

Mennonite Studies 101, Session 1

(Victor Kliever, March 1, 2015)

Focus: Mennonite World Conference

(www.mwc-cmm.org)



Mennonite, Brethren in Christ and Related Churches
Iglesias Menonitas, de los Hermanos en Cristo y afines
Églises Mennonites, Frères en Christ et Apparentées



**Mennonite
World Conference**
A Community of Anabaptist
related Churches

**Congreso
Mundial Menonita**
Una Comunidad de
Iglesias Anabautistas

**Conférence
Mennonite Mondiale**
Une Communauté
d'Églises Anabaptistes

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MS 101, 1-2

Global Mennonite Population (MWC 2012 statistics)

Total Mennonites, in 83 countries	1,774,720
North America —29.8% (<i>523,969 in 2009</i>) (USA 391,900; Canada 137,208)	529,108
Latin America —10.5% (<i>169,864 in 2009</i>) (Par. 33,251; Mex. 32,036; Bol. 24,988)	186,339
Africa —38.3% (<i>592,106</i>) (Congo 235,202; Ethiopia 224,407)	679,053
Asia —17.8% (<i>265,447 in 2009</i>) (India 149,849; Indonesia 108,528)	315,645
Europe —3.6% (<i>64,740 in 2009</i>) (Ger. 46,757; NL 8,030; Switz. 2,500)	64,575

MS 101, 1-3

The Mennonites in North America (www.mwc-cmm.org)



**North America
América del Norte
Amérique du Nord**

MS 101, 1-4

Some US statistics:

❖ Total Mennonites in USA	391,900
❖ Congregations in USA	4,718
❖ Average membership/congregation	83
❖ Population of USA, 2014	318,900,000
❖ Mennonite percentage of US population	0.1%

(i.e., Mennonites are a very small minority group)

MS 101, 1-5

More statistics:

- ❖ Mennonite conference bodies in US: **20**
- ❖ Members of MWC: **5**
 - ❖ Mennonite Church USA
 - ❖ Mennonite Brethren
 - ❖ Brethren in Christ
 - ❖ Conservative Mennonite Conference
 - ❖ Sinode Jemaat Kristen Indonesia

(Some non-members include: Amish, Beachy Amish, Bruderhof, Church of God in Christ (Mennonite), Old Order Mennonites, Old Order River Brethren, Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches, Reformed MC, others)

MS 101, 1-6

Some Canadian statistics:

- ❖ Total Mennonites in Canada (2012, MWC) 136,787
(Kraybill, *Concise Encyclopedia*: 144,000)
- ❖ Total Mennonite congregations 1,246
(*Concise Encyclopedia*: 1,316)
- ❖ Average membership/congregation 109.8
- ❖ Population of Canada, 2014 (*Stats Can*) 35,540,400
- ❖ Mennonite percentage of Canadian population 0.4%
(i.e., Mennonites still a very small minority group)

MS 101, 1-7

More statistics:

- ❖ Mennonite conference bodies in Canada: **28**
- ❖ Members of MWC: **5**
 - ❖ Can. Conf. of Mennonite Brethren Churches
 - ❖ Mennonite Church Canada
 - ❖ Evangelical Mennonite Conference
 - ❖ Evang. Mennonite Mission Conference
 - ❖ Brethren in Christ, Canada

(Non-members include: Amish, Chortitzer MC, Church of God in Christ (Mennonite), Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches, Hutterian Brethren, New Reinland MC, Old Colony MC, Old Order Mennonites, Sommerfeld MC, and others)

MS 101, 1-8

Who are “the Mennonites”?

Compact Oxford Can. Dictionary (2002):

