



## FAITH AT WORK: MENNONITE BELIEFS AND OCCUPATIONS

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**Mennonites in the United States regarded farming as an ideal occupation, but economic difficulties with agriculture have led many Mennonites to participate in new economic activities. Ethnographic research in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, examined how religious beliefs influence occupational decisions among members of two Mennonite subgroups. Divergent interpretations of a Mennonite tenet—separation from the secular world—play a large part in church members' occupational decisions. (Mennonites, occupations, ethos, intra-denominational diversity)**

The relationship between religious beliefs and economic activities has been a focus of anthropology and other social sciences (e.g., Keyes 2002; Weber 1958; Wilk and Cliggett 2007). One reason for this interest is that this subject touches on a fundamental question in the social sciences: how systems of meaning affect the material world. Religious beliefs, cultural practices, and values are often expressed and communicated through the use of material resources and patterns of behavior. Moreover, religious beliefs and other cultural practices may also be transformed as believers' social and economic situations change. The investigation of how religious beliefs influence believers' economic activities and how economic changes affect religious beliefs provides a window through which relationships between meanings and the material world can be examined.

The relationship between religious beliefs and economic decisions among members of two Mennonite congregations were investigated in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> While there are no specific provisions in Mennonite theology concerning occupational choice, agriculture has been the typical economic basis of Mennonite communities in the United States. The geographic and cultural isolation of most farms allowed Mennonite families to avoid values and practices incompatible with their religious beliefs. Their economic lives fit well with the central Mennonite tenet of separation from the secular world, disengagement from practices and values that contradict their religious ideals. Since World War II, however, Mennonites have steadily abandoned farming. In the 1950s, 66 percent of Mennonite males had agriculture-related occupations; the comparable figure in 1962 was 39 percent (Toews 1996:189; Redekop 1989). Among members of an important Mennonite group surveyed recently (Kanagy 2007), only 8 percent lived in farm households. Scholars disagree about the extent to which religious beliefs have influenced the economic choices of Mennonites entering new occupations. Some argue that Mennonites have a strong tendency to take jobs that they believe are consistent with their faith (Hamm 1987; Kauffman and Driedger 1991; Vogt 1980). Others (e.g., Redekop 1989; Redekop et al. 1995) say that Mennonite beliefs have relatively little effect on occupational decisions.

Based on extended fieldwork among one conservative and one liberal Mennonite congregation, this article suggests that Mennonite group affiliation and religious beliefs continue to be important for members' occupational decisions and behavior in the work setting. However, there are striking differences in the particular ways in which religion influences economic decisions. In the conservative congregation, the emphasis on separation from the world leads members to seek jobs where they can work alongside other Mennonites. In the liberal congregation, members place little emphasis on the religion of their co-workers. Instead, they seek service-oriented jobs consistent with Mennonite values.

While religious beliefs have long been considered to influence the ways in which economic activities are pursued (e.g., Geertz 1963; Weber 1958), recent scholarship has focused on the links between specific instances of religious phenomena and wider economic and social contexts. Studies have shown diverse religious responses to economic change. Religious tenets sometimes lead believers to critique and resist the social arrangements associated with new economic practices (e.g., Ong 1987; Taussig 1980). In other cases, belief systems have been interpreted as being consistent with entry into new occupations (Annis 1987; Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988; Weller 1994, 2000). Religious beliefs may also be transformed as the believers' situations change. In some cases, new elements, such as new rituals and religious activities, are added to pre-existing religious practices (e.g., Aguilar 1995; Boyd 1985; Hefner 1983; Robbins 1995, 1998).

Scholars are also addressing the importance of investigating the cultural and religious underpinnings of economic practices in industrialized settings (Appadurai 1986; Carrier 1992; Kopytoff 1986). Several studies in the United States have shown that religious organizations provide members with help for gaining skills and knowledge for jobs, such as providing language classes and distributing information on immigration issues (Kwon 1997 and Min 1992 on Korean churches). African American churches offer emotional, social, and financial support for unexpected illnesses or loss of dependent care (Billingsley 1999; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990).

Religious affiliations provide social networks that can influence economic decisions. Chinese find job openings through their churches (Guest 2003; see also Kwon 1997 and Min 1992 for Korean cases). Some religious affiliations may control occupational networks. For instance, ultra-Orthodox Jews dominate the diamond industry in New York City. Richman (2006) argues that the overlap of religious, family, social, and occupational networks helps create trust and avoid behaviors that hinder business development. In other cases, religious beliefs sometimes lead members to participation in community development through faith-based organizations that address economic issues such as living wage, workers' rights, and hiring practices (Wood 2002).

Several other studies, in contrast, show that religious beliefs have limited influence on economic decisions. Ammerman's (1987) study of fundamentalist Christians indicates that religious tenets do not necessarily guide believers' economic decisions. Wuthnow (1994, 1996) and Bellah et al. (1985, 1991), in studies of members from diverse religious affiliations, found that religious beliefs and values do not provide specific guidance for economic decisions and behaviors. Wuthnow (1994), for example,

argues that religious beliefs primarily help adherents to find satisfaction and consolation in their work, but do not particularly affect specific economic decisions, such as the selection of jobs and the use of financial resources.

