



Response To:

The Mennonite Brethren as a Confessing Church

by Victor Neufeld

Dr. Loewen has gone to considerable effort to define and articulate the essence of a confessing church. He has reaffirmed our heritage and traditions as such and has called us to remember with renewed vigor the biblical foundation of a confessional church. For this he needs to be commended.

Furthermore it is helpful to be reminded of our confessional roots as Anabaptist/Mennonite People. So is the comparative analysis of the 1902 and 1975 Confessions. Dr. Loewen concludes that there is nothing wrong with the existing M.B. Confession of Faith. What is required is a rediscovery and assertion of the doctrinal and ethical claims it makes.

While it seems unlikely that many would argue with Dr. Loewen's conclusions, they do raise some questions and observations which might call for further thought and clarification.

It has been stated that the Anabaptist/Mennonite Church is not a creedal church and that our confession of faith is descriptive rather than prescriptive. Hence our reluctance to identify with other confessions i.e. the Chicago Statement. If however we are to take Dr. Loewen seriously and give our confession of faith the teaching authority he calls for, will we not need to view it from a more prescriptive perspective than we have heretofore done?

Furthermore, if we are to give it its rightful place as a statement of doctrine and thus application in life, then we may need to address the selective use of certain books of Holy Writ as our appeal to authority. It seems inadequate to simply say that the life and teachings of Jesus are our final authority. Do we have a canon within the canon?

Finally, Dr. Loewen refers to the 'embarrassment' of some with our tradition and Confession of Faith. He also refers to the need to remain a dynamic church - always growing in our understanding. And while he argues that we do not need a new Confession of Faith he concedes that it may not remain adequate. Must that interim produce 'martyrs,' or does our Confession of Faith allow for such development. If not it may already be inadequate.