



## The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)  
So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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Issue # 6

### **The Ecumenical Effect of Mennonite Relief Efforts**

The Ecumenical effects of Mennonite Relief Efforts, which are the focus of our discussion now have been an attempt to live out what we sing in such songs as “O Use Me Lord, Use Even Me.” It is the desire to be used of the Lord and to walk worthily of the calling wherewith we have been called [Ephesians 4:1]. To that end there has been much effort to

carry the Gospel to people who have not heard and to relieve the suffering and pain that is being experienced by those who have been deprived of the normal benefits related to daily life.

We are thinking about the ecumenical effect of Mennonite relief efforts. The word ‘ecumenical,’ brings a negative or a note of caution into this consider-

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ation. It has the thought of world wide Christian unity or co-operation. There are various levels of co-operation that we could consider. I think there are primarily two. As we look at the record of the Mennonites in relief efforts, one has been the inter-Mennonite co-operation between various Mennonite and Anabaptist groups. Another is the broader interaction with Protestant groups that were also involved in these relief efforts.

*Relief is generally associated with material aid.* This is what we are thinking of. It is a Bible principle and something to which we are called. In Acts 11:27–30, there is a record of a world wide “dearth,” to which the Church responded. The relief was sent by the hands of Barnabas and Paul “Unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.” They saw a need. They organized. They responded, and “Every man according to his ability, deter-

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Messages have been selected on the basis of topic rather than the speaker. Messages have been selected from congregations or speakers within the Berea Amish Mennonite Fellowship, Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario, Conservative Mennonite Churches of York and Adams Counties, PA., Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, Mennonite Christian Fellowship, Nationwide Fellowship Churches, Ohio Wisler Mennonite, Washington-Franklin Mennonite Conference, and certain selected unaffiliated Amish Mennonite congregations.

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mined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.” (verse 29) This is the only time the word ‘relief,’ is found in the New Testament. It is worthy of note that even though the dearth was worldwide, the relief was directed specifically to the brethren of Judea, and dispersed by the leaders of the Church. This is the way it is recorded.

Regarding the term ‘relief,’ or ‘relieve’ in conjunction with physical deprivation, the New Testament does not have a lot to say. We do not have a lot of other records in the New Testament, There are a few, such as Paul reminding Timothy to relieve the widows in their affliction, those “that are widows indeed,” (1 Timothy 5:16) where a few specifics are given. In the book of the Psalms is a reminder that God is in the relief business. He says that God, “preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow.” (Psalm 146:9) We know that God is not insensitive to the physical and the spiritual needs of His Creation, His people, or His children.

He does not however commission His people to feed and clothe all the needy of the world. This is not to say we do not attempt this in some measure, but that is not the primary responsibility of the New Testament

Church. It is a Bible principle that we should have compassion and do and be as the Good Samaritan was on the highway, to relieve the fallen and aid him, bringing him relief. Our Lord Himself, when He was surrounded by the hungry masses that were gathered to hear Him preach the Scripture says He had, “compassion on the multitude,” (Matthew 15:34) and He fed them. Even Job said that if “If I have withheld the poor from their desire,” (Job 31:16) or “If I have seen any perish for want,” (Job 31:19) then he said, ‘let calamity befall me.’ It reminds us that there is a certain obligation that we have to do what we can, and to respond with compassion. I think it relates to an attitude toward God and self as we relate to others. We demonstrate that. In that respect we do not, and we never want to reflect against giving relief to needy souls.

I would like to take *a brief overview, merely a few glimpses, of the historic Anabaptist, record of relief work.* In the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, we can find a broader compilation of involvements that is true of the Anabaptists and the Mennonites as they eventually came to be named. The extremes of luxury and poverty were always to be avoided. This was a principle by

which they lived. It is a New Testament teaching that material aid and sharing in economic matters was to be freely practiced after the manner of the good Samaritan. That is how their statements read. The record is given of Hans Leopold a Swiss martyr of 1528, who said of His brethren, "If they knew of anyone who is in need, whether or not he is a member of their church it is their duty out of love for God to render help and aid."

We can read in the early confessions, about an emphasis on clothing and feeding the needy in conjunction with living the doctrine of nonresistance. If we are truly non-resistant, we are also willing to feed and to clothe our enemies and the needy in particular. In 1 John 3:17, the apostle John wrote, "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him," he raises the question, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" In the year 1553 there is a record of the followers of Menno Simons at Wismar in Germany who gave asylum to a group of English Calvinist refugees who had been driven from their home, by the Catholic Queen. They were refused admission into the country of Denmark, where there was a

Lutheran monarch ruling at the time. They were not permitted to enter there. These North German Anabaptists offered a haven by providing shelter, food and clothing to them.

