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AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE
EVANGELICAL MENNONITE BRETHREN

By
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

- A. The Subject
- B. The Sources of the Study
- C. The Plan of Procedure

AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE
EVANGELICAL MENNONITE BRETHREN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

1. The Subject Stated and Explained.

The subject of this thesis is an historical study of the development of the denomination known as the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. The Conference of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren was organized on the fourteenth of October, 1889, at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, under the name of "Konferenz der Vereinigten Mennoniten-Brüder von Nord-Amerika." Later, the name was changed to "Wehrlose Mennoniten Brüder in Christo von Nord-Amerika." In the year 1937, the Conference was given its present name, that of "Evangelical Mennonite Brethren." ¹

Since the historical development of this particular church body is still in its youthful stage there is very little published history of the group as such. Therefore, an effort will be made to put into written form as much as is possible of the available data on the birth, development, and the present status with a view to the future of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.

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1. Rempel, George S., Editor: A Historical Sketch of the Churches of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, p. 5.

2. The Subject Delimited

When making a study of this nature, selection must be employed in determining what is to be included and what is to be eliminated. In the first place, this work is not a detailed history of the Mennonite groups at large, although it will draw material from historical sources of both a primary and secondary nature. This will be done in order to place the development of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren in its proper relationship to other existing Mennonite church groups. The attitude of the approach will be as impartial as possible; it will be controlled entirely by the reliable material used in the study.

The period of history which will be considered in this work will be confined primarily to the interval between 1889 and 1948. Although reference will be made to various historical events reaching back into the sixteenth century, it will be for background purposes only.

This thesis pretends in no way to be a record of an exciting epoch in church history, but rather an appreciative study of the historic development of a quiet and sincere group of people whose aim was to live lives pleasing unto God. It is not the purpose to interpret the doctrines and practices of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, but to present a statement of them for the intent of general information only.

3. The Subject Justified.

In this era of rapidly changing scenes, when each day is writing a page of history, it is well to pause and consider what elements have led man to the present situation in which he finds himself. George Santayana made a potent statement when he said, "Those

who do not give heed to the past are condemned to repeat it." It is, therefore, the purpose of this work to gather together and to examine the available data for the intent of making a written record of the factors which were instrumental in bringing into existence the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, as well as to note their background, origin, character, and growth through the years. It is of equal importance to observe their present status with a view to the days ahead, so that those who will have the opportunity to profit from this study will in a small measure be assisted in preventing themselves from making similar errors.

Its value lies in the fact that to date no complete history of this particular Mennonite group has been attempted. A number of sketches have been written on several of the constituent churches and a few newspaper articles describing various phases of church activities of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren have appeared in print, but there has never been a comprehensive work nor a synthesis of these brief memorandums in any real sense. It is felt that such information organized in this thesis will be of worth to the constituent churches for a better understanding of their own history and present day mission.

B. The Sources of the Study

The primary sources of this study will consist of early manuscripts (handwritten in German), personal letters, newspaper articles (German), pamphlets, constitutions of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, and the conference year books of the same group, from 1900 through 1947.

Mennonite histories and books on Mennonite doctrines and

practices will be the chief secondary sources. The bibliography at the close of this thesis will give a complete list of the works consulted in this study.

C. The Plan of Procedure

The method of procedure is suggested to a great extent by the statement of the subject. Because this is an historical study of the development of a particular denominational group, namely, the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, the plan will quite naturally follow a chronological pattern. A brief study of the origin, doctrine, early leaders, and major movements of the Mennonite Church in Europe will lay the foundation for more protracted attention on the birth, growth, expansion and present position of the affairs of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren in America. Brief summaries at the end of each chapter will be employed to draw together and bring into focus the outstanding relevant facts. Similarly, a concluding chapter of the thesis will serve to bring together in summary form the resultant conclusions of the whole work.

CHAPTER II

THE BACKGROUND OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH

- A. Introduction
- B. The Founding of the Mennonite Church in Europe
- C. The Foundation Stones of the Mennonite Faith
- D. Major Movements of the Mennonites
- E. Conclusion

CHAPTER II

THE BACKGROUND OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH

A. Introduction

It is the intent of this chapter to study briefly the origin, the foundation stones of faith, the early leaders, and the major movements of the Mennonite Church in Europe, so as to get a clearer understanding and a better appreciation of the background of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren who came from this rich heritage.

B. The Founding of the Mennonite Church in Europe

The great awakening which came to the church in the sixteenth century, known as the Protestant Reformation, is of distinct interest to the Mennonites, because it was out of this great revival movement that the Mennonite Church was born. In the early years of that century, by the providence of God, a leader arose in the church in Germany who had the vision of what the Christian experience ought to be in the view of the teachings of the New Testament. He found that in his own experience it was through faith in the redemptive work of Christ that the sinner could find forgiveness for his sins and have peace with God. Because of his vital inner experience he was irresistibly impelled to make known to everyone this great truth. This man was Martin Luther. It was not alone that Martin Luther believed these great fundamental truths of justification by faith alone, and the exclusive authority of the Word of God, but that he gave his life to it, which kindled the fire of the Reformation.

1. In Switzerland

So it was that within a few short years after Martin Luther's announcement of his discovery in 1517, Christians all over Europe added their assent to this finding. In Switzerland Ulrich Zwingli was the leader of the Protestant Reformation. Both he and his followers accepted Luther's policies in general, but differed on one point, that the rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper had only symbolic meaning and had no efficacious value in themselves.

Followers of Ulrich Zwingli, who were unable to accept the compromise which he and Luther made in setting up the Protestant state church system, were founders of the Mennonite Church in Switzerland in 1525. They had been looking forward to a complete reformation and a restoration of New Testament Christianity. They desired no half-hearted profession of Christianity, but that the church be composed of believers only, who had experienced a vital relationship with God and had committed their lives in unreserved obedience to Him.

The birthplace of the Mennonite Church is to be found in the city of Zurich, Switzerland. The year was 1525.

"The City Council of Zurich had decided to suppress the small company of people in Zurich under the leadership of Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and George Blaurock, who had refused to have their children baptized and who insisted that a thoroughgoing reformation should take place in accordance with Zwingli's original promise."¹

The City Council issued strict decrees forbidding them to meet, to teach, and to practice fellowship together.

"So the little group of devoted Brethren who felt in their hearts deeply convinced that they should follow the teachings of the New Testament completely, and who endeavored to set up a church according to the pattern of Christ and the Apostles,

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1. Bender, Harold S.: Mennonite Origins in Europe, p.15.

were faced with the tragic alternatives, that if they surrendered their position they would be untrue to their conscience, and if they refused to obey the edict of the Council they would be subject to persecution and arrest."¹

Finding themselves in this desperate situation, they gathered together for prayer on about January 21, 1525.² Here they received the guidance for which they sought and were persuaded that they should establish a brotherhood of believers upon the basis of baptism and confession of faith. It was at that meeting that they baptized one another, Conrad Grebel baptizing George Blaurock, and Blaurock baptizing the remainder of the group.³ This event is significant in that it was on this occasion that the new independent church was formally launched, admitting members into its fellowship through adult baptism upon confession of faith. From that meeting they went forth with joyful conviction that they should continue their fellowship, and should teach and preach their faith, and summon men everywhere to become members of the body of Christ. Thus what later became known as the Mennonite Church was founded in a prayer meeting.

The Mennonite church in its early years was blessed with capable and fearless leaders who were truly men of God. The attainments of these men are the more noteworthy when one considers the tremendous obstacles under which they had to labor. Most of the early leaders died as martyrs, while their followers were hounded, persecuted, and executed.⁴ Regardless of this, men of unusual ability and character gladly took upon themselves the leadership of

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1. Bender, op. cit., p. 15.

2. Ibid.

3. Smith, C. Henry: The Mennonites, p. 16.

4. Cf. Bender, op. cit., p.19.

the "accursed sect of the Anabaptists" and gave their lives "for the brethren."¹ Only the names of the most important leaders of the Swiss Mennonites will be mentioned in this study.

Conrad Grebel may rightly be named the founder of the Mennonite Church. There might never have been a Mennonite Church had it not been for Grebel's faith and devotion, and his courageous assumption of the leadership of the first group of Brethren.² Felix Manz was a follower of Zwingli but soon joined with Grebel in the meetings of the Brethren where he himself expounded the Old Testament from the original Hebrew. He was in prison several times in 1525 and 1526, but did not refrain from preaching and baptizing in the area around Zurich. He was executed by drowning on January 5, 1527, as the first martyr of the Brethren at the hand of the Zwinglians.³ Next to Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock was the most influential leader in the beginning of the Mennonite Church in Switzerland. He had unusual ability as a speaker and was courageous to an extreme. "Blaurock was a man of deep convictions, of zeal and eloquence, 'the second Paul' among the Brethren, as some referred to him."⁴ He was active with great success as an evangelist. "He had been apparently the first to urge the need of separation from the state church through the act of baptism, a man of Christian zeal and consecration, of lucid sincerity of conviction."⁵ He was arrested with a fellow minister and burned at the stake on September 6, 1529.⁶ One of the

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1. Bender, op. cit., p. 19.

2. The Mennonites at first were often called "Brethren". This name is not to be confused with present day "Brethren" groups.

3. Cf. Bender, op. cit., p. 22.

4. Horsch, John: Mennonites in Europe, p. 145.

5. Ibid.

6. Cf. Bender, op. cit., p. 22.

most attractive personalities in the early history of the church is that of Michael Sattler, who was hailed even by his enemies as "a true friend of God."¹ One of the most unusual men among the early leaders was Pilgram Marpeck, an able leader and writer, and commonly considered the "Menno Simons of the South" because of his influence through an extensive career in the church.²

2. In Holland

The Mennonite Church in Holland was organized, in the year 1533, under the able leadership of two brothers, Obbe and Dirk Philips, who were resident in the city of Leeuwarden in Friesland, the northwest corner of Holland. These brethren, who came to be known as Obbenites, believed that the peaceful, scriptural Anabaptist faith as espoused by them was the true way of God. This group of Obbenites was the beginning of the Dutch Mennonite movement. In the year 1536 and after there was a rapid growth of the Obbenite group throughout all of Northwest Germany and Holland which revealed that it was destined to become a great and powerful movement, even more powerful than the movement of the Swiss Brethren which began in Zurich in 1525.

The Obbenites and the Brethren were identical in all their basic doctrines. Both held to the Holy Scriptures as the sole authority for faith and life, both desired a church composed of believers only, and both insisted upon a genuine life of Christian holiness and obedience to the Word of God.

In 1536 the Obbenites won to their cause a talented Catholic

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1. Bender, op. cit., p. 23.

2. Ibid., p. 24.

priest, who was at that time serving in the parish of Witmarsum, Friesland. This priest was Menno Simons. He was baptized by Obbe Philips in the same year, and shortly afterward persuaded to accept the ordination as an elder or bishop, and from then on was an outstanding leader of that group.

