

The Ordnung und Gemeinde Regel von Daniel Good, Aelter der Gemeinde in Rockingham Co. Va.

(ca. 1820-1850) in English translation by John S. Umble, Lois Bowman Kreider, and Evan K. Knappenberger; analyzed in historical context and introduced by Evan K. Knappenberger



Introduction, Analysis and Translators Preface¹

Background, Dating, Language

This document, titled *Ordnung und Gemeinde Regel von Daniel Good Aelt der Gemeinde in Rockingham Co. Va.* was written by Daniel Good (1781-1850), one of the first bishops of Virginia Conference of the Mennonite church when it was formed from Lancaster Conference in the 1830's.² Partially translated by John S. Umble (1881-1966) in the mid twentieth century³, Umble believed it was written around 1850 -- a dating which Harry Brunk seemingly accepts. However, it is unclear exactly when the document was written -- possibly as early as 1820. The entirely handmade original manuscript itself consists of multiple strata, written in both English and German, and is briefly prefaced by Bishop Jacob Hildebrand in ca. 1869. The contents begin with a homily, which makes up the bulk of the booklet; then follows a briefer manual section dealing with worship, duties, and ordination; and finally two hymns and a prayer.

The fact that the Good booklet was clearly composed in several stages, and lacks editorial markings points to the possibility that it evolved over a longer period of time, and is significantly older. Good himself had been ordained closer to the turn of the 19th century (1820 to be precise, and as Bishop in the new conference in 1837) than the middle. The homiletic tone of the first two-thirds of the booklet indicates that it may have arisen as a compilation of sermonic motifs in the German language preaching that began to die out early in the 1820's.⁴ One of the last sections appended to the booklet in the same hand of the bishop is on different paper and in English, reflecting perhaps something more mid-century than the earlier strata. This may have been what led Hildebrand, (and Brunk and Umble afterwards) to date the artifact to ca. 1850, as it reached its final form only ultimately upon Bishop Good's death.

¹ Evan K. Knappenberger, is an independent historian and author in Hardy County, West Virginia. He has an M.A.R. from Eastern Mennonite Seminary and a B.A. from Eastern Mennonite University. Translations of the original *Ordnung* were done by John S. Umble, Knappenberger and Lois Bowman Kreider in August of 2018. Kreider is a lifelong accomplished historian, librarian and Germanist at Menno Simmons Historical Library, EMU.

² Manuscript accessed 5/2018 by Jason Kauffman, Mennonite Church Archives, Elkhart, IN. John Funk Papers, HM1/064SC.

³ Translation draft accessed 5/2018 by Joe Springer, Goshen College Archives. Translation typed on onion skin paper, very faint. The final draft of the translation is preserved in the vertical files collection (under "Good") in the Menno Simons Historical Library at Eastern Mennonite University. Accessed 7/2018 by Lois Bowman Kreider, EMU.

⁴ Bishop Good refused to take a public stance against English preaching during the split of the 1820's. Brunk, Harry A., *History of Mennonites in Virginia*, Vol. I, Staunton, VA, McClure Printing. 1959. pp. 79-83.

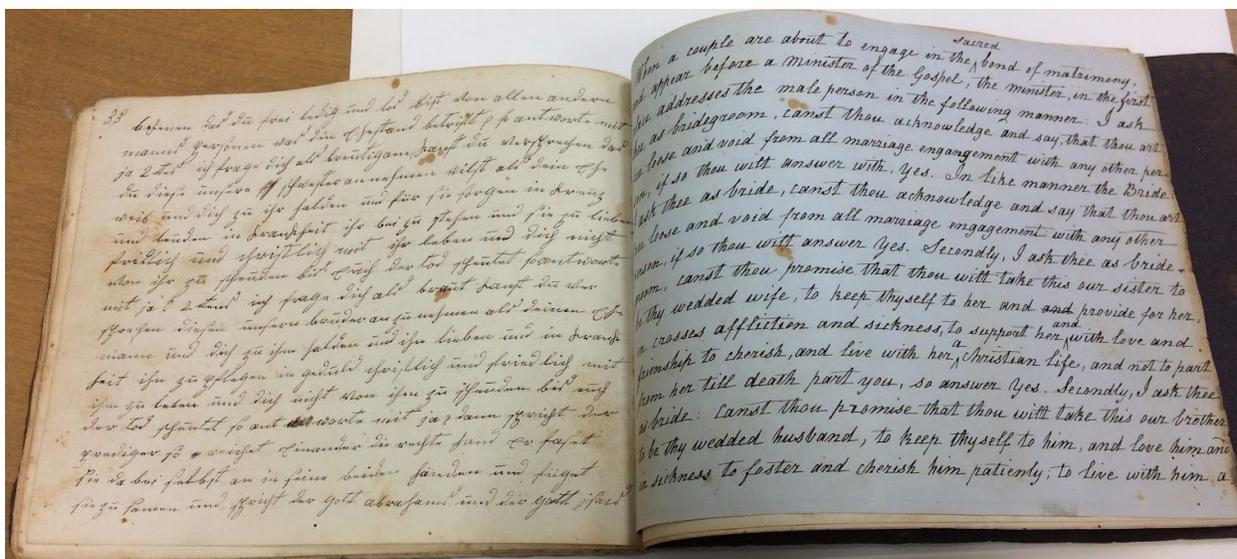
As to Umble's translation there are several things to note. The first draft, which encompasses only the homiletic opening sections and Hildebrand's preface, is preserved in the Goshen College archives and was typed on onion-skin pages, containing handwritten editorial and draft marks. It is illegible in some places and contains several serious mistakes. It would seem that Harry Brunk (1898-1990), who talks at some length about Bishop Good and his *Ordnung*, was the recipient of Umble's final draft translation, which is preserved in photocopy in the Menno Simons Historical Library at Eastern Mennonite University. Brunk spent several decades composing his seminal *History of the Mennonites in Virginia*, which was published in 1959, very shortly after Umble finished his translation in 1958. Because of the late availability to Brunk of the translation in the process of his analysis, it is possible that the full historical significance of Good's *Ordnung* is not completely digested in Brunk's magnum opus.⁵ Brunk did not likely have a chance to examine for himself the original manuscript before finalizing his work.

Additionally, Umble's translation should be viewed with a critical historiographical eye. The translation may reflect Umble's own personal polemic and religious biases to an unknown degree. The final sections, two German hymns and a prayer, were not translated by Umble for unknown reasons. These have been translated by Lois Bowman Kreider and myself for the first time here.

Bishop Good's German language was nonstandard, related to the Pennsylvania dialect of the late 1700's, but recognized by Germanists as linguistically distinct from Pennsylvania Dutch. Certainly Good's German would be recognized by Germanists as part of the distinctive Shenandoah dialect, which was considered to be closer to "high" German than its neighboring northern and western US counterparts.⁶ Good's punctuation and capitalization are also nonstandard, making it significantly more difficult for translators to deal with the manuscript. His usage of nonstandard words in several places should be of significant interest to those interested in historical linguistics.

⁵ Brunk. pp. 58-64

⁶ Research into Shenandoah Valley German, which was a distinctive (and more "pure") dialect than Pennsylvania Dutch: Smith, Elmer Lewis, John G. Stewart and M. Ellsworth Kyger, 1962. *The Pennsylvania Germans of the Shenandoah Valley*. Pennsylvania German Folklore Society 26. 1-278. Also: William J. Pulte Jr., 1971, German in Virginia and West Virginia, in Glenn G. Gilbert (ed.), *The German Language in America*, 58-69. Austin: University of Texas.



Pages o 33 and o2 34 clearly show the stratified nature of the manuscript. Good provided both German and English versions of the matrimonial rites.