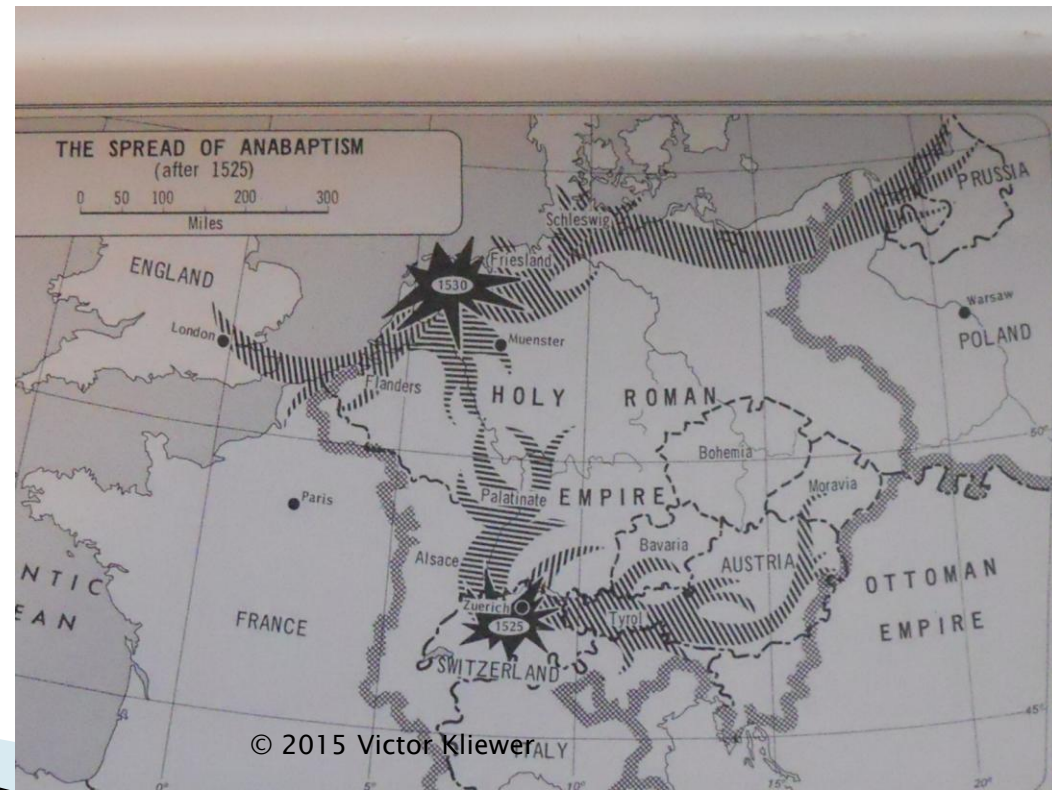
- ▶ “Mennonite” (*noun*)—a member of a Protestant denomination originating in 16th-century Friesland, emphasizing adult baptism and rejecting military service and the holding of public office.
- ▶ ***Is this definition adequate?***
- ▶ ***What would you consider the best identity markers?***
- ▶ ***What are the worst ones?***

MS 101, 1-9

Mennonites trace their beginnings to the Anabaptists

- Multiple, chaotic beginnings in 16th c. Europe
- Much movement: partly evangelism, also persecution
- Leaders gradually emerged
- **Menno Simons (+1561)**

- Migrations led eastward and westward



MS 101, 1-10

But who are “the Anabaptists”?

Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary (1988)

- “Anabaptist”—a member of a sect which arose in Germany in 1521 with the object of withholding baptism until it could be accompanied by a confession of faith, opposing Church establishment, and teaching that Christians should renounce private possessions. Anabaptism became a highly spiritualized religion of ‘inner light,’ and also a focus for general peasant discontent. Anabaptists were persecuted by Catholics and Protestants alike.

➤ *Is this definition adequate?*

MS 101, 1-11

❖ The **Anabaptists** had a very passionate but harsh beginning

“**Anabaptist cages**”:
Lambertikirche—St. Lambert’s
R.C. Church—Münster, north
Germany

(Photo: C.J. Dyck, *Introduction*, 100)



MS 101, 1-12

- ❑ **Migration westward to North America**
 - ❑ Dutch (New Amsterdam/New York, from 1644)
 - ❑ North German (Germantown/Philadelphia, from 1683)

Present stone Germantown
Church used 1770-present



MS 101, 1-13

- ❑ Swiss, South German, Amish (Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana)
- ❑ Spread: Ohio (Bluffton), Illinois, Indiana (Goshen/Elkhart)
- ❑ **Important centre: Lancaster County, PA**, the “largest compact concentration of Mennonites in the world” (MHA)
- ❑ **MWC meets in Harrisburg (Lancaster Cty.), PA in 2015**

MS 101, 1-14

Who are the “Brethren in Christ”?

