

# GLIMPSES OF MENNONITE HISTORY AND DOCTRINE

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## Lesson 1: Birth of Swiss Anabaptism (Chapters 1, 2)

### KEY EVENTS, NAMES, AND DATES:

1. Day of Pentecost, A. D. 30: birth of the church.
2. Ante-Nicene Period, A.D. 30-325: persecution and growth of the church.
3. A. D. 325: merging of church and state under Constantine; Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.
4. The Dark Ages A.D. 400-1500: spiritual darkness in Europe under the corrupt Roman Catholic Church.
5. Martin Luther: reformer in Germany; in A. D. 1517 he posted his famous 95 theses of protest in Wittenberg, Germany.
6. Ulrich Zwingli: reformer in Zurich, Switzerland (contemporary of Luther).
7. Reformation: the movement begun by Luther in the early 1500s to reform the Catholic Church, resulting instead in the Protestant churches.
8. January 21, 1525: birth of Anabaptism when Conrad Grebel baptized George Blaurock, who in turn baptized Grebel and Felix Manz, all three of whom became leaders in the Swiss Anabaptist movement.

### STUDY GUIDE

#### (Chapter 1)

1. What church at the time of the Reformation had organizational continuity from the New Testament Church?
2. Trace the church “center” from Jerusalem to Rome.
3. What is *asceticism*, and when and how did it begin to undermine true Christianity?
4. Make a list of false beliefs and practices which developed in the Catholic tradition and against which the reformers and Anabaptists protested.
5. What group broke away from the Catholic Church in the eleventh century?

#### (Chapter 2)

6. The best explanation for the origin of Anabaptism is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. It simply followed in a direct succession of Biblicists from the time of the apostles.
  - b. It was a byproduct of mysticism.
  - c. It developed from several men who from within the Roman Catholic Church began to study the Scriptures and became committed to following the truth.
  - d. It was a carry-over from Munzer’s peasant revolt.
7. Describe Conrad Grebel’s educational background.
8. What Scripture became Luther’s doorway to inner peace?
9. What incident stirred Luther to write his 95 theses of protest?
10. What were the conditions under which Luther was able to translate the New Testament into German?
11. What were two major reasons Lutheranism failed to produce changed lives?
12. Where did Ulrich Zwingli lead reforms?
13. Prior to the break with the Swiss Anabaptists, what Catholic beliefs and practices did Zwingli oppose?
14. How did Zwingli die?
15. Who is considered the founder of Swiss Anabaptism?
16. Why did Zwingli stall in abolishing the mass, even though he recognized it to be un-Scriptural?
17. Describe Zwingli’s position on infant baptism.
18. What was the issue which finally divided Zwingli from the Swiss Brethren?
19. Who was the first to actually baptize an adult believer? What was the date? Whom did he baptize?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the inevitable consequences of the church merging with the state?
2. What constitutes “believer’s baptism”? In other words, what must a person know and believe to be eligible for baptism? Can a normal four- or five-year-old believe unto salvation? A nine- or ten-year-old? A sixteen- or seventeen-year-old?

3. Are there dangers in baptizing too early? Too late?
4. How do we respond to a child who asks for baptism at a time when we question whether he understands “faith unto salvation”?
5. How can the Christian community encourage meaningful conversions among the “growing up” generation and avoid having young people choose to be baptized simply because they have reached the generally accepted age?
6. Do we have any practices to which we have attached saving merit?

## Lesson 2: The Swiss Brethren and Their Leaders (Chapter 3)

### KEY EVENTS, NAMES, AND DATES:

1. Conrad Grebel: considered the founder of Swiss Anabaptism; died of the plague in the summer of 1526.
2. Felix Manz: leader of the Swiss Anabaptists; martyred by drowning in the Limmat River in 1527.
3. George Blaurock: fiery leader; burned at the stake in 1529.
4. Michael Sattler: leader; writer of the Schleitheim Confession; burned at the stake in 1527.
5. Pilgram Marpeck: leader and outstanding writer; died a natural death in 1556.
6. Jacob Ammann: Swiss Anabaptist leader who in 1693 led a schism; his followers came to be known as the Amish.

### STUDY GUIDE

(Chapter 3)

1. Who was Felix Manz's father? (*Note: Manz, being the son of a man who was forbidden by the Catholic system to have a wife, is testimony of the corruptness of the system. He was not unique; many others of his time were illegitimate offspring of priests.*)
2. Describe Manz's educational background.
3. What was Manz's position regarding the earthly possessions of believers?
4. In what town close to Zurich did Manz and Grebel have a fruitful ministry?
5. Who was present at the third disputation with Zwingli on baptism?
6. What life sentence did the three leaders of Swiss Anabaptism receive along with 21 other believers?
7. Conrad Grebel died in the summer of \_\_\_\_\_, a victim of \_\_\_\_\_. (*Note: The cold imprisonment in early 1526 no doubt weakened his already frail health – he had a severe arthritic condition.*)
8. In what town were Manz and Blaurock arrested in December, 1526?
9. Describe how Manz was martyred.
10. Who encouraged him at the time of his execution?
11. What were the last words of Felix Manz?
12. Describe George Blaurock.
13. Describe his boldness in the pulpit at Zollikon. At Hinwyl.
14. Why was Blaurock not executed at the same time as Felix Manz?
15. What was his sentence at that time?
16. Following expulsion from Zurich, what characterized Blaurock's ministry?
17. Describe Blaurock's martyrdom. (*Note: The severe torture of Blaurock and Langeegger was intended to gain information from them concerning the Anabaptists in the area, for under Blaurock's ministry, large numbers had responded to the Gospel.*)
18. What was Michael Sattler's reason for marrying?
19. Who were the reformers at Strasburg who opposed Sattler?
20. Describe the differing views of the church as taught by the reformers and as taught by Sattler.
21. Over what conference did Sattler preside, and what was his contribution?
22. How long was Sattler in prison?
23. After studying the charges against Sattler, describe what the authorities meant when they used the term *heresy*. Then find Scripture which defines what heresy actually is.
24. Describe Sattler's martyrdom.
25. How did the wife of Michael Sattler die?
26. When did Pilgram Marpeck join the Anabaptists?
27. What did he forfeit in joining the hated sect?
28. What job did Marpeck secure in Augsburg and how long did he retain it? (*Note: The only explainable reason for Marpeck not losing his job is that he did excellent work. The city officials used threats to try to dissuade him from Anabaptism, but needed him too badly to do more against him.*)
29. What was Marpeck's lasting contribution to Swiss Anabaptism? (*Note: In one of his writings, Marpeck clarified the distinction between the Old and New Testaments – the Old being foundational to the New, but the New*

