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Abraham Towes

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_towesa@csl.edu

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THE GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND ADAPTATION OF
AMERICAN MENNONITE WORSHIP

Short Title

AMERICAN MENNONITE WORSHIP

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse,
Department of Educational Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

Approved: _____
Date: 1958

Accepted by: _____

E. R. [Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]

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THE ROOTS, DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF
AMERICAN MENNONITE WORSHIP

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Abraham Peter Toews

June 1958

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Approved by:

Walter E. Lugin

Advisor

Abraham Peter Toews

Reader

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

As Discussed by Conference

In recent years there has been growing conviction that the Mennonite Church needs to give serious attention to the strengthening of its spiritual life and that this can be done only by a return to the basic Mennonite tradition, but finding this present day application of progress and innovation.

At the 1947 Annual Meeting of the Mennonite Central Conference at Waterloo, Ohio, a committee was appointed to

PART I

study the roots and development of American Mennonite worship.

THE ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN

MENNONITE WORSHIP

The roots of the Mennonite movement, THE CHRISTIAN BACKGROUND

The roots of the Mennonite movement lie in the question of Christian worship as well as a number of other questions. In Part I we have an outline of the roots and development, and in Part II the positive and negative influences of Mennonite worship experience.

The Influence of the Anabaptists

There are several attitudes we can take toward problems of worship. It can be said that there is not sufficient reason to attack the issues and go on ignoring all indications for the need of revision. The Mennonites are aware of this

¹ John H. Sauer, "Editorial," *The Christian Herald*, 22 (July, 1947), 103.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

As Recognized by Conferences

In recent years there has been growing sentiment that the Mennonite Church needs to give serious attention to the strengthening of its ministerial forces and make room for worship services still in the true Mennonite tradition, but fitting into present day tendencies of progress and expansion.¹

At the 1947 biennial meeting of the Mennonite Central Conference at Wooster, Ohio, a committee was appointed to make a study of existing worship problems and bring in recommendations. From time to time these have made their appearance in the Mennonite periodical, The Christian Ministry.

This thesis intends to look at the question of Mennonite worship as would a member of this committee. In Part I we have an examination of the roots and development, and in Part II the practices and ordinances of Mennonite worship services.

The Attitudes Taken to the Problem

There are several attitudes we can take toward problems of worship. We can say that there is not sufficient reason to change the status quo and go on ignoring all indications for the need of revision. The Mennonites are aware of this

¹John R. Mumaw, "Editorial," The Christian Ministry, II (July, 1949), 129.

when Mumaw says: "Changing conditions in the society in which we live demand new applications of the changeless principles of the Scripture."²

The history of the Mennonites is rich in its religious life. The impacts which early stages of the Reformation made on them and the later efforts to exterminate them have left their mark. They hold tenaciously to their convictions for fear of losing what was obtained at the cost of much blood. Often this reluctance to change the form and content of worship has resulted in stagnation and confusion.

All worship practices root in confessions of faith. Intelligent changes can be made without jeopardy to the faith when the confessions are well known. For the last three-quarters of a century, due to emigration and wars, the dissemination of Mennonite faith has been neglected. A lack of confession has resulted in worship services that are either outdated or loaded with foreign innovations. The purpose of Mennonite World Conferences is to revitalize confession and promote fresh and consistent forms of worship.

Usually worship services are planned by church leaders who base their rubrics on the Scriptures and practices of their particular denomination. Their productions are accepted as authoritative. Mennonites place emphasis on individual interpretation of the Scriptures and pious expression of their

² Mumaw, op. cit., p. 129.

understanding. Christian reality lies beyond church and worship. Determinative are the principles of a simple religious life as found in the Scriptures. This is governed by deeds of love and contrasts with the ever-demanding life of the world. They practise non-resistance and avoid those who live "worldly." The Holy Spirit directs them in understanding and putting the Scriptures into practise. Their confidence is in the Scriptures and not in men. Worship services cannot be devised solely by church superiors. The Mennonites place literal belief in the words of the Master when He says:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.³

Robert Friedman, a student converted to the Mennonite faith, says:

Both groups Annabaptists and Pietists justified their policy on the basis of the leadership of the Holy Spirit, which taught them the correct understanding of the Scriptures. Both claimed to live strictly according to the Bible, that is, neither had confidence in a Christianity of the theologians and scholars. Both were seriously concerned with a Christian reality which lies beyond church and worship, although they understood the ultimate nature of this Christian reality differently. After all how could it be determined who possessed the "right" Holy Spirit? . . . ⁴

³John 16:13

⁴Robert Friedmann, Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries (Goshen, Indiana: The Mennonite Historical Society, 1949), p. 129.

With such individualistic interpretation of the Scriptures it is difficult to develop common forms of worship. The result is that the Mennonites are much divided. The groups are too small and numerous to have recognized scholars as leaders.

This takes us to another attitude, that of reckless adoption of new methods without careful investigation and analysis. For the lack of Mennonite theological schools many of their pastors attend schools of other denominations. Frequently, in order to avoid denominational flavor, inter-denominational schools are chosen. It is difficult to practice forms of worship proved to be Mennonite and denominationally cherished as such, when the pattern becomes distinctly inter-denominational. "This is equally damaging and confusion to our membership. We must be both investigative and analytical in our attack of current problems."⁵

The Approach to the Problem

The Mennonites recognize that they must re-consider the question of public worship. In their advance they always try to make sure that their investigation stands the test of Scripture. They try to satisfy the younger element by impartially considering all pros and cons. Their churchmen are taught that both leader and follower must be led by the Holy

⁵Mumaw, op. cit., p. 129.

Spirit.

People who have developed a sensitiveness to the Holy Spirit are easily disturbed by formalism. This the Mennonite churches try to avoid at all cost. They remember that they came out of Roman Catholic formalism. Bible School and seminary training is favored. Through a sounder knowledge of the Scriptures and the operation of the Holy Spirit in every believer, they aim to have spiritual, scriptural and simple worship services. Every activity in the lives of believers has meaning and purpose. It is not a question of the Scriptures but the correct interpretation of the symbols of worship on the basis of the Scriptures.

Another difficulty is the approach the investigator takes to the problem. It is impossible for one to write about worship if he has never worshiped. Even without a definite ideal of true worship it would be very difficult to deal with the subject. Likewise, one dealing with this material has to be intimately familiar with the Mennonite ways of worship. This takes a long time, for it is not a study but a life. The literal interpretation and practical application of the Scriptures in worship are to the uninitiated often quite unacceptable.

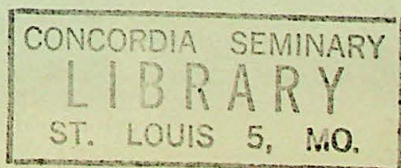
But this is not enough. To understand what he sees and hears, the Mennonite must also be acquainted with non-Mennonite forms. But being familiar is not all that is needed either. Worship is subjective as well as objective.

This makes it necessary to go through the forms many times until they begin to live and take on meaning. Through years of experience, both joyous and sad, they must lead to ever higher levels. From his primeval days, man has been led to worship together with his fellowmen. In our nation, made up of many peoples, we too, must worship with others in order to understand our own worship services. Both instruction and learning are imperative. This process must be "a step by step growth into the life which the church has with God in worship. Education into the church is initiation into a worshiping community."⁶ So often, like Moses, we are caught with our "boots on," and have to be reminded that we tread on "holy ground."⁷

Non-liturgical people like the Mennonites have difficulty in recognizing the basic principles in a liturgical worship service. Unless the aids of worship are fully understood, they are a hindrance rather than a help. It takes a while for a Mennonite who is used to a bare church interior to get the significance of all the detail in a brightly lit, colorful edifice. He has to get over a great deal of awe before he is moved in the spirit to meditate and worship. On the other hand, the same is often the case for one brought

⁶James D. Smart, The Teaching Ministry of the Church (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1954), p. 119.

⁷Exodus 3:5



up to worship in elaborate church surroundings and participation when he finds himself in a silent devotional exercise. The first minutes of silence seem very long and much seems to interfere until there is sufficient composure to hear the still, small voice of God whisper the words of peace He has for all those "worshiping in spirit and in truth."⁸

A Definition of Worship

Man is endowed with a capacity that enables communication with the Divine. Man is always led to take swifter and lighter steps to higher ground. The bounds of worship "fade forever and forever as he moves." From the day when he first learned to worship, place and time unknown, he has always aspired to be in a more perfect state of communion with God. This longing of the soul to express itself fully is seemingly never stilled.

According to definition, the term "worship" has several meanings. "In English it means what originally the Anglo Saxon term weorthschipe meant: courtesy or reverence paid to worth."⁹ "In the German we have the word Kultus which means a common expression of the veneration of God in its most

⁸John 4:24

⁹A. Merriam-Webster, Websters' New Collegiate Dictionary (2nd edition; Springfield, Mass.: G & C. Merriam Co., c.1951), p. 988.

basic, indigenious, direct and devout form."¹⁰ Another word in the German for worship is Gottesdienst which means what it literally says, "a service to God." This may range from worshipping in a colossal cathedral to giving relief to a tropical ulcer of an extremely underprivileged pagan in the hinterlands of Africa. What is done in the name of Christ is "worship." In our discussion of Mennonite worship all three are considered.

Looking at the definitions of worship on the basis of Biblical study, one obtains three further concepts.

First we have the explicit acknowledgment of Divine perfections which stir us to do homage. This constitutes recognition of God's "worth-ship."

Secondly, this is followed by the desire of a direct address or service to God.

Thirdly, we have the private or public act, custom or institution in which the preceding expressions play a large or determinative part. In connection with the first we have "adoration or thanksgiving."

Shahah in the Old Testament and proskunein in the New Testament are derived from bodily actions of humble and reverent salutation, such as are instinctive in the presence of a superior or eminent person. In the second we have confession, supplication and intercession, as is expressed in prayer. In relation to the third

¹⁰ F. A. Brockhaus, Konversations-Lexikon (14 Auflage; Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus in Leipzig, Zehnter Band, 1894), p. 794.

sense we have, when private, definite intercourse with God, and when social, designating the complex institution, known as public worship or cultus.¹¹

Relating Mennonite Worship to the Definition

Worship, according to its definition in The New Standard Bible Dictionary, has three levels in its development. The first level or imperative in worship is an "explicit acknowledgment of Divine perfection."¹² As it progresses, it takes on more "concrete expression." With the repetition of concrete thoughts come "actions, customs and institutions" in which preceding expressions play larger and more determinative parts.

In the second area, worship expresses itself. Here, besides the foregoing, "confession, supplication, intercession as in prayer, make their appearance."¹³

The third level is still more general. It designates and requires for its fuller expression "the complex institution."

The Menninite "public worship" or "cultus" has not seemingly reached the stage of a complex institution. It reminds us of the services of the early Corinthian assemblies.

¹¹Melancthon W. Jacobus, et al., New Standard Bible Dictionary (3rd revised edition; New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1950), p. 953.

¹²Ibid., p. 953.

¹³Ibid., p. 953.

Stalker says:

There was this difference between their services and most of ours, that instead of one man conducting them--offering their prayers, preaching, and giving out the psalms--all the men present were at liberty to contribute their part. . . . There seems to have been no fixed order in which the different parts of the service occurred; any might rise and lead away the company into praise or prayer or meditation, as he felt prompted.¹⁴

Several Mennonite groups have similar services. Some city churches have more organized and semi-liturgical services. So far no Mennonite Conference has prescribed a more elaborate form.

The Mennonites teach that true worship is an:

attitude of heart in which the soul bows before God in adoration and reverence. . . . Singing, praying, preaching, reading the Bible, meditation, are all activities that should lead us to worship, although in themselves they may not be worship. In worship we are occupied with the glory, majesty, greatness, and goodness of God Himself. . . . Anything upon which we set our affections to such an extent as to crowd out God becomes idolatry.¹⁵

Crowding God out of their worship services gives the Mennonites much concern. The more conservative groups use no musical instruments for this reason. Other helps used to enhance the spirit of worship are also avoided. Worship to them is a pious expression of faith. Doing homage to God to satisfy

¹⁴ James Stalker, The Life of St. Paul (New and revised edition; New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, c.1912), p. 106.

¹⁵ John L. Horst, editor, Instruction to Beginners in the Christian Life (4th printing, Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1947), p. 67.

the soul is a simple act. It is an expression that reflects the longing for peace and fellowship they forfeited during their years of persecution. Today it is the aim of all Mennonites with their simple and, if possible, rural life to foster greater longing for the presence of Christ and consciousness of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER II

THE MENNONITES

Introduction

The Protestant Revolution (A. D. 1517-1648) had seven reformatory areas. The first was the humanistic, with Erasmus as the leader. Its efforts at reform were opposed to Lutheranism and Zwinglianism.

Martin Luther soon overshadowed Erasmus with his "zeal for the new learning and his contempt for scholasticism."¹ Whatever opinion may be held regarding the soundness and value of Luther's reformatory work, "he is by common consent the central figure in the Protestant Revolution."²

In 1516, thirty years before Luther died, Zwingli began his reformatory work in Switzerland. "It was at this time that his sermons assumed a thoroughly simple and biblical form."³ "Conrad Grebel (1498-1526) until 1524,"⁴ held this biblicism with him.

¹Albert Henry Newman, A Manual of Church History (Revised and enlarged, 18th printing; Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1944), p. 37.

²Ibid., p. 41.

³Ibid., p. 128.

⁴John Horsch, Mennonites in Europe (Scottsdale: Mennonite Publishing House, c.1942), p. 59.

At first Grebel, as the first Anabaptist with any influence, worked with Zwingli in the interest of the Reformation and Bible. Throughout the history of the Anabaptists and Mennonites, this biblicism has played a major part in their worship services. Martin Luther remained more to the right, that is, closer to the medieval Western Church in its worship practices. But his emphasis on the Bible rather than on traditions was in full agreement with the Anabaptists. His sola scriptura was paralleled by the teaching of all the Swiss Reformers.

Zwingli differed from the Anabaptists in his political, social and economic thinking. He was in sympathy, together with other politicians, with the execution of two of the first Anabaptists, "Jacob Grebel, October 30, 1526,"⁵ and "Felix Manz, January 5, 1527. In the death of the latter he was sufficiently influential to make it the first martyr's death carried out by Protestants."⁶

The Anti-Pedo-baptists' Reformation began during the Zwinglian reform and increased in proportions after his death.

Following the Anabaptist days in Switzerland, we have the Calvinistic Reformation. It worked its way up from Geneva through France, the Netherlands, and into Scotland.

⁵Ibid., p. 60.

⁶Ibid., p. 62.

Calvin differed with the Grebel group in that the "church must not only be dependent on the State, it must rule the State."⁷ In this he also differed with Zwingli who maintained that the church must be dependent.

Calvinism respected and utilized, while Lutheranism and Zwinglianism drove forth, in the form of Anabaptism . . . most of the intense religious zeal developed through its influence.⁸

In England the Reformation reached its height during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. Terrific adjustments followed during Elizabeth's time and those of Mary, James I and Charles I. Apparently here the Anabaptists did not have followers at this time. Later they did and were forced to flee to Holland where "they sought admission into a Mennonite church."⁹

The Reformation also extended into Italy, Spain, Poland, Bohemia, Moravia, Austria, Hungary and Transylvania, and the Scandinavian countries.¹⁰ Fleeing persecution and seeking the fellowship of those of like faith, the Anabaptists emigrated to almost all of these countries. Switzerland was the one source of their origin.

In their movements the Anabaptists made contact with the

⁷ Newman, op. cit., p. 201.

⁸ Ibid., p. 202.

⁹ Ibid., p. 261.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. XI.

Waldenses, the Hussites and the followers of Wyclif. The origin and growth of these groups, however, seems to have antedated the Anabaptists. It is for this reason that the forms of worship of the Mennonites are different from those of these groups, even if the confession of faith is essentially the same.

Anabaptists

Frequently there is confusion when reference is made to the Anabaptists. It is believed that there is only one kind, really only Anabaptists. In so far as "again-baptizing" is understood, this is true, but in emphasis it is not. Wenger differentiates between the true and "false theories of Anabaptism."¹¹ Newman has the Anabaptists and the "Soundly Biblical Anabaptists."¹² Smith says that the name "Anabaptist" is not applicable in all cases. He writes:

The Zwinglians soon spoke of the new party as Wiedertaeufer (rebaptizers); but the latter, denying that they were rebaptized, since their first baptism as infants was not valid, rejecting the name, called one another "Brethren." In south Germany the name Taeufer and Taufgesinnte, became common; while in Holland, a little later, Doopsgezinde was applied to those who held the same views as the Swiss Brethren. In Latin countries, and in England, the term Anabaptist came into common use.¹³

¹¹ John Christian Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1949), p. 7.

¹² Newman, op. cit., p. 168.

¹³ C. Henry Smith, The Story of the Mennonites (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1945), p. 19.

The name "Anabaptist" is applicable when a candidate, who has been baptized in infancy, presents himself for adult baptism. With this the so-called Baptists do not agree for they believe that no one is baptized unless he is immersed.¹⁴ Here, and in the different interpretations of the Scriptures, is the basis for the various modes of baptism the Mennonites practise.

According to Newman the Anabaptists are divided into five main groups: "the Chiliastic, Biblical, Mystical, Pantheistic and Anti-trinitarian Anabaptists."¹⁵ According to him, the Mennonites belong to the "Soundly Biblical Anabaptists."¹⁶ "The Thomas Muenzer and the Zwickau Prophets, the followers of Hans Hut in Bavaria, Moravia, Bohemia and Upper and Lower Austria, belong to the Chiliastic group."¹⁷ Melchior Hofmann and Jan Matthys were others who led their followers sadly astray.

Those who do not know the Mennonites and their forms of worship believe that they originated with these radical elements amongst the Anabaptists. The Brockhaus Konversations-Lexikon has this to say:

¹⁴ F. W. Herrmann, Religionsunterricht (8th edition; Kassel: Verlagshaus der deutschen Baptisten, GmbH., 1939), pp. 36-37.

¹⁵ Newman, op. cit., p. X.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 168.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 162.

Mit den sogenannten Wiedertaeufern der Reformationszeit haben die Taeufer nur die Verwerfung der Kindertaufe gemein, unterscheiden sich dagegen von ihnen wesentlich durch Ablehnung aller Gewalt und spiritualistischen Schwaermerei.¹⁸

It is also wrong when it is believed that the Swiss Anabaptists, who were the direct forerunners of the Mennonites, either had contact with them or influenced them through their similar faith as above indicated. In Wenger's book Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine, we read:

Some of the older historians imagined a connection between the radical Zwickau prophets . . . and Swiss Anabaptists. But for this supposed connection there is no evidence. . . . Storch, who died in 1525, seems never to have practiced believers' baptism. . . . Swiss Anabaptism had no connections with Muenzer's peasant revolt of 1524-25.¹⁹

Richard Niebuhr and others contend that

Anabaptism was a social-economic movement. . . . This theory breaks down under the load of the evidence to the contrary. . . . The founders of Swiss Anabaptism preached not social revolt, but repentance, faith and holiness.²⁰

This quiet faith and yielding to God has been reflected in Mennonite worship services to this day. They, like the Puritans, stressed the Scriptures and worshiped in a very simple way. In their worship services a holy and repentant

¹⁸ F. A. Brockhaus, Konversations-Lexikon (14 Auflage; Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus in Leipzig, 1894), XVI, 642.

¹⁹ Wenger, op. cit., p. 7.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

attitude manifested itself in listening to the simple exposition of the Word of God and accepting it literally as their daily guide. Bender writes:

They were not Schwaermer but stressed the Scriptures. God was their wisdom and they lived and worshiped simply. The Word of God and commandments were their guide in their obedience and discipleship. They had little interest in formal theology and took Jesus' life for their example. They were sympathetic to the Gospels and Acts but did not lean heavily on the Johannine scriptures like the mystics did, nor on the Revelation of John, like the millennialists do. Like the major Protestant groups, they dwelt more on Paul's writings.²¹

Anabaptism was essentially a movement which insisted upon an earnest and uncompromising endeavor to live a life of true discipleship of Christ which was to give expression in fellowship and love. Its Christian faith was always ready to suffer in conflict with the opposing world order.

As long as this non-resistant willingness to suffer for its faith was a living reality, so long was Anabaptism a powerful movement. Fellowship and suffering were the outward marks of an inmost Christian experience. Whenever these inner forces declined and the readiness to suffer ceased to exist, the situation changed. Anabaptists continued in their faith but did so quietly. They "were more concerned to have the personal experience of salvation than to work it out in a

²¹H. S. Bender, "Anabaptists," Mennonite Encyclopedia, edited by C. Henry Smith, Harold S. Bender, Cornelius Krahn and Melvin Gingerich (Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, c. 1955), I, 113.

radical following of Christ. This quietistic tendency brings us to the pietistic attitude."²²

This difference of quietistic or pietistic devotion made a big difference in Mennonite worship. The quietists continued to worship in their simple, withdrawn form while the pietists belonged to other Protestant bodies and fully accepted their forms. They were members of their groups and spread their influence as Das Kirchlein in der Kirche. They did not separate from the main body. They worked most actively from within to improve its spiritual quality. Their forms of worship were those of the Anglicans, Lutherans and Reformed Church. Herschberger says, "the Anabaptists, who later came to be called Mennonites, from the beginning . . . believed in a voluntary church separated from the state. . . ." ²³ They aimed to be "other-world-minded," always mindful of Jesus' words, 'my kingdom is not of this world.'²⁴ With such an attitude towards the Scriptures and obedience in discipleship, persecution and subsequent fleeing

²² Robert Friedmann, Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries (Goshen, Indiana: The Mennonite Historical Society, 1949), p. 11.

²³ Guy F. Herschberger, Mennonite and Their Heritage, No. V of Christian Relationships to State and Community Series (2nd edition edited by H. S. Bender; Akron, Pennsylvania: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1942), p. 49.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

to other lands naturally followed. Later Puritan influence and frontier hardships in their new lands tended to make their worship services rigorously simple. Often they consisted only of absolute essentials.

When looking into the biographies of the originators of Anabaptism and Mennonitism, one must conclude with Max Gobel that they displayed "consistent evangelical Protestantism, recreating the original New Testament Church."²⁵

They withdrew from the Roman Catholic Church (because) they were determined by God's grace to get back to the Bible, back to the faith of the apostles of Christ, back to the faith of the church of the New Testament. . . .²⁶

The Anabaptist separation from Western Catholicism and its endeavor to get back to the faith and forms of worship of the Apostolic Church began in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. They subscribed to no established form of worship but chose as best they knew how the forms used in the first church of Christ.

Conrad Grebel (1498-1526) spent his boyhood days in the castle at Grueninges. He studied at the Universities of Basel, Vienna and later at Paris. The preaching of Zwingli in Zurich led him to his conversion. Zwingli promised to recommend Grebel and Manz, the first Anabaptists, for positions of Greek and Hebrew teachers in the theological school

²⁵Bender, op. cit., p. 113.

²⁶Wenger, op. cit., p. 4.

which was planned for Zurich.

During 1523 a tinge of disappointment began to color the attitude of the Anabaptists toward Zwingli. They longed to see Zwingli lead out in setting up a church of converted believers and discontinue the observance of the Roman mass. Instead of drawing closer to the Anabaptists, he became hostile. He opposed their worship services to the extent of imprisoning and executing their leaders. The break with Rome and Zwingli now came swiftly. Overnight they developed into extreme non-conformists and separatists.

William Reublin, a former Roman priest at Basel, carried an open Bible, saying: "This is the true, sacred thing; the other is only dead men's bones."²⁷ George Blaurock (ca. 1480-1529) took a stand for his faith in an open worship service all his own, only to become the pattern of many such later. Felix Manz (ca. 1480-1527) when drowned in the Limmat River cried in Latin, "into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."²⁸ His hymn, "With pleasure will I sing," number six in the Ausbund (the Swiss Brethren hymnbook of 1564) is still sung in some Mennonite worship services.

Both Michael Sattler (ca. 1495-1527) and his wife suffered death through martyrdom. Following Sattler's violent death, Capito paid him this tribute:

²⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

He ever exhibited an excellent zeal for the honor of God and the Church of Christ, a church which he demanded be pious and honorable, pure from calumny and inoffensive. . . .²⁹

The leading reformer of Strasburg, Martin Butzer (1491-1551), was of the opinion that out of love the Anabaptists ought to unite with the state church regardless of their differences in Christian doctrine and practice.³⁰

Instead of this the Swiss Brethren drifted further away. Pilgram Marpeck (ca. 1495-1556), their minister for twenty-five years, "has furnished us with a good statement of their doctrine."³¹

Anabaptists soon sprang up in several southern countries. At the same time the movement spread north into Germany and the Netherlands. Severe persecution broke up the southern groups before they could establish and formulate organized worship services. The Mennonite churches of Northern Germany and the Netherlands with the help of non-conforming Separatists from England succeeded in this. We have an account of two of their first services which portray their convictions and deep desire to worship their Lord in their simple way.

At this time it came to pass that a person came to them (Grebel and Manz from Chur), namely a priest . . . named George of the House of Jacob. He was also called Blaurock. . . . With them he spoke and talked through matters of faith. They came to one mind in

²⁹ Wenger, op. cit., p. 32.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

³¹ Ibid., p. 37.

in these things, and in the pure fear of God they recognized that a person must learn from the divine Word and preaching a true faith which manifests itself in love, and receive the true Christian baptism on the basis of the recognized and confessed faith, in the union with God of a good conscience, and henceforth serve God in a holy Christian life with all godliness; also to the end.

And it came to pass that . . . fear came upon them, yea, they were moved in their hearts. Then they began to bow their knees to the Most High God in heaven, and called upon Him the Knower of hearts, imploring Him to enable them to do His divine will. . . .

After the prayer George of the House of Jacob arose and asked Conrad Grebel to baptize him . . . with the true Christian baptism upon his faith and knowledge. When he knelt down with that request and desire, Conrad baptized him . . . and the others similarly desired George to baptize them. . . . Each ordained the other to the ministry of the Gospel and they began to teach and keep the faith. Therewith began separation from the world and its evil works. . . .

(Anabaptism) spread through persecution and much affliction; the church increased daily. . . . Men, widows, pregnant wives and virgins were cast miserably into dark towers . . . there to die. Soon . . . at the instigation of Zwingli, was issued a stern mandate, that if any more . . . should accept baptism they should immediately, without further trial, hearing, or sentence, be thrust into the water and drowned.³²

After much conversation and reading Hans Bruggbach stood up weeping and crying out that he was a great sinner and asking that they pray God for him. Then Blaurock asked him whether he desired the grace of God. He said he did. Then Manz rose and said, "Who will forbid that I should baptize him?" Blaurock answered, "No one." Then Manz took a dipper of water and baptized him in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then stood up Jacob Hottinger. Him also Manz baptized. Then the others all went away and Manz and Blaurock remained with him over night. They rose early the next morning. Then Blaurock said to his son-in-law: "Marx,

³²Wenger, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

you have hitherto been a gay young man. You must make a change. You must put away the old Adam and put on a new." Marx answered that he would do his best. Then Blaurock asked whether he desired the grace of God, and when he said that he did, Blaurock said: "Come hither and I will baptize you also." Then Marx went to him and was baptized. Then Blaurock said to him (Ruedi Thomann) that was an old man and near to death and that he should amend his life, and said that if he desired the grace of God he would baptize him too. And when he said that he did, Blaurock baptized him. After this Blaurock would have no rest until he had baptized the whole household. . . . They had a loaf upon the table and Blaurock said: "Whoever believes that God has redeemed him with His death and His rose-colored blood, let him come and eat with me of the bread and drink with me of this wine." Then they ate and drank.³³

The nature and spirit of this first Anabaptist meeting is still present in some Mennonite church services. There is "much conversion and reading" at their revival meetings. The expression "desire" is frequently used. At the baptismal service in 1924 of the Kleinegemeinde (a conservative branch) the words spoken just before pouring the baptismal water from a pitcher on the candidates, were: Auf das Bekenntniss deines Glaubens, dass du erkennst und bekennst, dass du Gottes Kind bist und dass dir deine Sunden von Herzen leid sind; und dass du verlangest von mir getauft zu werden, taufte ich dich im Namen des Vaters, des Sohnes und des Heiligen Geistes. Amen. The word verlangest with similar expressions appears in the above several times. This method of staying with the "seekers" is still used widely, especially in the older denominations. "Gayness" is frowned upon, and

³³ Ibid., p. 31.

putting away the "old Adam" is frequently used when reference is made to contrition, repentance and confession of sin. Coming to take the elements in the Lord's Supper in a simple eating and drinking ceremony is also used.

Menno Simons

The originator of the Mennonites and their forms of worship was Menno Simons. It was only in 1956 that his complete writings have been made available to the English reader through the translations of the entire contents of a new edition from the Dutch by a competent scholar, Leonard Verduin of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and edited by John C. Wenger, who wrote clarifying introductions to each of Menno's writings.

The extent to which Menno Simons is followed in public Mennonite worship services depends mainly on three factors. First, on the Mennonite Conference to which the particular church belongs; these range in practise from a high conservative to a low free church level. Second, on the institution in which the minister of the church was trained. Not that such a minister would totally abandon Mennonite basic forms of worship but in his service practises he is influenced by what he was exposed to during his learning years. It is for this reason that during the last decade especially, Mennonites have put forth special efforts to establish their own theological institutions. Third, on the location of the congregation. Some of the congregations have urbanized much

more than others. Really, it is not only the urbanization, but to what degree the church has permitted itself to be influenced by surrounding churches. The conservative branches have withstood the influence of others to a remarkable degree. Then again, those who have not made special effort to resist the practises of other denominations have worship services practically the same as all other adult-baptizing organizations. To determine what is of Mennonite tradition, we must go back to the root.

Menno Simons became an Anabaptist in 1536. The term "Menist," meaning a follower of Menno Simons, was first used at Emden in 1544, and did not come into general use until much later. It was at first applied exclusively to the Dutch-North German group of evangelical Anabaptists, and was never officially accepted by the Swiss group.³⁴

It is of value to note what outsiders have to say about Menno Simons. The perspective improves when viewed from farther away, that is the view is not distorted through insufficiencies. Williston Walker remarks:

As for the Anabaptist movement itself it came, especially in the Netherlands, under the wide, peace-loving, anti-fanatical leadership of Menno Simons (1492-1559), to whom its worthy reorganization was primarily due, and from whom the term "Mennonite" is derived.³⁵

This organization and re-organization is felt to this

³⁴H. S. Bender, Conrad Grebel 1498-1526 Founder of the Swiss Brethren (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, c.1950), p. 7.

³⁵Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), p. 375.

day. Especially with the publication of his writings recently, there is considerable revival of interest not only in original forms of worship but also in points of faith. Another factor to give this renewed interest in Menno Simons impetus is the revival of pacifism in general. Men like Doctors Niemoeller and Piper find open doors in our schools. One such recent occurrence was in the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. As a sequel to Dr. Piper's lectures in this school, the Mennonite papers wrote the following:

Dr. Otte Piper, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary and head of the New Testament Department there, was a guest speaker at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College. . . . Dr. Piper, a Presbyterian, is originally from Germany. He has studied theology and philosophy at Jena, Marburg, Paris, Munich and Goettingen, and has also taught systematic theology and philosophy of religion in four theological institutions. Dr. Piper, because of his pacifism, was first imprisoned and then, shortly after Hitler's rise to power, had to leave the country. . . . He has been an instructor of two members of our faculty. . . . The lectures . . . made us realize that in spite of denominational differences, he shares with us a true biblical faith in Christ.³⁶

After relating how the Anabaptists were persecuted by the Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians and Calvinists, Nichols says: "Menno Simons . . . purified them of fanatical tendencies which naturally resulted from their sufferings,

³⁶ "Visiting Lecturer," Mennonite Weekly Review (January 24, 1957), p. 12, col. 5.

encouraged them under persecution and increased their numbers by his preaching. . . ."37 His form of preaching is followed by the more conservative churches to the present time. With all the other great leaders of the Reformation, he is quoted at all occasions, even if his polemical and eschatological tendencies are ignored.

