

MENNONITE LIFE

OCTOBER 1967



An Illustrated Quarterly Published by Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas

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October, 1967

Volume XXII

Number 4

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COVER

Single Mennonite Church during the first Conference Sunday; Foto Bannink.

Back Cover:

Mennonite World Conference Relief Exhibit.

PHOTO CREDITS

Pages 167-172 *Mennonite Weekly Review*; Tijn Spaan; Jan Matthijssen, Amsterdam Congress Office.

Printing and lay-out by Mennonite Press
North Newton, Kansas 67117

MENNONITE LIFE is an illustrated quarterly magazine published in January, April, July, and October by Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. Second-class postage paid at North Newton, Kansas 67117.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year, \$3.00; Three years, \$7.50; Five years, \$12.50. Single issues, 75 cents.

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IN THIS ISSUE

This issue was inspired primarily by the Eighth Mennonite World Conference which convened in July in Amsterdam. The issue starts with a sermon preached by Russell L. Mast entitled "The Conscience of a Nation," and from there moves to the final day of the Conference at Amsterdam by presenting sermons by Henk Bremer and Vincent Harding which were televised, applauded, and discussed at length. The papers by H. J. Goertz and J. J. J. van Sluijs were selected from a number of closing remarks, while Wicher Veen's observation was a radio presentation at Amsterdam. Most stirring, challenging, and controversial was Vincent Harding's paper, "The Peace Witness and the Revolutionary Movements." ¶ "Crossroads at Amsterdam," Echoes from Amsterdam," and "Dutch News Reporting" reflect observations by the editor and convey the reactions to the Conference selected from numerous Mennonite papers and the Dutch press to give the reader a first-hand impression of the event. Jan Matthijssen relates about the planning, efforts, and problems connected with hosting a conference of this scope and magnitude. The illustrations should also prove helpful to bring some features of the Conference into the homes of the readers. The articles by Walter Klaassen and H. W. Meihuizen take us back to the days of the Anabaptist beginnings and shed new light on some aspects of this event. ¶ Maynard Shelly reports on the Conference on the Concept of the Believers' Church, Louisville, Kentucky, which was attended by representatives of the Free Church tradition, including Mennonites. Only one paper presented could be placed in this issue (T. Canby Jones). More are to follow.



The Mennonite World Conference convened in the RAI Building.

The Conscience of a Nation

By Russell L. Mast

TRAVELING IN THE Highlands of Scotland one day, we came to a small and very isolated town called Dahlwhinnie. It was about as remote a spot as one could possibly imagine and just about as bleak and desolate. However, between the town and a small line of hills in the background there was a railroad track. How often it was used, it would be difficult even to guess. Imagine our surprise, however, when we were told, "Here, in a railroad car on a siding, Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery spent a month outlining the campaigns of World War II." Few people in the world ever heard of Dahlwhinnie and yet one might not be too far wrong in saying that few people in the world were not affected in one way or another by what went on there. But what did go on there? What really happens behind the scenes when rulers, statesmen, and diplomats get together? What things do they say to each other that are off the record and not reported to the public? To know would be illuminating, surprising, and perhaps even shocking.

In the last chapter in the book of First Kings we have such an inside view of a secret meeting between two heads of state. Ahab, king of Israel, requested a summit conference with his weaker ally, Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, the meeting place to be in Samaria, just inside the city gate. Three years had already gone by since Israel and her bitter enemy Syria had been at war. It was an uneasy peace, however, because Syria had failed to return Ramoth-gilead to Israel, her rightful owner. By now Ahab's patience had come to an end, and after reviewing the situation with Jehoshaphat, he came directly to the point. "Will you

go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?" Always overpowered by his aggressive neighbor, Jehoshaphat bowed submissively and said, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

That, however, was not all that Jehoshaphat said, for he went on: "Inquire first for the word of the Lord." Ahab must have guessed that his ally and neighbor would try to mix religion with his state affairs, for suddenly into that regal presence marched not one or two, but four hundred prophets ready to declare the word of the Lord. Ahab put it to them: "Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I forbear?" Immediately the four hundred prophets reached a unanimous verdict. "Go up; for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king." With evident satisfaction Ahab turned to Jehoshaphat, but Jehoshaphat was still not satisfied. Instead of working on the theory that four hundred Israelites can't be wrong, he probably wondered how four hundred ministers of religion could agree so swiftly on a matter so delicate. At any rate, there was something artificial and unreal about it that suggested a performance more than anything else.

Jehoshaphat then said, "Is there not here another prophet of the Lord of whom we may inquire?" After some hesitation Ahab finally said, "There is . . . Micaiah the son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil." Nevertheless a servant was sent at once to bring Micaiah. As soon as the servant found him, he explained what had taken place and how the prophets had reached a consensus in a marvellous spirit of unanimity. Said the servant, "Let your word be like the word of one of

them." But Micaiah replied, "As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak."

Later while he was standing before the kings, Ahab put the same question to him that he had put to the four hundred: "Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead or shall we forbear?" With obvious mimicry and pointed mockery Micaiah said, "Go up and triumph; the Lord will give it into the hand of the king." Then the king was furious, "How many times shall I adjure you that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?" Then Micaiah said, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd." "Did I not tell you," said Ahab to his ally, "that he would not prophesy good concerning me?" Forthwith Micaiah was put into prison with a diet of bread and water.

The role which Micaiah fulfilled in the life of his nation was a strategic one for the reason that he became its conscience. It was a difficult role then, even as it is now, even as it was then and is now an unpopular one. But a nation without a conscience is a nation in dire peril and suffering from incipient decay. But here we see some of the important ingredients of such a conscience.

First of all, the conscience of a nation must be enlightened by the living God. "Conscience is not the 'Voice of God,'" as Brunner suggests, "primarily it has nothing to do with God at all."¹ Nor is it, as such, knowledge of right and wrong. For our purpose now we can simply say that it is that awareness in man that there is a right and a wrong and that man ought to do the right and not the wrong. It is therefore not enough to repeat the oversimplified dictum "Let your conscience be your guide." For in the name of conscience some of the most horrible deeds imaginable have been done. Whether it is the conscience of a nation or the conscience within the individual, it needs to be properly informed, instructed and enlightened. A watch before it can record accurate time must be set by the official standard of time. So the conscience must be set by that which one understands to be the will of God.

This was certainly true in the case of Micaiah. It was not his own word that he was speaking but a word that came to him from outside himself. "What the Lord says to me, that I will speak." To be sure, the record does not tell us how Micaiah knew the word of the Lord, which is always a very important and very difficult consideration. But the point now is that this was his deep and abiding conviction that it was the word of the Lord. In his daily walk he had kept himself close to God; he had tried to think God's thoughts after Him; he had tried to keep his life sensitive to the movement of God's Spirit in human affairs.

When Paul made his defense before the council he said, "I have lived before God in all good conscience

up to this day" (Acts 23:1). He did not mean that he had always done what was right. He had been a persecutor of the church. What he did mean was that he had always obeyed his conscience according to the way it had been instructed, according to the standard by which it had been set. Now as a Christian his conscience had received a new set of instructions. Jesus Christ had now become his conscience, for he said, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." For the Christian this is how his conscience is enlightened by the living God, as he lives in continuing fellowship with Him, as he reads and studies the scriptures which testify of Him and as the Holy Spirit serves as the continuing witness to Him. This is first in being the conscience of a nation.

In the second place, the conscience of a nation must insist on the priority of righteousness. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Mt. 6:33), said Jesus. This is finally what it means to have a conscience within one's self or to be the conscience of a nation. It means seeking first, last, and always the divine command. It means doing the will of God in all the relationships of life: in politics, in business, in statesmanship, in the community, and at home.

As we study carefully the ancient record of this secret conference, some things begin to stand out in bold relief—especially as far as the purpose of Ahab were concerned. We can begin to see what things really came first. National pride came before righteousness. Of course Ramoth-gilead was a strategic city, but the idea that Syria refused to turn it over to Israel according to the agreement was more than Ahab could take. Military victory came before righteousness. It is not at all clear that the question which Ahab addressed to the prophets had anything to do with the rightness or wrongness of a war with Ramoth-gilead. It was the question whether they were likely to win. He wanted someone to prophesy good concerning him. And as far as the four hundred court prophets were concerned, personal security came before righteousness. They knew what the king wanted to hear and that their places of position and security depended on his hearing it.

Too seldom can it be said concerning private affairs as well as public life that decisions are made on the basis of righteousness first. I heard a Jewish Rabbi relate that during those years before 1929 when men went wild following the mirage of quick material wealth, he was meeting with a group of business men. They were urging a proposal which the Rabbi questioned from an ethical standpoint. So he said, "But what about the moral consideration? What about the spiritual values involved?" Whereupon the businessmen replied with calculated cynicism, "Rabbi, morals, spiritual values are not listed on the board or discounted at the bank."

Is it not true of all of us, that in the secret confidences of our own hearts we often fail to put righteousness first? We decide issues on bases other than those of obedience to the divine command and a ready willingness to know and to do the will of God. When righteousness does not come first in our own lives and in the immediate, personal relationships around us, we forfeit our right to be the conscience of a nation. I submit that in his brave insistence on righteousness first, Micaiah performed a greater service to his nation than all the comfortable, satisfying words of all the four hundred court prophets. This leads to yet another major consideration.

In the third place, the conscience of a nation must stand above the wishes of men. Ahab was an enterprising, aggressive, warmaking ruler. And because he wanted to keep on being that way his religion must somehow support him in his intentions. It must give him comfort and courage but not moral guidance. It must bless his wars and insure a victorious outcome, but not raise any question about its rightness. So Micaiah was given this piece of good advice from this respected layman. "Let your word be like the word of one of them." After all, this is what they are saying now, this is the growing edge, the wave of the future. This is the way to be relevant to the world as it is and to meet the needs and wishes of men. Now Micaiah was either a stubborn ox, a blathering fool, or a prophet of God. Sometimes the proper distinctions have not always been clear in the minds of men. Whatever the needs and wishes of men might be and regardless of what it took to be relevant, "As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak." That was prophetic religion at its finest and best.

The current effort to make the Christian faith relevant to our day while it is based on thoroughly good intentions, needs to come up for special scrutiny at this point. We do need to ask and face honestly the question, Is the church really communicating to our time? And we ought to be prepared to engage in a certain amount of experimentation and adaptation to improve its communicative power. But consider this statement: "It is a dangerous thing for a great religion to begin adjusting to the culture of a special generation. Harmonizing slips easily into compromising."⁸ Perhaps you would like to know that this was said by Harry Emerson Fosdick over thirty years ago, and as far as I know, he was never in all his life accused of being a reactionary! But this ought to be a matter of our serious concern again in our time. For the moment we achieve communication at the expense of something worth communicating, and if we acquire relevance at the cost of faithfulness, we cut the vital nerve of prophetic religion. For it stands forever above the wishes and desires of men with the declaration, "What the Lord says to me, that will I speak."

Finally, the conscience of a nation must pay the cost

of courage. Without any attempt at sophistication or subtlety, Ahab gave out with his opinion of Micaiah the prophet. "I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me." That was certainly true enough in view of the fact that Micaiah ended up in prison. Said another prophet, Amos of Tekoa, "They hate him who reproves in the gate" (Amos 5:10). And Jesus warned, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" (Jn. 15:18). So they sent Micaiah to prison, Amos to the fields of Tekoa, and Jesus to the cross.

This certainly does not mean that we should make a career out of being obnoxious so the world will hate us and we can revel in self-righteous enjoyment of a martyr complex. Thomas More, during the time of Henry VIII, was not a perpetual misfit or an interminable rebel, but a highly respected member of his society and a responsible public servant. But when his monarch declared himself to be the spiritual ruler of the church, More objected. The King could not understand this in view of the fact that everyone else in the church seemed to think that his plan was a good one. Eventually More was executed at the Tower of London. To stand against any kind of majority opinion—both in the church and out of it—is costly, may involve the ultimate sacrifice, but always requires courage. This is the essence of prophetic religion. And this is always what it takes to be the conscience of a nation.

Since Jesus spoke so often of cross-bearing and sacrifice, this is also what it means to be a Christian. Surely to be the conscience of a nation means to make Jesus Christ the conscience of the individual, that in our decision-making and moral reflection we may think with his mind. Listen to the words of Peter as we have them in the New English Bible, "Remembering that Christ endured bodily suffering, you must arm yourselves with a temper of mind like his" (1 Peter 4:1).

Now as I bring this to its conclusion, let me focus what I have said on what I am sure has been on many minds—the war in Vietnam. Because of a series of past mistakes compounded by each succeeding mistake, our nation finds itself in an undeclared war, but one which has escalated on an ever widening scale. To save face our nation must now justify what is nothing short of moral bankruptcy, a policy that stands under the condemnation of ethically sensitive people all over the world. For our nation, the wealthiest nation in the world is in the process of destroying one of the poorest nations in the world. It is destroying its land and its people—particularly its women and children. And of those children not killed, we are making orphans of them at the rate of 2000 a month. In other words, we are destroying the very people we say we are liberating.

The problem is a complex one, riddled with ambiguities. I propose no easy solutions. But I call on

you to ask the question over and over again, "What about the moral considerations?", to prepare yourselves within to be the conscience of the nation, and to become informed about the facts in the case. For, finally, there can be no realistic dealing with this question without a conscience—enlightened by the living God, that puts righteousness first, that stands above the

wishes, wisdom and desires of men, that is prepared to pay the cost of courage.

FOOTNOTES

1. Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1964, p. 156.
2. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Successful Christian Living*, New York: Harper 1937, p. 161.

Rise Up and Walk

By *Henk Bremer*

"RISE UP AND walk," Peter says and a lame man started walking and leaping. The surprised onlookers are told: This is only a beginning. The complete recovery of this man is the sign of the beginning of the complete recovery of the world: The recovery of all things.

The lame man is begging in the heart of Jerusalem, in front of the beautiful temple gate. Jerusalem, for the Bible, is the city of God, but it is a secular city, too. People and nations assemble there to receive God's order of justice and peace. The holy city is for the benefit of man, and the secular city is called upon to be a holy city, full of peace and justice. The temple is the heart of the city, the heart which furnishes vital strength through the whole society. But apparently the city has a heart disease. In the middle of the city, at the beautiful temple gate, sits the lame man, and though he is not aware of it, yet he is pushed forward as the representative of all lame all over the world—of all those people that do not really function at a hundred percent and not only those physically lame, but also the spiritually and socially lame. Especially for them, the *Sjaloom* is the peace of Jerusalem, but still they sit in front of the temple gate as beggars. The generous givers of alms enter the temple, their heads raised, pillars of temple and society; but beggars and alms are something terrible in the city of God's justice and order.

People said of Jesus: "He came to his own and his own people have not received Him." He came to make the peace of Jerusalem function and to make it peace for the whole world. He begins his first sermon with the words of Isaiah 61: "The spirit of the Lord

God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me" (made Messiah, Christ, the Hebrew and Greek word for the anointed one). He hath made me Messiah "to proclaim liberty to the captives, sight to the blind, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the jubilee year of the Lord" (that is, the holy year in which the slaves were set free and the land was divided anew). This is really a program for the beggars outside the gate, but it appeared that the people within the gate were at a loss what to do with it. The religious establishment and the social establishment are interwoven.

When temple and church start functioning together, it means dynamite for that double establishment. But in that case it is better that the one man with the dynamite dies than that the whole establishment explodes. And that is why Jesus was put outside the establishment, crucified "outside the gate," as the Epistle to the Hebrews emphatically records it.

The revolution was put down. Indeed the revolutionary made it very easy, for he was a revolutionary without violence. But this is as it had to be because the people that killed him are lame people, people that do not function well and who, for that reason, must be healed. They also need salvation to be able to stand on their feet again.

Jesus places both the beggar and the enemy within the peace of Jerusalem. He does not disturb that peace, but he remains true to it by giving his life for both the oppressed and the oppressors.

From our human vantage point, the combination of this program and this method became a complete failure. However, our establishment is just as much at

a loss as to what to do with it as was the establishment of Jerusalem. But Peter explains in the Pentecost sermon, and again when he lifts up the lame man, that Jesus is our guide to life, especially because he has gone the way of the cross, the way of failure. He is the risen Lord, and he will not remain alone. He is the first, but many people will come and the man at the temple gate will be right in the front row. His complete recovery is immediately connected by Peter with the Resurrection of Christ and also with the complete recovery of all things. It is not an incidental story of a healing, but all people in the whole ordinance of life on earth are involved in it.

That complete recovery has three aspects. It is a question of the renovation of the individual, of the church and of the world. Some have emphasized the personal renovation, the rebirth. A sinful and frustrated human being starts functioning again because the Gospel is not only a guide for him, but is also strength in his legs. However, as soon as a human being rises again in order to function at full strength, then all relations in which he lives, are touched. The man who was lifted up, enters the temple, the church, walking and leaping. It is a sign for all sitting, passive church people to stand up.

At the moment we see in the Roman Catholic Church, especially in The Netherlands, a huge lay-movement. The laity literally rise in revolt, they stand up in order to put in a word and act. It seems a repetition of the rising of emancipated Christians in the Reformation, the *restitutio*. The recovery of the church was the immediate consequences of the recovery of men lifted up by God and who form a community of adult, responsible, emancipated Christians. These Christians are not very much interested in whether the church has prestige, wealth and a nice door, but rather whether it does function, whether it performs its function toward all those people outside the gate, all the lame people in the wide world.

The third *restitutio*, the complete recovery of the people in the world, is the immediate result of the renovation of the community. A mission which does not only direct itself to the soul of the human being or to the individual, but also to the relationship between people is the missionary order of the church. Of those books from the Reformation which bear the name of *restitutio*, the *Restitutio* of Bernhard Rothmann emphasizes this complete recovery of the world. Rothmann was one of the Anabaptists of Münster, who also accepted violence in the end and perished by this violence. The other Mennonites were so frightened that they not only wanted to have nothing to do with the violence of Münster but they also began to conceive of the complete recovery of secular life in such purely eschatological terms that it seemed to have nothing to do with life on earth. They concentrated on the renovation of the community or on the spiritual

renovation of the individual.

But how can a human being or a church, once they have been touched by God's spirit, be satisfied, if only for a minute, as long as the beggar sits in front of the gate? The third *restitutio*, the renovation of the world, is indispensable. The new order in Münster was a caricature, especially because the leader, Jan van Leyden, was an impure and insane man, but Bernhard Rothmann started a really new order without lame beggars. He says: "To eat and drink the sweat of the poor, to use our own people and neighbors as to injure love, these things have now completely disappeared from us, and because we know that God wants to put an end to these kinds of horrors, we prefer going on rather than returning to them."

An encyclical letter of the pope is called *Progressio populorum*, the progress of the nations. This is a good sequel to the first sermon of Peter, but it is also in the tradition of Bernhard Rothmann. Progress, rising and going on while whole nations are sitting, lame and begging outside the beautiful gate of our so-called Christian society. For a long time they have lived on alms, on help, but that time is over, they want to rise. They are becoming rebellious.

The pope has spoken the radical word: take a part of the money from the arms race and make a world-fund for the abolition of poverty. Peter started from the center of our faith, the resurrection of Christ and from there he drew a line to a man who is lifted up, and then to the complete renovation of the world. Being lifted up, rising, and resurrection have a lot in common.

But Peter also keeps to the connecting line from cross and resurrection. He knows only one way to the renovation of man and world, the way of radical love, which prefers to die for the enemy rather than to kill that enemy. Humanly seen, this way is impossible. Rothmann was finally overcome and he reached for violence: violence that was to put an end to all violence. Among the people of this generation, too, there are some who have started courageously, but the situation became so hopeless they gave up.

Peter's preaching and the gospel are purely eschatological, exceeding all human possibilities. We are called to create a world of completely renovated people in a completely renovated world. And the only security we have that this way is possible is through faith in our guide to life and in the fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross.

He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:8-12.)

The Beggars Are Rising . . . Where Are the Saints?

Sermon Response by Vincent Harding

MY REACTION TO the sermon of H. Bremer is a wholehearted "Amen." I agree with him that the beggars are rising. Our morning papers are functioning as God's messengers. The beggars are rising—they refuse to lie on the ground, crippled, crushed, begging.

