of rejecting violence assumes that Mennonites cannot also be perpetrators of violence.[15]

The Mennonite "peace witness" has never been static; it has always been contextual and evolving.[16] The move towards activism and justice increasingly demands acknowledgement of how Mennonites have been implicated as active agents of violence. It is a significant development that some Mennonites, Mennonite churches, and Mennonite institutions have begun to recognize these failures and have taken steps (even if tentative) to seek more just and mutual relationships with Indigenous peoples.[17] Good intentions alone will not ensure that further harm is not done in the process.

The second challenge emerges from this growing commitment within Mennonite churches and church-related institutions to address settler colonialism.[18] If, among other things, the credibility of Mennonite witness calls for a truthful reckoning of Mennonite complicity in the dispossession of Treaty 1 territory, this may further centre particular aspects of Mennonite history and its primary actors—white Russian Mennonites and their descendants—as the key to a more just Mennonite future. If "redemption" or at least rehabilitation of Mennonite self-identity is tied to this process of acknowledgement, then the stories, attitudes, and actions of some Mennonites—those already most often recognized internally and externally as "real Mennonites"—will be regarded as more important than others.

This is a problem for a reason that I will identify in primarily theological terms. Inspired by the vision in Acts 2 of people of many languages and nations coming together in mutual understanding and transformation, the vision of ethnically diverse Mennonite churches has been embraced at local, regional, national, and global levels. Globally, white Mennonites are in a minority.[19] In Canada, a vision of becoming an "intercultural church" is endorsed by several denominational entities.[20] As defined by Safwat Marzouk, an intercultural church is one which "fosters a just diversity, integrates different cultural articulations of faith and worship, and embodies in

the world an alternative to the politics of assimilation and segregation."[21] Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Intercultural Mission Minister Fanosie Legesse notes that persons and groups are often drawn by the Anabaptist commitment to peace. However, newcomers can also show long-time Mennonites their "blind spots" in reconciliation with Indigenous people.[22]

In his recent doctoral dissertation, Hyung Jin Kim Sun criticizes how the privileging of the "'foundational' ethnicities" of the Mennonite church in Canada fosters a system in which those not part of such groups can never be fully Mennonite. At best, they may be "perpetual 'guests' of the 'hosts,'" and are often the targets of more pernicious forms of ethnocentrism and racism. This inhibits true interculturality.[23] There are many subtle and not-so-subtle ways that white ethnic Mennonites perpetuate their privilege in Mennonite churches. These include discourses about Mennonite last names, foods, jokes, songs,[24] and rituals of genealogical definition such as the "Mennonite game."[25] Church and institutional leadership are still dominated by ethnic Mennonites and this reinforces public perception of who is a Mennonite. Even at the conference on Indigenous-Mennonite encounters at which a version of this paper was presented,[26] Mennonite identity was frequently claimed in terms of ancestry rather than faith affiliation. With respect to the church, the challenge for myself and Mennonites like me is to unlearn the practices of ancestral and ethnic privilege and white supremacy that reinforce my centrality in the Mennonite community, while at the same time fully recognizing the problematic legacy of settler colonialism.

Many Canadians instinctively think of historic responsibility as transmitted genealogically. Even those who say "I'm not responsible for what my ancestors did" are reinforcing that assumption precisely by denying responsibility at the point where it is assumed that such transmission may lie. With respect to Mennonite settlements on Treaty 1 territory, the benefits of land and material, cultural, and racial capital were indeed transmitted primarily along family lines. There is not only church complicity but also familial, cultural complicity—much of it occurring simultaneously. It is not that ancestry and culture, including community that might be formed and recognized in terms of ethnicity, are not relevant. These may be essential for understanding the mechanisms by which certain privileges were granted and are maintained. But as we seek to understand "ethnic Mennonite" mechanisms of privilege in terms of land, it is also necessary to resist their power to structure the identity and, therefore, dominate the future actions of Mennonite churches.