In the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, the Dutch Mennonites gave material assistance to the persecuted brethren in Switzerland, the Palatinate, Danzig, Poland, and Moravia. There is a wealth of records of their benevolence. Even in books as common as *Mennonites in Europe*, we can read of the benevolence of the Dutch in a formal protest from the authorities in the city of Amsterdam in 1666 to the Swiss government. They protested against the persecution of the brethren — the Mennonites — in Switzerland. They said, "The Mennonites are a people, which have no opportunity failed to extend noteworthy charity toward the people of the Reformed faith." They continued by citing the recent contribution that was made to the persecuted Waldensians of 7,000£ in the money of Holland.

During the 1720s and 30's, the Dutch contributed very large sums for the relocation of Mennonites from the Palatinate to Pennsylvania. This tradition continued into America. In 1756 the Franconia Mennonites in

Eastern Pennsylvania organized a small relief effort to assist the Moravian communities of Northampton County that had suffered loss of property due to Indian raids during the French Indian war. We know the record of Mennonite assistance rendered at the Ephrata Cloister where it was used for hospital purposes. They entered in and helped the suffering, fallen and wounded. One writer said, "We may be sure from what we know of their character and customs that many a weary straggler, invalid soldier or destitute refugee received aid and comfort from the rich farms and harvests of the Pennsylvania pacifists."

*Modern Relief Efforts.* In 1897 the Home and Farm Relief Commission was formed in Elkhart, Indiana. For ten years it contributed to famine relief in India. This was near the beginning of the twentieth century. Out of this, the Mennonite Mission was formed. The Mennonite Mission began in India in the year 1899, two years later. The Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities headquartered in Elkhart, Indiana sent workers to India to begin a work there.

In 1917 the Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers was again organized at Elkhart

and support was given to the Friends, or Quaker reconstruction effort in France and other European relief projects as well as the near east, or what we sometimes know or refer to as the Middle East today, following World War I. At one point in conjunction with the American Friends Service Committee (Mennonites were involved in supporting this) it is said that up to a million German children were fed daily. I think that it was more Quaker than Mennonite at that time, but they were involved. The Mennonite involvement eventually eclipsed the Quaker involvement of the Quaker relief efforts. In fact, in the mid Twentieth Century it was said of Mennonite Central Committee that they became the largest international organization in the world at the time because of their spread and the extent to which they offered material goods to the needy of other countries.

In 1920, the Mennonite Central Committee was formed in a response to the continued Russian Mennonite Crisis, due to the Revolution in Russia. There was a lot of suffering that came about following World War I. The new organization that emerged brought together several relief agencies of the Mennonite Church and several of the other

so-called peace churches. It came to be known as the Mennonite Central Committee. Soon after its beginning, the Lancaster Conference became organizationally involved. The Lancaster Conference had not been involved organizationally in the earlier efforts but at this time they did. Historians point out that this was contrary to the practice of the Lancaster Conference in response to other appeals from the broader Mennonite church for their support in the matter of foreign missions up to this point, and particularly the matter of higher education. They did not involve themselves, and withheld their support even from the Eastern Mennonite College until a much later date.

From this beginning, and the subsequent growth of the Mennonite Central Committee, we do share many of the concerns that we have today regarding the ecumenical effect of Mennonite relief efforts. Our thoughts focus now more directly on the work and the influence of the Mennonite Central Committee. Most of us who are old enough to read a little bit, know something about MCC. There was a day when the MCC was the primary relief organization. It was involved in things that touched church life in a more

direct way in our former setting. By the mid Twentieth Century, MCC (as I did already mention) was considered the largest relief organization in the world. When the Old Mennonite church committees for war sufferers became MCC, it combined the relief efforts of the Mennonite Brethren, the General Conference Mennonites, and the Old Mennonite Church under the direction of these committees.

When we bring the Mennonite Brethren factions, the General Conference, and the Old Mennonite Church together, we have a very large organization right at its inception. It grew out of the question of who would be in charge now of the relief efforts in Russia, after they had returned from the involvement in the Friends Committee. They saw the efforts and did engage for a short time in relief in the near east. Orie Miller spent a year there under the direction of that committee. Then, the question arose of who would direct the work of going into Russia to find out what the need was, and how they could help their fellow Mennonite Brethren.

Interestingly, Time Magazine published an article in February 1947 which said, "For most United States Mennonites the center of the U.S. is a tiny town

of Akron, Pennsylvania.” Akron had a population of 877 in that year, and Akron was chosen as the headquarters of the Mennonite Central Committee at that point because of Orrie Miller’s appointment as Secretary/Treasurer of the MCC.

