THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE SERVICE ON THE AMERICAN MENNONITE WORLD: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

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During the heat of World War II Donald Bain, a British soldier and poet, wrote a piece entitled "War Poets," defending the inability of the poetic imagination to register the meaning of the war:

We in our haste can only see the small components of the scene; We cannot tell what incidents will focus on the final screen. A barrage of disruptive sound, a petal on a sleeping face, Both must be noted, both must have their place. It may be that our later selves or else our unborn sons Will search for meaning in the dust of long deserted guns. We only watch, and indicate, and make out scribbled pencil notes. We do not wish to moralize, only to ease our dusty throats.¹

The war's meaning was elusive. Indeed, the war consisted of a multitude of incoherent details, and the design of the whole remained mysterious. It would be left to later generations to sort out the war's meaning.

Bain's interpretative restraint is part of what Paul Fussell terms the "ideological vacuum" that existed in World War II. Fussell writes, "If loquacity was one of the signs of the Great War—think of all those trench poets and memoirists—something close to silence was the byproduct of experience in the Second War." The repetition of the Great War within one generation was so demoralizing that "no one felt it appropriate to say much, either to understand the war or to explain it."² It was a war—nothing else. It contained all of the stupidity, cruelty and sadism of a great war. Cyric Connonlly described it as a war "of which we are all ashamed ... a war ... which lowers the standard of thinking and feeling ... which is as obsolete as drawing and quartering."³

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¹ Paul Toews is professor of history at Fresno Pacific College, Fresno, California.
³ Ibid., 142.
In sharp contrast was the Mennonite expectation for their wartime experience. A. J. Neuenschwander—longtime Mennonite minister, conference leader and member of the General Conference Peace Committee—articulated the expectant spirit of many Mennonite leaders in early 1941 when the Civilian Public Service (CPS) system was just getting started. Writing to Henry A. Fast, who became the first administrator of the Mennonite-run CPS camps, he expressed gratitude for the generosity of a political system that granted alternative service for conscientious objectors. It was an occasion of significance. Mennonites could now demonstrate to themselves and to the nation that their pacifism was “constructive . . . instead of destructive.” In his letter to Fast, Neuenschwander mused, “Will a new day dawn from this?” It was a question, to be sure; but behind the question was an optimism.4

Neuenschwander was not alone in gratitude and expectation. During the early years of the war Mennonites were full of confidence about the possibilities of the CPS system. Early in 1941 Fast wrote, “If the people in our churches can catch a vision of the wonderful opportunity God, through this arrangement of the government, has placed at their disposal . . . they will thank God for the opportunity and undertake it with the determination to make the most of it. Paul believed that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord.”5

The lead editorial in The Mennonite was just as effusive: “Now our beloved United States has, under the guidance of the heavenly Father, seen the need of a law whereby we, with others in true loyalty and love of country, are given the privilege of service of real benefit to our land, entirely under civilian control.”6

In its presentation to the 1941 Mennonite General Conference meeting in Wellman, Iowa, the Peace Problems Committee noted:

We should not fail to report to General Conference . . . the remarkably generous treatment which our representatives have received at the hands of the government officials concerned with this problem. . . . That our government, in the midst of a world tendency toward totalitarian and dictatorial methods, and in the midst of a national emergency including the threat of war, should make generous provisions for the consciences of non-

4 Letter from A. J. Neuenschwander to H. A. Fast, Jan. 11, 1941, Fast Collection, Box 1, folder 7, Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kans.
5 Henry Fast, “Mennonites and the Civilian Service Program,” The Mennonite, Jan. 17, 1941, p. 3.
resistant Christians, should be a matter of deep appreciation and gratitude by the entire church.\textsuperscript{7}

This optimism was partially rooted in the memory of World War I. The prospect of wartime service distant from the indignities, persecution and even martyrdom of World War I was surely reason for hope. The optimism was also linked to the permission granted to the National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO) constituency to run their own program with a high measure of self-governance. The prospect of young Mennonite men sequestered in less-traveled areas and under the partial supervision of church personnel was also good reason for hope.

Yet it would be shortsighted and even inaccurate to locate the optimism only in the different status granted to conscientious objectors in World War II. The ideologically charged atmosphere that surrounded the beginning of CPS was part of the idealism of the broader religious peace movement at the outset to the war, and the mid-twentieth-century Mennonite ideological reorientation.

