

**A HISTORY OF THE
REFORMED MENNONITE
CHURCH**

by

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FOREWORD

THERE has been a long-felt need for a historical outline of the Church of which this book is the subject, and in response to requests for it, this revision is issued, firstly, for historical information for the Church in general; and secondly, for all friends and inquiring persons, and for students of religious history in Lancaster County, who may find it of interest to them.

The Reformed Mennonite Church is an authentic body of Christian believers, little known in the world because of their non-worldly policies; their chief aim in life is to live the Christ-life in humility and simplicity, without ostentation and vain display; without seeking the honor of men, and at all times to keep the bonds of Christian unity through peace and love.

A history such as this must deal largely with material and mundane situations, because histories of any nature are the recorded stories of mankind's deeds and movements through the ages, be they good or evil. To record a strictly *spiritual* account would defeat the purpose of this history, and would necessarily have to dwell on doctrinal subjects, which after all are of greatest importance to the Reformed Mennonites. Controversial subjects are avoided, and factual data alone are brought to the attention of the reader.

This present edition is an edited version of a former treatise written by Wilmer J. Eshleman, and originally published in the papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society, Vol. XLIX, No. 4, 1945, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Mr. Eshleman has kindly given permission, without reservations, for re-publishing this work, and sincere thanks is given to him for this privilege. Although not a member of the Church, it is felt he has made a contribution of a valuable nature.

The picture of the Longenecker's Meeting House was made from a new photograph supplied by Mr. Eshleman. The pictures of the first Longenecker's (1812) Meeting House and John Herr's grave stone, and the Francis Herr house, are re-used from the 1945 edition of the Historical Society's papers.

The Reformed Mennonite Church

By WILMER J. ESHLEMAN

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, includes in its borders the site of the organization of the denomination known as the Reformed Mennonite Church, which had its official beginning in 1812 on a quiet, peaceful farm in the beautiful countryside on the edge of the historic borough of Strasburg, when John Herr, Abraham Landis and Abraham Groff became its leaders.

The Reformed Mennonite Church today has spread throughout the greater part of the United States and through some provinces in Canada. It adheres closely to the doctrines of Menno Simons (who was a contemporary of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin) which are embodied in the "Eighteen Articles of Faith," drawn up April 21, 1632, in a General Conference at Dortrecht, Holland, by fifty-one representatives from seventeen Mennonite congregations gathered from several European countries. These Articles of Faith, as set forth in the *Martyrs' Mirror* are condensed here as follows:

"I. Of God and the Creation of all Things.

"We must believe that there is a God — God consists of Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

"Since it is testified, that without faith it is impossible to please God, and that whosoever will come to God must believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of all those who seek him; therefore, we confess and believe, according to scripture, with all the pious, in one eternal, almighty, and incomprehensible God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Genesis 1
Genesis XVII, 1
Deuteronomy VI, 4
Isaiah XLVI, 8

Hebrews XI, 6
1 John V, 7
1 Corinthians XII, 6
Romans XI, 36

"II. Of the Fall of Man.

"Our first parents did not continue long in the blessed state in which they were created — Were deceivd by the subtlety of the serpent and envy of the devil—

Death, the wrath of God, and condemnation, passed upon all men in consequence of the fall.

"We believe, and confess, according to the tenor of the scriptures, that our first parents, Adam and Eve, did not remain long in the glorious state in which they were created; but, being deceived by the subtlety of the serpent and the envy of the devil, they transgressed the high command of God, and disobeyed their Creator; by which disobedience, sin came into the world, and death by sin, which has thus passed upon all men, in that all have sinned, and hence incurred the wrath of God, and condemnation.

Genesis III, 6
Genesis III, 23
Psalms XLIX, 8

Roman V, 12, 18
John III, 16
Revelation V, 9

"III. Of the Restoration of Man by the Promise of Christ.

"Notwithstanding the deplorable fall, God provided a means for man's restoration, the immaculate Lamb, Jesus Christ.

"Concerning the Restoration of the first man and his posterity, we believe and confess, that God, notwithstanding their fall, transgression, sin, and perfect inability, was not willing to cast them off entirely, nor have them eternally lost; but that he called them again to him, comforted them, and testified that there was yet a means of reconciliation; namely, the Lamb without spot, the Son of God, who was appointed unto this purpose, before the foundation of the world.

John I, 29
Galations IV, 4
Hebrews XI, 13, 39

1 Peter I, 19
1 John III, 8; II, 1

"IV. Of the Coming of Christ, and the Reason of his Coming.

"In the fulness of time God sent his Son — he was manifested in the flesh, born of the Virgin Mary — We are satisfied with the account given by the evangelists, of the incarnation of the Son of God — In Christ is our only salvation.

"We further believe and confess, that when the time of the promise, which all the forefathers anxiously expected, was fulfilled, this promised Messiah, Redeemer, and Savior, proceeded from God, was sent, and, according to the prediction of the prophets and the testimony of the evangelist, came into the world, nay, was made manifest in the flesh, and thus the Word was made flesh and man; that he was conceived by the Virgin Mary, who was espoused to Joseph, of the house of David; and that she brought forth her first born Son at Bethlehem, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.

Matthew I, 23
Luke II, 7
John I, 14

John IV, 25
XVI, 28
1 Timothy III, 6

"V. Of the Law of Christ — The Gospel or the New Testament.

"Of the new testament of Jesus Christ, containing the whole counsel of God — All men have repentance for the remission of sins preached to them — None are excluded from the inheritance of the blessed, except unbelievers and the disobedient.

"We believe and confess, that previously to his ascension, he made, instituted, and left his *new testament*, and gave it to his disciples, that it should remain an everlasting testament, which he confirmed and sealed with his blood, and com-

mended it so highly to them, that it is not to be altered, neither by angels nor men, nor to be added to nor diminished. And that, inasmuch as it contains the whole will and counsel of his heavenly Father, as far as is necessary for salvation, he has caused it to be promulgatd by his apostles, missionaries, and ministers, whom he called and chose for that purpose, and sent into all the world, to preach in his name among all people, and nations, and tongues, testifying repentance and the forgiveness of sins; and that consequently he has therein declared all men, without exception, as his children and lawful heirs, so far as they follow and live up to the contents of the same by faith, as obedient children.

Jeremiah XXXI, 31
 Matthew, XXVI, 28
 Matthew XXVIII, 19
 Mark XVI, 15
 Luke XXIV, 47
 John XV, 15

Acts XIII, 46
 Romans VIII, 17
 Galatians I, 8
 1 Timothy VI, 3
 Hebrews IX, 15, 17

“VI. Of Repentance and Reformation.

“The first lesson of the new testament is repentance and reformation, to which all men are bound.

“We believe and confess, since the thoughts of the heart are evil from youth, and prone to unrighteousness, sin, and wickedness, that the first lesson of the new testament of the Son of God, is Repentance and Reformation.

Genesis VIII, 21
 Ezekiel XII, 2
 Mark I, 15
 John VII, 38

Ephesians IV, 22, 24
 Colossians III, 9, 10
 Hebrews X, 22, 23

“VII. Of Baptism.

“Baptism, history of — Acts II, 38; all penitent and believing persons, must be baptized according to the doctrine of Christ, and according to the example and usages of the apostles.

“As regards Baptism, we confess that all penitent believers, who, by faith, regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, are made one with God, and written in heaven, must, upon their scriptural confession of faith, and reformation of life, be baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, agreeably to the doctrine and command of Christ, and the usage of his apostles.

Matthew III, 15
 Matthew XVIII, 19, 20
 Mark XVI, 16

Acts II, 38; VIII, 16; IX, 18;
 X, 47; XVI, 33
 Romans VI, 4
 Colossians II, 11 and 12

“VIII. Of the Church of Christ.

“Of the visible church of God and its members — This is the chosen people.

“We believe and confess a visible Church of God; namely, those who, as aforementioned, do works meet for repentance, have true faith and true baptism, are made one with God in heaven, and received into the fellowship of the saints here on earth. We confess, moreover, that the same are the chosen people, the royal

priesthood, the holy nation, who have the witness that they are the spouse and bride of Christ.

