

Religious Borderlands and Transnational Networks

The North American Mennonite Underground Press in the 1960s

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In 1968, Sam Steiner, a 22-year-old Mennonite from Lima, Ohio, immigrated to Canada as a draft resister, one of approximately 60,000 people to do so from 1966 to 1976.¹ For more than three years, Steiner had been a student at Goshen College, a small liberal arts school in Indiana operated by the (Old) Mennonite Church. While he had long been opposed to the draft, 1968 was the year that Steiner lost his student exemption because he was expelled from Goshen for co-editing an underground newspaper.

Steiner edited the newspaper *Menno-Pause* with fellow students James Wenger, Lowell Miller, and Tom Harley. It ran for only two issues. The self-professed aims of *Menno-Pause*'s editors at the time were to serve as "a spontaneous voice" for opposition to "the Goshen College 'establishment'" by "poking and prodding the G[oshen] C[ollege] sacred cows," to function as a "critic" and "watchdog" of education and discipline on campus, to be a venue for student opinion, and to provide "general all-around crap."² After the appearance of the second issue, all four student editors were expelled from the college. *Menno-Pause* was just one of thousands of underground newspapers that existed in the 1960s and that illustrate the entangled history of Mennonite students in Canada and the United States at that time.

Mennonites are a diasporic group with origins in sixteenth-century northern Europe. Fleeing religious persecution and economic limitations, many settled in Canada and the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Though their history in these two countries has been very different, many Canadian and American Mennonites have strong connections to each other by virtue of a shared ethnic and religious heritage that is maintained and reconstituted by transnational networks such as those created by educational institutions and church organizations and by official and grassroots media.³

Historians of the North American student movement have tended not to focus on religious campuses or on religious motivations, preferring to examine the (often-competing) philosophies and actions of various student groups. Doug Owram, for example, reviews the activities of the Company of Young Canadians, the Student Union for Peace Action, and the Canadian Union of Students, among others.⁴ An exception is Douglas Rossinow's study of Christian student organizations at the University of Texas in the 1960s. Rossinow shows that a minority of Christian students existed whose exposure to religious traditions such as the Social Gospel and to student radicalism resulted in their resolve that "they could live a life of meaning only if they decided on, and acted on, their values."⁵ While not discussing religion or religious hypocrisy per se, Roberta Lexier notes that the "gap between myth and reality" was "the primary focus of social movements in Canada, as students worked actively to promote specific democratic values."⁶ This gap was a particular struggle for Mennonite students on Mennonite campuses.

This study of Mennonite student newspapers adds a religious dimension to the scholarly work that has been done on the importance of networks to the student movement, such as that of David Churchill, Stuart Henderson, and Roberta Lexier.⁷ Lexier demonstrates that transnational social movements shaped student movements in English Canada to move beyond campus radicalism, while Henderson and Churchill show that American draft resisters in Toronto were sustained in their radicalism by alternative social spaces (such as Yorkville) that enabled them to link local actions with global movements. Michael Foley discusses the importance of radical newspapers—student and otherwise—in creating a network of support for draft resistance during the Vietnam War.⁸ John Hagan investigates the migration of Vietnam War resisters from the United States to Canada and outlines the cross-border network created by the Toronto Anti-Draft Program, its production of the *Manual for Draft-Age Immigrants*, the newspaper created by the Union of American Exiles, and the networks established by religious groups such as the Quakers.⁹ My focus on religion within these networks demonstrates that Mennonite students were part of a broader transnational student movement and that their religious backgrounds enabled them to see themselves not only as radicals challenging orthodoxy but also as prophets calling for a return to the radicalism of their faith's origins.

Student newspapers were central to the student movement and these networks, and their censorship was "the final key ingredient in the development of campus unrest."¹⁰ The *Carillon* was censored on the University of Saskatchewan's

Regina campus in 1968–1969, and in 1966, Simon Fraser University’s suspension of *The Peak* forced it underground.¹¹ The problem, Owram argues, was not so much that university administrators opposed the student movement but that they “mishandled situations. They were both too tough and too soft. Universities had traditionally assumed a quasi-parental supervisory role in relation to their occasionally troublesome and all too often high-spirited students.... The administrator and the senior faculty member thus assumed the role of a moral authority figure as well as official of the university.” He adds that “universities saw themselves as being forced by circumstance and history to take on a role that comprised family pastor, teacher, and parent. Overall, the university’s approach to students was a kind of benign authoritarianism.”¹² The “quasi-parental” and “pastoral” role administrators played on religious campuses was even greater, of course. Administrators at these church colleges, however, also struggled with their role as authority figures and the challenge to their consciences the student press presented.

