STUDIES OF MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

Memorandum Series

Subject: Mennonite Colonization

Date: April 11, 1945
MENNONITE COLONIZATION

This pamphlet by Dr. J. Winfield Fretz, Secretary-Treasurer of the Mennonite Central Committee at Akron, Pennsylvania, was published during the latter part of 1944.

The Staff of "M" Project selected this study of Mennonite colonization to illustrate the problems faced by a group held together by strong religious precepts.

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[Signature]
MENNONITE COLONIZATION

Lessons From the Past
For the Future

By
WINFIELD FRETZ

Published by
THE MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
AKRON, PENNSYLVANIA
1944
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*Printed in U. S. A.*
Preface

The reason for a study of Mennonite colonization at this time is clearly and briefly expressed in the directive issued to the writer by the Secretary-Treasurer of the Mennonite Central Committee at the beginning of the study.

Remembering particularly the Church’s experience in Mennonite migration and colonization efforts since World War I, and keeping in mind in a very general way similar movements of our people since 1870, and realizing that we may again in the days and years to come face the need of serving our people in similar projects, the Committee has come to the conclusion that it would be of tremendous benefit to us to have a careful study made of those past movements and the subsequent developments of the colonization and migration projects and have pointed out to us those trends and developments that turned out successfully as well as those that did not.

It will be understood from this statement of instruction that the present study is made primarily as an aid to the Mennonite Central Committee in formulating future policy and executing the administrative program as it pertains to migration and colonization. It is not primarily an academic study. To date, neither the Mennonite Central Committee nor any other American Mennonite agency has dealt with this matter according to any predetermined plan or established principle. It is hoped that as a result of this study some light will be thrown on this important phase of Mennonite life so that past mistakes may not be repeated and valuable lessons, learned through hard experience, may not be forgotten.

In this study no attempt has been made to catalogue all the Mennonite colonization efforts in the United States and Canada. Only the major efforts have been studied and representative minor ones considered; but it is believed that this study will give a worth-while and reliable picture of the total problem of Mennonite colonization. It has not been the intention of the author to criticize past colonization projects in an unfriendly manner; they are studied for no other reason than to gain valuable lessons for the future. He has sought to learn how Mennonite migration and colonization have been carried on; what the causes were and what the discoverable factors were that accounted for successes and failures.
It should be clear to the reader that this brief study is not an all-inclusive solution for the problem raised. What has been attempted is more like a spying out of the land than a full conquest. Highlights and guideposts along the way have been sought rather than conclusive answers.

March 1, 1944
Akron, Pennsylvania

Winfield Fretz

Foreword

The interest of the Mennonite Central Committee in colonization is the direct result of its responsibility for the welfare of the Mennonite men in Civilian Public Service, in particular after they are discharged from service. Many of the men wish to return to or take up farming, and a large percentage of these seek or welcome assistance in their undertakings. It is evident that the settlement of C.P.S. men on farms is but an aspect of the larger problem of Mennonite colonization in general and can be effectively studied only in this larger setting. For this reason a study of Mennonite colonization was undertaken.

The Committee was fortunate to have the services of Professor J. Winfield Fretz, Ph.D., on leave of absence from his post as Professor of Economics at Bethel College, in prosecuting this study. The first fruit of his research in this important but neglected field is the booklet which is herewith published under the title Mennonite Colonization, Lessons from the Past for the Future.

Mennonite Colonization is intended to be a general introduction to the field of colonization with practical suggestions for future action. It is designed for popular use, not as a comprehensive scholarly treatise. As such we commend it to all those interested in the welfare of our Mennonite people, young and old, of all conferences. It will be of particular value to church leaders and committees who are or should be interested in and responsible for colonization work, as well as to those who wish to support this work with their means and their counsel.

Harold S. Bender,
For the Mennonite Central Committee
Mennonite Migration

As a preface to the study of colonization it is necessary to devote some time to a discussion of the kindred subject of migration. Every colonization effort is preceded by migration because by its very nature colonization implies a change of location. It must be made clear, however, that not every migration results in colonization.

Migration may be defined as the movement of individuals and groups from one locality to another with a view to a permanent change of residence. The term as commonly used carries the connotation that the movements involve relatively long distances and affect a considerable number of people. This, however, is not necessarily the case, for migrations may be, and often are, for short distances and involve only small groups of people. If migrations are in large numbers, they are referred to as mass migrations. There are a number of instances in Mennonite history of mass migration of unusual size. Mass migrations may be composed of people with widely differing backgrounds, interests, nationalities and cultures, without a common purpose, as well as of groups of individuals with common ideals, a corporate organization, and a common culture.

Not everyone who moves about can be said to migrate. The millions of people who commute daily from their rural or suburban homes to their jobs in cities cannot correctly be said to be migrating. Nor is the salesman who travels across the country selling his merchandise a migrant in the strict sense of the term. Such people do not change their residence. They move about a great deal and may make many new social contacts daily but they regularly return to the place from which they started. Human migration then is the process by which individuals or groups move from one geographical area to another for purposes of permanent residence under more favorable circumstances.

Types of Migration

There are two general types of migration; namely, one that results in the moving of populations across international borders, and one which results in the moving of populations within na-
tional borders. These two types of migration can therefore be referred to as national or internal and international migrations. In the case of Mennonites most international migrations have been on a large scale, thousands of Mennonites moving from one country to another in the course of a few years.

It is worth while making a distinction between national and international migrations, because they have different characteristics and often result in different types of colonization. One may even say that the causes of migration are often quite different in internal and international migrations.

A person moving out of a country is referred to as an emigrant or an out-migrant, whereas a person moving into a country is called an immigrant or an in-migrant. Thus a person moving from one country to another is an emigrant as he leaves his old country and becomes an immigrant as he is entering the new country. These terms do not apply to people moving about within a single country. For instance, a person moving from a southern plantation to a northern city in the United States, or a farmer leaving his farm and moving to a near-by city, is not referred to as either an immigrant or an emigrant. In his old community he is called an “old timer,” and in the new community a “new-comer.” If he moves frequently he is referred to as a migrant. This term has taken on a specific meaning in America since the depression. It is now generally used to refer to casual laborers constantly on the move in search of work; such are the ever-growing number of unattached individuals and families who follow seasonal jobs in the harvest fields, beet farms, fruit and vegetable areas, and commercial tomato and potato growing industries.

No thorough and scholarly study of Mennonite migration has been made, but such a study would be of great interest and value. Whatever attention has been paid to the subject has been devoted chiefly to mass migrations of an international character. The subject of internal migration has thus far received no careful attention by Mennonite scholars. Yet as far as the history of the Mennonite Church as a whole is concerned, national or internal migrations have been far more significant than have the major mass movements, although they are not nearly so dramatic. The internal migrations are important because they have resulted in the numerous colonization efforts from which the
A growing body of Mennonite churches have sprung. Internal migration is constantly going on in small, fragmentary, and unnoticed ways, but the sum total of these migrations is a significant factor in accounting for the steady growth of the Mennonite Church.

The tremendous growth of the Mennonites in Russia illustrates the importance of internal migration, although here the migration was systematic. Four mother colonies were established by migrations from Germany and Polish Russia—Chortiza in 1789, Molotschna in 1804, Saratow in 1853, and Old Samara in 1861. By 1910 these four mother colonies claimed a total of thirty-six daughter colonies. These were all the result of internal migration. If one studies the settlement of Mennonite communities in the extreme western part of the United States, he discovers that few, if any, of them were the result of direct migration from a foreign country. All of them were the result of migrations and remigrations within the country. On examining the dates of settlement and church organization of these western churches one discovers a new church organized almost yearly from 1875 to 1940, indicating a constant migration going on during these years.

The importance of international mass migrations must not be underestimated, however, even though such migrations are not so frequent as national movements. As early as 1660 there is a record of two hundred Mennonite families migrating from Switzerland to Holland, and in 1671 two hundred and forty families migrated from Switzerland to the Palatinate. O. O. Miller has classified Mennonite migrations in modern history into four major periods:

I. 1707-1770 from Switzerland, South Germany, the Palatinate and Alsace to the United States—5,000?

1820-1860 From Switzerland and Alsace to the United States—7,000 to 9,000.

II. 1789-1840 from East and West Prussia to South Russia—9,000.

III. 1873-1880 from Russia to the United States and Canada—15,000.
IV. 1923-1930 from Russia to Canada, Mexico, Brazil, and Paraguay—25,000.
1922-1929 from Canada to Mexico and Paraguay—11,000.

It will be observed that the earlier migration periods were spread out over a long period of time and the average annual number of Mennonite immigrants was small. From this brief list of migrations it appears that the more recent the migration, the larger the number of people migrating. It is possible for international migrations to be for short distances, and national migrations may be for very long distances. Migration from North Dakota to Southern Manitoba would be a case of the former while migration from Pennsylvania to Oregon would illustrate the latter.

In addition to the two general types of national and international migration, migrations might be classified according to the time element, that is, according to the approximate length of residence at a place. From this point of view the first type of migration is that which results in a continuous change of location. Illustrations of this type are gypsies and professional entertainers who have no permanent home or fixed residence. The number of people in this class is comparatively small. The second type of migration, according to length of residence, is that with a temporary settlement. Migratory farm workers, sugar beet workers, fruit pickers, and construction crews illustrate this type of migrant. The number of individuals in this category is rapidly increasing in the United States. Home life is transitory, the family spending a few months at one place and then moving on again to another in search of work. Homes are generally shacks, tents, or trailers, a reflection of the transient character of the settlement. The period of settlement depends directly on the length of time the labor is needed. People in these two migratory groups are characterized by a great deal of instability, morally, spiritually, and economically. Frequent migration causes restlessness and produces a feeling of insecurity.

The third type of migration, according to tenure of residence, is that resulting in permanent settlements. By far the largest number of migrations are of this kind. The filling up of the
American frontiers by a continuous influx of European immigrants, and the establishment by the latter of thousands of new communities, illustrates this type of migration. All Mennonite migrations fall into this third category whether the migrations are foreign or domestic. This does not mean that people who fall into this classification do not move again after having once moved and settled. It means rather that when people in this category do migrate it is with the intention of establishing a residence and settling down permanently. Mennonite migrations, by way of contrast to modern migrations in general, are homogenous group migrations.

Migrations in modern history, except for the colonial period in America, are characterized by their fragmentary nature and lack of organization. Individuals were led by the most varied motives. The migration process repeated itself thousands of times but was characterized chiefly by the one fact that everywhere people changed localities in search of more favorable conditions of life. Internal migrations of Mennonites within the United States and Canada have been much more individualistic and fragmentary than international Mennonite migrations have been. In this sense they have followed much more the general American secular pattern. Mennonites have not migrated by individual families but rather in small groups of two, three, or a half dozen families at a time. When only a few families migrated into a new area it was usually with the hope, if not the understanding, that other Mennonite families would soon follow. Very frequently these hopes did not materialize and as a result throughout numerous parts of the United States and Canada one finds today small Mennonite settlements which are the result of fragmentary migrations. Such migrations were very often poorly planned, loosely organized, and sometimes composed of the economically and socially more unstable population of the home community.

Causes of Migration

The underlying motivation of all human migration is a desire for improvement over existing conditions. If men and women are out of work, or if they do not like the work they are doing,
they may migrate in the hope of finding more desirable employment elsewhere; if their living is precarious, they migrate, hoping to be more secure in other locations. If their freedom of thought and expression seems too limited in one place, they migrate to another where they hope to find greater freedom. There is a close relation between human migration, economic opportunity, and spiritual freedom.

Among Mennonites there has been no greater single cause for migration than the desire for religious freedom. This cause is found as an underlying one in every major Mennonite migration. It was persecution for religious beliefs that drove them out of Switzerland into South Germany, France, and Holland in the seventeenth century and from there to Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century. It was chiefly an opportunity for complete religious freedom that attracted between eight and nine thousand of them from East and West Prussia to South Russia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was the restriction of religious liberty that caused 15,000 of them to leave Russia again a century later. And it was the outright attempt to destroy not only religious freedom but religion itself in Russia in the early twentieth century that caused almost 30,000 Mennonites to seek refuge in various countries in North and South America.

Undoubtedly many Mennonites have migrated for reasons other than purely religious ones. Economic, social, and psychological motives have also played a part, but on the whole these motives have been overshadowed by the one fundamental motive—religion. Analyzing further the religious causes of migration we find that the loss of exemption from military service or the fear of that loss was an important factor. Time and time again the Mennonites preferred to leave their home and country and establish themselves in new lands rather than take up arms and defend their country by military force. There are those in the United States and Canada today who predict that Mennonites will have to leave these two countries in years to come if they wish to preserve this religious principle, because the privilege of military exemption is gradually being taken away from them just as it was in Russia between 1870 and 1930.
Another religious reason for Mennonite migration has been the interference by the state in the matter of education. Mennonites have always tried to make religion a prominent part of their school curriculum, and where they have been too seriously curtailed in this matter they have preferred to migrate to a country with greater freedom. The most recent illustration is the migration of the Old Colony Mennonites from Canada to Mexico and the Sommerfelder Mennonites from Canada to Paraguay in the 1920's. Rather than send their children to public schools to become nationalized, and possibly lost to the church, they sought out places to which they could migrate for the purpose of preserving their own religion and culture.

A third religious cause which should be mentioned in connection with Mennonite migrations is that of intolerance and ill treatment from other religious groups and organizations. Mennonites have not objected to being considered peculiar people but they have disliked being discriminated against and abused by neighbors, other religious bodies, or local governmental agencies. Rather than endure such treatment indefinitely, they have migrated to areas where they could find a more friendly environment. This was the situation in the latter half of the eighteenth century in Northeast Germany and it influenced the Mennonites to accept the invitation of Czarina Catherine II to come to South Russia. Likewise, many of the Hutterian Brethren from South Dakota migrated to Canada after World War I as a result of the harsh treatment they received at the hands of local governmental agents and super-patriotic citizens during the war.

In addition to strictly religious causes of migration there are also economic reasons. The economic factor is sometimes so closely identified with the religious that it is impossible to separate the two. This is much more frequently the case in internal migrations than in international migrations, although in the latter it is not completely absent. Many of the early Mennonites who came to America from Switzerland and the Palatinate during the early part of the eighteenth century, besides seeking religious freedom also sought greater economic opportunity. These first newcomers often wrote back to their friends and relatives in the old country of the good living conditions in the new land and strongly urged them to come to America too. The same
thing is true of the migrants who came from Russia in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Thus it appears that the very first immigrants in a particular migration were almost entirely motivated by religious reasons while the later comers were, at least in part, influenced by economic opportunity.

The privilege of getting land cheap, or entirely free, in the United States and Canada by homesteading caused many Mennonites, as well as others, to take advantage of what seemed a good opportunity to become economically established. The higher priced land in the more densely populated and industrial area was often sold and the money used to buy and develop cheap lands farther west.

Another reason why Mennonites have migrated in times past is in response to solicitation by governments. Sometimes such solicitation has come from the highest officials in the land. This was done by the King of Poland, the Elector Palatine, the King of Prussia and the Empress Catherine of Russia. One reason why Mennonites have been sought as immigrants is to develop the land in the country to which they are invited. The Canadian Government made repeated efforts to secure Mennonite immigrants to settle its western prairie provinces in the decade from 1870 to 1880. W. Hespeler served as a special immigration agent of the Canadian Government among the Mennonites in Russia for several years. The promises he made to the Mennonites and the privileges actually granted them by Canada is proof of this fact. In the more recent migration of the Mennonites from Canada to Paraguay the President of Paraguay took an official hand. He made definite efforts to secure Mennonites as settlers by seeking legislation to grant them religious freedom and economic inducements, and upon their arrival he arranged an official ceremony of welcome.