The findings of this research differ from those studies that suggest limited influence of religious beliefs on economic decisions. In both Mennonite congregations, Mennonite religious tenets, specifically the idea of separation from the world, profoundly influence church members' economic decisions, although the patterns in members' occupational decisions are different between these two congregations.

### AMERICAN MENNONITES

Mennonites in the United States trace their historical origin to Anabaptist groups formed in Europe during the Reformation (Redekop 1989; Ruth 2001). As Christians, Mennonites believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior and the Bible as the sacred text. However, they place particular emphasis on their separation from and nonconformity with the secular world and its practices (Redekop 1989). While the specific activities deemed as worldly practices vary among different groups of Mennonites, several tenets are widely shared. These include an opposition to infant baptism, a resistance to violence (especially the use of physical force to settle disputes), an emphasis on mutual assistance among believers, and the importance of providing help to the poor and needy. Persecution for their religious convictions by civil authorities and the established churches in Europe led some Mennonites to emigrate to North America in the early eighteenth century to seek religious freedom and economic opportunity (MacMaster 1985; Ruth 2001).

In accord with several biblical passages (e.g., Acts 2, 4, and 5), Mennonite religious beliefs stress sharing economic resources among believers and with the needy. In the past, aid among believers has been crucial on many occasions, such as when the North American Mennonites supported Mennonites in Russia in the twentieth century (Redekop 1989; Toews 1996). Indeed the purchase of insurance has sometimes been viewed as questionable because it is thought to undermine the emphasis on mutual aid among believers (Hostetler 1987; Nolt 1998; Redekop 1989; Scott 1996).

Mennonites do not practice communal property ownership and most make few stipulations about individual economic decisions, such as the choice of occupation and the pursuit and use of profits. This absence of guidance can pose a challenge for members in determining the appropriate ways to apply biblical principles to their economic decisions (Halteman 1994; Hershberger 1958; Redekop 1985, 1989, 1994).

### OCCUPATIONS

The Anabaptists of the sixteenth century had diverse occupations (Kauffman and Driedger 1991; Redekop 1989; Redekop et al. 1995; Snyder 1995). Those of the early believers include weaver, tailor, shoemaker, sailor, carpenter, and goldsmith (Krahn 1980). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some Mennonites in Germany were whalers (Bender 1956), but in other countries, such as Switzerland and France, most

were farmers, which allowed them to avoid unwanted governmental interventions based on their religious convictions (Kauffman and Driedger 1991; Redekop 1989; Yoder 1956).

For Mennonites in the United States and Canada prior to World War II, farming was the major occupation (Bender 1956; Driedger 1988; Fretz 1955; Hershberger 1958; Redekop 1989; Redekop et al. 1995; Yoder 1990). Some scholars argue that the rural lifestyle facilitated the geographic, religious, and cultural separation of Mennonite communities from unwanted secular and religious influences (Burkholder 1994; Driedger 1988; Redekop 1989; Yoder 1990), while others posit that the communal efforts farming once required also fit with the Mennonite emphasis on mutual assistance (Driedger 1988; Redekop 1989; Yoder 1990).

Since the 1950s, however, agricultural occupations among members have been steadily declining. Factors contributing to this change included a labor shortage in factory work during World War II and advances in farming technology that increased productivity and decreased the need for farm workers. In some regions, the demand for land development made it difficult to secure farmland for Mennonite youth (Bush 1994; Redekop 1989).

Previous studies on Mennonite occupations have focused primarily on two types of jobs: professions that require a bachelor's degree and additional training, and entrepreneurship. Surveys of church members suggest that Mennonites tend to choose service-oriented professions, such as doctor, nurse, teacher, and counselor (Hamm 1987; Kauffman and Driedger 1991; Kauffman and Harder 1975). Vogt (1980) suggests that Mennonites prefer these occupations because they allow members to avoid confronting urban, political, class, and industrial problems such as labor conflicts. Others (Kraybill and Good 1982; Weaver 1994) regard this conclusion as insufficiently nuanced and argue that while many professionals consider their occupation to be a good fit with the Mennonite emphasis on service, others feel uneasy about the relationship between their occupation and their religious beliefs. For instance, some wonder whether their professional pursuits lead them to be too close to the power and practices of secular institutions (Kraybill and Good 1982). Other members feel that their pursuit of creative expression and professional accomplishment are not well acknowledged within their church communities (Weaver 1994).

Regarding Mennonite entrepreneurs, a survey among church members claims that business owners and managers are "the most secular" in a variety of measures of Mennonite religiosity, including their views of Mennonite tenets, participation in church-related activities, and political and ethical positions (Hamm 1987:26). Mennonite entrepreneurs become highly visible in their congregations because of their unorthodox lifestyles and their risk-taking for profit, which in turn create suspicion about their religious commitment. As a result, although many Mennonite business people have religious views similar to those of other church members, they are prone to criticism. Redekop et al. (1995) claim that because they feel uncomfortable within their congregations, Mennonite entrepreneurs who become successful in their businesses tend to leave the church.