Matthew XVI, 18	Ephesians II, 19, 21
Matthew XXVIII, 20; VII, 25	Titus III, 6, 7
John III, 29	1 Peter I, 18, 19
1 Corinthians XII	1 Peter II, 9
2 Corinthians VI, 16	Revelation XIX, 7

“IX. Of the Election and Office of Ministers, Bishops, Teachers, Deacons in the Church.

“Of electing officers in the church of Christ — Christ commanded, that every man should walk in the vocation, wherewith he is called — Of the care which Christ had for his church — He provided the church with ministers, before his departure — The apostles followed the commands of Christ — They commanded every where, that suitable men should be ordained teachers — They must have a good report, and be blameless in conduct — Of electing deacons, etc., for what purpose elected.

“As regards Offices and Elections in the church, we believe and confess, since the church cannot subsist in her growth, nor remain an edifice without offices and discipline, that, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, instituted and ordained offices and ordinances, and gave commands and directions, how every one ought to walk therein, take heed to his work and vocation, and do that which is right and necessary.

Psalms XLIX, 8	Galatians III, 28
Matthew XII, 19; XVIII, 11	Ephesians IV, 10, 12
John II, 15	1 Peter II, 25

“And further, that he provided his church, before his departure, with faithful ministers, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, whom he had chosen by the Holy Ghost, with prayers and supplication, in order that they might govern the church, feed his flock, watch over them, defend and provide for them; nay, do in all things as he went before, taught, acted, and commanded, teaching them to do all things whatsoever he commanded them.

Matthew XXVIII, 20	John X, 9; XI, 15
Luke X, 1; VI, 12, 13	Ephesians II, 14

“That the apostles, likewise, as true followers of Christ and leaders of the church, were diligent with prayers and supplication to God, in electing brethren, providing every city, place, or church, with bishops, pastors, and leaders and ordaining such persons as took heed to themselves, and to the doctrine and flock; who were sound in faith, virtuous in life and conversation, and were of good report, both in and out of the church, and that they might appoint in all places, faithful men as elders, capable of teaching others, ordaining them by the imposition of hands, in the name of the Lord.

Acts XXIII, 24	1 Timothy IV, 16, 14
1 Timothy III, 1	Titus I, 5
2 Timothy II, 2	Titus II, 1, 2
1 Timothy III, 7; V, 2	

“X. Of the Holy Supper.

“Of the breaking of bread — for what end instituted: 1, to commemorate the

sufferings of the Lord; 2, to own to ourselves redemption; 3, that we are to love one another, etc. — to preserve the unity of the Spirit.

“We likewise confess and observe a *Breaking of bread, or Supper*, which the Lord Jesus Christ instituted with bread and wine before his passion, ate it with his apostles, and commanded it to be kept in remembrance of himself; which they consequently taught and practised in the church, and commanded to be kept by believers, in remembrance of the suffering and death of the Lord, and that his body was broken, and his precious blood was shed for us, and for the whole human family; as also the fruits hereof, namely, redemption and everlasting salvation, which he procured thereby, exhibiting so great love towards us sinners, by which we are greatly admonished to love one another, to love our neighbor, forgiving him, as he has done unto us, and try to preserve the unity and fellowship which we have with God and one another, which is also represented to us, in the *breaking of bread*.

Matthew XXVI, 26
Mark XIV, 22

Acts II, 42
1 Corinthians X, 16; XI, 23

“XI. Of Washing the Feet of the Saints.

“Washing the saints’ feet, examples of — The fathers before the time of the law, washed the feet of strangers, etc.

“We also confess *The washing of the saints’ feet*, which the Lord not only instituted and commanded, but he actually washed his apostles’ feet, although he was their Lord and Master, and gave them an example that they should wash one another’s feet, and do as he had done unto them: they, as a matter of course, taught the believers to observe this as a sign of true humility, and particularly as directing the mind by *feet-washing*, to that right washing, by which we are washed in his blood, and have our souls made pure.

John XII, 4-17

1 Timothy V, 10

“XII. Of Marriage.

“How God first instituted marriage — Christ abolished the abuses of it — Marriage is voluntary, yet it must be entered into in the Lord — Comparison of the marriage of the fathers who intermarried in their families, with Christian marriage, etc. — This spiritual people is the true people of God, etc.

1 Corinthians VII, 39

“We confess that there is in the church, an honorable Marriage between two believers, as God ordained it in the beginning in paradise, and instituted it between Adam and Eve; as also the Lord Jesus Christ opposed and did away all the abuses of marriage, (which had crept in) and restored it to its original institution.

Genesis I, 27

Mark X, 4

“In this manner, the apostle Paul also taught *marriage* in the church; and left it free for every one, according to its primitive institution, to be married in the Lord to any one who may consent; by the phrase, *in the Lord*, we think it ought to be understood that, as the patriarchs had to marry among their own kindred or race, so likewise the believers of the new testament are not at liberty to marry, except among the chosen race and spiritual kindred of Christ; namely, such, and no others, as have been united to the church, as one heart and soul, have received

baptism, and stand in the same communion, faith, doctrine, and walk, before they become united in marriage. Such are then joined together according to the original ordinance of God in his church; and this is called *marrying in the Lord*.

Genesis XXIV, 4

1 Corinthians V, 11; IX, 5

“XIII. Of the Magistracy.

“Of the authority of the magistracy — The end for which it was ordained — We have to submit to and pray for it that we may lead a quiet life. (1 Timothy II, 1)

“We believe and confess, that God instituted and appointed Authority and the Magistracy as a punishment for evil doers, and a protection for the good; as also to govern the world, and preserve the good order of cities and countries; hence, we dare not despise, gainsay, or resist the same; but must acknowledge the *magistracy* as the minister of God, be subject and obedient thereunto in all good works, especially in all things not repugnant to God’s law, will, and commandment; also faithfully pay tribute and tax, and render that which is due, even as the Son of God taught and practised, and commanded his disciples to do; that it is our duty, constantly and earnestly to pray to the Lord for the *government*, its prosperity, and the welfare of the country, that we may live under its protection, gain a livelihood, and pass a quiet, peaceable life in all godliness and sobriety.

Matthew XXII, 21; XLVII, 27
Romans XIII, 1-7
1 Timothy II, 1

Titus III, 1
1 Peter II, 17

“XIV. Of Defense.

“Defense forbidden to christians — According to the doctrine of Christ, we dare not persecute or injure any one — by well doing we must convince evil doers.

“As regards *revenge*, in which men resist their enemies with the sword: we believe and confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ forbade his disciples and followers all *revenge* and *defense*, and commanded them, besides, not to render evil for evil, but to sheathe their swords, or in the words of the prophets, to beat them into plowshares.

Isaiah II, 4
Micah IV, 3
Zechariah IX, 8, 9

Matthew V, 39, 44
Romans XII, 14, 19, 20
1 Peter III, 9

“Hence, it is evident, according to his example and doctrine, that we should not provoke or do violence to any man, but seek to promote the welfare and happiness of all men; even, when necessary, to flee for the Lord’s sake from one country to another, and take patiently the spoiling of our goods; but to do violence to no man; when we are smitten on one cheek to turn the other, rather than take revenge or strike back.

Matthew VII, 12

2 Corinthians IV, 2

“XV. Of Oaths.

“Christ has forbidden oaths — Our words to confirm any thing must be yea and nay — We must strictly observe all that we promise as though it was confirmed by an oath.

"Respecting *oaths*, we believe and confess, that Christ the Lord forbade his disciples the use of them, and commanded that they should not swear at all; but that yea should be yea; and nay, nay. Hence we infer, that all oaths, greater and minor, are prohibited; and that we must, instead of this, confirm all our promises and assertions, verily, all our declaration or testimony in any case, with the word yea in that which is yea, and with nay in that which is nay; hence, we should always and in all cases perform, keep, follow, and live up to our word as faithfully as if we had confirmed and established it with an oath.