They are rising in Detroit and in Harlem. They have risen in Vietnam. They are rising in Mozambique. They are rising in Ecuador and Guatamala. They are dirty, crippled beggars. Soon they will rise in Johannesburg. They will rebel in every part of the earth. The lame and bruised prey of western exploitation are rising and marching and demanding the right to live as humans.

They are rising and are outraged that we have eaten and drunk their sweat. They are in desperation because we have taken their silver and gold, their diamonds and oil and rubber and left them begging in front of our doors. The prey of the Christian west is rising, and among them is Christ, the beggar of Nazareth. Do you see him? Do you hear him in the noise of all the voices? Do you notice how his spirit blasts all bastions of security, affluence, and greed? He is there. We can hide but he is there. We can continue paying our taxes for armies and bombs, and continue to cry: "What can we do?" We can call on the police and the army. Fearfully we can hide behind law and order or behind the walls of our churches. Nevertheless, there is a spirit walking freely upon the earth. There is a spirit in search of freedom. This spirit will not perish.

Some call this spirit communism, blurring the significance of its meaning. Christ loved the beggars before Karl Marx was born. Some accuse Black Power, but they forget that Jesus promised the crushed beggars freedom long before Dutch ships brought the ancestors of Stokely Carmichael to the American coast.

Perhaps we have such lively discussions in regard to the Holy Spirit because of our blindness in regard to what is happening in the world. We should know one thing—the insurrectionist beggars are not waiting any longer. Christ has promised to help all beggars

and he keeps his promise. Let us not misunderstand. He is on the side of the beggars. On which side are we as Mennonites, Christians, and humans who love humanity?

Are we at the Conference to shake hands and take pictures? Are we in seminaries where we do our best to contain the spirit of God in words? Are we in churches where we sing and preach to people who have had the same name for generations? Are we preaching law and order and free enterprise in our peaceful congregations? Are we surrounded by the barricades of a status quo where we pray that the storm may pass so that we can continue living without disturbance?

If we are satisfied to be busy with all those things in the midst of dying, disappointed insurrectionists, do we show our true face? Then let us not identify ourselves with the Christ of the beggars. In this case, we must admit that we are disciples of a church, missionaries of law and order, defenders of a status quo and seekers for peace without a cross.

If this is so, let us quit calling the Anabaptist martyrs our ancestors. Let us not use Christ's name in vain. He is marching. He is in the midst of the flames. His way is to give all he has. He stands in the midst of embittered men who throw rocks and in the midst of possessed revolutionaries. He is soiled through their dirt and bloody with their blood even if they do not see him. He tries to touch their right hand and to draw them onto a new road of justice and love, which will lead them beyond their dreams of a new society.

This is more than symbolism. This was the only possible way and is the only possibility for those who live with beggars in the midst of a religious and political society of self-righteousness. Beggars do not constitute an acceptable society, particularly not if they scream out loud in the temple.

If we dare to search for a way in the midst of a crowd of beggars, we must, like Peter and Christ, go to them, not preaching, but reaching for the right hand and leading them. There will be moments when we will fall into the mud. Fear not, Christ is also the

Lord over dirt. Stretch your hand out in the direction of the mad, fearful, and embittered beggars. Let them know that you revoke all rights of your possessions so that they will not need to rob you.

Touch them with determination and depend on the Holy Spirit who will not leave you alone even if the beggars are armed. He will give you strength and wisdom. He will even give you the words if, after a while, they will be necessary. However, you must remember that God alone knows where the road on which the beggars go leads. This may lead you through prejudices, out of churches, away from old notions, and even into prison.

The beggars are rising. The beggars are marching. And Christ is in their midst. Where are the saints? Are we now the lame, paralyzed because of fear, swaying under the weight of dignity, captured by the power of our possessions? Where are the saints?

Rise you saints. Get out of your homes, out of your groups, out of your churches, when there is need for you to do so. Get out of conformity to the world and out of the fearful noisy night.

You have nothing to lose but your life to win the world. Rise you saints, spring forth and start marching. The Master is already on his way saying, "I am the way, follow me." Amen.

Crossroads at Amsterdam

By Cornelius Krahn

THE EIGHTH MENNONITE World Conference which convened in Amsterdam (July 23-30) was significant in a number of ways. Amsterdam has the largest congregation and belongs next to Emden to the oldest centers of Anabaptism. The Mennonite Church of Amsterdam has furnished leadership far beyond this city and the Low Countries. It is the only place where a Mennonite theological seminary has a close relationship with a university.

The Conference was also unusual because representatives came from thirty countries on five continents. For the first time a strong awareness of the fact that not all Mennonites have a white skin was created. We learned that there are some 40,000 Mennonites in Africa.

Revolution and Anabaptism

Among the many observations and characteristics the outstanding one was that we are living in a time of great changes. The words "race," "Vietnam," and "revolution" were heard repeatedly. At the first Mennonite World Conference in Basel in 1926 B. H. Unruh presented a paper entitled "Revolution and Anabaptism." His learned presentation aimed to demonstrate the "non-revolutionary" character of Anabaptism.

Others have taken pains to do the same (W. J. Kühler, John Horsch). Mennonites have a long tradition of looking at their background and their origin as a peaceful event. Amsterdam and other places in the Low Countries could have served as an illustration that this is not telling the whole story.

Anabaptism started as a "radical" or "left" wing of the Reformation. It is true most of the Anabaptists did not use force to promote or to defend their cause. It is also true that many of them died a martyr's death as a result of their witness. However, all of them believed in an eschatological radicalism which expected great things from the Lord. These great things were to take place immediately and were to effect all of life. When the fulfillment of the expectation was delayed, the second coming of the Lord was postponed and it was expected that it would be enjoyed by a few elect while the others would be doomed. The radical eschatological hope was tamed or domesticated and the Mennonites lost the urgency to witness about their expectancy of radical changes. They relaxed with the rest of Christendom, leaving the changes up to God and his time.

One of the unique aspects of the Conference convening in Amsterdam was that at times a vibration of

the above mentioned spirit of hope and challenge permeated the 5000 to 6000 persons who had come from all corners of the earth. There were moments like in the days of the outpouring of the spirit at Jerusalem. Ethnic and linguistic problems were solved by means of modern technique and the spirit of brotherhood and sharing.

Prophetic Worship

Many participants stated that the worship service on the last day of the Conference was a climax of prophetic preaching and inspiration. Henk Bremer, the senior pastor of the Amsterdam Mennonite Church, pointed out that in the days of Christ the Gospel caused the lame man at the gate of the Temple in Jerusalem to leap for joy since he experienced a restoration—physically, spiritually, and socially. Bremer, and Vincent Harding in his response, pointed out that the message of the Gospel must have the same effect in our day by healing individuals and groups spiritually, and restoring them into the image of God socially and economically. The Gospel is for the total man on a global scale. Similar words were heard from others such as H. J. Goertz. Naturally the reaction to this climactic and unusual challenge was not unanimous. It was possibly the first time since the days of the early Anabaptists that the worshippers applauded after the sermons. It is true not all joined in this response. In fact, when I walked out, I heard one brother ask the other whether he ever had attended a worship service like this one. It was obvious that the two were bewildered and could not understand what Mennonitism had come to. To refer to economic, race, and peace questions at the climax of the Mennonite World Conference worship service was not the quiet calm and the soothing balm of the spirit of Sunday worship to which they were accustomed. (The presentations by Bremer, Harding, Goertz and others are found in this issue.)

The two brethren, and no doubt many others, did not know that they, as sons of Menno, had come to the country of Menno and a city in which their spiritual ancestors had occasionally interrupted a worship service and protested in public marches. More than this, they had been willing to witness to the extent that they had given their lives as sacrifices unto the Lord by being burned at the stake on public squares and drowned in the canals of Amsterdam and other places. (It could be pointed out that a little more could have been done to point out places and events to the conference guests which were of significance in regard to the suffering of the early Anabaptists and the achievements of later generations. Quite easily special tours for this purpose could have been organized as had been the case in the conferences in Switzerland and South Germany.)

The Changing World

Comparing this conference with those preceding one can say that the sons of Menno have come a long way. Sometimes we hear it said that more change takes place in a decade in our day than occurred during a century before World War I. Reference could be made to scientific, technological, social, and political developments. Ethnic groups and nations emerge and confront us with problems which must be solved. What was taken for granted yesterday is questioned today. What seemed to have been settled forever has to be dealt with as if no one had ever paid attention to it. Races and young nations are awakening. These emerging, sleeping giants find their huts and their space in the sun too small for their size and needs. Some are stretching, others are rising, and some are already on the march. All this cannot remain unnoticed and without a challenge, even for a brotherhood that has remained aloof from the world. This was never brought to our attention on such a large scale and with such an urgency as was the case in Amsterdam.

The time is past that we could put a fence around our home or village, fortify our town or border, and feel protected. Even the most stubborn isolationist must realize that we belong to one world. This is the case not only in regard to small religious groups like the Mennonites but also in regard to all the nations of the world.

No one can really evaluate the total presentations and the impressions gained during the week at Amsterdam. The number of lectures, the great variety of discussions, and the wide range of impressions of people of different backgrounds and countries cannot be measured, classified, or gathered in any container. After the official Conference lectures, and reports will have been printed, we will be able to make a more comprehensive study. In this context only a few highlights are lifted out. They are possibly those which were more striking and unusual.

The Dutch Mennonites have in the past demonstrated an interest in the solution of racial tensions and demonstrated this again. Vincent Harding has repeatedly spoken in various Dutch Mennonite congregations and was this time introduced to the nation as a whole via the means of the press, radio, and TV. Among those who applauded most heartily to the messages by Harding were the Dutch. His paper, "Nonresistance and Revolution," (see page 161) was reprinted more than any other speech and referred to in all Dutch newspapers. This popularity did not prevent Harding from pointing out that the first slaves to be sold in America were brought from Africa on a Dutch ship. The Dutch themselves have a long history of colonial expansion and know both how much this has meant to the country in terms of prosperity and also the problems which resulted from it.

Numerous European countries view the developments in Vietnam and the annual racial riots in America with very critical eyes. They are inspired, no doubt, to a large extent by a strong desire and prophetic sense to correct mistakes and injustices of the past and present on both global and local scales. At times there is naturally also a display of Pharisaism when the older brother overlooks the splinter in his own eye and points at the log which distorts the vision of his bigger brother. Any international conference on such a level is an unusual opportunity to look into the mirror to see the national and international characteristics of each nation represented more clearly. This is a by-product of such a conference and helps to correct mistakes and to promote growth.

The Believers' Church Today

A few weeks before the World Conference convened in Amsterdam, some American Mennonite representatives attended the Conference on the Concept of the Believers' Church which convened in Louisville, Kentucky (see page 185). At times the Mennonite representatives could have been in danger of developing an oversized group ego when they heard some Friends, Brethren, Baptists, and others of the Free Church tradition claim the Anabaptist forefathers as guides for their own tradition in the past, present, and future. The Anabaptist church concept and the practice of discipleship were referred to freely. (See the article by T. Canby Jones in this issue.)

In America as well as in Europe the legacy of Anabaptism—once considered heretical—is now in esteem and claimed to be a legitimate ideal to be studied and generously applied. Why has Anabaptism—once considered the curse of the earth—become so popular in our day? Has that which the Anabaptists stand for been generally accepted and is it being practiced in daily life? Has the world in which we live become so "Christian" that the views of early Christianity and Anabaptism no longer constitute a stumbling block? Or have the views been so domesticated that they cease to cause a disturbance and have lost the punch of a conscience?

At Amsterdam strong arguments were presented stating that we could not claim much credit for the present rediscovery of the truth. The views discovered by our forefathers four hundred years ago often became a hidden talent. It is true we have produced volumes of books dealing with the discovery and rediscovery and the first and second look on the Anabaptist church concept, discipleship, and other basic beliefs.

H. S. Bender and I wrote our doctoral dissertations at the University of Heidelberg thirty years ago. Bender devoted his book to Conrad Grebel's life and concept of the church while I presented Menno Simons' life and his views of the church. We "rediscovered" a truth

which really was never fully lost sight of. Throughout the centuries the Mennonites kept the basic idea of the Anabaptist concept of the church "alive." The purity of the church and the discipleship of the individual Christian were always emphasized. Unfortunately the leaven of Anabaptism became dormant primarily because of persecution and isolation from the world. The resulting emphasis on a stale nonconformity, nonresistance, and simplicity further overshadowed the potent ingredient of the original Anabaptist view of the church.

Were the Anabaptists Radical?

In our "rediscoveries" Anabaptism has mostly been presented and viewed as a middle class form of Protestantism which at last could take a seat next to the Lutheran and Reformed churches. Much of our research was inspired by the claim: "me too" as a legitimate offspring of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. No effort was spared to make this legitimacy accepted and palatable. Contacts with more radical leaders of the sixteenth century such as Thomas Müntzer, Andreas Karlstadt, and the Münsterites were either denied or minimized. Some of us have had an uneasy conscience about this tendency for some time.

Today Bernhard Rothmann of Münster and his followers of the Low Countries are seen in a new light. Thomas Müntzer and his simultaneous association with the Swiss Brethren and the Peasants Revolt are getting a second look. Karlstadt and his influence on Melchior Hoffman and Anabaptism in the Low Countries is not necessarily a spot that needs to be removed with modern cleanser as some have tried to do. A more objective study of these relationships than has often been the case among Anabaptist scholars in the past is necessary. The Anabaptists were more radical in their day than we have often thought or were led to believe. They would today be more involved in the affairs of this world than are most of their descendants.

Could it have been that during that last Sunday in the worship service at the Conference in Amsterdam the fresh spirit of God, which was the motto of the Conference, was revived again? There are signs of another recovery of the Anabaptist heritage among us on a worldwide scale. Some preacher-prophets among us are saying that the "hidden talent" must be brought into the open and used. Particularly the younger generation demonstrated impatience with the older guardians of the heritage.

This was especially noticeable when the question of how to find a hearing among those in responsible government positions in regard to the Vietnam war and the race question was discussed. Some felt like stating specifically what was wrong and how it could be corrected. Others believed this to be inconsistent with the calling of the Christian church. There was

also a noticeable difference between those who had lived for generations in countries where the citizen does not dare express criticism in regard to his government and those who have lived in countries where public affairs and government are discussed freely and considered a personal responsibility.

In any event the spirit of God which did not always have a free movement and expression among *die Stillen im Lande* in the past seems to find expression once again. What Jesus said about the sons of Abraham that if they would not be faithful God could awaken children out of stones seems true also in regard to the sons of Menno (Luke 3:8). Do we not see God at work in many areas and among many nations in the realm of the heritage entrusted to our forefathers? The question of the believers' church as a disciplined body of Christ is being discussed widely. Are we furnishing guide lines which we inherited and which should be vital in our churches? The responsibility of the church in the modern world and towards government are being studied everywhere.

Are we involved in this dialogue? Or does Romans 13:1 still serve us an excuse for remaining *die Stillen im Lande* whereby we neutralize our witness?

Some four hundred years ago and later Mennonites from Amsterdam moved east and west spreading ultimately as far as Siberia and California. They returned in large numbers to Amsterdam, the city of crossroads. With these sons of Menno came native sons of Japan, India, Africa and South and North America. They did not all speak the same language when they discussed the problems they confront today. They did not even always express their Christian faith and witness the same way. After meeting for a week they parted, returning to their respective countries, churches and work. Because of the meeting at the crossroads none returned the same as they had come. Nor did those at home in Amsterdam remain the same. All had listened to each other and learned from each other. The spirit of Christ, which was the focal point at the crossroad discussions, will guide all in putting into action at home what they learned while together.

The Future of the Mennonite Brotherhood

By H. J. Goertz

WHEN ONE HAS the opportunity to talk to a Mennonite body assembled from all parts of the world about the future of the Mennonite brotherhood, one should do a thorough job. Enough has already been said about the past of Mennonitism. Our scholars seem to hold church history in high esteem, but less attention is paid to theological questions and the future of the brotherhood.

The impulses which we have received from our Anabaptist heritage have formed and corrected our congregational life. We should not abandon the insights pertaining to the concept of the church, the doctrine of baptism and the theology of peace which other denominations laboriously try to discover. However, we must raise the question as to whether we are not concentrating too much on a retrospective view as the only salvation for our congregations in the present

and future. We are so thrilled about the "recovery of the Anabaptist vision" that we are still raising and answering theological questions as if we were living in the sixteenth century. Our congregations, without knowing it, are following our theological leaders in a return to the past instead of moving into the future.

The Church of Jesus Christ is not looking for the "promised land" in the past, but it must reach out into the future. The church consists of pilgrims and strangers who are living in the promise of the coming fulfillment. The strongest power the church has is its faith in the coming of God's Kingdom to this world. This faith is aroused and strengthened by the Word and the Spirit of God. Both are as Jürgen Moltmann writes in his *Theology of Hope: dass Angeld des Kommenden und binden an sich, um auf grösseres hinzuweisen und auszurichten.*"

Wherever the Word of God is presented among us and wherever we are aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit, we must also be aware of the fact that we are not members of a perfect congregation but rather one that is in the making.

Consequently we are challenged to leave the past of Anabaptism, which has shaped our congregations after the model of the early church, which it is not, and to intensify our concentration on the aspect of Anabaptism which turns and moves in the direction of the Kingdom of God. At the close of this Mennonite World Conference, as we talk about the future of our brotherhood, we are in conversation with our Anabaptist forebears and are talking about things which are most important for all of us. It is not an insignificant question for us as to whether our congregations are moving in the direction of the Kingdom of God or not. There is no difference of opinion in regard to this question among the representatives of the Mennonites assembled here. The only differences of opinion that could arise deal with questions relating to the manner by which the congregations pursue this road. However, we must say that the individual congregations are not alone in this endeavor, for there are three sides to this pursuit.

Among Us

Wherever congregations move in the direction of the divine future, they do not do this irrespective of other congregations. The South German congregations are not moving without the North German congregations. The Dutch Mennonites are not pursuing their goal without reference to those in Switzerland. The American Mennonites remain aware of those in Asiatic countries. One congregation is a fellow traveler of the other on the road to the Kingdom of God. No one can insist that the Word and the Spirit of God do not have the power to bring all congregations to the same goal. Without fellow travelers to the eternal destination we miss the goal, consequently it makes sense to counsel and discuss in regard to the future of the Mennonite world brotherhood. Formerly we spoke about it in geographical terms. I am glad that we now can consider this matter from an eschatological point of view. This is our future and our challenge.

We will have to accept the peculiarities of our fellow travelers. One races to the future while the other is laboriously limping behind. Some have to be called back and others have to be assisted as they move forward. But we reach the goal together. We will have to accept the "hooks and eyes" of one congregation, as long as they do not pull us back into the past. We will have to tolerate the radical thoughts of others as long as they aim to express the old Gospel in new ways. The yardstick for our judgment is not the past and not even the present, but it is the question whether God's future will be revealed to us.

The conflict of the common positions among us, referred to as "Pietism" and "Rationalism" (liberalism), are outdated and are a burden in our effort and challenge to look into the future. Today, the way to the promised land leads through the "desert of decision," in which each assumes responsibility for his brother's decisions, whether we are in full agreement with each other or not.

We and Other Churches

Our Mennonite world brotherhood does not approach the divine future alone. There are other churches and fellowships which started out at other places and other times on their way in the same direction. The Word and the Spirit of God know no denominational borders and the hills and mountains of tradition will be leveled by the future. The Kingdom of God expects of us that we look forward to the future, not apart from other denominations, but together with them. This means that the future of other denominations and Christian fellowships is also our future. We are participating in the future of the Church of Jesus Christ and this is the only reason for an unconditional ecumenical engagement.

However, the opposition to this is somewhat strong in our congregations. Thus, some traditions are not to be underscored, but are bound to be broken. Whoever sees in the ecumenical movement the emerging "devil's super church of the end of times" is misjudging the emergence of the coming church called by Jesus Christ. Widespread among us is the opinion that the unity of the church will only be achieved in the life hereafter, composed of all true believers, and will not be manifested in space and time. For this reason many want to have nothing to do with it. We must ask ourselves with seriousness whether such an argument against an involvement in the ecumenical movement for the future can stand the test because of the demands of a growing church looking to the future.

