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MISSION AND SERVICE AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF NORTH AMERICAN MENNONITES

WILBERT R. SHENK*

During the past century North American Mennonites and Brethren in Christ have experienced an extraordinary permutation in identity. The primary source of this development is the modern mission movement—which itself was entering a new phase of development by 1880—and the ministries of compassion that emerged out of emergency relief and development following World War I. But this transformation needs to be placed within a wider frame. It is also a result of the all-encompassing globalization which has increasingly bound the world together. The process has been described as consisting of three stages: deprovincialization, internationalization and globalization.¹ The journey through each stage is filled with struggle and strain as the old is forced to make way for the new. In addition, the modern project has been marked by profound ambiguity and contradiction for the church as well as humankind generally.

*Wilbert R. Shenk is professor of Mission History and Modern Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, Cal.).

1. Max L. Stackhouse, "Globalization and Theology in America Today," in Wade Clark Roof, ed., *World Order and Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 247-57.

For Mennonites the process took direct and tangible forms. The first venture in organized mission for General Conference Mennonites began in the early 1880s when Samuel and Susie Haury left Halstead, Kansas to establish a mission to the Arapahos and Cheyennes in Oklahoma. James Juhnke has calculated that by 1900 more than one hundred Mennonites from sheltered rural communities, many without professional training or expertise, had rendered service through this mission in a variety of roles. The General Conference Mission Board publicized the mission widely and raised substantial financial and material support. "The mission became the cutting edge of the church," Juhnke has argued, "a magnet to attract and challenge the brightest young people moving out from Mennonite farms."² After twenty years the benefits derived by the Arapahos and Cheyennes from this outpouring were painfully meager and ambiguous, but the impact on the General Conference Mennonite Church was considerable. Not least, three future presidents of General Conference higher educational institutions were nurtured by their experiences with the mission. And having answered the call to mission among a people strange to them, members of the General Conference Mennonite Church had set out on the road toward "deprovincialization."

The scale of change experienced by Mennonites and Brethren in Christ can be placed in clearer perspective with the following three sets of data. Statistics for all Mennonite bodies in North America compiled in 1911 by H. P. Krehbiel³ report baptized membership as of that year as follows:

	<u>Congregations</u>	<u>Baptized Members</u>
Canada	110	56,449
United States	<u>746</u>	<u>17,297</u>
Totals	856	73,746

An informed estimate places Mennonite membership in Europe and Russia in 1911 at approximately 150,000. Information concerning the number of members of the mission-founded churches in Asia and Africa has not been compiled but the number of baptized adherents was probably fewer than 3000. Total Mennonite world membership would have been in the range of 225,000 baptized members in 1911.

By the time of this census all of the larger Mennonite and Brethren in Christ bodies were engaged in missionary work at home and abroad.

2. James C. Juhnke, "General Conference Mennonite Missions to the American Indians in the Late Nineteenth Century," *MQR* 54 (April 1980), 117.

3. Summarized in H. P. Krehbiel, *The History of the General Conference Mennonite Church of North America* (Newton, Kan.: Privately published, 1938), vol. 2, 71f.

The following is a summary of the number of new foreign missions⁴ initiated by European and North American Mennonites and Brethren in Christ churches:

<u>Period</u>	<u>Number of Missions Founded</u>
1850-1869	1
1870-1889	1
1890-1899	5
1900-1909	7
1910-1919	4
1920-1929	1
1930-1944	6
1945-1959	52
1960-1969	11
1970-1976	13
1977-1992	25

In addition, as of 1993 the Mennonite Central Committee had volunteers at work in fifty countries.

The scope of activity on the home front, including city and rural missions, was proportionately greater than that overseas prior to 1900. In the period following World War II the range of activity in Canada and the United States gained new impetus in intensity and scope.

The Dutch Mennonite Missionary Society was the pioneer among Mennonites.⁵ When the Dutch sent their first missionary couple to Indonesia in 1851, Mennonites were to be found in only eight nations: Austria, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Russia, Switzerland and the United States. A traditional and change-resistant people, Mennonites did not join bandwagons quickly. But Mennonites in other countries followed the work of the Dutch mission with interest, and it had a leavening influence.⁶ Some 140 years later Mennonite and

4. This reports only those initiatives which had as their object the founding of a new church. This does not include instances where Mennonite and Brethren in Christ workers have been seconded to other agencies or churches or to Mennonite Central Committee projects.