Mennonites have often been induced to migrate to new areas by enthusiastic, and sometimes unscrupulous, land agents. By means of glowing advertisements, free transportation to the prospective areas where land could be purchased, and by high pressure selling campaigns hundreds of Mennonite families have been induced to migrate in small groups to new areas in the hope of greatly improving their economic condition. The subject of land agents and Mennonite land purchases is important enough to warrant a separate investigation. The enthusiastic and deter-
mined efforts of various railroads to attract Mennonite colonists too is a story in itself. Certainly when railroads sent representa­
tives to Europe to solicit Mennonites as settlers in America, one
must conclude that this was at least a partial cause of Mennonite
migration. Railroads with which Mennonites have had con­
siderable experience in connection with immigration and coloni­
ization are the Santa Fe; Chicago, Burlington and Quincy;
Great Northern; Northern Pacific; and Canadian Pacific. The
Santa Fe and C.B & Q. were especially prominent in the immi­
gration of 1874-80 to the United States, and the C.P.R. was
instrumental in helping large numbers of Mennonites in both
the 1874-80 and the 1923-30 migrations.

As an illustration of the influence railroads may exert on pos­
sible migrants and the efforts they make to secure colonists we
shall refer briefly to some of the past policies of the Canadian
Pacific Railway. It should be said in fairness to the C.P.R.
that its record of colonization is, on the whole, very commend­
able. But in the effort to settle the Canadian western prairie
lands the C.P.R. used a variety of methods, some of which were
questionable. One of them was to assist in the organization of
subsidiary agencies to promote the sale of land. These agencies
were not always so straightforward in their methods as was the
C.P.R. The general plan was for these agencies to buy land
from the C.P.R. and then resell to individual settlers at a profit.
One such agency was the Canadian Pacific Irrigation Coloniza­
tion Company. This company established a large experimental
farm which was to be brought into a high state of cultivation in 1906, and to it were to be brought prospec­tive land buyers in order that they might see the possibilities of
irrigation farming. The Canadian Pacific Irrigation Coloniza­
tion Company was only one of many land agencies promoting
land settlement by the C.P.R.

It was the custom for these agencies to establish offices and
sub-offices in strategic regions in the United States and Europe.
In 1906 the C.P.I.C.C. had fifty general agencies and six hundred
sub-agencies. The job of these agencies was to follow up the
inquiries that resulted from the intensive advertising that was
being done. Advertisements by this company appeared regularly
in nine Canadian papers and in thirty-seven American papers,
all chosen because of their circulation among the farming classes.
who represented potential immigrants. The agencies operated on a commission basis and thus were directly dependent on income from the sale of land. The C.P.I.C.C. bought touring cars and placed them at Chicago and Denver and used them to transport prospective buyers to Calgary, Alberta, from whence they were taken to see the land. Descriptive pamphlets were available in large numbers to those whose curiosity had been aroused by advertisements.

That the C.P.I.C.C. spared no expense in an effort to secure settlers was shown by the fact that within a period of fifteen months it expended $220,000 in an effort to sell land. Of this sum, $67,000 represented commissions to agencies, $41,400 constituted salaries and traveling expenses, and $30,000 was the cost and operating expenses of the cars purchased. The advertising was systematic, intensive, and at times exaggerated. Speaking of the irrigation in Southern Alberta, the literature said irrigation was simple, that most of the successful settlers on the irrigated land had never seen an irrigated field before coming there, that irrigation required no more skill than plowing or harvesting.

Contact with settlers was not sporadic or casual but systematic and regular. Four “seductive” letters were sent to every inquirer at intervals with accompanying literature within forty days. This literature described the superior location of the area, its proximity to the railroad, its accessibility to markets, its social and educational advantages; and the letters assured the inquirer that the company could satisfy every kind of landseeker whether interested in grazing land, dairy farming, wheat growing, beet growing, or cattle, horse, or sheep ranching.

This is merely one illustration of the efforts made to influence people to migrate. The number of other agencies which operated on a similar or smaller scale is large. It is of special interest to note here that quite a few of the small land settlement agencies and agents were themselves Mennonites. It is response to efforts of agencies such as those just described that accounts for a large number of fragmented Mennonite colonization efforts throughout various parts of America. Some of these efforts resulted in success and others in complete failure.

A condition that existed in many Mennonite communities and one which made the appeals of land agents attractive was
overcrowding in the home communities. In a prosperous Mennonite community there is always a natural growth of population due to the birth rate exceeding the death rate. This results in competition for the available farms in the community, and competition results in a gradual rise in the value of land. If this competition continues over a long period of time, land values may rise so high that it becomes impossible for any but the more wealthy to acquire it. When families are large, as the majority of Mennonite families in the past have been, it is impossible for a farmer to acquire farms for all his children. It is in such situations that land agents find willing customers for cheap land in unsettled areas. Many American Mennonite communities have been started by pioneering fathers with large families of growing children whom the father desired to see established on farms close to his own. He concluded that the only way in which this could be done was to move into a new area where land was plentiful and cheap. The result was a miniature migration.

Besides religious and economic causes of migration there are also certain social and psychological factors. For instance, there are Mennonites who migrate from one area to another for the sake of adventure. Young married couples who have no stake in the home community and no job that is challenging may be lured to a new area several hundred or a thousand miles away where they think prospects for making a living are much brighter than they are at home. Older men who have lost their possessions and are discouraged with the outlook in the local community may be similarly attracted to new areas. When one or two families move out of a community into a new one, and report circumstances favorable, others are immediately tempted to migrate likewise. Migration is somewhat contagious. If a fairly large number of people from a given area decide to migrate, this stirs the imagination of others who never before had given migration any consideration. The more influential the people who decide to migrate the larger the migration is likely to be.

Kinship, too, is an important factor in determining migration. Human beings like to be within reach of blood relatives and close friends. There are cases on record where the only reason families or even groups of families have moved is because they desired to be with their relatives. This happened very frequently
among the Mennonites in Russia when large numbers of them migrated to America from 1873 to 1880. In some cases whole villages or churches moved bodily from one country to the other, retaining the original organization intact.

Additional causes of Mennonite migration could be listed. Some people migrated to western states in search of climatic conditions which they hoped would improve their health. Others left because of intolerance on the part of neighbors in the local communities who objected to Mennonites as a nonconformist German religious minority. One Mennonite bishop claimed that the reason for his own forefathers leaving an eastern community and moving to the Middle West was "because of the low moral standards in the church which he left." This would imply that dissatisfaction with stagnated religious life would be the cause for some migration. Other small groups of families left one community and moved to another because of personal quarrels and jealousies; some wanted to explore new fields; some were attracted by the lure of cheap land; and in at least a few cases changing economic and social conditions in the home communities caused migration. The discovery of oil wells, the construction of air bases, or the threat of industrialization, and the encroachment of city influences have caused some Mennonites to leave established communities to form new colonies.

It must be said to the credit of the Mennonite people at large that no significant migrations have been made in response to get-rich-quick schemes such as a gold rush, an oil boom, or the opportunity of high paying jobs in industrial plants during periods of inflationary wartime wages. Individuals are being attracted in the present war to high paying jobs, but in no cases has a Mennonite migration resulted. One may say by way of summary and general conclusion that the two chief causes of Mennonite migration have been the search for religious freedom and the desire for economic opportunity.
II

Mennonite Colonization

No colonization occurs without a previous migration, but not all migrations result in colonization. When the latter is the case, migrations result in settlements. There is a difference between settlement and colonization. Settlement is the process of adjustment to a new environment after migration. Settlements may be made by individuals or families, independent and even unknown to other individuals and families who are settling in the same community at the same time. The process of settlement includes the matter of building homes, renovating old ones, finding jobs, earning a living, and in general becoming familiar with people, activities, organizations, and conditions in the new community. Migrations may result in settlements that are not colonies.

Colonization is the process by which a group of like-minded people separates from a parent body and transplants itself to a new locality. The chief characteristic that distinguishes colonization from settlement is that in colonization there is a tie and a cultural similarity which continues to exist between the new colony and the parent group from which it comes. This may be illustrated in political history where such terms are used as "mother country" and "daughter colony." The Mennonites in Russia refer to the four mother colonies and the many daughter colonies. There is then a familial character in colonization which is not found in mere settlement. The settler adapts his life and customs to the environment around him and becomes a conformist, whereas the colonist resists adaptation to surrounding culture and adheres to the ways and customs of his own people.

Once settled in the new land, members of the daughter colony remember the homes they left and tend to idealize them. Their first inclination is to reproduce as far as possible in the new community the institutions, organizations, and social patterns of the parent colony. It has been suggested that just as a spider spins his web out of his body so the colonists tend to spin out of their own experiences and traditions a social organization similar to that of the parent body. In Mennonite history this is well demonstrated in southern Manitoba among the Old Colony Men-
nonites who came to Canada in 1874-80 and established themselves in small European type agricultural villages which were the exact replicas of those they had left in Russia. In fact, one can find among the Canadian Mennonites exact blueprints of village patterns which were brought from Russia or drawn from memory by those who had recently come from there.

A colony is a group of like-minded people with common interests living in a well-defined geographical area. The central idea around which a colony is organized may vary greatly. Colonies may be political, racial, economic, occupational, or religious. In the case of the Mennonites, the central idea is always religious. Colonies may be established in cities as well as in rural communities. Illustrations of this are urban communities of Italians, Irish, Swedes, the Negroes, the Jews, and an artists' colony such as Greenwich Village in New York City. All American Mennonite colonies, however, have been established in rural areas with the exception of one colony which is located in a suburb of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Here is a solid settlement of Mennonites on three city streets about one-half mile in length. These people have two churches, use the German language, have their own social life and activities apart from the surrounding society. This Mennonite group, having all the characteristics of a colony, is the only case known to the writer where Mennonites have attempted to colonize in an urban community.

Colonization, then, is more than mere settlement at the end of migration. It is a particular type of settlement, its chief characteristic being the establishment of a group of families with a common background, common interests, common ideals, and a common geographical location. Mennonites who come from various parts of the country to form a colony still fulfill this definition of colonization because they have a common religion which binds them into a common fellowship even though there may be some variation in social customs.

Types of Colonization

The various types of colonization found in the history of the Mennonite Church may be divided into two general classes. The first class is mass colonization due to mass migration. The second class is fragmentary colonization due to piecemeal migration. Mass colonization has taken place but few times in Men-
Mennonite history when compared to fragmentary colonization. Colonization on a large scale is naturally more dramatic and calls much more attention to itself than does colonization on a small scale, yet from the standpoint of the entire history of the Mennonite Church it is perhaps less important. This is so because over the centuries it has affected a smaller total number of people than has small-scale migration.

Mass colonization among the Mennonites might be compared to the transplanting of a mature and full-grown tree, as is done in modern tree surgery. The tree may be moved hundreds of miles from one geographic area into another and yet continue to grow with hardly an interruption, for it is moved as a total organism. So it is in the case of mass migrations where, if entire churches or communities are not transplanted intact, there are at least sufficient numbers of like-minded individuals to establish a daughter colony or congregation that carries on the customs and principles of the parent group. This has happened repeatedly in Mennonite history.

Mennonites who colonized during pioneer days in South Russia, Western Canada and the United States, Mexico, Brazil, and Paraguay, had to establish an economy of their own. They had to produce their own goods, and market them; they had to manufacture much of what they used; and they had to create whatever commercial and industrial activities they needed. But coming in sufficient numbers and settling in compact communities they were able to perform these functions by and for each other, although not without much hardship. But the significant fact in connection with this type of colonization is that everything about it is created and controlled by the group. It is thus colonization in the most genuine sense of the term. The life and culture, the backgrounds, traditions, ideals, customs, habits, institutions, and activities are all colored by this fact. Even where non-Mennonite settlers are found in surrounding areas they have at first comparatively little influence upon Mennonite colony life because of the social isolation and nonconformity of the Mennonites.

Mass colonization among Mennonites has often resulted in the establishment of a distinctive Mennonite culture which has influenced the surrounding areas and people more than these areas and people have influenced the Mennonites. This is illustrated
in the case of the large colonies of Mennonites established early in the eighteenth century in Eastern Pennsylvania, and in the late nineteenth century in Kansas. In these two areas not only were social and religious life influenced by the Mennonites, but the agricultural patterns as well. In the former it was the introduction and development of a highly intensified diversified family-farm unit with its crop rotation and fertilization system; in the latter it was the introduction and successful growth of hard winter wheat.

The most recent illustration of mass colonization among the Mennonites in the United States is that of the Mennonites who came from Russia in 1874-80. Large and successful colonies were established in Harvey, Marion, and McPherson counties in Kansas, at Beatrice and Henderson, Nebraska, at Freeman, South Dakota, and at Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Since the establishment of these so-called "mother" colonies, large numbers of communities have been established by people going out from the parent colonies.

Fragmentary colonization has accounted for the largest share of new Mennonite communities by far. It is the result of religious and social diffusion. Small groups break away from an established community and go out to establish a new colony of their own. This type of colonization is characterized by its spontaneous, unplanned, informal, and unsystematic nature. In this sense it is similar to the pattern by which the American continent was settled. Among Americans generally the cause for this is found in the government's land policy. Land was free or very cheap and there was a certain greed for it. Also, land had acquired a speculative value whereby many people sought title to a large acreage of cheap land in the hope of realizing an unearned increment as land prices rose because of increasing settlement.

Most early American settlers seem to have been willing to forego the advantages of communal living and ventured out on their own. They did not want to go in colonies for the most part. Community was sacrificed for self-aggrandizement. Also, in the rush for land it was difficult to attract a large enough group of families with sufficient common religious, economic, and social ideals to make for a successful colony. Among Mennonites,
however, the matter of migration and colonization was inevi-
tably and traditionally a group matter.

The pattern of small-scale Mennonite colonization seems to
be characterized by the following steps. Several men who desire
to leave the home community and find new homes for one reason
or another, visit prospective new settlement areas. After look-
ing over the land and deciding on the location they return home
and sell their possessions or prepare to move them and their
families to the new area of settlement. Through correspond-
ence, newspapers, or personal messengers, other Mennonites are
invited to investigate and join the settlement. By twos, threes,
and fours the new families trickle in. If the colonization effort
is successful, the colony grows rapidly. There may be from ten
to fifty families in the first year and as high as three hundred
new families within the first ten years. Usually, however, the
growth is much slower. After the first new families arrive, the
additional arrivals are few and at irregular intervals. Increase
is generally from natural causes; namely, the increase of births
over deaths. Prosperous economic conditions in the new com-

munity and enthusiastic reports from the new settlers, of course,
increase the growth from outside sources.

There is generally a minister among the new colonists, in fact
the promoter of the new enterprise has very often been an or-
dained minister or one who seems eager to assume ministerial
leadership. Religious services are at first held in the homes or
in schoolhouses; later small meetinghouses are erected, or aban-
donned buildings from other churches are bought. If there are
no ordained ministers in the colony, one is either chosen from
the group or called from the outside. The meetinghouse serves
as a community center, a place for regular fellowship, a source
of inspiration, and as a place to discuss the problems of the day
and make plans for the morrow.