Significance

Bishop Good's opus is important on several levels -- as historical document, for its ethnographic and religious data, and for its internal theological value. Nevertheless, Good's work has never received the kind of appreciation that perhaps he hoped (and which Bishop Hildebrand also hoped) it would. Its historical and historiographical context deserves clarification.

The *Ordnung* was not an uncommon genre in contemporary Anabaptist settings up until the mid twentieth century.⁷ Nevertheless, Good's *Ordnung* codified for the first time the religious practice, theological reasoning and common belief of the prolific Virginia community which was at the time a main hub of countercultural American Mennonism.⁸ It provides a glimpse into the early period⁹ of church practice during the first half of the 19th century. Harry Brunk uses the

⁷ Perhaps the best example of this is D.O. Kaufman's 1928 *Doctrines of the Bible*. (Scottsdale, PA. Mennonite Publishing House,) which attempted to combine, codify and summarize the contemporary Mennonite Church consensus on Ordinances, with the help of ordained Bishops, and which is still used by some Mennonite denominations.

⁸ My assertion that Virginia was a counter-cultural hub of American Mennonism standing somewhat in opposition to the "mainstream" Anabaptism reminiscent of Southeastern Pennsylvania is outside of the scope of this paper. I treat this more at length through the lens of education and ecclesiology in my MAR thesis. Knappenberger, E.K. *To Shake the Whole World From Error's Chain: An Alternative History of the Founding of Eastern Mennonite*. Harrisonburg, VA. Eastern Mennonite University, 2018.

⁹ I break the history of the Virginia Mennonites into several distinct periods. What I am here tentatively calling the "early period" is from the advent of Mennonites in Virginia (1730's) until roughly the time of the

document to begin a tentative differential analysis of Virginia practice as distinct from the hegemonic religious practices of the Lancaster Mennonites.¹⁰ Brunk's analysis is interesting but ultimately stops short of the kinds of claims to which it perhaps points. Otherwise, there is little awareness of Bishop Good and his *Ordnung* among Mennonite historians, and even less among historians focused on Rockingham County.¹¹

In the early 19th century in Rockingham County Mennonite circles, a nascent religious revolution was brewing which would shake the foundations of the community to their core. The first serious division occurred under the auspices of Lancaster oversight in the 1820's when a group of progressive families began building meetinghouses (starting with Trissels, very close to the Daniel Good homestead) -- and preaching in English. Among this group of progressives were Burkholders, Rhodes', Funks and many of the younger generations. The divide between those operating in English and those in German soon came to embody a whole new religious worldview that was suspiciously modern and looked somewhat too similar to neighboring protestant denominations. For a while several preachers made compromise by preaching in both languages within the same services. But soon the conflict fomented and split the community.

It was shortly after (and perhaps partly as a result of) this difficult situation that the Lancaster bishops decided to wash their hands of the Virginia problems and give Virginia its own independent authority system. By the end of the 1830's, local Bishops had solidified their standing in the community, and embarked on a progressive program of modernization. Daniel Good, having refused to take a public stand in the overt conflict of the 1820's seemed like a moderate in comparison to Bishop Peter Burkholder in the Middle District, who translated the confession of faith into English with Joseph Funk, and worked for a more progressive and English church. Burkholder was said to have preached well in both languages, as well as initiating a church school near to Weavers (which he himself built) that may or may not have served to teach Mennonite children the German language.¹²

For Bishop Good's part, there seems to be little primary source evidence related to him or his tenure in the Northern District. This document, therefore, serves as one of the few remaining sources on the period and the place. It elucidates the preaching styles and theology of moderate Virginia Mennonism struggling to adopt an identity apart from the Lancaster

founding of Virginia Conference as an independent ecclesial body (1830) when meeting houses began to be built and preaching started in English.

¹⁰ Brunk. pp. 58-64.

¹¹ Elwood E. Yoder has planned to utilize the Good *Ordnung* for his forthcoming history of Trissels Church; similarly, Steve Nolt and his work on Virginia Mennonite Conference.

¹² Historians are not unclear on the function, purpose or meaning of these church schools. Were they a compromise by the English faction to appease the conservative German faction? Brunk, 77, 83-85.

hegemony and in harmony with their worldly protestant neighbors. The preservation of the homiletic section of the manuscript provides a glimpse into the religious life of a people who had only recently begun meeting in churches and publicly defining themselves apart from their German and English neighbors.

Preaching before the 1870's was said to have been done in a "sing-song" style.¹³ Brunk describes the preaching of several contemporaries of Good's as "full of pathos" and even "compelling," but what exactly is meant by this is unclear. We can however be reasonably certain that the general theology and doctrine in the document were fairly standard in their context; the nature of the homiletic appeal, the repeated personal indicators, the strong emphasis on salvation and the illustrations of hell were typically protestant. An in-depth historical comparison between the preserved sermons of other non-Mennonite preachers might reveal the remarkable similarities of Good's preaching to theirs; that a backwoods, German-speaking Virginia farmer with no formal education could deliver such a sermon is remarkable in itself.¹⁴

The two hymns included at the end of the booklet seem to be original to Good.¹⁵ They can be described as traditional, the first (page 35) a song of warning, and the second (page 39) a song of praise. Both of these are fairly typical of the old style of song, and their composition is somewhat standard, with the first being slightly lengthy. The title, for example, (as well as perhaps the tune) of the second hymn is borrowed from a popular 17th century German hymn. These songs would have been considered to be very conservative, especially considering that a few short miles away, Joseph Funk and family were conducting their progressive musical education and hymnary projects. Good likely followed the standard practice of composing new lyrics to tunes that he had in mind from other, similar hymns.

The prayer on page 38 also deserves critical attention for its theological implications. Good prays on behalf of the "fallen Christians" who have been "nearly completely repressed." This seems to be a form of enemy-love, and, if it was meant to be a public prayer, it most certainly

¹³ This is asserted for example in M.S. Steiner's biography of J.S. Coffman. Coffman, who faced serious opposition for refusing to preach in the accepted style, worked rather in a conversational tone, which many younger people found refreshing and responded to enthusiastically. Steiner, Menno S. *John Coffman, Mennonite Evangelist: His Life and Labors*. Elkhart, IN. Mennonite Book and Tract Society, 1903.

¹⁴ I hope eventually to demonstrate my thesis that Virginia Mennonites from the 1730's to 1820's were developing their own subcultural religious, educational and familial ethos; a development which then culminated in the formation of a unique Virginia Mennonite identity. This, combined with the substantial pressures of the Virginia Mennonite diaspora and the newly-realized progressive openness of Virginia Mennonite attitudes, led to the eventual adoption of Virginia Mennonite worldviews throughout the non-Lancaster "modern" Mennonite Church. Of course such an argument is best left for a full-length historical/historiographical treatment.

¹⁵ Historian and Librarian G. Marcelle Frederick could not find any other instances of this composition.

pertains to those denominations farther from the center of contemporary Anabaptist doctrines, e.g. Roman Catholics.¹⁶ Parallel to this formula is that of “the many,” by which Good may mean potential converts to the Mennonite church. Finally, there is the assertion that the church is teaching “secrets” or mysteries. The sense of this phrase may be borrowed from liturgical traditions, such as the Magnum Mysterium; alternatively, Good could be implying that Mennonites have maintained possession of a unique theological perspective with which to understand the scripture. Both of these interpretations of the passage of Good’s prayer have historical implications.