C. Henry Smith writes that Menno was a natural reformer. All he needed was the material that would lead him on. He says that Menno was blessed

with an open mind and a tender conscience. Such being the case, he could not remain entirely oblivious to the revolutionary religious movements that were then shaking all northern Europe to its very foundations. It is known that quite early in his ecclesiastical career he had access to the writings of Luther which were being surreptitiously circulated throughout the Dutch monasteries and among the Dutch priests in spite of every effort on the part of the higher state and church authorities to suppress them. He began to waver in the faith.³⁸

When he was still celebrating mass as a priest, the thought flashed through Menno's mind that this bit of bread could not possibly be the flesh of Christ as he had always been taught to believe. Without any human aid he found relief from his doubts in the New Testament. This has become the core of all Mennonite preaching and teaching to this day.

³⁷ Robert Hastings Nichols, The Growth of the Christian Church (Revised edition; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1941), p. 231.

³⁸ Smith, op. cit., pp. 95-6.

Not long after this Menno heard of the beheading at Leeuwarden of the Anabaptist Sicke Freerks. A second baptism seemed strange to him. Thus far he had never doubted the validity of infant baptism. But now he again turned to the New Testament for light; and was surprised that he could find no justification there for the doctrine. His superior at Pinjum also found no direct Scriptural authority for the practise.

In 1536 Menno laid down his priestly office, renounced the Latin Church, and shut the door on a brilliant career. He exchanged a life of ease and pleasure for a life of uncertainty, misery, poverty, constant threat of imprisonment, persecution and death. None of the reformers did this. They made no personal sacrifice in the work they undertook. There was no formal renouncement of large salaries and positions of ease. Menno Simons chose the way of the cross, and this is considered by the Mennonites as the attitude with which a minister should approach his ministerial duties. The word they prefer to use is "minister," a servant. He is not a pastor in a sense and by no means a "reverend." The term most used in the more conservative churches is "brother."

Menno's faith developed a spontaneity after his break with the Church and his sole reliance on the Scriptures. This faith the common people also accepted. Its roots were in this wide reading of the Bible, newly turned into the

vernacular.³⁹

This emphasis on religious spontaneity on the part of the ministers is still evident among Mennonites. For instance in the Holdeman Mennonite churches, the ministers are not to do too much preparing of sermons before the service for fear that their message will not be spontaneous. Their preachers get up to preach when the spirit moves them and stop when prompted to do so. Usually they have two or three speakers in one meeting. Such practise avoids a mere reading of sermons but on the other hand can become flat if not spiritually elevated.

Like Luther and other leading Reformers who had been priests, Menno took unto himself a wife. To the Mennonites marriage was a very sacred institution. Menno set the high standard of proper sex relations and family life in general. No marriage contract was to be considered unless first begun and sanctioned by the parents. Marriage with outsiders was punishable. In many Mennonite worship services the men and women still sit separately to avoid improper mingling. The custom may also have come from the days of persecution in Holland. The women sat in the middle of the church auditorium and the men around them on the outside. This was done for protection and assistance. In all Doopsgezinde churches

39

C. Henry Smith, The Story of the Mennonites (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1945), pp. 96-114.

this is still the custom.

Present Mennonite marriage and sex disciplines have been derived from Menno's preaching. Illicit sexual relationships amongst Mennonites were and are comparatively few. They occur oftener in Mennonite churches that do not follow closely the customs of the past. Marriage with non-church members was not performed in the church. Conservative churches still do not permit this. Wedding rings are also taboo. Marriages are sacred without rings.⁴⁰ Long sermons used to go with marriage performances in the church. Sermons are still in vogue but not as long and less inclusive.

Menno advocated a ministry that was selected from the congregation without reference to theological training. Above all else they had to vouch for a regenerated life. Their support was voluntary. He spoke of salaried ministers as "hirelings."⁴¹ Ordination to him was very important, and before he accepted the office of elder he was ordained by Obbe Philips as a minister. About ministers he says:

Behold, dearest friends, thus the ministers should be reminded who serve the Lord's church, that they may not hear from the obstinate and obdurate, Why do you teach others and not yourselves? Nor can they teach

⁴⁰ E. B. Annable, Light on the Wedding Ring (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1948), p. 13.

⁴¹ Menno Simons, The Complete Writings of Menno Simons, translated from the Dutch by Leonard Verduin and edited by John Christian Wenger, with a biography by Harold S. Bender (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1956), p. 444.

otherwise to the glory of God, for the service of the New Testament is a service of the Spirit and not of the letter. II Cor. 3:6. Therefore Christ never chooses as laborers in His vineyard, as servants and builders, such as are avaricious and drunkards; in order that His servants might teach the kingdom of God, which is spiritual, in purity of heart, shepherding the sheep of Christ, not by force, but gently, not seeking filthy lucre, but with a kindly disposition, not as those who seek dominion of others, but as examples to the flock of Christ, not serving for a certain benefice, pension, or salary as do your teachers, but solely for the gain of the souls which Christ Jesus has so dearly brought with His precious blood.⁴²

In this original spirit of ministerial duties, service and unselfish sacrifice, Mennonite ministers still face their tasks. Traditionally, ministers spend their property and own person for the church. Since such calling is extremely ideal and beyond the reach of many, it is required that a minister have the endorsement of every church member and when called by ballot majority, he be first publicly ordained for the ministry. Menno did not permit preaching without ordination. Conservative Mennonite churches still observe this.

Menno's high ideal for the ministry spread also to the church members. According to his belief, the Christian Church consisted solely of regenerated and baptized believers. This was the basic principle of all Anabaptists. It was stressed to such an extent that outward signs were necessary to manifest an inner regeneration. Being of one faith included garments, general appearance and speech. Appearing

⁴²Ibid., p. 442.

regularly Sunday morning in church in uniform manner was a sign of true believers. We look upon it also as typically Quaker tradition.

In the conservative Mennonite churches we still have the "simple" dress. One not dressed this way is looked upon as with "spot and wrinkle." They are said to be "proud and live after the flesh. We should live separate from the world and not be conformed to it in any way."⁴³ Menno calls such attitude "living after the flesh" and continues:

Hear God's irrevocable sentence and judgment as pronounced upon all who live after the flesh, no matter who it is, whether emperor or king, duke or earl, baron, knight or squire, noble or commoner, priest or monk, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, man or woman, bond or free. All who live after the flesh must forever remain under the just sentence and eternal wrath of God; otherwise the whole Scriptures are untrue.⁴⁴

All this is obvious in Mennonite worship services.

⁴³John L. Horst, editor, Instructions to Beginners in the Christian Life (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1947), p. 73.

⁴⁴Menno Simons, op. cit., p. 90.

CHAPTER III

ROOTS AND GROWTH OF MENNONITE WORSHIP

Introduction

It is always easier to leave an organization than it is to begin and build another. This was the bitter experience of the Anabaptists in Switzerland and later the Mennonites in Holland.

In Menno's time, conditions in the Western Church were such that even the priests doubted and began to search the Scriptures for truth. Luther as a priest went to Rome and when he came back said: "No one, can believe the scandalous acts which are openly done, unless you have seen or heard them."¹

Menno too, within a year of his installation as a priest at Pingjum,

began to entertain doubts concerning the daily mass service. . . . After . . . prolonged consideration, he arrived at the conclusion that, since the Bible is God's Word, the study of it, even if it be not altogether justifiable, cannot be a grievous transgression.²

¹Lars P. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church (Revised edition; New York: Thomas Nelson and sons, 1942), p. 227.

²John Horsch, Mennonites in Europe (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, c.1942), p. 186.

Like Luther, he did not want to break with the mother church. Both preached from her pulpits their messages. Their aim was to bring the church to a higher spiritual and Scriptural level.

When Menno finally left the Latin Church, his past training as a priest stood him in good stead.

In the monastery he received training in reading and writing Latin and in a study of the Church Fathers. The Bible, however, he never read. One day . . . while celebrating the mass . . . he resolved to study the New Testament. This was important, for in the end it was bound to lead him from the Roman Catholic Church.³

At this stage Luther helped him with his problems. Menno got his writings in spite of the Church. They taught him one great truth: "A violation of human commands cannot lead to eternal death."⁴ It is strange though that he went right on celebrating the mass.

Others besides Menno had doubts about the tenets of the Western Church and left it. They now looked for a leader. Menno as a former Latin priest was their choice.

A deputation of brethren called on him and pleaded with him to accept the leadership of the brotherhood. When he hesitated, they came the second time. This time he accepted the call. It was probably early in 1537 when his ordination as elder (bishop) took place.⁵

³John Christian Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1949), pp. 75-76.

⁴Ibid., p. 76.

⁵Ibid., p. 77.

Here was a group of simple believers. They had the conviction that only believers constitute the Church of Christ. They were obedient and acted upon their convictions. To them it was once more a demonstration of the Master's words:

"Where two or three are gathered in My Name, there I am in the midst of them."⁶ To them it was a sacred belonging together as brethren having the same beliefs. They were very conscious that they were a simple, unorganized and despised brotherhood. But they were not aware that they were the originators of a new church. They knew that their confession of faith was that of the New Testament Church, but they did not realize how far-reaching this decision would be. Bender says, "here really was the beginning of another major type of the Reformation."⁷

Since these beginning days the Mennonite worshipers have felt that they differ from other church attendants. Their brotherhood does not include everybody. In their worship and communion services only the baptized and church members participate. They are painfully aware that this excludes often several members of their own family. There is an element of exclusion which in no case is popular. They can

⁶ Matthew 18:20

⁷ Harold S. Bender, Conrad Grebel 1489-1526 Founder of the Swiss Brethren (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, c.1950), p. 212.

invite people to worship with them only to a degree. This separateness must be understood in the light of these beginning meetings. We can perhaps understand it better if we let H. S. Bender sum it up this way:

The most characteristic feature of the Anabaptist . . . concept of discipleship, is its insistence upon a new church of truly committed and practicing believers in contradistinction to the prevailing concept of the Volkskirche, or inclusive church of the Reformation and subsequent periods, held by Roman Catholics and Protestants . . . alike, with a church maintained by the powerful patronage of the State, and to which, by birth and infant baptism, the entire population belonged.⁸

This new trend at first needed much clarification. Its own members got lost in the intense persecution that followed and the failure to see the significance of their stand. To them it seemed at times almost impossible to come together in worship, relate common experiences, and build up each other in the faith. The Mennonite churches in Holland still have secluded entrances. They are usually located close to the Roman Catholic churches to prevent their worshipers from being detected in the crowd. It was needful to remain inconspicuous. Patience and steadfastness in the faith was imperative. For many the day when they would be understood and tolerated came too slowly. It was constantly trying to face a hostile world. At times attempts were made to bring about the millennium in their own strength and time. For

⁸ Ibid., p. 221.

them it was difficult to understand the issue as H. S. Bender further relates:

Professor von Muralt in reference to the Volkskirche says (it is) "a church in which all professing Christians, the nominal, lukewarm, and indifferent as well as the really live and active Christians are kept together. A church to which the entire population belongs is not the church of genuine believers but only an imperfect human institution." . . . Only the Swiss Brethren and Dutch Mennonites at this crossroads of Christian history took the road of the free church of committed Christians.⁹

Keeping such a church in its ideal state required constant disciplining. Menno's later days were saddened by the difficult problems he had to face and the defections of some of his followers.¹⁰ All Mennonite denominations still have need for special disciplinary sessions. The maintenance of conformity in carrying out church regulations has always been a concern of the Mennonite church.

This new concept of the Christian church has had wide influence on English Puritanism, German Pietism and Mennonitism. The non-conforming spirit has made the worship services different. A scanty provision for essentials only, has created barrenness which left few incentives for those not used to worshiping in such simple manner. The fearless application of Scriptural principles to produce a sanctified

⁹ Ibid., pp. 221-22.

¹⁰ C. Henry Smith, The Story of the Mennonites (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1945), p. 120.

Christian life remains for all time a contribution to the Protestant faith. Professor Bender in this connection says:

Both the Zwinglian and the Calvinistic church ideals give evidence of Anabaptist influence, particularly in the realm of church discipline. English Puritanism and German Pietism also almost certainly owe something to Anabaptism. . . . Whether modern Congregationalism and the Baptist movement still reflect their earlier anabaptistic ideals . . . may be an open question, but their historic anchorage is clear. Through this channel Anabaptism has made its broadest contribution to our modern culture as is set forth by Rufus M. Jones: "Judged by the reception it met at the hands of those in power, both in Church and State, equally in Roman Catholic and Protestant countries, the Anabaptist movement was one of the most tragic in the history of Christianity; but judged by the principles which were put into play by the men who bore this reproachful nickname, it must be pronounced one of the most momentous and significant undertakings in man's eventful religious struggle after the truth. . . . It is the spiritual soil out of which all non-conformist sects have sprung, and it is the first plain announcement in modern history." . . .¹¹

The outside observer notices that Mennonite worship has much in common with that of Puritan denominations. Traditionally they all inherently require a church membership of regenerated Christians, a practical application of the Scriptures in their daily lives and worship services. The Puritans shared these Separatist ideals with the Anabaptists in the Frankfurt area and with the Mennonites in the Netherlands before their departure to colonize Massachusetts. The following said about the Puritans in reference to worship is also typically Mennonite:

¹¹

Bender, op. cit., p. 212.

They were not liturgists.¹²

Long and sad experience hath made it manifest, that the Liturgy . . . hath proved an offence, not only to many of the godly at home, but also to the Reformed Churches abroad.¹³

The question at issue in this debate (took place between the ecclesiastical authorities of London and certain Puritans, 1567) was whether ecclesiastical authorities had a right to add to the ordinances of worship required by the Scriptures. The Puritans claimed that they had not any right to add to the minimum required by the Word of God. . . .¹⁴

Let us not imagine that the worship of God is improved by a multitude of ceremonies.¹⁵

One would be well advised, and it would sometimes be useful, not to have too meticulous a uniformity, in order to show that faith and Christianity itself do not consist in that.¹⁶

The Puritans . . . in their condemnation of the festivals of the Christian Year. . . .¹⁷

The Sabbath retained its lonely splendour as the sole red-letter day.¹⁸

Every Church chuseth for herself a certain set time for Common-Prayers &c. And it is not lawful for any

¹² Ezra Hoyt Byington, The Puritan in England and New England (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1896), p. 119.

¹³ Horton Davies, The Worship of the English Puritans (Glasgow: The University Press, 1948), p. 35.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁸ Ibid.

man to overthrow at his pleasure this Order of the Church . . . besides if the Churches using their Christian liberty do religiously celebrate the commemoration of the Lords Nativity, Circumcision, Passion, and Resurrection, also of his Ascension into Heaven, and of the sending of the Holy Ghost upon his disciples: we do approve of it exceedingly.¹⁹

We should like to see that rite everywhere restored by which the young people are presented to God, after giving forth the confession of their faith.²⁰

It might thus have been decently administered, if it were frequently and at least every week set before the church, but that they should first begin with public prayers, then a Sermon should be made; then the Minister having bread and wine set upon the table, should rehearse the institution of the Supper; and then should declare the promises that are left unto us in it, and then should excommunicate all those that by the Lord's forbidding are debarred from it. . . .²¹

What reason is there, that the fashion and forme of Ministers attire should be different from other mens?²²

In this disapproval of any distinctive dress for the clergy, the English Puritans departed from the Reformed tradition.²³

They should and maintaine that the word of God contained in the writings of the Prophets and Apostles, is of absolute perfection, given by Christ the Head of the Church, to bee unto the same, the sole Canon and rule of all matters of Religion, and the worship and service of God whatsoever done in the same service and worship cannot bee justified by the said word, is unlawfull.²⁴

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 42.

²¹ Ibid., p. 43.

²² Ibid., p. 48.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 50.

I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.²⁵

What soeuer was not in use, whilst the Church continued in her puritie, after the postles times, is not now to bee used. . . . But kneeling at the Communion was not used then. . . .²⁶

the signe of the crosse, which hath no defence in the booke of God to be shrowded by, nor examples of the Apostles to rest upon, after so notable abuse, should be thrust cleane out of the Church?²⁷

For as much as wee are in conscience throughly perswaded, that Gods most holy word in the New Testament is absolutely perfect, for delivering the whole manner of Gods worship. . . .²⁸

Leaving the Church

When the Mennonites withdrew from the Church, they were misunderstood and persecuted. They aimed to make their worship services as simple as possible, always trying to get maximum returns for a minimum of outward display. The complex ritual and elaborate church interior of the medieval Church meant to them that it had gone far astray from the simple form of worship in the Apostolic church. To them it was "the result of

²⁵ Ibid., p. 51.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 62.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 63.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 77.

a long development from the simplicity of the Apostolic church, as it is portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles and in the New Testament epistles."²⁹ With all protestants they maintained that the papalist Church did "not teach soundly Biblical doctrines"; and had added "more and more tradition to the original truth of the Gospel until the message of God's Word was seriously obscured and defeated."³⁰

There are three main areas in which the Mennonites found the medieval Church and its practices in worship unscriptural. The first was the idea of a literal priesthood being substituted for the spiritual priesthood of the believers.

The priests of the established church were believed to be mediators between God and man. Now a priesthood in the literal sense required a literal altar and sacrifice. This was provided through the ceremony of the Mass, on the strange supposition that the host or bread in the communion service is changed into the body of the Lord Himself, and that He must be literally offered up again and again in the daily Mass, to atone for sin.³¹

To the Mennonite literal interpretation of the event on Calvary this was utterly unacceptable. (A repetition of

²⁹ John Christian Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (3rd edition; Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1949), p. 1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ John Horsch, Mennonites in Europe (2nd edition, slightly revised; Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1950), p. 2.

this supreme sacrifice on the altars in the churches and the simple and meek minister who believed literally in the Sermon on the Mount, to play the brutal Roman soldier, was inconceivable.)

The introduction of sacerdotal vestments to be worn in saying Mass and means "to reflect the intangible in the objective, the invisible by the thing that could be seen"³² caused further concern.

As the Church became Romanized . . . Christians tended to emphasize the form of belief, rather than personal virtues and simple faith. . . . The sacrament of the Altar came to be looked upon as the sacrifice of the New Covenant. Christian decorative art was expressed in symbols. Worldliness and externalism prevailed . . . and a special sanctity was attached to places and relics . . . externalism was manifested in the elaborate rituals and in the rapidly increasing number of Christian festivals.³³

To those still in the Roman Church but believing in the simple orthodox Christian faith and a holy life linked with Christian simplicity, scriptural discipline and other tenets of faith now recognized as "distinctive doctrines,"³⁴ such changes erected barriers that could not be scaled.

Another area of unscriptural practice was that of prayer. Mary and the saints were looked upon as essential

³² George Hedley, Christian Worship (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 54.

³³ Qualben, op. cit., pp. 111-14.

³⁴ Daniel Kauffman, Mennonite History (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, c.1927), p. 42.

for effective petition. To the Mennonites "in the language of Scripture the saints were the believers. . . . The word 'saints' was abandoned."³⁵ They refused to recognize only those as saints who were canonized after their departure from life, and images of Christ and the saints they in no way any longer adored and worshiped.

In the Eastern Church the use of images was restricted to paintings. . . . The Roman Church observed no such restriction. Among the most popular images were those of the cross and the crucifix. While the Greek church never sanctioned the use of musical instruments in public worship, no such restriction was in force in Western Christendom, where after the seventh century organs were used in the churches.³⁶

It is because of this anti-Roman attitude that many Mennonite churches to this day do not use any musical instruments. The fact that this non-use of musical instruments in Greek churches is mentioned in a book written by an Old Mennonite is evidence that this is still the custom.

The third area of objection to Roman religious expression in worship was the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences, the use of holy water and holy oil, the practice of exorcism preceding the rite of baptism, the superstitions regarding relics, and such other practices. "Many were keenly aware of the deviations made from the original faith."³⁷

³⁵ John Horsch, op. cit., p. 2.

³⁶ John Horsch, op. cit., p. 2.

³⁷ Horsch, op. cit., p. 3.

The Mennonites in their radical reaction to these ways of Roman worship again and again got into trouble. They were mystics, and anything that appealed to the senses in worship was frowned upon. Between 1524 and 1529 even the Swiss Reformer Zwingli became involved in a conflict with them because of their radical views.³⁸ Their main accusation of the Roman Church was its "ritualistic formalism . . . and lack of spiritual life."³⁹

It is not the whole story when it is said that the Mennonites withdrew from the Western Church and mention is not made of other groups that did likewise. Of these there are three who are similar in worship to the Mennonites and three who are not. Of those who followed the Great Church in their religious expression in worship were the Montanists, toward the end of the second century; the Novatianists, during Constantine's time and persecuted by him; the Donatists, who half a century after the Novatianists did not want to recognize "heretical baptism."⁴⁰ They severely criticized the state church on various grounds in the face of persecution by banishment, confiscation of property and death.⁴¹ In

³⁸ Qualben, op. cit., p. 259.

³⁹ Kauffman, op. cit., p. 43.

⁴⁰ Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), p. 113.

⁴¹ Horsch, op. cit., p. 3.

spite of their ill-treatment they lasted to the seventh century.

The other groups closer to the Mennonites in worship were the Waldenses, the Hussites and, in England, the followers of Wyclif. The Waldenses, like the Mennonites, held the Word of God in highest regard, not merely in theory, but in actual practice. They also believed that the Sermon on the Mount gave the rules of life for the Christian.

They taught the principle of non-resistance and did not permit going to law before the civil courts. They would take no part in civil government nor accept worldly offices . . . swearing of oaths . . . attend places of worldly amusement. Dedication of churches, worship of relics, as well as belief in purgatory were rejected.⁴²

The following paragraph about their pious living and worship applies exactly to the Mennonites years later.

The Waldenses may be readily known by their quiet unassuming life. They are modest in their attire and wear neither costly nor unclean clothing. They live by the labor of their hands, and even their preachers are shoemakers and weavers. They do not lay up riches but are content with that which is necessary. The Waldenses live pure lives and are temperate in eating and drinking. They do not visit drinking houses and do not attend places of amusement. They exercise self control and may be known by their considerate speaking, for they do not indulge in joking, slander, or gossip.⁴³

The German writer, Ludwig Keller, 1849-1915, attempted to connect the Anabaptists (Mennonites) with the Waldenses and similar groups whom he labeled "the old evangelical

⁴²Horsch, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴³Horsch, op. cit., p. 6.

brotherhoods." But an investigation of actual founding of the Swiss Brethren (the name for the Mennonites in Switzerland before Menno Simons organized them to some extent) reveals the false character of Keller's hypothesis.⁴⁴ Forms of worship and beliefs of these two groups are so much alike, however, that at present Mennonite groups are making efforts to establish closer relationships with what remains of the Waldenses.

The followers of John Wyclif (d. 1384) in England and John Huss (1360-1415) in Bohemia also leaned to a break-away from Rome. In England, Parliament prevented the fierce attack the Hussites had to endure from the Roman Church. The important outcome for our consideration is, probably through Waldensian influence, the Bohemian and Moravian Brethren party, which actually separated from Rome in 1465. What brought them close to the Mennonite movement, which was to emerge only fifty years later, was the belief in the believers' constituting the true church, the principle of non-resistance, rejecting oaths, worldly offices and warfare, and some not baptizing infants.⁴⁵ They too, emphasized the use of the Bible in worship and discipline. It was for this reason that as early as 1488 the whole Bible was printed in the vernacular by the Brethren. This was at the time, in all these groups,

⁴⁴Wenger, op. cit., p. 8.

⁴⁵Horsch, op. cit., p. 17.

one of the main points of difference with the Roman Church, and to this day is the usual practice. Since Martin Luther's main contention was that the Scriptures be known by everyone, he, on the whole, was sympathetic toward the Bohemian brethren.

We are in a position now to understand why the Mennonites left the Roman Church. Really their departure was in close consequence to the open breaks just related. How many of their convictions were original we do not know. What we know is that they had the Bible in common with all the others, and their way of worshiping was based on it directly rather than on the traditions of the Church and its interpretation handed down to its members by the hierarchy.

When we look back at the tremendous cost the sixteenth century founders of the Mennonite Church were willing to pay for their separation from the Roman Church, one involuntarily asks, whence such determination and conviction? The answer is, as history has cited through the years with almost monotonous repetition, "by God's grace get back to the Bible, back to the faith of the Apostles of Christ, back to the faith of the Church of the New Testament."⁴⁶

In order to understand the main issues involved in the following pages on Mennonite worship, it is essential to state, in summary at least, the cardinal points of the

⁴⁶Wenger, op. cit., p. 4.

Mennonite faith at the time of the break with the Roman Church, which have since determined the spirit of their worship services. Here according to Wenger:

1. The Bible teaches that salvation is by the grace of God, conditioned on faith alone, not determined by affiliation with any human organization. Grace is granted to each man by virtue of his faith in Christ, not by his mere partaking of "Sacraments."
2. Every Christian is a priest in the same sense. Some Christians are ordained to preach the Word and to assume the oversight of the congregations of the brotherhood, but no Christian stands over his brethren as a dispenser of God's grace or as a "priest" with God.
3. Justification is by faith alone. There are no deeds which bring merit in God's sight. The whole conception of merit, surplus merit, and indulgences is unbiblical.
4. The essential character of the Christian life is holy obedience to Christ and His Word, no ceremonialism, church fasts, pilgrimages, adoration of relics, making the sign of the cross, using the rosary, and the like.
5. The church is the fellowship of the saints, the brotherhood of those who have been redeemed by Christ from a life of sin. It is not a great hierarchical organization linked up with earthly government and participating in state affairs.
6. God, and God alone, is to be worshiped through Christ Jesus, the Mediator. Neither Mary, wife of Joseph, nor the apostles, nor martyrs, nor angels shall be prayed to, nor shall images be given veneration.
7. Baptism is an external rite, symbolizing the washing away of the convert's sins. It is not a supernatural instrument of grace to regenerate infants. Infant baptism is unscriptural, as is also the idea of baptismal regeneration.
8. The bread of the Lord's Supper is a symbol of Christ's death for the redemption of sinners. It is a memorial only; it is not changed into Christ's

body, nor is it to be worshiped.

9. Jesus told His disciples when He took the communion cup, "Drink ye all of it" (Matt. 26:27), but for several centuries prior to the Protestant reformation the Catholic Church had given communion in "one kind," withholding the cup from the laity. This is still Catholic practice.
10. The New Testament condemns the prohibiting of marriage (I Tim. 4:3), but Roman Catholic priests are forbidden to enter the married state, a practice which has often led to unhappy consequences.
11. The Bible knows of only two destinies in the life after death, heaven and hell. But Catholics teach the existence of purgatory, as well as a limbo or two.
12. The New Testament clearly teaches that the Christian shall love all men, whether evil or good, and that his every action must be directed to the salvation of men, not to their destruction. Personal suffering is to be preferred to retaliation. Mennonites, like the Christians of the first two centuries, therefore refuse all military service, as well as the magistracy, while Catholics have long employed both.
13. The final authority in faith and life is the Word of Christ as it is found in the New Testament. But Catholics elevate the church and tradition as equal to, in effect actually above, the Scriptures.⁴⁷

It has been Mennonite practice that everyone interpret the Bible for himself. In the worship services, the Mennonites aim at giving forth the Word, with a minimum of interpretation. They have a desire to put into literal practice the words of St. Paul, when he says: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long

⁴⁷ Wenger, op. cit., pp. 4-6.

suffering and doctrine."⁴⁸ It is maintained that

the greatest degree of liberty must be granted the individual's conscience in spiritual matters. Anabaptists insisted that each individual must decide the Bible message for himself. . . . Biblicists they are sometimes called.⁴⁹

Here lies the reason why they are divided into several major conferences, all varying in their forms of worship.

Mennonites Developing Their Own Forms of Worship

Spiritually

Before we can understand the Mennonites and their worship, we must look at their concepts of faith.

Mennonites believe that worshipers should conduct their services quietly and with the least amount of display. Fellowship with the Divine is spiritual. In the days of persecution and separation they had no friends except the Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer and Comforter. The hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" is still a great favorite.

The earlier Mennonite services seemed to be a redramatization of the experiences recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.⁵⁰ They expressed some of the mysticism that we

⁴⁸ 2 Tim. 4:2

⁴⁹ C. Henry Smith, The Story of the Mennonites (2nd printing; Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1945), p. 29.

⁵⁰ Acts 4:23-31

have in Gothic art--always directing the soul upward. Since the means with which to do this were taken from them, they had to worship in the spirit. For this reason the Mennonites looked with disfavor upon art as such. Others accused them of "spiritism" or "fanaticism." Some of the Anabaptists were such, but the Mennonites, as Menno pointed out, aimed to remain sane. This mysticism from the days of the Apostles has always made itself felt. How it was expressed depended on the available means and circumstances. Johannes Kelpius says:

The persistence of Gothic mysticism even into the modern era, may be credited in large part to the recurrent memory of the Apostolic Church and its purity and spiritual power as revealed in the Acts of the Apostles. Somehow, in spite of the dominance of scholasticism and the Catholic Church and the state's insistence on credal exactitude and formalism the apostolic ideal persisted throughout the medeaval era, both in the heretical sects and within the church itself, through the examples of the saints, like Dominic and Francis of Assisi. We may find plentiful hints of the same spirit in Dante.⁵¹

In the years of persecution the Mennonites fled from country to country and place to place. For their worship services they hid behind dikes or in woods. Even when the danger of being forcefully dispersed was past, they preferred to meet in secluded places. Under such conditions the places of meeting lacked all church furniture and other tangible means of worship. Their souls found spiritual

⁵¹ Johannes Kelpius, A Method of Prayer (1st edition; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), p. 13.

satisfaction only through Scripture, prayer, quiet exhortation and fellowship. Under the circumstances the Mennonites developed the art of worshiping in the fulness of the spirit without embellishments.

What beauty there remained in their services had to be expressed through their own lives. They were "brethren" to each other and all on the same level. They were men and women who of their own volition and deep-seated religious conviction had formed themselves into voluntary bands of worshippers. Horsch says:

From Zurich and St. Gall the movement for Bible study spread to other parts of Switzerland and to South Germany. A considerable number of "readers", men who read and expounded the Scriptures to interested groups of people, labored in various Swiss cantons and German provinces. In St. Gall those who regularly attended . . . were called "Brethren". . . . In these Bible meetings any one had the liberty to ask questions or to correct the "reader" from the Scriptures.⁵²

Wedel describes these meetings as they were conducted in Northern Germany and The Netherlands and gives their relation to the pietistic meetings of the same time.

The meetings during the days of persecution were held secretly and in great silence. In cities and villages they assembled in the "inner rooms" called Binnenkammern. Along the coast they gathered behind tall dikes or little islands during rain and snow storms. Since these were gatherings of the "same-minded" people they preferred to be called Doopsgzinde. This separatedness prevented them from becoming one with the later Pietists.⁵³

⁵²Horsch, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

⁵³C. H. Wedel, Bilder aus der Kirchengeschichte (Dritte Auflage; Newton, Kansas: Schulverlag von Bethel College, 1915), p. 59.

This matter of Pietism and Quietism is of significance. We find the worship services of the two still differ where they have not strayed from traditional expressions. "Among the Anabaptists," and later the Mennonites, "the cross" was consciously the leader in life's destiny and signified practical opposition against the evil world, whereas in Pietism "the cross" was more a symbol of an emotional experience such as is suggested by Zinsendorf's "suesser Heiland." Even with the same faith in the cross of Christ being the only symbol of salvation for men, the Pietists use concrete examples of it and the Mennonites do not.

According to Friedmann,

Pietism in the larger sense is a quiet conventicle-Christianity which is primarily concerned with the inner experience of salvation and only secondarily with the expression of love toward the brotherhood, and not at all in a radical world transformation.⁵⁴

The Pietists had missionaries in all parts of the world to bring the message of salvation to the people. "In the practice of non-resistance in the form of love to all people they were not interested. The Mennonites have missionaries too,"⁵⁵ but with the message of salvation they also tell the words of the Master to "love their enemies as themselves, to bless

⁵⁴ Robert Friedmann, Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries (Goshen, Indiana: The Mennonite Historical Society, 1949), p. 12

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

them that curse them and do good to them that hate them.
 . . . ⁵⁶ "and with those that go out as missionaries are
 always those that do social work as carried on by the
 Mennonite Central Committee."⁵⁷

Since theology plays a large part in worship services
 we must note a difference there also. Friedmann continues:

Neither Anabaptism nor Pietism lay the primary weight
 on theology and dogmatics; both seek the inner ex-
 perience of a true piety. But, whereas in Anabaptism
 a decisive element is the goal of spreading the Gospel,
 and everything personal is pressed into the background,
 Pietism on the other hand is in its essence pure sub-
 jectivity. . . .

