# Post-War Canadian Mennonites: From Rural to Urban Dominance

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In 1941 rural Mennonites dominated in Canada. Ninety percent were rural, and most of these were farmers. By 1981, a mere forty years later, over half were urban and less than one-fourth were still farming. The seventies were the watershed between rural and urban dominance. A majority of Mennonites today have lived through this enormous post-World War II rural-urban shift. Let us trace the demographic implications.

Urbanization began in the Tigris-Euphrates region about 3500 B.C., resulting in the Sumer or Mesopotamian civilization out of which the early writings which influenced biblical history began. Abraham emerged out of the region of Ur. The civilization of Egypt along the Nile followed on its heels with the beginning of cities around 3000 B.C. Much of Jewish and early biblical history occurred in this fertile crescent between these two earliest urban civilizations. Gordon Childe (1950) outlined ten characteristics of early urbanization which occurred in all early beginnings. These characteristics can also be applied to the emergence of Mennonites from rural agricultural settings. With urbanization came denser populations, division of labor, stratification, trade, writing and numeration, the exact sciences, building of monuments, taxes, the state and war.

While Christianity began in the hinterlands of Palestine, it was introduced to the Greek urban world by Paul, so that Ephesus, Thessalonica, Phillipi, Corinth and Rome became important urban Christian centres, where trade flourished and other urban activity, including the art of writing, developed. Writing, as we know was most important in the transmission of the biblical message. The Mennonite ancestors, the early Anabaptists, likewise were in the vanguard of the new urban awakening which soon resulted in industrialization and commerce, where they played an important role especcially as craftsmen, working at the edge of expanding urbanism. I see Canadian Mennonites emerging from their rural agricultural isolation into the

urban fray, and the forties and fifties were at the threshold of this new awakening. Before dealing with this important shift, we must present a theoretical focus consistent with early urban research.

## A Theory of Metropolitan Dominance

The Chicago School of Sociology was the first to begin the study of urbanization in North America, including numerous scholars such as Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, Louis Wirth, R. D. McKenzie and others. While these sociologists were generally influenced by Darwinian ideas, they were more directly influenced by the Chicago physiologist Charles Manning Child who was concerned with dominance, which was also perpetuated by sociologists such as McKenzie:

> The most important component of McKenzie's theory was the concept of dominance. In principle, dominance in the human ecological process referred to the controlling position that one or more units succeeded in acquiring over other competing elements; it involved the idea of survival of the fittest as well as the control exerted by the fittest over less able competitors (Shore, 1987:110).

McKenzie believed that the primitive community — a village or walled city — could be compared to an "interior-surface" organismic pattern, and the modern city to the more evolved axiate pattern. All the old boundaries, he continued, are gradually losing their significance; routes rather than rims are becoming the subject of stressed attention (McKenzie, 1927:28-41).

According to McKenzie a rural society is made up of many smaller ethnic, religious and regional communities such as villages and small towns, which tend to be fairly contained communities in themselves. They tend to operate more as enclaves where primary relations are most important, and where they develop a sense of *gemeinschaft* and place with restricted boundaries. The Mennonite east and west reserves in Manitoba and the reserves in Saskatchewan would be good examples, where the ethno-religious communities became the focus of identity, fairly self contained socially, economically and politically, with limited or controlled communication and contacts with the larger society. Hutterite colonies would be the best example, but Indian reserves and Chinatowns also come to mind. Those who live in such communities are more conscious of the boundaries which separate them than their economic linkages with their larger society where they have to sell their products and buy other necessities.

When the Mennonites first came to Ontario 200 years ago, and to the West 100 years ago, they entered a country which was predominantly rural and where the majority of Canadians were themselves located in such rural agricultural enclaves. Mennonites simply added their own enclaves to the many already in existence. However, as Canada became more urban, small towns turned into larger cities, and increasingly these urban economic and political centres began to wield greater influence. Increasingly farmers had to sell their grains and products in towns and cities, prices were established

there, and increasingly they needed more sophisticated machinery, which made them economically dependent on these towns and cities. Thus, some of their self-contained communities began to establish first economic, later educational, political and social routes to the city, to which their boundaries had to adjust. Whereas rural communities could concentrate on their small circles and boundaried rims, they now developed spokes to the hub of the wheel, centered by small towns, which later turned into cities. Slowly their orientation turned from their small rural enclaves to the routes connecting them with the city.

Small towns such as Leamington, Ebytown (later Kitchener), Steinbach, Winkler, Altona, Rosthern, Warman, Didsbury, Abbotsford, and Clearbrook are examples of how Mennonites first turned to towns (some of them former villages) for their economic and social needs. Some of these places have since become small cities. Mennonites now located in both Waterloo-Kitchener and Winnipeg, used to live on farms nearby, but have since been surrounded by and included as suburbs of these metropolitan centres. Churches which used to be located in the country are now within the city limits, and many are moving their buildings to the towns. Thus, the linkages with towns have turned into small cities. Routes to towns and cities have turned into axiate patterns, away from the separate ethno-religious now not so self-contained rural communities.

These towns and cities also radiate their own influence into the surrounding rural countryside by radio, television, newspapers, magazines, factory goods and processed commodities. At the same time they act as a magnet, drawing rural consumers into their stores, parks, theatres, halls, schools and social services. These also add to the axiate pattern, away from the boundaried rural enclaves, to make rural residents increasingly dependent on cities.