Good’s fellow Bishop, Peter Burkholder, from the Middle District (closer to the county seat of Harrisonburg), was a prolific and talented orator and writer. Burkholder published writings in English along with Joseph Funk of Singers’ Glen, including the accepted translation of the Mennonite confession of faith. In contrast, Bishops Daniel Good and Jacob Hildebrand left very little historical text to posterity. The question must be raised, considering the progressive stances of Peter Burkholder (and his son Martin in his place after his death,) if Good was inspired by a rivalry with Burkholder. Did he really pen his *Ordnung* with the intent to have it published, and if so, why was it lost for twenty years after his passing? Or did Bishop Jacob Hildebrand only independently decide that it should be published later? Because of the intervening decades between its composition and its rediscovery, the document must necessarily be interpreted through the perspective of post-Civil-War Virginia Mennonite history.

John F. Funk did not deem Good’s *Ordnung* worthy of print in the 1870’s -- likely because, inter alia, Funk was interested mainly in publishing material of immediate (i.e. general) religious significance to his Elkhart mission -- he was not particularly interested in promoting what would have been seen then as parochial Mennonisms.¹⁷ Nevertheless, enough passage of time has since occurred that Bishop Good’s work needs to be made available in print, as its historical, historiographical, theological, linguistic, poetic and ecclesial value has appreciated significantly. Perhaps if we listen closely to the distant voice of this church forefather some things of value can be salvaged to the service of the church which he sought to build up, and which is still active to this day.

¹⁶ Good’s several formulae for those outside of the congregation seem to include “bold sinners” and “baptism despisers” and “fallen Christians” and “unbelieving Jews.” I would posit that, depending on the intended audience of the written prayer, the category of “fallen Christians” would have meant, among other things, non-Protestants.

Mennonites in Virginia during this early period were very careful to live harmoniously with their neighbors, and avoid drawing undue attention to their presence. For a thorough treatment of these themes and how they changed into the 20th century, see MacMaster, R.K. *Land, Piety, Peoplehood: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America, 1638-1790*. Herald Press, 1985. Also, Juhnke, J.C. *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America, 1890-1930*. Herald Press, 1989.

¹⁷ Funk was in fact a religious modernist in 1870 whose primary motivation was to mainstream the Mennonite faith as a viable, nonresistant but fully American form of Protestantism.

Acknowledgements and Notations

For referential reasons, I have bracketed page numbers with [t #] to indicate page breaks on Umble's final manuscript and [o #] on Good's original manuscript. Because of the mediocre quality of the electronic replica with which I have attempted to notate this (pictures I took of the original in May, 2018, at Elkhart) and due to the approximations of the translation process, some of these [o #] are approximate to within a few words.

I have tried to stick as closely as possible to Umble's document. In several places I have tried to punctuate for more clarity, but wish to remain as near to Umble's work as is feasible. In several places he has errors or is illegible, in which case I have tried to work out from my electronic copy of the original. Umble did not notate however where Good's page breaks occurred, so I have tried to do that as well. I have not attempted to uniformly stylize the translation, with for example, capital "He" and "Him".

Lois Bowman Kreider graciously offered her time and considerable talents to interpret the last several pages of Good's manuscript. Because of the German script, Good's handwriting, the age of the manuscript, the poor quality of the photo reproduction and the nonstandard dialect of the writing, this required some serious skill. Her deep knowledge of history and culture has repeatedly proven a treasure.

I would like to thank (in no particular order) Marci Frederick, Simone Horst and Kathy Baugh at the Menno Simons Historical Library, as well as local historians Elwood E. Yoder of Eastern Mennonite High School, Dr. Mary Sprunger of Eastern Mennonite University, and Dr. Nate E. Yoder of Eastern Mennonite Seminary. Also, thanks to Dr. Jason Kaufman, archivist and director at the Mennonite Church Archives, Elkhart Indiana; and Joe Springer at the Goshen College archives; Drs. Nancy Heisey, Fred Kniss, Mark and Mary Thiesssen-Nation, and Ted Grimsrud for their advisory support throughout my studies. Special thanks to Andrea Early for her encouragement and support in this project, and to the Weavers Mennonite Church "Fellowship" Sunday School class, for allowing me to present this document to them and ask for suggestions. Thanks to Phil J. Yoder for his assistance in my research. Apologies for anyone I have forgotten to include here.

Regulations and Church Discipline

By Daniel Good, Elder of the Church In Rockingham County, Virginia

The lot for an ordinary preacher

The lot is given into the hand of God in order that God may show which one he has chosen as minister of the word in the church of God, for authorization to perform the rites of the church.

The lot is placed in the hand of God that may show whom he has chosen as the head and bishop of the church of God.

For an elder

The lot is placed in the hand of God in order that God may show which he has chosen as caretaker of alms in the church of God.

[In English, Jacob L. Hildebrand, Bishop of the Southern District of Virginia Mennonite Conference in the late 19th Century:] This pamphlet has been written about twenty years ago¹⁸ by Daniel Good, Bishop of the Mennonite Church a few years before his death and he has told me that he thought to have it printed but did not live to have it done. J Hildebrand.

[o 2]

Introduction to this little word¹⁹

First there is an admonition to repentance and faith and obedience to God and his saving word. For every human being who would like to be saved must give himself over to the covenant with God through baptism which is the new covenant of grace which God wishes to establish with all believers in Christ Jesus.

¹⁸ See the discussion on dating the manuscript above.

¹⁹ "Werdlein" -- the pages that follow are an original homily that apparently was meant to preface the *Ordnung* proper.

Second, are presented the regulations and practices which we observe in our church baptism is the choosing and ordination of ministers, choosing of bishops, and ordaining of deacons, which regulations we consider scriptural; also the regulations in connection with the ban and the receiving [of members who have been expelled.]²⁰ Prove everything and hold to the good.
D.G.

[t 2]

We see that God is pleased to be in a covenant with us and we with Him; accordingly he wishes to be our God and we are to be his people. In the first book of Moses Chapter 17, verse 10, God promised Abraham: "But this is my covenant which you are to keep between me and you and your seed after you. Every male among you is to be circumcised."

This was the sign of the covenant that they are to keep and us commanded so sternly that if a male child remained uncircumcised it had to be rooted out of the people. They were not to be members in the Jewish congregation. Here we can see and learn how God demanded the keeping of his commandments. Accordingly, Israel kept and perpetuated this covenant of circumcision. It is still

[o 3]

kept among the Jews in unbelief who do not believe on Jesus through whom the true means of salvation and covenant of grace is presented to us. This is called the new covenant. Of this new covenant of grace we can read in the prophet Jeremiah 31 v31: "See, there comes a time, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with them from the hand and lead them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they did not keep and I had to compel them says the Lord." Verse 33, "but this shall be the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after this time, says the Lord. I will write their law in their heart and in their mind and they will be my people and I will be their God." From these verses we see that God has made a covenant with which

[o 4]

however they did not keep the outward covenant of circumcision. Nevertheless they had departed from God in their heart and did not serve God with their heart but only with their lips. The Lord also complains, this people draws near to me with their mouth and honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me. God is not served in the mouth, merely, for he wishes to have the heart. This is the ? of the entire new covenant of grace for it is to be a spiritual covenant and not like the former was. For God intends to place his law in their heart and to write it in their mind. Heb. 8:10. Everything points to the time of the Gospel and to Jesus Christ,

²⁰ Umble's notation.

through whom god will establish the everlasting covenant[,] are these believers who believe on Jesus that he is the Son of God are to be his people.

[o 5]

Then He will be their God;

[t 3]

yes, he will be their father, and they are to be his sons and daughters. All those who believed on Jesus while Jesus was on earth, they were obedient, received his word and entered into new covenant. That is, they became converted, repented and believed the Gospel. As Jesus called them when he entered upon his office,, they left everything denying themselves, they followed their Jesus, loved him above everything in the world, believed that he was the Son of God. Matt. 16:16. They took up their cross and followed him. That was the beautiful, blessed time when many thousands were converted and entered the new covenant. And when the Lord Jesus intended to ascend to heaven, he gave his disciples the command to go forth to teach all nations in the name of the father the son and the holy ghost, teaching them to observe all that he had commanded them. Matt. 28:19.