A decisive element in Pietism seems to be the creation
 of quiet groups for the practice of piety which were
 not intended to take up the conflict with the world.
 This also assumed the belief in the possibility of a
 holy life, of the new birth, which could be lived
 within the framework of the middle-class life of the
 time.⁵⁸

For the position the Quietists took and carried over
 into their worship services the Lutherans had high regard. A
 Lutheran minister in the Palatinate, Johannes Odenback, in
 1528, advised the judges of the day; with reference to the
Wiedertaeufer":

Diebe, Moerder und Boesewichter habt ihr barmherziger
 in Gefaengnis gehalten, als diese Armen. Sie haben
 sich Gott zu Ehren und Niemanden zu Leide um geringen

⁵⁶ Matthew 5:44

⁵⁷ Mennonite Central Committee, Twenty-five Years
 (Akron, Pennsylvania; 1945), pp. 17-20.

⁵⁸ Friedmann, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

Irrthums willen zum zweiten mal taufen lassen. Wenn ihr sie toedtet, wird man von ihnen sagen: Siehe mit welch' grosser Gedult, Liebe und Andacht sind diese frommen Leute gestorben, wie ritterlich haben sie der Welt widerstrebt, man hat sie mit Wahrheit nicht ueberwunden, ihnen ist Gewalt geschehen und sie sind heilige Maertyrer Gottes.⁵⁹

These people were the direct forefathers of the American Mennonites, leaving East Prussia during the last quarter of the eighteenth century for Russia, and again Russia, about a hundred years later, for America.

According to Manhardt, the Mennonites and Lutherans differed mainly in four points; which asserted themselves in their worship services, for it is there that the faith professed finds expression.

1 The first, he says, was Luther's teaching of being justified by faith alone, works in no wise entering in. The Mennonites believe this too, and both maintain that such faith must manifest itself in works. But the Mennonites put emphasis on following Christ's teaching obediently. / As Menno taught, we must be humble at all times. Such humbleness must be expressed during the week and during Sunday worship services. The correct attitude in a worship service is to be a quiet listener, who does not participate except in singing. Even prayer was offered in silence for fear that Jesus' words

⁵⁹ H. G. Mannhardt, Die Danziger Mennonitengemeinde Ihre Entstehung und Ihre Geschichte von 1569-1919 (Danzig: Selbstverlag der Danziger Mennonitengemeinde, Danzig. Vertrieb durch John & Rosenberg, 1919), p. 14.

about the Pharisees would come true.⁶⁰ In later years this has changed greatly, but remains are still left in several places.

2 The second distinction Mannhardt makes is that Luther denied the free will of man in spiritual matters and asserted that the totality of his nature was corrupted. The Mennonites believe that man is free to make his own choice, whether in this life he wants to follow God or Satan. Man's nature has in it an urge to do good. Grace is free, but it requires the will of man to take and use it. From this view the Mennonites emerge as great disciplinarians. They talk not in terms of "weakness" but in terms of "you don't want to." Menno's later years were sad because questions of discipline disrupted his churches. It is still the practice of most Mennonite churches to have "business meetings" in church where discipline is then handed out to the straggling and the straying.

3 Thirdly, Luther accepted the idea of a state church. The Mennonites stress that the church of Christ consists of Christ's believers and baptized followers. State church and the pope's church are considered as un-scriptural and definitely un-acceptable. Neither has the state church any right to mingle and interfere with the belief of its subjects, as long as they do not interfere with the affairs of the state.

⁶⁰ Matthew 6:6

No one can dominate another's conscience in religious matters; the guide to all matters is the Bible. Dogma and tradition cannot determine, only true faith, love and its works, can do so. It is for this reason that the Mennonites always have tried to make their worship services inward expressions rather than outward rites and symbolism. Here they differ much from all churches, except the Quakers. "The Mennonites prefer to remain a separated people, and non-participating in state affairs. They are satisfied when they are only tolerated."⁶¹

4 Fourthly, to Luther's teaching of the sacraments, the Mennonites answered that they were only symbols and were to be observed with the least amount of symbolism. Baptism was not regeneration but a signification that the "being born again"⁶² experience had taken place and now there was a "having good conscience with God."⁶³ Basically, what Mannhardt writes,⁶⁴ is still the faith of all Mennonites. Now Mennonites frequently worship with non-Mennonites, and this often leads to the adoption of their interpretation of symbols.

⁶¹ Gerhard Wiebe, Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika (Winnipeg: Druckerei des Nordwesten, 1900), p. 24.

⁶² John 3

⁶³ 1 Pet. 3:21

⁶⁴ Mannhardt, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

The name "Mennonite" also reflects to some degree the spirit in which they worshiped. Smith tells us:

The peaceful followers of Menno were especially adverse to being called Wederdoopers . . . because it implied an earlier baptism . . . and that it signified "Muensterite." Doopsgezinde (Baptists Minded) was much less odious. . . . But for a time Menist was quite generally used to designate the peaceful Dutch Anabaptists. . . . Later . . . the strict faction, the "Flemish" and "Frisians", who accepted Menno's conservative views on discipline and avoidance . . . were again known as Menist. . . . The Waterlanders, the Upper Germans and the Frisians, the liberal elements, repudiating the name of their rivals, preferred the name Doopsgezinde. As party strife died out during the eighteenth century . . . and Dutch churches began to depart from many of the earlier views of Menno. . . . Doopsgezinde came into general use. . . . 65

Basic Concepts of Worship

Previously the connection between Pietism, Quietism and Mennonite worship was mentioned. It was also pointed out that mysticism tended to make up for the loss of goods and fellowship in worship. However, before mysticism can achieve this, there must be peace in the soul. This the Mennonites sought in obedience to God and worshiping Him in quiet withdrawal.

Upon this constant communion and intimacy with God rest the Mennonite principles of reverence and respect for human values. This mystical union with God expressed itself in good works. This showed itself particularly when the Puritans

65 C. Henry Smith, The Story of the Mennonites (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1945), p. 123.

fled from England to Holland. Here they came in contact with the Mennonites at Leyden who helped them. Haller writes in this connection:

Smyth (was) led . . . to conduct his congregation in Holland as a pure democracy, each member communing with God directly in his own breast and in scripture. Smyth's own ardent communing led him to discover that there had in a congregation of Dutch Mennonites been a true church all along. . . . Some followed their original leader into the fold of the Mennonites.⁶⁶

About their stay in Holland Byington says:

The magistrates of the city gave this testimony. . . . "These English have lived amongst us . . . and yet we have never had any suit . . . against any of them. . . . They had been hospitably entertained . . . and . . . had continued to worship God . . . according to their simple . . . way. . . . They grew in knowledge and other gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, and lived together in peace and love and holiness."⁶⁷

Johannes Kelpius touches this new phase of their worship when he says:

Pietism emphasized the importance of religious sensitivity and more particularly, its extension into the practise of good works. Mysticism endeavors to re-unite the fore consciousness of man and aims to create a complete, not a split psyche. . . . The mystic sought first of all a serenity of mind, a psychological security of inner peace, without which he believed activity lacked the full power of God's spirit in man.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ezra Hoyt Byington, The Puritan in England and New England (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1896), p. 56.

⁶⁷ William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 186.

⁶⁸ Johannes Kelpius, A Method of Prayer (Edited by E. Gorden Alderfer, 1st edition; New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1951), pp. 16-17.

"In its promotion of worship," Maxwell says, "mysticism is governed by two things, the knowledge of God, and the human resources we are able to bring to that worship."⁶⁹ As human resources decreased for the Mennonites, their knowledge of God from the Scriptures increased. The love of God and His promises of rest and peace that no enemy could take from them became more and more real. Every time they witnessed the execution of one of their loved ones because of faith in God in his way, the ultimate life with God became more and more real. Spiritually these hopes became very real. The Holy Spirit offered them everything while here below they were hated, tortured and killed. There was in the words of Otto, "a schauerliche reality of the Holy Other."⁷⁰ God was near and a help in the time of need. As dependent children they were familiarized with such lines from their hymns as, "en deepsta not beilk ek to Die" (Out of the depth of my misery I cry to Thee). The Holy Spirit was always near and revealed to them Christ's guidance and comfort.

From this profound reality of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit originated a unique way of life, a part of which was a unique form of worship. William Maxwell seems to sense this when he says:

⁶⁹ William Maxwell, An Outline of Christian Worship: Its Development and Forms (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 1.

⁷⁰ Rudolph Otto, Das Heilige.

Worship consists of our words and actions, the outward expression of our homage and adoration, when we are assembled in the presence of God. It is governed by two things, the knowledge of God and the human resources we are able to bring to that worship. Christian worship is distinct from all other worship because it directs to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its development is unique because the Holy Spirit has been with and in the church to guide it since the days of Pentecost.⁷¹

The Mennonites sought more of God and less of the world. Relentless persecution kept them in constant devotion and prayer. Death could be their lot at any moment. They worshiped like Paul and Silas in jail after they had received many stripes. As they worshiped, they sensed the presence of God more and more. This reality of His presence increased until "the foundations of the prison were shaken."⁷² When Paul Strodach describes worship in general, he points to this:

Worship is seeking and apprehending the Presence of God. . . . He, who does not live in the personal privilege of communion with God in daily devotion and prayer, is barren to engage in the corporate worship of believers. And while he contributes the fruits of his own personal experience to the corporate engagement, he draws from the life of common worship the inspiration to newer, fuller approach in his own devotion. He gives but to receive; he receives but to give the more. Therefore worship is growth in communion; it is apprehending more and more the presence of God.⁷³

⁷¹ Maxwell, op. cit., p. 1.

⁷² Acts 16:23-29

⁷³ Paul Zeller Strodach, A Manual of Worship (Revised edition; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1946), p. XIX.

The more the Mennonites gave, including their own lives, the more they received. What they experienced was, and is to this day, rock-bottom devotion to God in worship.

With such events and experiences come concepts that take root so deeply that in spite of evil days they will continue to live and show an abundance of life. They continue to grow, and because they are truly grafted into the life of Christ Jesus, they bud again and again. They worshiped in the spirit of the "scientific specialist, who knew more and more about less and less . . ." ⁷⁴ Theologically speaking they knew little but the less they knew the more they worshiped Him, who to know is life eternal. Or in the words of Evelyn Underhill, for them "worship in all its grades and kinds was the response of the creature to the eternal." ⁷⁵

Out of such deep and stirring faculties of worship emerged for the Mennonites four distinct and unique concepts of life.

First, Christians must live lives that are separate from this world. The non-conformed life is simply one way of describing the whole Christian life. The basis for all teaching of non-conformity lies in the very nature of God, and

⁷⁴ Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy (2nd printing; New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1955), p. viii.

⁷⁵ Evelyn Underhill, Worship (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1937), p. 3.

particularly in His holiness. When there is no clear teaching of a different life and conduct, it is because there is not a pure and holy God as the basis of worship. The teaching of the absolute holiness and purity of God is a doctrine peculiar to the worship of the one true God. Worship in this concept means to Mennonites what it meant to Israel

When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshiped, and praised the Lord, saying, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.⁷⁶

This type of worship must be as simple as possible, using nothing with which to express one's emotions. They are taught in home and church,⁷⁷ to "take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them."⁷⁸ How they are to approach this holy God they are told in the instructions of the prophet when he says,

wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;

⁷⁶ II Chron. 7:3

⁷⁷ John L. Horst, editor, Instruction to Beginners in the Christian Life (4th printing; Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1947), p. 66.

⁷⁸ Deut. 11:16

and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.⁷⁹

This citation is the core of many old-fashioned Mennonite sermons.

Through the constant preaching of the holiness of God, sin becomes even more sinful.⁸⁰ Worship services are opened with a spirit of contrition and humble submissiveness to God. Instead of the Lord's prayer and prayer of confession the audience listens to the words of the minister beseeching God to impart holiness and forgiveness to his flock. One such prayer before the sermon is:

Heilige durch deinen Geist uns, damit wir diesen Tag dir heiligen; wohne und ruhe du in uns, damit wir in dir ruhen. Reinige uns von aller Befleckung des Fleisches und des Geistes, dass nicht nur heute, sondern alle Tage unsers Lebens Leib und Seele dir geheiligt sei, dass auch mitten under der Arbeit der Woche Herz und Gedanke in dir ruhe, und unser ganzes Leben ein unbefleckter Gottesdienst vor dir, dem Vater, werde. . . .⁸¹

Often also reference is made to the words of Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine

⁷⁹ Micah 6:6-8

⁸⁰ "Unit XII, Learning About God," Program Builder (October-December, 1951), p. 245.

⁸¹ Allgemeines Formularbuch. Zum Gebrauch bei dem oeffentlichen Gottesdienste in den Evangelischen Mennoniten-Gemeinden (Worms: Gedruckt bei A. K. Boeninger, 1852), p. 5.

eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."⁸² In the light of this, it is expected that anyone who wishes to have fellowship with Him must separate himself from the sinfulness of the world and of the flesh.

The church and its worship services are the place where the contrast between the world and Christian living can be gauged. Here non-conformity is taught, and later observations are made during the week and on Sunday what effect the teaching has had. This teaching is very urgent because man is inherently antagonized to the ways of God and does not want to separate from the ways of the world. Separation principles are taught to apply to every area of life. This often sets off the church as the people of God and the world as the followers of Satan. A Christian following the ways of the world is unfaithful to God and a spiritual adulterer. The friendship of the world is enmity with God.⁸³ The one who lives in the ways of the world is said to have a divided loyalty.

To understand what is really meant by the "world" and conforming to its ways, it is necessary to look at their interpretation of the Scriptures in this regard. Martin Butzer (1491-1551), the follower of Calvin in Geneva, was of the opinion that "out of love the Anabaptists ought to unite

⁸²Isaiah 6:5

⁸³Romans 8:7

with the state church regardless of their differences in Christian doctrine and practice . . . "84 Sattler (1495-1527), an Anabaptist executed with his wife, on the other hand maintained together with the other Swiss brethren,

that the church was composed only of those who were personally united to Christ in saving faith and whose lives were lived in strict obedience to Christ. The earmark of true Christians is their carrying out of Christ's teachings in their lives. The citizenship of Christ's followers is in heaven, not on earth. Indeed they have a feeling of inner estrangement from the world.⁸⁵

The "world" to the Mennonites is a "sinful society," and the purpose of civil government, as described in Romans 13 is to maintain order in the evil society.⁸⁶ For them there are three types of law. These can best be illustrated in Cain's life. Cain had the natural law to kill his brother. When God put the mark on him to deter his fellow-men from killing him for misdeeds, the moral law was applied. It was applied again when God said that "whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."⁸⁷ Killing Cain

⁸⁴John Christian Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1949), p. 33.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Guy F. Hershberger, Mennonites and Their Heritage. No. V of Christian Relationships to State and Community Series (2nd edition, edited by Harold S. Bender; Akron, Pennsylvania: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1942), p. 7.

⁸⁷Gen. 9:6

was the deed of sinful society, the natural law defying the moral law as represented by the government. That is, even sinful society has found it most satisfactory to deal with the offender in an orderly, organized manner. But for the Christian is the revealed moral law, or the righteous law in the Old Testament expressed by the words "thou shalt not kill"? Israel would have fared well had she not resorted to the law of sinful society and stayed with the righteous law given it by God. "This revealed moral law is above the natural law just as the man of the Spirit is above the natural man."⁸⁸ In the New Testament we find that Jesus dealt not with "sinful society," for He said that His kingdom was of this world. The deduction for Mennonites is that Christians must withdraw from this sinful society, they must not conform with it. That is, we as Christians have nothing to do with the world. This is true Mennonitism but not all branches of Mennonites practice it implicitly.

Young Mennonites are taught that they must be different. The most obvious and simple way to be different is by way of the garments worn, especially when going to church. In their worship services,

clothing has become more or less a symbol of the simple life for them. The men dress conservatively avoiding the styles and fashions of the day. In some cases they do not wear neckties, considering them "worldly." The women wear . . . dresses as they consider becoming to

⁸⁸ Herschberger, op. cit., p. 5.

Christian women. . . . The Mennonite "meeting-house" is also a plain structure without steeple, bell, organ, altar, or works of art. Emphasis falls not on aesthetic stimulation but on worshipping God in the heart.⁸⁹

The great aim is to keep the form of worship and way of life from being "worldly." The separation from the world testifies that they have taken their stand with God. The Gospel must be proclaimed in its purity, unmixed with the dross of worldliness. A separated life does this. The person of the world does things to please himself. He who lives a separated life lives to please Christ.

Second, Christians must not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

Christians are in the world but "they are not of the world."⁹⁰ Mennonites are urged to attend only their own services. This almost always includes only the particular churches of their own conference denomination. For the young people this is very important because through church attendance so often mates are found for life. In the stricter Mennonite churches, marrying outside the Mennonite church and not joining the church, results in dismissal from membership. The teaching in church is that in all our contacts with men in the world, we are to maintain a clear witness to Christ, and this can be done effectively only through the

⁸⁹Wenger, op. cit., p. 114.

⁹⁰John 17:14

church. Any alliance that would blur this testimony is wrong. Any kind of partnership is questionable since the non-Christian element may easily enter this way.

Christianity is a life to be lived among men, even evil men, in evil times; not a life of isolation, but a life of separation in principle and practice, so that it may be a witness to a lost world, in the hope that sinful men will accept the Christian's Saviour, and be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.⁹¹

Marriages should be "only in the Lord." A Christian dare not marry a non-Christian. . . . The only safe and wise choice to make is another who shares the same faith, the same beliefs, the same aspirations. . . . Much unhappiness and weakened testimony has come from their religious differences. Husband and wife cannot share spiritual things as they ought.⁹²

Here is partially the reason why Mennonites live close together with the church and school in the center of the community. Worship and associations are to be with people of their own faith.

Third, Christians must live unselfish lives.

A major concept of worship for Mennonites is to serve. A preacher gets no salary because his calling is to serve. It is what in German is called Gottesdienst. Boys and girls in the church services are taught to yield to the older, and they usually sit in the rear seats. They may advance with age. This has been completely changed in many church, but middle-aged Mennonites still remember the time

⁹¹Horst, op. cit., p. 247.

⁹²Herschberger, op. cit., p. 249.

when this was the custom. Their life is that of service rendered in whatever way they can. The Mennonite Central Committee has its workers in all parts of the world. They were the first ones to go into Hungary after the recent trouble. They have been and are in many places the only ones with the Quakers to be allowed to stay in the country. This message is preached every Sunday. Young people give several of the best years of their lives in this service. It is a life of self-denial. This embraces the love of our neighbors and service to God. This emphasis has tremendous effect on missionary work and giving. (The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference has one missionary out for every 31.2 members.⁹³) After many services the minister interviews people who voluntarily have decided to enter into such service of love. The Mennonite youth instruction book says:

Unselfish living such as Paul's is possible only to those who love God. As long as we are in the flesh we will have to keep under the old man, but living unselfishly is not an unwelcome teaching to the Christian. He puts into practice the motto we sometimes see hanging on the wall: "God first, others second, self last."⁹⁴

Fourth, Christians must be unique. "A peculiar people"

⁹³ Sam J. Schmidt, compiler, The 1956 Annual Report (Published under the auspices of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren 62nd Annual Conference Sessions; Omaha, Nebraska: 1956), pp. 14f.

⁹⁴ Horst, op. cit., p. 252.

does not suggest queerness. It is rather a super-abundant, rich, select, special, preserving and saving; obtaining of a possession.⁹⁵ The world thinks of them. It is like the apostles, who were accused of turning the world upside down. They know that they will be considered queer for loving their enemies instead of shooting them, putting spiritual things ahead of material, and turning away from the fashions and amusements of the world. If the world judges them queer, that is merely an incidental result. All Christians together make up this people of God's own possession. Many do not, though, come out of the sinful society as God would have them do.

Mennonites believe that all those believing on the Lord Jesus Christ are His children and Christians. But in no wise are those Christians who love the deeds of the "world." By "world" in such case they mean "attitudes, actions, and associations that ignore or oppose God and His will. All who do His will are His own special possession, chosen out of the world that is at enmity with Him."⁹⁶

The people with whom a Mennonite habitually worships belong to one relationship--a relationship with all who have likewise been numbered by being totally set aside for God. The assembly at church considers itself a group of fellow

⁹⁵Herschberger, op. cit., p. 257.

⁹⁶Horst, op. cit., p. 258.

citizens in the kingdom of God. Non-Mennonite attendants sometimes judge them as being aloof and unfriendly. Invitations to their homes after church is a regulated business. Their church fellowship is different from so many designated by "fellowship" today. They have been called out of the world to fulfill definite and different purposes. Their fellowship is not only such for the time that they are in church but for the whole week and possibly for life, as leaving the community of closer church relations is not encouraged. It is a church fellowship above that which the world is able to offer. Many conservative churches do not want their members to carry insurance of any kind because what the church fellowship has to offer is better than what the "world" can offer. One of their guide books for young people says:

Our separation from the world and new relationship as the special people of God also brings us into a special relationship with all who are likewise numbered among God's treasure. We are fellow citizens with the saints. . . . Fellowship is a common word applied to many kinds of associations today. These different groups and organizations attempt to fulfill different purposes, some good, some wrong. Our Christian fellowship differs from all others. It is much closer, so close that the New Testament speaks of each one of us as being a member of the body of Christ. . . . God has called us out of the world into a goodly fellowship the best we can possibly have on earth.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Herschberger, op. cit., p. 258.

CHAPTER IV

AMERICAN MENNONITES AND WORSHIP

Compared with Other Areas

The Mennonites thus far considered have been located in five main areas. Their forms of worship have always tried, within the framework of their faith, to accommodate the demands of each particular area. For this reason their worship services differ. We can learn about the American Mennonite worship when we compare it with the worship in other areas.

First, the Swiss Brethren in Switzerland and Southern Germany, as already dealt with.

Second, the Dutch Mennonites from 1534 to the present. Outstanding men in the matter of worship were Dirk and Obbe Philips (early sixteenth century), Gillis of Aachen (1500-1557), Leonard Bouwens (1515-1582), and Menno Simons (1496-1561). A great union of Anabaptists occurred in 1632 on the basis of the Dordrecht Confession of Faith, which became the main guide of Mennonite worship in America. In 1811 the General Mennonite Society, usually written Allgemeene Doopsgezinde Societeit, was formed. It started the Gemeentedag movement with its evangelism and lay activity.

Today the Societeit has about 37,948 members.¹ Its large congregations are located in Leiden, Haarlem, the Hague, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam.

Third, we have the Dutch Mennonites located from the Rhine to the Vistula. The first congregation was at Aachen in 1533, where in 1614 six hundred were banished and later several executed for their faith. The most significant congregation of the Lower Rhine was at Crefeld. In 1683 some left from here for Germantown, Pennsylvania. The Emden group in East Friesland still has about six hundred members. Menno Simon's own area was around Hamburg, Wuestenfelde, Luebeck and Altona. The Hamburg-Altona congregation has been the best known and most influential in Europe. During the first year their worship services were very simple and led by liefdepredikanten (untrained and unsalaried ministers). Gerhard Roosen, one such unpaid minister, gave rise to the Pennsylvania group. He was the author of a much-used book Conversation on Saving Faith, which contains the "Longer Catechism," the "Shorter Catechism" and the "Eighteen Articles of Dordrecht." This has been the basis of the American Mennonite forms of worship.

Until the last World War the largest European Mennonite

¹ H. W. Meihuizen, "Doopsgezinden," 6. Mennonitische Weltkonferenz Program mit dem Thema, Das Evangelium von Jesus Christus in der Welt, edited by Horst Penner (Karlsruhe, 10. bis 16. August, 1957), p. 34.

churches were in the Danzig vicinity. Here they worshiped at first in private homes. The first church was built in 1638. Ten years later a home for the aged was erected. In 1805 an organ was installed in one of the churches. The Danzig church had a salaried ministry as early as 1826 and a parsonage since 1884. From here five other Mennonite areas developed in Prussia. The country churches were more conservative than those in the cities. Some elders were salaried and educated.

In Poland three congregations were established in 1568. These congregations have been greatly depleted by emigration to Russia, America, and more recently to Paraguay.

Fourth, the Mennonites accepted the invitation of Catherine II and moved in 1783 from Danzig to the Ukraine in Russia. Before the first World War there were about 100,000 of them located in various areas. A great revival under the influence of German Baptists and Lutheran Pietists swept through their colonies between 1850 and 1860. The leaders of the newly converted stressed baptism by immersion, a religious conversion experience and personal testimonies.² Since the large Mennonite emigration in America in 1873, this new branch has become the third largest group in America, and its forms of worship have gained wide influence.

² John Christian Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1949), pp. 82-100.

Fifth, we have the Mennonites in America. They, and their forms of worship in particular, furnish the next topic of the present study.

The North American Mennonites originally came to this continent in six major migrations:³

1. From Switzerland and the Palatinate to Eastern Pennsylvania from 1683 to 1750.
2. From Alsace and Switzerland to various places in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois from 1815 to 1860.
3. From the Ukraine to Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Dakotas and Manitoba from 1873 to 1900.
4. From West Prussia to Kansas and Nebraska from 1873 to 1880.
5. From Russia and Siberia to Canada from 1922 to 1925.
6. From the Ukraine to Canada via Germany from 1947 to 1950.

The Mennonite Church in America has its origin in those groups of Mennonites who immigrated to America in the early days of settlement, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, having come from the districts and congregations which adhered to the Confession of Faith adopted at Dortrecht, Holland, in 1632, and ratified at Ohnenheim, Alsace, in 1660.⁴

From the foregoing we have seen how outside influences from time to time often altered their worship practices. In America, where Mennonite ministerial students do not attend

³H. S. Bender, "American Mennonites," Mennonite Encyclopedia, edited by H. S. Bender, Cornelius Krahn, G. Henry Smith and Melvin Gingerich (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, c.1955), p. 645.

⁴John L. Horst, secretary, Mennonite Church Polity (compiled by the Church Polity Committee of the Mennonite General Conference; Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944), p. 3.

only Mennonite schools, outside customs and forms are common. Coming from different sections of Europe where customs and practices of worship varied also made a difference. In spite of this the

Mennonite Church has endeavored to maintain the simplicity of life and church organization which had cost her forefathers very dearly, and which they held at such cost because it was founded on the Word of God.⁵

In an effort to maintain a uniformity of faith and worship the Mennonites have prepared formal doctrinal statements. These have helped to keep the original ideals foremost. When these have been observed, worship services have remained orthodox; when not, attractive practices were adopted from other groups.

What complicates this matter is that the

Mennonites are not a creedal church, strictly speaking. In the final analysis Mennonites are bound only by the Word of God, not by any human interpretation of it, although confessions of faith as adopted by the church have great weight.⁶

Usually the Mennonites ranked with those on the frontier. Here before a close group could be formed, inter-marriages and co-worship were in operation. The worship services were typical of those on the frontier. Mennonites are enterprising people of the soil and good material for nuclei of of evangelical non-Mennonite denominations. In this respect

⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶ Wenger, op. cit., p. 133.

they rendered a real service. At times because of lack of creedal material insignificant matters were blown up to huge proportions. The following is a letter from one of these ministers:

Soon after I began to preach some of the members were displeased with the way I was operating, and for different reasons. One because I did not change my coat from what it was before; some thought it unbecoming for me to wear a collar on my coat, or to have buttons on both sides. Most objections were made against the form, some contending that it ought to be around. But as the Mennonite creed did not say what form of coat the minister had to wear, in view of the Gospel I exercised my own privilege as to what would be appropriate, and continued to wear my usual dress.⁷

Such emphases gave rise to less conservative, suspicious and exclusive Mennonite conferences. Groups that were more tolerant in their practices and less hesitant to work with other Mennonite and Protestant denominations made their appearance. Socially, too, they were less fearful of contamination by the outside world than were some of their more conservative brethren. They had no restrictions regarding clothes and recreations.⁸ Today about half of the Mennonite churches belong to these more open conferences.

What creeds or statements there were, have had the influence one would expect and were in constant demand. There was, for instance, Gerhard Roosen's (1612-1711) catechism

⁷ C. Henry Smith, The Story of the Mennonites (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1945), p. 600.

⁸ Ibid., p. 692.

entitled, Spiritual Conversation on Saving Faith, which was translated into English and often reprinted in America. In 1527, "The Seven Articles of Schleithelm" by Michael Sattler appeared. Peter J. Twisck (1565-1636) wrote the longer confessions consisting of thirty-three articles. In 1610 John de Ries and Lubbert Gerrits published another confession. Others followed in rapid succession. Perhaps the most used in American churches is the "Thirty-three Articles" of Cornelius Ris of Hoorn, Holland, 1766. This confession was translated from the Dutch into the German by C. J. van der Smissen in 1849, and A. S. Shelly translated it from the German into the English about 1902. This confession is used by the more liberal churches,⁹ and the conservative churches use those of Dortrecht produced in 1632.¹⁰ In the manual of the "Mennonite General Conference" we read:

In earlier years, congregations in America, widely separated from each other, with limited opportunities of fellowship and acting under local conditions and needs effected methods of organization and practices in worship which partook of a local or district complex, although maintaining the same spirit and general purposes of other sections of the Church. Because of these variations of methods and procedures, and with a general desire to promote a greater unity in service and to conserve the general spirit of unity in faith and practice throughout all the sections of the church, the formulating of a polity, a guide to the workers of the church in

⁹ Wenger, op. cit., p. 134.

¹⁰ Chester K. Lehman, Junior Catechism (fourteenth thousand; Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944), p. 3.

their labors and to cultivate the common interests of the cause in the hearts of the brotherhoods, was given consideration . . . ¹¹

Major American Mennonite Groups

When the statement is made that some Mennonites adhered closer to tradition and custom than others, it is necessary that a little more be said about each of the major American Mennonite groups. At present there are twelve larger separate "bodies with considerable variation in religious doctrine"¹² and worship.

The Mennonite Church

This is the largest body of American Mennonites, having about 60,000 baptized members. Their background is Dutch and Palatine of Swiss extraction. They settled in Pennsylvania in 1683 and later established daughter colonies in other states. About 18,000 came from Amish background.

In their forms of worship they are staunch conservatists in faith and discipline. Their main Gottesdienst lies in a program of sharing. Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are baptized by pouring, either in the church building or in a stream, on the confession of their faith. They practice close communion of those accepted into the

¹¹ Horst, op. cit., p. 4.

¹² Wenger, op. cit., p. 111.

fellowship and in good standing. Several weeks before communion service is held, the members have Counsel Meeting in which the chief pastor, the bishop, discusses the discipline of the church and gives opportunity for the members to make comments. The members are asked to state that they are in harmony with the standards of the church, at peace with God and with man as far as possible, and that they desire to participate in the communion service. In connection with the communion service they observe the ordination of washing the saints' feet on the basis of John 13; the brethren greet one another, and the sisters do likewise among themselves, with the "holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16). They also anoint the sick with oil when requested (Mark 6:13; James 5:14). During worship the sisters of the church wear a prayer veil as a symbol of the headship of man (I Cor. 11:2-16); in America this is usually a small white cap of a finely-woven net. In Argentina, Mennonite women wear a black veil over their heads during worship. Some of the laity and all ordained men wear a coat without a laydown collar, the so-called "plain" coat of Mennonite and Brethren circles. They take seriously the Scriptural prohibition against the wearing of gold and pearls (I Tim. 2:9,10; I Peter 3:3,4), including wedding rings.

Simplicity is also applied to worship. The "meeting-house," as they call their church, is a plain structure without steeple, bell, organ, altar, or works of art. The

minister is addressed as "brother" rather than "reverend." He is chosen from the congregation and has had no special training for his work. Formerly school-teachers were often chosen, and now those called to the ministry attend Bible School or seminary. Frequently there are two ministers to a congregation, both of them earning their own living, mostly by farming. This is changing though, since congregations note that our society demands a full-time ministry and full support. The worship service is simple and dignified, not demonstrative nor emotional. The congregations sing four-part music, unaccompanied by any instruments. For prayer they kneel. The sermon is simple and earnest with a constant appeal to the Bible in support of the message.¹³ How adverse this body is to change indicates their use of the Ausbund as their official hymnbook in their worship services. This book dates back to 1570 and is the oldest in use by any Mennonite church in America.¹⁴

The General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America

Since this Conference is composed of various churches, its members come from all European Mennonite sources and are

¹³ Wenger, op. cit., pp. 112-15.