*Testament being above the Old in establishing the rule of life for Christians. Some see this as one of his most significant contributions to the church through his writings. )*

30. What was the major reason Swiss Anabaptism did not expand more?
31. Who was the first Swiss Anabaptist to be martyred? Who was the last, and how was he martyred?
32. Summarize the appeal made by the Dutch government to the Swiss rulers.
33. What was the “Anabaptist Commission”?
34. What place in Germany provided a temporary haven for the Swiss Mennonites? *(Note: One of the qualifications for coming to the Palatinate was that the Mennonites would not proselyte; this is the reason for terming the offer of the Count as “qualified.”)*
35. How did the Swiss Mennonites eventually come to serving military duty?
36. In what year did Jacob Ammann part ways with the Swiss Mennonites?
37. What was the main issue of difference?
38. What were three particular items of contention?
39. What were two issues of contention which the Froehlich followers emphasized in withdrawing from the Swiss Mennonites?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The original leaders of Swiss Anabaptism were educated men, knowing especially the original languages of the Scripture. How was this important for their faith? To what extent might it be helpful, necessary, or dangerous today?
2. In early Swiss Anabaptism, Communion was shared often in the homes of believers. Most North American Mennonites observe this semi-annually at most. What are the strengths and weaknesses of either practice?
3. What are the necessary factors for Communion to be meaningful?
4. In early Swiss Anabaptism, baptism was administered upon confession of faith. Today most conservative Mennonites have a time of instruction prior to baptism. What are the strengths and weaknesses of either practice?
5. In retrospect, should the issue which separated the Amish from the Mennonites have been handled differently? What can we learn from this?

### Lesson 3: The Swiss Brethren in Other Lands (Chapter 4)

#### KEY EVENTS, NAMES, AND DATES:

1. Alsace: French-owned area west of Strasburg.
2. Palatinate: German-6 ed area north of Alsace; thousands of Mennonites migrated from the Palatinate to Pennsylvania in the 1700s.
3. Jacob Wiedemann: first to establish a community of goods in Moravia in 1528; a stern leader.
4. Jacob Huter: Swiss Anabaptist leader from Tirol who succeeded Wiedemann and made communal life successful; followers became known as Hutterites or Hutterians.

#### STUDY GUIDE

(Chapter 4)

1. What city seemed to be the Anabaptist center in Alsace?
2. Describe the opposition to Anabaptism in Strasburg.
3. According to the various accounts of Anabaptist worship in the Alsace region, describe a typical meeting.
4. What king of Austria was particularly severe in the persecution of Anabaptists?
5. What created an influx of Anabaptists to the Alsace region in the mid-1600s?
6. Several attempts were made by French kings to banish the Mennonites from the Alsace region. What arguments did local officials use in an attempt to allow the Mennonites to stay?
7. What two issues were particularly troublesome between French Mennonites and the government of France?
8. What French monarch in the early 1800s changed the exemptions which had been granted to the Mennonites?
9. Briefly describe the results of this change.
10. What was the major cause of Mennonites settling in Montbeliard?
11. Describe several privileges Mennonites enjoyed here.
12. What change created pressures for these people?
13. What demonstrates that the Palatinate region was caught in the upheaval of Reformation forces?
14. List briefly the concessions and the limitations given the Mennonites in the Palatinate under Elector Karl Ludwig.
15. List some of the trials the Mennonites suffered over the years in the Palatinate. (Note especially C. Henry Smith's description.)
16. What group of Mennonites was consistently active in giving relief to distressed Mennonites throughout Europe?
17. Where did Mennonites from the Palatinate generally emigrate to during the 1700s?
18. Finish this sentence which summarizes the intolerance toward Anabaptism in Bavaria: "He who recants shall be beheaded \_\_\_\_\_."
19. Briefly trace the Mennonite movement into and out of Poland.
20. Who was the first Anabaptist leader to establish a "community of goods"?
21. Where did this group settle?
22. Where did Jacob Ruter pastor a Bruderhof? (*Note: Wiedemann, it appears, was a rather authoritarian leader – to the point of designating marriages in the group – but he was not able to establish an economically efficient system. In contrast, Huter required equality, discipline, and efficiency, and thus his system became the pattern for successful communities thereafter.*)
23. Briefly describe the "golden age" of the Hutterian brethren.
24. What Roman Catholic order was particularly severe in the persecution of the Hutterians?
25. Name the three divisions of Hutterian Brethren in North America.
26. Briefly describe the experiences of the four Hutterian conscientious objectors.
27. Where is the greatest concentration of Hutterian groups today?
28. Who established Neo-Hutterianism in Germany?
29. Trace briefly how the German Bruderhof came to be the Society of Brothers in England.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the positive and negative results of Swiss Anabaptism being forcibly moved from one area to another? What were some of the factors which led Anabaptists to be willing to discontinue proselyting? Did this mentality (of being quiet if left alone) come with the Palatinate Mennonites to America?
2. Considering the severity of persecution, what kept people coming to receive believer's baptism and join the Anabaptists?
3. The "community of goods" is taught by the Hutterian groups as the Biblical way for believers to live. What is the Biblical teaching and example?
4. What common troubles among conservative Mennonites could Bruderhof living eliminate?
5. Considering the history of the Hutterian groups from their beginning to the present, what disadvantages and dangers are there attending the system?



