AMERICAN MENNONITE HISTORY

**1900 – TO THE PRESENT**

# James A. Goering

**Ministers’ Study Week**

Buck Creek Mennonite Church

Richland Center, WI

October 23—27, 2007

AMERICAN MENNONITE HISTORY – 1900 TO THE PRESENT

As early as 1775, a stone in a Lancaster Conference meeting-house indicated it had been built by the *Alt-Mennoniten* (Old Mennonites). Throughout the 19th century, Lancaster and Franconia Mennonites referred to their group as the Old Mennonites. It is this group’s history, as it developed through the 20th century, that we will trace from a period of *solidification* (of organization, doctrine and practice – 1898-1925), to one of *dissonance and disintegration* of a common faith and life (1918-1950), to *fragmentation* of the Old Mennonite Church into many parts (1949-2002).

Mennonite church life in the last half of the 19th century set the stage for the 20th century. What might be called the John F. Funk era witnessed a renewal in the Mennonite Church through publication, the Sunday school movement, evangelism, and education (the Elkhart Institute, founded by Henry A Mumaw in 1894), and missions. Associated with Funk was John S. Coffman under whose evangelistic preaching a number of prominent leaders in the 20th century were converted: George R. Brunk, 1888; Amos (A.D.) Wenger, 1890; Daniel Kauffman, 1890; Samuel G. Shetler, 1891; and J. B. Smith (Schmidt), 1891.

In 1864 Funk founded two church periodicals (twins, one in German and one in English), *Herold der Wahrheit* and *Herald of Truth.* He also founded the Mennonite Publishing Company in Elkhart, Indiana, in which Sunday school materials, as well as his and other periodicals were published.

**1900-1925**

## EVANGELISM-REVIVALISM

The evangelistic preaching of John S. Coffman continued to bear fruit through the preaching of many of his converts, as well as others.

In the new meetinghouse at **Elizabethtown** in **1906 Noah Mack** held a series of meetings with 125 converts (Ben Weaver, the bishop, heard it was 132).

A week later **A. D. Wenger** began a nightly series at **Ephrata** that brought in over sixty converts.

In the same fall **(1906), A. D. Wenger** was invited to hold revivals in Bishop Isaac Eby’s  **Pequea** district churches with no less than ninety-eight confessions.

The new meetinghouse for the **East Chestnut Street** congregation in **Lancaster** was the site for a series in early **1907** by **Samuel G. Shetler** with a reported eighty-eight confessions.

At **Willow Street** that same year **Shetler** also held meetings with sixty-six confessions. (**S. G. Shetler** held revivals in two hundred churches and visited in eight thousand homes in the United States and Canada. – Juhnke, p. 110)

At **Mount Joy** on **February 14, 1909**, the same day a new brick meeting house was dedicated for the congregation, **John Senger** began an evangelistic series, resulting in thirty-seven confessions.

In **1909,** at **River Corner, I. B. Good** elicited forty-three confessions.

In **February, 1909, Ben Weaver,** who had to substitute for John Mosemann who could not come, held a series in the modern meeting house at **Goodville** with a total of fifty-three responses. (Ruth, *The Earth Is the Lord’s,* pp. 788-792)

Once the ice was broken regarding protracted meetings, evangelistic meetings were an annual or biannual feature in many congregations, and became the accepted new method of bringing in the young people – at a younger age than previously.

A confession was usually swiftly followed by a change of costume. For the women that meant plain dresses and “devotional coverings.”

There as also a change in language – less talk of following Christ as Lord and more of giving one’s heart to him as Savior – also of “the deeper life,” “total surrender,” and “entire consecration.” (Ruth, pp.794-795)

# MENNONITE GENERAL CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

In 1898 the Mennonite General Conference (Old Mennonite) was organized, largely at the initiative of Daniel Kauffman (age 33), who presided over the first General Conference meeting. Bishop John F. Funk (age 63) preached the conference sermon. He was supportive at the first meeting, but by the second meeting in 1900 he spoke out against the conference organization. A struggle had emerged with Daniel Kauffman and others against Funk for control of Old Mennonite publishing. Two district conferences, Lancaster and Franconia never did join Mennonite General Conference, but were allowed to attend and vote in General Conference sessions.

In 1898, Mennonite Book and Tract Society, a new publishing interest started by younger brethren (including John S. Coffman), received recognition by the new General Conference. Funk’s Mennonite Publishing Company did not receive General Conference endorsement.

In 1902 Funk was suspended from his bishop office (he died in 1930 at age 95) by a five-man committee investigating a conflict involving Funk and the Elkhart Institute and the congregation.

In 1908 Funk sold his company to his rivals, the Gospel Witness Company in Scottdale, PA, which was publishing the *Gospel Witness.*  This paper became the officially sanctioned denominational paper, the *Gospel Herald,* with Daniel Kauffman as editor from 1908 to 1943.

The constituency of John F. Funk’s *Herald of Truth* formed the base of the Mennonite General Conference organization. These were the Old Mennonites and the Amish Mennonites. It took some time for the merger of the two groups to materialize. The Amish were congregational in organization and the Old Mennonites were conference oriented. The merging of the three Amish Mennonite Conferences with the OM’s occurred in 1916, 1920-21, and 1927. (James C. Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War,* pp. 121-122)

In the first quarter of the twentieth century the authority of the Mennonite General Conference grew rapidly despite a remarkable vagueness of its organizational boundaries. It was never precisely clear which and how many district conferences belonged. Leaders tried informally to include even those who had not affiliated. Bishops from any Old or Amish Mennonite conference, including Lancaster, could attend and vote in General Conference sessions.

The expressed purpose of the General Conference was “to bring about a closer unity of sentiment on Gospel principles.” Such unity would mean “a weeding out of heretical doctrines, and the consequent purity of the church. The conference organizers said they did not intend to assert legislative authority over district conferences and congregations. But the conference would at least exercise power over church institutions such as publications, educational institutions, homes for orphans and the elderly, and missions. (Juhnke, pp. 124-127)

Three major church-wide boards were organized: 1905, the Board of Education; 1906, the Board of Missions and Charities (originated in 1892 and organized in 1906); and in 1907, the Publication Board.

# DOCTRINAL CONTROVERSY AND CORRECTION

# Modernism

**Goshen College** (formerly the Elkhart Institute that was moved to Goshen in 1903) was a hotbed for modernism and theological liberalism. Consequently, it was opposed by the conservative Old Mennonite constituency and the Board of Education.

Several prominent educators at Goshen were infected and affected: Noah E. Byers and C. Henry Smith, president and academic dean resigned to accept positions at Bluffton College, a GC college (1913); Paul Whitmer, dean and Bible teacher went to Bluffton (1917); John (J.E.) Hartzler, Goshen’s president from 1913-1918 went to Bluffton (1918).

The Mennonite Board of Education closed Goshen for the 1923-24 school year and then reorganized it with a new faculty. Daniel Kauffman was appointed president, but did not stay. Sanford C. Yoder was then appointed president and served as president from 1923-1940.

# Fundamentalism

Principal doctrines defended were Biblical inspiration and inerrancy, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection, and the atonement.

Fundamentalism was a coalition of militant Protestant evangelicals and other conservatives who were opposed to both modernism in theology and cultural changes that it approved.

“Mennonite Fundamentalists” were Mennonite first and Fundamentalist second. Nonresistance set them apart from other Fundamentalists. Nevertheless, they used the language of Fundamentalism in publications and statements of faith. (Juhnke, pp. 258-259)

**1908.** *Gospel Herald* became the official denominational publication. John Horsch moved to Scottdale and began to write against liberalism, modernism, and higher criticism. (Juhnke, p. 176) In two tracts written in **1924** and **1926** he attacked the Bluffton-Witmarsum [seminary] “traitors” by name. (Juhnke, pp. 268-269)

**1909. Hesston Academy** (a junior college in 1915, a four-year college in 1918, and again a junior college in 1918) provided a conservative alternative to Goshen College. J. B. Smith, a principal author of official fundamentalist statements, was a teacher at Hesston from 1910-1917.

1. **.** *Bible Doctrines* by Daniel Kauffman (revised in 1928 as *Doctrines of the Bible*) provided an

accepted standard for Old Mennonite churches, Bible conferences, winter Bible schools, etc. John E. Hartzler [considered a liberal by George R. Brunk], president of Goshen College from 1913-1918 wrote the entire section on the plan of salvation. A thirty-page chapter on “The Bible,” was written by J. B. Smith, who skillfully set forth a conservative theory (*sic*) of biblical revelation. Smith introduced terms new to many Mennonites: “plenary inspiration,” “verbal inspiration,” “original autographs.” (Juhnke, p. 129)

It specified **seven ordinances** which provided a barrier between the OM’s and the liberal Mennonites (GC’s). The *Garden City Confession* – *CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS* – of 1921 contains these **seven ordinances. Eight** **ordinances** are included in the *1963 Confession*, although only **five** are developed as ARTICLES. Ordination is added as an ordinance. The *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995* Mennonite Church USA includes only **three ordinances** – Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and Foot Washing, which is optional.

**1917. Eastern Mennonite College** (Eastern Mennonite School in 1917 with college work added in 1920, and becoming a four-year college in 1945) started as a conservative alternative to Goshen College. Virginia bishops L. J. Heatwole and George R. Brunk led in the Eastern school movement from its beginnings in 1912. J. B. Smith served as principal/president from 1917-1922. A. D. Wenger served as president from 1922-1935.

1. **.** J. B. Smith authored the “Eighteen Articles of Faith,” which was adopted by Virginia Mennonite

Conference in 1919.

**1921.** The Virginia Mennonite Conference’s “Eighteen Articles of Faith” with slight revision was incorporated in the *CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS* (commonly referred to as the *Garden City Confession*) adopted by Mennonite General Conference in session at Garden City, Missouri, August 24-26, 1921. “It gives expression to some of the doctrines and practices of the early church which at the time [of the Dortrecht Confession] were not a matter of difference, but have since the time of the Dort Confession been questioned or denied by many church organizations. For the sake of preserving the faith and teaching of the Gospel as given by Christ and his apostles the church has confessed in this formal manner her faith in the practice of the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ.” (from the prologue to *CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS*)

1. John Horsch publishes *Modern Religious Liberalism.*

# NONCONFORMITY

Plain and simple attire was a tradition among Mennonites from the time of the Anabaptist movement. It was a sign of humility and separation in a world of fashionable pride. Revivalism made the question of dress seem very important. Evangelists persuaded young as well as old to heed Biblical admonitions toward nonconformity. They wanted to be obedient to the Scripture. Discussions and resolutions relating to dress occupied more time and attention at “old” Mennonite conferences than did any other issue. (Juhnke, p. 130)

**1910.** The Mennonite General Conference created a “Dress Committee” to bring “all our people to the Gospel standard of simplicity and spirituality.” The committee’s report, published two years later, recommended a “more perfect uniformity among both brethren and sisters,” uniformity based upon “God’s Word and the order of the Church.”

**1917.** The same committee warned “against two double standards, (1) a plainly attired ministry and a fashionable laity, and (2) plainness for sisters, no restrictions for men.”

**1921.** The dress committee declared that “the Church is vested with authority in all matters of doctrine and discipline … so long as her rules and regulations do not conflict with the Word of God her decrees are binding and her authority should not be questioned ….”

Some of the most aggressive leaders spoke out strongly for nonconformity in apparel. John S. Coffman and many who followed his progressive program (Sunday school, protracted meetings, etc.) committed himself to the plain coat and provided a biblical rationale for the women’s head covering. While Mennonites in the East were generally more conservative in dress than those in the West, concerning neckties the West actually brought more conservative standards to the East where bow ties were commonplace. In **1911** George R. Brunk moved to Virginia and headed a movement against both kinds of ties. He allegedly said, “Now we have the West plain. I’ve got to go and make the East plain.”

