

Contextual comments from the author – Gordon Rumford

During the time I was finishing an honours B.A. at Wilfred Laurier University I was occasionally preaching at Wallenstein Bible Chapel on Sundays. A requirement for obtaining this degree from the Religion and Culture Department was to write a thesis on some aspect of Canadian religious history. I knew exactly what my subject would be, a history of the beginnings of Wallenstein Bible Chapel. The thesis was completed prior to my graduation in October 1990.

The reason I was so interested in documenting how this thriving Christian Brethren Church began and continued to exist through the years was because they seemed to be doing everything wrong by the standards of modern church growth teaching. They chose to plant their spacious church building out in a corn field far from any large urban centers where all the people were. At that time the Chapel was run by a group of volunteer men who only had a grade 8 education and had come out of the Old Order Mennonites as young adults. None had any formal theological training. There was no ordained minister in sight. They were patterning their church organization after the infant church in the days after the apostles. All the rules about healthy church growth that we are aware of in modern society were ignored.

Yet this church was spiritually prosperous beyond most if not all Christian Brethren Churches in Canada. They grew to several hundred people, sent out many foreign missionaries and established more sister churches than any other Brethren Assembly. And, as far as I was aware, they did not have the usual divisions that churches experience. They were “doing church” in a most impressive manner. What was their secret? I had to know. So I received approval from the university to use the history of this puzzling assembly as the focus of my thesis.

There were a considerable number of leaders as well as people from the congregation of WBC that I interviewed. People who were still in the Old Order but alive at the time of the break to form Wallenstein were also interviewed. All proved willing subjects for my questions and I was happy with the lack of animosity on either side. Both groups spoke freely and fondly of those they knew whose views of the Christian Church differed from theirs.

It was a pleasure to discover the characteristics of the leaders of this Brethren Assembly which undoubtedly were used of God to grow a most improbable church.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the development of a group of young adults from two specific congregations of the Old Order Mennonites in north Waterloo county, who, in the late 1920's and early 1930's, defected from their church to form what was originally called the Hawkesville Gospel Hall, which in 1968 erected a new large church building south of Wallenstein, and took the name Wallenstein Bible Chapel. The humble beginning of this church is of particular interest as they have grown to become so large a congregation, have sent missionaries out to various parts of the world, and have started several daughter churches in the area. They were, almost from the beginning, associated with the Christian Brethren movement. ¹

The Wallenstein Bible Chapel is a member of the evangelical Protestant denomination popularly called Plymouth Brethren. This denomination is registered with the federal government in Ottawa as the Christian Brethren. There are over 425 such congregations in Canada. Although this particular congregation is fully Christian Brethren, the majority of its founding members came to it as a result of religious ferment within the Old Order Mennonite community of churches. Two Mennonite Churches in particular lost members to the Hawkesville group, namely the Peel Mennonite Meeting House near Wallenstein, and the Conestoga Meeting House near St. Jacobs. The Wallenstein Bible Chapel is located just south of Wallenstein, which is about 5 miles west of Elmira. Hawkesville is located about 3 miles south of Wallenstein.

The basic tenants of the Christian Brethren movement conform generally to such historic statements of faith as the Westminster Confession of Faith. When this movement began within the Anglican church in the early nineteenth century, it had the desire to fellowship with Christians of all denominations and to meet together in simplicity of worship to break bread and pray. It quickly became a movement apart from the Anglican church and had numerous divisions primarily over certain practices rather than over doctrine.

In the 1820's there began to appear in the Anglican Church groups of evangelical Christians who, unaware of the other groups forming, started to focus considerable attention on specific Christian teaching such as the second coming of Christ and the unity of the church. The locations of the spontaneous development of these groups included Dublin, Plymouth and Bristol. The Dublin group included the very influential John Nelson Darby, godson of Lord Nelson, whose teaching on the subject of eschatology would influence evangelicals in various denominations worldwide. In Plymouth, the leader was B.W. Newton who had a brilliant academic career at Exeter College, Oxford, with William Sewell and F.W. Newman as private tutors. He resigned his teaching post at Oxford amid theological controversy and moved home to Plymouth where he assisted in forming the Christian Brethren group there. The Bristol group included George Muller

who had been challenged by the work of August Hermann Francke in Halle with orphans. Muller became one of England's outstanding philanthropists with his work among orphans.

The early leaders were:

...young, mostly in their twenties or early thirties, men of keen mind as well as ardent spirit, some of good breeding, some from wealthy families, and the majority university trained.²

Because of the excellent theological training many of the early leaders had, they predictably developed differences of opinion on various issues. Some followed Darby and adopted a hard line of separation from dissenting views and others followed Muller who evidenced a more charitable spirit toward those with whom he disagreed on secondary matters.

Areas where the Christian Brethren differed from the Anglican tradition would include their emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. They did not see the clergy-laity distinction in Scripture that they saw in the Anglican church. In the Brethren churches ("assemblies", as they would prefer to call the local congregations) emphasis was put on the plurality of leadership and leaders were selected from the whole congregation, not just from those who had theological training. They did not see the need for any central government over the local assembly. Each congregation was to be autonomous, though, in the group that followed Darby, all assemblies were bound by decisions made through the leaders at any local group. They were thoroughly evangelical in their theology and preaching. Their worship services ("breaking of bread" gatherings, as distinct from their public preaching meetings) were, and are characterized by simplicity of format and spontaneity. No order of service is arranged before the fact. Any of the men present are free to announce a hymn, offer an extemporaneous prayer, read a passage of Scripture they have selected, or give a brief meditation on Christ's passion. As well as avoiding liturgical formulations, they are averse to having creedal statements. They state that they follow the teaching of Scripture and its perspicuity is sufficient.

The Old Order Mennonites, from which the subjects of my research came, have a belief system that is not greatly at variance with the Christian Brethren. Both groups espouse simplicity of worship services, have lay preachers, and observe the primacy of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice. The Old Order Mennonites have a bishop who oversees several local congregations while the Brethren do not. An area of difference, which became a matter of significant controversy between the Old Order people and the Brethren, were the issues of eternal security and assurance. The Brethren believed that once a person trusted in Jesus as their Saviour, they were certain of going to heaven. This led them to the belief that you could know or be "assured" that you were in a state of grace. The Old Order believed neither of these teachings and opposed them vigorously. To them it was arrogant to assert such things and they spoke tentatively about their relationship to God. The old Mennonites, from which the Old Order people came in a division in 1889, had a more evangelical flavour about their preaching and customs. The Old Order saw mechanization

of their farms and modern dress styles as signs of spiritual declension, a forsaking of the "Alt Ordnung" or Old Order. Many within the old Mennonite tradition viewed the activity of sharing their fundamentalist religious experiences with others as a legitimate, indeed, very important exercise. Others viewed such work with great suspicion and felt these people were elitist. To speak passionately about good works in the community or the need to perform charitable acts towards others was acceptable to all Mennonites, but to zealously describe one's love for God to a fellow Christian was never acceptable to certain Mennonites, it seems. The Ontario Conference Mennonites had great trouble holding various factions together as some pulled for more reform and others tended toward a more primitive or "plain" way of life and worship.

In Waterloo County, as in certain parts of the United States, there had for some time been considerable uneasiness about the changes that were being adopted. These included religious changes such as prayer meetings, protracted evening services, Sunday Schools, and the use of English in preaching, as well as social-secular changes: new falling top buggies, new dress styles, and other such innovations. Not infrequently the religious and the social-secular changes appeared simultaneously.³

In this thesis I have attempted to make a detailed investigation of the religious ferment out of which the Wallenstein Bible Chapel arose. The Wallenstein Bible Chapel has not taken any great interest in its history. The only historical work on the beginnings of the Chapel, other than the small commemorative booklet Wallenstein Bible Chapel, has been done by the "opponents" of the work who are among the Old Mennonites. As a result, the group has tended to be slurred. An example of this is in Ken Bechtel's book, *Three Score years*, where he says:

... the "Hawkesviller" Plymouth Brethren [were] a group whose zealous efforts to proselytize "unsaved" Old Orders and to proclaim doctrines of "assurance" and "eternal security" had made them, as one sympathizer puts it, "a poison word"...Given the early history, continued fraternizing, doctrinal inclinations, later flirtations and defections, it may be easier to talk of this more as a part of a fifth column Brethren missionary effort than as a primarily Mennonite renewal movement.⁴

Bechtel goes on to speak of a more recent "hyperactive and inventive rumour mill" emanating from the Wallenstein people towards members of the Mennonite community.