¹⁴ Lester Hostetler, Handbook to the Mennonite Hymnary (Newton, Kansas: General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America Board of Publications, 1949), p. XXX.

distributed in almost all States and Canada. "Its first meeting was on May 28, 1860, at West Point Iowa, with only three churches participating. In 1957 there were about 50 congregations."¹⁵ They use "The Mennonite Articles of Faith" set up by Cornelius Ris.

The Local church has the right to organize and arrange its own internal affairs. There is no uniformity in organization but usually there is an elder (pastor) and a Board of Deacons and a Board of Trustees to assist him.¹⁶

This branch is open to other denominations, marrying non-Mennonites and communion. The worship veil and plain clothing were discarded. Ministers are salaried and educated for the work. Musical instruments and choirs were introduced into the church services. They have their own Mennonite hymnal containing the most popular Protestant hymns. The ministers teach Mennonite principles, but members make their own decisions to a large degree without the loss of church membership.

This group pioneered in Sunday School work. There are no superior officers, and the title "bishop," common among the Mennonites and the Amish, is unknown.

¹⁵ Olin A. Krehbiel, "General Conference Mennonite Church," G. Mennonitische Weltkonferenz 10. bis 16. August 1957 in Karlsruhe, Germany (Karlsruhe, 1947), p. 29.

¹⁶ The Church Unity Committee of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, Our Church (North Newton, Kansas: Bethel College Press, 1942.)

The Mennonite Brethren Church of North America

This group originated in South Russia in 1860. Spiritual coldness in the old church led Edward Wuest, an earnest evangelist from the near-by colony of German Evangelicals, to have revival services among the Mennonites. A little farther south, Abraham Unger read Ludwig Hofacker's sermons and had many followers.

The first Mennonite Brethren came to North America in 1873. In their worship services they stress a religious conversion experience followed by "a changed life." Revival services are conducted for several weeks at a time. The objective is to have people accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, repent of their sins and follow Him in obedience through baptism by immersion.¹⁷ Baptismal candidates make a public confession to that effect. There is a negative attitude toward formalism in all worship services, and communion is limited to the baptized members in good standing in the local church. In their services, they sing mostly the newer gospel songs with organ or piano accompaniment. They give opportunity to every member to testify and offer public prayer. No stress is laid on particular clothing or using jewelry. The sermons are expository and not written out.

¹⁷ Acts 2:38

¹⁸ Wenger, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

Communion is observed frequently, and several congregations still have foot-washing in connection with it. In recent years they have begun to prepare and use their own hymnals. For a long time most of their churches made use of the Evangeliums-Lieder Numbers 1 and 2.¹⁹ In some of the churches they began to use simple hymns for processions and recessionsals.

The Old Order Amish Mennonites

This conference split off from the Swiss Anabaptists and was originated by Jacob Ammann in 1693. They came from Switzerland in Alsace. Settlements were first made in Pennsylvania, and later daughter colonies followed the frontier westward. This group is very conservative, and discipline is rigid. Modern methods of cutting hair and shaving are avoided. Clothing was not "to be proud," that is, made in conformity with current styles. In church they are all dressed alike and deviations are not permitted. The interior of homes and churches are very plain and simple. The vehicles they use are not painted in two colors. New and modern things are said to be invented by the "world," and an effort is made to avoid them. In trying to perpetuate the ways of their Swiss forebears new inventions, which may

¹⁹ Walter Rauschenbush and Ira D. Sankey, editors, Evangeliums-Lieder 1 und 2 (Chicago: The Biglow & Main Co., and Philadelphia: Theodore Presser Co., c.1897).

create new ethical problems in relation to world conformity (Rom. 12:2), are ruled out. Around these beliefs revolves almost all their worship.

About 1850 the absolutist attitude relaxed somewhat. They began to build "meeting houses." These were usually built close to a stream, convenient for baptizing, when the bishop and candidates stood in the water while the water was poured on the candidate's head (Matt. 3:16; Acts 8:38). When they have no church building, the services are held every two weeks in their homes. The minister uses a Pennsylvania German dialect; hymns and Scripture are in German. The tunes are ancient; only recently have they been written and printed. Following their service, which lasts over an hour, a meal is eaten at the home of the family which entertained the worshipers. During the afternoon the several families hitch their horses to their plain buggies and slowly wend their way homeward. The men all look alike in their plain style clothing all their own, with large, black, broad-brimmed hats and long beards. The women wear large, plain bonnets and long, full dresses of solid color, not flowered, checked, or figured. In this same garb they appear at all church services. Home life is strong, and in this fashion the whole family appears at church. Children look like their parents, only smaller and younger. They do not have Sunday School. Taking a stand against the use of tobacco and alcohol, as almost all Mennonites do, they deem unimportant.

Being strict congregationalists, they do not have uniform discipline. They are one of the fastest-growing Mennonite bodies, not because of mission work, but because of their large families.²⁰

The Mennonite Brethren in Christ

This is a group that came out of the Mennonite church in 1873-74. The present membership is about 13,000 and stresses emotional conversions, the so-called "second work of grace," personal testimonies, and other points receiving little or no emphasis by Mennonites historically. With few exceptions their Confession of Faith is in substantial agreement with the Dordrecht Confession. They have a conversion on a theory of instantaneous and complete sanctification often called "holiness." The mode of baptism is immersion, and foot-washing is practiced as an ordinance. They win converts from non-Mennonites and have many non-Mennonite family names.²¹

Old Order Mennonites

This group had its origin in Russia and now numbers about 4,000. Its members are opposed to every kind of change. They do not have Sunday School, frown upon preaching

²⁰ Wenger, op. cit., p. 123.

²¹ Ibid.

in the English language and having evangelistic services. They try to keep their church services the same as their fathers had them centuries ago. Their hymn-singing in church strongly resembles Gregorian chant. They seem more interested in preserving the status quo than in the Gospel.²² The prayers are silent, and the sermons are from one or two hours in length.

Conservative Amish Mennonites

This group has withdrawn from the Old Order Amish Mennonites. In practice they **vary** slightly from the present body of the Mennonite Church. They go to church with automobiles. They also use the Ausbund, the oldest Mennonite hymnal still in use. It has gone through twelve editions in Europe. The last two were printed in Basel in 1838. Its use was confined to the South German and Swiss Mennonites. It has been reprinted in America, and the Amish churches likely will continue to use it for some time to come. It has the distinction of being the oldest hymn-book officially in use by any church in America.²³

Church of God in Christ, Mennonite

This is another strict Mennonite church body. Its

²²Wenger, op. cit., p. 125.

²³Hostetler, op. cit., p. XXX.

founder was a layman, John Holdeman (1830-1900), in Ohio. This branch of Mennonites consists of Swiss and Russian stock. The main point of difference is shunning. The members have no fellowship with those not of their immediate group. Ministers from other denominations are not invited to its pulpits. The women wear a black headcovering in church and at all other times when they worship. The men wear no ties and are not allowed to shave. Any infraction of these rules is disciplined. The mode of baptism is pouring; it is performed in the church. All other Mennonite groups whose mode of baptism is pouring accept the baptisms performed by others, but this body does not. This is in the belief that they are the only true church and no one but a minister of the true church should baptize.²⁴ When a member leaves the church, he forsakes the true church and is banned (excommunicated). Whether he joins another Mennonite church or remains without a church but lives a Christian life, makes no difference. Every member, irrespective of blood relationship, shuns him.²⁵ Their church buildings are very plain and devoid of all symbolism. They use no musical instruments in the homes nor in the church services. The ministers do all the preaching, and the deacons are the stewards of the alms monies. They do not receive offerings in the church but

²⁴ Hebrews 6:1-3

²⁵ Titus 3:10

make their contributions directly as members. The expenses are at a minimum; no remuneration is given to the ministers. They are very active as a church and lately have spread out into Mexico with good success. The group has about 4,000 members in the United States and Canada.

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren and Defenseless Mennonite Church of North America

These two branches of Mennonites were distinct groups until June, 1953, when they affiliated to form The Evangelical Mennonite Conference. This was significant in that instead of splitting, as has been so often the case, there was union. Then too, Mennonites of Swiss extraction joined with Dutch and Russian Mennonites. From both angles this move is significant, indicating in some degree modern sentiment among Mennonites regarding union.

The name "Evangelical" was chosen because their emphasis is not on the Mennonite as much as on the Great Commission. Dr. P. M. Friesen tried a similar movement in Russia in 1905 by creating a Mennonite Alliance. Apparently he was too far ahead of his time. Instead of uniting two opposing factions he created a third.²⁶ Friesen's attempt, as well as the present affiliation, created a greater spirit of belonging together among Mennonite groups. The result has

²⁶Wenger, op. cit., p. 98.

been that worship practices have become more uniform. Since their emphasis is on the evangelical, barriers to non-Mennonite groups are almost gone. They worship like those of any other Evangelical denomination. In principle they are in agreement with the Mennonite Brethren and General Conference.²⁷ The use of tobacco and alcohol and attendance of amusement places is discouraged, reprimanded and disciplined.

The Evangelical Mennonites do not prescribe a specific mode of baptism. The usual modes are pouring and immersion. Since candidates may choose, both modes are frequently used in the same baptismal service. They pour in the church and also in streams. Footwashing is observed where it is demanded; attendance is not obligatory. Communion is open. They do not really have a church "table," they have only "the Lord's table," to which naturally all that are born again are invited.²⁸ Church discipline is mostly in private, there is no shunning. Musical instruments are used in the homes and churches. Choirs and special groups sing in churches and on special occasions. No particular attention is paid to clothes and jewelry as long as they are decent. The wedding ring is favored, seeing that it plays an important role in

²⁷ Wenger, op. cit., p. 126.

²⁸ H. H. Dick, Henry F. Epp and Sam J. Schmidt, editors, The Revised Constitution and Confession of Faith (Mountain Lake, Minnesota: The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, 1949), p. 31.

our modern living. The newer churches begin to use some symbolism, and the services show traces of liturgy. They have processions and recessions, and choirs in some churches render responses and appropriate renditions during the services. Since the conference has not its own hymnbook, each church chooses its own. Often they are not Mennonite books. The most widely used book is the Evangeliums-Lieder Number 1 and 2, where the services are still in the German. In English meetings the Mennonite Hymnary and other fundamental and evangelical non-Mennonite productions are used.

The pastors have Bible School or seminary training. They are salaried and provided with living quarters. Additions to the churches are made by way of evangelism, conversion and by letter from any other denomination. Instead of infant baptism they have infant dedication. For church membership only adult baptism is accepted. Marriages and other functions are very much the same as we have them in other evangelical groups, even if not Mennonites.

Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church

This group originated in Russia and settled in the middle States and Canada. Its worship practices are the same as those of the Mennonite Brethren except that in baptism they immerse the candidate three times forward instead of once backwards. During 1956 steps were introduced to affiliate or possibly merge with the Mennonite Brethren

Conference. This church has about 1,800 members.

Kleine Gemeinde now called the Evangelical Mennonite Church

This is a branch of the Mennonite Church in Russia. It originated in 1812 from the so-called Grosse Gemeinde. The immediate reason for leaving the larger body was the desire to remain conservative in its practises and way of life. In the last decade though, the form of worship has been that of other evangelical bodies. Discipline, baptism and communion observations differ in form from other groups. In discipline they are more demanding; baptism is only by pouring in the churches, and communion is for members only. They use no musical instruments, and only lately have they introduced choirs and special groups of singers in their worship periods. In the more conservative churches, the Gesangbuch, a Mennonite song book going as far back as 1767,²⁹ is still used. Where this is not used, the Evangelium-Lieder Number 1 and 2 is used. They have 2,500 members.³⁰

Reformed Mennonites

This is a small group of about 1200 members who left

²⁹ N. P. Springer, Comments on Gesang-Buch in welchem eine Sammlung geistreicher Lieder Befindlich. Zur allgemeinen Erbauung und zum Lobe Gottes herausgegeben. (Goshen, Indiana: Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College, 1957), p. 3.

³⁰ Krehbiel, op. cit., p. 32.

the Mennonite Church around the turn of the eighteenth century. They cling to the ways of the Mennonites. This was even more so before the introduction of Sunday Schools, young people's meetings, mission work and evangelistic services came into use. This group is very exclusive, not permitting its members to listen to the sermons of other religious bodies. They dress plainly and practice shunning.³¹

In summary, two observers of Mennonites, one of their own group and the other not, fittingly put it this way:

Wenger a Mennonite teacher says:

While all this may seem amusing to some people, even to the more progressive Mennonite groups, it is nevertheless a testimony to the ethical earnestness and the tender consciences of the brotherhood.³²

Dorothy Thompson, a present day well-known journalist, was invited by Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, to speak at one of its important annual observances. In a discussion of her experiences, she writes in the Ladies'

Home Journal:

My hosts and sponsors did not wear beards and their daughters dressed like any other modest American women, with the emphasis on cleanliness and simplicity. . . . They did not ram their religious concepts down my throat. I was in an atmosphere . . . not of piety in the usual connotations of the word, nor of sectarianism, which so easily becomes wrangling, nor of the self-righteousness that so quickly puts one on the defensive. It was an atmosphere, no less powerful because entirely unobtrusive, of serenity and peace, and far from being

³¹Wenger, op. cit., p. 129.

³²Wenger, op. cit., p. 130.

"queer." The people are practically creedless. The sum of their faith is to be found in the New Testament, and especially in the Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount. . . . Nor do they divide thought and act. Thought, in its highest most concentrated form, is directed, as prayer, for the fuller understanding and revelation of God's law of love, such thought, they believe, is an actual force in the universe, as real as electricity, as the actions which follow and conform with it are its incorporation in external reality. . . . God's revealed law is therefore to live naturally. . . .³³

What is said above, the Mennonites try to bring out in their worship without the aid of words. They do not want to be queer but natural, not bombastic but sincerely simple. They do not desire to have worship services but services of worship.

Their Heritage

The Church Year

Prior to the twentieth century the Church Year was followed in all Mennonite churches. It was "the atmosphere in which the church worshiped."³⁴ It was taught that "the celebration of the highest Jewish feasts, Easter and Pentecost, was carried over from the Old Testament."³⁵ Mennonites

³³ Dorothy Thompson, "Queer People," Ladies' Home Journal (Philadelphia: The Curtis Publishing Company, 1952), reprint (n.d.).

³⁴ Paul Zeller Strodach, A Manual of Worship (Revised edition; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1946), p. XXIV.

³⁵ Dom Otto Haering, Living With the Church (New York: Benzinger Brothers, Inc. 1930), p. XV.

agreed with all churches who "sought to do away with heathen festivals by instituting Christian feasts in their place. . . ."36 They teach that all "followers of Christ must keep separate from worldly entanglements and to keep unspotted from the evils that are about."37 With the observance of Christian holidays this is partially obtained.

Until the turn of the last century the Mennonite church observed all the main feast days of the Christian Year. In their schools the Advent season was a period of special preparation for a two or three-day Christmas season. Immediately following this came New Year and Epiphany. For all these occasions the children learned Wuensche (a type of prayer) to be recited in their homes. Besides these they learned several songs and Bible portions in reference to these days. The sermons pointed to the coming of the Christchild and His second coming.

In connection with Lent, Ash Wednesday and the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem were important. Passion week climaxed in preparing for Good Friday on Maundy Thursday. A very special service was held on Good Friday. In was in the full sense of Stille Freitag. The sermon was always a very simple presentation of Jesus' death on the cross for our sins.

³⁶Ibid., p. XV.

³⁷John L. Horst, editor, Instructions to Beginners in the Christian Life (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1947), p. 71.

All churches had services on Easter Sunday and the following Monday. Many more conservative congregations also kept Easter Tuesday. The messages stressed Jesus' victory over death. Frequent references were made to the numerous Anabaptist martyrs who also finished their course with victory.

After Easter came Ascension Day and shortly after at least two and sometimes three Pentecost holidays. On the latter it was customary to have the baptismal services. Many Mennonite churches who baptize by pouring in the church still baptize on these days. They do baptize at other times but only by special arrangements. With this ended the Christian Year.

At present only the more conservative branches of the Mennonite Church follow the Christian Year. The common practice is to follow the customs in the other non-liturgical churches. There is possibly one main exception: the observance of the Communion Service on Good Friday. All Mennonite churches have it on that day. They teach:

We also believe in and observe the breaking of bread, or the Lord's Supper, as the Lord Jesus instituted the same (with bread and wine) before his sufferings, and also observed and ate it with the apostles, and also commanded it to be observed to his remembrance, as also the apostles subsequently taught and observed the same in the church, and commanded it to be observed by the believers in commemoration of the death and sufferings of the Lord--the breaking of his worthy body and the shedding of his precious blood--for the whole human race. So is the observance of this sacrament also to remind us of the benefit of the said death and sufferings of Christ, namely the redemption and eternal

salvation which he purchased thereby, and the great love thus shown to sinful man. . . .³⁸

In later years those of the Mennonite faith have drifted away from following the church calendar for the year. This has several reasons:

First, the observation Strodach makes applies to the Mennonites.

In order to avoid formalism and ritualism the calendar has to some extent, been abandoned. The atmosphere of worship that festivals and symbolism furnish has faded into an undiscernable hue.³⁹

The golden age of freedom that we find ourselves in has left them to flounder in this respect.

Second, in the skirmish of progress, Mennonites with others, have gotten away from the so-called "old ways." Things, and good things, have been cast to the winds just because they are from previous years. Much of what is preserved is to remain only in museums. Anything prescribing order is viewed with skepticism. Modern psychology in many cases wants it differently. Religiously speaking, modern evangelism cannot be hemstrung by church year ballast. Events that were quite important fifty years ago in the Mennonite Church are now almost forgotten.

³⁸S. F. Coffman, Mennonite Church Polity (compiled by the Church Polity Committee of the Mennonite General Conference; Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944), p. 56.

³⁹Strodach, op. cit., p. XXIX.

Third, until half a dozen decades ago the Mennonites found a certain amount of companionship in the events of the church year. Before the age of modern conveniences of travel and communication Mennonites sought activities around the home and church. It was interesting to prepare for the holidays. Attending church with others fulfilled a great need. Homes with limited means made inexpensive things. "Little was much if God was in it." They find that the opposite is too often the case today. "Much is little if God is not in it." The sense of belonging to a rich Mennonite past is lost. Other and many interests have crowded out what Haering sees in the church year:

Like a true friend . . . that accompanies us throughout our life, teaching and admonishing us, consoling and delighting us, it must have something to say to us if it is to have a lasting influence on our Christian life . . . and give us certain definite ideas or impressions. . . . At no time do we hear more profound truths and more effective admonitions than on feast days and during the harmoniously recurrent seasons of the church year.⁴⁰

Fourth, interdenominational evangelical emphases have overshadowed Mennonite principles of faith. Present day outstanding evangelicals, independent of denomination, have a tendency to take the place of Mennonite "martyrs, confessors, and the like, high and low, who used the same creeds, and celebrated the same mysteries, and preached the same Gospel

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Otto Haering, Living With the Church. (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1930), p. 1.

as we do."⁴¹

Mennonites with their years of persecution and migration have a noble stock that went before to blaze a bloody trail for the faith. Every Mennonite household has read about them in Tieleman van Braght's Martyrs' Mirror. Through the centuries these have aroused them time and again to serve God. Their worship was a way of life and a Gottesdienst. Their events were always related to the lives of the Apostles and early church fathers. In their effort, together with the Puritans, to get back to the primeval church the life of Christ played the main part. "Faith is built around the Bible events of which Jesus is the cornerstone."⁴² With the unrestricted acceptance of the modern Protestant church life went the Mennonite church year.

Fifth, when the American Mennonites began to worship in the English language, many of the older customs and traditions were forgotten. The most accessible Christian literature was not Mennonite. A large number of churches did not have their own hymnbooks and Sunday School material. The old German and Dutch hymnbooks still have the church calendar, but the new material does not. With the production of Mennonite worship material in the English language this is overcome, but slowly.

⁴¹ Walker Gwynne, The Christian Year--Its Purpose and Its History (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., c.1915), p. 80.

⁴² George Hedley, Christian Worship Some Meanings and Means (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1953), p. 78.

Mennonites recognize that greater unity could be achieved if they would know and worship according to the teachings of their first leaders. Mennonites and Anabaptists accept them today as Biblical. By means of World Conferences efforts are made to bring Mennonites together on the basis of their tenets. Nations, after futilely trying to blast their way into peace, swing back to pacifism. The Mennonites recognize that now is the time to present their inherited faith of peace in a much more united spirit. This unity of spirit⁴³ has taken on new meaning and inspiration. Those who left behind the Mennonite faith with ways to live it, steadily acquire more respect.

The Mennonites further see that if they all follow a thoroughly planned and constituted church year rubric, their worship would be more consistent. Christ would be worshiped in a less adulterated Mennonite fashion. To do this in a measure, the last World Conference chose for its main theme Das Evangelium von Jesus Christus in der Welt. Mennonitism experiences a conscious swinging back to the cornerstone, Christ Jesus. A calendar, wrapping the year's texts and worship services systematically around Him in the faith of the forefathers, they recognize to be of great help. They look for a tie between all its churches and pioneers of their faith. A common church calendar for Europe and America could

⁴³Ephesians 4:3

do this to a large degree.

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference does something in this regard. For several years Mrs. Frank Thomas, the wife of the pastor of their Henderson, Nebraska, church, has compiled a missionary calendar. To unite the whole constituency in prayer for the missionaries in the field she places their names under the day of their birthday. The purpose, she writes on page two, in preparing this calendar, is "to acquaint ourselves with our missionaries, pray for them and to write to them."⁴⁴ This production has proven helpful in uniting the home churches in prayer for those in the field. Many churches use this material for their midweek worship prayer services. Church calendars regulate, deepen and unite the entire church life.

Newman, to arouse interest in those removed from us, writes:

And to them were joined, as ages went on, . . . fresh witnessess from the Church below. In the world of spirits there is no difference of parties . . . Greece and Rome, England and France.⁴⁵

For us it is Switzerland, the Netherlands, Russia, the Belgian Congo, the Americas and the uttermost parts of the earth. We must all be missionaries. The production of missionary calendars has been of interest in other conferences.

⁴⁴Mrs. Frank Thomas, Missionary Calendar of the Conference of Evangelical Mennonites (Henderson, Nebraska: The Henderson Printing Co., 1957), p. 2.

⁴⁵Gwynne, op. cit., p. XX.

This is an indication that a more inclusive church year calendar with its worship materials and leads is in demand

Gwynne goes on to say:

There is no color to those souls which have been cleansed in the one Baptism, nourished by the one body, and moulded by the One Faith. . . . Therefore it is good to throw ourselves into the unseen world, "it is good to be there," and to build tabernacles for those who speak "a pure language" and "serve the Lord with one consent"; not indeed to draw them forth from their secure dwelling-places, not superstitiously to honor them, or wilfully to rely on them, lest they be a snare to us, but silently to contemplate them for our edification.⁴⁶

The Mennonites teach how to have inward contact with the heavenly throng and the missionaries in far fields. However, in more recent times, they have failed to take advantage of feast days and their help in doing this. As we will see in a moment, feast and holy days, used to play a much bigger role in the church life of the Mennonites. About the significance of feast days for the church we read:

The feasts of the church year are more suitable for instructing people in the faith and for bringing the fulness of interior joy to their souls than the solemn expositions of the Church's teaching office. For these expositions are generally appreciated by but a few of the learned; the feasts, however, teach and quicken all the people. The spoken word sounds but once; the feasts speak to us every year and at all times. Dissertations have a salutary influence upon the mind; but the feast days influence the heart as well as the mind and thus grip the whole man. Since man is made up of body and soul, he needs the stimulating force conveyed by the feasts, so that his spirit may receive instruction from

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 80.

the manifold beauty of the holy rites, and so that these go over into flesh and blood and thus advance his spiritual life.⁴⁷

The Mennonite Gesangbuch was widely used in the Mennonite worship services as late as 1918. In it was a complete church calendar with its aids to worship.⁴⁸ It is of recent date that serious neglect of conforming to a Mennonite church calendar has set in.

Interest among Mennonites used to be high in the events of the church based on Scripture and practise. In a comparison of church calendars of 1730 and 1895, we note that the latter is more elaborate and likely has undergone several revisions and additions. The earlier one is found in a book of sermons written by Jacob Denner in 1730 and the latter in the fifth edition of the Gesangbuch printed in 1918. This book was used especially during the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth centuries.⁴⁹

The full title-page of Jacob Denner's book reads:

Jacob Denner Christlich-und Erbauliche Betrachtungen ueber die Son-und Festags-Evangelia des ganzen Jahrs; nebst einem Anhang verschiedener Predigten neber

⁴⁷ Haering, op. cit., p. XX.

⁴⁸ Mennonite Church, Gesangbuch (Fuenfte amerikanische Ausgabe; Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonite Publishing Co., 1895), p. IV.

⁴⁹ Walter H. Hohmann and Lester Hostetler, Handbook to the Mennonite Hymnary (Berne, Indiana: The Board of Publication of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, 1946), p. xxxi.

besondere Texte, so wohl aus dem Altne als Neuen Testamente; und einer Vermehrung von dreyen Predigten ueber das heilige Vater Unser. Durch Gottes Gnade in oeffentlicher Versammlung in Altona muendlich vorge-tragen, und auf Begehren dem Druck ueberlassen. Neue, auf Kosten Christlicher Freunde besorgte Auflage, welcher die Betrachtung vom Adel des Gewissens und eine Nachricht von den Lebens-Umstaedenden des seligen Herrn Denners beygefueget worden. Gedruckt im Jahr 1751.⁵⁰

In the Gesangbuch we find:

(Es) . . . sind von verschiedenen christlichen Maennern, besonders nach der bekannten grossen Reformation, fast unzaehlige geistliche Lieder verfertigt und viele herausgegeben worden. . . . In dieser Absicht von Gott ergebene und erleuchtete Maennern unserer taufgesinnten Gemeinden in Preussen schon fruher dieses gegenwaertige Gesangbuch zum gottesdienstlichen Gebrauche gesammelt und herausgegeben und durch verschiedenen Auflagen vermehrt, in allen Gemeinden unserer Glaubensgenossen eingefuehrt worden. . . .⁵¹

When comparing these calendars with the one Lutheran churches use today, we note that there must have been a common source for their epistles and gospels. They are the same in almost all cases, and where they differ it may have been error rather than choice. Then too, there has been a good deal of development. The later Mennonite one has several epistles and gospels in addition to the one used before and even in the Lutheran hymnal, indicating that more Scripture was added to their services from time to time. It seems that this is a sign of getting away from a prescribed calendar and

⁵⁰ Jacob Denner, Betrachtungen (Neue, auf Kosten Christlicher Freunde besorgte Auflage, auf Begehren dem Druck ueberlassen: Altona, Germany: 1751), fly leaf.

⁵¹ Mennonite Church, Gesangbuch, p. iv.

relying on Scriptures chosen by the individual preacher, until today the Mennonite Church has abandoned the formal use of the calendar in its churches. This has added to a less unified spirit among the churches and frequently in services inferior in effectiveness because of too much independence and lack of attention to the Mennonite Confession of faith and the past way of life. This loss will be immediately noticed when looking at the following comparison of these calendars for the seasons of Advent, Christmas and New Year.

The introit in the earlier Mennonite worship consisted of several Scriptures connected with a few sentences, as we note in comparison. The original sentences of the speaker have dropped away in the later calendar and have the epistles and gospels instead. The double designated with "but" and "and" is used only for the Advent season. The second Christmas day already limits itself to no topic.

It is striking to note how much time was devoted in the earlier church calendar to the introit. It is difficult to tell just where the very entry merges into the church service as such. A number of Scriptures are alluded to and cited before the sermon. There usually was a break of silent prayer, kneeling, before the sermon. This practice is still current in the conservative branches of the Mennonite church.

Another change is in reference to the feast days. The earlier calendar provided for two Christmas days, the latter

for three. The third day is still observed by several churches, but there are no church services like those on the first and second. The third day got its origin in Russia. Those Mennonites removed from the Russian influence have reverted back to the Prussian observance, namely two days as we also have in the Denner calendar, before the Mennonites went to Russia. This also agrees with the Canadian-English custom of having two Christmas days, the second one being "Boxing Day." The Mennonites in Canada make full use of such practice in their own churches. They make it an unwritten rule for families to be with the one side on the family on the first day and on the second day with the other. There was considerable observance of Christmas worship during such visits. A further comparison of the feast days indicates that we have lost a number of them, and with this loss much reverence for the spirit of sacrifice connected with the bringing about of our confession when the Mennonites left the Roman Church.

Deliberate effort was made in the Church Calendar to get away from making "saints." Special days are set aside for the events in the life of Christ, John the Baptist, Mary the mother of Jesus and her direct contribution to His birth, the angels and man in relation to creation and his own repentance and salvation. None of the Apostles and those close to them are considered in any way. They are human beings requiring salvation the same as we.

Not availing themselves of this opportunity to build up the Mennonite confession which also has taken root and form under extreme persecution, around heroic people of the faith, is a great loss. The Mennonites use the Martyr's Mirror by Thieleman J. van Braght widely in their homes and schools, but taking certain people and lessons for the church at specific times of the year is not practiced. The Apostles, the Church Fathers and outstanding Anabaptist and Mennonite martyrs could very effectively be used for Sunday School and Young people's meetings. In the church service mention could be made of these in memory of their lives.

For the children the Church Calendar and special days are very significant. Children remember every "special" day they have had in church or Sunday School. These special days must be given dignity and meaningfulness so that when remembered they are worthwhile doing so. Lois LeBar says:

If there is sufficient prayer and preparation behind each session, the children will move their households to get to church, they will be challenged by fascinating activities, and will have many things to share with parents and friends for special days.⁵²

July 4th and other great days in the nation have their place, but the church's days are much more significant and the Mennonite church calendar could well afford to make rich use of them.

⁵² Lois E. LeBar, Children in the Bible School (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1952), pp. 365-66.

Below is the story of one such stalwart of the faith. His memorial was unveiled in Rottenburg during the sessions of the Mennonite World Conference. The Lutheran church suggested that the memorial of Michael Sattler be placed in their church by the Mennonites, seeing that the Lutheran church shared in the Protestant blessings as much as the Mennonites through the work that Sattler did in and around Rottenburg. Representatives from Tuebingen University and the Lutheran church contributed to the unveiling service. This and the many other equally heroic efforts for the Lord, Mennonite worship periods can use. Briefly, this is Sattler's story:

During Michael Sattler's sojourn in Strassburg the Swiss Brethren congregation at Horb and Rottenburg was discovered by the authorities. Having returned to Horb he with his wife and a number of others were arrested and imprisoned by the Roman Catholic magistrates in a tower at Binsdorf. From his prison he found it possible to write . . . to his . . . brethren. . . . He admonished them to a pious walk . . . that the church may be an example in purity and piety, cleansed by the blood of Christ. . . . Be patient in tribulation and have a care that you may not fall short in love. . . .

He added that he knew what was waiting for him but that he was, with his fellow prisoners, fully resigned to the will of the Lord and ready to depart and be with Christ.

The imprisonment continued for eleven weeks and three days. . . . His defense was masterful and based on the Scriptures. . . . If they show us that we err. . . . we shall gladly be taught, and recant. . . . God will be our judge. . . . The judge then retired . . . leaving Sattler to the mercies of the barbarous soldiers. . . . An eyewitness . . . said that a murderer would have been treated with more consideration. . . . The judgment was that Michael Sattler

shall be delivered to the executioner, who shall first cut out his tongue; then throw him upon a cart and with hot tongs tear pieces out of his body twice, and on the way to the place of execution make use of the tongs five times more in like manner.

Thereupon he shall burn his body to ashes as an arch heretic. . . .