Causes of Colonization

The causes of colonization are numerous and involved, but
we shall cite four main reasons. The chief reason why Men-
nonites colonize rather than settle in scattered areas as inde-
pendent family units is because of the nature of the Mennonite
Church. The traditional Mennonite teaching is that the true
Christian church is composed of a body of adult believers in
Jesus Christ, a communion of saints, a fellowship of the reborn. The true disciples of Jesus literally try to follow in His footsteps. The New Testament becomes the source of authority and the Holy Spirit the light which daily leads the Christian into paths of righteousness. According to the Mennonite view, the reborn in Christ form a brotherhood with God as Father. Its earthly model is the primitive Christian church. This conception of the Christian church naturally sets it apart from the world at large and from many of the other Christian churches. The Mennonite Church has not been built around creeds, theologies, or even personalities that have been glorified to the point of sainthood. It has been built rather around the idea of a Christian brotherhood, the members of which are all equally responsible for a high ethical, moral, and religious life centered in Jesus Christ.

It is obvious that individuals who subscribe to this conception of Christianity will seek to live in close proximity to each other and fellowship frequently with one another. It is only in this way that the concept of Christian brotherhood becomes fully meaningful.

This view of the church sets it apart from the rest of society. Mennonites choose to be a nonconformist group on a Biblical basis and are so considered by society at large. In order that the religious ideals of the group may be maintained, it becomes necessary to settle in close-knit communities or colonies. In addition to the particular religious beliefs held by the church from the beginning, there have also developed unique customs, peculiar habits, and distinctive traditions. These traditions and customs have taken on deep meaning and are looked upon with reverence and respect. Colonization as a settlement device has been looked upon as a means of preserving these group customs and traditions. In fact, colonization as such has in many cases come to be looked upon as something of an ideal in itself. It is looked upon as the "right" way for Christian people to go to new communities and establish themselves in new homes.

The importance of settling in colonies with the church at the center is well illustrated by a writer in the *Herald of Truth* in 1886 who was looking for places where Mennonites could colonize. After traveling through parts of Tennessee and describing the country and the cheapness of the land, he said:
The people seem to be social and neighborly, but there is no church there of our faith. This is one great objection to any of our people moving there, even if they would like it otherwise. I think when we start out to look up a location for a new home, we ought to take the poet's advice: "Let religion be our chief concern," and not select a place where there is rich, good pasture and plenty of water, regardless of the kind of neighbors we shall have, or the social, moral, and spiritual privileges we shall be permitted to enjoy. . . . A Christian exposes himself to considerable danger when he moves away among wicked men, with the expectation of converting them. If he is not well armed with the Spiritual weapons, they—to his sad disappointment—will pervert him.

Not a small factor in accounting for Mennonite colonization is the matter of persecution. Throughout most of their history Mennonites have been unpopular. This unpopularity often goes beyond the stage of mere dislike and results in positive persecution. This has resulted in driving those of like mind and faith close together for mutual encouragement, assistance, and concern for each other's welfare. Settling in groups of like-minded people, therefore, results in a sense of strength that comes from numbers and a feeling of unity. Historical circumstance, therefore, very often made colonization a matter of necessity.

Another cause of Mennonite colonization is that of economic necessity. As a result of poverty, which was sometimes the result of persecution, Mennonite migrants have had to leave their homes in search of greater economic opportunity. Often too poor to migrate alone they have repeatedly been compelled to migrate and settle together. So acute was the economic situation in some groups and at certain times that it resulted in sharing to the point of actual or virtual communism. Human beings have long known, but have easily forgotten, that through group action insurmountable difficulties can be overcome, whereas persons acting as individuals in the face of the same difficulties would fail, if not perish.

This fact was demonstrated on numberless occasions by American settlers on the western frontier. Exploring parties and homesteaders often grouped themselves together to face immediate obstacles such as fighting off Indian attacks, fording streams or crossing deserts; but after surmounting these imme-
diate difficulties the parties split up and each man went his way looking out only for his own interests. In contrast, Mennonites and other religious bodies such as the Friends, the Dunkards, and the Mormons, have demonstrated that the techniques of mutual aid are valuable not only as emergency devices but also as permanent methods. They practiced mutual aid not only in a period of migration but also in the process of colonization and subsequent community development. One might say that colonization was originally the result of necessity but in time came to be looked upon as a virtue because it provided a way for group promotion and preservation.

Agencies Promoting Colonization

Although colonization is a characteristic of Mennonites almost as old as the group itself, it is significant that most colonization efforts have been spontaneous and unplanned. Mennonites have never established anything like an international Mennonite colonization organization, and in recent years when national colonization boards were established, it was only to discharge an immediate responsibility, not to set up a permanent organization to administer and supervise colonization systematically.

During the eighteenth century the Dutch Mennonites established the Committee for Foreign Needs which assisted Mennonite migration and colonization projects from time to time as need arose, but it was not an organization specifically for that purpose. In 1923 two colonization boards were organized in North America at about the same time. In the United States the Mennonite Board of Colonization was organized and in Canada the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization was established, both for the purpose of helping Mennonite refugees from Russia migrate and colonize wherever they could find homes in the United States, Canada, or Mexico. The United States board never operated on a large scale because it was impossible to bring refugees into this country, and the plan to settle them in Mexico was not successful. The Canadian board, however, was able to give assistance to over 20,000 refugees, most of whom settled in one of the Mennonite colonies in Canada. This board had little financial capital with which to operate, but it was able to render valuable assistance through its counsel and its influence as a responsible agency in securing credit from
the Canadian Pacific Railway. It succeeded in directing Mennonite immigrants to lands where settlement could be made in solid blocks and where favorable terms of purchase could be obtained. Both boards of colonization are still in existence, but the one in the United States is inactive.

The most systematic colonization efforts among Mennonites have been those in Russia. Here funds were regularly provided for families who needed to find new land on which to settle because of the crowded conditions in the old community. Land was purchased in large tracts and settlement of it systematically supervised. (A further discussion of this will be taken up later.) In the United States the General Conference of Mennonites of North America, and the Western District Conference, have periodically had colonization or settlers' aid committees. These committees have had purely advisory or exploratory functions. Since they have had no authority or financial appropriations and have had no systematic plan of colonization, they have been unsuccessful in promoting colonization. These unsuccessful efforts may yet be valuable because out of these experiences may develop more thorough plans and more systematic organization for the promotion of these plans.

An illustration of a private enterprise to promote Mennonite colonization is found in the organization known as the Mennonite Settlers' Aid Society which was established as a non-profit corporation in the State of Kansas by five Mennonite ministers in 1927. The society was formed to provide help for those Mennonites who were leaving home communities and settling in cities and in non-Mennonite communities where they were often lost to the Mennonite Church. It was an attempt to remedy a problem which the official church committees had failed to solve.

The Mennonite Settlers' Aid Society contracted for a 50,000-acre tract of land in northwestern Washington and northwestern Idaho. The contract provided that for a period of ten years the land reserved would be open to Mennonites only. Prospective settlers were to negotiate directly with the land owners. The price of land was reduced for Mennonite buyers below the price for which similar land in the same neighborhood could be bought. The terms of purchase were as follows: One-tenth cash at the time of purchase, after two years and each year thereafter one-tenth of the purchase price, thus providing eleven years in which
to complete payment; interest on unpaid balances was set at six percent annually. The contract provided that as soon as sixteen settlers had purchased reservation land, lumber for a new church building, and one hundred and sixty acres of land, would be donated by the agency selling the land. Before a settler could purchase land he had to have a written certificate endorsed by the secretary of the Aid Society stating that the buyer was a member of a church within the General Conference.

Although this land was widely advertised in Mennonite circles the society never succeeded in attracting sufficient Mennonite settlers to form a successful colony.
Factors Contributing to Success

In discussing causes which make for success in Mennonite colonization we wish to make it clear that there is no single cause of success. In most cases there are a variety of causes but one or two factors are exceptionally prominent or obvious. Often there are important underlying factors that play a part in determining success but the factors are psychological or spiritual in nature and hence cannot easily be discerned. The attempt to point out causes for success and failure in Mennonite colonization is somewhat akin to the attempt to point out why one farmer in a given locality succeeds while his near-by neighbor fails.

In this discussion we shall list what we consider the most important factors contributing to the success of Mennonite colonization over a long period of time and in a majority of cases. Exceptions can be found to many of the generalizations. The factors which seem very basic in determining success in one colonization effort are relatively unimportant in another, therefore one must not conclude that the causes of successful colonization are always the same.

We say that colonization is successful if it succeeds in transplanting sufficient people and culture from the mother colony to give the new colony a character and structure of its own, capable of operating as an independent unit after a period of time without assistance from the parent colony. From the Christian view, success is not measured from the economic standpoint alone. To be successful a new colony must have an organized church which is the center of community life. The people must maintain the ideals, traditions, and values of the parent body and so propagate them to new generations. The successful colony must grow and expand and flourish spiritually as well as economically. To prosper only in one of these areas would still not be considered successful colonization; prosperity in both realms is a requisite to success.

Religion

The first contributing factor to the success of Mennonite colonization is religion. As we pointed out in the previous discussions, religion and the Mennonite conception of the church are
at the very heart of all true Mennonite colonization efforts. The religious factor transcends and penetrates every other single factor and cannot, therefore, be overestimated. Its significance and its victorious quality have been repeatedly demonstrated throughout centuries of Mennonite history. It is because of the sustaining power of religion that Mennonites have endured all manner of persecution and suffered indescribable privations and economic hardships. It is their religious conviction that has caused them to be willing to make the great sacrifices which generally accompany the early stages of colonization. Only the most spiritually minded and religiously undergirded suffer voluntarily for the sake of religious ideals.

A study of the recent Mennonite communities that have been established in Canada by those Mennonites who came out of Russia in 1923-30 as religious refugees from the Soviet Union demonstrate this fact. These people, for the most part, came out of Russia penniless; they endured the hardships and discomforts common to all refugees without a home, with broken family ties and the hardships of travel to a foreign country. When they arrived in Canada they were confronted with the task of establishing new homes in the face of a coming decade of economic depression. All of them were thus still further tried after escaping from the terrors of Bolshevism. Yet through all these difficult years of trial and suffering the great majority retained their religious fervor, praised God for His godness, and continued to depend upon Him for protection and guidance.

This feeling is very well expressed by one of the refugees who left Russia and settled in Brazil. The background of this individual and his group was identical with that of the Mennonites who more recently came to Canada. He says, "I want to emphasize that which underlies all the life of our group, which carries, strengthens, and sustains us, and has done so throughout the centuries even in these last days as we are being scattered over the three continents, namely the power which flows from fellowship with the God of our fathers. The first community building on the plateau was the schoolhouse. But a schoolhouse among us is always also a church building, for we know that our existence is guaranteed and justified only when we cultivate those values which have come down to us through the long centuries
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of our history. It is the church which gives us strength, the church which is founded on Christ, God's representative."

This sentiment is typical of the expressions one finds repeatedly on the pages of Mennonite history which describe migration and colonization efforts. No other factor but a sincere religion has made them willing to face hardships bravely and meet uncertainties courageously. The religious faith of the Mennonites not only makes them willing to sacrifice but also binds them together into a single body so that the feeling of kinship develops. This must be said in spite of the many differences of opinion and differing shades of Mennonite theological and social views. No matter how much they quarrel within the Mennonite family, when faced with opposition, persecution, and hardships from without they submerge their differences and stand together as one united body.

Religion thus has a cohesive power. It draws men together and helps them unitedly to face common difficulties. The Mennonite refugees from Russia in 1923-30 were taken into Mennonite homes in the United States and Canada irrespective of the branch of the brotherhood to which either host or guest belonged.

Another way in which religion contributes to successful colonization is by means of its ability to bridge human conflict situations. It acts as a solvent for personal and group conflict which is bound to arise in all human societies. An important characteristic of the Christian religion is its capacity to solve conflict situations through the exercise of love and forgiveness. Personal differences of opinion, jealousies, and excessive personal ambition are often held in restraint or completely brought under control by means of a commitment of one's whole life to God and to the welfare of the brotherhood. Difficult situations that might result in an open break in a non-religious group have frequently been solved among Mennonites by forbearance and forgiveness, thus avoiding a split and possible colonization failure. Religious faith and practice among Mennonites have not been successful in solving all difficulties but have greatly reduced the severity of difficulties that have arisen. It cannot be denied that religion has sometimes been the cause of colonization failures, as we shall see later, but on the whole its influence has been on the positive side.
A second cause of success in Mennonite colonization is the practice of Christian mutual aid. This is one of the fruits of religion. It is the result of trying to live according to the New Testament pattern of Christianity. It is a demonstration of Christian love in everyday life and practice. In the very earliest records of Mennonite history we discover that Mennonites in one part of Europe who were enjoying freedom and relative economic prosperity aided their brethren with material and spiritual support in other areas where they were in distress. The Dutch Mennonites in the seventeenth century helped their Swiss brethren to migrate from Switzerland to South Germany and Holland. The sense of responsibility for helping their co-religionists in need has continued down to the present day, for as recently as 1930 they generously assisted the Mennonite colonists who came from Russia to Brazil. The assistance of the Mennonite Central Committee to the Mennonites suffering in Russia due to famine and revolution during the early 1920's, and their present assistance to the Mennonites in Paraguay, is a further illustration of Christian mutual aid in colonization. Also, the work of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization is a living demonstration of Christian love and brotherly helpfulness. Within the course of a single decade this agency alone assisted over twenty thousand Mennonites to find new homes in a new country.

Not only was mutual aid practiced between various groups of Mennonites but it was practiced within single groups. This is best illustrated by the Mennonite mass migrations both from Russia to various parts of North and South America and from Canada to Mexico and Paraguay. Here it was not a case of only those migrating who could afford it, for repeatedly the more economically prosperous assisted those who were economically dependent. Sometimes whole villages migrated and in such cases the poor families were always taken along at the expense of the whole group.

Mutual aid should not be thought of as mere relief or charity, something which often implies class distinction. In acts of charity there is often a wide gap between the giver and the one receiving, there is no feeling of kinship or social equality. Most generally the aid extended to the poor and needy by the brethren
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

was in the form of a loan. This meant that the recipient was looked upon as a self-respecting individual who deserved help and who in time expected to return the help received. Every encouragement was given to the poor and needy to become economically self-dependent, but in case of misfortune the entire brotherhood rendered assistance. The motive here was to equalize the burden and to have those who had plenty share with those who had little with the understanding that some day the situation might be directly reversed. That there is a Biblical basis for this type of Christian mutual aid is illustrated in II Corinthians 8:12-14 where the apostle Paul in discussing Christian sharing says: "If a man is willing to give, the value of his gift is in proportion to what he has, not to what he has not. I do not mean to be easy upon others and hard upon you, but to equalize the burden and in the present situation to have your plenty make up for what they need so that some day their plenty may make up for what you need and so things may be made equal." (The American Translation).

The most recent illustration of Christian mutual aid in practice on a large scale is that carried on by the recent immigrants from Russia in paying the transportation debt to the Canadian Pacific Railway. Out of a total of $1,800,000 debt contracted during 1923-30, $1,600,000 of the principal has been repaid and it is expected that the full debt will be repaid by 1945. There were some Mennonite immigrants who were unable or unwilling to pay their transportation debts, but rather than blemish the reputation of the Mennonites and make the C.P.R. bear the loss, the various Mennonite communities as a whole assumed the obligations of those who did not pay. Obligations to the C.P.R. were retired by the entire community, and the individual debtors then obligated themselves to the Mennonite community. In most cases where debtors had formerly been unwilling to pay their transportation debt they now made every effort to pay. Their own self-respect forbade them an easy conscience when they knew that members of the brotherhood had voluntarily accepted their debts.