While these patterns of urban dominance may operate regionally, they also operate nationally. C. A. Dawson, a graduate of Chicago, continued the same interest of metropolitan dominance at McGill, the first department of sociology in Canada (Shore, 1987). His extensive studies, first in Montreal and later in the Canadian prairies, included the study of Mennonites, Doukhobors, Mormons, Germans and French in the Canadian West. He wanted to see how the western hinterland fared vis a vis the metropolitan dominance of Montreal and Toronto in central Canada. Indeed, he saw Canada as a hinterland, dominated by a succession of colonialists, first by the French and then followed by the British and Americans. S. D. Clark, one of the most prominent sociologists in Canada, wrote a dissertation under Dawson concerned with the same theme of dominance; he saw Montreal and Toronto as urban centers which fought hard to secure their place of dominance within Canada as well as in competition with American economic dominance and to consolidate their control over the rest of Canada.

Dawson developed the idea of regions at whose head stood a main city with its supporting hinterlands cut off by natural barriers from each other. In the centre stood Montreal and Toronto, each central to their respective

Quebec and southern Ontario hinterlands, with their openings to the American south. To the east lay the Maritimes, cut off from the central region by the Appalachian mountains and centred by Halifax. The central plains centred by Winnipeg were cut off from the east by the Laurentian Shield, and the west coast segmented from the rest by the Rockies was centred by Vancouver. Each of these regions had its distinctive hinterland, centred by an important metropolis, and each had its access to the American south, compatible with its own unique regional characteristics.

I have taken the time to sketch this larger macro frame because it seems to be useful for our analysis of urban Mennonites. In Europe, Zurich, Amsterdam, Strasbourg, Hamburg and Danzig were important centres of Anabaptist activity. However, because of persecution Zurich faded as an Anabaptist centre, eclipsed by urbanism of Mennonites in northern Europe and centred by Dutch Mennonites in Amsterdam to this day. Out of the cities of the Netherlands the Mennonites fled eastward to Danzig and via Russia came to Canada in large numbers, so that ninety percent of all Mennonites in Canada are of Dutch/German/Russian origin. For centuries Amsterdam was the urban Mennonite Mecca of the world, with its schools, institutions and professionals, all characteristics of urbanism.

Similar patterns of dominance occurred in small towns in the U.S.A. beginning a century ago, when they established Mennonite colleges in Newton, Goshen, Harrisonburg, Bluffton, Hillsboro, Hesston, Freeman and others. Many of these college centres became magnets in their regions, attracting other institutions such as hospitals, schools, conference offices, and the like. The same occurred in Canada with the beginning of collegiates and Bible schools in Gretna, Rosthern, Winkler, Altona, Didsbury, Clearbrook, Hepburn, Leamington, etc. In small towns like Rosthern, the Rosthern Junior College was also the home of David Toews, the bishop of surrounding churches, and the offices of the Board of Colonization. *Der Bote* was published here for years, and the Rosthern Bible School followed — only Rosthern Junior College now remains.

While many small town Mennonite centres in the U.S.A. have turned into small cities, American Mennonites are still heavily located in the Harrisonburgs, Goshens, Newtons, Hillsboros, Hesstons and Freemans. In Canada Mennonites also concentrated important activities before World War II in places like Leamington, Steinbach, Winkler, Altona, Rosthern, Didsbury, Abbotsford and Clearbrook. However, after the forties there was an important shift toward larger cities. We need to trace this shift. While in 1971 over half of the Canadian Mennonites were still rural (52.8 percent), by 1981 they had become more urban (51.4 percent). Thus, the seventies were the watershed between rural Mennonite dominance and the beginnings of urban dominance. The eighties are only a clue to what extent urban dominance may develop in the future. But the urban trend of dominance has been set.

In this paper we also need to examine the location of urban Mennonite centres across Canada and compare the relative size and influence of these

centres. Are the various urban centres becoming consolidated in their respective regions, and how important is their influence within their region? Furthermore, are some Mennonite urban centres beginning to have more influence than others nationally, and what is their relative contribution to general Mennonite solidarity and identity? Is there any evidence that urban Mennonite regional dominance is beginning? To what extent have Mennonite churches, educational institutions, and mass media established in these metropoli? Will this shift contribute to dominance in the future?

## The Demographic Context

In the past we (Driedger, 1975, 1978, 1982) have reviewed some of the Mennonite demographic trends, but these need to be updated. The seventies were a watershed between rural Mennonite dominance prior to World War II and the eighties when a majority of Mennonites are urban. While urban dominance has not yet escalated, this seems to be the direction in which Mennonites are headed. The forties and fifties were a time of incubation in preparation for the great urban Mennonite explosion. We need to present the demographic context to help trace these trends.

## The Rural–Urban Shift

In 1941, 91 percent of all Mennonites in Canada were rural, only 9 percent were urban. Today there are twice as many urban Mennonites in Winnipeg alone (19,105 in 1981), as there were in all of Canada in 1941 (9,446). Only one out of eleven Mennonites was urban in 1941. Of these rural Mennonites in 1941 most were rural farmers, the largest percentage of any of the twenty largest religious denominations in Canada. By 1961 two out of three (65.6 percent) Mennonites were still rural. However, by 1981 less than half of all Canadian Mennonites (48.5 percent) lived in cities of 1000 plus, and only 23.0 percent were now rural farm residents. This rural–urban shift began in earnest after World War II and began to escalate in the fifties and sixties. By 1981 over half were urban.