The church has a particular way of understanding its continuity over time. For theological reasons, this is not defined by ancestry. In my writing on church apologies for historical wrongs, I argue that the doctrine of the communion of saints linking Christians across space, time, and even death is especially relevant for understanding the coherence and integrity by which the church in the present may repent for the actions of the church in the past. Archbishop Michael Peers, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, apologized in 1993 for running Anglican residential schools. When he said "We failed you" to survivors and their families, he spoke on behalf of an ecclesial "we" that extended through time.[27] Entry into this communion is not by birth or blood but by faith and baptism. Its continuity over time is theologically grounded in the sacramentally mediated connections with its living head, Jesus Christ.[28] No one is born a Christian. Even churches that practice infant baptism do so on the basis of faith—on the faith of the community and the parents rather than the one baptized.[29]

The fact that the church is constituted as a body over time by the communion of saints, and not by ancestry, was poignantly illustrated at the 2009 Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly in Paraguay during an act of reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites. Leaders from these two traditions embraced—Lutheran World Federation General Secretary Ishmael Noko and MWC President Danisa Ndlovu, both of whom were from Zimbabwe. Neither had an ancestral connection to the sixteenth-century European history of persecution acknowledged at the conference. Yet, because of their baptism and leadership roles, each was authorized by their church to speak unambiguously on its behalf to a history which had become "their history."[30] This also challenges me to reflect on how the history of Anabaptist-Mennonite churches in Zimbabwe becomes my history as well.

I must clarify an implication that I am *not* drawing from this incident. The embrace of two leaders of Zimbabwean descent in the name of reconciliation for a sixteenth-century history might suggest that those European "origins" represent the core or the essence of Anabaptism to which "others" are gradually grafted on over time or by mission, migration, or marriage. The embrace at the MWC assembly may even suggest that Ndlovu's Mennonite identity has integrity because he is explicitly relating himself to the history of European persecution which is the story of his spiritual forbears (but not his ancestral ones). However, the significance of the sixteenth century must be found not in family lines but in the embodied convictions of communities of faith articulating a vision centred on Jesus Christ where all are welcomed and many have joined. This

European history can be important and necessary to reckon with, but without perpetually allowing the centre to define the whole.

Anabaptism, and the Mennonite church groups which emerged historically, ought to be understood as a reforming movement for the sake of the one church and not as the foundation for contemporary denominations or ethnic groups. This is a theological (not sociological) argument and not even a strictly historical one. Regardless of what early Anabaptist reformers understood themselves to be doing, for the sake of the vision of ecclesial unity in John 21:17 and Ephesians 4:1–6, "Mennonite" identity should always be a provisional and temporary identity, for the sake of the reform and faithfulness of the whole church.[31] Faithfulness, for Mennonite churches in Canada, demands wrestling with complicity in past and ongoing injustices of the Western colonial project and its oppression of Indigenous people. Mennonite ethnic identity may be a helpful instrument in connecting some to their family histories (of settler colonialism) and even fostering accountability for that past. However, it should not be considered theologically as an identity to be maintained. Even as a distinctive faith tradition, "Mennonite" is not an ultimate identity but one which *may* temporarily serve as a way of indicating specific forms of *Christian* faithfulness.

Elaine Enns and Ched Myers's *Healing Haunted Histories* is a rich resource for the settler work of decolonization. Enns reflects deeply on her own Russian Mennonite family history. Their threefold framework of Landlines, Bloodlines, and Songlines speaks powerfully and prophetically to someone like me who has a similar story and to the paradox of focusing on white Mennonite settlers in the process of trying to de-centre Mennonite white settlers. The Landline trajectory considers the "where" of decolonization. The Bloodline trajectory considers the "who," including how intergenerational traumas shape identity. The Songline trajectory refers to those stories, convictions, and hopes that form and animate a faith community. Songlines draw on "the traditions of faith and Spirit that animated resilience and redemptive practices in our *ancestry* . . . and that help us work for justice and healing today."[32] I am concerned that this last category, to the extent that it presents a normative vision of church, may be overly determined here by the concept of ancestry and cultural practices of the dominant group. Given the overwhelming whiteness of Mennonite churches in Canada and the privilege accorded to "ethnic Mennonites," even drawing on the "cultural practices . . . that sustain and transform individuals and communities"[33] risks centring particular cultures within churches at the expense of a truly intercultural church. To be sure, they do acknowledge the ambiguity of this dimension of the Songline

trajectory, noting that "for settlers, Songlines often stand in tension with inherited Landlines and Bloodlines, especially as they call us to defect from our family, race, class, and gender socialization."[34] Within the framework Enns and Myers propose, my plea is that, as Canadian Mennonite church communities support the Bloodline and Landline work that needs to happen, it not detract from the churches' more basic identity as Songline communities defined by Christian faith moving to embody a truly intercultural ecclesiology.