[o 6]

Then many nations and great multitudes of heathen were converted and entered into the covenant and were baptized. Then they beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into sickles. That is, they laid off their rude, evil nature through conversion and, instead, have taken on the bearing and nature of a lamb. For they have come to Jesus and have learned from him true meekness and humility which is Jesus' own imitation: Matt 11:28 that all are to come to him who would like to be rid of their burden of sin. All believing and repentant souls receive forgiveness of their sins for all those who come to him he will not cast out. This is a great comfort for all the poor sinners who realize their lost condition and acknowledge that they are wretched sinners, unfit for heaven and eternal life and therefore concerned that they might be lost. If they then turn and leave off sinning and turn to

[o 7]

God in prayer with their whole heart and with hot tears of repentance beg for mercy and forgiveness of their sins, such the Lord Jesus will not cast out. John 5:37.²¹ No, such he will accept who come to him in such a lost state, for the son of man came to save the lost. Matt 18:11. Such poor sinners he receives in mercy and acknowledges to them, as he says, I know my own and am known of mine. John 10:11. They recognize him as their precious friend and teacher and savior.

²¹ Umble's error -- should be John 6:37.

[t 4]

Yes they rejoice in him because their sins were blotted out for them through him. He of his own free will died for their sins. Oh, what joy was among them all for they were filled with the Holy Ghost who gave their spirit witness that they were God's children and obtained mercy.²² Rom 8:16. If we are children then we are also heirs, namely heirs of God and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ. There was joy among them all and they

[o 8]

were daily and continually in the temple and broke bread here and there in houses. Acts 2:6. They ate food and praised God with joy and singleness of heart. Here the Godly life was again restored.²³ Here the spiritually dead became alive again through repentance and through true living and saving faith in Jesus which the Apostle Paul called "a gift of God" when he says "through which you are risen through the faith which God works in you, Col. 2:12. Through this faith Christ lives in the hearts of believers. Therefore the spiritually dead sinners become alive through the will of God because the quickening spirit lives in them. Here is another life than the former was for this is that new life which a man receives in the new birth. Jesus says you must be born anew. John 3:7. The ancient Christians believed the Gospels, repented, were converted, became obedient, received baptism as Jesus had

[o 9]

commanded and were diligent in keeping everything that Jesus had commanded. Therefore God showed such mercy to them and endowed them with light and understanding and spiritual power so that through the spiritual power they were able to overcome all opposition for Jesus lived in them. As Paul says, I live yet not I but Christ lives in me. What I now live in the flesh I live in the faith of the Son of God. Gal 2:20.. The grace of God and the love for Jesus was so mighty in them that Paul says, "I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, nor force nor things present nor things to come neither height nor depth nor any other creature may separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus." Rom 8:38-39. No

²² Here we have something verging on the Wesleyan formula of justification and experiential transformation. This was a theme in Virginia Mennonism starting with the transformation of Bishop Martin Boehm in the Kauffman house in Hamburg as early as the 1730's, out of which the United Brethren (later EUB and UMC) denomination eventually formed. This theme was out of favor in 18th century Mennonite theology in the Pennsylvania heartlands, which along with the Amish beliefs, centered on "Arbeit und Hofnung" -- Work and Hope -- as soteriological emphatics. Virginia Mennonites were much more openly appropriating theological concepts from the diversity of their neighbors, and developed more rigorous ecclesial hybridity as a result. For more on Boehm, see Brunk, Ch. 1.

²³ This is the early period (see analysis notes above) Virginia Mennonite ecclesial ideal, and reflects church practice which for nearly an entire century was familial, meeting in private homes and involving meals and praise -- not in church buildings or other formal settings. Bishop Good here understands the Godly life to be "singleness of heart" and communalistic.

martyrdom nor wretchedness nor death could turn them aside. They were one spirit with Jesus and of a like mind with Jesus and looked forward to heaven and eternal life and despised the world with its cunning craftiness and Godlessness.

[t 5]

Yes they had entered into the holy covenant with God and were therefore members of the family of God and God's possession and heirs of eternal

[o 10]

life. Matt 25:34. Now they are in eternal rest and glory and now enjoy the good things as the Lord says, preach about the just that they have it good for they will eat the fruit of their labors. But woe to the ungodly for they are malicious and what they deserve they will receive. Isa 3:10-11. The reward will be according to the works. Let us therefore do good while we are in the time of grace and let us fear God while he is to be feared for it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb 10:31. For God is just and treats no one unjustly but rewards all men according to their deeds. Let us then show all obedience.

The obedient will meet a merciful and loving father. On the other hand however the fleshly minded and ungodly and disobedient will meet an implacable God as Paul says, that he will be short and angry with the ungodly who will suffer pain in eternal destruction separation from the face of the Lord and from his glorious majesty. Oh dear fellow traveller to eternity let us consider how heavy and unbearable the punishment of the almighty God will be, how terrible and sharp he will be toward the ungodly, disobedient and unerkändlichen.²⁴ He will come, says Paul, with flames of fire to take vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who are not obedient to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They will suffer the pain of eternal destruction. 2 Thess. 1:8.²⁵

[o 11]

Yes dear ones, we have great reason to consider it. For we must all die and be translated into eternity. And if we then have not made peace with God through true repentance and conversion, we shall fall under the judgment of God. For we are all sinners before God. Therefore, dear one, God bids all men everywhere to repent.

[o 12]

Therefore because he has set a day in which he will judge the circle of the earth, therefore the true God judges and punishes and calls to repentance all men because he does not wish that anyone should perish but that everyone should turn to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9. If then we wish

²⁴ Umble fails to translate this word. Brunk reproduces the passage with the word untranslated.

²⁵ The original manuscript reads "1:9", but includes vv 7-9 as well.

to be saved we must forsake the old life and repent and lead a new and Godly life. Whoever leads a pious life, he is pleasing to God. Enoch led

[t 6]

a godly life; therefore he was so dear to God that God took him away and he was seen no more. 1 Moses 5:24.²⁶ Enoch did not live in sin and worldly lusts but he walked with God. Accordingly we must also have our walk and activities with and in God. God is in us and we are in God as our dear savior says: I in them and they in me, John 17:23. Dear precious souls, if we wish to inherit salvation we must loose ourselves from the love of this world, for a true Christian dare not love the world nor what is in the world.

[o 13]

For in the world there is the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life which is not from the Father but from the world. And the world with its lust decays. But whoever does the will of God, he endures into eternity.

1 John, 2:15,16²⁷. Now let us prove ourselves whether we still love the world and what is in the world. If we still love the world and the Godless life of this world we are still no true Christians. I have said that a true Christian dare not love the world, but now I say that a true Christian has no inclination at all for the perishable things of this world. For through faith in Jesus the world is crucified to him and he to the world. Gal. 6:14. For by faith a Christian looks on eternal things with a spiritual view. For he looks at the reward. It is to be wished that we might think more on eternal things. For it is to be feared that many a man just lives along in the world as if he might live here forever and had no soul to save. And as he thinks little of eternity so he thinks little of his conversion and still less about God and the frightful judgment which will come upon the godless.²⁸ Dear man, you surely know that there is

[o 14]

a God and you are convinced of it. That man knows that God is, that is clear to him, for God has revealed it to them. Rom. 1:19. God is so just that he has declared Himself to all men. You are convinced in your heart. Your conscience tells you there is an almighty God. You

²⁶ Good refers to Genesis as "1 Mos." reflecting the old German style bible names.

²⁷ Good's quotation of 1 John 2 includes vv15-17.

