

FROM REFUGEES TO AMBASSADORS: Mennonite Missions in Brazil, 1930-2000

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This paper reviews the principal findings of my research on Mennonite mission presence, mission understanding, and mission practice in Brazil.¹ The concluding recommendations are offered to ministry colleagues in Brazil, as well as for future researchers.

Mennonite Mission Presence

The first Mennonites did not come to Brazil as missionary ambassadors, but as immigrant refugees fleeing the persecution and poverty of the post-revolution Soviet Union. They were Germanic in their cultural heritage, and Russian in previous citizenship. Some 1,200 arrived in the sub-tropical jungles of Santa Catarina State in 1930 (see Appendix A for map of Brazil). Although two agricultural settlements were established, the harsh pioneering conditions led many to leave those close-knit communities in search of a better life. This search took them to major cities such as Blumenau, Curitiba, and São Paulo. In time, others formed new agricultural cooperatives in the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná, and Bahia. Within two decades, they had dispersed to at least four states in southern Brazil.

The Christian faith was central to their self-identity and particular ethnicity. Some refugees planned for a new church on Brazilian soil while still on ship en route from Germany. All began worship services within days of their arrival. Their concern for worship, fellowship, Christian education, and eventually witness led them to establish new

¹ The following essay is the final chapter of a dissertation ("From Refugees to Ambassadors: Mennonite Missions in Brazil, 1930-2000" PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2002). The purpose of this dissertation is to assist Brazilian Mennonites to reflect on and understand what God has done through Mennonite missions in the past in order to undergird their faith, motivation, and missiological understanding as they heed God's call for their role in world mission in the future. I have focused on describing their mission presence, understanding, and practice. I have also undertaken to evaluate, quantitatively and qualitatively, some of the effects after seventy years in this South American giant.

Research for this project has been diverse and extensive, yet only partial. It has included a review of background and context as well as an examination of secondary historical sources, both of which various libraries were able to furnish. However, my intention was to break new ground through extensive primary research. This was attempted through perusal of archival records, personal interviews and correspondence, a theological questionnaire, and reflection on nearly twenty years of participant observation.

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churches wherever they went. This was also the case for later immigrants (those of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite) who arrived in the state of Goiás in the late 1960s.

The influences of church renewal in Russia, foreign missionaries, immigrants from North America, as well as church renewal in Brazil, have led to the establishment of five different Mennonite denominations. In addition, two para-church missions have been active in Brazil. Each mission has a peculiar history, identity, and geographical sphere of influence.

The Brazilian Mennonite Church (MC) has its origins in the mainstream Mennonite church of Russia. In Brazil, it began in 1930 as a result of immigration. It is characterized by an ecumenical spirit, greater tolerance in matters of individual conscience, believer's baptism by sprinkling, and a missional emphasis on the social aspects of the gospel. Three churches came together in 1954 to organize a church association, of which one purpose was explicitly missional. Since that time, one church has closed (Guarituba) and another has separated into two (Boqueirão and Vila Guaira). Each of the latter two, as well as a third (Witmarsum, Paraná) have been instrumental in beginning daughter churches among Brazilians. Both mother and daughter churches are located in or near Curitiba, Paraná.

The Brazilian Mennonite Brethren Church (MBC) also traces its origins to Russia, specifically to the mid-nineteenth century renewal movement among the Mennonite colonies in the Ukraine. Although this renewal had origins in German pietism and influence from German Baptists, the Russian MBC intentionally preserved and reproduced its Anabaptist-Mennonite identity. Like the MC (see Appendix B for abbreviations), the Brazilian MBC emerged in 1930 with Russian refugees as founders. The MBC in Brazil is characterized by its emphases on conscious conversion, baptism by immersion, personal piety and witness, the church planting aspect of mission, and formal theological education. Since the late 1940s, the Brazilian MBC has partnered with the North American MB mission agency, Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services International (MBMSI). The MB churches formed German-speaking and Portuguese-speaking conferences in 1960 and 1966, respectively. In 1995, the conferences merged to form one Portuguese-speaking conference (COBIM). As a result of internal migrations and church planting carried out with MBMSI, the MBC has spread out into six regions covering the five states in southern Brazil (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Mato Grosso do Sul).

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) began in 1920 as an inter-Mennonite relief agency, founded to send material aid from North American churches to starving Mennonites in the post-revolution Soviet Union. MCC attributes include an inter-Mennonite and inter-denominational spirit, a focus on the social aspects of the gospel, and sacrificial service often to the poorest of the poor "in the name of Christ." While not a sponsor of the Mennonite refugees in Brazil, MCC did take an interest in them and in 1947 sent two couples to provide spiritual and social assistance. The presence of MCC volunteers eventually grew to include other kinds of social assistance linked to various Protestant

organizations active throughout Brazil. In 1968, MCC entered Recife (Pernambuco State) in order to establish its own base and program in the impoverished Northeast of Brazil. Since that time MCC has focused on the Northeast and has partnered with numerous organizations (Mennonite, evangelical, and Catholic) in ministries of relief and community development.