This study of five North American Mennonite underground newspapers (*Remnant*, *Piranha*, *The Fly*, *College Scroll*, and *Menno-Pause*) at five North American college campuses (Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Eastern Mennonite College in Virginia, Bethel College in Kansas, Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Manitoba, and Goshen College in Indiana) contributes to the broader scholarly discussion of the North American student movement by adding two focuses: transnational networks and religious borderlands.¹³ In the context of this study, I argue that religious borderlands were the underground newspapers and Mennonite colleges where traditional Mennonitism and the New Left were entangled. These colleges and publications bound people together across large regions that transcended political boundaries. Although the papers were produced in a specific geographic location (often an American college campus), their content and subscribers were transnational. The idea of borderlands at first glance appears to have much in common with liminality. Both seem to address fringes or edges. Liminality, however, suggests that there is a normative “center”; a borderlands approach does away with such privileging.¹⁴ The advantages of a transnational approach are that it encourages the scholar to explore how all parties involved were transformed in processes that have typically been seen as unidirectional (such as the flow of migrants from one country to another or the flow of religious authority from leaders to followers). A transnational approach encourages the examination of not only the differences and conflicts but also the connections and continuities

between groups (such as migrants, host societies, and sending societies or religious authorities, religious adherents, and religious rebels). The formation, maintenance, and re-formation of such transnational networks were essential for North American Mennonites after World War II, as increasing numbers of them migrated from farms to cities and entered secular institutions (particularly businesses and universities). They were also critical during the 1960s, when Mennonite university students found themselves torn between the expectations and commitments of the student movement and those of their religious leaders.

“Borderlands” reference geographic and political spaces,¹⁵ but they also refer to social spaces. Indeed, these last have come to be viewed by some scholars as the more significant. Anthropologists Gupta and Ferguson define borderlands as “an interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybridized subject.”¹⁶ They argue that geographic and political space, “for so long the only grid on which cultural difference could be mapped, need to be replaced by multiple grids that enable us to see that connection and contiguity—more generally the representation of territory—vary considerably by factors such as class, gender, race, and sexuality, and are differentially available to those in different locations in the field of power.”¹⁷ I would add “religious identity” to the factors that they list here. Gupta and Ferguson do well to remind us of the importance of power. Historians Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron similarly emphasize power structures in their definition of borderlands as “the contested boundaries between colonial domains.”¹⁸ When considering religious identity as a type of borderland, it is necessary to keep such power relations in mind.

Religious borderlands are the spaces where religious identity is questioned, challenged, or in flux.¹⁹ These spaces may be physical or geographic, but they are more likely to be intellectual or emotional. A borderland, sociologist Wade Clark Roof observes, is “a space of conflicted identities that harbors violence, fears, struggles, deep ambivalence.”²⁰ Since religions are “unfinished creations, always evolving, their boundaries drawn and redrawn to fit new circumstances,”²¹ they are better understood as borderlands than as institutions or ideologies. Religious historian David Carrasco defines religious borderlands as “the existential conditions of people who often, if not continually, find themselves at the crossroads of their lives and seek new combinations of resources—cultural and religious—to carry on creative struggles for survival and to thrive.”²² The stories of these people and their communities are key for understanding religious borderlands. As political geographer Alex van Wijnhe

notes, “Borders come to life at the level of the narrative, anecdote and communication, through everyday experiences of individuals.... These narratives can be individual, but also exist at group-level.”²³

By connecting Mennonites on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border and by serving as a space in which these Mennonites could debate and reimagine their evolving religious identity, underground newspapers and Mennonite colleges functioned as religious borderlands. The discussion here of five Mennonite underground newspapers in Canada and the United States, most of them on Mennonite college campuses, challenges simplistic dualities that position religious authorities against young radicals. The concept of religious borderlands instead reveals that college campuses and underground newspapers during the Vietnam War era functioned as spaces where both Mennonite students and religious leaders could question their positions.

Remnant and the Radical Mennonite Union

Underground newspapers functioned as sites where young Mennonites in Canada and the United States attempted to negotiate the competing claims of Mennonite religious identity and the transnational student movement. Mennonites in a variety of situations—living in the city, attending public universities, or studying at Mennonite colleges—produced such newspapers. They were often hastily (and poorly) mimeographed and with low circulation numbers, and it is fortunate that any of them have been preserved. Many published only a few issues before being shut down by authorities or because of lack of funds. What is notable about the papers that have been preserved is their extensive geographic reach. Newspapers published in Illinois and Manitoba would carry news of events in British Columbia and Indiana and be read by subscribers in Ontario and Florida.