We and the World

When our world brotherhood enters the divine future it does so not only together with denominations and fellow believers but also with the world in which we live. The future of the churches is no other than the future of the world. The coming of the Lord at the end of times will take place not in a church but in the world. He is coming to judge not only the church but also the world and to complete the salvation of the church as well as of the world. We will have to place more emphasis on the need that our brotherhood should become engaged in the affairs of the world. We have gotten used to looking for the brother within the church and not in the world.

At the cost of a radical dualism, we have kept the church and the world separated. Many of our con-

gregations have made this separation a characteristic and aimed to serve the Lord and the brother apart from this world. Whatever the reasons for this attitude may be, we must ask ourselves whether the Lord does not want our service to the world. We shall reach the world only if our attitude toward the world does not hamper or bar our communication with the world. With our traditional dualistic Mennonite view of church and world, we cannot do much for the Lord of the church in the extremely eruptive economic developments of our day. Even with a moderate relationship toward the church and the world we will remain unsuccessful. It is difficult for us to bring the two together because of our tradition which has kept them apart as entirely different entities. In view of the promise of the divine future which is for the world as well as for the church, we will have to make a radical break with our tradition and make our church a servant of the world. The theologians of our day are talking about a *prio*-existence of the church.

We have in our heritage a legacy with which we can launch out, without reservation, into the world.

This is our peace testimony for a world in need of it and yet unable and unwilling to practice it. With this we can make a practical contribution to the future of the world. War and the unwillingness to prevent war are hindrances to the divine future. As peace churches, we venture with other churches into new areas of the future. Herein lies our opportunity and challenge.

All this should be said in greater detail with more practical applications than is possible in this context. We must continue the dialogue with the world more intensely in regard to the spiritual and mental agonies of our society without identifying ourselves fully with her claims, ideologies, and expectations. The church of the future is an "exodus" church that is severing economic and social ties in order to be a challenging and healing church identifying itself fully with the needs and problems of the world. The needs of the world are our problems. All things considered, we must say: As fellow travelers to the Kingdom of God, the world, the church and God can use us as his instruments. This is the challenge and the future of our Mennonite world brotherhood.

The Significance of the Mennonite World Conference

By J. J. J. van Sluijs

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL Mennonite conferences took place on account of some historical commemorations or some emergencies. Soon a need to meet each other in a spirit of solidarity resulted. For me, this means that the regular World Conference sessions cannot be eliminated from our history anymore. I look upon our brotherhood as autonomous parts of a permanent body, the Mennonite World Conference, of which our Dutch brotherhood is a member. It is a membership that we would not like to end.

The Mennonite World Conference is perhaps the most important form of expression of an existing Mennonite brotherhood the world over. It provides an opportunity on a private level of meeting believers from many other countries because we together have met God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes the question is asked whether it is in place that this type of Mennonite solidarity is sought while various denominations aim to establish relationships on national or international ecumenical levels. My answer is that, within the framework of the ecumenical

movement, there will always be a place for some variations of the Christian churches. We are one of them. There are great differences, even within the Mennonite World Brotherhood, but there is more that is binding us together than that which is distinguishing us from each other.

We as Dutch Mennonites must say that we would not and could not live without the contact with other Mennonite brotherhoods. We are grateful that our relief work, our missionary work, and our peace movement have been influenced by these international contacts and that they are still being stimulated by them.

On the other hand, we hope that the Dutch Mennonites can also make a contribution to the Mennonites in other countries. Especially our part in the Dutch culture and our relationship to other denominations in the Netherlands may in the long run become a valuable contribution to the Mennonites elsewhere.

We aim to preserve the old Christian principle of adult baptism based on a personal confession of faith.

This means that neither tradition nor family relationships are decisive. The faith of the individual is central. We have many small congregations in which brethren and sisters know each other intimately. They are the marrow of our brotherhood. In these congregations, faith is active in a social context and in service to others. Our activities are not limited by the walls and membership of our churches. We think it is every-

body's duty to work in the service of God for the well-being of the world.

On account of all these things, I believe in the future of our Mennonite world brotherhood which will find its own voice in the choir of the Christian churches. I believe that together we can make this voice a strong and faithful instrument in the service of the Kingdom of God.

Where East and West Met

By Wicher Veen

REPRESENTATIVES OF the Eighth Mennonite World Conference were invited for a reception to the *Rijksmuseum* of Amsterdam by the government of the Netherlands and the city of Amsterdam. Thus we Dutch representatives considered it our duty to entertain our foreign guests and to introduce them to the sacred halls of our culture. My wife and I tried our best to contribute our share. We offered our services to a brother from faraway India after the official handshaking was over and the refreshments had been served. In response to our question whether he would like to see the art display of the museum, he willingly followed us.

On our way to the exposition-hall, however, when I mentioned the "Night Watch," he looked a little puzzled. He seemed to fear that we wanted to introduce him to the gloomy quarters of the town. I explained that the "Night Watch" is a monumental painting. In response to our inquiry whether he did not find it beautiful, he said, "Yes, but did one of you paint it?" Now I tried my best to introduce an Easterner to our Golden Age and the great Dutch masters of art. I climaxed my efforts by stating that the "Night Watch" was the masterpiece of the great Rembrandt, who was a close friend of the Mennonites. At this point, I did not fail to point out that the Mennonites of the Netherlands had always been great friends and patrons of art and culture. Our Eastern friend found this impressive and asked, "Is this Rembrandt still living?" I responded, "No, unfortunately he died not long ago."

But the end result was that we learned more at this occasion than our guest. Why are we so impressed by a Rembrandt and our old masters, our culture and enlightenment, our rational and often superficial

knowledge, and our western way of life? Have we not also invented gun powder and the atom bomb, in addition to other things such as capitalism and weariness? Why should our nonsense be better than the nonsense of others, above all, those others who have not given up and are still striving to 'live'? After all, the brother from India who wanted to find out something about our western culture did not ask me, for example, who Brahmasutra was. Nor did the other brother next to him with "hooks and eyes" from Pennsylvania ask himself how much money he could make in the Netherlands. Nor did he ask me to look at the world through his eyes. But he does ask me who I *am* and what I *do* and what I *think* about the world and life in general. This leads me to say "What a pity that so many of our press and television representatives look at this Conference with their western eyes and fail to understand what it is all about." On the other hand, it could be that I am mistaken.

Meeting people in the conference halls, one is impressed that most of them have a first name, such as John, David, Peter, or Mary, which is used freely when they talk to each other. The Dutch and some other Europeans usually hide their first names behind a J., D., P., or M., fortified if at all possible by one or several titles. If I have one concern, it is this, that we do not succeed in transplanting to our guests our mentality, our self-estrangement, our inferiority complexes, and consequently our desire for titles and status. Their secret seems to me is self-acceptance. This we, being Calvinists—whether we count ourselves among the humanists or the catholics—have lost, even we *doopsgezinden*. A rich life is that which practices simplicity and expresses itself as it is. That is why

our Lord calls us by our first names: the gospel presupposes us to be as we are, as John, David, Peter, or Mary. This is properly humanistic, but it is also truly biblical. Above all, from a historical point of view, it is Anabaptist.

During this week I have learned that there is something that is more biblical than fundamentalism and more humanistic than humanism, and this can be a lesson for us and the whole world in spite of some Mennonite conservatism and an occasional dripping piety. There is more than a lesson: there is a challenge. This is the kind of a revolution which will not make the front pages of our newspapers, but

through which I, a sober and often critical heretic, have found faith again during this week. This is not based on a myth of a world Mennonitism but on the fact that common people with very different backgrounds are going to observe the Lord's supper today. For some, the sermon to be preached is likely going to be too far to the right and for others, too far to the left, and the liturgy will appear to some overdone and to others too poor, but what does that matter to me? It is a historical fact that this *can* and *does* take place between the Indian and the Pennsylvanian brethren and me in a realm above and beyond Rembrandt and Brahmāsutra. This is the miracle taking place in our day and age with all its boundaries and limitations.

The Conference Message

I

THE EIGHTH MENNONITE World Conference, assembled at Amsterdam in the Netherlands, July 23-30, 1967, joyfully confesses its faith in God the Father, in Christ who accomplished our redemption, and in the Holy Spirit who effects in men the redemption of Christ. The study of our conference theme, "The Witness of the Holy Spirit," together with our worship services and our Christian fellowship, has been for us a rich spiritual experience.

With deep gratitude we have come to recognize that the Spirit is drawing our churches into closer ties of fellowship and love. We are especially grateful for the obvious way in which the Spirit has blessed a number of our younger churches in various parts of the world. We pray that all our congregations may in the power of God's Spirit come to a full experience of love and holiness and joy. We look to God to bestow upon us such gifts of His Spirit as will make us effective witnesses of Christ and His salvation—beginning in our several communities and reaching out to all the peoples of the world. We pledge ourselves to share generously our material gifts for the needs of those in hunger and suffering. We earnestly ask God to enable us to be effective agents of love and goodwill.

II

We also desire to reach out hands of love and goodwill to all the children of God in Christ in "every kindred and tongue and people and nation." We believe that God is helping us through the Mennonite World Conference to find ways of relating fruitfully to each other and to other groups of believers. We confidently expect that through dialogue and fellowship divine blessings may come both to us and to them in the power of the Spirit. We desire to be divinely cleansed of any spirit of pride or self-sufficiency. And we want God's Spirit to overcome in us any tendency toward an unchristian separatism or withdrawal. We beseech God to help all His children to realize more fully the spiritual unity which is theirs in Christ. And we call upon all our congregations to base their faith and practice on God's Holy Word as illuminated by the Spirit of God.

III

With anguish of soul we also remember the many peoples of this world who are living in poverty and distress; under restricted civil liberties; and where injustice prevails. We think particularly of those who are suffering because of racial and religious intolerance, as in the United States of America, in the

Republic of South Africa, and in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. We pledge ourselves to become agents of reconciliation, as God through His Spirit enables us. Our hearts go out to those lands where modern warfare is bringing fearful suffering and awful destruction to helpless peoples. We are especially distressed by the continuing and escalating war in Vietnam, as well as by the tragic conflict and uneasy truce between Israel and the Arab states.

We pray that God may bring an end to intolerance, injustice, and war. And in the name of Christ we appeal to all governments to seek by peaceful means to bring freedom and justice to all men. We deplore the arrogance which thinks to bring peace and security by violence and massive destruction. Above

all, we look in faith and Christian hope for that glorious day when men "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks, neither shall they learn war any more."

With deep gratitude to God we confess our utter dependence upon His Spirit for spiritual life, for service, and for our witness to Christ and His Gospel. We thank our Heavenly Father for the fellowship and the inspiration of this Eighth Mennonite World Conference. And we dedicate ourselves afresh to Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. We pray that He by His Spirit may transform us into effective witnesses of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Peace Witness and Revolutionary Movements

By Vincent Harding

"THE SPIRIT OF the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me;

He has sent me to announce good news to the poor,
To proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight
for the blind;

To let the broken victims go free,

To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

One of my first and firmest convictions is that we have spent the week here talking about a Spirit who often seems to avoid conferences of professionally religious people. At least this seems a reasonable conclusion to draw not only from our Lord's statement about the rather free-blowing quality of this creative being, but from the pages of history.

Therefore, I have no difficulty believing that the Spirit of truth was using that black American genius, W.E.B. DuBois, when 67 years ago he said to America and the world, "The problem of the 20th century will be the problem of the color line: the relationship of the white races of Europe and America to the darker races of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the islands of the sea."

Nor do I find it strange that the totally free Spirit should bring from another genius, Leon Trotsky, the

announcement in the 1920's that the world had moved into an age of permanent revolution.

A second conviction is that most of us who go by the name of Mennonite know—and often care—very little about the explosive worlds of color and revolution, especially as these worlds have developed since 1945.

Therefore it has seemed to me imperative that some introduction be offered to the now interrelated worlds of racial revolutionary thinking. It would be best of all if some of the revolutionaries were among us, entering into honest dialogue with our easy answers, but since that is not possible, I would like to present a selection of modern revolutionary documents at this point. These represent a significant portion of the world we are privileged to love. These are the points of view of men and women who have heard vaguely that we have a witness concerning peace and reconciliation. Let us hear them, so that we may not answer unasked questions, love unreal persons, or bear witness to an unknown world.

In almost every case one can hear the words of John F. Kennedy as a background: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolu-

tion inevitable." Perhaps the most important way to listen, though, is to ask, "What would I do if I were in their situation, suffering as they suffer, backed up against the same wall?" Such are the questions of compassion.

Voices of Revolution

Testimony of Nelson Mandela, leader of the African National Congress of South Africa, at his trial in 1965:

"At the beginning of June, 1961, after a long and anxious assessment of the South African situation, I and some colleagues came to the conclusion that as violence in this country was inevitable, it would be unrealistic and wrong for African leaders to continue preaching peace and nonviolence at a time when the Government met our peaceful demands with force.

"The conclusion was not easily arrived at. It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle, and to form Umkonto we Sizwe. We did so not because we desired such a course, but solely because the Government had left us with no other choice."

Statement from a member of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam in 1966:

"No brutal force in the world, not even that of American imperialism, can bring to their knees a people who have pledged themselves to die rather than to live in slavery. We have endured the sufferings of 20 years of unrelenting warfare; that is why, more than any other nation in the world, we want peace, a life free of bombing, where all families would be reunited and could freely rebuild their lives in happiness and prosperity. But we want a real peace, a peace that gives freedom, and not one obtained under the crushing heel of the aggressor."

Proclamation and editorial of the Mozambican Liberation Front, 1964:

"In September, 1962, the Congress of the Mozambican Liberation Front affirmed unanimously the will and determination of the Mozambican people to fight by any and all means for the achievement of their national independence.

"FRELIMO tried, through peaceful means, to convince the colonial-fascist government of Portugal to give satisfaction to the fundamental political demands of the Mozambican people. In spite of this, Portuguese colonialism continues to dominate our country.

"The richness of our country and the work of the Mozambican people continue to be exploited by the Portuguese colonialists and their imperialistic allies.

"Our brothers are daily murdered for participating actively in the struggle for the liberation of our country. The prisons are full of patriots, and those who are still free live in uncertainty of what the next day will bring.

"Therefore, concurrent with its peaceful efforts,

FRELIMO prepared itself to face the eventuality of an armed struggle. Today, faced with the constant refusal of the Portuguese government to recognize our right to independence, FRELIMO again declares that armed struggle is the only way for the Mozambican people to achieve their aspirations of liberty, justice, and social well-being.

"It was only after exhausting all possibilities of a peaceful solution that we decided to take up arms. We are now sure that this is the only means by which to convince the Portuguese people in Mozambique to get out, to give back what belongs to us, to restore to us our land. . . .

"When we decided to confront Portuguese colonialism—when we resolved by a conscious and pondered decision to destroy the world of oppression and misery that strangers established in our country, to build a world of justice and equality, we had already weighed the forces of repression. We knew that for many of us death would be the price of that ideal. We are ready to pay any price for it.

"We have nothing to lose. Existence itself has no meaning in a regime of servitude. We have nothing to lose but the chains that destroy our dignity.

"We shall never turn back. Nothing can stop our revolution. The Mozambican revolution is an immense movement—irreversible as a force of nature—with roots in the will and in the aspirations of each Mozambican.

"The armed struggle which we announce today for the destruction of Portuguese colonialism and of imperialism will allow us to install in our country a new and popular social order. The Mozambican people will thus be making a great historical contribution toward the total liberation of our continent and the progress of Africa and of the world."

Paraphrased statement of some Black Power leaders in U.S.A., 1967:

"We are tired, America. We're just plain tired—and fed up and angry, and outraged. We've been quiet; we've worked; we're 'slaved'; we've danced; we've smiled; we've shined your shoes and made up your bed. We've said, 'Yes sir,' 'Thank you, sir'; and still we're not free to be our own men, to control our own lives and destinies.

"We've marched; we've prayed; we've sung, 'We Shall Overcome' until it hurt, and then we sang it some more. We've pleaded; we've prayed; we've had our heads split open. Still our children are being given a poisoned education; our communities are left to rot; our men cannot be employed, our middle-class blacks are kept out of your neighborhoods. We've been lynched and beaten and jailed and subjected to all the quiet, deadly violence of the white status quo. And America, you still won't let us be free, be equal in opportunity to live and grow.

"Now we're tired. We've had enough. You've taught

us about violence and we're going to use our lessons well. We're going to kill some white men. If we've got to go, we're going to take some of you with us. If you won't let us go free, we're going to bring this whole rotten society down over all our heads. Give us liberty or give us death, white America. We're not going to have our children go through this madness anymore.

"This is war, America. You've been killing us for more than 300 years. Now we declare war. The movement for Black Liberation has begun."

Statement of Father Camilo Torres, Colombia, 1966:

"I have left the duties and privileges of the clergy, but I have not left the priesthood. I believe to have devoted myself to the revolution out of love for my neighbor in the temporal, economic, and social realms. When my neighbor has nothing against me, when I have helped bring about the revolution, I will say the holy mass again. Thus I believe to obey Christ's command: 'If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your neighbor has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go; first be reconciled to your neighbor, and then come, and offer your gift.'"

(Father Torres was murdered some time after he had made this statement. He was 37 years old.)

Something Against Us

These are the voices of revolution; and as they end it would appear that the blood of a Roman Catholic revolutionary priest cries out from the ground to all the safe Mennonites of the world. He reminds us that there are millions of men scattered over the globe whose inarticulate groans are their only way of saying that they have something against us.

These are the men who could work for ten years and not have the cost of one Mennonite tour. These are the children who never see in a month the food we have eaten in a week. These are the women whose sons have been killed because they wanted American, Dutch, and Belgian oil companies to give up their strangle-hold on the dark people's economy. *They have something against us.* What is our response?

It might be well to make sure we have heard them clearly and followed their arguments and their pleas. They remind us of intolerable injustice, of warped human relations, of men controlling the lives of their brothers in ways that must break the heart of our elder brother. They tell of vast sectors of their economy controlled by those who drain the wealth into already vast profits. They speak of twisted stunted growth as societies and as individuals.

In almost every case they tell of pleas for justice, requests for negotiations, nonviolent demonstrations, letters and petitions, all answered by subterfuge, hypocrisy, violence, or death. Out of this grows a conviction that they can obtain justice, independence,

manhood, self-determination only by the use of physical force. Their legal channels are blocked and their moral appeals fall on deaf ears. What shall they do?

The central theme of a search for justice is transformed by a struggle for power, out of the conviction that the oppressors respond to nothing else. This is the meaning of Black Power in the political realm. Its roots are to be found in a thousand crushed hopes.

But in the midst of these documents, too, is a faith in the rightness of their cause. There is an underlying, unspoken religious understanding of true community. There is an assumption that men are not meant to live as parasites on others.

They are convinced that if the earth is indeed the Lord's then he means for those who live on it to determine how they shall use it as faithful stewards. This, they believe, is their responsibility, not Wall Street's or the Hague's or Lisbon's.

And here we come to one of the most difficult issues of all: These men who have been driven to revolution often consider the good Christians of the West as some of their major enemies. We are part of the problem, not the solution. We live off the earnings of their land. They are paying for our comfort. Our continued acquiescence in all the benefits of Western corporate capitalism is for them a negation of all our prayers of concern and our conference statements wet with tears of pity.

Then, above all the rest, they see America as the leader of counter-revolution for the world, and they mark us as enemies until we prove different.

Nevertheless, even against so great a power as the military colossus of North America and the massed wealth of the West, these revolutionaries seem often to have a faith that their cause will triumph. Much of this expression of faith may be no more than rhetoric, but they appear to be more convinced of their cause than many Christians. They appear to be more clearly allied with the sufferers of the world than many Christians. They appear to be more ready to die for their convictions than many Christians.

What Should We Do?