The Hawkesville Brethren hall was overcrowded and the spacious new Wallenstein facility was being opened. Several members who were reputed to be "on the fence" have reported visits from a Brethren door to door salesman who fed rumours and invited them to the Chapel.⁵

Such statements are not surprising in a volume dedicated to explaining the old Mennonite position. It obviously needs balancing and I have attempted to do so. Most of the material given in this thesis was developed from personal interviews with individuals who were part of three groups. First, those who stayed within the Old Order tradition, secondly those who left the Old Order to form the Hawkesville Gospel Hall,

and thirdly with people who came from the old Mennonite and other related traditions. Primary source documents were limited to minutes of the early business meetings of the Hawkesville Gospel Hall and the book *Close Ups of the Great Awakening* by Isaac Horst. This book is a compilation of correspondence by Old Order people in the last century. Secondary source material included the writings of Ken Bechtel and Isaac Horst as detailed in the bibliography. Those interview, and their relative significance to the research, are as follows.

Melvin Bauman, Listowel. interviewed November 23, 1988. Bauman was raised in the Old Order and stayed in that tradition for several years after the division. He finally joined the Hawkesville group in about 1935.

Ken Bechtel, Toronto, interviewed September 20, 1988. Coming from the old Mennonite tradition, Bechtel had done considerable research into the Mennonite history of the Waterloo area.

AlmaFrede, Wallenstein, interviewed November 17,1988. Daughter of Martin Bauman who was an early member of the group. Her mother was sister to Israel and Nathan Martin who also figured prominently in the early days. She attended the Sunday School in Hawkesville from the beginning.

Ezra Frey, Wallenstein, interviewed November 17,1988. Raised Old Order, attending the Conestoga Meeting House, he also stayed loyal to the old ways for several years after the division and came to the Hawkesville group in 1935.

Amos Hoffinan, Heidelberg, interviewed November 17, 1988. Hoffinan was from the Conestoga Meeting House and was part of the Hawkesville group from its beginning.

Sydney Hoffinan, Unionville, March 3, 1989. Also from the Conestoga Meeting House, brother to Amos and became one of the first missionaries sent out from the Hawkesville Gospel Hall.

Isaac Horst, Mount Forest, March 1. 1989. A contemporary of those who left the Old Order who chose to remain within the Old Order. The best and most prolific historical writer among Old Order people.

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Henry Martin, Kitchener, February 25, 1989. Originally from the Old order he accepted the fundamentalist message and brought it to the Hoffman family. While sympathetic to the Hawkesville cause, he joined the Conference Mennonites.

Isaiah Martin, Heidelberg, November 17,1988. Raised Old Order, Martin remains within the group at the Conestoga Meeting House. He is a contemporary of those who left.

John Martin, Listowel. November 16, 1988, March 3, 1989. Bom into the Old Order, he was an early convert to the fundamentalist cause and has helped establish numerous Brethren congregations in the area.

Noah Martin, Wallenstein, November 17, 1988. Brother to John. he has been a leader in the Wallenstein Bible Chapel from the beginning.

Paul Martin, Conestoga, March 6, 1989. Has remained with the Old Order and is preacher at the Winterbourne Meeting House.

Because the Old Order people are self-effacing, I was impressed by the fact that those I did approach with a request for an interview were willing to see me. The interviews were conducted in their homes in all instances. I was made very welcome by these people and found they could generally detail objectively the matters under discussion. The gracious manner in which they spoke of those who left their tradition to form the Hawkesville Gospel Hall and their willingness to speak candidly of their own mistakes, caused me to sense that indeed they were and are humble people. Their religious beliefs do not allow for the recording of interviews as that would be considered making a "graven image". My taping of interviews was thus limited to those who left the Old Order. Copies of these cassette tapes have been made available to the immediate families of those interviewed who expressed an interest.

Some of those who were from other Mennonite traditions were more willing to challenge the motives of the Hawkesville people and interpret their actions in a very negative manner. More of this will be documented in the body of the presentation.

As will be clearly seen later, those who left the Old Order had a diverse group of evangelical leaders influencing them. The denominations represented included Baptist, Associated Gospel, Pentecostal, Conference Mennonite and two different groups of Christian Brethren.

Because of the potentially sensitive nature of certain comments, I have chosen to protect the identity of the persons(s) making such statements.

THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

For the evangelical church tradition in North America and particularly the groups treated in this thesis, the decade of the 1920's witnessed significant religious ferment centred on the debates between the fundamentalists and their modernist opponents.⁶ The controversy touched all levels of society, popular and academic. The great Baptist preacher, Dr. T.T. Shields, for example, was wrestling for control of McMaster University in Toronto against liberal elements on the faculty. At Princeton Theological Seminary, after the death of one of its most outstanding professors, B.B. Wardfield in 1921, a crisis over theological issues resulted in the departure of J.G. Machen, O.T. Allis, R.D. Wilson and C. Van Til to form Westminster Theological Seminary.

On the popular level, the famous Scope's trial, or "Monkey Trial", in Dayton, Tennessee in July 1925, was an international event.⁷ The fundamentalist cause, represented by William Jennings

Bryan, argued for the creation story as the proper explanation for the origin of the world. The local science teacher, J.T. Scopes, was on trial for teaching evolution in the classroom. Under the brilliant cross examination efforts of the defense lawyer, Clarence Darrow, Bryan suffered great humiliation, and died, a broken man, five days after the trial concluded. However, the position he supported did not suffer so dramatically. At the same time, various Bible conferences, organized throughout Canada and the United States, brought working people together to study the Scriptures more intently and to learn about the battles for the fundamentals of the faith that raged on the scholarly level.⁸

Mennonites too were affected by the religious battles. In the United States, controversy broke out at the major Mennonite College and Seminary, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana.

Pressures from sections of the Mennonite constituency, under strong conservative leadership, resulted in charges of liberalism against students and faculty at Goshen College and caused it to be closed for the 1923-24 school year. Daniel Kaufman's Mennonite Church and Current Issues includes an apology for the temporary closing of the college. Kaufman says he had been opposed to the closing of the college, and that the board was unanimous in its desire to continue the college without interruption...The Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, too, was harassed by Fundamentalist critics attempting to gain support at the conference level.⁹

But theological controversy was not something new among the Mennonites in the United States or particularly in Canada. Their ancestors came to Canada in 1786 and divisions had commenced already by 1830. The first pioneers were of Swiss-south German origin and had moved up from Pennsylvania.

Right from the beginning (as Isaac Horst related it), there was a difference between the settlers in the southern part of the county (Waterloo) and those in Woolwich. Woolwich...was settled by natives of Lancaster County (Pennsylvania), who were primarily of Swiss origin. During the greater part of the nineteenth century, the plainer people of Swiss stock and the more liberal element of Franconian influence (in south Waterloo) lived side by side and intermingled in one church conference. .

The period from 1875 to 1890 has been referred to as the great awakening. Three distinct schisms took place within the Mennonite church in Waterloo county during that time. The new Mennonites, now known as the United Missionaries, broke away from the main body about 1875, favouring greater spiritual experience and more liberal standards. In 1882, the Stauffer church was organized in Woolwich Township, stressing more conservative standards and stricter adherence to the principle of separation. In 1889, the main body of the church divided on the same general issues as the 1875 division.

Generally speaking, the Woolwich (Township) group strove for a standard closer to that maintained by their

forefathers, the Swiss brethren, a policy followed to this day.¹⁰

By the 1890's attention had been directed particularly to questions of non-conformity with the world. In the Conference minutes of that time we find resolutions being passed such as the following:

May 19,20, 1892 - Resolved, that our brothers shall be prohibited of the wearing of moustaches, according to 1 Cor. 11:2; 10:32; 14:40.