Soon everyone was aware of the fact that Menno Simons was the outstanding leader of the group and people gradually began to name the group after Menno, first using the name "Menist" about 1544, later changed to "Mennonite".¹ Menno Simons' numerous and powerful writings soon made the group widely known. Hundreds of ardent believers lost their lives, and thousands were persecuted with imprisonment, torture, and exile.

The early leaders of the Mennonite Church in Holland are more widely known than those in Switzerland. Menno Simons, who has been supposed by many to be the founder of the Mennonite Church, joined the church eleven years after it was founded in Switzerland. He is one of its great leaders and deserves full credit for his able and devoted service in the earliest days of the brotherhood. Even though he was a Catholic priest, he witnesses to the fact that he had no Bible knowledge until years after he was in the service of the church. His soul conflict arose the year he began his services as priest in 1525, but it was not until about April, 1535, that he surrendered to God and pledged his life henceforth to the Gospel.² Shortly after this experience he found his way to the Obbenites. He undoubtedly is the greatest figure in the history of the Mennonite Church. He had a sane and balanced program emphasizing both a sound

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1. Bender, op. cit., p. 27.

2. Cf. Horsch, op. cit., p. 186.

faith and a sound life. He was a fearless leader and a capable organizer. In thorough loyalty to the Word of God, he labored unceasingly for the establishment of true Christianity among men.

C. The Foundation Stones of the Mennonite Faith

The end which our forefathers in Switzerland and Holland set before themselves was the highest possible for Christians. Their idea was to revive original New Testament Christianity.¹ According to the way the Brethren saw it, the New Testament pattern of Christianity required a genuine change of life, a newness of living, which was true holiness in full obedience to Christ. This demand for "holiness of life", that is, for real "life", was the great central foundation stone of the faith of the Brethren. "It is still the central stone in the house of our Mennonite faith today."² In a description of this church and society one must consider also the secondary foundation stones of the faith. First, there is the concept of the nature of the church as a fellowship of true believers. Menno Simons said:

"Christ's church consists of the chosen of God, His saints and beloved who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, who are born of God and led by Christ's spirit, who are in Christ and Christ in them, who hear and believe His word, live in their weakness according to His commandments, and in patience and meekness follow in His footsteps."³

Another foundation stone was the concept of the nonconformity of the church to the world. For it was thought that if Christians lived in newness of life there would naturally be a radical difference between them and the world because of the inevitable direction of their ways.

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1. Cf. Bender, op. cit., p. 34.
2. Ibid., p. 35.
3. Bender, op. cit., p. 36.

The society in the world in general did not practice Christian principles and the church could not permit worldly practices among its members, therefore, the only solution was that of separation, the gathering of true Christians into a Christian society, where Christ's way was practiced. Menno Simons says about this principle of separation that:

"The whole evangelical Scriptures teach that Christ's church was and must be a people separated from the world in doctrine, life, and worship."¹

In a great debate in 1528 at Zofingen spokesmen of the Swiss Brethren said:

"The true church is separated from the world and is conformed to the nature of Christ. If the church is yet at one with the world, we cannot recognize it as the true church!"²

Mennonitism has always strongly favored individualism and, as a result, the Mennonites as a body were never committed to any one particular Confession of Faith. Writings of early church leaders, public debates with state church theologians, testimonies of martyrs, decisions of conferences, and a variety of Confessions of Faith are the sources from which one must discover what their religious beliefs were. Menno Simons and Dirck Philip are the only ones among the early leaders who wrote at length on the questions of church doctrine.

The earliest confession of faith of which we have any knowledge now was drawn up at Schleithem in South Germany in 1527.³ It was entitled "A Brotherly Union of Some Children of God."⁴ The following is an epitome of the points contained in this "Confession":⁵

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1. Bender, op. cit., p. 37.

2. Ibid., p. 38.

3. Smith, C. Henry: The Mennonites, p. 320.

4. Langenwaller, J. H.: Christ's Headship of the Church, p. 29.

5. Ibid., p. 29-30.

"1. Baptism. - Baptism shall be administered to all who are taught repentance and a change of life, and truly believe in the forgiveness of their sins through Jesus Christ, and are willing to walk in newness of life; all those shall be baptized when they desire it and ask it by the decision of their own minds, which excludes all infant baptism according to the Scriptures and the practice of the Apostles.

"2. The Ban or Excommunication. - This shall be practiced with all those who have given themselves to the Lord, to follow His commandments, are baptized, and call themselves brethren and sisters, and yet stumble and fall into sin, or are unexpectedly overtaken; these after admonition according to Matthew 18, if they do not repent shall be excommunicated.

"3. Breaking of Bread. - All who wish to break 'one bread' in remembrance of the broken body of Christ, and drink of 'one cup' in remembrance of His shed blood, shall be united by baptism into one body which is the congregation of God and of which Christ is the Head.

"4. Separation from the World. - The Christian must be separated from all the evil and wickedness that Satan has planted into this world. According to II Cor. 6:17, 18: 'We shall come out from among them and be separate'; separate from all Papistic works and services, meetings and church-goings, drinking houses and other things which the world highly esteems.

"5. Ministers. - The ministers shall, according to the teaching of Paul, be of good report of them that are without. He shall teach, exhort, and help all the members to advance in their spiritual life. When he has needs he shall be aided by the congregations which chose him to his work. If he should be driven away, or imprisoned, or killed, another minister shall at once be put into his place.

"6. Taking the Sword. - The worldly governments of the land are to use the sword, but in the perfect congregation of Christ, excommunication is used, by which no one suffers violence to his body. Peter says: 'Christ has suffered (not reigned) and has given us an example that we should follow in His footsteps.' Neither is it the Christian's work to have a part in civil government, because the rulings of government are according to the flesh, but the government of Christ is according to the Spirit. The weapons of the world are carnal, but the weapons of the Christian are spiritual to the overcoming of the world and Satan.

"7. Oaths. - Christ, who taught the law in perfection, forbade His disciples all oaths, whether true or false. By this we understand that all swearing is forbidden."

The Mennonites held the usual orthodox beliefs of the Protestant churches on the general doctrines of the Creation, Fall of Man, Trinity, Christ, His nature and function, the plan of Salvation,

Resurrection and the Future Life. Their emphasis was on life rather than doctrine. They preached their message with conviction because of this very fact. They took literally the portions of the Bible which deal with the ethical aspects of life and as a result were forced to the position that no man had a right to consider himself a member of the Church who was not even trying to live according to the will of Christ.

D. Major Movements of the Mennonites

From the beginning of the Mennonite Church in Europe, in 1525, to this present time, many of the believers in this church have been sorely persecuted. They were compelled to flee from one country to another, and consequently have been greatly dispersed. In Switzerland, which is today a bulwark of freedom, persecution persisted for nearly three centuries. Only the larger movements -- one each century since the time they began -- will be given here.

1. From the Netherlands to Prussia - 1530

What is West Prussia today was a part of the kingdom of Poland in the sixteenth century. East Prussia was a duchy under the rule of Albrecht v. Brandenburg. It was due to the more tolerant attitude of these governments toward religious dissenters, to the holders of waste lands in the lowlands of the Vistula, and the persecution suffered in other parts of the continent that the persecuted sought and found refuge in these regions. As early as 1530 Dutch and Moravian Anabaptists are found near Danzig, Elbing, and Koenigsberg. In the years that followed thousands came, especially from the Netherlands.¹

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1. Friesen, J. John: An Outline of Mennonite History. Much of the above information on the movements of the Mennonites is obtained from the section "Major Mennonite Movements".

2. From Europe to America - 1683

At the invitation of William Penn, and under the leadership of Pastorius, thirteen Mennonite families from Krefeld, Germany, arrived on the English ship "Concord" in Philadelphia, October 6, 1683. On October 25 they began to lay the foundations of Germantown. This was the first organized Mennonite settlement in America -- and it was the beginning of German migrations to this country. The newcomers settled in the East, especially in Pennsylvania, and from there moved on into states farther west. The movement continued for more than one hundred years.

3. From Prussia to Russia - 1788

Increasing oppression in Prussia, caused a movement to begin early in 1788, when 230 families followed the invitation of Catherine II and left Danzig, Prussia, for the plains of the Ukraine in southern Russia. The first colony, Chortitza, was established on lands adjoining the Dnieper River. Another colony, Molotschna, grew up on the river Molotschna. During a span of more than a hundred years, these colonies spread through southern Russia and into Siberia.

4. From Russia to America - 1874

The introduction of compulsory military service throughout Russia caused a large immigration at this time. During the six years that followed migrations from the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies to the United States and Canada approximated 15,000 people. This figure, however, included Mennonites from Poland, Prussia, Galicia in Austria, and Volhynia in western Russia.

5. From Russia to Canada - 1923-28

More than 21,000 came to the provinces during these years.

The immediate cause was the Bolshevik Revolution, which deprived the individual, the family, and the church of property rights and of religious freedom. The Revolution meant serfdom and persecution.

6. From Russia to South America - 1930-32

This movement too, like that mentioned under the preceding heading of which it is a part, sprang from the Bolshevik Revolution. The movement, which came by way of Germany and China, took a direction different from the former because the door to Canada was closed. About 2,000 found a home in Brazil and another 2,000 in Paraguay.

7. From Holland and Germany to Paraguay - 1947-48

Through God's miraculous intervention 2,305 persecuted and homeless Mennonites arrived in Paraguay in February of 1947.¹ Many of these refugees had left their homes in Russia and Poland more than ten years ago in an attempt to escape persecution, exile and starvation. The Mennonite Central Committee on Relief was largely responsible for bringing these wanderers of the earth to South America. More than half of the 1600 Russian Mennonite refugees who were to be transported to Paraguay in 1948 left Bremerhaven on the S. S. General Heintzelman on February 24. Of these 860, 345 were children under 16 years of age, 286 were women, and 229 were men. The ship was to arrive at Buenos Aires soon after March 13. The remaining group in Europe is to sail very shortly.²

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1. "Hilfswerk und Flüchtling Transport", Gospel Tidings, v.36, no. 23, Dec. 15, 1947, p. 7.
2. "860 Russian Mennonite Refugees Sail For Paraguay", Gospel Tidings, v.37, no. 6, March 15, 1948, p. 1, 2.

E. Conclusion

This brief study has turned the pages of history, beginning with the birth of the Mennonite Church in Switzerland and followed by a similar birth report from Holland. The foundation stones of "holiness", the church as a fellowship of true believers, nonconformity, and non-resistance have also been pointed out.