Between 1941 and 1961 the urban Mennonite population more than quintupled from a mere 9,446 to 52,643. By 1961 one-third of all Canadian Mennonites lived in cities of 1000 or more. By 1981 over half (51.5 percent) lived in cities. The urban escalation clearly happened in the fifties and sixties, and although the urban percentage will continue to rise, it is evident that it began to slow somewhat in the seventies and eighties, and will likely continue at a slower pace in the future. Such enormous demographic shifts have profound impacts on style of life, because Mennonites now enter new occupations. Their social mobility rises and higher education and income affects beliefs and attitudes which result in a new style of life. While in 1941 only 5,147 lived in larger urban metropolitan areas (100,000 plus), by 1981 one-third (61,195) lived in such larger urban complexes.

**Table 1. Rural and Urban Mennonites in Canada 1941–1981.**

| | Decades | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1941 | | 1951 | | 1961 | | 1971 | | 1981 | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Rural Farm | | | 80,539 | (64.0) | 70,397 | (46.2) | 50,190 | (29.8) | 43,440 | (22.9) |
| Rural Non-Farm | | | 20,732 | (16.5) | 29,412 | (19.3) | 38,520 | (22.9) | 48,630 | (25.7) |
| Total Rural | 101,434 | (91.0) | 101,271 | (80.4) | 99,809 | (65.5) | 88,705 | (52.8) | 92,070 | (48.6) |
| 1,000–2,499 | | | | | 6,847 | | 5,760 | | 9,005 | |
| 2,500–9,999 | | | | | 10,764 | | 15,455 | | 18,770 | |
| 10,000–29,999 | | | | | 2,499 | | 11,000 | | 5,605 | |
| 30,000–99,999 | | | | | 7,728 | | 2,695 | | 12,515 | |
| 100,000–499,999 | | | | | 24,805[a] | (16.3) | 18,410[a] | (10.9) | 16,435[a] | (8.7) |
| 500,000 plus | | | | | | | 26,125 | (15.5) | 34,970 | (18.5) |
| Total Urban | 9,946 | (9.0) | 24,667 | (19.6) | 52,643 | (34.5) | 79,445 | (47.2) | 97,300 | (51.4) |
| Total Mennonites | 111,380 | | 125,938 | | 152,452 | | 168,150 | | 189,370 | |

**Source:** Census of Canada 1941, 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981 Catalogues.

[a] [a]Metropolitan figures do not always compare with figures in Table 2, because
1) prior to 1981 not all centers listed as metros in 1981 were 100,000 plus, and were excluded, and
2) sometimes suburbs of metros are listed separately, and not included.

## Mennonites in Metropolitan Areas

In 1941 about one half (5,147 or 55 percent) of the 9,446 urban Mennonites lived in larger metropolitan areas of 100,000 plus. Almost one-third of these lived in Kitchener-Waterloo (1,472) and a fourth in Winnipeg (1,285). Mennonites first arrived in Ontario 200 years ago, and churches were established as early as 1807 in Kitchener, 1837 in Waterloo, 1897 in Toronto, and 1899 in St. Catherines. The first Mennonite church in Winnipeg was started much later, in 1907. These early Ontario beginnings are reflected in the larger Mennonite concentration in Kitchener-Waterloo than Winnipeg in 1941. More research is required to exploree the nature of those early pre-World War II beginnings.

By 1951, the Winnipeg Mennonite population had tripled in a decade, and another decade later it had quadrupled again, so that by 1961 the Winnipeg population had multiplied more than ten times in twenty years. For the first time, Winnipeg emerged as the largest center of Mennonites in Canada, and very soon it became the largest concentration of urban Mennonites in the world. While the Kitchener-Waterloo Mennonite population also tripled during the two decades (1941-61) from 1,472 to 4,480, the Vancouver Mennonite population increased ten-fold to become the second largest (5,260) concentration of Canadian Mennonites in 1961. However, by 1981, Kitchener-Waterloo had again pulled ahead of Vancouver, so that together they now comprise about as many Mennonites as in Winnipeg in 1981. Thus, we can think of these three centers as the metro Mennonite "Big Three," with Winnipeg centering Kitchener-Waterloo on the East and Vancouver on the West.

As we see in Table 2, there are many metropolitan areas in 1981, including St. Catherines, Saskatoon, Calgary, Toronto and Edmonton, which all count 2,000 Mennonites or more. While Saskatoon got an early start with 871 Mennonites in 1941, by 1961 the Saskatoon Mennonite population had multiplied six times to 4,765, thus remaining the third largest Mennonite urban concentration until 1961. However, by 1981, both Vancouver and St. Catherines vaulted past Saskatoon, leaving Saskatoon in fifth place. While Toronto Mennonites received an early start, they have grown more slowly, while the Mennonite population in Edmonton is now growing faster. It is interesting to note that the five largest Mennonite metros are also located in the five largest Mennonite settlements in the Niagara and Ontario Peninsula, and the Red, Fraser and Saskatchewan valleys. Each of them has a substantial rural Mennonite hinterland. The Calgary, Toronto, and Edmonton Mennonite rural hinterlands are smaller, and the rest have little rural Mennonite hinterland to draw from.