The Evangelical Mennonite Church (EMC) grew out of missionary efforts by the mission agency (Mennonite Board of Missions, MBM) of the Mennonite Church in the USA. In Brazil it is characterized by immersion baptism, a cultural composition that is mostly Brazilian, a pursuit of the Anabaptist vision for Brazil, and the large geographic distances that separate its five regions. The first MBM missionaries arrived in 1954 and began churches in São Paulo and Goiás. Since then the EMC has adopted mission fields and churches begun by other Mennonite missions. These include the mission field in and around Araguacema (begun by the Amazon Valley Indian Mission, an independent Mennonite mission), Portuguese-speaking churches begun by MC mother churches in and around Curitiba, and the churches begun by the Commission on Overseas Mission (COM of the North American General Conference Mennonite Church) in Recife. As a result, the EMC is spread out over five regions and eight states (Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Goiás, Distrito Federal, Tocantins, Pará, Pernambuco). Together with MBM and COM, the EMC has also initiated new churches in these regions.

The Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (CGCM) traces its origins to a renewal movement among American Mennonites initiated by John Holdeman in 1859. The church has some unique doctrines and practices, such as the conviction of being the true church, the disciplinary ban, footwashing, and avoidance of interdenominational Christian fellowship. In 1968, the CGCM came to Brazil from North America as immigrants in search of a more wholesome environment in which to raise their children, as well as in search of inexpensive land to farm. The first families purchased farms near Rio Verde, Goiás. Open church services were held immediately upon arrival, and soon after Portuguese translation was begun for the Brazilian neighbors attending the services. Two settlements with churches were established in this region. Another settlement and church began in the 1990s in Mato Grosso State. In addition, churches emerging out of mission work have been planted in Goiás, São Paulo, Paraná, Ceará, and Paraíba.

The Mennonite Benevolent Association (MBA) began in 1988 in order to provide spiritual and social assistance to rural villages throughout nineteen municipalities in southeastern Paraná. Its founder and director is Peter Pauls Jr. He is assisted by local workers and volunteers from Mennonite churches in and around Witmarsum, Paraná. The MBA is characterized by an authentic integration of ministries of word and deed. It is also a Brazilian mission agency that effectively networks with churches and donors in Brazil, Europe, North America, and Africa. While its material aid reaches mostly southeastern Paraná, its literature ministries extend throughout Brazil and into Africa. The MBA is

conservative and evangelical, more identified by its array of ministries than by theological or ethical positions.

The Renewed Mennonite Brethren Church (RMBC) is the newest Mennonite denomination, having emerged from a local church division in 1988. The RMBC left the Jardim Santo Eduardo MBC (in Embú, São Paulo), under the leadership of José Eguiny Manente. It is characterized by its pentecostal doctrine and practices, by its ministry of prayer, by its informally trained leadership, and by its aggressive expansion into different regions throughout Brazil. Among these could be cited Paraná, Bahia, Tocantins, and Minas Gerais.

Mennonite Mission Understanding

The findings in this area are based on primary research undertaken in the form of a survey administered to 264 Mennonite workers serving in six denominations and/or missions in Brazil. The objectives were to identify general mission understanding, compare theological diversity according to demographic variables, search for formative influences on mission understanding, and analyze the distinctness of Mennonite mission understanding in Brazil.

General mission understanding is aligned with Brazilian neo-evangelicalism, and to a lesser extent, conservative evangelicalism. In their core understanding of mission, Mennonite workers include the following convictions: God's glory as the goal of mission, Christ as divine and exclusive Savior, the Spirit as active in all aspects of mission, the great commission as the biblical foundation for mission, the missionary nature of the church, mission as both evangelism and social service (evangelism being primary), the conversion of individuals as the goal of evangelism, and the equality of all cultures. Other aspects were not as clear and will be referred to below under "Recommendations."

Internal comparisons of Mennonite workers were analyzed according to the demographic variables of gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, education, income, and church/mission affiliation. Gender was found to have no significant difference in missional understandings, while all other variables emerged as shapers of mission understanding. Considerable diversity was discovered among these variables.

Among the formative influences on Mennonite mission understanding, the Scriptures were found to be most influential, followed by theological education. Among theological influences, the respondents felt that sixteenth-century Anabaptism and twentieth-century Mennonitism were the most influential. Most respondents felt that cultural, socio-economic, political, and educational influences were minimal. Finally, the assumed influence of liturgy is characterized by nineteenth-century hymns of North Atlantic origin.