Sattler endured the inhuman torture stipulated. . . . Then his mangled body was tied to a ladder. He prayed again for his persecutors while the ladder was placed upon the stake. He had promised his friends to give them a sign from the burning stake, to show that he remained steadfast to the end, enduring it all willingly for Christ. The fire having severed the cords wherewith he was bound, he lifted up his hand for a sign to them. . . . A few days later his wife showed the same steadfastness and courage . . . when she was drowned in the Neckar river.⁵³

Some may object to the use of the material because it is gruesome. Others ask whether it demoralizes like the many killings our children are exposed to on TV and elsewhere. Here is a place where instruction can be given to the children with interest and "bringing the fulness of interior joy to the fulness of the souls solemn expositions of the teachings of the Testaments."⁵⁴ The following is a comparison of the three church calendars.

⁵³ Horsch, op. cit., p. 77.

⁵⁴ Haering, op. cit., p. xviii.

Day of Church Year	Jacob Denner Calendar 1730	<u>Gesangbuch der Mennoniten 1918</u>	Lutheran Hymnal 1941
1st Sunday in Advent	Introit: Matt. 11:29 Epistle: none Gospel: Matt. 21:1-9	Introit: none But: Jesus' entry into Jerusalem Epistle: Rom. 13:11-14 Gospel: Matt. 21:1-9 John 15: 1-16 <u>and</u> Promise of a Savior: Epistle: Gen. 3:15 Gen. 22:18 Gospel: Deut. 18:15,18 List of songs	Introit: Sentences and Ps. 25:4 Epistle: Rom. 13:11-14 Gospel: Matt. 21:1-9
2nd Sunday in Advent	Introit: Luk: 21:33 2 Peter 3:7,10,12 Epistle: none Gospel: Luke 21:24-31	Introit: none But: Signs of the last times Epistle: Rom. 15:4-13 Gospel: Luke 21:25-36 <u>and</u> Nearer tidings of the coming Savior Epistle: Isa. 11:1,2 Gospel: Haggai 2:8 List of suggested songs	Introit: Sentences and Psalm 80:2 Epistle: Rom. 15:4-13 Gospel: Luke 21:25-36

3rd Sunday
in
Advent

Introit:
John 15:19
John 8:44
1 John 1:7
2 Cor. 6:
14,15
Epistle:
none
Gospel:
Matt. 11:2-6

Introit:
none
But John sends
his disciples
to Jesus
Epistle:
1 Cor. 4:1-5
Gospel:
Matt. 11:2-10
and
Longing for
the coming of
the Savior
Epistle:
Ps. 14:7
Ps. 28:5
Ps. 33:4
Is. 48:15-17
Gospel:
Is. 59:20
Mal. 3:11
Suggested songs

Introit:
Phil. 4:4
Phil. 4:5
Phil. 4:6
Ps. 85:1
Epistle:
1 Cor. 4:1-5
Gospel:
Matt. 11:2-10

4th Sunday
in
Advent

Introit:
John 3:16
Eph. 1:7
Matt. 1:21
1 Tim. 2:5,6
1 John 2:2
1 Peter 2:21
Phil. 2:5
Matt. 11:29
John 10:27
John 2:6
Matt. 16:24
John 4:34
1 Peter 5:5
Romans 8:31

Introit:
none
But:
John's
testimony of
Christ
Epistle:
Philip 4:4-7
Gospel:
John 1:19-28
The nearness
of the
Savior's
appearance.
Epistle:
Ps. 24:7-10
Is. 62:10-11
Gospel:
Is. 7:14
Luke 1:31,32
Matt. 1:20-23
Suggested songs

Introit:
Is. 45:8
Is. 45:8
Ps. 19:1
Epistle:
Phil. 4:4-7
Gospel:
John 1:19-28

Day of Year	Denner 1730	Gesangbuch 1918	Lutheran 1941
Christmas Day	Introit: John 14:23 Gal. 2:20 Gal. 4:19 Eph. 3:17 Rev. 3:20 2 Cor. 5:16 1 John 2:6 John 14:21 Ps. 34:9 Epistle: none Gospel: Luke 2:1-7	Introit: none But: For the sacred Christmas day Epistle: Tit. 2:11-14 Is. 9:2-7 Gospel: Luke 2:1-14 and The Birth of the Savior. Epistle: Tit. 2:11-14 Gospel: Isa. 9:6-7 Luke 2:1-14 Songs suggested	Introit: Isa. 9:6 Ps. 98:1 Epistle: Tit. 2:11-14 or Is. 9:2-7 Gospel: Luke 2:1-14
Second Christmas Day	Introit: 1 Tim. 2:5 Eph. 2:3 1 Tim. 3:16 Phil. 2:5,8 John 1:1-5 John 1:14-17 Heb. 1:1-3 1 John 5:20 Heb. 2:15-17 John 14:6 Is. 60:6 Rom. 10:8 Epistle: none Gospel: Luke 2:15-20	Introit: none Epistle: Tit. 3:4-7 Acts 6:8,15 Acts 7:51-59 Gospel: Luke 2:15-20 Is. 9:6 Songs	Introit: The same as for Christmas Day Epistle: Titus 3:4-7 Gospel: Luke 2:15-20

Day of Year	Denner 1730	Gesangbuch 1918	Lutheran 1941
Third Christmas Day	none	Introit: none Epistle: Sir. 15:1-8 1 John Heb. 1:1-14 Gospel: John 1:1-14 Isa. 63:4 Isa. 49:13 Songs	none
Sunday after Christmas	none	Introit: none Simeon and Hanna Epistle: Gal. 4:1-7 Gospel: Luke 2:33-40 Songs	Introit: Ps. 93:5 Ps. 93:2 Ps. 93:1 Epistle: Gal. 4:1-7 Gospel: Luke 2:33-40
New Year's Day The Circumci- sion and the name of Jesus	Introit: A New Year's Prayer: Eph. 4:22-24 Ps. 16:11 And the usual entry: Rom. 10:4 Matt. 22:40 Luke 11:13 Heb. 7:25 Gospel: Luke 2:21 No specific mention of circumcision and name of Jesus	Introit: Specific mention of Name and circumcision of Jesus Gospel: Luke 2:21 Songs	Introit: Ps. 8:1 Ps. 8:4 Is. 63:16 Epistle: Gal. 3:23-29 Gospel: Luke 2:21 Specific mention of circumcision and the name of Jesus

Day of Year	Denner 1730	<u>Gesangbuch</u> 1918	Lutheran 1941
Sunday after New Year	Introits: Matt. 5:44 Jer. 17:5-8 Rom. 8:31 Dan. 6 (por- tions) Epistle: none Gospel: Matt. 2:13-23	Introit: none Jesus' parents flee to Egypt Epistle: 1 Pet. 4:12-19 1 Pet. 3:20-22 Tit. 3:4-7 Gospel: Matt. 2:13-23 Songs	Introit: Same as Sunday after Christmas Epistle: 1 Pet. 4:12-19 Gospel: Matt. 2:13-23

Epiphany or the coming of the Wisemen. The Day of the Appearance of Christ	Introit: Rom. 8:31 Ps. 34:8 Heb. 1:7 Dan. 3 and Dan. 4 Epistle: none Gospel: Matt. 2:1-12	Introit: The coming of Wise Men from the East. Epistle: Is. 60:1-6 Gospel: Matt. 2:1-12 Num. 24:17 Songs	Introit: Ps. 72:1 Epistle Is. 60:1-6 Gospel: Matt. 2:1-12
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Name of Feast Day	Denner 1730	<u>Gesangbuch</u> 1918	Lutheran 1941
Christmas Day	Observed	Observed	Observed
Second Ch. Day	Observed	Observed	Observed
Third Ch. Day	-----	Observed	-----
New Year's Day (Circumcision)	Observed	Observed	Observed
Epiphany	Observed	Observed	Observed
Purification of Mary	Observed	Observed	Observed
The Annunciation	-----	Observed	Observed

Name of Feast Day	Denner 1730 ⁵⁵	Gesangbuch ⁵⁶ 1918	Lutheran ⁵⁷ 1941
Maundy Thursday	-----	Observed	Observed
Good Friday	-----	Observed	Observed
Easter Monday	Observed	Observed	Observed
Easter Tuesday	-----	Observed	Observed
Ascension Day	Observed	Observed	Observed
Whitsun Monday	Observed	Observed	Observed
Whitsun Tuesday	-----	Observed	Observed
Nativity of John the Baptist	Observed	Observed	Observed
Visitation of Mary	-----	Observed	Observed
St. Michael and All Angels	-----	Observed	Observed
Thanksgiving (Immediately be- fore 17th Sunday after Trinity)	-----	Observed	Observed
Spring Festival	-----	Observed	-----
Repentance and Prayer Day	-----	Observed	Provided for

⁵⁵ Denner, op. cit., pp. 1-1144.

⁵⁶ Mennonite Church, op. cit., pp. IX-XVIII

⁵⁷ The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, The Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1941), pp. 54-83.

Literature of Worship

When the Mennonites came to America from Europe, they brought with them worship literature which was later printed and re-printed. John C. Wenger in Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine gives us a list of material currently used.⁵⁸

At the head of this list is a German Bible. The Swiss Brethren preferred the Froschauer (Zurich) Bible to Luther's. Northern European Mennonites used chiefly Luther's Bible. The Dutch, however, used their own translations. Later such translations as the Elberfelder Miniatur and Menge were used, both in Europe and America. The Kings James Authorized version is now used where the services are conducted in the English language.

There is a good amount of singing in Mennonite services.⁵⁹ The hymnbook is an important part of every worship service. How important it has been in the past can be seen from the title of the first German Mennonite hymnbook published in 1565 or 1566. The title is long and makes reference to the place in Scripture that directs the congregations to sing:

Ein schoen Gesangbuechlein Geistlicher Lieder,
zusammengetragen aus dem A. und N. Testament durch

⁵⁸Wenger, op. cit., pp. 132-38.

⁵⁹Hostetler, op. cit., pp. xxix-xxxiii.

fromme Christen und Liebhaber Gottes, welcher hiefuer etliche getrucht sei gewesen, aber noch viel dazu gethan, welche nie in Truck aussgangen seindt, in welchen auch ein recht Leben und Fundament dez rechten Christlichen Galubens gelehrt wirdt. Coloss. 3.⁶⁰

A second edition, 1570-1583 (date not given) adds to the above title the following:

Jetzo von neuem widerum uebersehn, an vielen Orten gebessert und mit etlichen neuen Liedern vermehret. Coloss. 3.⁶¹

Of the 133 hymns in the book, nine had been in use among other churches. Many of the others were by Mennonite authors. Most of the hymns were set to secular melodies popular at the time. Only a little of this first hymnal survives.

Another important hymnbook is the Ausbund. Its first appearance was in Switzerland in 1570. The title of this book is also long and impressive:

Ausbund, Das ist: Etliche schoene Christliche Lieder wie sie in dem Gefaengnis zu Passau in dem Schloss von den Schweizer-Bruedern und von andern rechtglaubigen Christen hin und her gedichtet worden.⁶²

What this title states about the hin und her gedichtet has always applied to the use of hymns among Mennonites. Their hymns emerged from their experiences.

At least twelve editions of the Ausbund have been printed in Europe, the last one in Basel, 1838. Only the South Germans and Swiss used it in Europe

⁶⁰Hostetler, op. cit., p. xxx.

⁶¹Ibid., p. xxx.

⁶²Ibid., p. xxx.

and later in America. Here it has been reprinted and is still used in Amish churches.⁶³

Several songs in the Ausbund were written by "Anabaptists of Switzerland and Southern Germany, who chose rather to die than to deny the truth which they had accepted as the truth of God."⁶⁴

The Anabaptists were not the only ones to write songs about the imprisonment and execution of their brethren in the faith. Luther also wrote a ballad about the burning of two former Augustinian monks at Brussels, who were executed because of their Christian faith, on July 1, 1523. Martyr hymns became popular. They reverberated the faiths of those languishing in prisons, burning on the stake, executed on the block, or tied up in sacks and thrown into the water. These people went to their deaths singing to God. Their last words are still sung in the Mennonite churches.

Felix Manz (1490-1527) who possessed a good knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, served as "reader" in early Anabaptist Bible study.⁶⁵ Bullinger said that he and other Anabaptists in Switzerland were executed because "they would

⁶³ Ibid., p. xxx.

⁶⁴ Henry S. Burrage, Baptist Hymn Writers and Their Hymns (Portland, Maine: Brown Thurston & Company, c.1886), p. 1.

⁶⁵ John Horsch, Mennonites in Europe (2nd edition; Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1950), p. 32.

say only what they desired to say, and not what they should say."⁶⁶ Manz when led to the place where he was thrown into the Limmat River, "praised God with a loud voice, 'Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.'⁶⁷ Manz was the author of hymn number six in the Ausbund, the Swiss Brethren hymn-book of 1564. The hymn has eighteen stanzas of seven lines each. The opening lines are:

Mit lust so will ich singen
 Mein Hertz frut sich in Gott,
 Der mir vil kinst thut bringen,
 Das ich entrinn dem Todt
 Der ewiglich nimmet kein endt.
 Ich preiss dich Christ von Himmel,
 Der mir mein kummer wendt.⁶⁸

Michael Sattler (1495-1527) and his wife were most brutally killed for their faith. Sattler had been a monk but, nauseated by the sinful living of monks, studied the Word of God, was converted and married.⁶⁹ He wrote the seventh hymn in the Ausbund. In it we have the spirit of the martyr and the last exhortation of one dying for his faith.

Wann man euch nun laestert und schmaecht,
 Meinethalben ferfolgt und schlaegt,
 Seyd froh, dann sihe euer lohn,
 Ist euch bereit in Himmels Thron.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

⁶⁷ Wenger, op. cit., p. 29.

⁶⁸ Burrage, op. cit., p. 4.

⁶⁹ Wenger, op. cit., p. 33.

Doch foercht euch nicht von solchem mann,
 Der nur den leib getoedten kan:
 Sonder foercht mehr den truen God
 Der beydes zu verdammen hat.

O Christe hilf du deinem volck,
 Welchs dir in aller treu nachfolgt,
 Dass es durch deinen bittern Todt,
 Erloeset wird auss aller Noht.⁷⁰

George Wagner, executed some time in 1527, lifted his eyes while at the stake and said: "Father, my Father, there is much in the world that is dear to me, my wife, my children, my life. But dearer than wife, children and life art thou, my Father! . . ." Later he said, "I am ready; I know what I am doing. . . . Then joyfully he turned to his executioners and welcomed the flames. . . ." ⁷¹ He wrote hymn number thirty-four in the Ausbund. It is still sung in the Amish churches. The first stanza indicates the praise and courage with which he faced his death.

Den Vatter wolln wir loben
 Der uns erloeset hat,
 Im Himmel hoch dort oben,
 Durch seines Sohnes Todt,
 Welcher er hat gegeben
 Zu versoehenen unser Suend,
 Dass wir im Glauben leben,
 Als sein gehorsam Kind.⁷²

Carius Binder with thirty-eight others on October 25, 1527, was shut up in a house which was set on fire. All of

⁷⁰ Burrage, op. cit., p. 5.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷² Ibid., p. 6.

them perished in the flames. His hymn is number thirty-five in the Ausbund. The first two lines show us how grateful he was in the sight of death. Anabaptists still find encouragement in singing this song.

Wir dancken Gott von Hertzzen
Der vaetterlichen Treu.⁷³

Leonhart Schlemmer was a prominent Anabaptist in Upper Austria. He was a monk and came from a good family. He preached and baptized. His influence had gone far before he was apprehended by the authorities who were always on the alert for those who baptized adults. Betrayed by a Franciscan monk, he was beheaded on January 14, 1528. His song, number thirty-one in the Ausbund says:

Dein heilige Statt hond sie zerstoert,
Dein Altar umgegraven,
Derzu auch deine Knecht ermoerdet
Wo sies ergriffen haben.
Nur wir allein, dein Haeufflein klein,
Sind wenig ueberblieben,
Mit schmach und schand, durch all Land
Verjaget und vertrieben.⁷⁴

Hans Schlaffer, a priest in the Roman Church from 1511 to 1526, joined the Anabaptists. He was put to death in 1528 with twenty other Anabaptists. He was the author of two hymns, the first being number thirty-two in the Ausbund. The first begins:

⁷³ Ibid., p. 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

Ungnad begehrt ich nicht von dir.
 O Gott! wollst mir
 Mein Sünde nicht zumessen,
 Die weil dieselben Christus hat
 Genug erstatt,
 Eh dann ich bin gewesen,
 Ein Feind war ich,
 Du liebtest mich,
 Und nahmst mich an
 Zu Gnaden schon,
 Gabst mir zu gut
 Deins Sohnes Blut,
 Welchs mich von suend und tod erloesen thut.⁷⁵

This hymn is very typical of the evangelical Mennonite expression. The stress is laid on the love of God while we were yet sinners and the redemption through His blood from the terrible conflict within man experienced through the merciless accusations of the law.

John Leopold, when told that he would be executed by the sword to pass from life to death on April 25, 1528, replied: "No, gentlemen of Augsburg, but, if God will, from death to life." His hymn, number thirty-nine in the Ausbund reads as follows:

Mein Gott dich will ich loben,
 In meiner letsten Stund,
 Im Himmel hoch dort oben
 Mit Hertzzen und mit Mund.
 O Herr du bist der rechte zart,
 Staerck du mir meinen Glauben,
 Yetzt muss ich auff die fahrt.

Mein Geist und auch mein Seele
 Befehl ich in dein Haend.
 Hilff mir auss alle Quele.
 Ach Gott von mir nicht wend,
 Nimm meinem Fleisch sein grosse Krafft

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

Das ich moeg ueberwinden,
In dir werden sieghafft.

His second hymn starts, "Herr Vater, mein eviger gott."⁷⁶

Hans Hut, was an Austrian, baptized in Augsburg by Hans Denk. He got into the Muenster group without sharing their objectives of obtaining civil rule. In an attempt to escape from prison in 1528 he lost his life. While in prison at Augsburg he wrote a hymn which the Amish still sing in their worship services:

Drum hat Gott seinen Sohn gesandt,
Der uns die Warheit macht bekandt
Und auch den weg zum leben:
So wir darnach thun streben,
Sein Geist will er uns geben.

Der zeigt uns an die Heilig Schrift,
Drinn Got sein Testament gestiftt,
In seinem Sohn so reiche,
In aller welt zugleiche,
Niemand drum von ihm weiche.

Den Todt er ueberwunden hat,
Ein rechter mensch und wahrer Gott,
Mit Krafft hat ers beweiiset,
Mit warheit uns gespeiset,
Darum wird er gepreiset.⁷⁷

Ludwig Hetzer took part in the second discussion with Zwingli in Zuerich in 1525. When banished from Zurich, he went to Augsburg and from there to Basel. His trial was on February 3, 1529. The charge against him was adultery. He was beheaded at Constance. Later writers said that the

⁷⁶ Burrage, op. cit., p. 11.

⁷⁷ Burrage, op. cit., p. 12.

accusation was unproved and unprovable. Before putting his head on the block, he translated into German the twenty-fifth Psalm and prayed the Lord's Prayer. While still in prison he made it resound with psalms and hymns. One of his hymns is based on the thirty-seventh Psalm and contains twenty-three stanzas of eight lines each.

Erzuern dich nit, O frommer Christ,
 Vorm neyd thue dich behuten!
 Ob schon der gottloss reicher ist,
 So hilfft doch nit sein wueten;
 Mit beyn und haut gleich wie daz kraut
 Wuert er im kurtz abghaven,
 Sein gwalt und reich ist eben gleich
 Dem grass auff gruener awen.

Another of his hymns for the strengthening and establishing of faith is based on Romans 5:4:

Mark auf, O Welt, mit deiner Pracht
 Kehr ab von deinem Leben,
 Bedenk den Tod und Gottes Macht,
 Schau, was er dir will geben.
 Thust du hie Buss,
 Fogst Christus' Fuss
 Er wird dich nicht verdammen;
 Das ewig Reich
 Wirst haben gleich
 Mit Jesus Christo, Amen.⁷⁸

George Blaurock (1480-1529) received his name during the disputations with the Zeinglians in Zuerich. He was a strong man and sometimes a little uncouth in his way of making his convictions known. He travelled extensively and baptized many. In 1529 he, with his co-worker, John Langegger, was

⁷⁸ Burrage, op. cit., p. 17.

burned to death as a heretic.⁷⁹ In one of his hymns, number thirty-five in the Ausbund, he writes:

Wie er dann selbst gelitten hat,
 Als er am Creutz gehangen,
 Also es jetzt den frommen gaht,
 Sie leiden grossen zwangen.⁸⁰

Martin Maler and six others were executed in Swabia in 1531. At the place of execution Maler commended himself and his associates to God, his King, pleading that he would grant them a blessed end and that he would care for the little flock left behind. His hymn says:

Mit Freuden will ich singen,
 Loben den hoechsten Got.

Another hymn that came into use at this time was

Luther's

Aus tiefster Noht schrey ich zu dir;
 Ach Gott, erhoer mein rueffen.⁸¹

This hymn was translated into the Dutch. Later it got to Prussia and Russia. It seems to have been a very popular hymn and was taken wherever the Mennonites went. Even to this day Mennonite children learn it early in life.

Peter Reidemann died when fifty in 1556. He travelled much and got the name Peter of Gemunden, a place about two hundred miles south-east of Munich. Much of his life he spent in prison. He was the author of numerous works and

⁸⁰ Burrage, op. cit., p. 18.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 19.

and many excellent hymns. Number two in the Ausbund says:

Wir glauben all an einen Gott,
Und lieben ihn von Hertenzen,

In the same book number thirty-seven is his (wrongly ascribed to Langemantel) and has sixteen stanzas. The twelfth goes like this:

Las uns Herr nicht beflecken
Die suend noch einign Schuld,
Und nimm vom Fleisch den Schrecken
Das uns abschrecken wolt,
Auch in deim Werck uns halten auff,
Das wir, wann man uns fordern solt,
Nicht erligen in Streit.⁸²

There are also hymns of martyrs not known by name.

Number ninety-seven is one of them. The first part says:

Wolauff, Wolauff, du Gotts Gemein,
Heilig un rein,
In diesen letzten Zeiten,
Die du eim Mann erwehlet bist,
Heist Jesus Christ,
Thu dich ihm zubereiten.
Leg an dein Zier
Dann er kommt schier,
Darum bereit,
Das Hochzeit Kleid,
Dann er wird schon,
Die Hochzeit hon,
Dich evig nit mehr von ihm lohn.⁸³

All these hymns express what Mennonites feel. Many of the younger people, who have not been acquainted with the history of the worship material, have been too far removed from the past to feel the depth of religious fervor which

⁸² Burrage, op. cit., p. 19.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 21.

those had who gave expression to the Mennonite faith. Mennonites, who have not been under the influence of foreign religions, worship not in the ornaments of the world. As they say, they are with the Lord, alone. This is typical Mennonite separation in preparation for His appearing. This is the spirit in their assemblies.

In 1780 we have the first appearance of the Gesangbuch. About this N.P. Springer from the Mennonite Historical Society writes:

The Geistreiches Gesangbuch, worin nebst den Psalmen Davids eine Sammlung auserlesener alter und neuer Lieder zu finden ist, zur allgemeinen Erbauung herausgegeben, Koenigsberg, 1767, was compiled and published by West Prussian Mennonites at the time they switched from the Dutch to the German language. By 1803 the title had changed to Gesangbuch worin eine Sammlung alter und neuer Lieder zum Gottesdienstlichen Gebrauch und allgemeinen Erbauung und zum Lobe Gottes, Elkhart, Ind., 1889. It ran through at least eleven editions in West Prussia, at least six in Russia, ten or more for the Mennonites in Canada, and five for the Old Colony Mennonite in Mexico, who are still using it.⁸⁴

The first Mennonite hymnbook printed in America in 1803 was Das Kleine Geistlich Harfe der Kinder Zions. It was the official hymnbook of the Franconia Conference of Mennonites. Seven editions were printed, the last in Elkhart, Indiana, 1904. The Unpartheyisches Gesangbuch passed through twenty

⁸⁴ N. P. Springer, "Comments on Gesang-Buch in welchem eine Sammlung gestreicher Lieder befindlich." Zur allgemeinen Erbauung und zum Lobe Gottes hereausgegeben (Goshen, Indiana: Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College, 1957), p. 3.

editions by the year 1942. From the fourth edition on, this book was called Harmonia Sacra. In 1847 the Virginia Mennonite Hymnal, A Collection of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs was published. This was followed in 1902 by the book which still is a favorite with the main body of American Mennonites, Church and Sunday School Hymnal. A supplement was added to this hymnal in 1911. One of the best Mennonite hymnals is the Church Hymnal, Mennonite, published in 1927. It contains less than twenty hymns by Mennonite authors.⁸⁵

In 1890 another much needed hymnbook appeared which had the title Gesangbuch mit Noten, Herausgegeben von der allgemeinen Konferenz der Mennoniten von Nord-America, Berne, Indiana. This book passed through fifteen editions. The last came out in 1936. It was the official hymnbook of the General Conference of Mennonites. Other congregations and conferences who had no hymnbook of their own also used it widely. This conference has had three subsequent English hymnbooks.

The Mennonite Hymnal, A Blending of Many Voices was published at Berne, Indiana, in 1894. In 1927 appeared The Mennonite Hymn Book. In 1940 also at Berne The Mennonite Hymnary was published. This book is now officially used by this conference and others. It is already in its sixth edition. Like every modern hymnal, regardless of the denominational interest, it reaches across all denominational

⁸⁵Wenger, op. cit., p. 135.

barriers and makes use of the hymns of widely divergent Christian groups.⁸⁶

The Mennonite churches that used the Gesangbuch had, and still have where it is used, a most unique way of directing the singing. They had about one precentor to every fifty worshipers. In order to cater to the various interests, the number of precentors was increased. This made it possible to sing a wider range of songs. Only the precentors gave out songs. They had no song board in front nor did they use bulletins to set forth the order of service. The precentors gave out the songs and led in their singing. The melodies they learned from a 132-page Choralbuch. The Erster Theil of this book consisted of 163 melodies and the title page read, Enthaltend saemmtlich Melodien zu den Liedern des mennonitischen Kirchengesangbuches.⁸⁷ The Zweiter Theil consisted of 112 melodies and was for the church, school and home worship services. It included newer melodies. The songs were gathered and the melodies transcribed from notes to numbers by H. Franz, Russia, in 1837.

He remarks that it was high time that the melodies be written down and put into the hands of songleaders and schools because singing only by ear had distorted many tunes. He

⁸⁶ Hostettler, op. cit., pp. xxxii-xxxv.

⁸⁷ H. Franz, Choralbuch (Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonite Publishing Co., 1918), p. 1.

writes:

Im Jahre 1837 ordnete ich bereits saemtliche Lieder unseres Kirchengesangbuches nach dem Vermasse und sammelte, in Gemeinschaft eines theuern Freundes und Kenners des geistlichen Gesangs die dazu erforderlichen Melodieen, welche damals alle nur einstimmig aufgesetzt wurden. Seit jener Zeit hat das . . . Choralbuch . . . in kirchlichen Versammlungen ein nach diesem Charalbucho geordneter und wohlklingender Gesang hergestellt. . . . Es ist ein besserer Unterricht, die Toene durch Ziffern in unsere Schulen . . . einzufuehren.⁸⁸

Following these words the author gives thirteen points along which the number system can be easily translated from notes. He remarked too, that in places he changed the melodies a little to make them more singable. It is for this reason that Mennonite chorales are sung a little differently than, for instance, the Lutheran. Since the conservative churches do not have organs or pianos to accompany the singing, the congregation depends on the precentor. This type of church singing has been abandoned in about ninety per cent of all American Mennonite worship services. The Old Colony and Sommerfelder branches in Canada and Mexico still carry on in this way. In the other Mennonite services, organs, pianos and trained directors have displaced this system. The Russian immigrants of 1924 and later brought with them songbooks using numbers instead of notes. It is very likely that they still use this system in Russia. By 1918 the Choralbuch had gone through three editions.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. iv.

Those churches which did not use the Choralbuch method used other books with notes. With the coming of the Gesangbuch mit Noten, in 1890, the number system and Gesangbuch songs were largely displaced by more modern ways. The songs were taken out of various books such as: Die Frohe Botschaft in Liedern - meist aus englischen Quellen in's Deutsche uebertragen von Ernst Gebhardt, Verfasser der Zions-Perlenchoere. Dreizeigste Auflage. Basel, Verlag von G. F. Spittler. Saenger-Bote von Aron G. Sawatzky Ein Liederbuch fuer Kirche und Haus, Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, Hillsboro, Kansas. This went through four editions and was widely used by the Mennonite Brethren churches. The Evangeliums-Lieder No. 1 und 2, Chicago: Biglow and Main Company. This book is very widely used and still is the usual songbook where they have not their own and still use German. Now all Mennonite conferences have their own, except the smaller ones which use books to suit them, with notes and directed by instruments or competent directors. Various books came from the fundamental branches of the Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists and others.

Present day interest in Mennonite hymnody is well expressed by the editors of the Mennonite Hymnary. They say:

Standard hymns have been selected from ancient and modern sources. . . . A considerable number were never published before in any Mennonite hymnal. Some of the tunes are . . . new. . . . Chorales . . . have come down to us from the land of Luther and our forefathers and are part of our religious heritage. In all of our hymnody is nothing finer than these.

Then they mention that they include the Metrical Psalm, a good selection of children's hymns and several "Amens." Also the Church Year receives attention because of renewed interest among Mennonites. A special feature of the book is a portion devoted to the Gospel Song, which has a tendency in Mennonite worship services to replace the older proven songs, hymns and chorals. They go on to say that the Gospel Songs have

been severely criticized by some and gallantly defended by others. . . .

The best of these songs have a legitimate place. . . . The songs are well adapted for special types of services, particularly revival meetings and other informal meetings. . . . We trust that no congregation will confine its singing to the Gospel songs to the neglect of the standard hymns. . . . 89

The words of the editors indicate the changes that are evident everywhere in the Mennonite worship services. In order to keep them more Mennonite, a reaction has come in the production of the different conferences' hymnbooks, of which all, except the so-called Evangelical Mennonites, now have their own.

In conclusion a word should also be added about the recent emphasis in youth and choir music among Mennonite churches. Youth programs of all kinds with church choir

⁸⁹ Walter H. Hohmann, Lester Hostetler, editors, The Mennonite Hymnary (Berne, Indiana: Published by the Board of Publication of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, Mennonite Book Concern, c. 1940), pp. v-vii.

renditions are very popular and often determine much the formation of worship services. Several times a year musical recitals and choir rehearsals on a larger scale take place. The Canadian Mennonites have special travelling directors, competent and well accepted. The most noted of these is Dr. K. H. Neufeld, who died January 13, 1957. The Mennonite Weekly Review wrote of him:

Dr. Neufeld was widely known for his composition of sacred music including chorales, cantatas and hymns. His four cantatas are: "To Youth"; "Zion, City of God"; "God in Nature"; and "At the Sea Shore."⁹⁰

Habit of Worship

The Mennonites teach that "everyone who unites with the church should make it at once a practice of attending every service. . . ." ⁹¹ Attending places of amusement is discouraged and in places disciplined. Seeing fellowship and variation is sought in church functions which are held in the churches and homes. Genuine Mennonite young people do not look for their life's partners in dance halls or other places of amusement. As a peaceful people their aim is "being at ease and harmony" with those who worship God in sincerity. Parents seek to bequeath their children with the knowledge that "a man's soul

⁹⁰"Well-known Musician Dies," Mennonite Weekly Review (January 24, 1957), p. 3, col. 1.

⁹¹John L. Horst, editor, Instruction to Beginners in the Christian Life (4th edition; Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1947), p. 96.

is at home with other souls in God because in private, his soul has felt at home with Him."⁹² As children they are taught to worship in an atmosphere of the home where often not much has to be said. In their parents' simple way of life they have evidence of their Father in heaven. "Children are much more sensitive to atmosphere than to words."⁹³ They speak with Goldsworthy:

I must acknowledge that my first experience of personal grew out of the bed-time prayers which my mother first helped me to say and from the grace at table which my father said at every meal. Without a basis in such early habits my ideals of worship may never have weathered the storms of later experience.⁹⁴

Such atmosphere in the home easily brings about what Elizabeth M. Manwell and Sophia L. Fahs say:

. . . children read a message out of the coming spring, bright sunlight, bright flowers, the song of birds, a gurgling, splashing brook, a blustering wind, or the scurrying of little woods animals. . . .⁹⁵

Home and open air experiences of this kind naturally lead to higher worship levels. Every truly Mennonite mother teaches her children to seek a natural cosmic happiness. Most

⁹² Edwin A. Goldsworthy, Plain Thoughts on Worship (New York: Willet, Clark & Company, c.1936), p. 4.