## Lesson 4: Birth of the Mennonites (Chapters 5, 6)

### KEY EVENTS, NAMES, AND DATES:

1. Melchiorites: followers of Melchior Hofmann, whose teachings on Christ's return and imminent earthly kingdom led many astray and brought much discredit to Anabaptism.
2. Munsterites: people who tried in 1534 to set up God's kingdom on earth, thinking Munster, Germany was the Zion of God; ended in terrible overthrow; again became a means of discrediting Anabaptism.
3. Batenburgers: followers of John Batenburg, who attempted to keep the Munsterite vision alive.
4. Davidians: followers of David Joris, a vision-minding leader at one time associated with the Anabaptists who came to oppose the Anabaptist emphasis on holy living as "dead-letter faith."
5. Obbenites: Dutch Anabaptists under the leadership of Obbe Philips; later, under the leadership of Menno Simons, came to be known as Mennonites.
6. Mennonites: Dutch and North German Anabaptists who under the leadership of Menno Simons grew and prospered into well-established congregations.

### STUDY GUIDE

(Chapter 5)

1. Who licensed Melchior Hofmann to preach?
2. Briefly describe Hofmann's view of the Incarnation. Of himself. Of Christ's return. Of the church.
3. How did Hofmann die?
4. How were the baptisms of Obbe Philips and Dirck Philips traceable to Hofmann?
5. What ties did John Matthys have with Hofmann?
6. What did Bernt Rathmann, the priest at Munster, preach against which was in harmony with Anabaptism?
7. The men who took over the reform at Munster viewed this city as \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Briefly tell how John Matthys died.
9. Briefly describe the rulership and overthrow of John Bockelson at Munster.
10. Who ordained David Joris to the ministry?
11. What is *antinomianism* (toward which Joris leaned)?
12. What does Joris' later life reveal about his former ministry?
13. Name four tenets of John Batenburg's teaching.
14. Name as specifically as possible the effect each of these four sects had on Anabaptism. (Chapter 6)
15. Who was the leader of the Obbenites?
16. According to Obbe's account, how did the apostles of John Matthys convince their converts?
17. Describe briefly how the prophecies of these men proved to be false.
18. What was Obbe Philips' personal response when he realized how he and others had been deceived by the Melchiorites?
19. Who baptized Menno Simons?
20. What were two points in which the Obbenites differed from the Swiss Anabaptists?
21. What was significantly lacking in Menno Simons' training as a priest?
22. What led Menno to study the New Testament?
23. What doctrine of Luther was a great help to Menno Simons?
24. What was the second issue which Menno looked to the New Testament to resolve?
25. How did the Munsterites indirectly help Menno decide to follow Christ openly?
26. How long after his conversion did Menno remain a Catholic?
27. Briefly describe what led to his ordination.
28. What became of Obbe Philips after this?
29. How did the authorities describe Menno's ministry?
30. In the Emperor's warrant for Menno's arrest, "grace and pardon" was offered to anyone guilty of the crime of Anabaptism who would capture Menno. What is the Emperor attempting to do here? On what condition? What was the monetary reward?
31. Briefly describe how Menno's last years were spent.

32. What issue was particularly hot in the closing years of Menno's ministry?
33. For how many years was Menno active as an Anabaptist minister?
34. Although Menno did not die as a martyr, what things did he suffer?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it that where true Christianity progresses, counterfeits invariably spring up? What is the best way to face these counterfeits?
2. How can we distinguish between immature brethren with misunderstanding and false brethren with heresy? And what should our response be to each?
3. Both Obbe Philips and Menno Simons had a "veritable terror of alleged new revelations" (in the words of John Horsch). In light of Hofmann and Matthys, why would they? Should we have the same view of revelations and visions today?
4. The naming of the various Anabaptist groups (Obbenites, Mennists or Mennonites, etc.) came usually from their enemies. The Anabaptists normally referred to themselves simply as "brethren." Is our view of the name *Mennonite* different now as compared to then? Do we have unhealthy attachments to the name? Is denomination important? What does the New Testament teach us?
5. The ban has been and continues to be viewed differently. What does the Scripture say? And how do we follow the instructions practically?

## Lesson 5: Mennonites in the Netherlands and Russia (Chapters 7-9)

### KEY EVENTS, NAMES, AND DATES:

1. Leonard Bouwens: Dutch Anabaptist leader who baptized over 10,000 converts.
2. A. D. S. (General Mennonite Society): conference of Dutch Mennonites founded in 1811.
3. Johann Cornies: innovator who improved the quality of education and farming among the Russian Mennonites.
4. Ukraine: province in South Western Russia where Mennonites from Prussia and Poland (originally from the Netherlands) settled and prospered in the late 1700s and throughout the 1800s.
5. Bolshevik Revolution: Communist takeover of Russia in 1917; many Russian Mennonites had emigrated before this, but those who remained lost their land and possessions; many of the men were sent to prison camps in Siberia.

