

Confession of Faith (Mennonite Brethren Church, 1902)

[This foreword was part of the first English printing of the confession in 1917.]

Foreword

The confession of faith here to follow is a short statement of the fundamental doctrines of the denomination of "The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America", a branch of the larger body of the "Mennonites" first appearing in history about the year 1536, when the founder of the denomination, Menno Simons, left the Roman Church and began the establishment of independent churches soon grouped together with others under the name, "Anabaptists."

The "Mennonite Brethren Church" as an independent denomination was first founded January 6, 1860, in southern Russia. Historically it claims full connection with the larger body of Mennonites now represented by a large number of branches. In its doctrine it differs from most of these in some of its principles, yet having in common with them many of the principles first set up by its honored founder. The following pages will show to what extent the doctrinal view of this denomination agrees with the doctrines of other Mennonite bodies and upon what points it differs from them.

In the years 1874-1880 large numbers of the denomination came over from Russia and founded the church in North America. Up to the year 1900 it had no creed in printed form. The brethren of the same faith in Russia had several documents of doctrinal teaching but had never developed the same fully nor printed them in complete form. About the year 1900 the denomination, still strongly represented in Russia, drew up and accepted the confession that was formally adopted by the "Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America" in its annual session of the Conference in the year 1902.

Since then a new edition of the confession was made necessary and such was issued by the denomination's "Publishing House" in the year 1916. This edition was printed only in the German language. In it the exact text of the adopted confession was retained, but a grouping into paragraphs was made and a few additions of scriptural references put in.

This present edition of the confession is necessitated by the growth of the denomination, which by this time claims quite a number of members that will be able to read it only in the American language. In the work of translation the aim has been to give as literally as is consistent with good English the exact statements of the text in the German. In the translations of passages from the Bible the "King James Version has been adhered to throughout. After the drafting of the translation it has been carefully read in committee. Rev. H.S. Voth and Rev. P.C. Hiebert together with the, writer going over the translation carefully before its publication.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ accompany the translation and may it become a means for the grouping in the faith in things fundamental in our denominational doctrine. May it help much to glorify the great name of our Lord!

H.F. Toews.