⁹³ Lois E. LeBar, Children in the Bible School (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, c.1952), p. 297.

⁹⁴ Goldsworthy, op. cit., p. ix.

⁹⁵ Elizabeth M. Manwell and Sophia L. Fahs, Consider the Children--How They Grow (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950), p. 27.

of the earlier Mennonites were rural people. It was their aim to teach from the first principles as nature always does when given an opportunity. This loftiness Strodach felt when he said:

Method may become uninteresting and lifeless; practice may become mere formality and rote. But these dangers appear only where the individual is barren of the fruits of personal communion and where the inspiration of the worshiping Church, that countless host of the ages, is not an added possession and joy to the individual worshiper. Singing the same canticles, praying the same prayers, participating in the same acts the fathers did, and their fathers, and theirs,--on back into the dim past,--this is mighty testimony to the union, the oneness of the Ever-living church abiding in her Ever-living Lord.⁹⁶

Mennonites learned to worship in "truth and spirit" through persecution. Hundreds died for their convictions. During the last World Wars, once, more, some of these lessons became very real to them. In such times worship practice must be in complete harmony with religious convictions. Worship is a habit, but it also has a purpose. We again quote Goldsworthy:

the purpose of worshiping God is to evaluate his giving and his calling as highest facts in human experience. . . . The hard knocks of life are likely to drive men away from God if their conception of worship is faulty, for they will come to regard God as unfaithful. But men who have grasped the true meaning and value of worship will grow closer to God year after year.⁹⁷

Mennonite children are taught to pray. Most churches

⁹⁶ Strodach, op. cit., p. 27.

⁹⁷ Goldsworthy, op. cit., p. 13.

have a mid-week prayer service where all children are taught to pray their own prayers. All of them know the Lord's prayer, but they are not taught to pray it. This is a lack, it seems. However, the mid-week or some other night set aside for prayer service in the church,

has been the center of Church devotions for generations. In former years, nearly every Christian Church had its midweek service where Christian people gathered, from week to week, to fellowship with one another and with God. The home had its family altar where the Bible was daily read and prayers offered. Children, also, were taught to pray at mother's knee. Prayer, in those days, was considered an essential part of a man's devotion and Christian experience.⁹⁸

In Mennonite churches both men and women are constantly admonished to attend church regularly with their children. In the services one finds as many men as women. The men always went to church and saw no serious reason for dropping out. This is an inbred habit. It makes for habitual church-going, and families cultivate the duty of being active members of the flock. The children see their duty toward others. Later on in their youth program this is highly developed in their world-wide peace and aid program through voluntary service and Mennonite Central Committee activities.

In these service projects Mennonite young people are given opportunity to find pleasure and satisfaction. Several denominations do not permit TV and some not even radios.

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Edmund E. Prescott, The New Midweek Service (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, c.1929), p. 11.

True pleasure for the soul is found in worship. In the majority of Mennonite homes it is still a simple and rural worship. The spirit is ideally portrayed in Millet's picture, "The Angelus."

Families learn to participate in singing and in prayers. Having no musical instruments in their churches creates self-reliance in singing. The calm, quiet and well-ordered dignity of the worshiper in contact with the living Spirit is an inherited practice. A feeling of love and trust in God is created.⁹⁹

Mennonites aim to expand their concept of contact with the living God in worship by what is involved in the term Gottesdienst. Menno Simons was not satisfied with a mere basking in His presence and lifting up the soul to Him. He said:

All those who are born of God, who are giffen with the Spirit of the Lord, and who, according to the Scriptures, are called into one body to love in Christ Jesus, are prepared by such love to serve their neighbors, not only with money and goods, but also after the example of their Lord and Head, Jesus Christ, in an evangelical manner with life and blood. . . . The ultimate test of discipleship is the bringing of the whole life under the lordship of Christ . . . which means overcoming evil with love and avoiding violence. . . .¹⁰⁰

The cardinal principles taught by the Mennonites in this

⁹⁹ Goldsworthy, op. cit., pp. 22-25.

¹⁰⁰ Mennonite Central Committee, Twenty-five Years The Story of the M. C. C. 1920-1945 (Akron, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Central Committee, 1945), p. 4.

connection are sobriety, sincerity, frugality, honesty, humility, repentance and salvation. These remain and assert themselves over and over again.

In our day too little is known about the Mennonite worship and the confession of faith at the bottom of it. Perhaps most to blame are the Mennonites themselves. They lived religiously as die Stillen im Lande, and for fear of becoming "worldly" higher education was often frowned upon. Menno Simons (1497-1561) and others soon after him wrote extensively in the sixteenth century. Much of his material is still very useful and of good quality. From his day to the twentieth century the Mennonites did not give much attention to writing. In most libraries we note a dearth of material on Mennonites and especially pertaining to their worship. As aims of schools and Conferences are more and more realized, this shortage should in coming years be overcome at least partially.

Their Way of Life

Co-operation

A cardinal point with members of the Mennonite Church is simplicity.

This applies to the entire life of the Christian. They hold that the Christian ought to live a simple life, avoiding the luxuries and selfish indulgence of the rich. . . . Simplicity is also applied to worship. The . . . meeting-house is a plain structure . . . and

the service is simple and dignified, not demonstrative or emotional. . . . 101

This simplicity leads to a greater trust in God. This like-mindedness in simple dependence on God's help they want the world to know. They aim to fashion their worship services so that this will be done. Instead of outward reliance on emotional expression, they aim to reveal inward strength. One of the conference papers says:

With such a common heritage Mennonites should feel increasingly the trust which God has in them. They should strive to make their testimony to the world more effective by closer cooperation wherever this is possible. 102

Belonging

The sense of belonging is strong among Mennonites. Families are fairly large and are used to being separated from non-Mennonites. Children learn to rely on themselves through the home and the church. The outstanding principals in worship are people, not things. These people come from their own homes, and without them the church is rather bare. This sense of belonging makes for "emotional security . . .

101 John Christian Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1949), pp. 113-14.

102 The Church Unity Committee of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, Our Church (North Newton, Kansas: Bethel College Press, 1942), p. 17.

through even when their immediate belonging is not to one of their churches.

The Christ-centered Services

It is the aim of the Mennonites to rally around Christ in their services. In their material aid program every article bears a little tag which has on it the words, "in the name of Christ." This brings stewardship right home to every worshiper. In their baptismal instruction classes they teach that

we must remember our responsibility of stewardship, in which we are to honor the Lord with our substance. And unless we in some way remember and honor Christ in these gatherings, our celebration is no different than that of others.¹⁰⁵

In connection with the observation of special days they are careful to give all glory to God. For a long time many churches did not have special thanksgiving days; they said that they were to be thankful every day. They said:

Thanksgiving is allowed to degenerate as a religious festival until it signifies to many children merely the eating of an elaborate turkey dinner at home with the giving of some canned vegetables to the poor.¹⁰⁶

Their instruction book says that "the Christian is to do nothing apart from Christ."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ "Unit XII, Learning About God," Program Builder, VII, (April-June 1951), 255.

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth M. Manwell and Sophie L. Fahs, op. cit., pp. 29-60.

¹⁰⁷ Program Builder, op. cit., p. 254.

In their worship services they emphasize "singleness of heart." The world cannot be the center in a person's life when Christ is. There is worldly-mindedness in their churches the same as in other churches. The difference is that they preach against it much more. They come close to what Kelpius expresses:

Worship follows the inclination of the heart, and is equal with it, we reasonably worship indeed, what we love in the highest degree. Now when we love God above all, we worship Him most truly. We cannot worship God and the world.¹⁰⁸

In their worship services every Mennonite youth often hears the verses of Scripture: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."¹⁰⁹

Community consciousness

A Christ-centered worship practiced by a non-conforming and separated people makes for close communities. People believing the same lean on each other rather than on the world for what they may learn. It is not an exclusiveness towards people but towards ways. They do not want to go the way of the world. "Church and community are close, at times they even substitute for each other. . . . The modern pagan

¹⁰⁸ Kelpius, op. cit., p. 122.

¹⁰⁹ Matthew 6:24

world. . . . has also been all too glad to communicate religion to . . . worship."¹¹⁰ He goes on to point out that the people of the world attend church but remain estranged from their fellowmen. They worship God in an elaborate church building and forget that God is not interested in the building but in how we treat our neighbor. It is not enough to worship God one hour a week in the church and spend almost all our goods and time of self. Our genuine interest in our fellowmen must be made manifest first in our own community and then reach out to the rest of the world.

In the concept of brotherhood the Mennonites prefer to use the German word Gemeinde according to Rom. 12; I cor. 12; and Ephesians 4. Those belonging together are those who have repented of their sins and have been baptized and joined wholeheartedly in fellowship.¹¹¹

To the concept of the temple of the Holy Ghost being in the believers we can say that

The presence of God in the church hallows the fellowship of beings, reminds them of their holy calling, rekindles the fires of flaming love and knits hearts together in the bonds of peace.¹¹²

They are builded together for the habitation of the Holy Spirit, they go beyond the individual, it is community wide.

¹¹⁰Harold S. Bender, "Conception of the Church" in Mennonite Quarterly Review, XIX (April, 1945), 90.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 90.

¹¹²Bender, op. cit., p. 92.

Consciousness of Inclusiveness

The fellowship in worship, in its true sense, however limited in origin, will breed the desire to include. Lotz says:

The experience of fellowship, when it is truly Christian, has been the quality of inclusiveness. The sense of belonging to the whole family of God and this eagerness to join hands with others in a comradeship, beyond denominational lines, racial and national boundaries is characteristic. . . . 113

True leadership will have a Weltanschauung that creates vision for greater service. Mennonites have their relief and refugee workers distributed all over the world. In assuming responsibility for the welfare of others they include everyone. There is a striking quality of responsibility that every individual is his brother's keeper. There is no level of "reverends" and another for lay people. "Pulpit and pew must not separate, they must exchange."¹¹⁴ They have large meat-canning and clothes-preparing bees, where minister and member work alike at the task. These goods are sent to their workers on the different fields for distribution. This is their Gottesdienst.

¹¹³ Philip Henry Lotz, editor, Orientation in Religious Education (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1950), p. 298.

¹¹⁴ Evelyn Underhill, Worship (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), p. vii.

Outside Influences

Introduction

The Mennonite churches have been exposed to powerful outside influences. The result has been that they have lost some of their peculiarities, which soon became evident in their worship services. This affected the foundation of their faith, which is largely based on the Sermon on the Mount with its ideal practices.

Severe persecution was the lot of the Anabaptists from the very beginning. The only weapon against it was withdrawal from the "world." They were thankful when they were permitted to worship with their families in peace and in a very simple way. It did not pay to invest in elaborately constructed churches; they never knew how long they would be tolerated in one place. Like almost all early Reformers, they often had to flee to save their lives.

This early practice of separation is still strong in America. When such barriers as the German language, solid group settlements, geographical and cultural isolation, prohibition of intermarriage, which have prevented this penetration in varying degrees for all groups,¹¹⁵

break down, outside influences come in. The reasons in particular for such break-down the Mennonites see in their

¹¹⁵ Harold S. Bender, "Outside Influences of Mennonite Thought," Mennonite Life, X (January, 1955), 46.

personal and neighborly contacts . . . through literature, especially as lesson helps, Sunday School periodicals, devotional books by the thousands, Bible Institutes periodicals . . . the omnipresent radio with its popular religious programs of varying types . . . non-Mennonite schools . . . perhaps to be most influential, the non-Mennonite Biblical institutes and theological schools . . . interdenominational Bible conferences . . . interdenominational co-operative endeavors, such as Sunday School conferences and evangelistic campaigns.¹¹⁶

At present all Mennonite worship services, other than the eastern more conservative conferences, are much affected by these influences.

It is wrong to conclude that such new views are always detrimental. In 1860 in Russia the great awakening among the Mennonites came from outside. Every group left to itself too long is liable to become complacent, self-sufficient and self-satisfied. It is a New Testament axiom for a church that wants to remain alive to reach out, have a give and take exchange. John R. Mumma says: "The adversely affecting current forces of the Mennonite community are materialism, modern education, urbanization, secularization and religious tolerance."¹¹⁷ These bring in new ideas in worship, at first perhaps thoughtlessly, but with time they tell.

The areas in which this change shows up are several.

¹¹⁶ Bender, op. cit., p. 46.

¹¹⁷ John R. Mumma, "Mennonite Way of Life," Mennonite Quarterly Review, XIX (April, 1945) 101.

On Biblicism

The pure

Biblicistic type of thought and attitude is pushed back by a more consciously intellectual, theologizing, purposeful one. . . . This has brought in a change in type of piety in some quarters to a more subjectivistic, emotional, introspective and even mystical type.¹¹⁸

The larger families going to church to listen to what the Bible has to teach are in danger of narrowing down to a few adults in the family attending the worship services, to listen to new developments in the political and theological world. If too involved, the children may have their own service where they can do more as they please. Instead of being trained for worship service they do not attend. Instead of telling the children at Christmas that the Son of God was born, they may be told that "the kindest man that ever lived was born . . . with no resurrection and that God gave His only begotten Son."¹¹⁹

The following account, written by a Mennonite minister, brings out the point:

Thirty-five years ago we had little difficulty in holding our young people. The church was the center of attraction for young and old. The youth were indoctrinated in Mennonite faith and practise. Comparatively few married out of the church. This had its advantages but

¹¹⁸ Bender, op. cit., p. 47.

¹¹⁹ Elizabeth M. Manwell and Sophia L. Fahs, Consider the Children--How They Grow (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), Chap. V.

but also its disadvantages. Holding Mennonite tradition was quite easy, but it made for seclusion and resulted in slow growth.

This is no longer the general practice. Our young people get acquainted . . . lack definite convictions . . . marry into churches not evangelical in faith. . . . We stress experience and ignore ritualism almost entirely. They stress ritualism and ignore experience. It involves . . . prayer, forgiveness and future life. How could a Mennonite reject the blessed hope of the church . . . and accept purgatory in its place?

There is . . . a chasm between evangelical Mennonites and formal and modernistic groups, and one with an experience of regeneration and a spirit-filled life should think. . . . If you want your boy or girl to keep the faith of their fathers, it is essential that the same type of school or college be chosen. . . .¹²⁰

On Singing

Another influence that is not desirable is "hill-billyism," which is an attempt to make the Christian faith acceptable to the common people in the cultural and aesthetic idiom of the man on the street.¹²¹ It is a half-baked religious affair, not bearing the mark of sincerity, simplicity and above all reverence, as all true worship does. It does not have the cutting-edge of a Holy Spirit directed worship service but a pounding-edge of a spirited service. We hear in this connection expressions like "Gospel ballad

¹²⁰ E. G. Steiner, "Are We Slipping," The Christian Ministry, IV (July-September, 1951), 144.

¹²¹ A. W. Tozer, editor of the Alliance Weekly, "Hillbillyism--the Blight in Religion," Youth's Christian Companion, XXXVI No. 30 (July 24, 1955), 237.

singing," "talk-down-to-the-masses preachin' and prophesyin' for laughs." Here is what the "Mennonite Youth Christian Companion," writes to the young readers:

The whole New Testament breathes the same spirit. The apostles never descended to the people; they so preached as to bring the people up to Christian standards. Paul sewed tents to pay expenses, but he never clowned to draw crowds.

He became all things to all men but he never lost the serious, deep, earnest tone from his message and deportment.

It is significant also that the two greatest movements within the church since Pentecost, sixteenth century Reformation and the Wesleyan revival, were characterized by New Testament sobriety and sincerity. They both reached to the roots of society and touched the masses of the people; yet they never descended to be common or to pander to carnal flesh. The quality of their preaching was lofty, serious, and dignified, and their singing was the same. The Lutheran hymns stand today among the greatest treasures of the church, and the Wesleyan hymns are no less beautiful. The first Methodist churches in America were often composed of farmers, woodsmen, hunters, and hill men of various kinds, but their hymnbooks were of the loftiest imaginable. . . . 122

On Preaching and Religious Deportment

The author of the above goes on to say that "hillbillyism" has affected . . . to a great extent the whole quality of the preaching and of the religious deportment . . . "123 This is in application to the musical instruments used and the way that people are goaded into what is called "singing."

¹²²Tozer, op. cit., p. 238.

¹²³Ibid.

Almost all Mennonite churches take a definite stand against such manner of worship. In the more conservative churches this type of worship is violently out of keeping with the Mennonite heritage and tradition, and in the more free churches it has no favor either. Through their contacts with others, however, influence does creep in.

On Prayer

Another area where the worship service is influenced is in prayer.

It seems that silent prayer was the general practice in the Mennonite Church until about 1723. The congregation would kneel in silent devotion until the minister arose. . . . Audible prayer came into use with the Waterland Mennonites through Hans de Ries in 1610. His prayers were so powerful and well worded that they became the nucleus of the first prayer book. Since then others have been added and these incorporated in a "Confession of Faith". . . . They were used more widely until in 1664 they were translated into German.

This change to the German was in some areas difficult and to overcome this difficulty the custom of using extemporaneous prayers arose. The same thing happened when the change from German to English was made. The leaders formed their own prayers. Since their familiarity with liturgical prayers in English was insufficient to do it well they got prayers that were not very expressive. Another reason for extemporaneous praying was to get away from threadbare ritualistic reading of ready-made prayers. Today, we are at the same place our forefathers were, with our stereotyped, mechanical meaningless and badly said extemporaneous prayers. . . . 124

¹²⁴ Elvin V. Snyder, "Worship," The Christian Ministry, V (January-March, 1952), 21-22.

Elvin V. Snyder, writing the above, offers the way out of this very extemporaneous and meaningless prayer, having developed under foreign influence.

If our ailment is superficiality and mechanistics, then the remedy dare not be more superficiality and mechanism. There is only one solution, and that is the raising of the level and the temperature of our spiritual experience. We will have to put ourselves under divine disposition and then incorporate all the varied possibilities of divine worship in order to bring again to our congregations the realities of the presence of God.¹²⁵

On Fellowship

The Mennonite faith is based on a fellowship with Christ and with one another. Those of like experience and faith cling to each other because they have the world as their common opposition. They huddle together as a herd in a storm. They have building bees and mutual aids. Until recently they had no life insurance; they were "brothers in need, brothers indeed." Through contacts with the religious life of the country their religion had a tendency to be identified with it. Spiritual fellowship was displaced by the association with others. Attending worship services for the sake of the brotherhood was no longer necessary. The Holy Spirit spoke to individuals. Dependence on others became obsolete; pioneer days with its many needs were past. It was as James Pike said, "The purpose of the Lord's Prayer

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

is, 'Thy will be done--with my help' not, 'my will be done with Thy help.'¹²⁶

American Mennonitism heads for the place the Dutch Mennonites find themselves today. Henk van Bilderbeek says about the position of the Dutch Doopsgezind:

The Mennonites of Holland are much more a part of the total religious and cultural life of the country. This weakens their own fellowship. . . . It appears that the traditional Doopsgezind fellowship and family ties are stronger than the true fellowship in belief and spirit.¹²⁷

When this spiritual fellowship will be strong, church attendance will be strong, outside influence less.

"In our day American Mennonites are increasingly challenged by their own standard of living and cultural appreciation to change their pattern of worship."¹²⁸ Their standard and culture is the same as that of every other American. The exterior and interior of their church buildings are the same as their neighbors'. They have shared indiscriminately with non-Mennonite students and young people in their worship services in schools and away from home. A large percentage

¹²⁶ James A. Pike, "I Object to Juke Box Religion," St. Louis Globe-Democrat, November 4, 1956, Magazine Section, pp. 8-9.

¹²⁷ Hank Van Bilderbeek, "A Confession for Our Day," Mennonite Life XII (January, 1957), 28.

¹²⁸ Elmer Ediger, "What Is Central in Worship," Mennonite Life XII (January, 1957), 28.

of their teen-agers, "just when they are very sensitive to an atmosphere of worship"¹²⁹ have mingled with other teen-agers and unconsciously fully accepted their culture. It is essential that they be taught to evaluate and accept only the best.

"Christian worship is leading men to wait before the objectively existing God as revealed in Jesus Christ."¹³⁰ People come to church to see Christ Jesus and what He did for all by way of the atonement. The Mennonite belief is that Jesus Christ came to establish fellowship with Him and then one with another. They often use the expression "to become children of God . . . and adoption admits that soul into the family of God with filial joy. Adoption deals with the position the soul holds as a child of God."¹³¹ The prerequisite for such acceptance is that man yields himself unreservedly to God in Christ Jesus. This worship for Mennonites, ideally, must do.

The Mennonite worshiper seeks to express this fellowship in his divine services. There is no special holy place

¹²⁹ Dorothy M. Roberts, Leadership of Teen-Age Groups (New York: Association Press, 1951), p. 58.

¹³⁰ Ediger, op. cit., p. 28.

¹³¹ H. H. Dick, Henry F. Epp, and Sam J. Schmidt, editors, The Revised Constitution and Confession of Faith (Mountain Lake, Minnesota: The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, 1949), p. 30.

for him. The minister comes out of the pews and is not a "reverend" but a "brother." The congregation wants no chancel, which word originated from the Latin word cancelli, meaning lattices, or crossbars and was formerly used to designate enclosures by lattices or crossbars. The congregation is a fellowship, and every brother has opportunity to come into the sanctuary. There is an open door to approach the Father. The Roman Catholic approach is traditional and ethical, the Quaker draws near to God by means of an inner light, the Mennonite comes into the presence of God with those of like mind, experience, simplicity and humility. Beside him he has one who has also yielded his life to be spent in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and the entire congregation desires that its Confession of Faith be the main function with which to express its homage to God. He shies away from liturgies which push him into conformity. Inward fellowship does not need outward means. There is an inward yieldedness in implicit obedience to God rather than an outward compliance with general worship service rubrics.

Such form of worship roots in the Mennonite belief of the priesthood of all believers; Wenger says:

The New Testament teaches clearly that all Christian believers, or "saints," are priests in the sense that they have direct access to God (I Peter 2:9). No earthly priesthood, such as Catholics thought essential, is acceptable to God. Christ is the eternal "high priest" for all true believers (Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 5:5; 5:10; 6:20). No mere human being, on earth or in heaven, can intercede for other human beings before God; there is but one Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus (I Tim.

2:5). Hence the worship of saints and the adoration of images are sinful idolatry, and insult to Christ, in the judgment of Protestants. Further, it is not Scriptural to require lay Christians to confess sins to ordained "priests."¹³²

In the eyes of the Mennonite all are priests and look up directly through the opened heavens to God. Ritualism hinders him in doing this. His ethical response he prefers to have totally unrestricted by doing what is prescribed at a certain time in a certain way. A chancel and an altar are foreign to him. He wants no priest to perform public duty and work for him. Too vividly does he remember the relics, rituals and shrines, whose progeny was persecution and burning at the stake for him. Instead of the altar with its sacrifices and place of human mediation he has a pulpit as the focus of the worship service from which God speaks through His word. The minister and the Bible on the pulpit are the witness of the presence of God. God is "in the midst of them." The world casts them out but not Christ Jesus Who understands them and abides with them "for fast falls the eventide." A lectern, a separate place for the Word of God from the pulpit is also foreign. The pulpit extends into the main auditorium as far as possible. Neither do they have a divided chancel; the choir, (representing the voice of God) speaks to them directly as to all priests in

¹³²John Christian Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1949), p. 3.

the Old Testament.

The Altar is moved down into the main auditorium in front of the pulpit, in the form of the communion table. The Lord's Supper is a group affair, just what Jesus and His disciples made it in the Upper Room. The spirit of Communion is exactly the opposite of what the Roman Catholics make it. In the mass the priest is often the only one to take the bread and the wine, which is far from what the Mennonites believe. The purpose of the Lord's Supper for the Mennonite is a fellowship with the Lord that He has made available through His redemption. It is for this reason that usually after the partaking of the communion elements they have "footwashing," a symbol of deep humility, one with another. The place of the communion table is on the main floor, close to the fellowship. It is not the centre of the worship; the pulpit, the Word, the witness, the voice of God, is the center. For Anabaptists the bread and wine were the only necessary symbols of sacrifice. The function of the participants is predominant.

From this true Mennonite position, through the influence of non Mennonite theologians and architects, appears today among Mennonite churchmen the tendency toward an altar and divided chancel. The Mennonite reaction to this, Ediger says: is

not to incline toward an altar and cross, because that is double sacrifice symbol, leaving out the idea of fellowship altogether. This is particularly the case

when the altar is fixed to the wall of the church; and most particularly the case when a reredos . . . is affixed. A minister who must celebrate communion before an altar places himself in a position in which it is next to impossible to emphasize the ideal of fellowship.¹³³

¹³³Ediger, op. cit., pp. 30.

with feelings of mysticism and religious experience. They speak with the Psalmist,

That I may publish with the voice of Thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine hands dwell.¹³⁴

One of the Anabaptist fathers said:

We go to the sacred place, where we meet God, have spiritual fellowship with God and where we are fed with heavenly manna. Here we get into sympathetic touch with others, and have opportunity for mutual service and are prepared for trials of life.¹³⁵

Churches are, like so many other Protestant churches today, in the midst of an expanded church building program. The architecture of their church buildings expresses the past, present and future. The past reaches into Anabaptist and Reformation days. When the architect and the congregation are familiar with the past, their building will express it. The speaker says it will,

¹³⁴Psalm 134:2-5

¹³⁵ Daniel Kaufman and John L. Stauffer, Major Fox
Walden and other Christian Writings (Scottsdale,
Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House).

CHAPTER V

THE HOUSE AND SYMBOLS OF WORSHIP

House of Worship

Mennonites approach their churches on Sunday morning with feelings of mysticism and religious experience. They speak with the Psalmist,

That I may publish with the voice of Thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honor dwelleth.¹

One of the Mennonite fathers said:

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¹Psalm 26:7-8

²Daniel Kaufman and John L. Stauffer, Helps for Ministers and other Christian Workers (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House).

seek to protest against faith without works, orthodoxy without the Holy Spirit, modernism without the revealed gospel of Christ, and mere words without the Holy Scripture. The Anabaptists (like the Puritans) reacted against symbolism and aesthetic decorations. They feared these would become snares and substitutes for religious reality. Out of this came the austerity of the meeting house.³

Professor Krahn of Bethel College points out that later the Mennonites of Holland and Northwest Germany were predominately a rural folk, and all their buildings expressed a ruggedness with which they resisted the elements in the low, open sea-wind swept countries. The many years of intolerance by the state and other churches found expression in that they made their houses and churches less conspicuous and more utilitarian.

Those of like faith often met in barns and homes to preach and pray. It was quite natural later that their schools and churches looked like their barns and homes. "Nowhere. . . . has any characteristic or distinctive architectural style developed which was created by Mennonites."⁴

The Mennonites who came from Switzerland and South Germany in the eighteenth century brought with them a culture the same as their neighbors, the Lutherans, Reformed and Moravians and some mystic and pietistic groups. Again their

³Don E. Smucker, "Building the Lord's House," Mennonite Life, XII (January, 1957), 18.

⁴Cornelius Krahn, "Mennonite Church Architecture," Mennonite Life, XII (January, 1957), 19.

European church and social background played a big part together with a new environment and the usual demands of the frontier. They followed not the practices of their neighbors but went their own way.

In reference to their church buildings, Dr. Krahn says:

During the 16th to 18th centuries when the Mennonites of Switzerland were outlawed and could not build churches or special buildings for worship purposes the worship had of necessity to be either in private homes or in the forests and deep mountain glens. No Meeting houses were built in Switzerland or neighboring Alsace and France before the second half of the 19th century. The Amish, being a conservative branch of the Mennonites, maintained the practice even in countries where there was no restriction along these lines. The Mennonites of colonial Pennsylvania (1683-1789), however, during pioneer days built log or stone buildings to serve as schools during the week and as churches on Sunday. Gradually separate buildings for each purpose were erected; usually close together, with a white-washed stone type soon becoming predominant, later replaced by a brick structure.

Originally the church building was very plain and similar to the school. The original meetinghouse usually had one entrance at the end or side; later two - one for men and one for women. A small porch at the entrance was in many cases extended across one end of the Meetinghouse. . . .

The origin and development of the Pennsylvania-German Mennonite meeting-house is most closely related to that of the other plain people such as the Friends and is most likely patterned directly after the Quaker meeting-house which was brought from England. This meetinghouse type has spread to Virginia, Ontario, Ohio, and the western states where the architectural patterns underwent some modifications, especially in the Middle West.⁵

Besides the Swiss-German strain of Mennonites in the Eastern States and provinces we have Mennonites in the

⁵Krahn, op. cit., p. 22.

mid-West and western states and provinces coming from a Russian-German tradition. They left the Low Countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to settle on the banks of the Vistula, and in the closing decades of the eighteenth century many left for southern Russia. From here they came to America in smaller and larger number for fifty years beginning in 1875. Their religious culture of church building was transplanted to these new areas. It was not a purely Dutch expression but rather at first a Dutch and German, later Russian added to it and here in America its influence. Underneath all these influences, however, always were the "religious principles adhered to for centuries."⁶

Even when Mennonites came from different geographical backgrounds, their religious convictions were the same.

There is considerable similarity between the Pennsylvania-German meeting-house and that of the Russo-German Mennonites. Both groups originated in strictly Reformed surroundings in which Catholic ritual was abhorred. . . .⁷

From this repugnance of Roman Catholic influence comes much present-day Mennonite opposition to ritual and liturgy. Their "vile deeds" (as Professor Adolf Koerberle of the Theological Faculty of Tuebingen University said at the Michael Sattler memorial service in Rottenburg on August 16, 1957), apparently are remembered too long. In Holland and

⁶Ibid.

⁷Krahn, op. cit., p. 22.

Switzerland they were compelled to worship in "hidden churches" without towers and bells. They could not afford to attract attention and mislead anyone to their services who was not of their own flock. The meetinghouse in the Netherlands could easily be a converted storage room or any other suitable building not too conspicuously located. Even the large Singel-Kerk in downtown Amsterdam today shows this caution. A large hall leads to the interior of the block where the meetinghouse is located.

For centuries the place of worship was known as Vermaning (place of admonition) in contrast to the Kerk of the state church. Throughout The Netherlands one can find even now simple and plain brick structures erected after the hidden church was no longer a necessity, revealing the dignity, simplicity, and beauty of the early Mennonite faith.⁸

The typical church of the Russo-German Mennonites in America had its origin in these earlier developments. It was an extremely plain wooden building with one or two entrances on the side. It was usually painted white with black trimmings in some cases. Its location was in an open space in the middle of the village. There are still a few of these churches left in Kansas, Nebraska and Canada. Since the same buildings were used for school during the week and church on Sunday, the custom developed later that when separate buildings were used they looked much alike. Before World War I one rarely found a Mennonite church with

⁸Ibid., p. 22.

a steeple and arched windows.

Today we find that many Mennonite churches have adopted the type of building their neighbors use. The more conservative groups adhere to tradition and as such their buildings are outstandingly Mennonite. Such we find in Canada, the States, Mexico and South America. Dr. Krahn, who visited the Mennonites in Mexico recently, says that some dwelling places are made of adobe brick while church buildings are still being constructed of imported lumber, an indication that in the realm of religious practices there is greater reluctance to give up traditions.

