

CHURCH AND STATE IN MENNONITE HISTORY

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Of all the forms of social organization which man has devised and established for the promotion of his well being, none has been more universal, more comprehensive and more powerful than the state. However, there is nothing mystical nor mysterious about the nature of the state, for after all the state is only the totality of the inhabitants of a given area organized to promote the common welfare through political measures and means. The form of the state has varied much in the course of recorded history. Most commonly it has taken the form of the control of the mass by a small fraction of the population, usually composed of those who have in some way or other been able to secure the instruments of power in the form of weapons, wealth or wisdom. In rare instances in the past the control of the political organization of a people has actually been in the hands of the people themselves through some form of democratic control such as that used in the city states of ancient Greece, in the Swiss mountain cantons of medieval times, or in the town meetings of Puritan New England. In the last three hundred years, particularly among the Anglo-Saxon peoples, the democratic form of government has been developed to its highest degree. However, even in this modern twentieth century four-fifths of the world's population still lives under a form of state organization, which, regardless of its nominal form, is in fact nothing less than dictatorial, that is the rule over the masses by the few who possess the instruments of power. Dictatorships are not new; most of the world's population has always lived under dictatorial regimes.

The Christian church was planted in a world of dictatorial states. Until recent times it has lived in a world of dictatorial states, and it has lived successfully. It is an error to assume that Christianity can exist only under the democratic form of state organization, or that democracy is essential to the life of the Christian church. So far as I can understand the Scripture there is no Divinely established form of the state, and nothing in the Old or New Testament can be taken for or against any particular form of the state.

Far more important for the Christian church than the form of the state, has been the function of the state. Where the state has confined its function to the minimum of maintaining law and order, there has been little or no occasion for conflict between church and state, at least where the exercise of this function of government has required the services of only a few of the male members of the population. The proper relation of the church to the state in the exercise of this function is described by Paul in Romans 13 as one of subjection. "For he beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject For this cause pay ye tribute also Render therefore to all that is due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." This subjection apparently involves chiefly obedience to the law and order of the state and the payment of taxes imposed by the state, together with general reverence and respect to the representative organs of the state. Peter also says in I Peter 2, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or to governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers or for the praise of them that do well Honor the king."

There have been states, however, which have extended their functions far beyond the primary function of the maintenance of law and order and the collection of taxes to support the same. In fact today every state worthy of the name professes to provide for its citizens a large variety of economic benefits which are taken as a matter of course by most of us. Seldom need there be any occasion for conflicts between the church and state in these performances. However, when the state as such enters those fields which relate to the real values of life, such as morals, religion, family life and relationships, art and music, education, press and radio and other forms of expression, it extends its functions into fields which are also in part at least a concern of the church. In doing so the state must of necessity give expression to fundamental concepts of value, to a philosophy of life and a way of living which include judgments as to the ultimate goals of living and the destiny of man. It is in this area of the state's functioning that the church has chiefly come into conflict with the state. The Mennonite church has like other churches not been able to escape this conflict, for the Mennonite church

also has ideals as to the goals and destiny of man and the things which are worth while living for according to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and the example of Christ.

When the state goes so far as to extend its function to include all phases of life, and exercises an exclusive and authoritative control over all forms of expression of the human spirit and all types of social relationship, and does this in conformity with an all-inclusive and final philosophy of life, this conflict with the church is inevitable, for the church also claims for God final authority. The type of state just described is known in our modern vocabulary as "totalitarian". However, totalitarianism is not the creation of Adolf Hitler or Benito Mussolini or Stalin. There were totalitarian states before communism and fascism were established in our western world. In fact totalitarianism has been one of the most common types of state functioning in human history. The Roman Empire was a totalitarian state, in the days when the church was born. However, the totalitarianism of these earlier states was not so rigid nor so effective, nor perhaps so comprehensive as that of modern Germany and Russia and Italy.

Now the danger of conflict between the church and state, even in totalitarianism, arises only when the philosophy of life that governs the rulers of the state is in conflict with the faith of the Christian Church. In the Roman Empire to 380 this was the case. But throughout western Europe from the year 380 A. D. to the Reformation, that is for over 1200 years, this was not true. In fact the opposite was the case. Our medieval forefathers lived in a world in which the ethics and social ideals as well as the religious faith and practices of the Christian church were not only accepted by the rulers of the state but were made the very basis of the whole functioning of the state. The totalitarianism of the medieval states was a Christian totalitarianism. It was a successful amalgamation of church and state, with the church and its way of life dominant. The whole body of medieval society was conceived of as a *Corpus Christianum*, a Christian body politic, in which there was no division in reality between the church and state even though there were rivalries and conflicts between the organs of the church and the organs of the state. Such a time has never been experienced by man either before or since. It must have been a most interesting time in which

to live, at least for those who accepted the way of life which was maintained by the church in that time.