Matthew V, 34, 35
2 Corinthians I, 17

James V, 12

"XVI. Of Excommunication or Separation from the Church.

"Of excommunicating the sinner — Who are to be excommunicated — the reasons why: 1, to cause repentance; 2, for an example to others; 3, that the church may be kept up; 4, to remove the cause of slander — How we are to conduct ourselves toward those who have been excommunicated.

"We also believe and confess a *ban, separation* and *christian correction* in the church, for amendment and not for destruction, and whereby the pure may be distinguished from the defiled. Namely, if any one, after he is enlightened, has attained the knowledge of the truth, and is received into the fellowship of the saints, sins, either voluntarily or presumptuously against God or unto death, and falls into the unfruitful works of darkness, by which he is separated from God and debarred his kingdom; we believe that such person, when the deed is manifest and the church has sufficient evidence, may not remain in the congregation of the righteous; but shall and must be separated as an offending member and open sinner; be excommunicated and reprov'd in the presence of all, and purged out as leaven; and this for his own amendment and an example and terror to others, that the church be kept pure from such foul spots; lest, in default of this, the name of the Lord be blasphemed, the church dishonored, and a stumbling block and cause of offense be given to them that are without; in fine, that the sinner may not be damned with the world, but become convicted, repent, and reform.

Isaiah LIX, 2
1 Corinthians V, 5, 6, 13
2 Corinthians X, 8; XIII, 10

1 Timothy V, 20
James V, 19

"XVII. Of Avoiding the Separated.

"How we are to avoid the separated — this must be done according to the doctrine of Christ and the apostles — We must use discretion toward those who have been excommunicated.

"Touching the Avoiding of the Separated, we believe and confess, that if any one so far fall off either by a wicked life or perverted doctrine, that he is separated from God, and consequently is justly separated from and reprov'd by the church, such person must be shunned according to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, and avoided without partiality by all members of the church, especially those to whom it is known, whether in eating, drinking, or other similar temporal matters; and they shall have no dealings with him; to the end that they may not be contaminated by intercourse with him, nor made partakers of his sins, but that the sinner may be made ashamed, be convicted, and called to repentance.

1 Corinthians V, 9, 10, 11

2 Thessalonians III, 14

"That there be used as well in the *avoidance* as in the *separation*, such moderation and christian charity as may have a tendency, not to promote his destruction, but to ensure his reformation. For if he is poor, hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, or in distress, we are in duty bound, according to necessity, and agreeably to love and to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, to render him aid and assistance; otherwise, in such case, the *avoidance* might tend more to his ruin than to his reformation.

2 Thessalonians III, 15

"XVIII. Of the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Last Judgment.

"Of the resurrection — those who live at the resurrection shall be changed — Of the reward of the righteous — Of the Unrighteous — Summary of the doctrine of salvation — The apostles believed and taught this creed.

"Relative to the *Resurrection of the Dead*, we believe and confess agreeably to scripture, that all men that have died and fallen asleep, shall be awakened, quickened, and raised on the last day, by the incomprehensible power of God; and that these together with those that are then alive, and who shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye at the sound of the last trumpet, shall be placed before the judgment seat of Christ; and the good be separated from the wicked; that then every one shall receive in his own body according to his works, whether they be good or evil; and that the good or pious shall be taken up with Christ, as the blessed; enter into everlasting life, and obtain that joy, which no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor mind conceived, to reign and triumph with Christ, from everlasting to everlasting.

Daniel XIX, 26, 27

Job XIX, 26, 27

Matthew XXII, 30, 31, XXV, 31

John V, 28

1 Corinthians II, 9

1 Corinthians XV

2 Corinthians V, 10

1 Thesalonians IV, 15

Revelation XX, 12

"These now, as briefly stated above, are the chief articles of our general christian faith, which we teach and practise universally in our churches and among our members; which in our conviction, is the only true christian faith, which the apostles believed and taught, and, testified with their life, confirmed with their death, and some also sealed with their blood; wherein we with them and all the pious, in our weakness, willingly abide, live, and die, that we may with them attain to salvation by the grace of the Lord."

Readers having any questions concerning the historical record or motives recounted in the following book are kindly referred to the foregoing Articles of Faith, and especially to the scriptural references.

As the Reformed Mennonites adhere more closely than other Mennonite denominations to the doctrines embodied in these Articles, they may properly be called Orthodox Mennonites.

Like many other denominations and societies, the original Mennonite Church from the time of its foundation has had internal trouble, the first great division occurring in 1693, when Jacob Ammon led a group which are still known in the United States as Amish Mennonites.¹

THE "PLAIN" CHURCHES

The clothing worn by members of the "Plain" churches has in the past created much discussion, and continues to do so. These churches based their ground on the following Biblical references:

Deuteronomy XXII:5 — "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God."

Isaiah III:16-24 — "Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet:

"Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts.

"In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon.

"The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers,

"The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings,

"The rings, and nose jewels,

"The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins.

The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.

"And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty."

Roman XII:2 — "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

1 Timothy II:9 — "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array."

According to "Dress" by Mennonite General Conference, page 47, both Jesus and apostles wore the Jewish garb. The Jews, as a covenant people, did not dress like the Philistines, Ammonites, Hittites or the Canaanites. (Today many "Plain" people have discarded the plain garb.)

D. K. Cassel² says: "Menno himself during the greater part of his ministry went about with a price on his head . . . During the Reformation

¹"Swiss and German Settlers of Pennsylvania," by H. Frank Eshleman, p. 128. (The "Mennonite" Church of today has split into many groups, going by various names, which makes it difficult or impossible for them to follow orthodox Mennonite doctrines).

²"History of the Mennonites," by D. K. Cassel, p. 21.

sometimes clad like a peasant, with an axe on his shoulder, to disarm suspicion, he would go into the depths of the forest to minister to his scanty flock assembled there."

Professor Smith³ describes Dirk Phillips (or Dietrich Phillips) who was an early Mennonite leader and a friend of Menno Simons—he died in 1568—as dressing in black with a round cap. Professor Smith⁴ quotes Kessler's description of Anabaptist or Mennonite dress about 1527 as follows: "They shun costly clothing, avoid excessive eating and drinking, wear coarse clothing and broad felt hats. They go about humbly, without weapons, neither swords nor pikes but with a short bread knife. They seem more concerned about an upright life than the Papists." Page 620: "The traditional explanation usually given for the opposition to wearing the mustache is that in certain parts of Europe it came into common use among the soldiers and acquired a military significance that was objectionable to the Mennonites."

Eshleman⁵ states that on March 5, 1688, a meeting was held at Obersultzen to adopt a code of rules in addition to "The Articles of Faith." The rule on clothing decided on was as follows: "Those who were tailors or mechanics should not make any fancy garments or articles of any kind for the brethren or any one else, because it would promote worldliness. "Plain" church leaders tell me today that their clothing is cut similar to the fashion which prevailed from 1800 to 1820. At this time people of lesser means became more prosperous and dressed stylishly, while the Mennonites continued the same cut of clothing as heretofore, but in black to denote simplicity.

SCHISMATIC PROBLEMS

After the Mennonites arrived in Lancaster County in 1710 all was well for a time but within less than a hundred years internal trouble and division developed among them. It is likely that some of this may have been caused by lack of education, as in some instances a son inherited the ministry from his father and it appears that the qualifications for the ministry among these industrious people were not as great as they might have been. At the same time some of the people were beginning to read for themselves, thus causing discord between the ministry and certain members. Prosperity also appeared as a factor. The first faint rumble of recorded discord in the Mennonite Church came in 1742 when Martin Mylin of Lampeter Township built his "palace of sandstone," which was described as being too showy for a Mennonite.⁶ (The house was later torn down.)

From about 1761 until 1775 the Rev. Martin Boehm caused tremors which reverberated throughout the Mennonite Church. Also in this period

³"History of the Mennonites," by C. Henry Smith, p. 113.

⁴*Ibid*, p. 33.

⁵Eshleman, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁶"History of Lancaster County," by I. Daniel Rupp, p. 287.