## A Mennonite Metro Model

To place all these numbers into a model which is easier to handle, I have plotted the Canadian metropolitan areas in Figure 1. Demographically, Win-

**Table 2. Mennonite Population in Canadian Metropolitan Areas (100,000 plus), 1941, 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981.**

| | Mennonite Population | | | | | Total 1981 Metropolitan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1941 | 1951 | 1961 | 1971 | 1981 | Population |
| Winnipeg | 1,285 | 3,460 | 13,595 | 17,850 | 19,105 | 585,000 |
| Kitchener-Waterloo | 1,472 | 1,646 | 4,480 | 5,235 | 9,760 | 288,000 |
| Vancouver | 559 | 1,624 | 5,260 | 8,880 | 9,515 | 1,268,000 |
| St. Catharines | 200 | 510 | 2,515 | 5,955 | 5,985 | 304,000 |
| Saskatoon | 871 | 1,663 | 4,765 | 5,697 | 5,380 | 154,000 |
| Calgary | 91 | 233 | 1,220 | 2,650 | 3,635 | 593,000 |
| Toronto | 326 | 267 | 1,375 | 2,540 | 2,950 | 2,999,000 |
| Edmonton | 29 | 85 | 455 | 1,590 | 1,920 | 657,000 |
| Montreal | 54 | 65 | 140 | 580 | 750 | 2,828,000 |
| Regina | 87 | 90 | 240 | 520 | 685 | 164,000 |
| London | 13 | 45 | 115 | 645 | 485 | 284,000 |
| Hamilton | 41 | 66 | 250 | 425 | 420 | 542,000 |
| Victoria | 10 | 14 | 45 | 145 | 320 | 233,000 |
| Ottawa-Hull | 12 | 28 | 60 | 230 | 285 | 693,000 |
| Windsor | 62 | 49 | 85 | 210 | — | 246,000 |
| Sudbury | 13 | 7 | 55 | 160 | — | 150,000 |
| Thunder Bay | 22 | 13 | 34 | 70 | — | 121,000 |
| Halifax | — | 1 | 7 | 40 | — | 278,000 |
| Quebec | — | 1 | 0 | 20 | — | 576,000 |
| St. John's | — | — | 9 | 10 | — | 155,000 |
| Saint John | — | 16 | 1 | 5 | — | 114,000 |
| Oshawa | — | — | — | — | — | 154,000 |
| Chicoutimi | — | — | — | 5 | — | 135,000 |
| Trois Rivieres | — | — | — | — | — | 111,000 |
| Totals | 5,147 | 9,888 | 34,706 | 53,462 | 61,195 | 13,632,000 |

**Sources:** 1941, 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981 Census of Canada Catalogues.

nipeg in 1988 is clearly the center, with the older Kitchener-Waterloo on the right, supported by eastern St. Catharines and Toronto, and the younger Vancouver on the left, supported by westerners like Saskatoon, Edmonton and Calgary (like in Canadian football, the East used to dominate, the West is getting stronger all the time, and Winnipeg cannot decide whether to be West or East — the lot of those in the center!).