### STUDY GUIDE

(Chapter 7)

1. Name four outstanding Dutch Anabaptist bishops.
2. What was the most outstanding literary work of Dirck Philips? (*Note: Dirck was probably the most educated of Dutch Anabaptist leaders, being fluent in Latin, Hebrew, Greek, German, and likely French.*)
3. What was sad about the death of Gillis?
4. How many baptized converts were named on Bouwens' list?
5. Approximately how many Anabaptists were martyred in the Netherlands from 1531 through 1597?
6. What issue plagued the Dutch Anabaptists with strife in the early years?
7. What was helpful in uniting the groups?
8. Describe the conditions among the Dutch Anabaptists toward the close of the 1600s.
9. Briefly describe the purpose and history of the Amsterdam Seminary.
10. What was the name and founding date of the organization of Dutch Anabaptist churches?
11. Briefly describe the Dutch Mennonites of the mid-twentieth century, and if possible, compare this with current statistics from a *Mennonite Yearbook*.

(Chapter 8)

*Note: In reading the opening section of Chapter VIII, do not be confused geographically by the term "Lower Rhine." The Rhine River runs generally north, and thus, the "Lower Rhine" is north of the Palatinate.*

12. How many Mennonites were banished from Aachen in 1614?
13. What prominent Dutch Anabaptist bishop came from Aachen? (Recall your answer to question 1.)
14. Name two Mennonites martyred at Cologne.
15. What gathering was held at Cologne in 1591, and what was the outcome?
16. What was the European hometown of the settlers of Germantown, Pennsylvania?
17. List two debates held in Emden.
18. Briefly describe the Mennonite conference held in Emden in 1547.
19. Where did Menno Simons spend the concluding years of his ministry?
20. What characterized the Mennonites of the Hamburg area?
21. What issue led to a division in the Hamburg-Altona congregation in the mid-1600s?
22. What leader in the same congregation stood for simplicity and against the trend toward religious liberalism for more than sixty years?
23. What book did he write?
24. Who was reportedly the first bishop of Danzig?
25. What divided the Danzig Mennonites, and when were they eventually united?
26. Describe briefly what happened to the Danzig Mennonites in the Second World War.

*Note: The description of Mennonites in Danzig and Poland makes little mention of the emigration to Russia in the late 1700s. But the great majority of Russian Mennonites came from the Danzig area, in Chapter IX referred to as Prussia.*

(Chapter 9)

27. Briefly describe what led to the Russian invitation to Mennonites to colonize in the Ukraine.
28. The Ukraine is north of what sea?
29. Describe the financial picture of the Russian Mennonites as it developed.
30. Who was the Russian Mennonite who became famous for innovations in both farming and education?
31. How did the Russian Mennonites fare spiritually?
32. Briefly describe two migrations, one westward and one eastward, which occurred in the late 1800s.
33. What revolution occurred at the close of the First World War which drastically changed the situation for the Russian Mennonites?
34. Name the countries where Russian Mennonites have settled.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What seemed to be the catalyst of spiritual decline among Mennonites both in the Netherlands and in Russia? Is material prosperity wrong? Is the same thing happening in North America? Are there safeguards which we should be taking? (For an account of the conditions suffered during the Bolshevik Revolution, read *From Wealth to Faith*, published by CLP. The book, *But Not Forsaken*, shows the plight of Russian Mennonites during the Second World War.)
2. Occasionally an Anabaptist recanted under persecution (such as the noted Bishop Gillis of Aachen), but many suffered almost indescribable suffering. What may we learn from the faithful martyrs? Do the examples of unfaithfulness teach us anything? What value is there in reading such books as the *Martyrs Mirror*? Should we read these stories to our children? to young children?

## Lesson 6: Mennonites in North America (Chapters 10-12)

### KEY EVENTS, NAMES, AND DATES:

1. Germantown, Pennsylvania: home of the first continuing Mennonite community, established in 1683.
2. Mennonite Church: in North America, the largest body of Mennonites.
3. General Conference Mennonite Church: second largest body of Mennonites in North America.
4. *Schleitheim Confession of Faith*: written by Michael Sattler, 1527.
5. *Dordrecht Confession of Faith*: written by Adrian Cornelis, 1632.
6. *The Ausbund*: Swiss Anabaptist collection of hymns, 1564, still used by the Amish.

### STUDY GUIDE

#### (Chapter 10)

1. What was the first enduring Mennonite settlement in North America?
2. Who was the first Mennonite minister in North America?
3. Where did the majority of Mennonite immigrants come from in the first half of the 1700s, and where did they settle?
4. What occasioned the Mennonite immigration of the early 1800s?
5. From what European area did these settlers come?
6. From Christian Ropp's account, briefly describe what it was like to emigrate to North America. (*Note: By this time, crossing was no doubt some better than a century earlier when the first Mennonites crossed. For an account of the hardships then; see the book "Hidden Riches," by Stauffer, published by CLP.*)
7. Give the approximate dates of the two migrations of Mennonites from Russia.
8. What was the U . S. origin of the majority of Mennonites who settled in lower Ontario (Kitchener area) in the late 1700s?
9. Choose the best answer: Generally it could be said that the district conferences of the Mennonite Church were organized according to \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. population                      b. available bishops                      c. geographic area
10. Generally the Amish Mennonites merged with what group?
11. Who was the founder of the *Herald of Truth*?
12. Who was the first moderator of the Mennonite General Conference? (*Note: Do not confuse the name of the meeting, Mennonite General Conference, with the name of the group, General Conference Mennonites. Mennonite General Conference was the biennial meeting of the Mennonite Church. (After 1969 this meeting was called Mennonite General Assembly. ) General Conference Mennonites refers to a different body of churches.*)
13. What was the purpose of organizing the Mennonite General Conference?
14. After recording the major schisms among the Mennonites and Amish, the writer concludes Chapter X with a plea for tolerance and unity. What comment would you make concerning the history of schisms since the mid-1900s?