We wish to submit here only sufficient information to make clear that Christian mutual aid has been a major factor in contributing to successful Mennonite colonization. Not merely in social and religious matters is mutual aid practiced but in the
economic and business activities of the local community as well. One may almost make the generalization that Mennonite colonies have prospered economically and spiritually in direct proportion to the degree to which they have practiced Christian mutual aid. There are very few exceptions to this generalization. This means that brotherly love and religious motivation are not confined to mere theory but in many communities have been put to the test in economic practice. The recent colonization efforts in Paraguay, Brazil, and Canada, by the Mennonites who came from Russia, demonstrates this fact. In the Fernheim colony in Paraguay, for instance, all economic matters are handled by the colony co-operative; all incoming goods are purchased for the individual settlers and all out-going produce in turn is marketed through the co-operative. This means that there is a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of duplication and waste of time and effort. In the various settlements of recent Mennonites in Canada one finds co-operative creameries, cheese factories, stores, credit unions, marketing associations, producers' societies, hospitals, burial societies, and health associations.

All of these activities are carried on as community organizations. They are owned by the people who use them; profits are shared by the community and losses are borne by the community. This means that individuals have an opportunity to work together during the week as well as pray and worship together on the Sabbath.

Mutual aid is more than a temporary device to meet hardships during migration and the early stages of colonization. It is a technique for helpful Christian living in the community after the colony is firmly established. Incidentally, this is not a new discovery. Mutual aid is a human technique as old as religion itself. It has, however, received far less attention than has the subject of competition.

The importance of mutual aid in colonization is attested by most of the colonists who have enjoyed its benefits. Peter Klassen, one of the leaders of the Mennonite colonies in Brazil, expresses this benefit in these words: "Only one who has had the opportunity to observe how the unorganized German colonists in this country have had to struggle in desperation and often practically sell themselves to the private merchants in the colo-
One evidence of mutual aid in Mennonite life is the custom of group migration and colonization. The reason for this fact has already been discussed. This group action has resulted in the feeling of kinship and primary relationship which in turn goes far toward building group spirit or morale. There is, furthermore, great satisfaction in the knowledge that all members of the group share the same ideals, traditions, memories, and cultural background, the same aims, purposes, religious principles, moral and ethical codes. This situation is of great value in normal times and under normal conditions, but is more appreciated in times of colonization in a new community or country where the conditions, the culture, and the people are strange.

A case which illustrates the importance of mutual aid in Mennonite migration and colonization is the Bergthal settlement in Russia which consisted of over two thousand people. This settlement decided to migrate to Canada en masse in three installments, the first group leaving in 1874 and the other two groups in the two succeeding years. Not all those in the first migration had sold their properties at the time of migration. This was left to the later migrants who were expected to clear up the business matters and bring the sale money with them. In *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites* C. Henry Smith describes this event as follows:

The Bergthal settlement was closely knit together not only as a religious, but as an economic and social unit as well. They were not only a church congregation, but a local government unit, a school district, and a poor relief unit, with homes for both the poor and the orphans of their group. They decided that all would migrate, poor and rich alike. The rich were taxed a certain amount for the creation of a fund to pay for the passage across to America for the poor. All the debts owing to one another, and all mutual obligations would be transferred to their new home in America, and were to be paid as soon as they became established in their new home. All the annuities and investments of the orphan home, about
one hundred thousand rubles in amount, was also to be brought with them to America; and also all obligations made in Russia in behalf of orphans were to be discharged in America so that the fatherless and widows would not lose a single ‘kopek.’ Elder Wiebe says in his account of this emigration that in all history he does not believe there is another instance where there was such a complete unanimity and harmony in everything taken up as in this colony.

**Industry and Frugality**

A third factor contributing to the success of Mennonite colonization is the willingness to work hard and to live simply. The Mennonites have a long standing reputation for industry and frugality, and a study of their efforts to establish themselves in new countries and in new communities convinces one that the reputation is not altogether undeserved nor a virtue found only in the dim past. Observations of contemporary colonization efforts impress one that capacity for hard work is still a dominant characteristic of most Mennonites. Very difficult tasks have been undertaken and completed through sheer persistence and steady work; a persistence that was inspired by a sturdy faith in God and in the spirit of Christian confidence that with God all things are possible.

The willingness to work hard and live frugally made possible the transformation of the barren plains of Western Canada into productive agricultural lands; perseverance and unstinting labor converted the grass lands of Chihuahua, Mexico, into prosperous farms and busy villages; the same kind of industriousness enabled the Mennonites from Russia to migrate to Paraguay and in the very bowels of a continent establish successful colonies by converting stubborn bushland and desolate wastelands of the Chaco into livable homes, productive farms, and growing communities. The same must be said of the recent immigrants from Russia who established themselves in various parts of Canada. In the Fraser Valley in British Columbia Mennonite colonists developed previously unsettled and unproductive areas by means of prodigious effort and sacrifice. Here men and sometimes whole families walked from three to five miles to hop fields where they labored for as little as fifteen cents an hour. In this way they earned money to buy food and
clothi n g and save a few dolla r s to make a down payment on a piece of land. Crude houses were built, gardens and small fruit farms were put into cultivation, in "spare time."

The land agent in the Fraser Valley who was responsible for the establishment of several hundred Mennonite families there told the writer that the willingness of the Mennonite colonists to work diligently at any task given them made a favorable impression upon the native settlers. He personally sold land and other equipment to many of these settlers on credit without security because he was convinced that people working as hard as they did were worthy of such credit. As a result of this diligence, family co-operation, and neighborly assistance, the people in time made noticeable economic progress. Today, after ten to fifteen years of hard work, these colonists have productive farms, large, new church buildings, and substantial houses. Mennonite colonists have believed in and demonstrated the dignity of labor. This characteristic has made Mennonites as colonists attractive to governments and to private concerns having undeveloped lands for settlement.

For this reason Mennonites were welcomed to drain swamps and low lands in the Netherlands; for this reason they were invited to develop the steppes of South Russia, the plains of Western Canada and the United States, the plateaus of Chihuahua in Mexico, and the Chaco plain in Paraguay. Simplicity of life and willingness to work are indisputable contributions to the success of Mennonite colonization.

Geographic and Economic Conditions

A fourth important factor in the success of any colonization effort is the location of the settlement with regard to geographic and economic conditions. Under geography is included such matters as topography, rainfall, quality of the soil, the length of the growing season, and the range of temperature. Under economic considerations come such matters as the cost of producing or growing commodities, the kind of markets available for goods produced, the cost of getting goods to market, the matter of transportation and financial resources with which to operate. Colonies that are most successful economically are those which have the largest possible combination of these favorable economic and geographic characteristics.
It does not matter in the long run how great the religious spirit or how strong the practice of mutual aid or how unstinting the human labor, if the soil is poor, the rainfall insufficient, the climatic conditions unfavorable and the markets inaccessible, a colony cannot succeed economically nor spiritually.

Frequent comments have been made about the uncanny ability of Mennonites to select the best land for their settlements. People making such statements seem to assume that it is because of the selection of good land that Mennonite colonization succeeds and Mennonite communities prosper. There is some truth in the assumption, but it does not satisfactorily explain the total situation. The other phase of the explanation lies in the use made of the land acquired. The methods of farming employed and the care and nurture given the soil over the years determines whether agricultural areas decay or flourish. In some areas in the United States where Mennonites are now established they were not the first to settle areas. They often have bought land that was first occupied by others. Such land was often basically good but the soil had been "mined," the buildings neglected, and the farms abandoned.

Numerous illustrations of this can be cited. Many of the prosperous Mennonite settlements in Eastern Pennsylvania were at one time occupied by the Scotch-Irish who forsook them and moved further west. In Western Pennsylvania near Meadville at the present time Mennonite farmers from Iowa, Illinois, and Ohio are buying abandoned and neglected farms at greatly reduced prices because the former operators have gone to the cities to earn "bigger money." The land is being built up, the buildings brought into a state of repair and a Mennonite community is being established. If in the next fifty years this becomes a prosperous agricultural community it will be because of what has been done by the new settlers with the natural resources that have been found there.

A similar situation can be cited in St. Mary's County, in southern Maryland, where a colony of Amish people has been established. These people left Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, because of a dislike for rigid school laws and moved to this new community where abandoned farm land was available at very reasonable prices. The land has very promising agricultural
possibilities but it needs careful nurture and the attention of good husbandmen. The Amish farmers are bringing the pattern of farming with them which made them prosperous in Lancaster County, namely, that of diversified farming and rotation of crops. Herds of cattle are kept and the manure used to build up the land. Even after only three or four years the replenished soil has produced bountiful crops. These cases are cited merely to show that adaptations to, and use of, the economic and geographic factors in an area are significant in determining successful Mennonite colonization.

A great secret of successful colonization is the introduction of new agricultural practices to particular areas. In this way a poor colonization prospect may be transformed into a very favorable prospect. By the introduction of new crops or new methods of farming unproductive land can often be made productive. The best illustration of this, of course, is the introduction of irrigation into many areas of the western United States and Canada which has converted millions of barren acres into fertile farm land. At the present time the Federal Government is reclaiming millions of acres of land by building dams and constructing irrigation systems to make hitherto unproductive land available for cultivation. At the same time, the government is taking out of cultivation other millions of acres of sub-marginal land because it cannot be successfully made productive.

An illustration of the economic significance of new crops to successful colonization is the introduction of a new type of grass known as lespedeza. This is a hearty grass which can withstand long, dry summer seasons. If this grass is as productive in dry areas as it now promises to be, it will permit farmers to graze cattle all summer long in areas where this had formerly been impossible. Farmers in the Mennonite community of Fortuna, Missouri, claimed that in earlier years cattle feeding had been a chief phase of the farming industry in that area but when the dry years came along they were forced to sell their cattle because of insufficient grass to feed them. The native grasses did not thrive in severe dry spells. Because of this threat to a basic aspect of farming in that area, land values decreased and some farmers began moving out of the area. If now a crop like lespedeza grass can successfully be introduced
it may mean the reversal of this downward trend, the attraction of new settlers and a gradual rebuilding and strengthening of this once prosperous but later declining Mennonite community.

The Mennonite farmers in Southern Manitoba living around the towns of Altona, Winkler, Gretna, Plum Coulee, and Horndean illustrate yet another type of agricultural adaptation which may contribute to successful colonization. Instead of depending on grain crops entirely for a source of income these farmers are beginning to plant row crops such as sunflowers, table beans, soybeans, argentine rape, and sugar beets. This in itself is not unique, but the accompanying program of processing these crops in the home community is unique, at least in Mennonite rural communities.

These farmers are erecting a co-operative oil extraction plant in which they plan to perform the initial stage of processing the oil producing vegetables. In this way not only will there be a change in the type of product raised but there will also be a significant change in the method of marketing. It will mean that the farmers can control the distribution of their product longer than if they sold the vegetable products directly without processing. Problems of storage, transportation to market, and control over supply will be significantly different from the situation when these farmers depended almost entirely on the raising of grain for their income. This change will not be made completely and suddenly but gradually over a period of years. This story illustrates the significance of economic adaptations in determining successful community life. It is simply the extension of a practice into other fields of agriculture, something that has been followed for many years in the dairy industry, namely, making butter and cheese with the milk produced in local farm communities. Processed commodities can be marketed at greater distance from the place of production and at less cost than when sold in the raw state.

The Mennonite colonists in Brazil experienced the importance of this fact. Their chief crop is a root crop with a very high starch content known as *arirum*. The price of the raw product, however, was so low when hauled to market forty miles away that it just about equaled the cost of transportation. In order to make the crop pay a factory was erected to refine the
starch near the point of production. This now permits the
growth of aipim with ample reward for the farmers' labor.
Similar illustrations could be cited from Mennonite colonization
experience in Paraguay.

Correlating economic practices with economic and geographical
conditions is obviously a crucial factor in determining success-
ful colonization. In the future even more than in the past, it
may be the deciding factor between success and failure.

Adequate Financial Credit

A further factor of importance in determining successful
Mennonite colonization efforts is the matter of adequate finan-
cial credit. The colonies which have succeeded best are those
which had some financial capital in addition to the social and
spiritual assets mentioned above. Oftentimes colonists suc-
ceded in spite of financial deficiencies but the struggle was long
and hard and perhaps unnecessarily difficult. These failures
might have been avoided if adequate financial assistance had
been available. On this point the Canadian Pacific Railway has
developed a definite philosophy of land settlement. After many
years of attempted land settlement and development of millions
of acres of Canadian territory the C.P.R. came to the conclusion
that to sell land and even to get settlers to move on the land was
not sufficient. The C.P.R. decided that the settlers needed a mini-
mum of assistance with which to begin farming operations. James
B. Hedges, in his story of the Canadian Pacific Railway’s history
of colonization, Building the Canadian West, makes this com-
ment in connection with the Mennonite immigrants of 1923-30
and the C.P.R. land settlement policy:

By virtue of their traditional devotion to the community form
of settlement, the Mennonite immigrants whom the Canadian
Pacific was bringing to Canada were clearly indicated as the
ones who did make a success of group settlement on the large
farms. But while the Mennonites were good human material
they were so largely without means as to preclude the possibil-
ity of their purchasing the lands in the ordinary way. . . .
Where groups of Mennonite families were settled on the large
farms additional buildings and equipment must be provided
by the vendors and added to the price of the land. The total
cost was then to be liquidated by the annual delivery to the
vender of one-half of all crops and livestock produced on the land. In this way every incentive was given to the settlers to achieve maximum production as a means of effecting the most rapid payment for the land.

This quotation illustrates how important the C.P.R. considered adequate financial capital as a prerequisite to colonization success. Where Mennonites had finances of their own or sufficient assistance in getting established in new communities the chances of success were much greater than where this was not the case.

**Leadership**

Another factor in successful Mennonite colonization is that of adequate leadership. It has often been demonstrated that two different groups of people may settle in approximately the same areas and be subject to the same general economic and social conditions and yet one group may fail where another succeeds.

In analyzing such situations one comes to the conclusion that the quality of leadership found in each community largely accounts for such differences. In the successful community the leader has the necessary vision as well as the loyalty of the members of the group. He also has the ability to make efficient use of opportunities and of talented individuals in the group. This includes the ability to prevent the breakup of the group because of internal dissension and personal conflict; ability to provide for necessary economic outlet and expansion; the development of a technique by which the younger generations can be successfully used and integrated into the community as a whole. In brief, strong community leadership has resulted in the successful building of a strong church organization in each community and, as we have stated before, it was an important factor in developing harmonious relations within the group. It seems that wise and capable leaders found their problems reduced as time went on whereas inefficient and poor leaders found their problems greatly multiplied. The importance of wise leaders in colonization is so self-evident that it needs little further discussion.
Governmental Laws and Concessions

A seventh factor which has been significant in determining the success of Mennonite colonization is that of favorable governmental laws and concessions. Governmental attitude is after all largely a reflection of public opinion, and public opinion is a significant factor in Mennonite colonization. If the attitude of many citizens in an area is hostile toward the Mennonites it may prevent the establishment of strong colonies. Usually where the official attitude of the government has been friendly and where the invitation to establish a new Mennonite colony has been characterized by generous concessions the attitude of the individual citizens in that country has been the same. Favorable governmental attitude toward Mennonites was expressed by the Russian government under Catherine the Great in the late eighteenth century; by William Penn in Pennsylvania; by the United States and Canada from 1874 to 1880 during large Mennonite migrations; and again by Paraguay and Brazil 1926-1930 when Mennonite immigrants from Russia and Canada were warmly welcomed.