April 13,14, 1893 - Resolved, that it be the unanimous advice of this Conference to the brethren and sisters, to refrain from having their likeness taken.

Sept. 7,8, 1893 - Resolved, that we advise our brethren to clothe their dead with a white shroud, the same as our forefathers did.

May 30,31,1895 - Resolved, that each district has the right to use fermented or unfermented wine by communion. 12

Sept. 7, 1905 - That this Conference unanimously disapprove of the wearing of hats by the sisters of our church." ¹¹

April 11, 1907 - That we advise our brethren not to hold funerals on Sunday if possible.¹²

The most serious division resulting from such concerns was that led by the Woolwich township bishop Abraham Martin, who, in 1889 ¹³, separated from the Ontario Mennonite Conference so as to maintain the older order of practice which many considered to be disappearing from the conference. These groups divided again a number of times, but especially significant for this study was the one which occurred in 1917. This one was headed by the preacher for the Peel Mennonite Meeting House (located 5 miles west of Elmira on county road 86), David B. Martin ¹⁴ and the deacon who was his son, David W. Martin. Isaac Horst relates the story:

In 1917 the David Martins, father and son, with several other families, withdrew from the Woolwich congregation and held meetings on their own- They exercised a more rigid discipline and a very strict observance of the ban and avoidance. Daniel Brubacher, the former preacher for Conestoga, had been relieved of his office several years earlier. He joined the David Martin group, and was ordained bishop...hi 1939 a group comprising perhaps one-third of the Woolwich Mennonites who were in favour of a more lenient form of discipline, withdrew from the main group. They annexed themselves to the Markham Conference, where the use of the automobile and telephone were no longer prohibited, and where English preaching was freely practised.¹⁵

It is to be noted that although the division took place along geographic as well as religious lines, the preacher of the Erb Street Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Elias Snyder, as well as his son in law Menno Shantz, the deacon, held with the Old Order and left with the 1889 division.

Associated with the Peel Mennonite meeting house was the Conestoga Meeting House also called the Three Bridges Meeting House.

The old Conestoga meeting house was situated beside the school, two miles northwest of St. Jacobs...the meeting house was built in 1853. When the liberal group took possession of the house in 1892, a new one was built to the south of the George Hoffman property in 1894.¹⁶

From these two congregations, the Peel and Conestoga Meeting Houses, came the great majority of the Old Order people who would form the Hawkesville Gospel Hall.

Because of their relative cultural isolation, the Old Order did not receive as direct an influence from the fundamentalist Christian community as did their modern Mennonite contemporaries. The Old Order people, who are the subject of our consideration, were, however, introduced to the fundamentalist message, primarily from the old Mennonites from whom they had originally come. The Old Order people focused on conduct rather than creed. The surge of fundamentalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries impacted on the old Mennonites¹⁷ and filtered through them to the Old Order by way of family gatherings, the weekly market trip, and auctions. The typically aggressive missionary spirit of the old Mennonite fundamentalists did, then, wield a significant influence on their Old Order acquaintances. This influence was particularly evident from the 1920's on, the time when the initial group who established the Hawkesville Gospel Hall was forming. Most of the people interviewed from the Hawkesville group tell of old Mennonite relatives who spoke to them of the evangelical faith.

Among the Old Order people, the idea of speaking about one's religion, especially saying one was assured of heaven at death, was a sign of spiritual pride. They stressed works rather than words. Invariably, in talking about their religious life at home, the persons whom I interviewed who had been Old Order people indicated that no one discussed the Bible, prayed audibly, or taught Bible stories to the children regularly. A few recalled the practice of Sunday afternoon reading of the Bible. When conversation centred on religion, it had, as its content, the observation of regulations on dress fashion, amusements, etc. Those interviewed recalled that the leadership did frown on too much cider on Saturday evening among the young men, but that much more concern was expressed if the young men wanted their own home Bible study. Such an activity was studying the Bible informally was too much for the bishops and preachers to countenance, since it was a mark for them of a drift toward the religious notions held by the worldly Old Mennonites.

Writing about the childhood home life of bishop Jesse B. Martin, Urie Bender says:

The religious influence of home and parents on Jesse was not generally overt. Strong characters, principled, committed to a simple way of life within the Mennonite heritage-these were the parental gifts to children. But family worship as a concept had not yet become prominent. There was seldom a discussion of biblical materials around the table. Although an illustrated Bible story book was

available for the children to read, it was not a focal point in family life. A large family Bible lay on a table in the living room. Each Sunday it was opened. Often on Sunday afternoons, mom and dad read from its pages.¹⁸

Most of those interviewed recall having a copy of the Jesse Hurlbut Story Book of the Bible in their home. They noted special fascination with the pictures and stories in this book. The exercise of reading this children's story book gave them a greater degree of biblical literacy, in their opinion, than anything they heard in the meeting house. Even though many homes had this story book, conventional wisdom among the Old Order people insisted that too much reading would inevitably lead one astray. One leading Old Order person interviewed referred to Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories as a book often used in Old Order homes with the children. Those in the Old Order who wanted to know more about the Bible had to look elsewhere, to groups who were willing to have Sunday School, home Bible studies, and who were interested in discussing freely the teaching of the Scriptures.

Because the Old Order people saw those outside their tradition as possessing a "false spirit", it was considered dangerous to hazard a visit to other groups. But, the other groups were there making their voices heard and some of the Old Order people listened. Those who listened and wanted to talk further would often gather in one another's homes in the evening to discuss what they had heard and what they should do.

In the 1920's and '30's, the Old Order people still sent their children to the public schools until they were 14 years old and the provincial law allowed the parents to withdraw the children. At that age, the boys went to the fields and the girls went to the kitchens.

Two factors were at work in the schools of the area that opened the Old Order Mennonites to the preaching of those who would eventually form the Hawkesville Gospel Hall. First, John Martinson, a retired school teacher, organized a fundamentalist Sunday School in the Zion Methodist Church in Wallenstein in 1929. The Sunday School was held in the afternoons and Martinson combined this with a Sunday evening preaching service for adults in the same building. He arranged for preachers from various denominations who believed the fundamentalist message to come to Zion Methodist Church including Alfred J. Lewis, pastor of Benton Street Baptist Church Kitchener, Mr. Frank Guthrie from the Brethren Assembly in Guelph, Pastor Sandicock of the Associated Gospel Church in Kitchener, and Mr. Henry Jensen the Russian Mennonite from Kitchener. The little log church was within a few moments' buggy ride of the Peel Mennonite Meeting House. The services were held at times which did not conflict with any other meetings and therefore it was most convenient for the Old Order people to attend. Martinson was known for visiting the local schools, and teaching the students songs. His presence among the children in the school made him more familiar to them and easier for him to get them to attend the Sunday School.

The second factor, which most of those interviewed remember well, and which all say influenced them, was

the Day School Gospel League announced at the public school and available through correspondence. By mail they received the Gospel of John in English along with lessons to complete. It is still not clear what the dynamics were which allowed these Old Orders to enrol in either the Sunday School or the Day School Gospel League. Moreover, the English primers, the old "Gold, Green, and Red books" of that era in Ontario had a significant religious element to them, biblical stories to read, and Christian poems to memorize. For example, the Ontario Reader's Second and Third Books, used in the public schools of the time, each had six biblical passages¹⁹ for the students to memorize and discuss in class.

Thus the children of the Old Order community learned Bible stories in day school and had social contact there with children from the fundamentalist Christian community. The pliable, hungry minds of the Old Order children were thus influenced during eight years of schooling. We may assume that the young inquisitive minds of that generation were no more satisfied with parental explanations than today and they willingly explored the strange world outside their own.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE HAWKESVILLE GOSPEL HALL

One of the converts of an evangelistic series of meetings in the Elmira Mennonite Church in the fall of 1927 was Israel Martin. He was to play a significant role in the formative stages of the Hawkesville group. While most of those who were "saved" in the Old Order Mennonite group remained within their own church for some months or years before leaving, Israel Martin left immediately to go to the General Conference Mennonites.