The great upheaval of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation from 1517 to 1648, which affected primarily only the Teutonic peoples of the west, broke once and for all this ideal unity for church and state, and set in motion the forces which have operated increasingly to divorce the functions of the state from the functions of the church, to split the life of man between the two sovereignties, and to secularize the life of our western world so that today the church has been relegated to a position of mere moral influence in most western European countries, particularly in the United States. It no longer has any direct means of forcing the state to promote its ideals and its philosophy. At the same time those ruling classes which have dominated the states of western Europe have become increasingly liberated, if one may use such a term, from the Christian philosophy of life and the Christian ethic, so that today there are exceedingly few rulers of state who profess to support the Christian way of life or to make it sovereign in their activities or in the functions of the state which they control. In fact the trend seems to be ever more in the direction of departure from and antagonism to Christian principles. Thus the greatest totalitarian state, Russia, is in the hands of rulers whose conduct and profession has become sharply anti-Christian and is definitely oriented toward the destruction of the Christian church and the way of life which it has promoted throughout these two thousand years. Trends in certain other totalitarian states give rise to grave concern among the Christians of these states.

However, when the Mennonite church was founded in Switzerland and Holland, this was not yet the case. Rather, the medieval concept that state and church should be united and that the state should promote a way of life following the principles upheld by the church, was maintained by the reformers in every country where Protestantism was established. There was however a subtle but very significant change in the relationship of church and state which should be noted. In the Catholic Corpus Christianum of the middle ages the church was dominant, in the Protestant Churches of the Reformation period and after, all too often the state was dominant. The Catholic system required the state to be Christian and promote Christianity. Luther, however, for instance, felt that the state was

evil, and all that the church had to ask of the state was that the state should protect the church and permit it free functioning, in return for which the church would support law and order and the social organization of the status quo. Luther had no interest at all in having the church dominate the state and make the state Christian. He felt that this was impossible. It is clear then that in this respect the Protestant Reformation represented a distinct retreat from the church and state system of the middle ages.

Mennonites, whether they lived in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, or France, lived in a world where the state as one of its functions required the conformity of all citizens to the established form of religion supported by the state, and treated those who did not conform as criminals. It was not until 1815 that full toleration and recognition of the Mennonite faith in Switzerland was achieved. In Holland a measure of toleration was achieved as early as 1581, but here likewise full toleration did not come until quite late, in 1795. It was somewhat different in the small states of south Germany such as the Palatinate and Baden, Alsace, Württemberg, and Bavaria, where Mennonites frequently were sought after by the princes because of their skill in agriculture, and where they had received a limited toleration as early as the late seventeenth century. The same was true of the Mennonites who settled in Russia at the invitation of Empress Catherine after 1788.

In the light of these facts, it is clear that for the most part the Mennonites of Europe were bound to be in conflict with the states under which they lived from 1525 until the nineteenth century. The intensity of this conflict depended upon two factors, first, the steadfastness of the Mennonites in maintaining their faith and ethics, and second, the degree of the repression which the state imposed upon the Mennonites. We of today often fail to appreciate the breadth and the intensity of this conflict for our forefathers. In a general way we know about it, and we do appreciate the suffering which our martyr ancestors endured, yet it is hardly possible for us who live in a land of peace and liberty where the state has since its organization in 1789 definitely excluded from its functions any interference with or control of the religious life of its citizens, to appreciate in reality the real bitterness and intensity of the conflict which was imposed upon our forefathers for three hundred years or more. As late as 1811 for instance, twenty-seven unbaptized chil-

dren of Mennonites living in the Canton of Berne, Switzerland, were actually forcibly baptized in the state church.

The conflict between the Mennonite church and the state was not exclusively nor primarily a conflict over such questions as military service or the oath. Universal compulsory military service was unknown in earlier times except in some of the Swiss cantons such as the Canton of Berne in the eighteenth century where militia service was required. It was Napoleon who first introduced universal conscription, and it was modern Prussia which led the western world in the establishment of a uniform compulsory military service program for all citizens in peace times as well as in war time. For our forefathers the conflict with the state was primarily over such principles as the right to worship according to one's own conscience, the right to baptize and to marry and to bury in the faith, the right to build church houses and to own property, to enter freely into trades and crafts of various kinds, even the elementary right to exist as inhabitants of an area. Under these circumstances Mennonites could *honor* the king, but could not be subject to "the powers that be" in any except the most limited sense of obeying the regulations governing law and order, for to have been subject to the state would have been to surrender everything that they held dear. It is small wonder then that the history of the Mennonites of Europe for the first three hundred years was so often one of persecution and of migration and flight from one city to the other, and from one country to the other. They were often in a literal sense pilgrims and wanderers upon the face of the earth, with no abiding cities and with no abiding homeland, except the homeland of the soul, no citizenship except the citizenship of heaven.

