

The Place of a Christian Periodical

~Jeff Jarmon

The apostle Paul recognized that he would soon leave this earthly life when he wrote to Timothy, *“The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.”* He clearly understood the importance of the printed word in providing for the needs of the church both present and future. The parchments would continue to speak to church generations long after the hand that scribed them had been stilled in death.

Historically, the Anabaptists have long recognized the importance of Christian literature. Books, tracts, and school curriculum have made significant impact on the perceptions and direction of the Mennonite church at large. Publications such as Introduction to Theology, Doctrines of the Bible, and ready Bible answers have helped generations of God’s people’s understanding of the nature of the Christian life, foundational teachings contained in the Scriptures, and how to make practical application of Bible directives. While these and other publications are not considered inerrant, they have become standard references in many Mennonite homes.

In 1929, in response to a growing waywardness in the church, George R. Brunk began to print a periodical called The Sword and Trumpet. Published on a regular basis, this work was intended to address the current condition of the Mennonite Churches in North America. When issues arose, The Sword and Trumpet could be depended upon to address the issue with a Scripturally based, conservative voice. This periodical was one part of what would become a strong surge in periodical type literature. Unlike larger published works, the information contained in these periodicals was not static. Mennonite families seemed to appreciate the relevancy of the content contained in works published on a regular basis.

As the diversity among North American Mennonites increased, so did the variation in church based periodicals. As specific fellowships or conferences emerged, many utilized regularly printed “organizationally specific” periodicals to communicate their specific vision to a wide spectrum of readers. Many families receive multiple periodicals of this type each month. acknowledging that these monthly publications exhibit a variety of styles and approach, they all share one common objective. Each is produced with a sincere desire to be used in the work of meeting the needs of those who are part of the true church of Jesus Christ. While these publications are not considered to be without some shortcomings, they have become a standard feature in many homes.

The Pilgrim Witness has been in print for almost two decades. Various editors and writers have made their individual contributions. all have sought to serve in meeting the needs of the church; the Pilgrim Mennonite Conference in particular. As the Pilgrim Witness begins another year of publishing, it is wise to again consider the role this publication is to fill in the life of its readership. In its most elemental form, this work seeks to do three things effectively. The intended purpose of the Pilgrim Witness is to instruct, inspire, and inform. With the image of the opened scriptures clearly depicted on the cover of each month’s issue, the centrality of the Word of God is emphasized. Doctrinally based articles serve the purpose of instructing the believer in a greater understanding of the Bible. Writings that exalt Jesus Christ and portray the greatness and grandeur of God are intended to inspire the believer to a closer walk with God. Finally; because this publication is to

serve as the “official organ” of the Pilgrim Mennonite Conference, it is to contain information pertinent to the constituency of the organization.

This publication seeks to be responsive to the needs and issues of the Pilgrim Mennonite Conference. In reality, an effort such as this one is only a small part of a greater effort of Christian based publications. Its ability to meet the needs of its readership will be limited to the abilities and understanding of its writers. as this publication attempts to meet the objectives outlined, we ask for the prayer support of our readership. While this periodical is not without shortcomings, it is our desire that it continues to be a true blessing in many homes.

— Reinholds PA