²⁸ Again, this soteriological progression reflects more of a Wesleyan/Whitfield experiential conversion dialectic than an historical Anabaptist quietistic piety. It is also worth noting that there is nothing thus far in the text to indicate sectarian affiliation *qua* Mennonites, or the "distinctives" which would become symbolic of Mennonite identity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries -- (plaidress and pacifism). For more on the historicity of these concepts, see Sawatzky, R.J. *History and Ideology: An American Identity Definition Through History*. Kitchener, ON. Pandora Press, 2005.

cannot excuse yourself; you have no excuses. Therefore, dear one, turn before you will be snatched away by death and are sent into eternity where there will be no more time to repent. The door then will be closed and the time of grace will be past. Today, so long as it is today, do not put off repentance from one day to the next, for

[t 7]

you do not know what tomorrow will bring. The Holy Scriptures teach us that those who neglect this time have neglected everything. O, you frivolous sinners, come for Jesus' sake and repent; do think how frightful it will be to be eternally rejected by God and to be cast out where you can nevermore find rest. The Holy Scriptures say that there will be everlasting pain, that the smoke of their torment

[o 15]

will rise from everlasting to everlasting. Dear fellow human being, do reflect on this and take warning. Think how painful and unbearable the suffering from fire is. Yet the pains of hell will be much greater for the nature of damnation in hell is described as a pool of fire which will burn with fire and sulphur. This is the second death. Rev 21:8. And all godless and unregenerate, fleshly minded sinners who have lived only according to the lusts of the flesh, their portion, will be in the pool which burns with fire and sulphur and yet they cannot die. Dear fellow human being, you who live so securely in your sins, do reflect that your undying soul must endure the pain of eternal fire where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. Mark 9:48.²⁹ The worm, that is your never dying soul, which can nevermore become nothing but must suffer the pain of inextinguishable fire. The fire is not quenched and the anger of God remains upon them. John 3:36. For after the ungodly has died he has no more

[o 16]

time for repentance, for for the door of grace is closed. Luke 13:25. Now however the door of grace stands open still, stands open for us who are still living. Yes, heaven stands open and God's will is that we shall come; for God has no pleasure in the death of sinners but that the sinner should repent and live. Ezek. 18:32. God's will is that we shall come; for God gives us all opportunity for repentance; has also sent to us his Holy Word from heaven and has let us know what his holy will is for us. Therefore come, dear souls, with your burden of sin and call to God: "Lord do not punish me in your anger and chasten me not in your displeasure!" Ps. 38:1,5. For my sins go over my head like a heavy burden, they have become too heavy for me, and, verse 7, I go troubled and bowed down greatly all day long. We must feel the burden of our sins and from the depth of our heart we must wish

[t 8]

²⁹ Cf. Isa 66:24.

to be rid of them and keep on praying and pleading to God. Then he will have mercy for with Him there is much forgiveness. Isaiah 55:7. We must seek God with our

[o 17]

whole heart and he will let us find him, and not alone that but he will bind himself to us with a vow. As he says to the prophet, I will betroth thee unto me forever; I will betroth thee unto me in judgment, in loving kindness and mercy. Hosea 2:19. Yes, in faithfulness I will betroth thee unto me and thou wilt know the Lord. Verse 20. So we can see how willing and ready God is to join himself to us. All this takes place by faith in Jesus; for if we believe in our heart that Jesus is God's son then Christ dwells in us. For Paul says that Christ through faith lives in the believer. Gal 2:20. Eph 3:12. And then if we have the true faith the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. If then we love God with our whole heart as the scriptures teach us, then we also love our neighbor and the dear savior who first loved us. Through love we are constrained to keep his commandments, as he also says "whoever loves me will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and take

[o 18]

our abode with him. John 14:23. Then God our heavenly Father will come with the Son and make His dwelling in us. Yes, God loves us human beings so ardently, for that reason he often comes to our heart door and knocks, and would gladly come in and live with us by his grace. Rev 3:20. Since then the dear God wishes to receive us in mercy let us by no means strive against the grace of God but with penitent hearts receive him in order to be made holy and to become worthy to be children of God in Christ Jesus in whom also our reconciliation took place. For God was in Christ and reconciled the world to himself and did reckon their sins to them and has set up among us the word of reconciliation. 2 Cor. 5:19. Now if we wish to receive reconciliation through Christ, we must accept the word of reconciliation; that is, the gospel of the eternal Father's word which Jesus Christ brought from heaven in which God made known to us his eternal will. This word teaches us that we must repent and believe on Jesus.

[o 19]

For in him our salvation consists and no other name is given to us whereby we must be saved, because he came into the world as Redeemer and Savior of the world.

[t 9]

All those who believe in him and repent in their heart receive forgiveness of their sins. He has obtained salvation through his death and shed blood, for his blood makes us free from our sins. 1 John 1:7. That is, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, that is, we must shun evil works and have no fellowship with the works of Darkness. But we must walk in the light, accept the

teachings of the gospel, believe the Word, do genuine repentance. That leads us out of darkness and we attain the illumination of the Spirit so that we recognize the condition of our souls then we will also equip ourselves with those. What shall we do? The the command will come: repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Acts 2:38.³⁰

[o 20]

And those who hear the word gladly , receive baptism. Then come, all you who stand outside the covenant of God and accept the Word with repentant and believing hearts and be baptized. For the Word says, those who receive his word gladly, were baptized. These have entered into the covenant have obtained mercy and forgiveness of their sins through faith in Jesus. And now, beloved souls, do accept this grace, and do not do like the Pharisees and scribes who despised God's counsel against them who refused baptism. Luke 7:30. If you do not accept this word and this proffered grace, and do not receive baptism, you will have no part in the holy covenant now in the work of salvation which Jesus performed for all for his believers. Through his death and resurrection, he has brought eternal salvation for all those who obey him and keep his commandment. Beloved, do reflect on what Jesus has done for you through his great love. You were in your sins and dying in the wrath of the great God. You would always

[o 21]

have had to remain under such heavy condemnation and never would you have been able to be saved if Jesus had not come to save us and himself offered our sins in his body on the wood of the cross. 1 Peter 2:24. From this we see the great love that he had for us. It stands to reason that we should realize that we are not purchased with silver or gold but redeemed by the precious blood of Christ as of an innocent lamb. 1 Peter 1:18, 19. Come then and believe on the Son of God; otherwise the wrath of God will rest on you. For whoever does not believe on the

[t 10]

Son of God cannot believe in his holy, saving Word. Therefore, the wrath of God remains over him (John 3:36)³¹ and be under sin and condemnation. For on account of the sin of one, condemnation came upon all men (Rom. 5:18); but whoever believes on Jesus and receives his teaching and walks in it, he has eternal life. Now, dear fellow being, accept the teachings of Jesus, for they are the power of God which will save all those who believe them. Rom 1:16. But we must accept all the commandments: baptism, through which

[o 22]

³⁰ Good also quoting v. 37.

³¹ Umble mistaken has "John 8:36"

a person is incorporated into the fellowship of believers; this is the new covenant which God wishes to set up with all believers in Christ Jesus. Then you must also keep the communion which the Lord Jesus himself commanded and said, “this do in remembrance of me.” Luke 22:19. For in this way we are to remember how painfully he suffered for us. Come, then, and consider aright what Jesus suffered for us when he died for us. Yes, we are debtors to keep everything which he commanded us. Come, accept Jesus and remain true to him till death.³² Then he will lead you into eternal life where you can be his in great joy and glory and shine like the sun in the Father’s kingdom. Matt. 13:43. Now great will be the joy among those who now are saved! They will praise and glorify God forever for the peace which is bestowed upon them through Jesus Christ.

God help us to the end. Amen.