As the spirit of toleration, however, gradually descended upon Europe, first in Holland, then in Switzerland, and finally in Germany, the situation changed. Gradually the major conflict between the Mennonites and the state came to an end. Gradually Mennonites came to enjoy all the rights of other human beings. They could worship according to their conscience, they could establish their social organization and maintain a way of life that seemed good to them. They could own property, they could move about freely, they could enjoy the protection of the state.

They were even admitted to participation in the state. And here is where an altogether new situation was created for the Mennon-

ites. The problem of participation in the state had never arisen before, because such participation was not only not desired by the Mennonites, but was not even possible. It is true that theoretically the founders of the Mennonite Church such as Conrad Grebel and Pilgram Marpeck in Switzerland and South Germany, or Menno Simons and Dietrich Philips in Holland, taught that the Christian should not take part in government and should not become a magistrate, yet this was purely a theoretical conclusion because in those days no Mennonite could have become a magistrate even if he had wanted to do so. No Mennonite could have held political office because he was not a full citizen of the state, and no Mennonite could have voted because he was a heretic. Furthermore most of the Mennonites of Europe were of the lower classes, both as to social standing and as to wealth, so that they no more aspired to participate in governmental affairs than any other peasants or poor people of the state in which they lived. At most places only the wealthy, property-owning upper classes were permitted to participate in the life of the state, even though the remaining population may have belonged to the state church. The problem of participation in the state therefore arose first in those places where Mennonites became wealthy and cultured.

Let us consider now the record of the Mennonites of Europe as it concerns participation in the functioning of the state. The first state which granted to Mennonites full right of participation in the life of the state was Holland. A decree to this effect was issued in 1795. It was not long until the Mennonites, who already in many cases were wealthy and educated, took advantage of this opportunity and gradually came to occupy not only a modest place in the life of the Netherlands, but ultimately a superior place. In fact the Mennonites of Holland today occupy a place of influence far out of proportion to their numbers in the political, cultural and economic life of their country. Mennonites of Holland have held the highest political posts in the nation. A deacon of the Mennonite church at the Hague was minister in the navy. During the World War a Mennonite was burgomaster of Amsterdam. Mennonites have occupied the highest seats on the judicial bench in Holland, they have filled the post of governor of the Netherlands East Indies, they have served on city councils and in minor official posts without number. Most surprising of all is the fact that beginning in 1807 Mennonite

churches in Holland took advantage of the privilege afforded by the state to all churches of Holland to accept grants of the state toward the support of the individual congregations. In 1912 for instance, forty Mennonite churches in Holland received grants from the state amounting to a total of approximately \$5,000.

In Germany the development followed a similar course. It was the wealthy and educated Mennonites of northwestern Germany, of Emden, of Crefeld, and of neighboring areas, that first participated in the life of the state. In 1847 Herman von Beckerath, a member of the Mennonite church in Crefeld, entered the Prussian Parliament, where he remained a leading member for a number of years. In 1848 he was elected to the famous Frankfort revolutionary parliament from which parliament he also received appointment as minister of finance for Germany, a post which he occupied for several months. Later he was offered a post in the cabinet of Prussia which he rejected because of his political differences with the king. At the same Frankfort parliament Isaac Brons, deacon of the Mennonite church at Emden, also served as a member. Brons was a member of the city council of his home town, Emden, and was active in many other political affairs. He was vice-consul of Great Britain in Emden and was at one time assigned an important commission by the German government in connection with naval affairs. However, it was not until 1867 that full political rights were granted to the Mennonites of Prussia. After that time the Mennonites of eastern Prussia gradually participated more and more in political affairs, although, being chiefly farmers, they were never as active as the merchants and business men of the northwest German Mennonite churches. The development in south Germany proceeded somewhat more slowly, but ultimately Mennonites here also received full political rights, and gradually began to participate in the political life of their home regions and ultimately in the life of the nation at large.

It is a fact well worth noting, that participation in the life of the state went hand in hand with surrender of the principle of non-resistance. This was true not only on the Mennonite side but also on the side of the state. In fact the law of 1867 in Prussia which granted Mennonites full political rights, based this grant specifically on the fact that the Mennonites were no longer to enjoy exemption from military service, and that since they had now been placed on

an equality with other citizens in the matter of bearing the burdens which the state imposed, they also should be granted all the rights and privileges which the state had to grant to its citizens. In the light of the experience of the Mennonites of Holland and Germany, it is well for us to ask the question, Is it possible for Mennonites to maintain the principle of nonresistance and still to participate in the life of the state by holding elective offices or accepting appointments to official positions?

