



# Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America (Center Books in Anabaptist Studies)

*Professor Perry Bush*

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For more than 300 years, Mennonites adhered to a strict two-kingdom theology, owing their supreme adherence to the divine kingdom while serving as loyal, law-abiding subjects to the state in all matters that did not contradict their religious beliefs. Traditionally, Mennonites saw affairs of state as none of their business. In times of war, the Mennonite church counseled conscientious objection and spoke against military participation in either combatant or noncombatant roles. Mennonites did not serve in coercive government offices. Most refused to vote or sue in courts of law, and held a generally negative view of expressions of political protest to government authorities. During World War II, however, the voluntary participation of Mennonites in conscientious objector labor camps pulled Mennonite youth out of rural isolation and raised their awareness of America's social ills and their own responsibilities as Christians. In the post-war era, Mennonites were no longer "the quiet in the land", but began to articulate publicly their concerns about such issues as the draft, the civil rights movement, and the Vietnam War.

In *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties*, Perry Bush explores the dramatic changes both within Mennonite communities and in their relationship with mainstream American society between the 1920s and the 1970s, as Mennonite society and culture underwent a profound transformation from seclusion to nearly complete acculturation. Congruent with their entrance into national society, Mennonites began to engage the state on a number of issues which an older theological and behavioral tradition had previously defined as outside their sphere of concern. Bush notes that, as was the case in mainstream society, it was primarily the church's youth who were the most passionately involved in the struggle to speak out against war and other concerns.

Bush's discussion of pacifism and theology parallels the internal struggle for social and cultural change within Mennonite communities nationwide. His study also sheds much light on the role played by religious conservatives in twentieth-century American social movements. Most studies of anti-war and social justice movements have focused on liberal Christian and secular activists, but Bush's account restores Mennonites to a more integral role in the history of recent social dissent. More generally, by reintroducing matters of religious ideology in considerations of recent social history, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties* highlights the dynamic relationship between social and intellectual developments in twentieth-century America.



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