5. Influential Dutch Mennonites influenced by the *Reveil* supported the Baptist Serampore Mission of which William Carey was a part. These Dutch Mennonites withdrew from the interdenominational Serampore support committee to form their own society in 1848 for the purpose of conducting their own foreign missions. See Th. E. Jensma, *Dooptgezinde zending in Indonesie* (s'Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1968).

6. See G. W. Peters, *Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions* (Hillsboro, Kan.: Kindred Press, 1984), 18-21. Peters concludes: "Whatever our present evaluation of and relationship to Dutch Mennonitism may be, this much is certain: at the time, it provided a pattern, set a noble example, and motivated participation in an independent Mennonite mission. This beginning of a distinctively Mennonite missionary movement resulted in the

Brethren in Christ churches are to be found in over fifty countries. Compared to the 100 organized conferences in 1978, the 1990 *Mennonite World Handbook* reported 171 separate bodies related to the Anabaptist/Mennonite family. This family of some 973,921 baptized members speaks seventy-eight languages. Membership by continent is as follows:⁷

	1978	1984	1990	1994
Africa	85,900	107,300	176,500	276,653
Asia	74,300	113,600	147,600	151,057
Latin America	44,300	75,300	83,400	91,436 ⁸
Europe	96,100	92,700	68,600	49,132
North America	<u>313,000</u>	<u>340,000</u>	<u>380,500</u>	<u>405,713</u>
Total	613,600	728,900	856,600	973,921

In 1851 the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ people were virtually all of European stock. By 1994 world membership consisted of 51.1% of European extraction and 48.9% of African, Asian and Latin American ancestry, with the most rapid growth taking place in Africa. At the present rate of growth, by the year 2000 the balance will have swung to the other side and the churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America will have the larger membership. The Mennonite and Brethren in Christ experience is similar to that of other churches which have become engaged in world mission. They themselves have been visibly changed through mission—at home as well as by virtue of relationships throughout the world. Membership in the historical “heartland” of the past five centuries is being outstripped by growth among the newer churches on other continents where the mission dynamic remains strong.

The Mennonite “Great Century”

In his study of the background to the founding of the Mennonite Central Committee, written for the fiftieth anniversary of MCC in 1970, Guy F. Hershberger argued persuasively:

The founding of the Mennonite Central Committee in 1920 represents an important milestone in the total sweep of Mennonite his-

organization of numerous distinct Mennonite mission agencies and in the sending forth of hundreds of missionaries into almost every part of the world” (21).

7. Diether Goetz Lichdi, ed., *Mennonite World Handbook* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Mennonite World Conference, 1990), 326f. and “Mennonite and Brethren in Christ World Directory 1994,” *Courier* 8 (1994), 15.

8. The figures for Latin America include members of mission-founded congregations (48,768) and of European Mennonite immigrant congregations (42,668). The latter group consists of 13,456 members of churches affiliated with Mennonite World Conference plus 29,212 Old Colony Mennonites.

tory, bearing a twofold symbolic significance. Looking backward from that date, we see it symbolizes the recovery of the Anabaptist vision of mission and service; looking forward, it symbolizes the opening of the door to a greater world-wide Mennonite brotherhood united in that mission and service to the modern world. In the half century preceding 1920 Mennonites were engaged in the solid task of recovery. The succeeding fifty years were given to the implementation of that mission which in 1970 was approaching maturity.⁹

However, this astute summary must be augmented at two points: (1) the considerable Mennonite debt to other Christian traditions for the help received during this transition must be reckoned with, and (2) the shaping influence of socio-political forces on Mennonites should be assessed.

Conditions among Mennonites in North America during the nineteenth century have been well described by others.¹⁰ In brief, Mennonites had long lived out of an enclave mentality which guided them in conserving their most cherished values: separation from the world in tight-knit communities. External forces, both secular and religious, constantly challenged these enclaves. For the most part they responded to these outside influences defensively. As the century wore on North American Mennonites were gradually drawn out of their traditional seclusion into worldwide engagement. Change came in a torrent of innovations between 1865 and 1918: from German to English as the primary language of home and worship, the introduction of Sunday schools, revival meetings, home and foreign missions, educational institutions, deaconess work, emergency relief and mutual aid organizations, and increasing entrance into the professions. Three conflicts exerted crucial influence on North American Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in the twentieth century: the modernist-fundamentalist controversy and the two great world wars.