I would like to attempt to answer the question, at least provide a few answers as to *why MCC became a major source of ecumenical influence in the Mennonite Church*. Again, we look at this from a negative standpoint in that it brought together the inter-Mennonite Conferences and groups as well as a touch with an influence from the broader Protestant group. One of the reasons that this happened is because of the era in which it was formed or established. The era in which this began was the period of the great awakening in the Mennonite church. The last third of the Nineteenth century and the first twenty years of the Twentieth century are known as the time of the great awakening. There was a great awakening earlier than that marked by the Protestant awakening. This however, was a Mennonite great awakening. The earlier one, to distinguish it, (in case you are confusing them) came from the preaching of the European evangelists such as

Jonathan Edwards, and Count Nickolaus Von Zinzendorf who traversed the Eastern Pennsylvania area, the New England states (the Eastern United States we should say) and brought a certain revival to the Americas.

The Mennonite awakening however, was a result of what men have termed or called, a diminishing of the Mennonite church into a more legalistic form of church life — a certain amount of legalism perhaps. To be fair to this, we should discuss it for a while. I cannot do that. The fact is that the Mennonites were a rural people. The early years were spent in establishing their homes and earning a living. There was however a certain lethargy that had come across the Mennonite church. Out of this period arose the Sunday School movement and the Revival movement. I think we are all familiar at least with the history of how the Sunday School and Revival meetings came into the Mennonite Church.

In this time, the Mennonite General Conference was established. It represented the establishment of a parent conference of the Western Mennonite conferences. The Allegheny Mountains were considered the dividing line between the east

and the west. and the Mennonite General Conference was formed. This is not the General Conference Mennonites. I am always conscious when I talk about the Mennonite General and the General Conference that we can mix the two. The Mennonite General Conference was the canopy conference which was organized to bring some cohesion and unity to the Western Mennonite conferences. The Conferences of the east such as Franconia, Lancaster and Virginia did not join the Mennonite General Conference. However, in fact I am of the opinion that Lancaster Conference never did.

Another consideration of this time period was the Mennonite educational institutions of higher learning — 1903 Goshen, 1909 Hesston, 1916 EMC. There were a burst of colleges and other institutions including the Mennonite Publishing House in 1908. In 1906 the Mennonite Board of Missions, and then foreign missions in 1908 in India, and 1917 in Argentina. These are all at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. In 1934 there was the African mission endeavour out of the Lancaster area. The Mennonite General Conference formed in 1898, and in 1906, there were thirteen dis-

trict Conferences that were a part of the Mennonite General Conference. As a result of this, and for various other reasons, there was a progression and a loss of Biblical non-conformity and separation in the Western conferences. The Mennonite General Conference was formed to address the drift. In many ways it did some good. However that organization also contributed to the continual slide and loss of these Biblical or Scriptural principles along with the influence of higher education and the mission endeavours,

*This provides a brief overview. Another reason for the influence of MCC was the scope of its involvement.* It was a very large organization. There was the original joint famine relief program in Russia. When it was begun, the first trip into Russia under the direction of MCC was the time when Delbert Gratz went along and did not return. It is not known to this day where he was taken or what happened, but he disappeared. If I have it correct, there is a tombstone marker in the Blooming Glen Cemetery in Franconia, that is a tribute or a Memorial to his death. He is certainly not living anymore. Orié Miller had gone with him and he had made another circle and never came back to try and find



him. They got off into different directions. These men appeared to be very fearless in their travel and in their effort to aid the Church.

There was also the resettlement of the Russian Mennonites. The Mennonite Central Committee was first involved in the relief to the Russian Mennonites, followed by the resettlement of the Russian Mennonites from Europe to Paraguay in 1930. Another one of their big projects (showing the largeness or largesse of their organization) was the war sufferer's relief following World War II that began already in 1939. Millions of dollars of aid were poured into Europe and workers sent. Then, there was the later resettlement of Russians and Danzig refugees after World War II into Paraguay and Uruguay. There was the development of the United States program for Mennonite Youth in 1945 in the CPS camps which was the effort to provide for an alternate form of service in the form of a community or civil service that would keep them out of the military camps as was done in World War I. Thus, the MCC Peace Problems section (it was later called the Peace section) was directly involved in the establishment and the organization of the

CPS program, followed by the IW program. They interacted directly with Washington and the IW program was enacted in 1952. Volume 5 of *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, says that "In 1987, MCC had more than a thousand workers serving in some fifty countries with as high as five thousand part time, or volunteer workers." Those thousand workers would have been enrolled and supported workers.

*Another reason why they were so influential was the wide scope of authority for the management of the organization that rested or resided in a few men.* This is very evident in the record that is provided. Some of these men were not ordained men. Orie Miller is one who was very much involved in the organization in the early years. It is possible for biographers to make these men larger than real life. We can almost get that impression when we read. We primarily see one side of these men, but there still is some truth. These men had some rope with which they were allowed to move in order to help to expand the work. They had ability. Paul Erb writes in his biography of Miller, "in a particular way he has been the unconscious mentor of a whole generation of church administrators. He

headed what may be the most significant Mennonite educational institution.” That does have some logic to it.