Rev. Jacob Engle, of later River Brethren prominence, became dissatisfied. Dr. Daniel Musser⁷ writes about Christian Kauffman, who was born in Hempfield Township in 1759, and who later became associated with Boehm. After joining the Mennonite Church in 1780, he (Kauffman) became dissatisfied with the worldly conditions which he claimed existed. He said ministers were lax in their duties and at meetings of the utmost importance, such as selecting new ministers, etc., they talked of the markets, trade, customs and money. Kauffman received one of the highest number of votes for the ministry but he refused, after much persuasion, to draw his lot because he said he felt unqualified to serve as a minister and that he did not believe the other candidates were any more capable.

In casting the lot, the following method was used: There were as many Bibles lined up as there were candidates and the number of Bibles containing slips of paper was limited to the number of ministers to be chosen. The candidates drawing the Bibles with the slips of paper will be ordained as ministers and the others will be rejected. Kauffman suggested that as many Bibles be placed as there were candidates and an additional number of Bibles with slips equal to the ministers to be chosen, be used. He said in this manner the Lord had a chance to make a choice and all could be rejected if they were not capable. The Bibles of course were so placed that no one knew which ones contained the minister slips. Kauffman's proposal was rejected. From that time he no longer attended Mennonite services.

DENOMINATIONAL DISCORD

The Mennonite Church must have been conscious of the discord within the denomination because a manuscript, written during the Revolutionary period by Mennonite bishops, ministers and deacons who constituted a Special Conference, contained the following: "Experience, however, proves that the sword, war and bloodshed will not lead men to unite together in meekness, humility and love; for, instead of love and faithfulness, we find that pride, covetousness, deception, and backbiting have (not by all but by many) gained a powerful hold. But that which is most deplorable is, even as in the kingdom of this world, there is discord, confusion, and dissension. So, also in these sad times, these same things manifest themselves among those of the same faith, and those who should teach the same things and be of one mind in Christ Jesus."⁸

One of the most prominent and celebrated men to withdraw—between 1780 and 1790—was Francis Herr, a son of the Rev. John Herr and Esther Herr, of Strasburg, who was a daughter of Dr. John Henry Neff, of Strasburg Township. He (Francis) was also a great grandson of Hans Herr and a great grandson of Rev. Benedict Brackbill, who was one of the most prominent Mennonite leaders in Europe and later in America

⁷"Reformed Mennonite Church," by Dr. Daniel Musser, p. 242.

⁸"The Mennonite Church and Her Accusers," by John F. Funk, p. 42.

during the Mennonite emigration to this country, and who was quite influential in arranging for their passage in 1710. Francis Herr was born on November 6, 1748, at Strasburg, in the house built by his minister father in 1740, the attic of which was equipped to hold the services of the Mennonite congregation of Strasburg. This congregation continued to meet there until 1804, when a church was built on the present site.

After his marriage Francis Herr purchased a farm near what is now Longenecker's Reformed Mennonite Church in West Lampeter Township. On it is still standing the little stone and frame house that served as his home and where the first informal meetings of the insurgent Mennonite believers were held. It typifies the simplicity in which its former owner must have lived and deliberated. This farm as well as the present church property was a part of the original tract granted by William Penn to Christopher Franciscus in 1710 (Deed Book B, page 575).

DISCONTENT WITH THE STATUS QUO

When Francis Herr reached maturity, at the insistence of his father, he joined the Mennonite Church, but some time after 1780 he felt the church was departing from the narrow path according to his conception of the gospel. He partly succeeded in bringing his minister father to the same conclusion. This added new fuel to the already burning sparks of turmoil kindled by the Rev. Martin Boehm and others. The magnitude of the situation demanded attention and it was decided to hold a meeting of bishops, ministers and deacons and settle this matter once and for all. John F. Funk⁹ lists some of the ministers at that time in the Lancaster District, as follows: Peter Eby, Jacob Brubacher, Christian Herr, Jacob Hostetter as bishops; Benjamin Hershey and John Herr as ministers; and a Deacon Mellinger. So we can assume some of these men were present besides Rev. John Herr, as previously stated.

This meeting was held at Mellinger's Church, we can assume, about 1785.¹⁰ Francis Herr and his minister father went to this meeting together. During the meeting, "Francis spoke openly to those assembled and freely gave his views of what the Scriptures require of the Church and what he thought it had become." He was followed by his father, the Rev. John Herr, whose views coincided with those of his son. After a discussion all parties left the church building except Francis Herr and his father. His father was later called out and his son was left alone. After consulting and deliberating for a time outside the church, The Rev. John Herr came in and spoke to his son saying: "Oh, Francis, we must give way to our brethren; we cannot stand against them." The group then came back into the church and there was further discussion with the result that they refused to accede to any of the proposals of Francis Herr. At this time he withdrew from the

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Musser, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

Mennonite Church, believing that his views were in accord with those taught by Menno Simons.

The issues being deliberated by the Mennonite churchmen of that day were deep and serious, some of which caused controversy that lasted many years. Francis Herr was greatly concerned about these matters, basing his opinions on his understanding of the scriptures and the teachings of Menno Simons. Failure to settle these problems according to Mennonite doctrines caused Francis to lose confidence.

EARLY LEADERS AND INFORMAL MEETINGS

Abraham Landis was born in East Lampeter Township in 1781, and joined the Mennonite Church in 1802. He, like others before him, became dissatisfied with the Church because he declared the doctrines of Menno Simons were not observed. After some discussion by the Church, the issue was again dropped and he withdrew in 1809. He later assisted in the formation of the new body. He died in 1861 and is buried in Mellinger's Mennonite Cemetery. The same was true of David Buckwalter, who later was a leader of the informal meetings held by the insurgents. He, too, is buried at Mellinger's.

John Herr stated that 2 Corinthians VI, 17, 18, justified the action taken by these Mennonite insurgents, as follows:

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

"And will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Dr. Daniel Musser¹¹ states: "This departure from the principles and practices of Menno and his brethren was the first and prime cause which the founders of the new organization always alleged was the reason for their procedure." After Francis Herr withdrew from the Mennonite Church, he held public meetings at his home which were largely attended by

¹¹Musser, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

neighbors and others who had left the Mennonite Church and sympathized with his stand.¹² He was called to exhort at funerals of his friends. In these exercises he did not presume to be a minister of the Gospel since he had never been regularly ordained by any body of believers or by a church. Consequently he did not assume the position of a preacher, that is, he did not stand up to address his audience, but to signify the regard in which he held himself, he kept his seat as an exhorter.

FRANCIS HERR VS. THE QUAKERS

That Francis Herr was in communication with the Quakers is proved by the publication of a book in 1790 entitled, "A short Explication of the written word of God; likewise of the Christian Baptism, and the peaceable Kingdom of Christ," which he addressed to them. In this book (pp. 41, 42 and 43) he gives what might be considered as the creed of the Reformed Mennonite Church, as follows: "Jesus Christ, having gone before us, in this doctrine, life and example, has commanded us to follow his example and has denied all revenge and resistance, which he has shown and manifested in his Gospel, doctrine and kingdom of Grace, and has told us to bear all afflictions wherewith He visits us, and not to revenge ourselves, but leave vengeance unto Him. You say in your publications, that all revenge was forbidden under the new covenant (New Testament) which I confess also; I must put this question to you: Is war more earnestly forbidden than going to law? To be elected to office means resisting force by force. And, if we, because of the Gospel, cannot hold office, how should we be capable of electing others? Does Jesus not say that his kingdom was not of this world? You deny totally all warfare but make use of going to law, thus resisting force by force. I must ask you once more where going to war is more forbidden than going to law? It is clear and manifest that the kingdom of Christ is a peaceable kingdom, but men, being bad by nature, withstand the peace of the Almighty and will not submit themselves under the scepter of his word. Therefore all men who will not submit under the scepter of his word, must submit themselves under the scepter of the kings and princes of this world which were ordained by God to reign over the kingdom of this world. Therefore, every one stands under the obligation to pay allegiance and be obedient unto them, and to avoid all rebellion or conspiracy that might be plotted against them, not for the sake of kings or princes but for God's sake. The children of God have no further obligation than to be obedient unto them (the rulers) when their laws are not contrary to the word of God."