An example of such a paper is *Remnant: Forum for Radical Mennos*, a Mennonite underground newspaper published in Chicago by “Steve, Mark, Stein, and G. P. Funk” in 1969.²⁴ Only one issue—its third—has survived. This issue included news of protest actions by Mennonites in support of the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign at Goshen College in Indiana, North Newton High School in Kansas, Evanston Hospital in Illinois, and in Pennsylvania.²⁵ Other items included favorable and supportive reviews of student underground papers on Mennonite college campuses: *Menno-Pause* and *the other wall* at Goshen College and *The Fly* at Bethel College.²⁶ Two issues of *Remnant* devoted space to the Radical Mennonite Union (RMU), a protest movement comprised of

Mennonite students at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia that was led by John Braun.²⁷ Excerpts of the RMU's "Radical Manifesto for Mennonites" were published in *Remnant's* first issue.²⁸ While student protest often has been examined in a national context, the story of *Remnant* and the Radical Mennonite Union reveals that student protesters were dependent on a transnational exchange of ideas and support.²⁹

The manifesto addressed four major issues regarding Mennonitism: the church's limited engagement with political and social issues, the absence of true democracy in the church, the limitations of religious education, and the conservatism of Mennonite society. The language used is provocative, as when church members are described as "passive, docile idiots . . . human near-vegetables incapable of facing life with any kind of honesty."³⁰ Despite this harsh tone, Braun did not reject religious institutions but instead called for a radical transformation. The manifesto decries the Mennonite church's defense of "rigid theology and outdated social mores" and its support of "the status quo in the political sphere." The document encouraged Mennonites to actively support draft dodgers and war resisters, and it called on the church to reform itself, allowing "free and open discussion of all theology, doctrines, rules, etc." Religious education—whether in the churches or on Mennonite college campuses—was to be similarly reformed. Women were to be liberated and treated with equality. "To honestly follow Christ in this day," the manifesto notes, "is to make the social revolution."³¹

After publishing excerpts of this manifesto in its first issue, the editors of *Remnant* included a reflection on the manifesto by its author, John Braun, in their third issue. Braun now judged the manifesto to be insufficiently radical, particularly with respect to its suggestions regarding democracy in the church.³² He advocated a more activist approach: forming coffee houses, living communally, producing underground publications, and supporting antiwar efforts.³³ In particular, Braun encouraged Mennonites to work together with non-Christian radicals, thereby attempting to link Mennonite students to a larger North American student movement. In so doing, Braun attempted to redefine Mennonitism, arguing that the quietism of twentieth-century Mennonites in the face of social change exemplified by the protest movements of the New Left was an abandonment of the radicalism of their sixteenth-century Anabaptist origins.³⁴ After some provocative and poetic slogans, Braun wrote a conclusion to his "Confession of Faith" that incorporated references (some unattributed) to Canadian poet-musician Leonard Cohen's 1966 novel *Beautiful Losers*:

Down with Fat-Cat Christianity
Obscenity is stuffing yourself and your garbage can while watching
with quiet glee as “our Boys” burn rice paddies in Vietnam,
Happiness is smashing the state
Before change, understanding; before understanding, confrontation.
Anabaptists have a persecution complex, or is it prosecution complex?
A New Christianity for a New Religious Age
God is alive; Magic is Afoot
“Welcome to you who read me today. Welcome to you who put my heart
down. Welcome to you, darling and friend, who miss me forever in
your trip to the end.”
(Cohen)³⁵

Braun’s writings reveal many connections and continuities with the Mennonite church he rejected. The manifesto, for example, demands not the rejection of the church but its transformation. His use of religious language (“confession of faith”) is further evidence of an ongoing interest in maintaining religious affiliation. Braun had connections with other Mennonite members of the New Left across the border in the United States, as his activities were reported in Mennonite underground newspapers there. The Chicago Mennonite editors of *Remnant*, for example, reported that RMU members had joined a student strike in support of eight professors who had been dismissed from Simon Fraser University.³⁶ The *Remnant* editors voiced their support of RMU members’ activities: “In their spare time, these students are developing a multi-media happening with theological overtones. This looks like part of a diabolical scheme to radicalize people with fascinating educational tools. God bless these efforts north of the border.”³⁷

The Underground Press on Mennonite College Campuses

Operating in the major urban centers of Chicago and Vancouver, *Remnant* and the Radical Mennonite Union were free (so long as their founders’ interests and/or finances permitted) to continue their work. Editors of underground newspapers on Mennonite college campuses, by contrast, had to contend with administrative officials whose interests often ran counter to theirs. Although most Mennonite colleges were in the United States, many Canadian Mennonites attended these schools. These U.S. institutions were larger and better established than the relatively few Mennonite colleges in Canada, and they offered

a greater number of degrees. Parents and religious leaders viewed these U.S. colleges as safe environments that were suitable for a young person's first adventures away from home. In addition, Mennonites on both sides of the border funded—and taught at—these U.S. schools. Underground newspapers on Mennonite college campuses thus functioned as religious borderlands for students and faculty alike and for both Canadians and Americans.