Based on such arguments, Redekop (1989) and Redekop et al. (1995) suggest three models that represent relationships between religious beliefs and economics among Mennonites and related Anabaptist groups: the community of goods model, the radical confrontation model, and the conventional model. The community of goods model is based on collective property ownership of economic assets and is largely limited to Hutterite communities. The radical confrontation model refers to those who attempt to apply their submission to God and the religious community to mutual aid and the rejection of coercive methods to achieve economic-related goals (e.g., avoidance of participation in union activities and use of lawsuits for personal benefit) without practicing collective property ownership. The conventional model refers to situations in which believers follow the practices and conventions of the wider society.

Redekop (1989) claims that none of the models, as ideal types, are fully realized. However, Redekop (1989) and Redekop et al. (1995) claim that, except for Old Order Mennonites and a few other Mennonite groups outside the U.S., Mennonite religious influences are limited in church members' economic decisions, particularly when their occupations become more diverse. These studies do not provide sufficiently nuanced views of the relationships between Mennonite beliefs and economics. Rather than focus on types of occupations, it is essential to examine church members' views of the religious significance of economic activities in order to understand how religious beliefs affect their decision-making.

#### DIVERSITY AMONG MENNONITES

North American Mennonites can be generally categorized as Old Order conservative, and non-Old Order nonconservative. In this essay, non-Old Order nonconservative Mennonites are referred to as liberal Mennonites. This term does not necessarily connote their theological or political orientation, but rather tries to capture this group's emphasis on a diverse understanding of faith and religious expression and its less rigid church regulations. According to Kraybill and Hostetter (2001), about 7 percent of all U.S. Mennonites belong to the Old Order group, 25 percent are conservative, and 68 percent are liberal.

These groups share general theological views, such as separation from the world and emphasis on the believers' community, but differ in their views on how to apply Mennonite religious tenets to daily practice, including appropriate types of religious activities, clothing, recreational activities, and involvement in politics. For example, Old Order Mennonites do not have Sunday school or revival meetings, because these activities could undermine the emphasis on separation from non-Mennonite and secular influences. Old Order and conservative groups have various church regulations regarding clothing and the use of television, radio, and the internet to avoid secular influences. Conservative Mennonites emphasize religious education for children and believers through Bible study, and participate actively in domestic and international mission activities to gain new believers. Liberal congregations have few church regulations and emphasize diverse expressions of the Mennonite faith. Except for a few Old Order groups, Mennonites use electricity and automobiles (Kraybill and Hostetter 2001; Scott

1996). Among the three groups, the least research attention has been paid to conservative Mennonites (Kraybill and Hostetter 2001; Yoder 1999). Conservatives' dual emphasis on some traditional practices (such as required women's head coverings and plain dresses) and on religious education and evangelism has attracted many believers, including some who did not grow up as Mennonites.

Research focused on two Mennonite congregations: Summer Creek Church and Fairview Church in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. No one industry dominates the County's economy; the three industries that employ the most people are manufacturing (23 percent); educational, health, and social services (18 percent); and retail trade (13 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Although agriculture is important, less than three percent of the total employed civilian population is employed in farming (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000). Lancaster attracts many tourists who are interested to see Amish and buy Pennsylvania German food and crafts (Kraybill 2001). Lancaster County is also an important center for North American Mennonites, with several national offices and diverse Mennonite groups.

#### SUMMER CREEK CHURCH

Summer Creek Church is a conservative Mennonite congregation. It was established in the 1980s, organized by several families who previously belonged to an Old Order Mennonite congregation. Original members' accounts suggest that they formed a new congregation because they wanted to have rigorous religious instruction in Sunday schools and special Bible meetings. They also desired strong fellowship among members in order to guide their children's spiritual journey, while maintaining strict church regulations such as the requirement of modest clothing. In 2004, there were about 60 baptized members. Regular church attendance was about 150, if unbaptized children of church members are included. In a survey carried out among 36 members, 11 were original members, 19 either had been members of Old Order Mennonite congregations or grew up in Old Order families, and 3 had not grown up in Mennonite families. These people came to join the church primarily through outreach activities by Summer Creek and other conservative Mennonite congregations. Just over half of the survey participants (20 people) grew up in Lancaster County.

Church members attend worship at least twice a week. In addition to regular Sunday worship, they have Wednesday and Sunday evening services. Members are strongly expected to attend these activities, and the size of the congregation makes it easy to notice those who are absent. Services are led primarily by church officials. As is typical in Old Order and conservative congregations, there are a bishop, a minister, and a deacon, all of them unpaid. Holders of these positions are nominated by fellow members and chosen by lot. Men take leadership roles in church and family, and married women with children stay at home to care for children in accordance with their interpretation of biblical passages (e.g., Titus 2:4-5).

During services, church officials and members emphasize avoiding secular influences. The importance of modest clothing, as defined by church regulations, women's devotional coverings, and nonparticipation in political and nonchurch activities are

repeated themes in sermons, Sunday school lessons, and Bible study sessions. For example, in 2004, a presidential election year, the bishop delivered a sermon titled "Christians' View of Civil Government." He cited passages such as John 17 and 18, Romans 12:2, Timothy 2, and Matthew 20, and reminded members that as Christians they should stay away from politics, although they should respect political leaders because they are ordained by God to suppress evil. Because Jesus said that his kingdom is not of this world, the bishop said that church members should not have allegiance to the State but only to God. Christians should not and need not vote, because as Christians they are always on the right side on moral issues.