It is worth noting further that when the Mennonites did accept appointments to state positions, they apparently had no scruples against accepting appointments of a military character. As was pointed out earlier, a Dutch Mennonite became minister of the navy. The Isaac Brons mentioned above founded a society at Emden for the promotion of a German fleet. Herman von Beckerath made a speech in the Parliament of 1848 in which he objected to granting any special exemption from military service to groups which had religious scruples against such service, and this even though he was a Mennonite himself. In recent times in certain sections of Germany, Mennonites have become very active members of the National-Socialist Party. In fact, I have been told that in Eastern Prussia at first the party made its progress largely on the basis of Mennonite participation.

Today it is clear therefore that the old conflict between church and state so far as the Mennonites of Europe are concerned has completely vanished. It is clear furthermore that modern Mennonites in Europe have no scruples whatsoever against full participation in the life of the state on the same basis that non-Mennonites participate.

The Mennonites of Russia occupy a unique position historically in reference to the problem of the relationship of church and state, a position which is so different from that of the other European Mennonites that I prefer to treat their situation later on in this discussion in connection with a discussion of a similar situation in Paraguay.

Let us now turn our attention to church and state in the history of the Mennonites of America. Except for the very small settlement in Virginia and possibly in Maryland, the only portion of colonial America in which Mennonites settled before the adoption of the federal constitution of 1789, was the colony of Pennsylvania.

In Pennsylvania from the beginning, church and state were separate and full freedom of religion was granted to all except Catholics. Here for the first time in their history, Mennonites had full liberty of conscience, a liberty which has obtained from their settlement in Germantown in 1683 to the present day. Except for the unique situation at Germantown however, there is no record that the Mennonites participated directly in the life of the state in Pennsylvania. They could have been elected to the colonial assembly, and they could have occupied various posts in the colonial government if they had chosen to do so. There is no record of any such participation. In Pennsylvania too, for the first time in history, Mennonites had the right to vote subject to the laws of the colony governing suffrage. There is evidence that the Pennsylvania Mennonites exercised the right of voting without hesitation. In fact it is still the traditional custom in many Mennonite communities today to participate in voting and there is no regulation against such participation by laymembers in any of the eastern Mennonite conferences. Quite early in the history of the eastern conferences, however, regulations prohibiting office holding, are found, so that it is altogether probable that the opposition to office-holding was present from the very beginning of the settlement. The Oberholtzer faction which withdrew from the Franconia conference in 1847, and which ultimately became a part of the General Conference Mennonite branch, adopted a different point of view. I am not aware that members of this branch have actually been elected to the legislature of Pennsylvania, but I have been informed that there are at least two known cases of members who have served as sheriff.

The situation at Germantown referred to above is unique in American Mennonite history. This settlement was established in 1683 by thirteen families from Crefeld who at the time of their arrival were for the most part members of the Quaker church, but up to a few years before that time had been Mennonites. In essence their attitude on political matters therefore was the Mennonite attitude of their home church in Crefeld. During the course of the next 25 years at least 40 or 50 Mennonite families settled in this Germantown village community. They together with Quakers constituted the corporate members of the Germantown village government. The village had been incorporated in 1691 under the laws of the province, receiving a special charter. Since the Mennonites

and Quakers who had settled here were the corporate members of this borough which was a closed corporation, they had the exclusive right of franchise, of legislation, and of admitting new members into the corporation. They were therefore under obligation to establish and maintain a local municipal government. So long as the village ordinances and local litigation concerned itself chiefly with stray pigs and line fences, there was little difficulty in securing Quaker and Mennonite officials to serve, but with the building of a jail and the introduction of stocks and a whipping post they lost their desire for office. As early as 1701, Pastorius, the civil leader of the village, complained to Penn that he found it increasingly difficult to find men who would serve in the general court of Germantown for conscience' sake, and that he hoped for relief from the arrival of new immigrants. Several men declined to accept offices to which they had been elected. Finally in 1707 the village lost its charter, chiefly because it was unable to carry on the government which its charter required, and it was merged for political purposes with the township of which it was a part. In this interesting Germantown political experiment, we have a situation where the Mennonites and Quakers were in the majority and had the franchise and were unwilling to admit others to the franchise, but at the same time were unwilling to hold the offices necessary to operate the village government. We have here then an unparalleled instance of a municipal corporation losing its charter because no one was to be found who was willing to function as an official.