For example, Virginia's Eastern Mennonite College was home to *The Piranha*, an underground newspaper that began in response to campus restrictions that included faculty censorship of the official student newspaper, *The WeatherVane*.³⁸ A former editor of *The Piranha* explained the origins of the paper, writing "The *WeatherVane* was pretty much censored. We did not show movies on campus. We were still trying to get musical instruments. It was a time where . . . Mennonite women wore [religious head] coverings. It was kind of pre-jeans. So, it was the times and something seemed to need to be done. So we created this paper."³⁹ *The Piranha* served as a forum where Mennonites could debate their changing religious practices regarding dress and social activities. Despite the controversial content and language of the paper, the administration at Eastern Mennonite College never did more than "chat" with the student editors of *The Piranha*. The paper died a natural death after a year, and one of the editors subsequently was invited by college administration to be the editor of a newly uncensored *WeatherVane*.⁴⁰

Bethel College, a Mennonite church-owned school in Kansas, also had an underground newspaper. *The Fly*, published from 1968 to 1970, discussed "student power . . . the Vietnam War, oppression, irrelevant classes, required chapel, Bethel College Mennonite Church, US President Nixon and Bethel President Voth—always in very colorful, forceful language."⁴¹ *The Fly* was one of the campus newspapers endorsed by the editors of *Remnant: Forum for Radical Mennos*.⁴² Bethel College administration did not share *Remnant's* view and took a very different approach from that of administrators at Eastern Mennonite College. In Kansas, administrators "worked for two years to close [*The Fly*] down" and were ultimately successful.⁴³

While there do not appear to have been any underground newspapers at Winnipeg's Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC), students did take advantage of school-sanctioned outlets for expression. *The Wittenberg Door* was a bulletin board on which students posted news items, art, poetry, and personal commentary. Students often commented on each other's postings and lengthy dialogues could ensue.⁴⁴ By its very nature, little of this material has survived over the years.⁴⁵ Other student outlets were CMBC's student yearbook and the

official student newspapers, the *College Scroll* (1948–1969) and its successor, *'Ayin* (1969–1999).⁴⁶

The *College Scroll* existed, the student editors explained in 1968, not for discussion of the “scholarly aspect of student life” (which was the function of classes, prayer meetings, and the *Wittenberg Door*) but for “artistic expression. We have seen that the result of suppression of expression in the school papers of certain of our fellow American colleges has been the organization of ‘underground’ publications.”⁴⁷ The existence of the *College Scroll* made underground papers on the CMBC campus unnecessary, its editors claimed. Only a minority of the articles published there in the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, address the sorts of issues raised by these other, more radical papers.

That said, CMBC students in general—and the contributors to the *College Scroll* in particular—were not oblivious to the transnational student movement of the 1960s. This paper’s involvement in this broader phenomenon integrated Mennonite students into these currents while at the same time maintaining permeable ethno-religious boundaries. An examination of the issues published in this decade, however, shows that these students’ interest was limited to the cultural aspects of the New Left (beatnik and hippie life) and Vietnam War protests.⁴⁸ The Vietnam War was a topic of particular importance for Mennonites: those in the United States had to determine how (or if) to resist the draft, while those in Canada had to determine their response to so-called draft dodgers (only some of whom were fellow Mennonites). The challenge for some was that living out one’s Mennonite beliefs (pacifism) might result in identification with the countercultural trends of the 1960s.

Appearing in the fall of 1968, *Menno-Pause* (an underground newspaper edited by four students at Goshen College, Indiana) contained a critique of Mennonite conservative social practices, called for a new definition of Mennonitism in light of broader social changes, and judged Mennonite authorities for religious hypocrisy. Articles included comment on Goshen College’s policy against dancing, its ban on popular music in public spaces on campus, discrimination against women in college housing policies, the decline in the use of religious head coverings among college women, and the reasons for low male enrolment at the college. Mennonite authorities were subtly critiqued for not providing sufficient leadership in response to the Vietnam War; they encouraged hiding in colleges or urged young men to seek alternative service assignments (1-W) instead of challenging the draft. The editors claimed that many young Mennonite men were avoiding attending Mennonite colleges, “despite the risks of being drafted,” and instead were accepting 1-W assignments,⁴⁹

“the sheer individual freedom of a job,” or attendance at state universities without the “strict code of conduct” of Mennonite colleges.⁵⁰ This first issue of four mimeographed pages ended with a brief note on editorial policy: “In keeping with the *Menno-Pause* policy of printing only articles of virgin purity, we have deleted the following less than acceptable words from the articles which herein appear: goodness gracious, golly-gee, heck, shucks, asinine, fink, raunchey [sic], LBJ, fuck.”⁵¹ The last word, it was claimed, had been deleted thirty-seven times.