MCC was operated by, what was known as an executive committee that had very broad ranging authority to make decisions to appoint people, to move them, and to enter into new areas. They had in that executive committee, executive officers who carried a certain amount of authority. They operated a little bit like CEO’s, where they had the right to make decisions and there was accountability, but not in the way that we measure accountability today. Orié Miller was appointed to many churchwide committees which operated under the umbrella of the Mennonite Central Committee including the Peace Problems Committee and the Mennonite Board of Education (in that he was involved in Goshen College). I remember reading some time ago in the biography of H. S. Bender the time when there was some financial difficulty at Goshen. Part of Harold S. Bender’s plan for recovery was to bring Orié Miller to Goshen (who was part of the Alumni at Goshen) to help put some system back into the financial books of the school. He was able to do that, and he got the giving going again.

The writer of his biography says, “Had Orié been ordained to the ministry, he could not have done as a minister what was less objectionable as a lay person. The free use of lay talent gave the program fluidity that others admire and envy.” His own view of this responsibility, or this privilege, is given in this statement that he made. “As a lay movement with spiritual leaders chosen right out of the congregation around the turn of this century, a tendency developed to put too much responsibility and authority into the hands of ordained men.” [Now he is quoting Miller]. “Too large a portion of those who do things become employees of the church, professionals hired to do a job. We tended to move away from the total use of our resources. This was not in keeping with our tradition and our heritage. The generation of J. S. Coffman, Daniel Kauffman, and D. D. Miller was the exception rather than the norm.” He writes, “Now the swing is back to the utilization of our lay resources. There is more of a conscious effort than a generation ago to use a total team. In this we are one of the leaders of Protestantism. The free use of lay talent and leadership gives our program this fluidity that he talks about.”

Upon Orié Miller's return from worldwide tours and involvement in the near east and Russia, there was a lot of attention focused on him. At Elizabethtown, one night, the crowd gathered to hear what he had to say, outside the building was as large as the crowd inside. These were the breakwaters and the beginning of travel in this dimension in the Mennonite involvement abroad. It was a new field and a new era. It is said that he stood in the doorway of the church to address the group that night, so that they both could hear. Pulpits were not closed to him. At Groffdale, one evening, Noah Mack (who was bishop) told him to use the pulpit where they could hear him. It was not uncommon to see him in the pulpit.

He once said this and related his own view of conservative practices as it related to the East. He came to the east by way of marriage. He married the daughter of the owner of what we know as the Miller Eash Shoe Company in Akron. But he said, "When I was a young man in Kansas, one of the chief reasons given for the wearing of the plain coat was that we must do this to work with the East." His own view of Mennonite ecumenism was very favourable. He was

very favourable toward this mixing. He once said, "For such a wide variety of Mennonites to work harmoniously together, it was necessary that we respect each others differences. We must not however minimize differences, because to do so would be to weaken ourselves. Such a spirit promotes unity but Miller refuses to plot the future of Mennonite unity. He thinks our blueprinting might make it more difficult for the Holy Spirit to bring His surprises.

"A united Mennonite Church, would have to be nearer to Christ than any one group now is or there is no advantage in the merger. He has seen that the direction of mergers is often downward." He does acknowledge this happens in order to find a common denominator. This is what I was talking about that resulted from the influence of Mennonite General Conference. There was a general decline because of that influence. "Miller thinks that splitting the Mennonite Central Committee into several mission boards in their programs throughout the world does not give witness of a fragmented Church." Regarding the working together in Haiti, "Someone raised the question, 'Could our churches become Mennonites?' As the leader of

the independent groups in Haiti. And he of course said, that if they want to become Mennonites because of what they see, why should we not provide for them,” But he adds, “God got along without Mennonites for 1500 years. He could get along without us today, but I hope He will not need to.”

His view was quite broad. I will simply leave it at that. Orié Miller was sent to look into relief needs, and was involved in the establishment of relief in many different areas of the church. One in particular, was when Congo lost their independence in 1960. There were eight or nine hundred doctors (M.D.'s) who were there under other organizations that left. This left about fourteen million Congolese without medical help. The Mennonite Central Committee sent Orié to see what the relief needs would be, or were. He met with a Methodist minister who was the secretary of the Congo Protestant council. The question was, “Was Mennonite Central Committee help needed here?” The conclusion was that with its independent and co-operative stance it could bring together the various elements of relief, and they did. They brought workers in. He went back to New York, found financing and entered into

a co-operative effort with the Protestant groups there. This record was repeated many, many times. He was involved in the beginnings of the development of the African Mission endeavour in the 1930's. One reason why he was so central to it, was because he was the man they sent to travel to all the different countries and then brought other workers in. He spotted areas where mission work could be followed, or could follow the relief efforts.