Tertulian's well-known statement held true also for the Mennonites, "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the church." Because of the desire to implicitly obey the Word of God, there have been recorded seven major movements which were caused by the oppression of governments and authoritarian churches. This will surely serve to give a greater appreciation for the study of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren which is to follow in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EVANGELICAL MENNONITE BRETHREN

- A. Introduction
- B. The Birth of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren
- C. The Growing Pains of the Bruderthaler Church
- D. The Formal Organization of the Konferenz der
Vereinigten Mennoniten Brüder von Nord Amerika
- E. Early Missionary Interests and Activities
- F. Educational Developments
- G. Conference Publications
- H. Names of the Individual Churches
- I. Conclusion

CHAPTER III

THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EVANGELICAL MENNONITE BRETHREN

A. Introduction

Since the denomination known as the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren grew out of the fourth major movement of Mennonites described previously the attention of this chapter shall be focused on a part of the group which came to America from Russia in large bodies during the years between 1873 and 1880 and settled at Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Some of the factors which will be considered particularly are the birth, growth, formal organization, early missionary interests and activities, publications, and educational developments.

B. The Birth of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren

The quest of the Mennonites for religious liberty in the past several centuries has been gratified when they settled in the western hemisphere. With few exceptions those who came to American shores have remained and prospered.

1. The Coming of the Mennonite Settlers from Russia to Minnesota

The Mennonite settlement at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, was established by about one thousand eight hundred of the fifteen thousand Mennonites who came to America from Russia in 1873-1880. Their story goes back to the days in 1871 when the contented and prosperous Mennonite colonies in Russia were suddenly disturbed by rumors that the colonists were to be subjected to military service and a program

of Russianization. With minds still full of vivid memories of the long pilgrimage to avoid similar jeopardy to their liberties in Prussia it was natural for them to think of emigration to a new land of promise as a possible way out of their difficulties. Hence they began to look about for a new home where they might enjoy the privileges they held dear.

North America apparently offered the greatest and most attractive opportunities for no other continent seems to have been very seriously considered.

"Minnesota was one of the first of the American regions to become known to them as a prospective home, for in a petition for information about Canada presented on January 13, 1872, to the British Consul Schrab at Berdiansk on the Sea of Azov they stated that 'they had received a pamphlet in the German language on Minnesota with good information about that state'".¹

The next contact between the Mennonites and Minnesota occurred in the summer or fall of 1872 when three young men, sons of wealthy Mennonite farmers, made an independent trip of adventure to America. The return of the young travelers to Russia in the fall of 1872 had a marked influence on the emigration movement among their people. The sentiment continued to grow so that twelve deputies were selected to investigate the possibilities of settlement in America.² They left Russia in late April of 1873 and spent about two and one half months in their itinerary of investigation on the North American continent. Sometime in July or August thirty families in one of the newer Mennonite colonies located in the Crimean Peninsula decided not to await the return of the delegates and so they sold their farms, packed up their belongings and began the long journey to America.³ They arrived in New

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1. Schultz, F. P.: The Settlement of German Mennonites from Russia at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, p. 25.
2. Smith, C. H., The Mennonites, p. 253.
3. Schultz, op. cit., p. 38.

York at the very hour when the deputies were about to embark for their return journey to Russia. Thirteen of these families settled at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in the latter part of October, 1873.¹ This group was the magnet which kept a stream of people coming for about the next seven years.

The coming of the Mennonites was an important event in the history of Mountain Lake because they came in sufficient numbers to control and dominate the subsequent development of the community. However, the area in which they settled was not raw, uninhabited frontier country, untouched by American civilization. They could not bodily transplant the peculiar pattern of civilization which they had developed in their hermitic Russian colonies. They chose the middle road of compromise, adaptation, and modification so that Mountain Lake became an American Mennonite community rather than a reproduction of a typical Russian Mennonite community.²

2. The Establishment of the "Wall Church"

In common with practically all Protestant denominations the Mennonites have experienced an almost endless number of schisms from hair splitting doctrinal disputes to petty personal quarrels. Frequently divisions resulted from mere differences of opinion in non-essential matters such as dress, form of baptism, or details of church discipline or policy, but the most significant divisions were expres-

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1. Rempel, J. P.: "Statistisches über unsere Ansiedlung", Jubiläumsfeier zum Andenken an das Fünfzigjährige Bestehen der Mennonitischen Ansiedlung von Mountain Lake, Minnesota, p. 41. This volume, which also contains essays by other pioneers of that region, will hereafter be cited as Jubiläumsfeier.
2. Smith, C. H.: The Story of the Mennonites, p. 638, footnote, "These Mennonites from Russia of course were not Russian Slavs... They were Dutch racially; German, culturally; and Russian nationally."

sions of revolt by small but energetic minorities against the characteristic tendency of religion to crystalize and degenerate into rigid systems of ritual and formalism which is usually accompanied by loss of inner spiritual vitality and emphasis on personal experience as essential to true Christian living. Wherever the Mennonites settled, their history was full of divisions which were easily effected because of their highly de-centralized and democratic organization.

The Mennonites who settled at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, represented over fifty different Mennonite villages in Russia and nearly as many different individual churches.¹ During their first years of pioneer life they keenly felt the lack of organized churches but they tried to conserve their religious life by worship services conducted in homes in various parts of the community. As they became acquainted with each other at these neighborhood meetings they discussed the possibility of the establishment of regular church organizations. The great diversity of opinion was the chief difficulty in arriving at satisfactory agreements. Each individual wanted the new church to be modeled after the church to which he had belonged in his former home. Some of the problems were concerning the ceremony of foot-washing, written or oral sermons, audible or silent prayer, unison or harmonizing parts in singing and whether there should be missionary services or not.² Another hindrance was the lack of strong experienced leadership.

In the summer of 1876 a sizable group achieved a degree of unanimity that made feasible the establishment of the first Mennonite

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1. Cf. Schultz, op. cit., p. 79.

2. Balzer, J. J.: "Entstehung und Entwicklung unserer Gemeinden", Jubiläumssfeier, p. 23.

church body at Mountain Lake.¹ Bishop Wilhelm Ewert was called from Hillsboro, Kansas, to officiate at the organizational proceedings. These were completed on August 18, 1876, with the election of Aaron Wall to the office of Elder.² Prevailing economic conditions delayed the erection of a church building until 1880 so the six preachers who were members went to the various parts of the community each Sunday to conduct worship services. The constituency was known for many years as the Wall Church being named after the leader, Aaron Wall.

3. The Schism which lead to the Organization of the Bergfelder, Bethel, and Bruderthaler Churches.

To most of the Mennonites who settled in Minnesota their religion was commonly a matter of tradition. They were Mennonites because their parents had brought them up to be Mennonites. Joining the church and learning to observe the outward forms of faith were followed as a matter of course. Sitting through a Sunday morning church service which contributed little toward spiritual or aesthetic inspiration and uplift was the expected and habitual procedure. The congregational singing was in unison from song books without notes, using tunes which had been passed down from generation to generation. Instrumental and part-singing were forbidden. Untrained and unpaid preachers haltingly read the sermons from poorly written manuscripts copied literally from old Lutheran sermon books.³ Joining the church was an easy matter for the young people. All that was required was to attend the catechism classes from Easter until Pentecost, on which day they were baptized and received into the fellowship. Menno Simon's

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1. Balzer, op. cit., p. 23.
2. Schultz, op. cit., p. 79.
3. Balzer, op. cit., p. 24.

primary emphasis and requirement for church membership was scarcely mentioned, much less interpreted, and with few exceptions, never stressed.

These conditions were not universal in the community, however, for they varied from church to church. The Wall Church was also strongly affected by the character of its leader, Aaron Wall.¹ He was quite conservative in his insistence on outward forms, such as wearing of certain kinds of clothes, but he believed that true religion was more than just doing certain things. It was primarily concerned with the condition of man's inner life, and he therefore preached conversion to some extent.² Since the majority of the members were content with the bare essentials of outward religious form, his lack of persuasive power failed to produce his convictions in them.

There was a notable increase of interest in the deeper meanings of religion in the Mennonite community during the eighties. This stimulation manifested itself in the spontaneous organization of neighborhood Sunday schools and Bible classes which were not directly associated with the churches. In 1888 upon the suggestion of Elder Wall a Sunday school of six classes was organized in the Wall Church in connection with the church itself.³ This school prospered for a short time and brought a larger attendance of young people to the church, but some of the conservative old members of the church objected and openly protested. They gave as their complaint the constant murmur of voices during the session and demanded the cessation of Sunday school work. This precipitated a crisis in the church that

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1. Cf. Schultz, op. cit., p. 83.

2. Ibid.

3. Hartzler, J. E.: Education Among the Mennonites of America, p. 98.

resulted in a three-fold division of the congregation.

The causes for this schism lay deeper than the Sunday school question, for there had been friction in the congregation for some years. Elder Wall, observing the manifestations of the works of the flesh and sensing that there were unsaved members in the church, denounced these inconsistencies from the pulpit but without marked success.¹ He became more and more convinced that he would be doing wrong if he tolerated such conditions. He himself repented and earnestly asked the church to do the same. The reading of an address written by himself containing a list of the various sins which had crept into the church presented an opportunity for the people to repent. Instead of confession and repentance there issued forth debate and antagonism and when the Sunday school question brought the crisis, Elder Wall, unable to prevent the break, resigned his office. About one third of the congregation followed his leadership in the establishment of the church that came to be known as the Bruderthaler Church. The two other groups established separate churches which were named the Bergfelder and Bethel churches. Both of these became General Conference Mennonite churches. The Bruderthaler Church, as will be seen later, became the mother church of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.

C. The Growing Pains of the Bruderthaler Church

The Bruderthaler Church had a very humble beginning. Few in number were those who were willing to take upon themselves the reproach of Christ. In the eyes of others the group was a disgrace

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1. Friesen, C.: "Vorrede zum Kirchenbuche der Bruderthaler Gemeinde," Der Evangelisationsbote--Jubiläumsnummer, May 15, 1936, p. 3.

and their leader was generally termed "a hireling".¹ Under these and similar slanderings, the following ministers of the Word of God were more closely knit together: Elder Aaron Wall, Johann Becker, Heinrich Fast Sr., Peter Schultz, Heinrich Fast Jr., and deacon Cornelius Friesen. These leaders and a group of fifteen families met together in their homes for spiritual fellowship.