Noah Mack, a Lancaster Conference leader who had adopted the plain coat only after a long struggle, made a trip west and returned without his necktie. It is said his wife advised against another such trip lest he come back without his shirt.

The dress code varied in different areas. Women’s coverings varied in size, material, strings, and color of strings, and in whether strings were tied or hung loose. Some conference districts allowed neckties, at least one allowed bow ties only, and some allowed neither. (Juhnke, pp. 130-132)

# MISSIONS

In Virginia Conference there was mission activity in western Virginia (now West Virginia) from the **1850**s. The first contacts came when mountain people came to the Valley to work in the harvest.

In 1919 Virginia Conference created a conference mission board.

**1896.** Lancaster Conference allowed youthful progressives to create a “Mennonite Sunday School Mission.” This group extended its missions agenda to include relief for the poor, fund-raising for overseas missions, a city mission in Philadelphia in 1899, a Mennonite old people’s home in 1905, and a children’s home in 1911.

**1898.** Its first work was to create an educational and industrial mission for poor blacks on the Welsh Mountains in eastern Lancaster County.

**1892.** “Mennonite Evangelizing Board of America” was created by a ten-year-old missions committee of the Elkhart congregation.

**1899.** Menno S. Steiner in Ohio led a rival board, which incorporated as the “Mennonite Board of Charitable Homes.”

**1906.** These two boards were brought together as the **“Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities”** located in Elkhart.

**1899. Overseas work begun in India.**  Bishop J. A. Ressler, accompanied by a physician, W. B. Page and wife, opened up the American Mennonite Mission in the Central Provinces of India. In **1912** the India Mennonite Conference was created.

1. A mission was established in **Argentina.** (J. C. Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America,* pp. 218-221)

# THE GREAT WAR

The war years were 1914-1918. The U.S. entered the war in 1917.

**1915.** The Mennonite General Conference adopted a resolution giving direction to all in the church regarding relationships to the state, to young men who might be drafted, and discipline of members entering military service. (Guy F. Hershberger, *War, Peace, and Nonresistance,* p. 115)

**1917.** Mennonite General Conference met at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church near Goshen, Ind. in August. A major concern was how to deal with the new draft – of men 18 to 45 years of age. Of particular concern was the treatment of CO’s in army camps. There were no exemption privileges for CO’s or any form of alternate service. (Sanford G. Shetler, *Preacher of the People,* p. 188)

The General Conference drew up a lengthy statement defining the position of the Mennonite Church on war. 181 bishops, ministers, and deacons signed this statement (called the Yellow Creek Statement). In 1918they were threatened with prosecution for violation of the Espionage Act of 1917. (Juhnke, p. 228)

**1917.** Newton D. Baker held a critical meeting with twenty-six CO’s at Camp Meade in Maryland. He was impressed with their backwardness. One Mennonite, not fluent with English, quoted Jesus as saying, “Give to the Kaiser what the Kaiser’s is.” Yet Mennonites always found Baker friendly. (Juhnke, p. 232)

**1918.** The Justice Department brought twenty-five charges against Aaron Loucks for violation of the Espionage Act. Included was the text of a speech he gave to Mennonite draftees at Camp Dodge on March 5, 1918. After the speech some of the men had decided to stop noncombatant work they had already begun. After investigation, the War Department let Loucks off with a stern warning. (Juhnke, p.239)

**1918.** On March 16, 1918, an act of Congress authorized the Secretary of War to grant furloughs without pay and allowances to enlisted men, and on May 31, 1918, the active Judge Advocate General advised the Secretary of War that he was authorized to furlough CO’s under this act. Those found to be sincere were to be granted furloughs either for farm service or to engage in relief work with the American Friends Service Committee then operating in France. By the end of the war 1,300 CO’s of various religious beliefs had taken such service. (Hershberger, pp. 118-119)

**Experiences in Army Camps**

**July 16, 1918.** A Mennonite wrote from Camp Lee in VA reporting severe abuse. “We were cursed, beaten, kicked, and compelled to go through exercises to the extent that a few were unconscious for some minutes ….” (Melvin Gingerich, *SERVICE FOR PEACE,* p. 10)

Four Hutterite draftees from South Dakota died as a result of their abusive treatment at Fort Leavenworth, KS. Prison officials sent their bodies home dressed in uniforms.

Mennonites who followed their consciences against military orders were beaten with hoses and fists, scrubbed down with stiff brushes in cold showers, forced to stand at attention for hours in the hot sun, reduced to bread-and water diets in guardhouses, threatened with various forms of execution, and mistreated in many ways. (Juhnke, p. 235)

D. Ralph Hosteetter of PA, was furloughed and worked for a Methodist farmer in a Catholic area. He wrote: “I am on a farm of 175 acres. There is plenty to do. I feel like a new person since I am out of camp and working.” (Juhnke, pp. 240-241)

In the Lancaster and Franconia conference areas, draft boards were remarkably generous with agricultural exemptions and put few men into camps. Congressman Griest claimed that in the first draft call, draft boards discharged 90 to 95 percent of the men on vocational grounds. All through the war the Weaverland congregation east of Lancaster did not have a single young man drafted, although it was a large congregation of 640 members.

Meanwhile, the Alexanderwohl congregation in Kansas had thirty-three members drafted from a membership of 743. (Juhnke, p. 237)

**Experiences in the Home Community**

Every Mennonite community had to face the problem of purchasing war bonds and of contributing to the war fund of such agencies as the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A.

The Mennonite Church (OM’s) and the more conservative groups opposed all participation in principle, but the pressure of public opinion was so great that in actual practice some Mennonites of all groups participated to some degree, including the purchase of war bonds.

In some communities, Mennonites left sums of money on deposit in local banks with the understanding that it was not to be used for the purchase of war bonds, although it might release other money for such purposes.

Practically all of the Mennonite communities contributed large sums of money for relief of war sufferers. (Hershberger, p. 122-123)

In some communities individuals were frightened into purchase of war bonds, or emigration to Canada. In most cases the pressures were less direct: threats of social ostracism; signs in towns demanding use of English; public “slacker boards” listing persons who had not purchased war bonds; and insistence that schools and colleges stop teaching German. (Juhnke, p. 220)

**Some Individual Experiences**

**Bishop Simon Gingerich** of Sugar Creek Amish Mennonite Church near Wayland, IA, at first refused to buy bonds. Finally he was persuaded to sign a statement of apology, and on behalf of his congregation buy $200 of War Savings Stamps, pledge $5,000 for the Third Liberty Loan Drive, and display American flags on the church meetinghouse and on homes.

**Walter Cooprider,** amember of the Spring Valley Mennonite Church in McPherson County, KS, was tarred and feathered. Several days later the family went to McPherson and bought bonds.

**Daniel** and **Charles Diener**, a father and son who were ministers of the Spring Valley congregation were visited by a mob on three different nights. On the second visit Daniel wrote a $50 check for the Red Cross; but the next morning he went to the bank and stopped payment, substituting a $75 gift to Friends Reconstruction Service. On June 10, 1918, members of the mob ransacked and smeared yellow paint on both Diener houses, stripped and whipped the men, applied carboline roofing paint and feathers, and said if they refused to buy bonds, they would come back and kill them. Humiliated and afraid, the Dieners went to nearby Canton and made a token purchase of “Liberty” Bonds.

**Samuel H. Miller** was a Mennonite minister and editor of *The Weekly Budget.* On May 15, 1918, *The Budget* included a letter from an Amish bishop who wrote: “Sorry to learn that some of the Mennonites have yielded and bought bonds. What would become of our nonresistant faith if our young men in camp would yield?” Both he and the Amish bishop were indicted by a grand jury on five counts of violation of an espionage-sedition act. They were both innocent of the charges, yet they negotiated a plea bargain under which they confessed they had attempted to cause “refusal of duty in military and naval forces of the United States.” Each paid a fine of $500 dollars plus costs.

**Lewis J. Heatwole** and **Rhine Benner** were also tried as being in violation**.** In mid-July 1918, in the face of war bond and savings stamps drives in Randolph County, WV, Benner, a missionary in WV, asked his bishop, L. J. Heatwole, for advice. Heatwole wrote that the church’s position was to “contribute nothing to a fund that is used to run the war machine.” Benner and his fellow minister Jasper Smith shared this information orally with as many of their scattered members as possible. Others they advised by letter. Benner’s letter, and eventually Heatwole’s also, came to the attention of the District Attorney of Martinsburg, WV. The attorney prosecuted. Heatwole and Benner pleaded guilty to the charges and were fined $1000 each. The Virginia Conference paid the fines.

Faced with the persecutions being endured, Mennonites felt pressured to make some positive contribution.

In **November 1917**, working through their patron-congressman Griest (who was instrumental in preventing draft age young men of the Weaverland District being called up for service) bishops of Lancaster Conference offered to buy or lease large tracts of land for the government. On it they would employ draft-age Mennonites to raise crops and produce foodstuffs “such as the Government may deem necessary for the maintenance of the National interests.” The government declined the offer.

**1918.** Mennonites offered medical facilities to treat wounded soldiers.

**1918.** The Military Committee of the Old Mennonites made a proposal for alternative service. (Juhnke, pp. 222-229)

# ORGANIZATIONS FOR RELIEF

1. From 1896 to 1906 the Old Mennonites had an active “Home and Foreign Relief Commission.”
2. George Lambert was appointed to go to India to supervise directly the distribution of the

Commission's portion of grain and its relief funds for famine relief. This led to the opening of two Mennonite missions in India.

**1898.** The Mennonite Evangelizing and Benevolent Board appointed J. A. Ressler and W. B. Page and wife, who opened the first foreign mission of the Mennonite Church at Dhamtari, India, on Nov. 22, 1899.

**1917.** The **Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers** was organized at Elkhart “to solicit, receive, hold and dispense or distribute funds or supplies for the relief of war sufferers.” (This was preferred to contributing to the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A., organizations closely associated with the war effort.) (Hershberger, pp. 138-139)

**1920.** BIRTH OF MCC. In June, 1920, a delegation from Russia came to America to solicit help for their people. In January 1920 Mennonites of Dutch-Russian background (MB’s, Krimmer MB’s, GC’s) had cooperated to organize a common **Emergency Relief Commission.** The **Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers** was ambivalent about such cooperation. One problem was the difficulty of controlling standards of behavior and dress for workers far away from home. In August 1919 the Old Mennonite Commission resolved to disband its agency as soon as it had fulfilled its postwar relief task. It expected to do so by the spring of 1920.

The emergency needs of starving Mennonites in the Ukraine finally convinced the separate agencies to expand and cooperate. Thus came into being MCC. *“For Mennonite ecumenical relationships, MCC’S birth was a high moment”* (Juhnke,p. 250).

Daniel Kauffman, guardian of Old Mennonite separatism and critic of inter-Mennonitism, was more than a little disgruntled. Only with reluctance did he report MCC news in the *Gospel Herald.*

To go overseas in relief work was to have one’s experiences broadened. Vinora Weaver and Vesta Zook, who went to Turkey and were the first two women to serve under MCC, had been careful to wear their regulation bonnets when meeting the Mennonite “higher-ups” at Scottdale who approved their going, but halfway across the Atlantic Ocean they declared their independence by throwing their bonnets overboard.

**1920.** In the fall of 1920 Clayton Kratz was administering relief in Halbstadt, a formerly Mennonite village in the Ukraine. The Advancing Red Army was overwhelming the White Army of General Wrangel in the area, but Kratz chose to stay. He was never heard from again. (Juhnke, pp. 249-250)

# NEW LEADERS

The dynamics of recruiting leaders in the 1920’s were especially interesting in the cases of Orio O. Miller and Harold S. Bender. In the following decades these two men from Elkhart County, Indiana, made extraordinary contributions to the definition and organization of the denomination. Both were graduates of the ‘old Goshen’ (1915 and 1918 respectively). Both carried a Goshen-style vision for progressive church work. Both conflicted with older, conservative leaders. But both also had some special advantages. (Juhnke,p. 276).