Higher education is also discouraged, as it may increase the danger of exposure to secular values and practices. Typically, conservative Mennonite congregations have a school (first to ninth grades) for members' children. This school is taught by non-college-educated and non-certified conservative Mennonites, although they may not come from the Summer Creek congregation. The school uses textbooks published by conservative Mennonite companies.

Most Summer Creek church members (32) did not have a high school diploma, 22 finished their education at the eighth grade, and 22 people were educated at church-affiliated schools taught by church members. Those who went to public schools are generally in their fifties or older and grew up when there were few church-related schools.

The occupations of Summer Creek church members are based mostly on skills that can be acquired through on-the-job training. Male congregants were employed in mechanical repair work (4), farming (3), and construction-related jobs such as painting and carpentry (3). Unmarried female members worked as secretaries (2), care providers for children and elderly people (4), and cleaning personnel (1). Other church members, both men and women, work at church schools as teachers, at a church-related printing press as mechanical and bindery staff, and as clerks at a bookstore operated with the printing press (9). These jobs, even teaching, do not require a high school diploma. Rather than formal training, practical job experience is valued. Most of the young church members acquire needed skills through working with church members.

Discussions with Summer Creek Church members suggest that their view of the appropriateness of an occupation is determined by the type of work and the situations and practices associated with particular jobs. Holding political office, serving in the military, and working in law enforcement are problematic occupations because they rely on the power of secular government and the use of force. Other jobs deemed inappropriate include those that bring undesirable effects to members' family life and religious commitment, such as occupations that routinely require church members to be away from their families and the church for prolonged periods. For example, when Summer Creek members had a series of study sessions about building Christian homes, they pointed out that long-distance truck driving was unsuitable for members. Although several church members drive trucks delivering produce and feed, the problem with long-distance driving is that it makes fulfilling responsibilities to family and attending and assisting in church activities difficult, and presents situations in which extramarital relationships might be a temptation.

Work outcomes also lead members to view some jobs as inappropriate. Members emphasize that jobs should improve the welfare of others, and the end result should not bring physical or spiritual harm to anyone. The manufacture and sale of tobacco products, television sets, and radios are deemed inappropriate for this reason. Jobs that encourage spiritually undesirable lifestyles are also inappropriate. Although having animals as pets is itself not wrong, church leaders dissuaded members from starting a dog-breeding business. The wife of one of the church leaders explained that the breeding business tends to focus on high-priced animals. With financial and emotional investment in these animals, breeders tend to treat them like their own children. Thus their lives may be turned away from relationships with other people and God.

The decision about dog breeding also illustrates Summer Creek's position in the broader Lancaster context. In Lancaster County, several people, including some Amish, breed dogs. The media have targeted some of these businesses as neighborhood nuisances and animal-rights abusers. Summer Creek Church's discouragement of dog breeding highlights its efforts to distance itself from such attention and disputes. If a church member takes a questionable job, it is brought up at a membership meeting, or church leaders will advise reconsideration.

Members work with other church members and groups of people who have similar religious beliefs, a preference influenced by members' experiences in working with nonchurch members. The story of David, who is in his late thirties, illustrates how past experience working with nonmembers can affect views on appropriate and problematic jobs.

David quit school when he finished the eighth grade to help his parents with farm work. Later, he worked with acquaintances of his father, first as a mason and later as a carpenter. His co-workers were from diverse religious backgrounds, including some who claimed to be Christians and Mennonites. David thought that his co-workers' behaviors were inappropriate for believers because they would swear, and they listened to the radio on their way to construction sites—behaviors David tried to avoid. Although he did not stop others from turning the car radio on, he turned it off whenever he was in charge of driving. After a while, noticing David's objection to the radio, his co-workers turned it on before he took the driver's seat to tease him. Although David appreciated the carpentry skills he acquired, his experience lead him to believe that a work environment can bring challenges to following biblical teachings from the conservative Mennonite point of view. He and his wife strongly prefer that their children work with other church members, especially while they are young.

Church members who have worked with nonconservative Mennonites have encountered challenges like casual invitations to go to a movie or to have a drink after work. These temptations are greater for the young, who have just made their religious commitment. Based on their experiences and stories that they hear from others, almost all members agree that a working environment can pose dangers to maintaining faith. Older members make sure that their children work in safe and supportive environments; i.e., with fellow church members.

After finishing their formal education in their midteens, Summer Creek members find employment through family and church networks or begin working with their



fathers or other church members on a part-time basis. For example, Mark left school when he turned 15 to work part-time feeding pigs for his uncle, a conservative Mennonite. Later, through his father's introduction, Mark found a job at an engine repair shop owned by a member of his church. The ways in which teenage female church members get their first jobs are similar, although women tend to begin work at a later age. In addition to helping at home with housework, they often help mothers in their congregation by taking care of children, canning, cleaning houses, and sewing dresses.