It was soon evident that the grace of God attended the functioning of this group. God's blessing was manifest in a particular way at times when new members were received into the fellowship. The Holy Spirit moved them to prayer, praise and thanksgiving. After much prayer and supplication, and under much abuse and contempt, the Bruderthaler Church of Mountain Lake was founded in January, 1889.²

1. The Emphasis on Christian Belief

One writer says of this church "this group was the most spiritual and evangelistic of the three new churches...".³ A noteworthy principle held by them was that everyone who asked to be received into their fellowship was required to give a public testimony of his conversion experience and present relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Previously, the attendance at the catechism classes from Easter until Pentecost was the only prerequisite to church membership. After this time it was considered justifiable to omit the customary catechism instruction entirely and to emphasize in its place a genuine heart-searching conversion which would result from a sense of guilt and repentance. The young converts were dealt with personally and given hours of thorough instruction where opportunity was

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1. Cf. Friesen, op. cit., p. 3.
2. Ibid.
3. Schultz, op. cit., p. 85.

given to them to become well acquainted with the doctrine of salvation.¹

The importance they placed on prayer was striking in contrast to previous emphases. Both men and women were to be given opportunity to participate in public prayer in all services. Prayer was to be offered in a standing as well as in a kneeling position.²

2. The Emphasis on Christian Practice

They soon found it advisable to introduce Bible study classes and to renew the work of the Sunday school. The latter was established not for the children only, but for the participation of the entire group, adults as well as children, old as well as young. The Sunday school which had hitherto made but little progress now became an integral part of the church's program.

Active interest characterized the Sunday school which was conducted on Sunday afternoons. The noon hours were utilized by the young people in voluntary practice of songs. The use of new songs in the rehearsal gradually thrust into the background the old "Gesang Buch".³

It was further considered well to use the kiss as a sign of brotherhood when members met and parted. Expressions of greeting used were "Peace", or "Peace be with you" and "God be with you" or "To God entrusted" on parting.⁴

The church exercised strict discipline in an effort to rebuke the evils of the day, such as smoking, drinking, and dancing.

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1. Cf. Friesen, op. cit., p. 3.

2. Ibid.

3. Rempel, G. S.; Editor: A Historical Sketch of the Churches of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, p. 31.

4. Ibid.

These were considered a sin against God and the church.¹

3. The Ordinance of Baptism

They found it necessary to alter the form of baptism to conform more closely to the Holy Scriptures. Before, the rite had been administered in the church by the method of sprinkling. Now it was decided that baptism should be administered in the river, the elder pouring the water with both hands over the candidate's head, while the candidate kneels in the water. Prior to and after the baptismal service, while the candidates dress the congregation spends the time in the singing of hymns.²

After the return to the church from the place of baptism, the elder prays over the candidates while they kneel and the congregation remains standing. The young believers are then welcomed by the entire church, with a warm hand clasp and a kiss, the brethren by the brethren and the sisters by the sisters. In the same manner also the members of other congregations were received into the fellowship after having given a testimony of their faith and a promise to assist in the edification of the church.³

4. The "House of Prayer"

The Lord God manifestly blessed and prospered the Bruderthaler Church so that in the same year of their beginning they were able to build an edifice for worship. The group agreed to name the dedicated building the "House of Prayer". The nucleus of believers increased rapidly in numbers so that in the next year, in 1890, the

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1. Cf. Rempel, op. cit., p. 31.

2. Ibid.

3. Cf. Friesen, op. cit., p. 4.

present larger structure was erected and dedicated.¹

5. The Desire for a Larger Fellowship

The Lord had given to them such rich spiritual blessings that there arose a deep desire to share with others these things which had been shown them. Their first task was to locate a group who were of a similar mind. Elder Wall then made a trip to Henderson, Nebraska, to confer with the then well-known Elder Isaac Peters. Elder Peters had similarly been the organizing hand in establishing a church with like ideals and motives. His followers also had withdrawn themselves from one larger fellowship of Mennonites who had come from Russia in 1874, and had settled in York and Hamilton counties, Nebraska.²

Elder Isaac Peters had held the position as elder in this one large congregation, with Rev. Heinrich Epp Sr., as the assistant pastor.³ The task was exceedingly difficult because the members came from so many different Mennonite churches in Russia. Among them were vital as well as nominal Christians. Here, as in the Mountain Lake group, the works of the flesh were clearly manifest. There were not the desired results from the repeated admonition to repent of sin. With the enforcement of stricter discipline came added opposition to Elder Peters. He finally decided to withdraw and organize a group that would be willing to subscribe to higher standards. These would include the new birth as requisite to church membership and the living of a separated life.

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1. Cf. Rempel, op. cit., p. 31.

2. Ibid., p. 39.

3. Ibid.

Thus, it was seen that they agreed on certain principles. First, there was the emphasis on conversion and the new life in Christ as essential to church membership; second, the stress on the fact that the every day life must manifest a clean walk; and third, to submit oneself to the practice of strict Biblical church discipline. Elder Isaac Peters and Elder Aaron Wall were ready to unite their respective congregations in a conference bond. The purpose of the association of their churches was for their mutual edification through conferences and to profit from the visits of itinerant ministers. They decided to meet together for their first annual conference in the fall of that same year.¹

D. The Formal Organization of the Konferenz der Vereinigten
Mennoniten Brüder von Nord Amerika

1. The First Conference

The first conference was held in the Bruderthaler Church at Mountain Lake, Minnesota on October 14, 1889. Elder Isaac Peters acted in the capacity of the chairman of those sessions.² It has been difficult to obtain much detailed information about that first conference and those which followed in the next ten years, for as far as is known no written records remain of the conference sessions held between 1889 and 1900, except one handwritten secretary's report from the 1898 conference held at Inman, Kansas on October 24, and a printed Constitution der Vereinigten Mennoniten Brüder Von Nord Amerika.³ It

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1. Regier, D. A.: Jubiläumsfeier, p. 5.

2. Ibid.

3. The handwritten report of the 1898 conference is in the writer's possession, as well as a copy of the Constitution of 1889.

is doubtful that representatives from church groups of any other locality were present at the sessions of the initial conference in 1889. Records which date back to the early twentieth century which refer to that conference mention only Elder Isaac Peters' Ebenezer Church and Elder Aaron Wall's Bruderthaler Church as being included.¹

The conducting of such conferences was termed absolutely essential for the basic reason that such a great variety of church backgrounds existed within the two groups. Besides that there was the problem of distance between these two church groups. Such gatherings afforded opportunities for the frank discussion of their important questions and problems. Many of them were related to home and foreign mission work. Special stress was laid upon evangelistic work and therefore, Rev. Heinrich E. Fast was appointed to the position of the itinerant minister.

2. The First Constitution

The Konstitution der Konferenz der Vereinigten Mennoniten Brüder von Nord Amerika was printed in the German language, as were all the reports of the early conferences, for all the sessions were conducted in that language. As far as is known this constitution was adopted at that first conference on October 14, 1889. It would seem appropriate here to mention briefly some of the important things contained in it.

a. The Motto

"Speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ." Ephesians 4:15.

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1. Regier, Jubiläumsfeier, op. cit., p. 5.

b. The Name

The name of this union shall be: "Konferenz der Vereinigten Mennoniten Brüder von Nord Amerika" (Conference of the United Mennonite Brethren of North America).

c. The Foundation Stones

The basic principles of this union are: to teach and to believe in the repentance and forgiveness of sins; to baptize upon the confession of a living faith; to manifest in word and deed the teaching of non-resistance; to practice church discipline according to the Word of God; not to take oath; not to join any secret society; and to mutually build up one another upon the God-given foundation, Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 3:11.

d. The Purpose

The purpose of this Conference is not only to strengthen and to build up one another's faith, but also commonly to join in the great task of world evangelism.

e. The Officers

The officers of this Conference are the following: chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and treasurer. Their election and duties are carefully described.

f. The Committees

The three committees with three members each, consisting of a chairman, secretary, and treasurer, are to be elected from the members of the Conference. The standing committees are the missions committee, the evangelism committee, and the program committee.

g. The Conference Meetings

The Conference gatherings are to be regular annual meetings. Each year the conference determines the place of meeting for the fol-

lowing year. The time of the annual conference is decided upon by the program committee and the church which is to be host to the conference.¹

h. Representation of the Churches

Each church constituency was to be represented by delegates in proportion to the number of its members. The ratio was one delegate for twenty members.²

i. Regulations for Missionary Candidates

Young people who have felt the call to missionary service shall present themselves to the mission board in obedience to the Word of God. It is required, however, before they can be accepted that they possess a satisfactory educational preparation. Then it will be expected of them to relate how they came to desire to become mission workers. They shall be ordained after they have been examined and accepted.³

3. The New Constitution

On June 13, 1922 the new Constitution and Discipline were adopted at the annual conference held in the Bruderthaler Bethaus (church) at Chinook, Montana.⁴ At the same time the old constitution was revoked. On June 13, 1923, at the annual session of the conference at the Bruderthaler Church near Meade, Kansas, it was decided to formulate a Confession of Faith and then to have it printed with the Constitution and Discipline and Church Rules after the committee

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1. Constitution der Konferenz der Vereinigten Mennoniten Brüder von Nord Amerika, p. 9.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid, p. 10.

4. 29. Jahrbuch der Wehrlosen Mennoniten Brüder in Christo, p. 19.

had thoroughly re-examined it.¹ In 1941, the Constitution, Church Rules, Discipline, and the Confession of Faith were revised and translated into the English language.²

E. Early Missionary Interests and Activities

God's plan since the creation of the world was that the glory of God should be made manifest upon the earth. Satan tried to destroy His purpose when he succeeded in causing Adam to sin. After God sent the Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to pay the ransom for lost mankind, He commissioned those who knew Him to proclaim the love of God and manifest His glory.

1. Mission Work in General

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren early demonstrated a missionary spirit in spite of all the problems and hardships which were theirs as a result of pioneer life. In their first conferences evangelism was one of the important topics of discussion. Cornelius Friesen says in his report written in 1901 that as early as 1890 two ministers were sent on mission errands to South Dakota.³ Rev. Heinrich E. Fast Jr. was appointed to act as the itinerant minister or evangelist. Another report says that repeated invitations came from Steinbach, Manitoba, South Dakota, and other places for ministerial visits and evangelistic work.⁴ Later, Rev. Heinrich E. Fast Sr. was also appointed as traveling minister. These brethren alternately served the group in Manitoba with preaching services, baptismal ser-

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1. 30. Jahrbuch der Wehrlosen Mennoniten Brüder in Christo, p. 13.
2. Constitution of the Conference of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, p. 39.
3. Cf. Friesen, op. cit., p. 4.
4. Cf. Regier, Jubiläumsfeier, p. 5.

vices, and communion. A few years later the work was established at two different places in South Dakota, at Marion and near Avon.¹

As God was visibly blessing this ministry, the interests of the churches continued to grow and to develop toward a broader outreach. On the 22nd of October, 1900, the specific question discussed at the conference held at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, was "Können wir uns heute dahin einigen, uns gemeinsam einer Missionsgesellschaft anzuschließen? Und wenn das, welche würde dann wohl die gewünschte und zweckentsprechendste sein?"² (Are we prepared now to mutually affiliate ourselves with a missionary society? If so, which one would be the desired one and purposefully adequate?) It was then recommended that a number of different mission societies would be personally investigated in order to become acquainted with them. Rev. Heinrich Fast Sr. and Mr. H. P. Unruh were appointed to make a trip to Indiana for the preliminary inquiry.³

The following year when the conference met at Loretta, South Dakota, the question of affiliation with another missionary society was again brought up for discussion. The common agreement was that they were not ready to make a definite decision, but to continue the investigation of various societies and for the individual churches to support mission work as they were led by the Holy Spirit. The new and larger committee elected included the following personnel: Elder Aaron Wall, Rev. Heinrich Fast Sr., Elder Cornelius M. Wall, and Rev. Johann P. Epp.⁴

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1. Cf. Regier, Jubiläumsfeier, op. cit., p. 5.
2. Konferenz Verhandlungen der am 18,19,22, u. 23. Oktober abgehalten offenen S.S. und innern Konferenz im Bruderthaler Bethause, Mountain Lake, Minnesota, Anno 1900, p. 4.
3. Ibid.
4. Bericht von der jährlichen Konferenz, abgehalten am 21. Oktober 1901 in dem Bethause bei Loretta, S. Dak., p. 12.