Reaction on campus to this first issue was mixed at best. J. Daniel Hess, professor of communication at Goshen College at the time, was “tickled” that the four young men “had a sense of humor and enough energy to put together a funny sheet. I wasn’t the only faculty member who liked it.... What I didn’t know until Monday morning was that a number of students, as well as ‘the establishment,’ didn’t find the publication funny.”⁵² Hess contacted the four editors when he learned that there was a possibility of their being sanctioned and “suggested that they bring out a second issue that clarified their function of providing innocent fun.” In retrospect, he noted that this was “very bad advice.”⁵³

Whereas the cover of *Menno-Pause*’s first issue quoted Goshen College president Paul Miner (“and we all need a sense of humor”), the second issue’s cover featured a poem entitled “Ode to the Four-Letter Word” (purported to be from a book titled *Pornography and the Law*) and a quotation from Martin Luther (“A Christian should and could be gay, but then the devil shits on him”). The shift in tone is clear here. The first issue quoted the college president, reminding the reader that even authority figures in the Mennonite community advocated a humorously critical approach to life. The second issue’s cover quotations are a more aggressive response to the criticism of the editors’ inclusion of one swear word in the first issue.

The second issue of the publication was twice as long as the first, running to eight pages. The editors noted that their previous issue had been subject to “super-pious pronouncements” because of its use of one swear word. They quoted at length from a 1965 article by Howard Moody in *Christianity and Crisis*⁵⁴ that commented in part, “Vulgar speech and four-letter words are not blasphemous or immoral, and our shame and prudery over them are basically class matters.”⁵⁵ The student editors concluded, “We don’t think ‘vulgarity’ is something to get hung up on, one way or the other.”⁵⁶ Another article on the same subject published excerpts from Episcopal priest and civil rights activist Malcolm Boyd’s *Free to Live, Free to Die*.⁵⁷ In it, Boyd argued that the

“true obscenity” is smiling at racist jokes or living in neighborhoods that exclude Jews and African Americans.⁵⁸ He wrote, “Can’t people care enough about others to try hearing what they are saying, despite their selection of words? . . . ‘Dirty words’ are apparently a greater shock than the dirty realities we have been conditioned to ignore, the dirty things we do to each other every day, often in the name of high-sounding words like duty, patriotism, and religion.”⁵⁹

Other articles with a similarly serious intent addressed the religious nature of the college and the quality of its faculty. President Mininger’s public explanation of the purpose of Goshen College (the “College is here to serve the Church”) was questioned in light of the fact that almost one-third of the student body was non-Mennonite. Why had these students been admitted if the college was part of the church, the student editors asked. Was the college merely a Sunday school under another name? Whatever the case, they wrote, “this is no longer education; this [is] training (conditioning in psychological terms).”⁶⁰

Faculty who demonstrated an awareness and acceptance of the secular non-Mennonite world were lauded in the newspaper’s second issue. Fine arts professor Mary K. Oyer was assessed in what the editors claimed was the first article in a series that would evaluate instructors on campus. Oyer was endorsed as “human” and “alive.” “Talk with her sometime about the Beatles, TV (she watches Hitchcock at 10:00 sometimes), gospel songs, McLuhan, Bach, G[oshen] C[ollege], or just life.” The editors noted that Oyer enjoyed the music of avant-garde composer John Cage and was interested in the sculptures of modern artist Alberto Giacometti. The anonymous author concluded: “Hail Mary—who brings some fresh grace wherever she goes.”⁶¹

The articles included in this longer issue were wide ranging in content. In a satirical “transcript” of *Menno-Pause*’s editorial process, editor James Wenger was “quoted” as saying, “Well, I guess I showed those people what kind of person I am last issue. And here they all thought I was a nice, sensible, pious, little boy. (Laughs demonically; starts singing a horrendous version of ‘Lovely Rita Meter Maid.’)”⁶² Also published were a long letter submitted by Goshen College mathematics professor Delmar Good teasingly correcting the first issue’s graphical representation of the decline of religious head coverings on campus, an invitation to Goshen College students to join the Students for a Democratic Society⁶³ (“John Birchers need not apply for membership”⁶⁴), a suggestion to paint campus trash cans “psychedelic purple and pink,” a letter arguing that alcohol consumption in moderation yields the sort of fellowship too often

missing in Christian churches, and a classified advertisement asking to trade a leather-bound “King James version of God’s word” for back issues of *Playboy*.⁶⁵

After the appearance of this second issue, Professor Hess was called to President Mininger’s office to meet with “the top leadership of Goshen College” and was asked if he had encouraged the creation of the paper. He said he had not but “was ready to give [his] assessment of its place in the current national student mood.” He did so for “eight to ten minutes,” after which Mininger pointed out “a solicitation for a male partner” personal advertisement placed by student editor James Wenger in the underground newspaper *Berkeley Barb*.⁶⁶ Hess recalled, “For the men in the room, there was no longer a question about the moral intentions of the *Menno-Pause* staff. I was not prepared to respond. The meeting was over.”⁶⁷ At a faculty meeting a few days later, President Mininger asked for a unanimous vote of support for his decision to expel the four students: most faculty members voted in support, some abstained, and Hess himself was absent because of a friend’s medical emergency. The letter to the four students noted that their suspension was due to their “promoting or encouraging campus attitudes contrary to the philosophy and/or standards of Goshen College.” Russel Liechty, the author of the letter of expulsion, concluded, “I have prayed and will continue to pray that you and we as individual and institution may through His Spirit be directed in our search for Truth.”⁶⁸