In 1874 the Canadian government appropriated $88,000 as a loan to be used by the Mennonites for colonization purposes in Canada. This act is unique in history as an expression of friendliness by a government toward Mennonite colonization. The generous attitude toward exemption from military service, freedom of education, and almost complete political and social liberty are further evidences of a friendly governmental attitude toward Mennonite colonists. The complete set of exemptions guaranteed the Mennonites in Paraguay, including military and religious freedom and exemption from taxes for a period of ten years, was not only an inducement to attract Mennonites to Paraguay, but it was a great encouragement toward successful colonization after settling there.

Planning and Supervision

The eighth and final factor which we shall list here, which has contributed to successful Mennonite colonization, is that of adequate planning and systematic supervision.

It must be said in fairness to the facts of history that Mennonite colonization has usually not been characterized by careful
advance planning. It has been even less characterized by administrative supervision from an official church organization. This may in part be explained by the fact that often Mennonites have had to flee from country to country on relatively short notice and under adverse circumstances, nevertheless it reflects a lack of central organization and provision for taking care of such emergencies. When planning has been done the results have been gratifying.

Two illustrations will suffice to make the point clear that planning and supervision are factors contributing to the success of Mennonite colonization. The first is the system of land settlement found among the Mennonites in Russia; it was a most efficient and unique system of colonization. In 1803 and 1804 the stream of Prussian emigrants was directed toward the Molotschna River in the district of Taurida. This became the largest Mennonite settlement in Russia. It is located some 60 or 70 miles southeast of Chortiza and a little north of the Sea of Azov. Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld were the centers, and Berdjansk, on the Sea of Azov, became their seaport. The first 300 families founded 18 villages. Ninety-nine additional families arrived some four years later, and 215 families in 1818. By 1836 there were 46 villages with a total population of 10,000. Immigration from Prussia to South Russia in groups of families ceased almost entirely before the middle of the century, but that did not retard the development of the colonies. By 1914 the Molotschna colony—the second "Old Colony"—comprised 58 villages with a population of 30,000. The land area was about 300,000 acres.

Since the land prices in the southern part of Russia went up, the later settlements had to be made farther east. Between 1855 and 1870 two other colonies were established directly from Prussia; both on the Volga River. The first of these was located not far from Saratow, and the other near Samara.

These four colonies—Chortiza, Molotschna, Saratow (generally referred to as On-the-Trakt), and Samara—were the mother colonies from which sprang 36 daughter colonies. These daughter colonies were scattered all the way from the Crimea to Turkestan and Central Asia. They were to be found in seventeen districts, and included 365 closed villages. Besides these villages many individual Mennonites owned
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

large estates. All told, by 1914 the Mennonites in Russia numbered about 100,000, and they owned between 5,000 and 6,000 square miles of land, valued at half a billion rubles ($250,000,000).

The arrangement which made it possible for these Mennonites to acquire new lands for settlement was the land fund (Pachtartikel). From the time of their first settlements in Russia they set a certain amount of land—about 5%—aside as rent land. The income from this was used for buying more land—where it was cheaper. When a considerable fund had been accumulated, and when the number of landless families became large, a commission was sent out to inspect and buy new tracts of land. Thus the daughter colonies came into being. These, as a rule, also set aside rent lands. How productive these lands could be is illustrated by the Chortiza settlement, which acquired 23.5 acres of new land for every acre of rent land it possessed—in a period of 47 years.

When the Mennonites settled on the steppes of South Russia it was a vast treeless plain of virgin soil. By their industry and thrift, and by their example, they contributed much to making the Ukraine the granary of Russia. Their particular colonies became veritable garden spots. It is doubtful whether any agricultural communities of the world presented to a greater degree the impression of orderliness, thrift, and prosperity than did these Mennonite villages. They were laid out as "models." Good buildings were erected, millions of trees planted, and the wheat, wool; and silk industries were vigorously promoted. Not only did these newcomers engage in purely agricultural activities but also in industries, especially such as were closely related to agriculture. They established flour mills by the hundreds, in Mennonite as well as in native Russian communities. Dozens of factories and brick kilns were owned by them. One of these factories produced 15,000 mowing machines, 3,000 threshing machines, and several thousands of plows annually.

Though separated by many hundreds of miles these Mennonites were held together by a strong communal spirit. Their religion and culture were of great importance to them. Even though they always insisted on the autonomy of each congregation there were matters that concerned them all. The
General Mennonite Conference met annually and was composed of delegates, especially preachers, from the various congregations. There was much to discuss besides matters of faith. A mere enumeration of the institutions which had to be supported out of their church treasury is impressive: 400 elementary schools, 1 theological seminary, 3 hospitals, 2 sanitariums, 2 homes for the aged, 1 orphanage, 1 deaf and dumb school, and 2 trade schools. Much attention was also given to foreign missions.

Statistical evidence that this colonization plan was successful is illustrated by the fact that from 1860 to 1910 thirty-six new colonies referred to as daughter colonies were established in various parts of Russia. Each one of the daughter colonies in itself was composed of a number of villages ranging from one to fifty in number, the average being nine. There were usually from twenty to forty homes in each village. The size of the new tracts of land purchased varied from 2,500 acres to a million acres. The total Mennonite population in Russia increased from the early nineteenth century to the early twentieth from about eight thousand to between eighty and one-hundred thousand.

A second illustration of planning and supervision is found in the work of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It is a well-known fact that between 1923 and 1930 the C.P.R. helped 20,201 Mennonite settlers come to Canada. The C.P.R. was willing to do this because it owned steamship lines in addition to its network of railways. It also owned millions of acres of land in Canada which it wished to have settled. The immigration of Mennonites to Canada seemed to offer an economic advantage to the C.P.R. as well as to the Mennonite settlers.

As an outgrowth of its many years of colonization experience the C.P.R. established the Canada Colonization Association, a subsidiary for taking care of its land settlement problems. The C.C.A. established, over a period of years, a definite set of principles covering its procedure with respect to land settlement. It acted as the seller of land and provided necessary oversight and direction to the immigrants purchasing the land.

The Mennonites were by far the largest single group to colonize under C.P.R. supervision. Because of this fact and the consequent problems in settling such a large number, the Mennonite Land Settlement Board was formed. This board
served as a link between the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and the Canada Colonization Association. The chief purpose of this new organization was to speed up the colonization process and to give adequate supervision following settlement. The board tried to find owners of improved land who would be willing to sell their holdings, and in turn to bring such owners, together with Mennonite immigrants, to see that contracts for the sale of such lands were fair to all concerned. It also provided "after care" and supervision for the new settlers. The day was gone when the settlers were placed on the land and promptly forgotten; where each man shifted for himself as best as he could. The aim and the purpose of immigration promotion on the part of the C.P.R. now was to build the settlers into the economic life of the country.

This evolution of policy on the part of the C.P.R. is very significant. It illustrates how a huge organization like the Canadian Pacific Railway with its vast areas of land to settle, after settling thousands of families on farms, comes to the conclusion that the mere selling of land and even settling of this land is not sufficient, but that careful supervision after settlement is the wisest, most efficient, and preferred long-term colonization policy.

In the case of the C.P.R., colonization has been most recently demonstrated when in 1939 it was given the responsibility for settling approximately one hundred and fifty refugee families from the Sudeten area of western Czechoslovakia. This illustration is only indirectly related to the Mennonites, in that the C.P.R. employed a Mennonite, Henry J. Siemens of Brandon, Manitoba, as its director for two years. But it is so significant, and the C.P.R. policy no doubt an outgrowth of some of its experiences with previous Mennonite settlements, that we wish to include it here. In brief, it was a matter of taking families who were almost entirely urban and industrial in background and trying to settle them on individual farms as quickly as possible.

The C.P.R. bought a large tract of land in Tupper, B. C. and attempted the settlement there. The families were first established in small movable homes that were erected in a village. Much of the material and cultural life was carried on communally. Land was cleared for individual farms, and as the settlers
proved themselves capable the houses were moved to the land and the families began farming on their own.

The British Government appropriated in cash $1,500 per family and $900 for single persons to establish these refugees. The C.P.R. appropriated $100 per family and $50 per single man for supervisory expenses. Supervision was carried on for four years, the total cost being $17,000 from March, 1938, to January, 1943. The whole colonization effort was organized into what was called the Tate Creek Development Company which was composed entirely of C.P.R. officials. This company owned all the land, the general store, and other equipment. The settlers were urged to organize a co-operative at the end of the first year. The community worked as a unit in trying to establish individual homes and erect buildings. The first year thirty-nine settlers were established on their own land; the second year, thirty-seven families; the third year, fifteen families; the fourth year, six families. By this united effort a relatively large number of people were able to establish themselves through mutual efforts on completely undeveloped land in an isolated geographical area.

If there had not been advance planning with consistent and careful supervision during the early years, there is every reason to believe that complete failure would have resulted, because of inadequate financial resources, lack of necessary knowledge about farming, and perhaps personal jealousies, quarreling, and general lack of organization. Because of supervision this colony will very likely succeed. It is significant also that through a central organization and effort considerable savings were possible in united purchasing of consumer goods, farm implements, and livestock. Not only were goods purchased at a saving, but only purebred livestock was purchased so as to introduce the highest grade of stock into the community. This was further possible because bulls were shared by a number of farmers so that the per farmer expense was considerably less than would have been possible if each farmer had acquired a high-grade bull of his own. The breaking of the ground by means of community owned tractors and large expensive equipment was a further demonstration of how difficult and large tasks could be accomplished in a relatively brief time and with a minimum of expense.
The causes of failure in Mennonite colonization efforts are the most critical phases of this entire study. Intelligent persons want to know where mistakes have been made and what must be done to avoid them in the future. This, too, should be the attitude of all Mennonites who are concerned with the welfare of their church. Why have many of the efforts at colonization in the past been complete or partial failures? Assuming that new colonization efforts in the future will continue, what must be done to prevent failure? The complete answer to this problem will not be found in the following discussion. We hope, however, to point out why some efforts in the past have been unsuccessful and thus to give assistance to future colonists.

The causes of colonization failure are many. Seldom, if ever, is failure due to a single cause; just as successful colonization is seldom due to a single factor. People may attribute failure to poor leadership, poor land, inadequate financial strength, or to any one of a dozen other reasons, and it may be true that one or another of these factors was prominent. But it is seldom true that one single factor accounts for the total failure. Such supposed causes are perhaps the most obvious external reasons, but a careful examination of the situation will reveal that the real reasons for failure are numerous, deep-seated, and complex.

Colonization failures are, furthermore, not sudden events due to a single act or deed but are the result of gradual processes or developments that occur over a long period of time. The unthinking may suddenly become aware that things are not going well and attribute the condition to whatever passing event or explanation seems to be outstanding at the time. The more careful observer, however, will discover a number of factors that have indicated trends toward failure. He will be able to see that, if existing conditions continue, the end result will be failure.

Colonization failure may be defined as the unsuccessful attempt of a group of colonists to establish a church or community in a new geographical area. But it may also be the failure to establish a community that has the customs, traits, traditions, beliefs, ideas, and cultural patterns of the mother
colony. If the new community is unable to establish a Mennonite congregation which holds to the traditional religious principles of the group, if it is unable to hold the group together for the purpose of work and worship and social fellowship and, therefore, preserve the distinctive group consciousness, it necessarily becomes a colonization failure. It might conceivably be economically and socially successful and still be a failure from the standpoint of colonization. Because they failed to transplant the culture of the mother community we would say in such a case that Mennonites were successful settlers but not successful colonizers.

It should be mentioned here that there is a distinction to be made between colonies that fail and those that discontinue because of external pressures and circumstances. There are numerous cases of Mennonite colonies which were once firmly established but today are very weak or altogether extinct. In the early nineteenth century, for instance, Mennonite communities were found in Northampton County in eastern Pennsylvania. Today only bare remnants of these once prosperous agricultural colonies survive. One of the factors accounting for the changing situation was the gradual development of the slate quarrying industry in this region. This interfered with farming so that most of the Mennonite farmers gradually withdrew from the area.

In Canada the Old Colony and Sommerfelder Mennonites were firmly established in village agricultural colonies following the migrations to Canada from Russia in 1874. The adoption of rigid school laws in Canada to force all ethnic groups to become Canadianized during World War I caused most of the Old Colony Mennonites and many of the Sommerfelders to seek new homes in Paraguay and Mexico. This resulted in a breakup of the well established and often prosperous communities there. In Central Kansas near the city of Hutchinson a large Amish community is at the present time being broken up as the result of the construction of a huge government air base in the heart of the Amish farming community. The Amish members who are directly affected are moving to Indiana, Iowa, and other eastern States, and it is entirely possible that fifty years hence the only trace of this Amish colony will be the historical record. These illustrations merely serve to point out the distinction between
Mennonite colonization efforts that fail and those that are discontinued because of externally changing circumstances.

No careful study has ever been made of the number of colonization failures in Mennonite history, but there is abundant evidence that the total number of failures is large. Evidence on this point is the factual record of the large number of Mennonite congregations that once existed but are now extinct and almost forgotten except for historical records, often hidden away on musty library shelves, or for grown-over cemeteries that contain informative names and dates on tombstones and markers.

In listing the causes of colonization failure, we make no assumption that the various failures could have been prevented in every case. Some undoubtedly could not have been prevented in spite of all the precaution and planning that was humanly possible. On the other hand, it seems reasonable to suppose that with some care and forethought and the use of available information many failures could have been prevented. In fact, a great number of colonization efforts might never have been undertaken had proper forethought been employed.

**Inadequate Preparation**

One of the most prominent causes of colonization failure is inadequate preparation. A study of many unsuccessful colonization efforts convinces one that many could have been prevented with even moderate preparation before actual colonization was begun. This conclusion is reached on the basis of the knowledge that was available to those undertaking colonization.

The establishment of a very large number of new Mennonite communities was attempted on the basis of very superficial preliminary investigation. Investigators were often of an informal nature and made by individuals who were well-meaning but who possessed only very limited knowledge. The information secured was, therefore, often extremely subjective and opinionated, lacking in factual accuracy and perspective. The mature judgment of individuals who were qualified to give information as a result of careful study and long experience was not secured.

The common pattern of Mennonite colonization is somewhat as follows. A few interested individuals become restless in their home communities for one reason or another and decide to visit
an area of prospective settlement either individually or in a group. Often such parties fall into the hands of land agents and all are treated to free transportation to and from their destination and "shown around" the prospective lands. After looking over the land, which incidentally often has a favorable appearance during the time of the visit, the prospective buyers are favorably impressed and decide to buy land and locate. The buying is done on a second trip, if not on the first. The decision is announced in the home community and others are encouraged to consider joining the new venture. If land agents are involved they usually stimulate colonization "fever" by means of advertising and direct correspondence with interested clients.

Those most interested in the colonization venture are the first to sell their farms and possessions and set out for the new community. Usually from three to five families make the initial move, although there are cases where a single family moves alone into an area where colonization efforts are in prospect. The hope of these first families is that many other families will follow them in subsequent years. This hope, unfortunately, often does not materialize. Those who stay behind to watch how successful the early settlers are frequently decide not to follow. The initial enthusiasm soon wears off and the success of the first families is not great enough to attract others. In many cases colonists moving into an area of settlement a year or two after the first settlers discover that some of the first families have already moved out. The first organization in all new Mennonite colonies is a church which at first holds its services in private homes, then in schoolhouses, and finally in a newly built meeting-house.