The nation approached World War I with messianic expectations. The pyrrhic victory of 1918 sobered any national inclinations toward a second global military confrontation. Parts of the NSBRO constituency approached the beginnings of World War II with utopian expectations. Mennonites were not alone in dreaming about a new day coming out of the war. Paul Comly French, the Friends director of NSBRO, considered the CPS experience invaluable to the nation's democratic traditions. He thought it made two particular contributions: (1) it signified the preservation of individual rights amidst a consuming war, and (2) it made "a demonstration of the irresistible power of constructive good will as against force and violence." CPS would do that by forging model communities of peace and harmony out of the diverse people coming to each camp. They would "create a pattern of life that will demonstrate the way that nations can live together in peace and harmony."\textsuperscript{8} At the camp opening at Patapsco, Virginia, speaker Rufus Jones dedicated the camp to "that way of life which takes away the occasion of wars."\textsuperscript{9} Wilma Ludlow, in The Christian Century, described the camps as having "every chance of

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\textsuperscript{7} Twenty-Second General Conference: Proceedings, Reports and Resolutions (Wellman, Iowa, 1941), 17.

\textsuperscript{8} Paul Comly French, Civilian Public Service (Washington, D.C.: National Service Board for Religious Objectors, 1942), 11-12.

\textsuperscript{9} Quoted in Mitchell Lee Robinson, "Civilian Public Service during World War II: The Dilemmas of Conscience and Conscription in a Free Society" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1990), 3.
becoming that Third Order for which so many Christian leaders have been looking."\textsuperscript{10}

But the Mennonite embrace was more expressive and enduring. Long after the ambiguities of the Civilian Public Service system became troubling to other pacifist people, and their responses turned to critique, many Mennonite leaders remained emphatic about the possibilities of the CPS system. In 1945 and 1946, even as the CPS system was ending, there was a series of expressions by CPS leaders that suggest a sense of loss at the prospect of terminating the system.\textsuperscript{11}

This continuing embrace was related to an intellectual redefinition of Mennonitism during the middle third of the twentieth century, and its possibilities amidst the catastrophic events of the 1940s. That ideological revitalization, if not fully refined at the outset of CPS, was already apparent. It reached its apogee in 1944 with the simultaneous publication of Harold S. Bender’s “Anabaptist Vision” and Guy F. Hershberger’s \textit{War, Peace, and Nonresistance}.\textsuperscript{12} Leonard Gross and Guy Hershberger subsequently referred to 1944 as a “watershed year” in the history of the Mennonite Church.\textsuperscript{13} Indeed, it was the benchmark in the twentieth-century intellectual reconstruction of American Mennonite identity.

Bender’s and Hershberger’s work culminated a reconceptualization of the Mennonite past that could simultaneously shape the future. Mennonites were the bearers of a history whose time had come. The Mennonite story, correctly understood, offered alternatives to the catastrophe of the mid-twentieth century. Living in the shadows of various host societies, Mennonites had preserved values now capable of renewing a world gone mad with violence, cruelty and social


\textsuperscript{11} For example, Elmer Ediger, educational director for the MCC camps for much of the war, noted in October 1945, “It is not uncommon to hear a CPS man wish that his younger brother could get about a year of CPS experience.” The wish, he said, was a “sincere feeling that his brother [was] missing a valuable experience by having to stay at home.” So confident was Ediger of the importance of CPS that he spoke of “factors which lead us to want the CPS experience for the next generation of young people.” Elmer Ediger, “Do C.P.S. Men Favor a Voluntary Service Program for Peacetime?” \textit{Mennonite CPS Bulletin}, Oct. 22, 1945.

\textsuperscript{12} Harold S. Bender, “Anabaptist Vision,” \textit{Church History}, XIII (1944), 3-23; Guy F. Hershberger, \textit{War, Peace, and Nonresistance} (Scottdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944). Bender’s article was originally the presidential address at the December 1943 meeting of the American Society of Church History; the first Mennonite publication of the article was in \textit{MQR}, XVIII (1944), 67-88.

disintegration. The Mennonite tradition of community and solidarity offered an antidote to social dislocation and anomie. The peaceable ideal could reconcile a world reeling with war. By refocusing and embodying this past in fresh forms, Mennonites could open up new alternatives. The Mennonite past could be prologue to the American future.