How do we address our revolutionary brothers? They have something against us. What is the peace witness for such situations? Perhaps even more appropriate questions are these: What would Mennonites do? What have Mennonites done? What would you do?

In the United States I have noted that Mennonites rarely hesitate to appeal to the legislatures and governors on issues which seem important to the group's life and concerns. I have noticed in the U.S. and elsewhere an increase in the number of Mennonite lawyers, and I am aware of various conferences struggling with the issue of the use of the courts.

Mennonites rarely hesitate to collect damages where insurance is concerned, I suspect. What I am suggesting is this: We usually have no hesitation about seeking justice for ourselves. Most often in this generation in the West we have not found legal channels completely blocked; but when there has seemed no relief, Mennonites have moved out of intolerable situations.

In the light of such awareness concerning our own practices, what do we have to say to others who seek justice? How shall our "peace witness" be valid if it refers only to *their* quest for justice and not ours? What can we say to those who have been pressed up against the wall for so many years that the life seems crushed out of them by oppressive regimes? Do we solve anything by quoting Romans 13? Is that a real response to our brother's agony?

Often in the recent past Mennonites have had friends outside of the oppressing situation to help get them out, to help get them settled, to help them survive for a time. How does this experience help in speaking to those who have no outside friends, to those who do not desire to leave the land in which their fathers are buried?

How do we speak to those who wish to stay and drive our Western nations off from exploitative uses of non-Western lands? What do we say when we have stocks in the companies who exploit and money in the banks who finance the very profitable adventures in foreign investments? How do we speak to such persons when our own Congress cuts off their aid to almost any nation that wants total control over its own economy? What is our peace witness when we live as citizens of the nations that make peaceful revolution impossible?

We cannot escape such questions by saying that we do not believe in violence when we participate in the "violence of the status quo." Nor can we affirm law and order when they maintain a situation in which men rob another people cruelly, legally and systematically, and share some of the profits with us. We are not excused by a refusal to be concerned with "politics" when we so readily appeal to the politicians to save our own skins. Moreover, if politics has to do with the ordering of men's lives in such a way that they may achieve their fullest potential in the community, then dare we remove ourselves from concern with it?

Of course, one of the things we may say to those who are sorely tempted toward revolutionary seizure of power is this: "Such power is not the answer. We have learned from our Lord that it is only through the renunciation of this world's kind of power that true and lasting changes come for man and society."

We may say this, but how shall we prove that we believe it when we sit in the midst of the fortress of Western military power and take advantage regularly (though often unconsciously) of political, economic, and military power? Even though we may not always wield these ourselves, we are glad to be protected by

them.

Sometimes, though, we clearly control the power, subtle power, like the power of Mennonite prestige, the power of middleclass respectability, the power of whiteness. Can we recommend the way of powerlessness while we dwell comfortably among the powerful? Can we really praise the purity of poverty and the blessedness of humility in such surroundings as these (or from church buildings and family houses not unlike this)?

I am convinced that we have not yet squarely faced this dominant human issue of our time, and I am also certain that we will be untrue to our Lord and his suffering brothers if we continue to avoid a matter so central to so many lives. (I realize that many of the non-Western churches have been forced to deal with this matter in some existential ways, but we have not drawn sufficiently on their wisdom at such a conference.) Therefore I would make this proposal:

An Exploration Proposed

It would seem crucial and right to me if some official or semi-official portions of our churches sponsored a major working exploration of this issue within the next 18 months. Such a gathering would be essentially concerned to listen to Christ and our brothers and to seek to discern the Spirit's blowing of truth from whatever source.

It should most appropriately be in a non-Western location where we could draw on some authentic revolutionaries, especially some of those who have felt compelled to leave churches to become part of such struggles.

Our main concern would be to know what a witness of non-resistance or Christian pacifism means in situations where men honestly sense that they have been pressed by oppression to violent resistance. A critical part of this search would be to know how those of us who live as the wealthy of the earth can find a peace-making style of life, but at least half of the seekers should be from the lands of the poor and the crushed.

I would further propose that part of the preparation for such a conference might properly involve the support of a person like John Howard Yoder, along with non-Western theologians, in exploratory missions among some of the modern revolutionary groups. Let such men live among the revolutionaries and listen to their deepest concerns.

Let them learn what kinds of witness might be possible on such frontiers of faith. If newspapers can send reporters to live among such men simply to get a good-selling story, we could certainly consider sending scholar-witnesses to learn and to share. Can we truly love this world of revolutionaries if we do not know it?

Such a proposal is no mere academic matter for me. I have sensed a calling to try to stand faithful to

our Lord among the black revolutionaries of America—and wherever else I might be. Such a task is completely uncharted, and I am seeking for help and guidance from all who are similarly concerned. I do not wish to appear melodramatic, but there are ways in which this seems to me a matter of life and death.

Now, more than enough words have been spoken on this subject about which we know so little. Let it suffice here to say that Jesus may have had such a time in mind when he called us away from the storing of treasures, from anxieties about possessions. The revolutionary poor are understandably skeptical about pleas for non-violence from Christians who live with more than necessities in an oppressor's land. Perhaps it will be easier to hear God's spirit concerning the marching poor if we had no houses or lands to defend.

I say "perhaps" because I do not know. That is why I plead for counsel. One last conviction: The Spirit we seek in Amsterdam might be here; but wherever he blows he is a Spirit of justice, truth, and love. Christ

is our guarantee of that. Such a Spirit surely understands and is compassionate with the desperate men who often are driven by a hunger for justice, a search for true human relationships, and the building of a new community. With such a Spirit abroad, let this be our final question: Whose sin is greatest, the desperate men who use the wrong weapons to fight for justice, or the complacent men who have all the right weapons and fight no battles at all, except their own?

Let us pray for the Spirit to fill us, but let us remember that the Spirit who fills is also the Spirit who drives men out into the desert of solitary testing and refining. If this is not the Spirit we want, then let prayers and conferences cease, beginning now. But if, with fear and trembling, we are willing to be driven beyond all the limits of physical, intellectual, and spiritual safety that we know now, then the anointing may come. Then the broken victims will leap for joy at our appearance, and the humiliated will sing a song of praise.

Amsterdam: Hosting the Conference

By Jan Matthijssen

LOOKING BACK ON the World Conference, one might think: "Why did we make so many efforts in preparing the organization of this Conference?" For, actually, we did make quite some efforts here in Amsterdam. During the past three years about fifty people met frequently and intensively in various committees; during the past six months our office worked with thirty volunteers, five or six on a full-time basis; during the conference itself, nearly 250 of us worked hard and long on the organizational aspects of the conference, both on and behind the scenes. These workers hardly had a chance to attend any part of the conference itself, but they did experience the value and the blessings of an intensive work-fellowship.

But again: "Why did we make so many efforts in preparation?" Of course, it was not in vain. Everything appeared to run rather smoothly, even if mistakes were made in the preparation and in the execution, mistakes for which we wish to apologize. However, the very fact that, generally speaking, everything went well, is in itself quite amazing. The truth is, that on practically

every front things have turned out differently from what we had anticipated: there were shortages, surpluses, desires, necessities, impossibilities, surprises, and all these together amounted to almost as much as the prepared part of our organization. As a result we were forced to improvise continually during the conference. It is a good thing that we had counted on this happening—after all, we had never organized such a massive affair before, and also, we knew that the visitors would be rather individualistic Mennonites. We had counted on a fair share of 'instant' organization, for which we left plenty of room. Instant organization was called for with respect to buildings, rooms and other facilities, as well as in terms of money, materials, time and personnel. In reminiscence, it is interesting to note that some of our people who have worked most intensively had offered their services only after the conference had started. In some cases we can not imagine now how we had ever hoped to accomplish the conference organization without this unexpected help. By the way, the greatest compliment we received came from one

of the doormen of the conference building. This man, who constantly has the opportunity to observe large international conferences, remarked that our conference went excellently, "because the participants are co-operating so fantastically and because the volunteers work with a complete personal devotion, in contrast with conferences organized by professionals." Also the post office and bank people in the conference building—the other outsiders with much experience—often commented in similar terms.

Our main problems were: food, lodging and translations. In the immediate neighborhood of the conference building restaurants are scarce and the downtown restaurants are too far away. Therefore, we had—at very great costs—to have a dining hall arranged for us in the building. Due to a monopoly arrangement we were forced to accept a very simple menu at relatively high prices. Many took their meals elsewhere. Lodging at the homes of Mennonites in Amsterdam and neighboring towns has in many cases led to very good and presumably lasting personal contacts. To our regret, the housing shortage in the Netherlands and the vacation season collaborated to make private lodging addresses scarce. Only about 1,400 of the foreign visitors could be accommodated in homes because of this. Roughly the same number of conference participants had to stay in hotels. Again, this provided a major problem, because at the height of the tourist season, hotel rooms were very scarce, too. Some hotel managers abused this situation by making last-minute changes in agreements.

The translations problem was new. Former conferences either had much smaller attendance or were actually mono-lingual. If 98 percent of those attending all understand one language, it is only a minor problem to provide translations for the remaining 2 percent. In Amsterdam, however, several thousands had to rely upon translations from one or more of the four official conference languages. For discussion etc., we could use the up-to-date simultaneous translation equipment of the conference building. For the eighty addresses, however, we had counted on having each of them translated into three other languages and providing

these translations in mimeographed form to all those needing them. To our regret, we have only partly succeeded in this; for another part we have had to be content with hastily made, insufficient translations; in some cases we could not offer any translation at all. Although other factors contributed, the main one was that many speakers did not send in their manuscripts until it was actually too late for us to do a decent job. Some manuscripts were even handed in to us during the conference.

A very important factor in trying to find solutions for these three (and some other) problems was, of course, the number of visitors from the several countries. Although we had announced an early registration deadline, several thousands registered later, much later. Very many others did not bother at all to register and just came. In this way the number of expected (registered) participants—4,500—rose to more than 8,000. A minor problem consisted of the fact that for many, apparently, it proved very difficult to fill out the registration form correctly and, furthermore, the American and German handwriting was often illegible for our Dutch office staff. Many mistakes, never serious, sometimes even amusing, were made in this way.

Has the conference been worth all the efforts and expenditure made? Personally I would say: yes. Yes, because this conference has created and strengthened many international contacts and friendships. Yes, because we have experienced a true and rich fellowship, e.g., in the communion service that was impressive in all its simplicity. Yes, because we have learned from each other. Yes, because for once, through press, radio, and TV, Mennonites not only came abundantly into the news, at least in Holland, but also our traditional as well as new concerns received nationwide attention. Yes, because we were sometimes shocked awake from our friendly piety, e.g., during the Sunday morning worship service.

But more important, the final evaluation will depend upon the way in which we, all of us, deal with our commitments, e.g., the commitment to realize reconciliation in this world.

Order Additional Copies

You are invited to order additional copies of this issue. Friends who were at the Mennonite World Conference or those who would like to have more information about this significant event will especially appreciate this issue. Single copies cost 75 cents. On 10 copies or more there is a discount of 50 percent. We will be glad to mail the copies to your friends.

Address your order to: *Mennonite Life*, North Newton, Kansas 67117.



After the arrival at the RAI (Rijswiel en Automobiël Industrie) building, registration and orientation followed.

Amsterdam in Pictures

Entrance Hall of the RAI building, site of the Eighth Mennonite World Conference.



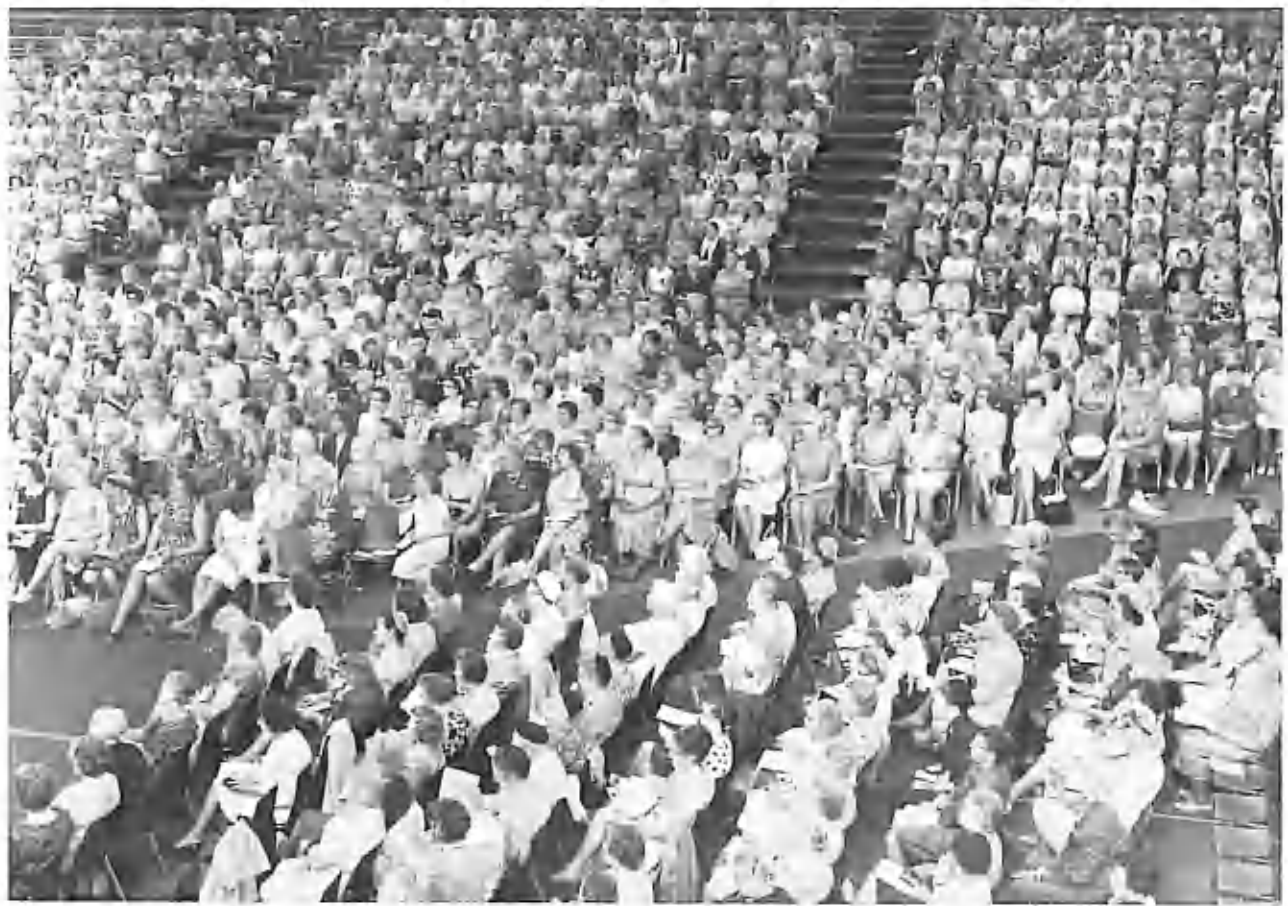


A section of a large meeting attended by four to five thousand people daily. The total number of registrants was 8000.

Erland Waltner opening the Eighth Mennonite World Conference on Sunday, July 23, 1967.

The wide range of religious, cultural, and national backgrounds of those attending the Conference is symbolized.





The mass meeting of Mennonite women from all over the world at the Conference on Thursday, July 27.

One of the five nursery and kindergarten rooms which made it possible for parents to attend meetings.



The wide range of representatives of Mennonites the world over is illustrated in this picture which features the Presidium of the Mennonite World Conference.





The bookstore in a wide hall distributing Mennonite publications gave a wonderful opportunity to browse and buy.

The huge dining hall, part of the RAI building, of the Eighth Mennonite World Conference.





Dutch Mennonite women from the province of Friesland wearing native costumes at the Conference.

The Bethel College choir singing at the Mennonite World Conference under the direction of Walter Jost.





A section of the large exhibition featuring Mennonite activities the world over, such as missions, relief, publications, peace witness.

The program and the opportunities to meet and visit with friends were unlimited. Exhausted, some found places for relaxation.



Echoes from Amsterdam

Selected from the following Mennonite periodicals: *Algemeen Doopsgezind Weekblad (ADW)*, *Canadian Mennonite (CM)*, *Der Bote (Bote)*, *Der Mennonit (M)*, *Gospel Herald (GH)*, *The Mennonite (Men.)*, *Mennonite Weekly Review (MWR)*.

1. A HEARTY WELCOME

Hospitality

It was a wonderful idea that the guests could spend the first Sunday with their hosts. Twenty guests met in a home to visit over a cup of coffee. We were taken out to see the quaint and friendly town of Hoorn located on the sea before we went to the opening of the conference in the evening.

Anni Dyck, Basel, Switzerland (Bote)

A Warm Welcome

The Dutch Mennonites gave us a warm welcome to the conference and to their homes. Speakers combined deep Biblical insights with warm evangelical fervor. I appreciated the open debate and airing of differences of opinion. The search for a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit was evident, as well as for a more effective proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord. I was amazed at the number of Dutch who could fluently speak English, German, and French as well as their own tongue.

Heinz Janzen, Kidron, Ohio (MWR)

Men and Women

People of the Netherlands are friendly and linguistically will meet you more than half way. We are impressed with the part women play in the church. They serve at communion services, they preach, and are deaconesses. There seems to be a lack of men. The discussions reveal real sincerity of spirit and depth of concern.

Melvin Klassen, Altona, Manitoba (CM)

2. WIDE RANGE OF REPRESENTATIVES

A Faith Fellowship

The Mennonite world brotherhood clearly manifested itself as a united faith fellowship during the Eighth Mennonite World Conference. Highlights of the conference were the informative lectures about relief work in Vietnam, the emotional address by Vincent Harding. . . . But the value of this gathering is the person-to-person conversations and meetings. The growing unity of the gathering became evident in the fast way in which the conference message was established. The content of this message proves that Mennonites everywhere do not want to isolate themselves any longer, but that they want to bring a Holy Spirit-inspired witness to the world.

R. de Zeeuw, Amsterdam (MWR)

New Representatives

It was especially appreciated that the churches of Asia, Africa, and South America were represented. European churches listened with great joy to the reports of the rapid growth of the young churches. With joy we greeted and supported the founding of a Travel Fund for the representation of the young churches. This representation gave the Conference a new dimension and prevented it from merely being a meeting of relatives and acquaintances.

Ernest Hege, Valdoie, France (M)

The Young People

With joy we observed the large number of young people and their lively participation in the discussions. One afternoon they had a special meeting in Haarlem which was well attended.

Horst Quiring, Stuttgart, Germany (Bote)

Disappointments

I was glad to meet other Mennonite young people from all over the world. It was an important conference for youth because we have founded here a Mennonite World Youth Contact On the other hand, however, this Eighth World Conference has disappointed us. Many speakers were too theological and not sufficiently practical. I think that Christians must be practical. People in today's world ask for that; they want and must see that we are really believing in our Lord and realizing His work in this world.

Frank Luyendijk, Amsterdam (MWR)

A Strange Thing

The whole thing is strange. I am the only North American Indian. Many people look strangely at me. Even though we look and act strange, we as Christians should feel closer to each other. But I also find it fascinating. I've talked to a lot of the Dutch people. I think the spirit is here, but for me it is broken up since they don't always switch on the translations. The highlights for me have been the discussions. I am surprised that there are so many viewpoints. I would come again if I could.

*Joseph Walks Along
Lame Deer, Montana (CM)*

Old and New Churches

The conference gives one a feeling of world brotherhood, and in a pictorial way also illustrates the different groups. One thing that has impressed me is the difference between old and new churches. The young ones are simple, growing, energetic. I have more in common with the Indonesian church. That church as well as the Indian mission work in Paraguay is closer to our thinking. We speak of the old church helping the young church, but not of the young church helping the old church. We need more contact on the congregational level.

Million Belete, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia (CM)

Wide Range of Participants

Much could be said about the great variety of participants in the Conference. As a child of the diaspora, I was filled with awe and fear watching the measured steps of the ascetic and conservative American Mennonites whose way of life reveals severity and a little self-righteousness. It was also interesting to watch the brethren and sisters from the younger churches of foreign continents go by. I was pleased to hear my West Prussian dialect spoken in all purity by a representative from South America. Mention should also be made of the sympathetic Dutch hosts of whom some would occasionally smoke a pipe and would, with Menno, not object to sitting around a table to chat over a glass of wine.

