



Mennonite Library & Archives Fresno Pacific University

J. B. Toews An Inventory of His Papers

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Creator: Toews, J. B. (John Benjamin), 1906-1998.
Title: Papers.
Inclusive dates: 1926-1998.
Quantity: 14.5 linear ft.
Record Group No.: M37

BIOGRAPHY OF J. B. TOEWS

John Benjamin (J. B.) Toews was born 24 September 1906 in Alexanderthal, Molotschna Colony, Ukraine. In 1920 he was baptized and became a member of the Alexanderthal Mennonite Brethren Church. He attended the Gnadenfeld *Zentralschule* and the Halbstadt *Mittelschule* in the Molotschna Colony before enrolling at the University of Ukraine in 1922.

Toews's studies were interrupted in 1926, when political conditions forced him to flee the Soviet Union. Unable to migrate directly to Canada because of medical problems, Toews remained in the Netherlands until 1928, and continued his studies at the University of Amsterdam's satellite campus in Rotterdam.

In 1928 Toews and other members of his family migrated to Coaldale, Alberta, where they began farming. Two years later Toews decided to return to school, and enrolled at Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas. He attended there from 1930 until 1932. While at Tabor he met Nettie Unruh, whom he married in 1933.

Toews received his first experience in preaching as a student at Tabor. He served on the college's gospel team, which visited congregations on behalf of the college. He also served briefly as interim pastor of the Jansen (Nebr.) Mennonite Brethren Church during the summer of 1931.

After returning to Canada, Toews moved to Hepburn, Saskatchewan, and began teaching at Bethany Bible Institute. While at Bethany, he also preached in many of the nearby Mennonite Brethren congregations. In 1936 he was ordained by the North Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren Conference, and served as pastor of the Hepburn Mennonite Brethren Church from 1937 to 1938.

Toews and his family moved to Portland, Oregon, in 1938. The following year he enrolled at Western Baptist Theological Seminary in Portland, where he completed a B.D. in 1940. He then accepted a position in the Bible department at Freeman (S.D.) College. In 1941 he completed his thesis, "The Christ of the Johannine Theology," and was granted the Th.M. degree from Western Baptist Theological Seminary in 1941.

That same year Toews enrolled in a doctoral program at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Forth Worth, Texas. He continued teaching at Freeman College during the 1941-1942

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academic year, but left there in spring 1942 to accept the pastorate of the Buhler (Kan.) Mennonite Brethren Church. During this time Toews was urged by leaders in his home congregation at Coaldale to forgo his doctoral studies, on the grounds that such a degree would cause him to lose touch with the congregations he served. Toews reluctantly agreed to this advice, and terminated his doctoral program.

In 1945 Toews resigned from the Buhler Mennonite Brethren Church and returned to Canada, where he became president of Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He remained in that position until 1948, when he returned to the United States and the pastoral ministry at the Reedley (Calif.) Mennonite Brethren Church. During this time Toews became involved in more extensive church leadership roles. He was elected to the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Board of Reference and Counsel in 1945, to the Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign Missions in 1948, and to the Mennonite World Conference Presidium in 1948.

In 1952, as a member of the Board of Foreign Missions, Toews made a trip to Belgian Congo to observe the mission work there. His experiences in Belgian Congo led him to leave the pastorate at Reedley in 1953 and become the General Secretary for the Board of Foreign Missions. He served in that role until 1963, a time of significant transition in mission philosophy and method.

In 1963 Toews again returned to the field of education, accepting a position as professor of theology and missions at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California. He was appointed president of the seminary in 1964. As with the mission board, Toews presided over a period of marked change at the seminary, helping to guide its reorientation from a fundamentalist theology to one based more directly on Anabaptist-Mennonite understandings.

Toews resigned as seminary president in 1972, but remained in Fresno for the rest of his career. In 1973 he was appointed Executive Secretary of the Mennonite Brethren Church Historical Commission. He was instrumental in setting up a system of official archival repositories for the North American Mennonite Brethren Church, including one in Fresno that he directed from 1975 until 1982. Toews's retirement did not, however, bring an end to his active church work. He continued to gather historical documents for the archives, teach at the seminary as an emeritus professor, and preach in pulpits around the world.

Though better known as a public speaker, Toews also wrote and published extensively during his career. A bibliography of his writings can be found in the Fall 1997 issue of *Direction* (vol. 26, no. 2).

