

Presented to the N.Y.C. (1) meeting in Dec. 1953

First, I would like to ask that you forget anything which you may have heard that I have in mind if it conflicts with what I now say.

My amazement continues to grow as I see how easy it is to find good objections to any attitude which one might want to take as being the best in the face of the prevailing conditions in the Amish churches. I have been totally unable to find a solution that does not appear to be possible of just criticism, including that of doing nothing for the time being. It appears to me that in spite of all the difficulties with every possible solution it is our responsibility to interpret the situation under the direction of our Master and proceed with the wisest solution, even though we feel it to be fraught with difficulties. I feel that there are times when it is just as dangerous and just as wrong to do nothing as to do the wrong thing (ex.).

From what I can feel it seems that even though interest is increasing in the mission movement opposition is organizing and increasing faster. And if the present trends continue we might as well admit that we are headed for an inevitable nation-wide split. This might not be so bad if there was any hope that the two segments could someday be re-united. But past experience indicates that this rarely happens. To my knowledge, when a division occurs in the Amish church it becomes permanent even though there may have been hopes of a future reunion at the time of the split. Approximately a century ago when the Amish Mennonites who finally merged with the Mennonites split from the Amish church, according to J.C. Wenger, it split the Amish church nearly in two. But even at that this split left the old block with the same essential nature and character. If a split occurred today we would be a very small minority. In fact when I look over the

mailing list and find how many of our readers are no longer Amish then I wonder if it is worth all the effort. But, as people are also largely a product of their times and the Amish culture is changing, I feel that we have a better chance of succeeding than we would have had a century ago. Yet the situation demands study and consideration by every individual who has any sincere concern in the matter.

Much of the fuming and fussing that has been done in the Amish church is due to ignorance concerning the true issues at stake. If people understood what they were disagreeing over often there would be no disagreement ~~in many cases~~. This may not be exactly true of the mission movement, but the church in general should have a more enlightened understanding on this matter. Our mission minded-people are earnest and sincere, but it seems that in some localities many have become mission-minded only as a result of a real conversion experience. We might as well admit that too many of us are just babes, and we are in serious need of greater stability. Yet at the present these people are our only means of representing our convictions to our opposers.

I feel that our movement is suffering from, in some cases, improper representation, but, more generally, from the lack of it. But even where we have good representation I believe that much could be gained by the publication, in some form, of an interpretation of what we believe concerning mission work. The publication should be distributed as widely as possible although exception to this could be made. This should be written in the form of an explanation with the purpose of creating a better understanding rather than trying to tell people what they must believe.

(Here is where we would differ from Manácia's tactics. Personally, I do not feel that he creates resentment simply by sending

the M.E.B. to uninterested people as much as he does by the punches he delivers by direct methods. I feel that the indirect method could be used to greater advantage.)

As to how our interpretation should be given I can only make suggestions. One possibility would be through a separate publication. Another would be by a small booklet. In either case I would suggest that the M.I.C. create a staff of editors consisting of ministers and leaders of the movement. Someone would have to write a skeleton. Then this would be mimeographed and sent to all the members of the staff for editing and clarifying wherever necessary as well as revising or giving needed completeness. This should be considered the official position of the entire staff and therefore a statement of major proportions. The staff of editors, of course, would give the publication some prestige.

Concerning distribution, the only solution that I have would be to use the Witnessing mailing list to contact someone in every church district which we have represented to supply us with the names and addresses of all the people in the church. I do not feel at all that this is an impossible task for anyone with lots of courage and perseverance. Personal acquaintances could be gotten to respond most easily and by utilizing the information available through the entire staff I believe that we could fairly well cover all areas where we have any mission-minded people. Of course, there would be a considerable period of time in which to work before anything would be ready to be sent out. The ministers' addresses in the unrepresented areas could be gotten from the year-book.