Yes, privilege tied to familial inheritance of resources and ethnic/cultural identities have indeed come into the church and this is a complex history that must be faced. While I am not rejecting the idea that some responsibility does accrue from ancestry, I am arguing that churches ought to be very careful with how they account for this and to what extent it constitutes the identity of the church. Furthermore, as Enns and Myers acknowledge elsewhere, traditions of faith are not only positive resources for justice but embodied communities of justice, as well as injustice. And this brings me back to the concern of my paper: that we not insert problematic assumptions about ancestry, family, and thus "whiteness" (in this case) into our understanding of the essence of church, lest it fail to serve as a critical resource for calling us towards justice.

There is value in statements that churches, in their ability to speak and act collectively, make about the past, including apologies and commitments to the future. The collection *Be It Resolved: Anabaptists & Partner Coalitions Advocate for Indigenous Justice* is ecclesiologically significant because it makes clear that there is a tradition of such statements which already bind church entities in particular ways. It calls them to live out these commitments. While such statements are never sufficient, they can be valuable in terms of setting an overall direction, educating members, acknowledging suffering, affirming moral norms, and fostering public accountability.

Such statements should speak truthfully about the past, naming the wrongs done and the collective entities responsible while recognizing that their primary value and purpose is to mobilize action in the present and future. Indeed, the present and future often require a deep reckoning with the past. But this reckoning is done by moral agents with capacities to think about the meaning of the past in the present rather than in a vacuum. I believe listening to the testimony of Indigenous persons is at the centre of this process. The challenge, for the oppressor group, is not to engage with presuppositions of what will be said or what needs to happen next. The moral task before churches is to be communities engaged in listening and responding. The churches that are best positioned to take just actions are, I would argue, those who recognize a call to embody a deep

intercultural diversity and to resist white supremacy. For Mennonite churches in Canada, this entails de-centring ethnic Mennonites.

Political philosopher Janna Thompson writes about how collectives such as churches or nations ought to understand their responsibility for past injustices. She proposes that such responsibility be conceived in terms of how collectives might be "morally reliable intergenerational institutions."[35] A collective such as a church can be a moral agent through its decisions, statements, and actions. A church wants future members to be guided in positive ways by its decisions, programs, institutions and, indeed, by its very identity into the future. Mennonite churches believe there is something about their specific embodiment of the Christian faith that is worth commending to others across time and space. This process creates obligations over time. Responsibility for the past moral failures of communities is a corollary of being such a collective moral agent over time. Recognition thereof may also reveal that such moral failures are, in fact, ongoing. If we want future generations to benefit from these communities and identities, we make commitments future generations are expected to honour. It follows that we must also reckon with the obligations and responsibilities incurred by these communities in the past. At first, this implies a subtle shift of perspective from past actions to present identity. Thus, how Mennonite churches think about the past ought to be oriented by the conditions under which a church that pledges to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery (as Mennonite Church Canada did in 2016)[36] can act on the implications of that statement ten or one hundred years into the future.

A wide range of histories must be understood as Mennonite histories alongside a range of complicities for settler colonialism and obligations. Though Thompson is not writing from a theological perspective, her proposal calls on Mennonite churches to be more explicit in thinking about their pasts from the perspective of present identity and commitments. Aspiring to be an intercultural church, current members bear a wider diversity of histories that relate, in complicated ways, to the broader Indigenous-settler dynamic in a colonial state such as Canada. This includes persons of colour and recent immigrants and/or refugees, as well as settlers.[37]