On various occasions, such as in Sunday school, sermons, and Bible schools, Summer Creek Church members emphasize the importance of working with other church members and fulfilling their needs. During a winter Bible school for conservative Mennonites in 2005, one ordained middle-aged man was teaching Christian stewardship, focusing on how students who were in their late teens and early twenties could wisely use their talents, resources, and time. Citing biblical passages, such as the story of Moses being called by God to lead his people out of Egypt, the instructor emphasized that students should work for the church community and do what God wants them to do, instead of what they themselves want. He told them that even if one aspired to work as a teacher or a missionary, one should not press the desire too strongly. Rather, one should wait humbly, taking jobs that need to be done, and that if it is God's plan, the Lord will provide opportunities.

As church members enter their mid-twenties and thirties, they tend to stay in particular occupations for longer periods, and some start their own businesses. Adam, in his early thirties, owns a manure-hauling business and repairs machines as a sideline. He employs a few church members. Other members with their own businesses also often employ fellow members. In addition, they see to it that they and their employees have time to participate in church activities. For example, Tom, who is in his fifties, has an engine repair shop. He said that he limits his business to specializing in the repair of only one brand of engine, and avoids truck engines to make sure that he and his employees can stop work at 5 p.m. to be with their families and prepare for church activities.

Many unmarried women in their mid-twenties and older move away from their families to live independently through their earnings. These women tend to take jobs related to housework and teaching, but some take a less traditional route. For example, Pauline makes her living by providing child care. She said she always wanted to care for foster children because she liked doing so and because these children's emotional, physical, and spiritual needs were not being met. However, the state where she grew up requires care providers to have insurance, which conservative Mennonites decline to purchase. She therefore moved to Lancaster, where her parents used to live and where there is no such requirement.

The Summer Creek Church emphasis on separation from secular influences also affects members' views of how to relate to others at work. Members' comments suggest that they see work as providing occasions for demonstrating their faith and reaching out to others about their beliefs. Comments from Roy and Jennifer, a couple in their fifties, provide an example of how Summer Creek Church members emphasize the maintenance of a safe environment during outreach opportunities. Jennifer considered interactions at work as an outreach opportunity:

If we never rub shoulders with non-Christians, you never have a chance to witness to them, either. If we stay just in our own little circle, Christians and Mennonite people, we don't have the chance to encourage each other along the way. We don't have the opportunities to . . . tell them [non-Christians] why we do what we do and what our case is all about. So it's good for us to rub shoulders with non-Christians and to be able to share with them sometimes. Or be an example of what the Lord has done for us.

However, Roy added:

[I]f you are with the world so much, after a while you start thinking like the world. That is where the problem is. That is why we Christian people tend to stay away from the world. . . . If you are with them all the time, it starts to do some damage.

Roy explained further why he and Jennifer thought their daughter had a good job:

She can work with church people, the boss, so to speak. [The managers where she works] have their vegetables and fruits to sell. So she would be working with Christian people there to sell and then they have a lot of people coming, customers. The worldly people. So she gets to relate to them, too. She can work with Christian people and she can relate to whomever else. So she likes her job.

According to Roy, his daughter's job is "nice" because she works for fellow church members who appreciate her religious belief and values, and within this supportive environment, she can interact safely with "worldly people."

This does not mean that Summer Creek congregants are hesitant about explaining their faith and recruiting others to their church. For example, Adam, when in his office managing his business, occasionally receives phone calls from insurance salespeople. Instead of just telling them that he is not interested, he explains that God will take care of him, and he himself does not need commercial insurance. Adam thus takes these phone calls as opportunities to articulate his belief to others. However, his and others' evangelical interest, while important, becomes secondary to keeping the boundaries of a safe environment at work.

#### FAIRVIEW CHURCH

Fairview Church was established in the late 1950s, with an original membership of about 40. In Lancaster County, many liberal Mennonite congregations belong to the regional Lancaster Mennonite Conference (hereafter LMC). The Fairview congregation, however, does not affiliate with LMC. Like several other non-LMC liberal congregations in this area, Fairview Church was founded by Mennonites from other areas who moved to Lancaster County and local Mennonites who did not agree with LMC policies. The LMC tends to be slower to adopt changes (e.g., musical instruments in worship, fewer regulations on clothing) than other regional Mennonites (Kniss 1997; Ruth 2001). Such differences have prompted some members to form their own congregations that are not affiliated with LMC.

Since its establishment, Fairview Church has grown to a current membership of over 350. In my survey of 36 members, 14 were LMC church members or grew up in LMC church communities and later joined this congregation, and 16 came from other liberal

Mennonite groups in diverse regions of the U.S. and Canada. Six people grew up in or were members of non-Mennonite church groups, including the Church of the Brethren and the Beachy Amish, and one person had no prior religious affiliation. (One member is counted twice. This person grew up in LMC, then joined a non-Mennonite congregation, and later joined the Fairview Church.) Twenty-four people, or two-thirds of the survey participants, moved into Lancaster County as adults.

In addition to Sunday worship, Fairview Church sponsors many other activities, including adult Bible-study groups, and Bible-study and recreational programs for children. Members may also join one of the so-called house churches—small groups of members who meet regularly for Bible study and social activities. Fairview Church supports a day-care center which uses the church facility during weekdays. One man and one woman are full-time pastors; other officers are a part-time music minister (woman), a part-time children’s education minister (woman), and a part-time church secretary (woman). In addition to these, women take many leadership roles as congregational chairpersons, worship leaders, song leaders, and Sunday school teachers.