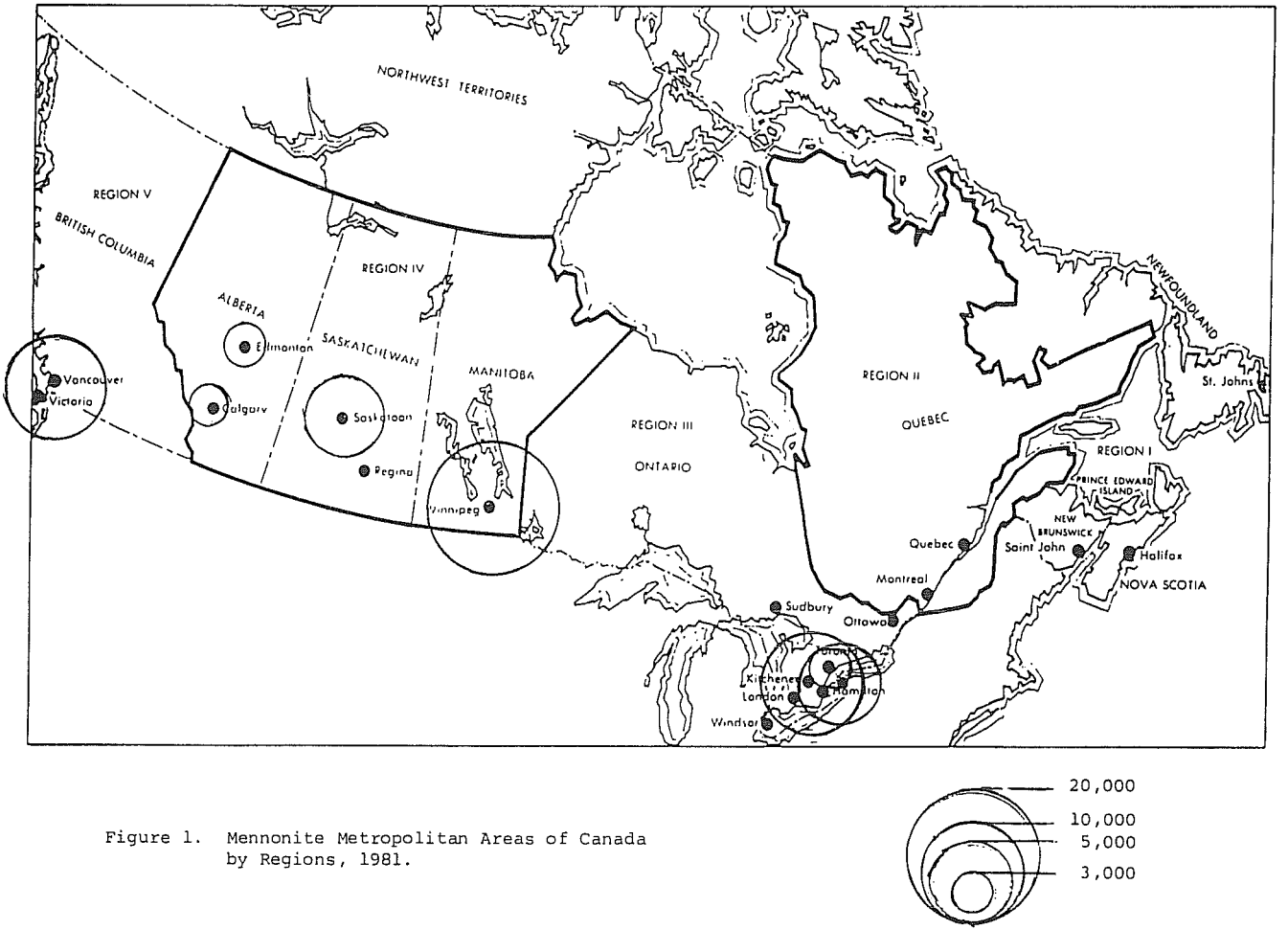


Figure 1. Mennonite Metropolitan Areas of Canada by Regions, 1981.

This urban Mennonite model will likely continue in the forseeable future with some modifications. Our demographic data clearly show that for the first time in 1981 Canadian Mennonites have become more urban. Whereas in 1941 Canadian Mennonites were dominantly rural, by 1961 urbanization had escalated. Five rural Mennonite hinterlands have contributed to the emergence of five major Mennonite metros in the forties and fifties, which are increasingly taking the lead and will do so in the future. These five metros are centered by Winnipeg, and we need to examine the richness and complexity of these new Mennonite urban networks. The immediate post-war decades of the forties and fifties helped to spawn these urban trends which provide new opportunities, as well as challenges and problems in the eighties. Let us explore these in more detail.

## Incubation of Urban Mennonite Roots

Mennonites established churches in Canadian cities fairly early, so we need to trace the planting of churches, social institutions, the media and business, in order to understand better how Mennonite urban networks have developed over time. I suggest that the two decades 1940–60, after World War II, were a period of incubation, in preparation for an urban explosion which followed.

## Church Planting and Outreach

Nine churches were established in four major metropolitan centers before 1920, mostly as missions before Mennonites themselves moved to the city (Epp, 1982:269–291). Five were started in Kitchener–Waterloo in 1807, 1837, 1842, 1877 and 1889 by Swiss Mennonites who moved into the Berlin area in the 1780s. Three churches were begun in Toronto by the Swiss in 1897, and in St. Catherines in 1899 and 1907 mostly by Mennonite Brethren in Christ (Epp, 1982:269–291). The only early Winnipeg Mennonite mission was established in 1907 by Mennonite Brethren. These nine early Mennonite missions had a combined membership of 1945 in 1940, the result of an earlier mission strategy before Mennonites moved to the cities themselves. Seven of these nine still remained in 1988.

Another twelve Mennonite churches were established in the twenties and thirties in five cities, mostly by Russian Mennonites who arrived in the 1920s which I shall refer to as inter-war immigrant Mennonite churches. In 1940 the membership of these twelve immigrant churches numbered 2416. Thus, before 1940 there were some 20 urban Canadian Mennonite churches located in six cities with a combined membership of 4361.

As shown in Table 3, 31 Mennonite churches were established in the next two decades (1940–60), more than had been planted for the entire period preceeding World War II. More new churches were planted in the six cities where Mennonite churches already existed (Winnipeg, Kitchener, Vancouver, St. Catharines, Saskatoon, Toronto), and new churches were also

planted in Calgary, Edmonton, Regina and Hamilton. This was the era when many promising young pastors from seminary and the Mennonite colleges started city churches as the new frontier. Leland Harder started his monthly newsletter titled *The Mennonite Church in the City,* urban pastors met at conferences for special meetings, and there was an air of optimism while the Mennonite seminary was still in Chicago in the 1950s, engaged in its own inner city experimentations. The two Canadian colleges (Mennonite Brethren Bible College and Canadian Mennonite Bible College) began in the forties. These increases of growth were fed largely by Mennonite immigrants from Europe in the fifties and sixties, and a strong migration from rural areas which continued into the seventies.

Many new Mennonite churches were established in the decade of the fifties which continued unabated through the decades of the sixties and seventies. We are not at the end of the 1980s yet, and already 37 Mennonite churches have been started. After a high of 26 new churches in the sixties, the seventies remained steady with 25 new churches, but new urban Mennonite church planting in the eighties is stronger that ever (37 planted). New Chinese and Asian Mennonite churches, as well as new suburban churches seem to provide new incentives and vision for growth. The early pre-1920 mission vision, linked with traditional immigrant urban Mennonite growth seems to more than make up for losses in Mennonite immigrant and rural influxes, which were the driving force in the decades soon after World War II.

Our survey of Mennonite churches and membership in Canadian metropolitan areas shows that there were 136 churches, located in 14 metropolitan centers with a membership of around 25,000. A third of these churches and members were located in Winnipeg with a membership of 9352 in 43 churches, showing the continued dominance of Winnipeg in 1988. The 24 Mennonite churches in greater Vancouver, one third planted in the eighties, shows the vibrant growth in that city, which makes Vancouver the second largest urban Mennonite center in the eighties.

## Extending Educational Urban Networks

The Gretna and Rosthern collegiates were established early in the small towns of Gretna and Rosthern, similar to the early colleges established in the U.S.A. At the time, starting Mennonite highschools and American colleges in towns when churches were often placed in the open prairies, was an important step away from the farm. Numerous Bible Schools were later started in small towns, especially in the thirties when the Russian Mennonites who arrived in the twenties had limited funds in the depression, but found the need for religious instruction on the elementary and high school levels. Almost no one went to college or university at that time. However, after World War II, with some Mennonites entering the city, instruction on a higher level was required.