Orders³³

To reach this state of happiness we must obey everything which Jesus commanded us. In our church we find ourselves indebted and constrained by love to our dear redeemer and savior to keep everything which he commanded us. Our regulations and practice you may see in the following pages.³⁴

³² This particular experiential soteriology is, interestingly, something heavily emphasized beginning in the 1870’s by the first Mennonite revivalist John S. Coffman (1848-1899) in his work to formulate a specifically Mennonite revivalism and to modernize Mennonite homiletics. When explaining his approach in letters to his confidant and brother-in-law Bishop Lewis J. Heatwole (1852-1932), Coffman clearly lays out the problematic nature of mainstream Protestant revivalism: i.e. an overemphasis on one-time salvation, coupled with a lack of follow-through in Christian community. That Virginia Mennonites were beginning in the early 19th century to develop the idea of a sustained conversion experience in their homiletic soteriology is evidenced here. For a treatment of and references to the large collection of correspondence of both JS Coffman and LJ Heatwole, see Knappenberger, 2018.

³³ Here Good’s homily, his “Werdlein,” shifts into a discussion of the rules and orders, the practices of the church. I have added this section header for clarity, and it is not in the original manuscript. It is unclear what kind of actual shift of heading or tone he meant to convey.

³⁴ Here ends Umble’s first draft of the translation manuscript. There are 17 more pages of regulations (15 of which are in German) after the 22 opening pages of explanation.

The fact that Bishop Good refrains until after the closing of his admonitory monologue to mention specific church identity and practice is significant. It shows that Virginia Mennonites were aware of themselves as a distinctive religious denomination within a larger Protestant context, but were oriented toward their non-Mennonite neighbors not in an attitude of sectarian apologetics, but rather more generally and evangelically.

If we assume that what Bishop Good has written here was taken in part or wholesale from a sermon or series of sermons, we must also assume that the last paragraph mentioning the specific regulations was addenda to what would have been a typical Mennonite message, closing with “amen” and delivered orally to families and visitors in what were then brand new timber meetinghouses, the first in Virginia Mennonite

The first question before baptism: in the first place you are to be asked whether you can confess that there is an Almighty God who is eternal without beginning of days or end of life, who made all things which are made, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, who upholds and maintains everything by His almighty Word.³⁵ Can you confess this with a yes? Secondly: then in the second place you are to be asked whether you can confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He was sent into the world by the Father to be the redeemer and savior of

[t 11]

the world and that he suffered much under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, and on the third day he arose from the dead and ascended to heaven from whence he will come again to judge the living and the dead. Can you confess this with yes? In the third place you are to be asked whether you can confess that there is a Holy Ghost and He is of the same essence³⁶ as the Father and the Son in power and activity and that He is Comforter of all believers and purifies their hearts and leads them on the road of life. And further, are you willing also to deny the devil, the world and every evil work and your own will and are you willing also to submit yourself to the teaching of the Gospel and to strive for the truth even until death. Can you confess this with yes?

After this the preacher and the candidate³⁷ kneel and the preacher prays. After the prayer the preacher rises, lays his hands on the candidate's head and says: "You are now baptized on your confessed faith which you have confessed before God and these witnesses, with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." As he speaks the three high names he pours double handful of water on his head. After this he offers him his hand and says, "Arise to a new life as Christ awakened from the dead through the glory of the father."³⁸ Accordingly we should also walk in a new life. You are now recognized as a brother (sister) in

Conference. Having used the occasion to pitch an exegetical outline of the need to uphold the commandments -- chief among them being believers' baptism, significantly -- Bishop Good can now get to his intended point, the rules and regulations of the newly-organized Conference.

³⁵ This confession is strikingly parallel to the creedal confessions of other Christian denominations. The implications of early 19th century creedal doctrines in Mennonite practice is important to the theological development of 20th century creedal Anabaptism which is sometimes seen as foreign to traditional Anabaptist theology.

³⁶ "*Wesen*"

³⁷ "*Täufling*"

³⁸ This seems to be a unique theological formulation.

the church of Jesus Christ³⁹ so long as you do not transgress and remain in the teaching of Jesus. As Jesus said if you remain in my word then you are my true disciples.⁴⁰

Excommunication or ban is also commanded. “Put away from yourselves whoever is evil” says Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:13. Whenever a member walks disorderly and a complaint comes against him and then is interviewed and found guilty but is stubborn and will not receive direction or accept some punishment then nice directions are given to us for such disobedient members.⁴¹ In Matthew 18 the Lord Jesus tells us that we should consider them as heathen and publicans and they should not be considered as members in the church any more but should be cut off and put out in the ban. But we should not consider such as enemies but much more

[t 12]

as brothers and exhort them that they might become submissive and repent of their wrong and again allow themselves to be received in the congregation. 2 Thes. 3:15.

When such a person who has been put out and was in the ban makes request to be received in the church again after satisfactory penance then an inquiry is held and if no one has any objection to receiving him again⁴² then he will be received again with these words: “[]Can you confess that you have been punished in a just manner and were put out of the church? Yes. And are you minded to better your life with true repentance and with real earnestness to hold yourself to God and his word to lead a holy and godly life and to strive for the truth until death?[]” Yes. Then the preacher gives him his hand and says “You are now again to be considered as a brother (sister) in the church of Jesus Christ so long as you remain true to the teaching of Jesus Christ and do not transgress.[“] Then he gives him the brotherly kiss and commits him to God.

³⁹ This formula, “the church of Jesus Christ” is repeatedly used to denote the Mennonite congregation, conference and denomination. That Bishop Good uses a catholic formula is of importance, as well as the fact that there is no specific formula of Anabaptist identity. Such identity distinctions were apparently not salient until later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Virginia Mennonite circles. This supports Sawatzky’s thesis.

⁴⁰ There is no close quotation mark in Umble’s final draft here.

⁴¹ Brunk finds this section to be of special interest in his history. I might also add that the exclusionary practices of Virginia Mennonites are still troubled and under scrutiny and debate to the present. Brunk finds especial significance in the gentleness of the Good’s wording -- e.g. “nice directions are given.” Brunk, pp. 58-64.

⁴² One feature of early Virginia Mennonite polity that repeatedly occurs is the emphasis on consensus (at least presumably among the male church members). This is true in the ordination process in which unanimous consensus circumvents the need to cast lots as well. (See page [t 13] below)

A form for ordaining an ordinary preacher

The congregation is admonished to pray earnestly to God that he might point out a man for the work of the office. After that the congregation votes (for candidates) then the men who have been voted for are interviewed (to learn) whether they are willing to go in a lot and whether they would be willing to cooperate with whomever it would hit according to our regulations. If so, then as many books are taken as there are men who voted for and the lot is placed in one. After the sermon the bishop admonishes the congregation to earnest prayer. Then they kneel again and pray with the apostles: "Lord who knowest the hearts of all men show which of these thou hast chosen." After prayer and after everything has been committed to God the hand of it is arranged so that no one in the house knows which book the lot is, then one after another takes a book until they are all taken. Then the authorized preacher (bishop) examines the books and in whichever book the lot is found that person then is ordained as minister of the word. He reads the words from the lot which are "The lot is given into the hand of God in order that God may show which one he has chosen as minister of the word in the

[t 13]

church of God." After that he offers him his hand and says, "Arise to obedience" (which then takes place with tears in his eyes)⁴³ "for the Lord has chosen you to preach his holy gospel." I now commit the gospel to you to preach repentance to the unrepentant, to exhort⁴⁴, to comfort the comfortless. Persevere with reading and teaching,⁴⁵ threaten, admonish in season and out of season, do the work of an evangelical preacher, administer your office wisely, feed the flock of Christ not from constraint not for filthy lucre but from a true heart. So be faithful and the Lord will give you light and wisdom, to which I wish you the grace of God. Amen.⁴⁶ Here you have your preacher be at peace with him and pray for him.⁴⁷

⁴³ Bishop Good is suggesting this show of emotion as normal in such a setting.