Toews's church involvement diminished during his later years. In 1986 his wife Nettie died. He lived alone in Fresno until 1995, when he moved to a retirement home in Reedley, California. He remained there for the rest of his life. J. B. Toews died on 9 May 1998.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

This record group contains general personal and family documents, including photographs (1926-1998); correspondence files (1933-1998, bulk: 1972-1997); subject files (1941-1997); manuscripts and publications (1951-1995); sermons and public presentations (1931-1997); Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary files (1960-1996), including correspondence, some administrative files and course materials; video tapes of sermons and lectures (1987-1995); and audio tapes of sermons and lectures (1949-1989).

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ORGANIZATION AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION

This record group is arranged into eight series, as described in the Scope and Content Note above.

Correspondence files are arranged alphabetically. Correspondence folders identified with an individual's name generally contain at least ten letters to or from that person. Correspondence with persons for whom fewer than ten letters exist may be found in the general alphabetical folders. Subject files are arranged alphabetically by topic. Sermons and public presentations are arranged by topic, scripture passage or setting in which the presentation was given. Most other series are arranged chronologically.

LANGUAGES APPEARING IN THE COLLECTION

While most of the material is in English, some records are in German and a few are in Russian.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Box 1

Series I. Personal and family documents

- Biographical data, undated

- Autobiographies of J. B. and Nettie Toews, 1968-1994

- Church membership documents (Russia), 1926

- Ordination certificates, 1936

- Immigration and naturalization documents, 1928-1963

- Passports, 1933-1993

- Educational records, 1922-1940

- Student notebooks (Tabor College?), undated

- Student papers

 - "The Theology of Schleiermacher," 1940

 - "Religious Education: The Basic Essential [sic] for the Building of a Moral Character," 1940

 - "The Christ of the Johannine Theology" (preliminary draft of B.D. thesis), 1939

- Birthday greeting from father, 1927

- Wedding keepsake book from Lydia Toews, 1933

- Declaration of Trust, 1977

- Notebook: "Musings," 1993-1997

- Tributes and articles about J. B. Toews, 1993 and undated

- 90th birthday tributes, 1996

- Personal library inventory, 1997

- Guest book, 1997-1998

- Funeral material, 1998 May 13

- Letters to family after J. B. Toews's death, 1998

- Family papers

 - Nettie Toews documents, mostly undated

 - Obituary of Eliesabeth Toews, undated

 - Funerals and obituaries of parents, 1953, 1973

(Record Group M37: J. B. Toews Papers)

Funeral of Lydia Dick, 1984
Death and funeral of Nettie Toews, 1986
Death of Grace Unruh, 1986
Family history documents, undated
Toews family reunion, 1976-1977
other family documents, undated
[See other oversize personal documents in box 16]

Photographs

J. B. and Nettie Toews
Toews family
Family and friends in Russia before migration
Tigchelhoven family
Other photographs
Slides from presentation on MB missions in Congo

Series II. Correspondence

A

Ba-Be

Baerg, Rueben M., 1962-1997

Bethany Bible Institute, 1973-1995

Bi-Bo

Board of Trustees (General Conference of MB Churches), 1986-1988

Boldt, Ed, 1987-1998

Br-Bu

Braun, B. J., 1958-1983

Brucks, Henry, 1953-1987

Brunk, George R., 1969-1998

C

Consulate General of the USSR, 1939-1940

Da-Do

DeFehr family, 1945-1990

Dick, A. N. & Tena, 1971-1990

Dick, Dave & Elfrieda, 1977-1987

Dick, Peter J. & Lydia, 1962-1985

Dirks, Victor A., 1966-1997

Doerksen, Victor, 1979-1984

Box 2

Du-Dy

Dueck, Abe, 1976-1996

Dyck, C. J., 1964-1991

Ed-En

Ep-Ew

Esau, John, 1984-1988

Europäische Mennonitische Bibelschule (Bienenberg), 1972-1993

Fa-Fo

Flaming, Arthur, 1961-1989

Fr

Friesen, Abraham, 1977-1991

(Record Group M37: J. B. Toews Papers)