In **1918** Hesston College was the largest [(Old) Mennonite] school…. By 1918 Hesston College was a main center of new conservative forces in the [(Old) Mennonite] church, reflected particularly by an emphasis on regulation attire and a conservative eschatological doctrine known as premillennialism. The contrast with Goshen was striking. At Hesston in 1918, all women wore the prayer veiling and many wore cape dresses. At Goshen, not one woman student wore the prayer veiling except at worship services. Many of the Hesston men, perhaps most, wore the “plain” or “regulation” coat, without lapels. At Goshen in 1918, only Arthur Slagel, who would join the faculty at Hesston in 1919, wore the plain coat.(Albert Keim, *Harold S. Bender,* pp. 66-67)

**1925-1950**

The first quarter of the century could be characterized as **progressive** – Sunday schools, revival meetings, missions, relief efforts, educational institutions established – and **conservative** – conference organization with a centralization of power in the leadership of such men as Daniel Kauffman, George R. Brunk, S. G. Shetler, John L. Stauffer, J. B. Smith, A. D. Wenger, John Horsch, and others. The Mennonite Church (OM) was firmly settled on a fundamentalist/biblicist basis with clear lines of separation from liberalist tendencies in its own fold and from other Mennonites of liberal theology and practice, such as the GC’s.

By the end of WW I tendencies away from the church’s conservative position emerged, especially among the younger generation who had encountered the outside world (and other kinds of Mennonites) in military camps, in overseas service work in the French reconstruction unit and other places, or in college.

**1924.** A new religious periodical, the *Christian Exponent,* wasfounded by progressives who were not satisfied with the *Gospel Herald.*  The *Christian Exponent* was a mouthpiece for the “old Goshen” group – leaders who had studied at Goshen College before its closing and reorganization in 1923-1924. This included former presidents and deans and alumni, including Harold S. Bender.

The *Christian Exponent* was immediately opposed by the conservatives. Daniel Kauffman referred to it as an “anti-church publication.” John Horsch (in 1924 and 1926) wrote two tracts attacking it. In September 1928 the *Christian Exponent* died. The editor, Vernon Smucker, later joined the Presbyterians. (Juhnke, pp. 267-268)

Two leaders from the “old Goshen” group who would do much to steer the OM’s into Mennonite *ecumenism* and the erosion of Mennonite *conservativism* were Harold S. Bender and Orie O. Miller.

# Harold S. Bender

Bender identified with and supported the youth movement that emerged among Mennonite postwar reconstruction workers in France. He became chairman of the Young People’s Conference which held conventions in 1920, 1922, and 1923.

**1920.** John L. Stauffer, teacher at EMS, published an article in *Gospel Herald* criticizing the youth movement.

**1922-1924.** Bender studied at Princeton and Tuebingen, Germany. While in Europe he grew a mustache and his wife (daughter of John Horsch) wore a fancy hat instead of a covering. Despite these facts, Sanford C. Yoder, newly appointed president of Goshen College, offered Bender a place on the Goshen faculty for the 1924-1925 school year. Yoder specified that to win the confidence of conservatives, the Benders should conform to the dress codes and write no more articles for the *Exponent.*

**1924.** Being noncommittal, rather than siding with the conservatives or the liberals, Bender based his ideological foundation for the renewal of the church on Anabaptist-Mennonite history. Anabaptism, not doctrine, would be the unifying factor in bringing the Mennonite groups together. He was for Mennonite ecumenism from early on.

**1926.** Bender pursued researching and documenting Anabaptist-Mennonitism, developing a Mennonite historical society, collecting books and documents, and starting *The Mennonite Quarterly Review.* He intended the *Review* to be an alternative to both the *Gospel Herald* and the *Christen Exponent.*

**1926.** Bender made a clean break with the youth movement with a critique of J. E. Hartzler’s *Education Among the Mennonites of America.* With his critique he won the favor of conservatives as an opponent of the liberals. (Juhnke, pp. 277-282)

1. Bender was one of two Americans at Mennonite World Conference its second meeting in

Danzig, Germany. (The MWC originated in 1925 at the instigation of Christian Neff of Weierhof) (Juhnke, p. 253)

Bender’s leadership role was of immense proportions in the Mennonite Church as illustrated in the following anecdote from Dr. Abraham Schmidt’s experience while a student at Goshen in 1952.

A secretary ushered me into the office at the appointed time and I took a seat as I assumed I should. Behind a huge pile of notes, books and letters, a foot deep and covering the entire desk, sat the Pope, as he was called by the students. He was working feverishly and I sat silently, believing that he would soon pause and address the concern that hung heavily upon me. I watched him carefully. Large in stature, both in size and position, he held sway over an entire denomination of several hundred thousand members. He had articulated “The Anabaptist Vision,” and in so doing had mobilized many of his fellow Mennonites. Soon he would give me my vision too.

After what felt like an hour he noticed me. He was startled. He had not expected me to be sitting there.

“What do you want?” came his hasty request. Obviously I had broken an important train of thought.

“Why, you called for me. I have an appointment card, see?” I stammered.

“Oh, yes. Didn’t my secretary give it to you?” he asked impatiently.

“No,” I replied. “Give me what?”

Rummaging around on his desk he pulled out a piece of paper and laid it on the pile nearest me. It was my course schedule, indicating that I could meet the requirements for completing my Bachelor of Science in Education degree as well as my Bachelor of Divinity degree.

After examining it carefully I looked up. I could see only the top of his balding head with a few streaks of long gray hair covering it. He was back at his labor, pen in hand, coining papal decrees.” (Abraham Schmidt, in his autobiography, *Brilliant Idiot,* pp. 82-83)

# Orie O. Miller

In **1915** Miller graduated from Goshen College and married Elta H. Wolf, a classmate. They moved to her home in Lancaster County. He joined his father-in-law’s shoe firm, and hoped to become a minister and church leader like his Indiana minister father, D. D. Miller.

**1918.** In July 1918 at the Ephrata meeting house, Orie was in a class of seven candidates for ordination. He was not ordained. He deliberately avoided the book directly in front of him. Amos Horst, later a prominent bishop in Lancaster Conference, took the book and was ordained minister. Orie earlier had served as a licensed minister in Michigan, and he and his wife desired to go on the mission field. He was in the lot two more times, but never ordained. (John Ruth, *The Earth Is the Lord’s,* pp. 868-869)

Orie became an active lay leader in several new denominational institutions. He was involved in extensive part-time church work in relief, missions, and mutual aid. His leadership in MCC brought the MCC administrative headquarters to Akron, PA, and to his own home property.

In spite of resistance by Lancaster Conference conservatives, Orie supported inter-Mennonite cooperation, association with the wider peace movement, and aggressive denominational organization for mission. “I am more convinced than ever that Orie is a dangerous man,” wrote Bishop Mosemann to John Horsch in 1927. “That man gets machinery set in motion [MCC, the Peace Problems Committee, and the Lancaster Conference’s Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities] that will take some power to stop.” Mosemann’s reasons for resistance were (1) wider association with different Mennonite groups of Mennonites and others would break down OM separation from the world, and (2) the next step would be compromises with Modernism.

**1926.** Mosemann demanded that Miller resign his position on the Continuation Committee of the Conference of Pacifist Churches. Miller submitted and demonstrated a humble spirit.

Although submissive in word and demeanor (and clothing), he continued to attend peace-organization meetings, urge the Peace Problems Committee to give an aggressive witness to government, and help lead the Lancaster Conference to more effort in missions.

Miller must have been disappointed in **1924** when the OM’s Relief Commission for War Sufferers chose not to join with other Mennonite groups to form MCC.

**Bender** and **Miller** were instrumental in the transition in the Mennonite Church from the Daniel Kauffman *Bible Doctrines* era to a new era of wider ecumenical and progressive concerns. Paul Erb has claimed that this shift had already taken place by 1925. However, the fruits of the new leadership did not fully ripen until after WW II. (nearly all of the above on Bender and Miller from Juhnke, pp. 277-285)

**LANCASTER CONFERENCE and MCC**

**1940s.** “It was now two decades since Orie Miller’s manifold inter-Mennonite activities had brought the offices of the growing Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) into the little town of Akron, next to Ephrata. Amos Horst, too, became something of a bridge between the wary Lancaster Conference leaders and MCC’s mix of all types of Mennonites from across the country. As bishop, Amos would have one foot in the nonconformity issues of this district and the other in the heady scene of the growing MCC office, where western women without head coverings and men with Dutch/Russian names carried the name Mennonite in unfamiliar ways startling, if not downright offensive, to Lancaster’s conservatives.

…

“One result of the presence of more liberal types of Mennonites brought into the county by MCC work would be the emergence of several congregations affiliated with bodies other than Lancaster Conference.

The first of these, the future Bethel Mennonite Church of the Eastern District Conference, had its inaugural meeting in the Lancaster YWCA on September 24, 1944. Another new congregation of liberal Old Mennonites emerged at an old Brethren meetinghouse near the hamlet of Monterey, not far from the Stumptown meetinghouse of the Lancaster Conference. This group affiliated with the Ohio Conference.

“From the point of view of the founders of the Monterey congregation, it was needed because as nonmembers of the Lancaster Conference, they were not allowed to participate in the communion services Bishop Horst administered in Orie Miller’s Ephrata congregation. From the point of view of the Lancaster bishops, the Mennonites from other communities were presuming to bring along their own less strict standards of church discipline, thus undermining those carefully maintained by the Lancaster Conference.” (Ruth, p. 971)

**PEACE ISSUES – COOPERATION and/or SEPARATION**

On issues of conscription, the trend was toward cooperation among Mennonite, Quaker, and Church of the Brethren groups – the three “historic peace churches.”

Two inter-Mennonite agencies were created: (1) MCC which in its beginning dealt with relief but later became involved in peace issues; (2) the All-Mennonite Convention (first meeting in 1913 in Berne, Ind.) which provided progressives opportunities to appeal for cooperation (five meetings were held between 1919 and 1930). In 1913 Daniel Kauffman addressed the meeting, but thereafter stayed away. He decided that through the emphasis on unity such meetings “foster the spirit of compromise” and do so “at the expense of things which are essential.”

Mennonites were active in the Conference of Pacifist Churches (begun in 1922 at Bluffton and continued with yearly meetings through 1929). It included religious pacifists from groups other than the historic peace churches. Because quite a few of the participants seemed theologically liberal, John Horsch and John H. Mosemann opposed OM involvment. (Juhnke, pp. 294-296)

**Orie Miller’s** position. By **1925** he was the Peace Problems Committee’s secretary. Between 1926 and 1929 he produced a series of articles for MC papers that defined the committee’s work. His three main points were these:

1. The church had not prepared its draftees for the war nor had it made its position clear.
2. He wanted his church to show greater interest in ecumenical conversation and peace witnessing.
3. He wanted the committee to represent the church’s position to the government. (Paul Toews, *Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970,*  p. 111)

**John Horsch** attended a **1926** meeting of a “World Alliance for International Friendship Through the

Churches” and found it worthwhile, but he did not want his attendance to be known in the Mennonite churches. John Horsch made a distinction between “pacifism,” a dangerous movement for world improvement outside of Christ, and “nonresistance,” the true teaching which was both biblical and Anabaptist.

**1935.** The first Historic Peace Churches meeting, held in Newton, KS, laid groundwork for peace church cooperation in WW II. This led to proposals that eventually produced the Civilian Public Service program in WW II. That program satisfied the needs of religious CO’s far better than did the draft system of WW I. (Juhnke, 296-298)

**SEPARATION AND NONCONFORMITY**

**1929.** The General Problems Committee was created by Mennonite General Conference. It was charged with, among other duties, “investigation and solution of any … irregularity … affecting the peace, unity, and spiritual welfare of the church.” Committee members were Daniel Kauffman, Oscar Burkholder, Daniel (D.A.) Yoder, Harry A. Diener, and John (J.L.) Stauffer.