The twofold task I am proposing for white ethnic Mennonites—to acknowledge and reckon with a specific history of dispossession of land while not making that work simply identical with the reparative work to which the *churches* are called—will be difficult to navigate. I do not want to justify any "whataboutism" by which a group seeks to minimize their responsibility by pointing to the complicities of others. Mennonite churches should not be excused of their

complicity in settler colonialism just because, ideally at least, these churches are intercultural spaces in which people with a wide range of histories are members. The legacy of my ancestors' settlement on Treaty 1 territory is *part* of this history and includes the way Mennonite exceptionalism provided theological justification. I reiterate this to emphasize that this past and present complicity should not be minimized. The dispossession of the land is absolutely crucial to the history that must be acknowledged. But to the extent that such dispossession enabled Russian Mennonites to later become assimilated as "white" churches, seeking to reckon with this history in the present must do so in ways that undermine rather than reinforce the hegemony of whiteness. There is an obligation to think about this past, not as a kind of benign (white) Mennonite past, but as a past that calls into question the very premise of what Mennonite identity ought to be.

Ultimately, it not that important theologically to specify what is "Mennonite," given its provisionality as a religious identity in service of a more basic Christian identity. But if churches are to be agents that truly acknowledge complicity, seek to make redress, and bear witness to just relationships, then an intercultural ecclesiology is imperative. Mennonite churches are called to bear witness to Jesus and to Jesus's way of peace and justice, not to the privileged, ethnic identities which have been at their centre. The Mennonite tradition may have specific resources to offer here but it also has ways of deluding itself about its failures. Indeed, as primarily white settler Mennonite churches take reparative actions, they must continue to be critically self-reflective about how these actions and the self-identification of the collective entities that undertake them may reinforce problematic white supremacy and ethnocentrism.

Notes

[1] One important resource for this is Elaine Enns and Ched Myers, *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021).

[2] Two examples of such Manitoba Mennonite self-presentation and reception are the 1974 centennial celebrations of the first wave of settlement, and the Mennonite pavilion at the multicultural Folklorama festival in Winnipeg in the early 1980s. In both cases, the Mennonite organizers presented (Russian) Mennonites as an *ethnic* group within the framework of Canadian multiculturalism. See Jeremy Wiebe, "Performing Ethnicity in a Pluralistic Society: The 1974 Manitoba Mennonite Centennial," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 37 (2019): 285–303; and David Rempel Smucker, "Faith versus Culture? The

Mennonite Pavilion at Folklorama in Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1980–1982," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 33 (2015): 234–250.

[3] Reina C. Neufeldt, "Settler Colonial Conscripts: Mennonite Reserves and the Enfolding of Implicated Subjects," *Postcolonial Studies* 25, no. 4 (2022): 514. On Russian Mennonites becoming white, see also Enns and Myers, *Healing Haunted Histories*, 205–213. Writing about the US context, Philipp Gollner shows how progressive social activism by some Mennonites in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries aligned them with white American Protestantism, which in turn facilitated the recognition of ethnic Mennonites as white. Philipp Gollner, "How Mennonites Became White: Religious Activism, Cultural Power, and the City," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 90, no. 2 (2016): 165–193. Robert Zacharias interrogates the ways that the emergence of "Mennonite/s writing" as a literary discourse served to "extend the normative whiteness of institutional Mennonite identity." Robert Zacharias, *Reading Mennonite Writing* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2022), 26.

[4] Royden Loewen and Steven M. Nolt identify a range of institutions such as "regional councils, village councils, school boards, fire insurance agencies, and the all-important *Waisenamt*," which assisted in the distribution of farmland as means by which these communities aimed for "complete self-governance." Royden Loewen and Steven M. Nolt, *Seeking Places of Peace: Global Mennonite History Series: North America* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books; Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2012), 59.

[5] In some settings, especially in the US, the term "racial/ethnic Mennonite" refers to those groups which are relatively new to the tradition, and thus has a completely different meaning. https://www.mennoniteusa.org/who-are-mennonites/church-structure/racial-ethnic-council/

[6] Neufeldt, "Settler Colonial Conscripts," 510. Mennonite Church Canada passed a resolution repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery in 2016. In fact, critical questions about this history were raised much earlier than Neufeldt suggests, even in official denominational settings. For example, the 1970 official program of the annual meetings of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada included a substantial "Litany of Confession" for acts and omissions in relation to Indigenous people. Steve Heinrichs and Esther Epp-Tiessen, eds., *Be It Resolved: Anabaptists & Partner Coalitions Advocate for Indigenous Justice, 1966–2020* (Winnipeg: Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Church Canada, 2020), 16–19.