Unlike Summer Creek Church, Fairview Church does not have regulations regarding clothing, recreational activities (e.g., use of television, Internet), and political involvement. Rather, members stress the importance of applying Mennonite theological principles, such as pacifism and concerns for the needy, into their responses to current social and political issues. For example, on a Sunday close to the presidential election of 2004, the two pastors delivered a sermon on politics. One pastor posed a series of questions about political involvement as Mennonite believers, including how Mennonites could deal with the issue of withdrawal from the world in voting. Citing Bible passages as well as Mennonite theologians’ writings, the other pastor answered by saying that as believers in Christ, they must place Christ at the center of their decisions when considering political issues. She went on to say that distancing themselves from the world does not necessarily mean noninvolvement in politics or voting. Rather, thinking about Jesus’s vision of a new community would provide God-centered criteria for how to vote.

The majority of the survey participants were college graduates (81 percent). Eighteen have master’s, Ph.D., or M.D. degrees; 23 went to Mennonite-related universities or colleges, such as Eastern Mennonite University and Goshen College. Several church members said that they came to this congregation because they have college friends who attend. Only five church members went to Mennonite schools between the first and twelfth grades. Five hold occupations of nurse or doctor; 13 are teachers; and there are social workers, counselors, and a therapist—occupations providing physical, emotional, and intellectual support to others. Many Fairview Church members have worked at Mennonite institutions at some point in their lives, and some have been pastors in other Mennonite congregations in the United States. Others are currently working at Mennonite-related institutions as administrators and project directors. Their activities are discussed at worship services for church-goers to learn about them. At Sunday services, guest speakers, such as directors of Mennonite-related facilities, give talks about relevant issues.

Many current members, especially those who are middle-aged, were raised on farms. Twenty survey participants said that their parents had been farmers; this is a lower percentage than that of Summer Creek Church, but a higher percentage than that of an LMC congregation close to Fairview Church. Many Fairview Church members grew up outside of Lancaster County, in areas where farmland was more available. Currently, only one member is a farmer.

Fairview Church does not have the clear criteria for inappropriate occupations as the Summer Creek congregation. Nevertheless, individual Fairview members consider several occupations as less appropriate than others. For example, referring to the historical Mennonite position on peace, several said that they would not take any job in law enforcement that requires carrying a gun. Others said that working at a bar was questionable, because alcohol can harm health and social relationships. Instead of relying on congregational regulations and decisions, Fairview Church members often take primary responsibility for discerning the religious implications of their occupational choices.

This, however, sometimes brings challenges. For instance, one member at a group discussion said that he wished he could talk more about his job concerns with his church leaders and fellow members. He mentioned his uneasy feeling when he was working as a mechanic at a machine-manufacturing company that made parts for weapons. Although he felt that his work contradicted somewhat his views against war, he kept his job for fear of losing his source of income. His story does not necessarily mean that such consultations and discussions do not happen at Fairview Church. If requested by a church member, the pastors would probably spend the time to discuss the matter. Rather, the member's comment indicates that it is not easy for some people to discuss the religious implications of their jobs with other church members.

Interviews with members suggest that being Mennonite plays an important role in their decisions about employment. Several members mentioned that their wartime work as Mennonite pacifists in alternative and voluntary service influenced their later occupational pursuits. For example, Fred, who is now in his sixties, grew up as an LMC member. After he graduated from high school, he worked for a year at his family farm, as he had promised his father, and followed that with work at an automobile repair shop. Then he was drafted and spent two years as a conscientious objector at a state hospital, where he was trained as an operating room technician, although he had no prior relevant knowledge. While in service, Fred was influenced by doctors, hospital workers, and other alternative service workers to think of going to college, which would open a variety of occupational possibilities. Up to that time, nobody in his family had even gone to high school, and Fred said that if he had not been "out of" the family culture, he would not have thought of going to college. After his service, Fred went to a Mennonite college attended by several people he had met through alternative service, and eventually became a science teacher and then an administrator in a public school.

Others who did voluntary service during and after wartime had similar experiences. Anna, now in her late fifties, has worked for the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and other Mennonite institutions. When asked how she decided where to work, she said:

Well, my husband and I both grew up on farms. We decided to get married right at the end of the Vietnam War. My husband was not called to do alternative service, but we decided we were going to volunteer. We

did two-year voluntary service in a community in [a southern state]. We always said that that experience changed our lives. We never came back to family farms. My husband went to college and I worked to put him through, but then we were very deliberate that we were going to be involved in church work or church employment of some sort or nonprofit. I don't know, I always thought of working at MCC and I just happened to be able to get a job and liked it and stayed there. It's kind of . . . what their values and visions and goals are pretty much aligned with what I feel. There wasn't a conflict of interest at all.