The purpose of the committee was to control the church’s drift in many areas – dress, amusements, secret societies, insurance, paid ministry, school problems, and more. It was effective to a great extent due to a respect for the centralized institutional authority of the Mennonite Church. The plain coat was not required among the Amish but was something many Amish Mennonites had to adopt as they merged with the Mennonites. (Juhnke, p. 301; Toews, p. 75)

**1933.** Daniel Kauffman chided Harold Bender, then dean, that Goshen still was “in some point, too far away from the accepted standards of nonconformity and kindred standards that the Mennonite Church holds to.” (Toews, p. 74)

As for individuality versus conformity, George R. Brunk I in a letter to Harold S. Bender, June 16, **1920** wrote: “We have a closed policy as to all that the Bible teaches – all that the church rules – all that a bishop rules.” (Toews, p. 75)

**1935.** The Committee’s report included seven protests against “selfishness,” “carnality,” “growing indifference toward our historic and biblical principles,” “immodest and fashionable attire,” “worldly and fashionable headwear worn by some of our sisters,” “world conformity” via members’ belonging to various associations, and a growing practice of individuals keeping membership in distant congregations rather than yielding to standards of local ones. (Toews, 75-76)

**1935.** J. C. Wenger, while a student at Princeton Seminary, in a letter to Harold Bender, deplored all the emphasis on dress and the prospect of eventually having to wear the plain coat. The more he studied history, he said, the more he thought “we are not true to the faith of our fathers when we draw such hard and fast lines at Conference” and then “force the regulations of a few bishops upon the brotherhood.” Later he would symbolize for many the connection of dress with orthodoxy. (Toevs,p. 73).

**1943.** The General Problems Committee in a resolution recommended that:

Nonconformity and nonresistance should be made tests of membership. A member could violate the doctrine of nonconformity by “holding life insurance, membership in labor unions, immodest and worldly attire (including hats for sisters), wearing of jewelry (including wedding rings), and attendance at movies and theaters.” The real clincher was a plan requiring that any district conference unable or unwilling to enforce the resolution’s conditions should be dropped for MC [OM] general conference membership. (Keim, *Harold S. Bender,* p. 346)

The general conference was unable to deal with the resolution in the 1943 meeting so a special session was called for 1944.

In the spring of 1944 Harold Bender was asked to write two articles for the *Gospel Herald* setting forth the history of the General Conference. He made the case that the General Conference was purely advisory and was not to interfere with the work of the district conferences. (Keim, p. 347)

**1944.** Mennonite General Conference held the special session in 1944. J. L. Stauffer thought they were at a “crossroads” and called for action to stop “compromise with and surrender to the world and worldliness.” Paul Erb, new editor of the *Gospel Herald*, feared quarrels about dress threatened to set off another church division. (Toews, p. 76)

In the discussion, tensions mounted and the conference came to an impasse. Bishop Sanford C. Yoder spoke: “You ask the reason for our situation? I’ll tell you the reason. It is because fellowship has broken down. There was a time when we experienced the finest of Christian fellowship, but for some time this has no longer been possible. Today the feeling experienced is one of ostracism. The fellowship is gone. This is the reason for distrust and tension within the church.” (Keim, pp. 348-349, quoting Guy F. Hershberger). A prayer meeting lasting one and a half hours followed, and then the discussion resumed. During the night the General Problems Committee softened the resolution, which in effect left the General Conference in only an advisory capacity.

**HOME MISSIONS and A SEPARATE ORGANIZATION FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS**

Among the Old Mennonites by the 1930s a key slogan was, “every congregation an outpost.” New OM “mission outposts” doubled from 71 in 1930 to 140 in 1940. Some of the conservative missions were rural and some urban.

Missions brought various new people into Mennonite congregations. Ex-moonshiners, ex-gamblers, and ex-prostitutes, as well as others joined. Persons came from various racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. In **1932** Franconia Conference, apparently the first time, made the decision to receive a black applicant into the church through water baptism. Lancaster Conference had been receiving blacks into the church since **1917**. (Toews, pp. 54-55)

**1930.** Lancaster Conference, not a member of the Mennonite General Conference, decided to start its own missions in Africa. In May 1930 the bishops challenged the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities to answer a list of ten issues regarding the India mission (a program they had been supporting). Among the issues were that ten of the fourteen missionaries in India had been trained at the old Goshen College, missionaries had close associations with non-Mennonite missionaries, that Indian Christian women should wear distinctive head coverings, and that men should not wear mustaches. Lancaster’s decision to begin separate overseas work implied that the conference would remain aloof from the Mennonite General Conference and the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. (Juhnke, p. 308)

**ROLES FOR YOUTH AND WOMEN**

In the 1920s many congregations provided weekly activities for the young people – Sunday evening young people’s meetings, literary societies, Christian worker bands, and more. The literary societies offered social activities and built skills through recitations, musical performances, debates, office-holding, and procedures based on *Robert’s Rules of Order.*

About 1927 Mennonite General Conference gave increased attention to the literary societies, which then took on a more religious tone. In 1932 the literary society of one congregation decided to limit itself to topics of Christian faith.

While in the general culture, women were experiencing some liberation (women’ suffrage was achieved in 1920), the Mennonite’s position of women’s place was Scripturally based. In **1929** Bishop Jacob Bixler of Indiana, in the *Gospel Herald*, wrote that women should lead or speak publicly only in women’s and children’s groups, and then only with men’s prior consent. Women could teach young boys, but it was unscriptural, for a woman to instruct and lead young men. In larger church gatherings, women were to be silent. Bixler and Daniel Kauffman thought women should not even ask questions if men were present.

A symbol for acknowledging woman’s submission was the head covering prescribed in 1 Cor. 11. (Toews, pp. 56-59)

**PUBLICATION**

1. The *Christian Exponent* is discontinued.
2. *The Sword and Trumpet* made its appearance. George R. Brunk set out to combat a drift toward

liberalism, worldliness, and Calvinism. He believed that the Reformation doctrine of salvation by faith *alone* – taught in the *Sunday School Times*, at Moody Bible Institute, and others – undermined the church’s ability to sustain a separated, nonresistant, unworldly community. He criticized Mennonite Fundamentalists for accepting the Scofield Bible’s Darby-style dispensationalist teaching.

*The Sword and Trumpet* became the first Mennonite periodical to make effective use of cartoons – collaborations by George R. and Ernest Gehman.

One cartoon decried the enemies who were tearing down the Mennonite pillars of regulation of dress, regulation of conduct, regulation of doctrine, and all church authority. The sequence from dress to all church authority represented a kind of domino theory. In the 1920’s the first domino teetered dangerously.

*“Dress is the test,”* wrote Brunk, “if that is lost we drop to *individual regulation* which certainly will mean World regulation.”

**1930.** Noah Mack, bishop in Lancaster Conference’s Weaverland district wrote in a *S&T* article that was reprinted in *Gospel Herald*: “There is now a doom and an overthrow threatening the Mennonite Church in America.” Women who exposed their arms, necks, and knees were following “Queen Fashion,” whose “overlord is Satan himself.” “Mothers, daughters, sisters … YOU ARE OVERTHROWING THE CHURCH!” For such men as Mack, Scriptural teachings on dress were clear. Changes in prescribed attire seemed to threaten the foundations of faith as well as a way of living. (All of the above on PUBLICATION taken from Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War,* pp. 312-313).

**1943.** *The Anabaptist Vision* was presented asBender’s address to the Society of Church History in Chicago in 1943. At least into the 1970’s, the Anabaptist Vision became the “regulative principle” of Mennonite thought, and insofar as ideas can affect practice, it regulated practice as well. That vision defined the essence of Christianity as discipleship (ethical faithfulness); a gathering together of the faithful in voluntary churchly communities that practiced mutuality and accountability; and an ethic of love and nonresistance that governed all relationships, civil and religious. (Toews, p. 104)

**The Year 1944**

* The Mennonite Church in its general conference decided not to make nonconformity and nonresistance tests of membership in the conference and at the same time reaffirmed its commitment to nonconformity.
* Harold S. Bender published *The Anabaptist Vision.*
* Guy F. Hershberger published *War, Peace, and Nonresistance.*
* Many Mennonites turned to Anabaptism, not fundamentalism/biblicism, for their dominant ***ideology.*** (Toews, *Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970,* p. 83)

**CIVILIAN PUBLIC SERVICE (CPS)**

1. The Selective Service and Training Act was passed and became law on **September 16, 1940.**

**October 4, 1940.** The Mennonite Central Peace Committee met in Chicago with 10 Mennonite denominations represented. They considered a program of service projects directed by the church and asked MCC to assume responsibility.

To have autonomy in administration (apart from the government) the church had to finance the program. By the time the CPS system ended in 1947, it cost MCC more than 3 million dollars. John Moseman, Jr., son of Lancaster Conference bishop and initial director of the first CPS camp at Grottoes, VA, observed that to have “actually paid our own fare has amazed even the severest critics.” For the peace churches to serve the government while footing their own bill “has in large measure been the sufficient rebuke to enemies of the conscientious objector position.” (Toews, p. 138)

On **February 6, 1941,** President Roosevelt signed the Executive Order that established CPS.

**May 15, 1941.** The first CPS camp opened at Grottoes, VA.

**1943.** At the American Legion national convention delegates offered more than forty resolutions attacking conscientious objectors and CPS. (Toews, p. 146)

**1941.** A Peace Problems Committee report to the 1941 Mennonite General Conference (OM) lamented “that a few of our young men have accepted full military service and a few more noncombatant service.”

1. In November, 1942, Mennonite Church (OM) data showed that 800 members were in CPS and

320 in the military. (Toews, p. 149)

From statistics provided by Guy F. Hershberger in 1949, of the draftees in the (Old) Mennonite Church 29.9 % I-A (regular military service), 10.6 % I-AO (noncombatant), 59.5 % IV-E (conscientious objector) (Toews, p. 173)

**Concerns about CPS**

Regarding candidates for directors in the camps, MCC chairman P. C. Hiebert, a Mennonite Brethren, cautioned executive secretary Orie O. Miller about several. “I would feel bad,” he wrote, “if our boys would return from camps contaminated with modernism.”

*CPS was the great ecumenical event that brought Mennonites together*. Virtually all the Mennonite bodies challenged CPS’s cooperative basis.

In **August 1941,** just four months after the first camp opened at Grottoes, VA, conservative leaders expressed dismay at mixing Mennonite Church youths with pacifists of questionable beliefs.

At the urging of the Virginia Conference, the General Conference established a “Civilian Service Investigative Committee.” The committee was to look into the possibility of a program controlled by those bodies who believed in biblical nonresistance and in the standards of the church.

In **1943** Bishop John E. Lapp of Franconia Conference suggested that MCC form two administrative divisions. One would run the camps whose men were mostly Old Mennonite, the other would run the remainder.

The Civilian Service Investigative Committee reported to (Old) Mennonite General Conference in **1943:** (1) Lax religious conditions in the camps; (2) Linkage with pacifists through the National Service Board of Religious Objectors (NSBRO); (3) Without naming names, the report implied that Harold S. Bender, Orie O. Miller, and such people controlled too much. In the shaping of policy there had not been

“sufficient representation and counsel.” There was a “danger” that the “present organizational setup of Peace, Relief, CPS and related organizations” would become the “permanent mold for postwar operations.” The pattern would “lead the Church away from her traditional ways of working and from some of her cherished doctrines and practices.” (Toews, pp. 152-153)

**Beginnings of Voluntary Service**

Several CPS units were made up of men who worked in mental hospitals. More than other CPS units, the hospital units incorporated women into the structure of CPS witness and service. This was the beginning of what after the war came to be the Mennonite Voluntary Service program. (Toews, pp. 167-168).