#### (Chapter 11)

15. What is the largest body of Mennonites?
16. What group merged with the Mennonite Church in the early 1900s?
17. Briefly describe the position of the Mennonite Church in each of the following points: a. communion, b. the veiling, c. use of force, d. the oath, e. attire, f. worship, g. the ministry, h. marriage, i. political involvement. (*Note: Obviously, the position of the Mennonite Church on these items is different now as compared to the mid-twentieth century when this book was written. More will be noted in this regard later.*)
18. What occasioned the withdrawal of John Oberholtzer's group in 1847?
19. Name some underlying differences between Oberholtzer's group and the Mennonites from whom he departed.
20. Briefly describe the changes which followed in Oberholtzer's group.
21. What broader organizational group emerged from Oberholtzer's efforts?
22. What phrase captured the spirit of General Conference Mennonites at this time?
23. What group greatly added to the numbers of General Conference Mennonites?

24. Briefly describe the organizational structure of General Conference Mennonites.
25. Where did the Mennonite Brethren Church originate?
26. Briefly state the Mennonite Brethren position on each of the following: a. church membership, b. baptism, c. evangelism
27. Summarize the Old Order Amish position toward inventions of the world.
28. Describe typical Old Order Amish worship.
29. Briefly state the weaknesses and strengths of the Old Order Amish.
30. What is probably the primary way in which the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church differs doctrinally from other Mennonites?
31. In what way is the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church more like the early Anabaptists than any other Mennonite group?
32. Briefly describe the worship ideals of the Old Order Mennonites.
33. Who was the founder of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, and on what basis did he begin a new group?
34. What groups combined to form the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, and what was their unique position on baptism?
35. What are the particular emphases of the Evangelical Mennonite Church which distinguish them from other Mennonites?
36. What was the original name of the Evangelical Mennonite Church (of Canada)?
37. What was the expressed intent of the Reformed Mennonites? (Chapter 12)
38. List a significant writing of each of the following: a. T. J. van Braght, b. Dirck Philips, c. Christopher Dock, d. Daniel Kauffman, e. John Horsch, f. Michael Sattler, g. Adrian Cornelis.
39. Briefly trace the hymnody of Mennonites, noting the most significant hymnbooks.

## ADDENDUM

The description of the Mennonite Church (Chapter XI) is obviously outdated. The “discarding tendencies” of the General Conference Mennonites (described on p.115) would generally apply to the Mennonite Church since the mid-1900s. As a result, talk of merging these two bodies led in 1983 to a joint conference meeting. The trend away from historic Mennonite belief and practice has resulted in a variety of withdrawal/reorganization movements. Out of the Mennonite General Conference (now Mennonite General Assembly) have come such groups as the Conservative Mennonite Conference (1910). Out of Virginia Conference came Southeastern Mennonite Conference in 1972. Out of Lancaster Conference emerged the Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship in 1978. Through the course of years, numerous congregations have removed themselves from this conference or that and remained “independent” or “unaffiliated.” Occasionally, groups of these unaffiliated churches have united to form a fellowship of churches, sometimes for a particular endeavor. The Mid-West Fellowship, for example, was formed in 1978 to organize and sponsor a winter Bible school. Other such fellowships include Conservative Mennonite Fellowship (1956), Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church (1968), and Western Conservative Mennonite Fellowship. While these fellowships have no official organizational ties to each other, ministers and congregations often have interaction back and forth with those in other fellowships. Minor variations exist between such fellowships and sometimes between congregations within the same fellowship, yet in general it may be said they are similar in the following ways:

- a. They believe the Bible to be the rule of life and faith.
- b. They teach that the new birth, as a clear and thorough change in life, is necessary for church membership.
- c. They believe the church has both the authority and the obligation to require a consistent Christian walk of its members, and thus to a greater or lesser degree, they make regulations applicable to their members.
- d. They refuse participation in politics and earthly warfare.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Mennonite migrations, caused by intolerance and persecution from the outside, have typically brought Mennonites to a better working relationship internally. At the same time, where toleration has permitted Mennonites to settle and thrive, internal dissension rises. What can be learned from this? Is there danger



in becoming too settled in a closed community? Could internal difficulties be avoided if Mennonite communities would branch out voluntarily as soon as growth permits this? What other factors are involved here? What vision, beyond simply avoiding large settlements, is necessary?

2. Obviously the New Testament does not teach believers to be united with those who profess to be Christians but in truth are not. What guidelines would we have for severing fellowship? What dangers surround this? What precautions should be taken?
3. Is it Scriptural to draw lines of exclusion between Christians? Have we been guilty of this? What should be our association with people we believe are Christians, but are in a group which we believe is generally apostate?

## Lesson 7: Mennonite Theology- Major Doctrines (Chapter 13, pp. 137-147)

### KEY CONCEPTS:

1. Anabaptists generally agreed with the Reformers on major doctrines such as the Trinity, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and salvation through faith in Christ. Thus, their writings, including their confessions, tended to be clarifications of issues under debate, rather than thorough presentations of their theology.
2. All Anabaptists believed staunchly in the deity of Christ; Menno, however, and some with him, believed Jesus' physical body was a creation of the Holy Spirit within Mary, so that Jesus did not receive even His human body from her. The Swiss Anabaptists and later most Mennonites rejected Menno's view of the "celestial flesh" of Christ.