During the life of Francis there was no church organization. He died on January 2, 1810. His last will, recorded in Will Book K, vol. 1, page 156, reads: "It is my will that my Executors shall not offer any Spiritous Liquors or strong drink to be sold at any vendue they might have of my goods after my decease." The whereabouts of his grave is to date unknown.

¹²Musser, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

His father is buried in the Strasburg Mennonite Cemetery and his only full brother, John, with his family is buried in the Herr graveyard at Wheatland Mills on the farm of Paul Longenecker. As this was very near to Francis' home, it is possible that he rests here also beside the whispering Pequea. He had four half-sisters and four half-brothers.

THE TRANSITION

As the dissension in the Mennonite Church had caused this insurgent group to grow, the death of Francis Herr did not retard the faith and these believers continued their informal meetings. It appears that David Buckwalter,¹³ a friend of Abraham Landis, who had been close to Francis Herr, continued to lead at these informal meetings for about two years or less, until John Herr, the son of Francis Herr, was called upon prior to the organization of the new church. According to John Herr,¹⁴ they had no idea of forming a new church although they still assembled for mutual discussion and exhortation "until at length some persons accused them of holding their meetings privately, adding that if there was anything good, others should be allowed to partake of it." When it became known that John Herr had embraced religion and advocated the principles which his father had advanced, those who sympathized with Francis Herr requested the son to speak or exhort at funerals as his father (Francis) had done, to which he reluctantly consented. All those who sympathized with him were encouraged by his discourses and were unanimous in feeling that it was the will of God that they should organize themselves into a church order and that John Herr should be their minister.¹⁵ John Herr married Betsey Groff on April 7, 1807, by whom there were ten children. (His second son, John Forrer Herr—not a member of the church—was elected to the Pennsylvania State Legislature in 1854.)

JOHN HERR — FIRST MINISTER

That John Herr was an extraordinary man in his day is borne out by an account recently given me very reluctantly by one of the heads of the Church, who desired his name to be withheld because they believe that publicity given living members would not be in conformity with the simplicity and humbleness of Menno's teachings. It appears that John Herr was a warm friend of James Buchanan, who had much respect for Herr's brilliance in oratory and logical reasoning and, when Buchanan was a candidate for Congress, he asked John Herr to deliver an address in behalf of his candidacy for that office. Herr felt as his father had believed when he wrote to the Quakers and he promptly refused, kindly telling his friend, the future President of the United States, that he had separated himself from worldly affairs of men to labor in the spiritual field.

¹³"The Way to Heaven," by John Herr, p. 398.

¹⁴*Ibid*, p. 392.

¹⁵*Ibid*, Appendix, pp. 398-9.

Alexander Harris¹⁶ says of his early training: "His father's library, however, being composed of but few books save of the religious and devotional kind, it is reasonable to suppose that he should become well versed in the Bible and works of a religious character. In his youth, therefore, he perused works of Church History and the Reformation, the lives of the Martyrs, writings of Josephus and those of Menno Simons, besides others. The only fiction he ever read was John Bunyan's *Pilgrims' Progress*. Poetry he appreciated very highly if of a devotional character; and in his mature years he composed hymns on frequent occasions. As regards science, art and rhetoric, he had no opportunities whatever in his youth to acquire a knowledge of them; and yet in his old age he had attained a fund of general information upon all these subjects. His extensive intercourse for many years with various classes of society, some of them the best scholars in the country, his great powers of observation, his faculty for minute analysis, his extraordinary memory and his extensive reading, caused him to become in his later years, if not profound, at least well informed upon all ordinary topics."

On page 300, Harris describes the first sermon of Bishop John Herr: "The sermon delivered on that occasion (which must have been about the time of the organization of the new church) was, as tradition tells us, an extraordinary effort in the opinion of his hearers. In their opinion, it surpassed anything they had ever heard. No sooner was the news spread abroad that John Herr had preached such a powerful sermon, than applications poured in upon him to preach in various parts of the county. His services came in great demand on funeral occasions."

On page 301: "Mr. Herr's labors were soon heavy and exacting; he not only preached regularly and attended frequently at funerals, but was continually sought by individuals at home and abroad to offer the consolations of religion to the sick and dying. His time was so largely occupied in duties of this kind, that he was unable to devote much time to private affairs. In this he made great sacrifices, as regards pecuniary matters, for he was unwilling to receive any compensation in lieu of his time and services, feeling that the ministration of the Gospel should not be made a means of worldly accumulation."

On page 302: "The services of the Rev. Herr all this time were coming more in demand, and many invitations came to him to preach in the counties of York, Cumberland, Franklin, Lebanon, Bucks and Montgomery. As a consequence, his correspondence became very large; so much, indeed, that nearly all his time unoccupied in preaching was required to reply to his correspondents. He made visits to New York, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, when those states were but little reclaimed from their primitive condition as a wilderness, and when the crossing of the Alleghenies was regarded as quite an adventure." Page 303: "As he became advanced in years, and the fruits of his labours were ripening in distant and more

¹⁶"Biographical History of Lancaster County," by Alexander Harris, p. 298.

extended regions, his correspondence grew more voluminous, so much so that it became necessary for him to call in aid to assist him in his labours." Page 304: "His oratory was both emphatic and persuasive. He was grandly eloquent; when he wished to enforce the truth the effect was electrical."

John Herr¹⁷ says: "Though my mental powers were but slightly developed, my mind was often deeply impressed by the admonitions of my father." On pages 382, 383, and 384 (1890 edition of his works), he gives a description of his conversion and on page 391 he relates his call to form a new church. In his slumber he was instructed by a vision as follows: "There were shown me very elegant stones, all glittering and exhibiting the appearance of having been fitted to each other, although they lay scattered about. With these I was to begin the building. There was shown me afterwards in a mountain a vast number of rough and unhewn stones, which I was to quarry out, this being all that I could do with them. After they came out of the mountain they were changed by the influence of an invisible power and received a shape and brilliancy similar to those I had first seen. This afforded me great joy and encouragement in building, for I perceived that these stones, so beautifully dressed, fitted into one another like the stones in Solomon's Temple, so that neither hammer nor iron instrument was required on the building. From this I was conveyed to another place, where I observed a large door at the entrance of an abyss (a bottomless pit) upon which Christ set his foot, and laying his hands upon his breast, he looked up to heaven and cried in a loud voice, 'Now is the mystery of God fulfilled and eternity sealed up.' And presently I heard a terrific sound as of awful and loud crashing thunder, the earth was convulsed, heaven and the elements were moved from their place and began to vanish away. Having come to, I lay in great agitation, laboring under the impression that my end was at hand; I wept and sighed to God for help and assistance. I prayed for the influence of the Holy Spirit to enable me to stand before his omnipotent justice and be controlled by his will.

"Now I opened my mind to my wife on condition that she should tell no one, lest my brethren might think that God had called me to the ministry, which at that time I could not consent to." As the meetings, which consisted of singing, admonishing one another with psalms and concluding with prayer continued, "My brethren now desired me to conduct the services—a very grievous request indeed—for I found myself extremely weak and unworthy in regard to the undertaking, wherefore I endeavored to excuse myself for this time; but they in reply asserted as their firm belief that God had called me to the work. At length I consented to do this, that I would take the precedence in our mutual exhortations." And now after about sixty years, during what might be termed the

¹⁷Herr, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

Mennonite Reformation in Pennsylvania, a Mennonite body was to be organized at Strasburg in Lancaster County.

Eshleman¹⁸ states on authority of Brons that in 1555 the First General Synod of the Mennonite Church was held at Strasbourg in what is now Alsace-Lorraine. The attendance consisted of fifty delegates representing six hundred members of different congregations. And so, after two hundred fifty-seven years, we like to believe that their descendants, who were transplanted into a new world, were furthering the ideals of those fifty delegates by organizing a new body at Strasburg, Pennsylvania.