The biography of H. S. Bender notes the spread of influence and the mind set of men who were behind the Mennonite Central Committee. H. S. Bender was one who was involved, but not as extensively as Orié. “By 1950 the material aid needs of Europe had largely been met.” The idea of a European Mennonite Bible School was born during Bender's stay in Europe (term in Europe was 1947 – 1948) “MCC,” they said, “Would be a catalytic agent or an anvil on which to shape Mennonite beliefs.” The MCC brought young people together from the various Mennonite European Conferences. We know that by this time (1950) the conservatism was largely gone. Yet, they say that was *one of the biggest monuments to the success of the Mennonite Central Committee in Europe in that*

*period of time was the establishment of a Bible school.* They bought a hotel on a hill near Basel, Switzerland and established it in 1951. It did have an ecumenical influence.

I have never fully understood the inner relationship of various students and teachers from colleges and interdenominational mixing. Bringing teachers in to teach in the colleges or students going to other Protestant colleges abroad was considered a part of receiving a well-rounded education. This mentality brought men from Europe and men from America to travel to Europe. Men, like H. S. Bender travelled very widely. They studied for years in Europe in language. He is one who did extensive work in Mennonite History, but keep in mind that as he and others did, they brought an influence along home. They were exposed.

*The MCC (Orie Miller in particular) was influential at a later time in establishing several Mennonite retirement communities.* I do not know how much credit he receives, but he is linked with the beginning of Landis Homes and Greencroft at Goshen, Indiana. The idea was that there would be a place for retired mission workers to return to. Some time ago we visited my wife's aunt at Greencroft in

Indiana. She had returned from Ethiopia and married a man who was used quite extensively under MDS work as a director. At Greencroft, the environment was very similar to Landis homes. He returned from having been out to play with his fellow residents (or guests) at the manor. That was part of the life and part of the mixing of the broader Mennonite church. I think I do not need to say more about the ecumenical community that does exist at many of those homes.

*The influence and introduction of MCC workers into the Akron area.* The Ohio and Eastern Conference began to provide fellowship for the workers who came into Akron, Pennsylvania to support MCC and to find a haven in a midst of a church life that was too restrictive. There was an article from 1987 in the *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* under the *Forest Hills congregation*. The building was built I think in 1976, but the congregation began in 1946. O. N. Johns, a bishop, was brought in from Ohio to give communion to thirty-five members from various Conferences. They also baptized some. This is what is said of the newly organized congregation. They did not fit at Ephrata, nor elsewhere in the Lancaster Conference. "The divergent

backgrounds as reflected in table 1 seem to add challenge and a satisfying feeling of worship activity.” The article continues to talk about what they did. They talked about the special singing that was brought in. Growth was supported by a large number of persons returning from Civilian Public Service Camps, hospitals, mental institutions and overseas reconstruction projects who found their home congregations too traditional.

One young couple, conscientious objectors, returning from an alternate service assignment had a small television in their home, and they found their way into this Monterey church. It was evidence of what we would today call their “global connections.” Much of this was within the United States. The CPS camps were in the U.S., but some of those who had served under MCC and MCC assignments abroad, came into Akron. This brought an influence into the local setting. The Civilian Public Service camps, which were under the administration of MCC, allowed for ordained men from various groups to go and minister to the young men in the camps. I cannot say more much about that, but it was another part of the ecumenical influence as these young men returned.

The same thing happened in coming back from 1W service where units were established under the direction of either the Eastern Board of Missions and Charities or under MCC. Young men served in other areas and were exposed to other Protestant groups. They did not have the direction like as was given to the MMM units at Wilmington and Danville, and it led one direction. Not everyone was absorbed into it, or lost through it, but many were.

Regarding the *Mennonite Central Committee*, volume 5 of *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* says that “MCC has grown in scope and complexity. As they have grown in scope and complexity, so have the questions and issues related to its identity and its organization and its programs in the world. *The Peace section established the Washington office in 1968* to serve as an observer, an interpreter and to monitor legislation.” They may as well have added to that, “to influence the legislature.” *As they were involved in the peace questions, and relief efforts, they also became involved in what created the problems of war and produced the wars.* Behind this was this idea of being proactive, if you can help to remove, through influence on government, a sub-

versive government in tribal Africa for example, it would be better to take them out of the way. I had an MCC, General Conference worker tell me that. It was the view that it would have its place to get some of those governments out of the way if it could influence other governments to do it. That is why they were in Washington. It was not only to interpret and to monitor legislation. They were there to lobby, and this is something that began as early as 1968.

I have one more that I would like to share somewhat as a summary to this whole ecumenical influence. Then, I would like to share a few closing reminders. Catherine Leatherman was another African missionary who also served as a substitute teacher at Ephrata Mennonite School. I had her on occasions as a teacher when I was in school. She sent out a questionnaire to older adults in a changing church. This was printed in June 1990 (I think it was taken from the Lancaster Conference News). The question presented was, "How do you feel about change in the church?" The first written response was, "I could not have believe years ago the changes which have come in dress. *There is more openness to other denominations*, being more free to recognize God working in

other bodies. Pray more for the Church that it may then criticize it. The promise is I will pour forth my spirit on the young men and women. Hopefully we have some Sauls of Tarsus and Apostle Pauls among us."