**CPS as an educational program.**

From **1942** to **1944** MCC published six small booklets with the series title, *Mennonites and Their Heritage.* Harold Bender saw this as an opportunity to educate some 4,000 young men while in camp. The core content of the booklets was determined by Harold S. Bender and was intended to educate especially the Mennonites in the CPS camps.

**Impact of CPS**

In the **1920’s** and **1930’s** fundamentalist fears had left Mennonite intellectuals under suspicion and at the margins of the church. By **1955** a host of young intellectuals, partly schooled in CPS, occupied positions of influence.

In **1935** fundamentalism was still in prominence. By **1955** the search for Anabaptist theology was displacing the motifs of fundamentalism.

In **1941** there was no Mennonite seminary. By **1955** there were three.

In **1935** most Mennonites were wary of interchurch dialogue. By **1955** young Mennonite intellectuals were dialoguing with church leaders of other denominations on questions of peace.

In **1935** many Mennonites were wary of dialogue not only with other Christians but also with other Mennonites. In the postwar years inter-Mennonite dialogue flourished. (Toews, p. 181)

**CHRISTIAN DAY SCHOOLS**

During the **1940’s** secondary schools in Old Mennonite communities were started in Lancaster, PA (1942); Culp, Arkansas (1944); Johnstown, PA (1944); Kalona, Iowa (1945); Belleville, PA (1945); Salem, Oregon (1945); and Kitchener, Ontario (1945).

Primary schools in Mennonite Church communities began in Dover, Delaware (1925); Greenwood, Delaware (1928); and Cheswold, Delaware (1933). A rapid expansion began in 1938 – from Virginia in the East to Oregon in the West. By **1949** communities affiliated with the Mennonite Church or Amish Mennonite conferences had begun 52 primary schools.

WW II brought home the necessity for more effective means of teaching and passing on the values of the church to the next generation. Many Mennonite draftees had absorbed the military spirit in public schools and accepted military service. Other reasons included unwholesome peer pressure and secular instruction for 35 or 40 hours a week with only two or three hours of religious instruction in church.

(Toews, pp. 191-193)

**MENNONITE MUTUAL AID (MMA)**

MMA was legally incorporated on July 19, 1945 as a Mennonite Church organization. It was intended to make money available for church purposes, yet provide an appropriate return. It was to provide an alternative to commercial insurance to protect against property loss and hardships due to sickness or death, and to make it financially possible for returning CPSers to get established. (Toews, p. 194)

**EXPANDING MISSIONS**

From 1945 to 1955 the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities founded new work in seventeen different countries. The Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (Lancaster Conference) began missions in Luxemburg, Honduras, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

MCC’s and mission boards’ activities often converged. Mission programs brought in MCC programs, and MCC’s relief work brought Mennonite Missionaries.

Often the standards of the sending mission boards were compromised on the field. The Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities attempted to deal with this by drafting a “Foreign Mission Polity” for the foreign mission personnel.

“Paul Graybill and Amos Horst [bishops] took a copy of the ‘Polity’ with them when they followed the returning missionaries to Tanganyika in December of 1947. The Lancaster visitors stayed for a month (joined by Orie Miller) but found their document making the missionaries newly unhappy. Orie [representing MCC and a member in Amos Horst’s district] tried to defuse their feelings by saying, ‘Put the polity in your files and keep on working.’” (Ruth, p. 1053)

J. D. Graber, executive secretary of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, expressed concern that these programs might degenerate into a mere social service. Helping the suffering in the name of Christ was good if it also opened opportunities for the proclamation of the faith. (Toews, pp. 207-208)

**MENTAL HOSPITALS**

In **1946** MCC changed the use of a farm at Leitersburg, MD, which it had bought for one of the experimental farm-community CPS units, to a site of its first psychiatric care facility. Mennonites were entering this new and highly specialized medical field without a single trained psychiatrist. In CPS work they had and outstanding record as caregivers in mental hospitals.

In **1946** MCC approved the opening of Brook Lane Farm at Leitersburg, and also agreed to cooperate with the MB’s to open a hospital on the West Coast. In March **1948** Lancaster Conference voted to open a mental hospital as its own project. In **1954** Prairie View Hospital opened at Newton, Kansas. (Toews, pp. 209-210).

**MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE**

At a Sunday school picnic, a class of young married couples of the Pennsylvania Mennonite Church at Hesston, KS considered how they might continue the service CPS represented. They formed a Mennonite Service Organization (MSO) to mobilize in case of disaster.

In **May 1951** floods hit Kansas and Wichita, Great Bend, Marion, Florence, Topeka, and Kansas City called for help. In the first two weeks at least 120 men and women volunteered.

Nearly a year later, in **March 1952**, tornadoes swept through White County, Arkansas. Again Kansas congregations organized a formal assistance program. Emerging was the idea and structure for what came to be MDS – an affiliate of MCC. (Toews, pp. 211-212)

**1950-2002**

**MENNONITES, REVIVALISM, EVANGELISM**

**June 3, 1951.** First Brunk tent revivals, East Chestnut Street, Lancaster, PA.

**1952.** Christian Laymen’s Tent Evangelism organization formed. Howard Hammer, from Ohio, used that organization to begin tent campaigns in the Midwest.

Andrew Jantzi, a preacher in the Conservative Amish Mennonite Church, and others, began their own tent-revival campaigns. (Toews, p. 217 ff)

**April 23, l955.** The Full Gospel Tent Evangelism Association was organized at Western Mennonite School, Salem, OR. (Jason Schrock, *Lengthen the Cords and Strengthen the Stakes,* p. 60)

**August 26-Sept. 16, 1956.** Crusade for Christ was held at Salem, OR with Myron Augsburger as speaker.

**Concerns:**

1. Parts of the Mennonite Church did not give support to the revival efforts. Moses Horst of Washington-Franklin Conference forbade members attending Brunk meetings near the Marion Church in 1954. The ideal of “total eradication of the old man” was promoted in these meetings and opposed by the Franklin County ministers. (Daniel Lehman, *Mennonites of Washington County, Maryland and Franklin County, Pennsylvania Conference,* p. 430)
2. Conferees in a conference on evangelism held at Goshen College in 1953 were troubled by more and more appeals to primary- and junior-age children, by certain of the evangelistic methods, and by evangelists’ emphasizing a “crisis commitment of faith in Christ” without calling for “full discipleship.”
3. Paul Erb, in an editorial in *Gospel Herald,* questioned whether the “honest search for truth” which discipleship demands is not “something very different from a revivalistic intoxication that sends the addict reeling from one evangelistic meeting to another …. If those things do not make the attendant a biblical Christian their influence is shallow and in the long run harmful.”
4. In some cases, Billy Graham fashion, the campaigns were community wide, with churches other than Mennonite cooperating. (Toews, pp. 219-220)

**MENNONITES AND EVANGELICALS**

After WW II some Mennonites became involved with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Guy F. Hershberger and Myron Augsburger worked with NAE leaders, especially those like Carl F. H. Henry who were open to Mennonite views on peace and social questions. From the 1950s onward Myron Augsburger was an influential voice in the NAE. (Toews, p. 222-223)

The laity had been drinking in doctrines of evangelicals and others through radio sermons and publications already in the 1930s. Car loads of Lancaster Mennonites were traveling to Philadelphia to hear Presbyterian Donald Grey Barnhouse and imbibed his teaching on eternal security. Paul Mosemann, removed from church membership for preaching on the radio, engaged teachers from Philadelphia College of the Bible to speak in the community. There was a considerable following from members of the Paradise Mennonite congregation. By February 1937 they had organized the Calvary Independent Church. By 1952 their membership numbered 661. (Ruth, p. 913, p. 930)

“As always [in the 1970’s], some listened more eagerly to other voices than to those of their own leadership. Amid the shifting cultural landscape, parents sent quite a few sons and daughters to seminars of a popular lecturer, Bill Gothard, who sounded convinced, among his own family’s problems, that there could be a moral order. There was a ‘chain of command,’ he held, that was God’s way of doing things with humanity. The Manor district arranged for buses to take their young people to the seminars. A minister brought to Lancaster Mennonite High School to speak on the Anabaptist heritage found that the brightest students had all been sent to the Gothard classes for the day, even though they had been there for a previous seminar.” (Ruth, p. 1107)

**MENNONITES AND CONSERVATISM**

In **1950** two student orators at EMC – J. Richard Burkholder and Daniel Hertzler, a future editor of *Gospel Herald* – suggested that the doctrine of nonconformity was difficult to defend. Hertzler likened the nonconformity doctrine to ecclesiastical walls designed to reinforce isolationism.

Some Mennonites chafed under the conservative standards and pulled out of conference or congregations to join less restrictive conferences or to form independent congregations. In **1938** the Cedar Grove congregation withdrew from Washington-Franklin Conference and was eventually received in the Ohio Conference. John Ruth documents the formation of at least nine new congregations coming out of Lancaster Conference from **1951-1971.** (Ruth, pp. 1049-1051)

Mennonite Church leaders broadened the concept of nonconformity from personal appearance. J. C. Wenger’s *Separated Unto God* **(1951)** and a statement by General Conference **(1955)** entitled “Declaration of Commitment in Respect to Christian Separation and Nonconformity to the World” still

emphasized attire – the central emphasis in previous decades – but now attire became only one element in a larger pattern of restraint, responsibility, simplicity, and separation. Nonconformity covered courtship and marriage, organizational affiliation, recreational patterns, speech, worship patterns, commercial connections, mutual aid, and relationships to the state. Following the 1955 statement, various Mennonite Church agencies held forty-four nonconformity conferences across the church.

By the early 1960’s John R. Mumaw, president of EMC and one who always practiced nonconformity in attire, was counseling change. In an address to General Conference in **1962** he suggested that “we should not dwell too long on our image of the past.”

In **1973** Conrad Brunk, a son of George R. Brunk II, observed that “the Mennonite Church seems to be swiftly losing its last external vestiges of nonconformity. To a large extent we have melted into the mainstream of American cultural life” (Toews, pp. 224-226)

**FROM CONFERENCE AUTHORITY TO CONGREGATIONAL AUTONOMY**

The “recovery” of Anabaptism raised ideals about the church, which in turn posed many questions about congregational structures and conference polities. Mennonites found themselves with an ideology of a “brotherhood” church [in Anabaptism] radically different from that which was in place – hierarchical from the top down as in Protestantism and Catholicism.

In the Mennonite Church, already in **1948**, a Reorganization Study Committee was moving the church toward a more bureaucratic, hierarchical, and concentrated organization.

The question was how to structure both congregations and conferences according to a biblical pattern.

In **1955** a survey of some regional conferences revealed several changing trends: (1) greater role for the laity in conference governance; (2) transfer of bishop functions to ministers or the appointment of a bishop for each congregation – both patterns implying greater autonomy for the congregation and less bishop power; (3) movement toward one salaried, seminary-trained minister.

Howard Charles: “In the New Testament church the pattern of organization … was not uniform.’

Paul Peachey: “Sixteenth-century Swiss and Dutch Anabaptists consistently thought in congregational terms.” (Toews, pp. 229-231)

Consequently, conference authority diminished from a legislative to an advisory role, and congregational autonomy increased to independence from conference authority.

**POST WORLD WAR II CONSCRIPTION: I-W**

In **March 1948,** only a year after the last CPS men were released from WW II service, President Harry S. Truman asked for another conscription system. The conscription bill passed in **1951** established what became known as the I-W program. From 1952 to 1974 approximately 15,000 Mennonite men performed I-W service.

Three forms of service emerged: (1) PAX Service under MCC; (2) Voluntary Service (VS) as established by MCC and various denominational agencies, among them Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church and Southeastern Mennonite Conference; (3) I-W earning service.