An initial assessment of how distinct Mennonite mission understanding is in Brazil reaches the conclusion that there is overall alignment with historic Mennonite understandings. However, it does not appear to be a strong alignment. Brazilian

Mennonites have been strongly influenced by nineteenth-century revivalism and twentieth-century fundamentalism. Both of these have a considerable North American flavor. From Latin America, especially within the last twenty-five years, pentecostalism and liberationism have made some inroads, though not as strongly as the former influences.

Mennonite Mission Practice

Historically, Anabaptists and Mennonites have concentrated less on the articulation of mission and theology and more on its practice. This has also been the case among Mennonites in Brazil. The following paragraphs review the primary mission activities in which Mennonites have involved themselves in the last seventy years.

Without exception, all seven missions studied have sought to practice evangelism by witnessing to Christ as Savior and Lord. This witness has taken numerous forms, which continue to change with each generation. In earlier decades preaching campaigns, radio broadcasting, and children's ministries were more widely utilized. In recent decades evangelism methods include retreats, sports, cell groups, and social events. Evangelism through personal witness, family life, and literature has been constant. Among the missions, the MBC, the EMC, the RMBC, and to a lesser degree the CGCM, link evangelism to church planting. The other missions practice evangelism and recommend that the converts join existing churches nearby.

Church planting has been the central focus of the MBC, the EMC, and the RMBC. To a lesser degree, the MC and the CGCM have also been active in church planting, although the MC focuses more on social assistance and the CGCM more on literature evangelism than on church planting. Church planting has been sponsored by local churches, national conferences, and international missions. Churches have been planted in at least fourteen of Brazil's twenty-seven states. The following table summarizes Mennonite church planting by denomination and decade.

MENNONITE CHURCH STARTS SINCE 1930

<u>DENOMINATION</u>	<u>1930s</u>	<u>1940s</u>	<u>1950s</u>	<u>1960s</u>	<u>1970s</u>	<u>1980s</u>	<u>1990s</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
MC	3	1	1		1	3	3	12
MBC	5	1	13	15	20	16	6	76
EMC			5	11	12	10	9	47
CGCM				1	1	5	3	10
RMBC						3	17	20
TOTAL	8	2	19	27	34	37	38	165

Holistic ministries are another area of extensive mission practice. Here, too, all missions have had some level of sharing the gospel through deeds of Christian love. Two missions, MCC and MBA, have numerous ministries of relief and community development as their main focus. They serve primarily in the northeastern states and southeastern Paraná

respectively. The Mennonite Association of Social Assistance (MASA) is the mission agency of the MC, and sponsors seven day-care centers in and around Curitiba. Among the other missions, the MBC and the EMC have created and developed formal organizations such as orphanages, schools, and hospitals. The MC and the MBC have worked together in Santa Catarina and Paraná to establish hospitals, schools, and a growing ministry of mental health. The CGCM and the RMBC practice holistic ministries to a lesser extent and in an informal manner at the local church level.

Training for mission has been practiced by all missions with varying degrees. All utilize informal means such as the observation of the more experienced by less experienced, weekly Christian education, accountability in normal ministry tasks, and isolated events (such as retreats or conferences). To a lesser degree, all missions are involved in formal training for mission. Here the MBC has invested most by creating local Bible schools, a regional training center, and national-level seminaries. The EMC carries out its own formal training through Theological Education by Extension (TEE), and utilizes other seminaries. The other missions utilize primarily foreign schools (MC and MCC), some form of non-Mennonite TEE (CGCM and RMBC), or a combination (MBA). The training that has been least used is the non-formal kind. However, the use of seminars, short courses, and conferences is on the increase, especially in the MC, the MBC, the EMC, and the MBA.

Finally, Mennonites in Brazil have engaged in some missiological reflection. As with training, this reflection has taken place informally, non-formally, and formally. Informal means of missiological reflection include weekly preaching and teaching, articles and editorials in church periodicals, as well as annual mission conferences or retreats. Non-formal reflection has occurred during special congresses and study conferences. The Mennonite World Conference in Curitiba (1972), the international MB Congress on World Mission, also in Curitiba (1988), and inter-Mennonite conferences for Latin Americans are examples of non-formal missiological reflection. Formal reflection has not been prolific; however MBC, EMC, and MCC personnel in and from Brazil have engaged in this mission activity to some degree either through academic writings, agency evaluations, or publishing books on mission themes.²