One of the Bishops was asked what he has to say. He said, "I generally feel good about change, and I was a strong advocate of getting women on the mission board." We did not talk about the place of women, but we can know that they picked up that issue and involved women in their mission work early on. He goes on to give his endorsement. Then, another lay leader writes, "What if some older person writes, 'I was not taught this way?'" (Then in answer to that question) "We do not keep house this way. Our parents did what was right for their generation. We are not dressing like our mothers, why should we expect our daughters to dress like us. How do you feel about change in the Church? I feel pretty good. These changes are not life threatening we can trust the Holy Spirit." The ecumenical influence of Mennonite relief efforts. Those were some current illustrations of Mennonite thought.

Now, I would like to make *a few concluding remarks regarding what we ought to learn*, or

some lessons regarding these relief efforts. I do not plan to be extensive. I think the lessons are there. In summary, *we must maintain a Biblical order of responsibility in providing relief.*

1) *First of all to the household of faith.* This was mentioned in the beginning. The New Testament examples of group relief are confined to this context that it is given to the household of faith. Brotherhood assistance is relief work in a Biblical form. It is interesting that as relief and global relief ministry increases, the deacon office and brotherhood relief diminishes. That is what happens.

2) *Our relief efforts should begin with the near before moving to the far.* The Bible mentions the widows and the orphans. The command to the Apostles was to begin at Jerusalem and Judea and then move to the uttermost parts of the earth. This was said of missions but it is also applies here. We begin near and then we are careful in moving to the far. Global relief efforts have always been fraught with danger. There are a few that maybe we could summarize. One is *the danger associated with the urgency to deliver.* If a group or an organization is “keyed” to the crisis spots of the world, the urgency to deliver

while there is hope is now. It does create some special dangers. It relates to sending people out without established churches and finding their churches.

When I hear of some of the local relief efforts and the sending of workers under the local CAM organization into areas which have no established churches, and then workers needing to go to Protestant churches for their fellowship while they are on assignment, it “smells” of danger. This merely tells us that we must beware. There has often been a certain amount of emotional charge associated in being part of this kind of work. This is a result of the pressing nature of the work and the natural sympathy that is aroused. When there is too much emotion and things are thrown aside, it adds to the danger.

*There is a difficulty associated with providing necessary safeguards, the proper personnel, and the care in the type of settings that workers are taken to and where. I mentioned worship. One instance that I heard of there was where rock music was brought into the church in the middle of the service. The fact of insufficient personnel has caused the cooperation or has been a reason or excuse for the cooperation with other Protestant*



groups. In this matter of discerning our place, we should not forget that a part of the responsibility of civil government is to establish an environment in which man can experience good. It is not all the responsibility of the church to provide relief to the masses.

We want to be careful that we do not become hard-hearted. Let us also remember that Romans 13:4 states that “He is the minister of God to thee for good.” The things that governments do besides law and order and the infrastructure, (we call it roads) and everything else, cleaning up after disaster, is also part of God’s method of providing for the needs of mankind.

*We should also remember that there is far more said in the New Testament about living and doing the commands of the Bible than about evangelizing and humanitarian relief.* Too often the order has been reversed where mission work has been viewed as a replacement for practical obedience. Again, we can take this out of context and we ought to remember that. It is a lesson we ought to learn. *Any relief effort that we engage in should be accomplished by practical expressions of Biblical separation as we go.* We do not travel in order to see sights and to get

some of that emotional side effect. It is from this premise that we are a separated people, that we carry the Gospel, and we are careful as we go to pay attention to the soul needs of people in the area, and we go especially where we could carry the Gospel to them. Which is the most important ministry that we can offer. *Too often the physical needs of men have eclipsed the needs of souls that were destined for hell,* and somehow that is all that mattered.

Another one is that *in all of mission and relief efforts we should give heed to sound principles of organization — especially as we move beyond the personal to the churchwide level.* We need to respect the place of the deacon office in administrating the work, coupled with bishop oversight. We need to avoid the executive capacities and involve multiple brethren. *We should guard against developing “specialists.”* Yes, some people come to know more and share that knowledge, but we do not want to have specialists in fields, except as the Bible gives direction, and that specifically in the ordained office. *We should also guard the growing enthusiasm for inter-group relief efforts among the more Conservative Mennonite churches,* and this does bring it to

a very local application.