The history of the Mennonites and Amish Mennonites in America since Germantown, in respect to their attitude toward the relation of church and state, can be briefly summarized. Following the tradition and example set by the eastern settlement, the newer settlements in Ontario, Virginia and western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois apparently had no objection to the participation in voting, but did maintain a regulation on holding office. This latter rule, however, applied apparently only to offices above the county level, that is state offices, or offices requiring the use of force. There was seemingly no objection to holding such offices as road commissioners, school board members, school trustees, or even election officials. In a few cases Mennonites are known to have accepted election to the office of city councilman. A few years ago a Mennonite served as mayor of the town of Souderton, Montgomery County,

Pennsylvania in the Franconia conference district. In recent years opposition to holding local offices seems to have increased, and certainly opposition to voting has increased. However so far as I am informed no conference of the Mennonite church has yet prohibited voting, although all conferences forbid office-holding, and many advise against or forbid "electioneering."

The more liberal Mennonite branches, however, have had a different record in both the United States and Canada. Particularly is this true of the branch known as the General Conference of Mennonites of North America. This is due in part to the fact that some of the congregations of this group are composed of immigrants from South Germany after 1830 who took a more liberal position toward participation in the state in Germany. The only known members of the Mennonite church in America who have held an elective national office, come from two such churches of the General Conference branch in Iowa. A. W. Ramseyer served eighteen years in the federal House of Representatives from 1915 to 1933, since which time he has been a commissioner of the Court of Claims in Washington, D. C. Edward C. Eicher served six years in the federal House of Representatives, from 1933 to 1939, since which time he has been serving as a member of the Securities Exchange Commission.

One of the most noted politically active Mennonites in America was Peter Jansen, born in 1852 in Russia as the son of the noted Cornelius Jansen who was for a time Prussian Consul in Prussia and South Russia, who emigrated to Beatrice, Nebraska in 1873. Mr. Jansen began his political career in 1880 as Justice of the Peace. As early as 1884 he was elected an alternate delegate to the National Republican Convention in Chicago. In 1898 Jansen was elected a member of the Nebraska State Legislature, and in 1899 he was appointed U. S. Commissioner to the Paris Exposition by President McKinley. In 1910 he was elected to the State Senate of Nebraska. He states in his memoirs that he was frequently urged by friends to become a candidate for governor, but that his pronounced opposition to war and all that was military never permitted him to seek this honor, since as governor of the state he would also be an officer of the militia. He was also conscientiously opposed to the death penalty. H. P. Krehbiel of Newton, Kansas, also a member of the General Conference of Mennonites, served a number of terms as a member of the Kansas state legislature, as did J. A. Schowalter

of Newton, Kansas, a member of the same branch. A wider acquaintance with the other Mennonite branches would probably bring other cases of politically active Mennonites to light. Certainly there have been numerous mayors and members of city councils in these other groups, and the above list of politically active American Mennonites is by no means exhaustive.

In addition to the matter of active participation in political life, the relation of church and state in Mennonite history involves other topics, primarily those matters in which the state has endeavored to tell the Mennonites to perform duties or services or to take action contrary to the principles of the Mennonite faith. Under this heading would come first of all military service, second, forced contribution to the state for war purposes, forced services of a non-military character such as transportation of army supplies, swearing of the oath and such minor matters as saluting the flag and the use of a foreign language, jury service, and similar civic duties.

The one principle which is probably still held in common by all Mennonites around the world is that of non-swearing of oaths. Almost universally the governments under which Mennonites have lived have been willing to concede the Mennonites, like the Quakers, the right to give an affirmation in place of the oath in all legal proceedings where the oath is required of others. Without doubt some Mennonites are becoming lax in this principle, but nowhere are Mennonites compelled today to swear an oath against their conscience, not even in totalitarian Germany.

This is not the place to review the whole history of compulsory military service—that would be a chapter in itself. At the present time there is one country in the world which does not grant any exemption to Mennonites from military service. That country is France. Holland recently passed a law granting exemption from military service to conscientious objectors. In Germany it is also possible to secure exemption from combatant service both in peace time and in war time. Even in Russia it is still possible to secure exemption from combatant service although this is possible only under very strict regulations. In Switzerland Mennonites are granted exemption from combatant service. In all of these countries, however, there is very little disposition on the part of Mennonites to make use of their privileges. In fact in most of these countries Mennonites are proud to be active soldiers, and have among their

numbers officers up to the rank of general. This is true even in the Swiss army. Canada has absolute exemption for Mennonites from military service at all times according to the fundamental constitution of the Canadian Confederation enacted in 1867. In the U. S. A. most states grant Mennonites and others exemption from militia duties on conscientious grounds, but the federal government is not bound by the constitution or by any precedent to grant any exemption from military service. However, as a matter of fact, the federal government has always granted exemption from combatant service, and in the last world war finally granted Mennonites and others exemption from all forms of service for so called special farm furloughs or furloughs for reconstruction work in France. What the policy will be in the case of a future war is altogether determined by the congress in session at the time that the military service laws are passed.