² Non-formal reflections include: Victor Adrian and Donald Loewen, eds., *Committed to World Mission: A Focus on International Strategy*, (Winnipeg, Canada: Kindred Press, 1990). Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., *Jesus Christ Reconciles: Proceedings of the Ninth Mennonite World Conference*, (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite World Conference, 1972). Formal reflections include: Jane Menezes Blackburn, Kevin Neuhouser, and Lisa Schirch, "MCC-Brazil Program Evaluation 1995" (unpublished evaluation paper presented to the MCC staff, Pernambuco, Brazil, 1995). Lawrence S. Cumming, "To Harvest One Hundredfold: A Study on Capacity, Sustainability and Related Themes," (unpublished report present to MCC Canada, 1999). Abram Dück, "Missionary Education in the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Brazil," (MA thesis, Wheaton College, 1961). Heinrich Esau, "A History and Analysis of the Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute in Brazil," (MA thesis, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, 1971), and "Mennonite Brethren Mission in Brazil," (MRE thesis, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, 1972). Donald G. Faul, "Governing Principles of Brazilian Church Growth," MTh thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968). René Horst, "The Associação Evangélica Menonita: The Growth of the Brazilian Mennonite Church," (MA thesis, Indiana University, 1991). Marcos Roberto Inhauser, "The Evangelical

General Conclusions

Except for their beginnings in the sixteenth-century European Anabaptist movement, and a number of outstanding nineteenth-century missions to Central Asia, Indonesia and India, history had known Mennonites more as the quiet in the land than as heralds of the gospel. Arriving as foreign refugees from a distant continent, the first two decades of the Mennonite presence in Brazil seemed to indicate a repetition of this historic pattern. However, by the grace of God, the 1950s saw a different pattern emerging. With some local churches experiencing spiritual renewal, and with missional motivation, modeling, and opportunities provided by North American missions (MBMSI, MCC, MBM), Mennonites in Brazil began to gain a mission dimension. Initially, this dimension was expressed through concrete intentions in holistic ministries. Later, it was expressed in evangelism and church planting. Still later, some efforts would emerge to train mission workers and to reflect and articulate missiologically. Thus, over the last five decades, mission for Mennonites in Brazil has not been incidental, but rather emerged as integral to their nature and presence. They arrived in 1930 as refugees; by the century's close they had become ambassadors.

In the course of seventy years, Mennonites have initiated extensive geographical proliferation throughout Brazil's vast territory (see Appendix C for mission locations). Mennonite mission work has been conducted in at least nineteen of Brazil's twenty-seven states. In some cases one would have hoped for more proliferation. The MC and MBC are the older churches with the most resources in terms of leadership, finances and stability, yet have not expanded beyond the five southern states. However, in most others (MCC, EMC, CGCM, and RMBC), many mission strategists would have recommended less geographical proliferation in order to consolidate through stable clusters of churches and ministries. Nevertheless, this extension is now a historical and irreversible fact.

The role of North American mission agencies has been significant. They have provided missionaries, funds, motivation, and strategies. Granted, at times there were tensions (even conflicts) in the relations between Germanic, North American, and Brazilian Mennonites. At other times there were disagreements over policies and procedures. Nevertheless, a consensus is clear that the balance is positive and that North American missions have helped more than they have hindered. In missiology, one often hears that foreign missionaries controlled too much for too long. In the case of Mennonite

Mennonite Church in Brazil: Identity and Mission," (DMin dissertation, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997). John J. Klassen, "Two Methods of Evangelism and Church Planting: A Case Study of the Brazilian Mennonite Brethren Convention," (DMiss dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1977). Jacob J. Toews, *The Mennonite Brethren Mission in Latin America*, (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church, 1975). James P. Wiebe, "The Persistence of Spiritism in Brazil," (DMiss dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979), and *Megacities: Biblical Lessons for Today*, (Winnipeg, Canada: Windflower Communications, 1999).

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missionaries in Brazil, there is greater agreement that the missionaries have transferred responsibility and left too soon. More will be said on this below.

Mennonites in Brazil are more heterogeneous than homogeneous. This is true in terms of ethnicity, theology, ethics, mission practice, and mission strengths. There is a diversity of cultures that presents both challenges and opportunities. There is also a diversity of mission understanding that spans from fundamentalist evangelicals to those who identify with liberation theology. In the matter of personal ethics, one finds a considerable span between intolerance and tolerance. Finally, one mission is strong in training, another in evangelistic tracts, and yet another in community development. There is significant diversity in mission practice, and this diversity is wholesome.

In terms of missional contributions to the kingdom of God in Brazil, Mennonite missions are small and the numbers are not outstanding as the following membership table indicates (statistics in parentheses indicate interpolations and estimates).

TOTAL MENNONITE MEMBERSHIP

	1949	1959	1969	1979	1989	1999
MC	234	373	388	550	926	722
MBC	410	979	1,529	2,773	3,290	5,143
EMC		104	375	691	1,200	1,972
CGCM			28	139	218	342
RMBC					100	1,200
Total	644	1,456	2,320	4,153	5,734	9,379

Even so, in their own way they have made modest contributions. My conclusion is that first among these contributions are the ministries of evangelism and church planting. Holistic ministries are a close second, followed by training and missiological reflection. This conclusion is based on the following table where the contributions of each mission are rated.