Israel soon became an active witness for the Lord. He spent eight weeks at the Mennonite Bible School in Kitchener soon after his conversion, and also a like period for the following two winters. He often spent time browsing through the Christian literature in Ewald's Bookstore and acquired a love of books and Christian literature which resulted in his doing colportage work for Mr. Ewald in Kitchener, Tavistock, Listowel area. He later purchased the bookstore and operated it for several years...During the early years of his Christian life Israel served as superintendent of the Sunday School at the Floradale Mennonite Church.²⁰

Nathan Martin, Israel's brother, was an apiarist and Israel went around the community selling the honey Nathan's bees produced. Israel also sold books, including Bibles, as he travelled the area. Israel was an enterprising, gregarious person who is remembered by his family as busy helping settle immigrant Russian Mennonites in 1924. He owned and operated a car and was able to help the people get settled by transporting them. Israel attended the Sunday School held in Wallenstein in the "little log church" early in 1931 and felt that a similar effort should begin in the home of his brother Nathan in Hawkesville. It was the first Sunday in October of that year when the Sunday School began in Nathan Martin's home in Hawkesville. While the brothers' father, Elias Martin, was from the Old Order, contemporaries of Nathan

and Israel thought the two were never "really" Old Order themselves. Many of their relatives were new Mennonites.

The ecumenical spirit of these first leaders in the Hawkesville program was immediately evident. They invited speakers from various denominations to the Sunday evening meetings which were initiated soon after the Sunday School. The only criterion that was considered in asking a speaker was that the person invited was a fundamentalist.

At the time the Martin brothers were starting their Sunday School, a William Goetz was holding Bible studies in various homes in Hawkesville. From Kitchener, the "Goetz family moved to Hawkesville for cheaper housing and hopefully to get some work among the farmers in the area...they were...in fellowship (members) in the Associated Gospel Church in Kitchener."²¹ Goetz also was willing to work with people from various denominational backgrounds and only left the work when a misunderstanding occurred over the use of a manger scene in a Christmas program in 1932 or 1933. It seems that Goetz had arranged for the manger props to be placed at the front of the auditorium. When two former Old Order people, David Gingrich and Israel Martin, came in and saw the props, they picked them up and threw them out the door. In their view such things were idolatrous. That act of censure caused Goetz to withdraw from the group.

A tragedy in the Goetz family occurred one Sunday morning in June 1932 when Bill Goetz and his sons, Vincent and Kenneth, were boating at the dam in Hawkesville near Nathan Martin's house. The waters in the Conestoga River were particularly turbulent at that time because of heavy rains. The boat was swept over the dam and 10 year old Kenneth drowned. Pastor Sandcock of the Associated Gospel Church in Kitchener came to preach the funeral sermon in Hawkesville. Noah Martin, one of the early defectors from the Peel Mennonite Meeting House, recalled that the funeral service was the first time he heard an evangelical preacher. Noah Martin had the "bom-again experience" prior to the funeral but had not attended the meetings until that time. Situations such as funerals became an important factor in getting Old Order people under the influence of the evangelicals. One person interviewed recalls a funeral at which Abraham Bearinger, the preacher at the Peel Mennonite Meeting House, spoke. He used the occasion to speak against those who believed they could know they were saved. "This", he said, "was putting hope to shame, because if they know, there is no place for hope."²² After the meeting some of the young men spoke to the preacher and disputed the point he made. John Martin wrote a letter to the preacher about this point trying to persuade him that they did believe in hope and good works. The same preacher was quoted as saying in a sermon that there was no hope for anyone who left the Mennonite church. This upset some of those in the Peel congregation who felt that Menno Simons, their spiritual father, preached the truth when he insisted that salvation was not found in being a member of a particular church.

One of the early converts from the Peel Mennonite Meeting House was John Martin. He was, without

dispute, the most influential person in the direction the group took over the years. Martin demonstrated an inquisitive and independent spirit as he first questioned the Old Order preachers while still in the Mennonite church, and then the teachers at the little log church in Wallenstein. He proved to be an eager student and an aggressive witness to the message he had discovered. Martin describes himself in those days as follows:

With great boldness I started witnessing for God. I visited neighbours, preachers and deacons and testified to them. Then I asked the preachers why they did not tell the people how to be saved. Most of the people did not know the Gospel, so why not preach it? Needless to say, this did not make me a neighbourhood favourite.²³

Martin attended the meetings at the little log church and those which were held in Nathan Martin's home in Hawkesville. Frank Guthrie from the Christian Brethren, Eramosa Gospel Hall in Guelph, visited Martin weekly to teach him. Within two years, Martin was street preaching in Elmira on Saturday nights when the Old Order men came into town. These meetings on Saturday evenings extended to many towns in the area. One evening when Martin and several others were driving home from a meeting in Drayton, Martin announced to the others, "Melissa (his wife) and I have decided to get baptized by immersion." Several others responded to his lead and agreed to be baptized as well.

They planned a baptism and on Sunday, September 9, 1934, it took place with fifteen local converts being immersed. The location was in the river at the railway bridge just west of Wallenstein. This baptismal service was a very significant event for several reasons. First, preachers from two denominations took part, George McKenzie was from the York Street Gospel Hall in Guelph, a Christian Brethren assembly, and Frank Guthrie was from the Aramosa Gospel Hall in Guelph. Henry Jansen was General Conference Russian Mennonite who preached and published extensively on religious topics. McKenzie and Jansen both gave talks on baptism. Jansen practised believers baptism. Interestingly, both Guthrie and McKenzie believed in household baptism²⁴ rather than believers baptism, but demonstrated a generous spirit with the new group. Frank Guthrie preached a evangelistic message and Henry Jansen from the Mennonite church in Kitchener baptized the candidates. It was estimated that more than a thousand people witnessed the baptismal service. It had been well announced and signs on the roads into Wallenstein were put up to guide those interested in observing the proceedings. Apparently Frank Guthrie, in his sermon, asked those there who knew they were saved to raise their hands. Such aggressive measures were offensive to many of the Old Order people who attended, and, in fact, were and continue to be frowned upon by the Christian Brethren themselves. It was also regarded by those there who knew Guthrie to be out of character for him to make such a request.

That same Sunday the group met to "break bread" in the manner of the Brethren assemblies. This was regarded as a turning point for the group as they realized that they needed to organize as a church. Because

they had a communion service in the Brethren manner, it was sensed that they would go with the Brethren tradition.

Two of the most respected preachers that emerged out of all the preachers coming among us at that time were Mr. Henry Jansen (a Russian Mennonite from Kitchener) and Mr. Frank Guthrie from the Brethren Assembly in Guelph. By now a choice had to be made. Either the group was going to follow the teaching of Henry Jansen and become part of the Russian Mennonite Organization or it would follow the teaching of Mr. Guthrie and meet as a Brethren Assembly...As a small group of believers with no outside influence we had many meetings to decide our future. My strong convictions were shared by my brother Noah Martin and Jacob Martin and eventually the whole group decided that we would become a Brethren Assembly. On September 9, 1934 we met for the first time as an Assembly to remember the Lord. Gathering with us that day were Mr. Frank Guthrie and Mr. George McKenzie to coach us along²⁵

The minutes of a business meeting held September 13, 1934 (item 7) demonstrated another way John Martin influenced the group. The item reads:

Discussion on church organization. Explanation of the topic by Israel Martin. Proposed by Israel Martin that we be incorporated with the Russian Mennonite Brethren (Brueder Gemeinde) by reason of several very obvious advantages. Objections to church organization raised by brothers John Martin, Noah Martin and Jacob Martin. Agreed to discuss this problem at some future date, also to bring in amendments on the other points if deemed advisable by the assembly.²⁶

When the group did formally form as a Brethren assembly, according to John Martin, about half of them left. These went to the General Conference Mennonites. It would be better to speak of them returning to the Conference Mennonites as John Martin indicated that Israel Martin had brought a group of Conference Mennonites along with him to the meetings. These people were from the area around Hawkesville. According to John Martin, none of those who came out of the Old Order went back, neither did they leave the Hawkesville group at that time. Perhaps eight couples and a few single adults formed the group that stayed with the Hawkesville Gospel Hall.