While these service experiences are influential, several members still changed their occupations later. Allen worked as a community development consultant, a decision influenced by his voluntary service for migrant-worker assistance during the Vietnam War. After a few years, Allen realized that he loved farming and that it was the best way he could connect with God. Similarly, after years of working at Mennonite-related agencies, others now work at for-profit organizations, including real estate agencies and insurance companies, and others have started their own businesses. While these congregants eventually changed occupation, alternative and voluntary experiences were often seen as turning points in their lives, leading them to ponder their potential for higher education and different employment.

Fairview Church members who had not had service experiences also emphasized their Mennonite background when they explored occupational possibilities. Harold, in his late forties, did not have alternative or service experience. In his college years, he worked at a hospital and became interested in healthcare. After graduating with an MBA specializing in healthcare, he said it was "essential" that his workplace be affiliated with the Mennonite church. He appreciates the values that his health institution is based on, including honesty, treating others with dignity, a recognition of the Holy Spirit, and the importance of feeling the presence of Jesus. It was also important to work with "good people," he said. Working at a Mennonite-related health institution has helped him to be a Christian witness, not necessarily trying to convert people, but trying to treat everyone fairly. Like members of Summer Creek Church, Harold values working with people of similar religious beliefs, but he does not emphasize separation from the secular world. He is more interested in serving those who need healthcare.

For some Fairview members, finding a good match among job opportunities, their interests, and their religious beliefs is an ongoing process, especially with younger members who are still exploring their potential. For example, Joshua, who is in his thirties, went to a Mennonite college and majored in psychology because he thought he could use it to help people with psychological and emotional difficulties. After graduation, he took several temporary jobs, wondering whether he should go to graduate school for further training. Meanwhile, through his brother's introduction, he began to work as temporary staff at a law firm in Lancaster, assisting with office work. Later, he was promoted to a permanent position as a litigation paralegal, researching records about parties involved in lawsuits. Upon taking his new job, Joshua pondered its relationship to his belief. Historically, Mennonites have been hesitant to become involved in lawsuits because they believe that litigation is a use of force to settle disputes. Joshua was aware of this, and he felt that work in litigation was incompatible with Mennonite belief. However, with further work he gradually came to think that this law firm was focused more on settlements, rather than litigation, as the best means of problem-solving. Joshua said he came

to terms with his uneasy feeling about paralegal work by trying to settle disputes and providing the best service to clients, sometimes beyond his normal duties.

For many Fairview Church members, the Mennonite faith is an integral part of their occupational pursuits, and they search out occupations in which they can serve others. Unlike Summer Creek Church congregants, they do not prioritize their church community and separate themselves socially from nonmembers. Instead, many members emphasize contributing to the broader society through their work.

The Mennonite faith influences not only Fairview members' occupational pursuits, but also plays an important role in members' views of the appropriate ways to manifest their faith to others in work-related contexts. Many Fairview members expressed reservations about explicit evangelizing at work and elsewhere. For example, in a group discussion, Don, a mechanic, said that explicit evangelizing at work would not be the best way to reach out to others. Many of his co-workers associate religion with negative images and he concluded that people who already have unfavorable impressions of religion would not be convinced by verbal expressions of one's faith. Rather, he tried to relate to his co-workers with the attitude of "servanthood." As an example of this, Don said, he had a co-worker who was very talented and skilled, but always complained about something. Don tried to listen to this man's complaints and to point to the more positive aspects of the situation.

This does not mean that members are always reluctant to express their religious views. When they see opportunities to do so, they use them in what they believe to be respectful ways. For example, Gloria, a local community college staff member, told how she expressed her beliefs in the context of fervent patriotism and militaristic sentiments after September 11, 2001:

After 9–11 . . . for pacifists, that got to be a real challenge because you know everybody wanted to get out and get them and give back to people who did terrible things to us. And of course patriotism was very, very high at that time. . . . Well, there was an activity that I was invited to be part of that I could not be . . . you know sort of condoning for the whole patriotism. And it was a really tough walk to walk because I felt terrible about it and people were killed. But you know I was also looking at the other side and . . . I remember saying to some of my friends that we'll probably need to look at why they did it—what is it about Americans that they don't like—and maybe we can learn something. . . . But you know what? That question was not welcomed at all. . . . I just knew I had to make some kind of expression and [one of the pastors] gave a sermon one morning, talking about verses [in the Bible] and where the way of Christ is asking us to go. . . . What would be our call that Christ is asking us to do and that wouldn't be in church? I decided I was going to go home and take some jars to my garden. There were marigolds and small flowers [and I put the flowers into the jars to bring them to the office]. [They were] prayer pots. I didn't put my name [on the jars]. I think I used the word "hope," hope for the world, hope for ourselves, and hope for our families. I went there [the office] early and placed them in all of the offices and so on. And it was just a hopeful action that I needed to do after that horrible thing. . . . So that was probably the most meaningful thing.

What Gloria did was not evangelical. Nonetheless, her action was motivated by her religious faith, not just her political position against war and the militaristic sentiments of that time.

Fairview members, however, sometimes have to grapple with different viewpoints and responsibilities in their pursuit of solutions which reflect their faith. For example,

in a group discussion, members considered a fictional story about someone named Howard.<sup>2</sup> Howard, who was injured at work and sustained permanent disabilities, bought property from a farmer in a cash transaction and built a house for his family. Trusting this farmer, who was a member of Howard's church, Howard failed to do a title search, and it turned out that somebody else had first rights to the property. As Howard's financial situation worsened, he faced foreclosure.