There are two main tendencies in Mennonite church building. They swing either to the right or to the left. The Amish, perhaps the most conservative branch, still assembled in their homes for worship even when they can well afford to have church buildings. What was a necessity at one time has become a part of their faith. Together with other ultra-conservative groups they express wholly their traditions. Where other Mennonites mingle with other denominations, there again we find a much less pronounced tradition and an acceptance of non-Mennonite elements. They all express their faith in their structure as Dr. Strodach points out:

Everything connected with the sanctuary and with the mode of worship should be shaped so as to express most clearly, most beautifully, and most effectively what the church confesses as the truth. It is evident therefore that greatest care is necessary so

that the building and that which takes place within it shall be in harmony with the faith of the church.⁹

Many Mennonites, in their desire to adopt from others, have come to rather odd mixtures in their structures "and contradictions like the towers found on almost all Mennonite churches of the prairie states, which are remnants of fortresses of the Middle Ages."¹⁰ In another place Dr. Strodach describes such as "looking little like church, look like factories, tower in odd places, walls different, entrance grotto-like, miniature hangers, realistic."¹¹

Since the Second World War the Mennonites have joined in the church building program across the country. It is of note what Heimsath says in this connection:

In this country among the churches of sectarianism we find the feeling for good architecture which has produced the highest average of beautiful church buildings. . . . While the interpretation . . . steadfastly renounced all purely ecclesiastical appurtenances and decorations, they do exhibit the beauty of simple elegance.¹²

The latest Mennonite structures can rank with this observation. "Traditionally the use of symbols in the Mennonite

⁹ Paul Zeller Strodach, A Manual of Worship (Revised edition; Philadelphia: Muehlenberg Press, c.1946), p. x.

¹⁰ Krahn, op. cit., p. 34.

¹¹ Strodach, op. cit., p. 26.

¹² Charles H. Heimsath, The Genius of Public Worship (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1945), pp. 88-89.

churches was restricted."¹³ Whenever they are introduced, there is an aim to keep a sense of propriety. A spirit of an American Mennonite culture of church architecture in harmony with that of other denominations is discernible. Being of frugal and cautious background, Mennonites recognize that function and purpose are important factors. One finds, however, an increasing looking beyond the purely utilitarian and immediate. They want more atmosphere that is American, Christian, orthodox and Mennonite. Their children are members of an American society, making contributions in all fields the same as others. They are Mennonites by faith rather than custom and tradition. Praise, prayer and practice are becoming thoroughly American-Mennonite. This has been much enhanced of late through the spread of peace efforts in all denominations. An integration of church, culture and Christian worship is finding expression in a new church function as stated by Goldsworthy:

A church's function is not fulfilled when it merely provides the place to do such physical things as sitting, hearing, singing, talking and gathering. It also has the function of providing an atmosphere in which the spirit may move in worship and adoration of God in prayer, and at one with other spirits in the unity of the infinite God.¹⁴

¹³ Krahn, op. cit., p. 34.

¹⁴ Edwin A. Goldsworthy, Plain Thoughts On Worship (New York: Willet, Clark & Company, c.1936), p. 106.

Symbols

The Mennonites have always taken a negative attitude to symbols and art in the church. They base their stand on the Second Commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."

As early as 1697 the Danziger Mennonite church put Enoch Samen under the ban for making a portrait. Until the twentieth century the taking of pictures and hanging pieces of art was disdained. In North America, as Mennonites moved out of isolation and out of purely rural environments . . . a positive attitude towards art gradually developed. In their colleges Mennonite teachers became art instructors.¹⁵

According to Edward Krusen Ziegler, when he talks about rural people at worship,

It is perfectly natural that . . . symbols, through which a worshiper wants to express religious ideas, are imbedded in his own religious and cultural heritage. These are the things that bring meaningful expressions to his faith.¹⁶

In relation to the Mennonite churches this expression of religious and cultural heritage comes through utmost simplicity. Wenger says:

Simplicity is . . . applied to worship. The Mennonite "meetinghouse" is a plain structure without steeple, bell, organ, altar, or works of art. Emphasis falls not

¹⁵ S. Bender, "Mennonite Art," Mennonite Encyclopedia, edited by C. Henry Smith, Harold S. Bender, Cornelius Krahn and Melvin Gingerich (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, c.1955), I, 167.

¹⁶ Orlando Schmidt, "The Use of the Fine Arts in the Mennonite Worship," unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Biblical Seminary, New York, 1949, p. 59.

on aesthetic stimulation but on worshipping God in the Heart.¹⁷

This very simplicity is conducive for a Mennonite to engage in worship. His soul finds it very difficult to come to sufficient rest in a Roman Catholic church environment to worship. Even colors and pictures on walls and windows distract the attention which his invisible God demands. His appreciation of "bareness" in the place of worship goes back to the time of the Third Disputation Zwingli had with the Papalists in 1524. Wenger writes about this meeting:

Following the third disputation on January 20, 1524, there was action, however. That spring all works of art, all "holy" relics, all altars, candles and crucifixes, were removed from the church buildings of Zurich. The inside walls were whitewashed to cover the pictures. The buildings were to be "meetinghouses" for the proclamation of God's Word, not "holy" temples.¹⁸

This was the first Anabaptists' way of putting into the concrete, what they inwardly experienced. Lois E. LeBar says:

It implies the putting together of the concrete and the abstract, illustrating the invisible and the visible. The symbol or sign serves to represent the abstract not by exact resemblance, but by suggestion. Of course, no illustration borrowed from earthly things can bring out the fulness of things of God, but some of them forcefully illustrate certain aspects of divine truth.¹⁹

¹⁷ John C. Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1949), p. 114.

¹⁸ Wenger, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁹ Lois E. LeBar, Children in the Bible School (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, c.1952), p. 153.

According to Gibson, the Mennonite re-action to the misuse of symbols in the medieval church was not without reason. The Anabaptist move against beautified worship places was at first a little excessive. Inward experience to prove to itself what is real requires a little more time. Gibson points out that

even the most excessive reaction against accepted outward forms of worship rise from a sound instinct. Two things are necessary to observe in a true evaluation: (1) that the inward experience must have some form of outward expression; (2) that the outward form must be kept in subordination to the inward experience. Genuine faith cannot be too watchful against the tendency in all worship to supplant the spiritual reality with the symbol.²⁰

Mennonite inward experience is a reality of God in things they do not see, much the same as every other worshiper. But in Quaker fashion, they worship through meditation. Not that they follow the Quaker denial of literally expressing worship as Christ taught it, but by lifting their souls from that which belongs to the world. The fewer the things of the world to help, the easier it is for them to rise in worship.

But what does the Mennonite mean by "the things of the world?" History tells us that after the Thirty Years' War it was admitted that the Ego had found itself and become the immediate agency between it and the surrounding world. The idea that the Roman Catholic Church plays this role is left behind.

²⁰ George M. Gibson, The Story of the Christian Year (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1945), p. 73.

The medieval damnation of the world is set aside or rather overcome; man finds in nature not the destroyer but a friend who on good acquaintance will assist him in surprising ways.²¹

Teutonic ideas, as over and against Latin philosophic ideas, expressed by Spinoza, a Mennonite countryman and friend, stood for nature as the unadulterated companionship to man. When the Mennonites spoke about the world, they meant that which the church had taken from the natural and in a predigested form had given back to man to use in his worship. To this Spinoza, Leibnitz and Descartes, who had fled to Holland to express their convictions about the Ego, all took vigorous opposition. The Mennonites, as a rural and simple folk, also felt that such was an injustice to their simple un-theological concept of God as manifested by medieval thinking. It was a radical breaking away from Latin philosophy, but with them the entire Teutonic philosophical spirit agrees. The Medieval philosopher sought to turn man away from the world, to find God. The Mennonites, a simple people of the soil, found God in the world directly and needed no mediation. Even to this day Mennonites are encouraged by their leaders to remain a rural people to facilitate their faith. They were in full sympathy with the philosophy of the day, and

when Kepler mathematically showed mechanical laws controlling the heavenly bodies, the idea lay near that

²¹Denton J. Snider, Modern European Philosophy (St. Louis, Missouri: Sigma Publishing Co. c.1904), p. 20.

God's thought was mathematical . . . God moved the Ego as if it were a machine.²²

But here again the unexpected happened. Instead of saying "world and man were the parts of the machine," they said

God and man were parts of the machine.

Man himself, the Ego, became the great symbol.

Further away he saw the

Socinian polemic . . . on the satisfaction theory of the atonement and the rigor of Calvinism . . . especially in Holland, where humanistic traditions had never died out and where Anabaptism was widely spread . . .²³

and found its opposition in Arminianism. He knew "Hugo Grotius, who first proclaimed the Freedom of the Sea (mare liberum)"²⁴ "and his important theory of the atonement."²⁵ He was familiar with the desires of the Puritans and the beginnings of Congregationalism with its martyrs in England.

Closer by was the bitter attack of the Roman Catholics on their faith in the Scriptures and personal salvation. Here the Mennonites saw almost daily the writhing bodies of those burning on the stake who dared to stand by their convictions. The Roman Catholic Church, under the cloak of

²²Snider, op. cit., p. 21.

²³Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), p. 453.

²⁴Snider, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁵Walker, op. cit., p. 456.

Mediaeval religiosity, came to be identified with the godless world, and hindrance to a free participation of man's souls in the verities of spiritual bliss.

Once more philosophy, history and the Scriptures all agreed in telling him that he was the new Ego. God saved him directly and needed no further means, the newly resurrected man became the symbol of God's way in dealing with man. No church building with all its accessories, inside and out, could take the place that man was himself. From the Scriptures the Mennonites were taught that they had been redeemed by the blood of Christ; complete atonement was made in His death on the cross. They themselves were the symbols of the cross. Whenever the symbol of the cross appears in Mennonite churches, it is decidedly foreign to its surroundings.

Mennonites fully concur with Goldsworthy when he says that "symbols solicit the emotions and sentiments which have to do with reverence."²⁶ Being aware of this, they aim to have control over their emotions, which makes their services sometimes too calculated and cold. They agree too with what Goldsworth goes on to say, but they teach against it. He says:

I have seen men throw things and shake their fists in rage. How, then, can they well contain themselves when

²⁶ Edwin A. Goldsworthy, Plain Thoughts on Worship (New York: Willet, Clark & Company, c.1936), p. 73.

they feel strongly in worship? It is hard for a true worshiper to sit perfectly still in the pew at all times.²⁷

With all their teaching about their faith "they live by a simple three-word formula: obedience, simplicity and love."²⁸ They must not show their rage and emotions. They can resist only one person, and that is themselves. Resisting others has culminated in gross wrongs. Scripture teaches that man cannot lose control of himself and let rage or any other violent emotion take over. In this sense symbolism is dangerous.

In his attempt to have nothing symbolical and accepting only the scriptural, the Mennonite kneels in prayer, takes no offering in church, only at the door, has a very simple communion table in front of the pulpit and no Christmas trees. Where these customs are no longer observed, there is definite deviation from Mennonite anti-symbolism. One such flagrant example is the use of candles at weddings and wedding rings.

Like everybody else, Mennonites find great stimulus to worship in the company of others. Even if they try to get away from fixed forms, man still remains such a form. Worship is a matter of the heart, and when others provoke it to

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ John A. Hostetler, Mennonite Life (Fifth Printing; Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1956), p. 2.

worship it will engage in it. D. H. Hislop says:

In all worship religion makes vital emphasis upon externals. Worship was a matter of the heart. It could be experienced wherever the people of God were gathered together. Religion was a real sense of freedom to worship God without fixed forms.²⁹

Mennonites made it a point originally to worship in non-conformity. Today these so-called "formless" rites have become quite fixed. It is their vital concern to keep the motives of worship spontaneous. They seek to produce a certain experience of belief or attitude in the mind of the worshiper. The reason is that God sees and hears at all times and in all places. They endeavor to get away from the strong subjective effect the Roman Catholic has for certain places. They have not a "church" but a "meetinghouse."

They agree with Hislop:

Beauty itself should not be the aim of the worship service. Its aims should be rather to provide adequate means whereby man can express his faith and accept God's grace; if this is done adequately, the service will be beautiful.³⁰

According to Tweedy this beauty must be inner glory. "It needs to give men their birthright to beauty and beauty which shall call forth that inner glory involved in the salvation of the soul and the vision of God."³¹ And more, this

²⁹ Orlando Schmidt, op. cit., p. 110.

³⁰ D. H. Hislop, Our Heritage in Public Worship (New York: Scribners and Sons, 1935), p. 298.

³¹ Henry Hallam Tweedy, Training in Worship (New York: Education for Christian Service), p. 195.

must not be regarded as an end in itself but as a means of approach to God. McIlvain says,

The peril of beauty is to regard it as extravagance, formalism, unreality, and making the beautiful as end in itself instead of one of the art paths of God.⁵²

⁵² Schmidt, op. cit., p. 110.

PART II

APPLICATIONS OF AMERICAN METHODIST WORSHIP

CHAPTER I

PRACTICES AND ORDINANCES OF WORSHIP

The divisions in this chapter are arbitrary. Some Mennonite churches call certain worship performances practices¹ or "general principles,"² while others call them "ordinances."³ All Mennonites, however, agree that baptism and the communion service are ordinances. Following this discrimination, this discussion is with (1) usual practices, (2) specific practices, (3) ordinances.

PART II

APPLICATIONS OF AMERICAN MENNONITE WORSHIP

I. The Sunday morning worship service. The order of service in an Evangelical Mennonite Brethren church for Sunday morning is:

Open Prayers
Hymn
Invocation
Announcements
Offering
Hymn
Scripture Reading

¹ H. K. Dick, Henry S. Egg, and Sam J. Schmidt, editors, *The Revised Declaration and Confession of Faith* (Mountain Lake, Minnesota: The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, 1942), p. 27.

² Evangelical Mennonite Church, *Confession of Faith: Faith and Principles* (Revised and adopted at the Annual Conference at Dallas, Indiana, 1947), p. 21.

³ Church Policy Committee of the Mennonite General Conference, *Mennonite Church Policy* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944), pp. 27-28.

CHAPTER I

PRACTICES AND ORDINANCES OF WORSHIP

The divisions in this chapter are arbitrary. Some Mennonite churches call certain worship performances practices¹ or "general principles,"² while others call them "ordinances."³ All Mennonites, however, agree that baptism and the communion service are ordinances. Following this discrimination, this discussion deals with (1) usual practices, (2) specific practices, (3) ordinances.

1. The usual practices are those connected with the Sunday morning worship service. The order of service in an Evangelical Mennonite Brethren church for Sunday morning is:

Organ Prelude
Hymn
Invocation
Announcements
Offering
Hymn
Scripture reading

¹H. H. Dick, Henry F. Epp, and Sam J. Schmidt, editors, The Revised Constitution and Confession of Faith (Mountain Lake, Minnesota: The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, 1942), p. 23.

²Evangelical Mennonite Church, Confession of Faith, Rules and Discipline (Revised and adopted at the Annual Conference at Upland, Indiana, 1949), p. 21.

³Church Polity Committee of the Mennonite General Conference, Mennonite Church Polity (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944), pp. 37-39.

Choir number
 Sermon story for children
 Choir number
 Message by Pastor
 Closing prayer and benediction
 Doxology
 Recessional⁴

The more conservative branches possibly would not have a prelude, choir numbers, an offering during the worship period, and closing with the doxology and recessional. The singing, Scripture, prayer, preaching and benediction are essentially the same in all Mennonite churches. In all cases they are nonliturgical except where traces of outside influences make their appearance.

2. The whole Order of Service revolves around the Scriptures. The "Mennonites are 'Biblicists' . . . (and) obey the written Word of God."⁵ Scripture plays a big part in every Mennonite worship. Only in isolated cases do hymn-books serve as "aids to worship." The Bible and its reading at appropriate times and places takes the place of the common usage of the Lord's Prayer, Creeds, Calls to Worship, Invocations, Confessions, Thanksgiving, Benedictions and Responsive Readings. In the pulpits of churches whose worship is

⁴ The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church, pastor, Arno Wiebe, "Church Bulletin" (720 Howe Street, Dallas, Oregon, June 2, 1957), p. 2.

⁵ John Christian Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, Third Printing, (1949), p. 9.

conducted in English only the King James Version is used; Luther's translation is used in German services.

The responsibility of choosing appropriate Scripture readings for the worship services falls entirely upon the minister. Since the churches do not follow the readings of a church year each minister makes his own selections. This requires special preparation in meditation and prayer. The portions chosen must answer the problems the worshipers met with during the week.

The ministers face a two-fold responsibility. They must do justice to the congregation and to the Word of God. Obedience is the big determinant. The Scriptures must be obeyed literally. All Mennonite ministers are fundamental believers of the Bible. "Anabaptism was Protestant . . . effort to render absolute obedience to the text of Scripture. . . ." ⁶

When the minister has mastered the truth of the Bible he must then master the art of reproducing the truth. . . . When Jesus spoke, it is recorded that "he opened his mouth and taught them". . . . They, like Jesus, must speak the revealed Word of God. . . . ⁷

In their preaching they aim not only at talking about the truths as contained in the Bible, but give forth the truths as they are written in the Bible.

How the Word is read is also their concern. Nelson E.

⁶ Ibid., p. 137.

⁷ Gordon Palmer, A Manual of Church Services (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, c.1947), p. 18.

Kauffman, president of the Mennonite Board of Education writes on this point:

To most of our listeners (the reading of the Word) . . . is often the least meaningful of any part of the service. Of all exercises, the reading of the Bible has possibilities for taking the deepest hold upon the human heart. Yet, there is practically no preparation for it. The reading of the Scripture in our services is often worse than a waste of time. Few persons present pay attention because of the way in which the Word is read. The reader often uses a monotonous tone of voice, has no regard for sentence or thought structure and mispronounces some words, all of which indicate that he has made no preparation for this "opening exercise," regarded as a matter to be disposed of quickly rather than to be "the interpretation of the divine Spirit and will to the hearts of men". . . . The Scripture passage should bear a definite relation to the whole service. . . . ⁸

Practices

Singing

For Mennonites "

hymn singing has always been associated with Christian worship. . . . Jesus and the Twelve sang a hymn . . . after the Supper. . . . Paul and Silas sang hymns . . . during the midnight hours of their imprisonment in Philippi. The great Apostle recognized the value of song when he exhorted the churches to "speak to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual song, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord," Eph. 5:18, 19 . . . "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord," Col. 3:16. I will sing

⁸ Nelson E. Kauffman, "On Reading the Scripture in the Pulpit," The Christian Ministry, II (January, 1949), 17-19.

with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also, I Cor.14:15.⁹

The above Scriptures are often referred to when the question of singing in the worship services is brought up.

Mennonite congregational singing dates back to the first years of their existence. We read "in prison they sang and were joyful."¹⁰

It was an encouragement to them to know that the first Christians also sang in the catacombs when driven there by persecution. Qualben writes about these early services:

Singing formed an essential part of the Christian worship, but it was in unison and without musical accompaniment. Augustine describes the congregational singing of his day as simple and non-artistic.¹¹

About one third of the Mennonite Churches use the Mennonite Hymnary. Its contents is quite representative of the material used in all Mennonite churches.

The songs in the Mennonite Hymnary date back to the beginning of Christian singing. It has six Psalms, the Gloria Patri, the Ter Sanctus, and the Te Deum. Eight songs have been selected from the Eastern and twelve from the

⁹Lester Hostetler, Handbook to the Mennonite Hymnary, published by the Board of Publication of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1946), p. xiii.

¹⁰Wenger, op. cit., p. 61.

¹¹Lars P. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church (Revised Edition; New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1942), pp. 112-13.

Western Church.

The Mennonites had much in common with the Bohemian Brethren, who were the first Protestants to introduce congregational singing.¹² Both were evangelicals and both were opposed bitterly by the medieval church. In their dispersal they came in contact with Luther's teaching of the Word and love for singing. Two centuries later they settled on Zinzendorf's estate. From that period the Hymnary has eight songs.

After this came a revolutionary period in Mennonite hymnody. The heart and soul of it was Martin Luther and his chorals, which became the vehicle for the "return of the individual."¹³ More conservative Mennonite congregational singing still shares the effects of the liturgical background of Ambrosian music and the Gregorian Chant.

Martin Luther dipped into the rich store of folk music and helped the peasant to enjoy it. The melodies belonged to those who sang them. While before Luther there were isolated individuals, later thousands were involved. When refinement was due, the great Baroque composers brought it about.

But folk music alone could not satisfy the genius of Martin Luther fully. He also encouraged part singing. He

¹² Hostetler, op. cit., p. xv.

¹³ Denton J. Snider, Modern European Philosophy (St. Louis, Missouri: Sigma Publishing Co. c.1904), p. 25.

wrote in his Geystliches Gesangbuechlin, 1525

these songs have been set in four parts, for no other reason than because I wished to provide our young people . . . with something whereby they might rid themselves of amorous and carnal songs, and in their stead learn something wholesome. . . .¹⁴

Mennonites today provide numerous opportunities in their worship services for their youth to sing in four parts.

Inferior hymnody made its appearance with the introduction of the English hymn and American song. The Mennonite Hymnary tires to counteract this. German hymns and chorale tunes constitute the main material. A special section of the book is given to these chorales exclusively. They cover the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That this is a step in the right direction is indicated by the wide and increasing acceptance of this book beyond the General Conference which introduced it.

Luther's enthusiasm for hymns and music found its counterpart in Calvin's legal thinking and rigid adherence to Psalm singing. The Mennonite Hymnary has six Psalms from the Genevan Psalter, one from the Scottish Psalter and five from the New Version. The Scottish Psalter has no notes and melodies. This is often the case in earlier Mennonite hymnody and accounts for even the remains of the Gregorian Chant in the isolated Ola Colony Mennonite worship singing. Just as the Psalter overcame this handicap in 1929 through

¹⁴ Hostetler, op. cit., p. xvii.

its most recent publication of tunes, so the Mennonites are now publishing hymnaries complete with words and tunes.

English hymnody has also made extensive contributions to Mennonite congregational singing. This was made first and foremost by Isaac Watts, an ardent dissenter like the Mennonites themselves. Watts pioneered the movement which resulted in a flood of hymns and hymnbooks in the English churches. When England in the eighteenth century turned to hymn-singing, the spiritually sensitive Mennonites on the continent responded. John and Charles Wesley followed Watts and made enormous use of hymn singing in their evangelistic work. This was again in great sympathy with Mennonite convictions.

From the Wesleys onward through the 19th century, the hymn writers in England became numerous . . . resulting in a vast number of original religious lyrics and the publication of hundreds of hymnbooks.¹⁵

English hymnody of the seventeenth century has given the Hymnary eight numbers, the eighteenth century forty, the nineteenth century ninety-three and recent years seven.¹⁶

In America the English speaking pioneers sang mostly Psalms. The German speaking colonists, including the Mennonites, brought with them the hymn books of the Lutheran tradition and continue the use of the German chorales in

¹⁵ Hostetler, op. cit., p. xxi.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. xxi-xxii.

the use of the German chorales in their worship. Little original material was produced until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the number of hymn writers became large.¹⁷

The Mennonite Hymnary follows the American trend of uniting the best in English and German traditions. The Mennonites also have many songs which date back to the days of their intense persecution. These are contained in the Ausbund which was referred to earlier. Mennonite congregational singing totally agrees with the statement in the Hymnary: "The hymnbooks of our time have become the channels through which flow the rich contributions to the stream of Christian hymnody from Christian people of all times and places."¹⁸ Six early American hymns, twenty-two nineteenth century, and seventeen recent American hymns have a place in the Hymnary.

Gospel songs have also affected Mennonite hymnody. This is not in the ethical quality of Christian living, but in the common personal gospel experience of the individuals. Mennonites with greater ethical emphases veered away from them more than did those who followed the more usual evangelical type of American Christianity. Also the quality of

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. xxiv-xxv.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. xxv.

the Gospel song, which often fully approaches that of the hymn, determined its acceptance by the Mennonites. The large number of publications of these books have in several Mennonite conferences dominated congregational singing. In spirit this is not truly Mennonite.

The Hymnary has only thirty-four Gospel songs. The re-awakening of Mennonite hymnody today screens more carefully. Frequently one finds hymnbooks used in Mennonite worship services in which the major portion is made up of Gospel songs. The Mennonite Hymnary fittingly remarks:

Mennonites have made many contributions to society through their religious life and practices, but we have produced no important hymnody of our own. Throughout the four hundred years of our existence as a church, we have been a singing people, in times of persecution as well as in times of peace.

Great emphasis has always been laid upon the importance of congregational singing in our worship services. Since the beginning of the 19th century the Mennonites of various branches, in America alone, have published over fifty hymn books. But an examination of these hymnbooks shows that we are heavily indebted to others. Instead of producing original hymns and tunes, we have borrowed, with minor exceptions, our entire repertory from other denominations. The wealth of verse and music produced by German and English writers through the centuries has been found to serve our needs adequately and well.

The churches in Europe used hymnbooks compiled from Lutheran and Reformed sources. Upon coming to the United States and Canada they gradually adopted English and American hymns and in some sections of the church, the Gospel Songs came into wide use.

Our German collections of hymns have, until recently, been uniformly on a higher level, both as to music and poetry, than the collections used after the change was made to the English language. During the transition from the German to the English language, many

churches, in their choice of their hymnbooks, sacrificed the fine chorales which had been a part of their religious heritage. This was due partly to the revivalistic influences of the times and partly to the fact that there were no good translations available of the German hymns which earlier were in use. The situation is gradually correcting itself. We are re-evaluating our hymnody, sifting the wheat from the chaff, and bringing back into our worship the rich treasure of song which had been used in the past. . . . 19

Every less conservative Mennonite church has a choir.

Young people constitute these choirs to a great extent.

Rehearsals continue during the entire year. Some have special training in music. Usually the more gifted and willing person becomes the choir director. During the last two decades several well-trained men have taken over leadership in wider fields. Outstanding are Dr. Walter H. Hohmann, Dr. K. H. Neufeld and Ben Horsch. These and others, have given courses to influential choir leaders in Mennonite churches. Goshen College also exerts a wide influence in the production of capable choir directors and song leaders. Churches and homes have produced a number of Mennonite musicians who assist in worship services. The conservative churches do not use musical instruments in their churches.

Praying

It seems that silent prayer was the general practise in the Mennonite Church until about 1723. The congregation would kneel down in silent devotion "without

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Hostetler, op. cit., p. xxix.

confusion or noise" until the minister arose.²⁰

In the most conservative Mennonite churches this is still the practise. The more progressive elements have audible prayer, and if they give any attention to silent prayer, it is in the form of meditation.

Audible prayer had been introduced before the Waterland Mennonites incorporated word prayers

in a Confession of Faith by Hans de Ries . . . in 1610, (which) little by little . . . seems to have been used more widely until in 1664 they were translated into German for use in Germany, and later used also in America by the Amish in the Ausbund.²¹

Extemporaneous prayers came with change of languages.

Not being familiar with liturgical prayers in other languages they made their own prayers. Another reason was a "reaction" . . . of the treadbare, ritualistic custom of reading ready-made prayers, which for that very reason, were considered incapable of the Spirit's moving.²²

The same article goes on to ask the question where the Mennonite churches are in this regard today. In trying to answer this he touches on silent prayer and the extemporaneous prayer, how to consider these today. Since this is a question of vital interest to most Mennonite churches, he asks:

²⁰ Elvin V. Snyder, "Public Prayers," The Christian Ministry, V (January-March, 1952) 21.

²¹ Snyder, op. cit., p. 21.

²² Ibid., p. 23.

To what extent should silent prayer be abandoned in Mennonite worship? . . . It is well, occasionally at least, to engage in silent prayer, for the simple reason that no minister can possibly voice all the needs, hopes and fears of all in his congregation. In most Mennonite churches the minister is not "paid to pray" for them, and therefore, logically, can require the people to pray for themselves--perhaps the only time some of them will! . . . In . . . silence the most restless and reckless talker may hear God's voice. Silent prayer dare not be a mere vacuum.²³

About the extemporaneous prayer the author says the Mennonite churches

today . . . are at the same place (the) forefathers were, with our stereotyped, mechanical, meaningless, and badly said extemporaneous prayers. They are very extemporaneous! . . . There is only one solution and that is the raising of the level and the temperature of our spiritual experience . . . and . . . put ourselves under divine disposition and then incorporate all the varied possibilities of divine worship . . . to bring again . . . the realities of the presence of God.²⁴

The matter of the opening invocation receives considerable attention in Mennonite churches. They all try to get away from the lifeless and monotonous repetition. They want the opening less formal and more vitally Scriptural. The Evangelical Mennonites have adopted the practise of opening the service with a few verses from the Psalms.²⁵ This is

²³ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁵ A. P. Toews, "Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Minister's Manual," unpublished Paper (Dallas, Oregon: Board of Overseers of Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, Omaha, Nebraska, 1951), p. 3.

refreshing, creates expectancy, makes for solemn, worshipful dignity. Since Mennonite churches are almost entirely without liturgy,

the invocation is prepared each time according to the character of the service, using language that will express the desires of the people to become conscious of God's presence and suggest a point the minister wishes especially to emphasize.²⁶

Snyder suggests the following collect from the Book of Common Prayer if the use of one especially prepared for the service is not desired:

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.²⁷

The Christian Ministry, a Mennonite ministerial magazine, makes the following suggestions regarding the Invocations:

- (1) That it be addressed to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
- (2) That in the relative clause be some attribute or promise;
- (3) That the petition be an expression of a desire; (4) That the purpose for making the petition be stated; (5) That the conclusion reiterate the grounds for the prayer.²⁸

The most important of all prayers in a Mennonite service is the pastoral prayer. The Christian Ministry says:

²⁶ Snyder, op. cit., p. 22.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 22-23

This is considered generally to be the most important prayer and while of necessity it will be longer than the others, that does not mean that it is to last fifteen everlasting minutes nor is it to be a sort of omnibus that can leave nothing behind. The time limit should be less than five minutes and its form is usually fourfold:

- (1) Thanksgiving, expressing the gratitude of everyone present.
- (2) Confessional of sin; which is very effective when related to the Scripture lesson that preceded it.
- (3) Petition, for some outstanding needs of those present.
- (4) Intercession, where the desires of the congregation for all mankind are expressed.²⁹

Ministers are reminded to be of service to the entire congregation in this prayer. In their calling they should pray so that their members may look upon God as their helper in time of need.

The Bidding Prayer, at least in its ritualistic form, is not common in Mennonite churches. In one form of this prayer the deacon bids the congregation to pray for certain things. When the matter for prayer is stated, the minister offers the petition and the congregation at its conclusion pronounces its "Amen" in token of praying co-operatively. In this connection the Mennonite Ministry says:

The Bidding Prayer has been used in less formal ways and presents a variety of possibilities. One of the most impressive is . . . where the minister . . . prepared the petitions and read them one by one very slowly, allowing a few brief moments between them for the congregation to express itself silently.³⁰

²⁹ Snyder, op. cit., p. 23.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

Other Mennonite churches use this type of prayer for unspoken and special requests. These appear in almost every Mennonite worship service. They are responded to either in silent or audible prayer. This type of prayer is and has been practised with wholesome effects in almost all Mennonite churches.

All churches are familiar with the Lord's Prayer. Mennonites look upon the thoughtless repetition of this prayer as formalism and

Roman Catholic idolatry, or . . . only a charm . . . the kind of thing held to have some merit in itself, a kind of "good work" for the performance of which God is much obliged to his children!³¹

Mennonite children are taught the Lord's Prayer the same as the Commandments. In their instruction book no mention is made of this prayer. It is not said either that it should be prayed in public services.³² In private or smaller gatherings it may be spoken by the whole group. Under foreign influence it is prayed audibly together by entire congregations.

Mennonites contend that the Scriptures do not teach prescribed prayers. They are afraid of "vain repetitions"

³¹ Ibid., p. 29.

³² John L. Horst, editor, Instructions to Beginners in the Christian Life, prepared by a committee appointed by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Mennonite Conference (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1947), p. 31.

and believe that there is danger that the congregations may "say" the Lord's Prayer and not "pray" it.

But the Lord's Prayer has meaning for the Mennonite worship. They say:

it means so infinitely much that we are unwilling to face its implications for us. . . . It is in reality the most artistic and most meaningful model for all of our praying. Look at its structure . . . wording . . . beauty, . . . theology . . . (and) you will never say it again, . . . you will pray it! It can be a fitting climax to a Spirit-filled "free-prayer" by having the congregation enter feelingly into its great strides. And that is the only way we dare ever pray it.³³

A very significant prayer used in many Protestant churches is that connected with the offering. The practise of receiving the Lord's gifts in Mennonite churches only at the door has been discontinued, except in a few orthodox groups and European churches. Prayer is offered in all of them in connection with the reception of the offering.

The nature of this prayer depends on the time when it is offered. Some have it before the offering, others after.