Another very important person in the situation was Henry Martin. Though he did not officially join the Hawkesville group himself, his influence caused many others to join. bom into a "good Old Order home" in Elmira, Henry went to the Elmira meeting house until the age of 11 when he was "shopped out" to his uncle Ira Martin's farm east of Heidelberg to get him "away from town mischief in 1923. He saw a sign on the Bearinger Road north of Waterloo that said "Christ died for the ungodly", this greatly upset him as he understood that Christ died for the good people. At that time a 'bom-again' old Mennonite, Simeon E. Martin, came to help butcher or thrash on the farm where young Henry was boarding. He gave much

encouragement to Henry who was a new believer. In 1929 Henry left his uncle's farm to work on the farm of Aaron Hoffman. This family attended the Conestoga Meeting House. One of Aaron Hoffman's sons, Sydney, had great arguments with Henry Martin over religion. After much discussion, Sydney was the first of the four brothers to be 'bom- again'. All four brothers eventually had this religious experience and joined the Hawkesville group. They have been leaders ever since. Sydney, in fact, became one of the first two missionaries to be sent out from the Hawkesville Gospel Hall. He and John Martin were commissioned on Good Friday, April 19, 1935, to go to the Peace River district.

...they set out with a 1930 Chevrolet car. Upon arriving at North Bay, the Spirit as it were, suffered them not to turn west but took them north to Monteith where they joined William Murray in the work of the Lord. In the fall of that year, John Martin returned to Hawkesville while Sydney Hoffinan remained at North Bay for four years.²⁷

Though he did not officially join the Hawkesville group. Henry attended their meetings for some years and, in so doing, caused problems for his Old Order family and for himself. His father had some concerned Old Order men speak to him about his boys going "red brick" and Hawkesville. The father's reply was, "Well, they are not stealing; they are not drinking; they are not going to dances; they are not lying; So what else can I do?" Evidently the father saw that his sons were keeping up the good works they had been taught in the Old Order. That incident was interesting to have related as some from the Old Order accused the Hawkesville people of ignoring good works. It was thus evident that those who left the Old Order for Hawkesville were careful to maintain a very high level of moral integrity. In fact, those interviewed repeatedly acknowledge the debt they owed the Old Order for teaching them such a high level of morality and industry.

Young Henry had two of the Old Order leaders visit him one Saturday afternoon and try to convince him of the error of his ways. They were his uncle Enos Martin and a deacon Elias Martin. According to Henry Martin they accused him of having a false spirit and suggested that he might go mad if he kept on with the Hawkesville people. One of the more frequently expressed concerns of the Old Order critics was that the Hawkesville people would likely go crazy with their religious emphasis. Henry would not agree to cease going to the fundamentalist Mennonite meetings and the Hawkesville meetings but did promise to cease attending the "Times" for the young people in the Old Order congregation. This satisfied the men and they parted from Henry on good terms. Unfortunately, modern historians such as Frank Epp often misrepresent fundamentalists on the issue of holy living as followers of Christ. Epp says, "Fundamentalism emphasized only the work of the cross, meaning grace, and neglected the way of the cross, meaning disciplined and abstemious living."²⁸ But this was not the case. A classic

fundamentalist such as Billy Sunday was notorious for his long dissertations against the evils of alcohol, playing cards, gambling and theatre attendance. The sermons of the Baptist leader T.T.Shields in Toronto against theatre attendance, dancing, playing cards, tobacco, alcoholic beverages and so on, were published and distributed widely among fundamentalist churches. More liberal elements in the Christian community actually accused the fundamentalists of legalism with respect to their avoidance of common social practices. And it is this point exactly which allowed Old Order people to be open to the Hawkesville Gospel Hall preachers. Noah Martin vividly recalled Frank Guthrie's appreciative comments on the stability and industry of "you Old Order people".

But this was not the only reason the Old Order people took an interest in the Hawkesville work. In several instances, tragedy was a significant motivating factor initiating Old Order members to search for answers to those questions that every generation struggles to address, and for which they did not find satisfactory answers within their tradition.

For example, Ezra Frey related how in January 1933, just a few weeks before his wedding, his fiancée, Lydian M. Weber, died. One of the preachers at her funeral was a bishop in the Old Order named Jesse Bauman. "Every time he was behind the pulpit it was assurance of salvation." he said.²⁹ After the funeral, Bauman made the unusual request of the mourning parents that he be allowed to have an afternoon meeting in their home. Funerals were customarily held in the morning in the Old Order tradition. His request was granted and the service was held. Again, assurance of salvation³⁰ was stressed and the broken-hearted young man was tormented because he did not have the assurance and peace of which the bishop spoke. For a year he asked himself, "Which is right? Which is right? These people (Bauman and the fundamentalists he knew) seem so happy, so peaceful compared to the Old Order."

Compounding his frustration was the fact that for some time prior to the tragedy, he had been reforming himself and seeking to be a "good Old Order boy." He had joined the church and put aside the unacceptable habits. Gone was the card playing, the smoking, the cider, and gone too was his fiancée. He could not understand it. For the following year he spoke at the auctions and marketplaces to the "false teachers" as the fundamentalists were called and they answered his questions. He read his German Bible regularly at home and finally he knelt one night by his bed and "accepted God at His word."

When the young man spoke to his mother about his conversion and desire to associate with the Hawkesville people she became extremely distressed and asked him, "You say you will not be a Mennonite again?" The concern behind her question was that she had the impression that there was no salvation outside the Mennonite church. The young man had the same opinion before hearing and accepting the fundamentalist message. Reflecting on the scene with his mother so many years ago the man suggested that it was rather a common idea among the Old Order that salvation was in the Mennonite church.

The emphasis of Bishop Jesse Bauman and his itinerant preaching among the Old Order congregations caused many to see advantages in "knowing one's destiny rather than groping after eternal life". Several people interviewed told of how Bishop Bauman started them searching for a more confident and peace-filled form of Christianity. Texts from his sermons were quoted as the biblical passage that brought them to assurance of salvation. Those who were young and still formative in their thinking were considering carefully and discussing thoughtfully what this man had to say. Some stayed longer in the Old Order after their conversion because of Jesse Bauman's presence among them. They wondered if the Old Order would ever see a reformation from within. Another family that was remarkably influenced by tragedy was the family of John Martin. The death of his married brother Addison, December 23, 1929, caused John to ask himself, "If that had been me, where would I be?" The teaching he had known from earliest days in the Old Order gave him no comfort. He made efforts at reform in order to become a good Mennonite. He dressed himself according to regulations and redid me harness on his horses (removed the brass buckles etc.) to conform to the standard. He attended the instruction class in the spring of 1931, was baptized, and welcomed into the fellowship of the Peel Mennonite Meeting House. According to Martin, his efforts at reform met with little lasting success, "Again and again I would slip back into the old ways."³¹

In August 1931 a Pentecostal evangelist, Mr. Harter, came to the "little log church" in Wallenstein for three nights of meetings. Hearing about the meetings, John Martin decided to attend. When he walked in he saw Old Order people he knew. He noticed a young Old Order friend there who had apparently just been "saved" a couple of nights earlier. When John Martin heard this friend, David Frey, give his testimony at that meeting he felt there was hope for him also. The preacher asked, during the sermon, who wanted to "get saved", and John Martin was the only one to raise his hand. The counsel given him by the preacher was to go home and "tell the Lord all about it."³² John Martin did as the preacher exhorted him and got assurance that night of salvation. Proximity of fundamentalist influences to the Old Order people was a facilitating factor in satisfying their curiosity. The "little log church" in Wallenstein was actually Zion Methodist Church. While a black congregation occasionally used the building for worship, no other groups were known to use the facility at this time other than Mr. John Martinson.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE HAWKESVILLE GOSPEL HALL

In late August, 1934, it was evident that a theological division was de facto. The John Martins had not attended the meeting house since June. Several had expressed interest in baptism and arrangements were being made for a baptismal service September 9. On the Wednesday prior, at the evening Bible study, Frank Guthrie made the casual comment, "Why don't you meet to break bread Sunday morning before the baptism?" Guthrie volunteered, along with George McKenzie, to meet with them, bring hymn books and guide them through their first service. This was taken seriously and the group met in Christian Brethren fashion on the Sunday morning to break bread, and the church was begun.