- Most original members were Mennonites
- Begun in Lancaster County, PA revival in 1770s
- Earlier known as “River Brethren” (near Susquehanna R.)
- Some migrated to Ontario from 1788, called “Tunkers”
- Name “Brethren in Christ” since 1866
- About 23,000 in USA, 3,600 in Canada
- Many more in south-east Africa (Zimbabwe >30,000)
- Active in MCC and MWC (2009 Assembly in Zimbabwe)

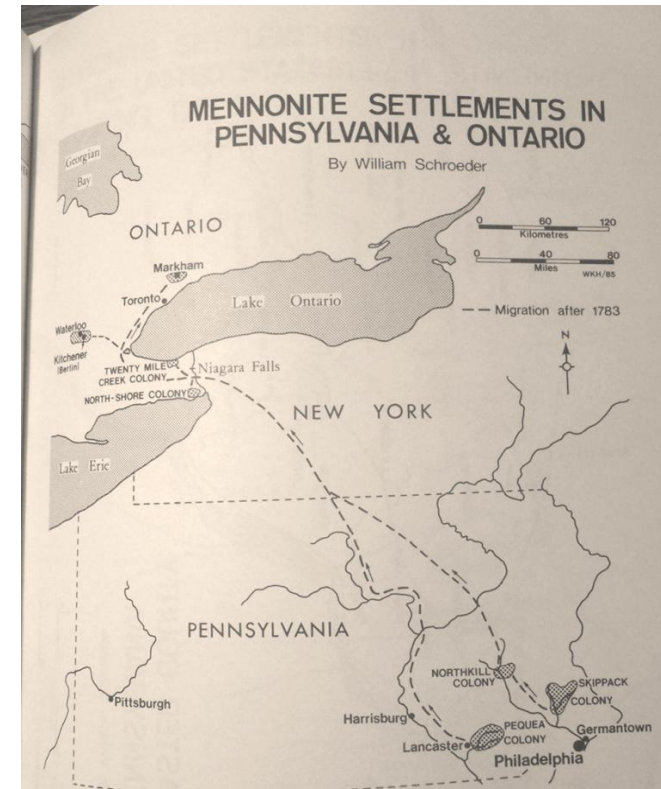
MS 101, 1-15

❑ 4 Mennonite settlement areas in Upper Canada (1786-1825):

- Vineland (“The Twenty”), Welland, Waterloo/Kitchener (Ebytown), Toronto/Markham (York)
- ❑ Migration to Canada after Revolutionary War (1776)
- ❑ Ebytown (Kitchener) settled 1807
- ❑ About 8,000 immigrants came to Upper Canada from USA and Europe

Migration route from
Pennsylvania to Upper
Canada (Ontario)

(MHAAtlas, 65)



MS 101, 1-16

First Mennonite Church, Vineland, Ontario

Oldest Mennonite church in Canada, established 1801 by immigrants from PA since 1786; called Moyer Mennonite Church until 1955



MS 101, 1-17

Vineland United Mennonite Church

Established 1927 as part of United Mennonite Church of Ontario; members were Russian immigrants of 1924-1926



MS 101, 1-18

Vineland Mennonite Brethren Church

Organized 1932 by Russian Mennonite immigrants



MS 101, 1-19

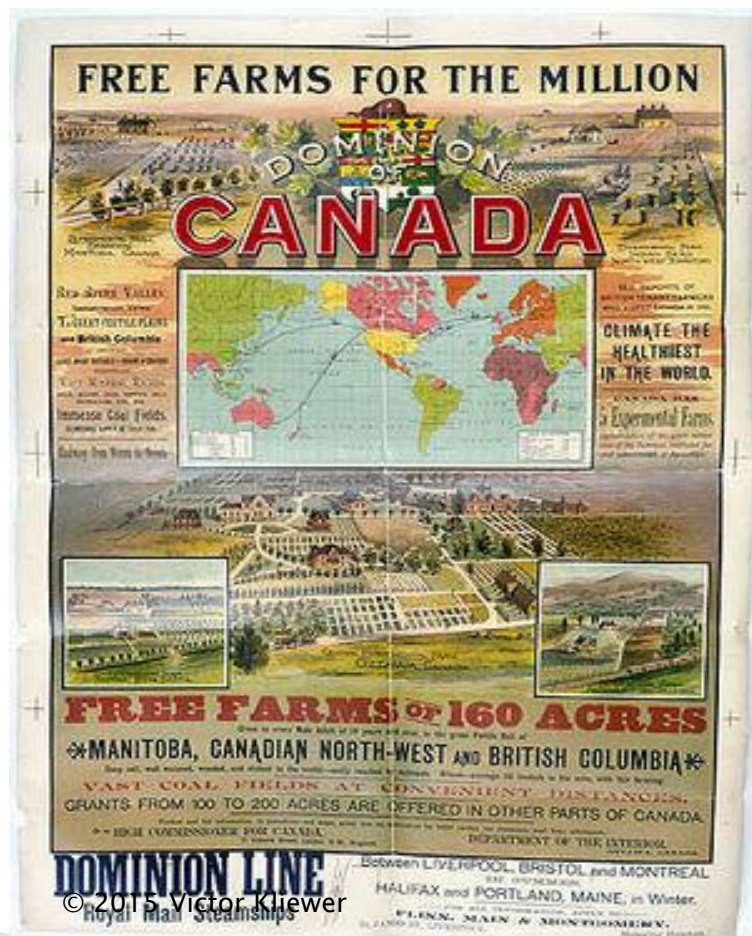
**Monument to the first Mennonite settlers in Canada,
Vineland cemetery (200th anniversary in 1986)**