If this is a representative picture of the common procedure of the smaller internal colonization efforts in this country, it indicates the superficial and utterly inadequate preparation that is usually made for such an important undertaking.

One of the basic facts of crucial importance to colonists settling in the United States is the nature and characteristics of the climate in the area of proposed settlement. The United States Weather Bureau has kept records of a great many climatic factors in every state in the union for many years. Information by counties in each state is available for the asking on such matters as the average temperature in January and July; the length of
the growing season and the average monthly and annual amount of rainfall. Such information is of basic value to the settler who wishes to move from an area where he is familiar with all these factors, into an area where such conditions are unfamiliar. An examination of such data by prospective colonizers in the past would often have resulted in a different choice of location.

An essential phase of adequate preparation before undertaking colonization is the careful investigation of the claims of land agents. Mennonites have been notoriously susceptible to the schemes of these agents. There are many respectable land agents, but the claims of all such agents should be carefully checked. When years of effort and all the resources of a number of families are involved the situation is important enough to take every available precaution before risking grave loss.

Another important factor in colonization failures due to inadequate preparation is the matter of loose, haphazard organization or perhaps no organization and planning in advance of settlement whatever. Where this has been the case—and it has characterized much of Mennonite colonization—it has resulted in great personal hardships and heavy financial losses to families. Many families have been so completely “wiped out” financially as a result of participation in unsuccessful colonization projects that they have never recovered economically. Hundreds of Mennonite families are living in various cities in the United States today who are the victims of such enterprises. These families are often now in the ranks of the unskilled laborers. During the depression years many of them were on the relief rolls and on the unemployed lists; some of them were living in hovels in the “shanty towns” on the edges of large cities. Along with economic disinheritance came moral degeneration and spiritual indifference.

Because of the far-reaching consequences of colonization failures every effort should be made to prevent all possible failures. In the past the official Mennonite Church bodies have viewed colonization failures with disappointment but not with alarm. Most of the families that were scattered as a result of failures were not followed up. Mennonite families fleeing to the cities in search of jobs or becoming virtual migrants following seasonal labor, have to all intents and purposes been given up as lost to the Mennonite Church.
Neither the individual families and small groups undertaking new colonization ventures, nor the parent congregations or conference mission boards, have done careful planning in advance, nor have they given close supervision after a project has been launched. Concern for the new venture was all too frequently confined to farewell parties and good wishes to the prospective colonists as they prepared to leave the home community. The colonists themselves were generally unwilling to wait until a sufficiently large group of families was ready to migrate and in this way give the prospective colony the sense of strength and solidarity that comes with numbers. Nor did most of them carefully weigh the difficulties ahead and work out a plan to overcome these difficulties. Often no organization for social or religious purposes was arranged for in advance. In Mennonite colonization, as in the days of the Judges in Old Testament times, it was all too often a case of each man doing that which seemed right in his own eyes.

The failure to plan and organize in advance of settlement has frequently resulted in unnecessary internal dissensions and difficulties. The small band of colonists is without clear plans for future action; it finds itself unprepared to make major decisions in crucial moments, and is without delegated individuals with the responsibility for leadership. These combined factors easily lead to discouragement when groups are naturally small to begin with. With so little careful planning in Mennonite colonization it is a wonder that there have not been more failures. Failure to plan and to organize is closely related to the type of leadership found in each colonization project.

The majority of cases to which the above description applies have been small fragmentary internal migrations. Efforts made by official church bodies to give counsel and supervision to this problem have been repeatedly admitted to be unsuccessful. The Western District in the General Conference of Mennonites of North America made perhaps the earliest and most consistent effort to deal with the problem of colonization. In 1910 this conference, then known as the Kansas Conference, created a colonization committee composed of seven members. The words of the only living member of that committee tell the results and reveal the concern of this committee:
The colonization which is most needed at all times is that which will keep our people together in groups large enough to have their church activities, to hold services, and keep their children and grandchildren together and not be lost for our Mennonite Biblical faith.

I have no reports from former meetings, nor records of trips to land we looked and drove over, but all those settlements were a failure because of being short grass land. We were at Bay City, Texas; Watrous, New Mexico—all short grass land. At Carlsbad, New Mexico, and Wheatland, Wyoming, irrigation land was bought. Some of our people bought too much land, and because of crop failures were not able to meet obligations. The irrigation land was too high and the short grass land while cheap, was too dry to raise much.

In 1913 the Kansas conference appointed a standing committee, which after five years of effort reported that the people who needed help were too independent in spirit to give heed to the judgment of the colonization committee. On the basis of this report the conference voted to discontinue the committee. The subject of colonization repeatedly came up for discussion in later years but no permanent organization or on-going program has been developed.

In 1938 the General Conference of Mennonites of North America at its regular triennial session in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, created a Colonization Committee of five members. This committee sent out questionnaires to all the churches asking for information regarding the needs pertaining to colonization in each church and what was at that time being done to assist worthy couples needing assistance. Out of approximately one hundred and fifty questionnaires sent out only forty-four (29%) were returned. The answers were so varied that no conclusions can be drawn from the results. The committee received many inquiries about colonization possibilities from interested Mennonites but it was not prepared to give much useful information. In its final report to the next session of the General Conference in 1941 the committee came to this conclusion:

It is however impossible for any committee or any one man of the committee to do all the work that might come under their supervision. Time would not permit to confer with all
the land agents who are at once ready to advertise their projects. To be able to advocate new land projects would entail a great deal of investigation and proving. This could not be done without a great deal of traveling which takes time and money. Furthermore, the committee can not be too well qualified to know all the aspects of new projects, rural or industrial, in order to advise too freely as to places of work or settlement. We do not believe that this committee should become a land agent but should gather information. In our day when traveling is comparatively fast and easy it should not be too difficult for anyone who wishes to make a new home to see the projects and investigate the possibilities himself.

It will be seen that the work of this committee did not in any way prevent future colonization failures by its work because in essence it assumed no responsibility for studying colonization possibilities and helping prospective settlers find suitable land. The above statement is an admission of this committee’s inability and lack of authority to act. In 1941 the work of this committee was turned over to the Home Mission Board. To date this board has given consideration to the problem of colonization but has not launched a systematic program. So far as known to the writer no other Mennonite conference has official committees promoting systematic colonization.

In 1923 representatives of several branches of Mennonites in the United States organized the Mennonite Board of Colonization for the primary purpose of giving aid in finding homes for the Mennonite refugees from Russia. The efforts of this board to settle refugees in Mexico were unsuccessful. No adequate preparation for settlement had seemingly been made prior to the arrival of the refugees in Mexico. When the representative of the board met the first thirty-six Mennonite refugee families in Mexico he was not able to direct them to a permanent place of location. In order to meet the emergency these families were temporarily settled in Chihuahua. After the second group of fifty refugee families arrived and still no permanent site had been found, the Board of Colonization sent two more representatives to Mexico to find a suitable place for permanent settlement. After some investigations they took an option on a 35,000-acre ranch (Rosario) in the state of Chihuahua which they had discovered through a land agent at El Paso, Texas. Neither the
board nor the settlers had any funds so the owners of the Rosario Ranch rented the land to the Mennonites with the option of later purchase.

The totally inadequate preparation for this colonization project was of course only a partial explanation for the ultimate failure of the attempt, but it was a significant part. Other factors in the situation were the fact that the Mennonites had not wanted to come to Mexico in the first place, having planned to enter the United States and Canada until they were denied admission because of the physical disabilities and communicable diseases which many of them had acquired during the difficult years of revolution and famine in Russia. Canada's immigration laws were more lenient toward Mexicans than Russians; hence the Mennonites took out Mexican citizenship after two years and then were admitted to Canada as Mexican citizens. Crop failures, internal dissensions, and the unattractiveness of the life and culture of the Mexican people also contributed to the outcome. The Mennonite Board of Colonization is still in existence, but only the secretary is active. The full board has never met. At present the only activity is the collection of the debts still owed the board. The secretary estimates that only twenty-five per cent of the loans made to settlers have been repaid to date.

A final example will be cited where inadequate preparation caused tremendous hardship, resulted in tragedy, and would have resulted in complete failure had it not been for certain unalterable circumstances. This story is described in detail by Walter Quiring in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* for January, 1934. The example is that of the Canadian Mennonites who exchanged their land in Canada for land in Paraguay and decided to colonize there en masse. Between November 28, 1926, and April 10, 1930, two hundred and seventy-nine families, or a total of 1,765 individuals, left Canada for Paraguay.

The failure to prepare adequately was not due only to the Mennonites but also to the Corporacion Paraguaya from whom the Mennonites purchased the land. One point on which the Mennonites had inadequately prepared was on how to deal with the slow, easygoing, shiftless nature of many Latin American customs and people. They learned through bitter experience about the Paraguayan conception of honesty, dependability, and
trustworthiness. They took too much for granted and trusted implicitly in the good faith of people who were strangers to them.

When the Canadians arrived at Puerto Casado on December 30, 1926, very little had been done by the Corporacion Paraguaya to prepare for their coming. Only temporary barracks had been constructed along the Paraguay River for the first colonists. These were to be relinquished upon the landing of the later arrivals. Nothing at all had been done for their transportation to the Chaco and settlement there. When the later groups arrived the earlier ones had to move into tents and small huts for which the Corporacion Paraguaya furnished lumber free of charge. The immigrants waited patiently to move into the Chaco but time passed and the Corporacion Paraguaya made no move to aid them. The outer boundaries of the purchased territory had not even been marked off, much less individual farm holdings surveyed. All these circumstances prevented the Mennonites from settling on their own land. The enforced idleness of the colonists in a foreign land, the change of climate and strangeness of the Latin culture caused many to become discouraged, disillusioned, and bitter. In addition to all this a typhoid epidemic broke out. The time for colonization was exceedingly bad from the health standpoint since the Mennonites came directly from the cold Canadian winter into the hot tropical Paraguayan summer. On the first day after arrival a child died, and on the third day three children died. From that time on frequent deaths occurred for months. In January and February alone twenty-six children were buried in the newly created cemetery. Soon adults began to take sick. The close quarters, the dirty and always lukewarm water, the strange and inadequate diet, the unsanitary toilet facilities which were located near the barracks, the absence of even temporary bathing facilities, and finally the flies and other insects, all prepared the way for the catastrophe which was to cost a total of almost two hundred lives.8

It was not until sixteen months after the arrival of the first immigrants in Puerto Casado that the colonists could settle on their own land. Soon fourteen villages were established. The usual difficulties of pioneering were still before them but at least they would work and plan for a brighter future. Land had
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to be cleared, ground broken, wells dug, and crude implements and equipment manufactured. But slowly progress was made and the colonists established themselves on a self-subsistence basis in their own homes and in autonomous communities one hundred and twenty-five miles west of Puerto Casado. However, some of the immigrants had lost patience before settlement was possible. Some returned directly to Canada and others attempted independent settlement in other parts of Paraguay, then later moved back to Canada. In all, three hundred and seventy-one persons returned to Canada.

This is certainly the most tragic of all Mennonite colonization efforts. The colony still exists; in fact, is fairly prosperous; and for that reason cannot be said to be a failure; but certainly the first year resulted in a regrettable waste of human life and materials. It was only the fact that the Mennonites were so far from their own homes and the fact that they had sold their farms and spent their money to migrate to Paraguay that prevented most of them from returning soon after they landed. There is little value in discussing at this date what should and could have been done to prevent the enormous suffering and the tremendous loss of life and money in this colonization effort, but it will long stand as a sober reminder to Mennonites of the costliness of inadequate preparation and the lack of statesmanship in colonization.

Lack of Leadership

The human factor of leadership is often the deciding factor which determines success or failure in colonization. Where situations are such that colonization is naturally difficult because of economic and social conditions the factor of leadership is all the more important in preventing failure. The functions of a leader are to act as spokesman, planner, and harmonizer for his people. It is his duty to help his people adjust themselves to new environments. If a leader lacks vision and foresight, if he is unable to inspire others, if his judgment and advice are disregarded and disrespected by the members of his group, and if he is unable to adjust group difficulties to the satisfaction of the members, he is not only a poor leader but his continued efforts to serve as leader may be a direct contributory factor in the failure of the colony of which he is a part.
It seems that in a considerable number of unsuccessful Mennonite colonization efforts, self-appointed and ambitious men were in positions of responsibility, who had poor qualifications for leadership and still less success. Such men succeeded in leading small bands of followers out of their home communities into new frontiers but they were unable to establish them successfully in the new lands. They were unable to bridge group differences, to help overcome economic handicaps, and to make necessary adjustments to new situations. There are a number of cases where the men who led families into new areas were the first to give up the colonization attempt and move out of the area. Where poor and misguided leaders attract a following for purposes of colonization it is small wonder that the efforts result in failure. In colonization it is impossible, as in other adventures in life, for the blind successfully to lead the blind. Not every colonization failure is of course due to poor leadership, but poor leadership has been an important contributing factor in many failures, and a major factor in a few cases.

Absence of Group Consciousness

Newly established Mennonite colonies widely scattered and far removed from other Mennonite churches are without benefit of periodic fellowship and mutual edification. Such isolated communities sooner or later face the problem of becoming more worldly, or to use a more modern term, becoming secularized. This lack of group consciousness and declining church loyalty is almost inevitable because of the general nature of the circumstances. The Mennonite group is not large enough to provide the necessary social fellowship. It cannot live entirely within itself and hence seeks more relationships outside.

One of the consequences of these relationships is intermarriage with non-Mennonites. This in turn frequently results in the loss of members by the Mennonites because in mixed marriages the tendency is for the couples to join the church which is largest and most prominent in the community, and that is not the pioneer Mennonite group. Even where the mixed marriage does not result in a loss of members it may not result in a gain because each party may retain membership in his or her own church. But such an arrangement is generally a loss, nevertheless, because it results in dividing the religious interests of a
family and diverts whatever religious enthusiasm may exist into opposite channels.

Even where non-Mennonites join the Mennonite Church it is sometimes at the cost of compromise. The small struggling congregation is so anxious to increase its membership that members are sometimes admitted even though not in sympathy with traditional Mennonite ideals, customs, and beliefs. Thus, unless Mennonites are firmly grounded in their faith and unless they have strong convictions about their way of life, such isolated communities have almost inevitably failed as Mennonite colonies. Although the name “Mennonite” may be preserved for several generations the very essence of that which makes them distinctively Mennonite is lost in the process of secularization. When a Mennonite church or community becomes so highly diluted with worldly ideals and practices that it becomes one with the world it is, of course, no longer, strictly speaking, a Mennonite church or community.

This lack of group consciousness or indifference to those religious principles which are characteristically Mennonite further hastens the failure of Mennonite colonization projects. It tends to divide the interests, loyalties, and aims of the members into two camps: those who are ardently loyal to the church and her ideals, and those who are lukewarm to the church and indifferent to its distinctive teachings. This division of loyalty and loss of solidarity and common purpose naturally weakens the small groups of colonists. In addition to this, the old members die off, others move away, and the combination of factors contributes to colonization failure. It must be emphasized here again that the factors causing failure are not single or sudden. Failure is rather the result of a combination of circumstances and personalities influencing each other over an extended period of years. The development of “worldliness” is a process, not an act; it comes gradually, not suddenly.