However, for several years the Old Order people had attended the services of their Mennonite church in the morning and the services in the Hawkesville Gospel Mission in the afternoon and evening, and, as the Hawkesville people told their stories, they clearly indicated they did not intend leaving the Old Order congregations. Some expressed genuine satisfaction with the Old Order prior to the crises mentioned. Some who left were told by family members who stayed that the reason for leaving was to adopt the ways of the world. It's true that most dropped the dress code within a few years of leaving the Old Order. Some changed dress styles within a year or two and some confessed to wearing "plain clothes" for ten years after leaving. Some did get cars soon after leaving, though, with the depression going on, such things as cars would not be affordable for very many. While it was not considered fashionable for the young adults to challenge the preachers, they did see the other preachers and deacons get up after the preachers of the day delivered their sermons, to give "Zeugniss" or the "yea and amen" to the sermons. While the Zeugniss was not as much confrontational as it was an affirmation or extension of the sermon, it did provide an opportunity to adjust or clarify what was said in the sermon. Such liberties were officially sanctioned and practised by the leaders in the meeting. After the meeting was over, young men such as John Martin would go out their door of the meeting house and meet the preachers coming out their door and question them at length about what they had said that morning. Also, it became evident in the meeting houses that occasionally the deacons were not giving the usual Zeugniss. They were not affirming the sermons as in time past. This did not escape the attention of those present who wanted a more fundamentalist style of sermon preached.

The preachers in the Old Order were hard working farmers and they did not have the time to study the Bible and prepare sermons as did some of the preachers heard in the little log church in Wallenstein. Moreover, preachers from the Brethren group like Frank Guthrie who had other forms of work often owned their own business and could take extra time for study and sermon preparation that a salaried employee could not. Also, the Old Order preachers were chosen by lot and not according to speaking ability. Mature members of the congregation would select a group of their men to participate in the lot. Because the public speaking was left to those already appointed, the men selected to participate in the lot would only be known for personal traits other than public speaking skills. The Old Order congregations felt that the Lord controlled the lot and therefore God would overrule and the right man would be chosen. But it was apparent, at times, that the choice fell on a person who had little skill in public speaking.

Since the men who spoke at the little log church were invited on the basis of speaking skills, demonstrated biblical literacy, and personal Christian commitment to the work of preaching, there were obvious differences between the sermons heard in the Old Order meetings in the morning and those in the little log church in the evening. As a result, when these young adults asked questions of the preachers in the little log church they discovered that the preachers could quote the Bible and give more satisfactory answers. One present-day Old Order leader interviewed remarked that these young men who were no[^]questioning the

Old Order preachers were the same young men who, by their rather wild actions, had caused the Old Order leaders much grief in another way. The young men would still be stirring up problems but not in another direction and that might have caused the leaders to be less patient or concerned about them. One person recalled having Bishop Ezra Martin ask him to drop by for a visit. This happened during the preparation time prior to one of the twice annual communion services. When the young man went to the bishop's home he was questioned about what he meant about various things he had been discussing with different members of the Old Order congregation. The bishop had sensed the young man was not happy in the group and wanted to know the source of the displeasure. The young man asked the bishop to get his Bible and show him where the Hawkesville people were wrong in their beliefs. The bishop declined the invitation for unexplained reasons. The young man then asked the bishop if the bishop would be just as happy if he did not take the communion. The bishop said "Yes." and the young man ceased taking the communion and soon left the congregation to join officially the Hawkesville group.

The brother of this young man had a similar experience when he and his wife were asked to go to see Bishop Ezra Martin. It was his in-laws, who, in great concern for their children, arranged the meeting. They invited the young man's parents to come as well as the parents of the hired girl who lived with the couple. Apparently, when the persuasive efforts of the Old Order leaders and the parents were seen to fall on deaf ears, the young couple were asked to pass the communion emblems by without participating. The parents of the hired girl removed her from the home of these who possessed a "heretic faith".

An important factor in the separation was a misunderstanding of words, in particular, the biblical word "saved" was very much misunderstood by the Old Order people when they heard the Hawkesville people using it freely. The word "saved" was not commonly employed by the Old Order people at the time. When it was heard in conjunction with a departure from the old ways in terms of dress code and acceptance of modern conveniences, the Old Order people reacted strongly. Upon reflection, after many years, one Old Order leader commented, "They did not mean what we interpreted it to mean."

In a very candid statement, one present day leader indicated that there was reason for the Hawkesville people saying that the Old Order people felt justified by their good works rather than by faith in Christ as the Brethren preached. This leader stated that the correct view of justification is by faith not works. However, he went on to say, when a group puts so much emphasis on the external it's easy to slip into wrong views. He felt that there was a decline in the spiritual vitality of the Old Order church during the 1920's.

Undoubtedly, one significant attraction for the Old Order people to the Hawkesville group was the lack of liturgical emphasis among the Brethren. Had the form of worship been complex and highly symbolic it might have caused the Old Order people to shy away. As it was, they came to a form of service quite like their own apart from the seating arrangement. The number of similarities between the two groups worship

service is striking.

Both groups sang a cappella, the Old Order did not put emphasis on prior preparation for preaching and the Brethren meeting for breaking of bread was viewed as a Spirit led gathering where no prior preparation for the message(s) was done.³³ While the seating arrangement for the Old Order was more complex with age and sex division (see diagram 1), the Brethren did gather in a circle with the communion elements in the middle on a table. In both groups, there would be an absence of choirs or musical soloists. Neither group had the practice of "public invitations."³⁴ after the services that were characteristic of revivalist and fundamentalist groups.

Both groups preferred plain worship buildings that did not cost much money and reflected a modest design. The furnishings for their buildings were correspondingly plain and functional. Also it needs to be noted that the Brethren practice was to have lay preachers as well as trained (though formal training was not prerequisite) and full time itinerant ministers. Lay preachers were what the Mennonites had each week and there was usually a visiting preacher at the meeting house each Sunday. Both groups were in the habit of having two preachers speak at the preaching services. Neither group would countenance the use of the title "Reverend" by their ministers.

Both groups were very careful not to put emphasis on collections or offerings of money. The Old Order would not take an offering on Sunday. They would announce, perhaps six to eight times a year, that there was a need and those who wished to contribute should see the deacon. Certainly the type of service had much in common and would thus be easier for the Mennonites who left the Old Order to accept the Brethren way. Both groups also appointed their leaders from within the local congregation. A preacher from outside the local congregation would never be called to take charge of the local church.

A practice among the Brethren was to seek out interested individuals and have private sessions with the person to study the Scriptures and answer questions the person might have about the fundamentalist faith. John Martin recalled how Frank Guthrie would come and visit him on the farm every Wednesday afternoon when his bakery in Guelph was closed. Guthrie apparently saw Martin as an eager learner and devoted hours a week to answering questions and teaching Martin the Brethren understanding of Scripture.

During these early years I had learned a great deal from my uncle Emmanuel Martin and from Frank Guthrie through private conversations with them. Through personal study as well as being tutored by the above mentioned brethren, I became fully persuaded that we should form a New Testament church as taught by Assembly brethren.³⁵

It should be noted that while John Martin saw the efforts of Guthrie as helpful and most welcome, those in the Old Order and other Mennonite groups considered the work of Guthrie in a very negative manner. Such missionary work by the Brethren people caused them to be unwelcome in many homes in the area. The term

"Hawkesviller" became synonymous with the idea of a cult to the Old Order people.