The social ideals in the historical recovery were bipolar and immediately posed a social conundrum. At the same time, they moved Mennonites inward toward the creation of a more intentional "Christian social order" and outward in a missional and service activism. Bender's "Anabaptist Vision" address amply pointed to the ambiguity. This most "sacred" of modern Mennonite texts began by proclaiming that Anabaptism was a "a programme for a new type of Christian society which the modern world, especially America and England, had been slowly realizing." The ecumenical and missionizing testimony was clear. Bender concluded, "The Christian may in no circumstance participate in any conduct in the existing social order which is contrary to the spirit and teaching of Christ. . . . He must consequently withdraw from the worldly system and create a Christian social order within the fellowship of the church brotherhood."14

The Hershberger metaphor, of later years, was arresting. Mennonites were to be a "colony of heaven." That colony was no longer hemmed in by sectarian constraints. In fashioning their own communities Mennonites could work with a greater sense of the linkage between their social withdrawal and national social reform.

CPS, in this understanding, was not simply wartime service. It was an effort whose meaning could spread out far beyond the boundaries of small, segregated camps. Here Mennonites would demonstrate to a watching world the workability of their idealism. Both CPS managers and campers could think of themselves as important players in fashioning a new patriotism and even a new world order.

The system permitted Mennonites to fulfill a longing, frequently expressed in the interwar years, that their nonresistance be positive instead of negative; active rather than passive; and engaged, not withdrawn. One inductee's comments about the positive nature of CPS was typical:

There is a positive side to CPS. To us, it is an expression of our willingness to serve our country. . . . To the world it is proof of the strength of our faith while we stand the test of the pressure of war and public ridicule. For the church it gives opportunity to rethink in practical ways our principles of peace . . . and pre-

14 Bender, "Anabaptist Vision," Church History, 3-4, 23
serves for the church of the future a principle that has been a major factor in it origin, growth and witness.\textsuperscript{15}

A new recruit to the Colorado Springs camp recorded his sense of the significance of their efforts:

The first delightful days here at camp!—So many things to do!—Making new acquaintances!—Like-minded fellows representing varying denominations!—All here for similar reasons!—Little thought of things left behind—too busy to grow too lonesome—ahead of us—new experiences!—A broader view of life and our fellowmen. . . . Unlimited possibilities for living a positive Christian life devoted to peace!—no time for regrets and looking back!—Enthusiastic hope for a greater, nobler future.\textsuperscript{16}

Of men being released early because of age limits, this CPSer wrote: "Many of their lives continue to bear witness to their beliefs—they have done their part-nobly-sacrificially,-positively,-their lives here [sic] have been a new experience for them—a new experiment in the history of the world."\textsuperscript{17}

Much of the optimism was linked to the unique educational opportunity presented by CPS. Albert Gaeddert correctly observed that "never before had the church been in a position where it could reach a group of 4,000 of its young men in an educational program."\textsuperscript{18} That program provided an opportunity for church leaders not only to nurture the religious and character development of each individual but also to socialize the next generation into the recently refurbished idealism. CPS became the Mennonite university experience. It was the teach-in of the church, the place to inculcate the Anabaptist Vision school of understanding and refashion the identity of Mennonite youth.

At the core of the curriculum was the series of six booklets entitled "Mennonites and Their Heritage." Required reading in virtually every camp, they were designed—as Bender wrote in the introduction to each volume—to "contribute to a greater appreciation of the church and its splendid heritage of faith and life."\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{15} Dwight V. Yoder, "CPS at the Crossroads," \textit{Skyliner}, I (Oct. 1943), 3.


\textsuperscript{17} "Notes from a C.O. Journal," \textit{Pike View Peace News}, Oct. 18, 1941.

\textsuperscript{18} Albert Gaeddert, "What Have We Learned in Civilian Public Service," \textit{Mennonite Life}, I (July 1946), 16.

