

MUTUAL AID



Applebutter boiling at the J. M. Foster home, near Bridgewater, VA, 1937. Joyce Pitsenberger Sheffer Collection.

'mine' and 'yours' may be spoken on this basis, that this is mine and that is yours to administer and keep until a time of need for the poor and suffering in and outside of the congregation."

In the original group of Brethren in *Schwarzenau, this concern for mutual aid may have been implemented for a time through complete community of goods, as claimed by the chronicle of the *Ephrata Community, where community of goods was practiced. After Schwarzenau, the main Brethren group cared for this concern through informal sharing, the work of the deacons, and other organized efforts. The congregation in *Germantown, PA, for example, used part of the meetinghouse as a home for widows, and devoted great attention to the *poor.

The concern for mutual aid involved not only material needs, but emotional and spiritual support as well. Church *discipline was seen as a form of mutual aid. On the basis of Mt. 18:15-20 new members covenanted to give and receive admonition. Love was to be the foundation of this discipline and its goal was the restoration of the brother or sister to full unity in the community.

Brethren opposition to *insurance was based at least in part on the desire that brotherly and sisterly love not be relegated to secular, impersonal organizations, but be kept as an integral part of the church life. Opposition to fire insurance and property insurance declined in the late 19th century but it was not until 1920 that the Annual Meeting of the Church of the Brethren repealed former decisions and began permitting members to own life insurance. To the extent the Brethren have been a community, they have not felt the need for secular means of security, such as insurance. *Barn raisings, tending the farm of a sick neighbor, and financial support for a needy

"Mine" and "Yours"

One of the more complete early treatises on Brethren beliefs was written in prose and poetry by *Michael Frantz and published in 1770, more than two decades after Frantz died. One lengthy section was devoted to inward and outward communion. Frantz described the practical outworkings of true communion with God:

"If the inward communion with God has been truly realized, it will issue in outward communion . . . , with all kinds of virtues of love, for when the name of the word of congregation or communion is spoken in truth, then the words 'mine' and 'yours' must no longer be heard. That is to say [that] no one is to own or possess anything by himself any longer. To this extent 'mine' and 'yours' may be spoken on this basis, that this is mine and that is yours to administer and keep until a time of need for the poor and suffering in and outside of the congregation. To love one's neighbor as one's self shows clearly what communion is. Thus it behooves him who has two coats to give to him who has none, and he who has food, let him do the same (Luke 3). From this it is to be understood that he who has two portions, be it food or clothing, house, property, livestock, money or whatever his neighbor needs for his life's necessity, then love should compel him to give to his brother and to his neighbor and to do as he can for their need." DFD

M. Frantz, *Einfältige Lehr-Betrachtungen* (1770), trans. in *Colonial America* (1967) 453.

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