...The 'Hawkesviller' Plymouth Brethren, (were) a group whose zealous efforts to proselytize 'unsaved' Old Orders and to proclaim doctrines of 'assurance' and 'eternal security' had made them, as one sympathizer puts it, 'a poison word'...for Jesse (Bauman) and his followers this spiritual awakening and assurance were so important that their earlier faith in Christ seemed like unbelief and their acceptance of this new experience was like that of being 'born-again', of being 'saved'. Given the early history, continued fraternizing, doctrinal inclinations, later flirtations and defections, it may be easier to talk of this more as a part of a fifth column Brethren missionary effort than as a primarily Mennonite renewal movement.³⁶

It certainly appears that some of those who lived through the time, and later historians such as Bechtel, slur the "hawkesviller" people quite willingly and deliberately. There has been some suggestion that the reason for leaving was to exchange one form of authority for another. Ken Bechtel explains:

The heads or parents of the families opting for the Bible Chapel had been born into and raised within the Mennonite church. Within that fellowship, authority means the church body's submission to even autocratic and legalistic leadership. Some suggest that their "conversion" meant exchanging one form of authority for another; they traded the bishop officially for the Bible, or perhaps more accurately, for systems of interpreting it and for certain authoritative speakers. 'These persons were looking for a leader with all the answers to hand down,' one has suggested...³⁷

The problem with such a simple explanation for the migrations to the Hawkesville people over the years is that, from the beginning of the meeting in Hawkesville, dialogue and free exchange have been the order of the day. What attracted many to the work in the earliest times was the freedom to express opinions that were not necessarily held by the teachers and to have opportunity to engage in open discussion. They experienced the antithesis of what was intimated in the above statement which says, they were "...looking for a leader with all the answers to hand down,". Reading the minutes of the business meetings evidences that the group started and ceased different practices as they struggled with what they should do according to the biblical teaching. Foot washing was one of the matters where differences of opinion were held and it took some time for them to arrive at a consensus about the practice.

John Martin tells the story of how, in the fall of 1935, George McKenzie came from Guelph to have a series of meetings. At a discussion time after one service, McKenzie was asked about the wearing of bonnets by the women. For a woman to wear a bonnet was to clearly indicate she was Mennonite. The women in the Hawkesville group were struggling to know what to do now that they were no longer Mennonites. It was difficult for them to discard the bonnet tradition. McKenzie replied that he would advise the women to put their bonnets in the stove and burn them. This response so offended the group that McKenzie was never

asked back. Evidently, not all authoritative answers handed down were accepted.

John Martin also related how the mature men who had come from different denominations to preach and teach, withdrew and allowed the young adults to have several meetings to decide their own future as a church. While the teachers had different denominational perspectives and each had made his views known, the new believers were not pressured into any one mould. The fact that the most influential preacher who was visiting them, i.e. Frank Guthrie, did not persuade them to practice household baptism, as he did, is evidence that they were independent thinkers. After they decided to become a Brethren assembly, people like Henry Jansen were still welcome and he participated in a baptismal service in 1935. As can be seen from the subsequent history of the Bible Chapel, the congregation has made adjustments in their practices as they have grown in their understanding of the Scriptures. They did not look for a leader to take charge as suggested. It's common knowledge that the structure of Brethren assemblies has always been to have plurality of leadership so no one man has control of the congregation.

The suggestion by some that the Hawkesville group were trading "authoritative leaders" is contradicted by another person's opinion that those who left were "a group of angry young men". If they were a group of people who were so angry, it is not likely they would be particularly submissive to the "authoritative leaders" they allegedly submitted to in the new work. An astute observation by one still in the Old Order was to the effect that a cross section of the Old Order people left. It was not a pocket or resistance to the Alt Ordnung who left, but people of very different temperaments and inclinations. The Hoffman brothers were, with the exception of Sydney, very quiet and soft-spoken men. Sydney was more of the mould of John Martin. The Hoffman brothers married women who, like themselves, were of the more conservative element in the group. The Martin brothers, John and Noah in particular, were known as aggressive and less reserved. The Old Order people indicated that the Martins "married women who were not as plain".

Describing the young people in the Old Order meeting houses of the time Urie Bender says:

In many homes during that period, hard cider in the cellar and the use of tobacco in cigars and pipes were common...The moderation found among adults in most of the Old Order homes was not, however, characteristic among the youth. Before his conversion, Jesse was part of the group of young men variously described as a gang, as rough, rowdy or wild. One of the earmarks of that crowd was the way they drove their horses - like crazy. Another was their conduct at the Saturday evening get togethers, an interesting and neutral euphemism for the regular dances. It seemed a short step from cider in the cellar, to cider at threshing time, to drinking excesses on Saturday night."³⁸

A most interesting observation as the research was conducted centred on the fact that the Old Order people and the Hawkesville people were very gentle and gracious in speaking about the other side of the situation. In spite of the division that occurred between them, they found ways to cooperate, and both sides today

seem at pains to relate how their own actions might have been misinterpreted. A very interesting incident of cooperation between the two groups was related by John Martin. In 1939, Annie Bauman (nee Martin), the wife of Urias, and now a member of the Hawkesville Gospel Hall, passed away. She and her family had been part of the Peel Mennonite congregation and some relatives had been buried in their cemetery. Because the Hawkesville congregation did not have a cemetery, they requested that they be allowed to use the meeting house and their cemetery. Permission was granted and the two groups cooperated.

In 1933 when the wife of Israel Hoffman, Lucinda Gingrich died, Israel Hofiman wanted Henry Jansen to officiate at the funeral service in the Conestoga Meeting House. This was not acceptable to the Old Order leaders. So the Mennonite service was held in the morning as was the custom, and then in the afternoon when everyone came to the Hoffman home for a meal, Mr. Jansen spoke to them. Some of the Old Order people moved into another part of the house when Mr. Jansen spoke so they would not have to listen to him speak. While some of those in the Old Order would willingly listen, it is clear that some for various reasons wished nothing to do with the fundamentalist influence at that time. It might be noted that the problem for the Old Order people was possibly as much a concern about Mr. Jansen's church association as it was the Brethren influence on the Hoffman family. The group had yet to officially form and complete the break from the Mennonite church.

The present situation is very different among the people. When a funeral of someone known to the people is held at Wallenstein Bible Chapel, many will come in their buggies to the service at the chapel. Within 6 years of the official break (i.e. 1934), it is seen that there was a healing process going on in the relationships between the two groups.

Another evidence of how considerate they were in remembering incidents between them was seen in the situation where one person recalled going to family weddings in the Old Order after leaving for Hawkesville. The first time or two when they went to a family wedding they were asked to sit back with those who served the tables rather than up with the family members where they would normally have been. Within a few years, they were allowed to occupy their normal places at such functions.

The person relating this modest form of shunning he experienced excused his family saying, "They didn't mean anything by it, they just thought they had to do it." The same person related how graciously they were received on visits and how their Mennonite relatives would come to their assistance whenever help was needed. He assured me that he never felt a loss of love for all the ecclesiastical arguments.

However, some who stand apart from the two traditions, but have studied them both, were quite eager to interpret the actions as being covert expressions of anger, suggesting that there was great

bitterness and misrepresentation, particularly on the part of the Hawkesville people. Memory may fail these people who left when it comes to remembering the less pleasant aspects of the story enacted so many years ago. However, there is definite evidence that they could speak with significant factual content regarding what they admired in the Old Order, how much of their present view of life was learned there, the lifelong friendships that survived the defection, the family gatherings that continued after the departure, and the mutual help that has continued between members of the two groups over the years when need is evident.

CONCLUSION

The thesis merely begins the investigation of a most significant phenomenon in the history of the Christian Brethren movement in Ontario. The particularly significant aspects of the work remain to be seen in the history of the Gospel Hall as it emerged into a Bible Chapel. That covers the period from about 1935 to 1968.

This era in the life of the group includes such issues as the development of a radio ministry by them, their struggle with the conscription for World War n, the commissioning of many missionaries to various parts of the world, how numerous daughter churches are formed, and their disputes and reconciliations with the different Mennonite groups around them.

As the work progresses more documentation of the history is available. However, for much of the development of the work, the main source of information resides in the memories of those who lived through the situation. Much intensive interviewing is required before a proper history can be constructed. As indicated earlier in this thesis, the writings to date that refer to the Hawkesville group are against them and a more thorough presentation of their history waits development.

It is my intention to pursue the matter and seek to record as much information as possible from the primary sources that are available.