Fairview members' discussion was centered on how to seek an adequate solution while balancing moral and religious expectations as church members with civil and legal responsibilities. Several participants pointed out that the seller's action was immoral in failing to be truthful with Howard, legally questionable, and unethical for a church member. Larry, an executive in an insurance company, said that the seller was most culpable, but others pointed out that Howard also had the responsibility in this situation to do a title search, which is basic in such transactions. Although sympathetic to Howard's situation, members in this discussion agreed that Howard failed to shoulder his civil responsibility and made the situation worse.

This does not mean that discussants perceived their moral and religious responsibilities as church members as less important. While they agreed that to take advantage of a lawsuit by claiming more money than was actually needed to cover damages was not appropriate, they were also aware that to ensure satisfactory solutions to similar conflicts, it would be necessary to consider whether those concerned fulfilled legal and civil obligations as well. Several members suggested the need to take a proactive position for incorporating their religious beliefs into legal and business procedures in their own work. For example, a couple who have a real-estate business said that they try to incorporate an "Anabaptist position" in their contracts by including sentences and clauses that encourage negotiation and mediation rather than litigation when conflicts arise.

Fairview congregants are sometimes frustrated and dissatisfied with situations where there are no clear ways to reflect their religious expectations and sense of fairness in business. Their solution is to try to integrate their religious values into the secular system.

## CONCLUSION

The accounts by the members of the two congregations in this essay suggest that their decisions about jobs must be understood in consideration of Mennonite beliefs. Inspired by these beliefs, many Fairview members pursue professions that require a college degree and additional training, as suggested in other studies (Kraybill and Good 1982; Vogt 1980; Weaver 1994). However, Summer Creek and Fairview congregants have taken other types of jobs, and some own their businesses. Unlike what is reported in other studies of Mennonite entrepreneurs (Hamm 1987; Redekop 1989; Redekop et al. 1995), members do not necessarily separate their beliefs and their work; rather, Mennonite beliefs are an important source of guidance in decisions about occupation, hiring, and business relationships.

The views of these two groups of Mennonites about appropriate expression of their faith at work are quite different. The differences correspond with each group's divergent view of Mennonite beliefs and, particularly, how to achieve separation from worldly values and practices. Summer Creek Church members emphasize separation from the world by avoiding social and political involvements beyond their religious community. Corresponding with this view, their occupational choices revolve around their church community. Members prefer to work with other members and groups of people who share similar religious views. Explaining their beliefs to others at work is important, but they are careful that interactions with nonmembers occur in situations where their practices would be respected. In contrast to such separation, Fairview Church members work against worldly values and practices by reaching out to others who need help. Influenced by the historical Mennonite support for peace and social justice, many Fairview members pursue service-oriented jobs in which they can provide assistance by meeting others' spiritual, physical, material, and emotional needs, while incorporating their own beliefs.

These examples of the divergent influence of Mennonite beliefs on occupational decisions do not provide a comprehensive overview of the relationship between Mennonite faith and occupations. Other groups of Mennonites may show different patterns. For instance, in my research with another liberal congregation, members' strong interest in reaching out to others led them to emphasize verbal and expressive evangelizing at work, but their beliefs have less impact on decisions about which jobs to take. While believers share the central tenets of the Mennonite faith, the ways in which belief affects members' occupational decisions are quite diverse. It is therefore also important to examine how believers interpret their Mennonite faith and how they apply it in their occupational decisions.

A close examination of the effects of religious tenets on believers' economic decisions can help in understanding the practices of other groups that emphasize social distance between themselves and others. Such insular religious groups have responded in diverse ways in the face of economic change. Some Old Order Amish groups, for example, have developed home-based small businesses while maintaining restrictions on the use of cars and electricity (Kraybill 2001; Kraybill and Nolt 2004). Hutterites have expanded colony businesses and adopted diverse technological innovations (Bennett 1967; Eaton 1952; Hostetler 1974; Hostetler and Huntington 1980). The desires of these groups to retain the cohesion of their religious communities (and a consequent social distance from others) have shaped their responses to economic change. Among the Amish and Hutterites, economic diversification has been accepted because it helps to sustain their religious communities (Bennett 1967; Eaton 1952; Hostetler 1974; Hostetler and Huntington 1980; Kraybill 2001; Kraybill and Nolt 2004). In the Amana Colonies, communal economic arrangements came to be incompatible with the maintenance of their religious community (Andelson 1981; Cavan 1978).

These varied responses to changing circumstances illustrate why careful ethnographic and historical analysis are essential for an understanding of how such groups find religious significance in economic activities.



## NOTES

1. Fieldwork took place in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in the summers of 2001 and 2003, and in 2004–2005. I am grateful to members of these congregations and to Michael Chibnik, who provided invaluable assistance in developing the research project and this paper.

The names of congregations and individuals in this article are pseudonyms.

2. This story (Sprunger et al. 1997:56–59) was written by three people who worked for the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA). The book is produced by Herald Press, a (liberal) Mennonite publisher.

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