CONTRIBUTIONS BY MENNONITE MISSION

MISSION	EVANGELISM/ CHURCH PLANTING	HOLISTIC MINISTRIES	MISSION TRAINING	MISSION REFLECTION
MC	2 nd	1 st	3 rd	4 th
MBC	1 st	3 rd	2 nd	4 th
Joint Efforts	2 ^{ns}	1 st	4 th	3 rd

MCC	4 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
EMC	1 st	2 nd	4 th	3 rd
CGCM	1 st	2 nd	4 th	3 rd
MBA	2 nd	1 st	3 rd	4 th
RMBC	1 st	3 rd	2 nd	4 th

Evangelism and Church Planting

A number of favorable conclusions emerge when one examines evangelism and church planting as a missional activity by Mennonites in Brazil. First, there have been numerous attempts to begin new churches, particularly since the 1950s when the immigrant Germanic Mennonites were more stable economically and more comfortable culturally. This was also the beginning of substantial personnel and financial investment by North American missions, namely MBMSI and MBM. These church planting partnerships have resulted in the formation of the two largest denominations. As indicated in the table on church starts, they (MBC and EMC) were most active in church planting from the 1960s through the 1980s. Since then, they have reduced new church starts while the RMBC has begun an aggressive movement of church planting in the 1990s. Second, while some of the Mennonite missions are more focused on gathering the harvest, others make their contribution through widespread sowing, especially through Christian literature. This would be the case with the CGCM and the MBA. Third, the Mennonite story of evangelism and church planting in Brazil highlights the importance of clusters of churches. This is especially evident in the MBC church-planting pattern. However, although the EMC is widely spread in its five regions, the fact that each region is composed of a cluster of churches has facilitated support, fellowship, and accountability. Fourth, although Mennonite church growth has fluctuated from excellent growth in the 1950s to fair growth in the 1980s, the overall picture is one of good growth which has accompanied the larger evangelical decadal growth rate. This is significant as Mennonites frequently compare their growth only to the rapidly growing pentecostal churches.

Other aspects of evangelism and church planting by Mennonite missions are in need of review and perhaps revision. Among these are the factors related to the closure of church starts and those church planting efforts that create a prolonged dependency on the sponsor. These factors emerge from analysis of the MBC and the EMC, yet apply to the other missions as well. Some factors relate to the role of workers (missionaries and pastors): 1) poor selection of workers who are inexperienced, culturally dislocated, mismatched in ministry gifts or denominationally non-committed; 2) the premature withdrawal of the church planter; and 3) a lack of continuity (in goals, methods, and ministries) in the transition from church planter to pastor. Other factors relate to the role of the sponsoring

body, whether it be a local church, a conference or a mission agency: 1) a lack of pastoral leadership for prolonged periods; 2) frequent changes in pastoral leadership; 3) loss of missionary vision by the sponsoring body; 4) either premature or delayed autonomy; and 5) excessive proliferation and inadequate consolidation. Another factor may relate to the sponsor or to the family of churches in a given region. Young churches have died when they are isolated from and/or neglected by a cluster of supportive sister churches. Finally, there are factors that relate to a combination of responsible parties, including the newly formed church. Among these could be cited a premature emphasis on building temples as opposed to building the body through continued evangelism, discipleship, and leadership training. Another has to do with doctrinal conflict, especially concerning pentecostalism, which has resulted in the division and early death of a number of fledgling churches.

Holistic Ministries

After evangelism and church planting, ministries of material aid and capacity-building are the other major mission contribution by Mennonites in Brazil. For the most part, these ministries are indeed holistic. The gospel of Christ is presented in both deed and word.

There has been a significant increase in the types of holistic ministries, especially by MCC and the MBA. These ministries have been well received, and undoubtedly thousands of lives have been touched to some degree. It is my conclusion that while extensive proliferation has been good, greater consolidation would have been better. A concentration of resources in fewer ministries allows for greater effectiveness, deeper relationships, and longer sustainability.

Short-term volunteers have made many contributions to different fields, and the field experience has probably made even more of a contribution to their lives. However, lack of longevity is a problem. The ideal pattern seems to operate in service organizations like MASA and MBA. That is, the program is sustained by a core of long-term Brazilian workers. Short-term volunteers come and go without leaving substantial gaps.

Mennonite missions that concentrate on holistic ministries appear to have a healthy balance between relief and development. Some missions (like MBA) are stronger on material aid, while others (MCC) focus on community development and capacity-building. On the whole, there is less emphasis on relief, and greater emphasis on development and education. Concerning the latter, it appears that the establishment and sustenance of schools has been the greatest holistic contribution by Mennonites in Brazil. With the exception of the newer RMBC, all missions have had extensive involvement in either the founding of schools or in educational assistance.