Mennonite involvement in mission during this period of cultural transformation divides readily into three phases: deprovincializa-

9. Guy F. Hershberger, “Historical Background to the Formation of the Mennonite Central Committee,” *MQR* 44 (July 1970), 213.

10. See Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: The History of a Separate People* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974) and *Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940s: A People's Struggle for Survival* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1982); Theron F. Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1988) and James C. Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1989), ch. 1-7. Important background on the mission movement among Mennonites is given in G. W. Peters, *Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions* (Hillsboro, Kan.: Kindred Press, 1984); James C. Juhnke, *A People of Mission* (Newton, Kan.: Faith and Life Press, 1979); Theron F. Schlabach, *Gospel Versus Gospel* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1980); and Lois Barrett, *Vision and Reality* (Newton, Kan.: Faith and Life Press, 1983).

tion, 1880-1918; internationalization, 1918-1970; and globalization, 1970 to the present.

1880-1918: Deprovincialization

The period between 1880 and 1914 is sometimes called the "high imperial" era. A defining event was a conference of European powers held in Berlin at the end of 1884 and early 1885 for the purpose of dividing the continent of Africa into colonies. Imbued with the spirit of the Enlightenment and confident of the superiority of its values and culture, the West believed itself destined to have charge of the "lesser peoples" of the world.

Although not directly involved in the first phase of "high imperialism," Americans across the Atlantic were not immune to the allure of the imperial spirit. One of the most influential books of the day was Josiah Strong's *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, published in 1886.¹¹ Strong skilfully blended religion and politics in an amalgam that undergirded the divinely appointed mission of the Anglo-Saxon peoples to the rest of the world. He called for expansion and outreach on all fronts—political, military, cultural, commercial and religious. The book became a powerful influence propelling the people of the United States out of their cultural provincialism toward greater world involvement.

Before the end of the nineteenth century the United States had gone to war against Spain in the Caribbean and the Philippine Islands in a crusade with both geopolitical and religious dimensions. Although a latecomer, the United States had now joined the ranks of the colonial powers. When the Ecumenical Missionary Conference was held in New York in April 1900, former U.S. president Benjamin Harrison, honorary chairman of the conference, delivered the opening address. President William McKinley, who led the United States into war against Spain,

11. (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1885). Strong was on the staff of the American Home Missionary Society at the time of writing the book. Subsequently he was general secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of the United States. In the preface to the revised edition of 1891 he reported that 130,000 copies of the first edition were in print and large parts of it had been serialized in newspapers throughout the U.S. and Canada. Special editions were published in Great Britain and it had been translated into one foreign language with other translations pending. (It was translated into German and published by the Christliche Central-Buchhandlung, Berne, Indiana in 1892, which suggests that it had a certain appeal to Mennonites.) Strong was an ardent and articulate exponent of a surging nationalism, which he believed could be made to serve Christian ends. He said: "Our plea is not America for America's sake; but America for the world's sake. For, if this generation is faithful to its trust, America is to become God's right arm in his battle with the world's ignorance and oppression and sin" (1891 ed., p. 263). Historians have been rather severe in their criticism of Strong. But see Dorothea R. Muller, "Josiah Strong and American Nationalism: A Reevaluation," *The Journal of American History* 53 (Dec. 1966), 487-503.

and Governor Theodore Roosevelt of New York State, a hero of the Spanish-American war, also spoke during the inaugural session.¹² An estimated 20,000 people thronged the conference, which lasted for two weeks.

The very term "world war" conjures an image different from regional or bilateral conflicts. Such a war engulfs the whole. World War I, 1914-1918, put an end to the doctrine of progress which undergirded modern western culture throughout the nineteenth century, and it solidified the budding nationalist movements among peoples colonized by the European powers. The West was no longer regarded as invincible. This, too, was a part of the "deprovincialization" process with direct implications for international relations.