In the conference held from the ninth through the fourteenth of October, 1902, at the Ebenezer Behaus (church), Jansen, Nebraska, the question arose whether the union would be willing and was strong enough to support and send forth young people into Christian service. Following a time of earnest heart-searching, they agreed that they were willing and that the Lord would undergird them in such enterprise. Immediately a young couple, Abraham Wienses from Texas, presented themselves as willing to undertake preparation for such service as the Conference would desire. Their offer was accepted and they were recommended to the committee for further action.¹

In the year 1903 at the annual conference there were presented to the mission board three more candidates, namely, Mr. and Mrs. Peter A. Friesen and Mr. David Fast, all from Mountain Lake.² During the next few years Mr. and Mrs. Wiens and Mr. and Mrs. Friesen did considerable traveling and sought to make the needed preparation for further mission work. At the conference held in Jansen, Nebraska, in 1906 it was decided that the Wienses were to be sent to work with the Chicago Home Mission and that the Friesens were to go to India under the American Mennonite Mission.³ Mr. David Fast was not mentioned again.

2. Home Mission Work

Until the last two decades the home mission work was more or less concentrated in the Chicago area. The Mission to which the Wienses went to work was opened by the Defenseless Mennonite Brethren

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1. Beschlüsse der Jansen, Jefferson Co., Neb., abgehaltenen...Konferenz 1902, p. 12, 13.
2. Beschlüsse der am 9 bis 12. November 1903...Konferenz, p. 6.
3. Protokoll...1906, p. 8.

in Christ of North America in the spring of 1907 at the corner of Hayne Avenue and 33rd street under the name of Hayne Avenue Mission.¹ After one year of operation at this place the Mission moved to the corner of Oakley and 35th street and received the new name of Mennonite Rescue Mission. The work was faithfully carried on in this place for some years, but the rent becoming increasingly higher some of the brethren of the conference decided to purchase a permanent residence for the mission work. This building which later became the property of the conference was situated at 3404 South Oakley Avenue. On May 7, 1912 this new hall was dedicated and the work was taken up with new zeal and energy. God honored the efforts which were put forth so that the first baptismal and communion services were held on December 8, 1912. Rev. A. F. Wiens superintended the work until September 1, 1916, when the present superintendent, Rev. G. P. Schultz, took over the responsibilities.² God continued to prosper the mission work so that in a few years the mission hall again proved to be too small. On November 9, 1919, the Mission moved to its present location on the corner of Lincoln and 34th Place to a brick church building which the Conference had purchased. The name today is Brighton Mennonite Church.³

The Happy Hour Mission had its beginning in the fall of 1908 on the South side of Chicago.⁴ Rev. A. H. Leaman and Rev. J. K. Gerig were the founders of the mission. Rev. G. P. Schultz was called to superintend the functioning of the mission. The work was extremely difficult among some of the most degraded people in the city. God

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1. Rempel, op. cit., p. 70.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 69.

used the workers in that mission to lead many sinners into the way of life. During the first World War the rent for this mission hall was greatly increased and finally rented by a business man so that the mission work was discontinued at this place.

In 1916 after the Wienses left the work of the Brighton Mission Church in the hands of Rev. G. P. Schultz they looked around on the south-west side of Chicago where a mission was needed.¹ The conference had granted them permission to open another. Mr. and Mrs. Wiens purchased a building in a very needy area. This work was not fully supported by the conference, but each church in the conference was to send them one offering a year. The workers here labored under great difficulties. Not until 1921 was a baptismal service held, when one girl was baptized. In 1925 a group of six were baptized.² Thus, the work grew slowly at first. Since then the numbers have increased greatly and the building has been enlarged. Rev. John Neufeld now superintends the work of the Mennonite Bible Mission which is presently under the auspices of the Mennonite Brethren Conference.

3. Foreign Mission Work

a. India

Rev. and Mrs. Peter A. Friesen were the first foreign missionaries from the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference going to India in 1906 under the American Mennonite Mission. With the exception of few furloughs they have labored in India ever since. They are not now supported by the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.

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1. Cf. Rempel, op. cit., p. 81.

2. Ibid, p. 82.

b. China

From 1914 until 1920 while Rev. G. T. Thiessen carried on colportage and evangelization work, he felt a growing conviction of his call to service in China.¹ In 1920 Mr. and Mrs. Thiessen were sent to China to labor in the China Mennonite Mission field in the Shantung and Honan provinces. This work had been founded by Rev. and Mrs. Henry C. Bartel in 1906.² Mr. Thiessen's special task was to give educational instruction to the children of the missionaries on the field. Mrs. Thiessen devoted her time to work with the Chinese women. During their second period of service they supervised the mission stations at Yucheng.³

Rev. and Mrs. John J. Schmidt had worked with good success on the China Mennonite Mission field since 1906. In 1920 the conference felt they were strong enough to take over the responsibility of their financial support. Rev. and Mrs. Schmidt retired from foreign missionary service in 1927.⁴

In 1924 Miss Aganetha Regier was sent to work together with Miss Mary Schmidt at the Ningling station of the China Mennonite field.

The conference had great joy in sending forth Rev. and Mrs. Loyal Bartel to China in 1928. Mr. Bartel being the son of the founder of the mission and having grown up in that country had the advantage of the knowledge of language and customs of the Chinese. Mr. Bartel received all his higher education in the United States. Upon his return to China he became the assistant superintendent of the

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1. Cf. Rempel, op. cit., p. 101.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 105.

China Mennonite Mission field and the president of the Bible Training School at Tsaohsien in Shantung.¹

c. Africa

The African mission field came to the foreground in 1924 when Miss Kornelia Unrau was sent to the Belgian Congo under the Congo Inland Mission.² After she had served one term she realized the great necessity for possessing a nurse's training. Therefore, she took time out to acquire a full nurse's course before returning for her second term of service.

Rev. and Mrs. Frank J. Enns, who were members of the Bethel church at Irman, Kansas, were sent to Africa under the Congo Inland Mission in 1931. Previously, they had had a successful term of service there. Their support was divided between the conference and their home church. Since the conference felt that its own members should have the preference, their support from the conference was withdrawn after the second term.³

In 1938, Miss Aganetha Friesen, a graduate nurse, joined Miss Kornelia Unrau and the Ennses in Africa under the Congo Inland Mission.⁴ Ministering to the physical bodies of the natives also provided opportunities to meet spiritual needs with the Gospel of Christ.

F. Educational Developments

1. The Bruderthaler Church School

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren early thought it neces-

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1. Cf. Rempel, op. cit., p. 102.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

sary to provide for the spiritual and educational development of the children. Before the establishment of the public schools in the Mountain Lake community there were a number of schools held in private homes where instruction was given to the children of the neighborhood. The numerous schools held in private homes were very helpful, yet seemed unsatisfactory as a whole. One of the difficulties was that they did not reach enough children. Besides, most of the teachers were men who were at the same time farmers, with little financial backing and of limited educational qualifications. Teaching in many cases became something of a side issue.

Under these circumstances it was not difficult to see the need of a better system. Elder Aaron Wall was among the first to see and express the need. It was in 1893 that the Mountain Lake Bruderthaler Church organized its own parochial school. In 1896 it built a three story school building with dormitory facilities and living quarters for the teacher and his family.¹ Elder Aaron Wall endowed the school with \$1,000.00, the income of which was to go toward current expenses.²

The goal and purpose of this school was to create interest in religion and the Church; to instruct the young in the fundamental doctrines of the Church and the Bible; as well as to teach them the German language.³

The Bible was always given the central place in the course of instruction. Great emphasis was placed on Bible history (Bib-lische Geschichte). Other courses which were taught were German

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1. Cf. Schultz, op. cit., p. 102.

2. Hartzler, J. E.: Education Among the Mennonites of America, p. 114.

3. Ibid., p. 115.

grammar, German language, arithmetic, geography, church history, general history, singing and some English reading. At first most of the courses were taught in German, but later one half were offered in English.

Mr. A. J. Becker was the only one of the teachers who had more than an elementary education. The foremost qualifications for the teachers were those of a good character and a fair knowledge of the Bible. The salaries were meager, not over \$60.00 per month, until 1921-22 when Miss Maria Wiebe, the first woman teacher in the school, received \$100.00 per month.¹

The school fulfilled a definite need of the church in the thirty years of its existence. However, there were definite limitations connected with it also. The fact that the German language was the mother tongue of most of the pupils and a large percentage of the teaching was done in that language made it difficult later when the same pupils entered the public schools. They were lacking in a satisfactory knowledge of the English language.

2. The Bible Schools

Realizing the need for a Bible School to train young people as workers for the Kingdom of God, the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church at Meade, Kansas, opened a school during the second decade of the twentieth century. Rev. G. T. Thiessen was the instructor during the short time of its existence. A committee, with Rev. J. E. Wiens as chairman, took upon themselves the responsibilities connected with the re-opening of the school in 1936.²

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1. Cf. Hartzler, op. cit., p. 115.

2. Cf. Rempel, op. cit., p. 87.

Two problems which were the greatest obstacles in promoting such a school were: the financial need of the school and the securing of an instructor. Needless, to say, both of these were solved. The students were asked to contribute \$2.25 per month as tuition and Rev. J. J. Gerbrandt who was then teaching in a Marion County public school gave his consent to come and instruct in the Bible School.¹ This was a test of faith on the part of the teacher for his salary was small.

Thirteen students enrolled when the school opened in October, 1936. The next year twenty-one enrolled. The school has continued to grow so that now it is called the Meade Bible Academy with four full-time instructors.

The Bible School at Jansen, Nebraska, served its Mennonite constituency for nearly ten years beginning in 1933 and terminating when its superintendent, Rev. H. P. Fast, who was at that same time pastor of the Ebenezer Mennonite Church at Jansen, accepted the pastorate of the Steinbach, Manitoba, Church.² Misses Myrna Gage and Anna Fast were also instructors. The school offered a three year course which when completed entitled the student to a diploma from the Evangelical Teacher Training Association.