Friesen, Frank H., 1979-1997
Friesen, Irvin & Lydia, 1963-1985
Fu
Funk, Loyal, 1964-1993
Furubayashi, Mikiya, 1973-1986
G
George, B. A., 1972-1981
Giesbrecht, Erich, 1974-1987
Giesbrecht, G. B. (and family), 1963-1993
Giesbrecht, Gerd, 1977-1993
Ha-He
Hamm, Peter, 1965-1991
Harms-Wiebe, Ray & Judy, 1987-1994
Hartfeld, Hermann, 1981-1986
Heidebrecht, Vern, 1974-1995
Hi-Hu
Hiebert, Clarence, 1963-1989
Hiebert, Paul G. & Frances, 1973-1997
Horch, Ben, 1980-1986
I
Institute Biblique Laval, 1981-1984
Isaak, Sally Schroeder, 1982-1993
J
Jantz, Harold, 1973-1997
Janz, B. B., 1933-1964
Janz, Willy, 1976-1983
Janzen, A. E., 1964-1986
Ka-Ki
Kasdorf, Hans, 1972-1997
Kl
Klassen, A. J., 1973-1987
Klassen, John N., 1973-1997
Kliwer, John B., 1953-1993
Ko-Ky
Kroeker Foundation, 1975-1994
L
Lepp, Emma, 1966-1978
Loewen, Harry, 1975-1997
Loewen, Jacob A., 1963-1997
M
Mennonite Brethren Bible College/Concord College, 1945-1994

Box 3

Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services, 1953-1996
Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1964-1982
Mennonite Central Committee, 1988-1990
Mennonite World Conference, 1985-1986
N
Neufeld, Abe J. & Irene, 1963-1992

(Record Group M37: J. B. Toews Papers)

Neufeld, Alfred & Wilma, 1983-1997
Neufeld, J. V., 1980-1985
Neufeld, Peter K., 1978-1994
O
Pa-Pe
Patton, Lynette & Jack, 1993-1997
Pauls, David & Lena, 1969-1998
Penner, Peter, 1982-1997
Peters, Frank C., 1963-1983
Peters, G. W., 1963-1989
Peters, Laurene, 1973
Plett, C. F., 1969-1984
Plett, Rudolf, 1978-1988
Poetker, Henry P., 1963-1997
Pf-Pr
Prieb, Arnold, 1974-1982
Q
Ra
Ratzlaff, Gerhard, 1976-1997
Red-Reg
Redekop, John H., 1974-1994
Rei-Ren
Remple, Mariana & Henry D., 1970-1998
Ri-Ru
Russia, 1985-1989
Sa-Se
Sanchez, George & Florine, 1978-1997
Seibel, R. C., 1977-1993
Sh-Su
South America, 1971-1989
Suderman, Anna, 1979-1983
T
Tabor College, 1967-1993
Tigchelhoven, Wilhelmine von, 1961-1984

Box 4

Toews, Henry & Ilse, 1962-1997
Toews, Jacob J., 1963-1995
Toews, James & Janey, 1963-1985
Toews, John A., 1963-1976
Toews, John B. & Lillian, 1966-1997
Toews, John E. & Arlene (and children), 1961-1997
Toews, Nettie, 1957-1980
Toews, Paul & Barbara, 1963-1981
U
Unruh, A. H., 1943-1956
Unruh, Grace, 1963-1982
V
Wa-Wh

(Record Group M37: J. B. Toews Papers)

Warkentin, Elmo, 1963-1973
Wic-Wie
Wiebe, James P., 1981-1993
Wiens, Hans, 1979-1987
Wil-Wu
Wölk, Gerhard, 1980-1993
Wölk, Heinrich, 1976-1997
Y-Z
letters to family and friends, 1963-1998

Series III. Subject files

Aging, 1992-1995
All-Mennonite Consultation on Evangelism, 1969-1972
Baptism, 1952-1953
Board of Reference & Counsel (General Conference of MB Churches), 1948-1960
Buhler Mennonite Brethren Church, 1941-1945
Church and conference issues, ca. 1948-1953
Church growth, 1989
Dutch documentary film project, 1980
Ethiopia, 1959-1966
Europe
 General, 1977-1989
 Aussiedler, 1988-1989
 Bienenberg Seminarkursus, 1973
 Bund Taufgesinnter Gemeinden, 1989-1990
 Intensive course at Willingen, 1988-1989
 Trips, 1967-1984
Evangelism Commission, 1975-1977
Fresno Pacific College, 1974-1982
General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1987-1998
LOGOS, 1987-1990