[7] One key article from this historical perspective is Royden Loewen, "The Poetics of Peoplehood: Ethnicity and Religion among Canada's Mennnonites," in *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*, ed. Paul Bramadat and David Seljak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 348–357.

[8] As part of "Native Ministries," the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC) helped to establish some congregations in Indigenous communities. I also note that, in 1966, the CMC officially encouraged "more Mennonite families to adopt and foster homeless Indian and Métis children." This "Sixties Scoop" was one highly problematic practice by which some Indigenous people may have identified with the Mennonite church. Resolution reproduced in Heinrichs and Epp-Tiessen, *Be It Resolved*, 5.

[9] Anne Bonds and Joshua Inwood highlight white supremacy as an enduring structure that extends far beyond formally racist laws or racist organizations. As an ongoing project with material, social, and cultural dimensions, white supremacy functions for the benefit of even those white people who may be

explicitly anti-racist. With respect to settler colonialism, white supremacy furthers the *continuing* dispossession of lands from Indigenous people for the benefit of a white-dominated social order through discourses and material conditions that render such dispossession as invisible or natural. Anne Bonds and Joshua Inwood, "Beyond White Privilege: Geographies of White Supremacy and Settler Colonialism," *Progress in Human Geography* 40, no. 6 (2016): 715–733.

[10] The vision behind such a covenant is discussed in Adrian Jacobs and Karen Kuhnert, "Seeking a Spiritual Covenant: Possibilities in the Haldimand Tract," in *Yours, Mine, Ours: Unravelling the Doctrine of Discovery*, ed. Cheryl Woelk and Steve Heinrichs (Winnipeg: Mennonite Church Canada, 2016), 154–157.

[11] In Waterloo Region, the first Mennonite settlers came in the early 1800s from Pennsylvania (of Swiss origin) followed in subsequent decades by settlers from Bavaria and Alsace.

[12] The very complicated history of the Haldimand Tract, which includes unaccounted for payments in trust and broken treaty promises, was documented by Phil Monture, former director of the Land Claims Research Office at the Six Nations of the Grand River. See Phil Monture, *Land Rights: A Global Solution for the Six Nations of the Grand River* (Ohsweken, ON: Six Nations Lands and Resources Department, 2019).

[13] Within this growing literature see Ruth Elizabeth Krall, *The Elephant in God's Living Room*, vol. 3, *The Mennonite Church and John Howard Yoder, Collected Essays* (n.p.: Enduring Space, 2013); Hilary Jerome Scarsella and Stephanie Krehbiel, "Sexual Violence: Christian Theological Legacies and Responsibilities," *Religion Compass* 13, no. 9 (2019): e12337, https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12337; Isaac Samuel Villegas, "The Ecclesial Ethics of John Howard Yoder's Abuse," *Modern Theology* 37, no. 1 (2021): 191–214; and Cameron Altaras and Carol Penner, eds., *Resistance: Confronting Violence, Power, and Abuse within Peace Churches* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2022).

[14] See Lisa Schirch, "A Mennonite Agenda for Research and Action on Antisemitism," *Mennonite Life* 74 (2020), https://ml.bethelks.edu/2020/07/02/a-mennonite-agenda-for-research-and-action-on-antisemitism/.

[15] See Melanie Kampen, "The Spectre of Reconciliation: Investigating Mennonite Theology, Martyrdom, and Trauma" (PhD diss., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, 2019); and Amanda K. Gross, "Ploughshares: Recovering from the Myth of Mennonite Exceptionalism," in *Resistance: Confronting Violence, Power, and Abuse within Peace Churches*, ed. Cameron Altaras and Carol Penner (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2022), 31–46.

[16] See Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994); and Ervin R. Stutzman, *From Nonresistance to Justice: The Transformation of Mennonite Church Peace Rhetoric, 1908–2008* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2011).

[17] See, for example, the programs of Mennonite Church Canada (https://www.mennonitechurch.ca/indigenous) and Mennonite Central Committee (https://archive.mcccanada.ca/learn/what/categories/indigenous-neighbours).