\textsuperscript{19} Bender's "Forward" appeared in each of the six study booklets that he edited and MCC published for the camps' educational program, under the series title "Mennonites and Their Heritage": Harold S. Bender, \textit{Mennonite Origins in Europe}, I (1942); C. Henry Smith, \textit{Mennonites in America}, II (1942); Edward Yoder, \textit{Our Mennonite Heritage}, III (1943); Ed G. Kaufman, \textit{Our Mission as a Church of Christ}, IV (1944); Guy F.
The interpretation of the past emphasized the commonality of both the story and faith. An ecumenical spirit prevailed, even when the slender volumes reflected the parochial knowledge of their particular writers. Furthermore, the divisions of the past could be bridged by the grandeur of the future. Guy Hershberger, as well as anyone, transmuted the hidden past into patterns and values that offered "far greater importance for the solution of . . . world problems" than most realized. Mennonites had a power to "make an unusual contribution to the welfare of the nation." They could exemplify a "true Christian patriotism of the highest type."\(^20\) CPS, at least in the imagination of the managers, was only the beginning of a new activist witness. As early as 1941 the arguments for CPS were as much the consequences of CPS as the system itself. One writer in *The Mennonite* was confident that CPS would "train men to become real missionaries of Christian love for relief and reconstruction work after the war is over."\(^21\) Harry Martens likened completion of CPS to graduation. Graduation from any school is properly called commencement. Graduation from CPS was to commence a life of active service amidst the ravages of the postwar world. Work of "National Importance" would become work of "International Importance."\(^22\) Henry Fast thought that the success of the CPS system would "determine very largely the whole future of Mennonitism in this country."\(^23\)

Albert Gaeddert, at the end of CPS, was confident that the church would be transformed because of the experience. Writing to a friend in December 1945, he mused: "The seeds have been sown, and there ought to be fruits, some of which should be nearly a hundredfold. We are living in such an interesting period, which has so many challenges to it; one almost fears that one will grow old too quickly."\(^24\)

II

The question before us is how to understand this heightened idealism and whether CPS had that kind of effect on the church. Were Gaeddert and Fast right? Were the consequences nearly a


\(^{21}\) Hershberger, *Christian Relationships to State and Community*, 71-72.


\(^{24}\) Letter from Albert Gaeddert to Elmer Gingerich, Dec. 19, 1945, Albert Gaeddert Papers, Box 2, file 15, Mennonite Library and Archives.
hundredfold? Did it shape the future of American Mennonitism? We are not the first to ask these questions. An earlier generation—Guy Hershberger, Albert Gaeddert, Melvin Gingerich, Howard Charles and Paul Albrecht—asked the same questions. The twenty-fifth anniversary of CPS offered another set of reflections on its meaning and impact. And now at the fiftieth anniversary we ask again: Are the contours of the American Mennonite experience different because of CPS?

Focusing on the idealism of the CPS experience obviously suggests that its primary consequence was the intellectual reorientation it made possible. As previously noted, the intellectual currents that defined CPS contained the conundrum of withdrawal versus engagement. CPS became a laboratory for differing social strategies. Some units were clearly part of an effort to return young men to rural Mennonite communities to continue there the traditional spatial segregation. Other units specialized in the study of postwar relief and reconstruction and prepared people for tasks in far-flung places. But it is the latter that came to define the postwar period. CPS was more a mechanism for engagement than for withdrawal. While its legacies are numerous, three particularly fostered this engagement: (1) CPS engendered a new self-confidence; (2) it produced a missional and service activism; (3) it accelerated the Mennonite ecumenical movement.

One reason the ideological consequences were so significant is that the CPS leaders returning to their home congregations came with other skills in addition to a broadened social and religious sensibility. This new generation of leaders was also empowered with self-confidence, administrative experience and political savvy. Historians and sociologists distinguish between traditional and innovative


leadership types in small ethnoreligious communities. CPS required innovative leadership. Young Mennonite men thrust into positions as camp directors, camp business managers and camp educational directors found and developed the resources to do a credible job. They managed thousands of dollars, hundreds of men, and negotiated intricate political, community, business and church relationships. They assumed many of the tasks associated with being the mayor or city council of a small town. Following the war these skills, hinged to a new religious outlook, flowed into Mennonite churchly institutions and enterprises of innumerable kinds.

Boyd Nelson, writing for the twenty-fifth anniversary of CPS, saw more clearly than most the combined impact of this ideological and administrative education. He described the many ex-CPSers who went on to higher education and then into the professions as moving "out with a good deal of self-respect." In 1941 self-respect was in the possession of the intelligentsia. By 1945 it had passed into the hearts and minds of countless CPSers. But this self-confidence was more than individual. Nelson wrote:

From this experience has come a turning of the church's eyes out from its internal problems; a moving away from the defense to the more positive . . . we became aware of the need for positive Christian response to human need, rather than fearful, defensive reaction. . . . In one short five-year period, history took out of the hands of the Mennonite Church many of its cherished goals and patterns and left it with a whole new world.