Up to the 1880s the churches in the United States had been largely preoccupied with mission to the frontier areas of their own country, with the result that American church membership grew from about 7% of the population in 1800 to some 36% a century later. Now the angle of their mission vision was about to be refocused.¹³

In the summer of 1886 evangelist Dwight L. Moody, in association with the Intercollegiate Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), hosted a meeting for students at Northfield, Massachusetts. This marked the start of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM). The movement quickly caught the imagination of students on campuses throughout North America and spread to Europe and several Asian countries. The SVM took as its slogan "The Evangelization of the World in This Generation." Controversial and criticized from the outset, the slogan nonetheless galvanized an entire

12. In his address McKinley said: "I am glad of the opportunity to offer without stint my tribute of praise and respect to the missionary effort which has wrought such wonderful triumphs for civilization. . . . The missionary, of whatever church or ecclesiastical body, who devotes his life to the service of the Master and of men, carrying the torch of truth and enlightenment, deserves the gratitude, the support, the homage of mankind. . . . Wielding the sword of the Spirit, they have conquered ignorance and prejudice. They have been among the pioneers of civilization. They have illumined the darkness of idolatry and superstition with the light of intelligence and truth. . . . Who can estimate their value to the progress of nations? Their contribution to the onward and upward march of humanity is beyond all calculation"—*Ecumenical Missionary Conference Proceedings* (New York: American Tract Society, 1900), 1: 39f.

13. For North American churches, unlike the Europeans, mission did begin at home with the establishment of missions to the indigenous peoples in the seventeenth century. Historians such as Kenneth Scott Latourette have argued that the greatest mission success story in the nineteenth century was the evangelization of the United States. See K. S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity, The Great Century: Europe and the United States* (1941; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1970), vol. 4. John K. Fairbank noted the simultaneous movement in the nineteenth century into foreign and home missions but with the bulk of resources going into home missions until the rise of the Student Volunteer Movement—"Assignment for the '70's," *The American Historical Review* 74 (Feb. 1969), 876-79.

generation of students because it effectively caught the mood of the times. Student Volunteer Bands were organized on college campuses to recruit volunteers and to provide moral and spiritual support for those who had already signed the pledge: "It is my purpose, if God permits, to become a foreign missionary." Fortunate to have outstanding leaders such as John R. Mott, Robert E. Speer, Robert P. Wilder and G. Sherwood Eddy, the SVM was instrumental in recruiting more than 25,000 university graduates for world mission—largely from North America—by 1925. Indeed, already in 1908 the United States had surpassed the long-dominant British in the number of missionaries serving abroad. This was a powerful incoming tide.

The multiple facets of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ dependence on the Protestant missionary movement constitute a story which deserves to be told comprehensively.¹⁴ It has various roots, including European Pietism,¹⁵ American revivalism and the holiness movement. But most obviously, Mennonite understandings of mission were shaped and guided by mainstream Protestant missions.

The first Mennonite Brethren missionaries to the non-western world were Abram and Mary Friesen from the Ukraine who went to India in 1889. The Friesens spent four years preparing for missionary service at the Hamburg Baptist Seminary. Convinced of their call, in 1888 the Friesens appealed to the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia for support. In their letter they said: "To organize an independent work we are too weak, but we are able to develop in association with a Baptist mission a work among the poor heathen that will really prove a blessing if we but concentrate our whole strength upon a single point and send out our own workers into the already white harvest fields."¹⁶ Mennonites were well aware of their small size and late arrival on the scene of foreign missions. But the American Baptist Missionary Union, Boston, willingly entered into agreement with the Mennonite Brethren.

14 Theron F. Schlabach, *Gospel Versus Gospel* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1980) subjects the Mennonite Church mission movement to sustained critique because of this borrowing and dependency. The analysis needs to be extended to the entire Brethren in Christ and Mennonite family.

15. See S. S. Haury, *Letters Concerning the Spread of the Gospel*, trans. Marie Rogehr Janzen and Hilda Voth (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1981; German original 1877); Orlando H. Wiebe, "The Missionary Emphasis of Pietism," in A. J. Klassen, ed., *The Church in Mission* (Fresno, Cal.: MB Board of Christian Literature, 1967), 115-33; G. W. Peters, *Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions* (Hillsboro, Kan.: Kindred Press, 1984), ch. 1-2; and most comprehensively, Hans Kasdorf, *A Century of Mennonite Brethren Mission Thinking, 1885-1984* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, Th.D. Thesis, 1986), ch. 3-4.