### STUDY GUIDE

(Chapter 13, p. 137)

1. Complete this statement: Anabaptism and Mennonitism are more than theological.
2. From this, we could conclude that Anabaptists \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. refused to read or write anything other than Scripture
  - b. focused on knowing and following the Scripture rather than attempting to systematically explain their understanding of it
  - c. believed everyone understood the Scriptures the same
  - d. believed the Christian faith was too difficult to explain systematically
3. What writing of Menno Simons sets forth the doctrine of God?
4. Writing about the greatness of God, Menno weaves the language of Scripture into a powerful description. Which part of this description is most gripping to you?
5. After describing as high, as low, and as far as human words can reach, what must be our conclusion concerning the greatness of God?
6. What words did Menno use to describe the humanity of Christ?
7. What prophet did he quote to show the deity of Christ?
8. In the *Dordrecht Confession* of 1632, how did the Dutch Mennonites resolve the question of the origin of Jesus' body?
9. List several ways in which Menno shows the deity of the Holy Spirit.
10. According to the paragraph on the Holy Spirit, what is His work?
11. How does Menno confess the unity of the Trinity?
12. What is the nature like which we receive by birth?
13. What is its relation to God?
14. What is it unable to do?
15. Dirck Philips quotes Jesus to show that the new birth is the only entrance into what?
16. Where does this new birth take place? (*Note: To us, these may seem like simple Bible truths. But to the Anabaptists, these were important to clarify because the Catholic tradition had deceived people into believing they entered the kingdom of God by observing external rituals such as baptism and Communion which had no bearing upon changing the actual life and conduct.*)
17. According to Dirck, what is the effect of the new birth on the mind?
18. What is the effect on the heart?
19. What Scriptural basis did Menno Simons have for describing the new birth as the result of "preaching the divine Word"?
20. The first paragraph written by Menno under "Holiness of Life" is another example of his use of Scripture in his writings. (Your own acquaintance with the Scripture will be necessary to answer this question.) How many different Scriptures does he quote from or make obvious allusions to in this paragraph?
21. What, according to the second paragraph, is the believer signifying by baptism?
22. John Wouters listed evidences by which his daughter could identify the true church of Jesus. What were these evidences?
23. Why is the grace of God important to believers, and how is it made available?



24. What does reconciliation with God depend upon?
25. In Menno's description of FAITH and UNBELIEF, how does he identify with the reformers, and how does he distinguish himself from them?
26. Name three other Anabaptists who clearly taught that even after we are born again, we are dependent upon the grace of God because of our imperfection.
27. Complete these statements: The Anabaptists believed the church to be "nothing more or less than the fellowship of the \_\_\_\_\_." Menno referred to the church as an "assembly of the \_\_\_\_\_" and as a "community of the \_\_\_\_\_."
28. What was the Mennonite concept of the kingdom of Christ?
29. According to the parable of the tares, what will occur at the time of Jesus' coming, and what will follow?
30. How did the episode at Munster disregard the point of this parable?
31. How did the Anabaptists view the authority of the Scriptures?
32. What did Menno insist must be done with that which is contrary to Scripture?
33. What was Menno's point in saying he was not Enoch or Elijah and that he received no visions?
34. What characterized the debate methods of the reformers?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The writer states that Anabaptists "engaged in no speculation concerning the philosophical aspects of the Trinity for they were Biblicists rather than theologians." Is this a strength or weakness of Anabaptism? To what extent should we try to think through the logic and order of what we believe?
2. Why is both the deity and the humanity of Jesus important to us?
3. Is the chance of having unconverted church members less or greater today as compared to the time of the Anabaptists? Why? How can congregations insist on a changed life without giving the impression that holiness can be prescribed by do's and don'ts.
4. What is the difference between the Anabaptists' trust in God's grace and the Calvinists' trust in God's grace?

## Lesson 8: Mennonite Theology--The Bible (Chapter 13, pp. 147-166)

### KEY CONCEPTS:

1. Anabaptists studied the written Word more to the end of living it than to the end of building a systematic theology from it; thus, their interest in the Word was more experiential than theoretical.
2. Anabaptists believed that all of the Bible is inspired, but that the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old and takes precedence in ordering life and conduct.
3. Anabaptists took the New Testament requirements to be applicable through the entire church age.

### STUDY GUIDE

(Chapter 13, p. 147)

1. True or False? At the time of the Reformation, the Anabaptists alone believed in the inspiration of Scriptures.
2. In one sentence, describe what distinguished the Anabaptists from the Reformers in their view of the Bible.
3. On what basis did the Anabaptists refuse to bow to the pressures of both the state and the state church to do things which violated their consciences?
4. Whom did Menno refer to as the sole "Ruler of the conscience"?
5. The Anabaptists believed New Testament commands should be followed in both "form and spirit." This means that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. they believed in following New Testament commands as stated
  - b. they believed a set of regulations was important for every ordinance
  - c. they desired to give every command a spiritual significance
  - d. they believed violations of any N.T. commands should be punished by excommunication
6. What two symbols are especially meaningful in showing what the Lord does and has done for believers?
7. What did Menno Simons say the kiss of peace was symbolic of?
8. What Catholic abuse was associated with "anointing oil"?
9. What has been the historic practice of virtually all congregations concerning the veiling?
10. Briefly list the symbolic significance of each of the following: a. baptism, b. the Lord's Supper, c. feet-washing, d. the holy kiss, e. anointing with oil, f. the veiling, g. marriage
11. On the basis of the above, write a definition of *ordinance*.
12. Name three offices of ordained men in the church and give a summarizing statement of their corresponding duties.
13. The section entitled "Restrictions" (pp. 152 ff.) deals with certain things which Mennonites in obedience to the New Testament refrain from doing. What is the first thing listed?
14. In this matter it is important to note that the teaching of Jesus and the apostles was not merely negative, but positive as well. True, they commanded believers not to use force. List briefly some of the positive commands which were given in the same teaching.
15. In simple acceptance of Jesus' teaching, what do Mennonites believe concerning participation in the following: a. warfare b. police or judicial work
16. What does the Bible teach concerning the state's use of force?
17. What does the Bible teach concerning the payment of taxes?
18. Briefly describe what happened among European Mennonites concerning the doctrine of nonresistance.
19. Briefly trace the doctrinal position of the Russian Mennonites on nonresistance.
20. What type of work has typically been done by Mennonites as alternative service to their country?
21. What does the Bible say with regard to the use of litigation?
22. What does the Bible teach concerning reinforcing our words with oaths?
23. On what basis do Mennonites refrain from membership in secret orders?
24. What does the Bible say about each of the following: a. the permanence of marriage, b. divorce, c. marriage following divorce