Both of these Bible Schools have been effective in furnishing to their respective churches better church members and more thoroughly equipped Sunday School teachers.

G. Conference Publications

1. The Year Books

As has been mentioned before, the reports of the early con-

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1. Cf. Rempel, op. cit., p. 87.

2. Ibid., p. 86.

ferences between 1889 and 1900 were not published in pamphlet form, but were given only as news reports in another newspaper, "The Herold der Wahrheit",¹ and hence have been lost to posterity. Since the year 1900 a booklet has been printed following each conference held. These have contained reports of the issues discussed and the decisions made. They have appeared under various titles such as "Berichte", "Beschlüsse", "Protokoll", and "Jahrbuch". Until recently they were published completely in the German language, because the meetings of the conference were in that language. Since 1941 the conference reports have been published under the name of the "Year Book of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren". From 1939 on about half of the reports in the year books began to appear in English until in the 1947 year book only a few pages are given in German.

2. The Gospel Tidings

During the annual conference held in 1909 a vital issue came to the forefront. Rev. J. A. Wall discussed the question of whether the conference should issue some kind of a periodical leaflet.² As the number of conference churches was increasing it was felt that something should be done to keep all of them informed on the various events happening in the churches and also to serve as a channel for making public announcements.

Because the feeling for the publication of such a leaflet had grown strong during the year previous to the 1909 conference, the decision was made to proceed with the plans. Rev. J. C. Wall and Mr. H. C. Unruh were elected to the positions of editor and assistant

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1. Wall, J. C.: "Die Entstehung des 'Ev-Boten' und seine Geschichte", in Der Evangelisationsbote--Jubiläumsnummer, May 15, 1936, p. 5.
2. Protokoll der Sonntagsschul Konvention und Zwangigsten Konferenz, p. 20.

editor respectively.¹ They were authorized to bring into existence a monthly leaflet which was to be called the "Evangelisationsbote".² This paper is today published bi-weekly and called "The Gospel Tidings".

H. Names of the Individual Churches

Until the name of the Conference was changed to Evangelical Mennonite Brethren in 1937, the names of the churches were either Ebenezer or Bruderthaler. Churches founded by Elder Isaac Peters took on the name Ebenezer and those founded by Elder Aaron Wall the name Bruderthaler. In recent years the churches which joined the conference did not use either of the names, but only the title of the conference, namely, Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.

I. Conclusion

Following the struggle of pioneer life in a new and strange country births of various institutions were numerous. This chapter has given a glimpse of the birth, growth, and development of one of the many Mennonite denominations. As the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren grew in size and number their interests increased accordingly in various channels. They undertook home and foreign mission work, established schools, and the publication of the Gospel Tidings. Throughout all this was seen their spiritual emphasis in word and deed.

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1. Protokoll der Zwangigsten Konferenz, 1909, p. 20.
2. Ibid., p. 21.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENT STATUS WITH A VIEW TO THE FUTURE

- A. Introduction
- B. The Present Constituency of the
Evangelical Mennonite Brethren
- C. The Missionary Activity
- D. The Educational Developments
- E. The Youth Organizations
- F. The Relief Program
- G. Other Current Issues and Trends
- H. Conclusion

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENT STATUS WITH A VIEW TO THE FUTURE

A. Introduction

Having traced through the historical background of the Mennonites in Europe and America and having seen the origin, growth and development of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren from the time of their inception among other denominations, it is well to pause and consider their present status. One needs to ascertain the possibilities for their future development and to become aware of lurking dangers which might lead to unexpected catastrophe. It is, therefore, the purpose of this chapter to examine the extent of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren constituency, their missionary activity, further educational developments, youth organizations, their relief program, and the most recent and important trends.

B. The Present Constituency of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren

God has graciously blessed the ministry of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren during the fifty-eight years of existence and growth. The two churches which were united in a conference bond on October 14, 1889, have had seventeen more congregations added to their fellowship.¹ They have grown from a handful of members until they now total two thousand and seventy-nine.² Their sphere of service has been greatly increased due to the enlarged vision of the need for the

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1. See Table of Churches in Year Book, 1947, p. 45.

2. Year Book of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, 1947, p. 45.

spreading of the Gospel of Christ and also the financial ability to support an ever-growing program of evangelism.

The churches of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren have been divided into four districts according to geographical location. Each of these districts has as its superintendent one of the pastors in its district.¹ All the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Churches and mission stations in Canada belong to district number one. Churches and mission stations in California and Oregon comprise district two. District three includes the churches and mission stations in Montana, South Dakota, Minnesota, Michigan, and Illinois. Churches in Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas belong to district four.

C. The Missionary Activity

In the providence of God the scope of missionary activity has been vastly extended since the early days of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. In a glance over the list of the present mission fields it would seem that home missions have received more emphasis for the number of their stations has increased in greater proportion than those of foreign missions. The constituent churches have shared this broadened interest by supplying Christian workers and in giving liberally of moral, spiritual, and financial support. It has been interesting to note that the budget for home and foreign missions has increased from a little over five thousand dollars in 1938 to forty-five thousand dollars in 1947.² There is hope of a continued growth of interest in missions because of the large number of young

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1. See Table of Districts and Superintendents in Year Book, 1947, p. 4.
2. 44. Jahrbuch der Evangelischen Mennoniten Brüder, p. 25; cf. Year Book of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, 1947, p. 8.

people now preparing for full-time Christian service. A closer view of the home and foreign missions will give a clearer picture of the present situation and possibilities for future developments.

1. Home Missions

As has been shown in a preceding chapter, the earliest home mission activities were concentrated in two different phases of work. From the time of the birth of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren the itinerant minister played an important part in the life of the constituent churches and scattered groups of Mennonites. Gradually the itinerant minister faded out of the picture. City mission work was first begun in Chicago with Rev. and Mrs. A. F. Wiens. The Brighton Mission which was first operated by the Wienses is now an independent church and shepherded by Rev. G. P. Schultz. Although there is considerable emphasis on mission work in this church it is no longer regarded as one of the home mission fields.

In a recent issue of the "Gospel Tidings" two foreign mission fields and seven home mission fields were listed as the fields of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.¹ All of the home mission fields are fairly young in their development. Brief mention will be made of each of these.

When the community around Fairholme, Saskatchewan, Canada, was settled in the late 1920's a group of Mennonites joined the settlers. They had come from a variety of church backgrounds. Before long there was expressed the desire for fellowship in worship. Rev. John H. Klassen was one of the early ministers of that group. In 1935 the group was formally organized with a nucleus of twenty-five

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1. Anonymous: "Our Fields", Gospel Tidings, v. 36, no. 21, Nov. 15, 1947, p. 1.

members.¹ Having met in the various homes for worship for several years they felt the need for a church building. After due consideration and prayer a group of ten men ventured into the woods to cut down and to deliver to the sawmill sufficient trees for the lumber. The whole undertaking required much faith, courage, and labor. All the furniture was handmade. The labor was donated. The only things which were bought were the nails, doors, windows, and chimney materials.²

Regular Sunday school classes, Sunday morning worship services, prayer meetings, and young people's gatherings are conducted by the workers in charge of the mission at Fairholme. Since its establishment the mission has become the center of missionary activity in the surrounding communities. Although this work is under the supervision of the conference of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren it is directly responsible to the Scripture Mission sponsored by the Langham and Dalmeny, Saskatchewan, Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Churches.³

The Floodwood Bible Chapel stands out as a light house in a large community of unchurched people in northern Minnesota. The workers use the public address system to broadcast from the chapel various parts of their services, but especially to broadcast records of Gospel music preceding and following their regular Sunday evening services. The attendance at their services has been excellent, in fact, it almost doubled last summer (1947).⁴ It became necessary to

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1. Cf. Rempel, op. cit., p. 73.

2. Anonymous: "Fairholme, Saskatchewan", Gospel Tidings, v. 36, no. 21, Nov. 15, 1947, p. 4.

3. Ibid.

4. Anonymous: "Floodwood, Minn.", Gospel Tidings, v. 36, no. 21, Nov. 15, 1947, p. 6.

arrange for more Sunday school rooms. The basement of the chapel was renovated to give more class room. The greatest success of the mission work at Floodwood has come as a result of the religious instruction classes in the public schools in that town and in the nearby villages. The summer camps conducted for the children have proved highly successful. The pastor and one or more full-time workers are more than occupied with the constantly growing ministry of the Floodwood Bible Chapel.

Proclaiming the Gospel of Christ among the back-woods people who have remained in old logging camps in Upper Michigan has been a most discouraging task to a young missionary couple.¹ Channing and Randville are the centers in their field. The Randville Bible Church has sixteen members.² Much effort has been put forth to evangelize these neglected areas through the distribution of Gospel portions and tracts, daily vacation Bible schools, street meetings, evangelistic services, and through the regular church services. The work is growing slowly but surely.

One married couple and two single women have been engaged in full-time mission work among the Sioux Indians in the Poplar, Montana, community.³ Even though this work is less than four years old it has made great strides in its program of evangelism. Every day during the school year the noon-hour Bible classes are conducted by the two missionary women. These are held in their house which is only one-half block from the public school. The Calvary Gospel

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1. Fast, Leander: "Channing, Michigan," Gospel Tidings, v. 36, no. 21, Nov. 15, 1947, p. 5.
2. Year Book, 1947, p. 45.
3. Anonymous: "Poplar, Montana", Gospel Tidings, v. 36, no. 21, Nov. 15, 1947, p. 4.

Chapel was dedicated on August 31, 1947.¹ Sunday services are conducted in the Chapel. Weekday classes, Sunday school, and worship services are also held in the nearby villages of Brockton and Riverside. The response of the adult Indian has been disheartening, but the work with the children has been encouraging. Recently several Indians accepted the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour. They have realized there the need of drawing the young believers into a closer fellowship and, therefore, have considered the possibility of organizing a church.² As has been seen, Poplar is already the center for extended missionary activities in the surrounding villages. By God's grace and as His children are faithful the work will continue to prosper.

Establishing Sunday schools and worship services in towns which sprang up like mushrooms during the war have lacked that permanent quality which prevails in a more stable community. With a constantly shifting population the progress of the mission work in Roscoe and Orange Cove, California, has been slow. The work at Roscoe is the older of the two stations. The newly built "Roscoe Church of the Bible" has already become too small, so that it necessitated having one of the Sunday school classes in an adjoining building.³ The Sunday school has almost doubled its attendance within the last year.⁴ The workers employ the means of the Sunday school, Christian Endeavor meetings, boys and girls clubs, house visitation, and dinners to bring in the unchurched. Copies of the Gospels of John and many tracts have been distributed. Quite a number of souls have been saved

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1. Dick, H. H.: "Mission News", Gospel Tidings, v. 36, no. 17, Sept. 15, 1947, p. 3.
2. Dick, H. H.: "Mission News", Gospel Tidings, v. 37, no. 6, Mar. 15, 1948, p. 2.
3. Year Book, 1947, p. 21.
4. Ibid., p. 36.

and have affiliated with the church. The membership now stands at thirty.¹ Cottage prayer meetings have unified the believers.