⁴⁴ The difference in emphasis between preaching and exhorting may be affected from the Methodists, who had to distinguish between preaching and exhortation for reasons of authority. For instance, Methodist women were allowed to exhort, but only ordained ministers were allowed to preach. In practice however, the two were often indistinguishable. Heitzenrater, R.P. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, (Second Edition). Nashville, TN. Abingdon Press, 2013.

⁴⁵ Education is codified into the duties of ordination. This presages the Mennonite emphasis on education that would follow in the late 19th and 20th centuries. This is a focus of my own MAR thesis, and seems to contra-indicate certain historians who claim that early Virginia Mennonites were quietistic farmers uninterested in education.

⁴⁶ Here the ordaining bishop presumably turns to the congregation to speak.

⁴⁷ This injunction to the congregants to "be at peace with him" reflects the recent conflict in the 1820's where some preachers were declared by laity as illegitimate and other preachers were self-ordained. Brunk. pp. 79-83.

A Form for Establishing (ordaining) a Preacher in the Complete Ministry⁴⁸

If a preacher is to be placed in the complete ministry (ordained bishop) it is presented to the congregation. Then if there is more than one ordinary preacher, the vote of the congregation is taken. If all the votes fall on one person, no lot is necessary. On the day of the meeting, with divine assistance, 1 Tim. 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5 are read. Then a sermon is preached from those on the duties of a bishop and the seriousness of the office: how a bishop should walk in faithfulness and show humility and love toward everyone and how he should conduct himself in all his dealings as a truly consecrated disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. After the discourse the one who is to be ordained is asked to come forward. At the direction of the bishop he kneels. Then the bishop lays his hands on his head and says: you are now authorized (to serve as) a head and bishop in the church of Jesus Christ. You are to make known the true teaching of the Gospel of our salvation. To you is committed the baptism of the repentant and believing, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and you are to teach them and to keep everything which our savior commanded. To you is committed also the presentation of the remembrance of the bitter suffering and death of Jesus.⁴⁹ You shall also have the authority to place under the ban, and to excommunicate, the godless and abominable according to the counsel of Paul when he says, put away from yourselves whoever is evil. 1 Cor. 5:13. The entire administration is

[t 14]

committed to you that you may do and administer in all things according to the Gospel. So now be faithful housekeeper in the house of the Lord. Bear with and care for the flock of Christ as a faithful shepherd of the sheep, so that you also may hear, with all the saints, the voice, Thou true and faithful servant, you have been faithful over little, I will place you over much; enter in to the joy of the Lord.⁵⁰ I wish you the grace of God, the Lord, may he bestow on you the spirit of wisdom. Amen. I offer you my hand in the name of God. Arise to obedience. Then he gives

⁴⁸ That the ordaining of a bishop is done here congregationally reflects the Anabaptist sentiment that the authority itself derives from community. That there is a formal scriptural theological rationale for this that is to be delivered to the congregation is also important to this point.

⁴⁹ This is a fascinating charge codifying the gravitas of the role of bishop as the enactor of “awful majesty.” This would have been important in keeping sacred spaces and activities serious in tenor. Perhaps it is this charge which, late in the nineteenth century, Bishop L.J. Heatwole was seen to be guilty of neglecting when the troubles of the Middle District were in full bloom? Certainly the admonition serves also to remind the community of the authority vested in the bishop -- something which they seem to have forgotten in the 1890’s during the troubles at that point.

⁵⁰ From Matthew 25:21.

him the kiss of peace. Afterwards he speaks to the congregation: Here you have your minister; be at peace with him and pray for him.

A Form for committing the ministry to an elder (deacon)

Votes are taken and a lot is prepared. Then the one who is chosen receives the following address from the authorized minister (bishop): dear brother, the Lord has chosen you to be an overseer and an alms caretaker in the church of Christ. You are commanded, first, to be a leader of the congregation in a good and Christlike walk, to support the ministers of the word, to give testimony to the sermon⁵¹, to read the scriptures in the meeting, also to help smooth out quarrels in the congregation⁵², to care for the poor members in the congregation, to give them alms when necessary, from the poor fund of the congregation. It is also committed to you to be a helper and supporter of the ministers at baptism and communion. If it may happen sometime that no preacher can come, then you are to conduct a worship service with singing, reading scripture and praying.⁵³ So manifest faithfulness to God and the church, then God will bless you and sustain you by his grace which I now wish you from my heart. Amen.

Marriage [English]⁵⁴

[o2 34]

⁵¹ Again, an interesting distinction between categories of homiletics. Presumably the preacher would execute an exegesis, and then the deacons would “testify” to it. “Exhortation” seems to have been the duty of both preacher and deacon to some extent, though this is less clear.

⁵² Conflict resolution was seen as distinct from the pastoral ministry of the preacher. This must raise the question as to why preachers were not considered mediators. Perhaps they were too often the source of conflict?

⁵³ Again, because of the congregational authority of the church, worship is not dependent upon clergy, whose primary function in worship is exegetical.

⁵⁴ This two-page English section (presumably also by Good) duplicates the earlier German text. So first I will provide Umble’s translation, and then Good’s own English original, which Umble omits. Strangely, Brunk fails to explain this section as well.

That this section is in English may be indicative of the later time at which it was written down, or that it was performed in the presence of those who spoke only English, or possibly that English-speaking people called upon Mennonite clergy to perform marriage ceremonies for them. This last possibility seems likely given that it appears as a question before conference several times.

Because the pages of the booklet are numbered --probably by Good himself-- and the two English pages in this section are not included in that numbering, I have indicated page numbers here with [o2 34] and [o2 35].

When a couple are about to engage in the sacred bond of matrimony⁵⁵ and appear before a minister of the Gospel, the minister in the first place addresses the male person⁵⁶ in the following manner: I ask thee, as bridegroom, canst thou acknowledge and say, that thou art free loose and void from all marriage engagement with any other person, and if so thou wilt answer with, Yes. In like manner the Bride: I ask thee as bride, canst thou acknowledge and say that thou art free loose and void from all marriage engagement with any other person, if so thou wilt answer, Yes. Secondly, I ask thee as bridegroom, canst thou promise that thou wilt take this our sister to be thy wedded wife, to keep thyself to her and provide for her, in crosses affliction and sickness, to support her and with love and friendship to cherish, and live with her a christian Life, and not to part from her till death part you, so answer Yes. Secondly, I ask thee as bride: canst thou promise that thou wilt take this our brother to be thy wedded husband, to keep thyself to him, and love him and in sickness to foster and cherish him patiently, to live with him a

[o2 35]

Christian and peaceable life and not to part from him till death part you, so answer Yes. Then the preacher will tell them to join their right hand, and will embrace their hands in both his, and thus join them together, saying: the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, be with you and unite you, and bless you, with his rich blessing abundantly. Now go in peace; fear God and keep his commandments.

Marriage [German]

When a couple wish to engage in matrimony it is made known publicly in the meeting two or three times. If then no one has any objections that would interfere with it then on the day of the wedding they are married by a minister of the congregation. He asks them to step before him. Then he first addresses the man: I ask you as bridegroom, do you confess that you are free, single, and unattached from all other women; then answer with yes. Then the bride. I ask you as bride can you confess that you are free, single, and unattached from all other men so far as marriage is concerned? Then answer with yes. Secondly. I ask you as bridegroom can you promise that you will take this our sister as your wife, keep yourself to her, care for her in cross and suffering, in sickness, to stand by her, to love her and to live with her in a peaceful and Christlike manner and not to part from her till death separates you? Then answer with yes. Second I ask you as bride can you promise to take this brother as your husband, to keep

⁵⁵ In the theological understanding of the time, Virginia Mennonite ideas of the “sacred bond of matrimony” are not something that the state or the church performs, but something that a couple themselves engage in. This is very significant and may serve as an important point in the early 21st Century Virginia Conference context where issues of marriage are significantly and negatively impacting the denomination.