When it is used before the offering, it expresses the gratitude of all for the material blessings of God and a dedication of themselves and their substance to God, asking God's blessing upon it. When it is used after the offering . . . it becomes a symphony of praise and consecration to God.³⁴

In some services the offering prayer varies because of the singing of the Doxology. This is sung also at the close

³³ Snyder, op. cit., p. 24.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

of the service, and in that case a different verse is used for the offering, such as "Now thank we all our God" (No. 514 Mennonite Hymnary)³⁵ and others. When the Doxology is used, prayer is fitted into the service. Stewardship and tithing are taught from many Mennonite pulpits, and this had had the result of receiving the offerings with devotion, solemn re-dedication and prayer.

In almost all Mennonite worship services the closing prayer is followed immediately by the benediction. Sometimes the Doxology is sung after the benediction to give the minister an opportunity to proceed to the rear of the church to greet the congregation. In orthodox services the ministers do not make it a point to meet individuals at the close of the service.

In reference to the closing prayers they say:

The prayer after the sermon . . . need not be long but . . . vital. It should look toward the individual, rather than the congregation as a whole. . . . This prayer should not say too much nor too little. The shorter and simpler . . . (the better) without losing . . . intensity.³⁶

All Mennonite services are closed with formal benedictions. The following forms, according to the Christian Ministry, are in use:

³⁵ Hohmann and Hostetler, op. cit., No. 514.

³⁶ Snyder, op. cit., p. 24.

1. The Old Testament benediction in Numbers 6:24-26. Until three decades ago this form was almost the only one ever used. The conservative conferences still use only this form. Others make frequent use of it at special services such as ordinations, dedications, and weddings.
2. The Pauline benediction in II Corinthians 13:14. Where younger ministers want to get away from the older forms they almost invariably use this one. Then too, in services other than the Sunday morning worship service these words from St. Paul are almost always used.
3. The priestly benediction in Philippians 4:7. This form is frequently used alone but also with the closing part of another verse going before.
4. The Covenant benediction of Hebrews 13:20,21. This form is used more often by the stronger evangelical and fundamental groups because of its greater emphasis of Christ being the Great Shepherd and that we now through the blood of the everlasting covenant are redeemed.

Jude 24 and 25 is also used as a prayer of benediction, but ministers say that it is "a closing prayer rather than a Benediction."³⁷

Many Mennonite churches have mid-week prayer services.

At these meetings they find what Dorothy Roberts throws out as a challenge.

Many teen-agers are interested in prayer. They want to know what it can mean to them. They want to know how to pray. When given an opportunity to formulate their own prayers, they do pray. When they are free to pray in their own way, the spirit of true prayer is there . . . ³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

³⁸ Dorothy M. Roberts, Leadership of Teen-Age Groups (New York: Association Press, 1951), p. 59.

Mennonites expose their youth to prayer and Scripture as much as possible. This has been their main deterrent from delinquency. In connection with the prayer service they have other features of interest for younger people. Choirs often rehearse in this connection or missionaries home on furlough speak to them. In many cases more than half of the usual Sunday morning congregation participates in the mid-week services. Keeping the youth interested has succeeded quite well in many churches.³⁹

At these services the work of the missionaries is receiving wide attention. Their work is often the object of prayer. Missions are of extended interest in all Mennonite areas and likely a good portion of the reason lies right here. Monod, the Great Frenchman, said at one time:

"Examine the prayers of the saints of all ages and you have their faith, their life, their ruling motive, their work."⁴⁰

Scripture, at these mid-week services, also receives particular stress. The entire group interest for the evening revolves around certain Scripture portions.⁴¹ Mennonites are

³⁹ "Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church Bulletin" of the Dallas, Oregon, E.M.B. Church, Arno Wiebe, pastor. June 2, 1957.

⁴⁰ Snyder Elving V., "Public Prayers," The Christian Ministry V (April-June, 1952), 85-89.

⁴¹ Gordon W. Shantz, editor, The Program Builder (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House).

frequently referred to as "literalists" and dismissed as such. When they come into the presence of God they come "to change . . . one's own ways and not God's."⁴² Weil refers to the spirit of Mennonite prayer when he says that it is a

whole life (of) faith, hope, charity and nourishment of the soul. . . . The inward man practices a pure and simple resignation to God. . . . Peace and silence dominate the activity with God. There is a worship of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit accompanied by a stillness before God that nourishes the Spirit.⁴³

The Program Builder, a widely-used Mennonite instruction book says: "Faith underlies all our relationships with God. . . ." In prayer we must be humble, sincere and reverent. We must worship Him with sincerity and simplicity. Prayer is to be earnest and heartfelt, never in vain repetition but in the name of Christ and in the Spirit He has given.⁴⁴

Mennonite ministers are exhorted to take

heed unto themselves, . . . unto the doctrine, and . . . unto the flock. . . . (They) are to be of sound faith, pious in their life and conversation, and to have--as well within the church as without--a good reputation

⁴² William Roy McNutt, Worship in the Churches (Chicago: The Judson Press, 1941), p. 89.

⁴³ Johannes Kelpius, A Method of Prayer (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1951), p. 78.

⁴⁴ Unit V, "Living in Fellowship with God", Program Builder, VII (April-June 1951), 89.

and a good report; so that they . . . might also, at all places, . . . appoint faithful men. . . .⁴⁵

Academic qualifications vary. Some conferences provide seminary training but do not require that their ministers have academic degrees. Churches make their own choice from the available men. The one deemed qualified to fill their pulpit is chosen.

About their calling, Menno Simons writes: "Some are called by God alone without any one having mediated as was the case of the prophets and apostles. Others are called by means of the pious as may be seen from Acts 1:23-26."⁴⁶

Mennonite churches used to elect their ministers only out of the pews but now most of them have had some special training. But in no case is a minister to function without some authority given. Menno Simons writes again: "No one is to undertake of himself to preach or advance from church to church unless he be sent or ordained thereto by the congregation or the elders."⁴⁷

The personal qualifications are paramount in the selection of a minister. Menno Simons addresses his followers

⁴⁵ S. F. Coffman, editor, Mennonite Church Polity (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944), p. 52.

⁴⁶ Menno Simons, Complete Writings of Menno Simons, Translated from the Dutch by Leonard Verdun and edited by John Christian Wenger, with Bibliography by Harold S. Bender (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Publishing Co., c.1956), p. 4.

⁴⁷ Menno Simons, op. cit., p. 1042.

Dear preachers, where is your Christian humility, zeal, pleasure, peace and joy in Christ Jesus? Where are the naked whom you clothed, the hungry whom you fed, the needy whom you have put up . . . the lost you sought? The wounded whom you bound up, the sick you healed? Where is your humble, pious life . . . how has the Holy Ghost likened you to wells of water? How lovely are they who with Christ the Great Shepherd feed the hungry sheep. They preach sharpened swords . . . have power, fruit, spirit. As the rain comes down and watereth . . . shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. . . . They are teachers who turn many to righteousness . . . spiritual streams . . . spiritual posts and pillars . . . messengers of peace . . . walls of Jerusalem . . . men whom the Holy Ghost has ordained bishops and overseers in his church congregation and house.⁴⁸

Menno Simons has also set the policy of not remunerating the ministers: "All who preach for money and play the hypocrite with the world are spiritual sorcerers of the servants of Baal . . ." ⁴⁹

With such background the ministers are very conscious of their calling, which is never a profession. He is God's servant alone, this must be foremost in his sermons. It is his high calling to "bring the people into the presence of God."⁵⁰ So as not even attract attention to his personal appearance, he is not to be "dressed up" but "dressed down." This, however, is not obtained by a clerical garb but by

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 167-172.

⁴⁹ Menno Simons, op. cit., p. 173.

⁵⁰ William Roy McNutt, Worship in the Churches (Chicago: The Judson Press, 1941), p. 43.

common attire, usually black. The Old Mennonites and other conservatives have specially cut garments. Others make it obligatory to wear no tie, a black shirt, suit and shoes. The less the minister is seen, the more real God is. His unobtrusive appearance is to motivate worship.⁵¹

The sermon does not take the listeners into politics. Alice M. Baldwin tells us how in American colonial days sermons would prepare for the elections that would come up.⁵² The Mennonite sermon was much the same as that of the Puritans but with respect to elections and other political stresses it was radically different. Hershberger writes:

According to the New Testament then the Christian's relation to the state is one of relative detachment. Inasmuch as the state exists for the regulation of an evil society the Christian ought to live above it. And nowhere does the New Testament suggest that the Christian had any part in the management of the affairs of state.⁵³

In a Mennonite worship service the minister is expected to "keep from dwarfing . . . (the) beholding of God in a

⁵¹ Maurice A. Yoder, "Motivating Worship", The Christian Ministry IV (July-September, 1951), 138-142.

⁵² Philip Henry Lots, editor, Orientation in Religious Education (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1950), p. 19.

⁵³ Hershberger, Guy F., Mennonites and Their Heritage. Number V of Christian Relationships to State and Community Series, second edition, edited by Harold S. Bender; Akron Pennsylvania: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1942), p. 9.

real sense."⁵⁴ Or as another Mennonite minister put it: "The pulpit is an awful place; we preach for eternity."⁵⁵ Later on he says:

We are not just men with some ideas to proclaim about God or some information to impart concerning the philosophy of life. We are agents of God--the voice through whom God speaks and shows Himself both as a flaming fire and as one ready to help in time of need.⁵⁶

Mennonite ministers are expected to induce their congregations to be of service to others. Here their messages differ from the purely evangelical. It is not only a case of being saved, but of being saved for a purpose. In the Mennonite ministerial paper, The Christian Ministry, we read:

A young student minister in the Friends' Meeting House at Tecumseh, Michigan, on September 22, 1940, made this statement while exhorting his hearers to bear much fruit, "that means not only helping people into heaven, but also serving them while here on earth."⁵⁷

Much of the preaching in Mennonite worship services revolves around the concept of peace. Mennonites say:

It is a great task and a unique calling in this atomic age to preach peace. . . . We become Christlike, are become "partakers of the divine nature," through the Word of promise. Such favorable relationship with God makes it possible to express peaceful, harmonious relationships with our fellowmen. . . . The preaching

⁵⁴Jess Kauffman, "The Sermon Is the Thing," The Christian Ministry, I (January 1948), 44.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 44.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 45.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 44.

of peace begins with the cross. . . . We owe it to ourselves, to all men, and most of all, to our kind heavenly Father who has so graciously preserved us for today, to preach the Gospel of Peace to all Men.⁵⁸

Sermons are from half an hour to an hour in length.

Ministers are urged to study and cultivate the talents of preaching on a higher intellectual level and yet be very simple. Ministerial students are taught that "simplicity and clarity attract attention."⁵⁹ To achieve this they are told that

a minister needs to exercise the same quality of care and skill in the preparation and delivery of sermons and religious addresses as the artisan does at the bench, as the workman on the farm, or as anyone else in pursuit of any secular interest. Our first responsibility is to the people to whom God has called us. Before God--and we are always before Him--the best is not too good. It is essential to our service in the Church. Let us then consider it.⁶⁰

In the past years sermons were written out but since the turn of the century this practise has been discontinued. The new displaced the old ways. The attempt was made to get away from the un-original and lifeless. At present the oral sermon is criticized as tending towards insufficiently prepared preaching. Mennonite ministers are prevailed upon to have good oral sermons.

⁵⁸ John E. Lapp, "Preaching Peace," The Christian Ministry, I (July, 1948), 143.

⁵⁹ George J. Lapp, "Outlining the Sermon," The Christian Ministry, II (October, 1949), 216.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 216.

About half of the Mennonites observe some kind of head-covering for the women.⁶¹ Together with the headcovering the Mennonite Church pays close attention to the clothes its members wear. This is very apparent in the worship services. The Mennonites teach that

The Bible upholds . . . standards with reference to clothing for God's people . . . (it must be) substantial (Gen. 3:7, 21); modest (I Tim. 2:9, 10); distinguishing sex (Deut. 22:5); economical (I Pet. 3:3).⁶²

About the headcovering for women which is very definitely a part of worship, they write:

The apostle tells plainly that women should have their heads covered whenever engaged in prophesying (I Cor. 14:3) or praying. That this is not the natural covering of the hair is shown . . . in I Cor. 11:6. . . . Hair never constitutes a veil. . . . Veiling shows the proper relationship between woman, man, Christ, and God. . . . Covering is a power of authority. . . . The woman has . . . power and authority in her prayer and Christian testimony. . . . The covering is a sign . . . for a pure devoted Christian life. . . . Since the Scriptures give no exact form . . . this becomes an ordinance of the Church, which specifies the exact form.⁶³

⁶¹ John A. Hostetler, Mennonite Life (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, fifth printing 1956), p. 31.

⁶² S. F. Coffman, editor, Mennonite Church Polity (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944), p. 95.

⁶³ John L. Horst, editor, Instructions to Beginners in the Christian Life, prepared by a committee appointed by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Mennonite Conference (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1947), p. 55.

Those Mennonite churches that prescribe a definite head-covering and garb for women also to a degree, regulate the clothes the men wear. The men usually wear dark suits with coats that button to the top and are without a lying-down collar. They wear white shirts and very seldom a tie. Some branches look upon a necktie as superfluous and an invention of the "world." In still more conservative branches the men use no buttons on their clothes. The suits are home-made of dark, sturdy material. The women are garbed in dark, loose dresses and wear bonnets. Non-conformists are easily spotted in the worship services. Continued independence in the use of wearing apparel and other "worldly devices" leads to disciplinary measures.⁶⁴

Special Practises

Mennonite marriages take place in the churches and homes. Never are they performed in courthouses and other places.

The Old Mennonite Church writes:

The marriage ceremony, according to our present usage, generally takes place at the home of the bride. There is apparently no reason, however, why it should not be performed in the meetinghouse, at the time of public services, according to the custom of our brethren in

⁶⁴ John C. Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, Third Printing 1949), pp. 124-25.

former times, and as is still the custom with some Mennonite churches.⁶⁵

Other conservative groups follow the same practise. The Old Mennonites consider marriage one of their seven ordinances on the grounds that "it carries with it an outward ceremony which binds two lives together as long as both live."⁶⁶ Marriages between believers and unbelievers are not accepted. Marriage must be "done in the Lord." "In the Lord" are those of

spiritual kindred of Christ; that is to such . . . as are already, previous to their marriage, united to the church in heart and soul, have received the same baptism, belong to the same church, are of the same faith and doctrine, and lead the same course of life, with themselves . . . ⁶⁷

The ceremony is simple, with no attendants and frequent wedding "fineries." The minister asks

do you believe that matrimony is an ordinance? . . . are you free from all other marriage relations? . . . Will you . . . take . . . the sister by your side, to be your wedded wife . . . (the brother by your side, to be your wedded husband)? Then the minister says "you will now take each other by the right hand." Upon which he takes their joined hands between his hands, or holds them in his right hand, and says⁶⁸

the blessing, pronounces them man and wife, prays and closes

⁶⁵Coffman, op. cit., pp. 130-131.

⁶⁶Horst, op. cit., p. 60.

⁶⁷Coffman, op. cit., p. 55.

⁶⁸Horst, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

with the benediction.

Wedding rings are not permitted and the wedding attire is of good quality but not of the "bridal-veil and tuxedo type."

Other groups are less conservative. What was said in Mennonite Life about them would apply here. "The way in which they worship is generally indistinguishable from that of other Protestant churches."⁶⁹ They use the usual music, ceremonies, and means, according to the wishes of the couple. In all cases the marriage partners must both be believers. What is meant the Evangelical Mennonite Church manual expresses quite well for the rest of them.

We believe that it is unscriptural for believers to unite with unbelievers in the bond of matrimony and therefore such unions should be discouraged by our churches and our ministers are forbidden to officiate at the marriage. . . . We definitely discourage a Protestant-Catholic courtship or courtship with a follower of any of the various cults. Divorces are not accepted. Nor is it permitted to remarry broken couples. An unbeliever who is dissatisfied to live with a believer shall not be forbidden to depart.⁷⁰

The washing of feet is observed by all Old Mennonites and several smaller groups. Several branches leave the observance to the decision of the individual church. As a whole, Mennonite churches are moving away from the practise. The

⁶⁹ Hostetler, Mennonite Life, op. cit., p. 7.

⁷⁰ Evangelical Mennonite Church, Confession of Faith, Rules and Discipline (Revised and adopted at the Annual Conference at Upland, Indiana, 1949), p. 21.

Old Mennonites include footwashing in their ordinances. None of the others do. Several conferences do not touch on the practise at all in their manuals and instruction books, as for instance those of the Evangelical Mennonite Church.

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren's interpretation is most acceptable to the more progressive groups. They say:

Jesus taught the lesson of humility, equality, and service by washing the feet of the disciples, John 13: 4-17. After the washing Jesus pronounced it as an example and attached a blessing thereto. This practise is to be encouraged where it can be used effectively as a means of growth in grace.⁷¹

On the other hand the Old Mennonites write:

On the same night that Jesus established the communion service He also instituted the ordinance of feet washing. . . . Jesus showed a fine lesson in humility and brotherly equality. . . . They should in like manner serve each other . . . none esteem himself above the other . . . The command that we should observe this ordinance is very plain. . . . It is very plain that Jesus did not here observe some old custom, otherwise the disciples would have understood what He was about to do. . . .⁷²

The scruples Goldsworthy voices against footwashing does not trouble the Mennonites too much. He says:

In the early Christian Churches the members embraced and kissed one another at the services. Such an easily

⁷¹ H. H. Dick, Henry F. Epp, and Sam J. Schmidt, editors, The Revised Constitution and Confession of Faith (Mountain Lake, Minnesota: Mennonite Evangelical Brethren, 1942), p. 32.

⁷² John L. Horst, editor, Instructions to Beginners in the Christian Life, prepared by a committee appointed by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Mennonite Conference (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1947), pp. 52-53.

abused custom had to be abandoned. Even today the members of some churches follow the practise of washing one anothers feet.⁷³

Where the washing of feet is practised the brethren wash the feet of the brethren and the sisters those of the sisters.

The Holy Kiss is observed immediately after washing one another's feet, and in greeting. All churches having foot-washing also greet with the kiss. As a matter of salutation the kiss is most widely observed among the Old Mennonites.

Their ground for doing so is:

Different salutations are mentioned in the Bible. Some of these refer merely to ordinary greetings among people as they meet from time to time. . . . These vary . . . in . . . periods . . . and . . . places. The greeting of the holy kiss, however, is mentioned specifically five different times in the New Testament, when it is given in the form of a definite command. . . . It should be observed by all the brethren . . . sisters should greet sisters . . . brethren greet the brethren.⁷⁴

Other Mennonite groups do not apply the question of the kiss this way. They leave its observance to the individual and in their instruction books ignore the matter.

Infant dedication is not observed by the Old Mennonites. Less conservative conferences observe the rite. What the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren write in this regard applies also to the other groups that make provision for it. They

⁷³ Edwin A. Goldsworthy, Plain Thoughts on Worship (New York: Willett, Clark & Company, c.1936), p. 63.

⁷⁴ Horst, op. cit., p. 57.

say on this point:

In Scripture we have instances where children were publicly brought to the Lord (Luke 2:22-24). The parents of our conference are . . . encouraged to dedicate publicly their children to the Lord by prayer and the laying on of hands by the minister.⁷⁵

Ordinances

"Ordinances are generally based on Biblical teaching. The founding fathers had a deadly aversion to any practice which was not Biblical."⁷⁶ And again "an ordinance, (is) an outward act or ceremony with a spiritual meaning. . . ."⁷⁷ McNutt says that the two ordinances recognized by all groups are baptism and communion.⁷⁸ With this the Mennonites agree.

Baptism is observed in most Mennonite churches when there are candidates. This is the first rite a Mennonite church member candidate faces. Candidates are those who, through the Word have recognized themselves as sinners, confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord of their daily life, and request to be baptized upon

⁷⁵ Dick, Epp, and Schmidt, op. cit., p. 32.

⁷⁶ Hostetler, op. cit., p. 8.

⁷⁷ Horst, op. cit., p. 54.

⁷⁸ McNutt, op. cit., p. 179.

this faith. Such candidates are called believers.⁷⁹

Baptismal services are frequent and as a rule, well attended. The nature of the service depends upon the mode of baptism followed. There are three practiced modes: The Mennonite Brethren and other smaller groups only immerse. The immersion is backwards and only once. The basis for this is that baptism "is a symbol of burial and resurrection. . . . The believer in baptism signifies his death to sin and resurrection and to walk in a newness of life."⁸⁰ The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren immerse three times forwards. The difference in the mode of immersion stems from Jesus bowing His head and giving up the ghost. The Old Mennonites and many other groups only pour water on the candidate's head. This is on the basis "that the Holy Spirit was poured out."⁸¹ The Scriptures that refer to this are Acts 2:41; Acts 10:47, 48; Acts 16:3. Baptismal services are held in the churches without a tank or in an open water.⁸²

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren are neutral regarding the mode. This is on the basis that Scripture also is neutral

⁷⁹Dick, Epp, Schmidt, op. cit., p. 31.

⁸⁰Mennonite Brethren Board of Home Missions of the Southern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, Fundamentals of Faith (Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1943), pp. 45-46.

⁸¹Horst, op. cit., p. 47.

⁸²Coffman, op. cit., p. 109.

for we find no particular mode is given. The choice of mode is left to the candidate and the "individual church."⁸³ The Evangelical Mennonite Church, another neutral group and, speaking for a good many Mennonites, say: "Let every believer have the choice of either immersion, sprinkling, or pouring."⁸⁴

Stating four forms of baptismal worship services will give their essence sufficiently to understand how all Mennonites worship in baptism and are received into the church fellowship.

The Old Mennonite Church (sometimes called the Mennonite Church). Taken from Mennonite Church Polity A Statement of Practices in Church Government. Compiled by the Church Polity Committee of the Mennonite General Conference (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944), pp. 101-109. (With slight adaptations.)⁸⁵

They (the candidates) have been instructed in the doctrines of the Gospel and in the ordinances and requirements of the church, and have given evidence that they are prompted in their purpose by the Spirit of God, that they are willing to forsake sin and the world, to consecrate themselves to the service of God, and from henceforth to be the disciples and followers of Christ. . . .

Addressing the applicants, the minister says:

⁸³ Dick, Epp, Schmidt, op. cit., p. 31.

⁸⁴ Evangelical Mennonite Church, op. cit., p. 45.

⁸⁵ Church Polity Committee of the Mennonite General Conference, op. cit., pp. 101-109.

And now if it is still your desire to be baptized and to be received into church fellowship, you will rise.
 . . . Then asking them:

Do you believe in one true, eternal, and almighty God?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, as the only begotten Son of God, that he is the Only Saviour of Mankind, that he died upon the cross and gave himself a ransom for our sins that through him we might have eternal life?

Do you believe in the Holy Ghost?

Are you truly sorry for your past sins, and . . . willing to renounce Satan, and the world?

Do you promise by the Grace of God, and the aid of his Holy Spirit, to submit yourself to Christ?

Candidates kneel, while the congregation stands . . . the minister prays . . .

The deacon or some other brother now brings a vessel with water, and the minister laying his hands upon the head of the subject for baptism, says:

"Upon the confession of thy faith, which thou hast made before God and these witnesses (he now with both hands takes a quantity of water from the vessel, and pours it upon the head . . .) I baptize thee with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

When the baptism takes place in outside body of water the subject kneels and the minister takes the water from stream.

After all the applicants are thus baptized . . . the minister gives them his hand and says "Arise! and as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so thou . . . and shalt be acknowledged as a member of the body of Christ, and a brother (or sister) in the church.

The Evangelical Mennonite Church. Taken from Church

Manual of the Evangelical Mennonite Church 1949, revised and adopted at the annual conference at Upland, Indiana. pp. 45-

Impress upon the candidates that baptism was instituted by Christ, and it signifies our engrafting into the body of Christ. It is not to be administered to any until they have publicly professed their faith in Christ as a personal Saviour and acknowledged their obedience to His divine will.

The minister shall ask . . .

Do you believe in the one true, eternal God?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God and the only Saviour from sin; that you have truly repented and experienced the forgiveness of your sins; and that through faith in Him you have eternal life?

Do you believe in the Holy Ghost?

Do you renounce Satan, and all his works; this vain world and all its carnal desires; and cheerfully present yourself "a living sacrifice" to God?

Are you in harmony with the doctrines of this church?

The very act of baptism is not specified.

Applicants for membership are asked:

Have you . . . been born again? . . .

Do you accept our articles of faith? . . .

Prayer and the right hand of fellowship is given with the words: "In the name of Jesus Christ and His Church, I give you my hand, and welcome you to the fellowship and communion of this church."

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. Taken from a mimeographed copy of the Church Manual written by A. P. Toews, as an assignment by the Board of Overseers at Omaha, 1950, pp. 3-5.

Candidates are requested . . . in the presence of the congregation to make confession of their faith . . .

Then the minister asks:

Do you believe the Holy Scriptures to be the divinely inspired Word . . . ?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, your personal Savior and Redeemer through whom, upon true repentance, you have received the forgiveness of sins and eternal life?

Do you acknowledge the Lord as . . . Lord of your daily life?

Do you desire to be baptized upon this faith and received into the fellowship of the Church of Jesus Christ?

The minister prays . . .

In the water the minister says: "(so and so - full name) upon the confession of your faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of your soul, of repentance and forgiveness of your sins, I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

In the reception the minister steps down from the rostrum, faces each candidate, and says: "As the Lord gives you grace, do you subscribe to the church covenant?"

After prayer the minister says in receiving them as members into the church: "In the name of Christ and His church I give you my right hand of fellowship: Arise, and as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so thou also shalt walk in newness of life. Be Faithful and abide in the doctrine of His word! And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who will also do it."

About half of the Mennonites have close communion. The General Conference churches and the Evangelical Mennonites invite all believers as above defined.⁸⁶ These include those

⁸⁶ The Evangelical Mennonite Church, Church Manual of the Evangelical Mennonite Church 1949 (Revised and adopted at the annual conference at Upland, Indiana), p. 19.

baptized in infancy and believing that there is no other salvation but through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on Calvary. The fellowship in communion of modernists is not sought.

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren request that the believers be baptized, "the Lord's Supper shall be open to all baptized believers who are living consistent Christian lives. Matt. 26:26-30; Luke 22:19-20; I Cor. 10:16."

Again giving the Old Mennonite form of the communion service and the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren form we have the main forms the Mennonites use in this type of their worship.

The Old Mennonite Communion service, taken from Mennonite Church Polity A Statement of Practices in Church Government. Compiled by the Church Polity Committee of the Mennonite General Conference (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1944), pp. 113-115.

The Lord's Supper is usually observed in the spring and fall of each year. The meeting on this occasion is opened by singing an appropriate hymn, after which the 26th chapter of Matthew or the 22nd chapter of Luke or some other appropriate Scripture is read. . . . Then a short address, and . . . prayer.

After prayer, a suitable text is read . . . and the bishop or . . . minister preaches . . . showing that . . . eating and drinking together . . . at the Lord's table, is expressive of the communion and unity of the church . . . also the great love of Jesus . . . his sufferings and death . . . the great salvation . . . and how he instituted . . . His Holy Supper and commanded . . . to observe . . . the same.

(After) the discourse . . . the bishop . . . reads

I Cor. 11:23-29, and . . . exhorts . . . to self-examination, after which the bread (the bread and wine should be placed on the table at the opening of the meeting, and remain covered until the bishop is ready to use them) is placed before the bishop by the deacon, the bread being cut into long slices. The bishop takes the bread and gives thanks, the congregation the while standing. After the congregation is again seated, the minister breaks the bread, and gives to each communicant as he rises to his feet to receive it, a piece, until all are served.

During the distribution of the bread, the bishop repeats the words of our Saviour given in Luke 22:19 or I Cor. 10:16 . . . or some other appropriate text or benediction.

In some parts of the country, the minister stands by the table. . . . and those wishing to partake of the Supper, rise from their seats and go to him to receive the bread and afterwards the wine, while in other localities the minister proceeds through the house from seat to seat, while the communicant, as stated above simply rises to his feet to receive it.

After all the members have been served with bread, the deacon pours the wine into the cup. The congregation again arises, and the minister takes the cup and gives thanks, after which he hands it to each individual communicant after the same manner in which he distributed the bread, repeating. . . .

After . . . the cup, the minister briefly admonishes . . . to remain faithful . . . walk humbly . . . exercise meekness and love. . . .

The meeting closes with prayer, hymn and the benediction.

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Communion Service.

This is taken from a mimeographed copy of the Church Manual written by A. P. Toews, as an assignment by the Board of Overseers at Omaha, 1950, pp. 7-8.

Previous to the service the deacons make all preparations and cover the elements on the Communion table with the communion table cover.

The organ plays the prelude softly.

Singing of a hymn . . .

Scripture lesson and invocation.

A short message by the pastor.

A brief memorial observance and mentioning of those who of the brotherhood cannot be present because of illness.

The deacon brethren . . . uncover the elements. The pastor breaks the bread while the congregation sings an appropriate hymn. Then the pastor reads Luke 22:14-16, 19 and takes the bread and thanks for it while the congregation stands. The bread is then distributed . . . by the pastor, or by the deacons . . . or the congregation comes to the front where each communicant takes the bread . . . goes back to his seat . . . all eat at the same time.

The congregation sings "What Can Wash Away My Sins" while the pastor and deacons prepare to serve the cup. The pastor reads Luke 22:17, 18, 20 and returns thanks for the cup, after which it is distributed. When separate cups are used all drink at the same time. This varies.

After the partaking of the elements follows the love offering for the poor and needy.

Meeting closes with prayer and Aaronic benediction.

All Mennonite Communion Services observe more or less the above order and emphases.

CHAPTER II

CONCLUSION

This thesis, in the words of Dr. Strodach, has been, "a modest effort adventuring in a great field."¹ It is hoped that through the discussion of the origins and history of Mennonite Worship something helpful has been offered. Better understanding between the Mennonites and others is greatly to be desired.

It is imperative that opinions be fashioned and then given direction. But such direction can never proceed safely unless it is guided by the past. The judgment of members of the Mennonite church, who are not familiar with the past, will not be dependable. Then too, the past must not alone be considered; when this is done the present will fail to bring us closer together. The present must speak to us as such, but its full interpretation cannot be achieved until the past tells us that we are correct.

That non-Mennonite institutions have enriched the Mennonite Church no one can deny. Contributions are made from both sides. This must be recognized, admitted and said. There exists common interest to establish wider and

¹Paul Zeller Strodach, A Manual of Worship (Revised edition; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c. 1946), p. xiv.

surer usefulness. These pages want to be evidence of this.

The Mennonite Church belongs to the non-liturgical expression. However, in these days of close proximity and social interaction the beauties of liturgical worship are continuously felt by them. Ecclesiastical equipment and practise help every believer to stave off corrupt social and religious impingements. To point in the direction where such may lie has been briefly attempted.

The path of the Mennonite faith has always been upward and at times very steep. The price paid for it as we know it today has been very high.

the authorities resorted to the desperate expedient of sending out through the land companies of armed executioners and mounted soldiers to hunt down the Anabaptists and kill them on the spot singly or en masse without trial or sentence.²

Only that which is dearly bought is deeply cherished and preserved.

For the enquiring mind new scenes always appear on the horizon. May this paper on "Mennonite Worship" bring such. The words of Pastor Palmer of the Rottenburg Lutheran Church at the unveiling of the Anabaptist, Michael Sattler's memorial plaque, on August 13, 1957, tell how to regard such new scenes when we come to them.

²Harold S. Bender, The Anabaptist Vision (reprinted from the Quarterly Review, April, 1944 Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955), p. 6.

May your conference fruits remain. Sattler loved God, and this church is glad to contain his plaque. We dwell not on differences today, we dwell on love. Paul writes about one body and its many members. We got your help after the last war, and even now prevails the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount in all of us. This is the way to proceed in the future. Jesus prayed that we be one. Let us look upon Christ, as the originator and accomplisher of our faith. Then will we fare well.³

³ Pastor Palmer, representative of the Territorial Church of Wuerttemberg greeting the Sixth Mennonite World Conference at the unveiling service of Michael Sattler's memorial plaque, now hanging on the rear wall of the Rottenburg Lutheran Church, August 16, 1957.

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