*There is the danger of relief becoming the catalyst whereby we ignore unscriptural or subtle differences that do divide us in worship and fellowship.* Because it is relief, do we get together to package, to distribute, to see their videos or whatever else may be paraded from abroad? This has a danger associated with it and it is a snare. We acknowledge that it may be informative, but right alongside is the danger of social and entertaining benefits that feed something else within us. We must guard against this and be very resistive to it. *We do not condemn the relief efforts of that group nor any other. We are merely pointing out the dangers, and the way that we ought to relate to it.*

I would like to, in conclusion read a few paragraphs from *the statement of our bishops* given and supported at Little Mountain Mennonite Church on September 24, 1996. I will not read it all. It was the Bishops' response. The title is *Our Response to "Christian Aid Ministries."* "The Bishops response is that we involve ourselves about to the

same degree as we have been doing with M.C.C. which is: that we do not officially endorse the program by lifting offerings in our churches, nor as a group support the organization, nor laud their effort, nor invite their promotional speakers into our services. Nor should our people physically involve themselves because of the social influence.

We arrive at this position for the following reasons.

1. Our church has an outreach program in evangelism which includes material aid that need the support of all members.

2. The amalgamation of the numerous religious persuasions will eventually have much of the same effect on us as M.C.C. has had in the past on "Plain People."

3. We do not want to develop an over emphasis on a material physical service which will most surely detract from the spiritual interest.

This statement is not intended to give a negative voice against the humanitarian efforts of the relief and service organizations but rather to be a help to our people in directing their priorities."

I think it is well said.

## Scripture References

<b>Job</b>		<b>Acts</b>		<b>Ephesians</b>	
31:16	102	11:27-30	101	4:1	100
31:19	102	11:29	102		
				<b>1 Timothy</b>	
<b>Psalms</b>		<b>Romans</b>		5:16	102
146:9	102	13:4	117		
				<b>1 John</b>	
<b>Matthew</b>				3:17	103
15:34	102				

### From the Previous Issue:

#### The Sin Not Unto Death — 1 John 5:16

From a message by Bruce Stauffer  
Culbertson Mennonite Church  
Sunday Evening, April 17, 2005

### Book Reprint (Continued) One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

#### LESSON 3. Sons of Adam.

- I. Cain.
  1. Birth of Cain and Abel.— Genesis 4:1, 2.
  2. His offering rejected.— Genesis 4:5; Hebrews 11:4.  
NOTE.— The reason is implied in Genesis 4:7 and Hebrews 11:4. Sacrifices are acceptable to God only, (1) when offered in faith, (2) when the one who offers them leads a Consistent life.
  3. The first murder.— Genesis 4:8.
  4. Cain becomes an outcast.— Genesis 4:9-16.  
NOTE.— “The way of the transgressors is hard.”  
[Proverbs 13:15]
  5. Cain’s posterity. Genesis 4:17-23.  
NOTE.— Where did Cain get his wife? asks the skeptic, sneeringly. The word says, “The days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years, and he begat sons and daughters. It is

generally understood that Seth married one of these “daughters.” Is it unreasonable to suppose that Cain did the same? But did not Cain get his wife in the land of Nod? The word does not say so.

## II. Abel.

1. His occupation and offering. — Genesis 4:2, 4; Hebrews 11:4.

2. His death.— Genesis 4:8.

NOTE.— Here is at least one case where the rule, “The survival of the fittest,” does not apply.

3. A type of Christ.— Genesis 4:10; Hebrews 12:24.

## III. Seth.

1. Appointed in Abel’s stead.— Genesis 4:25.

2. From Seth to Noah. — Genesis 5.

3. His age and death.— Genesis 5:8.

## IV. Points for reflection.

1. The sacred record of the antediluvian age is very brief; yet there is enough given in this brief record to give us an idea of the origin of matter, God’s plan in creation, the origin of man, the condition of man before and after the fall, the means of redemption, the subtlety of the tempter, the certainty of punishment for the disobedient, and the blessedness of holiness. What more do we need to know concerning this period?

2. God put a mark upon Cain. What this mark was, no one can tell; but we do know that God today puts a mark upon every criminal. Every committed sin leaves its impress upon the countenance. The marks of vice are stamped upon the outward features, as well as upon the heart.

3. “Where is Abel?” “I know not; am I my brother’s keeper?” Notice the evasive answer. It is the answer of the guilty soul. “Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” It was a guilty conscience that made Adam and Eve hide from the presence of God; that prompted Achan to hide the accursed thing; that drove Judas Iscariot out into the, darkness to betray his Lord and Master. Beware of the man who shows an anxiety to keep his affairs hidden from the knowledge of others.

4. When Abel died, God raised up Seth to take his place.

Places made vacant, through martyrdom are not half as hard to fill as places vacated by desertion. Let no man consider himself so essential to the cause that he could not afford to lay down his life at any time if need be.

1. Compare the characters of Cain and Abel.
2. Was Abel's occupation any more honorable than Cain's?
3. What was Adam's age at the birth of Cain and Abel?
4. Who were the more active, the descendants of Cain or the descendants of Seth?
5. Trace the lineage of Christ to the "son of Adam."