OFFICIALLY ORGANIZED

On May 30, 1812, the Reformed Mennonite Church was officially organized half a mile north of the village of Strasburg in the house of John Herr, on the farm now owned by Earl Groff, which belonged to the Howerly (originally Hauri, now Howry) tract, originally a part of the Martin Kendig grant in 1710. The John Herr house was of stone and burned down in 1898, but it was replaced by one of modern brick that stands on the site today. Several feet from this stands a peculiar log house with architecture like the one belonging to his father, Francis Herr, heretofore mentioned. Two-thirds of the building was one and a half stories high and the other third of the house was two full stories, with a narrow balcony attached to the second story. And we can assume that this log house was also the scene of much activity in connection with the organization of the new Church. The barn, built by John Herr, was taken down in 1904 and was replaced by a modern structure. (This information was given me by Earl Groff.)

VALIDITY OF BAPTISM

There has been controversy regarding the validity of the baptism and of the authority of the founders of the Reformed Mennonite Church. This was answered by Bishop Elias H. Hershey in a lecture at the Lancaster YMCA auditorium on February 13, 1918, as follows: "The manner in which the Reformed Mennonites were organized into a church body has been described as irregular. We answer that Abraham Landis had previous baptism. For reflection we say that John the Baptist had not received water baptism before he baptized, that the Apostles had not received the baptism in the name of the Trinity, which they administered. Some one of them must have been first in the act of performing the new baptism commanded by Christ. That there is a distinction between John's baptism and that authorized by Christ must be admitted because in Acts 19th Chapter, Paul rebaptized twelve disciples who had been baptized by John. All organizations have a primary head who makes the first ordination."

Dr. Daniel Musser¹⁹ writes: "After much prayer and meditation, they

¹⁸Eshleman, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

¹⁹Musser, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

unanimously elected John Herr to be their pastor and bishop; and, also, unanimously agreed in the appointment of Abraham Landis, to administer to him the rite of baptism," which John Herr describes as "The first evangelical order." John Herr then rebaptised Abraham Landis, who was elected to the ministry. Abraham Groff was chosen a deacon.

At this time they had no meeting-house and held their meetings in their dwellings, in school houses, and, in summer, often in their barns.²⁰ At the first meeting after the organization at John Herr's twenty-five persons were baptized at the home of David Buckwalter, in what is now East Lampeter Township. Soon after this meeting sixteen additional persons were baptized at the home of Jacob Weaver in West Lampeter Township. Among the latter was John Herr's mother, the widow of Francis Herr.

"Their mode of procedure in the administration of the ordinance of baptism is after the custom of the Mennonite Church.²¹ In the morning before opening the service, the bishop and generally another minister or deacon converse with the candidates for baptism, and inquire into his (or her) state of mind and whether he still desires to receive the ordinance. After this, the bishop preaches a sermon on a text from the Scriptures relating to water baptism and then invites those who still feel as they did in the morning to come forward."

The Reformed Mennonite subscribes and adheres to the Eighteen Articles of Faith, referred to previously, but takes the following as his Confession of Faith in the ceremony admitting him to membership:

Bishop's Salutation: "Since God in his mercy has visited you with His grace, so that you have been moved to forsake sin and turn to God, and you desire to confirm your faith by the ordinance of Water Baptism, I will ask you some questions.

1. Do you believe in an Almighty God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and all things therein and thereon? And in His Son, Jesus Christ, who left the glory of His Heavenly Father, and came down upon earth to redeem fallen man? That He was rejected of men, condemned to death under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and laid in the grave, and on the third day arose again, ascended to the Father, where He is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us? And in an Holy Ghost, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son? And that these three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, constitute the one Triune God, beside whom here is no other? (The candidate answers.)

2. Since you confess faith in God, and His Son, Jesus Christ, do you believe that you have repented of your sins, that they have been forgiven, that you have found Peace with God, and that you now desire to unite with His Church? (The candidate answers.)

3. Since you believe that your sins have been forgiven and that you have Peace with God, it is now your desire to renounce the world with all its vanities and extravagances and to faithfully obey the counsel of the Lord, since, as it is written, you are persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,

²⁰Musser, *op. cit.*, pp. 315-6.

²¹Musser, *op. cit.*

shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ, your Lord?" (The candidate answers.)

The candidate and the bishop kneel, the congregation arise and prayer is offered. The candidate remains upon knees, the bishop arises and the audience are seated. A deacon or an assistant bears the water in a container, from which the bishop, holding his hands together, takes the water and, as he applies it to the head of the candidate, says: "Upon thine own confession of thy faith, thou art baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

After all are baptized, the bishop receives the brethren with the right hand and a kiss, as they arise, with these words: "I receive you as a beloved brother in the Church of Christ." With brief admonition the sisters are received by the bishop with the hand and are greeted by another sister. After another brief exhortation all return to their seats. It is permissible for a minister to baptize in the absence of a bishop. (Ceremony taken from the minister's handbook.)

FIRST MEETING HOUSE

Dr. Daniel Musser²² writes that as the congregation grew it was decided to build a meeting-house. In the summer of 1812, following the organization, a piece of land was secured from the farm which formerly belonged to Francis Herr, adjoining the land of John Longenecker. As stated before, this was a part of the original grant to Christopher Franciscus in 1710 (Deed Book B, page 575). The church building was a frame structure, built adjoining the brick house of the sexton to the south. It had two doors facing the west, and an entrance opened from the sexton's house directly into the church. It had a seating capacity of four hundred people. The first services in the new building were held on November 7, 1812. John Herr referred to the new meeting-house as Longenecker's Reformed Mennonite Church. This building served as a place of worship until 1898 when it was taken down and the present brick church was erected.

THE TRAVELING BISHOP

Bishop John Herr, like the Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury and many others of prominence connected with Lancaster County, rode horseback to minister to the faithful and, like others, he rode through the countryside and forest on a trip to Humberstone, Ontario, in the Dominion of Canada, and returned on the back of his trusty horse.

One of these churches or meeting-houses, which is no longer standing, was described to me as being rather unique. It was built near Refton in 1832 in what is now Providence Township, by Bishop Henry Bowman, who is buried in the graveyard nearby, and was known as Bowman's Meeting-house. It was located on the road which goes from Refton to Smithville, on the southwest corner where the hard road turns to the left as the dirt road leads off straight ahead. This meeting-house had a seating

²²Musser, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

capacity of two hundred fifty persons and was torn down around the turn of the century, because many members moved away and the remainder of the congregation attended services elsewhere.

My grandmother, Mrs. Jacob C. Weaver, who lived nearby when a child, told me that Union soldiers on their way to Gettysburg stopped to get a drink of water from her home and to rest. They scattered in her yard and filled the little churchyard, many of the soldiers sitting on the porch. After several hours they shouldered their arms and started on toward Gettysburg.

The new church now started to expand as new converts eagerly came to hear what was proclaimed as the true adherence to the doctrine of Menno Simons. Churches were established at Millersville 1840, Lampeter 1849, Strasburg Borough 1865, Landisville 1869, New Danville 1837, Mt. Joy 1874, Schoeneck 1875, Denver, Shirk's and Steinmetz's (the latter three near Ephrata). There was also a church erected at 14 East German (Farnum) Street, Lancaster in 1855. This building was sold, and in 1904 the present church was built at the corner of James and Cherry streets. Regular services were also held at the IOOF Hall, Paradise; AOK of MC, Mt. Nebo, and at the Public Hall in Georgetown. (With the coming of the automobile the following places of worship were discontinued, in the 1920s and 1930s: Paradise, Shoeneck, Mt. Nebo, Millersville, Mt. Joy and Strasburg Borough; because with the new, faster mode of transportation, services so close together were not warranted. Others have been discontinued since.

About 1830 Bishop Christian Frantz moved to Waynesboro, Pa.; about 1833 the Rev. John Harnish moved to Clark County, Ohio and was later elected bishop. The denomination grew steadily until it has spread throughout the greater part of the United States and parts of Canada.