Ernst W. Schepansky, Hamburg, Germany (M)

A Good Sign

Some of the lectures touched me deeply and are disturbing me to this day. It is a good sign when the thoughts received continue to disturb us.

Samuel Gerber, Bienenberg, Switzerland (M)

One Brotherhood

In the first place, this conference has showed the brotherhood more than others. A high point was the Lord's supper. We belong to one brotherhood that comes from God. Secondly, I would like to say, the Dutch, American, and other Mennonites trust each other more. At other conferences there was so much mistrust. Now they believe they all belong to Jesus. Messages were very positive about Jesus our Lord.

S. Djodjohardjo, Pait, Java, Indonesia (CM)

3. LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONS

The Program

Amsterdam was worth the trip. The presence of Vincent Harding brought movement and life into the audience. This was where the conference came closest to confronting rough reality. The theme, "The Witness of the Holy Spirit," remained empty and

abstract. References to the Holy Spirit left an impression of artificiality. There was a noticeable lack of a basic search for who or what the Holy Spirit is. . . .

The list of the main speakers obviously came into being when every Mennonite group put its "main" speaker on the list. World Mennonitism has some better qualified representatives. During the sectional meetings, they had an opportunity to express themselves. It was here where the real work was done. But why must we spend one and one-half hours listening to two lectures; one would have been enough. Here, as well as at other instances, too much was offered; less would have been more. The weight of the program made it necessary to select very carefully in order to endure it.

Peter J. Foth, Hamburg, Germany (M)

Speakers and Topics

Likely a Conference cannot be organized without some "political" consideration. Every "group" has to present one or two speakers, at least that's the way it appears. The question whether the speakers will be able to do justice to the topic seems to be secondary. This compelled some speakers to speak on topics for which they were not qualified. Maybe one should not assign such difficult topics as "Renewal or Revolution," but choose easier ones for the next Conference.

Hans Werner Janzen, Münster, Germany (M)

Conference and Fellowship

There is a difference between conference as a meeting or as a fellowship. Every five years there should be a meeting in Europe or North America. In the interim the presidium and others should cultivate contact with the younger churches. We Dutch feel more Mennonite than even before. We are involved in ecumenical dialogue. We need our American brothers to strengthen our Anabaptist vision in this dialogue.

*Jan J. J. van Sluijs
Barsingerhorn, Netherlands (CM)*

Primary and Secondary

I recognize the basic value of the gathering. Its major significance is the exchange made possible. Its future continuation, however, should be carefully evaluated from the standpoint of basic objections to establish the primary and secondary objectives to be reached. A greater concentration should then be worked out on primary objectives. This could mean a delegate conference as over against a gathering of tourists.

J. B. Toews, Fresno, California (CM)

Study of Areas

Perhaps a world conference could be planned to provide an occasion for persons involved in specific areas of church life to get together for an entire week

to share, to think, and to plan globally in terms of their area of concern. These would be work sessions. Every minute would be valuable because the issues dealt with would be at the heart of each participant's concern. In Christian education, for example, it is clear that much work must be done, giving and receiving counsel on a worldwide basis.

Paul M. Lederach, Scottsdale, Pa. (MWR)

Lack of Prophetic Note

I am glad to be here. I feel positive on the informal things, i.e., the sidewalk conferences. There are two objections: the topics are too traditional, uncritical, introverted; it lacks prophetic note, that is it cannot convince the unconvinced, and make the Netherlands aware of our Christianity.

*J. P. Jacobszoon
Haarlem, Netherlands (CM)*

Holy Spirit—an Escape?

My primary criticism is that the idea of the Holy Spirit has become a kind of an escape clause for those issues which we don't want to face squarely. We brush them off by simply referring to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is guidance, but we must also do our part. The issues are, on the one hand, those within, the lack of freedom, the Scriptural literalism, and the senseless and superficial differences which divide us, and, on the other hand, the social problems of our world. We are too much a part of the world not to be involved.

Keith Harder, Hillsboro, Kansas (CM)

Lively Dialogue

The willingness to enter a dialogue was strong. However, at times, one was under the impression that some were primarily interested in finding their own opinions confirmed by others. The program was so rich that most likely no one could absorb all of it. For those worn out, Amsterdam offered recreation. In the Anne-Frank-House I found some very good and inspiring words about the dialogue which leads to a better understanding of others.

Elmar Werner, Schifferstadt, Germany (M)

The Next Conference

The next Mennonite World Conference would have value for me only if it would be composed of those delegates who would be able to participate in discussions and group work. Naturally this would include those engaged in work in missions, with youth, relief and peace. . . . The reports and lectures should be much shorter. . . . We owe many thanks to those who organized the Conference and helped sacrificially with the execution of it.

C. F. Brüsewitz, The Hague, Netherlands (M)

A Right Theology

In the battle of the worlds there are two views of a right theology. The one is "out there," and the other is to take a good look at this world and talk about doctrines only when they are directly related to issues of this world. I hold the second view and feel disappointed in the papers which were presented. We should ask poets, artists and musicians about the work of the Holy Spirit.

Gordon R. Dyck, Elkhart, Indiana (MWR)

A Suffering Church?

When a motion was made that the message should not only contain the challenge to be in touch with other groups of believers, but that we should also "extend our hands in love" to the world, it was not accepted. . . . I have an instinctive suspicion when I hear speeches about the "suffering church." This statement, "we must be a suffering church" can possibly cover up the fact that we really don't want to suffer. It was noticeable that the younger generation was only weakly represented at the Conference. Is the youth possibly disturbed by the frequent thoughtlessness with which we speak and take things for granted as if every Mennonite has the gift to recognize the fruits of the spirit?

Christoph Bornhäuser, Heidelberg, Germany (M)

The Conference Message

The Conference Message was disappointing to many because it did not speak specifically and directly to some of the major issues emerging at the Conference. Those wanting to register concerns about the message found it difficult to know what procedures to follow. Perhaps the time between the meetings every five years needs to be used more effectively both to filter the results of the conference down to the congregations and individual members but also to allow for the major issues to continue to emerge.

William Keeney, Bluffton, Ohio (MWR)

4. CRUCIAL ISSUES

Bearing Our Brothers' Burden

Until Vincent Harding spoke there was too much talking around the Holy Spirit. One of our colored brothers had to get us into the deep sea of bearing our brother's burdens. Now we have found our common concern for the physical and spiritual needs of the brother and a point of contact for knowing the will of Christ.

Loris Habegger, Elkhart, Indiana (MWR)

The Next Conference

Although I think there is much that could be said to what Vincent Harding has said, one positive aspect is that it pushes us in the direction of more action

rather than more discussion. I think this is something that we should take into consideration in planning for the next world conference.

Henry Enz, Curitiba, Brazil (MWR)

A New Beginning?

The first Mennonite World Conference convened some forty years ago. Slowly the organization developed so that by 1962 at Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, a tentative climax was reached. Mennonites from all over the world met and re-discovered together some characteristics of the Anabaptist heritage.

Although this quest and thought was kept in mind in Amsterdam, the main burden was somewhere else. It is true there was even an increased concern for the Anabaptist past and the biblical basis for our existence as Mennonites. The emphasis on our calling as witnesses, both in word and deed, to our faith was as strong as at previous conferences. However, we found ourselves placed into the world of today more concretely and definitely than ever before. The witness of Vincent Harding during the televised final worship service on Sunday morning made this very clear. The applause which followed was an unusual expression for the Dutch Mennonites who are always reserved and sober. This was an evidence that all the preceding speeches, discussions, and meditations had contributed to our realization that many segments of oppressed humanity are not willing to accept their lot forever. Only the future will reveal how significant the applause really was. It could signify a new beginning for our Mennonite world brotherhood.

*Frits Kuiper
Krommenie, Netherlands*

No, Vincent Harding!

What a pity that the World Conference had to close with a sermon with a lot of wrong conceptions. No, Vincent Harding, you can hang on to your views as long as you wish, you may even get an applause from those who after a week's discussion regarding the Holy Spirit do not sense the difference between love and hate. All you said was plain nonsense, an expression of immaturity which fears that those of goodwill in the Western world will turn away from the people and races which you intend to defend.

B. Verwey, Heemstede, Netherlands (ADW)

Social Concerns

Concerning the conference message I had hoped that the sections on ecumenicity and socio-political justice could have been more prophetic. The Presbyterians in the USA went much farther saying that they would follow Christ even at the risk of national security. We have gone farther in the past. Our World War I

position on CO's for instance, was much more radical.

Stanley Bohn, Newton, Kansas (CM)

The Thrust for Social Action

In our observations the Mennonites have always had growth and vitality as long as they built on the foundation of Jesus Christ as taught by the New Testament and Menno Simons. Whenever these convictions lacked we have had tremendous losses. The evangelical potential in the past has always furnished us the thrust for social action.

A. P. Tocws, Ferguson, Mo. (MWR)

In the Land of Menno

This summer, Mennonites from all over the world returned to the land in which Menno worked. They were a remnant of that group of Anabaptists which Menno saved from extinction by his leadership. But the Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam talked little of revolution. The trials of the last four centuries are not forgotten but few desire to repeat them.

Maynard Shelly, Newton, Kansas (Men.)

The Scandal of Inequality

Persons came together from 36 nations. The fact that they were together was significant—more significant, I think, than anything that was said or could have been said in speeches. The overwhelming imbalance of North American delegates as compared to delegates from emerging nations was significant, too—embarrassingly significant. Clearly Africans for example, would have been just as happy to be there in droves as North Americans were but how could they? Don Jacobs noted the "scandal" (his word) of inequality. Why should it take the entire annual income of an African brother for three years for one round trip ticket to the Mennonite World Conference? Why should an American Mennonite be able to come from a greater distance spending only last year's raise?

Arnold W. Cressman, Scottdale, Pa. (GH)

Pious Nonsense

It is simply pious nonsense to say that the Christian must stand with one foot in this world and one in another. The war in Vietnam and in the Middle-East, starvation in India, the race problem in South Africa and in the USA and the emancipation of the people in Asia and Africa are taking place in a world of which the Mennonites are a part. The responsibility to this world must be without reservation and hundred per cent.

L. Koopmans, Netherlands (ADW)

Strengths and Weaknesses

Can we evaluate clearly the strengths and weaknesses as we look at the World Conference? There were both.

The one danger is that we may see only the weaknesses. The other danger is that we might only dwell on the strengths. Either approach may rob us of what the Holy Spirit is doing.

Any person who went to World Conference with certain fears found such there. Any who went with

hope also had such supported. As in any work or meeting we realize to a great degree what we expect. I feel glad to be a Mennonite and realize anew that in our midst stand spiritual and intellectual giants and that God's Spirit abides with His church to bless.

John M. Drescher, Scottsdale, Pa. (GH)

Dutch News Reporting

ALL MEDIA OF communication—radio, television, and press, took note of the Eighth Mennonite World Conference which convened in the largest public building of Amsterdam (RAI). Some of the Dutch Mennonites felt that their reporting was not always sufficiently objective. This, of course, is hardly ever the case.

Every morning the IKOR radio had a Dutch Mennonite minister present a devotional message dealing with some aspect of the Mennonites or the Conference. Regularly, representatives of the large papers combed the halls for information, picking up lectures on display and interviewing lecturers, members of the presidium or delegates. The Sunday worship appeared on IKOR television.

The daily *Algemeen Handelsblad* (July 31) presented some interviews under the title "The Congress Awakened Mennonites from a World-estranged Goody, Goody Attitude." The core of the article centered around Vincent Harding who was introduced as a "strongly moved leader of Negroes who finds fault with faint-hearted pacifism." It called attention to the sentence from the Conference message stating, "We are under obligation to realize peace in the world." Vincent Harding was quoted challenging the Conference by saying that Mennonites must participate in a positive manner instead of standing by with a guilt feeling.

Irvin B. Horst was quoted as saying, "In these revolutionary times we are inclined to sit tight on our seats. At last some American Mennonites attempt to do things which other Christians already did during the seventeenth century. We do things as though we had an eternity at our disposal." Someone was quoted saying, "The word became theology and discontinued living among us."

The daily *Trouw* (July 31) presented a report of the lecture by Vincent Harding under the title "Christians Must Not Turn Away From Revolutions on Earth." Harding was quoted as saying that "Christian theologians of the West and East must take out time to live for a while among the revolutionaries of our day, the militant Negroes of the U.S.A. or the insurrectionists of Colombia or Mozambique. They must listen to learn what bothers these people and to find out how Christ can become a reality among them. Can we love those whom we do not know?"

The Dutch theological observer, Jan J. van Capelleveen, reporting in *Christianity Today* (August 28) stated that "responsibility in the world was the real theme" of the Conference and that little was said about "their place among fellow brethren." Consequently he found Vincent Harding "the most extreme voice" at the Conference.

A Believing People Today

(Continued from inside back cover)

11. Wilmer A. Cooper, *A New People to Be Gathered to the Lord*. Richmond, Indiana, Friends United Meeting, 1966, p. 14.

12. Lewis Benson, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

14. Wilmer A. Cooper, *A New People to Be Gathered*. p. 10.

15. Tertullian, *De Idolotria*, XIX. Quoted in Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*. Nashville, Abingdon, 1960, p. 73.

16. Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*. Stereotype edition, Philadelphia, Friends Book Store, 1908. Proposition XV section 15 answer to objection number six, page 537.

17. George Fox, *Journal*. p. 357.

Basic Anabaptist Beliefs Or a Consensus Mennoniticus

By Walter Klaassen

AN ANSWER TO this question requires a summary of what can be called a *consensus mennonicus*. I took the intention of the question to be to concentrate on the early period of Anabaptism ending, for the sake of convenience, in 1561, the year of Menno's death.

The persons to be included in my considerations are the following: Conrad Grebel and the circle of the Swiss Brethren, Pilgram Marbeck, Menno Simons, Hans Denck, Hans Hut, and Balthasar Hubmaier. I will not treat these men individually but will indicate special emphases and variations. The following, then, is the consensus as I understood it.

I. THE CONSENSUS MENNONITICUS

Faith

It can, I believe, be said without contradiction that along with Luther, Anabaptists held to the conviction that salvation is through faith alone, that is, through trust in and dependence on God's faithfulness. This is basic and is in no way neutralized or emasculated by the Anabaptist concern for and insistence on ethical living. Hans Denck and Hans Hut attacked most strongly among the Anabaptists Luther's doctrine of *sola fide*. They did not, however, repudiate it. What they did say was that as they heard Luther and his supporters use it, it represented a half-truth, that is to say, it was one-half of a whole truth. The other half was that the Word of God, accepted in faith, had also to be done. While the matter is not as strongly expressed by the rest of our representative figures it is no doubt because their opponents were not Lutherans but either Catholic or Reformed or both.

All Anabaptists, however, stress that the response of faith is the response of a free man. They repudiated both the Catholic notion of original sin with its corollary of the necessity of cleansing baptism immediately after birth, as well as the Lutheran insistence that man's will is bound. Every human being comes into the world a free person, upon whom, when he comes of age, is laid the responsibility for making the choice either for or against God. The children of Christians have no advantage over the children of unbelievers.

Against all others Anabaptists urged that no compulsion either of family, tradition, priest, or civil magistrate could be invoked to coerce a free man to accept a religious claim to which he could not consent. The response of faith must be free or it is not faith but slavery.

The response of faith is, however, not an abstract intellectual assent. To be truly a response of faith it must be in terms of action. "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and do it" (Lk. 11:28). "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21). These words of Jesus and many other passages are quoted tirelessly to make the point. Hans Denck's motto is especially appropriate here: "No one can truly know Christ unless he follow him with his life" ("*Niemand mag [Christum] wahrlich erkennen, es sei denn, dass er ihm nachfolge mit dem Leben.*") The way of Christ is the way of love, and love is the final motive for all action. A major implication of this was the rejection by all of participation in war. The only exception here was Hubmaier, and even he adopted a position strongly critical of prevailing views.

God's grace, therefore, is not only justifying grace. That is only one side of the coin. The other side indivisibly bound to it is that God's grace is also sanctifying grace, enabling man to do God's will. Justifying and sanctifying grace are equally emphasized; knowing and doing are indivisible elements of one transaction and one experience. Both proceed together from God's grace.

It is important at this point to emphasize again the importance of the freedom of man. If justifying grace fills the scene leaving no room for sanctifying grace, since man's will is bound, then the charge of submission to a new law is indeed justified. But that is an apposition of faith and works which the Scriptures do not justify. If, on the other hand, it is insisted that man's will is free (see Hubmaier, Denck, Luther, Erasmus on the freedom of the will) and that man freely accepts the discipline of following Christ, then works become the expression of love and obedience and the charge of legalism is not admissible, as appropriate

analogies from human experience will show.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit achieved great richness in Anabaptist theology. The Spirit's function is not simply to enlighten man's darkened mind to understand and accept God's grace in Christ, but his obvious and continuing function is to be seen in his guidance of the disciple community as it discerns the nature of the world in which it lives and as it seeks to do God's will in that world. The reality and presence of the living Spirit was accepted by all the Anabaptists. He was their daily guide and helper. The constant use of Spirit language following the example of the book of Acts has subjected all Anabaptists to the derogatory charge of *Schwärmerei*.

The Authority of Scripture

Anabaptists shared with the Reformers the belief that the Bible was the only reliable authority in matters of faith. However, we find some disagreement as to the nature of that authority. Basic to all was the admission that without the Bible we should know nothing about God's revelation in Jesus Christ. This is much like the position of Luther. In that sense it was indispensable to the Christian even for Hans Denck who took the most critical position of all on this question.

Certainly none of them viewed the Bible in a modern "fundamentalist" sense. They were critical in their treatment of it since they recognized its historical character. It could not be viewed as having throughout the same authority. Whatever did not agree with the life and doctrine of Christ could not be regarded as God's word. This was the broad principle by which the Bible had authority; because in it we have the life and teaching of Christ who is the Lord and the example of his followers. The Bible was viewed by them therefore not in the sense that the book in and of itself from cover to cover is the word of God without distinction. It is the word of God because through it God makes known to man his will and intention as revealed in Jesus. Denck insisted that Scripture was not the revelation itself but rather a witness to the revelation which is Christ. Although the others do not say it in that fashion Denck's formulation may be said to fairly represent the Anabaptist position.

Their concern for scriptural authority was parallel to their concern for obedience. They were particular about its details because they were concerned to be faithful. In a world from which they received no moral support; among fellow Christians from which they could expect no loving sympathy but rather prison, rack and stake, it does not seem strange that they would seek guidance to whatever detail was available in order to lose their way. It was therefore not a desire for security in literalism that drove them to regard the very words of Jesus as binding upon the disciple, but the conviction that the disciple's way in the world is

the way of the imitation of Christ and that man's salvation cannot be separated from obedience even as the exaltation of Christ was a consequence of his obedience.

The Church and the Ordinances

That the visible church was at the center of God's intention was never seriously doubted by Anabaptists. Again we have some variations of emphasis, but even Hans Denck in his writings concerned himself with it (*Von der Wahren Liebe*). It was of the greatest consequence to Marbeck and Menno. Indeed, the origin of Anabaptism was the formation of a church. The church is the people of God through whose witness and suffering God continues to call men to himself. It is the company of those whose lives have been brought under the Lordship of Christ and who express that allegiance by living together in love and forgiveness and in responsibility for each other's temporal and eternal welfare.

Three aspects of the church require short discussion here.

Baptism is a witness that a person has freely chosen to enter upon a life of discipleship under the lordship of Jesus Christ. It is the deliberate acceptance of the cross of suffering which is the lot of every genuine disciple, a point made with particular strength by Hans Hut. In addition to its character as a pledge of allegiance to Christ it involves also a commitment to the brotherhood in that one promises to submit to and exercise discipline. It constitutes the acceptance of the duty of binding and loosing.