The balance between deed and word is not as healthy. While all missions seek to include the word in their witness of deeds, the word is not always accompanied by a viable process of discipleship and church planting. In this regard, MC and its social agency MASA

have shown the best examples. That is, in at least five locations social assistance has been accompanied by the proclamation of the word and an attempt at gathering new converts into a church.

Also in this regard, the healthiest and most wholesome situations appear to be those where a holistic ministry has the support of a cluster of churches. The ideal is an existing cluster of Mennonite churches. Where this is not the case and compatible churches in both doctrine and practice are not present, an attempt should be made to plant a cluster of Mennonite churches.

Finally, little attention has been given by Mennonites, either through reflection or action, to addressing the systemic roots of poverty, suffering, and injustice in Brazilian society. MCC has made some contributions in articulating the problems and raising community awareness, while other Mennonite missions have remained silent.

Training for Mission

Three conclusions are forthcoming in this aspect of Mennonite missions. First, there is an obvious positive correlation between intentionality in mission training and both the quantity and quality of mission outcomes. The MBC and the MC have invested most in mission training over the years, and also sponsor the most mission activity. Conversely, the EMC and the CGCM have invested the least in mission training. This fact corresponds to the presence of fewer missional activities that can be listed in their work and outreach at the present time. Second, there is considerable diversity among the missions in both the type and source of training utilized. One mission invests heavily in formal training, while another uses mostly informal training. The trend is toward using a combination of informal, non-formal, and formal training according to local needs and circumstances. Third, there are positive qualitative trends evident toward a more developmental philosophy of education and a contextualization of Brazilian and/or Latin American resources.

Mission Understanding and Reflection

Concerning reflection on mission, this is the weakest area of Mennonite mission involvement in Brazil. The amount of missiological reflection undoubtedly has had a bearing on the quality of mission understanding and consequent practice. Furthermore, although expatriate missionaries have made helpful contributions through their missiological reflections, there remains a large space to be filled by Brazilian missiologists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing findings and conclusions have implications for future mission ministries both in and from Brazil. Recommendations follow and are grouped according to the four missional categories used throughout the project, as well as to possibilities for further research.

Evangelism and Church Planting

Each of the five denominations has church growth challenges before it. As I see it, the MC needs to open its cultural doors to Brazilian daughter churches and once again plant new churches. The MBC has the challenge of returning to a church planting momentum and expanding from the South into states and regions that are more responsive to the gospel. The EMC would do well to become more intentional about evangelism and church planting, and move from two decades of consolidation back into a balanced proliferation. The CGCM needs to continue to seek acculturation and contextualization, not least among mission leadership. Finally, the RMBC must seek a balance between proliferation and consolidation, centralized and regionalized leadership, and its Mennonite and pentecostal identities.

Moreover, given the past heritage of Brazilian Mennonites and current resources, the time has arrived for a greater involvement in global mission. Some global involvement has begun, particularly in the more established denominations (MC, MBC, and EMC). However, there is a need to prepare for a growing number of mission candidates who are sensing God's call to serve in other cultures and/or countries. Structures are needed to train, send, and support cross-cultural Mennonite missionaries from Brazil.

Holistic Ministries

In light of the research and conclusions, a number of recommendations follow. First, careful attention is needed by MCC and MBA to reach an optimum balance between proliferation and consolidation of holistic ministries for the sake of long-term effectiveness and sustainability. Second, MCC would do well to increase the longevity of its workers and recruit more long-term Brazilian staff. These measures would diminish the disadvantages of using many short-term volunteers. Third, both MCC and MBA need to consider dialogue with Mennonite church-planting missions, in order to pursue the possibility of developing clusters of churches in their fields of ministry. There is understandable discontent with nearby existing evangelical churches, and in my view the Brazilian Catholic Church is still not a viable option to nurture new Christians.³ This cluster would also provide support to long-term workers and short-term volunteers. Fourth, inter-Mennonite dialogue is needed on holistic ministries in general, and the systemic nature of social injustice in particular. Fifth, in the face of growing poverty in Brazil, there is a need for all missions to be active in alleviating suffering through holistic ministries. National bodies including the MBC, the CGCM, and the RMBC would do well to assume greater involvement at that level. At the

³ This view comes from over twenty years of participant observation and is based on theological considerations, the practice of Cristo-paganism still prevalent in Brazil, and the overall lack of biblical discipleship (with the accompanying nominalism) that characterizes this church at the local level. For an academic discussion the reader is referred to Samuel Escobar. *Changing Tides: Latin America and World Mission Today*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 2002), 38-41.

same time, regional bodies and especially local urban churches have open doors for ministry, often right at their doorstep.