[18] I see this a hopeful trajectory within denominations such as Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA, organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee, and initiatives such as the Anabaptist-affiliated Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery, among others. A "Declaration

of Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples" was adopted by Mennonite World Conference in 2018, https://mwc-cmm.org/en/resources/statement-solidarity-indigenous-peoples.

19 About two-thirds of baptized believers in Mennonite World Conference affiliated churches are in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, https://mwc-cmm.org/membership-map-and-statistics. Not all Mennonites in North America and Europe are white. For a theological reflection on this global diversity by the general secretary of Mennonite World Conference, see César García, "A Vision for Global Mission amidst Shifting Realities," *Anabaptist Witness* 1, no. 1 (2014): 27–35, https://www.anabaptistwitness.org/journal_entry/a-vision-for-global-mission-amidst-shifting-realities-2/.

20 For example, Mennonite Church Canada established an Intercultural Church Steering Committee in 2021, https://www.mennonitechurch.ca/article/11544-planting-a-seed-of-transformation. Mennonite Church Eastern Canada has a dedicated staff person committed to nurturing a vision of an intercultural church, https://mcec.ca/article/11610-intercultural-ministry-is-no-more-a-dream.

21 Safwat Marzouk, *Intercultural Church: A Biblical Vision in an Age of Migration* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 3. Assimilation occurs where the dominant culture takes over (as in the Anglo-Canadian practices of ethnic Mennonites). Segregation describes the situation where cultural groups have separate congregations. Organization of congregation by language groups is common within Mennonite Church Canada.

22 Janet Bauman, "'I Can See This Church Coming': Intercultural Mission Minister Shares Vision of the Church," *Canadian Mennonite*, Sept. 23, 2020, https://canadianmennonite.org/stories/can-see-church-coming.

23 Hyung Jin Kim Sun, "Toward a Critical Intercultural Ecclesiology for Mennonite Church Canada: Theo-Ethical Guidelines for Becoming an Intercultural Church" (PhD diss., Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, 2021), 5.

24 For a discussion of the ethnocentrism of practices surrounding hymn "606," see Austin McCabe Juhnke, "Rethinking 606, the 'Mennonite National Anthem,'" *Anabaptist Historians*, Nov. 28, 2017, https://anabaptisthistorians.org/2017/11/28/rethinking-606-the-mennonite-national-anthem/.

25 See Laura Pauls-Thomas, "The Mennonite Game's Winners and Losers," *Canadian Mennonite*, Mar. 10, 2022, https://canadianmennonite.org/menno game.

26 Indigenous-Mennonite Encounters in Time and Space, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, ON, May 12–15, 2022.

27 "A Message from the Primate, Archbishop Michael Peers, to the National Native Convocation," Aug. 6, 1993, https://www.anglican.ca/tr/apology/english/.

28 See chapter 5 in Jeremy M. Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Pasts* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

29 See "Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church: Lutheran-Mennonite-Roman Catholic Trilateral Conversations, 2012–2017," https://mwc-cmm.org/en/resources/baptism-and-incorporation-body-christ-church.

30 I discuss this encounter in Jeremy M. Bergen, "Lutheran Repentance at Stuttgart and Mennonite Ecclesial Identity," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 86, no. 3 (2012): 315–338.

[31] I develop this argument in Jeremy M. Bergen, "The Ecumenical Vocation of Anabaptist Theology," in *Recovering from the Anabaptist Vision: New Essays in Anabaptist Identity and Theological Method*, ed. Laura Schmidt Roberts, Paul Martens, and Myron Penner (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020), 103–126.

[32] Enns and Myers, *Healing Haunted Histories*, 22. Emphasis added.

[33] Enns and Myers, *Healing Haunted Histories*, 113.

[34] Enns and Myers, *Healing Haunted Histories*, 114.

[35] Janna Thompson, "Collective Responsibility for Historic Injustices," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 30, no. 1 (2006): 155.

[36] Documented in Heinrichs and Epp-Tiessen, *Be It Resolved*, 358–361. See also the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery emerging from Anabaptist groups primarily in the United States, https://dofdmenno.org/.

[37] One article that provides some helpful points of reference is Jo-Anne Lee, "Non-white Settler and Indigenous Relations: Decolonizing Possibilities for Social Justice," *Lectora* 22 (2016): 13–26.