25. List a number of forms of external showiness mentioned by Menno which would violate the simplicity taught in the Scripture.
26. How are modern hair styles violating the teaching of Scripture?
27. Name a number of modern forms of entertainment made available by technology which draw people into lust and sensual pleasures and which ought therefore to be avoided by believers.
28. Name four proper goals for the use of church discipline.
29. Briefly state the rationale for close Communion.
30. The Book of Hebrews shows us that the old covenant was preparatory for what?
31. Briefly contrast the character of the two covenants.
32. In the matter of the two covenants, briefly state the basic agreement of the reformers and the Anabaptists; then summarize their basic disagreement.
33. Complete this statement: The Anabaptists “demanded \_\_\_\_\_ backing for every church ordinance and for the entire ethic of the Christian.”
34. The position of Dirck Philips on the “unity in spirit” of the two covenants could best be summarized as: \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. The Old Testament, interpreted properly, says the same thing as the New Testament.
- b. The two testaments are united in that the same Holy Spirit inspired them both.
- c. Every command in the Old Testament is repeated in the New Testament.
- d. The letter of the Old Testament finds fulfillment, meaning, and reality in the Gospel.
35. True or False? The Anabaptists’ attitude toward the New Testament was that it should be understood and obeyed exactly as it was given.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Catholic error on baptism and the Lord’s Supper was that they made these things ends in themselves and thus robbed them of their true significance. Is there a danger of the ordinances losing their significance among conservative people today? What are essentials for preserving the meaningfulness of baptism? the Lord’s supper? footwashing? the holy kiss? the veiling?
2. Is the veiling simply a prayer veiling? Is it primarily for times of public worship? What Scriptural principles would guide the size and style of the veiling?
3. Should we pay taxes when we do not agree with how the money is used?
4. What factors have contributed to making the issue of attire so prominent among conservative groups? What are the dangers of avoiding the issue? What are the dangers of overemphasis?
5. To what extent are we feeling the impact of those who doubt or deny the inspiration of Scripture? How can we safeguard ourselves and our children from the dangers of skepticism?

## Lesson 9: Mennonite Theology-The Church and Christian Life (Chapter 13, pp.166 ff. )

### KEY CONCEPTS:

1. The Anabaptists believed the church is composed of genuine believers who walk in fellowship with and obedience to Jesus Christ.
2. The Anabaptists emphasized that those who walk in obedience to Jesus form a brotherhood whose members have responsibility and accountability one to another.
3. The Anabaptists believed that love for Christ, the church, and its members requires discipline of errant members.
4. The Anabaptists believed the corporate body of Christ exists in society, but is not of it, and thereby serves God by reflecting His glory and serves society by staying corruption.
5. The Anabaptists saw the church as having a calling, a kingdom, and a set of guiding ethics higher than any earthly kingdom; and therefore they believed that Christians could not enter earthly government either as a corporate body (forming a state church) or as individuals.
6. The Anabaptists accepted persecution as an opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ.
7. The Anabaptists emphasized a spirit of brokenness, contrition, and humility as becoming to children of God.

### STUDY GUIDE (Chapter 13, p. 166)

1. What problem was created by the state/church arrangement of the reformers?
2. According to both Luther's co-worker and Menno Simons, what was the chief mark of "piety" among the common Lutherans?
3. List six marks given by Menno by which the true church is known.
4. How did the Anabaptists say a believers' church would help the lost?
5. Briefly state Menno's position with regard to the salvation of children.
6. According to Article XVI of the *Dordrecht Confession*, what are several purposes for excommunication?
7. What two arguments did the reformers offer against the Anabaptist view of church discipline?
8. Menno taught that excommunication should be practiced in what spirit?
9. Briefly summarize the Anabaptist view of the function of the church as in contrast to the function of the state.
10. Briefly contrast the Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist views of the Christian's work in society and relationship to it.
11. What was Menno's view of the New Testament kingdom and its King?
12. How did Menno say Christians are to respond to needs?
13. What should be our attitude and action when we see a member sin?
14. Briefly describe four kinds of sin as Menno categorized them and tell how they are dealt with.
15. Contrast the Anabaptists' view of baptism with Luther's view.
16. What did Menno say would be the awful but logical conclusion of believing we are saved through water baptism?
17. What covenant do we enter into through baptism?
18. Briefly explain how the Anabaptists' de-emphasis of the ordinances made those very ordinances more meaningful.
19. According to the Anabaptists, what was the essence of Christianity?
20. What did the cross mean to the Anabaptists?
21. Reading Christian Langedul's writings to his wife, how would you describe his attitude toward his family? toward suffering? toward death? toward himself? toward God?
22. Briefly describe the situation of the martyrs John and Janneken van Munstorp.
23. In the letter to her month-old child, how does Janneken identify the true believers for her daughter?
24. Complete this statement: "Only those who were truly saints \_\_\_\_\_."
25. As a sanctifying factor in the believer, the cross effects the crucifixion of what?
26. Why did Menno believe the number of true saints would be relatively small?
27. Describe the German term *bussfertigkeit*.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is the state/church separation in North America becoming confused? What will be the backlash of “Christian” involvement in politics?
2. A government “of the people by the people” raises questions on the matter of Christian involvement in politics which neither the Anabaptists nor the early church faced. In North American democracies, the common citizen can enter into the political workings of his country. He does this by the vote. Is this suitable for Christians? Is it consistent to vote for candidates or issues, but to refuse to run as a candidate?
3. Concerning children, Menno said believers should “educate them in the instruction and fear of the Lord as much as we are able.” In practical terms how is this done? How and when does home instruction take place? Do we have the proper vision for our Sunday schools? for Christian day schools? What will be the effect when Christian day schools replace home training?
4. What is the effect of not dealing with church problems? What is the effect of dealing with problems hastily or contrary to the Spirit of Christ?
5. In terms practical for North American culture, what is discipleship? What are hindrances to discipleship?
6. Are we continuing to confront apostate Christianity with the true Gospel? Should we be? How? Can we do so without antagonizing? Are we better off quietly living the Gospel or boldly proclaiming it? Can we do one without the other?
7. Should we be looking more closely at the concept of *bussfertigkeit*? What are the evidences of brokenness? of not being broken?