MS 101, 1-20

- ❑ **Meanwhile**, the American and Canadian governments were seeking settlers for the “empty” prairies
 - ❑ Many Europeans came: Mennonites, Icelanders, Jews, Ukrainians, Germans, Galicians.
- ❑ At the turn of the century, 85% of Manitobans were Anglos or French or Metis

*Typical immigration poster
(canadachannel.ca)*



MS 101, 1-21

Settlers often wanted to live together

- ❑ Canadian government provided “reserve” lands for Mennonites, Icelanders (1875), Jews (1880s)
- ❑ **Reserve:** “An unbroken tract of land assigned for exclusive use, at least for a time, by a group of homogeneous settlers”
(Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, Vol. I, 210)
- ❑ Ukrainians settled together in Alberta and in SE Manitoba (1890s), but not on government reserve lands
- ❑ **Not all were welcome:**
 - ❑ Chinese, Japanese, East Indians not desired (“head taxes”)
 - ❑ Negroes from Africa or America were unacceptable
 - ❑ Aboriginal people/Métis repeatedly ignored or shortchanged

MS 101, 1-22

Four major Russian Mennonite migrations to N.A.:

- 1874-1880 7,000 *Kanadier* Mennonites to
Manitoba from Russia (+ 10,000 to USA)
- 1924-1930 21,000 *Russländer* Mennonites to
Canada from Russia
- 1947-1951 8,000 Mennonite refugees to Canada
from Russia (also via S. America in 1950s)
- 1993-2005 10-15,000 Russian Mennonite *Umsiedler*/
Aussiedler to Germany and Manitoba

▪ **A major theme in Mennonite history: Migration**

MS 101, 1-23

Mennonites have been divided into 2 categories:

(Donald Kraybill, *Concise Encyclopedia*)

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>“Traditional”</u>	<u>“Assimilated”</u>
Authority	In community	Individualistic
Gen. customs	Rejected	Accepted
Regulations	Strict	Freer
Religious ritual	Important	More freedom
Worship music	No	Yes
Education	No/Limited	Yes
Rural/Urban	Mostly rural	Mostly urban
Ministers	Lay/Unpaid	Professional
Women	Subservient	Equal to men
TV/Computers	No/Limited	Accepted

MS 101, 1-24

John J. Friesen divides Mennonites into 3 “streams”:

- ❑ **“Conservative/Conserving”**: Traditional beliefs and practices (Kraybill’s “traditional” Mennonites)
- ❑ **“Evangelical”**: Pietist/evangelical ties (personal climactic “conversion,” assurance of salvation, “witnessing,” missions); often weak pacifist and Menn. identity (Kraybill’s “assimilated”)
- ❑ **“Anabaptist”**: “Discipleship” (living according to Christ’s teachings); renewal of Anabaptist values; emphasis peace, justice, and service; evangelical and ecumenical (Kraybill’s “assimilated”)

(Friesen, *Building Communities*, 129-136)

MS 101, 1-25

Questions facing Mennonites in North America:

- How to understand the Bible?
- How to deal with the topic of homosexuality?
- How should we deal with wealth? And disparities?
- How to live in a technological, global, secular society?
- How to interact justly with Indigenous people?
- How to interact with other religious groups?
- Is the traditional Mennonite peace witness still valid?
- Others?

MS 101, 1-26

References:

- ❖ **GAMEO**
- ❖ ***Seeking Places of Peace* by Royden Loewen and Steven Nolt**
(A Global Mennonite History: North America), 2012

Focus of next session:

- ❖ **Mennonites in Latin America**
- ❖ ***Mission and Migration* (A Global Mennonite History: Latin America), 2010**