A draft census of Mennonite Church draftees in 1954 showed 73% of Illinois Conference draftees in I-W service and 96% or higher in districts such as Lancaster, Franconia, and some smaller ones.

In the MCC units there were often draftees from several different Mennonite groups and there was little administrative control. The program proved disappointing to many church leaders.

A report on the Denver unit reported that 50% of the men were responsive to the church program, but “the other 50% are obviously using I-W as a time to get away from home at best and some to actually run from the church.” According to leaders who visited the unit, the problem seemed to grow from the ease with which Mennonite draftees could secure CO status. (Toews, pp. 240-247)

**FROM NONRESISTANCE TO PACIFISM**

In the early **1950’s** several American Mennonite scholars in Europe were dialoging with European state churches, the World Council of Churches, Reinhold Niebuhr, and other advocates of the church assuming more responsibility for society’s order. The peace churches were represented by Albert Meyer, John H. Yoder, Paul Peachey, and Irvin Horst, all MCC workers who participated in preparing two documents – “War Is Contrary to the Will of God” (1951) and “Peace Is the Will of God” (1953) – which the WCC incorporated into its own documents and publications.

Some of these same men participated in four conferences in Europe from **1955** to **1962** under the title, “The Lordship of Christ over Church and State.”

By **1958**, J. Lawrence Burkholder, a future president of Goshen College, was calling for Mennonites to extend their doctrine of the lordship of Christ from the boundaries of the church to include the world.

This movement was contrary to the positions of H. S. Bender and Guy F. Hershberger, author of *War, Peace, and Nonresistance* (1944) and *The Way of the Cross in Human Relations* (1958). They held to the position that nonresistant Mennonites should stay clear of political activity. In true Anabaptist form, the state, politics, and culture were not in the “perfection of Christ” although they were under the sovereignty of God.

In **1956** the Mennonite Church held a conference on “Nonresistance and Political Responsibility,” and in **1957** MCC sponsored one on “Christian Responsibility and the State.”

The upshot of all this was that since the state would obviously not accept the Lordship of Christ, there was still ground for political noninvolvement. But since the state was under the reign of God, Mennonites could emphasize the obligation to witness to the state.

Some were advocating resistance to the conscription system and a witness to the state, among them Edgar Metzler, a Kitchener, Ontario pastor in a 1959 article in *Gospel Herald*. Harold Bender immediately responded saying one could not biblically resist the state “to witness to the truth or against the evil.” Resistance was legitimate only when the state compelled an “act which is clearly forbidden in Scripture.” Bender’s position clearly won this skirmish in the Mennonite battle over the acceptability of non-cooperation and civil disobedience. But in the next decade nonviolent resistance gained the ascendancy. (Toews, pp.261-265)

**MC -- GC DIALOGUE AND MERGER INTO MENNONITE CHURCH-USA**

In **1960** leaders of the MC’s and the GC’s asked for reconsideration of the Mennonites’ divisive past.

In the *Gospel Herald* Harold Bender identified 25 schisms among people who then constituted the MC denomination. He claimed that not a single division had occurred over “significant doctrinal” questions.

Earlier, in 1959, the GC’s general conference passed a resolution noting that a major objective in the GC birth a century earlier had been to seek the “union of all Mennonites.” (The GC’s root back to 1847 when John H. Oberholtzer led out in a schism from Franconia Conference in 1847.)

In **1965** the GC and MC conferences each established an Interchurch Relations Committee to explore further Mennonite cooperation.

John Drescher, editor of *Gospel Herald*, thought Mennonites were “overdue for a call to unity.”

One MC writer, writing from the vantage of Virginia Mennonite Conference, in response to the editorial, counseled caution. He thought the MC approach to the authority of the Scripture and the office of the ministry promoted more uniformity than did the interpretative freedom and the congregational autonomy practiced among the GC’s. (Toews, pp. 275-277)

*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995* was adopted by the delegates of Mennonite Church General Assembly, and of the General Conference Mennonite Church Triennial Session, **July 28, 1995,** in Wichita, KS. Mennonite Church USA, formed by the merger of these two groups, has adopted this confession as its statement of faith.

As a result of its weakened position on the Scripture (after much debate the inerrancy of the Scriptures in the original writings was not affirmed), several GC congregations in the East chose not to affiliate with Mennonite Church-USA.

MC-USA officially began on **February 1, 2002**.

Peter Dyck, longtime employee of MCC and advocate for the merging of the MC’s and GC’s, takes a good bit of credit for bringing the merger to pass in a two-part article appearing in *Mennonite Weekly Review*, July 23 and July 30, 2007. The article is introduced as follows: *The road to integration of the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church was a long one.* Herald of Truth *editor John F. Funk, who helped Russian Mennonites migrate to the prairie states and provinces in the 1870s, hoped the immigrants would join Mennonite Church conferences. They didn’t. MC and GC churches cooperated in sending relief supplies to India during the great famine of 1896-97. When sending food and money led to sending missionaries to India, GC leaders asked MC leaders whether they could cooperate. MC’s said no. Mennonite Central Committee, however, was inter-Mennonite from its beginning in 1920. MC’s and GC’s worked and prayed together during Civilian Public Service, 1941-46. Goshen Biblical Seminary (MC) and Mennonite Biblical Seminary (GC) affiliated to become Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Such shared experiences led to the formation of dually affiliated congregations – 129 by 1995. Peter and Elfrieda Dyck know about this journey from personal experience, as the following vignettes illustrate.* (MWR, July 23, 2007, p. 9 and MWR, July 30, 2007, p. 9)

**DIVISIONS AND REALIGNMENTS**

**THE NONCONFERENCE MOVEMENT**

In the **1940’s** there was unrest in the Fairview Mennonite Church, Albany, OR, that eventually resulted in the formation of the Tangent Mennonite Church in 1950. Fairview was organized in 1897 as an Amish Mennonite Church (without a written congregational discipline) and a member of the Pacific Coast Conference which did have a discipline, which was accepted by the congregation in 1942 but never fully implemented. The ministry was divided. Minister Melvin Schrock supported a more conservative stand, minister Henry Gerig a more progressive stand, and Bishop Nick Birky was in the middle.

A deacon ordination in **1948** brought things to a head. Two men were nominated for the lot. The

bishop rejected Harold Reeder because he thought he was too conservative. Verle Nofziger was ordained, but not immediately ratified by the conference because of the irregularity of the process.

In **1949** Melvin Schrock resigned his ministerial duties at Fairview.

On **Jan. 1, 1950,** the Prayer Group that had been meeting because of concerns at Fairview held its first

Sunday morning service at the home of Marvin Schrock. It was this group that later developed into the **Tangent Mennonite Church**. Melvin Schrock was not originally a part of this group. He did meet with them, and on March 19,1950 preached his first sermon for The Group. He was later appointed leader for The Group by officials of the Pacific Coast Conference. The congregation applied for and was granted membership with the Pacific Coast Conference. Ten years later, **1960**, the congregation disaffiliated from Pacific Coast Conference. Some of the issues were the wearing of gold, cut hair on women, immodesty in apparel, neckties, irreverence during worship services, use of tobacco, and sports involvement.

**This was the beginning of the nonconference movement.** This fact was established when before the Social Security Board it was verified that The Group which became Tangent was in existence before 1950, which was a government condition for receiving social security exemption.(Jason Schrock, pp. 18-35)

**November 1954. Paul Landis,** mission worker in Crockett, Kentucky, wrote to the Virginia Conference Executive Committee stating they “no longer consider themselves affiliated with … Mennonite Church …. We are convinced that … the Mennonite Church today is in a fallen condition – a state of apostasy.” Then in a letter dated Jan. 14, 1955, the Landises expressed their desire to recall their former statements. The Executive Committee received them back into the Conference, but asked them to leave the field in Kentucky, which they did in May of 1955, and located near Portsmouth, VA. Perhaps Paul Landis was in Sarasota, Florida when he heard Eli Kramer and several others had withdrawn from Virginia Conference. He decided a second time to withdraw from Conference.

While Landis was in Sarasota, a couple from Crockett were there for vacation, and Charlie Ferguson confessed Christ under Paul Landis’ preaching. Landis suggested Eli Kramer do the baptizing, which he did. Now Landis had a convert in Kentucky, and he thought he could return there. Three other members of the mission church requested church letters and joined the Landis group at Crockett, now known as Faith Hills Mennonite Church. Eli D. Kramer was associated with the new group in a bishop capacity. The work there in time became the center of Rod & Staff, Publishers, Crockett, Kentucky. (Harry Brunk, *History of Mennonites in Virginia – 1900-1960, Volume II,* pp. 405-409)

**November 16, 1959.** The Executive Committee of Virginia Conference received a letter from **Eli Kramer**, bishop of the Deep Creek Church near Fentress, VA, in which he announced his resignation from Virginia Conference. A month later he was joined by Paul Landis, Levi Kramer, and Harvey Mast. The four withdrew without conference letters. Kramer had visited with those who were sympathetic to his leadership and five families joined with him to form the Hope Mennonite Church. Issues were neckties, short sleeves, transparent clothing, gold-banded wrist watches, and wedding rings. (Brunk, pp. 316-317)

**July, 1960.** At a fellowship meeting near Gettysburg, PA, a group of ordained men centered primarily in the York-Adams counties region announced their withdrawal from the Lancaster Conference for conservative reasons. Chairman of the group was **Mervin Baer** of Carlisle. **Roy Geigley** of Mummasburg … served as secretary-treasurer. They announced in the *Gospel Herald* that they were forming “a fellowship … with three different worship points” that would “be known as the Mennonite Christian Brotherhood.” (John Ruth, *THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S,* p. 1074)

In **August 1966** **Maurice Martin** resigned his position at Yarrowsburg mission and his membership in Reiffs-Clear Spring. He objected to the decline in standards in what was ironically the most conservative congregation in Washington-Franklin (North). His family, along with those of his father Daniel and brother Silas, began attending the Stoughstown Mennonite Church in Cumberland County. Several families from the Dillers congregation, a Lancaster Conference church in Cumberland, and the Rowe had organized the **Stoughstown** congregation in **1962** under the leadership of bishop **Roy M. Geigley**. It belonged to the **Nationwide Mennonite Fellowship,** a loose network of conservative congregations, which had pulled out of their respective conferences with the idea that congregational self-government would be the antidote to apostasy.A year later **Abel Martin** resigned as deacon at Reiffs-Clear Spring and went to Stoughstown. Soon afterwards, the Stoughstown ministry helped them to organize the **Hagerstown Mennonite Fellowship.** A few more families from Reiffs-Clear Spring joined them. Abel Martin served as deacon, and **Maurice Martin** was ordained a preacher on **May 18, 1969.** (Edsel Burdge and Samuel Horst, *BUILDING ON THE GOSPEL FOUNDATION,* p. 693)

**March 1964.** CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS was adopted at the “Third Annual Biblical Discipleship and Fellowship Ministerial Meeting” at Hartville, Ohio, on March 23, 24, 25, 1964. Some excerpts:

Article IV – Of the Holy Spirit. We warn against modern healing and tongues movements, and the second work of grace emphasis ….

Article V – Of Creation. We believe that the Genesis account of creation is an historic fact and literally true; that the Bible … is scientifically accurate.

Article IX – Of the Church. We believe that the Church is neither an ecclesiastical hierarchy where ministers, bishops, boards, committees, church councils, or conferences arbitrarily rule …, nor a democracy where rule is by popular majority.

Article X – Of Discipline. … the local body of believers has the God-given responsibility (1) to choose officials … the use of the lot is recommended …. (3) to exercise wholesome discipline ….

Article XI – Of Separation. … a life of separation from the world and its follies, fashions, sinful practices and methods …. We believe uniform plain attire in the congregation is necessary ….

Article XII – On Ordinances. …. The Scripture teaches that the veil should be a covering for the head …. Marriage … is … dissoluble only by death …. We find [in the Scriptures] two possible exceptions, permitting separate living (not divorce), but no exception for remarriage while the former companion is living.