## **LESSON 4.**

### **The Deluge.**

#### I. Descriptive.

1. The Ark. — Genesis 6:14–16.
2. The Flood. — Genesis 7:10–12, 17–24; 8:1–14.

NOTE. — Some writers have taken pains to prove that the Deluge was not universal, but covered only the inhabited portion of the globe. Among other things, it is contended that to cover the whole earth to the extent that the water would stand fifteen cubits above the highest mountain peaks would be a physical impossibility. We object to idea of a partial deluge for the following reasons:

- a. The inundation of all the surface of the globe would be no greater miracle than the creation of the globe itself.
- b. It has never been proven that only part of the globe was inhabited at that time.
- c. Such Scriptures as, "And all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered" (Genesis 7:19), "For the waters were on the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 8:9), etc., cannot be harmonized with the theory of a partial deluge.
- d. To say that the Deluge, as described in Genesis, is a physical impossibility, is not only limiting God's powers, but denying His Word.

#### II. Historical.

1. Cause. — Genesis 6:1–7, 11–13.
2. God's message to Noah. — Genesis 6:14–21.

3. Time.

a. Preparation. — It is the general opinion that Noah had 120 years in which to build the Ark, preach repentance to the people, collect the animals, etc. (Genesis 6:3).

b. Calendar. — The following is taken from Genesis 7–9. It represents the principal events of the year of the flood, beginning, with the second month of the 600th year of Noah’s life, and ending with the second month of the following year.

MONTH.

2<sup>nd</sup> — (17<sup>th</sup> day) — Noah and his family and animals enter the Ark.

3<sup>rd</sup> — (27<sup>th</sup> day) — The rain ceased.

4<sup>th</sup>

5<sup>th</sup> — Water prevailed upon the face of the earth.

6<sup>th</sup>

7<sup>th</sup> — (17<sup>th</sup> day) — Ark rested on Mt. Ararat.

10<sup>th</sup> — (1<sup>st</sup> day) — Tops of mountains appeared.

11<sup>th</sup> — (11<sup>th</sup> day) — Raven sent forth and failed to return. Dove sent forth and returned.

— (18<sup>th</sup> day) — Dove sent forth the second time, and returned with all olive leaf.

— (25<sup>th</sup> day) — Dove sent forth the third time, And did not return.

1<sup>st</sup> — (1<sup>st</sup> day) — Waters Were dried up from off the earth.

2<sup>nd</sup> — (27<sup>th</sup> day) — Noah and his family moved out of the Ark.

III. The Ark a figure of baptism. — 1 Peter 3:20, 21.

IV. Points for reflection.

1. Noah preached 120 years and had no converts, outside of his own family, yet no one charges him with being an inefficient worker. God had set the conditions, and Noah, as His faithful servant, carried the message to the people. Perhaps if he had used the tactics which some of our modern evangelists use, and offered terms more congenial to the unconverted man, he might have numbered his converts by the thousand.

2. God gives plenty of time for repentance, but the day of reckoning will surely come.

3. The wicked were wiped off the face of the globe; but the result of their wickedness was afterwards made manifest in the lives of

Noah and his descendants.

4. To the antediluvians came the invitation to seek refuge in the Ark. To us comes the invitation to seek refuge in the great Ark of Salvation. Will we follow the example of Noah's family, or the example of the nations?

5. It is better to have the approval of God and the disapproval of the masses, than the approval of the masses and the disapproval of God.

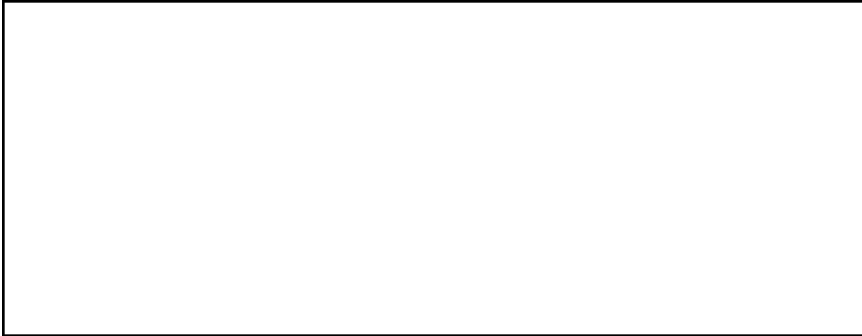
1. Give, in feet and inches, the exact dimensions of the Ark. (The cubits mentioned here are Egyptian not Hebrew cubits).
2. What covenant was entered into between God and man after the flood? What was the sign of that covenant?
3. How is the Ark a type of the Church?
4. How many windows had the Ark? Why?
5. What was Noah's first act after leaving the Ark?

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**History**  
The Background of the "Garden City  
Confession of Faith  
Can We Learn From History?  
**Home**  
Hospitality  
Keeping Peer Pressure Manageable  
**Inspirational**  
The Sin Not Unto Death — 1 John  
5:16  
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