DEATH OF JOHN HERR

Now, moving on to the year 1850, with Bishop John Herr becoming an old man, it appears that he realized his advancing years because he wanted to pay his brethren in Ontario a last visit. So, in the spring of the above mentioned year, he set out with Bishop Christian Frantz and Deacon Abraham Herr. This was to be John Herr's last trip and, after visiting the members of the Church, he preached for the last time on April 27, 1850, at Humberstone, Ontario, during the evening service. Following the service he went to the home of one of the members, Benjamin Morningstar, where he became ill and never recovered. On May 5 a telegram from Buffalo, New York, brought the sad tidings to the congregation assembled at Longenecker's, where the regular Sunday morning service had just opened with a minister (name not recorded) preaching the introduction. Bishop Henry Bowman was sitting behind the pulpit, waiting to preach the sermon, when the telegram was read informing the congregation that

their great leader had finished his pilgrimage on earth and had passed away on the 3rd day of May, 1850.

The sorrow that this news caused was very great and the congregation at once fell on their knees in prayer. Bishop Bowman, in a letter to the Rev. John Harnish, writes: "I dare say there was more weeping among us than among the Ephesians when the beloved Apostle bade them his last farewell, saying they should see his face no more." Bishop Bowman then addressed the congregation, admonishing them that they "should moderate their feelings because the Lord is merciful and his ways and acts are always right, though they bring us pain and sorrow." He also encouraged them to take fresh courage and continue in the ideals of the departed bishop.

After the service Bishop Bowman called at the home of John Herr's family at Strasburg, where the sorrow also was great. Arrangements were made to hold the funeral at Longenecker's on the following Tuesday, but by that time a second telegram notified them that the railroad company would not bring the corpse farther than Rochester, New York. The news arrived too late to change the arrangements and a large crowd gathered at the John Herr home and at the church at Longenecker's, which was crowded to capacity. Bishops John Hershey and Henry Bowman addressed the gathering at the home, while the Rev. Samuel Hershey and Bishop John Kohr, Sr., addressed those assembled at the church.

The two brethren who accompanied John Herr to Canada, took his body from Rochester back to Buffalo, where they engaged a wagon to take it to a brother Eggert's house near Williamsville, New York. The funeral was held there in the Reformed Mennonite meeting-house with interment in the village cemetery. In 1856 the remains were exhumed and the body of John Herr was brought home and buried in Longenecker's Reformed Mennonite Cemetery. His tombstone is inscribed as follows:

JOHN HERR Bishop

Died, May 3, 1850

Aged 68 years, 7 mos. & 15 da.

Faithful and true in the vineyard of God

His life was devoted to Christ and his word.

A large pine tree (now removed) once towered over his grave and, as if answering an appeal to heaven, it whispered soft requiems to those who passed by.

In the Lancaster County Register's Office in Will Book U, vol. 1, page 892, is the following statement from the last will of John Herr: "My executors shall be exempt from all moneys that cannot be collected without the assistance of the law and none of the heirs shall hold them accountable for the same."

CONTINUING GROWTH — A CHURCH HOME (CLOSED ABT. 1982)

The church continued to grow under the leadership of successive bishops, hereinafter listed. In 1912 it was decided to build a home for the aged and infirm members, thus marking the hundredth anniversary of the organization. The idea was conceived and proposed by Bishop Elias H. Hershey and John Kohr, Jr., of Lancaster County. The Church approved the proposal and appointed a building committee, consisting of Deacon Frank E. Eshelman, Frank H. Bare and Elias R. Brown. The Reformed Mennonite Home was built in 1912 at West End Avenue and Manor Street, in the City of Lancaster at a cost of \$20,000, and was occupied in 1913. The administration of the Home is under a committee of three men and a matron.

Shortly after the construction of the Church Home, Milton Snavely Hershey, the chocolate magnate, whose mother was a member of the church, endowed it with a trust fund of \$18,000 in her memory. His grandfather, Abraham Snavely, was a bishop of the Church (information from Frank E. Eshelman). The Home is maintained on this, and other endowments and contributions, which provide cheerful and comfortable living quarters to many who are entering the sunset of life.

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

The Church administration follows the pattern of most plain churches. A congregation is not a separate unit and membership is not confined to a separate congregation but to the Church as a whole body wherever it is located. The jurisdiction of administration is divided into geographical districts, which may include several counties or a state. Each district has at least one bishop who acts as a chairman of the governing body, made up of ministers and deacons. In districts where there are two or more bishops the older one takes precedence in authority. In a district there is a stated number of churches and the ministers assigned to the district preach in each church on succeeding Sundays, although they frequently visit in other than their home districts.

It might be added here that no salary is paid to any of the Church leaders, regardless of the position they hold. Like their fellow members, the ministers earn their living by some vocation other than preaching. They have their own fire insurance fund within the Church and the members are assessed according to the amount of damage by fire each year by a ratio of the valuation of their property. Any one having property valued above \$16,000 insures it in an outside company in order to ease the burden on the other members in case of fire.

Charities are conducted by the Church or by individuals anonymously. Members needing hospitalization or suffering other calamities are helped

DISCONTINUED

to the Church's fullest abilities; and because of the Christian principle of mutual aid, none has ever depended on public assistance.

The non-resistant doctrines of Christ have always been of major importance to the Church (see Article XIV in the Articles of Faith), and in times of war the Church has maintained its position through conscientious adherence to the peaceful teachings of the Master.

LITERATURE

Important to the propagation of the Gospel message and the dissemination of the Church's doctrines is a literary department, and although the Church has never had an official publishing division, as such, it has been active over the years in issuing books, tracts, and at one period a quarterly journal. In this area can be considered the development and publishing of the official Hymnal.

From its very inception, members of the Church, as individuals, and sometimes as groups or "committees" have written and published various treatises and tracts, all dealing with spiritual matters, and often written especially for the encouragement and edification of the members; but none of this was ever denied the outside "world."

Important books written by and published by or for certain members were, *Complete Works of John Herr*, two editions, 1875, and 1890; *The Reformed Mennonite Church*, by Dr. Daniel Musser, two editions, 1873, and 1878; *The Saint*, by Eli Herr, 1915; *The Millennium*, by John Kohr, 1886; and others. A sort of manual of all the Church's beliefs and practices, *Christianity Defined*, has gone through several editions; this is a compilation of writings from a number of the Church's more erudite writers. All tracts and books are free to the public or any interested persons, it being the policy not to make a charge for them, with the exception of certain books now out of print, but which have been rebound.

In 1922 a major project was launched in the publication of a quarterly journal called *Good Tidings*. The editorial board of this popular and eagerly-sought paper was John K. Ryder and Frank E. Eshelman, assisted by others. This journal was published without loss of issue for ten years, to the end of 1932. Copies of it are still sought by members and friends, and by libraries seeking information on the religious history of Lancaster County. Bound volumes are known to be sought at public sales.

The development of the Hymnal is a long and interesting subject. Known to this writer are at least nine editions and reprints, the oldest of which is dated 1837, its title being *Eine kleine Lieder-Sammlung* (Harrisburg, Pa.), 4½ x 2¾ inches, with 216 pages, printed entirely in German. The second hymn book is of similar size, by John Reist, 1847, Buffalo, N.Y., the English section alone having 226 pages. There was a German section also, and some copies had both English and German bound together. The next edition was by John Reist also, 1858, both English and German, Lancaster, Pa., and comprised 542 pages with both languages in one book. A fourth edition of 1873 comprised 444 pages, both English

and German, and these four editions were all within the same size range of the first Hymnal. None of these editions contained musical scores.

Singing in both public and private worship has always been important and necessary for the spiritual enjoyment of believers. The Church never had singing schools, but has always used the old tunes which seemed most suitable and appropriate to the sentiments of its written hymns. Certain brothers with ability to sing and hold a tune were selected to lead the singing at all public meetings, usually without the aid of a musical score. When singing aids were first used, probably in the 1880s, the old fasola system was tried, in which word syllables representing the various notes of the scale were sung by leaders able to understand and read them. Small booklets containing these symbols (notations) were printed and used for several years.