## Lesson 10: The Anabaptist Vision and the Current Situation (Chapters 14, 15)

### KEY CONCEPTS:

1. The early Anabaptists were zealously evangelistic in spite of fierce persecution.
2. Continued persecution and harassment eventually quieted the fires of evangelism in Europe; in some cases wearied groups traded their right to proselyte for the right to live.
3. Early Mennonite immigrants to America, weary of oppression, were content to form quiet communities unto themselves.
4. Toward the close of the 1800s, winds of revival spread through the Mennonite Church, encouraged by men such as John F. Funk and John S. Coffman; with this came renewed interest in missions.
5. The greater focus of North American Mennonite mission work is foreign missions.
6. North American governments guarantee freedom of religion, but the culture generally interprets this to mean “freedom from religion” as well; evangelism in North America is difficult work.
7. In spite of religious freedom, few Mennonite groups in North America are actively recruiting those in their own neighborhood for the Lord.

### STUDY GUIDE

(Chapter 14)

1. Briefly describe some of the things which, from our standpoint, would have stood in the way of effective evangelism at the time of early Anabaptism.
2. What, however, were the effects of Anabaptist evangelistic efforts?
3. What was unique about the Anabaptist position and witness at this time?
4. Briefly describe the evangelism of the following prominent Anabaptist leaders: a. Conrad Grebel, b. Felix Manz, c. George Blaurock, d. Menno Simons, e. Leonard Bouwens.
5. In what gripping words did Menno describe the work of preaching?
6. What was the “martyr synod,” and why was it so called?
7. What two reasons does the writer give for the dampening of the missionary zeal of the Anabaptists?
8. What was Tertullian’s statement on persecution?
9. Under what stipulation did the Bernese Anabaptists migrate to the Palatinate and the Prussian Anabaptists to Russia?
10. Briefly describe the difficult conditions the Mennonites faced upon coming to pioneer America.
11. List the two purposes of the early meetinghouses of the Mennonites.
12. Describe a typical worship service of the early American Mennonites.
13. Name four special services held on occasion by these Mennonites.
14. What helped to bring an awakening to the Mennonite Church in the latter 1800s?
15. Where was the first Mennonite Sunday school held and in what year?
16. Bender lists seven major contributions of the Sunday school. Which to you is most significant?
17. List John F. Funk’s major contribution to the church.
18. What was John S. Coffman’s literary work?
19. How did Coffman arrive at the decision to conduct evangelistic meetings?
20. What was his testimony concerning fasting?
21. Coffman led many to Christ who became outstanding church leaders. Can you describe the work of any of the leaders mentioned?
22. List four areas where missions were established around the turn of the century.
23. Name three Mennonite colleges formed in the early 1900s.
24. How was the *Gospel Herald* formed?
25. What historical journal was begun by Goshen College?
26. List several kinds of charitable organizations formed by Mennonites in the early 1900s.
27. What occasioned the organization of MCC?

(Chapter 15)

28. In Chapter 15, the writer describes six things which he considers assets of the Mennonites. Briefly list these.
29. What is the first “liability” he describes?
30. Secondly, the writer says Mennonites are facing a breakdown of “sociological barriers.” List a number of things which he offers as examples.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Within a few short years after the birth of Anabaptism, the original leaders were dead. Yet, perhaps the more remarkable thing was that leadership could be organized so quickly to replace the martyred and meet the demands of rapid growth. What is the importance of leadership? How much training should leaders have? How much study should they be free to engage in?
2. The early Anabaptists often ordained men specifically for the work of evangelism. Should this be done today? Does the present church have need of evangelists (Ephesians 4:11)? Should evangelists preach largely to the church (as most Mennonite evangelists do), or should they be trained to reach the unconverted? If so, how?
3. In what ways is the mentality of being the “quiet in the land” still with us? What hidden barriers does our exclusiveness create to those who come into our groups from non-Mennonite background? How can these things be changed?
4. Are we equipped to meet the challenges of leading people from unregenerate society to maturity in Christ? What are some essentials?
5. Some of the “assets and liabilities” given by the writer need updating. How would you describe the current situation? What should we be giving ourselves to for the future of the church?