This research is obviously of great importance to the Christian Brethren movement in Ontario because this is perhaps the most influential of all their congregations. Yet this group has significance beyond the Christian Brethren movement. Much can be learned about the Old Order Mennonites, the old Mennonite church and the evangelical tradition in Ontario from this situation. There are still many people alive who were there when the division took place and they can give understanding into how such a disruption takes place in denominations, how others move from one group to another, how healing takes place over the years, the factors that go into such healing, and how divisions may be prevented or minimized. When these matters are explored in detail, it will provide insight into the

dynamics of the divisions that are still taking place among various groups today.

Notes

1. For detailed descriptions of this movement see David J. Beattie, *Brethren* [Kilmamock: John Ritchie Ltd., 1939]; F. Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement* [Devon: The Paternoster Press, 1968]; W. Blair Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1901]; H.H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren* [London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd., 1967]
2. H.H. Rowden, *The Origins of the Brethren* [London: Pickering & Inglis, 1967], p. 1.
3. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, Vol. 1* [Toronto: Macmillan, 1974], p. 265.
4. Ken Bechtel, *Three Score Years* [n. publ.: Elmira, 1984], p. 33.
5. *Ibid*, p. 39.
6. For a more complete analysis of this era see Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970]; George W. Dolla, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* [Greenville, S.C.: Bob Jones University Press, 1973].
7. See E.R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970], p. 266, where he discusses this event's significance, stating it was "...the most notorious aspect of the Fundamentalist controversy."
8. The Guelph Bible Conference in Guelph would prove to be a very influential teaching station for those from the old order who travelled down to the various conventions. On the Victoria Day weekend 1934, it had the famous fundamentalist preacher Harry Ironside there to open the new facility for conferences.
9. B.S. Hosteller, *American Mennonites and Protestant Movements* [Kitchener: Herald Press, 1987], p. 207.
10. Isaac R. Horst, *Up the Conestoga* [n. publ.: Mt. Forest: 1979], pp. 266-268. See also Isaac R. Horst, *Cose Ups of the Great Awakening* [n. publ.: Mt. Forest: 1985], pp. 122-203, for more information on the divisions.
11. This means they wanted the women to wear approved bonnets, not that the women were to go without any headcovering.
12. Urie A. Bender, *Four Earthen Vessels*, [Kitchener: Herald Press, 1982], p. 34. 45
13. For a detailed description of this split see Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, Vol. 1* [Toronto: Macmillan, 1974], pp. 266-268.
14. Isaac Horst in *Up the Conestoga*, [n. publ.: Mt. Forest, 1979], says, p. 363, "David B. Martin had

been ordained as preacher for Elmira in 1890. When the Peel Mennonite Meeting House was built in 1901, David was transferred to the new house, which was more convenient to his home. His son, David W. Martin, was ordained as deacon for Peel in 1913."

15. Isaac Horst, *Up the Conestoga* [n. publ.: Mt. Forest, 1979], p. 363.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
17. For more information on how fundamentalism infiltrated the Ontario Conference Mennonites see Urie A. Bender, *Four Earthen Vessels* [Kitchener: Herald Press, 1982], p. 36-53.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
19. *The Ontario Reader's Second Book* [Toronto: T. Eaton Co., 1909], *The Ontario Reader's Third Book* [Toronto: T. Eaton Co., 1909].
20. *Wallenstein Bible Chapel* 1968, [n. ed. n. publ.] p.6
21. John M. Martin, *Saved to Serve* [n. publ.: Tavistock: 1985], p. 7.
22. The informant who remembered this quotation also recalled the following one where Abraham Bearinger stated that there was no salvation outside the Mennonite church. Another informant, upon hearing of this comment about no salvation outside the Mennonite church attributed to Bearinger, indicated, that in his opinion, Bearinger would not make such a statement. I could not resolve the conflict between these two informants on this point.
23. John Martin, *Ibid*, p. 5.
24. Household baptism refers to the practice of baptizing an entire family when the parents profess Christianity. The mode used by those Brethren who follow this teaching is immersion.
25. John M. Martin, *Saved to Serve* [n. publ.: Tavistock, 1985], p. 8.
26. *Wallenstein Bible Chapel* [n. ed. n. publ.: 1968], p. 11.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 12. 46
28. Frank Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, vol. 1 [Toronto: Macmillan, 1974], p. 57.
29. For more information on this influential bishop see. Ken Bechtel *Three Score Years* [n. publ.: Elmira, 1984], p. 32-36.
30. This doctrine declares that the believer in Christ can be confident they are in a state of grace. For more information see G.I. Williamson *The Westminster Confession of Faith* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1964] p. 13 Iff. Also see *Christian Spiritual Conversation on Saving Faith for the Young* [Union Grove, Pa. John W. Weaver, 1921] p. 155 Article 8. The latter work was used by the old order churches.
31. John M. Martin *Saved to Serve* [n. publ.: Tavistock: 1985], p. 4.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 4

33. The Brethren preachers were well prepared for the public preaching service that took place every Sunday. However, they stressed that the Breaking of Bread service [communion], that occurred every Sunday morning for their members, be a Spirit led gathering where no prior preparation would take place.
34. Public invitations is the practice of asking for those in the congregation who want to become Christians or rededicate their lives to the Lord to come forward to meet the preacher or other church leaders at the front of the auditorium. This "invitation" was extended when the closing hymn was sung and those interested would walk to the front as the congregation sang and counsel would be given.
35. John M. Martin, *Saved to Serve* [n. publ.: Tavistock, 1985] p. 8.
36. Ken Bechtel, *Three Score Years* [n. publ.: Elmira: 1984], p. 33.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
38. Uric A. Bender, *Four Earthen Vessels* [Kitchener: Herald Press, 1982], pp. 258-259. 47

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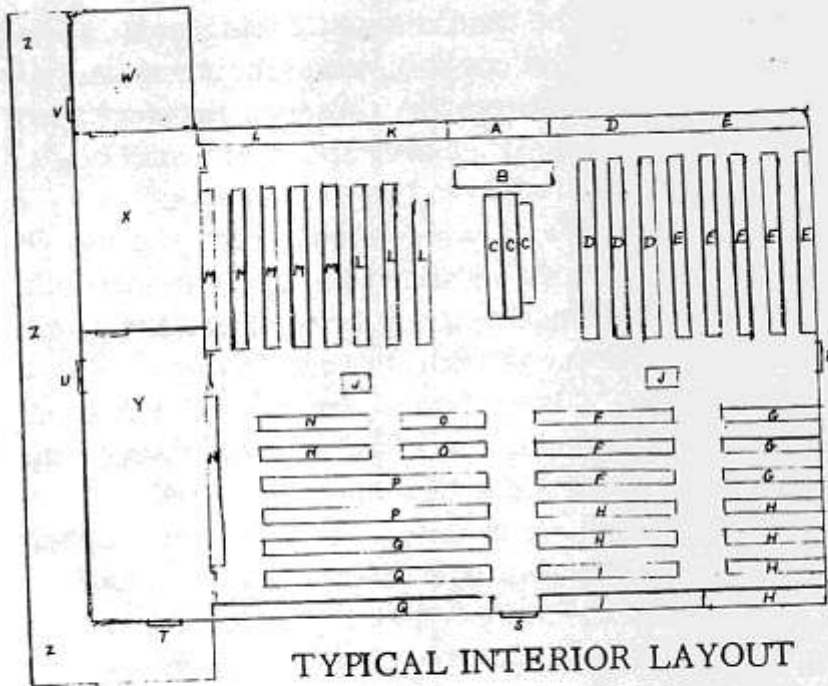
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Diagram 1



TYPICAL INTERIOR LAYOUT

KEY TO MEETINGHOUSE LAYOUT

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| A - clergy | N - young women |
| B - pulpit | O - newly married women |
| C - spare benches | P - young girls |
| D - older men | Q - older girls |
| E - middle-aged men | R - men's entrance |
| F - young men | S - boys' entrance |
| G - newly married men | T - girls' entrance |
| H - single young men | U - young women's entrance |
| I - boys | V - older women's entrance |
| J - heaters | W - woodshed |
| K - wives of clergy | X - older women's cloak- |
| L - older women | room; also council room |
| M - middle-aged women | Y - younger women's cloak- |
| | room |
| | Z - loading porch |