The year 1895 represents a transition in the development of the Hymnal. The page size was increased to $5\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and a number of the older hymns were eliminated and newer ones inserted. It is significant that all the hymns were written by members, and no others are used throughout the Church. The 1895 edition was issued in both English and German, since services were still often held in the German language. This book totaled 368 pages, and was used until 1910, when it was thought necessary for a complete revision of the Hymnal.

A general meeting of committeemen was held in the Lancaster meeting house for discussion and suggestions, with the intention to make the 1910 edition as complete and comprehensive as it could be made. This included for the first time musical scores of all the tunes used by the Church. The shaped notes, which had been in use for many years by other churches and singing schools, were selected as being the most practical, for they aided the reader by identifying themselves by their shapes. This version of the Hymnal has been standard with the Church since 1910. In 1918 a second edition was printed, and in 1949 a third edition was issued, from which the German was eliminated, and the music section was re-edited and improved. In 1957 a fourth edition of the 1910 version was printed, without changes, except for the new music section of 1949. This is the Hymnal in current use throughout the Church.



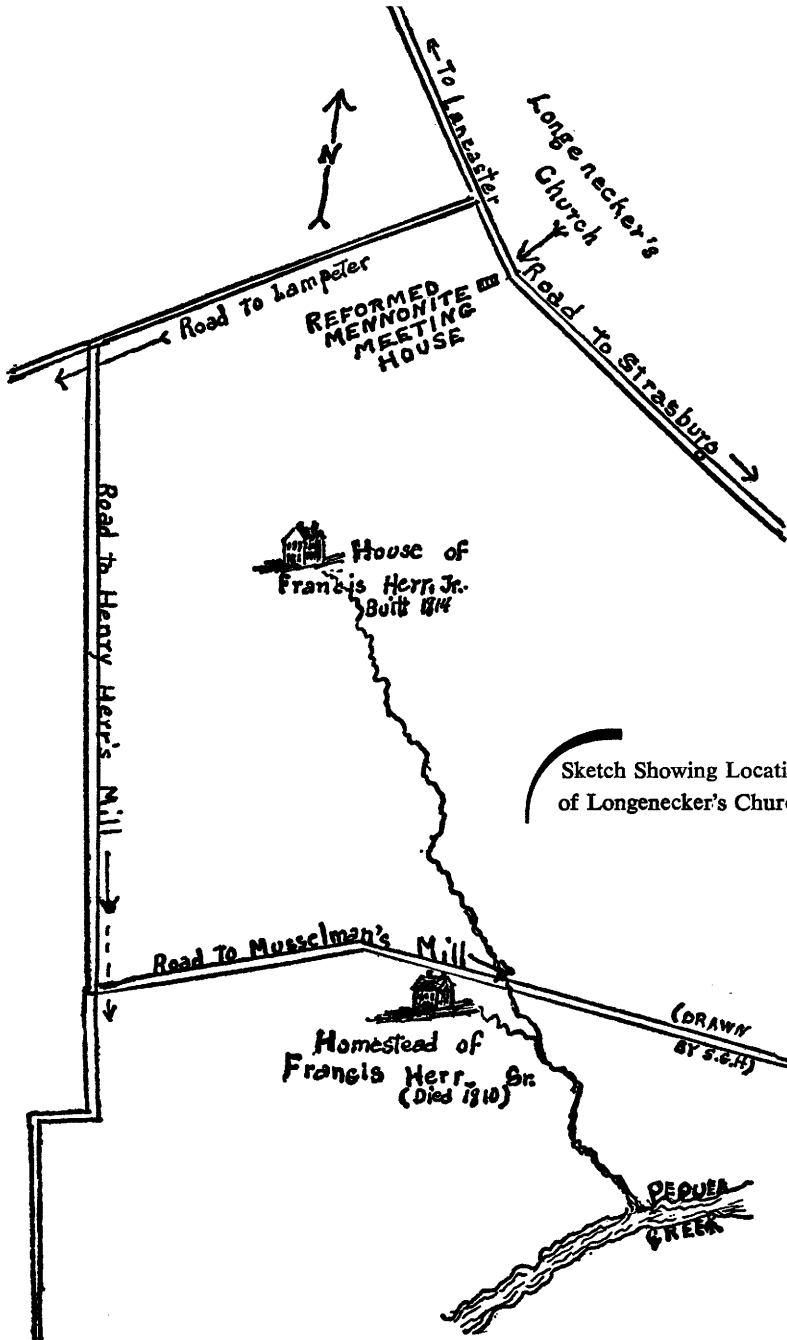
THE REFORMED MENNONITE CHURCH

REFORMED MENNONITE BISHOPS AND MINISTERS
OF LANCASTER COUNTY

	<i>Ordained Minister</i>	<i>Confirmed Bishop</i>	<i>Date of Death</i>	<i>Age</i>
1. John Herr	1812	1812	1850	68
2. Abraham Landis	1812		1861	81
3. John Landis	1812		1851	78
4. Christian Resh	1821		1849	68
5. Abraham Snively	?	1830	1867	78
6. Christian Frantz	1827	1830	1862	76
(moved to Franklin County, Pa.)				
7. Henry Bowman	1827	1830	1863	67
8. John Harnish	1832		1870	69
(moved to Clark County, Ohio)				
9. John Hershey	1832	18??	1851	51
(moved to Dauphin County, Pa.)				
10. John Kingports	18??	18??	1880	80
(excommunicated)				
11. Joseph Weaver	18??		1872	80
12. Samuel Hershey	1835		1885	81
13. George Mancha	1838		1850	?
14. Samuel Cassel	1841		1882	86
(his son, Samuel Cassel, Jr., a poet, composed many of the Reformed Mennonite hymns.)				
15. John H. Kulp	1843		1879	74
16. John Kohr, Sr.	1845	1853	1887	79
17. Jacob Geist	1845		1879	73
(moved to Baltimore County, Md.)				
18. Christian Hershey	1851	18??	1875	63
(moved to Dauphin County, Pa.)				
19. Abraham Horst	1851		1884	70
20. Dr. Daniel Musser	1851	1863	1877	67
21. Jacob Bowman	1851		1868	48
22. Christian N. Witmer	1865	1878	1879	48
23. Henry Weaver	1865		1898	82
24. Gabriel Wenger	18??			
(excommunicated)				
25. Abram Lantz	1871		1909	85
(moved to Morrow County, Ohio)				
26. Isaac Brubaker	1871		1887	52
27. John Haverstick	18??		1888	58
(relieved from ministry)				
28. Elias H. Hershey	1876	1884	1925	83
29. Abram Kurtz	1876		1917	76
30. Christian Howery	1876		1900	72

	<i>Ordained Minister</i>	<i>Confirmed Bishop</i>	<i>Date of Death</i>	<i>Age</i>
31. John Kohr, Jr.	1880	1897	1930	83
32. Henry H. Fisher	1880		1924	82
33. Levi Shenk	1885		1910	70
34. Martin N. Musser (relieved from ministry in 1894)	1885		1912	70
35. Levi H. Weaver	1888		1931	81
36. Abram Long (relieved from ministry)	1888		1944	92
37. John K. Ryder	1894		1926	66
38. Reuben Nolt	1894		1908	64
39. Abraham Brubaker (preached only in German, retired in 1931)	1900		1933	83
40. Jacob L. Kreider	1909	1923	1962	93
41. Christian S. Nolt	1910		1940	69
42. Elmer J. Trout	1914		1939	71
43. Henry S. Musser	1921		1951	71
44. Clyde W. Weaver	1928		1963	81
45. J. Henry Fisher	1928	1954		
46. V. Ray Eshleman	1940			
47. Willis Weaver	1940			
48. Earl M. Basinger	1951	1964		
49. William Eshelman	1960			
50. John S. Kilgore (on probation, 1965)				





Sketch Showing Location of Longenecker's Church.