Training for Mission

Both concerns and corresponding recommendations emerge in a consideration of training for mission. First, there has been little systematic thinking or effort at attempting to think through and articulate an overall mission training design that would include the systems of local church, training center and mission agency. One hopes that as Mennonites take their place in the larger evangelical mission movement in Brazil, a systematic and systemic mission training design process will begin.

A second concern focuses on the need to better utilize the missional lessons that can be gleaned from the social sciences. A careful and balanced inclusion of social science-based courses would better prepare mission workers. This is especially important for emerging Mennonite cross-cultural missionaries. Darrell Whiteman points out the kinds of contributions that social sciences are presently making:

1. They can help us understand ourselves and the social and cultural antecedents that shape who we are, influence our denominational and/or institutional loyalty, and affect our theological reflection.
2. They can enable us to understand the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts in which we are engaged in cross-cultural ministry.
3. They can contribute to our ability to distinguish between the gospel and culture, between the universal and the particular.⁴

A third concern is in the area of contextualization. While there is movement in this direction, some glaring gaps remain. There is a need for training mission workers who will serve in the context of Brazil's multiplying megacities. The context of spiritual warfare in Brazil has not been taken seriously enough by Mennonite mission trainers, including myself. Given the present opportunities for graduate-level missiological education in Brazil, my recommendation is that most mission trainers receive needed preparation *in context*.

Fourth, greater attention needs to be given to strengthening Anabaptist-oriented theological education among Brazilian Mennonite workers. The high number of workers educated in non-Mennonite training centers can only enrich an Anabaptist understanding of mission if such understanding is initially present among the majority of workers.

Finally, I recommend greater cooperation and networking in mission training among Mennonites, as well as between Mennonites and others. The numbers are simply too small and the resources too limited to allow for the luxury of each denomination

⁴ "The Role of the Behavioral Sciences in Missiological Education" p. 137, in *Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the Circle and the Sandals*. J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen and Edgar J. Elliston, eds. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 1996), 133-143.

administering separate mission training programs. More important, the world's need for a united Christian witness and the kingdom harvest's need for more workers is too great for Mennonites to continue to reinforce the distances between them that are present due to mostly historical circumstances.

Mission Understanding and Reflection

This is an area in which there is room for growth. Certainly each mission will be enriched and strengthened to the extent that it intentionally pursues deeper biblical foundations, explores its Anabaptist heritage, and enters into dialogue with Mennonites and other evangelicals. Such dialogue will further diminish cultural distances and develop needed relationships for future cooperation.

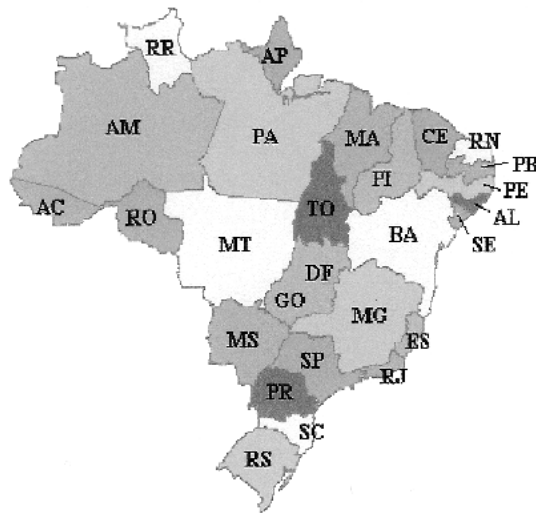
In my estimation, understanding of pneumatology, a broad hermeneutical community, a biblical theology of mission, a holistic view of mission, and a covenantal ecclesiology need to be strengthened. Also, further study is needed on the destiny of the unevangelized (and how this relates to mission motivation), on the methodology of spiritual warfare, and on the present role of the apostolic gift.

Finally, a more practical recommendation may be useful. Given the influence of music in all cultures, and especially Latin cultures, an inter-Mennonite songbook would be a worthy liturgical investment. It should include both Anabaptist and evangelical, Latin and Anglo, and salvationist and church/kingdom themes and songs.

Further Research

The scope of this research project has necessarily led to more breadth and less depth than was originally intended. Following this overview, greater in-depth research on the seven individual missions would be welcome. Another approach could focus more intently using only one of the four lenses used in this study, namely evangelism and church planting, holistic ministries, training for mission, and mission understanding. The broad field of Mennonite cultures and mission has only been introduced in this study. In the area of church growth, examination of other statistics would enrich the reflection and analysis as well as increase the relevancy of the subject. Statistics gathered might include the growth of different kinds of leaders (missionaries, pastors, church workers), of kinds of church growth (conversion, biological, or transfer) and of membership make-up (gender, age range, social class). The research on mission understanding would be enriched by adding the affective and behavioral perspectives to the cognitive, by adding the general membership perspective to that of the leadership, by including the rural and urban variables, and by comparing Mennonite mission understandings in Brazil to those of Mennonites in other developing countries. All said, the research that has been undertaken has been insightful and inspiring. May it contribute to the quality and quantity of Mennonite missions in Brazil and beyond.