Two colleges were established, one by the Mennonite Brethren in 1944,

**Table 3. Mennonite Churches and Membership in Canadian Metropolitan Centers.**

| Cities | Churches Established in: Pre 1920 | 20s | 30s | 40s | 50s | 60s | 70s | 80s | Mennonite Churches | Mennonite Church Membership | Mennonites 1981 Census |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Winnipeg | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 11 | 7 | 11 | 43 | 9,352 | 19,105 |
| Vancouver | | | 2 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 24 | 4,780 | 9,515 |
| Waterloo/Kitchener | 3 | 3 | | | 1 | 1 | | 3 | 11 | 2,725 | 9,760 |
| Saskatoon | | | 2 | | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 14 | 2,565 | 5,380 |
| St. Catharines | 1 | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 7 | 2,180 | 5,985 |
| Calgary | | | | 1 | 2 | | 3 | 3 | 9 | 1,193 | 3,635 |
| Toronto | 2 | | 2 | 1 | | | | 5 | 10 | 826 | 2,950 |
| Edmonton | | | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 654 | 1,920 |
| Montreal | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | 2 | 200 | 750 |
| Regina | | | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | 3 | 366 | 685 |
| London | | | | | | | | | | | 485 |
| Hamilton | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 3 | 170 | 420 |
| Victoria | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | 48 | 320 |
| Ottawa | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 139 | 285 |
| Quebec | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 25 | — |
| Totals | 7 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 22 | 26 | 23 | 37 | 136 | 25,223 | 61,195 |

**Sources:** Frank Epp, *Mennonites in Canada,* Volume 2, 1982, pp. 269–289; 1988 Survey of Metropolitan Mennonite Churches by the Author; 1981 Census of Canada.

and the other by the Conference of Mennonites in 1947, in the city of Winnipeg, an unprecedented move to a larger city in North America. While the Mennonite Brethren also started a Bible School in Fresno in 1944, which has since become a college, the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren started a Bible College in Winnipeg in 1944. Since Winkler in Manitoba was the first Canadian Mennonite Brethren settlement, it seemed natural to start a college in Winnipeg, where they had already begun mission work in 1907, and where in 1944 five Mennonite churches, including two Mennonite Brethren churches, already existed. A. H. Unruh, the respected Bible teacher at Winkler Bible School, became the first Mennonite Brethren Bible College president (Toews, 1975:276).

Three years later, in 1947, the Conference of Mennonites also established Canadian Mennonite Bible College. Saskatoon was considered as one possible location,but for many reasons, including Manitoba's larger Mennonite rural hinterland and the regional location closer to Ontario, Winnipeg again was chosen. Kitchener-Waterloo at that time had nine Mennonite churches, but these were mostly Swiss Old Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches, which were less open to establishing colleges in cities at that time. Ontario was also far to the east of the Canadian Mennonite range of settlements, making it less central. Thus, both colleges were established in Winnipeg mostly by Russian Mennonites,who saw the need for college education, and who were also more heavily concentrated on the prairies. The establishment of these two colleges in Winnipeg gave Winnipeg an enormous boost. J. A. Toews (1975:279) summarized the influence of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Canada:

> The spiritual impact of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College on the growth and development of the Mennonite Brethren Church can be seen, at least in part from the following statistics...in missionary service 106; in the preaching ministry 102; in the teaching ministry 241; are active in church and Sunday School work. Practically all misionaries who have been commissioned by Canadian Mennonite Brethren churches for service in foreign fields during the last 25 years have received a part or all of their training in the Bible College.

While I have not found similar statistics for the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, the report would most likely be very similar. The influence of these two colleges on Canadian Mennonite leadership is profound indeed, and these two colleges were established in the forties during and shortly after World War II.

The earlier Swiss Mennonite settlement in Ontario which began 200 years ago, spawned early mission churches in Kitchener-Waterloo, Toronto and St. Catharines, spearheaded largely by the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. However, except for Bible Schools, no institutions of higher learning like those in Goshen, Harrisonburg and Hesston were started in Ontario. Mennonites in Ontario were relatively small in number, representing a large variety and range. It was only in the sixties that some of these groups banded together to establish Conrad Grebel College on the campus of the Univeristy

of Waterloo in 1963. More research is needed to see how the 1940–60 period contributed to the Conrad Grebel beginnings. Like the two Mennonite colleges in Winnipeg, this school was also located in a metropolitan center. However, by the sixties Conrad Grebel could now be on a university campus, run by an inter-Mennonite board, with a liberal arts curriculum in tune with the times.

Conrad Grebel College, has now become a focus for many Mennonites in Ontario, with a dynamic young faculty where Mennonite students can be challenged. The fruits of 25 years of educational influence are increasingly becoming evident, where new leaders, conferences, peace institutes, seminars and libraries can be nurtured. Here Anabaptist theology and life can be modelled.