The Lord's supper is also a witness which points to two realities, the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus which is the basis of the community and ground of its witness and service in the world, and the unity of the fellowship and the commitment of the members to each other. It continually reminds us of the ground of our faith and the reality of our oneness in Christ, writes Hans Denck.

While a magic or semi-magic sacramentalism is clearly rejected in the Anabaptist view of baptism and Supper, it is vigorously insisted that they are indispensable to the church. Marbeck especially recognizes the necessity of these objective allegories and that they cannot be separated from the reality toward which they point because of the finiteness of man. That is why Jesus commanded us to observe them. Ultimately it is the command of Christ which provides the mandate for their observance.

Binding and loosing is in modern parlance normally referred to as church discipline. This is the objective expression of the responsibility which members assume for one another at baptism. It includes the giving and receiving of admonition in matters of Christian commitment, as well as putting at the disposal of any brother in need one's material goods. It was a way of

taking seriously the reality of sin within the community and dealing with it constructively. The method was the "rule of Christ" in Matthew 18:15-20. In this way the visibility of the church as the company of those who follow Jesus in act as well as in word was assured and maintained.

Church and State

Since the civil power is not Christian it cannot as such have any voice in matters that pertain solely to the community of disciples. It can neither dictate what men must believe nor has it the jurisdiction to penalize anyone in matters of faith. The God-given function of the state is to maintain order among men who have not acknowledged Jesus as Lord.

Anabaptists therefore rejected the old established unity of church and civil power in the *corpus christi-anum*. They insisted that the Kingdom of God was the Christian's primary concern and that one's attitude and responsibility to the state be formed by that primary loyalty. They therefore also insisted on religious freedom since the state has no competence in matters of faith. Finally, with the exception of Hubmaier, they all rejected the support and protection of the state. The consequence of this was that the Anabaptist church became in truth a suffering church.

II. WAS THIS CONSENSUS PRESENT BEFORE 1525?

This then is my summary of the *consensus anabaptisticus*, the exceptions having been duly noted. The question now is, was this consensus present before the baptism of 1525, that is, before the actual emergence of the Anabaptist community? My answer is two-fold.

1. First of all there appears to me to be no question that at least certain elements of this consensus were already on the reformation scene before we meet the people who were later called Anabaptists. Luther's principles of *sola fide* and *sola scriptura* were vigorously attacked by Thomas Müntzer and others, and in terms that we meet with later in Anabaptism. It is also a matter of record that Müntzer and other radicals criticized the practice of infant baptism and did so on the ground of its incompatibility with the emphasis on faith.

There appears to me to be no doubt about Müntzer's direct influence on Hans Hut, a legacy that was re-worked especially in the Hutterite tradition.

Further there is no doubt about the influence of Müntzer on Conrad Grebel and others in his circle. Only a careless or conditioned reading of Grebel's letter to Müntzer of September, 1524, could come to a contrary conclusion. The letter clearly indicates that they had read some of his basic works, especially the one on faith. We also learn that they had some detailed knowledge of what he was saying and doing.

Despite the fact that they criticize him for some points they refer to him glowingly as one from whom they have learned much and from whom they expected to learn more. In spite of disagreement on several points they referred to Müntzer along with Carlstadt as the clearest proclaimer of the purest word of God and that they were doing more than all other preachers of all nations in the cause of truth. They were particularly impressed by his views on faith and baptism and were anxious to discuss these and other matters with him.

The extent of the influence of Müntzer and other radical currents on Grebel, Menno, and others is impossible to assess, especially when we know that influence on one point may well be crucial by implication for other points. This much one can safely say: The radicals influenced certain areas of the later *consensus anabaptisticus*, but they did not provide the total consensus. Grebel's criticisms of Müntzer demonstrate this.

2. More definitely it can be asserted that a *consensus anabaptisticus* existed in Zürich in the Grebel circle before January, 1525, and that this consensus can be found in the letters written by Grebel and his friends to Müntzer already referred to. All the main elements of the consensus as earlier described appear in those letters. We read there about the freedom that is necessary in the matters of faith, both for acceptance as well as for rejection of the gospel. We are told that faith must be expressed in loving deeds or it is not faith. The Bible is appealed to as authority and a deep concern for obedience is characteristic of the whole document. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and binding and loosing are clearly set forth in their significance and interrelationship. Especially clear is the emphasis on the Supper as a witness to the covenanted unity of the Christian community. And finally the rejection of the claim that the civil magistrate has no competence as a magistrate in matters of faith also emerges clearly and with it the renunciation of state support for the church. The primacy of the Kingdom of God is asserted throughout directly and indirectly.

That the radical protest of the Anabaptists was not merely a question of baptism should be abundantly clear from the main part of this article. Baptism represented one aspect of a rather basic reorientation of the assumptions underlying Christian life and witness. The rejection of the sacral church and the sacral state and the insistence on man's freedom and dignity within a Christian framework had to bring forth a consensus similar to that presented here. The baptism of January 21, 1525, was therefore not the actualization of an isolated idea, the implications of which were then drawn out subsequently. It was rather the logical first step of an already comprehensively conceived radical approach to an understanding of the church and its place in the world. The letter of Müntzer, as the late Fritz Blanke put it, was the blueprint for a free church.

A Consensus Mennoniticus Before 1525

By H. W. Meihuizen

JÖRG BLAUROCK WAS able to ask Conrad Grebel to baptize him with the "right Christian Baptism" because he sensed that those gathered with him in the house of Felix Manz' mother had a common conviction. This conviction consisted of more, however, than a certain view of baptism. A spiritual orientation must have existed among the people of which baptism was a consequence. This could be called a *consensus mennonicus*. Of course we have little or no precise information about it, but we can discover its characteristic features if we look at it in its context.

The question of the scriptural basis for infant baptism entered a critical stage during the middle of March, 1524, because of Wilhelm Reublin and Johannes Brötli. Under the influence of Reublin, two fathers in Wytikon refused to have their newly born children baptized; and through the influence of Brötli, three fathers in Zollikon also refused. By August 11 the Zürich City Council took action against them and Reublin was put in jail.¹

We can follow the development almost step by step from that moment. The refusal to baptize children must have made a deep impression on the circle of Manz and Grebel. They had the desire to be simply obedient, unproblematically, to the precepts of the New Testament. We know that Brötli belonged to this circle in September 1524. We hear about Reublin for the first time at the disputation concerning baptism on January 17, 1525; but perhaps he was still a prisoner in September (even though the Council wanted to release him after the Diet of Baden, August 21).²

In May, 1524, Balthasar Hubmaier published his eighteen theses which had served as a basis for a discussion between him and his colleagues at Waldshut in April, 1524. It is possible that the remarkable form of the eighth thesis was influenced by the events in March. It reads: "Just as each Christian believes and is baptized for himself, so must each Christian, individually, on the basis of the Holy Scripture, also

watch and judge as to whether he is fed and refreshed by his pastor in the right manner."³

It is general knowledge that on October 28, 1523, on the third day of the disputation about the mass and images, Zwingli had preached about the Christian pastor. This sermon was published March 20, 1524,⁴ with the intention of giving readers an idea of the character a minister should have if they intended to entrust themselves to his care. However, before this sermon could have been seen by those not present at the disputation, Conrad Grebel, disappointed about the decisions of this disputation expressed rather strong criticism to his brother-in-law Vadian on December 18, 1523: "Whoever still thinks, believes or says that Zwingli acts in harmony with his office of pastor, that person thinks, believes and speaks without conscience."⁵

The word "pastor" in Hubmaier's theses presumably alludes to Zwingli's sermon. Hubmaier had spoken during that dispute instead of Grebel, who said that he had been unable to prepare himself adequately, so Hubmaier undoubtedly heard the sermon.⁶ It is even conceivable that in the letter to Münster, in which the word pastor occurs four times, traces can be found of Zwingli's sermon. They write specifically in this letter that they have learned to know the great and harmful error of the pastors, including their own, and that they are now despicable in the eyes of those learned pastors who work against or at least delay the consistent carrying through of the Reformation principle, *sola scriptura*.⁷

On June 29, 1524, in Zürich, Ludwig Haetzer published his translation of Bugenhagen's exposition of the Pauline epistles. He added a notation in the margin beside the discussion of Ephesians 5:22-24, where Bugenhagen, observing that the devil always tries to oppose what God has ordained, laments, "Many things go to ruin because nowhere is there a spiritual man who can come with divine council to the aid of the slow ones." Haetzer adds this word: "Just see if this is not exactly the case with baptism."⁸

Haetzer did not come to the point of having himself baptized, nevertheless, in him too the desire did not exist for someone, with spiritual authority who would urge on the slow ones. Perhaps this was the very reason why they wrote to Thomas Müntzer on September 5, 1524. Of course this letter strongly criticizes several aspects of the method which the "watcher of souls from Allstedt," as Müntzer called himself, thought he was permitted to apply, but nevertheless they say they consider Müntzer next to Karlstadt as one of the purest proclaimers of the Gospel. This letter gives us a glimpse into the convictions which were cultivated in the Zürich circle, including that of baptism. They write: "Concerning the view of baptism, we are well pleased. We would like to hear more from you concerning this." They then explain their own conviction that infant baptism is a senseless, blasphemous abomination. They express the hope that Müntzer or Karlstadt will write conclusively against infant baptism, but if that does not happen, then Grebel will try his luck.⁹

It seems to me that we can conclude that they hoped to find in one of these two men (they had also written to Karlstadt) such a man with spiritual authority who would come to the aid of the slow ones. They say that they have prayed earnestly with constant sighing to God to lead them out of the destruction of everything godly and out of human abominations!¹⁰

This is the point: They not only want the new biblical teaching, they also desire the new biblical church order as well. "New" here only means "pure"! What is striking in their view of baptism is the definition, as a baptism of self-judgment and self-examination; the meaning, as the washing away of sins; and the consequence of this, that one has to keep on dying to his sins and shall walk in a new life according to a new spiritual orientation.¹¹

This is undoubtedly an echo of Müntzer's *Protestation odder Empietung*. In this work Müntzer had written: "There is in all the writings of the church fathers never a single thought said or proved as to what true baptism is. The meaning of right baptism is not understood. Therefore the way into Christendom became a bestial monkeyshow. As they made immature children into Christians, the Christians become children."¹² But the Zürich brethren go one step further, challenging him with: "Just because you know all this ten times better than we, we hope that you will not act against God's eternal word, wisdom and command, which is that one my baptize believers only."¹³

One can ask the question why they did not immediately begin performing believers baptism in September. It seems to me that the letter plainly reveals the answer: "We have learned to see that one may not baptize a mature man without the rule of Christ concerning binding and loosing" (Matthew 18:15-20).¹⁴ The same thing also happened with the Lord's supper. One of the objections they raise, more against Zwingli

than against Müntzer, is that "whenever the Lord's supper is commemorated, it is not allowed to partake of the bread and wine without the rule of Matthew 18, because otherwise it is not the supper of the Lord, for then true and false brethren would eat together!"¹⁵

In September, 1524, they did not yet desire that a separate pure church should be established apart from the already existing one. They still hoped to be able to persuade the evangelical preachers to reform their own churches according to the apostolic example. They felt themselves justified to draw up the blueprint of such a church without spot or wrinkle, but not to found it. And when they were disappointed in their "pastors," they placed their hope in Müntzer, challenging him: "Witness with the word and build a Christian church with the help of Christ and his rule." When they wrote this they thought Müntzer was still in Allstedt.¹⁶ Shortly thereafter Karlstadt's brother-in-law, Gerhard Westerbürg, came to Zürich, soon followed by Karlstadt himself. Westerbürg tried to get Karlstadt's pamphlets on the Lord's supper printed.

On the 14th of October, Grebel wrote to Vadian that he and his supporters had received eight booklets by Karlstadt through the nuncio, Westerbürg, who stayed with them six days.¹⁷ One of those booklets was to have treated infant baptism, but it was not printed on the advice of Oecolampadius.

Oecolampadius had not yet read it when he wrote to Zwingli on November 21 that, on the basis of other utterances, he understood that Karlstadt wanted to see infant baptism done away with entirely.¹⁸ He expressed his views in *Auslegung dieser Worte Christi; Das ist Mein Leib, welcher für Euch gegeben wirdt* (This is my body which is given for you). Even though it was not printed before November, the group around Manz could have learned with approval these words from the manuscript: "We must learn from Paul that we are not allowed to act, either with baptism or with communion, differently than God himself has commanded."¹⁹ That was of course just what they had been saying! We know that Manz brought the booklets to Zürich; Zwingli says they even carried them on their shoulders and filled the city and canton with them.²⁰ They probably believed to have found in Karlstadt the spiritual man with authority who could give divine council to the slow ones.

Among the pamphlets of Karlstadt which were printed in Basel was one titled *Ob man gemach faren und des Ergernüssen der Schwachen verschonen sol in Sachen, so Gottes Willen angehen* (Whether one should be easy-going and excuse the offenses of the weak in matters which concern God's will). In this pamphlet Karlstadt demands the right — for all people, every church and even for every individual — to determine for himself when and how the transition should be made to introduce the practices which are really in accord with God's will. Karlstadt says that

there is not a single fellowship, nor even a family, that may be considered a dead body unable to either hear or see or do something on its own initiative.²¹

A justification was here offered to the circle of Castelberg, Manz and Grebel to act as a community of the chosen children of God. Haetzer had already said in his tract about the images, which he had likely meant as a contribution for the October disputation about the mass and images, "We are the chosen people of God if we believe in Christ."²² That feeling must have influenced their thought of introducing baptism and the Lord's supper. At this point they still did not consider themselves as a special separated people, but they were on their way to become just that.

Haetzer contacted Zwingli twice during the so-called Tuesday discussions in November. If what Zwingli says in his *Von dem Touff, vom Widertouff und Kindertouff* (Concerning Baptism, Anabaptism and Infant Baptism), published May 27, 1525, is true, that during both discussions his opponents became enflamed in anger and hate,²³ then it seems possible that they arrived at this state because they were disappointed with the spiritual man with authority (Zwingli). In their view it was not the worst thing that they were defeated in the debate (so thought the reformer, at least), but that Zwingli appeared to be so obstinately unwilling, so hesitant, to obey the plain biblical commands.²⁴

We may marvel that Manz in the beginning of December expressed himself so mildly in his *Protestation und Schutzschrift* (Protestation and Apology) toward the Council of Zürich. He said: "Some of your pastors have spoken many times and in many places in agreement with us that one, as is proper, must let only the Scripture speak, but this had never actually been done up to now. We have examples (in the Scripture) that God severely punishes those who violate external commands; for example, the two sons of Aaron."²⁵ This is another element behind the baptism question, also a part of the consensus: They count on the approaching judgment of God. The discovery of the true intentions of the Gospel was the sign for them for making definite changes and some of these would pertain to church practices. Therefore they wanted to make haste.

On December 15, 1524, Grebel again confides in Vadian: "You shall see that something is going to happen. . . . I do not believe that persecution can fail to come. . . . May God grant us mercy enabling us to pray that he strengthen the workers sent for his harvest! . . . Greet my sister and all disciples and beginners in God's word and life. If they are willing, have them pray for us in these dangerous times. God knows why they are dangerous."²⁶ Grebel must have abandoned any hope that the pastors of the Zwinglian communities might ever be convinced of the truth about the meaning of baptism. We do not know many facts about the discussion held on Tuesday, January 10, ex-

cept that a public discussion was to take place on January 17. Was the dispute on January 10 a last attempt of the Swiss Brethren to win Zwingli?

A short time before the decision on Thursday, January 12, Casper Grossmann preached that infant baptism must be right. During the service in the Spittal church, Jacob Hottinger interrupted him, but behaved himself so decently that the Council saw no reason to intervene.²⁷ Did Hottinger already have the feeling that his group could no longer fellowship with those who taught and lived contrary to God's intentions? This has been suggested by Karlstadt in his *Von den zweyen höchsten Gebotten der Lieb, Gottes und des Nechsten* (On the two highest commandments of love, toward God and the neighbor). Paul had prohibited such a fellowship (2 Corinthians 6:14) and John forbade receiving such people into one's home and even greeting them in the street (2 John 10).²⁸

In passing, I should like to point out that Zwingli reproached them in *Welche Ursach gebind ze usfuren*²⁹ for having applied the text of John. Nevertheless, although the Swiss Brethren had not yet progressed to that point, they were driven to it. We know that at the discussion of January 17, they were treated as men convicted without a trial.³⁰ It is true that the next day the council only ordered that unbaptized children had to be baptized within eight days, and that the fathers who refused to have their children baptized were threatened with banishment from the town and district of Zürich. However, on Saturday, January 21, a more far-reaching mandate followed stating that the separate "schools" (referring to the meetings of Castelberg, Manz and Grebel) had to be suspended. To the two inhabitants of Zürich, Manz and Grebel, who were considered to be the leaders, further discussion and agitation were forbidden. Reublin, Brötli, Haetzer and Castelberg had to leave town within eight days.³¹

Why were the measures against the leaders postponed so long? Did something happen in the meantime about which further information is unavailable? Four months later, when Zwingli looked back on these most crucial days, in the introduction to his book on baptism, he wrote that all "pastors" were amazed that the radicals were so hot-tempered. However, they finally realized that when infant baptism would be done away with, the brethren would feel free to go ahead and gather their separate church by means of rebaptism.³²

It seems to me that Zwingli was mistaken. The Swiss Brethren did not yet want a separate congregation. They were not even forced to form one as the result of the mandate of January 21. What happened on the evening of the first believers baptism is the formation of a shock-troop unit of the radical reformation which even then intended to convert the existing churches. Concerning Grebel, we know that immediately after baptism he left for Schaffhausen and tried to convince Sebastian

Hofmeister. He seems to have succeeded in this purpose to some degree with Reublin and Brötli.³³

We know more about nearby Zollikon. On January 29, Jörg Blaurock disturbed the service. On March 12, Jörg Schad baptized in the church itself. However, not until June 4 did Hans Hottinger appeal to the crowd to beware of that false prophet, Niklaus Billeter, and to depart from that corrupt place.³⁴ All this gives the impression that they wanted only to reform the existing churches into radically obedient Anabaptist congregations. Thus they did not consider it necessary to organize secret congregations before they knew that it was impossible to reform the existing churches. They succeeded in Teufen (Appenzell) and in Waldshut, but their work was soon undone.³⁵

We know precisely what happened on that memorable evening of the first believers baptism: "It occurred that they were together until fear assailed them and came over them, yes, their hearts were burdened. Then they began to bend their knees before Almighty God in heaven and called upon him as an examiner of their hearts. They petitioned him to give them strength to accomplish his divine will and that he would be merciful to them, for flesh and blood had not at all moved them since they knew very well what they would have to suffer and bear for this.

"After the prayer, Jörg of the House of Jacob stood up and asked Conrad Grebel to baptize him for the Lord's sake with the true Christian baptism on the basis of his faith and knowledge [of God's will]. And as he kneeled down with that question and desire, Conrad baptized him because there was no ordained minister to perform this act. After this had happened, the others wanted Jörg to baptize them in the same way, which he did on their request. In this manner they dedicated themselves to the Lord in a deep devotion, confirmed each other in the service of the gospel, and started to teach the faith and [instruct the people] to keep God's commandments. With that, the separation from the world and its evil works began."³⁶

This report seems to be very clear, yet certain questions arise. For example, why does the chronicler tell us so emphatically that there was no ordained minister at that time to baptize? He seems to feel an excuse is in place that the layman Grebel (who was not even the host because that was Felix Manz) was chosen by Blaurock to perform the first true Christian baptism. It is almost sure that Brötli and Reublin were present at this meeting. Brötli was "only" an assistant minister in Zollikon, but why did they not want to accept Reublin who was appointed by the Wytikon church as an ordained minister? That question becomes more urgent because the others did not address themselves to Grebel (as Blaurock did) to receive the symbol from his hands. Just why was Blaurock asked to perform the act of baptism on the others?