That new offense was observable in multiple ways. In 1935 Mennonite intellectuals were marginalized and under suspicion because of 1920s and '30s preoccupation with fundamentalist fears. By 1955 a host of younger intellectuals, partly schooled in CPS, occupied positions of influence denied the progressive intellectuals following World War I. In 1935 Mennonite theologizing of virtually all kinds was constricted by a smoldering fundamentalism. By 1955 the search for an Anabaptist theology replaced the dominance of fundamentalist motifs. In 1935 there was no Mennonite seminary; in 1955 there were three.

In 1935 most Mennonites were wary of interchurch dialogue. The resistance to Mennonite participation, even in historic peace church

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conversation, was strong except among the General Conference Mennonites. By 1955 young Mennonite intellectuals in Europe were organizing the Puidoux Conferences, which brought Mennonites into full participation in ecumenical peace conversations. All of these elements in the new offense were clearly inspired and enabled by the CPS experience and the new self-confidence it engendered. The missional and service activism and the enlarged Mennonite ecumenical movement were direct descendants of CPS.

What Hershberger called "a new social consciousness, and a new sense of social responsibility" became concrete, almost immediately following CPS, in Voluntary Service (VS) and Mennonite Mental Health Services (MMHS). While VS had its genesis in the Quaker work camps of the 1930s and as an alternative to Civil Defense activities during the war, its take-off was in the extension of CPS. There are both denominational and ecumenical forms of VS. The ecumenical illustrates the linkage to CPS.

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) version began at the 1943 Relief Training School in Goshen when Edna Ramseyer urged that Mennonite women be given service opportunities analogous to CPS. In the summer of 1944 such opportunities opened for sixty-one women—at the CPS hospital units in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and Howard, Rhode Island. The program grew dramatically to a post-war peak of 178 in 1949. Between 1944 and 1960, 1575 young people volunteered for summer service with MCC. Long-term Voluntary Service (one year or longer) grew apace. The first long-term service with MCC began in 1946. By 1960, 1497 people had given a year or more.

For most of these VSers the experience was analogous to CPS. Early VSers echoed the sentiments of early CPSers in their testimony to the meaning of engaging in "positive service," in their desire to become "living parables," to "challenge the accepted patterns of mediocrity in . . . church life . . . [and] to challenge the irresponsible

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31 Hershberger, The Mennonite Church in the Second World War, 286.

32 The history of these beginnings is found in many denominational and MCC sources but is most conveniently pulled together in Wilfred J. Unruh, A Study of Mennonite Service Programs (Elkhart, Ind.: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1965).

33 Ibid., A-85-87.

34 Ibid., A-109-10.
individualism which characterizes most of our decision making."\textsuperscript{35}

Here was the chance to continue many of the distinctive elements of the wartime experience: group living, leadership training, personal sacrifice, bearing witness to compassion and reconciliation. Irvin Horst understood the way Voluntary Service embodied the new idealism of the church. In an undated letter to VSers he wrote, "one of the secrets of voluntary service is ... the seeming paradox of being quiet and 'loud,' both humble and courageous, both doing and speaking."\textsuperscript{36}

The line from CPS to Mennonite Mental Health Services is a direct one. Leftover CPS funds facilitated the planning done by veterans of CPS administration and hospital work. Nowhere was the new Mennonite self-confidence better reflected than in the MCC decision of 1947 to establish three mental treatment facilities despite the lack of psychiatrists and medical directors.\textsuperscript{37}

There was an important transformation in this activism. Before World War II the boundaries of Mennonite international compassion and relief work were largely confined to the "household of Mennonite faith." Mennonite needs and dislocations dominated altruistic activity. During the war and following, those boundaries were enlarged. Today Mennonites meeting human need—"In the Name of Christ"—do not limit themselves to, or even necessarily begin with, the plight of Mennonite peoples. From their inception VS and MMHS demonstrated this willingness to offer assistance to all kinds of people.\textsuperscript{38}

There are many starting dates for the Mennonite ecumenical movement. The nineteenth century was the schismatic one in American Mennonite history, and the twentieth century is the