16. Quoted in G. W. Peters, *The Growth of Foreign Missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Hillsboro, Kan.: Board of Foreign Missions of the Mennonite Brethren Church, 1952), 57.

Within two years after the Friesens arrived in India, the Baptists ceded full responsibility to the Mennonites for the Nalgonda area.¹⁷

The conceptual dependence of early Mennonite missions can be demonstrated at a number of points. Noah E. Byers became principal of Elkhart Institute (forerunner of Goshen College) in 1898, following study at Northwestern University, where he was active in the YMCA. Immediately upon his arrival at the Elkhart Institute, Byers organized the Young People's Christian Association and encouraged the organization of the Student Volunteer Band the following year. Both organizations were influential on campus. In addition, students began attending the conventions of both the YMCA/YWCA and SVM, where they heard the challenge to world evangelization from John R. Mott, Robert E. Speer, Samuel Zwemer and others.¹⁸ Mott's book *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation* (1900) was the basic text for the Mission Study Class, which attracted good enrollments.

When the first three missionaries were appointed for service in India by the Mennonite Evangelizing and Benevolence Board¹⁹ in November 1898, they signed a Personnel Manual that defined their duties and relationships. Article fourteen spelled out the goal of their work:

The raising up of self-supporting and self-extending churches must ever be kept in view. Converts must be stimulated and encouraged in the study of the Word of God; suitable opportunities should be afforded them for the manifestation of spiritual gifts; and they should be encouraged to help pecuniarily, according to their ability, in the work of God. Native helpers especially should be afforded all possible help and encouragement; as they become able they should be allowed to bear responsibility, and the element of foreign teaching, pastoral care, and supervision be gradually withdrawn.

This was classic Protestant mission theory and policy as developed over the previous century. Mennonite and Brethren in Christ missionaries would indeed take it to heart. Recent studies of Brethren in Christ missions in Zimbabwe (founded 1898), Zambia (founded 1906) and India

17. The Mennonite missionaries organized a Mennonite Brethren Church in 1891. The cooperative arrangements with the Baptists continued until World War I. The war made it impossible for funds to be sent from Russia. The Russian Revolution in 1917 forced the termination of the relationship and the Nalgonda work was integrated into the Baptist mission and church.

18. At the time of Byer's involvement, John R. Mott was executive director of the YMCA as well as a major figure in the Student Volunteer Movement. For an account of Byers and his promotion of missions, see Susan Fisher Miller, *Culture for Service: A History of Goshen College* (Goshen, Ind.: Goshen College, 1994), 24-31.

19. In 1906 the Board merged with the Mennonite Board of Charitable Homes and Missions to become the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities.

(founded 1913) show how thoroughly the classical Protestant model was adopted and followed with virtually no modification until independent churches emerged in the 1960s.²⁰

Three Mennonites attended the landmark World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in June 1910. They were J. S. Shoemaker, secretary of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, a delegate; and observers J. S. Hartzler, from the faculty of Goshen College, and Alfred Wiebe, a General Conference Mennonite applicant for missionary service.²¹ Whereas the Mennonites represented agencies with scarcely a decade of missionary work abroad, for the major Protestant missions with a century of work behind them Edinburgh marked a shift in focus from mission to church. One of the eight commissions around which the conference was organized was "The Church in the Mission Field."²² As the report makes clear, one could now speak of "the church in the mission field" only with great diffidence. The phrase had lost its earlier force. "The whole world is the mission field, and there is no Church that is not a Church in the mission field."²³ For Mennonites, still in the first phase of learning how to conduct missions and with only a few fledgling churches in Asia and Africa, it was existentially difficult to identify with the emerging internationalist perspective that would undergird the ecumenical movement.