Just before describing these events, the chronicler

tells us that the Swiss Brethren learned from the divine word and the preaching of it that one ought to receive true Christian baptism as the covenant of a good conscience with God, on the confession of a faith that had been taught, confessed and activated through love. Neither in this passage nor in the one about the act of baptism is there any implication that the church had now been founded. In the introduction to this whole section of the *Geschichtsbuch* there is mentioned only a people of God which is set apart from all other peoples.³⁷ We can find an echo of this in the final sentence of the report of these events which took place in the house of Felix Manz' mother.

Thus it also becomes clear why they confirmed each other in the service of the gospel: namely, to preach, to baptize and to distribute bread and wine. The people that had to be gathered for God in these dangerous times needed no further organization, because God (and the mention of the fear that overcame them points to this) had now invited men for the last time. When Christ returned, and they expected that shortly, he would have to find a people with whom he could have communion (the Lord's supper), a baptized people, ready to die to their sins and to begin a new life with a new spiritual orientation and outlook. This is why the rule of binding and loosing was necessary. The new people had to be without spot or wrinkle. Perhaps this is the reason why Blaurock chose Grebel, because the latter had shown that he deplored the sins of his youth, and perhaps Jörg wanted, by asking Grebel to baptize him, to declare openly that he fully believed in his conversion. Perhaps it is also because of this that the chronicler tells us that Grebel was "of noble birth."³⁸

The rule of Matthew 18 did not need to be practiced that evening. They knew each other. But it should be practiced in the existing church whenever a baptism was performed or the Lord's supper was served. Later it would be applied in the congregation. However, the chronicler does not use that very word until he has related that some were made martyrs. This can relate to what we already considered in connection with the activities of the following months. Only after the attempt to win the Zwinglian churches had failed, could the congregation of believers come into existence.

Now we know something about the *consensus mennonicus*. It manifested itself in the question of believers baptism, but it had grown in the two years before the first baptism took place. Its basis was the acknowledgment that God demanded an unconditional obedience to his word. The *consensus mennonicus* was characterized by an effort to introduce the correct forms of baptism and the Lord's supper. It found its realization in that brotherhood which calls upon the name of the Lord in contrition of heart, knowing that the Lord's judgment is at hand.

FOOTNOTES

1. L. von Muralt and W. Schmid, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer in der Schweiz*, Vol. I, (Zuerich, 1952), pp. 10, 11. Hereafter referred to as *Z.T.A.*
2. *Z.T.A.*, p. 11.
3. Balthasar Hubmaier, *Schriften* ed. by Gerhard von Westin and T. Bergsten, (Gnetersloh, 1962), pp. 69 and 73.
4. Huldreich Zwingli, *Saemliche Werke*, ed. by E. Egli, G. Finsler, and W. Koehler, Vol. III (Leipzig, 1914), pp. 1-68.
5. *Z.T.A.*, p. 8.
6. H. S. Bender, *Conrad Grebel, Founder of the Swiss Brethren* (Goshen, 1950), p. 101.
7. *Z.T.A.*, p. 14, line 9; p. 16, l. 30; p. 20, ll. 15 and 24.
8. Bugenhagen, *Ain kurtze wolgegruendte Auslegung ueber die zehen nachgeenden Episteln S. Pauli, verteutscht durch Ludwig Haetzer*, w.pl. 1524, p. Dijro.
9. *Z.T.A.*, p. 14, l. 18f.; p. 16, l. 20f.; p. 17, l. 35f.; p. 19, l. 12, 35; p. 18, l. 29-32
10. *Z.T.A.*, p. 14, l. 10-12.
11. *Z.T.A.*, p. 13, l. 32f.; p. 18, l. 11.
12. Thomas Muentzer, *Protestation oder Empietzung*, in O. H. Brandt, *Thomas Muentzer, sein Leben und seine Schriften* (Jena w.y., 1933), pp. 134-136.
13. *Z.T.A.*, p. 18, l. 26-29.
14. *Z.T.A.*, p. 17, l. 36f.
15. *Z.T.A.*, p. 15, l. 39-42.
16. *Z.T.A.*, p. 17, l. 14-16.
17. *Z.T.A.*, p. 22, l. 3f.; p. 21, l. 32f.
18. C. F. Jaeger, *Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt* (Stuttgart, 1856), p. 452; H. Barge, *Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt*, II. Teil (Leipzig, 1905), p. 205.

19. Barge, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
20. Zwingli, *Saemliche Werke*, Band IV, p. 461.
21. *Karlstadt's Schriften aus den Jahren 1523-25*, Ed. by E. Hertzsch, Teil I, Halle (Saale) 1956, p. 80f.
22. Ludwig Haetzer, *Ain Urtayl Gottes unters Eegemahels*, w.p., 1523, p. Cijro.
23. Zwingli, *Hauptschriften*, bearb. R. Pfister, Zuerich w.y., p. 6, Band II.
24. Bender, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
25. *Z.T.A.*, pp. 23f. and 27.
26. *Z.T.A.*, p. 30f.
27. *Z.T.A.*, p. 33.
28. *Karlstadt's Schriften*, I, p. 66.
29. Zwingli, *Hauptschriften*, Band 7, p. 160.
30. F. Blanke, *Brueder in Christo*, Zurich, 1955, p. 21.
31. *Z.T.A.*, p. 35f.
32. Zwingli, *Hauptschriften*, Band 11, p. 6.
33. *Z.T.A.*, p. 45.
34. Blanke, *op. cit.*, p. 33f., 61, 75.
35. J. H. Yoder, *Taufertum und Reformation in der Schweiz*, I. *Die Gespraechen zwischen Täufern und Reformatoren, 1523-1530*, Karlsruhe, 1962, p. 95; T. Bergsten, *Balthasar Hubmaier, seine Stellung zu Reformation und Taufertum*, Kassel, 1961, pp. 302-5.
36. J. Beck, *Die Geschichtsbuecher der Wiedertaeufer in Oesterreich-Ungarn*, Wien, 1883, p. 19; A. J. F. Zieglschmid, *Die aelteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brueder*, N. York, 1913, p. 47; A. J. F. Zieglschmid, *Das Klein-Geschichtsbuch der Hutterischen Brueder*, N. York, 1947, p. 5.
37. Beck, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 15, 17, Zieglschmid, *Aelteste Chronik*, p. 45; Zieglschmid, *Klein-Geschichtsbuch*, p. 4.
38. Beck, *op. cit.*, p. 17; Zieglschmid, *op. cit.*, p. 45; Zieglschmid, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

A Believers' Church Conference

By Maynard Shelly

New Term in the Lexicon

Ecumenics in a new style surfaced this summer on the campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Ky., where a quiet conference of historians, theologians and pastors opened a dialogue that could become a new force for church renewal. Though this is a tentative judgment which only time can test, one thing is sure: The conference introduced a new term into the already wordy language of ecumenical discussions: "the believers' church."

Those who came to Louisville the last week in June accepted the phrase without question. Everyone wanted a definition and many tried to offer it. All left without even a semiofficial definition, though one may be in the making. Nevertheless the 150 leaders and teachers of 12 denominations (including Baptists of several varieties, Mennonites, Brethren, Friends, members of the Church of Christ and the Church of God) knew that it stood for all the good things they had always felt about the church, what they wanted their churches to be. In their closing statement, finding themselves "heirs of various free church traditions," they professed "to have discovered in history and in our present fellowship a common scripturally based heritage, which is relevant for contemporary life and which is developing in churches of other traditions."

Reluctant 'Radicals'

This Conference on the Concept of the Believers Church commemorated the 500th anniversary of the *Unitas Fratrum* (1467, according to one school of chroniclers) and the 450th of the Protestant Reformation (1517). Hus and Luther received their due for setting in motion the movement off which spun the radical reformation.

Whatever else the believers' church may be, its history is one of radicalism. But while the Louisville conferees basked in the warm glow of those old radicals of the Reformation—the Anabaptists and their spiritual descendants: the Quakers, the radical Puritans, the restitutionist Campbellites and others—they wavered when faced with today's radicals and the possibility of becoming new radicals themselves.

George H. Williams, Harvard University professor of divinity and writer of one of the conference's 13 major study papers, popularized and defended the "radical" label:

Though Anabaptists, spiritualists and evangelical rationalists differed among themselves as to what constituted the root of faith and the ultimate source of divine authority—the New Testament, the Spirit, reason—all three . . . agreed in cutting back to the

root and freeing church and creed from what they regarded as a suffocating growth of ecclesiastical tradition and magisterial prerogative. Precisely this makes theirs a radical reformation.

Cut back to its own roots, the believers' church may have eight laterals (or one taproot and seven laterals) in its tradition. Said the conference's only resolution:

By study and comparison we have noted that this heritage includes the following acknowledgements: the Lordship of Christ, the authority of the Word, church membership regenerated by the Spirit, the covenant of believers, a need for perpetual restitution of the church, the necessity for separation from the world, proclamation and service to the world, and a special conception of Christian unity.

Voluntarism: Unconfined

Out of these roots grow some visible fruits. One is voluntarism. "Membership in the believers' church is voluntary and witting," said Franklin H. Littell of Iowa Wesleyan College in the opening address. "Believers' baptism became the sign of the believers' church. There is no disagreement on the point that church membership is deliberate and voluntary."

Voluntarism, of course, may also be claimed by churches other than those that practice believers' (or adult) baptism. Certainly those that combine confirmation with infant baptism can refer to voluntarism as a characteristic of membership.

Thus the believers' church is a spirit that moves whithersoever it will; it is not an heirloom possessed by any one denomination or the genetic descendant of any of the believers' church traditions. It has always taken its stand against church establishment, whether by law as in several European nations to this day or de facto as in many communities in the United States. But time and place may erode the protest. One delegate cited as parable a Georgia town in which a large Baptist church might well have all the marks of an established church, a small Eastern Orthodox church those of a believers' church.

Still, Establishment?

Certainly the influence of the believers' church in the United States has been strong, perhaps more so than in other countries. Thus the ideas claimed by the believers' church may often seem part of the American heritage.

Kenneth Scott Latourette, Yale University professor emeritus of missions, told the group how it happened. Church membership in colonial America was numerically small—about 5 percent of the population—even though a majority of the settlers were Protestant in background, stemming from state churches in Europe. But the established churches never really got established. The religious vacuum was "progressively filled chiefly

by believers' churches." The great religious awakenings of the 19th and 20th centuries swept many into the believers' churches. "As a result, the overwhelming majority of membership of believers' churches in the entire world is now in the United States."

Missionary fervor, also a mark of the believers' church, has spilled over into other church groups. "It is no accident," said Littell, "that today three-fourths of the Protestant missionary personnel and support come from churches of the free church line. And if we include the works of Lutherans under pietist influence and of Anglicans affected by the evangelical awakening, the percentage is jumped even higher."

Time for Ecumenism?

But the believers' churches are debtors as well as creditors. Latourette pointed out that they benefited heavily in the religious awakenings from the zeal of other traditions. "We need to remind ourselves, however," he said, "that the large majority of the outstanding professional evangelists through which the Protestant gains were achieved were not in believers' churches." He listed Lyman Beecher, Charles G. Finney, Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday. "Only the latest of that notable succession, Billy Graham, is a member of a believer's church," he said.

With apparently general acceptance of the claimed heritage of the believers' church, is it time to close up shop? Responding to the Latourette paper was Pope A. Duncan of South Georgia College:

The need for ecumenical involvement on the part of the believers' churches is most certainly clearly implied. (Most of the denominations represented at the conference are not in the conciliar stream of the ecumenical flood.) Does our tradition have a unique contribution? No doubt, we did have. But have we not made our witness in a way that is no longer unique? If so, we are not to be sad or discouraged by the fact, but to be glad. If by losing our life we can find it in a larger context, then we're certainly on good biblical ground. We should rejoice in the fact that much that we stood for when it was not popular to stand for is increasingly the common possession of Christendom.

Duncan's concern was supported by a major presentation from Dale Moody, professor of theology at the host school, who found that the dividedness of the church is its major apostasy and that unity should be set at its first need:

Brethren groups and believers' churches have suffered much from isolation from one another and lack of contact with other Christians. Historical circumstances help to understand why this is the case, but the time has come for more contact between separated brethren, even our brethren who today may seem far away.

A 'Third Force'?

"Not so fast" was the advice from John Howard Yoder, professor of theology at the Associated Mennonite Biblical seminaries:

Is it appropriate to discuss the believers' church vision when society has . . . accepted certain of the believers' church criticisms of religious establishment and of the givenness of the given church? But since the believers' church was not seeking in the first place to mold a society after its values, the fact that Anglo-Saxon society has been somewhat molded is not really to the point as to whether the believers' church concept of mission continues to be valid.

Yoder found the believers' church offering a third alternative to the two most common views of the church and the world—the Puritan and the individualist, sometimes called the pietist. The Puritans (both of yesterday and today) hope to reform society by bringing the church's influence to bear on the power structures of society. The individualists, while critical of social structures, internalize their efforts. But the believers' church builds its own community. Continued Yoder:

The believers' church stands not merely between the other two, but over against them. With the individualists, it castigates the coldness and formalism of the official Puritan churchdom. But it corrects that formalism not by seeking to have no forms at all, nor by taking refuge in para-churchly forms, but rather by developing those forms that are according to Scripture. . . . With Puritanism, the believers' church rejects the individualistic and elite self-consciousness of the individualists, but the social form which it proposes . . . is not the undifferentiated but baptized mass . . . but covenanted fellowship with others who have pledged themselves to following the same Lord. . . .

That God is gracious to me is the good news that Zinzendorf, Wesley, Kierkegaard and today both Rudolf Bultmann and Billy Graham in their different ways have derived from Luther and have labored to keep unclouded by any effort to derive from it or base it upon a social program or other work of man.

The distinctness of the believers' church is prerequisite to the meaningfulness of the gospel message. . . . The need is not, as some current popularizers would have it, for most Christians to get out of the church into the world. They've been in the world all the time. The trouble is that they have been *of* the world too. The need is for what they do in the world to be different because they are Christians: to be a reflection not merely of their restored self-confidence, nor of their power to set the course of society, but of the special novelty of the covenant of grace.

In the Negro Churches

J. Lawrence Burkholder, professor of pastoral theology at Harvard Divinity School, found the early civil

rights movement offering a paradigm of this kind of believers' church that combined the individual and social expressions of redemption:

Under the direction of Martin Luther King, Jr., a number of churches in Montgomery and other places brought together in a unique way evangelical piety, prophetic speech, and social action. It strikes me as a unique religious phenomenon that in many Negro churches evangelical theology, language, songs, preaching and feeling were interlaced with political analysis and social witness. (There was) no such thing as a conscious transition from the religious to the secular, from this world to the next, from the call of Christ to the call to the prison. Social protest was grounded in a theology of the cross. Social action was not the artificial appendix to religious thought, but an evangelical religious act . . . a new form of congregational life.

For this reason Burkholder lamented the absence of Negro churchmen from the study conference, though invitations had been extended. Their experiences with contemporary forms of the believers' church, he said, would have brought additional relevance to the historical studies of the old radicals.

As to Pentecostalism . . .

Among the "new radicals" present was a representative of the Pentecostals. William G. MacDonald, a member of the Assembly of God and a former professor of Greek at Central Bible College, presented a paper on the believers' church as seen from the Pentecostal perspective. His definition of the marks of the church agreed in general with those given by other speakers: "The fellowship of or participation in the koinonia of the Holy Spirit is the essential basis of the corporate community of believers because in their unity in Christ they become members one of another in Christ's body."

In an assigned response to the MacDonald paper Wayne E. Ward, professor of Christian theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, took strong issue with the use made of the Bible. "When he makes a very important distinction between the afflation of the Spirit in John 20 and the effusion of the Spirit in Acts 2, he begins to marshal these biblical texts in a way that ignores the sources, the dating, the authorship and, I believe also, the theological context of these passages," he said.

Yoder came to MacDonald's defense by seeing in the interchange "a documentation of the problem we face together":

I'm not sure whether the Anabaptists . . . or the Campbellites 60 years after their origins or the Friends would have come already this far in talking the language of their persecutors. The Pentecostal movement is in our age the restoration movement protesting

against the establishment which all the rest of us represent. It's a test case of our capacity to be the believers' church to find a new way of dealing with a new restitution movement as the establishment of other ages did not do.

Yoder felt that if the believers' church wants "a church in which every layman is a minister" it must be prepared to accept "that the predominant theology of the believers' church must be a layman's theology, so that the critical questions which the scholar must ask (come) after and not before the acceptance of this mode of theologizing."

Future meetings of the believers' church groups may probe further into the contemporary expressions of

radical Protestantism, including the Pentecostals and Bible churches. While (in free church fashion) the conference did not develop a formal organization, the hope was expressed for another meeting in two years.

Chairman of the planning committee for this year's conference was James Leo Garret, professor of Christian theology at the host seminary. Observers were present from the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical Affairs.

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A Believing People Today

By T. Canby Jones

THIS ARTICLE MUST serve two purposes. First, it must present an interpretation of the Quaker background for a dialogue on the nature of the believers' church and, in the second place, attempt to speak on behalf of all of us concerned with the contemporary relevance of a believing people to the world today. I feel my limitations for this latter task very keenly, since I have only experienced careful conversation with Mennonites and Brethren in the past.

First, however, I need to describe my own standpoint as one of those rare birds who might be called a neo-Quaker. As such I believe that the early Quaker vision should be normative for all Friends today. Further, I think that the early Quaker vision has much to contribute to the recovery of a universal vision of a believing people of God which is the theme of this article.

I. THE SETTING OF EARLY QUAKERISM

I agree with Geoffrey Nuttall and Hugh Barbour¹ that early Quakerism was to a significant degree a fruit of the radical reformation as it expressed itself in Puritan dress in seventeenth century England. In many and various way Friends were like Puritans.

They shared the high Calvinist view of God's unlimited power and sovereignty, the conviction of man's depravity and the characteristic Calvinist theocratic ideal that all human society should be transformed into a verisimilitude of the kingdom of God. Unlike their conservative Calvinist brethren, early Friends professed to live in the same spirit and power in which the prophets and apostles lived. They were Holy Spirit radicals.

But I disagree with Nuttall and Barbour that Quakerism was solely a Puritan phenomenon. Such an uncanny similarity exists between the main points of the Quaker vision and the Anabaptist vision of the sixteenth century and the Anabaptist-Spencer-pietist vision of the eighteenth century that there must be some interconnection, although this is yet to be demonstrated. I would like to list the main characteristics of the Anabaptist vision as I understand them so that we may have them in mind as I go on to outline the faith of George Fox and the relevance of the Quaker vision of a believing church. In the Anabaptist vision: 1) "Christ's church consists of the chosen of God . . . who hear and believe His word . . . and in patience and meekness follow in His footsteps." This meant "voluntary church membership based on conversion and a commitment to

holy living." 2) The non-conformity of Christians and the church to the world. 3) The practice of true love and mutual aid among members of the church. 4) The principles of peace, suffering love and nonresistance applied to all human relationships resulting in the complete abandonment of war, violence or taking human life as legitimate for the Christian under any circumstances. 5) Separation of church and state, and 6) freedom of conscience.²

But the early Friends differed both from Puritans and Anabaptists. Lewis Benson summarizes the differences from Puritanism:

Quakerism differed radically from Puritanism in its view of the Scriptures, its conception of the nature of the church, its doctrine of Christian worship and ministry, its view of the sacraments, its belief in the moral perfectability of both the individual and the church by the power of Christ, its view of the relation of the Christian to the state, and its understanding of the meaning of the cross. Quakerism was militantly engaged in an attack on Puritanism at all these points.³

Those are rather important points on which to differ and still be a species of Puritanism. Perhaps Lewis Benson, Rufus Jones and others are right that Quakerism represents a distinctive third force on the religious scene in seventeenth century Britain. Quakers were leaders of a spiritual reformation. But in calling them spiritual reformers we need to distinguish them sharply from the Spiritualists of the continental Reformation. The latter part of this paper will show how closely the Quaker vision conforms to the Anabaptist vision and in so doing differs at the same points as the latter from men like Hans Denck, Sebastian Franck, Castellio and Schwenckfeld. Early Friends were not optimistic about natural man. Insisting that Christ had come to restore a visible Gospel order among disciplined people, Friends were not religious individualists as the Spiritualists tended to be. Neither were the early Friends mystics in the classical sense of that term. They were cast in the mould of the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New.