The house visitation and child evangelism efforts on the part of the workers at Orange Cove, California, have proved so successful that there too, the chapel has become too small for the Sunday school classes.² First they resorted to the use of an adjoining building for some of the classes which soon became inadequate. Finally they turned to the use of a tent for the additional classes. However, it was too hot in the summer to be comfortable in a tent, so a plan was submitted to the Mission Board of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren for the building of a larger chapel.³ A recent evangelistic emphasis brought about twenty-nine decisions for Christ.⁴ Here, too, there has been realized the need for an organized body of believers, that is, a church.

"The work in Winnipeg, Manitoba, is encouraging" writes one of the workers in a recent letter to the Mission Board.⁵ The Lord is blessing the services. The average attendance at the Sunday morning service is about sixty. Other activities in the chapel are the Sunday evening services, mid-week prayer meetings, young people's gatherings, and choir practices.⁶ The primary purpose in opening a mission church in Winnipeg was to offer opportunities of fellowship and service for Mennonite young people employed or attending schools in that city. Advantageous circumstances have provided favorable occasions for Chris-

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1. Year Book, 1947, p. 45.

2. Ibid., p. 21.

3. Ibid.

4. Dick, H. H.: "Mission News", Gospel Tidings, v. 37, no. 6, Mar. 15, 1948, p. 2.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

tian service. Besides the resident pastor there are now two women missionaries working full-time. The latter are busily engaged in house visitation and child evangelism work.

Nearly everywhere that one turns there are open doors of opportunities for Christian service. As has been seen from the above statements of the various home mission fields the work is ever growing with a continuous stream of possibilities appearing on the horizon.

2. Foreign Missions

a. China

The uncertain world situation has in no small measure affected the work of foreign missions. It is difficult to describe the present status of the mission work for it changes so rapidly that no one can be sure what it will be in another year or even in the next month. This has been quite the case with the work of the Evangelical Menmonite Brethren missionaries in the China field.

Following a period of internment by the Japanese during the recent war the missionaries in China were repatriated to the United States. Seemingly favorable conditions in China permitted them all to return to their various stations of work in the summer and fall of 1946. Their field lies between the provinces of Hopei and Kinngsu, and consists of the southern part of Shantung and the northern part of Honan. It is about 500 miles northwest of Shanghai. The size of the field is about 5,000 square miles. It is divided into nine counties with over 12,000 villages. There are perhaps 3,000 Christians among over 3,000,000 population.¹

The missionaries were pleased to find so lively an interest

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1. Thiessen, G. T.: "The Open Door in China", Gospel Tidings, v. 36, no. 21, Nov. 15, 1947, p. 2.

among the Christians of China. The indigenous churches have held their own, but that is not sufficient for a growing missionary program. They must have more Chinese leaders, teachers, and pastors. The Bible Training School in Tsaohsien, Shangtung, was closed during the war. The school has not yet been opened because of the political unrest in that area.

One of the missionaries from a neighboring field in writing recently said:

"In the Shangtung-Honan field the work has had a great setback by the Japanese occupation and now the Communists are making it almost unbearable both for the missionaries and native Christians. On my recent visit I was glad to find that many are kept in the midst of almost unendurable trials, still bearing testimony to the saving and keeping of our complete Redeemer. Yet we cannot but think of them with deep sympathy and feel sad for the many weaker Christians as well as the great majority still unsaved with so little opportunity to be enlightened concerning the way of salvation."¹

A missionary from the Honan field writes about an out-lying village which she and another missionary visited:

"When we arrived, we soon discovered it was restless; so no special meetings could be held. The next day, Sunday, very few people came; but it did our hearts good to see that they tried to carry on the work in spite of difficulty. Many of the places are like folds without a shepherd. May we be much in prayer for leaders who are able to lead these folds into deeper spiritual life."²

The work of the missionary today is different from that of the missionary ten or twenty years ago. His task is chiefly to train Chinese leaders, teachers, and pastors. Previously, the missionary was responsible for all the training from the lowest elementary levels through the secondary schools.

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1. Bartel, H. C.: "Shuang Shih Pu, China", Gospel Tidings, v. 36, no. 23, Dec. 15, 1947, p. 4.
2. Quiring, Mary: "Liuho, E. Honan", Gospel Tidings, v. 36, no. 19, Oct. 15, 1947, p. 2.

None of the new missionary candidates have gone to China since the close of World War II, because the mission board felt it was not wise to send them until they had first acquired a speaking knowledge of the Chinese language. How long it will take before the new missionaries will be sent will depend upon the political situation in that country.

b. Africa

The activities of the Congo Inland Mission have not suffered as directly from the war as the China mission field. The greatest handicap was that the missionaries, whose furloughs were due during the war in Europe and Africa, had to substitute a short furlough in Capetown, South Africa, instead of being able to come to the United States. Since then the missionaries whose furloughs were due at that time have returned to this country. One new missionary has gone out to that field of service for Christ.

God is continuing to bless the work in the Congo. There are now nearly 11,000 communicants. However, there are yet 390,000 to be won for Christ in this field.¹

The need is great for consecrated and educated young people to go forth into that field of service. Doctors, nurses, teachers, clerical workers, agricultural and industrial missionaries are needed to train the Africans to carry on the noble work which the pioneer missionaries have begun. The challenge in many of the Missionaries' letters has been directed particularly toward men to consecrate them-

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1. Rediger, C. E.: "A Workman at Rest--The Work Must Go On", The Congo Missionary Messenger, v. 17, no. 5, p. 11.

selves to useful service for Christ in the Congo.

c. Affiliation with other Mission Societies

In 1946 at the annual conference of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren at Langham, Saskatchewan, it was recommended that the Mission Board contact different mission societies for the purpose of seeking affiliation.¹ This would give the young people a wider range in the choice of mission fields. There had been felt to be an urgent need for expansion in the foreign fields for quite a number of young people were going to various places of service which were not under the jurisdiction of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Mission Board. But because they were members of the constituent churches their home churches felt a certain financial obligation toward them. This was extending the financial out-lay farther than could be comfortably cared for. Affiliation with other societies would cut down the over-head expenses and yet provide a greater variety of opportunities to the young people of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.

It was recommended that the conference of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren affiliate itself with the Gospel Missionary Union to secure the use of the fields in Ecuador and Columbia, South America, and Morocco and French West Africa.² Three missionaries have already gone to these added fields of service and others are preparing to go soon. As the interest in missions continues to grow there will be affiliations with other societies. A number of other societies have been and are now under consideration but no definite agreements have been made.

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1. Year Book, 1946, p. 49.
2. Year Book, 1947, p. 49.

D. The Educational Developments

As has been seen in the previous chapter the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren have not united in a body to establish schools for their constituency. Individual churches have opened schools to meet local needs. This was seen in the establishment of the Jansen Bible School, the Meade Bible School, and the Bruderthaler Church School near Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Only the Meade Bible School is still in operation. It is now the Meade Bible Academy. The other two schools have been closed.

Through the years the young people have by their attendance supported higher institutions of learning of other Mennonite conferences and also interdenominational schools. Consequently, a good number of future leaders, teachers, and pastors have been lost to the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. It has taken them a long time to realize why their young people left their Evangelical Mennonite Brethren churches to enter fields of service in other denominational circles.

At the annual conference of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren which was held at Steinbach, Manitoba, 1947, there was a lively discussion in one of the delegate sessions about the problems of education among the young people.¹ The chief problem, of course, was that the young people were attending schools that were not in agreement with the Mennonite principles and especially the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren confession of faith. One step which was taken toward the solution of the problem was to elect an educational committee which would investigate numerous institutions of higher learning and prepare a list of recommended schools.² Until the educational

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1. Cf. Year Book, 1947, p. 13.

2. Cf. Year Book, 1947, p. 51.

committee could report its findings it was recommended that the Grace Bible Institute in Omaha, Nebraska, be recognized as an approved school.

Although the interest in promoting educational work is growing it is still in its early stages of development. There is great room for more emphasis on educational preparation for persons entering fields of Christian service. Up until the present time very few of the pastors possessed both a college and seminary education. Most all of them have a Bible institute training and have been content with the few years spent in such an institution. As more and more of the young people are now completing college and specialized training for other professions so the young men preparing for the ministry are acquiring both college and seminary degrees. The trend is definitely toward securing more education in all phases of vocations and professions.

E. The Youth Organizations

The democratic organization of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren churches has definitely affected the churches' whole program. Because there has never been and is not even now a committee on youth work in the conference at large, each constituent church has been left to plan its own program. This has resulted in as many different programs as there are constituent churches. Since a large number of the component churches lack the trained leadership in their congregations there frequently has not been a planned program at all, but rather an unsystematic moving along toward an undetermined goal. However, there are three organizations which should receive brief mention, for some of the three function in a few of the churches.

1. The Christian Endeavor

The Christian Endeavor society was brought into the church mainly for the purpose of helping the young people to develop hidden talent. In most of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren churches the Christian Endeavor meets once a month or every third Sunday.¹ The programs consist of two or three topics discussed by different individuals and special music. All age groups in the churches participate in these programs eliminating the necessity of societies for the various ages. However, in recent years the interest in Christian Endeavor has begun to wane. To stimulate a greater interest in such an organization it might be wise in the future to reorganize the society in the individual churches so that it will more effectively meet the needs of the young people on the various age levels.

2. The Sowers of Seed Fellowship

The Sowers of Seed Fellowship is now organized in nine of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren churches. The offices of the headquarters and general director are in Omaha, Nebraska. The program is definitely planned for Christian youth. Their emphasis is on evangelism. The local fellowships meet once a month. The meeting is divided into three equal parts: devotional, business, and social. The fellowship has a number of definite projects for the group as a whole and smaller ones for the local fellowship groups. Some of them are: distribution of tracts and Gospel portions, supplying Bibles and New Testaments to needy places, visitation in hospitals and old people's homes, conducting of jail services, operating book and gift shops, making and placing of Gospel road signs, renting billboards with

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1. Cf. Rempel, op. cit., p. 93.

messages in Christian art, purchasing and support of mission cars, supporting of a missionary in the Ozarks, conducting a summer Bible camp, and a Book-of-the-Month club.¹ The official organ of the Sowers of Seed Fellowship is the "Gospel Sower".²

The young people have taken an active interest in the fellowship in each of the churches where it has been organized. It has given them a concrete and constructive outlet for effective Christian service. All those who join must first sign a four-fold pledge card promising to be a fearless testifier, fervent prayer warrior, a soul-winner, and a firm abstainer. Upon being received into the fellowship each new member is assigned to work in a certain committee. The work is growing at a normal rate. The Lord has been gracious in blessing the Sowers of Seed Fellowship with a consecrated general director and deeply spiritual local directors.