As already noted, Guy Hershberger believed that in this period Mennonites were engaged in the recovery of "the Anabaptist vision of mission and service." Indeed, they did become active in organizing and conducting missions at home and abroad. But conceptually and theologically this undertaking was heavily dependent on the larger Protestant movement. Nowhere is this more evident than with regard to how the gospel itself was understood. Throughout the nineteenth century the Protestant mission movement maintained a "whole gospel" emphasis based on the dominant themes of evangelical Protestantism. Except for the absence of the peace ethic, Mennonites found this formulation generally acceptable. With the rise of the social gospel, on the one

20. See Harvey R. Sider, "From Mission to Church: India," H. Frank Kipe, "From Mission to Church: Zambia and Zimbabwe," and Wilbert R. Shenk, "From Mission to Church: A Response," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 17 (August 1994), 113-72.

21. See J. S. Shoemaker and J. S. Hartzler, *Among Missions in the Orient* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1912) for an account of the Edinburgh conference.

22. World Missionary Conference, *The Church in the Mission Field. Report of Commission II* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1910).

23. *Ibid.*, 4. The report goes on to say: "The Commission has perforce accepted the popular but inexact usage of calling only those regions 'the mission field' where the Church has become more recently planted, and where its history falls, roughly speaking, within the last two centuries."

hand, and fundamentalism, on the other, this consensus was severely tested. Mennonites were not spared this trial.

1918-1970: Internationalization

This period opened in the aftermath of World War I with attempts by the victorious Allied Powers to create a League of Nations for the purpose of responding to international conflict through a permanent council and secretariat. The League was based on a covenant that provided for collective security, arbitration of international disputes, reduction of armaments and open diplomacy. It was a grand and idealistic vision of internationalism, but it soon foundered on the shoals of resurgent nationalism and isolationism. Out of this short-lived experiment only the Permanent Court of International Justice survived.

World War II underscored the urgency of finding ways and means of modulating and resolving conflicts between nations. After the war a series of new institutions emerged at the initiative of the Allies, starting with the United Nations in 1945, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. The Marshall Plan became the symbol of constructive internationalism. The world economy experienced unprecedented economic growth between 1945 and 1970.

The division of the world into the communist and capitalist blocs, however, quickly compromised this new and vigorous internationalism. Internationalism was soon viewed with cynicism as a tool for the United States and the Soviet Union to maintain hegemony through their blocs. The emergence of the Nonaligned Movement out of the Bandung Conference in 1955 was the first signal that this bipolar world would prove unruly. By 1970 virtually all independence movements in colonies of the powers had succeeded in winning their political independence.

This preoccupation with liberation from the foreign yoke affected the churches and missions as well. A parallel "independence" movement took place among mission-founded churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America. From the beginning the modern mission movement had been committed to the ideal of self-responsible churches. Those who had lagged in implementing their policy commitments were now under growing pressure to do so.

The conference at Edinburgh in 1910 nurtured initiatives that eventuated in the ecumenical movement: the Faith and Order Commission was organized in 1920 and the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921. During the previous decade John R. Mott, IMC chair, had held a series of conferences in Asia and Africa that resulted in the formation of national Christian councils, the infrastructure of the future World

Council of Churches. The founding of the World Council was delayed until 1948 due to World War II.

While these unitive efforts pointed in the direction of world-wide cooperation, a strong counter-force was at work. The modernist-fundamentalist conflict disrupted unity in most churches between 1905 and 1930. Mennonites felt the impact of this conflict. Mennonite missions had been one of the major interfaces between the Mennonite churches and other Protestants, and conservative critics were not slow to expose this fact. Mennonite missionaries continued quietly to fraternize with their Protestant colleagues but did not identify with the ecumenical movement.²⁴ In addition, the world economic crisis in the 1920s and 1930s allowed only modest mission expansion.

The seminal program development for Mennonites during this period was the organization of the Mennonite Central Committee in 1920. World War I had exposed the fundamental differences between the Protestant churches and Mennonites over the question of participation in war. The experience of Mennonite conscientious objectors who served in the American Friends Service Committee relief program in France and the Near East following World War I had shown them new possibilities for service by which they could express their pacifist convictions. When the call came in 1920 to respond to famine conditions in Russia, this experience in Europe and the Near East proved foundational.²⁵ At a time when Mennonite missions were under pressure from constituents to withdraw from association with other Christians, cooperation by the inter-Mennonite MCC with other agencies in relief programs was generally tolerated.