Box 5

Mennonite Brethren higher education, 1976-1989
Mennonite Brethren missions history, 1969
Ministry/leadership, ca. 1984-1990
Mission film series project, 1984-1987
Mission film series scripts, undated
Mission research material, undated
 Germany
 Austria
 Spain
 Brazil
 Colombia
 Missiologists and administrators
 Missionaries abroad
 Missionary survey
Missions, 1957-1984
Palm Village (Reedley, Calif.), 1995-1997

(Record Group M37: J. B. Toews Papers)

Panama research project, 1972-1978
Panama research project: final manuscript, undated
Peters, G. W. (tributes), 1984-1986
Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church, 1947-1953
South America (Bd. of Reference & Counsel concerns), 1957-1960
South America trips, 1976-1980
Soviet Union trips, 1985-1989
Summer School of Missions, 1962-1963
Zaire history project
 Correspondence, 1970-1972
 Research material, undated

Box 6

Series IV. Manuscripts and publications (undated, unless otherwise noted)

Biblical Basis of Missions

Christian Leader articles, 1978-1993

"The Christian Ministry"

"The Church Growth Theory and Mennonite Brethren Polity," 1991

"The Church in Evangelism," 1965

"Essentials of Biblical Doctrines" (suggested outline)

"From Where to Where," 1974

"The Holy Spirit in the Believers Church"

"Influences on Mennonite Brethren Theology: The Influence of Fundamentalism," 1980

"Influences That Have Affected Educational Processes in Mennonite Brethren Schools,"
1976

JB: A Twentieth-Century Mennonite Pilgrim

 Preliminary drafts

 Reviews

"Leadership in the New Testament Church," 1984

The Mennonite Brethren Church in Zaire (preliminary draft)

Mennonite Brethren Herald articles, 1989-1993

"Mennonite Brethren Identity and Theological Diversity," 1975

"The Mennonite Brethren in Historical Perspective," 1981

"Mennonite Brethren in the Larger Mennonite World"

"Nonresistance and the Gospel," 1968

"Our Present in the Light of the Past," 1975

Pilgrimage of Faith: The MB Church in Russia and North America

 Preliminary drafts

 Responses to manuscript and reviews of book, 1983-1995

"The Significance of P. M. Friesen's History for MB Self-Understanding," 1978

"Spiritual Laws for Evangelism"

"The Teaching Ministry in the Mennonite Brethren Church," 1979

"Theological Pilgrimage" for *Bridging Troubled Waters: The Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Twentieth Century* (preliminary draft)

"Theological Tensions in the Mennonite Brethren Fellowship and Implications for the Work of the Seminary," 1967

"The Theology of Missions in Acts," 1967

"Toward a Philosophy of the Pastoral Ministry," 1967

Articles written for the Board of Foreign Missions

(Record Group M37: J. B. Toews Papers)

Other articles, ca. 1951-1967

Box 7

Series V. Sermons and public presentations

Partial list of sermons preached, 1930s and 1950s

Sermon notebooks, 1931-1940

Sermons arranged by scripture passage

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

Judges

1 Samuel

1-2 Kings

Nehemiah

Job

Song of Solomon

Psalms

Proverbs

Lamentations

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Ezekiel

Minor prophets

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

Hebrews

James

1 Peter

2 Peter

1 John

Revelation

Sermons and public presentations arranged by topic

(Record Group M37: J. B. Toews Papers)

Abraham
Baptism
Bible
Calling
Charity
Christian evidences
Christian service
Christmas & Advent
The Church
Communism
Consecration
Diaconate
Discipleship
Easter
Education/leadership
Evangelistic
Faith
Family
Fasting
Footwashing
Heaven
History/Mennonite Brethren Church
Holy Spirit
Home
Hope

Box 8

Love
Men/Fathers
Ministry/Leadership
Missions
Moses
Mothers/Women
New Testament ministry in contemporary setting (Southern District Ministers
Conference)
New Year
Nonresistance
Obedience
Passion Week
Paul
Peace
Prayer
Prophecy
Redemption
Religious education/Sunday school
Repentance
Revival
Sanctification
Satan

(Record Group M37: J. B. Toews Papers)