Quakerism differed from Anabaptism primarily in terms of spiritual emphasis. It stressed the spiritual presence of Christ, the spiritual authority of scripture, the spiritual nature of obedience and the primary role of the Spirit in motivation to witness. Otherwise conformity to the basic Anabaptist vision outlined above seems to me very close. Perhaps in this spiritual application of the vision may lie a key to relevance to twentieth century man.

The Faith of George Fox

Important to an understanding of the Quaker vision is a brief discussion of the main points of the faith of

George Fox. A careful reading of his writings brings one to the conviction that central to the faith of Fox was his belief in the sovereign power of God in Christ. Fox expressed faith in "the great and holy eternal God, who made the world and all things therein . . . Lord of heaven and earth and great King over all . . . he giveth to all breath, life and all things, that they might serve and worship him."⁴ This God has made himself known through Christ his preexistent word and wisdom and express image of his substance. Secondly, Fox experienced and postulated a great ethical gulf which exists between God and Satan, good and evil, light and darkness. Fox, in the third place, was convinced of man's basic sinfulness. Rebellious men are all dead in the first Adam. Adam's disobedience has destroyed God's image in man. Therefore "all men are plunged into Adam's death, and imperfection and darkness."⁵ All the evils of mankind are traceable to the sinful nature which has infected man since the disobedience of his first ancestor. A fourth and distinctive tenet of Fox's faith was his belief that the light of Christ, a measure of God's grace is to be found in all men no matter how depraved. The seed of Christ which indwells fallen man is a sign and promise of his regeneration. The light of Christ is one, universal and saving provided men respond to him in faith. If men nurture this seed, lived by the measure of grace within, they begin the life of hearing and obeying the Lord which will increase as they continue to obey.

Though pessimistic about sinful man, Fox, in the fifth place, has tremendous confidence in regenerate man. Those who have heard and obeyed the voice of the prophet who teaches from within discover an inner power which enables them to live free from sin in this life. This is the experience of Christian perfection, power over Satan and his works. The Lord, maintains Fox, does not command his followers to actions without endowing them with grace and power to carry them out.⁶

The collective result, in the sixth place, of this power over sin in the life of the individual is the restoration of God's true covenant people. In this fellowship Christ has come to gather and teach his people himself and to restore them to the relationship with God known in the garden before the fall. The churches of the world have fallen into apostasy, but now Christ has returned in Spirit to restore his church to its primitive apostolic purity.

Finally, Fox proclaimed the call and mission of God's people to enlist in the Lamb's war and share in the victory of God. Christ as sovereign Lord of history has called out his restored and regenerate church to engage in a cosmic struggle against evil on every level of existence in this present world until the end of history. The sword of the Spirit is the weapon of this conflict. Those who rely on material weapons instead,

throw away the spiritual. The Lamb shall have the victory and of his kingdom and of peace there shall be no end.

II. RECOVERY OF A BELIEVING PEOPLE

It is my conviction that a recovery of the early Quaker vision combined with a recovery of the Anabaptist vision will bring about the restoration of God's believing people in this generation. I will attempt to make this combination in what follows. I further believe that the recovery of this vision of a believing people represents the most relevant, needed and important thing that we can say to modern, affluent, depersonalized man. The nature of the vision can be expressed in one sentence:

A believing people *hears* the voice of its living Lord, *obeys* him in all things and *witnesses* unapologetically to his power in every phase of the life of the world.

1. *A Believing People Hears*

The first characteristic of the believing people of the spiritual reformation is its hunger and willingness to listen. It hears the voice of the one who speaks to it from Sinai, from Calvary, from the upper room and from his martyr church throughout history. This is a hunger not to hear the printed word, the traditional word, the abstract word, but the new and living word of its living Lord. This word is no mere concept, sentence or saying; it is a cosmic divine person who was made flesh and dwelt among us and has now come again to us in spirit to draw all men to himself.

The living voice to which we listen is scriptural, normative, consistent with and faithful to biblical revelation. The Bible is not that voice but a record of that voice and an indispensable witness to him and to the living words spoken by him to our spiritual forebears. If we should hear a word that contradicts revelation, we know that it is false. But the word of God is a living person, the giver-forth of scripture, not limited to scripture but doing all things consistent with the precepts of scripture.

This voice we hear is the voice of God in Christ, Christ the king and sovereign Lord who rules in history. Just as God delivered Israel from Egypt in history and has rescued his people from bondage and oppression in every age so he does in our own and his concern is for all men. To Christ as king all authority has been given. Authority lies not in a book or in the will of man but in the good news that Christ has come to reign. In Lewis Benson's words, "Faith means putting one's whole existence under the authority of Christ."

Finally, the voice which we hear, as we aspire to be a believing people, is the voice of the conquering Lamb, who was, who is and who is to come. At once sovereign Lord of all he is the Lamb who conquers

solely by persuasion, suffering love, the sword of the Spirit and inner constraint. By these weapons he and his followers will bring all nations under his dominion and bring history to a climax of fulfillment and meaning.

2. *A Believing People Obeys*

God in Christ calls his believing people not only to hear his voice but to obey him in all things. We are first called to obey his call to covenant. In recent years I have been struggling to grasp the full meaning of the glorious concept of covenant found in scripture. I am now convinced that in essence it is a personal relationship of love and mutual commitment between God and his people. Love is the ground of the covenant (Deuteronomy 7:6-10).

In the New Testament, covenant is essentially the same except that it focuses in a person, who is God with us, Immanuel, Jesus the Messiah. Covenant in the New Testament also differs in that it has taken on fully and definitely the inward dimension promised by Jeremiah. His law has become a living thing written on our hearts. We are called to observe the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount not through any self-help measures but through the grace of another who has taken control of our wills. We live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.

The good news to the believing church is that God's son has come in the fullness of his power to restore his voluntary, gathered, regenerate people. He gathers through baptism by the Spirit into one body and one faith. Buried with him in his death we are raised with him into newness of life. No water is necessary to this great act of mutual self-giving and covenanting. Water may even be a distraction. True baptism is into and by his Spirit. No physical element nor mode of its administration should be confused with the decisive spiritual act. Likewise, communion, the eucharist is eternal, inward and spiritual.

There is really only one sacrament; this great act of God's self-giving love to redeem and save mankind and the world. The life-giving Word, the bread of eternal life is in our midst and that is sufficient. In a recent Faith and Order Conference on the subject of baptism, I polled the delegates present to find out whether I, a Quaker, could be admitted to membership in their churches without having to submit to water baptism. Only one would insist on water. All the rest would admit me on confession of faith and witness to baptism by his Spirit. I did not know whether to be shocked by this apparent lack of discipline or to be glad that spiritual baptism seemed to have such wide acceptance. I will choose the latter alternative and be glad.

This visible order of the gospel fellowship is, in the words of Lewis Benson, "not determined by the ordinances of the 'founder' during his lifetime but it is

determined by what Christ does now. . . . He is at the center of this community and it is what he does that causes the community to appear and determines its form."⁸ Institutionally minded churchmen must have a hierarchical priesthood, visible sacraments and properly ordained deacons, ministers and elders. The only structure or order the spiritually present head of his people requires is a personal relationship of hearing, obeying and witnessing. This master-disciple relationship results in a gathered community, which nurtures the spiritual gifts of each member, causes them to live in unity and love to one another and in righteousness and obedience to the Christ within.

As descendants of radical reformation groups we have had much experience with too rigid discipline. Sometimes we have been bound by too rigid adherence to the letter of scripture or more commonly to the letter of scripture as interpreted by the rigid human demands of culturally ossified Quakerism, Brethrenism and Mennonitism. The word of man and his authoritarian structures bound us to the letter of scripture and the letter of our books of discipline while quenching the life, the spirit and freedom of both. Some groups, certainly the Quakers, have swung in reaction to the other extreme with resulting individualism and moral relativism. To what discipline, then, does the Lord, who would restore his church call us?

He calls us to Christian liberty. For such liberty, obedience is the source of freedom. When we voluntarily obey the voice of our inward teacher we are released and freed from conflict and guilt feelings within and from the desire to dominate and control others. This liberty in obedience results not in rigid individualism but in a profound experience of unity of faith through the one Lord who gathers us all as in a net. Liberty means hearing and obeying the voice of the Lord.⁹

Corporate obedience results. But there is no place in this gospel order for the ban or shunning the erring brother. Brotherly admonition is necessary but supporting one another in love must be the criterion of such admonition. If real conflicts and disunity arise among those whom Christ has brought hither, the group in brokenness of spirit must seek the mind of Christ for a loving means of correction. If the group has not the mind of Christ it cannot correct anything. But every member of the fellowship must hunger for group obedience, group witness and the willingness to suffer as a group until the Spirit restores unity. The same standards apply to ordinary business meetings of the fellowship. We meet together to seek the mind of Christ for the fellowship in business matters in the same sort of spirit that we enter into worship. Taking votes which produces disgruntled minorities is highly inappropriate. In oneness of spirit we find

the will of the Lord for the whole group or we do not act until we do.

Another form of obedience to which the sovereign Lord of his church calls us is holiness and power over sin in this life. If Christ has returned in the fulness of his power to restore his covenant community and commands that we live in a hearing and obeying relationship to him he will enable us to live a-top of sin in this life and overcome the kingdom of evil through his power at work within us. This experience makes individuals feel as George Fox who felt he had been "brought up through the flaming sword into the paradise of God."¹⁰ As modern men we may shrink from claiming Christian perfection for at least two reasons. First, the arrogance of claiming the absolute perfection found only in God repels us. Second, absolute laws have disappeared from man's understanding of science and the natural order. So who are we, therefore, to claim an absolute amid the constant emergencies of Christian moral decisions? Present-day pleaders for the power of sin accuse us of self-righteousness, if we say sin can be conquered in this life. This danger to which they legitimately point can only be avoided by crucifixion of self-will and sole dependence on grace. But is this not a lesser danger than saying sin has won by default because Christ has power only to save men from sin beyond the grave?

In the next place, obedience means walking not where but *as* Jesus walked. He challenged men to believe and enter the Kingdom of God. He taught righteousness. He healed the sick. He judged down wickedness. He associated with and ministered especially to outcasts. Are we doing these things? What has happened, for example, to the healing ministry of our believing church? I was spiritually healed. The Lord saved my life; my physical life, I mean.

But walking as Jesus walked means above all becoming a servant church. This exalted Messiah of the Gospel of John humbled himself and washed the disciples' feet. He commands us to do likewise. I think it very significant that at least three of the free church traditions still practice footwashing as an ordinance. What a sign for the servant church! But our Lord's command that we wash one another's feet did not mean that we should go into the universal foot-bathing business complete with automatic coin operated machines but that we should serve man in all his needs: physical, economic and spiritual needs with both grace and joy. This generation no longer has patience with an authoritarian church handing out edicts but responds warmly to Christians who empty themselves and take on the form of servants responding to personal needs as their Lord did.

Finally, Christ calls us to a new intensity of obedience in a prayer life worthy of Thomas R. Kelly. How much do we really practice and depend on prayer? Do we really confess our helplessness to God and

agonize for the rebirth of this people? I get a great charge out of men like the prophets of the Old Testament, Conrad Grebel, Balthasar Hubmaier, Alexander Mack, John Bunyan and all the martyrs of our tradition. I thirst to be like them! To have their courage, their guts, their devotion, their vision of mankind reborn into a gospel family order—I long for this fervently. Do you share this hunger? I weep for the restoration of a believers' church, do you?

We need to learn humility, too. Not the humility of a doormat. Enjoyment at being trampled upon is really a form of inverted spiritual pride. We must be humble like the prophets who were blinded by God and the demands of his righteousness so that they could see nothing else. To be humble is to live out Luther's dictum to fear God and nothing else. Humility is bold because we fear nothing for ourselves.

But our prayers for the restoration of a believing people will be ineffective unless we believe it is already happening. God has already begun this spiritual reformation of which we dream. In Wilmer Cooper's excellent published lecture, *A New People to Be Gathered*, the best sentence is this affirmation: "The fact is that new life is taking place among us and a new leadership is being raised up for the purpose of a new ingathering of people for our day."¹¹ Do you believe it? I do.

3. *A Believing People Witnesses*

A believing people hears the voice of its living Lord, obeys him in all things and witnesses unapologetically to his power in every phase of the life of the world. Witnessing serves as the primary means of demonstrating relevance of a believing people.

Our first responsibility is evangelism by all means and all media and especially to depersonalized, urbanized man. We must, as Lewis Benson puts it, lead men "directly to Christ who is the new covenant. As men turn to Christ, the light, they will be formed into a community—the children of light. Therefore, leading people to Christ is the strategy of renewal that belongs to the new covenant."¹²

This sharing of good news seeks to reach man who is at once self-sufficient, self-satisfied, the creator of a new technopolis—"man come of age"—and at the same time a prisoner of all the patterns of production, merchandizing and pleasure-fulfillment-gimmicks that he has created. Alienation, aloneness, noninvolvement describe his condition. What has the believing church to say to him? Precisely that "hearing and obeying the voice of the creator is the fundamental law of man's being."¹³ Also that the living Christ brings assurance that power to obey is available and that life can be repersonalized through the new covenant of love for other men that results from the master-disciple relationship to Jesus Christ.

If Christ is God's eternal prophet and king who speaks and rules from heaven, his believing people

must also develop a new concept of grace and mission. First, as Brunner, Newbigin, Elton Trueblood, Wilmer Cooper and many others have reminded us, "the church does not just *have* a mission . . . the church *is* mission in the world."¹⁴ A church or believing people that is not missionary is no church at all. Quaker quietism felt that proselyting was wrong and thereby wrote its own epitaph. Young people today, on the other hand, want to go where the action is. Where the church is alive to its essence as mission, its dynamic witness will attract the young.

But the grace of Christ, the prophet who speaks within, is one, universal and saving and is extended to all men. Though men in any culture, religion or anti-religion know him not by name, he is present within them urging and prodding them to live up to and apply the best that they know. Does this suggest syncretism into one universal religion of the spirit? Not at all. First, it is the Spirit of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who has made himself known through a particular saving history and who was incarnated in his only son. It is not the spirit of Amida Buddha or an impersonal absolute. Second, although individual men in many and various faiths and religions may very well be saved by obedience to the light of Christ within without knowing him by name, the vast majority of men *disobey* these inner promptings of the Spirit of our Lord and thus are concluded under sin. To disobedient men, the good news and the saving history through Christ must be preached. One of the tragedies of contemporary Quakerism has been the separation of mission and service into opposing camps served by separate agencies and motivated by different philosophies. Quakers are known over the world for service and humanitarian concern in action. The Brethren Service Commission patterned after the American Friends Service Committee enjoys the unique distinction of having brought into being that service agency which represents most of us, Church World Service. But the balance between selfless service to war victims, refugees and the needy and evangelism and mission to bring men to Christ has been preserved by the Mennonite Central Committee. We are called to become a servant church after the pattern of our Lord.

Harvey Cox and others call us to become secular in order to serve the needs of the world. To this challenge the believing church must say an emphatic 'yes' if it means that we must get off our duffs and out of our four walls and our middle-class-ecclesiastical-ghettoes and reach depersonalized industrialized man in all his new social and power structures. We don't just believe in the priesthood of all believers. We advocate the preacherhood of all. We seek not to abolish the ministry but to abolish the laity.

One inescapable obligation our Lord Jesus lays upon his believing people in this and all generations is the demand for a consistent, unified Christian peace testimony. One of the blasphemies of Constantinian Chris-

tianity was its constant compromise with war, violence, and capital punishment. Jesus taught us to love our enemies that we might become sons of our Father in heaven. If instead we shoot, murder, bomb and napalm them, we not only disobey his explicit command but no longer remain sons of our Father in heaven. Since a believing people exists by hearing and obeying, we must obey our sovereign Lord in this. Part of the American ethic seems to be, "If you have to kill to enforce the right, kill." To the Christian this concept is both blasphemous disobedience and treason. The only right a Christian has is to suffer wrong at the hands of another. We are called to a new kind of warfare, a warfare of the Spirit dedicated to saving men's lives, not to destroying them. Jesus' disciples sought hospitality in a Samaritan village. When refused they wanted to play Elijah and bring down fire from heaven and burn up the place. Jesus rebuked them, "You don't know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them." This imperative of our Lord applies to his disciples today just as fully as it did then (Luke 9:51-56).

Justifying the participation of Christians in the armed forces of any nation fighting today's tribal wars based on tribal ethics is treason to Christ the king, sovereign Lord of history and of all men. We are citizens of the kingdoms of this world and its nation states only in a derivative, secondary and subordinate sense. To disobey God's command not to kill but to love enemies and rejoice when persecuted is treason to the high king of heaven, making shipwreck of our faith. This demand of Christian peace witness is not a luxury ethic reserved for the historic peace churches. It is a demand on all Christians, especially on all those who have the vision of the restoration of a believing church. Tertullian insisted that when Jesus disarmed Peter in the garden of Gethsemane, "he thereby ungirt every Christian."¹⁵ Robert Barclay, Quaker theologian, expressed it, "To those whom Christ hath brought hither, it is unlawful for them to bear arms."¹⁶ George Fox expressed it: "All such as pretend Christ Jesus, and confess him, and yet run into the use of carnal weapons, wrestling with flesh and blood, throw away the spiritual weapons."¹⁷

The unifying concept of mission and witness which embraced the whole spectrum of the early Quaker vision was what they called the Lamb's war. As a believing people we are called to enlist in and fight in a new kind of army, the army of the Lamb. We struggle against evil in the name of Christ on every level of existence until the end of history confident that the Lamb, who has already conquered death and sin by his atonement and resurrection, will bring all things under his feet. We can turn to the book of Revelation for a description of the leader of this war and the nature of the conflict.

The struggle forecast in Revelation is not a description of an obscure eschatological conflict tucked away at the end of history. It begins here and now as the struggle of the people of the prophet who speaks from heaven to hear and obey in the conflicts of this present world. The key to understanding the whole conflict lies in the nature of its weapons. They are weapons of the spirit. The sword proceeding from the mouth of the Lord is the sword of the spirit which smites men not with physical death but with spiritual judgment and with love in order to save them. The rod of iron is a symbol of total spiritual authority and does not mean a bar of ferrous metal. These are the same weapons more fully described in Ephesians 6:14 ff.

The scope of the Lamb's war of the believing church is almost limitless. The axe is laid to the root of institutional Christianity and the relics of Constantinianism. Social and economic injustices among men are witnessed against and corrected. Relief is brought to the suffering, the needy are served, prisoners visited, the naked clothed. All structures of men's pride of class or race are hewn down. Civil rights, world peace and the abolition of capital punishment are brought about. But most important, the citadel of man's pride, his hardness of heart is besieged with persuasion, suffering love, the gospel of peace, until all men are won to allegiance to Christ and through his grace to one another.

As we recapture this vision of a believing people who hears the voice of its living Lord, obeys him in all things, witnesses unapologetically to his power and uses his spiritual weapons to wage the Lamb's war until the end of history, our hearts are filled with hope, our eyes become bright with the vision of the triumph of God's purpose for mankind and we sing with praise the new song: "Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen" (Revelation 7:12). And we hear his word behind us, "Behold, I am doing a new thing. Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19).

FOOTNOTES

1. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 1947. Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, 1964.
2. H. S. Bender and C. H. Smith, *Mennonites and Their Heritage*. Scottdale, Pa., Herald Press, 1964, pp. 42-45.
3. Lewis Benson, *Catholic Quakerism*. Gloucester, U.K. privately published, 1966, p. 8.
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5. ———, "A Sermon at Wheeler Street London, 1680." *Richardson MSS*, pp. 195-202; *Swarthmore MSS*, Vol V, No. 121; printed in *Sermons of Story, Hicks and Fox*. Philadelphia, S. Potter, 1825, p. 64.
6. Lewis Benson, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-27.
10. George Fox, *Journal of*. John L. Nickalls editor. Cambridge, University Press, 1952, p. 27.

(Continued on p. 177)