For the missions and their related churches in other countries this retreat from wider engagement was checked at two points. Soon after the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1943 and the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association in 1945, a number of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ bodies affiliated with these evangelical organizations. This drew them firmly into the evangelical orbit, which was poised for rapid growth during the next several decades. This tendency to withdraw was also rejected by many of the developing churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Typically they were small churches in societies where the total Christian population was a small minority. These communities were far less conscious of denominational differences and felt the importance of solidarity with

24. Orie O. Miller, executive secretary of Mennonite Central Committee and Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, attended International Missionary Council assemblies on his own.

25. Hershberger, "Historical Background" gives the context.

fellow Christians of whatever persuasion. The channels of relationship varied. In Tanzania the East African Revival became a primary vehicle for interdenominational fellowship. In Indonesia the Mennonite churches played their full role in the Council of Churches. In other instances cooperative theological education programs became the focus for cooperation.

Throughout this period Mennonites produced no substantial works on the theology, history or practice of Christian mission and service. The "recovery of the Anabaptist vision" focused largely on questions of Mennonite identity. The groundbreaking work of Guy F. Hershberger, H. A. Fast and others with regard to war, the gospel and the way of peace had no counterpart in regard to the mission of the church to the world.²⁶ Mennonites continued to depend on evangelical and ecumenical theological and missiological thought.

Since 1970: Globalization

By the late 1960s the post-World War II economic boom had come to an end. In the 1970s the bipolar world created in response to the antagonism between the communist and western blocs was beginning to come apart. The notion of the nation-state itself was being questioned. Internationalism was based on the premise that the nation-state remained the basic unit of economic and political life, but the emerging global reality was driven by economic forces beyond the control of individual nations.²⁷

The term "global" entered our vocabulary only in the 1960s as substitute for "international." During the 1960s one American Protestant mission board was renamed "Global Program Agency." In popular parlance "global" remains a synonym for "international," that is, encompassing the whole world. As a technical term "globalization" is of even more recent coinage and has arisen out of world systems thinking associated particularly with Immanuel Wallerstein²⁸ and Roland Robertson.²⁹

Robertson defines the term as follows: "Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of

26. This observation is most easily verified by scrutinizing the "Bibliography of Mennonite Missions," *Mission Focus* 12 (December 1984), 49-71.

27. See Robert B. Reich, *The Work of Nations* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

28. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

29. Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Newbury Park, Cal.: Sage, 1992). Robertson's work on globalization began in the 1960s.

consciousness of the world as a whole."³⁰ The world has been increasingly compressed and held together by the vast techno-economic and communication networks that have rapidly developed over the past several centuries. According to Robertson this global system which leads to "the intensification of consciousness" consists of four components: humankind, the individual, nation states and the world system. Each of the four elements perforce exists in direct relationship with the other three. Change in one element is radiated to the other three, although with vastly differing degrees of impact. These elements are interdependent but in tension with each other. Instability and volatility characterize the system. It never achieves a steady state.

The language of globalization points to a qualitatively new stage in cultural development. Whereas in the past each imperium imposed its particular culture on the empire, recently the world has entered the new phase of globalization. Peter Beyer has argued that the present situation means "the creation of a new global culture with its attendant social structures, one which increasingly becomes the broader social context of all particular cultures in the world, including those of the West."³¹ Global culture is increasingly the arbiter in human development. The particular, whether cultural or religious, is constantly being relativized by the global. However, the global itself is continually being undermined and eroded by competing powers.

The most important conceptual development in mission theory in the past twenty-five years is the notion of "contextuality" introduced in 1972 by Shoki Coe of the Theological Education Fund. For the previous century the key idea had been "indigenity." This indicated a process by which something exogenous was introduced and adapted so that it took root in the soil of that culture. Now authority was shifted from the outside agent—be that missionary or service worker—to the local. At the same time, however, it was increasingly evident that ecclesial reality had changed. No local church, regardless of its location, was self-sufficient. What was needed was a new conceptualization of church which recognized the integrity of the local church but always in relation to the church universal.

Mennonites and Brethren in Christ were fully aware of their changing relationships as a result of nearly a century of international church development. Already by 1970 some conferences in Asia or Africa were larger than the North American body to which they related. A new agenda was being posed. How do we achieve the promise of "the new

30. *Ibid.*, 8.

31. Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage, 1994), 9.

humanity" which embodies the rich variety of peoples from all parts of the world? What new structures will be required to enable this new reality to witness and serve together? The Mennonite World Conference was seen as one means by which this universality might be expressed. But from the outset it was agreed that MWC should not attempt to be more than a mechanism for fostering fellowship through periodic assemblies.³² MWC did sponsor a series of international consultations—in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1975, Hesston, Kansas in 1978 and Strasbourg, France in 1984—where the changing Mennonite and Brethren in Christ relationships were studied. In addition, between 1970 and 1994 a series of discussions took place in the Council of Mission Board Secretaries and its successor Council of International Ministries concerning the implications of internationalization and globalization for future relationships and witness.³³ Denominational groups such as the Mennonite Brethren and Brethren in Christ have also worked at internationalizing their program structures.

Conclusion

1880-1980 was the Mennonite "Great Century" because it marked a wholesale redefinition of their identity. Mennonite and Brethren in Christ mission and service ministries have indeed been instruments in creating this global reality. The pioneers a century ago could not have anticipated the scope and scale of change.

The new phenomenon of globalization defines the world today. It contributes to fragmentation and alienation. It leads to the concentration of immense power in the hands of a small group of corporations that operate beyond national boundaries and conventional political constraints.

The original globalization was the reign of God enacted in the first coming of Jesus the Messiah and continually reenacted through the disciple community which obeys the call to follow him. The goal of the reign of God is to "unite all things" in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20)—the essence of the mission of Jesus (Mt. 4:17; Mk. 1:15). Other globalization efforts are based on human striving and power-mongering. What sets Christian mission and service apart from other human initiatives—especially the myth of redemptive violence which is foundational to the global world system—is that Christian mission

32. Cornelius J. Dyck, "The History of the Mennonite World Conference," in Paul N. Kraybill, ed., *Mennonite World Handbook* (Lombard, Ill.: Mennonite World Conference, 1978), 1-9. This purpose was reaffirmed in a resolution at the Curitiba assembly in 1972.

33. Four summary statements from these consultations are appendices to Wilbert R. Shenk, *God's New Economy: Interdependence and Mission* (Elkhart, Ind.: Mission Focus Pamphlet, 1988).

witnesses to the reign of God which arises out of self-sacrificing love. Christians cannot escape this new globalization. As disciples we are called to exercise discernment with respect to all powers and movements that do not submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

There is no doubt that Mennonite mission and service efforts have been used to extend the reign of God around the world in response to the original globalization. The most tangible evidence of this are the hundreds of local congregations scattered around the world where the God of Jesus the Messiah is worshiped and obeyed. This is the basic criterion by which we must judge and evaluate whether we have been faithful.

In 1970 Guy Hershberger concluded that Mennonite mission efforts were "approaching maturity." However, he did not tell us what this meant. What is "maturity" in mission? Is it possible to achieve such a state? Is it even a proper or desirable goal? Repeatedly, we observe that history is a poor teacher. So-called "lessons from history" are not readily accepted by the next generation. Indeed, the continually changing historical context requires fresh wrestling with truth and obedience in light of new demands. Nonetheless, I suggest that three fruits of the past century of engagement in mission may contribute to the maturity of which Hershberger spoke:

(1) An enlarged and enriched understanding of the gospel as one. We are confronted with various "gospels" which undergird ideologies or interests, including efforts that pit word against deed. These instrumental uses of the gospel produce distortion. There are not multiple gospels, only our reductionist versions. Reductionisms weaken and denature. Maturity requires a readiness to embrace the gospel in its fullness. The gospel is as wide and comprehensive as human need.

(2) A deepened conviction and confidence in the gospel as a result of participating in its continuing spread to peoples who have never yet heard and embraced the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. This experience has reconfirmed that the gospel is indeed "the power of God" to create "one new humanity" out of disparate parts; that erstwhile enemies can be reconciled through the atoning work of Jesus Christ; and that it is the source of healing and hope.

(3) The recognition that agencies, methods and strategies are only instruments and should never be regarded as otherwise. Maturity means the readiness to subject our methods and means to honest scrutiny in light of experience and growth.

The globalization of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ community over the past century urges us on toward maturity.