Article XIV – On Apostasy. Many church organizations are dominated by a compromising leadership seemingly intent on maintaining organization unity at the expense of faithfulness and obedience to the Scriptures …. The emphasis on higher education (colleges, universities, and seminaries) has resulted in the acceptance of ungodly philosophies and centralization of power that has undermined the faith of many. The present-day ecumenical movements that ignore doctrinal unity and purity of practice are unscriptural ….

**CONFERRING, CONFERENCE, AND FELLOWSHIP ORGANIZATIONS**

**Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church**

**1960.** The congregations at Gingrich and Lititz, served by the recently ordained conservative bishops Aaron Shank and Isaac Sensenig, were urgently asking for release from Lancaster Conference restrictions. Although the conference had not allowed special (as opposed to congregational) singing until fifteen years after their neighboring Franconia Conference had done so, there had been frequent breaches of that rule at Lititz. The new Bishop Sensenig, one of a number of Old Order Mennonites who had joined Lancaster Conference in the era following the Brunk revivals, was not minded to allow for bending the clearly stated conference rules. Those of his convictions thought that conference discernment was giving undue hearing to liberal influences and voices from outside the conference, including some from the nearby MCC at Akron. (Ruth, p. 1074)

In **1965** the neighboring Franconia Conference discovered that only thirty-eight percent of their ordained men supported their own written list of rules. Something was about to give. Lancaster leaders had been continually warning against the coming of “cut hair” for women, infrequent wearing of “the veiling.” and the gradual decline of “the plain coat” among the faculty of EMC in Virginia. Now reports kept coming back that some of their own ministers had been seen in public with “lapel coats and ties.” Young ministers no longer wanted to wear “the frock coat.” There was new pressure from the far-flung home mission stations to make some allowance for accepting divorced members. Most worrisome of all to some was the liberty their young men in 1-W service were finding to dress by worldly standards as they lived in distant communities.

Finally, in **October 1966**, four bishops – **Homer Bomberger, Benjamin Eshbach, Isaac Sensenig,** and **Aaron Shank** – stated that they were unable in good conscience to serve communion where the Lancaster Conference “discipline” was not obeyed. Furthermore, they were forming a separate committee to oversee their Voluntary Service and 1-W personnel in a manner that accorded with former conference discipline. Their work would go forward under the name **Mennonite Messianic Mission** (often referred to as “the Three M’s). They set up two Voluntary Service units – at Wilmington, Delaware, and Danville, PA – that allowed only participants and activities approved by “the Three M’s.” A few years later those fostering this project led a group of conservative congregations to separate from the conference and take the name of the **Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church.** (Ruth, p. 1077)

Homer Bomberger identified several key issues: “The present interdenominational and ecumenical involvements, the social gospel trends, the loss of conviction and practice of separation of dress on the part of key men and women in the Conference, the rapidly increasing number of sisters with cut hair and fashionable hair arrangements who continue in communion relationships with the church, and other situations.” (Ruth, p. 1095)

Another writer commented that now that change [in conference practices] is in the air, the conference is as necessary as ever, … but that there must be new thinking about how to keep it in unity. As hard as it might be to accept the fact that “in a few years few of our younger sisters will be wearing the veiling,” the bishops should not let that divide them or the conference. (Ruth, p. 1096)

**July 17, 1968.** A vote on the revised discipline [by Lancaster Conference ordained] at a special session at Mellinger resulted in 283 in favor and 37 who found it unacceptable.

**August 15, 1968.** The [Lancaster Conference] bishops read a letter by which the bishops in the MMM resigned from all conference committees and declared that since the new discipline was “basically a statement of recommendation rather than a statement of requirements,” they felt they must withdraw.

**September 19, 1968.** At the Lancaster Conference assembly, Moderator David Thomas reported that the bishops had voted twenty-two to four to **“release”** those wishing to withdraw from conference.

Bishop Homer Bomberger expressed appreciation for the considerate way the bishops had responded to those whose stated motive was “to maintain Bible principles.” The four Messianic bishops were unanimous, he said, on the method of dividing. “We are not here to judge, but we have a conscience.” Bishop Aaron Shank also stated that the moderator had clarified the issue well. There would be “no fighting over territory.” Bishop Isaac Sensenig added that there were “no personality clashes involved.” Shank said that at that point there were “thirteen [ordained] brethren” in the Mennonite Messianic Mission, and that no congregations had been organized under it.

By **April 1970** statistician Ira D. Landis was reporting that the “recently organized Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church” had “27 meeting places,” served by “six bishops, 38 ministers, and 19 deacons for 1,178 members.” (Ruth, pp. 1096-1098)

**Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship**

Some of those who formed the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church in 1968 wished to continue with the 1954 Lancaster Conference discipline. Others desired to revise the discipline and make it more conservative. Bishop Homer Bomberger was among those who wanted to maintain the 1954 discipline rather than making it more conservative. The other bishops considered Bomberger to be too lax in discipline and assigned two bishops to assist him with his administrative duties in October 1971. In the fall of 1971 Homer Bomberger and a following of 16 families were holding prayer meetings in the home of Jacob Hostetter. In December 1971 Homer Bomberger asked to be given retirement status as an EPMC bishop.

A number of EPMC members in Bomberger’s White Oak district supported him and felt he had been unfairly treated. They withdrew from EPMC and formed the New Haven Church near Lititz in **1972**. The following year EPMC made ownership of radios a test of membership. Many did not agree with this decision and withdrew from EPMC to form the Fair Haven Mennonite Church near Myerstown in June **1973**, which church also came under the leadership of Homer Bomberger.

In **1977** the Sharon Mennonite Church in Lebanon County, PA, was founded by Lancaster Conference members who wished to be under Bishop Bomberger’s oversight. In **1978** the three churches under Homer Bomberger’s oversight organized as the Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship. (Scott, Stephen, *Introduction to Old Order and Conservative Mennonite Groups,* pp. 181-182; Horst, Amos, Jr. “The Beginning of the Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship,” pp. 1-2)

*Mennonite Church Directory 2007* lists Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship with 20 congregations and 1,523 members.

**Pilgrim Mennonite Conference**

**August 26, 1991.** The Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church Bishop Board, in the absence of the Brethren Aaron Shank, Sidney Gingerich, and Stephen Ebersole, agreed to “work out a separation in which the Brethren Aaron Shank, Sidney, and Stephen would provided leadership to those ordained men who support them and that provision be made for any ordained brethren or members of the Lebanon District who remain with EPMC ….”

Another motion carried that “if the Brethren Aaron, Sidney, and Stephen are not ready to accept the responsibility of a new group, then we would consider the following recourse. For our working relation to continue together, we would consider Brother Stephen inactive and the bishop administration for the district would be by bishop board appointment. Brother Aaron and Sidney would fit into that program and their role would be determined by the bishop board.” (Ivan Martin, Jr., *e-mail*, 8/16/07)

Bro. Ivan feels “the reason for the division rests with those in the administration of the church, especially on the bishop level. There was a growing difference of methods of administration and secondly a difference of how traditions were to be viewed.”

The solution proposed by the Bishop Board was “an unworkable ‘solution’” that caused the division that many had prophesied would come. Many who left felt they had to even though their desire was to stay with EPMC. (*Ibid.*) The cause, in Bro. Martin’s view, was relationship problems.

According to the 2007 Mennonite Church Directory, PMC has 4 bishops, 21 congregations, and 1,255 members.

**Southeastern Mennonite Conference**

**1963.** The Middle District of Virginia Mennonite Conference divided into three districts – Central District, Harrisonburg District, and West Valley District. Ordained brethren were granted the privilege to

choose in which district they would serve. This resulted in a conservative block congregating in the West Valley District and set the stage for the future division.

**July 15, 1968.** The West Valley District Ministerial Council sent a “Statement of Concern” to the Executive Committee of Virginia Mennonite Conference. Among the concerns were these: (1) women cutting their hair and imitating fashionable styles of hairdressing; men adopting novel ideas in hair styling; (2) women appearing unveiled or inappropriately veiled in times of worship; (3) members involved in unscrupulous business transactions and unscriptural business relationships; (4) members practicing mixed bathing, attending commercial amusement and recreation centers, participating in professional athletics and dancing; (5) men appearing publicly semi-nude or in form-fitting attire; women adopting fashionable and immodest attire; members wearing jewelry; (6) conformity to the world in wedding practices; (7) breakdown in loyalty to Conference both among the ordained and unordained. All of the issues mentioned were in violation of the VMC Rules and Discipline.

The WVD Ministerial Council issued a “call [to] our Conference brotherhood to new commitment to the Lord of the Church, who, we believe, is able to ‘revive us again, that we may rejoice in him.’” They concluded with this appeal: “Therefore, beloved brethren of the Virginia Conference, we entreat you that we affirm our loyalty to our present Rules and Discipline in order that Scriptural unity may be regained.”

**May 2, 1970.** The West Valley District Ministerial Council took formal action to present a request to Virginia Mennonite Conference for a release from Conference.

**May 30, 1970.** The West Valley District Ministerial Council presented a formal request for release from Virginia Mennonite Conference. A Joint Committee was formed, consisting of a five member Steering Committee appointed by the WVD Council and the five member Executive Committee of VMC. The Joint Committee worked through the details for a peaceful separation. Both the ordained and the laity were given the privilege to choose to stay with VMC or to go with the new organization to be formed and to be called Southeastern Mennonite Conference (SMC).

**May 7, 1971.** A special session of Virginia Mennonite Conference was called to consider granting the request for a release by West Valley District. A motion to grant that request was made and seconded. As the ballots were being distributed, a motion to table the motion to grant the request was made “to allow time for prayer and fasting.” The latter motion carried.

**June 21, 1972.** The release was granted in a regular session of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

**June 30, 1972.** Southeastern Mennonite Conference was officially organized in a meeting held at Bank Mennonite Church. Membership lists were finalized on June 30 with a total membership for Southeastern Mennonite Conference of 559, while 106 members of the former West Valley District remained with Virginia Conference. (That remnant formed the Dayton Mennonite Church and also was officially organized as the West Valley District of Virginia Mennonite Conference.) Of the 39 active ordained brethren in the former WVD, 37 – 2 bishops, 25 ministers, and 10 deacons – officially organized as Southestern Mennonite Conference

1. Southeastern Mennonite Conference consists of 16 congregations with 701 members.

**South Atlantic Mennonite Conference**

**October 7, 1993.** In a meeting of the Executive Committee of SMC, Bro. Enos Heatwole presented a proposal and plans for a new conference structure for the churches of the Georgia-Carolina District of SMC. The need for a new conference was felt because of the distance between the Georgia-Carolina District and the northern districts of SMC. Geography made it difficult for the brotherhood in the Georgia-Carolina District to attend and actively participate in conference.

**June 24, 1994.** In a regular session of SMC, a recommendation that the Executive Committee appoint a six-man committee (Steering Committee), consisting of three brethren from the northern districts and three men from the Georgia-Carolina District to work out the details in the relationships between SMC and the new conference, was accepted.

**October 21, 1994.** The Executive Committee of SMC took action to call for a session of Conference on January 23, 1995, at the Pike Church at 7:00 p.m. to consider the proposals of the Steering Committee regarding the formation of the new conference.

**January 23, 1995.** In the special session of Conference, the proposals of the Steering Committee were approved as amended.

**April 12, 1995.** South Atlantic Mennonite Conference (SAMC) was officially organized in accordance with the Minutes of the Special Session of SMC, January 23, 1995, and began to operate as a separate conference.