The Mennonite Church as a whole, as well as the new colony itself, suffers loss from colonization failures. Not only do the individuals involved in the failure suffer financial, social, and religious losses in such cases, but the Mennonite Church, too, loses members, energies, and spiritual resources. Also, each colonization failure means that some families never again identify themselves with established Mennonite communities or
churches but rather become absorbed into the world around them. In such cases all trace of Mennonite influence is usually lost by the time of the second and third generation. Colonization failures are wounds in the body of the church through which precious lifeblood is lost.

**Internal Conflicts**

Another factor contributing to failure in colonization and closely related to the foregoing causes is internal conflict. Internal conflicts are due to a great variety of causes. Some are related to personality problems and others to economic and social problems lying beyond the realm of individual persons.

One general cause of internal conflict in colonization groups is rooted in the make-up of the colony. In new colonization projects, families are often drawn together from various geographical areas and a variety of family and community backgrounds. Often too, the colonists are those from the ranks of the economically under-privileged who have little to lose and much to gain by staking their future on the new colonization venture. These people with different backgrounds, ideas, and customs, although all within the larger family of Mennonites, often find it difficult to merge into one harmonious whole in the close contacts of a new settlement. There are also the usual human frailties of jealousy, selfishness, envy, and gossip that tend to strain the ties of brotherhood.

In newly established communities such small differences sometimes loom large and assume more significance than they would in a larger and more firmly established community. This is true because in the new community the families and individuals are thrown into close and intimate relation with one another by virtue of the hardships that accompany colonization and pioneer life. It was pointed out earlier that mutual aid and cooperation are among the factors which make for success. It must be emphasized here that conflict and group dissension, the direct opposite of mutual aid and harmony, tend to weaken colonization efforts and contribute to ultimate failure.

Language differences are a common cause of conflict within the group. This has been a very common problem among Mennonite immigrant groups in the second generation. The conflict often arises between the younger and the older generations.
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as well as between the original members and those non-Mennonites joining the Mennonite Church through marriage or upon confession of faith. In the United States and Canada the children learn and use the English language in schools, and the young people who learn English through employment in cities are no longer willing to teach their children the German language. The first generation immigrants and the older folk insist on using and teaching the German for fear that by surrendering it they will also surrender vital Mennonite religious principles.

A further basis of conflict in colonization groups is sometimes found in the inroads made by various forms of “isms” or peculiar religious groups. Newly established colonies without deep roots in the community, without a strong sense of group solidarity and frequently without strong leadership, provide a fertile field for various types of so-called “holiness” sects which generally put extreme emphasis on an emotional display of religion. Where these sects get a foothold they naturally weaken the solidarity of the Mennonite colony, and if the strain is severe enough it contributes to the breakup of the colony. Such problems are related to weak leadership. They occur only where Mennonite religious leaders lack group support and where they are unable to provide adequate spiritual nurture and incapable of “rightly dividing the word of truth” for their own people.

Sometimes inconsistent living among some of the members is a cause of internal dissension and a weakening of harmonious community life. Fortunately, this has not been a frequent cause of colonization failure. Where it has occurred it was largely the result of a loss of church control and a weakening of religious discipline. Discipline is naturally not so strong in a newly established colony as in the older and larger communities. The colonization projects also have attracted some of the more rebellious and unconventional members of the parent communities. In fact, dislike of strict church discipline causes some individuals and families to leave the home community and venture forth on a colonization experiment. No factor can cause a religious colony to fail sooner than inconsistent moral and ethical living. Fortunately this factor is an exceptional one as a cause of internal conflict and an accessory to Mennonite colonization failure.
The factors contributing to colonization failure which have been discussed up to this point are all human factors dealing with personal and social problems. They are factors that lie within man. The factors to be discussed in the following pages are external to man. Man has not created them but must take them and use them in a way that they will best serve God and man, or perhaps must leave them entirely untouched as God made them.

In discussing the economic causes of Mennonite colonization failure perhaps no other is of greater significance than poor or cheap land. Certainly no other factor has been the cause of attracting so many people to move from one area to another as cheap land. Repeatedly Mennonites along with hundreds of thousands of others have interpreted low-priced land as an economic opportunity. They have been lured away from their own farms, which were often fertile and productive, and tempted to buy large tracts of cheap land in new and unsettled areas. They have hoped in this way to increase their incomes and perhaps find enough land for each child in a large family. False­ly they have assumed that the net income from their effort and their labors would be as great or greater than it was from their former holdings. They failed to take into consideration the factors which accounted for the land being cheap, namely distance from the market, low productivity, poor quality and uncertainty of weather conditions. Many men, including farmers, have not yet discovered that poor land may be expensive at five dollars an acre whereas good land may be a bargain at three hundred dollars an acre. Poor land is expensive at any price if it is to be used for agricultural purposes from which high productivity is expected. Land values can never be determined entirely by the selling price. They must be determined in relation to the use to which the land is to be put, and such factors as the productivity, the accessibility and the distance from market.

Many Mennonites have been lured into buying cut-over timber land. They were persuaded that the only difficulty to overcome was the clearing of the land. The purchases were made on the assumption that the cost of clearing would be nomi-
nal, and thus a low initial price for the land would give them good land at a low cost. Several hidden factors invalidate this assumption. First of all, most amateurs, particularly prairie farmers, underestimate the cost of clearing timber land, for the task of clearing and breaking timber land is far greater than the cost of preparing prairie land for cultivation. Progress in breaking and clearing is slow, tiresome, and costly. Many settlers become discouraged before breaking sufficient ground on which to provide a living. In many cases only ten or fifteen acres are under cultivation after a period of five years' residence on the farm. Furthermore, the land is frequently stony and the additional problem of clearing stones is encountered. The amount of stone is difficult to assess in wooded country previous to clearing the trees and the brush. It is the cost of dealing with such uncertainties that sometimes makes cheap land very expensive. In the past colonists have seldom made adequate provision for financing land clearing. This clearing cost should be carefully estimated by competent individuals in advance of settlement, and the cost added to the selling price of the land. This would be one way of dissolving the illusion that low-priced land is necessarily a bargain.

Sometimes poor land has been purchased with the expectation of improving the soil and bringing it into a state of productivity through fertilization, soil conservation, and careful nurture. Sometimes this has been successful but in other cases the cost of improvement has been excessive. The cost of draining or tiling a wet piece of land, nurturing a badly eroded farm, or struggling with rocky sub-soil is sometimes so great that the price of land becomes too expensive before a stage of productivity is reached. After years of experimentation, settlers become discouraged and decide to move to other areas where prospects are brighter. In such cases heavy and irrecoverable losses are sustained by the colonists.

Unfavorable Climate

Closely related to the kind of land on which colonists settle are the climatic characteristics of the area of settlement, although geographic factors such as unwholesome climate, poorly distributed rainfall, and extreme temperatures, are of secondary importance in explaining colonization failures. Prospectors who
investigate the areas to be settled often visit during favorable seasons in the year, and frequently discover various additional unfavorable factors only after settling. Many climatic factors are entirely undiscoverable by observation alone. This is especially true in areas susceptible to severe electrical storms, tornadoes, and hail. In such situations all other factors may be favorable but if crops are frequently destroyed by forces of nature no type of colonization can succeed.

The climatic factor seems to have been especially important in accounting for colonization failures in the southern and southwestern States. Mennonite colonies have never been successfully established in states south of Virginia. There are records of failures in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, and Texas, as well as Arizona and New Mexico. The story of an attempted colonization at Lake Charles, Louisiana, as told by one of the few remaining settlers, well illustrates how a Mennonite colony in the South began and ended.

A Mennonite land agent from Nebraska promoted the sale of Bell Telephone cut-over timber land at Lake Charles. In 1916 three families moved there from Nebraska, and in 1917 others followed from Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas, and Canada, until there was a total of thirty-one families and an approximate total Mennonite population of one hundred and fifty. The settlers came from a variety of church backgrounds, but all gathered into one congregation for worship in the new community. A minister in the group preached regularly. Soon a meetinghouse was erected. But in August of 1918 Lake Charles was hit by a terrific storm that wrought heavy damage to the entire community including the destruction of the meetinghouse. The people were discouraged and doubtful of the wisdom of their coming to Louisiana.

The colonists soon discovered that not only was the area subject to numerous storms of serious proportions, but the land they had bought was also very poor and had to be fertilized in order to grow anything. The banks and local people urged the Mennonites to plant rice, but the Mennonites knew nothing about rice culture and besides it was expensive to begin. Some of the colonists borrowed money and signed notes and mortgages for security. When the rice was harvested the price was low and the venture proved a failure. Within the course of five years
the colonists were financially ruined and practically every family moved away. Today there is only one Mennonite family left, an aged couple who live in town and whose sons are in business in Lake Charles rather than on the farm. Other families that did not move away have joined other churches and are completely lost to the Mennonites. Thus ends the story of a typical Mennonite colonization failure where unfavorable climate was at least one of the primary causes.

Other illustrations of climatic conditions contributing to the breakup of Mennonite colonies could be cited at length. The long cold winters of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan account in part for the movement of large numbers of Mennonites to the coastal province of British Columbia where the climate is more friendly. Colonists who have moved to Montana, Idaho, New Mexico, or Texas in search of a more healthful climate have often moved away again. The hot dry winds and the long periods when there is no rainfall have been contributing causes.

A second illustration of Mennonite colonization failure will be cited here to illustrate the factors which operate in the process of establishing and destroying a new colony. In 1910 the Western District Conference Colonization Committee examined various tracts of land and recommended as a desirable area for settlement the region around Loving, New Mexico, twelve miles southeast of Carlsbad. The area was an irrigation region recommended as a desirable area for almost any kind of crops, but especially alfalfa, hay, and grass seed.

The Friedenstal Church near Gotebo, Oklahoma, had a number of large families who had become restless because of the recent economic adverses due to crop failures. Because of the rather dark outlook for the future some of these families decided to find new homes. Led by their elder, a number of families in Gotebo traded their Oklahoma farms for land near Loving, New Mexico. The departure of these families induced other families to follow, both because of a desire to improve their economic situation and to maintain close relations with church members and friends. Most of the families moved to New Mexico in 1911.

During the summer of 1911 a cloudburst destroyed the reserve water dam and part of the adequate conveying the irrigation water to the farms. The government undertook to rebuild
the dam but charged the costs against each of the eighty-acre farms being served by the dam. Due to heavy rains in the early part of the summer and lack of water for several months later a large part of the alfalfa and the hay crops was ruined. In addition to these difficulties the area became infested with an alfalfa root rot. Because of these experiences some of the late-comers cancelled their contracts and remained in Oklahoma. Others already at Loving traded their newly acquired farms and moved elsewhere. At the most there were ten Mennonite families who lived there or who were ready to take possession of farms. In a little more than two years the whole settlement as far as the Mennonites is concerned was dissolved. The total enterprise involved the loss of many thousands of dollars. One family alone lost over $13,000. Thus ended a well-meant, but costly Mennonite colonization project.

Of very great significance in this illustration is the effect that the New Mexico experiment had on the home church in Oklahoma. As a result of the movement of ten families to New Mexico the Friedenstal Church at Gotebo, Oklahoma, was severely weakened. It had lost half of its members and its elder. The church struggled along for seven years, during which time additional families became discouraged and moved away. Finally the remaining members united with another Mennonite Church near Gotebo and the Friedenstal Church disbanded. This illustration shows clearly that colonization failures may cause disruption and ruin of the old communities as well as the new. Colonization failures may be expensive in terms of economic losses, and in social and personal disorganization as well as in church membership. While an awareness of this will not necessarily prevent failures, it should certainly cause future colonization to be undertaken with more caution and careful planning.

**Poor Markets**

A factor which has perhaps not been considered too significant in contemplated colonization projects, but one which nevertheless, has been important in causing some colonization failures, is the subject of markets. Many of the more naive colonists have assumed that if the land to be settled is fertile, the climate favorable, and other social and religious factors satisfactory, the area
must necessarily be desirable for settlement. At first thought this conclusion seems plausible, but an important consideration is entirely omitted. It is the question of where the goods produced are to be marketed. This is a significant omission because we live in a type of society where the bare essentials of food, clothing, and shelter that can be produced at home are not sufficient to meet our needs and desires. We need to market some products in order to get cash with which to buy the things we cannot produce at home. In other words, colonization where abundant food supplies can be produced for home use may still result in unsuccessful colonization because settlers want cash with which to buy food, furnishings, clothing, and equipment. Modern people, including Mennonites, are not satisfied with the bare essentials of life nor with a primitive standard of living with which our forefathers in the age of "homespun" may have been satisfied. This fact makes the question of markets very significant to colonizers.

Mennonite colonies have sometimes failed because the colonists had no place to sell their products. This was pointed out to the writer in northern Saskatchewan by a Mennonite farmer who complained that even when they had no crop failure it was difficult to sell the goods produced for a profit. The farmer in question said there were times when it was difficult to sell eggs for as little as three and one-half cents per dozen, wheat for eighteen cents a bushel, and hogs for a price high enough to pay for shipping to the nearest market. In such a situation colonists might have plenty to eat but still go bankrupt because they can not get sufficient cash with which to pay taxes, reduce mortgages, buy farm implements, or secure those supplies that can not be produced at home. Repeatedly colonies have been started in areas too far removed from market. The movement of more than fifty families from Hepburn, Saskatchewan, to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Region in Ontario is a partial acknowledgment of this fact.

The factor of transportation is closely related to the subject of markets. Good highways are a boon to otherwise isolated colonies. With the use of modern trucks, formerly isolated communities can now haul their saleable goods five hundred or a thousand miles to market, as is the case of some Kansas Mennonite communities which produce butter and ship directly to
Chicago and sometimes to New York City. They are thus not entirely dependent on water or rail transportation. The Mennonite colonists in Paraguay are discovering the difficulties of transportation and distance from market to be their greatest economic handicap.

It is not only distance from markets that contributes toward colonization failure but lack of markets for the goods produced. It may be a case of failure to adapt production to the changing circumstances in a given community that causes economic hardship. Farmers are becoming increasingly more aware that they ought to produce the type of product for which there is demand rather than the type of product which has traditionally been produced in a given area.

**Inadequate Financial Credit**

Some Mennonite colonies have failed because of inadequate financial resources. This applies to the individual members of the colony as well as to the total resources of the community. One of the reasons for leaving the home community to engage in a colonization enterprise is to improve one's economic situation. This means that those leaving cannot be very well satisfied with their present condition or they would not consider migrating. It is a well-known fact that voluntary migration and colonization in the United States and Canada has been engaged in chiefly by those in the lower economic brackets of society. This group includes those who have suffered severe financial reverses in one community and desire to improve their lot in another; young couples who want to start farming but who do not have the means; farmers with large families wanting to establish their children on farms of their own; as well as people in search of wholesome climates for the sake of health. These types are found chiefly among the voluntary colonizers, and are those most likely to have inadequate financial means.

When one remembers that the areas chosen for colonization are almost always in undeveloped areas which require capital for improvement, the need for adequate financial resources at once becomes obvious. And yet it is exactly such situations in which Mennonite colonization efforts have frequently failed because of a lack of capital and credit with which to develop the economic possibilities of the new communities. The more eco-
nomically stable communities and mother colonies in the United States and Canada have not provided systematic and adequate financial assistance to new ventures. The financially able individuals in the brotherhood frequently seem to have lacked confidence in the economically needy colonists.