⁵⁶ An interesting genderized formulation for the early 19th century. Note also it is not necessarily “male member” -- meaning perhaps that ministers were called upon to perform this ceremony for non-churchgoing persons. This is further evidence to the question posed above.

yourself to him, to love him, to care for him in sickness, to live with him in patience in a Christlike and peaceful manner and not to separate yourself from him until death separates you? Then answer with yes. Then the preacher says to them give each other your right hand. Then he clasps their hands in both of his, joins them together, and says: The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob be with you and help you both and shed his blessing richly upon you. Go forth as married people, fear God and keep his commandments.⁵⁷

[o 34]

Re-baptism

If anyone from any one of our churches wishes to unite with ours⁵⁸ and has already received baptism on confession of faith he will not be baptized again if he is satisfied with his baptism but he will be instructed in our confession of faith. If he agrees with it and the congregation has nothing against him then he is asked whether he believes our confession of faith is evangelical.⁵⁹ If he answers with yes, the preacher extends him his hand, gives him the kiss and says you are now considered as a brother in the church of Jesus Christ so long as you do not transgress and remain in the teaching of Christ. As Jesus says, whoever believes my word he is my true disciple.⁶⁰

God bless us all in Jesus. Amen.⁶¹

[o 35]

A song on the bold sinners and the despiser of baptism

1. Oh, sinners bold, think indeed

⁵⁷ Here ends the Umble's translation of the German section on marriage.

⁵⁸ It is unclear exactly what this means. Does Good mean other Christian denominations, or other Anabaptists, protestants or Mennonites? To deduce from the instructions in the confession of faith before the offer of membership, it would appear that this category includes any that were previously members of churches that engaged in believers baptism. If this is so, then the "our churches" Good refers to here point to an identity formulation of Virginia Mennonites along with Brethren, Baptists and other (non-Lutheran?) protestants.

⁵⁹ The intended meaning of this is also somewhat unclear.

⁶⁰ From John 8:31.

⁶¹ Here ends Umble's translation.

That you also must die,
 Though God gives you mercy too.
 Soon go you into destruction
 If you be converted not to God.
 How God's word justly teaches
 That you should be converted.

2. Oh we indeed behold your evil deeds.
 With your evil⁶² lives
 You plunge yourselves in fire⁶³
 Where you must be suspended for eternity.
 Oh we understand indeed what it means
 To suffer hell's fire:
 The scriptures teach us well.

3. Oh yes -- ye think not of God,
 Nor either on his words
 Which teach you of the eternal death.
 Therefore come to the narrow gates.
 Oh, but you want it not!
 Oh, yes, you rush to judgment?
 You plunge yourselves to hell!

4. Oh sinners take your good time --
 It goes fast; prepare yourselves for death!
 Therefore come, submit yourselves to baptism
 Rather than continuing to commit evil --

[o 36]

Because you are still in unprofitable dread⁶⁴ --
 Indeed, Jesus has commanded it.

5. You say, "Baptism does not make me pure,⁶⁵
 Or cleanse my from my evil life;
 It must be the Spirit's work;

⁶² "*bö□en*" is a nonstandard word. Probably intended "evil" in standard modern German *bösen*.

⁶³ "*ihr stürzt euch selber in die gluth*"

⁶⁴ "*weil ihr noch sind unnitzen furcht*"

⁶⁵ "*rein*"

God must give himself to me.”
 Baptism alone does not make you pure
 Yet faith must be fulfilled in action
 Which, through love, compels one.

6. Fear in your heart and deepest chambers,⁶⁶
 And cry out for salvation,
 Yes, over your grievous wound,
 That God might heal it
 And purchase you also to himself.
 And that he then gain for you the baptism of the spirit--
 Which is the righteous baptism.

7. Who believes and accepts baptism --
 He shall come to eternal life.
 Such a one is a faithful servant,⁶⁷
 He escapes death.
 Whoever does not submit himself to baptism,
 In such is the belief unrighteous --
 He stands in utter danger.

8. So that He might be an example to us,
 The Savior had himself baptized.
 He knew nothing at all of sin.
 Thus, if we all believe he shows us the correct ways,
 Then we will follow him in baptism,
 Because of it we are in need.

[o 38]

9. The evil world thinks not of God
 Nor of His sacraments.
 It cares much more for entertainments.
 The New Testament has revealed to us
 God and all his words
 Through Jesus his son.

10. Don't despise the Lord's word.
 He will purchase you for himself,

⁶⁶ *“Befahre dich von herz und ground”* where “befahren” in the poetic sense means “to fear”

⁶⁷ *“Ein solche ist ein frommer knecht”*

Because indeed, he loves you.
 Come then to baptism.
 Come also to communion
 So that you may come into heaven's halls.
 To Jesus' table, come.

11. Then you will rejoice greatly
 With all of heaven's spirits.
 When you shine brightly and clearly,
 Just as the master does,
 You will then in great joy
 Live there in the glory,
 And be called citizens.⁶⁸

12. Lord Jesus prepare us for life,
 And prepare for us the wedding garments
 Which will make us free from sin,
 So that we may be saved
 Through Jesus Christ,
 Amen.

D.G.

[o 38]

A prayer for God's mercy and blessing⁶⁹

Almighty and everlasting God who alone is wise; father in Christ Jesus; you who are father over all who are called children in heaven and on earth; and you are father of all mercy, and a God of all comfort; look down at us in grace and be merciful. Think not of our high defiance⁷⁰ and sins, but hold us as your children. You consider us so very dear that for our sake you did not even spare your only Son, because you knew that we could not help ourselves. I thank you and praise you for such undeserved grace! Also, father, have mercy upon the fallen Christians, they who in mercy you long for, father, for they are almost completely repressed⁷¹, oh God, that they come to their senses so that their souls can be saved. Take notice of the many, oh God. Build

⁶⁸ Meaning uncertain, "*Salner bürger heisen*"

⁶⁹ This section consists of a prayer composed by Good, however the intended use of the prayer remains unknown. Was it a public prayer, or a part of the worship, or private? See discussion above.

⁷⁰ "*über trotzung*"

⁷¹ "*verhaltet*" could mean repressed, controlled, curbed, oppressed.

your church and hold them; grant that many might also act so that your kingdom will increase on earth. Bless your servants who proclaim your word. Give them wisdom, give us understanding, so that we comprehend your word correctly, and that we teach your mysteries correctly.⁷² In your word is the power. God bless us in Jesus, Amen.

[39]

He who only allows dear God to lead⁷³

1. Lord Jesus you have conquered the entire power of the kingdom of hell
 You have bound the old dragon, caught in the deep abyss
 Lord Jesus, be also our support
 You alone are conqueror of the world

2. Lord Jesus we are weak children; oh stand by us with your power
 We come, yes, as poor children and beg your steadfast love
 Strengthen us with the true faith that flows from the fountain of love

3. Oh dear savior lead us all
 And train us in the way of your cross
 That we come to your throne where eternal joy reigns
 Oh dear Lord draw us after you, that we thank you forever and ever

4. Unfailing Lord we say "Amen" as heaven is opened to us
 Oh praise we all Jesus name who to us opened it through love
 Oh praise with me God's name through Jesus Christ
 Amen.

DG

⁷² "Geheimnissen"

⁷³ "*Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walden*" is borrowed from the 1641 Georg Neumark hymn of the same name.