While Winnipeg and Waterloo have emerged as higher educational institutional centers, a similar movement is afoot in British Columbia to the far West. In 1970 the Mennonite Brethren and the Conference of Mennonites joined their two Bible Schools to create Columbia Bible Institute. Just recently Columbia moved into a higher level college program. To what extent the forties and sixties contributed to this movement also needs exploration. However, Columbia is located in Clearbrook, British Columbia, a relatively small city more in line with earlier American college and Canadian small town Bible School beginnings. Columbia will not have the metropolitan stimulation which Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Canadian Mennonite Bible College and Conrad Grebel do, and it is relatively removed from the greater Vancouver Mennonite concentration where as yet no such schools have been created. Limited activity at the University of British Columbia, relating to Regent College there and creation of an Anabaptist Center have only begun. To what extent Columbia is now drawing Mennonite students from Vancouver and whether urban Mennonite students will continue to go to Clearbrook is not yet clear. Many Mennonites came to Vancouver from South America in the fifties, and many churches are in the German-English language transition, so they do not yet seem ready to focus on higher Mennonite education in Vancouver. Like Columbia, Steinbach Bible College seeks to establish itself in a small city, Steinbach, Manitoba. Unlike Columbia, Steinbach Bible College is run by one small group, the Evangelical Mennonite Church, with limited students and resources.

## The Rise of Urban Mennonite Media

Like the American Mennonite colleges and Canadian Bible schools, Mennonite newspapers and periodicals also began in small towns. *Die Steinbach Post* began in Steinbach in 1913, and *Der Bote* in Rosthern in 1924 (Toews, 1975:290). However, increasingly the Mennonite media are moving to metropolitan areas in Canada, so that Winnipeg has become an attractive center for the offices of periodicals, radio and television. To some extent this is also happening in Kitchener-Waterloo. Like Mennonite churches and

institutions of higher education, there is a convergence on these several Mennonite urban centers. Again, the 1940–60 period seems to have acted as an incubator for location of urban Mennonite media in the Canadian city.

In 1923 the publication of the two German-language weeklies of the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottdale, Pennsylvania, *Die Mennonitische Rundschau* and *Christlicher Jugendfreund,* were transferred to Winnipeg, to my knowledge the first urban Mennonite newspapers in Canada (Toews, 1975:290). This is surprising since at this time there was only one Mennonite mission church in Winnipeg, and the large Mennonite immigration of the twenties from Russia had not yet arrived. By 1940 the Rundschau Publishing House was reorganized into Christian Press, one of two Mennonite Brethren publishing agencies. In 1962 Rudy Wiebe became the first editor of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald,* the official English newspaper of the Mennonite Brethren in Canada located in Winnipeg, and by the sixties, *The Canadian Mennonite* which began to publish in 1953 in Altona, Manitoba, also moved its offices to Winnipeg. While no national Mennonite newspapers were established during the 1940–60 period in urban centers, it was soon after this incubation time that numerous periodicals appeared, especially in Winnipeg.

In 1970 *The Canadian Mennonite* folded in Winnipeg, and the *Mennonite Reporter* began as the national English Mennonite newspaper in Waterloo, a major coup for Waterloo, where it is still being published, with a regional office in Winnipeg. However, Winnipeg continued to be an attractive center for Mennonite papers. The *Mennonite Mirror* began in 1971. The editorial office of *The Mennonite,* the official periodical of the North American General Conference, located in Winnipeg 1971–86, and *Der Bote,* the German General Conference paper, moved its editorial office to Winnipeg in 1977. More recently, the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* and the *Conrad Grebel Review,* two academic Mennonite journals began publishing in 1983 in Winnipeg and Waterloo respectively. I am not aware of similar national Mennonite newspapers being published in other Canadian urban centers. More research is needed. Location of national and North American Mennonite papers in Winnipeg especially, illustrates the influence of this largest urban center in the communications world. The urban dominance model fits well here. It is surprising for example that more similar media have not been created in Vancouver with its growing Mennonite population.

The national conference offices of the two largest Mennonite Brethren and Conference of Mennonites also located in Winnipeg in 1960 and 1961 respectively, as well as their Manitoba conference offices. The Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference national offices have also located in Winnipeg. Radio and Television Communications centers, operated by the two major Mennonite conferences, are located in Winnipeg, one example of the kind of additional influence eminating out of Winnipeg. The demographic Mennonite mass in Winnipeg, its central geographic location, the large clustering of churches in the city, and the concentration of leaders — all tend

to attract additional opportunities like a magnet. More research is needeed for the other urban centers to see to what extent this kind of influence is there as well. The two universities and many colleges in Winnipeg, for example, have many Mennonite teachers and professors who contribute at various levels of the Mennonite urban world.

## Mobility as Catalyst for Urbanism

Starting of Mennonite city missions in the 1800s was but one catalyst for the beginnings of Mennonite mobility from the farm to the city. The city mission involved relatively few other Mennonites, and contact between new city converts and rural Mennonites was often lacking. Five other mobility factors, including the establishment of business in the city, the beginning of Girls Homes in the city, the dispersion of men during World War II, the Mennonite Central Committee service expansion after the war, and the general movement into the service professions must be briefly examined. Unfortunately, research is required in all of these areas of mobility, so we can only outline these as research agenda. The research literature is indeed very scarce.

While the Mennonites who came to Canada in the 1870s generally remained on the farm, the Mennonites from Russia who came in the 1920s had already entered industry extensively prior to their coming to Canada. This is well documented by J. B. Toews (1981). For example, C. A. DeFehr and his sons (and now his grandsons, as well) who came to Winnipeg in the twenties have by now expanded into numerous forms of business. These business people also entered the industrial fray; they were no longer on the margins of urbanism. The influence of some of these entrepreneurs as early as the twenties is described by J. A. Toews (1975:292):

> Another man who rendered valuable services in the development of the publishing house, and especially its physical plant, was C. A. DeFehr who through the years became actively involved in practically every major enterprise of the Canadian conference.