3. The Be Ye Doers Clubs

Be Ye Doers clubs have been organized in a few of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren churches. The clubs were begun for the younger young people. They included those between the ages of nine through sixteen. In the spring of each year all those who were interested received twenty-five cents to seek to multiply it for the Lord. Since such a large number of the club members lived in rural areas it was not difficult to find a seed plot and plenty of seeds for a quarter to plant and to care for. Some of them raised chickens. In the late summer or fall the garden produce or chickens were sold. The money was brought to church at a designated time when a special pro-

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1. Year Book, op. cit., 1947, p. 43.
2. Ibid.

gram was prepared to highlight the reception of the gifts as unto the Lord. The money has been used to help support missionaries with whom the club members were acquainted. Many young people have enjoyed participating in such projects.

F. The Relief Program

Mennonite principles and practices were brought to the forefront during the recent war. For many the war proved to be a testing ground whether they were willing to take a stand for their beliefs. One principle which was brought into the picture most strongly was that of non-resistance. From the very birth of the Mennonite Church in Europe the doctrine was held that it was wrong to participate in war. It was better to preserve life than to destroy life. The government of the United States made provision for those young men who were conscientious objectors by giving them the choice of selecting either non-combatant service or entering the Civilian Public Service camps. The Mennonites in the United States were willing to do more than just support their young men in the Civilian Public Service camps. They were interested in rendering vital services to humanity. Therefore, all the Mennonites joined together in a united effort. They organized the Mennonite Central Committee which was divided into five branches of service: Civilian Public Service, relief, peace section, Mennonite aid and resettlement, and the spiritual ministry.

The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren have taken an active part in all of these branches of service. The outstanding projects now are foreign relief and Mennonite refugee transportation. Of the three hundred Mennonite relief workers now serving in five different countries, four of them are members of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. Several more are now making preparation to enter relief service.

All the constituent churches have participated in voluntary donations of food, clothing, soap, tools, garden seed, religious literature, Christmas bundles, school bags, and toys.

The cost of the transportation of the 2303 refugees which were brought from Europe to Paraguay in early 1947 was paid entirely by voluntary contributions of the Mennonites in Canada and United States. So again the transportation costs for the 1600 who will be transferred to Paraguay in 1948 will be paid by voluntary gifts. The approximate quota for the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren is three dollars per member.¹ In the component churches regular designated offerings are taken for relief. The response has been most gratifying. God has sealed the efforts put forth with His bounteous blessings.

G. Other Current Issues and Trends

One could almost say that problems today are as abundant as the people in the world. Vexing issues confront nearly every human being. The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren have not been exempt from mental and spiritual conflicts. It is well to consider at this point some of the trends in the thinking of the leaders and pastors of their churches.

1. Non-resistance

At the annual conference held at Steinbach, Manitoba, in the summer of 1947, it was emphasized that the New Testament peace principles and books stressing the Biblical Mennonite view be brought into closer contact with the young people of the Evangelical Mennonite

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1. Anonymous: "Our Share", Gospel Tidings, v. 37, no. 6, Mar. 15, 1948, p. 2.

Brethren.¹ It was agreed that there was a vast need for teaching the principles of non-resistance.

Nearly two whole sessions of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Workers' Conference held at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in the fall of 1947, were devoted to the presentation and discussion of the problems in connection with the teaching of non-resistance in times of peace as well as in times of war.² At the latter conference a committee of three men was appointed to formulate plans for effective teaching of the above doctrine. It was also recommended, that since all wars are wrong, that the young men of the conference churches take up alternative service under the direction of the Mennonite Central Committee instead of combatant and non-combatant service.³

2. Communion

"Communion is a convocation where all of God's children can meet for sweet fellowship. It is a time when the rich, the poor, the executive, the laborer, and all who are washed in the Blood of Jesus are on common ground."⁴

At the Workers' Conference mentioned previously half of an afternoon session was spent on the subject of the Communion. It was first brought out that there must be a thorough heart-searching as preparation on the part of the minister as well as the other partakers. The Communion was to be regarded as a memorial rather than having any efficacious value. Such services should be conducted frequently enough and yet not too often so as to lose their significance. The Christians were to be encouraged to attend Communion services regularly. The sick and aged ought to receive Communion in their homes. In

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1. Year Book, 1947, p. 50.

2. Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Workers' Conference Report, p. 5-9.

3. Ibid., p. 9.

4. Ibid., p. 12.

answer to the question of "open" or "closed" Communion it was said that even as salvation was for all, so also the Lord's Table. If Christians were in the right relation to Him why should they not partake of Communion. Another question that arose in the discussion was whether anyone else but an ordained minister should serve the Lord's Supper. The reply came that there should be reverence and order at the Communion service and, therefore, only a properly appointed person should serve.¹

3. Foot-washing

The practice of foot-washing was inaugurated in the early history of the Mennonites and was based on a literal interpretation of Jesus' example at the Last Supper.² It was commonly practiced among a number of Mennonite churches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but not universal. The custom was dropped in Europe, but has been continued by certain groups of Mennonites in America. Among the latter groups are the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. When the matter was brought up for discussion at the mentioned Workers' Conference the emphasis was placed on the spiritual implications rather than the literal observation. However, those constituent churches which desire to continue the practice are encouraged to do so.³

4. Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Up until the present time there have been only rare cases of divorce in the Mennonite Church at large. But it seems that as the church has mingled more with the world that more of the world has

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1. Cf. Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Workers' Conference Report, p. 13.
2. Cf. Smith, The Mennonites, p. 324.
3. Cf. Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Workers' Conference Report, p. 16.

come into the church. The Mennonites have not been able to avoid the problems of marriage, divorce, and remarriage from obtaining a grip on their members. At the Workers' Conference it was decided to reaffirm the Biblical ground for divorce. Fornication was the only valid reason for divorce. Divorcees are not to remarry unless the other mate has passed away. The pastor is not to officiate in a marriage ceremony of divorcees. Divorcees are to be received into the fellowship of the church after they have duly repented of their sins.¹ The Educational Committee of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference was appointed to assume the responsibility to place in the homes of all members suitable literature covering courtship, marriage, family life, and divorce.²

5. Merging

The ecumenical spirit has spread throughout the world. Hardly a spot on the globe has been left untouched. For more than a year now efforts have been put forth toward merging with other groups for more effective missionary service.³ In the late summer and also in the fall of 1947 representatives of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren met in conferences with the Defenseless Mennonite Conference (now the Evangelical Mennonite Conference) for the purpose of seeking to bring about a merger of the total effort of the two conferences.⁴ In comparing the two different Mennonite conferences it was found that

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1. Cf. Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Workers' Conference Report, p. 20.
2. Ibid., p. 21.
3. Year Book, 1946, p. 18.
4. Dick, H. H.: "Report of the Defenseless Mennonite Conference Sessions, August 14-17, 1947," Gospel Tidings, v. 36, no. 17, Sept. 15, 1947, p. 3; cf. Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Workers' Conference Report, p. 23.

the similarities were many and the differences were few. Therefore, it was recommended that before a merger could take place that steps be taken to help the ministry and the laity of these two conferences to become acquainted with each other.

H. Conclusion

The study in this chapter has played the role of a moving picture camera. There has been time for only rapid glimpses of the various phases of the present developments of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren with slight intimations of the future. The aspects which have been considered are the extent of the present constituency, the home and foreign missionary activity, further educational developments, the youth organizations, the relief program, and the other current issues and trends.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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The purpose of this thesis, as indicated by its title, was to make an historical study of the development of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. This has been an appreciative study of the development of the denomination known by that name rather than a record of an exciting epoch in church history. In introducing the subject the modulation of the title from "Konferenz der Vereinigten Mennoniten Brüder von Nord-Amerika" to the present title of "Evangelical Mennonite Brethren" was noted. It was stated that although historical data would be drawn from events as early as the sixteenth century the primary period of history considered would be confined to the years between 1889 and 1948. In this rapidly changing age it has been well to take a backward look and put into a written record some of the events in the history of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, for previously, no complete history of this group has been attempted. Therefore, it is easily seen that the only sources of data available would be newspaper articles, brief sketches of the constituent churches, and the mention of this group in writings by outside observers. The plan of procedure has naturally been chronological.

The second chapter reviewed briefly the European background of the Mennonite Church. It was observed that the Mennonite Church was born shortly after the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, in Zurich, Switzerland. The early Swiss leaders were Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and George Blaurock. Just a few years later in Holland

there arose a group known as the Obbenites. The groups in Holland and Switzerland were identical in all their basic doctrines. Both strongly emphasized the reviving of New Testament Christianity. A few years after the birth of the Holland group they were joined by Menno Simons, a converted Catholic priest. Menno Simons soon became the outstanding leader. The people gradually began to name the group after Menno, first using the name "Menist" which was later changed to "Mennonite".

The foundation stones of their faith were "holiness", the church as a fellowship of believers, non-conformity, and non-resistance. Their doctrines and practices have caused thousands of them to wander upon the face of the earth. Thus far, there have been recorded seven major movements of large groups of Mennonites from one country to another and to other continents. Who can tell whether the last movement has taken place?

Chapter three revealed that the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren were one of the off-spring of the fourth major movement. They came from Russia to America in the late nineteenth century. There was seen the birth of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren at Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Growing pains of the developing small independent denomination were sensed. They undertook projects of various kinds such as the establishment of schools, home and foreign missions, and the publication of a conference paper. Throughout all the growth and development was seen a constant emphasis on deep spiritual life.

In chapter four there was portrayed a picture of the present status with slight intimations as to possible future developments of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. There was seen first the extent of increase which had come to a small bond of believers. Greatest

growth was evident in the spread and intensity of missionary activity. Such keen interest and participation in mission work resulted in the affiliation with other missionary societies. Though the educational program lagged behind for some time new impetus has provided added incentive toward greater progress. That factor has had an effect on the organizations and activities of youth in the Mennonite churches. The social and humanitarian interest has not lagged as has been evidenced by the active participation in the relief program. The fact that the leaders and pastors of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren have met together in a workers' conference and anticipate doing so in the future shows that they have been alert to the problems of the day.

This historical study of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren has been attempted with a sympathetic understanding and a just recognition of worth, based upon reliable data gathered from abundant sources. Appreciation and esteem for the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren are enhanced by their modesty in making known their merits. God will continue to bless those who seek to do all things to the glory of God.

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