**2007.** SAMC consists of 4 congregations with 241 members.

**Conservative Mennonite Churches of York and Adams County**

**1975.** Dismay over the changes in Lancaster Conference life led to a new division in the York County District. Bishop Richard Danner had managed to forestall a split there when the major one [1968] had occurred. At that point he had led those of his members in sympathy with conservatives leaving the conference to remain in the conference, while maintaining the older rules whether or not the main body did. The differences had become so great that he, with others, felt they must call the direction of the larger group “apostasy.” Seven of his congregations – the greater part of his district – then left the Lancaster Conference to form the Conservative Mennonite Churches of York and Adams Counties. (Ruth, pp. 1114-1115)

**Washington-Franklin Mennonite Conference**

In **1957** the Washington County, Maryland and Franklin County, Pennsylvania Conference revised their 1930 discipline. There were two new rules. (1) The first, aimed at preventing a repeat of the 1954 Brunk meetings, forbade members from sponsoring “Tent Revival Campaigns” that did not have Conference sanction. (2) The second prohibited members from attending meetings “of interdenominational groups” emphasizing “healing, speaking in tongues [and] extreme holiness.”

Over the next ten years, church leaders lamented the increasing disregard some church members paid to the discipline. (Burdge and Horst, p. 646)

***A Microcosm of Mennonite Church Fragmentation***

**1938.** The Cedar Grove congregation, a liberal group, withdraws from Washington-Franklin Conference and is received into the Ohio Conference in 1950. (Daniel R. Lehman, pp. 463-467)

**August 13, 1965.** Washington-Franklin divides into two groups – Washington-Franklin (North) [a progressive/liberalizing group] and Washington-Franklin (South) [Moses Horst’s group]. (Burdge and Horst, p. 673)

**1962.** Stoughstown was organized by Bishop Roy M. Geigley as a Nationwide Fellowship congregation. He was joined by Maurice Martin and Abel Martin in 1966.

**May 18, 1969.** Maurice Martin was ordained preacher for Hagerstown Mennonite Fellowship.

**April 1969.** Culbertson was organized as a Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church congregation.

**November 18, 1970.** Cumberland Valley Mennonite Church was organized under the leadership of Bishop Amos E. Martin with his supporting ministry who were granted a release by Washington-Franklin (North). (Burdge and Horst, pp. 692-695)

In **1970,** there were approximately 2,400 Mennonites in thirty-eight congregations, divided into ten groups in Franklin County, PA and Washington County, MD. Half of them were moving away from traditional understandings of nonconformity. While modified distinctiveness remained, the congregations in the Lancaster, Ohio and Eastern, and Washington-Franklin (North) conferences defined faithfulness primarily in terms of carrying out the Great Commission. The other half of the Mennonite community – Cumberland Valley, Eastern Pennsylvania, Nationwide Fellowship, and Washington-Franklin (South) – defined faithfulness in terms of adherence to traditional Mennonite distinctives. (Burdge and Horst, p. 697)

**Midwest Mennonite Fellowship**

**September 21, 1977.** Midwest Mennonite Fellowship was officially organized in a meeting of 23 ministers from 13 congregations at Bethel Conservative Mennonite Church, Nappanee, Indiana, as a supporting group for a new Bible school that was being planned. In that meeting (1) the official name adopted for the organization was Midwest Mennonite Fellowship, (2) a constitution and statement of standards for the Bible school was adopted, and (3) the name Maranatha Bible School was adopted.

**January 7, 1976.** An exploratory letter regarding interest in starting a Bible school in the Midwest was sent by Jesse Beachy, Buck Creek Mennonite Church, and Arnold Skrivseth, Prairie Mennonite Church, to several churches in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and possibly North Dakota.

**February 8-10, 1977.** Approximately 50 ministers met at Stone Lake, WI. A committee was formed to begin the work of starting a Bible school.

**March 21-23, 1977.** The committee met at Nappanee, Indiana, and drafted three purposes for the Bible school. They also suggested that an association of congregations be formed who would conform to these three basic principles:

1. Function basically with congregational type of church administration, but recognize a need for broader sharing to accomplish the goals of starting and maintaining a Bible school and mission projects.
2. Appreciate our Christian heritage as brought to us through the Mennonite Church and are by the grace of God endeavoring to preserve that heritage.
3. Accept the Christian Fundamentals as adopted in 1964 at Hartville, Ohio.

**July 1-3, 1977.** Thirty-eight ministers met at Iowa Mennonite School, Kalona, Iowa. Many churches that left conference settings remained unaffiliated and had less occasion for fellowship with other churches of like faith and practice. At this meeting a decision was made to form an association to support the Bible school. There were no dissenting votes. (Information provided by Arnold Skrivseth, August 2007)

**2007.** Midwest Mennonite Fellowship has 33 congregations with 2,121 members.

**Keystone Mennonite Fellowship**

**March 1985.** A group of about 20 concerned pastors from Lancaster Conference began meeting together for Bible study and to counsel together concerning the doctrinal diversity within the conference

and how to respond to it.

**Issues:** problems with liberal church administration; the roles of men and women; church and state relationships; the biblical practices of the ordinances; Conference and Mennonite Church literature that undermined Biblical authority and truth; participation in church mission and service programs with very liberal personnel and administration.

The group functioned under the name of “Concerned Pastors Fellowship.”

1. This group, in communication with the Lancaster Conference Bishop Board, officially organized

as “Keystone Pastors Fellowship.” The organization consisted of licensed and ordained deacons, ministers and bishops of Lancaster Conference.

They formulated a statement of **Four-fold Purpose:**

1. 1. To provide opportunity for conservative church leader to identify and fellowship with each other.

2. To provide a basis for accountability in order to administrate [their] own programs of mission and

1. 3 To assist one another as [they] strive to guide [their] congregations in purity of faith and practice.
2. 4 To provide assistance in the possible development of conservative districts with conference.

The first planning committee of the Keystone Pastors Fellowship (KPF) consisted of Raymond Harnish, Jay Fox, Robert Keller, Clayton Shenk, and Isaac Gehman.

**1997.** The KPF continued to function within Lancaster Conference until 1997 when it became obvious that their relationship and affiliation with conference was becoming a problem for them and the congregations they served. At that point the bishops of three districts, Raymond, Harnish, Paul Hollinger, and Leroy Gehman became actively involved in the planning and ultimate decision to request the Bishop Board to allow them to leave conference and to function separately.

**1999.** The request was granted on March 19, 1999, and included 15 congregations, 46 credentialed leaders, and 891 members.

**2007.** Keystone Mennonite Fellowship includes 19 congregations, 62 credentialed leaders, and 1162 members. (Information supplied by Isaac W. Gehman)

**Biblical Mennonite Alliance**

The issues that brought about the formation of BMA were:

1. The increasing tendency, on the part of Mennonites with whom [they] were traveling at the time, to stress belief in Biblical doctrine without requiring the corresponding Biblical practice.
2. The danger and loneliness of being unaffiliated without outside accountability.
3. The need for an organization of congregations and ministers to spearhead a missionary thrust to the unreached people groups of the world.

BMA was officially organized on **June 5, 1998.**

Minimal doctrinal requirement is the Mennonite Confession of Faith (1963) together with additional policy and practice commitments.

As of **August 15, 2007,** there are 44 member congregations, 115 ministerial members, and approximately 2,300 lay members.

BMA is an alliance. A one page “Positions and Policy Statements” adopted by ministers of BMA

on June 5, 1998, updated February 2, 1999 and February 2, 2000, sets forth the minimal requirements for congregational membership in the alliance. Beyond that congregations have considerable autonomy to make application of biblical principles. (From information provided by Paul Emerson)

**Mountain Valley Mennonite Churches**

Dayton Mennonite Church comprised the West Valley District of Virginia Mennonite Conference since the formation of the congregation in 1972 following the release of the original West Valley District from Virginia Mennonite Conference on June 21, 1972. It was made up of 106 members of congregations in the original West Valley District who chose to remain with Virginia Mennonite Conference.

Several years later, after about a year’s discussion and discernment, many of the districts of Virginia Mennonite Conference were reorganized and realigned. Issues leading to the formation of the **Mountain Valley District** were: (1) the prayer veiling, (2) women in pastoral leadership, (3) issues of modesty without prescribing acceptable patterns, (4) jewelry, (5) divorce and remarrige.

The Mountain Valley District was formed on theological, not geographical, grounds. The Mountain Valley District was officially recognized as a Virginia Conference district on March 20, 1993. At the same time the West Valley District was dissolved.

Mountain Valley District churches were released from Virginia Conference during the Spring Delegate Meeting of Virginia Mennonite Conference, January 26, 2002, at Waynesboro, VA. This was the same meeting in which Virginia Conference officially joined MC-USA. An additional major issue for Mountain Valley District was (6) homosexuality as it was being treated by MC-USA.

At this same meeting of Virginia Conference, the Faith congregation (South Boston, VA) which was part of the Southern District of Virginia Conference was also released.

**Mountain Valley Mennonite Churches (MVMC)** marks May 1, 2002, as the date of its formation. Five charter congregations formed the MVMC: Bethel, Dayton, Faith, Morning View, and Salem. (From information provided by Roman J. Miller both by telephone and e-mail)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

BOOKS

# Bender, Urie A., *Four Earthen Vessels,* Herald Press, 1982.

Brunk, Harry A., *HISTORY OF THE MENNONITES OF VIRGINIA, Volume II, 1900-1960,*

McClure Printing Company, Inc., Verona, VA, 1972.

# Burdge, Edsel, Jr., and Horst, Samuel L, *Building on the Gospel Foundation,* Herald Press,2004.

# Burkholder, Roy S., *Be Not Conformed To This World,* Masthoff Press, Morgantown, PA, 1998.

Coffman, Barbara F., *HIS NAME WAS JOHN,* Herald Press, 1964.

# Gingerich, Melvin, *SERVICE FOR PEACE,* Herald Press, 1949.

Hershberger, Guy F.,*War, Peace, and Nonresistance,* Herald Press, 1944.

Juhnke, James C., *Vision, Doctrine, War,* Herald Press, 1989.

# Keim, Albert N., *Harold S. Bender,* Herald Press, 1998.

# Lehman, Daniel R., Mennonites of the Washington County, Maryland and Franklin County, Pennsylvania Conference, Publication Board of The Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, 1990.

*Mennonite Church Directory 2007,* Christian Light Publications, Inc., Harrisonburg, VA, 2007.

Pellman, Hubert R., *Eastern Mennonite College, 1917-1967*, Eastern Mennonite College, 1967.

# Ruth, John L., *The Earth Is the Lord’s,* Herald Press, 2001.

# Scott, Stephen, *Introduction to Old Order and Conservative Mennonite Groups,* Good Books, Intercourse, PA., 1996.

# Shetler, Sanford G., *Preacher of the People,* Herald Press, 1982.

Toews, Paul, *Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970,* Herald Press, 1996.

Wenger, J. C., *Faithfully, Geo. R.,* The Sword and Trumpet, 1978.

Wenger, J. C., *The Mennonite Church in America,* Herald Press, 1966.

# CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

*CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS,* Garden City, Missouri, Adopted by Mennonite General

Conference, 1921.

*Statement of Faith of the Virginia Mennonite Conference,* 1963.

*Mennonite Confession of Faith,* Adopted by Mennonite General Conference, August 22, 1963.

*CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS,* Adopted at the “Third Annual Biblical Discipleship and Fellowship Ministerial Meeting” at Hartville, Ohio, March 23, 24, 25, 1964.

*Confession of Faith in A Mennonite Perspective, 1995* Mennonite Church USA.

# MISCELLANEOUS

Articles from *Mennonite Weekly Review,* July 23, 2007 and July 30, 2007.

Minutes of Southeastern Mennonite Conference, June 30, 1972 and July 20-21, 1972.

Numerous reports, e-mails, and telephone conversations as documented in the text.

Paper, “The Beginnings of the Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship,” Amos Hurst, Jr. Lititz, PA, 2003.

James A. Goering, Ministers’ Study Week, Buck Creek Mennonite, Richland Center, WI, 10/23-26/07