A financially successful farmer in one of the prosperous Mennonite communities and a member of a colonization committee expressed this feeling to the writer. "The difficulty with loaning money to Mennonites is that one stands so much chance of losing the money. Bankers generally have confidence in Mennonites. If they don't have confidence in a man it has been my experience that we lose, if we extend such a man credit." The conclusion that one draws from such a statement is that members of a brotherhood cannot risk investment in a brother if the bankers can not. The standards of a secular agency thus become the standards of a religious group. This attitude of economic individualism is a far cry from the early Anabaptist expression of sharing with, and concern for, all members of the brotherhood.

It is a strange paradox that official bodies of the Mennonite Church have not taken official action to render material assistance to colonization efforts in view of the church's long tradition of mutual aid. It may be a reflection of the extent to which the ethics and practices of the business world have invaded the policies and considerations of the Mennonite Church. But whatever the reasons for the lack of financial assistance by official agencies in the church, the fact is that many colonies have suffered severe hardships and in some cases surrendered completely, solely because of lack of financial means with which to buy essential equipment needed to get a proper start or with which to meet the reverses that accompany colonization. The old maxim that "it takes money to make money" is a profound observation and holds true in economic matters. In many cases Mennonites have succeeded economically and socially in spite of financial shortages. No one can say, however, how many hardships and failures were experienced in such cases, for they tend to be forgotten once success is achieved. Neither can one say how much sooner colonists would have been successful had they had a moderate amount of assistance.
Where colonists do not have adequate financial resources they often receive credit with which to purchase land, livestock, lumber for houses, and mechanical equipment. This credit is frequently extended by agencies wishing to have the land settled. The policy of the Canadian Pacific Railway in selling land on a long term basis, erecting buildings, and supplying a minimum of livestock and equipment in order to give settlers an opportunity to get started is a case in point. The same holds true for some of the companies selling land to the Mennonites in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia. These Mennonites were absolutely penniless when they arrived in British Columbia, but having a willingness to work they bought land on credit, erected crude homes, lived frugally, and in time repaid the credit extended to them.

In many communities in the western United States where colonies were started the settlers were not extended credit liberally, nor did they engage in the type of agricultural activity that returned large cash incomes as quickly as did the fruit growing industry of the British Columbia colonists. The clearing of land and the establishing of farms in irrigation territory are both slow and expensive undertakings. If poor colonists must depend entirely on their own resources to develop such projects, a long time must elapse before the colonists arrive at the point where the investment of time and money return an adequate income. It is the lack of capital to develop such projects quickly that frequently has caused colonists to become discouraged, give up, and move away before the full possibilities of a community have been tried.

The experience of a small colony of Mennonites at Indian Cove, Idaho, illustrates the difficulty of a colonization project handicapped by limited finances. A few Mennonites in this area saw a possibility of reconstructing and repairing a defunct irrigation system. The man who had the vision for this task died soon after undertaking it. The widow with her sons and some neighbors decided to carry the project to completion. After working very hard and struggling desperately for two years the small group found its financial resources entirely inadequate to complete the task. The project held great promise, if it could be completed, but without outside help the struggle was sure to be long and uncertain of completion.
The settlers appealed to the Farm Security Administration for help in 1940 and received the promise of assistance with a loan. The offer greatly encouraged the Mennonites and assured the success of the project. In 1941 the loan arrived and after many months of hard labor the water system was ready for use. The surrounding desert land was converted into fertile fields. A little additional financial assistance in this case spelled the difference between success and failure. It is not too much to claim that had financial assistance come to other struggling colonization efforts they too could have been saved from complete failure. But the question might well be asked, why should Mennonite colonists need to call upon the state or other secular agencies for financial assistance? Why should they not call upon their own brethren for help?
V

Suggestions for Future Mennonite Colonization

As a result of this study the writer has come to some conclusions regarding the lessons that can be learned from past colonization experiences. The conclusions are expressed in the form of suggested lines of action for future Mennonite colonization projects, and are given here under four main heads.

Church Responsibility

The Mennonite Church at one time influenced practically every phase of the life of its members. It was directly concerned with the economic, social, and educational phases of life as well as the religious. It adhered to the principle that all of life was sacred and that the Christian church should, for that reason, be interested in influencing every phase of the Christian’s individual and group life. This conception of the area of the church’s responsibility among Mennonites has slowly changed. By gradual steps the church has divorced itself from the responsibility of meeting the economic needs of its members. There has been a growing tendency to think that it is the duty of the state to look after the economic welfare of church members as well as non-members. This is reflected by an increasing acceptance of workmen’s compensation, unemployment insurance, old age pensions and similar care provided by the state.

Education, which was once the whole responsibility of the church, has been surrendered entirely to the state. Recreation too has been turned over to secular commercial agencies or ignored entirely. In brief, the Mennonite Church has surrendered a large share or responsibility for the concerns of its members which it once accepted. There is much evidence to show that where churches have surrendered to secular agencies every other responsibility but spiritual guidance, they have lost much influence in the spiritual realm also. The present generation of Mennonites must recognize this tendency and decide whether it wishes to reverse the current trend and return to the earlier
pattern. It must decide whether it wishes to claim its original heritage of responsibility for the whole of life.

Colonization is just one aspect of Mennonite group life, but it is a very important aspect. It is the growing edge or the expansion department of the church. My first suggestion regarding colonization is that the Mennonite Church officially recognize the importance of this phase of the church program and give it the churchmanship which it deserves. The first step in future Mennonite colonization then should be a religiously motivated and church directed colonization program. The following suggestions are made on the assumption that the Mennonite Church will continue to assume this traditional responsibility.

A Colonization Program

Future Mennonite colonization should begin with the development of a set of colonization principles. This would mean the statement of certain basic facts about colonization as viewed by the Mennonite Church. It would mean the setting forth of settled rules or grounds of action, and the issuing of clearly stated principles governing colonization policies. It would mean, for instance, that in all Mennonite approved colonization, religion would be the primary concern, and the church the central agency of the new colony. It would mean that a new colonization venture should be the result of the entire community’s planning and the prayerful concern of all members in the local or district brotherhood. The expression of such principles would make clear to all concerned the basis of colonization. It would also provide encouragement, enthusiasm, and morale for new colonists, if it were known from the beginning that the entire brotherhood supported the project. Principles, of course, are broad, general statements of governing aims and should not be confused with more detailed statements of policy.

A second point in the development of a colonization technique is the establishment of a method of organizing new colonies. There ought to be criteria for arriving at decisions as to when a new colony is to be organized, and where it is to be located. If colonies are to be successful and if they are to have the full support of the congregation or the district conference, small groups of families should be discouraged from launching new colonies without first submitting the idea to the consideration
of the group. Perhaps each district conference should have a mutual aid or resettlement committee to keep abreast of the needs and the changing conditions of its members. Such committees might get information regarding colonization possibilities from a central Mennonite agency. In this way settlements might be more carefully planned and most wisely made.

One advantage of a systematic colonization program to the Mennonite Church is supplementary settlement. Many small and widely scattered Mennonite communities are located in areas where the economic and social conditions are favorable, but where the church is weak because of a small membership. Through organization and planning new Mennonite families might successfully be located in such established communities to the satisfaction of the families interested in new settlement and to the encouragement of the old settlers. It would be a means of adding new life and new blood to the old communities. This is something which is urgently needed in most isolated Mennonite communities to prevent too much intermarriage within the church or to forestall the necessity of mixed marriages with non-members.

A further advantage of systematic organization is that adequate religious leadership may thus be provided for the colonization group. This important matter should under no circumstances be left to chance. We have seen the dire consequences of such procedure in our discussion of colonization failures. This phase of colonization might very well be operated in connection with the mission boards of the church. Furthermore, by proper organization the outlook and prospects for the new colony might be more carefully weighed and thoroughly analyzed than if this were left entirely to individual enterprise.

Under a system of organized colonization certain weaknesses might be eliminated which come with unplanned settlements; for instance, the attempt to colonize in areas where there is insufficient room for expansion. In the past, Mennonites have sometimes tried to establish themselves in communities where within a few years the area reached its maximum settlement capacity. One such example is the Mennonite settlement in the Krauel Valley in Brazil where the opportunity for expansion had reached the saturation point already in the seventh year. Colonies
that are doomed to remain small and struggling from the begin­
ning should never be started.

Financial Assistance

A third suggestion to improve future colonization is the
establishment of a system of financing individual colonists who
need assistance as well as of providing credit for community
economic enterprises. This needs to be done in accord with
standards of Christian ethics and in accord with the Mennonite
understanding of stewardship and mutual aid. Financial assist­
ance should not mean the same as Christian charity and benevo­
lence, but rather the sharing of material goods and financial
credit on a brotherly basis. Under such an arrangement the
Christian motives of love and service should be the dominant
ones, and profit-making at the expense of a brother should be
definitely eliminated or at best, reduced to a minimum.

Under this arrangement it would be necessary to devise
methods of raising funds and determining clearly in advance
for what purposes and under what conditions the funds should
be used. Equally important is the matter of supervising the
use of funds raised. In this matter there is much to learn from
the methods and experience of other agencies such as the fed­
eral government’s Farm Security Administration. This agency
advances credit, assists in the securing of favorable long-term
leases, and scales down debts of farmers whose credit risk is so
low that no private agencies will assist them. The amount of
money lost on these so-called poor credit risks has been amaz­
ingly small. The explanation lies to a large extent in the careful
supervision provided by the F.S.A. for its clients. The success­
ful administration of financially assisted individuals by an
agency of the State is something of a rebuke to the Mennonite
brotherhood. It means that the secular state has confidence in
some Mennonites in whom the church either has no confidence
or for whom it makes no provision. This is explained in part
by the fact that the F.S.A. was set up for this express purpose
with extensive financial backing, whereas the Mennonite Church
has no formal organization for the purpose of rendering finan­
cial assistance to its members.

The particular method of financial assistance might vary con­
siderably throughout the brotherhood. Local congregations,
district conferences, or general conferences might wish to estab-
lish funds for the assistance of their own members who desire
and need assistance to establish themselves in new colonies. It
is possible that the various Mennonite bodies might wish to
establish a program of financial assistance for colonization
through a central agency much as they are now doing in matters
of relief and peace. The particular method is not so important
as is the fact that assistance is available on liberal terms, thus
providing a source of credit for purposes of getting started when
such credit is not obtainable elsewhere.

The Mennonite Central Committee has already demonstrated
one method of rendering this assistance in its program of colo-
nization among the Mennonites of Paraguay. Considering the
great inconvenience that is caused by the distance between the
United States and Paraguay, the M.C.C.'s record of financial
assistance and supervision is remarkable. The value of this
assistance in determining the success of the Paraguayan Colony
has been repeatedly acknowledged by the brethren in Paraguay.
When one considers the tragic experiences of these colonists
before arriving in Paraguay, the years of up-hill struggle in the
wilderness of a barren Chaco, and the progress they have since
made, one cannot deny the effectiveness of the financial assis-
tance given by the M.C.C. It enabled the colonists to survive
the difficult times of crop failure and economic adversity and
it gave them sufficient funds to establish such basic industries
as creameries, saw mills, cotton gins, and a community co-op-
erative. The M.C.C. sent a representative to Germany to meet
the refugee colonists and there assure them that it would pro-
vide support for one year in addition to the funds necessary to
buy household goods and basic agricultural equipment.

It is easy to imagine how much this assistance was appreciated
and how utterly impossible colonization in the Chaco would
have been without some such help. Mennonites in the United
States have never doubted the wisdom of this assistance nor be-
grudged it to their needy Paraguayan brethren. The point to
be considered here is that if financial assistance has proved to
be a mutual blessing in Paraguayan colonization why would it
not be equally helpful and rewarding when applied to needy
brethren on the home front. Financial assistance is of absolutely
crucial importance in the successful development of a coloniza-
A central office, supported by all branches of the Mennonite Church, could serve as a fact-finding body for individuals and groups interested in colonization. At the present time there is no such agency to which church members can go for reliable information. Prospective Mennonite colonists need more effective guidance in regard to the selection of suitable land for colonization if they are to be spared the waste of money and effort that colonists in the past have so frequently experienced. In many parts of the country there is a movement of people to new areas in the hope of successful settlement, while at the same time other people are moving away from those very areas because of lack of opportunity for successful settlement.

The individual colonist's decision to move or not to move is almost always based on the limited information which is available. It consists of tips, hunches, rumors, and vague reports that are often not representative, reliable, or adequate. This results in much useless migration and re-migration and in disappointed colonists. The development of an adequate system of gathering and spreading information about colonization and settlement possibilities would eliminate much of the present waste. It is not only desirable that migrants be assisted in going to locations that offer maximum opportunities, but in some cases it is also necessary to stimulate new migration and to assist present settlers to find more desirable locations. This may be necessary because of changing conditions in a particular area.

A central agency such as here suggested should gather information on all phases that concern prospective colonizers. It should serve as a clearinghouse for those having farms and land to sell and for those wanting farms and land to rent or buy. It should provide information regarding settlement possibilities of large undeveloped areas such as cut-over timber land, government reclaimed areas, or large tracts of virgin prairie or irriga-
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tion lands. Such an agency could help buyers select suitable farms, guard them against unscrupulous real estate agents, and counsel them in various matters pertaining to farm purchases and other means of earning a livelihood.

Mennonites can learn much from other agencies such as the Federal Government through its resettlement and reclamation agencies, the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Jewish Colonization Association, and various smaller private agencies. It would be inefficient and needless duplication of effort for every Mennonite group interested in colonization to try to gather and analyze all the information needed. This could be done thoroughly, efficiently, and satisfactorily by a central agency, and the results then used by the various Mennonite and other interested religious bodies.

The advantages of centralized action on matters of land settlement and even farm supervision and management have come to be widely recognized by large insurance companies, banks, and investment companies which have money invested in farms and real estate. One such illustration is the Colonization Finance Corporation of Canada which is in essence an agency to settle and manage the farms of a combination of business and industrial concerns. This agency is managed by, and is a subsidiary of, the Canadian Pacific Railway. By means of this organization the cost of management of the individual participating concerns is greatly reduced. Only one inspector or manager is required, only one office is maintained, and only one set of agents needs to travel, thus avoiding a duplication of all these efforts by each agency.

In the case of a central agency for Mennonite colonization the function performed would be of a non-controversial nature; it could and should be strictly objective in its services. The facts gathered would be available to everyone co-operating. Representatives of the various bodies would have to create such an agency and determine its policies, if it is to come into existence at all. In brief, a central agency could perform the preliminary functions of colonization and certain aspects of supervision in a more thorough and efficient manner than any of the individual agencies could afford to do alone.

In the matter of distributing information, as in the other suggestions made, the method of performing the function is not the
item of greatest importance but rather the results desired. Our concern here is not so much with how the tasks are accomplished, but rather what is accomplished. Again, colonization is not an end in itself but only a means of strengthening the Mennonite Church as one member in the Body of Christ.

Footnotes

5. James B. Hedges, Building The Canadian West, New York: Macmillan, 1939, pp. 368 ff. This is an excellent source of information on colonization in Canada. It is the story of the Canadian Pacific Railway colonization program and it discusses the relation of the Mennonites to it.
7. The author is obliged to C. C. Regier of West Liberty, West Virginia, for the use of an unpublished manuscript on "The Mennonites of Russia." In it Regier summarizes the systematic colonization policy of the Mennonites.
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