It will not be possible here to review at length the whole problem of compulsory contribution to the cost of war in the form of war taxes. As early as 1777 a division occurred among the Mennonites in the Franconia Conference over the payment of war taxes. For the most part Mennonites have been willing to pay war taxes, because it is exceedingly difficult to determine what portion of the taxes was actually used for prosecution of the war and what portion was not so used. The attitude taken by some conscientious objectors, that war taxes should not be paid or that that portion of the current taxes which are devoted to military preparation should be paid only under protest, has not found widespread approval among Mennonites. I am not well enough informed on the history of compulsory service in the transportation of military supplies to discuss this matter, but I know that in the War of 1812 Mennonites of the two settlements in what is now Waterloo County, Ontario, were impressed into transporting supplies for the retreating British army which had been defeated at Detroit. There is evidence that in other wars Mennonites have either been impressed into service or have voluntarily hired themselves out for the transport of army supplies.

Jury service is required of all eligible citizens in most states whenever the lot falls on them. So far as I know however, citizens are nowhere impressed into jury service if it is against their conscientious scruples. As a matter of fact Mennonites have served on juries, and do now serve on juries with the exception possibly of

capital cases involving the death penalty. In our own branch, conferences have frequently advised against or forbidden jury service. In a few instances Mennonites have objected to compulsory salute to the flag and the recitation of the loyalty pledge in the public schools. In most cases, however, Mennonites have not felt that the flag salute or the pledge of allegiance is contrary to their faith. In recent years the oath of allegiance required of those who wish to become naturalized citizens has led to difficulty. This oath includes a pledge to defend the constitution and the nation by bearing arms. Mennonites cannot conscientiously take this oath. However, since no one is compelled to become a citizen, there is no necessary conflict between the church and state on this point. Native-born inhabitants of this country are not required to take such an oath of allegiance.

I now wish to call attention to an altogether different phase of the problem of church and state in Mennonite history, one which has escaped the attention of most Mennonites interested in this problem. I refer to those instances in Mennonite history where Mennonite colonies have been granted local political autonomy by the state under whose sovereignty they reside. These cases involve in actual effect the erection of Mennonite states. A study of these autonomous or semi-autonomous Mennonite states sheds an interesting light on the whole problem of church and state.

The first instance of this in Mennonite history is the autonomy granted to the Mennonite colonies in South Russia by the czarist government. In 1763 the Russian government offered special inducements to secure German colonists in the newly acquired south Russian farm lands. Among other things all immigrants were promised the right to establish their own schools, churches and forms of local government, together with military exemption. A special invitation was extended to Mennonites of eastern Prussia in 1786, with very liberal terms and grants of aid in addition to the terms offered to the German colonists in general. These privileges were confirmed in a perpetual charter granted in 1800. We are interested just now in the guarantee of local autonomy to the Mennonite colony. Their affairs were placed in the hands of a governmental committee placed directly under the national cabinet. Under the committee was a government director who was to be closely in touch with the local community. Within the Mennonite colonies, however,

all strictly local affairs were given over to the Mennonites themselves. They were given the right to elect their own officials and to establish their own local laws and to govern themselves quite freely. They thus constituted a sort of democracy within the Russian autocracy, and they enjoyed much greater freedom than did native Russian communities. At the head of each of the two major Mennonite colonies was a general superintendent called "Oberschulz," elected by representatives from the different villages. Each village in turn elected its own magistrate, called "Schulz," and each likewise had its own village assembly that governed the village. There was also a representative assembly to govern the entire colony. Since all the inhabitants of the Mennonite districts were either members of the Mennonite church or members of Mennonite families, and no non-Mennonites were permitted to live in the colony, this was a pure Mennonite state. The actual conduct of government fell largely to the local village assembly and the village magistrate. To the Mennonite magistrate fell the lot of administering local discipline. Whipping was a frequent method of punishment. The village meetings handled such questions as schools, teachers, roads, caring for the poor, distributing surplus land, etc. Thus we see that practically all the functions of local government were carried on by the Mennonites themselves.