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., A-19-21.
\textsuperscript{36} Quoted in \textit{ibid.}, A-25.
\textsuperscript{38} A missional activism was closely linked to the expansion of social services in Voluntary Service and the mental health program. In the immediate postwar era the General Conference Mennonites thrust outward to new foreign missions in Japan, Taiwan and Colombia, and joined with other Mennonites for missions activity in Paraguay and Uruguay. See James Juhnke, \textit{A People of Mission: A History of General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions} (Newton, Kans.: Faith and Life Press, 1979), 210-11. Mennonite Brethren foreign mission expansion in the decade following the war included new efforts in Brazil, Colombia and Japan. Between 1945 and 1955 the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities initiated new activity in seventeen different countries. \textit{ME}, III, 715-16. During the same decade the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities ventured into Luxembourg, Honduras, Ethiopia and Somalia. \textit{ME}, II, 133.
ecumenical one. World War I, the plight of the Russian Mennonites, and the formation of the Mennonite Central Committee in 1920 have all been important in the twentieth-century ecumenical renaissance. But the story of the 1920s and 30s also includes deep suspicions and divisions between Mennonite denominations. It was easy to hurl charges of theological deviancy back and forth between denominations. Strong animosity followed the transfer of individuals between differing Mennonite subgroups. The distance between members of the Mennonite family permitted the perpetuation of stereotypes.

In bringing people together CPS sometimes reinforced those stereotypes. But more often it rendered them obsolete. Camp newspapers contain numerous comments on the easy fraternity and fellowship among different kinds of Mennonites, and the richness of being together. While some of the conservatives wished for denominationally segregated camps, the predominant desire among the campers was clearly the integrative and “cosmopolitan” unit. In the evaluations of CPS, 67% of those questioned thought the intermixture beneficial, while only 9% thought it harmful.39

Those sentiments quickly translated into a host of inter-Mennonite organizations and agencies. In 1957 Harold S. Bender, noting the common effort required to administer the CPS system, wrote: “World War II gave the greatest impetus to inter-Mennonite co-operation.” The “greatest” impetus was not measured against other significant influences. There are times when the truth is so compelling that such measurement is unnecessary. The data speaks for itself. Three inter-Mennonite organizations emerged between 1920 and 1940. Thirty-two were established in the twenty years following the conclusions of CPS. Among them are many that we identify as important carriers of Mennonite work and identity: Mennonite Mental Health Services, Mennonite Disaster Service, Mennonite Economic Development Associates, Council of Mennonite Seminaries, Council of Mennonite Colleges, and Mennonite Indemnity.40

III

James Juhnke long ago noted the double impact of wars upon American Mennonites. They both accelerate and brake the drift of

39 See, for example, Dean Stucky, “Isolationism,” *Rising Tide*, Sept. 1943, p. 2; and “United We Stand,” *Skyliner*, I (Oct. 1943), 9. The percentages are found in Albrecht, 12-13.

40 See Ken Neufeld, “Factors Associated with the Growth in Number of Inter-Mennonite Organizations” (Unpublished student paper, University of Southern California, n.d.); and Paul N. Kraybill, “North American Inter-Mennonite Relationships” (Unpublished paper, 1974, Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen, Ind.)
Mennonites into American culture. They sharpen the sense of civic responsibility and civil alienation. They focus and diffuse Mennonite identity. They fragment and revitalize.

World War II was surely no exception. It reinforced long-established patterns of deference to the state. The state granted special privileges to the historic peace churches, and Mennonites responded by being "die Stillen im Lande." A later generation would find those patterns troubling, with their perceived complicity.

World War II accelerated the movement into American society. The war revealed the degree to which a Mennonite cultural christianum was fractured and even disintegrating. It reinforced the need for mechanisms that would insure a continuing separation from the world. Mennonite Mutual Aid, the parochial school movement, rural revitalization and the "Mennonite Community" movement were all attempts to stem the Americanizing drift.

But the war also gave Mennonites an ideological particularity. CPS and the subsequent Voluntary Service programs linked orthodoxy to social compassion in a fashion that permitted the church to be socially more activist while remaining theologically conservative. This "servant activism" became the core of an ideologically revitalized Mennonite identity. The ideals of benevolence and service were, without doubt, activated by the war. CPS was the occasion that gave them concreteness and character and mediated them to the next generation. It did that and more. It also nurtured a new self-confidence. It connected Mennonites to each other as did no previous event in the twentieth century. It fashioned new institutions to channel the missional and service activism.

In 1958 J. Lawrence Burkholder noted that all "idealistic, separatistic communities" at some time face the dichotomy between the logic of history and theology which point toward separation, and the logic of contemporary experience which points toward greater social participation. CPS was that occasion for American Mennonites. The refashioning of a people's identity is not the work of a single event. Yet CPS more than any other event contributed to that refashioning.

41 James Juhnke has made this point repeatedly in articles and books dating back to 1970. For a recent article, see James C. Juhnke, "Mennonite Benevolence and Revitalization in the Wake of World War I," MQR, LX (1986), 15-30.