These businessmen had the ability to make money and also the faith to invest it in church-related urban enterprises, which has continued to this day in many cities of Canada. Much research is required to document this whole development of mobility of social status. (See the article by T. D. Regehr in this issue.)

The great depression in the thirties spawned an urbanization drive of its own. Soon after the Mennonites arrived from Russia in the twenties, they were faced with almost impossible economic odds, so that many sent their young women to the city to work as domestics in well-to-do homes. While salaries were low, they could at least earn their room and board which was a help for rural families. Marlene Epp has also done considerable research on special Girls Homes which were established in cities like Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and others, to help these young women cope with the city and their faith

(Epp, 1987). These women often related to emerging Mennonite missions and churches which added strength to church building. Later these women with urban experience returned to their rural communities, but many stayed or returned to the city. These Girls Homes extended well into the 1940–60 period.

World War II definitely acted as a catalyst for Mennonite mobility. The status quo of farming in isolated rural areas was upset by the war. Of the 6,158 religious conscientious objectors, 4,425 were Mennonites (Toews, 1959:99) which represented more than four percent of the 111,554 Mennonite population in 1941. Estimates are that about one-half of the Mennonite men served as conscientious objectors and about half in the military. Almost ten percent of the Mennonites in Canada were forced to leave their home communities to work in forestry camps, mental hospitals, military training in many parts of the country and the world. Working outside their home communities for a number of years opened up new opportunities and aspirations, which acted as a catalyst for change. Some of these moved to the cities after the war. The war also stimulated industrial growth, especially after the great depression of the thirties, and industrialization tended to draw immigrants into the cities. This held true for Mennonites as well. More research needs to be done tracing the extent of this mobility to the cities.

While relief work of the Mennonite Central Committee began in 1920, it was focused largely on relief and immigration services to Mennonites in Russia. The aftermath of World War II expanded Mennonite Central Committee services to much of Europe, and inevitably it also included increasingly non-Mennonites. Work in mental hospitals and relief camps of Europe, resettlement of Mennonites in South America, and exposure of Mennonites to the multitude of needs everywhere, produced a set of experienced young leaders such as the Peter and Elfrieda Dycks, Bill Snyders, Elmer Edigers, Robert Kreiders, C. J. Rempels and others who had caught a vision of the whole world as a field of service. Thus, the 1940–60 period became a period of expansion of Mennonite Central Committee so that by the eighties there are now 1000 workers in fifty countries focused on both relief and development. In the fifties, conferences led by some of these returned volunteers, began to create Peace and Social Concerns Committees which then delved into a variety of social issues where peace was placed in a much larger and richer context of non-violent relations. Various relief and peace organizations existed in the various regions, which were all organized into Mennonite Central Committee Canada in 1963, located in Winnipeg. Provincial Mennonite Central Committees were also formed during this time, many located in cities like Kitchener, Saskatoon and Edmonton (Epp, 1983). Again, British Columbia chose the small town of Yarrow rather than Vancouver for its Mennonite Central Committee offices, deviating from the urban patterns in the rest of Canada. These urban offices have since then been greatly expanded and consolidated, constantly providing opportunities for inter-Mennonite and inter-church dialogue and interaction.

With Mennonite dispersion into the world, the exposure of Mennonites to a variety of needs and their commitment to live out a relevant faith, it is only natural that Mennonites increasingly entered the cities, streaming especially into the service professions. Large numbers in addition to the traditional teaching and nursing professions have gone into social work. In all of the eight cities where 2,000 or more Mennonites live, there are universities where Mennonites teach, and in the Big Three there are several universities where many Mennonites teach. The same is true for politics which includes Mennonites at every level. In most provincial capitals Mennonites are active in government. Mennonites are present in federal government as well. Of the 229 candidates who ran in the 1988 Manitoba provincial election, 24 had Mennonite names, which represents ten percent. Again, the 1940–60 period acted as an incubator in preparation for this mass professional entrance.

Both horizontal geographical and vertical socio-economic status mobility are now an integral part of Mennonite metropolitan life; geographic mobility is a catalyst for urbanism, and vertical mobility a product which Anabaptists already had to deal with in Amsterdam much earlier. The results of the urbanism of some of these forerunners await to be examined critically.

## Conclusions

In this paper I have sketched a longitudinal frame in which to place the urbanization of Mennonites in the forties and fifties. These demographic data and historical evidence suggest that it was a post-war Mennonite period of incubation for an urban Canadian Mennonite explosion which began in earnest in the fifties and has continued into the eighties. This urban explosion of the past fifty years started with less that 10,000 Mennonites and some 20 urban Mennonite churches in 1941, and then escalated to more than 135 churches and nearly 100,000 urban Mennonites in 1981. Mennonites in the eighties are now more urban than rural.

Such demographic and regional analysis, however, needs to be supplemented with more intensive research on the consequences of this rural-urban shift. The data raise questions such as the extent of Mennonite secularization and how this will affect their identity and a sense of "The Sacred" in the future. As Mennonites enter the urban economic and political fray, individualism increases, and the question arises about what might happen to their community values? Farmers are on the decline and professionals are on the rise. What are the consequences of increased professionalization in the churches? With escalating affluence we still do not know how this will affect their values of the simple life and service. Reginald Bibby (1987) suggests that religious fragmentation is taking place everywhere. How will the tendency toward McDonaldization (fast, cheap and efficient) of religion influence urban Mennonites? In this rural-urban shift are important values of the rural past retained and new urban opportunities blended into a new dynamic

Mennonite identity? In considering these questions, one is tempted to apply Matthew Arnold's (1855) lines, "wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born," to the Mennonites and their future.

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