If we examine the situation more closely we discover that actually the government approached a form of theocracy. Even though the elders or bishops were not at the head of civil affairs, yet as heads of the church they exercised great influence over matters of government, especially over the schools which were largely controlled by the church. Frequently also the magistrates requested the elders to assist them in many local affairs. Later on the strong influence of the elders in the village government declined. It is needless to say that it was not always easy to carry out the principles of nonresistance and opposition to the use of force which all the Mennonites of Russia firmly believed in, and at the same time maintain the discipline necessary for a stable order and to carry out the functions of local self-government. To lead a fellow-member to the whipping post required considerable rationalization of the injunction "Resist not evil." The most serious breach of Mennonite principles occurred when certain Mennonite ministers and laymen left the old church, once in 1820 and once in 1860, to form other branches. It is shock-

ing to report, but true, that the elders or bishops of the old Mennonite church at that time requested the Russian government to deport the schismatic Mennonite leaders to Siberia in order to get them out of the Mennonite settlements. They also opposed the government granting the schismatic Mennonites any of the privileges which Mennonites were supposed to enjoy in Russia.

It is interesting to note that when the Russian government attempted to cancel most of the privileges of the Mennonites as well as the other German colonists of Russia, about 1870, a large number of the Russian Mennonites were prepared to leave the country. Under the pressure of the threatened emigration the Russians withdrew part of their proposals, especially that cancelling exemption from military service. A compromise was reached according to which the Mennonite population, through the Mennonite civil organization of their autonomous colony self-government, undertook to provide a substitute service for the state in the form of a voluntary forestry service. This service, which was inaugurated in 1880, was financed by the Mennonites themselves. It corresponds closely to the United States government C. C. C. service. At first it called for four years of service, but later this was reduced to three. Before the recent world war there were eight forestry camps in which a total of about 1,000 young men were serving. The entire cost of this service was borne by the Mennonites themselves. During the World War the privilege of non-combatant service among the Mennonites was maintained by the Russian government. The Soviet government has of course cancelled all of the special rights of the Mennonite colony except that providing for non-combatant military service, so that the great experiment of Mennonite self-government in south Russia has come to an end. So far as I know no one has ever assessed the value of this experiment or drawn any conclusion from it for the problem of the relation of church and state. However, on the whole I would be inclined to say that the experiment was a success and that it offers one solution of the problem of maintaining a nonresistant, non-participating Mennonite social group in the midst of a state which requires service to the state in some form or other. However, this seems possible only in an age when nationalism is not strong, where the government is not totalitarian and where the presence of a large block of foreign people speaking a foreign language and maintaining a foreign culture isolated from the na-

tional community would not lead to serious trouble.* It is scarcely conceivable that such an arrangement would be tolerated in any progressive, prosperous, well-ordered national state in the western world today.

The second instance of Mennonite self-government is found in the Mennonite colonies in Paraguay. In the year 1921, the Paraguayan parliament passed a law guaranteeing to all Mennonite settlers in the extensive territory known as the Gran Chaco, exceptional privileges which are strikingly similar to the privileges granted to the Mennonites of Russia in 1786. According to this law the Mennonites have full self-government in the Chaco. For ten years after arrival no taxes of any sort were to be collected by the government. The autonomy of the Mennonites in the Paraguayan Chaco is greater than that of the Mennonites in Russia. As a matter of fact the Mennonites of the Chaco do constitute an absolutely independent state. There has never been any application of any of the laws of Paraguay to them in the Chaco, there has never been any police officer or government officer in the colony to exercise any authority on behalf of the national government, the courts of the land have never interfered with the Mennonites of the Chaco, and the army in its occupation of the Chaco has never presumed to exercise authority.

There are two Mennonite states in the Chaco. The first is the Canadian Russian Mennonite colony known as "Menno Colony", established in 1928, and which is a pure theocracy. Until last year this colony was governed altogether by the elders and ministers. Last year finally this colony was organized, primarily for economic purposes, under the leadership of an "Oberschulz" or general superintendent. However this new organization does not exercise the function of a political state. In so far as these functions are exercised they still reside in the hands of the bishop or elder.

The second Mennonite state was established on land near to the first in the year 1930 by Mennonite refugees from Russia. This colony is known as the "Fernheim Colony." It has been organized on identical lines after the pattern of the ancient Mennonite autonomous organization in South Russia. Each village has its local

* Such a Mennonite group need not of course be a foreign language or foreign culture group. It could speak the national language and share in general the national culture.

magistrate or "Schulz" elected by the people, and the entire colony has a general superintendent or "Oberschulz." The colony assembly, consisting of all of the heads of the families in the colony, is the legislative assembly. The local village assemblies, together with the general colony assembly, establish all the laws governing the colony. They have also established all the judicial procedure necessary to settle disputes. Although the Mennonite elders and bishops in this colony also exercise great influence, they have nothing to do directly with the civil organization of the colony.