APPENDIX A – MAP OF BRAZIL



AC Acre
AL Alagoas
AP Amapá
AM Amazonas
BA Bahia
CE Ceará
DF Distrito Federal
ES Espírito Santo
GO Goiás
MA Maranhão
MG Minas Gerais
MS Mato Grosso do Sul
MT Mato Grosso
PA Pará
PB Paraíba
PE Pernambuco

PI Piauí
PR Paraná
RJ Rio de Janeiro
RN Rio Grande do Norte
RO Rondônia
RR Roraima
RS Rio Grande do Sul
SC Santa Catarina
SE Sergipe
SP São Paulo
TO Tocantins

APPENDIX B – ABBREVIATIONS

AVIM Amazon Valley Indian Mission
CGCM Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman)
COBIM Convenção Brasileira das Igrejas Evangélicas Irmãos Menonitas (Brazilian Convention of Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Churches)
COM Commission on Overseas Mission (General Conference Mennonite)
EMC Evangelical Mennonite Church
MASA Mennonite Association of Social Assistance
MB Mennonite Brethren
MBA Mennonite Benevolent Association

MBC	Mennonite Brethren Church
MBM	Mennonite Board of Missions (formerly Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities)
MBMSI	Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services International
MC	Mennonite Church
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
RMBC	Renewed Mennonite Brethren Church

APPENDIX C – MENNONITE MISSION LOCATIONS

Key:

1. Bagé, RS
2. Santa Catarina
3. Curitiba, PR
4. Witmarsum, PR
5. Southwestern PR
6. Greater São Paulo
7. Maringá, PR
8. Interior, SP state
9. MS state
10. Rio de Janeiro
11. Uberlândia, MG
12. GO state
13. Greater Brasília
14. MT state
15. BA state
16. Araguacema, TO
17. TO state
18. PA state
19. MA state
20. PI state
21. CE state
22. PB state
23. Interior, PE state
24. Greater Recife



APPENDIX D - HIGHLIGHTS OF MENNONITE MISSIONS IN BRAZIL

- 1930: 1,200 Mennonite refugees arrive in SC from Russia via Germany.
- 1935: A hospital opened for immigrants in Witmarsum (SC) which also served others.
- 1946: MBMSI sends first missionaries to open orphanage in Curitiba.
- 1947: MCC sends pastoral workers for assistance in São Paulo and Curitiba.
- 1949: A major migration of MB settlers to Bagé (RS) opens a new mission field.
- 1954: The MC organizes a church association with mission outreach as one purpose.
MBM sends first missionaries to open mission work in Brazil.

- MB orphanage workers begin church planting among Brazilians.
- 1956: MB itinerant Bible school begun in Bagé for South American Conference.
AVIM missionaries arrive in Brazil to open new field in Araguacema.
- 1957: First EMC churches begun in SP by MBM missionaries.
- 1958: MBM assumes mission field in Araguacema.
MBMSI missionaries initiate outreach in the Southwest of PR.
- 1960: The German MBC organizes an association with mission as one purpose.
- 1961: The German MBs open the SC mission field in the former settlement of Witmarsum.
- 1961: MBC and MBMSI open Bible institutes in German and Portuguese.
- 1963: MBM missionaries and EMC churches form an association; MC also a partner.
- 1964: MCC begins community development in northern Brazil (Maranhão).
- 1965: MC Portuguese-speaking churches join the EMC.
- 1966: MBMSI missionaries and Portuguese-speaking MB churches form an association.
- 1968: CGCM immigrants arrive to resettle in Rio Verde, GO.
MCC begins a major relief and development program in Recife and hinterland.
- 1970: MASA founded as the MC agency for social assistance to non-Christians.
- 1972: Mennonite World Conference in Curitiba.
Saturation evangelism thrust begun by MBMSI and Brazilian MBC in the South.
- 1976: The COM sends first missionaries to plant churches with the EMC in GO.
- 1978: MASA enters into a legal and missional partnership with MCC in the Northeast.
- 1981: Church planting begun in Recife by MASA and COM with support from MCC.
- 1982: EMC begins its own theological education by extension.
- 1988: MB World Congress on World Mission in Curitiba.
The RMBC is organized in Embú, SP.
The MBA begins in Witmarsum (PR) and surrounding region.
- 1995: German- and Portuguese-speaking MB conventions merge to form COBIM.
- 1999: The EMC sends its first cross-cultural missionaries to Mozambique.