- Sermon on the Mount
- Service
- Sin
- Singing
- Soul winning
- Stewardship
- Thanksgiving
- Trust
- Works, good
- Youth/Christian education
- Sermons and public presentations arranged by type of event or location
 - Weddings
 - Anniversaries, Wedding
 - Funerals
 - Ordination and commissioning services
 - Dedications
 - Anniversaries of institutions
 - Seminary Chapel addresses
 - Tabor College convocations
 - Fresno Pacific College chapels and College Hours
 - Fresno Pacific College lectures, 1979-1982
 - Mennonite Brethren Bible College
 - Commencement addresses
 - Christian Renewal Series, 1984
 - Radio broadcasts
 - Women's Missionary Societies
 - Prayer meetings
 - Conference messages
 - Quebec series, 1985
 - North Kildonan Mennonite Brethren Church series, 1974
 - Winnipeg crusade
 - Tabor College School for Ministers, 1974
 - Palm Village, 1994-1997
- Other material relating to public presentations
 - Bible study notes, 1993
 - Personal testimonies

Box 9

- Series VI. Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary files
 - Correspondence, 1962-1964, 1970-1996
 - Seminary Study Commission, 1960-1962
 - Seminary merger, 1967-1969
 - Board of Reference & Counsel Advisory Council, 1968-1971
 - Seminary retreat presentations, undated
 - Discernment meetings, 1977
 - Missions curriculum planning, 1973-1974
 - Course material
 - Ecclesiology
 - Mennonite Brethren Church syllabi and exams

(Record Group M37: J. B. Toews Papers)

Mennonite Brethren Church lecture transcripts, 1979-1984
Preaching
Missionary Principles and Practices
Anabaptist History and Theology
Introduction to Biblical and Theological Studies
Introduction to Theology lecture transcripts, 1977
Biblical Basis of Missions syllabi and notes
Biblical Basis of Missions lecture transcripts, 1977

Box 10

Church Evangelism, 1971-1975
Church Mission Institute, 1977-1978
Other teaching material
Essentials of Christianity
English Bible (Bethany Bible Institute)
Old Testament survey
Bible II and III

Box 11

Series VII. Video tapes
Pacific District Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches 75th Anniversary, Bethany MB Church, 1987
Morning worship sermon, Corn (Okla.) Mennonite Brethren Church, 1988
Sermon, Buhler (Kan.) Mennonite Brethren Church: "The Mennonite Brethren Church in a Culture of Relativism," 1988
Thanksgiving sermon, Dinuba (Calif.) Mennonite Brethren Church, 1991
Buhler Sunshine Home 50th anniversary, 1995
Series VIII. Audio tapes
Audio tape reels
Missions Philosophy and History course lectures, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, 1971
German sermon, Reedley (Calif.) Mennonite Brethren Church, 1971

Box 12-13

Acts course lectures, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, 1975

Box 14

Audio tape cassettes [number of cassettes in brackets]
Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church [1], 1949
Steinbach, Manitoba [3], 1973
Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary retreat [1], 1973
Seminar at Bienenberg, Switzerland [5], 1973
First Baptist Church, San Jose, Calif. [3], 1974
Acts course lectures, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary [30], 1974
Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary chapel [1], 1976
Acts course lectures, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary [14], 1977

(Record Group M37: J. B. Toews Papers)

Theology course lectures, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary [22], 1979
Witmarsum, Brazil [1], 1980
Sermon on Mennonite Brethren Church history, Butler Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church [2], 1981
Mennonite Brethren course lectures, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary [5], 1981

Box 15

Mennonite Brethren course lectures, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (continued) [5], 1981
Mennonite Brethren course lectures, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary [27], 1984
New Testament Church leadership [1], 1984
Christian Renewal Series, Westport Mennonite Church [5], 1984
Missions centennial message, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Reedley, Calif. [1], 1984
Tabor College lecture [1], 1985
Messages at Alberta Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches [2], 1986
Messages at Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches [2], 1986
Mission Institute [1], 1987
sermons at Frankenthal Mennonite Brethren Church [2], 1987
Seminar presentations at Willengen, Germany [13], 1989
Back to the Bible Broadcast series on love [6], undated
"Institutional Churchism in Conflict with New Testament Concepts" [1], undated
"Influences on Mennonite Brethren Faith and Practices: Pietism" [1], undated
J. B. & Nettie Toews golden wedding anniversary [3], 1983
Nettie Toews funeral [1], 1986
"Nettie's Story," as told by J. B. Toews to Joanne Olfert [1], undated
Golden wedding anniversary of Johan A. & Margaretha Toews [1], 1953

Box 16

Series I. Personal documents [*series continued from box 1*]
Diplomas and certificates of recognition [oversize], 1932-1980