On the whole this form of Mennonite self-government in Paraguay has been very successful to the present date. It has been possible to maintain law and order without using force with the exception of one or two instances where it was necessary to administer corporal punishment to recalcitrant striplings. It is true of course that those who are dissatisfied with the order in the colony can leave, and are probably under so much social pressure that they voluntarily leave before they become serious problems to the authorities. But in any case, for ten years these Mennonite states have existed in the heart of South America without the use of force, and have maintained a degree of law and order, industry, sobriety and peace, which is almost without a parallel in the world of our day which is so full of strife, struggle, conflict and bloodshed.

It is difficult to say whether the autonomous Mennonite colonies in South Russia, and the two independent Mennonite colonies in South America, present a union of church and state in an ideal form or not. It is true that in these colonies the church governed or governs itself without interference from or support from the civil government. That is, the Mennonite churches in these colonies have not been subjected to or made a part of the civil government. Nor has the church in its organized form, that is in its regular meetings or conferences, dictated on the other hand to the government. The functions of church and state have been maintained as completely separate functions, the functions of the state being exercised by the civil assemblies, and the functions of the church being exercised by the ecclesiastical assemblies. Yet it is the same people who are members of both the civil and ecclesiastical assemblies, with the few exceptions of those church members who have been excommunicated, or those who have grown up without being baptized and joining the church. However, it is true beyond the shadow of a doubt that

the actual leadership of this joint life in the Mennonite colony, both in Russia and South America, has always been in the hands of the elders and ministers. It is inconceivable that anything could be done in these colonies that would be contrary to the teachings and wishes of the church leaders. Thus in effect if not in form there is an amalgamation of the church and state. Is this not an ideal solution to the problem? However, as is said above in speaking of the Mennonites of Russia, this solution seems to be possible only in a state which is not well developed nor prosperous and which has large open spaces in which it is possible to settle blocks of foreign population without interfering with the national life in general. Paraguay is a poor country with a small population and with large unoccupied areas of land. It is very anxious to secure settlers and it is willing to pay the price of granting practical independence to such foreign groups as the Mennonites in order to secure the benefit of their service in the development of the state, at least in the Gran Chaco territory.

As we conclude this survey of Mennonite history, several basic issues in the relation of church and state stand out clearly. The first is that of participation in the organized political forms of the state, that is participation in government. Historically Mennonites were not permitted to participate until approximately the year 1800. Since that time the Mennonites of Europe have entered into full participation both in voting and office holding in the states in which they are settled in Europe. In America apparently only the conservative groups, chiefly our own branch, still maintain consistently the principle of non-participation in government. However, even among us this is consistently applied only to the higher officers in the state. Participation in strictly local affairs is not absolutely prohibited. The right of franchise has apparently always been exercised in America by our people. Although in recent years there is a tendency against this, no doubt a majority of Mennonite men have no scruples against voting whenever they feel led to do so. No state, however, compels participation in government, not even in voting. Therefore there cannot be a serious conflict between the Mennonite church and the state over the question of participation in government.

The second major issue is that of obedience to the state. Here the Mennonites have universally followed the principle of obey-

ing the state as far as possible, both in the payment of taxes and in the performance of duties imposed upon them by the law, and in general obedience to the laws of both local and national governments. The only serious conflict with the state in this matter has arisen when states have interfered with freedom of worship, which is now fortunately past, or when service has been required of a military nature. Even here during most of past Mennonite history and at the present time, military service can be avoided by Mennonites who wish to avoid it, and in Canada and Paraguay even non-combatant military service is not required. According to the precedent set in this country by the Civil War and the World War, as well as the general attitude of the leaders of our government, it is probable that Mennonites who are willing to perform non-combatant service will not come into conflict with the state in this country. Certainly those who are willing to perform non-combatant service in the army would also have no difficulty in carrying out any other orders issued by the state in connection with the prosecution of the war such as rendering service to industry or transportation. However, those Mennonites who are unwilling to perform non-combatant service or to participate in any way in the prosecution of a war, either financially or by any kind of personal service, and this number is still very large among the Mennonites of America, face the probability of conflict with the American state if another war comes. It is becoming increasingly clear to all of us that the next war will be a totalitarian war in which all the resources of the nation will be harnessed to the supreme goal of winning a complete victory. Thus our own native America may still be the scene of a serious conflict between the Mennonite church and the state, and we may once again be brought to the place where our martyr ancestors stood when they refused to accept the dictation of the state in which they lived regarding the practice of their religious faith and principles. It is a good thing that in preparation for such a possible conflict the Mennonite Church through its General Conference has expressed itself clearly and unequivocally on this question in the general conference statement of 1937 on "Peace, War and Military Service."



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