Faculty met together the weekend thereafter for a venting session to “state their true feelings about the publication, about the Thursday faculty meeting [with the president], and about campus process in general.”⁶⁹ On the following Monday, Professor Hess was again called into the president’s office, this time for a one-on-one meeting. Hess took the opportunity to tell Mininger “in terrible language what I thought of him and Goshen College” for at least a half hour. He later learned that the president had defended him when some board members had asked that he be fired over his support for the editors of *Menno-Pause*. Almost thirty years after the *Menno-Pause* controversy, former president Mininger initiated a conversation with Hess about it. Mininger told him that he “wondered what happened to the four boys, whether they had recovered from their expulsion and humiliation.”⁷⁰ At Hess’s encouragement, Mininger visited former editor James Wenger at his and his male partner’s home in Chicago. Both Wenger and Mininger died shortly thereafter. There are some notable aspects of this story that make it more than simply an isolated disciplinary issue occurring in the 1960s at a small religious college

in the American Midwest. First are the religious language used in various articles in *Menno-Pause* and the student editors' interest in religious topics. They attacked what they considered to be frivolous applications of religious belief (prohibitions on dancing and popular music, the use of religious head coverings by Mennonite women, middle-class rejection of "crude" language) at the expense of those aspects of Mennonite religious commitment that they held more dearly (war resistance and rejection of racism). Their writing demonstrates not a dismissal of the religious tradition of the college but a call for its reexamination, much like the writings of Vancouver's Radical Mennonite Union in Chicago's *Remnant*. What the editors of *Menno-Pause* did reject, very clearly, is religious indoctrination and some Mennonites' refusal to engage with popular culture (thus, for example, they comment favorably on Professor Oyer's habit of watching late-night television).

The second aspect worth noting is the support of a significant minority of faculty members for the student editors. Professor Good's humorous submission correcting the graphing skills of the editors (and ignoring the discussion of religious head coverings in the article in question) is one example. Clearly Good did not feel offended or challenged by the newspaper if he was willing to contribute a light-hearted piece to its second issue. Hess's comments to President Mininger on the "current national student mood" are particularly telling. Hess was aware that in the fall of 1968, following a spring and summer filled with news of student protests around the globe as well as the anti-war demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, an underground student newspaper on the Goshen College campus was not an isolated challenge to college authorities but part of a larger historical movement. His words, however, fell on deaf ears.

Another notable aspect is the college president's reference to James Wenger's advertisement in the *Berkeley Barb* as the ultimate grounds for expulsion. It is not clear whether the solicitation for a sexual partner, Wenger's homosexuality, or the reputation of the *Berkeley Barb* itself was the problem from President Mininger's perspective, or whether all three were the issue.⁷¹ Professor Hess makes it clear, however, that the administration used Wenger's action (if not his homosexual identity) to judge the "moral intentions" of *Menno-Pause*'s editors. As a result, Goshen College authorities, with the support of many faculty members, put an end to the four students' public questioning of Mennonite religious beliefs and their public advocacy for the New Left.

After Menno-Pause

Menno-Pause editor Sam Steiner's expulsion from Goshen College was not the first conflict that he had had with the administration since his arrival in the fall of 1964. The administration was aware both of the changing nature of their college and of the transnational student movement. The composition of Goshen College student body was increasingly non-Mennonite, and *Menno-Pause* was evidence of some student (and some faculty) support for the New Left. In an attempt to adapt the school to these circumstances, college administration had taken some small, awkward steps by the end of the 1960s.

In September 1966, Steiner wrote to the administration, questioning policies regarding drinking, smoking, and dancing (topics that were also popular in *The Fly*, *The Piranha*, and *Remnant*). An extraordinary written exchange between Steiner and administration ensued, in which administrator Russel Liechty wrote unusually lengthy responses—not merely defending school policies but also raising philosophical questions regarding community and the limits of freedom. In November of that year, another, more serious, conflict developed when Steiner refused to record his attendance at mandatory school assemblies (which differed from the school's chapel services) as a protest against the use of religious language at those nonreligious events.⁷² His continued refusal to comply resulted in his suspension, despite the attempts of a pair of college senators to intervene and a small student protest.⁷³ Steiner responded with an open letter:

Was it worth it? I don't know. The issue was. The results might not be. Vietnam is not the only battleground, Civil Rights is not the only cause. If true intellectual ferment is not achieved, how can these other problems be resolved? It should not take a year in France to see that Goshen College is only trying to mimeograph "progressive" middle-class Mennonitism onto blank-faced students. The testimonials of graduates as to the narrowness of their education here is evidence of this. This failure is the root of my protest. My departure will be worth it if anyone starts to realize that the only road to truth is through challenge, and not through soft reinforcement of childhood experiences.... The hopes of this college lie in the hands of students like Dwight King and speakers like Vince Harding. My 2 ½ years [at Goshen College] have seen their and similar challenges either ignored or only tokenly listened to. The Christ you claim to follow would seem to deserve more than this.⁷⁴

Steiner was suspended from the school for the remainder of the semester. At the beginning of the next term, in May 1967, he was readmitted.⁷⁵ But in October 1967, he was suspended for the remainder of the academic year for his involvement with *Menno-Pause*.⁷⁶

Steiner was raised in a Mennonite home but was not a member of a Mennonite church and did not identify as a Christian in the late 1960s. He nonetheless used the rhetoric of the Mennonite religious tradition in which he was raised and that was the religious foundation of Goshen College. The final reference in Steiner's open letter to true Christian discipleship would have struck a chord with the college's Mennonite administrators. His invocation of the 1968 student protests in France and of the American civil rights movement and his upholding of Vincent Harding and others as models of Mennonitism are telling. Steiner clearly saw himself as existing in a religious borderland: one where the traditional Mennonitism and the New Left coexisted. He had been profoundly shaped by his experience of participating in Martin Luther King's Selma to Montgomery march in 1965. He subsequently joined the Students for a Democratic Society, which may be where he obtained his awareness of the French student protests.⁷⁷ Steiner thus viewed his actions at Goshen not as those of an isolated disaffected nonreligious Mennonite student but as part of a broader transnational student movement and, indeed, as part of the centuries-old Anabaptist movement, both of which spoke truth to power in their own way.

Steiner's expulsion from Goshen College resulted in the loss of his student exemption from the Vietnam War draft. He moved to Chicago—a haven for many draft resisters on their way to Canada—and worked with the Chicago Area Draft Resisters (CADRE) while appealing unsuccessfully for conscientious objector status to his local and state draft boards.⁷⁸ He was called up for active service on April 20, 1968, and refused to board the bus that was taking inductees to be sworn in. Members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation came to interview him about this refusal, but he would not meet with them. The next step would have been indictment for failure to comply with an order of his local draft board and failure to report for induction into the armed forces, but former classmates from Goshen College convinced Steiner to move to Canada in November 1968 rather than wait to be imprisoned.⁷⁹

In moving to Canada, Steiner took advantage of transnational networks comprised of draft resister supporters and Mennonites. While the pacifist commitment of the latter group suggests a natural affinity with the former, in fact the two did not come together until the late 1960s, and only after a struggle.

American Mennonites supported registration with the government as conscientious objectors (COs) and performance of alternative service rather than noncooperation with the draft—that is, until fifteen Mennonite draft resisters led by three Goshen College students convinced the annual assembly of the (Old) Mennonite Church at Turner, Oregon, to support noncooperation in August 1969.⁸⁰ Rather than quietly accept alternative service assignments, young Mennonite men now had the support of their church for burning their draft cards and resisting the draft in other ways. Most draft-age Mennonite men continued to register as COs, but just over fifty young Mennonite men resisted the draft. For example, Duane Shank, a student at Eastern Mennonite College who refused to register for the draft, was arrested on campus by the FBI and was convicted and sentenced to three years of community service. Dennis Koehn, a student at Bethel College who also refused to register for the draft, was arrested on campus by the FBI and was imprisoned for a year and a half.⁸¹

In Canada, Mennonites debated whether they should support draft resisters migrating to the country and whether that support should be restricted to those resisting on religious grounds. *The Canadian Mennonite*, an independent weekly newspaper edited by Frank H. Epp that was published in Winnipeg, Manitoba, regularly published articles about the Vietnam War and draft resistance, including articles by Vincent Harding and descriptions of draft protests at Mennonite colleges in the United States.⁸² Religious scholar Mara Apostol observes, “There was a profound sensitivity [among Mennonites during the Vietnam War] to the fact that the fates of the [Canadian and American] nations were deeply intertwined as far as militarization and the protection of conscientious objectors were concerned.”⁸³ Epp’s *I Would Like to Dodge the Draft-Dodgers But...* published in 1970, was written to convince Canadian Mennonites to support draft resisters and help draft resisters find assistance: the booklet lists contact information for draft resister assistance centers across Canada.⁸⁴ Mennonite Bob Neufeld worked as an employment counselor for Ottawa’s Assistance with Immigration and the Draft (AID)—a war resister support group—in the basement of the Ottawa Mennonite Church; Frank Epp had recommended the job to him.⁸⁵ Mennonites were “a mainstay” of the AID organization, and Mennonite churches in Winnipeg helped fund the Winnipeg Committee to Assist War Objectors.⁸⁶

Mennonite networks that linked the United States and Canada and the draft resister networks—which at times overlapped—proved essential for Steiner. Families, institutional connections, and the binational nature of the three largest

Mennonite church conferences had maintained cross-border Mennonite networks for over a century.⁸⁷ Although he could have had access to draft resister networks through his participation in the non-Mennonite CADRE, Steiner came to Canada with the assistance of his former Goshen College professor, Dan Leatherman. Leatherman had a sister-in-law living in New Hamburg, Ontario, and he arranged for Steiner to stay with her for his first night in Canada. He subsequently found accommodations in Waterloo with his former roommate from Goshen College. Steiner then made contact with Walter Klaassen, a professor at the Mennonite Conrad Grebel College, “who was active in the local support committee for draft resisters.”⁸⁸ Klaassen, in turn, connected Steiner with James Reusser, the pastor of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church. Reusser helped Steiner get a job at a supermarket owned by a member of his church and found him six months’ room and board with his wife’s aunt.

These contacts kept Steiner within Mennonite circles—as did his enrollment as a student at Conrad Grebel College—and after several years, he became a church member.⁸⁹ Steiner was baptized into Rockway Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario, in 1974, a church that had other draft resisters as members and that had impressed him during “a sermon on the theology of Bob Dylan.”⁹⁰ Steiner recalled that at his baptism, he declared that his “faith was not traditionally orthodox,” yet Rockway Mennonite “still made space” for him.⁹¹ In a biographical article in a Mennonite church publication in May 2012, Steiner asked, “Did the persona of the marginalized radical refugee survive in any form? Others will have to answer that.”⁹² He noted, however, that he has had a history of supporting war tax resistance⁹³ and advocating acceptance of homosexuality by the Mennonite church—ideas supported by only a minority of his fellow church members. Thus, Steiner maintained continuity with his earlier commitments to the 1960s student movement.

Conclusion

Looking across the Canada-U.S. border to find linkages provides a greater understanding of the student movement in the 1960s and 1970s, which has typically been treated within a national framework. Including the ways students of one denomination interwove ideas of the New Left and religious traditions shows other ways that the student movement in this period transcended the Canadian-American border. The networks that connected activists across North America and that were cultivated by underground newspapers and church college campuses were crucial in the 1960s, as urban Mennonites found

themselves torn between their commitments to the student movement and the expectations of their religious leaders. These newspapers and campuses functioned as both figurative and physical borderland spaces where the tensions between conservative religious belief and leftist political activity were negotiated and transnational connections were reinforced. Mennonite underground newspapers were part of the broader North American phenomenon that was the student movement, and they created a movement that exploited the porosity of Mennonite religious identity.

Many North American Mennonites were at the crossroads of their lives in the 1960s. The countercultural movements of that decade generated a contested religious borderland in the Mennonite community. Four hundred years earlier, European Anabaptists and Mennonites had been countercultural, but by the 1960s, North American Mennonite leaders were upholders of the middle-class status quo. Transnational networks allowed students, who perceived themselves as the “other” yet who simultaneously wanted to redefine Mennonitism on their own terms, to exchange ideas and obtain much-needed moral support via underground publications. Some of these students also relied on more traditional Mennonite networks of family and institutional connections, as was the case when Sam Steiner migrated to Canada after losing his draft exemption. Mennonite leaders, meanwhile, relied on other networks to keep abreast of the scope and challenge of the New Left. Canadian historian Frank Epp, for example, regularly received copies of the American publication *Menno-Pause*, and he corresponded with others about the newspaper. American sociologist Calvin W. Redekop, who taught at Goshen College in the late 1960s, received copies of writings by Canada’s Radical Mennonite Union. Reuben Baerg similarly received a copy of the Radical Mennonite Union manifesto; Baerg had been born in Saskatchewan and taught in Mennonite colleges in Canada and the United States. When the RMU issued its manifesto, he was pastor of Dinuba Mennonite Brethren Church in California.⁹⁴

In migration and diaspora studies, transnational theory has shifted the discussion away from assimilation and its nationalist assumptions by making us aware of the connections over borders and beyond the nation-state.⁹⁵ The stories of transnationalism and religious borderlands told here enable us to see how individuals in a time of social ferment attempted to negotiate a new relationship with both their secular and religious communities and how their religious communities joined them in this process. Interpreting these stories through the dual focus on religious borderlands and transnationalism frees us from creating a false binary between religious traditionalists protecting their

power and radicals on the fringe pushing for change. Shaped by resistance to the Vietnam War and by denominational identity, the transnational nature of student networks and the religious borderlands created by underground newspapers in the 1960s are best understood by broadening our scholarly gaze beyond national frameworks.

Notes

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